

Let's all sing w/ the Neighbors!

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 12 Mar 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1263>

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Robert Borski — 12 Mar 2001, 15:01

Skeptical Kevin M. having peed on my Pas-as-Neighbor speculations:

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.)>

The other Blue-Green tandem in Wolfe's universe--Sainte Anne and Sainte Croix--are only twenty years out from Earth. And Wolfe's universe does seem to exhibit some continuity, especially if you accept certain notions such as the ghoulish bear of Sainte Anne is Urth's alzado. So I find it unlikely that the next likeliest pair of habitable planets is 15X over the distance from Earth to the worlds of Fifth Head. Like you, I agree about the unlikelihood of close habitable planets, but this is Wolfe's idea-space, not ours.

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?<<

<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.>

Nope, you're wrong. Here's the exact quote from IGJ, p. 266-267:

"Sing song," Oreb suggested, and I did, following Seawrack's own intonation and pronunciation to the best of my very limited ability. The lapping of the waves was in her song, and the eerie cry of the seabirds, and the lonely whistling of the wind.

"That is in the language of the Neighbors, whom you call the Vanished People."

Then two paragraphs later Horn adds:

"Seawrack is singing in that place that lays beyond this place. Listen there, and you cannot help but hear her." With her I sang a few more words in the language of those whom Mora had once called The People of That Town.

So once again I ask: how have Horn and Seawrack learned to sing in the language of the Neighbors?

Robert Borski

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

James Jordan — 12 Mar 2001, 16:49 · follows Robert Borski

At 03:01 PM 3/12/2001 -0600, Borski, whose missives are GREAT and challenging, challenges:

So once again I ask: how have Horn and Seawrack learned to sing in the language of the Neighbors?

I propose a scenario. We know that the Neighbors visited the Whorl when it came in-system, and delivered inhumani there. I don't recall if this plays into the Revolt Against Pas or not. Let us assume Pas was still alive. He'd've learned the Neighbor language from the Neighbors, and then Horn would have gotten it from his experiences on the Whorl (a Silk download, if that's what happened). Pas's family would have learned the Neighbor language at the same time, being all one big computer after all, and Seawrack from Mother from Echidna (?).

Patera Nutria

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