

Urth is Norse

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 29 Mar 1999

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m.driussi — 29 Mar 1999, 18:25

Right, sure, of course. I originally listed it as "Old Norse," but then that made it seem as if: Urth had been "terraformed" (itself a questionable notion) by the same civilization that terraformed Mars and Venus (that is: the planets get new names when they become new places); there had been no discontinuity between civilizations on Terra in the transition from Earth to Urth.

So I changed the "Old Norse" listing to "English."

Because, alas, Norse "Urth" does not mean Earth. Yet Earth does mean Earth. And Thea's version of the planets and their names strongly suggests that before the "Norsophone" civilization (which terraformed and renamed planets in their vigor) there was an "Anglophone" civilization. We can see the distinction between "Anglophone" and "Norsophone," but Thea's story blends them, so that homonyms in English are expressed in Norse. Likewise, Earth is "homonymized" into Urth.

Furthermore, the Norse word is spelled UR+, with the plus sign being that wonderful letter which we no longer have in the Anglophonic world--I won't bore you with the name of it. It is necessary, however falacious an impression it creates, to spell words with "+" as having either "th" (which rudely approximates the phonetic value) or "d" (which rudely captures the essence of the letter's shape, since it looks like "a crossed d").

Sadly, English no longer graphically distinguishes between hard "th" and soft "th." If we pronounce Urth as "Earth," we are using the hard "th" sound. If we can somehow pronounce Urth as "Ur+" (with the "th" of "then"; the effect is almost a lisp with a headcold?) then we are speaking Norse. If we say it "Urd" (as in "Oy urd youf been a n'aty boy, Clemit") we are being mildly eccentric. <g>

(That's my understanding of it, at least. Scandinavians can go to town, of course. But my central point being the Anglo/Norse transition from Earth to Mars.)

"Urth(e)" is also an old, obscure, variant spelling of an English word, "Earth." Says the OED.

=mantis=

Matthew Malthouse — 30 Mar 1999, 07:25 · follows m.driussi

m.driussi at genie.com wrote:

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Com'on, don't be shy. It's a thorn, yes? (The letter that printers used y for, as in ye=the)

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I wonder if it's actually necessary to have a change of language, isn't a pronuncial shift from Earth -> Urth sifficient?

But even with a change do we read English = the vernacular of Severian's Commonwealth, Latin = and archaism, Norse = some distinct influence of the distant past. Or do we have to consider these as real examples of English, Latin and Norse languages developed?

Incidentally 'Urth', from very first seeing the word, put me in mind of 'Ur-', as in, well I can't explicayte it to my satisfaction but as in Ur-gold and Ur-Viles. Or maybe I just read Donaldson at too impressionable age. :)

Matthew