

Three Poems

Devon Balwit

I'm Not Sure I Should Say This [One Says]

in Hebron

I like being among those not forced to the lip

of a pit. The soldiers are sexy, mission driven.

They point, and the people go, kneel, strip—

whatever it takes to secure the perimeter they're given.

But clinging to them, without a seam, is their shadow,

the kicking apart of legs—too far—

the cuffing of kids, the rubber bullets, the bellow

into the sleeping house, the hassling of families in their cars.

If my mother knew what I did here, she wouldn't be proud,

one says, then retracts that, reframing it.

She's proud, but she doesn't know, he says, a cloud

on his brow—that look that soldiers have, that split

between the ideal and the real—what it means to take

another's home, to occupy another's ache.

Chaz Guest Shows Us How to Look

Awaiting battle, his men have sad eyes,
sad eyes as they bury their dead. Buffalo
soldiers of distant roads, mostly horseless,
they bank fires under tarps, hungry and hollow
but for fibrous roots, which they chew
and chew, swallowing every last bit
of nourishment. They look directly at you,
hand on the pommel of their pride. What is it
you want from me now? they ask. Come and take
it if you dare. We witness and walk by,
shaken by boot and hoofbeat, their honed ache
needling beneath our layers, deep inside.
We know they march to war, and so few
back again to safe hearth and porch-view.

Elsewhere There Was Bombing

The birds on the beach were ordinary. The waves, ordinary.

Ordinary children. Ordinary tidepools. Ordinary

thoughts rendered more so in the lulling shush

of breakers. Musing altered nothing much,

just as placing my feet didn't keep them dry.

The streams coursing from the culverts shifted shiftily.

My shoes got wet. My pantlegs also.

Elsewhere there was bombing. Elsewhere NATO.

The beach house had no wi-fi, so only there,

amidst wrack and swooping gulls, could I stare

at people's suffering. What is proper protocol—

to eschew joy or to understand as normal

that always elsewhere the unscathed ignore

the miracle of ordinary days untouched by war?

Devon Balwit walks in all weather. When not making art, she edits for *Asimov Press* and *Asterisk Magazine*. For more of her work, please visit her website:
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