

arcologies like mountains

The Urth list — 13 messages, 6 voices, 16 Jul 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3363>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 16 Jul 2002, 23:44

Blattid wrote:

The 97 Kyear figure is very debateable, and I for one hold it to be completely implausible ... we're talking a sufficient amount of time so that the ruins of ancient human civilizations have been uplifted in the bodies of new mountains (which, of course, are then carved into the figures of Urth's vain rulers). That doesn't happen in less than multiple millions of years.

Oh dear, back to this chestnut.

Yes, the 97 Kyear figure is very debateable. (For all sorts of reasons. Let a thousand timelines bloom!)

But, as far as I am concerned, so is the notion that the "mountains" are natural (especially the single cliff that is being referred to here, however obliquely). I'm sure anyone who has read Olaf Stapledon can instantly recall the supercities like continental coral reefs that sprout up in superscience civilizations -- indeed, they are rather puny compared with Asimov's "full metal planet" of Trantor. The concept is rather a staple of sf, and iirc, the brown book says that non-humans built vast cities like "banks of cloud" (note scale) and like "skeletons of dragons" (note fossil imagery) on Urth after the zenith of the Empire.

As for "multiple millions," Wolfe has written, more than once, iirc, that it is "perhaps" one million years distant (which I have always taken as an outer limit rather than an inner limit, because of the qualifier). FWIW.

=mantis=

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matthew.malthouse — 17 Jul 2002, 09:45 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

On 17/07/2002 00:44:27 Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

Blattid wrote:

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outer limit rather than an inner limit, because of the qualifier). FWIW.

The single cliff I might have swallowed. But there is more than that.

As Severian travels north he comes to new mountains, sharp, uncarved (which also touches upon the time between Typhon and tBotNS). The raising of new mountain ranges by conscious intervention rather than eon-long techtonic activity would have been an event of staggering magnitude to rival the coming of the New Sun itself. The lack of mention of such an event could be allowed but set against it is the long continuity (of decline, to be sure) implied in the whole atmosphere of the Commonwealth.

Yeuch, I just don't believe it.

Matthew

Michael Andre-Driussi — 17 Jul 2002, 13:50 · follows matthew.malthouse

Matthew wrote:

As Severian travels north he comes to new mountains, sharp, uncarved (which also touches upon the time between Typhon and tBotNS).

Nope, not in the text I read. If you can find it again, please tell. (Perhaps you are mistakenly thinking of URTH and the era of Apu Punchau.)

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You don't have to believe it. There are plenty of readers who believe, for example, that the Old Sun is dying of natural causes; or that Lune's orbit is a natural function of time rather than engineering; or that all those weird animals evolved on Urth (implying evolutionary time scales); etc. (Everyone has their own mix and match.)

It seems to me that there are many such cases of misdirection in the text where things once

seem very big and then shrink down.

For the rest: As a matter of fact, I have considered in the past how artificial continent raising might be a requirement, if only to allow a certain continent to sink under the waves during a global deluge and not come up again when the high waters retreat.

But what I was talking about in this case was not whole continents, but rather mountain ranges. Of supercities. Decayed into gigantic tells.

As for the mine at Saltus: well, urk -- do you believe that excavations of Roman cities prove that they were in place a million years ago? Probably not.

=mantis=

matthew.malthouse — 17 Jul 2002, 14:24 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

On 17/07/2002 14:50:15 Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

Matthew wrote:

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Nope, not in the text I read. If you can find it again, please tell. (Perhaps you are mistakenly thinking of URTH and the era of Apu Punchau.)

Perhaps... vide below.

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The problem is that everyone likes to be "right". The chances of being so are diminished if one cannot persuade the consensus to ones point of view.
;-)

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For the rest: As a matter of fact, I have considered in the past how artificial continent raising might be a requirement, if only to allow a certain continent to sink under the waves during a global deluge and not come up again when the high waters retreat.

You're alluding to the coming of the New Sun? There's a point there; either it's too much or not enough.

But what I was talking about in this case was not whole continents, but rather mountain ranges. Of supercities. Decayed into gigantic tells.

One might also consider the usual belief that the Commonwealth is in South America - and the changes required to make that fit the geography Severian travels.

As for the mine at Saltus: well, urk -- do you believe that excavations of Roman cities prove that they were in place a million years ago? Probably not.

You're right. I don't. ;-)

But the point I think was made about the mines is that they are not mining the crust for raw materials (ores) as we would understand it but mining the detrius of the past - that's unlikely to be less than many many times what we'd find today in the whole archological deposit between the Iron Age and now.

However memory does play tricks. I was going to finish the current light reading (Tad William's Memory, Sorrrw, Thorn), enjoy my new new one (Ricardo Pinto's sequel to The Chosen) and then re-read tBotNS - which is over due. When I get home I might reconsider those priorities and get back to you on this in a few weeks time.

Matthew

James Wynn — 17 Jul 2002, 15:52 · follows matthew.malthouse

I'm inclined toward short-timeline theories myself - simply because I don't think beyond a maximum of a million years in the future, the characters could credibly be considered human. Although a review of the archives reveals a wealth of debate on this subject, I wasn't on the list then. ;-) So I'll offer my pennies: Mantis wrote: As for the mine at Saltus: well, urk -- do you believe that excavations of Roman cities prove that they were in place a million years ago? Probably not. Matthew Malthouse wrote: But the point I think was made about the mines is that they are not mining the crust for raw materials (ores) as we would understand it but mining the detrius of the past - that's unlikely to be less than many many times what we'd find today in the whole archological deposit between the Iron Age and now. From the beginning of the Bronze Age til now - 5000 years --- the currently available technologically-advanced archeological artifacts available for us to "mine", is still impressive. Imagine that extended to 100,000 years - mostly encompassing the output of artifacts since the first industrial revolution a mere 250 years ago --- well, one could probably mine for generations in the New Jersey garbage dumps even if we shut them down today.

-- Crush

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 17 Jul 2002, 16:17 · follows James Wynn

Oh dear, back to this chestnut.

More of a walnut, I think. A hard nut to crack.

Let a thousand timelines bloom!)

Bravo!

But, as far as I am concerned, so is the notion that the "mountains" are natural (especially the single cliff that is being referred to here, however obliquely).

I was not referring to the single cliff; others have mentioned the mines of Saltus, (which are pretty darn deep down), the newer mountains ...

... and perhaps the most important piece of evidence, which I didn't cite because I'm not prepared to go and reread the whole darn thing right now looking for one sentence: but ... somewhere in there it's mentioned that Urth's core has cooled solid. And that is not going to happen in the next 97K years, or the next million.

I'm sure anyone who has read Olaf Stapledon can instantly recall the supercities like continental coral reefs that sprout up in superscience civilizations -- indeed, they are rather puny compared with Asimov's "full metal planet" of Trantor. The concept is rather a staple of sf,

Well, yeah (though it's not a full metal planet; it's a planet with a full metal jacket ... later, after some of the metal has been stripmined, people can farm on Trantor). And my own favorite examples of this, the plastic-coated planet of Bunch's "Moderan" and the continental cities of Wingrove's "Chung Kuo." Posdef a known and negotiable trope of the sfnal ecology: I grant that readily. (Indeed, the Autarch's palace may be an example.)

Still: while I have no textual proof of this, in my first reading of tSotL, and since, I didn't read the cliff that way at all -- a standard SF trope did enter my mind, but the emblematic example of the trope was the "apartment mine" in the original film of PLANET OF THE APES. (Where, granted, it is unlikely that "millions" of years have passed...)

and iirc, the brown book says that non-humans built vast cities like "banks of cloud" (note scale) and like "skeletons of dragons" (note fossil imagery) on Urth after the zenith of the Empire.

...and? I don't imagine you'll disagree if I say that the stories in "Wonders" are not, in general, to be taken as historically factual (in the universe of the discourse). Aside from the blatantly poetic language, I also expect these descriptions to be, well, exaggerated.

As for "multiple millions," Wolfe has written, more than once, iirc, that it is "perhaps" one million years distant (which I have always taken as an outer limit rather than an inner limit, because of the qualifier). FWIW.

And I have always taken it as typical Lupine vupinity ... "perhaps one million years" doesn't actually commit Wolfe to anything.

--Dan'l

Bluebird, what do you see?

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 17 Jul 2002, 16:20 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Mantis quoted Matthew...

As Severian travels north he comes to new mountains, sharp, uncarved (which also touches upon the time between Typhon and tBotNS).

Nope, not in the text I read. If you can find it again, please tell. (Perhaps you are mistakenly thinking of URTH and the era of Apu Punchau.)

Well, that's certainly what I was thinking of; and in context, I'm pretty darn sure that those are the same mountains that Typhon and company later carve into their effigies.

David A Baird — 17 Jul 2002, 16:44 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

OK, I also remember reading the bit about the Urth's core cooling. Also, the Hieros/Hierogrammates/Hierodules are creations from Urths past and now they want the new sun so that Urth can regain it's glory and then in turn recreate them again. 100K years seems too few for such a cycle.

Andy Robertson — 17 Jul 2002, 14:12 · follows David A Baird

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

From: "Dan'I Danehy-Oakes" <ddanehy at siebel.com>

Oh dear, back to this chestnut.

More of a walnut, I think. A hard nut to crack.

Let a thousand timelines bloom!)

Bravo indeed.

I think we simply have to face the fact that the poetic elements of the "Dying Earth" which Wolfe put in can not be rigorously justified in SF terms.

The book is really about an Earth which is so old the Sun is dying. (Anyone else here think one root is the dying universe of Charn in the Narnia stories?)

All the stuff about a black hole causing it has been shoehorned in afterwards, and the "poetic" elements do not really make scientific sense. Deal with it.

hartshorn

Crush — 17 Jul 2002, 18:41 · follows Andy Robertson

David A Baird said:

... the Hieros/Hierogrammates/Hierodules are creations from Urths past and now they want the new sun so that Urth can regain it's glory and then in turn recreate them again. 100K years seems too few for such a cycle.

Wait a minute. I don't think I'm understanding this point. What possible limitations of time could the Hieros offer? They go backwards in Time, go outside of Time, drop in on Time. I presumed that Hieros were created in a future far beyond the Age of the BothNS.

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 17 Jul 2002, 18:53 · follows Crush

Crush quoted David and said...

... the Hieros/Hierogrammates/Hierodules are creations from Urths past and now they want the new sun so that Urth can regain it's glory and then in turn recreate them again. 100K years seems too few for such a cycle.

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Well, while you're right that the Hieros don't help us set up any kind of time limits, it's a _little_ more complicated than that -- it's established in UotNS that the Hieros are from an "earlier" cycle of the universe. If there is any meaningful time-relationship at all (and I question this,

since "time" is only a meaningful measurement within a given spacetime), it's to be measured in Sagans of years.

I would while away the hours smoking all the flowers and shooting up the rain

David A Baird — 17 Jul 2002, 19:23 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

If there's no time limitation to the Hieros activity then why do they rely on Urth regaining it's power?

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

From: "Crush" <crushtv at hotpop.com>
To: <urth at urth.net>
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2002 8:41 PM
Subject: RE: (urth) arcologies like mountains
David A Baird said:

... the Hieros/Hierogrammates/Hierodules are creations from Urths past and now they want the new sun so that Urth can regain it's glory and then in turn recreate them again. 100K years seems too few for such a cycle.

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--

James Wynn — 18 Jul 2002, 16:14 · follows David A Baird

David A Baird said:

... the Hieros/Hierogrammates/Hierodules are creations from Urths past and now they want the new sun so that Urth can regain it's glory and then in turn recreate them again. 100K years seems too few for such a cycle.

Crush asked:

Wait a minute. I don't think I'm understanding this point. What possible limitations of time could the Hieros offer? They go backwards in Time, go outside of Time, drop in on Time. I presumed that Hieros were created in a future far beyond the Age of the BothNS.

David responded:

If there's no time limitation to the Hieros activity then why do they rely on Urth regaining its power?

Now Crush says:

Because...oh wait... now I understand your timeline. You are saying that the Hieros are created between our time and Severian's and that they are backing the new Sun in order to have themselves created a second time around? Right?

That's not the way I read tUotNS. My recollection of my reading was that their ORIGINAL

creation had been brought about by beings created by humankind AFTER the New Sun's advent, AND that those beings would *never* be created in the Future where the Dying Sun continues to decline. Dan'I has offered another fold, saying that the Hieros are created during a previous universe-cycle - I'll have to re-read the book I guess. But even so, all this takes place (relatively speaking) AFTER the advent of the New Sun.

Hence, the Hieros are not goosing the Urth toward the New Sun just to replicate themselves in the future. They are ensuring their own original creation. And with Dan'I,s twist the possibility arises that THEIR eventual creation is necessary for humanity's development (and the Hiero's creation, etc.).

Twisted enough for ya?

--Crush