

Pas's Two Heads

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 08 Nov 2002

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James Jordan — 08 Nov 2002, 15:53

At 11:24 PM 11/7/2002, Roy wrote:

So, when Typhon decided to build the _Whorl_ (for whatever reason), he *did not* plan to have himself scanned as a two-headed god. At some point before the launch, events overtook him. He was forced to change his original plans and have himself scanned *after* he had been grafted to Piaton. (Why he didn't have himself poured into a custom-made, look-alike chem body, like Loris, and Potto, and the others, I don't know.) But, so far as I know, Typhon never set foot in the _Whorl_. There was *no reason* for his scanned, digitized personality to have been depicted as two-headed. Given Typhon's vanity, it doesn't make sense for it to have been done that way.

The entire pantheon of Pas and his family and friends is all the more a travesty, some sort of sick joke, apparently. Yet the manteions in the pre-fabricated cities were built before the human cargo was put aboard. The Sacred Windows, the gods in Mainframe, all of that seems to have been planned from the beginning. Did Typhon's original plan call for him to be scanned as his one-headed self (with a new body)? Did he have time to have the Writings composed to reflect his two-headed godhead, create the whole mythology that permeates the _Whorl_? Why bother? If he wanted to play god, he didn't need to be two-headed to do it, and from his egocentric viewpoint, it wouldn't have been desirable.

Maybe. Maybe not. Janus of Rome was two-headed, and thereby ruled the past and the future. Typhon may well have wanted a two-headed image for Pas, so that he was visibly greater than other gods. Think also of the double-headed eagle of Russia, and similar images. We don't know that Pas's two heads looked like Typhon and Piaton. They may have both looked like Typhon. Of course, on the other hand, the reason Pas is not as bad as Typhon may be because the second head is Piaton's, and Piaton's nature has become highly influential in Pas. I don't think we have the information to decide about this.

Nutria

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 08 Nov 2002, 18:14 · follows James Jordan

There is nothing in the books which seems to me to suggest that the appearance of the Gods of Mainframe is necessarily based upon the appearance of the bodies in which they resode when they were scanned -- it seems to be more a matter of either self-image or a chosen image. (Does Tartaros manifest visibly?)

The "scan" seems to be a sort of brain-snapshot, or perhaps soul-snapshot. So even if it was taken when Typhon was grafted onto Piaton, it would only be a scan of the one brain.

It is not at all clear to me why Pas has two heads, but it seems clear that this is a choice Typhon made, either consciously or un-. It might have some reference to the Piaton body; it seems likely to me that he would want to scan himself at the last possible moment before the launch of

the _Whorl_, to preserve as much of his self as possible.

Roy C. Lackey — 08 Nov 2002, 20:18 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Dan'l wrote:

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No, he doesn't.

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Having been blind from birth, the scan of Tartaros is limited by the biological abilities of the brain he was born with. Knowledge he acquired after birth becomes a part of his personality, or whatever you want to call it that gets scanned, but he can't learn to see, not even digitally, because the requisite areas of his brain were never developed, and no amount of computer-enhanced tinkering can change that. At least that is the essence of what he told Auk.

I agree that Piaton's brain was unlikely to have been scanned. The only reason Typhon kept Piaton around at all was to handle biological functions that Typhon's brain hadn't yet learned to assume. Typhon had no body to worry about in Mainframe, so Piaton was entirely superfluous.

As regards two-heads-being-better-than-one for inspiring or enhancing religious awe, as Nutria suggests, I must have been born lacking that gene. <g> A two-headed man is a freak, like a two-headed calf; the idea of worshiping such a thing would never cross my mind. Sev's thoughts on first seeing Typhon were:

"A man, larger than I and far broader of shoulder, stepped from between the foot of a cataphract, and it was as though one of the monstrous constellations of the night sky had fallen to Urth and clothed itself in the flesh of humankind. For the man had two heads, like an ogre in some forgotten tale in _The Wonders of Urth and Sky_.

"Instinctively, I put my hand on the sword hilt at my shoulder."

Sev's gut reaction was not to fall to his knees, but to grab a weapon. And the more Sev found out about him, the less he liked him. Sev may have feared the power of the monster, but that didn't stop him from killing it, having first refused, specifically and emphatically, to worship it.

-Roy

James Jordan — 08 Nov 2002, 20:49 · follows Roy C. Lackey

At 02:18 PM 11/8/2002, you wrote:

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-Roy

But then, why would Typhon make himself look like an ogre? My point was that two-headed gods are not unknown, especially in Rome, and Rome is a big deal for Wolfe. In the symbolism of the Whorl novels, the mainframe gods are like the Roman ones, the Whorl like the Roman empire, and Viron like Israel at the time of Jesus. So a two-headed Roman god like Janus makes sense. The Romans did not view Janus as an ogre, however Severian might have looked upon him.

FWIW

JBJordan