

words in favor of PEACE timelines

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 10 Aug 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3402>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 10 Aug 2002, 15:05

Roy wrote:

"He was one of the tallest men I ever saw, I guess, but most of the time he stood like he didn't have any chest at all, all hollowed out there, so he didn't look much taller than the average." (117) Even slouched, Tilly was above average height.

Ach. Scratch Tilly from the sepia roster.

Still, Tilly is connected to the episode by way of his ties to the carnies; Smart is connected by his inheritance of Tilly's business. If sepia man = Smart, then the photo presumably was taken in the brief time of Smart's running of that pharmacy (circa 1922).

Robert Borski wrote against PEACE timeline construction:

No, you have it right exactly. Because as I've been attempting to demonstrate all along it is not possible to construct a hard and true chronological ordering of the events in PEACE. There are just too many contradictions and mutually-exclusive events.

From my perspective, and I have worked on the timelines, the text contains island-continent of stability (the main narrative of each section) surrounded by a sea of uncertainty (the frametale, mainly, which aside from being strange itself, bleeds oddities into the main narrative at transition points). The dream-like quality of the frametale makes it just like the corridors of time, and like those corridors, the frametale has "backstage" elements to it, where the main narrative is "on stage."

Among the sections, the fifth is the most tricky: cold house prank (how does this relate to anything?), Doris (how does this relate to anything?), etc. It is almost as if Gene Wolfe is taking off the training wheels that were present in the previous sections. OTOH certain elements are very clear and true, so clear and true that we don't debate them, for example: the sterility of the Americans (woman at the plant who did not have children) echoes that of Tilly, Smart, and A. D. Weer; the arrival of foreign workers hints at the post-American landscape Weer has seen in visions (races of new colors, including the "orange" tribe which in this case becomes the tribe of the fake orange); Charlie Turner's appearance validates Smart's weird story; etc.

The most thorny tangles, iirc, are the visits to Drs. B and V and the Charlie Turner episode. One solution for Sherry Gold at the office involved a timesplice mid-paragraph! The Dr. V thread is pretty clearly a composite of many visits, begun when Weer is plump president and moving backward to when he was a skinny middle-age loser. The doctor's office is "corridor of time" area, where dream-like things happen.

Example 3: Once again, I cite the scene where Den has sex with Sherry Gold. Sixteen-year old Sherry shows up at Weer's door and Den invites her in. Says Den to the girl: "Excuse me for not rising. I have suffered a stroke resulting in partial paralysis of my leg." Kind-hearted Sherry, though nervous (as Wolfe tells us), responds, "That's all right."

But how can this be? Den's stroke is years in the future--long after he has sex with Sherry Gold. It's clearly impossible--and yet there it is, right on the page before us. Possible solutions include: 1) post-stroke Den is looking back to the encounter and re-imagining it from the perspective of his current present, complete with revisionist dialogue; 2) Den, adrift in a maze of memories, is conflating events, as confused or disoriented as anyone who's suffered a stroke, or in the twilight of their life has vivid recollections of their childhood, but can't remember what they had to eat yesterday.

Surely we have discussed more options than that!

3) A. D. Weer is dead (true) and his ghost is haunting the past (text establishes that ghosts can come from the future) in realtime:

3a) like Scrooge (and Billy Pilgrim), Weer cannot alter the past, only relive it. The other ghosts cannot hear anything that deviates from the script; Sherry Gold in the case cited, or Dr. Black when warned of son Bobby's soon-to-come fall. 3b) like (who? Bill Murray's character in "Groundhog Day"?), Weer can alter the past and is presenting us with the ameliorated "novelization" (Walter Mitty) of his life.

4) A. D. Weer is dead and is in effect summoning ghosts to recreate the past in his memory mansion prison as he struggles against this self-knowledge of his own post-death existence:

4a) like 3a

4b) like 3b

=mantis=

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