

Gene Wolfe in SFE

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 08 Nov 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6104>

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Gwern Branwen — 08 Nov 2011, 21:59

http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/Entry/wolfe_gene

Reads like a pretty good entry, although given recent threads, I can see many interpretive claims list regulars will reject. Conclusion is interesting:

It may be that Wolfe has never had an original sf idea, or never a significant one, certainly none of the calibre of those generated by writers like Larry NIVEN or Greg BEAR. His importance does not reside in that kind of originality. Setting aside for an instant his control of language, and his intensely applied control over structure in general and the paced revelation of story in particular, it is possible to claim that Wolfe's importance lies in a spongelike ability to assimilate generic models and devices, and in the quality of the transformations he effects upon that material. Wolfe's actual language is at times visibly parodic, and many of his short stories are designed deliberately and intricately to echo earlier models, from the whole pantheon of GENRE SF. But the relationship between current and previous texts is not only in the "music" of the words themselves. A further musical analogy might be the Baroque technique of the PARODY cantata, in which a secular composition is transformed by reverent transformations (some recondite) into a sacred work (or vice versa); such parodies, in the case of the greater composers, can often only be deciphered after long study. Wolfe's importance has been, therefore, twofold: the inherent stature of his work is deeply impressive, and he wears the fictional worlds of sf like a coat of many colours. In 1996 he was given a WORLD FANTASY AWARD for Life Achievement; and he was inducted into the SCIENCE FICTION HALL OF FAME in 2007. [JC/John Clute]

gwern
<http://www.gwern.net>

António Marques — 08 Nov 2011, 22:08 · in reply to Gwern Branwen

Gwern Branwen wrote:
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Not unlike the Outsider transforms folks into doing his work, heh?

Gerry Quinn — 08 Nov 2011, 22:33 · in reply to Gwern Branwen

From: Gwern Branwen

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The Outsider as AI was a new one on me. But I agree, whether or not you agree with everything it gives encyclopaedia readers a decent picture of the author.

- Gerry Quinn