

Reasoning about Typhon and Pas

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 11 Nov 2002

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Dan Rabin — 11 Nov 2002, 06:33

I'm not much bothered by the inconsistencies between the account of Typhon in *_The Book of the New Sun_* and *_The Urth of the New Sun_* as opposed to that of Pas in *_The Book of the Long Sun_*. I just don't think Wolfe is the sort of storyteller to be tightly constrained by a story he told about the same character in a book ten years previously. It's Typhon's arrogance and megalomania that are important, not whether the back-story of the building of the *_Whorl_* in *_Long Sun_* could be flawlessly fitted into the timeline of the stories in the earlier *_Sun_* books.

As to why Typhon didn't build a chem body like Lemur and the other councilors, I can offer three explanations. On the real-world plane, I could insist that the technologies in the two series are differently conceived, and that personality-scanning isn't a possibility in Wolfe's earlier books. Or I could say that having an organic monster was important for effect in the earlier books, but evil men making themselves into machines was important in the later ones.

If I wanted to play the game of concocting explanations within the secondary world, I could suggest that the adaptation of the personality-scanning technique to the construction of chem bodies that impersonate the personality's former body is an actual innovation of the Lesser Primate family in Viron; perhaps nobody had actually thought to merge together the technology of personality-scanning with the technology of chem-building, or perhaps the prejudice against chems as servants and cannon-fodder was too strong for anyone to try.

It's not that I don't enjoy the game--it's just that I think that at some point we have to admit that we're talking about works of art by an inhabitant of the same world we inhabit, and that that author may have chosen to subordinate the consistency of his constructed world to his distinct visions of his distinct works.

That being said, I have to admit that, although I understand intellectually the assertion that Typhon in *_New Sun_* is a cardboard character, I personally have always found him fascinating, and have long fantasized that Wolfe would write a *_Book of Typhon_* (followed perhaps by a *_Book of Piaton_*). Of course, these books would account for their own existence in some wonderful and unforeseen way. I guess we could always put these books on the shelves of the imaginary library that has been previously discussed on this mailing list.

-- Dan Rabin