

GUT's and so on

The Urth list — 13 messages, 7 voices, 05 Sep 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5735>

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Lee Berman — 05 Sep 2010, 19:42

Gerry Quinn- As I read it, the Shadow Children are the degenerate remnants of the original human discoverers of St. Croix. The hillmen and marshmen are the St. Croix aborigines who took on the discoverers' original form. They were already of human appearance when the psychic shield surrounding the twin planets was removed and the French colonists came.

I think it is Ste. Anne. But anyway, the text is deliberately confusing, everywhere, in relationship to identity. I almost despair of being able to provide the quotes which lead me to believe Shadow Children are a version of the original inhabitants of Ste. Anne but I'll try.

I can see where the interpretation of Shadow Children as degenerate humans comes from. It is presented first, but then (I think) called into question.

As Old Wise One speaks to Sandwalker in the pit:

"When we came, we looked as you do now--...You come from a race of shape-changers--like those we called werewolves in our old home. When we came, some of you looked like every beast and some were of fantastic forms inspired by the clouds--or by lava flows or water. But we walked among you in power and majesty and might, hissing like a thousand serpents as we splashed down into your sea..."

There is the suggestion that the chewing of an addictive plant is what caused the crash-landed humans to become Shadow Children. Okay, fine, so there it is, the two races explained.

But then there are doubts. The abos are all of human form and behavior. It is the Shadow Children who are weird looking and seem indeterminate in their number and solidity. You never know how many of them there are or whether they will be tangible or ethereal.

The Old Wise One says:

"It is possible that our home was named Atlantis or Mu--or Gondwanaland, Africa, Poictesme or the Country of Friends.

Not sure about Country of Friends unless it refers to Quakers. But Atlantis is a legendary continent of the Atlantic Ocean. Mu the same for the Pacific. Gondwanaland is the name of a pre-cursor to Pangaea (existing long before humanity). Poictesme is a fictional province of France in the work of a somewhat obscure fantasy writer, James Branch Cabell.

Africa is okay but the other possible homelands leave me very suspicious about the true Earthly origins of Shadow Children.

Then there is this passage as Sandwalker and the Old Wise One discuss names of Shadow Children:

OWO: "We had no names before men came out of the sky. We were mostly long, and lived in holes between the roots of trees."

SW: "I thought we were the ones."

OWO admits: "I am confused". There are so many of you now and so few of us".

I interpret this to mean that the Old Wise One has started to have glimmers of what Shadow Children's true origin is- vague shape changers. Most of his race has become fully human abos and fully think they are human and have developed human abilities such as tool use. Shadow Children are those who made only a partial transformation to human form and have appearance, abilities and memories which are part human, part local shape-changer.

There is some talk about how Shadow Children have the ability to sing across the stars and lure human beings to them and again the Old Wise One claims confusion on which one of the races they are. And we know it is the Shadow Children who sing.

In the last discussion of such things another Shadow Child says:

"Men cross the stars, bending the sky to make the way short. Since first we came here----"

"Since first THEY came here," the Old Wise One corrected him gently. "Now I am half a man and know that we were always here, listening to thought that did not come; listening without thought of our own to be men. Or it may be that all are one stock, half-remembering and dwindling, half-forgetting and flourishing.

So, as so often from Gene Wolfe, we are given one explanation. Then another which contradicts it. Then a final sentence which completely muddies up and merges the whole thing. But for me I have to think Shadow Children are mostly versions of the local residents. The stuff about them being purely humans stunted by chewing a drug plant seems on a par with Inhum flying through space. A lie told so bald-facedly that we can't help but believe it, at first.

antonio at gmail.com — 05 Sep 2010, 21:02 · in reply to Lee Berman

No dia 2010/09/05, ?s 20:42, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> escreveu:

"It is possible that our home was named Atlantis or Mu--or
Gondwanaland, Africa,
Poictesme or the Country of Friends.

Not sure about Country of Friends

Possibly Cymru.

David Stockhoff — 05 Sep 2010, 23:16 · in reply to antonio at gmail.com

Why?

On 9/5/2010 5:02 PM, antonio at gmail.com wrote:

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Mr Thalassocrat — 06 Sep 2010, 01:01 · in reply to antonio at gmail.com

On Mon, Sep 6, 2010 at 6:32 AM, <antonio at gmail.com> wrote:
No dia 2010/09/05, ?s 20:42, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com>
escreveu:

"It is possible that our home was named Atlantis or Mu--or Gondwanaland,
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Not sure about Country of Friends

Possibly Cymru._____

Or "Philly" at a stretch, by association with "philai" = "friends". (Now that I write it down,
vaguely remember somebody else suggesting that sometime in the deep past.)

David Stockhoff — 06 Sep 2010, 03:49 · in reply to Mr Thalassocrat

Of course, Philly is not the only Philadelphia, historically. The Greeks had a few.

However, it doesn't seem quite on a par with the others ... it ought to be a literary reference,
not a real one. That would be my guess.

OTOH, it's a lot like "the land of the Neighbors."

On 9/5/2010 9:01 PM, Mr Thalassocrat wrote:

On Mon, Sep 6, 2010 at 6:32 AM, <antonio at gmail.com
<mailto:antonio at gmail.com>> wrote:

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Jeff Wilson — 06 Sep 2010, 05:49 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 9/5/2010 2:42 PM, Lee Berman wrote:
The Old Wise One says:

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Not sure about Country of Friends unless it refers to Quakers. But Atlantis is a legendary continent of the Atlantic Ocean. Mu the same for the Pacific. Gondwanaland is the name of a pre-cursor to Pangaea (existing long before humanity). Poictesme is a fictional province of France in the work of a somewhat obscure fantasy writer, James Branch Cabell.

Africa is okay but the other possible homelands leave me very suspicious about the true Earthly origins of Shadow Children.

The "Country of Friends" is almost certainly a reference to Texas, named after the the indigenous word for "friends". Texas is quadruply appropriate as the boyhood home state of Gene Wolfe, as an assimilated colony, as the center of the American space program, and as part of the area where Coronado encountered similar deception and duplicity in his quest for El Dorado.

It's also worth knowing that Coronado wrote that he considered the land to be useless, while standing amidst the undepleted buffalo herds, shortly to be "changed into" a new way of life for the plains indians and then into wealth for the colonizing Europeans.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Lee Berman — 06 Sep 2010, 07:50 · follows Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson- The "Country of Friends" is almost certainly a reference to Texas, named after the the indigenous word for "friends". Texas is quadruply appropriate as the boyhood home state of Gene Wolfe.

I like this explanation pretty well. Also, the state motto of Texas is "Friendship", based on the Caddo word.

Philadelphia seems a longer shot- its name most commonly translated as "brotherly love" but as the center of the "Quaker" religion the preferred name of which is "The Religious Society of Friends".

Moreover, Texas is more like a "Land" while Philly is more like an urban jungle.

Mo Holkar — 06 Sep 2010, 08:47 · in reply to Lee Berman

At 20:42 05/09/2010, you wrote:
Africa is okay but the other possible homelands leave me very suspicious about the true Earthly origins of Shadow Children.

In Classical times Africa was seen as a land of mythic wonders, hence "ex Africa semper aliquid novi". So I think this fits into the fantastical pattern of the other suggested homelands.

I take all this to be flagging the Shadow Children up as analogous to the various fay myths that humans have cherished on Earth. Perhaps Wolfe is hinting at a galaxy-wide settlement of fay-analogues before humans came along -- like in Poul Anderson's 'The Queen of Air and Darkness', if I'm remembering that correctly.

Poictesme is a fictional province of France in the work of a somewhat obscure fantasy writer, James Branch Cabell.

Sad to reflect that Cabell is now fairly described as "somewhat obscure". He was hugely influential on a wide range of SF & F authors, and I think much of his work is still very worthwhile and interesting. Lots of it can be read on Project Gutenberg, as it's out of copyright -- I recommend starting with Jurgen: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/8771>

Mo

~ # ~

WolfeWiki -- a wiki about Gene Wolfe

<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/>

Jeff Wilson — 06 Sep 2010, 09:37 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 9/6/2010 2:50 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

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Texas is referred to as "the land of friends" in another Wolfe story of the period, "Feather Tigers", which also features alien inheritors and vanished races and colonialism.

Jeff Wilson - [jwilson at io.com](mailto:jwilson@io.com)

Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana

< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Mr Thalassocrat — 06 Sep 2010, 10:58 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On Mon, Sep 6, 2010 at 7:07 PM, Jeff Wilson <[jwilson at io.com](mailto:jwilson@io.com)> wrote:

Texas is referred to as "the land of friends" in another Wolfe story of the period, "Feather Tigers", which also features alien inheritors and vanished races and colonialism.

Yup, Texas it is, I think.

David Stockhoff — 06 Sep 2010, 13:45 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Ahh, I wondered if there might be a way to get Texas on that list ...

On 9/6/2010 1:49 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 9/5/2010 2:42 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

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Gerry Quinn — 06 Sep 2010, 18:14 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>

To: <urth at lists.urth.net>>Gerry Quinn- As I read it, the Shadow Children are the degenerate
remnants of the

original human discoverers of St. Croix. The hillmen and marshmen are the
St. Croix aborigines who took on the discoverers' original form. They
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It is presented first, but then (I think) called into question.

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serpents as we splashed down into your sea..."

There is the suggestion that the chewing of an addictive plant is what caused the crash-landed humans to become Shadow Children. Okay, fine, so there it is, the two races explained.

But then there are doubts. The abos are all of human form and behavior. It is the Shadow Children who are weird looking and seem indeterminate in their number and solidity. You never know how many of them there are or whether they will be tangible or ethereal.

Nevertheless, they exist. Something is known of Earth. Contact must have been made.

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From a literary viewpoint, they are reflections of the suggestions of David and the narrator in *_5HoC_*.

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I interpret this to mean that the Old Wise One has started to have glimmers of what Shadow Children's true origin is- vague shape changers. Most of his race has become fully human abos and fully think they are human and have developed human abilities such as tool use. Shadow Children are those who made only a partial transformation to human form and have appearance, abilities and memories which are part human, part local shape-changer.

My interpretation is that the degenerate human discoverers have become outnumbered, and have for that reason become confused as to their own nature.. Their telepathy was always based on the reflections from the abos.

There is some talk about how Shadow Children have the ability to sing across the stars and lure human beings to to them and again the Old Wise One claims confusion on which one of the races they are. And we know it is the Shadow Children who sing.

In the last discussion of such things another Shadow Child says:

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There is only one Shadow Child left from the group - and then there is also Sandwalker, the Shadowfriend. The Old Wise One is now half a man, meaning that he is also half an abo. He is constructed equally from both. It is explained how that works.

Previously, there were multiple Shadow Children, and only one Shadowfriend.

So, as so often from Gene Wolfe, we are given one explanation. Then another which contradicts it. Then a final sentence which completely muddies up and merges the whole thing. But for me I have to think Shadow Children are mostly versions of the local residents. The stuff about them being purely humans stunted by chewing a drug plant seems on a par with Inhum flying through space. A lie told so bald-facedly that we can't help but believe it, at first.

I do believe it - I think it is the straightforward interpretation.

- Gerry Quinn

antonio at gmail.com — 06 Sep 2010, 18:54 · in reply to Lee Berman

No dia 2010/09/05, ?s 20:42, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> escreveu:

Inhum flying through space. A lie told so bald-facedly that we can't help but believe it, at first.

Just as an aside, Horm does say the inhum actually travel to Blue in Auk's lander.