

The green man is a fake

The Urth list — 48 messages, 14 voices, 16 Jan 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5908>

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Lee Berman — 16 Jan 2011, 17:03

Since the list has taken a turn toward hard science it might be time to expose the green man for the carnival huckster he really is. There is no way for internal algae to provide the energy requirements of a warm blooded animal. Simply no way. The surface to volume ratio of a solid being is part of it. Trees need thousands of flat leaves (or 10x the number of needles) to achieve their energy needs and they don't have a fraction of the energy costs of a being which moves and stays warm. Moreover, trees have massive reserves of stored energy that a human-sized body couldn't come close to.

No quibble about "new, high efficiency chlorophyll.." blah blah. Our green plants already have a very high energy conversion efficiency after half a billion years of competition and natural selection (much higher efficiency than animal energy conversion). There are laws of physics to follow. You can't convert more than 100% of received sunlight energy into sugar and ATP energy.

The amount of sunlight hitting the area of human skin is not enough energy to allow homeothermy and movement. And we know that the Green Man is a walker through the corridors of time, which requires energy approaching full stellar output. Something is not right with this guy.

It could be argued that Wolfe was aware of these problems but created a fictional green man anyway just because he is a cool character. I'd be happy with this explanation except the green man is not a cool guy. He is a self-admitted liar and he has the creepy laugh that is even worse than the alzado's. What purpose does this laugh serve? He also fails to live up to his promise to rescue Severian in repayment for being rescued by him.

There is a religious figure called The Green Man, associated with Dionysus and Great God Pan and other pagan deities. Some Christians associate this guy with a certain, trickster, a liar The Great Deceiver. I'm not sure if Ushas or Green is this guy's goal for Urth but I think we should be very leery in considering His future to be the right path.

Marc Aramini — 16 Jan 2011, 17:24 · in reply to Lee Berman

--- On Sun, 1/16/11, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:
What purpose does this laugh serve? He
also fails to live up to his promise
to rescue Severian in repayment for being rescued by him.

I thought he saved him obliquely, or tried to, in Urth of the New Sun, doesn't he? Or did he show up too late? I have a very poor memory of Uth, though. The laugh and the comment that the demons describe Ushas in the play are disconcerting, as is, you know the contradictory idea at the end of citadel that Sev thinks both the high and the low must be preserved, and winds up wiping out pretty much both.

But people are still people, and that evil inside man seems pretty universal, as does his good.

The green man is at best ambiguous (is it stated he absolutely can't supplement his chlorophyll with the old gastric digestive system? Is he completely plant-like in energy or can he eat if he has to?)

Yeah too many weird negative associations with his description. I say, he is at best ambiguous, at worst ... bleh.

Jack Smith — 16 Jan 2011, 17:58 · in reply to Lee Berman

I think you're absolutely right in your scientific analysis of the green man. But perhaps Wolfe just did not think things through as you have done.

Even Homer nods.

On Sun, Jan 16, 2011 at 12:03 PM, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com>wrote:

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The Great Deceiver. I'm not sure if Ushas or Green is this guy's goal for Urth but I think we should be very leery in considering His future to be the right path.

Gerry Quinn — 16 Jan 2011, 18:01 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>
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Correct about homeothermy and movement. As has been noted before, Wolfe is not writing hard SF, for most authors of which this would be a slight stumbling block. As for Severian's even more thermodynamically challenging capabilities such as resurrection of the dead and walking the corridors of time, it is not really clear how much energy it requires. The mechanism used by the Green Man appears to be different anyway, as he can apparently range through a wider period of time.

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The laughter is easily explained as expressing the Green Man's disappointment and despair after he had briefly hoped in Severian, and then found him to be an ignorant primitive babbling about a New Sun of which the green Man had no knowledge (because in his time it is forgotten). And he never promises to rescue Severian. He does help Severian with information, which proves to be correct. And that's basically all we know about him. Seems cool enough to me.

- Gerry Quinn

Jeff Wilson — 16 Jan 2011, 19:37 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 1/16/2011 12:01 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:
From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>
The amount of sunlight hitting the area of human skin is not enough energy to allow homeothermy and movement.

Preaching to the choir, though I hadn't posted about this since you were yclept bsharp.

And we know that the Green Man is a walker
through the corridors
of time, which requires energy approaching full stellar output.

If it does, that coming from the the White Fountain seems sufficient.

Something is not right with
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Maybe. They are both firmly identified as Corridor walkers and the light of the White Fountain extends forward into the time of Ushas, so both could be fountain-powered. This would be a good reason to have greenness that can't feed you, if only to connect to that light without benefit of Severian's terminated bloodline.

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Yes, at least as cool as Severian, who is also a self-admitted liar, self-admitted cannibal, and comitter of genocide (no one left to admit that to). Nasty laugh? Imagine what kind of cackle you get out of a guy who shares his cranium with the lover whose death he was a party to (twice) and his hated pimp-king who rubber-stamped her death warrant. "Worse than the alzado" - at least the victimhood is temporary for the beast, not so the analeptic.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

James Wynn — 16 Jan 2011, 20:38 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Lee Berman-
The amount of sunlight hitting the area of human skin is not enough
energy to allow
homeothermy and movement.

Jeff Wilson-
Preaching to the choir, though I hadn't posted about this since you
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Yes, but one must allow the possibility that artificially manufactured algae could leverage the sunlight to get more oomph. Even today, people boost the idea of solar energy replacing carbon

fuels in all our vehicles and homes. They expect this even though after 3.5 billion years of evolution no creature that uses a significant amount of energy (like say a really lazy alligator) relies on solar energy even primarily. They all rely on carbon fuels and --at best-- gain supplementary energy from the sun. Yet, hope in technological breakthroughs springs eternal. And, this is, after all a sci-fi story.

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David Stockhoff — 16 Jan 2011, 21:20 · in reply to James Wynn

And sci-fi is a religion.

On 1/16/2011 3:38 PM, James Wynn wrote:

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Pedro Pereira — 16 Jan 2011, 21:46 · in reply to James Wynn

As it has already been said "The amount of sunlight hitting the area of human skin is not enough energy to allow homeothermy and movement". What that means is that it is physically impossible to harvest enough energy from the sun for a body with such a mass/surface area ratio to support him to such an extent. Artificial algae won't change that. Alo, I seem to remember that the Green Man is not supposed to eat, etc. It's almost as if Wolfe forgot that photosynthesis is a source of energy but photosynthetic organisms still need "food" for structural building (growth) in the form of other nutrients.

Date: Sun, 16 Jan 2011 14:38:24 -0600
From: crushtv at gmail.com
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Subject: Re: (urth) The green man is a fake

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James Wynn — 16 Jan 2011, 22:32 · in reply to Pedro Pereira

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for structural building (growth) in the form of

other nutrients.

1) There's plenty of room in Severian's encounter with the Green Man for undiscussed feeding processes that included taking organic that did not require killing.

2) Notice I used the word "leverage". What I'm suggesting is that it is theoretically possible that the Green Men's algae use the sunlight to tap power unavailable to us at this time (just as could be said of nuclear power plants in 1880). If serious people can imagine an economy running on solar power, Wolfe is not too far out there. This reminds me of ancient philosophers saying that it is impossible that the Earth rotates because the resulting wind would blow us all off the planet. It also reminds me of Wolfe's answer to those who said the Godling's anatomy was impossible. He responded [paraphrasing] "That's only true if the godling were constructed along the same lines as a human [...] I weary of people making claims about the limits of biological potential."

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António Pedro Marques — 16 Jan 2011, 22:35 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>

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- Who says the green man lives only on photosynthesis
- Who says the green man only uses chlorophyll-based photosynthesis (other, parallel pigments
can make use of other wavelengths)
- Who says more intense radiation can't lead to different photosynthetic strategies (heck, even
our plants have 3 types)
- Who says photosynthesis is the only path to autotrophy
- Who says the green man isn't engineered to be more efficient in his storage of energy
- Who says the green man isn't engineered to be more efficient in his usage of energy

(Interestingly, one corollary of your idea is that a moving, talking plant is an evolutionary
impossibility.)

Jeff Wilson — 16 Jan 2011, 23:26 · in reply to James Wynn

On 1/16/2011 2:38 PM, James Wynn wrote:

Lee Berman-

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homeothermy and movement.

Jeff Wilson-

Preaching to the choir, though I hadn't posted about this since you
were yclept bsharp.

Yes, but one must allow the possibility that artifically manufactured
algae could leverage the sunlight to get more oomph.

Even at 100% conversion efficiency, each day a person-sized patch of sunlit earth receives
about 1/30 of the energy a normally active person takes from a day's worth of food. Maybe it is
used instead to synthesize dietary supplements to make it easier to be life-long vegans?

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Jerry Friedman — 17 Jan 2011, 00:31 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

From: António Pedro Marques <antonio at gmail.com>

Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>

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Do we know he's homeothermic? I suppose when he took one of Severian's arms to help him escape from the Ascians, Severian might have noticed if his hand had been cold, though he was drugged.

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"The green color... is only what you call pond scum. We have altered it until it can live in our blood... the tiny plants live and die, and our bodies feed from them and their dead and require no other nourishment."

(No other nourishment? No minerals?)

It's hard to think of another energy source algae inside the body could have.

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He's "the color of pale jade". This means he absorbs less visible light than current plants (Ribes?). If Wolfe had said "blackish jade", it would have been a step in the direction of plausibility.

- Who says more intense radiation can't lead to different photosynthetic strategies (heck, even our plants have 3 types)

It would have to be many times more intense. Mirrors in space? Another white hole or two?

- Who says photosynthesis is the only path to autotrophy

What else is there? He doesn't seem adapted to use wind power. Getting one's internal algae to parasitize plants through what looks (and probably feels) like human skin would be a really, really good trick.

- Who says the green man isn't engineered to be more efficient in his storage of energy

- Who says the green man isn't engineered to be more efficient in his usage of energy

There's not enough at 100% efficiency, as Jeff said.

However, I'm imagining a world with many fusion plants powering LEDs that shine on green people as they sleep. Including shining on them from below through transparent water or air mattresses.

However however, I suspect Wolfe just committed the Sin Against Niven and didn't think it through.

(Interestingly, one corollary of your idea is that a moving, talking plant is an evolutionary impossibility.)

If by "plant" you mean "something that gets most of its energy from photosynthesis on Earth as it is now", it would have to move a lot less than us.

Jerry Friedman

Pedro Pereira — 17 Jan 2011, 00:46 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

Date: Sun, 16 Jan 2011 16:31:14 -0800

From: jerry_friedman at yahoo.com

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Subject: Re: (urth) The green man is a fake

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algae to parasitize plants through what looks (and probably feels) like human skin would

be a really, really good trick.

Truth be told, there are other things: chemosynthesis, which many bacteria and archaea use. However it doesn't solve the problem in any way, so you're right anyway.

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I agree fully.

Pedro

Jeff Wilson — 17 Jan 2011, 00:49 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

On 1/16/2011 4:35 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:
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perhaps not; an evergreen could become animated a few weeks a year, or a few months if it could deploy broad leaves for sun and furl them for activity, perhaps like a peacock's tail. Developing language would take proportionately longer.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Gerry Quinn — 17 Jan 2011, 00:53 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

From: "Jeff Wilson" <jwilson at io.com>
On 1/16/2011 12:01 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Maybe. They are both firmly identified as Corridor walkers and the light of the White Fountain extends forward into the time of Ushas, so both could be fountain-powered. This would be a good reason to have greenness that can't feed you, if only to connect to that light without benefit of Severian's terminated bloodline.

My impression was that Severian's ability to walk the corridors terminated with the formation of Ushas, but I could be wrong. One obvious possibility (probability, even?) is that the white and black holes cancel, so neither exists after the merger.

Furthermore, Severian has a personal link to the White Fountain. Nobody else in his time can access its power. Why should Green Men from the future be able to use it? Seemingly, they don;t even know that the Sun has been restored anyway, which also indicates that they have found some other means of walking the Corridors.

- Gerry Quinn

Jerry Friedman — 17 Jan 2011, 01:13 · in reply to James Wynn

From: James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com>

...

1) There's plenty of room in Severian's encounter with the Green Man for undiscussed feeding processes that included taking organic that did not require killing.

He says they get no nourishment except from the algae.

2) Notice I used the word "leverage". What I'm suggesting is that it is theoretically possible that the Green Men's algae use the sunlight to tap power unavailable to us at this time (just as could be said of nuclear power plants in 1880).

Like Antonio, you're leaving us to fill in your interesting suggestion. Green people are yesodotrophs?

Why would Wolfe hide something so cool from us? And if any energy source could be tapped in proportion to solar power, algae seem like an odd mechanism for it. Sympathetic magic?

If serious people can imagine an economy running on solar power, Wolfe is not too far out there.

Some arcane source of energy for the green man's algae strikes me as way, way more hard-science-fictionally believable than the alzabo and its analept. Or even the notule, which prefers the heat of living creatures.

On solar power, Wikipedia notes (with sources if anyone wants to check) that more solar energy hits the Earth every hour than humanity used in the whole year 2002. "All" that's necessary is technological breakthroughs, as Jeff Wilson implied. I see this as in a quite different category from that unknown source of energy that algae can tap in proportion to the solar energy they get.

This reminds me of ancient philosophers saying that it is impossible that the Earth rotates because the

resulting wind would blow us all off the planet. It also reminds me of Wolfe's answer to those who said the Godling's anatomy was impossible. He responded [paraphrasing] "That's only true if the godling were constructed

along the same lines as a human [...] I weary of people making claims about the limits of biological potential."

But at least that second comparison is unfair. Tapping some unknown source of energy is hardly biology in the way that giant fossil birds and pterodactyls are.

Jerry Friedman

António Pedro Marques — 17 Jan 2011, 01:30 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman wrote:

From: António Pedro Marques<antonio at gmail.com>

Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: "Lee Berman"<severiansola at hotmail.com>

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(No other nourishment? No minerals?)

From there one can see that's not the whole story, as indeed was to be expected - is he going to embark on a lecture on his biology to Severian? Not likely. Should he have a dozen adaptations in his organism, will he describe them to Severian in terms the latter wouldn't even understand? Or would he pick on the most visible thing, which happens to be easy to explain, and offer it for the whole package?

Also 'require' may mean they can survive without it, but not necessarily do everything. Think of a hybrid vehicle in electric mode.

Of course, some minerals are required in very minute quantities, but that's only some minerals.

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There's chemoautotrophy, though of course it alone can't account for everything.

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There's not enough at 100% efficiency, as Jeff said.

Hey, I didn't say production, I said storage and usage. He can store a lot when idle and use it more efficiently than we do later on. For one thing, if he doesn't have digestion, he can do away with a lot of costly organs. Then again I recall his being minute; that may not mean anything in terms of surface / mass, but it may mean a simplified internal structure, including lighter raw materials.

However, I'm imagining a world with many fusion plants powering LEDs that shine on green people as they sleep. Including shining on them from below through transparent water or air mattresses.

However however, I suspect Wolfe just committed the Sin Against Niven and didn't think it through.

I don't think so, because if he hadn't something in mind he just wouldn't have put him there. It's not the king of thing he does. He doesn't put Little Green Men in a story just to showcase the cool idea of living on chlorophyll. Or maybe he thought 'well, this is the classic discredited idea, but it's cool, and who's to say it really can't be made to work, so I'll just annoy those pesky types'. (Well, I don't know that GW would willingly annoy anyone.)

(Interestingly, one corollary of your idea is that a moving, talking plant is an evolutionary impossibility.)

If by "plant" you mean "something that gets most of its energy from photosynthesis on Earth as it is now", it would have to move a lot less than us.

One thing is certain, whatever the biology of the green man, if he really doesn't ever get any more nourishment than sunlight, then it's very different from ours. (Of course one can posit some unknown source of energy, but then, as Pedro points out, the whole 'green' thing would be pointless and cheap.)

My point was just that one can't counter it scientifically. One can say it's unlikely, but not that it's sheer fantasy. We don't have a close enough scrutiny of the green man in order to say so.

Jeff Wilson — 17 Jan 2011, 01:45 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 1/16/2011 6:53 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

Furthermore, Severian has a personal link to the White Fountain. Nobody else in his time can access its power. Why should Green Men from the future be able to use it? Seemingly, they don't even know that the Sun has been restored anyway, which also indicates that they have found some other means of walking the Corridors.

Sev uses the White Fountain power before he knows he's using it, so awareness is not required. His connection seems to be established by the light shining on him from the sky, so perhaps the fountain emits a special frequency chosen by the Yesodis to resonate with something in Severian's body as determined from Sev's genetic material; a thin line of color Severian in its emission spectrum.

Then, some Yesodi plot also needs furthering and some Hierarch has it seen to that the green men's algae also respond to this particular frequency of light. Imagine a race of pacifists who never need to kill to eat, not directly or even to clear land or or protect crops, born to rejoice in the light and die as needed by the grim doers of the necessary. Might they ascend to the stations of the Hieros all the sooner?

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose in Yesod....

Jeff Wilson — 17 Jan 2011, 02:17 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 1/16/2011 6:31 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

He's "the color of pale jade". This means he absorbs less visible light than current plants (Ribes?). If Wolfe had said "blackish jade", it would have been a step in the direction of plausibility.

He might be bleached out from lack of light, the way grass is when something is left covering it for a few days, then removed. On his second appearance, he is merely jade colored, indicating a partial recovery.

However, I'm imagining a world with many fusion plants powering LEDs that shine on green people as they sleep. Including shining on them from below through transparent water or air mattresses.

The green man seems almost at technological. He wears a kilt for modesty, but despite having the run of Severian's lifetime, he doesn't bother to stop for anything else that might help him rescue Severian.

However however, I suspect Wolfe just committed the Sin Against Niven and didn't think it through.

Niven's one to talk! Actually, Niven fesses up to lots of "didn't think it through" moments, though I can't believe he didn't intentionally stick the fossil record under the rug when he decided 1) Kzinti and humans are descended from a virus, 2) primates are descended from aliens, and 3) all of the above are descended from feedstock designed by still another alien race for the benefit of still another unrelated alien race.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Lee Berman — 17 Jan 2011, 04:07 · follows Jeff Wilson

Well, some interesting discussion. I would agree with those who suggest the only way for the green man to work as he claims is to have super Yesod-algae which access and harness the energy from another universe.

OR

We can notice how the green man describes himself when asked by Severian, "What are you?"

"A great seer. A great liar..."

Someone above noted the right bit of evidence..he has a nice set of teeth. Exactly how does evolution allow for that? Needs a nice smile?

Speaking of evolution allows Severian one of his cleverest lines. The green man is explaining that he is not a plant because evolution could not allow a plant to follow the same pathway to become a human form. Severian answers:

"The same thing might be said of stones, yet there are statues"

The clues are there. This is not a product of the higher evolution of humanity. This is a construct. A disguise, I think. A trick to get Severian to favor a future for humanity which will actually wipe it out.

The green man is given teeth so he can smile. But just as Father Inire's smile does not fool Thecla, the green man's laugh does not fool Severian. Something is wrong here. There are forces on Urth that do not want the oceans to freeze.

Jerry Friedman — 17 Jan 2011, 04:20 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

From: Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com>

On 1/16/2011 6:31 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

He's "the color of pale jade". This means he absorbs less visible light than current plants (Ribes?). If Wolfe had said "blackish jade", it would have been a step in the direction of plausibility.

He might be bleached out from lack of light, the way grass is when something is left covering it for a few days, then removed. On his second appearance, he is merely jade colored, indicating a partial recovery.

Good one. I really should have figured that out.

However, the reason for this phenomenon of etiolation seems to be so the plant can put its resources into growth to reach the sun and not into chlorophyll in the dark, which will be useless.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=0ZtXx54h75MC&pg=PA745#v=onepage&q&f=false>

This wouldn't apply to the green man--I can't see why he'd etiolate when he's genetically engineered and it would be better for him always to be ready to photosynthesize.

(For that matter, it doesn't apply to algae, most of which do form chlorophyll in the dark, as implied in the above reference and stated in

<http://books.google.com/books?id=r808AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA55&lpg=PA55#v=onepage&q&f=false>

)

Also, why wouldn't he wait till he was completely recovered? And given that his algae are genetically engineered, why shouldn't he be black (or fuligin), or gray when faded? Answer: because green is a cooler color for a photosynthetic man. Same reason he's shaped like a man instead of having big leaves or membranes or something.

However, I'm imagining a world with many fusion plants powering LEDs that shine on green people as they sleep. Including shining on them from below through transparent water or air mattresses.

The green man seems almost atechnological. He wears a kilt for modesty,

Which I suspect is the showman's idea, by the way. Modesty doesn't make much sense for people who need light, and no sense at all if they're short of it.

but despite having the run of Severian's lifetime, he doesn't bother to stop for anything else that might help him rescue Severian.

That's an interesting point. His kind was created by technology--has it been lost by his time? Or is he just not involved in it? Anyway, maybe he sees that he can rescue Severian without anything.

However however, I suspect Wolfe just committed the Sin Against Niven and didn't think it through.

Niven's one to talk! Actually, Niven fesses up to lots of "didn't think it through" moments, though I can't believe he didn't intentionally stick the fossil record under the rug when he decided 1) Kzinti and humans are descended from a virus, 2) primates are descended from aliens, and 3) all of the above are descended from feedstock designed by still another alien race for the benefit of still another unrelated alien race.

Or maybe "knowingly" more than "intentionally". That is, his goal wasn't to make it implausible; that was just the price he had to pay. (This could apply to Wolfe too, contrary to what I said.)

Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman — 17 Jan 2011, 04:46 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

From: Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com>

From: Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com>

On 1/16/2011 6:31 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

He's "the color of pale jade". This means he absorbs less visible light than current plants (Ribes?). If Wolfe had said "blackish jade", it would have been a step in the direction of plausibility.

He might be bleached out from lack of light, the way grass is when something

is left covering it for a few days, then removed. On his second appearance, he

is merely jade colored, indicating a partial recovery.

Good one. I really should have figured that out.

However, the reason for this phenomenon of etiolation seems to be so the plant

can

put its resources into growth to reach the sun and not into chlorophyll in the

dark, which will be useless.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=0ZtXx54h75MC&pg=PA745#v=onepage&q&f=false>

This wouldn't apply to the green man--I can't see why he'd etiolate when he's

genetically engineered and it would be better for him always to be ready to photosynthesize.

Okay, if green people are trapped in the dark, maybe they should be using their resources to get out of the trap, so maybe it would make sense for their algae to be engineered to etiolate.

Jerry Friedman

Jeff Wilson — 17 Jan 2011, 04:51 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 1/16/2011 10:07 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

Well, some interesting discussion. I would agree with those who suggest the only way for the green man to work as he claims is to have super Yesod-algae which access and harness the energy from another universe.

OR

We can notice how the green man describes himself when asked by Severian, "What are you?"

"A great seer. A great liar..."

"...like every man whose foot is in a trap." So he admits he will lie to get out of a trap, and the algae explanation comes when he is hopeful Severian will help him get out. However, telling the truth in a way it will not be believed is also a method lying, and fits in with his practice of driving off patrons with dire fortunes.

Someone above noted the right bit of evidence..he has a nice set of teeth.
Exactly how does evolution allow for that? Needs a nice smile?

The same way it apparently allows for contemporary humans to have wisdom teeth, appendixes, male nipples, sense of humor, musical aptitude, etc.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Lee Berman — 17 Jan 2011, 05:56 · follows Jeff Wilson

Exactly how does evolution allow for that?

Jeff Wilson: The same way it apparently allows for contemporary humans to have wisdom teeth, appendixes, male nipples, sense of humor, musical aptitude, etc.

Not quite getting your examples. But perhaps not fair since you are dwelling into my own field of expertise. Sense of humor and musical aptitude seem to be social adaptations which are fully functional in our modern human world.

Wisdom teeth are a problem for modern humans because our jaws are shorter than our ancestors' while number of teeth is a more persistent trait.

Male nipples are a product of gestational development. We all start with the same basic template and our parts are formed into male and female by presence or absence of testosterone derivatives. Penis/clitoris, scrotal sac/vulva, testes/ovaries, nipples, all have their male/female analogs. (that's why a boy baby's testes start in the abdomen and drop down later).

Now appendix is on the right track! It is a vestigial structure, left over from when we were herbivores and (like cows) needed that extra "stomach" to digest a high fibrous diet.

But an appendix is a little, shrimpy, non-functional thing. The green man seems far more evolutionarily distanced from us humans than a leaf-eating ape is. Maybe having some ill-formed calciferous stumps left in his mouth would make Wolfe's evolutionary point.

But having fully formed, nice looking teeth makes the opposite argument. As do the outrageous scientific contortions needed to justify algae-based human life.

The green man, as he admits, is lying. He is not evolved, he is not the future of humanity. He is the Trickster. His very name, Green Man, invokes a satanic (to Christians) pagan deity. A horned god of the vine.

Jeff, you know what I'm talking about. I understand the annoyance of its global impact on the story. But, there it is.

Jeff Wilson — 17 Jan 2011, 06:15 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 1/16/2011 11:56 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

Exactly how does evolution allow for that?

Jeff Wilson: The same way it apparently allows for contemporary humans to have wisdom teeth, appendixes, male nipples, sense of humor, musical aptitude, etc.

Not quite getting your examples. But perhaps not fair since you are dwelling into my own field of expertise. Sense of humor and musical aptitude seem to be social adaptations which are fully functional in our modern human world.

They function, but they have marginal impact on selection at best. particular features don't have to be advantageous , only that the overall incremental change is positive. The green man's teeth don't have to be especially gainful any more to still be there, the way the above features are still present despite outliving their necessity or not especially having one to begin with, who knows?

The green man, as he admits, is lying. He is not evolved, he is not the future of humanity. He is the Trickster.

His very name, Green Man, invokes a satanic (to Christians) pagan deity. A horned god of the vine.

He doesn't say he's evolved, so he's not lying about that.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Jerry Friedman — 17 Jan 2011, 06:27 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

From: Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com>

On 1/16/2011 10:07 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

[snip interesting points]

Someone above noted the right bit of evidence..he has a nice set of teeth.
Exactly how does evolution allow for that? Needs a nice smile?

The same way it apparently allows for contemporary humans to have wisdom teeth, appendixes, male nipples, sense of humor, musical aptitude, etc.

Surely the green man would be an example of genetic engineering, not evolution. He says they've altered the algae, so why wouldn't they have altered themselves?

It's possible that in doing so, they preferred to keep their human shape, including teeth, no extra surface, and something (fat?) filling the abdomen where their digestive organs used to be, since Antonio pointed out they don't need them. It's also possible that green people eat for pleasure and supplemental nutrition as long as it doesn't involve killing anything (fruit, dairy products, synthetic food).

I can't put much stock in his saying "a great liar", since he has another reason to say that, and I don't see why he'd give Severian even that much of a hint. And he doesn't say he lies all the time. However, I think you've raised a good possibility that he's a fake put in Severian's path by whoever wants the New Sun.

Jerry Friedman

Jeff Wilson — 17 Jan 2011, 06:36 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 1/17/2011 12:27 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:
From: Jeff Wilson<jwilson at io.com>

On 1/16/2011 10:07 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

[snip interesting points]

Someone above noted the right bit of evidence..he has a nice set of teeth.
Exactly how does evolution allow for that? Needs a nice smile?

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Surely the green man would be an example of genetic engineering, not evolution.
He says they've altered the algae, so why wouldn't they have altered themselves?

They would, but not more than the Author would consider respectful of the Creator.

doesn't say he lies all the time. However, I think you've raised a good possibility
that he's a fake put in Severian's path by whoever wants the New Sun.

But there seems to be something of a tradition of enslaving green men as captive oracles. And why can't he be authentic and still be put in Severian's path, eh?

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Lee Berman — 17 Jan 2011, 13:21 · follows Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson: They [teeth] function, but they have marginal impact on selection at best. particular features don't have to be advantageous , only that the overall incremental change is positive.

This makes sense using an ideal version of natural selection. In practice, there seems to be a maintenance factor involved. Meaning that if an organism's structure is neutral in regard to natural selection it will tend to accumulate negative mutations just in the course of not being maintained. Thus cave fish lose their eyes to become non-functioning bumps of tissue; not because a working eye is selected against by pitch dark but because deforming mutations are not selected against and pile up over the generations. Perhaps the same for the human appendix, baby toe, etc. The green man's teeth should be deformed.

Jerry Friedman: Surely the green man would be an example of genetic engineering, not evolution. He says they've altered the algae, so why wouldn't they have altered themselves? It's possible that in doing so, they preferred to keep their human shape, including teeth.

This seems to be the necessary argument to retain any legitimacy to the green man, bolstered by Severian's "stones to statues" argument. But it might be simpler and tie the story together if he is a liar and not a legitimate end product of humanity.

I can't put much stock in his saying "a great liar", since he has another reason to say that, and I don't see why he'd give Severian even that much of a hint.

What other reason? Why would ANYONE say they were a liar? As we are at least partially aware, he says he is a liar because Gene Wolfe makes him say so. It is Gene Wolfe giving us a hint, as a good storyteller/puzzle maker must. The only people who say they are liars are..well....liars. Liars hoping that a bit of honesty will seduce a perceptive listener into believing the lie anyway (which is what has happened here).**

And he doesn't say he lies all the time.

heh. That statement would create a logic paradox. Think of all the logic puzzles involving liars and truth tellers...well, hopefully you know what I mean.

However, I think you've raised a good possibility that he's a fake put in Severian's path by whoever wants the New Sun.

Fair enough. I never mean for my theories to be any more than possible interpretations. But I'll suggest that the "whoever" doesn't have to be quite such a mystery. There is another character who seems to have access to the Corridors of Time. She also has an association with green algae. What is the source of the undine? Perhaps you'll find the source of the green man in the same place. If one can pinch off "daughter-brides"... BTW, in keeping with the androgynous, dionysian theme, the green man's voice is "saved from womanishness only by its depth".

More evidence that Abaia, et al. are surreptitiously pushing FOR the New Sun/Flood can be found when we first encounter undines, which is in Severian's Baldanders-induced dream:

"we are the brides of Abaia. The sweethearts and playthings...Here we feed, floating and growing until we are great enough to mate with Abaia, who will one day devour the continents."

**as a bit of possibly helpful advice in dealing with human social interactions, whenever someone starts a sentence with the phrase, "To be honest..." or something like that, the person is sub-consciously acknowledging a general pattern of dishonesty in their communication. Liars use this phrase all the time.

It doesn't have to be completely malicious. Some people habitually lie in saying nice things they don't really mean and use "To be honest with you..." when making the rare critical statement. Gene Wolfe is VERY aware of such interpersonal and self-deceptions in speech and uses them to great effect in his work.

Jerry Friedman — 17 Jan 2011, 16:20 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com>

...

Jerry Friedman: I can't put much stock in his saying "a great liar", since he has another reason

to say that, and I don't see why he'd give Severian even that much of a hint.

What other reason? Why would ANYONE say they were a liar? As we are at least partially aware, he says he is a liar because Gene Wolfe makes him say so. It is Gene Wolfe giving us a hint, as a good storyteller/puzzle maker must. The only people who say they are liars are..well....liars.

Liars hoping that a bit of honesty will seduce a perceptive listener into believing the lie anyway

(which is what has happened here).**

...

The other possible understanding of his comment might be "It should be obvious that my fortune-telling will be lies, since my foot's caught in a trap. If you don't want to hear lies, we can talk about what's important to me--my foot's caught in a trap."

Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman — 17 Jan 2011, 16:29 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

From: Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com>

On 1/17/2011 12:27 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

From: Jeff Wilson<jwilson at io.com>

On 1/16/2011 10:07 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

[snip interesting points]

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Surely the green man would be an example of genetic engineering, not evolution.

He says they've altered the algae, so why wouldn't they have altered themselves?

They would, but not more than the Author would consider respectful of the Creator.

Do we know that the green people or their creators share the Author's views of respect toward the Creator? And do the various man-beasts show us the limits of that? Wings the size of the anpiels' would be very handy for photosynthetic people.

doesn't say he lies all the time. However, I think you've raised a good possibility

that he's a fake put in Severian's path by whoever wants the New Sun.

But there seems to be something of a tradition of enslaving green men as captive oracles.

That's a good point. We could perhaps imagine that the others have had other purposes, such as carrying messages that will be believed when a cacogen wouldn't be.

And why can't he be authentic and still be put in Severian's path, eh?

Because of all the things we've been discussing: He should be a darker color and have a different appearance (rather like an inhumu--just kidding), and there's not enough energy in sunlight.

There are answers to all the arguments on either side, and it seems ambiguous to me.

Jerry Friedman

Jeff Wilson — 17 Jan 2011, 17:43 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 1/17/2011 10:29 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

From: Jeff Wilson<jwilson at io.com>

On 1/17/2011 12:27 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

From: Jeff Wilson<jwilson at io.com>

On 1/16/2011 10:07 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

He says they've altered the algae, so why wouldn't they have altered themselves?

They would, but not more than the Author would consider respectful of the Creator.

Do we know that the green people or their creators share the Author's views of respect toward the Creator? And do the various man-beasts show us the limits of that? Wings the size of the anpiels' would be very handy for photosynthetic people.

I don't think those Smithian underpeople are supposed to represent movement toward the Christian ideal the way the ideal green man concept is. And I don't think a guy who considers

BEN HUR possibly disrespectful for fictionalizing parts of the gospel is going to choose to depict the path to salvation as requiring people to forsake the form Christ gave them at the Creation and become gutless, leafy freaks.

But there seems to be something of a tradition of enslaving green men as captive oracles.

That's a good point. We could perhaps imagine that the others have had other purposes, such as carrying messages that will be believed when a cacogen wouldn't be.

Plausible, but that would again favor my idea that the Yesodis use them as part of their master plot. Attuning them to the White Fountain gives them the run of human history and a certain amount of prehistory, but keeps them from being able to accidentally step on the wrong butterfly in the Jurassic or prevent the formation of life itself.

And why can't he be authentic and still be put in Severian's path, eh?

Because of all the things we've been discussing: He should be a darker color and have a different appearance (rather like an inhumu--just kidding), and there's not enough energy in sunlight.

We can't discount things with bogus physical explanations as fake; flyers still fly despite anti-iron having positive mass, and the Ship still flies to the end of the universe despite relativity and the light sails' abysmal thrust.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Jeff Wilson — 18 Jan 2011, 00:18 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 1/17/2011 7:21 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

Jeff Wilson: They [teeth] function, but they have marginal impact on selection at best. particular features don't have to be advantageous , only that the overall incremental change is positive.

This makes sense using an ideal version of natural selection. In practice, there seems to be a maintenance factor involved. Meaning that if an organism's structure is neutral in regard to natural selection it will tend to accumulate negative mutations just in the course of not being maintained. Thus cave fish lose their eyes to become non-functioning bumps of tissue; not because a working eye is selected against by pitch dark but because deforming mutations are not selected against and pile up over the generations. Perhaps the same for the human appendix, baby toe, etc. The green man's teeth should be deformed.

Sexual selection? Crap teeth aren't sexy.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Lee Berman — 18 Jan 2011, 01:57 · follows Jeff Wilson

The green man's teeth should be deformed.

Jeff Wilson: Sexual selection? Crap teeth aren't sexy.

LMAO good one Jeff! I really did laugh thinking of the green man giving some green woman the sexy smile on a date (being careful not to ruin things with that pesky alzado laugh).

Green women are a funny idea too. Do they have sexy green breasts? (watch out for James T. Kirk on the prowl!) I am tempted but too mature to make a V-8 joke here.

Stuart Hamm — 18 Jan 2011, 02:08 · follows Lee Berman

I recently passed a pub called "The Green Man" in London between the Euston Station and the St Pancras Station....sigh....
Euston connects London to the North and Midlands of England and? the St Pancras station is the Eurostar hub to Europe....

OK, lads....have at it....

hehehe

???????? ? ?

Stuart Hamm — 18 Jan 2011, 02:10 · follows Stuart Hamm

...on Marylebone Road...which goes right by 24 Baker Street....BRING IT!!!!!!!!!!!!

???????? ? ?

?Mobile — (415) 786-3624

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FACEBOOK/STUARTHAMM

myspace.com/stuhamm

Skype? stuart.hamm

? ??

--- On Mon, 1/17/11, Stuart Hamm

<hammstu at sbcglobal.net> wrote:

From: Stuart Hamm <hammstu at sbcglobal.net>

Subject: Re: (urth) The green man is a fake

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Date: Monday, January 17, 2011, 6:08 PM

I recently passed a pub called "The Green Man" in London between the Euston Station and the St Pancras Station....sigh....

Euston connects London to the North and Midlands of England and? the St Pancras station is the Eurostar hub to Europe....

OK, lads....have at it....

hehehe

???????? ? ?

-----Inline Attachment Follows-----

Jeff Wilson — 18 Jan 2011, 02:20 · in reply to Stuart Hamm

On 1/17/2011 8:08 PM, Stuart Hamm wrote:

I recently passed a pub called "The Green Man" in London between the Euston Station and the St Pancras Station....sigh....

Sev's green man is tropically related to the celtic green man of knowledge and the leprechaun. You have to catch and hold him, but yields up prophecy and wisdom instead of a pot of gold. And when he's loose he vanishes in a flash!

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Lee Berman — 18 Jan 2011, 02:54 · follows Jeff Wilson

Stuart Hamm: I recently passed a pub called "The Green Man" in London

I suspect a Celtic, Druidic origin to the name.

António Pedro Marques — 18 Jan 2011, 11:29 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson wrote (17-01-2011 06:15):

The green man's teeth don't have to be especially gainful any more to still be there, the way the above features are still present despite outliving their necessity or not especially having one to begin with, who knows?

"Nearly all sickness is from the teeth" (The Third Policeman). Well, maybe that doesn't apply if you don't eat [vegetable matter] a lot.

António Pedro Marques — 18 Jan 2011, 11:30 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson wrote (18-01-2011 00:18):

Sexual selection? Crap teeth aren't sexy.

Without teeth, language becomes impaired.

António Pedro Marques — 18 Jan 2011, 11:34 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

António Pedro Marques wrote (18-01-2011 11:30):

Jeff Wilson wrote (18-01-2011 00:18):

Sexual selection? Crap teeth aren't sexy.

Without teeth, language becomes impaired.

Speech, I meant, though if enough people have deficient speech then it will become a problem of the language itself.

Jeff Wilson — 18 Jan 2011, 19:12 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

On 1/18/2011 5:34 AM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

António Pedro Marques wrote (18-01-2011 11:30):

Jeff Wilson wrote (18-01-2011 00:18):

Sexual selection? Crap teeth aren't sexy.

Without teeth, language becomes impaired.

Speech, I meant, though if enough people have deficient speech then it will become a problem of the language itself.

With no need of cooperative effort to secure food, the advantage of speech is greatly reduced.

António Pedro Marques — 18 Jan 2011, 23:33 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson wrote (18-01-2011 19:12):

On 1/18/2011 5:34 AM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

António Pedro Marques wrote (18-01-2011 11:30):

Jeff Wilson wrote (18-01-2011 00:18):

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Without teeth, language becomes impaired.

Speech, I meant, though if enough people have deficient speech then it will become a problem of the language itself.

With no need of cooperative effort to secure food, the advantage of speech is greatly reduced.

I don't think we really wanna go down that road.

David Duffy — 19 Jan 2011, 00:05 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

Wolfe gave a brief response to a questionnaire sent out to writers by Barbara Bengels ("The Care and Feeding of Science Fiction Writers"):

A formative moment in which you decided to become a writer? "There was none..." Roommate asked GW to contribute stories to the student magazine so he could illustrate them.

And specifically SF? "I have never considered myself an sf writer, just a writer who writes some sf."

and on encouraging the young

"There was a little kid over on Banks Street who borrowed my sf magazines after I had read them. His name was John Cramer, and he became a nuclear physicist [and SF writer]". Not a story I had heard before.

Cheers, David Duffy,

Matthew Keeley — 19 Jan 2011, 00:31 · in reply to David Duffy

Not directly related, but io9 ran an interview with Wolfe today:

<http://io9.com/5736063/gene-wolfe-talks-dystopian-futures-and-the-chances-of-star+drive-in-our-lifetime>

-Matt

On Tue, Jan 18, 2011 at 7:05 PM, David Duffy <davidD at qimr.edu.au> wrote:
Wolfe gave a brief response to a questionnaire sent out to writers by Barbara Bengels ("The Care and Feeding of Science Fiction Writers"):

A formative moment in which you decided to become a writer? "There was none..." Roommate asked GW to contribute stories to the student magazine so he could illustrate them.

And specifically SF? "I have never considered myself an sf writer, just a writer who writes some sf."

and on encouraging the young

"There was a little kid over on Banks Street who borrowed my sf magazines after I had read them. His name was John Cramer, and he became a nuclear physicist [and SF writer]". Not a story I had heard before.

Cheers, David Duffy,

Gerry Quinn — 19 Jan 2011, 00:54 · in reply to David Duffy

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

From: "David Duffy" <davidD at qimr.edu.au>

Wolfe gave a brief response to a questionnaire sent out to writers by Barbara Bengels ("The Care and Feeding of Science Fiction Writers"); and on encouraging the young

"There was a little kid over on Banks Street who borrowed my sf magazines after I had read them. His name was John Cramer, and he became a nuclear physicist [and SF writer]". Not a story I had heard before.

Wolfe gave Cramer a namecheck in the short story Procreation.

- Gerry Quinn

Son of Witz — 19 Jan 2011, 00:57 · in reply to Matthew Keeley

Thanks for the article.

"But people seem to look at mine and expect to find hidden fingerprints under the lily pad or something. I've heard some really nutty theories about my stories — I won't name names, but there's some real screwball stuff going on out there."

Hehehe.

~witz

On Jan 18, 2011, at 4:31 PM, Matthew Keeley <matthew.keeley.1 at gmail.com> wrote:
Not directly related, but io9 ran an interview with Wolfe today:

<http://io9.com/5736063/gene-wolfe-talks-dystopian-futures-and-the-chances-of-star+drive-in-our-lifetime>

-Matt

On Tue, Jan 18, 2011 at 7:05 PM, David Duffy <davidD at qimr.edu.au> wrote:

Wolfe gave a brief response to a questionnaire sent out to writers by Barbara Bengels ("The Care and Feeding of Science Fiction Writers");

A formative moment in which you decided to become a writer? "There was none..." Roommate asked GW to contribute stories to the student magazine so he could illustrate them.

And specifically SF? "I have never considered myself an sf writer, just a writer who writes some sf."

and on encouraging the young

"There was a little kid over on Banks Street who borrowed my sf magazines after I had read them. His name was John Cramer, and he became a nuclear physicist [and SF writer]". Not a story I had heard before.

Cheers, David Duffy,

Marc Aramini — 19 Jan 2011, 01:47 · in reply to Son of Witz

--- On Tue, 1/18/11, Son of Witz <Sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org> wrote:

Thanks for the article.

"But people seem to look at mine and expect to find hidden fingerprints under the lily pad or something. I've heard some really nutty theories about my stories — I won't name names, but there's some real screwball stuff going on out there."

Uh ... ehmmm ... (he has no one to blame but himself, right James?)

I've got it!!!!!!? He's talking about Borski!? Borski and the onomastics, yes!

that part at the top where it says "some people do" get it, well, there you go. whew. That was close. Thank God for Borski and Wright's books to absorb the impact of the above quote!!!!!!

James Wynn — 19 Jan 2011, 03:42 · in reply to Marc Aramini

Uh ... ehmmm ... (he has no one to blame but himself, right James?)

Definitely. Right now I'm imagining Wolfe with wide eyes and a finger to his puckered lips: "Oops! I was unclear?"