

Did the Library Survive?

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 11 Jul 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4085>

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James Jordan — 11 Jul 2003, 03:14

It's been assumed that the Ushas Flood destroyed the Library, but I wonder. As Don noted, it's Borges's library, and is transcendental. Also, it's physically protected, arguably, being underground.

Sev. put one copy of his book there. I think this was for the Ushas generations to read, not for his own to read. I think he assumed that the Library (symbolically in another way the Bible, or Bible of Bibles) would survive.

Sev. put the other copy in the heavens. Wolfe seems to be doing something here, beyond explaining how he got his copy to translate. The same book in heaven and on earth? Or what? What think ye?

Nutria

matthew.malthouse — 11 Jul 2003, 07:03 · follows James Jordan

On 11/07/2003 04:14:08 James Jordan wrote:

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If it's transcendental who knows. But in the mundane world Nessus drowned. The library's under water and full of soggy vellum, paper, papyrus etc.

Matthew

Chris — 11 Jul 2003, 18:33 · follows matthew.malthouse

That's what I meant by the "philosophical" argument for the Library's survival. It's hard to say, given the nature of the Library, whether he ever expected it to be read at all - when you place one book among an infinite number of other books it's not much different from launching it off into space/the corridors of time. I feel that perhaps either Wolfe (or Severian - his subtlety as a writer is perhaps underrated when one considers him simply a dissembler) is here giving a nod to the leap of faith every writer takes when writing a book. It is a sentimental thing suited to the end of such a work, a symbolic ritual of release where the author frees his creation with no way of knowing if his meaning will ever come home in a reader, or where it may go that he never intended.

It is probably also notable that Severian literally saves himself by this act of release, in the continuation of his journey that is UotNS.

Nutria's comment about heaven and earth rings a bell, but though I spent some time hunting for a reference I was unable to come up with one. I could swear I recall having read somewhere that, in completion of his act of creation, God placed the Torah in the heavens and in the earth. Of course, it is not presented in quite as literal a sense as this, but who's to say that Severian is

being purely literal either.

Civet

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