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The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 29 Apr 1999

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Ori Kowarsky — 29 Apr 1999, 19:48

Heh. The reply I was working on to Ori has been made redundant by Jonathan Laidlow who summed up what I was trying to say with this:

I very much enjoyed Jonathan's post, thoughb I disagreed with him on the same point I'm about to address below.

Lewis, unlike Wolfe, was writing a sort of "literal continuation of Earth history" with the Narnia and Space Trilogy books. The books speculate "What if there were other worlds? Given what Christians believe, how

This is a very interesting point, and brings to mind Eco's "The Island of the Day Before", where the characters argue about the existence, and salvation, of beings on other planets. I don't know if this book has been mentioned before, but it's a lot of fun and is a great big jumble of ideas.

I hate to break this to you Ori, but not only is TBOTNS not our universe, I'm pretty sure Wolfe made the whole thing up.

Gasp But what about that post-historic first edition I bought from Mr. Gold at "Books of Gold"?

Seriously, Wolfe's playful appendices where he talks about translating a manuscript from the future are a kind of parody of the attempt to fit Wolfe's story into our world's history. They serve to highlight the fact that Urth is a fiction, that this is a story about stories. Again see Jonathan's post for a better explanation.

Where I disagree with you and Jonathan is that I believe that by inviting the reader to conclude that there is a future-history timeline connecting Earth to Urth, Wolfe creates a fictional universe which has interpretive implications as the result of its recent and far-flung history; within that fictional universe, it is fair to examine whether certain interpretations are consistent with the events described in the text or not. TBOTNS may be nothing more than the avatars of certain ideas or concepts bumping into one another, but I think enough care and craft has gone into creating realistic settings, characters and narrative to justify asking whether certain ways of looking at the story can be justified by its content.

Ori