

Severian the Memorious

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 17 Dec 1998

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Dan Parmenter — 17 Dec 1998, 12:44

From: David_Lebling at avid.com

Another one. After describing his near drowning on the day he rescued Vodalus, he says "I never went back" to the river. Yet a few chapters later, ("The Last Year", I think) he describes taking the apprentices down to swim in the river, "though I could never dive in deep water without fear."

Hmmm, perhaps a better list would be "Severian inconsistencies" since it's conceivable that they are not lies. I for one have always championed the example of the old Autarch's robe, described as yellow many times, but later described as saffron "as I had always seen him" (sorry I don't have the exact quotation, but its from CITADEL). Now admittedly saffron is a shade of yellow, so perhaps it's forgivable, but given his constant reminders about his perfect memory, it certainly gives one pause.

Of course the saffron robes themselves are significant, evoking buddha, etc.

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Michael Straight — 17 Dec 1998, 17:11 · follows Dan Parmenter

On Thu, 17 Dec 1998, Dan Parmenter wrote:

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That's the thing. If he didn't go on about his perfect memory so much, we might cut him some slack. But as it is, if Severian is so perfect, what alternative do we have but to call him a liar?

However, I rather like the idea of a narrator who tells us he's got a perfect memory, but who really doesn't.

I remember on my first read thinking Severian's memory was just a cheap trick to justify a memoir having such great detail. Now I wonder if maybe his constantly going on about it might be an attempt to convince himself of his own perfection.

And was his cloak *really* that dark?

-Rostrum