

choices

The Urth list — 28 messages, 13 voices, 04 Aug 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6045>

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Sergei SOLOVIEV — 04 Aug 2011, 21:02

Dear members -

I didn't vote (just missed the vote), but I am puzzled by the fact that two of the books sometimes chosen (Thomas Covenant and Elric) were truly repulsive to me. I tried to analyse why, in case of Elric I concluded that it seems to me full of (slightly veiled) plagiarism on the level of ideas and images, but in case of Thomas Covenant I could not find a rational explanation (the same with other books by the same author). Most of the rest I like very much myself.

All the best

Sergei Soloviev

James Wynn — 04 Aug 2011, 22:09 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

1) I remember distinctly that the Covenant Chronicles just ran out of steam.

2) It is a slightly veiled plagiarism of the Sword of Shanara (which was a plagiarism of The Lord of the Rings. But then so were so many other fantasy books of the late 70s.

As a teen, I was revolted by the rape at the beginning of volume 1 and chunked the book for about a year. Then I picked it up and moved on. Ultimately, I liked it pretty well. Enough to buy book 2 with anticipation which I thought was even better. But book 3 just fell off a cliff. Total waste of time for me. I had very specific theories about why the ending failed but I can't remember what they were. However, I knew people who were absolutely crazy about Donaldson in the early 80s. Not so much now I'm afraid, which I have always credited to the dreadful follow-up trilogy. It could be that the book captured some zeitgeist at the time. I hardly ever hear about it now. I wonder how the first trilogy reads for young people who pick it up for the first time now, 35 years later.

On 8/4/2011 4:02 PM, Sergei SOLOVIEV wrote:

Dear members -

I didn't vote (just missed the vote), but I am puzzled by the fact that two of the books sometimes chosen (Thomas Covenant and Elric) were truly repulsive to me. I tried to analyse why, in case of Elric I concluded that it seems to me full of (slightly veiled) plagiarism on the level of ideas and images, but in case of Thomas Covenant I could not find

a rational explanation (the same with other books by the same author).

Most

of the rest I like very much myself.

All the best

Sergei Soloviev

Gerry Quinn — 05 Aug 2011, 13:57 · in reply to James Wynn

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

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I actually started midstream, I think with the Illearth War, and only read Lord Foul's Bane later. Oddly enough, I liked the second trilogy better - I think it seemed more of a fantasy adventure. I know this is a minority viewpoint.

Like it or not, its influence on the genre cannot be denied. It's very visible in Wolfe's Wizard Kinght, for example.

Donaldson is working on a third trilogy now - at least one (The Runes of the Earth) is out a few years ago. I found it readable but a bit repetitive. But that probably goes with the territory. [One thing I have never understood is the popularity of Donaldson's other fantasy series Mordant's Need - I read about one and a half of the two books and then gave up; the only thing I know that beats it for repetition and obvious villains is Hubbard's Mission Earth!]

- Gerry Quinn

Craig Brewer — 05 Aug 2011, 13:57 · in reply to James Wynn

There's a lot about Thomas Covenant worth returning to. I think the initial repulsiveness is the point. I don't know how many people I've heard say they stopped when they get to the rape and never come back. But Covenant is supposed to be a despicable dude. I think in the end he hates himself more than we hate him. He's not a reluctant hero, he's an unwilling and self loathing hero. The adventures themselves are often Tolkienesque, but the context is anything but.

And someone once tried to tell me that Donaldson's love of weird words was Wolfean. But...no. Donaldson just loves his thesaurus and throws in completely random vocab at odd times. Wolfe has reasons, and his words are much more calculated.

On Aug 4, 2011, at 5:09 PM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:

1) I remember distinctly that the Covenant Chronicles just ran out of steam.

2) It is a slightly veiled plagiarism of the Sword of Shanara (which was a plagiarism of The Lord of the Rings. But then so were so many other fantasy books of the late 70s.

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On 8/4/2011 4:02 PM, Sergei SOLOVIEV wrote:

Dear members -

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All the best

Sergei Soloviev

António Pedro Marques — 05 Aug 2011, 15:30 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

It was written:

villains

Time for another query. Who are your favourite arch-villains? I mean, those who really rejoice in their villainy? Almost cartoonishly? (cartoon villains don't count)

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 05 Aug 2011, 15:33 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

Vladimir Harkonnen.

2011/8/5 António Pedro Marques <antonio at gmail.com>:

It was written:

villains

Time for another query. Who are your favourite arch-villains? I mean, those who really rejoice in their villainy? Almost cartoonishly? (cartoon villains don't count)

Lane Haygood — 05 Aug 2011, 15:46 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Gross.

Inspector Glokta in the First Law trilogy is a villain of sorts. Same for Bayaz, who I still like. Not Khalul though.

I know this isn't literary, but Emperor Palpatine in Star Wars always seemed rather cool. I think I'd have chosen him over Yoda.

I can't actually think of another book I've read with a defined "villain." I sort of hate the

Lannisters, so they're out.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 5, 2011, at 10:33 AM, "Dan'l Danehy-Oakes" <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:
Vladimir Harkonnen.

2011/8/5 Ant?nio Pedro Marques <antonio at gmail.com>:

It was written:

villains

Time for another query. Who are your favourite arch-villains? I mean, those who really rejoice in their villainy? Almost cartoonishly? (cartoon villains don't count)

Craig Brewer — 05 Aug 2011, 15:46 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

(cartoon villains don't count)

Aw, man! Dr. Doofenshmertz from Phineas and Ferb deserves a mention. (For those without kids, that show deserves a watch or two.)

And this may sound lame among our more "literary" minded sf/f readers on this list, but one of the things that always stuck with me from the Dragonlance books was the relationship between Raistlin and Takhisis, the big bad queen of darkness. The weird power struggle between them seemed the best written aspect of that series. So she gets my vote for being much more than I expected given what that series was supposed to be.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 05 Aug 2011, 15:52 · in reply to Lane Haygood

On Fri, Aug 5, 2011 at 8:46 AM, Lane Haygood <lhaygood at gmail.com> wrote:
I know this isn't literary, but Emperor Palpatine in Star Wars always seemed rather cool. I think I'd have chosen him over Yoda.

I thought of him but decided he'd been ruined for me in the second/first trilogy.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Lane Haygood — 05 Aug 2011, 15:59 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

If I pretend they don't exist... then they don't.

I thought of another, sort of. Yod in Sean William's "Books of the Change/Cataclysm." And, I suppose, his servants like Jibreel and the energumen. Though that's more like transcendent Lovecraftian evil and madmen who worship it.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 5, 2011, at 10:52 AM, "Dan'l Danehy-Oakes" <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:
On Fri, Aug 5, 2011 at 8:46 AM, Lane Haygood <lhaygood at gmail.com> wrote:

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I thought of him but decided he'd been ruined for me in the second/first trilogy.

--

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Gerry Quinn — 05 Aug 2011, 16:01 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

From: "Ant?nio Pedro Marques" <antonio at gmail.com>

It was written:

villains

Time for another query. Who are your favourite arch-villains? I mean, those who really rejoice in their villainy? Almost cartoonishly? (cartoon villains don't count)

Is rejoicing in one's villainy really a necessary characteristic of a good villain? It seems hard to avoid cartoonishness in such - the example that springs to mind is the Archimandrite in Iain M. Banks' The Algebraist.

My favourite villian is Casmir in Jack Vance's Lyonesse, but he doesn't really rejoice in his villainy, and would probably find arguments to justify all his actions.

- Gerry Quinn

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 05 Aug 2011, 16:07 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On Fri, Aug 5, 2011 at 9:01 AM, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

My favourite villian is Casmir in Jack Vance's Lyonesse, but he doesn't really rejoice in his villainy, and would probably find arguments to justify all his actions.

Ooooh. Vance's "Demon Princes" are classic villains.

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Lane Haygood — 05 Aug 2011, 16:11 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

What about Arioeh? Sure, he's "evil," in the sense that he wants chaos, but isn't that in keeping with his nature? I guess I never saw Arioeh as really immoral or twisted, just... alien?

Or for that matter, the Chaosians or Random in "The Chronicles of Amber." They are antagonists, I suppose, but what, in an absolute sense, makes them any worse than Merlin or Corwin?

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 5, 2011, at 11:07 AM, "Dan'I Danehy-Oakes" <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:

On Fri, Aug 5, 2011 at 9:01 AM, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Lane Haygood — 05 Aug 2011, 16:20 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Looking back at my choices, I have discovered an interesting fact about my moral philosophy. I am ready to absolve cosmic entities of moral guilt/evil because they transcend human experience. For instance, I'm not sure I considered the Hieros villainous even though they do some pretty beastly stuff to Severian and later Urth. The human-constrained notions of morality simply stop to apply once the scale gets big enough.

On the other hand, a limited human that nevertheless acts with needless or irrational cruelty, or supreme dishonesty, always get my moral censure. Typhon or the Lannister family (sorry, I just read the new ASOIAF novel and it's fresh in my mind how much I hate this one family) are petty pushers of maliciousness when compared to someone that will drown a whole world with a white hole to throw in the middle of a dying sun, but I think they're worse for that. They'll fiddle while Rome burns, and that's less excusable than being the Ostrogoth with the torch.

But I have less sympathy for a human that willingly chooses subservience to a cosmic evil, like the Consult/Mangaecca in Bakker's "Prince of Nothing" trilogy. Not that Kellhus is necessarily any better, because he just wants to control everyone and everything to settle up some serious daddy issues, but at least he's directing his psychosis in the right direction.

LH

On Fri, Aug 5, 2011 at 11:07 AM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:

On Fri, Aug 5, 2011 at 9:01 AM, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Ryan Dunn — 05 Aug 2011, 16:22 · in reply to Lane Haygood

I was going to suggest Bomb Voyage from The Incredibles. Just Kidding.

Although I think you'll find film villains more close to what Antonio was asking about, since the medium tends to cartoonize literary villains for cinematic effect.

Hannibal Lecter springs to mind, amongst others. Buffalo Bill in that same film for that matter. Jack Torrance in The Shining, although the spirits haunting the grounds probably the true villain there.

...ryan

On Aug 5, 2011, at 12:11 PM, Lane Haygood <lhaygood at gmail.com> wrote:

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On Aug 5, 2011, at 11:07 AM, "Dan'l Danehy-Oakes" <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Jerry Friedman — 05 Aug 2011, 16:26 · in reply to Lane Haygood

2011/8/5 Ant?nio Pedro Marques <antonio at gmail.com>:

It was written:

villains

Time for another query. Who are your favourite arch-villains? I mean, those who really rejoice in their villainy? Almost cartoonishly? (cartoon villains don't count)

Sauron and the Lord of the Nazgul.

Are Tanith Lee's Lords of Darkness villains?

I liked Mordred in /The Once and Future King/, and he seemed to rejoice, sort of, in his villainy. Mordred in /Camelot/ definitely does, more simply but with a charming song.

By the way, Antonio, in answer to your question about the Lensman books: Yes. :-)

On Aug 5, 2011, at 10:33 AM, "Dan'l Danehy-Oakes" <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:

Vladimir Harkonnen.

From: Lane Haygood <lhaygood at gmail.com>

G ross.

I agree he's a good choice, but I'd say he's no worse than lots of other characters, except for his tendency to rape slave-boys.

Speaking of fat owners of sex slaves, I'd like to put in a word for Sencho be-L'vador (sp?).

I can't actually think of another book I've read with a defined "villain."

You haven't read LotR?

Jerry Friedman

Allan Anderson — 05 Aug 2011, 18:10 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

I love to hate Gormentghast's Steerpike. Boo, hiss!

On Fri, Aug 5, 2011 at 9:26 AM, Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> wrote:
?2011/8/5 Ant?nio Pedro Marques <antonio at gmail.com>:

"It was written:

?villains

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By the way, Antonio, in answer to your question about the Lensman books: Yes. :-)

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Jerry Friedman

Marc Aramini — 05 Aug 2011, 21:28 · in reply to Ryan Dunn

--- On Fri, 8/5/11, Ryan Dunn <ryan at liftingfaces.com> wrote:

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what Antonio was asking about, since the medium tends to
cartoonize literary villains for cinematic effect.

Hannibal Lecter springs to mind, amongst others. Buffalo
Bill in that same film for that matter. Jack Torrance in The
Shining, although the spirits haunting the grounds probably
the true villain there.

...ryan

Yeah, the best villainous fellows are captured in film: Kronos in highlander with his distorted musketeer mentality, breeding a virus to nonsensically destroy everything, or someone like the General in Fist of Legend, who argues with his colleague about what it is to follow Bushido before breaking his back and blaming the Chinese for his death - that argument is awesome - to paraphrase, "I was supposed to win that fight so faar and square, how could you poison him? It is not the way of the warrior." "What do you know about the way of the warrior? It is to obey the emperor, to do what must be done, regardless of consequences, even to be reviled and scorned throughout eternity etc etc."

But I did like that bad guy in Vance's The Face, just a great ending. "I never want to see your ugly face looking over my wall again." heh heh heh.

{I have a vague suspicion that Severian is a rather villainous apologist, like Number Five and Weer. Latro and Silk are heroes, though.}

James Wynn — 05 Aug 2011, 22:03 · in reply to Marc Aramini

I like the conniving wife in the movie "Ran". In literature, Regan in "King Lear" and Iago in "Othello" are what we are talking about right?

António Pedro Marques — 06 Aug 2011, 03:05 · in reply to James Wynn

No dia 05/08/2011, às 23:03, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> escreveu:

I like the conniving wife in the movie "Ran". In literature, Regan in "King Lear"

Yes!

and Iago in "Othello" are what we are talking about right?

I've only seen the movie :P

António Pedro Marques — 06 Aug 2011, 03:13 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

Thank you all for the input. I think it's very hard to create good villains, the more so of the kind I asked, while still having them believable and in line with the story.

No dia 05/08/2011, às 17:26, Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> escreveu:

By the way, Antonio, in answer to your question about the Lensman books: Yes. :-)

I'm devastated.

Marc Aramini — 06 Aug 2011, 03:17 · in reply to Lane Haygood

--- On Fri, 8/5/11, Lane Haygood <lhaygood at gmail.com> wrote:

Or for that matter, the Chaosians or Random in "The Chronicles of Amber." They are antagonists, I suppose, but what, in an absolute sense, makes them any worse than Merlin or Corwin?

You mean Brand or less probably Erik, not Random, right? Random's a pretty decent guy as far as Amber goes ... :)

Lane Haygood — 06 Aug 2011, 04:44 · in reply to Marc Aramini

Yes. Got those two confused.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 5, 2011, at 10:17 PM, Marc Aramini <marcaramini at yahoo.com> wrote:

--- On Fri, 8/5/11, Lane Haygood <lhaygood at gmail.com> wrote:

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You mean Brand or less probably Erik, not Random, right? Random's a pretty decent guy as far as Amber goes ... :)

antonio at gmail.com — 06 Aug 2011, 08:01 · in reply to Lane Haygood

I was getting worried I'd missed something in the story!

I think you can't really say Brand is no worse than the others.

No dia 2011/08/06, ?s 05:44, Lane Haygood <lhaygood at gmail.com> escreveu:

Yes. Got those two confused.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 5, 2011, at 10:17 PM, Marc Aramini <marcaramini at yahoo.com> wrote:

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Jeff Wilson — 06 Aug 2011, 19:14 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

On 8/4/2011 4:02 PM, Sergei SOLOVIEV wrote:

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Could you say more about why Elric is repulsive? I mean, I know he's an antihero in the literal sense, intentionally being written to have opposite attributes to Conan, for instance, but I didn't catch any veiled plagiarism or excessive quotation, but that might be out of lack of familiarity with previous genre material.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Jeff Wilson — 06 Aug 2011, 19:35 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 8/5/2011 11:01 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: "Ant?nio Pedro Marques" <antonio at gmail.com>

It was written:

villains

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This.

Mohammed Vance in Daniel Keys Moran's THE LONG RUN and other Continuing Time Books is in fact a mostly decent, honorable person who sincerely believes in his democratically elected world government is the only hope for long-term peace and the ultimate survival of humanity, and pursues his job to put down the ungrateful rebellious Americans without mercy.

Babylon 5's Mr Bester, on the other hand, is a vicious brainwashing weasel pack leader who is too damaged to really enjoy himself but he does display a sort of consolation prize of amusement that he is so often able to use crime, politics, and war as a pretext to further his power to take away the freedoms and families of everyone who crosses him, in repayment for the way their democratically elected world government did to him, twice.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Allan Anderson — 19 Sep 2011, 06:06 · in reply to Craig Brewer

On Fri, Aug 5, 2011 at 8:46 AM, Craig Brewer <cnbrewer at yahoo.com> wrote:
(cartoon villains don't count)

Aw, man! Dr. Doofenshmertz from Phineas and Ferb deserves a mention. (For those without kids, that show deserves a watch or two.)

Just wanted to quickly thank you, Craig, for mentioning this show. It's become my four-year-old daughter's favorite, and is in fact looked forward to by the whole family.

Son of Witz — 19 Sep 2011, 16:32 · in reply to Allan Anderson

On Sunday, September 18, 2011 at 11:06 PM, Allan Anderson wrote:
On Fri, Aug 5, 2011 at 8:46 AM, Craig Brewer <cnbrewer at yahoo.com (mailto:cnbrewer at yahoo.com)> wrote:

(cartoon villains don't count)

Aw, man! Dr. Doofenshmertz from Phineas and Ferb deserves a mention. (For those without kids, that show deserves a watch or two.)

Just wanted to quickly thank you, Craig, for mentioning this show. It's become my four-year-old daughter's favorite, and is in fact looked forward to by the whole family.

Agreed. My son got turned onto Phineas & Ferb recently and we've been working through all the episodes. Such a great show!.

Dr Doofenshmertz is the bestinator!

Son of Witz