

## Poem by George Economou

### THE AMOROUS DRIFT OF THE FIRST HOPLITE ON THE RIGHT WING

All armies are alike in this: on going into action they get forced out rather on their right wing, and one and the other overlap with this their adversary's left; because fear makes each man do his best to shelter his unarmed side with the shield of the man next him on the right, thinking that the closer the shields are locked together the better will he be protected. The man primarily responsible for this is the first upon the right wing, who is always striving to withdraw from the enemy his unarmed side; and the same apprehension makes the rest follow him.

- Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War, V. 71

The amorous drift of the first hoplite on the right wing to protect his unshielded side from the enemy was solicitous of his survival and contagious to the hoplite to his left whose amorous edging behind his neighbor's shield for the sake of his survival and to the hoplite to his left and to his left was considered dangerous by the generals at Mantinea where both armies having caught it moved in circuitous front lines the Athenian phalanx the more impetuous the Spartan though anxious to hold synchrony with the battle flutists' pace yielding at last to the devious swerve for survival that would be perilous if not calamitous to the generals' plans had they not provided multifarious maneuvers analogous to the anomalous overlapping of their left flanks to insure they would in the end be victorious despite the amorous drift begun by the first hoplite on the right wing just before the ferocious sweep into chaos.

--George Economou

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