

Ship Volant

The Urth list — 28 messages, 11 voices, 17 Feb 2009

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5348>

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Jeffrey Brent McBeth — 17 Feb 2009, 17:44 · in reply to Son of Witz

Volant is a heraldry term (as is clear from the text), and while the word does translate as flying, I think it usually means seen from above. (like a pin-board for insects)

Jeff

"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over
the man who cannot read them."
-- Mark Twain

Son of Witz — 17 Feb 2009, 17:44

more illustration related questions:

.....

Shadow 2:

For my part, I had already adopted as my own the device graved in bronze above
the door of a certain mausoleum. They were a fountain rising above waters, and a
ship volant

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Shadow 3:

At last I turned my treasure over, and then indeed I caught my breath; stamped on the reverse
was just such a flying ship as I had seen in the arms above the door of my secret mausoleum.

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This is another situation where I'm conflicted as to how one would represent the Ship Volant.

What makes a ship look like it's flying?
Does the flying ship have masts?

We've seen masts on Tzadkiel's ship, thousands, which I assume would look like a cubist
nightmare clipper, then the masted shuttle that takes Sev and Bergundofora down to Urth, but
other than that, the fliers seem to be mastless, and very sleek. I picture them more or less like
speedboats. sleek. no masts.

A flying ship for Severian would seem Tzadkiels. I assume it's the same for the Autarch (Appian)
who also went to Yessod, presumably on the same ship.

Ok, so the Ship Volant would look like Tzadkiel's ship, but who, without having seen such a ship,
would even think to call it a ship? But then if I pictured a mastless ship, it would just look like a
boat, not a ship?

I know, these are silly concerns, and not crucial to understanding the books, but these details

get tricky when trying to draw it out.

one more:

"A fountain rising above waters"

I've always pictured this as a spray of water. a plume.

does anyone picture it as a sort of literal, garden fountain. sculptural, I mean?

any comments appreciated.

~witz

Son of Witz — 17 Feb 2009, 18:07 · follows Son of Witz

-----Original Message-----

From: Jeffrey Brent McBeth [mailto:mcbeth at broggs.org]

Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2009 09:44 AM

To: 'The Urth Mailing List'

Subject: Re: (urth) Ship Volant

Volant is a heraldry term (as is clear from the text), and while the word does translate as flying, I think it usually means seen from above. (like a pin-board for insects)

Jeff

Thanks for that.

in the web references I saw, the Heraldric(?) uses of the term indicates flying, and usually shows wings.

and then with the description of the coin "flying ship" it would seem to indicate, at a glance, that this ship is in flight, in both bas-relief images, blazon and coin. hmm. How the heck can one make a ship look like it's flying without wings? confounding!

~witz

Jeffrey Brent McBeth — 17 Feb 2009, 18:40 · in reply to Son of Witz

On Tue, Feb 17, 2009 at 06:07:31PM +0000, Son of Witz wrote:

Thanks for that.

in the web references I saw, the Heraldric(?) uses of the term indicates flying, and usually shows wings.

and then with the description of the coin "flying ship" it would seem to indicate, at a glance, that this ship is in flight, in both bas-relief images, blazon and coin. hmm. How the heck can one make a ship look like it's flying without wings? confounding!

Landing gear retracted? Wings extended? I know you said you imagined no wings, and with anti-gravity type tech you probably wouldn't need wings, but that isn't the only wing like structure on a space ship.

Ships that spend any amount of time out in space and have to support human life have a heat disposal problem, and would probably have to have radiator panels. If the ship were atmospheric, you don't want those things flapping around when there is air around, so you would probably make those panels retractable too. Volant would obviously? have theme extended.

I've imagined the ship from the last book as a giant solar sailor, and those sails would have to be positionable and retractable for agility.

I would actually suggest you look at Ad-Astra games for some renderings of how war ships would probably have to look without the invention of new magic physics.

Jeff

"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them."
-- Mark Twain

Jordon Flato — 17 Feb 2009, 19:15 · in reply to Son of Witz

I think we talked about this before, but I am of the firm opinion that it should not attempt to look like Tzadiel's ship at all. First off, Sev, writing Book of the New Sun, hadn't been on Tzadkiel's ship yet. And as you said, if one just saw a representation of it, it wouldn't at all look like anything someone on Urth would call a ship. So I think we can write off the idea that it is to look like Tzadkiel's ship at all (although I've always liked to think that if one looked at The Ship from far enough away, it's seven sided and many sailed silhouette might look a bit like a rose....)

And, as coats-of-arms are made of symbols and not literal figures, I would think a traditional ship would be what is depicted.

Volant? To me, I simply picture an upward tilted profile of a ship. Or a ship straight on with it's prow tilted upward to indicate that it's rising (which would work either profile or head on). On the sea, ships aren't normally at that angle, so it would indicate 'flying' to me.

-Jordon

Son of Witz — 17 Feb 2009, 19:37 · follows Jordon Flato

yeah, we had discussed this over curry.

You're right about Severian not having been on Tzadkiel's ship as of that writing. Using the rising angle is not a bad idea at all, that's how some birds are depicted in Heraldry sites that mention Volant or "rising"

Jordon, did the idea of the ship looking like a rose come from my crappy sketch of it, which did have a rose quality, or did you picture that before?

Isn't there some point where Severian is horrified looking at some painting or depiction of a ship? what was that?

Re: Ad-Astra,

Interesting points about wings. Those ships look very Battlestar Galactica to me, probably technically "realistic". I think why I'm attracted to illustrating this novel is that it "looks" nothing like Space Sci Fi. Even Tzadkiel's ship has wood and sails and rigging. While the ship is a solar sailer, it doesn't seem to look like our modern renderings, somehow it looks like a 7 sided hull with masts coming off from EVERY angle. I think he literally meant a sort of mylar fabric, sheetlike sail with rigging, and not, say, hard solar panels such.

thanks,
~witz

-----Original Message-----

From: Jordon Flato [mailto:jordonflato at gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2009 11:15 AM

To: 'The Urth Mailing List'

Subject: Re: (urth) Ship Volant

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-Jordon

Jordon Flato — 17 Feb 2009, 19:48 · in reply to Son of Witz

I've had the rose idea for a while. I think I remember mentioning that your sketch could go even more in the 'rose like' direction, as it seemed to be clearly going that way. But you know, curry tends to destroy effective memory. And yeah, I can't remember why Severian was horrified at the depiction. The first thing that comes to mind is that it must have looked like one of those typical office posters so well lampooned at Despair.com. Something like a "Thomas Kincaid: Painter of Light" version of Tzadiels ship with bold blue text underneath that reads: "The Ship: Some days you are so busy you just feel like you are meeting yourself coming and going. Only here, it's probably true."

Son of Witz — 17 Feb 2009, 19:54 · follows Jordon Flato

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From: Jordon Flato [mailto:jordonflato at gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2009 11:48 AM

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Subject: Re: (urth) Ship Volant

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Laughing out loud.

David Stockhoff — 17 Feb 2009, 21:02 · follows Son of Witz

That's a knotty question. Jordan expresses exactly my original assumption---but I always imagined an iconic rocket ship pitched or angled upward even though that doesn't fit with what Severian knows. Been reading science fiction for too long.

However, Jeff is right---volant means "Depicted with the wings extended as in flying."

So ... it would have to resemble an oceangoing ship---with hull and deck, masts and sails---but perhaps with sails that extend outward as much as upward, winglike. It could be pitched as well. It could also be seen from above or below, which might be more difficult perspectives from which to identify such a ship.

See this example:

http://shop.cafepress.com/item/heraldry-eagle-volant-large-poster/56534642?cmp=pfc--f--us--054--56534642&utm_source=froogle&utm_medium=productfeed&utm_term=56534642&utm_campaign=large-poster

but also:

<http://www.rafcollection.com/ecart/control/faq;jsessionid=0C254B62E950890745335ACFBF543EBB>

Also, there's no doubt that Severian always had plenty of warning before he used Terminus Est. It was the tool of his trade, after all, and usually he only used it after having been paid for a job. So while he would have wanted his limbs free to suddenly leap aside or block a treacherous swing or blow, he would mostly have simply wanted the sword out of the way, not accessible.

Message: 4
Date: Tue, 17 Feb 2009 17:44:27 +0000
From: "Son of Witz" <sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org>
Subject: (urth) Ship Volant
To: urth at urth.net
Message-ID: <W91940964109691234892667 at webmail36>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset="utf-8"

more illustration related questions:

Shadow 2:

For my part, I had already adopted as my own the device graved in bronze above the door of a certain mausoleum. They were a fountain rising above waters, and a ship volant

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one more:

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does anyone picture it as a sort of literal, garden fountain. sculptural, I mean?

any comments appreciated.

~witz

Jeff

Jeff Wilson — 18 Feb 2009, 05:40 · in reply to Son of Witz

Son of Witz wrote:

-----Original Message-----

From: Jeffrey Brent McBeth [mailto:mcbeth at broggs.org]

Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2009 09:44 AM

To: 'The Urth Mailing List'

Subject: Re: (urth) Ship Volant

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and then with the description of the coin "flying ship" it would seem to indicate, at a glance, that this ship is in flight, in both bas-relief images, blazon and coin. hmm. How the heck can one make a ship look like it's flying without wings? confounding!

It might be drawn with hydrofoils, or with the fins of flying fish.

matthew at calmeilles.co.uk — 18 Feb 2009, 09:08 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

jwilson at io.com wrote:

in the web references I saw, the Heraldric(?) uses of the term indicates flying, and usually shows wings. and then with the description of the coin "flying ship" it would seem to indicate, at a glance, that this ship is in flight, in both bas-relief images, blazon and coin. hmm. How the heck can one make a ship look like it's flying without wings? confounding!

There are several deliberate ambiguities here.

First in heraldry a navire volant is a ship under full sail, those sails bellied by the wind. So the description of the coin and other instances can be read in an entirely conventional manner if you just have that small bit of knowledge.

Second Severian throughout the narrative makes little distinction between a ship of the conventional water going type and a ship of space such as the craft that hovers above Baldander's tower. So here too is an interpretation of "flying ship" that might not really surprise the reader.

Third - and this is something that is perhaps not made really explicit until Urth I think although either Hethor or Jonas allude to them - space, time and universe spanning ships, maybe only one ship, such as that on which Severian travels really do have keels, masts, sails and all the other appurtenances of an ocean going vessel. So a ship flying through the air or space with the mirror sails of high technology (indistinguishable from magic as AC Clarke's famous aphorism has it) is quite conceivable.

I'm curious to know why these successive constructions are presented and my guess is that at least one reason (not to say there aren't several others intended concurrently) is to ease the reader into the suspension of disbelief that allows Tazekiel's ship to literally sail through space and time.

Matthew

Thomas Bitterman — 18 Feb 2009, 14:45 · in reply to Son of Witz

On Tue, Feb 17, 2009 at 12:44 PM, Son of Witz <[sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org](mailto:sonofwitz@butcherbaker.org)> wrote:

This is another situation where I'm conflicted as to how one would represent the Ship Volant.

What makes a ship look like it's flying?
Does the flying ship have masts?

Perhaps it looks like the ship here: <http://www.baen.com/> or: <http://www.tor.com/>. There is a famous sci-fi publisher icon that looks like a zooming rocket (but the icon has changed and I can't remember the publisher). I just figured it was a subtle reference/joke.

one more:

"A fountain rising above waters"

I've always pictured this as a spray of water. a plume.

does anyone picture it as a sort of literal, garden fountain. sculptural, I mean?

I did.

any comments appreciated.

~witz

Enamel

brunians at brunians.org — 18 Feb 2009, 16:43 · in reply to matthew at calmeilles.co.uk

People have been talking seriously about sail powered spaceships for decades.

jwilson at io.com wrote:

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Matthew

Son of Witz — 18 Feb 2009, 16:52 · follows brunians at brunians.org

Thanks. This is all really helpful.

Since I always pictured a masted ship, and Tzadkiel's reinforces that concept, I suppose I'll go with a Ship under full sail, at an upward angle.

It's interesting to see the different responses. I guess I shouldn't be surprised to hear that some folks picture a rocket ship.

Makes it clear to me that while I might try to satisfy the text, it would be very hard to arrive at some consensus image.

Dang. I'm surprised how much I'm enjoying reading this book again. Even more than the second read. nuts.

~Witz

-----Original Message-----

From: matthew at calmeilles.co.uk [mailto:matthew at calmeilles.co.uk]

Sent: Wednesday, February 18, 2009 01:08 AM

To: 'The Urth Mailing List'

Subject: Re: (urth) Ship Volant

jwilson at io.com wrote:

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Matthew

Rob Thornton — 18 Feb 2009, 16:57 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

On Wed, Feb 18, 2009 at 11:43 AM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

People have been talking seriously about sail powered spaceships for decades.

Additionally, I think there are hints that the sails in the Ship are more like the mirrors in Father Inire's quarters than standard solar sails.

rob t.

"Our plan is working perfectly. In mere days, hordes of gay Islamic abortionists will be streaming over the border from Mexico."

--Daily Kos poster

Matthew Malthouse — 18 Feb 2009, 18:32 · in reply to Rob Thornton

At 16:57 18/02/2009, you wrote:

Additionally, I think there are hints that the sails in the Ship are more like the mirrors in Father Inire's quarters than standard solar sails.

More than hints: in Urth the apports that arrive on the ship do so via the mirrored sails that face each other. I think Severian compares them to the book in which two mirrors face themselves and thereby accumulate power which he is shown in his first visit to the House Absolute.

Prosaicly solar sails would surely be most efficient if morrored would they not?

Matthew

Si non confectus, non reficiat

Son of Witz — 18 Feb 2009, 18:36 · follows Matthew Malthouse

I thought the text was pretty clear about making them mirrored, yet flexible. Silvered Sails. I don't think they are rigid, and I believe we encounter masts with sails unfurled. I need to check though.

~witz

-----Original Message-----

From: Matthew Malthouse [mailto:matthew at calmeilles.co.uk]

Sent: Wednesday, February 18, 2009 10:32 AM

To: 'The Urth Mailing List'

Subject: Re: (urth) Ship Volant

At 16:57 18/02/2009, you wrote:

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Roy C. Lackey — 18 Feb 2009, 20:40 · in reply to Son of Witz

Son of Witz wrote:

Thanks. This is all really helpful.

Since I always pictured a masted ship, and Tzadkiel's reinforces that concept, I suppose I'll go with a Ship under full sail, at an upward angle.<<

That is almost certain to be correct. See the description of the tender that brought Severian and Burgundofara back to Urth:

"I recall thinking, as I leaned over the railing and watched dots of red and gold turn to woodlots, and brown smudges to fields of tangled stalks, how strange we should have looked had there been anyone to watch us, a trim pinnacle-just such a vessel as might have lain alongside some wharf in Nessus-floating silently down out of the sky." (URTH, chap. XXVIII, 196)

And when the tender rose:

"We turned-as I believe no one could have helped turning-and watched the tender rise, righting herself as soon as her keel was free of the soil, bobbing in a gentle swell none but she could feel and lifting like a kite. We had come to Urth through clouds, as I have said; but the tender found an opening in them (I cannot but think it was so we might watch her) and rose through it, higher and higher, until hull and masts were no more than a pinprick of golden light. At length we saw her blossom to a shining speck, like the steel that falls from a file; then we knew that her crew had freed her sails, all of silver metal and each bigger than many an isle, and sheeted them home, and that we would not see her again." (ibid. 196-197)

It's interesting to see the different responses. I guess I shouldn't be surprised to hear that some folks picture a rocket ship. Makes it clear to me that while I might try to satisfy the text, it would be very hard to arrive at some consensus image.<<

It is not likely that the image on the coin (the same as on the mausoleum) was of a conventional rocket ship. There were no working spacecraft of that type on Urth. It would be almost impossible to represent the seven-sided Ship of Tzadkiel on a coin. Remember that both Severian and the Old Autarch had been shuttled between Urth and the Ship by a tender like the one described above, and the Old Autarch's face was on the obverse side of the coin. The flying ship was the symbol he and Severian (and possibly Ymar) had in common.

-Roy

Jeffrey Brent McBeth — 18 Feb 2009, 21:04 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

On Wed, Feb 18, 2009 at 02:40:36PM -0600, Roy C. Lackey wrote:

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Plus, if it were a conventional rocket ship, they wouldn't have been so quick to call what they were living in "Towers"

Jeff

"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them."
-- Mark Twain

Son of Witz — 18 Feb 2009, 21:28 · follows Jeffrey Brent McBeth

Roy, thanks for justifying it with the text. great stuff.

I agree about the significance this ship has linking Severian, the Autarch, and Ymar. I feel certain the face on that particular coin is the current Autarch (Appian) because of the androgeny. First he thinks it's a woman's face, which is more or less his first thought when he meets Appian in the House Azure.

Man, I wish I had all day to draw on this stuff right now. so rarely get the time to work on it.

~witz

-----Original Message-----

From: Roy C. Lackey [mailto:rclackey at stic.net]

Sent: Wednesday, February 18, 2009 12:40 PM

To: 'The Urth Mailing List'

Subject: Re: (urth) Ship Volant

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-Roy

David Stockhoff — 19 Feb 2009, 03:31 · follows Son of Witz

Bingo. Or Severian would have called the image on the coin a "tower volant." And on fire as well, presumably. I doubt there's a heraldry term for that!

Message: 2

Date: Wed, 18 Feb 2009 16:04:13 -0500

From: Jeffrey Brent McBeth <mcbeth at broggs.org>

Subject: Re: (urth) Ship Volant

To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <20090218210413.GB13404 at broggs.org>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset="us-ascii"

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Plus, if it were a conventional rocket ship, they wouldn't have been so quick to call what they were living in "Towers"

Jeff

Jeff Wilson — 19 Feb 2009, 04:39 · in reply to David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff wrote:

Bingo. Or Severian would have called the image on the coin a "tower volant." And on fire as well, presumably. I doubt there's a heraldry term for that!

"in flames"

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BrusinoArsizio-coat_of_arms.svg

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com

< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

matthew at calmeilles.co.uk — 19 Feb 2009, 10:36 · in reply to David Stockhoff

dstockhoff at verizon.net wrote:

Bingo. Or Severian would have called the image on the coin a "tower volant." And on fire as well, presumably. I doubt there's a heraldry term for that!

Two options; if "proper" ie depicted with a degree of realism "aflame" as in:

Arms impaled. Dexter: Arms party per fess Gules and Argent; in chief a cross of the second with

a heart enflamed in centre Or and upon a chief of the second three fleur-de-lis per fess of the third; in base a carpenter's square per chevron between three lilies of the second. Sinister: Or, issuant from a base wavy Azure a tower aflame Argent, the tongues of fire Gules; on a chief of the third a Cedar of Lebanon Proper.

<http://www.htdiocese.org/BishopsOffice/tabid/707/Default.aspx>

If symbolic wavy hauriant Gules indented Or - red vertical wavy lines with inside border of gold - would be understood as would anything vaguely similar, eg the Congressional Space Medal of honour a red line on white band symbolises both the "fire" of the rockets and courage of astronauts. <http://history.nasa.gov/spacemedal1.pdf>

Matthew

David Stockhoff — 20 Feb 2009, 02:56 · follows matthew at calmeilles.co.uk

Awesome! ----- Message: 2 Date: Wed, 18 Feb 2009 22:39:30 -0600 From: Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com> Subject: Re: (urth) Ship Volant To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net> Message-ID: <499CE282.7070006 at io.com> Content-Type: text/plain;

charset=ISO-8859-1; format=flowed David Stockhoff wrote:

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http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BrusinoArsizio-coat_of_arms.svg

-- Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com < <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

Jeffrey Brent McBeth — 02 Mar 2009, 18:27 · in reply to Son of Witz

On Tue, Feb 17, 2009 at 07:37:58PM +0000, Son of Witz wrote:

Interesting points about wings. Those ships look very Battlestar Galactica to me, probably technically "realistic".

This comment has confused me for a while, as their ships don't look Battlestar Galactica at all, and I think I finally figured out what happened. Ad-Astra has three lines now rather than just the one. I meant to look into the Ten-Worlds line rather than their imagining of Weber's Honorverse. The best images I could find were (unfortunately) on t-shirts (unless you get their calendar, which is pretty, but silly with two months already gone)

<http://www.cafepress.com/irrationalshop/2047067>

Although the quotes around "realistic" is a bit silly too. Given current physics, there a lot of features on the outside of a deep-space manned space ship that would have to look a certain way to be feasible.

Sorry again for resurrecting an old topic, later down this discussion people came to a much more sane idea of what an illustration from the books should look like: Jeff

"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them."

-- Mark Twain

Son of Witz — 03 Mar 2009, 17:13 · follows Jeffrey Brent McBeth

Hope that wasn't eating at you this long, Jeffrey.
yeah, those ones on the shirt are much more in line and not very BSG looking.

(also, BTW, not really feeling the last few BSG episodes...hmmmmm.)

danke,
~witz

-----Original Message-----

From: Jeffrey Brent McBeth [mailto:mcbeth at broggs.org]

Sent: Monday, March 2, 2009 10:27 AM

To: 'The Urth Mailing List'

Subject: Re: (urth) Ship Volant

On Tue, Feb 17, 2009 at 07:37:58PM +0000, Son of Witz wrote:

Interesting points about wings. Those ships look very Battlestar
Galactica to me, probably technically "realistic".

This comment has confused me for a while, as their ships don't look
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Jeff

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"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over
the man who cannot read them."

-- Mark Twain

Jeffrey Brent McBeth — 03 Mar 2009, 17:18 · in reply to Son of Witz

On Tue, Mar 03, 2009 at 05:13:27PM +0000, Son of Witz wrote:

Hope that wasn't eating at you this long, Jeffrey.

Eating, no, but I play the games quite a bit, and everytime I saw a picture of one of the ships, I
would squint to try to see BSG designs :)

As far as the show goes, I'm still stuck back shortly after they escape the planet where they had
decided to colonize, so I have a bit of catching up to do :) (I don't care that much about spoilers,
however)

Jeff

"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them."

-- Mark Twain

Matthew Groves — 27 Apr 2009, 00:58 · follows Jeffrey Brent McBeth

Apropos of the question of the necessity of wings on a heraldic representation of anything "volant," I find this quote in *Soldier of the Mist* (62): "[H]er oars, with the foam on them, made her look like a bird with four white wings." Someone else here suggested that banks of oars might suggest wings (and that the many masts on the *Tzadkiel* might suggest both banks of oars and wings). This quote lends support to that idea.