

Summa contra Marcus

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 25 Mar 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3084>

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 25 Mar 2002, 20:06

A summary of objections to the theory that Blue = Urth.

Others may wish to add any that I've missed.

I. The cosmographical objection.

The WHORL, a slower-than-light ship, set out from the Urth system. Barring evidence to the contrary (which has not, to the best of my knowledge, been presented), it begins in a reference frame more-or-less stationary relative to the Solar system, accelerates away from the Solar system, and eventually brakes to come to relative rest at another system. In order for the "other system" to be the Solar system, then, some mechanism must be provided for the motion away from the Solar system to somehow bring the WHORL back to the Solar system. Several such mechanisms are certainly possible, as: the WHORL hit some kind of "space warp" (which is, I believe, your proposal); the Solar system hit ditto; the WHORL was gone so long that it wandered around the edge of curved spacetime.

However, and this is the key here, it is not sufficient for such a mechanism to be offered, or even for it to be "plausible." Some textual evidence (direct or indirect) for the mechanism must also be adduced. To say (as you have in effect done) that the space(-time) warp must be present because it fits your theory, is not textual evidence; it is circular logic, using the "Urth=Blue" theory as support for the "space warp" theory which was, in turn, created to support the "Urth=Blue" theory. If reasonably unambiguous textual evidence could be adduced for the "space warp" theory, then it would indeed support the "Urth=Blue" theory. Likewise, if the "Urth=Blue" theory were supported by evidence so strong that it could stand on its own, then finding evidence for a mechanism might be problematized. But as things stand ... no.

II. The genetic objection.

The life forms of Blue/Green are sufficiently different from those of Urth that some mechanism must be proposed, and evidence given, for the production of one from the other. You have proposed part of a mechanism (polyploidy), a mechanism which may, in some cases, produce effects similar to those seen in the life forms of Blue (but which produces nothing vaguely similar to the inhumani). However, no mechanism whatsoever has been offered for why Urthian animal forms might have become uniformly polyploid, and with such uniform phenotypic effects evidencing in a variety of species.

III. The chronological objection.

Related to the above. Assuming that the mechanism for Urth's animalia becoming uniformly polyploid is discovered and evidence given for it, you find yourself in a bit of a sticky wicket.

Either Blue is in Urth's distant past, or it is in Ushas's distant future.

Now, if it is in Urth's past, the genetic objection becomes redoubled -- a second mechanism must be provided for the return of Urthian life to diploid normality by the era of Severian. But other chronological objections (beginning, but not limited to, the difficulty of placing an era resembling the Blue of SHORT SUN anywhere in Severian's apparent past) make this whole idea so unlikely that, frankly, I dismiss it out of hand.

So suppose Blue to be the distant future of Ushas. Now, we can begin by wondering: why the did Green Man not show the "polyploid" characteristics of Bluvian life? Nor, indeed, did he resemble the Neighbors, or Bluvian life forms in general, in any interesting way. And, supposing you do successfully overcome this objection -- for example, proposing that the Green Man is from even farther in the future, a time when the Colonists and the Inhumani have somehow merged into a single species (mechanism required, etc.) -- then we would need to have some plausible sequence of events leading from Severian's time, to the Neighbors, to the colonists', to the Green Man's.

IV. The objection from gravitation

This has been discussed to death ... but ... it's very hard to produce a plausible argument for Green as a satellite of Blue (even an escaped satellite) without producing tidal effects of a scale that dwarf those described by Horn. Similarly, the failure of Horn to describe any real difference in weight, trajectory of thrown objects, walking gait, etc., between the surfaces of Blue, Green, and the Red Sun Whorl, and the "surface" of the WHORL (other than the interesting discussion of floater mechanics in LONG SUN), stands as strong evidence that the surface gravities of Blue and Green are very similar, and very similar to that of Urth, i.e., one G. Nor does the "climbing the tower one-handed" business really help; we know that the Narrator is not subject to the ordinary laws of physics when astrally travelling (e.g., is, he is capable of creating weapons out of thin air); further, that is, as noted in an earlier post, a classic adventure fiction trope.

Summary of the summary: I admit that you have "dealt with" each of these objections at some level in the past. The problem is that in each case, your method of dealing with the objection is to pile another hypothetical on top of the hypothesis already in place (i.e., "Blue = Urth"). This might be satisfactory for a theory with a really solid textual basis, but for a theory that begins fairly shaky, such additional hypotheses are completely unacceptable, because your explanations for the objections must, of themselves, be solid enough to _support_ the overall theory.

Jerry Friedman — 26 Mar 2002, 17:10 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Is "Marcus" the right case? Just curious.

--- Dan'I Danehy-Oakes <ddanehy at siebel.com> wrote:
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the Solar system, accelerates away from the Solar system, and eventually brakes to come to relative rest at another system. In order for the "other system" to be the Solar system, then, some mechanism must be provided for the motion away from the Solar system to somehow bring the WHORL back to the Solar system. Several such mechanisms are certainly possible, as: the WHORL hit some kind of "space warp" (which is, I believe, your proposal); the Solar system hit ditto; the WHORL was gone so long that it wandered around the edge of curved spacetime.

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Stop it! Polyploidy has nothing to do with extra limbs, as Marc has agreed.

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apparent past) make this whole idea so unlikely that, frankly, I dismiss it out of hand.

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Or by assuming the Short Sun books aren't in the Green Man's future any more than they're in Master Ash's.

-- then we would need to have some plausible sequence of events leading from Severian's time, to the Neighbors, to the colonists', to the Green Man's.

The only real problem I see is why humanity either altered itself and most terrestrial fauna to have doubled limbs, or left Ushas to the Neighbors and their related alien fauna (depending on whether the Neighbors are human-descended or not). But that's a very big problem. There's also the question of the inhumis would have gotten to Lune, but heck, there's a question of why anybody brought the alzapos to Urth.

IV. The objection from gravitation

This has been discussed to death ... but ... it's very hard to produce a plausible argument for Green as a satellite of Blue (even an escaped satellite) without producing tidal effects of a scale that dwarf those described by Horn.

As I just mentioned, this all has nothing to with whether Blue is Ushas.

Similarly, the failure of Horn to describe any real difference in weight, trajectory of thrown objects, walking gait, etc., between the surfaces of Blue, Green, and the Red Sun Whorl, and the "surface" of the WHORL (other than the interesting discussion of floater mechanics in LONG SUN), stands as strong evidence that the surface gravities of Blue and Green are very similar, and very similar to that of Urth, i.e., one G. Nor does the "climbing the tower one-handed" business really help; we know that the Narrator is not subject to the ordinary laws of physics when astrally travelling (e.g., is, he is capable of creating weapons out of thin air); further, that is, as noted in an earlier post, a classic adventure fiction trope.

It's not unreasonable to assume that the gravity of Lune was already raised as part of the terraforming (although that creates an even bigger problem in conjunction with Lune's being closer to Urth than the moon is to the earth).

Summary of the summary: I admit that you have "dealt with" each of these objections at some level in the past. The problem is that in each case, your method of dealing with the objection is to pile another hypothetical on top of the hypothesis already in place (i.e., "Blue = Urth"). This might be satisfactory for a theory with a really solid textual basis, but for a theory that

begins fairly shaky, such additional hypotheses are completely unacceptable, because your explanations for the objections must, of themselves, be solid enough to _support_ the overall theory.

I agree with this.

Jerry Friedman

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 26 Mar 2002, 18:06 · follows Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman wrote...

Stop it! Polyploidy has nothing to do with extra limbs,
as Marc has agreed.

Well, yeah. But it was (at the time) the only explanation that had been offered. I have since offered a very silly retrovirus
-- one capable of having a nearly identical effect on elephants and crocodilians, and possibly humans...

Or by assuming the Short Sun books aren't in the
Green Man's future any more than they're in Master
Ash's.

I'm pretty sure that Wolfe has stated that Sev's bringing of the New Sun means that the Green Man's future is the one that will happen.

matthew.malthouse — 27 Mar 2002, 11:12 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

On 26/03/2002 18:06:56 Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote:
Jerry Friedman wrote...

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I'm pretty sure that Wolfe has stated that Sev's bringing
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one that will happen.

Anyone have something to confirm this?

It's interesting that the 'divergent futures' idea often posits an infinite number of possibilities, sometimes of varying probability: Asimov's psychohistory; Herbert's prescience, etc etc. Because of this perhaps a reader might assume an 'anything possible' future. But as far as I can recall we are only shown 2 possibilities: Ashe's Ice and the Green Man's fecund world. The New Sun doesn't/does come. A duality: very Lupine.

Matthew