

Mysteries of Whorlography; "Starcrosser's Landfall"

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 18 Apr 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/211>

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David_Lebling — 18 Apr 1997, 11:10

*** Talon's questions, and some attempts at answers:

"Why is Viron colder than Triviguante?" (IV, 79)

Viron is colder than Triviguante for two reasons. One is that Lake Limna is cold and exerts a lake effect on the surrounding territory. (People who try to swim in Limna get out pretty quickly, we are told). The lake is "artificially" cold: lakes make a good way to radiate heat from the interior of the whorl if you put a good radiator on the exterior. The second explanation is that by manipulating the sun and the shade (not to mention the air-conditioning tunnels), the scientists at Mainframe can produce climates and seasons to order. They can make the shade cover more of the sun or reduce the sun's output to produce colder weather, or make the shade's opacity or the sun's output change during the diurnal cycle to produce climates. Triviguante is south of Viron, which means it gets full sun at a different time of day. (Recall that places at the same latitude are in the same "time zone" on the whorl). To make Triviguante warmer, you just make aperture of the shade wider when it's toward Triv, or make the shade a tad more transparent when the shade faces Triv at night. Also, Triv is in a desert, which might affect its microclimate.

"How to mountains cast shadows if the sun is directly overhead?" (I, 91)

The shadows aren't etched in stone, as someone suggested. They probably move a little as the part of the sun obscured by the shade changes during the day. Obviously, if the aperture through which the sun shines is directly overhead, they don't cast shadows. However, at other times of day there would be shadows, albeit unusual, nearly immobile, and small from our short sun point of view.

"How does seeing the lake let Chenille know she is getting closer?" (II, 144)

We know that Lake Limna is south of Viron, and Blood can see it "like a mirror" from his mansion. My guess is that between Viron and Limna is a relatively built-up and wooded area. When you are in this area you can't see the lake, but as you get closer you get out of the obscuring buildings and trees and can see it again. (This is an unsatisfying explanation, I admit).

"What is meant by the term 'horizon'?" (II, 255)

Maybe the horizon is the opposite of our usage: the line beyond which distant objects rise above "level ground" and are visible? Isn't Silk referring to distant cities that are also in the dark when Viron is in the dark in this passage? These would be cities somewhat north or south of Viron, but not so far north or south as to be in the sun. Cities directly east or west would be invisible at all times.

*** I'll add some more of my own, with commentary:

"How big is the Whorl?" "What is its shape?"

It's at least 200 leagues (how big is a league?) east-west (lengthwise), and probably much more (Iolar remarks on a weather front 200 leagues away just before he is attacked by the eagle). It takes the airship a couple of days to get from Viron to Mainframe. At five miles per hour (a conservative estimate, as the wind aids them for part of the trip) you could go over 250 miles in two days.

As for its diameter, we have only indirect evidence. When people look at the skylands they can see cities, and at night you can see the lights of cities that are also in the dark. We can see details of the terrain (mountains, valleys, etc.) When the airship is over towns we can see the individual houses, so it's not more than a few miles up -- at the typical 5 miles that airliners fly, houses aren't visible to the level of detail given (houses shaped like Pas or thatched with straw, for example). Horn remarks that it's like looking at the skylands, and Silk says they are much farther away, but the fact that Horn can guess this indicates the diameter can't be huge. My intuitive feel is that the diameter is relatively small (20 miles or less), but I have no direct evidence. I think 100 miles is probably the largest that makes sense.

My guess is about 500 to 1000 miles long by 10 to 20 miles radius.

This would make it more cucumber-shaped than potato-shaped, to recall a previous debate.

"How does the sun work?" "How thick is the sun?"

Are we dealing with a giant fluorescent light, or is it much thicker, or thinner, or what? What is it made of? I think it's a magnetic or other containment with fusing hydrogen plasma inside. Sciathan's remarks about how it has to start at full power suggest this; you must get the plasma and the containment up to speed before you can fine-tune it.

"How does the shade work?"

I think the shade is not a physical object (like the Ringworld shadow squares). I think it is a "field" of some sort that masks the sunlight. I think the opacity and size of the field can be manipulated by the scientists at Mainframe.

"Is it ever dark on the Whorl?"

No. The amount of light reflected from the skylands would make it at least somewhat light at all times. This leaves unexplained how Mucor's room can be so dark, as it has a window. Maybe the window is some opaque material rather than glass? I would guess that shutters to close at shadelow might be rather common on the whorl.

"If Triviguante is south of Viron, why can't we see it from Viron, and watch the approach of the Vironese army directly?"

Silk laments that they didn't ask someone to signal from the airship during the wait for the army. Couldn't someone in a high spot in Viron just look?

"In what direction does the whorl rotate?" "How fast?"

We should be able to figure this one out from the behavior of the floaters. As I recall, it's north

that's the "smash into the ground" direction, so that would imply north-to-south rotation. We can work that out once we know the diameter of the whorl, assuming the gravity is 1G.

"In what direction does the shade rotate?"

I.e., Triviguante is south of Viron. Where does shadeup occur first, Viron or Triviguante?

*** _Starcrosser's Landfall_ was the "Ace double" title of the _Long Sun_ series. I can't help but wonder, given that title and the whorlography of the whorl, if Wolfe ever played _Starcross_? (Oddly enough, this thought only just occurred to me).

--vizcacha
(david_lebling at avid.com)

Derek Bell — 20 Apr 1997, 13:47 · follows David_Lebling

In message <199704181518.IAA02032 at lists1.best.com>, David_Lebling at avid.com writ es:

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According to the WWWebster dictionary, it could be one of several units from 2.4 to 4.6 statute miles, or 3.9 to 7.4 km.

Tercel