

Jack Vance or There are Doors?

The Urth list — 20 messages, 13 voices, 19 Dec 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3694>

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.

cilluff1 at optonline.net — 19 Dec 2002, 17:23

Hello, all. I was looking for any opinions here, I am just about to finish RTTW, and was looking next either to read Jack Vance's Tales of the Dying Earth or Wolfe's There are Doors. I'm intrigued as to the Vance work to see how it influenced the Urth novels, but have never read any Vance before. I also have never read any Wolfe other than the Urth/LS/SS cycle, so don't know what to expect from There are Doors. Any recommendations or views on these books from the list?

-- Joe

p.s. As to Vironese signoff names I'm leaning towards Shell, which I think would make me a male Chem if I'm not mistaken. My last name, Cilluffo, is Sicilian and has no direct translation but I've been told is similar to and may be a derivation of the Greek word for shell (although I know no Greek, it is all Greek to me as they say!). I hope this isn't taken?

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 19 Dec 2002, 17:25 · follows cilluff1 at optonline.net

p.s. As to Vironese signoff names I'm leaning towards Shell,
which I think would make me a male Chem if I'm not mistaken.

No, shells are animal parts or products, and so "Shell" would be a male bio's name.

cilluff1 at optonline.net — 19 Dec 2002, 18:02 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Blattid wrote:
p.s. As to Vironese signoff names I'm leaning towards Shell,
which I think would make me a male Chem if I'm not mistaken.

No, shells are animal parts or products, and so "Shell" would be a male bio's name>>>

Joe/Shell responds, smacking himself in the forehead with the palm of his hand:

I guess you are right! Animal by-products (Silk, Blood, Horn) are bio names, how did that slip my mind? I'm glad for the clarification, especially as I don't want to be a chem... :)

James Wynn — 19 Dec 2002, 19:52 · follows cilluff1 at optonline.net

Shell declares:

I guess you are right! Animal by-products (Silk, Blood, Horn) are bio names, how did that slip my mind? I'm glad for the clarification, especially as I don't want to be a chem... :)

Crush interjects:

You'll never make the Ayuntamiento with that kind of attitude.

-- Crush

cilluff1 at optonline.net — 19 Dec 2002, 20:06 · follows James Wynn

Crush admonishes:

You'll never make the Ayuntamiento with that kind of attitude.>>

True, I need to start spraypainting "Shell for Calde" all over town! :)

Michael Andre-Driussi — 19 Dec 2002, 20:47 · follows cilluff1 at optonline.net

Joe wrote:

Hello, all. I was looking for any opinions here, I am just about to finish RTTW, and was looking next either to read Jack Vance's Tales of the Dying Earth or Wolfe's There are Doors.

If you decide to read THERE ARE DOORS then let me know: I'll reread it and you will have someone to talk to.

(It is next on my list, anyway.)

=mantis=

Jeff Veyera — 20 Dec 2002, 01:45 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

I just finished reading There Are Doors. I found it to be pretty mundane until experiencing the usual Wolfean epiphany late, which of course makes me want to reread the whole thing again to figure out what really was going on.

I haven't read Vance; it's on my list as well.

Teflon

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

From: cilluff1 at optonline.net [mailto:cilluff1 at optonline.net] Sent: Thursday, December 19, 2002 9:23 AM To: urth at urth.net Subject: (urth) Jack Vance or There are Doors?

Hello, all. I was looking for any opinions here, I am just about to finish RTTW, and was looking next either to read Jack Vance's Tales of the Dying Earth or Wolfe's There are Doors. I'm intrigued as to the Vance work to see how it influenced the Urth novels, but have never read any Vance before. I also have never read any Wolfe other than the Urth/LS/SS cycle, so don't know what to expect from There are Doors. Any recommendations or views on these books from the list?

-- Joe

p.s. As to Vironese signoff names I'm leaning towards Shell, which I think would make me a male Chem if I'm not mistaken. My last name, Cilluffo, is Sicilian and has no direct translation but I've been told is similar to and may be a derivation of the Greek word for shell (although I know no Greek, it is all Greek to me as they say!). I hope this isn't taken?

Gareth Jelley — 20 Dec 2002, 01:37 · follows Jeff Veyera

From: "Michael Andre-Driussi" <mantis at siriusfiction.com>

If you decide to read THERE ARE DOORS then let me know: I'll reread it and you will have someone to talk to.

'There Are Doors' is on my Christmas Wish-List :o) So I may (or may not!) be reading it in the New Year.

Best,

G.
<relurks>

Joe Cilluffo — 20 Dec 2002, 11:55 · follows Gareth Jelley

I just finished reading There Are Doors. I found it to be pretty mundane until experiencing the usual Wolfean epiphany late, which of course makes me want to reread the whole thing again to figure out what really was going on.

I haven't read Vance; it's on my list as well.

Well, I'm glad to see if I turn to There are Doors next I'll have some company on my voyage. The mundane comment was sort of a fear I had moving beyond the Urth universe -- Wolfe did such a spectacular job creating that universe you have to wonder how many times he can come close to such a feat when he starts from scratch on a non-Urth world. Still, I think I may make There are Doors my next challenge. Thanks, Teflon.

-- Shell

William Ansley — 20 Dec 2002, 20:14 · follows Joe Cilluffo

At 12:23 PM 12/19/2002 -0500, you wrote:

Hello, all. I was looking for any opinions here, I am just about to finish RTTW, and was looking next either to read Jack Vance's Tales of the Dying Earth or Wolfe's There are Doors. I'm intrigued as to the Vance work to see how it influenced the Urth novels, but have never read any Vance before. I also have never read any Wolfe other than the Urth/LS/SS cycle, so don't know what to expect from There are Doors. Any recommendations or views on these books from the list?

My recommendation is that you read Jack Vance first. Wolfe is wonderful, of course, but it is nice to branch out once in a while. <g> Also, if you like Vance's _Dying Earth_, you'll probably like the rest of his stuff, and there is quite a bit of it. Then you'll have something to read when you run out of Wolfe.

I am a big fan of Jack Vance, but I feel it is only fair to warn you that if you are expecting the same intellectual work out that Wolfe gives you, you will be disappointed. But Vance is one of the better writers in SF; he certainly has his own unmistakable voice. If you expect to see a lot of direct influence from _Dying Earth_ to _New/Long/Short Sun_, you may also be disappointed. I would say that the influences are of mood and (very broadly) setting, rather than specific persons, places or things.

But, if you are willing to except Vance on his own terms and not as Wolfe-lite, I'll think you'll find a lot to like.

William Ansley

Josh Geller — 20 Dec 2002, 20:35 · follows William Ansley

On Fri, 20 Dec 2002, William Ansley wrote:
At 12:23 PM 12/19/2002 -0500, someone wrote:

Hello, all. I was looking for any opinions here, I am just about to finish RTTW, and was looking next either to read Jack Vance's Tales of the Dying Earth or Wolfe's There are Doors. I'm intrigued as to the Vance work to see how it influenced the Urth novels, but have never read any Vance before. I also have never read any Wolfe other than the Urth/LS/SS cycle, I also don't know what to expect from There are Doors. Any recommendations or views on these books from the list?

My recommendation is that you read Jack Vance first. Wolfe is wonderful, of course, but it is nice to branch out once in a while. <g> Also, if you like Vance's _Dying Earth_, you'll probably like the rest of his stuff, and there is quite a bit of it.

I am awaiting delivery of my copy of the 44 volume Vance Integral Edition, which (so it is said) should start arriving in February sometime.

Then you'll have something to read when you run out of Wolfe.

I am a big fan of Jack Vance, but I feel it is only fair to warn you that if you are expecting the same intellectual work out that Wolfe gives you, you will be disappointed.

This has not been my experience at all.

But Vance is one of the better writers in SF; he certainly has his own unmistakable voice.

Vance is one of the great writers of the 20th century. Someday this will be recognized.

.

James Jordan — 20 Dec 2002, 21:51 · follows Josh Geller

At 02:35 PM 12/20/2002, you wrote:
I am awaiting delivery of my copy of the 44 volume Vance Integral Edition, which (so it is said) should start arriving in February sometime.

Me, too.

I am a big fan of Jack Vance, but I feel it is only fair to warn you that if you are expecting the same intellectual work out that Wolfe gives you, you will be disappointed.

This has not been my experience at all.

Yes. A different kind of intellectual work, but still profound and subtle -- very subtle.

But Vance is one of the better writers in SF; he certainly has his own unmistakable voice.

Vance is one of the great writers of the 20th century. Someday this will be recognized.

Amen. Preach it, brother!

Patera Nutria

.

--

Dave Rolsky — 20 Dec 2002, 23:29 · follows James Jordan

On Thu, 19 Dec 2002, cilluff1 at optonline.net wrote:

Hello, all. I was looking for any opinions here, I am just about to finish RTTW, and was looking next either to read Jack Vance's Tales of the Dying Earth or Wolfe's There are Doors. I'm intrigued as to the Vance work to see how it influenced the Urth novels, but have never read any Vance before. I also have never read any Wolfe other than the Urth/LS/SS cycle, so don't know what to expect from There are Doors. Any recommendations or views on these books from the list?

I think you might as well read the Dying Earth stories, since they're a quick, easy read. Contrary to some other views on the list, I think Vance is a good but definitely not great author. I do think he should get some credit for writing such an entertaining set of stories where the main character in most of them (Cugel) is a completely unlikeable bastard ;)

Hmm, I don't have a Vironese name but I think I do win for most Wolfe-ish email address ;)

-dave

```
/*=====
www.urth.org
we await the New Sun
=====*/
```

James Jordan — 20 Dec 2002, 23:51 · follows Dave Rolsky

At 05:29 PM 12/20/2002, Dave R. wrote:

I think you might as well read the Dying Earth stories, since they're a quick, easy read. Contrary to some other views on the list, I think Vance is a good but definitely not great author. I do think he should get some credit for writing such an entertaining set of stories where the main character in most of them (Cugel) is a completely unlikeable bastard ;)

The Cugel stories are in the tradition of "picaresque tales" (tales about rascals) and we've seen very few in recent times, though they were common in Spain in the 16th c. You're supposed to both like and disdain Cugel, and that's the strength of a picaresque tale, which exposes the attractiveness of wicked behavior and makes us feel the humanity of even wicked people, all the while entertaining us humorously and indirectly showing us that wickedness is .. well .. wicked. It's a kind of realistic + humorous moral tale that is hard to pull off, and Vance does it brilliantly. Whether one thinks Vance is "great" or not, the Cugel tales are deft and exquisite exemplars of a neglected genre of Western literature.

Nutria

Andy Robertson — 21 Dec 2002, 00:04 · follows James Jordan

Um, I disagree. The original picaresque novels did not have the grace of a fantastic ****deus ex machina**** every three paragraphs.

Love Vance, hate THE DYING EARTH (except the first novel)

,nitc od

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

From: "James Jordan" <jbjordan4 at cox.net>
To: <urth at urth.net>
Sent: Friday, December 20, 2002 11:51 PM
Subject: Re: (urth) Jack Vance or There are Doors?
At 05:29 PM 12/20/2002, Dave R. wrote:

I think you might as well read the Dying Earth stories, since they're a quick, easy read. Contrary to some other views on the list, I think Vance

is a good but definitely not great author. I do think he should get some credit for writing such an entertaining set of stories where the main character in most of them (Cugel) is a completely unlikeable bastard ;)

The Cugel stories are in the tradition of "picaresque tales" (tales about rascals) and we've seen very few in recent times, though they were common in Spain in the 16th c. You're supposed to both like and disdain Cugel, and that's the strength of a picaresque tale, which exposes the attractiveness of wicked behavior and makes us feel the humanity of even wicked people, all the while entertaining us humorously and indirectly

showing us that wickedness is .. well .. wicked. It's a kind of realistic

+

humorous moral tale that is hard to pull off, and Vance does it brilliantly.

Whether one thinks Vance is "great" or not, the Cugel tales are deft and exquisite exemplars of a neglected genre of Western literature.

Nutria

--

Alice K. Turner — 21 Dec 2002, 02:00 · follows Andy Robertson

Rat rote:

The Cugel stories are in the tradition of "picaresque tales" (tales about rascals) and we've seen very few in recent times, though they were common in Spain in the 16th c. You're supposed to both like and disdain Cugel, and that's the strength of a picaresque tale, which exposes the attractiveness of wicked behavior and makes us feel the humanity of even wicked people, all the while entertaining us humorously and indirectly

showing us that wickedness is .. well .. wicked. It's a kind of realistic

+

humorous moral tale that is hard to pull off, and Vance does it brilliantly.

Whether one thinks Vance is "great" or not, the Cugel tales are deft and exquisite exemplars of a neglected genre of Western literature.

Oh Ratty, picaresque tales are very much with us today! Without even using my waning brain power, I'm thinking -Tom Jones-(and then the movie), Felix Krull-, -On the Road- and a zillion Hollywood "road movies" including the great -Thelma and Louise-, movies that Jack Nicholson inhabits, with -Easy Rider- only the first of them. It's become a very American form, though the Irish -The Ginger Man- de rigueur in my college days, was another one. And on and on. Picaresque doesn't really mean rascally, it's more an unplotted tale that moves from adventure

to adventure without much formal structure. But rascally helps! And the Cugel stories fit perfectly, though most of Vance is a bit more plotted. Let's see, in sf (which I'm less familiar with than some of you) Pangborn's -Davy-, some of Delaney I think, the Fafyr and Mouser stories if they're thought of as a narrative (maybe that doesn't count, but it almost does). Nearly everyone here can probably improve on that list.

For people planning to dive into Vance, let me remind you that our own mantis has written a useful (and cheap) guide that you can find by going to the website marked in his sig.

-alga

Adam Stephanides — 21 Dec 2002, 03:17 · follows Alice K. Turner

I think *There Are Doors* is Wolfe's most underrated book, but it's undeniably a very strange reading experience. It's probably his most somber book in tone, if not in plot. And if you're looking for the sort of intricately detailed world found in the NS/LS/SS books, you won't find it here; you'd probably be better off with the Soldier books (though it's been a long time since I read them), or with *The Dying Earth*.

I'm not a huge Vance fan, but I'm probably in the minority in that respect on this list. Wolfe has praised *The Dying Earth* (the first book) very highly; I suspect that if you asked him, he'd tell you to read that first.

--Adam

Adam Stephanides — 21 Dec 2002, 03:17 · follows Adam Stephanides

on 12/19/02 7:45 PM, Jeff Veyera at teflon93 at cox.net wrote:

I just finished reading *There Are Doors*. I found it to be pretty mundane until experiencing the usual Wolfean epiphany late, which of course makes me want to reread the whole thing again to figure out what really was going on.

I'm curious; what was your epiphany? I had an epiphany of a sort while pondering TAD, but I don't know whether it was the same as yours.

--Adam

James Jordan — 21 Dec 2002, 14:51 · follows Adam Stephanides

At 08:00 PM 12/20/2002, the Slime wrote:

Oh Ratty, picaresque tales are very much with us today! Without even using my waning brain power, I'm thinking -Tom Jones-(and then the movie), Felix Krull-, -On the Road- and a zillion Hollywood "road movies" including the great -Thelma and Louise-, movies that Jack Nicholson inhabits, with -Easy Rider- only the first of them. It's become a very American form, though the Irish -The Ginger Man- de rigueur in my college days, was another one. And on and on. Picaresque doesn't really mean rascally, it's more an unplotted tale that moves from adventure to adventure without much formal structure. But rascally helps! And the Cugel stories fit perfectly, though most of Vance is a bit more plotted. Let's see, in sf (which I'm less familiar with than some of you) Pangborn's -Davy-, some of Delaney I think, the Fafyr and Mouser stories if they're thought of as a narrative (maybe that doesn't count, but it almost does). Nearly everyone here can probably improve on that list.

I won't argue that picaresque tales are not still around. I'm happy to be corrected. However: "The word picaresque derives from the Spanish *picaro*, which means rascal or crafty

good-for-nothing" (Michael Alpert, introduction [p.7] to *Two Spanish Picaresque Novels*, pub. by Penguin.)

Tom Jones is a decent example, from the same historical period (roughly).
But that's just a detail.

Nutria

Josh Geller — 21 Dec 2002, 15:57 · follows James Jordan

On Sat, 21 Dec 2002, James Jordan wrote:

At 08:00 PM 12/20/2002, the Slime wrote:

Oh Ratty, picaresque tales are very much with us today! Without even using my waning brain power, I'm thinking -Tom Jones-(and then the movie) [....]

I won't argue that picaresque tales are not still around. I'm happy to be corrected.

However: "The word picaresque derives from the Spanish picaro, which means rascal or crafty good-for-nothing" (Michael Alpert, introduction [p.7] to *Two Spanish Picaresque Novels*, pub. by Penguin.)

Tom Jones is a decent example, from the same historical period (roughly).

I really like 'Barry Lindon'. My favorite Kubrick picture also.

But that's just a detail.

You guys are *really* cute when you get to sniping at each other.

.