

Neighborly Inhumani; Oreb as God-Mount

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 22 Aug 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/966>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Robert Borski — 22 Aug 2000, 13:34

Nick Gevers having wondered:

Did the
original "Neighborly inhumani" survive in some other
guise? Specifically, are the Neighbors Horn encounters
not perhaps inhumani themselves?

Couple of thoughts here.

When Horn first meets up with the Neighbors on Shadelow, he writes: "There were more shadowy figures seated around [the fire]; they wore dark cloaks (or so it seemed to me at the time) and soft-looking hats with wide brims and low crowns." (OBW, 268) At the time I wondered could what *seem* to be dark cloaks actually be wings?

The other passage is even more oblique. Horn, introducing himself, offers his hand to a Neighbor to shake, writing, "He took it, and this time I felt his hand and remembered it. It was hard, and seemed to be covered with short, stiff hairs. Beyond that I will not say." (269) Horn here is deliberately not telling us something--just as Wolfe is obscuring the Neighbors' facial features for some reason--but perhaps either one or the other relates to your theory.

My biggest problem with the the inhumani-as-Neighbors postulation, however, involves its sustainability. The vampiric Neighborly inhumani surely would still need blood, but if all the real Neighbors have left for parts unknown, how are they able to maintain their Neighborly guise--especially if they're supping at other non-Neighbor fonts? Recall Fava's difficulties retaining her youthful composure after dining with Salica.

Alex David Groce then having asked:

<Oreb: I'm still puzzling over which God rides Oreb--and part of me says "the Outsider, silly." Does "The Night Chough," which I haven't read, make this more explicit?>

Very much so. Not that I believe you need the story to make the Oreb-Scylla connection since I believe Wolfe establishes this very well in both Blue books to date. But here are a couple of quotes from "The Night Chough" to prove my point.

Oreb, at the story's beginning, sees several images reflected back to him from the waters of a pool; the first is his own, the second is the face of a murdered young woman, Lily. And then:

"Already a third countenance was forming, a young woman's snarling face framed by floating tendrils of dark hair. This new young woman had a profusion of arms, some with two elbows and some with three--some, even, that required no elbows at all, arms without hands, as sinuous as serpents, mouthing angry phrases without sound." (THE CROW: SHATTERED LIVES & BROKEN DREAMS, 64.)

Later, when Oreb encounters Starling, who's searching for Lily's body, he refers to seeing both faces as a vision, but seems to believe that Starling is actually looking for Scylla.

"Girl here," it declared. "Find girl." Again, it recalled its vision. "Big wet. Have arms." (66)

As if for emphasis, Oreb repeats the "Have arms" line two more times.

Starling soon encounters a character named Moonrat, who agrees to lead him to Lily's body. On their way back to the pond, Moonrat indicates he wants to ask Starling a question.

"I--I've been following you. Not ever since I gave you my gun, I went away then. I didn't want him to see me. But I started back when I heard the shot.

"I understand."

"You were gone by then, and your bird was pecking at Bushdog's...at his face. So I was sure you were going to Serval's, so I ran down the steet to catch up to you. Maybe you didn't hear me, because of the storm."

"I didn't," the young man said.

"Then your bird flew past and lit on your shoulder, and a girl was with you, walking beside you. The--your bird had brought her. That was what it seemed like."

"Lily's ghost?" The young man was silent, pensive.

"I don't think so." Moonrat's voice quavered. "I've seen Lily, you know? Around town sometimes with you. It didn't look like her. Not--not at all like Lily."

"I wish I'd seen her." The young man might not have heard him.

"You had to. She was right besides you. In the, you know, the lightning flashes. I could see her better than I can see you right now. I wanted to ask who she was."

"Scylla." That was the bird. And not the bird. (p. 74)

There are a couple of other passages I could cite you, but if the above doesn't convince you neither will they. And so to recapitulate: Oreb is being ridden by Scylla--aka "Big wet" and quite probably "The Mother"--who's attempting to contact Horn, but surreptitiously so, in all likelihood fearing for her life, especially since Pas has already killed the ringleader of their earlier attempted coup. ("Echidna tried to kill Pas, so was killed by him for that.") Quite possibly "The Night Chough" takes place during Oreb's year-long absence from Horn and Gaon; it's hard to tell whether the tale takes place on Blue or the Whorl, but my sense of it is that Oreb is with Scylla in one place or the other, and that relationship carries over into the Short Sun series.

Robert Borski

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