

Thoughts on Undines, and other ramblings

The Urth list — 21 messages, 10 voices, 15 Jun 2002

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Andrew Reeves — 15 Jun 2002, 17:58

I'm quite thrilled to have discovered this group, and as such, I'm going to air a few more thoughts that have nagged me concerning the main villains of the Briah universe, the Undines. First off, I'm trying to make a list of what we do know about them:

- They are basically shaped like homo sapiens that never stop growing and can breathe under water.

- They've been on Urth since around the time of Typhon, and were likely brought by Scylla (can't remember her human name, and the book's not handy) or an associate of hers, as related in Jonas's tale.

- There appears to be at least one on Blue.

- They're really into high tech and enslaving humanity (viz. Baldanders and the Ascians). They are the brains behind the Ascians.

- They can project their mental presences.

All of the above still leave a whole lot of questions. The first of these is the rather blas=E9 attitudes of Silkhorn and Severian near the end of their series when actually meeting a representative of them. When Severian meets Juturna underwater (if it's not a dream), he basically gives her a tip of the hat and moves on. Later, when Silkhorn projects to Urth, he basically says, "Hey, I really dig Seawrack, tell me how to find her." Now, both of these men are Gene Wolfe's attempt to draw saintly, Christian figures. I would think that such figures would have severe reservations about the way they dealt with such beings. Of course, Silkhorn doesn't really know the pedigree of our giants, but I would think that the first thing Severian would do when he realized that he has Godlike powers would be to try and find Erebus, Abaia et al and finish them for good so that humankind could begin to climb back from the level of hunter-gatherers without interference. But then again, since the Green Man doesn't indicate that Abaia and Erebus are a problem (and forms non-Maoist sentences), perhaps someone else has.

That also brings to mind the whole question of the Commonwealth's force projection capability. By the age of Severian they're stuck at a fairly primitive state, but in the early days of the Autarchy, especially around the time of Ymar, they probably had the tech level to go after the giants in the water. The other question of tech level and undines is that there seem to be some indication that Urth under Typhon might have had the capability of superluminal travel, since there's a really good chance that Scylla went to Blue and brought back the undines. If that's the case, why would the Whorl move at sublight speeds? Or am I reading too much into the text?

One final ramble: By the end of our series, Severian is but one AU from the source of his power, and is probably going to have a hard time dying, even of old age. He may grow really, really

bored.

Just rambling.

Andrew

Alice K. Turner — 17 Jun 2002, 03:22 · follows Andrew Reeves

From newbie Andrew:

First, welcome, and prepare to be attacked at once! (Or slimed, heh heh.)

I'm quite thrilled to have discovered this group, and as such, I'm going to air a few more thoughts that have nagged me concerning the main villains of the Briah universe, the Undines. First off, I'm trying to make a list of what we do know about them:

They are **not** the main villains of the Briah universe.

-They are basically shaped like homo sapiens that never stop growing and can breathe under water.

They are shaped like women. They are taken from German mythology: water nymphs. The original Undine was created without a soul, married a mortal, had a baby, gained a soul and its attendant woes. (Andersen took off on this in his original "Little Mermaid" story, as I'm sure you'll recognize.) It's Baldanders that never stops growing; there's no indication that the undines don't have a limit, though it's a large one.

-They've been on Urth since around the time of Typhon, and were likely brought by Scylla (can't remember her human name, and the book's not handy) or an associate of hers, as related in Jonas's tale.

Not necessarily; they seem to have resources of their own ("swimming between the stars").

-There appears to be at least one on Blue.

The Mother is not an undine, if that's what you're referring to. Nor is Seawrack. If there is an undine on Blue, I don't recall her, though one could turn up--see above.

-They're really into high tech and enslaving humanity (viz. Baldanders and the Ascians). They are the brains behind the Ascians.

No, no and no. Erebus and Abaia, different entities entirely, perform those functions. There's a hint that the undines are handmaidens or concubines to them, but it could be myth and I doubt that it could be proved. The undines seem mostly hedonistic, with infrequent moments of conscience. Some of them (Idas) are clearly in the enemy camp. But Gunnie attacks Sev too!

-They can project their mental presences.

Well, sort of. That also goes back to German myth and the Rhinemaidens (like the Greek sirens, carelessly destructive). But so can a lot of other beings on Urth.

All of the above still leave a whole lot of questions. The first of these is the rather blasé attitudes of Silkhorn and Severian near the end of their series when actually meeting a representative of them.

When Severian meets Juturna underwater (if it's not a dream), he basically gives her a tip of the hat and moves on. Later, when Silkhorn projects to Urth, he basically says, "Hey, I really dig Seawrack, tell me how to find her." Now, both of these men are Gene Wolfe's attempt to draw saintly, Christian figures. I would think that such figures would have severe reservations about the way they dealt with such beings. Of course, Silkhorn doesn't really know the pedigree of our giants, but I would think that the first thing Severian would do when he realized that he has Godlike powers would be to try and find Erebus, Abaia et al and finish them for good so that humankind could begin to climb back from the level of hunter-gatherers without interference. But then again, since the Green Man doesn't indicate that Abaia and Erebus are a problem (and forms non-Maoist sentences), perhaps someone else has.

Sev's not so saintly. And his powers are limited--he can't go around blasting Ascian armies like one of Yaweh's apparatchik thugs...er, sorry, Ratty, avenging angels. And I would imagine they're well protected. It is definitely an untied thread to the first series though: as water-bound beings I would think they'd be thrilled with the drowned Ushas.

That also brings to mind the whole question of the Commonwealth's force projection capability. By the age of Severian they're stuck at a fairly primitive state, but in the early days of the Autarchy, especially around the time of Ymar, they probably had the tech level to go after the giants in the water. The other question of tech level and undines is that there seem to be some indication that Urth under Typhon might have had the capability of superluminal travel, since there's a really good chance that Scylla went to Blue and brought back the undines. If that's the case, why would the Whorl move at sublight speeds? Or am I reading too much into the text?

Don't think Scylla did any such thing. Undines however *can* swim through the universe, and time, à la Brook Madrigot. Human spaceships must obey the laws of our universe, however. For some reason, this all makes sense to me.

One final ramble: By the end of our series, Severian is but one AU from the source of his power, and is probably going to have a hard time dying, even of old age. He may grow really, really bored.

What is an AU?

-alga

Andy Robertson — 17 Jun 2002, 04:32 · follows Alice K. Turner

----- Original Message -----

From: "Alice K. Turner" <aturner6 at nyc.rr.com>

One final ramble: By the end of our series, Severian is but one AU from the source of his power, and is probably going to have a hard time dying, even of old age. He may grow really, really bored.

What is an AU?

An Astronomical Unit. The average distance between the Earth and the Sun. 93,000,000 miles and some odd. It is very easy to determine the size of the solar system in terms of this unit, with a simple telescope/sextant, but it was actually not so easy to determine exactly what this unit was until echo-radar ranging of the planets was available .

hartshorn

Josh Geller — 17 Jun 2002, 05:00 · follows Andy Robertson

On Sun, 16 Jun 2002, Alice K. Turner wrote:
And Someone Else wrote:

I'm quite thrilled to have discovered this group, and as such, I'm going to air a few more thoughts that have nagged me concerning the main villains of the Briah universe, the Undines. First off, I'm trying to make a list of what we do know about them:

They are **not** the main villains of the Briah universe.

I'm not sure why the Briah universe should be so-called, except to say that Mr. Wolfe's qabalah, despite his many and other known excellent qualities, is certainly no better than it ought to be.

-They are basically shaped like homo sapiens that never stop growing and can breathe under water.

They are shaped like women.

There are those who say that women are female H. Sapiens.

I've heard arguments one way and another, and I have to say that I basically agree, though some of the arguments are strong arguments.

Perhaps mere circumspection keeps the undine's menfolk away when they are flirting with Severian.

There's a hint that the undines are handmaidens or concubines to them, but it could be myth and I doubt that it could be proved.

Juturna or one of her buds does tell Severian that this is the case. Severian does lie, occasionally (or so he claims), and certainly has his own point of view of most things, but I think that he generally tells the truth as he sees it. So the dream might be false, or Juturna (or whoever) might be lying.

...[B]oth [Severian and Silkhorn] are Gene Wolfe's attempt to draw saintly, Christian figures.

You should read some of the histories of some of the saints.

I find St. Olaf's story to be particularly interesting, if only because we have more than just the Church's story in his case (he figures in a number of Icelandic sagas).

Anyway, you don't need to be of particularly saintly character to be a Christian saint (though no one would deny that it can be helpful): you just have to perform two demonstrable miracles after you are Dead.

Sev's not so saintly.

See above.

And his powers are limited--he can't go around blasting Ascian armies like one of Yaweh's apparatchik thugs...er, sorry, Ratty, avenging angels. And I would imagine they're well protected. It is definitely an untied thread to the first series though: as water-bound beings I would think they'd be thrilled with the drowned Ushas.

Maybe someday (I would prefer after the third Latro novel) Mr. Wolfe will write a second Dead Severian book (if we take UotNS as the first).

One final ramble: By the end of our series, Severian is but one AU from the source of his power, and is probably going to have a hard time dying, even of old age. He may grow really, really bored.

What is an AU?

In modern astronomy it is the average distance separating Earth from the Sun, if you go in for that sort of thing.

J.

Andrew Reeves — 17 Jun 2002, 12:27 · follows Josh Geller

"Alice K. Turner" wrote:

From newbie Andrew:

First, welcome, and prepare to be attacked at once! (Or slimed, heh heh.)

That's the fun of mailing lists and NG's, is it not? :)

They are *not* the main villains of the Briah universe.

My mistake. Perhaps I ought to have called them the main villains on Urth, the folks who are going for the enslavement of mankind.

-They are basically shaped like homo sapiens that never stop growing and can breathe under water.

They are shaped like women. They are taken from German mythology: water nymphs. The original Undine was created without a soul, married a mortal, had a baby, gained a soul and its attendant woes. (Andersen took off on this in his original "Little Mermaid" story, as I'm sure you'll recognize.) It's Baldanders that never stops growing; there's no indication that the undines don't have a limit, though it's a large one.

-They've been on Urth since around the time of Typhon, and were likely brought by Scylla (can't remember her human name, and the book's not handy) or an associate of hers, as related in Jonas's tale.

Not necessarily; they seem to have resources of their own ("swimming between the stars").

I'm aware that they have greater capabilities than movement through physical space, but there's still some connection between them and Typhon's daughter that I (with very few readings under my belt) cannot quite piece together. Did Jonas's story mention whether the beans will stop growing?

-There appears to be at least one on Blue.

The Mother is not an undine, if that's what you're referring to. Nor is Seawrack. If there is an undine on Blue, I don't recall her, though one could turn up--see above.

Maybe the other is not an Undine per se, but she definitely has some relationship to Abaia, Erebus, and Typhon's sprat, otherwise Silkhorn wouldn't have needed to make the trip to Urth to begin with.

-They're really into high tech and enslaving humanity (viz. Baldanders and the Ascians). They are the brains behind the Ascians.

No, no and no. Erebus and Abaia, different entities entirely, perform those functions. There's a hint that the undines are handmaidens or concubines to them, but it could be myth and I doubt that it could be proved. The undines

seem mostly hedonistic, with infrequent moments of conscience. Some of them (Idas) are clearly in the enemy camp. But Gunnie attacks Sev too!

My mistake. How about wording it, "Erebus, Abaia, and their Undine minions?"

All of the above still leave a whole lot of questions. The first of these is the rather blasé attitudes of Silkhorn and Severian near the end of their series when actually meeting a representative of them.

When Severian meets Juturna underwater (if it's not a dream), he basically gives her a tip of the hat and moves on. Later, when Silkhorn projects to Urth, he basically says, "Hey, I really dig Seawrack, tell me how to find her." Now, both of these men are Gene Wolfe's attempt to draw saintly, Christian figures. I would think that such figures would have severe reservations about the way they dealt with such beings. Of course, Silkhorn doesn't really know the pedigree of our giants, but I would think that the first thing Severian would do when he realized that he has Godlike powers would be to try and find Erebus, Abaia et al and finish them for good so that humankind could begin to climb back from the level of hunter-gatherers without interference. But then again, since the Green Man doesn't indicate that Abaia and Erebus are a problem (and forms non-Maoist sentences), perhaps someone else has.

Sev's not so saintly. And his powers are limited--he can't go around blasting Ascian armies like one of Yaweh's apparatchik thugs...er, sorry, Ratty, avenging angels. And I would imagine they're well protected. It is definitely an untied thread to the first series though: as water-bound beings I would think they'd be thrilled with the drowned Ushas.

That always troubled me as well. Yeah, I know Sev can't do anything like shoot energy bolts, but he really ought to try and do *something*.

Don't think Scylla did any such thing.

So who *was* the girl in Jonas's story? And what then were the beans? It always seemed to me to fit neatly in with the rest of the cycle, especially after we found out that there's definitely a relationship between Blue's Mother and Erebus and Abaia.

Undines however *can* swim through the universe, and time, a la Brook Madrigot. Human spaceships must obey the laws of our universe, however. For some reason, this all makes sense to me.

Yabbut, again, Jonas's tale plus events of _Short Sun_ indicate that *something* is going on between that bratty daughter of Typhon's and the great monsters in the sea. What it is, I don't know, but it's there, and *seems* to fit in well w/ Jonas's tale.

One final ramble: By the end of our series, Severian is but one AU from the source of his power, and is probably going to have a hard time dying, even of old age. He may grow really, really bored.

What is an AU?

Astronomical Unit. The distance between earth and the sun.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 17 Jun 2002, 16:35 · follows Andrew Reeves

Okay, some of this has been replied-to, but I think perhaps less clearly than could be desired (given Andrew's follow-up). Andrew

Reeves, then, wrote:

-[Undines] are basically shaped like homo sapiens that never stop growing and can breathe under water.

The undines, as near as can be told, _are_ homo sapiens -- they are more advanced cases of the process to which Baldanders has been subjecting himself.

-They've been on Urth since around the time of Typhon, and were likely brought by Scylla (can't remember her human name, and the book's not handy) or an associate of hers, as related in Jonas's tale.

Well, I presume that by "they" you mean not the undines themselves but their masters, Erebus, Scylla, and Abaia (possibly others?).

-There appears to be at least one on Blue.

The Mother appears to be of the same race as, at least, the aquatic Scylla of Urth.

(We need a generic name for these creatures ... "space-going water monsters" seems a bit not quite the thing, if you know what I mean. I'll use Scylloids for now. I'm sure one of the clever folk out there will have a better name.)

-They're really into high tech and enslaving humanity (viz. Baldanders and the Ascians). They are the brains behind the Ascians.

Again, yes, the Scylloids appear to be the brains behind the Group of Seventeen which appears to rule Ascia. It is far less clear what the relationship is between Baldanders and the Scylloids -- he seems to be in a very real sense a self-made man; and the Hieros seem to deal with him peacefully, as I suspect they do not with the Scylloidules.

-They can project their mental presences.

I don't see this as at all clear. How do you mean?

All of the above still leave a whole lot of questions. The first of these is the rather blasé attitudes of Silkhorn and Severian near the end of their series when actually meeting a representative of them. When Severian meets Juturna underwater (if it's not a dream), he basically gives her a tip of the hat and moves on.

Well, she's saved his life on at least one occasion; what do you expect him to do, smite her with Divine Wrath [tm, pat. pending]?

Later, when Silkhorn projects to Urth, he basically says, "Hey, I really dig Seawrack, tell me how to find her." Now, both of these men are Gene Wolfe's attempt to draw saintly, Christian figures. I would think that such figures would have severe reservations about the way they dealt with such beings.

Now, the Narrator doesn't encounter an undine, as I recall, but Scylla-of-Urth. And what possible reason would he have for "severe reservations" (other than fear) in dealing with a being which he, a native of the _Whorl_ transplanted to Blue, perceives as a goddess? That is, he perceives her (correctly, as I think we pretty-much-all agree) as being of the same general kind as the Mother on Blue; and the Mother, he perceives as one of the gods of Blue, of the Vanished People. Absent a direct revelation that there is no God but the Outsider -- and, despite Silk's rapture that contains the line "I know that You are the only god for me," neither Silk, Horn, nor the Narrator ever appears to receive such a revelation -- there is no reason for the Narrator to think of these beings either as false gods or as intrinsically evil; they are, to him, perilous only as gods are, necessarily, perilous to mortals.

For Wolfe, if he is drawing "saintly, Christian figures" is, in all cases, drawing "realistic," human and flawed, pictures of such figures -- and, what is more, drawing them as very much the products of their culture and upbringing. Severian ultimately transcends his upbringing as a torturer; Silk at least partially transcends his upbringing as a polytheist. Whether the Narrator transcends anything but himself is unclear to me, at this rather

early stage of study.

I would think that the first thing Severian would do when he realized that he has Godlike powers would be to try and find Erebus, Abaia et al and finish them for good

It is not at all clear that Severian's "powers" are _that_ "godlike." I don't recall any examples of him blasting anything with bolts from his fingertips or any such thing. His "powers" seem to be primarily over himself, and secondarily over time. Could he, perhaps, use the latter against Abaia and company? Perhaps, but I'm not at all clear how, given their essentially ageless nature.

On the other hand ...

But then again, since the Green Man doesn't indicate that Abaia and Erebus are a problem (and forms non-Maoist sentences), perhaps someone else has.

Indeed, possibly the rackings of the Urth in the passage of the New Sun has done for them -- consider, if the depth in which Abaia lay were suddenly raised-up as a continent, what would be the effect on Abaia? His rotting corpse would also provide a great deal of fertilizer ... though it would make the main part of that continent pretty-much uninhabitable for some time. Perhaps, then, there are in fact only a few people left on a few islands, and they have to live there while the corpses of the Scylloids, rather like that of Ymir, provide the new-risen continents with the stuff of life, while these corpses deteriorate, their bones become mountains, and forests and such grow in the new soil. Perhaps: it does seem a rather Lupine approach, now I think about it ...

That also brings to mind the whole question of the Commonwealth's force projection capability. By the age of Severian they're stuck at a fairly primitive state, but in the early days of the Autarchy, especially around the time of Ymar, they probably had the tech level to go after the giants in the water.

Maybe ... and maybe not; the Scylloids seem to be very advanced beings indeed. Further, it may not have been as clear at the time of Ymar that they were a threat as it is by Severian's time.

The other question of tech level and undines is that there seem to be some indication that Urth under Typhon might have had the capability of superluminal travel, since there's a really good chance that Scylla went to Blue and brought back the undines. If that's the case, why would the Whorl move at sublight speeds? Or am I reading too much into the text?

By the time of Typhon, the culture and technology of Urth is already well-advanced in its decadence and decline. Typhon has access to some FTL transport but not to the technology required to build it.

Alice K. Turner — 17 Jun 2002, 17:01 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Idle Idas question:

Does she ever give her real name? It ought to be a water-nymph's name, like Jurturna (spirit of Lake Diuturna). Idas is a man's name; he was one of a princely pair of twins coeval with, but not nearly as famous as, Castor and Pollux.

-alga

Robert Borski — 17 Jun 2002, 22:54 · follows Alice K. Turner

The landbound Blattid arguing:

"The undines, as near as can be told, are homo sapiens -- they are more advanced cases of the process to which Baldanders has been subjecting himself."

Not sure I agree with this.

For starters the names "Juturna" and "Idas" derive from classical mythology, and if we adhere to Wolfe's rule of names--a rule I believe to be inviolable--such beings are aliens. Contrast this with "Baldanders," which comes to us from Borges via Grimmelshausen--quite another kettle of fish in my opinion.

There's also evidence that they experience time in a direction opposite to ours. In URTH at least, when Severian asks Juturna if she remembers saving him as a boy, she responds, "No. It hasn't yet happened. It will, because you spoke."

Idas, I've also argued before, may well be the daughter of Baldanders. Severian's first guess is that she's ten years old, which would make her the right age if Baldanders mated with Juturna after the Piteous Gate incident. (This would also help explain why Baldanders can breathe underwater--Severian is offered the same gift for mating with Juturna. "You will breathe--by our gift--as easily as you breathe the thin, weak wind here.") Idas also proudly admits to burning the letter from Malrubius proclaiming Severian to be the true Autarch of Urth--something which may have especially grated upon her father, since he too was once in the running for the New Sun candidacy. And lastly, Idas is a nested name--save for one letter, being derivable from Baldanders--a pattern Wolfe uses over and over and over in BotNS to confer relatedness.

I looked in vain for a Saint Idas, since she's attempting to pass as human (this would put her in the same category as Palaemon and Paeon, both of whom possess names that have both saintly and mythic exemplars), but the closest I could find was Ida, although my various dictionaries of saints are far from complete.

Also argued here, but never accepted, is the notion that Blue's Mother is an underwater godling meant to host the eventually downloaded Scylla--just as the other godlings were designed to host Pas, Echidna, and various sprats once planetfall had been achieved.

Robert Borski

Alice K. Turner — 18 Jun 2002, 01:36 · follows Robert Borski

From: "Robert Borski" <rborski at charter.net>

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"The undines, as near as can be told, are homo sapiens -- they are more advanced cases of the process to which Baldanders has been subjecting himself."

Not sure I agree with this.

Definitely don't agree with this--i.e. agree with RB.

For starters the names "Juturna" and "Idas" derive from classical mythology,
and if we adhere to Wolfe's rule of names--a rule I believe to be inviolable--such beings are aliens. Contrast this with "Baldanders," which

comes to us from Borges via Grimmelshausen--quite another kettle of fish in my opinion.

Quite correct, and see my earlier comments on undines and Rhinemaidens.

There's also evidence that they experience time in a direction opposite to ours. In URTH at least, when Severian asks Juturna if she remembers saving him as a boy, she responds, "No. It hasn't yet happened. It will, because you spoke."

That's because, as a mythological creature, she has access to Brook Madrigot/corridors of time-traveling, not because she is living backward, as the hierodules do.

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I think this is nonsense, or, more politely, highly speculative. And Idas is not a nested name. His twin was Lynceas. All Idas means is " from or of Mt. Ida" (in Africa) which doesn't explain much. Ida as a female name is from a different tradition.

Also argued here, but never accepted, is the notion that Blue's Mother is an underwater godling meant to host the eventually downloaded Scylla--just as the other godlings were designed to host Pas, Echidna, and various sprats once planetfall had been achieved.

O heavens, what conceivable evidence is there for this?!!

-alga

Michael Straight — 18 Jun 2002, 01:54 · follows Alice K. Turner

On Mon, 17 Jun 2002, Robert Borski wrote:

Also argued here, but never accepted, is the notion that Blue's Mother is an underwater godling meant to host the eventually downloaded Scylla--just as the other godlings were designed to host Pas, Echidna, and various sprats once planetfall had been achieved.

Is Silk a godling? Surely Silk was the body planned for Pas, what with his near miraculous charisma. And the symmetry with Piaton is too good to ignore. (i.e. an intended host body turning the tables on Typhon).

-Rostrum

Josh Geller — 18 Jun 2002, 02:06 · follows Michael Straight

Ah! And Mint would be the body planned for what's-her-name, the war goddess.

And Mucor the spooky one.

J.

On Mon, 17 Jun 2002, Michael Straight wrote:

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-Rostrum

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Jeff Wilson — 19 Jun 2002, 06:20 · follows Josh Geller

From: "Alice K. Turner" <aturner6 at nyc.rr.com>

From newbie Andrew:

[Undine Discussion]

-They've been on Urth since around the time of Typhon, and were likely brought by Scylla (can't remember her human name, and the book's not handy) or an associate of hers, as related in Jonas's tale.

Not necessarily; they seem to have resources of their own ("swimming between the stars").

See below.

-They're really into high tech and enslaving humanity (viz. Baldanders and the Ascians). They are the brains behind the Ascians.

No, no and no. Erebus and Abaia, different entities entirely, perform those functions. There's a hint that the undines are handmaidens or concubines to them, but it could be myth and I doubt that it could be proved. The undines seem mostly hedonistic, with infrequent moments of conscience. Some of them (Idas) are clearly in the enemy camp. But Gunnie attacks Sev too!

Juturna =says= she serves Abaia. But the Undines are absolutely not into high-tech gadgets, since they slosh around naked all the time. I think Andrew began to think of all the various dark lords' minions as Undines, since Juturna is very prominently their servant.

Don't think Scylla did any such thing. Undines however *can* swim through the universe, and time, a la Brook Madrigot. Human spaceships must obey the laws of our universe, however. For some reason, this all makes sense to me.

Whoa there! =One= of them, Juturna, is shown to do something like this. This may or may not be her own ability like Severian and the Green Man, but it may be something granted by Abaia,

like Master Ash's house is powered by Erebus or somebody.

Or it may be a skill their minions acquire in order to follow the paths laid down by those same powerful beings. Juturna might only be able to point into the fourth dimension while Severian is there. Idas certainly doesn't have the ability to flee in any but the usual way.

Jeff Wilson

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"If your SecOp can see you, so can the enemy." -Cpt Law

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Jeff Wilson — 19 Jun 2002, 06:38 · follows Jeff Wilson

From:

"Robert Borski" <rborski at charter.net>

"The undines, as near as can be told, _are_ homo sapiens -- they are more advanced cases of the process to which Baldanders has been subjecting himself."

Not sure I agree with this.

There is precedent, with the royal jelly of the exultants.

For starters the names "Juturna" and "Idas" derive from classical mythology, and if we adhere to Wolfe's rule of names--a rule I believe to be inviolable--such beings are aliens. Contrast this with "Baldanders," which comes to us from Borges via Grimmelshausen--quite another kettle of fish in my opinion.

This would make Typhon an alien. While he =is= a tyrant from another star, he's should be human as he is descended from emigrants of Urth stock.

Idas, I've also argued before, may well be the daughter of Baldanders. Severian's first guess is that she's ten years old, which would make her the right age if Baldanders mated with Juturna after the Piteous Gate incident.

I don't think literal human-alien hybrids "fit" the BotNS. Are there any other examples of unaided cross-species mating?

(This would also help explain why Baldanders can breathe underwater--Severian is offered the same gift for mating with Juturna. "You will breathe--by our gift--as easily as you breathe the thin, weak wind here.")

But Baldanders is already established as being able to modify himself to suit; he doesn't necessarily need their gift.

Jeff Wilson

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"If your SecOp can see you, so can the enemy." -Cpt Law

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Robert Borski — 19 Jun 2002, 17:25 · follows Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson quoting me first, then appending:

"For starters the names "Juturna" and "Idas" derive from classical mythology, and if we adhere to Wolfe's rule of names--a rule I believe to be inviolable--such beings are aliens. Contrast this

with "Baldanders," which comes to us from Borges via Grimmelshausen--quite another kettle of fish in my opinion."

"This would make Typhon an alien. While he =is= a tyrant from another star, he should be human as he is descended from emigrants of Urth stock."

But again, unless you're willing to attribute this to nomenclatural sloppiness on the part of GW, the name "Typhon" does indicate he is an alien. After all, aliens do not travel to Urth, decide they need an Urth-friendly name, and then consult a book on mythology as opposed to a book of saints. Similarly for new parents of a human child; they do not know their own names derive from saintly exemplars. This is because the saint/human-mythic/alien naming stratagem is an order imposed from without, by the author. Either you believe it's fast and true, or you don't; if the latter, then there's not much point in arguing further since we both disagree about the convention. If the former, however, we must further account for several possible contradictions; Typhon bears an alien name, for example, as does Ossipago (seemingly an automaton) and Ceryx (who comes across as more human than alien); then there's Palaemon and Paeon, both of whom have saintly and mythic exemplars. But how can they be both saints and aliens? Resolving these contradictions, in my opinion, is very important to a true understanding of tbotNS--as I've indicated before in a number of published essays (for which see further gloss).

What I call the nested names rule is equally important: i.e., where a second name is, if not entirely, derivable from a parent name, requiring only the addition of a single letter--such interrelatedness being Wolfe's way of conferring the two are somehow related, either literally or figuratively (or in some cases making both individuals the same person).

Mindful of Buck Mulligan's comment about Stephen Dedalus' theory about Hamlet ("He proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father"), I will not subject you to my various interpretations of how one individual is related to another, but I will append my list of nested names. If you know of any others, please feel free to add to it--I doubt the list is exhaustive.

1. Severian/Severa
2. Severian/Inire
3. Severian/Agia (+g)
4. Agilus/Agia
5. Thecla/Thea
6. Camoena/Cumaeon (+u)
7. Katharine/Catherine (+c)
8. Catherine/Carina
9. Palaemon/Paeon
10. Burgundofara/Gunnie (+ie) [The lone exception to the one letter addition, but hardly arguable.]

11. Peryton/Purn (+u)
12. Tzadkiel/Zak
13. Domnicellae/Domnina
14. Nicarete/Thea (+h)
15. Pelagia/Agia
16. Baldanders/Idas (+i)
17. Famulimus/famula [famula=Merryn]
18. Cyriaca/Cyby (+b)
19. Dorcas/Casdoe (+e)
20. Piaton/Pia
21. Melito/Miles (+s)
22. peryton/pteriope (+i)
23. Meschiane/Meschia

Robert Borski (also known as rik stroeb--at least in various usenet circles)

Andrew Reeves — 20 Jun 2002, 00:34 · follows Robert Borski

Jeff Wilson wrote:

Juturna =says= she serves Abaia. But the Undines are absolutely not into high-tech gadgets, since they slosh around naked all the time. I think Andrew began to think of all the various dark lords' minions as Undines, since Juturna is very prominently their servant.

Yeah, I was just using "Undine" for Erebus and Abaia on down to Idas, when I really ought to have made a distinction.

Alice K. Turner — 20 Jun 2002, 01:31 · follows Andrew Reeves

From Jeff Wilon:

Juturna =says= she serves Abaia. But the Undines are absolutely not into high-tech gadgets, since they slosh around naked all the time. I think Andrew began to think of all the various dark lords' minions as Undines, since Juturna is very prominently their servant.

From me:

Don't think Scylla did any such thing. Undines however *can* swim through the universe, and time, a la Brook Madrigot. Human spaceships must obey the laws of our universe, however. For some reason, this all makes sense to me.

From him:

Whoa there! =One= of them, Juturna, is shown to do something like this. This may or may not be her own ability like Severian and the Green Man, but it may be something granted by Abaia, like Master Ash's house is powered by Erebus or somebody.

Or it may be a skill their minions acquire in order to follow the paths laid down by those same powerful beings. Juturna might only be able to point into the fourth dimension while Severian is there. Idas certainly doesn't have the ability to flee in any but the usual way.

Juturna is our sole adult acquaintance with this group of the Other People and I think she has to count for something representative in a novel..Her talents seem thoroughly mythological to me, not "granted by Abaia," and extremely feminine in a not entirely PC sense.. Idas is possibly only 10 years old, and in disguise--not a good contra-example.

-alga

-alga

James Wynn — 19 Jun 2002, 21:54 · follows Alice K. Turner

Robert Borski wrote:

But again, unless you're willing to attribute this to nomenclatural sloppiness on the part of GW, the name "Typhon" _does_ indicate he is an alien...Either you believe it's fast and true, or you don't.<<<

Even if your assignments are true, why is it a given that Typhon bears an *alien* name (presuming "alien" means a non-human species). Why could GW have not assigned mythological names to beings on Urth who are from other planets, and mythological monster names for other-worldly invaders of Urth? Of course, if yours or this alternate nomenclature is a true Rosetta Stone, then Nessus should be an alien being.

Actually, I'm unaware of any reason not presume all the beings (regardless of power) are not either humans who have extended their physical form and power through technology OR are whose existence, like the Hieros, is the result of human activity (ala "Tracking Song").

Can you elaborate on why even beings such as Erebus and Skylla could not be human?

-- Crush

Jerry Friedman — 20 Jun 2002, 21:32 · follows James Wynn

--- Robert Borski <rborski at charter.net> wrote:

Jeff Wilson quoting me first, then appending:

"For starters the names "Juturna" and "Idas" derive from classical mythology, and if we adhere to Wolfe's rule of names--a rule I believe to be inviolable--such beings are aliens. Contrast this with "Baldanders," which comes to us from Borges via Grimmelshausen--quite another kettle of fish in my opinion."

"This would make Typhon an alien. While he =is= a tyrant from another star, he should be human as he is descended from emigrants of Urth stock."

But again, unless you're willing to attribute this to nomenclatural sloppiness on the part of GW, the name "Typhon" _does_ indicate he is an alien. After all, aliens do not travel to Urth, decide they need an Urth-friendly name, and then consult a book on mythology as opposed to a book of saints. Similarly for new parents of a human child; they do not know their own names derive from saintly exemplars. This is because the saint/human-mythic/alien naming stratagem is an order imposed from without, by the author.

Not necessarily. As Dan'l reminded us, "saint" doesn't go with "human" but with "citizen of the Commonwealth". Also, in some sense it's imposed by the author, of course, but maybe as a custom or even law of the Commonwealth. Maybe there's a certain list of names that everyone must be given. (I think they're the names of the "eponyms", but Mantis, at least, interprets the eponyms another way.) Thus Baldanders's name may not be a "wink" from Wolfe to the reader, unrecognized by any character, to say that Baldanders is in a different category from the other characters. It may mean that he's an immigrant to the Commonwealth, or that he's changed his name in keeping with his removal of himself from the ordinary condition. (This might justify the innkeeper's "pretended error", though it really doesn't need justification.) A difficulty with this suggestion is that Severian never comments on whether or not names are customary or familiar.

[snip a lot]

Mindful of Buck Mulligan's comment about Stephen Dedalus' theory about Hamlet ("He proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father"), I will not subject you to my various interpretations of how one individual is related to another, but I will append my list of nested names. If you know of any others, please feel free to add to it--I doubt the list is exhaustive.

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21. Melito/Miles (+s)
22. peryton/pteroiope (+i)
23. Meschiane/Meschia

You missed one that may have simply been too obvious, and was mentioned in this thread: Diuturna/Juturna. Also Cyriaca/Ymar, Merryn/Ymar, Meschiane/Thea, Hethor/Thea, Hethor/Roche, Vodalus/Talos, Jolenta/Talos, Jolenta/Ultan, Jolenta/Jonas, Squanto/Jonas, Squanto/Ultan, Kimleesoong/Miles, Kimleesoong/Melito, Kimleesoong/Lomer, and Loyal to the Group of Seventeen/Mannea. If you're allowed to use a letter more than once that was in the first name once, as in Cyriaca/Cyby and peryton/pteroiope, then you have Abdiesus/Erebus, Abdiesus/Abaia, Barbatus/Abaia, Malrubius/Abaia, Hethor/Drotte, and many more. Ash can be extracted from many names (because he's the descendant of many of the characters?), as can Eata.

Imagine the amount of care Wolfe would have had to take to avoid putting in any connections of this type that he didn't mean!

Robert Borski (also known as rik stroeb--at least in various usenet circles)

Jay Fred forgot Morwenna/Lomer and Melito/Lomer.

James Wynn — 20 Jun 2002, 14:24 · follows Jerry Friedman

I wrote:

Even if your assignments are true, why is it a given that Typhon bears an *alien* name (presuming "alien" means a non-human species). Why could GW have not assigned mythological names to beings on Urth who are from other planets, and mythological monster names for other-worldly invaders of Urth?

Of course, if yours or this alternate nomenclature is a true Rosetta Stone, then Nessus should be an alien being.<<<

I don't think I was clear in this paragraph that I was proposing the possibility that all the aliens are human or human creations (in the case of the Hieros, creations of human creations).

-- Crush

Robert Borski — 21 Jun 2002, 17:18 · follows James Wynn

Jay Fred appending the following long list of nested names:

You missed one that may have simply been too obvious, and was mentioned in this thread: Diuturna/Juturna. Also Cyriaca/Ymar, Merryn/Ymar, Meschiane/Thea, Hethor/Thea, Hethor/Roche, Vodalus/Talos, Jolenta/Talos, Jolenta/Ultan, Jolenta/Jonas, Squanto/Jonas, Squanto/Ultan, Kimleesoong/Miles, Kimleesoong/Melito, Kimleesoong/Lomer, and Loyal to the Group of Seventeen/Mannea. If you're allowed to use a letter more than once that was in the first name once, as in Cyriaca/Cyby and peryton/pterope, then you have Abdiesus/Erebus, Abdiesus/Abaia, Barbatus/Abaia, Malrubius/Abaia, Hethor/Drotte, and many more. Ash can be extracted from many names (because he's the descendant of many of the characters?), as can Eata.

Jay Fred forgot Morwenna/Lomer and Melito/Lomer.

Hokey smokes! That's a long list--for which I commend and thank thee.

Some preliminary thoughts.

I deliberately did not include place names in the list because I was working exclusively with character names; besides Diuturna/Juturna, there's also Famulorum/famula and Ossipago/Os. Whether you see a connection between place name and character--in other words, are these nested clues?--remains for each individual reader to decide. (I've already commented on the Famulorum and Os connections in one of my NYRSF essays.)

Given that tBotNS contains over 400 named characters, it's also inevitable that there should be a number of paired names that fall into the category of nested names (perhaps cryptonyms is a more descriptive word). Obviously, not all of them can be valid--so the problem becomes one of postulating relationships between each set of names. I can do this for all the names in my original list, and for a number of the pairs in yours. (E.g., Jolenta/Talos; Jolenta/Jonas; Kimleesoong/Lomer.) The rest I'm still thinking about--especially the Abdiesus pairs, given he seems a rather mysterious personage, with cyptonymic links to Abaia and Erebus (it's also possible that Thrax is Typhon's first capital, before he moves to Nessus).

In light of which, I'd like to rephrase my original postulate, making the Second Rule of Names to read something like the following: when a second name in the Book of the New Sun is, if not entirely derivable from the first, requiring only the addition of a single letter, Wolfe may be implying kinship of some sort, whether literal or figurative.

As for the First Rule of Names, see "Onomastics" in mantis's Lexicon Urthus, where the scheme is presented much more clearly than my own rather dim recall of it: i.e., "People of the Commonwealth are named after saints, or after mythological figures if they are allied with the Other People. The Other People and the Hierodules are named after mythological figures, non-Olympians and Olympians respectively." This definition will probably satisfy most who want to make Typhon and Talos human beings; petulantly, I don't. But again, even if we accept mantis's scheme as legit, it's interesting to contemplate the names that fall outside the box: Saintly/mythic figures Palaemon and Paeon; robotic alien Ossipago (whose name should be some variant of iron); necromancer Ceryx (unless Wolfe is implying he's allied with the Other People), and Father Inire, whose name is neither saintly nor mythic.

And as much fun as all these named characters are, consider the plethora of characters whose names are never given, but should be identifiable: Severian's paternal grandfather (the

boatman); "Jolenta"; the castellan Severian is taken to when he returns to Nessus as autarch (his limp identifies him with Severians' bloodline); and the two nameless wretches Severian visits in prison, especially the woman who nails children to furniture, and whom the Claw will not heal (she's compared to Baldanders and Jolenta--is she too unnaturally transformed?). To say nothing of many, many others.

Robert Borski

Jerry Friedman — 24 Jun 2002, 17:03 · follows Robert Borski

--- Robert Borski <rborski at charter.net> wrote:

Jay Fred appending the following long list of nested names:

You missed one that may have simply been too obvious, and was mentioned in this thread: Diuturna/Juturna. Also Cyriaca/Ymar,

...

Jay Fred forgot Morwenna/Lomer and Melito/Lomer.

Hokey smokes! That's a long list--for which I commend and thank thee.

A pleasure.

Some preliminary thoughts.

I deliberately did not include place names in the list because I was working

exclusively with character names; besides Diuturna/Juturna, there's also Famulorum/famula and Ossipago/Os.

Got it.

...

Given that tBotNS contains over 400 named characters,

I was wondering what the number was.

it's also inevitable

that there should be a number of paired names that fall into the category of

nested names (perhaps cryptonyms is a more descriptive word). Obviously, not

all of them can be valid--so the problem becomes one of postulating relationships between each set of names. I can do this for all the names in

my original list, and for a number of the pairs in yours. (E.g., Jolenta/Talos; Jolenta/Jonas; Kimleesoong/Lomer.) The rest I'm still thinking about--especially the Abdiesus pairs, given he seems a rather mysterious personage, with cyptonymic links to Abaia and Erebus (it's also

possible that Thrax is Typhon's first capital, before he moves to Nessus).

In that case, don't overlook Abdiesus/Eusebia.

In light of which, I'd like to rephrase my original postulate, making the

Second Rule of Names to read something like the following: when a second name in the Book of the New Sun is, if not entirely derivable from the first, requiring only the addition of a single letter, Wolfe may be implying

kinship of some sort, whether literal or figurative.

I think that's a distinct improvement.

As for the First Rule of Names, see "Onomastics" in mantis's Lexicon Urthus, where the scheme is presented much more clearly than my own rather dim recall of it: i.e., "People of the Commonwealth are named after saints, or after mythological figures if they are allied with the Other People. The Other People and the Hierodules are named after mythological figures, non-Olympians and Olympians respectively." This definition will probably satisfy most who want to make Typhon and Talos human beings; petulantly, I don't. But again, even if we accept mantis's scheme as legit, it's interesting to contemplate the names that fall outside the box: Saintly/mythic figures Palaemon and Paeon; robotic alien Ossipago (whose name should be some variant of iron); necromancer Ceryx (unless Wolfe is implying he's allied with the Other People), and Father Inire, who name is neither saintly nor mythic.

Good heavens, who are the Other People? And what are the mythological references for Barbatus ("bearded", right? My Penstemon barbatus is blooming spectacularly right now), Famulimus, and Inire?

Talos is certainly not a human being in the sense of "born of man and woman", right? But I don't see why Typhon shouldn't be.

And as much fun as all these named characters are, consider the plethora of characters whose names are never given, but should be identifiable: Severian's paternal grandfather (the boatman); "Jolenta";

Why don't you think Jolenta is her real name?

the castellan
Severian is taken to when he returns to Nessus as autarch (his limp identifies him with Severians' bloodline); and the two nameless wretches Severian visits in prison, especially the woman who nails children to furniture, and whom the Claw will not heal (she's compared to Baldanders and Jolenta--is she too unnaturally transformed?).

Or just not fully human?

To say nothing of many, many others.

Many, many.

Jerry Friedman