

Autarchs are commoners

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 20 Jul 1998

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m.driussi — 20 Jul 1998, 23:11

Adam,

Perhaps you want to argue that hereditary autarchy imparts "nobility" in the first generation. But the aristocracy of Urth is the exultant class, and exultants are forbidden to be autarchs--this is a clear rule I don't think anybody has tried to deny. So in the simple binary system of nobles vs. commoners, autarchs by definition must be "commoners"--a range from armigers to optimates to commonality to servants of the throne.

Yes, the quote in IV does suggest that "most" (which is what, a range from 55% to 75%, or whatever percentage level where "most" gives way to "nearly all") of the minds at Severian's disposal (which does not reach all the way back to Ymar with any clarity of personality) are not certainly hereditary autarchs. (There is a part somewhere in there where Severian recalls the fatal mistakes of many autarchs before him: one last visit to a lover, one last charge on the battlefield, etc. For those who care, these fragments could perhaps be gathered up and laid out to add to the "depth of Autarchial Mind" beyond and before Appian.) Hereditary autarchy is mentioned very briefly and not really sketched out beyond that--we really have no clue as to how successfully the potential was realized, at the individual level or on average. We only know that the potential was there and it was realized to some degree.

Then again, your assertion that of "all the personalities Severian now contains, only some of them are Autarchs" is quite astounding and I look forward to your fleshing this out! Thecla as the rule rather than the exception?!

Re: commoners talk about Valeria. Right, they talk because she is a woman (and this is something of a red herring, since we =know= from the quote in IV that there are female autarchs--the point being that there hasn't been one in living memory, but emphatically =not= that women are forbidden) and she doesn't know the words of power (=this= is the point I keep trying to make: they know next to nothing about brain-eating, Yesod and all that, yet they know that she doesn't know the words of power which autarchs should know, and this is cause for them to talk--presumably to wonder what on Urth is going on, is she a sham or just more mentally incompetant than most?).

Depending upon how much strength one wants to invest in the "opium of the masses: the population believes that the Autarch will somehow bring the New Sun" deal, this question of Valeria's validity ranges from 0 "Whitewater ho-hum" to 10 "Watergate apocalypse!" That is, as usual, it depends upon the given application.

=mantis=