

## POETRY

*Ares: A Poem*

**Books X and XI**

**Edward Robert Raupp**



**With Illustrations by  
Salome Bekauri and Mariam Bekauri**

**BOOK X.**  
**Ares Omnipotent**

I am the greatest god, the God of War,  
My fame is known throughout the universe.  
Though born in anger and in pain, I made  
My mark for all the other gods to see  
In blood, the sign of my omnipotence.

Diomedes, my archrival's dead,  
His corpse is merely food for crawling worms.  
Athena has her statues and her town,  
But worshipers are gone into the wind  
While I remain supreme in minds of men.

Do not mistake the wars you see as chance  
Or only the result of brilliant thought,  
As it is by my influence that men  
Decide to start a war against their foe.  
I am omnipotent, the God of War.

In what is called the War of Hundred Years,      1337-1453  
The English and the French so fiercely fought  
For little spots of land and dominance,  
Each side would claim the costly victory,  
But in the end, the laurel leaves were mine.

You may have heard of other nations' gods  
From farthest north and all around the world.  
The Vikings' god of war was Týr, a god  
Who could not even tame the wolf Fenrir,  
The beast who cleaved the hand of that frail god.

One-handed Týr was ineffectual  
In battles that heroic Norsemen fought.  
I had to interfere lest there be peace  
Among the clans with grievances severe  
And took my sword and axe against them all.

Go south from Vikings' land and you will find  
My mark among the many Indie gods,  
So many deities that I cannot discern  
One from another idol in the group,  
But one I know from my campaigns with him.

Auspicious Shiva's first-born son is he,  
That Skanda is their god of war, with spear  
And trident constantly attacking those  
Who warp the innocents with horribles,  
And I was on his side from north to south.

Within the Empire of the Sun, there was  
A Shinto god of war called Yahata,  
Whose birth announced by doves belied the fate  
Of one now known as Hachiman divine  
The ruthless god of fiercest Samurai.

As Hachiman inspired the Samurai  
To murder promptly all his enemies,  
I sometimes dressed to look like one of them  
And joined the battle with my axe and sword,  
But often with the other side opposed.

Across the sea, the Middle Kingdom called,  
And answered I with all my armaments.  
With great Guan Yu, the Chinese god of war  
I fought against the nemesis that plagued  
The people of that land and of their gods.

My power reigned supreme in all the lands.  
No other gods could ever match my might  
In battle or in cities' sovereignty,  
Although they tried and lost repeatedly,  
And bowed to my command and to my rule.

Sometimes a mortal makes a hollow claim  
To be omnipotent, to rule the world.  
Ferocious Khan who ravaged East and West     1162-1227  
Was such a man affecting dominance  
Above the universe and all its men.



This Genghis Khan, the first among the Khans,  
Rode through the land and with his butcher hordes  
Some sixty million innocents did kill,  
A carnage even I could not conceive,  
A few in battles fair but most unjust.

My axe and sword are meant for stronger foes,  
And not for slaughter like a herd of cows,  
For where's the glory in a genocide,  
When enemies are frail old men and boys?  
This Khan's a thug; he's not a warrior.

I've seen such men so many times before,  
Who strut around like roosters on the farm,  
Impressing all the hens with colors bright,  
But I am not impressed and just as soon  
Would put them in the dinner pot to boil!

Rapacious, rampaging across the land,  
They set ablaze the forests and the fields,  
Malicious plague that Nature did not cause,  
To brutal Tartarus they will be sent  
As punishment for all eternity.

Inhuman fiends dishonor our good name,  
The name of warrior, the brave and true,  
Who with his sword and axe will also bring  
Nobility to every battlefield,  
A decency respecting friend and foe.

Where is the rectitude, the sense of right,  
In wanton slaughter of the weak and frail,  
Of those with no ability or strength  
To fight against the overwhelming force  
Of darkness, pitiless and merciless?

To be courageous is to overcome  
The fear invading every human heart,  
Not knowing what uncertain future holds,  
And move into the light with confidence  
That righteousness and goodness will prevail.

So far away from civil people's lands,  
Across the roiling Ocean to the West,  
Some thirteen colonies in unison  
Declared their independence from the Crown     1776  
Of crazy British monarch George the Third.

With help from France and Spain, the colonies  
In more than seven years of war won out 1783  
From "Shot heard 'round the world" in Lexington  
To Valley Forge and to the Delaware,  
The patriots fought on against the realm.

The massive British Army could not stand  
Against the rabble of the Continent  
Who, fighting for their liberty, drove on  
With little but determined energy  
And leadership inspired by common weal.

The God of War was on the side of right,  
For I could not deny my high regard  
For those who fight against the tyranny  
Of kings who claim to be divinely blessed,  
But just detestable and self-possessed.

In Philadelphia, when those men rose  
Proclaiming liberty throughout the land,  
They put their lives and families at risk,  
That if their valiant cause should come to grief,  
The English King would likely not forgive.

Perhaps if I had thought it through with care,  
And put aside emotional appeal,  
I might have joined the men with coats of red  
Who had advantage in the war to come,  
With weaponry and funds to pay their troops.

How should the timeless God of War decide  
Between the powerful who claim the right  
To use their might to dominate the weak  
And those who rise with just and righteous cause  
Against the well-armed privileged elite?

I strongly disagree with “Might makes right,”  
That old canard that those in power cite,  
So that is why I choose the moral side,  
And win or lose, I know that I have fought  
For principles that long outlast the war.

More than a thousand times I’ve seen the good  
Triumph above the evil inhumane,  
When the oppressed rise up as one and claim  
Their rightful heritage and say with force,  
“Enough! No more! It’s here we’ll take our stand!”

The fervent feeling’s not unknown to me,  
As from my birth I’ve been dismissed and shunned  
By all the gods of earth and of the skies  
As one who only lusts for blood of men,  
Who only acts with callous cruelty.

But they are hypocrites denying truth,  
And ignorant of how the universe,  
Itself a breeding ground for rivalry,  
Obliges enmity among the tribes  
Pursuing dominance above all else.

I stand with those who will not bend the knee  
To worship at the altars of false gods,  
The venal mercenary gods of greed  
And of deceit who promise paradise—  
But only after they give up their lives.

I said I knew a man named Socrates     399 bce  
Who tried to educate Athenians  
To think more carefully about their lives,  
But half of them were having none of it  
And shut him up with poison hemlock drink.

What did he say that Athens would not hear,  
That so inflamed the frightened populace?  
He put the words in Thrasymachus’ mouth,  
The stronger make the rules, the Sophist said,  
And spelled the bitter end for Socrates.

But then Thucydides said much the same:           431 bce  
The strong do what they can, the general said,  
And of the weak, they suffer what they must.  
What of the warrior? The lesson's clear:  
The stronger nation likely will prevail.

Defend the land and all the people there  
From the invader's murderous intent  
By being strong and always well prepared  
With lions in the lead and in the pride  
Equipped with the most modern weaponry.

Security is what the people want.  
It's not too much to ask of governments,  
Whose most important aim is to protect  
The population from the harm that comes  
From foreign or domestic enemies.

When you have something that another wants  
So desperately that he will go to war  
To snatch by force from you what you have earned,  
You need to think about what it will take  
To guard against that possibility.

The warrior stands ready to defend  
Your land, your property, and family  
From those who'd take it all from you,  
Intent on dominating all you have,  
So call upon your warrior for help.

A call to arms, to fight, if call is just,  
Is noble and deserving of response,  
Of answering the call with bravery,  
And overcoming fear of what may come  
With skills the warrior will know full well.

If there be angels, let them sing for those  
Who fought for liberty when they were called.  
Sing mournful elegies for those who died  
Defending to the end the people's rights  
To live in peace and free from choking fear.

I cannot falsely promise Paradise,  
As some gods do to fool their worshippers,  
But those who fought will live in memory,  
So long as history will tell the tales  
With honesty, integrity, and truth.

Achilles fought so he would be recalled  
Three thousand years as the most glorious  
Of all the warriors the earth has known  
And with ferocity achieved his goal,  
But Thetis' son died at an early age.

Today, the warrior has just two aims:  
To do his duty and come home alive.  
Though he will sacrifice save a friend,  
No sentient soldier gives his life for fame,  
So sing in gratitude the warrior.

It was for *Liberté* the French rose up     1789  
Against the puffed-up aristocracy,  
And for *Égalité* to be alike  
With their *Fraternité* and with respect  
For human dignity across the land.

The impotent *Ancien Régime* had not  
Sufficient energy to turn away  
The rising tide of people in revolt  
Intent on paying back the Monarchy  
In retribution for brutality.

I saw what lay in store for Royalty,  
Its end upon the dreaded guillotine,  
The downcast people taking their revenge  
For heinous treatment by the King and Queen,  
Divided factions vying for control.

Then came a man from nearby Corsica     1793  
To unify the raucous delegates  
And build the greatest army in the world,  
Establishing himself as one who could  
Defend the new Republic from its foes.



Astride his steed, a white Arabian,  
Napoleon rode to the battlefield  
Against the Austrians across the Alps, 1800  
His Gallic troops outnumbered but well led,  
And crossed the River Po in Italy.

I rode with him that sunny day in June  
As I had done some seven years before  
When at Toulon I saw the genius 1793  
He brought with Revolutionary zeal  
To validate the principles of war.

And at the Battle of Saorgio, 1793  
While in command of the artillery,  
The young Napoleon drew up the plans  
That won the victory against the King  
And proved the brilliance of the man at arms.

The steed he named Marengo to recall  
That day in June in northern Italy  
When he showed to the world what he could do  
With his inspired leadership and his  
*Audace—L'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace.*

Where is the line between audacity  
And foolish recklessness gone to excess?  
Napoleon extolled audacity:  
Again, "*L'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace,*"  
But Bonaparte, you were impetuous.

You thought to overthrow the Russian Tsar.  
In eighteen-twelve, your army traveled east  
And crossed the River Neman on your way 1812  
Intending to defeat the Russian force  
And occupy the vastness of their land.

In this, were you audacious, Bonaparte?  
A million soldiers in your *Grande Armée*,  
Miscalculation led to arrogance.  
The Russian army never played your game,  
And winter took its heavy toll of death.

I could not help myself: I chose the Tsar  
Because I knew your overconfidence  
Would lastly bring defeat and end your reign,  
Your Anglophobic attitude the cause  
That ultimately brings your *Armée* down.

The French aristocratic admirals  
Were guillotined and left the navy bare  
Of senior leadership for fights to come,  
Where cavalry would be of little use,  
Nor seasick infantry with bayonets.

While France was ill-prepared to fight at sea,  
Lord Nelson led a hardy crew of tars  
And tough embarked marines prepared to brawl,  
Outnumbered but superbly trained and led.  
To victory against the French in Spain.

Trafalgar was an English master class 1805  
That taught Napoleon audacity  
Can never overcome experience,  
And ships at sea are in their element,  
The rolling waves and roiling ocean storms.

Aboard his mighty flagship Victory,  
Lord Nelson gave the orders to his fleet  
That led the Allies to that victory  
Before the bullet of a musketeer  
Brought down the new and brave Horatio.

From Brussels to the south nine miles, no more,  
Lay Waterloo, a place of destiny  
Where Wellington defeated Bonaparte 1815  
Thus ending the career of that great man  
Who had his moment in the Frankish sun.

Sir Arthur Wellesley, born in Dublin town  
Across the Irish Sea, found his career  
In soldiering, from Boxtel and Assaye  
To Waugh Insurgency and Portugal,  
And then to Belgium's fateful Waterloo.

There was no hanging of Napoleon,  
But Elba was too close to Europe's coast,  
And he escaped the island once before, 1815  
So where on earth should he live out his life  
And be no threat to European kings?

To Saint Helena went Napoleon, 1815  
Twelve hundred miles due west of Africa,  
A European Emperor no more,  
But just the master of a postage stamp  
Who lives in military memory.

Sometimes my anger turns to rage, and I  
Can lose control while fury reigns unchecked,  
No bounds to cap the consequence or end  
My wrath can cause in deaths and damages  
To men, some innocent, caught in the trap.

My reputation for ferocity  
In truth is one I never will deny.  
Audacity is in the very souls,  
Of soldiers who become the champion,  
Who live to fight the enemy again.

But anger interferes with reasoned thought  
That's needed for a plan to win the war,  
A strategy that counts the cost to gain  
The ultimate advantage in the fight  
To win the battle and to win the war.

My power is not only in my sword,  
But also in my intellect and brain.  
I win the battles, but I win the wars  
By choosing well the braver stronger side,  
The side with confidence and better plans.

My loving virgin aunt is Hestia,  
The god who keeps the household fires aglow,  
To whom the mothers pray along with wives  
For warmth and food to feed their families,  
Mostly ignored by all the other gods.



My hope is Hestia will stay with me  
To keep the hearth aglow with constant care,  
For she, alike to me, is much abused  
Today and all throughout the centuries,  
The lonely woman who remains at home.

When warriors go to the battlefield,  
Who keeps the little children safe from harm?  
And when surviving warriors return,  
What care will they receive to tend their sores,  
The secret injuries to flesh and mind?

Let's all of us, the gods and humankind  
Take just a moment to express our thanks  
To Hestia and all who follow her,  
Who tend the glowing embers of the hearth,  
And welcome home their men with open arms.

I want to think of war as my career  
To which I need to dedicate my life,  
And that profession has well-founded rules;  
The code of chivalry is at its base,  
Inviolable, intact among the called.

Such codes are not revered by everyone  
Within the ranks or in the polity.  
I've seen such violations, criminal,  
In villages and city neighborhoods,  
The shameless plundering and pillaging.

The looters, unashamed, appropriate  
Such goods as they can find in homes destroyed,  
Bombarded by invaders' vicious shells,  
Indifferent to the wounded residents  
Who lie in pain before they pass away.

If it were in my scope, I'd take my sword,  
My axe, my spear, and send to Tartarus  
Such men who desecrated all the homes  
And burdened victims with more misery  
Than they deserved in consequence of war.

I'm often asked, "What is your purpose here?"  
I never hide behind a screen of lies,  
As many do who benefit from war,  
Who always claim it's for the greater good,  
When sending boys to fight and die for them.

My feet are on this ground, I say to all  
Because you called to me by what you've done,  
Prayed earnestly to me for triumph soon  
Against the people with whom you dispute.  
I am the stick that lights the fire of war.

I was on the shore when men with arms appeared  
To claim the land for their own foreign kings,  
Enforcing their assertions with their troops  
Assassinating the appointed chiefs  
And spreading fatal poisonous disease.

"This land's now mine!" was the invader's scream  
Initiating an uneven war,  
A well-armed force against the primitive.  
I want no part of it, this massacre.  
The God of War will not participate.

Let's fight! but make it fair—a sword for sword,  
A spear for javelin, an axe for axe.  
You do no honor for yourself or cause  
By murdering the innocents, the babes  
In mothers' arms who pose no threat to you.

Fight me, hyena hiding in the bush.  
Come out, and face a warrior to prove  
Your worth. Come here and bring your weaponry  
Whatever it may be, and I will match  
You stroke for stroke till one of us is down.

Ensnared in arrogance, you boast aloud,  
But you are not what you suppose you are.  
You are a plague, a scourge on laws of war,  
Infecting the nobility of all  
Who fight in chivalry to win the right.



Own up to your hypocrisy and seek  
Redemption for your gutless craven acts,  
The murders of the pure, the clean, the chaste  
Who never did you any harm at all  
And never would in any future war.

I am not proud of all the wars I've seen,  
The Pyrrhic victories that claim the lives  
Of those young lions led like nervous sheep  
As to the slaughterhouse by spineless men,  
Hyenas with no military skill.

In Asculum, southeast of Rome, the Greek  
King Pyrrhus of Epirus lost his men  
To the Republic, who as well, gave up  
Its soldiers in a useless bloody draw,  
And gave his name to all futility.           279 bce

For eighty years, the Catholic Spanish kings  
Fought to retain their regal sovereignty  
Against the freedom-loving Netherlands,  
But in the siege of Ostend for three years,           1601-1604  
More than a hundred thousand people died.

Is it stupidity or ignorance  
That leads to such severe calamities,  
And who will count the cost in human lives  
When those in power can inflict the pain  
On innocents without a cause to gain?

Three times in forty years, the Seminoles           1816-1858  
Fought the American expansionists  
Who lusted for their land in Florida,  
Demanding that the pesky Indians  
Get off the fertile land that white men want.

When Andrew Jackson raided Florida,   1818  
The land belonged—by white man's law—to Spain,  
But that did not prevent the General  
From razing villages of Seminoles,  
Oblivious to human dignity.

Osceola was a Seminole  
Who talked until the talk had no effect,  
Then took his people on the road to war,  
Resisting the demands to relocate  
To sterile western prairie properties/

Though Osceola fought with bravery,  
Believing white men's lies, he was betrayed.  
His flag of truce lay trampled underfoot,  
He died deceitful white man's prisoner,  
While Seminoles went to the Everglades.

George Armstrong Custer, the epitome  
Of arrogance the likes of which will lead  
To fatal ignominious defeat,  
Fell victim to the tragic flaw of pride  
And loss to Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse.                      1876

It's called The Battle of the Greasy Grass  
By the Lakota Sioux and by their friends  
Who slaughtered all the Seventh Cavalry  
Beside the Little Big Horn River bank,  
The final stand of Custer and his men.

It was an unjust war of Washington  
Against the native people for their land,  
Alike to Joshua at Jericho,  
Embarking on a wicked genocide,  
All for the sake of just a bit of soil.

Dakota Sitting Bull, a warrior,  
Protected all of those who could not fight;  
Lakota Crazy Horse could not accept  
Invasion from the east. Together they  
Defeated Custer's vaunted regiment.

I try to shield the mothers and their babes  
From injury and death as best I can.  
Remember, I believe in chivalry,  
Though some believe it is irrelevant,  
Convinced that all is fair in love and war.

To treat with courtesy and charity  
The women and the weak who need my help  
Has always been my guide, though some believe  
There's no compassion in the God of War,  
Accepting what they hear from those who hate.

Take hold of your reality and think  
That much of what you're shown and told are lies  
Spun by the side that has an incentive,,  
A stake in falsity and fallacy,  
Compelling them to cheat and to deceive.

My code, as ancient as the warrior,  
Requires that I adhere to principles  
Of gallantry and of nobility  
That brooks no cowardice or selfishness  
But magnanimity to one and all.

You know by now that I am not a beast.  
I have a moral heart. I seek to right  
The wrongs committed in the name of war,  
Such immorality that men disguise  
As vital national security.

Atlantis, once a great society,  
Offended by its hubris all the gods  
And sank in punishment below the waves.  
It lacked in its prosperity a sense  
Of decent moderation and respect.

Would I attack a village or a town  
To loot and plunder just because I can?  
My code of honor will prevent such things  
By me or by the warriors I know.  
Ferocious? Yes, I am, but not corrupt.

The hate of my own birth weighs heavily  
Upon my heart and mind, but I will win  
Not only on the battlefield, but here,  
Where lives my soul, the source of who I am,  
The fountainhead of my morality.





How many more must die? How much more blood  
Must flow from tender veins of novices  
Before insanity is overcome  
By rationality and careful thought  
To end the mindless slaughter of their kind?

Where is the charity, humanity,  
That must win out if this, the race of men,  
Survive the next millennium or two—  
Or even one or two more centuries—  
As anything but dust of memory?

In hospitals and homes around the world  
The broken bodies lie in suffering,  
While wars continue spewing forth the dross  
Of battles borne of pleonexia,  
Unsated greed and lust for others' lands.

Accuse me of my share of misery.  
Intensity of combat knows no bounds,  
But never dare to say the fault was mine  
That in the hearts of mortals lay the seeds  
Of barbrous cruelty to their own kind.

When I need rest, I find a quiet stream,  
And sit alone beneath a willow tree.  
I watch the swallows and the meadowlarks  
Take to the air, so graceful on the wing,  
So well-proportioned for their daily flight.

In this, I find a basic principle  
That's easier to see when I'm at rest:  
The birds reveal a pattern we can use.  
Their form is perfect for what they must do,  
To fly, to soar, to dive, and to survive.

Come, Warrior, and learn from simple birds,  
That you must be equipped, as they instruct,  
With what you need to win and to survive,  
A helmet and protection for your chest,  
Along with sturdy boots for your long trek.

From Nature, we can see the obvious,  
What may be hidden in the fog of war,  
That victory requires the warrior  
To be prepared for what the enemy  
May bring to shed his blood and break his bones.

Exhausted warriors can make mistakes  
That cause the deaths of comrades on their side,  
Allowing enemies to penetrate  
The battle lines with greater confidence,  
And all because your warriors are tired!

When Homer sang his song of Ilium,  
It was as if the Bard himself observed  
The Greeks and Trojans as they boldly clashed  
On battlefields before the walls of Troy,  
But I was there, and I can tell the tale.

When I left Greece, I left for love, not hate,  
Nor in a jealous rage the Spartan king  
Displayed for all his warriors to see,  
But for the God of Love, Aphro Roula,  
The only one for whom I'd fight and die.

I saw Achilles on the battlefield  
Pursuing his ambition to be great,  
To be remembered for a thousand years,  
But sullied reputation when he dragged  
The corpse of Hector 'round the city walls.

I fought as infantry with hoplites brave  
And rode as cavalry with Hannibal.  
My arrows killed a thousand Frankish knights  
At Agincourt with Henry at the head, 1415  
A band of brothers fighting all as one.

I was with Wellington at Waterloo 1815  
With my artillery, the battle's king.  
My Bangalore torpedo at Cambrai 1917  
Tore holes in barbed wire fences of the boche.  
I've seen it from the soldier's point of view.

I piloted the Hawker Hurricane  
And downed a dozen German Messerschmitts  
That Hermann Göring sent across the sea           1940  
To bring the British people to their knees  
But only strengthened their resolve to win.

I drove a Sherman tank across the sands  
Of Egypt with a British Regiment,  
Destroying Panzers at El Alamein,           1942  
Defeating Rommel in North Africa  
And bringing hope to British families.

Where once the horses of the cavalry  
Would carry knights across the grassy plain,  
To shock the soldiers of the infantry  
With flaring nostrils and with steel-shod hooves,  
A new more fearsome mount has come to fight.

The Leopard and the Panther battle tanks  
Command the ground on open battlefields  
With power, shock, and the ability  
To move with speed to where they're needed most,  
Invincible perhaps or nearly so.

More than a thousand Russian tanks were lost  
Campaigning in Ukraine for just a year, 2022  
Some damaged, some destroyed, but many more  
Abandoned by their crews who went across  
The lines to join Zelensky's Blue and Gold.

Now comes from far across the Western Sea  
The M1 Abrams tank to fight the Bear, 2023  
All sixty tons and more when fully armed,  
With cannon and machine gun, for the fight  
Against a dissipated Putin's force.

Aboard the Lexington, I thought I'd see  
How naval aircraft could be used to win  
A battle for an ocean's dominance,  
So from the deck I flew my fighter plane,  
The brawny Grumman F4 Wildcat.



Out on the Coral Sea, I found a ship,      1942  
Shōkaku, with its Empire's battle flag  
High-mounted on its mast, inviting me  
To aim all four .50-calibers  
And rake the deck and bridge with deadly fire.

I manned the heavy guns at Tarawa      1943  
And Iwo Jima near the end of war      1945  
And saw the setting sun of Japanese  
Imperial belligerence up close,  
The end of Tojo's reign of hell on earth.

I joined the crew of the Enola Gay      1945  
At North Field on the isle of Tinian  
As Little Boy was put aboard the plane  
And trembled with the knowledge of the thing  
That we were meant to do that August morn.



**BOOK XI.**  
**Ares Victorious**

If any nation holds me in esteem,  
It's Pelops' Isle, where men are gifts to me  
And from their weaning trained to fight, to kill  
With no remorse, to shed the blood of all  
Who dare offend the bold Laconians.

For twenty years, the Messenian War 743-724 bce  
Claimed lives and slaves for Sparta's governors.  
By taking Ampheia by surprise,  
Alcmenes, Sparta's great Agiad king,  
Expanded to the west Morean reign.

To fertile soil, the Spartans came to farm  
The lands that once Achaeans used to plow,  
Who now are helots bound in slavery  
Subservient to Morea's rich and proud,  
And I could count the thousand men I slew.

The Spartans brought the war across the plains  
To punish those whose worship they opposed,  
But they ignored the timeless God of War  
And raised no tropaion to honor me,  
Who wiped out thousands of their enemies.

By Sparta's arrogance and blasphemy  
I was deprived of proper dignity,  
So to the brother of my father Zeus,  
Poseidon, I submitted my appeal,  
Assured that Sparta's punishment was due.

Poseidon pondered the request, then said,  
"Though never favored by the gods, you earned  
Obeisance by the Spartan populace.  
Mortals must be grateful to the gods  
Or gods will vanish in the mists of time."



I stood atop the high Acadian mount  
And watched ungrateful Pelops laid to waste  
By such a quake as I had never known, 464 bce  
The work of that great God who answered me  
And punished Sparta's wicked sacrilege.

The Spartans will rebuild, but they will pay  
In blood for centuries to come with wars  
Against their enemies, Messenians,  
And I will fight against my former friends  
Reminding them that victory is mine.

Across the fertile plain of Lelantine,  
Northeast of mainland Greece, two city-states,  
At one time in the past the best of friends,  
Began to argue over who should reap  
The ripened autumn harvest of the fields.

I heard the angry squabbling farmers' voices  
And thought a nearby war might be at hand  
In which my special skills might be of use,  
So down I landed on the plain between  
The Chalcis and the Eretrian men.

To my delight, men came from other states,  
From Corinth and from Thessaly to fight  
Along with men from Syracuse against  
The warriors of Chios and Argos,  
A rich abundance of such men to slay.

The battle's struck, but both sides did agree      c. 705 bce  
No slings or javelins would be allowed,  
Nor bows with arrows flying from afar,  
And only brazened swords, held hand-to-hand,  
Familiar to Euboean island men.

Good news for me! Those weapons I know not.  
My fighting style is man-to-man alone.  
My axe aside, I hefted up my sword  
And flew into the fray with all my rage.  
The blood of men I killed flowed through the fields.



So many men were slain that I lost count,  
And in the end, no man can tell who won.  
The only victor was the God of War,  
And I am satisfied with what I did  
To end the war the only conqueror.

Fifty years of fighting were the Greeks  
And Persians from the East with Darius  
Intent on punishing Athenians  
For their support of insurrectionists  
Against the kingdom on Ionia.

To Marathon, the Persians came assured 490 bce  
Of holy win against the untried Greeks,  
With confidence in their supremacy  
In combat on a distant foreign shore,  
Their banners waving in the Attic wind.

Miltiades rallied all the Greeks,  
And then I saw my opportunity,  
To shed the Persians' blood upon the plain  
With stories that would last a thousand years  
About the tale of Marathon and me.      490 bce

I fought beside the hoplite infantry,  
With iron swords and spears in phalanxes  
Held tight by discipline and loyalty,  
Beneath bronze helmets varied in design  
Protecting crown and squinting eyes from harm.

The God of War prevailed against the odds  
Opposing Cyrus' son in battle fierce  
With axe and sword impervious to harm  
Inflicting death on the invader's troops,  
So I remain victorious once more.

In time, I watched Athenians grow strong  
And how the Spartans also watched with dread  
That Athens' growing posed a threat to them,  
As risk of confrontation seemed to rise,  
And, once again, I saw a place for me.



The Roman army with its legions strong  
Referred to me as Mars, but I'm the same  
No matter how I'm called and in what tongue,  
The God of War, *Deus Belli* in Rome,  
And still the spirit of the battlefield.

Vercingetorix was the King of Celts      82-46 bce  
Who rose against the brutal Roman rule,  
The *Pax Romana* with its cruelty.  
*Romani crudelitas* was their state,  
A frightful foreign terroristic force.

The final Battle of Alesia      52 bce  
Found valiant Celtic forces in the lead,  
Defending their own land to the last man,  
Until a brilliant Roman general  
Encircled and defeated that brave group.

That general was Gaius Julius  
Who later crossed the River Rubicon      49 bce  
In glory to become the dictator  
Of Rome until the Senate had enough  
And ended his dictatorship with knives. 44 bce

There are some nations where there is no war.  
Although the Swiss may guard the Pope in Rome,  
They have not been at war with anyone  
Since Sonderbund, a minor civil war,      1847  
When just a hundred valiant soldiers died.

But they are well prepared, the cagey Swiss,  
For their defense, if enemies attack,  
As every able-bodied man is trained  
With modern weapons they might have to use,  
Along with an ingenious strategy.

Should Switzerland be mobilized to fight  
Against a hostile military force,  
They'd blow up every bridge and railroad track  
And block the roads with rubble from the hills,  
Frustrating the incursion from abroad.

But more than that, attacking Switzerland  
Is inadvisable for anyone,  
As nations need a banker for their wars.  
Geography may be expedient,  
But money in the end will win the day.

In Costa Rica, there is no armed force.  
The people will not spend a colón more  
For wasteful military armaments  
To take away to foreign battlefields  
Or to deny the dissidents their due.

In nineteen forty-eight, they had a war, 1948  
A civil war that caused the President  
To call an end to military funds  
And use the money for some better use  
Like health and education for the poor.

What will they do if enemies attack  
Their cities and their rural villages?  
Will they surrender all they have to them,  
Submitting to oppressive dominance,  
Or will they turn to others for their aid?

Police patrol the borders and keep peace,  
Providing safety and security,  
Along with capable civilian guards.  
But will they ever have a need for help?  
I wonder and can only join in hope

When battle's past, I stand victorious  
For I don't wish to choose a side to aid  
But seek the swiftest end to enmity  
That yields a body count for its own sake  
Of warriors and novices alike.

Why do I care about the origins  
Of armies and their bravest warriors,  
What gods they worship or their fantasies?  
My only purpose is to fight the fight.  
What else would any other purpose serve?

The fight I choose is not as many think.  
I do not sell my sword and spear so cheap  
That any despot with a fatted purse  
Can ever buy my weapons or my soul  
With filthy lucre stolen by the cheats.

My reputation as a warrior  
Can never do me harm, for that I am,  
And have been from my early childhood days,  
Equipped, attired, preparing for my fight  
With adversaries standing in my way.

As I began to fight with anyone  
On any field and any circumstance,  
I came to see that my antagonists  
Were often boys of tender years and mien,  
Whose cheeks were clean as newborn babies' skin.

These youths I pushed aside and made my way  
To meet the battle-hardened veterans  
With iron swords, with axes, and with spears  
Held firmly in the grips of muscled men  
Accustomed to avoiding solid blows.

When all was done, and in a somber mood,  
I sat upon a granite stone and thought,  
Was that war right and just when in its ranks  
Were children imitating blooded men  
Prepared to kill, prepared to die—for what?

Then it occurred to me to ask, Where are the men  
Who sent these boys to fight and die for them  
Before the time when they would come to age?  
And that is when I not again would fight  
For any tyrant in an unjust war.

The God of War will never be usurped,  
For there's no power that can rival mine  
On earth or in pathetic minds of men.  
The ancient gods are gone into the mists  
Of time, although their temples still remain.

Delusional the worshippers who pray,  
Who earnestly assert there's someone who  
Will listen to their melancholy cries  
And grant their fevered wishes for a fee,  
A ram, a hen, or just a purse of gold.

Ambition is a master in disguise,  
Enticing those who yearn to confiscate  
Their neighbors' goods and dominate their lands,  
To take by force what they have never earned  
By clever intellect or diligence.

Across the seven seas, around the world,  
Are greedy men who reach across their bounds  
To clutch the throats of friendless novices  
And throw them headlong into servitude,  
Usurping lawful seats of governments.

In Africa, where I enjoy full sway,  
It's said that when the elephants contest,  
It is the greenest grass that suffers most  
That had no part in the dispute but paid  
The price of being in the battle's place.

When Pyrrhus of Epirus fought his wars  
The flame-haired king claimed dominance, but at  
What cost did conquest come to Asculum?      279 bce  
And caring not for Pyrrhus or for Rome,  
I claim the win with tens of thousands dead.

In Borodino did Napoleon      1812  
Boast his Grand Army won the battle fierce,  
Ensnared in Moscow while his regiments  
Were starving in the devastated fields,  
And once again, it's only I who won.

If Bonaparte were such a clever man,  
As those who write the history proclaim,  
Then how could that great man have blundered so,  
Have been so wrong when he went to the East,  
And been outwitted by the Russian Tsar?

A blunder's just a really bad mistake.  
We make mistakes. We all have made mistakes.  
Inconsequential, most of those mistakes,  
With harm to no one in particular.  
We shake our heads, and we apologize.

In all my battles, I have made my share  
Of truly poor decisions large and small,  
So I regret the choices that I made,  
But having learned from my experience,  
I move along the line that is my life.

Adiaphora are the meaningless,  
Without a certain moral consequence,  
But blunders that cause unintended harm  
Are not the same, are inexcusable  
And they besmirch the warrior's good name.

From Xerxes to the blind Flaminius  
And from the haughty French at Agincourt      1415  
To Bonaparte and all the rest, their gaffes  
Condemned their thousands to a futile death,  
Along with Hitler's human sacrifice.

I remember when the state of Qin  
Besieged the Zhao fortress of Shangdang      262-260 bce  
For three long years without a victory,  
When on misguided whim, Zhao Kuo went out  
To break the siege of the invading force.

It was a blunder in the classic sense,  
To rush out into battle with no thought  
Of how his army would be fed and fueled  
When in pursuit of Bai Qi in retreat  
He found he fell into a well-planned trap.

Another blunder farther to the west  
Flaminius committed in his fight  
With Hannibal and thought he'd caught  
The Carthaginian at Trasimene  
Without a scout to take a look ahead.      217 bce

Flaminius with injudicious haste  
Gave orders to attack, when Hannibal  
Descended from the darkly wooded hills  
And massacred the Romans in their lines,  
The blunder yielding failure in the war.

The blunder's not so rare in strategy.  
I've seen it many times when just a thought  
Of consequences might have saved the day,  
But there are blunders tactical, as well,  
Committed in the battle's smoke and heat.

And one of these I'll never understand,  
Though I have heard the stories from the men,  
Those half who managed to survive the fray.  
Six hundred lancers, hussars, and dragoons  
With sabers, lancers, nothing more, they rode.

Crimea is a large peninsula,  
The Black Sea west and south and east surround,  
Where Western Allies fought the Russian Tsar  
For reasons I find no one can explain  
With any clarity or common sense.

In Balaclava did the Light Brigade  
Attack the Russians making off with guns      1854  
Six hundred charged the line; three hundred died  
Because...? Because...? I cannot tell you why  
Or who it was whose blunder caused the deaths.

When British merchants fought the Nepalese,      1814-1816  
They thought their enemies were impotent,  
Mere primitives without the proper tools  
To challenge the Imperial command,  
Invincible, impossible, so grand.

East India the company was called,  
The ever-avaricious EIC,  
With but a single wicked aim in sight:  
To conquer foreign lands where profit lies,  
Where revenue will justify the cost.

The merchants won three Anglo-Mysore Wars 1767-1799  
And wars against the southern princely states,  
But then they blundered into Gurkha land 1814  
Supremely confident that they would win  
Against these simple mountain savages.

Fierce fighting men of Nepal's Kathmandu 1814-1816  
Would never yield to foreign dominance,  
But would instead become a fearsome band  
Within the British military force,  
A blunder with a satisfying end.

I think I understand the blunders' cause,  
Why people do the stupid things they do,  
When they should think a matter through with care,  
Unleashing consequences they might know  
If only they would contemplate the end.

It's hubris at the top of any list  
Of reasons for the blunders that I've seen,  
An overweening pride that takes command  
Of better judgment and of careful thought,  
The king of vices leading to distress.

Next, after pride is pompous arrogance,  
The feeling of superiority  
That weak and feckless narcissists display  
To hide their fear that they may be exposed  
As cowards when the light is brought to bear.

And finally, there is the ignorance,  
The simple fact they do not understand  
The situation that demands a choice  
Between the blunder and a clever way  
That wins the battle or the total war.

Before the leaders send their boys to fight,  
Consider whether they could win or lose,  
Then maybe they would hold their tongues awhile  
Until the estimate is understood,  
The price that war demands of either side.

As time goes by, the lethal weapons change,  
From axes made of stone and spears of bronze  
To swords of stronger iron and of steel,  
And then to cannons, guns, and hand grenades,  
From horse-drawn chariots to battle tanks.

Avoid the blunders, I advise, and think  
Of how the armaments have changed,  
And study how the victors have prevailed,  
From ancient times to only yesterday,  
That teach successful winning strategies.

Someday, the warriors will fly away  
From earth up to the moon where they will find  
Their adversaries on the lunar hills  
And use such weapons I have never known  
To make the battlefield a battlespace.

As gentle folk as I have ever seen,  
The people of the land of Vietnam,  
Grew rice and lived in peace until the French,  
Decided they would occupy that ground  
And dominate the growing Asian trade.

The “white man’s burden” was the rationale  
That covered unapologetic greed  
When men of capital attacked the poor  
To rob them of the little that they had:  
*Merci beaucoup*, you wretched peasant lot!

What could they do, these tillers of the soil?  
*Fait accompli*. The deed is done. We rule!  
Get back to work. Go out into the sun.  
Go pick the rice and cut the rubber plants  
To stuff our European pocketbooks.

Perhaps the day may come, and come it will,  
When unfit conquerors will be expelled,  
But not before a war or two will end  
The profit of their foreign thieving reign.  
I knew the wars would come and come they did.





He had a hundred names, or maybe more,  
But friendly “Uncle Ho” will do for now.  
He fought for freedom for his countrymen  
From French colonials, the Japanese,  
The French again, and the Americans.

I listened as he spoke with clarity,  
With fervent passion for a righteous cause,  
To rid the land of domineering men  
Who had no moral right to rule by force.  
“Rise up and let the dragon fly,” he said. 1946

Ten thousand soldiers entered from Japan,           1940  
Supporting Vichy France in their control,  
But when the soldiers left, the French remained  
And struggled for nine years with “Uncle Ho”  
Until they lost their war at Dien Bien Phu.           1954

Three million dead in Viet Nam, a war   1955-1975  
That Lyndon Johnson tried to win but lost  
To “little men in black pajamas” dressed,  
The rising “body count” on sides alike  
Was to my mind a senseless futile scheme.

In northern climes, the winter chills the bones,  
So no commander sends his troops to fight  
In snow and ice and sleet and freezing air—  
Except Napoleon and Hitler, too,  
And inept Putin in the vast Ukraine.

With deadly frostbite on their feet and toes,  
Their eyes enveloped in an icy mask,  
Obscuring corpses in the frozen fields,  
The soldiers march to seek supremacy,  
And find defeat at Mother Nature’s hands.

“March on!” the sergeants and the captains shout.  
“There is no turning back,” commanders add,  
“The nation’s liberty depends on you.  
You need to make the sacrifice,” they say,  
As from a distance, I can hear and see.



They lie. It is not true that death of youth  
Is all that keeps alive a nation's hope,  
A pile of corpses in exchange for loot  
Is not a bargain anyone would want,  
Indecent covenant with baleful death.

At Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, 1863  
The men in gray believed they'd win the war  
By bringing to the people of the north  
The feud that seemed a million miles away,  
To shock their tender sensibilities.

Fresh from his victory in Chancellorsville, 1863  
Emboldened and with motivated troops,  
The general planned a risky strategy  
That failed in execution of the plan  
When men in blue repulsed George Pickett's charge.

July in Gettysburg in sixty-three,  
Began the end for General Robert Lee,  
While half his men in rebel gray lay dead,  
And major victory for George G. Meade,  
The cause of Southern slavery was lost.

I dressed in blue and fought with Meade that day  
With deadly sharpened saber in my hand  
To press for freedom for the families  
Held hostage by the privileged white men  
Who bought and sold them in the marketplace.

Sometimes the warrior might lose control,  
Transform in anger to a raging beast  
With no regard for any innocents,  
The women and the tender babes in arms  
Who pose no threat to them or anyone.

Do not depend on me to lie for you  
If in a state of fury you may kill  
A first-grade child who's walking to her school  
Oblivious to you and to your war,  
Avoiding bits of rubble in the street.

I'll never make excuses for the likes  
Of William Calley or his followers      1968  
For what they did in Mỹ Lai long ago.  
They were not warriors in Viet Nam  
But murderers impelled by hate and fear.

When comrades fall, the warrior fights on  
Against the enemy—but not his wife  
Or family in frenzied mindless rage—  
With all his mighty hand and steady wit  
To win with gracious honor for his friends.

When I began my fighting escapades,  
My weaponry was made of stone and bone.  
Then later came the bronze to keep the edge  
Upon my axe and sword and javelin.  
Next was the iron, strong, resilient.

What more could any warrior desire  
Besides a weapon of such solid stuff  
To wield against the enemy in war  
And bring the battle to a winning end,  
To power and to gratitude for strength.

What more? The gun and powder for the gun,  
The cannon and the cannonball, to break  
Impenetrable walls, completely smash  
Safe cities and their armories and stores.  
What more could any warrior desire?

The B2 bomber and the fighter jet  
Delivering destruction from the air,  
Below the missiles in the submarines,  
And weaponry that still has yet to come  
Is what the warrior will need to win.

What is this “victory” that nations seek,  
Above all other aims at any cost?  
I know what victory there is in war,  
To vanquish, to destroy, eliminate  
The other force that's out to conquer me.

But in the end, when all is said and done,  
What does it mean that one has gained a win  
When men and boys are dead, and treasure spent  
Not ever to be seen again, the waste  
To prove a point, to show your manliness?

It's true that I have been victorious,  
And even if my chosen side has lost,  
My reputation and my fame still stand  
From age to age and all around the world,  
With never-ending lines of worshippers.

My undiminished power still reigns free,  
And after Troy, I'll never lose again,  
For now, I know the truth, that victory  
Is fantasy, that in a war, there is  
No winning side, that all bereave their loss.

I hear some voices in my anxious dreams,  
With confidence, they always say to me,  
"The best way to defeat an enemy,"  
I nearly waken from my sleep to hear,  
"Surely is to make of him your friend."

Can it be true? Is this advice for me,  
I who have slashed and slain my whole life long?  
The broken bodies and the broken souls,  
Is this my legacy in history,  
To be remembered disagreeably?

Of all the enemies that I defeat,  
If one still lives, I treat with charity.  
The bestiality of violence  
Is not the calling of my life of war,  
But that's the ugly nature of this beast.

And in my dreams, I see my valiant foes,  
As warriors we fought and met the test:  
To overcome the fog that clouds the mind  
When battles loom with enemies in sight,  
Imagining what lies ahead for both.

*J'accuse!* I hear the gods and mortals shout,  
But what's the crime and where's the evidence?  
Abhor the blood profusely shed in war,  
Detest the devastation of the land,  
But dare you not impugn the warrior.

*J'accuse!* I charge the greedy hypocrites,  
The liars and the so-called patriots  
Who hide behind their nations' unfurled flags  
And spread their propaganda to the boys  
They send to die on foreign battlefields.

*J'accuse!* I'd prosecute the profiteers  
Who never saw a war they didn't like  
And shudder at the thought that wars might end,  
Reducing profits from their armaments  
And leaving them with unsold merchandise.

*Je n'accuse pas!* I do not blame  
The men and women who believe the lies—  
Or because they need the salary—  
Put lives on hold and with a sad farewell  
Go to the front to face the enemy.

I've made mistakes, I readily admit,  
But in the fog of war, who has not erred?  
Who has not done a thing that he regrets  
When all the facts are brought to vivid light  
And shocking consequences laid out bare?

Once in Sevastopol in heavy rain,        1854  
I threw my javelin across the green  
At one I thought a British officer  
And struck that darkened figure in the chest,  
A fatal blow with no recovery.

The cloak flew off and I could clearly see  
A woman with an infant in her arms,  
No weapon or defense against my spear.  
I could not go a moment back in time  
To stop the horrible mistake I made.

There were no words that I could say to her  
Or to the babe I just made motherless.  
I offer no excuse, no alibi  
For what I did, the horror of it all,  
But sorrow ever haunts my days and nights.

To win a war is not a choice you make,  
But rather winning is a consequence,  
The sum of all the choices you have made  
From first to last of the alternatives  
That Nature and your enemy provide.

At Agincourt, the French nobility        1415  
Decided to advance through all the muck  
To battle Henry's simple commoners,  
With lofty confidence unmerited  
And lost not only battle but the war.

Napoleon decided to attack        1812  
The vastness of the Russian mass of land  
While thinking that his only enemy  
Was Alexander, Tsar, and all his men,  
Ignoring Mother Nature and her force.

And even I, the God of War, went wrong  
When I defected from Athena's side  
To join the cause in Troy that could not win,  
Impassioned choice that almost cost my life  
Pursuing Aphrodite to the end.

In dark of night, the sentries walk their posts,  
While soldiers try to get a little sleep,  
And I keep company with those who guard,  
Who watch and listen for an enemy  
Approaching through the wire obstacles.

One night in Hue, I saw the strangest sight.  
A single slight-built figure dressed in black  
Contorting, twisting, turning through the wire,  
A small brown canvas satchel on his back,  
Most likely filled with Composition C.



Against the pale gray sky, the figure moved  
And caught the sentry's well-trained practiced eye.  
He watched the movement for a little while,  
Then raised his M16 and taking aim,  
Fired at the drum of fougasse near the man.

The drum exploded, spreading burning oil  
Across some twenty meters all around.  
I could not hear the penetrator scream,  
And maybe he did not, but died in pain,  
But vindication would be soon at hand.

Philosophers have pondered for millennia  
About what's true, what's right, what's beautiful.  
They've disagreed about reality  
And even whether there is such a thing,  
Or if it's all a fancy, all a dream.

When nations go to war, there is no doubt  
That men will die, that children die, as well,  
No woman can be safe from predators,  
And what was built will crumble into dust,  
But no philosopher can tell you why.

A search for food one surely understands,  
The biological imperative  
That every living organism needs,  
But I've observed that seldom is the cause.  
Instead, it's often hate and pride and greed.

When Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*, he made it clear 1925  
Annihilate the Jews, destroy the Slavs!—  
A testament, an epic ode to hate  
Recorded by a lunatic in jail.  
You should have listened to the lunatic.

***The final book, Book XII, will be in the next issue***