

WAR, LITERATURE, AND THE ARTS



Volume 2

Number 2

Fall 1990

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Cover art is *Sorrow and Comfort*, by Roger Preston.

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**Department of English
United States Air Force Academy
Colorado Springs, Colorado**

WLA

War, Literature, and the Arts is published semiannually by the Department of English of the United States Air Force Academy. The editors of *War, Literature, and the Arts* are accepting manuscripts of 15-30 pages which contribute to understanding either war or art, or both, by means of critical inquiry into artistic depictions of war from any culture or period. (Documentation conforms to the MLA Style Manual.)

Although critical articles are our main focus, we will consider war poetry, personal memoir, short fiction, and visual art. The opinions expressed in the journal are not necessarily those of the editors or the United States Air Force.

For subscription information, see detachable form on the last page of the journal.

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War, Literature, and the Arts is indexed in *The American Humanities Index*, *Literary Criticism Register*, and *The MLA International Bibliography*, and is a member journal of the *Council of Editors of Learned Journals*.

ISSN: 1046-6967

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Preface

From *The Iliad* to *Platoon*, artists have depicted combat through the individual soldier's eyes, vividly illustrating war's personal and national costs. Such is the path by which Oliver Stone's film adaptation of Ron Kovic's autobiographical *Born on the Fourth of July* has sought to enter the American psyche. Winner of two major Academy Awards—Best Film Editing and Best Film Direction—Stone's 1989 cinematic interpretation of one Vietnam veteran's story captured a large audience, powerfully affecting American attitudes already bombarded with competing Vietnam War portrayals. War always demands heavy duty of its participants, and in an age of Technicolor special effects and hyper-realism, movie audiences must be prepared for heavy duty too. For this issue's lead article, a professor of American literature and film adroitly negotiates his way through the disturbing, graphic materials of *Born on the Fourth of July*, exploring the intended shock value of some of the film's more trenchant scenes and dialogue as well as putting their dramatic and thematic purposes in perspective. Donald Kunz unflinchingly assesses a film which assaults, sometimes with fury, two American myths: heroic manhood and the frontier myth of the warrior.

Working in one of the newer art forms, Roger Preston replaces canvas and brush with a computer monitor and printer. Through his electrical pointilism, we again face the ugliness of war—in this case, the many horrors victims, survivors, and observers of the Holocaust endured. Clearly, Preston's visual representations impress, not with their beauty, but with their confrontation of individual and collective agonies.

This issue's final article explores an unusual genre: "invasion literature." In pre-World War I days, British readers encountered, through fiction, an imaginary and omnipresent threat of a German takeover. Hard realities of a growing German navy, of a formidable industrial strength and a powerful economy—as well as an historical predilection to use military might—sparked understandable concerns across the Channel. Joseph Meisel's research looks at the way literature and politics interacted, actively and symbolically informing one another, in turn-of-the-century England.

The Editors

Acknowledgements

War, Literature, and the Arts is made possible in part through the generous support of The Falcon Foundation.

A special thanks to Lieutenant Cynthia Wright, Class of 1990, for her editorial and administrative assistance in preparing this issue.