

What's so Green about Ushas?

The Urth list — 9 messages, 4 voices, 15 Jul 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5104>

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Tony Ellis — 15 Jul 2008, 18:50

Roy C Lackey wrote:

(FWIW, I have a hard time fitting the futuristic Green Man into the prospective Hieros line. He seems to be rather a pacific fellow whose kind will not even kill to eat. It's hard to imagine his kind will produce the cruel men who fashion Hierogrammates in Briah. Maybe he signals the end of the senseless cycles.)

I don't think the Green Man future is meant to be the one that produces the Hierogrammates, because I don't think it's the one to which Severian returns as a god at the end of UotNS, although that sometimes seems to be the assumption.

When Severian escapes from Apu-Punchau's tomb in the final chapter of UotNS and the corridors of time stretch around him, he says: "Bright-winged, the small Tzadkiel fluttered beside one. The green man raced beside another. I chose one that ran as lonely as I..." That's the one he follows back to Ushas.

That seems to suggest that the Green Man future is one that gets the New Sun but doesn't get Severian the demi-god, and humanity works out its own arrangement with the universe.

Roy C. Lackey — 15 Jul 2008, 20:44 · follows Tony Ellis

Tony Ellis quoted and wrote:

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I don't think the Corridors necessarily led to alternate realities, just different points in time. Ash and his house disappeared because the ice future was no longer probable. When Sev made to force him out of the house, he said, "But your world is your world. I can exist there only if the

probability of my existence is high." (CITADEL, XVII) And he went poof when he left the protection of the Last House. The Green Man had been held prisoner in Saltus, so he could exist outside the Corridors in Sev's world because the probability of his future existence was high.

When Agia and the Green Man rescued Severian in the jungle, the Green Man said "We are your children . . ." (CITADEL, XXX) That suggests that his kind were descended from the new peoples that Sev found on Ushas when he returned from the stone town. That is corroborated by what the Green Man said to Sev in Saltus, "I am a free man, come from your own future to explore your age." (CLAW, III)

-Roy

Tony Ellis — 16 Jul 2008, 09:15 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy wrote:

I don't think the Corridors necessarily led to alternate realities, just different points in time.

I think if that was true, there would only have been one corridor, as there was when Tzadkiel first showed Severian the Brook Madregot. Severian is now talking about a multitude:

"All about me stretched the Corridors of Time, waving meadows roofed with the lowering sky of Time and whisperous with the brooks that ripple from the most supernal universe of all to the least." UotNS, LI

Brooks, not brook, you notice. Severian goes on to say "Behind me along a line that seldom exists, Apu-Punchau, the Head of Day, stepped from his house and squatted to eat the boiled maize and roast meat his people had left for him." If the corridors only lead to different points in the same time-stream, I don't see how Severian can look back and see a reality that 'seldom exists'.

The quotes you give where the Green Man talks about his future still make sense if he comes from one of a multitude of futures. For what it's worth, I think that at the time those lines were written, long before UotNS, Wolfe may well have intended them to be read in the stricter sense you suggest. But I also think that by the time UotNS came along Wolfe had changed his mind about a few things.

b sharp — 16 Jul 2008, 12:12 · follows Tony Ellis

I like Tony Ellis' explanation of the Green Man, being the equivalent of Master Ash- an alternate future to Ushas. It explains why he doesn't seem to fit with the UotNS Ushas and Hiero-dudes. Tony supports the position well with the text. I'll add that in their initial meeting, Severian and the Green Man have a bantering discussion but at one point they are hit by a sudden disgust for each other and debate over which one of them is really human.

I can imagine a Gene Wolfe in his 40's writing this book, having a crisis of conscience. He sees the passive, do-nothing, wait-for-a-savior nature of much of humanity and recognizes there is no real future in that. Having passed through the hippie 60's and granola 70's I can imagine him questioning his own faith and spirituality. I can stereotype vegetarian, secular humanists as, like the Green Man, very nice, honorable, caring people, and I can imagine Wolfe wondering if that was the way to go.

Religion seems to have won the battle though. Wolfe could see an even more noble future for humanity than becoming a giant hippie commune. I've always imagined that the Hierogrammates evolved into or created a superior cognate race that passed on to that

universe which is higher than Yesod.

The process would continue until The Increate is formed at the end, which is also the beginning (says God: "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last"- Revelation 1: 8). Leads to the interesting idea that while Man was made in God's image, God was made in Man's image also. (is THAT what the Sistine Chapel ceiling is all about? ;-))

-bsharp

Adam Thornton — 16 Jul 2008, 16:37 · in reply to Tony Ellis

On Jul 16, 2008, at 4:15 AM, Tony Ellis wrote:

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Note that something that "seldom exists" within the "Corridors of Time" has just about *got* to be a loving nod to Borges' "A New Refutation of Time."

Adam

Roy C. Lackey — 17 Jul 2008, 03:05 · follows Adam Thornton

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"All about me stretched the Corridors of Time, waving meadows roofed with the lowering sky of Time and whisperous with the brooks that ripple from the most supernal universe of all to the least." UotNS, LI

Brooks, not brook, you notice.

The multiple brooks refers to the brooks that run between the tiered universes. Small Tzadkiel could show him only the one brook, Madregot, because that was where she had been exiled by her larger self.

"This is the Brook Madregot, and it runs from Yesod to Briah."

"Between the universes?" I asked. "How can that be?"

"How could it not be? Energy gropes for some lower state, always; which is merely to say that the Increate tosses all the universes between his hands."

"But it's a stream," I protested. "Like the streams of Urth."

Tzadkiel nodded. "Those too are of energy seeking a lower state, and what is perceived is dictated by the instrument. If you had other eyes, or another mind, you would see all things otherwise." (URTH, XL, 285)

Since the brooks run between universes, it would not be very meaningful for the Corridors of Time to be merely congruent with them. Urth and Ushas were in Briah. I see no evidence that

the Green Man traveled to Urth's past from outside BriaH. True, Sev moving along the Madregot (or at least at an angle to it on the bank beside it), somehow ended up on Urth some forty years after he left for Yesod, but I find that inexplicable.

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I don't know what Severian meant by that, but if there are a multitude of futures, then trying to understand the Urth Cycle becomes a decent into chaos. If a man from a future that was not Sev's can interact with Sev in a practical way that Ash could not, then that opens up a can of worms better left alone. Any of the story's many mysteries can be explained away by appeals to influences from undemonstrated alternate futures.

-Roy

Tony Ellis — 17 Jul 2008, 21:16 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy C Lackey wrote:

The multiple brooks refers to the brooks that run between the tiered universes. Small Tzadkiel could show him only the one brook, Madregot, because that was where she had been exiled by her larger self.

Yet at least three of these brooks lead to BriaH. The Green Man races beside one, and you say he travels only within BriaH. Small Tzadkiel flutters beside a second, which is Madregot, and Severian chooses a third. The fact that Wolfe bothers to show us Severian choosing *not* to take the Green Man's brook seems significant to me.

Since the brooks run between universes, it would not be very meaningful for the Corridors of Time to be merely congruent with them.

I think they may be more synonymous than you realise. First of all, note that "to enter the corridors of time is to leave the universe." CotA, XXXIV.

And secondly, congruent or not, the brooks run between universes, but they also run through time:

"Madregot flows from the glory of Yesod" - she pointed upstream - "to the destruction of BriaH, down that way." She pointed again. "Follow the water, and you'll be at a time nearer the coming of your star." UotNS, XL

Roy C. Lackey — 18 Jul 2008, 04:16 · in reply to Tony Ellis

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We just aren't going to agree on this. The books show only two possible futures, Ragnarok and Ushas, with one excluding the other. Whether the Corridors and brooks are the same or not, the Green Man came from the Ushas future, which is necessarily in the universe of Briah. There is no evidence that there were multiple futures or realities after the arrival of the white hole, which was the original point of debate.

-Roy

Tony Ellis — 18 Jul 2008, 22:08 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy C Lackey wrote:

There is no evidence that there were multiple futures or realities after the arrival of the white hole, which was the original point of debate.

The multiplicity of brooks that lead to Briah is the evidence. But as you say, we just aren't going to agree on this. :-)