

disposable robots and the talus

The Whorl list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 04 May 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/605>

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Greg Neyman — 04 May 1999, 23:03

hey Michael, about your last post:

the very concept of a seedship strikes me as so flawed . . . even the notion of a robotic terraforming flotilla (which is a near cousin) is based upon the premise that robots are disposable slaves! "Thanks for the planet, Tinman--now go rust someplace else, you are staining the lawn."

I think I take it for granted, but I'm glad that when I wake up at two in the morning to do that paper that I've been putting off, my computer doesn't return the error message "what the @\$% are you doing up at 2 in the morning, and more importantly, why are you bothering me!!!" the thing is, my computer was created to be my unquestioning servant ... if robots are created, whose sole purpose is to make a planet habitable for human detachment, then they won't care that they're thrown out like rubbish as soon as the terrans arrive ...

ALSO, the late Dr. Asimov has kindly provided me with information on the origin of Talus ... from an essay he wrote of the history of robots ... Greek mythological inventor extraordinaire Daedalus gave the people of Crete a fab gift, a giant brass man who could move, and whose sole purpose was to protect the rich isle from invaders ... the name of the brass man was Talus ...

/\ Greg Neyman Greg.Neyman at gte.net
//____ http://home1.gte.net/web100to/
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*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

Robert Patterson — 05 May 1999, 09:56 · follows Greg Neyman

Greg, about Michael's post:

hey Michael, about your last post:

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Another point is that if humans are ever going to inhabit other planets, with or without current biospheres, those planets will almost certainly require some level of terraforming. While I find the probability-based arguments for the existence of biospheres on other planets to be fairly plausible, I see no reason to expect that their life-chemistry will be in any way compatible with ours. I just re-read Vernor Vinge's A_Fire_Upon_the_Deep_, and while it is a great book, he seems rather naive in assuming that everyone can eat everyone else and not die.

Of course, if we discover some nice e.t. delicacies on Europa, all bets are off.

R.

Robert Patterson

<http://home.midsouth.rr.com/rpatterson>

Alastair Reynolds — 05 May 1999, 15:20 · follows Robert Patterson

Robert:

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R.

there's a nice Joe Haldeman short story which exploits the idea of incompatible biochemistries - I think it's in his last collection, whatever it was called.

It's interesting that at the moment, SF seems to be questioning some of the core assumptions which have held good for decades - like, if we had the ability to settle other worlds (in this solar system or elsewhere) we automatically would do so. Remember in Sterling's Schismatrix, how the entire solar system has been "taken over" by humans, but hardly anyone actually bothers with settling planets or moons. Similarly in Egan's recent Diaspora, the posthuman explorers (actually just software running on tiny spacecraft!) are deeply reluctant to introduce any sort of contaminant into the planet they are exploring. Rather than sending submarine probes into the planet's ocean, they toy with the idea of waiting a few hundred years until a tsunami dumps some sea-life onto dry-land, where they can study it from orbit.

Incidentally - for anyone interested in the science (and art) of extrasolar planets - I'd suggest having a look at this **very** nice website I found yesterday (needs Java though):

<http://www.jtwinc.com/Extrasolar/>

cheers...

Al

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