

Typhon and Pas

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 13 Dec 1999

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Mitchell A. Bailey — 13 Dec 1999, 18:19

One curious contrast I noticed between the postoperative recuperating Typhon of Urth and the bicephalic simulation Pas of the Whorl.

Typhon of Urth was rather reticent about his, er, condition when the Conciliator showed up. The monarch had retired to his work camp in the mountains where his monument was being carved while he recovered (that is, until Piaton should outlive his usefulness and be amputated like a tumour). The chiliarch threatened Sev with death if he should speak of anything he might see or hear, and ensured the troopers could not see the monarch when the curtain was drawn. I think we can guess what it is Typhon did not want spoken of, and it seems clear that he does not wish his subjects generally to see or know about his surgery or the means by which his intended rejuvenation was supposed to occur.

He appeared readily enough to Sev in both `_Sword_` and `UNS`, but those were special cases out of sight of his ordinary subjects.

On the other hand, the Typhon who was simulated as Pas seemed to have no problem whatsoever with the people on the Whorl seeing his disfigurement, and in fact flaunted it as a sort of trademark.

Other than to say that the Cargo of `_Whorl_` were permanently removed from Urth and what is an acceptable appearance for a god might be unsuitable for a monarch, it seems to be a bit of a contradiction in attitudes. This could call into question the theory that Urth and Whorl occupy the same milieu after all.

Greene, Carlton — 13 Dec 1999, 18:55 · follows Mitchell A. Bailey

I always understood that the chiliarch was protecting against news of Typhon's weakened, post-operative condition, and not the fact that he would be sporting two heads for a while. Although we might see Typhon's status as horridly embarrassing, it might also be seen as an impressive, god-like display of magical technology. Such a display is consistent with Typhon's deity status on the Whorl generation ship. It is also a peculiarly symbol-laden technological achievement, and gives Typhon more of the mythological touches that a good deity needs. A two-headed man has a rich grounding in myth (Janus and fairy tale giants spring to mind), much more so than a man who achieves immortality by taking a high-tech multivitamin.

As a practical matter, it might have taken too long for Typhon to wait for his spare head to atrophy before returning to his empire, leading him to make the best of it and exploit his two-heads' symbolism as best he could. Are we told how long it would take for Piaton to atrophy?

Having said all this, it does seem odd that he would choose his two-headed self as the self-image he bequeathed to posterity aboard the whorl, given that he planned a return to one-headedness. Maybe the mythological power of that symbol was more important than the

man he would become.

C/

From: Mitchell A. Bailey[SMTP:MAB at lindau.net]
Reply To: urth at lists.best.com
Sent: Monday, December 13, 1999 9:19 PM
To: urth at lists.best.com
Subject: (urth) Typhon and Pas

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 13 Dec 1999, 16:24 · follows Greene, Carlton

Mitchell A. Bailey wrote:

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I agree with everything but the last paragraph.

I took the situation as meaning that the "scanning" for the Whorl had happened before the slave's head had been removed; thus sometime before Severian met Typhon in Typhon's era; which is obvious and self-evident.

I would add to your notions that it would be more fitting for a god to have two heads. That is true and I agree. Here's the addition: we know that Typhon was seriously messing with the heads of all the people (and embryos) going onboard the Whorl, thus there is no "continuity" problem for them; whereas on Urth, the palace guards are saying, hey, what's the deal--bossman had only one head yesterday!

=mantis=