

PEACE and ""The Lottery of Babylon"

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Adam Stephanides — 08 Nov 2000, 10:41

On p. 16 (Harper & Row), Weer refers to "the bland chance of the scientists (whose blind, piping ape-god, idiot-god, we have met before; we know you, troubler of Babylon)". Mantis has pegged this as a Lovecraft allusion; but the apostrophe to "chance" as "troubler of Babylon" makes it a Borges allusion too. Specifically, to the story "The Lottery of Babylon," in which an omnipotent lottery controls the lives of all Babylon's inhabitants.

Given this allusion, we can see resemblances between the story and Weer's life. The narrator of the story has been (iirc) both a king and a slave; Weer has been both a poor man and a very rich man. And Weer's acquisition of the factory was pretty much a matter of luck, at least if Weer is a reliable narrator on this issue (i. e. Weer did not kill Julius and had no idea he was Julius's heir). Judging from the "What went wrong?" passage, Weer seems to regard (or want to regard) the major disappointments in his life as the results of chance as well.

--Adam