

Soldier of What?

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 20 Jan 2003

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Brett M. Grace — 20 Jan 2003, 21:24

Howdy all.

I was drawn to a reference to Soldier of Arete in somebody's blog today. He mentioned off-handedly that "[arete]... means 'a sharp-crested ridge in rugged mountains'", the word deriving from the Latin for fishspine.

Having a smattering of Greek, and being ignorant of the perfectly cromulent English word, I took it to mean exclusively "manliness, excellence, virtue" -- it's similar in usage to Latin's *virtus* if that makes it clear. I'm forced to plead, "it looked Greek to me."

I had always thought that putting 'arete' in the title was a kind of signpost stating "this is not an accessible book." Doubly so if its English doppelganger has quite a different meaning.

Unless... it's an allusion to the rocky geography of the Pelopennesus and Attica, where much of the action takes place. Er, I think. My recollection of the book grows dim. I had been bothered by the lack of symmetry between "Mist" and "Arete" which this interpretation eases.

Thoughts anyone?

BMG

PS: Thucydides is also good background for the second book.