

Weer's Death, and J.L. Borges

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 25 Aug 1998

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CRCulver — 25 Aug 1998, 06:34

William Ansley said:

<I read the book three times before I realized that Weer was dead.>

That's common with Wolfe's books. I read the BotNS three times before I came to grasp basic plot structure. I'm sure most of the people on the list can testify to similar occurrences. <g>

And he continued:

<Another thing that adds to my interest in _Peace_, after reading much of Wolfe's other work, is how many germs of ideas that appear in many of his novels and short stories can be found in _Peace_ (or so it seems to me).>

Peace includes a great deal of Jorge Luis Borges' influence, and seeing it here can illuminate how it was later used in the Book of the New Sun. One Borgian influence I think is particularly strong is the labyrinthine symbolism of Weer's house (which I'm assuming is part of his postmortem imagination and doesn't actually exist). Mr. Gold's writing of books that don't exist reminds me of Borges' tendency to make up books and authors to validate the claims of some of his characters. The story that comes immediately to mind is "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius."

Christopher R. Culver <crculver at aol.com>

<http://members.aol.com/crculver/index.html>

William H. Ansley — 27 Aug 1998, 00:38 · follows CRCulver

Christopher R. Culver <crculver at aol.com> said:

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I prefer to believe that the house does/did exist and it did have "museum rooms" replicating important rooms in Weer's life. But, I think the real house certainly wasn't the shifting thing Weer describes in the book, with rooms moving about and appearing and disappearing. Building a house with museum rooms would be a peculiar thing to do, but Weer was a peculiar guy.

William Ansley

Michael Straight — 27 Aug 1998, 09:41 · follows William H. Ansley

On Thu, 27 Aug 1998, William H. Ansley wrote:
Christopher R. Culver <crculver at aol.com> said:

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I don't know. It seems too obviously a reference to the ancient method of enhancing memory by creating an imaginary house or castle in which each room represents a time period or category of knowledge and the objects in each room represent the specific things you are trying to remember.

I guess that doesn't rule out Weer literally building such a house (in fact, the more I think about it, the more I like the idea--but I'd like it more in a story about some character consciously doing it as an extravagant mnemonic device--but then, what is a museum but an extravagant mnemonic device?), but I think the shiftiness implies that at a minimum, the house in the story has imaginary rooms/qualities in addition.

-Rostrum

William H. Ansley — 28 Aug 1998, 00:08 · follows Michael Straight

Rostrum (Michael Straight <straight at email.unc.edu>) said:

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I really don't think we disagree very much here. I think there was a "real" house Weer built before he died that had museum rooms in it. I think the house his ghost inhabits is imaginary and has all sorts of odd properties that no real building could have but had as its starting point in Weer's (ghost's) mind the original house the living Weer built.

I agree that the house described in _Peace_ could be wholly imaginary, I just don't think it *necessarily* is.

(Of course, I mean imaginary within the world of _Peace_ when I use the word above.)

William Ansley