

Inside the Sausage Factory

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 14 May 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1630>

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David_Lebling — 14 May 1999, 09:29

Patrick O'Leary, guarding the gate to the sausage factory, wrote:

All this speculation about Wolfe "speeding through," "making it up as he goes along," "backfilling mistakes," "multiple drafts," "no idea where it's going" are, in my opinion fruitless. How a writer gets to where he's going doesn't matter.

Gee, my original post in this vein was intended as a joke. I think I even labeled it as such. But seriously, folks... This stuff is interesting. I think it's even potentially interesting to writers. Stephen Jay Gould writes that it's very common in science to hide (or even be ashamed of) the path taken to reach the wonderful theory; to make it look like the theory derived inexorably from a cool dispassionate chain of logic. He scoffs. Science is messy, and learning about the process by which the mess became the theory is important. Wolfe commits art, not science, of course, but the process is just as interesting, at least to some of us. Who is not fascinated to learn why Michelangelo's David stands in the posture he does, or why Leonardo's Last Supper is so deteriorated?

It's magic, don't you think? Who cares how the wizard does it?

Well, actually, I do. I care about it at the simplest level, which is curiosity. I also care about it at the level of learning about craftsmanship, which is the same thing that impels me to watch New Yankee Workshop, even though I know I will never be a carpenter. I find books like The Castle of the Otter fascinating.

Dave Lebling
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