

John Clute on The Best of Gene Wolfe

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 07 Apr 2009

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5399>

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gwern0 at gmail.com — 07 Apr 2009, 01:15

<http://scifiwire.com/2009/04/critic-john-clute-the-bes.php>

"Is The Best of Gene Wolfe the best there is? Critic John Clute says yes."

"We do not enter a story by Gene Wolfe without knocking, because the door to the inner rooms is never open. What many potential readers have wrongly assumed over the years, however, is that a door that is not open is door that is locked, that everything Wolfe writes needs a key probably inscribed with runes?to get inside of.

This sense that Wolfe thwarts his readers may ring true when some of his less-good stories, none of them collected here, are encountered. And of some of his non-Euclidean, gnostic, aleph-like short-shorts, some of which do appear in The Best of Gene Wolfe (Tor, \$29.95), it may be fair to say not only that they do not open to any keys we may have on hand (clues from our understanding of history, literature, the human heart, previous stories by Wolfe and by a slew of other writers he admires), but that they do not open to any keys we are likely to possess, because they are more than the sense they seem to make; they work best as flavors of something ineradicable, daedal epiphanies of immurement (see below), oneirisms shaped like dreams you dare not remember.

They make me feel as though I've read or wrestled with a story way outside my grasp, that I've somehow been translated to the innards, and that once inside find myself clinging to the inside walls of a building by Escher built of Braille. But the great stories, usually of novella length, though they may be difficult, are not locked."

gwern