

Squares of the City

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 30 Mar 1998

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m.driussi — 30 Mar 1998, 02:40

Reply: Item #7497439 from URTH at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET00#

raster,

Re: Algedonic, whoops. I meant that "Latinate" (or more properly "Greco-Latinate") names are officialese titles for quarters (not that "algedonic" was a generic term) that are never used by ordinary citizens of the quarter (who use the "living name" based upon local features), thus when the quarter is recently dead it is known only by this officialese name; and when it is long dead it has no name at all.

Algedonic means "pertaining to pain, especially when associated with pleasure" (MRS. BYRNE'S). Roche tells Severian that their alibi is: they are optimates who, having finished business at the Citadel, are now going to amuse themselves at the brothel. This suggests that such behavior is common. But I hasten to agree with you that the quarter's northern boundary shifts depending upon who is talking: denizens of the Citadel think of it as a quarter unto itself; people across the river think of the Citadel as something else, part of the Algedonic Quarter or worse, i.e., omophagist ruins (IIRC). ("Omophagist" is "Greek-Greek[English]," again an example of what I'm calling the officialese language.)

In a sense this naming of quarters is like the naming of guilds and orders: there is the official name ("Seekers of Truth and Penitence") and the common name ("[commonly known as] the torturers"). But another quality of Greco-Latinate titles for districts of the city is to make it seem (to me at least) more like realms of a netherworld (a nod to THE INFERNO and all its Greco-Roman sources: with rivers "Phlegethon" and all that). "Algedonic Quarter" sounds like a ring of hell for a certain kind of sexual sinner: algophilics anonymous?

You are right--the House Absolute is littered with the same sort of Greco-Latinate zones, furthering my impulse about the officialese. (There are also the more prosaic "Well of Green Chimes," "Well of Orchids," etc. Then again, given the unusual chthonic architecture of the House Absolute, these "wells" [ring-ring-ring, "What is THE TIME MACHINE?"] amount to "gates": another category of names.)

=mantis=