

Little, Big stuff

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 30 Apr 2000

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Alex David Groce — 30 Apr 2000, 15:00

Hmmm... I think I know what I'm reading as soon as I finish the Lafferty fest that I'm indulging in at the moment. Thanks to all for the various useful insights on LB.

Michael: Yes, LB as a whole is much less compelling than the individual parts taken by themselves, which are (with only a few exceptions, such as the Eigenblick thing) beautiful indeed. Maybe this fits the "inside is bigger than outside" theme...

Alga: Yes, Crowley is much less of a genre writer than Wolfe, but I really wasn't thinking of it in genre terms, but as a kind of thematic connection to Dunsany (who obviously wasn't drawing on "genre" sources, since as such they didn't exist for him anymore than for Carroll or Kingsley). This, handled as anything other than the rather crass Niven "iron drove out the magic" or the simple story of someone from "reality" whisked off to fantasy to be a hero, hasn't really been used much in conventional genre work, has it? Usually fairy and reality are nicely compartmentalized, with fantasy, while more "fun," usually given a fairly explicit short end of the ontological stick. Crowley is certainly more in keeping with the 19th c. sources he's using than anything I'm aware of in-genre.

Mantis: Perhaps Crowley cruelty really does explain the ending--after all, Engine Summer strikes me as the same thing, amazing beauty that in the end sums up to an extremely cruel vision of a personality trapped in amber. Wolfe at his most savage is considerably kinder to his poor fictional creations, although perhaps this just shows a lack of nerve on his part, while Crowley has what it takes to let the Revolutionary do it's work and not pass the knife under the door.

"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>

Jack and Melissa Holcomb — 30 Apr 2000, 23:24 · follows Alex David Groce

Ah! Finally something I feel equipped to comment on, a little! I've read LB, but it was years ago. It just went into the bedside table pile again (right under the Gormenghast omnibus --so it'll be awhile).

Alga: Yes, Crowley is much less of a genre writer than Wolfe, but I really wasn't thinking of it in genre terms, but as a kind of thematic connection to Dunsany (who obviously wasn't drawing on "genre" sources, since as such they didn't exist for him anymore than for Carroll or Kingsley). This, handled as anything other than the rather crass Niven "iron drove out the magic" or the simple story of someone from "reality" whisked off to fantasy to be a hero, hasn't really been used much in conventional genre work, has

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That's pretty much true, although there seems to be a growing body of stories/books dealing with the interpenetration of faery and mundanity. I'm thinking of Emma Bull's overrated *War for the Oaks* and Charles de Lint's stuff, all of which seems to work from the assumption that the faery place has been/is being marginalized, although it is still accessible--and the upshot seems generally to be that encountering faery enriches existence. This body of work has been christened (poorly, I think) Urban Fantasy, and I suspect that a lot of it is written in imitation of *Little, Big*, despite the fact that they seem to disagree with its premise. (In fact, I seem to recall that the most recent trade paperback release of *LB* was touted as both Urban Fantasy and Magic Realism.)

There is one exceptional treatment of the boundaries between faery and mundanity that leaps to my mind: Robert Holdstock's excellent *Mythago Wood* books. That's a very different notion of faery--actually an externalized Jungian collective unconscious--but it has a similar effect of drawing people in and making them less than they were. In fact, I'd say there's a strong streak of Lovecraft through the *Mythago* books.

Sorry to drag us even farther off topic.

Say, does anyone know if there's a Holdstock e-mail list anywhere about?

Jack
jackandmel at socket.net