

more on Wolfe females

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 10 Sep 2003

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maa32 — 10 Sep 2003, 06:03

Interestingly enough, I was just talking with my girlfriend the other day about Wolfe's portrayal of women. She says that Thecla influences how Severian treats (and writes about!) Dorcas and Agia, casting Agia (who Severian actually likes) as a villainous wench and Dorcas as little miss perfect. My girlfriend went on to say that the only good woman character that Wolfe has written was Agia. She says girls really think like that, and that Wolfe finally got the "shame" aspect of it right (re - breast hanging out in Botanic Gardens). She said Thecla was too idealized, but I rationalized that away by claiming that Thecla IS the narrator and that the idealization is a distorted self-image.

She doesn't like Mint, but thinks Chenille is OK.

Frankly, all this talk of Severian not being a good guy is disheartening. He's ok. He helps children with pustules on their faces and only hesitates a little bit when saving women from rabid animal-people, and then only because he has no reason to help the lady. Another interesting thing is that Chrissy (my girlfriend) claims that Severian's care for little Severian was exactly Thecla's feelings for Big Severian coming through (or at least her maternal instincts). Chrissy also said that perhaps Severian's misogyny comes in large part from Thecla herself, who is a jealous lover. Severian is in control of his body, but he can't engage his emotions. When he thinks that Dorcas and Jolenta were lesbians, it is because his woman self is looking back at the memory of coupling and categorizing them as homosexuals.

Also, it was my opinion that perhaps Severian's narrative insistence on Vodalus as an influence on his life could have been "highlighted" and made more important by Thecla-as-narrator. She obviously had allegiance for Vodalus, since she used all his buzzwords.

In any case, Chrissy claims that the only interesting relationship between Severian and a woman is the one with Agia, and they don't even get it on.

While we are on the subject of unreliable narration, there is a scene in Lake of the Long Sun where Gulo talks to Remora about meeting Silk, Chenille and Auk in the arbor of the manteion when he first goes to spy on them. His version of the meeting is NOT like the real version 30 pages previously. He says that Silk was talking about Gulo when Gulo himself came up, and there is no indication that he says this to Chenille in the actual text. Is this meant to cast doubt on the validity of the rest of the narrative? What can we do without external evidence? Not too much, I think.

Oh well. Enough for now.
Marc Aramini