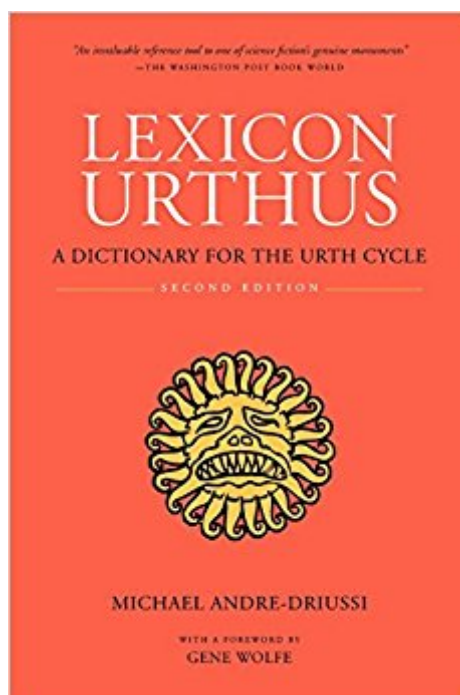


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Lexicon Urthus: A Dictionary For The Urth Cycle



Synopsis

Lexicon Urthus is an alphabetical dictionary for the complete Urth Cycle by Gene Wolfe: The Shadow of the Torturer; The Claw of the Conciliator; The Sword of the Lictor; The Citadel of the Autarch; the sequel Urth of the New Sun; the novella Empires of Foliage and Flower; the short stories "The Cat," "The Map," and "The Old Woman Whose Rolling Pin Is the Sun"; and Gene Wolfe's own commentaries in The Castle of the Otter. The first edition was nominated for a World Fantasy Award. This second edition, available for the first time in paperback, includes 300 new entries. When the first edition was published, Science Fiction Age said: "Lexicon Urthus makes a perfect gift for any fan of [Wolfe's] work, and from the way his words sell, it appears that there are many deserving readers out there waiting." Gary K. Wolfe, in Locus, said: "A convenient and well researched glossary of names and terms. . . . It provides enough of a gloss on the novels that it almost evokes Wolfe's distant future all by itself. . . . It can provide both a useful reference and a good deal of fun." Donald Keller said, in the New York Review of Science Fiction: "A fruitful product of obsession, this is a thorough . . . dictionary of the Urth Cycle. . . . Andre-Driussi's research has been exhaustive, and he has discovered many fascinating things . . . [it is] head-spinning to confront a myriad of small and large details, some merely interesting, others jawdropping."

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Customer Reviews

This book is useful but is sometimes puzzling. Some of the definitions are simply wrong, in fact some are so far off that you will wonder if Andre-Driussi perhaps is referring to a condensed, abridged,

and slightly altered version of the series. Some very minor terms and characters mentioned in passing only once in the series are described here in some detail, while some important terms, places, and incidents integral to the storyline (such as the Torturer's Guild/Order of the Seekers for Truth and Penitence, to which Severian belonged) are not listed at all. Many of the definitions are, well, stretched. This book would be less than half the current size if you threw out all of the example sentences. For instead of just giving the definition, pronunciation and etymology of the listed term, the entry in many cases also gives the full sentence (from the book) in which the word was used. This is not necessary, since the entry also pinpoints the book, chapter, and page in which the term was used in the first place. Takes up a lot of space. Still, this book will save you from browsing through stacks of dictionaries looking for that obscure term. The definition will not always identify what language the word is, but the careful reader can soon learn to tell if it's Greek, Latin, French, or Spanish (as most of the "foreign" words here are). Some terms are defined in detail; they contain many examples of the word (and sentences/book excerpts), with real historical anecdotes, mythological references, hypotheses, comments, and squiggly line drawings. Some entries are short and abrupt: "marge: margin. (IV, chapter 13, 86)". Sometimes there is no definition at all; all you get for the entry is the sentence the word is in, and the location of the word.

LEXICON URTHUS is a dictionary prepared by Michael Andre-Driussi of the unusual words and names used by Gene Wolfe in his four-volume masterpiece *The Book of the New Sun* (and its coda *THE URTH OF THE NEW SUN*). Those who have read Wolfe's work know that he usually allows many of his archaic terms to be defined for the reader through context, but those wishing to know more about these words weird and wonderful can turn to this resource. The book doesn't limit itself merely to terminology, however, but also contains the names of characters and places. Many characters in the *Book of the New Sun* are named after obscure saints of early Christianity or the Middle Ages or mythological figures, and Andre-Driussi shows why they have the names they do. For example, "Nilammon", the man mentioned in passing by the caretaker who shows Severian a picture of the moon ("Now there's trees enough on it to hide Nilammon") is named after a 4th century Egyptian saint who hid in his cell to escape a mob that wanted to proclaim him bishop. Yet, Andre-Driussi sometimes goes astray. In the entry on Valeria, for example, he mentions several female saints, but doesn't mention who, I would say, is the most likely namesake of the character: Claudius' wife Valeria Messalina. The name of "Kim Lee Soong", the ancestor of the prisoners in the antechamber, is said to be Chinese, but clearly it is Korean. And occasionally Andre-Driussi makes pronouncements that are simply beyond reason, such as that Hethor is the same as Soong. The

work is also clearly an amateur production, although Sirius Fiction has typeset and bound it quite nicely. Educated readers will already recognise many of these etymologies, and LEXICON URTHUS is no substitute for the Oxford English Dictionary and a good saints dictionary.

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