

OT: Lafferty recommendations

The Urth list — 11 messages, 10 voices, 21 Jul 2007

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4887>

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Matthew Groves — 21 Jul 2007, 18:11

Wolfe seems to be a big admirer of R. A. Lafferty. ("Has Anyone Seen Junie Moon" from _Starwater Strains_ has a character named Roy T. Laffer.) Are there any readers of Lafferty here who can recommend a good place for a Wolfe fan to start?

Bryan Alexander — 21 Jul 2007, 18:31 · in reply to Matthew Groves

The short stories. I liked the Nine Hundred Grandmothers collection, if you can find it.

On 7/21/07, Matthew Groves <matthewalangroves at gmail.com> wrote:

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Gwern Branwen — 21 Jul 2007, 19:13 · in reply to Matthew Groves

On 0, Matthew Groves <matthewalangroves at gmail.com> scribbled:

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Start with "Fourth Mansions" for a good almost-mainstream immersion in Lafferty-style paranoia and story telling, and follow it up with "The Devil is Dead" and "The Annals of Klepsis" (in that order; Klepsis is even more paranoid and hallucinatory than the previous two put together, so I wouldn't start with it).

gwern
mania 701 CTP CATO Phon-e Chicago Posse NSDM

Roy C. Lackey — 22 Jul 2007, 00:20 · follows Gwern Branwen

Matthew Groves wrote:

Wolfe seems to be a big admirer of R. A. Lafferty. ("Has Anyone Seen Junie Moon" from _Starwater Strains_ has a character named Roy T. Laffer.) Are there any readers of Lafferty here who can recommend a good place for a Wolfe fan to start?

Echoing what others have said: Lafferty is probably most consistently at his best in short stories, but it was _The Devil is Dead_ that first hooked me. That's a fine book, as is its sequel, _Archipelago_. (Good luck trying to find it! <g>) There are even a couple of related short stories in the collections.

-Roy

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 22 Jul 2007, 00:34 · in reply to Matthew Groves

i'm going to go against the herd here and recommend Lafferty's book _Apocalypses_, two short novels. The first, "The Three Armageddons of Enniscorthy Sweeney," is about why the Twentieth Century never really happened. The second, whose title I'm blanking on, is about an agent appointed to investigate the sudden appearance of a major landmass.

They're both very, very funny.

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Roy C. Lackey — 22 Jul 2007, 04:03 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

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Yes, they are. The other one is _Where Have You Been, Sandaliotis?_

The Annals of Klepsis and _The Reefs of Earth_ are also funny.

-Roy

Andy Robertson — 23 Jul 2007, 12:32 · in reply to Matthew Groves

Matthew Groves writes:

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I recommend ARRIVE AT EASTERWINE, a lovely, funny, wise book about the Institute of Impure Science and their creaton, Epiktistes the Ktistec machine. Reads like it's a fix-up even if it isn't.

hartshorn

<http://www.thenightland.co.uk>

01273-488272 / 0777-214-9545

Craig Brewer — 23 Jul 2007, 14:00 · in reply to Andy Robertson

It's a bit hard to find, but the collection Lafferty in Orbit (of his stories from Damon Knight's Orbit) is quite a good source for small doses of very strong Lafferty. There are some great little gems in there: "The Skinny People of Leptophlebo Street," "One at a Time," and "When All the Lands Pour Out Again," not to mention about 15 others.

But since that's hard to find, I'd second those who said The Devil is Dead.

Fernando Q. Gouvêa — 23 Jul 2007, 14:17 · in reply to Craig Brewer

Actually, many of these are not hard to find at all. Wildside Press has print-on-demand editions of quite a few of Lafferty's books (including these two). See http://www.wildsidebooks.com/LAFFERTY-R-A_c_31-1.html

They can also be ordered from Amazon.com.

Fernando

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Adam Stephanides — 25 Jul 2007, 16:06 · follows Fernando Q. Gouvêa

Lafferty is one of my very favorite authors. I would start with Nine Hundred Grandmothers, his first story collection; it's his most new reader-friendly collection, and probably also his most consistent. Then probably Strange Doings, his next collection. Lafferty in Orbit is good too, but SD has the advantage that you can probably find it cheap by hunting in used book stores. (Ringing Changes, another collection, is also good.) I'll also second the recommendation for Apocalypses.

Keep in mind that Lafferty is a very different writer from Wolfe. If I were going to describe him in one word, it would be "exuberant," as opposed to Wolfe's deliberateness. Conversely, Lafferty's work doesn't require the close reading that Wolfe's does. Also, Lafferty was even more conservative, politically and religiously, than Wolfe (he was a creationist, for example), though this is almost invisible in much of his fiction, including the collections I suggested. Lafferty's catalogue as a whole is in a sorry state. In the 80s and early 90s, there were several small presses publishing Lafferty. Then, for some reason, they all stopped at around the same time (leaving two series up in the air), and most of what they published is probably

unobtainable now except at collector's prices, if at all. There are also a lot of good stories that were afaik never collected. Somebody needs to publish The Complete Stories of R. A. Lafferty. (I'd like to see all the novels in print, too, but that's probably asking for the moon.)

--Adam

Matthew King — 26 Jul 2007, 14:43 · in reply to Adam Stephanides

Here is the introduction to Lafferty that hooked me:

<http://greatsfandf.com/AUTHORS/RALafferty.php>

Lafferty is never "realistic." However ordinary his settings may seem when first we start one of his tales, we must remember that for a certainty they are surreal fantasies in the truest sense of those words. I think the most apt analogy for Lafferty's works is animated cartoons. Things in Lafferty tales happen at the breathless, breakneck pace--and with the madcap ad hoc paralogic--of a Bugs Bunny cartoon. We believe none of it because we are never for a second expected to believe any of it, any more than we are expected to "believe" what happens to Bugs and Elmer; we do not participate to behold "slices of life" but to behold madcap exaggerations and distortions of it. The single worst error a reader new to Lafferty can make is to think that a world Lafferty introduces in apparently ordinary science-fiction terms actually is (even by science-fiction standards) ordinary.