

#41 – The Glass Cage, Colin Wilson BOOK REVIEW

Krauser PUA | 24 March, 2018 | by krauserpua

It's very rare I'll read a book that someone thrusts into my hands uninvited. I like to wait until my subconscious prompts me to explore a particular genre or writer. Sometimes I'll have my eye on a book for several years until I finally feel I sudden urge to read it. Perhaps that's weird. I don't know. I'm stubborn and I always try to follow my subconscious. Little good comes from trying to overrule your instincts.

So when my brother thrust two smelly paperbacks into my hands last week, I muttered "thanks" and threw them onto the pile. To my surprise, I found myself picking up and reading *The Witching Night* cover-to-cover that evening, and then this book the evening after. I think I just wanted something outside my usual genres.

So, Colin Wilson. Where to start? How about with a photo.



I really don't know what to make of this guy but the one thing I'm certain of is he's interesting. Look carefully at that photo and make educated guesses about his personality type. I'd say the young Wilson could well be sigma. He's good looking, bright with energy, and giving a believable affectation of a beatnik artist. Or is he just a gamma who's serotonin is off-the-charts because he's actually hoodwinked society into believing his bullshit [1]. **George Orwell** famously wrote that every man at fifty has the face he deserves. The older Wilson looks like a fruity old pedophile.

So, which is it? Or neither?

Wilson came from humble [2] beginnings and dedicated himself to writing at the age of sixteen, churning out short stories and political essays. At just twenty-five he published *The Outsider* and made a huge splash in literary circles. Wilson describes the genesis of the book in 1954 as follows:

"It struck me that I was in the position of so many of my favourite characters in fiction: Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, Rilke's Malte Laurids Brigge, the young writer in Hamsun's *Hunger*: alone in my room, feeling totally cut off from the rest of society. It was not a position I relished... Yet an inner compulsion had forced me into this position of isolation. I began writing about it in my journal, trying to pin it down. And then, quite suddenly, I saw that I had the makings of a book. I turned to the back of my journal and wrote at the head of the page: 'Notes for a book *The Outsider in Literature*'..."

The book, viewed through a modern red-pill PUA lens [3], is an exploration of the Sigma Male. Wilson is attempting to trace the socio-sexual archetype through famous literature and then apply it to his own experiences. **Vox Day**, you see, was perceptive when he explained the temptation of every reader of [his socio-sexual hierarchy](#) attempts to redefine himself into a higher category [4]. It would appear Wilson was a talented gamma trying to redefine himself as sigma, though he lacked the theoretical structure to do so.

For a 25-year old to do that, and so successfully that the literati bought the bridge he was selling, is testament to just how smart this young lad was. He was the toast of London and the serotonin flowed. Doubtless, he banged a few hotties off the back of it.



As I began reading *The Glass Cage*, I was at first very interested in Wilson's prose. It was clean, thoughtful, and drew me in. I felt like I was reading a very intelligent man's work. He was only 35 when

he wrote this book too. It's nominally a detective story, about a scholar of **William Blake** who is challenged by a friend to try to find a serial killer currently tearing up the lower orders of London. However, I grew increasingly disturbed by the philosophical undercurrents.

Part One of the book is all set in the Lake District near Keswick. The protagonist, Damon Reade, is a reclusive mid-thirties scholar living in a cottage five miles from town, next door to a small family of shifty gypsies. A local policeman comes to visit because a London serial killer has been chalking quotations from William Blake onto the walls where he dumped his victims. As the UK's preeminent Blake scholar, the police want to know if there's any pattern or clue within the killer's choice of quotations. Or if he's received any crank letters which may be from the killer.

Reade resents the intrusion of the outside world, being an extremely introverted and bookish man. He later walks into the village to see his sole friend, a fat ageing seller of antiquarian books. The friend has recently become legal guardian of a fifteen year old niece, following the death of her parents. Reade has known this girl since she was ten.

What follows is creepy as fuck.

For several chapters this fifteen year old niece is flirting with and attempting to seduce Reade. Bear in mind Reade is very obviously a Mary Sue character for Wilson himself. The uncle is a panty fetishist who in one scene tells his niece to lift her skirts to show Reade the frilly new panties he'd bought her. The girl thinks it's slightly odd, but no big deal. By the end of Part One, this girl has spent the night in Reade's bed, kissed, but not yet fucked. It also turns out Reade is a virgin.



Gagging for it. Over-35s only, please

As if the subject matter wasn't creepy enough, the scenes were written for titillation and Wilson seems to be normalising the situation:

"But you don't mind, do you? I wouldn't try to lie to you. Do you want to marry me?"

"You're too young to marry."

"I know. And you're twenty years my senior. Will you marry me, please? Am I being terrible?"

He propped himself up and looked down at her. Her eyes were open and candid. He said quietly, "Yes, I'll marry you if you really want me to."

She smiled, and for a moment he wondered if she was going to cry; her eyes took on a strange, clouded expression. She said, "And you'll tell Uncle Hugh tomorrow?" [page 44]

The uncle gives his consent. This isn't the serial killer being introduced. This is the **hero**. I felt like I should put the book down and wash my hands. Perhaps this is a good time to quote the real-time chat I had with my brother on Facebook:

Me: "I'm really not sure I want to read this. Without spoiling the story, tell me if the hero is actually a pedo. This entire chapter has been two creepy old men grooming a girl, and her in love with the hero since she's ten, and now trying to seduce him at 15. Basically, pedo apologetics that kids want it."

I sent him another photo of a page.

Me: "Jesus. Is this intentionally weird in a clever way to bring out characterisation, or is Wilson really such an oddball?"

Him: "He's definitely an oddball. But a literary type. He puts gays in quite a bit but always because it's the 1960s and every club or pub sounds more seedy if there's some gays in. In most books I'm sure the hero has to run away from unwanted fag attention."

Me: “I’m 80 pages in. Pretty good, just odd views about women.”

Him: [quoting The Guardian feature on Wilson] “But now, at 73, he has written an autobiography. *Dreaming To Some Purpose*, of considerable charm. It is jaw-droppingly – one might say cringe-makingly – honest and often unintentionally hilarious. I particularly enjoyed his account of how, as a panty-fetishist and visiting lecturer at an American university, he contrived to look up his students’ skirts with the aid of a glass-bottomed mug”

Me: “He’s certainly a bit fruity. I checked his photos. The Glass Cage is full of panty fetishism.”

Him: “He was basically you before you were born. A self-declared genius who was mostly self taught and wrote on all manner of subjects.”

A natural gamma with some sigma traits, then.

Me: “Sounds a lot like a fruity man’s view of how men and women interact”

Him: “He was actually married more than once. With kids from both marriages.”

Me: “I read the wiki. But I was thinking, what kind of man is irresistible to pretty barely-legal girls? And then I realised it’s obvious: a 35-year old reclusive scholar of a dead poet, who lives in the forest surrounded by gypsy criminals, is a virgin, and had one fat old mate. I’ve seen it on Euro Jaunts. Those guys clean up!”

Him: “If he wasn’t dead you could sell him one of your books.”

By the time I reached Part Two, where Reade takes a train to London and attempts to solve the murders, I felt I had a good read on Wilson’s personality type. The rest of the book bore it out. On his first night in London, a black 17yr old cleaner in his apartment block seduces him and he fucks her, but feels cheapened by the experience. She’s an actual whore, but jumps him for free. Two days later she jumps another character. The old friend he’s living with, a famous composer named Butler, is constantly leching and on the first night a young model comes round to fuck him, then later he fucks some other women.



Also gagging for it. Not fussy.

It’s the most unlikely ideas of male-female relations you’re ever likely to see. Men are just minding their own business and hot young women leap onto their dicks. It’s the same way sex happens in modern science-fiction and fantasy. Pure gamma wish fulfilment.

I read the book cover-to-cover in just over one day because it’s actually quite compelling and the prose style is so smooth that the pages just keep turning even when the plot sags. The whole time I was more interested in solving the puzzle of Wilson’s mind than I was the puzzle of who the murderer is.

Was this book a legitimate statement of Wilson’s own world-view, or was he convincingly inhabiting the minds of characters who he deliberately made into degenerate oddballs in order to titillate his literati readership who liked to slum it with the commoners? Did he really believe women throw themselves around like that in squalid Portobello Road apartments, or was he mocking the upper class literati who thought that’s what they did?

I don’t have the answer, as this is the only Wilson book I’ve read.



The murderer is the real victim of his own murders

Towards the end of the book, Reade identifies the killer but tries to get him off with the murders because “I find it difficult to believe a reader of Blake can be fully irredeemable”. His mate Butler is aghast, that he would sympathise with the man who has brutally murdered and dismembered nine innocent victims just because they like the same poet.

Again, I can't tell if Wilson is trying to outrage us with such a sanctimonious protagonist or if Wilson himself is really so evil as to think that's a defensible position. The whole time I'm reading, I suspect Wilson is a prankster. He's a clever man deliberately messing with the emotions of his readers.



"But I like Blake!"

So, it's a fascinating book. I can't tell if Wilson is trolling the literati scum who invited him to wine parties on the back of *The Outsider* and then ostracised him when they realised he was working class. Or, is he just a fruity degenerate with the gamma male's love of pederasty?

*If you'd like a book on seducing women half your age which **totally isn't at all creepy** you might like [Daygame Infinite](#). It has pictures and everything.*

[1] Every gamma dreams of becoming the Recognised King rather than the Secret King. That will lead, to believe Jordan Peterson, his brain to reward him with serotonin for rising up the dominance hierarchy and thus he'll come to adopt the behaviours and vibe of the sigma rather than the gamma.

[2] Or should that be, 'umble?

[3] I'm sure the literary world is really crying out for such an interpretation.

[4] Rollo Tomassi has also often noted how many of his readers attempt to redefine alpha to fit themselves perfectly.

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