

UotNS and how it screws with your head

The Urth list — 53 messages, 16 voices, 13 Jul 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5662>

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Cliff Judge — 13 Jul 2010, 15:05

The first time I read this book, I was overawed by it, but found it confusing to the point where I didn't like it much. Second time around, I find I enjoy it more, but it is clear that it is not quite up to the standards of the main series. But maddening.

So....for foreplay, Severian and Apheta talk about numinous matters, and she spends awhile talking about how time flows however they want it to in Yesod, past can become future, and the future ripples back to the past.

And then they engage in what a couple of Wolfe's characters call the "warm congress" and Severian says, I entered Yesod, or rather, it enclosed about me, yada yada, and then he describes his orgasm as this terribly serious cosmic event, and talks about something that is conceived from the union. Then he states that what was conceived was himself.

Now as a reader who has just decided that its pretty clear that Dorcas is his grandmother, Ouen is his father, and btw I like the idea that his mother is Catherine, of whom a khaibits is slain every year at the Feast of Holy Katherine, there is something in my brain that really WANTS to take the easy way out here and say, right what was conceived was "himself" meaning the actual white fountain that will replenish the sun of Urth.

But part of me is also thinking....yeah there it is, Severian is his own father.

David Stockhoff — 13 Jul 2010, 16:02 · in reply to Cliff Judge

That reminds me: I need a white fountain to go with the white obelisk in my front yard.

This is difficult to process, making as many problems as it solves. It may mean that all of time originates in this self-(pro)creation, because surely there can't be more than one such event or loop per universe.

It may conflict with the concept of the Increate as the only entity able to father himself. It may associate Severian with the Increate.

It may just be a hint that Severian fathered himself. But then did he do this with Catherine or did he do this with Apheta? or both? Is one fathering physical and the other mystical? And what about incest as the way to bring in a new universe, per the principles of alchemy? Is there a suggestion of masturbatory closed loops a la Fifth Head, or is a closed loop a way forward?

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Gerry Quinn — 13 Jul 2010, 16:03 · in reply to Cliff Judge

I think it was the white fountain too.

Of course, there is another issue with the white fountain, which Mr. Thallassocrat, at least, may find interesting. The concept of a white hole comes from the maximally extended Schwarzschild solution for a black hole. Few nowadays think that white holes exist in nature - but if one does it should be associated with a black hole (though perhaps in a different universe).

It would also make sense in that the result of combining the two should be to negate both - this doesn't seem so probable if an arbitrary black hole meets an arbitrary white hole.

Could Severian, therefore, also have created the black hole in the Sun?

- Gerry Quinn

From: Cliff Judge

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Lee Berman — 13 Jul 2010, 16:12 · follows Gerry Quinn

Thomas Bitterman- Fenrir as father of "Wolfe"s is good enough for me.

Cliff Judge- But part of me is also thinking....yeah there it is, Severian is his own father.

I think Severian bears quite a resemblance to Number Five (as Phaedria quite resembles Thecla). Number Five's real name is Gene Wolfe. Is it so far fetched that Inire is father to another of these literary Gene Wolfe avatars? I always thought the mausoleum, with its five coffins, was a connector between these two stories.

Anyway, how the heck are we supposed to draw sensible family trees if they involve clones and time travel and shape changing alien beings who can reproduce sexually and asexually?

With regard to Severian's father, we must ask about Ouen (though I am more interested in Ouen's small, bent father).

I think of Theseus (though it could be various other Greek heroes) who was:

"son of Aethra, and fathered by Aegeus and Poseidon, both of whom Aethra lay with in one night."

The mechanics of that parentage are a bit mysterious...then again Christianity also relies on a similar divine conception of a hero with a surrogate human father figure. (I mean hero in the Campbellian sense here).

Alright I am done trying to make sense of this for now. I'll just concur with Cliff that it screws with your head. As I expect it was intended. Some questions we'll never get a definite answer to.

David Stockhoff — 13 Jul 2010, 16:12 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

When?

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John Watkins — 13 Jul 2010, 16:12 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

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Metaphorically (and maybe literally), I think Wolfe is making a point about grace. The layers of universe ultimately terminate at what Dante would have called the Empyrean, highest heaven, where infinite energy miraculously fonts from the Godhead. God, being the well that never goes dry, can give without taking, breaking the law of conservation of energy. This has a parallel with ethics--in love, humans partake in the divine essence, and so love is giving without taking, et cetera.

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David Stockhoff — 13 Jul 2010, 16:25 · in reply to John Watkins

That has been my assumption. It would mean that

- (1) first Urth had a yellow sun
- (2) then it drained itself into a lower universe
- (3) then a higher universe drained into it, there being a river of available energy/love (with ultimately the Empyrean as source)
- (4) Urth had a yellow sun again but now it's called Ushas.

Which universe did the sun drain into? When? Why? Is there any reason to think Severian did not open the drain thousands of years ago (as Apu Punchau? During a stopover in Typhon's time?) and plug it up again as the Conciliator?

Yes, it would seem like an unnecessary step---but then God gave his only son to bridge a gulf he himself created in creating Adam, and he makes us suffer etc. Without this negation of an earlier act, there would be no Christian religion. There is also the Creation and the End of creation---are those redundant acts?

Do we have a better explanation for the black hole? I haven't seen one.

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James Wynn — 13 Jul 2010, 16:48 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 7/13/2010 11:12 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

Anyway, how the heck are we supposed to draw sensible family trees if they involve clones and time travel and shape changing alien beings who can reproduce sexually and asexually? With regard to Severian's father, we must ask about Ouen (though I am more interested in Ouen's small, bent father).

Hear! Hear! Don't forget aquastors. Additionally, it is important to note (as I do fairly often) that Wolfe can be very free-wheeling when it comes to familial titles and associations. Maitre is Number Five's father. Silk is Tussah's "son not of his body". In The Book of the Short Sun the Rajan various calls Jahlee his daughter and his sister. Later he warns his son against giving in to her wiles saying IIRC "she could be your sister or your aunt".

I think this deviousness is why people have doubted that Ouen was literally Severian's father by seed and intercourse. Or that Dorcas was literally Ouen's mother. Let's face it. That option is still open in the story. Wolfe stretches the concept of identity to the breaking point. Number Five and Maitre are essentially the same, or so we are told by Dr. Marsch. Is a "perfect copy" something different from the original? The point of The Fifth Head of Cerberus seems to be to cast doubt on that. The point of Ossipago's lesson about aquastors seems to be that it is not. Wolfe doesn't see Pas as Typhon "sort of" being on the Whorl. To him, Typhon IS on the Whorl by another name.

If there were a Silmarillion of the New Sun, I can guarantee there would be a movie adaptation of Severian so fast.

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Lee Berman — 13 Jul 2010, 17:11 · follows James Wynn

John Watkins:

I don't think so...I think the black hole in the Sun exists as a white fountain in the lower universe (Abbadon?) It would follow that the white fountain Severian creates exists as a black hole in Yesod or some higher plane. There may be an incredible number of layers of universes...

Nice post John. My thinking has leaned in the same direction, heavily influenced by the (surprisingly) hard SF, (shockingly) foresighted 1972 book, *The Gods Themselves*, by Asimov. I don't feel it is considered a very seminal work though it did win the Hugo and Nebula. Surely Wolfe read it?

It paints a very similar picture of the universes leaking from higher energy to lower which might clarify things in BotNS. As you say, Severian's (and Apheta's?) creation was a White Fountain in Briah. But it was a black hole they created in Yesod (no snarky comments please). Was Yesod

(or maybe Sol) left with a black hole that they will need to repair?

We have heard the black hole in Urth's sun was created as a punishment. But could we infer that it (also) was created when a nastier version of Severian travelled to Briah to get a white fountain to bring back and heal the black hole for a nastier version of Urth in Abbadon?

Metaphorically (and maybe literally), I think Wolfe is making a point about grace...God, being the well that never goes dry, can give without taking... et cetera. These points would be lost, or their effectiveness reduced, if the white fountain and the black hole were one and the same.

Wolfe is usually portrayed as a devout Catholic but, given his writing, I have serious doubts whether he has the same view of grace and the "God Is Love" stuff that most Christians have or are supposed to have. He really seems to have a dark and pessimistic side which comes out in pretty much all his work. Where, in his work, is the shining, uncompromised redemption we must (as christians) eventually, somehow achieve? Is he saving that for his last novel maybe?

In a way I hope so. But I doubt Gene Wolfe's worldview is likely to become more positive as he nears death. Tzadkiel, who is so much more spiritually advanced than Severian, is still infinitely far from the Increate. I suspect a soul will have to pass through an eternity of incarnations before becoming one with God, in the Wolfean cosmos. And that is dark, pessimistic and depressing.

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 13 Jul 2010, 17:19 · in reply to Lee Berman

On Tue, Jul 13, 2010 at 10:11 AM, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote: Wolfe is usually portrayed as a devout Catholic but, given his writing, I have serious doubts whether he has the same view of grace and the "God Is Love" stuff that most Christians have or are supposed to have. He really seems to have a dark and pessimistic side which comes out in pretty much all his work. Where, in his work, is the shining, uncompromised "redemption we must (as christians) eventually, somehow achieve" Is he saving that for his last novel maybe?

I think this deeply misunderstands Wolfe and Christianity. Christianity is pretty much a "dark and pessimistic" religion when it comes to the nature of this world. Christians believe that the Universe is broken, beyond repair; God's only option for redemption is Apocalypse, end the whole thing and start again. The only optimism comes in the belief that some of us will get to participate in the rebooted, unbroken Universe. C.S. Lewis put it very nicely: Christianity is an underground movement in an occupied territory.

Nor is redemption something we must "achieve." It is given to us, undeservedly; that's what "grace" is all about.

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

John Watkins — 13 Jul 2010, 17:20 · in reply to Lee Berman

On Tue, Jul 13, 2010 at 1:11 PM, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

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I assume so...for the record, it's my favorite Asimov book by a fair margin. Second is The End of Eternity.

As you say, Severian's (and Apheta's?) creation was a White Fountain in Briah. But it was a black hole they created in Yesod (no snarky comments please). Was Yesod (or maybe Sol) left with a black hole that they will need to repair?

I don't know. Maybe they really have divine tech that allowed them to, er tap...that is, to ritualistically perform...yeah. There's not term for it that won't lead to jokes. But conceivably (haha!) they circumvented creating a black hole in Yesod by opening a direct pipeline to God. Or just to a higher universe, and created a black hole there and a fountain that goes through Yesod to Briah.

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I think it's speculation either way, isn't it? If the black hole is a biproduct of creating a white fountain, wouldn't the same apply in reverse, so that maybe the Hierogrammats or whoever created a white fountain in

Abbadon as a biproduct of punishing Urth?

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I think Wolfe, like Tolkien, has a dark view of the world and of human nature. The light of God, as he writes of the Claw, is "the only light we have"--the rest is darkness, Tolkien's "long defeat." I think Wolfe would say that the shining redemption is waiting in the next world if it's anywhere.

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David Stockhoff — 13 Jul 2010, 17:22 · in reply to Lee Berman

My father-in-law, who eschews SF because it lacks hope with a capital (C)H(RIST), would agree with you.

I disagree. As a Catholic acquaintance once said to me, "Catholicism is not supposed to be easy." If you take it seriously, it acknowledges the most horrifying pain of existence and tries to justify it. I respect that.

BotNS has a perpetual subtext of violence and injustice. You could trace every chapter and scene simply by the violence done or attempted by one human being to/on another. There is a purpose to this subtext.

Lee Berman wrote:

John Watkins:

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Gerry Quinn — 13 Jul 2010, 17:27 · in reply to James Wynn

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

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Was thinking of this the other day. BotNS could be adapted for a movie (perhaps animated) but the story would have to be simplified and spelled out much more than in the book.

Have any of Wolfe's works been made into screen versions?

- Gerry Quinn

John Watkins — 13 Jul 2010, 17:28 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Tue, Jul 13, 2010 at 12:25 PM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>wrote:

Do we have a better explanation for the black hole? I haven't seen one.

I've been assuming it has something to do with Typhon. I also have a wacky hypothesis that there are clues to how this may have occurred in other Wolfe books, but I really don't have an account for it at this point. So I guess I have to fall back on my point about theme, and saying that we're told, repeatedly, that the white fountain comes from another universe, not from the sun itself in the past, and that we never see Severian taking any action that could account for the black hole being placed in the sun when he's running around in the past.

The one thing I'll say for the alternate hypothesis is that the timelines do seem to match up. If the White Fountain enters the universe in Typhon's time and is using the sun as its power source, it is an unusual coincidence. However, the coincidence is necessary to put Severian-as-Conciliator in Typhon's time.

John Watkins wrote:

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David Stockhoff — 13 Jul 2010, 17:29 · in reply to Gerry Quinn
Only The Wizard of Oz.

Oh, wait ...

Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 13 Jul 2010, 17:31 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On Tue, Jul 13, 2010 at 10:27 AM, Gerry Quinn <gerryq at indigo.ie> wrote:
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Work in progress: <http://www.doctorisland.com/>

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

David Stockhoff — 13 Jul 2010, 17:38 · in reply to John Watkins

So you're thinking power could be drained from past Sun to future Sun? That's interesting---not what I thought at all. Sensible though.

I assume that all universes coexist, and they are layered like a wedding cake, or like Able's world. Love flows from the top. Rotating spigots moved by elves and fairies control the flow. Devils punch holes in the frosting. What goes down does not come up, because the love is indeed inexhaustible.

Typhon preceded the Autarchs. Thus, he preceded FI, who began the program of rehabilitation. But it's hard to see what Typhon did that could be so horribly wrong, beyond indulging in his own creation (i.e., the Whorl).

If a Conciliator bridges gulfs and closes gaps, could he also add $1+(-1)$ and get 0?

John Watkins wrote:

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<dstockhoff at verizon.net <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>> wrote:

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I've been assuming it has something to do with Typhon. I also have a wacky hypothesis that there are clues to how this may have occurred in other Wolfe books, but I really don't have an account for it at this point. So I guess I have to fall back on my point about theme, and saying that we're told, repeatedly, that the white fountain comes from another universe, not from the sun itself in the past, and that we never see Severian taking any action that could account for the black hole being placed in the sun when he's running around in the past.

The one thing I'll say for the alternate hypothesis is that the timelines do seem to match up. If the White Fountain enters the universe in Typhon's time and is using the sun as its power source, it is an unusual coincidence. However, the coincidence is necessary to put Severian-as-Conciliator in Typhon's time.

Gerry Quinn — 13 Jul 2010, 17:59 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: "David Stockhoff" <dstockhoff at verizon.net>
When?

That may not be a very sensible question. White holes, effectively, travel backwards in time; and this is supported in the text by the negentropic effects such as healing the sick and raising the dead which Severian effects by way of his association with the White Fountain.

We know that the black hole was created, or arrived, during the reign of Typhon. I am not certain that it makes sense to worry about when the white hole becomes physically present in our universe, or indeed how and even whether it travelled to the Sun. About the only thing we know for certain is that gravitational radiation is emitted shortly before the final merging of the black and white holes; the ringing of the bells does suggest that the two entered an inwardly spiralling orbit.

Time does not run in Yesod as it does in Briah... an event in Briah might happen at any Urthly time coordinate, or perhaps at more than one.

There is also the issue of mass - surely the black and white holes have to be the same size to cancel each other? i suppose it would work well enough if they were *approximately* the same mass, but still...

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn wrote:

I think it was the white fountain too.

Of course, there is another issue with the white fountain, which Mr. Thallassocrat, at least, may find interesting. The concept of a white hole comes from the maximally extended Schwarzschild solution for a black hole. Few nowadays think that white holes exist in nature - but if one does it should be associated with a black hole (though perhaps in a different universe).

It would also make sense in that the result of combining the two should be to negate both - this doesn't seem so probable if an arbitrary black hole meets an arbitrary white hole.

Could Severian, therefore, also have created the black hole in the Sun?

Gerry Quinn — 13 Jul 2010, 18:02 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

I think Wolfe has suggested more than once that our lives are 'a Christmas present'. Even if there's nothing else, it's all Good.

- Gerry Quinn

From: "Dan'I Danehy-Oakes" <danldo at gmail.com>

On Tue, Jul 13, 2010 at 10:11 AM, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

Wolfe is usually portrayed as a devout Catholic but, given his writing, I have serious doubts whether he has the same view of grace and the "God Is Love" stuff that most Christians have or are supposed to have. He really seems to have a dark and pessimistic side which comes out in pretty much all his work. Where, in his work, is the shining, uncompromised redemption we must (as christians) eventually, somehow achieve? Is he saving that for his last novel maybe?

I think this deeply misunderstands Wolfe and Christianity. Christianity is pretty much a "dark and pessimistic" religion when it comes to the nature of this world. Christians believe that the Universe is broken, beyond repair; God's only option for redemption is Apocalypse, end the

whole thing and start again. The only optimism comes in the belief that some of us will get to participate in the rebooted, unbroken Universe. C.S. Lewis put it very nicely: Christianity is an underground movement in an occupied territory.

Nor is redemption something we must "achieve." It is given to us, undeservedly; that's what "grace" is all about.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 13 Jul 2010, 18:04 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On Tue, Jul 13, 2010 at 10:59 AM, Gerry Quinn <gerryq at indigo.ie> wrote:
We know that the black hole was created, or arrived, during the reign of Typhon.

No; what we know is that its _effects_ were first noticed during his reign. That it was created or arrived at that time is a (debatable) conclusion. It can reasonably be argued that it would take at least thousands of years for its effects to be noticeable -- unless it was such a huge honkin' black hole that it would cause the Sun to collapse into itself.

Time does not run in Yesod as it does in Briah... an event in Briah might happen at any Urthly time coordinate, or perhaps at more than one.

Or none. I think it's suggested strongly that the two time flows are unrelated, though I'd be hard pressed to find the citation right now.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

brunians at brunians.org — 13 Jul 2010, 18:22 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Have, maybe.

Supposed to have? What views are Christians supposed to have?

As near as I can tell Gene is completely orthodox.

That he is devout cannot be doubted.

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On Tue, Jul 13, 2010 at 10:11 AM, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

brunians at brunians.org — 13 Jul 2010, 18:24 · in reply to David Stockhoff

The World is as it is.

Religion - real religion - acknowledges this.

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My father-in-law, who eschews SF because it lacks hope with a capital (C)H(RIST), would agree with you.

I disagree. As a Catholic acquaintance once said to me, "Catholicism is not supposed to be easy." If you take it seriously, it acknowledges the most horrifying pain of existence and tries to justify it. I respect that.

BotNS has a perpetual subtext of violence and injustice. You could trace every chapter and scene simply by the violence done or attempted by one human being to/on another. There is a purpose to this subtext.

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Ryan Dunn — 13 Jul 2010, 18:24 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

The Doctor Island project seems to have been abandoned, forgotten, or to have fallen apart. It has been in the same stage of development for five years.

...ryan

On Jul 13, 2010, at 1:31 PM, "Dan'I Danehy-Oakes" <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:

On Tue, Jul 13, 2010 at 10:27 AM, Gerry Quinn <gerryq at indigo.ie> wrote:

Have any of Wolfe's works been made into screen versions?

Work in progress: <http://www.doctorisland.com/>

--

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

brunians at brunians.org — 13 Jul 2010, 18:26 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

That this is not obvious to everybody is remarkable.

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- Gerry Quinn

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Nor is redemption something we must "achieve." It is given to us, undeservedly; that's what "grace" is all about.

David Stockhoff — 13 Jul 2010, 18:27 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Interesting. I think that the Briahns can direct the flow of energy any way they want; this supports that notion.

The "timing" may be a false concern.

Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: "David Stockhoff" <dstockhoff at verizon.net>

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David Stockhoff — 13 Jul 2010, 18:35 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

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brunians at brunians.org — 13 Jul 2010, 18:36 · in reply to Ryan Dunn

Cool nekkid pitchers.

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David Stockhoff — 13 Jul 2010, 18:39 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

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brunians at brunians.org — 13 Jul 2010, 18:53 · in reply to David Stockhoff

He'd probably react well to Wolfe.

Thinking Christians tend to so react.

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Jerry Friedman — 13 Jul 2010, 18:54 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>

So you're thinking power could be drained from past Sun to future Sun? That's interesting---not what I thought at all. Sensible though.

I assume that all universes coexist, and they are layered like a wedding cake, or like Able's world. Love flows >from the top. Rotating spigots moved by elves and fairies control the flow. Devils punch holes in the frosting. >What goes down does not come up, because the love is indeed inexhaustible.

Typhon preceded the Autarchs. Thus, he preceded FI, who began the program of rehabilitation. But it's hard to >see what Typhon did that could be so horribly wrong, beyond indulging in his own creation (i.e., the Whorl).

I'm enjoying this. I like the idea that Severian created both the Black Pit and the White Fountain as the two ends of the same structure, with Murphy's Law applying to the timing.

I'm also enjoying the other idea that the Black Pit drains energy to a lower universe and the White Fountain is a drain from the higher one. Is Severian's White Fountain causing global cooling in Yesod? Is the Black Pit being worshipped in Abaddon? Sunlight is better than justice, so black holes in suns are worse than injustice--sort of tough on the Yesodis, maybe.

If a Conciliator bridges gulfs and closes gaps, could he also add 1+ (-1) and get 0?

And can he teach my students to?

Jerry Friedman

Cliff Judge — 13 Jul 2010, 20:19 · in reply to David Stockhoff

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David Stockhoff — 13 Jul 2010, 20:34 · in reply to Cliff Judge

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brunians at brunians.org — 13 Jul 2010, 20:39 · in reply to David Stockhoff

It's pretty ordinary geometry.

Different levels of the World have different geometry.

There are timelike and spacelike dimensions.

We use three spacelike and one timelike dimension.

We have no power of operation, normally, in the single timelike dimension: everyone is propelled forward willy nilly.

The next level up has four spacelike dimensions and two timelike dimensions within which at least some of the creatures on that level have at least some freedom of movement. One of these timelike dimensions is parallel with our single timelike dimension.

There is also on that level a seventh timelike dimension, within which the six dimensional space-time plenum is propelled forward, analogous to our single timelike dimension.

There are other levels.

Not too much is known about them beyond that they exist.

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Cliff Judge — 13 Jul 2010, 20:40 · in reply to David Stockhoff

There's something nicely alpha/omega-ish to the idea that the Increate is at both top and bottom. Like the two statues that flank a major Buddhist temple - one them with its mouth open "AAAAAUUUU" and the other with its mouth closed "MMMMMM".

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John Watkins — 13 Jul 2010, 20:44 · in reply to David Stockhoff

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This reminds me of C.S. Lewis's words about Milton's (fictive?) cosmology. I slogged through Paradise Lost for the sake of saying I had, only really enjoying the fights, but Lewis fortunately provides this insight:

"[Milton] invented a most ingenious device for retaining the old glories of the builded and finite universe yet also expressing the new consciousness of space. He enclosed his cosmos in a spherical envelope within which all could be light and order, and hung it from the floor of Heaven. Outside that he had Chaos, the 'infinite abyss', the 'unessential Night', where 'length, breath and highth/And time and place are lost'."

Now imagine that, instead of Heaven, this sphere hangs from the floor of a larger sphere, that hangs from the floor of a larger sphere yet...and imagine that each sphere is continually contracting and expanding, dying and being reborn. And some spheres have more than one sphere hanging off of them.

But maybe there is a terminal sphere (or a set of terminal spheres) that really does (do) hang from the floor of Heaven. Eventually.

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John Watkins — 14 Jul 2010, 18:25 · in reply to Cliff Judge

Cliff thinks something funny is happening with up and down, and makes a good case...

On Tue, Jul 13, 2010 at 4:19 PM, Cliff Judge <transentient at gmail.com> wrote:

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This tickled my brain and I just realized why.

"Soon as he reach'd the point, whereat the thigh
Upon the swelling of the haunches turns,
My leader there, with pain and struggling hard,
Turn'd round his head where his feet stood before,
And grappled at the fell as one who mounts;
That into hell methought we turn'd again.

...

...I raised mine eyes,
Believing that I Lucifer should see
Where he was lately left, but saw him now
With legs held upward. Let the grosser sort,
Who see not what the point was I had past,
Bethink them if sore toil oppress'd me then."

So here in Canto 34 we have Lucifer located at the Earth's core, and the expected reversal of gravity in his presence. This seems to be invoked by the incident with Typhon, who is already doing a bit of a temptation in the desert schtick,.

As for the other cases in which up becomes down and vice versal, I suppose that's precisely what would happen when one passes through a horizontal looking glass to another world, isn't it? Or the reflective surface of a still body of water?

David Stockhoff — 15 Jul 2010, 01:41 · in reply to John Watkins

Which Pirates of the Caribbean movie was that?

John Watkins wrote:

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Subscription/information: <http://www.urth.net> <<http://www.urth.net/>>

John Watkins — 15 Jul 2010, 02:05 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Wed, Jul 14, 2010 at 9:41 PM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

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brunians at brunians.org — 15 Jul 2010, 02:25 · in reply to David Stockhoff

The next pirates movie is somewhat based on Powers' On Stranger Tides.

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Jeff Wilson — 15 Jul 2010, 03:57 · in reply to Cliff Judge

On 7/13/2010 3:19 PM, Cliff Judge wrote:

Remember that in BotNS it is spelled out that the cosmology involves an expansion / big crunch concept of the universe - I apologize for being bad with quotes on this list but when Famulimus is explaining the sucession of races that led to the creation of the Hierodules he states that the universe expands, then collapses in on itself and expands again. In UotNS Severian refers to each such cycle as a....manuvantara? An obviously Hindu word that I looked up and refers to one instance of creation by a Manu, which is in turn created by Brahma.

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I'm not sure what you mean by recent. The black hole/white hole thing still had some currency at the time of writing despite 1975's "discovery" and rapid acceptance of Hawking radiation allowing all of the black hole's matter-energy to eventually leak back into the same universe (for excessively long values of eventually) but as of 2005, the bulk of physicists including Hawking have held that that the information can return as well, though the only other black hole theorist of equal stature, Kip Thorne, remains unconvinced.

The voyage from Briah to Yesod in UotnS seems to take place in "real" time, as it would in a more simply-trope science fiction world, where there may be FTL travel through hyperspace, different than time travel, different than travel to "other dimensions" or "alternate realities." In other words, a gateway to another universe was opened at 1200 hours in our universe and the ship was through it by 1205 hours. But while adventuring on the ship, Severian had two occasions to find himself floating in space perilously close to being lost in the void. The first time he looks forward and sees the end of the universe, aft and sees the beginning. The second time, he sees Briah compress into a ring which the ship passes through to wind up in Yesod.

Even though Wolfe is using a lot of hokey superscience in the book, he's using accurate relativistic imagery here in the ring. The blue- (rather than red-) shifted creation seen to aft is the reversed, superscience version as befits using mirrored sales to outrace light itself; the ship goes back in time like Ms. Bright, all the way to creation and before. This "explains" Yesod being the product of previous incarnations, and perhaps the original ms. he throws finding its way to our era.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
IEEE Student Chapter Blog at
< <http://ieeetamut.org> >

Jeff Wilson — 15 Jul 2010, 04:02 · in reply to John Watkins

On 7/13/2010 3:44 PM, John Watkins wrote:

This reminds me of C.S. Lewis's words about Milton's (fictive?) cosmology. I slogged through Paradise Lost for the sake of saying I

had, only really enjoying the fights, but Lewis fortunately provides this insight:

"[Milton] invented a most ingenious device for retaining the old glories of the builded and finite universe yet also expressing the new consciousness of space. He enclosed his cosmos in a spherical envelope within which all could be light and order, and hung it from the floor of Heaven. Outside that he had Chaos, the 'infinite abyss', the 'unessential Night', where 'length, breath and highth/And time and place are lost'."

Now imagine that, instead of Heaven, this sphere hangs from the floor of a larger sphere, that hangs from the floor of a larger sphere yet...and imagine that each sphere is continually contracting and expanding, dying and being reborn. And some spheres have more than one sphere hanging off of them.

But maybe there is a terminal sphere (or a set of terminal spheres) that really does (do) hang from the floor of Heaven. Eventually.

Continuing the visit to Cosmology Corner, the above imagery is actually a fairly accurate description of physicist's Andrei Linde's form of linked expansionary universes.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
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< <http://ieeetamut.org> >

brunians at brunians.org — 15 Jul 2010, 04:04 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

It's identically similar to the nested Worlds in qabalah.

On 7/13/2010 3:44 PM, John Watkins wrote:

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Cliff Judge — 15 Jul 2010, 17:43 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On Wed, Jul 14, 2010 at 11:57 PM, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com> wrote:
On 7/13/2010 3:19 PM, Cliff Judge wrote:

(I understand that the cosmological models most popular with physicists these days involve a constant expansion until entropy has reached max, but on the other hand, some recent papers have thrown credibility towards the concept that black holes in our universe connect to white holes in other universes, so Wolfe seems to be 1 for 1 here).

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So what's this "dark flow" nonsense I have been hearing about in recent months?

Lane Haygood — 15 Jul 2010, 18:13 · in reply to Cliff Judge

So what's this "dark flow" nonsense I have been hearing about in recent months?

Dark flow refers to the non-random motion of galaxies and galactic clusters relative to the cosmic microwave radiation background. Old models predicted them to move randomly; new observations are dubbed "dark flow" because we cannot observe the impetus for motion. Just like we can't observe the matter that makes up the majority of the mass of the universe, calling it "dark matter."

Jeff Wilson — 15 Jul 2010, 18:52 · in reply to Cliff Judge

On 7/15/2010 12:43 PM, Cliff Judge wrote:
So what's this "dark flow" nonsense I have been hearing about in recent months?

The indignant label given by painted figures to their disagreement with the artist's semiotic choices, despite remaining on the firmament of his easel for the completion of their study.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
IEEE Student Chapter Blog at
< <http://ieeetamut.org> >

Jane Delawney — 29 Jul 2010, 00:32 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 13/07/10 18:27, Gerry Quinn wrote:
Was thinking of this the other day. BotNS could be adapted for a movie (perhaps animated) but the story would have to be simplified and spelled out much more than in the book.

Have any of Wolfe's works been made into screen versions?

Don't know whether any have; but regarding BOTNS did you know that Innovation attempted to produce a *comics* series back in 1993? I think it was originally supposed to be a 12- issue limited series (that would have covered vol. 1, Shadow, only, as far as I know).

Only 3 issues actually made it on to the newsstands. Although there was some interesting

artwork in there (The Matachin Dance made it on to the page pretty impressively) and the script was apparently approved by Wolfe himself, the whole thing was so compressed as to be unsatisfying to the Wolfe/BOTNS fan, and consequently so dense that the average X-men fanboy would have found it incomprehensible and left it on the shelf.

Kudos to them for trying, though! Even in the world of comic-books that took some hubris.

JD

- Gerry Quinn

Lane Haygood — 29 Jul 2010, 00:45 · in reply to Jane Delawney

Ever since I saw the Japanese book covers for BOTNS I've had in mind that a really subtle anime studio could probably do the series justice. Damn near incomprehensible quasi-gnostic puzzles are the bread and butter of a lot of sci-fantasy anime.

If I win the lottery, I'll finance it.

LH

On Wed, Jul 28, 2010 at 7:32 PM, Jane Delawney <jane_delawney at sky.com> wrote:
On 13/07/10 18:27, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Milton Jackson — 29 Jul 2010, 01:36 · in reply to Lane Haygood

I used to think I'd like to see Book of the New Sun made into a movie. Unfortunately I doubt even the best filmmakers could make a successful version of it. The intricacies of the story just

seem to preclude the possibility of a faithful and watchable series of movies, even in anime format.

On Wed, Jul 28, 2010 at 8:45 PM, Lane Haygood <lhaygood at gmail.com> wrote:
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- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 29 Jul 2010, 07:51 · in reply to Jane Delawney

From: "Jane Delawney" <jane_delawney at sky.com>
On 13/07/10 18:27, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Interesting. I wonder if it might have worked better with lossier compression.

- Gerry Quinn

Pedro Pereira — 29 Jul 2010, 12:31 · in reply to Milton Jackson

Personally I never had problems with a movie (or trilogy or something) version of BotNS. Some people have expressed the idea that it is impossible to capture all the complexity of the books in movie format (and making it commercially successful doesn't help) and that so it would be better to not make it at all.

I disagree. Even a "lighter" version of BotNS would have the disirable effect of probably capturing the interest of more people to the books and that for me is a positive thing. I don't think that a movie (or series of movies) needs obligatorily to capture all the intricacies of Wolfe as if it was a reproduction of the Urth's Discussion List + "academic" treatises on Wolfe. Wolfe has a very good thing going for it which is that it can be read on many different levels. The first time I read the BotNS I was like 12 or 13 years old and I absolutely loved it while I certainly didn't even began to grasp the intricacies of the books. That's the beauty of Wolfe. The books can be read at face value like any other "fantasy" books and it works. It would be extremely difficult to capture the "second level" reading nature of Wolfe in movie format and I honestly don't think it is needed to be a good desirable project. Plus, it's a beautiful story full of great imagery that would be a beautiful movie if done by the correct director/studio combination. That alone is already a good reason.

But that's just me.

Pedro

Date: Wed, 28 Jul 2010 21:36:50 -0400

From: miltonwjackson at gmail.com

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Subject: Re: (urth) Not a film version but ... (was: Re: UotNS and how it screws with your head)

I used to think I'd like to see Book of the New Sun made into a movie. Unfortunately I doubt even the best filmmakers could make a successful version of it. The intricacies of the story just seem to preclude the possibility of a faithful and watchable series of movies, even in anime format.

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JD

- Gerry Quinn

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António Pedro Marques — 29 Jul 2010, 14:26 · in reply to Pedro Pereira

Pedro Pereira wrote (29-07-2010 13:31):

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I don't even know that it would be very difficult. Just put the thing into moving pictures. Of course, a lot of detail would have to be left aside, but as long as a faithful rendering were done, afaic the books would be 'captured' into the movie. Of course, to really understand it all, one would have to go read the books and the kilometers of exegesis that have been written, but that's simply starting a step below the usual. If there is anything that I think could work on movies or comics that's Wolfe - simply because you *always* have a lot of investigation you can

do.

Of course, no 'creative' producers, please. Which probably means it can't be done. Also the incest thing would have to be toned down if there were any hopes of actually screening it.