



Days of Atonement

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The author of *Hardwired* and *Voice of the Whirlwind* moves closer to the present in this science fiction thriller, set in the next century, that is a taut study of a small town which must learn to cope with high technology--and the arrival of the men and women who use it. "Highly recommended".-- Booklist.

Days of Atonement Details

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Author : Walter Jon Williams

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From Reader Review Days of Atonement for online ebook

Ben Thurley says

A tightly plotted techno-thriller bringing small-town New Mexico politics together with high-energy physics and corporate malfeasance.

It's a good read, generally pacy and punchy, but let down somewhat by the reliance on fairly OTT gunplay to bring about a forced climax over the last 50 pages or so.

Powerschnute says

Nachdem mir „Aristoi“ von Walter Jon Williams so gut gefallen hatte, war ich auf „Tage der Sühne“ von ihm sehr gespannt. Der Klappentext klang sehr vielversprechend, aber irgendwie hatte ich nicht damit gerechnet, in einem Buch zu landen, das sich so sehr nach Wilder-Westen-Science-Fiction anfühlte. Williams schafft eine interessante Kulisse, auch wenn es anfangs eher zäh erscheint und man sich fragt, wann es denn so endlich richtig losgeht. Dabei ist die Hauptfigur Loren Hawn nicht unbedingt ein sympathischer Mensch. Er und ich sind auch die ganzen 415 Seiten lang nicht miteinander warm geworden. Trotzdem zog das Tempo der Geschichte ab der 2. Hälfte deutlich an und je mehr Loren den Dingen auf die Spur kam, desto weniger wollte ich es weglegen.

Auch wenn Williams viel world building betreibt, hätte das Buch ruhig ein paar Seiten kürzer sein können, dann hätte das Tempo von Anfang an gestimmt. So war mir das Buch grad am Anfang einfach viel zu zäh und ich war ein paar Mal versucht, es abubrechen. Ich bin froh, dass ich dabei geblieben bin. Normalerweise liebe ich ja ausschweifende Erzählungen, aber die Stimmung des Buches war auf mich eher bedrückend weswegen für mich weniger wirklich mehr gewesen wäre. Ich hatte die meiste Zeit das Gefühl, selbst schwitzend und staubig neben Loren zu stehen, der versuchte, die Puzzle-Teile zusammenzusetzen, die aber anfangs so gar kein richtiges Bild ergeben wollten.

Fazit

Alles in allem ist es ein eigentlich spannender Scifi-Krimi mit ungewöhnlichen Twists, der, wenn er erstmal in Fahrt kommt, kaum zu stoppen ist. Im direkten Vergleich zu „Aristoi“ kann er allerdings so gar nicht mithalten.

Clyde says

This is an amazing book.

Loren Hawn, Chief of Police in a small town in New Mexico, has a murder to solve. The problem is, it is an impossible murder, because he saw the same man die twenty years earlier. This is a mystery deeper than a small town policeman should have to solve, but solve it he must. Hawn is a strong man, quick tempered, and a fighter with a tendency to rage. But, he also has a strong sense of duty and some uncommon detecting ability.

I will avoid any spoilers. Suffice to say Chief Hawn's investigation into the mysterious murder leads him to a conspiracy involving a nearby research facility. At the same time, he has to deal with unrest due to the closing of the town's main employer, a nearby copper mine, and with escalating local criminal activity. The combination is volatile. The story has a truly explosive finish.

Enjoy.

(This review is of the ebook purchased from Smashwords.)

Kris says

This book was an odd dichotomy for me - there were aspects of it that I really didn't like, and yet it kept pulling me forward. The book was published in 1992 but is supposed to be taking place after the turn of the century. But there are so many technological advances that have happened between 1992 and now, that their absence was often a bit of a shock. The lack of cell phones and laptop computers spring immediately to mind. The main character was very well written, but a bit hard to like. WJW clearly did his research, as the town and its people felt very real to me. Still, things take a long while to really get going, and the ending left me hanging more than I'd like. I've enjoyed other books he's written more.

Jason Mitchell says

Note: Written before the Internet

Quite interesting and thought provoking with tons of twists and turns. But it's written in 1991 so it talks about satellite networks and bobs's, so younger readers will have to do some research or go with the flow on the very out of date tech. Summary, everything was done via modem and connections to the internet were scarce. So people connected to bbs's little islands that sometimes talked to each other. All character based and kludge. Hard to grasp if you grew up with the Internet.

Joanna says

Unlikeable protagonist, densely backgrounded, can't keep minor characters straight, cardboard antagonist, sf aspect is tangential, religious aspect seems grafted on. But excellent bits throughout. Needed an editor, I suspect. Or a better one.

Stacey says

Now this was one heck of a book! It combined small town shoot em up Police procedural (which takes place in a tiny town in New Mexico), old west style justice with science fiction. This is quite a combination, but it worked well. It was a long book, with an extremely well developed plot. The first part of the book was very slow, but so much needed to be established. Once into the story, it got very exciting. And the ending was mind blowing! Most of the characters were very well developed, however, nobody was really that likable, including our hero Police Chief Loren Hawn. Although he is the person you identify with, and for the most part really care for him, he has the tendency to be over the top when dealing with people he considers threats to "his town". I have never read anything by author Walter Jon Williams before, but would sure like to in the future.

Jerico says

I really liked this book when I first read it, and it has added poignancy today.

At the time it was written, America was about to build the Superconducting Super Collider (SSC). This book is a police procedural from the point of view of the local town's sheriff when some of the odder possibilities of having a supercolider in your town start happening. There's a neat Jewish mythology theme in background, with a sensitive main plot that starts with an authentic feeling examination of the social structure of small South Western towns and ends up dealing with the Everett-Wheeler many worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics.

Very good read.

John says

I didn't like the religion in this book, but I did like the explanation of how someone could travel through time, sort of. Too much to drudge through.

Angie Boyter says

When the book disgusts me 3 times and I'm only 6% of the way through, I think it's time to move on. It is a very depressing, seamy culture, and I don't want to know it any better.

The scene that made me give up? Our police chief is remembering his earlier days when he used to participate in a favorite activity on week-ends, brutal boxing matches at the local bar between cops and ex-cons to see who could bloody the other more. As our "hero" is leaving the ring blinking back blood, he looks out in the audience and sees the state senator receiving a sexual favor (use your imagination!) from a local exotic dancer.

Janice says

This was a well-written book. The story moved well, and I had no complaints about the prose.

But I didn't love it. Mainly because I couldn't love the protagonist.

This is the story of a couple of men who are out of their times, one literally, and one figuratively. Loren Hawn is a police chief who lives in the modern world, but who would be more at home in the wild west. The other man out of time is the mystery at the heart of the story.

Almost everything that happens flows from the man Loren Hawn has become. He's a product of a small town where Things Have Always Been Done That Way. And he's a man a bit more willing to take the law into his own hands that I'm comfortable with. That's why I didn't like him. He THINKS he's doing the right thing. But he's not, really.

I read the book in bits and pieces, because I could see that what was coming wasn't going to make me happy.

But it's well-written. It's been a while since I read a Walter Jon Williams book. I remembered liking him as an author, and this doesn't change my mind about him.

Kris says

I picked this up to read and realized I had only read this book one time about 15 years ago. So it felt like a new book to me. I can say that it was light on scifi elements but the scifi in it is still core to the central plot and the ending. This is mostly about the very flawed central character, Loren Hawn police chief of Atocha NM, and Williams really does a great job of writing the story from his point of view. He is not a sympathetic hero and there is a lot of old school small town policeman attitude that Williams really captures. There are times when I really was not comfortable with Loren Hawn but that made the book that much of a better read. This is a story outside Williams normal stuff but really shows his veratility as a writer as he pulls off a unique laser story that was compelling and a little bit disturbing as well. I also like how Williams weaves his knowledge of NM into the story which gives it that much more of an authentic feel. I have lived in similar towns in NM and he captures the zeitgeist of rural NM well.

Macha says

early work by an sf writer i really like. bit too early, maybe - he doesn't quite pull it off, though in its own way it's plenty ambitious, juggling alternate history, quantum theory, the western genre, psychological thrillers, and a biblical theme to make its mean. the result is interesting, but the writer's not always in control of his material. and the book acquires in the reading a kind of crazed quality that's supposed to belong to the protagonist but makes me worry about the writer's state of mind at the time. still, as storytelling it's a compelling read. and he almost makes every bit of it work. as his later books pretty much always do.

JW says

As I devoured this book I kept thinking "I don't really like this." Which was obviously utter nonsense. It's got WJW's propulsive writing style, his detail in terrain and history, it feels a lot like Hardwired. The character was fascinating, the contradictions in his outlook were perfectly melded and felt totally real.

So why the vague sense of dissatisfaction? The plot was maybe a bit thin, a lot of the book felt like wheels were spinning and but nothing was moving. I've enjoyed character driven works before, though. Hardwired and the Dagmar series were at least as much about character and world as plot. This is an early work for WJW, maybe he hadn't found his balance yet. Still work the time it takes to read it, if you can find it. His back catalogue is pretty much only available as e-books.

Audrey Hare says

The ending of this book was unfulfilling to me because the protagonist didn't really solve any of the underlying problems driving the story. Instead he just went on a religiously stoked fanatical shooting spree and destroyed a lot of property. He probably killed some innocent people, too, since he set two huge brushfires in a populated area, though the author doesn't address this. Not does he address how this course of

action, apparently justified to the protagonist by the desire to protect his family, would actually affect his family (it wouldn't be good, most likely).

The really compelling problems the characters face in the book (the corruption of the town, poverty, changing times, racial tensions, even the bizarre results of the science experiment that provides the sci-fi aspect of the book) are all subsumed by shooting a bunch of Uzis at a villain who is ultimately made into nothing more than a sad stereotype.

I don't think that the author intends to say that the protagonists actions are "right," but he doesn't provide any alternatives either. That the religious fervor is more than a little crazy is reflected by the fact that the pastor is himself a murderer (the only reason I can think of other than sensationalism to include that subplot.)
