

Meanwhile, back on Urth

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 12 Jun 1998

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m.driussi — 12 Jun 1998, 04:03

Spectacled Bear,

Did alga get huffy with you? Well then you are extra special--if not unique! <g>

Re: the sack of the Claw. Hmm, yes, "leather" is "manskin"; or rather, "manskin" is "leather." And "doeskin" is "leather," too. But only by an obvious joke can "manskin" be "doeskin."

("The manskin was made from the skin of a guy named John Doe.")

"Claw of the Conciliator. re: the sack it is carried in by Severian. The text gives it as made of doeskin (III, chap. 1) and human skin (III, chap. 21, last page). This curious detail is seen in REALMS OF FANTASY (1983) by Malcolm Edwards and Robert P. Holdstock as a concrete example of how Wolfe uses careful signals to cast doubt upon Severian's memory" ("LEXICON URTHUS:Additions, Errata, &cetera (Volume I)," p. 7).

"Who (or what) is the intelligence in the depths of the mine at Saltus?" (item number four in list "Mysteries of the Urth Cycle," LEXICON URTHUS, p. 175)

My own guesses (in more or less chronological order)

1. Some obscure chthonic deity from Greco-Roman mythology, more to do with "riches" (i.e., the "Pluto" of "plutocracy") than "the dead." (This is more a category for further search rather than a specific answer of a single individual.)

2. Arioch. (Because he is named in the text but never placed in any location. Problem is that he is supposed to be in league with Erebus and Abaia . . . well, he might have been "converted" along the way . . . and Arioch of mythology doesn't seem to have a "chthonic" association . . . beyond some bat wings, hmmm . . .)

3. Nazca. (If you've seen the map in LEXICON URTHUS you know that some real estate has been added to the Pacific Rim. On our Earth this region is part of the Nazca Plate. The situation on Urth might be more drastic than the LU map suggests--the whole continent the Commonwealth is on might be a raised Nazca.

(The text talks of the "roots of the continent." With such terraforming feats as Verthandi, Skuld, and Lune, not to mention stellaforming stunts like the dying sun and the New Sun, I find continent lifting to be rather simple in comparison. In our non-technical, 20th century terms, I imagined a sort of hydrolic jack at the roots of the continent, lifting it up against "Nature"; this jack and its titanic servator, a throwback to Morningstar of JACK OF SHADOWS, no doubt, are both "Nazca," a sort of Atlas of the Commonwealth's continent.)

(Why raise continents? I dunno. But the text says that all the topsoil runs off into the sea [hmm, maybe that's just "Seven American Nights" I'm thinking of right there], all the metals are at the bottom of the oceans, and so on. So raising a new continent would be like getting a fresh new world to start on, and any continents that sank as a result of raising the new one would become renewed by the dip in the sea, just like Aphrodite.)

4. One of the thinking engines in Cyriaca's story about the founding of the Library of Nessus.

Or some combination of the above.

As with many mysteries of the text . . .

=mantis=

Peter Westlake — 12 Jun 1998, 09:39 · follows m.driussi

At 04:03 1998-06-12 GMT, m.driussi at genie.com wrote:
Spectacled Bear,

Did alga get huffy with you? Well then you are extra
special--if not unique! <g>

No, with Mr Wolfe for (as she thought) not explaining the mystery of who made the footsteps in the mine at Saltus.

Re: the sack of the Claw. Hmm, yes, "leather" is "manskin"; or rather, "manskin" is "leather." And "doeskin" is "leather," too. But only by an obvious joke can "manskin" be "doeskin."

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... and on my memory too. Whorl readers may recall that "bears are not universally intelligent"! I shall have to look again.

"Who (or what) is the intelligence in the depths of the mine at Saltus?" (item number four in list "Mysteries of the Urth Cycle," LEXICON URTHUS, p. 175)

My own guesses (in more or less chronological order)

... are very interesting. I haven't seen LEXICON URTHUS, or any of the chapbooks, and thanks for reminding me to look into how to get hold of them.

But I think it's the war machines. I guessed at the end Citadel, XXII, where they appear, and was amazed by the mention of the footsteps in the mine in XXIII, which is a very generous clue.

Peter.