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POETRY

Ares: A Poem

Books XII

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BOOK XII.
Ares Resident

The seeds of war, their very origin.
And who or what created them, and why,
Are things that we are never meant to know.
But this one thing I know without a doubt,
That war with hate and greed are of a kind.

The universe was founded on a lie,
That buried in the sky are truth and hope.
My sister Eris had it figured out:
The universe is begging to return
To Chaos in the dark and misty deep.

Disorder and distrust right from the start
Is what the universe became at birth.
Survival simply is the only truth
With any meaning for the gods and men,
And war is just the means we must employ.

Away with timid, squeamish men and gods,
Repelled by battle's bloody sights and smells,
Who send their boys to war but will not go
Themselves to fight for their own selfish cause,
Who profit handsomely from each new war.

Those men, those hypocrites, those greedy men
Who lie, and cheat, and steal shout out their call
For other men to fight for what they're told
Is national defense against a foe
Who'd rob them of their wives and property.

To Tartarus below I'd send such men,
Those mongers of the wars from which they gain
Great wealth to satisfy their greed and lust
To dominate with lies the weak and poor,
Molesting tender youth for profit's sake.

The God of War will take the men and boys
Those peddlers send to do their dirty work,
But spilling blood of youth is not my choice.
Send me the warriors, the grown-up men,
Who bring the battle skills to each affair.

I much enjoy contesting with the best,
With those who challenge me with no god's aid,
Who, knowing they face early death, fight on,
Aspiring to defeat the God of War.
Send these to fight and not untested boys.

I understand the mortals who want peace,
Who will not fight no matter what the cause,
For I would love to be the God of Peace
And store my blooded weapons in a shed,
But there are times I find I must respond.

The conscientious man is not unique
In his objection to the force of arms.
Achilles was the greatest warrior,
But even he was loathe to go to war
Against the Trojans for the Spartan Queen.

Achilles went for he was called to fight,
Not for the Attic King or for the Greeks,
But that his name would live a thousand years,
And so it has, and even thrice as long,
In tales of glory three millennia.

So, you objectors, do not say that we
Who fight lack consciences. If you say that,
You would have watched the Nazi Holocaust
From some safe hiding place with no concern
For those who suffered in the prison camps.

"Deny the Holocaust!" the bigots screamed,
"Cooked up by Jews to stain the Teuton race."
"The photographic evidence was fake
With actors playing sad-eyed prisoners
Pretending deprivation of their rights."

Call me a skeptic; I'll not disagree.
Show me the evidence that proves your claim,
And I can be convinced that you are right.
Show me the maps and do the calculus
That leads to a conclusion with no doubt.

But never dare to call me cynical,
Refusing to accept the proven facts,
Ignoring evidence that contradicts
My strongly held beliefs or biases,
Regardless of the truth that you can prove.

The Holocaust was real, and millions died
Because of one man's hateful tyranny.
I learn from my mistakes. I also learn
From others' blunders and their biases
When I can see results like Holocaust.

What hate can do confounds the reasoned mind!
The Holocaust was Hitler's final plan
To murder every child of Abraham.
Six million of the tribe he put to death
Before the Devil dragged him back to Hell. 1945

I cannot rest until the world is free,
Until all traces of the hate and greed
That drove the Germans and the Japanese.
No moral being takes the path of crimes
Against the whole of all humanity.

But immorality is a disease
Spawned in the Chaos long before our time.
Perdition's path is paved with venal pride,
With markers promising what cannot be
To those who trust that what they hear is true.

From those in leadership, far more is due.
They have a duty to morality,
To show the righteous path by how they live,
And not to tell but demonstrate the path
Their followers must choose above the rest.

Each warrior must choose the path to take,
The path to glory or to infamy,
A winding road that's filled with obstacles
Or smooth and easy road that leads to Hell,
But I am confident. I know my friends.

My optimism grows when I see youth,
Devoted to a better way of life,
Who study military victories,
Of those of us who fought for principles,
For justice and for freedom in the land.

Academies where future leaders learn to lead,
To think with care, avoiding all the traps
Of prejudice and hate that cloud the mind,
Who take an oath that they will never lie,
Or cheat, or steal, or tolerate such vice.

Each leader has a personality
That can be helpful when the time arrives
When soldiers struggle to survive the fears
Of dangers they have not experienced,
And need a leader's positive approach.

How military leaders are prepared,
Both what they're taught and how they must behave,
Will lead to victory or to defeat,
Regardless of the weapons or support,
Or of the warriors whom they command.

"Do not despair," the leader tells his troops.
"You are superior, and you will win.
Fight through your fears. You know what you must do.
It won't be easy, you must realize,
But this, right now, will be your finest hour."

These are the words the leader needs to say
When cannon fire is near and overhead,
Before the order comes to "Take the hill,"
To leave the rocky cover and advance,
As comrades fall to the machinegun fire.

B52s may drop their massive bombs,
But all they do is make a lot of holes.
But it's the Queen of Battle takes the land,
The Joes, the Mikes, the Petes, the Infantry
That wins the battles till the war is won.

Achilles in his rage defied the gods
By dragging Hector's body through the dust,
But Priam's plea gave Thetis son the chance
To show that he was still devoted to the gods
And to redeem himself to history.

Like him, I am a warrior who fights
With such ferocity that you expect
When you decide that we must go to war
Against an enemy who is prepared
With arms and attitudes to win the prize.

And when that day arrives to face the foe,
Will you prefer to send the timid man
Or one like me, who knows what he must do,
That there's no place for such timidity
When javelins are thrown and swords are thrust.

If war is in your plan, then you must win,
So you must send the very best, and yes,
That means ferocity is what you need,
A fury led by Eagles, not by crows,
Unleashed against a strong and vicious enemy.

Give me Achilles—Sing his praise on high!
In him, there is the greatest warrior,
Reluctant to engage, but when the dogs
Of war nip at his heels, he will arise.
Now there's a worthy challenger to me.

Achilles, come to me, and we will fight
Together and to magnify your fame,
Lest mortals may in time forget your deeds,
Your name shall once again be on the lips
Of all, your glory known in every land.

Peleus' son with Thetis, river nymph
Who gave you life and loved you from the start,
Unwavering that you shall never die,
Immersed you fully in the River Styx—
Alas, almost. She held you by your heels.

The treachery! The villainy! The guile!
The fratricide of gray-eyed Pallas false,
Who guided Paris' missile to your heel
Where Thetis held you at that sacred stream,
Thus wreaking that infernal fatal wound.

Send Hector with his javelin and sword,
That Prince of Troy whose courage never failed.
Give him another chance to demonstrate
His prowess on the battlefield today
To try against the God of War.

Restore in whole the body he once held
And proved himself in battles to defend
The Trojan people safe within the walls,
To fight invading armies from without,
An honored Prince whose worthy of the throne.

In honesty, mistook that Patroclus
Clad in the armor of our man of war,
Achilles, resting in his tent the while,
Did slay his dearest friend in battle fair,
And brought the maddened warrior to fight.

Two hardened soldiers man-to-man then clashed,
To death they fought, with Hector's fate assured.
Achilles won but disobeyed the law
By desecrating the remains of him
Who fought with steely valor to the end.

Send Ajax, brawny warrior, to me.
The son of Telamon will test my strength,
As Heracles was tested as a babe
By vengeful Hera, mother of all hate,
And I will match those heroes' potency.

Descended from the King of Gods, that Zeus,
Our Ajax towered over all the rest,
His arms so hard, like massive oaken limbs,
Formed more by sacred eagle than by man,
He is a soldier's soldier through and through.

The black-haired Ajax battled for the Greeks
And killed more men at Troy than I could count
Trained by the centaur Chiron, Ajax learned
The craft of war, to kill and not be killed,
And put his learning to the test in Troy.

With courage and with strength, fought off attacks
And saved the Greeks from Troy's supremacy,
But treacherous Athena took from him
Achilles' sacred armor, causing him
A shame in which he could no longer live.

Give me that clever king of Ithaca;
Give me Odysseus and I will match
His skillful—cunning—ingenuity,
Although I would prefer a match of arms,
A match of power, strength, and battle skills.

Victorious in Troy, he left for home,
A journey that would take ten years again.
The god Poseidon's now his enemy.
Odysseus had stabbed the eye of that
God's son, Polyphemos, the cannibal.

The Lotus Eaters he did best by wit,
And Circe, wicked sorceress, as well,
Who bid him travel to the underworld,
Where he would meet Achilles once again.
And Hercules and Agamemnon, too.

The Sirens he survived and many more,
And finally to Ithaca arrived
To vanquish lusting suitors of his wife,
Penelope, who waited twenty years.
This is a king with whom I'd fight beside.

Do not forget the heroes of the wars
That greedy men conspired to prosecute,
The valiant fighting through their fears and tears,
Who lost their lives, their limbs, their sanity,
The comrades I respected most of all.

Though they are dead or in distress, they fought
With inspiration from the God of War.
For those, I have remorse, for they were brave
And did what they were pledged and trained to do
On battlefields at home or far away.

I live to fight and wield my weapons well.
If Terpsichore inspires the dance, and all
Her sisters breathe into all humankind,
Then think of a brother to the Muse:
I breathe into mankind the urge to war.

I will confess I'm skilled at fighting wars,
Unlike the other gods who promise bliss
But gravely disappoint their worshippers.
I do not disappoint. I promise war,
And war I grant to satisfy the urge.

Send a seasoned battle veteran
To tell the family their son was killed.
Say that he sacrificed his life for you,
But never say he died for profits' sake,
To fill the pockets of the hollow men.

Go with the grieving mother to the site
Where honors will be paid to that young man,
Some melancholy music will be played,
And paeans to his valor will be sung
By sad but dry-eyed mourners in black gowns.

Then get you to the next and then the next
Before the sky turns dark as is the grave,
As dark it is for those young warriors
Who never knew the fullness of a life
Well-lived, who died for some or other cause.

Do not say they sacrificed, as if
They gave their lives in homage to a god,
But say in truth their lives were snatched from them
As they snuffed out the lives of enemies
Whose mothers mourn across the foreign field.

Send me no weaklings to contest and slay,
For it's no challenge to defeat a snake
That slithers in the grass and hides in dark
Recesses of the mind afraid of light
That shatters the illusion of the bold.

If you would send me tricksters, send the best:
Odysseus and Loki from the North,
Companion to the gods Odin and Thor,
Prometheus, the Titan mischievous,
And I will match their wit—or win by force.

Send me no liars, cheats, or common thieves,
Or those who violate the old and weak,
Or send their children to the battlements
Where they will never show their face to me,
For they are not deserving of my sword.

Those jackals will receive their just deserts,
As Adolph Hitler in his bunker did, 1945
Or they will hang as Mussolini hanged,
And not as heroes but contemptible,
Just slugs who left their filthy slime behind.

Make no mistake: I have survived it all.
I triumphed over Hera with her hate,
Athena, too, pretender to my place
As God of War, Olympic hypocrite.
Now they are gone and only I remain.

It may be true that those of ignorance
Still worship gods who long ago expired,
Who left their bogus mark on consciousness
Of naïve mortals thirsting for relief
From ignorance and searching for some truth.

I stand aside and watch the foolishness
Of mortals who prepare to go to war
Against another tribe, another god,
No longer an existent deity,
To whom they pray aloud for victory.

And so I whisper in their ears, “Go fight!”
Pretending it’s their long-dead god they hear,
“We need to fight!” their leaders lie to them,
“For country and our way of life’s at stake,
Let’s pray that our young men will fight for us.”

I, too, have progeny of whom I’m proud.
Eros and Anteros, two treasured sons
From my dear Aphrodite, God of Love
Eschew their father’s constant search for war,
Preferring over all requited love.

Phobos strikes fear into the hearts of foes,
And Deimos does disorder in the ranks.
They come with me, while brothers stay behind,
Their aunt, my sister, Eris, tutors them,
Preparing in their way with mind not sword.

Harmonia is nothing like her aunt,
Epitome of concord, my sweet girl.
Enyalius and Thrax are most like me.
But Phlegyas by offending Phoebus earned
A place in Tartarus.

Two sons exceed me in my cruelty:
Oenomaus and his chariots
And savage Cycnus killed by Heracles.
If I ever had a favorite,
Penthesileia would be the one.

She would become a warrior of fame,
The leader those robust combatants,
Queen of the Amazons, whom I admired
From far and near as they prevailed in war.
Her parents were inordinately proud.

It was a first-rate match, the God of War
And Otrera, the founder of the race
Of female warriors, the Amazons,
A union that produced two other queens
And both with awe-inspiring qualities.

Two queens of Amazons we would create.
By accident, Penthesileia killed
Hippolyta, bewailing in remorse,
But went on fighting made her way to Troy
To help repel the Greeks from Ilium.

She fought heroically and all her tribe,
But then was killed by god-like Heracles,
Deceived by Hera, full of hate and spite,
Who never does her dirty work herself
But tricks and bribes another to the task.

No naïve deity the God of War,
I choose my battles for a grand effect,
Although the side I join may not succeed.
When any city I destroy, that place
Will know my fame a thousand years to come.

When Hitler came to rule in Germany, 1933
He carried in his kit a pouch of hate,
That in the end would cause defeat and death,
My finest hour even though the man
Ignored my warning to decelerate.

Vladimir Putin is that kind of man,
Who praises me and worships at my feet.
He knows what I can do to help him win
The many battles that bedevil him,
But makes of my advice a mockery.

A mouse can squeak at feral cats at night,
With confidence, he'll not be seen and caught,
But savage cats can strike with lightning speed
Impaling heedless prey on piercing claws,
And so it is with prideful naïve men.

Today I go to Kyiv to lend a hand,
To free the land of Vladimir the Great
From Russian criminals in uniforms
Who answer Putin's calls to violate
The code of chivalry and global law. 2023

As Hitler did before, he lies aloud
To justify the widespread plundering
And pointless demolition of the towns
Where innocent civilians have their homes,
Whose people never posed a threat to him.

The maddened Russian Bear is on the loose
With appetite that can't be satisfied.
"Obliterate Ukraine! Destroy it all,"
The homicidal maniac demands,
But they will not go soft or quietly.

Two hundred thousand casualties or more,
And millions on the road to make escape,
But why? I cannot understand the cause
That brought the Russian army to Ukraine.
Insanity cannot provide a clue.

It's clear that chivalry is dead and gone
From memory of warriors today,
Replaced instead by dark hypocrisy
Of slaves to liars, cheats, and thieves
Across the world of sterile counterfeits.

Valhalla's gone, the dream of Vikings old,
Once glorious and beckoning the dead
Who slew the beasts and fell in moral cause,
Heroic and courageous in the fray
Defending those who could not fight themselves.

Elysian Fields are bleak and barren now,
Deserted, desolate, and bare, with weeds
In place of fragrant floral garlands there,
No heroes honored for their bravery,
Abandoned veterans of prior wars.

What Paradise awaits the warrior,
Who rallied to the bugle call and fought
With valor and with skill at arms and died
The death of ancient heroes I have known?
Where is the glory due to those who lived?

I am that warrior who came to fight,
But now I'm here to tell the price of war,
To say who paid that price in early death
And broken bodies and with memories
That haunt the mind on every sleepless night.

"Come home a hero," is the hollow call
From those who never heard the sounds of war
Or smelled the stench of rotting human flesh,
"or come home carried on your shield," they say
In genteel condescending arrogance.

Not all the heroes leave to go to war,
For there are those who manufacture arms,
The weapons warriors will need to win,
Just as Hephaestus made Achilles' kit
And the Cyclopes' lightning bolt for Zeus.

From homes, the fighters come, from family,
Then cherish in their minds as they engage,
To homes they will return—if they survive—
In celebration of the victory
With loving family who kept the faith.

I know not everyone can join the fight.
There is no honor I can justly claim
For killing easy marks, the beardless youth,
Or superannuated veterans,
Survivors of an earlier campaign.

You hypocrites who send your youth to war
While you remain at leisure in your homes
And profit from the blood that's spilled for you,
I call on you to meet me face-to-face,
But cowards to the core, you will not come.

I understand why you will not reply
To invitations from the God of War.
Alarmed that you will die upon my sword,
But that concern is fully meritless.
I would not waste my sword on such as you.

You greedy narcissistic plutocrats,
There is some joy in knowing you will die,
As mortals always do, and you will go
To deepest Tartarus for punishment,
Eternal torture and ignominy.

Pretending fealty to your nation's god,
You sacrificed your soul to something else,
The golden calf, the currency of greed.
Mamonas' devotee you have become,
To serve his purposes among mankind.

You swore allegiance to another god
And not the jealous god of Abraham
Who knows your facile tongue keeps spewing lies
To elevate your stature for a while,
Until the day when you are held to count.

Prevarication is a human trait
Refined across a few millennia
To hide corruption from the public view
And nudge the trusting people into war
Believing that their cause is justified.

I will not lie, nor will I cheat or steal.
That is my code, and I expect the same
Of those whose side I take in any war,
But I am well aware that there are some
Who think that code is quaint and out-of-date.

How did America, the global babe,
Mature so fast and grow so wide and tall,
When all around were other nations' lands?
The new-born babe grew powers rapidly
And showed its muscles all around.

The Union Army told the Indians,
"This ground is white man's soil. You savages
Must go to places we don't need or want.
Go hunt your buffalo before they're gone
And bang your drums and chant your pagan songs."

"Señor," the soldiers called, "you Mexicans
Stand in the way of foretold destiny,
So brace yourselves; prepare for coming war."
I could not join the bold intruding force
With their superiority in arms.

By force, by unjust war, the nation grew
And showed no mercy to the vanquished foe.
Apache, Iroquois, Yaqui, and more
Were dispossessed and robbed of dignity
In racial wars that never could be won.

Their government was born and bred in war,
Inherited from sires in other lands,
Refined in centuries of enmity
To anyone who dared to interfere
With their expansion to the west and south.

I joined the Revolutionary War
Because the colonists had made their case,
As red-haired Thomas Jefferson declared
In Philadelphia, that England's King
Abused his influence and had to go. 1776

But I could not stay long when war was won,
As freedom-loving fighters turned to hate
Toward the tribes who first enjoyed the land
Pronouncing widespread sentences of death
On innocents of every age and sex.

It seems appropriate that those who rule
Would claim their god to be a god of war,
But I cannot accept the reverence
Of those who kill and maim the novices.
I am no evil god of genocide.

To see a genocide in modern times,
You need to go to brutal Bosnia,
Where Christian soldiers killed the Bosniaks,
The men and boys, in nineteen ninety-five,
Eight thousand slaughtered in a single month. 1995

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The Srebrenica massacre, condemned 1995
By all the world, was proof beyond a doubt
That Ratko Mladić was a criminal,
The general who supervised the crimes
Against humanity, of genocide.

There is no more a Yugoslavia
That stitched together six republic states,
And no more Josip Broz to hold them all
Together with a solid iron hand,
The Christians and the Muslims all as one.

The jigsaw puzzle country came apart
Ex uno, septem! Seven out of one.
Then seven wars broke out across the land,
With ethnic hatred let upon the loose,
The bullies and the bigots on the rise.

You think you know, because you read in books,
What war is like. You see in photographs
The two dimensions of the battlefields,
The glossy pictures of the generals,
Statistics of the many casualties.

But do you see the faces of the men
Who are in such excruciating pain
From penetrated flesh and broken bones?
What of the sounds that scream in agony
Of fallen warriors before they die?

Next, put your face close to the book you hold,
And tell me what you smell. Is it the stink
Of week-old corpses rotting in the trench
Or gangrene climbing up a soldier's leg,
The human waste that's festering in piles?

Oh, what a book that it would be to read
So you could know what war is really like,
To know the sights, the sounds, the smells of war,
Then put the book aside and close your eyes
And thank the warriors for what they do.

I am ubiquitous. I live in you,
The might in every war your fathers fought.
So do not seek the God of Peace on earth
Or in the skies above because she's dead,
And only I remain to sway men's minds.

Just look around, and you will see my mark,
Impossible to miss, the steaming flesh
And gushing blood from gaping open wounds
That I inflicted on the men at arms
Who fought for causes that they never knew.

Of all the gods who ever roamed the earth,
There is but one remaining to the end,
A one who dwells within the hearts of men,
Long after other gods have disappeared,
Gone from the pantheon and out of mind.

And I persist, inciting men to war,
So never ask for peace, the end of feuds
While there be pride enlisted in the hearts
Of many lust-filled craving men who shout
The lie that combat is the only truth.

Mellifluous the words I hear from some
Who justify the rush to start a war,
Sweet, scented honey-coated arguments
They smugly offer in the public square
To filch the funds to prosecute their war.

They speak—their words are in the summer air.
Regardless of the language that they use,
There is no logic to the argument,
Or if there is, it fails to meet the test
Of common sense and upright honesty.

The words stir up the bile in all who hear,
But hollow is the core of what they say:
The promise of the glory that will come
To those who fight and those who sacrifice
A little money for a noble cause.

"Strike up the band!" the would-be patriots
Command. "Let's everybody sing the song
Of nation's pride and certain victory!
Let no one dare to quarrel with our aim
To utterly destroy the enemy!"

Know not of what they speak, or if they do,
Then they are vultures sending boys to fight
The wars that swell their bulging bank accounts
That line their pockets with the battle's coins
New-minted from the darkest ore of death.

I live in them. I occupy their souls,
For that is where the warfare germinates,
The fecund soil enriched with human blood,
And fertilized by Mammon, win or lose
While claiming naïve amorality.

I visit time by time the souls of those
Who make and carry out the laws with faith
That what they do is for the greater good,
Delusional to claim the benefits
Of war to common ordinary folk.

So long as there are men who gain from war,
The colored ribbons are affordable,
The flag-draped coffins come from petty cash,
And there's no fee for services by me;
I will remain so long as there are men.

But wait! There's more. I've only just begun
To tell the tale of immortality,
The story of my never-ending life
Among the mortals and the ancient gods
And how the crushing God of War prevails.

If there is any land without a war
In all its history, I'd like to know,
To know if it is ever possible
That any men can settle their disputes
With amity and with sincere respect.

If there is such a place, I'll go there now
As it's a threat to me and to my life
Of instigating violence and war,
Lest like the other gods I disappear
Irrelevant, forgotten, like the rest.

No, I'm content that I shall never find
On land or sea or in the air a place
Where I will be unwelcome by some man
Whose hunger still craves more and shouts his call
For patriots to rally round his flag.

The "Heart of Asia" is Afghanistan,
That place, it's said, where empires go to die.
Where Mauryan, Macedonian, and all
The British Empires failed, the Soviets;
And the Americans were worst of all. 2001-2021

How many millions have to die in wars
Intended to control that piece of ground?
What is the limit of a nation's wealth
To conquer tribal chiefs and make them yield
When they will never bow to other gods?

Their rulers are misogynistic men
With no regard for basic human rights
Who subjugate their women and their girls
In bondage to medieval practices,
But I have not a place in this affair.

What is the answer? empires always ask,
But they have got it wrong. The question is,
What is the *problem* here? A Greek I knew,
Plato by name, said this: "The people get
The government that they deserve." It's true!

How many human empires have I known,
From Rome to farthest Oriental East,
Including infant North America,
Weaned on the blood of native Western tribes,
Of Aztecs, Mayans, Incas to the South?

How many years do human empires last
Before they fall apart in disarray,
Succumbing to the siren call of wealth
Or lured by lust for other nations' land,
Defeated in adventure poorly planned?

A thousand years? Japan and Byzantine,
But most last only just a little while
Till they decay to dust from rot within
Consigned to books historians will write
For dusty shelves at universities.

I will not join the fight for emperors
Who bully weaker neighbors with their might
Compelling sinless men to bend the knee
Because they have the power to demand
Obeisance from the conquered populace.

Call me Ferocity, and I agree.
Call me Audacity, and that's all right.
But never say Hypocrisy to me!
I'm only born to be a warrior,
And fighting is what I am meant to do.

In all, I claim no further aim than this
Fulfill my obligation to my craft,
Contend against an honored enemy
With chivalry along with nobleness,
Restore to all the sanity of peace.

I will not lend my sword to unjust wars
Begun by those who gain from young men's deaths,
To fill their purse with filthy blood-drenched coins,
The profits swelled from making armaments
For foreign wars they never want to end.

A Knight is what I am; I'm not ashamed.
My calling's for a fully upright role,
To fight the fight to remedy the wrong,
Where avarice and coveting abound
And lust for lucre hides in darkened rooms.

Take my advice, when you are called to war,
Do not be boastful and no music play.
Wear no regalia when you are called;
Bright colors on the active battlefield
Sing to the enemy a melody.

Avoid inviting death and injury.
Go find your helmet and your coat of mail.
Take up your javelin and sharpened sword,
All rid of rust and dirt and battles' blood.
And do make sure your feet are clean and dry.

At home or in the field fear not the risk
That you'll be mocked and scorned by some who fail
To pay the price that you will pay for them.
Say to the donkeys when they bleat and bray
That you will gladly go when you are called.

There is no greed or cravenness in you
Who trace Achilles' steps across the plain,
Or Hector's or of Godfrey of Bouillon,
El Cid, or William Wallace of the Scots,
Who fought through tears with daring gallantry.

And gallantry is at a premium
For none can ever know how he'll behave
When deadly bombs are falling all around
Or when he meets the enemy head-on.
What will the soldier do when hell breaks loose?

Some run away and some will hide from view
Of officers who count on them to fight
Beside their comrades crouching left and right,
While others, terrified, will take a gun
And shoot a single bullet in their foot.

The gallant warrior will risk his life
On battlefields to meet the enemy,
To focus on the mission he must do,
While overcoming fear that he may die
And holding back the tears for comrades lost.

The hero will not boast of what he did,
But carries on until the battle's won,
And when the fighting pauses just a bit,
He rests until the next assignment comes
When he will bring again his gallantry.

But in my mind, I see above the earth
A war high up toward the starry night,
With educated warriors so brave,
Intrepid, flying through the firmament
To meet the dreaded enemy in space.

Three governments are straining at the bit
To dominate the skies above the clouds
Where I believe my javelin and sword
Will have no value to the warriors
Who bring with them some new machinery.

The scientists are closeted in rooms
All gray and white and filled from wall to wall
With metal boxes humming like a hive
Of bees, at work on deadly weaponry
For soldiers fighting in the starry skies.

I have no fear that these new warriors
With all their fancy modern weaponry
Will ever disregard the God of War,
For they will fight with that same violence
That ever drove their fathers in the past.

And you may wonder if there's anything
That causes me to think the end is near,
A looming threat to my eternity,
Impending doom that may be imminent,
Approaching from the shadows of my mind.

It is the echo of the waste that was
Hiroshima reduced to poisoned ash, 1945
Of Nagasaki, Naples of the East, 1945
Plutonium the element of death,
Encroaching on my thoughts and all my plans.

If all the plutocrats of humankind,
No longer satisfied with what they stole
From naïve neighbors with their subtle lies,
Demand a stronger weaponry of war,
The scientists will pull the strings of fate.

The god of Abraham who made the Flood
Held out the threat: Next time will come the fire.
Good night, humanity. Your days on earth
Are done, your history obscured by smoke
And mushroom clouds around the galaxy.

To those who hear this song and read the words,
I ask what you will do when *Voco te!*
Will you go to the front with all of us?
Will you engage the enemies of truth,
And when you fight, will you be mild and coy?

But maybe you'll embrace ferocity,
As I have been chastised for what I've done,
And you will feel the sting of unkind barbs
From those who sit like crows upon the bough
Who never saw a bloody battlefield.

If you must hate, abhor the hypocrites,
And not the warriors you send to fight,
Who do what you demand and lose their lives
Or else return to find you do not care
For wounded warriors or families.

Why do the other gods despise us so?
We're only called to do what they will not.
If fault they seek, let it be in mankind
Or in the Chaos of the origin,
Whose spores persist until the present day.

Just look around on seven continents
For active wars—or even small disputes
Where embers may erupt in red hot flame—
And daily count the dead and badly maimed
That even I, the God of War, condemn.

Aggression by the Russians in Ukraine, 2022-2023
Yields only one such set of battlefields.
In ancient Burma, civil war goes on,
Where more than twenty thousand graves are dug.
Sudan—both North and South—and Syria.

In Mali, Cameroon, Nigeria,
Colombia, Iraq, around the world
A million terrorists are on the loose
With no agenda but to hate and kill
As many as they can, no matter who.

Americans are on the verge of war
Between the forces of democracy
And well-armed fascist cells from coast to coast,
Their only god a would-be autocrat
Pretending deity and lord of all.

But there is only one God still alive
When all the other gods are done and gone,
Immortal God of War remains to lend a hand,
As well as sword and spear, to fight for right
Against the forces of the hollow men.

Charade to be a god will never stand.
The likes of Caesar and Caligula,
Of Charles First, of Hitler and the Tsars,
All reached a fatal end to their pretense
By agents of a bitter jealous god.

My father Zeus is dead, and Hera, too.
Athena's temples have no worshippers,
Nor is the god Apollo relevant,
And Yahweh is blasphemed in every land,
Though he is dead and gone these many years.

But war is everywhere and evermore,
So I will stand until the end of time,
And when the end of time has come at last,
My journey back to Chaos will begin
And wait for one more Gaia to return.

This is the Age of Unreality.
Prevarication has replaced the truth,
And arrogance is more acceptable
Than quiet modesty. Humility
Is rarely seen in those who lead the pack.

The lies that leaders tell are worse by far
Than those who trust in their veracity,
Believing what they say is for their good,
When all the while they only give a thought
For their own profit and their benefit.

In highest places of authority,
When those invested with the awesome weight
To choose between the moral right and wrong
Deceive the people with their wicked lies,
The consequences may be horrible.

The stalwart Russian people, capable
In arts and crafts for many centuries,
Hear only what their evil leader says,
Denied the simple truth of unjust war
That too untimely pulls their sons to death.

You must not dare to blame the warriors.
For it's the politicians start the wars
When they cannot agree to disagree
To put aside their differences, move on,
And compromise a little, give and take.

Can you believe with all your intellect
That soldiers relish combat man-to-man,
To lunge at someone with a bayonet
While parrying the thrust of that same man
Intent on sending you to Heaven's Gate?

It's not the soldiers who will start the war,
The untrained privates or the corporals;
It's not the colonels or the generals
Who know at end of day that it all ends
In quiet graveyards and in hospitals.

It's men in vested suits who start the wars
In thrall to what new loot may come their way
With utter disregard for cost in lives
That they themselves will never have to pay
For those young men they hire to die for them.

I'll never know the greed that drives those men
Beyond the edge of common decency,
Or feel their urge to dominate a land,
A speck of earth adjacent to their own,
When they have all the soil they'll ever need.

Two billion hectares is enough by far
For any nation to grow food to eat,
For families and friends to live in peace,
Not needing to expand by violence
To subjugate the people just next door.

It only takes one man to violate
The rules of common sense and decency
And order an attack on someone else,
A neighbor unprovoked without a cause,
But that's what Putin did in twenty-two.

A blunder by a would-be Slavic Tsar
Would kill two hundred thousand citizens
Of Russia and Ukraine, and maybe more
For no apparent cause than foolishness,
But he will fall as Hitler fell before.

In Hiroshima, Death was redefined, 1945
And then again, the Nagasaki bomb
Sounded the echo of the ultimate,
That humankind is rushing to its end,
The weapon that would end all war is here.

Now Russia's would-be Tsar is threatening 1945
To open up the door to Tartarus
For all humanity around the world
In spite, because he could not win his war
Of lust to dominate a neighbor's land.

There's little I can do to stop the slide
To the annihilation of mankind
With my sharp sword, my axe, and javelin
Against the power of the fusion bomb
That slaughters billions in a moment's time.

For those of you who just stand by and watch,
Be sure to duck and cover up your eyes,
So you will not see how your species ends
In fire that you ignited with your hate.
Remember, you were warned, and warned, and warned.

They came from Africa, the hominids.
From Olduvai and Ethiopia
Came Lucy and her early family,
All picking seeds and hunting on their way,
Surviving just another day or two.

But when another clan would interfere,
Inchoate grunts could not move them aside.
Your ancestors picked up the sticks and stones
That lay about the verdant countryside,
Asserting dominance above the rest.

They had no gods, no thoughts of deities,
Their only aim just to survive the night,
Until they wondered why the sun would rise
Each day, and who it was they could not see
Who caused the rain to fall and grass to grow.

So in their unschooled minds and in their clans
The forebears of mankind created gods,
With all the faults they saw and knew so well,
The jealousy, the urge to dominate,
From early on, the need to go to war.

Across the vastness of the universe,
In far-off places only gods have seen,
No thing persists like everlasting war.
Wherever sentient beings may be found,
There will be contests for the highest peak.

Who is to bear the culpability
When at the start, the seeds of war were sown
In fields all plowed and ready to receive
The grains that feed on hate and spread their spores
Infecting every living man and beast.

The match is to the death. There is no draw.
So to the final winners go the spoils,
The future progeny of winners' loins
And history that twists the truth to fit
The fabled myth of their supremacy.

Where is the scholar who has never sought
To find the causes of so many wars?
I think that I can tell, from what I've seen,
One answer's clearly pleonexia,
Unbridled lust for what we do not have.

Three other causes I have seen at work:
Religion, hate, and arrogance of power.
Sometimes, I've seen all four of them combined
To start a war that seems to lack an end,
A mix of greed, religion, hate, and pride.

I have no need of what another has,
No need of land or wealth of any kind,
But there are those who have another view,
Who, in their greed for more, will start a war
To take away the treasure they demand.

The Christians, Jews, and Muslims all believe—
Or so they say—in that same jealous god,
That green-eyed god that promised Abraham
A lovely land already occupied
By people of another deity.

Of hate I know but cannot understand
Why one disliking color or a creed
Cannot accept the minute differences,
Just celebrate the rainbow of mankind
And put aside the pride that starts the wars.

What hate can do, the inhumanity!
Barbaric treatment of another man
Because the man is not the same as you,
His skin is of a different hue than yours,
Or that he worships not your deity.

"This will not stand," the patriot declares,
Preparing willing people for a war
That costs a million lives of innocents
And devastates the quiet countryside
Creating rubble from the centuries

When I am asked if peace will ever come
To humankind across the entire world,
I pause for just a moment and reply,
Not in a thousand years or five or ten,
And that is why I know I'll never die.

So long as man exists upon the earth,
There will be wars. Of that, there is no doubt.
So long as there are wars, the God of War
Will fight on land and sea, and in the air,
And even far above the clouds in space.

When I was young and did not understand,
I thought there was a roof above the earth
And stars, the sun, and moon were simply lights
Affixed on high as massive chandeliers,
The candles lighted as the night approached.

Now I can see, through modern telescopes,
There is no roof, no binding to the soil,
The sky is limitless and lures us all
To rise above the clouds and venture out
Toward the boundless cosmos' outer edge.

But have we not already seen in men
The primal urge to fight among themselves.
In competition for the land and goods
That elevate their pride and self-esteem
Above the others who are not their kind?

So I predict, and I am seldom wrong,
That outer space will be the battlefield
So long as *homo sapiens* exists
And gives the lie to *sapiens* as wise,
In ceaseless competition for the crown.

Invent new armaments that you will need
To fight the battles for the moon and stars.
Prepare a breed of modern warriors
For I can guarantee without a doubt
Your enemies are doing just the same.

They watch as you debate your reticence
To think about the crucial consequence
Of ceding dominance in outer space
To callous conquerors who will enslave
The people whom you swore you would defend.

My specialty is fighting on the land,
Although from time to time I've fought at sea,
And once or twice, I battled in the air,
So I believe, and I have found it best
To follow simple rules and take the heights.

From high above, I see the fortresses,
And watch the infantry, the cavalry,
Artillery, and how they're all deployed
To face the forces they must fight to win
The battles and at last to win the war.

I've seen the rise and fall of autocrats,
Of Hitler, Mussolini, and the Khans
Napoleon, Saddam Hussein, Amin,
And Caesar, all brought down when at their height,
All arrogant, all filled with fatal pride.

When will these mortals learn that in the end,
They will return to dust as they began,
Remembered harshly as the worst of men,
As tyrants who could not control their whims,
As bullies who would be disgraced in time?

Historians will tell the tale, but how?
Will they be truthful when they write of these,
These prideful men of soiled character,
Or will they bury some of those details
That finally reveal their sordid lives?

I truly do detest those evil men
Who fool the trusting populace with lies,
Seducing the naïve whose hopes are high,
Who then discover they have been betrayed
When it's too late to stop the devil fiend.

My lengthy poem now comes to an end,
And not because there is no more to tell,
For I am called to active battlefields
Where warriors are fighting for their lives,
But as I leave, I ask for you to think:

Who is a warrior? Who qualifies?
An officer is sitting at a desk
Intently staring at a busy screen
Directing drones eight thousand miles away.
Is she entitled to the epithet?

All warriors are not identical.
They may wear different-colored uniforms
That signify the branch in which they serve,
Some green, some blue, some desert camouflage.
The warriors are those who go to war.

But more than that, we ask the warriors
To stand up to the evil that may come,
To fight for freedom to be who we are,
Prepared to give their lives so we may live
In peace, in gratitude for those who serve.

My words are plain and unadorned with guile
That clouds the tales I tell of what I've done
And what I've seen and heard on battlefields
From Attica to Troy, from Italy
To Africa, and all around the world.

I lack the skill that Homer demonstrates
In *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in rhyme,
The sweetness of his voice and vividness
Of stories from the ancient days of Greece
That to this day humanity recalls.

The shallow depth of my philosophy
Gives ample proof that I will never match
The wit of Socrates or of his style
Or the ability of those great minds
Like Plato, Aristotle, and their like.

So I apologize for my inept
And wholly disingenuous attempt
To tell my tales in epic poetry
That might offend the sensibilities
Of scholars much more qualified than I.

In metered tone without hyperbole
I've sung the song that needed to be heard
By those who wondered at the reasoning
Of warriors who, when they're called, will go
And face the enemy with no remorse.

I join, with admiration and respect
For warriors who stand before the gates,
Those who appreciate the risk they take
For fellow countrymen, and trust their cause
Is just and follow all the rules of war.

My hope is that this song will resonate
And echo through the years across the globe
To justify the calling of the brave
Defender of morality when it's
Assaulted by corruption manifest.

My song is ended, but the cause goes on,
Of justice in the face of tyranny,
When warriors' vocation is the bar
Against the arrogant invading force,
The last best hope of all of humankind.

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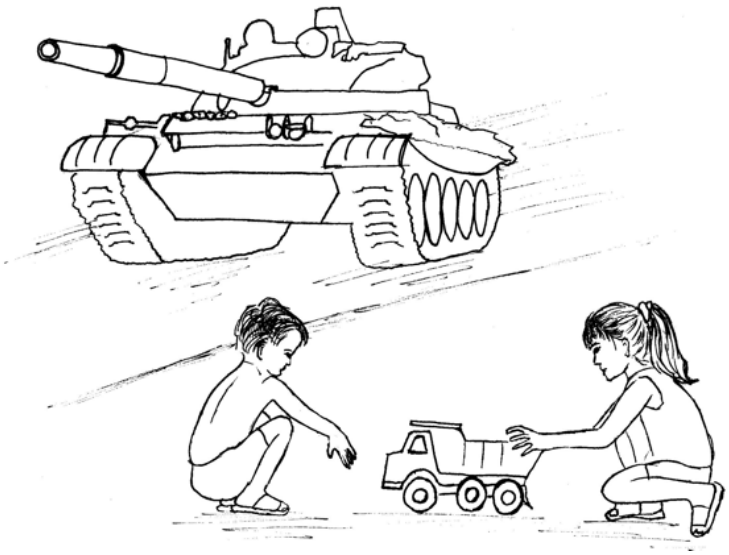

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Epilogue

Ares, the God of War, is arrogant, boastful, and proud, but perhaps not without reason. He asserts that the other gods are gone but that he remains. He has evidence. The world continues, even after five millennia of recorded history, to be everywhere at war, while love, beauty, and honor—and their gods—are being eclipsed by baser values.

He exaggerates. He deceives himself. But he doesn't lie. He detests those who lie, cheat, and steal. When he entices men to elevate their disputes to warfare, he is taking advantage of the flaws of those men. He didn't create the flaws. When he fights, he does so with fierce abandon. To do otherwise would diminish his reputation as a warrior. Mankind's warriors today and throughout history have been honored for their ferocity, and men create gods in their own image.

The God of War rebukes those who instigate wars to enrich themselves. He chastises those who violate the principles of just war: jus ad bellum, jus in bello, jus post bellum. But is he correct when he asserts that war is inevitable and universal among humankind around the world? What does the evidence show?

The authoritative Oxford English Dictionary defines "war" as (1) A state of armed conflict between different countries or different groups within a country; (2) a state of competition or hostility between different people or groups, or (3) a sustained campaign against an undesirable situation or activity.

Using the OED definitions, as of this writing, at the start of 2023, there are, by one count, at least twenty-five countries, or thirteen percent of the members of the United Nations, where we can find active wars with fatalities.

The most intensely reported war today is the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against the sovereign nation of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, which was an escalation of Russia's undeclared war that started in 2014, when they conducted military operations in Eastern Ukraine and formally annexed Crimea, a part of Ukraine, in March of that year. One estimate is that as many as a million people have been killed so far in that war, many millions have been made homeless, and more millions have fled Russia and Ukraine to Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Germany, Georgia, Romania, Moldova, Belarus, Czech Republic, and Italy.

The evidence suggests that the assertion of Ares is warranted. An alphabetical list of nations at war would start with Afghanistan and end with Yemen. A map shows there are wars on five of the world's seven continents. Most of these are civil wars and terrorist insurgencies. Whether the war is between nations or between factions within a nation, homelessness is still homelessness; a death is still a death.

As John Milton has been chastised by critics for seeming to promote Satan as the epic hero of Paradise Lost, we may be similarly admonished for seeming to promote Ares as an epic hero in this poem. Satan and Ares, however heroic they may be, are the antitheses of those heroes of myth who aim to right the wrong and confront evil with good intentions and satisfying outcomes. Instead, Satan and Ares are, put simply, manifestations of the human condition—they are us.

[1] A complete list, with map, may be found at the following website: https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-currently-at-war

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Notes

Book I

The anonymous speaker of Book I introduces the purpose of the poem and posits the argument that the propensity for war existed before the universe was formed.

Sources for the Greek Creation myth, as well as much of the material about the deities throughout this work, include Homer's *Iliad* https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6130; *Hesiod's Theogony* https://www.theoi.com/Text/HesiodTheogony .html; Ovid's *Metamorphoses* https://www.gutenberg.org/files /26073/26073-h/26073-h.htm; and *The Holy Bible* https:// www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10

Tartarus may be seen to be equal to perdition, a place of eternal punishment.

Thessaly is the site in Greek mythology of the Titanomachy, the war between the Titans and Olympians.

The son of Henry III was Edward I, known as Edward Longshanks and the Hammer of the Scots, King of England and Lord of Ireland from 1272 to 1307. He ordered William Wallace to be hanged and his body mutilated.

Heber is the name that Moses was called by his father. Abram was the original name of Abraham. In Hebrew mythology, the god Yahweh called Abram to leave his home in Ur, in what is now southern Iraq, to travel to a new land. That land was Canaan, already occupied by people who worshipped other gods.

Shaddai is one of the names of the God of Israel. This god is a god of war, also called Yahweh.

Book II

The voice of the speaker changes to that of Ares, whose voice will continue throughout the rest of the poem.

Atë was the Greek goddess of reckless impulse. Eris, notable for her role in the event precipitating the Trojan War, was the goddess of discord. The Meadow of Atë is earth.

While Ares was the legitimate child of Zeus and Hera, Athena was the illegitimate child of Zeus and Metis, one of three thousand daughters of the Titans Oceanus and Tethys.

The Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta began in 431 BCE. and lasted some twenty-seven years.

The Potamoi are the gods of rivers and streams of the earth in Greek mythology.

The "all-too-beauteous queen" was Helen of Troy, Queen of Sparta.

Herakles (or Hercules) was the son of Zeus, and his mother was Alcmene, the granddaughter of the hero Perseus.

Book III

Jabril is the Romanized name of the angel Gabriel. *HiraI* is the name of a cave where Muhammad went to pray.

The War of the Roses lasted thirty years and pitted the forces of the Red Rose of Lancaster against those of the White Rose of York. The last battle, at Bosworth Field, saw the death of Richard III, crying out, "A horse. A horse. My kingdom for a horse," and the end of the Plantagenet dynasty. It was the beginning of the Tudor dynasty, which would consist of Henry VII, Henry VIII, and Elizabeth I.

After a farce of a trial, Edward I had William Wallace hanged, drawn, and quartered, and desecrated his remains.

Hecuba was the Queen of Troy. Andromache was the wife of her first-born son, Hector, the great Trojan warrior and heir apparent to the Trojan throne. Cassandra was his sister, a princess of Troy, blessed by Apollo with the gift of prophecy but cursed by him when she would not submit, the curse being that no one would believe her prophecies.

In *The Metamorphoses*, Ovid tells how Hera turned Echo from a sweet girl into just a voice for distracting her from her jealous rant against Zeus, and how Medusa, a beautiful maiden seduced by Poseidon in a temple of Athena, was turned into a horrible monster by that goddess. Jealousy seems to have been a common characteristic of both Greek and Hebrew deities.

After the German military left Paris in August of 1944, women who had consorted with German soldiers were punished in what was called *le épuration sauvage*, the "wild purge." They had their heads shaved, they were stripped half-naked, smeared with tar, paraded through towns, and taunted, stoned, kicked, beaten, spat upon, and sometimes killed.

Book IV

Pelops' Isle is the western part of the Peloponnesian Peninsula of Greece, where Sparta is located.

Tegea, north of Sparta, was the site of a temple where women worshipped Ares. In Athens, the famous Areopagus was named for Ares.

Pallas, as used here, is another name for Athena. Athena accidentally killed her friend Pallas and took her name to express her grief.

Siraf was a port city on the north-central coast of the Persian Gulf.

The Maxim and the Lewis were machine guns first deployed extensively in World War I.

Suomi is the name the Finnish people call their country.

Book V

Tjaneni wrote *An Account of the Battle of Megiddo*, 1482, translated by James Henry Breasted in 1906.

Diomedes was a renowned Greek warrior who fought against the Trojans and was considered second only to Achilles. He wounded both Aphrodite and Ares, the latter with the aid of Athena.

The Moirai are the Greek Fates, the three goddesses who determined human destinies.

Patroclus was the best friend, perhaps lover, of Achilles.

Thetis' son is Achilles.

Plato, in his *Republic,* describes a dialog between Thrasymachus of Chalcedon and Socrates along the lines of "might makes right."

Tartarus is the darkest part of the underworld reserved for the most wicked when they die.

In Greek comedy, the *eirôn* exposes the *alazôn*, the fraudulent braggart.

Chosun (조선) is another name for Korea and can be translated as "Land of the Morning Calm."

Arirang (아리랑) is a traditional Korean folk song.

Namsan (남산) is a mountain in Seoul, translated as "South Mountain."

El Libertador is Spanish for The Liberator and refers specifically to Simón Bolívar. The Battle of Boyacá resulted in the independence from Spanish rule of Venezuela, Peru, and Ecuador, and the creation of Bolivia.

The initial "Scramble for Africa" involved the dividing of Africa by six European colonial nations: Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, and Portugal. Italy joined the "scramble" later. (See Thomas Pakenham's *The Scramble for Africa: The White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912,* Random House, 1991.)

The Battle of Adwa was the climactic battle of the First Italo-Ethiopian War. The Ethiopian forces defeated the Italian invading army at Adwa in northern Ethiopia.

Book VI

The reference to Medusa is found in lines 753-803 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* The Greek Athena is the Roman Minerva.

Myrmidon sentinels are soldiers who guard Achilles.

Peleus is the father of Achilles.

Achaios is another name for Greeks opposing Troy.

Themis is the personification of justice.

Book VII

Greek mythology describes the incident of the golden apple as occurring in the garden of Zeus. Belus is another name, perhaps from the Babylonian, for Zeus.

The God of Compromise and Calm is Ares' pejorative name for Athena. The God of Beauty and of Love is Aphrodite. "The god of my unquenchable desire" is also Aphrodite.

Argivians are those from King Diomedes's Argos.

Laconians are Spartans, from the region of Laconia. Their shields bear the Greek lambda (**Λ**) for Laconia.

Sisyphus was punished by Zeus for a variety of crimes. He had to push a boulder uphill but could never reach the top, after which the boulder would roll back to the bottom.

Book VIII

Hebe in Greek mythology was a sister of Ares, the youngest daughter of Zeus and Hera. She was the goddess of youth and was close to her siblings, including Ares.

Paeon in Greek mythology was the physician of the gods who healed their wounds when they were injured in battle.

Greek myth describes Athena as having gray eyes.

Mare Nostrum, Latin for "Our Sea," how Romans referred to the Mediterranean Sea.

Ain Jalut is north of Jerusalem in southeastern Galilee in the Jezreel Valley near what is known today as the Spring of Harod.

Hulagu Khan was a Mongol ruler of Iran in the 13th century.

Book IX

A chiton is a Greek undershirt corresponding to a Roman tunic.

Gylippus was a Spartan general who in 414–413, during the Peloponnesian War, broke the Athenian siege of Syracuse.

The *demiurge* in Platonic philosophy is the Maker or Creator of the world, i.e., in this case, Yahweh., the god of Abraham.

Kakwa is the tribe of Idi Amin of Uganda.

Mwalimu is Swahili for teacher but specifically refers to Julius K. Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania, who had been a teacher.

The Russian autocrat is a reference to Vladimir Putin.

The women of Timnah and Delilah were the two Philistine wives of Samson, both of whom betrayed him. Judges 14-15.

The OSS and SOE are the United States Office of Strategic Services and the British Special Operations Executive. Both were active in World War II in espionage, sabotage, and support of resistance groups in occupied territories.

Lothar is the given name of Pope Innocent III. He is considered the most significant pope of the Middle Ages. He was an authoritarian dictator, a virulent hater of Islam, and a zealous supporter of the Crusades, with all their genocidal slaughters. He bears responsibility for the Massacre of Albigensian Christians at Béziers, in the Occitanie region of Southern France, because they would not submit to his tyrannical rule.

Book X

The Hundred Years War consisted of several periods of conflict of 116 years, from 1337 to 1453, between England and France over succession to the French crown. https://www.britannica.com/event/Hundred-Years-War.

Book XI

Laconia is a region of the Peloponnesian Peninsula, of which Sparta is the capital. Spartan shields bore the character lambda (Λ) to signify Laconia.

Morea was the name of the Peloponnesian peninsula in southern Greece during the Middle Ages and the early modern period.

A tropaion was an ancient Greek or Roman monument set up to commemorate a victory, often shaped like a tree with branches.

J'accuse, I accuse, begins an open letter by Émile Zola to the president of the French Republic in defense of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer who had been wrongfully accused of treason by the French army.

Book XII

Voco te may be translated from Latin to "You are called."

Godfrey of Bouillon was a knight and leader of the First Crusade and King of Jerusalem at the beginning of the twelfth century. El Cid, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, was a Castilian knight and warlord in medieval Spain in the late eleventh century. Sir William Wallace fought for the independence of Scotland in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

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Salome and Mariam Bekauri created the illustrations throughout the book, capturing brilliantly the power of the characters and adding depth of meaning to the text.

There is no adequate way to express our gratitude to those men and women who have served their countries in just wars, but we try. Special thanks are owed to my brothers who served in World War II, Lieutenant William H. Raupp, who flew multiple missions in B-24 bombers in the United States Eighth Air Force in Europe, and Seaman Frank Raupp, Jr., who served on the light aircraft carrier USS Cabot in the Pacific. Thanks, too, to those brave troopers of the 101st Airborne Division with whom the author served in the Vietnam War in 1969 and 1970. Comrades all, they will live forever in honored memories.

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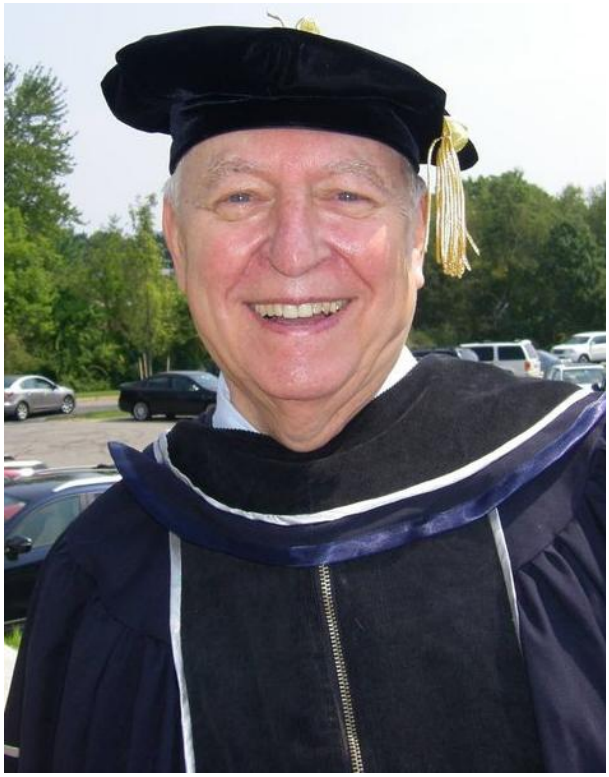

Edward Robert Raupp—soldier, business executive, educator. As a Peace Corps Volunteer in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia from 2003 to 2006, he was a member of the Faculty of English Language and Literature at Gori State University, where he is now a full Professor of Humanities. He has taught English literature, economics, statistics, and other courses in Georgia, Tanzania, and the United States.

He earned a BS from Carnegie Mellon University; an MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania; an MA in English Language and Literature from the University of Minnesota; a Ph.D. in Economics from The University of Georgia in Tbilisi; and a Ph.D. in English Language and Literature from Selinus University in Bologna, Italy. He graduated with distinction from the Army Command and General Staff College and the United States Naval War College and retired from the Army as a colonel in 1978.

After Peace Corps, he was a co-founder and the first Chancellor of The University of Georgia, Tbilisi, and is its Emeritus Distinguished Professor.

He is married to the former Danna Hilary Vance. As a team, they teach Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Academic Writing, and Critical Thinking at Gori State University and previously taught Economics at Great Bay Community College in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. He is the founder of the Milton Society of Georgia. Edward and Danna are at home in Gori with a large extended Georgian family.

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The Illustrators

When most of us read a text, we see words and struggle for meaning. When Salome and Mariam Bekauri read the same text, vivid images emerge and find their way to paper or canvas that both illuminate and enrich the power of the text.

Salome Bekauri was born and raised in Gori and now, in 2023, is a fourth-year student, a senior, of English Philology at Gori State University. For four years, she has been the Manager of the University's English Library of over 6,000 books. Salome was attracted to art, more specifically painting, from her childhood. She is an avid self-taught artist and spends most of her free time painting. She does not like frames and paints what she likes in any artistic movements with any material.

Mariam Bekauri, also a native of Gori, is now a second-year student of Georgian Philology at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. She is doing an intensive individual study of the German language. Apart from this, she is interested in fashion design and art and spends most of her free time drawing and sewing. She also runs her own small handmade accessories business, which she started in 2019. In the future, she plans to study fashion design thoroughly.

Both Salome and Mariam live in Gori with their parents, Nino and Zviad, and their young brother, Luka. They are both working as book illustrators.

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