

GW Reads...

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 03 Feb 1998

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MBS — 03 Feb 1998, 23:29

I just read over the GW transcript. Interesting stuff.

Can anyone give me more info about the authors he mentions at the end? I'll list them here for ya; reply private by email if ya prefer. Oh and what do ppl think of Paul Park and why is he compared with GW's style? Thanks. Terry Bisson, Patrick O'Leary, Nancy Kress, John Crowley, Ester M. Fresner, Diana Wynn Jones. Maybe ppl have gone over thsi and I missed it.. hope not. Enjoy the day lots.

Jim Jordan — 03 Feb 1998, 22:53 · follows MBS

At 06:29 PM 2/3/98 EST, you wrote:

[Posted from URTN, a mailing list about Gene Wolfe's New Sun and other works]

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Oh and what do ppl think of Paul Park and why is he compared with GW's style?

I'll start with a stab at these.

Park's original trilogy was a lupine tour-de-force; very Urthesque:

Soldiers of Paradise, *Sugar Rain,* and *The Cult of Lovingkindness.* The only problem is that he really does not give enough information to figure many things out, unlike Wolfe. The world of the "trilogy" (it's not really that, but it is three linked books) seems to be populated by human beings and intelligent manlike canines. An enjoyable, if puzzling read. Perhaps Park needs his own Driussi! This is the set that Wolfe endorsed enthusiastically.

Park's later *Celestis* is a horse of a different color. At one level, it is "about" white men in South Africa, but set on a far planet. The natives, who have been "raised up" to be humans by medicine and technology, are really pretty much animals. As one such person gradually reverts to its "animal" status, it is unclear whether it is becoming more than human, or just going insane. I found the book to be very ambiguous in perspective, though a couple of reviews I read took sides with the aliens and read the book as an attack on civilization.

I doubt if Wolfe would be pleased with Park's latest fiction about Jesus Christ, the title of which escapes me. Wolfe is very orthodox.

Terry Bisson:

I only know "Bears Discover Fire," an interesting retelling of some aspects of the Eden and Prometheus stories. Really weird and fun. Right up there with that wonderful old story "Space-Time for Springers" by Leiber. Bisson also completed *St. Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman* by Walter Miller. Bisson evidently was close to Miller, who was a recluse. Miller was a Catholic, like Wolfe, who did not hesitate to use theological themes in his writing, as in his novella "Crucifixus Etiam." Perhaps Bisson is also. Don't know.

Patrick O'Leary, Nancy Kress, John Crowley, Ester M.

Fresner, Diana Wynn Jones.

I can only discuss Crowley, whose writing is very literary and whose books are very deep. *Engine Summer,* which is the place to start, is a warm and beautiful narrative with many layers and dimensions, and which, like Wolfe's books, can be re-read several times. I have not been able to track down *The Deep,* Crowley's first. *Beasts,* his second, is also a complex tale, and I need to re-read it to see why things are juxtaposed as they are. Wolfe loved Crowley's *Little, Big,* a long novel about men and fairies, which I'm only half through. Crowley's Big Opus is a quartet of novels that begins with *AEgypt,* but which is not yet finished. I'm not going to plunge in until I can read them all. Crowley shows a good familiarity with the Bible; I suspect Wolfe likes him both for the depth of his writing as well as for seemingly holding similar ideas.

Best I can do for you on the people mentioned.

Wolfe loves Jack Vance; told me that none of Vance's works should ever be allowed to go out of print. He also likes Stephen Lawhead, an evangelical Christian fantasist, and has enjoyed Tim Powers (Eastern Orthodox Catholic) and James Blaylock (an evangelical). All of these are heavenly influenced by Chesterton and Lewis, as is Wolfe also.

I understand, btw, that Wolfe will be attending the C.S.Lewis Centenary celebration-conference sponsored by the Mythopoeic Society at Wheaton College. I plan to attend as well. Anyone want information?

Nutria