

Pas-Typhon redux

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 07 May 1997

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Joel Priddy — 07 May 1997, 13:15

This is my first posting here, and boy, do I hope I don't say anything stupid. I've been a Gene Wolfe fan for a few years, more or less in a vacuum. Now I find other people who not only have heard of him, but are familiar with his work on a level I find boggling. Reading this list has been tremendous fun, and has enriched Wolfe's work for me. Thanks.

Now, to dive right into the mix:

First question: other than the cover blurbs, do we have any reason to connect the New Sun and Long Sun books? Does it ever actually say that Pas is Typhon? Is Pas-Typhon the only link so far?

Since discovering the archives of this mailing list, I've been rereading my Wolfe, but I've been starting with the individual novels. The detail of the 2 series' are a little rusty for me. Basically, New Sun strikes me as being full of super-advanced "magic black box" style technology in a culture of such decay that no one cares anymore. It brims with FTL... even the Undine seems to be capable of it just by swimming. The Whorl seems to be the result of more limited (STL) technology from a still vibrant culture. Could Typhon have built an interstellar empire when generation-ships were required to make the trip between stars?

A couple of two-headed tyrants does seem like a coincidence, but there is a lot of repeated imagery throughout Wolfe's books. Maybe Pas represents the two kings of Sparta from the Latro books? I say that jokingly, of course, but the point is that there could be a lot of reasons like that in Pas' mental make-up that made him think representing himself as having two heads would be a good idea. Didn't Adam originally have two heads before God got around to experimenting with making helpmates? Having two heads makes for an imposing figure, and I would be likely to accept the authority of such a person when he started ordering me around. Could Urth be in the Whorl's future, not it's past? Maybe the eventual legend of Pas is what inspires Typhon to follow his (IMHO) ill-considered route to immortality. Sorta' casting himself as a second coming of Pas. If the Typhon had access to the sort of technology that even the Councilors had, it seems he'd have been able to find a much more graceful way to preserve himself, if the continued survival of his head were really his only concern. Blue and Green strike me as a more likely being the connection between the series. I have no reason to put this forth other than the planets seem to open a lot of possibilities, and I'm looking for something to fill in a Pas-Typhon gap. Hmmm... was the winged wormy thing that Severien spotted in Father Inire's workshop an Inhumi flying across the air bridge? I don't remember it's description too well.

Second Question: Did anyone else crack up at the description of the collapsed shiprock wall in Exodus? Here I'd been thinking all this time that shiprock was some sort of super-light, super-strong miracle material like what Niven built Ringworld out of... and it turns out to be steel-reinforced concrete.

Third Question: dredging up the Quetzal identity/motivation topic... I don't have any copies of the second book (I'm a library reader), but does Remora say or think something about how "these days" Quetzal only seems to drink beef-broth tea? If this is a recently-developed preference and is the result of being a blood-sucker (instead of a sign of age as Remora

reasonably assumes), does this open up the possibility that the vampire is a recent arrival in the Whorl, having replaced an original (human) Quetzal? This explains his seeming working at cross-purposes, namely, he ran into Fifth Head of Cerberus-style identity problems after assuming a humans identity. Up until this thought hit me, I was with the camp that said Q was there from the beginning of the Whorl, because if the inhumani have to wait for the air bridge to fly between planets, then they obviously can't cross vacuum under their own power, and don't have the technology to do it. But if they do have a way, and Quetzal's preference for a meal of beef tea is a sign of being replaced by an inhumani, this could be a marker of exactly when the Whorl arrived in the system.

And as a parting aside... is the Alice Turner on this list really the Alice K. Turner of A History of Hell? It's a favorite, and I've forced my copy of it on friends more often than I have my copy of Peace.

Apologies if I'm covering old territory.

JOEL

(hmmm... the Vironese name might be... ah, gizzard?)