

What are you reading?

The Urth list — 40 messages, 15 voices, 12 Mar 2014

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6517>

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Antonin Scriabin — 12 Mar 2014, 13:26

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Anyway, I am getting back on a Wolfe kick today by finishing the latter half of *The Island of Doctor Death, and Other Stories, and Other Stories*. Looking forward to it!

Marc Aramini — 12 Mar 2014, 13:49 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 12, 2014, at 6:26 AM, Antonin Scriabin <kierkegaardian at gmail.com> wrote:
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fantasy. Surprised it got any literary attention. McElroy has always been one of those authors I feel I should like but in execution he seems rather boring. At least you have to pay attention when you read him.

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Daniel Otto Jack Petersen — 12 Mar 2014, 13:58 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

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On Wed, Mar 12, 2014 at 1:26 PM, Antonin Scriabin

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Antonin Scriabin — 12 Mar 2014, 14:03 · in reply to Marc Aramini

"Bolano's 2666 which seems to me at its heart kind of a Twin Peaks urban fantasy."

Well, now I kind of want to read it!

"McElroy has always been one of those authors I feel I should like but in execution he seems rather boring. At least you have to pay attention when you read him."

Have you read **Lookout Cartridge**? I also lucked out and found a copy of **Women and Men** for \$3 a few months ago, I would be willing to try that one if it is better. I adore Pynchon, Gaddis, and Barth (with whom McElroy is so often mentioned) so I was surprised to be so turned off right away.

"Clearly island of doctor death and other stories is Wolfe's best collection."

"The Hero as Werewolf" and "Alien Stones" are really outstanding stories. So far I am enjoying the collection at least as much as **Endangered Species**.

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Stephen Case — 12 Mar 2014, 14:07 · follows Antonin Scriabin

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Antonin Scriabin — 12 Mar 2014, 14:09 · in reply to Daniel Otto Jack Petersen

I found it hard to enjoy poetry for a long time, but a few things recently have swayed me. *Paradise Lost*, and the poems scattered throughout the Gormenghast books, of all things.

"Maybe Wolfe's

*The Sorcerer's House"

Yes! This is my absolute favorite of Wolfe's post-*Long Sun* novels. It is great.

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Antonin Scriabin — 12 Mar 2014, 14:22 · in reply to Stephen Case

I like this in your review of **The Fifth Head of Cerberus**: "I can't keep beginning reviews of Gene Wolfe's work with "one of the best books I've ever read" or "one of my favorite books of all time,"

I started off by reading **The Book of the New Sun**, **Peace**, and **The Fifth Head of Cerberus** and was shocked at what masterpieces they were, then proceeded to buy up 40-odd volumes of his work right away. I definitely understand your sentiment!

Craig Brewer — 12 Mar 2014, 14:35 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

Just finished the new Lafferty collection as well. Good to revisit old masters. :)

I can't recommend Jeff Vandermeer's *_Annihilation_* highly enough. It's part of a new "trilogy" (the others will be out by September), but each book is going to be quite different. It's the smartest, most entertaining, and most effective continuation of the "weird" tradition I've read in years. He learned everything you're supposed to learn from Bierce, Blackwood, Machen, Lovecraft, C.A. Smith, and the others, and turned it into something fresh.

Poetry: Edith Sodergran, a Finnish poet (translated, don't worry), and I think Wolfe fans would appreciate her sensibilities.

I also read Chambers' *_The King in Yellow_* based on all the *_True Detective_* buzz. Fun, but not mind blowing.

And my new discovery is Michael Cisco. I don't know how to describe what he writes, so I'll just leave it at that.

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Mark Lewin — 12 Mar 2014, 14:37 · in reply to Daniel Otto Jack Petersen

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Subscription/information: [4]<http://www.urth.net>

Daniel Otto Jack Petersen

Marc Aramini — 12 Mar 2014, 14:38 · in reply to Stephen Case

Just read your review and end notes on fifth head. I have a long long write up which has been submitted to Ultan's Library for about eight months on Fifth Head- It does a pretty decent job delineating at exactly which point the cat bite infects Marsch with the parasitic Shadow Children and allows the death of the boy to be "true"- he falls. I don't think the shadow children are the remains of humanity , but I do think the inutile hand we should look for is port mimizon itself with its fingers and all the girls with stick like legs are abos (in a story the walk of the Abos is bird or stork like) Making number five human, the society a bad imitation of degenerating utility and no new buildings, and Marsch something different altogether. I hope the write up is put up sometimes soon.

I guess I really don't enjoy reading reviews of Shadows of the New Sun though heh heh heh.

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On Mar 12, 2014, at 7:07 AM, Stephen Case <scase1@nd.edu> wrote:

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Brian — 12 Mar 2014, 15:26 · follows Marc Aramini

Currently reading the Oxford Anthology of Victorian Ghost Stories.

Couple of comments on what some others have reported:

Piers Plowman starts off promisingly enough, but so quickly devolves into "and then I saw Mister Blabbermouth and Miss Gossip, then I met Mister Miser and Master Crap-head" Ho-Hum

Finished Mishima's Sea of Fertility recently. Liked everything but the end. Totally a letdown. Certainly not cosmically earthshattering or whatever the publisher's blurb said.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 12 Mar 2014, 16:00 · in reply to Mark Lewin

What am I reading? Right now, the last "Wicked Years" book, OUT OF OZ, which is the best since the original WICKED. Before that, an okay urban fantasy.

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Ha, thanks, Mark - for once in my life I'm too modest! It's great to hear of all these other book

review bloggers lurking about on this Wolfe forum.
I'll be checking out your stuffs!

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Piotr Szczęsny — 12 Mar 2014, 18:38 · in reply to Craig Brewer

I bump Craigs recommendation!, great start for "Southern Reach" trilogy.

"Jagannath" by Karin Tidbeck is a short story collection, in summary it's new weird in nordic countries setting (mostly, not all), very fresh, disturbing, and yet sweet sometimes. Also the stories originally written in swedish Karin translated herself, that impressed me very much.

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Anyway, I am getting back on a Wolfe kick today by finishing the latter half of *The Island of Doctor Death, and Other Stories, and Other Stories*. Looking forward to it!

Tony Ellis — 12 Mar 2014, 21:10 · follows Piotr Szczęsny

Yeah, let's do this.

I'm halfway through *The 19th Wife* by David Ebershoff, which splices a modern murder mystery set in a polygamous Mormon-spinoff community with the story of Ann Eliza Young, infamous 19th wife of Brigham Young. I'm enjoying it, especially the historical sections, but it's disappointingly lightweight.

Before that it was *Bring Up the Bodies* by Hilary Mantel. I didn't find it better than *Wolf Hall*, as a lot of people said, just more of the same. But since 'more of the same' in this case means 'an electrifyingly vivid and original reinvention of the historical novel', that's fine by me.

There's a lovely passage about torture that immediately reminded me of the Guild:

The faces of your torturers loom up like giants or they become impossibly distant, small, like dots. Words are spoken: bring him here, seat him, now it is time. They were words attached to other and common meanings, but if you survive this they will only ever have one meaning and the meaning is pain. The iron hisses as it is lifted from the flame. The rope doubles like a serpent, loops itself, and waits. It is too late for you. You will not speak now, because your tongue has swelled and filled your mouth and language has eaten itself. Later you will speak,

when you are carried away from the machinery and set down on straw. I have endured it, you will say. I have come through. And pity and self-love will crack open your heart, so that at the first gesture of kindness - let us say, a blanket or a sip of wine - your heart will overflow, your tongue unstop. Out flow the words. You were not brought to this room to think, but to feel. And in the end you have felt too much for yourself.

Antonin Scriabin — 13 Mar 2014, 02:10 · in reply to Tony Ellis

I forgot to mention I also just finished *A Maggot* by John Fowles. This was a fantastic book, and an easy recommendation for Wolfe fans. It is a genre-bending puzzle of a book, very expertly constructed, with a proper balance of mystery and information. I also quite liked *The Magus* by the same author, but *A Maggot* struck me as the more clever work.

Antonin Scriabin — 15 Mar 2014, 04:19 · in reply to Piotr Szczęsny

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Yes, he wrote a brilliant afterword to it. But I always suspected he was handed that one to read and write an afterword for - I'm sure he sincerely liked it, but he'd already been a long time fan of Lafferty by then (1987), so I'd be interested to know what else he liked.

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From: Antonin Scriabin <kierkegaardian at gmail.com>

Daniel Otto Jack Petersen — 02 Apr 2014, 18:57 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

My favorite Lafferty too. Unfortunately, it was the first I read and the others I've read simply haven't worked as well for me.

That's cool to hear about liking *Apocalypses*, Dan'l, but unfortunate that nothing else has worked for you. Have you tried *Fourth Mansions*, *Arrive At Easterwine*, or any of Lafferty's later novels? (*Not To Mention Camels*, *Aurelia*, *Annals of Klepsis*, *Serpent's Egg*, *East of Laughter*.) And none of the short stories do anything for you?

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From: Antonin Scriabin <kierkegardian at gmail.com>

Antonin Scriabin — 02 Apr 2014, 19:06 · in reply to Daniel Otto Jack Petersen

Yeah that is a very strange publication decision. I wonder if it was Lafferty's intent. The two novellas do go together very well, but I wouldn't be surprised if they were written separately and turned into one volume down the road.

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From: Antonin Scriabin <kierkegardian at gmail.com>

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 02 Apr 2014, 20:02 · in reply to Daniel Otto Jack Petersen

I didn't say they didn't work for me at all, just not as well. Some of the short stories in 900 Grandmothers are delightful indeed. I haven't read any of the later novels, though Klepsis is on my seemingly-transfinite to-read pile.

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From: Antonin Scriabin <kierkegardian at gmail.com>

Andrew Mason — 02 Apr 2014, 21:03 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

I've been reading 'The Emperor of all Things' by Paul Witcover, which is interesting. The Grandmaster of the Clockmakers' Company is called Thaddeus Wolfe, and is known as 'the Old Wolf' - which might be a coincidence, did he not have an enforcer called Master Malrubius. (There is also a group of people known as the Morecockneyans, one of whom is called Cornelius. There may well be other science/fiction fantasy references which I have missed.)

António Pedro Marques — 02 Apr 2014, 23:36 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Pardon my ignorance on Lafferty (to me, that name always evokes 'Winding your way down on Baker Street...'). What omnibus are you talking about and what are the 900 Grandmothers?

Antonin Scriabin — 02 Apr 2014, 23:40 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

The omnibus is Apocalypses, which is made up of two novellas, "Where Have You Been, Sandaliotis?" and "The Three Armageddons of Enniscorthy Sweeny." Nine Hundred Grandmothers is a collection of Lafferty's short stories, arguably the best such collection.

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Ant?nio Pedro Marques — 03 Apr 2014, 01:24 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin
Spasibo.

No dia 03/04/2014, ?s 00:40, Antonin Scriabin <kierkegardian at gmail.com> escreveu:

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Antonin Scriabin — 03 Apr 2014, 02:11 · in reply to Ant?nio Pedro Marques
????? ??????????

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Piotr Szcz?snny — 05 Apr 2014, 10:13 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

I just finished "Empire Star" by Samuel R. Delany. It was kinda Wolfian style story, unreliable narrator, needs re-reading and has a woman character that feels like taken out from Wolfe book also her name is San Severina, but that's just a coincidence (or not?) :). Maybe this is a long shot, so anyone had similar feeling? This is a short book, but definitely fun, I was looking for some classic SF light reading and got a light mind bender ;).

2014-03-12 14:26 GMT+01:00 Antonin Scriabin <kierkegardian at gmail.com>:

Hello, Urthlings. What are you reading these days? I haven't been reading much Wolfe lately, so nothing is fresh enough in my mind to participate in some of the other ongoing discussions.

I am working my way through the Harvard Classics. I just finished the fourth volume, the complete poems in English by John Milton. *Paradise Lost* was a treat, as was Franklin's autobiography in the first volume and the *New Atlantis* by Bacon in the third, which is an old favorite of mine from my philosophy major days.

I've also recently read *The Sea, the Sea* by Iris Murdoch, which was excellent, and *The City of Dreaming Books* by Moers, which was great, silly fun*. I also read the first 50 pages of *Lookout Cartridge* by McElroy and decided to put it back on the shelf for the time being. It wasn't particularly *bad*, it was just entirely unsuccessful in grabbing my attention within a reasonable amount of time, together with being written in a very disjointed, unique style. I will probably get back to it in the near future.

Anyway, I am getting back on a Wolfe kick today by finishing the latter half of *The Island of Doctor Death, and Other Stories, and Other Stories*. Looking forward to it!

Fred Kiesche — 05 Apr 2014, 13:07 · in reply to Piotr Szczęsny

Empire Star is old enough that SRD may have influenced Wolfe as much as Wolfe influenced SRD. It was pretty early on in both their careers, when they were both showing up as Nebula winners, appearing in Orbit (Damon Knight) and the like.

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David Duffy — 07 Apr 2014, 00:45 · in reply to Fred Kiesche

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Yeah, I posted on this back in 2005 and mentioned in 2008 -

<http://lists.urth.net/htdig.cgi/urth-urth.net/2005-April/005034.html>

<http://lists.urth.net/pipermail/urth-urth.net/2008-July/009588.html>

Part of the mash-up of ideas I think being played with

Cheers, David Duffy.