Science Fiction Book Club
Interview with Marc Aramini (September 2020)

Marc Aramini wrote "Between Light and Shadow: An Exploration of the Fiction of Gene Wolfe, 1951 to 1986." The second volume, "Beyond Time and Memory: An Exploration of the Fiction of Gene Wolfe from 1986-1990" is coming out in 2020, and two future volumes are planned.

He is a college literature and composition professor at Walters State in Tennessee (And formerly at the University of Nevada Las Vegas UNLV) with a strong interest in Wolfe and New Wave SF. He received his Doctorate in Literature from UNLV. His dissertation was titled: "Does it Mean? Gene Wolfe: Perverse Puzzle Maker." He has an undergraduate in Biochemistry from the University of Notre Dame.

Marina Akushskaya: I've never ever read any books by Wolfe. Where should I start?

In general, I think your first choice should depend upon your own reading interests, as Wolfe frequently changed his style and worked in multiple genres, sometimes blurring those lines. If you are looking for short fiction, I think the single best collection is *The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories and Other Stories*, which, in addition to the titular story and its various island variants, has "Seven American Nights," "The Eyeflash Miracles," and "Tracking Song," some of the strongest SF novellas ever written. If you are primarily a reader of mainstream literature, then the novel *Peace* is a great place to start, with its interrogation of memory and the subtle horrors of self-realization. If pure science fiction holds your interest, then *The Fifth Head of Cerberus* is a wonderful place to start, exploring identity and colonialism in fascinating and sometimes ambiguous ways. If you prefer urban fantasy, then his late work *The Sorcerer's House* is a great starting point, and it is enjoyable even on a surface reading. Finally, if you have the time and commitment to start at his most famous work, the one which has by and large cemented his legacy, then the science fantasy epic *The Book of the New Sun* is a challenging but awesome place to begin your journey with Wolfe. That was my first exposure to Wolfe, in the mid 1980s, and though some might say it is no easy path, I have found it to be sublime and extremely rewarding.

Anastasia Hilvers: Vance often had absolute scoundrels as protagonists or major characters. Wolfe seemed to really enjoy these anti-heroes and their amoral antics. Did he have favorites? Did he draw on any real-life people? Any other delightful, little-known details regarding these rogues?

First, the influence of Jack Vance on Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun* can't be stressed enough. While they have some very distinctive stylistic features, the erudite banter of Vance's rogues certainly informs some of the vocabulary choices (not to mention the setting) of Wolfe's most famous work. Yes, Wolfe occasionally modeled his characters on real-life people, but I think he also had a tendency to write symbolic and archetypal characters, so that once they reached his pen they were transmuted into a somewhat more essential form. Wolfe had a tendency to allude rather than to recreate, but Dr. Talos and some of his wittier lines seem to me directly inspired by Vance, and while Jonas's Wellerisms are clearly inspired by Dickens, I think the tone of some of them is also an echo of Vance. There is a kind of humor and irony in some of Wolfe's work that dwells on an inability to accurately perceive the self, and even in his Latro books we can see this in the character of the historical poet Pindaros, whom Wolfe casts as a genuinely supportive and trustworthy, if occasionally arrogant and overconfident, character. He has directly referred to Damon Knight and some rather obscure actors like Pete Palmer (more on that

later) in his work, and I am fairly certain that the recreational park designer in “The Adopted Father” is a stand-in for Wolfe himself, as is the old mustachioed man in “Petting Zoo,” who stares up in wonder at the young boy riding the dinosaur. Given his affection for Cassie in *An Evil Guest*, I think there is more than a little of his wife Rosemary in her, at least from Wolfe’s point of view.

It could be that the rather abrasive Sir Marc in the final chapter of *The Wizard Knight*, who flings insults and stones at the enemy and starts the final battle, is a subtle reference to a rather unpleasant interpretational feud on the Urth Mailing List involving me (and dragging Wolfe into the middle of it) circa 2003, when he was working on those novels. However, it isn’t as if that character is actually me – Marc means warlike, or dedicated to Mars, and in that book, Marc starts the battle that ends the war. I swear I’m really not that bellicose … most of the time.

Craig Brewer: Was it necessary for Long/Short Sun to be in the same universe as New Sun given that the themes addressed seem (to me, at least) to be very different? Plus, Silk/Horn's stories seem so much more character-driven than Severian's, which is more "allegorical" in a lot of ways. Would Long/Short have worked independently of Severian's world?

For those of you unfamiliar with Wolfe’s work, I suggest you skip the next few answers, as I go beyond spoilers here. Yes, I think that Wolfe very much had to show, in my reading, the rise of the heiros and the full circle of the complex redemption promised in New Sun. *The Urth of the New Sun* has a theme that I can only describe as theodicy: see, then, how God (or the Increate) makes use of even the worst evil to bring about good, and how the enemies of the New Sun eventually fight for its arrival – even death is not the end, as rebirth and transformation occur, but for true immortality to be achieved, the body as it is must die. How often Severian was saved by his enemies, and how little power the death of his body had over him.

But what of the Satan figure of New Sun, Typhon? The ultimate allegory of evil from New Sun is almost fully redeemed into a caring demiurge in Long and Short Sun, and … given that I think Silk is his heir, his long-term plans are turned to ultimate good. Typhon brings Silk, who then stops Typhon from returning to influence humanity further at the end of the cycle. The entire cycle is playing with those themes, that even if we cannot recognize if our actions have good or evil outcomes, the intention matters; however, even if that intention is bad, a greater good may still come of it. A demon who imitates God risks bringing the plans of God to fruition. The stories might have worked independently, but I think they are the ultimate fulfillment of the themes of New Sun, because they still highlight that humanity has a choice even as they depict the unrecognizable future of humanity: Blue, for all its promise of a new beginning, is very much worse than one would expect when it is seen clearly, and the inhumi, supposed monsters, look more and more human in their choices, for Green is very much worse than one would expect if it is in any way related to Ushas. (And the city of the inhumi is ultimately Nessus in my reading, as the unrecognizable goddess of purity the neighbor’s worship is the Virgin Mary .. and the tower Horn dies in another iconic tower in the series … yes, there are some games with time there). The redemption of Typhon and the freeing of humanity from his yolk when Silk leaves are in my opinion key strains that start in New Sun: mankind may struggle with individual choice, but even if humanity chooses evil, something good can come of it.

I think both stories are character driven, but that the style of New Sun allows for more people to spin allegorical readings from it. I think Wolfe engages in allegory in more subtle ways in Short Sun, such as Silk’s story of leaving Viron with his mother and being called back into the town later, only to stop at a

neighbor's house, where his mother fell asleep. One odd detail is that his mother's male friend called them back and kept a razor in the house ready for his return. The boy in Silk's story (who seems to be him) eventually goes out wandering alone and gets lost, where he meets a very old man whose sins bring great tears and sorrow. Silk's story is an allegory for what happens to humanity and the whorl, sent out to the reaches of space to be called back by Typhon, who kept something like the razor ready to make a sacrifice and ensure his return in a body bearing his face. The neighbor's house is the Neighbor's planet Blue, and the old sin-wracked man the ancient inhumi. Another story of a green frog killed by a red leech is similarly allegorical and plot related in *Book of the Short Sun*, but that is surely harder to see than mapping Typhon to Satan. Wolfe is always writing allegorically, but the way that allegory is embedded changes from story to story.

Craig Brewer: Will Wolfe's legacy grow or fade, do you think? And will New Sun always be his magnum opus, or could other works come to seem more central?

I would love for his legacy to grow. I think that for a while it seemed to be, but there is still a dearth of critical attention, and the continued focus on representational and mimetic issues in critical work and from readers might indicate that his brand of symbolic fabulism remains slightly out of tune with modern audiences. I think his reputation will always hinge on New Sun, but *Peace*, *Fifth Head*, and his short stories all have decent shots of becoming more popular. I think his late work is great, but that too much emphasis on subtext and not quite enough on making the surface story truly as compelling as New Sun will preclude it from becoming his most famous. He might very well someday be considered one of the greatest novella writers of all time if his novellas could get included in anthologies more frequently – some of those are the strongest the SF field has ever produced.

Jay Sherman: I'm really struck by how different the style can be from one Wolfe book to the next. Even mid series in the Solar Cycle somewhat but more obvious going from his early books to his latest. Could you divide his books into different types? I know he simplified the prose later on but it also seems some of his books are mostly straightforward stories while others are incredibly cryptic

Yes, I think Wolfe made a conscious decision not to do the same thing twice, even though a few things will never change (like his obsession with creepy big houses). You can see him inverting themes, playing with memory, going from certain character types to their polar opposites. In general, his fiction in the 1970s was very sociologically concerned. His short stories dealt with the idea of universal basic income and social revolution, but soon he turned his eye to a further future that would not seem dated or obsolete in a few years. The 1980s was perhaps his most baroque period, and even though *The Book of the New Sun* is ostensibly science fiction or science fantasy, he was turning to fantasy and away from pure SF in this period. I feel he always had a tendency towards allusion and homage, and this continued throughout his career, but that he transitioned in style form a Proustian sensibility to one closer to Hemingway, trying to say as much as he could through implication rather than through long and complex sentences. Even his simple seeming stories are usually cryptic, and this is one feature I think stays throughout his career from start to finish: he liked burying gems and details that could have huge implications for the plots of his stories in different ways in every decade in which he wrote. I think *Pirate Freedom* is actually the only straightforward thing he ever wrote, and I have even seen wildly divergent impressions from that book as well.

John Grayshaw: What makes Wolfe interesting from a critical perspective? What first drew you to his work?

I think it is amazing that every reader can come out of reading Wolfe with a completely different idea about what the story and themes even were. Peter Wright argues that New Sun is a criticism of organized religion and a story of manipulation; I argue that it is essentially concerned with free will and the understanding that eventually God will make good use of all things even if we choose poorly or tragic things seem to happen, as it celebrates spiritual transcendence. People seem to read whatever they want into Wolfe because of that allusive and open style, but to me his actual control over the text and his profound structures, that create meaning, suggest that he is the furthest thing from a "deconstructive" author – he is the ultimate engineer. If we knew everything, all of his stories and all of the details in them, in my opinion, would make sense, and the scaffolding he erased in writing the story unify it. However, a lot of people probably wouldn't agree with me there. His sophistication as a prose stylist, his unique characterization, his ability to create meaningful but cryptic stories, and his themes are all in my mind sui generis and make him well worth the study. His ability to combine symbolism with actual plot closure is unique in my experience, because the erudition he displays always goes back to a deeper understanding of the plot and the story itself or the characters in it. The numinous spirituality and the beauty of the language in his work attracted me even as a young child, and the way that he employed and talked about symbols was, in my mind, ultimately compelling.

John Grayshaw: How did you get involved with teaching? And what are your favorite things about teaching?

They say those who can't do teach … so, not knowing what I wanted to do, after graduate school I found a teaching job at a local college. When the full-time position disappeared before I started, I had to get a day job teaching at the high school while I taught three of the college classes at night. I took a long break from teaching after that, working in banks, gyms, even a family circus for a time, but the respect and nobility of the teaching profession is like no other, and I love helping students. It felt so good to be back in front of a classroom after almost a decade away that I knew I never wanted to leave it again. It is also the only job I can think of where students have to listen to me talk all day long, and sometimes even feel compelled to laugh at my jokes. Seeing students develop and mature as thinkers and writers is extremely rewarding. My eyes are not the greatest, so grading papers can sometimes get to me, especially the digital papers I am forced to use now, but I love the profession and feel it is definitely my true calling. I can feel good about going to work every day.

John Grayshaw: Who were some of the writers Wolfe grew up reading?

The classic pulp writers, but he was certainly interested in Clark Ashton Smith, Lovecraft, Jack Vance, Lord Dunsany, and other early fantasists. He wrote a fan letter to Tolkien about the word Warg. He was also very interested in English Literature as a whole, and in my mind nineteenth century writers loom large there. Dickens, Kipling, Maupassant, (perhaps later writers like Proust and Kafka) – I think he tended to read more short stories than novels, but he was extremely erudite in a very self-directed way. Certainly, he has an appreciation for classical poetry and Greek thinkers and entertainers as well.

John Grayshaw: Who are some writers that were Wolfe's contemporaries that he enjoyed/admired and how did they influence his work?

I think only the editors like Damon Knight directly influenced his work, honestly. Perhaps authors like LeGuin, Kress, and Algis Budrys might be in that conversation, and I do feel that several of his stories are in dialogue with James Tiptree, Jr, or Joana Russ, but I think most of his models are usually not

contemporary, though he clearly did state that he once hated a story so much by another author he was inspired to rewrite it to "fix" it. I think that he greatly respected Neil Gaiman, Kim Stanley Robinson, Michael Swanwick, and John Crowley, but, except for Crowley, I don't think any of those authors were in a position to influence Wolfe himself. Wolfe once said that *Dune* had little impact on him. Much of my work on Wolfe is not comparative – Michael Andre-Driussi's recent chapter guide on Wolfe really attempts to pin down the homages and allusions in Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun*.

John Grayshaw: Did Wolfe have favorites of his own works?

I think he loved *Peace* and *There Are Doors*, but to be quite honest with you he seemed to have an inordinate affection for *An Evil Guest*. At the 2013 Nebula awards he was named Grand Master, and of all the works he could read from, he chose what he called the "climax" of *An Evil Guest*, when Cassie is taken up to the mountain. However, he did say that his favorite of his works often changed with what he was currently working on.

John Grayshaw: What kind of research did Wolfe do for his books?

Exhaustive, until his vision failed! He learned Greek for the Latro books, read original sources, and fully explored whatever topic he was writing about. He seemed to have the capacity to lose himself in things that interested him greatly, and I think that he does not get enough credit as a researcher and synthesizer. The words and names in New Sun alone … for example, the raising of the apprentices features an aside in which Severian mentions that Gildas was head of the apprentices the year he first saw the ceremony. Gildas was the name of a saint involved in a proto-Bluebeard story, and in it he re-attaches the head of a decapitated (pregnant) woman. In the ceremony, a woman seems to lose her head and then reattaches it. That minor throw-away detail from the life of a relatively obscure saint shows how carefully every name is placed for context, even though Gildas will never be mentioned again as a character – yet how perfectly that is put together! I think he was interested in archetypal studies like those of Frazer and Campbell, and that Jung also influenced the construction of some of his stories.

John Grayshaw: Did his childhood bout with polio effect his life and/or his writing?

Yes, I think the isolation and loneliness of his childhood can be seen in many of his stories. Some have attributed the chronic limp of his protagonists to that illness as well.

John Grayshaw: Did his experience in the Korean War effect his life and/or his writing?

Yes, but I think the most lasting impression was one that truly shows his philosophy. He was at a party once in which all of the people were talking about how their friends needed to think like they did and have the same interests, and Wolfe said that a true friend was someone who would share his canteen and watch over you while you slept regardless of what he believed, even if you had nothing in common. I think that this kind of true openness and human understanding is central to his character and a part of what made him so beloved, as he did not expect that his readers or friends should be just like him or believe everything he did. He was an amazingly kind man.

John Grayshaw: How did his career as an engineer effect his writing?

I think it had a profound impact on how he structured his stories. Jacques Derrida said that writers and creative artists are not truly engineers but bricoleurs, with language innately lacking the ability to be exceedingly precise, and that there might not be a transcendent signifier in communication. Conversely,

I think Wolfe was indeed a true engineer, and the Apollonian instincts he held make his work super-structured and imbued with a kind of symbolic logic that is completely unique and very precise. I think he constructed everything very thoroughly and comprehensively, and that he was very skilled at weaving multiple plot points into rewrites such that there was usually a surface story, an undercurrent that seemed plausible but didn't explain everything, and a true solution that finally snapped those little details on the side into focus.

John Grayshaw: why did he keep returning to the Solar Cycle series? What is it about that universe that motivated him creatively?

I think it made him the most money, and that the dying earth setting is simply such a rich vein to explore. It is far enough removed from us that it will never be obsolete or out of date, and the complex cosmology there could definitely have supported even more work in the same setting. I think he had some unresolved plotlines he wanted to finish, whether readers ever realized it or not.

John Grayshaw: What are some interesting anecdotes about Wolfe going to conventions and meeting his fans?

Wolfe always seemed a kind and generous man. I haven't studied much on his fan interactions, but the community that grew up around him was unusually close. One of the gentlemen who runs Ultan's Library, Nigel Price (who hopefully won't mind that this story is told), came to see Wolfe win an award and spent time with Wolfe's family at the convention, including his daughter Teri. Unfortunately, Nigel had a sudden and severe health episode while he was there that even prevented him from getting out of bed. When he was late for breakfast, the Wolfes eventually discovered that he required hospitalization. Since Nigel was far from England and any relatives, Teri pretended to be his daughter or niece in order to visit him in the hospital and make sure that he was recovering. Wolfe always seemed super approachable and kind, and the image of him on the Merry-Go-Round at the Fuller Award Ceremony shows that no matter his age there was always something young and vital in him. When I was taking a course for my PhD program, a fellow student told me they had a friend who was a huge Wolfe fan, and asked if they could have his address to send him something to be signed. I did so, and that fan got his personally signed copy. That was in 2016 or 2017, so even late in Wolfe's life he was still so generous in giving to his fans. He sent me advance reading copies of a few of his books, including *The Land Across*, though of course I still bought a few copies.

John Grayshaw: What was Wolfe's friendship with Damon Knight like?

I will simply say that Wolfe respected him greatly as an editor, and that Knight provided many early publication opportunities for him. In addition, Wolfe says that he originally composed the short story "Trip, Trap" in two columns, with the different point of views right next to each other on the page. Damon Knight broke it up and sent it back, saying that maybe Wolfe could improve on the places he chose to present alternating points of view instead of side by side. When Wolfe saw that all of those breaks and transitions were as good as they possibly could be, he acknowledged that perhaps Knight really did have valuable insight into writing. I think the relationship soured years later when Knight reviewed one of Wolfe's books (perhaps *Castleview*) with perplexity. The political drama around the *Orbit* anthologies resulted in the Asimov gaff in which he accidentally declared Wolfe's "The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories" a winner, when in fact "No Award" was indicated by the ballot, but this would be cosmically redressed in Wolfe's Nebula victory for "The Death of Doctor Island" in 1973.

John Grayshaw: Who are some of the other science fiction writers he had correspondence, friendships, and/or collaborations with?

I think Wolfe had a long list of correspondences, and certainly the most famous of those individuals are Neil Gaiman, Kim Stanley Robinson, and Michael Swanwick. He collaborated with Gaiman and Brian Hopkins on fiction. He may have had some correspondence with Ursula LeGuin and James Tiptree, Jr., if I remember the details he shared correctly, but I never really explored much of this avenue.

John Grayshaw: Did you know Wolfe personally?

Way back in the late 90s I found a database with author's addresses and decided to write Wolfe. He wrote me back, and we had a correspondence that spanned decades. He was extremely kind to me, and we met in person on three occasions – once at a dinner with Rosemary when I was in the Chicago area in 2002 or so, at the Fuller Award ceremony in 2012, and at the Nebulas in 2013, though I feel that we knew each other much more thoroughly than those meetings would imply, as we shared so many letters and emails over the years. I still miss him, and I am grateful that I got to experience such a positive relationship with someone I respected as the greatest of authors for decades.

John Grayshaw: In the title of your dissertation you call Wolfe a "Perverse Puzzle Maker." What did you mean by this?

Sometimes I feel that Wolfe really is playing a little unfair. Some of the puzzles and games he plays require some real intuitive leaps, especially late in his career, but I think his cryptic sensibility and revelry in constructing prose labyrinths is real (see the short story "The Adopted Father," in which the Dedalian park designer searches for someone who thinks as he does, as I think Wolfe played with his readers).

John Grayshaw: What are some of the most interesting things you've found in your research of Wolfe?

I'm going to dodge this question a bit – so many things that are included in my exhaustive analyses, but I just want to say that I think the most interesting thing was how supremely erudite Wolfe actually was as a synthesizer and syncretist. He makes diverse mythological and religious traditions seem to presage Christianity in the Latro books by combining symbols from historical and mythical sources - the fish jumping out of the frying pan in a story by Herodotus right before the crucifixion of Artyactes is turned definitively Christian in Wolfe's hands when he references it in the Latro books … if someone were to do a google search of latro poenitens, for example, they might be surprised by what comes up.

John Grayshaw: Was there anything in your research of Wolfe that surprised you?

Yes, so much. I think one of the first eureka moments I had in this long project on Wolfe involved the short story "The Changeling." I noticed that there seemed to be a three-year age gap somewhere in the tale for the character to be in Korea at war in 1949 with an ostensible birthdate in 1934. I saw that the ageless child in the story had appeared when the older sister, three years older than the narrator, was born, and I thought … well … if there was a changeling swap, maybe his encounter with the ageless child when he was supposedly in the fourth grade messed with the narrator's perceptions. I put Pete Palmer (the narrator's name) born 1931 in a search engine to see if anyone had thought of that possibility, that he was three years older than he thought he was, and a real actor came up, the actor who played L'il Abner, a notorious oaf. (Wolfe was also born in 1931). I knew that the word oaf originally referred to an

elfin changeling left in a bad bargain, and suddenly I saw that the title of the story told me exactly what had happened: our narrator was actually the original son of the family in the story, and his own perceptions had been affected when he wrestled his changeling such that he no longer even knew how old he was, nor that he was speaking to his real family through much of the story. That use of historical, external verification and wordplay is characteristic of Wolfe, as it is not subjective information but objective fact: Peter Palmer was born in 1931, and played an oaf, which is the equivalent of a changeling. In the story, Peter Palmer was actually born in 1931, not in 1934, and a changeling was involved. Wolfe does that kind of stuff all the time to structure the mystery of his stories, and it is neat when you finally see it. After that, I think I gained an insight into how his mind worked sideways and symbolically.

John Grayshaw: What are the funniest things you've found in your research of Wolfe?

Nothing immediately comes to mind, but it is usually a moment when you understand one of his puns or dream sequences – for example, in Long Sun, Silk has a vision of mother riding a donkey, then riding "Auk's" larger donkey (both Auk's Chenille and Silk's Hyacinth worked as prostitutes who were possessed by the goddess Kypris.) Then the word play on donkey jumps out and you groan … the set up for puns like that in Wolfe is almost ridiculous.

John Grayshaw: When is your next volume on Wolfe's writing coming out?

I have finally seen some early covers, so I hope soon! It will be much better than the first volume; editing that thing was one of the worst experiences of my life, and this one was a pleasure to work on. I am hopeful we might even see a November/December release.

John Grayshaw: Are any of Wolfe's works under option for movies or TV?

I know once or twice he took some money for New Sun, but nothing ever materialized. A French role-playing game has been developed with his blessing, and some fan projects exist, but I don't think anything is currently being developed.

John Grayshaw: Are there any unpublished Wolfe works in drawers or archives somewhere or is everything published?

No. I think everything has been published. He lost an early novel that he says had "too much plot" and seems to have abandoned at least one other novel, but I think parts of it were possibly incorporated into the plot of *A Borrowed Man*.

John Grayshaw: Did Wolfe have any particular writing habits or routines he stuck with?

When he was working, he would get up early and write for a few hours. I think he was extremely consistent until Rosemary's health failed, and then he slowed down a bit. However, he was able to keep up a regular writing schedule well into his 80s, and I think of all great authors hard work and dedication helped create the artist who wrote so much quality fiction over decades.

John Grayshaw: What were some of Wolfe's hobbies other than writing?

He collected knives and canes, seemed to have an interest in nautical issues, and loved those wolf t-shirts. He was sincerely devout. I think his interests were varied and strayed to classical philosophy, literature, and poetry, but even given that, he was still very much a self-made intellect, at least from the

perspective of his literary knowledge. For all that he dodged a lot of questions in interviews, I think he enjoyed interacting with his fans. I hope that he felt as if he was recognized enough in his life for the hard work he put in, because I honestly think he spent most of his "free" time hard at work – to leave us behind that great and complex body of work.

John Grayshaw: What is Wolfe's legacy? Why was his work significant at the time? And why is it still important today?

I still view Wolfe as a contemporary writer, and I think the maturity and sophistication he brings to the table in Science Fiction is as significant as the impact modernist writers like Joyce, Faulkner, and Hemingway had on mainstream literature. His legacy is that of a complex and dynamic stylist who rarely did the same thing twice. His novellas and *The Book of the New Sun* are enough to secure his reputation, and I hope readers will continue to discover him for centuries to come. Right now, as readers are used to mimesis and representation in their fiction, his presentation of archetypal and symbolic character tropes might be a bit difficult, but I hope that the pendulum swings once again and his work can be appreciated in a context that recognizes its complexities and wonder. Even the basic premise of his work from the 1970s and 1980s is fascinating, from alien mimics who imitate so perfectly that they forget they are alien as they incorporate the qualities of those who may have conquered them (or whom they may have conquered) to the dichotomy of the torturer/savior who seems at first glance to bring only suffering and destruction, Wolfe's fiction and his themes do not gravitate towards facile or easy answers, and they challenge us as readers in ways that are intellectual, spiritual, and emotional. There are three podcasts devoted to Wolfe now and multiple online discussion boards, so despite the fact that the critical attention is still lagging, readers are engaging each other about his wonderful work. I think that beautiful art should always have a place, and Wolfe's art has so many beautiful moments that deserve to be preserved. His best work touches on redemption and transcendence, and that need is timeless. Thank you for allowing me a platform to speak about Wolfe – I appreciate all of your questions.