

ending and other stuff WK

The Urth list — 29 messages, 10 voices, 05 Jan 2005

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4293>

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aramini1 at cox.net — 05 Jan 2005, 21:38

I only have about 36 more messages to read before I'm caught up, so forgive me if someone has said this.

It seemed pretty clear to me at the end of the Wizard Knight that Able is going back to the missing years of his childhood with Desiri, the part between leaving the log cabin and showing up on the island where he planted the spiny orange. (The years when he would have grown up to be the man he was accelerated into)

The Wizard EXPLICITLY states that Able watches himself plant the spiny orange during his time in Skai, and Michael also explicitly states Able was the only person on the island when the knight appears - this means that Able has, in some fashion, been freed from the passage of time.

Able is going back to his childhood at the end, the lost time that was taken from him. The great lord whose service will be required is Arnthnor, and Able will go on to forget everything that happened. The book is a big circle. But it isn't the first Wolfe book to work like that.

Maybe someone said that - I'll see either tonight or tomorrow when I catch up.

Marc

(PS - Anyone notice Sir Marc in the last chapters? Throwing rocks at the throngs and starting the final battle?)

StoneOx17 at aol.com — 06 Jan 2005, 03:56 · follows aramini1 at cox.net

In a message dated 1/6/2005 12:39:07 AM Eastern Standard Time, aramini1 at cox.net writes:

I only have about 36 more messages to read before I'm caught up, so forgive me if someone has said this.

It seemed pretty clear to me at the end of the Wizard Knight that Able is going back to the missing years of his childhood with Desiri, the part between leaving the log cabin and showing up on the island where he planted the spiny orange. (The years when he would have grown up to be the man he was accelerated into)

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Watching himself plant the spiny orange was one of those things he did during his missing 20 years in Skai. Here we are (it's really difficult to find things in this book, although not as difficult as in Peace). Page 56.

"We went to the spring Mimir," I said at last. "I drank its water and remembered you and Gylf, and a lot of other things. I visited myself, watching myself drink water in the ruins of Bluestone Castle. Afterward the Valfather laid his condition on me. ..."

Presumably, respecting time is part of the condition the Valfather has laid on him. Although, even when he broke the condition, he still wasn't able to go back in time and save those people who had died, so even time travel has its limitations in Mythgarthr.

Able is going back to his childhood at the end, the lost time that was taken from him.

But he remembers his missing years after delivering his message to Arnthor, so they're not lost to him in the end. Page 404.

I shook my head. "We played together as children, Uri. Disiri and me. I remember now." Her voice was tender. "Do you, Lord?"

"I do." Until that moment I had not known I remembered. "I thought they wiped those memories away, but they only hid them under the message. ..."

The great lord whose service will be required is Arnthnor, and Able will go on to forget everything that happened. The book is a big circle. But it isn't the first Wolfe book to work like that.

I don't see any evidence for this, and I don't like the idea at all. WK seems to me to be a coming-of-age book, where Able learns stuff and grows up. You don't make big circles out of coming-of-age books -- it defeats their whole purpose. (OK, in some sense, Fifth Head of Cerberus is an exception to this. But my point still stands.)

The idea (that somebody proposed here) that Able's going back to America to serve the Most High God -- and I sure hope the great lord in need of a knight is the Most High God and not the American President -- I find much more convincing.

-- Stone Ox (Peter)

Andrew Bollen — 06 Jan 2005, 04:11 · in reply to StoneOx17 at aol.com

Stone Ox writes:

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One reason I don't like this: if he's going back to America, surely he can meet Ben in person, rather than send him a huge letter?

James Wynn — 06 Jan 2005, 08:39 · in reply to StoneOx17 at aol.com

The idea (that somebody proposed here) that Able's going back to America to serve the Most High God -- and I sure hope the great lord in need of a knight is the Most High God and not the American President -- I find much more convincing.

Well, that's not exactly what I said, but then I like the idea that Able will return to America in "knight's service" to the Most High God. But that is a whole extra level above Kleos, and Able must first succeed in his mission there.

Incidentally, for reference sake, here is the instance in Able's dream in Mythgarthr where he sees an ambulance taking him (to a hospital? a morgue?).

"Beyond the black pavilion was a highway. Cars, trucks, SUVs, and minvans -- all sorts of vehicles -- were traveling on it, going so fast that it seemed certain they would crash. There was a school bus, a red hook-and-ladder, a black-and-white police car, and a white ambulance. Those stand out even now. The ambulance rocked from side to side as it tore along with its light bar blazing and its siren screaming. I climbed down and went to the highway. The drivers would not stop for me, and I shouted at their cars, thinking how far the ambulance was getting ahead of me. Able -- the real Able -- was in that ambulance. I knew that, and I wanted to help him."
-- "The Wizard" pg 459

stilskin — 06 Jan 2005, 08:49 · in reply to James Wynn

I'm not sure, in the context of the WK universe, that America is above Kleos. I seem to recall a place where Able muses that it is located sort of sideways to Mythgarthr. Of course, he might very well be wrong about that!

One thing I kept thinking throughout was that Gene Wolfe was the Most High God, as is every author in terms of his/her fictional creations. But I got the feeling that Wolfe was setting up an analogy between his creations and God's -- that we are fictional characters in the mind of God who may, through our actions, take on a reality we might not otherwise possess. I wonder if Able, at the end of the novel, is not being taken by Michael to Able's America but, rather, to ours . . . That just as, in the Catholic faith, virtuous souls receive the reward of rising to a realer existence, in Heaven, so, too, does Able rise (with Disiri) to an incarnation outside the pages of the novel.

Paul

--- James Wynn <thewynns at earthlink.net> wrote:
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James Wynn — 06 Jan 2005, 09:04 · in reply to stilskin

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I don't recall this, can anyone think of where this may have been said?

~ Crush

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 06 Jan 2005, 09:30 · in reply to James Wynn

Crush quote-and-wrote:

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Where, no, but I do recall it also.

I think though that the point is not that America is above Kleos, but that the MHG is - so that in his "evolution" upward, Able has to complete his service to Kleos before he can serve the MHG directly, whether in the Mythgarthr-system or in America.

David Lebling — 06 Jan 2005, 09:54 · in reply to James Wynn

Crush asked:

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I don't recall this, can anyone think of where this may have been said?

I don't recall that statement specifically, but there is a passage where Able says that all the levels of the WK universe from Mythgarthr on up have multiple "places" or "worlds" in them. I believe the context is the discussion of how each level is infinite but ten times smaller than the level above it, and how the "place" where the Giants of Winter and Old Night live is part of Skai but different from where the Valfather lives. He also states that Aelfrice and the levels below it only have one "place" in them, if I recall correctly.

America could be another "place" sideways from Mythgarthr.

-- Dave, aka Vizcacha

James Wynn — 06 Jan 2005, 09:56 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

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I agree. The idea that America is above Kleos is not intended.

(I didn't realize, until Dan'I posted this, that this concept was being conveyed in saying that Able would wake up when he finally came face-to-face with the Most High God.)

However, this fact did not prevent me, when Able visited the MLG, from imagining doctors around Arthur Ormsby going crazy shouting "We losing him!!"

Speaking of the MHG and the MLG, these designations suggest that there might be a Middle Most God in Mythgarthr and god in every other level as well. The god of Skai, I presume, would be Valfather. I imagine the god of Kleos would not be Michael since he's being punished (I would guess) by that god via his quest. Maybe it is Parka (btw as I write this I remember that the Fates were beyond the command of Jupiter, Zeus, and Odin -- although the Norns only spoke to Odin).

Kulilli seems to be the god of Aelfrice and Garsecg/Setr is a usurper.

Who is the god of Mythgarther? Not Able...he doesn't seem specially connected to a particular level. Arnthor? Well, Able is sent with a message to him, but I thought he was also seen as more of a usurper considering his heritage from the second to lowest level. How about Bold Berthold?

~ Crush

David Lebling — 06 Jan 2005, 10:59 · in reply to James Wynn

Crush asks:

Who is the god of Mythgarther? Not Able...he doesn't seem specially connected to a particular level. Arnthor?

The whole point of the message Able carries is to enable the Aelf to ask Arnthor, the god of Mythgarthr, to be a better god.

How about Bold Berthold?

Given Able's vision of Bold Berthold killing the new King of the Giants, perhaps he will be the new god, as you suggest. Of course, there is room for worship of multiple gods; Toug is Baki's god, after all.

-- Dave, aka Vizcacha

Dave Rolsky — 06 Jan 2005, 11:16 · in reply to David Lebling

On Thu, 6 Jan 2005, David Lebling wrote:

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Kulilli may be another god of Aelfrice, as James Wynn suggested, although it's not clear to me if she is of Aelfrice or Mythgarthr. I think it'd have to be the latter for her to be a god of Aelfrice.

-dave

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/*=====
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Your guide to all that's veg.
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Dave Rolsky — 06 Jan 2005, 11:17 · in reply to David Lebling

On Thu, 6 Jan 2005, David Lebling wrote:

multiple "places" or "worlds" in them. I believe the context is the discussion of how each level is infinite but ten times smaller than the level above it, and how the "place" where the Giants of Winter and Old Night

Anyone else think of John Crowley's Little, Big when they came to this part?

-dave

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/*=====
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=====*/
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stilskin — 06 Jan 2005, 11:25 · in reply to Dave Rolsky

It seems that there can be multiple gods on every level except the highest and the lowest. I find Wolfe's scheme confusing, I must admit. Kulilli is the original inhabitant of Aelfrice. Why isn't she worshipped by the dragons of Muspel? Nor does it seem that the Most Low God worships the dragons. And though the Angrborne live on Mythgarthr, they are not worshipped by the Aelf. I wonder if descent from Angr has anything to do with who is and isn't a proper object of worship.

P

--- Dave Rolsky <autarch at urth.org> wrote:
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David Lebling — 06 Jan 2005, 11:55 · in reply to stilskin

stilskin said:

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I think a more important component of who is worshipped and by whom is the level on which they live. As you go lower in level, the inhabitants are less likely to be moral beings, though Able admits there is a range on each level (from the Valfather to Lothur in Skai, for example, not to mention the Giants of Skai). The less moral, the less likely to worship the proper god for your level.

Given that Kulilli created the Aelf, their position is somewhat unusual. I can imagine several reasons why they wouldn't worship the Angrborn, including the Aelf's apparent desire to conceal their true natures by mimicking humans, which indicates they are ashamed of being created from leftovers and thus would disdain worship of other beings so created.

The dragons of Muspel would be extremely unlikely to worship the god appropriate for them, and in fact attempt to displace the gods/rulers of the next two higher levels. The Most Low God worships himself and states that he is also the Most High God.

We know little of Kleos, but obviously they are patterned on angels and all faithfully worship the Most High God. Those that did not were expelled, if the mythology parallels Christianity, as it does in most instances.

-- Dave, aka Vizcacha

Andy Robertson — 06 Jan 2005, 12:39 · in reply to Dave Rolsky

Dave Rolsky writes:

Anyone else think of John Crowley's Little, Big when they came to this part?

It's a parallel derivation, not a sequential one. LITTLE, BIG gets its cosmology through the Victorian legend of Fairies, which is derived from the diminished Shakespearian version. THE WIZARD KNIGHT tries with some success to synthesise far older streams - Celtic myth, Gnosticism, Nordic legend (overwhelmingly important) and of course CS Lewis and Tolkien.

James Wynn — 06 Jan 2005, 12:43 · in reply to David Lebling

I'm convinced. I think I agree that in this world, all creatures are 'gods' of somebody and only the MHG and the MLG are distinguished.

The Most Low God worships himself and states that he

Yes, but the MLG is a liar. He says that if one could see his back he would see the MHG (like some kind of bizarre Janus), but Able sees his back and it is only worms and filth.

We know little of Kleos, but obviously they are patterned on angels and all faithfully worship the Most High God. Those that did not were expelled, if the mythology parallels Christianity, as it does in most instances.

Well, Kulilli and Parka don't look like angels...albeit I suppose it is possible they might look different at different times.

~ Crush

David Lebling — 06 Jan 2005, 12:59 · in reply to James Wynn

Crush replied:

The Most Low God worships himself and states that he

Yes, but the MLG is a liar. He says that if one could see his back he would see the MHG (like some kind of bizarre Janus), but Able sees his back and it is only worms and filth.

Precisely my point. The MLG is so morally deficient that he cannot find a better object of worship than himself, and either out of delusion believes (or out of mendacity claims) to be the MHG.

-- Dave

James Wynn — 06 Jan 2005, 14:55 · in reply to David Lebling

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Able says that all the levels of the WK universe from Mythgarthr on up have multiple "places" or "worlds" in them. I believe the context is the discussion of how each level is infinite but ten times smaller than the level above it, and how the "place" where the Giants of Winter and Old Night live is part of Skai but different from where the Valfather lives. He also states that Aelfrice and the levels below it only have one "place" in them, if I recall correctly.

America could be another "place" sideways from Mythgarthr.

The definitions of "multiple places" I took to mean that there were other planets in the universe of Mythgarthr. It is not explained what the separate region of the Frost Giants is in Skai...whether another planet or some totally different concept. But if we assume it is somehow analogous to the separate worlds in Mythgarthr then Mythgarthr's worlds should be theoretically navigatable *within* Mythgarthr as well.

In Aelfrice and below I understood that the sky of Alfrice decended (infinitely) to the sea of Aelfrice like a dome (as ancient people understood the cosmos to do). The same would be true for the lower levels. So there would be no place in the lower levels for other "planets".

It never occurred to me that America could be one of the other "worlds" on the level of Mythgarthr ala "parallel dimensions" (rather "worlds" meaning "planets") but that would make sense too. It would additionally explain why our world is so much like Mythgarthr.

I wonder if Wolfe ever thought it out this far?

~ Crush

Andy Robertson — 07 Jan 2005, 03:00 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn writes:

The definitions of "multiple places" I took to mean that there were other planets in the universe of Mythgarthr.

One of the "places" Abel visits (with Toug) is Dream, which I assume is a dream-share realm of some sort. This seems more like a matter of alternate modes of consciousness than other planets: but this of course does not rule out America as being such a "place2.

stilskin — 07 Jan 2005, 04:21 · in reply to Andy Robertson

And the Room of Lost Loves has to be fit into this somewhere as well.

Has anyone identified Abel's father?

--- Andy Robertson <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk> wrote:
James Wynn writes:

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Andy Robertson — 07 Jan 2005, 05:24 · in reply to stilskin

stilskin writes:

And the Room of Lost Loves has to be fit into this somewhere as well.

I've only read the Wizard Knight once: starting to reread now. Where is that mentioned?

stilskin — 07 Jan 2005, 05:30 · in reply to Andy Robertson

I might be misnaming it -- but it's the room in Gilling's castle that Abel, Mani, and Lynnet enter, with the permission of Thiazi.

--- Andy Robertson <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk> wrote:
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Andrew Bollen — 07 Jan 2005, 06:14 · in reply to stilskin

I think Dream is a shared realm, as Crush says. I think it is the key to Mag and Able/Art.

First of all my understanding of Able/Art: they have been swapped, in some way, by the Aelf. The original, "real" Able goes to America; Art takes Able's place in Mythgathr. I think this is very clear: when Art dreams of the ambulance, he knows in his dream that it carries the "real Able".

Mythgathr and Earth are connected though Dream. Art dreams of Able in America on several occasions. Dream exists on the same plane as Mythgathr, and must be connected to Aelfrice as well.

The Aelf have power over dreams. Baki (can't remember) bring dreams to both Idnn and Art. From this we can guess how the Art/Able swap happened. Art dreamed in the Downs and the Aelf enticed his dream-self down to Aelfrice. Able dreamt and had his dream-self sent back to Art's body on Earth via Dream. Art's dream-self replaced Able's in Able's body, which was later sent back to Myth via Parka's cave.

As to why the Aelf did this: I speculated earlier that the Aelf wanted an American, rather than a local, as their messenger.

As to why Able/Art: because they have the same mother, presumably facilitating the swap. We have to assume that Mag and Art's mother are in some sense the same person; not least because Art says he thinks Mag was both the mother of Berthold and Able, and of himself and Ben (p236).

But the situation is not straightforward. Mag recognizes that Art is not actually her son Able. Able seems to recognize that Mag is not actually his mother. She seems to have no memory of Art as such, but she does appear to remember her "girlhood in America" (p335). Although her message in the green glass tube opens thus: "Mag is my name *here*" (p236), implying that she has another name elsewhere (ie America), we cannot assume that she has simply travelled from America to Mythgarthr.

I think the solution to this conundrum might be suggested by what happens to Escan: he leaves behind in Aelfrice a copy of himself (p424). I think the American-Mag dreamed of Aelfrice as a child and left a copy of herself there, which continued on as Myth-Mag, the eventual mother of Berthold and Able, while her original dream-self returned to America, to marry and bear Ben and Art.

I think we know that Art's mother did dream of Aelfrice. Writing of his descent to Aelfrice in search of Toug he says, "How far to the dream my mother had?" (p314)

Andy Robertson — 07 Jan 2005, 06:24 · in reply to stilskin

stilskin writes:

I might be misnaming it -- but it's the room in Gilling's castle that Abel, Mani, and Lynnet enter, with the permission of Thiazi.

I'm moved to remember Abel's description of Lady Freya's house. "You're forever finding something new there, and it's always something good. Secret stairs leading to rooms full of books, and instruments you've never seen anyplace else, or windows with beautiful views you never knew were there". Rivendell, The High House, and a touch of Libraryspace? I expect they all link up.

Andy Robertson — 07 Jan 2005, 06:26 · in reply to Andy Robertson

<http://library.flawlesslogic.com/freya.jpg>

Andrew Bollen — 09 Jan 2005, 03:05 · follows Andrew Bollen

Further on Dream, Art & Able ... It seems that you one way you know you're in Dream is if you see the the Valfather's "castle like a star" flying through the clouds. Toug watches it in Dream (p56), as does Art at the start of Knight, on the hillside as he is surely dreaming. Elsewhere in Knight, Art dreams he is Able dreaming on a hillside (surely the same one) as the castle scuds through the clouds, remembering how he used to live in a place where there were swords and no cars (p133). I think all this supports the idea of Art & Able having being swapped, by the Aelf, via Dream.

(Though come to think of it, I guess the swap could have been engineered by the Overcyn, given the presence of the Valfather's castle ...)

As a bonus, in the Dream chapter in Wizard, there's a gratuitous-seeming little passage where Art tells Toug that any horse ridden by an Aelf "will be one of ours, a horse taken by the Aelf as a man or woman may be." Or indeed as Able, Art & Toug all have been at one time or another.

Toug is in some ways the most interesting character in the series. Art identifies with him to a certain extent. In the Dream chapter, he more or less appoints Toug as his prime agent. I can't remember who or where, but one of the characters says that Art sees himself in Toug. Toug is a key piece in the game played by various parties in the first half of the book to secure Art's services for their own ends; they recognize Toug's influence over Art.

I don't think that Toug and Art have any direct physical or psychic relationship with each other, but I do think Art sees him as a kindred spirit. More than that, I think Toug is a kind of stand-in for the real Able, now in America.

One of the things that surprised me about Wizard was that we hear little about Able. I think we get Toug instead: an exceptionally brave peasant kid from the same area as Able, also taken by the Aelf & also delivered into a strange and dangerous world ... Toug fights against great odds, is wounded, fights on & is further wounded. I think we have to assume the same for Able in America; we hear of him in America via Art's dreams mainly when he is hospital after fighting hijackers, in an ambulance and so on.

Toug, unlike Art, is not a figure of destiny; no god-like beings have moulded him for great tasks and he doesn't have "supernatural" powers. I think the same would be true of Able in America, and though we don't know the details I feel sure his experiences there parallel Toug's.

stilskin — 09 Jan 2005, 13:38 · in reply to Andrew Bollen

I think you're onto something about Toug. Why do you think he fades from the ms. toward the end? Is it simply the return of Able to center stage?

--- Andrew Bollen <abollen at internode.on.net> wrote:
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I don't think that Toug and Art have any direct physical or psychic relationship with each other, but I do think Art sees him as a kindred spirit. More than that, I think Toug is a kind of stand-in for the real Able, now in America.

One of the things that surprised me about Wizard was that we hear little about Able. I think we get Toug instead: an exceptionally brave peasant kid from the same area as Able, also taken by the Aelf & also delivered into a strange and dangerous world ... Toug fights against great odds, is wounded, fights on & is further wounded. I think we have to assume the same for Able in America; we hear of him in America via Art's dreams mainly when he is hospital after fighting hijackers, in an ambulance and so on.

Toug, unlike Art, is not a figure of destiny; no god-like beings have moulded him for great tasks and he doesn't have "supernatural" powers. I think the same would be true of Able in America, and though we don't know the details I feel sure his experiences there parallel Toug's.

Andrew Bollen — 11 Jan 2005, 04:01 · in reply to Andrew Bollen

At the end of Wizard, when Art is wearing his magic helm. I think that previously, Berthold would have looked like Berthold, helm or no. Art wears the helm a lot and Berthold is around, in all of the fighting leading up to this; and the appearance of Ben in place of Berthold after the River Battle is obviously a surprise.

The big change is Art's healing of Bert, in which "it took a lot to restore the thing he had left in a pond, so long ago." We know that Art doesn't have the power to restore the dead. I think the point here is that the "thing" which Ben lost in the pond is indeed dead. To restore him, Able has had to replace it with something taken from or copied from (a memory of?) Ben, though it seems that Art himself doesn't realize this.

Seth Lombardi — 11 Jan 2005, 13:49 · follows Andrew Bollen

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I felt it was something along the lines of: the inhabitants of Mythgrather and America do more than just live parallel lives, but in fact share a soul, and that the differences between the two places were just different points of view on the same conflict, or state of being. Thus being a big reveal at the end of the book, it's an attempt to give the work an extra bit of relevance or emphasis or emotional punch.

seth

Seth Lombardi

sethlombardi at hotmail.com

sethopotropolis: <http://pages.prodigy.net/nlom/blogg.html>

AIM: melombardi

"Two faces are alike; neither is funny by itself, but side by side their likeness makes us laugh"

-Pascal
