

Wolfe: Misogynist or Realist?

The Urth list — 45 messages, 17 voices, 17 Oct 2006

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4733>

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Jack Redelfs — 17 Oct 2006, 20:32

Vis-a-vis "The Death of Doctor Island," webster.com gives one definition of offensive thusly: "giving painful or unpleasant sensations." So, it appears that a work can be deemed offensive without any question of the authors personal motivations or opinions.

It's just that Wolfe seems to be really fond of including misogynist characters and situations in his stories.

I think that's simply his brutal realism. I never read an author who was less interested in easy escapes and happy endings. His characters suffer, and they suffer a lot. Look at history and the world around you. Is misogyny the exception or the rule in human relations? The bad guys do very bad things to women, and they usually get away with it.

This view of the world is cognizant with Wolfe's catholicism. The devil rules the world of flesh, and God rules the world of spirit. It makes his stories more gripping and his more characters more real. When I read about characters that float through life as though in a cloud, without any pain, I wonder "why should I care?"

Daniel D Jones — 17 Oct 2006, 21:50 · in reply to Jack Redelfs

On Tuesday 17 October 2006 16:32, Jack Redelfs wrote:
Vis-a-vis "The Death of Doctor Island," webster.com gives one definition of offensive thusly: "giving painful or unpleasant sensations."
So, it appears that a work can be deemed offensive without any question of the authors personal motivations or opinions.

It seems to me that there is an unavoidable connotation of disapproval and an associated blame or culpability when one describes an action (or the result of an action) as offensive.

It's just that Wolfe seems to be really fond of including misogynist characters and situations in his stories.

I think that's simply his brutal realism. I never read an author who was less interested in easy escapes and happy endings. His characters suffer, and they suffer a lot. Look at history and the world around you. Is misogyny the exception or the rule in human relations? The bad guys do very bad things to women, and they usually get away with it.

Agreed. The reader is supposed to be offended by the actions of certain characters or the environment in which some characters are immersed.

This view of the world is cognizant with Wolfe's catholicism. The devil rules the world of flesh, and God rules the world of spirit. It makes his stories more gripping and his more characters more real. When I read about characters that float through life as though in a cloud, without any pain, I wonder "why should I care?"

Agreed again. Literature is driven by conflict. It's one of it's most fundamental characteristics. Without conflict, you don't have a story. Wolfe is simply very good at creating powerful, visceral

conflicts that affect our most primitive emotions.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 17 Oct 2006, 22:15 · in reply to Daniel D Jones

A distinction here.

Most kinds of stories, and certainly the kind Wolfe writes, need to have people in them who do bad things -- even unambiguously, horribly bad things.

The question in my mind is what attitude the writer takes toward those things. NOT, I hasten to say, the narrator, but the writer, including the writer's handpuppet, the Narrative Voice. Does the text dwell lovingly on the details of each new atrocity (as does, say, Clive Barker; but then, Barker is writing horror when he does this)? Is it described in a clinical and detached manner?

Some ways of approaching an action in a text, even when the narrator speaks disapprovingly of that act, bespeak another attitude on the part of the writer. Orson Scott Card's constant fantasies about the torture, death, and castration of young boys eventually led me to be unable to read him anymore, not because I have any particular reason to believe that Scott wants to torture, kill, and castrate young boys, but because I grew too conscious of the blatant way in which he was using that particular tactic to manipulate my emotions. (It didn't help that I've seen him speak at length about how deliberately he does it.)

Then there's the narrator in certain kinds of porn (often the most sadistic) who constantly bewails the terrible things happening to the female "protagonist:" the "Justine" syndrome.

I'm not suggesting that Wolfe falls into either of these categories.

I AM saying that I have come to find the sheer quantity of violence against women in his narratives disturbing, and I think it needs further thinking-about by people who understand this sort of thing better than I do.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

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Tragedy is when I cut my finger. Comedy is when you walk into an open sewer and die.

- Mel Brooks

Jack Redelfs — 17 Oct 2006, 22:52 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Some ways of approaching an action in a text, even when the narrator speaks disapprovingly of that act, bespeak another attitude on the part of the writer.

I'm not sure I agree with is, or rather, yes, I agree with it but interpreting an author's "Narrative Voice" seems like a very contentious and subjective thing.

I've read more Gene Wolfe books than any other author, and Card comes in second, he's not my second favorite SF author, just very consistent (he's somewhere in the range of #11-20). You're right that Card has a sadistic streak, but I think you overstate your case, especially in regards to castration. I'm having a tough time recalling any castrations

in the novels. Maybe it was in his short fiction, most of it written quite early. Maybe you've mostly read his early stuff, like Hart's Hope, Treason, and The Worthing Chronicles? He

got a lot "softer" as he aged, although he also became a lot more inconsistent.

I tend to think that part of the reason that Card and Wolfe are often seen as vicious, misogynistic, or misanthropic, is this: both writers are heavily influenced by the Old Testament.

David DiGiacomo — 17 Oct 2006, 22:59 · follows Jack Redelfs

It's just that Wolfe seems to be really fond of including misogynist characters and situations in his stories.

What I would say is that his woman characters are often foolish or evil, creating situations where misogyny is apparently justified.

Compare Wolfe to Iain M. Banks, who also has a penchant for including "misogynist characters and situations" (not to mention torture) in his writing, but to completely different effect.

Maybe it's not fair to bring this up, but when I read "Letters Home" I was struck by Wolfe's lack of empathy for the Korean prostitutes he encounters. He was very young at the time, but it's hard not to draw a connection to his later fiction.

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 17 Oct 2006, 23:13 · in reply to Jack Redelfs

H'mmm. Yes, my reading of Card is all quite early -- I think the last one I read was "Wyrms." I'm pretty sure I remember castration as theme in "Hart's Hope" and "Songmaster" -- I may have the title there a bit off.

Please note that I do not see Wolfe as vicious, misanthropic, or misogynistic; I've read most of his books multiple times. It's just that I see something specific that bothers me.

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Mo Holkar / UKG — 18 Oct 2006, 10:28 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

At 23:15 17/10/2006, Dan'I wrote:

I AM saying that I have come to find the sheer quantity of violence against women in his narratives disturbing, and I think it needs further thinking-about by people who understand this sort of thing better than I do.

I am not such a person, unfortunately... but I think it's interesting to compare Wolfe in this respect with another of my favourite SF writers, Philip Dick. In much of Dick's mature work there's this recurrent figure of the beautiful woman with long, dark hair who maliciously betrays the love of the protagonist. You don't have to be a psychoanalyst to suspect that Dick had some particular neurosis he was exercising there, particularly when you note that he formed unhappy marriages with a number of women also fitting that description. Positive images of women to put alongside these negative ones are very rare -- so I think it's fair to describe this writing as having a misogynistic trait, albeit a fairly tightly-focused one.

The handling of women in Wolfe's writing seems to me to be more broadly negative. He is quite capable of creating positive women characters, but he seems rarely to choose to do so. Instead his women characters often seem to be defined by their status as one kind or another of sexual object. While I think it's dangerous to impute opinions and beliefs to a writer on the basis of

what they write, you do have to wonder what's going through his mind as he's composing some of the passages.

I know very few women who enjoy reading Wolfe, which is a pity but not really a surprise.

Mo

Fred Kiesche — 18 Oct 2006, 12:14 · follows Mo Holkar / UKG

Greetings:

On several recent threads.

Stories aren't always happy. Stories don't always tell us what we already know or feel comfortable with. So, Wolfe is just practicing his craft.

Author's don't always equal their stories.

And...to quote from The Master, Himself:

"Read. No matter what you may long to believe, you cannot become a writer without tens of thousands of hours of reading. You cannot please the master until you have been a master and know what is pleasing."

So, hmmm, maybe he has detected a misogynist streak in literature, and, therefore, by extension, in society overall?

As for Mr. Twain, he lived in a different era. He may have reflected some of the attributes of that era. However, I cannot think of somebody who wrote such a wonderful book as "Huckleberry Finn" with such a wonderfully sympathetic character as Jim, as a true racist.

(Oddly enough, one champion of the anti-slavery movement lived on his property in CT.)

Fred Kiesche (FPK3)

My books are water; those of great geniuses are wine. Everybody drinks water. (Mark Twain, "Notebook")

Over 7,000 postings served! See The Eternal Golden Braid (<http://theeternalgoldenbraid.blogspot.com/>).

b sharp — 18 Oct 2006, 12:35 · follows Fred Kiesche

I'll chime in by suggesting that there is a continuum here, as for most human characteristics. I suggest the poles of the continuum are not misogyny and reality but rather misogyny and chivalry. On one end there are men who fear and/or loathe women, on the other end are men who feel women deserve a higher degree of respect, protection and caring than men (yes,

sorry, Dan! I'm accusing you of being a gentleman). I'm not sure it is accurate to call the middle "realism". And I'm not sure each person has a lot of choice on where they fall on the scale.

I notice the discussion has focused solely on Wolfe's treatment of women rather than an objective comparison of whether he treats his female characters worse than his male characters. It would seem there are other chivalrous gentlemen in the room. Are there any thoughts on whether Wolfe treats his male characters better than women? (and no fair using quantitative measures, Wolfe makes it clear he identifies strongly with his protagonists so naturally they will mostly be men).

As for most human continuums (continua) of values, it can be uncomfortable when one person is placed in close contact with someone else who resides a great distance away on the continuum. I think we can all agree Wolfe is writing from his heart and his deeper feelings about women are expressed. Dan's expressed view was also heartfelt and I take his use of the term "misogynist" to be a recognition of the distance between himself and Wolfe on this issue, not a flat condemnation.

Daniel D. Jones raises an important question: Is Wolfe's "misogyny" presented in a way which is meant to inspire outrage in a reader, or a recognition of how things "really" are? I think people are disagreeing on this.

Mo's observation that few women seem to become Wolfe fanatics is germane. There was an Alice who appeared on this list in its early days and I think I remember a complaint or two about Wolfe's presentation of women from her. This suggests to me that Wolfe is not so successful if he is trying to inspire outrage or empathy in regard to women's issues. I don't think he is trying to.

Jack's observation of connection between identification with the Old Testament and mysogyny was interesting. While the Middle East is generally known for being "misogynist" on the scale (regardless of faith) the early days of Christianity and Roman Catholicism show an even stronger vein, in my estimation. In researching some of Wolfe's saint names I was really struck by how many of the early female saints were canonized for virtues of virginity, chastity, fighting off sexual advances, dressing as a man to avoid sex, etc.

Lastly, I'll note again that it seems to me that Wolfe is writing from his heart and I suspect few of his devoted readers would sign a petition requesting he change his attitude.

-bsharp

Matthew King — 18 Oct 2006, 15:22 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On Oct 17, 2006, at 6:13 PM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:
H'mmm. Yes, my reading of Card is all quite early -- I think the last one I read was "Wyrms." I'm pretty sure I remember castration as theme in "Hart's Hope" and "Songmaster" -- I may have the title there a bit off.

In Songmaster you might say the main character is psychologically castrated: part of the training of the Songbirds is a conditioning against orgasm, resulting in some sort of violent, painful reaction. The confused young man who initiates a sexual encounter with the Songbird is physically castrated (and IIRC, lobotomized) as a punishment.

Castration is a punishment offered in Hart's Hope, but I don't recall it being thematic in any way.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 18 Oct 2006, 18:06 · in reply to Mo Holkar / UKG

On 10/18/06, Mo Holkar / UKG <lists at ukg.co.uk> wrote:

I am not such a person, unfortunately... but I think it's interesting to compare Wolfe in this respect with another of my favourite SF writers, Philip Dick. In much of Dick's mature work there's this recurrent figure of the beautiful woman with long, dark hair who maliciously betrays the love of the protagonist. You don't have to be a psychoanalyst to suspect that Dick had some particular neurosis he was exercising there, particularly when you note that he formed unhappy marriages with a number of women also fitting that description.

For what it's worth, Dick himself eventually decided that the image of "the dark-haired woman" in his writing was all about his twin sister, who died shortly after birth.

Positive images of women to put alongside these negative ones are very rare -- so I think it's fair to describe this writing as having a misogynistic trait, albeit a fairly tightly-focused one.

Positive images of women in Dick? H'mmm. I think most of his characters, male and female, are "positive," just not "heroic." If you'd said this about, say, Barry Malzberg, now...

The handling of women in Wolfe's writing seems to me to be more broadly negative. He is quite capable of creating positive women characters, but he seems rarely to choose to do so. Instead his women characters often seem to be defined by their status as one kind or another of sexual object. While I think it's dangerous to impute opinions and beliefs to a writer on the basis of what they write, you do have to wonder what's going through his mind as he's composing some of the passages.

Yep. That's totally the direction I'm heading in these days.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

Tragedy is when I cut my finger. Comedy is when you walk into an open sewer and die.

- Mel Brooks

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 18 Oct 2006, 18:17 · in reply to b sharp

Point of order.

On 10/18/06, b sharp <bsharpoflat at hotmail.com> wrote:

I think we can all agree Wolfe is

writing from his heart and his deeper feelings about women are expressed.

Dan'l's expressed view was also heartfelt and I take his use of the term

"misogynist" to be a recognition of the distance between himself and Wolfe on this issue, not a flat condemnation.

I did not use the term "misogynist" except once, and that was to specifically state that I did NOT consider Wolfe one. I believe it was David who brought the term in -- specifically, he spoke of "blatant misogyny" in regards to certain themes (which I DO find disturbing; make no mistake) in Wolfe's oeuvre.

(Nor am I at all clear on why you accuse me of being a gentleman, based on this coinscription; nor, for that matter, of why it would be something I should consider an "accusation," as opposed, to, say, a "compliment.")

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- Mel Brooks

Daniel D Jones — 18 Oct 2006, 20:50 · in reply to b sharp

On Wednesday 18 October 2006 08:35, b sharp wrote:

Daniel D. Jones raises an important question: Is Wolfe's "misogyny" presented in a way which is meant to inspire outrage in a reader, or a recognition of how things "really" are? I think people are disagreeing on this.

Mo's observation that few women seem to become Wolfe fanatics is germane. There was an Alice who appeared on this list in its early days and I think I remember a complaint or two about Wolfe's presentation of women from her. This suggests to me that Wolfe is not so successful if he is trying to inspire outrage or empathy in regard to women's issues. I don't think he is trying to.

To tie this into another recent thread, does it matter what his intent is? The story stands or falls on its own merits, not the author's intent. If intent does matter, then, while Wolfe may not be attempting to inspire outrage or empathy, I don't think he's trying to encourage or praise misogyny either.

In the particular story DoDri, I don't think misogyny was a theme of the story so much as was the value of human beings, regardless of gender. Behaviorism and similar theories which treated human beings as machine-like automatons were in vogue at the time the story was written. I'd strongly suspect that this is more relevant to interpreting the story than is the treatment of women.

timothy fletcher — 18 Oct 2006, 21:08 · in reply to b sharp

First, I don't know if this is acceptable to others here, but I've always seen Wolfe's somewhat narrow and negative portrayal of women as a part of his being so ingrained in revisiting old science fiction cliches (I can't figure out how to do accents). In a lot of old science fiction and fantasy, at least that I've read, female characters are shallow and seem to be more of an outlet for the protagonist's sexual adventures and companionship needs than a realistic person. That may seem a narrow view of science fiction, but I think it's at least somewhat valid. In Lord of the Rings, for instance, the women are almost completely background characters (with some mild exceptions that were brought more to the foreground in the films). As someone said, he obviously is capable of creating deep and complex female characters, which makes me think he purposely does not, especially since I have seen him in interviews so heavily enforce the importance of characterization.

Second, and this is slightly off topic, but a response to b. sharp's statement: Jack's observation of connection between identification with the Old Testament and mysogyny was interesting. While the Middle East is generally known for being "misogynist" on the scale (regardless of faith) the early days of Christianity and Roman Catholicism show an even stronger vein, in my estimation. In researching some of Wolfe's saint names I was really struck by how many of the early female saints were canonized for virtues of virginity, chastity, fighting off sexual advances, dressing as a man to avoid sex, etc.

If I may respectfully disagree (if you are saying, as it seems to me, that early Christianity was in some way misogynistic), having some background in the study of early christianity (2 relevant B.A.'s), early Christianity was a haven to women. In fact, there is some evidence that early Christianity actually raised the role of women. They were treated more as human beings. This is discussed in Stark's Rise of Christianity, I believe, but I've even seen it in some fundamentalist histories. I agree about the early female saints, but I'm not sure that's much sign of misogyny since chastity was important for both early males and females (interestingly enough, from what I remember, some early vains of gnosticism (well, some scholars would disagree in calling it true gnosticism), and possibly some later, believed that since the spirit was good and the body evil, and the spirit more important than flesh, they were free to follow there own sexual desires to the fullest, which is something Paul disputes in I Corinthians).

OK, you can flame me now.

Jeff Wilson — 19 Oct 2006, 03:17 · in reply to Fred Kiesche

Fred Kiesche wrote:

As for Mr. Twain, he lived in a different era. He may have reflected some of the attributes of that era. However, I cannot think of somebody who wrote such a wonderful book as "Huckleberry Finn" with such a wonderfully sympathetic character as Jim, as a true racist.

Twain had no problem with black people; he paid for more than one to attend college, among other philanthropies. However, he had little use for Indians, other than as the unsympathetic villain, Injun Joe in _The Adventures of Tom Sawyer_.

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

don doggett — 19 Oct 2006, 07:03 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

--- Dan'I Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:

I AM saying that I have come to find the sheer quantity of violence against women in his narratives disturbing,

But not one iota as disturbing as the true acts of violence against women perpetuated daily in the world. Heck man, two women were killed by abusive spouses/boyfriends within a year on the street I lived on as a teenager on and I've called the cops twice on a neighbor who was beating up his girlfriend just this year. It's definitely a literary obsession of Wolfe's but that's a writer's job, to push and then push harder. Good for Wolfe for disturbing you, and better for you for being disturbed. Perhaps too, there is a misidentification of chauvanism with misogyny? Just thinking out loud.

Don

Nicholas Gevers — 19 Oct 2006, 07:40 · follows don doggett

It'll be interesting to see what people think of Wolfe's main female character in *Soldier of Sidon*, the "singing girl" Myt'sereu, who is prone to drinking and promiscuity. There's also a new Wolfe story, "Six

From Atlantis", which takes a number of shots at

Robert E. Howard's treatment of women; whether Wolfe is being ironic or not is up to the reader to decide.

--Nick Gevers.

Mo Holkar / UKG — 19 Oct 2006, 09:08 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

At 19:06 18/10/2006, Dan'l wrote:

For what it's worth, Dick himself eventually decided that the image of "the dark-haired woman" in his writing was all about his twin sister, who died shortly after birth.

Mmm... I've never found that a psychologically convincing explanation for this particular aspect of his writing (although clearly the missing-twin theme does emerge elsewhere). It seems to me that Dick shied away from confronting the influence of his relationship with his rather domineering mother.

But maybe it's wrong of me to feel it's OK to psychoanalyse Dick because he's not around any more, when I'd be reluctant to examine Wolfe the same way ;-)

Positive images of women to put alongside these negative > ones are very rare -- so I think it's fair to describe this writing > as having a misogynistic trait, albeit a fairly tightly-focused one.

Positive images of women in Dick? H'mmm. I think most of his characters, male and female, are "positive," just not "heroic." If you'd said this about, say, Barry Malzberg, now...

Sure, you're quite right. I was using a lazy shorthand of implication -- meant to say something like "images of women engaging positively with the male protagonist", as contrasted to the dark-haired woman's activities.

Mo

=====
Live dirt, up a sidetrack carted, is a putrid evil.
=====

b sharp — 19 Oct 2006, 17:35 · follows Mo Holkar / UKG

Dan'l writes:

I did not use the term "misogynist" except once, and that was to specifically state that I did NOT >consider Wolfe one. I believe it was David who brought the term in -- specifically, he spoke of "blatant misogyny" in regards to certain themes (which I DO find disturbing; make no mistake) in >Wolfe's oeuvre. (Nor am I at all clear on why you accuse me of being a gentleman, based on this >coinscription; nor, for that matter, of why it would be something I should consider >an "accusation," as opposed, to, say, a "compliment.")

Sorry Dan! I had thought you used the term misogynist to describe Wolfe's scenarios (not Wolfe) but it was the other Dan, Daniel D Jones in a discourse with Jeff Wilson. Accusing you of being a gentleman was my attempt at a wry, ironic compliment which failed miserably as do so many of my attempts. That said, there are some people (a minority surely) in the world who do consider the connotations associated with the term "gentleman" less than complimentary.

(Thanks to Jeff Wilson for bringing up A Boy and His Dog! Couldn't be an SF misogyny discussion without mentioning that one eh?)

Daniel D Jones says:

In the particular story DoDrl, I don't think misogyny was a theme of the story so much as was the >value of human beings, regardless of gender.

and

does it matter what his intent is? The story stands or falls on its own merits, not the author's >intent. If intent does matter, then, while Wolfe may not be attempting to inspire outrage or >empathy, I don't think he's trying to encourage or praise misogyny either.

Thought experiment: How would your feelings as a reader change if the murdered person in DoDrl had been a man? If Thecla's or Hunna's or Morwenna's torture had been done to a man? I think most would feel a little less bothered. Despite protestations, gender matters to almost all of us including Gene Wolfe.

Jack Redelfs writes:

In order for there to be a true appreciation for chivalry, perhaps you should make it clear that >women are in great danger? Perhaps if, as an author, you shepherd your female characters from >indignities, you paint a rose-colored picture of the world.

Well, I hate to use the R word, but in reality, by any measure, at any point in the lifespan, males are in greater danger and are injured and killed more often than females. Despite this (ignoring a few radical Men's Rights groups) the safety and protection of women continues to be of higher priority than protection of men in our society. Chivalry colors our social outlook so universally it is hard to see it.

Tolkein revels in chivalry and refuses to let female characters be physically harmed (Eowyn is the dramatic exception but she had to dress as a man and of course she recovers). Tolkein won't even show us ugly women like bearded dwarf wives and female orcs. Wolfe (a fanatic Tolkein fan) chooses to let women come to harm and death many times. I am unabashedly interested in his intent as well as the effect that has on various readers.

timothy fletcher writes:

If I may respectfully disagree (if you are saying, as it seems to me, that early Christianity was in >some way misogynistic), having some background in the study of early christianity (2 relevant >B.A.'s), early Christianity was a haven to women. In fact, there is some evidence that early Christianity actually raised the role of women. They were treated more as human beings. I agree >about the early female saints, but I'm not sure that's much sign of misogyny since chastity was >important for both early males and females.

You make a good point and I sort of covered myself by using quotation marks around my use of the term "misogynistic". I agree with Don Dogget that a distinction should be made between misogyny and chauvanism, the former being hate of women and the latter being a form of

chivalry (perverted?) in which women are protected so thoroughly they aren't allowed much freedom.

However I can't agree with your assessment of equality in early Christian society....maybe I missed them but in my research I didn't encounter any male saints who were canonized for chastity and virginity. Wouldn't a male virgin deserve even more credit than a female? ;-).

I haven't read Wizard Knight yet, but Bob Miller inspires me to do so.

-bsharp

timothy fletcher — 19 Oct 2006, 19:36 · in reply to b sharp

Thought experiment: How would your feelings as a reader change if the murdered person in DoDrl had been a man? If Thecla's or Hunna's or Morwenna's torture had been done to a man? I think most would feel a little less bothered. Despite protestations, gender matters to almost all of us including Gene Wolfe.

This, to me, is probably one of the most interesting points so far (though there have been a lot of interesting ones). The very fact that we're discussing this shows that people care about positive treatment and portrayal of women in literature. That may seem obvious, but I don't think it's something that would have mattered to earlier generations (and I don't just mean American generations).

As others have said, Wolfe, it seems, can create positive and sympathetic female characters, so the question is why doesn't he do so very often? It could be because he has some chauvanistic or misogynistic feelings, but it could also be to achieve some particular reaction from readers. I don't think it's impossible that he is something of a misogynist or chauvanist, but I'm not sure the evidence is clear enough on that point. He has some positive women in his fiction, and I find it difficult to pinpoint an author's psychological state by looking at his work. I think the best evidence anyone has presented for anything resembling chavanism is the point from "Letters from Home" (though having little sympathy for prostitutes is something a lot of more conservative men would feel).

You make a good point and I sort of covered myself by using quotation marks around my use of the term "misogynistic". I agree with Don Dogget that a distinction should be made between misogyny and chauvanism, the former being hate of women and the latter being a form of chivalry (perverted?) in which women are protected so thoroughly they aren't allowed much freedom.

However I can't agree with your assessment of equality in early Christian society....maybe I missed them but in my research I didn't encounter any male saints who were canonized for chastity and virginity. Wouldn't a male virgin deserve even more credit than a female? ;-).

I really didn't mean complete equality, and I'm sorry if it seemed I did. I mean more elevation, perhaps some form of chivalry. In Greco-Roman society women had few rights, and, like in other cultures, female babies were a burden, sometimes leading them to be "exposed to the elements." Christians had a very different world-view, and they gave women a higher station.

Men have never been rewarded for chastity very much by any culture. Even in modern society women are devalued for sexual activity while men are praised (this has become something of a cliché, but it's still valid, I believe). In early Christian writings, I can think of Augustine of the top of my head, men sometimes did praise and favor chastity for themselves. Earlier than Augustine, Paul in I Corinthians says it is good not to marry and that he himself chooses not to

marry. Celibacy in priests is another example, though it did not develop in Christianity until the second or third century.

timothy fletcher — 19 Oct 2006, 19:48 · follows timothy fletcher

I think this discussion is being too narrow. There are a lot of fantasy and science fiction authors, especially modern ones, who portray violence against women. Off the top of my head I can think of the most extreme, Goodkind and Martin. I know that Goodkind is barely considered literary, and Martin perhaps less so than Wolfe, but if we are psychoanalyzing authors by their works, those two would have to hate women exceedingly more than Wolfe himself. Tolkien would have to find them uninteresting and ignore them. And what about female authors? Should we look at more female authors and decide whether they hate men? I find "The Yellow Wallpaper" suspect.

Jack Redelfs — 19 Oct 2006, 22:20 · follows timothy fletcher

any point in the lifespan, males are in greater danger and are injured and killed more often than females.

Men are risk-takers; they are more prone to injure themselves and other men. Irrelevant.

the safety and protection of women continues to be of higher priority than protection of men in our society. Chivalry colors our social outlook so universally it is hard to see it.

I heartily disagree.

What do you mean by "our society?" The US? North America and western Europe? Your own social sphere? Because I just don't see it.

Bob Miller — 20 Oct 2006, 00:23 · in reply to Jack Redelfs

the safety and protection of women continues to be of higher priority than protection of men in our society. Chivalry colors our social outlook so universally it is hard to see it.

I heartily disagree.

What do you mean by "our society?" The US? North America and western Europe? Your own social sphere? Because I just don't see it.

Well, I do know the reflexive courtesy I consider synonymous with chivalry that some show women is usually quite appreciated. At my age I only get smiles of thankyou and deference due to that age and I appreciate those.

While we have a much much less chivalrous societal base now than before ~ 1975, it is true that we have many customs that are based on that code. For example, the USMarineC does not, as a policy, put owmen in combat positions.

On the other hand as eminent a sociologist as Dr. Greeley has stated in print that one of the effects of "women's lib" seems to be a major blow to chivalry (# of rapes and date rapes on campus up dramatically over the past few decades?).

To be clear on my own part, "all morality comes from women and children first" --RAH and he meant into the lifeboat first, is the base of my own behavior. Besides, either the smile or view of some walking away makes my eyes feel better.

David Duffy — 20 Oct 2006, 01:05 · in reply to don doggett

This has been gone over a number of times in the last few years, here and elsewhere. The attitudes and actions of the characters in his books are always completely consonant with the worlds they live in, and those worlds are usually classical or medieval in spirit (perhaps Augustinian) and detail. To me, he captures those times pretty accurately. And in most of those times, the status of women was as he portrays it. Similarly, his male central characters often represent the virtues, whether classical (which are masculine virtues I would think) or theological. One can then only ask why someone may wish to write about those settings, and his essay on Tolkein may answer that.

Wolfe has Dorcas say that thoughts are noblest and greatest when the world is at its hardest, and also the converse. So, he always puts his characters through the wringer.

I think the book that seldom gets enough discussion is *Peace*, in that it is (presumably) closer to the life that Gene Wolfe and his parents and grandparents live/lived. I think Olivia's portrait is psychologically convincing. I also think the speech (in the doctor's surgery, isn't it) about the ideal life being the now dying agrarian lifestyle is probably how the author feels (cf *My Antonia*). It is also in keeping with Catholic ideas of around that time (late 19th-early 20th C) of the good life.

David Duffy.

b sharp — 20 Oct 2006, 02:33 · follows David Duffy

Jack Redelfs takes me to task responding to my post: any point in the lifespan, males are in greater danger and are injured and killed more often than females. With-

Men are risk-takers; they are more prone to injure themselves and other men. Irrelevant.

Men remain in greater danger throughout their lives than women, that is my point, regardless of the source of that danger. Perhaps you are suggesting it is irrelevant since men deserve their danger because they (as a species?) put danger on themselves? I won't accuse you of misandry? misoandry? since I think society as a whole tends to agree with the sentiment that men deserve what they get. (there are biological arguments for why that system was originally set up by females, but..nevermind, nevermind, lol).

Jack responds to my: the safety and protection of women continues to be of higher priority than protection of men in our society. Chivalry colors our social outlook so universally it is hard to see it. With-

I heartily disagree. What do you mean by "our society?" The US? North America and western >Europe? Your own social sphere? Because I just don't see it.

Well, I did say it is hard to see. Actually I deleted a lot of qualifiers from that post on WHICH society I meant and regarding exceptions like female infanticide in rural India and China and female genital mutilation in animist Africa, fearing that was drifting too far from Wolfe (it probably is). I'll go out on a limb to guess that no tribal peoples of Africa or Asia subscribe to this list and extend the definition of "our society" to mean the general cultural milieu of anyone reading this.

To help Jack or others to see what I'm saying, I'll borrow from Bob Miller and ask if you are adamantly in favor of putting women on the front line of the battlefield. I'll also ask if you were on the Titanic if you would demand an equal chance as any woman to be first in the lifeboat. If

the answer is no to either question I'd ask why. And timidly suggest the answer is....chivalry?
For what other reason (again won't get into biology) can we as a society consider men to be more expendable than women?

okay, back to Wolfe.

-bsharp

Adam Thornton — 20 Oct 2006, 02:51 · in reply to b sharp

On Oct 19, 2006, at 7:33 PM, b sharp wrote:
And timidly suggest the answer
is....chivalry? For what other reason (again won't get into
biology) can we
as a society consider men to be more expendable than women?

Chivalry *is* biology.

One guy can impregnate thousands of women. A woman can bear a lifetime maximum of, what, maybe 20 or 30 children?

Adam

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 20 Oct 2006, 04:07 · in reply to Bob Miller

On 10/19/06, Bob Miller <bob_bageera at hotmail.com> wrote:
On the other hand as eminent a sociologist as Dr.
Greeley has stated in print that one of the effects of
"women's lib" seems to be a major blow to chivalry
(# of rapes and date rapes on campus up dramatically
over the past few decades?).

Thank you for that question mark, because that
"up dramatically" is definitely in question. It is clear that at least _part_ of that increase is due to
increased _reporting_ -- one of the effects of feminism/"women's lib"/whatever you want to call
it is that women aren't afraid to point the finger when they're raped.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

Tragedy is when I cut my finger. Comedy is when you walk into an open
sewer and die.

- Mel Brooks

Jeff Wilson — 20 Oct 2006, 04:36 · in reply to b sharp

b sharp wrote:
(Thanks to Jeff Wilson for bringing up A Boy and His Dog! Couldn't be an SF
misogyny discussion without mentioning that one eh?)

If you check the quotations, David Duffy brought it up; I just did a little deconstruction on it.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com

< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

Jeff Wilson — 20 Oct 2006, 05:01 · in reply to Adam Thornton

Adam Thornton wrote:
On Oct 19, 2006, at 7:33 PM, b sharp wrote:

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I'll bite: Why protect one woman and her children if there are thousands more for you to knock
up?

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

Adam Thornton — 20 Oct 2006, 05:51 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On Oct 19, 2006, at 10:01 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:
Adam Thornton wrote:

On Oct 19, 2006, at 7:33 PM, b sharp wrote:

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lifetime maximum of, what, maybe 20 or 30 children?

I'll bite: Why protect one woman and her children if there are
thousands
more for you to knock up?

Uh, cause there are going to be approximately equal numbers of men and women after a
couple of generations anyway. If there are plenty of women left then having plenty of men
around will take care of itself. If there aren't, then the population will remain small.

In short: males are expendable.

Adam

Daniel D Jones — 20 Oct 2006, 11:41 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On Friday 20 October 2006 01:01, Jeff Wilson wrote:
Adam Thornton wrote:

On Oct 19, 2006, at 7:33 PM, b sharp wrote:

And timidly suggest the answer
is....chivalry? For what other reason (again won't get into
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One guy can impregnate thousands of women. A woman can bear a
lifetime maximum of, what, maybe 20 or 30 children?

I'll bite: Why protect one woman and her children if there are thousands
more for you to knock up?

There weren't thousands more. Our biology was defined through thousands of years of living in small tribes where survival of the self and of the tribe was constantly in question. The environment we've lived in since the rise of civilization has had little effect on our biology. It's an eyeblink on the evolutionary time scale.

In a small tribe, if most of the men get killed, the few remaining can serve to produce just as large a next generation as if nothing had happened. If most of the women get killed, the tribe is almost certainly dead.

b sharp — 20 Oct 2006, 15:03 · follows Daniel D Jones

I'll follow up on Jeff's, Adam's and Daniel's biological posts to note with evil irony that the European and Islamic codes of chivalry which extend such great protection to females (and their purity) can be seen as the product of barbarian cultures, hell-bent on warfare, global expansion and maximum population growth and tacit or open polygamy (polygyny).

In contrast, the female infanticide found in China and India was the product of mature, peaceful civilizations interested in population control, monogamy, balance and harmony. (all this being historical argument based on pre- modern birth control time periods and surely subject to much dissent and hackle raising ;-)).

The topic of protecting females from war reminds me..., Hmph writes:

I seem to remember rather liking the female soldier in, is it the third or the fourth part of TBotNS? I forgot her name and don't have time to look it up now. Also, wasn't there a >sympathetic female sailor in TUotNS?

I can't think of a female soldier in BotNS, but the female sailor is surely Gunny, whose younger version goes by Burgundofora. I guess both are sympathetic characters though they both betray Severian, one in a minor way, one in a major way.

Jeff Wilson — 20 Oct 2006, 15:44 · in reply to timothy fletcher

timothy fletcher wrote:

I think this discussion is being too narrow. There are a lot of fantasy and science fiction authors, especially modern ones, who portray violence against women. Off the top of my head I can think of the most extreme, Goodkind and Martin. I know that Goodkind is barely considered literary, and Martin perhaps less so than Wolfe, but if we are psychoanalyzing authors by their works, those two would have to hate women exceedingly more than Wolfe himself. Tolkien would have to find them uninteresting and ignore them. And what about female authors? Should we look at more female authors and decide whether they hate men? I find "The Yellow Wallpaper" suspect.

It's not quantity of violence against women, it's the moral context. Is it presented as a crime? spoils of war? just desserts? pretext to arranged marriage? harmless fun?

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

Dave Lebling — 20 Oct 2006, 15:45 · in reply to b sharp

I can't think of a female soldier in BotNS

I would assume he's thinking of Foila, who is indeed a sympathetic and likable character, a soldier recovering from wounds(?) in the Pelerines' hospice. (She's the prize in the story-telling contest, but turns the tables on the contestants by entering and winning.) This is in _Citadel of

the Autarch_.

-- Dave Lebling, aka vizcacha

timothy fletcher — 20 Oct 2006, 18:38 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Well, that post was meant to be mostly humorous, hence the "Yellow Wallpaper" comment, but I would say there is some validity to it. Moral context is truly important, but if you constantly write about rape and mistreatment of women over and over again, then there would seem to be some kind of over-infatuation going on. Goodkind really does that more than Martin. I haven't read him since high school, but I remember some kind of violence (usually sexual in nature) against women at least 5 or 6 times in a book, probably varying from book to book. That could just be my own memory. I think the argument with Wolfe is similar. He could and does write about other characters being mistreated or lacking depth, but he nearly consistently does so with women, with only a couple of exceptions. I think that's pretty much what the argument is, and I've seen little regarding moral context, since only a couple of people have pointed to actual examples (most of the ones I think people have mentioned are exceptions. That's not a slight against you at all, just an observation of the entire discussion).

Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com> wrote: timothy fletcher wrote:
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Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
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b sharp — 20 Oct 2006, 19:03 · follows timothy fletcher

Dave Lebling writes regarding the female soldier:

I would assume he's thinking of Foila, who is indeed a sympathetic and likable character, a soldier >recovering from wounds(?) in the Pelerines' hospice. (She's the prize in the story-telling contest, >but turns the tables on the contestants by entering and winning.) This is in _Citadel of the Autarch_.

Oooh how could I not think of Foila. Yes, she is likable enough to dispel accusations Wolfe can't develop an admirable female character...But then again, we last see her critically wounded, probably dying,....hm....

-bsharp

(p.s. forgot Vulcan neck pinch in my list of 60's pop references in my last post)

Daniel D Jones — 20 Oct 2006, 21:56 · in reply to timothy fletcher

On Friday 20 October 2006 14:38, timothy fletcher wrote:

Well, that post was meant to be mostly humorous, hence the "Yellow Wallpaper" comment, but I would say there is some validity to it. Moral context is truly important, but if you constantly write about rape and mistreatment of women over and over again, then there would seem to be some kind of over-infatuation going on. Goodkind really does that more than Martin. I haven't read him since high school, but I remember some kind of violence (usually sexual in nature) against women at least 5 or 6 times in a book, probably varying from book to book. That could just be my own memory. I think the argument with Wolfe is similar. He could and does write about other characters being mistreated or lacking depth, but he nearly consistently does so with women, with only a couple of exceptions. I think that's pretty much what the argument is, and I've seen little regarding moral context, since only a couple of people have pointed to actual examples (most of the ones I think people have mentioned are exceptions. That's not a slight against you at all, just an observation of the entire discussion).

For what it's worth, it could also mean that Wolfe finds violence against women particularly horrifying. An author's purpose is to impact and move the reader. As such, it's natural that they choose powerful, emotional scenes to do that. If Wolfe finds women in dire straits to be particularly powerful, he may assume that his reader does as well and intentionally include such scenes because he finds them repulsive rather than attractive.

timothy fletcher — 20 Oct 2006, 22:18 · in reply to Daniel D Jones

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That is very much true; I will concede that. I will say, though, that it is (or seems it must be) difficult to pinpoint which is the case with some authors, which explains this discussion. Personally, I doubt Wolfe harbors any ill will or dislike toward women (Goodkind either, for that matter). I know a smattering about psychology, and could probably learn more by asking some friends (one of whom is a professional psychologist), but I've heard that in Rorschach tests and such the results are based more on patterns and types than the answers themselves.

Jack Redelfs — 20 Oct 2006, 23:56 · follows timothy fletcher

I have been interested the discussion of evolution, but I'm not sure if a convincing case has been made for "chivalry is biology." Evolution "says" that society can't allow men to kill fertile women wantonly. But evolution has no problem with men beating and humiliating their wives, or raping and enslaving strangers. These actions don't interfere with reproduction so evolution wouldn't seem to "have an opinion" on them.

That's an interesting side-discussion, but more closely regarding Wolfe and his attitudes:

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Perhaps few have addressed the argument because it seems so absurd on the face of it. It's so very easy to say that there are countless authors, in literary and pulp fiction, that describe horrid behavior toward women in obsessive detail - what about Samuel Delany's *_Dhalgren_*, for one example? Wolfe doesn't even come close. Someone already mentioned Stephen King and Clive Barker, "but they write horror, so it's okay.." Unlike a million counter-examples, most of the rapes and tortures in Wolfe are alluded to, not described in detail.

I have always thought of Wolfe as one of the most humane SF authors. He seems like the last SF author I would have thought guilty of misogyny. Although maybe he put himself at risk by failing to write thinly veiled political tracts about womens' and gay rights (ala John Varley).

It appears that you, Jeff, are not immediately going to condemn Wolfe, and I'm glad. So you ask:

It's not quantity of violence against women, it's the moral context. Is it presented as a crime? spoils of war? just desserts? pretext to arranged marriage? harmless fun?

I'm glad you are asking these questions. We could go over this thing on a case by case basis, and I'd try to be openminded about the possibility that I'm wrong about Wolfe, although I'm not sure I'd succeed. It's probably difficult to be objective about your favorite author.

In one respect Wolfe's work IS similar to horror authors like Lawrence Block and Clive Barker. The Bad Guys quite often "win." I won't deny that sometimes this causes me to feel sick or disgusted when I'm reading Wolfe. Perhaps if I had a different intellectual background, I'd think that Wolfe was jaded and perverse (or misogynistic?) to write like this.

Or maybe he's trying to make a point: true victories are not made from killing Bad Guys or saving damsels in distress. Sure, we should try to do what we can to right the world, but if we fall short, are we to despair? If we only recognize temporal succes, are we not setting ourselves up for failure? True victories are victories of the heart.

Or, to paraprase *_Lictor_*,
"They say you are a great warrior who has killed many," said the chief of the Island people to Severian. "I am warrior, but not great," said Severian. "For a man is made great not by killing others, but by killing parts of himself."

Of course, this is just my own personal interpretation of what Wolfe is trying to say. Others have a completely different take on it, and who's to say they're not more correct?

That's the beauty of Gene Wolfe. He doesn't hit you over the head with a moral message, like many authors do (Heinlein, anone?) There's no Wise Old Man to explain what lessons you "should" be learning from this scene or that.

Perhaps that's why *_The Book Of The New Sun_* is beloved by devout christians and confirmed atheists alike.

I can agree with Wolfe being loved by both atheists and devout Christians, having been both and loved Wolfe as both.

That is something I think really makes it difficult to say Wolfe is in some way against women (I'm trying to think of a way to state that and encompass everything that's been discussed, but everything seems inadequate), that there are so many other authors that are worse. Not that other authors should be used to judge Wolfe, but I've not really heard many people call these other authors misogynists (Delany, I don't know about; I've heard people say that all homosexuals are ultimately misogynists, but I don't really buy that, per se)

Jack Redelfs <jackredelfs at gmail.com> wrote: I have been interested the discussion of evolution, but I'm not sure if a convincing case has been made for "chivalry is biology." Evolution "says" that society can't allow men to kill fertile women wantonly. But evolution has no problem with men beating and humiliating their wives, or raping and enslaving strangers. These actions don't interfere with reproduction so evolution wouldn't seem to "have an opinion" on them.

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Or, to paraphrase *Lictor*,
"They say you are a great warrior who has killed many," said the chief of the Island people to Severian. "I am warrior, but not great," said Severian. "For a man is made great not by killing others, but by killing parts of himself."

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Perhaps that's why *The Book Of The New Sun* is beloved by devout Christians and confirmed atheists alike.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 21 Oct 2006, 18:42 · in reply to Jack Redelfs

On 10/20/06, Jack Redelfs <jackredelfs at gmail.com> wrote:
I have been interested in the discussion of evolution, but I'm not sure if a convincing case has been made for "chivalry is biology." Evolution "says" that society can't allow men to kill fertile women wantonly. But evolution has no problem with men beating and humiliating their wives, or raping and enslaving strangers. These actions don't interfere with reproduction so evolution wouldn't seem to "have an opinion" on them.

Actually, some of these behaviors are probably favorable at some level to the reproduction of the genes of those who perform them. Not beating wives, though; that tends to kill babies. The one place it makes evolutionary sense is in cases of jealousy.

(Note that I am not saying anything about morality here.)

It's so very easy to say that there are countless authors, in literary and pulp fiction, that describe horrid behavior toward women in obsessive detail - what about Samuel Delany's *Dhalgren*, for one example?

You must be thinking of *Hogg*, or perhaps *Equinox* (a/k/a/ *The Tides of Lust*). Those books record the actions of some truly vile characters. *Dhalgren*, not so much. I'm stretching my brain and I can't think of anything in *Dhalgren* that would support this statement.

I'm a bigger Delany fan than I am a Wolfe fan, but *Hogg* is the one Delany book that I'm pretty sure I will *never* reread. It's the only book I've ever felt unclean after reading. The titular character is a "rape artist" -- a man who rapes women for pay, to achieve other men's revenge.

A lot of what the book is about is evil by proxy: not only Hogg himself, but a lot else is going on throughout the book in which one character performs another's evil. It's ... horrendous, in the most literal sense of the word. It's a very powerful book, but it's just no fun to read, at *all*, on *any* level.

Wolfe doesn't even come close. Someone already mentioned Stephen King and Clive Barker, "but they write horror, so it's okay.."

That were I, and I was being somewhat ironic.

In one respect Wolfe's work IS similar to horror authors like Lawrence Sanders and Clive Barker. The Bad Guys quite often "win."

Yep. But then, I would claim that a goodly percentage of Wolfe's work partakes of the horrific.

That's the beauty of Gene Wolfe. He doesn't hit you over the head with a moral message, like many authors do (Heinlein, anyone?) There's no Wise Old Man to explain what lessons you "should" be learning from this scene or that.

Actually, there are passages where various characters deliver homilies. Silk does it a *lot* in *LONG SUN*.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

Tragedy is when I cut my finger. Comedy is when you walk into an open sewer and die.

- Mel Brooks

Hmpf MacSlow — 22 Oct 2006, 16:58 · in reply to timothy fletcher

At 04:09 AM 10/21/2006, you wrote:

I can agree with Wolfe being loved by both atheists and devout Christians, having been both and loved Wolfe as both.

That is something I think really makes it difficult to say Wolfe is in some way against women (I'm trying to think of a way to state that and encompass everything that's been discussed, but everthing

seems inadequate), that there are so many other authors that are worse. Not that other authors should be used to judge Wolfe, but I've not really heard many people call these other authors misogynists (Delany, I don't know about; I've heard people say that all homosexuals are ultimately misogynists, but I don't really buy that, per se)

Isn't Delany bisexual, anyway? For a homosexual he certainly writes a lot about sex with women! (And about mixed threesomes.) I didn't get misogynist vibes from Dhalgren. But then, it's been a while - maybe I've forgotten. And quite possibly my tolerance to misogyny is pretty high, due to having read predominantly very 'male' types of literature for most of my life. Maybe I just sort of ignore misogyny, especially in older works where I assume it was just part of the general culture/the 'common subconscious' that few people could escape. I dunno... Oddly enough, I identify as a feminist at the same time.

- Hmpf (apparently not **quite** in lurking mode again)

"I'm too weird to be a tourist and not weird enough to be an employee."

- 'Finder' by Carla Speed McNeil

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 22 Oct 2006, 17:16 · in reply to Hmpf MacSlow

On 10/22/06, Hmpf MacSlow <hmpf1998 at gmx.net> wrote:

Isn't Delany bisexual, anyway?

Delany regularly identifies himself as gay. He has had some "straight experiences," including a long-term but ultimately not-very-successful marriage to the poet Marilyn Hacker, which did result in the birth of one child, their daughter Iva.

For a homosexual he certainly writes a lot about sex with women! (And about mixed threesomes.)

The "happiest" (or most successful, sexually) period of the Delany-Hacker marriage seems to have been a period when they welcomed a third person into their home and bed. This is chronicled in different ways in Delany's memoir, The Motion of Light in Water, and Hacker's long poem, "The Navigators."

I didn't get misogynist vibes from Dhalgren.

Nor do I. Delany is as feminist as a male can be.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

Tragedy is when I cut my finger. Comedy is when you walk into an open sewer and die.

- Mel Brooks

timothy fletcher — 22 Oct 2006, 21:44 · in reply to Hmpf MacSlow

I think someone else mentioned Delany as a misogynist; I was just throwing that comment out, and after I wrote it I wondered if it might sound slightly prejudice. It's just something I've heard a lot, not something I believe. I've only read Delany a little, and never a complete novel (I liked what I read, just never finished anything), so when I said I don't know about him, I really don't. I did know he is a homosexual, only because I read a little biography of him in one book (Stars in my Pocket like Grains of Sand, I believe, but could be wrong). Personally, I'm sure he thinks women are great.

Hmpf MacSlow <hmpf1998 at gmx.net> wrote: At 04:09 AM 10/21/2006, you wrote:
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Christians, having been both and loved Wolfe as both.

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that and encompass everything that's been discussed, but everthing
seems inadequate), that there are so many other authors that are
worse. Not that other authors should be used to judge Wolfe, but
I've not really heard many people call these other authors
misogynists (Delany, I don't know about; I've heard people say that
all homosexuals are ultimately misogynists, but I don't really buy
that, per se)

Isn't Delany bisexual, anyway? For a homosexual he certainly writes a
lot about sex with women! (And about mixed threesomes.) I didn't get misogynist vibes from
Dhalgren. But then, it's been a while - maybe I've forgotten. And quite possibly my tolerance to
misogyny is pretty high, due to having read predominantly very 'male' types of literature for
most of my life. Maybe I just sort of ignore misogyny, especially in older works where I assume
it was just part of the general culture/the 'common subconscious' that few people could
escape. I dunno... Oddly enough, I identify as a feminist at the same time

Adam Thornton — 23 Oct 2006, 06:21 · in reply to Hmpf MacSlow

On Oct 22, 2006, at 9:58 AM, Hmpf MacSlow wrote:
Isn't Delany bisexual, anyway? For a homosexual he certainly writes a
lot about sex with women! (And about mixed threesomes.) I

As far as I know, he's homosexual these days, although he was married to Marilyn Hacker for a
while and certainly had sex with her at least enough to impregnate her (read The Motion of
Light In Water for details). However, I'm pretty sure he isn't a misogynist by any reasonable
definition of the term.

Adam