

Hyacinth

The Urth list — 30 messages, 10 voices, 02 Nov 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6095>

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Lee Berman — 02 Nov 2011, 14:15

I was just checking into the Hyacinth myth and I was reminded that this character was a teenage boy, the sexual consort of Apollo. I was trying to think if there is any evidence (for or against) that this might impact the Long Sun story.

Somewhere in his writing, Mantis remarks that Hyacinth's breasts, as described, seem likely to be implants. Silk does seem almost unnaturally afraid of his own passion when he first meets Hyacinth. And she is a shockingly good fighter, we find out toward the end. Is there any evidence that Hyacinth can't be male, like her being pregnant?

It wouldn't be a complete shock to find Blood's clients might have a thing for ladyboys, especially Oosik. In history, pagan soldiers have a reputation for that sort of thing.

James Wynn has suggested Patera Incus (I think it was him, yes?) might be part of a gender bender thing going on. I wonder if James might find the inclusion of Zephyrus (West Wind) as part of the Hyacinth-Apollo story to be of interest.

James Wynn — 02 Nov 2011, 21:51 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 11/2/2011 9:15 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

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So inquiries like this one make me realize that although my comments on this list don't go back as far as Borkski's or Mantis' or Roy's, it has been a long while now. So long, in fact, that very infamous theories that I helped initiate are not even lore anymore.

Immediately after I finished "The Book of the Long Sun" so many years ago, I posited that Hyacinth might be a male chem who had himself retrofitted to pass as a woman. I did not know at the time that Marc Aramini had posited only a few months earlier that Hyacinth might be male.

I don't believe my "male chem" theory anymore (I only half believed it even then), nor even Marc's "male Hyacinth" theory. I've moved on. But I can still see the appeal of theories along that line. There's something "off" about Hy. She has a secret that Chenille knows to some extent. At the time I offered the "male chem" theory, I noted that Hyacinth followed the same transformative pattern as Dracaina of "The Soldier of the Mist". I asked at that time "what was Hyacinth before"? I have another working theory that I'm currently collating. I don't think Hy is or has ever been male, but I am still convinced she ain't no ordinary girl.

J.

larry miller — 03 Nov 2011, 00:31 · in reply to James Wynn

As someone who is rereading Long Sun in search of mysteries and puzzles I would love to hear your theory on Hyacinths nature as well as anything in the text that suggests she is not a female. This is a theory I have never heard before and Am interested in hearing more.

On 11/2/11, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:

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Lee Berman — 03 Nov 2011, 12:44 · follows larry miller

larry miller: As someone who is rereading Long Sun in search of mysteries and puzzles I would love to hear your (James Wynn's) theory on Hyacinths nature as well as anything in the text that suggests she is not a female. This is a theory I have never heard before and Am interested in hearing more.

I agree. Bring out your theory James, even in partial form. You can complete and polish it for publication later. This is just for fun and elucidation. will it really ignore the mythological boy Hyacinth? That would be surprising for a James theory.

Yes, it will probably draw out some venomous criticism from those who enjoy dispensing it. And we know that some who find merit in a theory will withhold their praise. Just remember all that has its emotional roots in simple jealousy of one of the best Wolfe theorists still working.

David Stockhoff — 03 Nov 2011, 14:13 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 11/3/2011 8:44 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

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Yes, bring it on, James!

Disregard the almost imperceptible sound of the sharpening of knives. :D

antonio at gmail.com — 03 Nov 2011, 14:25 · in reply to Lee Berman

No dia 2011/11/03, ?s 12:44, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> escreveu:

larry miller: As someone who is rereading Long Sun in search of mysteries and puzzles I would love to hear your (James Wynn's) theory on Hyacinths nature as well as anything in the text that suggests she is not a female. This is a theory I have never heard before and Am interested in hearing more.

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Last time James was asked to present an incomplete theory, the list went up in flames.

Marc Aramini — 03 Nov 2011, 15:11 · in reply to Lee Berman

quite simply it is the name, the fake breasts, here surprising ability to fight, and the statue of Catamitus that is near her room when Silk breaks in. On the other hand, Blood has Musk, and its his villa, so maybe the Hyacinthus/hyacinth connection, while valid in light of the hyacinth flower blooming at the end of Short Sun, is not necessarily applicable in terms of gender, but the statue of Catamitus is a bit thematically suggestive.

--- On Thu, 11/3/11, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

From: Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com>

Subject: (urth) Hyacinth

To: urth at urth.net

Date: Thursday, November 3, 2011, 5:44 AM

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Marc Aramini — 03 Nov 2011, 15:26 · in reply to James Wynn

--- On Wed, 11/2/11, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:

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know at the time that Marc Aramini had posited only a few
months earlier that Hyacinth might be male.

heh heh heh was that my fault? sometimes I forget who said what when. There is definitely
something off about Hy, looking in her little ring and changing her appearance, but I agree, its
not definitive by any means that she is male, its just an odd mythical association chain with her
through the presence of all those boy toy mythological statues and Blood's homosexuality and
the resonance with the mysterious gender bending elsewhere in the Soldier series.

Craig Brewer — 03 Nov 2011, 15:30 · in reply to Marc Aramini

So let's assume that Hy is in fact male/transsexual/altered. What does that mean for Silk and
how we interpret him?

I don't want this to be a dismissive question. I suppose I'm just looking for what it means if
that's the case. Are we suggesting that it's Wolfe (as a cliché Catholic) undermining Silk's
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Marc Aramini — 03 Nov 2011, 15:41 · in reply to Craig Brewer

--- On Thu, 11/3/11, Craig Brewer <cnbrewer at yahoo.com> wrote:

From: Craig Brewer <cnbrewer at yahoo.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) Hyacinth
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Date: Thursday, November 3, 2011, 8:30 AM

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I agree, I don't like it. Unless it means she is the super false kind of untrue love that can still somehow be transformed to sanctity (lying, cheating whore can we make her any lower ... oh yeah ex-man)

António Pedro Marques — 03 Nov 2011, 15:49 · in reply to Marc Aramini

Marc Aramini wrote (03-11-2011 15:41):

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Well... does nobody really remember Silk's absolute shock after his wedding night?

Marc Aramini — 03 Nov 2011, 15:52 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

--- On Thu, 11/3/11, António Pedro Marques <antonio at gmail.com> wrote:
From: António Pedro Marques <antonio at gmail.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) Hyacinth
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hammstu at sbcglobal.net — 03 Nov 2011, 15:55 · in reply to Marc Aramini

Y'all might be on to something here imho...Borski did a chapter on GW's negative portrayal of
homosexual characters (as I'm sure you all know....)

Sent from my BlackBerry? smartphone with SprintSpeed

-----Original Message-----

From: Marc Aramini <marcaramini at yahoo.com>

Sender: urth-bounces at lists.urth.net

Date: Thu, 3 Nov 2011 08:52:26

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

To post, write urth at urth.net

Subscription/information: <http://www.urth.net>

James Wynn — 03 Nov 2011, 17:09 · in reply to larry miller

On 11/2/2011 7:31 PM, larry miller wrote:

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I believe Hyacinth is Fava (both beans...and beans were believed by the Romans to contain the souls of the dead). I think that after the end of SS, the Rajan reclaims Fava from the World of Dreams where she has been stuck. Then he goes back in time, says hello to Silk, then goes further back with Fava and releases her into the Whorl as Hyacinth. He then takes a job at the Juzgado (Silk's mother's intention for him) and is identified as her "father". Thus, Silk meets him but WE never do.

Between that time and when she meets Silk, she "forgets" her origin (perhaps the same way the Rajan forgot that he was Silk), remembering Green only as a green umbrella and her former form as a dress, both of which she got from her mother (who bequeathed to her a human soul). She suddenly remembers everything at the end of Exodus of the LS when she is faced with the prospect of returning to Green.

This explains why Hy didn't know her mother was dead. The mother she met in Mainframe was the mother of her human soul--her inhuman portion has been left behind on Blue.

Problems (some small some bigger)

1) Chenille says that Hy's father rented her out to the family of Colonel when she was a child. She says "they had a lot of sprats". Many have opined from that that Hy had lots of siblings. Actually, no. It was the Colonel who had a lot of children. Hy was being hired as a nanny.

2) Hy seems to eat. Auk brings her a fruit which she demands from him. Actually, though, we don't see her eat it. She claims to have eaten the fruit whole, pit and all (improbable). I'm convinced she ditched the fruit. But what was she doing while she was alone when Auk was getting that food? Also, Marble asserts that Hy doesn't actually eat at all. Remember that the Rajan himself claimed to only pretend to eat until Spring came and he was ravenous (Hello, trees! --because the Rajan is a Neighbor who has possessed the bodies of Horn and Silk consecutively).

3) Dave Tallman has pointed out that it *appears* Fava is blonde in dream world. This is the part I'm still collating. But I don't think so.

4) Hy has some pretty contemptuous things to say about her "father". This is a real toughy -- -- if one takes it at face value and assumes that this is Hy's constant and forever opinion of her father, then it is difficult to overcome. I suspect she is in intermittent communication with each other and this statement represents a recent falling out with him.

So there it is, for what it is worth.

The following was something I wrote even before I came up with the "male chem" theory:
<http://urth.org/whorlmap/worm.htm>

James Wynn — 03 Nov 2011, 17:24 · in reply to Craig Brewer

On 11/3/2011 10:30 AM, Craig Brewer wrote:

So let's assume that Hy is in fact male/transsexual/alterd. What does that mean for Silk and how we interpret him?

There was a lot of push-back at the time that Wolfe would not have a "moral exemplar" (that was the term) be married to a transsexual.

Of course, I didn't see a problem with it since I was suggesting Hy was a male CHEM. It would be no more sexually "deviant" for Silk to marry a retro-fitted male chem than a female chem. Neither are male or female in the biological sense (although, I think they are in the spiritual sense).

As pointed out, Silk becomes suicidal after his second enlightening on his wedding night. He tells Horn that "there was a taint that came from neither Hyacinth or me, but from the act itself.

Of course, if Hy is Fava in dream-travel (plugging my newest theory), she is therefore 100% REAL WOMAN. So the taint could not come from Hy in that case. But the Rajan warns Hoof that, although the promiscuous Jahlee, was a true woman sexual relations between humans and inhumans in dream travel are nevertheless wrong.

J.

Marc Aramini — 03 Nov 2011, 17:24 · in reply to James Wynn

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

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James, there is also the possibility that doll Mucor and Fava in the dreams are retrieving Hy's soul, and that they are separate, but they can serve as a conduit to the past without ever "being" her, only combining in a spritual gestalt for the dreams.

headache time.

Marc Aramini — 03 Nov 2011, 17:29 · in reply to James Wynn

There is a similar switch in Castleview where we see one girl die and are then at the funeral of the other girl that reminds me of the Fava and friends situation, really disconcerting.

Marc Aramini — 03 Nov 2011, 17:52 · in reply to James Wynn

There is also a fair amount of ambiguously creepy same sex molestation in Wolfe for an author considered so heterodox in his morality system, even extending to a Catholic priest being raped at one point. The gay warrior who likes young men in the Soldier series is actually likeable and manly.

I actually don't like reading that stuff into his texts, to be honest, as I sometimes do tend to be the heterodox fellow with a slant toward benevolent fascism that Wolfe is misconstrued as being, but some of the undercurrents tend to point at times to things I don't like (suicidal Silk, for example)

Lee Berman — 03 Nov 2011, 18:48 · follows Marc Aramini

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Sigh, well, this cuts to the heart of the matter for me. We are willing to discuss the ramifications of Wolfe being Catholic on his work. If he were openly gay, would that not similarly impact our interpretation of his work? Should we assume that Wolfe's long marriage and multiple children define him as a 100% red-blooded heterosexual?

I get the sense that bisexuality (and perhaps pedophilia) are masked in Severian's story. And Silk- he is so likable and good, he has such strength in his faith and such skill in his social interactions and combat/military situations...yet, the author clearly intends to show him as a flawed figure; his own self-loathing is his downfall. Is it fair to suggest that all failure in regard to Silk may be traced to Hyacinth? What might Wolfe be trying to say with that?

James Wynn: I believe Hyacinth is Fava

Ah yes! I have encountered this theory in a different context. Thanks for reviewing it for us James. As you say, there is some conflicting evidence to be found, but it is worth thinking about.

One connection I see clearly is the aspect of sexual unwholesomeness that radiates from Hyacinth and seems to be shared by male and female inhumani. Add Severian's passion for Agia and Juturna to that same assessment.

I find this in direct contrast with the more pure and innocent passion felt by our narrator for Dorcas, Pia and perhaps Bugundofora (while the feelings toward Seawrack are a very interesting mix of these two types).

A further contrast can be seen to whore and nymph, in the prim, practical connection our narrator feels for Valeria and Nettle. Surely Wolfe is not the only man who has felt that no one woman could ever be all things a man needs. For me, Wolfe short answer to James Jordan speaks volumes:

JJ: Is Valeria the ideal love for him?

GW: No.

James Wynn — 03 Nov 2011, 19:09 · in reply to James Wynn

On 11/3/2011 12:09 PM, James Wynn wrote:

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This is a real toughy -- -- if one takes it at face value and assumes that this is Hy's constant and forever opinion of her father, then it is difficult to overcome. I suspect she is in intermittent communication with each other and this statement represents a recent falling out with him.

Incidentally, what she says of her father is that he was "a pig's arse". If one sees The Long Sun/Short Sun as a single novel (as I do), this can't help but to recall Pig and his relationship to the original Silk (recognized but still not nailed down). The name and the term might be coincidental. Still, "pig's arse" is not a typical insult. Usually it is "horse's arse". Leaving open the possibility that Hyacinth or Wolfe is relaying something other than what was understood on the initial reading.

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Hm.. It might be a stretch to think that Wolfe has his minor godling character from RttW in mind when he was creating Hyacinth's character. But not an impossible stretch. I am struck by the use of the word "arse". American english would actually more commonly use the term "horse's ass". Does Pig speak in some sort of British accent. I don't have my book but I think maybe he does?

Is there any way the "pig's arse" comment could link more immediately to Phaea? With Pig being a godling and Phaea being a pig-associated god of the Whorl it almost cries out that there be a connection. The Tartaros connection is there also, of course, but if we must choose one (which might not be necessary) the pig connection seems stronger to me. Names, names names rule the Sun series imho.

James Wynn — 03 Nov 2011, 20:13 · in reply to Lee Berman

James Wynn: Incidentally, what she says of her father is that he was "a pig's arse". If one sees The Long Sun/Short Sun as a single novel (as I do), this can't help but to recall Pig and his relationship to the original Silk (recognized but still not nailed down). The name and the term might be coincidental. Still, "pig's arse" is not a typical insult. Usually it is "horse's arse". Leaving open the possibility that Hyacinth or Wolfe is relaying something other than what was understood on the initial reading.

Lee Berman wrote:

Hm.. It might be a stretch to think that Wolfe has his minor godling character from RttW in mind when he was creating Hyacinth's character. But not an impossible stretch. I am struck by the use of the word "arse". American english would actually more commonly use the term "horse's ass". Does Pig speak in some sort of British accent. I don't have my book but I think maybe he does?

Scottish brogue, IIRC

António Pedro Marques — 03 Nov 2011, 21:07 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote (03-11-2011 20:13):

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sort of British accent. I don't have my book but I think maybe he does?

Scottish brogue, IIRC

lyrc? Are these rhetorical questions? Everybody knows what Pig speaks. Do you also not remember you've presented the Fava-Hy theory just a few months ago, albeit with not so much detail?

James Wynn — 03 Nov 2011, 21:24 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

Scottish brogue, IIRC

Antonio wrote:

lyrc? Are these rhetorical questions? Everybody knows what Pig speaks.

Do you also not remember you've presented the Fava-Hy theory just a few months ago, albeit with not so much detail?

???

On this subject, I like to give people are reason to NOT pick irrelevant fights. "IIRC" was just one of those ways. I don't want to get in a fight over whether it is Welsh or what-have-you. I can't imagine why I would be paranoid that there would be some pugnacious sphincter out there looking to up-end the tables over nothing.

J

António Pedro Marques — 03 Nov 2011, 21:40 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote (03-11-2011 21:24):

Scottish brogue, IIRC

Antonio wrote:

lyrc? Are these rhetorical questions? Everybody knows what Pig speaks.

Do you also not remember you've presented the Fava-Hy theory just a few months ago, albeit with not so much detail?

???

On this subject, I like to give people are reason to NOT pick irrelevant fights. "IIRC" was just one of those ways. I don't want to get in a fight over whether it is Welsh or what-have-you.

In matters of opinion, you have showed no problems in asserting stuff without qualification. In a matter of fact such as this, you take care to place such caveats. How is the unwary reader to know what is established and what is conjecture? You should moderate your temper, btw.

David Stockhoff — 03 Nov 2011, 22:13 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

On 11/3/2011 5:40 PM, Ant?nio Pedro Marques wrote:

In matters of opinion, you have showed no problems in asserting stuff without qualification. In a matter of fact such as this, you take care to place such caveats. How is the unwary reader to know what is established and what is conjecture?

You should moderate your temper, btw.

JAMES should?

Never mind---I don't follow it anyway. If you guys have an old argument to revive, well ... you know.

António Pedro Marques — 03 Nov 2011, 22:39 · in reply to David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff wrote (03-11-2011 22:13):

On 11/3/2011 5:40 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

In matters of opinion, you have showed no problems in asserting stuff without qualification. In a matter of fact such as this, you take care to place such caveats. How is the unwary reader to know what is established and what is conjecture?

You should moderate your temper, btw.

JAMES should?

Whoever is unable to maintain civil language, whoever can't face a question without snapping, should.

Never mind---I don't follow it anyway. If you guys have an old argument to revive, well ... you know.

I have no argument here. I was puzzled first by James apparently not remembering Hy-as-Fava having been discussed at painful length not so long ago, then by his apparent uncertainty as to Pig's language. Should Gene Wolfe have done something like that in one of his books, it would constitute 'clues' to some mystery.

Sergei SOLOVIEV — 04 Nov 2011, 11:56 · in reply to Lee Berman

Frankly, I think that before discussing the theories about "masculinity" of Hyacinth it would be useful to think about the causes of her death.

To me it looks like some nasty gynaecological disease, like cervical cancer (she is about 40). It is very probably related to her early situation as a "sex worker". Transsexuals usually die of other causes. If it is breast cancer, again, nothing to do with implants. As far as I remember, it was discussed somewhere (with Chenille?) that the girls at Orchid had to get rid often of the foetuses. It can explain easily the infertility of Hyacinth. It is told also that she and Silk tried to have children. The desperation of Silk is better explained in this context, if you add to the brew some "masculinity" or "transsexuality" it will only confuse the matter.

More arguments against this theory.

There was some real "transsexual" (or something very close) in the story told by Spider to Mint and Remora. When it really plays the role in the story it is told explicitly - even if it is needed only to create an "atmosphere".

I think the argument that Hyacinth in the story about Apollo and Hyacinth was male is weak - the Hyacinth (flower) grew from his blood, it doesn't mean the flower is male. The girls names in the Whorl are given after plants regardless to the gender of the word in Roman languages. (By the way, Lily in French is "Lys" and it is "male".) Amor (love) also was male, and it didn't bother even the medieval Catholics.

Sergei

David Stockhoff — 04 Nov 2011, 14:25 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

On 11/4/2011 7:56 AM, Sergei SOLOVIEV wrote:

There was some real "transsexual" (or something very close) in the story told by Spider to Mint and Remora. When it really plays the role in the story it is told explicitly - even if it is needed only to create an "atmosphere".

The spy Titi, yes. It is made quite clear.

I don;t think it's atmosphere, though---I think Wolfe wants to include homosexuals etc. as imperfect human beings trying to be better with poor models to work from. They are imperfect in a certain way that fits with his concerns (obsessions?) with the body and procreation.

I think the "male Hy" theory needs some way to make Hy male in a way that does not involve genitals. For example---just an example---if we knew she were a female Typhon, i.e., a clone of him with a bit of a twist to make her female.

She'd then be a potentially aggressive masculine personality (if you accept Typhon's engineered general genetic superiority) in a very female body. If we assume that sex change surgery is unheard of in the Whorl, then that makes her almost, not quite, a transsexual who has no concept of transsexuality. As a prostitute, she is unspecific about her partners and may even register as bisexual. So she might be another type of the imperfect human striving to work it all out.

Again, just an example, with none of the implications worked out.

Jerry Friedman — 05 Nov 2011, 04:37 · in reply to James Wynn

From: James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com>

Lee Berman wrote:

Does Pig speak in some sort of British accent. I don't have my book but I think maybe he does?

Scottish brogue, IIRC

Scottish-ish, anyway.

Jerry Friedman