

Typhon & the Whorl (was Prior Race On Blue And Green)

The Urth list — 10 messages, 6 voices, 17 Dec 2007

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4956>

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Dan — 17 Dec 2007, 19:12

At 03:26 AM 12/17/2007, gwern wrote:

On Dec 16, 2007, at 9:50 PM, Michael Dale wrote:

Who is the Undine that exist on Blue? It is not Scylla if she is also on Urth I think. (so long that SilkHorn cannot time travel)

I heard someone say that the undines put a blackhole in the sun. I don't think so since they want to survive on the Urth also.

I don't know that I like this idea, but it's a new one to me:

What if the Whorl never actually GOES anywhere?

I've wondered before what the acceleration means in terms of whether its bodies of water stay put, and whether that gives a maximum and minimum time for its trip.

But what happens if the Whorl just kinda wanders around the Solar System for a few centuries, or millennia, or aeons, and Silk's trip to meet Severian is "mere" time travel, not spatial travel? What if Blue and Green *are* Earth and Venus in the future after the arrival of the New Sun?

I now need to think and read and see whether that's at all internally consistent.

Another sort-of-snarky point: what if TBot*S isn't _meant_ to be hard SF?

Maybe we're just supposed to read it as _The Dying Earth_ written by someone who can really, really write (look, I like Jack Vance too, but he's no Gene Wolfe), and who has read his Borges.

Adam

That *might* work. It's been used in hard sci-fi before; I think particularly of Baxter's Xeelee Sequence and _Ring_.

You would expect the Whorl to accelerate to near-C for a few decades. The gravity both on Blue and Green as well as the Whorl seem to be as close to normal as makes no difference, so our acceleration/deceleration could be at most 1.0Gs of accel. It would take a while to reach .9c, but if we grant 150/1500 years for the initial acceleration, that's more than enough to get a very very high velocity, and spend a couple decades hanging around at ridiculous time dilations. I mean, I don't know the math, but I suspect fractions of millions of years are possible here. Baxter has the Great Northern spend 1000 time-dilated years, ending up 5 million years after launch; 300 years ought to get us at least 1 million years into the future.

That scenario gives us some stuff to look for: acceleration and then

deceleration would probably be symmetrical, so we could expect to see some signal or occurrence some decades before 'arrival' when the Whorl stopped accelerating or coasting and began the deceleration from relativistic speeds.

We could also expect signs of even more advanced age in the universe, but given that Sol would've been rejuvenated at this point by Severian, I'm hard-pressed to say what those signs would be.

And further, why would Typhon send a colony off into the far future to a world he already solidly ruled? In *_Ring_* it was because the vessel was dragging around one end of a wormhole, while the other end remained in the past; a wormhole allowing timetravel between megayears has obvious utility, but what good does planting a colony in the far future do? Preventing the extinction of humanity is an obvious goal, but that seems awfully altruistic for Typhon.

I agree that Typhon would never do anything out of altruism. I'm not sure what you mean by "a world he already solidly ruled." Typhon was abandoned and besieged and was awaiting the arrival of the Conciliator to free him of Piaton's stubborn hold on his involuntary functions (which he did and he did, lol). Remember during his brief discussion with Severian, Typhon is absolutely arrogant. This and personal survival are his twin drives for injecting a copy of himself into the Whorl project and hijacking it. Being STL, no one saw it's utility in escaping the global cooling "disaster" that had befallen the Earth. I don't think it was built from the ground up (or shiprock in) as a personal vessel for Typhon's digital self and its amusement. The time frame is too long and his position too tenuous for him to oversee it's completion. Typhon simply copied himself into the mainframe and created it's religion or inserted himself in it as it's Godhead and his treacherous family as pantheon of lesser gods.

Whatever the original design, I think Typhon wanted the Whorl to return to Earth after things calmed down after a few centuries to "recolonize" using technical experts released from suspended animation to start fixing things, millions of peons that worshipped him as a god to provide the labor and armies of chems to reestablish order. Then they could either revive the original Typhon or if he was lost Pas could download into a suitable body and reestablish his empire and glory.

Evidently something went wrong with his plan when he was deposed by his children and the inhumani hijacked the ship and redirected it to Green/Blue.

Dan

gwern0 at gmail.com — 17 Dec 2007, 22:00 · in reply to Dan

On 2007.12.17 13:12:39 -0600, Dan <autarch at vipn.com> scribbled 4.9K characters:

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Dan

Perhaps I missed something (I've not read Long or Short sun as thoroughly as I should have), but why are you assuming the Whorl was launched during the latter days of Typhon's empire? An advanced, complex, long-term, and hence extremely expensive interstellar generation-spaceship is not the sort of project you launch when everything is decaying around you. It's the sort of hubristic project launched just before or during one's prime.

gwern

Mace tekka .375 RX- nowhere Templar imagery Keyhole AMEMB gold

Dan — 18 Dec 2007, 17:51 · follows gwern0 at gmail.com

At 05:20 PM 12/17/2007, gwern wrote:

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gwern

Three things: the fact that his mountain monument depicts Typhon with one head ("home" and his seat of power built during his prime) while two headed Pas depicts Typhon as he appears after the life extension transplant. I'd say most rulers are only concerned with their legacy toward the end of their reign. Wanting to extend his life shows that's exactly where Typhon was at. If the Whorl was built or started at the height of his power, I'm sure he would have scanned himself and downloaded into Mainframe immediately in case he was assassinated which would subvert the whole point of the project. Thus he would have been mono-headed.

The solar/global cooling disaster ushered in Typhon's decline by severing him from his interstellar empire when his appointees absconded with his FTL ships (but since his doctors came from other worlds, we know he was grafted before this). Due to this the STL colony ship was his only way out but without the Conciliator there to heal him there was really no point in him going anywhere. So he opted instead just to send a digital copy of himself. The way Typhon recounts the events it seems his decline was rapid (within a few years). This may have been a large enough window to start and complete such a project, but I think it was already complete or nearing completion. Typhon may have had little or no interest in it at all until his decline. That's why I think he hijacked the Whorl when it was nearing completion or perhaps after it was already enroute.

The Pas cult always seemed forcibly kludged over the two distinct cultures we see in BotLS. It was the instigator of a great deal of death, destruction, chaos and waste amongst the cargo and caused a great deal of damage to the ship itself due to the pantheon's digital familial infighting. Hardly things you'd want on a generational colony ship. This indicates to me that this pantheon wasn't part of the Whorl's original design and smacks of Typhon's influence after the fact.

Dan

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 18 Dec 2007, 20:03 · follows Dan

On Wed, 19 Dec 2007 04:51:47 +1100 Dan <autarch at vipn.com> wrote:

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One thing which points the other way: chem soldiers were stockpiled "for maybe 20 years" before being loaded onto the Whorl, according to Hammerstone.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 18 Dec 2007, 20:35 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

On Dec 18, 2007 12:03 PM, <thalassocrat at nym.hush.com> wrote:
One thing which points the other way: chem soldiers were stockpiled
"for maybe 20 years" before being loaded onto the Whorl, according
to Hammerstone.

Doesn't mean that they'd been stockpiled originally for that purpose
-- only that Hammerstone thinks so.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

I am miserable, he is miserable,

We are miserable.

Can't we have a party? Would he rather have a party?

gwern0 at gmail.com — 20 Dec 2007, 05:11 · in reply to Dan

On 2007.12.18 11:51:47 -0600, Dan <autarch at vipn.com> scribbled 4.3K characters:

At 05:20 PM 12/17/2007, gwern wrote:

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OK, here's another sticking point for me. We both agree Typhon's decline was swift, and so it's unlikely the Whorl was constructed during or after the period where he was stranded on Urth.

It somewhat follows from that that the whorl was not originally intended to be an escape vessel for some form of Typhon. But the Whorl is a STL ship! Why, in a period where there was FTL travel, and extremely capacious FTL travel (the ship Severian travels on in Urth of the New Sun is just absolutely colossal) at that, would they have planned and begun to construct an STL vessel in the first place? Even if the available FTL vessels couldn't carry so much cargo, they might still best STL vessels given that they could make multiple trips.

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Dan

gwern

X400 NAVCM F-22 SERT rain RIT Gulf BLACKER clones cryptanalysis

Dan — 21 Dec 2007, 06:54 · follows gwern0 at gmail.com

At 04:48 PM 12/19/2007, thalassocrat wrote:

One thing which points the other way: chem soldiers were stockpiled "for maybe 20 years" before being loaded onto the Whorl, according to Hammerstone.

I think that is good evidence for how long it took to construct the Whorl, which reinforces my point that Typhon hijacked it. It wasn't built specifically as a personal monument to his grandeur or chariot to the stars. If anything, it seems like a living cultural museum to preserve Earth's social diversity. Given the rapidity of the decline and the length of time for construction it almost seems that there was extraterrestrial influence to motivate it's construction and then bring about the disaster which would necessitate it's existence. Like Noah's Ark and the great flood.

At 06:58 AM 12/20/2007, gwern wrote:

OK, here's another sticking point for me. We both agree Typhon's decline was swift, and so it's unlikely the Whorl was constructed during or after the period where he was stranded on Urth.

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I have a vague memory that in Citadel, there was a discussion about technology (which may have tied in with why the Hieros didn't use their ships to save the doomed population) with the point being that Earth couldn't make everything and some things had to be procured from other worlds. I think FTL technology would fall under this category and no doubt the Hieros would be reluctant to part with it. Especially to a tyrant like Typhon. The ones he had under his control may have been loaners or inherited from previous, more benevolent rulers. Besides, I don't see the Whorl as a lifeboat, more of a living museum. Far more people could be accommodated by

better utilizing it's volume than wasting it to isolate culturally different city states.

thalassocrat wrote:

Abaia etc are in the oceans of Urth during Typhon's reign, and given that his family knows about them, presumably he does too (whereas in NS their presence seems to be a new thing for the "resurrected" Typhon).

I always thought Abaia et al was part of the plot against Typhon by his family. That plot got transcribed to the Whorl when they were digitally scanned. They knew about the creatures because it was in the works but the NS Typhon didn't because it never unfolded before he was, uh, dehydrated. I don't recall any indication that Pas knew about them. In Typhon's time they were probably hiding, while in Sev's time they were more actively involved in the war and easier to discover. If Typhon knew of them before he wouldn't have hesitated a second to destroy them if he saw them as a threat. And I certainly doubt he would have given his digital family free run of mainframe if he suspected they were up to something.

As it is, I have to think that Wolfe didn't care very much about making the two series consistent. But if he didn't, then why the tie in at all? So maybe he had something else in mind which I can't figure out.

It's a neat tie in to the previous series and provides one of those "hey wait a second" moments of revelation/realization. I do wish he would write a short story or novel exploring it further.

Pedro Pereira wrote:

As for the reason for constructing the Whorl, the major reason is that Wolfe wanted to write a story about a generation starship. The second is that Typhon wanted Immortality, he wanted to be Remembered. He was a megalomaniac. He wanted to be worshiped for Eternity. So he built the Whorl. Wolfe states so as the main reason in one of his interviews. With the whorl he installs a new colony in which people adore him as a god. As his empire grows, so does his cult. His name will not be a distant thing of no importance to people on the fringes of a nominal-only empire. People will actively worship him even if he never pays a visit in 100 years.

I'd certainly like to read that interview as it directly refutes one of my views on the issue.

Dan

Roy C. Lackey — 21 Dec 2007, 08:15 · follows Dan

Dan wrote:

[snip]

I have a vague memory that in Citadel, there was a discussion about technology (which may have tied in with why the Hieros didn't use their ships to save the doomed population) with the point being that Earth [snip]

I believe you meant Hierogrammates, not Hieros. The Hieros were the humans who cruelly fashioned the Hierogrammates in another universe that collapsed. The Hierogrammates were the only things that mankind had made that survived that universe. Tzadkiel was a Hierogrammate. Yesod is where they reside. It is outside the universe of Briah, which is where Urth is located.

-Roy

Pedro Pereira — 21 Dec 2007, 12:44 · in reply to Dan

The answer is right here in this list. Its one of the few interviews in which memebbers asked questions that Wolfe later answered:

<<<<From: m.driussi at genie.comSubject: (whorl) Train from WolfelandDate: Sat, 14 Jun 97 21:15:00 GMT[Posted from WHORL, the mailing list for Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun]
3. "What was Typhon's purpose in lanunching the Whorl and was theBlue/Green system the intended destination?" Knowing Typhon as I do,he probably had at least half a dozen purposes; but certainly one ofthe chief must have been self-aggrandizement -- to return human kindto the stars would be a very great thing indeed. Yes, the Blue-Greensystem was the intended destination.>>>>

There it is, clear as water.

Pedro

Pedro Pereira — 21 Dec 2007, 12:52 · in reply to Pedro Pereira

And by the way, let me say that the Blue/Green system was the intended destination right from the start according to Wolfe, which puts to rest some theories that the Whorl changed its destination or that someone (or something) hijacked it and changed its original destination.

Pedro

From: domus_artemis at hotmail.comTo: urth at lists.urth.netDate: Fri, 21 Dec 2007 14:44:21 +0200Subject: Re: (urth) Typhon & the Whorl