

Still amazed by Wolfe's FIFTH HEAD OF CERBERUS after 20 readings...

The Usenet list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 06 Jun 1985

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/usenet/28>

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Donn Seeley — 06 Jun 1985, 09:59

I give up. After going through the book for the twentieth time or so, I still have to admit that Gene Wolfe's THE FIFTH HEAD OF CERBERUS is my favorite work of sf, and very possibly my favorite book, period. I have found something new every single time I've read it, which I think is the greatest and most difficult gift an author can make to a reader. On this pass I finally figured out what Number Five's real name is. In retrospect I probably should have guessed it sooner, but that would have taken some of the fun and suspense out of it! Has anyone else had this experience?

Awed,

PS -- If you're a Wolfe fan and haven't figured out who Number Five is, are desperate to know and happen to be going to the Usenix conference, buttonhole me when you see me there and I'll give you a hint. I'm also open to hypotheses about PEACE, NEW SUN and other Wolfe masterpieces...

William Ingogly — 07 Jun 1985, 19:22 · in reply to Donn Seeley

In article <1475 at utah-gr.UUCP> donn at utah-gr.UUCP (Donn Seeley) writes:

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The Fifth Head of Cerberus is also close to being my favorite SF work, although Lem's Solaris and certain other works by other authors are also contenders. It's an infinitely rich and rewarding book, but reading Wolfe is definitely work. You've certainly beat me on the number of readings; I've read it three times. It's a book I recommend to anyone I talk to about SF.

Wolfe's short stories are also first-rate; check out The Death of Dr. Island And Other Stories And Other Stories. Actually, I can't think of anything he's written that I haven't enjoyed, including the mainstream novel Peace (at least it appears to be mainstream).

At the risk of starting more flames in the group on quality and SF (-:), my opinion is that Fifth Head of Cerberus is his best work, but I've only read the Book of the New Sun once so I haven't really gotten into it. I'd be interested in hearing from other people in the group on F. H. of C; does anyone else share our high opinion of this book?

-- Bill Ingogly