

Two Ships

The Urth list — 7 messages, 6 voices, 13 Aug 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4157>

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James Jordan — 13 Aug 2003, 15:42

I don't think your Whorl = OneShip hypothesis can stand close inspection, as Crush has pointed out. Thematically, however, there may be something Wolfe intended. The One Ship is related symbolically to the Church: seven sided, existing throughout all of time, moving between the heavens and the Briah-world. The Church-as-Ship is just WAY too common historically for us not to consider it, and Wolfe certainly positions the One Ship in such a way as to point to Church-symbolism.

But that brings up Typhon's ship as a counterfeit, of course, housing false pastiche religions that he established as a way to control the people inside of it. Given that this is indeed the case, Wolfe may have loaded Whorl with "counterfeit equivalents" to the features of the One Ship, for thematic reasons. This might be worth exploring, building on the parallels you have mooted. There has been speculation here to the effect that Typhon intended Whorl to make a circular journey and come back to Urth/Lune at a time after the Flood so he could take over the world again. (To wit: that Blue/Green is a later form of Urth/Lune, or vice versa.) If that theory ever is fully borne out, the notion of a circular journey would be another point of comparison. You know, just for fun: Various fringe Christian sects have said that the Great Pyramid is a key to all of human history, and that it was built before the Flood and is the one human artifact to survive the Flood. Now, consider Typhon sleeping on the highest mountain on Urth, perhaps intending to awaken and take over after the coming Flood. Assuming for the nonce that this was Typhon's intention, perhaps Wolfe had this old Pyramid myth in mind....

Nutria

Lisa Schaffer-Doggett — 14 Aug 2003, 05:11 · follows James Jordan

On Wednesday, August 13, 2003, at 08:42 AM, James Jordan wrote:

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Don agrees. He finds this a most likely scenario, the Whorl as a corruption of Tzadkiel's ship. Or perhaps a lesser imitation since he is suspicious of the "holiness" of the Hiero's.

On Wednesday, August 13, 2003, at 08:04 AM, James Wynn wrote:

The only way I can think to salvage this theory is to say that Severian's ship was *first* the Whorl, retrofitted over time to eventually become Severian's ship. In that case, the time-line problems disappear and all the problems in technology can be explained by the passage of time. This is a less elegant solution than you were looking for since it doesn't explain "the cargo". But IMO it resolves some nasty snarls.

Don doesn't think this is likely. However, Silk did leave for the Whorl at the end of RttW and it went on it's merry way to who knows where. Maybe it went to Yesod. If Silk is Typhon redeemed then this makes an interesting circle. Hmmm.

James Wynn — 14 Aug 2003, 12:53 · follows Lisa Schaffer-Doggett

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Crush responds:

Well, of course its unlikely. Its a cumbersome theory whose main benefit is that it explains the Whorl's existence in view of the captain's claim that there is only *one* ship. Not one "true" ship -- one ship. Of course, there are more cumbersome theories that I hold true, and two other options -- that the captain was wrong or that Wolfe messed up (the most likely explanation) and both seem like cheating to me.

There is one other option I can think of: The Whorl returned to Urth or wherever before Severian's ascent to the throne. But that is also unlikely if one believes Severian is contemporaneous with Silk. Anyway, how would all the inhabitants land? What would become of the Whorl? It would still "exist" in orbit.

--- Crush

matthew.malthouse — 14 Aug 2003, 13:18 · follows James Wynn

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There's another way of looking at it. A qualitative difference between "ships" and "Ship".

The ships of men which are prosaic things, with which the empire of man (from which Typhon retreated) was made and possibly one type of which form the towers of the Citadel. The Ship of Tzadkiel, the ship that can navigate the rivers of time, that can cross between Briah and Yesod, that can appear to be many because it's voyages cross and recross it's own path in both space and time almost infinitely.

Matthew

[If the spill chucker had had it's way that could have been "The Ship of Twaddle ... cross between Brian and Yeast"]

Andrew Bollen — 14 Aug 2003, 14:21 · follows matthew.malthouse

The universes of New Sun and Short Sun really don't fit together very snugly. IMO, if you took them as standalones, you'd say that Short Sun is in the future, while New Sun is in the *deep* future. A few hundred years versus a geological age or two. I think that GW did a lot of back-filling to tie them together. (Not that I really mind - myths are generally cobbled together from pieces which don't fit very well, in a logical sense.)

Obvious examples:

- Typhon in New Sun at least desires to rule an inter-stellar empire, and offers Sev the job of satrap of Earth. How does this make any sense without superluminal travel? If Typhon can travel faster than light, why build the Whorl? If he can't, is he really going to feel good about a clunky slower-than-light hollow asteroid crawling through space while the immense ship/s of the Hiero-whatsits leap/s over dimensional boundaries?
- The universe of New Sun has a bunch of human-settled planets in some kind of contact with each other, if only via port-calls by Tzadkiel's ship. Why would Typhon think it was a cool thing

to send out a slow boat to found a crappy little colony when these old, established ones already exist, and he presumably intends to conquer them?

- The literary survivals from our age in the Chras Writings are **really** implausible for a deep future setting.

- At some point in Exodus Silk talks of French and Latin as extant languages (at least literary languages). Ditto.

- Why none of the bio-engineered animals from New Sun on the Whorl? No destriers, no smilodons ...

- Why no chems on Urth, apart from throwbacks like Jonah? Maybe there are some around at the time of Sev vs Typhon in UOTNS; we don't meet them, AFAIK. But surely Typhon's army would have been predominantly chems?

Chris — 14 Aug 2003, 17:27 · follows Andrew Bollen

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Civet throws in:

Or, perhaps Tzadkiel's Ship is the archetypal ship (or the ideal form of "shipness" if you want to go Platonic). Tzadkiel himself seems to operate in the symbolic/angelic realm. It seems to make more sense than interpreting it in a strictly physical way (and the transition from Yesod to Briah is debatably a metaphysical one in the first place).

It also, now that I think about it, has a certain logic of its own. Tzadkiel's Ship seems to visit Urth during even the most primitive periods of technology or sophistication of the natives. Why? Well, strictly speaking of it as a freighter, there's no good reason I can think of. Instead, we can say that Tzadkiel's Ship visits all these eras because **it has to, by nature** - because all ships are the Ship.

Lisa Schaffer-Doggett — 15 Aug 2003, 03:42 · follows Chris

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Don replies:

I think that these "inconsistencies" that you bring up may very well point to another motive for the existence of the Whorl. In some perverse way, I think Typhon is seeking to create a renewed "Urth" (meaning whatever planet he chooses to colonize. It will be Urth like, be full of Urthlings, Urth technology and Urth animals). French and Latin could easily be recreated from the books in the Library (or whatever stands in for the Library in Typhon's time). Remember, the Whorl is not Urth and doesn't have to reflect what the trends and patterns are there. It is only a reflection of Typhon's will. As far as chem armies, they'd be much more costly and alienating than human ones. The bio engineered animals aren't there because Typhon doesn't want them. Just some thoughts.