

"Donovan Sent Us" review

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 11 Oct 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5764>

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Gwern Branwen — 11 Oct 2010, 23:36

<http://www.bestsf.net/2010/10/08/gene-wolfe-donovan-sent-us-years-best-sf-15/>

--Mark Watson

I had been looking forward to reading a Gene Wolfe story in this volume, but in the end was rather let-down.

It's a Second World War alternate history — what if the USA didn't join in, and the Germans won. The political setting in America is also different, as Eisenhower isn't president anymore, but a President Kuhn, of the German-American Bund. Having read the story on the train, with no Google on hand, I had to wait to get home to find out about this anti-semitic, anti-communist, pro-Hitler piece of 1930s American History. I struggled to engage with the story — an American parachuted into occupied Britain to rescue a VIP. The American is fluent in German, but in speaking English in the guise of the German, he speaks in a terrible cod-German not very far off "ve haff vays of making you talk". He infiltrates a bunker quite easily, and co-incidentally stumbles across the VIP, whom he rescues. Pondering next steps over a fine cigar (there's your clue as to the identity of the VIP), the perceived potential threat to world peace of the VIP leads to an unexpected denouement.

I wouldn't have identified this as a Gene Wolfe story, and it comes from the same anthology as Robert Charles Wilson's ??This Peaceable Land, or, The Unbearable Vision of Harriet Beacher Stowe??, which I enthused about at length, and which is a country mile ahead of this story in terms of quality. Unless of course Wolfe is being very, very clever, and there's a clue in there that I've missed that gives fuller richness to his story.

gwern

<http://www.gwern.net/>