

Derivation of talus

The Whorl list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 19 May 1998

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/477>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Brownes3 — 19 May 1998, 13:28

I don't recall anyone posting a possible derivation of the term of talus on this, list, although I remember at one point several posts saying "talus" was still a mystery.

Here's my try:

I'm re-reading Nightside and came to the passage that describes the painting of Pas creating the Whorl. The message mentions two taluses of a particularly lovely shade of butter yellow. Obviously, they are bulldozers, but a certain kind -- yellow is the brand color of Caterpillar Tractors. So I went looking for associations with caterpillars or butterflies and such.

I needn't have been so devious. According to Webster's, a talus is:

"a slope formed by an accumulation of rock debris."

So a talus is named after the thing it makes: the slope the bulldozer blade leaves in the rubble after it pulls back.

What do y'all think?

Rich Browne

Peter Westlake — 19 May 1998, 12:47 · follows Brownes3

At 09:28 1998-05-19 EDT, Brownes3 wrote:

I don't recall anyone posting a possible derivation of the term of talus on this, list, although I remember at one point several posts saying "talus" was still a mystery.

See <<http://www.gbso.net/zuki/GREEK.HTM#TALOS>>, which says "In Greek mythology, Talos was a bronze man given to Europa by Zeus to guard Crete. He would clutch people to his breast and jump into a fire so that they were burnt alive."

Spectacled bear.

David_Lebling — 26 May 1998, 09:38 · follows Peter Westlake

The nice thing about "talus" as a term for the bulldozer-guard-robots is that the word also fits nicely within Wolfe's naming scheme, in that talus is rock debris, or a pile of such debris making up a slope.

So, we have the resonance with the Talos of mythical Crete (which Wolfe has written about in terms that suggest he "believes" it to have been a robot), and the nice fit with the Whorl's naming scheme, and the definitional parallel that the taluses of the Whorl are, compared to the soldiers, "debris," in that they are somewhat inferior jury-rigged copies of the real thing.

-- viz