

Gene Wolfe: Castlevew

The SF-Lovers list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 02 Jul 1990

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/sflovers/84>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Geoff Alexander Cohen — 02 Jul 1990, 01:39

I just finished Gene Wolfe's latest, *_Castlevew_*, which concerns a family moving from Chicago to an old-fashioned town called Castlevew, in which it is possible to glimpse a castle off in the distance. (Thus the name!) It started off pretty well, and I enjoyed Wolfe's first dealings with modern reality in novel form, and there are some pretty surprisingly enjoyable and yet mainstream-type characters (surprising in the mainstream-ness, not enjoyable.)

Now don't get me wrong, I'm a very big Wolfe fan, and would recommend him almost without reservation as the best science-fiction author today. However, I DIDN'T GET IT!!!! :(Yes, I'm used to him being pretty opaque, for example *Fifth Head of Cerberus*, as I saw in a recent post. But after a re-reading, I think I got a lot (not all) of what he meant in that. *_There Are Doors_* is a little harder, but still excellent, and I was left with a sense of completion, if not closure.

But *_Castlevew_* left me cold, confused, and angry. Could someone out there give some advice as to what happened? In the words of Orson Scott Card himself, "Altogether, one of the most disappointing books I've ever read." It seems he was as confused as I. Card says in another essay, "I wish Gene Wolfe would take pity on his not so smart readers and EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED!" Amen!

Geoff Cohen
Center for Energy and Environmental Studies
Princeton University

Mark Brown — 05 Jul 1990, 17:17 · follows Geoff Alexander Cohen

GACOHEN at pucc.Princeton.EDU (Geoff Alexander Cohen) said:

I just finished Gene Wolfe's latest, *_Castlevew_*, which concerns a family moving from Chicago to an old-fashioned town called Castlevew, in which it is possible to glimpse a castle off in the distance. (Thus the name!)

Geoff, re-read CASTLEVIEW slowly, this time with an eye for Arthurian Legend...you know, Camelot and all that.

I'm led to understand that it's **very** subtly done, and to get some of the references requires **extensive** knowledge of the Arthur Mythos.

Mark Brown
mbrown at osf.org