

5HC (again)

The Urth list — 11 messages, 8 voices, 22 Aug 2005

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4492>

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Maru Dubshinki — 22 Aug 2005, 22:55

As usual, I've been reading through the archives again; I've noticed that one of the more popular theories for Fifth Head of Cerberus is that the unnamed family is surnamed "Wolfe". I can see the attraction of this, in a novel concerned with identity, and with the only obvious clear clue to the surname the statement "the kids called our house "la maison du chien"" (to quote from memory) in the first novella. But this has a problem with solving as Wolfe. Cerberus is a dog; the three-headed beast is a dog. "Wolfe"=wolfe !=dog != Cerberus/three-headed dog in the front of the mansion. The archives don't tell me how this difficulty was resolved, if it was, or even if it ever came up.

~Maru

Los Arboles Del Frio — 23 Aug 2005, 00:03 · in reply to Maru Dubshinki

And, as far as I can remember, chien means dog. Wolf would be loup. Is my sketchy knowledge of French betraying me?

Chris — 23 Aug 2005, 01:47 · in reply to Los Arboles Del Frio

If I recall correctly we know that the last name begins with a "W", and has some sort of association with "dog". While the original settlers in the system were French-speaking, this particular family is from a later wave, from someplace English-speaking. So if it were a word evocative of dogs, you would expect it to be in English word.

Personally I don't see much importance in this little tidbit, but when I read it "Wolfe" was indeed the first name that came to mind.

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John Barach — 23 Aug 2005, 08:23 · in reply to Maru Dubshinki

Maru writes:

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if it ever came up.

The name of the house is not the only obvious clear clue as to the family surname. We're also told that Number 5's father has written lots of books and that Number 5 looks for them when he visits the library. He clearly expects the books to be in the fiction section, since that's where he's looking, and the last name they're under is in the W section near Virginia Woolf (if I recall correctly).

So we're looking for a last name that is related to the French word "chien" (dog) and begins with a W. There's only one I can think of and that's "wolf." Doesn't Wolfe have an essay somewhere (perhaps in Castle of Days) where he talks about how dogs are just tame wolves?

Furthermore, we're also told that Number 5's aunt is named Jeanette. Given that she's the sister of Number 5's father and that both of them are therefore likely to be clones of the grandfather, the theory is that Number 5's father is probably named "Jean," the French version of John. But pronounced in an English way, "Jean" is homophonic with "Gene."

That, at least, is the theory set forth (again: if I recall correctly) by Robert Borski. Speaking of which, is his Fifth Head website up again yet?

John

<http://www.ontoblogical.com/katajohn>

JWillard — 23 Aug 2005, 11:39 · in reply to John Barach

John Barach wrote:

Maru writes:

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Jeffrey Lefstin — 23 Aug 2005, 12:24 · follows JWillard

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There's a line somewhere, which I think is among the more beautiful GW has penned, that goes something like: "The wolf is God's dog, half-mad with hunger and the memory of His hands upon her head."

don doggett — 23 Aug 2005, 18:41 · in reply to Jeffrey Lefstin

--- Jeffrey Lefstin <jeff.lefstin at stanfordalumni.org>
wrote:

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to the French word
"chien" (dog) and begins with a W. There's only
one I can think of
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just tame wolves?

Besides, loup would be a dead giveaway, ham handed, inelegant, and not like GW at all. They're both canis which is about as close to obvious as he would ever seem to get. And yet vague enough to cause a discussion. All for a little pun. No wonder no one can sort out the big picture. Evil.

Maru Dubshinki — 23 Aug 2005, 21:41 · in reply to JWillard

On 8/23/05, JWillard <aldenweer at charter.net> wrote:

I believe this is one of the few things that Wolfe has actually confirmed in person...but I don't remember where it was right off. Maybe in Strokes, by John Clute...Yeah, here's the quote:

"A member of the class then asked a question about The Fifth Head of Cerberus. Certain clues about the narrator's name seemed to lead in one particular direction, he said. Given these clues, could the narrator's

name really be Gene Wolfe? Gene glanced at the student in mild surprise. "Why of course," he said, as though he were the last person in the world to have a secret."

I thought I read somewhere that chien's predominant meaning was dog, but could also be wolf. But I don't remember for sure...

That quote doesn't actually settle anything. I remember another quote to the effect that Wolfe never actually lies himself. The relevant portion of your nice quote is "could the narrator". Sure he could. He could also be an alien from outerspace who ravishes women as a hobby.

~Maru

Maru Dubshinki — 23 Aug 2005, 21:42 · in reply to Los Arboles Del Frio

On 8/23/05, Los Arboles Del Frio <losarbolesdelfrio at gmail.com> wrote:

And, as far as I can remember, chien means dog. Wolf would be loup. Is my sketchy knowledge of French betraying me?

My thought (and thus problem) exactly.

~Maru

Maru Dubshinki — 23 Aug 2005, 21:45 · in reply to John Barach

On 8/23/05, John Barach <jbarach at telus.net> wrote:

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John

<http://www.ontoblogical.com/katajohn>

All good points: but what does it mean that Number 5 cannot find any books? If Vinge has a volume in the library, definitely Wolfe should as well. Which I feel is a strike against the theory. I like the bit about Jeanette, but can we rely on it? After all, she is Dr. Veil too, is she not? So if her last is not Wolfe like the theory would have, then why should any credence be put in her first name being of significance? Borski's site is still down (or rather up, and not letting anyone in).

~Maru

Jeff Wilson — 25 Aug 2005, 07:46 · in reply to Maru Dubshinki

Maru Dubshinki wrote:

All good points: but what does it mean that Number 5 cannot find any books? If Vinge has a volume in the library, definitely Wolfe should as well. Which I feel is a strike against the theory.

At the time Wolfe wrote the original story, he had not yet published any books to my knowledge. Maitre's books are probably his private volumes of notes on vivisection and theories of how best to take over the world.

I like the bit about Jeanette, but can we rely on it? After all, she is Dr. Veil too, is she not? So if her last is not Wolfe like the theory would have, then why should any credence be put in her first name being of significance?

Veil (that which hides) could easily be an assumed name. She may even have married a Mr. Veil in an attempt to further the planetary takeover plot.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >