

(no subject)

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 16 Oct 1998

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Kevin J. Maroney — 16 Oct 1998, 10:54

At 08:47 AM 10/16/98 -0400, Rostrum wrote:
Memory.

"Memory" doesn't seem to me to be a theme, but a subject matter (just as, say, time-travel is a subject matter).

"All of life is a fragmentary memory, even as we are living it" would be a theme.

Wolfe repeats *tropes* over and over--tricks with memory and memory palaces, resurrections and wars, killing one's friends (I often find myself wondering who, exactly, Wolfe killed that he feels so guilty about it--perhaps he's working through war guilt, or possibly he just finds it a fascinating subject), stage-acting, and so forth.

The equally brilliant John Crowley returns again and again to a few well-defined themes--the past is fundamentally different from the present and the present is constantly fundamentally changing into the future; the entire world is a palace of memory.

Wolfe is more varied. Yes, memory features prominently in *The Book of the New Sun* and the *Soldier* novels (and in so many smaller works) but in very different ways; I would say that its role in *The Book of the Long Sun* is, while certainly not absent, much less central and not in a thematic continuum with either of those.

More central to Wolfe's work is his ideal of heroism, which is a remarkable mixture of self-determination and self-sacrifice. The degree to which his characters are refined by suffering, but never lose sight of the fact that their heroism is grounded in a need to protect their friends and their world.

(Of course, that doesn't fit Alden Weir at all, probably the least admirable of Wolfe's protagonists. But even Weir has the self-determination of a Wolfe hero.)

Wombat

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