

Yet another Secret theory: we have met the enemy and he is us

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 23 Apr 2001

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Adam Stephanides — 23 Apr 2001, 20:14

Say what you will about Nicholas Gevers' proposal, he's got people thinking about the Secret again. After some thought, I have a new theory, which seems to me to answer the difficulties around the Secret better than any other I've seen. In particular, it answers Kevin Maroney's question: what does Jahlee's revelation add to what we'd already guessed?

When Jahlee says that the inhumis take their children's minds from the humans whose blood they drink, she is not merely referring to their intelligence. The children's spirits (perhaps their souls, if inhumis have souls) are taken from humans. Krait is Horn's son, not just by adoption, but because his spirit is the same as Sinew's. This is why, during astral travel, the inhumis appear human. This is what Jahlee means when she tells Horn: "_You_ are my race. You know that, why won't you admit it? Inside, I'm one of you. So was everybody who fought for you at Gaon." (IGJ, 376) Horn "knows that" because he knows the Secret. It's what Horn means when he describes the inhumis, talking to Vadsig, as mirrors, and when he tells her that "Many [Neighbors] had left the whorls already, fleeing the inhumis but taking inhumis with them....We cannot run away from ourselves" (RttW, 236). The Neighbors brought inhumis with them, because they were themselves inhumis: the inhumis were their dark side.

So the way in which the Secret can be used as a weapon is indeed the Golden Rule bit proposed here before. If humans loved each other enough and were unselfish enough, then the inhumis, drinking their blood, would produce children who were too unselfish to drink human blood. Then the inhumis would lose their intelligence, and this would not be cruel to the inhumis because they were meant to be just animals: they have no spirits of their own (this is what I take to be Wolfe's view, not necessarily my own). The inhumis as they exist now are monstrosities, albeit pitiable monstrosities, like the beast-men of "The Island of Doctor Death" (sorry, alga, but I think that this fits Wolfe's portrayal of the inhumis better than visions of human-inhumis brotherhood [*] do).

There is still the objection raised to the Golden Rule idea when it was first brought up: how can the inhumis, having observed the colonists, believe that they could achieve this level of unselfishness? I don't have a real good answer to this. Maybe even the remote possibility of this occurring is enough to alarm the inhumis. Or maybe they think that Silkhorn's powers of persuasion could convert the colonists.

In any case, apart from the numerous objections that have been raised to Nicholas Gevers' specific proposal, I don't think that the key to the Secret or to how to reduce the inhumis to animals is any sort of improved strategy or technology. Horn tells Hide that the Neighbors "tried in their desperation to become stronger still, to know more and more and more, and succeeded, and were doomed by that success." (IGJ, 353)

--Adam

[*] Apologies for the sexist terminology; but I can't think of a suitable non-sexist substitute. "Fellowship" sounds like a bunch of Rotarians; "brother-and-sisterhood," aside from its awkwardness, implies that one species is the "brother" and the other the "sister," which is not what I mean.

While I'm apologizing, apologies if somebody else had anticipated this theory on the list. I tried to search the archives to see, but the relevant volume is too large for my computer to download.

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