

Inhumechanics

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 28 Mar 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1300>

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Dan Parmenter — 28 Mar 2001, 10:43

Blattid writes:

Ummmm. A great big "huh?" just hit me.

The inhumini can imitate us.

The inhumini can imitate Neighbors.

How many limbs have the inhumini? And how can they imitate both us and the Neighbors? Or ... can they?

Oddly enough, this hit me this weekend too. I had come to think of the Inhumini in their natural state as a kind of shapeless bat. I suppose that the question again emerges: how much actual shape-shifting can they do? And what exactly do they have to work with? We hear of limbs being stretched, but how many "limbs" do they have? I'm imagining a "radial" design, a kind of soft umbrella shape which might give them as many possible "limbs" as they need, though the shaping of hands, even poorly-functioning ones seems dicey as does any kind of walking, though it seems that the Inhumini can do both, if badly. We hear on numerous occasions of reshaping facial features and the wearing of powders and wigs, but I never assumed that they were just flying silly-putty with a head. There's also the seeming "telepathic" component. Wasn't it Borski who thought that this may well be their primary mode of "shape-shifting".

How much "information" do the inhumini get from their victims? We know that they get some kind of intelligence/memory/personality download; do they get some kind of genetic/somatic download also?

Is this yet another case of Wolfe playing Lysenko games?

Lamarck games I hope. Wolfe has never advocated Lysenkoism and has touched on the differences in several interviews and articles. But yes, Lamarckism is clearly one of Wolfe's recurring themes.

Shellac

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 28 Mar 2001, 12:17 · follows Dan Parmenter

Black Jacques Shellac a écrit:

I had come to think of the Inhumini in their natural state as a kind of shapeless bat.

Whereas I had been thinking of them as looking like, well, leeches.

I'm imagining a "radial" design, a kind of soft umbrella shape which might give them as many possible "limbs" as they need, though the shaping of hands, even poorly-

functioning ones seems dicey as does any kind of walking, though it seems that the Inhumans can do both, if badly.

H'mmm. Leeches are kinda-sorta radial. At least their mouths are.

There's also the seeming "telepathic" component. Wasn't it Borski who thought that this may well be their primary mode of "shape-shifting".

Actually, I think it was Krait -- He says something to Horn about people seeing what they expect to see and the inhumans exploiting that, which struck me as one of those "I mean more than I'm saying" things.

Is this yet another case of Wolfe playing Lysenko games?

Lamarck games I hope.

Uh, yeah. That. Oops. That's right. I meant Lamarck. It was a typo, honest. Lamarck.

The point of my question being, of course, that the inhumans' kids seem to inherit the characteristics their mumsies (and popsies?) acquire from the various sentients they suck on.

Okay, inhuman life cycle basics. They lay eggs in water. Baby inhumans come to a certain amount of development, apparently even including some degree of consciousness, in the eggshells, preciousssss. They hatch in some kind of aquatically correct shape -- little crocodagaters? Awww, cuuuute.

H'mmm. Wolfe describes them as reptilian; I think they're more amphibious. Anywho, eventually they go on land and start looking for something sentient to snack on.

Now, how about this proposal: An inhuman (or inhumana) does not get his(her) smarts from who he(she) feeds on, but on who his(her) mother (parents?) fed on.

No; that won't work -- viz. Fava having to feast on children now and then to counteract the effects of feeding on Granny. Or is that just physical appearance? I'm so confused...

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Kevin J. Maroney — 28 Mar 2001, 16:26 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

At 10:43 AM 3/28/01 -0500, Shellac wrote:

We hear on numerous occasions of reshaping facial features and the wearing of powders and wigs, but I never assumed that they were just flying silly-putty with a head. There's also the seeming "telepathic" component. Wasn't it Borski who thought that this may well be their primary mode of "shape-shifting".

I actually think I was the original advocate of the "inhuman as projective telepaths" theory, but I could be wrong on both counts.

It's clear that the inhumans do physically deform to resemble the things they want to resemble, but there are also some textual hints that they make their prey see them as they want to see them. (I wonder if they can only do this to one target species at a time. This would explain why animals can detect them when they're posing as humans.)

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Michael Straight — 28 Mar 2001, 20:43 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

On Wed, 28 Mar 2001, Kevin J. Maroney wrote:

It's clear that the inhumis do physically deform to resemble the things they want to resemble, but there are also some textual hints that they make their prey see them as they want to see them. (I wonder if they can only do this to one target species at a time. This would explain why animals can detect them when they're posing as humans.)

My impression was a weak psi-ability that doesn't influence what people see so much as encourage them not to look too closely and to ignore the flaws in the physical disguise, but that it could be overcome by someone determined to pay attention and be wary. But I don't think it's really spelled out. They might be influencing perceptions as well.

-Rostrum

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