

PEACE: sources for the Doris letter

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 21 Aug 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3420>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 21 Aug 2002, 18:59

William Ansley, writing about my "real letter somewhat warped" notion, wrote:

I see another problem here. Grimm's fairy tales and the Arabian Nights actually

exist in the real world, so we can read them and see that Weer's stories do not come from these sources. But Charlie's letter exist only in the reality within PEACE, so we have no way of knowing that the version Weer presents to us is fictionalized, the way we do with the two stories. The parallel also seems

to break down in that the two stories are *stories*, that is pieces of fiction (in the context of PEACE), from the beginning, whereas Charlie's letter is a real object in Weer's life (the original letter that is, if it ever existed).

That is, the stories, on their surface, have no direct bearing on Weer's life although I won't deny that they (especially the "Tale of the Three Suitors") actually are about his life as soon as you delve below the surface.

Granted we do not have as much extra-textual material in the case of the letter as we do with the stories. In part this is what makes it feel like a case where Wolfe is taking off the training wheels.

OTOH, the Doris part of the letter is clearly a story, whether or not it was intended by Charlie to be taken as true. A story told in the course of a letter thanking Weer for the tour of the plant and the dinner.

In addition to that epistlary context, we have oft noticed the Dickens mentions, so if we put these together we get a literary mode as clear as Grimm's fairy tales and the Arabian Nights: a letter-story ala Dickens, but set in Middle America in 1963 (which takes the Victorian England out of the whole thing).

Did Wolfe have a specific Dickens episode in mind? I don't know, and based upon the warpage caused for the tales in the style of Grimm and Scheherazade (I always wonder at how Sherry herself might equal Scheherazade, even though Sherry isn't much of a story-teller herself--but I digress!), it might be nearly impossible for even a Dickens expert to find the take-off point for this particular "forgery."

But beyond that, we did manage to discover the fairytale element, the complete, easily recognized Cinderella buried in there. Which, oddly enough, is exactly what is missing from the "fairy tales" Weer writes (there is no suitors tale; there is no marid story)! Part of the whole wonder.

"The Princess and Her Three Suitors"

mode: fairy tale

authorial voice: the brothers Grimm

most specific text: Lang's THE GREEN FAIRY BOOK (not there)

"The Tale of ben Yahya and the Marid"

mode: fairy tale/oriental fantasy

authorial voice: Scheherazade

most specific text: THE ARABIAN NIGHTS (not there)

(the Doris letter)

mode: epistle, traveler's tale

authorial voice: hints of Charles Dickens

most specific text: "Cinderella" (not connected to Dickens afai)

=mantis=

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 21 Aug 2002, 20:39 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Mantis done wrote...

In addition to that epistolary context, we have oft noticed the Dickens mentions, so if we put these together we get a literary mode as clear as Grimm's fairy tales and the Arabian Nights: a letter-story ala Dickens, but set in Middle America in 1963 (which takes the Victorian England out of the whole thing).

Did Wolfe have a specific Dickens episode in mind?

Ummm.

Granted, I've only read about half a dozen of Dickens's novels ... but not a one of the ones I've read (OLIVER TWIST, GREAT EXPECTATIONS, DAVID COPPERFIELD, THE PICKWICK PAPERS -- okay, not really a novel -- A CHRISTMAS CAROL, and I'm pretty sure something else I'm forgetting) was epistolary or even significantly driven by letters.

Actually, when I think Victorian + epistolary novel the first thing that comes to my mind is DRACULA. Which may or may not have anything to do with PEACE. (Come to think of it, FRANKENSTEIN has an epistolary frame, too.) This may or may not have anything to do with PEACE, a novel of a very different kind of Un-Dead.