

Blue's Races; etc.

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 12 Oct 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/676>

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Jim Jordan — 12 Oct 1999, 11:53

At 05:51 PM 10/5/99 -0700, you wrote:

"Gaon" is Hebrew, meaning "genius," according to printform OED.

It needs to be something in Hindi.

Okay, Han are Chinese, Gaonese are East Indians, the tribes along the river are Amerinds, and Wijzer (sp?) is Scandanavian.

When are we? Evidently Typhon ruled the whole earth, and picked up people from all over, not just Latin Americans and Iranians (Trivigaunti - ?). If we're millions of years in the future, would such groups still be around? I'd originally thought the Spanish-culture Vironese and the Trivigaunti were simply far-future cultures whose folkways and language were being "translated" by Wolfe into something familiar to us. That's what he says he did when he "translated" the Severian narratives. Is that still the case? Are we to assume that the Han ARE future Chinese, or that Wolfe is just translating things in such a way?

That's the problem. Urth is not our Earth, but part of a previous universe. Thus, everything is being "translated" by Wolfe, who somehow has gotten hold of these manuscripts. My guess is that all we can say is that Wolfe the translator has decided to various cultures in various ways familiar to us, based on similarities he perceives in the original manuscripts.

As for Blue's being Urth, this is way too early for that. Typhon sent out this ship long before Severian brought the New Sun. During this whole period, the moon was orbiting the earth, wasn't it? In Ultan's library Severian sees an Urth-equivalent of the photo of America astronauts on the moon before it was greened. No such moon, grey or green, orbits Blue. We'd have to assume that somehow the Whorl travelled back in time millions of years, before Urth-Blue captured Moon-Green, and that Moon-Green became the airless dead world that it was at the time the photo in the Library was taken. Wolfe could do all this, I'm sure, and we'd love it -- but I think we'd better wait for more information. I'm happy with two planets out in space.

'Course, maybe Green is ancient Urth, because it is inhabited by dinosaurs. In that case, Blue will die and possibly become the Moon of Green. But this will all still have to be millions and millions of years before the time of Typhon and Severian. And it cannot be Ste. Claire and Ste. Anne, since those two planets were moons to one another, while Blue and Green have different orbits and triennial conjunctions.

Since we have lost the clever notion that the inhumi forced Typhon to send this ship, and we now know that Quetzal, and others I guess, came onto the ship when it arrived in their system, a couple of things: Was the Blue/Green system the original destination of the Whorl, or was the ship captured en route? It's starting to look that way to me, for this reason: The Whorl was in the B/G system for a long time, several decades, before the exodus was forced. I'm assuming that the exodus was on a timer, and that the Whorl was designed to last until it arrived at its destination. If it was stopped en route by Quetzal & company, that would explain why the timer did not force the exodus upon arrival. Or am I missing something here?

And in terms of missing something: Were we given any reason why the inhumi departed from the skies at the end of the book and did not attack Horn?

Horn-Silk has lost an eye, but he has gained one from Olivine for Maytera. A swap? And if not a

literal swap, clearly a literary one: He's lost an eye in the process of gaining one for someone else.

I don't think the inhumis drove out the Neighbors. Quite the opposite. The Neighbors finally learned to live in love and harmony, and defeated the inhumis. But by the same token, having matured to that point, they were ready to move on to some kind of "plane of being." Recall that this Urthine universe has levels in it, like the Qabbala.

Quadrifons is a cherub. Biblical cherubs are sphinx-like and have four faces. Combine this with Greek sphinxes, and you have the guardian of crossroads. Just like your domestic cat, who positions himself/herself in your house where he/she can look down all the halls and see everything.

Now, cherubim are archangels, and creatures. But they are so close to the throne of God (Revelation 4-5) that they are practically possessed by Him, and might be considered manifestations of Him. Some interpreters of the Bible regard the cherubim as not actual angels at all, but as merely symbols for God. Wolfe can play with this in a variety of ways, and we'll have to read more to know what direction he wants to go in.

Alga writes: "Horn seems to have a natural military bent, like Mint and Severian. (Well, I guess Mint's is not entirely natural.) " Probably Horn's is not entirely natural either. Remember how Silk's genetic heritage enabled him to become an expert swordsman overnight. Notice how Horn never misses when he shoots -- being Silkified, he always "catches the ball." His reflexes are well-nigh perfect.

And now we understand his Silkitude. Since Silk was copied and downloaded into Mainframe, so that the Silk-programme joins with Pas, that Silk-programme can now be downloaded onto Horn.

Now, when did this downloading occur? Do we have any contrasts between Horn's abilities in the pre-trip part of the narrative and his obvious Silk-like abilities in the post-trip part? It was before he left Blue that he shot and killed the bull-thingie, evidently a very remarkable feat. Was he Silked when he was at Mainframe, and has he been Silked for 20 years? Or, did this ability come not from Silk but from the Neighbor? I.e., first from the Neighbor, and later amplified by being downloaded with Silk.

Nutria

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

Kevin J. Maroney — 12 Oct 1999, 13:23 · follows Jim Jordan

At 11:53 AM 10/12/99 -0700, Nutria wrote:

That's the problem. Urth is not our Earth, but part of a previous universe. Thus, everything is being "translated" by Wolfe, who somehow has gotten hold of these manuscripts.

It was my understanding--and it's possible that something has superceded this--that Urth *is* our Earth, so far in the future that languages which haven't even been born are now ancient (as in the language which is inscribed on the sword Terminus Est). There are specific artifacts of our Earth which surface in _BotNS_, most notably the photograph of Buzz Aldrin on the moon mentioned (though not that clearly, obviously) in _Shadow_.

Severian pitched his manuscript, in its lead coffer, back into a time-vortex; it could have gone anywhere.

The language spoken in Viron is not Spanish or any variant of it; it's a language which hasn't been born yet.

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Review of Science Fiction <http://ebbs.english.vt.edu/olp/nyrsf/nyrsf.html>

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Kevin J. Maroney — 12 Oct 1999, 13:36 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

[I should have read the *entire* letter before responding. Oops.]

At 11:53 AM 10/12/99 -0700, Nutria wrote:

As for Blue's being Urth, this is way too early for that. Typhon sent out this ship long before Severian brought the New Sun. During this whole period, the moon was orbiting the earth, wasn't it?

The theory is that perhaps Blue is Urth and Green is Lune knocked out of its geocentric orbit by the coming of the New Sun. That actually makes some sense to me; two planets in as close conjunction as are Blue and Green do not, I think, make for a stable system.

We don't know how long the _Whorl_ was in transit. I'm very bad at finding textual references, but I have a distinct memory of Maytera Marble trying to remember how long it had been since she saw the Short Sun Whorl [in _Calde_], and there's a reference to her having misplaced a decimal.

Even if only 300 subjective years passed on the _Whorl_, relativistic distortions could mean that any arbitrary number of years have passed since the _Whorl_ was launched.

Note that I don't actually think that Blue *is* Urth, just that it could be.

Quadrifons is a cherub. Biblical cherubs are sphinx-like and have four faces. Combine this with Greek sphinxes, and you have the guardian of crossroads. Just like your domestic cat, who positions himself/herself in your house where he/she can look down all the halls and see everything.

Oh, cool.

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Alex David Groce — 12 Oct 1999, 13:40 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

As I understand it the "Urth=Earth" arguments tend to boil down to "Yes, this is the future of OUR universe" or "This is the future of a Universe Very Much like ours, but we are the previous/next cycle in the recursive Heiro loop, so there are 'improvements'."

The first seems most likely, but only from an Occam's Razor type "why assume this is a different iteration" standpoint.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

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