

Path of Air

The Urth list — 26 messages, 8 voices, 18 Aug 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5721>

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Lee Berman — 18 Aug 2010, 11:58

Jeff Wilson- Light and gravity are common and cheaper than dirt on Urth, while time travel requires a huge undertaking.

Ah, now I understand your reluctance to invoke time travel. That kind is a huge undertaking. But how much effort did Severian spend to travel to the future to see Ragnarok? A flight or two of stairs. He actually WAS in the future, not just observing it, since the upper levels of the Last House, are in the future, making them invisible from the present.

Valeria's tower, off the Atrium of Time, is also invisible from the present, suggesting its upper levels exist in the future. About 60 years in Severian's future, if I am correct. Valeria lives in the lower levels of her tower, thus in the past, hence her antique appearance.

To understand the Path of Air I think we not only have to connect it to the Last House but to other Commonwealth structures, specifically Ultan's library and Rudesind's art gallery. Both are said to extend from the Citadel all the way to House Absolute. A while back someone suggested that these structures truly physically extend for 100 miles or whatever in underground tunnels. I find it more plausible that Father Inire-built portals are involved.

I think bogus suppositions of sleigh rides, etc. are meant to lead us to wonder how khaibits are able to travel back and forth between House Absolute and House Azure in Nessus. Inire-portals would fit the bill nicely and it makes sense that the Autarch would have access to them.

I am suggesting that there is a similar portal which connects House Absolute to the top of Valeria's tower. It is called the Path of Air because one end is underground but the other is, well, in the air providing a breeze. Hence it is a loggia or breezeway as Jeff has suggested. (a loggia is provided breeze from the side rather than its terminus but, hey, no theory is perfect).

I find this the best explanation for why Severian sees an unchanged face from his youth appear 60 years in the future. It allows for a reason for why she seems to be under arrest and being taken back to the past. Whatever crime Catherine committed it was surely in the past from the Path of Air scene.

Since the woman on the Path of Air has dark hair and a pale gown I connect her to the woman in the grave at the beginning of the story. If that is right and Dave Tallman is right she was brought back in time to give

birth to Severian and then died 20 years later.

I'm not sure. Nor am I sure which of these various dark haired women is the original (Contessa?) Catherine and which is a khaibit. I tend to think the woman on the Path of Air was not pregnant with Severian (and Severa) but had already given birth and was trying to escape her deferred execution by escaping to the future.

I'm not sure how the monials fit in, but if her manner of execution was Allowin's necklace I must guess her crime was infidelity, mirroring the strangulation sentence for that other dark haired, oval faced, failed Pelerine, Cyriaca.

The connection of this Catherine personage to Valeria's time travelling tower might be Valeria herself. I think Valeria remains a possible candidate as Severian's missing twin sister. The wife of Roman emperor valentinianus was named Valeria Severa.

António Pedro Marques — 18 Aug 2010, 13:36 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee Berman wrote (18-08-2010 12:58):

I think Valeria remains a possible candidate as Severian's missing twin sister. The wife of Roman emperor valentinianus was named Valeria Severa.

This I think is worth exploring.

- When Severian goes to Yesod, Valeria remains in his place for decades. Why would this be tolerated? We're told of no similar thing in the history of the Autarchy.

- What's Severian's attraction to Valeria? He met her when both were reasonably young. Then years pass and suddenly upon becoming Autarch he realises he must go get her. Why?

- I don't know what to make of the names. The -ian in Severian's name was sometimes used in Rome to indicate adoption. Otoh Valeria would simply be the name of a woman born to perhaps the most noble family in roman history, while at the same time one that generally stood for the rights of lower strata of society. So, the names seem to fit, but do they tell us anything new?

Jeff Wilson — 18 Aug 2010, 17:48 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 8/18/2010 6:58 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

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This sort of transcendental architecture may be more suitable for research and monitoring than meddling with causality, especially regarding Master Ash's fade from existence and the

subsequent detachment of the lower stories from the altered timeline. The Corridors of Time likewise seem unsuitable on their own, as Severian never changes history despite randomly blundering into new eras repeatedly, he only ever confirms what was already suspected. It seems to be the Hierogrammates and the sea-beasts that have the superhuman perception of time required to judge which changes can be made and how best to make them, and to direct their minions accordingly.

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I'm in agreement on the existence of physical corridors that bridge time and space like the Corridors of Time, but I see no evidence that Valeria's tower itself is a time-bender. Since it's immediately adjacent to the Atrium of Time and the tunnels passing the dial-filled rooms, you get the same effect if the tower is entirely in the past, or if the tunnels curve through space so that the tower seems to be in one place rather than another.

It's also the sort of thing you'd find on a certain university campus, but that's a theory for another time.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
IEEE Student Chapter Blog at
< <http://ieeetamut.org> >

Lee Berman — 18 Aug 2010, 18:14 · follows Jeff Wilson

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Could be. Still we see someone ostensibly from Severian's past there in his distant future.

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Why is it called the Atrium of Time then? There is no time travel there in the Atrium.

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I suppose. But if that were true then Valeria's tower is like nothing else on Urth. By noticing the similarity of Valeria's tower to the Last House, with its invisible top in the future, we at least have some basis of comparison for guesswork. And, as previously mentioned, it gives a reason for the name Path of Air.

Jeff Wilson — 18 Aug 2010, 21:22 · in reply to Lee Berman

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Could be. Still we see someone ostensibly from Severian's past there in his distant future.

Where? You mean Master Ash is really from the past instead of the ice-age future?

I'm in agreement on the existence of physical corridors that bridge time and space like the Corridors of Time, but I see no evidence that Valeria's tower itself is a time-bender.

Why is it called the Atrium of Time then? There is no time travel there in the Atrium.

An atrium is an enclosed or partially enclosed area adjacent to some larger structure or feature, usually open to the sky though glassed-over and skylit atria are popular these last few centuries. Thus, the Atrium of Time can be this secluded area adjacent to the Corridors of Time, associated with their function but not part of it, accessible through time but outside of it. Mantis speculates that it and the dial-filled rooms nearby might be part of some abandoned time patrol headquarters.

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I suppose. But if that were true then Valeria's tower is like nothing else on Urth.

Her tower can be just like all the other towers, only the place it is resting is unusual. There are other towers shown on the map not in evidence, and towers visible that are not on the map. The time tunnels allow her tower to be both.

By noticing the similarity of Valeria's tower to the Last House, with its invisible top in the future, we at least have some basis of comparison for guesswork. And, as previously mentioned, it gives a reason for the name Path of Air.

That's "speculating on", not "noticing." The Last House has to have its upper stories in the future of its lower stories, because the ice accumulates over the ages. If time travel had a strictly vertical, up-to-the-future-down-to-the-past character, the Green Man would seen climbing the Stairs of Time, or the Chutes and Ladders of Time, and Tzadkerbell would flutter alongside the Cataract or the Geyser Madrigot.

David Stockhoff — 18 Aug 2010, 23:58 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

Some obvious answers present themselves:

Ant?nio Pedro Marques wrote:

Lee Berman wrote (18-08-2010 12:58):

I think Valeria remains a possible candidate as Severian's missing twin sister. The wife of Roman emperor valentinianus was named Valeria Severa.

This I think is worth exploring.

- When Severian goes to Yesod, Valeria remains in his place for decades. Why would this be tolerated? We're told of no similar thing in the history of the Autarchy.

---Because it's not important.

- What's Severian's attraction to Valeria? He met her when both were reasonably young. Then years pass and suddenly upon becoming Autarch

he realises he must go get her. Why?

---Because he could.

- I don't know what to make of the names. The -ian in Severian's name was sometimes used in Rome to indicate adoption. Otoh Valeria would simply be the name of a woman born to perhaps the most noble family in roman history, while at the same time one that generally stood for the rights of lower strata of society. So, the names seem to fit, but do they tell us anything new?

António Marques — 19 Aug 2010, 01:17 · in reply to David Stockhoff

This kind of answers is precisely why people lose interest in following the list.

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David Stockhoff — 19 Aug 2010, 01:55 · in reply to António Marques

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Perhaps it's actually the endless bickering that is a problem for some. I don't know. I'm not going to address it further.

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Ant?nio Marques — 19 Aug 2010, 03:09 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 19 August 2010 02:55, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:
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Ryan Dunn — 19 Aug 2010, 03:17 · in reply to António Marques

There's an irony here, and I'm feeding it, but replies like the one you gave below, Ant?nio, while I agree with them, are just as easily accomplished by replying to dstockhoff at verizon.net

instead of urth at lists.urth.net.

...ryan

On Aug 18, 2010, at 9:17 PM, Ant?nio Marques wrote:

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Lee Berman — 19 Aug 2010, 03:54 · follows Ryan Dunn

Antonio P. Marques- What's Severian's attraction to Valeria? He met her when both were reasonably young.

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They are still about the same age when they married I think. I am not interested in parsing out exact timelines but I think those who do estimate Severian's journey from graveyard to Autarchy lasted somewhat under two years. Or was it somewhat over... I forget.

Severian doesn't mention Valeria much, if at all, after their first meeting, for three books. Then, in Citadel of the Autarch he brings her up rather unexpectedly in the first pages, describing her dark, curling hair and dark eyes and milk and pomegranate skin. "really more beautiful than anyone I've ever seen since--more lovely even than Jolenta". Later he describes Valeria's face as one that "tears at his heart". So there is that.

Another face that Severian finds "tears at his heart" is the woman on the Path of Air. She resembles the Holy Katharine maid who many think is Severian's mother. Make of that what you

will.

Further exploration of the Roman empress angle might be to check out Valeria's speaking Latin phrases to Severian. She may not be the best linguist but she translates "dei" to mean "New Sun". Severian has to be a bit pleased with that on more than one level.

Ryan Dunn — 19 Aug 2010, 04:03 · in reply to Lee Berman

Has this question been asked...

If Wolfe never intended to write UotNS, did he intend for his reader to deduce that Severian would go on to marry Valeria? If so, what "tells" were there that might lead one to believe that she, above all the other women from this story, would be the one?

...ryan

On Aug 18, 2010, at 11:54 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

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António Marques — 19 Aug 2010, 23:39 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 19 August 2010 04:54, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:
Severian doesn't mention Valeria much, if at all, after their first meeting, for three books.

And he doesn't care to mention how he got back to Matachin, though he did say to Valeria he didn't want to go down to the tunnels again. Let alone how he could find his way out of them - even his memory can't be much help when there's no light. Also, while talking to Master Ash he remembers Valeria because the maze he had to go through *before* finding her. Could mean nothing, of course.

Then, in Citadel of the Autarch he brings her up rather unexpectedly

in the first pages, describing her dark, curling hair and dark eyes and milk and pomegranate skin. "really more beautiful than anyone I've ever seen since--more lovely even than Jolenta".

In 'a different way'... later on, Jolenta 'is the most beautiful'. But Valeria is 'lovely'. Mmmm.

Later he describes Valeria's face as one that "tears at his heart". So there is that.

Yea, she looks like his mother, and Holy Katharine is the following chapter to the Atrium of Time.

Further exploration of the Roman empress angle might be to check out

Valeria's speaking Latin phrases to Severian. She may not be the best linguist but she translates "dei" to mean "New Sun". Severian has to be a bit pleased with that on more than one level.

The weird part is that I almost get the idea that she knows how her story will end. All the particulars seem to echo one another.

Her family was to have left Urth with the Autarch of their time - how come? She's all the sisters and all the sons. And they now wait because there is nothing left but to wait. And both the first and the last time Severian meets her, he has to go through tunnels. And after she's killed, he thinks she's alive somewhere. Could there be alternate Valerias just as there are Severians?

António Marques — 20 Aug 2010, 00:03 · in reply to Lee Berman

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Lux dei vitae viam monstrat
The beam of the New Sun lights the way of life
The light of God points forth the path for life

Felicibus brevis, miseris hora longa
Men wait long for happiness
Time runs slowly for the unfortunate ones, fast for the fortunate ones or Time runs slowly for those who are sad, fast for those who are happy

Aspice ut aspiciar
N/A

See, in order for me to be seen

I don't think anyone knows much about Valeria Severa. But Wolfe may have liked the name. Which came first, his name or hers? For all we know, Valeria may be his mother and Catherine his sister. Has anyone worked out the significance of the name Severian, besides the bishop?

David Stockhoff — 20 Aug 2010, 00:09 · in reply to António Marques

Antonio

As I said quite clearly, those were the "obvious" answers. Not the "only" answers. Generally, in these matters, the interesting answers must contend with and overcome the obvious ones, or else join with them, or else go away. Therefore, the obvious answers must be known.

If you find the obvious answers to be uninteresting, but you can't come up with more interesting ones (you still haven't), then this suggests that the questions themselves aren't that interesting. That is, they don't lead anywhere. You need better questions.

Whether you want to hear that or not is a different matter.

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they tell us anything new?

David Duffy — 20 Aug 2010, 00:25 · in reply to Ant?nio Marques

On 19 August 2010 04:54, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

Severian doesn't mention Valeria much, if at all, after their first meeting, for three books.

I have previously mentioned that I think part of the origins of BotNS are as a dialogue with Dune and Empire Star, both of which share many of the same plot elements. Then, Valeria is Irulan, a political marriage but not his true love, his grandmother ;)

Just another 2c, David Duffy.

Jeff Wilson — 20 Aug 2010, 03:47 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

On 8/18/2010 8:36 AM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

- What's Severian's attraction to Valeria? He met her when both were reasonably young. Then years pass and suddenly upon becoming Autarch he realises he must go get her. Why?

There are several reasons: he still feels a fondness for her, having met her under unusual circumstances on his final juvenile adventure. She is a connection to a simpler time, his last hurrah without adult responsibility.

They met as near-peers, both obscure servants of the Autarchy. Valeria's technically an armigette of a landed family while Severian has no pedigree at all, but his guild still actively serves while her outfit hasn't been called upon in generations. They are apparently peers in age as well.

Severian met and knew her before his infamy and ascension, so he knows she did not seek to spend time with him for those reasons. This is an important advantage she has in that it rules out her being a golddigger or a plotter, or otherwise seeking to exploit their relationship, at least initially. (Alas, Claudius and Messalina...)

Severian remarks on how he never desires a woman more than when he cannot have her - their considerable separation counts here. Then there his reflection that love and lust are intertwined, since men love women for giving themselves to them, even if it is only in their minds; so after months or years of unconsumated separation and months of fantasizing on his un-conjugal travels, his crush on his original adolescent sweetheart might be very strong indeed.

And there is her dark hair and light skin that Severian overtly finds attractive, and if the metal trim on her dress is zippers up the sides, that doesn't hurt either.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
IEEE Student Chapter Blog at
< <http://ieeetamut.org> >

Dave Tallman — 20 Aug 2010, 14:28 · follows Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson wrote:

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This is a world where copper and iron are mentioned in the same breath as silver and gold. Metals are rare and precious. Metal trimming on the dress makes Sev think it has an "antique

quality." Since Valeria's family has come down in the world it's unlikely they could afford to buy such things. It has either been passed down to her or she herself is from an earlier time.

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I've thought about that some more. Valeria's family doesn't seem to be of especially poor means as they have servants and at least three towers to themselves, despite having dwindled to a single member in Valeria's generation.

As for the commonality of metals, there are any number of iron fixtures and other objects left to rust instead of being kept painted or oiled, and gold chrisos are not particularly rare in Severian's travels (unless I'm mistaken and chrisos aren't gold). No one's looted the funeral brasses from Severian's crypt. So supplying a dress with zippers to the only marriageable girl in even a poor but landed noble family isn't a big deal, though the zippers may have been salvaged from earlier garments, and it would make sense for them to be exposed as an ostentatious display. The same goes for any other metal trimmings, of course.

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David Stockhoff — 20 Aug 2010, 19:47 · in reply to David Stockhoff

My apologies to the list for the following.

To Antonio, who promised to block any response to an email discussion with me that he himself initiated:

Though you are a very confused and childish person, you haven't hurt me---you have simply wasted my time and worn out my patience, because I was tolerant of your petty foolishness. Please learn adult behavior before you pester me again.

David

António Pedro Marques — 21 Aug 2010, 00:32 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Hi all,

I've told David I wouldn't read any more personal e-mails from him for the time being, as they were devoid of content (and actually abusive, though my issue is chiefly with the pointlessness

of it), but of course I'd keep on reading his contributions to the list if he had something to say there. I didn't for a moment think he was so much in need of (my?) attention that he'd try to carry on our non-conversation here. So, if it is my fault that a matter I took off-list returned to it due to my not wishing to discuss it any more, I apologise. To avoid further unpleasantness, I won't be reading David again for a while either on- or off-list, so 1: if David wishes to keep talking, by all means do, but I have nothing to do with that, and 2: if David should regain his temper and wish this silliness to end, then say so via some 3rd party. Sorry (honestly, not rhetorically) for wasting the subscribers's time.

And to David, my apologies for my part in the issue.

David Stockhoff — 21 Aug 2010, 01:01 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

Antonio

It is all too clear who is crying for attention. You are making public accusations that have no merit regarding a matter that you insist is private. You therefore leave me no choice but to respond here.

And my response is to ask you to cut the passive-aggressive psychodrama NOW. It is pathetic and shows your complete disrespect for members of this list.

This is the LAST you will hear from me.

David

Ant?nio Pedro Marques wrote:

Hi all,

I've told David I wouldn't read any more personal e-mails from him for the time being, as they were devoid of content (and actually abusive, though my issue is chiefly with the pointlessness of it), but of course I'd keep on reading his contributions to the list if he had something to say there. I didn't for a moment think he was so much in need of (my?) attention that he'd try to carry on our non-conversation here. So, if it is my fault that a matter I took off-list returned to it due to my not wishing to discuss it any more, I apologise. To avoid further unpleasantness, I won't be reading David again for a while either on- or off-list, so 1: if David wishes to keep talking, by all means do, but I have nothing to do with that, and 2: if David should regain his temper and wish this silliness to end, then say so via some 3rd party. Sorry (honestly, not rhetorically) for wasting the subscribers's time.

And to David, my apologies for my part in the issue.

Mr Thalassocrat — 21 Aug 2010, 15:22 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Sat, Aug 21, 2010 at 10:31 AM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

Antonio

<snip>

I doubt that anybody is very interested in any of this.

Lee Berman — 22 Aug 2010, 08:24 · follows Mr Thalassocrat

I doubt that anybody is very interested in any of this.

Nobody is very interested in anything, anymore.

Ryan Dunn — 22 Aug 2010, 12:27 · in reply to Lee Berman

On Aug 22, 2010, at 4:24 AM, Lee Berman wrote:
I doubt that anybody is very interested in any of this.

Nobody is very interested in anything, anymore.

I'm still interested in Gene Wolfe.

...ryan

antonio at gmail.com — 23 Aug 2010, 06:59 · in reply to Ryan Dunn

No dia 2010/08/22, às 13:27, Ryan Dunn <ryan at liftingfaces.com> escreveu:

On Aug 22, 2010, at 4:24 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

Nobody is very interested in anything, anymore.

I'm still interested in Gene Wolfe.

It's August and some of us do observe the weekend sometimes :)

I hope to comment on both your and Lee's latest contributions during the week.