

5HC : Free People

The Urth list — 5 messages, 5 voices, 04 Feb 2005

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4360>

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Jim Raylor — 04 Feb 2005, 19:29

The one and only argument that might be considered pro-slavery that I can recall from Wolfe offhand is the reminder that *for the ancients* a certain amount slavery was actually the humane way to eliminate a conquered city as a potential threat - the alternative being wholesale slaughter.

I don't think that could be held as a pro-slavery argument in anything like this context.

Wolfe sets his face like granite against this slavery, in book after book.

I agree that he often discusses slavery.
Often he submits arguments in favour of it.
I think he understood that slavery was not always a bad thing... if the slave was willing.

=== message truncated ===

Consider Io in the Soldier books who pretend she is given to Latro as a slave to avoid a worse fate.
In VRT the interrogator argues that those who are dependant on government for healthcare are slaves.
The slave at the end of that story is complicit.
Or take Bruno in TIODD!!!
I am sure GW also poses the arguments for slavery in the Sun series and if you missed them then I am not sure what to say.

Nevertheless I agree that GW disapproves of coercional slavery when there are better alternatives.
Gene seeks to build on what the Etruscans wrought, not to destroy their memory.

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<http://prisoner143.50megs.com/>

I am not a number I am a free person!

James Wynn — 05 Feb 2005, 09:46 · in reply to Jim Raylor

I am sure GW also poses the arguments for slavery in the Sun series and if you missed them then I am not sure what to say.

"Posing arguments for" and advocating to two very different things. In The Short Sun, Marrow offers *justifications* for slavery, but Wolfe presents Marrow as part of the problem on Blue, not the wise solution-maker. Remember that many people were captured and impressed in to slavery as soon as they got off the ships.

The "slaves" in The Long Sun are the chems, and it is difficult to see any aspect of their existence as anything but heartbreaking...I direct you to Silk's discussion with Horn on the airship or Hammerstone's conversation with Silk.

So, while Wolfe may POSE arguments in the Silk segment, I don't think he ARGUES for it. Even in Soldier of the Mist, lo PRETENDS to be Latro's slave but he consistently denies she is. This is not slavery. What she wants is not be his slave but his lover (which might have some embedded commentary on romantic love, but not slavery). I don't know what terrible life she was supposedly escaping by RUNNING AWAY FROM HER MASTERS with Latro, but her 'slavery' to Latro did not protect her from a Fate Worse Than Death, since she was eventually raped by Helots and sold into slavery to the Spartans.

In the Soldier stories Wolfe is only attempting to present the Greeks they way they saw themselves. He NEVER justified slavery. He is said that modern people should not feel morally SUPERIOR for not having slavery considering the Holocaust, Khmer Rouge, Stalin, Mao, Dresden, etc etc etc.

~ Crush

Chris — 05 Feb 2005, 11:44 · in reply to James Wynn

I have to agree with Crush, and I'd also point out that even this much is using a very loose (and possibly just wrong) definition of "posing an argument for". In my mind this entails presenting an attempt at justification. Yet while slavery occurs in these stories, the reasons it happens rarely if ever qualify as an attempt at justifying it.

lo decides to be Latro's slave in order to avoid being someone else's slave. Nowhere does she really have a realistic chance not to be a slave; her choice is between masters.

There is no attempt to justify slavery in the Short Sun - it exists, but is straightforwardly presented as an evil.

In Long Sun and New Sun there are perhaps speculations on who is or is not a slave. This, too, doesn't amount to an attempt to justify slavery.

In the Soldier books I am willing to grant Wolfe may be making a slightly stronger point than even Crush generously allows, and that is the historical one I mentioned earlier: rebuilding an army was much easier in those times than now (the weapons were simpler), and to have long-term security against a defeated enemy you had to somehow remove their ability to rebuild. This meant either mass slaughter or forced relocation and/or slavery. It can be argued

that slavery at that time was the more humane option.

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Andy Robertson — 05 Feb 2005, 12:53 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn writes:

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I think Wolfe might occasionally be trying to say that "honest slavery" is better than the things that replace it in his more dystopian stories.

There are things that never **call** themselves theft, slavery and genocide, just as Nicholas' murder is "called" therapy.

Georg Schönegger — 06 Feb 2005, 00:30 · in reply to Chris

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Since slaves often became part of the owners' economy (or military), it could be argued that the relations were in fact two-edged. During the growth of the Roman Empire, it became more and more dependent on slave-labor. In fact, in later centuries, big parts of the Roman economy were run by ex-slaves. The nobility's children were educated by (greek) slaves. "Slavery is a mode of cultural transmission", says Kenneth Toomey in "Earthly Powers", and it's a fact. So, while accepting the moral evil in slavery, we still may look at the factual relations between owner(s) and owned as a little more complex.

Georg