

Multiple choice

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 05 Feb 1998

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Alice Turner — 05 Feb 1998, 20:45

Derek,

I imagine that there is quite a long gap between the two eras,
because Severian mentions that rats in the library smear the covers of
the books in their own crude writing

I took, and take, this as metaphoric.

CRC,

My question is this: why would Ymar go and take the test in Yesod if
he
had met the Conciliator?

Most interesting question! Never occurred to me!

- 1) Canog did not finish his BotNS until after Ymar took the test.
- 2) Canog finished his BotNS before Ymar went to Yesod, but its contents did not become part of common knowledge until long after the test.

Either of the above would be, IMO, Wolfe's answer, should you ask him.

- 3) Ymar believed that the Conciliator was *his* future self.

Unlikely, unless, as several recent posts seem to be leaning toward, such a thing is possible (of course in one sense Ymar truly is there with Severian).

- 4) Ymar did not know that castration was 'punishment' for 'failing' the test
and figured he had nothing to lose.

I simply cannot believe this. The hierodules played absolutely fair with Severian, and there is no reason whatsoever to think that they would not do so with anyone else. I vote for some version of the first two.

Nutria,

Park's later *Celestis* is a horse of a different color. At one level, it is "about" white men in South Africa, but set on a far planet. The natives, who have been "raised up" to be humans by medicine and technology, are really pretty much animals. As one such person gradually reverts to its "animal" status, it is unclear whether it is becoming more than human, or just going insane. I found the book to be very ambiguous in perspective, though a couple of reviews I read took sides with the aliens and read the book as an attack on civilization.

When I read this book, I was heavily struck by how much it was influenced by FIFTH HEAD OF CERBERUS (the whole book, certainly not just the novella). It seemed to me, in fact, to have been written almost as an answer, or a variation, to that book, with similar Australian (not South African) images and themes. I was extremely touched by its take on imperialism and striving "to

be white" and casual, thoughtless racism, which Park has magnified---amazingly well, I thought---into a meditation on plastic surgery, drugs like Prozac, the Michael Jackson phenomenon and other quite sophisticated notions into the old human-alien sci-fi encounter. Like Wolfe, he has clearly read Kipling and absorbed the halfbreed (DiSouza) perplexity of many of the stories.

I haven't read the trilogy, but would recommend this book highly. Having said that, I must tell you that I sent it to mantis, who wasn't at all impressed!

Terry Bisson:

I only know "Bears Discover Fire," an interesting retelling of some aspects of the Eden and Prometheus stories. Really weird and fun. Right up there with that wonderful old story "Space-Time for Springers" by Leiber. Bisson also completed *St. Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman* by Walter Miller. Bisson evidently was close to Miller, who was a recluse. Miller was a Catholic, like Wolfe, who did not hesitate to use theological themes in his writing, as in his novella "Crucifixus Etiam." Perhaps Bisson is also. Don't know.

Bisson isn't a bit religious, and was chosen to finish the novel only because he is a publishing-savvy pro. PIRATES OF THE UNIVERSE is a recent novel. Bisson is a stylist, humorous writer, who comes off best in short stories---and he will be at Disclave if any of you are tempted!

David Lebling wrote:

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.

Er, ahem, for some of us it doesn't take place in -any- South America. But that's an argument for another time!

Having said that, I think you're right anyway that 50 million years is just too damn far in future. My money is on any number between two to nine million.

Sounds just right! <g>

-alga-