

Wolfe on PEACE

The Urth list — 5 messages, 3 voices, 05 Nov 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2441>

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Robert Borski — 05 Nov 2000, 17:24

I've been enjoying immensely the recent series of posts on PEACE--quite possibly my all-time favorite list discussion--so please accept my thanks and congratulations to everyone who has participated. Perhaps someday someone (all right, mantis) could gather the material and publish it in a handy reference guide.

I also thought I'd pass on a few comments Wolfe made about PEACE in a 1983 THRUST interview conducted by Robert Frazier that some of you may not have seen or read before.

Wolfe: When Tom Disch reviewed ["The Hero as Werwolf"], he pointed out the missing E of _werewolf_ on the end of my own name. I wasn't conscious of that when I wrote the story, but I suspect he's right. _Werwolf_ is a valid old spelling. I used it to point up the fact that _werewolf_ means "man-wolf." _Wergild_ is the price of a man's life. Note also that the protagonist of PEACE is Alden Dennis _Weer_. I've always been conscious, you see, that I am neither exemplary nor popular, and every so often I try to tell my side of the story.

Thrust: I found the material in PEACE fresh and wondrous; was it autobiographical?

Wolfe: Some, but not a lot. My father came from Logan, Ohio. I went there several times as a boy for more or less extended visits, and lived there once for a year or so. Those memories gave me a great deal of background, but that was about the end of it.

Thrust: PEACE seems to to be told by a _sidhe_, mentioned in the last pages of the book. As if some immortal creature lives by constantly reliving. What exactly _is_ going on with Alden Weer?

Wolfe: Weer is dead. In spirit, he is reliving his life, which he confuses with the house he built during his final years. Note that at the end of the book Miss Bold asks permission to plant a tree on his grave. It is the fall of that tree, at the beginning of the book, that has freed his ghost--an old superstition.

Robert Borski

Adam Stephanides — 06 Nov 2000, 11:44 · follows Robert Borski

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Many thanks for posting this, Robert.

It's a bit difficult to reconcile what Wolfe says here with his statements re the house in the Jordan interview that I cited earlier. The best I can do is to say that he did build a house, but didn't put "memory rooms" in it. The other alternative, of course, is that Wolfe was mistaken in one of the interviews. (Although I tend to regard Wolfe's exegeses of his own work as authoritative, I've never been completely at ease about it. That part of the People On-line Chat where Wolfe is asked whether Weer is a mass murderer, and has to pause and think before saying "no," suggests that his memory of the book may have become fuzzy over the years.)

Assuming that this interview is indeed reliable, we can also infer that Weer is not actually haunting his house, which means that we don't have to place his grave in his backyard. I'm unclear as to how to reconcile the statement that Wolfe's ghost was freed at the start of the book with Weer's memories of having been "sick" for some time before the book begins. Are we to take these memories as doubly unreliable--false "memories" of hallucinations that were never hallucinated, so to speak?

--Adam

Urash, Tom — 06 Nov 2000, 11:27 · follows Adam Stephanides

-----Original Message-----

From: Adam Stephanides [mailto:adamsteph at earthlink.net] Sent: Monday, November 06, 2000 1:44 PM To: urth at lists1.ba.best.com Subject: Re: (urth) Wolfe on PEACE

Robert Borski wrote:

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Could Weer's "sickness" be the ghost's interpretation of whatever travails or confusion of being

it experienced between physical death and the release brought on by the felling of the elm? How would this being interpret a prior purgatorial state if given a chance to reflect, and isn't it traditionally the case that ghosts are ghosts because of attachments to the physical universe they are unable or unwilling to let go of? I don't read a great deal of horror or supernatural fiction, so this may be a stretch, but if you were to relate the condition of being a ghost to the condition of most individuals when dreaming, I think there are some parallels, e.g., volitional control of movement and context are often severely limited, and critical examination of surroundings and events is practically non-existent, otherwise we'd all be lucid dreamers (aware that we are dreaming during every dream). So, instead of "false 'memories' of hallucinations", etc., maybe we have the ghost's best (or most comfortable, soothing) interpretation of an otherwise non-sense-ical state of being, one that would be neither true nor false in the usual sense of those words.

...tom

Urash, Tom — 06 Nov 2000, 13:32 · follows Urash, Tom

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