

This little Piggie had roast hus for dinner

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 12 Feb 2001

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Robert Borski — 12 Feb 2001, 15:10

For a long time now, and well before the publication of RTTW, I've been wondering if there might be a connection between Babbie the hus and the blind giant known as Pig. Part of this was based on the similarities of Babbie to Babe, the talking (lower case) pig of cinematic fame; both speak in their own fashion and are of unusual intelligence, and the hus, I always felt, was meant to be seen as porcine. The hus-Pig connection was then further reinforced by GW himself, who told me that hus was actually short for hushog (at least originally), and since the last three letters of this are a perfect synonym for 'pig,' it's somewhat easier to equate the two. And then there's the loving nature of Horn's relationship to both man and beast, each in his own way being a friend and boon companion to Horn while he's on the road and water having his various adventures.

After having read RTTW, I'm now even more convinced that my original supposition is true. Certainly, GW seems to want to suggest this (almost as much as he does the notion that Horn may be an inhumu), so let me take you through the particulars.

[This post also presumes you've read my first two Piggie posts, which argue that Pas's blind son Tartaros has been downloaded into godling Pig.]

A number of times in the narrative both Pig and Babbie are described as having thick black nails. E.g., "[Pig] was standing at the ambion, his thick black nails seeming to stab at its carven sides." And: "Babbie himself simply rose to obey, thick black claws clicking along the deck very much as they used to when the two of us were sole occupants of my little sloop."

In a dream that Horn has, "Pig was seated in the stern, his hand upon the tiller and Oreb on his shoulder." This parallels a scene in OBW where Babbie mans the tiller.

Babbie has grown since his earlier days with Horn, prompting Vadsig to say, "Never a hus so big I see." Compare this with Pig's giant nature.

Pig has no particular bestial features (other than his thick black nails perhaps), but the godling who picks up Horn has "tiny eyes, nostrils like the lairs of two beasts, and a cavernous mouth," plus "bestial, pointed ears." The "tiny eyes" aspects will become more important shortly.

The gods of Mainframe, we are told, can go into animals, and have done so to escape Pas's angry wrath. It seems rather parsimonious of Wolfe to only show one example of this (Scylla as Oreb).

But perhaps the strongest evidence for a Pig-Babbie link comes when Horn goes back to the Red Sun Whorl with Scylla, Hoof, and Juganu. Babbie is present in the boat when they dream-jump, but rather than stay behind as Horn intended, Babbie appears as "a hairy man with thick arms and real big shoulders, and glasses, and a couple of Babbie's eyes (the little ones)." Horn, in fact, does not even recognize him; but the transformation is very similar to the

process that Oreb undergoes in both this and previous jumps. In fact, it was these same transformations that led me earlier to conclude that Oreb was possessed by Scylla--an idea that was roundly dismissed by almost everyone here except mantis. Babbie's hairiness, thick arms, and real big shoulders match up similarly with giant, hirsute Pig. Babbie cannot talk here, but this may be because Horn cannot imagine him so ("Are you really my old master? This was said with Babbie's eyes; it is the only way he has of talking."). But what's really odd and distinctive in the above description are "the glasses" and "Babbie's eyes (the little ones)." This implies, to me, four eyes, which may or may not be an attribute of the Neighbors (similarly the expression, "By Pas's bright four eyes," if you buy my Pas-as-Neighbor theory.) "The little ones" recall the "tiny eyes" of the godling who picked up Horn, and the glasses may well represent on a symbolic--or possibly prosthetic--level how Pig is able to navigate so thoroughly in the dark. Pig claims he can tell what's ahead by feeling it on his "clock," meaning face, but there may be some correlation here between "clock" and "glass." Horn also looks in the dream whorl more like the Horn that Hoof remembers, while Scylla finally assumes her Cilinia form, splitting off from Oreb; I therefore don't think it's unreasonable to argue that the hairy, man-shaped, four-eyed Babbie is more reflective of his truer nature--that of hus + Pig.

Does this mean I believe that Tartaros/Pig has downloaded himself into Pig the same way that Scylla has gone into Oreb? I think this is certainly one valid interpretation. But the theory I prefer is another one that has been roundly dismissed--that Babbie is actually a Neighbor. We do not know if the Neighbors can shape-change, but given that their programmed bio-weapons, the inhumis, can, I don't think it's that big of a stretch to imagine so (they may also be able to bilocate in dreams like the inhumis, and this same pluripresence is seen in the gods of Mainframe). This helps resolve the four-eyed aspect of Babbie's dream avatar, as well as the very curious initial observation that Horn makes about Babbie, who's only half-grown and the size of a large dog, but who at first glance, just before he jumps from Mucor's rock, looks like "a cluster of boys, or two men upon their hands and knees."

But what the heck is Tartaros--if he's either Pig or Babbie, or both--trying to accomplish with all of these outré manifestations?

Stay tuned.

(Note to Adam Stephanides about Pig's cut-out eyes. When Horn looks at where Pig's eyes should be, he sees "Widely-spaced holes like the eyes in the skull stared at nothing." This is not inconsistent with a person born without eyes (as opposed to, say, blindness caused by optic nerve damage). In fact, given one person who was born without eyes and another whose eyes were physically removed, it may not be possible to tell the difference given proper healing time for the latter. But even above and apart from this, look at what Tartaros says at one time in CALDE OF THE LONG SUN: "What your augurs and sibyls see, if they see anything, is the self-image of the god who chooses to be seen." It could be that Tartaros's self-image includes either no eyes or cut-out eyes. He is, after all, as he describes himself, "the only unwilling god," and cannot heal himself--although it's hard to see why his computer-scanned persona couldn't, unless it's written into his programming or forbidden by Pas.)

Robert Borski

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.