

Typhon & Pas

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 22 Jan 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/41>

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Ranjit Bhatnagar — 22 Jan 1997, 13:42

Inconsistent or not, I don't think there's any doubt that Pas is Typhon. I don't remember exactly when it occurs, but when Pas appears in a monitor or Window, he's shown with one head speaking and the other gasping, trying to catch its breath. In *The Sword of the Lictor*, Typhon explains to Severian that he extended his life by having his head grafted onto the body of a healthy slave, Piaton, but that Piaton's head couldn't be removed because it still controlled the heart. Severian: "You told me about Piaton. Why can't he speak?"

"He can't get his breath, poor fellow," Typhon said. [...] "As I told you, I control all the voluntary functions--I will control the involuntary ones too, soon."

How many tyrants do YOU know who are in this particular fix? There can't be a lot of them.

I agree that the time scales don't seem to match up, though. Pas's time is close enough to our own time that French is still in use. Heck, I can't even figure out how they could be consistent within the Book of the New Sun alone.

But I really write to alert you to the movie "THE INCREDIBLE TWO-HEADED TRANSPLANT." I just stumbled across it in Video Movie Guide 1997: "A sadistic killer's head is grafted to the body of a dim-witted giant. Rated PG. DIR: Anthony M. Lanza. CAST: Bruce Dern, Pat Priest, Casey Kasem.

1971." Typhon must have rented this movie; that's where he got the idea.

[Exodus spoilers below]

Also, near the end of Exodus, on the airship monitor, Kypris shows Silk a vision of himself as Pas. I wonder if she has already scanned him into Mainframe without his permission? Or was she just using a monitor's demonstrated ability to show people cosmetic improvements?

Speaking of which, what's this business about people speaking to their dead ancestors at Mainframe? If Mainframe really is a kind of digital heaven, what's the point? It might be useful to have a repository of personalities and knowledge, but not if few people are ever allowed to consult it. Perhaps if the stored personalities could be brought to the new colony planets, they'd be useful in establishing a new civilization, but there's no indication that Mainframe is portable. And how did all these ancestors get scanned, anyway? Most people die far from a monitor or Window.

- r

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com

Derek Bell — 23 Jan 1997, 18:04 · follows Ranjit Bhatnagar

In message <199701221842.KAA12107 at lists1.best.com>, Ranjit Bhatnagar writes:

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Pas's time is close enough to our own time that French is still in use. Heck, I can't even figure out how they could be consistent within the Book of the New Sun alone.

IIRC, Wolfe used languages such as Latin and Old French in the Book of the New Sun to represent languages that bear the same relationship to Severian's language as the ones used in the text do to English. Perhaps French is used to represent a contemporary (to Silk) language.

Latin is once mentioned by Silk as an example of a language that might survive in another city as the native tongue; again this is probably used in place of what, to Silk, would be a dead language that is still known of.

I see that Pas didn't just divide cities by physical barriers - it looks like he deliberately created linguistic, if not cultural, barriers too. (Damn clever, these two-headed dictators! :-)) The Trivigauntis are shown as speaking something that sounds like Arabic, which is a totally different family of language to English.)

Derek

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Jim Jordan — 23 Jan 1997, 16:25 · follows Derek Bell

At 06:04 PM 1/23/97 +0000, you wrote:

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Derek

This goes back to the Tower of Babel, where God did the same thing for the same basic reason. Pas is a counterfeit of God.

JBJordan

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com

Derek Bell — 25 Jan 1997, 19:06 · follows Jim Jordan

In message <199701232225.OAA02246 at lists1.best.com>, Jim Jordan writes:

[My comment on the cultural and physical separation of cities by Pas]

This goes back to the Tower of Babel, where God did the same thing for the same basic reason. Pas is a counterfeit of God.

The whorl could be interpreted as a metaphor for life, with Green & Blue as a metaphor for the afterlife. (Don't the colonists in Exodus enter the tunnels through a crater in the graveyard?) In this interpretation, Pas is a demiurge - this is contrary to Catholic teaching, no? (Then again, Silk comes to interpretations that are wrong, so perhaps Wolfe is making a subtle warning about interpretations.)

Derek

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