

Authors as torturers?

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 19 Jun 1998

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adam louis stephanides — 19 Jun 1998, 16:16

On Wed, 17 Jun 1998 William H. Ansley wrote:

Somewhere in TBotNS there is a passage where Severian compares the relationship between torturers and their clients to that of men to women and authors to their readers. (Maybe I am combining two separate passages.)

Could you be thinking of the passage in Shadow, ch. 33, in which Severian gives us his thoughts on authorship? But here he compares the relationship between authors and readers not to that between torturers and their clients but between executioners and their spectators. And he at least presents himself as wanting to please his readers, not torture them.

Incidentally, it's interesting to compare what Severian set forth here as the principles of writing he's following with his actual practice as a narrator. IMO there's a pretty poor match, except for his final self-imposed requirement that "he must add to the execution some feature however small that is entirely his own and that he will never repeat." This the book fulfills in spades.

--Adam