

Free Live Free

The Urth list — 6 messages, 4 voices, 10 Apr 2014

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Antonin Scriabin — 10 Apr 2014, 00:10

First, I just finished and loved this book. The characters were wonderful, and it was quite funny. I also loved Castlevision, so I am looking forward to the other member of that "era" in Wolfe's oeuvre, There Are Doors.

I have a first printing of the 1985 hardback from Gollancz, which doesn't have the timeline. Is this floating around online anywhere? Is it something Wolfe himself put together? Does it shine light on anything important?

Finally, did it cross anyone else's mind that the characters never left (or were always in) Belmont? It's a pretty cheap trick, and probably not the case, but I kept getting the feeling that they were all running in place somehow. I also just watched The Machinist, so maybe that has me paranoid.

David Stockhoff — 10 Apr 2014, 00:19 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

That's one of my all-time favorites.

On 4/9/2014 8:10 PM, Antonin Scriabin wrote:

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 10 Apr 2014, 00:30 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

Antonin - also from that period of Wolfe's work is "'Pandora' by Holly Hollander"

On Wed, Apr 9, 2014 at 5:10 PM, Antonin Scriabin

<kierkegardian at gmail.com>wrote:

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Antonin Scriabin — 10 Apr 2014, 00:32 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

I liked Pandora too, but not quite as much. I think I was waiting for something truly bizarre to happen the whole time. Thanks for the note. For some reason I thought it was from much later.

On Apr 9, 2014 8:30 PM, "Dan'l Danehy-Oakes" <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:
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Marc Aramini — 21 May 2014, 17:47 · follows Antonin Scriabin

Uncle Sam's "Free" Whitten as America and Its Dream and the Mad Electro-Magnetic Darkness of the Modern World: Free Live Free

Marc Aramini

In between Gene Wolfe's labyrinthine New Sun series and the equally complicated Latro novels, settings so far removed from the present that any critique or endorsement of modern society was at best second hand or indirect, *Free Live Free* represents a marked departure, at first depicting a world contemporaneous with its composition. *Free Live Free, There Are Doors, Castlevue, *and *Pandora by Holly Hollander* are fairly unique in their approach to realistic

modern settings in Wolfe. The earlier

Peace avoided the seedy day to day qualities of the opening of *Free Live Free* by granting its narrator the ultimate power of the memoir — he was free to jump from time to time and suppress any memory or fact with which he did not want to face. The characters in *Free Live Free* are afforded no such luxury during the obstacles they face, with the omnipresent third person narrator peering into all their weaknesses and failures. Yet even in *Free Live Free*, an unrelenting look at adult powerlessness in a hostile, cold city, it is revealed that Ben Free, too, has jumped from time to time and suppressed and eradicated past, imperfect versions of himself. Urban fantasy isn't even a great attempt to define exactly what *Free Live Free* is — a naturalistic exploration of ordinary, low mimesis characters in the first two thirds of the work almost echo the story "Forlesen" in a much less fantastic set up. Urban allegory is perhaps a better description.

While it is a contemporary novel, with most of its action occurring over four days at the end of January in 1983, the mission Free sets in motion for his boarders reveals that the entire social system in the novel is a natural outgrowth of several pivotal moments and shifts in United States history when mankind, and America in particular, finally achieved the power to destroy on a sufficiently grand scale to threaten its own existence, forever and ironically rendering the majority of humanity powerless, trapped, and completely insignificant. Only in Whitten's ability to transform himself from "Uncle Sam" into Ben Free and eradicate past versions of himself do we see the thrust of the novel: the American dream, and individual desires in particular, may fail, but the mutable, ever changing nature of that dream can, or should, embrace, empower, and liberate that which has been cast out and scorned.

While critics and reviewers have mentioned that both Severian and Latro appear to be at times nothing but pawns working in a vast system they cannot understand, their powers in combat, in cheating death, and in altering the destiny of armies and nations place them somewhere near mythic representations, and I have always felt naming them as powerless was a basic misprision of their mythic status. The four protagonists in *Free Live Free* do not enjoy these powers at first: beset by debt, poverty, desperation, and disappointment, they can expect to have no impact on their society or even make a mark on the vast city in which they dwell. For the majority of the novel this remains true. An obese prostitute, a short unlicensed private detective, an arrogant and mystical gypsy, and a poor salesman have all reached the bottom of society, but they are given an opportunity to live their life long dreams over the course of the text. With the exception of Madame Serpentina, our main cast is about as ordinary and every day as one could expect in a work of realistic fiction, with very real flaws.

The very ordinary struggles they undergo all culminate in equally appropriate scenes of "temptation" in which their dreams come true: Stubb is actually wanted by an employer, and with his wits easily solves this case, but a small distraction causes his failure; the concupiscent Barnes gets his date with a lovely tall woman, stands on stage for a comic introduction of a musical group, and has his clothes torn off by lustful strippers before being apprehended in his nudity; Candy gets her sweet john, who stuffs her with all the candies and attention she could desire even though she is drugged; and Madame Serpentina is lead by the Egyptian gods to a mystical unveiling that turns into a mockery.

Before these disappointments, each tries to save the house with their ingenuity and the means they have, whether that involves calling up salesman or politicians, using sneezing powder, greasing up a corpulent body and refusing to move, proving that even these outcasts can still be formidable, though they are doomed to failure. Perhaps the most bizarre and thematically confusing portion of the text involves the Belmont Asylum and the widespread darkness that results in city riots on a frigid night — the realism of the text frays at this point when just about every minor character introduced in the text also converges there, picked up for insanity.

Before we delve into the symbolic nature of this mad darkness through which the characters emerge (without ever speaking to Sergeant Proudly again — the ostensible reason that they go to Belmont in the first place), we should look at the other dominant symbol working in the text — that of Uncle Sam and Ben Free.

Uncle Sam B. Whitten, Lewis & Clark, and the Manhattan Project

As an allegory, Free Live Free is much more understandable. While the character Whitten grows up rich and serves his country patriotically in World War II before defecting to an earlier ideal, his symbolic identification as Uncle by his daughter Kip and his dialog clearly indicate that he is the symbol of America itself, Uncle Sam. Furthermore, his ability to jump backwards in time, eradicating the present version of himself and becoming stronger, shows how the idea of what America is completely changes over time. In a rather neat trick, the older version of Whitten will hold the ideals of the older frontier version of America, and the younger version treasure the newer, repressive ideals, so that old Ben Free represents old America and younger Whitten represents the new status quo of the nuclear age, both ultimate hero and ultimate villain in the story, just as the American Dream has both raised up many and crushed many under its cogs. Beyond this, Whitten's name resonates with some of the words Serpentina lectures about early in the novel: ?*Wit* meant knowledge once. To *wicken* was to enchant, only a thousand years ago. To

wikken was to prophecy.

Wih meant holy. ? *Wikken* sounded much like *wicken*, *wit* like *wih*. (Wolfe Tor 30)

These resonate with Whitten's name as well (Of course, rather ironically his name means “a person from White's town” - his maturation as a character leads him to expand his idea about what an American should be). The dialog between the four roomers and the man in the duffel coat (Whitten at his most status quo) reveal this:

“Our country was founded on the destruction of the wild by the civilized — Those Indians represented civilization. The beavers felled trees and built lodges, but the Indians killed beavers and skinned them.”

Barnes said, “Then the whites came and skinned the Indians.”

“Precisely. But the frontiersmen who destroyed the Indians and their culture were destroyed themselves, with their culture, by the settlers who followed. Those settlers lost their farms to the bank, and the banks sold them to companies who have brought the advantages of corporate existence — immortality and amorality — to agriculture.” (Wolfe Tor 353-4)

He goes on to posit that the chain stores represent the chains of slavery, and they discuss what it means to be an American:

The Indians used to be Americans - that's what an America was. Then the trappers were Americans, the Americans of their day. Then the farmers, with their buggies and low horses and white clapboard houses Even today when you look at a picture of Uncle Sam, you're seeing what those farmers were like dressed up to go to the county fair. Only farmers aren't real Americans anymore. Neither are Indians. — The trappers are gone, and pretty soon you'll be gone, too. — You aren't Americans, either. (355)

Of course, Free will change his mind and realize that these four are actually very much every day America. Indeed, knowing that his attempt to save the building that he calls his house, they will become his symbolic house: “hlp sv hs” - the name Stubb implies a room, Garth a garden, Barnes a barn, etc. While at first some of the statements Madame Serpentina makes seems to imply that symbolically Free is the house (when the tile falls, for example), in a sense they have

become Free's house, which expands beyond the limit of a building or a freeway.

Free has planted inside his house the means of escape from the ordinary. The well documented morning glories outside the back door of his kitchen in chapter 6, while snow surrounds the front door, reveals exactly where Free has concealed the gizmo, the singularity induction coil, that has allowed him to transcend time — clearly the backyard is in a different time. At one point it seems that the house is actually Free, since he exerts some control over the environment by making the tile fall from under Serpentina's feet. Serpentina believes him to exert power over that environment, and when Stubbs asks "You see the body?" Serpentina replies "I walk into it now." (74). Yet her understanding of Free's actual symbolic resonance is incomplete. He is much more than the house. Barnes will discover the "ticket" to freedom beneath the sign painted Free Live Free. Free reveals to Stubbs, "If we can keep the walls standing, that's all the help I need." (23). Since Whitten knows that Barnes will choose to go back through the normal door instead of the gizmo at the end of the novel to save his son Little Ozzie, the frontier version of Free is replaced mid conversation in Chapter 7: "In a Wall" to give Barnes more advice.

There is a reason that Whitten is so impelled to explore with Lewis and Clark — the first exploration to traverse to the West coast in the United States, called the Corps of Discovery Exploration — this is the establishment and exploration of America's physical borders through the untamed wilderness and foreign territories. The Manhattan Project is an equally pivotal moment in American history — harnessing the power of the atom forever changed the global landscape and to some degree fully catapulted humanity into the modern age. In this age, poor decisions made by one nation or another could for the first time in history result in absolute annihilation. For all its necessity or justification, it is America that first uses this power. This ultimate power proves mankind's powerlessness at the hands of governmental decisions and whims. This then, is the young, angry Whitten: a post nuclear repressed soldier who champions a very strict idea of what "Americans" should be. Our four roomers have fallen between the cracks of their rigidly socio-economic society and, to that version of Whitten, are not even worth being considered Americans because they don't fit in — the problem of the modern world.

Yet the novel shows that the American Dream is not dead even if it must change. All of the characters get to reach towards their desires: "The message I left for the general I used to be — said you should get you greatest desires. I did it because I've learned we all have to get them before we can have better ones" (398).

Serpentina herself states the dramatic theme of the problem with America

Wealth and power we have already too much of--we suffocate. Longer life? We outstay the lion and elephant. Hardly a day passes that we do not meet some man or woman who should be dead, who has outlasted his own time by decades...As for healing, it is not we who require it but the world, which requires to be cured of us. Serenity would indeed be a benefit, but we do not seek it; if we did we might find it required us to abandon wealth and power, and we love them too much. No, what we require from whatever Powers may be entitled to give it is some indication of how far we may go...we do not know what is permitted to us, and that ignorance paralyzes those who might otherwise refrain, while the worst of us kill every living thing and ruin all they reach (Wolfe Tor 317).

This final sentence reinforces how powerful mankind has become — but that power forever renders the vast majority of humanity helpless, stuck in mind numbing and dispiriting situations from which there seems no escape.

The Mad Darkness

At the center of each character's arc, a strange scene occurs in the Belmont. Almost every character in the text, from Phil Reeder, Nimo, Proudly, the gypsies, Dr. Makee, to even the cops, converge at the asylum. It strains credulity that Proudly, Reeder, and Nimo would all be detained simultaneously, and for this reason the scene must be looked at for its allegorical power. EVERYONE in the novel is living in an insane environment, detained, and without true freedom. They might as well be institutionalized. The Belmont shows that lack of freedom — living in the modern world creates a paranoid suppression that cannot be escaped. Some try to create alternative identities, like Richard Chester, calling himself the clown Nimo (perhaps related to Nemo — no one) and suppressing his name and identity. Stubb notes the similar numbers between Proudly's room at the Belmont and at the Consort: 717 and 771. While 7's proliferate throughout the text, (and they resonate with rather large aircraft such as the 747's which are noted as being able to land easily on a wing of the High Country) this does create a direct relationship between the rooms of the hotel and the rooms of the institutionalized.

I do not like to think of the novel as one large crazy hallucination — it is too realistic in its efforts. Yet that scene where the lights go out over the entire city shows a symbolic descent into madness — stripped of the external perceptions and orders imposed by society, what is left? A squawking madhouse. Riots ensue outside the city, and the insanity contained and bottled up escapes rather easily. Sandy Duck is reaching for an elevator when the power goes out, and her hand does not encounter what it expects to find.

The most surreal scene of the novel involves everyone sitting in the dark, the mad and sane alike, where even identity cannot be established. Multiple people claim to be Candy Garth (though thanks to the rules of the time folding, where the newcomer absorbs the current person, we know that they cannot all be her). In this scene, someone keeps calling out that they are the Page of Wands. In Tarot, this character represents change and new beginnings as well as desire. His creativity is nascent, and thus it is appropriate that in this darkness the characters can begin to actually select what they want to be, when modern civilization and its expectations are stripped clean and no one can see them. It is in this way that Free Live Free is intrinsically different than other naturalistic texts: those crushed by society can actually chose to define themselves in Wolfe, and become something larger, once their visible position in society is finally robbed of its power to hold them in place. In the culminating scene of the novel, they are even given the choice to achieve a kind of personal apotheosis through the gizmo or return to life as it was. Barnes is the only one who selects to return, because his duty to his son has not been fulfilled.

Interestingly enough, given talk of the magnetic properties surrounding the High Country, it is perhaps a similar magnetic property that causes the large city wide blackout. This EMP like effect could resonate with not only the “turning off” of civilization but that great nuclear power that lurks in the background, ready to send mankind back to the dark ages.

Mysticism and the Text

Serpentina strays to the mystical explanation for everything, and identifies Free as an acarya, a guide or instructor in religious matters (or a highly learned man). During her little chant in Chapter 8, which is her attempt to defend the house, her little green screen proceeds from nonsense letters to “AMRTET ALGAR ALGASTNA”, “ADAM ALCAR DAGERAM,” matching her pastel inscriptions of ADAM TE DAERAM and AMRTET, ALGAR ALGASTNA — these are actually from a Rembrandt painting at first called “The Practicing Alchemist” and then “Faust in his Study”. What is missing from Serpentina's invocation is the center inscription: the cross and INRI. In many ways all of these characters will re-enact Faust's story: getting what they want at

the cost of being betrayed by those they trust and their own desires. The arrangement depicted in the picture was said to be used on amulets for protection in battles. (McHenry)

Her chants beginning “Bagabi laca bachabe” is supposedly from a 13th century story of the sorcerer Salatin conjuring the devil and “Palas aron ozimonas” from a miracle play in which a character named Tervagans yields his soul to the devil. Interestingly enough, even though these are from different sources, they both appear on page 109 of de Givry's **Witchcraft, Magic, & Alchemy**, as does the mention of Rembrandt's painting. In other words, I believe that de Givry's book was Wolfe's original source for this scene. These chants are still extant in witchcraft and devilish incantations but they are not truly translatable.

However, later, when Serpentina curses her captors and escapes a straight jacket like a serpent, her words “Marear enkranken tober malade ammalarsi” (254) can be translated from various languages: to fall sick or sicken. In the original Ziesing addition, Free mishears the word whores and answers, “No Horace here.” — I normally don't like sound connotations, but Horus happens to be the god of vengeance, sky, protection, and war, and happens to resonate with the renamed first chapter: Four Roomers of War, and the later floating High Country. Horus' designation with the falcon and as “The one who is above, over” is interesting. During her divination with the mirror, “an airplane droned far overhead” (106) presaging the High Country, so her magic does seem tied to the flying fortress above. This divination results in her prophecy, which will be discussed in further detail below.

Finally, the poser Illingworth, who is over 70 in 1983 but claims to have been with Aleister Crowley in both Smyrna and the Himalayas (making him very, very young at that time) does mention a few figures whose mystical philosophies resonate with the text. In addition to Crowley, he mentions Dion Fortune, born Violet Mary Firth, and both Crowley and Fortune believed in the Secret Chiefs — those with transcendent cosmic authorities. Serpentina has prophesied of these secret masters herself. Crowley's mystical history involves an aeon of Isis, Osiris, and Horus which might also be mapped onto many of Wolfe's texts. Isis involves primitive worship of the mother goddess, Osiris the idea of a sacrificial and paternal dying god, and Horus a time of the child's spiritual growth and development. Certainly the transition from the aeon of Osiris to Horus can be traced in the spiritual journey of the characters in **Free Live Free** as Free sacrifices himself for their spiritual development.

NAMES:

Serpentina, in discussing her prophecy, says that something would be lost in translation such that someone named John Smith might be referred to as the beloved disciple, son of the iron smiter, and for this reason it is at least worthwhile to examine the patterns in the main characters' names. This is the part of Wolfe analysis I usually find the least worthwhile, but I feel at times it is necessary because there are very real patterns in the meanings of this cast's names involving fields, houses, and properties.

James (he who supplants/beloved disciple) Stubb — tree trunk, nickname for a short stout man, though Barnes indicates that he feels Stubbe with an e means room.

Catherine (Innocent) Margaret (Pearl) Garth -Keeper of the garden?

Marie/Serpentina — her real name implies beloved, star of the sea. The serpent is obvious, as is her later identification as the good witch, Glinda.

Cassius Illingworth — Madame Serpentina's breakdown of the name is different than the official one, saying at one point that she defrauded one who was named after someone with influence

below (Cassius is in Satan's mouth after betraying Julius Caesar in Dante's **Divine Comedy**), and his last name bodes the ill that he is worth despite his boasts. However, Illingworth would actually refer to a fenced area or "worth" fortified against a battle.

John B. Sweet need scarcely be mentioned for its obvious connotations as far as the prostitute Candy goes.

Phil (loves horses) Reeder — someone who thatches cottages. I suppose he is across from Barnes because — horses are kept in a barn? And it is at this point that we must move on, for we have already mentioned the relationship between Nimo and Nemo.

REVISIONS

Free Live Free also gives us a look at revision in Wolfe, with the Zeising version representing a penultimate draft. While the differences are not extreme, there are a few noticeable ones beyond word choice which have interpretive connotations that we will explore here. The cumulative effect is to show Free folding backwards and becoming more portentous and to change both the character of Stubb so that he is less lecherous. The very first chapter is retitled from "Selling Weather" to "Four Roomers of War". This markedly different chapter title shifts the theme from Barnes' optimistic view of the sales situation even though he is destitute to one showing a conflict in which these four are clearly to some degree victims. There are two other significant changes in this chapter: the policeman who comes to shake down Candy for money asks specifically for Candy here and then strikes her, dissatisfied with the amount she gives him. This is clearly a pay off so she is not arrested. This policeman, Norris, is completely eradicated in the Tor version and is replaced with Proudly, the Sergeant who will later suffer a head wound and be institutionalized at the Belmont Psych Ward. Thus Proudly is a bit more sympathetic in the Zeising version. In the Tor version, he comes specifically looking for "Bernard" Free and shaking down Candy for money is incidental when he recognizes her voice upstairs. The scene where Norris goes upstairs has different dialog: "You let whores stay here, sir?" "No Horace here," the old man said. (Wolfe Zeising 6) After some other slightly altered statements about forgetting to collect rent or even giving the boarders the money, Norris goes upstairs. The television is designated as merely having sounds. In the Tor version this is replaced with a discussion about time:

"You got to be out tomorrow, understand that's all the time you got."

"Used to have a lot more. — All of it. I'm not going. Going to die here." The sounds of the television are described as "rotary-engined fighters warmed up on the deck of a black and white aircraft carrier." (Wolfe Tor 7)

This presages the High Country Plane much more effectively, where Reagan's **Hellcats of the Navy**, on the TV here, will be referenced again. The other movie mentioned during this introductory chapter is of course **The Wizard of Oz**.

The interaction between Stubb and Free in Chapter 4 is also significantly altered, especially after Free mentions that he never sees rabbits, bears, or deer. The scene ends like this:

"People don't know how poor they are." He straightened up, squaring shoulders that were still wide, and went out.

Half a minute later, Stubb heard the door of the master bedroom close and the click of the bolt. He took off his glasses and produced an almost clean handkerchief from his hip pocket. When

he had wiped the lenses thoroughly, he took a notebook and an automatic pencil from his shirt pocket and, twisting his face in a laborious grimace, wrote a note in his minute hand. (Wolfe Ziesing 31)

After speaking of the animals in the Tor edition, Free declares:

"You people don't know how poor you are." He straightened up, squaring shoulders that were still wide.

'The creatures are all gone now, Mr. Stubb, as I soon shall be. Murdered.' Stubb leaped up By the time he reached the door, the parlor beyond it was empty. So was Free's bedroom.

Returning to the kitchen, he removed his glasses and produced an almost clean handkerchief. When he had wiped the lenses thoroughly, he took a notebook and an automatic pencil from his shirt pocket and, twisting his face in a laborious grimace, wrote something in an almost microscopic hand. (Wolfe Tor 25)

Free declares precognition of his murder and vanishes in the Tor scene here, making him much more mysterious. As Stubb walks to the cafe later, an interplay with another cop of the seventeenth precinct is taken out of the tor version, in which the cop asks Jim where he is going and jokingly says that his Sergeant tells how Jim and the Sergeant play bridge together, and then declines to give Stubb a ride: "This ain't a cab."

Chapter 7 represents the most important revision because a different Free shows up to warn Barnes in the Tor version:

The candle went out. "You're wrong, Barnes." The voice was Free's and yet not Free's, as though a new and different Free had come suddenly with the dark. ?

"Your trying to ask me where I put my gizmo, and what it is. A way to make me tell you what I hardly know myself about something you don't understand. Well, I put it where I told you. In a wall. I could have put it someplace else, but it was a wall I chose." (Wolfe Tor 45)

In the Ziesing edition, there is no talk of a different Free coming here, and the dialog does not change from the informal frontier style:

"You're tryin' to figure out how you can ask me where I put that thing I had. What I call my treasure, and what it is. Some way that'll get me to tell you what I hardly know myself about somethin' you're not even close to understandin'" (Wolfe Ziesing 56-7).

This revision indicates that a different Free has come back, possibly immediately after the scene at the end of the novel, to give Barnes the extra bit of information he needs to find the gizmo under the Free Live Free sign in the epilogue. The Free dialog before this point maintained the same informality of the original Ziesing text throughout, indicating this narrative space as a conscious folding point Wolfe added in the final draft, changing Free's voice as a clue to this replacement. The candle presages the darkness of the asylum as well and the loss of power throughout the city.

Several scenes involving Candy are changed in the Tor version, eliminating her mention of the cop who took her money once they arrive at the Consort hotel and also getting rid of a bird like description to describe her taking a drink. The scene in which the bell hops bicker over the money due them by Joe Majewski, who has been cheated by Madame Serpentina with her prestidigitation, is slightly extended. In the elevator with Candy, the bellhop Fuentes offers to

do whatever Serpentina needs more cheaply than Joe, and warns Candy that Joe cannot be trusted until he returns the seventy dollars he owes Serpentina. This is excised from the Tor version.

In the Ziesing edition, when Serpentina visits her gypsy family, Rose says that she is her mother though she is not really her mother (ie - stepmother), and the King ends the chapter by saying "Is this how a daughter speaks to her father?" This relationship is brought up again by Rose when she infiltrates the Belmont looking for Proudly. The Tor edition merely hints that Serpentina is a princess of the gypsies and is less overt in this implication. During the interrogation at the Belmont, Barnes gives his age as 41 in the Ziesing edition and 34 in the Tor edition, but in both versions his age is given at 35 in the opening scenes when he responds to a lonely hearts ad. Either way he lies about his age, slightly or extremely.

Chapter 29 also has a significantly different introduction. Rather than passively look at the building and note an unidentified man's tracks in the snow as in the Ziesing edition, Stubb mutters "In a wall" and begins to actively demolish the walls with a hammer, noting that the foot prints belonged to Barnes and Serpentina.

After Barnes gives his comedic introduction to Binko's band, the Tor edition has an entirely new section in which Sandy Duck picks up Osgood Barne's son (Wolfe Tor 325-6). The Ziesing edition completely omits this section, ending with the words, "KILROY WAS HERE."

In addition, Chapter 43 of the Ziesing edition is completely excised, entitled "Monkey Bars." In this chapter Candy complains that police would do little to defend a sandwich shop but that looters dare not attack a bar, and that there are two types of businesses she designates as regular and "monkey" businesses. Movies, TV, bars — these are all monkey businesses meant to keep the majority of the people entertained, drunk, and docile, fed on illusions. She tells of a fellow prostitute who met a college film major since she always went to romantic movies after her tricks. The film student and the prostitute developed a relationship, but rather than elevate her to respectability, when he found out he started pimping her out as well, but would only let her see good movies. This chapter changes Stubb's character quite a bit because in it he keeps thinking as he is helping the inebriated Candy around that he should have taken advantage of her when she was drunk in the opening scenes, helping her up the door. Cutting out this chapter makes Stubb seem slightly more chivalrous in the Tor version and avoids the condemnation of the entertainment and bar industry for keeping the people as satisfied sheep.

During the chapter in which Serpentina meets Illingworth, he expresses curiosity about her powers.

"I'm also a fairly good medium, particularly with unhuman spirits — elementals, that sort of thing."

"Demons?"

The witch hesitated, then nodded slowly. "occasionally, yes." (Wolfe Zeising 362)

In the Tor version, she replies:

"I am also a fairly good medium, particularly with the nonhuman spirits — elementals and so forth."

"Demons, Mademoiselle?"

The witch hesitated, then nodded guardedly. "They have other, and better names; but occasionally, yes" (Wolfe Tor 288).

This somewhat alters the supernatural state of the novel.

Finally, the chapters Murder Mystery (Chapter 50 in both versions) and Serving the Country (49 in Tor Version and 51 in the Ziesing version) are switched so that Stubb's dramatic "desire" chapter is last — this shows us Free's death at the hands of his daughter Kip, so the effect of having Candy drugged after this does not seem to have the same rising urgency. The Tor placement is superior for dramatic tension.

Outside of word choice and connotation in a few other places, these represent the major differences between the two versions. The Tor version represents a final draft insofar as the folding back of Free and the frequent mention of airplanes creates a slightly more complete subtext, and the excised portions seem either unimportant, or, in Stubb's case, a slight change to his character.

Proudy, *Oz, God, and the Hotel Call *

In many ways, Proudy's madness hints that he has some understanding of what the future will hold for these four characters. Whether this is the result of "folding" backwards through the gizmo or simple insanity is elided from the text, but judging from Madame Serpentina's mirror divination and Proudy's statements. According to Serpentina:
?The greatest event of the coming decade will be the quadrumvirate.
Four leaders, unknown today, shall unite to take political, financial, artistic, and judicial power. They shall create a revolution of thought. Many who are now rulers shall be imprisoned or exiled. Many who are now powerless shall rise to places of great authority. The rich shall be made poor, and the poor rich. Old crimes, long concealed shall be made public, and their perpetrators given to the people as to a pride of lions. The four shall be hated and idolized, but their rule will not end within the period specified by my prediction. (Wolfe Tor 111). Proudy believes that the people he watches from his hotel room are those four:

"I know about you. — You don't think I do, but I do. You don't think anyone knows, do you. Well, I do. — I know more about you than you do about yourselves. ? What could I say" Quit? Your boss wouldn't allow you to quit. ? Confess and bargain with the Prosecutor's Office for police protection? They wouldn't believe you any more than they would me. Kill yourself? That wouldn't work either now would it? ? We'll fight it out, you people and me. I got a hand tied behind me: I got to work inside the law, or pretty much. You can do as you damn please. There's four of you with God knows how many millions or billions behind you, and only one of me. — That's okay, too. (139). While not extremely problematic given the ability of the gizmo to fold back time for Proudy to be somewhat aware of what will happen, it still seems to me that this scene follows the allegorical pattern established by Wolfe with Uncle Sam/Ben Free. Proudy's name, so close to pride, seems to be what the four must struggle with in order to overcome their limitations. Seeking for proud Proudy in the asylum, there is the sense that he is very important but their actual interaction with him is curtailed and limited. This is the strangest aspect of the narrative — Proudy's failure to return in the final scenes given his exaggerated importance early. It is quite clear, however, that he does NOT see clearly, mistaking a lighter for a gun and assuming that the bellhop who entered the room must have been killed by the four when he merely went a different way. The vision problems of Stubb and Barnes (one with a fake eye that pops out and the other with the glasses that dominate his face) might resonate with this prideful inability to see truly important things and distort their dreams to the lowest level.

Putting aside pride for an instant, previous commentary on *Free Live Free* has made much of the Oz associations. These scenes usually involve Candy or her observations in one form or another, make me feel that it is Candy who is most obsessed with that dreamlike escape. However, there is one more disturbing elision that hangs over the character of Candy involving the phone call she receives at the start of Chapter 20 — a phone call whose entire dialog from her side is repeated again in the novel: "Hello — Yes, it's me — I'm staying with her — Okay. It was real nice hearing from you, you know" We thought something might have happened to you. (129) When questioned about it, she responds to "You didn't tell somebody from the hotel you were staying with Madam S." with "Huh uh. It wasn't from the hotel — It was for me, all right" I answered it. I got the message. It was my business. Later, Serpentina asks about it, and slightly misremembers the conversation as "It was real nice hearing from you again, you know" (147). Candy indicates that it is Joe Majewski who called her at this point, but this does not jive with her previous claim that it was no one from the hotel — and she has never actually met Joe in person, merely heard about him from the other bellhops. Both Stubb and Serpentina think that it might be Free calling, but why would Candy be reluctant to admit this? Stubb also believes that she was incarcerated by the police before returning to the Free House — is Candy working with Proudly or one of the other policemen? The male suspects for making the call are limited to Free, Dr. Makee, Proudly, another policeman, or Joe, but it is very difficult to discern who would actually have an interest in calling her at this point in the story with the knowledge of where she is. Is Candy lying here at her entrance into the pact? This is perhaps the least clear part of the text, so let us move back to our examination of Candy's infatuation with Oz. Of course in the very opening scene Candy indicates that she loves when the *Wizard of Oz* is on, and after escaping the Belmont, she thinks that the clown will begin singing the infamous movie song, which little Ozzie actually breaks into. In the opening chapters when Stubb makes a deduction, Barnes jokes that he has been taking lessons from the Wicked Witch of the West. By the epilogue, Serpentina is identified with Glinda the good, her opposite. Osgood's name is shortened to Ozzie, and in the scene on the High Country, when the lighting makes Serpentina flash different colors, Candy declares, "It's like that *Wizard of Oz* movie — whores of a different color, remember?" (Wolfe Tor 384) In the Ziesing edition this is at least the second pun on whores. Since it is mentioned at the beginning and at the end, many have tried to map the characters exactly with the Scarecrow, the Lion, the Tinman, Dorothy, and Toto, and I will here quote an old post on the Urth List by James Jordan:

The four main characters each have a besetting sin. These seem to link with four of the Seven Deadly Sins (Pride, Greed, Envy, Anger, Lust, Gluttony, Sloth). Fat Candy - gluttony. That's a no-brainer. (Her name links to this also, of course.) Ozzie (Osgood = Oz-Good) Barnes (the salesman) - lust. I think his marriage broke up because of unfaithfulness, though this is not stated. Stubb (the detective) - pride. He thinks he can handle everything, and has a "little man complex" or "Napoleon complex." As a short man consumed by being short, he's a "stub." Madame Serpentina - witchcraft, perhaps greed as lust for power (the sin of the Serpent, Satan). Also, as a gypsy pickpocket she's "greedy." (Note that her name originally was Marie, Mary, but that she has fallen from this "Christian" name into serving Satan as Madame Serpentina.) Each is trapped by his/her sin just before being offered a new life. — (for his complete and comprehensive post, please examine <http://www.urth.net/urth/archives/v0030/0313.shtml>)

This corroborates information from Wolfe's interview with Jordan himself:

GW: ... One of the things that I was trying to say was that America is not free and is becoming less so. And that we have to realize it and we have to resolve within ourselves to be free and to oppose the forces that are enslaving us. — I tried to give the four borders, I tried to give each sort of a besetting sin. Madame Serpentina, it's pride. Candy, it is gluttony. Stub, I forget now.

Osgood Barnes, sexuality of courseEnvy, envy I think is Stubbs. And I wasn't trying to write allegory. I wasn't saying he was a personification of envy. I wanted to show men and women who were actually beset by these sins. Trying to, given an opportunity to become something bigger and better than they had been by defeating the sin to some degree. Candy of course gets what she wants. She stuffs herself to the point that she can't stuff herself no more. And finds that this is not really paradise, it is not heaven, even though she has achieved it. Osgood Barnes comes to see sex as something more than the physical act. He comes to see the possibilities of love and sacrifice and so on. That is what I tried to do at least. (Jordan)

Of course, despite these words, while they are realistic characters through the majority of the novel, they veer into strange and idealized archetypal patterns by the end of their character arcs: Serpentina becomes Glinda, Barnes becomes Popeye, Stubbs transforms away from the furtive and shifty Elijah Cook Jr identification, and Uncle Sam transforms into "Free" - these all have very obvious allegorical connotations. Which leads me to identify *Free Live Free* as a strange blend of low mimesis realism and mythic romanticism — a naturalistic urban allegory.

This realism transformed into allegory is further exacerbated by the strange little patterns that develop around certain characters. Also on the Urth List (accessible at <http://www.urth.net/urth/archives/v0030/0321.shtml>), William Ansley noted several passages that seem to indicate the relatively minor Dr. Makee is God-like:

"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 tattersail shirt--an almost infallible sign of the presence of deity--peeped above the collar of his overcoat. (Wolfe Tor 69) This is echoed again later: 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." (Wolfe Tor 241-2)

Ansley concludes that Free becomes a symbolic son of this God like figure: 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. (Wolfe Tor 206) I think that this interplay here at least riffs on the idea that America , at least as far as the English colonization, was established on principles of religious freedom. The freedom to choose the highest possible dream in **Free Live Free** leads to a literal apotheosis, forever separating the novel from any naturalistic roots and creating that strange dichotomy between the day to day failures depicted through the novel and the ticket to transcendent freedom offered these four characters on the High Country.

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Marc Aramini — 21 May 2014, 19:08 · follows Marc Aramini

I think I accidentally mixed up the names John and James in my write up - of course John implies the Beloved Disciple, not James. Sorry about that. Another reason I really don't like the onomastics Borski adores ever so much.