

For Jerry- a response

The Urth list — 9 messages, 7 voices, 27 Feb 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3000>

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maa32 — 27 Feb 2002, 04:42

Jerry, The quote you bring up keeps emphasizing how old and ancient the world around the red star is. The distance is one of time. The present tense refers to the transtemporal nature of Silk's gift (and Severian's - a thousand ages in his sight are like an evening gone). God is outside of time. The distance for him is no more real than one of space. The ancient and old images imply that it is from a long, long time ago. The distance is real because the universe has moved so much since then. It was a long way away in space and time, but Silk can travel there because he moves through time, like the song of the mother is a song of time, as he claims that the only way to go back in time is through dreams, as he claims that his travels are dreams, etc. That's the best I can do.

Marc Aramini

Michael Straight — 27 Feb 2002, 13:17 · follows maa32

On Tue, 26 Feb 2002, maa32 wrote:

distance for him is no more real than one of space. The ancient and old images imply that it is from a long, long time ago. The distance is real because the universe has moved so much since then.

The universe has moved, but it's not moving faster than light, which it would have to in order to be able to see the old red sun in the sky of Blue.

I think the only way you can reconcile this detail with the idea that Blue is Urth is to say that Silk/Horn was mistaken when he tried to point out the Red Sun of Urth, that he simply didn't know he was going back in time rather than to a different solar system. (And note that at the time Silk/Horn points out the Red Sun in the sky, he's saying all sorts of odd things to try to get Juganu to take him to Urth -- he goes on for several paragraphs about all the women who are waiting, of how grateful the women prisoners of the Matchin Tower would be to someone coming to rescue them, etc.)

However, I think the better explanation is that Silk/Horn is right, and that the Urth solar system is far away and not the same system as Blue/Green.

-Rostrum

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 27 Feb 2002, 16:18 · follows Michael Straight

Chiming in -

Marc, while I find a lot of attraction in your theory that Blue/Green is a much older Ushas/Lune (particularly the implicit identity of the Mother and Scylla-on-Urth), it just isn't plausible for a largish variety of reasons.

Probably the most significant of these, for me, is that if we take the more-or-less canonical set of assumptions about the voyage of the _Whorl_ (discussed in some detail in the archives by

Mantis and others), the timelines are just too neat to drop: but there are also the questions of Greenish gravity (despite the tower-climbing scene, I believe that lunar-type gravity would warrant some pretty direct observation by a character coming from urth-type gravity), of the apparent visibility of Urth's red sun in the Bluvian sky, of the doubled body parts of Bluvian life forms*, etc., etc.

* but not Greenish life forms? I don't recall enough description of other Greenish beasties, but it seems pretty clear that the inhumis, at least, are four-limbed. Though ... h'mmm. Is it at any point stated clearly that the inhumis were equally successful at masquerading as Neighbors?

Anyway, Marc, I think most of your other hypotheses about tBotSS work just as well (or as poorly; I'm still sceptical-but- interested, with the observation that there aren't very many overall models of this Book on display as yet) without trying to force identity of Blue with Urth, Green with Lune. And, in the end, it does feel forced: which is the problem. In general, when you have a "good" model of one of Wolfe's texts, it doesn't feel forced.

Jeff Wilson — 28 Feb 2002, 00:30 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

From: Michael Straight <straight at email.unc.edu>

On Tue, 26 Feb 2002, maa32 wrote:

distance for him is no more real than one of space. The ancient and old images imply that it is from a long, long time ago. The distance is real because the universe has moved so much since then.

The universe has moved, but it's not moving faster than light, which it would have to in order to be able to see the old red sun in the sky of Blue.

If the Whorl traveled through a region of space that curved back upon itself, then it's reasonable that the old Sun would be visible back along the way they came. There's no particular reason for this to be impossible based on the speed of light, as the BOTNS glosses over many such concerns to start with.

From: "Dan'I Danehy-Oakes" <ddanehy at siebel.com>

Chiming in -

Marc, while I find a lot of attraction in your theory that Blue/Green is a much older Ushas/Lune (particularly the implicit identity of the Mother and Scylla-on-Urth), it just isn't plausible for a largish variety of reasons.

Probably the most significant of these, for me, is that if we take the more-or-less canonical set of assumptions about the voyage of the Whorl (discussed in some detail in the archives by Mantis and others), the timelines are just too neat to drop: but there are also the questions of Greenish gravity (despite the tower-climbing scene, I believe that lunar-type gravity would warrant some pretty direct observation by a character coming from urth-type gravity), of the apparent visibility of Urth's red sun in the Bluvian sky, of the doubled body parts of Bluvian life forms*, etc., etc.

It's been previously discussed that Lune hasn't sufficient gravity to retain an atmosphere; given that gravity manipulation is featured discretely in Severian's time, it's possible that Lune's gravity was increased during the age of wonders to keep the air held down. There is also the possibility that the Whorl's gravity was intentionally set lower than Urth's.

Jeff Wilson

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Andy Robertson — 27 Feb 2002, 23:20 · follows Jeff Wilson

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

From: "Jeff Wilson" <jwilson at io.com>

If the Whorl traveled through a region of space that curved back itself, then it's reasonable that the old Sun would be visible back along the way they came.

This does not feel right.

You are correct that this sort of thing is often glossed over, but the Whorl is a STL generation starship and is not at the "magical" level of technology that, for example, the Ship in UOTNS is.

It's been previously discussed that Lune hasn't sufficient gravity to retain an atmosphere; given that gravity manipulation is featured discretely in Severian's time, it's possible that Lune's gravity was increased during the age of wonders to keep the air held down.

Actually the moon would, I believe, hold an atmosphere for quite a long time, but not for geological timespans.

One simple possibility is that a lot of smaller bodies were dumped upon it, increasing its mass and its budget of volatiles. This offers a way of terraforming it at the "Terran" level of technology and also of increasing its gravity.

hartshorn

Jerry Friedman — 28 Feb 2002, 16:42 · follows Andy Robertson

--- Andy Robertson <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk> wrote:

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

From: "Jeff Wilson" <jwilson at io.com>

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I suspect Jeff is thinking of a space warp that was already there, either naturally or created by someone like the Hierodules, which the _Whorl_ passed through without anyone's knowledge (at least in the Cargo). This strikes me as a lot to conclude on very slim evidence, since the physics is very hard to swallow and I don't remember anything like it anywhere else in the books.

It's been previously discussed that Lune hasn't sufficient gravity to retain an atmosphere; given that gravity manipulation is featured discretely in Severian's time, it's possible that Lune's gravity was increased during the age of wonders to keep the air held down.

With light-bending space warps and gravity control, you could make a case for anything you want: that Green is the other side of Blue, that the Bluvian fauna's doubled members (stop me now!) are an effect of double refraction by space warps in the atmosphere, that the whole thing was really written by Charles Kinbote. ...

Jerry Friedman

Andy Robertson — 28 Feb 2002, 15:34 · follows Jerry Friedman

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

From: "Jerry Friedman" <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com>

With light-bending space warps and gravity control, you could make a case for anything you want:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. But the fundamental thing about SF is how it feels.

Science fiction is myth-making, not rationality.

The Whorl is a BDO, a human-made thing, a Generation Starship like the one in "Orphans Of the Sky", with nothing numinous about it. Its gods are fake. It has no business transgressing the bounds of the universe.

The Ship is quite different.

You can't judge SF on the basis of science. But you can judge it on the basis of its own internal mythology and history.

hkartshorn

Jeff Wilson — 01 Mar 2002, 00:50 · follows Andy Robertson

From: "Andy Robertson" <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk>

Actually the moon would, I believe, hold an atmosphere for quite a long time, but not for geological timespans.

No. During the Apollo program, the measured amount of gas surrounding the moon remained fairly constant, despite each landing adding an amount of gaseous exhaust equal to the original natural contents.

One simple possibility is that a lot of smaller bodies were dumped upon it, increasing its mass and its budget of volatiles. This offers a way of terraforming it at the "Terran" level of technology and also of increasing its gravity.

That would require "adding" the mass of Mars, at least. Even Mars won't keep an atmosphere over large geological eras, but the time from Apu Punchau to Ushas is maybe 100 millenia.

I don't see why it is necessary to limit things to Terran technology. The Hiero-people already meddle heavily in Briatic affairs, and stepping up the moon's gravity seems like small potatoes next to Father Inire's time and dimension defying gardens.

From: Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com>

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I suspect Jeff is thinking of a space warp that was already there, either naturally or created by someone like the Hierodules, which the _Whorl_ passed through without anyone's knowledge (at least in the Cargo). This strikes me as a lot to conclude on very slim evidence, since the physics is very hard to swallow and I don't remember anything like it anywhere else in the books.

Father Inire's gardens
the various magic mirrors
The Ship
The Atrium of Time
Master Ash's house
Hildegryn's wrestling match
Severian discovering his own ancient tomb
the pool in Yesod
Severian whispering in his own ear

It's been previously discussed that Lune hasn't sufficient gravity to retain an atmosphere; given that gravity manipulation is featured discretely in Severian's time, it's possible that Lune's gravity was increased during the age of wonders to keep the air held down.

With light-bending space warps and gravity control, you could make a case for anything you want: that Green is the other side of Blue, that the Bluvian fauna's doubled members (stop me now!) are an effect of double refraction by space warps in the atmosphere, that the whole thing was really written by Charles Kinbote.

please stop! :)

I'm trying to keep to extrapolations from what's in the books, and what science would have been available to Wolfe as reader of SF at the time he turned in _Shadow_.

From: "Andy Robertson" <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk>

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Heinlein's "Orphans" is set in a morally indifferent universe and its wonders appeal to the authority of science to justify suspension of disbelief. The Sun books are set in a universe the under the continuous supervision of a moral God, and science is merely a justification for bad guys to have evil wonders to compete with the good guys' righteous resources.

Now I won't argue that what Wolfe chooses to call SF is myth making, and in fact I am judging it on its internal standards, since it incorporates astronaut mythology of which Planet Of The Apes is a part.

Jeff Wilson

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Ben Hutchison [Intamission] — 01 Mar 2002, 11:04 · follows Jeff Wilson

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

From: "Andy Robertson" <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk>

To: <urth at urth.net>

Sent: Wednesday, February 27, 2002 11:20 PM

Subject: Re: (urth) For Jerry- a response

It's been previously discussed that Lune hasn't sufficient gravity to retain an atmosphere; given that gravity manipulation is featured discretely in Severian's time, it's possible that Lune's gravity was increased during the age of wonders to keep the air held down.

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One simple possibility is that a lot of smaller bodies were dumped upon it, increasing its mass and its budget of volatiles. This offers a way of terraforming it at the "Terran" level of technology and also of increasing its gravity.

My understanding is that a strong planetary magnetic field, as earth has, protects the atmosphere from the erosion caused by solar wind by deflecting incoming solar particles. This is a greater determinant of the presence of atmosphere than a planet's mass. I suspect the moon could retain an atmosphere too if a magnetic envelope could somehow be induced around it.

Gradual losses from the moon's future atmosphere might be replaced by gas extraction from moonrock; rich in oxides, though I'm unsure if it contains enough carbon or nitrogen.

Ben