

Various and Sundry...

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 31 Oct 1998

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Alex David Groce — 31 Oct 1998, 13:16

THE LANGUAGES OF PAO:

Good book, I'm sure Wolfe's read it. I think it was somewhat spoiled for me, though--I read it just after finishing Pinker's THE LANGUAGE INSTINCT for a class in cognitive science. Vance's book is VERY Sapir-Whorfian, and Pinker made it very hard to turn off the "this is nonsense" meter.

Ascians:

Yes, I think that Loyal to the Group of 17 proves Wolfe isn't a Whorfian. Actually, as to the idea that the language only works so long as we don't picture the Ascians sitting around saying "meet at 2:00 and ambush those damned Southerners...", I suspect the language is one of the things that prevents the Ascians from winning, despite their superior technology and help from Abaia & Erebus. Even though the 17's Orwellian plan has failed, it's succeeded in limiting the soldiers' ability to communicate effectively.

The Translation from the Future:

Wolfe treats it fairly lightly, although he does go to the trouble to explain in the beginning of Urth how he might have gotten hold of Severian's narrative. Which is one of my favorite things about that book--the idea of Wolfe sitting in his backyard, gardening, digging up a lead coffer... Also, it's a nice parallel to the MS found behind a vase in the British Museum for the Soldier books. The monuments surviving from futurity, by the way, I assume to be things that Wolfe thinks will survive until Severian's time--although what they might be I can't imagine--the Grand Canyon?

Owen Barfield:

I'm sure he influenced Lewis' view. Weren't they friends in real life? In fact, I'm thinking somewhere Lewis explicitly says something like "Barfield influenced my ideas on this stuff."

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." - John 8:32

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