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The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 10 Apr 2000

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Timothy Reilly — 10 Apr 2000, 23:07

Kieran Mullen wrote:

No doubt half a hundred people will write to you that the definition of echidna:

echidna \E*chid"na\, n. [L., a viper, adder, Gr. ?.] 1. (Gr. Myth.) A monster, half maid and half serpent.

(Source: Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary)

Is probably the one you want. Unless of course Wolfe meant:

Echidna: Constraint logic programming embedded in an object-oriented language. The syntax is an extension of Edinburgh Prolog.

["Hierarchical Arc Consistency Applied to Numeric Processing in Constraint Logic Programming", G. Sidebottom et al, TR-91-06, CSS-IS, Simon Fraser U, and Comp Intell 8(4) (1992)].

since she *is* a computer construct... Nah... ;-).

Similarly Alice Turner wrote:

And, btw, Tim, long before a little hedgehog was named an echidna, the name was applied to a frightful monster, half woman, half serpent, who ate men raw and bore a brood of monsters to Typhon. The name means "she-viper."

Check it out in any Greek mythology compendium, or go to the source, Hesiod.

As I said in my original post on the subject, I possess Lexicon Urthus so I know there are alternative definitions, and doubtless this is what Wolfe had in mind. But you see when someone says Echidna here, what springs to mind is the cute hedgehog, not the above. So you see my difficulty. Or perhaps not. Anyway, I'll shut up about it now!

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.