

pandora

The Urth list — 5 messages, 5 voices, 15 Apr 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3150>

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maa32 — 15 Apr 2002, 06:28

It was mentioned that the reasons Pandora by Holly Hollander was an unenjoyable reading experience seemed indiscernable to some on the list.

For me, I think Wolfe's one weakness is his portrayal of female characters - I'm just being honest. However, that doesn't really matter to me (please don't stone me Alga; I'm talking about literary great-making qualities - not feminism). I really don't think Wolfe is good at a first person female perspective - and especially a first person, pot-smoking, mother hating, "liberated" female like Holly - as far as possible from the tortured but ultimately physically powerful Silk and Severian (Silk is even pretty handy with a staff into his geritol-stage thanks to his superior (engineered? surely) genetics). If I'm not mistaken, there is a quote in Pandora which states that Larry Lief is a "dreamboat" (or something to that effect).

Let's be honest - Wolfe's oppositional themes (perfect memory/end of the world vs. no memory/dawn of history) are usually fabulously pulled off from work to work, but Pandora is too different. Even though I think you can find hints that Holly's flying horse (you think I'm kidding, eh?) was complicit in the death of Larry Lief, you can also find some big German special forces conspiracy hints dropped all over the place, too. And Holly knows a lot about what masks the scent of pot for someone who claims she won't write about smoking it for the first time in her introduction; it seems as if she already has throughout the text - and her mom confronts her about "smoking", too; a smoking that is never directly narrated by Holly in any other scene. I don't trust that girl.

In any case, I think that there are two big factors involved here in the general ill repute in which Pandora by Holly Hollander is held: your average reader of Wolfe appreciates the absolutely amazing technical skill he has "in spite" of his depiction of women (I know I'm generalizing; please forgive me); also, Wolfe is notoriously ambiguous in many respects, yet I find little ambiguity in his treatment of women. It just so happens that having a female narrator, while to an amazing degree subverting this picture of weak and accepting or duplicitious and conniving women, reaffirms the stark dichotomy and emphasizes it at the same time (in my mind, Holly really wants to get rid of her mother and is just as culpable as whoever really did commit the murders; perhaps Wolfe wanted to present her as an opposite of ideality (a real word, by the way, or at least a word I read in a recent piece of criticism on Borges) - we were meant not to like her narrative since it reflects some of her undesirable traits - but this is too devious and I cannot imagine Wolfe composing something that he envisioned as a "failed" narrative from the beginning, simply for the purpose of challenging the liberal convictions of its narrator.)

Marc Aramini

Roy C. Lackey — 16 Apr 2002, 00:26 · follows maa32

Date: Monday, April 15, 2002 1:28 AM

Marc wrote:

For me, I think Wolfe's one weakness is his portrayal of female characters - I'm just being honest.<<

I won't argue with that, because I can't; you're right.

(Silk is even pretty handy with a staff into his geritol-stage thanks to his superior (engineered? surely) genetics).<<

Geritol-stage? Damn it, Marc, at the end of RTTW Silk is only about twenty years older than you are!! Geritol-stage? Sheesh. <g>

Let's be honest - Wolfe's oppositional themes (perfect memory/end of the world

vs. no memory/dawn of history)<<

Uh, what Nutria said.

And Holly knows a lot about

what masks the scent of pot for someone who claims she won't write about smoking it for the first time in her introduction; it seems as if she already has throughout the text - and her mom confronts her about "smoking", too; a smoking that is never directly narrated by Holly in any other scene. I don't trust that girl.<<

If by "smoking" you mean cigarettes, Holly does smoke in the text. In the hospital, near the end of chapter 8, page 66 of the hardback. And it was her mother who gave her the cigarette.

-Roy

Adam Stephanides — 16 Apr 2002, 14:10 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Interesting post by Marc. I didn't find any of the subtleties in PANDORA that Marc did; the few "clues" I did notice seemed to me to be just affectations leading nowhere. It struck me as being basically just a murder mystery, and not a particularly good one, either. Furthermore, I was repelled by the misogyny in the portrayal of Holly's mother (unlike Marc, I wasn't put off by Holly, but she didn't erase the bad taste left by her mother). If it hadn't been written by Wolfe, I might have filed it away in my mind as "mildly diverting"; as it was, it was a severe disappointment.

The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (iirc) said there had been speculation that PANDORA was actually written early in Wolfe's career. Can anyone confirm or deny this?

--Adam

Endy9 — 20 May 2002, 00:22 · follows Adam Stephanides

mantis wrote:

What does it matter what =anybody= else says? You hate it. That is your opinion. Tried and tested. Do you want people to tell you that you are an idiot? Do you want people to brow-beat you into reading it again until you like it? Do you want people to tell you that you are a genius for "seeing through all the drivel," for being the brave fellow who says that the emperor has no clothes?

What is your reason for writing anything to this mailing list? Do you want people to tell you that you are an idiot for any opinion you post here? Do you want people to brow-beat you into changing your opinion if they disagree with you? Do you want people to tell you that you are a

genius for "seeing things" that other's were not intelligent enough to catch?

Do you really want to attack my motives for writing instead of simply agreeing or disagreeing and open yourself to the same inspection?

Now to attempt to honestly answer your questions:

I do not look upon myself as the ultimate genius of this world and value other's opinions. I might gain insight into why others liked the story and even though I might not enjoy the story, I would better understand why other people like it. I enjoy getting to know other people and what they like and don't like and why. That is probably the main reason I post to any message board.

I also claim my right to like or dislike any work of literature and to state my reasons why without the motive of trying to change anyone else's opinions. If I find a consensus that 99% of people like a work that I hate, when a friend asks my opinion of said work I will usually respond. I didn't like it but many people seem to so you might.

BTW, my apology to the group for forgetting to change HTML to Plain Text in the last message I wrote.

Dennis/Endy
<http://home.attbi.com/~phleblori1/andy9/index.htm>

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Be more concerned with your character than with your reputation. Your character is what you really are while your reputation is merely what others think you are. (John Wooden)

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 20 May 2002, 00:48 · follows Endy9

Endy wrote:

Do you really want to attack my motives for writing instead of simply agreeing or disagreeing and open yourself to the same inspection?

Did I attack?

Did I attack your motives for writing?

I tried to make it clear that I wouldn't touch your opinion, but I took umbrage at your hurtful words that, imho, verge on flaming. The bile that leaks out and spoils the diplomacy of discourse: not the content of what you said, but the aggressive and antagonistic way in which you said it. I thought I said as much before, and you have yet to retract or apologize, or even acknowledge the offense.

Did I attack your semi-flaming? Perhaps I did.

=mantis=