

Mo/Po-mo

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 28 Oct 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1884>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Alex David Groce — 28 Oct 1999, 12:13

Maybe the best distinction is one of underlying epistemology/ontology, as it applies to non-literary things that can be labeled modernist or post-modernist as well. Modernists believe that things (stories, whatever) exist and have a real nature, but that this nature may be only approximated by any method of telling about the things: Joyce is does not doubt Dublin, but can only show it by a collection of perspectives, styles, voices, allusions, and even then does not capture the real thing. Post-modernists go beyond doubt that we can capture the nature of the things to doubt that the things have real, unitary natures, or even, for that matter, exist apart from the (doomed) attempts to capture them. It's essentially a universal agnosticism/atheism, applied to things other than God (and the "author" often takes the place of God in criticisms structurally similar to those offered by other thinkers against God). Wolfe obviously falls into the modernist camp, and from this point of view, ignoring the techniques, fits very snugly, and is quite different many of his literary "parents"--Dickens, one suspects, did not consider, as Wolfe clearly does, the impossibility of describing/constructing the "soul" of a character to be an important element of attempting to describe a character.

...

By the way, I did like CASTLEVIEW, I just didn't "get it." Unlike most Wolfe works that remain fundamentally mysterious (like "The Ziggurat", his best shorter work in years), it left me puzzled rather than awed. But it was fun to read. On the other hand, if he'd only written it, I think our quest to save him from the rubble-heap of history would be less worthy. On the third(?) hand, if he'd written only THE FIFTH HEAD OF CERBERUS or BOTNS, there would be fodder for canonization.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

Alex David Groce (agroce+ at cs.cmu.edu)

Ph.D. Student, Carnegie Mellon University - Computer Science Department

8112 Wean Hall (412)-268-3066

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~agroce>