

Urth of the New Sun

The SF-Lovers list — 6 messages, 6 voices, 16 Nov 1987

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/sflovers/68>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

John Cherniavsky — 16 Nov 1987, 13:29

Just finished Gene Wolfe's latest, Urth of the New Sun (Tor Hardcover). Written very much in the style of the three predecessors. Some, but not everything, explained (at least to my satisfaction). More complete review with minor spoilers later also review of Jack Vance's latest.

Kai Quale — 23 Nov 1987, 08:56 · follows John Cherniavsky

Just finished Gene Wolfe's latest, Urth of the New Sun (Tor Hardcover). Written very much in the style of the three predecessors. Some, but not everything, explained (at least to my satisfaction). More complete review with minor spoilers later also review of Jack Vance's latest.

Huh ?!? The *series* is called Book of the New Sun. The fourth book is called *Citadel of the Autarch*. I have never heard of UotNS. Is it the fifth ?

Kai

Chuq Von Rospach — 23 Nov 1987, 17:44 · follows Kai Quale

Just finished Gene Wolfe's latest, Urth of the New Sun (Tor Hardcover). Written very much in the style of the three predecessors. Some, but not everything, explained (at least to my satisfaction). More complete review with minor spoilers later also review of Jack Vance's latest.

Huh ?!? The *series* is called Book of the New Sun. The fourth book is called *Citadel of the Autarch*. I have never heard of UotNS. Is it the fifth ?

It is the fifth. It starts a new cycle in the New Sun series. Tor hardcover, also a Gollancz Hardcover in the UK.

And if you want to be technical about it, the fifth book is really "Castle of the Otter" which is a small non-fiction book that explains the background and etymology of Urth. Wonderful book, if you can find it. Fortunately there is a Science Fiction Book Club edition.

Chuq Von Rospach

obrien — 24 Nov 1987, 16:17 · follows Chuq Von Rospach

I haven't seen many mentions of this yet, so here's a mini-review.

I'm biased, I admit it. I'm one of those insufferable *****s who thinks "The Book of the New Sun" is the best thing the field's seen in the last ten years or more.

In some ways I found the new offering a disappointment. To a large extent it merely seems to

be a confirmation of the tenuous conclusions one could draw from "The Book of the New Sun" if one worked hard enough at it. It also does not weave as rich a tapestry, but this may be because it is only a third the length of the earlier work. If one considers it a short story following a novel, it does quite well.

There is room for the pleasant speculation that is so much a part of the earlier work. One possibility: Do we meet Jason in the new book?

For those who love Wolfe's use of language, that is here, in full. And it does serve to explain one or two incidents in the earlier books that were, to me, almost completely incomprehensible (such as the very mysterious run-in with Apu-Punchau in the stone city). Although it is not of the same length or complexity as the earlier book/books, it is certainly a worthy successor. For me, it passed the final test: after reading it, I haven't been able to read anything since. Everything else seems tepid and shallow in comparison.

Recommended, but only for those who have read "The Book of the New Sun".

Mike O'Brien
obrien at aerospace.aero.org

Not That One! — 27 Nov 1987, 06:15 · follows obrien

The Urth of the New Sun is here, and it's a knockout.

This is the long-awaited sequel to _The Book of the New Sun_, Gene Wolfe's monumental four-volume novel about the life under the dying sun of the cradle of mankind, Wolfe's masterpiece.

Urth begins immediately after _The Book_ ends: Severian the Torturer, Autarch of Urth, Exemplar of Man, has boarded the ship that will take him far from Urth to face judgement to determine whether he will bring a White Fountain to rejuvenate the Sun. The ship is enormous, possessing sufficient mass to generate a gravitational field about 1/8th that of Urth. Severian spends some time wandering about it, exploring this world, while various factions attempt to assassinate him. He spends a fair amount of time falling great heights without suffering serious injury and evading hostile forces trying to prevent his success.

After he arrives at the planet of judgement, in the universe of Yesod, he discovers both how important and unimportant he is in the eyes of God; eventually, he is returned to Urth, but things have changed. The latter half of the novel entails his encounters on Urth, in a variety of identities and locales, until his final arrival at his true berth.

I really don't want to go into any detail in a general review; however, I will mention that the beautiful prose, oblique story-telling, intricate time-travel, grand philosophical insights, and general brilliance of _The Book_ are all here, although fewer of them than in the original, which was, after all, much longer. A great deal of _Urth_ is concerned with making more plain the unravelling of mysteries established in the first; since I was confident in my understanding of most all of that work, they came as no surprise. However, I will state that _Urth_ was completely unlike my expectations of it, and disappointed me not in the least.

From what I understand, there will be no further volumes detailing the life of Severian; this was intended as the coda to the concerto of _The Book_, and after its final (uplifted) note, we must deduce the rest of Severian's life ourselves--and with him, the life of Man.

Yes, _Castle_ is a _New Sun_ book (actually, I believe it was published fourth, between _Sword and Citadel_ and is very worth getting from the SFBC. Besides interesting insights into _The Book_, it also has memorable bits about being a convention guest and plans to put MX missiles on wooden sailing ships in the Pacific.

Kevin J. Maroney

ames!lll-tis!ptsfa!pbhyc!djo — 27 Nov 1987, 23:31 · follows Not That One!

kjm at dg-rtp.UUCP (Not That One!) writes:

Urth begins immediately after _The Book_ ends: Severian the Torturer, Autarch of Urth, Exemplar of Man, has boarded the ship that will take him far from Urth to face judgement

Uhhh...I suppose this is **technically** correct, since at the end of tBotNS Severian says he is writing immediately before boarding the ship...but what is not mentioned in tBotNS, and is mentioned only in oblique references in tUotNS, is the decade Severian has spent as Autarch. The **action** of tUotNS, thus, begins long after the **action** of tBotNS ended.

A great deal of _Urth_ is concerned with making more plain the unravelling of mysteries established in the first

This is, for many, the biggest complaint with tUotNS; most of us liked the vague, implied feel of those "mysteries" -- the answers were always there, if you could figure them out; but now the puzzle has been taken away.