

What does Horn look like?

The Urth list — 7 messages, 5 voices, 02 Oct 2004

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James Wynn — 02 Oct 2004, 17:43

I got the idea while reading "The Book of the Short Sun" that Horn was (originally) balding. Is this accurate?

The cover of "On Blue's Waters" shows a Horn looking quite young, with lots of hair and a beard. He looks like Richard Chamberlain in "Shogun".

The cover of "In Green's Jungles" shows a Horn walking with a the Neighbor after he lands on Green. He has long white hair and is balding. This was my understanding of the way Horn looked.

The cover of "Return to the Whorl" shows the exact same character on the Whorl talking to the godling. Of course, this character *should* have looked like Silk.

So what's going on here. The covers of these books are unimpressive enough that they could have at least been *accurate* to the story.

So... what does Horn actually look like? What does Silk look like?

~ Crush

Christopher Culver — 03 Oct 2004, 11:36 · in reply to James Wynn

From: "James Wynn" <thewynns at earthlink.net>

So... what does Horn actually look like? What does Silk look like?

Horn was only 35 years old or so at the beginning of OBW. While life was hard on the frontier planet of Blue, resulting in Horn having the tone of a crotchety old man, I don't think that by 35-40ish he could have had white hair. Instead, the picture of him as balding is more probable. Silk could have had white, long hair (in tBotLS we're told his hair is fairly long), but even he would have been pretty young, so life must have been really tough on the Whorl to make him look so ancient before the age of 50.

Christopher Culver

James Wynn — 03 Oct 2004, 17:45 · in reply to Christopher Culver

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Well, life was no picnic on Blue, either. I remember reading "Angela's Ashes" as the author described his parents sitting by the fire clacking their false teeth, and I realized that at that point in the story they were in their late 20s or very early 30s. Yet I had already come to think of them well into middle age. They were worn out well before their time. So it is not inconceivable that Horn looked like a middle-age man by his mid-thirties. But the covers to IGJ and RttW describe very specific events in the story in which there is no real question whose body we are looking at. Yet it seems that one of them is a mistake. OTTH the character in the cover art is not the sort to make books fly off the shelves, so I'm thinking the design was not pure marketing trumping the author and story. Which makes me think Wolfe was involved.

I was hoping someone here would know definitively if the cover art were a mistake that was unapproved by Wolfe. Or.....do Horn and Silk look verrrrry similar? Either way, I have always considered it an important narrative point that Horn was balding so how he looked...whether it was he or Silk that was balding is kind of important (to me).

~ Crush

Don Doggett — 03 Oct 2004, 20:26 · in reply to James Wynn

On Sunday, October 3, 2004, at 05:43 PM, James Wynn wrote:

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Don replies:

I highly doubt the cover art was approved by Wolfe. The cover for RttW (besides being hideous) is the result of a misreading of the passage where Silkhorn is picked up by the godling. It describes the godling's thumb as looking like a head with a curved hat (thumbnail). So I wouldn't look to the cover art for any insight.

Gregg — 04 Oct 2004, 16:00 · follows Don Doggett

Regarding the comments about the misleading cover art, it occurs to me that Jim Burns might have been working from an earlier draft of the Short Sun books. Or, maybe he took the job without having the text at all. Some cover artists want to read the books before they will do the cover, others don't.

James Wynn — 04 Oct 2004, 16:28 · in reply to Gregg

Well, it seems from the pictures that he must have read something of it or was given specifics on what to paint.

It seems to me that there must be a story there regarding these covers for neither Wolfe nor his editor to be involved in the decision process.

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

From: Gregg

To: urth at urth.net

Sent: Monday, October 04, 2004 6:00 PM

Subject: Re: (urth) What does Horn look like?

Regarding the comments about the misleading cover art, it occurs to me that Jim Burns might have been working from an earlier draft of the Short Sun books. Or, maybe he took the job without having the text at all. Some cover artists want to read the books before they will do the cover, others don't.

Roy C. Lackey — 06 Oct 2004, 22:42 · follows James Wynn

Crush queried:

I got the idea while reading "The Book of the Short Sun" that Horn was (originally) balding. Is this accurate?

Yes. Ignore the book covers. I don't remember Horn's hair color, but it isn't white. This is what Horn looked like when he began his quest (It is, of course, Silkhorn who wrote):

"They had brought food, tents, and trunks full of clothing, expecting to spend a week or more on Lizard; but in my books Silk was an account that had never been closed, one so large that it dwarfed all others. At fifteen, I had thought him the greatest of great men. At thirty-five, only a little taller, thick-bodied and nearly bald, I thought him a great man still." (OBW, p.65)

This is what Silk(Horn)'s body looked like, right after he left Gaon. He's then in his early forties.

"Saw my own reflection standing in the water holding up my spear, wild white hair and empty socket, lined and worried old face." (OBW, p.381)

-Roy