

Heads; Scylla; Four Eyes

The Whorl list — 7 messages, 5 voices, 13 Mar 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1270>

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Robert Borski — 13 Mar 2001, 12:13

First up, re the Neighbors having two heads: of course, I misread my own argument from my original post about Pas-as-alien ("Typhon's Home: Pas as Neighbor," Vol. 11). What I failed to notice in my haste to post was the following parenthetical aside I made, where I actually get things right: "Both Typhon and the Neighbors bear doubled body parts (heads vs. limbs)." I now stand eagerly corrected and my thanks to the legion of you who pointed out the error of my ways.

Alex Groce then having written:

<(*) Well, she's her "sister." I take it that Abaia, Erebus, Scylla, etc. are all definitely space-travelers. So if it is a common language that's the issue here, they might have both learned Neighbor from their "Fodor's Blue/Green System for Great Old Ones" or Neighbor may be linguistically derived from the tongue of the Space Monsters.>

I agree with you about Abaia and Erebus being space travelers, but the Scylla you're talking about is not from beyond Urth, she's Pas's daughter Cilinia, who's secretly joined the undersea cabal pre-launch. As Horn tells us near the end of RETURN, talking about Oreb/Scylla, "The Scylla we see is no more than a sketch of the original Scylla, of the daughter of the tyrant who assumed the name Typhon, the daughter who had pledged herself in secret to one of the gods of the Short Sun Whorl that would in time become our Red Sun Whorl. It was a a form of treason, of rebellion against her father." It's this Scylla (the "Greater") who's apparently left behind when young Cilinia/Scylla is scanned into the Whorl's computers (the same way Typhon-Piaton is). I'm therefore not sure she's ever had the chance to travel widely on a galactic basis, nor how she's able to explain to Horn how to contact the Mother, who, we know (because of Seawrack's ring and otherwise) is allied with the Neighbors. I doubt that your theory about Neighbor being the lingua franca of the Great Lords is correct.

Interesting to note how Cilinia's rebelliousness carries over into her Mainframe avatar, and perhaps she is even the instigator of the revolt.

Insect-eyed blattid subsequently opining:

<But you are quite right about Babbie (and thus presumably other Bluvian critters, including the Neighbors) having four eyes. This fits the general theme -- elephants with eight legs & two trunks, etc.>

Kinda makes you wonder how this works with, er, a creature's more fun parts, don't it?

Also: I'm still waiting for someone to explain Babbie's spectacles. No takers?

Robert Borski

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

Alex David Groce — 13 Mar 2001, 14:28 · follows Robert Borski

Robert wrote:

I agree with you about Abaia and Erebus being space travelers, but the Scylla you're talking about is not from beyond Urth, she's Pas's daughter Cilinia, who's secretly joined the undersea cabal pre-launch. As Horn tells us near the end of RETURN, talking about Oreb/Scylla, "The Scylla we see is no more than a sketch of the original Scylla, of the daughter of the tyrant who assumed the name Typhon, the daughter who had pledged herself in secret to one of the gods of the Short Sun Whorl that would in time become our Red Sun Whorl. It was a form of treason, of rebellion against her father." It's this Scylla (the "Greater") who's apparently left behind when young Cilinia/Scylla is scanned into the Whorl's computers (the same way Typhon-Piaton is). I'm therefore not sure she's ever had the chance to travel widely on a galactic basis, nor how she's able to explain to Horn how to contact the Mother, who, we know (because of Seawrack's ring and otherwise) is allied with the Neighbors. I doubt that your theory about Neighbor being the lingua franca of the Great Lords is correct.

Several points here. It's not really my theory that Neighbor is their language. I am unconvinced that the "how to communicate with..." is about teaching a language at all. I'm thinking more the equivalent of a summoning method.

Also, unless I am mistaken, you're mixing up Scyllas, or perhaps your theory conflates them more than is needed. In my opinion, Great Scylla is a Abaia/Erebus type monster, on Urth prior to Cilinia's birth. Cilinia takes this creature's name as part of her treason. The original Scylla is NOT the daughter of the tyrant, but the space monster. The daughter of the tyrant (as you even say above) betrays Daddy by going over to the creature's side.

It is this Great Scylla, who is not Pas's daughter or her scanned image, that I am talking about knowing this language. I think this Scylla is quite plausibly a space traveler. I don't see any evidence for the idea that young Cilinia becomes the monster herself (she betrays Daddy by going over to her future self's side? Not utterly ridiculous, given that time travel is possible here, but still not even remotely supported.) The real Cilinia is buried in a tomb that her astral self eventually goes to also, rather than roaming the seas with her siren spawn.

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

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James Jordan — 13 Mar 2001, 21:47 · follows Alex David Groce

At 12:13 PM 3/13/2001 -0600, you wrote:

Also: I'm still waiting for someone to explain Babbie's spectacles. No takers?

Robert Borski

Nonono! We want YOU to explain it. And then we'll leap upon you like arctothurs and shred you to pieces.

Nutria (Slavering, Drooling Rat)

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James Jordan — 13 Mar 2001, 22:39 · follows James Jordan

At 09:47 PM 3/13/2001 -0600, I wrote:

At 12:13 PM 3/13/2001 -0600, you wrote:

Also: I'm still waiting for someone to explain Babbie's spectacles. No takers?

Robert Borski

Nonono! We want YOU to explain it. And then we'll leap upon you like arctothurs and shred you to pieces.

Nutria (Slavering, Drooling Rat)

Well, to be NICE about it, I just thought that since Babbie is appearing as a human being, the only way his four eyes could be expressed was as a man with glasses, which people are called "four-eyes" in American slang, and I thought Wolfe was just making a bit of a joke.

Nice Nutria, who started being "Old Four-Eyes" at about the age of 45.

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William Ansley — 13 Mar 2001, 23:49 · follows James Jordan

At 12:13 PM -0600 3/13/01, Robert Borski wrote:

Also: I'm still waiting for someone to explain Babbie's spectacles. No takers?

It's a joke!

As you quoted in an earlier message:

At 11:19 PM -0600 3/12/01, Robert Borski wrote:

"Our boat was water, and Babbie was a hairy man with thick arms and real big shoulders, and glasses, and a couple of Babbie's eyes (the little ones)."

Babbie has more than two eyes, that's plain. It is consistent with the "doubling" of other parts of Bluvian creatures (thanks Blattid) that Babbie has four eyes. A man wearing glasses also has "four eyes."

I am sure this has occurred to all of you but you thought, "This can't be what Wolfe really intends here!" Well, I think it is what he intends. Anyone who can put a scene where Puss-in-Boots kills Mickey Mouse* into _The Fifth Head of Cerberus_ (even if it is a hallucination) is capable of anything.

*Yes, I will provide a reference for this scene, if anyone asks me to.

William Ansley

PS. Hmmm... Babbie has four (or possibly more) eyes of different sizes, eight limbs and is

covered with bristles. Is Blue the planet of the giant arachnids?

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 14 Mar 2001, 07:53 · follows William Ansley

Also: I'm still waiting for someone to explain Babbie's spectacles. No takers?

It's a joke!

What them guys said. Sometime I think I'll have to do a miniarticle on Lupine humor -- there's a LOT of it, but it's usually subtle and often goes unnoticed until the fifth or so reading. (This kind of "analysis" can bring it out sooner, tho'.)

Wolfe's humor reminds me, more than a little, of the subtler death jokes in the ALICE books, as when Alice, falling down the rabbit hole, remarks that "after a fall like this, I shall think nothing of a tumble down the stairs. In fact, if I fell off the roof, I should say nothing at all" -- to which the narrator adds, "Which was probably true; or as when, being advised by Humpty-Dumpty that she should have stopped (aging) at six, she remarks "One can't, you know," and Humpty-Dumpty: "One can't, perhaps, but I daresay with the right help you could have managed it." [All quotes by memory & probably misworded but accurate as to intent.]

Anyway, that sort of thing, where you don't necessarily catch it on the first or even third reading but suddenly it hits you WHAM and you find yourself giggling embarrassingly.

Bluvian creatures (thanks Blattid)

Well, it was that or "Bluish," and that's already taken by the arch-enemies of Pepperland.

*Yes, I will provide a reference for this scene, if anyone asks me to.

Okay, I'm asking.

--Dan'I

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William Ansley — 15 Mar 2001, 22:27 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

At 7:53 AM -0800 3/14/01, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote:

> *Yes, I will provide a reference for this scene, if anyone asks me to.

Okay, I'm asking.

Here is the passage, courtesy of Adam Stephanides, quoted from the Urth archives:

Later. For a moment I thought I saw my cat flying like a shadow in the dark, and I wondered if she were really dead, though I broke her neck. The day before I found the burial cave for him, she brought me a little animal and laid it at my feet. I told her that she was a good cat and could eat it herself, but she only said, "My master, the Marquis of Carabas, sends you greetings." And disappeared again. The little animal had a pointed snout and round ears, but its teeth were the even, biting teeth of a human being, and it smiled in its agony.

It is on p. 247 of the Orb paperback edition, very near the end of the book.

Here is some of what Adam and I said about it back in June 1998.

Adam:

1) I take it this is a dream or hallucination, since even if the cat is an Annese, there's no reason for her to be quoting "Puss in Boots."

Me:

To me, at least, the little animal is obviously Mickey Mouse (or possible one of the other, similar cartoon mice with pointed snouts, round ears and square human teeth). Wolfe definitely has Mickey on his mind from time to time; witness the story "Three Fingers" in The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories and Other Stories.

So, I think this passage is, more or less completely, a joke.

Hmmmm. I guess I think everything Wolfe writes is a joke. Hey, now I've got a new hypothesis!

William Ansley

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