

Final Defense: Terrans Haven't Met Shadow Children; Abos are the Natives

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 09 Apr 1999

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Mitchell A. Bailey — 09 Apr 1999, 20:26

Tony, we might just have to agree to disagree here, but thanks for your interest and thought-provoking debate. I guess my nature is more literal-minded. Like I said, Wolfe probably intends for us to reach our own conclusions about these things.

Re the first statement you take issue with:

"Quite probably no Terran of the latter wave of colonization... ever encountered or spoke to a Shadow Child personally after that first landing ..., but knew them only from the tales of the abos ..."

I threw that out but frankly don't believe it very strongly, hence the qualified manner in which I stated it. I base that remark on (1) textual evidence, practically all negative and indirect (2) a certain "artistic" appeal of symmetry. My thinking was along the lines of "As the abos are to the modern settlers, so the Shadow Children were to the abos" that is, faery, elusive and practically legendary.

You do make a good case that Mary Blount might indeed have played with Shadow Children, but I still reserve doubts. SC wouldn't have come in daylight, but abos would unhesitatingly have attempted to rob a smokehouse under cover of darkness.

The second issue is more substantial. You have concluded that the abos are the descendants of colonists (from Earth?) and the SC are evolved descendants of the primal pleiomorphs, while I conclude the converse. You say: " One more thing. When the Old Wise One confesses that he is confused, he goes on to talk of an indigenous people, and a second, star-travelling race, our "Atlanteans". The first "heard the songs of the second and sent them out again", which is to say, they had a strong telepathic ability right from the start...."

2 problems:

First, could the OWO be mixed up again? He concluded that little soliloquy with "Once, I was sure I knew who the first were, and the second; now I am no longer sure." That statement could be construed to mean the SC can't even be sure whether the natives first heard the spacefarers or vice versa, as well as which ones the SC were.

Second, notice Sandwalker "hears" the song of Many Mouths and All Full after the Shadow Children band capture his tick-deer. Now maybe they also sing in the conventional sense, but based on what the OWO, at that time serene and sure, explains to him regarding the nature of their singing, they almost certainly did not. Sandwalker at least must be telepathic also [perhaps that is what makes him special], and many of the other abos are said to be able to detect Shadow Child singing in their dreams. So the question of "who was which" doesn't seem to have been conclusively answered.

Wolfe has thrown out the concept of paranormal mental powers for the SC and an ancient visitation by technically sophisticated humans from offworld without undertaking to explore or justify those ideas, as they are really peripheral to the story. Those matters are left as exercises for the student, so to speak.

Bottom line:

We agree that OWO is so flakey, at least after the capture by the wetlanders, that we can't draw a reliable conclusion based on his statements. I based my conclusion on other evidence as well, particularly my reasoning that the race which exhibits even residual shape-changing ability is the better candidate for native pleiomorph. Otherwise, we end up making the further stretch that the _"atlantean" humans_ somehow acquired this shape changing ability or an approximation of it. Not utterly impossible, I'll admit, but in my view less likely.

And too, don't forget that everything we are told about the SC comes from Victor Trenchard, filtered through his own degree of ignorance and prejudices on the subject. It is with this in mind that, for example, I keep questioning the authenticity of a pre-contact abo belief in colonists from Sol in the Fighting Lizard; he or his parents might have added that detail anachronistically, knowing of course where the present colonists are from.

Regards.