

Suzanne Delange & Snow White

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 28 Jun 1998

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Robert Borski — 28 Jun 1998, 18:12

Just got done reading SUZANNE DELANGE for the first time and thought I would post my thoughts.

To me it seems a rather straightforward retelling of Snow White.

Note how Suzanne's daughter (who's the very image of her mother) is described: "Her hair was of lustrous black, and her complexion as pure as milk." She has "virginal breasts half afraid to press the soft angora of her sweater" and has "an air, at once insouciant and shy, of vitality coupled with an innocence and intelligence that was hers alone." The physical description and images of innocence, I maintain, both recall Snow White.

Then there's the name Suzanne, which means "lily." Compare lily white/snow white.

We also have "the dazzlingly beautiful [girls] whom we, in those naive times, called 'queens.'"

The evil queen is the neighbor of our narrator, who hates Suzanne Delange's mother (surely, Suzanne's mother resembles her the same way Suzanne's daughter resembles Suzanne): "There lived directly across the brick-paved street from us, a bitter old woman, a widow, who for some reason never explained to me detested Mrs. Delange."

Then there's the yearbooks saved for our narrator by his mother, who also has collected a variety of Americana having to do with antique cloths.

The first mention of photographs reveals a number of them have been cut out--including Suzanne's and our narrator's. I submit the mutilated yearbook represents the mirror of the evil queen, who destroys her speculum when she doesn't get the answer she wants to her "Mirror, mirror, on the wall" question. (Serendipitously, one of the high schools in my community calls its yearbook the Mirror).

The next mention of a photograph involves Suzanne's membership in the pie club. I submit this symbolizes the poisoned apple. (Remember our narrator's mother's obsession for Americana and especially that which was created during times of conflict, i.e., the American Revolution and Civil War? What could be more American than apple pie? And the conflict involved is the internecine squabble of good vs bad queen.)

But the next mention of pictures reveals that Suzanne's is missing because she may have caught Spanish Influenza, a disease also known as the sleeping sickness, because its victims often went comatose and never woke up.

All of these events recapitulate what happens to Snow White.

And why doesn't our narrator remember Suzanne Delange? It's because he lacks the bona fides

of true princeliness. Not only is he as he admits "a second-string quarterback," but when he looks at Suzanne Delange's daughter he mostly notices her sexuality, "the virginal breasts" and "tiny waist" he might have circled with his two hands. In other words he's not noble enough to be her prince. (Might we not also assume his short two marriages failed once the thrill was gone and he succumbed to sexual ennui?) And so being unworthy of the pure and innocent Suzanne Delange, our narrator is unable to resuscitate her with a kiss and she remains sleeping in his brain, unavailable to recall.

scolex/Robert Borski