

Padding?

The Urth list — 6 messages, 5 voices, 30 Nov 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5786>

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Mo Holkar — 30 Nov 2010, 11:16

Hi all,

One of Wolfe's comments in the Cooney interview, linked here recently, caught my eye. Re BotNS:

"If you look in the third book, you will find a storytelling contest that's strictly padding. That contest got me a really good review in Playboy Magazine — and I've always been grateful to it for that reason."

I have always seen the storytelling contest as narratively and thematically important. We step back from the main action, and get a succession of insights into the metaphysics of the characters' world. We then read on with somewhat renewed eyes.

I guess we can continue to believe that Wolfe is being a little disingenuous when he says it's "strictly" padding. But it is slightly sobering to reflect that if BotNS had remained a trilogy, it wouldn't have been included.

Although perhaps you may feel that this is post hoc reasoning, and really it is indeed padding that we could have done happily without?

best wishes,

Mo

~ # ~

WolfeWiki -- a wiki about Gene Wolfe
<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/>

Daniel Petersen — 30 Nov 2010, 12:14 · in reply to Mo Holkar

I suspect he did indeed add it as 'strictly' a means of padding out the story, but that in the writing of it he (consciously or unconsciously) made it a crucial element to the whole BotNS as you suggest. And yes, I'm sure he's being deviously modest and facetiously flippant as his pleasure at its favourable review shows.

On Tue, Nov 30, 2010 at 11:16 AM, Mo Holkar <lists at ukg.co.uk> wrote:
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Son of Witz — 30 Nov 2010, 17:31 · in reply to Mo Holkar

Wait, Isn't the storytelling contest in the fourth book, in the Lazaret?

I feel that stuff is obliquely relevant, but mostly padding. I can barely stand that contest in the Lazaret.

~Mike

On Nov 30, 2010, at 3:16 AM, Mo Holkar <lists at ukg.co.uk> wrote:
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Craig Brewer — 30 Nov 2010, 18:02 · in reply to Son of Witz

It seems like there are different ways to take it.

When I first read it, I thought, "And here's Wolfe deciding to be 'literary.' Let's stop the 'quest-adventure' and do some thematic ruminating!"

After I got more interested in the world of Urth, it seemed like perfectly appropriate "world building" stuff. It was almost generically appropriate.

Then, even later, when I was interested in the cultural/religious aspects of Urth, it seemed like a series of interesting philosophical digressions.

Looking back now, it was probably Wolfe doing some of all of that. It seems perfectly appropriate that the original STORY could have done without it. And my bet is that when Wolfe was originally writing the thing, he was thinking primarily as a professional genre writer would: I have my story, and now I have to add to it because my editor/publisher wants more. I don't want to screw up the plot I've laid out, so how can I add to this appropriately in a way that won't require all kinds of plot-level restructuring?

So it probably was padding, in terms of word count. But a good writer will still make padding add to the overall work, which I think this does. It certainly interrupts the "forward movement" of the story (and maybe we can fault it for that...Wolfe even seems to, and I can understand how the "storyteller" in him might be a bit irritated with those passages), but it still contributes to Urth. I wouldn't want to do without it, myself, just as I wouldn't want to do without any of the other Brown Book stories (and still want more!).

----- Original Message -----

From: Son of Witz <Sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org>

To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>

Sent: Tue, November 30, 2010 11:31:54 AM

Subject: Re: (urth) Padding?

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Urth Mailing List
To post, write urth at urth.net
Subscription/information: <http://www.urth.net>

António Pedro Marques — 30 Nov 2010, 18:16 · in reply to Craig Brewer

Craig Brewer wrote (30-11-2010 18:02):

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linm NS was to be a trilogy, but then the third volume was promising to get too big, so it had to be split. Then yes, some padding may have been needed to fatten one of the resulting volumes.

Son of Witz — 30 Nov 2010, 20:01 · in reply to Craig Brewer

I think all that is very apt, Brewer.

And as I wrestle with each sentence of this book, I ultimately find the stories rewarding. Just last friday night, I came home from work to an empty house, my family out of town because they had the day off when I didn't. Suddenly Halvard's story, which I previously had no use for, became very relevant. What a monster I would be without my family to keep me on the path.

As Ava says:

"Like the man your friend talked about, most men think they make their homes for their families, but the fact is that they make both homes and families for themselves.

~witz

On Nov 30, 2010, at 10:02 AM, Craig Brewer <cnbrewer at yahoo.com> wrote:
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