

Nerd? Artisan? PEACE!?

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 05 Jan 2002

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maa32 — 05 Jan 2002, 02:45

Andy R wrote:

Wolfe is what we call a Nerd, in this decadent age, and in a better one would call an Artisan. His interest is in working quietly, cunningly, and well; his hope is to be ruled by a true and good King; and his nearest self image (in his works) is the protagonist of PEACE.

This is obvious from his books. Severian is no self-image of Wolfe: I never read a less convincing portrayal of the interior monologue of and aggressive and sexually violent man. Silk, celibate and constantly suffering for his high status, is something Wolfe is much happier with.

I cannot agree with you on your characterization of a nerdy celibate, especially from PEACE. Weer molests an underage girl! He calls sex absolutely ordinary, going on all the time. Come on, all Wolfe's females are close to hookers (some are sympathetic hookers). I think that Severian's interior monologue is a good representation of an aggressive man (and maybe a sexually violent man) because, let's face it, he doesn't think about it that much, he just does it, and I think that is pretty realistic. Do you think Mike Tyson thinks about anything when he beats the crap out of people or molests them? (here about that thing in Cuba over New Years?) He doesn't even remember the rules of boxing while he's in the ring. Just think of Mike Tyson telling you about his experience in the brothel where the girl said she'd scream and he knew there was nobody around, and I think you'll come close to what you get in that scene in Shadow of the Torturer.

Andy Robertson — 05 Jan 2002, 08:20 · follows maa32

----- Original Message -----

From: "maa32" <maa32 at dana.ucc.nau.edu>

I cannot agree with you on your characterization of a nerdy celibate,

I wasn't talking about Wolfe's private life at all, but about the type of fictional character he is comfortable with! (and maybe this is a good point to resolve that we will stay away from any discussion of Wolfe's private life).

But yes, he is a Nerd. Nerd calleth unto nerd, yea even across the oceans of space. I can tell.

Nerd power! Nerd Pride!!

--- *** ---

Seriously, he is a man whose energies primary flow into his craft, not into mastering others.

This again is characteristic of what he means by "the settled customary goodness of the Shire". That it is only in a society whose politics is quiet - where political forms are fixed and settled by

custom, and absorb only a small fraction of the energies of men - that such men can thrive.

This is why he wrote rather unconvincingly about Severian, who genuinely enjoyed power and domination, but much more convincingly about Silk - a man who would rather have remained unimportant and small.

especially from PEACE. Weer molests an underage girl!

Weer is a batchelor who has missed the love of his life. His occasional sexual adventures are miserable and unsatisfying.

That underage girl with her "magic ring" is one of the saddest and most accurate portrayals of promiscuous femininity I have ever read (and yes, I've met older women exactly like that, even slept with them)

He calls sex
absolutely ordinary, going on all the time.

Compensation because he isn't getting any

Come on, all Wolfe's females are
close to hookers (some are sympathetic hookers).

Good point. But repentant evil is always easier to portray than sympathetic good. Mary Magdelene comes to mind.

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interior monologue is a good representation of an aggressive man (and
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much, he just does it, and I think that is pretty realistic.

I will expand slightly

In my experience aggressive people are usually fundamentally logical people who fight because they have to or gain advantage from doing so. They are not incapable of making constructive alliances or of affection. They are, in fact, normal. Hildegrin is a good example, well portrayed. Auk is another in the same mould.

However, Severian was a picture of someone far more complex than that. He is not simply moderately violent by inclination or practical necessity - he is a man trained into lethal violence from birth, and trained *not to feel anything when he performs violence* from birth.

It is very hard to make such a person convincing, because we have no echo of their interior life within us. All of us have been in childish scuffles at least. None of us have ever been Torturers.

Wolfe did as well as he possibly could, by making Severian utterly hard and cold, and obviously badly damaged, psychologically. With Silk, Wolfe portrayed someone far closer to normality, and correspondingly more believable.

Andy Robertson