

Hyacinth and Seawrack

The Urth list — 9 messages, 5 voices, 21 Oct 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5766>

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Lee Berman — 21 Oct 2010, 11:30

I've been reading Return to the Whorl and had a question. I think it is for James Wynn. Wasn't it you who suggested some sort of connection or shared identity between Hyacinth and Seawrack? I tried looking/searching but couldn't find the post.

I thought of it because I ran across a section where Horn is describing to Vadsig how he and Maytera Mint and Patera Silk and Seawrack overthrew the Ayuntamiento.

If the inclusion of Seawrack was an auctorial error I'd find that pretty interesting, as I am more interested than most in the autobiographical aspects of Gene Wolfe's work.

More likely it is an example of unreliable narrator error I suppose. As such my first interpretation would be that the error occurs due to relationship parallels. Horn's paramour is Seawrack. Pas/Typhon's paramour is Kypris. Silk and Hyacinth, possessing aspects of the gods, provide the bridge between these two pairs, thus Seawrack and Hyacinth are confused.

Am I missing some some real world (within the story) way that Seawrack and Hyacinth can be connected in the way that Silk and Horn are connected?

António Pedro Marques — 21 Oct 2010, 13:15 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee Berman wrote (21-10-2010 12:30):

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IIRC he said Hyacinth was dream-dead-Fava.

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If the inclusion of Seawrack was an auctorial error (...)

Short of severe confusion, which I fortunately isn't the case, I find that simply impossible.

James Wynn — 21 Oct 2010, 15:42 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee Berman-

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I'm pretty sure that is not the only time the Rajan confuses Hy with Seawrack. I couldn't tell you exactly where. I thought there was a time where he talks about Hyacinth singing.

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António Pedro Marques — 21 Oct 2010, 16:20 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote (21-10-2010 16:42):

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There is (but don't ask me where). Hyacinth is the woman Silk ever found more attractive, and Seawrack is the woman Horn ever found more attractive. It's only natural that the Silk in Horn would sometimes make the latter mix up the names of the two. My grandmother quite often refers to my grandfather (which I've never met) as 'your father' while talking to me about old recollections and doesn't notice it at all, she's clearly uncounsciously positioning me at the son (which she never even had) level in those situations.

Lee Berman — 22 Oct 2010, 02:10 · follows António Pedro Marques

Antonio P. Marques: Hyacinth is the woman Silk ever found more attractive, and Seawrack is the woman Horn ever found more attractive. It's only natural that the Silk in Horn would sometimes make the latter mix up the names of the two.

Yes, if the mistake is repeated then I suppose this is the most parsimonious answer. Would have been nice (for me anyway) if there was more to it. For some reason Wolfe is uncharacteristically heavy handed in his demonstration that Silk and Horn have been merged. This could just be a part of that.

Dave Tallman — 22 Oct 2010, 02:12 · follows Lee Berman

James Wynn wrote:

I'm pretty sure that is not the only time the Rajan confuses Hy with Seawrack. I couldn't tell you exactly where. I thought there was a time where he talks about Hyacinth singing.

There is, in IGJ, p. 121. "Here I stopped to listen, for I heard Hyacinth singing to her waves."

I believe this is more about the Narrator's identity confusion than any real identification of Hyacinth with Seawrack. He exchanges one love for another because he is really two men. A similar mistake is when he addresses one of his sons as "Horn" in the last book.

The following quote shows how his memories of the women are doubled: IGJ p. 170: "I am going to pray and go to bed and (if I cannot sleep) daydream about the first time I lay with Seawrack on the clumsy little sloop I built with my own hands, and loved so much, and of lying with Hyacinth, too, in Ermine's on the night of our marriage."

Roy C. Lackey — 22 Oct 2010, 17:56 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman quoted and wrote:

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I agree. IIRC, there are also other places where Silkhorn confuses one wife with the other, when he writes Hyacinth when he means Nettle. He also consciously substitutes Hyacinth's name for Nettle's at least once, when he spoke to Chandi: "As for me, I did not weep; but I was at least as homesick as she, and when she was calmer I told her about you, Nettle, calling you Hyacinth." (OBW, 222)

He also mentions Seawrack's singing on the same page.

-Roy

James Wynn — 22 Oct 2010, 18:06 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Dave Tallman-

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Dave Tallman — 22 Oct 2010, 18:14 · follows James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

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In the case of Chandi, I think he makes a deliberate choice. He knows she thinks he's Silk, and she probably knows Silk's wife's name is Hyacinth. So to avoid confusion and mistrust, he chooses to speak of Nettle this way.