

The end of Soldier of Arete

The Urth list — 10 messages, 5 voices, 30 Nov 2006

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4776>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Michael Straight — 30 Nov 2006, 06:04

I just finished re-reading the first two Soldier books in preparation for Soldier of Sidon. I'm convinced that they are Wolfe's very best.

But, wow, to completely follow the plot you really must keep careful track of every single character, which city they are from, which god they serve, and all the alternate names for them, their regions, and their gods. (And also whether or not they are a werewolf, dryad, centaur, ghost, or transgendered via possession by lamia.)

I think I mostly got it this time but I'm still unclear about the penultimate paragraph.

Pindaros says that the ship Latro stole carried the cargo of the Spartan regent (Pausanias). But I thought the Crimson Men (Phonecians) had been robbed of the cargo by the pirates from Hundred-Eyed (Argos?).

I'd originally thought the pirates had taken the treasure and that the Spartans were holding the Crimson Men and their empty ship. But if Hundred Eyed=Argos, and Pindaros says the Argives were asking for Spartan help in chasing Latro, that means the Argives were holding the Crimson Men captive and had the Phonecian ship with Pausanias's cargo sitting right there in the port under Pausanias's nose! Talk about hutzpah and trust in the truce of the games!

So it makes sense that Pausanias would order the Spartans to "shun the Phonecian steel" and prevent others from pursuing Latro--if he can't have the cargo, neither can the Argives--but what does Pindaros mean when he says "the shrewd prince gained ten times over what he lost"? I don't see how he gains anything by Latro's escape except in the sense of "my enemy's loss is my gain."

I'm also not clear about Hegesistratus's comment "He [Themistocles] has become a friend of the Rope Makers...For the good of the world, he must be discredited and they destroyed." But he believes he has been bribed by Artemis to make sure Latro wins. I can see how losing the race might be a blow to Themistocles, but I don't see how it would lead to the Rope Makers being destroyed.

And does he think that's why Artemis wants Latro to win the race? Because it would lead to the destruction of her people, the Rope Makers? Surely that's more like what Gaea wants. (Is it possible there is a typo and Hegestratus is saying Themistocles must be discredited and *then* destroyed?)

It's funny how Pindaros writes of the sighting of Artemis on Latro's ship as if it's a sign that her hand was in Latro's escape in the victory of the silver chariot. But that's the opposite of what Artemis wanted and if that was her on Latro's ship, it must be because he's in big trouble with her.

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 30 Nov 2006, 11:56 · follows Michael Straight

On Thu, 30 Nov 2006 17:04:51 +1100 Michael Straight
<mfstraight at gmail.com> wrote:

So it makes sense that Pausanias would order the Spartans to "shun
the
Phoenician steel" and prevent others from pursuing Latro--if he
can't
have the cargo, neither can the Argives--but what does Pindaros
mean
when he says "the shrewd prince gained ten times over what he
lost"?
I don't see how he gains anything by Latro's escape except in the
sense of "my enemy's loss is my gain."

The end of Arete is Wolfe at his toughest, IMO. For this part of it, my conclusion is that Latro did a deal with Pausanias; the ship cargo in return for Pausanias holding back when Latro makes his play. Towards the end, he writes: "I still do not know what can be done, but I know that for gold these Hellenes will connive at anything." Then a little later, Pausanias sends Pasicles off to Corinth, telling him not to come back without gold.

And does he think that's why Artemis wants Latro to win the race?
Because it would lead to the destruction of her people, the Rope
Makers? Surely that's more like what Gaea wants. (Is it possible
there is a typo and Hegestratus is saying Themistocles must be
discredited and *then* destroyed?)

My reading on this: Pausanias is actually Gaea's favorite in this. Recall the scene where a decrepit Gaea prophesizes for the helots. Pausanias will, perhaps, raise them up or whatever.

Artemis, presumably for similar reasons, wants Pausanias destroyed. In typical Greek fashion, the weapon of destruction is to be hubris, specifically a victory in the chariot race. As she says to Latro, H and Elata: "My queen must win in order that the prince may be destroyed."

In the end, things work out a little differently: Pausanias in fact loses the chariot race, but nevertheless "wins" in a sufficiently hubris-inducing way. (And Themistocles will suffer the same fate.)

I think there was a deal worked out between the representatives of Gaea and Artemis, in Ch38. Infuriatingly, Latro doesn't say what happened at this meeting, finishing with Elata murmuring, "Now we can begin."

So I don't know what Gaea gets in exchange for Pausanias' downfall -
maybe a victory for her grand-daughters, the Amazons?

It's funny how Pindaros writes of the sighting of Artemis on
Latro's
ship as if it's a sign that her hand was in Latro's escape in the
victory of the silver chariot. But that's the opposite of what
Artemis wanted and if that was her on Latro's ship, it must be
because
he's in big trouble with her.

But Artemis did get what she wanted - a "victory" for Pausanias, "accounted twice a hero among the strategem loving Greeks." Gaea presumably gets the consolation prize of a victory for her grand- daughters, the Amazons.

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 30 Nov 2006, 16:46 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

I've also been rereading in prep and realized that I never quite worked this out:

who are the Sons of Sco**** (the bowmen -- I don't have the book to hand)?

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

Tragedy is when I cut my finger. Comedy is when you walk into an open sewer and die.

- Mel Brooks

Mo Holkar / UKG — 30 Nov 2006, 16:58 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

At 16:46 30/11/2006, Dan'I wrote:

I've also been rereading in prep and realized that I never quite worked this out:

who are the Sons of Sco**** (the bowmen -- I don't have the book to hand)?

Sons of Scoloti = Scythians (or possibly some subdivision thereof),

Mo

Mo Holkar

Undying King Games

mo at ukg.co.uk

<http://www.ukg.co.uk>

Internal Virus Database is out-of-date.

Michael Straight — 30 Nov 2006, 17:02 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

On 11/30/06, thalassocrat at nym.hush.com <thalassocrat at nym.hush.com> wrote:

The end of Arete is Wolfe at his toughest, IMO. For this part of it, my conclusion is that Latro did a deal with Pausanias; the ship cargo in return for Pausanias holding back when Latro makes his play. Towards the end, he writes: "I still do not know what can be done, but I know that for gold these Hellenes will connive at anything." Then a little later, Pausanias sends pasicrates off to Corinth, telling him not to come back without gold.

Hmm. That's kind of a stretch. Hard to believe, given Pausanias's pride. And would he really let Latro go, given that he believes that with Latro at his side he has Nike there as well? On the other hand, he really wants that gold, and this is a way to break the truce without being blamed. And given the high regard he has for Latro's opinions about the gods, he might feel that helping Latro was the way to get the gods on his side.

The other problem is that this has to be a secret deal or Pausanias is guilty of breaking the peace of the games. But Pindaros implies that everyone can see that Pausanias ended up gaining more than he lost.

I'd like to believe it if only because it means Pasicrates's fate isn't quite as bleak as it appears. The gods punishment on him was pretty relentless from the moment he tried to have Latro

whipped.

Artemis, presumably for similar reasons, wants Pausanias destroyed. In typical Greek fashion, the weapon of destruction is to be hubris, specifically a victory in the chariot race.

In the end, things work out a little differently: Pausanias in fact loses the chariot race, but nevertheless "wins" in a sufficiently hubris-inducing way. (And Themistocles will suffer the same fate.)

I suppose this makes sense. We see how Themistocles is being damned by the Spartans' praise (this is their intention). I guess we're supposed to assume something similar will happen to Pausanias?

I think there was a deal worked out between the representatives of Gaea and Artemis, in Ch38. Infuriatingly, Latro doesn't say what happened at this meeting, finishing with Elata murmuring, "Now we can begin."

Especially since Latro promised Elata he would write down in his journal what happened there. This is one of the few places I think Wolfe cheated, leaving out something he wanted left unsaid but that Latro ought to have written.

So I don't know what Gaea gets in exchange for Pausanias' downfall - maybe a victory for her grand-daughters, the Amazons?

Maybe, unlike Artemis, she thinks Pausanias's downfall will actually be bad for Sparta in the long run.

But that's the opposite of what Artemis wanted and if that was her on Latro's ship, it must be because he's in big trouble with her.

But Artemis did get what she wanted - a "victory" for Pausanias, "accounted twice a hero among the strategem loving Greeks."

Yeah, that makes sense. I'd forgotten about the meeting where some kind of deal was struck between Artemis and Gaea. But again, how can Pausanias be "twice a hero" if his profit from Latro's escape is that Latro secretly gives him the treasure (under the cover of Pasicrates going to Tower Hill to get some gold)?

Rostrum

Jeff Wilson — 30 Nov 2006, 17:09 · in reply to Michael Straight

Michael Straight wrote:

On 11/30/06, thalassocrat at nym.hush.com <thalassocrat at nym.hush.com> wrote:

I think there was a deal worked out between the representatives of Gaea and Artemis, in Ch38. Infuriatingly, Latro doesn't say what happened at this meeting, finishing with Elata murmuring, "Now we can begin."

Especially since Latro promised Elata he would write down in his journal what happened there. This is one of the few places I think Wolfe cheated, leaving out something he wanted left unsaid but that Latro ought to have written.

Remember, other people have access to the scroll, and even the Latro du jour may have had his temporary reasons for censoring it. GW can use all of the devices presumably employed in "Seven American Nights" and "V.R.T." as well as deterioration due to extreme age.

Michael Straight — 30 Nov 2006, 17:14 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 11/30/06, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com> wrote:
Remember, other people have access to the scroll, and even the Latro du jour may have had his temporary reasons for censoring it. GW can use all of the devices presumably employed in "Seven American Nights" and "V.R.T." as well as deterioration due to extreme age.

But no one else can read it, except maybe Hegistratus (does his gift allow him to read any language as well?), and he was at the meeting.

Rostrum

Michael Straight — 30 Nov 2006, 17:16 · in reply to Michael Straight

One other question. Pindaros says that when Themistocles wins the vase then gives it to the Amazon queen, "peace is forged between Theseus's city and Theseus's foes."

Which of Athens's foes is he referring to here? And how does Themistocles's victory and/or gift to the Amazons accomplish it? Does Pindaros mean peace between the Athenians and the Amazons?

Rostrum

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 30 Nov 2006, 20:47 · follows Michael Straight

On Fri, 01 Dec 2006 04:16:29 +1100 Michael Straight
<mfstraight at gmail.com> wrote:
One other question. Pindaros says that when Themistocles wins the vase then gives it to the Amazon queen, "peace is forged between Theseus's city and Theseus's foes."

Which of Athens's foes is he referring to here? And how does Themistocles's victory and/or gift to the Amazons accomplish it?
Does
Pindaros mean peace between the Athenians and the Amazons?

Theseus was supposed to have kidnapped an Amazon & taken her as his wife. When the Amazons invaded Attica seeking revenge, Theseus defeated them.

Jeff Wilson — 01 Dec 2006, 05:34 · in reply to Michael Straight

Michael Straight wrote:
On 11/30/06, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com> wrote:
Remember, other people have access to the scroll, and even the Latro du jour may have had his temporary reasons for censoring it. GW can use all of the devices presumably employed in "Seven American Nights" and "V.R.T." as well as deterioration due to extreme age.

But no one else can read it, except maybe Hegistratus (does his gift allow him to read any language as well?), and he was at the meeting.

We only know it was written that no one admitted being able to read what Latro writes. Even if this is true, someone could still sneak in and erase or scrape off a recent entry they fear records something damning.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >