

Urth Scylla & Blue Mother

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 11 Jul 2002

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Charles Reed — 11 Jul 2002, 14:14

Hello.

This is my first posting to the Urth mailing list, so I just want to say howdy to everyone. I've read pretty much all of the (no-longer-active) Whorl archives and am gradually working my way through the Urth archives, and all of it's really fascinating. I almost feel like I know a lot of you.

Anyway, to cut to the chase, I just recently (within the last month) finished reading the Long Sun and Short Sun books, and am now rereading the original New Sun books. In reading through the Whorl archives, I noticed that several people seemed to have trouble reconciling how the Greater Scylla from Urth knows how to communicate with the Mother from Blue. At the risk of presuming to know more than my betters (and of repeating something that has already been pointed out), I think I have an answer: In THE SHADOW OF THE TORTURER, Chapter XIII (titled "The Lictor of Thrax"), after Severian finds out that he is to be exiled to Thrax instead of executed, he climbs to the top of the Matachin tower one last time and surveys his surroundings. Here's the relevant quote from page 104 of the paperback Timescape edition:

"I saw a caique, with high, sharp prow and stern, and a bellying sail, making south with the dark current; and against my will I followed it for a time -- to the delta and the swamps, and at last to the flashing sea where the great beast Abaia, carried from the farther shores of the universe in anteglacial days, wallows until the moment comes for him and his kind to devour the continents."

In light of the phrase, "carried from" there seems to me to be only two ways to read this passage, if you want to reconcile it with the fact that Scylla and the Mother are somehow of the same race of beings:

- 1) The original home for creatures like the Greater Scylla and Abaia was Blue, and somebody from Urth had been to Blue in the far distant past and brought to Urth the sea-creatures that they found there. Or ...
- 2) The original home for these beings was entirely someplace else, but somebody had brought these creatures to both Blue and to Urth.

Personally, I find the second one to be more probable but the first to be more intriguing, especially sine it might help explain how/why Typhon chosen the Green/Blue planetary system for colonization. (He probably had access to records of the time when humans were still space-farers. If so, and if he knew that the Green/Blue system had been previously visited by Urthmen, then that could have led to his choice. This raises some interesting questions, though, about what Typhon knew of the great sea beasts, but that's another topic, isn't it?) In any case, both of the above possibilities reconcile the difficulties of Scylla/Mother communication, don't you think?

I don't how much I'll be able to contribute in the future, but I've grown to really, really love Gene Wolfe's work and am glad that there are people who like to discuss it.

Charles