

Keeping Up With the Neighbors

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 25 Mar 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1286>

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Talarican — 25 Mar 2001, 22:43

Some thoughts on these Vanished People / Neighbors.

First of all, they seem to be tall, eight-legged arthropods, i.e. spider-people. When the Neighbor "Horn" offered Horn his hand, it was hard and bristly, as one might expect an insect or spider's paw to be. The impression of the "dark cloak" could perhaps have been intended to suggest an abdomen? When Horn first saw one, from the pit, he did in fact believe it could have been a huge spider.

It would appear they probably aren't dead, but have stepped into some sort of extradimensional netherworld (the Corridors of Time? The Brook Madregot? Some dimension beyond the specula?) from which they might occasionally appear dimly, wraithlike, able to interact with their former homes and inhabitants, but safe from the inhum. Horn was told "you cannot go where we are", but surely the humans could follow the Neighbors into Death, if that's what happened. While they seem to have certain similarities with some other Good Beings in Wolfe, particularly the Hierodules, they seem unlike anything ever mentioned in the New Sun cycle.

One of their powers seems to be an ability to project feelings and emotions telepathically, to make others feel comfortable or uncomfortable in their presence or former dwellings. They obviously approved strongly of Horn, who felt so good and welcome in their presence he thought he would gladly clean their sewers for the rest of his life. Poor Barsat, OTOH, was not liked by them, for whatever reason, and felt repellent fear and menace in their presence. In that respect, I am rather reminded of the Mule from Asimov's _Foundation Trilogy_, or the Celtic-deity-aliens from Julian May's Pleistocene Exile cycle.

One would think that this ability would give them instant recognition and rapport with one another. The inhum can deceive humans with their shape-changing and color camouflage because humans are so daylight sight-oriented, whereas animals which are more smell/sound or night vision oriented, such as horses and night choughs, are not fooled by inhum masquerading as humans. I must wonder whether the inhum could in fact convincingly masquerade as the Neighbors' kind, if they presumably lacked this telepathic emotion projection ability, and if so, how. Could the inhum acquire this ability by drinking a Neighbor's blood?

They also remind me in some ways of the Shadow Children and Old Wise One of 5HC: They are spectral, difficult to see and count, and seem to love philosophical speculation. Also, they used the term "starcrosser" at the end of _Green's_, the first use of that term I've seen outside 5HC.

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

j e — 27 Mar 2001, 12:21 · follows Talarican

I am unliking because I must. I enjoyed The Book of the Protagonist so much I keep going back and rereading certain parts, especially the scenes with the Neighbours which are so fascinating.

Talarican had some interesting thoughts:

From: "Talarican" <exultnttalarican at mindspring.com>
Subject: Keeping Up With the Neighbors
Date: Sun, 25 Mar 2001 22:43:15 -0500

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I can see spiders also, although Horn never mentions a connection when speaking of the giant spiders on Green. (Don't have a copy for reference, but it's in Horn's second story to Inclito's family IGJ) I don't know what to make of the fact that the Neighbour said his name was also Horn. The only (I think) other Neighbour name we read is Windcloud (pg 231 RTTW), which I associate with Pas' image. Windcloud fits with the elemental nature of the Neighbours and Horn seems to serve them in that he's _real_ on Blue or Green.

Incidentally, I've got to look into legends based of Tierra del Fuego, Horn calls the place where he first meets Neighbour Horn the _land of fires_ - my next post.

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Horn, you'll remember wrote in "My Defense" (Exodus) that some thought his book should have been called _Starcrosser's Landfall_. It's interesting that a Neighbour would choose this word and not Lander, which Horn uses. (The two words may both be common in the way some Bluvians say Vanished People, while some say Neighbours). The _crosser_ in starcrosser may be an homage to Quadrifons I suppose. Even the Inhumi say Crossing when speaking of the jumping of planets at conjunction.

Now a small question. In LS, the span of Quetzal's time as _Prolocuter_ (note Jahlee's comment that inhumi catch their prey with their tongues as someone pointed out on this list) is something like 30 years. The first meeting of Vatican II was in 1962, thirty years before the publication of NStLS. There are clearly parallels with the Prolocutor and the Pope. Quetzal's prothonotary is named Bull, for one. One of the decisions made at Vatican II was to allow the Mass to be said in the common tongue (if you will). When exactly did Viron lose it's high speech? Did any of you read recently about the exhumation of Pope JohnXXIII recently? His face was said to be remarkably _composed_ for a man long dead. I could'nt help putting this together with Whorlly things. (Is World the past tense of Whorl?)

Before I finish, one more thing,
Was Uncle Gene referring to this list when he wrote of Pig's name choice?(pg. 45 RttW).

I'll take the name Crateowl.