

Ben Free, Son of God?

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 06 May 1998

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William H. Ansley — 06 May 1998, 01:02

I re-read FLF a while ago and noticed something that hasn't been discussed in this group. Since all (most?) of Wolfe's major works have a Christ figure in them, one would expect FLF to have one, too. Ben Free seems to be the closest thing to one. He does offer the four protagonists a "new life" at the end of the book, just before the epilogue, and just before this he says that he arranged that they all get their greatest desires "because I've learned that we all have to get them before we can have better ones."

But, in FLF, it is (more or less) directly implied that Ben Free is the Son of God. Dr Makee "is" God. This comes from Ch. 11, P. 69 of the Tor pb. ed.:

"Do I look like God?" the old doctor said. "I don't know." As a matter of fact he did look like God. He was a small, elderly man who sported a little white beard and an even whiter mustache; the collar of a tattersall shirt--an almost infallible sign of the presense of deity--peeped above the collar of his overcoat.

and this from ch. 31, p. 206:

The old doctor began to pump the blood pressure cuff. "He was my son, you know." Barnes stared at him, and he chuckled again. "Not my actual son--Tommy died a long while ago, and I think Ben was really a few years older than I am. But we used to pretend that way and we had a lot of fun. ..."

and finally this from ch. 36, p. 241-242:

Barnes shook his head.

"She said, 'God, you gotta take care of Baby Phil because he won't never take care of himself.' I wasn't there, but Bubba was, and he told me. God has to get me out, and you're his chosen instrument."

"Instrument, hell. I never even met Him!"

Dr. Makee chuckled and nudged Barnes with an elbow. "Don't be too sure."

Now all of this is done in a playful, not to mention peculiar, way and probably isn't meant to be taken seriously.

But then FLF is a playful, not to mention peculiar, novel. However, I am not at all sure it isn't meant to be taken seriously.

William Ansley