

Elm? A net-tree, my dear Watson

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 18 Jul 2001

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 18 Jul 2001, 09:35

Roy, having duly considered, wrote:

For all the times I've read that sentence, it is only now that something strange about it strikes me. How is it that Weer knew the tree in question to have been planted by her? There are two possibilities: 1) he recognized the site as one known by him (while he was alive, of course) to be the grave of someone other than himself, another of Eleanor's friends, or 2) he recognized his own (prearranged, necessarily) grave site and only _assumed_ the tree to have been planted by her.

Or, more simply, (3) he starts out knowing that he is dead and promptly "forgets" -- the normalization process. As you say,

Weer had to know, from the first page of the novel, that he was dead.

Right. To put it otherways: it isn't that Weer doesn't know he's dead; it's that he won't _permit_ himself to know (or to admit that he knows) that he's dead. He's floating around in Egypt, diggez-moi?

This answers most of your questions, actually. Why the physical maladies? Why eat? Why haul axe? Na, na, na, na, stayin' alive, or at least maintaining the appearances.

With one point will I take exception:

He _did_ know his consultations with the doctors weren't real -- he said as much to Dr. V.

Yes, he knew it but I think he was wrong. My current (for the last few months, anyway) grand unification theory (call it a gut feeling?) for PEACE involves the Doctors and possibly others acting as guiding angels leading Den Weer toward the elusive "peace."

At one point Weer speaks of being "sicker, even, than I was this winter, before Eleanor Bold's tree fell".

I can see at least two useful possible-meanings for this.

1. Weer died in winter. He was mighty sick then.
2. Weer was conscious in the grave and trapped by the tree, as many have suggested, and felt mighty low indeed down there.

In fact, #2 fits nicely with the general Purgatorial theory; Weer's time under the tree is the "temporal punishment" of which some Catholic theories of Purgatory speak. (Punishment for what? Well, Mantis speaks of "a weird kind of revenge for killing Bobby Black"; certainly this could be one thing. He is trapped in the tree, as in a net, underground.)

When his "time" is up [and keep in mind that no specific amount of time is or need be involved; the ghost's time, in Eternity, is private and not related,

at least in any simple or obvious way, to the physical time of Cassionsville], the tree falls and Weer is "freed" to move on towards, uh, peace. He still has to complete the process of repentance, which is, at some level, what the guiding angels are leading him through.

That's my theory and I'm sticking by it.

Until something better comes along, anyway.

Mantis articulates similar ideas, and I like the 2001 comparison.

A few specifics:

We definitely went over the "was it ever really built or not" angle before. It gets tricky, because Weer will say strong things like there was never a Persian room, which makes it sound as if the thing was concrete; comments about the contractor; and that the blue plans were on the table back in the Commons apartment.

I think the simplest answer (though not one I'm prepared to argue strongly for) is that Weer built a house, and that the "memory mansion" bears some strong resemblance to the house he built, for reasons which might be obvious.

Deep suspicion: This is the house that Weer built -- but in the sense that Marley says, to Scrooge, "These are the chains I forged in life."

--Dan'l