

blonds of the Commonwealth

The Urth list — 6 messages, 4 voices, 15 Jul 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3353>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 15 Jul 2002, 19:03

Hartshorn wrote:

I never really understood this point. Isn't there somewhere in the BOTNS where Severian says that it is known that each continent has a pattern for humanity, and that if people move from one land to another they will change to fit it?

If so, how come there are European lloking people in South America (or for that matter, North America?)

Right, the implication being that the Europeanoids have not been living on that continent long enough to be genetically altered into looking like the red-brown people of Apu-Punchau. If you can find the quote, iirc Severian gives the number of generations that the transformation requires.

So, like the blond Argentines today, the Europeanoids have come from elsewhere, in their case arriving maybe just a few thousand years before Severian's time.

=mantis=

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Alice K. Turner — 16 Jul 2002, 06:35 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Hartshorn wrote:

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Severian's time.

Logically, this is ridiculous. Here in New York, when Wombat, Ranjit and I take the subway (not all together, or not yet), when we look up and down the car we see profiles that could have come off Mayan tomb reliefs, bright purple turbans, giggling teenagers with Asian faces and Brooklyn accents, sheerly Slavic faces. noble Arab features and those that resemble African carvings, neon hair, every shade of black, brown, yellow and white, and sometimes the wildest costumes (including those of Orthodox Jews)--and we're so cool that if an exultant or a character like Ossipago walked in we'd only flick an eyelid. The daughter of one of my colleagues is Italian-Chinese-Irish-something-else-that-I forget. That's the present and the sure future, in reality. And that, I think, would be true in the Commonwealth. Though not among the Ascians, who are satirically presented. And GW has chosen to take the satire further in the next two series: the Trivigaunts are not racially satirized, but in terms of feminism, a cliché of male American humor in fantasy (see -The Land of Oz- 100 years ago). But in the SS series, he does racially satirize societies, specifically Indian and Italian. To me not very successfully--a real ho-hum genre feel here--but feel free to disagree.

So the world of Apu-Punchau represents the far, far past, when tribes are separated and racially alike. Severian's time sort of mirrors the realities of America, very mixed (blonds quite normal, as they definitely are in Illinois--first time I ever saw blond construction workers), with some skiffy exoticism thrown in--Europeanoids needn't come from "elsewhere" (though in my own schema the whole thing is set in a transposed Europe anyway). And then Wolfe makes a right (I thought of using left, but it's definitely right) turn into Vancean satire (lots of separate societies to make fun of) in the next two series.

=alga

Andy Robertson — 16 Jul 2002, 07:18 · follows Alice K. Turner

----- Original Message -----

From: "Alice K. Turner" <aturner6 at nyc.rr.com>

Logically, this is ridiculous.

Not at all. Massive mixing of populations is historically a very new thing, the consequence of massive, fast, travel, and that has stopped in Severian's time for reasons of technological exhaustion. The people of the Commonwealth are not a pan-human mixture: travel is by foot, and immigrants are very rare. You can argue about the relevance of this to the real future, but not Wolfe's internal logic.

hartshorn

Alice K. Turner — 16 Jul 2002, 15:36 · follows Andy Robertson

A thought to add to my own last post: there is a logical explanation, or at least a novelist's explanation, for the culturally, racially and sexually segregated cities (or enclaves) of the Whorl and Blue. It's that old joker Typhon/Pas at it again. He wants his "ark" to preserve as many of Urth's customs and bloodlines as possible, so he sets up these artificially segregated cities and preserves "ethnic purity" (or the cultural equivalent) by setting them all at each other's throats. (Helps keep the population down too--a lot like Yahweh, our Typhon.)

-alga

Andy Robertson — 16 Jul 2002, 15:53 · follows Alice K. Turner

----- Original Message -----

From: "Alice K. Turner" <aturner6 at nyc.rr.com>
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Seems obvious enough.

More to the point, it is obviously the best policy for colonising a new world, preserving the greatest variability and making sure someone will be preadapted to survive at a low tech level whatever the environment.

But Pas did not make the cities war with each other: that just comes naturally. Rather he separated the cities as much as possible.

hartshorn

Michael Straight — 16 Jul 2002, 15:53 · follows Andy Robertson

On Tue, 16 Jul 2002, Alice K. Turner wrote:
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Isn't there a passage in the Long Sun books that all but says this explicitly? Maybe when Silk is talking to Sand about all the cities having armies and being set against each other so they won't gang up and storm Mainframe?

But yeah, it's Typhon's version of Babel.

-Rostrum