

Trumpets

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 20 Jul 1999

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Roy C. Lackey — 20 Jul 1999, 09:56

I would like to say thank you to those who have responded kindly to my flowers post. I wrote it a few weeks ago and only posted it because Robert Borski bullied me into it. And MA-D is right; there is little incentive to write such pieces, and I didn't put the effort into it that I could have. But, having done so, it gives me a greater appreciation for such efforts, like William Ansley's Oz/Eyeflash posts.

Tony Ellis wrote:

I hadn't even finished it when I started thinking of the "sprawling angel's trumpets" which are the very last words of The Fifth Head of Cerberus. They work on various levels, of course, including a symbolic link to the silver trumpet vine of the opening paragraphs, but now I'm curious as to what (if any) meaning they have in florigraphy.

What do you sources say, Roy?

This was (is) harder than I thought, and I only have a partial answer. Trumpet vine is the same as trumpet creeper. The trumpet creeper is of the genus *Campsis*, species *Campsis radicans*, of the *Bignonia* family *Bignoniaceae*. The problem is, the trumpet-shaped flowers range from yellowish-orange to red. Silver, when used in a plant name, usually means white. The *bignonias* include shrubs, vines, and trees. This latter may be important, because David is said to "snap off branches" to make a crude pan-pipe. There is a trumpet tree, which has hollow branches used to make wind instruments.

We know that Wolfe has (or had) the cumbersome two-volume compact edition of the OED, as do I. Among the dreadful fine print of usages under "trumpet" is the following: "The White Queen [*narcissus*], a novelty with white perianth and trumpet of pale chrome." (brackets _not_ mine) Chrome can be said to be silver in color, and the "White Queen" name, when coupled with Number Five's remarks about the black and white queens, linked to the *narcissus*, which means "egotism; self love", seems to fit the theme of 5HC too nicely to be an accident.

The angel's trumpet is easier. It is of the genus *Datura*, species *Datura Innoxia*, of the nightshade family, *Solanaceae*. The *Datura* is a group of poisonous shrubs and trees, which include the jimson weed, angel's trumpet, and the English thornapple. In the language of flowers the thornapple means "deceitful charms".

Roy