

Finally... UOTNS has arrived

The Urth list — 18 messages, 11 voices, 29 Sep 2004

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4233>

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Jonathon McKitrick — 29 Sep 2004, 06:37

Well, after deciding to order the book online since none of the stores near here had it, it took TWO WEEKS for everything to go through.

I'm glad it's finally here, and fortunately my waning enthusiasm was quickly stirred after beginning the book. A few reviews I read said this book was unnecessary after the 4 before it, but I don't see how that could be true. There are just too many questions left unanswered.

Is there anything you can warn me to look out for? Any details I should make sure I catch?

jm

My other computer is your Windows box.

Andrew Bollen — 29 Sep 2004, 06:54 · in reply to Jonathon McKitrick

Jonathon wrote:

Is there anything you can warn me to look out for? Any details I should make sure I catch?

While enjoying the way loose ends get tied up, I think it's interesting to think about whether or not the way in which this happens tells a different story than the back-story Wolfe had in mind for New Sun when he wrote it.

Anthony Ferrara — 29 Sep 2004, 11:12 · in reply to Andrew Bollen

I am about to start the long journey into reading the entire Sun series of books. I was wondering if it would be better to start in this order:

Long Sun ---> Short Sun ---> New Sun

I write this since this seems to be the chronologically correct order. Or is it better to read them by date of publication? Thank you for any advice.

Anthony

Chris — 29 Sep 2004, 11:34 · follows Anthony Ferrara

For various reasons it's hard to place the New Sun series chronologically. But in any event I think it still works slightly better to read the New Sun books first.

Not that it makes a huge amount of difference. The connections between the New Sun books and the Long/Short Sun books are not especially impressive on first reading. And, of course, the second time through the order won't matter.

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Anthony

Do you Yahoo!?

Yahoo! Mail is new and improved - Check it out!

James Wynn — 29 Sep 2004, 11:51 · in reply to Anthony Ferrara

New Sun I

Castle of the Otter (aka "Castle of Days")

"Best of Crank" containing "Empires of Foilage and Flower"

NS II-IV

"Endangered Species" containing "The Map" and "The Cat"

"Urth of the New Sun"

LS I-IV

SS I

"The Crow: Shattered Lives & Broken Dreams" containing "The Night Chough" (from the Book of the Long Sun). SS II-III

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

From: Anthony Ferrara

To: The Urth Mailing List

Sent: Wednesday, September 29, 2004 1:12 PM

Subject: (urth) Best order to read Sun books?

I am about to start the long journey into reading the entire Sun series of books. I was wondering if it would be better to start in this order: Long Sun ---> Short Sun ---> New Sun I write this since this seems to be the chronologically correct order. Or is it better to read them by date of publication? Thank you for any advice. Anthony

Do you Yahoo!?

Yahoo! Mail is new and improved - Check it out!

William Ansley — 29 Sep 2004, 12:08 · in reply to Anthony Ferrara

I strongly believe that the best way to read any series of books is by publication date. That way, you can best see the workings of the author's mind and the ways the various characters, concepts, etc. evolve over time.

To maximize your confusion, errr, enjoyment, I suggest that you read _The Fifth Head of Cerberus_ first, before the Sun series. I don't subscribe the notion that 5HoC is set in the "same universe" as the Sun books, but there are very interesting thematic parallels between the two works (5HoC and the Book of the Various Suns).

Have fun!

William Ansley

At 02:12 PM 9/29/2004, you wrote:

I am about to start the long journey into reading the entire Sun series of books. I was wondering if it would be better to start in this order:

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Anthony

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 29 Sep 2004, 12:45 · in reply to William Ansley

I strongly believe that the best way to read any series of books is by publication date. That way, you can best see the workings of the author's mind and the ways the various characters, concepts, etc. evolve over time.

"We are the chorus and we agree.
We agree, we agree, we agree."

Gross example: The Narnia books. CS Lewis decided after the fact to recommend a reading order that begins with The Magician's Nephew, which is his prerogative but dumb because TMN kind of assumes that you are already familiar with some of the other books. At least in small ways.

Anyway, I highly recommend reading the "Books" in publication order. I'm not so convinced that there's any special purpose to reading the various related short stories in any particular place - though I do think that "The Night Chough" fits nicely in between the Long and the Short of it.

www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer
Propensity for the base
Capacity for such grace

James Wynn — 29 Sep 2004, 13:56 · in reply to William Ansley

William Ansley:

To maximize your confusion, errr, enjoyment, I suggest that you read The Fifth Head of Cerberus first, before the Sun series. I don't subscribe the notion that 5HoC is set in the "same universe" as the Sun books, but there are very interesting thematic parallels between the two works (5HoC and the Book of the Various Suns).

This is absolutely true - especially for the "Book of the Short Sun". So perhaps reading "Fifth Head" just before plowing into the last series could be useful. On the other hand, reading "Fifth Head" last of all would not be worse.

However, if you go the route William Ansley suggests, then I recommend reading the Latro novels just before starting "The Book of the Long Sun" since Wolfe seems there to have been appealing creative demons that were left unsatisfied when Tor gently recommended another Urth book instead of another Latro book.

Incidentally, while I'm not sold on always reading a series by publication chronology, I think if

one does not read the New Sun first, he will miss intentional references in the Silk segment that the author intended. Since "Short Sun" is (a little too) difficult as it is (there! I said it!), I don't see any point in making it tougher.

~ Crush

StoneOx17 at aol.com — 29 Sep 2004, 14:56 · follows James Wynn

I know people who've found it very difficult to get into the New Sun books but really enjoyed the Long Sun books, and I think there's little enough cross-reference between these two series that the reading order doesn't matter. So if you have difficulty with the New Sun, try starting with the Long Sun. Also, I think it's best to save the Short Sun for last, as it's both the most difficult in certain ways, and it references both the New and Long Suns.

Stone Ox (Peter)

Andrew Bollen — 29 Sep 2004, 17:34 · in reply to James Wynn

There was some discussion of this story a while back, which I didn't follow as I've only just read it - so maybe this has been done to death, but FWIW, my interpretation ...

The doll-like figure is surely the Chateleine's soul, or some aspect of it. Her cat, existing in some border-land between the "other realm" and this, has grabbed it on its passage through and delivered it to its mistress (ie the Chateleine's body) in the same way that it had deposited the body of a sparrow at her feet many years before. We know it's her soul and not some random border-land denizen because Inire orders it to be buried with her.

Souls-as-dolls seems to be another of Wolfe's little tropes - carried over into the Long Sun series in the form of the soul-dolls which appear to Silkhorn & others in dreams.

Jonathon McKitrick — 30 Sep 2004, 08:26 · in reply to Andrew Bollen

On Wed, Sep 29, 2004 at 11:54:05PM +1000, Andrew Bollen wrote:

: Jonathon wrote:

:

: >Is there anything you can warn me to look out for? Any details I should : >make sure I catch?
: : While enjoying the way loose ends get tied up, I think it's interesting to : think about whether
or not the way in which this happens tells a different : story than the back-story Wolfe had in
mind for New Sun when he wrote it.

Really? Hmm. That could be interesting. I really can't see how BOTNS could stand on its own. There is just so much left unexplained. But what makes you think he really changed the back-story?

jm

My other computer is your Windows box.

Christopher Culver — 30 Sep 2004, 10:32 · in reply to Jonathon McKitrick

Jonathon McKitrick <jcm at FreeBSD-uk.eu.org> wrote:

Really? Hmm. That could be interesting. I really can't see how BOTNS could stand on its own. There is just so much left unexplained.

Wolfe originally intended to let the story stand on its own in those four books. The only reason he wrote UotNS is because of pressure by his editor.

This is all discussed in the archives and in interviews with Wolfe available on the web. I'm glad that the list is getting new people, but be aware this issue, and many others, have all be discussed before, and you'd get more profit out of the lengthy discussion in the archives than curt answers now.

Christopher Culver

Christopher Culver - christopher_culver at yahoo.com
<http://komputilo.org/~crculver/index.php>

??
- Yasunari Kawabata, ????????

James Wynn — 30 Sep 2004, 11:34 · in reply to Christopher Culver

Jonathon McKitrick <jcm at FreeBSD-uk.eu.org> wrote:
Really? Hmm. That could be interesting. I really can't see how BOTNS could stand on its own. There is just so much left unexplained.

Christopher Culver:
Wolfe originally intended to let the story stand on its own in those four books. The only reason he wrote UotNS is because of pressure by his editor.

Which doesn't mean that stopping the story with "Citadel of the Autarch" would have been the best plan. I didn't get idea from Wolfe that his editors wanted an extra novel only to sell more books. They seem to think more elaboration was needed. I agree.

I realize some people think all the extra "splainin'" in UotNS is an imposition on the mystery and elegance of the original novel. I'm not in that camp.

~ Crush

Jonathon McKitrick — 30 Sep 2004, 12:39 · in reply to Christopher Culver

On Thu, Sep 30, 2004 at 12:32:10PM -0500, Christopher Culver wrote:
: This is all discussed in the archives and in interviews with Wolfe
: available on the web. I'm glad that the list is getting new people,
: but be aware this issue, and many others, have all be discussed
: before, and you'd get more profit out of the lengthy discussion in the : archives than curt
answers now.

I've been trying to wade through them, but it is so difficult to tell what to search for. And just browsing by subject line is not much help either.

jm

My other computer is your Windows box.

Adam Stephanides — 02 Oct 2004, 16:25 · in reply to James Wynn

on 9/30/04 1:34 PM, James Wynn at thewynns at earthlink.net wrote:
Jonathon McKitrick <jcm at FreeBSD-uk.eu.org> wrote:

Really? Hmm. That could be interesting. I really can't see how BOTNS could stand on its own. There is just so much left unexplained.

UotNS does more to raise new enigmas than to resolve old ones, imho.

Christopher Culver:

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Which doesn't mean that stopping the story with "Citadel of the Autarch" would have been the best plan. I didn't get idea from Wolfe that his editors wanted an extra novel only to sell more books. They seem to think more elaboration was needed. I agree.

Iirc, Wolfe said somewhere that his editor had originally wanted him to add a paragraph or so to the end of Citadel spelling out that Severian went to Yesod and brought back the New Sun, and eventually agreed to let Wolfe leave the ending as it was if he wrote an extra volume to explain what happened after Citadel. (I thought I remembered this from Castle of Days, but I just went and looked, and it doesn't seem to be there.)

--Adam

William Ansley — 04 Oct 2004, 20:34 · in reply to James Wynn

At 1:51 PM -0500 9/29/04, James Wynn wrote:

New Sun I

Castle of the Otter (aka "Castle of Days")

"Best of Crank" containing "Empires of Foilage and Flower"

NS II-IV

I have to endorse reading _Castle of Days_ (CAD), although I would read the entire Book of the New Sun (BOTNS) (_Shadow of the Torturer_, _Claw of the Conciliator_, _Sword of the Lictor_ and _Citadel of the Autarch_) first, then CAD. In fact, you don't need to read all of CAD, just the part that is _Castle of the Otter_ (CATO). CAD is a volume that combines CATO and _Gene Wolfe's Book of Days_, both of which were relatively short books that had gone out of print.

You might also consider reading the short story, "A Solar Labyrinth" in _Storeys from the Old Hotel_ right after BOTNS and consider what relation, if any, it has to the longer work.

William Ansley

William Ansley — 04 Oct 2004, 21:12 · in reply to James Wynn

Even though it won't satisfy anyone who primarily reads Wolfe for the complexity and obscurity of his books, I still recommend _Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell_ by Susanna Clarke to the members of this list. I certainly think this book will appeal to those among you who enjoy John Crowley, although again, it is quite a different reading experience.

JS & Mr. N is a charmingly and quite well-written book about an alternative England, set in the early 19th century and written in the voice of an author of the period. Although the book is long (782 pages in hardcover) and occasionally seemed to be proceeding at too deliberate a pace, having finished it I cannot say that I begrudge Ms. Clarke a single page. I must add that Susanna Clarke is particularly sound on fairies.

William Ansley

Don Doggett — 05 Oct 2004, 17:22 · in reply to William Ansley

On Monday, October 4, 2004, at 09:12 PM, William Ansley wrote:
Even though it won't satisfy anyone who primarily reads Wolfe for the complexity and obscurity of his books, I still recommend Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell by Susanna Clarke to the members of this list. I certainly think this book will appeal to those among you who enjoy John Crowley, although again, it is quite a different reading experience.

JS & Mr. N is a charmingly and quite well-written book about an alternative England, set in the early 19th century and written in the voice of an author of the period. Although the book is long (782 pages in hardcover) and occasionally seemed to be proceeding at too deliberate a pace, having finished it I cannot say that I begrudge Ms. Clarke a single page. I must add that Susanna Clarke is particularly sound on fairies.

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Don replies,

It's a very enjoyable book. The many footnotes, far from being distracting, really add to the richness of the story. Still, I felt it was anticlimactic for such a large theme. A second volume would rectify this quite nicely though. Perhaps she should just write *The History and Practice of English Magic* with footnotes from other works on Pale, Godbless, and the rest. I'd certainly buy it. FWIW