

Fifth Head of Cerberus: Shadowchildren vs. Abos

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 11 Apr 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4995>

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E — 11 Apr 2008, 00:04

I found a transcript of a chat w/ Gene Wolfe

<http://home.austin.rr.com/lperson/wolfe.html>

Here is an interesting quote:

LP: "'A Story,' by John V. Marsch."

GW: "'A Story,' by John V. Marsch," yes, which is not actually written by John V. Marsch, but by the shadowchild who has replaced John V. Marsch. (laughs) That's New Wave. But belonging to a literary movement doesn't consist so much in using a certain set of techniques, as it consists in running with a certain set of people, and only to a very small degree did I run with that set of people. So as I said, I would be very peripheral as a New Wave writer.

So if Wolfe is being truthful, Marsch was replaced by a shadow-child, not a humanoid abo. Meaning that VRT is a shadow-child.

I know there was an unresolved debate about whether shadow-children are the original abos or are the result of early space fairing humans degenerating due to addiction to the drug found on the planet.

Anyway, this doesn't really clear that argument up, but if Wolfe is truthful it certainly makes me think differently about the story, because "VRT" was described as a human in Marsch's journal... but then again, maybe VRT edited even the earliest parts of Marsch's journal to simply say that VRT looked human to Marsch?

If what Wolfe says is true this also means the shadow-children themselves (or at least VRT) can shapeshift... which we hadn't seen discussed or mentioned before, it seemed that the shadow children weren't able to do this in "A Story".

Might VRT be a shadow-child + abo hybrid, rather than human + abo hybrid?

Anyway this has left me more confused than ever about the abo vs shadowchild vs settler conundrum but I certainly found Wolfe's quote interesting and surprising.

Maybe you guys have other ideas about this. Then again, Wolfe is quoted as laughing after saying the VRT = shadowchild line...

James Crossley — 11 Apr 2008, 03:36 · in reply to E

On 4/10/08 5:04 PM, "E" <euth82 at gmail.com> wrote:

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[snip]

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My understanding was that the shadow children were the original inhabitants, able to shapeshift but lacking a humanoid model until the humans arrived and colonized the planet. Once that happened, the shadow children mimicked the colonizers (becoming known to them as "abos" along the way) sometimes so successfully that they might forget their true nature.

James

b sharp — 15 Apr 2008, 11:45 · follows James Crossley

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That's how I see it too. Humans came to the planets in several waves. The first ship crashed and the few survivors became the template for some shadow children to become human-like abos. Later waves brought civilized humans but they were subject to replacement by abos, who despite losing their memory of being shadow children, retained their shape changing ability, perhaps as an unconscious reflex. It might be that all the natives of both planets are abos who have replaced the real humans. Marsch was a true human from earth (not a particularly nice one) but was soon replaced by an abo.