

BEATING AN EIGHT-LEGGED HORSE

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 02 Sep 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1003>

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Urash, Tom — 02 Sep 2000, 14:16

Having just received IGJ I just can't help myself. The cover sucks! As does OBW's, imltho. Shadow was the first Wolfe book I ever bought: an impulse buy spurred by the Maitz cover, and, Jesus MacGod!, am I ever grateful. Now, like most you, I can't get enough. That first purchase was twenty some odd years ago, and I'd never even heard of Gene Wolfe at the time. The young man I was then, or so I surmise, wouldn't take a second glance at either of the first two volumes of Short Sun based on the covers. I live in Texas and the artist who paints the Short Sun covers reminds me of the myriad white Blues guitarists in this state who, not uncommonly, are technically quite proficient but lack that special something -- soul? -- that so many Black Blues artists seem to evoke so effortlessly. Or, like Twain is reputed to have told his wife upon her trying to shame his habitual swearing by doing a little swearing of her own, "... you have the words, honey, but you don't have the music."

It says more about me than Wolfe, but I just hate the idea that he could have been on board with the decision to use those covers. I'd rather imagine some sort of evildoings that left him no choice but capitulate in the matter.

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

John Clute — 04 Sep 2000, 10:59 · follows Urash, Tom

In-Reply-To: <200009021918.MAA02421 at lists1.best.com>

A couple comments:

- 1) I thought the _New Sun_ covers were abominable. But this made no difference.
- 2) I thought the _design_ of the _Short Sun_ covers was philistine, and destroyed any virtues the covers might possess.
- 3) I think Jim Burns usually does very well with books he illustrates, and that these covers--if the art can be abstracted from the design of the whole--are meritorious but failed attempts at doing illuminations of a text of quite extraordinary visual difficulty. None of us on this list seems really to know what any of the main characters in the book look light at any one moment. Fixing this sort of thing into a visual representation is something Jim was not able to do. He was probably the wrong kind of artist for the job, though he is unusual in the fact he actually reads the ms he's illustrating, with great care. But find the right artist. The world of _Short Sun_ is immensely less fixable than the world of its predecessors, all of which have execrable art. Is there any _good_ Gene Wolfe visual?

Best,
John C

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Alastair Reynolds — 04 Sep 2000, 11:13 · follows John Clute

John Clute wrote:

In-Reply-To: <200009021918.MAA02421 at lists1.best.com>

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Best,
John C

Do you refer to the Bruce Pennington covers of the New Sun books, John, as used on the UK editions (paperback at least)? It's strange because for me these absolutely define how I see the world of the New Sun. Neither the Don Maitz (US hardcover editions, I think) or the later UK covers seemed to hit the right note. Funny things, covers...

Al

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John Clute — 04 Sep 2000, 21:15 · follows Alastair Reynolds

In-Reply-To: <200009041114.EAA10036 at lists1.best.com>

Al,

I was referring to the US hardbacks, which is how I encountered the Book initially. I should retract the fullness of my utterance (I was writing late at night, not my best time), as I'm not very familiar with reprint editions, and I know some of the UK art differs from the US (some I think is the same). Pennington might well have done something memorable for me--I'll give the editions a look, thanks.

Best,
John

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