

contra Summa contra Marcus

The Urth list — 13 messages, 4 voices, 25 Mar 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3086>

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Andy Robertson — 25 Mar 2002, 18:24

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

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

It flew in a circle, as Pas/Typhon intended.

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.

The life forms of Blue are edible to those of Urth, and vica-versa. On a galactic scale this is
99.99 percent smilarity.

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III. The chronological objection.

I pass.

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.

It is not possible that the Blue/Green system could be gravitationally stable. Ergo, it is recent.

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

- 1) The large animals of Green
- 2) The vast trees of Green

Both argue for a low gravity.

hartshorn

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 25 Mar 2002, 22:16 · follows Andy Robertson

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.

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Well, this is at least plausible. But is there any _textual evidence_ in its favor?

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.

The life forms of Blue are edible to those of Urth, and vica-versa. On a galactic scale this is 99.99 percent similarity.

While this is clever, it entirely evades the questions actually asked about the genetic issues.

IV. The objection from gravitation

It is not possible that the Blue/Green system could be gravitationally stable. Ergo, it is recent.

It is not possible _if_ the distances given are accurate. However, there is no evidence that it is recent, and the ability of the inhumi to make the crossing argues that the two worlds have been having reasonably near passages for -- well, for long enough for such an expensive adaptation to have been worthwhile. There are two ways out of this: (1) the Neighbors, after reaching Green, deliberately engineered the inhumi to make the crossing -- which seems kind of unlikely (2) the ability to make the crossing is a side-effect of some aspect of the inhumi physiology (about which we -- probably -- do not know), originally evolved to meet some other need. This is what biologists call "pre-adaptationism," and is generally looked upon with some scorn, but I'll grant that GW is a bit of an evolutionary heretic so that's probably not an argument against this.

However, again, this is putting the cart before the horse: all this is throwing hypotheticals at objections to an original hypothetical which has yet to be significantly supported from the text.

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

1) The large animals of Green

A brief glance at the geological history of Terra suggests that some extremely large animals are capable of existing under 1G conditions ... unless you care to suggest that the gravity of Earth has significantly increased since the age of dinosaurs?

2) The vast trees of Green

I live a few hours' drive from the giant redwoods of California. The trees of Green do not strike me as a significant argument for low gravity.

Andy Robertson — 25 Mar 2002, 21:25 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

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

From: "Dan'I Danehy-Oakes" <ddanehy at siebel.com>
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the analogy of Noah's Ark seems compelling to me

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The life forms of Blue are edible to those of Urth, and vica-versa. On a galactic scale this is 99.99 percent smilarity.

While this is clever, it entirely evades the questions actually asked about the genetic issues.

A fairer reply would be that the life forms are very similar indeed except for the limb doubling.

The life forms of Blue are nearly all near - analogs of Urth forms, with the possible exception of the sea creatures. This is not true of Green, where the animals are far more alien, but even on Green the animals can eat and be eaten both by Blue and Urth fauna.

IV. The objection from gravitation

It is not possible that the Blue/Green system could be gravitationally stable. Ergo, it is recent.

It is not possible _if_ the distances given are accurate.

Yes it is, anything can happen in a four-body system like Sun-Urth-Lune-White fountain.

However, there is no evidence that it is recent, and the ability of the inhumis to make the crossing argues that the two worlds have been having reasonably near passages for -- well, for long enough for such an expensive adaptation to have been worthwhile. There are two ways out of this:

3) It is possible that Inhumis are native to Lune and lived there when it circled round Urth.

1) The large animals of Green

2) The vast trees of Green

The trees are specifically mentioned as being ****much larger than those on Blue****. Ergo, Green has lower gravity than Blue.

hartshorn

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 26 Mar 2002, 00:57 · follows Andy Robertson

Well, this is at least plausible. But is there any _textual evidence_ in its favor?

the analogy of Noah's Ark seems compelling to me

An analogy to an outside source, with no citation of the text at hand to invite compare with that outside source, hardly constitutes "textual evidence." If there's a controlling Biblical analogy, it's Moses.

In favor of an analogy to the Ark, I suppose one could adduce Typhon's attempt to make himself God; against it, however, one might begin with the highly-minimalist nature of the Ark as vs. the inclusion of many cultures aboard the WHORL. Then, too, one can't help but wonder who in this

analogy would play a role even vaguely analogous to Noah's ... Remora?

While this is clever, it entirely evades the questions actually asked about the genetic issues.

A fairer reply would be that the life forms are very similar indeed except for the limb doubling.

Well, yes. So either we have a totally unexplained shift in huge portions of the animal kingdom, to a polyploidy that seems to have no significant ill effect but produces doubled limbs; or else, equally difficult to explain, beasts ranging from elephants to crocodiles undergoing mutations that cause their limbs to double. Either way, it requires a fair amount of explaining. Perhaps you'd like to hypothesize some weird retrovirus that does this?

The life forms of Blue are nearly all near - analogs of Urth forms, with the possible exception of the sea creatures. This is not true of Green, where the animals are far more alien, but even on Green the animals can eat and be eaten both by Blue and Urth fauna.

We might note that this is true of the fauna of a number of alien worlds in Wolfe texts, from the blue/green pair of FIFTH HEAD to the homeworld(s) of Hehehethor's monsters and the alzado. I suspect Wolfe has some point in mind here, though just what it is has, so far, eluded me.

It is not possible that the Blue/Green system could be gravitationally stable. Ergo, it is recent.

It is not possible _if_ the distances given are accurate.

Yes it is, anything can happen in a four-body system like Sun-Urth-Lune-White fountain.

Well, no: if you assume that Blue is more massive than Green, then it _must_ have proportionally greater tidal effects on Green than Green does on Blue. Bring Lune close enough to Urth to cause the kind of effects we _do_ have described, and Lune will be deeply, ah, _disturbed_ by massive seismic activity. The sewers of the inhumi city won't be clogged by bodies; they'll be filled with rubble -- the buildings will fall down and go boom.

It is _much_ simpler to believe that the distance given is wrong.

3) It is possible that Inhumi are native to Lune and lived there when it circled round Urth.

There is _nothing_ native to the Moon, but let that pass. (I find myself wondering about night-gaunts again, though...)

- 1) The large animals of Green
- 2) The vast trees of Green

The trees are specifically mentioned as being ****much** larger than those on Blue******. Ergo, Green has lower gravity than Blue.

This would be in the same way that Northern California has lower gravity than Vermont?

Andy Robertson — 26 Mar 2002, 08:26 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

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

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

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On the scale of Silk's life, yes. But here are multiple analogies here

In favor of an analogy to the Ark, I suppose one could adduce Typhon's attempt to make himself God; against it, however, one might begin with the highly-minimalist nature of the Ark as vs. the inclusion of many cultures aboard the WHORL. Then, too, one can't help but wonder who in this analogy would play a role even vaguely analogous to Noah's ... Remora?

Mainframe Typhon/Pas and his wife and quarreling family

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OK. Lets.

The life forms of Blue are nearly all near - analogs of Urth forms, with the possible exception of the sea creatures. This is not true of Green, where the animals are far more alien, but even on Green the animals can eat and be eaten both by Blue and Urth fauna.

We might note that this is true of the fauna of a number of alien worlds in Wolfe texts, from the blue/green pair of FIFTH HEAD to the homeworld(s) of Hehehethor's monsters and the alzabo. I suspect Wolfe has some point in mind here, though just what it is has, so far, eluded me.

Hethor's monsters are far more alien to Urth than are any of the entities on Green or Blue.

Well, no: if you assume that Blue is more massive than Green, then it must have proportionally greater tidal effects on Green than Green does on Blue.

Yes, but this means very little unless Green has world-oceans like Blue.

It doesn't (it has a world-forest instead, that is why it is Green). Tidal effects depend on the size of the body of water.

Earthquakes? No. The moon is solid from crust to core.

3) It is possible that Inhumani are native to Lune and lived there when it circled round Urth.

There is nothing native to the Moon, but let that pass. (I find myself wondering about night-gaunts again, though...)

Ha ha. By "native" I should have said "colonised Lune long ago". But I agree it is a stretch.

This would be in the same way that Northern California has lower gravity than Vermont?

It's not proof,. but it tends in the direction.

My own beliefs on the Green/Blue Lune/Ushas conundrum are complex. It is a beautiful idea, but I suspect that if it were true we would be seeing many more direct signifiers. There is no *compelling* reason to believe it.

What really runs behind it is the Blue World/Green World thematic duality that seems to be a near constant of Wolfe's planetary fiction. And it is possible that Wolfe has no clear idea himself, or is leaving his options open.

hartshorn

matthew.malthouse — 26 Mar 2002, 10:52 · follows Andy Robertson

On 25/03/2002 18:24:51 Andy Robertson wrote:

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

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

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.

It flew in a circle, as Pas/Typhon intended.

A question.

The Whorl of the Long Sun produces a facsimile of gravity through spin. Otherwise when we see it there is no other acceleration. Is there (and I ask because I can't remember) any mention of how the Whorl behaved when traveling? I'm thinking here of AC Clarke's Rama and it's circular sea with one shore higher than the other to prevent the water flooding over the land when Rama is under acceleration.

A linear path is simple enough but a circular one would require accelerations in directions other than parallel with the axis of the Whorl - either constant or periodic. The first suggests some motive force applied at an angle to the direction of travel, the latter might be effected by an attitudinal adjustment.

In either case how large a force could be applied without it being perceptible to the inhabitants? And is there a mid-trajectory roll-over?

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.

It is not possible that the Blue/Green system could be gravitationally stable. Ergo, it is recent.

Yet the Neighbours have a long history of interaction with the Inhum. Ergo the orbital arrangement of Blue and Green must have been stable for minimally several thousands of years of that history and potentially for periods sufficient to have impact on the evolutionary development of the species.

So we have a contradiction between celestial mechanics and narrative. It's fiction, not history, so narrative is our only evidence and it would appear that celestial mechanics can go hang. ;-)

Matthew

matthew.malthouse — 26 Mar 2002, 11:08 · follows matthew.malthouse

On 25/03/2002 21:25:30 Andy Robertson wrote:

IV. The objection from gravitation

It is not possible that the Blue/Green system could be gravitationally stable. Ergo, it is recent.

It is not possible _if_ the distances given are accurate.

Yes it is, anything can happen in a four-body system like Sun-Urth-Lune-White fountain.

Oh no. The WF approaches the sun, we see the effects. But once there we're back to a 3 body system.

Matthew

Jerry Friedman — 26 Mar 2002, 17:00 · follows matthew.malthouse

--- matthew.malthouse at guardian.co.uk wrote:

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In either case how large a force could be applied without it being perceptible to the inhabitants? And is there a mid-trajectory roll-over?

The acceleration, either for a straight-line path (speeding up and slowing down) or for a curved path, would have to be negligible compared to g (or g on the _Whorl_ if that's different).

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fiction, not history, so narrative is our only evidence and it would appear that celestial mechanics can go hang. ;-)

I totally agree. The celestial mechanics doesn't work at all, independent of whether Blue is Ushas or not, and it works only slightly better if Gagliardo's numbers are wrong.

Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman — 26 Mar 2002, 17:16 · follows Jerry Friedman

--- Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <ddanehy at siebel.com> wrote:

...

I live a few hours' drive from the giant redwoods of California.

The trees of Green do not strike me as a significant argument for low gravity.

Doesn't the narrator tell Incanto and his dependents that creatures bigger than a man live in the *bark* of trees on Green? Unless he's exaggerating for effect, I think they're a lot bigger than redwoods, and a good argument for lower gravity (but not low enough that you need to relearn how to walk).

Jerry Friedman

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 26 Mar 2002, 17:33 · follows Jerry Friedman

Hartshorn wrote (very cut):

Hethor's monsters are far more alien to Urth than are any of the entities on Green or Blue.

True; but my point was simply that the alien creatures in tBotNS seem to be Urth-compatible enough to live and feed there. Indeed, the degree of compatibility of the alzabo with Urthly life is so complete and complex as to suggest a strong tendency, in the Lupiverse, for all life (or "all life evolved on worlds with free oxygen and temprature-pressure ranges that permit lots of liquid water and reasonably Urthlike gravity") to be biochemically similar.

Which is, after all, pretty much another convention of SF (or at least pulp-descended SF).

Yes, but this means very little unless Green has world-oceans like Blue. It doesn't (it has a world-forest instead, that is why it is Green). Tidal effects depend on the size of the body of water.

Ummmm.... three points here.

First, it's hard to believe that Urth-like life will work on a world without large bodies of open water. You need a certain basic size of water reserve to keep it all from disappearing into the atmosphere -- and the hotter the world, the more likely this is to be true, and lower gravity will make the problem worse as more of the stuff escapes into space. (Lower gravity also therefore makes the problem of anything as _different_ as the inhumi having the time to evolve on a terraformed Lune that much tougher.)

(OTOH, I have in fairness to point out that there's no particular reason to assume that Green is actually hotter than Blue -- Horn experiences a relatively small geographical area of Green; it

could easily all be equatorial.)

Second, if Green is a terraformed Lune, in order for it to be as moist as we're shown, one of two things must be true: either there _are_ large bodies of open water, filling the large craters and so on; or else the people who terraformed it didn't just give it water and air, but ran an iron over the whole thing so that there are no low spots where water will gather.

Third, and to my mind most significant, in Wolfe's other major green/blue system, the green planet most definitely _does_ have oceans.

So then I read this:

My own beliefs on the Green/Blue Lune/Ushas conundrum are complex. It is a beautiful idea, but I suspect that if it were true we would be seeing many more direct signifiers. There is no **compelling** reason to believe it.

Which, really, is my main point. There is no compelling reason -- no real textual evidence -- beyond it being a "beautiful idea." Marc has been fighting for it, primarily because it _does_ offer resolution to a number of questions, but there's no significant textual evidence _for_ it. It's a huge hypothetical, that requires a number of other totally unsubstantiated hypotheticals (like the retrovirus I flippantly tossed off and you accepted so blandly) to make it work. Given that, I can't accept it short of a "smoking gun" bit of textual evidence or a clear statement from Wolfe.

What really runs behind it is the Blue World/Green World thematic duality that seems to be a near constant of Wolfe's planetary fiction. And it is possible that Wolfe has no clear idea himself, or is leaving his options open.

One thing behind it, of course, is that Wolfe likes to create systems with two planets that he can set in contrast, and this is the most plausible pair of "themes" for worlds where humans can reasonably live.

But I agree that there's also something more going on in the back of Wolfe's mind, probably where he himself can't see it. This is a problem for the sort of critic who likes to apply psychoanalytic methods and other such mumbojumbo; I will leave it to them.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 26 Mar 2002, 17:41 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Matthew Malthouse interjects a bit of realism to the discussion:

... we have a contradiction between celestial mechanics and narrative. It's fiction, not history, so narrative is our only evidence and it would appear that celestial mechanics can go hang. ;-)

Bravo.

The play's the thing -- or, rather, the novel is. Wolfe may be following yet another basic convention of science fiction: when physical reality conflicts with a compelling storyline, and you can't reconcile the two, wave your hands and make the physical reality go away. It's all about the story.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 26 Mar 2002, 18:08 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Doesn't the narrator tell Incanto and his dependents that creatures bigger than a man live in the **bark** of trees on

Green? Unless he's exaggerating for effect, I think they're a lot bigger than redwoods,

Or, more simply, trees with very thick bark to protect the heartwood from giant termites (or whatever).

--Dan'l

Jerry Friedman — 26 Mar 2002, 21:18 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

--- Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <ddanehy at siebel.com> wrote:
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Or, more simply, trees with very thick bark to protect the heartwood from giant termites (or whatever).

That's *very* thick bark. How much room does something bigger than a man need to live (not "sleep" or "den")--ten feet? The biggest sequoia is about 26.5 feet thick <<http://www.americanforests.org/resources/bigtrees/facts.php>>. That suggests ten feet of bark on each side and 6 feet of sapwood and heartwood? Possible, I guess, but I took the comment to mean that Green's trees are to ours as people are to bark beetles; that is, the trees on Green do grow high, to thousands of feet.

--- He later wrote:
For such a jerryrigged theory to be acceptable, it requires some kind of "smoking gun" _textual_ evidence

...

I just want to mention that the word is "jury-rigged". "Jury-rigged"! That's an ENORMOUSLY important point. :-)

(Unfortunately, there is a word "jerry-built".)

Jerry Friedman