

Covers; Inhum; Who is Horn?

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 04 Oct 1999

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David Lebling — 04 Oct 1999, 10:07

alga (I think) wrote that the cover illustration is wrong because it shows Horn with a beard. Just a little correction: the cover is clearly illustrating Seawrack's return (about p. 240). Just a few pages earlier Horn refers to his beard. (Besides, the fact that Horn shaves doesn't mean he can't have a beard

-- lots of people with beards shave part of their face to keep the beard safely confined to a limited area). Horn should be bald, though, and Babbie could use a few more legs. The boat looks a bit too big to me as well, to add another nitpick; this is a boat that seems in danger of swamping every other chapter. 'Way too much freeboard in that sucker on the cover for that!

On the subject of Babbie's limbs, I find it interesting (but wholly appropriate) that the Neighbors also have eight (four legs and four arms, to be exact). They also have fur. I think Babbie is to a Neighbor as a chimpanzee is to a human.

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Dan Rabin wrote:

<<Morally repugnant to whom? My interpretation of Krait's "cattle" metaphor and his comment "I must eat" is that the inhum's drinking of blood is as matter-of-fact to them as eating fish is to Horn. When leatherskins kill humans, are they being immoral?>>

At one point Krait remarks that inhum prey on humans preferentially, because they like human blood better than that of other "cattle." I think this is at least morally suspect on their part. This is worse than humans preferentially eating chimpanzees or dolphins, I think: inhum show little evidence (so far) of being more intelligent than humans.

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mantis opines:

<<Ah, the Horn who is writing (aka "the Rajan of Gaon") is one eyed and white haired, like Odin. But he also has a hurt ankle, is sometimes confused with Silk by others (just because he's wearing the clothes, walking the walk, talking the talk <g>), often confuses the names of his own twins ("Horn [sic] and Hide") as well as writing of Horn in the third person, and even, in the very end, says that =he= caught the ball (at the beginning of TBOTLS)! He =is= Silk, in some as-yet-unspecified way. Not to mention the intriguing "Passilk"!>>

I think that Passilk is the merging of Silk and Pas, hinted at in _Exodus_ and nearly confirmed (by denial of first-hand knowledge) in _Blue_. By extension, I think that the "Horn" who is writing _Short Sun_ is Horn's mind in Silk's body

-- this must have happened at, near, or because of the death of Horn that he speaks of on several occasions in _Blue_. As to whether Silk's mind is there too, mantis's point about the ball

is telling.

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On the subject of the inhum's secret, I have to disagree with alga. There are several places (as I've previously pointed out) where Horn states that the secret is something that would, if known, give humans some sort of advantage against the inhum. It's explosive enough that Horn fears the inhum will try to kill him if it becomes known that he has it. I doubt that inhum survival when inhumed (couldn't resist) is enough of a secret. After all, inhumation is only used in Gaon, and doesn't really seem to confer any sort of immunity. Like any sort of hostage-taking, it only confers an advantage if the victims allow it to, and it suffers from the same disadvantage that kidnapping has here on Earth: first you have to catch your rabbit.

I'll dig up the references (Horn's hints on the secret) tonight, if I have time.

--Dave Lebling
(aka vizcacha)

ps: I'm already reading it a second time. I couldn't stop myself.

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