

# Pirate Freedom: Is Chris Blackbeard?

The Urth list — 8 messages, 5 voices, 28 Apr 2015

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6749>

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Robert Pirkola — 28 Apr 2015, 20:26

I can say fairly certainly that Chris is not Blackbeard. Textual evidence strongly suggests that? \*Pirate Freedom\* takes place (in its bulk) in the late 1670's. Edward Teach is generally thought to have been born in 1680 or thereabouts so it seems impossible. Having read a great deal on pirates lately, I have not been able to pinpoint any that scream out as being "who Chris is". My own thoughts are that he is not meant to be a stand-in for any particular historical pirate.

On April 28, 2015 Robin B. Smith wrote:

since Pirate Freedom was brought up here, before I go off and start a new email chain, I've been wondering: has it been discussed that Chris may be Blackbeard? (I did some cursory searching previously, but found no discussion of that point expressly)

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Robin B. Smith — 28 Apr 2015, 21:04 · in reply to Robert Pirkola

Please keep in mind that I'm putting this forth as an hypothesis to be considered, off of just some loose thinking.

I haven't had a re-read to scrutinize and make a better case for this conjecture, but here's the gist: after returning as Ignacio to the past, and past the events within the book, he recovers the treasure and lives out his life of Pirate Freedom as Blackbeard (inventing the Edward Teach biography, etc.)

- based on the chronology worked out by Ed Edson, there seems to be a suggestion by Chris that at the time of writing (2017) that he will have died 300 years prior, 1717, roughly the date of Blackbeard's death and the end of the golden age of piracy -- this struck me as a clue, especially since he make a point of also including the date of Blackbeard's death within the text

- Blackbeard is mentioned once (if I recall correctly) by Chris in the text and then is listed in the glossary; in the glossary he is stated to be Edward Teach, which I feel could not-too-implausibly be a trick by Wolfe to obscure--explicitly giving the name of Blackbeard to throw detectives off.

- Blackbeard's MO of making a show and trying to minimize killing seems to align pretty nicely with Chris's own feelings

- Wolfe likes elaborating history with fiction -- I'm specifically inspired by The Devil in a Forest; he could have conceived of this as a grand opportunity to weave his own threads into the tapestry of piracy (along with a counter-intuitive chance to do time-travel)

- It feels like something Wolfe might get a kick out of doing

I'm well aware that this is not much of a case nor is it strictly based on evidence, and it does have some faulty lines of reasoning. I'm going on my feeling here, for the book and for Wolfe, and it is at least fun to consider (so please, don't immediately discard it out of hand).

On Tue, Apr 28, 2015 at 3:26 PM, Robert Pirkola <rpirkola at hotmail.com> wrote:

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Robert Pirkola — 28 Apr 2015, 21:33 · follows Robin B. Smith

Robin,

I think you are on to something but maybe not quite what you were thinking. ?Since the narrative likely ends (in the past) somewhere near 1680, the date of Blackbeard's supposed birth, it is probably more likely that Chris's son with Novia is Blackbeard if anyone is.

---

Robin B. Smith — 28 Apr 2015, 22:09 · in reply to Robert Pirkola

I like this possibility too! Makes me want to get to re-reading promptly and see if anything stands out with this in mind.

I appreciate the discussion

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 29 Apr 2015, 04:26 · in reply to Robin B. Smith

Well, it's an interesting theory, though Blackbeard was born in England.

On Tue, Apr 28, 2015 at 3:09 PM, Robin B. Smith <robinbsmith at gmail.com> wrote:

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Robert Pirkola — 29 Apr 2015, 15:13 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

You are correct Dan'I. "Though it is more likely that if anyone is Blackbeard it is Chris's child rather than"

Chris himself, it just seems to present too many insuperable problems. "Calico Jack, Mary Read and Anne Bonney

are also mentioned in the character list at the end, but I don't believe they are there to tell us that

Captain Burt, Novia, or Estrellita are those historical people. ?Instead their respective biographies

enlighten us to the surprising authenticity of what might otherwise be thought to be entirely from

Wolfe's imagination. ?"

On Tue, Apr 28, 2015 Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote:

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Gwern Branwen — 29 Apr 2015, 15:33 · in reply to Robert Pirkola

This has been suggested before, but I don't think anyone has offered a good answer to: why should Chris or Chris's son becoming Blackbeard be the esoteric meaning of Pirate Freedom? What thematic sense does it make or depth add?

When you realize (or more likely, are told) that Weer is an unquiet ghost in Peace, suddenly all the vague musings and recollections snap into place as you have been given a skeleton key to Weer's past sins. When you learn that the Hierodules and futures have been manipulating Severian all along to turn him into the Autarch who can renew Urth, then likewise one begins to understand much of New Sun. With Long Sun, we have a good man worshipping false gods who eventually transcends them in becoming a great man. And so on. (I would say part of why An Evil Guest and other recent Wolfe novels are so unsatisfactory is that no one has figured out an esoteric reading which seems to justify and improve on the exoteric narration of events, rather than be relatively minor plot events on the order of 'at the end of Sorcerer's House the protagonist kills and replaces his twin'.)

But with Blackbeard, saying Chris/son become him is fun, certainly, and a cute link, but it doesn't seem to change the story significantly like it should. Unless someone can think of a way in which that link makes things much more profound and meaningful, I think Blackbeard is a

dead end and we're stuck with existing lines of inquiry about the other captain being Chris molding his younger self (which sounds like it could be interesting and at least has some Wolvean precedent in \_Three Heads of Cerberus\_).

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

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DAVID STOCKHOFF — 29 Apr 2015, 16:44 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Presumably, the theory would require a rewrite (i.e., falsification, probably by Chris/Blackbeard himself) of Blackbeard's biography. Otherwise, Blackbeard: The Early Years would tend to invite disbelief.

On Wednesday, April 29, 2015 12:26 AM, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:

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