

Griffin in The Knight

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 04 May 2007

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JBarach at aol.com — 04 May 2007, 00:46

Urthers --

I don't recall seeing any discussion of this already on this list, and I couldn't find any when I searched the archives, so please forgive me if this has been brought up before.

I finished The Knight last night. It ends with Able calling upon the griffin ("or on whoever's altar this may be") and then flying upon the griffin to fight and conquer the dragon. In fact, the cave where Able found the altar was once the griffin's home, though now possessed by the dragon, so that Able in a sense is "exorcising" it, casting out the dragon. I gather that the cave is also the place Able was looking for, the source of the Griffin river, and Able has been looking for Griffinsford from the beginning of the book.

So with all that griffin stuff in mind, I dipped into Jorge Luis Borges' Book of Imaginary Beings today and read what he says about the griffin. He points out that usually in the Middle Ages the griffin is "an emblem of Christ," as Isidore of Seville explains in his Etymologies: "Christ is a lion because he reigns and has great strength; and an eagle because, after the Resurrection, he ascended to heaven."

Similarly, Dante's Purgatorio (Canto XXIX) has the church as a chariot drawn by a griffon, Borges notes. Again, it would appear that the griffon might be Christ, but others (says Borges) "feel that Dante wished to symbolize the Pope, who is both priest and king. Didron, in his Manuel d'iconographie chretienne (1845) writes: 'The pope, as pontiff or eagle, is borne aloft to the throne of God to receive his commands, and as lion or king walks on earth with strength and might.'"

So much for Borges. I know that Wolfe is more than a little familiar with this work by Borges, which, of course, is the source for Baldanders in the New Sun, so I'm wondering if he might not have the medieval symbolism of the griffin in mind at the end of The Knight.

What think you?

John

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 04 May 2007, 17:59 · in reply to JBarach at aol.com

On 5/3/07, JBarach at aol.com <JBarach at aol.com> wrote:

What think you?

I think I like cheese.

I think that if the griffon is a Christ-symbol it's partly because it's a twinatured beast.

I think that if we're going to figure this out we have to figure out just what happened between the two books.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

Soon, where Toon Town once stood will be a string of gas stations, inexpensive motels, restaurants that serve rapidly prepared food. Tire salons, automobile dealerships and wonderful, wonderful billboards reaching as far as the eye can see. My God, it'll be beautiful.