

Naming Rule 2a.

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 29 May 2006

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b sharp — 29 May 2006, 07:32

Robert Borski lists two Rules of Names in his Solar Labyrinth book. The first is a clear and concise way to distinguish Commonwealth humans from others via saintly names. The second provides a very open, sprawling collection of paired characters and things from BotNS which may be connected biologically, figuratively, political, on identity, or other and are based on a flexible scheme of shared letters in the name.

To be honest, I think I will fail in my quest for an understanding of BotNS deep enough to ever significantly connect Laeutus with Eata or Kyneburga with Lybe. But I'd like to propose a much smaller, concise rule of names derived from this which could shed some light on some things.

This 2a. rule assumes that cloning is occurring on Urth. I know some (including, I think, Borski) are sure that there is no cloning going on in the Commonwealth. But the old Autarch says explicitly that kaibits are grown from the cells of exultant women so an exchange of blood will prolong their youth. Perhaps he is lying but I don't see the use of it. Moreover, Wolfe takes the time to insert two textual suggestions that Appian is a truthful guy. Plus in Ascians we have a billion bits of circumstantial evidence that cloning might be a common practice on Urth.

In his perusal of naming pairs, Borski finds one pair that doesn't seem to make sense even to him. Two childhood friends of Thecla are named Josephina and Josepha. It does seem silly for an author to name two briefly referenced, unimportant characters with such similar names. Borski hypothesizes this was a editorial or auctoral mistake.

I propose that it wasn't a mistake and that these characters are important in introducing this 2a. naming rule which is- The name of a kaibit shall be a derived, diminutive name of the cell donor.

Other of the few examples which could fit this naming rule are Domnicellae and Domnina and Pelagia and Pega. Perhaps there are more I haven't found. Domnicelle is an exultant but Pelagia is an armigette. So if the naming rule is valid then the second highest caste also participates in cloning. I think this will be important later.

Another Urth rule we have been taught is that the only way to prolong youth is through growth. This could explain why exultants (male and female) are so tall and why armigers, with less access to kaibits are tall but not quite so tall as exultants.

Still cloning seems to be a rather impolite topic never to be mentioned out loud (except by the truthful Appian). Pega says she is Pelagia's soubrette (coquettish maid), and Odilo chides that she was an ancilla (servant). But something weird and unspoken is going on underneath that conversation. Pega did Pelagia's hair we are told, and shared gossip and care of a bird. An almost sisterly relationship. Thecla's playful relationship with Domnina, Josepha and Josephina suggest that kaibits and their mistresses mixed rather freely.

I agree with Borski that when notable Wolfe characters go unnamed, we are being invited to name them. He notes that for the kaibits in the House Azure all we are given are their assumed names. He jumps to the conclusion that a couple of them must be Severa. I prefer to be more conservative and suggest (consulting my list of saints) that the kaibit for the Chatelaine Barbea is named Barbe, or Barba. The Kaibit for Gracia could be Ia, but I think is more likely Grace. The kaibit for Thecla might then be Tecla. Chatelaine Leocadia's would have to be Lea. The Chatelaine Nympha's name doesn't appear to have a saintly diminutive match. But there is no Saint Nympha that I can find, either.

(the next two paragraphs should be ignored if you don't like scenarios which are a bit offbeat; skip to the last paragraph). Thea also could be a kaibit name for Thecla. Could there be a kaibit relationship? Thea and Thecla are both tall, dark haired and probably both have violet eyes. They call each other "half sister" or "my dearest sister" but no parentage is ever explained. Severian always distinguishes Thea from Thecla by saying Thea's face is heart shaped. Thecla's face is triangular, with a widow's peak. This sounds a lot like a heart shape to me. But a heart shape would be produced if a triangle face had sunken cheeks.

There is a strange dream sequence, where Thecla, as a girl, is wandering through a chamber full of partially dressed women. Borski thinks she is looking for her mother, but I think she might be seeking someone even closer to her. She seems to finally find this person in the face of one of the women, who has a weird heart-shaped patch on her cheek.

Thea is never (I think) called a Chatelaine or identified as part of the Autarchs court. So how could she have become so tall? What happens to members of the Inner Circle of Concubines and their kaibits as they age, say into their 30's, 40's 50's? The Chatelaine would get very tall. And the kaibit would need a kaibit of her own. There is another dream sequence where Thecla is very concerned about how old she might be.

Severian briefly sees what seems to be the kaibit of Thea in the House Azure and at the House Absolute. What would a kaibit of Thea be named? It is already such a short name and I don't find any St. The or Te or Tha or Ta in my list. So I think her name, in the beginning would simply have been "Thea's". Later this would become the more conventional homonym, Thais. (Borski and I agree on the identity of Thais but for somewhat different reasons).

-bsharp