

PEACE: the China Pillow

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 22 Oct 2000

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 22 Oct 2000, 16:47

vizcacha wrote:

Has the gang of three looked into the relationship of the Chinese tale to the overall story? It seems to me that that story (sorry, I'm at work, details will be sketchy) provides a possible explanation for Olivia's voice over the intercom. That is, just as in the fable, Weer lives or dreams his entire life, seeing the consequences of the choices he makes, and then at the end Olivia wakes him to live it all over again as a wiser man. I don't see the point of including that story unless it speaks to something else in the novel, as all the other included tales do. What is its relevance to the novel, unless it is that?

Right, that is probably the strongest indicator of what I call the circular reading of PEACE: this flavor is "it was all a dream." Whether "it" in this instance is Den's life from age 9 to 60, or Den's afterlife version of his life, or whatever else "it" might be, remains open.

OTOH, it is also important to note the context of Olivia's story: it seems to be a strong message to Macafee for his "ungentlemanly" winning of the Chinese Egg (which is itself funny, since Olivia wanted to fight and win, etc.; she would have had contempt for any man who would have treated her like "a lady," or so her outward persona would seem to indicate).

In the Princess story, the merchant lad gives her a magical bird (note connection to "egg") "though to hear its most beautiful song its owner had to set it free" (note connection to how Olivia had to give the hard-won Egg away to Macafee); "this the princess did, and then charmed it back into its cage again by singing herself" (no comment; well, then again, the fact that Olivia commits her adulterous trysts with Macafee in the sight of the Egg . . .)

In the China Pillow story, told by Olivia to all, but especially Macafee, the giver of the gift says, "Fool! Do you not recognize me? I have granted your heart's desire, and for it I receive your ingratitude!" And thereby ends the dream of a happy life by withdrawing the real gift.

(Does Olivia have similar scathing responses for Peacock and/or Blaine?)

After the China Pillow story is Smart's story of Mr. Tilly, but I still refuse to talk about this one yet.

On to the next story!

=mantis=