

Peace of Mind

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 25 Aug 1998

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1061>

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Alex David Groce — 25 Aug 1998, 17:33

I still find the "Purgatorio" hypothesis to fit best with my interpretation of "Peace". This IS Weer's life as it was lived (or, perhaps, as he tells it to himself, which may be subtly different than the real thing).

The tacking of memos onto the board, the nailing down of the final memos, is Weer's exploration of his past.

In summary (roughly). The fall of Eleanor Bold's elm wakes Weer's restless soul, and begins a process of telling its own story. The Necronomicon, "the book that binds the dead," is appropriate, in that it is by binding his life into a story that Weer comes to terms with his painful (although not, in my opinion, murderou, other than Bobby) and solitary life.

He also binds himself to the others who helped to create this story, binding the other dead to himself (we can assume that all are dead, given the time it would take for the elm to grow and topple). In fact, the spin given to ghostly life here reminds me of T. S. Eliot's "Little Gidding"--"the end of all our exploration will be to arrive at the place that we started from, and to know it for the very first time". Only after death can Weer "know" his life.

Ironically, the purpose of the binding is to set Weer free, to no longer haunt his house or his skull, but to the an only hinted at something else (which I think is what the Chinese head-rest at the end indicates, a "popping" of a layer of reality, a joining of the other "purged" dead--his Aunt is calling him, after all.)

It seems to me that the placing of the memos on the board (I don't have the book with me at the moment to point out specifics) indicates that a certain memory (the order being holographic, not chronological) has been dealt with.

The story of the Sidhe suggests that this "unnatural" extension of Weer's self is about to be replaced by a true immortality (true/false immortalities are a favorite theme of Wolfe's). He has outlived his time in his skull, on Earth, and now comes a baptism of Father, Son and Holy Ghost to give him Peace. "' . . . The time of the sidhe is long past, and the time of geese is passing. And in time men, too, will pass, as every man who lives long learns in his own body. But Jesus Christ saves all.'"

Actually, this line has always given me the haunting image of that elm falling over Weer's grave not just fifty years later, but perhaps even after (for whatever reason) men no longer live...

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." - John 8:32

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William H. Ansley — 25 Aug 1998, 23:33 · follows Alex David Groce

Alex David Groce (adgroce at eos.ncsu.edu) said:

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I am rereading Peace again and taking notes. (Man oh man, does that ever slow me down and make what is normally a pleasure into a chore. I don't know how any of you scholarly types out there can do it day in and day out.)

But the up side is that I can say very quickly that if you turn to page 53, paragraphs 6 through 10, in the Orb edition of Peace, you will find Olivia Weer explaining to Professor Peacock why humanity will no longer exist in "thousands and thousands of years" (this is on the way to the cave). Admittedly, this is too long to be the life of an elm, but still it ties in with what Alex David Groce says above.

William Ansley

Michael Straight — 26 Aug 1998, 09:33 · follows William H. Ansley

On Tue, 25 Aug 1998, Alex David Groce wrote:
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interpretation of "Peace". This IS Weer's life as it was lived (or, perhaps,
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While I must admit that I'm still enamored of my own "it's a Chinese pillow dream of a possible life" theory, I have to admit that your interpretation works pretty well, is satisfying, and strikes me as possibly closer to Wolfe's intent. It also has the virtue of not undermining the reality of all the other fascinating characters in Weer's past.

One thing about the dream idea, is that it bears some similarity to the idea we've been discussing in tBotNS of there being several Severians living his life over and over until he gets it right (an idea much more Eastern than Christian). Except I don't think Weer is going to literally

relive his life, it's more like Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Future.

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Now you've haunted me too.

-Rostrum