

Brain back

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 09 May 1999

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Gordon Brain — 09 May 1999, 21:35

Here's another one for the Canting Crew, i.e. anyone else who's been baffled but fascinated by the patter of the Vironese criminal classes.

Having come across a new dictionary, I thought I'd have another look at Mantis's booklet LS-2, Languages Of The Short Sun Whorl, to see if could plug a few of the remaining gaps.

Here's what I came up with, mostly courtesy of: The Cassell Dictionary Of Slang, by Jonathan Green, 1998 (abbreviated JG below).

Brick - "a reliable, kind, selfless person, mid-19C+" (JG)

Buy him rope - sense: provide enough evidence to convict or condemn (c.f. the old saying: 'give him enough rope and he'll hang himself')

Candy - "of a job, easy, undemanding, 'soft' 1930s+" (JG)

Card in a cart - sense of: I can afford to be generous, the cost will be relatively low compared to our overall takings (as Orchid ups her offer, mistaking Silk's shocked speechlessness for him expecting more). From: Card as in Whorl currency Cart as in "Cart-Load - many, a great quantity, esp. of a desirable commodity, late 16C-late 18C" (JG) (c.f. "in for a penny, in for a pound")

Dog's Right - two possibilities?:

rhyming slang for "a night"

or it may be related to "Dog's Rig - sexual intercourse taken to exhaustion, followed by mutual disinterest, late 18C" (JG)

Flipper - "the hand or arm, mid-19C+" (JG)

Flue - "the anus, 20C" (JG)

Hanger - not slang, this is Standard English for a "short sword, orig. hung from belt" (OED)

Hornboys - related to "Horn-child - the offspring of an adulterous relationship 20C, WI" (JG) ?

Liftin' (seals) -from "Lift - to steal, late 16C+" (JG)

Quill - "Pure Quill - something that is excellent or flawless, 1950s+" (JG) from "Quill - first rate whisky, the genuine thing as opposed to the 'bathtub' or 'rotgut' versions produced during Prohibition, 1920s-30s" (JG)

Rags and tags - from "Rag, tag and bobtail - the whole lot, early 19C" (JG) (i.e. Paca was good

for all sorts of criminal activities)

Scut - not cant, Standard English for "short tail, esp. of hare, rabbit or deer" (OED)

Shook: "what shook last night" - what was stolen last night, from "Shook - robbed, lost by robbery, 19C" (JG) c.f. "What shakes? - what chance is there of stealing something?, mid-19C" (JG)

Smoke up - from "Smoke - to cheat, to deceive [one blows smoke in the victim 's eyes], late 17C-18C" (JG) . Smokin' - same meaning as in 'Smoke Up' above.

Swop: "lose swop" = lose the exchange, from "Swop = swap = an act of exchange, mid 19C+" (JG)

Hope this is of use Mantis, too late for LS-2 but maybe to feed into Gate Of Horn?

And here's hoping there'll be plenty of new cant to get our teeth into, when the Book Of The Short Sun arrives.

Regards,
Brain

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