

living dolls

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 26 Sep 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3468>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Andy Robertson — 26 Sep 2002, 19:23

IMHO the real root is the nursery/toy/steadfast tin solder vibe seen well in "The War Beneath The Tree".

As I reflect, it seems to me that all Wolfe's artificial people- from the chems of the Long Sun, through the adult-sized puppets of <story whose name I forget>, through Mr Million and the Horars (note name of tank), are, more than anything else, to be understood as walking *toys*.

Gods' toys, maybe. But essentially toys.

Hence their sexual impotence.

Toys have nothing between their legs, and neither do robots, however "superior" they may be in other ways.

In the Long Sun books this is hypostatized into the difficulty the Chems have in reproducing, by their non-sexual, but plausible, means.

There is no reason why they should have this difficulty - it could be arranged otherwise - but they must have it, because they are toys, and toys do not have babies.

And also this is the key to their personal characteristics and the odd limitations of the way Wolfe uses them.

Stop thinking of them as robots.

They are dolls! Big grown-up dolls!,

Nurse and housemaid dolls for the female chems, soldier dolls for the male ones.

hartshorn

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

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at HotPOP.com>

To: <urth at urth.net>

Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2002 7:43 PM

The Tin Woodman may have been an *inspiration* to Wolfe's images of synthetic people, but can the connection be drawn any more tightly?

-- Crush

Michael Andre-Driussi — 26 Sep 2002, 19:55 · follows Andy Robertson

Hartshorn wrote about living dolls:

As I reflect, it seems to me that all Wolfe's artificial people- from the chems of the Long Sun, through the adult-sized puppets of <story whose name I forget>, through Mr Million and the Horars (note name of tank), are, more than anything else, to be understood as walking *toys*.

The story whose name he forgot might be:

"The Toy Theater" (most likely)

"It's Very Clean" (less likely)

Name of tank, noted: Pinocchio.

=mantis=

Jerry Friedman — 27 Sep 2002, 20:49 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

--- Andy Robertson <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk> wrote:

IMHO the real root is the nursery/toy/steadfast tin solder vibe seen well in "The War Beneath The Tree".

As I reflect, it seems to me that all Wolfe's artificial people- from the chems of the Long Sun, through the adult-sized puppets of <story whose name I forget>, through Mr Million and the Horars (note name of tank), are, more than anything else, to be understood as walking *toys*.

Gods' toys, maybe. But essentially toys.

Hence their sexual impotence.

Toys have nothing between their legs, and neither do robots, however "superior" they may be in other ways.

In the Long Sun books this is hypostatized into the difficulty the Chems have in reproducing, by their non-sexual, but plausible, means.

There is no reason why they should have this difficulty - it could be arranged otherwise - but they must have it, because they are toys, and toys do not have babies.

And also this is the key to their personal characteristics and the odd limitations of the way Wolfe uses them.

Stop thinking of them as robots.

They are dolls! Big grown-up dolls!,

Nurse and housemaid dolls for the female chems, soldier dolls for the male ones.

I think you're right that this is how their creators think of them. I don't think Severian and Silk think of them as toys at all.

As for how we should think of them, I think you're right that in some artistic sense they're connected with various fictional toys you and others have mentioned. But I think we're supposed to see them as equivalent to humans (and Neighbors), just as we're supposed to see the human characters as humans and not, though Severian remarks people often do, see them as clients.

You can certainly add Dr. Talos to your list, by the way. What about the homunculus in _Citadel_? Or the aquastors and Hierodules?

Jerry Friedman

Andy Robertson — 28 Sep 2002, 00:47 · follows Jerry Friedman

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

From: "Jerry Friedman" <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com>

I think you're right that this is how their creators think of them.

Wolfe is their creator, of course

As for how we should think of them, I think you're right that in some artistic sense they're connected with various fictional toys you and others have mentioned. But I think we're supposed to see them as equivalent to humans (and Neighbors), just as we're supposed to see the human characters as humans and not, though Severian remarks people often do, see them as clients.

Yes. When I read Wolfe, sometimes I feel I am in there, rendered into something not a doll, but a human character, but yet as much part of his world as if I was written by him

You can certainly add Dr. Talos to your list, by the way. What about the homunculus in _Citadel_? Or the aquastors and Hierodules?

It's complex. The gods see these dolls, as dolls only. But how does God see us?

Where is the division between toy, doll, robot, domestic animal, underperson, child, created being, and beloved and redeemed Child, to be drawn?

So Wolfe tells us - and Smith, too, in his way.

hartshorn