

17 megatherians

The Urth list — 11 messages, 7 voices, 19 May 2006

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4598>

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b sharp — 19 May 2006, 01:30

There are theories on why the number 17 might be important as a significant and/or evil number to Gene Wolfe in BotNS. Because Noah's flood happened on 'February' 17? Because Gene Wolf was in the 17th company (or some other military division) in Korea? These aren't compelling to me.

Since the Ascians, the slaves of Erebus, have often been compared to communist/socialist societies (Group of 17, Gang Of Four?), the possibility of a 17 member Politburo as inspiration is appealing. I think there is circumstantial evidence to suggest Wolfe is no fan of communism. But my research suggests the typical politburo membership was 12-15 in the USSR and 7 for the equivalent in China. Why pick 17 to be important?

Now, Abaia and Erebus are clearly the primary megatherians. To me, Abaia with his vast bulk and network of agents might invoke the USSR while Erebus with billions of slaves who all look alike and quote from a book of stock phrases might invoke China. Of course these two nations were the major communist powers in the 70's. Perhaps the other megatherians represent the other established communist nations existing in some degree of collaboration or servitude to the major two at the time of BotNS's writing.

My list of those nations would be Cuba, E. Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania, Mongolia, N. Korea, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos and Burma. 15. + 2.

I know this list is an easy target for the sarcohamphi but, well...the 17 had to come from somewhere and this might be it. Without the New Sun would we have had to add the People's Republic of Baldanders? ugh.

Interesting that Wolfe chose to have the Ascians originate from what is probably the current USA.

-bsharp

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 19 May 2006, 02:29 · follows b sharp

On Fri, 19 May 2006 11:30:11 +1000 b sharp

<bsharporflat at hotmail.com> wrote:

Now, Abaia and Erebus are clearly the primary megatherians.

I've never understood why people assume this. "Megatherians" = "Big animals". Why think of Abaia, Erebus et al as "animals"?

On the other hand, I suppose you could think of the "Group of 17" as composed of 17 individuals each under the control of a different "megatherian". But to me it's a red herring.

Adam Thornton — 19 May 2006, 03:14 · in reply to b sharp

On May 18, 2006, at 8:30 PM, b sharp wrote:

There are theories on why the number 17 might be important as a significant

and/or evil number to Gene Wolfe in BotNS. Because Noah's flood happened on

'February' 17? Because Gene Wolf was in the 17th company (or some other

military division) in Korea? These aren't compelling to me.

It's the number used to mean "infinite" by the Minotaur in the Borges story "The House of Asterion."

"Group of Seventeen" thus becomes "Everyone"--quite literally The Will of The People.

Adam

b sharp — 19 May 2006, 03:27 · follows Adam Thornton

thalassocrat expresses:

I've never understood why people assume this. "Megatherians" = "Big animals". Why think of Abaia, Erebus et al as "animals"?

On the other hand, I suppose you could think of the "Group of 17" as composed of 17 individuals each under the control of a different "megatherian". But to me it's a red herring.

I use the megatherian term as a convention only, is there an alternate term? So Thalassocrat is of the school who feel "they" (is it even 17?) are human?

I profess no strong stance at this juncture. However, Abaia is referred to as "great beast" is he not?

And Wikipedia chimes in with- (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Therian>)

Therian in the English language has two distinct definitions:

-In taxonomy, the term refers to a member of Theria, a subclass of advanced mammals. -In anthropology and in certain psychological/spiritual subcultures, therian refers to a variety of >otherkin who identify with animals or shapeshifters; a person who believes in, possesses some characteristics of, or subscribes to the spiritual or shamanic (not the folkloric) definition of >therianthropy or who belongs to the therianthropy subculture.

ooh I like the idea of Wolfe using of a bit of both of those definitions but that second one..whew! It happens over and over. Is he a genius or what? But I think we are getting somewhere....piece by piece....

-bsharp

Roy C. Lackey — 19 May 2006, 04:43 · follows b sharp

bsharp wrote:

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and 7 for the equivalent in China. Why pick 17 to be important?

Fwiw, according to M.A.-D. in LEXICON URTHUS, "The number seventeen alludes to the Soviet politburo, which typically had seventeen members (eleven to twelve full members and six to nine alternate members)." (p-118)

-Roy

maru dubshinki — 19 May 2006, 05:51 · in reply to Adam Thornton

On 5/18/06, Adam Thornton <adam at io.com> wrote:

On May 18, 2006, at 8:30 PM, b sharp wrote:

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and/or evil number to Gene Wolfe in BotNS. Because Noah's flood happened on

'February' 17? Because Gene Wolf was in the 17th company (or some other

military division) in Korea? These aren't compelling to me.

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Adam

Are you sure about that, Adam? In my Collection Fictions, there are some footnotes and interpolations mentioning that where the translator rendered as "infinite", Borges wrote in the Spanish, "14"- not "17".

~maru

Adam Thornton — 19 May 2006, 06:47 · in reply to maru dubshinki

On May 19, 2006, at 12:51 AM, maru dubshinki wrote:

On 5/18/06, Adam Thornton <adam at io.com> wrote:

On May 18, 2006, at 8:30 PM, b sharp wrote:

There are theories on why the number 17 might be important as a significant

and/or evil number to Gene Wolfe in BotNS. Because Noah's flood happened on

'February' 17? Because Gene Wolf was in the 17th company (or some other

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Adam

Are you sure about that, Adam? In my Collection Fictions, there are some footnotes and interpolations mentioning that where the translator

rendered as "infinite", Borges wrote in the Spanish, "14"- not "17".

Well, that would certainly bugger up my theory.

Um, I'll look tomorrow.

Adam

Adam Thornton — 19 May 2006, 14:20 · in reply to Adam Thornton

On May 19, 2006, at 1:47 AM, Adam Thornton wrote:

On May 19, 2006, at 12:51 AM, maru dubshinki wrote:

Are you sure about that, Adam? In my Collection Fictions, there are some footnotes and interpolations mentioning that where the translator

rendered as "infinite", Borges wrote in the Spanish, "14"- not "17".

Well, that would certainly bugger up my theory.

Um, I'll look tomorrow.

It's 14.

Well, it was a nice theory while it lasted.

I guess that makes more sense: 14 is as high as the Minotaur can count. Ten fingers, two hooves, two horns.

Adam

Jeff Wilson — 20 May 2006, 05:19 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com wrote:

On Fri, 19 May 2006 11:30:11 +1000 b sharp

<bsharporflat at hotmail.com> wrote:

Now, Abaia and Erebus are clearly the primary megatherians.

I've never understood why people assume this. "Megatherians" = "Big animals". Why think of Abaia, Erebus et al as "animals"?

They are "great beasts" with occult power, as Aleister Crowley styled himself on occasion. Abaia and Erebus, being inhuman Things Man Was Not Meant to Know, also count as great beasts in a more literal sense.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com

< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

brunians at brunians.org — 01 Jun 2006, 22:58 · in reply to Adam Thornton

On May 18, 2006, at 8:30 PM, b sharp wrote:

There are theories on why the number 17 might be important ...

It's the number used to mean "infinite" by the Minotaur in the Borges story "The House of Asterion."

No it isn't.

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Adam Thornton — 02 Jun 2006, 02:58 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

On Jun 1, 2006, at 5:58 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:

On May 18, 2006, at 8:30 PM, b sharp wrote:

There are theories on why the number 17 might be important ...

It's the number used to mean "infinite" by the Minotaur in the Borges story "The House of Asterion."

No it isn't.

Well, it *should* be.

My theory would have succeeded, if it weren't for you meddling facts.

Adam