

Sev as anti-hero

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 06 Apr 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1486>

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Roy C. Lackey — 06 Apr 1999, 00:08

On 4-4-99 Alex David Groce wrote:

<snip>

However, I don't think he means us to reject these figures--rather, to see ourselves in them, with veins of dark and light. A picture of a (to sue the religious terms that are relevant) sinful but redeemable man. And I think

it's clear that there IS moral growth in Severian throughout the BOTNS. The final talk with Palaemon, in my opinion, establishes that for the pre-Urth Severian, at least.<<

Oh, I agree he makes moral progress. I said much the same thing in an off-list e-mail to someone here. But I still do not like Sev and have trouble seeing him as Everyman--even a dark Everyman. Silk, Weer, and the other figures you mention are much more sympathetic figures, whatever their flaws, because they come closer to Everyman than Sev. They do not wield the powers, temporal or supernatural, that Sev does. They do not have his capacity for doing harm. mantis used the term "anti-hero" and I have to agree with it. I could never identify with Sev, as I could with Weer or Green or Silk or Free's boarders.

Roy

Alex David Groce — 06 Apr 1999, 10:28 · follows Roy C. Lackey

On Apr 6, 12:08am, Roy C. Lackey wrote:

Oh, I agree he makes moral progress. I said much the same thing in an off-list e-mail to someone here. But I still do not like Sev and have trouble seeing him as Everyman--even a dark Everyman. Silk, Weer, and the other figures you mention are much more sympathetic figures, whatever their flaws, because they come closer to Everyman than Sev. They do not wield the powers, temporal or supernatural, that Sev does. They do not have his capacity for doing harm. mantis used the term "anti-hero" and I have to agree with it. I could never identify with Sev, as I could with Weer or Green or Silk or Free's boarders.

I won't argue that Severian is easy to identify with; as to Silk, I would place him in another category of Wolfe's protagonists. Green is somewhere in the middle--not as dark as Severian (or even Weer), but not an almost saintly (and likable--which is hard to portray) fellow like Silk. I'm just not sure anti-hero is the right term for Severian. It seems to me that in the end he stumbles to glory, at any rate, and that's not just an accident--the Hierodules choose him because he does, in the end, get the job done. Of course, this depends on your interpretation of the last pages of Urth.

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

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Senior (Computer Science/Multidisciplinary Studies in Technology & Fiction)

Kevin J. Maroney — 12 Apr 1999, 19:36 · follows Alex David Groce

At 12:08 AM 4/6/99 -0500, Roy wrote:

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Considering the trail of dead bodies Weer leaves behind him, I'm not sure that I *want* to identify with Weer. Wolfe's protagonists are not admirable or likable people, for the most part (the "Free" quartet being a very pleasant exception).

Wombat, a.k.a. Kevin Maroney [kmaroney at crossover.com](mailto:kmaroney@crossover.com) Kitchen Staff Supervisor, New York Review of Science Fiction <http://ebbs.english.vt.edu/olp/nyrsf/nyrsf.html>

Alex David Groce — 12 Apr 1999, 21:09 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

On Apr 12, 7:36pm, Kevin J. Maroney wrote:

Subject: Re: (urth) Sev as anti-hero

At 12:08 AM 4/6/99 -0500, Roy wrote:

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Well, some of us aren't convinced that Weer is responsible for anyone's death other than (A) the boy on the stairs, and that's not exactly murder and (B) maybe (there is something sinister about it at any rate) the frozen-freezer guy. I think the "Weer as mass murder" hypothesis is most likely nonsense.

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