

lost in the big words

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 05 Feb 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2920>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 05 Feb 2002, 00:03

Joe Eull wrote:

The scene you're talking about is a particularly affecting one. Without re-reading, Severian seems to hate Jolenta for her relationship with Dorcas, and more importantly for the lust she engenders in him is a reflection of her desire to be desired. He says she made a tribadist of Dorcas, and nearly an algophilist of himself. (lesbian, ghou-lover respectively). My girlfriend at the time stopped reading the book at this point and handed it back to me saying it was disgusting. I don't blame her, Severian is talking about killing her and raping her dead body for spite.

Joe, your memory is quite good, but your word-hoard contains a few false coins.

"Algophilist" is not "ghoul-lover," nor does it function as a synonym for "necrophiliac" as you suggest.

"Algo-" here means "pain"; an "algophobic" is one who morbidly fears pain. By changing the "-phobia" part into its commonly known opposite, "-philia," we get a word meaning "lover of pain."

This is a tad ambiguous, since it might apply to both a masochist and a sadist. Severian's use of the term clearly marks it as a synonym for sadist--so why not use "sadist" instead?

Because sadist is one of those words which comes from a name, and as such it would be too time-specific and jarring for the milieu of Urth. Likewise the word lesbian, which shows up in your example.

Thus "algophilist" is "sadist" without mentioning de Sade.

The larger point thus becomes clear: algophilists are =forbidden= to become torturers (those sick little amateurs who try to join the guild are turned away, iirc). So her effect on him is to threaten that professional part of himself with a personality trait that is forbidden by the guild--he goes up to the limit and nearly plunges over.

=mantis=

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Joe Eull — 05 Feb 2002, 06:11 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

From: "Michael Andre-Driussi" >

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Mantis your corrections are both painful and purifying. Of course, you're right. I've been going with the definition of "algophilist" all this time. Probably a result of having the word in mind and looking it up later in a dictionary.

Joe