

Effinger

The Urth list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 18 Apr 2020

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6834>

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 18 Apr 2020, 22:55

I just read and reviewed George Alec Effinger's book What Entropy Means to Me, and I think it may be of interest to y'all.

Here's my review, which will explain why.

This book by the late Mr. Effinger could have been written by the late Gene Wolfe as a jeu d'esprit. It has many of the earmarks of Wolfe's best novels...

On a distant planet, a Mother and a Father have settled down to raise a passel of kids - I mean an utterly unreasonable number - and, along the way, instituted a religion with themselves as deities. Father goes off and disappears. After a while, and not long before her own death, Mother sends Dore - the eldest son and only one who was born on Earth - to look for either Father, or the source of the River which plays a major part in their religion, or, ideally, both.

It's been a long time and there has been no word of Dore. A younger son, Seyt, is tasked by the elders with writing a history of Dore's journey.

This is the story of Syet writing Dore's story. Dore sets off and meets a wide variety of characters, including a Mysterious Companion, a Mad Doctor and his Monster, a Treacherous Baron, and more. Dore develops as the story progresses.

And so does Seyt. The First household is a crazed hotbed of political and religious factions, in which the wrong words can get Seyt sent to the Pen, along with losing his name and being assigned a number. Seyt tries, as he writes, to please (or at least not to too-badly displease) all the factions at once. His life as he writes is intermingled with Dore's story, each rising and falling in a sort of pulsing double-helix of narrative.

If you know your Wolfe, you'll find a lot of this familiar. Only ... this book was published in 1972, the same year as Wolfe's first serious book (The Fifth Head of Cerberus). Thus, that Wolfe had influenced Effinger's book is fairly unlikely, though it is quite possible that Effinger's book influenced Wolfe's later work. Sadly, it's too late to ask him whether he'd ever read it.

What this book has that Wolfe's major work lacks, however, is bellylaughs. Wolfe used humor, and used it well, but it was a sly sort of humor that usually involved suddenly getting the joke several pages (or chapters, or even weeks) later when you realize what something back there actually meant. Many of Wolfe's jokes only appear on rereading; Effinger's jump out and buttonhole you.

Recommended, and for two bucks on Kindle you really can't go wrong. Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Maka ki ecela tehani yanke lo!

*--*T?a???ke Witk?

David Stockhoff — 18 Apr 2020, 23:07 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Thanks!

On 4/18/2020 6:55 PM, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote:
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Eric Bourland — 19 Apr 2020, 02:09 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Interesting! Thank you.

Eric

Eric Bourland

<https://www.hwaet.com/>

From: Urth <urth-bounces at lists.urth.net> On Behalf Of Dan'l Danehy-Oakes Sent: Saturday, April 18, 2020 6:56 PM To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net> Subject: (urth) Effinger

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Charles Gillingham — 19 Apr 2020, 06:22 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

I have it on my shelf. Well the shelves I have here, and it's even in a front row. I'll check it out. I did very much enjoy *When Gravity Fails*.

On Sat, Apr 18, 2020 at 3:55 PM Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danlido at gmail.com> wrote:

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