

Relative & Absolute

The Urth list — 6 messages, 5 voices, 01 Sep 1998

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1076>

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m.driussi — 01 Sep 1998, 16:42

Tony A. West,

Interesting point regarding the two "first" meetings of Severian and OB&F on ship Tzadkiel (chapters 4 and 26 of URTH).

Here are some observations:

In the meeting of ch. 4, only Severian says it is the first time. Severian asks, "You have not met me before?" and F answers, "Though we do not know you [as a friend], yet you know us [as friends]." So they allow Severian to rattle off his theory unchallenged, or they think their oblique oracular statements set him straight, if this editorially enhanced reading of F's phrase is correct.

In the meeting of ch. 26, OB&F had been sent by Tzadkiel to escort Severian to the place of parting, the hall of weeping masks. (Imagine their surprise that he had found his own way there!) Severian only sees B&F; Ossipago is offstage (unleashing the dogs, heh). This might be critically important, since in ch. 4 we are told that O is the one with good memory; and we know that O is a machine raising the child-like (if not actually juvenile) B&F, so it might be that for all their angelic beauty and oracular talking, B&F are as scatter-brained as little kids sent to the market to buy something for mom. That is, they might not remember meeting Severian before, without their "auxiliary brain" there to remind them.

Okay. We are back to trying to piece together the subjective timeline of OB&F.

1) They get their mission in Yesod (outside of time or in reverse time) after Severian passes the test.

2) They get onboard the Ship (itself going in and out of time) by foot or by teleport. They see Severian twice, either ch. 4 first or ch. 26 first. (I'm leaning toward ch. 26, myself.)

3) They land on Urth at the beginning of Severian's Reign and hang out with him for ten years (forward time), until he gets onto the tender that will take him to the Ship.

4) They continue their mission by flying their time rover saucer back in time. They mess with Baldanders by moving either forward or backward--that is, maybe they skip back one hundred years and then hop ahead by decades, watching Baldanders's progress and egging him on; or they do it backwards, giving him nothing on the first for them/last for him visit, then giving him presents on subsequent visits (and straining causality for us monkey brains).

5) They travel further back, to the era during which the light of the white fountain first reaches Urth. In this stage at least we know that they "pass themselves" at one point--since they are also on the Ship slowing down circa Typhon's Era, slowing down so the tender can pick up Severian and Gunnie. (And they find Severian in the tomb--very surprised!)

Note that the tender itself burns up time in slowing down--thus the drop off point must be decades, perhaps centuries before the landing time. So Ship drops off Severian at 100 years before the Revolt against Typhon; then Ship burns up more time in Briah space (scooting around at sublight speed eats up compressed time) before dropping OB&F at 100 years before the Reign of Severian. The respective tenders (Age of Monarch, Age of Autarch) decompress time across space as they decelerate from near light speed and bring the passengers to the landing zones--right on time!

=mantis=

CRCulver — 02 Sep 1998, 08:37 · follows m.driussi

Mantis said:

<we know that O is a machine
raising the child-like (if not actually juvenile) B&F>

The fact that Barbatus and Famulimus are consistently child-like puzzles me. If the Hierodules have notoriously short lifetimes, how do we account for the perpetual youth of B&F?

Christopher R. Culver <crculver at aol.com>
<http://members.aol.com/crculver/index.html>

"The darkest dreams are the ones that come true."
-Warren Defever

Peter Westlake — 02 Sep 1998, 10:25 · follows CRCulver

At 04:37 1998-09-02 EDT, CRCulver at aol.com wrote:

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Isn't it only Baldanders who says they have short lives? Maybe he is fooled by the way their time interacts with his: if they spent a score of years with him, then went back forty or more, the discontinuity might make him think he was dealing with different people. Two visits, with the second lot of visitors saying "hello, pleased to meet you" could very easily give that impression.

Peter.

Mark Millman — 02 Sep 1998, 09:12 · follows Peter Westlake

On 2 September 1998, Christopher R. Culver <crculver at aol.com> wrote:

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Just off the top of my head, I can offer the following possibilities:

1. They're not human, despite their appearance, and so humans don't look for the right signs of aging in them, assuming there even are visible physical changes. A related possibility is that they simply don't outlive their youth--they are physically young right up until they die, as is true of many species of animals, and don't have a senescent stage in their lives.
2. Their lifespans being so short, they don't have time to develop "old attitudes", causing them to seem child-like to humans for their entire lives.
3. They only do the traveling and field-work that we associate with them during their actual, physical years of youth (regardless of how long they in fact live). They're seen only briefly at any given time (i.e., they don't seem to spend even months, much less years--Father Inire excepted--with Severian or Baldanders), and their continual reappearances could, to them, seem close in time due to the effects of traveling on the ship Tzadkiel (taking into account both relativistic time dilation and "time travel" as such. So this period of their lives could be analogous to the schooling of human children, with their visits to Severian (or whomever) corresponding to the exams.
4. They do only live twenty years--in the form in which we know them. As they were crafted by the Hierogrammates, the Hierodules, whether of one species or many, may have a larval stage, and Famulimus could parallel Apheta (though on different planes of existence). Thus their lives would literally end, and new ones begin, and during the lives in which humans know them, they would always be, in the most exact way, children.

Any other ideas out there?

Mark Millman

Jon Camfield — 02 Sep 1998, 16:26 · follows Mark Millman

John Gersten <jgersten at slip.net> wrote:
[snip]

Are B&F born in the future? Do they then "age" as they pass backward in time (from Sev's point of view)? This would seem to be the case. But then how can they interact, even briefly, with people whose physiological and neurological processes are, time-wise, working backward from their own? Perhaps they use artificial means to briefly sort of "snap" themselves around to Sev's time-arrow direction? Or am I just overcomplicating things (in a Wolfe book?!? <g>)?

I always saw this as similar to Merlin-- he lived backwards (born in our future, dies in our past (link:Green man:passing through all of our future in coming here). He operates 'forward' in that he can interact with us normally, and no other explanation exists. sorta Kant-ian: we apply the ideas of causality to the universe, but it is not necessarily there as we think of it.

I wish I had TBotNS here with me, so I could look through it and map the OB&F meetings better, though what Mantis says looks to be what I was thinking originally.

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"The most incomprehensible fact about nature is that it is comprehensible"
-- Albert Einstein

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