

Iron men forever?

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 08 May 1999

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William H. Ansley — 08 May 1999, 23:45

"Nicholas Gevers" <potto at webmail.co.za> wrote:

A welcome change from this increasingly rusty topic of the iron men; shouldn't we move on to other threads, like whether Severian's guild cloak is made from tussah, chenille, or silk?

I'm afraid you're forgetting something: Rust never sleeps!

Earlier "Roy C. Lackey" <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:

But I learned many years ago that religious arguments are fruitless. Believers believe because what they believe cannot be proven, else it would not be a matter of faith.

And I replied:

Perhaps this applies to nonreligious arguments as well. It seems to in this case. So why did I bother adding another round to this debate if I think it's fruitless? I have to support my faith, don't I?

I am now going to violate an article of faith on this list, that Gene Wolfe never makes a mistake. A corollary to this belief is that every paragraph, phrase, word, letter and bit of punctuation Wolfe puts on paper is of cosmic significance.

I think Gene Wolfe blew it when he wrote the "Severian getting into the Sidero suit" scene. It is riddled with inconsistencies. Well, I suppose that's putting it too strongly; it's too short a scene to be riddled with anything. But the descriptions of the size of Sidero, direct and implied, *are* inconsistent, as I think my and Roy C. Lackey's analysis of the text shows.

Am I being unfair? Probably. No author's prose should be expected to unflinchingly stand up to the scrutiny we put Wolfe's through on a regular basis. The fact that his so often does is one more testimonial to his skill.

Am I missing the point of this list? No, I realize that putting Wolfe's words through the wringer is a large part of the point (and the fun) of this discussion group. But I do get weary, from time to time, of someone making some outrageous claim about one of Wolfe's works and justifying it by saying "Wolfe would never have mentioned (or repeated) so trivial a point if it didn't mean that I am right and everyone else is wrong." Or, "The fact that Wolfe never mentions this means that I am right and everyone else is wrong." (I should have said above: "every paragraph, phrase, word, letter and bit of punctuation Wolfe puts *or doesn't put* on paper is of cosmic significance.")

Am I aware that I am setting up a straw man here? Perhaps I am, but I think some posts on this list have come perilously close to my examples.

Do I realize that I am merely indulging in more pointless nitpicking? Well, that's for everyone else to decide, isn't it?

William Ansley