

PEACE: What happened to everybody else?

The Urth list — 4 messages, 2 voices, 21 Oct 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3499>

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Jeff Veyera — 21 Oct 2002, 23:35

The recent thread on Mr Tilly and the discoveries made regarding oranges (especially his propensity for injecting oranges with drugs) have made me wonder again what real or perceived calamity befell humanity in Weer's present. This is referred to consistently throughout, and buttressed perhaps by the Irish folktale at the very end of the novel. What is Wolfe's game here?

There seems to be a lot more going on in that plant than meets the eye, what with the very odd treatment of the reporter and that ghost story.

I was also struck by the comment that the plant opening caused a glut in the potato market in the area. Aside from using potatoes to make vodka (a key component in the screwdrivers Weer favors) and the potential that the plant is also a distillery, why should this be? Is a key juice ingredient extracted from potatoes?

Michael Andre-Driussi — 22 Oct 2002, 00:00 · follows Jeff Veyera

Jeff Veyera wrote:

The recent thread on Mr Tilly and the discoveries made regarding oranges (especially his propensity for injecting oranges with drugs) have made me wonder again what real or perceived calamity befell humanity in Weer's present. This is referred to consistently throughout, and buttressed perhaps by the Irish folktale at the very end of the novel. What is Wolfe's game here?

In the AD 2274 timeframe, all the Americans have died out. Throughout PEACE there is a sense of "decline and fall," like that of the Roman Empire, with Weer being something like a provincial big man who sees it crumbling away. One reason given for the fall of the Roman Empire is the lead in the water -- the Romans were accidentally poisoning themselves by using lead pipes. This single point seems to be a compelling answer for the soft-apocalypse that happens offstage in PEACE: the citizens have been poisoned by the fake orange drink, turned into sterile workers or freakish mutants (sideshow freaks who have to live nomadic lifestyles). As per Olivia and Weer's vision of the relatively near future, the continent is likely peopled by new species of humankind, with tribal organization being the highest level. Weer wasn't alive past 1974, so he doesn't have the details for the last two centuries, but it was all falling action from the trends he could see.

Weer isn't the "last American," since he is dead, but he might well be among the last American ghosts (delayed by that elm tree, in his case). Very much like the goose sidhe in the story you mentioned, who have survived past the death of their species.

[snip]

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is also a distillery, why should this be? Is a key juice ingredient extracted from potatoes?

Whole potatoes are used up to make the ersatz orange beverage, or so it seems to me.

=mantis=

Jeff Veyera — 22 Oct 2002, 00:23 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Thanks for your reply, Mantis. I thoroughly enjoyed GURPS New Sun, btw.

[snip]

Mantis wrote:

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So may we assume PEACE and "Seven American Nights" are related?

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[snip]

Might that not explain the letter nailed down? If Weer is a ghost, perhaps he kept moving that letter, and someone among the living nailed it down so that it would stop moving.

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 22 Oct 2002, 01:11 · follows Jeff Veyera

Jeff Veyera wrote:

So may we assume PEACE and "Seven American Nights" are related?

Well they have always seemed thematically related, but I don't recall anyone trying to make a stronger case. Interesting thought, to arrange all the tales of America declining and falling, from "Hour of Trust" and "The Blue Mouse" onward . . . well, I don't know about all that. But 7AN seems like a plausible nesting inside the PEACE timeline, what with its mutants and tumble-down monuments.

Mantis wrote:

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he kept moving that letter, and someone among the living nailed it down so
that it would stop moving.

It might, indeed. I'm still not sure exactly what happened with Weer's wandering essence
=before= the elm fell, but now my sense is that the thing was more like a mere shade,
possessing only lower intelligence. When the elm fell another piece was released and the
essence graduated up to being a ghost, a step higher than a gibbering shade.

The shade, if I may use that term to denote "Weer's essence prior to elm fall," seems to have
not left the "room" with the fireplace near the elm. (I use quotes because there is reason to
believe that the memory mansion has no physical presence at all.) When Weer's ghost ventures
out into the other rooms and eventually finds the president's room (which has the nailed letter
you are referring to), it seems to be for the first time (as opposed to those actions which seem
like repetitions of actions that the shade went through, like maybe questioning the doctors
about his stroke).

How many categories of spirit are there? I don't know, but Weer's aunt Bella knew!

=mantis=