

Pas, on disembarking: Howdy Neighbor

The Whorl list — 7 messages, 6 voices, 12 Mar 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1261>

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Robert Borski — 12 Mar 2001, 12:14

Gamemeister Maroney (Unplugged) having asked:

<Why would we believe that Pas is a Neighbor?>

Well, as I've been arguing for some time now, I believe this notion answers more questions than it generates.

For starters, it explains why the Blue-Green system was targeted by the Whorl. Pas/Typhon is simply going home. Doubtless, other habitable systems much closer to Urth could have been targeted, but they haven't--why not? To argue otherwise--that the Whorl arrived at Blue-Green by accident or malfunction--leaves a rather hollow core at the center of the Long Sun series. ("Why did we come here, Silk?" "It appears, students, that the Whorl took a wrong turn at Alpha Centauri. Whoops!") I also find the idea that the Whorl has been programmed to temporarily stop at Blue-Green while it flushes its bilge tanks and reboots untenable because it takes away the impetus for the Mainframe rebellion. As Horn notes, "[Scylla] and her mother and some of Pas's other sprats had tried to kill him because they did not want people leaving the old whorl to come to Blue where they would not be the gods." But if the Whorl's prime directive is as seed ship or long range voyager, why wouldn't Echidna et al still be aboard as its gods? Surely, they don't need the colonists of Blue to worship them if they have other congregants.

Secondly, Pas and the Neighbors both have two heads. Coincidence or plot point? For the most part the twice-normal biology of the Blue-Green systems seems utilized more for exotic color than anything else (love those eight-legged crocodiles of the Nadi). And as for Pas not having multiple limbs, there's evidence that the Neighbors know how to bioengineer shape-shifting in the inhumi, so perhaps Pas knows how to do this himself.

Thirdly, who is the little girl in Hide's dream (RTTW, pgs. 22-24) who is being pursued by the talus-like doll and why are there also "tall men with too many legs" in some of the rooms Hide looks into? Isn't she Scylla, who we know is on the run from Pas? And why would there be Neighbors present? Wolfe's dream sequences are almost always meant to be revelatory.

Fourthly, at one point during IGJ, Horn sings in and translates from Neighborese--and not amateurishly, but well enough so that it completely discombobulates poor Colonel Terzo. When and how did Horn learn the language of the Neighbors? From darling one-armed Seawrack? But isn't Seawrack a minion of the Mother--Greater Scylla's clone on Blue? How, in turn, has Scylla come to learn Neighborese? Personally, I favor the idea that the Pas aspect of PassilkHorn is the one who's providing the translation skills because it's the least complicated. As a Neighbor, he's simply speaking his native tongue.

And these are just off the top of my much-scratched head.

Robert Borski

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

Alex David Groce — 12 Mar 2001, 14:20 · follows Robert Borski

<snipping Robert's Pas-as-neighbor arguments>

Fine and well, but you still haven't dealt with the fact that when Severian meets Typhon in SWORD, Typhon doesn't remotely resemble a Neighbor, in any way, form, or fashion. Indeed, if he's a Neighbor, the grafting of a human's head onto his shoulder seems unlikely in the extreme.

If the only way to arrive at a set of answers in BOTSS is by completely destroying continuity and consistency with BOTNS, my opinion is that those can't be the right answers.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

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Kevin J. Maroney — 12 Mar 2001, 14:33 · follows Alex David Groce

At 12:14 PM 3/12/01 -0600, Mssr. Borski wrote:

<Why would we believe that Pas is a Neighbor?>

Well, as I've been arguing for some time now, I believe this notion answers more questions than it generates.

I don't like any of the answers, frankly.

For starters, it explains why the Blue-Green system was targeted by the Whorl. Pas/Typhon is simply going home. Doubtless, other habitable systems much closer to Urth could have been targeted, but they haven't--why not?

A. We don't know that there are. There's no evidence whatsoever to judge what criteria Typhon used to select the target for the _Whorl_. Personally, I think that habitable planets are few and far between. (Of course, I also believe that planets are an unnecessary luxury.)

B. We don't know that they haven't. There's no textual evidence that the _Whorl_ is the only ship of its type.

Secondly, Pas and the Neighbors both have two heads. Coincidence or plot point?

Pas's second head is artificial. This is explicitly stated in _New Sun_. Typhon doesn't show any evidence of having any other attribute of the Neighbors, including a long nose, an excess of limbs, etc. I wouldn't presume to call something that obvious a "coincidence", but I think that the connection is more subtle than that.

Thirdly, who is the little girl in Hide's dream (RTTW, pgs. 22-24) who is being pursued by the talus-like doll and why are there also "tall men with too many legs" in some of the rooms Hide looks into? Isn't she Scylla, who we know is on the run from Pas? And why would there be Neighbors present? Wolfe's dream sequences are almost always meant to be revelatory.

I don't see any direct link between the presence of Neighbors in Hide's dream and the presence of Scylla.

Fourthly, at one point during IGJ, Horn sings in and translates from Neighbores--and not amateurishly, but well enough so that it completely discombobulates poor Colonel Terzo. When and how did Horn learn the language of the Neighbors? From darling one-armed Seawrack?

Obviously, you are more familiar with the book than I, but I never got the sense that Seawrack was singing in the Neighbors' language, or that Horn had the opportunity to actually learn it from her. It seems equally likely that Horn learned the Neighbors' language from becoming Neighborly himself.

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 12 Mar 2001, 12:45 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

I'll reply to a couple of specific points, but, Robert, it seems to me that this (like much discussion on this list) is a flagrant violation of Ockham's principle, multiplying entities (in this case unsupported hypotheses) with no real need. Nothing you've brought up is inconsistent with Typhon being pretty much what he appears to be in tBotNS.

Specific points:

For starters, it explains why the Blue-Green system was targeted by the Whorl.

Because it had to target some system.

There is no particular reason to suppose that Ty-Pas knew the Neighbors and/or inhumis existed. Nor is there any particular reason to believe that there were other star systems, nearer to Urth, that would serve Typhon's purposes. Note

(1) The timescale; we're talking about a future distant enough that the "neighborhood" will have changed.

(2) We don't entirely know what Typhon's purposes are.

(3) Given (2), we can't say for certain what would serve them -- for example, he may have wanted a certain minimum distance from Urth (because, e.g., nearer stars were already colonized, or were being monitored by Hierodules and the like to prevent human "infection").

Finally, there is no real reason to assume that Typhon himself actually picked the target! He's a tyrant; he wouldn't do something like this for himself. He'd say "I want a system with these characteristics," and tell someone else to find it. (We know he had some boffins he trusted, or he'd never have submitted to the Incredible Two-Headed Man surgery.)

[deletia]

Pas and the Neighbors both have two heads. Coincidence or plot point?

Or maybe just Wolfian obsession. He likes multiple heads. Cerberus and all that, neh?

--Dan'l

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James Jordan — 12 Mar 2001, 16:45 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

At 12:14 PM 3/12/2001 -0600, Scratched Two-Headed Borski wrote:
Gamemeister Maroney (Unplugged) having asked:

<Why would we believe that Pas is a Neighbor?>

Well, as I've been arguing for some time now, I believe this notion answers more questions than it generates.

I'll take the opposite view. More problems than answers.

1. Typhon has a human wife and human children and a human lover, no?
 - 1a. They are wife/lover/children of his first body, therefore he's human.
 - 1b. They are wife/lover/children of his second, grafted body; so maybe he wasn't human to begin with.
 - 1c. This is not Wolfe but Star Trek, and humans intermarry with aliens all the time!!!!
2. Typhon's original head is not said, from my memory, to have any unusual characteristics that might make us think it was a Neighbor head. Okay, Wolfe dreamed up the Neighbors later on, but in that case we'd expect Pas to be described as having one weird head. Don't recall any such thing.
3. I cannot recall evidence that Neighbors have two heads. Neither Babbie nor any of the other indigenous lifeforms of Blue do, do they? Have I forgotten something here? Even if they do, my other arguments still stand (for me, today).
 - 3a. It's simpler, for me today, to think that Pas has two heads because by the time the Whorl was sent, Typhon's original body had died and he'd grafted his head onto the second human body.
4. If Typhon wanted to Do Something About The Inhumis, why weren't the armies of taluses and chems the first ones on board of the landers? They'd be the Marines, sent in to clean up Green and Blue, not only because they are soldiers but also because they'd be immune to the inhumis. That does not happen, and remember that Pas is alive and well by the time the landers are sent to implement the Plan of Pas.
 - 4a. Okay, the Whorl arrives, and Pas learns that the Neighbors have gone. Well, all the more reason to send in the chems and taluses to clean up the inhumis before the human settlers arrive, or in tandem with them.
 - 4b. Okay, Pas did not realize the inhumis would prey on the humans, because he was asleep when they came aboard the Whorl and was not aware that they could. Well, he found out later on that the inhumis were preying on humans, if not before, then from Horn; but probably as soon as he resurrected and chatted with his sons and daughters. So why not send in the chems then?
5. Well, maybe Typhon/Pas HATED the Neighbors, and the chems and taluses were to fight the Neighbors. When he learned they were gone, he kept the robot armies on the Whorl.
 - 5a. That means Typhon is either a Rogue Neighbor who hates the other Neighbors, or a human. I much favor the latter, for the reasons given above.

Now, I'm game to the suggestion that Typhon knew about the Neighbor system, and sent the Whorl there first. Humans have been in space for a long time, and surely this system was known, in which case Typhon selected it for some reason. But given the presence of aliens on Urth, he could have done so for other reasons, perhaps:

- (a) He knew that the Neighbors were vacating these planets, and thus that they were ripe for colonists.
- (b) He had a deal with the Neighbors; but in that case, why not

sent in the chems and taluses?

(c) He hated the Neighbors and wanted to take over their homeworlds. I favor (a).

Well, in terms of (a), why didn't Pas send in the Robot Armies to wipe out the inhumi? That's a good question. At this point, I can only assume that the Plan of Pas means humans must fend for themselves. Which carries this corollary: That the robots are only for the Whorl, and the Whorl was planned all along to make more than one stop.

Patera One-headed Nutria

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Kevin J. Maroney — 12 Mar 2001, 19:02 · follows James Jordan

At 04:45 PM 3/12/01 -0600, Nutria wrote:

Well, in terms of (a), why didn't Pas send in the Robot Armies to wipe out the inhumi? That's a good question. At this point, I can only assume that the Plan of Pas means humans must fend for themselves. Which carries this corollary: That the robots are only for the Whorl, and the Whorl was planned all along to make more than one stop.

"What was Typhon's purpose in launching the Whorl and was the Blue/Green system the intended destination?" Knowing Typhon as I do, he probably had at least half a dozen purposes; but certainly one of the chief must have been self-aggrandizement -- to return human kind to the stars would be a very great thing indeed. Yes, the Blue-Green system was the intended destination. <...> Typhon did not know about the inhumi [and] would have done everything possible to keep them out of the Whorl if he had.

--Gene Wolfe, 14 Jun 1997 <<http://www.urth.net/whorl/archives/v0006/0350.shtml>>

I suppose it's possible to assume that Typhon was a Neighbor and came to Urth as its conqueror but somehow didn't know about the inhumi. But that seems to be stretching credulity to support a theory which doesn't provide interesting answers to any questions.

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Adam Stephanides — 12 Mar 2001, 21:59 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

on 3/12/01 12:14 PM, Robert Borski at rborski at charter.net wrote:
there's evidence that the Neighbors know how to bioengineer
shape-shifting in the inhumi

Where? Not in Chapter 23 of IGJ, where Horn gives Hide the lesson on the inhumi and the Neighbors.

Fourthly, at one point during IGJ, Horn sings in and translates from Neighborese--and not amateurishly, but well enough so that it completely discombobulates poor Colonel Terzo. When and how did Horn learn the language of the Neighbors? From darling one-armed Seawrack? But isn't Seawrack a minion of the Mother--Greater Scylla's clone on Blue? How, in turn, has Scylla come to learn Neighborese? Personally, I favor the idea that the Pas aspect of PassilkHorn is the one who's providing the translation skills because it's the least complicated. As a Neighbor, he's simply speaking his native tongue.

I may be missing something again, but I don't see the problem here. The Mother is a goddess of the Neighbors; why wouldn't she have been able to learn their language and teach it to Seawrack? And Seawrack could have taught Horn enough to translate the few lines he does (there's no need to assume it's an impromptu translation; he could have heard the same song in the boat with Seawrack).

--Adam

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