

Alden Weer's Dimensionality

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 04 Nov 1998

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David_Lebling — 04 Nov 1998, 09:50

Wombat said:

Alden Weir is a brilliant 3-dimensional figure...

Really? I've read _Peace_ several times and still don't know what to make of Weir. Judging from past posts on this list I don't think I'm alone. For example, there seems little agreement on whether Weir is a murderer (much less a multiple murderer). What sort of man is he? He's something of a manipulator of women, as evidenced by his various relationships. I can't say we know much more about him than that. For the narrator and ostensible protagonist of a novel, he is remarkably invisible. He really tells us very little about himself, and consequently people who comment on the novel tend to go all mantic or even borskian on us.

I'm happy to hear from the assembled wisdom that I'm all confused here, but I each time I read _Peace_ I think I know more about Olivia, or Julius Smart, or even the Golds, father and daughter, than about Weir.

Dave Lebling
(aka vizcacha)
(david_lebling at avid.com)

Alex David Groce — 04 Nov 1998, 15:51 · follows David_Lebling

David Lebling said:

Wombat said:

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I think that's true, in a sense, but only because Weir is a man who has defined himself by OTHER PEOPLE'S stories. I think Wolfe is suggesting that this is both a peculiarity of Weir's personality AND something common to all of us. For my money, I never entertained Weir as mass-murderer (and I don't think Bobby's death is really murder in the sense I'd use the word). His character is visible in the way Weir reacts to others--that it is,

in the stories he is told, rather than his own story, that occupy his reminiscence (from beyond the grave or a less likely possibility in response to a Thematic Apperception Test) is a major defining trait of his character. Weir is a highly introspective, isolated man, often implying hesitations and failures he does not explicitly describe (for instance, how he lost Margaret). He's not at all "flat" in the sense Severian is--instead of innately sensing what he must do, Weir seems to avoid making any real decisions. Only a few times (confronting Gold, for example) does he actually ACT in his own story. However, Weir asserts a self in the way he tells the stories he has heard, and in the stories he chooses to tell... It seems to me that the way Weir does tell us about himself (usually by evasion) tells us as much as what he tells.

Maybe you could consider Weir as an inverse of Kinbote in Nabokov's PALE FIRE who (sort of) turns someone else's story into his own, extending the ego to encompass what is not his, while Weir tries to shrink his ego, turning his own life into everyone else's story--even claiming Julian Smart is the protagonist of the book. Either way, you have a literarily brilliant way of evoking a three (or even four) dimensional character.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." - John 8:32

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CRCulver — 05 Nov 1998, 03:32 · follows Alex David Groce

Vizcacha said:

<What sort of man is he? He's something
of a manipulator of women, as evidenced by his various relationships.>

I'm not so sure. After all, he was enough of a gentleman not to take advantage of the drunken Lois.

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I feel that way too. Weir is dead, so he's a shade of a man and not really anything that can be described...I guess.

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