

Free Live Free by Wolfe

The SF-Lovers list — 8 messages, 6 voices, 22 Mar 2000

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Ahab's soul — 22 Mar 2000, 20:30

Just read this interesting little book. Other Wolfe works I have read include: Castleview Pandora by Holly Hollander Island of doctor death and other stories and other stories BotNS (including epilogue) Peace

FLF is certainly an interesting book. It is written in a way that makes the book more of a page turner than many books out there but it isn't as much of a page turner as _Castleview_. The humor aspect (especially involving the mental hospital nonsense) is quite new to me. I can't remember another Wolfe work with so much humor in it. He does a good job with the humor but it never reaches the quality of the humor in

Confederacy of Dunces, _Lolita_, _Don Quixote_, or _Master and the Margarita_. However, for a guy who may have been new to using humor in his writing, one can't expect a classic of comic literature.

FLF reminds me of _Castleview_ in that it goes from one distinct section to a very distinct concluding section. _Castleview_ goes from a breathtaking, Scooby Doo mystery, with cliff hangers at every turn and turns into something quite different in the last few pages. _FLF_ goes from the mystery phase (quite a different approach to mystery than in _PbHH_ or _Castleview_. Maybe more like _PbHH_ than _C_) to the strange conclusion phase. I think the writing style shifts that occur at these boundaries alone guaranteed that the novels would not become bestsellers. Of course another thing that separates _C_ and _FLF_ from run-of-the-mill mysteries or horror stories is the amount of wrapping up Wolfe does at the end of each. I was left feeling somewhat confused about events upon finishing both books and plan to reread each of them to see if all they need is a second reading.

A question I have is how much confusion he wants people to feel as they complete these 2 books. Does Wolfe just write for a more intelligent reader than me? Perhaps a person who can tie everything together in his/her head would not find anything lacking upon reaching the final pages of each book? Or could it be his goal to leave readers with a feeling that there is more to the story than they have picked up.

Another question I have is what other Wolfe works are worth taking up? I have avoided the Long Sun books because they have been universally reviewed as worse than BotNS. A second reason is relates to the fact that publishers seem so into pushing writers to create multi-volume fantasy epics right now. I wonder if Wolfe is just cranking the 2 latest Sun sagas to get cash (not bad in itself) but hasn't any real interest in creating works of quality like his other material.

Any feedback on where to go in my reading of Wolfe would be appreciated.

Ron Henry — 22 Mar 2000, 21:13 · follows Ahab's soul

Wolfe's multi-volume works might look, from the outside, like series potboilers, but they're anything but. I just finished reading On Blue's Waters, and I can testify that it's as smart, and in many ways as subtle, as anything he's ever written. He seems really to have mastered the art

of deceptive simplicity - making a story look quite straightforward while concealing all sorts of tricks and hints and foreshadowings. Wonderful stuff to read.

His other books of short stories, *Endangered Species* and *Storeys from the Old Hotel*, are well worth reading (as is, I presume, the new one, *Strange Travellers*, which I have not yet gotten). I also enjoyed *There Are Doors* and *The Fifth Head of Cerberus*, though both of these might take several readings to fully appreciate (lots of very subtle clues and general ambiguity about what's really going on and who is who).

Ron Henry

Ahab's soul — 22 Mar 2000, 22:08 · follows Ron Henry

ronhenry at clarityconnect.com wrote:

I also enjoyed [snip] *The Fifth Head of Cerberus*,

I almost picked this up at the book store the other day, but then it occurred to me that I may have read it already. Isn't there a short story or novella in *_The Island of Dr. Death & other Stories & Other stories_* by this name? If so, what is the relationship between what is in that collection and the book that bears the same name?

Andrea Leistra — 22 Mar 2000, 23:13 · follows Ahab's soul

The novella "The Fifth Head of Cerebus" is the first of three linked novellas in the book *_The Fifth Head of Cerebus_*. The other two are "'A Story,' by John V. Marsch" and "V.R.T".

Andrea Leistra

Avram Grumer — 23 Mar 2000, 18:08 · follows Andrea Leistra

And don't forget the New Sun of Estarcion books, currently in print as *_Church & Claw_*, *_Mothers & Shadows_*, and *_Guys of the New Sun_*. I loved the scene where Severian climbs to the top of the House Absolute and tells the faithful that they have to conquer the Ascians or the New Sun will incinerate their nostril-hairs.

Avram Grumer

Michael Straight — 23 Mar 2000, 18:28 · follows Avram Grumer

I really enjoyed Wolfe's Soldier books (*Soldier of the Mist* and *Soldier of Arete*). Fantasy set in ancient Greece, although Wolfe almost makes you believe that he sees it as an historical adventure novel and that he believes the Greek gods were real.

Ahab's soul — 23 Mar 2000, 19:21 · follows Michael Straight

Actually, I have read both Soldier novels and enjoyed them though I forgot to mention in my initial post that they are among my Wolfe reads. I hope he gets around to finishing that series before he retires. How many more "Sun" books are on the drawing board?

I guess I will have to get the BotLS and BotSS series if so many Wolfe fans are praising them. I just noticed a BIG difference between the number of awards his first series got and how well recieved the later ones were and assumed that this meant that the other Sun sagas were of inferior material.

CPars56235 — 24 Mar 2000, 01:24 · follows Ahab's soul

Odd that no one has mentioned Peace.
Wonderful storytelling. Find it, read it, then do the dance.

Charles

SPOILER

It's a ghost story. (What? You thought I was giving away secrets?)