

## POETRY

### *Ares: A Poem*

#### Books VIII and IX

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**BOOK VIII.**  
**Ares Revenant**

I thought that I would die, fatality  
Of war in Troy and by my sister's hand,  
But I lived through the wound, thanks to Paeon,  
And Dione nursed me back to full effect,  
So now again I can resume my fight.

My father Zeus admonished me to quench  
The fire of passion for the blood of men.  
"You are known by many ugly names:  
Serpent, God of Murder. You are despised.  
Devote your talent to a better cause."

Despised! I was despised within the womb  
Of she who is the truest God of Hate,  
That goddess who conceived in enmity  
And gave me dreaded birth in agony.  
You say that I'm despised by gods and men.

"You have an appetite for blood of men,  
A need to give them pain, and now you know  
Full well the pain Athena struck in you,  
That pain you much enjoyed to see in men.  
Your blood is on the battlefield of Troy."

I did not die and vow I never shall  
So long as pride and greed infect the land.  
My calling is to cleanse the earth of such  
Who prey upon the frailest of them all,  
A never-ending task forever mine.

The other gods will die to memory,  
For when the mortals fail to sacrifice,  
To call upon their names as supplicants,  
They will for all eternity be gone,  
While I remain alone to do my work.

I've never been respected as a god,  
And never worshiped by adoring crowds,  
Depending for respect on anyone,  
So I go on when other gods are gone,  
Alive within the hearts of prideful men.

I cannot die. I live eternally.  
The Fates have no dominion over me.  
My father Zeus was king of all the gods;  
My mother Hera was his lawful queen  
Who gave me birth in agonizing hate.

My mother gave to me a legacy,  
And that bequest gives me eternal life,  
For there is ceaseless hate in mortal men.  
My lust for blood of men has deepest roots  
That thrive on hate-infected poisoned soil.

I have been wounded, and I bear the scars  
Of battles I have fought around the world,  
With rivals who would kill the God of War,  
Brave men with solid strength and sturdy skills,  
But they could not succeed in killing me.

When arrogant Athena caused my wound,  
Her try at fratricide aroused in me  
The hatred in my mother's legacy  
Directed at the god who did aspire  
To wear the title of the God of War.

Though Diomedes may a hero be,  
And wounded both the Gods of Love and War  
He never could kill either one of us,  
So we are here, and he is in the ground.  
I live! Tell all that I shall never die!

If Gray Eyes thought that I would die in Troy,  
She erred on two accounts: The first is clear-  
The javelin that Diomedes hurled  
Was never venom-tipped to bring me down.  
And second, mortals cannot kill a god.

Athena died when men no longer cared.  
Her monuments collapsed in disrepair.  
The rundown Parthenon is rubble now,  
And she is just a curiosity,  
Just one to whom no sacrifice is made.



If she could look upon me now, she'd see  
The living God of War whom men obey  
Not with their lips or down on bended knee,  
But with their swollen treasure and their sons  
Invested in incessant lethal wars.

The gods that people worship now are dead,  
Their temples crumbling into ash and dust,  
If ever they existed in real life,  
Or creatures of the restless human mind  
With human character and all their flaws.

Where is the "holy" in the "Holy Land,"  
The consecrated place of endless war?  
Is it a blasphemy or irony  
Devised by someone to mislead the flock  
Of Yahweh's dedicated worshippers?

It may be holy land to Abraham  
And to his devotees who tell the tale  
Of how the god of war he chose in Ur  
Made promises of land and progeny  
If all of them would worship only him.

Hang on! I say. There is a problem here.  
The land that Yahweh promised Abraham  
Was for millennia another's home,  
So I could see at once what's going on:  
That minor god was war personified!

The pretty promises to Abraham  
Were made to justify the tribal wars  
To conquer other people's fertile lands  
And using as defense, "God told me so,  
And I just followed orders from above."

Close to the Sea of Galilee there lies  
The Jezreel Valley, then called Megiddo,  
Where sits Goliath's Spring, that's also called  
Ain Jalut, endowed with rich dark soil  
And fertile fields to feed the populace.



At times I contemplate my parentage:  
Am I not child by Zeus of Hera born?  
I face the truth and my epiphany,  
That I'm created by the human brain,  
A manifested thought of war and grief.

Those other gods, both ancient and today,  
Were also drawn from man's experience,  
Familiarity with how they think  
About the universe and all within,  
And how to paint a picture of it all.

It is not true that god created men,  
But men created gods that look like them,  
The jealous gods, the strong gods and the weak,  
The liars and the cheats, the murderers,  
With all the vices vested in themselves.

I am the Muse who breathes a fire in men,  
A spirit that persists so long as they  
Continue in their hunt for more and more,  
More money and more land, and more control.  
So long as there is greed, I shall abide.

Do I epitomize the side that's dark,  
The place of fire and death where no light shines?  
If that is so, it's in men's hearts I live,  
Obscure, impossible to know its depth  
Profoundly evil or intensely good.

I had a choice, as every being has,  
To do the harm or do the good instead,  
But is not doing harm to evil men,  
Weighed in the cosmic balance, good itself?  
For that is what I try to do in war.

My pater was a rake, my dam a shrew,  
And who will judge the king and queen of gods?  
What standards will the arbitrator use  
To calculate their distance from the good  
Evaluate the harm they may have done?

Perhaps there is an in-between to use  
To estimate the value of a life,  
Assess the contribution one has made  
To shape the universe and all within  
Improving Gaia's work done at the start.

Though I survived, so many warriors  
Did not, and left their bodies to be burned  
Or buried in the ground without a word  
Of comfort to their families or friends,  
Who'll never know the place where their boys rest.

When tales are told of battles won or lost,  
The names of those who died will be inscribed  
On monuments of bronze and marble stone  
So future generations can recall  
The titled heroes of their heritage.

But what of those who lived and homeward came  
With scars both seen and deeply hid from view  
To be neglected by the populace  
Whom they offend by how they may appear  
Or habits they acquired to deal with fear?

You have the purses billowing with cash  
That freely gushed from profits made of war,  
So shake onto the altar of your god  
A little for the veterans you sent  
To fight for you and for your benefit.

I'll try to represent the veterans,  
To speak in verse to amplify their voice,  
As I am one of that distinguished group,  
Survivors of the nations' constant wars,  
To tell their stories others might not know.

They may not want to talk of memories  
Repressed to keep away insanity,  
Of ugly things they may have seen or done,  
The inescapable, the incidents  
That lie embedded in the scope of war.

I know because they are the things that I  
Have seen and done a hundred thousand times  
Since I was born and raised a warrior  
And known such agony I cannot share  
But never can forget in all my life.

Receive your wounded warriors with care,  
The generation that believed your lies,  
Who left their families for foreign fields  
Obedient to orders from above  
Returning, ask alone for some respect.

Give thanks to nurses in the hospitals,  
In clinics, and in homes throughout the land,  
Who hold the hands of wounded warriors  
And help to heal the bodies and the minds  
Of men and women from the battlefields.

Dione helped to nurse me back to health.  
An Oceanid water nymph, whose touch  
Could heal the wounds of any deity  
As she healed mine with tender loving care  
And set the standard for the nurse career.

I've been to many hospitals to see  
My comrades who survived the violence  
Of battles where they lost an arm or leg,  
To tell them they will come out right as rain,  
Because they're in the best of hands—the Nurse.

The surgeons also go about their work,  
Assisting Providence when they repair  
The bodies of the wounded warriors,  
But when the patient wakes, the face he sees  
Is the one he will recall—the Nurse!

I'm not immune to negativity,  
But I am not a pessimistic god,  
As are some angry deities who lurk  
In ruined temples where few worshippers  
Attend with petty pleas that go unheard.





I hold no grudge against my enemy,  
 And when the battle’s done, I take his hand,  
 As I have always thought the simplest way  
 To rid ourselves of enemies for good  
 Must be to make of enemies our friends.

But there are times when in a pensive mood  
 I contemplate the meaning of my life,  
 The deaths that I have caused in many wars,  
 And what I could have done with all my tools,  
 To help to make the world a better place.

Could I reshape my sword into a plow  
 That turns the soil, inviting healthy seeds,  
 Or use my spear to herd a flock of sheep?  
 Can I express sincere remorse and turn  
 To start anew—or is it just a dream?

Three hundred thousand gods in India  
 Were not enough in the Kalinga War                                        261 BCE  
 To save three hundred thousand human lives  
 Or to protect the forests and the fields  
 From devastation from the bloody war.

If ever there were on the continent  
 An emperor of greater cruelty  
 Than Ashoka of the Maurya,    d. 238 BCE  
 I never knew that man or wanted to,  
 Delighting in extreme brutality.

So Chandashoka was the name he bore  
 To boast that he was fierce, but suddenly,  
 On seeing what he’d done, he turned away  
 In shame and in remorse for all the pain  
 And death that to Kalinga he had brought.

I’ve known regret so many warriors  
 Must carry when the battle tally’s made,  
 As from here on, Ashoka would be called  
 The Righteous and a seeker of “The Way,”  
 In studied contemplation and in peace.



Some gods and humans say that they believe  
The God of War enjoys the sight of blood,  
That carnage of all kinds delights my eyes,  
But no one who's been on the battlefield  
Can put aside the ghastly memories  
Of all the horrors that one has seen.

Those memories will never disappear,  
Though we can try to push them to the back  
Of stubborn brains that will not let them go,  
Such images impressed so vividly,  
So striking and so luridly detailed.

If ever you should find a combatant  
Who relishes the dreadful sights and sounds  
Of battles where the darkened blood is shed,  
Where soldiers' arms and legs are torn away,  
Then call him not a warrior but thug.

So, on reflection, maybe it is well  
That warriors cannot eradicate  
The grim reminders of the blood and gore  
They witnessed in their military lives  
Lest they misguided go to war again.

I've not been overthrown as God of War  
By any other pompous deity,  
Although the wishful aspirants abound,  
Athena being one, but her idea  
Of war is limited in means and scope.

I have returned and will not go away again  
Because of injuries I may receive,  
Rejecting rest in hidden pleasure dens,  
Preferring battlefields and energy  
From combat with a worthy enemy.

When I am idle with no fight at hand,  
I grow too restless pondering my state,  
If this is all there is, and there's no more.  
Companionship is mostly what I need,  
Good fellowship among the men of war.



I treasure my alliances, my friends  
With whom I share the cup of triumph sweet,  
The fresh-cut laurel garlands round our heads  
That wither, dying in a day or two.  
What shall we do today to win the leaves?



**BOOK IX.**  
**Ares Allied**

As God of War, I've had allies by scores.  
Both gods and mortal men have served my cause.  
The pharaohs' god of war, the dog-faced Seth,  
The son of Earth and Sky, saved Ra by war  
Against his foe the serpent Apophis.

First murderer, the fratricidal Seth,  
To win the throne of Earth, slew Osiris,  
But then his nephew Horus made him pay,  
And wars began throughout Egyptian space.  
Too soon, came on the warriors of El,  
Canaanite Hyksos from the east and north.

Another god was El of Elohim,  
For whom a war was just another means  
Of gaining food when his own land was bare,  
A god whom I abhorred, who shed the blood  
Of warriors and innocents alike.

I took my place among the files of El  
Along the side of that god's brutish men,  
With cruelty and lust for blood immense,  
To kill with sharpened axe and sword of bronze  
All those who worship any god but El.

One son of El of Elohim then comes,  
A Canaanite, a minor god of war;  
He is a bragging god, a jealous god  
Who gives a promise of eternal life.  
Yahweh is the name by which he's called.

Some like this god, this killer of mankind,  
Though he is sensitive, he speaks with weight,  
Encouraging his captains to the fight  
With promises of post-life Paradise  
If they will massacre his enemies.

In Joshua, he found a warlord bold  
Who followed brutal orders fervently,  
And I was there to watch with wonderment  
The enemies entire and all their kin,  
All in the service of this god of war.

c. 1250 BCE



When it was done, the enemies were dead,  
With battlefields that reeked of rotting flesh  
And Canaan's cities conquered totally.  
Their blood-lust pleasure was full satisfied.  
More wars like this will surely come again.

When stars will cease their spark above the clouds,  
And Helios will hang his chiton on a post,  
I still will be alive and in my prime,  
A warrior enduring to the end,  
One constant in a changing universe.

What lies beyond, not even gods can tell.  
Will there be opportunities for me  
To ply my trade, the art and craft of war  
With thorny bush to prick the hand and foot,  
Or will it be Elysium for me?

What of humanity, of fate for all  
The women and the men, the girls and boys?  
How long can they remain on this green earth  
And breathe the noxious gases in the air,  
Grow food in sunbaked poisoned sterile soil.

Out to the heavens they may go to find  
Another Paradise where they can live  
But be assured that I will be there, too,  
Alert for weaknesses of humankind  
Erupting in that constant state of war.

In that peninsula of Greece, where boys  
Are taught from early age to fight—and die,  
If die they must—in service to their king,  
I find alliances with men of war.  
We are of mind alike in weaponry.

We wield the axe and sword and use the shield  
As our defense against the battle's blows.  
My spirit gives them energy to fight,  
To multiply their strength against the foe,  
A potent nectar pushing fear aside.



Laconia, you fount of warriors,  
You are my truest allies in the field,  
Relying on my strength and on my aid,  
While I depend on you to send your men  
To fight and die in causes right or wrong.

“Great God of War,” Gylippus prayed to me,                   414 BCE  
“Above the other gods, we worship you.  
Empower Sparta to the final win  
And we’ll be yours in service evermore.”  
Then Sparta worshipped me and only me.

No general in all of history  
Could match the bravery and leadership  
That Leonidas showed in his defense  
Against the Achaemenid Aryans  
Of Xerxes on the shores of Attica.

In vengeance for the loss by Darius  
A decade earlier at Marathon,                                   490 BCE  
King Xerxes brought three hundred thousand men,  
An overwhelming military force,  
To conquer finally the whole of Greece.

Three days the fighting raged along the coast,  
Thermopylae the final fatal stand,  
Where Leonidas led three hundred men  
Who gave their lives that others may live free,  
Such warriors the world has never known.

They died. Outnumbered, but they did not quit.  
They lost. But never will Thermopylae                           480 BCE  
Be lost in honor or in memory  
So long as there are gallant warriors  
Who fight against ignoble enemies.

Defenders of Toulouse withstood the siege                   721  
In seven twenty-one by Umayyad  
Al-Samh, the governor of Andalus,  
While moving north and west with book and sword,  
To conquer Odo’s Christian Aquitaine.



Samh's capture of Toulouse would open wide  
The vastness of the land to ocean's shore,  
And victory appeared to be assured  
When the reluctant Frankish king refused  
To intervene on Aquitaine's behalf.

Just as the city was about to fall,  
Duke Odo rode to rescue the besieged,  
Surprising the invaders on all sides.  
Al-Samh escaped the Duke but very soon,  
He'd find himself in his own paradise.

Where was the King when the attack took place,  
When Aquitanians were under threat?  
Is any reigning monarch fit to lead  
If he absents himself when crisis calls  
And clearly demonstrates his cowardice?

I have observed when people are at war  
They fill the churches, mosques, and synagogues,  
And to their gods they pray for dominance  
To shed the blood of others they don't know,  
To conquer other lands they do not own.

I hear their orisons, and then I smile,  
If intervention by their gods they seek,  
Then it's the God of War who will respond!  
Indeed, I'll answer all the zealous prayers  
With blood and broken bodies on all sides.

Come to the temples of your gods and pray  
To them, the deities that cannot hear,  
For they are dead and in their sullen graves,  
So come to me with honor and with praise,  
And I will answer your appeals and pleas.

Come worship me—or not—I little care,  
But do not kneel to all those other gods,  
Incompetent and useless deities,  
The products of the minds of fearful men  
Who prostrate fall before a nothingness.





They pledge allegiance to their nation's flag,  
These worshippers of gods they made themselves,  
As if a simple symbol like a flag  
Could wield a battle axe or sword or spear  
Ensuring victory against a foe.

Illusory the notion that to pray  
To some imagined mythic deity  
Will help the naïve pleader to prevail  
Against a well-armed well-trained enemy  
Who may be praying to that selfsame god!

It's pride and arrogance and ignorance,  
Compounded by their gullibility  
Allows, or even drives, the innocent  
To gallop to a foreign war with joy,  
And never understand its consequence.

The colored flag they wrap around themselves  
Comes back across a modest wooden box  
Containing what the war has done to them,  
To be committed to the brooding earth,  
Beneath another symbol of their god.

“Deus vult!” the second Urban cried.                    1088  
“Attack the infidels who desecrate  
Our sacred capital Jerusalem  
That by our holy Lord is sanctified.  
Kill all of them. It is the will of God.”

That Urban fit the definition of  
A guileful monger of the state of war  
Who caused a million deaths in Holy lands  
And two hundred years of enmity  
Between the followers of their Yahweh.

I've never understood the worshippers  
Of that old minor Canaan god of war  
When there was Baal and other stronger gods  
From whom to choose, adore, and venerate,  
But they chose Yahweh and his Abraham.

Why, then, I ask, did Yahweh's devotees  
Divide in animosity and hate,  
Attacking with such utter vehemence,  
Creating carnage on a massive scale,  
And doing it in that god's holy name?

The Son, it was, of Yahweh caused the breach;  
Who loved him more and worshipped at his feet,  
Proclaiming his superiority,  
Divinity above the other gods,  
Condemning those who disagreed to death?

Urbanus sitting on his golden throne,  
Manifesting hate in human form,  
As hollow men before him did in greed,  
In fevered lusting for authority  
Directed East the cohorts of the Son.

I knew at once the consequence, the price  
Supporters of the Son would pay in lives,  
More than a hundred thousand dead, the price  
For just a strip of land along the coast  
To satisfy Urbanus' lust for power.

Through Anatolia the army marched,  
Jerusalem the final goal. "Get out!"  
They screamed to those within the city walls.  
"This place is ours! It's where our savior died  
And rose again in love, the Prince of Peace.

I could foresee a place for me, a war  
Between two ardent foes with energy  
Supplied by that same Canaan god of war.  
Which side shall I support? I asked myself.  
I answered, Choose the side with greater zeal.

I donned the cross-marked vestments of a knight,  
The armor and the arms, and took to horse,  
And with a hundred thousand ardent men  
Attacked the Seljuk Turks with lance and sword  
All to the glory of the Son of God!

Eight times the brave defenders of the faith  
Attacked their enemies to free the land  
They claimed for holy Christianity,  
Campaigns to dispossess the pagan horde,  
To pave their rocky road to Paradise.

Athena was not there to interfere  
To moderate, to substitute concord  
For violent dispute between the faiths,  
Assuming modest reason could prevail  
When viscera were in control of men.

Because their warriors would wear a cross  
Proclaiming their allegiance to their Christ,  
The gentle rabbi born in Bethlehem,  
Those brutal forays into foreign lands  
With modest irony were called "Crusades."

Five million lives the cost of eight Crusades.  
More wars declared by those who killed by scores  
To demonstrate the kindness of their lord  
By slaughtering the innocent if such  
Would not at once conform to their god's rule.

In Joshua, they had their precedent,  
To massacre in whole the populace  
Whose prophets shouted out their blasphemy  
Defiling cities where their lord had lived  
And died more than a thousand years before.

Sometimes they won the war, sometimes they lost,  
And in the end, five million lives were lost,  
The price for hateful pride and arrogance,  
Paid by the poorest people, not by priests.  
The coin of war is ordinary lives.

The Albigensians did not agree  
With ill-named Innocent that he alone  
Possessed the truth of Christianity,  
That only he could speak to deity  
And know how every Christian should behave.



I listened to the Cathars speak their mind,  
And I could prophesy a coming war  
As Lothar now named Innocent cried out  
For genocide against the heretics,  
Began the Albigensian Crusade. 1209-1229

Some say the ancient Roman Empire fell  
As foreign Goths and Visigoths prevailed  
When Odoacer won the capital, 476  
But I insist the Empire did not fall;  
It simply changed its name to Church of Rome.

The Roman Emperor is now called Pope,  
All powerful, whose word is absolute,  
So when the Cathars boldly challenged him,  
He sent his army to extinguish them, 1209-1229  
The *demiurge* would claim a million souls.

I looked and wept to see the massacre,  
But there was little I could do to help  
The Cathars of Languedoc to fight the Pope 1209-1229  
Abetted by the kings and Papal States,  
Who looked to curry favor with the man.

I know that they would never worship me,  
For they adored the Son, the Prince of Peace,  
But it would be impossible for me  
To save the pious Albigensians  
From Lothar's monstrous grisly genocide.

As God of War, I sometimes choose a side,  
While on the battlefield I take some note  
Of who is killed and who outlives the fight,  
But when the contest is no even match,  
I simply stand aside and shake my head.

If Yahweh is in charge, I understand,  
For he's the god who ordered Joshua  
To show no mercy to the Canaanites,  
Though Lothar says he worships God the Son,  
He shows no mercy to the Cathar line.

The mighty Seljuk Empire met its match  
In Georgia at the hands of David Four,  
Whose brilliant tactics vanquished Ilghazi,  
Commander of the massive Turkish force,  
Nomadic tribal army from the Muslim East. 1121

Ilghazi ibn Artuq took command  
And wrongly thought large numbers would prevail  
Against the Georgian tillers of the soil,  
Who, after all, submitted to the rule  
Of those marauders coming from the East.

But he mistook the Georgian friendliness,  
The innate sense of hospitality,  
For weakness and a lack of will to fight,  
Allowing David and his allied force  
To win the battle and to win the war.

The Battle of Didgori brought an end  
To foreign exploitation of the land  
The Georgian God of old had promised them  
And drove the Seljuk Turks away in shame,  
Defeated by a dedicated King.

In later days, hate's poison spread abroad,  
Infecting bands of men who took control,  
A realm that's under one man's evil sway,  
And with my aid, the people went to war,  
The greatest war in human history.

I never thought, since time of men began,  
That I would ever see a war so great  
Where I could play a part in the demise  
Of fifty millions of humanity;  
I claim no credit for the bloody war.

Far to the east, into the rising sun,  
The Shogunate imposed its will by war  
Upon the weaker people of the land,  
Endowing men of violence with will  
To conquer, to control, and to enslave.



With watchful eye and skeptical, I saw  
Those men of arrogant proclivity  
Attack the treasure of a high-placed chief, 1941  
Beginning then the bloodiest of wars  
That ended in dishonor and defeat.

Berlin! The year was eighteen-eighty-five 1885  
When Europeans with their arrogance  
Drew lines across a map of Africa  
With no regard for tribal families,  
Dividing for themselves the continent.

Von Bismarck took the lead for Germany,  
While thirteen others followed close behind  
In fear of missing out on their fair share  
Of loot to be purloined from native folk  
By force and use of modern weaponry.

Who in that group could fail to see the seeds  
Of centuries of wars among the kings  
To dominate the trade in slaves and gold  
And sell to eager purchasers at home  
For profits to enrich the merchant class?

Beware the tyranny of nation-states,  
Where xenophobia will rule the day  
Their racist monarchs and their haughtiness  
Compelling them to subjugate the weak  
In bondage to the avaricious few.

I will not have a slave to serve my needs,  
To do the work that I can do myself,  
Denied the freedoms every man should have,  
Deprived of even basic dignity,  
In chains that bind in shameful servitude.

What kind of being would I be esteemed,  
If I kept any man in slavery  
When I have always fought for liberty,  
For opportunity to make the choice  
To be oneself in truth and dignity?



There may be tyrants over any land,  
But he who holds one man in slavery  
Is just as much a tyrant in his soul  
As one who dominates a thousand men,  
Who steals the spirit of that single man.

I would not ever be a slave in chains,  
To grovel at some evil master's feet.  
I'd break those chains with all the might I have  
And then return to seek revenge on those  
Who thought they'd vanquished the invincible.

In Africa, a thieving Kakwa man  
Took hold the reins of government by force.                    1971  
By usurpation of the rightful seat,  
This former British Army cook became  
Most brutal despot of the continent.

I took no notice of the man who  
Terrorized the people of the land,  
For that's too common on the earth,  
Who without merit glorified himself  
With titles and with medals made of gold.

But when the much bemedaled fraud attacked  
His neighbor to the south, I came to look,                    1978  
To see if I could use my axe and sword,  
But the defender did not need my help,  
When there arose Mwalimu in the lead.

One Julius Nyerere took the lead,  
A teacher stood against the fraud and won.  
Idi Amin was done. He fled the field.                    1979  
I would have intervened but that good man  
Repelled the fiend and pulled his phony fangs.

For many man-years, I went on to start  
Small wars around the world, but then at last  
I coaxed a Russian autocrat to march  
Into his neighbor's land and take it all  
And knowing he would take the tempting bait.

“If you invade,” I told the man, “much blood  
Will turn the neighbor’s lands from green to red,”  
But I did not tell him whose blood would change  
The color of the fields from green to red.  
It was his arrogance that drove his hand.

When this conceited man began his war, 2022  
I then went over to the other side  
To spill more blood, as I could plainly see,  
His hasty strategy was ill-conceived,  
Unlikely to succeed but with great cost.

The war went on and I with modern arms  
Killed tens of thousands of his men and boys,  
Destroying much of his old weaponry.  
“Why did I start this war?” he asked himself.  
Did he not know of me, the God of War?

On Bosworth Field, the final battle fought 1485  
Between the potent Red of Lancaster  
And Yorkist White, the Rose of Richard’s sun  
Contending for the throne and all its wealth.  
For thirty years the back and forth went on.

When I see minor trifling arguments,  
I know there is a possibility  
That soon enough there will erupt a war.  
Hostilities emerge from petty fights,  
As who will wear a crown for a few years.

*Plante Genest* three hundred years had reigned,  
Afar from Anjou to the British Isles,  
But late the heirs of Geoffrey and his Queen  
Would bicker over their inheritance,  
With Roses Red and Roses White at war.

As for me. I didn’t care who won—  
Until that nasty murderer arose,  
So I came to the Field and fought against  
The last Plantagenet, Richard the Third,  
Unhorsed the King and battle won for good.



It's in the "civil" wars where I find friends,  
Misnamed, for there is nothing "civil" there,  
When nations fracture into partisans,  
Demanding what the other cannot stand,  
Preferring violence to reasoned speech.

Civility assumes some compromise:  
You give a bit, and I will give a bit.  
Unyielding any point will lead to grief,  
And I see war about to bloom in full,  
So I must choose a side or let it go.

I sided with the Parliament against 1642 - 1651  
A king who would not compromise,  
Who claimed appointment by divinity,  
And deaf to any plea from common folk,  
Who, rather than concede, lost crown and head.

I sided with the Abolitionists,  
When slavers bombed the homeland's Sumter Fort. 1861  
Four years the Blues and Grays with steely eyes,  
Created bedlam in the southern states.  
Six hundred thousand dead because of this,  
But in the end, the Blues went on to win. 1861-1865

I know Olympus is the home of Zeus.  
It's my home, too, and so I know it's real,  
But where's this "Heaven" humans talk about,  
The place they wish to go when they expire,  
Where goodness dwells for all eternity?

It matters to the Chinese warrior  
Who trusted "Heaven's will" to guide his sword,  
When in the Battle of Muye, the Zhou, 1046 BCE  
Outnumbered one to ten defeated Shang,  
Who lost the holy Mandate by misrule.

Six hundred thousand Shang with all their slaves  
Could not defend their capital of Yin  
Against the fifty thousand Zhou because  
The Mandate shifted to deserving hands  
And ended six long centuries of Sheng.

Surrender in the face of sure defeat  
Was no disgrace to warriors of Sheng  
Who knew the reason for the Mandate's change  
Must be corruption in the ruling house  
Offending Heaven and their ancestors.

Eight million Chinese human beings died                      1927-1949  
In something that was called a "civil" war,  
But there was no civility between  
Two despots both intent on dominance  
No matter what the cost in human lives.

I watched it all but could not choose a side,  
For neither one gave me the reverence  
That I had earned in five millennia,  
Nor did they pay attention to the rules  
Of warfare I embrace wholeheartedly.

The occupation of the Rising Sun                                      1937-1945  
With its brutality came to an end  
And opened up the door to anarchy:  
A Chairman or a Generalissimo?  
I shook my head when I was asked to help.

I could foresee the carnage yet to come,  
Surpassing Hide Tojo's cruelty  
In numbers I had never known before.  
The Chairman's army at last won the war  
And chased his "civil" foe into exile.                                      1949

The paratrooper's rigged and standing by                              1945  
To climb aboard the plane bound for the east  
Across the channel to the coast of France  
On a Crusade to free Europa's land  
From Hitler and his Nazi lunacy.

The sixth of June in nineteen forty-four  
Will be remembered as the fateful day  
That German planners always feared would come,  
Invasion by a mighty Allied force,  
Beginning of the end of Hitler's war.



It took eleven months for that Crusade  
To make the Nazi army quit the field,  
With Marshal Zhukov's army in the east  
To squeeze the Wehrmacht in an iron vise.  
Surrender was the German's only choice.

Was it one man who caused the world's worst war,  
And just one man who did atrocities?  
Who were the other Germans in the horde  
That ruthlessly oppressed the Continent  
With horrors never known to any man?

The Allies stormed the beach at Normandy,                   1945  
As Screaming Eagles landed, talons bared,  
From clouded skies behind the German lines,  
All fighting to make free the citizens  
Of France, of Belgium, and the Netherlands.

D-Day, the Sixth of June, will be recalled  
So long as children hear of valiant men  
Who fought the battles that would end the war  
On European soil and all the world,  
And bring the perpetrators to the dock.

I've been to Buchenwald. I've seen Dachau,  
The Jewish women held at Ravensbrück.  
I saw the filthy camp at Flossenbürg,  
The concentration camps of Neuengamme,  
But I broke down at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

What kind of fiend could plan and build these camps  
Where men and women would be kept and killed  
For reasons that suggest insanity?  
Incomprehensible the senselessness,  
The cruelty, the inhumanity.

The gentle Japanese show courtesy  
By smiling and by bowing to their guests,  
But this façade hides animosity  
To anyone who interferes with plans  
Of the Imperial pursuit of power.

Nanjing was torched, its women raped by thugs  
Who wore the military uniform  
Symbolic of the Hirohito reign,  
Who murdered noncombatant prisoners  
Under the orders of their officers. 1937-1938

The gutters of the city flowed with blood  
Of Chinese families, both old and young,  
As Hirohito's murderers found ways  
To torture, maim, and kill the innocents,  
With knives and swords and clubs and gasoline.

These men in military uniforms  
Could never qualify as warriors,  
A term that's earned by honest bravery,  
For they are cowards using cruelty  
To keep in hiding shameful character.

"*Banzai*," the soldiers screamed, "Ten thousand years,"  
"*Tenno Heika Banzai*," for their God,  
The Emperor, descendent of the Sun,  
But he was just a man in thrall of war,  
Of inflamed generals and admirals.

Then "*Tora! Tora! Tora*" was the cry 1941  
Unleashed the tigers of the sea and air  
On all the warships tied up to the piers  
Adjacent to the beach at Waikiki,  
December seven, nineteen forty-one.

When Yamamoto ordered the attack,  
All of the evils of mankind emerged,  
From devastated ships to immorality,  
The Death March of Bataan and Sandakan,  
Starvation, torture, evil decadence.

There never was a hope for victory,  
Which Iso Yamamoto must have known,  
But he was killed before the atom bombs  
Brought to an end the nightmare of the age,  
A murderer hanged by the neck to death.

Will those who study Chaos ever find  
The seed that was the origin of war,  
The preternatural urge to dominate,  
Competing for the universe's space,  
Destroying each opposing candidate?

To win the match when all the rest are gone  
Is the imperative that drives all life,  
From microscopic bits of human cells  
To entire nations of all magnitudes,  
Employing the most modern weaponry.

Competing for the laurel wreath is fine  
When it is for a feat of strength or speed,  
A wholesome game among a group of friends  
In healthy sportsmanship to find the best  
And motivate the athletes, win or lose.

But competition for the stuff of life  
Commits contenders to a bitter end,  
Where even those who win are losers still,  
Whose crown of thorns instead of laurel leaves  
Is purchased at a steep and bloody price.

Yes, I'm the God of War. The battlefield  
Is where I ply my trade. It's where I fight.  
But I am not the god of cruelty  
Of ruthlessness beyond capacity  
To judge the man who is my enemy.

In all the pantheon, there are a few,  
The gods of ruthlessness, of cruelty,  
Who can be held to be accountable  
For causing nations to go mad with hate,  
To torture and to murder innocents.

The Hitlers and the Tojos were not first  
To sink their nations to brutality  
And likely will not be the last of those  
Who dredge up from the darkness of the deep  
The vitriol that dwells in every soul.



It is not fitting for the warrior  
To massacre the families of those  
With whom he fights, who pose no threat of harm,  
But should he win, he must show chivalry,  
Compassion, kindness, and benevolence.

Practitioners of war's dark arts have fought  
From dusky shadows for three thousand years  
With spies and saboteurs behind the lines  
Of unsuspecting enemies in stealth  
To ferret out the foes' intelligence.

Rahab the prostitute hid Hebrew spies  
Of Joshua intent on genocide c. 1550 BCE  
In Jericho obedient to his god.  
The Greeks and Romans used their hidden scouts  
To steal the secrets of their enemies.

A riddle and the woman of Timnah,  
Delilah and the story of the hair, 1200–1000 BCE  
Deception and pretense, the craft at work  
To benefit the ruling Philistines,  
Both giving value to the secret arts.

The SOE and OSS behind 1940 & 1942  
The forward lines of Axis enemies  
Saved lives and helped to bring an early end  
To the most devastating global war  
That ever was in human history. 1939-1945

I always looked to Aristophanes 446-386 BCE  
For humor when my mental state was low.  
He said it's better not to bring inside  
Your city walls a lion, but be warned:  
You'd better be prepared to feed the beast.

Alliances to win are *de rigueur*  
For nations large and small and their defense.  
The people who decide to stand alone  
Are doomed to suffer ignominious  
Defeat while holding to their principles.

The occupation by a foreign force  
Is slavery by any other name,  
But to avoid that foreign dominance,  
A nation needs a multitude of friends  
To fight with it for its own sovereignty.

I've fought beside defenders in the past,  
At Marathon, Thermopylae, and Troy.  
I helped to free the French from Nazi rule  
And victims of the concentration camps,  
Along with Allied forces, East and West.



*To be continued in the next issue.*