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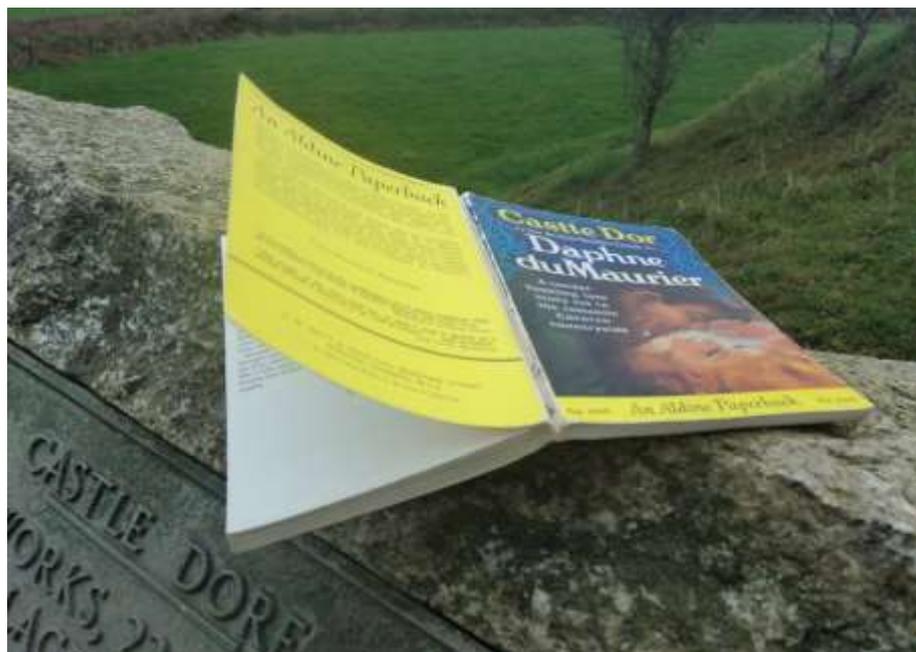


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Finished by Another: co-authorship and self-completion in *Castle Dor*

"It is a curious coincidence that no poet, or shall we call him investigator, has ever lived to conclude this particular story. His work has always been finished by another!"

- Monsieur Ledru, *Castle Dor*, page 70



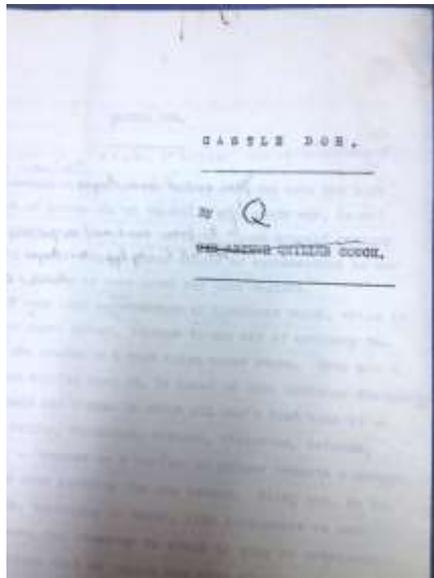
In 1925, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch began writing *Castle Dor*. He was working from his study, overlooking Fowey Harbour to the domed fields beyond, excitedly caught up in a mixture of legend and fantasy following his discovery of 'Mark's Gate' on an old map. King Mark of Cornwall, immortalised in the Arthurian legend of Tristan and Iseult, was a fascinating figure for Q who felt embedded in his local landscape on both an emotional and literary level, and rewriting the tale was an opportunity to indulge in this.

Castle Dor, however, remained unfinished when Q passed away in 1944. Whether the manuscript was abandoned because it was considered below standard, whether it was due to his failing eyesight, or whether he was overcome with grief at the death of his only son, Bevil, from pneumonia after the First World War is a question left unanswered, as Q himself left few written clues about his decision. Outwardly, Q put on a gallantly brave face, directing his energy and anguish towards enhancing life in the community in Fowey and Cornwall, taking roles on councils, clubs and education boards. He became very involved in debates surrounding education, particularly after the Education Act of 1902, to which he was strongly opposed. Creatively, the loss of his son had a huge impact on Q, and he stopped writing fiction after *Castle Dor*, so it would therefore be reasonable to assume all three factors had an impact. Asserting more directly, one reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* on the 13th April 1962 wrote:

He lay it aside unfinished believing that "it would never be good enough to publish"...Sir Arthur was a sound judge of prose. His verdict [that the book should have been left unpublished] stands.ⁱⁱ

The implication here is that the manuscript was beyond help, yet in 1959 Q's daughter Foy asked her friend Daphne du Maurier to pick back up the narrative and finish the novel. Foy and Daphne had grown increasingly close over the years, frequently riding and sailing together, and - dressed unconventionally in men's clothes - they made an eccentric couple. The task Foy entrusted Daphne with, however, was not all light and fun: Q had abandoned the manuscript at Book II Chapter XXIII, leaving du Maurier with a Breton hideaway, a lovestruck adulteress and a thick weave of intertextual references hanging over the lives of the characters. Daphne struggled initially to make sense of the narrative, as Q had "created so many difficulties for himself"ⁱⁱⁱ by blurring the original role

of King Mark with a seemingly incompatible counterpart character of Mark the pub landlord, and this caused her some concern. She held Q in very high esteem and was anxious at not being able to do justice to the work.



Castle Dor manuscript, Trinity College Oxford archives, drawer H/1

In her biography, Margaret Forster also suggests Daphne took on *Castle Dor* as a means of filling a creative void, but was not ignorant to the pressures: "it would be awful if they... said I had ruined his beautiful style"^{iv}. Overall, though, "The challenge was too great to dismiss." Daphne wrote, and "I must, and would, bring the story to a conclusion, if only to satisfy my own sense of order, and more important still, to please Q's daughter and live again, in memory, happy evenings long ago when Q was host at Sunday supper."^v

This touching evocation of Sunday supper with the Quiller-Couches provides an initial insight into du Maurier's adulation for her "uncrowned king of Fowey"^{vi}. Adulation does not seem too strong a term here, as she held a confessed respect and fascination for Q that extended beyond the purely academic and into the personal sphere - had she not had such a close relationship with her own father, some of her correspondence could be seen to indicate a desire to seek such a figure in Q, who represented for her both a moral and intellectual guide. Writing to Foy in 1926, Daphne said "Your Father (unwittingly!) pushed me a step further in the right direction when he spoke to me last week about a code of living, and a standard and that marriage and children meant more in life than all the novels and successes ever written"^{vii}, and later in 1961 she dropped the 'your' and referred to Q simply just as "Father"^{viii}.

These sentiments are also echoed in the letters of Cornish historian and Oxford scholar A. L. Rowse, who grew up in St Austell and lived often came to Fowey, completing the

triumvirate of literary minds at work in the area. Writing to Q in 1925, Rowse called him a 'part-parent' and in a letter from 1948 he told Foy "I loved him - he was so sweet to me"^{ix}. These strong feelings of attachment and nurture consolidated a link between the three, who were otherwise bound by their mutual love for Cornwall. The desire to emphasise this triangular structure (in which Q looks down affectionately from the upper apex) does seem, however, to stem almost exclusively from the younger two, as du Maurier and Rowse appear more enthusiastic to be associated with the talent and company of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch.

Indeed, it became almost possessive after his death - du Maurier wrote to Rowse in July 1944, mentioning again her weekly routine and dismissing Frederick Britten's biography "I was very touched by your wireless memorial to Q. It couldn't have been better. I wish you were doing the biography and not the Cambridge man. When I lived in Fowey I used to have supper with them every Sunday and learnt to love the whole family"^x, and in 1988 Daphne's wish came true, for Rowse published his biography *A Portrait of 'Q'*, dedicated to "Daphne du Maurier, in common admiration for our old mentor and friend"^{xi}. It seems there was a strong desire to cling on to the bonds they had shared - almost a nostalgia for the Fowey gone-by, in which Q's presence had such a crucial role. The idea that these two younger writers felt Q's passing impacted not only upon their personal lives, but also upon the intellectual integrity of their home can be summarised by Rowse's closing phrase in his biography: 'The Cornish have not been much of a literary folk - their genius has been all for mining, science and technology - and Cornwall has been mostly written about by others. But for those of us who do write, he is the head of us all.'^{xii}

This attachment to place and identity that Q was able to offer London-born/ Cornwall-based du Maurier can be seen as pivotal aspect in their creative relationship. *Castle Dor* as a narrative is inextricably tied to the location and topography of Cornwall, tracing paths from Mark's Gate to Castle-an-Dinas as a means of mapping fate and literary history. In the same way, it could also be said that du Maurier uses Q and his unfinished manuscript as a means of tying herself to the landscape, feeling more a part of the intellectual centre to Fowey, grounding herself both academically and geographically to people and place. In her biography, Margaret Forster emphasises Daphne's constant quest for self-unity and completion, referring frequently to her dual sense of self, split between what she terms the "boy-in-the-box" and the wife/mother roles she simultaneously inhabited. Daphne was able to unlock this first part of her personality in Cornwall, boating, fishing and riding with Foy and wearing the trousers she felt most comfortable in, while London forced her into dresses and high-society dinners. This constant tension between the two sides of her self, along with the two sides of her home between London and Fowey, can perhaps offer another more psychoanalytical explanation for her attachment to Q. In 1929, during her first years in Fowey, du Maurier had written in her diaries:

Oh, these are my people, they really are. What have I to do with London? I shall live and die here in Cornwall and do my best to write about them. What's the use of being clever and witty? It's a heart that is the needful thing. PS I wish I was a really good writer.^{xiii}

This simultaneously confessional and humorous entry reveals vulnerabilities experienced by any writer - to be accepted and appreciated in a social and profession milieu. The Quiller-Couch family perhaps represented to Du Maurier an example of this achievement as she observed "They belong here, if anyone does, and are Cornish to the last drop of their blood."^{xiv}

The idea that Daphne had multiple versions of herself that all coexisted relatively harmoniously can be paralleled with her literary techniques. The theme of duality is found frequently in du Maurier's stories - such as the two Mrs de Winters, or John and Jean in *The Scapegoat* - but *Castle Dor* takes it even further still. Not only is the book itself a palimpsest, but the plot is built upon layers of retelling, with Q's voice adding to legend, and du Maurier embellishing and finishing his story. This perpetual reworking has created what is a conceptually (albeit originally unintentionally) complex text, offering depth and development to what Q had apparently considered unworthy of publication. The question of layering and transition was very much a talking point after the novel's publication, and the fundamental marker of success was how seamlessly du Maurier blended and adapted to Q's prose. Rowse was very supportive of the completion, saying "Daphne has done a good job of finishing it" and that "one can't tell where Q ends and she takes up"^{xv}. This was also a major point of pride for du Maurier, who wrote to Foy upon finishing *Castle Dor* "I defy anyone but you to spot the place where I take over!"^{xvi} and the general perception of the critics agreed the handover was indeed imperceptible^{xvii}.

To blend in with Q's narrative was a significant personal achievement for du Maurier, as Q represented a standard and a goal as well as being a guide and mentor, offering an image of local integration and intellectual achievement that she strove to live up to. *Castle Dor* was a tantalising challenge and a way for Daphne du Maurier to weave herself into the story, consolidating her authority as a writer of Cornish tradition and actuality following on from the great success of her popular novels published in the decades previously, and her own satisfaction with her execution outweighed the less enthusiastic reviews at the time^{xviii}. Quoted after publication, du Maurier poignantly said:

I like to think that had (Sir Arthur) read what I had written, he would have turned to me, with a quiet half-smile and murmured, 'Well, child, you were more observant than I thought. This is happily done.'^{xix}

And, for those who read and talk about it today, indeed it is.

Monday
Nov. 21. 2000

MEMORABILIA
PAR
CORNWALL

but at Hadham
Museum.

My dear . . .

It's finished! I mean,
Castle Doz - not bona billey.
I wrote the Epilogue the day before I
came here for a few days, the Guardsmen
Leaving off on a Limited Defence
Course until Friday, so I seize
the chance of a short break.
At Castle Doz, I took in to the
rather part of Book II, and have done
a complete Book III To bring the tale

Letter from Daphne du Maurier to Foy Quiller Couch, Trinity College Oxford archive, drawer G/4

Bibliography:

- Kirsty Bunting *The Imprint of What Has Been: Arthur Quiller-Couch, Daphne du Maurier and the writing of Castle Dor*, Cornish Studies volume 21, University of Exeter Press (2013)
- Margaret Forster, *Daphne du Maurier*. Chatto & Windus, (1993)
- Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Daphne du Maurier, *Castle Dor* (1962)
- A. L. Rowse *Quiller Couch: A Portrait of 'Q.'* Methuen London (1988)
- Laura Varnam, *Review of Castle Dor* (2009), available online:
http://www.dumaurier.org/menu_page.php?id=110

Thanks to:

The Q Fund
FEAST
Cornwall Council
Exeter University Archives
Trinity College Oxford Archives
First Great Western Railways
Bookends of Fowey

ENDNOTES

ⁱ It is interesting to note this quote is not found in Q's original manuscript, meaning it must be one of the few that du Maurier inserted afterwards. She clearly enjoyed the idea of inevitability and fate surging through the text, perhaps also a force she believed compelled her to finish the novel.

ⁱⁱ Leo Alfred Duggan, review of *Castle Dor* in *The Times Literary Supplement* 13th April 1962, cited in Kirsty Bunting, *The imprint of what has been: Arthur Quiller-Couch, Daphne du Maurier and the writing of Castle Dor*, Cornish Studies volume 21, University of Exeter Press (2013). Further explanation from du Maurier states: "The story will seem old fashioned and rather fantastic to many a modern reader, but I think this was Q's intention - though it was possibly the real reason he laid it aside in the troubled days before the war. It was certainly one of the reasons I decided to complete it; a return to fantasy and the legends of Cornwall affording a temporary release from our swiftly changing world of the Nineteen-Sixties." - Daphne du Maurier in *The Times* 02/18/62 interviewed by The Book Review

ⁱⁱⁱ Daphne du Maurier in *Finishing a Romance*: Daphne du Maurier tells how she completed a novel laid aside by Q in the 1920s, published in the *Sunday Telegraph* 1st April 1962.

^{iv} Margaret Forster, *Daphne du Maurier*, London (1993) pg 316

^v *ibid*

^{vi} Daphne du Maurier, *Growing Pains*, page 151

^{vii} Exeter University archives, MS 307/2/2/1-2

^{viii} Correspondence file between Daphne and Foy, 1st May 1961, Trinity College Archives

^{ix} Trinity College Oxford archives, drawer G

^x *ibid*

^{xi} A.L.Rowse, *Quiller Couch; A Portrait of 'Q.'* (1988) Methuen London

^{xii} *ibid*, page 224

^{xiii} *Growing Pains*, page 171

^{xiv} Growing Pains, page 129

^{xv} AL Rowse, correspondence files Trinity College Oxford archives drawer G/4

^{xvi} du Maurier in a letter to Foy, Exeter University archives MS 307/2/2/1-2

^{xvii} The New York Herald Tribune (undated) describes it "barely audible shifting of gears"

^{xviii} Kirsty Bunting describes the press reaction as providing 'faint praise' at best, page 260. One write-up from The Times Book Review rather tepidly concluded it was 'Old fashioned, if you like, but not therefore to be despised.' (The Times The Book Review 18/02/1962, written by Mrs. Pippet: 'a freelance critic who specialises in English literature.)

^{xix} Quoted in William Hogan's *Miss du Maurier Assists a Master* article in the San Francisco Chronicle from February 12th 1962.