

# Good afternoon Urth

The Urth list — 26 messages, 12 voices, 12 Nov 2017

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6764>

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Ab de Vos — 12 Nov 2017, 10:26

Hi,

The list is silent these days.

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Paul Zinn-Justin — 12 Nov 2017, 10:55 · in reply to Ab de Vos

Lately, each time I receive a message from this mailing list, especially after a long period of silence, I can't help feeling "this is going to be sad news". Am I the only one? Slowly catching up on Wolfe short stories. Enjoying Marc's write ups.

On Sun, Nov 12, 2017 at 9:26 PM, Ab de Vos <foxyab at casema.nl> wrote:  
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Ab de Vos — 12 Nov 2017, 11:35 · in reply to Paul Zinn-Justin

Everybody is holding his breath for Marc to finish.

Op 12-11-2017 om 11:55 schreef Paul Zinn-Justin:

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<mailto:foxyab at casema.nl>> wrote:

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Eric Bourland — 12 Nov 2017, 14:07 · in reply to Ab de Vos

Speaking just for me. The list is quiet, and I'm usually a dedicated reader of it, so I've noticed it's been quiet. As a mail server admin I manage a bunch of mailing lists, and have noticed that most of them are like creatures, active then quiet then active again and so on.

Among the stack of books I usually keep going, there's always a Wolfe. Right now I am re-reading A Borrowed Man. I remember gulping it down in an afternoon when it came out a

couple of years ago. I've looked for news of the next one, which I think is titled Interlibrary Loan, but I don't see anything.

I am liking A Borrowed Man more, the second time through, maybe because this time I'm more aware of Smithe's efforts, sometimes unconscious, to assert his own humanity. One thing I noticed this time through is that he does pushups on his shelf. A little thing that sets him up for various feats of strength later in the story. Good for him!

The first time through the book I needed to overcome a visceral response to the way in which reclones are treated.

Have we discussed reclones in Borrowed Man? I remember a couple of passing conversations that I scanned but did not really consider. I need to go back through the Urth archives.

I'm sending Mr. Wolfe good vibes. Hope he's feeling better. I'm guessing he wants some privacy. When I'm not feeling well I want everyone to leave me alone. ;-)

Eric

Eric Bourland  
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Ab de Vos — 12 Nov 2017, 15:12 · in reply to Eric Bourland

We had a discussion about the meaning of reclones. It is maybe an edited reprint of a clone with a limited capability like a program that limits his freedom in order to make him/her conform to the (presumed?) original. As a choice of character in a novel rather arresting.

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Marc Aramini — 12 Nov 2017, 17:44 · in reply to Ab de Vos

Thanks ... I looked at Land Across again yesterday. The problem is multifoliate - I am not entirely burnt out but I am waiting for the light of stability to hit and solidify all the small details. The problem involves when certain scenes in late wolfe should be taken metaphorically: border guards say the factories make fertilizer, official instructs grafton on how to get rid of the willows

(which make him think of god and heaven) and the bees (which make him think of hell) by putting plenty of fertilizer down, planting fruit trees (symbols of a strong man who instills fear even after his death in this story) ... how much of a metaphorical prophecy is that? He avoids the sting of the bees by thinking of martya's hips sexually... seems metaphorical. Later he speculates on the actual use of the factories making "fertilizer"

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Eric Bourland — 14 Nov 2017, 03:12 · in reply to Marc Aramini

<http://locusmag.com/2017/11/wolfe-update/>

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Marc, I'm looking forward to reading thoroughly your three-volume exegesis. I have returned repeatedly to the only volume I have seen so far, which is the first.

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Charles Gillingham — 14 Nov 2017, 05:25 · in reply to Eric Bourland

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David Stockhoff — 14 Nov 2017, 17:09 · in reply to Eric Bourland

Thanks for the update.

On 11/13/2017 10:12 PM, Eric Bourland wrote:

<http://locusmag.com/2017/11/wolfe-update/>

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Paul Rydeen — 15 Nov 2017, 13:42 · in reply to Charles Gillingham

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Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

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Charles Gillingham — 15 Nov 2017, 20:44 · in reply to Paul Rydeen

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Eric Bourland — 16 Nov 2017, 03:02 · in reply to Charles Gillingham

Which one of you borrowed my copy of Endangered Species? ;-)

Except seriously I can't find it. It was a beat-to-hell copy of the mass-market softcover Tor edition from 1990 with the orange cover and the puffer-fish-lookin' critter on the cover. I have two shelves for Wolfe and usually it's right there. . . . ah, well. I will ask for it for Christmas.

I was doing research on sundials, and was reminded of A Solar Labyrinth, which I re-read today. I can never decide if it's creepy or . . . well, it's creepy.

None of this is here or there. I have a lot more chatty appreciation of Wolfe than learned exegesis, so mostly I pipe down and read the list, enjoying it when there are active conversations. There's a Facebook group where all of this chatty nonsense finds a more appropriate home.

Some questions, for those who wish to answer:

1) What are you reading?

2) What are you writing, if anything?

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 16 Nov 2017, 03:55 · in reply to Eric Bourland

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

The spatula is the natural enemy of the hypothalamus.

On Wed, Nov 15, 2017 at 7:02 PM, Eric Bourland <eb at hwaet.com> wrote:

Some questions, for those who wish to answer:

1) What are you reading?

Just started Patrick Rothfuss's \_The Name of the Wind\_. (I've been putting this one off for a \_long\_ time.)

2) What are you writing, if anything?

At any given times, several things, most of which come to naught.

---

Charles Gillingham — 16 Nov 2017, 04:22 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

What is the Facebook group?

I've been reading Clark Ashton Smith. Which is excellent. It's obvious to me how much he influenced Wolfe. I've been so impressed I've read a few of the stories to my girlfriend.

He seemed to have lived a quiet, sad life. For whatever reason. It's such a shame when such a talented artist doesn't express their craft to it's fullest extent. With how complex his writing was it's understandable how he couldn't produce it forever.

I haven't been able to write anything for a long time. Living in the woods with only a phone to type on doesn't help. I have feathers enough for quills, and bark for paper. To Green with excuses!

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Marc Aramini — 16 Nov 2017, 04:57 · in reply to Charles Gillingham

Everyone knows what I am writing, amidst other academic work.

I'm teaching again and this semester I had the chance to teach world lit for science majors ... the course description says from antiquity to the present so I figured I would push a narrative of violence and competition as the motivator for progress. Started with Hesiod and Gilgamesh, went through the Iliad and the Aeneid, through the renaissance and Enlightenment. Just got to the 20th century this week and taught Brighter Than a Thousand Suns about the Manhattan Project - had Oppenheimer's granddaughter come in and talk to them today. The next few weeks we are going through some of the modernists before I totally screw them by making them explain Fifth Head of Cerberus to me on the second to last day ... I have lectured the whole semester save for a few poetry exercises for them ... let's see how it goes.

Otherwise not reading much for pleasure only for work.

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Eric Bourland — 16 Nov 2017, 05:34 · in reply to Marc Aramini

Marc, your class sounds like a lot of fun. I hope your students are appreciative.

I do not know that I could defensibly explain Fifth Head and I have read it too many times to comfortably count.

On 11/15/2017 11:57 PM, Marc Aramini wrote:

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Eric Bourland — 16 Nov 2017, 05:58 · in reply to Charles Gillingham

Charles,

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2230578996/>

I read Clark Ashton a long time ago. I'll look into him again.

Eric

On 11/15/2017 11:22 PM, Charles Gillingham wrote:  
What is the Facebook group?

I've been reading Clark Ashton Smith. Which is excellent. It's obvious to me how much he influenced Wolfe. I've been so impressed I've read a few of the stories to my girlfriend.

He seemed to have lived a quiet, sad life. For whatever reason. It's such a shame when such a talented artist doesn't express their craft to it's fullest extent. With how complex his writing was it's understandable how he couldn't produce it forever.

I haven't been able to write anything for a long time. Living in the woods with only a phone to type on doesn't help. I have feathers enough for quills, and bark for paper. To Green with excuses!

On Nov 15, 2017 7:55 PM, "Dan'I Danehy-Oakes" <danldo at gmail.com <mailto:danldo at gmail.com>> wrote:

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

The spatula is the natural enemy of the hypothalamus.

On Wed, Nov 15, 2017 at 7:02 PM, Eric Bourland <eb at hwaet.com <mailto:eb at hwaet.com>> wrote:

Some questions, for those who wish to answer:

1) What are you reading?

Just started Patrick Rothfuss's *The Name of the Wind*. (I've been putting this one off for a *long* time.)

2) What are you writing, if anything?

At any given times, several things, most of which come to naught.

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Ab de Vos — 16 Nov 2017, 09:23 · in reply to Eric Bourland

At the time I'm reading *Porius?* by John Cowper Powys and stories by Borges and Pierre Michon. *Porius* is a bit hard to get through. I find I'm more appreciative of short stories and essays as I get older. I'm reading Azimov's magazine and *Interzone* and some other magazines on and off. I'm memorizing psalms for a number of years. Usually I read too many books at the same time.

I only write when I have to do a paper for an Open University course. Never felt much artistic stirring or academic ambition. Always thought the best is already written like the Bible or Homer.

Op 16-11-2017 om 06:58 schreef Eric Bourland:

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David Stockhoff — 16 Nov 2017, 14:03 · in reply to Charles Gillingham

I'm reading Durrell's Alexandria Quartet. Not SF, but definitely experimental and a little reminiscent of Robert Aickman in its detachment combined with nearly-alienating attention to detail.

Writing, ha! More dribbles of naught.

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Gerry Leb — 16 Nov 2017, 14:10 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Re-reading *Pirate Freedom*.

<[https://www.avast.com/sig-email?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=link&utm\\_campaign=sig-email&utm\\_content=webmail&utm\\_term=icon](https://www.avast.com/sig-email?utm_medium=email&utm_source=link&utm_campaign=sig-email&utm_content=webmail&utm_term=icon)>

Virus-free.

[www.avast.com](http://www.avast.com)

<[https://www.avast.com/sig-email?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=link&utm\\_campaign=sig-email&utm\\_content=webmail&utm\\_term=link](https://www.avast.com/sig-email?utm_medium=email&utm_source=link&utm_campaign=sig-email&utm_content=webmail&utm_term=link)>

<#DAB4FAD8-2DD7-40BB-A1B8-4E2AA1F9FDF2>

On Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 9:03 AM, David Stockhoff <[dstockhoff@verizon.net](mailto:dstockhoff@verizon.net)> wrote:

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Allan Anderson — 16 Nov 2017, 15:08 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 4:04 AM David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

I'm reading Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*. Not SF, but definitely experimental and a little reminiscent of Robert Aickman in its detachment combined with nearly-alienating attention to detail.

I really enjoyed the *Alexandria Quartet*. He gives each of the four books such a different voice and appetite. Which one are you on? I hadn't made an Aickman connection, but I can see that. I've just finished up his *\*Dark Entries\** wth my old college chums Facebook reading group.

In SF, I've been trying out David Brin's *\*Kiln People\**, which, egregious title pun aside, seems to have a bit in common with *\*A Borrowed Man\**. \*Brin's book's schtick is that just about everyone has access to the technology to make shortlived artificial copies of themselves, to various degrees of fidelity and autonomy. Murder mystery, copies of people, memory games--very different setting and, I expect, conclusions, but still, fun.

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Paul Rydeen — 16 Nov 2017, 16:10 · in reply to Gerry Leb

Reading *\*The Devil's Alphabet\** by Daryl Gregory. ?

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

On Thursday, November 16, 2017, 9:09 AM, Gerry Leb <leb.gerald at gmail.com> wrote:

Re-reading *Pirate Freedom*.

|| Virus-free. [www.avast.com](http://www.avast.com) |

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Gwern Branwen — 16 Nov 2017, 16:22 · in reply to Marc Aramini

On Wed, Nov 15, 2017 at 11:57 PM, Marc Aramini <marcaramini at gmail.com> wrote:  
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Just got to the 20th century this week and taught Brighter Than a Thousand Suns  
about the Manhattan Project - had Oppenheimer's granddaughter come in and  
talk to them today.

How fun.

Not that you need the suggestion, but one of my favorite books is all about this theme of warfare and competitive pressures of various kinds pushing (and corrupting) science/technology and is about the post-Manhattan Project nuclear laboratories: Carter Scholz's 2002 novel \_Radiance\_. (I hesitate to label it 'science fiction', even though Scholz is usually considered one and his last novel was unambiguously SF, because it's so based on real

events and SDI.)

I have an annotated transcription & scans at <https://www.gwern.net/docs/radiance/2002-scholz-radiance> along with supporting materials, some of which are quite interesting in their own right, for example, Greg Benford's memoirs "Old Legends" ( <https://www.gwern.net/docs/radiance/1995-benford-oldlegends.pdf> ) or Berger's "The Astounding Investigation: The Manhattan Project's Confrontation with Science Fiction" ( <https://www.gwern.net/docs/radiance/1984-berger.djvu> ) or MacKenzie & Spinardi 1995's "Tacit Knowledge, Weapons Design, and the Uninvention of Nuclear Weapons" ( <https://www.gwern.net/docs/radiance/1995-mackenzie.pdf> ). Physicists or people interested in future weapons development might also find it interesting to revisit Fourth Generation Nuclear Weapons ( <http://web.elastic.org/~fche/mirrors/www.cryptome.org/2014/06/wmd-4th-gen-quest.pdf> ), and consider the array of possible nuclear weapons - turns out there are a lot of possible nuclear weapons going beyond classic fission and fusion designs (apropos of which, 'quark fusion': <https://arxiv.org/abs/1708.02547> <https://phys.org/news/2017-11-theoretical-quark-fusion-powerful-hydrogen.html> ).

gwern

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António Pedro Marques — 16 Nov 2017, 21:02 · in reply to Eric Bourland

During the last year I've mostly been reading Andrea Camilleri - some years ago I'd read two books I've found at a fair in english, then last year on a trip to Italy I found a couple in the original and thought I'd give them a go - they're mostly written in sicilianised Italian and romance linguistics is one of my hobbies - and I couldn't stop before I'd read about twenty. Camilleri is quite successful and respected in Italy, he's in his nineties and keeps writing, and is the kind of communist I like (my political views are mostly coincident with Gene Wolfe's). Being successful and opinionated, he's also disliked by some, of course.

I've also read a bit of Aickman. I've had him in my list for a decade or so, but haven't yet gotten around to picking him up successfully. These days I'm averse to reading short stories, I don't know why.

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David Stockhoff — 19 Nov 2017, 04:30 · in reply to Allan Anderson

Allan, I have only just started the first book. Justine, I believe.

I'm glad to see people reading Aickman.

On November 16, 2017 10:08:08 AM EST, Allan Anderson <[rubel@goosemoon.org](mailto:rubel@goosemoon.org)> wrote:  
On Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 4:04 AM David Stockhoff  
<[dstockhoff@verizon.net](mailto:dstockhoff@verizon.net)>  
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games--very  
different setting and, I expect, conclusions, but still, fun.

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Marc Aramini — 19 Nov 2017, 14:32 · in reply to Gwern Branwen

Thanks for all of this, Gwern. I look forward to looking to looking it over soon!

On Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 9:21 AM, Gwern Branwen <gwern at gwern.net> wrote:

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gwern

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