

Dorcas (was: The mystery of the image of an astronaut cleaned by Rudesind)

The Urth list — 23 messages, 7 voices, 09 Jul 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5656>

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Tony Ellis — 09 Jul 2010, 18:33

James Wynn wrote (of the Dorcas-grandmother puzzle):

I remember when the grandmother theory was posed. There was no more textual evidence for it than this Hairy Inire theory. The only reason it's not sitting on the "Half-baked Theory" pile today is because Wolfe uncharacteristically confirmed it to a questioner.

and

This "transparent" puzzle was only understood some 20 years after the book was published. I'm sure you would have been on the list explaining it a week after the SotT was published if you had had the opportunity.

Where are you getting this from? The Dorcas-is-Sev's-grandmother puzzle was understood by some of us as soon as we read Citadel of the Autarch back in the 1980s.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 09 Jul 2010, 18:35 · in reply to Tony Ellis

On Fri, Jul 9, 2010 at 11:33 AM, Tony Ellis <tonyellis69 at btoopenworld.com> wrote:
Where are you getting this from? The Dorcas-is-Sev's-grandmother puzzle was understood by some of us as soon as we read Citadel of the Autarch back in the 1980s.

Yep. In fact, I didn't even realize it was considered a "puzzle."

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

James Wynn — 09 Jul 2010, 18:47 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Where are you getting this from? The Dorcas-is-Sev's-grandmother puzzle was understood by some of us as soon as we read Citadel of the Autarch back in the 1980s.

Yep. In fact, I didn't even realize it was considered a "puzzle."

I don't know how it could have passed your notice that this issue was debated on this list in detail in the late 90s.

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James Wynn — 09 Jul 2010, 19:08 · in reply to James Wynn

On 7/9/2010 1:47 PM, James Wynn wrote:

Where are you getting this from? The Dorcas-is-Sev's-grandmother puzzle was understood by some of us as soon as we read Citadel of the Autarch back in the 1980s.

Yep. In fact, I didn't even realize it was considered a "puzzle."

I don't know how it could have passed your notice that this issue was debated on this list in detail in the late 90s.

I think should elaborate on this. Sure there were people who read tBotNS and said "Aha! Dorcas is Severian's grandmother." That Number Five's name could be derived from the text was lore from at least the late 70s.

One day perhaps it will revealed in no uncertain terms that Tussah is a clone of Typhon and that the narrator of the Book of the Short Sun is Neighbor. But if that happens, I'm not going to say "Ho ho! Why it was

obvious! What's the mystery here? I was saying that from the beginning!" The issue is whether Dorcas as Sev's grandmother was explained in terms that made it convincing to all.

I think simian references to Inire and Rudesind are significant, but I never paid them much mind before. Now they *do* appear obvious, don't they?

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António Pedro Marques — 09 Jul 2010, 19:40 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote (09-07-2010 20:08):

Sure there were people who read tBotNS and said "Aha! Dorcas is Severian's grandmother."

Unlike the usual 'Wolfean mysteries', the identity of Dorcas is hinted at using the classic literary devices one finds everywhere. I think this is what makes it so obvious and not really a 'puzzle'. I also think it makes your comparison misguided. Again, the debate with Dorcas isn't whether there is convincing evidence, it's more like whether the evidence isn't deceptive.

I think simian references to Inire and Rudesind are significant, but I never paid them much mind before. Now they *do* appear obvious, don't they?

I don't see what you mean. There are several simian references throughout the book. Lowering the bar for what constitutes a simian reference gets us even more. They do not apply only to Inire and Rudesind. They may tell us more about Severian and his society than the people being described. And it's funny that the fauna is so different yet simians are supposed to be just like our own. But again - what do you mean when you say they're obvious?

James Wynn — 09 Jul 2010, 20:01 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

I think simian references to Inire and Rudesind are significant, but I never paid them much mind before. Now they *do* appear obvious, don't they?

On 7/9/2010 2:40 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

But again - what do you mean when you say they're obvious?

I mean that they they are *clearly*, almost to the point of self-evidence, intended by the author to signal something. Or as Roy put it today in the initial post of the "Monkey Business" thread:

That some characters in the Urth Cycle are compared, in some way, with monkeys is beyond dispute. Since Wolfe wrote it, I think almost everyone will agree that the simian markers signify *something*.

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António Pedro Marques — 09 Jul 2010, 20:07 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote (09-07-2010 21:01):

I think simian references to Inire and Rudesind are significant, but I never paid them much mind before. Now they *do* appear obvious, don't they?

On 7/9/2010 2:40 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

But again - what do you mean when you say they're obvious?

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So you're saying that you didn't notice that they were there before? But your wording suggested you were aware of them. If you were, what has changed? I'm assuming it wasn't Ryan's mentioning them, since you say they are almost self-evident. What then?

James Wynn — 09 Jul 2010, 21:06 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

James Wynn said:

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On 7/9/2010 2:40 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

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James Wynn wrote (09-07-2010 21:01):

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On 7/9/2010 3:07 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

So you're saying that you didn't notice that they were there before?

But your wording suggested you were aware of them. If you were, what has changed? I'm assuming it wasn't Ryan's mentioning them, since you say they are almost self-evident. What then?

Look. English is not your first language. I get that. But you are allowing your debility to make an ass of you. Also, didn't you just chide me for trimming messages for emphasis? Why did you drop the quotation from Roy that I offered to further illustrate what I was saying?

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Tony Ellis — 09 Jul 2010, 21:53 · follows James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

The issue is whether Dorcas as Sev's grandmother was explained in terms that made it convincing to all.

No, the issue in this thread is whether it was explained in terms so *un*convincing that you were right to call it 'a half-baked theory' or 'only understood 20 years after the book was published'.

Neither of these things is true. As Dan'l says, it's debatable whether it should be classed as a puzzle at all.

James Wynn — 09 Jul 2010, 22:16 · in reply to Tony Ellis

James Wynn wrote:

The issue is whether Dorcas as Sev's grandmother was explained in terms that made it convincing to all.

On 7/9/2010 4:53 PM, Tony Ellis wrote:

No, the issue in this thread is whether it was explained in terms so
*un*convincing that you were right to call it 'a half-baked theory' or
'only understood 20 years after the book was published'.

No. You misread part of that. I did not call it a half-baked theory. I said this:

The only reason

it's not sitting on the "Half-baked Theory" pile today is because Wolfe
uncharacteristically confirmed it to a questioner.

If it was explained in terms at all before the late 90s, I'm unaware of it. It's not an issue of it being in "un"convincing terms. Perhaps "insufficiently convincing" is accurate, because people can be very hard to convince. But in the late 90s, the explanation was carefully detailed in a way that many people began nodding their heads in agreement. Still, until someone posted that Wolfe had confirmed this (which I believe unfortunately occurred when the archives were broken), alternate theories were regularly offered and debated on this list. Now it is gospel and the other constructs are beneath the waves as Nessus is beneath the oceans of Ushas. It's as though they never happened.

If I've inadvertently dissed you, I apologize.

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Roy C. Lackey — 09 Jul 2010, 22:49 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

[snip]

If it was explained in terms at all before the late 90s, I'm unaware of
it. [snip]

It is stated in the original LEXICON URTHUS, p-90, published in 1994, that Dorcas is Severian's paternal grandmother.

-Roy

Ryan Dunn — 09 Jul 2010, 23:34 · in reply to James Wynn

On Jul 9, 2010, at 6:16 PM, James Wynn wrote:

James Wynn wrote:

The issue is whether Dorcas as Sev's grandmother was
explained in terms that made it convincing to all.

On 7/9/2010 4:53 PM, Tony Ellis wrote:

No, the issue in this thread is whether it was explained in terms so
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The only reason

it's not sitting on the "Half-baked Theory" pile today is because Wolfe
uncharacteristically confirmed it to a questioner.

If it was explained in terms at all before the late 90s, I'm unaware of it.

I've read BotNS twice through, and am on a third scouring, non-linear, clue hunting, note-taking. I came to the grandma Dorcas without much effort, which is saying alot if you've read my previous argument starters (aka mailing list threads).

But I think the point was, it wasn't explained in the late 90's, but rather in the mid-80's when

the books were published, because the explanations are in the text, quite obviously in my opinion.

Dorcas and the boatman birthed 'You-Are-My-Mother-Come-Again' Ouen.

Ouen knocked up Catherine, who was handed to the torturers where she birthed Severian (plenty exposition going to great lengths to explain what happens when a woman gives birth while a client of the Matachin Tower.

And finally, Severian clearly described as sharing Ouen's profile.

Done and done, as far as I can deduce.

Now, about those monkeys.....

...ryan

Ryan Dunn — 09 Jul 2010, 23:38 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

On Jul 9, 2010, at 6:49 PM, Roy C. Lackey wrote:

James Wynn wrote:

[snip]

If it was explained in terms at all before the late 90s, I'm unaware of it. [snip]

It is stated in the original LEXICON URTHUS, p-90, published in 1994, that Dorcas is Severian's paternal grandmother.

-Roy

Oh, and I always liked this quote from the book, guess who said it...

"Look at the great successes of the past - they say their deities are the masters of all the universes, and yet that they require grandmothers to defend them, as if they were children frightened by poultry."

...ryan

James Wynn — 10 Jul 2010, 00:00 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

James Wynn wrote:

[snip]

If it was explained in terms at all before the late 90s, I'm unaware of it. [snip]

On 7/9/2010 5:49 PM, Roy C. Lackey wrote:

It is stated in the original LEXICON URTHUS, p-90, published in 1994, that Dorcas is Severian's paternal grandmother.

This is an excellent example of what I'm talking about.

In the definition for Dorcas, Mantis places her status as Severian's grandmother in the commentary...a location that, in the 1st edition, he seems to have favored for speculation and spoilers. Far less often for self-evident points of fact. And as Tony Ellis IIRC referenced, many people viewed it as a feint. And why wouldn't they? Sev's opinion about Ouen's and Catharine's connection is rather peculiar: "A woman you loved or perhaps only one who loved you".

On 7/9/2010 6:34 PM, Ryan Dunn wrote:

I've read BotNS twice through, and am on a third scouring, non-linear, clue hunting, note-taking. I came to the grandma Dorcas without much effort, which is saying alot if you've read my previous argument starters (aka mailing list threads).

I'm not going to disparage those who had alternate readings in this case. Suffice that Wolfe has instilled extreme paranoia in his readership and inclined them to straining at ants. I don't say he

has no one to blame but himself, but he bears a large culpability.

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James Wynn — 10 Jul 2010, 00:17 · in reply to James Wynn

Look, when one becomes exasperated, that's the time to take the conversation off-list. I want to apologize to Antonio and to anyone who read my just previous responses to him. I was out of line taking it here.

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António Pedro Marques — 10 Jul 2010, 01:08 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote (10-07-2010 01:17):

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Whoa. I'd like to apologise to everyone as well, including James, for my part in it. I wasn't going to, but you were the better man in providing the opportunity. And I've appreciated reading the Map of the Whorl these last years.

brunians at brunians.org — 10 Jul 2010, 01:33 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

On 7/9/2010 3:07 PM, Ant??nio Pedro Marques wrote:

So you're saying that you didn't notice that they were there before?

But your wording suggested you were aware of them. If you were, what has changed? I'm assuming it wasn't Ryan's mentioning them, since you say they are almost self-evident. What then?

Look. English is not your first language. I get that. But you are allowing your debility to make an ass of you.

He's the one who looks like an ass?

.

Roy C. Lackey — 10 Jul 2010, 04:08 · in reply to Ryan Dunn

Ryan Dunn wrote:

Oh, and I always liked this quote from the book, guess who said it...

"Look at the great successes of the past - they say their deities are the masters of all the universes, and yet that they require grandmothers to defend them, as if they were children frightened by poultry."

I'm not going to step into that. <g> Anyway, I think Thecla's next line was better, even if it more properly belongs in Andrew's thread.

"Or that the authority that punishes no one while there exists a chance for reformation will punish everyone when there is no possibility anyone will become the better for it."

-Roy

brunians at brunians.org — 10 Jul 2010, 04:18 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Thecla is an atheist.

Ryan Dunn wrote:

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James Wynn — 10 Jul 2010, 05:48 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

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And look! Now we're fine again. There's a lesson there about emotions. They seem as big and imposing as a house and an offense against them is a knife through your heart. Then you shrug your shoulders and a breeze blows them away. They are by definition irrational.

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brunians at brunians.org — 10 Jul 2010, 06:58 · in reply to James Wynn

I ain't apologizing to anybody.

I will point out, however, as I do occasionally, that I lie almost constantly.

Very little that I say is reliable.

Look, when one becomes exasperated, that's the time to take the conversation off-list.

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Tony Ellis — 10 Jul 2010, 13:13 · follows brunians at brunians.org

James Wynn wrote:

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Ah, I think I understand now. We are talking at cross-purposes. When you talk about the Dorcas theory being 'explained' or 'understood' you mean 'explained in circles of Wolfean criticism such as this list', don't you? But I, and I think also Antonio, Dan'I, Ryan and Roy, are talking about how it is explained *in the text*. In the text, it is made transparently clear that Dorcas is Severian's grandmother, as several people have now come forward and demonstrated.

This is why I can't agree that 'if Wolfe hadn't confirmed the grandmother theory, it would be on the Half-Baked Theory pile today'. People like us would never have allowed it to languish there.

If I've inadvertently dissed you, I apologize.

Not at all. I am entirely un-dissed, but thank you.

Roy C Lackey wrote:

It is stated in the original LEXICON URTHUS, p-90, published in 1994, that Dorcas is Severian's paternal grandmother.

If anyone has issue 164 of Vector, the critical journal of the BSFA, they'll see that some tiresome guy called Anthony Ellis stated it back in October, 1991. :-)

brunians at brunians.org — 10 Jul 2010, 13:50 · in reply to Tony Ellis

This is my general criticism against the ouinusses and ouanquerres that infest this list.

James Wynn wrote:

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