

Blue and Green

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 23 Dec 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3711>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Nigel Price — 23 Dec 2002, 23:47

Marc wrote:

I've already proposed several mechanisms, and Nigel Price has come up with an interesting further interpretation of the star system that is fascinating and may explain the theme of the doubled limbs.

I take GW's comment to Marc very seriously, and believe that it is true, at least at a symbolic level. Green is, in part, a satire on greedy, warring, self-destructing Urth/Earth. Here is part of my recent off-list correspondence with Marc on the subject.

Hi Marc!

OK, I've been thinking. Unusual, I know, but true nevertheless.

Thought #1: GW told you that Green is Urth, but that doesn't preclude the possibility that Blue is Ushas.

My reasoning - or rather, my fragile chain of loose, associative, links - goes as follows.

I always thought that there was a symbolic polarisation at the end of Long Sun. If you made it to a lander, you could go to Blue or to Green. Blue was good. Green was bad.

As far as I understood, somewhere in the grand, allusive, quasi-allegorical scheme of things, this was somehow an image of Death and Judgement.

Now, of course, if it had been any other author playing with this sort of complex and symbolic material, this would have played out as a clear cut binary split. Blue would have been heaven and Green would have been hell. Instead, because GW loves hierarchies and because things are always resolutely themselves as well as something else, Blue is good, but not heaven, not least because of the proximity of Green and the infiltration of inhumanity from Green to Blue. Green is hellish and horrible, but not hell itself. Even there on Green, there is the possibility of heroism and generosity.

So Blue is hopeful and has the potential to be an urthly paradise, and Green is horrible but possibly redeemable. Not Heaven, not Hell, but heavenly and hellish with the

possibility that each can influence and even move towards the state of the other.

In New Sun and UotNS, we see that there are multiple time streams. The research station in the Last House observes the various possibilities. Urth can end in cold and eternal night, or it can be reborn to new life. Severian brings the New Sun and the Urth is purged and becomes Ushas, a cleansed and higher, better place.

But what if, in the light of the observations from the Last House, we're supposed to see that Urth, like Shrodinger's Cat, both dies and lives, becomes ever more desolate and corrupt as well as being renewed and refreshed. Ushas and Urth exist side by side, twin planetary possibilities.

Now Green is not the Urth of a dead or dying sun, but rather the Urth which is given a new sun but is not in the process cleansed and renewed. It has physical life in abundance, but is morally bankrupt. The life on Green is fecund and vigorous, but cannibalistic and corrupt, torturously self-devouring like the symbolically significant huge and fearsome trees.

Blue could be Ushas - Urth flooded, cleansed and renewed.

The new binary duality is not Urth and Lune, but Ushas and Urth. Both are renewed compared to the Urth of the Commonwealth, but Green/Urth is only physically, not morally or spiritually, renewed.

Maybe!

Thought #2: Roger Zelazny, a very different sort of author to GW, but a master in his own, mercurial way, had a strange way of adding depth and interest to his fictional characters and worlds. He used to invent a fact or an episode about his hero and then *not* include it in the book or story he was writing. The fact was carefully worked out and developed, and he sometimes even wrote out in full the story about the character which he was not going to tell the reader. Zelazny's idea was that knowing but not revealing this information would make his creations more real and rounded. After all, when do we ever know everything about a real person, even someone we know well?

Now, Zelazny would sometimes drop hints in his stories or make unexplained references to the unrevealed episode, but that's as far as he would allow himself to go, although once or twice he published the "lost" episode as a separate story in its own right.

My understanding of GW's literary practice hitherto has been that although there are gradations of certainty within his method, he gives the reader everything they need to know to be able to work out the most important mysteries of his stories. The answers to minor or tangential concerns may be left less defined or even unresolved, but the central matters are ultimately determined, though difficult to discern.

The revelation that Green is Urth leaves me wondering, however, whether GW is not borrowing Zelazny's technique and introducing elements into his story which only he knows and which are impossible for the reader ever to work out by themselves. If that is the case, then we would have to suppose either that he is being deliberately frustrating, or that such matters as he completely hides are of themselves unimportant.

Does GW really think that it's obvious to the intelligent reader that Green is Urth? No one on the list has guessed this, and there are some bright sparks out there who are devoted and assiduous readers too.

Marc, you asked:

does this mean the man with the limp on top of the tower was Severian? Is the tower on Green the Matachin Tower?! Has the water drained? Weird, eh?

Utterly, utterly weird. The foregoing ruminations notwithstanding, I am still stunned.

You commented:

I don't know - is Blue Lune, or is it some kind of re-aquafied Mars knocked out of orbit? I guess its Lune. Weird, huh? Where did the water come from?!!

I'd wondered about the Mars option, but dismissed it. On consideration, Lune seems all wrong too.

No, I stick to Blue=Ushas, at least symbolically, if not literally.

More on this anon!

Nigel

** Hear what John Culshaw sounded like before he became
** famous and what George Barford said to the man from
** the future!
** <http://moorhousepartnership.co.uk/ud.htm>

matthew.malthouse — 24 Dec 2002, 10:09 · follows Nigel Price

On 23/12/2002 23:47:40 Nigel Price wrote:
Marc wrote:

I've already proposed several mechanisms, and
I take GW's comment to Marc very seriously,

If one wanted to tease Marc what, oh reverend list memebbers, would be the most effective means....

Matthew