

Wolfe and Calvino

The Urth list — 7 messages, 6 voices, 22 Feb 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2133>

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Thomas Jeenicke — 22 Feb 2000, 13:21

Alga suggested in the Whorl-list (message dated 18 Feb 20:06:28) that Wolfe could have read Italo Calvino. He might have, but I don't see much evidence. I think (though maybe I don't know Calvino good enough) that memory per se is not a theme for Calvino, at least not a main theme. Nearest (but still quite different) to Wolfe, in my opinion, seems to be Calvino's labyrinthian novel "Se una notte d' inverno un viaggiatore" (first published 1979 - I don't know if there's an English translation, if so, the title must be something like "When in a night of winter a traveller"), which ends in a library (Borges!).

The whole topic Wolfe-Borges-Calvino raises one question in me: Is Wolfe a "postmodern" writer? - If that is actually a useful literary category (I'm not sure).

Thomas

Alex David Groce — 22 Feb 2000, 10:04 · follows Thomas Jeenicke

"If On a Winter's Night a Traveler" was translated into English by William Weaver, who also does Eco's translations. It's my favorite Calvino book-- probably because it's a tribute to the act of reading. If I recall, a genre science fiction pastiche is, unfortunately, not among the half-begun books that it contains.

The list archives contain considerable discussion of whether Wolfe is a post-modernist, etc. I would say he's more accurately described as a modernist.

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

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Nicholas Gevers — 22 Feb 2000, 11:48 · follows Alex David Groce

Just a small note on the Wolfe/Calvino issue: IN GREEN'S JUNGLES, which I'll shortly start reading, seems to have a strong Italianate bias--evidence perhaps of Calvino's influence. I'll be on the lookout for signs of that.

Jesper Svedberg — 23 Feb 2000, 18:35 · follows Nicholas Gevers

From: "Thomas Jeenicke" <Thomas_Jeenicke at public.uni-hamburg.de>
Subject: Wolfe and Calvino
Date: Tue, 22 Feb 2000 14:21:15 +0100

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The only thing I've read by Calvino is _The Tree Baron_ (title? the original was _Il Barone Rapante_ anyway) and the first few pages of _Invisible Cities_. I'd say that Wolfe has more in common with Calvino stylewise than contentwise, the other similarity would be that they are both intelligent authors who write intelectual novels. Although, after taking a quick look at _Invisible Cities_ I can't help wondering if Wolfe has read Calvino, _IC_ had the same sense of wonder that I got from reading TBotNS, albeit it seemed even more obscure.

// Jesper Svedberg

Urash, Tom — 23 Feb 2000, 12:58 · follows Jesper Svedberg

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The English edition I have is titled "The Baron in the Trees".

...Tom

Alice Turner — 23 Feb 2000, 21:36 · follows Urash, Tom

I agree with our new Danish member (welcome, Thomas, and please turn off that Rich Text feature for this list) that the Calvino influence, if any, is not so evident. Except for my half-joke that Pajarocu is an Invisible City, which it really is. Alex is (I think) right; IOAWNAT doesn't have any out-and-out sf refs or jokes in it (I've never thought of Italians, especially of his generation, as being into it)--still, it's the sort of book that I think might attract Wolfe. It was only a half-joke and those of us who are really conversant with Calvino (I have read some, even mini-reviewed one book, but I'm not) might think about this.

I also would call Wolfe a modernist rather than a post-modernist, except for some experimentation in a few of the stories (and no, I can't cite them off the top of my head). This could lead us into a labyrinth (hey, cool!).

-alga

Alex David Groce — 23 Feb 2000, 21:57 · follows Alice Turner

Cosmicomics is (sort of) science fiction, although definitely not <genre> science fiction.

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