

PEACE: Is there a doctor in the house? If not, where?

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 27 Oct 2000

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 27 Oct 2000, 08:54

More and more I think that a lot of the problems of PEACE may be resolved by abandoning chronology entirely at a certain level: specifically, by presuming (as I suggested briefly in my longish post on "PEACE, love, and understanding) that W. is not merely meandering over his life but guided through it by beings seeking to bring him to "peace," salvation, or whatever.

These beings are (primarily, at least) represented by the Drs. Van Ness and Black, whom W. visits "though dead." As noted, any attempt to assign chronology to these visits breaks down.

There's a strongish hint that Dr. Van Ness is not a figment created by W. to "consult" at his will. Consider this sequence:

"You promised me, Mr. Weer, that if I would prescribe for your stroke you would cooperate with me -- take certain tests."

"I had forgotten all about you. I thought you were gone."

[following which Dr. V. has W. play with mirrors to check the accuracy of his self-image. But note that Dr. V. speaks not of W's "somatic" body parts but of his "psychosomic body areas."]

"...Your image of each of the psychosomic body areas is perfect; in other words your I.D.R. is zero. I would say this indicates a very high level of self-concern."

"You mean that's how I look?"

"Yes, that's exactly how you look. Frightening, isn't it?"

[!!! This is a "psychosomic" body -- and its accurate appearance is "frightening?" H'mmmm. Finally, a little further along:]

"You know, all I really wanted from you was advice about the effect of exercise on my stroke. I've got that, and now I really should wipe you out."

"Do you really think that you could do that, Mr. Weer?"

"Of course..."

[pp. 36-7, Berkley PB]

Consider, too, Dr. Van Ness' lack of response to the idea that Sherry Gold, who is in the next

room, is dead:

"...I woke up like this. It was the morning after Sherry Gold died."

"Miss Gold?" The doctor's head makes an unintentional and almost imperceptible movement towards the partition that separates us. I wonder if the girl is listening; I hope not. [pp. 14-15]

Let's be clear: I'm suggesting that Dr. Van Ness, not at all a creation of W's memory/imagination, is a psychopomp, guiding Weer in some way to (if not through) the memories he must deal with. He has other patients, including those in the waiting room (itself a pregnant image) with its achronic magazines. In fact, whether Wolfe consciously thought it or not when he wrote PEACE, I'm suggesting that Dr. Van Ness is, if not Jesus Christ, then at least an agent thereof -- an angelic being, or one of the blessed dead, whose "prayers accomplish much."

One last pair of bits suggest very strongly indeed that it is a psychic body we're talking about:

I stand straight and six feet tall, a fine figure of a man, though twenty (Dr. Van Ness will say thirty) pounds overweight. [3]

But what Dr. Van Ness actually says on the subject is:

"You are thin, Mr. Weer. Underweight." [11]

...and this is the guy whose "image of each of the psychosomic body areas is perfect." H'mmm.

Well. Have a most excellent weekend, everyone.