

3 Tiered Universes

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 16 Feb 1998

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m.driussi — 17 Feb 1998, 02:47

Umm...

If you read the recently quoted lecture Baldanders gives (V, ch. 42): BriaH is neither the lowest nor the highest cotemporaneous universe (which is only a half surprise, since we know the name of hyperspace is "Yesod" but we don't have much of a lead on subspace); a Briahtic black hole leads upstairs to Yesod; a white hole in BriaH can only be from a black hole in subspace downstairs.

(I write "contemporaneous" to avoid confusion with the past/future universes of different manvantaras: subspace/BriaH/Yesod are all in the same manvantara, or "period between Big Bang and Grand Gnab"; the Hieros, those who made the Hierogrammates in their own image, were born in--and died in--the "BriaH" of an earlier manvantara; the Hierogrammates escaped the death of their universe by colonizing Yesod [which in turn suggests that Yesod is actually independent of BriaH, rather than being tied to the same cycle that BriaH is].)

The name of subspace is probably "Abaddon" (III, ch. 12).

=mantis=

Jim Jordan — 16 Feb 1998, 21:20 · follows m.driussi

At 02:47 AM 2/17/98 GMT, you wrote:

[Posted from URTH, a mailing list about Gene Wolfe's New Sun and other works]

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Are you certain that this is so in the Urth world/s? I had associated the fountain with the river that flows from Yesod to BriaH, and theo-symbolically with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit -- so that the regenerating power is coming from heaven. I'd be inclined to reverse your scenario, and say that hell is syphoning off BriaH through the black hole.

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Sure. Heaven, Cosmos, Hell. (Abaddon is one of the names of Satan, the lord of the pit of hell, in Revelation 9.)

In terms of SF scenario, we have a previous BriaH, whose "saints" are now in Yesod (heaven) and, like angels, oversee the current BriaH (via their big scarab-machine). All this makes sense at the theo-symbolic level also, except for the notion that the Hieros of the preceding cycle made the Hierogrammates, who now occupy Yesod. This would imply that the Hieros, or their spirits, have gone to a plane higher than Yesod.

I did ask Wolfe about the Kabbalistic worlds, and he indicated to me that he had just picked the words Yesod and BriaH to designate these two realms, without intending to imply the entire gnostic hierarchy of worlds of Kabbalism.

At any rate, the notion that the angels of the present cosmos are not the men of the previous one, but rather creatures fashioned by those men, is curious, and I wonder if there is more info to be teased out of the books about the whole matter. Any thots?

Yesodim as angels: Tzadkiel should mean "God Is My Justice," but Wolfe said he intended it to mean "Angel of Justice," which is also possible.

Tsedeg = justice, righteousness

Tsaddiq = just, righteous

Tsidqi = my justice

Tsidqiel = God/Angel is my justice

Properly, in Hebrew, "Angel of Justice" should be El-Tsedeq.

But then again, this is BriaH, not Earth!!

Nutria

Tony Ellis — 18 Feb 1998, 11:58 · follows Jim Jordan

18/02/98

10:02

RE>3 Tiered Universes

Mantis, I envy you your clear vision of the relationship in time and space between Yesod and BriaH! Personally, I have always found this perhaps the single most confusing and opaque area in all the five books. Here are some of the problems I have:

You say that the White Fountain can't come from Yesod, citing Baldanders' explanation in V, Ch 42 that the white fountain is the irruption of energy from a lower universe (ie not Yesod) into our own. But in Ch 23 we actually get to see creation of Severian's White Fountain. He's in Yesod, and it's a black hole. He passes through it into our universe, and it's a white fountain. Later, in Ch 25, Severian himself wonders how he could have looked back and seen Apheta's face leaning out of it, and concludes "May it not be that the White Fountain is a window to Yesod after all?"

How, then, do we explain Baldanders' explanation? Can Yesod be simultaneously higher than our universe and lower? Perhaps: like Blake, Wolfe loves to show us that two opposing views of a fact can be equally valid. Baldanders puts his faith in cold science, and doesn't believe in the Claw: to some extent he is Severian's antithesis - perhaps for him the world of Yesod IS lower than ours; he sees a hell where we see a heaven. Severian tells the prophetess "'He has told the truth, as well as you.'"

I mistrust your 3-tiered universe idea. I'm not aware of anything in the novels that suggests universes come in packs of three.

Your idea that Yesod is "hyperspace" I like a lot more. It's one explanation of how Yesod can be a "higher" universe than our own: Severian tells us that Briah is one of an endless series of dying and re-blossoming universes, and I've always assumed that "higher" meant that Yesod must be the universe to succeed ours. Now I have better mental picture: an endless, linear series of Briahitic universes, all existing within the outer, meta-universe of Yesod.

I don't think that Yesod dies with the Grand Gnab, however. To my new way of thinking, Yesod exists outside of ordinary time\space - destruction and rebirth is just something that happens to other universes. <g>