

Disingenous Gene

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 25 Jul 2006

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4671>

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b sharp — 25 Jul 2006, 14:45

Twice in recent posts, Gene Wolfe has been accused of being disingenuous in interviews. Another Lupinology truism?

My dictionary calls the word:

adjective: lacking in candor; also : giving a false appearance of simple frankness : CALCULATING

I see the opposite. In interviews, (and his essay on Tolkein) he seems to me to be genuinely frank and candid, which includes letting an interviewer know which questions he doesn't like to answer. But for those who do see him as disingenuous I am interested in specific examples, and what you think his motive for it might be.

Is it just his evasive personality, which is thus reflected in both his writing and his speech? Or a deliberate attempt to make sure nobody can ever understand his stories? Or..

At the risk of sounding rude, I can't help but think the disingenous accusation is a way of preserving a personal pet theory when Wolfe's interview answers contradict. But I am interested in opposing views.

-bsharp

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 25 Jul 2006, 17:09 · in reply to b sharp

On 7/25/06, b sharp <bsharporflat at hotmail.com> wrote:
Is it just his evasive personality, which is thus reflected in both his writing and his speech? Or a deliberate attempt to make sure nobody can ever understand his stories? Or..

More than anything else, I think it's a matter of not wanting to give the game away -- he has repeatedly claimed that everything we need to know is there, and he doesn't want to tell the answers. I think he sometimes takes this to frustrating levels: no, I don't believe he ever actually lies, but I believe he sometimes responds in ways that ... how shall I put it? ... use the truth in misleading ways.

Take the Kaballah thing. He never actually said he wasn't familiar with it; he said he had used it for "some names and ideas." That sounds dismissive ... but what does "some ideas" mean? Ideas can be big or small; he can mean the idea of multiple universes or he can mean the whole four-worlds, ten-sephiroth structure of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Or anything in between, or outside that range entirely.

Again, I refer you to the essay on Onomastics in Castle of the Otter. Wolfe states plainly: A thing's name states what it is. I guess that's my bottom line; he makes a firm rule like this, puts it in print, and then ignores it only for naming worlds? Seems unlikely to me, at any rate.

--Dan'l

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

"Shovels are essential to the fantasy genre.

However, they are primarily used by the authors rather than the characters." -- Stephen R. Donaldson

Jeff Wilson — 28 Jul 2006, 06:12 · in reply to b sharp

b sharp wrote:

Twice in recent posts, Gene Wolfe has been accused of being disingenuous in interviews. Another Lupinology truism?

More ambiguous. At one point he says Urth is "perhaps a million years in our future."

In There Are Doors,

Jeff Wilson - [jwilson at io.com](mailto:jwilson@io.com)

< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

Jeff Wilson — 29 Jul 2006, 05:17 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson wrote:

b sharp wrote:

Twice in recent posts, Gene Wolfe has been accused of being disingenuous in interviews. Another Lupinology truism?

More ambiguous. At one point he says Urth is "perhaps a million years in our future."

In There Are Doors,

Ahem. In There Are Doors, I recently reread where he writes (as Lara), "[...]Perhaps three children. Perhaps three dozen."

As it happens, a 12:1 ratio just about fits the million years figure above wrt my few dozen millenia figure.

Jeff Wilson - [jwilson at io.com](mailto:jwilson@io.com)

< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >