

Urth Ending

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 14 May 1997

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Joel Priddy — 14 May 1997, 15:44

Just finished a second reading of Urth_of_the_New_Sun_. I feel like I slept-walked through it the first time. Especially those last two chapters. I guess you know you're starting to get somewhere with a Wolfe book when the ending actually feels like an ending, not like particularly rude coitus interruptus. So let's talk about that ending... Maybe this has been well-sewn up in the Lexicon, but I haven't gotten around to ordering a copy yet (my girlfriend, the credit card in the family, has said she'll be placing a big order at Amazon.com in a while). But First...

---SPOILERS----real big SPOILERS---

Let me just make sure I have the ending right...

After returning to Ushas from the earliest days of man's habitation of Urth, Severian finds it seeded by the sailors who'd fought against him on Yesod (either past versions of the sailors, or memory-wiped sailors, or the children of the sailors...?). The seed-humans descendants worship the four survivors we know of from the flooding of the House Absolute, including Severian, the Sleeper, who wasn't among them when they landed, but not including Eata, who may have been (unless he died during Severian's story, instead of just falling asleep). The people have built bowers for their gods, and Severian apparently takes up residence in his bower in order to indulge in his taste for writing memoirs. Severian has regained access to the Corridors of Time, and seems to plan on building up his skill at traveling time, stating that he is but an apprentice where the Green Man is a Master. He earlier stated that he'd like to go back and visit the inn at Os, and he may have done so (or is going to be about to do so after writing his Ushas memoirs) many times, because he thinks he may have seen several of his face looking in through the door when the dead man chopped it open (it must have been a wide hall to contain multiple Severian's, since he wouldn't want to merge with any of his other selves by coming too close to them).

So when we leave second-generation eilodon Severian, it seems that he's a time-traveler who can visit any point during the life span of the White Fountain, which reaches back as far as the earliest days of humans on Urth. He can visit the same place and time multiple times, as long as he never gets too close to himself.

This, by the way, would seem to include the time during which the Whorl was built. Could the White Fountains power reach a Severian across yet further light years and inside an asteroid? It seems to have trouble reaching him when the Urth is between him and it, but not when he's in a totally different level of reality (the stream between universe). Might Severian eventually cover the past of Urth and the future of Ushas so thoroughly that he hops aboard spaceships to tour new sights? I hope not. I really hope not. As much as I want a stronger link between New_Sun and Long_Sun, I don't want it to be Severian. He belongs to the one series, not to the other, IMHO.

So anyway, before I go back and read the first four books with the assumption that every character that the narrator doesn't come into physical contact with is another Severian, does my summary sound right, or have I missed something important? And how much does this ending reflect at all on the contents of the original series? Urth_ was written well after the first

4, and wasn't planned when the first 4 were written, right? So would time-duplicate Severians in the first 4 be retro-fitting, or do you think Wolfe intended Severian to be a four-dimensional hero from the beginning? Other than the obvious example of Apu-Panchau.

Of course, another possible ending is that Severian is as bound by the worship of the people of Ushas as Apu-Panchau was by the worship of the autocthons, and never leaves his bower, and he only thought he might have seen his face at the inn. Trapped little godling Severian spends the rest of his existence being worshipped by fisher-folk, occasionally having wine with Odillo's ghost.

Hmm... this post has become a monster, so I won't even start on the eclipse of Apu-Panchau. But I'll get back to it.

JOEL
(gizzard cum cyphlothorax)

m.driussi — 14 May 1997, 22:01 · follows Joel Priddy

Reply: Item #4900689 from URTH at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET01#

Joel,

Yep, that sounds about right. <g>

(But "earliest days of humans on Urth" should be "earliest days of White Fountain starlight on Urth.")

(Quick--who's buried in Severian's tomb in the necropolis of the Old Citadel; what was his rank and when did he die?) <heh-heh-heh>

=mantis=

Jason Voegele — 14 May 1997, 22:04 · follows m.driussi

(Quick--who's buried in Severian's tomb in the necropolis of the Old Citadel; what was his rank and when did he die?) <heh-heh-heh>

=mantis=

Evil! That was evil!!! <g>

I suppose your going to say you've solved all of the "Mysteries of the New Sun" too, aren't you? Just because you wrote the Lexicon doesn't mean you can go around taunting us with all these little tidbits! :)

Jason

m.driussi — 15 May 1997, 05:37 · follows Jason Voegele

Reply: Item #9272096 from URTH at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET00#

Jason,

Well no, I haven't solved all the mysteries. And as you've probably noticed, the "solutions" I do have tend to be provisional and wooly--my little nose goblins, if you will. ;^1

But if I can trick you into coming up with an answer I don't have, well then, that would be a fine thing!

=mantis=