

Latro's recitation and love's power

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 10 May 2003

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maa32 — 10 May 2003, 21:32

At the end of Chapter 40 of Soldier of Arete, Latro is asked to speak a poem from memory to prove that he is a Hellene. Latro has been depressed and has thought about killing himself. From his mind comes this odd bit:

You golden lyre, Apollo's and the muses',
Your tune commands the dance, your tone he uses,
When master of the warbling choir,
He lifts the crystal voices higher.

...

you quench the bolt, the lightning's fearful fire,
the eagle rests his wings, that never tire;
to hear you shaken by your song,
fell Ares quits the spear-proud throng.

Notice that the 6th line invokes the eagle, symbol of Rome's ascendancy. however, the last line is also interesting in that Ares the god of war gives up and quits battle (!). I believe that the soldier books are showing the reformation of the God Ares, weaning him away from manly war into manly love. Latro wants to quit, and the only verse he can think of is this inexplicable one of Ares giving up conflict. I believe that with the other evidence, that Gaea calls herself his mother and grandmother in his memory palace, that there are many lions in place there, and that this poem tells how Ares gives up struggle (and perhaps gives up godhood for a time to be a mortal), as well as how Thymarion calls Latro Pleistorus, there is some evidence to support that Latro is Ares.

Also, the very last line of Soldier of Arete is interesting.

"Allow us to voyage in safety, O lovely Ino, to that great city, Syracuse, the precinct of Ares."

Pretty neat that it would end with that god's name as the last word.

Here is my theory: If, as was indicated in the text, Ares is an aspect of Ahura Mazda, and Latro is an aspect of Ares (and what better name for Ares than 'Soldier'), then what we are seeing is a vengeful god growing weary of battle and bloodshed and recognizing the power of love (through Pharetra, Aphrodite, Io, etc). What I said in jest earlier seems more likely to me: the vengeful old testament God learns to love by living among humans through one of his angels, and decides to repeat the experiment having dismissed Arete as the true way to replace it with the way of love.

Yet I think there is an equal and opposite force at work in the text: on the white isle, the shade of Achilles wants more blood, more struggle, while the god Ares has come to desire only peace. Thus the two sides of the zoroastrian great powers: ahura mazda for good, and that other fellow for evil.

Upon looking in the index, imagine my great joy when the first two names are Achaens and Achilles, confirming my suspicion that Achilles would be upset at the Spartans for their effrontery. They are also the force that causes latro to weary of battle: the ceremony of manumission frees latro from his bloodlust and he begins to weep compassionately and openly.

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