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The Whorl list — 8 messages, 6 voices, 31 Oct 1998

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Kieran Mullen — 31 Oct 1998, 17:26

From: "Greg Neyman" <Greg.Neyman at gte.net>
Subject: what's up with hy? ... plus building fusion reactors
Date: Thu, 29 Oct 1998 20:45:48 -0800

[deletia]

Anyhoop, I've always wondered about Hy ... I mean, Silk is a sophisticated, mild-mannered clergyman, and Hy, is basically still a fourteen years old girl, and not a well educated one at that ... every time the two interacted, starting with the "wee flea" letter, I got this sensation in the pit of my stomach, reminiscent of the one I get when people scratch their fingernails across a chalk board ... basically, I could never shake the idea that the two were ALL wrong for each other ...

Well, she is beautiful and passionate, a combination that is pretty attractive. If you want a more literary interpretaion, I figured that it was related to the allegory of the church as the bride of Christ which is also tied up with Mary Magdelene imagery ("whoring after false gods" sort of thing). Silk is a redemptive figure (though not exactly Christic) and Hy seemed to me to be the worldly person who is loved, for all of their faults and failings. Certainly Silk is on a mission to save her - especially at the very end of the book.

I'm still not sure I understand the change in Silk that takes place after he and Hy sleep together and he has a second illumination from the Outsider. (It's also been a while since I read that part.) Silk certainly seems changed to me. But the storyline also seems to get murkier.

[deletia]

Finally, a mil plus years after all of us are dust ... why are people STILL speaking English? (or is it explained in Urth, in which case, don't ruin it for me ...)

Didn't you read "Heh-asugh !ktungari" in the original? Or did you read its English translation, "Nightside the Long Sun"? ;-)

Kieran Mullen

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

Greg Neyman — 31 Oct 1998, 22:41 · follows Kieran Mullen

Thanks everyone for responding to my questions ... here goes ...

Rostrum -

Chems must be able to access this information ... it's not like they shove the raw material in one end of them, and little chems come out (like bios) ... they've gotta assemble all the stuff themselves, by hand ... it's true that each has only half the plans, but if a rich person wanted

fusion packs, all he'd have to do is take a male and female chem, and ask them to build fusion packs for him. If they were building a child, they'd get to that step eventually.

Hey, something just occurred to me ... Hammerstone mentions on many occasions that chems don't eat at all ... even potto says that, when alluding to the fact that his tunnel army can go a long time on little supplies cuz most of them are chems ... but even fusion packs don't run forever ... energy has to be input at some time ... I refuse to believe that Maytera Marble, of Moly, or whatever her name is, who's lived for 300 years, is still running on original fuel.

Thoughts?

Thank you Keiran for replying to my question bout Hy ... as for English, two things ... first of all, as Ranjit points out, French and Latin are mentioned BY name .. second, poetic effects like puns and deliberate alliteration (Overseeing Outsider, marvelous molpe, etc) are bound to the language they originated in, and would be lost in translation. Plus note the use of shag as their "f" word, a throwback of British English.

that's it for now ...

/\\ Greg Neyman Greg.Neyman at gte.net

___/______ <http://www.trailerpark.com/siesta/thehat/>

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

Alex David Groce — 01 Nov 1998, 10:50 · follows Greg Neyman

Greg Neyman wrote:

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that's it for now ...

Hmmm... But, unless we assume that the people of the future are ALSO speaking British slang that's no longer used in 1999, we have to assume that the whole thing is a translation, and that slang terms, puns, etc. are analagous to the original (although, of course, really non-existent because Wolfe wrote it in English, but means it to be a translation of a fictional book) ones. This can be done, although it's very hard (see Douglas Hofstadter's *Le Ton Beau de Marot* for a beautiful book on translation issues, such as these, although I don't recall him really getting into the issue of translations of fictional books...)

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

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

Matthew Malthouse — 01 Nov 1998, 20:35 · follows Alex David Groce

Greg Neyman wrote:

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Tolkien, in his exposition upon the Common Tounge and the languages of Middle Earth, says that he uses English to _represent_ the Common Tounge and as such names like Merriadoc, Samwise and Brandywine/Branduin have been changed to "work" rather than leave them in the "original". I haven't got a copy but the "real" names are given.

I've usually taken this to be a reasonable way of looking at much fantasy/sf so that the language doesn't intrude. It certainly covers the alliterative phrases in Whorl and the French & Latin as "analogue foreign/ancient languages in Urth.

Matthew

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Michael Straight — 02 Nov 1998, 08:43 · follows Matthew Malthouse

On Sat, 31 Oct 1998, Greg Neyman wrote:

Rostrum -

Chems must be able to access this information ... it's not like they shove the raw material in one end of them, and little chems come out (like bios) ... they've gotta assemble all the stuff themselves, by hand ... it's true that each has only half the plans, but if a rich person wanted fusion packs, all he'd have to do is take a male and female chem, and ask them to build fusion packs for him. If they were building a child, they'd get to that step eventually.

I guess I'm imagining that a male and female get together and start making the little chem and go into an different mode of consciousness, after which they couldn't really tell you what they did or how they did it. All part of Typhon's plan to keep technology out of the wrong hands.

And OF COURSE they would demand privacy.

-Rostrum

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Alex David Groce — 02 Nov 1998, 11:53 · follows Michael Straight

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And OF COURSE they would demand privacy.

Yes. Clearly the whole system has been designed by Typhon to keep useful technology out of the cargo's hands--not that Typhon did such a hot job... It's easy to imagine a program that the Chems can run but can't consciously access--they can "do it", but are made so they can't figure out how they do it. I mean, people can have kids, but for most of history, if you'd taken two people aside and said--"When you have sex and out comes a kid, how does that work? I'm thinking of using hearts for power packs on my new catapults," well you get the picture.

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

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Derek Bell — 04 Nov 1998, 21:10 · follows Alex David Groce

In message <199811021653.IAA28654 at lists1.best.com>, Alex David Groce writes:

Yes. Clearly the whole system has been designed by Typhon to keep useful technology out of the cargo's hands--not that Typhon did such a hot job...

I think Typhon had more than one motive for giving the cargo lower tech - control is the obvious one, but it might also give them an advantage if things go badly on the destination planet. A lot of knowledge and skills that were relatively common a century or two ago (horseriding, blacksmithing) are scarcer now. They still exist, but if some emergency occurred that wiped out the infrastructure (a large, protracted non-nuclear war), it would take longer to get back to the level of technology than if the skills hadn't been cultivated.

Put it another way, the Amish *may* be Y2K insurance policy! :-)

It's easy to imagine a program that the Chems can run but can't consciously access--they can "do it", but are made so they can't figure out how they do it.

Put it another way - describe how to walk - in detail. Now try to build a two-legged robot that walks like a human.

I mean, people can have kids, but for most of history, if you'd taken two people aside and said--"When you have sex and out comes a kid, how does that work? I'm thinking of using hearts for power packs on my new catapults," well you get the picture.

;-) I have this image of sex manuals for chems - or would that be in firmware?

Tercel

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Derek Bell — 04 Nov 1998, 20:56 · follows Derek Bell

In message <199811011551.HAA06589 at lists1.best.com>, Alex David Groce writes:

Hmmm... But, unless we assume that the people of the future are ALSO speaking British slang that's no longer used in 1999, we have to assume that the whole thing is a translation, and that slang terms, puns, etc. are analagous to the original (although, of course, really non-existent because Wolfe wrote it in English, but means it to be a translation of a fictional book) ones. This can be done, although it's very hard (see Douglas Hofstadter's *Le Ton Beau de Marot* for a beautiful book on translation issues, such as these, although I don't recall him really getting into the issue of translations of fictional books...)

You've reminded me of a metaphor that Hofstadter used in one of his books (I forget which). Translation can be thought of as like crossing a river on stepping stones. Here's a diagram: (This is using a non-proportional font)

o X s

X o s

X s

o

X s

X o s

Imagine the "X"s as representing the spirit of a text to be translated. The "o"s represent words that are close in sense, but that have a different spirit. Meanwhile, there are stones further along the river ("s"s) that have a closer spirit, but a spirit "parallel" to the original.

I agree entirely with Alex that it's very hard to translate text that relies a lot on puns, allusions and other wordplay: some philosophers, such as Heidegger[1], Nietzsche & Derrida[2] have been difficult to translate because of this.

Derek

[1]Hmmmm... the 3 philosophers I've chosen are all controversial.

[2]I know there's a huge controversy over whether Derrida's a philosopher or merely a sophist with a big following, but his writings do seem to rely on a lot of wordplay, which made, for example, *_Glas_* difficult to translate because of French puns ("Hegel" & "eagle") which don't translate well

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