

This Week in Google Alerts: another BotNS review

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 19 Aug 2013

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6417>

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Gwern Branwen — 19 Aug 2013, 16:11

"<http://www.rantingdragon.com/gfn-the-shadow-of-the-torturer/> "Great Fantasy Novel Nomination: The Shadow of the Torturer by Gene Wolfe", by Paul Weimer

...The setting was the first thing that drew me as a reader to *The Shadow of the Torturer* years ago, and it still draws and enchants me today. Jack Vance may have codified the idea of a Dying Earth, refreshing it from the work of Clark Ashton Smith and William Hope Hodgson. However, it is Wolfe that has taken the idea of the Dying Earth, and put a map to the territory, eschewing the picaresque, small bore scope of much of Vance and instead launching us into an epic tale of an Earth just as close to the end of its days. Plants as dueling weapons. A crumbling ancient city under a literally dying sun. And yet, the careful and alert reader can see how this bizarre far future world connects to and is an extension of our own. There are allusions, intimations, and references to our own past, and earlier still, for readers to untangle and discover.

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With its ambiguous and odd ending, *The Shadow of the Torturer* also stands alone as a volume that engages and allows the reader to fill in the blank at the end. The reader is perfectly capable and given the tools needed to leave the series and suite after reading this book, if they so wish. What really happens at the gate of the massive wall of Nexus? Where will Severian and his companions go? What is the world outside the walls of the city really like? *The Shadow of the Torturer* only gives us hints, leaving, in the context of this book, our imagination, our own faculties to fill it in. It allows the reader to continue to imagine it for themselves. And that is what the best literature, especially genre literature does: it provides room for the playground of the imagination.

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

Daniel Otto Jack Petersen — 19 Aug 2013, 16:52 · in reply to Gwern Branwen

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Full stop.

-DOJP

On Mon, Aug 19, 2013 at 5:11 PM, Gwern Branwen <gwern at gwern.net> wrote:
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Marc Aramini — 19 Aug 2013, 17:06 · in reply to Daniel Otto Jack Petersen

Critiques of New Sun in particular are almost universally asinine. Later Wolfe lacks the universal appeal but is still great, but the balance in New Sun between theme, atmosphere, execution (of the writing), and entertainment is sublime.

Sent from my iPhone

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Daniel Otto Jack Petersen — 19 Aug 2013, 19:26 · in reply to Marc Aramini

Yes. I honestly think 'sublime' is a sober and appropriate assessment.

-DOJP

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