

The text below is an English translation of the Dutch article "Enkele reacties op het stuk van Gerald Woerlee" by Titus Rivas, published in *Terugkeer*, 19(4), winter 2008, p. 8. The translation was done by the author himself and edited by Rudolf H. Smit.

A few comments on the article by Gerald Woerlee*

I'm glad to have been given this opportunity to respond to various central elements within the interpretation of the case of the "Man with the Dentures" offered by anesthesiologist Gerald Woerlee. To be frank, I believe Woerlee is showing a lot of character, by openly admitting that his former representation of the case was premature and needed to be adjusted.

I will now comment on the main propositions and interpretations presented by Woerlee.

(1) Woerlee states that it is unclear how long exactly the man had been lying in the meadow. In his opinion it is not clear either whether bystanders had already tried to resuscitate him.

Comment: This is correct, but in my view it is not essential to the case. What is crucial, is that the patient – no matter how long he had been lying in the meadow, and regardless of whether passers-by had already tried to resuscitate him or not – certainly had insufficient blood circulation to be able to undergo conscious experiences when he arrived at the old Canisius Wilhelmina Hospital (CWZ). This means that in accordance with current neuropsychological insights he could not have had any type of consciousness until he was sufficiently resuscitated.

(2) Woerlee claims that the man felt how TG took his upper denture out of his mouth and heard that he put the denture on a shelf of the crash cart.

Comment: This does not match with TG's story. The man did not feel that TG removed his upper denture from his mouth and neither did he hear how TG laid this denture on a shelf of the crash cart. Instead, he perceived these events visually and in a disembodied state from above in the room. The only things the man said he had felt and heard were, respectively, pain under the heart massage pump and utterances about terminating or continuing the resuscitation. At least as important is the fact that I explicitly asked TG if it could be thinkable that the Man with the Dentures only received auditory impressions of the crash car during his near-death experience. TG answered: "Not to reconstruct [an image of] the crash cart. Of course, one could have inferred: 'there are bottles,' because that one will hear. But you cannot infer from the clatter: 'There is a wooden shelf upon which one has laid my dentures'" (Rivas, 2008, p. 19)

(3) Woerlee does not realise enough that the patient could not have had any type of consciousness, according to mainstream neuropsychological consensus, because there was insufficient blood circulation and therefore too little brain activity as well. In the words of TG: "No, at that moment I can be 100% sure of that, no rhythm, no circulation, and I cannot imagine that after all that time that there was enough oxygen in his brain to listen, or see, or to interpret what he observed. No." (p. 19)

(4) Next, Woerlee claims that de patiënt was wrong "in thinking that his denture was put into a drawer."

Comment: I don't recognize this alleged failure from my report, or it should be that Woerlee erroneously refers to comments below a photograph derived from the

BBC-documentary *The Day I Died*, under which it is mentioned that the reconstruction therein is wrong, because the denture was not put into a drawer (p. 14). This refers to the reconstruction in the documentary, not to the patient's own reconstruction.

(5) Furthermore, Woerlee claims that the patient could have perceived TG (visually) while his eyes were opened by TG.

Comment: Even if this had been really possible, which does not correspond with TG's description ("They were lifeless eyes, eyes that just looked straight up", p. 16), it still would not explain the fact that patient constructed an image of the nurse, while he did not have enough blood circulation to accomplish this.

(6) According to Woerlee, the man had an out-of-body experience while he was feeling pain caused by the heart massage pump.

Comment: Woerlee's formulation of this makes it appear that he believes the out-of-body experience occurred only then, whereas it becomes very clear from the report that the removal of the upper denture was already perceived in an out-of-the-body state as well.

(7) More generally, it seems that Woerlee does not sufficiently realise the following fact. TG mentions that the pain under the heart massage pump may still be explainable by the artificial small circulation that had been activated by then, but that the perception at the moment when the upper denture was removed from the patient's mouth certainly could not be explained by this. About this, TG mainly states: "He may have had that [i.e. a form of consciousness] after we had been resuscitating for some time. At the moment of removal of the dentures from his mouth: at that moment he had no circulation and no heart-beat, so at that moment he could not have seen it. We had to start the resuscitation at that time." (p. 19) In other words, if the pain under the pump is explainable, this still would absolutely not hold for the perception of the removal of the denture! This is and remains the central anomaly within this case.

(8) Woerlee judges it important that the patient was able to mention the presence of two female nurses, but could not describe them. According to Woerlee, this would be odd, because the man should be able to do so during an out-of-body experience.

Comment: Again, it appears as if Woerlee has not read the corresponding passage well enough. TG does not claim that the man was not able to describe the two female nurses, but simply that the man did not describe them. So this implies nothing for what the man did or did not perceive of their physical appearance. Besides, it is very strange that someone who rejects the reality of real out-of-body experiences of consciousness believes to know how such an OBE should work!

Summarizing, I'm afraid that Gerald Woerlee's extensive response is less relevant than he thinks. It would please me if he once again shows the character to fully acknowledge this.

Reference

- Rivas, T. (2008). Een gesprek met TG over de Man met het Gebit. *Terugkeer*, 19, 3, 12-20.

* The article Rivas responds to, 'Reactie op de "Man met het Gebit"' by G.M. Woerlee, was published in the same issue of *Terugkeer*, on pages 4-7.