

# delany, etc.

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 29 Jul 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4128>

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maa32 — 29 Jul 2003, 06:15

I had to comment on one statement that was made - that Wolfe might think that Borges and Delany are better writers than him? I have the suspicion that Wolfe doesn't like Delany's writing that much - he said he couldn't get through Dhalgren and much preferred Report on Probability A by Aldiss. I'm sure he admires Borges, but I wonder how much of his humility is at times fake: "Everything I write is wonderful" - I know he said that at a convention. If I had to go out on a limb and say that Wolfe felt like a lesser writer than anyone, it would probably be Dickens, Proust, Shakespeare, or Chesterton - who were kind of prolific. And I don't think he really believes that.

Yes, it was absolutely awful how Mr. Wolfe was treated at Odyssey. People take their manuscripts personally. Having read just about everything Wolfe has written except perhaps 10 stories, I have come to the conclusion that there is one reason that I might find Wolfe a difficult teacher: he really doesn't like to explain himself. I was blessed some time ago: Mr. Wolfe perused one of my manuscripts. He said, "You have a wonderful idea here. Many wonderful ideas. But you will have to get much better at writing before you can do justice to them. You explain yourself way too much."

I was infinitely grateful for his input - and I regard it as extremely positive - yet here is the rub: everyone who has ever read my work says I need to explain more, because it doesn't make sense - that I make too many quantum leaps that should be explained.

I'm sure Wolfe is a wonderful teacher. On the other hand, I knew many brilliant research scientists at my undergraduate college who weren't as good at teaching as some high school or community college teachers because they couldn't simplify in terms that a student could parse and digest. I maintain that some people are too brilliant to be teachers, because those who can't do, teach. Like me!:) Unfortunately, talent isn't a contagious disease. I wish it were.

Marc Aramini

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Lisa Schaffer-Doggett — 29 Jul 2003, 07:04 · follows maa32

On Monday, July 28, 2003, at 11:15 PM, maa32 wrote:

"You have a wonderful idea here.

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Don butts in with two maybe three comments:

Having never read anything you've written I would instinctively say that Mr. Wolfe's advice will give you critical longevity and "everyone" else's advice will give you more marketability. I'm a less is more writer myself (and chronically unpublished, critically unnoticed, etc - My only hope is that when the Apocalypse comes the airtight seal on the time capsule will hold and I'll win by attrition : )

By the by, there was no excuse for what those students did. They didn't even have the guts to complain to Mr. Wolfe in person. Besides, we are all rational (usually, sometimes, potentially) beings who have the ability to study criticism and accept or ignore it to whatever degree we wish. How often do you think Mr. Wolfe lets someone talk him out of a "bad" story idea? It's his confidence in HIS story that we love as much as his skill in presenting it. IMHO.

I think I'm over my limit.

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Chris — 29 Jul 2003, 18:55 · follows Lisa Schaffer-Doggett

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Perhaps it's a certain confusion of terms. It sounds like your "everyone else's" advice is telling you that they don't understand what the story is getting at, and what they really want is more information to be able to work it out. But what Wolfe is telling you is that you should give them this information in more subtle ways than outright explaining it to the reader with the voice-of-god: give them circumstantial clues, pieces from which they can infer what you want them to know.

I haven't read your writing either so please don't take offense if I'm guessing wrong. But the reason I guess this is because Wolfe has, on other occasions, said that the tendency of a writer to try and "explain" things explicitly is one of the main things a potential writer has to overcome. So it sounds like just the kind of thing he would caution you against.

Civet