

Early _Sorcerer's House_ review

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 01 Mar 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5549>

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Gwern Branwen — 01 Mar 2010, 23:44

<http://www.fantasyliterature.com/wolfegene.html#house>

"The Sorcerer's House is a beautifully subtle new novel by master fantasy and SF author Gene Wolfe. The novel's protagonist is a recently released convict who, seemingly by complete coincidence, comes into possession of an abandoned house. As he moves in, he discovers that the house already has a few odd inhabitants...

A large part of the enjoyment of this novel is the process of discovery, as the protagonist slowly finds out more and more about the odd nature of the house and its inhabitants, as well as the relations between the other people living in his new town. Because I don't want to spoil this process of discovery, I won't say much more about the plot of the novel, aside from the fact that it will slowly suck you into its own twisted reality, and that it's perfectly suited to be read and re-read, because everything, from the very first page on, will have acquired a new meaning by the time you're done reading The Sorcerer's House for the first time.

Fans of Gene Wolfe know that this author likes to play games with unreliable narrators, such as the protagonist of the SOLDIER books, whose memory is wiped out at the end of every day, or Severian from The Book of the New Sun, who claims to have a perfect memory. In the case of The Sorcerer's House, the novel actually consists of a series of letters. The vast majority are written by the erudite and intriguing main character, and addressed to his twin brother, his former cell mate, or his brother's wife. It's the epistolary format of The Sorcerer's House that sets up lots of opportunities to twist the reader's perspective, because it allows the writer of the letters to tailor the content (not to mention tone) to the addressees. The very last letter of the novel is a perfect example — and I guarantee you'll have a smile on your face when you read it.

I wouldn't call The Sorcerer's House a major novel in Gene Wolfe's impressive oeuvre, at least when compared to masterpieces like The Book of the New Sun or THE WIZARD KNIGHT, but that doesn't mean that it isn't a supremely elegant fantasy novel, with a memorable narrator and a Twin Peaks-like atmosphere of "everyone in this small town has a secret". If you're already a fan of the Wolfe, definitely pick up a copy of The Sorcerer's House... and if you're not, maybe this quote from Neil Gaiman (about THE WIZARD KNIGHT) will convince you: "Gene Wolfe is the smartest, subtlest, most dangerous writer alive today, in genre or out of it. If you don't read this book, you'll have missed out on something important and wonderful and all the cool people will laugh at you." ?Stefan Comments "

gwern