

Brian Erland, Amazon reviewer

First things first, I didn't know what 'denouement' meant when I first picked up the book. I actually thought the publishers had misspelled denouncement. Just so you won't make the same mistake I have provided the following;

Definition: Denouement is a series of events that follow the climax of a drama or narrative, thus serves as the conclusion of the story. It is the unraveling or untying of the complexities of a plot. (Wikipedia)

Synopsis: As indicated by the title, 'The Denouement' explores the possibilities of what follows some monumental event. In this case that "monumental event" is the Great War in Heaven, the battle between God and Satan that resulted in the death, or expulsion of one-third of the angelic kingdom from the heavenly realm. The story resumes millennia after this catastrophic event yet despite the passing of time Satan has yet to give up the fight. With the unwilling help of his brother, the renowned warrior Lucifer and his only offspring Beelzebub, he devises a scheme to force the hand of the Father and put into motion a series of events that will at long last bring about that last decisive battle, Armageddon.

Critique: 'The Denouement' is as described by author Hugh Centerville an attempt to combine Christian Theology within the framework of an epic fantasy. A daunting task to be sure and one that most readers would expect to fail miserably. Why would I say that you ask? Let me explain;

The process is precarious at best, the reason being that when you put traditional Theological concepts into a contemporary narrative format one of two things will generally occur. If the writer tries to remain true to traditional understandings, the story will come across as unoriginal, boring, and unnecessary. On the other hand if you play with a belief system too much you'll offend the adherents to the faith which would most likely be the bulk of your potential reading audience. One would certainly expect this to be a lose-lose situation.

Fortunately what Hugh Centerville has done is approach Christian Theology in the broadest manner possible moving way beyond its Biblical underpinnings and mainstream understanding, thus hopefully avoiding the criticism from Christian purists. He has incorporated centuries of obscure Christian thought and musings from every discipline imaginable; Apocryphal writings, philosophical treatises, mythic narratives, epic poetry, phantasmagorical art and popular modern cinema to create a one-of-a-kind reading experience.

Within Centerville's narrative the reader will also recognize strong literary currents from such classics as Dante Alighieri's 'Divine Comedy', John Milton's 'Paradise Lost', Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's 'Faust' and the more recent 20th century classic 'Lord of the Rings' by J.R. Tolkein. In a very real way, Centerville's novel has brought these classics into the 21 century in a new and exciting format. Hopefully other authors will catch on and do the same because there is so many profound concepts latent in these works to explore and expand upon.

While there are no pictures or drawings in the book, the author does have a talent for conjuring up vivid imagery through the medium of the written word. This is particularly so with his description of Hell with its Ice Mountain (Satan's Throne) surrounded by a vast array of despicable minions. It's like reading a Hieronymus Bosch painting. His narrative also draws a substantial amount of imagery from the paintings and etchings of William Blake and Gustav Dore. With such overpowering visions of Hell one has to wonder how peacefully the author slept at night when writing this book, just a thought.

Some of the films that come to mind while reading 'The Denouement' should come as no surprise; The 'Lord of the Rings', 'King Arthur' and believe it or not 'Pirates of the Caribbean' (When you read the section containing the Ferryman at the River of Lost Memories and his submerged servants you'll immediately see the connection).

I was totally taken by surprise by this book. I hadn't finished the first page before I realized that this was going to be unlike anything I've read in quite a long time and that I'd better focus all my attention on what I was reading because I was going to be in for quite a ride. At times 'The Denouement' reads like an alchemical text designed for personal illumination and spiritual transformation. The otherworldly landscape is pregnant with clues and hidden meaning; signs, symbols, names and situations that seem to indicate more than meets the eye. Even more important is the conversations; angel with angel, demon with demon, angel with demon. It just doesn't get much better than this!

There's a lot here to digest to be sure. However what really fascinated me the most was the intermittent, ongoing dialogue that takes place between the greatest warrior in Heaven and the greatest warrior in Hell, Michael and Lucifer. There are some absolutely amazing theological concepts discussed within their conversations; love, loyalty, sacrifice, redemption and most importantly forgiveness. Such questions as just how far is God willing to go in order to save a soul from damnation are presented in a new light that should cause every reader to stop and ponder, if only for a moment.

With that said let me also say that I did find some things in the book that I wasn't crazy about. There are some uneven areas here and there. I found those portions of the book dealing with Hell to be much more exciting than those focused on Heaven (isn't that the way it always is, people like the evil stuff). As far as writing style, I noticed the author has a tendency towards run-on sentences which makes it difficult at times to stay focused. This is especially true during the epic battle sequence. There is simply so much going on it's hard to absorb it all when too many thoughts or events are crammed in one sentence. Be that as it may, this work is so original and so daring I can only admire what Hugh Centerville has accomplished here. Oh yes almost forgot, the authors decision to incorporate Ruben's Baroque vision of the cherubim was brilliant. Bravo!