

Typhon's nature

The Urth list — 208 messages, 14 voices, 09 Oct 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6060>

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Andrew Mason — 09 Oct 2011, 21:37

Larry Miller wrote:

SO does anyone else give credence to Borskis idea that Typhon is the nieghbor Windcloud?

I think the main evidence for Typhon as Neighbour was that they both have doubled body parts; but I don't find this plausible, as Typhon's doubled part was artificial.

Andrew Mason — 09 Oct 2011, 21:46 · follows Andrew Mason

Larry Miller wrote:

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I don't think it does, really. It's not humans, as such, but Commonwealth citizens who have saint's names; Ash, for instance, or Loyal to the Group of Seventeen don't. (Also Baldanders seems to be human in origin but to have adopted a monstrous name when he became a monster.) And this principle is carried on into Long Sun/Short Sun; people born in the Commonwealth region on Urth (Mamelta, Roger) have saints' names, though no one else does. Also, here Typhon's daughter has a saint's name - Cilinia - which seems to imply that she is human.

I don't know if Typhon is an Urthling, or an off-earth human from one of the planets settled during the first empire; but I don't think he's totally alien.

larry miller — 09 Oct 2011, 22:49 · in reply to Andrew Mason

In the Sword of the Lictor Typhon says a few things that seems to indicate an alien origin. He tells Severian that "I was not born, at least not in the way you mean it". Also Typhon says that though he has lived a day he has sent his thoughts to far places, seemingly making contact with the megatherians. This seems very similiar to the astral abilities possessed by the Nieghbors. Was Cillinia born on the Whorl or Urth? Perhaps she has a saints name because she was fathered by Piaton and then later adopted by the alien Monarch?

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David Stockhoff — 10 Oct 2011, 00:38 · in reply to larry miller

A simpler explanation of Typhon's remark is that he was born as Silk was born, i.e., from a surrogate mother.

Recall Macbeth, where the witches' prophecy "not of woman born" was fulfilled by a cesarean birth. Surely Typhon outdoes Macduff (we are not much impressed by c-sections today) but probably it doesn't need to be by much. Perhaps he was grown in a vat and "decanted" or even genetically "designed," but he'd still need a human body to parasitize.

On 10/9/2011 6:49 PM, larry miller wrote:

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Lane Haygood — 10 Oct 2011, 00:42 · in reply to David Stockhoff

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yvt,
LH

On Sun, Oct 9, 2011 at 7:38 PM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

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larry miller — 10 Oct 2011, 01:05 · in reply to David Stockhoff

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Jeff Wilson — 10 Oct 2011, 07:30 · in reply to larry miller

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If Typhon was a clone to begin with, and could transfer his consciousness at will, why bother with the head graft? Just possess another clone brother.

Consequently, I believe that Typhon's disclaimer of being born must have been originally a

reference to his then surgically assembled nature. His thoughts being sent into far places could easily have been him spying through the remaining technological outposts similar to the speaking machines in the Matchin Tower and Valeria's reception hall. He may have had telepresences there to keep his ruling face au courant.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

larry miller — 10 Oct 2011, 10:53 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

I Believe that was Typhons plan to download into another clone body but something happened which prevented this. The Mandragora we see at the end of Citadel is probably this discarded clone body. Your point about Typhon using communication devices is interesting though.

On 10/10/11, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at clueland.com> wrote:

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David Stockhoff — 10 Oct 2011, 12:31 · in reply to larry miller

I'm not sure anyone has suggested before that Typhon is an alien mind in a human body (who for some reason is very attached to his body's face). Nor that the "beans" are human/oid embryos. It seems possible and not inconsistent with the BotNS universe or Wolfe in general.

We do know (or suspect) that the sea-Mothers on Blue and Urth are physical sisters. Moving minds ought to be easier than bodies.

On 10/9/2011 9:05 PM, larry miller wrote:

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David Stockhoff — 10 Oct 2011, 12:43 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/10/2011 3:30 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/9/2011 8:05 PM, larry miller wrote:

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Except that this would require "outposts" at the south pole and under the sea.

True that any embryo-implanting technology should encompass cloning, since we know cloning was used to create the uhlans, and therefore the head graft would seem to be rendered unnecessary by mind-transfer technology. However, we don't know for sure whether mind-scanning is fatal (as in TFHoC) or not, and Typhon is not a guy who would want a second Typhon running around even briefly. Doesn't that make it a little less simple? (As opposed to godlike possession powers, which clearly are not called for here---we know Pas was created by scanning.)

I don't think the head graft could possibly be taken as a form of "birth" in any sense. Something

more like actual birth is meant.

David Stockhoff — 10 Oct 2011, 14:19 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On rereading, it is somewhat ambiguous---

"No, I was not born as I am, or born at all, as you meantit. Nor was Piaton grafted to me. I was grafted to him. "

---but still leads to only one clean conclusion. Typhon is referring, with "as I am" to his apparent two-headed condition, since Severian plainly asked about it, but "or born at all, as you meantit" must be an aside referring to something Severian did not refer to except with the word "born" itself. Severian has no reason to think Typhon was NOT born, so his assumption is the usual kind of birth (but including c-section as a matter of course, since he is familiar with it). In addition he asks how Typhon got that way.

But Typhon does not think of his current configuration, with his head on a whole body, as "himself" but rather as his riding a "steed." He means:

---I was not born with no body of my own

---Furthermore, I was not born at all, with body or not

The rest is a response to Severian's "was Piaton's head attached to you." Thus, Typhon was not originally born in the usual manner.

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larry miller — 10 Oct 2011, 15:38 · in reply to David Stockhoff

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Gerry Quinn — 10 Oct 2011, 16:38 · in reply to larry miller

From: larry miller

All we know for sure is that Piaton is not Typhons original body. The links between Scylla and Typhon suggest that maybe his original form was that of a megatherian.

But we know Typhon's head was human or humanoid, and that he lived on land when he ruled Urth. I don't think it's tenable to identify him with a sea monster. Nor was his observation "there are powers in the sea that would rule" followed by "used to be one myself".

In the two later series there is considerable evidence that Typhon was human or at least reasonably humanoid.

I think Jonas telling the beans story in the same chapter of the Piteous Gate (most likely caused by the undines swimming through the river beyond the wall) is Wolfes sly way of hinting at a connection. Growing from a bean as being a way to explain cloning from a frozen embryo seems to fit with high technology passed off as magic throughout the books.

The beans certainly are embryos of some kind (or nano-factories or whatever sea monsters develop from). And Wolfe once observed that Damon Knight grew him from a bean. But I don't where you find a connection with Typhon here.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 10 Oct 2011, 16:44 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Sorry all, just realised my overaggressive spam filter is messing up the threads, I will delete its comments from the titles of future posts.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 10 Oct 2011, 17:00 · in reply to larry miller

Jonas and Typhon are twins in the sense that they both physically ride other bodies. Jonas does appear to then ride another body (Miles) without any visible technological means of doing so. The door is thus opened for Typhon to do the same. But Jonas clearly cares little for his "body." Typhon definitely cares a lot.

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Yeah the passage is really ambiguous. Ive just been stuck on the idea that Typhon was an alien since rereading BotNS the second time and learning later of Wolfes naming strategum cemented the idea in my mind. All we know for sure is that Piaton is not Typhons original body. The links between Scylla and Typhon suggest that maybe his original form was that of a megatherian. I think Jonas telling the beans story in the same chapter of the Piteous Gate (most likely caused by the undines swimming through the river beyond the wall) is

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On 10/10/11, David Stockhoff<dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

On rereading, it is somewhat ambiguous---

"No, I was not born as I am, or born at all, as you meant it. Nor was Piaton grafted to me. I was grafted to him. "

---but still leads to only one clean conclusion. Typhon is referring, with "as I am" to his apparent two-headed condition, since Severian plainly asked about it, but "or born at all, as you meant it" must be an aside referring to something Severian did not refer to except with the word "born" itself. Severian has no reason to think Typhon was NOT born, so his assumption is the usual kind of birth (but including c-section as a matter of course, since he is familiar with it). In addition he asks how Typhon got that way.

But Typhon does not think of his current configuration, with his head on a whole body, as "himself" but rather as his riding a "steed." He means:

---I was not born with no body of my own
---Furthermore, I was not born at all, with body or not

The rest is a response to Severian's "was Piaton's head attached to you." Thus, Typhon was not originally born in the usual manner.

Any other interpretation would require that Typhon thinks of himself as two-headed. He doesn't. If he did, he would mean:

---I was not born two-headed
---I was surgically made two-headed

So that's not what he means.

On 10/10/2011 8:43 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/10/2011 3:30 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/9/2011 8:05 PM, Larry Miller wrote:

Or maybe that particular body of Typhon's was grown from an embryo (Or one of Jonas' beans) and then downloaded into it when his original body died? I don't have the book on hand but I also seem to remember him commenting on the longevity of physical bodies in contrast to the longevity of consciousness. Perhaps this wasn't in reference to human bodies but to his original alien form. Any thoughts on his other comment about sending his thoughts out?

If Typhon was a clone to begin with, and could transfer his consciousness at will, why bother with the head graft? Just possess another clone brother.

Consequently, I believe that Typhon's disclaimer of being born must have been originally a reference to his then surgically assembled nature. His thoughts being sent into far places could easily have

been him spying through the remaining technological outposts similar to the speaking machines in the Matchin Tower and Valeria's reception hall. He may have had telepresences there to keep his ruling face au courant.

Except that this would require "outposts" at the south pole and under the sea.

True that any embryo-implanting technology should encompass cloning, since we know cloning was used to create the uhlans, and therefore the head graft would seem to be rendered unnecessary by mind-transfer technology. However, we don't know for sure whether mind-scanning is fatal (as in TFHoC) or not, and Typhon is not a guy who would want a second Typhon running around even briefly. Doesn't that make it a little less simple? (As opposed to godlike possession powers, which clearly are not called for here---we know Pas was created by scanning.)

I don't think the head graft could possibly be taken as a form of "birth" in any sense. Something more like actual birth is meant.

avast! Antivirus: Outbound message clean.
Virus Database (VPS): 111010-0, 10/10/2011
Tested on: 10/10/2011 8:43:38 AM
avast! - copyright (c) 1988-2011 AVAST Software.
<http://www.avast.com>

Jeff Wilson — 10 Oct 2011, 17:29 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/10/2011 7:43 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/10/2011 3:30 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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Except that this would require "outposts" at the south pole and under the sea.

I don;t know about require; sensors can have ranges and their data may be used to infer details beyond those. An ancient but still functional satllite in orbit above the south pole and the sea could be accessible to Typhon "Hmm, weather patterns continue to deteriorate... Great Me, what is that THING on the infrared?"

The talking machines could intercept intelligence from the Ascians' transmissions and preserve it for their master's review. Jonas, for example, is a machine that knows about the great beasts without being currently at the south pole or under the sea. He probably lost his antennas for far communication, though.

As to not being born at all, that could mean he was gestated mechanically, perhaps like Dr Talos.

larry miller — 10 Oct 2011, 17:45 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

In dr. Talos play Scylla is mentioned alongside Abaia and Erebus. Knowing that Scylla is part of Typhons family it doesn't seem too farfetched to assume Typhon was originally one of the Megatherians. Maybe his bean grown body was humanoid and he transferred into it from his monster form. Then something prevented him from transferring into the Mandragora in Citadel (more than likely a Proto-Chem) and his only alternative was to graft his humanoid head onto Piatons body. We know that Typhon as Pas did not get on well with Scylla and the others so it makes sense that he would want to enslave them when he regains control of the Commonwealth. Typhon more than likely feels as though he has surpassed his waterbound brethren and does not count himself among them.

On 10/10/11, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

From: larry miller

All we know for sure is that Piaton is not Typhons original body. The links between Scylla and Typhon suggest that maybe his original form was that of a megatherian.

But we know Typhon's head was human or humanoid, and that he lived on land when he ruled Urth. I don't think it's tenable to identify him with a sea monster. Nor was his observation "there are powers in the sea that would rule" followed by "used to be one myself".

In the two later series there is considerable evidence that Typhon was human or at least reasonably humanoid.

I think Jonas telling the beans story in the same chapter of the Piteous Gate (most likely caused by the undines swimming through the river beyond the wall) is Wolfes sly way of hinting at a connection. Growing from a bean as being a way to explain cloning from a frozen embryo seems to fit with high technology passed off as magic throughout the books.

The beans certainly are embryos of some kind (or nano-factories or whatever sea monsters develop from). And Wolfe once observed that Damon Knight grew him from a bean. But I don't where you find a connection with Typhon here.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 10 Oct 2011, 17:59 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/10/2011 1:29 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/10/2011 7:43 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/10/2011 3:30 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

His thoughts being sent into far places could easily have been him spying through the remaining technological outposts similar to the speaking machines in the Matchin Tower and Valeria's reception hall. He may have had telepresences there to keep his ruling face au courant.

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It's possible. It's just a lot to expect the reader to guess. And Typhon, by his own account, is not one to speak indirectly. For myself, I tend to want to interpret him as neither god nor demigod but as an example of pure hubris. He's like a tower built to reach Heaven. That requires him to have been constructed by humans. Genetics (assuming we allow a gene for telepathy, as we must if we allow telepathy, which we must because Mucor exists) explains Silk, Mucor, and Typhon.

Gerry Quinn — 10 Oct 2011, 18:16 · in reply to larry miller

From: larry miller

In dr. Talos play Scylla is mentioned alongside Abaia and Erebus. Knowing that Scylla is part of Typhons family it doesn't seem too farfetched to assume Typhon was originally one of the Megatherians.

Scylla (the sea monster) and Cilinia (Typhon's daughter whose digitised personality was later named Scylla) are different entities.

Maybe his bean grown body was humanoid and he transferred into it from his monster form. Then something prevented him from transferring into the Mandragora in Citadel (more than likely a Proto-Chem) and his only alternative was to graft his humanoid head onto Piatons body. We know that Typhon as Pas did not get on well with Scylla and the others so it makes sense that he would want to enslave them when he regains control of the Commonwealth. Typhon more than likely feels as though he has surpassed his waterbound brethren and does not count himself among them.

The beans were or symbolised the embryos of the sea monsters. Typhon may well have come from off-Urth, but IMO there's nothing to suggest he was visibly distinct from the average human. He got old or ill and needed a full-body transplant, that's all.

- Gerry Quinn

Andrew Mason — 10 Oct 2011, 19:11 · follows Gerry Quinn

One thing, by the way, that would count against Typhon being a Neighbour, is that Wolfe has said that he did not know about the inhumis - which, if he came from Blue, he surely would have known. That does not rule out his being an alien of some other sort, of course.

larry miller — 10 Oct 2011, 19:48 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Yeah Im not too sure about Typhon being a Neighbor either. I just remember reading Borskis idea that he was Windcloud. I am convinced that he is an alien however.

On 10/10/11, Andrew Mason <andrew.mason53 at gmail.com> wrote:
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larry miller — 10 Oct 2011, 20:59 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Wait who was Typhons wife? Was that Echidna? My copies of the Long Sun are packed and I'm going off pure memory.

On 10/10/11, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

From: larry miller

In dr. Talos play Scylla is mentioned alongside Abaia and Erebus. Knowing that Scylla is part of Typhons family it doesn't seem too farfetched to assume Typhon was originally one of the Megatherians.

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- Gerry Quinn

António Pedro Marques — 10 Oct 2011, 21:42 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson wrote (10-10-2011 08:30):

If Typhon was a clone to begin with, and could transfer his consciousness at will, why bother with the head graft? Just possess another clone brother.

There is no transferral of conscience. There is just duplication. If you duplicate it and the original dies, the original doesn't get anything from the copy's still being around.

António Pedro Marques — 10 Oct 2011, 21:46 · in reply to larry miller

larry miller wrote (10-10-2011 16:38):

Growing from a bean as
being a way to explain cloning from a frozen embryo

Whoa. That would mean Gene Wolfe was cloned from a frozen embryo one night.

David Stockhoff — 10 Oct 2011, 21:56 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

Unless there is scanning of the older clone and uploading into the younger.

If Typhon has superpowers that are genetic in origin, he'd lose them if he transferred to another brain, unless that brain also has that genetically-derived infrastructure. Might this explain his reluctance to lose his "face"?

On 10/10/2011 5:42 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

Jeff Wilson wrote (10-10-2011 08:30):

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António Pedro Marques — 10 Oct 2011, 23:00 · in reply to David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff wrote (10-10-2011 22:56):

Unless there is scanning of the older clone and uploading into the younger.

When the older dies, the older dies, regardless of having been copied into the younger. The entity may go on existing for third parties, including the younger clone, but not for itself.

If Typhon has superpowers that are genetic in origin, he'd lose them if he transferred to another brain, unless that brain also has that genetically-derived infrastructure. Might this explain his reluctance to lose his "face"?

That's a pretty good idea.

I find that face stuff strange, unless there is some deeper meaning of faces to be reckoned with.

larry miller — 10 Oct 2011, 23:32 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

I think Typhons obsession with his face has more to do with maintaining his rule. His face was probably a symbol of his reign in the same way that the Autarchs face adorns the coin given to Severian by Vodalus. I believe he says something along the lines of "Its the face that men obey". This might also explain Typhons hiding out in his mountain in Urth of the New Sun. If the populace were to know they were ruled by a two headed alien they might threaten Typhons monarchy.

On 10/10/11, António Pedro Marques <antonio at gmail.com> wrote:

David Stockhoff wrote (10-10-2011 22:56):

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David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 02:47 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

On 10/10/2011 7:00 PM, Ant?nio Pedro Marques wrote:

David Stockhoff wrote (10-10-2011 22:56):

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I don't follow. The younger clone would start off his memories at the point where the older was scanned and thus continue on as the same entity. At least that's how it works in Home Fires. (The problem would be meeting yourself, which would be resolved in a clone situation by assuming scanning = death.)

If Typhon has superpowers that are genetic in origin, he'd lose them if he transferred to another brain, unless that brain also has that genetically-derived infrastructure. Might this explain his reluctance to lose his "face"?

That's a pretty good idea.

I find that face stuff strange, unless there is some deeper meaning of faces to be reckoned with.

Yes. Typhon says something about loyalty or command, and that makes sense. But it's not just the face that conveys presence---especially if you are telepathic. So who knows.

David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 02:50 · in reply to larry miller

That's what he says, yes. I see no reason not to believe Typhon but then if he is telepathic that might change things. Of course he is no Mule

Presumably he would have shown himself only to his troops, i.e., those he directly commanded, who would have seen his face (he thinks) and ignored Piaton's. Those would command others etc., so the people might never know.

On 10/10/2011 7:32 PM, larry miller wrote:

I think Typhons obsession with his face has more to do with maintaining his rule. His face was probably a symbol of his reign in the same way that the Autarchs face adorns the coin given to Severian by Vodalus. I believe he says something along the lines of "Its the face that men obey". This might also explain Typhons hiding out in his mountain in Urth of the New Sun. If the populace were to know they were ruled by a two headed alien they might threaten Typhons monarchy.

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Jeff Wilson — 11 Oct 2011, 03:12 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/10/2011 12:59 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/10/2011 1:29 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

The talking machines could intercept intelligence from the Ascians' transmissions and preserve it for their master's review. Jonas, for example, is a machine that knows about the great beasts without being currently at the south pole or under the sea. He probably lost his antennas for far communication, though.

It's possible. It's just a lot to expect the reader to guess. And Typhon, by his own account, is not one to speak indirectly.

But neither is he given to elaborate for the benefit of others.

It's not so much to guess; Mt Typhon itself is such an outpost and Typhon is master of its numerous machines by word. Since he allows Severian to transcend distance and "see" distant parts of the Urth as if present above them, it's not such a stretch to think that he can do that for himself and more besides when he's not busy putting on a show to secure his hold on the unsuspecting Conciliator.

On 10/10/2011 4:56 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

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If Typhon has superpowers that are genetic in origin, he'd lose them if he transferred to another brain, unless that brain also has that genetically-derived infrastructure. Might this explain his reluctance to lose his "face"?

The nature of his mental powers might include the ability to impress his brain's pattern upon another. He does this a bit, when Sev feels his mind gripped by a vise when Typhon tries to make him submit to an oath.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com

Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana

< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Jerry Friedman — 11 Oct 2011, 05:25 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>
To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>
Sent: Monday, October 10, 2011 11:59 AM
Subject: Re: (urth) Typhon's nature

On 10/10/2011 1:29 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/10/2011 7:43 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/10/2011 3:30 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

His thoughts being sent into far places could easily have been him spying through the remaining technological outposts similar to the speaking machines in the Matchin Tower and Valeria's reception hall.

...

No matter how or whether Typhon sent his thoughts to far places, we know he's telepathic. He makes Severian see through his eyes, and he casts a spell to try to get Severian to swear loyalty to him. Severian compares this spell to Decuman's, greatly in Typhon's favor.

I don;t know about require; sensors can have ranges and their data may be used to infer details beyond those.

An ancient but still functional satllite in orbit above the south pole and the sea could be accessible to Typhon

"Hmm, weather patterns continue to deteriorate... Great Me, what is that THING on the infrared?"

:-)

With no evidence, I imagine the sea monsters cold-blooded, so they wouldn't show up on the IR.

The talking machines could intercept intelligence from the Asciians' transmissions and preserve it for their master's review. Jonas, for example, is a machine that knows about the great beasts without being currently at the south pole or under the sea. He probably lost his antennas for far communication, though.

It's possible. It's just a lot to expect the reader to guess. And Typhon, by his own account, is not one to speak indirectly. For myself, I tend to want to interpret him as neither god nor demigod but as an example of pure hubris.

I'm inclined to agree.

He's like a tower built to reach Heaven. That requires him to have been constructed by humans.

Genetics

(assuming we allow a gene for telepathy, as we must if we allow telepathy, which we must because Mucor exists) explains Silk, Mucor, and Typhon.

Do we know Mucor's talent is genetic? Maybe it's the result of an implant or? brain surgery or magic performed on her embryo. Or are you using "genetic" as a shorthand for some broader idea?

It seems to me Typhon's psionic talents are quite possible for humans in Briah, considering Mucor and Decuman. We have no idea what enhancement and special training Typhon might have.

Jerry Friedman

Jeff Wilson — 11 Oct 2011, 07:30 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 10/11/2011 12:25 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

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see through his eyes, and he casts a spell to try to get Severian to swear loyalty to him. Severian compares

this spell to Decuman's, greatly in Typhon's favor.

Typhon has some mental and some technological effects going in that scene, it's debateable which particular element arises from which origin. However, the seeing through his eyes part is overtly a figure of speech, because they are looking out through the pupils sculpted into Typhon's mountainous likeness. It *might* be a double-meaning, but Typhon's facial eyes can't see over the curvature of the Urth any more than Sev's can.

I don;t know about require; sensors can have ranges and their data may be used to infer details beyond those.

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<http://www.flickr.com/photos/yoshihirata/>

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/10/071015215148.htm>

The talking machines could intercept intelligence from the Ascians' transmissions and preserve it for their

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It's possible. It's just a lot to expect the reader to guess. And Typhon, by his own account, is not one to speak

indirectly. For myself, I tend to want to interpret him as neither god nor demigod but as an example of pure hubris.

I'm inclined to agree.

Typhon's got loads of hubris, but he's not all false pride; like Alexander, he did accomplish things no other man approached.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com

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< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Tim O'Donnell — 11 Oct 2011, 08:30 · follows Jeff Wilson

I think that Mucor is a clue to the nature of Typhon. Mucor has mental powers that arise genetically and she was born from an embryo purchased by Blood. That embryo must derive from the time of Typhon. We don't know whether Mucor was created through selective breeding or genetic manipulation or both. I don't think it matters though, we have evidence that mental powers are associated with embryos bred for the purposes. Is this what Typhon means when he says he was not born as such? He may have been raised in vitro.

Which only raises more questions about Typhon's origins to me. Was he perhaps a slave himself, the product of a genetic breeding program? I could go on but I know I am in the realm of sheer conjecture at this point.

Jeff Wilson — 11 Oct 2011, 10:34 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/10/2011 4:56 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

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Gerry Quinn — 11 Oct 2011, 11:40 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

From: Jerry Friedman

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I don't read too much into this. Typhon is a powerful and charismatic individual; I wouldn't be surprised if in the _BotNS_ universe such individuals typically have some sort of telepathic power. Like Jeff, I don't think it's important whether he uses telepathy or some kind of techno-magic.

Do we know Mucor's talent is genetic? Maybe it's the result of an implant or brain surgery or magic performed on her embryo. Or are you using "genetic" as a shorthand for some broader idea?

Of course Dr. Crane cannot know the details, but I think we should heed his observation that Mucor's parents (her genetic parents, that is) met in a petri dish. [I imagine the same applies to Silk.] Presumably the embryos were then genetically or otherwise engineered. We know Mucor's brain developed in an abnormal fashion, and after brain surgery her powers were suppressed for a time but eventually came back. So I imagine the telepathic powers must inhere in brain tissue, and probably exist to some extent in everyone.

It seems to me Typhon's psionic talents are quite possible for humans in Briah, considering Mucor and

Decuman. We have no idea what enhancement and special training Typhon might have.

I never saw him as primarily a telepath, but indeed perhaps telepathy was a greater part of his powers than I had thought. But I think his chief powers were charisma, leadership, and military strategy. [That's why I think a lot of Pas is coming out in SilkHorn as he wanders Blue on his way back to his (Silk's) island.]

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 11:51 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/10/2011 11:12 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/10/2011 12:59 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/10/2011 1:29 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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OK, but how does it explain talking to the monsters in the abyss, who were not there before he slept, as he stated he did? Why make this complicated?

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The nature of his mental powers might include the ability to impress his brain's pattern upon another. He does this a bit, when Sev feels his mind gripped by a vise when Typhon tries to make him submit to an oath.

Definitely. Typhon can't read Sev's thoughts but he can do other things.

larry miller — 11 Oct 2011, 11:55 · in reply to David Stockhoff

I think the Megatherians were on Urth during Typhons reign. They had to be there previous to the Whorls launch because Scylla knew of them.

On 10/11/11, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

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If Typhon has superpowers that are genetic in origin, he'd lose them if he transferred to another brain, unless that brain also has that genetically-derived infrastructure. Might this explain his reluctance to lose his "face"?

The nature of his mental powers might include the ability to impress his brain's pattern upon another. He does this a bit, when Sev feels his mind gripped by a vise when Typhon tries to make him submit to an oath.

Definitely. Typhon can't read Sev's thoughts but he can do other things.

avast! Antivirus: Outbound message clean.
Virus Database (VPS): 111010-2, 10/10/2011
Tested on: 10/11/2011 7:51:04 AM
avast! - copyright (c) 1988-2011 AVAST Software.
<http://www.avast.com>

Jeff Wilson — 11 Oct 2011, 12:19 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/11/2011 6:51 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/10/2011 11:12 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/10/2011 12:59 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/10/2011 1:29 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

The talking machines could intercept intelligence from the Ascians' transmissions and preserve it for their master's review. Jonas, for example, is a machine that knows about the great beasts without being currently at the south pole or under the sea. He probably lost his antennas for far communication, though.

It's possible. It's just a lot to expect the reader to guess. And Typhon, by his own account, is not one to speak indirectly.

But neither is he given to elaborate for the benefit of others.

It's not so much to guess; Mt Typhon itself is such an outpost and Typhon is master of its numerous machines by word. Since he allows

Severian to transcend distance and "see" distant parts of the Urth as if present above them, it's not such a stretch to think that he can do that for himself and more besides when he's not busy putting on a show to secure his hold on the unsuspecting Conciliator.

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Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 14:05 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 10/11/2011 1:25 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:
Do we know Mucor's talent is genetic? Maybe it's the result of an implant or brain surgery or magic performed on her embryo. Or are you using "genetic" as a shorthand for some broader idea? It seems to me Typhon's psionic talents are quite possible for humans in Briah, considering Mucor and Decuman. We have no idea what enhancement and special training Typhon might have. Jerry Friedman

The councilors' discussion of Mucor and the missing embryo that was Silk makes it very clear that they are much the same. Surgery can't explain a "magic" embryo. But the very fact that it's an embryo is a clear signal that the origin of its magic is fundamentally genetic.

David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 14:22 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/11/2011 3:30 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:
And Typhon, by his own account, is not one to speak indirectly. For myself, I tend to want to interpret him as neither god nor demigod but as an example of pure hubris.
I'm inclined to agree.
Typhon's got loads of hubris, but he's not all false pride; like Alexander, he did accomplish things no other man approached.

Definitely---I don;t mean to imply falseness or failure with the Tower analogy. (I'm sure the Tower would have succeeded if it hadn't been messed with, and in fact the way it was messed with suggests that it would have succeeded, or else why sabotage it?)

Interestingly, Alexander was not constructed---he was clearly a "sport" if not exactly a mutation as the Mule explicitly was. In fact, these are two competing and valid models, but both require that Typhon be human, which was my basic point.

A third model (which I reject) might be Hercules (with whom Alexander was associated by his propagandists, but falsely of course), who was only half-human. His powers were therefore semi-divine, from Up There. The fourth (which I also reject) is that Typhon is some kind of Wolfean angelic being or god---but he's no Hiero. There's no room for more gods in Briah!

David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 14:49 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/11/2011 7:40 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: Jerry Friedman <mailto:jerry_friedman at yahoo.com>

No matter how or whether Typhon sent his thoughts to far places, we know he's telepathic. He makes Severian see through his eyes, and he casts a spell to try to get Severian to swear loyalty to him. Severian compares this spell to Decuman's, greatly in Typhon's favor.

I don't read too much into this. Typhon is a powerful and charismatic individual; I wouldn't be surprised if in the _BotNS_ universe such individuals typically have some sort of telepathic power. Like Jeff, I don't think it's important whether he uses telepathy or some kind of techno-magic.

I'm quite baffled by this. Genetic engineering is techno-magic. Its existence raises questions about cloning and how it works. Mind transfer is techno-magic, whether mechanical or organic. There is no evidence that Typhon had digital-mental techno-magic or that Abaia uses it too.

This is an SF novel. How can it not matter which kind of techno-magic is involved? Why go with the one that has the least evidence for it?

Do we know Mucor's talent is genetic? Maybe it's the result of an implant or brain surgery or magic performed on her embryo. Or are you using "genetic" as a shorthand for some broader idea?

Of course Dr. Crane cannot know the details, but I think we should heed his observation that Mucor's parents (her genetic parents, that is) met in a petri dish. [I imagine the same applies to Silk.] Presumably the embryos were then genetically or otherwise engineered. We know Mucor's brain developed in an abnormal fashion, and after brain surgery her powers were suppressed for a time but eventually came back. So I imagine the telepathic powers must inhere in brain tissue, and probably exist to some extent in everyone.

In some sense, yes. We certainly can't disprove that, and the "origin" of telepathy is plainly backgrounded---we don't need gods or such to explain it. It's just there, and we only need an explanation of how different characters got super-versions of it. Your explanation is the simplest one (see above).

It seems to me Typhon's psionic talents are quite possible for humans in Briah, considering Mucor and Decuman. We have no idea what enhancement and special training Typhon might have.

I never saw him as primarily a telepath, but indeed perhaps telepathy was a greater part of his powers than I had thought. But I think his chief powers were charisma, leadership, and military strategy. [That's why I think a lot of Pas is coming out in SilkHorn as he wanders Blue on his way back to his (Silk's) island.]

- Gerry Quinn

This is certainly a debatable point. But I return to the narrator's purpose: why drop such strong and "classical" hints that Typhon can send his mind forth to commune with aliens under the sea, and that he can seize other's minds, in a universe where telepathic/projection/possession powers are demonstrated to exist, without accounting for the fact that the alert reader will proceed to interpret this as "super-telepathic powers"? This needs explanation, but there is none.

Possibly Typhon is meant to be an emblem of "loyalty to the monarch"---in other words, a

reference to the degrees of loyalty one step below "loyalty to the throne." But this does not contradict Typhon's powers, it just gives deeper significance to his claims that his face is what will get him back his empire.

David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 15:04 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/11/2011 8:19 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/11/2011 6:51 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/10/2011 11:12 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

It's not so much to guess; Mt Typhon itself is such an outpost and Typhon is master of its numerous machines by word. Since he allows Severian to transcend distance and "see" distant parts of the Urth as if present above them, it's not such a stretch to think that he can do that for himself and more besides when he's not busy putting on a show to secure his hold on the unsuspecting Conciliator.

OK, but how does it explain talking to the monsters in the abyss, who were not there before he slept, as he stated he did? Why make this complicated?

I'm not sure how it is especially complicated by the overall standards of the BotNS, which incorporates several times its wordcount of tropes by reference and allusion.

As for talking to the monsters in the abyss, who is doing that and when/what chapter?

Typhon: "Yes. But I have lived almost a day and have sent my thought into far places. There are powers in the seas now who would rule. They will become our slaves, and the hordes of the north are theirs."

(1) Typhon has learned this information since he awoke (2) by sending his thought into far places. There is no evidence for anything else.

Gerry Quinn — 11 Oct 2011, 15:10 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

This is certainly a debatable point. But I return to the narrator's purpose: why drop such strong and "classical" hints that Typhon can send his mind forth to commune with aliens under the sea, and that he can seize other's minds, in a universe where telepathic/projection/possession powers are demonstrated to exist, without accounting for the fact that the alert reader will proceed to interpret this as "super-telepathic powers"? This needs explanation, but there is none.

I consider myself a reasonably alert reader, and I drew no such conclusion. Indeed, I assumed that Typhon's awareness of the undersea monsters (did he say that he actually communicated with them, or did he just describe them, in which case he might just have accessed an archive of old news reports?) was technologically mediated.

As for magic and the comparison between Typhon and Decuman, I had meant to mention the coin given to Severian by Vodalus at the start of the story. Recall Severian's observation that the power to instill loyalty must be present in the coin, because — as he points out very scientifically — things act of themselves or not at all.

My conclusion is that there is room for interpreting these events in ways other than Severian would interpret them...

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 15:29 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/11/2011 11:10 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

This is certainly a debatable point. But I return to the narrator's purpose: why drop such strong and "classical" hints that Typhon can send his mind forth to commune with aliens under the sea, and that he can seize other's minds, in a universe where telepathic/projection/possession powers are demonstrated to exist, without accounting for the fact that the alert reader will proceed to interpret this as "super-telepathic powers"? This needs explanation, but there is none.
I consider myself a reasonably alert reader,

Impossible! You are well known to be both alert and UNreasonable. ;)

and I drew no such conclusion. Indeed, I assumed that Typhon's awareness of the undersea monsters (did he say that he actually communicated with them, or did he just describe them, in which case he might just have accessed an archive of old news reports?) was technologically mediated.

See my quote of it in my last post. It's pretty straightforward. I agree that it was indeed technologically mediated but not in the sense you mean.

Yes, it's possible that Typhon mentally called up his old AOL account at the servers on Lune (a "far place") and got a quick update, but there is simply no support for this except that WE have some of this technology and can easily imagine the rest. Its familiarity to us is no argument---it exists but is it Typhon's method? Why should it be?

We know he has machines on the mountain and in Nessus but neither of these is a "far place," let alone more than one far place. We know of no other places where he may have machines; he probably does, but how would these machines know any of the information he states? This is what I mean by "complicated."

I agree that there is no hard reason as far as that chapter to prefer innate/genetic telepathy over (let's call it) electromechanically enhanced telepathy. However, I give you Mucor.

As for magic and the comparison between Typhon and Decuman, I had meant to mention the coin given to Severian by Vodalus at the start of the story. Recall Severian's observation that the power to instill loyalty must be present in the coin, because — as he points out very scientifically — things act of themselves or not at all.

My conclusion is that there is room for interpreting these events in ways other than Severian would interpret them...

- Gerry Quinn

That is an ever-present danger.

larry miller — 11 Oct 2011, 15:49 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

During Severians encounter with Typhon he tells Severian "though Ive lived again but a day Ive sent my thoughts to far places. There are those in the sea that would rule us". Typhon I think more or less senses the presence of the megatherians instead of actually communicating with them.

On 10/11/11, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at clueland.com> wrote:

On 10/11/2011 6:51 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/10/2011 11:12 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/10/2011 12:59 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/10/2011 1:29 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

The talking machines could intercept intelligence from the Ascians' transmissions and preserve it for their master's review. Jonas, for example, is a machine that knows about the great beasts without being currently at the south pole or under the sea. He probably lost his antennas for far communication, though.

It's possible. It's just a lot to expect the reader to guess. And Typhon, by his own account, is not one to speak indirectly.

But neither is he given to elaborate for the benefit of others.

It's not so much to guess; Mt Typhon itself is such an outpost and Typhon is master of its numerous machines by word. Since he allows Severian to transcend distance and "see" distant parts of the Urth as if present above them, it's not such a stretch to think that he can do that for himself and more besides when he's not busy putting on a show to secure his hold on the unsuspecting Conciliator.

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I'm not sure how it is especially complicated by the overall standards of the BotNS, which incorporates several times its wordcount of tropes by reference and allusion.

As for talking to the monsters in the abyss, who is doing that and when/what chapter?

--

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com

Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana

< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 16:05 · in reply to larry miller

Yes, that's probably more accurate, and it's in line with his telepathic powers vs Severian. He can "seize" Sev's mind but can't read his thoughts. He probably senses the megatherians as much as he listens to them, but clearly he gathers much information that way.

On 10/11/2011 11:49 AM, larry miller wrote:

During Severians encounter with Typhon he tells Severian "though Ive lived again but a day Ive sent my thoughts to far places. There are those in the sea that would rule us". Typhon I think more or less senses the presence of the megatherians instead of actually communicating with them.

James Wynn — 11 Oct 2011, 18:02 · in reply to larry miller

I think this implies that that he has systems that have kept track of affairs while he's been dead. He's received the update and now comprehends the current political state of the Urth.

On 10/11/2011 10:49 AM, larry miller wrote:

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David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 18:18 · in reply to James Wynn

Several people think this, to my astonishment. But there are complications, which I have pointed out.

Not the least of which being that no character mentions machines capable of political observations and updates, especially subaquatic ones, and even if they existed they would require human input since politics are human systems. You can't do that with satellites. And why not, then, even years-out-of-date interplanetary updates? Typhon mentions none.

On 10/11/2011 2:02 PM, James Wynn wrote:

I think this implies that that he has systems that have kept track of affairs while he's been dead. He's received the update and now comprehends the current political state of the Urth.

On 10/11/2011 10:49 AM, larry miller wrote:

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Jeff Wilson — 11 Oct 2011, 18:59 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Tue, October 11, 2011 10:04, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/11/2011 8:19 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/11/2011 6:51 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

OK, but how does it explain talking to the monsters in the abyss, who were not there before he slept, as he stated he did? Why make this complicated?

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(1) Typhon has learned this information since he awoke (2) by sending his thought into far places. There is no evidence for anything else.

I see no mention of talking, talking to monsters, or of an abyss.

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >

A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab

< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

António Pedro Marques — 11 Oct 2011, 19:06 · in reply to David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff wrote (11-10-2011 03:47):

On 10/10/2011 7:00 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

David Stockhoff wrote (10-10-2011 22:56):

Unless there is scanning of the older clone and uploading into the younger.

When the older dies, the older dies, regardless of having been copied into the younger. The entity may go on existing for third parties, including the younger clone, but not for itself.

I don't follow. The younger clone would start off his memories at the point where the older was scanned and thus continue on as the same entity.

The younger clone would be the same entity for everyone, including itself, except for the older clone.

At

least that's how it works in Home Fires. (The problem would be meeting yourself, which would be resolved in a clone situation by assuming scanning = death.)

Which I don't think is an option for Typhon. He doesn't get special kicks out of having his conscience duplicated if the original doesn't carry on. Afaict he created Pas as a lieutenant, not as a replacement.

If Typhon has superpowers that are genetic in origin, he'd lose them if he transferred to another brain, unless that brain also has that genetically-derived infrastructure. Might this explain his reluctance to lose his "face"?

That's a pretty good idea.

I find that face stuff strange, unless there is some deeper meaning of faces to be reckoned with.

Yes. Typhon says something about loyalty or command, and that makes sense.

But it's not just the face that conveys presence---especially if you are telepathic. So who knows.

What bothers me is that I think there is something hidden there but I haven't got a clue what, so I'm left with the sensation that maybe there is nothing - and in that case my impression that there is becomes an uncomfortable reminder that I have no clue about the whole books.

António Pedro Marques — 11 Oct 2011, 19:13 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson wrote (10-10-2011 18:29):

On 10/10/2011 7:43 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/10/2011 3:30 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

His thoughts being sent into far places could easily have been him spying through the remaining technological outposts similar to the speaking machines in the Matchin Tower and Valeria's reception hall. He may have had telepresences there to keep his ruling face au courant.

Except that this would require "outposts" at the south pole and under the sea.

I don't know about require; sensors can have ranges and their data may be used to infer details beyond those. An ancient but still functional satellite in orbit above the south pole and the sea could be accessible to Typhon

"Hmm, weather patterns continue to deteriorate... Great Me,

Awesome. +10.

what is that THING on the infrared?"

+2

David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 19:22 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Larry was right to point out that Typhon probably senses the "powers" more than he "speaks" with them. But they are plainly Erebus and Abaia, or I have never read a word by Wolfe and live under the South Pole in a rusty tin can.

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David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 19:27 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

On 10/11/2011 3:06 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

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Yes. I think that's what I meant by the below.

At least that's how it works in Home Fires. (The problem would be meeting yourself, which would be resolved in a clone situation by assuming

scanning
= death.)

Which I don't think is an option for Typhon. He doesn't get special kicks out of having his conscience duplicated if the original doesn't carry on. Afaict he created Pas as a lieutenant, not as a replacement.

Possibly. Just another thing to be worked out.

António Pedro Marques — 11 Oct 2011, 19:35 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson wrote (11-10-2011 08:30):

On 10/11/2011 12:25 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

Jeff Wilson wrote:

"Hmm, weather patterns continue to deteriorate... Great Me, what is that THING on the infrared?"

:-)

With no evidence, I imagine the sea monsters cold-blooded, so they wouldn't show up on the IR.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/yoshihirata/>

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/10/071015215148.htm>

FTA:

And their babies reveal many details because they are see-through.

+10

Unfortunately, some of the researchers had to stay awake along with the fish. "Originally, we didn't have the automated sleep-deprivation system, so I manually sleep-deprived them, becoming sleep-deprived myself," Yokogawa added.

'Unfortunate' is an odd spelling for 'fair'.

Jeff Wilson — 11 Oct 2011, 21:21 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Tue, October 11, 2011 14:22, David Stockhoff wrote:

Larry was right to point out that Typhon probably senses the "powers" more than he "speaks" with them. But they are plainly Erebus and Abaia, or I have never read a word by Wolfe and live under the South Pole in a rusty tin can.

Typhon's ship commanders slipping away before he knows it argues against his long-range ESP. He mentions the Ascians in the same breath as the beasts and knows they are beholden to them as the old autarch and Vodalus later confirm. This is entirely consistent with him retrieving Ascian signal intelligence from automated listening posts; Vodalus confirms they use long-distance comms.

Typhon's sending of his thoughts into distant places remains a somewhat curious idiom if it is not literal, but it is not entirely without precedent in literature and bombast and other figurative expression.

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 21:51 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/11/2011 5:21 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On Tue, October 11, 2011 14:22, David Stockhoff wrote:

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Of course, it argues against good signal intelligence as well.

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This seems to assume Erebus and Abaia use ordinary radio. Right?

Typhon's sending of his thoughts into distant places remains a somewhat curious idiom if it is not literal, but it is not entirely without precedent in literature and bombast and other figurative expression.

Its ambiguity-while-seeming-perfectly-clear would not be without precedent in Wolfe either.

Jeff Wilson — 11 Oct 2011, 22:41 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Tue, October 11, 2011 16:51, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/11/2011 5:21 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On Tue, October 11, 2011 14:22, David Stockhoff wrote:

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Of course, it argues against good signal intelligence as well.

Skill at subterfuge and confounding men and machines is fairly common in the books but there's no hint of a cloak against mind powers.

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This seems to assume Erebus and Abaia use ordinary radio. Right?

I don't know how ordinary it might be, but yes, it assumes that the Ascians use radio along with robots and electric lights.

Typhon's sending of his thoughts into distant places remains a somewhat curious idiom if it is not literal, but it is not entirely without precedent in literature and bombast and other figurative expression.

Its ambiguity-while-seeming-perfectly-clear would not be without precedent in Wolfe either.

"I've sent my Athenians into distant places."

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

Jerry Friedman — 11 Oct 2011, 22:45 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

From: Ant?nio Pedro Marques <antonio at gmail.com>

Jeff Wilson wrote (11-10-2011 08:30):

On 10/11/2011 12:25 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

Jeff Wilson wrote:

"Hmm, weather patterns continue to deteriorate... Great Me,
what is that
THING on the infrared?"

:~)

With no evidence, I imagine the sea monsters cold-blooded, so they
wouldn't show up on the IR.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/yoshihirata/>

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/10/071015215148.htm>

The fish is illuminated by an infrared source

<http://www.plosbiology.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pbio.0050277>

and I'll bet the beautiful creatures on Flickr are too. In some of the pictures it seems the
source?(the sun) is visible. So maybe if Erebus swam or oozed over a volcanic vent...
Of course this has nothing to do with Wolfe, and I don't mind if it turns out I'm wrong.
By the way, many thanks to Yokogawa et al. for publishing in an open-access journal!

FTA:

And their babies reveal many details because they are see-through.

+10

Unfortunately, some of the researchers had to stay awake along with the
fish. "Originally, we didn't have the automated sleep-deprivation
system,
so I manually sleep-deprived them, becoming sleep-deprived myself,"
Yokogawa added.

'Unfortunate' is an odd spelling for 'fair'.

Indeed. Maybe I can observe that in Wolfe stories, we're seldom invited to care about animals
that can't talk. For instance, what would "Our Neighbor, by David Copperfield" be like if anyone
suggested we feel sorry for the birds? Say if a starling said, "I can't get out"?

No doubt there are lots of exceptions, though.

Jerry Friedman

David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 22:55 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/11/2011 6:41 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On Tue, October 11, 2011 16:51, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/11/2011 5:21 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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Of course, it argues against good signal intelligence as well.

Skill at subterfuge and confounding men and machines is fairly common in the books but there's no hint of a cloak against mind powers.

Typhon is not a mind reader. No one suggested that he was.

He mentions the Ascians in the same breath as the beasts and knows they are beholden to them as the old autarch and Vodalus later confirm. This is entirely consistent with him retrieving Ascian signal intelligence from automated listening posts; Vodalus confirms they use long-distance comms.

This seems to assume Erebus and Abaia use ordinary radio. Right?

I don't know how ordinary it might be, but yes, it assumes that the Ascians use radio along with robots and electric lights.

So you mean that the Ascians have revealed their fealty to Abaia in their radio communications. That makes sense.

Typhon's sending of his thoughts into distant places remains a somewhat curious idiom if it is not literal, but it is not entirely without precedent in literature and bombast and other figurative expression.

Its ambiguity-while-seeming-perfectly-clear would not be without precedent in Wolfe either.

"I've sent my Athenians into distant places."

Meaning? BTW, he sent his thought into distant places. Not his thoughts.

António Pedro Marques — 11 Oct 2011, 23:15 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman wrote (11-10-2011 23:45):

Of course this has nothing to do with Wolfe, and I don't mind if it turns out I'm wrong.

'Cold-blooded' does not mean the creature is at the same temperature as its environment. It means it has no organic* way to regulate the temperature. Of course, that means it can't stray very far from the environment's temperature, but a little bit is doable.

(*) 'Fever' in mammals means the animal's body produces large amounts of heat. In lizards it means the animal moves into the sun so as to increase the temperature. Imagine that, behavioural fever.

David Stockhoff — 11 Oct 2011, 23:17 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/11/2011 6:41 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On Tue, October 11, 2011 16:51, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/11/2011 5:21 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On Tue, October 11, 2011 14:22, David Stockhoff wrote:

Larry was right to point out that Typhon probably senses the "powers" more than he "speaks" with them. But they are plainly Erebus and Abaia, or I have never read a word by Wolfe and live under the South Pole in a rusty tin can.

Typhon's ship commanders slipping away before he knows it argues against his long-range ESP.

Of course, it argues against good signal intelligence as well.

Skill at subterfuge and confounding men and machines is fairly common in the books but there's no hint of a cloak against mind powers.

He mentions the Ascians in the same breath as the beasts and knows they are beholden to them as the old autarch and Vodalus later confirm. This is entirely consistent with him retrieving Ascian signal intelligence from automated listening posts; Vodalus confirms they use long-distance comms.

This seems to assume Erebus and Abaia use ordinary radio. Right?

I don't know how ordinary it might be, but yes, it assumes that the Ascians use radio along with robots and electric lights.

Typhon's sending of his thoughts into distant places remains a somewhat curious idiom if it is not literal, but it is not entirely without precedent in literature and bombast and other figurative expression.

Its ambiguity-while-seeming-perfectly-clear would not be without precedent in Wolfe either.

"I've sent my Athenians into distant places."

Does anyone have any opinion on whether or how Abaia and Erebus rule without resorting to ESP powers?

David Stockhoff — 12 Oct 2011, 00:38 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

On 10/11/2011 3:06 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

David Stockhoff wrote (11-10-2011 03:47):

On 10/10/2011 7:00 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

David Stockhoff wrote (10-10-2011 22:56):

If Typhon has superpowers that are genetic in origin, he'd lose them if he transferred to another brain, unless that brain also has that genetically-derived infrastructure. Might this explain his reluctance to lose his "face"?

That's a pretty good idea.

I find that face stuff strange, unless there is some deeper meaning of faces to be reckoned with.

Yes. Typhon says something about loyalty or command, and that makes sense.

But it's not just the face that conveys presence---especially if you are telepathic. So who knows.

What bothers me is that I think there is something hidden there but I haven't got a clue what, so I'm left with the sensation that maybe there is nothing - and in that case my impression that there is becomes an uncomfortable reminder that I have no clue about the whole books.

Is it possible that Sev's observation that Typhon grips his mind like a vise is simply invalid? And Jeff is right, and Typhon's machines simply monitored Ascian radio traffic for millennia, and they analyzed the data for him?

30 years ago I read TBotNS and read the line "sent my thought" literally. I was suspicious, naturally, since I knew Wolfe, and suspended judgment until I read the above about Typhon gripping Sev's mind. To me, this confirmed that Typhon had limited but super mental powers. Mucor's existence confirmed it further. Yet there was always a nagging thought that something was missing. There seemed no point to Typhon's possessing these abilities. But beyond these two potentially misleading statements, there is no evidence for them---only evidence that they exist in Briah. Is Typhon's power merely that he can convince people he has powers?

Beyond that, the face stuff points to Silk. But as James points out, it's maddening!

Lee Berman — 12 Oct 2011, 01:50 · follows David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff: Is it possible that Sev's observation that Typhon grips his mind like a vise is simply invalid?...Is Typhon's power merely that he can convince people he has powers?

I don't think so. Again, I will invoke Typhon's namesake, the Mandragora. For me the connection between these characters is nearly undeniable and I find the prospect of Severian being delusional about both their mental powers to be a very bleak one in regard to the enjoyment of the story.

Moreover I get the sense that Wolfe's message in this and other works is more that there is a real component to that we consider magic or mystical or spiritual rather than the opposite, that being that all mystical and spiritual items are merely tricks to fool the weak-minded.

David Stockhoff: Does anyone have any opinion on whether or how Abaia and Erebus rule without resorting to ESP powers?

I have a nagging feeling the text does make some mention of Abaia controlling humanity purely through the power of his thought, but I can't pin the passage down.

Anyway, we are explicitly shown another way these guys (and their angelic analog, Tzadkiel) control and influence humanity, which is through the use of agents. Some are human, like Ascians, Purn and Severian. Some are more than human, though less than the great powers-beings like Barbatus and Famulimus and Apheta and (I think) Inire and the Cumaean. Some agents are human sized and shaped but are produced by being pinched off from the gigantic bodies of the greater being- characters like Juturna and Idas, Tinkerbell and (I think) Seawrack.

I don't think we are meant to know the origin of Typhon but his name and Severian's description of his powers have always suggested to me that he is more than just a regular human who is simply a good talker.

Jeff Wilson — 12 Oct 2011, 02:05 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 10/11/2011 5:45 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:
From: Ant?nio Pedro Marques<antonio at gmail.com>
Jeff Wilson wrote (11-10-2011 08:30):

On 10/11/2011 12:25 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

Jeff Wilson wrote:

"Hmm, weather patterns continue to deteriorate... Great Me,
what is that
THING on the infrared?"

:-)

With no evidence, I imagine the sea monsters cold-blooded, so they
wouldn't show up on the IR.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/yoshihirata/>

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/10/071015215148.htm>

The fish is illuminated by an infrared source

Like the sun illuminates this river delta? Imagine if you saw a moving, compact shape on this
scale.

http://www.visualphotos.com/image/1x6053922/pearl_river_estuary_infrared_satellite_image

<http://www.plosbiology.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pbio.0050277>

and I'll bet the beautiful creatures on Flickr are too. In some of the pictures it seems the source (the
sun) is visible. So maybe if Erebus swam or oozed over a volcanic vent...

Of course this has nothing to do with Wolfe, and I don't mind if it turns out I'm wrong.

It's still relevant in that the cooling sun will increasingly shift its peak output into the infrared
frequencies, so Typhon would have reason to have set up IR monitoring.

Jeff Wilson - [jwilson at clueland.com](mailto:jwilson@clueland.com)
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Marc Aramini — 12 Oct 2011, 02:07 · in reply to Tim O'Donnell

--- On Tue, 10/11/11, Tim O'Donnell <[timodonn at gmail.com](mailto:timodonn@gmail.com)> wrote:

From: Tim O'Donnell <[timodonn at gmail.com](mailto:timodonn@gmail.com)>
Subject: (urth) Typhon's Nature
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Date: Tuesday, October 11, 2011, 1:30 AM

I think that Mucor is a clue to the nature of Typhon. Mucor has mental powers that arise
genetically and she
was born from an embryo purchased by Blood. That embryo must derive from the time of
Typhon. "We don't know
whether Mucor was created through selective breeding or genetic manipulation or both. I don't
think it matters though,
we have evidence that mental powers are associated with embryos bred for the purposes. Is
this what Typhon means
when he says he was not born as such?" He may have been raised in vitro.

Which only raises more questions about Typhon's origins to me. Was he perhaps a slave

himself, the product of a genetic breeding program? I could go on but I know I am in the realm of sheer conjecture at this point.

I think it more likely Typhon was more like an engineered ubermensch like the exultants, but even more special. And that his little frozen embryos might be his family rebooted for a recolonization of the future. son silk, Mucor as Scylla? Even Echidna? Very hard to say.

Jeff Wilson — 12 Oct 2011, 02:13 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/11/2011 5:55 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/11/2011 6:41 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On Tue, October 11, 2011 16:51, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/11/2011 5:21 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On Tue, October 11, 2011 14:22, David Stockhoff wrote:

Larry was right to point out that Typhon probably senses the "powers" more than he "speaks" with them. But they are plainly Erebus and Abaia, or I have never read a word by Wolfe and live under the South Pole in a rusty tin can.

Typhon's ship commanders slipping away before he knows it argues against his long-range ESP.

Of course, it argues against good signal intelligence as well.

Skill at subterfuge and confounding men and machines is fairly common in the books but there's no hint of a cloak against mind powers.

Typhon is not a mind reader. No one suggested that he was.

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Its ambiguity-while-seeming-perfectly-clear would not be without precedent in Wolfe either.

"I've sent my Athenians into distant places."

Meaning? BTW, he sent his thought into distant places. Not his thoughts.

I don't want to hog the whole gauntlet of quibbling challenges, I'll give the rest of the class a chance to answer some.

He mentions the Ascians in the same breath as the beasts and knows they are beholden to them as the old autarch and Vodalus later confirm. This is entirely consistent with him retrieving Ascian signal intelligence from automated listening posts; Vodalus confirms they use long-distance comms.

This seems to assume Erebus and Abaia use ordinary radio. Right?

I don't know how ordinary it might be, but yes, it assumes that the Ascians use radio along with robots and electric lights.

So you mean that the Ascians have revealed their fealty to Abaia in their radio communications. That makes sense.

Thank you.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Jeff Wilson — 12 Oct 2011, 02:24 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/11/2011 6:17 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:
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Their minions are the kind of "people" who seek to do their bidding, and they handle ruling over the masses by fear. "Yield, lest we flood your lands/barricade the harbor/blot the sun with smoke and ash/send pestilences, etc." The beasts themselves are smart enough to learn how to communicate with their Urthly minions by voice-like noises, writing, pictures, etc. if they didn't already know it when they got here.

For extra horror, Urthlings like the undines are bred and modified in order to better communicate with their uncanny and cyclopean sovereigns.

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Jeff Wilson — 12 Oct 2011, 02:32 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/11/2011 7:38 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:
On 10/11/2011 3:06 PM, Ant?nio Pedro Marques wrote:

David Stockhoff wrote (11-10-2011 03:47):

On 10/10/2011 7:00 PM, Ant?nio Pedro Marques wrote:

David Stockhoff wrote (10-10-2011 22:56):

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That's a pretty good idea.

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Yes. Typhon says something about loyalty or command, and that makes sense.

But it's not just the face that conveys presence---especially if you are telepathic. So who knows.

What bothers me is that I think there is something hidden there but I haven't got a clue what, so I'm left with the sensation that maybe there is nothing - and in that case my impression that there is becomes an uncomfortable reminder that I have no clue about the whole books.

Is it possible that Sev's observation that Typhon grips his mind like a vise is simply invalid?

I mis-remembered the simile, but I think the steel cable net is supposed to be read as a "real" mental sensation. But I believe we're also meant to realize Typhon other tricks up his notional sleeve.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
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David Stockhoff — 12 Oct 2011, 02:50 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/11/2011 10:13 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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Of course, it argues against good signal intelligence as well.

Skill at subterfuge and confounding men and machines is fairly common in the books but there's no hint of a cloak against mind powers.

Typhon is not a mind reader. No one suggested that he was.

This is hardly quibbling. Typhon is explicitly not a mind reader in the classic pulp sense. So those comments don't argue much.

Typhon's sending of his thoughts into distant places remains a somewhat curious idiom if it is not literal, but it is not entirely without precedent in literature and bombast and other figurative expression.

Its ambiguity-while-seeming-perfectly-clear would not be without precedent in Wolfe either.

"I've sent my Athenians into distant places."

Meaning? BTW, he sent his thought into distant places. Not his thoughts.

I don't want to hog the whole gauntlet of quibbling challenges, I'll give the rest of the class a chance to answer some.

No, please just explain your remark. If you've sent your Athenians, presumably they went. What has this to do with "sending thought"? It is indeed a "somewhat curious idiom if it is not literal, but it is not entirely without precedent," as I agreed above.

I pointed out the use of the singular because to some, "thought" might imply more of a focused and intimate connection, while "thoughts" might be interpreted more easily as thought commands to mindreading machines. It may or may not bear directly on the discussion. See below.

He mentions the Ascians in the same breath as the beasts and knows they are beholden to them as the old autarch and Vodalus later confirm. This is entirely consistent with him retrieving Ascian signal intelligence from automated listening posts; Vodalus confirms they use long-distance comms.

This seems to assume Erebus and Abaia use ordinary radio. Right?

I don't know how ordinary it might be, but yes, it assumes that the Ascians use radio along with robots and electric lights.

So you mean that the Ascians have revealed their fealty to Abaia in their radio communications. That makes sense.

Thank you.

Although difficult to imagine, especially given what we know of Ascian. I mean, "Abaia says this" and "Erebus directs that" don't reveal much.

Why is Typhon not surprised that there are powers in the sea, of all places? If he is purely an Alexander-style military conqueror, should he not consider fighting and defeating seamonsters a tactical and strategic challenge? Yet his arrogance dismisses them. Do his cataphracts function under water?

If Typhon can send his thought into the sea and sense other great minds there, he would confirm their presence and objectives and weaknesses himself.

David Stockhoff — 12 Oct 2011, 02:53 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/11/2011 10:24 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/11/2011 6:17 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

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Their minions are the kind of "people" who seek to do their bidding, and they handle ruling over the masses by fear. "Yield, lest we flood your lands/barricade the harbor/blot the sun with smoke and ash/send pestilences, etc." The beasts themselves are smart enough to learn how to communicate with their Urthly minions by voice-like noises, writing, pictures, etc. if they didn't already know it when they got here.

For extra horror, Urthlings like the undines are bred and modified in order to better communicate with their uncanny and cyclopean sovereigns.

As I thought, this establishes two very different and possible irreconcilable schools of thought on the topic. Your beasts seem very weak and ineffectual to me, lacking mind powers. I don't see them enslaving half the planet and threatening the Commonwealth.

larry miller — 12 Oct 2011, 02:59 · in reply to Lee Berman

As I posted before the Mandragora was likely a proto chem Typhon built to download into. There's a point in Long Sun where Silk having discovered that the Gods can possess chems and I remember Echidna mentioning a Prime Calcula in the Citadel. I'm sure this was a reference to the mandragora. This would also keep with Wolfes naming conventions as Calculas is I believe the latin word for stone.

On 10/11/11, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

David Stockhoff: Is it possible that Sev's observation that Typhon grips his mind

like a vise is simply invalid?...Is Typhon's power merely that he can convince people he has powers?

I don't think so. Again, I will invoke Typhon's namesake, the Mandragora. For me

the connection between these characters is nearly undeniable and I find the

prospect of Severian being delusional about both their mental powers to be a very

bleak one in regard to the enjoyment of the story.

Moreover I get the sense that Wolfe's message in this and other works is more that

there is a real component to that we consider magic or mystical or spiritual

rather than the opposite, that being that all mystical and spiritual items are merely

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Anyway, we are explicitly shown another way these guys (and their angelic analog,

Tzadkiel) control and influence humanity, which is through the use of agents. Some

are human, like Ascians, Purn and Severian. Some are more than human, though less than

the great powers- beings like Barbatos and Famulimus and Apheta and (I think) Inire and

the Cumaeen. Some agents are human sized and shaped but are produced by being

pinched off from the gigantic bodies of the greater being- characters like Juturna and

Idas, Tinkerbelle and (I think) Seawrack.

I don't think we are meant to know the origin of Typhon but his name and Severian's

description of his powers have always suggested to me that he is more than just a

regular human who is simply a good talker.

David Stockhoff — 12 Oct 2011, 03:02 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/11/2011 10:32 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/11/2011 7:38 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/11/2011 3:06 PM, Ant?nio Pedro Marques wrote:

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I mis-remembered the simile, but I think the steel cable net is supposed to be read as a "real" mental sensation. But I believe we're also meant to realize Typhon other tricks up his notional sleeve.

It's hard to say what the "snare" consists of. It could be words alone. Without the first clue about sending thought, I would have taken this as purely figurative.

David Stockhoff — 12 Oct 2011, 03:03 · in reply to larry miller

That's an interesting thought. You're right about the name.

On 10/11/2011 10:59 PM, larry miller wrote:

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Marc Aramini — 12 Oct 2011, 03:30 · in reply to larry miller

--- On Tue, 10/11/11, larry miller <biglar1984 at gmail.com> wrote:

From: larry miller <biglar1984 at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Typhon's nature

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Date: Tuesday, October 11, 2011, 7:59 PM

As I posted before the Mandragora was likely a proto chem Typhon built to download into. Theres a point in Long Sun where Silk having discovered that the Gods can possess chems and I remember Echidna

mentioning a Prime Calcula in the Citadel. Im sure this was a reference to the mandragora. This would also keep with Wolfes naming conventions as Calculas is I believe the latin word for stone.

huh always wondered about that quote. So the prime stone? Not referring to the strange seal under the whorl with all those numbers?

Jeff Wilson — 12 Oct 2011, 03:42 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/11/2011 9:53 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/11/2011 10:24 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/11/2011 6:17 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

Does anyone have any opinion on whether or how Abaia and Erebus rule without resorting to ESP powers?

Their minions are the kind of "people" who seek to do their bidding, and they handle ruling over the masses by fear. "Yield, lest we flood your lands/barricade the harbor/blot the sun with smoke and ash/send pestilences, etc." The beasts themselves are smart enough to learn how to communicate with their Urthly minions by voice-like noises, writing, pictures, etc. if they didn't already know it when they got here.

For extra horror, Urthlings like the undines are bred and modified in order to better communicate with their uncanny and cyclopean sovereigns.

As I thought, this establishes two very different and possible irreconcilable schools of thought on the topic. Your beasts seem very weak and ineffectual to me, lacking mind powers. I don;t see them enslaving half the planet and threatening the Commonwealth.

We know they have minions, yes? Abaia has undines, Erebus has perischii. If they had sufficient mental wattage to enslave half the planet, why do they bother with minions? Or is the mind power what they use to control the minions who then enslave half the planet?

Chairman Mao did it without any mind powers at all using 100% pure minion power.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

larry miller — 12 Oct 2011, 10:56 · in reply to Marc Aramini

Dug out my long sun books last night to reread and found the quote. Echidna has just possessed Maytera Marble and killed Blood. She says in response to Silks question "The Prime Calcula.....His Citadel.....". Wolfe always capitalizes the citadel to seperate it from other strongholds so this Prime Calcula must be on Urth. At first I thought this refered to the thing Severian wakes in the mine of the man apes. But the mandragora seemjs to make more sense in the context of Silk and Echidnas conversation.

On 10/11/11, Marc Aramini <marcaramini at yahoo.com> wrote:

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larry miller — 12 Oct 2011, 11:07 · in reply to larry miller

Correction. Meant to say Musk not Blood in my last post.

On 10/12/11, larry miller <biglar1984 at gmail.com> wrote:
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Gerry Quinn — 12 Oct 2011, 13:03 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

I don't think so. Again, I will invoke Typhon's namesake, the Mandragora. For me the connection between these characters is nearly undeniable and I find the prospect of Severian being delusional about both their mental powers to be a very bleak one in regard to the enjoyment of the story.

I don't see any connection between a long-dead emperor and the pretty standard homunculus in a jar that Severian finds in the Autarch's quarters, along with many other objects of a similar nature.

David Stockhoff: Does anyone have any opinion on whether or how Abaia and Erebus rule without resorting to ESP powers?

I have a nagging feeling the text does make some mention of Abaia controlling humanity purely through the power of his thought, but I can't pin the passage down.

Wasn't there something about the Wall being built to defend against the human forces of the sea monsters? I have a vague impression of something of the kind too.

But if we look at the Ascians, the coin, Typhon etc., what I think we see is a deliberate blurring of the boundaries between powers of charisma, force of personality etc., and powers which we would consider telepathic. Mucor's telepathic abilities, apparently the result of brain modification, suggest to me that in Wolfe's world some elements of telepathy exist in everyone, but are stronger in some, and probably trainable (c.f. Decuman and the village of sorcerers). Typhon probably does have some telepathic powers which enhance his already great powers of charisma etc. It is a not uncommon trope in sf/fantasy.

Severian (and other narrators) are not delusional about the existence of such powers, but the powers are not of any special significance to the story.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 12 Oct 2011, 13:43 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/11/2011 11:42 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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Their minions are the kind of "people" who seek to do their bidding, and they handle ruling over the masses by fear. "Yield, lest we flood your lands/barricade the harbor/blot the sun with smoke and ash/send pestilences, etc." The beasts themselves are smart enough to learn how to communicate with their Urthly minions by voice-like noises, writing, pictures, etc. if they didn't already know it when they got here.

For extra horror, Urthlings like the undines are bred and modified in order to better communicate with their uncanny and cyclopean sovereigns.

As I thought, this establishes two very different and possible irreconcilable schools of thought on the topic. Your beasts seem very weak and ineffectual to me, lacking mind powers. I don't see them enslaving half the planet and threatening the Commonwealth.

We know they have minions, yes? Abaia has undines, Erebus has perischii. If they had sufficient mental wattage to enslave half the planet, why do they bother with minions? Or is the mind power what they use to control the minions who then enslave half the planet?

Chairman Mao did it without any mind powers at all using 100% pure minion power.

Yeah, but Mao didn't live under the ocean and across the planet! Even he had cadres of minions. Just as a telepathic Typhon would not abandon radio and other electromechanical technology (see the Mule), the Beasts would not abandon basic tools of manipulation.

It seems to me your scheme of frightening humans into submission would only work for coastal peoples. There seems to be no pattern of coastal tribes invading inland, but rather of periscii and ascii, as you say. There must be something more, in addition to ideology and self-interest. Cthulhu only ever used dreams, but then he was not awake.

Gerry Quinn — 12 Oct 2011, 13:46 · in reply to larry miller

From: larry miller

As I posted before the Mandragora was likely a proto chem Typhon built to download into. Theres a point in Long Sun where Silk having discovered that the Gods can possess chems and I remember Echidna mentioning a Prime Calcula in the Citadel. Im sure this was a reference to the mandragora. This would also keep with Wolfes naming conventions as Calculas is I believe the latin word for stone.

Are we talking about the same mandragora, i.e. the very ordinary homunculus briefly interrogated by Severian at the end of Citadel of the Autarch?

It's just a random foetus pickled in spirits and magically kept in a semi-alive state. As it tells us itself: "I was deformed, and died before birth, and have been kept here since in white brandy."

Neither Typhon nor a mandrake are involved. And surely the "Prime Calcula" must refer to a central processing unit of Mainframe (I would not surprise me if some of the problems of the Whorl arise from Mainframe being damaged during the war of the gods, but that's speculation.) I am pretty sure it is actually called the Prime Calculator. Echidna is losing control of Marble as she says the word:

Her head swivelled toward the Sacred Window. "The prime calcula... His citadel." [?] Her knees would no longer support her; she crumpled [?] seeming to shrink as she fell.

So the ellipses can be naturally interpreted as indicating an interrupted word/sentence.
- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 12 Oct 2011, 14:01 · in reply to larry miller

From: larry miller

Dug out my long sun books last night to reread and found the quote. Echidna has just possessed Maytera Marble and killed Blood. She says in response to Silks question "The Prime Calcula.....His Citadel.....". Wolfe always capitalizes the citadel to seperate it from other strongholds so this Prime Calcula must be on Urth.

It's not capitalised in my edition (Epiphany of the Long Sun, combining Calde and Exodus, First Orb edition, November 2000). Here it says: 'The prime calcula... His citadel. Only Pas gets a capital, and — as I noted in my previous post — that is likely because it is a new sentence (or sentence fragment), rather than any lingering respect for Pas on Echidna's part. Even capitalised, I don't see how it could make sense for it to be on Urth, presumably many light-years away at the least (there are certain inconsistencies in the physics relating to the journey, but I interpret them as either errors or things forced on Wolfe to accommodate his use of traditional SF tropes).

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 12 Oct 2011, 14:35 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/12/2011 9:03 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: Lee Berman <mailto:severiansola at hotmail.com>

I don't think so. Again, I will invoke Typhon's namesake, the Mandragora. For me the connection between these characters is nearly undeniable and I find the prospect of Severian being delusional about both their mental powers to be a very bleak one in regard to the enjoyment of the story.

I don't see any connection between a long-dead emperor and the pretty standard homunculus in a jar that Severian finds in the Autarch's quarters, along with many other objects of a similar nature.

David Stockhoff: Does anyone have any opinion on whether or how Abaia and Erebus rule without resorting to ESP powers?

I have a nagging feeling the text does make some mention of Abaia controlling humanity purely through the power of his thought, but I can't pin the passage down.

Wasn't there something about the Wall being built to defend against the human forces of the sea monsters? I have a vague impression of something of the kind too.

But if we look at the Ascians, the coin, Typhon etc., what I think we see is a deliberate blurring of the boundaries between powers of charisma, force of personality etc., and powers which we would consider telepathic. Mucor's telepathic abilities, apparently the result of brain modification, suggest to me that in Wolfe's world some elements of telepathy exist in everyone, but are stronger in some, and probably trainable (c.f. Decuman and the village of sorcerers). Typhon probably does have some telepathic powers which enhance his already great powers of charisma etc. It is a not uncommon trope in sf/fantasy. Severian (and other narrators) are not delusional about the existence of such powers, but the powers are not of any special significance to the story.

- Gerry Quinn

Downplaying mental magic seems pointless if such magic serves the narrative, which it obviously does. There's no question that telepathy is a classic pulp trope that simply must appear in TBotNS, and therefore it appears. Typhon's powers, great or little, came up in a discussion of cloning and Silk---THAT is their critical significance. (Note: Mucor's telepathic abilities are NOT the result of brain modification but of genetic modification, since they are present in embryo and such embryos are very special.) But there is more.

I agree that various technologies are deliberately blurred, as is (famously) the line between technology and magic. This seems to be both a stylistic approach and a philosophy. For example, in Wolfe, there is little distinction between human and machine. Machines can read minds and project eidolons. Machines can do anything humans can do and vice versa, because both are material and explicitly non-divine. Both can manipulate time and space, because both are material and not divine. This "law" underlies all of Briah. Blurring and ambiguity can hardly be said to weaken the significance of the elements that are blurred---only the significance of the original distinctions.

I see Typhon's role in TBotNS as a sort of hyper-anti-Autarch, a Satan to Severian's parallel/opposite Christ figure, who demands that Severian kneel and accept him as his lord. Sev is practically just out of the womb of the Tower and has left the guild for good when he meets Typhon and is at a very low point. So what's the first thing Typhon does? He feeds Severian and demands an oath of loyalty.

What is wrong with this oath? The more unique Typhon is, the more that oath would be to his person and less to his throne. Typhon is all arrogance and denial of love and death. His military prowess is implied at best, but hints are dropped, in the context of the very SF tradition you call "not uncommon," as to his unique mental powers. What good does it do to drop fake hints? They can mislead or provoke thought or lead to other points, but they should not confuse.

Gerry Quinn — 12 Oct 2011, 15:09 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

Sent: Wednesday, October 12, 2011 3:35 PM

To: The Urth Mailing List

Subject: [BGSpam]Re: (urth) Typhon's nature

On 10/12/2011 9:03 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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I don't mean it is downplayed as such, I just think it is not an element of special significance. As for Mucor, I agree that the engineering is probably genetic, although there are other possibilities. What I meant was that the intended and actual result of the embryological tinkering was to cause her brain to develop in an unusual fashion, which somehow endowed her

with phenomenal psychic powers.

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I agree, though his role seems more nuanced in the later series. Speaking of psychic powers, it seems possible that in BotNS it is something that is associated with evil, devil worship, the dark side who oppose Severian (though perhaps are not all wholly averse to the coming of Ushas). The "good" characters do not seem to have such powers, at least not in fashions similar to Typhon, Decuman, Abaia etc. Perhaps it is the old trope of misusing such powers for personal gain.

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For me they are not confusing because I do not find it very important what exact mix of technological, personality, and psychic powers is possessed by Typhon. Whether he has sent his thoughts into far places by telepathy or by logging onto still extant computer databases is something we are simply not told, and Severian, if he knew, would probably find both possibilities equally astounding.

- Gerry Quinn

Lee Berman — 12 Oct 2011, 15:09 · follows Gerry Quinn

Larry Miller:

As I posted before the Mandragora was likely a proto chem Typhon built to download into. There's a point in Long Sun where Silk having discovered that the Gods can possess chems and I remember Echidna mentioning a Prime Calcula in the Citadel. I'm sure this was a reference to the mandragora. This would also keep with Wolfe's naming conventions as Calculas is I believe the Latin word for stone.

Sorry I missed your post Larry. Some interesting ideas! There are a few Latin words for stones and rocks. "Calculus" is most specifically for "pebble" which became associated with math via the use of pebbles in a Roman abacus-type calculator. Anyway, with both the stone and computing aspects of the word, it becomes a fantastic option as a name for a Chem. Not sure why Wolfe wanted to feminize it by spelling it "calcula".

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his mental upload was a fatal process and apparently not subject to further up/downloads.

Anyway, if Wolfe meant the "prime calcula" to refer to a chem being in BotNS I think we only have two or three characters who qualify as mechanical beings: Jonas, Sidero and Ossipago. None would seem to have any association with the Citadel, unless.....

Perhaps we could extend some latitude to Borski's idea that Ossipago is Father Inire in disguise. The identification is based largely on the idea of obscured eyes (eyes being the window to the soul, which chems don't have?). The role of "bone grower" and "father" are not so far apart.

If we can accept this idea, we now have a "prime calcula" who has been the power behind the throne of the Commonwealth for a millenium, is the architect of the House Absolute and likely the Citadel (given the mystic pathways between them), and is the boss of Barbatus and Famulimus, directing their "hammer" and "tongs" actions which forge humanity.

Moreover, Inire's name can be connected to the god Pan (from whom Pas seems to have derived his name) and thus Dionysus, who is associated with The Outsider in RTTW. I find some substance to these connections and find them helpful to my own understanding of the text. Thanks for the inspiration, Larry! (even if not shared, heh)

Marc Aramini — 12 Oct 2011, 15:24 · in reply to Lee Berman

--- On Wed, 10/12/11, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

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Say it ain't so, Lee. Not the dreaded Inire is everybody theory because inire has an r and an e and so does everybody, and if you spell venial-body and connect it to Inire you can spell everybody. NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO.

Lee Berman — 12 Oct 2011, 15:33 · follows Marc Aramini

David Stockhoff: I agree that various technologies are deliberately blurred, as is (famously) the line between technology and magic. This seems to be both a stylistic approach and a philosophy.

Yes. I think this cuts to the crux of the debate. For some readers, Wolfe's work seems to be a collection of rippingly good yarns. Any perception of an overarching philosophy and use of sub-text to convey it is seen as a distraction and diminishing of the story. These different approaches create a difficult platform for discussion between parties.

I tend to agree with your assertion that a story which contains spaceships, ray guns, robots, aliens, anti-gravity, cloning and time travel simply has to have telepathy. How could it be left out? ;-)

David Stockhoff — 12 Oct 2011, 15:47 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/12/2011 11:09 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

Sent: Wednesday, October 12, 2011 3:35 PM

To: The Urth Mailing List <mailto:urth at lists.urth.net>

Subject: [BGSpam]Re: (urth) Typhon's nature

On 10/12/2011 9:03 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Typhon

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I don't mean it is downplayed as such, I just think it is not an element of special significance.

As for Mucor, I agree that the engineering is probably genetic, although there are other possibilities. What I meant was that the intended and actual result of the embryological tinkering was to cause her brain to develop in an unusual fashion, which somehow endowed her with phenomenal psychic powers.

Exactly. I just wanted to be clear there, since the brain develops AFTER the genes are set.

I see Typhon's role in TBotNS as a sort of hyper-anti-Autarch, a Satan to Severian's parallel/opposite Christ figure, who demands that Severian kneel and accept him as his lord.

I agree, though his role seems more nuanced in the later series. Speaking of psychic powers, it seems possible that in BotNS it is something that is associated with evil, devil worship, the dark side who oppose Severian (though perhaps are not all wholly averse to the coming of Ushas). The "good" characters do not seem to have such powers, at least not in fashions similar to Typhon, Decuman, Abaia etc. Perhaps it is the old trope of misusing such powers for personal gain.

Quite possible! Pact with the devil and all that. Manfred, perhaps. See below.

Sev is practically just out of the womb of the Tower and has left the guild for good when he meets Typhon and is at a very low point. So what's the first thing Typhon does? He feeds Severian and demands an oath of loyalty.

What is wrong with this oath? The more unique Typhon is, the more that oath would be to his person and less to his throne. Typhon is all arrogance and denial of love and death. His military prowess is implied at best, but hints are dropped, in the context of the very SF tradition you call "not uncommon," as to his unique mental powers. What good does it do to drop fake hints? They can mislead or provoke thought or lead to other points, but they should not confuse.

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- Gerry Quinn

Astounding, or else pedestrian. We can't really tell, can we? But I agree that mechanisms are not strictly critical outside of hard SF, which this ain't. But what about my point above? An interstellar emperor who basically uses Daddy's wealth to create his empire is quite different from one who asserts the power of his self, is it not? (A Trump-style president who uses self-promotion to hide his incompetence vs an Eisenhower?) Force of personality, force of mind, same thing. Fancy electronics---not so much. BIG difference there, and that's a bigger point than ESP, aside from the cloning debate.

Typhon wants to govern the universe by unleashing (ungoverning) himself. That's why I call him anti-Autarch. If his powers come from himself, the point is more strongly made.

Lee Berman — 12 Oct 2011, 16:17 · follows David Stockhoff

Does the multi-head/multi-limb aspect of the Neighbors reflect a tree origin?

Marc Aramini:

In my opinion, yes, and it also symbolically represents the doubled genetic nature of a hybrid strain (corn genetics in the first chapter of OBW and hybridization linked to the condition of Blue - ad nauseum! Both symbolic of Silk-Horn and the neighbors as hybrids more suited to the harsh environment). Note how MAD the neighbors get when a guy with an ax goes into the forest. why? It's mother tree he's going to cut down.

Yes. The pieces fit together.

Say it ain't so, Lee. Not the dreaded Inire is everybody theory because inire has an r and an e and so does everybody, and if you spell venial-body and connect it to

Inire you can spell everybody. NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO.

Heh, funny! Actually I agree with you that Borski's 20 pages of Solar Labyrinth "onomastics" where he connects every name in BotNS with every other name to be a ridiculous waste of paper. But I do consider Borski to be a very intelligent guy whose thoughts are worth paying attention to. (what Borski is not intelligent enough to do is "solve" Gene Wolfe's work all by himself. IMHO, his major errors all stem from his refusal to consult with anyone but himself in developing his ideas.)

Much discussion has been devoted to this topic over the past years, so I'll just try to summarize why I am open to the idea that Father Inire is "everybody" or at least quite a few different characters.

1. We never openly see the Father Inire character in the action. This must have a literary purpose. It might be to hint that he is actually seen all over the place.
2. I think the text presents the (old) Autarch and his actions and devices to be a pale echo of Father Inire's. Conversely I think the text presents Father Inire and his devices to be a pale echo of those used by Tzadkiel. We are shown the old Autarch playing a few different roles with minimal changes in his appearance. We are shown Tzadkiel playing a number of different roles with drastic changes in appearance. I find it logical that Father Inire conducts himself in a similar fashion at a level somewhere in between those two.
3. I think the origin/significance of Father Inire's name must be important. I'll ignore the "Father" part for now though it is important. The Latin verb "inire" meaning 'sexual entrance' is derived from Inuus, an epithet of the god Faunus/Pan. One of mythological Pan's tricks was to multiply himself into a small horde of copies who could each independently conduct various aspects of Pan's desires and goals.
4. Long Sun rather pointedly suggests Pan as an origin for the name of Pas. Short Sun pointedly references The Outsider as being associated with Dionysus, a god associated with Pan (not to mention the Celtic "Green Man" and various other pre/alt.-christian deities).

These four points are enough for me to at least consider the possibility that Father Inire is a character who can be found appearing throughout this story. This constant involvement/interference with human beings is what we might expect a pagan god to do in a non-Judeo-Christian universe, which is what I think Briah is.

larry miller — 12 Oct 2011, 17:50 · in reply to Lee Berman

Im pretty sure we see Inire twice in BotNS. The crooked bent man that appears before the Autarch and Severian in the Secret House and the figure Severian sees entering the Autarchs tent near the end of Citadel is Inire.

On 10/12/11, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

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Marc Aramini:

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Larry Miller — 12 Oct 2011, 18:02 · in reply to Lee Berman

I think calling it a fetus may be a mistake on Severian's part. I think the Mandragora may in fact just be small. It tells Severian it was deformed- maybe in reference to its stunted growth? Maybe that's why Typhon never transfers into it. While I'm thinking about it does anyone have an idea what the "emerald bench" Severian mentions in the same chapter could be?

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Larry Miller:

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Jeff Wilson — 13 Oct 2011, 03:04 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/12/2011 8:43 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:
Just as a telepathic Typhon would not abandon radio and other electromechanical technology (see the Mule), the Beasts would not abandon basic tools of manipulation.

Yes, I agree.

It seems to me your scheme of frightening humans into submission would only work for coastal peoples.

Sigh. I'm sorry to disappoint any expectation of a comprehensive plan for world domination; I thought a few illustrative examples would suffice. If you want the full scheme, I demand one million dollars!

"blot the sun with smoke and ash/send pestilences" should be credible in places distant from water, especially if you *actually* blot the sun for a while, or actually let some un-Urthly pests devour some crops and bite prominent citizens.

The carrot may compel as well as the stick; presumably some people will fall for the undine's charms and their offers of curiously wrought jewelry.

Jeff Wilson — 13 Oct 2011, 03:19 · in reply to larry miller

On 10/12/2011 1:02 PM, larry miller wrote:

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emerald_Tablet

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Jerry Friedman — 13 Oct 2011, 03:57 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 10/11/2011 1:25 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

Do we know Mucor's talent is genetic? Maybe it's the result of an implant or? brain surgery or magic performed on her embryo. Or are you using "genetic" as a shorthand for some broader idea? It seems to me Typhon's psionic talents are quite possible for humans in Briah, considering Mucor and Decuman. We have no idea what enhancement and special training Typhon might have. Jerry Friedman

The councilors' discussion of Mucor and the missing embryo that was Silk makes it very clear that they are much the same. Surgery can't explain a "magic" embryo. But the very fact that it's an embryo is a clear signal that the origin of its magic is fundamentally genetic.

I don't have time to argue with you and Lee about this, so I hope we can agree to disagree.

Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman — 13 Oct 2011, 04:31 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com>

David Stockhoff: I agree that various technologies are deliberately blurred, as is (famously) the line between technology and magic.

An interesting exercise for some might be to consider all the mind control and telepathy in the Sun books. There's a lot, from the revolutionary, shown as purely technological, to Decuman's spell, which Severian speculates on in pure black-magic terms, with all kinds of others, often not explained at all. They could then decide which examples throw light on which others.

This seems to be both a stylistic approach and a philosophy.

Yes. I think this cuts to the crux of the debate. For some readers, Wolfe's work seems to be a collection of rippingly good yarns. Any perception of an overarching philosophy and use of sub-text to convey it is seen as a distraction and diminishing of the story. These different approaches create a difficult platform for discussion between parties.

...

As do caricatures such as the one above. I'll leave the caricature of the opposite approach as an exercise.

Jerry Friedman

David Stockhoff — 13 Oct 2011, 12:21 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/12/2011 11:04 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/12/2011 8:43 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

Just as a telepathic Typhon would not abandon radio and other electromechanical technology (see the Mule), the Beasts would not abandon basic tools of manipulation.

Yes, I agree.

It seems to me your scheme of frightening humans into submission would only work for coastal peoples.

Sigh. I'm sorry to disappoint any expectation of a comprehensive plan for world domination; I thought a few illustrative examples would suffice. If you want the full scheme, I demand one million dollars!

"blot the sun with smoke and ash/send pestilences" should be credible in places distant from water, especially if you *actually* blot the sun for a while, or actually let some un-Urthly pests devour some crops and bite prominent citizens.

The carrot may compel as well as the stick; presumably some people will fall for the undine's charms and their offers of curiously wrought jewelry.

Sure. It's not clear how they would accomplish even those things, however.

David Stockhoff — 13 Oct 2011, 14:26 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 10/12/2011 11:57 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

From: David Stockhoff<dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 10/11/2011 1:25 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

Do we know Mucor's talent is genetic? Maybe it's the result of an implant or brain surgery or magic performed on her embryo. Or are you using "genetic" as a shorthand for some broader idea? It seems to me Typhon's psionic talents are quite possible for humans in Briah, considering Mucor and Decuman. We have no idea what enhancement and special training Typhon might have. Jerry Friedman

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I don't have time to argue with you and Lee about this, so I hope we can agree to disagree.

Jerry Friedman

Sure, but can you at least put forth an alternative theory that explains what is special about Mucor, and Mucor's embryo, etc. Otherwise, we're not actually even disagreeing. It seems to me you are suggesting that a surgical implant into an embryo is an equally likely source of Mucor's abilities vs breeding/splicing. Is that right?

To me, that's like a murder mystery where the killer happens to have a mysterious superpoison

he inserts into a tomato seed so he can grow a single poisoned tomato he serves to his wife in a salad. It explains nothing, makes no sense on any level, and greatly overcomplicates everything without making a good story. The killer would be caught just the same as if he used a hammer.

David Stockhoff — 13 Oct 2011, 14:44 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 10/13/2011 12:31 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

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An interesting exercise for some might be to consider all the mind control and telepathy in the Sun books. There's a lot, from the revolutionary, shown as purely technological, to Decuman's spell, which Severian speculates on in pure black-magic terms, with all kinds of others, often not explained at all. They could then decide which examples throw light on which others.

There is quite a bit, yes. But almost none of the technology is described in a direct, straightforward manner, especially in TBotNS. Even bits such as Typhon's explanation of antigravity are obfuscating. All the bits contradict one another or could be said to present alternative understandings of reality: mechanical machines, thinking machines, spells, brain tissue, higher species. The nature of reality defies simple analysis. The characters inhabit a world that is "dirty" and granular and so saturated with SF tropes that they don't even think about explaining these mechanisms nor expect them to cohere, even perhaps when they make use of them.

In this context, why (and how) argue that Typhon definitely or even primarily LACKS psionic powers? The onus would seem to be on such a theory to explain itself.

David Stockhoff — 13 Oct 2011, 19:28 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/11/2011 5:21 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

Typhon's sending of his thoughts into distant places remains a somewhat curious idiom if it is not literal, but it is not entirely without precedent in literature and bombast and other figurative expression.

I am suddenly reminded of the Wizard of Oz. It's something he might have said (although he didn't).

Jerry Friedman — 14 Oct 2011, 05:22 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 10/12/2011 11:57 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

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Okay, I've got some time.

In the real world, I'd say a surgical implant was the obvious possibility. How can producing different proteins make a brain capable of taking over other brains? In sf, that doesn't apply. In Chapter 6 of RttW, Silkhorn tells Hound the embryos were "the products of carefully controlled matings in his workshops". I suppose there could have been no more intervention than that. On the other hand, Crane tells Silk that Mucor's brain was not recognizably human (LotLS, Chapter 11). That sounds like a lot to get out of selective breeding, and makes me suspect that Typhon's scientists did something more in the labs. Genetic engineering, implants, surgery, and changing the environment in the uterine replicators (as we call them here in the wormhole nexus) all seem like possibilities and are compatible with each other. One speculation: There's an sf cliché that we'd all have superpowers, but we inhibit them. (The mandragora tells Severian that Sev's continued psychic shrieking from being abandoned as an infant inhibits his telepathy, which is along the same lines but not the same.)? Maybe someone did a little surgery on Mucor's embryo to disable the part of the brain that would have inhibited her powers.

Anyway, I don't see that it matters to the story.

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To me it's more like saying, "We can't find any trace of the weapon--it might have been the hammer we're told he had, or a rock, or a frozen leg of lamb. But we know the husband did it anyway."

Jerry Friedman

I'd forgotten about the conversation between?

Lee Berman — 14 Oct 2011, 12:29 · follows Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman: The mandragora tells Severian that Sev's continued psychic shrieking from being abandoned as an infant inhibits his telepathy, which is along the same lines but not the same.) Maybe someone did a little surgery on Mucor's embryo to disable the part of the brain that would have inhibited her powers. Anyway, I don't see that it matters to the story.

I think the best answer is whatever gives you that "click" sense of just feeling right. If the surgery hypothesis does that, you should go with that.

For me, the seeds of the entire Sun series can be found in Fifth Head of Cerberus: the uploading of human intelligence to machines, the dead end nature of cloning, the mystery of identity and family, the origin of myth, the relationship of the faerie/divine world with our "reality" etc.

Of the three sections of the Sun series I am least familiar with Long Sun. But given the themes I think Wolfe established in 5HoC, I tend to gravitate toward genetics and cloning as explanations which tie into the larger picture Wolfe is trying to paint. I get the impression Wolfe is trying to make philosophical points with all that he writes, though I'm not sure all his fans would agree.

Gerry Quinn — 14 Oct 2011, 12:53 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

On 10/12/2011 11:09 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

For me they are not confusing because I do not find it very important what exact mix of technological, personality, and psychic powers is possessed by Typhon. Whether he has sent his thoughts into far places by telepathy or by logging onto still extant computer databases is something we are simply not told, and Severian, if he knew, would probably find both possibilities equally astounding.

Astounding, or else pedestrian. We can't really tell, can we? But I agree that mechanisms are not strictly critical outside of hard SF, which this ain't. But what about my point above? An interstellar emperor who basically uses Daddy's wealth to create his empire is quite different from one who asserts the power of his self, is it not? (A Trump-style president who uses self-promotion to hide his incompetence vs an Eisenhower?) Force of personality, force of mind, same thing. Fancy electronics---not so much. BIG difference there, and that's a bigger point than ESP, aside from the cloning debate.

Typhon wants to govern the universe by unleashing (ungoverning) himself. That's why I call him anti-Autarch. If his powers come from himself, the point is more strongly made.

But I think we can all agree that Typhon does have great force of personality and will to power. This is the essential thing about him. To fulfil his drive to conquer he uses the things and people about him, and any tools available to him. He uses armies, he uses databases. He uses the power to command that by way of propaganda and years of power have been identified with his face in the mind of the populace — hence the whole head transplant. If he has innate psychic powers he uses them too, but they are no more significant than the strength of his hands. In the Long Sun series, we learn more about life on Typhon's Urth from Mamelta, a young computer technician who was one of the millions selected by Typhon and commanded to enter the Whorl as a sleeper. We learn much from the very fact of command, of course: "We had to volunteer. They were — you couldn't say no." She agreed with Silk that the Loganstone was a "slave boat". [Note: This passage also seems to make it clear that Mamelta was nobody special on Urth. Of course she might for all we know have been forced previously to donate eggs, and one of them could have been fertilised and engineered to eventually become Silk, and then she might have become the one of many sleepers woken by Mucor to be woken just as Silk arrived, but there is no indication in the text that any such series of coincidences happened.] We also learn that the inhabitants of Typhon's Urth (or maybe just certain classes or occupations) were wired into some kind of always-on telepathic internet. They did not need to use normal speech to communicate, and the system was also used for control: the family of the Monarch danced or stalked through their dreams. When they were placed in the Whorl, brain operations were needed to remove the apparatus (whether that consisted of modified brain tissue or electronics we are not told) associated with this internet, and to reduce their mental dependence on the rulers. The latter was not possible to completely achieve - and thus came about the eventual political/religious structure of the Whorl - but the surgeons did "as much as they dared". Brain centres associated with speech processing may have also needed to be revamped, or it may be that the ability to speak "to move my lips and my tongue... while I make this noise in my throat" was present anyway, though unused. So Typhon's psychic domination of his people was technologically mediated, in the end. Of course, Wolfe probably hadn't decided on any of that when he wrote BotNS, and for all we know he may have leaned the other way at that time.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 14:14 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 10/14/2011 1:22 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

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I think it matters in terms of figuring out what's possible in the rest of the story.

Positing that Typhon's labs could insert nanorobots into embryos doesn't tell us what to do with the "carefully controlled matings" remark. Positing microsurgical techniques fails to explain why we don't see more evidence of microsurgery. Positing that Mucor is radio-controlled through her fillings only pushes the explanation farther away.

There is also the fundamental technical problem that embryos don't have brains. You can't operate on a brain that has not yet come into being, nor will an implant do anything for quite some time. In fact, if the brain does not develop as desired, the implant will prove to be a huge waste. Implants fail, surgeries fail. Since we are dealing with embryos on the Long Sun side (and large numbers of them), that pretty much settles it.

But genetic manipulation is supported, does not need teams of scientists performing thousands of surgeries (since the damn things grow by themselves once you start them off---they don't need revisions or follow-up visits), and directly connects to ever-present concerns about paternity, heredity, and identity.

I'd go so far as to assume that all technology in Briah is genetic, or at least somatic (who knows about astral travel, but we know there is no "astral travel suit"), unless demonstrably otherwise.

larry miller — 14 Oct 2011, 14:51 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Does anyone think this telepathic-internet might be connected with Cyriacas story?

On 10/14/11, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

From: David Stockhoff

On 10/12/2011 11:09 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

For me they are not confusing because I do not find it very important what exact mix of technological, personality, and psychic powers is possessed by Typhon. Whether he has sent his thoughts into far places

by telepathy or by logging onto still extant computer databases is something we are simply not told, and Severian, if he knew, would probably find both possibilities equally astounding.

Astounding, or else pedestrian. We can't really tell, can we? But I agree that mechanisms are not strictly critical outside of hard SF, which this ain't. But what about my point above? An interstellar emperor who basically uses Daddy's wealth to create his empire is quite different from one who asserts the power of his self, is it not? (A Trump-style president who uses self-promotion to hide his incompetence vs an Eisenhower?) Force of personality, force of mind, same thing. Fancy electronics---not so much. BIG difference there, and that's a bigger point than ESP, aside from the cloning debate.

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In the Long Sun series, we learn more about life on Typhon's Urth from Mamelta, a young computer technician who was one of the millions selected by Typhon and commanded to enter the Whorl as a sleeper. We learn much from the very fact of command, of course: "We had to volunteer. They were — you couldn't say no." She agreed with Silk that the Loganstone was a "slave boat". [Note: This passage also seems to make it clear that Mamelta was nobody special on Urth. Of course she might for all we know have been forced previously to donate eggs, and one of them could have been fertilised and engineered to eventually become Silk, and then she might have become the one of many sleepers woken by Mucor to be woken just as Silk arrived, but there is no indication in the text that any such series of coincidences happened.]

We also learn that the inhabitants of Typhon's Urth (or maybe just certain classes or occupations) were wired into some kind of always-on telepathic internet. They did not need to use normal speech to communicate, and the system was also used for control: the family of the Monarch danced or stalked through their dreams. When they were placed in the Whorl, brain operations were needed to remove the apparatus (whether that consisted of modified brain tissue or electronics we are not told) associated with this internet, and to reduce their mental dependence on the rulers. The latter was not possible to completely achieve - and thus came about the eventual political/religious structure of the Whorl - but the surgeons did "as much as they dared". Brain centres associated with speech processing may have also needed to be revamped, or it may be that the ability to speak "to move my lips and my tongue... while I make this noise in my throat" was present anyway, though unused.

So Typhon's psychic domination of his people was technologically mediated, in the end. Of course, Wolfe probably hadn't decided on any of that when he wrote BotNS, and for all we know he may have leaned the other way at that time.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 14 Oct 2011, 14:54 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

Positing that Typhon's labs could insert nanorobots into embryos doesn't tell us what to do with the "carefully controlled matings" remark.

Perhaps both are needed for optimal performance.

Really, I agree that genetic engineering is the most obvious technological way to go in producing the desired effects, at least with our current understanding. I'm willing to assume that that (probably combined with carefully controlled matings) was probably what was done. But I don't think we know for sure, and if there was some special reason to believe it was nanobots instead I'd happily countenance it.

The telepathic internet described by Mamelta, after all, doesn't seem like it was necessarily implemented by genetic engineering. It might have been, although that means Typhon would have had to wait two decades to set it up, or else employed surgical modification or other methods for the first generation, switching to genetic engineering later.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 14 Oct 2011, 15:02 · in reply to larry miller

From: larry miller

Does anyone think this telepathic-internet might be connected with Cyriacas story?

Interesting idea. My instinct is that Cyriaca's story relates to a much earlier time, and she makes no mention of Typhon but refers instead to a machine-dominated society. But it's not inconceivable.

One other reason for doubting it is that it seems improbable that Wolfe had thought of Mamelta when he wrote Cyriaca.

- Gerry Quinn

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Jerry Friedman — 14 Oct 2011, 15:16 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com>

Jerry Friedman: The mandragora tells Severian that Sev's continued psychic shrieking from being abandoned as an infant inhibits his telepathy, which is along the same lines but not the same.)? Maybe someone did a little surgery on Mucor's embryo

to disable the
part of the brain that would have inhibited her powers. Anyway, I don't
see that it matters to the story.

I think the best answer is whatever gives you that "click" sense of
just feeling right. If
the surgery hypothesis does that, you should go with that.

It might be churlish of me to disagree when you're being so agreeable, but you've put your
finger on the difference between our styles of interpretation. None of the hypotheses gives me
that "click" sense, and I see no reason to go with one in particular. The best answer for me is to
accept that we don't know, except that Crane tells us controlled conception was involved and
Silkhorn (who may have additional sources of information) repeats it.

For me, the seeds of the entire Sun series can be found in Fifth Head of
Cerberus: the
uploading of human intelligence to machines, the dead end nature of cloning, the

mystery of identity and family, the origin of myth, the relationship of the
faerie/divine
world with our "reality" etc.

Certainly those are among Wolfe's repeated interests.

Of the three sections of the Sun series I am least familiar with Long Sun. But
given the
themes I think Wolfe established in 5HoC, I tend to gravitate toward genetics
and cloning
as explanations which tie into the larger picture Wolfe is trying to paint. I
get the
impression Wolfe is trying to make philosophical points with all that he writes,
though I'm not sure all his fans would agree. ??? ??? ??? ? ??? ??? ?

I'd say "with some of what he writes".

Steven Brust apparently says he got his method from Wolfe: it's "And now, I'm going to tell you
something really cool."

<http://books.google.com/books?id=hHbWswMuvOgC&pg=PA397>

Does anyone know what the source of that might be?

Of course, for Wolfe (and most of us), philosophy can be really cool.

Jerry Friedman

Lee Berman — 14 Oct 2011, 15:25 · follows Gerry Quinn

From: larry miller

Does anyone think this telepathic-internet might be connected with
Cyriacas story?

Interesting idea. My instinct is that Cyriaca's story relates to a much earlier time, and she
makes no mention of Typhon but refers instead to a machine-dominated society. But it's not
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One other reason for doubting it is that it seems improbable that Wolfe had thought of Mamelta
when he wrote Cyriaca.

- Gerry Quinn

Some think the monarch who planned to destroy all human books/knowledge was Typhon but I dunno. My memory is a little fuzzy on Cyriaca's story but I think it is primarily meant to provide a framework for the creation of the Hiero-types we hear more about in Malrubius' story. If the hieros are like angel-analogs then the ones who are personally assigned to people, like Malrubius and Triskele for Severian, become "guardian angels" I guess. The old Autarch says he got one too.

I'm tempted to think that the hieros are related to the Long/Short Sun story. Maybe somehow they are related to The Neighbors? But I think some Wolfe quotes have suggested that isn't the case and Long/Short is just a side story rather than relating to the universal future which the hieros represent.

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 15:46 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/14/2011 8:53 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 10/12/2011 11:09 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Significant in what sense?

If I ruled worlds with all those tools you list, and then you found out I was psionic (without using

a psionic helmet), would that not strike you as significant?

What if I boasted of these powers?

What if I claimed (or hinted at) them but had none?

All these hypotheticals are situations in which the "significance" of psionic powers TO THE STORY is quite high. Wolfe has made choices---the choices are significant.

In the Long Sun series, we learn more about life on Typhon's Urth from Mamelta, a young computer technician who was one of the millions selected by Typhon and commanded to enter the Whorl as a sleeper. We learn much from the very fact of command, of course: "We had to volunteer. They were — you couldn't say no." She agreed with Silk that the Loganstone was a "slave boat". [Note: This passage also seems to make it clear that Mamelta was nobody special on Urth. Of course she might for all we know have been forced previously to donate eggs, and one of them could have been fertilised and engineered to eventually become Silk, and then she might have become the one of many sleepers woken by Mucor to be woken just as Silk arrived, but there is no indication in the text that any such series of coincidences happened.] We also learn that the inhabitants of Typhon's Urth (or maybe just certain classes or occupations) were wired into some kind of always-on telepathic internet. They did not need to use normal speech to communicate, and the system was also used for control: the family of the Monarch danced or stalked through their dreams. When they were placed in the Whorl, brain operations were needed to remove the apparatus (whether that consisted of modified brain tissue or electronics we are not told) associated with this internet, and to reduce their mental dependence on the rulers. The latter was not possible to completely achieve - and thus came about the eventual political/religious structure of the Whorl - but the surgeons did "as much as they dared". Brain centres associated with speech processing may have also needed to be revamped, or it may be that the ability to speak "to move my lips and my tongue... while I make this noise in my throat" was present anyway, though unused. So Typhon's psychic domination of his people was technologically mediated, in the end. Of course, Wolfe probably hadn't decided on any of that when he wrote BotNS, and for all we know he may have leaned the other way at that time.

Again, it's not that the distinction between technologies is small. It's that the distinction between forms of matter is small, so that putting on an electromechanical helmet to intensify brain-controlling thought-waves generated by mutated brain tissues to rule the galaxy is simply part of the fabric of what is possible (in pulp SF).

I wonder again if there is a particular model for Wolfe in describing Typhonic society, there being so many models to choose from. But I'm inclined to think "as much as they dared" points to a removal of tissue, not removal of a kind of set-top cable box for the brain. The story that Lemur tried to limit Mucor's power through surgery but failed supports this idea, since an implant could simply be removed. In this theory, perhaps humans developed their brains on their own through exposure to mental commands, or evolution (Mucor may not be all that unique).

It's almost as though Wolfe posits, as a sort of philosophical joke, a human gene for submission to kings that corresponds to a vulnerability to imperious commands. Remove it and we think for ourselves. There is a parallel between the "words-of-power" Severian uses on susceptible

machines at the Citadel as Autarch and the "mental speech" of Typhonic society that turns humans into tools. (Decuman's magic, too?) How much is really meant to correspond between New and Long Sun?---but you do have to wonder about the innateness question. Were people made more vulnerable, or their rulers more powerful? My money is on Typhon's uniqueness. OTOH, once you consider the central roles of his children, and the way Mainframe weakly replicates their ability to abuse the Mameltas that they had on Urth, I can certainly see it the other way.

Variability in psionic power could be a test of this. Do any of the Mainframe gods show greater or lesser power? Did they on Urth? Such variability might indicate variable inheritance of an inherited trait for mind control. Lack of variability suggests standard electromechanical enhancement.

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 15:47 · in reply to larry miller

On 10/14/2011 10:51 AM, larry miller wrote:

Does anyone think this telepathic-internet might be connected with Cyriacas story?

The thinking machines? Yes, they seem to run together as a plausible history.

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 15:51 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/14/2011 10:54 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

*> *

Positing that Typhon's labs could insert nanorobots into embryos doesn't

*> *

tell us what to do with the "carefully controlled matings" remark.

Perhaps both are needed for optimal performance.

I'd only comment that at some point what might be complementary technologies become redundant technologies, and a story becomes inefficient and chokes on its own, er, waste.

Really, I agree that genetic engineering is the most obvious technological way to go in producing the desired effects, at least with our current understanding. I'm willing to assume that that (probably combined with carefully controlled matings) was probably what was done. But I don't think we know for sure, and if there was some special reason to believe it was nanobots instead I'd happily countenance it.

Absolutely.

The telepathic internet described by Mamelta, after all, doesn't seem like it was necessarily implemented by genetic engineering. It might have been, although that means Typhon would have had to wait two decades to set it up, or else employed surgical modification or other methods for the first generation, switching to genetic engineering later.

The Typhonic "mindernet" does seem like a key, but cryptic, phenomenon linking Mount Typhon to Mucor.

Jeff Wilson — 14 Oct 2011, 16:18 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 10/14/2011 10:16 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

Steven Brust apparently says he got his method from Wolfe: it's "And now, I'm going to tell you something really cool."

<http://books.google.com/books?id=hHbWswMuvOgC&pg=PA397>

Does anyone know what the source of that might be?

King said it in DANSE MACABRE, about 1981.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com

Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana

< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Lee Berman — 14 Oct 2011, 16:27 · follows Jeff Wilson

Jerry Friedman: It might be churlish of me to disagree when you're being so agreeable, but you've put your finger on the difference between our styles of interpretation. None of the hypotheses gives me that "click" sense, and I see no reason to go with one in particular. The best answer for me is to accept that we don't know,

Sounds like we agree! :-)

Gerry Quinn — 14 Oct 2011, 16:49 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

On 10/14/2011 8:53 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

But I think we can all agree that Typhon does have great force of personality and will to power. This is the essential thing about him. To fulfil his drive to conquer he uses the things and people about him, and any tools available to him. He uses armies, he uses databases. He uses the power to command that by way of propaganda and years of power have been identified with his face in the mind of the populace — hence the whole head transplant. If he has innate psychic powers he uses them too, but they are no more significant than the strength of his hands.

Significant in what sense?

Significant to our interpretation of the story.

If I ruled worlds with all those tools you list, and then you found out I was psionic (without using a psionic helmet), would that not strike you as significant?

Not really, if psychic powers are reasonably common.

What if I boasted of these powers?

What if I claimed (or hinted at) them but had none?

I don't see evidence that Typhon did either of those things.

He does have strong arms and hands, strong enough to dangle Severian over a cliff. But then again, he took those from Piaton.

All these hypotheticals are situations in which the "significance" of psionic powers TO THE STORY is quite high. Wolfe has made choices---the choices are significant.

I don't see it. When did he claim to have psychic powers?

So Typhon's psychic domination of his people was technologically mediated, in the end. Of course, Wolfe probably hadn't decided on any of that when he wrote BotNS, and for all we know he may have leaned

the other way at that time.

Again, it's not that the distinction between technologies is small. It's that the distinction between forms of matter is small, so that putting on an electromechanical helmet to intensify brain-controlling thought-waves generated by mutated brain tissues to rule the galaxy is simply part of the fabric of what is possible (in pulp SF).

But again, that's not really what Typhon did.

I wonder again if there is a particular model for Wolfe in describing Typhonic society, there being so many models to choose from. But I'm inclined to think "as much as they dared" points to a removal of tissue, not removal of a kind of set-top cable box for the brain. The story that Lemur tried to limit Mucor's power through surgery but failed supports this idea, since an implant could simply be removed. In this theory, perhaps humans developed their brains on their own through exposure to mental commands, or evolution (Mucor may not be all that unique).

Remember, Typhon's people had spent their lives living in this system, and it had become deeply ingrained, producing engrams in the ordinary parts of the brain. Typhon's surgeons would have walked a narrow line trying to erase as much as possible of these memories without damaging intelligence or other functions. Removing the internet apparatus would have been only part of the job — perhaps the easiest part.

It's almost as though Wolfe posits, as a sort of philosophical joke, a human gene for submission to kings that corresponds to a vulnerability to imperious commands. Remove it and we think for ourselves. There is a parallel between the "words-of-power" Severian uses on susceptible machines at the Citadel as Autarch and the "mental speech" of Typhonic society that turns humans into tools.

I don't think the people in Typhon's society are tools any more than people in any tightly controlled society are tools. Of course the mechanisms of control used by Typhon were more sophisticated than those available today, but perhaps some societies have been even more tightly controlled, using more brutal methods. [And one must also think of the Ascians: probably many of us would prefer to live in Typhon's Urth rather than in Ascia.]

(Decuman's magic, too?) How much is really meant to correspond between New and Long Sun?---but you do have to wonder about the innateness question. Were people made more vulnerable, or their rulers more powerful? My money is on Typhon's uniqueness. OTOH, once you consider the central roles of his children, and the way Mainframe weakly replicates their ability to abuse the Mameltas that they had on Urth, I can certainly see it the other way.

Typhon *was* powerful and unique, but it was not any psychic powers he had that made him so. Or so I think. Once he ruled Urth, he imposed his will by a variety of means, but I doubt whether innate mind control abilities were part of it.

[I am reminded of the psychic vampires in Dan Simmons' *Carrion Comfort*, the most powerful of whom rarely used his mind control powers except for amusement, surrounded as he was by minions eager to do his bidding.]

Variability in psionic power could be a test of this. Do any of the Mainframe gods show greater or lesser power? Did they on Urth? Such variability might indicate variable inheritance of an inherited trait for mind control. Lack of variability suggests standard electromechanical enhancement.

I don't see much in the way of variability, except maybe for Tartarus, who is atypical anyway by virtue of his blindness.

Echidna is (presumably) no blood relation of Typhon, yet her digitised personality has similar powers. And anyway, of course, the Mainframe Gods no longer have organic bodies, so it is to be assumed that the same technological systems are used by all of them. We are told, I think, that the process involves pulses of light transmitted by the Sacred Windows.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 14 Oct 2011, 16:53 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

Some think the monarch who planned to destroy all human books/knowledge was Typhon but I dunno.

Nothing Typhon does or says indicates that he would contemplate such an act.

- Gerry Quinn

Lee Berman — 14 Oct 2011, 17:39 · follows Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn: Jesus existed in the universe of Urth — Silk has a vision of him entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

I think this has been discussed in the past. That vision does seem to be of a Jesus-like figure. But severian has been described (by Wolfe) as a Christ-like figure and we can be pretty sure he is not Christ.

Conversely, even if the figure Silk sees in the vision happened to be named Jesus (or Yeshua or Joshua) I don't think he is meant to be Jesus Christ, The Saviour of Humanity. Humanity on Urth/Whorl is still plagued by all the stuff Earth's humanity was plagued with before Jesus and even the stuff before the Flood. Things like false (but real) gods, monsters, demonic possession, etc.

If the Jesus that Silk sees was Jesus Christ, it would mean his salvation was only temporary and faded. Doesn't seem like a very Christian concept to me, but I dunno. Anyway, Urth's humanity is plagued by a lot of problems with no hope for salvation except for a New Sun that might come someday. (and as has been mentioned in the past, it is part of Earth's God's covenant that he wouldn't ever use a Flood again on humanity).

Gerry Quinn: Echidna is (presumably) no blood relation of Typhon, yet her digitised personality has similar powers.

Mythological Echidna was Typhon's sister as well as his mate. I think there was a purpose in naming her this way. Part of it was surely that Typhon and Echidna are known as the "mother and father of all monsters". But why not make their sibling relationship part of it also. Pagan ruling houses were well known to use sibling matings to solidify dynasties.

Even if there were no evidence of genetically similar powers, I would think it more likely that Echidna was Typhon's sister than that she wasn't. The assumption of outbreeding and marriage based on love is a modern prejudice.

Gerry Quinn — 14 Oct 2011, 18:25 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

Gerry Quinn: Jesus existed in the universe of Urth — Silk has a vision of him entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

I think this has been discussed in the past. That vision does seem to be of a Jesus-like figure. But Severian has been described (by Wolfe) as a Christ-like figure and we can be pretty sure he is not Christ.

Actually, Wolfe said Severian was “a Christian figure”. But in any case, Silk’s vision was not of Severian but was a pretty clear reference to Jesus on Palm Sunday.

Conversely, even if the figure Silk sees in the vision happened to be named Jesus (or Yeshua or Joshua) I don't think he is meant to be Jesus Christ, The Saviour of Humanity. Humanity on Urth/Whorl is still plagued by all the stuff Earth's humanity was plagued with before Jesus and even the stuff before the Flood. Things like false (but real) gods, monsters, demonic possession, etc.

The same is true of our own Earth.

If the Jesus that Silk sees was Jesus Christ, it would mean his salvation was only temporary and faded. Doesn't seem like a very Christian concept to me, but I dunno. Anyway, Urth's humanity is plagued by a lot of problems with no hope for salvation except for a New Sun that might come someday. (and as has been mentioned in the past, it is part of Earth's God's covenant that he wouldn't ever use a Flood again on humanity).

But Urth **is** saved, resurrected even. As for the personal salvation of its inhabitants, that is a matter between them and what is called in Severian’s time the Increate. Regarding the Flood, Wolfe is a Catholic, and probably doesn’t fret about Biblical literalism.

Gerry Quinn: Echidna is (presumably) no blood relation of Typhon, yet her digitised personality has similar powers.

Mythological Echidna was Typhon's sister as well as his mate.

That depends on which of a dozen origin stories you select. Besides, they were monsters, not people.

I think there was a purpose in naming her this way. Part of it was surely that Typhon and Echidna are known as the “mother and father of all monsters”. But why not make their sibling relationship part of it also. Pagan ruling houses were well known to use sibling matings to solidify dynasties.

One might note in this regard that Typhon’s offspring were all in some way defective. On the other hand, Typhon would have known of the dangers of inbreeding, and it also seems that he didn’t much like the idea of genetically engineering his offspring. So it would be remarkable if he married his sister. Duke Rigoglio doesn’t mention anything unusual about his marriage — you’d think such a thing would be remarked upon.

Even if there were no evidence of genetically similar powers, I would think it more likely that Echidna was Typhon's sister than that she wasn't.

There is no evidence whatsoever of genetically similar powers. We are told nothing about any genetically endowed powers Echidna (or whatever her real name was) may have had. We know her digitised personality can invoke the personality transfer mechanisms installed in the Sacred Windows, but so can all the others except maybe Tartarus.

The assumption of outbreeding and marriage based on love is a modern prejudice.

Outbreeding has notable advantages that societies ignore at their peril. As for love, it’s not unlikely that Typhon married into some powerful family rather than for love; he had concubines as well, after all. Or perhaps Echidna was necessary to him in some other way. But there’s no particular evidence of incest that I can see.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 18:28 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/14/2011 12:49 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 10/14/2011 8:53 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

But I think we can all agree that Typhon does have great force of personality and will to power. This is the essential thing about him. To fulfil his drive to conquer he uses the things and people about him, and any tools available to him. He uses armies, he uses databases. He uses the power to command that by way of propaganda and years of power have been identified with his face in the mind of the populace — hence the whole head transplant. If he has innate psychic powers he uses them too, but they are no more significant than the strength of his hands.

Significant in what sense?

Significant to our interpretation of the story.

So, since that is in fact the context of our discussion, no more significant in any way whatsoever. No conditions at all and regardless of any talk of enhanced embryos who have psionic powers.

If I ruled worlds with all those tools you list, and then you found out I was psionic (without using a psionic helmet), would that not strike you as significant?

Not really, if psychic powers are reasonably common.

So, emphatically yes (because they are not).

What if I boasted of these powers?

What if I claimed (or hinted at) them but had none?

I don't see evidence that Typhon did either of those things.

"I sent my thought to far places." Jeff says this may be bombast. However, in the light of what has been mentioned about Urth society before the Whorl, Typhon may have been speaking as he would if his society still existed, which would put a different spin on it. We might say, "I googled it and found 7637542 hits."

He does have strong arms and hands, strong enough to dangle Severian over a cliff. But then again, he took those from Piaton.

Which means he does not have them at all.

All these hypotheticals are situations in which the "significance" of psionic powers TO THE STORY is quite high. Wolfe has made choices---the choices are significant.

I don't see it. When did he claim to have psychic powers?

I thought you said there was no difference! But again: "I sent my thought to far places." Why, do you think, he said that? Why did Wolfe have him say that?

So Typhon's psychic domination of his people was technologically mediated, in the end. Of course, Wolfe probably hadn't decided on any of that when he wrote BotNS, and for all we know he may have leaned the other way at that time.

Again, it's not that the distinction between technologies is small.

It's

that the distinction between forms of matter is small, so that putting on an electromechanical helmet to intensify brain-controlling thought-waves generated by mutated brain tissues to rule the galaxy is simply part of the fabric of what is possible (in pulp SF).

But again, that's not really what Typhon did.

You may be missing my point. That comment was definitely not under the heading "Things Typhon Did."

I wonder again if there is a particular model for Wolfe in describing Typhonic society, there being so many models to choose from. But I'm inclined to think "as much as they dared" points to a removal of tissue,

not removal of a kind of set-top cable box for the brain. The story that

Lemur tried to limit Mucor's power through surgery but failed supports this idea, since an implant could simply be removed. In this theory, perhaps humans developed their brains on their own through exposure to mental commands, or evolution (Mucor may not be all that unique).

Remember, Typhon's people had spent their lives living in this system, and it had become deeply ingrained, producing engrams in the ordinary parts of the brain. Typhon's surgeons would have walked a narrow line trying to erase as much as possible of these memories without damaging intelligence or other functions. Removing the internet apparatus would have been only part of the job — perhaps the easiest part.

So, then: how can the internet device be "significant to our interpretation of the story."? It presents no challenges, is completely boring, and is never mentioned.

I propose that the food Typhon feeds Severian is a ham sandwich. Do you concur?

It's almost as though Wolfe posits, as a sort of philosophical joke, a human gene for submission to kings that corresponds to a vulnerability to imperious commands. Remove it and we think for ourselves. There is a parallel between the "words-of-power" Severian uses on susceptible machines at the Citadel as Autarch and the "mental speech" of Typhonic society that turns humans into tools.

I don't think the people in Typhon's society are tools any more than people in any tightly controlled society are tools.

Not a part of my argument. However, that raises a point: which came first? Were people forced to have implants, or did they have them already and Typhon took advantage? When the Beast comes, will he have a Web site?

Of course the mechanisms of control used by Typhon were more sophisticated than those available today, but perhaps some societies have been even more tightly controlled, using more brutal methods. [And one must also think of the Ascians: probably many of us would prefer to live in Typhon's Urth rather than in Ascia.]

It's all the same theme.

(Decuman's magic, too?) How much is really meant to correspond between New and Long Sun?---but you do have to wonder about the innateness question. Were people made more vulnerable, or their rulers more powerful? My money is on Typhon's uniqueness. OTOH, once you consider the central roles of his children, and the way Mainframe weakly replicates their ability to abuse the

Mameltas that they had on Urth, I can certainly see it the other way.

Typhon *was* powerful and unique, but it was not any psychic powers he had that made him so. Or so I think. Once he ruled Urth, he imposed his will by a variety of means, but I doubt whether innate mind control abilities were part of it.

But you have no particular reason to say this, except that you dismiss it, and therefore you doubt it, and therefore you dismiss it.

[I am reminded of the psychic vampires in Dan Simmons' *Carrion Comfort*, the most powerful of whom rarely used his mind control powers except for amusement, surrounded as he was by minions eager to do his bidding.]

Sounds painfully pointless. Reminds me of a recent movie about a vampire scientist in a society of vampires. I look forward to the sequel, about a vampire tax attorney in a society of vampires.

Variability in psionic power could be a test of this. Do any of the Mainframe gods show greater or lesser power? Did they on Urth? Such variability might indicate variable inheritance of an inherited trait for mind control. Lack of variability suggests standard electromechanical enhancement.

I don't see much in the way of variability, except maybe for Tartarus, who is atypical anyway by virtue of his blindness.

I agree, but I'd be curious if anyone else notices any.

Echidna is (presumably) no blood relation of Typhon, yet her digitised personality has similar powers. And anyway, of course, the Mainframe Gods no longer have organic bodies, so it is to be assumed that the same technological systems are used by all of them.

Exactly.

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 18:30 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/14/2011 12:53 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: Lee Berman <mailto:severiansola at hotmail.com>

Some think the monarch who planned to destroy all human books/knowledge was Typhon but I dunno.

Nothing Typhon does or says indicates that he would contemplate such an act.

- Gerry Quinn

No, but if you think about the character and his motivations and mode of operation, it fits.

Of course, one could just as well argue that it is a conflation of Hitler's Germany and the burning of Library of Alexandria.

Marc Aramini — 14 Oct 2011, 18:34 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

--- On Fri, 10/14/11, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

But Urth *is* saved, resurrected even. As for the personal salvation of its inhabitants, that is a matter between them and what is called in Severian's time the Increate. Regarding the Flood, Wolfe is a Catholic, and probably doesn't fret about Biblical literalism.

Gerry, we finally agree completely, completely, completely.

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 18:41 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/14/2011 2:25 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: Lee Berman <mailto:severiansola at hotmail.com>

Gerry Quinn: Echidna is (presumably) no blood relation of Typhon, yet her digitised personality has similar powers.

Mythological Echidna was Typhon's sister as well as his mate.

That depends on which of a dozen origin stories you select. Besides, they were monsters, not people.

I think there was a purpose in naming her this way. Part of it was surely that Typhon and Echidna are known as the "mother and father of all monsters". But why not make their sibling relationship part of it also. Pagan ruling houses were well known to use sibling matings to solidify dynasties.

One might note in this regard that Typhon's offspring were all in some way defective.

Great point.

On the other hand, Typhon would have known of the dangers of inbreeding, and it also seems that he didn't much like the idea of genetically engineering his offspring.

Why do you think this?

So it would be remarkable if he married his sister. Duke Rigoglio doesn't mention anything unusual about his marriage — you'd think such a thing would be remarked upon.

WE would. Would anyone on Urth? Anyway, perhaps there was some reason why Typhon might want to narrow the gene pool---I mean, marry his sister---even despite the (actually very small) risks ... racking my brain ... can't think of any

Even if there were no evidence of genetically similar powers, I would think it more likely that Echidna was Typhon's sister than that she wasn't.

There is no evidence whatsoever of genetically similar powers. We are told nothing about any genetically endowed powers Echidna (or whatever her real name was) may have had. We know her digitised personality can invoke the personality transfer mechanisms installed in the Sacred Windows, but so can all the others except maybe Tartarus.

Correct.

The assumption of outbreeding and marriage based on love is a modern prejudice.

Outbreeding has notable advantages that societies ignore at their peril. As for love, it's not unlikely that Typhon married into some powerful family rather than for love; he had concubines as well, after all. Or perhaps Echidna was necessary to him in some other way. But there's no particular evidence of incest that I can see.

You're right---Typhon was not wearing his INCEST IS BEST T-shirt when he met Severian.

Andrew Mason — 14 Oct 2011, 18:43 · follows David Stockhoff

Gerry Quinn wrote: >

From: Lee Berman

Some think the monarch who planned to destroy all human books/knowledge was Typhon but I dunno.

Nothing Typhon does or says indicates that he would contemplate such an act.

The monarch repented, and everything we see of Typhon, both on Urth and on the Whorl, would have come after that repentance. I think it's clear that this monarch is Typhon, since in _Urth_ there is a specific reference to him as having brought the books to to the Citadel.

It remains true, though, that the machine-run society seems to belong to a much earlier period, the First Empire. Such machines, Malrubius tells us, still exist, but they are clearly not commonplace.

Gerry Quinn — 14 Oct 2011, 19:02 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

On 10/14/2011 12:53 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: Lee Berman <mailto:severiansola at hotmail.com>

Some think the monarch who planned to destroy all human books/knowledge was Typhon but I dunno.

Nothing Typhon does or says indicates that he would contemplate such an act.

No, but if you think about the character and his motivations and mode of operation, it fits.

I disagree. Typhon valued technology and knowledge. He wanted to rule a hi-tech interstellar empire, for which purposes an educated citizenry (for example, Mamelta) is useful. What makes you think he wanted to destroy it?

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 19:05 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/14/2011 3:02 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 10/14/2011 12:53 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: Lee Berman <mailto:severiansola at hotmail.com>

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I disagree. Typhon valued technology and knowledge. He wanted to rule a hi-tech interstellar empire, for which purposes an educated citizenry (for example, Mamelta) is useful. What makes you think he wanted to destroy it?

Gerry, his people didn't even know how to speak out loud. Why would he want them to read?

An emperor wants to keep knowledge to himself and his servants.

Andrew Mason — 14 Oct 2011, 19:07 · follows David Stockhoff

Lee Berman wrote:

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Of the three sections of the Sun series I am least familiar with Long Sun. But given the themes I think Wolfe established in 5HoC, I tend to gravitate toward genetics and cloning as explanations which tie into the larger picture Wolfe is trying to paint. I get the impression Wolfe is trying to make philosophical points with all that he writes, though I'm not sure all his fans would agree.

I'm not sure if I'm disagreeing with you here, but it seems to me that one philosophical point that Wolfe is making turns on the importance of the mind, and how our identity depends on that. His recent statement that Typhon really is on the Whorl - not just 'in a way' bears this out. Long Sun and Short Sun are full of the idea of the same mind being realised in different substrates, human, alien and artificial. Pas is Typhon, Marble is Rose, Jahlee is Chenille (or someone), the Rajan is Horn, all without any genetic connection. So for this reason I am doubtful about cloning as a clue to the various identities suggested in the text. (You may agree, since you refer to 'the dead end nature of cloning'. But I don't think Silk is a dead end.)

Genetics clearly enters into what is happening, with the embryos being specially bred, and I'm not averse to the thought that there are hidden family connections of various kinds. But that seems to me to be secondary. There's something similar in New Sun, where there are certainly hidden family connections; Dorcas is Severian's grandmother, Merryn is his sister, Casdoe may well be his cousin, and knowing how Wolfe works, there are very likely other hidden relations we haven't spotted. I think these probably do illustrate a theme, of threads being drawn together to produce someone suitable to be a New Sun: it's interesting how Severian's ancestry seems to include most of the various classes of the Commonwealth. But it doesn't seem to me this is central to the story.

Gerry Quinn — 14 Oct 2011, 22:11 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

On 10/14/2011 12:49 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

If I ruled worlds with all those tools you list, and then you found out I was psionic (without using a psionic helmet), would that not strike you as significant?

Not really, if psychic powers are reasonably common.

So, emphatically yes (because they are not).

Aren't they? Decuman seems to have them. So does Mucor. The Cumaeen has. In Typhon's time, there was a telepathic internet.

What if I boasted of these powers?

What if I claimed (or hinted at) them but had none?

I don't see evidence that Typhon did either of those things.

"I sent my thought to far places." Jeff says this may be bombast. However, in the light of what has been mentioned about Urth society before the Whorl, Typhon may have been speaking as he would if his society still existed, which would put a different spin on it. We might say, "I googled it and found 7637542 hits."

It's not bombast: what Typhon says is true, there are powers in the sea who would rule. Whatever he did to find out, he did something and it worked. "I sent my thoughts into far places" is how he explains it to Severian. Probably he used some sort of telepresence system to access the databases, military systems or whatever.

He does have strong arms and hands, strong enough to dangle Severian over a cliff. But then again, he took those from Piaton.

Which means he does not have them at all.

Sure he has them!

All these hypotheticals are situations in which the "significance" of psionic powers TO THE STORY is quite high. Wolfe has made choices---the choices are significant.

I don't see it. When did he claim to have psychic powers?

I thought you said there was no difference! But again: "I sent my thought to far places." Why, do you think, he said that? Why did Wolfe have him say that?

He's talking about telepresence, virtualities? Or maybe just alluding to looking at satellite images etc.

So, then: how can the internet device be "significant to our interpretation of the story."? It presents no challenges, is completely boring, and is never mentioned.

When did I say it was significant? It adds colour to our understanding of life in Typhon's empire, just as elsewhere we learn a little about life in Ascia.

I propose that the food Typhon feeds Severian is a ham sandwich. Do you concur?

A kolpochoerus sandwich is another example of something that is perfectly plausible,,. but for which we have no evidence one way or the other. All we know is he gave Severian food of some sort. (If I had to guess, I'd say something like the ready meals eaten by Silk and Mamelta on the lander.)

I don't think the people in Typhon's society are tools any more than people in any tightly controlled society are tools.

Not a part of my argument. However, that raises a point: which came first? Were people forced to have implants, or did they have them already and Typhon took advantage?

Who knows? It would have been convenient for Typhon if their systems were already in use, of course.

Typhon *was* powerful and unique, but it was not any psychic powers he had that made him so. Or so I think. Once he ruled Urth, he imposed his will by a variety of means, but I doubt whether innate mind control abilities were part of it.

But you have no particular reason to say this, except that you dismiss it, and therefore you doubt it, and therefore you dismiss it.

Direct person to person mind control is a lousy way to rule an empire containing billions of subjects. We hear lots about the methods actually used by Typhon, and they are military, technological, and personality based.

[I am reminded of the psychic vampires in Dan Simmons' *Carrion Comfort*, the most powerful of whom rarely used his mind control powers except for amusement, surrounded as he was by minions eager to do his bidding.]

Sounds painfully pointless.

There was a point to it, and it's similar to the point about Typhon.

- Gerry Quinn

Jerry Friedman — 14 Oct 2011, 22:13 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

From: Jeff Wilson <jwilson at clueland.com>

On 10/14/2011 10:16 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

Steven Brust apparently says he got his method from Wolfe: it's "And now, I'm going to tell you something really cool."

<http://books.google.com/books?id=hHbWswMuvOgC&pg=PA397>

Does anyone know what the source of that might be?

King said it in DANSE MACABRE, about 1981.

Thanks!? I hope Brust didn't mix Wolfe up with King. I'd rather think Wolfe said something like that too. (But maybe my response is more appropriate to fiction than to reality.)

Jerry Friedman

Gerry Quinn — 14 Oct 2011, 22:15 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

On the other hand, Typhon would have known of the dangers of inbreeding, and it also seems that he didn't much like the idea of genetically engineering his offspring.

Why do you think this?

Because he had access to the technology, and he didn't use it.

So it would be remarkable if he married his sister. Duke Rigoglio doesn't mention anything unusual about his marriage — you'd think such a thing would be remarked upon.

WE would. Would anyone on Urth?

In Severian's time, people certainly would. Of course we don;t know anything about social norms regarding incest in Typhon's time, but those are thin grounds for assuming they were unusual. Rigoglio does not marvel at the perverse tendency of those on Blue to marry strangers.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 23:28 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/14/2011 6:11 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 10/14/2011 12:49 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

If I ruled worlds with all those tools you list, and then you found out

I was psionic (without using a psionic helmet), would that not strike you as significant?

Not really, if psychic powers are reasonably common.

So, emphatically yes (because they are not).

Aren't they? Decuman seems to have them. So does Mucor. The Cumaean has. In Typhon's time, there was a telepathic internet.

In my example, I am not a character living in Briah.

What if I boasted of these powers?

What if I claimed (or hinted at) them but had none?

I don't see evidence that Typhon did either of those things.

"I sent my thought to far places." Jeff says this may be bombast. However, in the light of what has been mentioned about Urth society before the Whorl, Typhon may have been speaking as he would if his society still existed, which would put a different spin on it. We might say, "I googled it and found 7637542 hits."

It's not bombast: what Typhon says is true, there are powers in the sea who would rule. Whatever he did to find out, he did something and it worked. "I sent my thoughts into far places" is how he explains it to Severian. Probably he used some sort of telepresence system to access the databases, military systems or whatever.

We've been through this. I agree that IF the "telnet" (still working on what to call it) survives, then the link between thought and data is ready-made.

He does have strong arms and hands, strong enough to dangle Severian over a cliff. But then again, he took those from Piaton.

Which means he does not have them at all.

Sure he has them!

No, he does not. Rather, he has Piaton.

All these hypotheticals are situations in which the "significance" of psionic powers TO THE STORY is quite high. Wolfe has made choices---the choices are significant.

I don't see it. When did he claim to have psychic powers?

I thought you said there was no difference! But again: "I sent my thought to far places." Why, do you think, he said that? Why did Wolfe have him say that?

He's talking about telepresence, virtualities? Or maybe just alluding to looking at satellite images etc.

But why did he say it LIKE THAT?

So, then: how can the internet device be "significant to our interpretation of the story."? It presents no challenges, is completely boring, and is never mentioned.

When did I say it was significant?

You didn't. It isn't. Is it possible to make a point to you that is not completely literal?

It adds colour to our understanding of life in Typhon's empire, just as elsewhere we learn a little about life in Ascia.

I am sure that is why Wolfe wrote the series: to provide color and information, like a white writer in the South after the Civil War.

I propose that the food Typhon feeds Severian is a ham sandwich. Do you concur?

A kolpochoerus sandwich is another example of something that is perfectly plausible,, but for wich we have no evidence one way or the other. All we know is he gave Severian food of some sort. (If I had to guess, I'd say something like the ready meals eaten by Silk and Mamelta on the lander.)

Are you a machine?

I don't think the people in Typhon's society are tools any more than people in any tightly controlled society are tools.

Not a part of my argument. However, that raises a point: which came first? Were people forced to have implants, or did they have them already and Typhon took advantage?

Who knows? It would have been convenient for Typhon if they systems were already in use, of course.

Sure. Plot convenience is an author's primary concern.

Typhon *was* powerful and unique, but it was not any psychic powers he had that made him so. Or so I think. Once he ruled Urth, he imposed his will by a variety of means, but I doubt whether innate mind control abilities were part of it.

But you have no particular reason to say this, except that you dismiss it, and therefore you doubt it, and therefore you dismiss it.

Direct person to person mind control is a lousy way to rule an empire containing billions of subjects. We hear lots about the methods actually used by Typhon, and they are military, technological, and personality based.

An empire must have many redundant systems. Tree, meet bark.

Are you really going to spend 5 more days trying to prove a negative you can't prove?

Jeff Wilson — 14 Oct 2011, 23:55 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Fri, October 14, 2011 18:28, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/14/2011 6:11 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Are you a machine?

When does Typhon give him any food? Doesn't he die before he gets around to it?

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >

A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab

< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

David Stockhoff — 15 Oct 2011, 00:24 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/14/2011 6:15 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On the other hand, Typhon would have known of the dangers of inbreeding, and it also seems that he didn't much like the idea of genetically engineering his offspring.

Why do you think this?

Because he had access to the technology, and he didn't use it.

How do you know this?

So it would be remarkable if he married his sister. Duke Rigoglio doesn't mention anything unusual about his marriage — you'd think such a thing would be remarked upon.

WE would. Would anyone on Urth?

In Severian's time, people certainly would.

How do you know?

Of course we don;t know anything about social norms regarding incest in Typhon's time, but those are thin grounds for assuming they were unusual.

I agree. Who is to say what's unusual?

Rigoglio does not marvel at the perverse tendency of those on Blue to marry strangers.

Why would he?

David Stockhoff — 15 Oct 2011, 00:27 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/14/2011 7:55 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On Fri, October 14, 2011 18:28, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/14/2011 6:11 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Are you a machine?

When does Typhon give him any food? Doesn't he die before he gets around to it?

Before he makes him kneel.

Jeff Wilson — 15 Oct 2011, 00:56 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 10/14/2011 5:13 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

From: Jeff Wilson<jwilson at clueland.com>

On 10/14/2011 10:16 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

Steven Brust apparently says he got his method from Wolfe: it's "And now, I'm going to tell you something really cool."

<http://books.google.com/books?id=hHbWswMuvOgC&pg=PA397>

Does anyone know what the source of that might be?

King said it in DANSE MACABRE, about 1981.

Thanks! I hope Brust didn't mix Wolfe up with King. I'd rather think Wolfe said something like that too. (But maybe my response is more appropriate to fiction than to reality.)

It's not an unusual sentiment among speculative fiction writers and publishers, and it is paraphrased many times over the decades, even in genre magazine titles like TALES TO ASTONISH and THRILLING WONDER STORIES.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Jeff Wilson — 15 Oct 2011, 01:06 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/14/2011 7:27 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/14/2011 7:55 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On Fri, October 14, 2011 18:28, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/14/2011 6:11 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Are you a machine?

When does Typhon give him any food? Doesn't he die before he gets around to it?

Before he makes him kneel.

I see where Severian sees the food in the translucent wall, but Typhon puts off opening it:

I filled my mouth again and swallowed. "This is enough. Yes, I am very hungry."

"Good," he said, and turning away from the windows went to the wall at one side of the chamber. When I neared it, I saw that it, at least, was not (as I had thought) plain stone. Instead, it seemed a kind of crystal, or thick, smoky glass; through it I could see loaves and many strange dishes, as still and perfect as food in a painting.

"You have a talisman of power," Typhon told me. "Now you must give it to me, so that we can open this cupboard."

"I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean. Do you want my sword?"

"I want the thing you wear at your neck," he said, and stretched out a hand for it. I stepped back. "There is no power in it."

"Then you lose nothing. Give it to me." As Typhon spoke, Piaton's head moved almost imperceptibly from side to side. "It is only a curio," I

said. "Once I thought it had great power, but when I tried to revive a beautiful woman who was dying, it had no effect, and yesterday it could not restore the boy who traveled with me. How did you know of it?"

"I was watching you, of course. I climbed high enough to see you well. When my ring killed the child and you went to him, I saw the sacred fire. You don't have to actually put it in my hand if you don't want to just do what I tell you."

"You could have warned us, then," I said. "Why should I? At that time you were nothing to me. Do you want to eat or not?"

I took out the gem. After all, Dorcas and Jonas had seen it, and I had heard the Pelerines had displayed it in a monstrance on great occasions. It lay on my palm like a bit of blue glass, all fire gone.

Typhon leaned over it curiously. "Hardly impressive. Now kneel."

I knelt.

and in the next chapter it is confirmed that he still hasn't eaten much later:

I hungered no longer, for hunger is a thing that passes if one does not eat. Weakness came instead, bringing with it a pristine clarity of mind. Then, in the evening of the second day after I had climbed from the pupil of the right eye, I came upon a shepherd's bothy, a sort of beehive of stone, and found in it a cooking pot and a quantity of ground corn.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Lee Berman — 15 Oct 2011, 03:42 · follows Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson: and in the next chapter it is confirmed that he still hasn't eaten much.

IIRC, I think his hunger gets no relief until he finds some corn in an abandoned shepherd's bothy. He leaves the Pelerine scarf as an attempt at repayment. This scene is rarely discussed but might have a lot of meaning.

Anyway, so the water Severian drinks is melted snow and he never accepts the satanically offered food. Surely there is some significance to that. The story may be about something greater than the battle between good and evil but when offered a choice, Severian seems most often to choose good.

Jeff Wilson — 15 Oct 2011, 03:51 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 10/14/2011 10:42 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

Jeff Wilson: and in the next chapter it is confirmed that he still hasn't eaten much.

Lee, you altered the quotation of my post to make it seem like I said the opposite of what I originally wrote. This is NOT cool, and there is NO EXCUSE for a grown person to do it.

Gerry Quinn — 15 Oct 2011, 09:48 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

On 10/14/2011 3:02 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

I disagree. Typhon valued technology and knowledge. He wanted to rule a hi-tech interstellar empire, for which purposes an educated citizenry (for example, Mamelta) is useful. What makes you think he wanted to destroy it?

Gerry, his people didn't even know how to speak out loud. Why would he want them to read?

Mamelta and those like her didn't speak out loud because they had an alternative that they found adequate (presumably the same is true of Apheta, Tzadkiel etc.) They were perfectly well able to communicate. Mamelta was trained as a computer technician, and that was only a part of her responsibilities. She did not appear ignorant on general subjects, although she had not been informed about anything to do with the Whorl (then again, she should not have had to spend more than a day or two there before embarking on a lander). Whether she reads we are not told, but she is knowledgeable about computers (and can repair them) and spacecraft and biology.

An emperor wants to keep knowledge to himself and his servants.

Typhon's servants were his subjects. He might have wanted to destroy the libraries of his enemies. There is no indication that he wanted to destroy those of his friends. Indeed, I don't believe your generalisation about emperors anyway. Some emperors may. I don't think it would be Typhon's style.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 15 Oct 2011, 09:58 · in reply to Andrew Mason

From: Andrew Mason

Gerry Quinn wrote: >

From: Lee Berman

Some think the monarch who planned to destroy all human books/knowledge was Typhon but I dunno.

Nothing Typhon does or says indicates that he would contemplate such an act.

The monarch repented, and everything we see of Typhon, both on Urth and on the Whorl, would have come after that repentance. I think it's clear that this monarch is Typhon, since in _Urth_ there is a specific reference to him as having brought the books to to the Citadel.

Where does it say that?

- Gerry Quinn

Lee Berman — 15 Oct 2011, 09:59 · follows Jeff Wilson

On 10/14/2011 10:42 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

Jeff Wilson: and in the next chapter it is confirmed that he still hasn't eaten much.

Jeff Wilson: Lee, you altered the quotation of my post to make it seem like I said the opposite of what I originally wrote. This is NOT cool, and there is NO EXCUSE for a grown person to do it.

Sorry Jeff, but I don't know what you are talking about. I didn't alter your quotation and my post was clearly meant to agree with your assertion that Severian did not get food from Typhon.

Or perhaps I've lost my ability to understand the written word correctly and you were arguing that Severian DID get food from Typhon? That is a possibility I am willing to consider.

Gerry Quinn — 15 Oct 2011, 10:08 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

On 10/14/2011 6:11 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 10/14/2011 12:49 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

If I ruled worlds with all those tools you list, and then you found out

I was psionic (without using a psionic helmet), would that not strike

you as significant?

Not really, if psychic powers are reasonably common.

So, emphatically yes (because they are not).

Aren't they? Decuman seems to have them. So does Mucor. The Cumaeans has. In Typhon's time, there was a telepathic internet.

In my example, I am not a character living in Briah.

Then I don't understand the point of it.

He does have strong arms and hands, strong enough to dangle Severian over a cliff. But then again, he took those from Piaton.

Which means he does not have them at all.

Sure he has them!

No, he does not. Rather, he has Piaton.

Which includes Piaton's hands. If all had gone well, Piaton's head would soon have been dispensed with, and the distinction becomes even less meaningful.

I thought you said there was no difference! But again: "I sent my thought to far places." Why, do you think, he said that? Why did Wolfe > > have him say that?

He's talking about telepresence, virtualities? Or maybe just alluding to looking at satellite images etc.

But why did he say it LIKE THAT?

What's wrong with the way he said it? He thinks he's talking to an oik who has never seen a TV.

It adds colour to our understanding of life in Typhon's empire, just as elsewhere we learn a little about life in Ascia.

I am sure that is why Wolfe wrote the series: to provide color and information, like a white writer in the South after the Civil War.

You don't think that fleshing out such imaginary societies is part of the writer's job?

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Are you a machine?

I'm finding your responses increasingly hard to compute, that's for sure.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 15 Oct 2011, 10:23 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

On 10/14/2011 6:15 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On the other hand, Typhon would have known of the dangers of inbreeding, and it also seems that he didn't much like the idea of genetically engineering his offspring.

Why do you think this?

Because he had access to the technology, and he didn't use it.

How do you know this?

Surely these things are obvious? We know he had the technology, because the Whorl is loaded with it. It seems obvious that a technology that can produce Mucor or a psychic internet can prevent, say, the blindness of Tartarus, who seems otherwise sound. So Typhon must have chosen not to use it.

So it would be remarkable if he married his sister. Duke Rigoglio doesn't mention anything unusual about his marriage — you'd think such a thing would be remarked upon.

WE would. Would anyone on Urth?

In Severian's time, people certainly would.

How do you know?

When I re-entered the cell, Agilus was sitting cross-legged, his back propped by the wall. "Don't ask me about Agia," he said. "Everything you suspect is true--is that enough? I will be dead tomorrow, and she will wed the old man who dotes on her, or someone else. I wanted her to do it sooner. He couldn't have prevented her from seeing me, her brother. Now I will be gone, and she won't have even that to worry about."

Clearly incest is not the norm in Severian's time.

- Gerry Quinn

Marc Aramini — 15 Oct 2011, 10:34 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

--- On Sat, 10/15/11, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

From: David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

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From Gerry> > > Why do you think this?

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How do you know this?

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Sigh. Putting your head on someone else and wanting a perfect child means to me that Typhon would have LOVED genetically getting the perfect heir, and somehow his technology either didn't foresee or couldn't predict Tartarus' blindness. He wants a more worthy son after all these failures, so he decides to get the perfect one. That's what he wants. I think Mucor and Typhon have "natural" psychic powers (inherited but possibly augmented from normal homosapiens over time, not necessarily machine based at all; Wolfe believes in souls) I think its a mistake to dismiss the unscientific as naturally impossible in Wolfe. I would certianly engineer an heir if I would put my head on somebody else, but I would still want it to be my genetic material, even if tweaked to be the best of me.

David Stockhoff — 15 Oct 2011, 11:24 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/15/2011 5:48 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 10/14/2011 3:02 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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rule a hi-tech interstellar empire, for which purposes an educated

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Whether she reads we are not told, but she is knowledgeable about computers (and can repair them) and spacecraft and biology.

All that means is that she was trained.

An emperor wants to keep knowledge to himself and his servants.

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destroy those of his friends. Indeed, I don't believe your generalisation about emperors anyway. Some emperors may. I don't think it would be Typhon's style.

You said Typhon used all tools available to him to seize and to hold power.

David Stockhoff — 15 Oct 2011, 11:28 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/15/2011 6:08 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 10/14/2011 6:11 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 10/14/2011 12:49 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Aren't they? Decuman seems to have them. So does Mucor. The Cumaeans

has. In Typhon's time, there was a telepathic internet.

In my example, I am not a character living in Briah.

Then I don't understand the point of it.

Right.

He does have strong arms and hands, strong enough to dangle Severian over a cliff. But then again, he took those from Piaton.

Which means he does not have them at all.

Sure he has them!

No, he does not. Rather, he has Piaton.

Which includes Piaton's hands. If all had gone well, Piaton's head would soon have been dispensed with, and the distinction becomes even less meaningful.

It's as though the discussion about genetic inheritance never happened!

I thought you said there was no difference! But again: "I sent my thought to far places." Why, do you think, he said that? Why did Wolfe have him say that?

He's talking about telepresence, virtualities? Or maybe just alluding to looking at satellite images etc.

But why did he say it LIKE THAT?

What's wrong with the way he said it? He thinks he's talking to an oik who has never seen a TV.

Who said there was anything wrong? Are we not discussing theories to fit them to facts? But thank you for your long-awaited answer---it is much the same as my own.

It adds colour to our understanding of life in Typhon's empire, just as elsewhere we learn a little about life in Ascia.

I am sure that is why Wolfe wrote the series: to provide color and information, like a white writer in the South after the Civil War.

You don't think that fleshing out such imaginary societies is part of the writer's job?

It's certainly not your job to put words in my mouth.

I propose that the food Typhon feeds Severian is a ham sandwich.

Do you
concur?

A kolpochoerus sandwich is another example of something that is perfectly plausible,,. but for which we have no evidence one way or the other. All we know is he gave Severian food of some sort. (If I had to guess, I'd say something like the ready meals eaten by Silk and Mamelta on the lander.)

Are you a machine?

I'm finding your responses increasingly hard to compute, that's for sure.

I can tell, Gerry!

David Stockhoff — 15 Oct 2011, 11:36 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/15/2011 6:23 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 10/14/2011 6:15 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

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Why do you think this?

Because he had access to the technology, and he didn't use it.

How do you know this?

Surely these things are obvious? We know he had the technology, because the Whorl is loaded with it. It seems obvious that a technology that can produce Mucor or a psychic internet can prevent, say, the blindness of Tartarus, who seems otherwise sound. So Typhon must have chosen not to use it.

Thank you for a concrete example! But he didn't give Tartarus mechanical eyes either. Did he also not like cyborging them? Or is something else going on?

So it would be remarkable if he married his sister. Duke Rigoglio doesn't mention anything unusual about his marriage — you'd think such a thing would be remarked upon.

WE would. Would anyone on Urth?

In Severian's time, people certainly would.

How do you know?

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Clearly incest is not the norm in Severian's time.

No one, and I mean NO ONE, has suggested that incest is "the norm" anywhere, ever. At all. You do your own arguments no service when you twist others' arguments into nonrecognition before denying them.

The rulers of ancient Egypt committed incest almost by definition. Do you really think it was "remarked upon" by Egyptians?

It has been suggested that "sacred" incest is a motif in the Sun books. It has been explained why that might be the case. And it has nothing to do with Margaret Meade. Are you interested at all?

David Stockhoff — 15 Oct 2011, 11:38 · in reply to Marc Aramini

On 10/15/2011 6:34 AM, Marc Aramini wrote:

--- On *Sat, 10/15/11, Gerry Quinn /<gerry at bindweed.com>/* wrote:

From: David Stockhoff
<<http://us.mc1618.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=dstockhoff at verizon.net>>

> >

> > *From:* David Stockhoff <<mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>>

> > > > On the other hand, Typhon would have known of the dangers of

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> > > > genetically engineering his offspring.

> > >

From Gerry> > > Why do you think this?

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Wolfe. I would certainly engineer an heir if I would put my head on somebody else, but I would still want it to be my genetic material, even if tweaked to be the best of me.

Thank you, Marc.

Lee Berman — 15 Oct 2011, 15:35 · follows David Stockhoff

Surely these things are obvious? We know he had the technology, because the Whorl is loaded with it. It seems obvious that a technology that can produce Mucor or a psychic internet can prevent, say, the blindness of Tartarus, who seems otherwise sound. So Typhon must have chosen not to use it.

Typhon would have LOVED genetically getting the perfect heir, and somehow his technology either didn't foresee or couldn't predict Tartarus' blindness. He wants a more worthy son after all these failures, so he decides to get the perfect one. That's what he wants.

I feel the discussion needs appreciation of another auctorial level for more complete comprehension. While the Sun series is SF and contains politico- religious philosophy it also involves intensely personal allegory.

Choose whatever text-related reason makes the most sense to you, but Typhon cannot have a perfect spouse and perfect children because Gene Wolfe (and everyone he knows and has ever known of) does not have a perfect spouse nor perfect children.

FWIW, I don't think Wolfe is simply commenting on the human (or sentient being) condition. The issues and emotions that he describes are not that generic. I think the familial problems encountered by Severian, Typhon, Silk and Horn reflect, to a large degree, the personal issues Gene Wolfe himself has faced in his life. Interviews and anecdotal information I've encountered seem to confirm this.

Voyeurism component aside, this is an important literary consideration. If Wolfe feels the strong need to express his life's personal tribulations and anguishes, he also feels the need to disguise them enough to protect the privacy of his family. I believe this is one of the primary motivators for Wolfe making so much of his work so cryptic.

Jeff Wilson — 15 Oct 2011, 20:15 · in reply to Lee Berman

On Sat, October 15, 2011 04:59, Lee Berman wrote:

On 10/14/2011 10:42 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

Jeff Wilson: and in the next chapter it is confirmed that he still hasn't

eaten much.

Or perhaps I've lost my ability to understand the written word correctly

...

Perhaps that is the case, if you do not see the difference between my original "still hasn't eaten much later:" and your "still hasn't eaten much."

Mine means he did not eat anything during the day he met Typhon or the next, yours commonly means he ate some small amount during the period. This confounds my entire point with the other posters that they are mistaken about Typhon feeding Sev.

I would give most posters a pass on accidentally trimming the quote a bit too far, but not on then putting a period in the grammatically correct position to make a well-formed sentence with an opposed meaning. At best it is critical negligence to submit post containing such a misrepresentation.

Jeff Wilson - <jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

Gerry Quinn — 15 Oct 2011, 20:48 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

On 10/14/2011 3:02 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

Whether she reads we are not told, but she is knowledgeable about computers (and can repair them) and spacecraft and biology.

All that means is that she was trained.

Training is a form of knowledge.

An emperor wants to keep knowledge to himself and his servants.

Typhon's servants were his subjects. He might have wanted to destroy the libraries of his enemies. There is no indication that he wanted to destroy those of his friends. Indeed, I don't believe your generalisation about emperors anyway. Some emperors may. I don't think it would be Typhon's style.

You said Typhon used all tools available to him to seize and to hold power.

Yes. One such tool was an educated and technologically advanced citizenry.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 15 Oct 2011, 20:54 · in reply to Marc Aramini

From: Marc Aramini

--- On Sat, 10/15/11, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

Surely these things are obvious? We know he had the technology, because the Whorl is loaded with it. It seems obvious that a technology that can produce Mucor or a psychic internet can prevent, say, the blindness of Tartarus, who seems otherwise sound. So Typhon must have chosen not to use it.

Sigh. Putting your head on someone else and wanting a perfect child means to me that Typhon would have LOVED genetically getting the perfect heir, and somehow his technology either didn't foresee or couldn't predict Tartarus' blindness. He wants a more worthy son after all these failures, so he decides to get the perfect one. That's what he wants. I think Mucor and Typhon have "natural" psychic powers (inherited but possibly augmented from normal homosapiens over time, not necessarily machine based at all; Wolfe believes in souls) I think its a mistake to dismiss the unscientific as naturally impossible in Wolfe. I would certainly engineer an heir if I would put my head on somebody else, but I would still want it to be my genetic material, even if tweaked

to be the best of me.

Typhon's vision and that of his other children was fine. If Tartarus were given the same it would not have impinged on any putative genetic absolutism on his part.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 15 Oct 2011, 21:05 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

On 10/15/2011 6:23 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:
Clearly incest is not the norm in Severian's time.

No one, and I mean NO ONE, has suggested that incest is "the norm" anywhere, ever. At all. You do your own arguments no service when you twist others' arguments into nonrecognition before denying them.

The rulers of ancient Egypt committed incest almost by definition. Do you really think it was "remarked upon" by Egyptians?

I'm sure it was.

It has been suggested that "sacred" incest is a motif in the Sun books. It has been explained why that might be the case. And it has nothing to do with Margaret Meade. Are you interested at all?

A lot of stuff about incest has been posted to the list. Mostly speculating that every woman mentioned in the text is Severian's sister, with rather little in the way of justification. So now Typhon's at it too? The implications are complicated, though, for a guy with somebody else's genitalia.

Show me where the text implies Typhon engaged in sacred incest, and I'll be interested.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 15 Oct 2011, 23:08 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Gerry

Is training a form of books?

On 10/15/2011 4:48 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:
From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>
On 10/14/2011 3:02 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

Whether she reads we are not told, but she is knowledgeable about

computers (and can repair them) and spacecraft and biology.

All that means is that she was trained.
Training is a form of knowledge.

An emperor wants to keep knowledge to himself and his servants.

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the libraries of his enemies. There is no indication that he wanted to

destroy those of his friends. Indeed, I don't believe your
generalisation about emperors anyway. Some emperors may. I don't think
it would be Typhon's style.

You said Typhon used all tools available to him to seize and to hold
power.

Yes. One such tool was an educated and technologically advanced citizenry.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 15 Oct 2011, 23:12 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/15/2011 5:05 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 10/15/2011 6:23 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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sister, with rather little in the way of justification. So now
Typhon's at it too? The implications are complicated, though, for a
guy with somebody else's genitalia.

Show me where the text implies Typhon engaged in sacred incest, and
I'll be interested.

Don't ask me. I didn't suggest it. Ask the person who suggested it.

Lee Berman — 16 Oct 2011, 01:08 · follows David Stockhoff

Gerry Quinn:

So now Typhon's at it too? The implications are complicated, though,
for a guy with somebody else's genitalia.

Heh, well. I don't think Typhon was having much sex with Piaton's body since it was in restraints
until their (first) death on the couch. But who knows. We know from Typhon's conversation with
Severian and the hidden painting of Typhon that Silk destroys that he was a pretty kinky guy.

Show me where the text implies Typhon engaged in sacred incest, and
I'll be interested.

This has already been done. Wolfe chose to name Typhon-Pas' wife "Echidna". Mythological Echinda was a snake-woman and was the sister and wife of Typhon and the mother of Scylla and Sphigx (sphinx) among other monsters.

Long Sun Echidna is a snake woman, wife to Typhon and mother of Scylla and Sphygx. If we understand that there are puzzles to solve in this book, the sibling status of Typhon and Echidna isn't a difficult one to solve. You have four linked puzzled pieces (snakey, Typhon, Scylla, Sphigx) and one missing piece (siblings). Simply plug it in. It fits.

Against this positive evidence that Typhon and Echidna are siblings we are getting an argument that they are not siblings based on....well, nothing I guess aside from a gut-level feeling that incest just ain't normal.

It was normal for pagan gods and it was normal for pharonic dynasties both of which lend themselves to the literary creation of the gods of the Whorl. This has been pointed out, but without text evidence Gerry bravely soldiers on in his insistence that Typhon and Echidna cannot be siblings. I guess that level of devotion to intransigence does warrant a bit of admiration.

António Pedro Marques — 16 Oct 2011, 01:28 · in reply to Lee Berman

No dia 16/10/2011, às 02:08, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> escreveu:

evidence that Typhon and Echidna are siblings

I don't know that there's evidence for it, but it would explain why the heck Typhon and Echidna remained spouses. Other than ritual incest, I see no explanation for it.

Gerry Quinn — 16 Oct 2011, 12:18 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

Show me where the text implies Typhon engaged in sacred incest, and I'll be interested.

This has already been done. Wolfe chose to name Typhon-Pas' wife "Echidna". Mythological Echinda was a snake-woman and was the sister and wife of Typhon and the mother of Scylla and Sphigx (sphinx) among other monsters.

Wikipedia gives two accounts of Typhon's origin, and four for Echidna. Of the eight combinations, Echidna is his sister in one and his niece in one. Wikipedia is not exhaustive and others could be found.

I notice you don't mention Typhon's father. Could that be something to do with the fact that his father was TARTARUS? In BotLS, the Whorl god named Tartarus was clearly Pas's son. [In the Hera origin story, Typhon had no father.]

Long Sun Echidna is a snake woman, wife to Typhon and mother of Scylla and Sphygx. If we understand that there are puzzles to solve in this book, the sibling status of Typhon and Echidna isn't a difficult one to solve.

I think you (and some others) greatly misunderstand the nature of Wolfe's books. You seem to think of them as some sort of puzzle in which a hidden underlying story, cloned from some ancient myth or other, is disguised as a science fiction story. The object (you think) is to peel away the extraneous matter and locate the crossword clues to the true story you think is lurking underneath. You clutch at every possible classical reference because with those there's always

some way to play six degrees of Kevin Bacon towards whatever scheme you are trying to impose on the story.

Why would Wolfe engage in a complicated, arbitrary, pointless scheme such as this? He is writing his own stories. Science fiction stories. Yes, he enriches them with classical references, but he is not rewriting the classics. Yes, he loves to place keystones of his story in a subtle and understated way, but they are always there in plain sight and they are NOT in general found in proper names. [To place them in proper names would in fact be a gross dereliction of artistry, excluding the reader who is attentive but lacks a particular literary background. I will allow that they can be in proper names as well as in the story proper, and that exceptions could be made in certain circumstances.]

The story of the BotNS is its own. Wolfe has obviously taken inspiration and ideas from many sources, but these sources are just raw material and not in any sense what the story is about. Wolfe takes the raw material and twists it into the shapes he wants, and the texture of it is still there and if he is successful the texture fits the story he is telling. But it is subservient; it is not part of the story.

Read the text with care and you will find answers in events and in the words of the characters. Chase allusions instead and you will produce random noise which you will then interpret to fulfil some arbitrary thesis, just as we can hear whatever music we like when we listen to white noise.

You

have four linked puzzled pieces (snakey, Typhon, Scylla, Sphigx) and one missing piece (siblings). Simply plug it in. It fits.

No, it's just noise, unless there's some reason why it's significant that Typhon's wife should be his sister,. and if there were some reason for that — maybe there is but nobody has presented it yet — it would be in the story and the names would just drive it home, or give the classically educated reader a knowing smile.

So, what do you think are the implications of Tartarus actually being Pas's father? He must be hiding right? I know, he's Father Inire! When you play this game there's no place to stop until there's nothing left of what Wolfe actually wrote.

Against this positive evidence that Typhon and Echidna are siblings we are getting an argument that they are not siblings based on....well, nothing I guess aside from a gut-level feeling that incest just ain't normal.

Actually it's based on the fact that there is no reason in the story to think they are siblings, just as there's no reason to think Tartarus is Pas's father.

It was normal for pagan gods and it was normal for pharonic dynasties both of which lend themselves to the literary creation of the gods of the Whorl.

This has been pointed out, but without text evidence Gerry bravely soldiers on in his insistence that Typhon and Echidna cannot be siblings. I guess that level of devotion to intransigence does warrant a bit of admiration.

You can find anything you want in the literary sources of the gods of the Whorl. You can find incest if that's your obsession, or you can find as many or more outcrossings with non-human creatures if you want to go in the opposite direction from incest. In either case you're not paying attention to the book Wolfe wrote, you're writing your own book, incorporating a word here and there from Wolfe's and ignoring the rest.

Wolfe is writing science fiction novels, not detective stories or gnostic scrolls. Read them as such, and a lot of the so-called "puzzles" will evaporate.

- Gerry Quinn

Marc Aramini — 16 Oct 2011, 15:25 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

--- On Sun, 10/16/11, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

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Gerry, in general I agree with you on this, but I do think Wolfe DOES at times perform this "gross dereliction of artistry" for the reader with a particular background (not necessarily literary).

For example, the short story Suzanne Delage - her very name is pulled from a book about a narrator who eats something and involuntarily remembers things he had completely forgotten from his childhood that COMPLETELY changes how he perceives the world and the people he knew. In this case, Wolfe is clearly saying the narrator has involuntarily forgotten something with that allusion, in addition to invoking the Spanish Influenza offhandedly (called the forgotten illness) etc etc. The point is these things point to forgetfulness of extraordinary events, and the premise of the story itself is that extraordinary things will be forgotten. So, yes, sometimes you are just out of the loop.

I don't think he just goes straight from one myth to his writing, it's too limiting. He has his own agenda, this is why I can't lend any real credence in authorial intent in Typhon and Echidna as siblings are to mapping myths onto the stories unless they are just EXPLICIT in the text.

However, WOLFE DOES NOT SPELL OUT EVERYTHING or we wouldn't all disagree, and sometimes these inferences require outside knowledge, the "roman a clef" principal and play intertextually. That's just the way it is. Having said that, no, I don't think he maps mythology in terms of familial relationships this way since he created his own relationship scheme on the whorl through features and names (yeah, it makes sense that SOMEHOW [i posit "adoption"] Tussah and Silk are related because of their names)

Marc Aramini — 16 Oct 2011, 15:28 · in reply to Marc Aramini

Marc wrote:

?He has his own agenda, this is why I can't lend any real credence in authorial intent in Typhon and Echidna as siblings?ARE to mapping myths onto the stories unless they are just EXPLICIT in the text.

Sorry, that should be OR up there. What's wrong with me?

David Stockhoff — 16 Oct 2011, 18:38 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 10/15/2011 9:08 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

Against this positive evidence that Typhon and Echidna are siblings we are getting an argument that they are not siblings based on....well, nothing I guess aside from a gut-level feeling that incest just ain't normal. It was normal for pagan gods and it was normal for pharonic dynasties both of which lend themselves to the literary creation of the gods of the Whorl. This has been pointed out, but without text evidence Gerry bravely soldiers on in his insistence that Typhon and Echidna cannot be siblings. I guess that level of devotion to intransigence does warrant a bit of admiration.

I'd like to note that incest is almost by definition covert. The implication of it does its own work. See any gothic novel---including Walpole's. Either a whisper of it is enough to destroy, or the brazen fact of it is enough to establish that a character has departed from common morality---or else he is an Oriental despot who never knew it in the first place. The possibilities are: monstrous guilt, blasphemy, hubris, or alchemy. A hint of Typhon doing it would speak volumes about him and how he saw himself.

And didn't someone just observe that all Typhon's offspring had something wrong with them?

David Stockhoff — 16 Oct 2011, 19:04 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/16/2011 8:18 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: Lee Berman <mailto:severiansola at hotmail.com>

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the raw material and twists it into the shapes he wants, and the texture of it is still there and if he is successful the texture fits the story he is telling. But it is subservient; it is not part of the story.

Read the text with care and you will find answers in events and in the words of the characters. Chase allusions instead and you will produce random noise which you will then interpret to fulfil some arbitrary thesis, just as we can hear whatever music we like when we listen to white noise.

Gerry

All this is very true and well put. Allusions are allusions and, unless a particular story is so well known that any hint of it carries great weight (and there is after all one Greatest Story in particular that Wolfe retells in semi-hidden fashion in TBotNS that undeniably fits that description!), they should be taken in small doses. Six degrees of separation is way too many.

But here we have kindergarten mythology leaping out at us. Echidna is well known to be the mother of monsters. Typhon's and Echidna's family is a veritable pantheon of divine monsters. The onus is on you to deny a theory of how this situation came about and what it means in New Sun and Long Sun. You'll need to do more than sit back and yawn if you wish your denials to be taken seriously.

Why should Wolfe care if he recasts a father as a son to create this debased and pagan Olympus? You say yourself that allusions don't matter! Wolfe is already necessarily picking and choosing among disparate mythologies. I see Milton's Satan in there plain as day, because Satan raped his daughter to produce all the sins of the world. I could go on.

But incest couldn't possibly happen in New Sun! No, Wolfe would avoid this topic, the bread and butter of half the mythologies (and ancient dynasties) of the world, to avoid upsetting Gerry Quinn with the coyness of its secret histories.

David Stockhoff — 16 Oct 2011, 19:23 · in reply to Marc Aramini

On 10/16/2011 11:25 AM, Marc Aramini wrote:

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These are two opposite principals. On the one hand, we need some degree of concreteness before we fall for "extraordinary claims." On the other, we know that some explicitness is indirect. "Explicit" does not mean "shouted."

In the case of Typhon's theoretical incest with Echidna, it's not a plot point, because it's deep backstory. It's as much thematic as background, a little less concrete and well-defined. Standards are lower: there's no reason to hash it out as though it has a direct impact on the

characters. It's just implied. I can hold it suspended in my mind as something that fits (the names, the monstrous offspring, Typhon as Satan, as Alexander, as Pharaoh, as Oz, etc.) without regarding it as a bedrock positive. However, we already have incest occurring at least twice in TBotNS, and that almost cries out for a third instance.

Unfortunately for the antigenetic contingent, Silk himself is more than a character. He's a BODY. The origin of his body is itself a backstory. An event 30 years ago physically affects Silk today. So we can't just dismiss a potentially tangled and warped tale of genetic inheritance (of possibly very interesting traits) as unimportant just because we'd rather see Typhon as a one-dimensional cardboard plot point of no deep significance and a randomly chosen name.

Marc Aramini — 16 Oct 2011, 19:30 · in reply to David Stockhoff

--- On Sun, 10/16/11, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

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Gerry tends to stray to absolute surface level interpretations, but I often agree with him that a well known myth will not agree in EVERY particular when mapped onto the story, as, yes, there are different myths that are mutually exclusive.

Gerry may be correct in saying that simply the names Echidna and Pas might not be quite enough to imply that they are genetically related without other internal evidence (sometimes in the form of theme - I think this is huge in Wolfe). (Are consistently flawed and damaged children that internal textual evidence? I don't know - maybe.)

I DO think the story of Hyacinthus is actually of the utmost importance in Short Sun (transmogrification of fallen lover into vegetable matter that survives tenaciously). Additionally, James' explanation of the code word Thetis seems spot on - from a time when Zeus

was rebelled against (in the Iliad?) Similarly, OBVIOUSly we have to consider the myth and history of the period in the Latro books to glean absolute meanings. But just the fact that the greek gods enjoyed incestuous relationships and Wolfe used their names isn't quite enough for me to say, for sure, Typhon and Echidna had to be siblings.

David Stockhoff — 16 Oct 2011, 19:32 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Apologies to Marc and all for the formatting disaster in my last post. Here's a fix.

I also should clarify that the mystery of Sillk's genetic heritage and Typhon's relationship with Echidna may OR may not be separate problems. If the explicit Silk problem can be traced back to Typhon/Echidna, then the source of the sperm Echidna used to create her family becomes much more relevant and the incest question more acute.

Until then, I regard Typhonic incest as implied but unproven.

On 10/16/2011 3:23 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/16/2011 11:25 AM, Marc Aramini wrote:

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Absolutely.

Gerry may be correct in saying that simply the names Echidna and Pas might not be quite enough to imply that they are genetically related without other internal evidence (sometimes in the form of theme - I think this is huge in Wolfe). (Are consistently flawed and damaged children that internal textual evidence? I don't know - maybe.)

The evidence is certainly circumstantial and not presented on an explicit and detailed level.

I DO think the story of Hyacinthus is actually of the utmost importance in Short Sun(transmogrification of fallen lover into vegetable matter that survives tenaciously). Additionally, James' explanation of the code word Thetis seems spot on - from a time when Zeus was rebelled against (in the Iliad?) Similarly, OBVIOUSly we have to consider the myth and history of the period in the Latro books to glean absolute meanings. But just the fact that the greek gods enjoyed incestuous relationships and Wolfe used their names isn't quite enough for me to say, for sure, Typhon and Echidna had to be siblings.

Agreed. You need more than a single point of correspondence to establish an argument. The gods were bisexual and homicidal, too, but that doesn't mean Andrew killed Sam the flute player.

Unless Sam was found flayed alive---then you'd have to pay attention!

Lee Berman — 16 Oct 2011, 20:49 · follows David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff: I also should clarify that the mystery of Sillk's genetic heritage and Typhon's relationship with Echidna may OR may not be separate problems. If the explicit Silk problem can be traced back to Typhon/Echidna, then the source of the sperm Echidna used to create her family becomes much more relevant and the incest question more acute.

Until then, I regard Typhonic incest as implied but unproven.

A nice synthesis of these two issues. This mirrors my own view, which is that there are implications of partial mythological mapping throughout the text of the Sun series but nothing concrete enough so that a person like Gerry would be forced to concede the possible relevance.

Actually I think Gerry, in a moment of weakness, did concede that the Bird-of- the-Woods story did map nicely to the Roman Rhea Silvia myth. Perhaps the heat of recent battle has driven him back to his fortified position of denial of any and all mythological significance in Wolfe's work.

This time it is your fault not mine David. ;-)

Gerry Quinn: I notice you don't mention Typhon's father. Could that be something to do with the fact that his father was TARTARUS?

I think that is a good question, though the assumption that I ought to be addressing all the complexities of all the issues of these stories in one post is rather an unrealistic expectation. Neither did I address the indirect relationship of mythological Typhon to Phaea. She was the human caretaker of one of Typhon and Echidna's monstrous offspring, the Hus Krommyon or Crommoyon Sow. And no, I'm not going to discuss Babby at this time.

Anyway regarding Tartaros, I think this is another example of the father-son sequence confusion which is tangentially introduced throughout the Sun series but is most explicitly stated in RttW.

As has been suggested in the past I think this has its basis in the father-son confusion of ambiguous gender Dionysus being a primeval Greek deity who gave rise to the Titans and Olympians and their paternalistic kings Chronos and Zeus. One of Zeus' offspring was then ambiguous gender Dionysus who was a primary deity (in various guises) during the pre-Christian period centered across what was Alexander's empire.

I think it is the belief of many pagan cults that the paternalistic Christian religion which now dominates so much of the Western world will one day be again supplanted by worship of the hermaphroditic, One True God, Dionysus, Great God Pan, The Green Man or various other names he goes by. Son-Father-Son-Father-Son gods...etc. It is confusing and I think Wolfe is astute in recognizing that gnostic confusion in this story.

David Stockhoff — 16 Oct 2011, 21:19 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 10/16/2011 4:49 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

Gerry Quinn: I notice you don't mention Typhon's father. Could that be something to do with the fact that his father was TARTARUS?

I think that is a good question, though the assumption that I ought to be addressing

all the complexities of all the issues of these stories in one post is rather an

unrealistic expectation. Neither did I address the indirect relationship of

mythological Typhon to Phaea. She was the human caretaker of one of Typhon and

Echidna's monstrous offspring, the Hus Krommyon or Crommoyon Sow. And no, I'm not

going to discuss Babby at this time.

Please do!

Anyway regarding Tartaros, I think this is another example of the father-son sequence

confusion which is tangentially introduced throughout the Sun series but is most explicitly

stated in RttW.

Huh. Yes, the frequency with which these things occur---Silk and his father, Horn and his sons---suggests that it may need a closer look as its own phenomenon, rather than just a result of (or clue to) other problems.

As has been suggested in the past I think this has its basis in the father-son confusion

of ambiguous gender Dionysus being a primeval Greek deity who gave rise to the Titans and

Olympians and their paternalistic kings Chronos and Zeus. One of Zeus' offspring was then

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worship of the hermaphroditic, One True God, Dionysus, Great God Pan, The Green Man or

various other names he goes by. Son-Father-Son-Father-Son gods...etc. It is confusing

and I think Wolfe is astute in recognizing that gnostic confusion in this story.

Very nice! Tangentially, one could argue that the question of what to do with the Trinity when presenting an alternative, pre-Christ mythology is its own problem. That is, ones, twos, and threes become significant, for better or worse. Avoid 3 or go with something else? If not 3-in-1, why not 2-in-one? (Consider the monoecious plant, with 2 sexes in one "house.") And never mind that we still don't know who Christ's mother was!

Two-in-one divinity takes one right back to divine incest, of course. A hermaphroditic Deity represents an ideal union of what here on Earth is forever divided. A self-pollinating "God" would fit right in, in Briah, with its perpetual, cyclical regeneration.

Remind you of anyone, Lee?

Marc Aramini — 16 Oct 2011, 22:05 · in reply to David Stockhoff

--- On Sun, 10/16/11, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

And never mind that we still don't know who

Christ's mother was!

Of course Wolfe would tell you the homoousios nature of Christ would not preclude his FULL AND COMPLETE humanity (ie entirely Mary's son - but who can say with how many chromosomes or if that Y was the only Divine tweak) There would be neither "Sophia" nor "Gaia" nor other mysterious female divine addition to Christ's essence or karyotype.

Lee Berman — 17 Oct 2011, 02:11 · follows Marc Aramini

David Stockhoff: Two-in-one divinity takes one right back to divine incest, of course. A hermaphroditic Deity represents an ideal union of what here on Earth is forever divided. A self-pollinating "God" would fit right in, in Briah, with its perpetual, cyclical regeneration. Remind you of anyone, Lee?

Wow, that is insightful, David. In pondering the Sun series over the past years I came to be aware of perhaps the most important aspect of monotheism. We can recognize that the Greek and other pantheons of ancient gods were not really immoral in their incestuous relationships because, who the heck else could they mate with?

But, with a nod to Gerry, it is a human (and even mammalian) trait to avoid incest and we humans can't fully respect gods who participate in that (not to mention the "bestiality" of their matings with humans). And it is pretty clear from the mythologic stories that the Greeks really didn't respect their gods very much.

Monotheism provides a God we can respect, especially among those prudish Middle Eastern types. I hadn't considered that a hermaphroditic "self-pollinating" god might solve that problem in a different way.

David, were you hinting at Tzadkiel (who appears in male and in female form and would seem to have something to do with universal reproduction)? Tzadkiel has a son, Venant, and those such as Apheta are the "larvae" of the hierogrammates. But we are not given enough information to know how such offspring are reproduced. Self-pollination..hm...I tellya, it might make sense. Hard to imagine Tzadkiel performing the sex act in the usual human way with some other. And Tzadkiel compares himself to a sponge animal...

...okay Just did a little zoology refresher and sponges are monoecious. They can reproduce asexually by budding but sexually they are not self-fertilizing. They reproduce sexually through being *sequential hermaphrodites*, producing sperm for one time period and eggs during a later time period. DAMN! Tzadkiel really is a freaking sponge!

Well, anyway, we have the long Biblical tradition of understanding angels to be hermaphroditic or di-sexual beings. And likewise for Dionysus. And an understanding that Dionysus and other Greek deities have been conflated with angels and demons by Christian and gnostic sects. And then Gene Wolfe comes along and adds some invertebrate biology to that mix. Hallelujah! I didn't think my level of awe for this story could get any greater but it just did.

David Stockhoff — 17 Oct 2011, 02:56 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 10/16/2011 10:11 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

David Stockhoff: Two-in-one divinity takes one right back to divine incest, of course. A hermaphroditic Deity represents an ideal union of what here on Earth is forever divided. A self-pollinating "God" would fit right in, in Briah, with its perpetual, cyclical regeneration. Remind you of anyone, Lee?

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I came to be aware of perhaps the most important aspect of monotheism. We can recognize that the Greek and other pantheons of ancient gods were not really immoral in their incestuous relationships because, who the heck else could they mate with?

But, with a nod to Gerry, it is a human (and even mammalian) trait to avoid incest and we humans can't fully respect gods who participate in that (not to mention the "bestiality" of their matings with humans). And it is pretty clear from the mythologic stories that the Greeks really didn't respect their gods very much.

True! They feared them.

Monotheism provides a God we can respect, especially among those prudish Middle Eastern types.

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David, were you hinting at Tzadkiel (who appears in male and in female form and would seem to have something to do with universal reproduction)? Tzadkiel has a son, Venant, and those such as Apheta are the "larvae" of the hierogrammates. But we are not given enough information to know how such offspring are reproduced. Self-pollination..hm...I tellya, it might make sense.

Hard to imagine Tzadkiel performing the sex act in the usual human way with some other. And

Tzadkiel compares himself to a sponge animal...

You win the prize!

I'm not making any particular argument here. I just think Wolfe has definitely thought these things over. He might simply have asked himself, "What would a sentient sponge or a species of angels really be like"? But it is a little eerie that we have touched on such matters as divine incest and found resonance all over Briah.

Lee Berman — 17 Oct 2011, 05:19 · follows David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff:

A hermaphroditic Deity represents an ideal union of what here on Earth is forever divided. A self-pollinating "God" would fit right in, in Briah, with its perpetual, cyclical regeneration. Remind you of anyone, Lee?

David, were you hinting at Tzadkiel> David, were you hinting at Tzadkiel (who appears in male and in female form and would seem to

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You win the prize! I'm not making any particular argument here. I just think

Wolfe has definitely thought these things over. He might simply have asked himself, "What would a sentient sponge or a species of angels really be like"? But it is a little eerie that we have touched on such matters as

divine incest and found resonance all over Briah.

It really is eerie. My head is still swimming a bit from the resonance of the divinely ambiguous father-son and incest themes through all 12 Sun books.

I guess if we rely only on the text we could conclude Wolfe's intentions might be purely superficial with no thought of mytho-religious allegory. But then we read in an interview that he thinks Jesus Christ is underappreciated. That part of his writing is meant to illustrate this by creating worlds where Christ is absent.

For me, the interview quotes take the skeleton hints of a pagan universe in this story and puts flesh on the bones. (of course I'm not saying it has to work that way for everyone)

Thanks for bringing up the Trinity, btw (thanks also to Mathew Weber for earlier mentioning forgiveness of sin as the role of Jesus Christ). Never having been Christian I tend to forget some things...

...though I just noticed I am paternal-Judeo-Christian enough to have called Tzadkiel "he" when the sponge comparison was made when Tzadkiel was female. Or perhaps that is mostly because Tzadkiel is male during the majority of his/her appearance in the story.

Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 11:31 · in reply to Marc Aramini

From: Marc Aramini

--- On Sun, 10/16/11, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

Why would Wolfe engage in a complicated, arbitrary, pointless scheme such as this? He is writing his own stories. Science fiction stories. Yes, he enriches them with classical references, but he is not rewriting the classics. Yes, he loves to place keystones of his story in a subtle and understated way, but they are always there in plain sight and they are NOT in general found in proper names. [To place them in proper names would in fact be a gross dereliction of artistry, excluding the reader who is attentive but lacks a particular literary background. I will allow that they can be in proper names as well as in the story proper, and that exceptions could be made in certain circumstances.]

Gerry, in general I agree with you on this, but I do think Wolfe DOES at times perform this "gross dereliction of artistry" for the reader with a particular background (not necessarily literary).

For example, the short story Suzanne Delage - her very name is pulled from a book about a narrator who eats something and involuntarily remembers things he had completely forgotten from his childhood that COMPLETELY changes how he perceives the world and the people he knew. In this case, Wolfe is clearly saying the narrator has involuntarily forgotten something with that allusion, in addition to invoking the Spanish Influenza offhandedly (called the forgotten illness) etc etc. The point is these things point to forgetfulness of extraordinary events, and the premise of the story itself is that extraordinary things will be forgotten. So, yes, sometimes you are just out of the loop.

I don't agree that the name of the main character in Suzanne Delage is significant, or that it is about memory. Sure, the name is apparently that of a minor character in Proust, and Wolfe is known to like Proust. But nobody has ever, as far as I know, proposed any particular connection between the actual Proust character who bears the same name, and the character in Wolfe's story. If the story was called Mary Macdonald, I would read it exactly the same way as I do. It does, in my opinion, require that the reader be familiar with one aspect of Western culture, the romantic love ideal, in which each person has a soulmate whom they will, it is hoped, marry

and live Happily Ever After. The One In A Million. Wolfe's story is an inversion of this trope. It is a horror story of sorts, about a man who has lived in a small town along with his Perfect Woman, and by some malign conspiracy of fate, has never encountered her in person.

The scene is set at the start: ?I lay recalling.. my life. It HAS been a pleasant, though I fear a dull, and perhaps a lonely, one. ... I have twice been married, but both marriages were brief... my wives bored me ... and I bored them.

Then comes the bulk of the story, in which he describes how he might have met this mysterious presence in his life on so many occasions, but never did.

Finally, he sees her daughter and instantly falls in love. Note the sensual language of the passage describing her, used nowhere else in the story. And then the other shoe is dropped: ?She's the very image of her mother at that age.

Perhaps readers would be less confused if the story had been, in fact, called Mary Macdonald.
- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 11:51 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

But here we have kindergarten mythology leaping out at us. Echidna is well know to be the mother of monsters. Typhon's and Echidna's family is a veritable pantheon of divine monsters. The onus is on you to deny a theory of how this situation came about and what it means in New Sun and Long Sun. You'll need to do more than sit back and yawn if you wish your denials to be taken seriously.

Sure, they are given the names of divine monsters, and that accords with their behaviour, or at least the behaviour of some of them.

Why should Wolfe care if he recasts a father as a son to create this debased and pagan Olympus? You say yourself that allusions don't matter! Wolfe is already necessarily picking and choosing among disparate mythologies. I see Milton's Satan in there plain as day, because Satan raped his daughter to produce all the sins of the world. I could go on.

I never heard that myth, and I also don't know that Typhon raped Cilinia. Maybe he did, but I don't see it in the book, and Wolfe does not write the sort of modern literature in which it is a truth universally acknowledged that a single woman who is in the possession of a fucked up nature must have been raped by her father. Also in Long Sun, as distinct from New Sun, Typhon is a Demiurge perhaps, but he is not Satan.

But incest couldn't possibly happen in New Sun! No, Wolfe would avoid this topic, the bread and butter of half the mythologies (and ancient dynasties) of the world, to avoid upsetting Gerry Quinn with the coyness of its secret histories.

There IS incest in New Sun — at least two major instances - and we are told about them in the story and in what characters say. Wolfe doesn't hide silly clues in peoples' names by naming Agia and Agilus after Van and Ada, say.

Tell me where the story is advanced by Echidna being Typhon's sister. And tell me why nobody, even people who knew Typhon, remarks on it ever. And tell me why, if Wolfe wants to indicate that Typhon's family are going through the motions of replicated characters in an ancient myth, or at least one selected version of it, he spoils it by giving Typhon's son the name of his father?

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 12:00 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

Actually I think Gerry, in a moment of weakness, did concede that the Bird-of-the-Woods story did map nicely to the Roman Rhea Silvia myth. Perhaps the heat of recent battle has driven him back to his fortified position of denial of any and all mythological significance in Wolfe's work.

Where did I ever dispute that that story is a mash-up of the story of Romulus and that of the Jungle Book, perhaps filtered through the perspective of generations unfamiliar with real animals, like those people confined in the Antechamber who displayed very similar misapprehensions? If I recall correctly, my objection was to theories that the story was all about Typhon, because of course BotNS will never be "understood" until it is boiled down to some little self-referential tangle with three or fewer actual characters...

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 17 Oct 2011, 12:32 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/17/2011 7:51 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

But here we have kindergarten mythology leaping out at us. Echidna is well known to be the mother of monsters. Typhon's and Echidna's family is

a veritable pantheon of divine monsters. The onus is on you to deny a theory of how this situation came about and what it means in New Sun and

Long Sun. You'll need to do more than sit back and yawn if you wish your

denials to be taken seriously.

Sure, they are given the names of divine monsters, and that accords with their behaviour, or at least the behaviour of some of them.

But only the visible behavior, right? Nothing offstage, hidden from us?

Why should Wolfe care if he recasts a father as a son to create this debased and pagan Olympus? You say yourself that allusions don't matter!

Wolfe is already necessarily picking and choosing among disparate mythologies. I see Milton's Satan in there plain as day, because Satan raped his daughter to produce all the sins of the world. I could go on.

I never heard that myth, and I also don't know that Typhon raped Cilinia. Maybe he did, but I don't see it in the book,

What am I supposed to say here? Gerry, you need to read more of what Wolfe has read. Milton's Satan is a character in Paradise Lost. I won't cite it further.

No one said Typhon raped Cilinia, however orgiastic his inclinations. The Sun series is not a police procedural.

and Wolfe does not write the sort of modern literature in which it is a truth universally acknowledged that a single woman who is in the possession of a fucked up nature must have been raped by her father.

Perhaps you have been reading too much of that literature, whatever it is. Stop.

Also in Long Sun, as distinct from New Sun, Typhon is a Demiurge perhaps, but he is not Satan.

The two are not so different as you suppose---certainly not mutually exclusive.

But incest couldn't possibly happen in New Sun! No, Wolfe would avoid this topic, the bread and butter of half the mythologies (and ancient dynasties) of the world, to avoid upsetting Gerry Quinn with the coyness of its secret histories.

There IS incest in New Sun — at least two major instances - and we are told about them in the story and in what characters say. Wolfe doesn't hide silly clues in peoples' names by naming Agia and Agilus after Van and Ada, say.

Has anyone argued that Wolfe hides silly clues?

Tell me where the story is advanced by Echidna being Typhon's sister.

The potential implications have been explained over and over.

And tell me why nobody, even people who knew Typhon, remarks on it ever.

Would it advance the story?

And tell me why, if Wolfe wants to indicate that Typhon's family are going through the motions of replicated characters in an ancient myth,

This is a classic straw man.

or at least one selected version of it, he spoils it by giving Typhon's son the name of his father?

I suspect he needed another god, and allowed that the pantheon designers (since I doubt those are their real birth names anyway) were working with patchy information, like any student of mythology.

Lee Berman — 17 Oct 2011, 13:35 · follows David Stockhoff

Gerry Quinn: And tell me why, if Wolfe wants to indicate that Typhon's family are going through the motions of replicated characters in an ancient myth...

David Stockhoff: This is a classic straw man.

I think David has a point here. Nobody has said the gods of the Whorl were exact replicas of their mythological namesakes except you. All that was suggested is that if they explicitly share some characteristics they might implicitly share others.

Gerry, this seems to be your standard modus operandi. You take suggestions of evidence of complex possibilities and re-define them as simplistic, concrete certainties, making them easy targets for criticism and derision. Which you then proceed to gleefully provide.

Why not give the negativity a rest? Maybe you could come up with some of your own unique ideas for understanding Wolfe's work. Or perhaps you could praise the ideas of other people that you do like. It would be a nice change of pace.

David Stockhoff — 17 Oct 2011, 14:01 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/17/2011 8:00 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: Lee Berman <mailto:severiansola at hotmail.com>

Actually I think Gerry, in a moment of weakness, did concede that the Bird-of-the-Woods story did map nicely to the Roman Rhea Silvia myth.

Perhaps the heat of recent battle has driven him back to his fortified position of denial of any

and all mythological significance in Wolfe's work.

Where did I ever dispute that that story is a mash-up of the story of Romulus and that of the Jungle Book, perhaps filtered through the perspective of generations unfamiliar with real animals, like those people confined in the Antechamber who displayed very similar misapprehensions? If I recall correctly, my objection was to theories that the story was all about Typhon, because of course BotNS will never be "understood" until it is boiled down to some little self-referential tangle with three or fewer actual characters...

Then you're objecting to something no one said.

Mark Millman — 17 Oct 2011, 14:22 · in reply to Lee Berman

Folks,

Gerry Quinn is attacking ideas, not people. As far as I can recall, he has only ever attacked ideas, and never people. I won't name names--there should be no need--but I've repeatedly seen Mr. Quinn personally attacked.

Please stop. That is disgusting. It also wastes time--or, if you prefer, bandwidth--that could be spent on strengthening arguments.

Mark Millman

David Stockhoff — 17 Oct 2011, 14:28 · in reply to Mark Millman

On 10/17/2011 10:22 AM, Mark Millman wrote:

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Please stop. That is disgusting. It also wastes time--or, if you prefer, bandwidth--that could be spent on strengthening arguments.

Mark Millman

Mark, Gerry has only been accused of obstructionism and the creation of straw men. These are the things that waste time and do not strengthen arguments except by chance. Attacking ideas is welcome and desirable, but only if those ideas actually exist in the first place.

That's hardly a personal attack.

Mark Millman — 17 Oct 2011, 14:53 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Mr. Stockhoff,

On Monday 17 October 2011, you wrote:

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I have noticed more than one instance of personal phrasing. That's what makes it a personal attack. My comments stand, no matter how pointless you may think his posts have been.

Mark Millman

David Stockhoff — 17 Oct 2011, 15:07 · in reply to Mark Millman

On 10/17/2011 10:53 AM, Mark Millman wrote:
Mr. Stockhoff,

On Monday 17 October 2011, you wrote:

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I have noticed more than one instance of personal phrasing. That's what makes it a personal attack. My comments stand, no matter how pointless you may think his posts have been.

Mark

Are you sure you know what a personal attack is?

Your complaint risks obscuring the real issues. If you want better discourse on this forum, then insist on it. Be specific. If you have a point, present evidence. Otherwise, this is just another off-topic thread that increases the noise.

If you need to discuss further, I suggest that offline might be better. Wrangling over Wolfe is one thing, but wrangling over standards of civility is another.

Marc Aramini — 17 Oct 2011, 15:09 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

--- On Mon, 10/17/11, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

From: Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) [BGSpam]Re: Typhon's nature
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Date: Monday, October 17, 2011, 4:31 AM

I don't agree that the name of the main character in Suzanne Delage is significant, or that it is about memory. Sure, the name is apparently that of a minor character in Proust, and Wolfe is known to like Proust. But nobody has ever, as far as I know, proposed any particular connection between the actual Proust character who bears the same name, and the character in Wolfe's story. If the story was called Mary Macdonald, I would read it exactly the same way as I do.

It does, in my opinion, require that the reader be familiar with one aspect of Western culture, the romantic love ideal, in which each person has a soulmate whom they will, it is hoped, marry and live Happily Ever After. The One In A Million. Wolfe's story is an inversion of this trope. It is a horror story of sorts, about a man who has lived in a small town along with his Perfect Woman, and by some malign conspiracy of fate, has never encountered her in person.

The scene is set at the start: ?I lay recalling.. my life. It HAS been a pleasant, though I fear a dull, and perhaps a lonely, one. ... I have twice been married, but both marriages were brief... my wives bored me ... and I bored them.

Then comes the bulk of the story, in which he describes how he might have met this mysterious presence in his life on so many occasions, but never did.

Finally, he sees her daughter and instantly falls in love. Note the sensual language of the passage describing her, used nowhere else in the story. And then the other shoe is dropped:

?She's the very image of her mother at that age.

Perhaps readers would be less confused if the story had been, in fact, called Mary Macdonald.

- Gerry Quinn

You see, we disagree greatly on it because the premise of the story is, in italics, "that every man has had in the course of his life some extraordinary experience, SOME DISLOCATION OF ALL WE EXPECT?FROM NATURE AND?PROBABILITY, of such magnitude that he might in his own person serve as a living proof of Hamlet's hackneyed precept - but that he has nearly always, been so conditioned to consider himself the most mundane of creatures, that, "finding no relationship to the remainder of his life in this extraordinary experience, HE HAS FORGOTTEN IT." (361-362, 1st print *Endangered Species*)

We can accept this?as true in which case the narrator DOESN'T remember or can't make the connection, which would tell us why pictures of Suzanne would be cut out for scrap booking and the creepiness" of possibly encountering his own daughter, or even of spreading small pox through the sheets when he and Suzanne got it on on them, but the point is the EXTRAORDINARY EVENT CAN'T BE REMEMBERED BY THE NARRATOR, which is EXACTLY why the name of Suzanne Delage and Spanish Influenza and small pox quilts, all associated with forgotten or shameful memories, are present in the text.

So we'll just disagree on our readings, but the text says the narrator can't be trusted to relate the extraordinary event and PUTS HIS MEMORY IN QUESTION with those references. millions of people died of Spanish Influenza, and he isn't certain about what disease hit his town. His memory is faulty. He claims he has no idea what Suzanne looks like, then claims the daughter looks just like her. This is not Wolfe being lazy with details.

Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 16:49 · in reply to Marc Aramini

From: Marc Aramini

--- On Mon, 10/17/11, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote: > > I don't agree that the name of the main character in Suzanne Delage is significant, or that it is about memory. Sure, the name is apparently that of a minor character in Proust, and Wolfe is known to like Proust. But nobody has ever, as far as I know, proposed any particular connection between the actual Proust character who bears the same name, and the character in Wolfe's story. If the story was called Mary Macdonald, I would read it exactly the same way as I do.

It does, in my opinion, require that the reader be familiar with one aspect of Western culture, the romantic love ideal, in which each person has a soulmate whom they will, it is hoped, marry and live Happily Ever After. The One In A Million. Wolfe's story is an inversion of this trope. It is a horror story of sorts, about a man who has lived in a small town along with his Perfect Woman, and by some malign conspiracy of fate, has never encountered her in person.

The scene is set at the start: ?I lay recalling.. my life. It HAS been a pleasant, though I fear a dull, and perhaps a lonely, one. ... I have twice been married, but both marriages were brief... my wives bored me ... and I bored them.

Then comes the bulk of the story, in which he describes how he might have met this mysterious presence in his life on so many occasions, but never did.

Finally, he sees her daughter and instantly falls in love. Note the sensual language of the passage describing her, used nowhere else in the story. And then the other shoe is dropped: ?She's the very image of her mother at that age.

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FROM NATURE AND PROBABILITY, of such magnited that he might in his own person serve as a living proof of Hamlet's hackneyed precept - but that he has nearly always, been so conditioned to consider himself the most mundane of creatures, that, finding no relationship to the remainder of his life in this extraordinary experience, HE HAS FORGOTTEN IT." (361-362, 1st print Endangered Species)

That's what the narrator *thinks* is the premise. He tries to find a memory of an extraordinary experience in his life, and cannot. Then he realises that there is one — his having lived in a small town with a girl whose name he often heard, but whom he never met.

We can accept this as true in which case the narrator DOESN'T remember or can't make the connection , which would tell us why pictures of Suzanne would be cut out for scrap booking and the creepiness of possibly encountering his own daughter, or even of spreading small pox through the sheets when he and Suzanne got it on on them, but the point is the EXTRAORDINARY EVENT CAN'T BE REMEMBERED BY THE NARRATOR, which is EXACTLY why the name of Suzanne Delage and Spanish Influenza and small pox quilts, all associated with forgotten or shameful memories, are present in the text.

I don't see textual evidence for any of these things. Is smallpox mentioned anywhere at all? We are told why some pictures of Suzanne were cut out like those of many others including the narrator. The Spanish Influenza was mentioned, but it was probably a much later milder epidemic than that of 1918, and the narrator is unsure what it was anyway.

So we'll just disagree on our readings, but the text says the narrator can't be trusted to relate the extraordinary event and PUTS HIS MEMORY IN QUESTION with those references. millions of people died of Spanish Influenza, and he isn't certain about what disease hit his town. His memory is faulty. He claims he has no idea what Suzanne looks like, then claims the daughter looks just like her. This is not Wolfe being lazy with details.

He is *told* the daughter looks just like her. The important thing is the effect the daughter has on him.

There's no real evidence that the narrator has misremembered or forgot anything IMO — it is his interpretation that is at fault.

I don't think Wolfe is being lazy about details.

- Gerry Quinn

Marc Aramini — 17 Oct 2011, 17:20 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Gerry, if we accept the premise that strikes the narrator, he can't remember the event. If we don't accept it at face value, his guess of never meeting Suzanne is correct. I made the connection of why she is named Suzanne Delage: the return of involuntary memories that were repressed or misunderstood on an unconscious level.

There is a plague that leaves people crippled and unable to be photographed, a crippled widow across the street, he states neither of us are crippled are invalids. His repression is working to the opposite on everything about her. He isn't even sure it's spanish influenza, which is WEIRD. His memory is faulty about events concerning her; his story of her being in the pie club and not knowing her friends doesn't add up considering the wife of his friend says of course you know

whose she is, don't you etc etc.

But once again, if he forgot the extraordinary event (its in a fantasy collection remember) HE CAN'T REMEMBER IT NOR BE TRUSTED ABOUT WHAT IT REALLY IS, HE IS ONLY GUESSING ACCORDING TO THE PREMISE OF THE STORY, and incorrectly.

You tend not to believe in supernaturally unreliable narrators so let's just agree to disagree, I can't convince you of this, it is implied by the premise and the title that this story is about the unreliability of memory and the repression of supernatural events. Doesn't it suck more as a mundane story in which he never met a girl, though? Is that why he alludes to a text all about the power of forgotten memories to transform everything you believe?

Mark Millman — 17 Oct 2011, 18:37 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Mr. Stockhoff,

On Monday 17 October 2011, you wrote:

Mark, Gerry has only been accused of obstructionism and the creation of straw men. These are the things that waste time and do not strengthen arguments except by chance. Attacking ideas is welcome and desirable, but only if those ideas actually exist in the first place.

That's hardly a personal attack.

I have noticed more than one instance of personal phrasing. ?That's what makes it a personal attack. "My comments stand, no matter how pointless you may think his posts have been.

Mark

Are you sure you know what a personal attack is"

Yes. That's one. It questions me--in this case, my ability to comprehend discourse--and not my ideas of what constitutes a personal attack.

If I'm moved to complain, somebody has done something wrong. If it's been inadvertent, then there's no reason not to apologize and continue discussing the issues. If it's malicious, then there's a bigger problem. If it's a result of somebody's style of argument, it's regrettable; and I think it indicates that that person needs to rethink his or her approach. I have nothing more to say on this topic.

Your complaint risks obscuring the real issues. If you want better discourse on this forum, then insist on it. Be specific. If you have a point, present evidence. Otherwise, this is just another off-topic

thread that increases the noise.

If you need to discuss further,

I'm not discussing this further. Every so often, people go off the rails here, and it's usually simple to get them back on. Perhaps the difference is that my tolerance for it has decreased. Regardless, I'm the one who has identified it and is complaining about it now.

I suggest that offline might be better.
Wrangling over Wolfe is one thing, but
wrangling over standards of civility is
another.

I indicated a problem. I made the mistake of continuing to discuss it, but my indicating the problem in the first place is not an instance of "wrangling".

Mark Millman

David Stockhoff — 17 Oct 2011, 20:30 · in reply to Mark Millman

On 10/17/2011 2:37 PM, Mark Millman wrote:
Mr. Stockhoff,

On Monday 17 October 2011, you wrote:

Mark

Are you sure you know what a personal attack is?

Yes. That's one. It questions me--in this case, my ability to comprehend discourse--and not my ideas of what constitutes a personal attack.

If I'm moved to complain, somebody has done something wrong. If it's been inadvertent, then there's no reason not to apologize and continue discussing the issues. If it's malicious, then there's a bigger problem. If it's a result of somebody's style of argument, it's regrettable; and I think it indicates that that person needs to rethink his or her approach. I have nothing more to say on this topic.

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I indicated a problem. I made the mistake of continuing to discuss it, but my indicating the problem in the first place is not an instance of "wrangling".

Mark Millman

Mark

(1) You seem to define "personal attack" as any questioning of your ideas. Or is it just your idea of a "personal attack"?

(2) You asked us to only attack ideas, implying that all else is personal. Is calling someone's behavior "disgusting" then a personal attack?

(3) And now you tell us that since you complained, a crime must have been committed. Do you realize this logic effectively leaves you in charge of the forum?

Boy, this is going nowhere fast.

You should know that sometimes, members who sincerely want to calm the forum while still participating in it have made general remarks about restoring civility. They avoid pointing fingers, but they also don't drop cute hints that, in effect, accuse everyone. They don't start new fights where before there were none. They don't come out of nowhere to interrupt and impose themselves on a productive ongoing discussion. Some of them even strive to set an example by their calm, restraint, and humility.

May I suggest you rethink your own approach?

Jerry Friedman — 17 Oct 2011, 20:47 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

From: Gerry Quinn gerry at bindweed.com

I don't agree that the name of the main character in Suzanne Delage is significant, or that it is about memory. Sure, the name is apparently that of a minor character in Proust, and Wolfe is known to like Proust. But nobody has ever, as far as I know, proposed any particular connection between the actual Proust character who bears the same name, and the character in Wolfe's story. If the story was called Mary Macdonald, I would read it exactly the same way as I do.

...

The excerpt from Proust is available at the WolfeWiki

<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Stories.SuzanneDelage>

and there are more resemblances than the character's name. Whether these resemblances should suggest anything about the interpretation of the story is another question.

Jerry Friedman

David Stockhoff — 17 Oct 2011, 20:54 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/17/2011 12:49 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

--- On *Mon, 10/17/11, Gerry Quinn /<gerry at bindweed.com>/* wrote:

I don't agree that the name of the main character in Suzanne Delage is significant, or that it is about memory. Sure, the name is apparently that of a minor character in Proust, and Wolfe is known to like Proust. But nobody has ever, as far as I know, proposed any

particular connection between the actual Proust character who bears the same name, and the character in Wolfe's story. If the story was called Mary Macdonald, I would read it exactly the same way as I do.

Demonstrable connections between Suzanne Delage and Proust don't necessarily need to be critical ones (that the story would die without) to be rich, or useful, or true. Nor do they need to make everything crystal clear---it would be nice if they did, but art is often counterintuitive.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 17 Oct 2011, 20:56 · in reply to David Stockhoff

David, Gerry --

I agree with both of you.

Knowing about the Proust connection is not necessary for understanding and enjoying "Suzanne Delage." However, if you do know it, it provides a lovely additional "easter egg" of meaning.

--Dan'l

On Mon, Oct 17, 2011 at 1:54 PM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

On 10/17/2011 12:49 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

--- On *Mon, 10/17/11, Gerry Quinn /<gerry at bindweed.com>/* wrote:

I don't agree that the name of the main character in Suzanne Delage is significant, or that it is about memory. ?Sure, the name is apparently that of a minor character in Proust, and Wolfe is known to like Proust. ?But nobody has ever, as far as I know, proposed any particular connection between the actual Proust character who bears the same name, and the character in Wolfe's story. ?If the story was called Mary Macdonald, I would read it exactly the same way as I do.

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Marc Aramini — 17 Oct 2011, 21:19 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

--- On Mon, 10/17/11, Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> wrote:

From: Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) memory and Suzanne (offshot of Typhon's nature)

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Date: Monday, October 17, 2011, 1:47 PM

From: Gerry Quinn gerry at bindweed.com

I don't agree that the name of the main character in Suzanne Delage is significant, or that it is about memory.

Sure, the name is apparently that of a minor ?>character in Proust, and Wolfe is known to like Proust. But nobody has ever, as far as I know, proposed any particular connection between the actual Proust >character who bears the same name, and the character in Wolfe's story. If the story was called Mary Macdonald, I would read it exactly the same way as I do.

...

The excerpt from Proust is available at the WolfeWiki

<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Stories.SuzanneDelage>
and there are more resemblances than the character's
name. Whether these resemblances should suggest anything
about the interpretation of the story is another question.

Fear not, friends! For when I rewrite Suzanne Delage, line by line, what Wolfe meant merely as flat homage will once again be filled with the full spiritual power of memories unconsciously suppressed, invoking ALL of *In Search of Lost Time*, not merely a part. My laborious task is before me, but, like Pierre Menard, I am sure the recreation will be worthwhile.

"It is a revelation to compare Menard's *Don Quixote* with Cervantes?. The latter, for example, wrote (part one, chapter nine):

. . . truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor. Written in the seventeenth century, written by the "lay genius" Cervantes, this enumeration is a mere rhetorical praise of history. Menard, on the other hand, writes:

. . . truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor.

History, the mother of truth: the idea is astounding. Menard, a contemporary of William James, does not define history as an inquiry into reality but as its origin. Historical truth, for him, is not what has happened; it is what we judge to have happened. The final phrases exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor ?are brazenly pragmatic.

The contrast in style is also vivid. The archaic style of Menard?quite foreign, after all suffers from a certain affectation. Not so that of his forerunner, who handles with ease the current Spanish of his time." [from *Borges*, of course]

For while Wolfe's reference to Delage had little interpretive impact, and his inclusions of quilts were a mere curiosity, Aramini's, conversely, will hinge upon them. When Wolfe writes of an event so extraordinary it can't be remembered by the very being that experienced it, how the character's mundanity is revealed! But Aramini, writing the selfsame lines, has captured how extraordinary events WILL escape recollection in his characters.

{Seriously though, there's a reason Wolfe's fiction is so open to these types of theories - he obviously elides a lot of information that at the very least hints at both natural and supernatural resolutions that linger just a bit out of grasp, and I am amazed at how frequently those elisions are quite simply seen as ... intentionally unfillable.}

Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 21:52 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

From: Jerry Friedman

From: Gerry Quinn gerry at bindweed.com

I don't agree that the name > of the main character in Suzanne Delage is significant, or that it is about memory. Sure, the name is apparently that of a minor ?>character in Proust, and Wolfe is known to like Proust. But nobody has ever, as far as I know, proposed any particular connection between the actual Proust >character who bears the same name, and the character in Wolfe's story. If the story was called *Mary Macdonald*, I would read it exactly the same way as I do.

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<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Stories.SuzanneDelage>
and there are more resemblances than the character's name. Whether these resemblances should suggest anything about the interpretation of the story is another question.

?I had once been due to go to a dancing lesson, and even to take a small part in a play at her parents' house. But the fear of getting a fit of giggles and a nose-bleed had at the last moment prevented me, so that I had never set eyes on her.

I think that's the connection. Like the girl in Wolfe's story, the narrator (in this case the author himself) heard of the girl and should have met her, but never set eyes on her. That's central to Wolfe's story and to me it seems sufficient to explain the name. Probably Wolfe got the idea for his story while reading this.

In Proust's narrative, however, neither the girl nor the fact of him not meeting her seem to be of any particular significance.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 22:23 · in reply to Marc Aramini

From: Marc Aramini

Gerry, if we accept the premise that strikes the narrator, he can't remember the event. If we don't accept it at face value, his guess of never meeting Suzanne is correct. I made the connection of why she is named Suzanne Delage: the return of involuntary memories that were repressed or misunderstood on an unconscious level.

Jerry Friedman has posted the passage from Proust. In that, Suzanne Delage is a woman Proust was meant to meet but never did. Seems like sufficient reason.

There is a plague that leaves people crippled and unable to be photographed, a crippled widow across the street, he states neither of us are crippled are invalids.

It leaves them *quarantined* and unable to be photographed. And who says the widow is crippled? I can't see it anywhere!

His repression is working to the opposite on everything about her. He isn't even sure it's spanish influenza, which is WEIRD.

Not so weird even if it was the 1918 epidemic. Parents probably tried to protect their children from learning too much about it. But it could have been a later, milder flu epidemic. Maybe people overreacted to flu for a bit.

His memory is faulty about events concerning her; his story of her being in the pie club and not knowing her friends doesn't add up considering the wife of his friend says of course you know whose she is, don't you etc etc.

I see nothing odd here. Boys couldn't join the pie club. His friend's wife (who he has known all his life) was probably at school with him and Suzanne, and just assumed he knew her.

But once again, if he forgot the extraordinary event (its in a fantasy collection remember) HE CAN'T REMEMBER IT NOR BE TRUSTED ABOUT WHAT IT REALLY IS, HE IS ONLY GUESSING ACCORDING TO THE PREMISE OF THE STORY, and incorrectly.

What he read in the book was:

"every man has had in the course of his life some extraordinary experience, some dislocation of all we expect from nature and probability, of such magnitude that he might in his own person serve as a living proof of Hamlet's hackneyed precept²-but that lie has, nearly always, been so conditioned to consider himself the most mundane of creatures, that, finding no relationship to the remainder of his life in this extraordinary experience, he has forgotten it"

In fact, what happens in the story is not so very far from this: certainly there is a dislocation of probability, and the narrator had forgotten it until he thought about it. And at the end he still does not, perhaps, recognise the implications and how important it has been for him: that might also be considered a kind of forgetting.

Just because it is in a fantasy collection doesn't mean there have to be ghosts or vampires.

You tend not to believe in supernaturally unreliable narrators so let's just agree to disagree, I can't convince you of this, it is implied by the premise and the title that this story is about the unreliability of memory and the repression of supernatural events. Doesn't it suck more as a mundane story in which he never met a girl, though? Is that why he alludes to a text all about the power of forgotten memories to transform everything you believe?

The title is explained well enough by it being the name of a girl the narrator should have met but never did, just like the girl in Proust. And I don't think the story sucks at all — in fact, I like it a lot. The best fantasy is often that which is closest to reality.

- Gerry Quinn

Marc Aramini — 18 Oct 2011, 02:57 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Gerry says:

The title is explained well enough by it being the name of a girl the narrator should have >met but never did, just like the girl in Proust. And I don't think the story sucks at all — in >fact, I like it a lot. The best fantasy is often that which is closest to reality.

Fair enough. For me the question is whether the reference is synecdochic (part for whole) or purely specific to the passage naming Suzanne. If it refers to the total work, memory is a HUGE theme. If just to the section with Suzanne, then, yes, Proust having not met the girl but knowing of her is the complete reference.

What sways it to the supernatural interpretation for me is just the strangeness of her attraction, the decimation of the town, and the premise that an explicitly "supernatural" event that embodies "there are more things on heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy" would be completely forgotten if it occurred ... which would be more like Proust's involuntary/suppressed juvenile memories than the section with Suzanne's name in it.

So I still think the reference could go either way. The very idea of completely forgetting something mentioned in the text just screams of elision (and yes, I understand the circumstance of the quote, but it does say that in the text, like Chekhov's gun, supernatural events will be forgotten)

Jerry Friedman — 18 Oct 2011, 14:12 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>
On 10/17/2011 7:51 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>
...

Wolfe is already necessarily picking and choosing among disparate mythologies. I see Milton's Satan in there plain as day, because Satan raped his daughter to produce all the sins of the world. I could go on.

I never heard that myth, and I also don't know that Typhon raped Cilinia. Maybe he did, but I don't see it in the book,

What am I supposed to say here? Gerry, you need to read more of what Wolfe has read. Milton's Satan is a character in Paradise Lost. I won't cite it further.

...

I admit I haven't read Paradise Lost, but I took a quick look at Book 2, lines 740-850 or so, which seemed promising. I saw where Satan had consensual sex with his daughter, Sin, and got her pregnant. Death was born (tearing through Sin's entrails) and later raped her, producing monsters. Does Satan rape her or some other daughter at some other point?

Jerry Friedman

David Stockhoff — 18 Oct 2011, 15:01 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 10/18/2011 10:12 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:
From: David Stockhoff<dstockhoff at verizon.net>
On 10/17/2011 7:51 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff<mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

...

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I too must admit I'm a little foggy on that point---I may have conflated the rape with the sex and thus skipped a generation. But you get the general idea.

This is allegorical in a way I do not expect to find repeated in Long Sun. I'm not sure why Death + Sin = monsters, beyond that the whole reason Adam and Eve were kicked out of Eden is that they sinned and thus found mortality. Cue Pandora and her box. So this is in a sense a recap of the apple story with sex as the central act or event.

David Stockhoff — 18 Oct 2011, 20:19 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/18/2011 11:01 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:
On 10/18/2011 10:12 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

I admit I haven't read Paradise Lost, but I took a quick look at Book 2, lines 740-850 or so, which seemed promising. I saw where Satan had consensual sex with his daughter, Sin, and got her pregnant. Death was born (tearing through Sin's entrails) and later raped her, producing monsters. Does Satan rape her or some other daughter at some other point?

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Jerry, I'm glad I brought up PL and that you corrected me on the passage. Milton is probably the original fantasist (as well as propagandist) of English literature. Even a Catholic wouldn't dare to ignore him in building a mythology!

Thinking a little further: Echidna's spawn and Sin's spawn seem to be roughly parallel---one may even be an imitation of the other---but one is based on a clear moral system and the other is not, or at least not on one familiar to us.

I'm not sure what Greek monsters really do except entertain us and present us with puzzles about the intractability of the struggle of human nature vs itself and the unforgiving universe---gods too. Maybe the gods were supposed to humble us by depicting exaggerated human weakness and simultaneously inflicting always-inventive punishments for them.

But what Wolfe appears to have done is synthesize from these and possibly other sources to get a mythology that is comprehensive within a narrow context, and as well developed as Roman state paganism in 2000 A.D. It's flexible enough to serve the goal of stability, in terms of social engineering, and just moral enough to highlight the inadequacy of its morality and ethics. It's ripe for the Outsider to reveal himself to and bring down.

(1) Given that assumption, it is not odd to find Tartarus as Typhon's son and the unions of Satan + Sin, Sin + Death, and Typhon + Echidna a bit blurred.

(2) Typhon of New Sun shows no sign of becoming Pas, but he was a good candidate as an exemplary tyrannical Ruler of Worlds. If we take him as Archon of whatever plane of existence Urth is in (Puritans used to see Satan as almost the jailer/landlord of the filthy world outside church, and Death can be seen as the single truly immutable law of the mortal plane, hiding the truth of Eternal Life), then it fits for him to have created a kind of tapestry of gods to wrap around the colonists and hide from them the true nature of the Outsider and the universe.

(3) Even if this pantheon and the society described by Mamelta were not fleshed out at the time New Sun was written, my guess is that they were at least conceived of. Typhon's "I send my thought" which is so opaquely suggestive without this added information becomes much easier to read with it. I no longer see any need for Typhon to be a telepathic sport. Telepathic, yes, but not in the way I guessed before Long Sun. Purely electronic, definitely not, nor purely genetic.

And yes, it does matter! Typhon's mindnet is as close to magic as the series gets; it's beyond analysis. His genes are still superior but not to the degree that the Mule's would have been. (IIRC, the Mule was sterile anyway.)

Andrew Mason — 19 Oct 2011, 22:13 · follows David Stockhoff

Gerry Qunn wrote:

Andrew Mason:

The monarch repented, and everything we see of Typhon, both on Urth and on the Whorl, would have come after that repentance. I think it's clear that this monarch is Typhon, since in *_Urth_* there is a specific reference to him as having brought the books to to the Citadel.

Where does it say that?

Urth chapter 36 (the physician speaking):

'This coast is quake-prone, as the old records indicate clearly enough
- praise to our Monarch, by the way, for having them brought here.'

Gerry Quinn — 19 Oct 2011, 23:13 · in reply to Andrew Mason

From: Andrew Mason

Gerry Quinn wrote:

Andrew Mason:

The monarch repented, and everything we see of Typhon, both on Urth and on the Whorl, would have come after that repentance. I think it's clear that this monarch is Typhon, since in _Urth_ there is a specific reference to him as having brought the books to the Citadel.

Where does it say that?

Urth chapter 36 (the physician speaking):

'This coast is quake-prone, as the old records indicate clearly enough
- praise to our Monarch, by the way, for having them brought here.'

Fair enough, though it doesn't really give the impression that Typhon was trying to suppress knowledge. But I just found a problem:

"Their spoil was gathered into a great heap in the city of Nessus, which was then newly built, to be burned.

Surely Nessus was built long before the reign of Typhon"

Either way, Typhon eventually came to appreciate the pleasures of a good book:

"Nessus shall be your capital, if you wish it. From your throne in Nessus you will send me tribute of fair women and boys, of the ancient devices and books, and all the good things this world of Urth produces."

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 20 Oct 2011, 10:42 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

From: Gerry Quinn

Fair enough, though it doesn't really give the impression that Typhon was trying to suppress knowledge. But I just found a problem:

"Their spoil was gathered into a great heap in the city of Nessus, which was then newly built, to be burned.

Surely Nessus was built long before the reign of Typhon"

I don't mean to say this disproves Andrew's theory: errors may have crept into the history related by Cyriaca, or Wolfe may have nodded. Certainly it's odd that the guy should make a point about Typhon bringing records to the Citadel if it wasn't meant to be him.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 20 Oct 2011, 11:42 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/20/2011 6:42 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: Gerry Quinn <mailto:gerry at bindweed.com>

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- Gerry Quinn

I suppose one could interpret that line as "newly REbuilt" there could be some conflation of names and dates in your average Urthian's sense of history. The origin of Nessus itself is so confused it can't be used for reliable dating. But Nessus should surely precede Typhon by a chiliad, except for the Citadel, which I'd connect with the useless stump of Typhon's lost fleet as well as the library.

But recall that Alexander, a precursor to Typhon, built the Library of Alexandria, which later burned. Ironically, if it had not been built it would not have burned. Point being, a centralized library system is just as vulnerable and more subject to restriction than a dispersed or nonsystematic one. The whole story of the collection of books to burn them suggests this. Typhon need not embrace universal knowledge to collect all books and bury them below the ground where only he can access them.

Andrew, do you have evidence for the monarch's repentance? Is it possible that Typhon brought all remaining books to Nessus to save them, where a predecessor burned them?

Jeff Wilson — 20 Oct 2011, 16:53 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/20/2011 5:42 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:
From: Gerry Quinn <mailto:gerry at bindweed.com>
> Fair enough, though it doesn't really give the impression that Typhon
> was trying to suppress knowledge. But I just found a problem:
>
>
> Their spoil was gathered into a great heap in the city of Nessus,
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On the other hand, Wolfe is a keen consumer of ancient histories where it is very commonplace for later rulers to accumulate misattributed works of their predecessors. The same is true of more contemporary history, as witness the various Cleopatra's Needles.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

David Stockhoff — 20 Oct 2011, 17:52 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/20/2011 12:53 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:
On 10/20/2011 5:42 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:
From: Gerry Quinn <mailto:gerry at bindweed.com>
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Exactly. And the more glorious the better---Napoleon, for example, famously invented not only canned food but also Egyptology, the ambulance, the submarine, and so on. (Googling the topic, I find he also invented the computer and proved Napoleon's theorem, whatever that is. Might even be true!)

Having just read Tolkien's verse version of the Norse sagas based on Attila's defeat of the Burgundians, I now have a sharper appreciation of how stories move around and adapt over centuries. If the records were themselves lost---or they were all kept in the telepathic cloud---the telescoping effect could only increase.

Andrew Mason — 20 Oct 2011, 19:14 · follows David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff wrote:

Andrew, do you have evidence for the monarch's repentance? Is it possible that Typhon brought all remaining books to Nessus to save them, where a predecessor burned them?

'But on the night before the burning was to begin, the autarch of the time, who had never dreamed before the wild dreams of sleep but only waking dreams of dominion, dreamed at last.... When morning came, he ordered that the torches not be kindled, but that there should be a great vault built to house all the volumes and scrolls the white-robed men had gathered.' (SOTL 6.)

David Stockhoff — 20 Oct 2011, 19:29 · in reply to Andrew Mason

On 10/20/2011 3:14 PM, Andrew Mason wrote:

David Stockhoff wrote:

Andrew, do you have evidence for the monarch's repentance? Is it possible that Typhon brought all remaining books to Nessus to save them, where a predecessor burned them?

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Thanks. I had forgotten that completely. The "dreams of dominion" sounds like Typhon, as well as not dreaming at all.

So the monarch who gathered the books is also the monarch who planned to burn them and did not. Typhon is both.

Andrew Mason — 20 Oct 2011, 19:36 · follows David Stockhoff

Gerry Quinn wrote: .

But I just found a problem:

“Their spoil was gathered into a great heap in the city of Nessus, which was then newly built, to be burned.

Surely Nessus was built long before the reign of Typhon”

Well, clearly Cyriaca's story is not entirely accurate. After all, she thinks the Citadel is deserted and no one but the Autarch knows about it. But I think it's clear that Typhon's actions are the source of the story.

(Jonas, by contrast, seems to put the foundation of the Citadel much too early, before the first empire.)

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 20 Oct 2011, 20:00 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Thu, Oct 20, 2011 at 10:52 AM, David Stockhoff

<dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

Exactly. And the more glorious the better---Napoleon, for example, famously invented not only canned food but also Egyptology, the ambulance, the submarine, and so on. (Googling the topic, I find he also invented the computer and proved Napoleon's theorem, whatever that is. Might even be true!)

Don't forget margarine.

And legend has it that mayonnaise was invented _for_ Napoleon. He liked to have his chefs dedicate a new dish to every major town he conquered, and mayonnaise was the sauce in one of these. He didn't like it.

(Actually, mayonnaise is recorded well before N.B. began his conquests.)

But why did he hide his hand?

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Jeff Wilson — 20 Oct 2011, 20:00 · in reply to Andrew Mason

On 10/20/2011 2:36 PM, Andrew Mason wrote:

Gerry Quinn wrote: .

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(Jonas, by contrast, seems to put the foundation of the Citadel much too early, before the first empire.)

The "old port" could date back many ages, once you establish it as a place for relativistic rockets to land you have to expect late arrivals in later ages, and as kind of useful,

low-maintenance wasteland.

The "great vault" can also refer to the subterranean complex that extends into the city and to the House Absolute.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

David Stockhoff — 20 Oct 2011, 20:04 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

On 10/20/2011 4:00 PM, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote:
On Thu, Oct 20, 2011 at 10:52 AM, David Stockhoff
<dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

Exactly. And the more glorious the better---Napoleon, for example, famously invented not only canned food but also Egyptology, the ambulance, the submarine, and so on. (Googling the topic, I find he also invented the computer and proved Napoleon's theorem, whatever that is. Might even be true!)

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(Actually, mayonnaise is recorded well before N.B. began his conquests.)

But why did he hide his hand?

Incest!

Jerry Friedman — 23 Oct 2011, 05:25 · in reply to Marc Aramini

From: Marc Aramini <marcaramini at yahoo.com>
? He isn't even sure it's spanish influenza, which is WEIRD.

Oddly enough, Spanish influenza has been called "the forgotten pandemic". And mortality caused by it varied a lot from place to place. For instance, the early form was less deadly, and where a lot of people got that, they were immune to the second, deadlier wave. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_influenza>. So it's not necessarily weird.

His memory is faulty about events concerning her; his story of her being in the pie club and not knowing her friends doesn't add up considering the wife of his friend says of course you know whose she is, don't you etc etc.

I'm reminded of someone from my town--let's call him Steve B., since that's really his name and initial--who was a grade after me. However, I went to a private high school, so I didn't know him from our one public high school. My mother worked closely with his mother on a community organization. He then went to the same college as me. One of his roommates was one of my best friends in high school--but though we still enjoyed a chat if we ran into each other on some quad, we were in different social circles in college. He worked at the campus radio station, as did one of my roommates--but I was seldom at the station. Another of my roommates helped referee a simulation of corporate takeovers for an economics class that Steve participated in (and I told my roommate Steve's mother's name so my roommate could announce that the result of a tender offer was "Only Mrs. X. B. of Ourtown, Ohio, sold any shares at this price"). So someone who knew all

this could have said, "Of course you know who he is"--but I've never met him.

I have no reason to think meeting him would have made any significant difference in my life, and I imagine I could find a photo of him if I looked--in fact I think I've seen one--but I think our narrator's story can add up.

(I can't find a picture of him on the Web, though. Hm...)

But once again, if he forgot the extraordinary event (its in a fantasy collection remember) HE CAN'T REMEMBER IT NOR BE TRUSTED ABOUT WHAT IT REALLY IS, HE IS ONLY GUESSING ACCORDING TO THE PREMISE OF THE STORY, and incorrectly.

You tend not to believe in supernaturally unreliable narrators so let's just agree to disagree, I can't convince you of this, it is implied by the premise and the title that this story is about the unreliability of memory and the repression of > supernatural events. Doesn't it suck more as a mundane story in which he never met a girl, though? Is that why he > alludes to a text all about the power of forgotten memories to transform everything you believe?

I'm inclined to think that supernatural agencies, which there's no point in speculating about, have prevented him from meeting the woman who would have changed his life. What he's forgotten is there was a person who he came so close to knowing but never met.

(Why supernatural? The missing pictures are too much. And it's from an sf collection.)

Jerry Friedman