

More Castlevuew (Spoilers)

The Urth list — 7 messages, 5 voices, 19 Jun 2007

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4857>

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Matthew Keeley — 19 Jun 2007, 16:55

Hi,

I just finished Castlevuew last night for the first time, and though I know there's been a lot said on this particular book recently, I hope I've got something to add to the conversation. (Note: In addition to Castlevuew spoilers, there's a spoiler for The Wizard Knight).

1. There seems to be a lot of discussion about whether Wrangler / Arthur Dunstan or Will Shields is the "real" Arthur; this got me thinking about just how many characters in Castlevuew seem to represent either part of an Arthurian figure or several Arthurian figures.

a. Viviane Morgan seems to be the Lady of the Lake, Morgan le Fay, Morgause (in Malory I believe it's Morgause, not Morgan, who sleeps with Arthur), and Vivian / Nimue, the enchantress who seals Merlin under a hill or tree.

b. Dr. von Madadh kills Shields at the end of the novel, suggesting an affinity with Mordred, but throughout much of the novel he seems to be a Merlin-figure; extremely knowledgeable constantly vanishing and reappearing (plus, he has a beard, though I think that's pushing it). The comment at the end of the book that he was "the best of them" also seems suggestive to me. Earlier in the novel, Fee tells us that God dislikes his group, of which we know the Doctor is a part. In those stories, then, Merlin would be the best of an evil brood. Fee's comment suggested devils to me, and in some stories, Merlin is in fact the devil's son. The fact that the doctor's first name is "Rex" suggests a connection with Mordred to me, as Mordred surely wanted to be the king (I believe he's even crowned in some versions of the Arthurian legend?). Anyone know the etymology of "Madadh?"

2. I wonder if there's a Jack Vance influence to this story? Vance had published at least a few of his Lyonesse books before Wolfe published Castlevuew, and I wonder if Wolfe's references to Lyonesse in the text constituted another one of his homages to Vance.

3. Some of the previous posts on the ending of Castlevuew suggest that Excalibur's scabbard will be useless to Will because it only protects against blood loss. I've always taken the epigraph a little less literally; I tend to think the scabbard would still have healing powers; otherwise why would it be on the boat to Avalon? I actually took that piece of the ending as a bit of lupine brilliance; it suggests how Arthur / Will might somehow survive AND it ties up a loose end of the Arthurian story, and in fact creates a very nice "circle" to the myth (Fairly early in Malory, Morgan le Fay steals the scabbard from Arthur, after that, we never hear of it again). I thought that the scabbard's presence in the boat was one of the most beautiful of Wolfe's inventions.

4. What are we to make of Excalibur's resemblance to a cross (Mercedes at first thinks it's a jeweled cross)? How does that fit in with the pagan aspects of the ending? Furthermore, upon what leather-bound book is the tip of the sword resting? Malory? The Bible? The missing diary of the Wrangler's ancestor?

5. Also about the ending: Wolfe really seems to like the legend of the Green Man or Green Knight; in *The Wizard Knight* Able tells us that he WAS the Green Knight who Gawain decapitated. Maybe Wolfe is trying to take an essentially pagan symbol and Christianize it, as it is his wont to do? The Green Man could perhaps be read as a Christ figure, though so presumably could the king who slays him, as he too will die and rise again. A little earlier in the text, Phyllis Sun sees Odin leading the Wild Hunt down the streets of Castlevue; the narrator takes pains to describe his missing eye, which, if I recall correctly, he gave up so that he could give knowledge to humanity; a Christian take on Odin seems like something Wolfe would enjoy.

Any thoughts?

-Matt

Michael Straight — 19 Jun 2007, 18:46 · in reply to Matthew Keeley

On 6/19/07, Matthew Keeley <matthew.keeley.1 at gmail.com> wrote:
1. There seems to be a lot of discussion about whether Wrangler / Arthur Dunstan or Will Shields is the "real" Arthur; this got me thinking about just how many characters in Castlevue seem to represent either part of an Arthurian figure or several Arthurian figures.

You may have seen this in the archives, but one of the ideas in the book (I believe this is straight from Wolfe), is that the gene pool in Arthur's time was so small and there's been enough generations of mixing so that today, almost anyone with European ancestors is a descendant of Arthur. So while the faerie folk seem to be looking for the "true" descendant of Arthur (it's not clear whether they realize this or not), in fact, everyone human in the story is equally a true descendant of Arthur. And so several of the characters end up acting out various pieces of that role.

Rostrum

Matthew Keeley — 19 Jun 2007, 19:18 · in reply to Michael Straight

I hadn't seen that in the archives, as the only stuff I've read on Castlevue in the archives is the stuff from last month, but it does make sense. I believe there's even a comment somewhere about there being many people "of the king's blood." Thanks for the clarification.

-Matt

On 6/19/07, Michael Straight <mfstraight at gmail.com> wrote:

On 6/19/07, Matthew Keeley <matthew.keeley.1 at gmail.com> wrote:

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descendant of Arthur. And so several of the characters end up acting out various pieces of that role.

Rostrum

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 19 Jun 2007, 19:28 · in reply to Matthew Keeley

On 6/19/07, Matthew Keeley <matthew.keeley.1 at gmail.com> wrote:

4. What are we to make of Excalibur's resemblance to a cross (Mercedes at first thinks it's a jeweled cross)?

The guard of a sword is often shaped like that, and knights (at least in legends) would often stab the sword into the ground to get a cross to pray by.

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I don't know much about the Green Man, but Odin gives his eye to Mimir in payment for wisdom, not so he can give his wisdom away. He is looking for a way to avert Ragnarok.

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.

Joel Sieh — 19 Jun 2007, 20:27 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

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--

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

Ooh! Echoes of Silk giving his eye to Pig. In fact, that seems like a very good match.

--Joel

Matthew Keeley — 19 Jun 2007, 20:45 · in reply to Joel Sieh

Interesting thought, and I think right. I'd point out that Odin is associated with ravens, which, if not exactly night choughs, are pretty close. Apparently Odin's ravens talk to him...

From all-knowing Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugin_and_Munin

-Matt

On 6/19/07, Joel Sieh <joel.sieh at gmail.com> wrote:

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

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--Joel

Mo Holkar / UKG — 20 Jun 2007, 08:20 · in reply to Matthew Keeley

At 17:55 19/06/2007, you wrote:

Anyone know the etymology of "Madadh?"

"Madadh" is Gaelic for "dog". So Rex von Madadh ~= king of the dogs.

Von Madadh must in some sense embody the spirit of Sally's dead dog Remy, or is a fay posing as it. Remy was run over the previous year, but reappears during the night. When Sally calls for Remy, von Madadh appears at the door, with muddy feet, and hands her a card the colour of bone. He claims to work for the Daoine Institute -- the daoine sidhe are the good fairies in Celtic myth.

On another note, von Madadh's beard is described as red-gold, and a fox in Gaelic is just called "madadh ruadh", "red dog" -- shades of the foxy Dr Talos?

Mo