

Cordwainer Smith

The Whorl list — 5 messages, 4 voices, 11 Sep 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/437>

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Michael Straight — 11 Sep 1997, 12:28

Sorry about the non-Wolfe topic, but I've never heard of Cordwainer Smith outside of this mailing list, and was wondering if any of his fans could recommend some titles.

-Rostrum

m.driussi — 11 Sep 1997, 19:14 · follows Michael Straight

Reply: Item #2797678 from WHORL at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET01#

Rostrum,

alga is queen reader of Cordwainer Smith, so she will give you the best pointers, but I cannot help myself from suggesting that "Alpha Ralpa Boulevard" is his most perfect story and a great introduction to his universe. I believe it is widely collected, in various anthologies such as the old ARBOR HOUSE TREASURY OF SCIENCE FICTION, and it might even been in the one of the volumes of the old SCIENCE FICTION HALL OF FAME. Use an internet search engine to find a bibliography or maybe alga knows where else you can find this story (novella?).

(This discussion is what in the future will go into the "Wolfe-like but not Wolfe" category.)

=mantis=

Greg Montalbano — 11 Sep 1997, 13:06 · follows m.driussi

There's an old SF BOOK CLUB selection that still shows up in used book stores: THE BEST OF CORDWAINER SMITH. Not only does it contain this story, but a number of other interesting works, framed by some interesting speculation on his whole "Instrumentality/Rediscovery of Man" future history.

~G~

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

Jim Jordan — 11 Sep 1997, 15:35 · follows Greg Montalbano

The New England SF Association publishes two volumes containing all of Cordwainer Smith. Both nicely bound hardcovers, with annotations. I sell them, so if you don't want to track them down, you can order them from me:

Complete Short Stories: \$25.00

Norstrilia ("novel"): \$21.00

shipping: \$4.00

James B. Jordan
Box 1096
Niceville, FL 32588

As for what to read first, it depends on where your interest lies. I personally suggest getting both books and reading the stories in chronological order, according to the time-line provided. If Christianity is your main interest, you can start with his trilogy of long stories: "On the Gem Planet" (which is a "mirror for princes," and concerns "nature"); "On the Wind Planet" (which concerns redemption, "grace"); and "On the Sand Planet" (which concerns pilgrimage from Egypt to Eden, and is based on Dante and Bunyan).

An introductory essay on Smith by yours truly is at:

http://www.wavefront.com/~Contra_M/cm/features/cm02_cordwain.html

Nutria

m.driussi — 11 Sep 1997, 22:42 · follows Jim Jordan

Reply: Item #4917410 from WHORL at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET01#

. . . and Nutria is king of Cordwainer Smith readers!

(Which makes for an odd couple royale. <g>)

(Those NESFA volumes are really nice, they always do good work, and because of blood sacrifice to Ashtaronuggoth or some other Big Name Devil, NESFA books are even available at Borders Books!! <gnashing of teeth in ENVY> OTOH, that is a daunting prospect, to buy the complete volumes and start from the kinda rough and very early beginning-- don'tcha think? On the Wolfe side, I wouldn't start somebody off with his first ever story "The Case of the Vanishing Ghost" [1951] nor even the first novel OPERATION ARES [1970]; I'd say FIFTH HEAD ["if the first novella don't grab ya, f'gettit"] or SHADOW OF THE TORTURER ["if the first chapter don't grab ya, f'gettit"].)

(Gee, ranking the Cordwainer Smith stories. I don't know. For example, "The Burning of the

Brain" seems very popular but doesn't do much for me. "Scanners Live in Vain," another biggie, is touching but a little rough, if I remember my impressions aright--but still I like it better than "The Burning of the Brain." And so on.)

=mantis=