

Beastly

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 18 Apr 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3168>

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Tony Ellis — 18 Apr 2002, 10:20

Nutria wrote (of 5HC):

Jerry, also notice that it is a whorehouse, the opposite of the church (Bride of Christ) in the Book of Revelation (The Great Harlot). Thus, 666. Also, the place is guarded by Cerberus who guards the gates of hell. (Anyway, the abode of the antichrist is hell until he appears on earth, when "they want us.")

I can't think of anything in this very secular SF story about family and self that would benefit from having Number Five turn out to be the anti-Christ.

The number 666 is the only explicit link to Revelation, and no one calls it the Number of the Anti-Christ. We call it the Number of the Beast. The Beast, like Cerberus, is many-headed, and that, I think, is the only connection we are supposed to make: that Number Five and his family are a single, many-headed monster.

The evidence that we're supposed to read anything more into this is pretty tenuous. Cerberus guards the entrance to the underworld of Greek mythology, not the Christian hell. Given that classical Greek culture is explicitly name-checked in at least two other places in the story, this just doesn't feel like a Christian signifier.

And does a whorehouse automatically have to be the bride of the anti-Christ? Can't it just be a whorehouse? There are more than a few prostitutes and houses of ill repute in Wolfe's fiction, bless him. If the Maison du Chien had formerly been a church, like the brothel in the Long Sun book, fair enough.

James Jordan — 18 Apr 2002, 14:03 · follows Tony Ellis

At 05:20 AM 4/18/2002, you wrote:

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You may be right, but all of Wolfe's stuff "looks" "very secular." The religious/theological stuff is almost always sub rosa. The "benefit" would only be another overlay of meaning on the story,

one that darkens it even more than it already is.

The number 666 is the only explicit link to Revelation, and no one calls it the Number of the Anti-Christ. We call it the Number of the Beast.

True, but in common Christian theology the Beast is the Antichrist. (This is not my view, but it is the common view.)

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Good point, but commonly this is also antichrist. But if you want to say "not Antichrist but Beast," the thematic element remains, right?

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It does if you're read Dante, where the imagery is conflated. Cerberus appears in Inferno Canto 6. Wolfe is always conflating the two. Severian is both Christ-like and Apollo-like, and this in fact comes from the very earliest Christian imagery in the catacombs.

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Of course a whorehouse can be just that. But given its address, and what I see as other thematic signifiers, the one at 666 RdS is more than that. And you point out the parallel in the Long Sun. Wolfe uses this a lot. Consider that the Italian restaurant in *There Are Doors* represents the Catholic Church. It is very unLupine, IMO, for a whorehouse to be nothing but a whorehouse. And you point out the Beast as 666. Well, in Rev. 17 the Beast rides the back of the Harlot. They are clearly associated in Christian thought.

Wolfe is just using this "zone of imagery" to provide another dark depth to the narrative. But we may have to agree to disagree about this.

Nutria

Jerry Friedman — 18 Apr 2002, 18:01 · follows James Jordan

--- Tony Ellis <LittleSense at necronomicon.co.uk> wrote:
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