

Robert Aickman, The Model

The Urth list — 5 messages, 3 voices, 11 Oct 2012

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6298>

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jbarach at aol.com — 11 Oct 2012, 23:07

URTHlings --

Recently I read Robert Aickman's *The Model*, a book which is blurbed by (among others) Robert Bloch, Fritz Leiber, and Gene Wolfe. Wolfe says about it:

"The late Robert Aickman was up to something, and quite consciously. He did not title his little book *The Model* for nothing. What he has done (and knew he had done) is discover a new wonderland. I would bet that the number of people who have done that is less than one tenth the number who have discovered actual islands, inhabited or treasure; we must now add Aickman to that short list. He has told us what I think none of us had realized before -- that czarist Russia can be just as viable a wonderland as, say, Baghdad under the Caliph. And he has not merely told us; he has proved it by leaving us a model."

Some aspects of the book reminded me strongly of Wolfe (e.g., Aickman often implies things, rather than saying them outright, and you have to be paying attention as you read to catch what's really going on or being said), and I wondered about the possible influence of Aickman on Wolfe. Certainly Wolfe himself has written at least one story set in something like the wonderland he says Aickman discovered ("*The Death of Koschei the Deathless: A Story of Old Russia*"), and certain elements in "*Queen of the Night*" (the carriage journey, for instance) remind me a bit of what happens in *The Model* (though *The Model* is much less creepy and graphic).

Has anyone else read *The Model*? Thoughts?

John

António Pedro Marques — 12 Oct 2012, 02:51 · in reply to jbarach at aol.com

Interesting, thank you for sharing.

Aickman has been on my list of authors to explore, but I haven't yet found anything by him that is in convenient form for me (no collected works, no series, no omnibuses...).

jbarach at aol.com — 12 Oct 2012, 05:02 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

There is a two volume collection of his "strange stories," but it is rare and expensive. Nor does it include *The Model*, which seems like a good starting place.

John

-----Original Message-----

From: entonio at gmail.com

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

Sent: Thu, Oct 11, 2012 5:52 pm

Subject: Re: (urth) Robert Aickman, The Model

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Tony Ellis — 12 Oct 2012, 22:54 · follows jbarach at aol.com

I'm a huge Robert Aickman fan, and definitely recommend him as of interest to Wolfe readers.

As John Barach says, he's a writer who implies things rather than saying them outright. Often very strange and unsettling things - a lot of his stories are anthologised as 'horror'. This makes The Model atypical, as far as I can recall, as I remember it as more dreamlike than actually unpleasant. But it's years since I read it.

A crucial distinction between the two writers is that generally Wolfe's mysteries *seem* solvable, even if none of us can agree on the solution. Whereas a lot of Aickman's stories very deliberately *don't add up*. You think you can see where it's heading, you're picking up on all the clues, then something outright surreal happens and suddenly it's over.

For that reason I would suggest 'Mute' as one of Wolfe's more Aickman-like stories. Maybe it has an explanation that I just didn't pick up on, but for me its mystery was the essence of the story.

I wouldn't have thought Aickman's writing could translate at all to cinema, but Jeremy Dyson and Mark Gatiss made an enjoyable stab at it in their short film version of The Cicerones, which for a long time was very hard to get hold of but I'm delighted to say you can now watch here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZefDTNt2u4>

António Pedro Marques — 13 Oct 2012, 18:15 · in reply to jbarach at aol.com

Are those the Tartarus books? I was quite close to getting them once, but then some reviewers who complained of poor and small type put me off. That would seem to be a problem with latter Tartarus volumes, and the reason I didn't get any Oliver Onions Stuff either. I must say I have no complaints about the ones I do have (Arthur Machen, Walter de la Mare, LP Hartley), and my eyesight leaves a lot to be desired.

No dia 12/10/2012, ?s 06:02, jbarach at aol.com escreveu:

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