



The Judge of Ages

John C. Wright

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The year is 10,515 AD. The Hyades Armada, traveling at near lightspeed, will reach Earth in just four centuries to assess humanity's value as slaves. For the last 8,000 years, two opposing factions have labored to meet the alien threat in very different ways.

One of them is Ximen del Azarchel, immortal leader of the mutineers from the starship Hermetic and self-appointed Master of the World, who has allowed his followers to tamper continuously with the evolutionary destiny of Man, creating one bizarre race after another in an apparent search for a species the Hyades will find worthy of conquest.

The other is Menelaus Montrose, the posthuman Judge of Ages, whose cryonic Tombs beneath the surface of Earth have preserved survivors from each epoch created by the Hermeticists. Montrose intends to thwart the alien invaders any way he can, and to remain alive long enough to be reunited with his bride Rania, who is on a seventy-millennia journey to confront the Hyades' masters, tens of thousands of light-years away.

Now, with the countdown to the Hyades' arrival nearing its end, del Azarchel and Montrose square off for what is to be their final showdown for the fate of Earth, a battle of gunfire and cliometric calculus; powered armor and posthuman intelligence.

The Judge of Ages Details

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From Reader Review The Judge of Ages for online ebook

Johan Haneveld says

Exhilarating SF by an author who's well versed in SF-tropes, scientific knowledge, and the classics of western civilization. And has a fertile imagination, filling every page with new ideas, witty dialogue and huge revelations. Most of all, he's not afraid to write in order to provide the reader with that most elusive of sensations, a sense of wonder. A sense of wonder that is not produced by empty spectacle, but the deep awe one feels when confronted with deep time, the grandeur of space, breathtaking beauty or courageous sacrifice. Or two rivals and enemies smoking a cigarette together and choosing to be gentlemen. I felt this sense of wonder often, reading this book, at the same time being stimulated to think about different elements of human civilization, how they balance against each other, and how when one comes to the fore, at the cost of others, we lose what makes us human. And what makes us human is a lot simpler than huge formula's, all encompassing intellect, and all the meddling people do: it's being a man, being a woman, and love your life. There's something chestertonian in that (the author is a fan, I know). Sadly some of these thoughts remain a bit academic, for I don't think Wright's characterisation is really where he shines the most. He's a man of ideas. And on some of his ideas I think I disagree, seeing how he is a bit on the right side of American politics, and holds on to some things I think are ultimately harmful. But he would say the same thing about me, and I don't find his politics harm the work. The imagination and passion for life do really outshine these little flaws in my opinion.

This is the third book in a series, and one must really read the first two, and start on an exhilarating journey into the far future. This book is intriguing as all action takes place in one place, during approximately one day, and mostly consists of conversation. But there are awesome revelations that span aeons. Definitely recommended for people who like outlandish speculation coupled with hard science in their fiction.

Michael says

Got confused and thought I was reviewing the Hermetic Millennia. Ah well, I'll just leave this here.

Hermetic Millennia is of Wright's best books. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Like in his Golden Age trilogy Write has some of the most imaginative post humans I've ever read about. The book is exciting, funny, and thought provoking. I thought it was significantly better than the first book in the series.

I'm sure the Judge of Ages will be fantastic as well.

Charles McGonigal says

It's an intriguing end to the tug-of-war, but the fourth star is because as a law student from Texas, there are so many beautiful one-liners for me that are probably irrelevant asides to most people. I think I enjoyed most of the journey, but still want to read more by this author to decide how I feel about him.

Sheppard says

This 3rd book of 4 was a little uneven in pace. A lot of time in the middle was spent on an interspecies battle in Montrose's Tombs. Given the big scope of the concepts, I felt it was a little slow. But as the story progressed I understood that the details of the battle, especially as it related to the species capabilities in battle and their thought processes. Overall this book took me by surprise and with the injected humor it places him with Iain Banks and Neal Stephenson. As for vision and scope and pure mind blowing thoughts he is a natural peer of Greg Egan, Peter Hamilton and David Zindell

Nicholas Kotar says

Picks up where Hermetic Millenia left off, and does so with a bang. Almost 200 pages of a single battle scene, with lots of philosophizing going on in the intervals, and somehow John C. Wright makes it impossible to put down. But the final move in the millenia-long chess game is what makes this book fantastic. For all of his faults, Wright has endless imagination. The only thing that makes me cringe is Menelaus' blasphemy, endlessly inventive though it may be. But I have a thin skin for that kind of thing, so...

In any case, I'm anxiously awaiting volume four of this six-volume series.

Robert says

The scope of the COUNT TO A TRILLION series (JUDGE OF AGES is #3) is staggering, and this book is little more than a blink in that time, with huge impact.

Mark says

The Judge of Ages

Author: John C. Wright

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REVIEW MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS

Summary:

The distant future. An alien fleet travels toward Earth from a great distance. This fleet will test humanity for our value as slaves to our new/old alien masters. Mankind is preparing for their arrival. One faction of humans has been playing with their genes in an attempt to create a hybrid race that the oncoming horde will find worthy of conquest instead of extinction. In the eons long wait, they have created quite a few offshoots of Mankind. The Judge stands in opposition to that faction. He seeks a way to beat the Hyades and their far distant Masters. Posthuman vs. powered armor. Bullets and brains. The end of the beginning of the end. History and evolution. Masters and slaves. Will Man or his descendants survive?

Genre:

Adventure

Disaster

End of the World

Fiction

Science fiction

Why this book:

The title caught me. The image on the cover of the city in the clouds.

Favorite Character:

Scipio Montrose. He sounds like a survivor...or a quisling. I haven't decided yet. But he comes across awesomely.

Soorm. He basically farted and belched an opponent to death.

How could you not love the Judge? He's an awesome character.

Least Favorite Character:

Ull is thickheaded. As all around him put two and two together, he failed to realize that the object of his quest was before him the whole time.

Character I Most Identified With:

The swirling, science fictionness of the characters, alien is the best word to describe them even though they aren't aliens and are all actually genetic children of Man, makes them virtually impossible to identify with.

Maybe the Judge...or the Giant, Bashan.

Soorm when he recognizes that Alpha Yuen brought a knife to a gunfight.

The Feel:

Very Grant Morrison-esque. Blue Men. Gray Men. Dog Men. Living Digital Super Whales. Spaceships so big that they are visible in the sky stretching from the sky into the distant heavens causing hurricane force storms as they move their tip through the atmosphere

Favorite Scene:

When Menelaus gets his peek outside through the digital machinations of the Gray Twins and he sees the gigantic ship stretching from way out in space into the atmosphere where it is vacuuming up a future version of Raleigh. And as its tip moves through the atmosphere, it stirs up hurricane forces to swirl around it and in its wake.

The run up to the duel...and the duel. Love the kneel before Zod moment when they are discussing Blackie's "real" plan.

Pacing:

Breakneck. There's a lot of headsnap, look at this over here, wow, in this book.

Spastic and jittery.

Mentally exhausting...but awesome.

The story is thick with exposition what with it being largely one big fight in a locked room. It's a big room, throne room, but still. Just as I start to think too much exposition, something will hit me between the eyes and set off my wow circuits.

The exposition begins to wear as you get around the 220s to 250s. But then, the buildup to the duel kicks in and, just like that, the expository nature slacks off as Menelaus's mind turns to the duel and the story becomes more about the present than the tremendous past of the Judge and all the various children of Earth and Man.

Plot Holes/Out of Character:

Montrose, the real one, supposedly, finally, gets the drop on the guys who have been tormenting him for the whole first act and instead of going for it ends up recaptured/back under their spell. This was a huge letdown and felt out of character for someone who was supposed to be as on-the-ball as the Judge of Ages is supposed to be.

Hmm Moments:

The Noah's Ark intelligent zeppelins floating over a blasted hell-like Earth carrying the future geosperma of the entire biosphere of the planet.

"Jesus pissing in Palestine" is a great exclamation.

chronovertigo - the crushing weight of aeons.

I like how all of the Thaws think that they are either still the Currents or going to be the next Ascendants when the dilemma works itself out. Course that sets the stage for the conquest of the Vaults to become a Civil War between all these aeons separated Children of Mankind whether they be cyborg Locusts, Giants, Sylphs, Blue Men, Gray Men, Dog Men, Humans who have uploaded their souls to the Noosphere, Net, Datumsphere, etc.

A locked room mystery where the reader knows the answer but have to follow the breadcrumbs as the invaders and prisoners figure it out. The plan and the plot of the Judge takes its time to boil, but the depth of characterization and the brain spinning speed of the pace make up for the slow boil.

The Earth Brain and The Jupiter Brain.

Why isn't there a screenplay?

There's no way that a screenplay would be the same as the story in this book.

Casting call:

Last Page Sound:

I feel cheated...but that's alright.

Author Assessment:

Brain spinning. I would read other stuff by this author.

Editorial Assessment:

Well done.

Knee Jerk Reaction:

instant classic

Disposition of Book:

Irving Public Library, Irving, TX

Would recommend to:

everyone

Joshua says

Alright. I loved this book. In its entirety. Wright brings us back to his character driven take on Last and First Men (With ninja beastmen and Doc Smith style curses!) in a book that consists of a conversation, a fight, and conversation, and another fight. Which sounds boring, but it's not. (At least, not if you're fond of secret histories and hard scifi sense of wonder.)

Caveat Emptor: This is book three of a series of... 5? 6? Something like that.

Jesse says

The premise of this series is interesting, but the last two books could basically have been half a book, and nothing would have been lost. The interminable attempts to regain control of the hero's computer are tedious to say the least. None of the good characters are interesting, and the villains are not threatening. The hero and the main villain are fighting over a girl who is not that interesting. I would read the first book, and then skim the next two if the final two volumes turn out to be better, otherwise, I'd give everything after book one a pass.

Joshua says

A few plot twists in this one... helps make sense of the previous book.

DMS says

I've basically stopped reviewing here in favor of BookLikes, but for Mr. Wright, I'm willing to make an exception. Especially with this oh-so-perfect title. And, really, the rest of this review consists mostly of his

writing, not mine:

"A real heroine does not manipulate good men by their affections, nor copulate out of wedlock." (Slut shaming, check.)

"Women, it must be noted, complain more than men." (Unchecked "facts," check.)

"But the purpose of the specialization is also difficult to deny: children need both a father-figure to mete out justice and fight for the family against the world, winning bread and slaying foes, and need a mother-figure to quench the thirst for mercy and nurture the family within the home." (Oh, good, I was worried he might not say anything homophobic.)

"His mission is not to give into despair, and, when she walks out on him, to walk after her." (No means keep trying, check.)

"Now, if that is the essence of the male-female mating dance, as you can see, nature places a much greater burden on the woman." (Personal prejudice (especially Western) = nature, check.)

"The sexes are opposite, and culture should exaggerate the complimentary opposition by artifice in order to increase our joy in them, including artifices of dress and speech: when women dress and speak and act like men, some joy is erased from both sexes." (Put a bow on it, check)

"Feminism abolishes femininity." (straw-man feminism, check. There's a lot more of this kind of thing, but most of it is so long-winded and illogical that you, dear reader, would think I made it up.)

"By the way, gentlemen, this is why women talk more than men and talk about more trivial things." (See unchecked "facts."

I've read more than enough of this author. No need to waste money on this upcoming title.

Also, just for good measure: Fuck you goodreads.

Bob says

This book was great. Think of "Count to a Trillion", "The Hermetic Millenia" and "The Judge of Ages" as a trilogy: most of the numerous threads are explained and wrapped up neatly in this book. There will be a few more in the series (the overarching thread isn't finished yet), but this is a good conclusion to the first series of events. It doesn't end on a cliffhanger like the last two did.

The first book was very cerebral and difficult to read, and the second was better but still rather slow and confusing, but this book really shines. It explains what was going on in the huge, fascinating evolutionary arcs humanity has been following over the several millenia. In fact, one of the few complaints I would have about this book is that it explains things several times, and sometimes I'm reading a recap that I already read earlier, and shouldn't have to go through again.

Overall, I thought this book was terrific: fascinating ideas, huge scope and a very interesting and creative conclusion: the ending definitely took me by surprise, in a good way. I would say that the protagonist is one

of the more interesting and unique characters I have ever read in science fiction, and I like the way he was built up.

Jeff Miller says

While I enjoyed the previous two books in the series, this one blew me away. A slow start soon led to a frenetic pace of action and plot reveals that held up through the rest of the book.

This series has so many cool ideas in it that they could easily had been provided as a basis for other books. Space opera with plausible science brings it down to earth and up to the skies. Yet as cool as the action was, it was the interplay between between Menelaus and "Blackie" that provides so much entertainment. Especially as it is far from typical hero/villain interplay. The war of ideas and nuances in outdoing each other is just fun to watch and just went you thought you understood what was going on you descend down another layer of the onion.

I just found myself smiling through most of the book. Although this was not a quick read as the book is os dense in characters and ideas you have to read carefully to keep track. Still the effort it well worth it.

Brian Niemeier says

A truly masterful, viscerally satisfying space opera in the hard SF tradition.

Bigfire says

This novel picks up the second after the conclusion of the previous novel. As I said in the review of the previous novel, this is merely part 2 of a novel that was cut in half for length reason. Most of the mysteries of the histories of the different post-human era are answered in multiple dialogues in this novel. The struggles between Master of the World (Hermetics) and Judge of the Ages (Montrose) are chess like with various characters noting their own position on the board. Some of the pieces are very very far away, some of the commit self sacrifice so their side may gain advantage (in this case, even commented on that fact as the act is being carried out).

Unlike the previous book, this book ends conclusively the war between the 2 post-human factions and sets stage for the next book The Architect of Aeons, in which we hopefully get to see the aliens, after waiting for 8 thousand years.
