

Gene Wolfe Books

The Usenet list — 20 messages, 14 voices, 21 Nov 2005

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/usenet/65>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Evelyn C. Leeper — 21 Nov 2005, 13:46

Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:

Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)

Devil in a Forest

Fifth Head of Cerberus

Nightside the Long Sun

Soldier of the Mist

Urth of the New Sun

Which would people say are his major works and which could be gotten rid of? (Yes, I know some will say "keep everything", but that way lies madness.)

Evelyn C. Leeper

A passionate commitment to social justice is no substitute for knowing what the hell you're talking about. --Thomas Sowell

Nancy Lebovitz — 21 Nov 2005, 14:27 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

In article <2dkgf.27307\$rc7.1415 at fe12.lga>,

Evelyn C. Leeper <eleeper at optonline.net> wrote:

Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:

Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)

Devil in a Forest

Fifth Head of Cerberus

Nightside the Long Sun

Soldier of the Mist

Urth of the New Sun

Which would people say are his major works and which could be gotten rid of? (Yes, I know some will say "keep everything", but that way lies madness.)

Do I gather you haven't read some or all of them so that you aren't sure what you'd want to reread or refer to?

Nancy Lebovitz <http://www.nancybuttons.com>

<http://livejournal.com/users/nancylebov>

My two favorite colors are "Ooooooh" and "SHINY!".

Evelyn C. Leeper — 21 Nov 2005, 14:38 · in reply to Nancy Lebovitz

Nancy Lebovitz wrote:

In article <2dkgf.27307\$rc7.1415 at fe12.lga>,

Evelyn C. Leeper <eleeper at optonline.net> wrote:

Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:

Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)
Devil in a Forest
Fifth Head of Cerberus
Nightside the Long Sun
Soldier of the Mist
Urth of the New Sun

Which would people say are his major works and which could be gotten rid of? (Yes, I know some will say "keep everything", but that way lies madness.)

Do I gather you haven't read some or all of them so that you aren't sure what you'd want to reread or refer to?

Correct. I think the only Wolfe I have read are short stories (those collections I will keep).

My initial impulse is to keep BotS and get rid of the rest. (We have reached a point when we are really trying to at least hold the line on the book volume in the house. This concept is, of course, a whole nother thread. As are infixes.)

Evelyn C. Leeper

A passionate commitment to social justice is no substitute for knowing what the hell you're talking about. --Thomas Sowell

Nancy Lebovitz — 21 Nov 2005, 14:53 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

In article <rZkgf.1264\$Jq4.1034 at fe09.lga>,

Evelyn C. Leeper <eleeper at optonline.net> wrote:
Nancy Lebovitz wrote:

In article <2dkgf.27307\$rc7.1415 at fe12.lga>,
Evelyn C. Leeper <eleeper at optonline.net> wrote:

Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:

Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)
Devil in a Forest
Fifth Head of Cerberus
Nightside the Long Sun
Soldier of the Mist
Urth of the New Sun

Which would people say are his major works and which could be gotten rid of? (Yes, I know some will say "keep everything", but that way lies madness.)

Do I gather you haven't read some or all of them so that you aren't sure what you'd want to reread or refer to?

Correct. I think the only Wolfe I have read are short stories (those collections I will keep).

My initial impulse is to keep BotS and get rid of the rest. (We have reached a point when we are really trying to at least hold the line on the book volume in the house. This concept is, of course, a whole nother thread. As are infixes.)

For what it's worth, BotNS is the only one on the list I'm enthusiastic about, but I'm not a huge Wolfe fan and I haven't read all of them. You might want to keep Urth of the New Sun since it's a sequel.

I recommend going with your impulse--used copies of reasonably common sf books are cheap and easy to get these days, and I suspect they're going to get cheaper for a while --you're not the only person who feels a need to declutter.

Nancy Lebovitz <http://www.nancybuttons.com>
<http://livejournal.com/users/nancylebov>

My two favorite colors are "Ooooooh" and "SHINY!".

Steve Simmons — 21 Nov 2005, 15:03 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

Evelyn <eleper at optonline.net> wrote on 11/21/05 at 14:38:

Nancy Lebovitz wrote:

Do I gather you haven't read some or all of them so that you aren't sure what you'd want to reread or refer to?

Correct. I think the only Wolfe I have read are short stories (those collections I will keep).

My initial impulse is to keep BotS and get rid of the rest. (We have reached a point when we are really trying to at least hold the line on the book volume in the house. This concept is, of course, a whole nother thread. As are infixes.)

If you've not started reading any of these, I'd question keeping any of them except 'Fifth Head.' Wolfe is likely to remain in print for many years to come, so should you suddenly become addicted to Wolfe there will be plenty of opportunity to fix.

But keep 'Fifth Head.' Every time you get to wondering if you should read his longer works, consider it a push towards 'Fifth Head.' If you finally read it (all of it) and like it, then go get some of his other novels.

Realize that life is a situation comedy that will never be canceled. A laugh track has been provided, and the reason why we are put in the material world is to get more material.

From "Swami Beyondananda's Guidelines for Enlightenment"

Pete Fenelon — 21 Nov 2005, 16:24 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

Evelyn C. Leeper <eleper at optonline.net> wrote:

Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:

Major:

Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)
Fifth Head of Cerberus
Urth of the New Sun

Minor:

Soldier of the Mist
Devil in a Forest
Nightside the Long Sun

pete

Thomas Lindgren — 21 Nov 2005, 18:01 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

"Evelyn C. Leeper" <eleper at optonline.net> writes:

Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:
Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)
Devil in a Forest
Fifth Head of Cerberus
Nightside the Long Sun
Soldier of the Mist
Urth of the New Sun

Which would people say are his major works and which could be gotten rid of? (Yes, I know some will say "keep everything", but that way lies madness.)

A bit of triage, then? Keep Book of the New Sun, Fifth Head, Soldier. I might keep the Long Sun there as well, but you only seem to have the first volume and it doesn't sound like you want to buy more. (Soldier isn't a solo volume either, of course, but why be consistent?)

If space is at a premium, just keep a slim first edition Fifth Head and snort or give a silent, unnerving hooded stare when people mention his later work.

Best,
Thomas

Thomas Lindgren
"It's becoming popular? It must be in decline." -- Isaiah Berlin

Jesper Svedberg — 21 Nov 2005, 18:25 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

Evelyn C. Leeper wrote:
Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:
Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)
Devil in a Forest
Fifth Head of Cerberus
Nightside the Long Sun
Soldier of the Mist
Urth of the New Sun

Which would people say are his major works and which could be gotten rid of? (Yes, I know some will say "keep everything", but that way lies madness.)

Haven't read them all, but BotNS and Fifth Head definite keepers; being among the greatest works of sf of all time and all that. Soldier might be a bit more minor, but the writing is beautiful and it's a must read for anyone who has an interest in ancient Greece.

// Jesper

David Dyer-Bennet — 21 Nov 2005, 20:22 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

"Evelyn C. Leeper" <eleeper at optonline.net> writes:

Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:
Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)
Devil in a Forest
Fifth Head of Cerberus
Nightside the Long Sun

Soldier of the Mist
Urth of the New Sun

Which would people say are his major works and which could be gotten rid of? (Yes, I know some will say "keep everything", but that way lies madness.)

Well, BotNS is clear a major work. But I wouldn't keep it. I'd keep 4th Head and nothing else, myself, assuming I were actually going to dispose of books.

David Dyer-Bennet, <mailto:dd-b at dd-b.net>, <<http://www.dd-b.net/dd-b/>>
RKBA: <<http://noguns-nomoney.com/>> <<http://www.dd-b.net/carry/>>
Pics: <<http://dd-b.lighthunters.net/>> <<http://www.dd-b.net/dd-b/SnapshotAlbum/>>
Dragaera/Steven Brust: <<http://dragaera.info/>>

Evelyn C. Leeper — 21 Nov 2005, 21:05 · in reply to David Dyer-Bennet

David Dyer-Bennet wrote:

"Evelyn C. Leeper" <eleeper at optonline.net> writes:

Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:

Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)

Devil in a Forest

Fifth Head of Cerberus

Nightside the Long Sun

Soldier of the Mist

Urth of the New Sun

Which would people say are his major works and which could be gotten rid of? (Yes, I know some will say "keep everything", but that way lies madness.)

Well, BotNS is clear a major work. But I wouldn't keep it. I'd keep 4th Head and nothing else, myself, assuming I were actually going to dispose of books.

Is 4th Head 20% slimmer than 5th Head? :-) :-)

Evelyn C. Leeper

A passionate commitment to social justice is no substitute for knowing what the hell you're talking about. --Thomas Sowell

David Dyer-Bennet — 21 Nov 2005, 22:10 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

"Evelyn C. Leeper" <eleeper at optonline.net> writes:

David Dyer-Bennet wrote:

"Evelyn C. Leeper" <eleeper at optonline.net> writes:

Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:

Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)

Devil in a Forest

Fifth Head of Cerberus

Nightside the Long Sun

Soldier of the Mist

Urth of the New Sun

Which would people say are his major works and which could be gotten rid of? (Yes, I know some will say "keep everything", but that way

lies madness.)

Well, BotNS is clear a major work. But I wouldn't keep it. I'd keep 4th Head and nothing else, myself, assuming I were actually going to dispose of books.

Is 4th Head 20% slimmer than 5th Head? :-) :-)

Or shorter; one or the other.

David Dyer-Bennet, <mailto:dd-b at dd-b.net>, <<http://www.dd-b.net/dd-b/>>
RKBA: <<http://noguns-nomoney.com/>> <<http://www.dd-b.net/carry/>>
Pics: <<http://dd-b.lighthunters.net/>> <<http://www.dd-b.net/dd-b/SnapshotAlbum/>>
Dragaera/Steven Brust: <<http://dragaera.info/>>

John VanSickle — 21 Nov 2005, 22:13 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

Evelyn C. Leeper wrote:

Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:

Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)

Devil in a Forest

Fifth Head of Cerberus

Nightside the Long Sun

Soldier of the Mist

Urth of the New Sun

Which would people say are his major works and which could be gotten rid of? (Yes, I know some will say "keep everything", but that way lies madness.)

No, that way lies good taste.

Regards,
John

Rich Horton — 22 Nov 2005, 01:13 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

On Mon, 21 Nov 2005 08:46:46 -0500, "Evelyn C. Leeper"

<eleeper at optonline.net> wrote:

Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:

Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)

Devil in a Forest

Fifth Head of Cerberus

Nightside the Long Sun

Soldier of the Mist

Urth of the New Sun

Which would people say are his major works and which could be gotten rid of? (Yes, I know some will say "keep everything", but that way lies madness.)

Of course you should keep everything. Seriously, Wolfe is perhaps our best -- why not?

That said, of the books above, perhaps _Nightside the Long Sun_ would go first because it really doesn't stand alone -- you need the other three books in the Long Sun series.

After that, _The Devil in a Forest_ is a very good juvenile but not absolutely brilliant.

And The Urth of the New Sun is an intriguing but not really necessary coda to The Book of the New Sun.

Of course we would have to punish you if you got rid of The Book of the New Sun, very clearly an essential SF series, or The Fifth Head of Cerberus, a great novel, from which in many ways almost all of Wolfe descends.

Will — 22 Nov 2005, 01:37 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

Humm, where to begin... I'll probably sound like a broken record after the rest of the replies, but Book of the New Sun is most definitely a keeper, as is Fifth Head of Cerberus. If you are keeping New Sun, you should keep Urth of the New Sun, for while it is not essential, it does clarify a few things (and raise additional questions).

Ditch Nightside, since you don't have the rest of the Long Sun novels. I've not read Devil in a Forest, so I'm not prepared to comment on that one, but it can probably go.

Now - I'm probably a minority, but I found the Soldier books to be amongst Wolfe's finest, probably because I have a weakness for Greek mythology. If you don't intend to acquire the sequel, then you can dispose of it, but it really would be a shame.

As an aside, if you're disposing of many books, most of them are probably far below Wolfe's caliber, in which case you can safely retain the Wolfe books and still considerably pare down your collection.

Mike Beede — 22 Nov 2005, 04:46 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

In article <rZkgf.1264\$Jq4.1034 at fe09.lga>,

"Evelyn C. Leeper" <eleeper at optonline.net> wrote:

My initial impulse is to keep BotS and get rid of the rest. (We have reached a point when we are really trying to at least hold the line on the book volume in the house. This concept is, of course, a whole nother thread. As are infixes.)

Soldier of the Mist is one of the best fantasies I've ever read. None of his other long fiction has done anything for me. I suggest you keep it, and further, that you read it immediately.

Mike Beede

JavaJosh — 22 Nov 2005, 07:28 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

Evelyn C. Leeper wrote:

Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:

Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)

Devil in a Forest

Fifth Head of Cerberus

Nightside the Long Sun

Soldier of the Mist

Urth of the New Sun

Which would people say are his major works and which could be gotten rid

of? (Yes, I know some will say "keep everything", but that way lies madness.)

Gene who? You should sell all of those nasty books and buy something *good* by Weiss & Hickman.

Seriously though, I'd keep them all because of the books I've read in that list they've all been quite thought-provoking. Soldier of the Mist was my least favorite.

Nancy Lebovitz — 22 Nov 2005, 11:33 · in reply to Mike Beede

In article <rZkgf.1264\$Jq4.1034 at fe09.lga>,
"Evelyn C. Leeper" <eleeper at optonline.net> wrote:

My initial impulse is to keep BotS and get rid of the rest. (We have reached a point when we are really trying to at least hold the line on the book volume in the house. This concept is, of course, a whole nother thread. As are infixes.)

Soldier of the Mist is one of the best fantasies I've ever read. None of his other long fiction has done anything for me. I suggest you keep it, and further, that you read it immediately.

Alternatively, read it and see if you like it. If you do, sell it and get the trade paperback duology--it's got a spectacular cover.

I suppose I should ask--do people who've read both think _Soldier of Arrete_ is as good as _Soldier of the Mists_?

Nancy Lebovitz <http://www.nancybuttons.com>
<http://livejournal.com/users/nancylebov>

My two favorite colors are "Ooooooh" and "SHINY!".

Mike Beede — 22 Nov 2005, 17:14 · in reply to Nancy Lebovitz

I suppose I should ask--do people who've read both think _Soldier of Arrete_ is as good as _Soldier of the Mists_?

I didn't think so. In fact, I never got more than a little bit through it.

Mike Beede

Ron Henry — 22 Nov 2005, 20:56 · in reply to Evelyn C. Leeper

"Evelyn C. Leeper" <eleeper at optonline.net> wrote in message news:rZkgf.1264\$Jq4.1034 at fe09.lga...

Nancy Lebovitz wrote:

In article <2dkgf.27307\$rc7.1415 at fe12.lga>,
Evelyn C. Leeper <eleeper at optonline.net> wrote:

Assume one has the following books by Gene Wolfe and is trying to trim down one's collection:

Book of the New Sun (4 vols.)

Devil in a Forest

Fifth Head of Cerberus

Nightside the Long Sun

Soldier of the Mist

Urth of the New Sun

Which would people say are his major works and which could be gotten rid of? (Yes, I know some will say "keep everything", but that way lies madness.)

Do I gather you haven't read some or all of them so that you aren't sure what you'd want to reread or refer to?

Correct. I think the only Wolfe I have read are short stories (those collections I will keep).

My initial impulse is to keep BotS and get rid of the rest. (We have reached a point when we are really trying to at least hold the line on the book volume in the house. This concept is, of course, a whole nother thread. As are infixes.)

Given only this list, I'd keep BotNS and Fifth Head of Cerberus; I'm assuming you won't be buying any additional books to fill out series (since Nightside the Long Sun is part of a 4-book series and Soldier of the Mist has a companion volume).

Urth of the New Sun is a more difficult-to-read (or perhaps differently-difficult to read?) sequel to the New Sun series, and some people don't like it; in any case it's not essential to the main story. The Devil in a Forest is (imho) a minor Wolfe novel.

Ron Henry

westprog — 23 Nov 2005, 11:31 · in reply to Nancy Lebovitz

In article <rZkgf.1264\$Jq4.1034 at fe09.lga>, "Evelyn C. Leeper" <eleeper at optonline.net> wrote:

My initial impulse is to keep BotS and get rid of the rest. (We have reached a point when we are really trying to at least hold the line on the book volume in the house. This concept is, of course, a whole nother thread. As are infixes.)

Soldier of the Mist is one of the best fantasies I've ever read. None of his other long fiction has done anything for me. I suggest you keep it, and further, that you read it immediately.

Alternatively, read it and see if you like it. If you do, sell it and get the trade paperback duology--it's got a spectacular cover.

I suppose I should ask--do people who've read both think _Soldier of Arrete_ is as good as _Soldier of the Mists_?

I'd have to think about it. However, Wolfe tends to not want to do the same thing in part 2, or 3 or 4. The denouement he is building towards seems to go missing. That can seem a bit disconcerting.

My advice would be to get rid of the TV, shower, bed, dividing walls etc, and get spare copies of all the Gene Wolfes. If I had to trim down to twenty books, I suspect he'd make up about a third of them.

J/