

# The Last Pigeon

Douglas Borer

The walk through the minefield  
takes three thousand years  
I have marked each of the bombs  
with a small flag of our nation  
avoid the flags  
and you may live

in the final miles  
I ran short of flags  
and dragged my heels  
until I had no boots

you'll have to chance it

at the end  
there is an endless sea  
the shoreline littered with intact skulls  
some tiny as a grain of sand  
others of common measure  
that are periodically washed  
by waves of clotted blood

The smell recalls the trench

I worked in my youth

until the barrel burst

in my Thompson gun

and I used a bayonet

to finish the job

After sending the last pigeon

with this message to you

I will sharpen my bayonet

and add one more skull

to the beach with no flags

**Douglas A. Borer** teaches military policy, strategy, and politics in the Defense Analysis graduate program at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. This poem is dedicated to students and friends serving in global Special Operations Forces. He has learned much more from them than he ever taught.