

PEACE, JBC, 5HC, etc.

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 28 Nov 2000

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 28 Nov 2000, 13:17

So Roy,

About Tilly and Smart--so what do you think Smart's middle name is: "Tilly" (or "The"<g>)?

Re: the gift and the giver, in the cases of the Chinese Egg and the pearls of Grandfather Christmas. Now Roy, I want to keep up with you here, but please remind me the difference between "Olivia gives the Egg to Macafee on his birthday in August" and "Olivia gives the Egg to Macafee on Christmas in December" (aside from this being a detail pointing to Den's unreliability). I mean, we know she had it first; we know she gave it to him at some point; and then there's the "sexual favors" angle which you mentioned with regards to the pearls (Mr. Elliot/Mab) but also seems to apply (weirdly) to the Egg (Olivia/Macafee).

Everybody,

PEACE mentions James Branch Cabell's JURGEN. I just read JURGEN, the second JCB book I've read (the other being FIGURES OF EARTH). Both JCB books in the end are sort of circular and linear at the same time (a condition we sometimes see in PEACE). JURGEN has a couple of ways of =not= showing things: there are the naughty scenes that happen in the dark so you can't "see" anything, you just have the innocuous dialogue of a man and woman alone in a dark room (this was the meat of the obscenity trial, as I understand it); and then there are certain mythic scale heroic episodes, trials of mystery, which are completely missing from the text--you have all the stuff leading up to it, and all the stuff after, with only vague and/or coy hints as to what actually happened. (Some of them are apparently long running jokes throughout the various novels.)

We struggle to piece together the "fictional" and the "biographical" elements of PEACE into a coherent whole. We do the same thing with THE FIFTH HEAD OF CERBERUS when we look at "'A Story' by John V. Marsch" not as a fiction but as a veiled autobiography of the prisoner in "V.R.T.": Marsch's journal in "V.R.T." tracks its hero into the outback, where he is killed and replaced (at which point the journal becomes fictional, but with a certain toe-hold on reality); "A Story" tracks its hero out of the outback; the police are probing certain big grey areas, like the missing entries in the beginning of the journal, and the missing time (years spent in the field) implied by the end of the journal.

(5HC also alludes to James Branch Cabell. Hmm.)

(Speaking about that journal, as I've put an awful amount of time into thinking about Annese time, calendar, length of day, length of year, and things of that sort, from time to time I wonder about the dating system used in the journal: because, of course, it is a bit difficult to fit 365.25 days into a 402 day year unless one adds new months and/or adds more days to existing months . . . so how many days in the months Marsch writes about: March, April, the missing May, and June?)

Timeline for "A Story"

DAY EVENTS

- 1 Walking across desert from Sliding Stones
- 5 Arrives at Thunder Always
- 6 Meets/joins Shadow Children
- 7 Oasis, meets Seven Girls Waiting
- 8 Dreams of Flying Feet killed, jumps in river, flows along
- 9 Marshmen hunting Shadow Children, tables turned
- 10 Sandwalker captured
- 15 Sandwalker put into sand pit (after being held five days)

If I take "A Story" as veiled <ahem> autobiography, then I'm tempted to see the incarceration at the sand pit as being V.R.T.'s stay in the prison; this makes "hillmen" as Annese and "marshmen" as Croixans; the trip down the river becomes the trip across space between the two worlds. Eastwind, the castrated (i.e., non-reproductive) twin locks in as clonal Number Five (I mentioned before how the text makes these two strangers some kind of twins at a few points). Even those weird hints that V.R.T.'s mom is in the prison with him are validated (since his mother is with him in the sandpit of "A Story").

This feeds into all the Veil noodling: that all the characters are abos, just that some (like Number Five and his "family") have become stuck in human form/mentality.

If the river-trip is the voyage between planets (have we decided that before?), then it implies that the Shadow Children were met and joined on Ste. Anne sometime after the murder of Marsch (the mummified priest in the cave matches up with V.R.T.'s claim to have put the body in a cave); then another group of Shadow Children was met and joined on Ste. Croix, where crimes were committed (a trap for Shadow Children backfired and the hunter was blinded then killed). This feeds into the police version of spies and conspiracy (with Maitre as the spy-catcher/hunter).

Robert Borski has written about how Veil might be an abo; in this case I'm describing, she would be specifically a Shadow Child (I think that's what Robert says in his own piece, following different threads, iirc). But if hillmen:marshmen as Ste. Anne:Ste. Croix, then Shadow Children might be what they claim to be, that is, true humans. So in the political/espionage mode, they really might represent a human faction on both twin planets, a group that is trying to influence/subvert the faux-humans (full validation of the police paranoia)

Well, anyway . . .

Part of the challenge of PEACE, it seems to me today, is that it is being written by a single perspective, a first time author. It shifts through five major modes (each section being a different genre), and many minor modes, yet through it all there is a sense of fragmentation, incomplete-ness. Whether the editorial filter is Wolfe himself (maybe something like "this would be an interesting tidbit to add, but it wouldn't propel the main story, so I'll just allude to it") or Weer dodging around a painful incident, sometimes both, sometimes neither, case-by-case . . .

=mantis=