

Some Gene Wolfe Trivia

The Usenet list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 23 Jan 1984

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donn — 23 Jan 1984, 09:25

Re Borges and Wolfe (Bruce Smith, UNC-Chapel Hill): Here is what Wolfe has to say about Borges:

Like the undines, Baldanders is a giant who is still growing. I took his name from Jorge Luis Borges's THE BOOK OF IMAGINARY BEINGS. It isn't one of Borges's best books, but that has never stopped me from stealing from it disgracefully. (Anyway, second-rate Borges is still very good.) In his article on Baldanders, Borges credits the name to one Hans Sachs (1494-1576) of Nuremberg, then states, 'Some ninety years after Sachs's death, Baldanders makes a new appearance in the last book of the picaresque-fantastic novel by Grimmelshausen, THE ADVENTURESOME SIMPLICISSIMUS (1699).' Were Sachs and Grimmelshausen real? Is there actually a such a book as THE ADVENTURESOME SIMPLICISSIMUS? I have no idea. Borges is capable of making up much better books and authors than anyone can find in libraries; for examples, read 'The Approach to Al Mu'tasim' and 'Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote,' both of which are to be found in his FICCIONES. (If you do not get a copy of that book, if you fail to read those stories, you will never be sure that I am not making up Borges, a literary effort worthy of the Nobel Prize.) [From THE CASTLE OF THE OTTER, pp. 46-47]

Wolfe's final parenthetical remark is of course trying to imply that Borges should get the Nobel Prize for inventing Pierre Menard... I have in fact heard of Grimmelshausen -- readers of John Le Carre may recall that the book which poor George Smiley forgets at the club at the start of TINKER, TAILOR, SOLDIER, SPY is an old edition of Grimmelshausen.

Re THE URTH OF THE NEW SUN (Jeff Duntemann at Xerox, Wombat at UI):

The latest word I have on Wolfe comes from the January LOCUS. The article says that (a) Wolfe has finally quit his job as an editor of PLANT ENGINEERING MAGAZINE and is going to be a full-time writer, (b) he has spent the last year or so writing a new novel entitled FREE LIVE FREE which has not yet been sold to a publisher, and (c) '... I've got the fifth book of the New Sun in first draft, but I haven't done anything on it for months. I plan to pull it out eventually and do the final draft. Comparatively little of the book takes place in the Urth of the Commonwealth. A lot of it takes place in space... The temptation is... to get away from [writing about Urth], because I know the place pretty well and it's time to go and explore a new place.'

Isn't LOCUS wonderful?

On the home front, I gave my younger brother a full set of THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN in

paperback for Christmas, hoping he might like it but without much optimism, and to my surprise when I stayed at his apartment in DC during the Uniforum conference last week, I found that he was well into THE SWORD OF THE LICTOR and apparently enjoying it. When I left he was working on SotL on the couch while his friend was attempting THE SHADOW OF THE TORTURER on a chair. Will wonders never cease?

Reviews for THE MAN IN THE TREE by Damon Knight, COURTSHIP RITE by Donald Kingsbury, SOMERSET DREAMS by Kate Wilhelm, FEVRE DREAM by George Railroad Martin, RIDDLEY WALKER by Russell Hoban, NO ENEMY BUT TIME by Michael Bishop, and others in a later posting.