

TBoTNS as Science and fantasy

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 02 Nov 1999

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Jeremy Crampton — 02 Nov 1999, 19:42

There's a section in the text which I think of in reference to the science vs. fantasy nature of TBoTNS:

Citadel Chapter 17 "Ragnorok The Final Winter", Ash is speaking:

"The distinction you mention no longer holds. Religion and science have always been matters of faith in something. It is the same something. You are yourself what you call a man of science, so I talk science to you. If Mannea were here with her priestesses, I would talk differently".

Although I don't necessarily agree with all these comments it does have the useful aspect that it involves the reader in the process, rather than just saying something "is" or "is not."

Many years ago Tim Maroney brought all this up on sf-lovers, namely that TBoTNS was fantasy because "if Severian put his arm into a rainbow and pulled out a butterfly, no-one would be surprised."

Jeremy W. Crampton <http://geog.gmu.edu> jcramp to at gmu.edu Dept. of Geography & Earth Science [MS 1E2] 'Tis true; there's magic in the web of it. George Mason University --Othello (III.iv.69) Fairfax, Va 22030

Daniel Fusch — 03 Nov 1999, 02:13 · follows Jeremy Crampton

Jeremy:

(snip)

Many years ago Tim Maroney brought all this up on sf-lovers, namely that TBoTNS was fantasy because "if Severian put his arm into a rainbow and pulled out a butterfly, no-one would be surprised."

I don't agree with Maroney's comment on classification here, because you could say the same of fable and myth, which are both distinct from fantasy, and both of which Wolfe makes use of.

But I did want to say that that's quite a witty quote! I hadn't thought of it that way, but come to think of it, if Wolfe had Severian reach into a rainbow and pull out a butterfly, I wouldn't be surprised.

With Wolfe at the helm, you have to expect the unexpected. Quite literally!

Anyway, that quote brought a chuckle.

-Daniel