

RAH sex

The Urth list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 21 Apr 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3958>

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Alice K. Turner — 21 Apr 2003, 02:50

From: "Jeff Wilson" <jwilson at io.com>
quoting me:

Wrong. No one ever, ever, including hack porn writers, EVER, EVER wrote worse sex than Heinlein. With possibly the momentary exception of a long-forgotten 9-day wonder of the 60s or 70s called -The Harrad Experiment-. And I am something of an expert here. I should probably say,
for members of this group, that IMO Sturgeon wrote bad sex too, though not,
by leagues, in the same abysmal class.

I don't find sprunging nipples to be an inappropriate idiom, and neither did my ex-wife. The spiggots remark I will give you, but I find Clarke's depiction of sex to be poorer storytelling than Heinlein's overall.

Have you considered why she's your ex-wife, hmmm? No, seriously, none of the Golden Agers could address sex; you could say that they were trained out of it by convention, and by the time things loosened up it was too late for them. Clarke had the further problem of the het stuff being a bit alien, hence indeed "poor storytelling." But only RAH was actively offensive in a horrible lame, leering, really repulsive sort of way--for me it's that chalk screaming across a blackboard syndrome to a degree I've never felt with another writer in any genre. Ask your ex if she likes any of RAH's later books (anything after -Stranger-) and if so why.

Perhaps I should add, being rather outnumbered by gender here, that I do not find Wolfe viscerally offensive sexually. There are rape scenes, yes, but they are not gloated over and they seem to me in context. The worst rape is that of Seawrack, and that is certainly agonized over, and also has a certain supernatural aspect.

-alga

Allan Lloyd — 21 Apr 2003, 08:09 · follows Alice K. Turner

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

From: "Alice K. Turner" <aturner6 at nyc.rr.com>
To: <urth at urth.net>
Sent: Monday, April 21, 2003 3:50 AM
Subject: (urth) Re: RAH sex

From: "Jeff Wilson" <jwilson at io.com>
quoting me:

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I couldn't agree more about the creepy attitude of RAH, but for sheer badly judged and inappropriate writing, the worst must be the childbirth scene in one of the post Stranger in a Strange Land books, where the girl who is about to die in agony looks up to her partner and says "Sorry about the sound effects, daddy".

I find it hard to take any writer who is so unaware of human feelings or emotions seriously. Didn't Harry Harrison remark to Brian Aldiss after reading "Starship Troopers" that RAH had obviously never seen any real fighting in the war. By his general treatment of pain and suffering, mostly dealt with with a macho shrug and "there goes my leg but, what the hell, I've got another one" attitude, I get the impression of a man who has never seen real pain, or been touched by real suffering.

With Wolfe, the one rape that always affects me deeply is of the child in the Latro books. This happens between chapters and off-page, but it is a mark of Wolfe's skill that he can still make it significant and moving. I'm not altogether happy about the number of rapes in Wolfe's work, but that is part of an article on women in Wolfe's work which I keep planning to write someday.

Allan

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 21 Apr 2003, 19:09 · follows Allan Lloyd

... But only RAH was actively offensive in a horrible lame, leering, really repulsive sort of way--for me it's that chalk screaming across a blackboard syndrome to a degree I've never felt with another writer in any genre ...

H'mmm. While I agree that RAH's writing about sex (both in the concrete and the abstract) is very little short of abysmal, it's never affected me that way: possibly because I _am_ a het male who grew up with RAH's writing. Two books, and two alone, really offended me on first reading: FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD, for reasons too numerous to mention -- though I have since concluded that RAH never intended what he seems to intend with that book, it still is what it is -- and "THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST--", for reasons primarily of sexual politics ("Husband! What a heart-filling word." Icky. Double icky.)

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Neither of which seems to me to help: it is indeed far and away the most brutal of Wolfe's rape scenes, and made worse by the fact that the victim chooses to blame herself ... which is part and parcel of that "supernatural aspect," come to think of it. That whole scene bothers me, perhaps, more than anything else in Wolfe, which is saying quite a lot; I think there has to be some kind of meaning to this scene which I have never grasped, and I'm not sure I _want_ to.

Jeff Wilson — 22 Apr 2003, 00:18 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

From:

"Alice K. Turner" <aturner6 at nyc.rr.com>

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She's not a Heinlein reader, she's damn near a Heinlein character! She described her own sexual responses similarly, with her "boing" being a close cousin to Deety's onomotopoeia, in addition to red hair and a certain response to corporeal punishment.

A Golden Ager who did less than cringeworthy sex references would be Simak; a prostitute is one of the supporting characters in THEY'D RATHER BE RIGHT, and the topic comes up more than once.

Jeff Wilson - <http://www.io.com/~jwilson>

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