



## The Widow's Son

*Robert Anton Wilson*

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Sigismundo Celine knows only what he is and what he must do to become the one spoken of in the old texts. But what he doesn't know could kill him: the secret powers of Maria, the Italian beauty; the Irish fisherman Moon, who stumbles across the workings of an unsuspected cult; and the question they keep asking: the identity of The Widow's Son.

## **The Widow's Son Details**

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Author : Robert Anton Wilson

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## From Reader Review The Widow's Son for online ebook

### Vinnie Messina says

Perhaps RAW's best fiction writing.

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### Thibault says

Not as good as the first volume, hope it will pick up in the 3rd

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### gepr says

[sigh] Brilliant, of course. I'm terribly sad RAW has left us. Thank the gods he didn't leave us empty-handed.

I must have missed this in my first reading (circa '87 -- before I learned of non-well-founded set theory and had been exposed to our deep veins of hypocrisy); but, the final letter from Sigismundo to his Uncle Pietro speaks a fundamental truth that lies at the heart of at least a colloquialism, a new branch of mathematics, and an imminent rift in science. Sigismundo refers to it by saying: "The illusion of Sin and Guilt, the madness of our species, is the act of cursing the world under the misapprehension that one is cursing only one part of it. ... The fallacy that one can judge the part in isolation from the whole is 'the Lie that all men believe.'"

This point is particularly poignant as we enter the 2008 election cycle and we see all the loud-mouthed accusers on both wings accusing their counterparts (who Sigismundo reminds us are really themselves divided into illusory parts by the fallacy of separability) of heinous crimes against XYZ.

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### Anthony Faber says

The second Historical Illuminatus book, which are all prequels to the Illuminatus Trilogy. Okay, but I advise ignoring the footnotes, since they're repetitive and don't add much to the story.

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### Alethea Hammer says

In this, the second book of the trilogy, Wilson's quirky nature reasserts itself. Not content with a linear narrative that a rational reader can easily follow, he starts a crazy little subplot which takes place entirely in the footnotes. The footnotes refer to and quote several other books. Some of those other books exist, in the sense that you could look them up and read them somewhere else. Some exist in the mind of the author and some were allegedly written by characters in the footnotes, such as de Selby, who may actually turn out to be fictional characters in other novels. Let the reader beware. Wilson likes to toy with your sense of what is

'real'.

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## **East Bay J says**

The second volume in Wilson's *Historical Illuminatus Chronicles* is a little slower going than the first. This is due almost exclusively to the "footnotes" Wilson scatters throughout the book. These seem to be clever jokes about people who did or did not really exist and what they did or said or thought about. Full disclosure: I started to skip them. I read some, one here, one there, but generally I found I wasn't taking anything away from those passages. I realize it's in homage to *The Third Policeman* and it's all terribly clever but... it's just not my thing.

The lengthy orations/monologues/diatribes are still present as characters wax philosophical on any number of topics. These I didn't skip (though I sometimes found them tedious) because they often prove fairly interesting. I began to wonder if Wilson's intent wasn't to pass on to the reader something of the ritual or repetition of Freemason ceremonies.

Still, what interests me most about this series is what happens to our protagonists. Approaching this as a novel, my expectations are of a certain kind and those expectations were occasionally disappointed.

Still, I enjoyed this book and it's likely because Wilson is a great writer who creates interesting characters who do interesting things. And, I suppose, if it makes me think and I take something away from it, well, that's what you call a bonus.

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## **kat says**

Compelling story. Too goddamn many footnotes. Probably won't look up the last installment of the series, as much as I love RAW.

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## **Alicia says**

The second book in Robert Anton Wilson's The Historical Illuminatus Chronicles was another great read. Once I had the proper time to read I couldn't put it down and read the biggest part of the book in 3 days. Wilson has a way of pulling you into the story, his way of writing is so easy but still very intelligent, which makes it very attractive. The story was engaging and it was interesting to see where the next part of Sigismundo's life went. I also enjoyed all the other characters parts thoroughly. The only thing I found a bit distracting was the massive amount of footnotes, that to me didn't often seem as real importance to the story, although these footnotes also gave interesting information, they didn't always seem to have much to do with what was going on. It was as if they were telling a separate story next to the main story. On the whole though, like the first book, a very enjoyable read and I am looking forward to the last book in the trilogy but also other books by Wilson.

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## **Michael says**

In my review of *The Earth Will Shake* I referred to the later sequels in the series as inferior. Actually, this is the only one I ever read, because after it, I really didn't care about the story any more. You'd think that would earn it a lower star rating, but looking at it today, I see it as less of a failure and more of a strategic shift in storytelling, one which simply didn't work for me as an adolescent.

This book continues the story of Sigismundo Celine/Malatesta/Balsamo as he studies in Paris, is locked up in the Bastille, and tries to escape a conspiracy determined to recruit him during the years leading up to the explosion of the French Revolution. However, it also shifts perspective away from him, and much of the text is spent in Ireland with Sir John Babcock and his Italian wife Maria (who were characters in the original novel) and with Seamus Muadhen/Moon (who is a new character). By the time I read this novel, I had read *The Illuminatus! Trilogy: The Eye in the Pyramid/The Golden Apple/Leviathan*, so I knew that all of these characters were ancestors of the characters in *Illuminatus!* and I was looking for common traits and explanations of how those characters came to be. On one level, I think that weakens the story. As I read it, I became aware that Wilson wasn't creating characters, but mostly recycling them from his more successful work. This is also a rather darker novel than the first, which had its ominous elements, but still worked as an adventure story.

The bigger problem I had with it, however, was the experimental writing technique Wilson introduced with this novel. There are footnotes on almost every page, placed at the bottom of the paragraphs (not the bottom of the page) they refer to. At first, these are minor comments, generally to provide a bit of historical context to readers who hadn't read the first book, or who might want to know more about something going on in the story. Over time, however, they become a "second novel" of their own, about the theories, disputes and personal life of a fictitious scholar named "de Selby" and his various cohorts, admirers and detractors. I found it very distracting, although I admit that at the time I was much less used to reading books with footnotes, and I missed a lot of the humor that I get now out of these notes. I believe I only managed to finish the novel when I decided to skip any note that was over five lines. I'd sort of like to go back and read just the notes, now.

So, what seemed to be a failure now seems less so, although certainly where the first book worked well as a Young Adult novel with wide appeal, this is going to work only for a more specialized, probably more mature audience. I don't know what Wilson did with the third book, as I say, because I never read it, but I suspect that as the story developed, the style shifted again, possibly to something a bit more palatable. Some day perhaps I will give it a chance.

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## **Derek Baldwin says**

Continuing the historical illuminatus chronicles, this time with reams of very funny footnotes in a direct steal from *The Third Policeman*.

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## **Phil Scovis says**

In the second book of the Historical Illuminatus Trilogy, Wilson satirizes just about everything about the secret society conspiracies: the people who believe they are the force behind history; the people who think

dismiss them; the people affected by them; and above all, the people who are part of them.

Even the scholarly discussion of conspiracies gets mocked in the copious footnotes, supported by wholly imaginary citations.

Wilson departs from the usual conceit that secret societies are the puppet masters behind all world events. Their members, like all of humanity, are ridiculous and fallible fools. The real conspiracy is none other than the hard laws of nature and economics.

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**Kevin says**

Yeah the footnotes get a bit much.

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**Fishface says**

Terrific. All I wanted was more!

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