



# BOOK REVIEW

Book Title	<b>Paternus</b>
Author	<b>Dyrk Ashton</b>
Date	<b>May 2018</b>
Stars	

I need to begin this review by declaring some self-interest. Like *Paternus*, my *Knights' Protocol* trilogy shares characters from the Celtic pantheon and Arthurian legend. My stories also explore the possibilities of mythological characters and archetypes being real – and use extensive research to establish that reality.

It's just that Dyrk Ashton does it better.

I'm not denigrating my work. What amazes me about *Paternus* is the range and depth of that research and the way it's woven seamlessly into the narrative. That's what is so impressive. Every pantheon and belief system are represented here, references are global and stretch across Time. It truly is epic.

But as I know all too well, the balance a writer must maintain between exposition and narrative drive is a highly delicate one, it sits on a pin head. It is where my awe reaches its zenith. Because, to use that old cliché, the reader is taken on a real roller-coaster of a ride. I read it in four days. I could not put the book down! UK literary agent Jonny Gellar says that a really good book is when the reader cannot stop thinking about what's happening to its characters, and that's what I found myself doing. I abandoned tasks, cut others short, just so that I could pick up where I'd grudgingly left off.

In a story with so much factual information and dramatic events, in less accomplished hands, characters tend to be two dimensional. Not so here. It's because the book takes time to build them. I've read a couple of reviews that have said the opening chapters are slow. I don't agree. They are full of menace but it's subtle. And it's sustained by the characters.

The interplay between Fi and Zeke is playful, uncertain, intense. It sustains our interest in them during the first third of the novel because we want to see how it develops. The other characters, primarily mythological ones, introduce us gradually to the grandiose scale of the world that's about to come crashing down upon us. The events each set of characters experience, are hints at what is to come, we can feel the pressure build. I don't think everyone appreciates the subtlety of how this is done. It is artful.

The pace of the narrative, once all hell breaks loose (a deliberate choice of phrase), is sublime. It is relentless. I found myself thinking the attack in the hospital felt like the climactic moments of the story. I remember saying to myself, "where's he going to go from here?" I worried that the drama may have peaked too early.



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Boy, was I wrong.

It just keeps building. And building. And building. I felt exhausted by the end. And, when you're dealing with super-powerful people, you wonder how can they be hurt, or killed? In the Temple of the Bull, you find out. No one is safe, the 'kill your darlings' rule is well and truly applied here.

I can appreciate this book won't be for everyone. Some will accuse its emphasis on the mythological world to be too heavy. It is intelligently written and demands the same from its readers, it needs some serious consideration. I've found myself wondering about all kinds of things, some of them topics I've chewed on in my own research – for instance, why are there so many common ingredients in pantheons that existed continents apart?

As with all good stories, it takes you on one hell of a ride. I can't wait for Book Two!