

The Pelerine (COTA 12)

The Urth list — 12 messages, 6 voices, 09 Sep 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5740>

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Andrew Mason — 09 Sep 2010, 21:07

Hi. I'm new here, but have been lurking for a while. I read BOTNS a while ago, but didn't feel qualified to take part in discussion till I had read `_Urth_`, which I have just finished.

People comment from time to time on characters in BOTNS who aren't named, although they seem significant enough to have names - e.g. the Autarch or the old boatman. One I haven't seen discussed is the Pelerine Severian talks with in COTA chapter 8. I think she is particularly notable, because this part of the book is very carefully structured. The odd chapters contain stories from Foila and co.: the even chapters contain meetings of Severian with people connected with the Pelerines. Three of them are named - Ava, Winnoc and Mannea - but this one, even though the chapter is called after her, is just 'the Pelerine'.

Any thoughts on what her significance could be?

David Stockhoff — 09 Sep 2010, 23:27 · in reply to Andrew Mason

She has a lot to say, but I'm not sure she has much importance as a character.

She seems to present some Catholic-type ideas, insofar as that is possible, as well as to explain some things we need to know to "get" the book. That chapter contains a good amount of such material.

On 9/9/2010 5:07 PM, Andrew Mason wrote:

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Lee Berman — 10 Sep 2010, 03:09 · follows David Stockhoff

Andrew Mason

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Welcome Andrew! I think your observation of how the chapters alternate is good. I often think that chapter names provide more clues to what is going on than what is frequently acknowledged here. Especially good is your observation that, as much as we might obsess about names, sometimes the non-naming of a character can be a marker of significance.

Why DO the other Pelerine characters get names but this one doesn't? I think this is Wolfe being especially devious. Which means that I don't really know what the significance is. All I have is a guess and some conjecture.

When Severian is talking to Cyriaca, she first tells him that she has had no contact with any of the Pelerines since leaving. Later, under fear of torture, Cyriaca tells Severian that she got a letter a week ago from her friend, Einhildis, saying the Pelerines were stationed at the Autarch's battle camp at Orithiya.

Being at Orithiya, and unnamed, I must guess this older Pelerine is Einhildis. I don't see anything mysterious about Einhildis herself. So my guess is that her un-naming is a pointer back to Cyriaca, telling us to pay careful attention to all she says and to read as much as possible into it, including omissions and deceptions.

My conjectures about Cyriaca are:

1. She is a family member of Severian's, probably aunt. They have sex, so no great surprise there. Perhaps she is mother to Agia and Agilus as she plans to go to escape back to Nessus to sew and cook.
2. Her mysterious (and likely lecherous) uncle who told her so many stories and seems to know more about the cosmic history of humanity than anyone else on Urth might be Father Inire.
3. Severian's question to Cyriaca about whether the Pelerines dabble in necromancy is never answered, suggesting to me that they do. Meaning they are probably associated with the Witches. (I think the Citadel is mentioned to have a Red Tower and a Tower of Healing). We know that the Pelerines are primarily an exultant order. But we have evidence (secret beautification, khaibits, experiments with hairless creatures) that exultant Chatelaines also have some connection to witches. Secret connections all over the place.
4. Cyriaca discusses the landing of cacogens in the north and they they'd want to "avoid the mirrors at the House Absolute so they could escape the eyes of the Autarch." She discusses political tension between exultants and the Autarch, between the Autarch and the cacogens (hierodules). Stuff even Thecla knows only as rumor. Again, it seems Cyriaca's uncle has been filling her in on very secret stuff known only by the guys at the very top.

Of course the cacogens do show up at the House Absolute for Dr. Talos' play, so Cyriaca isn't a perfectly reliable source of information. Still, I think the whole thing (along with Palaemon and Rudesind forgetting their lines) smacks of a big set-up for Severian. A play designed to set him

on a particular course. Severian has been steered to Orithya.

Master Ash observes that the Ascians mounting their current massive offensive can only be explained by one purpose: "your foes have need of an immediate victory and are straining every limb". I assume that need is related to the presence of Severian on the battlefield. I'm still not completely sure which parties are hoping he will be killed and which parties are hoping he will become Autarch and New Sun.

Well, okay probably too much. As the old Autarch tells Severian, "you asked me for a light for your candle, and I tried to give you the sun...". But hopefully at least a little helpful.

Andrew Mason — 13 Sep 2010, 12:13 · follows Lee Berman

Jeff Wilson wrote (quoting Lee Berman):

In recent discussions we've sorta determined that the Hierogrammates were probably created by humans from Ushas.

Andrew: Please note that the "we" of this determination consists entirely of Lee and the mouse in their pocket. The majority view (of those expressing opinions) seems to be that the Hierogrammates and were the products of humans of a previous Big Bang/Big Crunch cycle. Meanwhile, the humans of Ushas are the conventional descendants of the humans of Urth, and their only visible offspring race is that of the Green Man.

That's how I would read it - with the corollary that, if all goes to plan, future humans from Ushas will at some remote time produce a new race of Hierogrammates.

But I don't think that's what Cyriaca is talking about. Her story is neither about the future nor about a previous cycle, but about the past of her own cycle. I have just looked at her story again, and it does indeed have curious parallels with that of the Hierogrammates - both they and the machines are created by humans, and try both to benefit and to punish them in some way. But I still don't think it can be the same. The machines are real, and are not the same as Hierogrammates - Malrubius, recalling Cyriaca, says there is one on his ship. And Cyriaca says the outline of her story is common knowledge, though the details aren't, whereas Malrubius' story is of course deeply secret.

I do think Cyriaca's story is quite important, by the way, because it explains why, though the physical distance between our time and Severian's is enormous, the cultural distance at times seems strangely small. The various bits of cultural inheritance haven't been handed down continuously; they were returned to humans by computers just a few thousand years before Severian.

Lee Berman wrote:

I think the question becomes- why did the Hierogrammates give Severian the power to change Urth to Ushas? "Are they divine judges above the fray" Or are they taking a hand in their own creation? I see evidence for both.

I would say they are taking a hand in the creation of beings like them, and hence in preserving their kind (in a rather abstract sense of kind; not their biological species). That need not stop them having other motives as well.

Mr Thalassocrat — 13 Sep 2010, 13:29 · in reply to Andrew Mason

On Mon, Sep 13, 2010 at 9:43 PM, Andrew Mason <andrew.mason53 at gmail.com>

wrote:

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... and then the knowledge was collected by Typhon, perhaps, in the library. This is an observation which might also help to explain some of seeming anachronisms between BOTNS and SS/LS. Languages and writings from "our" time are present on the Whorl not because they were current in Typhon's day, but because Typhon's cultural archaeologists put them there,

They didn't mine the past just for the Chras Writings etc, but for whole chunks of language and culture. So eg the "Dorp culture" doesn't indicate some totally unlikely survival of things Dutch into the deep future, but rather an artificial reconstruction of deep-past Dutchness by the Whorl project team.

I like this; it has the right whiff of megalomania.

Perhaps every town culture on the Whorl was just a megalomaniacal museum reconstruction by the Whorl team, having no roots at all in the Urth of Typhon's day.

Viron's odd naming convention was just something they made up.

Pity the poor sleepers!

António Pedro Marques — 13 Sep 2010, 14:03 · in reply to Mr Thalassocrat

Mr Thalassocrat wrote (13-09-2010 14:29):

Pity the poor sleepers!

Has anyone analyzed at length the sleepers' role?

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 13 Sep 2010, 15:20 · in reply to Mr Thalassocrat

The Vironese naming system may have been made up by Typhon's people, or it may have been a relic of another time unfamiliar to us but just as "real" as Dutch, or both (i.e., the Whorl is not in our future at all but in the future of a similar universe). It may have been used on another planet (recall that Typhon ruled many).

Or the similarity to things familiar to us is an artifact of translation.

But if we follow the logic here, I'd guess that somewhere, sometime in Briah, such a system was used.

--- On Mon, 9/13/10, Mr Thalassocrat <thalassocrat08 at gmail.com> wrote:

From: Mr Thalassocrat <thalassocrat08 at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) The Pelerine (COTA 12)

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Date: Monday, September 13, 2010, 9:29 AM

On Mon, Sep 13, 2010 at 9:43 PM, Andrew Mason <andrew.mason53 at gmail.com> wrote:

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-----Inline Attachment Follows-----

Mr Thalassocrat — 14 Sep 2010, 09:40 · in reply to Mr Thalassocrat

On Mon, Sep 13, 2010 at 10:59 PM, Mr Thalassocrat
<thalassocrat08 at gmail.com> wrote:

On Mon, Sep 13, 2010 at 9:43 PM, Andrew Mason <
andrew.mason53 at googlemail.com> wrote:

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FWIW, I tried to find the meaning for the names of all the Dorpians given in the IGJ listing, using Google translate and the Dutch version of wikipedia; below.

Not all of them are bizarre or implausible, but overall I think the list is consistent with hypotheses that (a) Dorian names come from some list of Dutch words that the Whorl team found somewhere & as a body don't have much to do with names that a real Dutch culture would use; and (b) the Dorpians quite possibly don't even speak Dutch & have no idea what these names "mean".

Aanvagen: Swept (mistress of house in which SilkHorn "jailed") Azijn: Vinegar (leggerman)
Beroep: Occupation, trade (husband of Aanvagen) Cijfer: Digit, numeral (wife of Wijzer) Hamer: Hammer (judge) Leeuw: Lion (leggerman) Nat: liquor, wet, soggy (magnate) Parel: Pearl, bead (servant) Strik: Bow, trap, knot (captain) Taal: Language (advocate) Vadsig: Lazy, slothful (servant) Vent: Fellow, chap (advocate) Versregel: Should be Versregel? = Verse, line (Strik's wife) Vlug: Fast (leggerman) Wapen: Weapon (son of tavern owner) Wijzer: Pointer, clock hand (captain) Ziek: Sick, diseased (merchant)

I don't have enough interest at this point to try to go into "Gaoan-culture" names, but I'd just also note along these lines "He-pens-sheep" as an unlikely name for a hunter.

Mr Thalassocrat — 14 Sep 2010, 10:47 · in reply to Mr Thalassocrat

On Tue, Sep 14, 2010 at 7:10 PM, Mr Thalassocrat

<thalassocrat08 at gmail.com> wrote:

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"He-pens-sheep" as an unlikely name for a hunter.

Again just fwiw, looking at the "Grandecitta culture" names, from IGJ: Adatta: Suitable Affito: Properties (Inclito's coachman) Bello: Handsome (colonel) Blanko: ??? (town) Bricco: Jug (child in Fava's story) Bruna: Brown (mule) Cantoro: Singer? (merchant) Casco: Helmet (Salica's story) Cugino: Cousin (woodcutter) Cuoio: Leather (Hide's name in Blanko) Decina: Ten (servant) Dentro: Inside (Salica's story) Eco: Echo (messenger) Fava: Broad bean Gagliardo: Strong, red blooded (astronomer) Gioioso: Joyful (Salica's story) Incanto: Enchantment (Inclito's brother) Inclito: Illustrious (de facto leader of Blanko) Legaro: Tie (ambassador) Mano: Hand (trooper) Morello: ? (general) Novella Citta: New city Olmo: Elm (town) Onorifica: Honorific (servant) Perito: Expert, surveyor (hired hand) Rigoglio: Luxuriance (duko) Rimando: Return, cross-reference (messenger) Rimo: Removal (trooper) Salica: Willow? (Inclito's mother) Sborso: Disbursement (hired hand) Schiamazza: Cackles (servant) Sfidio: Challenge (officer) Soldo: Money, penny (town) Solenno: Solemn (Salica's story) Terzo: Third (officer) Torda: ??? (servant) Turco: Turk? (Salica's story) Ugolo: Uvula (Salica's story) Urbanita: city sweller? (person in Blanko) Valico: Pass (trooper) Vivo: Living person (colonel) Volanta: Wheel (person in Blanko) Volto: Face (trooper) Zitta: Silent (Inclito's dead wife)

I don't really know what to make of that as a group: some of the names are fine as names, some of them make little sense. Anyway, think have to conclude that these people do know at least some Italian: eg Hide being advised to change his name to "Cuoio", if nothing else. ("Novella Citta" also, of course, but I could argue against that one as meaning too much by itself...)

António Pedro Marques — 14 Sep 2010, 11:00 · in reply to Mr Thalassocrat

Mr Thalassocrat wrote (14-09-2010 10:40):

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Here I disagree. Not only are the dorpian seafarers, which is quite dutch, their names are not weird at all. Even Dorp (english thorpe) is the word for 'town'. Of course they are not dutch, but they do look dutch-inspired. As to the language, they speak the 'common tongue' funny, with what can be considered a dutch syntax.

Not that this is in any way inconsistent with the hypothesis that the cultures in the Whorl were fashioned from bits and scraps of urthly originals rather than from the full originals themselves.

Mr Thalassocrat — 14 Sep 2010, 21:49 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

2010/9/14 Ant?nio Pedro Marques <entonio at gmail.com>

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As you say, it's not really very important whether or not the Dorpians actually speak Dutch or know what their names mean. Obviously some of the Whorl cultures know something about "their" languages - the Trivigauntes and apparently the GrandeCittans, for example.

On the hypothesis that the Whorl team constructed these cultures from whatever info they could find in the old records, I guess there would be a spectrum. To me, the Dorpians look like they are at one end of that spectrum, as far as a recovered language goes. Little example: Vadsig - neither she nor anybody else seem bothered that her name means "Slothful".

As to why the Whorl team went to all this trouble: possibly just whimsical megalomania. But maybe also this: Typhon's intention with the Whorl project is to do something like recreate the evolution of the First Empire. To do this he plans to recreate something like the world of "our" time, and re-run a struggle between nations and cultures to dominate it, with whatever culture emerges from that as victor honed in conflict and ready to conquer the stars - and with him as their immortal god.

On the Whorl, that struggle has to be kept at a low level, to avoid any victor being powerful enough to challenge Mainframe. On the Whorl, with Mainframe safe in orbit, it can start in earnest.

The purpose of the Whorl then is to get a collection of cultures to a new planet and make sure that they remain foreign and little understood to each other until they get there. On arrival, they will all lack various necessities and will start to fight each other for resources. Wars will escalate and continue over a long period until some culture dominates.

Anyway, I think that's plausible. Typhon is the kind of guy who would believe that war is the best mother of progress.

James Wynn — 14 Sep 2010, 22:51 · in reply to Mr Thalassocrat

Blanko: white (town)

Morello: a sour cherry or, possibly "bitter" (general)

Torda: petite one (servant)

We've gotten so used to names being carefully selected. It's strange have characters named without any discernible purpose.

Again just fwiw, looking at the "Grandecitta culture" names, from IGJ:

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Affito: Properties (Inclito's coachman)
Bello: Handsome (colonel)
Blanko: ??? (town)
Bricco: Jug (child in Fava's story)
Bruna: Brown (mule)
Cantoro: Singer? (merchant)
Casco: Helmet (Salica's story)
Cugino: Cousin (woodcutter)
Cuoio: Leather (Hide's name in Blanko)
Decina: Ten (servant)
Dentro: Inside (Salica's story)
Eco: Echo (messenger)
Fava: Broad bean
Gagliardo: Strong, red blooded (astronomer)
Gioioso: Joyful (Salica's story)
Incanto: Enchantment (Inclito's brother)
Inclito: Illustrious (de facto leader of Blanko)
Legaro: Tie (ambassador)
Mano: Hand (trooper)
Morello: ? (general)
Novella Citta: New city
Olmo: Elm (town)
Onorifica: Honorific (servant)
Perito: Expert, surveyor (hired hand)
Rigoglio: Luxuriance (duko)
Rimando: Return, cross-reference (messenger)
Rimo: Removal (trooper)
Salica: Willow? (Inclito's mother)
Sborso: Disbursement (hired hand)
Schiamazza: Cackles (servant)
Sfido: Challenge (officer)
Soldo: Money, penny (town)
Solenno: Solemn (Salica's story)
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