

***Castle Dor* (1962)**

begun by Sir Arthur Quiller Couch and finished by Daphne du Maurier

This novel is overlooked, and there is little critical material on it. Q is also rarely remembered as a novelist – it is supposed that he wrote up to mid-Chapter 17. Du Maurier says she did not imitate his style but tried to fall into his mood. Even the early chapters remind me a little of the tone of *The House on the Strand* – especially with historical detective work done by scientific men. Nina Bawden writes about this in *The Daphne Du Maurier Companion*; she makes the interesting point that Q is seen as a scholar and DDM as a romantic novelist, and yet the two seem to blend seamlessly here.

- Do you feel you can detect where the two writers meet? What giveaways do you think there are? Is there any evident shift in tone?
- Why do you think this novel is taken less seriously than her other books?

Historical research was clearly done by both writers – I sense she did more research than he had done, which perhaps confused things, and certainly Carfax and Ledru also seem to make some unexpected leaps and find their conflation of ancient history and myth with modern places and events somewhat bewildering. Perhaps Quiller-Couch's interest in the subject was caught by the 1930s excavations at Castle Dore.

- Does the research weigh too heavily on the novel, or obscure the plot? Do you find some of the book confusing?

Du Maurier said she only really felt for Dr Carfax, who is perhaps a projection of Q himself. In Beroul (the 12th century Breton poet who wrote a version of the Tristan story) the deception of the lovers is accepted because it is true love (despite the love potion incident – and the potions are one of several repeated incidents drawn from the sources).

- How do we feel about the characters?
- Do we forgive the immorality in Amyot and Linnet in the same way?
- A linnet is a bird often caged in the nineteenth century as a pet, which seems significant. Do you sense echoes of *Frenchman's Creek* here?

What do you think about the relationship between Amyot and Linnet? He seems naïve, she flirtatious. At the final stage he seems to have been taken over by the historic Tristan (although it's also suggested the stories might be even older than that).

- Is this a kind of ghost story without the ghosts, or reincarnation?
- What other explanations might there be for the events of the story?

Linnet doesn't feel like a Du Maurier heroine to me; however, the story itself with roots in a dark and interesting past, in which the landscape figures almost as a character, and with a slightly ambiguous ending seems very much in her usual genre-defying style.

- What would you say the genre/genres of this novel is/are?
- Do you see the landscape as a character?

The use of poems throughout is interesting (and something Du Maurier does in her other work). Some of the poems are misquoted slightly, though.

- Did you read the poems/extracts? What do they add to the story?

There are some obvious real-life parallels in the book, as well as the mythical basis. Troy represents the town of Fowey, Chretien de Troyes becomes Carfax of Troy.

- Du Maurier described Carfax as a kind of Prospero figure. Is he the man in charge of the story?

The setting and landscape are hugely significant here – history is written into the landscape in ways we might not expect. Myth becomes reality, feelings linger, the old story is played out again and again.

- Is this idea of landscape having power something we see in other du Maurier novels?

You can read a detailed review and summary of *Castle Dor* [here](#). There is a lot more information [here](#).

You and I and Amyas,
Amyas and you and I,
to the green wood must we go.
Alas! You and I, my life and Amyas.

The knight knocked at the castle gate;
the lady marvelled who was thereat.
To call the porter he would not blin;
the lady said he could not come in

The portress was a lady bright;
Strangeness that lady hight.
She asked him what was his name;
he said ‘Desire, your man madame’

She said ‘Desire what do you here’;
He said ‘Madame, as your prisoner.’
He was counselled to brief a bill;
And show the lady his own will.

Kindness said she would it bear;
And Pity said she would be there.
Thus how they did we cannot say;
We left them there and went our way.
(William Cornish)