

The Cumaean

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 02 Apr 2002

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 02 Apr 2002, 16:56

So...what is the Cumaean? The following evidence is of interest; it comes from the scene immediately before the manifestation of Apu-Punchau, when the Cumaean has cast Merryn, Sev, Dorcas, Jolenta, and Hildegrin into a kind of trance (which Hildegrin describes as seeing from a perspective larger than a single moment):

As I had suspected, the Cumaean was not a woman at all; yet neither was she one of the horrors I had beheld in the gardens of the House Absolute. Something sleekly reptilian coiled about the glowing rod. I looked for the head but found none, though each of the patternings on the reptile's back was a face, and the eyes of each face seemed lost in rapture. (from THE CLAW OF THE CONCILIATOR. I didn't write down the page numbers, but it's about 292-3 of the original Timescape HC.)

Okay, she's reptilian and can fool people into thinking she's human. She appears, to Severian in some kind of trance state, to have many faces.

H'mmmmm... My immediate response is to think, "Aha, this proves that there were inhumani on Urth in Severian's time..." But does it? The Cumaean is said to be centuries old. I have a vague recollection that the inhumani are shorter-lived than humans -- does anyone recall for certain? I almost hope I'm wrong, as it would make Marc's theories one step closer to probability.

Of course I wouldn't suggest for a moment that Wolfe planned the Cumaean as an inhumani ... but is it possible that in writing the Long/Short books he retconned her into one?