



The Wishstone and the Wonderworkers

Hugh Cook

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The Wishstone and the Wonderworkers Details

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Author : Hugh Cook

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From Reader Review The Wishstone and the Wonderworkers for online ebook

Ceri Sambrook says

I'm cheating and using this review for all Hugh Cook's Chronicles of an Age of Darkness.

Take almost every fantasy cliche and trope you can think of and give it to Eddings or Jordan and you get 'The Belgariad' or 'The Wheel of Time'- entertaining enough but otherwise soulless pap. Give them however to Hugh Cook and you get your tiny mind blown. He turns everything on its head like no other author before or after him. Wizards, magic bottles, monsters and heroes are used in such a fresh imaginative way that you are glued to the story page by page. Humour pervades every book to a varying degree and one of the great disappointments in life is that he never finished the whole set as he saw them- though luckily each book can be read as a stand alone novel, rewarding fans with nods, winks and links akimbo, otherwise complete reads in themselves.

I cannot recommend these books enough- even if you are not a fantasy fan; believe me these books will nothing like you expect and I think represent a truly unique literary experience

Jp says

I am revisiting this series from when I was a kid, so I'm not sure if my opinion is influenced by the fact this is the first of the series I hadn't actually read (I only made it to the last one), but I absolutely loved this book. I found myself sneaking a few pages in here and there when I could because I was totally hooked.

Off the back of the lackluster Wicked and the Witless, this fresh new tale features an entirely new set of characters and is the first not to be set on the continent of Argan. It still contains the moral ruminations and sly jokes of previous novels, but it is also far more concise and has far fewer meandering passages and pointless subplots which is one of the few things that annoys me about Cook. Its location, settings and characters are interesting and developed efficiently, the story itself is fairly straightforward and doesn't tangle itself up unnecessarily.

The book is a purported history written by a madman, a resident of the island's asylum of which the novel is centered. It is also heavily redacted and notated by obviously hostile editors, a stylistic twist which I haven't encountered before but really enjoyed; the prejudices of both sides adding humour to the proceedings.

A fairly straightforward tale of an outcast who becomes a reluctant hero, driven by aspirationally pure motives of which he constantly questions. This sits nicely against the prejudices of the narrator and the good natured pissing of liberal, progressive values. Cook is one funny mofo; his Pythonesque / Douglas Adams style of humour is right up my alley so I always enjoy his comic ramblings and asides. This book is a hoot, especially when Shabble is around. I also loved its subtlety in interweaving patches of history into the present, such as the days of wrath (I now wish he'd got to write that series). The legend of the Golden Gulag especially injects a menacing undertone I hope is further developed in the next 4 books, as I do the sci-fi elements which take it in more interesting directions than the simpler heroes and dragons of previous books.

Overall this book is wonderful; I immediately got stuck into the Wazir and the Witch upon finishing it.

Matt says

Revisiting this series, proudly displayed on my bookshelf.

I'm not judgey (I am massively judgey) but those who see the series and know it have always turned out to be decent, most excellent people.

This book in the series held up for me as the writing is excellent. Almost all the books are written in a different way, this one uses an unreliable narrator whose text has been further annotated by a clerical caste of pedants, fact checkers, redactors et al. This isn't overused and the effect is a good one.

As for the story, it's a simple tale of love between an outcast and a do-gooders daughter; it's a tale of stolen Crown Jewels and the farce accompanying their retrieval, it's a commentary on race; it's a analysis of a political coup between an usurper's daughter and a civil servant loyal to the old regime; it's about demonic possession and an immortal delinquent called Shabble; it's about a Hermit Crab that can turn people inside out.

The writing is such that you jump along for the ride, it all fits together! (With the only criticism being that perhaps Chegory meeting Odolo is a bit contrived).

Well worth it for any fantasy sci-fi fan.

If only it had turned into the 30/40 book epic Cook had planned - this book like others leaves so many questions unanswered (but not at the detriment of the story).

Dan Schwent says

A massive energy drain disrupts the magic of Injiltaprajra and it's up to Chegory Guy to divine what happened. Too bad he's just a rock gardener at Injiltaprajra's insane asylum. But does the disruption have anything to do with the the Wishstone?

The Wishstone and the Wonderworkers is a slight departure from the first five books in the Chronicles of an Age of Darkness. Rather than concerning the fall of Argan from different angles like the first five, this one is the story of Chegory Guy and a demon forcing itself into the world. Rather than being a straightforward tale, this one is purported to be told through a manuscript written by one of the asylum's inmates. It took me a little while to warm up to the style but I was hooked by one of the hilarious interjections by one of the supposed editors of the manuscript. Jeff Vandermeer employed a similar technique in Shriek but I enjoyed it a lot more here.

While my summary above makes The Wishstone and the Wonderworkers sound like a fantasy version of Die Hard, it isn't. Interesting narration aside, it's more the story of a protagonist that isn't a hero. Chegory is an Ebrell Islander, a red-skinned persecuted minority. One of his friends is The Shabble, a miniature sun.

Chegory blunders his way through the story, interacting with such personages as a corpse seller, Guest Gulkan and his Wishstone-stealing crew, and, of course, The Hermit Crab, a godlike being resembling a giant crab that Chegory is charged with feeding a bucket of fish guts once a day. Gulkan makes cameo appearances in all the Chronicles leading up until the final book where, I presume, he finally takes center stage.

As always with Hugh Cook, there is a fair amount of hilarity. Without giving too much away, every one of the cultural taboos Chegory was raised with are challenged in amusing ways. That's about all I can say without giving away too much of the plot.

If you're looking for a hero, look someplace else. If you're looking for an ordinary person going up against extraordinary things, The Wishstone and the Wonderworkers, as well as the other books in the Chronicles of an Age of Darkness, are for you.

Paul Grant says

A very different style to the previous 5 volumes. Rather hardwork to get into it, but worth the effort.

Zivan says

Cook is back in form with The Wishstone and the Wonderworkers.

As a history buff I'm thrilled by the return in force of the commentary.

We are treated to a future historian discussing a historical document discussing current events. So we are getting three perspectives. that of the protagonists themselves, that of the original historian and that of the future editors of the historical text.

And the wonderful thing is that none of them are perfect. They each suffer from their own biases and flaws.

Steve says

Chronicles of an Age of Darkness
