

Potto and Typhon

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 22 Nov 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3598>

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cilluff1 at optonline.net — 22 Nov 2002, 18:26

Crush wrote:

Crush responds:

Oh, no. Not at all. Potto says in LS4:1

"As we aged, Cousin Tarsier made us new bodies *out of chems*."

This statement horrifies Mint who asks, "What became of the chems?" To their minds?" and then, "You got this body from another person. And-and changed it to look like you? You must have. Did he consent to any of that?">>

Reading this excerpt, I am struck by the parallel between what Loris, Potto, etc. did in stealing these chem bodies for themselves and Typhon's appropriation of Piaton. I am not what, if anything, GW may have meant by the parallel, perhaps just that absolute power corrupts absolutely, and that those in power will do anything to maintain it, even cheating death by forcing the death of others.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 22 Nov 2002, 21:21 · follows cilluff1 at optonline.net

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One might go so far as to accuse Wolfe of "deconstructing" identity through these books. A quick, from-memory list of some of the identity-related issues ... because this comes from my memory, I have to use place-holders for some names ... I intend the list as suggestive, not comprehensive or exhaustive, and I'm only listing questions that seem to me to bear directly on the uberquestion of identity ... I do not believe most of the questions here have received definitive answers, and indeed wonder if Wolfe intends them to _have_ such answers; but it seems clear to me that, at the very least, he intends his readers to _think_ about these questions.

5HC:

- o The name and identity of Number Five
- o The identity and relationship of Number Five's "brother" David and "aunt" Jeannine to himself and the Wolfe line, and Jeannine's identity as Aubrey Veil
- o The identity and nature of "John V. Marsch" and/or "Victor" o Who is human? Who is an abo? Who is a clone? Are abos descended from Atlanteans? Are the Vanished People different from abos? What about Naomi?
- o Why are all boy-children "John?"
- o Are John and John two people or one?

BotNS/UotNS:

- o Do one's memories compose one's identity? (Does a memorious person like Severian have a stronger or a weaker sense of self than "normal" people?)
- o Is a resurrected person the same person as the person who died?
- o In what sense is an aquastor the person it presents?
- o Who are Severian's parents? How and how much does one's parentage/ancestry determinewho one is? (nature/nurture)
- o What does the addition of artifical parts do to a human's identity (Jolenta, Baldanders)?
- o Does a created person (Jonah, Dr. Talos, etc.) have a
- o What does the use of the analeptic alzabo do to one's identity? "personal" identity, or is it a thing?
- o Does the alzabo itself have a personal identity? Is this separate from the identities of the people it consumes? Do they continue to have separate identities? ("My name is Legion...")
- o When a timewalker crosses his own path, who is who and why? o Is this story set in our future, our past, or neither of the above, and what difference does it make?
- o How many Severians are there, and are they the same person or not? (Decide for yourself whether or not to include Apu-Punchau...)

BotLS/BotSS:

- o Is Pas Typhon or just a representation of him? (What about that other head? Piaton?) Is he the same person after he is killed and reassembled? And how about Pas-Silk?
- o What happens to the identity of a possessed person? Of the possessor? Is this different in the case of Mucor's possession (which appears to have a different fundamental mechanism, in that she does not appear to enter through the eyes)?
- o Who is the Narrator and when is he whom and why?
- o To what extent can an inhum?, a hus, or a chem be considered a person? What about a Neighbor? A night chough? A cataphract? A tree?

- o Are the inhumans a sentient race? If not, are individual inhumans sentient beings?
- o When a chem is rebuilt or reprogrammed is it the same person?
- o Back to identity and memory -- to what extent is Marble also Rose? Do they integrate persons or "just" memories, or is there a difference?
- o Whatever happened to minds/souls/whatever of the chems the Lesser Primates possessed?
- o Who was Potto(?) when he found his body had died?
- o If a demon (or a "god") pretending to be a god becomes (an aspect of) that god, is their identity merged or dissolved into the god?
- o More about parentage -- Silk's (he seems to have four parents), Chen's, Orpine's, etc.
- o If Blue is/isn't Ushas, how can/could we know?

"Soldier" books:

[I haven't read these many times, or in quite a while, so I can't really say much about them, but...] o Does Latro have an identity at all? Does he construct a new one every time he reads his scrolls? If he failed to read them, would he be someone else? Nobody at all?

Etc., etc., etc. Perhaps this could form the beginning of an organized approach to these questions, especially if others chime in with more questions for the list ... I'd be particularly curious to see questions from the stand-alone novels and short stories. (I don't imagine we'd have much trouble coming up with a list for PEACE, for example.) Note however, that a question that simply seeks to put a name on a mysterious figure, or determine whether two figures far apart are "the same person," is not likely to be a candidate for this list ... those are puzzles, not mysteries.

James Wynn — 22 Nov 2002, 23:36 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Well, for the Soldier books the entire Greek pantheon is of questionable identity. Demeter/Earth Goddess and Kore/Artemis are ostensibly at odds yet their orders to Latro are not necessarily at odds. Furthermore Latro says in Mist that the gods are like servants receiving supplicants of a great king. But (in Arete I believe) he says iirc that in talking to the gods he has the sense of watching a Greek play in which a single actor plays different characters merely by putting a different mask before his face.

Also, (in Mist) Eurycles/Drakaina's identity is in question seeming to be simultaneously the necromancer and the serpent spirit that possesses him.

--Crush

-----Original Message-----

From: Dan'l Danehy-Oakes [mailto:ddanehy at siebel.com] Sent: Friday, November 22, 2002 3:22 PM To: urth at urth.net Subject: RE: (urth) Potto and Typhon

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