

Various Phenomenon

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 05 Aug 1998

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m.driussi — 05 Aug 1998, 21:53

GriffJon,

Re: volcanos on Urth. Nope, they've been only legends for a looong time in Severian's birth-time.

Re: stars visible during the day. Right, the =easiest= solution to this one is that there is little or no atmosphere on Urth--since on our own Moon the stars are visible around the 28 day clock. (Of course, this makes it very hard to breathe.) Blue sky due to scattering of light in atmosphere. Downgrade the star and add odd-yet-not-lethal gases to the atmospheric mix, you can get orangish skies, maybe greenish.

The more difficult solution is that the Old Sun is putting out energy in the "dim and red" end of the spectrum, i.e., the "heater" (ecosphere creator) is not a very good "lantern" (light source).

From a literary/historical perspective, however, the effect of this mood lighting is very much like those medieval paintings and woodcuts where the daytime sky is dark (or midnight blue) and has stars. So once again we have TBOTNS acting as a literal fulfilment of medieval traditions--just like the flame-like blades of medieval polearms spout real fire on Urth; or how all the bells ring by themselves when the New Sun arrives (due to its gravity and their balance).

There is an interesting (perhaps even "sly") description of Urth colors within the text. I don't believe the term "sky blue" is ever used, but when Severian has some visions, the light is a "celestine" color not found, it seems, in the natural world around him, a tint we would glibly call "sky blue." The same light cast by the Claw; the same light seen on Yesod. Maybe the same light used with Inire's mirrors in the Presence Chamber. And celestine is a color from heraldry, like sanguine.

As for "why put a black hole in the Sun?" No, I don't think it has anything to do with terraforming Venus, but I can see how you would mention it after I was just talking about ecospheres. Myself, I persist in thinking that the reason is one or more of the following:

1) Tapping energy directly from the Sun for all the usual uses that civilizations and/or godlings use power for. (Note how Severian's use of the Claw, and later =any= available power source, points to this sort of "energy circuit" scheme. And if we take Severian's case as being typical of godlings like Thyme, Typhon, and Abaia, then we can wonder where they get their various energies from . . . brings us back to that volcano detail--since natural vulcanism would not likely end while Earth is still habitable, this =might= point to another energy source being tapped to the max, feeding some chthonic deity. But if the Old Sun is an energy grid hook-up, who or what is it feeding? Aside from Abaddon, that is.) (This engineering strategy is covered a bit in Martyn Fogg's TERRAFORMING.)

2) Interrupting the natural evolution of the Sun so as to both lengthen its lifetime and avoid

entirely the disastrous giant phase. (This is obviously very far-looking.) (This engineering strategy is covered a bit in Martyn Fogg's TERRAFORMING.)

3) A vengeance weapon with no positive applications. (Launched by someone other than Typhon, since it messes him up and he doesn't seem to know what's going on. Perhaps one of his rebellious children. If placed by Yesod for their own reasons, it might be more of a "tire boot" on the car for the probationary period of 1000 years within which Urth must evolve or die the slow death. But if there is a Yesodic tire boot, this sort of implies that the Old Sun's energy was already being tapped for the First Empire and would fuel the Second Empire and so on--that is, as a device to prevent Empire it seems a bit obscure to merely make farmers work harder as the growing seasons shorten, rather than break the [hypothetical] solar furnace power plant circuit that makes Empire possible. It would be like spreading an ineffective defoliant over enemy farmlands rather than bombing the nuclear powerplants that supply energy to the factories cranking out war machines.)

4) An explanation for why the scientists of mid-20th century could not find the neutrinos that theory dictated should be pouring out of the Sun, if it were a natural star and not some sort of artificial dingus.

=mantis=