

# chem slavery and bio slavery

The Urth list — 6 messages, 4 voices, 05 Oct 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3473>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 05 Oct 2002, 14:58

Roy,

Interesting post on Bio bias and the potential of disguised chem slavery. Very meaty. The situation of the chems at points comes close to "wage slavery," but even then, the term slave is firmly in place.

Moving along . . . Once the Cargo got to the world of Blue, we know that real, no mistaking it, bio slavery started up almost immediately. (IIRC it was "early bird" colonists seizing late bird colonists.) Do you suppose that the chems on the Whorl "kept slavery alive" and thus facilitated the adoption of bio slavery (that is, the colonists express a learned institution), or is bio slavery an inherent part of the human condition which would have come up even if there had been no chems (in which case chem slavery is a blessing in the sense that it moves bios away from bio slavery: allowing bios to treat bios as non-slaves)?

=mantis=

P.S. Olivia an adultress? Roy, you surprise me again! I had not thought such a thing was in your no-nonsense reading of PEACE . . . I hesitate to even guess who the party or parties might be, nevermind the complicated ramifications. Please tell!

=m=

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Roy C. Lackey — 06 Oct 2002, 18:26 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

What follows was prepared yesterday; I didn't post it then because I thought I would leave well enough alone, that and wait to see if there would be any further response to my "Bios bias" post. In the wake of mantis's post of about an hour ago about the NYRSF article, I wish I had sent it then. I can only say that, no, I've never even seen an issue of NYRSF. I'll comment about mantis's comments on the article in a separate post, but I will note here that, in the penultimate paragraph of yesterday's Bio bias post I wrote, of chems: "But even to call them slaves is to grant them a status their creators never intended--you don't pay a machine." I belong to the "clever tools" school of thought mantis mentioned. FWIW.

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mantis wrote:

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chem slavery is a blessing in the sense that it moves bios away from bio slavery: allowing bios to treat bios as non-slaves)?

Given human history on Earth/Urth, I have to agree with slavery being "an inherent part of the human condition which would have come up even if there had been no chems".

I really wasn't concerned with the subject of slavery as it applied to chems. I just wanted to point out the logical inconsistency of trying to maintain on the one hand that chems were just differently-made people, on an equal footing with bios, when on the other hand the way they were actually treated on the \_Whorl\_, both in Typhon's day and in Silk's, demonstrated that they certainly were not equal to humans. "Wage" slaves,

as you put it, is a reasonable description of the de facto situation of most people living today. Sure, unlike 'real' slaves, people are free to stop working; they won't be beaten or killed for it, but they will suffer obvious consequences, one of which, if carried to its ultimate conclusion, is death. But you can't starve a chem or talus to death.

It's a given, in the text, that a talus is 'born' owing for its flesh, er, existence. (And a possible nod to Philip Jose Farmer.) It is quite reasonable to infer the same for a chem. Hammerstone bitched about his crummy life as a soldier. Why didn't he quit? Are there any retired soldiers in the LS books? No. A soldier leaves the army KIA or resigned to the recycling bin for any reusable parts, just like my old cars. What would happen to an uppity talus that refused to work off its birth debt? Does its creator 'kill' it? How would that satisfy the expense of its creation? Would that be murder? Just turn the thing loose to do as it pleased, whatever that might be? No, a talus is too stupid and dangerous to be left on its own. The soldiers aren't much better. Sgt. Sand thoughtlessly tossed an employee of Ermine's over the railing of the stairs.

All these thorny questions become moot when you stop thinking of taluses and chems as people. If a talus doesn't work right, fix it or replace it, whichever is cheaper, just as you would a car or can opener. Was there any "save the chems" movement on the \_Whorl\_? Nope, not even by chems. Twenty years after Horn left the \_Whorl\_, Olivine was the closest thing to a femchem still living in Viron. The chems didn't follow the bios to Blue and Green--the subject never even came up. They had been built to last about two-hundred-and-fifty years, the intended duration of the voyage of the \_Whorl\_. Planned obsolescence. When the trip was finished, so were they.

It comes down to: if chems were people, then they were slaves. A slave is not equal to, in law, its master. No matter how you look at it, a chem was not the equal of a bio. But it's worse for a chem because, in fact, apart from the function they were created for, their existence is meaningless. They were created to serve bios. If they can't do that, they may as well slip, like Puff the Magic Dragon, off into a cave somewhere and shut down.

-Roy

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Mark Millman — 07 Oct 2002, 03:52 · follows Roy C. Lackey

On Sun, 6 Oct 2002, Roy C. Lackey wrote:

[snip]

But you can't starve a  
chem or talus to death.

[snip]

It may be true that you can't starve a chem to death, Roy, but a talus runs on fish-oil; deny it that, and I do think

that you'll succeed in starving it to death. This doesn't, of course, affect your arguments, except in that it gives a talus' owner an additional means of control over it. Actually, I believe that Swallow mentions fish-oil consumption as one of the expenses that a talus has to pay off before it can buy its freedom, as would an indentured servant who must pay room and board before putting down money toward the contract obligations.

Nacre

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Jerry Friedman — 07 Oct 2002, 14:58 · follows Mark Millman

--- "Roy C. Lackey" <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:

...

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I generally agree with your point about how the chems were thought of when the \_Whorl\_ was created, and I thank you for all this bits of evidence of prejudice on both sides. I have a quibble with the above, though. Marble was taken to Blue, and isn't Cijfer a chem? Outside of New Viron, we may not know about some characters whether they're chems or not.

Jerry Friedman

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Roy C. Lackey — 07 Oct 2002, 18:49 · follows Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman quotes and writes:

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Marble ending up on Blue was a fluke; as Mucor's guardian she was just in the right place at the right time, and being the calde's friend didn't hurt. Cijfer was married to Wijzer, who was a bio,

so I don't think she was a chem. Silkhorn traveled to several other cities and was even the ruler of one. There is no textual evidence to indicate that any chem other than Marble ever went to Blue or Green that I am aware of. Chems would have been impervious to inhum attack and near invincible as a weapon against them, which is probably why Wolfe left them on the \_Whorl\_.

-Roy

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Jerry Friedman — 08 Oct 2002, 23:15 · follows Roy C. Lackey

--- "Roy C. Lackey" <rlackey at stic.net> wrote:  
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was a chem.

Apparently I was confused. There is an odd sentence in Ch. 7 of RttW in which Silkhorn says that  
if Cijfer were an inhum, she wouldn't have covered the comatose Jahlee's face or summoned a  
\*bio\*. Why "bio" instead of "human", unless Cijfer isn't a bio? But aside from that and possibly  
her name, there doesn't seem to be any suggestion that she's a chem, and her being married to  
Wijzer isn't the only suggestion that she's a bio. And I was mixed up about who Cijfer was and  
thinking of a conversation that turned out not to exist.

Wait a second--could Wijzer be a chem? Probably not...

Thanks for the correction.

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Jerry Friedman