

Query

The Urth list — 13 messages, 7 voices, 04 Mar 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5551>

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James Wynn — 04 Mar 2010, 22:10

Anyone else going to be at Comicpalooza?

J.

John Watkins — 04 Mar 2010, 22:12 · in reply to James Wynn

Doubtful, but is Gene ever coming out to the East Coast for one of these things?

On Thu, Mar 4, 2010 at 5:10 PM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:
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James Wynn — 04 Mar 2010, 22:22 · in reply to John Watkins

Well he was at Balticon last summer IIRC.

Incidentally, I just found Cory Doctorow's post on "Gene Wolfe's Rules for Writers"
<http://www.boingboing.net/2004/03/03/gene-wolfes-rules-fo.html>

Cory praise them for their quality and sensibility. These aren't bad, but I could tick off better one's --more practical to a refined level-- that I've heard at various Wolfe panels. His suggestions invariably make those of other writers sound obvious and fuzzy,

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On Thu, Mar 4, 2010 at 4:12 PM, John Watkins <john.watkins04 at gmail.com> wrote:
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Andrew Bryant — 05 Mar 2010, 20:31 · in reply to James Wynn

I would be interested in reading other such rules - please tick them off!

Andrew

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James Wynn — 05 Mar 2010, 21:00 · in reply to Andrew Bryant

Well, I posted some before recently but....

1. Plan to write no more than 10 minutes a day, at least at the beginning. If you do that, you will always talk about "the novel I am writing" rather than "the novel I once tried to write."
2. When I started writing, I would get up in the morning before everyone else and write for an hour, sometimes two. When my wife would bring me breakfast, I'd stop. I'd eat, get ready for the day and go to work. I'd come home and play with the kids or whatever, and then I'd go to bed early because I was going to do the whole thing again.
3. Start with the ending of your story and then slowly work backwards to how you got there. That way your plot will tend to lead to a satisfactory end. For example, a Cinderella is a poor girl who marries a prince. How do they meet? Well, maybe he has this shoe and he is going to marry the girl it fits? Well, why should it fit her? etc.
4. A good villain is someone who is *almost* a hero but falls just short of it. (examples given were Bill Reis and Typhon -- I think Wat is also a good example of what he's talking about)
5. If someone asks for advice about being a writer, I always tell them "don't do it", because if they can be deterred by that, then they shouldn't be a writer.
6. You should never read bad reviews if you can't help letting them affect you. I read them, but I don't let them have an effect on me or my emotions. But if you can't do that, you should just not read them.

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On Fri, Mar 5, 2010 at 2:31 PM, Andrew Bryant <ajustinbryant@gmail.com> wrote:
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Jerry Friedman — 05 Mar 2010, 21:09 · in reply to James Wynn

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That's interesting because it's exactly what some critics and educators on literary fiction tell you not to do.

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I really can't see Bill Reis as a good villain at all. For much of the novel he's not causing or threatening any harm. Unless I'm missing something.

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then they shouldn't be a writer.

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Very Borgesian, I believe.

Jerry Friedman

Gwern Branwen — 05 Mar 2010, 21:22 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On Fri, Mar 5, 2010 at 4:09 PM, Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> wrote:
Very Borgesian, I believe.

Jerry Friedman

Dan Simmons, in the introduction to the first story in Prayers to Broken Stones, tells a funny story about Harlan Ellison wherein he gives much the same advice.

gwern

James Wynn — 05 Mar 2010, 21:26 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

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There's one thing, unsaid, that I picked up emphatically from Wolfe's panels last September: He is extremely happy with AEG. Cassie is one of his favorite protagonists EVER and Reis is a prime example of what Wolfe thinks a villain should be. When I brought AEG to him to sign and asked him some questions about it, he lit up like a candle.

I am quite certain we are missing a great deal about Reis, Cassie, and AEG. I would not mind seeing more stories to flesh out that world.

J.

brunians at brunians.org — 05 Mar 2010, 22:12 · in reply to James Wynn

Hear, hear!

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Jerry Friedman — 05 Mar 2010, 22:42 · in reply to James Wynn

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I am quite certain we are missing a great deal about Reis,
Cassie, and
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world.

Very interesting.

I guess Reis does cause Cassie harm by making her fall in love with him, which indirectly leads
to very unpleasant consequences for her, including what may be a wasted trip to Woldercam.
However, that doesn't seem like enough, and I agree in hoping we find out or figure out more.

Jerry Friedman

David Stockhoff — 05 Mar 2010, 22:57 · follows Jerry Friedman

Which explains a lot of literary fiction ...

I've always followed this particular piece of advice. Some authors talk about letting their
characters find their way (Le Guin for example), but that doesn't work for me.

Message: 6

Date: Fri, 5 Mar 2010 13:09:40 -0800 (PST)

From: Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com>

To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>

Subject: Re: (urth) Query

Message-ID: <513638.99613.qm at web50705.mail.re2.yahoo.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=us-ascii

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That's interesting because it's exactly what some critics and educators on literary fiction tell you not to do.

Andrew Bryant — 09 Mar 2010, 18:49 · in reply to James Wynn

Thanks for reposting - I missed them the first time. Regarding #2, as someone who struggles with time management myself, I wonder where he managed to fit what must have been a lot of reading in between his sleeping, writing, working, parenting, and eating (among other things) schedule...

Andrew

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James Wynn — 09 Mar 2010, 19:53 · in reply to Andrew Bryant

Regarding #2, as someone who struggles with time management myself, I wonder where he managed to fit what must have been a lot of reading in between his sleeping, writing, working, parenting, and eating (among other things)

schedule...

That's something else I heard Wolfe say at a panel. He said that people at cons often gift him with books, but the truth is that as writer he really doesn't have time to read for pleasure. He shelves are full of books he knows he will never read. This very much reminds me of what the fraudulent book maker/novelist said in *Peace*.

I know he reads books sometimes when he's paid to, but that's not what I'm talking about. Therefore, I posit that there are probably very few intentional literary references in Wolfe stories from books written before the mid-1970s. Actually, I don't recall a lot of literary references in the *Island of Doctor Death* collection, *Fifth Head*, or *Peace*. So he might have stopped reading much of fiction well before then.

However, based on AEG, I think he must have found time to at least read Cory Doctorow recently, unless they were riffing on the same reference. And he seems to follow some of Gaiman's work as well. In *Castle of the Otter/Castle of Days* I recall him saying that reading is the most important training for a starting writer: (paraphrasing from memory) "Before you can serve, you must learn how to please the master".

Another quote from a panel:

"You can't imagine how difficult it is to write a well-received youth novel. In order to get one into the hands of its audience, you must first run a gauntlet through the parents *and* the school librarian. Yet Neil Gaiman managed to have an award-winning youth novel where the main character's parents and sister are murdered by a serial killer in the first few pages. Neil Gaiman is a wizard!"

J.