

Divided against Yourselves

Bill Hiatt

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Divided against Yourselves is a young adult fantasy about the reincarnation of Taliesin the Bard and his battle against the nefarious Morgan Le Fay. The book is full of action and adventure that is sure to entertain. More importantly, it offers a unique exploration of the process young people go through as they try to determine who they are and who they want to become.

After discovering that he is the reincarnation of the original Taliesin and defeating the witch Ceridwen, Tal thinks his life is settling down. His girlfriend, Carla, however, is in a coma. One day, while visiting her in the hospital, he encounters Morgan Le Fay. Morgan shocks him with the news that Carla is the reincarnation of her sister, Alcina, and she wants Tal to help lift the spell that caused Carla's coma so that Alcina can live again. Tal desperately wants to help Carla, but he cannot allow Alcina to reemerge. In addition, Tal's friend Stan is having difficulty integrating past-life personalities into his current life, and Tal learns that another of his friends has betrayed him. Tal must defeat Morgan to protect his friends, but his greatest battle may be trying to defeat the darkness within himself.

The novel will appeal to young adults who have an interest in magic and mythology. The story is well crafted and contains a great deal of action to drive the plot forward. Author Bill Hiatt seems very in tune with the age group he is writing for. For instance, he describes a long wait with insight and humor: "Anyway, after what seemed like an eternity—or at least, like an algebra class—Nurse Florence returned, looking even more exhausted than usual." Additionally, the young characters are struggling to reconcile the people they are trying to be with their less noble desires. This is uniquely appropriate for young adults, who are so often trying to find themselves.

Hiatt tells this story from a first-person perspective. This allows for a very clear view of what motivates Tal, but it does not allow for much understanding of the other characters. Morgan Le Fay is a fascinating character, but with no insight into her psyche, she is somewhat two-dimensional. More significantly, much of the narrative revolves around the love that Tal feels for Carla and his ex-girlfriend. He speaks about the strength of his love with conviction, yet there is no action to support the emotion. With no explanation of the intense love that Tal feels, the emotion feels implausible.

Divided against Yourselves is an enjoyable book. The Celtic myths Hiatt has based his characters on are rich and interesting, and it is truly exciting to see them getting a fresh treatment. The author's understanding of young adults allows the novel to go beyond mere entertainment as it teaches an important life lesson that makes the story very worthwhile.

CATHERINE THURESON (February 10, 2014)

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