

# Quotations

The Urth list — 9 messages, 6 voices, 01 Jan 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5866>

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Matthew Wisbey — 01 Jan 2011, 14:06

Hi all

I've just joined the list and hope to be an active participant in discussions. Please forgive me if the following question has already been addressed, I haven't had time to work my way through the archives .

When Severian meets Ultan in the library, the Master Librarian quotes the following lines to him:

'Of the trail of ink there is no end.'

'A man will give his life to the turning over of a collection of books.'

Thanks in advance for your responses.

Matt

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Gerry Quinn — 01 Jan 2011, 15:42 · in reply to Matthew Wisbey

Welcome!

What's the question? I'm guessing you are asking where the apparent quotations come from.

I did a google search out of curiosity but found nothing useful. Perhaps Wolfe got them somewhere obscure, or perhaps he invented them! Maybe somebody else has a clue.

- Gerry Quinn

----- Original Message -----

From: Matthew Wisbey

To: urth at urth.net

Sent: Saturday, January 01, 2011 2:06 PM

Subject: (urth) Quotations

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David Stockhoff — 01 Jan 2011, 15:49 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Same here. I would guess they are more "in the style of" an author than direct quotes.

On 1/1/2011 10:42 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Adam Thornton — 01 Jan 2011, 16:38 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 01/01/2011 09:49 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

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On 1/1/2011 10:42 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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- Gerry Quinn

Well, given the source, I would expect them to be found in Borges. And given that Borges did not originally write in English, it seems plausible that we're seeing Wolfe's translation, which is not necessarily word-for-word anyone else's, and so it might therefore make sense that you couldn't find it with Google.

Someone with a much more encyclopedic knowledge of Borges than I might be able to say whether it's a quotation or just something that sounds kinda like Borges.

Adam

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Son of Witz — 01 Jan 2011, 16:45 · in reply to Matthew Wisbey

Welcome. There seem to be a lot of "Matthews" around here. I know another Matthew NewSun nut who doesn't post here as well. Something about this quasi-religious stuff attracts Matthews. ~witz

On Jan 1, 2011, at 6:06 AM, "Matthew Wisbey" <mattwisbey at yahoo.com> wrote:

Hi all

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Lee Berman — 01 Jan 2011, 21:07 · follows Son of Witz

Matthew Wisby: I've just joined the list and hope to be an active participant in discussions. Please forgive me if the following question has already been addressed, I haven't had time to work my way through the archives .

Welcome Matthew! Six years ago I joined the List and did my best to peruse the archives first. It was really difficult then. Now I think it is just too damn big to try anything more than cursory perusal. We rehash questions here all the time. No problem. Most of the time I find new insights with re-discussion.

Son O' Witz: There seem to be a lot of "Matthews" around here...Something about this quasi-religious stuff attracts Matthews.

Would you prefer Matthew's name was John or Joshua? heh. (We've had a lot of JW's here too)

When Severian meets Ultan in the library, the Master Librarian quotes the following lines to him:

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'A man will give his life to the turning over of a collection of books.'

Jose Luis Borges wrote a story called "Mirror Of Ink". It was set in ancient times, involved a ruler and his wizard advisor, and an execution, a beheading. Maybe an indirect inspiration for BotNS? Perhaps the quote was Wolfe acknowledging Borges as his direct predecessor.

Borges also wrote about the "Library Of Babel". "Many of Borges's signature themes are featured in the story, including infinity, reality, cabalistic reasoning, and labyrinths". Some quotes:

1. "The universe (which others call the Library)...."
2. The mystics claim that their ecstasy reveals to them a circular chamber containing a great circular book, whose spine is continuous and which follows the complete circle of the walls; but their testimony is suspect; their words, obscure. This cyclical book is God.)
3. We also know of another superstition of that time: that of the Man of the Book....there must exist a book which is the formula and perfect compendium of all the rest: some librarian has gone through it and he is analogous to a god.
4. If honor and wisdom and happiness are not for me, let them be for others. Let heaven exist, though my place be in hell.
5. I venture to suggest this solution to the ancient problem: The Library is unlimited and cyclical. If an eternal traveler were to cross it in any direction, after centuries he would see that the same volumes were repeated in the same disorder (which, thus repeated, would be an order: the Order). My solitude is gladdened by this elegant hope.

There is a lot more. I think Wolfe owes much to Borges. David (stockhoff), per our previous discussion and my observations of possible devil/demiurge associations with Ultan (Borges), it may be that Wolfe does this inspired by Borges' own self-assessment (if there is more in his work like #4).

Here is an interesting list of books:  
<http://www.interleaves.org/~rteeter/grtborges.html>

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Adam Thornton — 01 Jan 2011, 21:57 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 01/01/2011 03:07 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

There is a lot more. I think Wolfe owes much to Borges. David (stockhoff), per our previous discussion and my observations of possible devil/demiurge associations with Ultan (Borges), it may be that Wolfe does this inspired by Borges' own self-assessment (if there is more in his work like #4).

I'm quite sure that:

1) Ultan is meant to be (FSVO) Borges. In fact it's Ultan that convinced me that Nessus was intended to be the future Buenos Aires, because after all how many south-of-the-Equator blind National Librarians can there be?

2) Cyby is the Gary-Stu insertion of Wolfe into the story (thanks to someone--maybe Borski? Maybe someone else? at ReaderCon '98 for pointing this out to me).

3) So of course Ultan is Author-as-Demiurge, and as acknowledged mentor to our actual authorial demiurge. But then I think of BotNS, in some sense, as "What if Borges had written \_The Dying Earth\_?"

Adam

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Lee Berman — 01 Jan 2011, 22:34 · follows Adam Thornton

Adam Thornton: Cyby is the Gary-Stu insertion of Wolfe into the story (thanks to someone--maybe Borski? Maybe someone else? at ReaderCon '98 for pointing this out to me).

I agree. Although...I think it might be more complex. Ultan mentions reading on the 49th floor, overlooking a bed of rosemary; while Wolfe published SotT at age 49 having wife Rosemary. Might be a bit of WOLfe in Ultan also.

I think this is paralleled later. I'm not the only one to find Severian's ostensible Dad, Ouen having a physical description which matches Gene Wolfe's at that time. Master and apprentice combined. Father and son combined. (I won't mention Dionysus, Zeus The OUTsider and Pas at this time. I WON'T!)

So of course Ultan is Author-as-Demiurge, and as acknowledged mentor to our actual authorial demiurge. But then I think of BotNS, in some sense, as "What if Borges had written \_The Dying Earth\_?"

Oh, hell yes. That is just perfect.

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Lee Berman — 01 Jan 2011, 22:38 · follows Lee Berman

Master and apprentice combined. Father and son combined. (I won't mention Dionysus, Zeus The OUTsider and Pas at this time. I WON'T!)

Nor Jesus. Nope sorry.