

# ...Abos are the Natives

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 10 Apr 1999

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Tony Ellis — 10 Apr 1999, 13:52

Mitchell A. Bailey wrote:

Tony, we might just have to agree to disagree here,

Yup, we're getting beyond textual analysis and into personal interpretation now, alas. But see my final point in this post, which I really should have remembered earlier.

...but thanks for your interest and thought-provoking debate.

Likewise! Glad to meet someone who's worried this little matter over as much as I have. I can't quite resist quibbling a couple of your quibbles, but I freely admit I'm not really solving anything:

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.

Well, he is saying he doesn't know "who" the two races were, which is an issue of identity, rather than, say, "Once, I was sure which was the race that heard the songs of the other". But even if we say, for the sake of argument, that the spacefarers -were- the ones with the telepathic ability, then by process of elimination the indigenous, shapechanging creatures were the ones that as a result felt their -own- songs "more strongly in all their bones". And that doesn't sound like the recipe for suddenly wanting to become something different. If you're long and live between the roots of trees, you'll want to stay that way.

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.

You don't have to -be- telepathic to "hear" the telepathy of others. Don't forget that the SC have been hiding St Anne from Earth ships all this time by their mental powers, and the crew of those ships are just dull old non-telepathic Earth people.

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.

Well, almost. I would argue that OWO is also flaky -before- the capture, because then he is made up from the minds of the Shadow Children, who are all as mad as a box of monkeys. After the capture, when he is half made up from Sandwalker's mind, I think he has returned to his senses.

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.

It depends how seriously you take the famed Annese shape-changing ability. We are never, not ever, not once, shown anyone actually changing shape or admitting to such an ability. VRT and his mum seem to have great skill as mimics, but it's sufficiently minor that both Trenchard and Marsch - rightly or wrongly - see it as a human skill, rather than superhuman. I freely admit that it seems obvious to regard this ability as vestigial of an old, now lost, shape-changing ability, but for me it feels -too- obvious. A red herring. A recurring theme in the book is the way the colonials have never really understood the aborigines: either ascribing them fabulous, fairy-tale powers, or seeing them as animals. Wolfe loves a bad joke, and the joke that the human colonists are unknowingly displacing their own kind is the worse joke of all.

Final Point: I've only just remembered that, years ago, the thing that actually made me start to think that the Free People must be human was the fact that Victor himself is only half-Annese. If humans can breed with Free People, they -must- be human.

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Mitchell A. Bailey — 10 Apr 1999, 22:34 · follows Tony Ellis

Tony Ellis wrote:

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Final Point: I've only just remembered that, years ago, the thing that actually made me start to think that the Free People must be human was the fact that Victor himself is only half-Annese. If humans can breed with Free People, they -must- be human.

Well, yes, valid point based on the assumption.

But then again, there may not have been any such thing as abo's in the sense of a native race, and the Trenchards are con artists or even deluded.

On the other hand, Robert Borski has made a pretty solid case that not only is Vic's vanished mother of the Free People of the hills, but Roy Trenchard is actually an abo also, specifically of the marshmen, therefore no Terran/Annese crossbreeding is necessary (leave that kind of scenario for Star Trek). Check out the essay entitled "Roy Trenchard, Homeboy". If it's not in the Urth archives, it's on RB's Cave Canem website.