

Time

The Urth list — 10 messages, 5 voices, 01 Feb 1998

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/332>

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David_Lebling — 01 Feb 1998, 13:37

What a great flurry of new activity! And some new blood as well. Yumbo!

On the illness of the sun: It is stated in several places that the sun is being devoured by a black hole. That much is impossible to argue with. The debatable point is whether it's natural causes or murder. It seems pretty clear to me that it was done on purpose to weaken Typhon's empire. The coincidence is too unlikely otherwise. Who dunnit? The obvious SFnal idea is that it's "the rebels," whomever they might be. The unobvious idea is that it's Severian himself, or more generally the forces of good. It's pretty clear that the sort of empire Typhon was ruling is one you don't want as a neighbor, so...

On the mountains: This may just be me reading things into the text that aren't there (what! never!), but the mountains are clearly "all" carved in the shape of people. And it isn't just autarchs, either. You could look it up.

On geography, to CRCulver: The action of the tetralogy takes place in South America, and yet there is a great river that flows southwestward over a plain, and great mountains to the north and east of the plain. This isn't _our_ South America. Either lots of time has passed (and getting serious mountains in that end of SA is going to take a lot of time -- the plate tectonics are all going the wrong way), or someone has been fiddling. On the other hand, the statement that such stuff has stopped is a pretty strong argument for Deep Time. Perhaps the same technology that reshaped the continents froze them as well -- what a nuisance if you get the continents where you want them and they start drifting off again!

Tzadkiel and Severian: Recall that Tzadziel can send slivers of itself off as independent beings. Now we have the suggestion that Severian can do the same. Perhaps Severian _is_ Tzadziel, in that sense?

Deep Time: The hardest thing to believe about TBOTNS taking place 50 million years in the future is that _so little_ has changed. People are still people, exactly as they are now. The average species lasts on the order of three million years. Even with all sorts of advanced technology, would 50 million years have changed so little?

Wolfe is a master at making things simultaneously not be what they seem and giving clues to the truth. It's perfectly appropriate that it should seem like millions (or even billions) of years have passed, just as it seems that we're reading a sword & sorcery story at first. After all, one of many things the book is is an homage to _The Dying Earth_, which is pretty clearly science fantasy. One of Wolfe's goals was to make the science fantasy into science fiction. Vance's book doesn't make sense as science fiction, so Wolfe spent a great deal of effort to make sense of it.

-viz

(david_lebling at avid.com)

Kieran Cleary — 02 Feb 1998, 11:14 · follows David_Lebling

On the illness of the sun: It is stated in several places that the sun is being devoured by a black hole. That much is impossible to argue with. The debatable point is whether it's natural causes or murder.

How about this then:

Item: The Conciliator is sometimes referred to as "Dark Sun" (or "Dark Star" can't remember which.) Item: The New Sun itself is a White Fountain. This is described in the text as being the opposite of a black hole, i.e. an eruption of matter from one (lower) universe to another (higher) universe. Item: There is a black hole in the Old Sun Item: The White Fountain that is the New Sun was not born in the same universe as Urth. (shaky here, but I thought that was mentioned in tUotNS)

So, speculation follows: the black hole that is destroying the Old Sun is merely the necessary complement to the New Sun. One has caused the other, and are both different sides of the same coin that is Severian.

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

From: David_Lebling at avid.com <David_Lebling at avid.com>
To: urth at lists.best.com <urth at lists.best.com>
Date: Sunday, February 01, 1998 8:10 PM
Subject: (urth) Time

[Posted from URTN, a mailing list about Gene Wolfe's New Sun and other works]

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getting serious mountains in that end of SA is going to take a lot of time -- the plate tectonics are all going the wrong way), or someone has been fiddling. On the other hand, the statement that such stuff has stopped is a pretty strong argument for Deep Time. Perhaps the same technology that reshaped the continents froze them as well -- what a nuisance if you get the continents where you want them and they start drifting off again!

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-viz
(david_lebling at avid.com)

works

Kieran Cleary — 02 Feb 1998, 14:22 · follows Kieran Cleary

[Resending this, so apologies for duplication if any]

-viz wonders:

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So, speculation follows: the black hole that is destroying the Old Sun is merely the necessary complement to the New Sun. One has caused the other, and are both different sides of the same coin that is Severian.

lasrach

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Kieran Cleary — 02 Feb 1998, 12:50 · follows Kieran Cleary

Addendum to last message: I'm mixing up my terminology somewhat. To clarify: the New Sun as an astrophysical object is the spanking brand new star which results when the White Fountain does its rejuvenation job on the Old Sun. (Which of course you all knew, but I confused the two terms in my last message).

lasrach

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

From: Kieran Cleary <kieranwn at tinet.ie>
To: urth at lists.best.com <urth at lists.best.com>
Date: Monday, February 02, 1998 11:14 AM
Subject: Re: (urth) Time

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-viz
(david_lebling at avid.com)
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Jason Voegele — 02 Feb 1998, 14:18 · follows Kieran Cleary

vizcacha wrote:

Deep Time: The hardest thing to believe about TBOTNS taking place 50 million years in the future is that *so little* has changed. People are still people, exactly as they are now. The average species lasts on the order of three million years. Even with all sorts of advanced technology, would 50 million years have changed so little?

This is not exactly true. I'm as yet unable to track down the reference, but I'm sure that the text mentions somewhere that the people of Sev's era have evolved quite a bit from the *Homo Sapiens Sapiens* that we know today. Or maybe it's in one of Wolfe's essays. Anyway, this could support the FAR future setting for *The Book*...if only I could track it down. Of course, I've been looking for the "Coke bottle beaches" reference for some time too. Methinks the hour is anon for another reading.

Jason

Jim Jordan — 02 Feb 1998, 20:19 · follows Jason Voegele

<excerpt>At 02:18 PM 2/2/98 -0500, you wrote:

</excerpt>

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Jason

</excerpt> While I don't recall any particular reference, the ability of these people to sustain pain under torture implied to me, in my first reading, that they had developed beyond where people are today in some regards.

Of course, we also know that people have been engineered....

Nutria

Kieran Cleary — 03 Feb 1998, 11:14 · follows Jim Jordan

I think the reference to the humans of Sev's time having changed a good deal takes place when Sev. emerges from the mine at Saltus and chats to Jonas re the possible origin of the man apes. Sev wonders aloud why humans haven't changed & Jonas gives him one of his long hard looks to indicate that he's wrong. A bit vague, I know, but I don't have the books to hand.

-lasrach

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Jason Voegele — 03 Feb 1998, 10:19 · follows Kieran Cleary

lasrach said:

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Good call! Here it is: II, Ch. 8, p. 260 of Shadow & Claw

(Jonas and Severian are discussing the origin of the man-apes)

Jonas:

"I don't know whether your man-apes are the same kind of hybrid...I would be inclined to agree with you that they are human beings who have undergone some change in their essential nature as a result of their life in the mines and their contact with the relics of the city buried there. Urth is very old now...Gold and silver do not alter, but their guardians can suffer metamorphoses stranger than those that turn grapes to wine and sand to pearls."

Severian:

"But we outside endure the dark each night, and the treasures carried up from the mines are brought to us. Why haven't we changed too?" Jonas did not answer...Still, when he turned to face me there was something in his eyes that told me I was being a fool, that we had changed. He turned away again and stared out and up once more.

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

From: Kieran Cleary <kierannwn at tinet.ie>
To: urth at lists.best.com <urth at lists.best.com>
Date: Tuesday, February 03, 1998 9:35 AM
Subject: Re: (urth) Time

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-lasrach

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Michael Straight — 05 Feb 1998, 17:05 · follows Jason Voegele

On Mon, 2 Feb 1998, Jim Jordan wrote:

</excerpt> While I don't recall any particular reference, the ability of these people to sustain pain under torture implied to me, in my first reading, that they had developed beyond where people are today in some regards.

I had read that as attesting more to the skill of the guild than to the hardness of their victims, but either or both could be true.

-Rostrum