

LU Questions Answered

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 09 Jul 1998

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m.driussi — 09 Jul 1998, 00:35

Adam Louis Stephanides,

First, thank you for buying a copy of LEXICON URTHUS. Perhaps even more importantly, thank you for your kind words about it!

"Lexicon Urthus: Additions, Errata, &cetera (vol. 1)" (AE&1) is still available directly from the publisher for \$1 plus \$1 postage. (If you ordered LU directly from us, then we owe you a copy. Let me know in private e-mail.)

Re: Atrium of Time as a time travelling structure. The usual disclaimers apply: your mileage may vary, etc. John Clute mentions it glancingly in one essay on Wolfe (1983) and directly in the famed Catherine essay (1986). Others have mentioned it, I'm fairly certain. The clues are: Valeria's clothing seems out of time; her lineage is so ancient that it may stretch back to Ymar; the place she lives in does not exist on any maps, nor can it be found from aerial survey or reached in any other way than by the one true path through the maze (exactly like the trail to Last House); and not the least, we know that the Atrium is not named for the sundials--the sundials where put there
=because= it is the Atrium of Time.

Re: Valeria's Regency in the Valeria entry. Do you consider it an error because technically she became regent the moment Severian left Urth? Rather than "during the decades of [Severian's] absence" (which sounds vague and gradual)? Your question makes it seem more likely that you doubt Valeria was his regent while he was visiting Yesod.

I'm nearly positive that Severian uses the term "regent" or "Valeria's regency" somewhere in URTH.

(FWIW, Feeley's essay uses the phrase "Valeria's ten-year regency in his absence" [NYRSF No. 32, p. 14], and while I'd argue with the number of years as being a gross underestimate, I wouldn't quibble at all with the rest.)

But it is true that Valeria had a loss of faith during the many decades of his absence--nobody had any idea it would take so long, apparently. (The medieval analogy is one of a king going off on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land--figure a couple of years ought to do it. Set up a regency to irritate Robin Hood and sail off.)

So at some point it seems Valeria had to consider Severian lost at sea (see the cenotaph, chapter 41). Out of political necessity she then called herself Autarch (with a capital A, rather than autarchia, which she was before) and out of loneliness and/or additional political necessity (to keep the Commonwealth together) she married Dux Caesidus. But the autarchy is broken since she hasn't eaten the brains of her predecessor--she isn't a real autarch. Even the commoners via Eata know that there's some sham to this "autarchy," that she "doesn't know

the words." What can one do? The war with Ascia continues, etc.

Your quotes from chapters 4 and 16 of URTH are given slightly out of context: the conversations are onboard the starship at the edge of the universe, and in the example from chapter 16, the issue at hand is that of determining which of two "autarchs" on the ship is the real one.

In the general case, again using the analogy of a king going by ship to the holy land:

Passenger: "So you still claim to be king of England while you are on this ship out in the middle of the Mediterranean?"

King: "I was king--now I'm on holiday, so I'm the grand poobah of partydom. Good thing my regent is minding the kingdom while I'm away!"

Or, to put it in a skiffy way: if John F. Kennedy gets into a time machine and travels to the Restaurant at the End of the Universe, is he still "President" while he sits there eating his meal and watching the universe collapse in the Grand Gnab? His nation is gone, his planet is gone, his solar system is gone.

Dinner Cow: "So you still claim you're really the President?"

JFK: "Well, I was. And I will be when I get in the time machine and get back home--after I've finished eating you, of course."

=mantis=

Matthew Malthouse — 09 Jul 1998, 02:54 · follows m.driussi

m.driussi at genie.com wrote:

Or, to put it in a skiffy way: if John F. Kennedy gets into a time machine and travels to the Restaurant at the End of the Universe, is he still "President" while he sits there eating his meal and watching the universe collapse in the Grand Gnab? His nation is gone, his planet is gone, his solar system is gone.

Dinner Cow: "So you still claim you're really the President?"

JFK: "Well, I was. And I will be when I get in the time machine and get back home--after I've finished eating you, of course."

No, the protocol officer flunked briefing you there. :)

Once a President always a President. If you ever have a Very Large Cheque to waste on an after dinner speaker remember this, otherwise Mr President Ford, Mr President Carter or Mr President Bush may decline the invitation.

On the other hand you could fire the protocol officer, split the money 50/50 and I'll do the speaking engagement. I doubt anyone will really care.

Matthew
(Appologies for the trivia)