

Agonizing over Wolfe's place in literary history

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

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Dan Rabin — 28 Oct 1999, 22:02

[It's not that I'm not enjoying the modernism thread, but that I can't contribute much, being the Modernism-101-only-plus-Pynchon sort myself.]

I think we're agonizing a lot over a non-problem. Several of us have testified to hooking other people on Wolfe's work. Some of the hookees will hook others in turn. Some of their kids will discover their parents' copies of the books on some low-lying shelf before they pass the age at which The Book of Gold may be found. No one I know who is impressed with Wolfe feels much restraint against proclaiming their admiration for the man's work. These are pretty good conditions for preservation.

A lot of the angst seems to stem from pessimism that Wolfe's work will be canonized, a different matter from whether he will be read. Wolfe will be read, because he writes treasures.

As for the question of what the critical consensus will be, who cares? Today's critical consensus (for literature as a whole, not for the genre) excludes Tolkien and is hence mistaken. You ignore my Book of Gold, I ignore your criticism. Seems fair to me.

-- Dan Rabin