

Castleview

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 08 Aug 1998

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Robert Borski — 08 Aug 1998, 00:07

Just finished CASTLEVIEW for the first time and thought I would offer my preliminary observations. After I do a second read, I'll probably post some longer, more explicatory stuff--though by then I may have changed my mind about some of what follows.

Doc Dunstan's diary is stolen from the county museum by the six "people" in the van from Minnesota. The diary contains coded information about the location of Excalibur (or possibly the Holy Grail). Jim Long deliberately crashes his sedan into the van so he can appropriate the diary for Morgan Viviane.

Morgan Viviane and Liam Fee are one and the same.

Ditto for Lucie and G. Gordon Kitty.

Ann Schindler and her daughter Mercedes may represent Merlin (they may also live life backwards a la Merlin and thus remember the future).

The Giant Horseman/Greenman/Master of the Hunt represents--minimalistically--a combination of Odin/Christ/Cernunnos.

King Geimhreadh probably represents a combination of Joseph of Arimathea/the Fisher King/a Frost Giant. He may also be Malory's King Evelake (who in some accounts is father to Morgan Le Fay).

Von Madadh is both Mordred and Fenris (madadh = large dog [Celtic]; wolf [Gaelic]). He's also the half Celtic, half German Gene Wolfe.

Morgan Viviane conflates a whole mess of figures from both Arthurian legend and various other mythologies. She's Morgan Le Fay and Viviane and the Lady of the Lake and Guinivere. She's also an oceanid and a merrow (an Irish mermaid). 'Mor' means sea in several Celtic languages.

Valse Triste is from Edvard Grieg's Peer Gynt? Not hardly. (Though it does provide a clue as to who's stealing the Dunstan diary, while the true provenance of the piece provides us with an early clue about the fate of Will Shields.)

[Always nice to see Gene use classical music in his works. He does so in "The Friendship Light" and Alban Berg's Wozzeck is crucial to an understanding of "In Looking Glass Castle." Anybody know of any more?]

The Isle of Glass = Glastonbury (the Saxon translation of Ynis Witrin, 'Island of Glass'). Chapter 36's title, "The Land of Apples," combines Edenic imagery with Arthurian--Avalon means "Isle of Apples." Glastonbury, founded by grail-bearer Joseph of Arimathea, is traditionally held to be the site of Avalon.

The book as a whole seems based on the novels of Charles Williams--like C.S. Lewis, another Oxford don heavily into religious fiction. Anybody read William's WAR IN HEAVEN?

All in all, I rather enjoyed CASTLEVIEW--though it is a bit confusing at times and I still have lots of questions. I'm hoping maybe some of you may have the answers I seek and will join me later when I begin to post the longer pieces.

Robert Borski

David Duffy — 10 Aug 1998, 11:04 · follows Robert Borski

I originally thought the story must take place on Halloween, but it is most likely to be Samhain (7th November), the New Year and start of Winter or Geimhreadh (Gaelic). I suspect _The Golden Bough_ would be a good reference for a death of the old king, a competition (?) for his wife and home, plus a replacement/scapegoat to allow the Summer King to survive and wait until his turn comes around at Beltaine.

For those as ignorant as me, the _Valse Triste_ was written as accompaniment to a scene where a dying woman dreams of a ball, and mistaking Death for her husband, starts to dance with him.

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