

Editor in China requesting help with translation of certain sentences in BotNS

The Urth list — 7 messages, 6 voices, 16 Dec 2013

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6482>

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Daniel Otto Jack Petersen — 16 Dec 2013, 19:58

Got this alert from the Goodreads Gene Wolfe group:

https://www.goodreads.com/topic/show/1614149-help-some-details-in-the-shadow?utm_medium=email&utm_source=comment_instant#comment_88705259

"I am a SF editor & Wolfe fan in China, and we are trying to publish The Book of New Sun in Chinese. I've done a lot of work in reading and translation, yet there are still some sentences I can't understand. Hope I can get some help here.

THE HOUSE AZURE

While I was undressing I said, "Nevertheless, we all seek to discover what is real. Why is it" Perhaps we are drawn to the theocenter. That's what the hierophants say, that only that is true.

what does "theocenter" mean? I can't find this word in dictionary nor can I google it. and what does the whole sentence mean?

THE LAST YEAR

I carried them to her, and she said my beard had shot up like them, and I should be bluer of cheek than the run of common men, and the next day begged my pardon for it, saying I was that already.

what does "bluer of cheek" and "run of common men" mean here?

DORCAS

"Your pardon, sieur," he said. "But I can't come no nearer. Wet she may be, but she gets too dry for me, or you couldn't walk upon it.

Does "she" refer to the boat or Cas' body? what does the sentence mean?

THE PLAY

confirm the outcome of a love affair by putting the elector of one suit atop the patroness of another

If the word suit refers to some card game, then what does "elector" and "patroness" mean?"

Daniel Otto Jack Petersen

Antonin Scriabin — 16 Dec 2013, 20:54 · in reply to Daniel Otto Jack Petersen

Well, "bluer of cheek" is a variation on the term "blue-blood", of course a reference to nobility ... you could see the surface veins of those who, because of their stature in society, had very pale skin (they didn't have to work outside at physical labor, thus acquiring a tan).

In Solitaire, a black (or red) Jack is placed "on top" of a Queen of the opposite color (and a different suit, necessarily) ... so perhaps the "elector" is the Jack and the "patroness" is the Queen?

"Theocenter" might simply mean "godhead", or a reference to the oneness and simplicity thereof, as the root of all existence, in a Judeo-Christian sense. But don't quote me.

Not sure about the other one, I'll have to page through my copy at home to get the full context.

On Mon, Dec 16, 2013 at 2:58 PM, Daniel Otto Jack Petersen <danielottojackpetersen at gmail.com> wrote:
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Fred Kiesche — 16 Dec 2013, 22:43 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

Given the sentence it is used in, I thought "bluer in cheek" was pretty much saying "heavier beard".

On Mon, Dec 16, 2013 at 3:54 PM, Antonin Scriabin

<kierkegaardian at gmail.com> wrote:

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David Stockhoff — 16 Dec 2013, 23:35 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

Blue cheeks are cheeks with one-day stubble (if you have black hair and pale skin).

Otherwise, I agree. The Solitaire question is especially interesting, since Wolfe could not possibly have slipped those in without working out a system. An elector is an HRE prince (archbishop/count/duke/margrave/king), thus probably taking the place of the jack.

I can only assume, given the milieu, that the king is an autarch, who of course has no queen so the queen becomes a patroness. This sounds like an ecclesiastical rank but it could mean "patrona" (city patroness) or female "patron saint."

Either way, one must wonder who it is that the elector elects. Could the autarchy originally have been at least theoretically elective?

(There seem to be very few noble titles in the Commonwealth; the highest title I can recall is "waldgrave." The autarch can't allow any ranks near his own.)

On 12/16/2013 3:54 PM, Antonin Scriabin wrote:

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Gwern Branwen — 17 Dec 2013, 00:57 · in reply to Daniel Otto Jack Petersen

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So to put this in further context:

"Babies know it," Dorcas said. "They know it before they learn to speak, but by the time they're old enough to talk, they have forgotten most of it. At least, someone told me that once."

"That's what I mean, something like that. The brown book is a collection of the myths of the past, and it has a section listing all the keys of the universe - all the things people have said were The Secret after they had talked to mystagogues on far worlds or studied the popul vuh of the magicians, or fasted in the trunks of holy trees. Thecla and I used to read them and talk about them, and one of them was that everything, whatever happens, has three meanings. The first is its practical meaning, what the book calls, 'the thing the plowman sees.' The cow has taken a mouthful of grass, and it is real grass, and a real cow - that meaning is as important and as true as either of the others. The second is the reflection of the world about it. Every object is in contact with all others, and thus the wise can learn of the others by observing the first. That might be called the soothsayers' meaning, because it is the one such people use when they prophesy a fortunate meeting from the tracks of serpents or confirm the outcome of a love affair by putting the elector of one suit atop the patroness of another."

"And the third meaning?" Dorcas asked.

"The third is the transsubstantial meaning. Since all objects have their ultimate Origin in the Pancreator, and all were set in motion by him, so all must express his will - which is the higher reality."

Now, when I hear 'soothsayers' in close proximity to 'one suit', my instant expectation is that we are talking about Tarot and fortunetelling. Foretelling a love affair is exactly the sort of thing Tarot might be used for. And this would be far from the first reference to Tarot by Wolfe: I'm sure we haven't forgotten Sorceror's House or "The Computer Iterates the Greater Trumps", and a search on urth.net will turn up still others.

The suits or minor arcana of the Tarot include the knave, the knight, the queen, and the king. 'elector' sounds like the German kings, and 'patroness' is a reasonable description of a queen.

gwern
<http://www.gwern.net>

David Stockhoff — 17 Dec 2013, 02:19 · in reply to Gwern Branwen

That works out a lot better than solitaire=elector=jack.

One of the HR electors was an actual king, so there can be several kings/princes; there can be only one autarch, and he is completely separate from the nobility. That means the elector can easily be a king.

Knights can woo queens, but pages, never.

On 12/16/2013 7:57 PM, Gwern Branwen wrote:
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Andy Robertson — 17 Dec 2013, 05:48 · in reply to David Stockhoff

"Bluer of cheek"= more and darker stubble on the face, if shaven. A thick black beard if not shaven.

And in this bit

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"She" refers to the condition of the ground, or rather the swampy mat of plants, on which Severian is walking. This has no sharply defined edge, and so the boat, which is in a relatively weed-free bit of water, can't get close to the nearly solid bits where Severian is.

hartshorn (Still very happily lurking, and a merry Xmas to you all)