

the superb level of discourse here

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 02 Nov 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1895>

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.

Patri10629 — 02 Nov 1999, 09:32

In a message dated 11/2/99 12:43:53 AM, Mitchell Bailey writes:

<< As you probably can tell, I'm not a literature scholar. I'll have to paraphrase Sev's line on this subject: if I sometimes manage to seem a peer of the esteemed contributors to this list, or at least one whose company does not shame them (perplexes? annoys?) it is to a significant extent due to that erudition to which I've been exposed here. >>

No, I couldn't tell, and, yes, I know **exactly** what you mean. If ever there was a forum which enhanced and increased my pleasure with Wolfe's work, why humbling me, this is it. What a privilege it is to eavesdrop. Hats off to you, mates.

Love Mr Ansley's Oz reference.

A sidenote: Responding to my constant complaint that parades are not organized in response to, and full-page New York Times reviews are not devoted to each new Wolfe book, (and a national holiday not declared specifically for a masterwork like ON BLUE'S WATERS), a friend replied: "With those godawful covers they slap on his books they're scaring off anybody with half a brain who doesn't already know he's great." Comments?

Actually the cover of OBW is sort of Wolfe in a nutshell--the siren's one grotesque feature is hidden from view, the animal's leg's too. What? What's a few limbs between friends?

I must say again: We are not all lit crit/ sci fi (uh-oh I said the naughty word)/intellectual giants (I mean besides Mantis and Alga), nerds and nerdettes obsessed with minutia (I'll forgive the geographers for the moment). "Minutia." Hey! Maybe That could be my name! (sorry) Is Wolfe so wrenchingly good? So demanding? Am I naive and alone in thinking that his art is ultimately accessible?

best,

Patrick O'Leary

Alex David Groce — 02 Nov 1999, 10:21 · follows Patri10629

Patrick--

Well, part of my point in the whole modernism debate was that, because he avoids their techniques, Wolfe is at the least pretty darn accessible for a modernist. While I like that kind of thing, I understand the people who throw ULYSSES and THE SOUND AND THE FURY down and never pick them back up.

The main thing with Wolfe is, you DO have to pay attention. Which some readers aren't very keen on. FREE LIVE FREE and those darned morning glories catches a lot of people sleeping

(although if you don't figure out what's going on before "all is revealed" anyway you are not paying attention on a much bigger level).

I'm really not a fan of the OBW cover. On the other hand, the Long Sun covers were OK, if nothing spectacularly good. But they all look like *gasp* Science Fiction Book Covers, which is honest advertising but not too good for getting random non-SF people who would enjoy Wolfe to read him.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

Alex David Groce (agroce+ at cs.cmu.edu)
Ph.D. Student, Carnegie Mellon University - Computer Science Department
8112 Wean Hall (412)-268-3066
<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~agroce>

Daniel Fusch — 02 Nov 1999, 19:09 · follows Alex David Groce

Hello, Patrick!

I also am enjoying this forum.

About the covers...I couldn't agree more. When I read *The Book of the New Sun* in paperback, I kept thinking, "What horrible cover art!" Especially on Books II and III. Oh, I suppose the art isn't that bad...it's just incredibly cliché. It has "sword and sorcery/Conan/pulp fiction" written all over it, to use a cliché. No self-respecting lit professor would have books with those covers on his/her bookshelf!

The Tor/Orb editions (the two-volume edition, I mean) of *The Book of the New Sun* is a little better--the books are well put together, the covers look respectable, and they chose the two best samples of the cover art, at least. My advice--give THOSE editions to your friends.

Patrick--I don't think you are either naive or alone in thinking Wolfe's work ultimately accessible. I can only speak for the Urth cycle and for a few of his short stories, myself (still have to read 5HC and Dr.Death as soon as I get the chance--the time, that is), but I find his work very accessible. Severian's narrative voice--like, say, Ishmael's voice in *Moby Dick*--draws the reader right in.

(On the other hand, not every one finds *Moby Dick* accessible.)

I'm not certain why some people "don't get" Wolfe's work. Is it the science fiction element?

Anyway, that's all I had to say.