

PEACE: ghost of Christmas

The Urth list — 3 messages, 2 voices, 21 Oct 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3497>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 21 Oct 2002, 20:26

Having made my rule about ghosts, then yes, Mr. Tilly was killed by the ghost of his wife (case solved!), and Santa Claus switched the presents for Mab and Mrs. Weer (case solved!).

Weer asks his mother if Santa will bring presents for grandpa and she says "If he's been a good boy"! And what do you know!

No doubt you think I'm kidding, being frivolously silly.

I am not.

I confess I had never before seen that the Christmas book "from Santa" was the green book, the one and only book that serves Weer in the same oracular fashion that the brown book serves Severian in TBOTNS. Previously I had thought that "The Princess and Her Three Suitors" and "The Tale of ben Yahya and the Marid" were inventions by Weer to explain his life after the fact -- they are not. They are stories from the green book, which is the first book that Weer ever possessed, the first book he ever read on his own. The book is truly magical and the stories tell about the world around him: specifically about his aunt Olivia's courtship in the egg hunt and his own adventure in the gold hunt.

So Weer really did start to read those stories at the age of five, and they remain unfinished because he stopped reading them.

This makes another echo with the china pillow story: Weer is a man who has seen his future ("The Tale of ben Yahya and the Marid"), just like the Chinese hero, yet Weer does not recognize it as his life until it is upon him, because he has been deluded by his own self-generated dreams of himself and Margaret Lorn. That is to say, he has drugged himself with the vision of the easy life, then the obstacles come up and thrash him around until he wakes up as a 40-year old man in the "haunted city" of the Marid story, but since he never finished reading that one, he has to work his way through it and to the end. Judging from the outcome, I'd guess that in the arabesque story the woman he loved (Olivia) whom he thought he had found again (Lois) turned out to be a treacherous ghula (that "digging up graves" image is pretty strong in the interplay between Weer and Louis).

While I'm writing about pillow echoes, I will point out that Weer's "Chinese garden dream," in which Weer (AD 2274) dreams about being 25 again (AD 1939), has, I believe, image-ties to the china pillow story (the walls and the plain, especially); furthermore, it is exactly the case of an old man (well actually he is dead) successfully revisiting that grim and frightful time when he stood on the cusp of his life's adventure. He does this and is not censured for it.

=mantis=

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Roy C. Lackey — 22 Oct 2002, 05:12 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

mantis wrote:

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Whoa, now! Since when did Santa Claus get to be a ghost?!

I posted about the switch two years ago. Teenage Den was right about who switched the gifts--it was his grandfather, for sexual favors anticipated and received that night. The old man was not a good boy. The proof is the layout of the house. There were two upstairs bedrooms. When Bella and Della were girls, one room had been theirs; the other had belonged to their grandmother. (22) Mab now slept in the old grandmother's room. Den and his mother slept in the girls' old room. Mr. Elliot's bedroom was on the first floor. (27) Grandpa Elliot told Den: "I just come down myself to have a look at these here candles before I puts them out and goes up to bed." Note the coming down and going up. Christmas morning he "came down and shaved". (25) Elliot spent that cold night with Mab, who couldn't put her present under the tree.

-Roy

Michael Andre-Driussi — 22 Oct 2002, 15:09 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy wrote:

Whoa, now! Since when did Santa Claus get to be a ghost?!

Santa Claus is something of a chimerical creature -- part saint (Saint Nicholas), part elf, part burglar <g>. While he does not appear as himself in "A Christmas Carol" as one of the ghosts of Christmas, he seems rather close to at least one of them. What category of being is he, then? "Imaginary being, seasonal"?

In the present example [heh], I'm thinking of him as being a ghost, albeit of a higher order than most, and entirely benign. That is, his name was voiced and so he was summoned (this really is a critical key of PEACE), he did his magic without being heard or detected, he vanished.

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Which is great for determining the switch of the water for the pearls! But it cannot explain the switch of the book (which presumably was a mundane book bought by one of the adults). The

obvious switch of water for pearls is the cover for the more important switch; in a similar way the obsessive importance of the Christmas knife that Weer searches for is a cover for the magical origin and magical nature of the book.

Wolfe did a trick like this in TBOTNS. Thecla has a number of books brought to her, and we know that one of them, the brown book, becomes this highly important item for Severian. We see it throughout the four volumes, etc. But in fact, one of the unnamed volumes that Thecla got from the library was [Canog's] THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN. In this way, the brown book, while as oracular as Weer's green book, acts in TBOTNS as the Christmas knife does in PEACE, to hide or obscure the presence of another item.

I would also like to point out that the green book itself is congruent with the (green) china pillow, because Weer reads the green book before nodding off to sleep. (Perhaps its hidden title is "The Book of Dreams"?) But mainly it shows him his future just as the pillow showed the hero his future.

The green book tells the future and Gold's forgeries warp the past; in this sense, then, Lou Gold is, er, the anti-Claus, in that he is the author of lies based on the past.

(If grampa did do the switch, then it was clearly not premeditated, since he showed young Weer the situation at that time. Risky, if not stupid, of grampa to make the switch after showing Weer, since as a little kid he is very likely to blurt out what he knows, causing all sorts of trouble. From this standpoint it makes more sense for Della to make the switch, she not knowing that Weer and grampa had met in secret at around midnight.)

=mantis=