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Quotes by Burroughs, William S.

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William Seward Burroughs II (February 5, 1914 - August 2, 1997) was an American novelist, essayist, social critic, painter and spoken word performer. Much of Burroughs' work is semi-autobiographical, drawn from his experiences as an opiate addict, a condition which marked the last forty years of his life. He is a primary member of the Beat Generation, and is regarded as an avant-garde author who affected popular culture as well as literature. In 1984, he was elected to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

Desperation is the raw material of drastic change. Only those who can leave behind everything they have ever believed in can hope to escape.

- Burroughs, William S.

Which came first the intestine or the tapeworm?

- Burroughs, William S.

There couldn't be a society of people who didn't dream. They'd be dead in two weeks.

- Burroughs, William S.

Junk is the ideal product... the ultimate merchandise. No sales talk necessary. The client will crawl through a sewer and beg to buy.

- Burroughs, William S.

The face of evil is always the face of total need.

- Burroughs, William S.

I think the ideal situation for a family is to be completely incestuous.

- Burroughs, William S.

Intelligence and war are games, perhaps the only meaningful games left. If any player becomes too proficient, the game is threatened with termination.

- Burroughs, William S.

America is not so much a nightmare as a non-dream. The American non-dream is precisely a move to wipe the dream out of existence. The dream is a spontaneous happening and therefore dangerous to a control system set up by the non-dreamers.

- Burroughs, William S.

America is not a young land: it is old and dirty and evil before the settlers, before the Indians. The evil is there waiting.

- Burroughs, William S.

I think there are innumerable gods. What we on earth call God is a little tribal God who has made an awful mess. Certainly forces operating through human consciousness

control events.

- Burroughs, William S.

In deep sadness there is no place for sentimentality.

- Burroughs, William S.

Humility is indeed beatness, a compulsory virtue that no one exhibits unless he has to.

- Burroughs, William S.

Now what sort of man or woman or monster would stroke a centipede I have ever seen?

And here is my good big centipede! If such a man exists, I say kill him without more ado.

He is a traitor to the human race.

- Burroughs, William S.

Out of the closets and into the museums, libraries, architectural monuments, concert halls, bookstores, recording studios and film studios of the world. Everything belongs to the inspired and dedicated thief... Words, colors, light, sounds, stone, wood, bronze belong to the living artist. They belong to anyone who can use them. Loot the Louver! A bas l'Originality, the sterile and assertive ego that imprisons us as it creates. Vive le sol -- pure, shameless, total. We are not responsible. Steal anything in sight.

- Burroughs, William S.

Most of the trouble in this world has been caused by folks who can't mind their own business, because they have no business of their own to mind, any more than a smallpox

virus has.

- Burroughs, William S.

Language is a virus from outer space.

- Burroughs, William S.

Artists to my mind are the real architects of change, and not the political legislators who implement change after the fact.

- Burroughs, William S.

Black magic operates most effectively in preconscious, marginal areas. Casual curses are the most effective.

- Burroughs, William S.

Anything that can be done chemically can be done by other means.

- Burroughs, William S.

The people in power will not disappear voluntarily, giving flowers to the cops just isn't going to work. This thinking is fostered by the establishment; they like nothing better than love and nonviolence. The only way I like to see cops given flowers is in a flower pot from a high window.

- Burroughs, William S.

There is the pleasurable orgasm, like a rising sales graph, and there is the unpleasurable orgasm, slumping ominously like the Dow Jones in 1929.

- Burroughs, William S.

Nothing exists until or unless it is observed. An artist is making something exist by observing it. And his hope for other people is that they will also make it exist by observing it. I call it creative observation. Creative viewing.

- Burroughs, William S.

No atomic physicist has to worry, people will always want to kill other people on a mass scale. Sure, he's got the fridge full of sausages and spring water.

- Burroughs, William S.

A functioning police state needs no police.

- Burroughs, William S.

They tend to be suspicious, bristly, paranoid-type people with huge egos they push around like some elephantiasis victim with his distended testicles in a wheelbarrow terrified no doubt that some skulking ingrate of a clone student will sneak into his very brain and steal his genius work.

- Burroughs, William S.

Admittedly, a homosexual can be conditioned to react sexually to a woman, or to an old boot for that matter. In fact, both homo -- and heterosexual experimental subjects have

been conditioned to react sexually to an old boot, and you can save a lot of money that way.

- Burroughs, William S.

Man is an artifact designed for space travel. He is not designed to remain in his present biologic state any more than a tadpole is designed to remain a tadpole.

- Burroughs, William S.

So cheat your landlord if you can and must, but do not try to shortchange the Muse. It cannot be done. You can't fake quality any more than you can fake a good meal.

- Burroughs, William S.

This is a war universe. War all the time. That is its nature. There may be other universes based on all sorts of other principles, but ours seems to be based on war and games.

- Burroughs, William S.

Virtue is simply happiness, and happiness is a by-product of function. You are happy when you are functioning.

- Burroughs, William S.

After a shooting spree, they always want to take the guns away from the people who didn't do it. I sure as hell wouldn't want to live in a society where the only people allowed guns are the police and the military.

- Burroughs, William S.

My general theory since 1971 has been that the word is literally a virus, and that it has not been recognized as such because it has achieved a state of relatively stable symbiosis with its human host; that is to say, the word virus (the Other Half) has established itself so firmly as an accepted part of the human organism that it can now sneer at gangster viruses like smallpox and turn them in to the Pasteur Institute.

- Burroughs, William S.

After one look at this planet any visitor from outer space would say I WANT TO SEE THE MANAGER.

- Burroughs, William S.

I feel that any form of so called psychotherapy is strongly contraindicated for addicts. The question Why did you start using narcotics in the first place? should never be asked. It is quite as irrelevant to treatment as it would be to ask a malarial patient why he went to a malarial area.

- Burroughs, William S.

Writing prejudicial, off-putting reviews is a precise exercise in applied black magic. The reviewer can draw free-floating disagreeable associations to a book by implying that the book is completely unimportant without saying exactly why, and carefully avoiding any clear images that could capture the reader's full attention.

- Burroughs, William S.

In mijn schrijven handel ik als een cartograaf, een onderzoeker van psychische ruimtes... een kosmonaut van de innerlijke ruimte en ik zie geen nut in het exploreren van plaatsen die al grondig zijn onderzocht.

- Burroughs, William S.

Taal is een buitenaards virus.

- Burroughs, William S.

Rommel is het ideale product... de ultieme merchandise. De rommelverkoper verkoopt zijn product niet aan de consument, hij verkoopt de consument aan het product. Hij verbetert of simplificeert zijn product niet, hij degradeert en simplificeert de consument.

- Burroughs, William S.



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