

The Outsider

The Urth list — 63 messages, 13 voices, 16 Dec 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5833>

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Andrew Mason — 16 Dec 2010, 19:29

Wow! How did that happen? Rather than trace my way through the discussion and reply to each bit separately, I'll just try to state my view as a whole.

I think the Outsider is God, i.e. the God of Christianity or, more generally, of the Abrahamic faiths, also known on Urth as the Increate. As evidence for this one could mention: The Jesus references, both in Silk's visions (the man riding through a city whet're people are waving palm leaves, the criminal on the scaffold) and in what's already known about the Outsider in the Whorl (the beating of the traders in animals). The suggested identification with Ah Lah. The identification with the 'maker' in the Pajarocu story. The claim that according to a doubtful story he was the original creator of humans,. The statement that he was worshipped on the Short Sun Whorl (i.e. Urth). I'm inclined to add his apparent power to raise the dead.

I don't think we can say precisely either that he is the Father or that he is Christ. From an out-of-story perspective, if we are Christians, we can say that he is the Trinity, but of course no one in the story thinks of him that way. Some of the things said of him may be more applicable to Christ. and some to the Father - or indeed to the Holy Spirit. (One of the voices which Silk hears is 'cooing')

I think it's clear there is an analogue of Christianity within the _Sun_ world. The references are copious; there are crosses, not just Dorcas's rood, but Ctesiphon's cross and the Sign of Addition - which is not the same as the voided cross, Pas's symbol, and is hinted to be the Outsider's symbol. (Also the red sign of addition as a medical symbol!) Names of saints; the paschal candle; the Angelus; rituals involving bread and wine; what look like direct quotations from scripture, for instance Marble's reference in OBW to 'the sign from the belly of the fish'. This could be explained in various ways: that Jesus is actually present within that universe. that there is an analogue of Jesus, who is merely a prophet. that the stories have somehow been transmitted from another universe. But I don't think the first is ruled out. Even if it is a past iteration of the universe, the Son of God may have been incarnated in it. Even if the idea of multiple incarnations multiple universes is not strictly Orthodox Christianity, it's not wild and beyond the pale. It's the basis of the Narnia series, and Lewis is generally seen as pretty orthodox. I don't see anything to make me say 'This is a universe without Christ' - though at the time the events take place, it's certainly a universe where Christ is not _known_.

Now, it is certainly true that a link is drawn between the Outsider and Dionysus. But I don't see that as negating the connection with the Christian God, but as suggesting a connection between the Christian God and Dionysus - a connection which others (Lewis and Soyinka, at least) have drawn, and which, therefore, can't be ruled out.

Son of Witz — 16 Dec 2010, 19:46 · in reply to Andrew Mason

On Dec 16, 2010, at 11:29 AM, Andrew Mason <andrew.mason53@gmail.com> wrote:
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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 16 Dec 2010, 20:09 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Like Witz, I agree with ... well, _most_ of what you say. Here're my points of difference.

On Thu, Dec 16, 2010 at 11:29 AM, Andrew Mason
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I do. The idea of multiple Incarnations is not only "not strictly Orthodox Christianity," it is abhorrent to the idea that Jesus died once _for all_. "All" is a big word, which I mostly try to avoid, but it's unambiguously present in Scripture.

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Actually, a number of fundamentalists have condemned the Narnia books on precisely this ground. I think that's throwing the baby out with the bathwater; the Narnia books are good stories, and even have a lot to recommend them theologically. But the idea that Aslan's death in tLtW&tW is analogous to Christ's salvific death on Earth has to be taken with a whole salt lick.

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Oddly enough I don't have a problem with this...

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

James Wynn — 16 Dec 2010, 20:32 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

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Since the cycles of Briah are not linked in Time, they are from a practical standpoint indistinguishable from parallel universes. In There Are Doors, although the parallel universes are based on a fundamental difference, they are very similar too each other anyway. For example, Green noticed that Lara's universe doesn't have ice cubes. Green explains that this is because the universes are like strings on a guitar tuned to the same note. Pluck one and those next to it vibrate. So the parallel universes keep each other in line. Men in Lara's universe where black tuxedos to their wedding because they die after sex. Men in Green's universe do the same only because the men in Lara's universe do.

So in Severian's cycle, there was a Christian Church because there was in _our_ universe. The Jesus mentioned in Silk's Holy Book is a figure of myth. Neither Severian nor the Rajan could any more go back in time and meet him than you or I could go back in Time and meet Cinderella or Jason or Thor. But that doesn't mean he hasn't heard of him. The Outsider is the God of all cycles, and the vision he shows Silk of Christ on the cross is from _our_ cycle.

Thus the Good News of the One Event spreads to all cycles for the salvation of all.

But that's a very geeky explanation. I prefer to just call it a fantasy story of the distant future in our own universe.

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Son of Witz — 16 Dec 2010, 20:33 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On Dec 16, 2010, at 12:09 PM, "Dan'l Danehy-Oakes" <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:
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Wait. That Jesus saved us once and for all is theological interpretation, more than scripture, right? I think we can say that we are pretty sure the man Jesus actually lived and preached in our universe, but it is only theology and belief to say that his acts provided eternal salvation for the residents of that universe. I mean, where is the proof of that? The proof that he existed seems very real, but the rest is, sorry, speculation and unverified Revelation. It may be right, but that's not my point.

From there we can say that there are clearly historical traces of the man Jesus in the Chrasmalogical writings at the very least.

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 16 Dec 2010, 20:39 · in reply to Son of Witz

On Thu, Dec 16, 2010 at 12:33 PM, Son of Witz

<Sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org> wrote:

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Wait. "That Jesus saved us once and for all is theological interpretation, more than scripture, right"

As I said, it's unambiguously present in Scripture. For example, Hebrews 7:27: "Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself." And 9:26: "Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."

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theology and belief to say that his acts provided eternal salvation for the residents of that universe. I mean, where is the proof of that? The proof that he existed seems very real, but the rest is, sorry, speculation and unverified Revelation.

You are right; the revelation of Scripture is unverified. And indeed I take a certain amount of it as not-literally-true (for example, the accounts of Genesis). But if we take it as, well, Scripture, then it is unambiguous that "his acts provided eternal salvation" for ALL. No other.

From there we can say that there are clearly historical traces of the man Jesus in the Chrasmalogical writings at the very least.

Where? The only Biblical quotes I recall in the C.W. are from the old testament.

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Gerry Quinn — 16 Dec 2010, 20:49 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

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

From: "Dan'I Danehy-Oakes" <danldo at gmail.com>
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Even theologians who take a hard line on this might pause for thought when considering the precise situation Wolfe is postulating (tentatively) - a succession of near-identical iterated universes.

"All" is a big word, but it is usually taken as referring to the contents of a particular universe. Many physicists invoke at times the concept of a multiverse, and yet they may use "all" to indicate the contents of a single one.

Furthermore, the question of a single incarnation is actually highly problematic in such a sequence!

We know there is a Jesus-analogue in the Solar Cycle. Some hypothesise that this is an imperfect Jesus, a man who is not the incarnation of god, as he will be in a future cycle, presumably ours.

But if he is the Incarnation in one cycle, what happens in the cycle after that? Back to an imperfect Jesus-analogue?

Or is our iteration the last? If so, one would think it should be in some way perfect. Does it look perfect to anybody?

I think multiple Incarnations are almost an inevitable consequence of Wolfe's scenario.

(I don't think most people, including Catholic theologians, would be shocked by the notion of Incarnations on differnet planets of our universe either...)

- Gerry Quinn

Andrew Mason — 16 Dec 2010, 20:56 · follows Gerry Quinn

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote: >

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Actually, a number of fundamentalists have condemned the Narnia books on precisely this ground.

Oh, I know. But we aren't actually doing theology here, but literary interpretation: can we be sure that, while Lewis is capable of heresy, Wolfe is not? Or at least of imagining a world whose literal description would be heretical?

I'm not particularly attached to the actual presence of Jesus in the _Sun_ universe; after all the various pagan gods who are alluded to aren't literally present in it either. I just don't see him as so manifestly absent that the series can actually be read as having the aim of working out the consequences of his absence.

That's actually another theological problem. Scripture has the Church enduring to the end of days.

True. This may be another point on which Wolfe is deviating from orthodoxy; though actually you could finesse it by saying that while Christ is unknown (or not clearly known) on Urth and the Whorl, he might be known in some other corners of the universe.

Son of Witz — 16 Dec 2010, 20:57 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

On Dec 16, 2010, at 12:39 PM, "Dan'I Danehy-Oakes" <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:

On Thu, Dec 16, 2010 at 12:33 PM, Son of Witz

<Sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org> wrote:

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Ok, then my point stands. Anything that interprets the visible actions and quoted statements is essentially theological speculation. So it would be as possible to have multiple universes with Jesus where none of them were ever saved because the revelation is not valid as it is to have multiple universes with one Jesus who saved them all forever because the revelation is right. Without the answer to the question of the veracity of the theology, we aren't on solid ground to say one or the other MUST be.

From there we can say that there are clearly historical traces of the man Jesus in the Chasmalogical writings at the very least.

Where? The only Biblical quotes I recall in the C.W. are from the old testament.

In the chasmalogical writings. Money changers and the scourge. A few have been listed out in the last few days.

David Stockhoff — 17 Dec 2010, 00:49 · in reply to Andrew Mason

And that is half the point. We can agree on that at least.

Of course, then you have to wonder what happened to him. Perhaps he was not crucified; and with no resulting salvation, he was largely forgotten.

On 12/16/2010 2:29 PM, Andrew Mason wrote:
I don't see anything to make me say 'This is a universe without Christ' - though at the time the events take place, it's certainly a universe where Christ is not_known_.

David Stockhoff — 17 Dec 2010, 01:05 · in reply to James Wynn

I think this is correct. I presented my scheme of gradual improvement/enlightenment because Severian specifically describes it and it helps sort out why one iteration would have our experience and Severian's another, but that's all I'd add.

On 12/16/2010 3:32 PM, James Wynn wrote:

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Andrew Mason — 17 Dec 2010, 11:31 · follows David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff wrote:

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Of course, then you have to wonder what happened to him. Perhaps he was not crucified; and with no resulting salvation, he was largely forgotten.

Except that I now realise I misspoke. He (if he exists) is not wholly unknown - the scourging of the animal sellers appears to be a reference to him, and so, I take it, is the Theanthropos of _New Sun_. The religion of Urth is influenced by Christianity in numerous ways; the religion of the Whorl is a parody of it, though also of Greek paganism. Christ is not _clearly_ known. And I think this is unsurprising, for nothing from our culture is clearly known. It was lost during the first empire; later it was restored, but in an obscured form.

I'm not suggesting this is the only possible interpretation. Perhaps this world has only a Jesus-analogue, perhaps it has only myths. But if it were a world where Jesus existed, then given the general facts about the obscuring of cultural memory, what we see doesn't seem surprising to me.

Andrew Mason — 17 Dec 2010, 11:52 · follows Andrew Mason

Gerry Quinn wrote:

(I don't think most people, including Catholic theologians, would be shocked by the notion of Incarnations on different planets of our universe either...)

That is the basis of the (in some circles) well-known Christmas hymn 'Every star shall sing a carol', by Sidney Carter.

On the other hand it is firmly rejected by C.S. Lewis, who seems OK with the idea of different incarnations in different universes.

None of which, of course, proves anything about Wolfe. I agree that your reading is the simplest; it fits in with the fact that Severian's world has a past very (incredibly) like our own, and the clear existence of a Christianity-analogue there. These can be explained in other ways; but to insist that they must be seems to me to turn on a theological assumption that it's not

clear Wolfe shares. I'm inclined to share it myself; but manifestly not everyone does, so I don't insist on it as a principle of interpretation.

António Pedro Marques — 17 Dec 2010, 12:02 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Andrew Mason wrote (17-12-2010 11:52):

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I'll just say I think that until proven otherwise there was a Jesus on Urth. But either that Jesus wasn't God the Sun (bwahaha), or he was but the Church there failed for whatever reason. I just don't think it's logical that specific Jesus-related lore exists ('Judas tree', 'Mary', etc) without a Jesus (who may even have been called Bill, of course).

David Stockhoff — 17 Dec 2010, 12:52 · in reply to Andrew Mason

I think it is unnecessary to study too closely the question of incarnations and universes. Seems to me that the question of how many incarnations can fit into the multiverse depends far more on one's sense of a "universe" than on one's theology. Lewis is bound to think differently from Wolfe, and so on. At one point we discussed this on the planetary level (specifically, Wolfe's Christmas story set on another planet).

Recall that "universe" was once commonly taken to refer to our galaxy alone; now we know how much bigger the universe is than we thought a mere 100 years ago. And theories of its construction have advanced tremendously as well.

After all, even if we objectively observe several "universes," how do we know whether these represent subdivisions of a universe, or additions into a multiverse?

We don't. The "Author" has the final say, and can therefore hand out the incarnations as he sees fit.

On 12/17/2010 6:52 AM, Andrew Mason wrote:

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Lee Berman — 17 Dec 2010, 14:02 · follows David Stockhoff

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In my view, Severian is the Theoanthropos, given his mixed parentage, that which makes him the perfect Conciliator between humanity and the sky gods.

Severian tells us early on that he practices his mystery throughout his travels but will not describe each instance to avoid giving his story any perverse appeal to sadists. There may be several copies of him travelling through time and Typhon's Urthly empire.

Wolfe has admitted that he considers Severian an aspect of the Outsider. I consider it possible that the legends of a scourger possessed by the Outsider point more to Severian, than our earthly Jesus.

Ryan Dunn — 17 Dec 2010, 16:02 · in reply to David Stockhoff

I would argue that it is very important to take anything Malrubius teaches Severian to heart within the realm of BotNS. Here may be the single most important thing Malrubius explained... "Just as a flower blooms, throws down its seed, dies, and rises from its seed to bloom again, so the universe we know diffuses itself to nullity in the infinitude of space, gathers its fragments (which because of the curvature of that space meet at last where they began) and from that seed blooms again. Each such cycle of flowering and decay marks a divine year.

As the flower that comes is like the flower from which it came, so the universe that comes repeats the one whose ruin was its origin; and this is as true of its finer features as of its grosser ones: The worlds that arise are not unlike the worlds that perished, and are peopled by similar races, though just as the flower evolves from summer to summer, all things advance by some minute step.

In a certain divine year (a time truly inconceivable to us, though that cycle of the universes was but one in an endless succession), a race was born that was so like to ours that Master Malrubius did not scruple to call it human. It expanded among the galaxies of its universe even as we are said to have done in the remote past, when Urth was, for a time, the center, or at least the home and symbol, of an empire.

These men encountered many beings on other worlds who had intelligence to some degree, or at least the potential for intelligence, and from them that they might have comrades in the loneliness between the galaxies and allies among their swarming worlds they formed beings like themselves.

It was not done swiftly or easily. Uncountable billions suffered and died under their guiding

hands, leaving ineradicable memories of pain and blood. When their universe was old, and galaxy so far separated from galaxy that the nearest could not be seen even as faint stars, and the ships were steered thence by ancient records alone, the thing was done. Completed, the work was greater than those who began it could have guessed. What had been made was not a new race like Humanity's, but a race such as Humanity wished its own to be: united, compassionate, just.

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Son of Witz — 17 Dec 2010, 17:52 · in reply to Ryan Dunn

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...ryan

Thanks for pointing to Malrubius. I love that part. It is almost at the end of a series that began with "Resurrection & Death"

However, I take issue with a conclusion you draw from this which I think the text implies the opposite. The Moon Painting can exist in their creation if the Book of the New Sun can exist in ours as a translated work. Remember the awesome beginning of Urth of the New Sun when Severian sees the black hole surrounded by the ring of stars? It's one of the most breathtaking scenes in the series, and hugely important.

V-II The Fifth Sailor

"We had penetrated the fabric of time, and the fuligin vortex marked the end of the universe. Or its beginning. If its beginning, then that shimmering ring of stars was the scattering of the young suns, and the only truly magical ring this universe would ever know. Hailing them, I shouted for joy, though no one heard my voice but the Increate and me. I drew my cloak to me and pulled the leaden coffer from it; and I held the coffer above my head in both my hands; and I cast it, cheering as I cast it, out of my unseen cloak of air, out of the purlieu of the ship, out of the universe that the coffer and I had known, and into the new creation as final offering from the old. At once my destiny seized me and flung me back."

First, an artifact seems to have crossed from one blossom to another due to the possibility of exiting that time-space. What is to say that other cargo from one of these ships might not have crossed over as well? In fact, this solution is far more likely than believing that a photograph or a canvas with oil or plastic pigments would last 30,000 to 1,000,000 years into the future, if Earth is Urth's past. That is extremely unlikely.

Second, it's worth noting that Severian's mission would have FAILED if he hadn't chucked that book out and created a force to propell him back. The New Sun of Ushas depends on this act.

Third. I've really been chewing over the Apollo moon landing painting.

We all seem to take it on face value that it is Neil or Buzz, an obvious nod to the extreme distance of time between Urth and Earth. But really, the text does not disambiguate this depiction, so we have to admit that it may NOT ACTUALLY be a painting of the Apollo Moon Landing. It may be a photo of an Urth empire astronaut pre-moon forrestation. Wolfe may be giving us a double mind-fuck!

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back to being barren, and thus we would see our barren moon despite it once having had a forrest.

Fourth. Severian doesn't really know if he's seeing a Big Bang or a Grand Gnab, he is guessing. Plus, it is a guess to say that the copy we have IS the one that he threw to the "new creation". We know that one of the two copies crossed from Urth to Earth, but not which one.

Furthermore, it is still within the realm of The Text to say that we Don't know that Earth is in another universal blossom than Urth is, even though Wolfe's interview leads us there. Ushas could be Earth. The last decade has uncovered so many massive structures that could not seemingly have been made by the hunter-gatherers who are supposed to have built them, that Erich Von Daniken looks less like a quack then he did thirty years ago when his work was dismissed as not having enough evidence. The more we look back, the more it looks like our civilization is built over one vastly older civilization that was buried in a deluge. (none of which is to say I believe that BotNS is TRUE or something.)

~witz

Lee Berman — 17 Dec 2010, 18:20 · follows Son of Witz

Son of Witz- "We had penetrated the fabric of time, and the fuligin vortex marked the end of the universe. Or its beginning. If >its beginning, then that shimmering ring of stars was the scattering of the young suns, and the only truly magical ring this >universe would ever know.

Severian doesn't really know if he's seeing a Big Bang or a Grand Gnab, he is guessing.

True, though I think it goes deeper than that, even. Consider Malrubius' words:

"Just as a flower blooms, throws down its seed, dies, and rises from its seed to bloom again, so the universe we know diffuses itself to nullity in the infinitude of space, gathers its fragments (which because of the curvature of that space meet at last where they began)..."

The parenthetical part is as Severian describes it. The beginning is at the same point as the end.

Normally when we think of sequences, there has to be a beginning of one element distinct from the end of the previous element. Otherwise it is just circular. The closest I am able to picture is a spiral shape where the end of one coil is right there at the beginning of the next. Maybe that's how Wolfe meant us to picture it. (Yesod is like the helix)

Consider also there is the issue of the location of Yesod. In last year's discussion we learned there are text passages suggesting it is forward in time from Briah and text passages suggesting it is backward in time. How can it be both?

I get the impression Wolfe is trying to describe some of these concepts in a confusing, self-contradictory manner to make the point that these things are too vast and n-dimensional for a human brain to comprehend. (I think Frank Herbert does the same thing to describe Paul Atreides' pan-temporal prescience in the early Dune books).

Son of Witz — 17 Dec 2010, 18:40 · in reply to Lee Berman

On Dec 17, 2010, at 10:20 AM, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

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the previous element. Otherwise it is just circular. The closest I am able to picture is a spiral shape where the end of one coil is right there at the beginning of the next. Maybe that's how Wolfe meant us

to picture it. (Yesod is like the helix)

I have always thought the shape of the universe was a torus. Hawking described a globe which had opposing poles that were the Big Bang and Big Crunch. It seems obvious to me that a better model is a torus, the center of which is this Black Hole/ White Fountain. Time and creation whirl around the surface and through the center again and again. (this is actually a cosmology I believe in, which may be why One of the reasons I find this book so resonant.)

Consider also there is the issue of the location of Yesod. In last year's discussion we learned there are text

passages suggesting it is forward in time from Briah and text passages suggesting it is backward in time. How can it be both?

Because it is outside our time-space and are capable of perceiving the breadth of temporality within that time bubble in a multi-linear way.

Don't over think what is a simple metaphor. They escaped the wheel of time. They are outside of any time-space that concerns us.

I get the impression Wolfe is trying to describe some of these concepts in a confusing, self-contradictory

manner to make the point that these things are too vast and n-dimensional for a human brain to comprehend.

(I think Frank Herbert does the same thing to describe Paul Atreides' pan-temporal prescience in the early Dune books).

Pedro Pereira — 17 Dec 2010, 18:50 · in reply to Son of Witz

And which structures are those?

From: Sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org

Date: Fri, 17 Dec 2010 09:52:55 -0800

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Subject: Re: (urth) Key to the Universe

On Dec 17, 2010, at 8:02 AM, Ryan Dunn <ryan at liftingfaces.com> wrote:

The last decade has uncovered so many massive structures that could not seemingly have been

made by the hunter-gatherers who are supposed to have built them, that Erich Von Daniken looks less like a quack then he did thirty years ago when his work was dismissed as not having enough evidence. The more we look back, the more it looks like our civilization is built over one vastly older civilization that was burried in a deluge. (none of which is to say I believe that BotNS is TRUE or something.)

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Son of Witz — 17 Dec 2010, 19:14 · in reply to Pedro Pereira

On Dec 17, 2010, at 10:50 AM, Pedro Pereira <domus_artemis at hotmail.com> wrote:
And which structures are those?

I'm no expert on this stuff, and I don't want to derail the thread with a tangent.
One interesting one is Gobekli Tepe in Turkey. There are also several underwater structures that have been uncovered in the last 15 years that are dated 10,000 years old and are have enormous stone blocks of several hundred tons.

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Pedro Pereira — 17 Dec 2010, 19:25 · in reply to Son of Witz

Thanks.
Pedro

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

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 17 Dec 2010, 20:07 · in reply to Ryan Dunn

How does your quote support your conclusions? How does it address incarnations?
No one has suggested that paintings of astronauts survived the death of universes.

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As the flower that comes is like the flower from which it came, so the universe that comes repeats the one whose ruin was its origin; and this is as true of its finer features as of its grosser ones: The worlds that arise are not unlike the worlds that perished, and are peopled by similar races, though just as the flower evolves from summer to summer, all things advance by some minute step.

In a certain divine year (a time truly inconceivable to us, though that cycle of the universes was but one in an endless succession), a race was born that was so like to ours that Master Malrubius did not scruple to call it human. It expanded among the galaxies of its universe even as we are said to have done in the remote past, when Urth was, for a time, the center, or at least the home and symbol, of an empire.

These men encountered many beings on other worlds who had intelligence to some degree, or at least the potential for intelligence, and from them that?they might have comrades in the loneliness between the galaxies and allies among their swarming worlds they formed beings like themselves.

It was not done swiftly or easily. Uncountable billions suffered and died under their guiding hands, leaving ineradicable memories of pain and blood.?When their universe was old, and galaxy so far separated from galaxy that the nearest could not be seen even as faint stars, and the ships were steered thence by ancient records alone, the thing was done. Completed, the work was greater than those who began it could have guessed. What had been made was not a

new race like Humanity's, but a race such as Humanity wished its own to be: united, compassionate, just.

I was not told what became of the Humanity of that cycle. Perhaps it survived until the implosion of the universe, then perished with it. Perhaps it evolved beyond our recognition. But the beings Humanity had shaped into what men and women wished to be escaped, opening a passage to Yesod, the universe higher than our own, where they created worlds suited to what they had become. From that vantage point they look both forward and back, and in so looking they have discovered us. Perhaps we are no more than a race like that who shaped them.

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From: Son of Witz <Sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org>
Subject: Re: (urth) Key to the Universe

Ryan Dunn — 17 Dec 2010, 20:14 · in reply to DAVID STOCKHOFF

David,

I think Mike's point was that, if the tome we have all read made it from one divine year to another, then so, too, could a painting of an astronaut.

I may have the wrong of it.

Regardless, I'm of the opinion that:

Divine Year X = Earth
Divine Year Y = Urth

where X and Y are not sequential, as I'm still not sure if I/we know which came first.

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 17 Dec 2010, 20:14 · in reply to DAVID STOCKHOFF

Well, just because it doesn't exist yet doesn't mean that it won't. But I agree that it is a product of Briah in Severian's past.

On Fri, Dec 17, 2010 at 12:11 PM, DAVID STOCKHOFF <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:
It's NOT a contemporary painting---it doesn't exist in this universe, as far as anyone here has been able to discover. Therefore, it is a product of Briah in Severian's past.

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Subject: Re: (urth) Key to the Universe
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Date: Friday, December 17, 2010, 12:52 PM

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Adam Thornton IO — 17 Dec 2010, 20:22 · in reply to Son of Witz

On Fri, 17 Dec 2010 09:52:55 -0800, Son of Witz

<Sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org> wrote:

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A couple years ago I looked and could not find any actual photo from the Apollo missions that replicated the scene described.

Adam

Ryan Dunn — 17 Dec 2010, 20:38 · in reply to DAVID STOCKHOFF

I stand by my presumption that Urth and Earth are the same planet but created during different Divine Years.

However, I'll make one little bone... it is never articulated as a "painting", as far as I can remember. And Rudesind is the "picture" cleaner, meaning many of these may be and probably are, photographs.

...ryan

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Yes, my point was that we have a book that crossed from one creation to the other, so we may have other things, which may be the Astronaut Painting, which is NOT a photo, so it's not impotant that no one can pinpoint it. I think it's likely that it SHOULD be understood as an Earth Astronaut with a USA flag, beacuse Wolfe was the script supervisor on the (aborted) Innovation Comics adaptation. The image shown is as I describe. I think he would have vetoed that if it was wrong.

But it doesn't address incarnation, which is why I changed the subject. I was breaking a tangent off from the Christ discussion.

Also, Master Ultan says that the library houses "books cased in perfumed woods shipped across the inconceivable gulf between creations - books doubly precious because no one on Urth can read them."

So I'm saying each creation, acording to the text, is not a closed system.

On Dec 17, 2010, at 12:14 PM, Ryan Dunn <ryan at liftingfaces.com> wrote:

David,

I think Mike's point was that, if the tome we have all read made it from one divine year to another,

then so, too, could a painting of an astronaut.

I may have the wrong of it.

Regardless, I'm of the opinion that:

Divine Year X = Earth

Divine Year Y = Urth

where X and Y are not sequential, as I'm still not sure if I/we know which came first.

...ryan

On Dec 17, 2010, at 3:07 PM, DAVID STOCKHOFF wrote:

How does your quote support your conclusions? How does it address incarnations?

No one has suggested that paintings of astronauts survived the death of universes.

--- On Fri, 12/17/10, Ryan Dunn <ryan at liftingfaces.com> wrote:

From: Ryan Dunn <ryan at liftingfaces.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) The Outsider

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

Date: Friday, December 17, 2010, 11:02 AM

I would argue that it is very important to take anything Malrubius teaches Severian to heart within the realm of BotNS. Here may be the single most important thing Malrubius explained...

"Just as a flower blooms, throws down its seed, dies, and rises from its seed to bloom again, so the universe we know diffuses itself to nullity in the infinitude of space, gathers its fragments (which because of the curvature of that space meet at last where they began) and from that seed blooms again. Each such cycle of flowering and decay marks a divine year.

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In a certain divine year (a time truly inconceivable to us, though that cycle of the universes was but one in an endless succession), a race was born that was so like to ours that Master Malrubius did not scruple to call it human. It expanded among the galaxies of its universe even as we are said to have done in the remote past, when Urth was, for a time, the center, or at least the home and symbol, of an empire.

These men encountered many beings on other worlds who had intelligence to some degree, or at least the potential for intelligence, and from them that they might have comrades in the loneliness between the galaxies and allies among their swarming worlds they formed beings like themselves.

It was not done swiftly or easily. Uncountable billions suffered and died under their guiding hands, leaving ineradicable memories of pain and blood. When their universe was old, and galaxy so far separated from galaxy that the nearest could not be seen even as faint stars, and the ships were steered thence by ancient records alone, the thing was done. Completed, the work was greater than those who began it could have guessed. What had been made was not a new race like Humanity's, but a race such as Humanity wished its own to be: united, compassionate, just.

I was not told what became of the Humanity of that cycle. Perhaps it survived until the implosion of the universe, then perished with it. Perhaps it evolved beyond our recognition. But the beings

Humanity had shaped into what men and women wished to be escaped, opening a passage to Yesod, the universe higher than our own, where they created worlds suited to what they had become. From that vantage point they look both forward and back, and in so looking they have discovered us. Perhaps we are no more than a race like that who shaped them. Perhaps it was we who shaped them ?or our sons or our fathers. Malrubius said he did not know, and I believe he told the truth. However it may be, they shape us now as they themselves were shaped; it is at once their repayment and their revenge."

(Citadel of the Autarch, c.34 - "The Key to the Universe")

With the entire obliteration of a universe, we cannot assume that pictures of astronauts from Earth carried over from one divine year to the next. This universe is, at best, a refined mirror image of Earth, but in this Urth, there were once astronauts very like Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong. One would stand to reason there is a God (Increate) and a Christ figure (Conciliator?).

Whether Urth is in a divine year before or after Earth is a different question all together, but Wolfe clearly outlines that a divine year includes the death of one universe and the blossoming of another.

...ryan

On Dec 17, 2010, at 7:52 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

I think it is unnecessary to study too closely the question of incarnations and universes. Seems to me that the question of how many incarnations can fit into the multiverse depends far more on one's sense of a "universe" than on one's theology. Lewis is bound to think differently from Wolfe, and so on. At one point we discussed this on the planetary level (specifically, Wolfe's Christmas story set on another planet).

Recall that "universe" was once commonly taken to refer to our galaxy alone; now we know how much bigger the universe is than we thought a mere 100 years ago. And theories of its construction have advanced tremendously as well.

After all, even if we objectively observe several "universes," how do we know whether these represent subdivisions of a universe, or additions into a multiverse?

We don't. The "Author" has the final say, and can therefore hand out the incarnations as he sees fit.

On 12/17/2010 6:52 AM, Andrew Mason wrote:

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That is the basis of the (in some circles) well-known Christmas hymn 'Every star shall sing a carol', by Sidney Carter.

On the other hand it is firmly rejected by C.S. Lewis, who seems OK with the idea of different incarnations in different universes.

None of which, of course, proves anything about Wolfe. I agree that your reading is the simplest; it fits in with the fact that Severian's world has a past very (incredibly) like our own, and the clear existence of a Christianity-analogue there. These can be explained in other ways; but to insist that they must be seems to me to turn on a theological assumption that it's not clear Wolfe shares. I'm inclined to share it myself; but manifestly not everyone does, so I don't insist on it as a principle of interpretation.

Lee Berman — 17 Dec 2010, 20:51 · follows Ryan Dunn

Adam Thornton- A couple years ago I looked and could not find any actual photo from the Apollo missions that replicated the scene described.

Heh, funny. Same here.

If we envision the sequential universes as an ascending spiral, or maybe stacked toroids, as Son ofa Witz suggested, it would be easy to envision a portal linking the adjacent coils or donut rings. Maybe like an Inire/Hethor mirror?

I don't think we're given enough information to know how, but it seems clear there is some way for stuff from Earth to have made it to Urth (I suppose some would argue it is simply longevity).

Some of the stuff could be just Urthly versions of Earth stuff, like the moon astronaut. But some seem too perfectly Earthian to be seen that way. I think Jonas' literary allusions are the best example.

His Alice/Looking Glass quote and him supplying the Earth/Theseus ending to Severian's story "proves" to me that he (robot form) has either been to Earth or, more likely, spent significant time with true Earth books.

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 17 Dec 2010, 21:05 · in reply to Pedro Pereira

Yes, thanks Witz. I love this stuff, and have never heard of it. This site looks remarkable. It's not the world's first temple, however, though it may be the world's oldest (and it is in a good location for that). The first temples were built of materials that did not last---like wood.

--- On Fri, 12/17/10, Pedro Pereira <domus_artemis at hotmail.com> wrote:

From: Pedro Pereira <domus_artemis at hotmail.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) Key to the Universe
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Date: Friday, December 17, 2010, 2:25 PM

Thanks.

Pedro

From: Sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org
Date: Fri, 17 Dec 2010 11:14:58 -0800
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Subject: Re: (urth) Key to the Universe

On Dec 17, 2010, at 10:50 AM, Pedro Pereira <domus_artemis at hotmail.com> wrote:

And which structures are those?

I'm no expert on this stuff, and I don't want to derail the thread with a tangent. One interesting one is Gobekli Tepe in Turkey. "There are also several underwater structures that have been uncovered in the last 15 years that are dated 10,000 years old and are have

enormous stone blocks of several hundred tons."

From: Sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org
Date: Fri, 17 Dec 2010 09:52:55 -0800
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Subject: Re: (urth) Key to the Universe

On Dec 17, 2010, at 8:02 AM, Ryan Dunn <ryan at liftingfaces.com> wrote:

??The last decade has uncovered so many massive structures that could not seemingly have been made by the hunter-gatherers who are supposed to have built them, that Erich Von Daniken looks less like a quack than he did thirty years ago when his work was dismissed as not having enough evidence. ?The more we look back, the more it looks like our civilization is built over one vastly older civilization that was buried in a deluge. ?(none of which is to say I believe that BotNS is TRUE or something.)

~witz?

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

-----Inline Attachment Follows-----

James Wynn — 17 Dec 2010, 21:06 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee Berman-

Some of the stuff could be just Urthly versions of Earth stuff, like the moon astronaut. But some seem too perfectly Earthian to be seen that way. I think Jonas' literary allusions are the best example. His Alice/Looking Glass quote and him supplying the Earth/Theseus ending to Severian's story "proves" to me that he (robot form) has either been to Earth or, more likely, spent significant time with true Earth books.

I'm probably just old-fashioned --a meat and potatoes SF guy-- but I find it really unappealing that Neil Armstrong is not in Severian's chronological past. Part of the fun of that scene for me is the way the perception of symbols change due to Time.

I'm quite aware that this sort of "aesthetic blowback" always annoys me when I confront it with _my_ theories, but there it is.

u+16b9

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 17 Dec 2010, 21:39 · in reply to Ryan Dunn

it's certainly a valid point, although not every object gets to be carried into space to the end/beginning of the universe by the Conciliator to be cast into the fuligin void.

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There's no doubt that Urth is Earth in some physical sense.

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Subject: Re: (urth) Key to the Universe
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Date: Friday, December 17, 2010, 3:38 PM

I stand by my presumption that Urth and Earth are the same planet but created during different Divine Years.

However, I'll make one little bone... it is never articulated as a "painting", as far as I can remember. And Rudesind is the "picture" cleaner, meaning many of these may be and probably are, photographs.

...ryan

Lee Berman — 17 Dec 2010, 21:42 · follows DAVID STOCKHOFF

David Stockhoff- The first temples were built of materials that did not last---like wood.

Shazam! This is part of the anthropological lesson being taught to David and #5 by Mr. Million in the first few pages of the first Wolfe story (novella) I ever read. That's when I knew he would become one of my favorite authors.

James Wynn- I'm probably just old-fashioned --a meat and potatoes SF guy-- but I find it really unappealing that Neil Armstrong is not in Severian's chronological past. Part of the fun of that scene for me is the way the perception of symbols change due to Time.

Yep, I was aware of which side of this debate you find yourself on, James. Myself, I am interested in the way symbols change culture to culture (which is a function of both geography and time). So, Urth being a different world than Earth has some appeal to me in that regard. (likewise I care about societal differences like "vines" and "lianas", heh).

But I don't think you should change your position. It isn't centrally important, IMHO. And if Wolfe reading ever stops being fun, we might as well all pack it in and quit.

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 17 Dec 2010, 21:44 · in reply to Son of Witz

That line is ambiguous, but I conservatively read that as meaning "between suns." In other words, a "creation" is a world in that case, not a universe.
Perhaps a survey of Severian's use of that term is in order.

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So I'm saying each creation, according to the text, is not a closed system.

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 17 Dec 2010, 21:53 · in reply to James Wynn

I know what you mean.

On one hand, the Alice quote is a legitimate literary allusion. On the other hand, Jonas quotes it. It appears that Urth has tracked Earth unnervingly closely in some ways. But if you look at the Jungle Room, where apparently historical characters appear anachronistically, perhaps there are serious differences, proving that there can be serious differences.

--- On Fri, 12/17/10, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:

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Subject: Re: (urth) Key to the Universe

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

Date: Friday, December 17, 2010, 4:06 PM

Lee Berman-

Some of the stuff could be just Urthly versions of Earth stuff, like the moon astronaut. But some seem too perfectly Earthian to be seen that way. I think Jonas' literary allusions are the best example. His Alice/Looking Glass quote and him supplying the Earth/Theseus ending to Severian's story "proves" to

me that he (robot form) has either been to Earth or, more likely, spent significant time with true Earth books. ??? ??????? ?????? ???

I'm probably just old-fashioned --a meat and potatoes SF guy-- but I find it really unappealing that Neil Armstrong is not in Severian's chronological past. Part of the fun of that scene for me is the way the perception of symbols change due to Time.

I'm quite aware that this sort of "aesthetic blowback" always annoys me when I confront it with _my_ theories, but there it is.

u+16b9

Craig Brewer — 17 Dec 2010, 22:08 · in reply to James Wynn

I'm with you James. For me, the whole fun of that scene is that WE know what the picture is, but they don't. It's another case where all the puzzling over the puzzle seems to shrug off what that scene does for the story in terms of establishing the depth of history/"Dying Earth" attitude. But, like you say, that "aesthetic blowback" subjective stuff and likely unconvincing to those who don't feel the same way.

As for other examples of "our Earth," there's also Dr. Talos' recognition of the Frankenstein story and the host of quotations/misquotations in his play.

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

From: James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com>

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

Sent: Fri, December 17, 2010 3:06:16 PM

Subject: Re: (urth) Key to the Universe

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Son of Witz — 18 Dec 2010, 01:32 · in reply to DAVID STOCKHOFF

On Dec 17, 2010, at 1:05 PM, DAVID STOCKHOFF <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:
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It's not the world's first temple, however, though it may be the world's oldest (and it is in a good location for that). The first temples were built of materials that did not last---like wood.

I love it too.

Really, check out that Ancient Aliens History Channel show. Even if the theories are wacko, the "evidentiary" meat is fun to chew on and the interviewees are sorta hilarious. They detail out all this crazy archeological stuff.

I HATE how they are always calling the oldest the " first". Haven't scientists had to eat crow on that stuff enough to know better by now? They are gonna keep rolling things back the more they dig!

Son of Witz — 18 Dec 2010, 01:35 · in reply to DAVID STOCKHOFF

True, it may mean between suns. But I'd wager Ultan is learned enough to choose his words carefully, and would likely know as much about this stuff as Malrubius's aquastor.

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So I'm saying each creation, according to the text, is not a closed system.

Son of Witz — 18 Dec 2010, 01:43 · in reply to Craig Brewer

I agree. I much prefer it to be a painting from Urth's past, which was, I prefer to think, in the same creation, about thirty thousand years before, with no intervening deluge.

Re: stacked toroids. Nah, I mean ONE torus. History is a path that cycles around the surface endlessly.

On Dec 17, 2010, at 2:08 PM, Craig Brewer <cnbrewer at yahoo.com> wrote:
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Jeff Wilson — 18 Dec 2010, 07:17 · in reply to Son of Witz

On 12/17/2010 2:38 PM, Son of Witz wrote:

Also, Master Ultan says that the library houses "books cased in perfumed woods shipped across the inconceivable gulf between creations - books doubly precious because no one on Urth can read them."

This is almost certainly an indirect reference to Kant, who used the term "island universes" when conjecturing that spiral nebula were not merely clouds of gas but galaxies like our own Milky Way. The Yesodis also use "creation" to mean "galaxy", and have a literal island devoted to each one humans inhabit.

So I'm saying each creation, according to the text, is not a closed system.

This is still true, but there's much less interchange between manvantaras than is otherwise suggested between Urth and Earth by G.W.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Jeff Wilson — 18 Dec 2010, 07:29 · in reply to DAVID STOCKHOFF

On 12/17/2010 3:53 PM, DAVID STOCKHOFF wrote:

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It appears that Urth has tracked Earth unnervingly closely in some ways. But if you look at the Jungle Room, where apparently historical characters appear anachronistically, perhaps there are serious differences, proving that there can be serious differences.

Remember, in the BOTNS, time proceeds only mostly linearly, with many loops and echoes backwards and possibly forewards. If we take other metafictional hints in the BOTNS, the universe(s) described in the Book are themselves book-like, proceeding from draft to draft with the best lines and tropes congealing around the plot skeleton. The Increate, outside of time, fiddles with manuscript, keeping some elements while rearranging others, and trying to work in His favored set pieces like the Flood where He can.

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Jeff Wilson — 18 Dec 2010, 07:35 · in reply to Son of Witz

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True, it may mean between suns. But I'd wager Ultan is learned enough to choose his words carefully, and would likely know as much about this stuff as Malrubius's aquastor.

I don't see any way for Ultan to know about Yesodi-level goings on and yet feel free to share it so casually with someone he can't positively identify.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Son of Witz — 18 Dec 2010, 07:37 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On Dec 17, 2010, at 11:17 PM, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com> wrote:
On 12/17/2010 2:38 PM, Son of Witz wrote:

Also, Master Ultan says that the library houses "books cased in perfumed woods shipped across the inconceivable gulf between creations - books doubly precious because no one on Urth can read them."

This is almost certainly an indirect reference to Kant, who used the term "island universes" when conjecturing that spiral nebula were not merely clouds of gas but galaxies like our own Milky Way. The Yesodis also use "creation" to mean "galaxy", and have a literal island devoted to each one humans inhabit.

So I'm saying each creation, according to the text, is not a closed system.

This is still true, but there's much less interchange between manvantaras than is otherwise suggested between Urth and Earth by G.W.

--

I'm cool with all that.

Son of Witz — 18 Dec 2010, 07:38 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On Dec 17, 2010, at 11:29 PM, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com> wrote:
On 12/17/2010 3:53 PM, DAVID STOCKHOFF wrote:

I know what you mean.

On one hand, the Alice quote is a legitimate literary allusion. On the other hand, Jonas quotes it.

It appears that Urth has tracked Earth unnervingly closely in some ways. But if you look at the Jungle Room, where apparently historical characters appear anachronistically, perhaps there are serious differences, proving that there can be serious differences.

Remember, in the BOTNS, time proceeds only mostly linearly, with many loops and echoes backwards and possibly forwards. If we take other metafictional hints in the BOTNS, the universe(s) described in the Book are themselves book-like, proceeding from draft to draft with the best lines and tropes congealing around the plot skeleton. The Increate, outside of time, fiddles with manuscript, keeping some elements while rearranging others, and trying to work in His favored set pieces like the Flood where He can.

--

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com

Thats the shit right there, Jeff!
Nail on the head.

Lee Berman — 18 Dec 2010, 16:16 · follows Son of Witz

Also, Master Ultan says that the library houses "books cased in perfumed woods shipped across the inconceivable gulf between creations

This sounds so much like description of manvantaras by Malrubius I feel one has to perform contortions to avoid the connection.

there's much less interchange between
manvantaras than is otherwise suggested between Urth and Earth by G.W.

I could accept this better if I thought Wolfe wrote BotNS primarily to create a strange, alien planet so different from our own. Instead this is a planet tightly allusionally bound to our own so there must be significant connections between the two planets. It could be that is a result of Urth being future Earth and has nothing to do with alternate manvantaras. But if that were true, why would Wolfe dwell on the multiple universe theme so strongly? What purpose to make Malrubius' story and UotNS the "big reveal" if it reveals nothing about the main story?

I don't see any way for Ultan to know about Yesodi-level goings on and yet feel free to share it so casually with someone he can't positively identify.

I do. But this is because I am not willing to default to the assumption that Ultan is just a throw-away character: show up, reference Borges, then disappear forever in the story. Weird things are going on with him. Gnostic symbolism, as has recently been discussed. The woman from the coffin is seen in his face. His hunger for the knowledge of the dead, etc.

We have the example of Cyriaca's "uncle" casually sharing the secrets of the universe with her (then Cyriaca casually sharing them with Severian and us). As, noted before, I see a thematic connection between Ultan and this book-loving "uncle" and his Library story. This connects them both to a guy who seems to be almost everywhere.

[FWIW, I strongly suspect Cyriaca to be Severian's aunt, sister of Catherine; both dark-haired, failed Pelerines. Both sentenced to strangulation for adultery. Thus the resemblance of Ultan to the woman in the coffin]

Son of Witz — 18 Dec 2010, 16:30 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On Dec 17, 2010, at 11:35 PM, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com> wrote:
On 12/17/2010 7:35 PM, Son of Witz wrote:

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I don't see any way for Ultan to know about Yesodi-level goings on and yet feel free to share it so casually with someone he can't positively identify.

Well...

Are we convinced that Severian going to Ultan isn't part of his being steered? Do we take Ultan at face value when he just knows, off the top of his head, that a book is leaning in such a way on such a shelf, even when he's been blind for years and his apprentice has no idea about? This is a book that seems soooooo important to Severian that he carries it through the entire BotNS. It is plausible that this is a truly random event, but NOTHING else about Severian's life, or the tasks he's assigned, seems random at all, so it is just as likely, perhaps more likely, that Ultan has had a hand in shaping him.

This book is treacherous.

David Stockhoff — 18 Dec 2010, 16:39 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Well put.

On 12/18/2010 2:29 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 12/17/2010 3:53 PM, DAVID STOCKHOFF wrote:

I know what you mean.

On one hand, the Alice quote is a legitimate literary allusion. On the other hand, Jonas quotes it.

It appears that Urth has tracked Earth unnervingly closely in some ways. But if you look at the Jungle Room, where apparently historical characters appear anachronistically, perhaps there are serious differences, proving that there can be serious differences.

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Craig Brewer — 18 Dec 2010, 16:45 · in reply to Son of Witz

Witz said:

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This book is treacherous.

Allow me some total speculation. You've been warned.

Ultan, of course, talks about the The Book of Gold, and the circumstances in which to-be-apprenticed librarians is a mystical, mysterious experience. It initiates their initiation.

And he uses the word "christening," which can hardly be a careless use on Wolfe's part, I'd imagine:

"The child, as I said, in time discovers The Book of Gold. Then the librarians come - like vampires, some say, but others say like the fairy godparents at a christening. They speak to the child, and the child joins them. Henceforth, he is in the library wherever he may be, and soon his parents know him no more. I suppose it is much the same among torturers."

So we've got the imagery of dying (vampires) from one life and being reborn into another (vampires, again, and the christening, as well as one's parents not knowing one anymore). And there's also the sense that, after you find the book, you're always in that new world, no matter where you are.

The point: it's very much a conversion story. And it's a conversion story centered on finding a book.

So here the speculation begins: in what sense in Sev's Brown Book perhaps his own Book of Gold? (Does he ever call it that later? I can't recall exactly, but I thought he might.) But it's also brown, rather than gold. We know it's myths that are true but also corrupted. So in what sense does the Brown Book serve as a kind of true-but seen "through a glass darkly" revelation to Sev of truer things?

And when Wolfe also admits that he knows many people have seen New Sun as a Book of Gold itself, it seems to fit: it, too, is telling true myths in false ways.

So it seems like we have a very Christian (if slightly less Catholic) notion of a book being a guide to revelation. But we also have the very Wolfean idea that the book misleads in all kinds of ways.

It still seems right, as Witz said, that the book should shape him in a TRUE way (apart from the Hiero-folk manipulation). Metaphorically, at least it works. Maybe that's just obvious, though...

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

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

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

Sent: Sat, December 18, 2010 10:30:22 AM

Subject: Re: (urth) The Outsider

On Dec 17, 2010, at 11:35 PM, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com> wrote:

On 12/17/2010 7:35 PM, Son of Witz wrote:

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Son of Witz — 18 Dec 2010, 21:37 · in reply to Craig Brewer

On Dec 18, 2010, at 8:45 AM, Craig Brewer <cnbrewer at yahoo.com> wrote:
Witz said:

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I dig all that. It truly is his book of gold and his initiation into the myths of Urth's past. Severian himself wonders if his memoir will be someone's Book of Gold. I think it is an apt reading. This scene is definitely an initiation into Urth's intellectual history for Severian. I love that he goes into total darkness before Ultan shows up like a glow worm or something. Recently I watched an excellent animated film, The Secret of Kells, which has had me thinking a lot about how crucial books are during dark ages. This is huge for Sev, moreso because he ends up drowning the library. This makes his re-telling of the stories into his own even more significant.
~witz

David Stockhoff — 18 Dec 2010, 22:00 · in reply to Son of Witz

Yes, and recall the naming of Iubar Street.

Good point about Severian drowning the library. Worse than the burning of the library at Alexandria.

On 12/18/2010 4:37 PM, Son of Witz wrote:

On Dec 18, 2010, at 8:45 AM, Craig Brewer<cnbrewer at yahoo.com> wrote:

Witz said:

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~witz

Jeff Wilson — 18 Dec 2010, 22:50 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 12/18/2010 10:16 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

Also, Master Ultan says that the library houses "books cased in perfumed woods shipped across the inconceivable gulf between creations

This sounds so much like description of manvantaras by Malrubius I feel one has to perform contortions to avoid the connection.

Even bonafide Yesodis casually use "creations" to refer to galaxies when thy are speaking to be understood by Urthlings.

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Because it's a time travel story, and a religious story, and deals with the beginning and end of the world as well.

I don't see any way for Ultan to know about Yesodi-level goings on and yet feel free to share it so casually with someone he can't positively identify.

I do. But this is because I am not willing to default to the assumption that Ultan is just a throw-away character: show up, reference Borges, then disappear forever in the story. Weird things are going on with him. Gnostic symbolism, as has recently been discussed. The woman from the coffin is seen in his face. His hunger for the knowledge of the dead, etc.

So he's Cyriaca's uncle, and fits in with the general macbre, gothic mode of the citadel.

We have the example of Cyriaca's "uncle" casually sharing the secrets of the universe with her (then Cyriaca casually sharing them with Severian and us).

The story of the citadel library and the ancient machine companions, et al, isn't a secret of the universe, just forgotten history. Ultan can be free with that sort of general ancient lore because it's all in the library somewhere and it's his job to facilitate access to it. The Yesodi plot is for-sure current state secret of the Commonwealth that is actively concealed by the "cacogen" masquerade, and the Yesodis keep some of it from even the Autarchs until they get a certified sun-bringer, to whom they have to eventually reveal their master plan in order to secure his participation, or we'd never learn of it at all.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

David Stockhoff — 18 Dec 2010, 23:27 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Sound. I agree that "galaxies" fits better than planets, because there are gulfs and then there are inconceivable gulfs.

I like Ultan as Cyriaca's uncle, who knows lots of stories.

On 12/18/2010 5:50 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 12/18/2010 10:16 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

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is actively concealed by the "cacogen" masquerade, and the Yesodis keep some of it from even the Autarchs until they get a certified sun-bringer, to whom they have to eventually reveal their master plan in order to secure his participation, or we'd never learn of it at all.

Jeff Wilson — 19 Dec 2010, 03:35 · in reply to Son of Witz

On 12/18/2010 10:30 AM, Son of Witz wrote:

On Dec 17, 2010, at 11:35 PM, Jeff Wilson<jwilson at io.com> wrote:

On 12/17/2010 7:35 PM, Son of Witz wrote:

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I don't see any way for Ultan to know about Yesodi-level goings on and yet feel free to share it so casually with someone he can't positively identify.

Well...

Are we convinced that Severian going to Ultan isn't part of his being steered?

No, it *is* part of his being steered, and he acknowledges it when he confirms the steering orders to Rudesind after his Ascension. But we have no reason to think that Rudesind knows anything of the Yesodi plot, do we?

Do we take Ultan at face value when he just knows, off the top of his head, that a book is leaning in such a way on such a shelf, even when he's been blind for years and his apprentice has no idea about? This is a book that seems soooooo important to Severian that he carries it through the entire BotNS. It is plausible that this is a truly random event, but NOTHING else about Severian's life, or the tasks he's assigned, seems random at all, so it is just as likely, perhaps more likely, that Ultan has had a hand in shaping him.

Does Ultan need to know any more than Rudesind about the Yesodi plot in order to obey a secret order to have a specified, named book ready to go when asked for?

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Lee Berman — 19 Dec 2010, 04:15 · follows David Stockhoff

Jeff Wilson: Even bonafide Yesodis casually use "creations" to refer to galaxies when they are speaking to be understood by Urthlings.

I used to think Yesod was the next universe in succession after Briah. And that they would eventually get an Earth and a Jesus there. In this scenario, the "creations" as galaxies would make sense. I haven't fully given up this view.

But last summer's discussion swayed my interpretation toward those of others who see Yesod as a universe above the others, at some higher plane than the manvantaras Banging and Gnabbing below. Considering the meaning of Yesod in a Kabbalich sense was part of the shift. In this view it makes more sense for the creations to refer to universes, not galaxies.

I mean if there is a super-universe which exists both in the cosmic future and past of Briah then it has a rather eternal essence. If they are building stuff it wouldn't be for their own eternal, heavenly space. Surely God doesn't build garages or other additions to heaven.

Jeff Wilson — 19 Dec 2010, 06:23 · in reply to Craig Brewer

On 12/18/2010 10:45 AM, Craig Brewer wrote:
Witz said:

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So we've got the imagery of dying (vampires) from one life and being reborn into another (vampires, again, and the christening, as well as one's parents not knowing one anymore). And there's also the sense that, after you find the book, you're always in that new world, no matter where you are.

The point: it's very much a conversion story. And it's a conversion story centered on finding a book.

I agree with this speculation, except I think the literary vampirism-> new life link is less likely than a disparagement of communion.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
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Jeff Wilson — 19 Dec 2010, 07:33 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 12/18/2010 10:15 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

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I used to think Yesod was the next universe in succession after Briah. And that they would eventually get an Earth and a Jesus there. In this scenario, the "creations" as galaxies would make sense. I haven't fully given up this view.

I believe I must retract the above statement, it is in error. I have re-checked, and I see only galaxy used to mean galaxy by the Yesodis.

But last summer's discussion swayed my interpretation toward those of others who see Yesod as a universe above the others, at some higher plane than the manvantaras Banging and Gnabbing below.

Considering the meaning of Yesod in a Kabbalich sense was part of the shift. In this view it makes more sense for the creations to refer to universes, not galaxies.

It's clear that the Yesodis watch over many galaxies at once, and back and forth through Briah-time over the lifetime of those galaxies, but these are all within the same incarnation of Briah.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
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David Stockhoff — 19 Dec 2010, 14:38 · in reply to Lee Berman

Surely the Increate's garages would be in a yet higher "universe."

I might note that, to some degree, all out terms are inadequate for what we are describing. People simply don't discuss other universes in their daily conversation! So we have to make do with specific religious coinology or else use ordinary words to suggest slightly expanded meanings.

On 12/18/2010 11:15 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

I mean if there is a super-universe which exists both in the cosmic future and past of Briah then it has a rather eternal essence. If they are building stuff it wouldn't be for their own eternal, heavenly space. Surely God doesn't build garages or other additions to heaven.

Jeff Wilson — 19 Dec 2010, 20:24 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 12/19/2010 8:38 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

Surely the Increate's garages would be in a yet higher "universe."

That would possibly be the place that supposedly the Hieros (the human-cognates who are uplifters of Tzadkiel's ancestors) have gone on to, and where the Hierogrammates wish to follow.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
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Gerry Quinn — 21 Dec 2010, 15:32 · in reply to Craig Brewer

From: "Craig Brewer" <cnbrewer at yahoo.com>

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So it seems like we have a very Christian (if slightly less Catholic) notion of a book being a guide to revelation. But we also have the very Wolfean idea that the book misleads in all kinds of ways.

It is perhaps coincidental that Peace contains a Book of Gold (at least it was written by a character named Gold, and concerns gold). It is a fake, and it leads to conflict and possibly murder...

- Gerry Quinn

James Wynn — 21 Dec 2010, 16:16 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 12/21/2010 9:32 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

It is perhaps coincidental that Peace contains a Book of Gold (at least it was written by a character named Gold, and concerns gold).

It is a fake, and it leads to conflict and possibly murder...

It also leads to the discovery of a treasure. And thus, Weer ends up the eventual owner of Smart's company.

u+16b9