

Nessus, geography

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 18 Mar 1997

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Alice Turner — 18 Mar 1997, 09:06

Concerning Nessus:

I took Nessus as (Bue)Nos Aires in the same way that Cordwainer Smith's Meeya Meefla is Miami Fla. But, that was me, not Wolfe. Smith is not a major influence on Wolfe, despite appearances. (It seems that they both think along the same lines, and that creates the appearance of some dependance.)

What I have never done is try to "solve the crossword puzzle" (to use Mantis's felicitous analogy) by looking for evidence of the direction of flow of the river, whether Urth flipped more than once, etc. If the river flows west instead of east, and if we are in South America, then perhaps Nessus is Santiago.

Now, one other point: Pas has loaded the cargo of Starcrosser with locals.

These locals sip mate and are generally (in Viron) a South American culture. This would indicate that Typhon's domain is in the Argentine area,

not in an Egyptian area. AHA, but the Trivigauntes speak a kind of Arabic,

so maybe they and not the Vironese were the local population around Typhon's throne.

So, okay. I give up. Gene has defeated me. Where's my .357 Magnum....

If Urth flipped only once, then the Alexandria suggestion makes more sense; especially since Alexandria is noted for its library. In that case,

the Ultanian nod to Borges would just be a nod, and not a Clew!

So then: What do you see as evidence for Alexandria?

Well, I've developed a kind of geography of Urth, or at least of Severian's major journey, an abbreviated version of which is in mantis's second addendum to Lexicon Urthus (if you email him, he might send you one in gratitude for that long and interesting Wolfe interview). I'm supposed to be writing it up at length, or at least at more length---why don't I finish doing that and then post it here, so as not to have to defend challenges piecemeal? The reason I asked about Wolfe (and am relieved at your answer) is that had he endorsed you, I would have had to abandon it.

Mate is sorta weak as a clue.

But the quick-and-dirty clues to Alexandria are (1) Holy Katharine (St. Catherine is the patron of Alexandria); (2) the library; (3) the cluster of towers in the old launching pad (Matashin, Bear, Witches etc.) which seem to stand in for the ancient Pharos. Admittedly, the third point is a bit far-fetched, but not so much when you put in context (I promise to do context soon---taxes are in the way).

I simply can't accept your etymology for Nessus. For me it refers directly to the centaur with the poisoned blood, and belongs along with Gyll and other references to what mantis (and I too)

refers to as the Gnostic view of Urth, that in its tainted state it is a kind of Hell that must be saved--by U-No-Who. But this is, of course, because I have a Euro-centric view of Urth, at least "our" part.

JBJordan (Hmmm. What shall I be? How about Nutria!)

How about Naugahyde? Heh!!

Found both mantis and Nutria really good and interesting on the parallels between Cordwainer Smith and Wolfe. Which is not only to say I agree with both, but that I admired their parlance.

-alga-

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com

Jim Jordan — 18 Mar 1997, 14:25 · follows Alice Turner

De Nessum atque Algam:

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Well, certainly the culture of the Autarky is Byzantine, and that would support you. I noticed all kinds of allusions to gnosticism also, and originally assumed Wolfe was creating a universe consistent with modern physics and gnosticism -- a universe with no true transcendent, and thus where all sacraments are ultimately mechanical, time is cyclical, and the universe is closed like a Kline bottle. But that is not really the case. Which raises the question of whether the taurobolium and other gnostic allusions are mere decoration or are designed as the foil against which the New Sun must act. I thought the Qabbalism in volume 5 (Yesodh, Beriach) supported a gnostic reading, but Gene told me it was just a device, so I'm left in a quandary. Someday I'll have to find out what you guys mean by your Gnostic approach.

Nutria, the Big Rat

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