

"a score of years, like dogs."

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 11 Jul 1998

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Charles Dye — 11 Jul 1998, 13:17

m.driussi at genie.com (mantis) writes:

The quote raster mentions (ch. 34 in URTH) has a context: Severian still thinks he has returned to his era (he doesn't guess he is in Typhon's); he has a sense of failure (since the white fountain cannot arrive to his era in time); and he is wondering about this "Monarch" people are talking about, thinking that Inire wouldn't do such a thing. (In a real sense, a presentiment of what he will find when he gets closer to home-time.) (We will skip over all possible excuses, like: Severian, hearing a masculine title "Monarch," envisions the first =male= candidate of succession, Inire, rather than the first candidate, Valeria.)

I think he's aware that he's Billy Pilgrimmed. He just doesn't have any idea how far. Certainly the planet isn't the way he left it.

Of course I may be over-reading raster (throw me a bone!), but the suggestion is (I believe):

Severian's Reign from 1 S.R. to 10 S.R.

Inire's Regency from 10 S.R. to — S.R.

Valeria's "pseudo-autarchy" from — S.R. to 50 S.R.

Severian returns 50 S.R.

Oh, I'm nowhere near that precise :-). But yes, I think Inire was left at the wheel; then at some point, Valeria found a reason to take over. Perhaps Inire died. Or perhaps her remarriage made a new Autarch look plausible. Or maybe just because Sev has been gone so long -- as you point out, this is expected to be a short trip, making a regency reasonable.

[Snip Oddyseus. Though I'm sure you hit a homer there.]

With that out of the way--Inire as regent: what a dumb idea! Poor little wry-neck Inire, ancient and twisted! They only live a score of years! (That's 20, for you ultramoderns--so Inire is what, 19 or 21 already?) Serving autarchs since Ymar, skipping through the corridors of time! All reinforcing the notion that the trip to Yesod was thought to take less than a year.

Honestly, I don't think it's such a dumb idea. You're suggesting that Inire pops in on each Autarch's reign for a month or two (A day or two? How many Autarchs?) to render pithy advice. Oh, it's possible, I suppose, but it just doesn't feel right to me. Judging by his first letter to Severian, I see an individual who is deeply immersed in the day-to-day politics of the Commonwealth and the war with Ascia. He was present in the previous Autarch's reign long enough to gain a devoted servant in Rudesind, long enough that Thecla couldn't be certain that he wasn't actually pulling the strings. He has his own personal suite of apartments, rather than

being assigned a room in the BOQ. If my guess is right, Inire has more experience running an empire than any human being.

Here are a few not-so-random quotes:

"... old Father Inire, alive so long beyond the span of his short- lived kind" -- Severian, IV-38

"Growth has its disadvantages, though for your species it is the only method by which youth can be reinstated." -- Ossipago, III-34 (Note the qualification!)

"She cannot. She is very old, but this city was devastated whole ages before she came to be." -- Merryn, of the Cumeaen (who in turn finds an older friend!) II-31

Also, Severian says that he's certain the Hierodules come in different colors and flavors. Can't find the reference, but I'm sure someone else will remember where it is.

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Now for some wild speculation. Imagine you're a scientist, a biologist with a very rational and materialistic viewpoint. You are visited at infrequent intervals by mysterious colleagues who obviously know far more than they tell. You have a special interest in youth and the process of aging -- it's your life work! -- and you slowly come to the uncomfortable realization that your guests are getting younger with each visit. They also have an odd habit of forgetting conversations, details of their previous visits. How do you explain this?

Of course, your "friends" must represent successive generations in a single family. (Whoa, deja vu.) From the intervals between visits, you can figure the length of a generation; and from there, it's easy enough to estimate lifespans. In short: Baldanders' statement of the Hierodule lifetime may be based on a wildly faulty assumption.

IF Valeria's reign is from 10 S.R. to 50 S.R., then the argument boils down to simply the use of the term "regency" (as committed by Feeley and myself) rather than some more-accurate-but-not-yet-specified word.

I don't think Wolfe uses the word, but I like it anyway. I get the impression that Severian has left Inire at the helm; and the faint madness-of-the-monarch resonance fits in too. Why Inire rather than Valeria? First, he has had umpteen centuries experience in the management of the Commonwealth. Second, while Valeria has the bloodline, that doesn't necessarily make her a leader. She seems pretty peevish in "Urth," though I guess that's understandable. What with the world ending and all.

Finally, Valeria is queen (ahem, autarchia) only by dint of being married to Severian. She doesn't rule "in her own right." She can't succeed to the Autarchy legally. Come to think of it, noone can truly claim the throne while Severian is alive. Or if his body is lost at sea. I think the Commonwealth is forced into an indefinite regency until the New Sun comes!

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