

time travel in Short Sun (and Chenille on Blue)

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maa32 — 02 Jan 2002, 02:20

All right, this will be my last post for tonight. (I guess I have nothing else to do - I keep thinking of new stuff - hopefully someone will find SOMETHING worth discussing). Near the end of the first person narrated sections of Return to the Whorl, the narrator says there is "no returning to the past save in dreams." The description of Astral Travel that the narrator offers when he first discovers its repeatability identifies it as "a dream in [his] sleeping mind".

Is there any indication that time travel occurs during those "astral travel" experiences? At first, I was sure that Blue and Green were Ushas and Lune (albeit a Lune that had been somehow cast from its orbit into a heliocentric orbit and in which the green terraforming had gotten out of control, but it is still close enough to effect the tides of Blue), but I find that stance untenable in light of the accurate passage of time between the Nessus that Rigoglio remembers and the actual progress of the city. (does anybody else remember the part in Nightside the Long Sun where Marble's internal clock is off by a factor of ten? That would make the time elapsed in the whorl 3,000 years rather than 300 or so, but that is an untenable supposition as well, due to all sorts of other evidence that the time in the whorl was only a couple hundred years.) All the cities of the neighbors that exist under the water (according to Seawrack) would at least seem to indicate that a similar flood has occurred on Blue as the one that heralded the birth of Ushas. Also, why does Jahlee make a big point about Merryn having problems with animals, too? Are we to buy that the Cummean and Merryn are inhumani, and that they have always been with mankind (or, if time travel is possible, always will be?)

Ok. I kind of like the idea that the astral travel can be time travel, and could explain the presence of Silk in Inclito's mother's story. But on the other hand, what about the narrator's ability to influence Fava's story? He claims he can change her story and enter it. Can he exert the same influence on the accounts written by his family after he is gone (the even chapters of Return to the Whorl), to change things and make it more or less reliable according to his whims - steering Hide away from an event which he does not want revealed?

One more random thought. At the end of Chapter 7 in Return to the Whorl, the narrator keeps seeing Auk in his chair and he confuses Jahlee for Chenille because she fed on a "big woman" who was drunk or on rust outside the bar. Could the astral travel that the narrator undertook towards the very end of In Green's Jungles, in which he visited his body with his son Sinew and gave him the white ring, have included a freeing of Auk and Chenille, and their travel to Blue in Horn's Lander? Could Jahlee have fed on Chenille as she wandered around Blue, seeking drink to cope with the probable death of her adopted children at the hands of the inhumani? Perhaps the narrator didn't simply leave Auk and Chenille at the mercy of the Triviguanis on Green.

OK, enough for now. I hope someone will have something to say about some of this stuff. Marc Aramini