

Thoughts on pollution <MANTIS> esp.

The Urth list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 13 Mar 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3031>

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Gage Kerrigan — 13 Mar 2002, 01:54

Dear Mantis (and others),

I would like to personally thank you (mantis) for several things, among them being the first person to reply to any of my postings on Urth.net. That aside, I would also like to state how delighted I was upon seeing your real name, and realizing that you were the same man who has written 4 of the 20 articles/books that encompass the report on which my question centered. (pollution, social downfall)

One thing I would like to clarify however, was that I was already nearly 100% sure that economic pollution had not continued on as magnanimous a scale as our present day situation, which would actually seem quite absurd when discussing the time scale of New Urth. Quite a few theories have been published with the general theme of Earth will become the garbage dump of the solar system as soon as a significant number of people have established extended self-maintained colonies off Earth.

I was not concerned as much with continued pollution greater than human carelessness and lack of concern, more with what happened, or what went wrong. We have witnessed the 'downfall' of our own space program for the sole reason that it's not necessary, and there haven't been any significant developments. I do not partake to this view, but, obviously, some do.

Considering this, my inquiry perhaps should have been the following: "what would possibly motivate us to take the initiative towards leaving Earth". I think that the fact that humanity has attained interstellar technologies, and that Earth is for all purposes medieval, suggests that it has been abandoned for some reason or another, and I ruled out mass attack or invasion (from extraterrestrials, perhaps) because the snippets of history presented in New Sun focus rather on history that's ancient to us, and does not mention outside-in contact.

Air pollution could certainly be a factor, and would not only contribute to the general disdain for living on Earth, but might make the sun appear darker and possibly cooler...(Hey!) Is there any evidence of

Apocalyptic ice caps? Could they have even reformed (after o-zone repairs itself) and left the geography similar to what it is today, but have driven many coastside dwellers into space?
And still, the other question... what caused the decline of society from interstellar to, well, you know. I doubt that a black hole which has done little in a long time could cause a mass techno-exodus, or that they couldn't handle some new goliaths in the sea (esp. if they started out like Baldanders). I think that there is a strong binding between ecosystem and society in BotNS, and a strong case (strong in the sense that it hasn't been disproven) since they are two of the more important aspects when studying a culture.

Thoughts, please.

«Lord ESN»

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G Willickers
aka
Gage Kerrigan

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 13 Mar 2002, 17:26 · follows Gage Kerrigan

G. Willikers done wrote (in part):

I was not concerned as much with continued pollution greater than human carelessness and lack of concern, more with what happened, or what went wrong.

I'm going to take a slightly different tactic from my esteemed fellow-insect here, and speak to what (in my reading) the BotNS (and indeed the whole Lupiverse ueberwerke) is about.

"What went wrong" is, very simply, the Fall of Man. In Catholic (indeed, generally in Christian) belief, because of the Fall, nearly all our efforts and achievements in this life are foredoomed to failure and futility. Oddly, this does not mean that they are not worth doing; through Grace, our works can be hallowed and made successful - if not at what we intended, then at what God intended. ("What you meant for evil, God intended for good, for the saving of many.")

The Hierodules at one point describe Urth as quarantined. (This is my term, and I am describing the situation from memory; it has been a while since I last reread tBotNS.) I don't recall the exact details, but it was because of the behavior (i.e. the evil, the Fallen nature) of humans - this is analogous to the "Silent Planet" concept of C.S. Lewis's "Space Trilogy."

We have witnesses the 'downfall' of our own space program for the sole reason that it's not necessary, and there haven't been any significant developements.

Hmm? I regard both the shuttle and the ISS as pretty significant developments. I regard some of the unmanned probes we've sent out in recent years as pretty significant developments. Heck, I regard Hubble and COBE as very significant developments.

Are we moving as fast as I (or most SF fans) would like?

Hell, no! But movement has continued.

Considering this, my inquiry perhaps should have been the following: "what would possibly motivate us to take the initiative towards leaving Earth".

Basically, if it becomes possible, some humans will do it. The desire is clearly there, even if it is not universal. (Make it possible for _me_ to leave Earth, and, baby, I'm outahere.)

It's equally reasonable to ask "what could possibly motivate those who stay behind?"

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Actually - I don't think we can say that "Earth" is, for all purposes, medieval; we really only know this about the Commonwealth. It seems likely that this is true of the rest of Urth, to be sure. But even the word "medieval" is misleading - people at the "medieval level" of technology have at least limited access to things that neither true medievals nor we today can produce, and while the Urth level may not be universal, it's common enough to equip entire armies with Urth- level weaponry. Severian encounters things well beyond modern tech wherever he goes.

suggests that is has been abandoned for some reason or another,

Again, not abandoned but quarantined (see above).

And even the quarantine is not complete. Some humans come and go (if only on The Ship), and hierodules/cacogens are constantly coming and going, and working for the redemption of Urth (which is, apparently, at least _one_ reason for Father Inire's long residence in the House Absolute).

I doubt that a black hole which has done little in a long time could cause a mass techno-exodus, or that they couldn't handle some new goliaths in the sea (esp. if they started out like Baldanders).

Two different issues in this sentence.

First, the black hole has done one major thing, and that is "wound" the Old Sun. Barring direct conversion of mass to energy (something of which I don't think we see any real evidence in the books), or something essentially magical (like ZPF energy), the Sun is the major source of energy in the Solar system. But the Sun's energy output has been severely reduced, and so the ability to _run_ technology is decreased.

Second: the "giants in the sea" (and, apparently, one at the South Pole) did not "start out like Baldanders," at least not the main ones: they are aliens.

I think that there is a strong binding between ecosystem and society in BotNS,

I think it would be truer, because less limited and less motivated by a political agenda, to say that there is a strong relationship between environment and culture.

On 13/03/2002 17:26:49 Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote:
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This put's me in mind of Arthur C Clarke's "The City and the Stars"

In simplest terms the adventurous emigrated leaving the conservative behind. Human society
in the galaxy subsequently left the whole of earth behind.

Then we have Typhon returning to a forgotten backwater - Urth. Would this not be a world from
which the adventurous had emigrated for generations leaving behind those who were not and
that would underpin the cultures of Urth, Commonwealth and Ascias alike.

Matthew

Andy Robertson — 13 Mar 2002, 17:49 · follows matthew.malthouse

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

From: <matthew.malthouse at guardian.co.uk>

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conservative behind. Human society in the galaxy subsequently
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Am I correct in thinking that the awakened sleeper that Silk meets beneath Virion remembers
being savagely compelled to board the Whorl?

This would fit in with the idea that the "adventurous genes" have escaped Urth and fled away.

haartshorn