

5HC: musings on the Shadow Children

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 14 Dec 2000

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 14 Dec 2000, 20:43

Adding to what I wrote before about the levels of organization for each of the groups, and the biomes they are restricted to; the anthropological terms are (or perhaps at one time were) band, tribe, and chiefdom theocracy, in that order of increasing size.

With regard to harsh biomes, it was also a given that as chiefdoms grew in the good lands they would squeeze competing groups into the marginal lands: bands and tribes are not necessarily "pristine" stone age groups who have been in that harsh biome for ten thousand years; more likely they are remnants, refugees, and other displaced persons of more recent arrival.

With this in mind, because the Shadow Children are bands, and they are nocturnal scavenger types, they seem to be earlier than the hill folk or the marsh people; and the hill folk might be earlier than the marsh people.

From a folklore standpoint, the Shadow Children are:

- ghouls, eaters of dead things, permanent halloween critters that must be bought off with gifts of mice
- children (they eat some, adopt others), cast off/abandoned children, as implied by their name and their stature (OTOH, when the second group meets Sandwalker as a shadowfriend, they remark how young he is, so maybe they usually pick up cast off elders?).
- dead/dreaming
- sacred Lotus Eaters with a drug communion
- profane drug abusers (simultaneously autochthons wiped out by alien alcohol/ex-conquistadors derailed by exotic opium)
- first and last: autochthons and invaders-gone-native; yet neither first nor last, since the magic trees came before they did, and the Anglophone colonists came after they did.

When Sandwalker first meets them, there's that weird build up of threat and sudden deflation after he has been scratched by what he feared was a poisoned claw. Then they welcome him as friend, feed him, teach him songs. Have they infected him? They seem to think of him as "one of us," albeit at the lowest level. (The other levels are: eating marshman flesh, taking the narcotic herb. He refuses both.)

That is to say: he has been adopted by outsiders just as Eastwind was, the only difference is that Eastwind was abducted as a newborn and Sandwalker stumbled into his initiation while on his manhood quest.

The largest group we see are seven

Two are wrinkled and stiff (elderly)

One is a woman

Two are neither old nor young (adult)

Two are little more than boys

to which we add Sandwalker, as shadow friend: seven males, one woman.

Sounds like a creepy Snow White to me.

And that woman is probably the same one who shows up in V.R.T./Marsch's journal, toward the hallucinatory end.

One more tangential tidbit: re: the claimed abo naming conventions of Mary and John. It is interesting that this does not appear in "A Story" at all, with the exception of the infant Mary Pink Butterflies. She and her mother are from a different tribe than Sandwalker's, and they may have different naming conventions, but her mother isn't "Mary." In fact, judging from the circumstances, "Mary" might mean "daughter of a tree" <g>. But in any event, my point here is that Mary Pink Butterflies might be the "Eve" of the post-French landing abo reorganization: that is, because of her, all abo girls will be named Mary, and because of some John, likewise for boys.

If that Mary/John convention isn't a complete fabrication, that is.

=mantis=