

Quetzal On Urth?

The Urth list — 16 messages, 8 voices, 25 Nov 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3605>

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Charles Reed — 25 Nov 2002, 17:15

Howdy everyone.

I have some thoughts that I'd like to share regarding when Quetzal came on board the Whorl, especially in regard to how Gene Wolfe seems to approach his writing.

Last week, Crush posited the following:

... even if Typhon did not know the target planets were full of blood-sucking monsters (and I never imagined he did) it does not mean he wasn't manipulated by Quetzal on Urth. And based on Quetzal's statements in LS3:1 (Slaves of Scylla) that still seems probable to me.

Further, Don Doggett added the following:

The thirty years bits all refer to things that have happened inside the Whorl and they all hinge on one idea, namely that Quetzal somehow entered the Whorl from Green or Blue thirty years ago. An easy way around that is to say that Quetzal has been on the Whorl from the start. Nowhere, to the best of my knowledge, is the lifespan of an Inhumu given in the text. For goodness sake, Jahlee was buried underground for months without nourishment . . .

I guess the idea of Quetzal being on board the Whorl from the beginning bugs me more than it should. There are other theories floating around that I don't agree with but that I can stomach because they at least seem to be within the realm of possibility because their positions can be argued from the *text*. Examples of such theories include the Blue = Ushas theory, and the theory that it was Severian who appeared to Horn in the pit.

But the Quetzal-on-board-from-the-beginning theory is different.

I see how the text doesn't refute such a possibility -- and I've looked for something to refute it with -- but that's not the same thing as support. As much as I would like to avoid extra-textual support for my ideas, I'm going to offer as back-door evidence the following quote from the Nick Gevers interview with Gene Wolfe (<http://www.sfsite.com/03b/gw124.htm>):

Q: Why did you choose in Short Sun to have your characters cross over into the milieu of New Sun? In particular, do the meetings of Horn/Silk and Severian have a decisive impact on the destinies of both?

A: Because the books would have been lame if they had not. Once you see that Pas is or was

Typhon, and know the Rajan can travel by astral projection, he's got to do that. There's a wonderful bit in the Roger Rabbit movie nobody seems to get. Roger goes around with handcuffs on his wrists for half an hour. Then he pulls one hand out of the cuffs and does something with it, and sticks it back in. Bob says, "You mean to tell me you could get out of those whenever you wanted to?" And Roger says, "No, only when it's funny." That is a profound expression of the the law that governs all writers and performers. The audience doesn't have to think about that, but writers are bound by it. If there's a gun on the wall in Act I, it must be fired before the end of the play. Etc.

OK. Think about this. If Quetzal or other inhumis had been on Urth influencing Typhon or other government officials, I think Gene Wolfe would have let us know. More than that, according to the above quote, I think he would have felt bound -- at least artistically but perhaps morally as well -- to let something of such a relationship be seen. In other words, if the inhumis can travel to Urth (as has been suggested of Quetzal) then they've **got** to do that. We would hear stories of them on Urth, see one flying in the distance, observe people who don't eat, can't run, and lick their chops when someone mentions blood. Something.

Some indication. But there's nothing. No indication whatsoever that any of the inhumis have ever been on Urth. (The SS astral-projections don't count because, for one, they're not physically there and for two, they're not inhumis when they're there -- they're fully and completely human.)

Further, if it's only one single inhumu (Quetzal) that made it to Urth, how did he get there and why can't others come too? He has to have been there physically -- not astrally. That is, he had to have traveled there on some kind of ship. So who built and launched such a ship and where is it now? If Quetzal was slick enough to influence Typhon about where to point the Whorl, surely he would have been slick enough to redirect the hypothetical Urth-bound ship to Green (with it's "cargo") thereby avoiding the need to go to Urth at all.

I feel like I'm ranting, and I apologize. I just can't see any textual support (which again is not the same as the lack of refutation) for the idea that any inhumis ever visited Urth. Is there any?

Charles

James Wynn — 25 Nov 2002, 17:39 · follows Charles Reed

Charles Reed inquires:

I just can't see any textual support (which again is not the same as the lack of refutation) for the idea that any inhumis ever visited Urth. Is there any?

I haven't finished the BotSS yet, so someone may offer textual evidence shoots my theories completely full of hole. The fact is that I've yet to see any textual evidence for how or when Quetzal got on the Whorl. There is (I believe) thematic evidence however to which I've already referred: <http://gene-wolfe.tripod.com/midas.htm> (note the http? Mr. Ansely?)

In the above referred story we have the answers to a couple unresolved questions:

1. How long do inhumis live? Very long.
2. How did Quetzal get on the Whorl? It was Quetzal who instigated the Whorl project.

Now as to how he arrived at Urth that is also per speculation. I presume he hitched a ride with a ship that visited Green. He fed on the crew on the way to Urth and acquired technological knowledge which he shared with Typhon to get himself back.

If one chooses to associate Quetzal with Noah, the thematic tendency increases for the Whorl to

be (in a sense) Quetzal's ship.

-- Crush

cilluff1 at optonline.net — 25 Nov 2002, 18:02 · follows James Wynn

Charles wrote:

<>

Let me start by saying that I agree with your points, and generally don't think the inhumis were on Urth. But just to put forth one possible textual reference, when I first starting reading Blue the inhumis reminded me of the bloodbats that bite Jolenta and Severian. Perhaps these were the pre-evolved inhumis? Jolenta's reaction to the bite were reminiscent of the child who was bitten that Silk attended to (the name slips my mind).

- Joe

cilluff1 at optonline.net — 25 Nov 2002, 18:10 · follows cilluff1 at optonline.net

One more piece of textual evidence is Quetzal's knowledge of Allah (or Ah Lah). True, I'm working backward from this, but he seems to know a lot about an Urth deity who is not worshipped on the Whorl. Of course, I would refute this argument by noting that apparently Remora knows about Allah, too, and he has never been on Urth.

Original Message:

From: cilluff1 at optonline.net cilluff1 at optonline.net Date: Mon, 25 Nov 2002 13:02:17 -0500
To: urth at urth.net Subject: RE: (urth) Quetzal On Urth?

Charles wrote:

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- Joe

matthew.malthouse — 25 Nov 2002, 18:02 · follows cilluff1 at optonline.net

On 25/11/2002 18:02:17 cilluff1 wrote:
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I dislike the inhumani on earth theory. Dislike it a great deal.

However there is no necessity for inhumani to travel to earth by their own means. Think apports, ships and mirrors.

Matthew

Charles Reed — 25 Nov 2002, 18:44 · follows matthew.malthouse

cilluff1 at optonline.net wrote:
Charles wrote:

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I always took the blood-bats to be actual bats, similar to South American vampire bats except larger and less afraid of attacking people than those we have on our "Earth." Also, the physical reactions of anybody that loses a lot blood -- whether to a vampire bat, an inhumani, or a cut on the wrist -- would be the same, although the emotional reactions might quite different.

And as for some other creature evolving into the inhumani: this could only happen if Urth somehow became . . . Green? . . . since that's the only place the inhumani can breed.

By the way, I think the child's name was Teasel.

Charles

Charles Reed — 25 Nov 2002, 19:30 · follows Charles Reed

matthew.malthouse at guardian.co.uk wrote:
On 25/11/2002 18:02:17 cilluff1 wrote:

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I dislike the inhumi on earth theory. Dislike it a great deal.

However there is no necessity for inhumi to travel to earth by their own means. Think apports, ships and mirrors.

OK. That would mean that there are (or were) such devices on Green (or Blue). And again, we're thrown into the realm of having no evidence of any kind -- that I'm aware of, that is -- to suggest such a thing. And it's this kind of thing that bugs me.

I know there are different schools of thought in how to "criticize" literature. One such school of thought, sometimes referred to as "Formalism," holds that a work of literature should be judged solely on what is in the text itself -- not the author's background or religious beliefs, not the historical context in which the author wrote, not the unspoken, underlying psychology motivating the characters, etc.

Obviously, few people who post to this list (including me) subscribe to this school of thought since we all tend to make use of the fact that Wolfe is a Roman Catholic, that he has said this or that in certain interviews, etc. In fact, it severely limits a person's ability to evaluate a work because it fails to account for allusions and resonances with other works.

Still, I believe that any theory of what a text means has to be supported in some discernible way by the text itself. To do otherwise, I think, is merely to play games -- to build a house of cards that has no firm foundation in the bedrock text. (e.g., the "Frodo and Sam were gay lovers" nonsense).

Charles

James Jordan — 25 Nov 2002, 23:25 · follows Charles Reed

At 01:30 PM 11/25/2002, you wrote:
matthew.malthouse at guardian.co.uk wrote:

On 25/11/2002 18:02:17 cilluff1 wrote:

other words, if the inhumi can travel to Urth (as has been suggested off Quetzal) then they've *got* to do that
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I would be kind of weirded out to discover that Gene Wolfe had already thought up the whole Long Sun and New Sun and inhumi businesses at the time he wrote New Sun. I mean, gimmeabreak! It's a bit much to ask to find inhumi in the New Sun quartet/quintet. But I think your argument is sound. Once Wolfe came up with the Long Sun and the inhumi, if he were going to put Quetzal on Urth during the time Typhon was abuilding his ark, there'd be some allusion that would point in that direction. Where is it? Nowhere that has been found.

And there is a perfect place for such a revelation: when Silk travels to Urth in the days of Severian's childhood. Plenty of opportunity for Wolfe to add in an inhumi attack or some other hint of Urthly inhumi. But he doesn't.

And hey, Allah is just the arabic word for "God." Christians in

Arab lands call God "Allah." It's the arabic form of "El" or "Elohim" found in the Hebrew Bible. "Allah" was doubtless a word for God found in some of the other cities, and Quetzal chooses to use it. Maybe even found in the Chrasmolological Writings, since they were cobbled from all over the place. No need to think Quetzal had to have been on Urth to pick up this word.

As for how Quetzal got on Starcrosser, we are TOLD that Neighbors seeded the ship with inhumi. Lacking any other indication, surely that's what we are to understand about how Quetzal got there. How he rose to such preeminence in the "church" is another question, and has been discussed here. (Hey, a very thin, wizened "man," an "ascetic," might be just the kind of "man" to catch the eye of "church" superiors and be promoted rapidly. Add to this Quetzal's cunning, and the clearly corrupt nature of the "church," and you have all you need to imagine a rapid rise to eminence.)

Wolfe says that if a gun appears in the first act, it has to be fired later on. Clearly the reverse is also true. If Quetzal was on Starcrosser from the beginning, then there is going to be something to indicate this. Nothing proffered thus far fits the bill.

Nutria

Don Doggett — 26 Nov 2002, 04:25 · follows James Jordan

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

From: "Charles Reed" <cmreed at link.com>

I feel like I'm ranting, and I apologize. I just can't see any textual support (which again is not the same as the lack of refutation) for the idea that any inhumi ever visited Urth. Is there any?

Charles

No need at all to apologize. These texts can be maddening if you're looking for conclusive evidence for anything. I think there is incidental support for the inhumi on Urth, but I also think that Wolfe shoehorned it in after the fact. Near the end of Claw, Jolenta is bitten by something (a blood bat?) and the bleeding won't stop. Immediately after, they meet the Cumaen and Merryn in the ruined town of Apu Punchau. This doesn't have any relevance by itself, but in Return to the Whorl, Silkhorn and Jahlee (and whoever else) encounter Merryn on Urth and Jahlee seems to intimate that Merryn is an inhuma (at least that's one way to interpret it).

Don

William Ansley — 26 Nov 2002, 04:43 · follows Don Doggett

At 11:39 AM -0600 11/25/02, James Wynn wrote:
(note the http? Mr. Ansely?)

Crush,

Thank you for the complete URL. It may just be my Macintosh email client (Eudora 5.1) that has a problem when you leave off the http://, so I may be the only one with a problem here, but I do appreciate it.

You did misspell my last name, but you can call me William.

William Insanely

matthew.malthouse — 26 Nov 2002, 11:03 · follows William Ansley

On 25/11/2002 19:30:18 Charles Reed wrote:
matthew.malthouse at guardian.co.uk wrote:

On 25/11/2002 18:02:17 cilluff1 wrote:

other words, if the inhumi can travel to Urth (as has been suggested off Quetzal) then they've *got* to do that

I dislike the inhumi on earth theory. Dislike it a great deal.

However there is no necessity for inhumi to travel to earth by their own means. Think apports, ships and mirrors.

OK. That would mean that there are (or were) such devices on Green (or Blue). And again, we're thrown into the realm of having no evidence of any kind -- that I'm aware of, that is -- to suggest such a thing. And it's this kind of thing that bugs me.

No need for devices, or not on Blue/Green. The sails of The Ship transport things by chance and the ship travels time.

Although I've no interest in pressing the matter as inhumi on Earth isn't something I've any wish to promote.

Matthew

matthew.malthouse — 26 Nov 2002, 11:34 · follows matthew.malthouse

On 26/11/2002 04:43:57 William Ansley wrote:
At 11:39 AM -0600 11/25/02, James Wynn wrote:

(note the http? Mr. Ansely?)

Crush,

Thank you for the complete URL. It may just be my Macintosh email client (Eudora 5.1) that has a problem when you leave off the http://, so I may be the only one with a problem here,

Nope, the mail clients I use also appreciate complete URL's

Matthew

Charles Reed — 26 Nov 2002, 14:38 · follows matthew.malthouse

Don Doggett wrote:

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

From: "Charles Reed" <cmreed at link.com>

I feel like I'm ranting, and I apologize. I just can't see any textual

support (which again is not the same as the lack of refutation) for the idea that any inhumi ever visited Urth. Is there any?

Charles

No need at all to apologize. These texts can be maddening if you're looking for conclusive evidence for anything.

I have to disagree. I think they're only maddening when you're looking for conclusive evidence to support incorrect theories. :-)

I think there is incidental support for the inhumani on Urth, but I also think that Wolfe shoehorned it in after the fact. Near the end of Claw, Jolenta is bitten by something (a blood bat?) and the bleeding won't stop.

But inhumani "bites" don't cause bleeding in their victims. People that are "bitten" feel the way that they do simply because they've lost blood -- by having it sucked out of them, not by bleeding externally. In fact, a lot of the victims don't even know that they've been attacked (see Inclito's mother as just one of many examples). This certainly wouldn't be the case if the attack resulted in bleeding of any kind, much less uncontrollable bleeding.

Immediately after, they meet the Cumaen and Merryn in the ruined town of Apu Punchau. This doesn't have any relevance by itself, but in Return to the Whorl, Silkhorn and Jahlee (and whoever else) encounter Merryn on Urth and Jahlee seems to intimate that Merryn is an inhumani (at least that's one way to interpret it).

Can you quote the passage in RttW that "Jahlee seems to intimate that Merryn is an inhumani" ?

Again, I hate to use "extra-textual" sources to support my idea (or to attack your idea), but I'm afraid I'm going to. In the same Nick Gevers interview in which Wolfe explained his ideas about the g

Q: Are the Cumaen and/or Merryn inhumani? Possibly, or definitely?

A: No. The Cumaean is an alien but not an inhumani. Merryn is a human being.

Take that for what it's worth. I've not known Gene Wolfe to lie about anything in an interview. He doesn't always answer the question that is asked, but when he does, I believe what he says.

Charles

Charles Reed — 27 Nov 2002, 19:29 · follows Charles Reed

Hello again. Just replying to my own message here.

Yesterday I asked if anybody had a transcript of the Gene Wolfe People Online transcript, and Roy Lackey was kind enough to e-mail it to me.

(Thanks, Roy!) Here's a quote of interest from that transcript for everybody that's been following this Quetzal-on-Urth discussion:

Question: In the Long Sun books, is Quetzal the only one of his kind on the Whorl? Was he an original passenger or a late arrival?

Gene Wolfe: He was a late arrival. He is not the only one of his kind, but the Inhumani are rare on the Whorl.

I still believe it to be relatively clear from the text that Quetzal is a late boarder, but maybe this will convince some of the doubters.

Crush, don't you have to give in now? Or do you believe Gene Wolfe to be so sadistic as to outright lie about his own books?

Charles

James Wynn — 27 Nov 2002, 20:00 · follows Charles Reed

Charles brings the tablets from the mountain:
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Crush, don't you have to give in now? Or do you believe Gene Wolfe to be so sadistic as to outright lie about his own books?

Crush concedes:

Sadistic, yes. But not in that way. I can hardly argue with the author. And with this light thrown on the subject, I cannot divine any consistent narrative value to Quetzal's story of A-man and Wo-man.

Bratt Ian — 28 Nov 2002, 07:38 · follows James Wynn

Question: In the Long Sun books, is Quetzal the only one of his kind on the Whorl? Was he an original passenger or a late arrival?

Gene Wolfe: He was a late arrival. He is not the only one of his kind, but the Inhumani are rare on the Whorl.

I still believe it to be relatively clear from the text that Quetzal is a late boarder, but maybe this will convince some of the doubters.

Crush, don't you have to give in now? Or do you believe Gene Wolfe to be so sadistic as to outright lie about his own books?

Just for clarity I wanted to point out a few lines from RTTW that support this.

RTTW pg 235:

"To Viron, yes, mysire. Also to Grotestad. To go to the Long sun Whorl I would like..." I told her it was possible she would. "There the Vanished People went?" I nodded. "To greet us it was?" "You might put it so, though they were sensible enough to find out a good deal about us--and infect us with inhumani--" "Bad thing!" "Before they ventured to greet even a few of us." "Bad it was," Vadsig agreed with Oreb. "To leave inhumani among us?" I shook my head. "It was a small price to pay for two whorls, and it enabled the Neighbors to gauge much more accurately the differences between our race and their own." "Because our blood they drink, mysire?"

-ian