

Seawrack's Real Name

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 08 Sep 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1020>

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Robert Borski — 08 Sep 2000, 12:51

For a long time now I have been trying to figure out Seawrack's real name.

That Seawrack isn't her real name is revealed to us very early on in BLUE, when Horn first confides, "the truth is that her name, which was no word of the Common Tongue, baffled me, and that Seawrack was near to it in sound and seemed to suit her very well."

Later, Horn tells Babbie that he must not harm their new shipmate:

"...I tried to pronounce the name the goddess had used, and the young woman who bore it laughed nervously.

"I can't say that, "I told her. "Is it all right if I call you Seawrack?"

Armed with these clues, I subsequently drew up the following parameters:

1. Her name is not in the Common Tongue (i.e., English), so we're talking another language here--thus recalling the various personages we've met in the Long and Short Sun series with names of Arabic, Gaelic, Italian, Dutch or Indian extraction (among others).
2. It must be incredibly difficult to pronounce. Given that Horn seems to have little trouble saying Thelxiepeia and Sphigx, it's likely to be a genuine tongue-twister.
3. Her name must sound something like Seawrack, but not too much so or Horn would be able to pronounce it more readily.
4. Given the naming convention for women of the Whorl (since I believe Seawrack is a special talent), the name should be floral, with a possible nod to something in the broader seaweed family.

Now even before alga's rather serendipitous discovery about the algae-seawrack connection, I was operating under the assumption that Seawrack was almost certainly named after a member of the Cyanophyta. This is because of its more common name: Blue Green Algae. Unfortunately, though I looked through more taxonomy books and databases than I care to think about, I could not find anything that resembled "Seawrack" in either Latinate binomial or common forms (seaweed has a long and pervasive history in the cookbooks and pharmacopeiae of the world--hence a plethora of folks names for almost all varieties).

Disappointed, but undaunted, I moved on to the Rhodophyta, figuring that perhaps since the

Whorl hailed from a Red Sun system, the red algae would be potent hunting ground.

No such luck.

Onward to the Phaeophycota, the unattractive brown algae. Then again its Laminara genus is cited in the OED under entry 2 of sea-wrack as a major form thereof. And thus I discovered Laminaria hyperborea, a seaweed with an extensive list of folk names, among which I list the following: sea rods, mayweed, sgothach, murach foghmuir, and so on and so forth--and then last, but not least, screadhbhuidhe.

Funny word, screadhbhuidhe.

It's Irish and pronouncing it may well give your tongue a hernia.

Something like: Shkreavwiyeh (or ...vweeyeh)

At least its vowel sounds approximate those in sea-wrack, and it has an initial 's'.

So could Seawrack's real name be Screadhbhuidhe?

To review: (1) it's not in the Common Tongue; (2) it's difficult to pronounce; (3) it sounds (sorta) like Seawrack; (4) it's floral and has the bonus OED association with Laminarian sea-wrack. (5) its Irishness may link back to Mainframe, whose fliers' names derived from similar roots.

Don't know about the rest of you, but I'm satisfied.

Robert Borski

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

Peter Westlake — 08 Sep 2000, 18:13 · follows Robert Borski

At 12:51 2000-09-08 -0500, Robert Borski wrote:
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It's fairly convincing - I'm certainly not going to try saying it out loud, especially while I'm in the office! A good piece of work.

So, does that mean the Flyers made it to Blue? One would hope they had, and they would hardly have spent all this time idly watching the Whorl disintegrate around them. Fascinating!

SBear.

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Endymion9 — 08 Sep 2000, 20:39 · follows Peter Westlake

Robert,

You're suggestion sounds much better than what I kept trying to make work somehow. The Latin name for Seawrack/Bladderwrack is *Fucus vesiculosus*. Doesn't sound hard to pronounce or anything like Seawrack <grin>. I'll go with your choice of screadhbhuidhe.

Dennis/Endy

<http://home.mindspring.com/~endymion9/index.htm>

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

William Ansley — 08 Sep 2000, 23:36 · follows Endymion9

At 12:51 PM -0500 9/8/00, Robert Borski wrote:

So could Seawrack's real name be Screadhbhuidhe?

Robert,

You make an intriguing and even convincing case. It's nice to see you using your powers for goodness instead of evil. <G>

William Ansley

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