

Fish

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 16 Mar 2012

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6184>

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Lee Berman — 16 Mar 2012, 19:31

David Stockhoff: The fish motif is scattered so far and wide I don't know whether it has specific meaning or a general one. Certainly it has a link to early Christianity's "sign of the fish," which suggests furtiveness, but not necessarily secret or esoteric knowledge. On the other hand, Wolfe is quite familiar with the Nag Hammadi scrolls, where Jesus is clearly shown to withhold plain knowledge from "the people" and reserve it for the apostles.

Aren't all Wolfe motifs scattered far and wide, inhabiting the interstices of the text like white wolves in the Secret House?

True, fish themes are splashed across the Sun Series from B and F's kelpie origin to Scylla to Seawrack to "good fishing!". I agree there is probably a broad general meaning there.

But there's the fish's mouth subset of that. If Typhon and Severian's tete a tete is meant to reference the temptation of Christ, then as surely the fish's mouth is meant to reference the story where Peter is told by Jesus to pay his taxes with a coin he'll find in the mouth of the next fish he catches.

I can't help but think Wolfe's reference to this story points out that while Christ is associated with universal spiritual salvation, Jesus was a guy who made a number of instructive points with simple magic and parlour tricks such as this. Likewise for Severian's life.

Who knows what sign Agia scratched in the dirt?

Well, a certain class or species of Wolfe reader that's who. ;-). The text line is:

?It might have been the snarling face of Jurupari, or perhaps a map, and it was wreathed with letters I did not know.

Now I know there are some readers who get lost in the story and can't escape interpreting the words as though they are really from a not-so-bright young man with a good memory, from a world not really our own. Nothing wrong in that.

But personally, I must also keep in mind that these words are really being produced by a very clever, middle aged man from our own time who is deeply immersed in religion and mythology. Severian may have one thing to say to us, while Wolfe is saying something else, using the same words.

So, we could think Agia has scratched a map (to where?). Or perhaps think it is really something unknowable. Or we could realize that the word "Jurupari" was not likely to have been thrown in there casually.

Learning that a Jurupari is a S.American demon who captures people in his cave- like mouth and is also a cichlid fish which broods eggs in its mouth I must connect it with the star named Fomalhaut (fish's mouth) and the Ouroboros story in which men are swallowed in a cave-like mouth and probably the cave of the man-apes in which some monstrous presence lurks below.

Add the mention of a fishy monster like Abaia who is so large he could easily brood a school of daughter undines in his mouth, and a picture of what Agia was referencing with her drawing becomes, if not perfectly clear, at least a bit more in focus. (I believe this also helps us understand the relationship between The Mother and Seawrack)

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 16 Mar 2012, 20:39 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com>
To: urth at urth.net
Sent: Friday, March 16, 2012 3:31 PM
Subject: (urth) Fish

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I don't know the story but I agree that the juxtaposition must mean something.

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...

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Add the mention of a fishy monster like Abaia who is so large he could easily brood a school of daughter undines in his mouth, and a picture of what Agia was referencing with her drawing becomes, if not perfectly clear, at least a bit more in focus. (I believe this also helps us understand the relationship between The Mother and Seawrack) ??? ??? ??? ? ??? ??? ?

What is it, then? A monstrous mouth? A fish sign, but fully annotated rather than two curved lines? A black hole?

Gerry Quinn — 16 Mar 2012, 21:09 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

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told by Jesus to pay his taxes with a coin he'll find in the mouth of the next fish he catches.

As surely?

- Gerry Quinn