

Thorny paradoxes

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 30 Mar 1999

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Tony Ellis — 30 Mar 1999, 10:36

Mathew Malthouse wrote:

m.driussi at genie.com wrote:

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").

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

-That's- thorn, yes. But I wouldn't describe it as a crossed "d", more an angular "P".

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.

Me too. But then the prefix "ur" is used to mean earliest, or most primitive, so technically speaking we were right to do so. :-) I also used to wonder if there was supposed to be some suggestion of Ur, the ancient Chaldean city, which really was way off the mark...

Roy wrote:

But that is precisely where the paradox occurs. That chapter, chapter XXXVII, is titled "The Book of the New Sun". The title implies, if anything, that Canog is the author of _TBotNS_.

Well, it says on the back of my battered Arrow paperback that it is volume one of "The Book of the New Sun", so isn't that TBotNS too? I did carefully say 'If you can accept that Severian's narrative constitutes, either wholly or in part, the "lost" Book of the New Sun on which Dr Talos says his play is based'. If you don't want to accept that, fair enough, I'm not entirely sure that I do. -But-, there does seem to be more than one Book of the New Sun. There's the one which the imprisoned Thecla requests from her local lending library, which by definition cannot be "lost", and there is the one Dr Talos's play is based on, which -is- described as lost. There's at least one other reference to The Book of the New Sun being lost, too.

Regardless of who put pen to paper when--Sev, Dr. Talos, Canog, or another--none of them originated the story.

Severian is an eye-witness. Where everyone else is writing second or third hand, he's writing about events that he himself has taken part in. You can't get much more original than that. Yes, he fudges the events of Urth's last day when relating them to Canog, but later he puts this right by witnessing them first hand and writing about them.

Which brings me to Dr. Talos again. He is several times mentioned as tinkering with the script of the play to accommodate his circumstances. When he does so is he changing history/destiny?

A fun idea, but I don't think so. In the play the Contessa sees a mysterious figure, in UOTNS we learn that this is Severian, but he's not there because he read it in Dr Talos's play. He only makes the connection at that moment. But he will now write about this encounter. If his manuscript goes back in time, this argues that actual events drive the content of the play, rather than the content of the play driving events.