

Space Vampires from the Green Planet!

The Urth list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 26 Mar 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3094>

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Michael Straight — 26 Mar 2002, 16:16

Regarding the similarity of Urth and Blue/Green lifeforms and their ability to eat each other, this is an old standard convention in science fiction. Let's remember that the Short Sun series are, among many other things, Wolfe's take on the pulp planetary exploration novels complete with Vampires from Outer Space! In these novels, the fauna from other planets are just like ours, with extra limbs or two heads or blue fur. See also Star Trek.

Many otherwise "hard" science-fiction novels gloss over having Earth-like plants and animals on other planets. Some, like Larry Niven come up with some kind of justification for it (planets all seeded by earlier space empire), others just ignore the question. In general, if the characters don't bring up the unlikelihood of other planets having such similar plants and animals, you're just supposed to ignore it and get on with the story.

Given these conventions, I think Wolfe is using the extra limbs to denote alien-ness, while the similarity of life allows for low-tech colonists and monsters that suck their blood. (Note also that the colonists had to bring their own crops. They aren't able to subsist only on the native Bluvian crops.)

-Rostrum

Michael Andre-Driussi — 26 Mar 2002, 17:01 · follows Michael Straight

Rostrum wrote:

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Right. We (well, me and someone else around here) were more distracted when hard sf guy Vernor Vinge had human kids crash on a random planet that just happened to have edible grains and protein . . . as a case of random chance, like a voyage to an uncharted planet, this seemed a bit far off the thinking at the time A FIRE UPON THE DEEP was written (the 90s). And it could have been fixed, it seemed, with a single sentence.

Back to Typhon. I don't think there is any sense of the Whorl being an exploration vessel: it is a colonization ship. It is not looking for a home, stopping at every oasis in the desert of space, it is going straight to the place, non-stop. The target star system is, therefore, presumed to be known in advance. Of all the uncolonized-yet-colonizable planets in the galaxy, surely a ruler will select a planet that has compatible DNA (especially if the colonization effort is one ship). This is part of the "habitability" package, after all, and has been since the 1960s: another factor, just as gravity, sunlight, oxy/nitrogen atmosphere, atmospheric pressure, water, length of local day, etc., but one that comes near the end of the stream.

As for Typhon loading an ark to repopulate Urth. No. This function is being carried out, either by design or by accident, by the Ship Tzadkiel. From the play by Talos; from the plan for the sailors in the Hall of Justice (iirc it was: if the sailors win, they can stop the New Sun, if they lose they can populate Ushas); from the way that guards bring news of ships dropping off people at the time of the deluge (echoing the play): it seems like Tzadkiel drops off Adam&Eve packets onto Urth in lean times, just as Tzadkiel seems to snatch people up in other times (all that trade in slaves).

=mantis=

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 26 Mar 2002, 17:57 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Mantis wrote:

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... and you know what? This is the best argument I've seen for the WHORL returning to Urth: Tzadkiel (or Tzad's masters) rerouting it to repopulate. It still falls a smidgeon short of a smoking gun, but it provides a much more plausible reason, imho, than Typhon giving enough of a damn about posterity to want to repopulate Urth after the coming of the New Sun (which, I believe, he intended to prevent anyway ... though he's clever enough to play both ends against the middle this way).

matthew.malthouse — 27 Mar 2002, 10:34 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

On 26/03/2002 17:01:56 Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

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seems like Tzadkiel drops off Adam&Eve packets onto Urth in lean times, just as Tzadkiel seems to snatch people up in other times (all that trade in slaves).

And in support: such a move would be contrary to Typhon's ambition to (re-)conquer his stellar empire. He doesn't care about Urth, the backwater, any more than as a springboard from which

to re-enter the bigger game out amongst the stars.

But that does leave me pondering the old question "why did he do it?" Typhon's conversations with Severian first when awoken on his couch and later (in Severian's experience) as Severian is traveling the history of Urth definitely suggest a man right up there at the cutting edge of the tyranting business. Long term strategems or back-up plans don't really seem to be Typhon's style.

Matthew