

WLA

War, Literature & the Arts
An International Journal
of the Humanities

Special Double Edition, 2004
Volume 16, Numbers 1 & 2





War, Literature & the Arts

An International Journal of the Humanities

Founded in 1989, *WLA* is the journal of the Air Force Humanities Institute. The journal is indexed in *The American Humanities Index, Literary Criticism Register, The MLA American Periodical Verse,* and the *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature* and is a member journal of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals and the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses.

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Department of
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Colorado Springs, Colorado

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From the Editor's Desk

WLA is pleased to announce the addition of **Vince Gotera**, **Alex Vernon**, and **James H. Meredith** as Contributing Editors.

Vince comes from three generations of US Army veterans. He served in the US Army during the Vietnam War. He also serves as Editor at *The North American Review* and English Professor at the University of Northern Iowa. His previous books include a collection of poems, *Dragonfly* and a literary study, *Radical Visions: Poetry by Vietnam Veterans*.

Alex graduated from West Point in 1989 and, shortly thereafter, served in the First Gulf War. He is co-author of *The Eyes of Orion: Five Tank Lieutenants in the Persian Gulf War*, winner of the Army Historical Foundation Distinguished Book Award, and editor of *Arms and the Self: War, the Military, and Autobiographical Writing*. Alex teaches American literature and writing at Hendrix College.

Jim retired as Professor of English at the United States Air Force Academy in 2004, where he taught since 1984. He also retired as a lieutenant colonel after nearly 25 years of US Air Force service. He continues to serve on the F. Scott Fitzgerald Society Board where, among other duties, he has helped organize several of their international conferences, including directing the 2004 conference in Vevey, Switzerland. He also serves as Board Secretary of the Ernest Hemingway Foundation and Society. Jim's World War I companion to *Understanding the Literature of World War II* is forthcoming from Greenwood Press, and his *Hemingway and War* anthology of essays is forthcoming from Kent State University Press. Jim is a founding associate editor of **WLA**.

We are pleased to recognize our newest Contributing Editors' most recent books.



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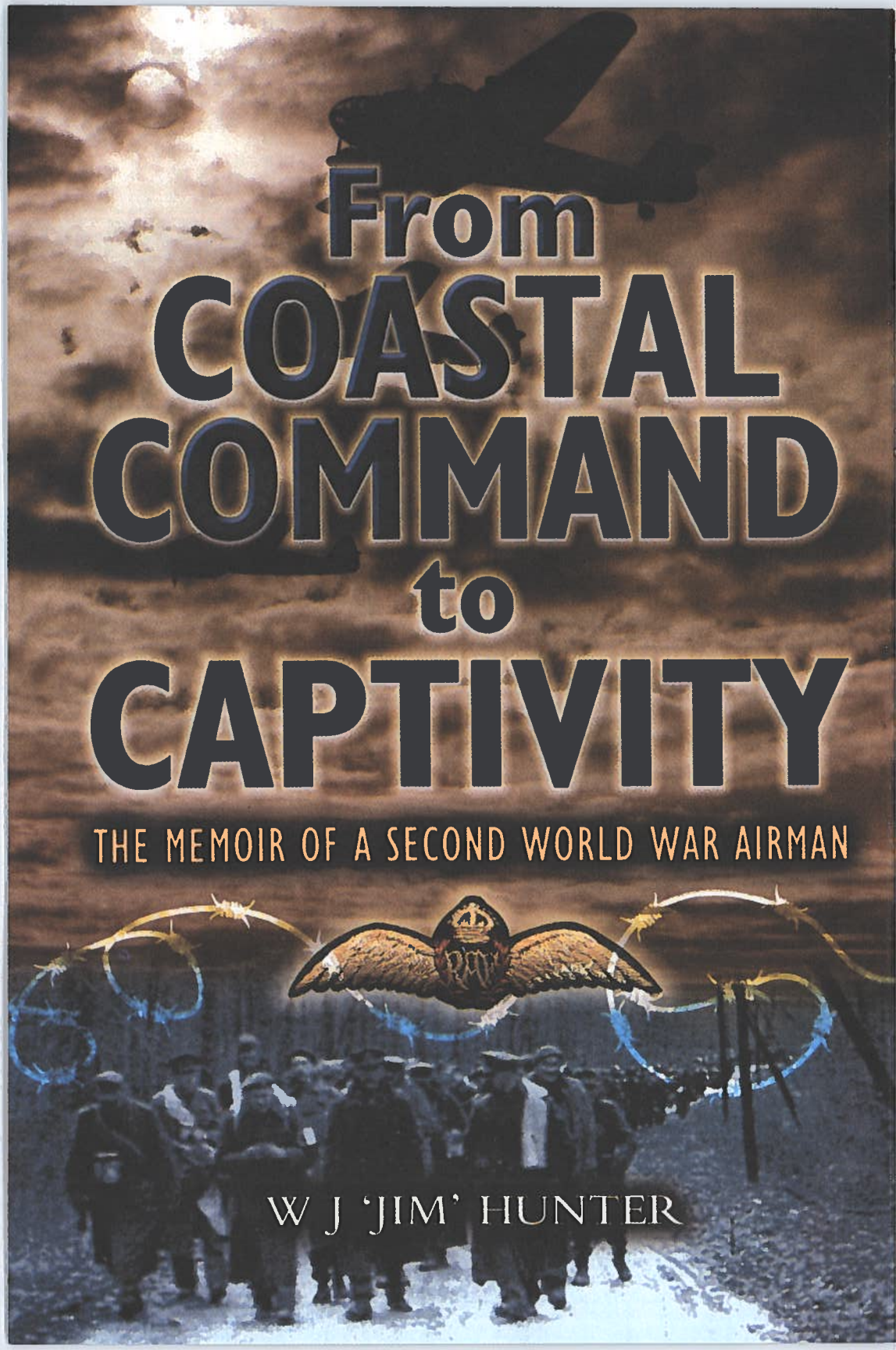
THE LITERATURE OF WORLD WAR II

A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents

JAMES H. MEREDITH


From
COASTAL
COMMAND
to
CAPTIVITY
THE MEMOIR OF A SECOND WORLD WAR AIRMAN
W J 'JIM' HUNTER

Allan Hunter

In the gray pre-dawn light of July 25, 1941, six Bristol Beauforts of 217 Squadron, Coastal Command, warmed up on the airfield at RAF St. Eval in Cornwall. At 5:30 am, weighed down with bulky landmines that stuck out beyond their bomb doors, the twin-engined bombers rumbled down the runway one by one and clambered into the sky. The crews scanned the horizon with some anxiety. It promised to be a clear day, and they needed cloud cover for the operation ahead of them. They were due to rendezvous with torpedo carrying Beauforts from 22 Squadron - their orders to find and attack the battleship Scharnhorst, surely one of the most dangerous ships on the sea at that time.

At 38,400 tons full load the Scharnhorst *was at that time one of the largest and most heavily armed warships in the German fleet. She was a foe they had faced before. Two nights earlier 217 Squadron Beauforts had bombed her at La Pallice. The previous night Bomber Command had attacked her and scored hits. Now the Scharnhorst, escorted by six destroyers, was somewhere in the Bay of Biscay, making a dash for the safety of Brest harbor, its guns, and its repair facilities.*

The following excerpts, taken from a longer memoir, describe the events of that day as witnessed by my father, Pilot Officer Jim Hunter, aged 21. He was the observer (navigator/bomb aimer) of the leading Beaufort, piloted by Squadron Leader Les Collings, known affectionately as 'Digger' because he was Australian. The wireless operator (W/Op) that day was Sgt. Pip Appleby, and Sgt. Ted Taylor was the air gunner (A/G). Both sergeants could do either task, and alternated positions for each flight.

The Bristol Beaufort was a bomber designed to double as a torpedo attack aircraft. It was handsome to look at but underpowered and hard to fly. It had also suffered disastrously at the hands of enemy fighters during daylight raids, all facts of which the crew was well aware that morning.

Jim Hunter recorded that day's events on three small pieces of paper, which he kept safe from prying German eyes throughout the time he spent as a prisoner of war. In 1945 he pasted the pages into his Flying Log book, noting that this particular operational flight had lasted three years, nine months, fifteen days, seven hours and 27 minutes. The log book and his small blue watercolor album, in which he had recorded scenes of prisoner of war life, together with the pages of his war diary, remained on a shelf until he began to write the events in narrative form in 1980.

The St. Eval Beauforts had originally been detailed to attack the six escorting destroyers with semi-armor piercing (S.A.P.) bombs, creating a

diversion, while the torpedo carrying Beauforts from 22 Squadron went for the Scharnhorst itself. Then the plan was changed - the diversionary force was to attack as before, but using landmines. If they became separated from the rest of the force each aircraft was to attack only the Scharnhorst. A landmine meant a much lower, slower, and more dangerous approach, with a weapon that was almost impossible to aim. It also meant that the mine would be next to useless for an attack on the battleship if that should be necessary, since it had no armor-piercing capability. The crews were well aware of this, and Jim's crew knew that since they had not seen any other supporting aircraft they were expected to carry out an attack that had little chance of any success.

The British spelling and punctuation of the original has been retained.



The W/Op and Gunner were already aboard and sorting themselves out; Pip was assembling his box of tricks in the W/Op's compartment and Ted was busying himself polishing the perspex in his turret for, as he would say, 'If you can't see 'em you can't hit 'em.' The skipper and I did the usual tour around the outside of the aircraft and I made a point of inspecting the bomb bay primarily to check that the arming pins, so far as one could see with a landmine, were in place in the fuses. A mine carried three in the nose and three more in the tail. Technically, nothing happens to a mine until the arming pins are withdrawn and the fuse is free to operate by dint of the wind turning the little propeller to allow a striker to explode the detonator on impact. Whilst they're in place it's quite safe, although I do remember an occasion when we were diverted to Chivenor and one crew, Sergeants Holliday, Whadcoat and their Wop/Ag's had a hung-up mine aboard. The next day we set out for base and we were in the lead. The weather was fine and the flight was no more than thirty minutes. Some five or six minutes into the flight the aircraft behind us just blew up and, so far as I know, the reason for that was never determined. It was assumed that their mine had exploded but it is difficult to imagine a crew taking off without ensuring the pins were intact.

SETTLING-IN

Digger went first up the ladder into the aircraft - there was scarcely room to pass in the fuselage until he had scrambled into the cockpit. I could then crawl into my glasshouse in the nose. It would have been a whole lot easier to have

climbed in through the nose had we not been armed with what was known as a 'scaregun', a Browning mounted on the floor and pointing backwards. This could be quite a useful piece of kit in an encounter with another aircraft on any other occasion. Today, however, it would be of no use at all, at least on the outward leg; its angle of deflection was only slight and the chances are that the first shot (and the last!) would hit the projecting landmine! On the other hand it could well come in handy on the return flight should we encounter any nasties.

As the pilot checked around his cockpit I began installing my odds and ends in the navigator's compartment. First of all I had to get rid of the most bulky stuff - my parachute, which occupied a slot on the starboard behind the seat - then to arrange everything around me in its accustomed place. It required a little discipline because without it there was always the risk of some item finding its way to the floor and thence to disappear for ever down the cartridge case chute into the sea and beyond! Having done what was necessary I'd poke my head round to the cockpit to see how Digger was doing. Most things seemed to be where they should be so far as he was concerned and he was just placing his "crib sheet" of headings, times and distances, which I'd prepared for him to enable him to keep track on our progress, above the combing above the instrument panel. Last came his packet of cigarettes. We were in good time with even several minutes in hand before start up. This was just as well since we should be the first to go.

The grey light of dawn had now given way to a yellowish sky - the portents of a fine day to follow. I'm sure we all hoped there would be just a little cloud in the target area, say 5/8th at around 3,000 feet. That would do nicely.

TIME TO GO

All was very quiet until the skipper's voice over the intercom announced, "Time to go - final check" to which we reported in turn and waited. The ground crew who had been in position for some time beside the trolley-ac and chocks waited for the skipper's signal to start-up. The port engine started nicely with the usual cloud of exhaust smoke and purple flames from the rich mixture lapping over the wing's leading edge. The engine was set at fast idle while the same procedure was used for the starboard engine. This was a shade more reticent and required a little more encouragement but it too soon fired with a slightly better display of purple flame. The propeller gathered speed to keep time with the other until the temperatures and pressures for both engines reached the normal. Then the engines would be run up and the pitch operation of the propeller actuated and the magnetos checked for serviceability. Then back to fast idle once more to await the "green" from the caravan at the other end of the field.

When I was a lad at school my brother Don and I would cycle to Kenley airfield to watch the Hawker Harts and Bristol Bulldogs taking off and landing. We'd park our bikes and lie on the ground at the edge of the field and watch as they

soared over our heads. We would talk about aeroplanes and what fun it would be to fly...Today, I doubt if there was a soul who cared what was going on or where we were going. At 5.30 precisely we led the squadron take-off, which from a spectator's viewpoint was no great deal - simply six Beauforts following one another at short intervals into the morning air of the Cornish countryside.

There's nothing to compare with the last minute preparation, the orderly drill up to the gathering roar of the engines as they are taken up to full power for take-off and the final lurch forward of the aeroplane. Another thing is the smell of an aeroplane (not a modern airliner, naturally). Piston engined military aircraft in particular always have the all-pervading odour of 100 octane fuel. Add to this the smell of various lubricants and, especially at start up, the exhaust gases and one has an environment which, I think, defies description. It's not objectionable; it's almost homely, something which stays in one's mind for a long time. It's not till the windows are closed and the aircraft gathers speed on take-off that the air clears and all that's left is a memory - as of a fading perfume.

So. Ready to go and time for my usual silent prayer - "Please God take us safely into the air and back to land at the end of our operation".

For take-off the throttles were advanced with considerable caution in order to avoid any swing occurring as we accelerated across the bumpy field. Digger was pretty experienced on this aircraft and au fait with most, if not all, of its characteristics so the trip across the airfield was very orderly. The Observer sat in the second pilot's seat (not that we ever carried a second pilot) for take-off with his feet braced against the base of the instrument panel for there were no straps fitted. Then as the airspeed built up to 100 knots and we became airborne at the second bounce I'd take up my position in the nose. The neat lines of hedgerows beneath us were receding rapidly and the sea came quickly into view. It was calm and there was little wind or drift as we reached 2,000 feet - the altitude for the first leg. It appeared to be getting quite warm when the skipper said that the heating was in one of its "all" positions. That is, it was either all on or all off. Whoever decided to put those heating controls where they were must have had a great sense of humour - almost as great as the chap who designed them! However, by means of a deft shove with the right foot the status quo was restored.

SET COURSE TARGET

In company with the other five we were on our way, each to attack one of the destroyers. Or, should we not rendezvous as planned, we would attack the main target itself. Having passed the first heading to the pilot he made a gentle banking turn to port to take us more or less down the coast and overland towards the Lizard. Then we'd fly out to sea before heading in a south easterly direction from which we would begin our planned interception. By so doing we

hoped to have a fair degree of coverage in our search for and interception of our prey. Apart from the occasional fishing vessel there was very little going on. The cloud began to appear and we dropped down beneath it to maintain contact with the sea. Ted, in the turret, could see nothing of the rest of the squadron but we hoped to catch a glimpse of one or two of them as we altered course onto our next heading. Pip, on the other hand was, as usual, doing his accustomed act of juggling with the coils and checking out the various frequencies. He was quite safe doing this because we would be unlikely to be making any transmissions yet awhile.

There was something special about being airborne. It was exhilarating. As a crew we always adhered to a strict discipline, no talk or chatter except about those things which directly concerned our task in hand. When on long sea patrols I would often have a yen to sing - only to myself, you understand. Should the microphone get itself switched on during one of these sessions one would be left in no doubt whatever by the rest of the crew who were not particularly musically inclined! On this occasion, however, there was not too much time to spare for such luxuries. Digger, on the other hand, seemed to find more solace in a cigarette, which at our altitude was no problem for the oxygen mask was usually hanging loose. Whatever we did I'm sure it bore little resemblance to scenes portrayed on films of ops. We just did not chatter or jump up and down with excitement. Most of the conversation concerned headings, distances and times, changes in altitude, airspeed or any other variations which affected the situation. The wireless op would pass me any bearings I might ask for and relay any message he would receive, whilst the air gunner would be left in his solitary splendour of loneliness and discomfort in the turret. We made a point, however, of bringing him into the conversation whenever possible. Fortunately our trips were seldom very long, four or five hours, and it was seldom cold. And if it was we in the sharp end could always try putting the heating to its 'all-on' position.

EN ROUTE

We'd been airborne for about an hour and there was still no sign of the rest of the squadron. We were accustomed to operating alone but this time we should have been surrounded by folk we knew. One thought did strike me, however, that our compass could be in error, but both the pilot's and mine agreed - and I knew my plotting was correct. Even so, it's a nasty feeling to be the only one in step! If this trip was to be the success we hoped it was imperative that we should all be in approximately the same air space at the same time. Even Digger had a feeling of being alone when he asked me to check our last heading. We came to the conclusion that the others were obscured by the morning mist. We'd surely pick them up later but for the moment their company was rather academic. The cloud was continuing to lower and rain was beginning to splatter the perspex so

we went a little lower to get underneath it. There was also a bit of drift which confirmed the met man's forecast of a small front. We altered course to maintain track and increased airspeed to achieve our planned groundspeed. All the while the pilot was flying manually. This was not at all unusual. George [the automatic pilot] was not the most predictable of assistants at the best of times, and at low level he would be an absolute disaster. This meant that this trip, and all like it, was very demanding on the pilot and without accurate flying and close co-operation between pilot and navigator the little mathematical exercises I was hoping to achieve could not possibly succeed.

The weather was definitely deteriorating and getting rather more turbulent. Visibility was now less than a mile but since there was still some time to go to our ETA over the target we were not unduly concerned. Once through this band of turbulence and rain we again entered a comparatively clear patch. Furthermore my calculations showed the wind to be dropping and small patches of low stratus were beginning to appear. As we progressed and neared the target area blankets of sea fog were noticeable. Seeing this, Digger warned the crew to keep a close look-out. There was now only some seven minutes before ETA, we were at around 500 feet and being alternately engulfed in fog and then exposed to clear air.

FIRST SIGHT

Two minutes before our ETA there was a call from Ted in the turret to say there were some "large ripples" on the port side. Digger immediately climbed a little and banked to port. Sure enough, between the patches of fog could be seen without any doubt a large ominous wake. And just ahead of this was a huge dark form whose outline was still obscured. Of one thing I was certain. It had to be our quarry but so very much larger than I'd expected. Once before, when the Scharnhorst was docked at Brest, we'd come pretty close to her when we were laying mines in the harbour. There she looked awfully large. But now....

THE SCHARNHORST

Plotting and log keeping played no part in what followed. ..."Bomb doors open. Arming switches on," I told the pilot as I placed the line of switches on my right to the "on" position. These would withdraw the pins from the safety devices as soon as the mine was released. We were all on the look-out for the rest of the squadron and/or the torpedo squadron who were supposed to have first crack, so to speak.

Normally I'd be manipulating the bombsight by setting on whatever wind there was, adjusting the height bar to our altimeter height, setting the bombs' terminal velocity, trying to align the verge ring with the compass needle, levelling the bomb-sight and guiding the aircraft onto the target. Keeping 'red on red'

was almost impossible to achieve; during evasive action there would be a certain amount of swirl set up in the compass bowl which would give a false reading of our direction. Even the height setting would only be an approximation by virtue of the errors in the aneroid altimeter and not knowing what the barometric pressures were in the area. The only component one could set with any degree of accuracy would be the T.V. [terminal velocity] of the bombs, provided we were high enough. All this I was spared on this occasion for I don't think anyone had bothered to calculate the T.V. of a paving stone, for that was the thing to which a landmine was usually likened. From our altitude the bombsight was almost superfluous, even though there was a device mounted on the drift wires which we were supposed to use for low level bombing. But we had devised a means of low level bombing by using marks on the perspex as the foresight and resting the chin on the top of the height bar. Nevertheless we would certainly do our best. There was little point in coming this far only to make a mess of things.

ATTACK

The Scharnhorst was, without doubt, somewhere at the start of the wake we had seen earlier and, no doubt, she would now be aware of our presence both from the noise of our engines and from her radar responses. They could, in all probability, have seen us. With calm deliberation Digger guided the aircraft along the line of the wake as far as I was able to tell him, for the sea was, for the most part, still shrouded in mist or fog. We gained a little height and were now at a few hundred feet which, if all went well, would be the height of release of our load. The sea was by this time becoming quite agitated and white foam could be distinguished here and there. Soon there appeared to be a dark area beneath the mist and out ahead to which I did my best to direct the pilot. Whether this elusive ogre was the Scharnhorst or one of the ships escorting her was, at this stage, impossible to tell. Whatever it was we must attack it for the chances of making a second run were a bit slim. The skipper began a gentle turn. We wanted to attack from behind to cross her bows diagonally. Murphy's law dictated otherwise for she was by now completely obscured by fog. In an instant she had disappeared until we were immediately above her bows when she appeared big and large. To release our mine at this point would have meant a large overshoot so, without another word Digger began to go round again in order to return to where we'd last seen her. For the present she was lost from sight but we continued to turn until we estimated we should be on a parallel track. Sure as eggs we were on a parallel heading but this time on the ship's starboard side and in a perfectly clear patch of sky. The engines were at full throttle and the props in fine pitch as I began to give the skipper directions for another attempt. We began to turn towards her. Suddenly the aircraft gave a distinct shudder and smoke

began to appear from the port engine. There was also some smoke coming from behind the pilot, or so it seemed, as it came into the nose. I was still trying to align the target with the marks on the perspex by giving directions to Digger. But it was soon apparent that things weren't going as they should for, despite my directions, we were turning only slightly and at the same time descending. We had lost our inter-com and no amount of turning would enable us to attack on this run either. We would pass way over to starboard. It was at this time that I took a quick peek over my shoulder into the cockpit. We had no communications between us but I could see that Digger had problems as he held the column back and to port. The port engine was still in fine pitch and over revving as it continued to issue smoke in large quantities.

DITCHING

The skipper must have realised that there was little hope of our being able to reach the target and drop our landmine so at that point he pulled the jettison toggle. The aircraft breathed a sigh of relief as it leapt a few feet into the air before relapsing into its former unhappy state. Although I had a course ready to give the pilot for him to steer to reach home - the normal procedure when leaving the target area - I had my doubts whether Digger could do much about it. What was at once evident was the fact that we were now being hit repeatedly. There was a fire somewhere aft of the main spar so I collected a fire-extinguisher and went to see. The W/Op's cabin had been badly hit and poor Pip was in a shocking state. He must have been killed in an instant. There was little I could do to help him so, on impulse, I switched the IFF [Identify Friend or Foe signal] fully clockwise and clamped the morse key down as we'd been instructed, with the intention of sending a signal which, if base were listening, would alert them to where the target was, or at least enable them to get a bearing. In retrospect, however, I doubt whether any part of the radio was serviceable for everything seemed such a shambles and Pip was in the middle of it all. I was obviously superfluous there so I attempted to return to the front of the aircraft. From the side window I saw the starboard undercarriage wheel hanging limply down beneath a smoking engine which, however, was still operating. And Digger was still hauling back on the control column. By this time we were not far off the sea but descending very gently. A lot of wind was finding its way in through the nose, my office, which had been partly shot away. Beyond that point I have no clear recollection of what took place except I remember bracing my feet in the usual way against the instrument panel - the emergency ditching position, or one of them. The optimum position was to brace against the main spar but at this stage of the game that was a long way back. Pip had no longer any need to take such precautions. As for Ted we had no idea how he was faring. In normal circumstances he says the drill would be 'to centralise the turret and pray'. Fortunately he had the pres-

ence of mind, and the good fortune, to be able to operate the turret manually and at just the critical moment to enable him to exit the turret into the sea.

INTO THE DRINK

That ditching was something to be wondered at. Little short of a miracle. Digger must have used every bit of flying skill he ever possessed to make such a copy book ditching. And if one takes into account the state of the engines - one on fire and in full power whilst the other was seemingly sick and out of control. And, into the bargain, he had also collected a certain amount of shrapnel during the process. It can only be assumed that somewhere there was someone keeping a close eye on things.

Everything became so very quiet. By God it was quiet after the previous din. Digger was then making his way out through the hatch above his cockpit and I soon followed. The last ridiculous thing I remembered doing before I left was to lift the Syko [radio encoding] machine over the side of the depleted nose into the sea! Within seconds of our entering the sea Ted appeared from the turret and had apparently suffered no real harm. The pity was that Pip didn't make it. We had to leave him in the aircraft, which took no time in sinking with her back broken and without trace. The three of us trod water and inflated our Mae Wests and waited for something to happen.

WE'RE RESCUED

We saw the battleship and some other craft in the distance and we noticed the Scharnhorst even had her gangway down. There was another aircraft somewhere overhead, but it was certainly not a Beaufort. When we did see it we realised it was a Heinkel, probably a 115, and most probably from the Scharnhorst. After a while, I do not know how long, there was a largish ship heading towards us. With a few deft movements and with the aid of a sailor wielding a boat-hook in the stern, we were towed away some distance and then hauled aboard; we were very subdued and full of water. Once aboard we were stood beside what appeared a hot boiler and it was not till then that we realised just how cold we were, even though the sea at the end of July is not usually that cold. We were then stripped naked and our uniforms were taken away by a band of worthies. There was precious little conversation at this time, but in due course our uniforms, quite surprisingly, were returned to us, a little scorched but dry.

Digger then came once more to the fore. He made the most senior-looking of our captors an offer. He not only suggested but made it very clear to, presumably, the captain of this vessel that he would be handsomely rewarded by the British government if he would be so kind as to take us across the channel to England. This suggestion was not so well received. In fact it was received with some very stern words which somehow escaped our complete comprehension. But we got

the gist especially when he said, "for you the war is over" - an expression we were to hear many times over in the years to come.

Stalag Luft III in Sagan is probably the most well known of all the German prisoner of war camps of World War II. Partly this is because of the enormous success of the movie "The Great Escape" *which dramatized the successful digging of the tunnel 'Harry' out of which seventy-six airmen escaped. Fifty of these men were re-captured and machine-gunned on Hitler's orders. Twenty-three others were returned to captivity. Just three made it back to England.*

The cold-blooded shooting of recaptured officers became a cause célèbre, and after the war seventy-two of those responsible were put on trial. Twenty-one were executed, seven committed suicide, and the remainder escaped punishment or were acquitted. The viciousness of Hitler's order gives some idea of the extent of the disruption caused to the Germans whenever there was an escape.

Events such as these seem to define the camp's notoriety, and the ingenuity of the escapers is by now legendary. It was for example the scene of the highly successful 'Wooden Horse' escape, in which all three men involved reached England. That escape is described here.

In fact Stalag Luft III was a whole complex of camps, which grew from a basic plot of East and Center camps, until it eventually incorporated North, South, West and Belaria camps, all sealed off from each other, the total number of prisoners being about 16,000. Its designation 'Luft' indicated that this camp was for aircrew only - since airmen were thought to be especially troublesome and daring escapers who needed special monitoring.

Jim Hunter arrived at Stalag Luft III East camp, designated for RAF only, in summer 1943, from Oflag XXIb in Schubin. Schubin had been the scene of its own great escape when forty men slipped through a tunnel dug from a cess pit. The pictures attached to this article were done by Jim in a small watercolor book, supplied by the Red Cross, which he managed to preserve throughout the war. The complete album includes scenes from all the prison camps he was in. We may choose to look at these as interesting curios, or we may wish to see that in each picture Jim is honing his draftsman's skills, for he was to become a gifted forger of escape documents. He produced most of the documents used by Oliver Philpot, who escaped using the 'Wooden Horse' and made it back to England - his papers having been inspected by the secret police along the way. The picture album was, therefore, a recreation, an historical record, a training ground, and, finally a cover. Whenever there was a search and his forgery materials were dragged out Jim could quite innocently point to his album and explain away the need for his box of paints.

One thing that stands out is that there are very few people in any of the

pictures. I feel there may be several reasons for this. First of all, Jim may not have felt he was much good at drawing people. He may have felt more at ease drawing objects - some of his pictures of flowers are exquisite. Second, I cannot help but feel that his emphasis on the place rather than the people has to do with his sense that he wanted to record the physical actuality of his prison. The people, so lively, so restless, just did not belong in this cage, and to put them in any rendition would be like imprisoning them all over again.

The narrative excerpt begins as Jim describes his work as a forger.



After my earlier attempts I decided that digging holes in the sand with the risk of the whole lot caving in on one was not my forte. Instead I joined a small team of two who traded under the name of Dean and Dawson. Dean and Dawson was the name of a travel agency who operated in the city of London. Our specialisation was forgery. We operated in what was laughingly known as the canteen, a large dining room and kitchen. It was from here that the daily soup ration was issued in bulk but few, if any, would eat in the 'dining room'. We had a small room at the back, which sometimes doubled as a 'reading room'. There we were able to operate under the noses of the Germans in the adjoining goon-box and those in the kitchen. Outside the window in the space between the canteen and the perimeter wire the renowned 'Wooden Horse' operated. Now, forging was one way of getting on the escape list. That is, not everyone could or for that matter wanted to dig tunnels and since there were so many allied tasks associated with getting out of camp those taking part in, for example forging, were allocated a slot on the escape list. A long shot. We got slots which, unfortunately, never materialised.

One immediate requirement for sensible forgery was a sight of the original document and that was difficult. From our very early days as kriegies we had acquired the habit of 'finding' anything which looked useful. This could be achieved in many ways. One way was to pick the pockets of any workman who was required to do anything in camp. He would be working under guard himself, which brought the deed of acquiring down to a fine art. Suffice it to say that many's the tool and, not infrequently, document which came our way. There were many ruses employed to further our aims, including blackmail. There would be, for instance, the occasional friendly goon who during his routine of inspecting a block would be engaged in conversation by the more fluent German speakers amongst us. After a while he might be offered a cigarette

and, having smoked it in the seclusion of one of our rooms, would go on his way rejoicing. By means of a little patience this performance would be repeated a few days later. Chocolate could also be used in this way. Having got his confidence and discovered how best he could help us the question would be put. We only wanted to borrow things! But some things were more difficult than others; typing took a lot of persuasion as did photographs for identity cards. There was one classic event when the Germans had us on the parade ground for identity checking and for finger printing. They had set up a table with their files etc., and each of us in turn had to be checked and fingerprinted. Initially this all went well for them but having once 'been done' the officer in charge gave us to understand that we were more or less free to wander about. And since everything was going according to plan he decided to leave the corporal in charge. About half way through this procedure the football, which had appeared and with which we had been fooling about, somehow found its way to the tables on which rested the Germans' paraphernalia! Naturally we did our best to help! We cursed those who had kicked the football, of course, and helped to pick up all those cards which had become so mixed up. We'd even salvaged the camera which, in a trice, was whisked away to photograph a potential escapee. So far so good. But we needed the printed photograph so we had to do a little barter, something on the lines of a roll of film and the use of the camera on some future occasion together with the required prints in exchange for the returned camera. That was a very reasonable exchange we thought. So, apart from the forgery itself a lot of other skills were brought into play! The Germans, if caught helping us, stood a very good chance of being posted to the Eastern front - a fact we had often to remind them of.

Roger Simmons was a 'natural' for Dean and Dawson since his ambition was to become an architect. When I told him about my 'hobby' he gladly joined. He had an extremely neat and steady hand and was probably the best of us all. Now we were five; Bushy Shore was the boss (he was in a Bank before the war), then came Claud, previously a salesman, Pritchard, myself and now Roger. Quite a merry team who were taken care of by a number of 'stooges' who did the keeping watch for us. We worked whenever the situation would allow having taken precautions against a surprise intrusion by having a 'choir' on hand or a play rehearsal group ready to spring into action. The penalty for our passtime was the same as for 'incompetently approaching a German woman' - shooting!

Our work was, in the main, copying whatever documents we could get hold of which, as explained earlier, was with some difficulty. In addition it was necessary to improvise as in the case of letters. If a potential escapee were supposed to be travelling on business he would need letters of introduction and copies of correspondence to back up his story should he be challenged. This was the case with the documents for Ollie Philpot who with Codner and Williams escaped in

the 'Wooden Horse'. Ollie was a Pilot on a sister squadron to myself. He knew I was a member of Dean and Dawson so one day he called on me to see if I'd like to do a circuit. And so we set of to pound the circuit, as the expression had it. Soon he had explained his plan and his need for papers. He, in company with Codner and Williams had a plan, which was to build a vaulting horse on which everyone would be encouraged to exercise. This horse was to be placed outside the canteen about a third of the way between it and the perimeter wire and within full view of the goon-box. After it had been established for a short while the plan would begin in earnest. One or two people would be carried out within the box and whilst others were 'exercising' over it the chaps underneath would begin work. First, they had to construct a trap through which to enter the tunnel they would subsequently dig. The sand from the excavation would be loaded into little sacks and hung along the walls of the horse so that when the time came for Appel the workers and the sand could be carried back to the canteen. This required four strong men who should show no sign of strain as they lifted this whole contraption and its occupants from its place on the sand back into the canteen. The sand it contained had then to be distributed. There were various ways of doing this. It could be carried surreptitiously by visitors to the canteen and distributed gently over the 'playing field'. This required care since the new sand was totally different in colour from the normal surface sand. It could also be hidden above the ceiling in another block and in other ways. Anyway that was Ollie's plan. He went on to say that he would be travelling as a sales representative and as such would need letters of introduction, visiting cards etc., and could I do them for him? He would, of course need other documents such as an Identity Card and a permit to travel, which everyone required. Of course I could not hope to produce all these myself but I had time to do many, and so the plan was put to the others and work started in order to discover precisely what was required. It just so happened that by good fortune I received a stick of Chinese Ink in a parcel from home. This was ideal for making a good density ink. Pens we had but paper had to be of the right quality to simulate normal letter paper, a stiffer paper for the visiting cards etc. I have no idea how many man-hours the task took for it was very demanding and errors would often require beginning that piece again. We got some typing done through 'the good offices' of one of our tame goons which was fortunate for simulating typing was an awfully tedious business - but we managed. Such things as Identity Cards and the like posed less of a problem because they would naturally be part worn through daily use. I then came to the letter headings. These obviously had to be something professional and so embossing was necessary. This was done with the head of a pin pressed carefully against the back of the lettering in the heading of the letter. Visiting cards too needed extra care, they shouldn't be too part worn! The days and the weeks went by. Whilst we were beavering away at our lettering

the teams outside were getting so fit leaping over the horse and the tunnellers beneath were strenuously working. Their work was so hard that from time to time they had to have a day off in order to recuperate. It was during one of these days that some idiot pushed the horse over as he failed to make the jump. Good team-work prevailed and the status quo was quickly restored. From then on it became common practice very occasionally to repeat that performance so that any spying goon could see for himself that it was perfectly harmless exercise we were engaged upon!

The long and the short of all this is that Codner and Williams travelling together arrived home safely and, shortly afterwards Ollie, who travelled quite on his own reached home too. The next time I met Ollie Philpot was at a Royal British Legion meeting at which he was the speaker for that evening. I did not arrive in time to meet him before the talk began but I snuck in to hear what he had to say. I was really flattered to hear him say that 'a chap called Red Hunter had made some of his papers, and very useful they were'.

Whilst at Warburg I had begun to think semi-seriously about my future when the war came to an end. My first choice would be to remain in the RAF but tended to dismiss this mainly on the grounds that there would not be too many vacancies for Navigators and, in any case, competition would, doubtless, be pretty steep. It would be worth a try though. My second string would be a degree in Mechanical Engineering. It began at Warburg when I and a Fleet Air Arm Lieutenant Squire Clayton, a Swordfish Navigator, started to work methodically through Caunt's 'Introduction to the Infinitessimal Calculus'. That was no mean 'introduction', which we nevertheless completed albeit through a smoke haze, for Squire smoked a pipe and I cigarettes. Also in our room at the time was a Peter Bressey who was flying with Imperial Airways before the war but joined the RAF only to be shot down in the very early days. He taught me a great deal of navigation, especially astro navigation. With this I figured I'd be able to take the First Class Navigators exam when I got home. In any event these together with my work in the 'travel agency' and tin-bashing kept me very busy indeed and, since it was quite demanding, I had little time in which to think of other things. These activities were continued at Sagan where we were rather more fortunate in that we could obtain proper books for our studies. By dint of the generosity of the New Bodleian Library, and the Red Cross I got books on such things as physics and mechanics. With these, shared with others in exchange for books they'd been able to organize, one could study to some purpose. My first priority was to read for a B.Sc. Mech. Eng. In fact I was able to sit the First Year exam and, since the papers actually arrived home I was encouraged to take the Intermediate exam a little later. It just so happened, however, that we had to move camp again and I had only one paper to write.... That put paid to studies from then on as a kriegie.

Even from my early days I had a yen to make things. I've mentioned radio capacitors; the more commonplace things like mugs with handles, pans and chip-heaters (a little device consisting of a tin can within a tin can which could burn small fragments of coal from a cinder path with which to heat enough water for a brew) could all be made from the tins in which the Red Cross sent food in food parcels. But my *pieces de résistance* were steam engines. I built two: the first was a single acting affair which at best did 670 rpm. Then I built a double acting engine. This was intended to drive a boat, built by Tony Ingram, across the fire hydrant pond which was only three or four yards across but quite deep and naturally *verboten* to ourselves. The engine was a magnificent affair with a water tube boiler fired by a fat lamp. Had we been able to salvage it I'm sure it would have been a great success! As it was it blew up and found its way smartly to the bottom of the pond. It nearly came to grief sometime before all that, during its embryo stage, in fact. It was the day of the landing in France. We had heard on 'Jimmy' that the invasion was on but when it was confirmed by the German radio by *"Das Oberkommando der Wehrmacht gibt bekannt...*that an attempted landing was driven back with heavy losses to the enemy..."There was great rejoicing! And since I was in the process of building my monster, my first reaction was to throw the whole lot out of the window. I soon retrieved it all, however, realising that I may still have time to complete the project.

Tin-bashing equipment consisted first of all of an appropriate tin and silver paper from cigarette packets. The Red Cross always managed to send cigarettes with tinfoil - and it really was tinfoil - which, if collected and compacted and afterwards heated in a suitable tin and poured into a wooden mould would make excellent solder. Then one required a source of heat. This was provided by heating the German 'margarine' to extract the water and with the aid of a wick made from something like a pyjama cord suspended in it a fairly constant flame could be made. Then, by blowing into a blowpipe projecting into the flame a hot, controllable flame could be obtained for soldering.

Alcohol played no great part in the life of a kriegie and I don't think it worried anyone that much. Nevertheless, when the opportunity presented itself certain people became quite adept at making it. Even at Warburg the enthusiasts managed to concoct a brew of kinds: at Sagan the art was brought to near perfection. When we received what we termed 'bulk issue', a supply of dried fruit which originated from, I believe, the British ambassador to Turkey, a Knatchball Hugessen as I remember. We would pool our resources, put them into a bucket and add yeast tablets and the whole lot would ferment. Whilst at Warburg this fermenting mass strained through apiece of cloth would suffice as a 'brew'. Here we were in the realms of sophistication which now required the specialist knowledge, in our block, of one Simpson to produce the final article. To his specification we built a condenser (the kind of thing we knew at school as a Liebig

condenser) which consisted of a tube from the fire extinguisher connected to a series of cans surrounded by another series of cans through which ran cold water. This was placed onto a larger can in which the mother liquor was gently boiled. The distillate was the real stuff. There was, however, a cut-off point beyond which one should not go. Boiling the whole thing to its end produced 'wood alcohol' which was not to be recommended. Before that stage the distillate was poured into bottles (supplied by the Germans and containing metal polish for which we paid *Lager Geld* or camp 'money') and, when stoppered, was buried in the sand outside the block for security. We chose bottles, rare though they were, in preference to tins for we feared that this mixture might penetrate the can before we would be able to drink it! If one were unfortunate enough to drink the last dregs of the distilled liquor it could, and did, have disastrous consequences. Bob Chadwick, who lived in the bunk above mine, had the unfortunate experience to drink some of this. Shortly after going to bed he decided to get up and get out of the window (we were always locked in at dusk) and walk to the wire. There he started to climb over. By dint of great good fortune the guard who saw him did not shoot. Instead he called the guard-room from which, in no time at all, a bevy of guards arrived to take him away. He was taken to the German sick quarters, via the cooler, from which he never again emerged into the camp. The happy part of that story is that eventually he was repatriated. It was several years later that I again saw Bob. He visited G.C.H.Q. for briefing before going to the Far East and I gave him part of that briefing. That night he stayed wit iven a newspaper in the normal way. The headlines of that paper announced that a British Officer had been lost overboard from a ship travelling to the Far East. It was Bob Chadwick. The reason for this event was never discovered.

In every camp we took a fair amount of exercise quite voluntarily. It consisted for the most part of walking round and round the camp, known as doing a circuit. The usual call was 'Anyone for a circuit?' and one was never lost for a companion. We would walk round and round just chatting - after all the view was no great shakes, just pine trees and wire. There were many other forms of exercise available according to taste. Softball, the Canadian game, was very popular in the summer and the Canadian Red Cross provided the kit. We, under guidance from the Canadians, learned the game pretty well and organised leagues. Cricket, on the other hand, never did take off - only the British seemed to know the rules - and there was precious little in the way of equipment. Golf became very popular. The course was flat and all sand and, because we had no kit, we had to manufacture our own. Laying out a course was no problem; the greens were simply smoothed-out sand. Since there was no pro or shop available, ways and means had to be found to construct clubs and balls. Golf was one of those sports which required certain equipment which was not available in its true sense. The ball, for instance, was made from a marble core wound round many times, as regularly

as possible, with thread, wool and the like to the standard size and then covered with a skin of leather from an old boot, cut 'tennis-ball' fashion and sewn together with the strongest thread one could muster. Clubs were usually made from melted down water jugs and poured into a sand mould ready to be assembled onto a stick which was made from the ubiquitious bedboard.

It was not long before word reached home of 'the golf course' we had at Sagan either through letters or via the Red Cross. So it was not long before some unfortunate kriegie would receive a letter from his wife saying something to the effect that she was so pleased to hear he was able to play golf again and had, accordingly, given his clubs to some poor German PoW who was working nearby! Rather like another piece of mis-information to reach home - our swimming pool. Again, I imagine the sources must have been the same. But this 'pool' I spoke of earlier was the fire hydrant pool, three or so yards square but deep. Alongside this was a large notice saying 'kein trinkwasser', 'Baden ist verboten'. The only time I ever heard of anyone bathing in it was almost a disaster. For some reason or other a kriegie was thrown in; it was a pretty warm day anyway, but the almost unfortunate part of it was that he couldn't get out. The sloping brick surround gave him nothing onto which to hold. Someone, however, did take pity on him, eventually, and gave him a helping hand.

Letters from home, infrequent as they were for many of us proved a source of great merriment quite often. The custom was when anyone had any mail he would take it off to his bunk to read. Anything of outstanding interest which may have escaped the keen eyes of the censors was given a full airing. But when something humorous cropped up it was not unusual for the reader to leap up in his bunk and announce to the room 'listen to this'. There were such snippets as, 'Mother was right, and I've decided to marry Harry. You remember? That nice chap who used to beat you at golf'. Or someone's girl friend would write, 'I hope you're having as much fun as I am'. Another, 'I've met such a nice young Army officer'. One rather cruel remark was, 'How lucky I was not to have married a cowardly prisoner of war'. 'Do the guards teach you German?' caused some amusement too. Sometimes we'd receive photographs which we'd pin to the wall by our bunks. One surprising incident occurred when, by chance, one chap visited another for a chat and happened to notice a picture of a nice looking girl stuck to the wall saying 'She's just like my wife'. It turned out that it was (or had been) his wife who, because he'd been in the bag for so long and she hadn't heard from him decided to marry another. I think the two chaps became great friends.

Life went by without too many tragedies such as the loss of tunnels or equipment for some time. But, on 24th March 1944 we had a serious jolt. The German Commandant came to the camp with a large number of guards. He went straight to the room of the S.B.O., Group Captain Dickie Kellett, whilst

the guards shouted to us to go out side for *Appell*. When we'd assembled in our usual dishevelled manner the German officer and the S.B.O. came on the scene. This was a most unusual event and could only bode ill. And, sure enough it did. The SBO had to tell us that 50 British Officers had been shot 'attempting to escape'. A number of them I knew personally. The escape had been from one of the three large tunnels Tom, Dick and Harry dug from the North camp. The escape had taken place from Harry some days before and it had upset the Germans a great deal. In fact, as we learned later, it had caused great consternation throughout Germany. Even the Gestapo had been involved (Himmler had long since tried to get control of Allied P.o.W's but had so far been resisted by Goering) and it was they who had shot our colleagues 'whilst resisting arrest'. The Commandant himself was almost in tears: he knew as we did that it was a prisoner's duty to attempt to escape, that we were unarmed and should be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention. The Commandant, although hard pressed at times by our antics, remained an officer and gentleman. It was his 'leniency' which caused him to be 'relieved' of his appointment. We never saw him again. We were then resolved to do our utmost to let the goons see and know how much we hated them.

In January 1945 it became clear that Russian troops would soon overrun the area, which was south-east of Berlin, and so plans were made to move the prisoners. The Americans in South and West camps were sent south, where they were eventually liberated by General Patton. The RAF from East, Center and North camps were sent west in several columns. This narrative describes that march.

What made the march difficult was the overall physical condition of the men. Food had been scarce, and suitable clothing even more so. When Jim Hunter was eventually returned to England he weighed 96 pounds, which is not much for a man of six foot one. And he was one of the fitter ones. A march in the cold and snow of January, which entailed carrying most of one's bedding and food, was not a slight task.

On the whole the guards were not in much better condition. They were those who were too infirm to go to the front lines. Jim's friend, Roger Simmons, reported carrying one guard's rifle for him, and even supporting him along the route with a man on each side. The rifle was returned, minus bullets and bolt. After the war was over Roger sent this guard food parcels for several years.

Food was short, there was considerable danger of frostbite and freezing to death at night. Some men contracted dysentery, some died from exhaustion. And there was the ever present threat from Allied fighters who might think they were German troops. A column of British other ranks actually was

attacked by rocket firing Typhoons. Sixty men died.

After a rest of several weeks at Marlag und Milag nord, Tarmstedt, a prison camp west of Hamburg, the march continued towards Lubeck, when the column was overtaken by General Montgomery's army. They then moved to Luneberg to be picked up by RAF Lancasters. Jim's illustrations include pictures of some of the stopping places on the march, such as 'the best barn in all Deutschland', as well as of the prison camp.

The excerpt begins as the first rumors of an upcoming move are heard in Stalag Luft III.



It was the winter of 1944/5 that rumours of yet another move were prevalent. A tame goon had whispered that something was about to take place although he couldn't say precisely when. This news confirmed our suspicion that because of the Russian advances we would most likely be moved on. After all, there were by this time some 10,000 air force prisoners of one kind and another in this huge complex of camps, most of whom no doubt, were Americans. It was unlikely the Germans would want them to fall into the hands of the Allies. There was another rumour, not quite so pleasing perhaps, that we were to be held hostage. Whenever and wherever made no difference; we began making prudent provision. Most had accumulated some small reserves against the possibility of harder times, including a few brickettes of coal. We had no intention of leaving behind anything which would be of use. First requirements, however, were the construction of means of carrying our gear. I still had my original battledress-trousers which when sewn and tied up made a presentable haversack. Roger Simmons, Ron Simmich (a New Zealander) and myself decided (it was not so much of a decision as a natural event) to travel together and although many others decided to construct sledges on which to haul their gear we reasoned that should a sledge break down en route it would be a problem to transfer what we had to an alternative means of transport. We decided, therefore, to carry all we could although we did succumb later on. One thing was certain. We would need to wear as much warm clothing as possible for it was mid winter and winters in Germany could be - and were - very cold. As a 'tin-basher' I immediately set to work to make water bottles and other accessories for the journey. Meanwhile, Jimmy [the illicit camp radio] kept us informed of events regarding the Allies' movements and the war's progress and our spirits were high.

Finally the suspense was over and we were told that we had to be ready to

move at 11.30 that night, the 27th January. I rolled all my drawings and tied them with string from my bed and placed them in my 'locker' with my remaining books with a label addressed to me in England! Who was going to find and forward them didn't concern me. It was just an idea. My notes, however, should not be left behind since I'd spent so much time writing them. My diary too; from quite early in the bag I'd managed to keep a diary of sorts on scraps of paper which I concealed in a hollow made in a bed post. There was nothing of any great merit noted in it, almost entirely personal jottings. I also had a small sketch book in which I'd made drawings of the rooms, some of the equipment we made. Roger wrote in his exceedingly neat hand, a verse of a poem: 'Not by Eastern windows only...' to celebrate my entering my fourth year as a kriegie. Such things I'd certainly not leave behind!

The S.B.O. [Senior British Officer] had ruled that no attempt at escape should be made during the march out of Sagan; for one thing the weather was definitely against us. Many of the guards escorting us appeared to have been imported specially for the occasion and were, by and large, older than we had seen around during life inside the wire. Presumably the younger, fitter types had been despatched to one of the fronts. Those marching alongside us were finding this no joke as they tried to keep us in some sort of column. Their rations were little better than ours and consisted of the oats-cum-sawdust-type bread and a can of meat paste. For them not only the present but also the future must have looked pretty grim.

The events of the next few days are recorded on odd scraps of paper which once, in part, constituted my diary. During the early part of the march, I decided there would be little future in carting, or dragging through the snow, any superfluous kit. I wouldn't be able to eat it! So I threw out some books and one or two pieces of 'junk' including the little roll of paper, my diary. It was one of my least rational moves. I must have been in a state of mental aberration. From the few remaining sheets, written subsequent to the march I can quote.

Saturday 27th January 1945 "Wrote the second part of the Engineering Drawing paper for Inter B.Sc. (Mech. Eng). Jerry Pitt and I were the only two stayers, the rest have thrown in on account of the news and rumours.

"This evening I got stuck into making water bottles for the chaps in the room - soldering lids and handles onto Klim and other tins. I'd made only four when the panic started. We were told to be ready to move off at 11.30 pm. I had my pack nearly ready and so spent time sewing and pinning things together. That which grieved me most was not the thought of a forced march to anywhere but the thought of leaving my sole worldly possessions of the last three and a half years; my mail, photos, books and all my drawings and reserve clothing - and the fact that I had only one more paper to write for my Inter exam. And I don't think I lie when I say I think I was doing pretty well.

"Sentiment apart, we have to move and that right soon. We put brickettes which we had been saving for a rainy day in the stove and got a really solid coffee brew going and had the odd quick bash (eating more than usual) through the 'generosity' of our room quartermaster, Frank Reade. My allocation was a tin of jam which enabled me to achieve one of my kriegie ambitions of bashing a tin of jam with a spoon! Time wore on. The move was postponed an hour at the time. We decided to employ the time by using some flour and make some shortbread. This was started by John Lloyd and continued by Bill Roe and Roger Simmons

"Sunday 28th. At about 0600 we prepared to move and finally moved as a body of about 1,000 from East Camp. We collected a Red Cross parcel apiece on our way out and finally left camp at 0800.

"The first town we passed was Helmsdorf and after 14 km we stopped in a most barren spot for 'lunch' for 30 minutes. There was no mean wind blowing and a fair amount of hard snow. Arrived Haldau about 1600 hours - 18 km - where we got some hot water, and some of us hot Reich coffee from civilians who, for the most part, seemed sympathetic.

"For about two hours we hung around the town square hoping to get some place to sleep. During this time we bought two very ropey sledges from the locals for forty cigarettes. Then our camp was split into two parties, one to be billetted in a church and the other in a school. Roger, Ron and I plumped for the lower ground floor of the school - concrete - and got a small space. The only way to keep warm was to sleep eight deep. In fact, that was all space would permit. No food or hot water were provided and the temperature in the night was down to minus 18 Centigrade; during the march minus 10 Centigrade. (If nothing else we always came across thermometers - perhaps to let us know just how miserable we should be!)

"Monday 29th. Spent the day at Haldau to let the Americans from Belaria and North Camp to get ahead again. Roger traded a tin of Bully for a loaf of bread - otherwise no rations. One *Appell* in half a blizzard and told tomorrow's trek would be 25 km.

"Tuesday 30th. Left at 0100 hours dragging every thing we had on our sledges etc., destination Priebus. Evacuees on the road hindered our progress no end. Arrived Lieppa, distance 11 km at 1600 hours. Here we were billetted in a school. No lights and still no food. We lit a fire for hot water and afterwards retired to bed in the attic which was literally knee-deep in kriegies. Still damned cold but only minus 7 centigrade in the night.

"Wednesday 31st January. Set course Muskau at 16.10 hours. A very hard day - hardest yet. Lack of food quite noticeable - scarcely enough to keep us warm. Snow and wind were bad and the roads treacherous. The last five kilometers was very hard going as the thaw had set in and the sledges went deep into the snow. Upon our arrival at a glass factory in Muskau the French and other work-

ers were most helpful and generous with hot water and often coffee. They were also most amenable to bargaining for bread. Oberfeldwebel Stuhlmeyer (previously NCO i/c guards at Luft 3 and a man who did his awkward duty quite fairly by the kriegies) managed to get us billetted in this glass factory, the manager of which had been a P.o.W in America in the last war, and did everything he possibly could to help. SBO put us on parole as regards damage. The factory people gave us a free hand to the extent of providing coal for fires. We utilised the furnaces to the full extent for making hot water and drying clothes. I didn't sleep much at night for I was in an outhouse which filled with smoke which necessitated leaving the door open thereby making it pretty chilly.

"Thursday lst February. Spent day at Muskau during which time we carried out an inspection on the sledge; didn't favour putting on such wheels as we could find or manufacture. Maggie Roth set the pace by standing at the factory gate with a tin of coffee and a D-bar shouting at the passing civilians '*Kaffee und Schokolade für alten Kinderwagen*' - and, what's more, he got one. Others turned out wooden wheels in the lathe shop. Although the thaw seems to have set-in we still intend to take our sledge, lightly laden, and our packs on our backs. Received half a loaf of bread per man and marching orders for 21.30 hours. This was later changed to 22.30 hours, at which time we left. The air raid which we hoped would prevent our move tonight, and the extreme darkness, seemed to have no bearing on the matter - we left. The East camp was split into blocks 62 (ours), 63, 64 ,66 and 67 and the rest. They would leave tomorrow for Nurnberg - possibly.

"Friday 2nd. Marched through the night. We jetissoned our sledge after about seven km but carried all our gear. What a shambles. Bods lying in ditches, packs and belongings lying around them. We (Roger, Ron and I) kept going pretty well but were fairly teased out soon after dawn. Eventually arrived at a village, Graustein, near which we, and most everyone else, spied some milk in churns outside a farm and we wasted no time in transferring the contents to ourselves.

Just outside this village we were directed towards a large barn. This barn was the best thing yet, packs were hurled into the hay and we just dived in on top. We didn't stir till two hours later to continue our trek to Spremburg, a further eight km. Arrived at 15.15 hours. We were set down in some *panzerschule* and were issued with a fair amount of brattling soup - and were promised some water later. We left before we could avail ourselves of the water and marched to the goods yard where we hung around till after dark waiting to entrain in cattle wagons.

During our wait we noticed a scruffy looking individual coming along the track beside the wagons in a very nonchalant manner, sometimes whistling to himself, as he opened the axle box of each wheel in turn and from time to time would pour in oil from a can. He also added something from a bag hang-

ing inside his coat. He was quietly adding a little sand to the lubricant - for luck! Being escorted by a guard meant that conversation was limited. Nevertheless, he said 'When you get to Blighty tell 'em we're coming too'. And he went on his way rejoicing - a typical British Tommy. He did my heart a power of good, and probably others too.

We finally boarded, 43 in our wagon and they were only designed to take '*40 hommes ou 8 cheveau (en long).*' Expecting to spend the night in this siding we got weaving making a fire to boil our brew can. We were doing very well until it was decided we should leave at 23, 30 hours. In the ensuing panic to collect our gear once more, John Lloyd knocked the hot water over. That was the nearest we've been to having a hot brew for sometime. The only thing left to do was to try to bed down somehow. I spent the night on top of some blokes. We were fortunate in being issued with a Red Cross parcel before we left the siding. Where those parcels came from I do not know but they could hardly have come at a more opportune moment.

"Saturday 3rd. Spent the day on the train - pretty chilly but derived a certain amount of rest although we all ached through being unable to move. Passed through Hannover.

"Sunday 4th. Arrived at Tarmstedt Ost at 16.30 and marched to a camp 4 km away. Now we come to the bitter bit; we waited outside those gates, wallowing around in mud and drizzling rain till 01.30 - the worst part of the whole journey. Damned cold and tired and no alternative but to walk around in very restricted circles endeavouring to keep warm. When we eventually got in we were given a cursory search and shown to some very derelict blocks where with the greatest of ease we just parked on the floor till about 10.30 next morning.

"Monday 5th. Moved to permanent quarters, Bk 22 Rm 3 which has a most teased-out stove, no lights, no beds, practically nothing. We stopped up holes in floor, dismantled the stove and tried to re-assemble."

This was Malag und Milag Nord, Tarmstedt.

Our days in camp were now numbered, certainly in smaller numbers than hitherto. Spring could not be far off and the end must be in sight. We spent our time making-do and mending; there was precious little to scrounge but we managed to find oddments around the place with which to furnish our abode - sparsely. The few remaining impressions of this desert of a place are the poor food and the lack of organisation. Our rations consisted of a black treacly type of bread which, surprisingly, we found to be quite nourishing, and a sausage paste. We got to like these as time went by even though this diet lacked variety: they were said to be submariners' rations. The disorganisation manifest itself in irregular *Appells* and a complete lack of information concerning our future for we were sure it could 'not be long now'.

THE LAST LAP

In due course we were on the road once more. Our destination was said to be Lübeck. It was now some three years since I'd been 'stationed' there and memories of it were far from favourable.

It was spring (when a young man's fancy is said to turn to thought of something or other - I'll try to remember!) and the outlook was decidedly brighter. At this time we hadn't much gear to transport, just the bare essentials. Accordingly we moved off into the countryside and were going one knew not where. The weather was warmer and the countryside did indeed look yes, inviting! Somewhere along the road we drew level with a field of rhubarb (not very ripe as I recall.) Now, an opportunity such as that was not to be ignored and the whole column simply diverted, guards or no guards, through this field and cut a very neat swathe through it. For some considerable distance along the road thereafter we left a fine trail of rhubarb leaves. The after effects of that foray were not quite so happy for some for, not to put too fine a point on it, it proved to be something of a laxative!

It was during this journey our syndicate acquired a pram. We came to a halt in the village square; the village name escapes me. The point was we needed transport and sure enough in this village there appeared before us several opportunities. There were women pushing prams. In our best kriegie German we started to ask first one then another whether they would be prepared to sell their pram for chocolate or coffee. And we bought our pram, not a large or ostentatious machine you understand. A simple green affair with four good wheels. The lady concerned was delighted as she lifted junior out and grabbed the flimsy blanket etc. And took our coffee and a 'D-Bar' of chocolate. We were happy too for we could simply put our packs into this and it virtually ran itself from there on.

Another opportunity to put our new transport to the test came very soon afterwards. Ron did a barter for some potatoes and later we got some onions for a few cigarettes. We could have a stew tonight! During the first part of our march we were delivered into a field where it soon became evident we would be staying a while, so without too much ado we began making preparations for a place to sleep. This was accomplished by digging an area and piling the turves so removed on what we estimated to be the windward side of the ditch, the idea being to sleep in the hole and to cover ourselves with the ubiquitous Polish greatcoat. Nearby we found a supply of straw in bales. This was indeed a boon and we set out to gather enough to sleep on. During my foray I almost came to grief at the hands of the Hitler *Jugend*, young boys and girls dressed in a kind of scout uniform. I was feeling very pleased with myself for having found a bale before they all disappeared and was making my way back when there was a boyish shout from behind me. I nonchalantly turned around only to find one of these

creatures shouting and pointing a rifle at me. A couple of prods from his rifle gave me the impression he didn't like what I was doing. He was ordering me to return the bale so I dumped it on the ground. Apparently that was not the idea at all for he waved his rifle in all directions and shouted some more before pointing to where I'd been. I had to admit defeat and picked up the bale and, under escort, took it back. Roger had more luck and brought back enough straw to line the pit we'd dug. Meanwhile Ron had got some water and was busy trying to get a small fire to burn in order to make a brew. Then followed the height of contentment, sitting in a field, beside a fire and a brew of coffee with my friends.

From there we set off next morning heading towards Lübeck which was still some way off. Somehow we got to hear that there was an outbreak of cholera. True or not, the SBO remonstrated with the Germans telling them that the war was nearly over and it would be in no one's interest to go much further. As a result we were directed towards a farm. The party was split; one going round a lake to some barns on the far side whereas we were herded into a large barn nearby. This was a monument of a barn which inside had a ladder leading into a hay loft. Again, tired and weary, we clambered up this ladder and threw ourselves into the hay and fell soundly asleep for some time. By now the guards were sadly depleted and those in evidence could not have cared less. They were far from home with little hope of improving their miserable lot. They'd lost - as we always told them they would. Now we roamed freely. Some enterprising types had made a sign which they pinned to a tree along the lane. The sign read 'Good pull-in for tanks' with an arrow pointing towards our 'estate'. At about 10.00 next morning, sure enough along came a couple of scout cars. In no time at all they were issuing copies of the *Daily Mirror* and white bread. This bread was like cake to us who'd eaten only the German bread for so long. But food was of secondary importance now for we were FREE.

Recollections of what followed although of no major significance otherwise were of pure unadulterated joy.

Roger, Ron and I decided it would be rather pleasant if we could find a car and drive home. In a little while we found a car, a staff car and a Mercedes to boot. Fuel there was by the hundreds of gallons in the centre of the autobahn so we borrowed a few cans, filled the car and loaded the seats with more and then parked it in a nearby wood. Next day would see us homeward bound. We would simply head westwards, hit the coast, drive to the nearest port and then scrounge a lift on one of the many ships that would certainly be there. From then on it would be merry England all the way. It was going to be the best outing one could ever plan. Next morning, however, there was little more than a track, from where our limousine had been parked, leading to the road. Hell's bells. Some miserable sod had pinched it.

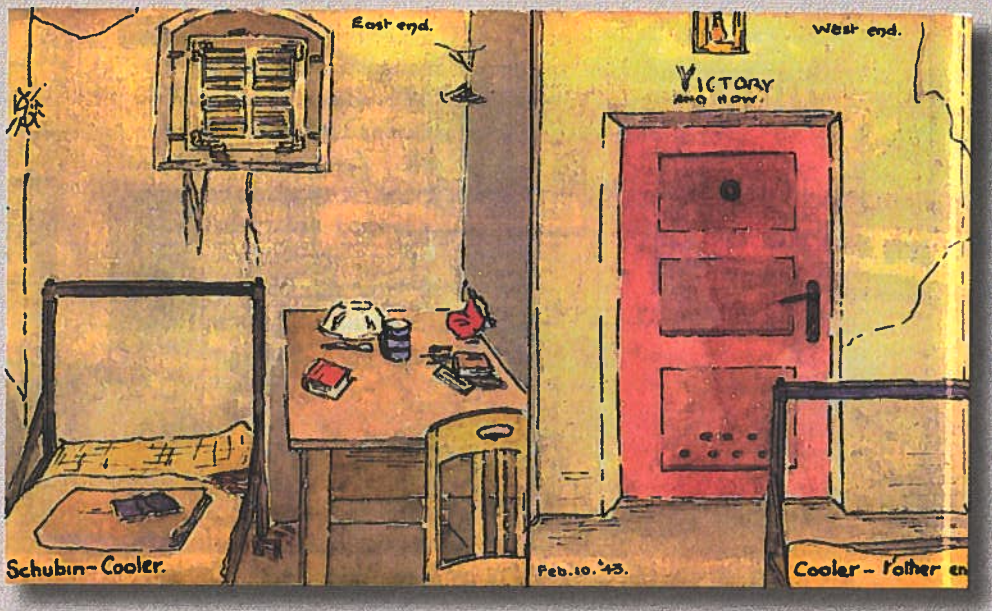
Jim Hunter arrived back in England to an emotional welcome from his family, all the more poignant because it was only then that he discovered that his younger brother, to whom he had always been close, had been killed the year before at Arnhem.

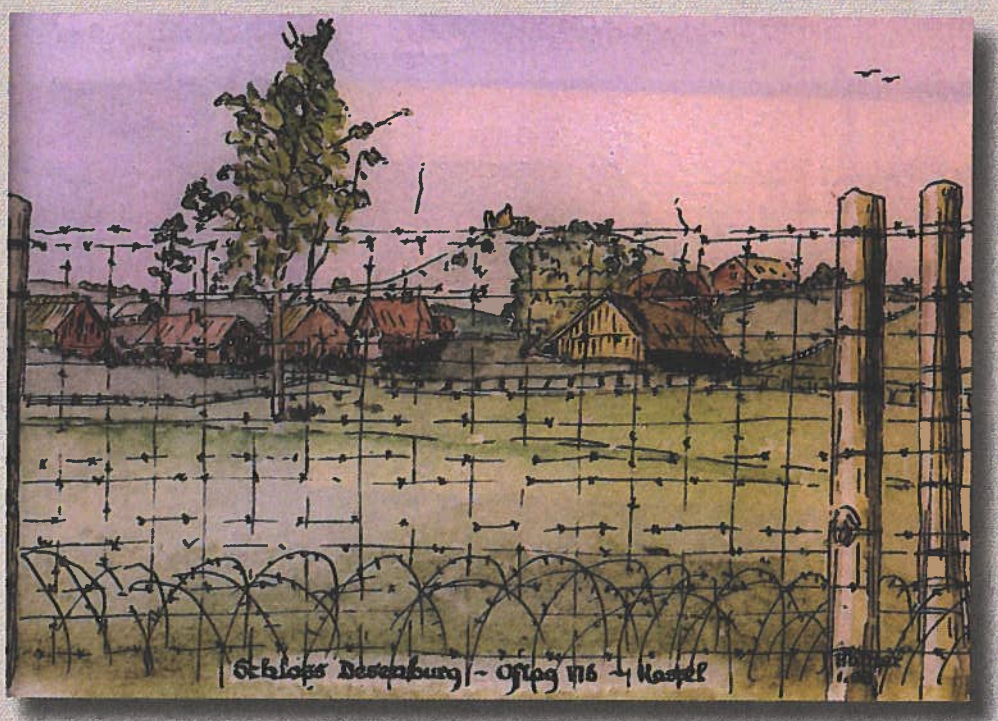
Despite his experiences Jim had no lasting animosity for the Germans. That Christmas he asked the family if they would agree to take in a German prisoner of war, from the local camp, for the festive season. The young German was somewhat nervous when Jim went to collect him wearing his RAF uniform, but the tension quickly eased, and the young man kept in touch with the family for some years afterwards, until he emigrated to Canada.

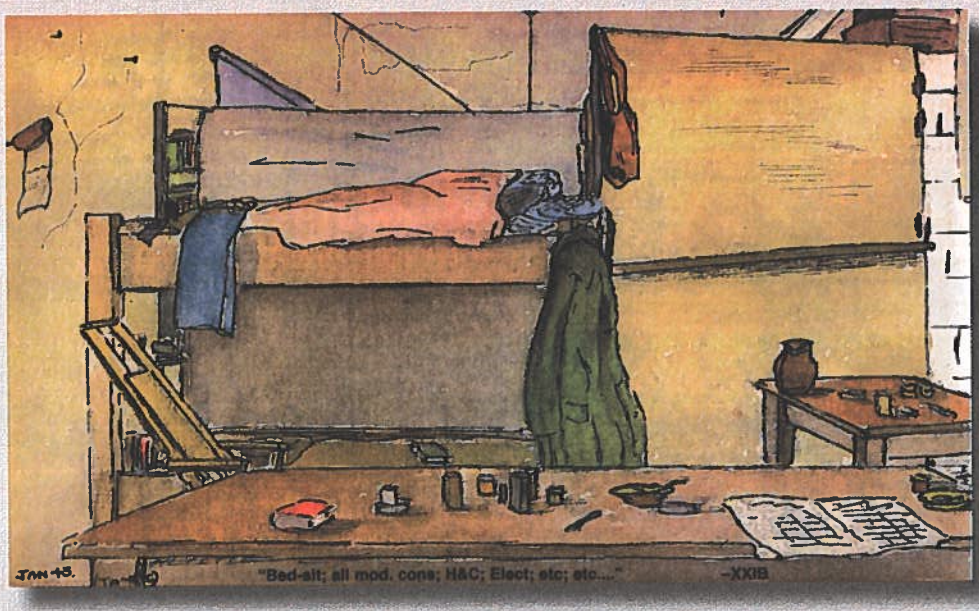
William James Hunter spent nearly four years in German prisoner of war camps. In 1945 he returned to the RAF, reaching the rank of Wing Commander before retiring in 1975. Jim Hunter died in February 2002, aged 82.

Allan Hunter is a professor of English at Curry College in Massachusetts.

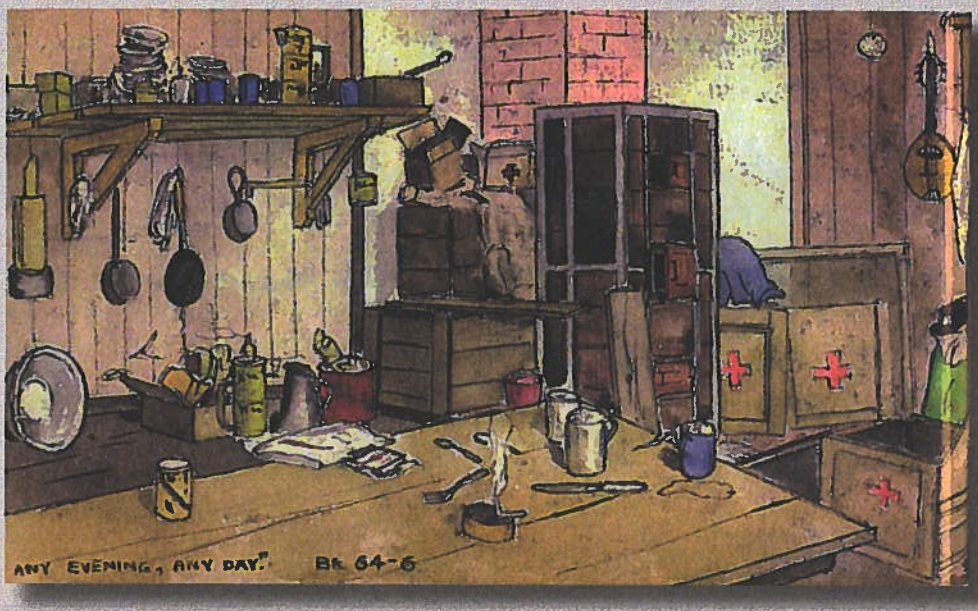
Note: The artwork which follows represents war camp paintings that Jim Hunter managed to create and preserve during his years of captivity. The full text of* From Costal Command to Captivity, *including artwork and photographs, is available from Pen & Sword Books, Great Britain.

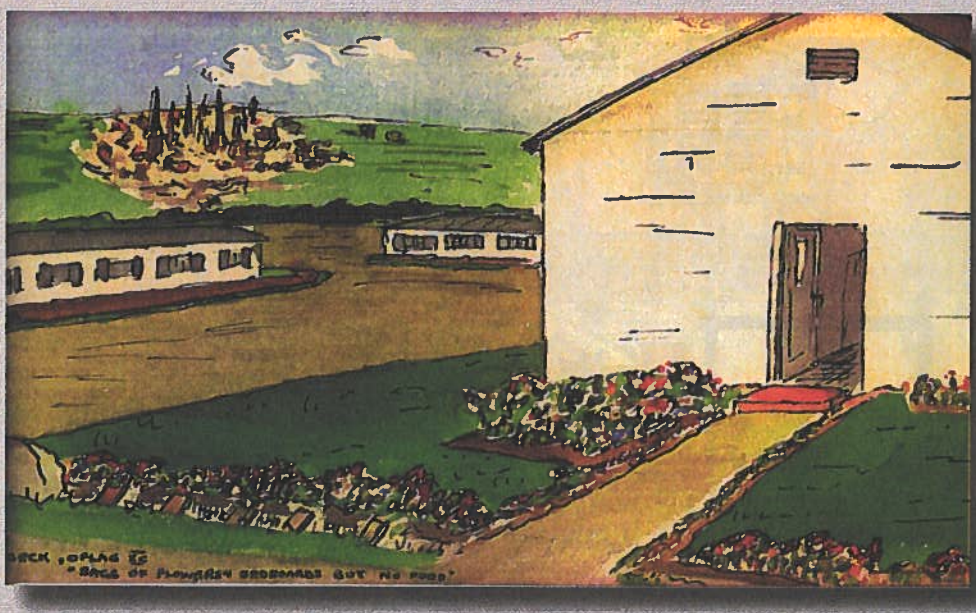

East end.
West end.
VICTORY
AND NOW.
Schubin-Cooler.
Feb.10.'43.
Cooler-Pother en


Schloss Deutenburg - Offlag VI B - Hadel


JAN 45.
"Bed-sit; all mod. cons; H&C; Elect; etc; etc...."
-XXIB

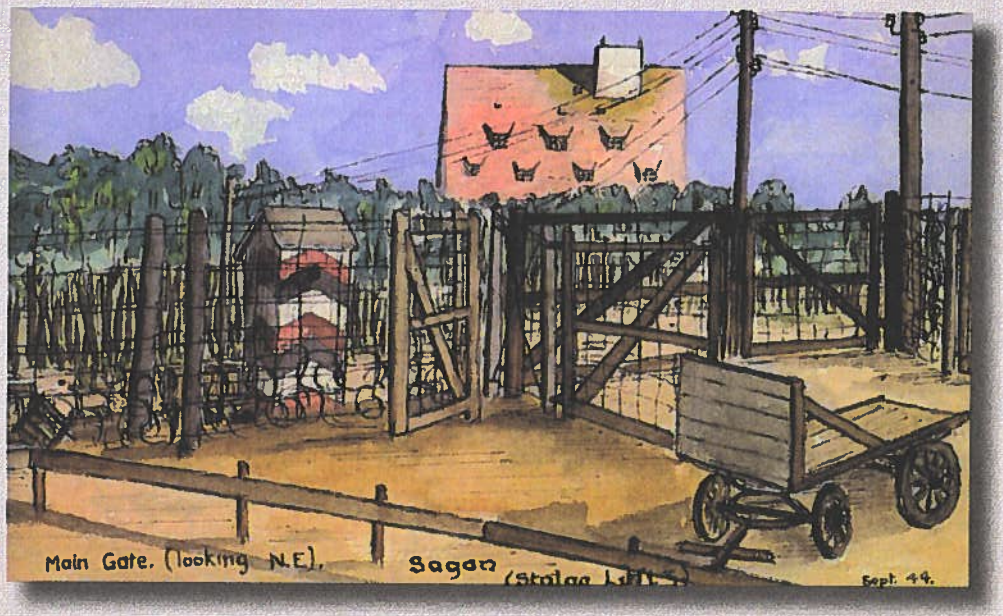

"COOLER" SPORTSPLATZ.
FEB. '45.


ANY EVENING, ANY DAY.
BR 64-6



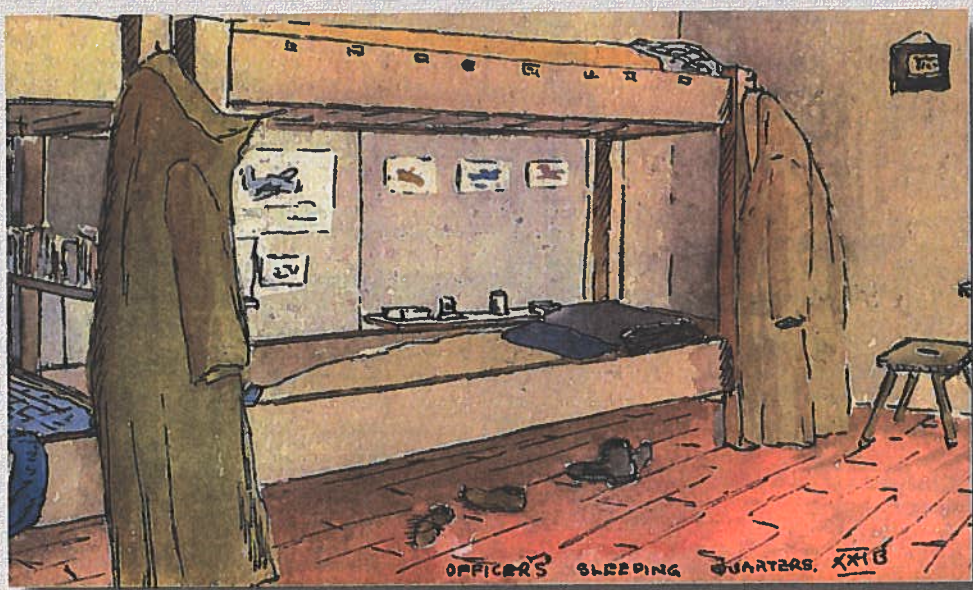

ICE RINK — FROM OUR WINDOW

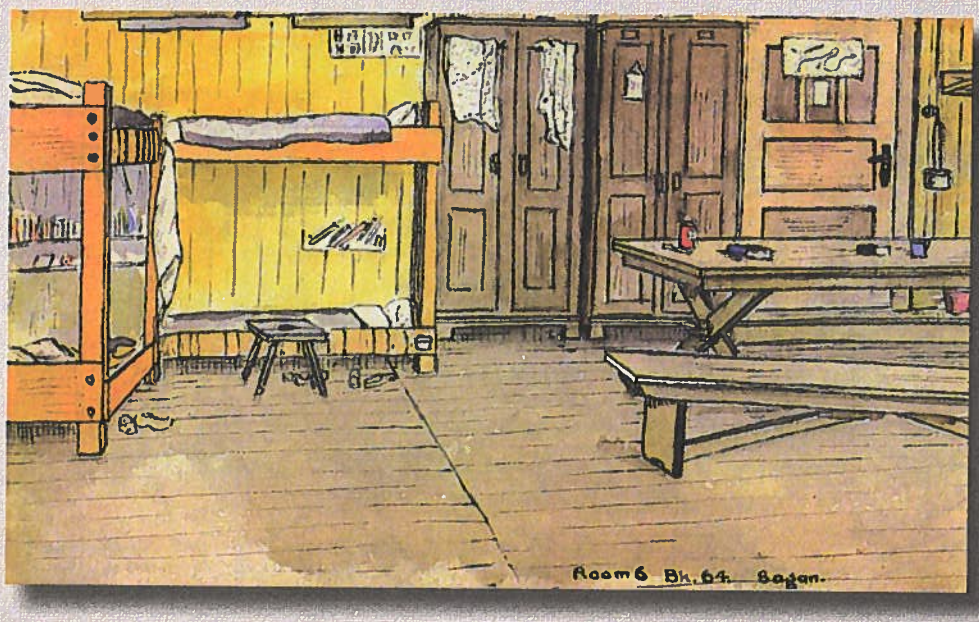

LOOKING NORTH FROM Bk. 64. GAGAN.

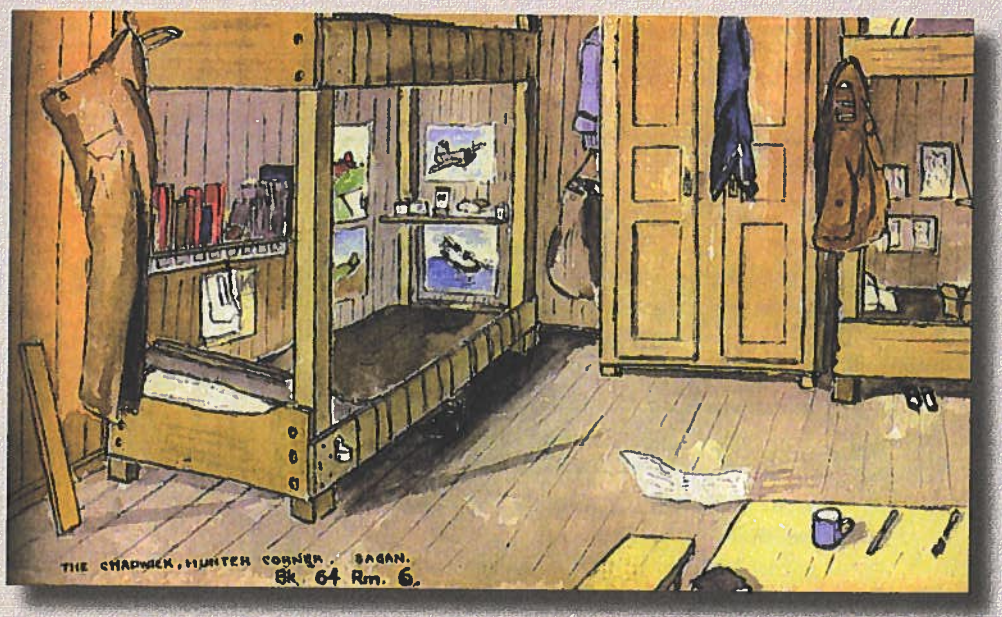

Main Gate. (looking N.E).
Sagan
Sept. 44.

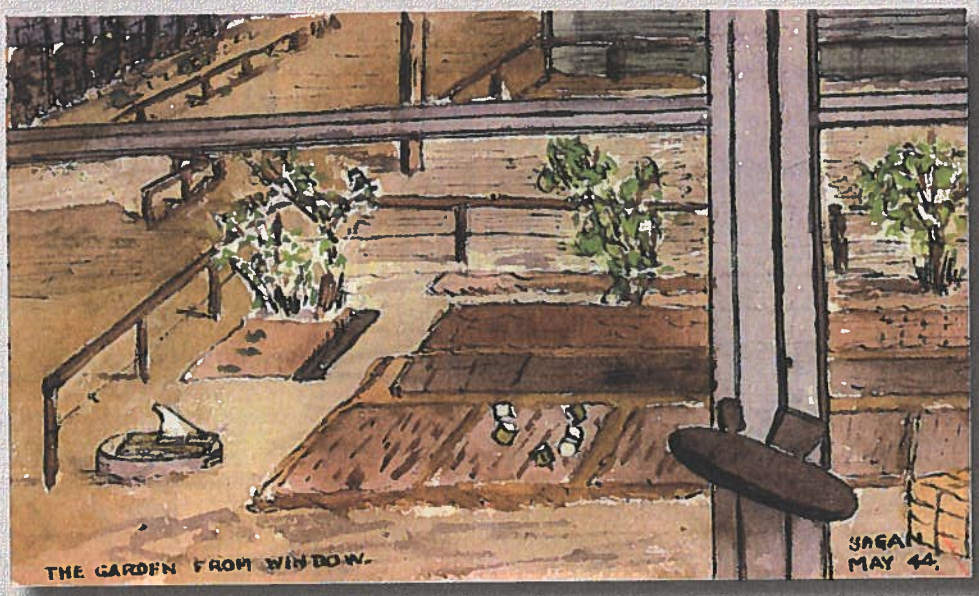

N.C.O.'s Compound Sagan

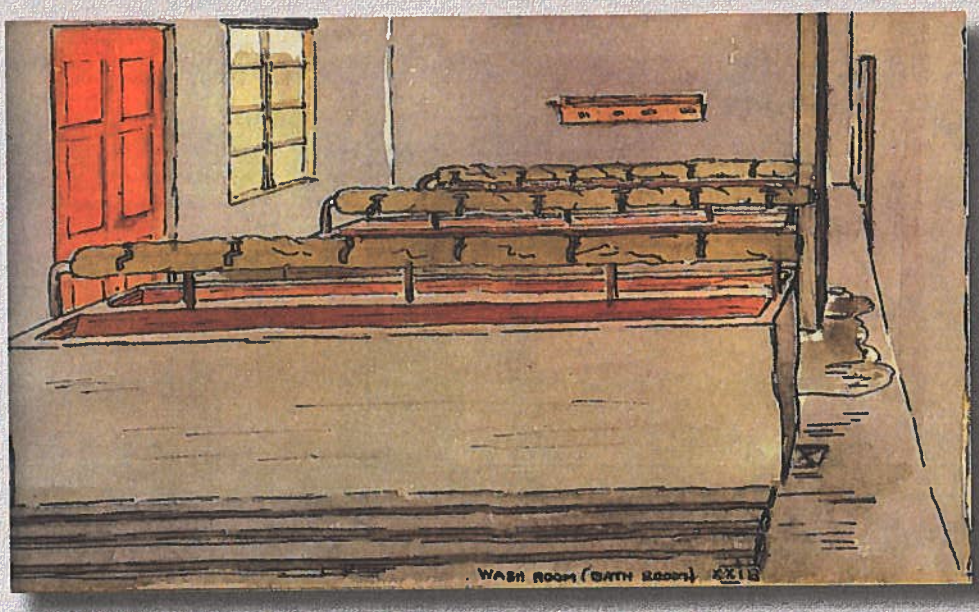

Schubin. '43. Kriegie-made cooking Stoves. Necessity the mother of invention


OFFICER'S SLEEPING QUARTERS. XXIB


Room 6 Bk. 64 Bagan.


THE CHADWICK, HUNTER CORNER. BAGAN.
Bk. 64 Rm. 6.


THE GARDEN FROM WINDOW.
SAGAR
MAY 44.


WASH ROOM (BATH ROOM)

Dale Ritterbusch

Three Poems

Thế Miếu

Nine urns in the temple
courtyard are as much truth
and beauty as anyone can stand
especially on a hot afternoon in Huế.
The Citadel is being rebuilt, and I apologize
noting long deep grooves in the urns
tracing trajectories of small arms fire,
but Hoa is unreceptive—
Americans did nothing, she says,
The French destroyed it all in 1948;
you have nothing to be sorry about.
She knows the story, says nothing
of the massacre, but I want repentance
full measure, for everyone, accountability
meted out with Christian vengeance,
justice finally for the dead, the bastards living.
She suggests mango juice, knowing
it cools my temper, hot-headed American
who knows little, a calm Mahayana acceptance
far beyond my reach. I stop
and touch the bas-reliefs, the bronze cooler
than I'd imagined, move my hands over
the length of a dragon, the intricate scales
of a carp, feel the sharp horns
of a banteng, the soft feathers of a crane
wading along the shore, and a Chí-lin—
symbol of absolute goodness—
regales my touch with the wisdom of detachment
its fanciful wings trailing along
a .50 caliber groove that burns my lingering hand

Viet Nam 2000

Note: Nine dynastic urns, cast between 1835-1837, stand outside this temple in the Citadel, site of the Emperor's Palace, at Huê, Viet Nam. The urns weigh as much as two tons and stand about six feet tall. The guide's name, Hoa, means flower in Vietnamese. The Battle of Huê in 1968 destroyed much of what was once the flower of Vietnamese cities. Several thousand civilians suspected of bearing allegiance to the South were killed by NVA and VC forces. A banteng is the wild ox of S.E. Asia. The mythical Ch´i-lin has the wings of a dragon.

Far from the Temple of Heaven

I

In a room of what's left
of the Hanoi Hilton, a guillotine
stands cold and resolute,
a reminder of the promise of blood,
a fleur-de-lis of l'Ancien Régime,
deep memory trope, sculpture of its own
a semblance prefigured
in years of monolithic art
Marxist style in the courtyard
reflecting the glory of men in massive
blocks of stone, the overthrow

If one could go back, reassemble
the disassembled, recall head
to body, the body still warm,
eyes burning with their own
historical dynamic:
Define, then, or delineate
this inherent schematic,
a violent rubric capturing
the sun's light and heat
like blood on vegetation;
explicate the throat, cultivate the pleasure
of the wholeness of a time
filled with the red rambutan,
all of an afternoon
the sweet heart of the fruit
separated from the bloody husk
loving the many heads of separation

the goodness that flows
from dissembling

II

Rambutan in the U.S. is tasteless,
cordy, and the blade as
recognizable symbol, seems in poor taste
as well, and taste is everything.
I've brought back a lotus lamp,
red glass, gold base, almost garish and
certainly out of place, unlike
incense-breathing shrines in Viet Nam, dark
as a chamber of horrors where the red lotus
glows appropriately beneath statues
of monks and saints who placidly
oversee the inseparable

In this land of Dzao, kouprey, Cao Dai
and temple ponds clogged with lotus,
there are symbols of return,
of reconnection, the last joined up
with the long ago, rice wine
swirled with snake blood,
heaven burned to ash, a fine dust
layering the earth where vengeance
conjoins with love for a bitter enemy,
for the enemies of our fathers,
enemies ourselves:
Still, the sun burns hard outside
the walls and my guide says, as a
millipede thick as a snake escapes
across our path, *Be careful,*
they sting, you sicken, maybe die.
He gives chase, cuts it in two with his shoe.

Viet Nam 2000

For John McCrae

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row

Grow or *blow*? Even you couldn't decide
from one hand-written version to the next,
but then it doesn't really matter
given all the times I've dismissed your poem,
along with Rupert Brooke's—one word
would hardly change a thing.

A friend, another Canadian poet,
says I've got it wrong—says
I have to look at your strong poem once again
consider it in context—The Second Battle
of Ypres, first use of chlorine gas,
the death of your good friend, Alexis Helmer,
blown to fodder and you left in the shell hole
to pick up the few remaining bloody bits.

And so I spend an afternoon
in Guelph, your family home,
note your references to going mad, how
easy it would be. And in the notes
upon the wall the mention of your descent,
how you withdrew, spent more time with
your horse, Bonfire, once wounded by a shell,
than fellow soldiers: and not one
poem from the sea-change in your
soldier's heart—not one—your voice
more silent than the wind
blowing through that sea of red.
But then, what was there
left to say and so the better to say nothing
than write another foolish lie.

When I was young my mother brought home a poppy
fastened to her purse; I asked what it was for and

she replied *Remembrance Day* and told me more
than I could understand. It's hard to find those poppies
anymore, but it's the same with all our wars; our books
say less than nothing the heart does not already know.

After your war it's said
one could walk down the streets
of any city in the western world
and see pock-marked faces
of soldiers bearing scars
of mustard gas, of chlorine burns—
they still teach the trick
of pissing in a handkerchief,
holding that urine soaked cloth
over nose and mouth if not equipped
with a protective mask. In the museum
at Edgewood Arsenal, one can still see
gas masks designed for horses—
grow or *blow* it doesn't matter,
our history willfully buried, as it must.

Still, I love the wind
blowing through a bed
of poppies I grow in the backyard,
their color like blood coursing
through the summer sun, your lines,
like trenches, carved across the fields
of Europe, still visible from the air
after all these years,
the earth unwilling to relinquish
line after line we fall back on
when we have so little else that holds.

Dale Ritterbusch is author of the poetry collection *Lessons Learned*. The poems that appear here are from his forthcoming collection, *Far from the Temple of Heaven* (Black Moss Press). Professor Ritterbusch is Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Department of English & Fine Arts at the United States Air Force Academy for 2004-05. He is a frequent contributor to **WLA.**

Commentary by W.D. Ehrhart

Carrying the Ghost of Ray Catina

Carrying the Darkness: The Poetry of the Vietnam War has had a long and successful life for an anthology of poetry. It has been in print almost continuously since 1985, first with Avon Books and since 1989 with Texas Tech University Press. It has reached thousands of readers, and still sells several hundred copies each year.

Inevitably, the book has some glaring omissions. No female veterans are represented, though as Lynda Van Devanter said to me when she and Joan Furey were preparing *Visions of War, Dreams of Peace,* "Of course they wouldn't send you their poems. You're a man." David Connolly and Doug Anderson had not yet published their first books, and thus are not represented. And of course, it doesn't contain a number of wonderful poems written since 1985 by contributors such as John Balaban, D.F. Brown, Dale Ritterbusch, and others who have continued to produce new work.

If I had the book to do again, I would therefore do a number of things differently, but the only actual errors I've ever come upon in all these years were some egregious proofreading mistakes in the Avon edition that I was able to correct in the Texas Tech edition. I've mostly been satisfied that I did the best I could do with what I had available at the time.

Not long ago, however, I stumbled upon yet another egregious error, this time not of proofreading but of fact. The discovery began with a July 2004 e-mail from a long-time friend, the poet Linda Lerner of New York City. Linda is a great supporter of Vietnam War literature and knows the field well. "I thought of you," she wrote, "when I got a book by Alan Catlin called *Ghost Road*. On the back cover it says: 'He has been anthologized extensively, most prominently in *Carrying the Darkness*, edited by W.D. Ehrhart,' but I have your book and he's not in there."

I'd never heard of Alan Catlin, and he's certainly not in my anthology, so I wrote to Scott Douglass at Main Street Rag, publisher of Catlin's 2000 *Ghost Road*. Douglass replied that the jacket information was supplied by Catlin and he had taken Catlin at his word. "If it helps," he added, Catlin "lives in upstate New York. Any two-poem contributors in the Albany/Schenectady area?"

With this information, I went through the book looking for two-poem contributors from Schenectady. Only one name fit both criteria: Ray Catina.

Readers familiar with *Carrying the Darkness* may remember Catina as the author of "Negotiations" and "Philosophy." In the Notes on Contributors section, compiled from information provided directly by the poets, one finds that Catina was born in 1948 and served as a U.S. Army infantryman in Vietnam, 1969-70.

I checked and re-checked my paperwork. Neither the author's biographical notes, handwritten by Catina, nor the permission form signed by Catina make any mention of an Alan Catlin, and the check for the permissions fee was made out to Ray Catina and sent to Ray Catina. But the address was Schenectady, New York. Moreover, Catina wrote in 1985 that he "occasionally tends bar in upstate New York," while the back jacket of *Ghost Road* says that Catlin "has been working as a bartender in Albany, New York" for the last twenty years.

Armed with this information, I checked my *Poets & Writers* directory, found an address for Catlin—in Schenectady—and wrote to him, presenting the information I had found. Confronted with the evidence, Catlin readily admitted he himself is not a veteran and that he had invented "Ray Catina," adding that "it was a strange time in my life."

Maybe it was. I've had strange times in my life, too. And I've got no problem with pseudonyms. Consider Elia or Mark Twain or Ellis Peters. Nor have I a problem with poetic personas. Consider Bryan Alec Floyd's *The Long War Dead* or William Childress's "The Soldiers." But I do have a problem with someone who invents a fictitious person with a fictitious military history, publishes under that name, receives mail under that name, cashes checks under that name, and never mentions that it's a pseudonym, allowing me to propagate false information in two different editions of *Carrying the Darkness*, and never admitting to the falsehood until nearly two decades later when he's found out. As I told Catlin, "Not cool."

So, for the record, those of you with copies of *Carrying the Darkness*, please amend your Credits, Table of Contents, the author's name on page 69, and the Notes on Contributors, striking out the name of Ray Catina and replacing it with Alan Catlin. And please accept my apology for allowing, however inadvertently, so many readers for so many years to think that Ray Catina was a real person who had fought in Vietnam.

W.D. Ehrhart teaches English and history at the Haverford School in suburban Philadelphia. His most recent book is *The Madness of It All: Essays on War, Literature and American Life.*

Ron Sandvik

Falling With Style

The 17th Draft of a Videoplay to be Produced Upon My Death and Played For My Children

(Black screen with Muddy Waters' "You Can't Lose What You Never Had" playing in a slow fade up to full volume. Then text reversed out in white.)

Had a sweet little home, it got burned down,
people ain't that sad.
My own fault, people ain't that bad.
Well you know you can't spend what you ain't got,
You can't lose some little girl you ain't never had.

—Muddy Waters (McKinley Morganfield)

(Roll opening credits. Fade song out. Voice over black screen.) First, this isn't a morbid recollection of an overweight, middle-aged, midwestern white guy's average life. *(Establishing shot [stock, vintage 8mm and jumpy for effect] of a nondescript Midwestern hospital circa 1963. The building is squat and flat-roofed with an institutional brick construction. Fade colors, add film distress for the effect of a memory I don't have of being born.)* No, this is a tonic, a powerful liquor, for my friends and loved ones in a time of sorrow. *(Montage: stock, vintage footage [jumpy 8mm] Parents holding newborn. Insert a partial sequence of Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello fast-action dance scene from a beach. Run sequence upside down, then repeat the sequence right side up, then as if this segment was included by mistake, jump cut to a long shot of a desolate, wind blown two-lane blacktop highway at night with a sign in the foreground illuminated by headlights, "Welcome to Iowa." Jump cut to stock industrial film footage of various fields and crops being worked and harvested. Clip of "Ioway" from the* Music Man.*)* This is my message to the future based on whatever it is that I am, was, and could be. It's how I remember it. It's an explanation, an apology, a love song and a sweet home brewed dirge. *(Fade to black.)*

Kids, remember this survival fact: Shipwrecked survivors, who have no freshwater to drink, die of thirst drinking seawater sooner than those who drink nothing. It's just as true that you will kill yourself, waste so much time as to have been maimed, or at the very least make yourself miserable drinking from the cup called *I Want.* Being a little hungry or thirsty won't kill you. Comfort in this world is not your objective—living is. *(Extreme close-up of a choir singer's mouth, so extreme the screen is black. Very slow pull back in the shot to reveal woman's face, choir, tabernacle, then the television the choir video is being played on.)* There are a million verses to the song of want. We all have our favorite one and one of the most famous refrains is *I deserve it.* It is one of the main verses sung by the choir singing down at the First Church of the American Dream. *(Fade to Black.)*

(Black screen, slow fade up of The Rolling Stone's "Can't Always Get What You Want." White text reversed out on screen.)

No, you can't always get what you want
You can't always get what you want
You can't always get what you want
And if you try sometime, you might find,
You get what you need

—The Rolling Stones

(The music plays over a sequence of stock, vintage, or appropriated images of anything being thrown from a height. Cars go over cliffs to explode in mid air, bad guys losing their grip and falling from a height.) Everyone has some recurring image they are compelled to consider from every angle, in wakefulness or sleep. Much of my life seemed defined by falling. *(Montage of Chevy Chase's Saturday Night Live skits where he falls down.)* I'm not talking about the overtly clumsy stumbling Chevy Chase built a career on, rather the full-bodied, terminal-velocity kind. I'm talking about, "Hey-we're-not-connected-to-a-damn-thing-and-it's-still-a-while-before-we-land" kind of falling.

(Montage of scenes including all manner of industrial or stock shots of parachuting, including the 1960s TV show Ripcord.) As a child, I saw some old war movies and I began dreaming about parachuting out of airplanes. Boom, just like that you're in someplace you've never been, action, adventure, love, danger—boom, just like that. *(Insert clips from* The Rat Patrol, Jericho, Combat! Men of Valor *and* Victory at Sea!*)* Most of us kids in my neighborhood fought the Russians, Indians, Klingons or the indispensable, generic Nazi in those hot, logy afternoons with the cicadas whirring. We would occasionally fight the North Vietnamese, but it wasn't often. When somebody would get a "good letter" home from kin fighting in Vietnam, then it would be OK. Bad letters could come any-

time, and nobody wanted to think about it, so mostly, we stuck to old wars or ones that didn't exist.

(The Brian Setzer Orchestra plays "James Bond/Mission Impossible/Peter Gunn Themes Medley" over the chase scene from The Third Man *where the writer Holly Martins [Joseph Cotten] stalks his thoroughly corrupted college friend Harry Lime [Orson Welles] through the sewers of post WWII Vienna.)* When I played alone, I would usually parachute in and get some MacGuffin or another and struggle to a safe place. I would search for countries on my little, dented four-inch metal globe. Most of the names I had never heard of, until occasionally the news would report some huge natural disaster or war. *(Clip montage of silent films representing other cultures in blackface, in tribal masks, fixing to boil white colonists. Clip: Tribal scenes from* King Kong *and tribal dancing in* Zulu Dawn.*)* What the folks did in those countries, how they lived, their dreams, were all unknown and mysterious to me. All I had to go on was what the local news was amped up about, so I figured they wanted their own football teams to win, and better soybean and hog futures. *(Montage sequence of "America's Bountiful Harvest" stock images. Extender shot of Norman Rockwell's famous "Freedom From Want" where the fat old white lady is presiding over the filleting of a turkey the size of a 1939 Oldsmobile.)* Like everyone else in this world, I just wanted to be loved, noticed, appreciated, useful, needed.

(Voiceover black and white montage of public domain barnstorming and early flying machines.) Kids, here's another survival fact: Children unconsciously know that when you are doing something, anything—the whole world looks better. Adults tend to forget this. It may be play, but it is not inactivity.

None of the various one-story structures on my relative's farms were safe from children jumping off them. My brother and sister, my cousins, the neighbor kids and I would all stretch out and jump onto a soft spot of dirt, land on our feet and roll like we thought paratroopers would. It was just a moment, but we always felt so much more alive afterward. *(Montage of stock images of gymnasts, kids in physical education classes,* Jackass *and* Fear Factor *reality television show stunts.)* I would flatfoot jump, cannonball, belly flop, watermelon, and butt-bounce low-boards at swimming pools—in those days before insurance companies ran America, every pool seemed to have one. I'd bound up the ladders of high-boards if a pool was big enough to have one. *(Repeat image 3 times of an Olympic diver slicing deftly into a pool of water.)* It was years before any of us kids would care to arc out and gracefully pike in, leaving a small splash in a widening set of ripples. I wanted the rush, the feeling of living. I wanted to fly. *(Fade to black.)*

(Black screen, John Lee Hooker's Never Get Out of These Blues Alive *plays in on a slow fade capturing his hypnotic guitar riff and text reversed out in white come on with the first vocals.)*

Drinking black coffee and smoking cigarettes
Drinking black coffee, yeah, and smoking cigarettes
I can't see no use to try
I'll never get out of these blues alive
No, I'll never, I'll never get out of these blues alive

—John Lee Hooker

(Clips from David Copperfield where the master and Fagan respectively beat the child. Fade to black. Montage: scenes of despairing serfs from Sergei Eisenstein's Strike! *Fade to black.)* My love for heights and jumping would be cured with whatever kills childhood, with age, with pain. *(Clip of Hitchcock's* Vertigo *where Jimmie Stewart is wigging out in a bell tower. Warren Zevon's "Prison Grove" plays over looped scenes from Fritz Lang's classic silent movie* Metropolis. *The Masses entering and leaving the work lifts. The Masses entering and leaving the work lifts. The Masses entering and leaving the work lifts. Jump cut to the scene of the worker trying to keep up delivering electricity in the bowels of the Metropolis. Jump cut to the Masses entering and leaving the work lifts. The Masses entering and leaving the work lifts. The Masses entering and leaving the work lifts. Fade to black.)*

(Mungo Jerry's "In the Summertime" plays under the stock footage of hobo camps circa 1930. Insert the California auto-camps footage from the film of John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath *and Tom Joad's [Henry Fonda] reaction shot.)* After high school, I fell in with the unemployed leisure class. *(Insert scenes from* Reefer Madness.*)* Work when it rains; grow some weed in a ravine with a southerly exposure somewhere, and a sunny day is best experienced with no bosses and loud music. *(Insert scenes from* Tom Sawyer *and* Huck Finn.*)* This was a sweet devilish time until that inevitable day that you know is coming when the cops catch you doing something. *("Dragnet Theme" plays under voiceover.)* They didn't have a good case, enough to talk shit on, but not too solid. And so the detective proposed a deal, and I fell in with it. The detective had his name carved on the biggest, ugliest US Navy desk name sign to ever be perpetrated on the seven seas. I knew which recruiter to visit to get this guy off my ass. *("Anchors Aweigh" plays under voiceover.)* The next Monday I am at the recruiter's office.

"Master Chief Geerdes, how do you join the Navy, and avoid those claustrophobic ships?"

"Glad you asked, kid. I myself am a Seabee. It's a good way to go. We can deploy a battalion anywhere in the world in seventy-two hours and within six hours of landing the beer WILL be cold, son."

"Yeah, that one, man."

I just wanted out of my hometown. I wanted to see the world. *("Song of the Seabees" plays in on a slow fade. Fade to black.)*

We're the Seabees of the Navy
We can build and we can fight
We'll pave the way to victory
And guard it day and night
And we promise that we remember
The "Seventh of December"
We're the Seabees of the Navy
Bees of the Seven Seas

Ry Cooder plays slide guitar under voiceover. Montage of Navy boot camp stock footage—first haircuts, drill instructors in their "Dixie Cup" hats, folded in the manner of veteran sailors screaming at shaved head recruits.) In the Navy I started falling to my hands and giving pushups a lot. We fell in and made various lines for all sorts of things. I never fussed with clothing so much as in the Navy. A good company commander can put the most fascist queen of the 5th Avenue fashionistas to shame. Early on, it all seemed a bit prissy worrying so much about your clothing and folding the contents of a sea bag all the time. It all turned out OK—they just wanted attention to detail. By the time I got done with boot camp, some basic electrical training, and eight weeks of the Naval Construction Training Center in Gulfport, MS—the only thing I wanted was cold beer and hot leg.

(Footage of Navy SEALs movie, machine guns blazing. Footage of professional wrestlers talking shit and whacking each other with chairs, footage of pro football players tackling and hitting each other.) You can truly have a lot of macho shit going on—but for sheer natural, testosterone-laden manhood the Navy Seabees are strictly industrial strength. *Clip of government archive footage of the grim conditions on Wake Island, WWII Pacific Campaigns, and Vietnam construction conditions. Jump cut to* James Bond *footage.)* Yeah, it's true, a Navy SEAL can train up for a mission and swim miles underwater, navigating hazards and keeping an eye on time and tide tables in order to take out some objective with a ballpoint pen. He'll also need some debriefing and R & R afterwards. *(The Grateful Dead's "Easy Wind" plays under the voiceover.)* But what person can ball a ninety pound jackhammer eight to ten hours a day in tropical heat, pave asphalt in the desert, run a power plant in the Antarctic, and in all cases not break stride at quitting time, get piss drunk and fight with Marines, make-up with the same Marines, then go on some sad mission to try and get laid, take two hours of sleep then do it all over again until they run out of money or collapse out of exhaustion? The Navy Seabees. If it's about arduous labor, the con-

struction of jobs so shitty no civilian contractor will bid them, endurance under harsh conditions and the blithe ignorance of pain—put your money on a Seabee every time. They may not be the "tip of the spear," but they are damn proud to be the big-ass shaft. Sharp points break off and dull down, but you can plain-old beat somebody to death with a good shaft. Or use it for leverage on a jack handle.

(Mountain's "Mississippi Queen" plays over the Montage of NCTC Gulfport. Extender shots of many historical photos from the Seabee Museum in Port Hueneme, CA.) In Gulfport, and God did love that city before the gambling took over, I learned the trade of electrical work. A huge field of empty utility poles laid out in a grid about twenty feet apart, looms large in my mind. They would throw volleyballs at us and have us volley to each other twenty feet above the ground. If the ball fell, you climbed down and got it. When I froze up on top of the pole, scared to come down, Chief Wenzel took a splitting maul from the line shed and started chopping at the base of my pole to "unfreeze" me. To this day I ponder whether Chief Wenzel was either the best psychologist in the entire world or the very worst. I never "froze up" again, so . . . .

Occasionally, I would fall off the poles, landing on my back in the red clay. Usually my hands would slip out of the gloves I climbed with from so much sweat. The sweat of Mississippi in July, the sweat of fear mingled and became too much. I would lie at the base of a pole to see my glove hanging on a splinter fifteen feet up or my hardhat rolling in a lazy arc toward the instructor's boots.

(Industrial training film footage of Ready Kilowatt *the industrial electrical training films.)* Other services specialize their MOSs. In the Seabees, if you are an electrician and electrons flow through it somewhere, you are responsible for that equipment somehow. It's your bag, Dad. *(Stock photos of items synched with voiceover.)* Stoves, power generators, telephones, high voltage, low voltage and interior wiring: If we didn't train on it, we read about it in a book somewhere. At this time all I wanted to do was fall in and turn to. I wanted to be useful, to be a good sailor. My best efforts only made me average, adequate, and OK. But there was a cold war on and I wanted to be ready.

Whenever the Seabees wanted to be more ready, it seems like we always rappelled. We rappelled from towers, rooftops, from helicopters and down sheer-faced terrain. We trained regularly, and wherever we were. We often trained with the Marines or Army. We practiced the Australian crawl, going down a rope, walking facedown the side of the feature you were scaling, practicing sweeping our imaginary automatic weapons to suppress hostile forces that may wait for us there. We always landed on our feet and felt a little more alive. We cheered each other and smoked non-filtered cigarettes. Our pocketknives were razor sharp, because Marine Kabar knives were just too cumbersome and impractical for getting on and off heavy equipment all day.

It started as an assumption on some forgotten chief's part. Being called "tractor-

boy" as a sometimes handle by my peers in reference to being from Iowa didn't help. It's kind of like how some folks get called Ace, and you know they never shot down five enemy planes. As a kid from Iowa, the chief obviously knew that I knew how to drive a tractor, and thusly I knew how to operate heavy equipment, and was the best man for the job. So that's how, in my unit, I became the Mozart, the Stan Getz, and the fucking-A Jimi Hendrix of backhoes and rough terrain forklifts. I once cleared eighty years worth of industrial debris from a field in a few days, weeks ahead of schedule, so the Navy SEALs could do a bunch of whatever it is they do. It wasn't spraying the enemy down with a fifty-caliber, but hey—take that you commie bastards.

Kids, here's another survival fact:Two pair of boots will last you three times as long. I don't know where that fits in, but I wanted you to know it.

As a workingman in a trade like this, my mortality was always hovering about my head waving its hands. I started to look out for stoners, deadheads, and drunks. I became less tolerant of fuck-ups, tormenting them and finding ways to remove them from around me. I hadn't cared before, but now I did.

(Insert stock footage of conveyances mentioned.) Electrical work took me onto bucket-trucks, scaffolds, ladders, scissor-lifts, cherry pickers, catwalks, rooftops, antenna towers, and even into tall trees. There was no time to leap, jump or fall. *(Insert clip from Hitchcock's classic cut on image where Janet Leigh's eye mixes with the drain in* Psycho.*)* It was during this time that falling became an internal activity for me. Because of the work schedules, I trained myself to fall asleep in almost any position, almost anywhere. At first I'd lie down flat, splayed out, as if I'd already landed safely—then I would fall into the great nothingness. I would sail downward deeper and deeper into sleep, nothing, my unconsciousness, everything—*(Clip:* Star Trek *landing party transporting or appearing on an unknown planet phasers ready, looking warily about.)* a parachute insertion into that place of dreams, a bewildered soldier trying to make some sense of all the unknown and mysterious things around him. I wanted recognizable order. I wanted to understand everything. I wanted outcomes to match my desires. I wanted to live . . . like . . . like I don't know . . . Just better than I was. I had begun to drink want.

(Black screen. Slow fade up on The Kinks' "Catch Me Now I'm Falling" text reversed out in white)

> Now I'm calling all citizens from all over the world
> This is Captain America calling
> I helped you out when you were down on your knees
> So will you catch me now I'm falling (falling)
>
> —Ray Davies (The Kinks)

(Stock footage of eagles flying, hanging on updrafts forever.) Falling, to descend freely by the force of gravity is a powerful human metaphor and experience. The Phoenix fell down into ruins and rose from its ashes. *(Clip from* Fractured Fairy Tales Cartoon of Icarus and Daedelus.*)* Icarus flew too high and fell to his destruction. *(Clip from* Commercial for Medic Alert Panic Button.*)* We are fearful for the poor lady on television who falls and can't get up. You can fall unawares into bad company. You can fall into a fortune, a shit bucket, in love, out of love, and you can fall down drunk. There are fallen women, fallen clergy, fallen angels, and all of those fallen persons can talk about fallen cakes, leaves, and markets. Dynasties, Reichs, Empires, capitals, and military objectives all fall within the abstractions humans create that rise and inevitably fall. I never meant to fall so many times. I just wanted to fly under my own control.

(Extender shot of British Socialist Agitprop poster "A Bayonet is a Tool With A Worker at Both Ends.") Kids, another survival fact: Guess what? You're always a worker. Remember that and it will put you on the right side of the issue every time.

(Blues riff from Savoy Brown's "I'm Tired" plays over montage of news broadcasters, reporters, commentators, and politicians.) Here's yet another survival fact: *Everybody* on this fragile planet is looking for good things for themselves and the ones they love as they each freefall irrevocably, inevitably into the dust of nothingness. Ask them, they will tell you this themselves.

If somebody tells you something different, tells you other people are going to do unspecified evil—beware. They will probably speak of a higher power abandoning you to convince you of their own fearful beliefs. Or they may be paid, under-informed commentators, trying to make you feel that a steady drumbeat of body bags coming from some place where the people are cursing fate in some language you don't know is an acceptable thing. They will convince you to fall out with your conscience, your allies, to fall silent against the outrages of unknown and mysterious intrigues of multi-national corporations. They will try to break your connections to others, these spider-hair thin cords that bind us together, bind us to the unknown and mysterious world that rains down hate and love in the same day.

(Extender shot of a Norman Rockwell-esque painting of me, with each of you at age three sitting at my feet on a Sunday afternoon.) Last survival fact, Kids: Peace is inside you. Nobody can conduct you to the great halls of yourself. Folks will take advantage of you if you do not know this. They will sell you special texts, access to a social group, crystals, and you name it. Trust yourself. Nobody owes us an explanation and none is forthcoming. There is no answer other than creating your own peace. Listen to a lot of music. Learn to play a few songs on a few instruments. Learn another language. Rock and roll is about fixing to jump.

Country music is about after the landing. Blues observes the inescapability of the whole cycle of jumping and landing. Trust yourself, it's in there, though you may need to look hard.

(Extender shot of a soft-focused cornfield with the sun rising.) Do your best—and remember, believe it or don't, everyone else is trying to do theirs. I had an ass-kicking good life. I was and am a wealthy soul. Those things that mattered, I took on my own terms. Like that film we played you guys when you were little, *Toy Story.* Buzz Lightyear tells Woody, "It's not flying. It's falling with style." Finally, what I really want is for you to be happy. *(Tom Waits and Allen Ginsberg reading "America [Closing Time]" then Lou Reed's "There is No Time" plays over various clips of the famous parachute team The Flying Elvi jumping, falling, deploying chutes and landing.)*

Ron Sandvik is a former Navy SEABEE. His poetry and prose have appeared in numerous journals, including previously in **WLA**. He is Managing Editor of *North American Review*.

Dana Gioia

Four Poems

Veterans' Cemetery

The ceremonies of the day have ceased,
Abandoned to the ragged crow's parade.
The flags unravel in the caterpillar's feast.
The wreaths collapse onto the stones they shade.

How quietly doves gather by the gate
Like souls who have no heaven and no hell.
The patient grass reclaims its lost estate
Where one stone angel stands as sentinel.

The voices whispering in the burning leaves,
Faint and inhuman, what can they desire
When every season feeds upon the past,
And summer's green ignites the autumn's fire?

The afternoon's a single thread of light
Sewn through the tatters of a leafless willow,
As one by one the branches fade from sight,
And time curls up like paper turning yellow.

—from *The Gods of Winter*, Graywolf Press, 1991

Night Watch

For my uncle, Theodore Ortiz, U.S.M.M.

I think of you standing on the sloping deck
as the freighter pulls away from the coast of China,
the last lights of Asia disappearing in the fog,
and the engine's drone dissolving in the old
monotony of waves slapping up against the hull.

Leaning on the rails, looking eastward to America
across the empty weeks of ocean,
how carefully you must have planned your life,
so much of it already wasted on the sea,
the vast country of your homelessness.

Macao, Vladivostok, Singapore.
Dante read by shiplamp on the bridge.
The names of fellow sailors lost in war.
These memories will die with you,
but tonight they rise up burning in your mind

interweaving like gulls crying in the wake,
like currents on a chart, like gulfweed
swirling in a star-soaked sea, and interchangeable
as all the words for night—*la notte, noche, Nacht, nuit,*
each sound half-foreign, half-familiar, like America.

For now you know that mainland best from dreams.
Your dead mother turning toward you slowly,
always on the edge of words, yet always
silent as the suffering Madonna of a shrine.
Or your father pounding his fist against the wall.

There are so many ways to waste a life.
Why choose between these icons of unhappiness,
when there is the undisguised illusion of the sea,
the comfort of old books and solitude to fill
the long night watch, the endless argument of waves?

Breathe in the dark and tangible air, for in a few weeks
you will be dead, burned beyond recognition,
left as a headstone in the unfamiliar earth
with no one to ask, neither wife nor children,
why your thin ashes have been buried here

and not scattered on the shifting gray Pacific.

—from *The Gods of Winter*, Graywolf Press, 1991

News from Nineteen Eighty-Four

for James Fenton

The great offensive in the East began
this morning as our forces overran
the enemy's positions. Total victory
is now expected within weeks! The Spring
Youth Festival will be delayed by an
impromptu demonstration of support.
Arrests continue at the Ministry.
The weekly coffee ration will remain
at sixty grams. More news in half an hour.

Arrests continue at the Ministry
where ten high-ranking members have confessed
to crimes against the People. Late last night
news of another massive victory
along the Eastern front. "The end's in sight,"
our Leader commented as he released
the record figures of the summer harvest.
Impromptu demonstrations of support
occurred throughout the capital. More news at ten.

Fighting is still intense along the front
as the cold weather stalls the enemy's
feeble offensive. Now that the bombardment
of the capital has ceased, the execution
of draft evaders will resume tonight
in Freedom Square. All rations have been raised
with coffee now at thirty grams. Production
goals have been surpassed in tin and bauxite.
Morale among the volunteers is high.

The fires at the docks have been contained
with suspects netted in a late-night sweep.
The enemy's offensive in the East
has been repulsed at great cost. But morale

among the senior volunteers is high.
The Worker's Festival began last night
with execution of trade dissidents.
Spring coffee rations climb to twenty grams.
Arrests continue at the Ministry.

—from *The Gods of Winter*, Graywolf Press, 1991

Elegy with Surrealist Proverbs as Refrain

"Poetry must lead somewhere," declared Breton.
He carried a rose inside his coat each day
to give a beautiful stranger—"Better to die of love
than love without regret." And those who loved him
soon learned regret. "The simplest surreal act
is running through the street with a revolver
firing at random." Old and famous, he seemed *démodé.*
There is always a skeleton on the buffet.

Wounded Apollinaire wore a small steel plate
inserted in his skull. "I so loved art," he smiled,
"I joined the artillery." His friends were asked to wait
while his widow laid a crucifix across his chest.
Picasso hated death. The funeral left him so distressed
he painted a self-portrait. "It's always other people,"
remarked Duchamp, "who do the dying."
I came. I sat down. I went away.

Dali dreamed of Hitler as a white-skinned girl—
impossibly pale, luminous and lifeless as the moon.
Wealthy Roussel taught his poodle to smoke a pipe.
"When I write, I am surrounded by radiance.
My glory is like a great bomb waiting to explode."
When his valet refused to slash his wrists,
the bankrupt writer took an overdose of pills.
There is always a skeleton on the buffet.

Breton considered suicide the truest art,
though life seemed hardly worth the trouble to discard.

The German colonels strolled the *Ile de la Cité*—
some to the Louvre, some to the *Place Pigalle*.
"The loneliness of poets has been erased," cried Eluard,
in praise of Stalin. "Burn all the books," said dying Hugo Ball.
There is always a skeleton on the buffet.
I came. I sat down. I went away.

—from *Interrogations at Noon*, Graywolf Press, 2001

Dana Gioia is the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. He is a successful businessman, educator, critic, anthologist, translator, and poet. His 1991 book, *Can Poetry Matter?* strongly influenced the art, and his three books of poetry (published by Graywolf Press) continue to delight and guide readers with their craft and passion.

Gary Mills

from *At All Costs*

The Waltz

We are forlorn like children, and experienced like old men, we are crude and sorrowful and superficial—I believe we are lost.
—*All Quiet on the Western Front*

Technician Fifth Grade Roy Mills could feel the waves of sound long before the formation's signature yawn sluggishly chased and ultimately caught the second P-47, making the visual correlation complete. Noises were muffled, delayed, and weak. Nature's Doppler effect had been tainted, degraded by the detonation of a Tiger tank's 88 mm shell near the painfully inadequate cover of his fox hole pried from the frozen Belgian soil just four months earlier. Roy's ears had stopped bleeding a few days after his capture just four miles from Bastogne on 21 December 1944, but since then inflexible scabs had formed over his senses. Although, this sound, actually more sensation, was intimately familiar. The four bladed prop, the dull echo off the trees, the air stream howl caused by the oversized cowling, and the soft whistle of air squeezed between the bombs and the wings' hard-points made the first attack on the prisoners. For some, the reflex to run for cover was boxed by impulses to urinate and vomit at the same spasm-clinched second. Guards ran for nearby ditches—their war tackle clanked and flapped. They looked like gray geese being chased by six hungry dogs: a scene worthy of a cartoon strip in *YANK* magazine. Unfortunately, the waddling geese soon turned their weapons on the remnant of the formation—attempting to squawk and screech over the din at the prisoners. The frantic commands came across as pleas, as if the prisoners could make the planes go away. The column's *Gruppenführer*, section leader, pointed his MP-38 submachine gun at the prisoners and shouted over his shoulder down the ditch with little effect. Two of the guards, mere boys, were wedged silently next to each other. Others disappeared completely. Now all that remained was the rapid, throaty melody of each plane's Browning machine guns, followed by the sudden ripple and eruption of the road. The belt-fed tune, conducted at 150 rounds per minute would soon signal the end of the prisoners' easterly waltz across Germany. The half-inch rounds would often turn bodies into a heavy mist, leaving the torn clothing as the sole evidence of the encounter. Commonly,

the rounds would ignore the flesh and impact the ground, spalling up jagged chunks of concrete, asphalt, and rock. The resulting missiles were equally fatal, and the dead were decorated with earthen ornaments. Roy and Acker shared a quick glance. Roy remembered the P-47s that bombed the rail yard near the first encampment—one of many Marlogs that would eat away at his strength and senses. The P-47s would attack; after the explosions subsided, the prisoners were sent to remove the dead bodies and clear the contorted tracks near the coveted roundhouse. The initial excitement of seeing one of *their own* carrying on the fight soon was overridden by the fact that they now posed as great a threat of death as their captors. At this point, the ending seemed almost appropriate—another in a long list of misfortunes, starting at the Hürtgen Forest.

Horizon

> The assembly is sounded; form companies, and we are ready for a march, or a fight, or a detail, or anything. If we are marched a thousand miles or twenty yards, it is all the same. The private soldier is a machine that has no right to know anything. He is a machine that moves without any volition of his own.
>
> —*Company Aytch*

October '43 winds raced across the deck of the *Crystal Ball* as the troop transport shouldered fifteen-foot waves. During a rare reprieve from the clutter, compression, and contagious seasickness under deck, Roy caught a premiere of the world beyond Cabarrus County, North Carolina. Prior to graduation from high school Roy made several quick runs to the coast. It was a sweet exodus...the sand and waves... and Anne. It was *Huck Finn* visits *Treasure Island.* Importantly, it was an escape for Roy and his friends—far from their Proverbs 31 mothers, "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness," and near-cripple fathers enslaved to cotton mills, ten-acre plots, and frail box board houses filled beyond capacity. Just three years before, the wave-washed horizon held energy and mystery...now, the storm-slashed distance held the apprehension of an older brother's letters home, headlines of spring offensives, and concerns of what it would take to actually lay siege to a "Master Race." Up to this point, the world was limited to the contents of blue cloth-covered world history readers issued at Winecoff School. Yellowed, pull-down maps cracked along the edges as they were pulled down to place the vast expanse into view. Boundaries, rivers, and mountains were in ordered quadrants on thick paper. But here, he watched

the Atlantic swell and distort, making the ship pitch and groan. For a second he thought about the Liberty Ships that had split and sunk just seven months prior to the 28th Division's deployment. Some ships were lost to submarines...a fairly common occurrence during the first years of the war, even off the Carolina coasts, prompting the formation of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP): a group of hastily "militarized" Piper Cub pilots watching for periscope wakes to scar the ocean's surface. The organization's young cadets would earnestly warn neighbors about black out provisions, straining to sound official as words washed with heavy accents cracked and sputtered. Roy remembered how excited his youngest brother Alex was to join the CAP. He was one of the few cadets with a real government-issue uniform. The field jacket was a treasured gift from their oldest brother William, "Bill," a newly commissioned officer, already stationed in England. He remembered how Alex treated the jacket like a mythic relic. However, he wore it with the snap of a musketeer or a Royal Dragoon, always donning the garment with precision, then facing the family as if to say "I'm ready...soon I'll be old enough." Roy was glad he was safe at home: glad mom, dad, his sisters...and Annie...were there, too. Nearby, another soldier from the 28th was puking over the rail. The sound of the retching soldier was lost in the clash between the hull and the sea. While lighting a cigarette, Roy remembered how the other Liberty Ships had sank. Reportedly, the centerline welds on the pre-fab vessels had failed, giving way to extreme cold and rough seas. The last word was that government contractors had fixed the problem by riveting fifty-foot strips of steel along both sides of the critical point. Roy peered over the rail, dropped his cigarette, and went back below.

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Jackson A. Niday, II

A Rhetoric of Trauma in 9-11 Stories: A Critical Reading of Ulrich Baer's *110 Stories*

As individuals of an earlier generation recall where they were and what they were doing when they learned that JFK had been shot, so we today recall our own where's and what's of September 11, 2001. My morning had started with a coincidence. I was conditioned at a young age to think of physical exercise more as religious duty than recreational escape. In twenty-eight years of exercising, I had never stopped before finishing my scheduled workout. I'd taken days off, but never, once started, had I ever quit before finishing. No more than one third of the way through my workout on September 11th, I stopped. Not from illness or exhaustion, but because of some strange distraction. I couldn't focus. I switched on my television. In the Colorado Rockies, it was not quite 7:00 a.m.

As the screen's pixels congealed into a discernable image, a skyscraper spewed smoke from a floor about two-thirds up its structure. When the camera zoomed back, I recognized the building: one of the Twin Towers. A commentator's small, distant voice informed that the burning tower was no fiction. Then a second airliner floated into focus and to smash itself into the burning tower's twin. As I worked to digest the fact of a terrorist plot, I realized that this morning of September 11, 2001 had achieved what January 1, 2000 had failed to achieve in any definitive sense: a new century had just been born.

In the minutes, hours, and days that followed, I wrestled with a torrent of intense but ill-defined feelings. I was angry. And I longed for justice—even if I wasn't certain what justice would require. But retribution wasn't all I desired. I'd wanted to visit the Towers. I'd wanted to experience them first-hand, to know whether they were grandly gaudy or majestically sublime. Not now. The towers were gone. I'd never gawk at their height, never ascend to their observatories, never dine in their restaurants. But what thoughts were these? What of the 2792 people who were in those buildings? I knew them only abstractly as fellow Americans—their absence a nameless absolute. These fellow humans were the real loss, a loss too much to dwell on for long. So I cycled in obsessions, speculating about the victims' last moments, blocking such conjecture for some time, then returning to the story, but finding no end.

My feelings were at first but a wreck of anger, disbelief, regret, sympathy, rage: the spawn of unjustifiable ruin. Generally my obsessions breed analysis, because analysis is how I tend to cope. What I noted was that my emotions were split. My first sense was an *absence of presence*—my emotions fueled by my awareness of a concrete loss: the structures and the people were gone. But that was not all. A related yet distinct cluster of emotions accompanied my first reactions. My emotions swelled to accept a second sense: the *presence of absence*. That is, beyond registering the concrete losses as a matter of fact, the losses increasingly became meaningful abstractions: matters of significance. Something, both concrete and abstract, had been stolen from me as a person, from us as a nation. We had been cheated and stripped. But what of the family and friends and lovers who had shared life with those who perished? How were they to cope? I sought their stories.

The ones I've selected to investigate here come from a single book: *110 Stories: New York Writes After September 11*. From among the narratives, I've selected seven to explore. A few general observations: Resolution proves elusive in these stories. Only three of these seven writers show a character coming to terms with the post 9-11 realities. Only one of those, the last examined in this essay, seems able to grasp any sense of redemption through the loss. Among this diversity, however, these story tellers collectively draw upon the two clusters of emotions I mention above—the *absence of presence* and the *presence of absence*—as common responses.

We know that humans tell stories to please and to instruct, but they also tell stories for release. Psychologists inform that talking or writing about trauma is of healthy use to survivors. In a recent article that explores "trauma" as an evolving concept, Irene Kacandes finds that only within the last 100 years has the term referred to psychic wounding, and then has done so haphazardly, for "trauma" can refer both to the conditions that wound a psyche *and* the resulting injured state of mind.[1] The actual labor of crafting a story is especially therapeutic. As Kacandes writes:

> Being able to move on from [a] threat to the self involves in part accepting the fact that what seemed impossible did actually happen by telling a narrative about it and feeling the appropriate affect for such an occurrence. Most important to my analysis here is this: contact with uninvited disaster, the working through, and the acceptance of the presence of the impossible in one's life will *change one.*[2]

Kacandes' assertion offers a hypothesis for stories crafted in response to 9-11. Namely, if traumatic events produce similar effects on different people, then

the different stories from 9-11 ought to have similarities at the level of their infrastructures.

As different as the stories are in their particulars, they are bound together in preoccupations with resolution—preoccupations with either achieving it or failing to. In the narratives those preoccupations manifest themselves as *absence of presence* and *presence of absence*. *Absence of presence* pertains to a corporeal loss in which the artist's subject matter is tangible, tactile, concrete. Drawing from *absence of presence* as a common topic, the artist's focus is with the objective; the critic's with imagery. To be more precise, in drawing from the *absence of presence*, the artists deal with the death and destruction as matters of fact, as matters of what is, or perhaps more accurately, what is no longer. Reflective readers encounter this common topic predominately through imagery of persons, buildings, streets, and the like. The second topic, *presence of absence*, pertains not simply to loss as a matter of fact but to a change in the psyche—to the significance of loss. Here, the artist's focus is with the subjective; the critic's with how art gives voice to something incomprehensible that has become actual. In other words, the focus is with how narrators place their audience and how characters respond to the losses.

Lawrence Chua's parable, "The Quick and the Poor," moves us into a cloud of ambiguity. The title invites a free association with the common phrase "the quick and the dead." The title calls up an archaic definition of "quick," contrasting the living with the deceased, but still allows the possibility of interpreting the word in its modern meaning—fast, speedy, rapid. In a gunfight, one must be quick not to end up dead. Does Chua's "quick" refer to speed or living? Either way we interpret the word in the title, are the "quick" contrasted against, equated with, or added to the poor? Oddly, this story is not told in a New York setting, but in Milan. This distant, exotic setting contributes heavily to making the narrative a parable. The story's main character is a nameless "he"—an old man who is on a quest. His mission: to view a famous painting.

The man obsesses over a recent loss he has suffered. The longing filling his mind stems from a poignant *absence of presence*. As he walks the streets of Milan, he wishes "there were some evidence there to mark his father's passing. His father had died quickly and poor, leaving behind nothing but some papers and an old silver-plated watch, nothing of value and nothing of worth."[3] This desire plays a vital role in any interpretation of Chua's parable. The man discloses no regrets regarding the relationship between him and his father itself. His distress stems from an absence of appropriate marker to honor a cherished bond.

Sitting at a restaurant, he is overcome by an impulse. Compelled to view the painting, he'll tolerate nothing that stands between him and his quest: "He entered the museum, finally, resenting even the young woman with quiet half-lidded eyes who took his ticket. He went searching for the famous painting. He did not have far to go."[4]

> It was a painting of a man lying with his eyes closed and a sheet across his naked waist. His feet stuck out from under the sheet, and the soles of the feet faced the viewer. There were wounds on the man's feet. Above the knees, the man's soft penis stirred under the cloth. Lean, dull flesh curled around the man's rib cage and his face was the color of something that no longer had breath. There were wounds on the hands also, and if one looked at the holes clearly enough, one could catch a glimpse of something moving just out of reach. In the corner of the painting, three faces leaned towards the man. They appeared to be crying, but they were not crying at all. There was something unreasonable about their sadness, its pretense.[5]

The description is that of Montegna's *Dead Christ*. The energies aroused in the man's desire (that some evidence should mark the passing of his father) seem sublimated in this quest to view the image. In a sense, the painting could be seen as evidence of Christ's death. But Montegna's style clearly declares that that is not the painting's full significance. Chua's use of *Dead Christ* reappropriates the painter's stylistic distortions for his own purposes, bringing them to bear on the media depictions of 9-11 events.

Resolution follows the man's seeing the distortions in the painting not as artistic expression but as simple misrepresentation: "He looked at the mourners and the man for a while, and then he saw that the man's legs were too short for the rest of his body. This is wrong, he said .... This is totally wrong."[6] Chua's drawing on the *presence of absence* manifests itself in the moment the man recognizes the presence of distortion in the painting. The painting cannot be a tribute to his father. It is not an accurate or authentic depiction of anything. As the quest was an attempt to resolve the desires aroused for his father, the distortions are not limited to the painting's artistic merit—they transfer directly to his personal grief. For this man in this moment, the visual distortion does a disservice, even an insult, to the painting's subject. Given the man's reason for wanting to see the painting, the disservice is to his father. From that moment of realization, a momentarily ambiguous segue follows: "An alarm went off, a little bird whistle. An attendant walked over .... She motioned to the painting and the space between it and him and him and her. He looked at her and his voice was no longer impatient. Yes, he said. Yes. I know how to look at a painting."[7]

The alarm borders on pathetic fallacy: the alarm in the mind coincides with the alarm in the museum, signaling a change in psychological perspective. Such

a change is most often a private matter. That truth is conveyed here through situational irony when the man asserts that he knows how to look at a painting. His statement conveys something other than acquiescence. He now knows how to truly see, knows what an accurate and appropriate depiction would be, and that the distortion before him falls short. As he recognizes distortion, he asserts standards of proportionality and appropriateness. In doing so he crosses a psychological threshold into peace of mind, if not tranquility.

Offered in response to the 9-11 exigence, Chua's parable suggests a critique of the national media's coverage of the event. Like Mantegna's painting, the eyes of the cameras and the voices of the talking heads distorted the events, robbing them of appropriate depiction. To assimilate trauma, one must put it in proper perspective and respond to it with appropriate and authentic emotion. Chua seems to understand the delicacies of his subject and offers sage advice: the mass media offer nothing in way of treating trauma. If we can heal, we must begin by escaping media distortions.

The narratives that are more story than parable turn inward, focusing more directly on the souls and less on the context, to comment on the trauma of 9-11. Taking up the troubles of an unlikely hero, Humera Afridi unveils the plight of a nameless Islamic woman in her story, "Circumference." The story opens with concrete, detailed description: "The woman has trained herself to wake up to precise images: aquamarine sea, limestone villas, sand the color of caramel custard. For a week now, she has awakened to this collage of all the beaches she has known."[8] In sharp juxtaposition with that opening the lines that follow show the character is engaged in some much needed therapeutic escapism. "Less than a mile from where she lives," we are told, "there is a world destroyed, mangled, spitting the flumes of burnt steel, flesh and plastic."[9] The city has been in lock-down. With security measures now relaxed, she is "free to roam beyond the circumference of the five square blocks where she has been zoned for the last four days since the attack."[10] This woman's story, we find, does not begin with the terrorism of 9-11. It begins at least three days, perhaps even a year, before the towers were destroyed. The beach imagery, the attack, the destruction, and the ensuing physical freedom are all context for a more personal story of loss.

The nameless woman is a person whose humanity is highlighted in her flaws. Granted access to her thoughts, we learn the woman wrestles with more than the trauma of foreign terrorists: "Her lover—though after this last time, could he really be called that? Said: *We should leave it at the level of skin. No telephone calls, no e-mail.* This woman who moved alone to the city three weeks ago cannot get her lover's words out of her head. She mutters them, remembering the breadth of him against her, wishing she'd said them first."[11] Implied in that last wish is a commentary on our contradictory human impulses and the personal risks of private passions. He is absent. But what presence had he when he was

with her? No discourse, no words cement their bond. Then there is the desire for one-upsmanship that the game has on its players—quietly she desires that she had been first to eviscerate their intimacy. As she prepares to leave her apartment, a darker side of her reality reveals itself to us in her innermost thoughts:

> [S]he thinks of her husband. He will call soon from the home they had shared until three weeks ago. She will miss the call. On the fourth day after this world has been sabotaged, she knows that the other man, the one with whom she has this arrangement, this mutual exercising of lust, will not telephone. Each time, in the days following his visit, the sensation of his presence dissipates, but now she does not let him out of her head. To do so will mean creating space for the horror outside, the sinking in that this life is no longer a fiction.[12]

The figures of speech that accumulate in the story paint a complex mural of absence. For example, "as she crosses the street it feels as though she has left a country behind." Also, "earnestness is not what the city is about and she wears her sin too close to her skin." And, "the woman feels she is driving through a palimpsest."[13] The imagery is active; moreover, it coheres as being all of a given ilk. The act of leaving a country behind has an emotional mix of loss and exhilaration. But the city she enters is foreign, her attire, the sin she wears, is not in keeping with the fashion of the metropolis. "Driving through a palimpsest" (the space created by erasing from a parchment that contains sacred writing) suggests a freedom encumbered with a lingering sense of guilt. She traverses across a cleared path, but on either side of her declarations of holy writ bear witness to her sin.

As she rides in a cab, her thoughts return to her lover. "She cannot believe that the man who fucked her seven days ago hasn't bothered to e-mail, to call; she cannot believe she is thinking of him still . . . ."[14] During the cab ride, she witnesses random threats yelled to the cab's Middle-eastern driver. The woman thinks of her lover during her cab ride. The narrator tells us, "She cannot believe she is thinking of him still and that she has thought more about him than at any other time, in any other year. She cannot believe she is becoming this sort of woman, the sort of woman who baffles her."[15] Hers is not simply an awareness of his absence, but an awareness of what that absence is making of her. She exits the cab and approaches a mosque. Spying a man at the door, she asks for the women's entrance. "He looks over the length of her body, tilts his head. *Why? Do you want to pray?* She disregards him and walks into the squat building."[16] As she makes her way into the mosque, she is told no women are there. A man shows her the way out. She leaves, deprived of any solace prayer might afford.

Who is this nameless woman? What no name can tell us we know by her situation and its attending pathos. Her identity resides in her plight, an apparent physical freedom trumped by psychological bars: She is free to roam, but doubly trapped by circumstance and obsession. An *absence of presence* registers with readers in her absent husband, her truant lover, her wrecked city, the house of worship that bars her from its doors. In her world, the cosmos thwarts desire at every turn. The woman wants her lover, wants to pray, wants to speak. She stumbles into epiphany as each absence translates into a dreadful existential moment—the *presence of absence* that elicits an unnamed desire. Outside the mosque, "she feels stripped to the bone: shameless; adulteress; wine-drinker. Her jeans seem to say this to the men as do her boots and the fact that she is here alone on a day when the women are secure at home."[17] The functional equivalents of metonyms, the jeans and boots speak volumes against the woman's practice of her faith. Their presence is the absence of *abaya*, *hijab*, or *burqa*. And that absence is palpable. The clothing implies an estrangement from her faith. Her untimely presence at the mosque tells a tacit story. At some point, she has drifted from her faith. Now, it rejects her.

As she stands in the street, reality weighs in: "You are here, she thinks, in this city, among things and people . . . but you cannot say a word. The sins of this life seem as flat as copper pennies ground under heeled boots, worthless as vanity, lost in dirt."[18] The metaphor is doubly telling. The woman's metropolitan life is prized at the value of a discarded penny. Also, the metaphor heralds a new perspective as the narrator brings the story to its close: "There is a sudden newness to the street, there is a sudden stark separation of the soul from the world that sifts around and though the body. You are here, she thinks. When you awake tomorrow, and the day after and the day after that, this is where you will be."[19] Where, exactly, is "here"? In a hell of alienation. She is among people, alone amidst masses. She cannot say a word that will be truly heard by anyone. Where does that leave her? In a hell of ambiguity. Is she free to become who she will? Or is she trapped as an inconsequential sinner languishing in a city of *angst* and *ennui*? In itself, realization does not bring resolution.

In "The Price of Light and Air" David Hollander offers us a different view of how resolution evades the traumatized. Hollander's is a macabre tale of metropolitan voyeurism and alienation. The tale unfolds in a technique of dark impressionism. Like the stories above, its two characters are nameless. They exist as "he" and "she." From the start, "he" is a shady character, caught by surrounding circumstances and his own desires. His entrapment is captured in the artist's technique—a series of regressing frames, much like the phenomenon created by two opposing mirrors. The story opens with an unseemly feel:

> He stands outside a brick building in Brooklyn, braised by the sick yellow light of a nearby streetlamp. It's freezing cold, and his breath fans out in a thick cloud, like fine spores of white flour. He is at eye level with a window. The window is closed, but the shade is not drawn, and he is witness to what the room's occupant—a bald woman without eyebrows or, for that matter, any tertiary evidence of body hair, a woman whom he assumes has been stricken by some brushfire variety of cancer—is witness to.[20]

This opening, raw and voyeuristic, frames a viewer (the woman), viewed by a viewer (the man), viewed by a viewer (the narrator), viewed by yet another viewer (the reader), all progressing down a twisted path of unrequited attraction.

The woman the man watches is approximately his age. She is a woman with a "thin pretty face that is all points and angles, a woman who has probably spent her life inadvertently stabbing friends and acquaintances with her face . . . he can see the television newscast unfold and he can see the flickering colors of that glass box wash over her like sin and redemption, and he is feeling a pang of sad remorse. . . ."[21] Filtered by the narrator's word choices, the scene takes on a morbid sheen. The woman's pretty face "stabs." The light from the televised images has the religious weight of "sin and redemption." And our witness the man is hit with "remorse." Unseen by the woman, he stares. Unknown to him, we partake in his desire through the narrator's adjectives. Hollander's readers are then thrown into another frame as the narrator's perspective shifts, moving from the moment to the man's circumstances:

> Soon, he will return to his basement room in a building two blocks away, where he is writing a story. He may or may not be a writer some day, but he is writing a story, and his heart is filled with the desire for this story to be important and worthy and full of light and air, and he is smoking this cigarette in front of her window because this is what validates and defines him, walking and smoking between periods of internment in his damp basement room, where a space heater glows . . . Threatening to immolate while he sleeps, lending to his subterranean existence that very sense of danger which makes it bearable. Really, he only wants to be loved.[22]

The periodic structured paragraph surprises us with its end. The peeping-Tom we've been introduced to is humanized. In his isolated existence, he longs for human intercourse.

We are returned to the chill of the preceding frame. The man sees a parade of inconsequential images on the television screen. Then, the story again calls attention to its cascading frames. On the television screen, the man sees the image of the woman who is sitting in the room. He is watching a woman, a woman who is watching a television newscast, a newscast that features the woman, the same woman the man is watching. The effect on the peeping-Tom is pronounced: "He forgets, for a moment, to exhale the smoke he has swallowed up, and chokes a little."[23] Forgetting the illusion, he watches, confused. The moving images suggest real-time immediacy. How could she be depicted on the screen and he not? In a minor climax in the narrative he then sees the woman point to the television and begin to cry. Jolted into another frame, we move back in vantage point. Outside and further away, we see the man in the context of 9-11:

> He exhales stale smoke into the night dome of this poisonous cityscape. The streetlamp casts its green-yellow sheen. In the air, the atomized death of the World Trade Center's demise still hangs like a malediction, and his own breath mingles with these traces of dust and ash and metal, of human life and its registry of components, white bone and muscle meat. He watches the woman. He needs to hold her, that's all.[24]

Wandering these gritty, mephitic streets, this watcher could be the forgotten nephew of J. Alfred Prufrock. But unlike Prufrock, in the yellow-green sheen of this city, our nameless peeper finally commits to action. He tries to open the window, but can't. Desire registers with him as an absence, a decided *presence of absence*. He wonders "if anything he ever does will be filled with light and air, and he wonders why she won't look at him, and why he's stuck here behind the glass, on the wrong side, why he can't budge things, why she is crying harder now, and what sort of irradiated potion can singe and suffocate hair follicles without killing everything else."[25] Frantic frustration climaxes in reckless desperation. "*Over his dead body*, he decides. That's how they'll pry her away from this life, the filthy bastards. Over his dead body. He draws back his arm and lets fly. And his heart balloons with a sadness he has never known, and never will again."[26]

By nature, stories seduce. But what manner of story hath Hollander wrought? His narrative invites us to consider the price of air and light from a shadowy perspective of underworld smog. In such a short a story, Hollander brings his audience into an intense identification with this character, an identification

achieved through a severe pathos. Lofty aspirations, longings for love, an awareness of deprivation, a sympathy for those who suffer—all cherished sentiments. But what man is this? Whose mind have we shared? Whose views color our perceptions? In our last look at him, we see a man who has stepped outside the frames of reason. He turns his voyeurism into infatuation, and, in a crisis of self-worth, transmutes infatuation into existential bravado. Falling prey to his own voyeuristic infatuation, he destroys his hope for the very human intercourse that might free him from isolation. Whatever his motive, his society views his voyeurism as criminal.

In a similar depiction of unresolved trauma, Alice Elliot Dark offers in "Senseless" the story of Clara, a woman who is tied obsessively to the 9-11 news reports. The story chronicles the crisis that ultimately frees Clara from her obsession. Unlike the two preceding stories, this one offers a different sort of resolution. Her obsession stems, the narrator tells us, from the fact "she believed—irrationally, stubbornly, grandiosely, and holding herself in contempt for doing so—that if she watched enough television and learned enough facts, if she controlled the information, there wouldn't be another attack. It was all up to her."[27] Obsessive-compulsive desire is a merciless taskmaster, one whose demands forge the bars of self-made prisons. This narrative, however, whispers some hope, for it is the story of how "she cut back on her monitoring after running into two friends in the coffee line at Starbucks."[28]

What broke the cycle of obsession? By chance, she found her friends discussing news that she, in spite of all her monitoring, was unaware of. The source? NPR. In Clara's internal monologue, we hear her dislike for NPR. That dislike, however, is vanquished by a fresh obsession. She locks on this absence, an absence of information, as one she can easily fill. "'What channel is that?' she asked. The women exchanged a look. Clara White didn't know that?"[29]

No, Clara didn't know, but now she becomes aware that she doesn't, and that awareness is an absence of presence. Compelled by the promise of NPR, a promise she herself has ascribed to the station, Clara rushed to her car to find the station. Finding the distinctive voice of the NPR correspondents, "she felt the first real relief she'd had in days, the support for which she'd been longing. She wanted to be spoken to in this quiet, reassuring voice. She supposed she'd held out in disdain for so long because it was the very thing she wanted, and she was far too discerning to automatically allow herself that."[30] Granted access to her thoughts again, we see a pitiable character. She can't simply listen to the station. She needs to justify her change of mind. Rationalizing on grounds of delayed gratification, she dismisses all the reasons she gave earlier for disliking NPR.

Like the previous story discussed, a pathos of failure drives this one. We see Clara in the travails of a rebirth as she undergoes what appears to be a conversion to NPR. She envisions how she and her friends will laugh at the old, pre-NPR

Clara. She decides to keep the station playing constantly. She vows to send donations to the local station. Her identification with the radio station resembles a true believer's with a messianic leader. Although intense, such identification is often unstable, ever subject to the flux of volatile personalities.

The real conversion, the one that ultimately moves her to "cut back on her monitoring," follows hot on the heels of her ostensible conversion to NPR. The crisis that leads to her real rebirth comes from another absence of presence: "When Clara turned the motor off, and there was a sudden silence in the car; and she was cut off from reports of what was happening; and she knew that the people who ran the world and the people who terrorized it were going about their business without her; and she felt utterly alone...."[31] She tried to ignore the burning desire. The void proved too much for her. She turned the radio back on. But the presence of the NPR voice now proves insufficient. Her anxiety mounts. "She tried to listen, to catch up, but her heart had begun to pound uncontrollably so she couldn't pay attention. *Stop,* she thought, *please slow down, please repeat that, go back to the beginning, I've missed too much, I don't know what's going on, please start over.*"[32] The stronger the identification, the more pronounced the effects on the true believer when the oracle fails. The crisis, of course, resides solely in the mind of the convert. For Clara, the crisis comes when the oracle proves impotent. She needs control. The oracle offers only an illusion.

The story concludes with Clara's breakdown. Consumed by an overwhelming *presence of absence,* she realizes her listening grants her no control: "Her pleas made no difference. The voice droned on. She snapped the radio off, and began to weep."[33] What are we to make of the moment? Is this breakdown a beginning for Clara, a new awareness? After all, the story is one of how "she cut back on her monitoring after running into two friends in the coffee line at Starbucks."[34] Still, the end is ambiguous, unsatisfying. We see the breakdown. We know she has reduced her monitoring. Yet there is no sense of a whole person emerging from this moment. What we witness may be a moment of rebirth. If so, the trauma of the whole experience may have left Clara incapable of full resolution. Along those lines, Susan Brison has described her own experience: "People ask me if I'm recovered now, and I reply that it depends on what that means. If they mean 'am I back to where I was before the attack?' I have to say, no, and I never will be.... But if recovery means being able to incorporate this awful knowledge into my life and carry on, then yes, I'm recovered."[35]

Linda Davis's "Grammar Questions," is narrated by a particularly erudite storyteller. In the course of the narrator's musing, the story finds an important psychological and spiritual space between *absence of presence* and *presence of absence.* Davis's narrator places us squarely in the moment of change, that time of transition between two distinct states of being. Her story probes the philosophical

implications of that moment by parsing the inadequacies of the language needed for resolution. Her first sentence clearly illustrates my point: "Now, during the time he is dying, can I say, 'This is where he lives'?" Her second sentence removes all question of the narrator's brooding study: "If someone asks me, 'Where does he live?' should I answer, 'Well, right now he is not living, he is dying'?"[36] If verbs convey action and time, what is this period in time in which one wavers between what was and what will be? What is that period of twilight, the period where an impending loss of a loved one divides the *absence of presence* from the *presence of absence*? More than simply posing those questions, Davis brings us into the experience of that state of mind, that state stemming from awareness that one is caught between presence and absence.

Continuing to other parts of speech, the narrator parses pronouns to explore the metaphysical implications of this state of being, this time between life and death. "Actually, then I won't know if the words 'he' and 'him' are correct, in the present tense. Is he, once he is dead, still 'he,' and if so, for how long is he still 'he'?"[37] This distinction between existence in terms of identity and existence in terms of mere matter comes fully into focus when the narrator abandons the masculine pronoun for the demonstrative: "He will be put in a box, not a coffin. Then, when he is in that box, will I say, 'That is my father in that box' or 'That was my father, in that box' or will I say, 'That, in the box, was my father'?"[38] In each iteration the impersonal demonstrative pronoun takes on ever more prominence, conveying ever more finely the distinction between existence and life.

What it means to exist is not the same as what it means to live. "To live" requires volition; "to exist" does not. Moving to larger grammatical units, the narrator reflects on mood (an attitude toward action conveyed via auxiliary verbs), modality (the classification of propositions according to whether they are contingently true, false, possible, impossible, or necessary), and agency (the degree to which an actor is able to exercise choice). She considers the delta between the implications and the actualities of phrases commonly heard at such times: "In the phrase 'he is dying,' the words 'he is' suggest that he is actively doing something. But he is not very actively dying. The only thing he is still actively doing is breathing. He looks as if he is breathing on purpose, because he is working hard at it, and frowning slightly. He is working at it, but he surely has no choice."[39] Once opened, the question of volition dominates the remainder of the narrator's reflections:

> "He is dying" sounds more active than "he will be dead soon." That is probably because of the word "be"—we can "be" something whether we choose to or not. Whether he likes it or not, he "will be" dead soon. He will have to be dead soon, because he is not eating.

"He is not eating" sounds a little too active too, because it is not his choice.[40]

A severe, fatalistic pathos resides in these grammatical considerations. The father is not dead, but is beyond exercising his will. This parsing paints an existential hell—neither dead nor alive, the man is neither fully absent nor fully present. Davis gives us a meditation on a horrible question. What would have been the state of mind, in those hours and days in which the loves, friends, and colleagues of 9-11 victims waited and waited and waited to know if their neighbor, friend, or relative would be pulled from the rubble of the buildings?

In such grammatical minutia may lie great truths. While not the last words of the story, the grammar lesson ends with us still caught in the portal between states of being and states of mind: "He is not even conscious of it. He is not conscious at all."[41] The present-active-indicative sentences echo back not simply to grammar school, but to the very thing that makes a human a human: will, choice, volition. Yes, our mortality, too, defines us as human. But it is our will, our volition—not our mortality—that primarily defines us as *living* human beings. Where does that leave those who are in the act of dying, those who—though not of their own volition—straddle the line separating life from death? And where does it leave those who helplessly watch others in that state?

Desire is arrested in this narrative; caught in stasis, it is never resolved. As the father lacks volition and hovers between life and death, what can the daughter wish for? Desire confounds itself by its own urges. Is there an end to this existential hell? Should she long for that end? What does the longing for that end make of the person who longs for it? Is she dispassionate grammarian or composed sage? The narrator doesn't answer the questions. We are left to contemplate them ourselves.

In Samuel R. Delany's "Echoes" we enter a meditation whose subtleties of technique intermesh the erotic with absence and presence. The narrator, Chip, descending an apartment stairwell, meets an ascending neighbor. As he walks, he hears the echoes of each of their steps. In an apparently random arousal of thoughts, the echoes stir up in his mind an impression, one of people in a prison camp and "a woman who'd learned that the one beside her was Akhmatova leaned to whisper: 'Can you write this . . .?'"[42] Anna Akhmatova, was a Russian poet who, among other things, is known for being among the writers who rejected the vagueness of Symbolism for a more concrete style in her youth. Later, the Soviet state denounced her and deprived her of any public voice or publishing opportunities and she was labeled "half nun, half harlot." This fleeting thought serves as background of ironic relief for symbolism echoes throughout the story.

The woman who greets Chip on the stairs is Lois, a neighbor who tells him of the tragedy that befell her daughter, also named Lois. The younger Lois worked

in the World Trade Center, and she was engaged to a fireman. On the eleventh of September she called work telling them she'd be late coming in that day. As she hung up, the planes hit the towers. Her fiancée, not knowing his betrothed was still at home, scrambled to the scene to render aid and to get her out of the burning building. Determined to save her, he died when the buildings collapsed. The cosmic irony of this tale takes another twist in a tribute of condolence. The fireman's colleagues, knowing the couple's plans to buy a puppy, got the dog for her in his stead. An act of such kindness should not be questioned, but the dog, offered as solace, must also play another role in the woman's life: a presence of absence, a daily reminder of the loss she suffered. Lois has one request to make of Chip:

> "You're a writer aren't you?"
> "Yes. That's right."
> Lois looked at me.
> "I mean, do you think there is any way you could write ...? I mean write something? To tell people that story? I don't know—I just would like it if people knew, somehow. That things like that happened." Lois shook her head again.[43]

The request is clear: write the story of Lois and her fiancée. The story does not do that. Caught in psychological paralysis, the narrator-writer tells *his* story, not hers. The younger Lois is introduced only to be pushed into a mysterious absence till the end of the story. Lois is present, if at all, only as an echo. "Over the next weeks," confesses the narrator, "I've thought of other things I would also like to write about." His list includes a friend's wife whose altruistic impulses drive her to go halfway around the globe to render aid; a random piece of music; a writing instructor's revelatory advice; and, sandwiched in among the items on his list, "about why it is so much easier to tell Lois's mother's tale ... Than it is to write it [Lois's daughter's tale]."[44]

The last echo of his images offers a subtle but telling innuendo, one that hints at, but doesn't really answer any questions it raises. The last impression Chip thought he might write about?

> About crossing Broadway at 79th and going from bright sun into the shadow of a building, where—now that the light was off my dusty glasses—I saw people coming toward me over the street, and a smoky blue afterimage pulsed over the face of a young woman stepping off the corner, lighting a cigarette: Lois (Lois's daughter)

> smokes—I've seen her smoking in the stair; though not for three months.[45]

The image is one of wonder, adoration, perhaps even infatuation. An image of a woman, which when seen, imposes one of those moments where the frames in the film of life move in slow motion. Chip feels the younger Lois's presence most keenly in her absence. So keenly, in fact, that her haunting image thwarts his attempts to tell the story of the betrothed lovers. On a subsequent reading, we see her image is included among a not-so-random list: the heroic altruist, the arresting music, the sage writing instruction, an untimely yet all-too-timely request for a minute's silence to honor the dead. No inordinate affection is explicitly revealed in the story. Desire stands behind a silent veil. The younger Lois could be Muse to Chip as easily as she could be a lustful infatuation. The narrator keeps his own council on the matter. The desire the narrative arouses passes as unfulfilled as the betrothed lovers' marriage.

Thus far, our New York writers have plumbed the depths of trauma but offered little toward resolution. The last of our writers discussed here differs in that regard. Peter Carey's "Union Square" is the story of a father whose sons serve as foils, glossing the narrator-character's transformation from a sanctified New Yorker into a full-fledged American. As in previous stories, the *absence of presence* again manifests itself in images of a city attacked, and, again, the *presence of absence* shows itself in a changed self. Unlike the other stories considered, however, this story strives for resolution. "Union Square" opens with a view of the 9-11 clean-up work:

> That evening we are standing on the corner of Houston and 6th Avenue watching the huge earth moving equipment and heavy trucks rolling, bumper to bumper, in a never-ending parade down toward the devastation. Here is the endless might and wealth of America. Here are the drivers, like soldiers, heroes. These are not military vehicles, but huge trucks from small companies .... I am reminded of Dunkirk. I am moved. We are all moved. The crowds come out to cheer them. I do too, without reserve.[46]

The character's conflation of truck driver with soldier figures heavily in how he comes to terms with the 9-11 trauma. The story opens with the narrator celebrating his status as a New Yorker and holding in contempt anything American—especially its military might. The narrator's witnessing the response to the trauma is what begins his conversion. To hear of the Dunkirk Spirit is one thing; to actually see it is quite another.

The eventual union between his New Yorker identity and an American identity, however, would not have merged had it not been for an absence of presence pervading the story: "Everywhere people are touched by death. Our friend David across the road has lost his best friend, the father of a brand-new baby. Silvano the restaurateur has lost a fireman friend already, and as Charley [the narrator's younger son] and I walk out of our immediate neighborhood we are dismayed to see the huge piles of flowers outside the tiny fire station on West 3rd Street."[47] The effects of the trauma are dramatized as a split in narrator's self. The narrator becomes both subject and object here. As our storyteller, he is the subject of his own tale. But as witness to the horrors of the destruction he is a victim-object of the terrorists. The split manifests in rage:

> As for my own feelings, I am more vindictive than my son. I want to strike back, pulverize, kill, obliterate anyone who has caused this harm to my city. I may be Australian to the core but I have become like the dangerous American the world has most reason to fear. This phase passes quickly enough. It has passed now. But on those fist days and nights I was overcome with murderous rage.[48]

The rage is not the transformation, but it does open the door for the transformation. It puts the narrator-character in the position of experiencing possibilities, of seeing another version of himself. That opportunity allows him to see the dichotomy he holds, the clean cleavage between cosmopolitan, Australian New Yorker and dangerous, ugly American, as a false one. The narrator dramatizes that dichotomy in an exchange between his son and himself:

> Once, a year or so ago, I heard my son saying, "When we bombed Iraq."
>
> "No," I said, "When THEY bombed Iraq."
>
> "No," he said, "We."
>
> I have joked about this moment often, but in truth it put a chill in me. I was very happy for him to be a New Yorker, but I wasn't sure I wished him to be American."[49]

The cognitive distance separating New Yorker from American in the narrator's worldview is fraught with a cognitive dissonance that predates the destruction of the World Trade Center by a year. In that distance and dissonance is a wall that separates father from son, a wall that is both a self-imposed identity and an *absence of presence* in paternal-child bond. The son is American. The father is not.

Sometimes the changes resulting from trauma is beyond words, even when the

changes are healthy changes. Like the unseen transformation of Shakespeare's Hamlet, Carey's narrator changes off stage:

> But on the second day after the attack on the World Trade Center, I bought him a large white T-shirt with an American flag on its front. Sam is a very hard guy to buy a T-shirt for, but this shirt he put on immediately, and then we went out together again, out into the dark, out amongst the people, giving ourselves some strange and rather beautiful comfort in the middle of all the horror that had fallen on our lives.[50]

Posterity has long ranked high as a reason to secure the blessings of liberty. Carey's is one of the happier stories of the collection. Not only does the story have resolution, but it has a restoration of hope. That hope is found in the narrator's new understanding of "American." Part of what it means to "be an American" means rests in ordinate affection, in finding comfort from being among Americans.

What can art do for a traumatized society? Across the ages, many critics have argued art should never be judged by what it does or by what it tries to do. But times of crisis call for human responses—from policymakers, administrators, and perhaps even more so from artists. The notion that art serve no other end than simply *to be* denies everything people do to give value and meaning to life. The stories of 9-11 are as much rhetorical and social acts as they are aesthetic creations. In sum, they look into the hearts of survivors and ask whether and how the wounded can heal. Art can help us come to terms with reality, if not change it. Most people never fully resolve deep-seated trauma. Some are wholly crippled by the horrors and terrors of life; some mend themselves enough to get by; and a few others are able to make something better of life when, somehow, enlightenment follows horror.

Why do some victims prevail, while others don't? The answers are hid in mystery, a mystery that if ever solved is solved only obliquely, never directly. If there is a single truth from these different stories, it is a cold one, and it is this: Fortune metes out the hazards of Life with a blind eye. In the bedlam that is so often Life, human desire plays more by chance than by design. In that game, pawns can expect tragedy. But along the way, if luck allows, a rare serendipity may grant them not simply succor, but reconciliation, even redemption.

Notes

1. Irene Kacandes, "9/11/01 = 1/27/01: The Changed Posttraumatic Self," in *Trauma at Home after 9/11*. Ed. Judith Greenberg. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003. 168-183.
2. Kacades, 171.
3. Lawrence Chua, "The Quick and the Poor," in *110 Stories: New York Writes after September 11*, ed. Baer, Ulrich (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 58.
4. Chua, 58.
5. Chua, 58.
6. Chua, 59.
7. Chua, 59.
8. Humera Afridi, "Circumference," in *110 Stories: New York Writes after September 11*, ed. Baer, Ulrich (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 10.
9. Afridi, 10.
10. Afridi, 10.
11. Afridi, 10.
12. Afridi, 11.
13. Afridi, 11.
14. Afridi, 11-12.
15. Afridi, 12.
16. Afridi, 12.
17. Afridi, 12.
18. Afridi, 12.
19. Afridi, 12.
20. David Hollander, "The Price of Light and Air," in *110 Stories: New York Writes after September 11*, ed. Baer, Ulrich (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 148.
21. Hollander, 148.
22. Hollander, 149.
23. Hollander, 149.
24. Hollander, 149-150.
25. Hollander, 150.
26. Hollander 150.
27. Alice Elliot Dark, "Senseless," in *110 Stories: New York Writes after September 11*, ed. Baer, Ulrich (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 65.
28. Dark, 65.
29. Dark, 65.
30. Dark, 66.
31. Dark, 66.
32. Dark, 67.
33. Dark, 67.
34. Dark, 67.
35. Kacandes, 179-180.
36. Linda Davis, "Grammar Questions," in *110 Stories: New York Writes after September 11*, ed. Baer, Ulrich (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 72.
37. Davis, 72.
38. Davis, 72.
39. Davis, 73.
40. Davis, 73.
41. Davis, 73.
42. Samuel R. Delany, "Echoes," in *110 Stories: New York Writes after September 11*, ed. Baer, Ulrich (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 75.

43. Delany, 76.
44. Delany, 76.
45. Delany, 76-77.
46. Peter Carey, "Union Square," in *110 Stories: New York Writes after September 11*, ed. Baer, Ulrich (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 54.
47. Carey, 55.
48. Carey, 56.
49. Carey, 56.
50. Carey, 56.

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Elisabeth Avery Miner
b. 1768



Dr. John Owen Miner
b. 1762

Mary Elizabeth Lang

Two Poems

First Blood

Groton Heights, September 6, 1781

Elisabeth wakes to cannon
and musket fire, to squawks
of chickens seeking cover.
Hair unpinned, she pulls on
her linsey-woolsey dress, fastens
buttons wrong as she runs, flings
the latch up, the door open.
Cows unmilked, confused, wander
in the yard, complain in deep lows
above shouts and moans of men
and boys. Across the narrow river
the town burns, close enough
for smoke to sting her eyes,
enough to think at first
it is her own cornfield in flames.

Hands pull her back
into the house. Though tall,
she is only thirteen, hides
behind her mother's skirt
until the cannons are silent. Then
the women come out with rags
to bind wounds, a bucket
to douse scattered grass fires.
Elisabeth learns to take the gourd and scoop
water between lips of men who whisper
that they thirst yet cannot seem
to close their mouths and swallow.
John, the physician's apprentice,
works beside her, barely notices
her shawl askew, her rumpled stockings.

Between her house and the earthworks,
twelve of her cousins and brothers
lie still. One is fourteen.
They are not dressed as soldiers—
they wear sturdy work clothes, one
a blacksmith's apron, one a brimless
milking cap covered with flies.
She reaches toward a neighbor's face
she no longer recognizes, tries
to cover it. Inside her, sympathetic blood
begins to gather. This day is a milestone,
her first woman's blood,
but she cannot take time to reflect.
She only bleeds quietly, feverishly works
to save what and whom she can.

Later, she will marry John, bear
twelve children, and they will help
plow this now fallow field under
and make it yield again.
When she is eighty, she will still walk
the corn rows here and then lie down
where her kinsmen lie now.
This is the way with wars at home;
we gather the same ground to us
while we still stand and when we fall.
Either way, our blood makes it ours.

Remnants

The burning of Mystic Fort, June 5, 1637

We English first defined
the Pequots, the brown-eyed Destroyers,
as savages, enemies, slaves, a people
scattered, absorbed, no more a tribe,
only the ashes left of flames in which,
historians say, three hundred
to seven hundred perished.

We Pequots once defined
the English, the *Owanux*,
as other, as green-eyed stranger,
snake who lies dozing on the path,
then, according to the storytellers,
as hand that holds the firebrand,
cruelty heaped upon cruelty, voice
that orders, "Burn them!"

For centuries only a few could speak
of that day, that single hour.
Who has words, even in two languages,
to tell a story so far removed from nature—
the color of a grandmother's hair
afire, the acrid smell of smoked
flesh and boiling blood, the snap
of roasting marrow of children?
These sights, odors, unspeakable sounds
human ears were never formed to hear
nor throats formed to utter,
made even seasoned soldiers cry.
Outside the circle of fire, Narragansett
witnesses moaned in disbelief and horror.

But sit and listen now to this, our story
told anew. Does the surviving fox
identify itself only by marks of hawk's talon
and dog's tooth? We, war's remnants,
no longer measure ourselves
by fire and blood, outward brands
and inner scars of war.
We must look
through time's clear lens, as we now see
through multicolored irises.

When we do, we recognize
in one another the strong faces
of our common grandfathers, hear
the soft voices of our grandmothers

singing shared songs. We do not
speak the names of the dead,
but at last speak the names
of the living, names by which
we wish to know ourselves.

Mary Elizabeth Lang teaches English at Southern Connecticut State University. She is a fellow of the Connecticut Writing Project and a member of the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association. She has previously published poems in *The Prose Poem, Underwood Review, Connecticut Review,* and *Connecticut Artists.* She was born and raised close to the sites of the two battles depicted in these poems.

Kyle Torke

Two Poems

Attention

The General left his four stars on the bench
Beside his trousers and marched to the shower,
Towel pressed neatly against him like a flag
Draped across the coffin. The others already
Installed wanted to salute, to raise soapy hands
And snap to attention, but the General turned
His back to them and reached his towel
To the hook, nearly too high, and swiveled
Toward the farthest spigot, chrome and solid
And solitary. Each man completed his mission,
Did not smile, passed without looking. Finished,
The General reached for his towel as if hung
Among the stars, grabbed a small piece of heaven,
And cinched the clouds tightly around his waist.

War Planes

Ft. Carson's fifteen rows of train tracks, fallopian tubes hosting
Tanks and personnel carriers and howitzers, lose their edge
Beneath the dusting of snow and appear from the road like anacondas
Freshly slaughtered and presented for market. Men in camouflage
Twirl whistles, finger M-16s, monitor the corpses, surveying for openings,
Ants who could be squeezed to death if any muscle twitched.
With their rotors removed, strapped to a flatbed like amputated arms,
The helicopters cluster on their hosts like dragonflies pinned for exhibition,
The bulging front eyes lifeless as statuary under the snow. Tomorrow,
The train-yard will empty one track at a time, like sperm in an orderly swim
To the coast, and sweet-talk a battleship until her thighs yield. Inside
The womb, the snow will melt, and all the great metal will gleam
As if polished, and then, in stillness, the birth.

Kyle Torke publishes poetry and fiction, and his screenplays have won awards. Gorsky Press released *Archeology of Bones*, a collection of poems, in 2001.

Thomas Dukes

Writing Daddy

Mama whispered bedtime stories of your Korean letters
hidden in a locked cedar casket, your myth kept

out of reach, though I knew early you could barely write
or read the word *impediment* that Mama made from your

misfired Cracker vowels. Later, in some Carolina
woods of wild pines, you aimed your malaria

against my boyhood, the worst a man could get,
you said, so you voted for Stevenson, twice.

Recruited at school, I cracked the secret code
of language, not knowing I had crossed our DMZ.

Angry, you moved Army words against me,
and I learned the maneuver named *goòdbye*

on an educational deferment: what else
could protect us so well as *furlough?*

After this truce, you fell first, then Mama
began her great retreat, and I policed the past:

Waiting for her final orders, I took the
forbidden letters to the nursing home cafeteria,

I betrayed the lock with a dying bobby pin
and read your romance, Daddy. Who knew

how dull wartime illiteracy could be?
Cold misspellings, hungry loneliness,

a convoy of *I love you's* crossing the Pacific.
Now, a few years later, the silver and china

rationed to relatives, I have stationed the letters
at my desk, the base archive. When I need to, Daddy,

I hold this cease-fire of love and wonder
What were you trying to say?

Thomas Dukes is Professor of English and Assistant Department Chair at The University of Akron. He has written literary criticism and articles on writing pedagogy; his poetry has appeared in such journals as *Poetry, The South Dakota Review, Jabberwok Review*, etc. His father was a mess sergeant in the US Army for fourteen years, serving in the Pacific Theater during WWII and in the Korean Conflict.

Edward Gillin

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and the Old Soldier of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*

Although Sarah Orne Jewett's Maine is remembered by most readers as a land of dark evergreen forests, deep blue bays and rocky headlands, it was also a place severely stricken by the American Civil War. The thinly populated state had sent 70,000 men into the federal army and navy during the war. One in seven of these men died in service (Dyer 11).

Nor were women unaffected. In addition to numbers who served as relief workers, as nurses and in other capacities near the front lines, women organized and sustained massive initiatives at home to support the Union war effort. As in other wars, the reduction of laboring men in places like Maine mandated new levels of female leadership (Young 2). Appomattox brought a bitter aftermath to some of these homefront survivors. Many were dismissed from jobs that reverted to returning veterans. Those who had given breadwinners to the nation found themselves straitened in their efforts to support themselves and their families. Conditions among such women provoked the *New York Herald* to editorialize that the government should create a bureau for women similar to that provided for the freedman (Massey 333, 335).

Along with economic hardships came social and political setbacks. The English and American women who contributed so much to the Allied war effort in World War I were rewarded with suffrage; but their counterparts of fifty years earlier were encouraged to return to the antebellum gender constructs which had stipulated separate roles for men and women. Within this social framework men were to dominate and control a public sphere while women supervised and inhabited a private sphere. Although this Victorian-era ideology implied parity, there was an implicit hierarchy of importance and power. Public life was the arena of political power and history; private life, where women exercised their primary influence, was the arena of domesticity and piety (Sizer 9). Though the disruptions of the American Civil War seemingly threatened this rigid gender system, the postwar years witnessed widespread efforts to reimpose the old limiting doctrines. Thus the generations of women after the war grew up amid paradox. The Civil War had revised the gender system by drawing upon their capaci-

ties for carrying on the labors of the homefront, and also allowed women broader access to professional labor in nursing and institutional charity and in clerical work. On the other hand, postwar social patterns (as represented by the stalled condition of the women's suffrage movement even as the Fifteenth Amendment secured voting rights for former male slaves) revealed the fundamental resilience and stubborn durability of the gender system (Leonard 199).

It is understandable that critics of Sarah Orne Jewett have largely ignored this particular historical background. Jewett was, after all, a teenaged girl at Berwick Academy during the Civil War. The major works of her career, climaxing with *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896), seem to emerge from a period unconnected to the terrible conflict of the 1860s. Most present-day scholars have particularly appreciated the book for its sensitive depiction of women's lives and the spirit of female solidarity it celebrates. The relative unimportance of men in the novel appears to be explained by the decline of New England fishing and shipping during an era of industrialization and rapid development in other parts of the nation. Yet the Civil War's legacy at this historical moment deserves consideration. As Elizabeth Young notes, that legacy in women's literature follows no even progression from a more immediate influence to an increasingly remote one over time. The war is remote in some texts of the 1860s, Young observes, but urgent in some 1890s texts, "when its memory and symbolism become freshly energized" (21). Certainly that urgency was felt by Jewett's fellow New Englander Elizabeth Stuart Phelps—who attributed her own interest in writing to the stimulus of the war being fought when she, like Jewett, was still an academy student. In her 1897 autobiography Phelps described her region "dark with sorrowing women," aptly observing the postwar conditions of a place where virtually everyone she knew had lost some relative, friend, or acquaintance to the war (Sizer 2). It seems altogether appropriate, under such conditions, that a realist author like Jewett should produce a body of fiction colored by disappointments and broken dreams. Her strong female characters might inevitably reflect the many women in Maine who took up the stern duties of the wives of disabled veterans, or the solitary burdens of widows.

Yet the chief reason literary scholars have tended to slight the historical background of Jewett's New England fiction may have much to do with the stereotypes built into the gender politics of our own day. The same critic who praises Jewett's ability to convey the quiet heroism of female characters struggling with the hardships of domestic life has tended to reject the author's occasional literary inclination to valorize the soldierly spirit and the accomplishments of military men. Disapproval has taken several forms. Mild bewilderment seems to greet the fact that Jewett should favor "Decoration Day"—a tender tribute to aging Civil War veterans—above all her other stories. The martial themes of *The Story of the Normans* (1887), being more strongly pronounced, have

attracted far stronger denunciations. Jewett's history-book for young readers has been condemned for its "Darwinist attitude toward war," dismissed as "an inferior work that mixed history and myth," and castigated for its aberrant departure into a "historical framework, the male script" that "subscribes to the conquest of the people and their land" (Gale 264; Donovan 74; Roman 102-103).

Perhaps today's literary critics need to become more aware of what their contemporary counterparts in women's intellectual history have been realizing. Elizabeth Leonard observes that "historians of women and gender who once shunned the study of wars as the heart and soul of 'traditional history' have begun to include wars among the historical events receiving the greatest attention, because they represent the kind of social upheavals that highlight the arbitrary and changing nature of gender systems" (xxi). Lyde Cullen Sizer's examination of three northern writers—Phelps, Louisa May Alcott, and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper—claims that the Civil War "suggested a wider arena of authority for women who proved their worth in the midst of its chaos and tragedy," compelling increased postwar demands for "the freedoms and rights in that sphere they had previously been denied" (278, 280). Yet as Elizabeth Young notes, feminist scholars rarely take the Civil War as a central concern: "In revaluing the privatized domestic sphere of nineteenth-century Northern women's writing, for example, scholars have ironically contributed to a neglect of women's literary relation to this central public event of the nineteenth century" (6).

This article attempts to follow such ideas, suggesting the value of reading a key scene in Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* with a heightened awareness of its author's reference to the American Civil War and, particularly, the role of one Union hero from Maine.

Chapter XVIII, "The Bowden Reunion," might seem an odd place to look for such a war hero. The occasion is a grand picnic outing, planned and attended by most of the book's major female characters. If Jewett's novel is admired for its eloquent evocation of the communal solidarity of the feminine spirit, this chapter represents the triumphant highlight of this theme. Elizabeth Ammons observes that "many white feminist critics, myself included, have written fondly of this reunion and of the book as a whole as a celebratory mythologization of a rural matrifocal community in which women—Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Blackett—have real power and status, a place outside of or, in historical metaphor, 'before' patriarchal hegemony" ("Material Culture" 91-92). Contemplating the same scene in her introductory notes to the novel, Marjorie Pryse remarks: "What is significant about the Bowden reunion is that the most important male characters in *Pointed Firs* do not attend. Without seeming to exclude the men, the narrator continues to focus on the community of women" (xv). Josephine Donovan similarly reads the reunion as a pre-eminently "matriarchal" event (109).

Yet in placing such rightful emphasis on the reunion's "community of wom-

en," literary critics routinely overlook or derogate a male character, Santin Bowden, who literally directs the day's triumphant ceremonies. Robert L. Gale's *A Sarah Orne Jewett Companion* characterizes him as a "soldier manqué" who directs the reunion participants to their seats at the well-provisioned tables "in a regimented fashion" (55). Ammons expresses discomfort that "military imagery is blatant" in the key reunion chapter ("Material Culture" 95). For Margaret Roman, Sant Bowden's effort to impart a military precision to the occasion represents his "warped male value system" (223). Susan Gillman says the "militarism" of this "pathetic" man partly undercuts the authenticity of the Bowden reunion as a transcendent experience (113-114). Even where the character's presence is tolerated, his figure has been relegated to a background role as "another of the local eccentrics" (Blanchard 288). Sant Bowden's gender surely inconveniences those who view the occasion as matriarchal, especially since most readers regard the reunion chapters as a fulfilling climax of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*—what Paula Blanchard aptly calls the book's "emotional center" (287). One is tempted to join Blanchard in tolerating Sant Bowden as an odd sort who passingly graces the occasion. But given the old man's evocative placement at the head of the crucial ceremonial events of the reunion (and the sanctioning of this placement by such an indisputable authority as the Antigone-like Almira Todd), Santin Bowden remains a factor to be reckoned with. Indeed, his true value as a point of reference will never be understood so long as we insist on criticizing the little man's military instincts—and his creator's evident interest in them—as somehow apart from the book's principal focus.

Certainly the Bowden family reunion is a setting that demands almost larger-than-life performers. The narrator of *Country of the Pointed Firs* immediately reverences the occasion as one of those "primal" events "when, at long intervals, the altars to patriotism, to friendship, to the ties of kindred, are reared in our familiar fields." "Such a day as this has transfiguring powers," she continues, and "gives to those who are dumb their chance to speak, and lends some beauty to the plainest face" (457). Against this backdrop, Santin Bowden is first perceived in the forest grove where the reunion takes place as a "straight, soldierly little figure of a man who bore a fine resemblance to Mrs. Blackett." With a "grand military sort of courtesy" the little man marshals the numerous Bowdens into an orderly procession ranked by fours. The deeply moved narrator inquires about the small functionary who, in her imagination, has converted the Bowdens into "a company of ancient Greeks going to celebrate a victory" (460). Was he an old soldier? she respectfully asks.

> "Don't he do well?" answered Mrs. Todd with satisfaction.
>
> "He don't often have such a chance to show off his

gifts," said Mrs. Caplin, a friend from the Landing who had joined us. "That's Sant Bowden; he always takes the lead, such days. Good for nothing most o' his time...."

"No, Santin never was in the war," said Mrs. Todd with lofty indifference. "It was a cause of real distress to him. He kep' enlistin', and traveled far an' wide about here, an' even took the bo't and went to Boston to volunteer; but he ain't a sound man, an' they wouldn't have him. They say he knows all their tactics, an' can tell all about the battle o' Waterloo well's he can Bunker Hill. I told him once the country'd lost a great general, an' I meant it, too."

"I expect you're near right," said Mrs. Caplin, a little crestfallen and apologetic.

"I be right," insisted Mrs. Todd with much amiability. "'Twas most too bad to cramp him down to his peaceful trade, but he's a most excellent shoemaker at his best, an' he always says it's a trade that gives him time to think an' plan his maneuvers. Over to the Port they always invite him to march Decoration Day, same as the rest, an' he does look noble...." (461-62)

Such a figure might well have inspired a writer of different artistic temperament (such as Mark Twain, for instance) to light comedy or satire. But I think Michael Davitt Bell is mistaken when he focuses on the remark "He ain't a sound man" to suggest that Sant's "dreams of military glory are only an empty parody of manhood" (67-68). Careless readers, misconstruing cause for effect, have maintained that Santin Bowden's incapacity for military service stems from a problem with alcohol. Roman and Gale dismiss the old man with an unwarranted supposition that his unsoundness is mental (Roman 223; Gale 55). Yet in contrast to such harsh, Caplin-like disdain for the processional ceremonies or their capable leader, Jewett's narrator, never apparently far from the author's sensibility, clearly approves what she perceives under those venerable trees. The reader is hardly invited to see this august event diminished by any revelation about its organizer's amateur standing. Rather, the Bowdens (and those surrounding communities that invite Sant Bowden to participate in their holiday parades) have, in effect, granted idealism a brief triumph over realism. The lack of genuine military credentials, in this post-Civil War era when many an old soldier possessed authentic claims to military distinction, simply concentrates Jewett's fiction on the pathos of the human condition. Although Mrs. Todd may speculate about there having possibly been some "great general in some o' the old wars" in the family background, she concedes the mystery of Santin Bowden's abilities:

"'Taint nothin' he's ever acquired; 'twas born in him. I don't know's he ever saw a fine parade, or met with those that studied up such things. He's figured it all out an' got his papers so he knows how to aim a cannon right for William's fish-house five miles out on Green Island, or up there on Burnt Island where the signal is. He had it all over to me one day, an' I tried hard to appear interested. His life's all in it, but he will have those poor gloomy spells come over him now an' then, an' then he has to drink."

Mrs. Caplin gave a heavy sigh.

"There's a great many such strayaway folks, just as there is plants," continued Mrs. Todd, who was nothing if not botanical. "I know of just one sprig of laurel that grows over back here in a wild spot, an' I never could hear of no other on this coast. I had a large bunch brought me once from Massachusetts way, so I know it. This piece grows in an open spot where you'd think 'twould do well, but it's sort of poor-lookin'. I've visited it time an' again, just to notice its poor blooms. 'Tis a real Sant Bowden, out of its own place." (462-63)

As readers of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* discover, Jewett's frequent textual references to plants and herbs regularly draw upon associations to various strains of folklore and traditional plant symbolism. Mrs. Todd's invocation of the laurel here certainly seems to fit the pattern. There is ironic value in associating the untested Sant Bowden with the laurel of heroic fame and victory. But the irony is not intended for comic purposes. One can clarify this point by reflecting on the degree to which certain references to the would-be soldier evoke parallels with the most laureled contemporary figure in Jewett's Maine.

It is difficult today to study anything about the American Civil War without encountering the name of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain. Thanks in part to this figure's prominence in John Pullen's best-selling regimental history *The Twentieth Maine* (1957), his key role in Michael Shaara's 1974 Pulitzer Prize-winning historical novel *The Killer Angels*, and his "leading man" status in Ronald F. Maxwell's films *Gettysburg* (1993) and *Gods and Generals* (2002), the native of Brewster, Maine has reacquired considerable renown. One of several recent Chamberlain biographers unabashedly idealizes him as "one of the most remarkable officers in the history of the United States" (Trulock 333). And in fact Chamberlain seems almost without peer in having combined qualities of intelligence and thought-

fulness with coolness and bravery in battle. Gerald F. Linderman's study of courage as a factor in Civil War combat leadership makes repeated references to this sterling Union commander (see, for instance, 163-164 and 301n). His story even finds a prominent telling in a current U.S. Army Field Manual (*FM 22-100*) devoted to the topic of "Military Leadership" (Pullen 175, 183). Notwithstanding Chamberlain's steady conduct at the battle of Fredericksburg and his demonstrations of utmost valor during the siege of Petersburg and the Five Forks campaign, he will probably remain always best known to history as Maine's "Hero of Little Round Top." For, as the colonel commanding the Twentieth Maine Regiment on July 2, 1863, Chamberlain legendarily affected the course of the battle of Gettsyburg. Ordered to preserve the crucial left flank of the Federal army and hold its ground "at all hazards" on that day, the relatively untested Twentieth Maine withstood charge after charge of Confederate troops determined to turn its position. When the regiment had expended nearly all of its ammunition and braced for another assault that promised to be irresistible, Colonel Chamberlain led his severely depleted unit in an unsupported bayonet charge against the enemy. Taking the Confederates by surprise, the Union troops captured prisoners from several rebel regiments; some of the Maine soldiers wound up escorting their prisoners back from the desperate attack carrying unloaded weapons.

The successful defense of Little Round Top provided a spectacular example of military leadership on that memorable day—one turning point in the battle that was the turning point of the American Civil War. Chamberlain's key role was recognized both immediately and long thereafter. Union officers up to the highest levels praised Chamberlain's resourcefulness, courage, command of tactics, and military judgment. Congress eventually awarded the Twentieth Maine's colonel the Medal of Honor for his conduct at Gettsyburg. As a result of later actions Chamberlain received one of only two battlefield promotions Ulysses S. Grant would confer during the entire course of the American Civil War. By fighting's end the six times-wounded Chamberlain had been promoted to the rank of full major general. Grant eventually appointed Chamberlain to supervise the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia to the Army of the Potomac at Appomattox Court House—an important ceremonial role Chamberlain performed with grace and distinction.

Yet what prompts a degree of fascination about Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain to this day is the stark perception that the man from Brewster had virtually no reason to have played the instrumental role he did on Little Round Top and in later American military history. Chamberlain—always "Lawrence" to those who knew him—had been a somewhat sickly but devout boy who proved to be a fine scholar. Upon graduating from Bowdoin College in 1852, he was invited to stay on as a professor of rhetoric and modern languages. Chamberlain was the epitome of the New England intellectual of his day, well spoken and well read.

He saw the Civil War as a struggle to preserve democratic institutions, and he was immediately eager to join in this sacred cause. But Bowdoin administrators, who highly prized their young humanities teacher, discouraged his efforts to volunteer. Chamberlain then secured a leave of absence presumably allowing him to travel and research abroad. As college officials soon learned, their idealistic faculty member had instead used his sabbatical to volunteer for army service. Maine's governor, Israel Washburn, immediately received letters from colleagues and acquaintances of Chamberlain who emphasized the professor's military inexperience and general unfitness for command. Although the mail campaign seems primarily motivated by an effort to safeguard a prized member of the Bowdoin faculty, simple jealousy may have also played some role. One colleague told the governor that, far from being adequate officer material, Chamberlain was "a mild-mannered common student" (Longacre 54). Maine's attorney general counseled Governor Washburn to avoid making use of Chamberlain's services: "His old classmates here say you have been deceived: that C. is a *nothing* at all: that is the universal expression of those who know him" (Nesbitt 207-208). Somehow Washburn resisted the chorus of complaints and trusted to an intuitive faith in the young man whose letter of self-introduction had asserted emphatically, "I have always been interested in military matters, and what I do not know in that line *I know how to learn*" (Nesbitt 9). In 1862 Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain found himself assigned as second-ranking officer in the newly organized Twentieth Maine regiment.

The army this regiment joined was notoriously suspicious of its nonprofessional officer corps and the volunteers they commanded (Jones 2-3, 5). Though West Pointers made a small percentage of all officers serving, they bore an influence far beyond their numbers. Every one of the principal Union army's commanders (and most of the corps and departmental commanders) would be a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy: "From first to last, the Army of the Potomac was under professionals," Bruce Catton has noted (40). Nor was the bias toward such prewar training limited to the Northern side. Though the excellence of Robert E. Lee's military judgment is legend, as one staff officer wrote, "General Lee never went outside...the regular grades to find officers..." (Jones 22). On both sides of the conflict, relative incompetents with the right credentials seemed to find advancement easy under the preferential system. Indeed, Chamberlain himself rose to command of his regiment only when its first colonel, the youthful West Pointer Adelbert Ames, was promoted to higher command after Fredericksburg. Thus an unusual chain of circumstances had led the young college professor from his Bowdoin classroom one year before to regimental command at Gettysburg. And on that field the Army of the Potomac's chief engineering officer, General Gouvernour Warren, happened to notice the critical importance of the rocky hill called Little Round Top just as a massive Confederate assault threatened to roll

up the Union flank. Warren hastily ordered the brigade containing the Twentieth Maine to hold the ground at all costs. This moment on July 2, 1863, has ever after haunted historians as a peculiar instance of what is most usually described as destiny. As historian Thomas Desjardins demonstrates in *Stand Firm, Ye Boys from Maine* (1995), the Twentieth was a relatively untested combat unit at that time, its ranks largely composed of woodsmen and fishermen. Few officers of any grade or training might have maneuvered and directed these men, as it turned out, better than Colonel Chamberlain did on that day. Shaara's novel about Gettysburg summed up the general response to Chamberlain's wonderfully skilled performance in the battle through the words of a tough Irish sergeant declaring he'd "[n]ever served under a better man": "The army was blessed," he fitly declares, in recognition of this almost accidental officer (245).

After the war such a unique figure could hardly retire from the public eye. Maine's "Hero of Little Round Top" was elected governor of his home state four times. Chamberlain would also serve as Bowdoin College's president from 1871-1883 and remained actively involved with the college for the rest of his life. Although he played a forceful role in modernizing and liberalizing the college's curriculum, Chamberlain's most noteworthy action there involved an administrative failure. Fearing the prospect of ever entering another war with the dearth of trained soldiers and officers which confronted it in 1861, the federal government encouraged military training programs at the nation's colleges and universities. Perhaps influenced by his personal history, Chamberlain required gymnastic work for all students, and then instituted a military drill for Bowdoin underclassmen. A generation of young men who had not been touched by the Civil War's fire rebelled against these new rules, and the Bowdoin "drill revolt" made nationwide headlines. Editors condemned Chamberlain's role in the affair, citing his "craze for epaulets and gold" and his "sickly longing for the exercise of autocratic power" (Longacre 272). Bowdoin trustees ultimately responded to the criticism by forcing their reluctant college president to give up his plans.

Chamberlain no doubt felt this rebuff on a personal level as well as an official one, for, according to his biographers, the retired general was instilled with a lifelong love of military pageantry (Wallace 311; see also Trulock 363-364). Because Chamberlain was forever willing to grace G.A.R. functions and veterans' committees and soldiers' reunions and public ceremonies with his presence, few citizens of southern Maine in the decades after the Civil War lacked some opportunity to see the old soldier, stiff from old wounds but resplendent in his much-decorated uniform and stiffly handsome even in old age with his flowing white hair and mustache. He was, in every modern sense of the word, a celebrity (Longacre 260). Chamberlain's sense of pride could hardly be untouched by the bands that saluted him by striking up "See the Conquering Hero Comes" whenever he traveled throughout his home state. Indeed, due to his national fame,

he often lectured even outside Maine before packed houses. When he spoke at the Boston Music Hall in November 1868, reporters noted that the audience was entranced by his "glowing eloquence" and "graphic power." As one account expanded, "The Governor's voice is full, rich and sonorous; his manner bright and interesting, and his gestures free, graceful and impressive"; another report from the 1880s noted, "The interest was positively painful at times, so real did the lecturer make it by his eloquent speech" (LaFantasie 31, 41).

Over these years of public performance, whether before great audiences or little crowds celebrating holidays in the Maine communities where Chamberlain was frequently honored, the old general had developed something of a set-speech that lifted his own experience beyond the realm of individual personality. In recounting the story of Little Round Top and of his own role there, destiny became his pointed theme. Thus at a ceremony dedicating a monument to the Twentieth Maine Regiment on the Gettysburg battlefield in 1889, Chamberlain reminded his friends and comrades of their unique historical role. "We know not of the future and cannot plan for it much," he remarked. "But [...] we may cherish such thought and such ideals, and dream such dreams of lofty purpose, that we can determine and know what matter of men we will be whenever and wherever the hour strikes that calls to noble action" (Wallace 284). It was a philosophy doubtlessly shaped by years of self-reflection about the mystery that had made his own past as a frail, bookish youth from rural New England and his years as a college professor somehow a qualifying background to lead 386 men on the most critical day of their lives. But the fact that they were able to act their parts so well together was the second great theme of his "Gettysburg lecture," a 90-minute oration which he characteristically delivered without notes (LaFantasie 41). For Chamberlain had also developed some thoughts about the duality of human potential. "Our personality," he asserted, "exists in two identities—the sphere of self, and the sphere of soul."

> One is circumscribed; the other moving out on boundless trajectories; one is near, and therefore dear; the other far and high, and therefore great. We live in both, and but most in the greatest. Men reach their greatest development, not in isolation nor working within narrow bounds, but through membership and participation in life of largest scope and fullness. (Wallace 283)

By the late 1880s and early 1890s he regularly invoked this idea of what he came to call the "two souls" in many of his public talks. When a person was severely tested, as he had seen soldiers tested in battle, Chamberlain concluded that the "better soul" looks to a "life associated with others," renounces the

self and "moves and acts in the communion of a larger life" (LaFantasie 35). This was the message Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain had extracted from the crucible of Gettysburg, repeating it over and over through the years in moving speeches that combined what one historian characterizes as combining "poetical idealism" with "a spirituality almost mystical": "There are too many testimonials from contemporary individuals and newspapers for one not to realize that between this man[...], with his sweeping mustache and his hair worn long in the fashion of his day, [...]and his audience there passed a kind of magnetic sympathy" (Wallace 282).

When this famed speaker and writer, former general, governor, and college president died in 1914, representatives from other states joined the governor and thousands of Maine citizens to bid their hero farewell. "In all probability, Chamberlain, with his love of military pageantry," wrote the general's first major biographer, "would have keenly enjoyed observing his own funeral" (Wallace 311).

Had that other keen observer from Maine, Sarah Orne Jewett, ever shared the "magnetic sympathy" of one of Chamberlain's many audiences over the years? Though her published correspondence never mentions the general by name, it would strain probability that Maine's most illustrious fiction writer of the post-Civil War era was not conversant with the Chamberlain legend. Apart from her characteristic alertness to affairs in the home state where Chamberlain served four terms as governor, Jewett would undoubtedly have taken some particular interest in the activities of a man who taught and presided at the college where her own beloved father—a Bowdoin alumnus—had served as professor of obstetrics for a number of years.

Biographers of Sarah Orne Jewett attest that she had shared with her classmates at Berwick Academy an avid interest in the battles and events of the American Civil War, closely tracking the involvement of Maine citizens in the historic struggle (see Blanchard 48 and Silverthorne 42-43). In later years she seems to have regarded Decoration Day as a particularly important public event celebrated in the little towns of coastal Maine (Blanchard 287, 304, 306). In the unlikely event she never saw the resplendently memorable figure of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain—who was in much demand on these ceremonial occasions—she certainly witnessed the scores of aging veterans like him who instilled her with a sense of poignant respect. In 1892 she commemorated such men in a sentimental sketch, "Decoration Day," which she always valued above her other stories (Blanchard 304). Several months after the publication of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, Jewett traveled to Boston to attend the dedication of the Saint-Gaudens monument to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the heroic 54th Massachusetts Regiment (Blanchard 306).

Before or after researching her *Story of the Normans, Told Chiefly in Relation*

to Their Conquest of England (1887), the author may have learned how proudly Chamberlain claimed a Norman ancestry connecting him to William the Conqueror. Biographer John Pullen notes that this heritage was important to the war hero who self-consciously "looked and acted the part of a knight-errant" (10-11). In any event Chamberlain, a devoted member of the American Huguenot Society (Longacre 285), certainly seemed to embody every standard of chivalrous honor and courage that Jewett had celebrated in her much-maligned history book.

Other ties of mutual interest also link the two. For example, Chamberlain had been invited to deliver the "Maine Day" speech at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition on November 4, 1876, and his lengthy remarks were published subsequently in book form. In the text he stated that "Maine has many things yet to take hold of human interests, and to stir life and love." He evoked visionary connections between the state's inhabitant and their landscape:

> [F]ar-stretching woods in a net-work of countless silver-threaded streams and blue waters—and this great and wide sea—this wonderful shore—these beaches and bays and harbors, and bold headlands sun-steeped in loveliness or storm-swept in grandeur,—these things invite the brave, the noble, the cultured; those who love nature's simplicity, and are partakers of her sacraments. (Quoted from Longacre 276)

Certainly the man who spoke of the Maine coast so poetically had much in common with the woman who eventually composed *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Chamberlain's love for the sea and the shore were well publicized. In the postwar decades of his great celebrity, Maine newspapers frequently mentioned the five oceanfront acres the old soldier had acquired for a summer home, or his sailing about the coastal waters near Brunswick on his yachts *Wildflower* and *Pinafore* (Trulock 347). Intriguingly, an 1899 letter from Jewett to Mary Mulholland places the locale of Dunnet's Landing "between the region of Tenant's Harbor and Boothbay (*Sarah Orne Jewett Letters* 116). This area happens to coincide not with Jewett's own South Berwick vicinity, but with Chamberlain's stretch of home waters. Jewett's geography specifically places her fictional country, in any event, firmly astride Lincoln and Knox Counties. This means that, if the fictional Santin Bowden *had* been permitted to enlist by his local recruiting board, he would have mustered in with fellow volunteers from two of the four counties (Androscoggin and Penobscot being the others) from which the Twentieth Maine drew its complement of officers and men (Raus 28).

Interestingly, Jewett may have had a close encounter with Chamberlain on

one of the great days of her life, when their respective roles as celebrity and admired observer would have been quite reversed. In 1901 she was awarded an honorary doctorate from Bowdoin College. Jewett wrote Annie Fields of how moved she was to sit on the platform with the College trustees as "the single sister of so many brothers at Bowdoin": "And your S.O.J. Applauded twice by so great an audience!" (*Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett* 177-178). A pair of clapping hands likely belonged to General Chamberlain, whom biographer Alice Rains Trulock describes as regularly attending the Bowdoin commencements, even after resigning the college presidency, as the college's most distinguished trustee (363, 379). In 1869 when Bowdoin had honored the retired general with an honorary doctorate, he had marked the occasion by presenting the college chapel with its first stained glass commemorative window. Jewett duplicated the action in 1901 by donating another window to the chapel. One is left to wonder whether the sincerest form of flattery may have been at work in the gesture.

If in no other fashion, the military figure and the Maine author certainly shared a sympathetic understanding of the value of communal feeling over the dangers of a perilous isolation. Fear of personal injury or even of losing one's life in battle led to a debilitating form of individualism, according to Chamberlain; this idea seems strongly analogous to the condition Jewett outlined in the experiences of her lonely sea captains and other loners of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Mrs. Fosdick refers to the odd local types who "used to hive away in their own houses with some strange notion or other" (429). Most spectacularly, of course, the syndrome is evidenced by the plight of love-crossed Joanna Todd who retreated to Shell-heap Island, "a dreadful small place to make a world of" (430). On a human level there is a great deal of compassion extended to this lonely hermit: "All she wanted was to get away from folks" (429). But if her understanding friends won't convict her for committing the "unpardonable sin" Joanna condemns herself for committing, it is nonetheless plain that the truly complete human beings of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* possess what Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain styled the "better soul." Good soldiers performed so well because their lives were "not merely in their own experiences," the former college professor declared, "but in larger sympathies" (Hess 99). Like the venerable Mrs. Blackett they have responded to the Joanna-like crises of their own lives by learning to act in a greater communion: "Mrs. Blackett was one of those who do not live to themselves, and who have long since passed the line that divides mere self-concern from a valued share in whatever Society can give and take" (409). Strikingly, Jewett's formula for living a heroic life on Green Island is identical with that which Chamberlain had found conducive to heroic endeavor on the slopes of Little Round Top.

As already noted, prior to writing *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, Jewett is most likely to have seen Chamberlain, either in person or through newspaper images, leading the parades and ceremonies on various Maine civic occasions.

The general was a remarkably trim and striking man. "Even in his old age Joshua Chamberlain was a figure suggestive of gallantry," Pullen observes (photo caption opposite Pullen 89). He had a full head of snow-white hair and great sidewhiskers, and "his personal dignity [was] made doubly impressive by his soldierly bearing," according to one observer (Trulock 372). The crowds who watched him must have had a hard time conceiving that, but for chance and circumstance, the illustrious figure atop his aging war-horse Charlemagne might have gone to his grave a little-known professor of rhetoric and philosophy at a small-town college in the farthest corner of his country.

Jewett, of course, had precisely the sort of mind to ponder life in the subjunctive mode. Her description of Santin Bowden as an unfulfilled military commander fits the impulse. By itself, the portrayal perfectly captures Jewett's idealism; her artistic mission would always be to give a voice and a splendid humanity to the mute, inglorious figures of her weather-beaten coastal landscape.

But the vivid presence in Jewett's contemporary Maine of another quiet and scholarly man—the once sickly-looking college professor from Bowdoin turned into the unlikely, magnificent hero by the crucible of Gettysburg—suggests an attitude beyond simple pathos in Jewett's choice of Sant Bowden to lead the Bowden family reunion. Her decision can best be defined in terms of what Marilyn Sanders Mobley calls the "mythic" tendency of *The County of the Pointed Firs*. Mobley's revealing comparison of folk tendencies in the works of Sarah Orne Jewett and Toni Morrison leads her to the conclusion that both of these writers artistically committed themselves to endowing everyday people, places and things with a larger-than-life quality (18). The use of myth orients its audiences "between their 'natural world' and the 'preternatural' world of possibility." What fundamentally unites Morrison with Jewett, in Mobley's view, is their common use of narrative as a cultural means "to validate people and places that have been devalued and to offer cultural affirmation of these people and places as a prescription for healing and transforming American culture" (13). A comment by Morrison about her own fiction in this regard can shed light on *The Country of the Pointed Firs*: "These are the kinds of characters who never had center stage in anybody else's book" (quoted in Mobley 2).

Sant Bowden, whose natural gifts have been adjusted to being drillmaster at parades and director of the Bowden processional pageant, is one of life's bit-players. One critic, noting that Sant is reputed a fine shoemaker, can only express dismay at his "military posturing": "The portraits of the minister Dimmick and Sant Bowden reveal an amused scorn for men with such needs" (Bell 69, 75). Another dismisses such "inept, stunted" figures as the cautionary "Paralyzed Men" of Jewett's fictional world (Roman 65, 67). Such readings are hardly unique in Jewett criticism, where schemes emphasizing gender divisions are quite frequent. Most of these analyze the men as misdirected and ineffectual, clinging

obsolescently to faded cultural standards and institutions, with "a long way to go before they become full human beings," as Roman puts it (223-224). On the other hand the women of Dunnet's Landing affirm their strength through a vital contact with their environment, with their community, and with their special ways of nurturing and knowing. Interpretations of this sort encourage critics, in turn, to overlook the presence of men in a scene such as the Bowden family reunion as incidental and insignificant; thus Sarah Way Sherman can confidently label the occasion a climax of the "feminine mysteries" (224).

These bifurcations overlook, however, Jewett's repeated blurring of gender concerns throughout her text. Thus the male doctor of the town and the practitioner of herbal medicine Mrs. Todd "were on the best of terms" , and Mrs. Todd considers that they are less rivals than "kind of partners" (379, 452). William Blackett is "son and daughter both" to his mother (409). Captain Elijah Tilley apparently takes as much pride in his housekeeping and knitting as he does in any of his stereotypically male skills as a fisherman. The peculiar Captain Littlepage has been represented by Ammons as an "obvious parody of erudite masculine learning gone berserk" ("Material Culture" 65), and elsewhere she warns readers that his kind of story—"learned, male-focused, aggression-based"—demonstrates what must be transcended (*Conflicting Stories* 48). Yet the Milton-quoting Littlepage modestly accepts the "lower place of a scholar" in the schoolroom where the female narrator converses with him. Significantly, wise Mrs. Todd speaks of the meek Littlepage as a "beautiful man" (400). The unusual adjective here, together with the ambivalent details that accumulate around Elijah Tilley and William, suggest that Jewett was less interested in dividing men and women into opposing camps than in suggesting the ground where they might become "kinds of partners." Indeed, one is inclined to conclude on the evidence of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* that Jewett is making a fictional case for the kind of androgynous human spirit of mutual support Virginia Woolf would favorably envision more than three decades later in *A Room of One's Own*.

Ammons has written candidly about her own predilection for viewing *The Country of the Pointed Firs*' central Green Island chapters rather than the later reunion chapters as the book's rightful culmination. "But now I have to ask how much my argument has reflected Jewett's design, which I do think is there" she remarks, "and how much it has been the result of my resisting another design, which is also there: the subtle but clear protofascist implications of all those white people marching around in military formation ritualistically affirming their racial purity, global dominance, and white ethnic superiority and solidarity" ("Material Culture" 96-97).

Ammons' hyperbolic language seems clearly instigated by an equation that links the military manner to repression and reactionary politics. But as numerous details from her life testify, Jewett's sense of the military tradition owes little

to any politically correct pacifism of today. As Blanchard has noted, Jewett saw some positive side to war not merely because of Social Darwinist tenets or the contemporary wave of Anglo-American jingoism, but because of "personal associations with three 'just' and necessary wars fought by her own ancestors and neighbors in the past century" (163). The Civil War veterans she observed in her adult life—particularly the imposing reincarnation of Norman knighthood in the renowned Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain—would have hardly disabused her confidence in the achievement of which some fine soldiers were capable.

Ironically, the anti-military prejudices of many Jewett scholars have blinded them to the great use to which Jewett was able to put her "design" of military references at the climax of her greatest work of fiction. Here one of Chamberlain's biographers offers a helpful and most relevant consideration. "In trying to get inside Joshua Chamberlain's handsome head it seems important to recognize that he hungered for an epic life," John Pullen observes (14). The biographer also notes why, for all of Chamberlain's military accomplishments, it proved difficult to satisfy this hunger during his peacetime career. "In the bloody business of war, although it may take a while, incompetent people must eventually be thrown off and meritorious ones raised up—otherwise goals will not be reached and destruction may ensue," Pullen writes. "In civilian pursuits courage, intelligence, and character do not necessarily bring success" (133).

The thoughtful reader of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* does well to juxtapose Pullen's above generalizations with Sant Bowden's apparently small role in the "Bowden Reunion" chapter of the book. Just a page or so after contemplating the limitations that had prevented Sant Bowden's finding his rightful place in the soldiers' world, the narrator also notes how the festive occasion of the reunion has transformed her friend and tenant, the wonderful herbalist Almira Todd. Removed from the village where she frequently seems "limited and heavily domestic," Mrs. Todd now beams with competence, stature, and a fullness of existence. "It was not the first time that I was full of wonder at the waste of human ability in this world," the narrator remarks, "as a botanist wonders at the wastefulness of nature, the thousand seeds that die, the unused provision of every sort" (465-66). Such a declaration should, of course, be read thematically on behalf of all those Bowden women who populate Jewett's world with their special talents and capabilities, some exercised fully and others unfortunately unused. I believe it also fully illuminates the important function Santin Bowden plays in the author's purposes. To make the little man's military dreams stillborn was an acutely deft touch at a historic moment when many Americans still vividly recollected the debt owed to gifted amateurs such as Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain who had proven themselves when given a chance. Giving such "Sant Bowdens" of the world their due is no matter of sentimental benevolence or benign social justice, it would furthermore appear—if one mentally juxtaposed, for a moment,

the mythic figure of a one-time Bowdoin ("Bowden"?) professor of rhetoric behind such an assertion. For the significance of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's story is not the tragedy of personal frustration if the stolid U.S. Army of 1861-65 had not discovered his military skills. The implication was palpable in the last decades of the nineteenth century, while the public vividly remembered the heroic legacy of Maine's Chamberlain, Massachusetts's Shaw, Pennsylvania's Colonel Strong Vincent, New York's General James Wadsworth, and all the other gifted military amateurs who had emerged in the meritocracy of battle. A nation willing to squander such natural human talent might not have survived. An overlooked man—a never-to-be old soldier—would have been a tragically lost resource, a resource lost with the direst political and social consequences. *The Country of the Pointed Firs* reminded its readers of this truth through a quietly embedded contemporary reference—even while its author made her telling point that the "overlooked man" often happened to be a woman.

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Wayne Karlin

The American Reader

The first time Mai sees Americans they are bathing in a stream about a thousand meters from where she and two of her girl friends lay watching through the foliage. The soldiers' voices don't carry that far, though she can see they are splashing, probably laughing, their skin occasionally flashing like daylight through the leaves. She wishes she can get closer, but if Ninh, the male section leader, knows they have even gotten this close, they will all be in trouble.

She wants to see them in their flesh. The enemy. Yet still held tightly shut, against the very shattering they would bring her, in the tattered Steinbecks and Hemingways and Londons she carries in her rucksack. Her aunt's treasures, given to Mai when she had joined the Volunteers, gone South to keep open the Trail that knit the Nation. Her aunt a teacher and a good revolutionary and the authors approved for good revolutionaries, but sometimes after a bombing or strafing, the other girls would look at Mai with bitter astonishment. The American reader. The adjective in that nickname edging into a noun. Yet there is always a wistfulness in their teasing as well. As if what Mai is holding onto is something they can't name but feel sliding out of themselves as well, day by day.

She strains to see the Americans through the screen of leaves. They are still Tom Joad, moving towards a vision of a perfected, kind world, as she, when she remembers, imagines herself doing, moving through the dust of a space she finds unimaginable in the closeness of the jungle—even though they seem now to be trying to turn that jungle, those trees, into that same bowl of dust and emptiness Joad had fled to a greener land. They are Robert Jordan, laying on his stomach, watching the bridge, as she lays on her stomach, watching Jordan's compatriots now, and she is Marie, waiting in the encompassing warmth of his sleeping bag, for the warmth of flesh and connection against the coldness of death. They are a man trying with his hands to build a fire as the circle of howling wolves closed in on him, as her own hands, her fingers, worked frantically to prevent the fire blossoming from the guts of the bomb that moments before had howled down from them to her; they are the machines that come to kill her and hers; they are the red flashing of tracers through the jungle canopy, the masked, mirroring face hovering above, the sudden light shivering like panic through the branches. They are torn apart in her mind and she needs to knit them together if she is going to knit herself together. They are a weight in her rucksack, the books that

anchor her; they give her paths she can follow along the paths she must follow; they give her the courage to face themselves. They are these naked boys in a jungle pond, though they are too far away to really see anything, her friend complains in a whisper, and the other two girls giggle. They are too far away to see anything, she thinks, because they are ghosts, they are lines in a book, they are too many contradictions to be real, to be flesh, to be naked.

They are flying over Helicopter Valley, with its cupped wreckage, when DeLeon's scream pierces John's ears, a sound so filled with terror and despair that, filtered through earphone static, he hears it as a wail spiraling up from the broken aircraft below them. The helicopter jerks, up and then down. He traverses the ground with the barrel of the machine gun. He sees no tracers, has heard nothing hit the plane. He risks a glance over at the two prisoners they'd picked up at LZ Crow, drags the flashed afterimage of them quickly back to his stare out of the port. The recon marine sitting across from them hadn't moved. His M-14 on his lap, his finger on the trigger. The two in olive-green North Vietnamese Army uniforms tattered, muddy and bloody, but not faded. New guys. Sitting motionless also, the base of a triangle, the recon marine the apex, their eyes dulled, heads leaning towards each other, side by side, as if still fastened together by the wire the Nungs who had captured them had punctured through their cheeks. The marine—he was a staff sergeant—had cursed and pulled it out when they'd been handed over, the two North Vietnamese jerking like fish as he did it. The holes in their cheeks scabbed over now, but still bleeding red slick snail trails down their swollen cheeks. Tears from strange eyes. The staff sergeant's eyes dulled also, head tilted.

The noise from the cockpit—curses, scuffles—hasn't abated. Sam keys his mike: "Sir, what's happening?"

"A fucking snake," the co-pilot, Anderson says, his voice more exasperated than fearful.

A *snake*, he says again, indignantly, and the word, the hot, poisonous *sibilance* of it, opens into Everything. Into the jagged carpet of smashed helicopters below them. Into the impossible, malevolent, steambath of tangled, vine strangled, insect-crawling, breezeless, lightless at midday, hundred foot tall triple-canopy jungle they were over again now. Into the men they'd set down in it and taken out, sucked dry like insects caught in a web. Into clouds of hot, red laterite dust sucked into engines at take-off, the nerve-racking dance of hands and feet on collective and cyclic and pedals, a manic weave on the loom of the very centrifugal force that wants to tear the thousands of pieces of machinery to pieces; into landing too hot and too heavy and downwind on slopes picketed with trees, the heavy wet air pushing down the helicopter loaded with its weight of flesh and equipment; all the deadly specific numbers: thirteen grunts times eighty pounds

each of steel helmets, M-14s, web belts hung with grenades and loaded magazines and full canteens and entrenching tools and machetes and flak jackets and field packs, not to mention the M-60 machine guns or mortars the weapons platoons carried, not to mention the 150 to 200 pound eighteen to twenty year old bodies carrying all of it, not to mention the helicopter's own machine guns and ammunition and flak-jacketed crew and 2200-pounds-of-fuel, all optimal conditions needed to suck the lift right from under blades, to wind down, as if it were the clock of your life, the RPM that kept you in the air; to stop rotor blades like a hand stuck into a fan, to feel yourself a gracefully floating dandelion suddenly puffed on from above by a malevolent hot-breathed giant, to be slammed into the terrain below, into other helicopters, into screaming men and suddenly liberated fifty foot-long blades slicing through air foliage torsos necks heads arms and later you come down and see someone still sitting behind a log as if taking a break and you pick up what turns out to be only the top half of a sergeant, lighter that way, and yes, a clean-cut boy, you think. It's all there, in those words, in the utterly appropriate hissed curse of them: The 12.7mm North Vietnamese anti-aircraft guns and B-40 rockets and quad-fifty machine guns that send orange and green fireballs streaking past the ports, and the ship you'd watched go down yesterday, thick black smoke streaming from the fuel line the incendiary round had hit, smashing into the ridge, rolling on its back, bursting into flames, a random pyre auto-rotating frantically as if to blow out its own flames before twisting over, breaking its rotored back on the ground, the sheet of flame moving through the compartment, the two men jumping out of the back, one too high, to his death; the other too low, the flaming mass falling on top of him, and the rest all gone by then, burning bright in that forest of eternal night. And, if that wasn't enough, there were the prisoners dragged to the rear ramp like fish flopping on a wire, and the grenade your allies from the Army of the Republic of Vietnam Itself had left wedged under a red-webbed seat, and the wounded and dead you'd scooped out of the black meat-grinding, fire-seared night. And if, just in case, by any chance, as Vietnam would have it, to top it all, if that wasn't enough, then you could still have a fucking snake in your cockpit.

She looks at her friends, Suong and Thu Ha, their faces shaded under the floppy green jungle hats, but scratched, smudged, hollow-cheeked with hunger, gums bleeding, teeth loose. If she could see their bodies under the clothes that hung like rags on them, she would see ribs pushing against paper-thin flesh over stomachs bloated with hunger, nets of scars and scratches, insect bites and scabies. They are all like that. She understands what bodies are. She understands the hungers, shares them; they are all young, girls and boys, and they breath and sleep with death as if they are old, and they want their lives, and they all understand a life can be folded like an endless cloth into ten minutes that you can slowly draw

back out and touch and savor all the rest of your life, however long it goes on from that moment. When bodies are laid out on the broken earth they look like part of it. People go South dressed and they come back dead, and that direction itself has come to mean death, and she helps bury them, the dead, though sometimes they are wounded and sometimes she holds them, the way the woman in Steinbeck held the starving man against her breast and gave him suck, and they call her mother, though she's younger than them, and she remembers how, in her village, before she'd gone South, the bombs had struck before the time people knew they needed to build shelters and she'd come back from the school outing to see the bodies huddled under the trees, mothers and fathers with children clutched and melted to their chests. And sometimes they are the other girls or boys from her unit, and often the bombs blast the clothing from their bodies so they go into their deaths as they had come into their births and she had at first, more than death itself, feared that exposure. But she is seventeen now and she knows that death makes everyone sexless. In a line of bodies, what caught your eye was how little difference there was, how easily it could be erased. Her thoughts are scrambled, confused, and mixed now with the dim white figures seen through the screen of leaves, the ghosts that would kill her.

"Where, sir?" John says nervously, keying his mike. He is hearing curses, scrambling noises through the earphones. "Shit," DeLeon says, his voice high-pitched.

"No joy, no joy," Anderson says. No visual contact.

"It went behind the instrument panel!"

"Are you sure?" Anderson's voice. "I think it's a fucking viper."

I'm de vindow viper. Punch line of an old joke. John looks down nervously at his feet. Sweat rolls down his neck, under the collar of his flight suit, crawls down his back; he wants to turn, search, raise his legs, dance like a mad bagpiper. He feels his skin contracting under the leg of his flightsuit, his muscles spasming up to his thighs. Snake crawl. *I'm de bamboo viper.* He thinks of it sliding behind the HAC and co-pilot, through the hatch, under the web seats, or along the wiring over his head. Hears, suddenly, the voice of the flight commander, Colonel Watson in his ICS, asking them what the problem is.

The helicopter had reared out of formation—they are flying in a division, four helicopters—when DeLeon let go of the collective. The pilot had pulled out his survival knife and hacked at the snake, which had dropped heavily to the deck, shot like an arrow between Anderson's rubber foot pedals into the tangle of wires behind the instrument panel. Straightened up and slithered off, John hears DeLeon say, wit h the near-hysterical hilarity which means, John knows, that the incident has already become a war story, will be told everywhere, was humming through the ether even now.

But the snake is still in the aircraft, had not yet crawled into the safety of

story. For all he knows it is still coiled around wires behind the panels, cunning, camouflaging itself as part of the technology, using the machinery of the enemy against the enemy. Low crawling, naked and slick, a sapper coming through the wire. Touched my elbow like a kiss, slid along the aluminum ledge under the window, he hears DeLeon say to Anderson. *I'm the vindow viper.* Green brown in complexion, maybe three foot tall, skinny as a pencil, DeLeon says. He talking to them now. Fanged and dangerous. Find the fucker. Take no prisoners.

"A fucking snake," Anderson says, and John can feel it, sense the snake, moving under the deck plates, sneaking through the avionics. Staying just ahead of or just behind them. He glances down, involuntarily. Something to the left of his left foot. Green and brown. He looks at the staff sergeant. He still hasn't moved, and neither have the prisoners. They're each others' stories too, but they don't know the end yet. John slowly picks up the M-1 carbine he'd bought for ten dollars from an ARVN as a back-up weapon. What the hell is he going to do, shoot it through the deck? He slowly leans the carbine against the ammo catcher, slides out his K-bar knife. The thing seems motionless. Playing dead, he thinks. *I'm the vindow viper and I've come to vipe your vindow.* He stares. He should be looking out of his port. It is getting rapidly dark. But the enemy is here. It's too still. Too...dull. Inanimate. It can't be a snake. He slowly advances the point of the knife, pushes down swiftly. Like a snake striking. The object is solid. Unsnake-like. He slowly squats, thinking *grenade.* No. A small book. He picks it up, impaled, pulls it off the blade, realizing, too late, it may be a booby-trap anyway. No. It doesn't explode. There's a black and white picture of a girl inside, a young couple in front of an iron gate fashioned into a circle of Chinese ideograms. But the writing on the stained pages, cribbed and lined through, smudged and blurring in the waning light, is Vietnamese writing, regular letters tortured top and bottom with little barbed wire spikes. The written lines broken, as if poetry. Probably belonged to one of the prisoners. He should give it to the sergeant. Snake's diary, he thinks. Viper story. The two prisoners and the sergeant are still staring at each other, motionless as a diorama, as if all three have been wired together. The small book burns his hand, through his flight glove, as if it has dripped venom on him. He straightens up, quickly tosses it out of his port. Follows it with his machine gun barrel, twisting and fluttering in the air, white pages winging against dark sky, the photos flying out like released spirits.

It is growing dark, and is darker yet under the thick-knit branches canopied over the creek where she bathes. It is the same pool, a widening of the creek really, where the Americans had bathed. Mai can't see. Knows she can't be seen. Suddenly the noise of rotors beats down on top of the leaves like fists beating on a door, and she freezes until it fades off, leaving only its echoes and then the memory of its echoes. She thinks, taking herself away from it, how she will make

all this into story, mix has-been with could-be; fold the story over herself like a camouflage shelter as the bombs fall closer. This urgency to immerse herself in the same water, she thinks, to take the mystery of them into her skin, she thinks, and her mind tries to flee the thought, but she has trained herself to clutch at those fugitives of her being; they were in the end the whispers that named her. She has a broken sliver of soap that from a bar that Thu Ha had brought back from Hanoi, a luxury, and she soaps herself, and now she hums the tune to an Italian song all of the girls from Hanoi remember and sing. She has dirt under her nails from the Trail, from the dirt they shoveled back into the craters, smoothing them for the trucks going South, and her fingers stink from the gelignite they'd packed around the bomb she had embraced earlier in day, helped lower into a hole, blown up. She scrubs her hands and her body, unable to even see her flesh now, feeling herself seeping away, borders dissolving into the water, the darkness, the insect hum. Something heavy and cold and reptilian bumps into her lower belly. She stifles a scream. Reaches out tentatively. Her fingers find hair, a head, a nose, a mouth, and the fear suddenly leaves her, bursting like a bubble opening in water; she knows what this is; it isn't the first time a corpse has come floating down this stream to her. She lets her fingers move along the cold skin, feeling the man's flesh, naked to her own nakedness, feeling his wounds open under her fingertips like kisses, this one lover, from all that had gone South, come back to her now in the dark. She knows what this is, but the Americans she has seen that day come to her mind, and the words she feels written on her back, blurred through her rucksack and into her skin by her sweat, and she lets that thought, lets them, float next to her for a moment, and then lets it go; yes, it could be one of them as easily, and perhaps it is, but it doesn't matter, death doesn't only erase sex, and yes, isn't it pretty to think so.

As the book falls, the helicopter formation wheels west, over the mountainous jungle of the cordillera. A place filled with snakes. The darkness is not so much beginning to cover it as it is entering it, like an injected liquid, the top of the jungle canopy configuring into ominous, fluid shapes. Leaf people. Anderson's voice is in his ear again, his words repeated by DeLeon: they want him and Sam to fire into the fleshy mass below. Into the trees. They think Something is down there. No shit. It's the snake's home. The place of snakes. The home of the snake and the land of the viper. He fires down into it. As he does, he sees an artillery barrage begin, over to the west of their flight path, aircraft diving down, as if called by his fire. A hot shell casing falls on his neck, stings like a snake bite. He fires more, his shoulders shaking, hands vibrating, fires at the ghosts moving under the trees, fires at a girl who bathes with the dead to dream the resurrection of love, who tries to find his face and her own, behind the wind and the fire and the noise and the fragmented light. His rounds

curve and streak down and the darkling green absorbs them so quickly it is as if they never existed at all.

Editor's Note: a translation of this story is appearing simultaneously in *Tuoi Tre—Youth Magazine* of Ho Chi Minh City.

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Jeff Loeb

Brisance

About 1985 or '86, a man came into my photography studio in Junction City, Kansas, wanting to have some pictures copied. They were snapshots of him and some other retirement-aged men at what was apparently a veterans' reunion. As it happened, he was a garrulous type, so when I inquired about the event, we struck up a conversation. His name was Stan Duch, and it turned out that he had been a longtime acquaintance of my father's; I guess he trusted me as a result because he proceeded to tell me a story about himself and how he happened to be at the reunion in question. He had gone into the Army, he told me, as a young man in World War II. After the war, he had stayed in for twenty-some years before retiring at nearby Fort Riley, and then worked with Civil Service there for another twenty, a so-called double-dipper, or retread, as we somewhat disparagingly referred to such dual military careerists in Junction City, which was full of them.

He had been involved in the Normandy Invasion, he told me, and had participated in some secret, pre-dawn, mock landings in Devon a few weeks before the actual operation was to take place. However, during this mock-up, some German U-boats somehow got among the landing craft and, in the ensuing confusion, managed to torpedo and sink several, including the one Duch was in. Hundreds of men drowned in the dark, icy Channel waters, Duch told me, and he was very nearly one of them, being saved only because rescuers located him in the dim light of the breaking dawn before he sank or froze.

The story should have ended there, but in some respects it had only just begun. Because of their embarrassment, as well as the secrecy surrounding D-Day, the Allies decided to cover up the entire fiasco. Survivors such as Duch were separated while in the hospital and instructed to say nothing to anyone about the episode. To add to their isolation, they weren't told who of their friends had survived and who hadn't. As soon as they recovered sufficiently to return to duty, they were then reassigned to different units, leaving most of them no way of contacting each other. Plus, to further confuse things, the names of those who died in this disaster (which, as I later found out from reading Paul Fussell's *Wartime*, was called Slapton Sands, after the beach the men were to have landed on) were merely added to the counts run up at Normandy a few weeks later, and their families notified accordingly.

After the war, the secrecy didn't end, according to Duch. Instead, the Allied governments continued to deny that the matter had even occurred. When he

tried to ask the Army for information about his friends, he was met with silence and even denied access to the names and addresses of their families; so apparently were all other inquirers. After a time he gave up and, as he told me, almost completely blocked the incident out of his memory. It was only through a Freedom of Information request made by another of the survivors forty years after the event that it finally came to public light. Soon thereafter, some of the survivors contacted others, like Duch, and eventually several of them managed to get together. In fact, he had just recently returned from that very reunion, he told me, hence the pictures to be copied.

Now, even though I was a veteran of both Vietnam and Watergate, and thus had a healthy respect for official deception, I was a little dubious at this point. Being around military and ex-military people for most of my life, I had grown up listening to war stories. In any given Junction City coffee shop, with any given group of old men, you could be sure that every one of them had served under Patton, every one was an ex-POW, and every one had been the very first American to cross the Remagen Bridge into Germany. Duch's story seemed no different, and I was prepared to listen and let him go his way, keeping my reservations politely private.

However, an unexpected thing happened at that point. Instead of concluding with some sentimental truism about the barbarity of World War II combat, Duch began saying over and over, "They wouldn't let us talk about it. They wouldn't let us talk about it." Suddenly, without warning, he broke down, hands covering his eyes and tears streaming between his fingers, his shoulders heaving with sobs. "They wouldn't let us talk about it," he said again and again, voice breaking with grief over events which had occurred almost half a century before. It was necessary to hold him in my arms, or he would have totally collapsed. Junction City, it should be noted, is a tough, working-class town. It's not a place that easily accommodates itself to public displays of emotion by males, so I was not particularly comfortable holding him this way. And I doubt that Duch, had he the opportunity to reflect, would have been any more pleased with the spectacle: an old man sobbing uncontrollably, in the arms of a younger man in a public place.

After a few minutes, however, he composed himself, we said goodbye, and, to my immense relief, he left. Within a short time, I more or less forgot the entire incident, and it appeared to me with decreasing frequency in the ensuing years only as a kind of slightly jangling but unconnected image of an old man crying. Even in the early nineties as I was studying and writing about Freud and his philosophical descendants while working on my dissertation, I failed to connect ideas like the return of the repressed with Duch and his delayed response to trauma. Like the literature of the Vietnam War that I was analyzing, I objectified these ideas to the point that they had no personal connection to my own history. And while at the time I felt that I had a certain sensitivity to this literature

as a result of my having served in Vietnam, in reality I now see that I was using my critic's stance as a means of distancing that experience—just as I had been doing in other ways, in fact, for years.

I spent much of 1968 all along the DMZ, at places like Khe Sanh, Con Thien, and Cua Viet, where hundreds of Marines died in a six-month period, and what I witnessed there as a twenty-year-old was the unthinkable violence that high-velocity rounds and high-explosive ordnance can do to the human body, and of course more death than I had ever thought to see. Later, I endured several moldering months in the hot, flat coastal lowlands south of Da Nang in a place called the Riviera, the very area, in fact, where Lewis Puller's legs were blown off on an operation I was on. It was a different kind of war than the one going on up north, with its artillery duels and savage firefights and unit casualty percentages regularly in the double digits; down south, it was endless rocket watches and frustrating, nerve-wracking patrols over sandy, mine-infested ground. For all that, by the nineties, all this might as well have happened to someone else. It's not like I didn't talk about Vietnam; I did, even with some of the people I'd been there with, whom I periodically saw. But I didn't remember *it*, what *it* had felt like, what *I* had felt like. If such things occurred at all, it was as a series of fleeting images or isolated memories of conversations, ushered into consciousness by some novel or memoir I was analyzing, but quickly shoved back down to fester in my unconscious.

I think it was *In the Lake of the Woods*, or more exactly Bruce Franklin's masterful analysis of it in *The Vietnam War and Other American Fantasies*, that finally brought me face to face with my war, not the one I had sentimentalized over the years but the one the one I had actually participated in; and with this traumatic return of the repressed came back my memories of Stan Duch as well, though as always with the psyche, it was indirect. In May of 2001, as I—embarked by now on a totally different career, that of high-school teacher—had my junior class reading O'Brien's novel about the long-term effects of Vietnam, the eerily parallel Bob Kerrey situation was unfolding concurrently. We not only interrogated the novel deeply—certainly much more so than the two previous times I'd taught it—but we also made some far-reaching cultural analyses of just how the Kerrey affair could have remained secret for so long and why, after thirty years, its revelation had such an enormous impact. Most of all, the students asked me questions, upsetting ones about my personal war, about how we had treated the Vietnamese, and I found I was not at all equipped to answer them, so distanced had I made that experience. The images that I attempted to employ seemed come from books, other people's memories, my own being gone or unconveyable. How could I tell my students how it felt to be scared and angry and frustrated all at once when the incidents that impelled such feelings were no longer accessible?

Fortunately or unfortunately—I don't know which—memory is like the fabled exotic flower that, no matter what light or temperature it's placed in, will only bloom at the behest of some unknown stimulus, and then only once every several years. At almost exactly the time I found myself unable to respond to my students, a curious set of images began appearing to me, apparently unbidden by anything that I could discern. They weren't supernatural in origin—that's not where this is going—but rather came from the deep places of my memory and imagination, spurred into life by the intensity of our discussions of *In the Lake of the Woods*, and in a sense, they were a monument to the capacity of the human psyche to resist the repression and self-deception that John Wade, the main character of the book, is so adept at. As the class examined the book during the two or so weeks we spent on it and the film (*Platoon*) that we watched, partly as a result of their questions of me but just as much because Franklin's analysis, I began more and more to see it as an allegory not only of the American experience in Vietnam but also my own. I wasn't at My Lai, of course—like John Wade has been—nor could anything I saw or did compare with the slaughter and mayhem that took place on that ignominious day in March of 1968. However, the country around the Riviera is very much like that of My Lai, and it's that part of my tour, when I was actually in the villages and among the people as an interpreter, that I think gave rise to the uninvited images I began seeing.

Suddenly and seemingly inexplicably, I began to experience in recurring fashion at odd times a certain brief scene, like a movie in my head (in fact, its secular origins are directly rooted in newsreels I watched as a ten-year-old member of the local police Boys' Gun Club, sitting in the basement of the Municipal Building waiting to fire a .22 at paper targets): It's from the Korean War, the beginning of the long second retreat to the Pusan Peninsula, after the preening, vainglorious General Douglas MacArthur, blatantly disobeying President Truman's order to stop his advance well short of the Yalu River, instead sent American troops deep into the hard-spine mountains of North Korea, seemingly headed for China, with winter fast approaching. And on top of this, in his arrogance, he split his forces, despite the fact that he knew that several hundred thousand Chinese troops were even then massing around the border.When the inevitable occurred, when the Chinese army indeed attacked and quickly enveloped the badly outnumbered American troops, a contingent of several thousand men, mostly Marines of the First Marine Division, my unit in Vietnam half a generation later, found themselves trapped at a place called the Chosin Reservoir, pronounced, as I understand it, roughly "shong-shin," but which the Marines, unable to wrap their tongues around the strange Korean syllables (and apparently, according to W.D. Ehrhart in the *Madness of it All*, using the Japanese spelling), instead pronounced "chosen," as if they were already anticipating the name that would soon emerge to be immortalized in their own folklore: the "frozen

Chosin." What followed is one of the most heartbreaking episodes in the history of an organization which, with a sort of perverse pride, as often as not measures its successes in terms of numbers of men lost. The temperatures began dropping, as a Siberian front moved in, reaching twenty-five degrees below zero with hard, blowing snow, and soon the Marines found themselves ice-locked in the high mountains miles from the nearest relief, nearly surrounded and badly outgunned, with only sporadic air support available to them. The fighting was savage; for nearly a week, waves of Chinese soldiers assaulted isolated Marine positions atop ice-bound, rocky hills, and bodies were piled upon frozen bodies. Finally, even MacArthur had to admit that a retreat was necessary, though nearly impossible in the blowing Siberian winter. The Marines set out, however, when the skies briefly cleared, men and vehicles, in single file down the one narrow, rutted road that was available, along what amounts to a seventy mile-long valley, receiving defilading fire from both flanks at times in a terrible retreat that saw some units take over fifty percent casualties, not including the many additional frostbite cases.

These are the images I began seeing in May of two years ago, the Marines' retreat, or at least a few seconds of it. In black and white I saw them—it's a fact that we remember the Korean War and wars before it in black and white, Vietnam and later in color because that's how they were captured on film for us. I could see the Marines clearly in my vision, slogging by and, one by one, briefly looking up at me, as if I were the newsreel camera. Tightly bundled in knee-length field jackets buttoned to the neck, wooden-stocked M-1's slung, beleaguered, bearded, exhausted, helmets jammed down over the dark scarves or bandages wrapped around their heads, and cloth wrapped around their hands and feet over their gloves and boots to ward off the intense cold, each of them looks briefly up at me with terrible, haunted eyes as he stumbles down the rutted road. Interspersed with the men, half-tracks and tanks move slowly down the mountain as well, skidding and braking. On them are the bodies, the dead and soon-to-be dead, no room for anyone else. Anyone who can walk does.

When these images first came flooding into my inner eye two years ago, they took me by surprise and totally. I was literally overcome; for no reason that I could discern, I was struck like Stan Duch had been fifteen years before, and indeed I suddenly remembered that occasion for the first time in years. I stood alone in my living room at home and shook with sobs, and had no idea why. Later, when I tried to recount the experience for Jane, my wife, the same thing happened, and I could no more explain it then than I could to myself earlier. It happened again and again in the coming months, coming on me for no apparent reason. I'd try to talk myself through it, describe the scene to myself in detail, thinking that a familiarization process might demystify the images, but nothing worked. Each time I'd begin focusing on those gaunt faces and those hollowed

eyes, I'd come apart. Where did these images emanate from? Why did they have such power over me? They weren't even my memories. I couldn't answer, only endure their unexpected coming.

The most recent episode occurred that spring. It was at a conference in Philadelphia for Independent School English teachers where I had gone with a colleague, Steve Salinger, to present a paper about our school's program. As fortune would have it, the keynote speaker was Bill Ehrhart, whom I'd met in New Orleans at the My Lai Conference several years before. After the presentations, the three of us repaired to a local establishment to talk. We not only discussed Vietnam, of course, but also Bill's work on resurrecting the forgotten texts of the Korean War. Later, as Steve and I had dinner, I guess as a result of the day's discussions (and, I willingly confess, because we'd been imbibing for several hours at that point and my defenses were down), I attempted to convey to him what had been occurring to me. I was just at the point of describing how the Marines were dressed to fend off the bitter cold when I broke down. Since we know each other well, it was less embarrassing than it might have been, and I was able effectively to mask my tears from those customers at the surrounding tables, but still it was a totally unexpected occurrence for both of us. Later, we dealt with it by simply not talking about it, the tried-and-true male method.

However, the next morning, impelled partly by my embarrassment, I finally set out to interrogate the images themselves, something I'd not done before. As I sat by myself for three hours on a nearly empty plane back from Philadelphia (we had run into some fellow Kansas Citians, and Steve conversed with them), I asked myself what in these pictures connected so deeply with my own experiences. What was it about them that could so utterly incapacitate me? I finally decided, as I sat there on that plane, deep in thought, that it's in those terrible eyes and what they're saying. It's the betrayal they're expressing—not the horrible deaths the men have seen, nor the terrible cries of the wounded that I know they've heard—but the betrayal they've experienced, and that I came to understand that I had experienced as well.

When I went to war, like the men in my waking nightmare, I was betrayed, I decided. However, where they were betrayed by their leader, MacArthur, and those commanders afraid to stand up to him, I'd been betrayed by my culture, and not in the way you might think—i.e., in a deterministic, Ron Kovic/Bill Ehrhart sort of way in which I was inexorably funneled into the military by unseen patriotic machinery. Nor am I talking about the vanity or stupidity of our commanders in Vietnam, although it would be difficult to match William Westmoreland on either count, and not even the official lies told, as we found out from the *Pentagon Papers*, by five presidents, or their minions, lies that caused and sustained the war itself. No, the betrayal I'm talking about occurred after the fact, the one Bruce Franklin talks about, when American culture finally had a chance to face squarely

its own sins, and instead created Rambo, who, of course, went back and won the Vietnam War, as we all know. When one president, Ronald Reagan, sentimentalized and then totally rewrote history, terming the war a "noble cause," and another, George Bush, told us, first, that we should "forget Vietnam," and later, after the Gulf War, that we had "kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all." It's this betrayal of the truth that O'Brien, of course, is allegorizing in *Lake of the Woods*.

What did all this have to do with me personally? And where did these nightmare visions come from? It's in this, I think. Unlike John Wade, I had no My Lais in my background, no Pfc. Weatherby, no old man with his hoe spinning in the sunlight. But like John Wade, I spent the better part of a generation suppressing what I'd seen, and more importantly, felt. I shot at people; I may have hit some; certainly the artillery and air strikes I called in killed many. This is not what haunts me, trying to kill other soldiers. Rather, it was the small day-to-day cruelties that we—Americans, citizens of the City on a Hill—had, in our anger and frustration, systematically committed against the farmers and villagers of a backward country twelve thousand miles away. I was brought up to think things were a certain way, that we were a certain way, and instead I witnessed numerous and unendurable cruelties committed against innocent people by Marines, who in their anger and ignorance systematically beat and abused them, then destroyed their homes, all for the crime of trying to maintain a semblance of life in the most impossible of circumstances. And, worst of all, I lacked the courage to try to stop them. Something deep inside of me was outraged when, for instance, a corporal in a jeep I was riding in swerved on purpose and, laughing as he did it, put an old man on a bicycle through the girders of the I Corps Bridge in Da Nang. Or when I learned that the noises I had heard (but had not dared investigate) coming from a hootch in one of the villages in the Riviera were, in fact, the sounds of four Marines raping a woman, just before they killed and buried her. Or even when I stood by and watched some ignorant cracker of a grunt break the nose of an ARVN soldier just for the crime of putting his hand on the grunt's arm as a gesture of affection. Yet, in the face of these violations of what I had been brought up to know was right, to borrow Jonathan Shay's term, I, who attended Catholic school for twelve years, was an altar boy, class president, CYO president, co-captain of the football team, did nothing. When it counted, I hadn't the courage of a Hugh Thompson confronting the murderer Calley, of Elias facing Barnes. I was a coward, and this is what the probing inquiries by the class I taught in the spring of 2001, and the *J'accuse* in the haunted eyes of my own personal objective correlative, those Marines from half a century ago, were bringing me finally face to face with.

I went underground beginning in the 1970's; like John Wade, I adopted a protective coloration and hid myself and my feelings about the war and what I'd seen from everyone, especially myself. When I might have talked about it,

begun working out those feelings, I rather became ashamed, and then Rambo and Reagan and Bush sealed it for me, and I participated gratefully in their urgings to sentimentalize our true history. Vietnam, at least the Vietnam I'd experienced, ceased to exist for over twenty years, just as Slapton Sands had for Stan Duch, though for far different reasons. I became like Krebs of Hemingway's story "Soldiers Home": it was simply impossible for me to talk about the war in any meaningful way, and so, as the character Vinnie says of John Wade, I buried it deep, so deep that it took an intense reading of a book, and a harrowing set of images from another war to bring it back.

It's widely believed, I think, that since the accuracy of people's memories erodes with time so does the intensity. For instance, we're apt to say something like "Time heals all wounds" without questioning the saying's truth. And yet, a century ago, Freud suggested that the return of memories buried too deep or softened too much for the conscious mind to deal directly with them has a more powerful impact than the originals. In fact, I recall his using in one place the French word *brisance*, which refers to a breakthrough of shattering force, to describe the effect of such a sudden recognition. I, for one, can certainly attest to the accuracy of this term, but I'd also like to give proper weight to the impetus for the return of the repressed. I might well have gone to my grave continuing to objectify my experience, reading and writing about the poets, novelists and memoirists of what Tobias Wolff has termed "the Lost War" without once understanding my own mind. Instead, thirty-five years after the fact, I had the enormous good fortune to teach, at an enormously propitious time, a wonderful group of students who, to paraphrase O'Brien, gave me back my lost life.

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Tim Parrish

Orderly

One of the cops said, "That there'll be more of the shot niggers," and it was like somebody pissed a scent in the air the way they clotted the entrance to the E.R. I scuffed the cement apron with my toe, squinting at the washed out blue sky as a police unit and ambulance crawled into the parking lot flashing lights but no sirens. Then I flicked my smoke and eased on over where the ambulance would be pulling in, my hands so shaky I shoved them in my pockets.

Word was, some Black Muslims from Chicago had rallied local blacks and blocked North Boulevard in a poor section of town not far from the river, then the blacks had beat a TV reporter and the cops came in shooting, although I hadn't been able to get the full story yet. It was my second day as an E.R. orderly at The Baton Rouge General, and while we'd been gearing up triage in a stumble of panic, one of the nurses,who knew I wasn't home long from thirteen months as a medic in Nam, recruited me to help set up stuff that orderlies weren't even supposed to touch. Which I did until a doctor who I knew twice as much as sent me to fetch. If I'd been smart I'd have booked right then.

Before the ambulance had stopped backing in, one of the officers in the lead car hopped out all tugging at his gun belt and jumpy and announced, "Got another of the bastards in here," then glared at me like I was in on something. The ambulance's brake lights flashed red on my white pants and the exhaust stopped. Through the back window I could see the attendant next to an old-style stretcher, but he didn't move to open the door and the uniforms and leather pressed in behind me grumbling. The driver inched around to where I was, looking on past me like he thought maybe the best thing to do would've been stay behind the wheel, then an officer with a shotgun stepped around from the passenger side of the ambulance and went stiff like a sentry. I reached and swung open the door, and me and the driver pulled the stretcher out and firmed our grip, my arms already soggy from the day's lifting and toting. None of the cops made a move to help us clear a path like they'd done with the police casualties, but the cop with the shotgun stepped in real close and looked down on the black dude. "You still alive, son?" he asked.

I wanted to say something smartass to somebody, but none of this crew seemed like they knew enough to lighten up a shitty situation, so I kept shut. I'd already carried in seven cops, two dead, and a young gut-shot Muslim nappy-dressed in a white shirt and bowtie. We'd took the cops to the operating room,

but the Muslim, whose pale lips told me he was bleeding good inside and who called me a white devil when I told him I liked his tie, he got routed off into a little exam room where a group of suits and brass chased me and the attendant off and closed the door. I didn't argue.

Now I angled my head straight on and waded into the uniforms. There was a lot of talk about no hurry getting him in the hospital and nigger getting what he deserved, but I found myself talking the cops out of our way and sort of shielding the stretcher with my body from officers poking, slapping and spitting at the dude, some of them also slapping and poking me. Then another ambulance pulled in giving a diversion. "Hustle," I barked back at the driver and felt a jolt and heard an Oof as somebody stomach-punched the black dude before the glass doors opened and we were through. Inside there was nobody from the hospital to meet us, although I saw two black nurses' attendants off against a wall watching. An older cop with a big gold badge pointed us to an exam room next to the Muslim's and followed us in there with a younger cop. We lifted the stretcher onto the exam table and set it down harder than I meant, making the dude let go a "Mother fuck!"

"Keep it shut," the older cop told him, then the older cop had a pow wow with the young cop, who nodded way too much and said, "Yes, Sir," way too much. When they finished the older cop motioned the driver and me out with him, but I didn't move.

"I been spit on enough," I said, and wiped the sticky cotton from the edges of my mouth. "Think I'll stay here and keep this one company."

The older cop gave me a look like he was going to jump on my ass, which I wouldn't have minded for a change of pace, then finally he smirked. "Just don't talk to him, you got me?" I half-saluted and the older cop and the driver shut the door behind them.

The dude on the table let out a groan and said, "Shit." I looked at him really for the first time, a big afro and skinny muscular body and sunk-in cheeks and a scraggly goatee, somebody I would've thought of as a black radical cause he looked like the meanass sons-a-bitch Panthers we had on base in Chu Lai. His hands were cuffed to the stretcher and he didn't have a shirt, the only thing on his upper body a bloody bandage that wrapped over his shoulder. His lower lip was split, but he wasn't busted up like the Muslim earlier. On his arm was a fancy "Semper Fi" tatoo.

"He tell you to keep it zipped?" the black dude said to the young cop.

"Shut your damn mouth," the young cop said, his face about the white of the gauze on the shelves.

"You surprised when he shot me?" the black dude asked him. "You ain't never seen nobody get shot, huh?"

The young cop was belching and breathing through rubber lips and I told

him to make sure he puked in the sink, which he stepped over and did right off. Me and the black dude laughed, then off the brother went into a fit of coughing. I peeled back his bandage and saw powder burns but a clean wound that I figured exited on the other side.

"They popped you up close, huh, stud?" I said.

"Fuckin A they did, jack," he said, catching his breath. "I done dropped my piece and that one there's partner zapped the fuck out of me."

"Bullshit," the cop said, "you had a goddamn gun."

"I *know* I had a gun, but I *had* it on the ground. I wasn't shooting, I was trying to keep from getting shot."

"Then why the hell were you there?" the cop asked.

"Protesting. I was with the Muslims on the protest. I didn't know they's gonna start a shoot out with the whole Po-lice Department."

"You ain't a Muslim?" I asked.

"Do I look like a Muslim?"

"He's an asshole," said the cop. "You were shooting before we got you. You telling me you weren't there to shoot?"

"I ain't fool enough to show down with the pigs in the street, if that's what you axin."

"Damn nigger." The cop looked at me. "They beat the brains out of that TV guy, Don Stimpson, and shot a whole slew of officers. Chip Thibeaux's dead. His face was blown off." The cop dry heaved, and, weird enough, that made me see he was probably a few years older than me.

"Yeah," the dude said, "and how many brothers dead? How many y'all greased unarmed like me?"

The cop stepped toward him but stopped himself a couple of feet away. His face was bright red and his eyes all puffed from tears. He wiped his mouth a few times, then slunk off and sat in a chair by the wall.

"He upset cause he didn't get to shoot me," the dude said to me, not belligerent, but just matter of fact.

"You shouldn't have had your ass down there," I said. "You oughta know better."

"What you know about it?"

I snorted. "When were you in country?"

He glanced at his tattoo. "Sixty-eight, sixty-nine."

"Tet?"

"Right there. Hue, mother fucker."

"Yikes. I was seventy, seventy-one. Chu Lai. Tricky Dick gave us Cambodia so we wouldn't feel left out."

"You a grunt?"

"Kind of. Medic."

"You having a big day then."

He nodded and raised his eyebrows and I stretched my neck to both sides, electricity itching in my shoulders and scalp. I thumped a butt out and bent down to take it with my lips cause my hand still wasn't cooperating. "You got a extra?" the dude asked. I hesitated a second, then thumped another one and aimed the pack at his mouth, but he had to kind of strike at it like a fish. "Glad you ain't the surgeon," he said. The cop had lurked up on the other side of the table, scowling and still peekid and close enough where I could read his name plate.

"You want one, Scavona?" I asked him.

"Why you giving him one?" Scavona said.

"That yes or no?" I asked. He smacked his mouth with the vomit taste, then reached over and got the pack. I lit mine holding the lighter with both hands, then Scavona took the lighter, fired himself up and then made me light the black dude. I knew if somebody caught me giving out cigarettes in an exam room they'd probably can my ass, but I knew I was probably gonna be canned anyway for hiding or something else and that wasn't nothing to me by then. I'd already knocked down a row of jobs, from clerking at a ghetto Pak-A-Sak to dressing like Pluto the dog at a department store. I lost that one cause some little prick kept razzing me for having a wet tail that I'd slopped in the toilet and then stabbed me with a straight pin, so I tossed him head first in a shopping cart. He didn't think Pluto was so fucking funny then.

The dude dragged the cigarette, shifted it to the side of his mouth and blew out through his nose, showing he knew how to smoke without his hands like we all did over there. From next door I heard some commotion that I couldn't really tell what was and my gut locked tight with pictures of people bleeding all in the hall and brass telling everybody this and that.

"So what went down?" I asked.

Scavona took a puff and squinted and poked the lit end toward the dude. "They scattered after they started shooting. We were going through the Lincoln Hotel looking for 'em when we found this one with his piece. We shot him."

The dude levelled on Scavona. "If I'd a been shootin', some of y'all be dead in that room y'all bumbled in," he said and I believed him. I'd known a bunch of Marines who'd been in Hue flushing NVA regulars house to house and they knew how to greet people.

Scavona scowled at the dude. "Why don't you tell how y'all beat that reporter till his frickin brains run out the crack in his skull. How y'all started shooting us as soon as we came in to help."

"Coming in to help," the dude said out the side of his mouth. "We blocked the street, people was agitated. That dumbass reporter waded up in there where he didn't belong."

"That's his job," Scavona said.

"Hey, man, brothers know the way shit come out on TV. Like when them white students is killed at Kent State it's something, but when students is murdered out at Southern the only attention get paid is the police never done nothing except keep the peace from some savage niggas."

Scavona squinted and flicked at the tip of his nose. "You were probably there at Southern," he said.

"Fuckin' A I was. Heading to class when them brothers got cut down. Dude from math got killed."

What he was talking about had happened when I was still over there. I'd heard students were raising hell about the war out at the black university and some deputies shotgun-killed two of them, the deputies excusing themselves by saying they thought they were putting tear gas shells in their weapons but accidentally loaded buck shot. I'd laughed.

Scavona leaned over the table. "That don't make it right to beat a man and shoot us when we coming in to save him. That's murder, you son-of-a-bitch."

"Boy, don't talk to me about murder, standing there in that fucking Confederate uniform."

I checked Scavona out there in his gray uni with red epaulets and red piping and I grinned cause I'd never noticed it *was* a rebel uniform and a damn fine rebel uniform at that. Then yells from the Muslim's room next door cut through the wall and we listened, the black dude's face tight as latex, till the noise fell away to murmuring and whimpering. Scavona pressed his palm to his forehead and tossed his cigarette in the sink and slumped back over to his chair. He raked his hand through his dark hair and kept on raking it. Some loud talking came through the wall again and the dude went wide-eyed and took to breathing hard, and a part of my brain that had been sunk low brought up a memory of a day when me and a buddy took a long time getting a VC into the hospital and his stretcher managed to get lifted and dropped a few times. He died. Then a lot more dead were visiting me–Ug and Larry and Reno–friends that didn't come home and I felt the rage I sometimes still feel, like when a boss looks at me wrong or I drop something and it rolls where I have to stoop to get it, like the rage I got when my old man acted like I was still the boy from before the war and not the man who'd bagged bodies and saved lives. But way underneath I felt real calm too, like I understood what I was supposed to do.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Pigs working on a brother in there, ain't they?" he said, and he looked a little concerned for the first time.

"I said what's your name?"

"What you need to know for?"

"You ain't got to say."

He glanced at Scavona, then looked at me sideways. "Eric Banks."

I smacked my lips to work up some talking saliva. "So, Eric, you didn't shoot nobody?"

"I didn't do nothing but go down there, man."

"And get shot for being a dumb shit."

"Fuck you." He squinted at me and swallowed so his pointed adam's apple bobbed. "What's your name?"

"Owen."

"So, Owen, you calling me dumbshit and you here wiping ass all day?"

I thought that was funny, I really did, but my fingers didn't, all hot and flexing. "Still better than getting shot."

"You know I ain't did nothing."

"You went down there. I'd trade your stupid black ass for a bunch of my buddies didn't come home."

"And I'd trade you for a bunch of brothers spread out on North Boulevard."

"Fucking whining," I said and wiped my mouth. "You a Black Panther?"

"I don't wear no uniform no more. Not like you."

I smiled and turned to Scavona. "Y'all shoulda shot him in his black mouth."

More yelling came through the wall, worse, a mix of somebody saying, You like that, and somebody calling for Allah like he was getting castrated and I wanted that noise to stop. Eric went to breathing real fast and trying to hold his burnt-down smoke in his lips, then he spit the cigarette flipping to the floor. He jerked and shifted the stretcher, straining against the cuffs, breathing through his nose real loud. The pain shrugged through him and up into his face and he dropped into it for a second, his eyes glossed and his mad shine gone. I'd thought he was okay, but I had that quick feeling from knowing that sometimes you can't tell, especially if somebody starts giving in or a piece of bullet's fragged off bone and nicked an artery. He started going pale, always weirder on somebody black, and I grabbed an extra pillow and put it under his feet to keep him from going shocky on me, I'm not sure why. My fingers went all stiff and a familiar rush buzzed in my chest until he steadied his breath and his skin colored again and his brown eyes spit back the shape of the fluorescent tube on the ceiling. I ground his cigarette on the tile, then went over, got me a sip from the faucet and sat in the chair where Scavona had been. My cheeks were tingling like novacain was wearing off and my eyes felt scratchy and all of a sudden I was tired, too tired, a body of grits. I covered my face.

"They torturing a brother in there," Eric said, his voice a lot weaker than before. "They coming in here next, ain't they?"

"You deserve what you get," Scavona said, but he didn't sound like he had a whole lot of conviction.

"You know I ain't did nothing," Eric said. "Your partner shot me cause that's

what he supposed to do. That don't mean y'all got to let 'em do what they gone do. *Medic*, you gone let 'em do me that way?"

I remembered the Muslim next door looking like he wanted to slit my throat and the goddamn gold-badged captain hustling me out so they could get to torturing the other shot-up fool, thought of the mountains of bled-on sheets and bandages I'd be picking up and the bodies I'd be wheeling down to the morgue and part of me wanted to walk out right then. But it would just be another shitty job waiting and shitty as this one was it was pretty familiar. I uncovered my face. "I'm just the ass wipe, bro."

"Jail and shit's one thing, man, even doing me out on the street, but this ain't right, you know it ain't."

Eric was sort of pray-cursing and I did want to do *something*. The chair started brewing like a rocket under me and you know how it is when your brain gets out ahead of you and it ain't firing right but it's firing so much that you can sense words about to come at you. Not the actual words and not what they mean, but what they'll do. Well, that's where I was, right then, waiting for the words. And they came.

"You sure you ain't getting your rocks off?" he said, and I knew what he was trying.

"Be quiet," Scavona said.

"This all make you feel at home?" he went on to me, his voice husky. "I know you done for somebody in the field needed it. Me and you was there. I'd do for you if need be. Don't let 'em come in here and start poking cigarettes in this hole."

I gripped my thighs. "You brothers bring out the guns, what you expect?"

"That what you went over there for? Let 'em torture somebody would of saved your ass in the bush?"

The whole puke green room pulsed around Eric's dark face and glinting eyes, pushing the tired in me all the way back. I saw him in that room when Scavona and his partner busted in, raising his arms up but still grinning a big Fuck You, Pig. I went over to him, but I'd be lying if I said I remembered standing and going. The chair might as well have tilted me out on a moving floor. Eric's eyes glowed clear and intense and the pain sweat on his brow exploded with the bright light. "Yeah," he said to me, and I saw in my head my hands just reaching out and squeezing until everything stopped. Then something touched my elbow and I flinched like snake bit.

"Hey," Scavona said to me.

"Do something," Eric said.

"Shut up, nigger," Scavona said and took my arm.

"Leave him be!" Eric said and he tried to spit but there wasn't any spit. He strained at Scavona yelling like crazy and Scavona yelled back until I edged him away from the table, Eric still cussing until he took to gagging. A second or two

went by with me and Scavona watching, then laughing busted out from the next room. "Don't y'all have all the fun before we get there," a voice said through the wall.

Eric collapsed in then, not looking at me or Scavona, and I turned and went over to the sink. I splashed some water on my face and neck, drank some, then towelled off with my shirt. My insides were crawly and my skull was lined with dull noise but there wasn't any comfort in it.

"You shoulda did something," Eric muttered.

"What?" I said.

"There it is," he said.

The door swung open and in marched the uniforms and suits from the Muslim's room, the Captain smiling, but a couple not looking too good. "Thank you, gentlemen," the Captain said, and two big uniforms took up spots to urge me out, while three suits sauntered over to Eric. I didn't move right away, keeping my look on the Captain.

"I got to make sure his bandage don't slip," I said, stupid shit, gesturing at Eric.

"We'll call you back in if he needs some blood," the Captain said and a couple of them chuckled.

I thought about looking at Eric, but I didn't. Me and Scavona stepped into the hall and I turned the other direction from the emergency entrance. "Where you going?" Scavona asked.

"Out," I said.

I tromped down a short flight of stairs and pushed through an exit to a stoop hidden behind some bushes where another orderly had took me for a cigarette the day before. The sunshine air opened and I took out my smokes and thumped the pack, lipped one out, then couldn't hit it with my lighter. Scavona got the lighter from me and went to help, but he was even worse, making us laugh until I held his wrist and we both finally got lit. Then I pushed my finger and thumb into my sockets till my knuckles must've disappeared.

"What a day," Scavona said, startling me. He was staring into the bushes like somebody was up in there hiding. "Didn't know who I was supposed to shoot. People were screaming everywhere and blood all over. We went in that room and..." He rubbed his hand all over his face. "Probably wouldn't have been nothing to you."

I took a long drag good as a kiss, then let go a long exhale. "Any friends get popped?" I asked.

He flicked at his cigarette hard like he could see something evil on the cinder, then rattled his head. "Not partners. I rode with Thibeaux a few times. Cool dude. I liked him a lot. Another one I rode with a couple weeks ago got hit in the leg, but I should've shot him."

"And y'all zapped old Eric after he dropped his piece."

Scavona did a slow lizard take on me. "Wouldn't you?"

I put my face toward the air. I wished I was drunk, and I don't mean four fishbowls drunk, but barrel drunk, tank truck drunk, fucking bowling alley drunk. Still, I knew I wouldn't call any of my old high school buddies. I took another deep drag and blew it out slow. Scavona stood there all decked out in gray with his shiny bullets and gleaming thirty-eight and slick blackjack and polished boots. He pulled on his cigarette like it was hurting him, then went to scraping his shoe sole on the edge of one of the steps.

"You like it?" I asked him. "Being a cop?"

"Not today. You like doing this?"

"Not today." We smiled. "Just started. Had about a hundred pissant jobs since I been home."

He stared at me, nodding slow. "You thought about joining the force?"

I shrugged. "Thought about everything."

"You oughta. There's lots of vets. And the women love you."

"The brass don't hassle you?"

"You're off in your unit. You have to screw up big time to bring a lieutenant in on your ass and the sergeants are mostly cool." Scavona sat on the cement step and stretched his legs, then rubbed his thighs like they'd gone to sleep. "Most of what we do is drive around. Weekends and paydays get busy, but mostly you hang out. Full moons are crazy."

I took a spot next to him, noticed sirens still howling in. I'd never been fully keen on cops, but I thought how that day they'd been like a big old family, ready to take care of their own without asking questions, knowing what side they were on. Thought about riding around in a car and being out among it.

"Glad I ain't still downtown," Scavona said.

"Really?" I asked.

He worried his thumb like he had a splinter, nibbled at it, then swallowed. He hmmphed. "Shit, I don't know," he said.

I ground my cigarette on the steps, struggled a couple more out the pack and lit them.

I wished I'd given Eric one more, then without wanting to my head was conjuring images from stuff I'd heard American and ARVN investigators goof about, stuff everybody's heard about, like hooking electrical wires to prisoners' nuts and turning a crank, or hanging them upside down to pour toilet water in their mouth and nose. I remembered one time after a particularly bad day a buddy of mine taking a knife point to a VC's wound right in triage. Then I pushed it all down in me like a land mine with my foot.

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Dorlea Rikard

Patriotism, Propaganda, Parody, and Protest: The Music of Three American Wars

When Johnny comes marching home again, Hurrah, Hurrah!
We'll give him a hearty welcome then, Hurrah, Hurrah!
The men will cheer, the boys will shout,
The ladies they will all turn out,
And we'll all be gay when Johnny comes marching home.

This rousing chorus, usually associated with the Civil War, was meant to encourage both soldier and civilian. Although it is sung in a minor mode, which traditionally denotes melancholy, solemnity, or foreboding, it has a rousing march rhythm. The lyrics promise victory and heroism. Undoubtedly many young men marched off to the war with this song ringing in their ears, dreaming of the promised hero's welcome after they had done their patriotic duty. Even if the minor key corresponded with the fear just below the surface of their consciousness, the driving rhythm and the vision of men clapping them on the backs and women kissing their cheeks must have carried them along.

The Irish have an older, much more solemn and realistic version of the song. It is sung, not as a call to arms, but as a dirge, a lament for what might have been, but is no more:

Where are your legs that used to run, Hooroo, Hooroo?
Where are your legs that used to run, Hooroo, Hooroo?
Where are your legs that used to run, my darlin' John, so pale and wan?
Oh your dancin' days for sure are done.
Oh Johnny I hardly knew ye.

These two songs represent drastically different views of war. One might call them the before and after versions, or the idealistic and realistic versions of the same song.

Music has always been an important part of war. The ancient Scots blew bagpipes to terrify their enemies; the Turks, under Suleyman the Magnificent, marched into battle to pipes and drums in such an orderly and relentless fashion that many of their enemies lost heart before they ever saw the Turks' formidable swords; the British Redcoats had their fife and drums; American soldiers still sing cadences as they march in training. And it is not only soldiers who make the music of war. Michael Ballard, writing about the place of popular music in war, says, "In order to galvanize American might during World War I, President Wilson turned to New York's Tin Pan Alley for help. Some war songs were written out of pure patriotic conviction while others were made to order" (*Templeton*). Governments, which start the wars, encourage music that is purely patriotic, and civilians who want to support the war effort (and make a fortune as well) write sentimental songs that keep the public starry eyed about their soldiers. Much of war music is jingoistic, but wars also inspire another kind of music that is sad and bitter and disillusioned.

War literature is filled with references to music. The patriotic music is certainly there. The sentimental popular music is there. But war literature also includes the songs of propaganda, parody and protest. A close look at these different kinds of music reveals the complicated response of human beings to both the idea and to the reality of war.

Townsend Ludington makes this observation about Americans' attitudes at the beginning of World War I:

> Americans were charged with excitement and with expectations of high times in Paris. They kept singing:
>
> "God help Kaiser Bill
> God help Kaiser Bill
> Oh, old Uncle Sam,
> He's got the infantry
> He's got the cavalry
> He's got artillery
> Then by God we'll all go to Germany
> And God help Kaiser Bill." (124)

This kind of uninformed bravado is not accidental. In his work on war and popular song in culture, Les Cleveland notes this about the popular music that surrounds these young men as they contemplate their place in the war: "The music industry also promoted an alternative view of the war as an opportunity for adventurous excitement implicit in such entertainments as George M. Cohan's 'Over There' [. . .]" (5). The lyrics of "Over There" promise that "the Yanks are

coming," and make the boast, "And we won't come back 'til it's over over there" (Cohan). Arrogant enthusiasm characterizes the music and the spirit of those men who have not yet seen the realities of battle.

John Dos Passos in *Three Soldiers*, a book that focuses on three young men in World War I, laces his entire book with references to music. John Trombold, writing about music in Dos Passos' works, observes: "The very lives of the characters in *Three Soldiers* are directed by music" (305). One of the soldiers in this book, Dan Fuselli, has these thoughts as he is preparing to ship overseas: "The notes of the bugle and of the band playing 'The Star Spangled Banner' sifted into his consciousness through a dream of what it would be like over there. He was in a place [. . .] full of old men and women in peasant costume, like in the song, 'When It's Apple Blossom Time in Normandy' [. . .]. The Yanks were coming" (Dos Passos 32-33). The idea from popular music that the "Yanks" will fix everything inspires Fuselli as "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" must have inspired Civil War soldiers, but, like that song, Fuselli sounds a minor note when he thinks to himself, " 'The guns must make a racket, though [. . .]'" (33). Even though the music can inspire Fuselli, it cannot obliterate his fear.

We hear echoes of "God Save Kaiser Bill" in *Three Soldiers*. Early in the narrative, Dos Passos crams the soldiers into a Y.M.C.A. hut where a "Y" man leads them in a chorus of "We're Going to Get the Kaiser." This song is designed, like the propaganda film the men have been gathered to watch, to unify the men in their hatred of the German leader:

> Hail, hail the gang's all here
> We're going to get the Kaiser
> We're going to get the Kaiser
> We're going to get the Kaiser
> Now! (20-21)

Even this early in their war experience (the men are still in training in the States) the soldiers parody the propaganda song the "Y" man is singing with them. The "Y" man responds: " 'Somebody tried to put one over on the 'Y' man and sing 'What the hell do we care?' But you do care, don't you Buddy?'" (21). Dos Passos repeatedly portrays the "Y" men as shallowly patriotic and ineffective with the men as we see in his characterization of Spencer Sheffield (250-251). The soldiers do not regard them as comrades. The men do not want to be told what to think (or what to sing) by the "Y" man. Trombold notes: "Dos Passos observed that soldiers could assert some independence of mind by not always singing the approved martial songs, and—somewhat more daringly—by singing approved song in parody" (294). This parody, early in the soldier's training is all in fun.

After they have had some experience, their parody takes a darker turn. The

cadences that the men sing as they march have always been a perfect vehicle for parody or even protest. These songs have simple tunes and steady marching rhythms, thus they are easy to learn. Cleveland observes that soldiers used popular tunes that are "well-known tunes that can be easily remembered and do not require much musical skill to reproduce" (31). As they are marching on a long, arduous march in France toward the sound of battle, the soldiers sing this song:

> Oh ashes to ashes
> And dust to dust;
> If the gasbombs don't get yer
> The eighty-eights must. (181)

This song that mocks their own fear, helps them to control that fear so they can march forward. Cleveland, commenting on the soldiers' making parody says, "it improvises responses to alarming or inconvenient experience and mocks at what it cannot alter or control" (20). The sentiment in "Ashes to Ashes" is oceans apart from "God Help Kaiser Bill."

Experience has shown the soldiers of World War I that a huge difference exists between the homeland "Hoorahs" and the horrors of war. Again Cleveland notes:

> In wartime these [disturbing experiences that are not supposed to be there] emerge as contradictions between the ideological hyperbole of popular culture content and the daily actualities experienced by its consumers [. . .]. To a soldier, it is the disparity between the ideal and the actual, measurable in the contrast between patriotic fervor and battlefield realities. (2)

These "battlefield realities" move them away from such songs as "There's a Long, Long Trail A-Winding" with its "land of dreams," and toward the grizzly "The Hearse Song" with its "the worms crawl in, the worms crawl out" (Cleveland 7).

Protest music in World War I is evident both inside and outside the military. Cleveland offers two verses of "That Bloody War" as a sample of internal protest:

> The Captain asked me why I ran,
> I said the reason why,
> The only reason that I ran
> Was cos I couldn't fly!
> Bloody War! Oh, bloody war!
> I ran all over Europe

A 'fightin' for my life
And before I go to war again
I'll send my darlin' wife!
Bloody War! Oh, bloody war! (6)

In this song, the war becomes, not a fight for patriotism, but a fight for the soldier's own life. Cleveland goes on to list two contrasting song titles as evidence of protest outside the army. Those titles are:"If I Had a Son for Each Star in Old Glory," and "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier" (6). Of the latter title Cleveland says, "This 1915 composition warned prophetically of 10 million soldiers going to the war and protested that warfare would cease if other mothers made the same pacifistic declaration as she had" (6).

While soldiers entered World War I to the strains of "God Help Kaiser Bill," young men at the time of World War II were encouraged by several different media of popular culture. Writing about Hollywood and propaganda during World War II, Robert Tyne makes this point about a popular movie—*The Purple Heart*: "From the opening frame every component of effective propaganda was evident.The lugubrious strains of the American patriotic hymn, 'My Country Tis of Thee,' wailing softly in the introductory titles, served as the musical harbinger for the martyrdom that must follow" (64). Here, as in World War I, patriotic songs are used to encourage men to join the fight for their country's sake.

The beginning of World War II produced a whole new group of sentimental popular songs. One of the most compelling is "The White Cliffs of Dover":

There'll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover
Tomorrow, just you wait and see.
There'll be love and laughter and peace ever after
Tomorrow when the world is free.

The shepherd will tend his sheep,
The valley will bloom again.
And Jimmy will go to sleep
In his own little room again. (Burton)

This song, set in England, became an important anthem of sacrifice and hope for American audiences. They saw themselves as liberators of brother England and suffered vicariously with the English.

Even though such traditional patriotic songs as "My Country Tis of Thee," "The Star Spangled Banner," and "America the Beautiful" were sung loudly and often, new songs were also being written that would become standard patriotic tunes. Irving Berlin's "God Bless America," which is much more about America than it is

about God, crossed over from a show tune to a patriotic song. Cleveland notes that popular song writers during World War II "relied less on jingoism and the deity and more on the patriotic values of nationhood [. . .]" (7).With these sentimental and patriotic songs ringing in their ears, the G.I.'s faced the ghastly reality of the beaches of Normandy and Guadalcanal. It is no wonder that sentimentality turned to sarcasm.

For the soldiers of World War II, like the soldiers of World War I, the sarcastic response to sentimentality took shape in parody. Paul Fussell, writing about the frustration a soldier feels with the misunderstanding at home of the atrocities of the war, says, "The troop's disillusion and their ironic response, in song and satire and sullen contempt, came from knowing that the home front then could (and very likely historiography later would) be aware of none of these things" ("Real War" 1-2). This frustration expressed itself in bawdy cadences and irreverent songs. In his book *Wartime*, Fussell says the book is "about the psychological and emotional culture of Americans and Britons during the Second World War," and he notes that " 'The Beer Barrel Polka' [. . .] in its secular hedonism was significantly the Second World War's 'Onward Christian Soldiers,' and in its utter avoidance of anything like patriotism and ideology, it was the Second World War's 'Over There'" (187). "The Beer Barrel Polka" does not ask soldiers to spout inane sentimentalities. It does, however, celebrate comradeship; therefore, it is a song they can sing with gusto.

Cleveland offers this parody of the show tune "People Will Say We're in Love" (from *Oklahoma*) as an example of the kind of song G.I.'s fabricated to express their frustration and to make them laugh at themselves at the same time:

> Don't throw grenades at me,
> Don't lob mob mortar shells,
> Don't shoot your artillery,
> People will say we're at war.
>
> Don't throw grenades at me,
> Don't pull that safety pin,
> Kraut-buddy, don't you see,
> People will say I'm done in (61).

James Jones, in his novel *The Thin Red Line,* writes a song that both verbally and musically expresses "sullen contempt" for war. In a jauntily syncopated rhythm, with directions to sing it at a march tempo, Jones sets the following lyrics in a tell-tale minor key:

Don't monkey around with death,
It will only make you dirty;
Don't futz around with the reaper,
He will only make you smell.
Have you got B.O.?
Then do not go
Fiddling around with that Scytheman;
Because your best friends will not tell you;
Don't monkey around with death;
You will only wind up soiled. (xiii-xiv)

In the novel these lyrics run though John Bell's mind as he flees the sight (and smell) of a Japanese mass grave that the men in his platoon have disturbed. He has been chiding himself for failing to stop this desecration. This face-to-face encounter with the putrid reality of death incongruously elicits from Bell the memory of a jazzy torch song (77). This incongruity mirrors the inappropriateness of Bell's laughter at the socially unacceptable behavior of the men at the Japanese grave.

"Incongruous" is a word that appears often in literature about war. Studs Terkel makes this comment about the title of his book *"The Good War"*: "Quotation marks have been added, not as a matter of caprice or editorial comment, but simply because the adjective 'good' mated to the noun 'war' is so incongruous" (vi). This book, a compilation of interviews with a wide range of people about World War II, repeatedly demonstrates the incongruity of its title. In the section titled "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," Maxine Andrews of the Andrews Sisters, an extremely popular act during World War II, makes this observation: "I felt we were invincible. Right is right and we were right and we're gonna [sic] win. But the news was not encouraging [. . .]. I would look on the set and see all those wonderful young men. It would go through my mind: am I ever gonna see them again?" (294). This purveyor of upbeat, sentimental, and patriotic songs admits her doubts that those songs tell the whole story.

If civilians had a difficult time correlating popular songs with the reality of war, soldiers had an even harder time. Consequently, they often changed the words to popular songs to better suit their situations. Cleveland notes that one such change resulted in transforming the song titled "Bless 'Em All" to "Fuck 'Em All!" He explains this need to change proprietorship of these songs this way:

> Parallel with the morale building effusions of wartime [. . .] there exists among the troops an entirely different and contradictory expressive tradition [. . .]. Such songs are oppositional to the dominant ideology of the popular

> culture, ridiculing the ideals of heroism and military propriety. Hundreds of them circulated in World War II, illustrating the disparity between values that affirmed the righteousness and seriousness of the collective wartime effort and the nihilist cynicism of its rank-and-file participants. (19)

Later in his discussion, Cleveland explains the importance and function of these "oppositional" songs. He writes:

> To the reluctant warrior grousing about life in the services, grumbling about the food or yearning for the comforts of home, the singing of oppositional songs offers a semblance of at least having some control over the dictates of technique in the performance of duties. 'Fuck'em All' thus becomes a hymn of endurance and a source of psychological support as much as it is a disaffected denunciation of authority. (145)

Here the difference in those who only have an idea of war and those who experience its reality is clearly demonstrated.

Terkel includes in his book this song by Tom Paxton, a folk singer from the early 1960s:

> What did you learn in school today, dear
> Little boy of mine?
> What did you learn in school today, dear
> Little boy of mine?
> I learned that war is not so bad
> I learned about the great ones we have had
> We fought in Germany and in France
> And I am someday to get my chance
> That's what I learned in school today
> That's what I learned in school. (vii)

His placing this song, written in the sixties, in a book about World War II, demonstrates that ambivalent attitudes toward war span generations.

The time between the ending of World War II and the Vietnam War, whenever one chooses to date its beginning, was a time of profound social change in America. The Civil Rights Movement was about to see its greatest leader rise. The birth control pill gave women new freedom and added impetus to the

already burgeoning Women's Liberation Movement. Widespread recreational drug use was about to change (in a drastic way) what parents worried about. Popular music is an important chronicler of all these cataclysmic changes. From "We Shall Overcome," the hymn of the Civil Rights Movement, to Leslie Gore's "You Don't Own Me," which foreshadowed the Women's Movement, America was singing about its changes. Onto this kaleidoscopic stage of changes entered the Vietnam War. The beginning of the war is impossible to date, as Bruce Franklin points out in *The Vietnam War in American Stories, Songs, and Poems* (11). It is certain, however, that by the middle of the 1960s the Vietnam War was a centerpiece of the American psyche.

Another movement that coincided with the Vietnam War was a huge resurgence in the popularity of folk music. It moved off the porches and out of the coffeehouses into America's radios and stereos. It became bona fide popular music. Folk music has always been the perfect vehicle for recording social history because of its storytelling narratives and simple, singable melodies. The gradual change in popular folk music from the relatively quiet, acoustically accompanied early days of Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and Peter, Paul, and Mary to the screaming, electrically enhanced sounds of The Animals and Jimi Hendrix paralleled the escalating war in Vietnam. Many of the songs produced by both the folk artists and later the rock artists—who readily acknowledge their debt to folk music—have become inextricably linked with the Vietnam War. Franklin explains the symbiotic relationship of popular music and the war:

> Songs were a prominent feature of the anti-war movement and a shaping element of its associated counterculture, an inspiration for pro-war sentiment, and an essential part of G.I. culture in Vietnam. In more subtle ways, the war exerted deep and lasting influences on the form and content of popular music. (203)

From folk and rock music, which registered more protest than support, to country music, which was largely pro-war, everyone seemed to be singing about Vietnam.

Country music, which has always been more politically and socially conservative than folk and rock music, became the chosen vehicle for pro-war sentiment. Les Cleveland mentions "The Ballad of the Green Berets" as an example of the pro-war song (129). This song, recorded in 1966 and sung by Green Beret Barry Sadler, is an extremely sentimental and patriotic song about the heroics of the Green Berets. The last two verses of the song clearly indicate its tenor:

Back at home a young wife waits
Her Green Beret has met his fate.
He has died for those oppressed,
Leaving her this last request.
Put silver wings on my son's chest,
Make him one of America's best.
He'll be a man they'll test one day.
Have him win the Green Beret. (Franklin 212)

This sentimentality begged to be parodied by the men who were actually fighting in Vietnam. Lydia Fish, writing about music in the Vietnam War, affirms that it "spawned dozens of parodies" (3). She goes on to state that these parodies "served as a strategy for survival, as a means of unit bonding and definition, as entertainment, and as a way of expressing emotion" (3). Inane sentimentality is simply not a useful emotion for those who are in the midst of the reality of war.

As in previous wars, soldiers in the Vietnam War era made their own songs. Sometimes they made parodies as in "The Ballad of the ASA." This song is a parody written by the men of the Army Security Agency at Ft. Devens in 1965-66. It uses the melody of "The Ballad of the Green Berets." A sampling of two verses indicates the song's flavor:

Drunken Soldiers, Always High
Dropouts from old Sigma Phi
Men who bullshit all the way
These are the men from the ASA

Plastic cans upon our ears,
We've been cleared and we're not Queers
One hundred men we'll test today,
But only three make the ASA. (Army Security Agency)

Sometimes soldiers appropriated popular songs for their own purposes. Fish observes: "The troops had their own top forty of songs about going home like 'Five Hundred Miles,' or 'Leaving on a Jet Plane,' or of darker or more cynical album cuts which reflected their experiences: 'Run through the Jungle,' 'Bad Moon,' 'Paint It Black,' or 'The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down'" (2). They also claimed the Animals' "We Gotta Get Out of This Place" for obvious reasons (1).

Not all of the songs the Vietnam soldier made his own were about going home. Sometimes those songs had multiple meanings. Franklin says this about "Puff the Magic Dragon":

> Songs have varied meanings, which multiply as people relate them to their own lives. G.I.'s in Vietnam turned Peter, Paul, and Mary's 'Puff the Magic Dragon,' an apparently innocent childhood fantasy sung by leading antiwar folksingers, into both the nickname of the deadliest of all gun ships and a sly celebration of marijuana"(203).

If they could not make any sense of their war experiences, at least these soldiers could sing of them in humorous and familiar terms.

The infantrymen of John Del Vecchio's novel, *The 13th Valley* sing a song in the bar on the eve of their deployment to the infamous "13th Valley." This song, "The Boonie Rats" is both an honest account of the progression of a "Boonie Rat" from his first experience in the boonies—

> I landed in the country,
> One year of life to serve
> My only friend a weapon,
> My only prayer to live.
> Boonie Rats, Boonie Rats
> Scared but not alone,
> 300 days more or less,
> Then I'm going home.—

to his becoming an experienced soldier:

> Boonie Rats, a legend
> For now and times to come,
> Wherever there are soldiers,
> They'll talk of what we've done.
> Boonie Rats, Boonie Rats,
> Scared but not alone,
> 50 days more or less,
> And then I'm going home.

The song ends with a proud tribute to the brotherhood of Boonie Rats:

> They say there'll always be a war,
> I hope they're very wrong,
> To the Boonie Rats of Vietnam
> I dedicate this song. (91-93)

This song, made by the men who are fighting, for the men who are fighting, has no hint of sarcasm or parody or even patriotism. It is a song of comradeship.

Songs of protest against war made an appearance early in the Vietnam conflict. "Masters of War," recorded in 1963 by the young folksinger, Bob Dylan, asks the question:

> How much do I know
> To talk out of turn
> You might say that I'm young
> You might say I'm unlearned
> But there's one thing I know
> Though I'm younger than you
> Even Jesus would never
> Forgive what you do. (Znet 4)

Here Dylan indicts the "masters of war," but not the soldier. When he wrote this song, widespread protest against the war had not yet begun. Four years later, in 1967, Peter Yarrow emphasizes the reaction of the public to a young pacifist in his song "The Great Mandala":

> Tell the people they are safe now
> Hunger stopped him, he lies still in his cell.
> Death has gagged his accusations
> We are free now, we can kill now,
> We can hate now, now we can end the world
> We're not guilty, he was crazy
> And it's been going on for ten thousand years! (Znet 58)

"Draft Dodger Rag," by Phil Ochs, addresses the view of the war from the perspective of the young men who are expected to fight it. The whole idea of dodging the draft in the later years of the Vietnam War created a sort of culture of its own, complete with an underground network for moving young men to Canada. This song captures perfectly the hypocrisy of the attitude of many Americans—"Maybe this war needs to be fought, but my son is not going to fight it." The chorus and the last verse sarcastically states that attitude:

> I'm just a typical American boy from a typical American town
> I believe in God and Senator Dodd and keeping old Castro down
> And when it came my time to serve I knew better dead

than red
But when I got to my old draft board, buddy, this is what
I said:

I hate Chou En Lai, and I hope he dies,
But one thing you gotta see
That someone's gotta go over there
And that someone isn't me
So I wish you well, Sarge, give 'em Hell
Yeah, kill me a thousand or so
And if you ever get a war without blood and gore
Well I'll be the first to go. (Ochs)

In 1965 Country Joe and the Fish recorded "The I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin-to-Die-Rag," which approaches protest from a different angle than "Draft Dodger Rag." The song begins sardonically:

Yeah come on all you big, strong men,
Uncle Sam needs your help again.
He's got himself in a terrible jam
Way down yonder in Vietnam.
So put down your books and pick up a gun,
We're gonna have a whole lotta fun.

And ends bitterly:

Well, come on mothers throughout the land,
Pack your boys off to Vietnam.
Come on fathers, don't hesitate,
Send 'em off before it's too late.
Be the first one on your block
To have your boy come home in a box. (Znet 49)

Franklin asserts that this song,"expressed the vitality of the [anti-war] movement [. . .]. The song also formed part of the transition from folk to rock" (205). The protest song genre had not, before the Vietnam War, had such a wide appeal or such eloquent and prolific expression. Country Joe's song hinted at a new wave of anti-war music. Douglas Reitinger, writing about the music of Vietnam War films, states:

The fact that in many ways the rock music tradition parallels the American experience during the Vietnam War

> cannot be avoided: both had their roots in the post World War II baby boom, both were infants twisting the night away in the naivete of Jack Kennedy's Camelot, both spent their *American Graffiti*-like adolescence while LBJ stepped up the war, and both raged madly at My Lai and Altamont. In the seventies rock music and the Vietnam War went mega. (58)

As the war wore on, and general support for it waned, the public embraced the protest genre more readily. By the time of the shooting of students at Kent State in May, 1970, the public was ready for a popular protest. This readiness explains the immense popularity of the song "Ohio," written by Neil Young and recorded by Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young in July, 1970. The middle verse expresses the frustration and horror that Americans felt at this event:

> Got to get down to it
> Soldiers are gunning us down,
> Should have been done long ago
> What if you knew her and
> Found her dead on the ground
> How can you run when you know?
> (qtd. in Franklin 213-214)

Even after the Vietnam War was officially over, protest music continued. The most notable anti-war song of the 1980's is Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." This song tells the story of a Vietnam veteran. Bobbie Ann Mason uses this song, along with other icons of popular culture, as the background for the characters in her novel *In Country*. The repetition of the song in the book emphasizes the maladjustment of Emmett, a Vietnam veteran. The middle verses of the song capture the essence of the veteran's disaffection:

> Come back home to the refinery
> Hiring man says "son if it was up to me"
> Went down to see my V.A. man
> He said "son don't you understand now"
>
> Had a brother at Khe Sanh fighting off the Viet Cong
> They're still there, he's all gone
> He had a woman he loved in Saigon
> I got a picture of him in her arms now

Down in the shadow of the penitentiary
Out by the gas fires of the refinery
I'm ten years burning down the road
Nowhere to run ain't got nowhere to go.
(qtd. in Franklin 218)

After the war is over, both the veteran and the American public are trying to come to grips with its aftermath. Emmett and his niece Sam struggle throughout the book to find a way to deal with the fallout from Vietnam that affects each of them differently. This song captures their frustration. The repetition of the phrase "Born in the U.S.A." emphasizes the irony of a veteran who is dishonored by his country.

In his book *Dispatches*, Michael Herr comments on the way popular rock music melded with the war during and after the Vietnam War years and affirms that it became part of the Vietnam experience. He writes:"Out on the street I couldn't tell the Vietnam veterans from the rock and roll veterans. The Sixties had made so many casualties, its war and its music had run power off the same circuit for so long they didn't even have to fuse" (258). Here music is not only a commentary on the war, it becomes an integral feature of a whole country's remembrance of that war.

War and music are inextricably linked in history. Music and the lyrics it accompanies serve an important function as they reveal different attitudes toward and perceptions of war. Cleveland comments on this function:

> Many lyrics reinforce morale by maintaining sentimental and patriotic linkages with the homeland. Others help to bring fears and anxieties under social control, while an uninhibited core of less compliant utterance allows criticism and resentment of authority to be openly voiced within the boundaries of official tolerance as a desirable alternative to refusal of duty or even mutiny. (145-146)

The music of war has made its way into our popular culture and serves to remind us of the difference in the before and after versions of war and between the idealistic and realistic visions of war. Whether the music inspires marching, saluting, toe-tapping, or weeping, it enters our collective memory and acts as a bench mark for every generation who has gone to war.

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Suzanne R. Thurman

Point of View

"At a quarter past three on that bright afternoon the order 'Forward!' rang along the lines. The supreme moment had come. As far as the eye could reach . . . A long line of soldiers mov[ed] with all the precision of a grand review."

—Mrs. George E. Pickett, 1863

1 Omniscient

The word, itself, was light
as a single feather drifting from the tail
of a hawk, brief as a firefly's

twilight dance; it melted
quickly in the summer heat, absorbed
by denser bodies that scrambled below.

It was a moderate word, only seven letters,
and unpretentious. It did not require
an education or a dictionary to be understood.

And yet its fleeting life controlled the fate
of men. Its utterance split time in two
and marked the lives of soldiers. It sent
them forward, emissaries

if only briefly, between its ending and theirs.

2 First Person, Present

I used to measure death in years,
protected by youth's hubris
and the simple rhythm of planting

and reaping. One season turned
into another, each different in its way
but all the same. Sun and moon
foretold a life of pleasure while starry
prophets promised a good harvest.
I embraced the wise-words cast
by nature's seers, held them
like ripened ears of corn
so sweet they burned my tongue.
But now the net is broken,
their soothsayings forgotten
in the rush of falling bodies,
the metallic taste of fear,
and the agony of soldiers
who measure death in seconds.

3 First Person, Future

We had our choice of eateries, General Lee's Family Restaurant,
Lincoln Dining Room, General Picket's Buffet. We weren't dressed

for entertaining presidents or sacred heroes so we chose
General Pickett's, assured by AAA of the coming feast—

barbecued ribs, homemade pies, even Southern fried catfish
right in the heart of Yankeeland. If mounds of food were not enough

to draw us in, this was: the chance to eat our meal two hundred feet
from charnel ground, the very field where Pickett's men were slaughtered

by Union bullets and Confederate honor. We settled in, plates stacked
high with bean salad, coleslaw and fresh baked rolls; platters loaded

with broasted chicken and fried okra, roast beef and mashed potatoes
drowning in gravy; bowls weighed down with slabs of chocolate cake

and vanilla soft serve. Around us a sea of tourists tried hard to eat
their fill, while outside mangled ghosts covered their wounds
with the gauze of memory and begged for just one bite.

Suzanne R. Thurman is a poet and history professor. Her most recent publications include poems in *The Cresset* and *The Mochila Review*, a short story in *Studio*, and the book *"O Sisters Ain't You Happy?": Gender, Family, and Community Among the Harvard and Shirley Shakers* (Syracuse Univ. Press, 2002).

Marlene Hanna

Quicksand

—October 12, 2002: Bali

Her mouth grew wide
To suck all the air out of this world,
And with her breath
To birth another.
A world where her daughter was still alive.

She did not aim back in time.
Before terrorist bombs blew the children to pieces.
But faced forward where warm wet sand never sucks you down
    into its sharp indifference.

But the thought of her child
Changed the face of the sand.
As crystal slivers slashed straight at her body and cancelled her mind.
    She smashed critical into its ice mud womb.
She stopped.

Until she remembered her daughter.
Remembered to breathe.
To suck all the air out of this world.
And with her breath to birth another.
A world where her daughter is still alive.

Marlene Hanna is an artist and philosopher. She lives in Boston, Massachusetts.

Paula Panzarella

Desert Rose

I saw my first desert in California.
I camped in Death Valley in '74 on the Summer Solstice.
Vast, beautiful, quiet intensity,
    Taproots plunged deep into the sand,
There's nothing barren within the ecological balance
    As long as you know where to look,
    How to look.

Pale and subtle, the range of colors overwhelm
And I decide that yes, this is where I want to be,
    Within this deep, wide place filled with life
That hides from the casual observer.

If I have a child, her name will be Sahara Mojave.
Dispel the myth of bone-dry death deserts!
They're nothing like that.
    I know.
    I've been in a few of them.

I once submitted a poem, and signed it "Sahara Mojave"
    And it wasn't printed.
I once wrote a short story with her as a character
    And it never quite got finished.
Such a fine name, with such an empowering image,
    There's nothing wrong with my borrowing it back a bit.

But now, since the war, I think of deserts drenched in blood.
The open space filled with corpses
    And the quiet intensity shattered by bombshells.
Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Desert Death, Desert Destruction,
    Desert Despair, Desert Dismemberment.
If I have a child, I'll have to find her another name.

"Desert Rose" received Honorable Mention in The Connecticut Poet's first annual competition (1997), and was originally published in *The Connecticut Poet Newsletter.*

Paula Panzarella is a resident of New Haven, Connecticut, and a performance poet, freelance writer and social justice activist whose writings have appeared in many literary journals and newspapers. Paula is the editor of *Poems on the Road to Peace: A Collective Tribute to Dr. King,* published by the Yale Peabody Museum, and the creator/director of *Outcry for Justice: Poetry in the Struggle for Freedom of Sacco and Vanzetti,* a nine-person performance piece of poetry, music, history and commentary about the two Italian labor leaders and anarchists who were executed by the State of Massachusetts in 1927.

Major Richard C. Sater

Notes from a Journal

Afghanistan, 11 Sept 2003-7 Apr 2004

—for Lt. Col. Greg Vrentas, US Army
Hey, you. Thanks.

11 Sept. 2003: DUST

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan—The battle for Afghanistan after Sept. 11, 2001 was swift and decisive. The world and I watched as US military and coalition forces attacked and the Taliban government fell, after six years of oppressive rule.

So it seems entirely fitting that I step off the plane and onto the tarmac here on the second anniversary of a September event that redefined our present and our future and let us know we could never be complacent again.

I have had a three-hour flight from Kyrgyzstan to think about where I am going and why, questions that are too big for the rattle and hum of a C-130 with two dozen of us sardined into the belly.

We are Air Force, Army, Marine, Navy. Male and female. Private first-class and colonel. We are going to the same place for the same reason: to carry out our portion of the larger war versus terrorism.

In my brand-new brown camouflage uniform, I am curious. A little apprehensive. Possibly scared. But proud too, which stands by itself.

Thirty-two provinces make up this country that is roughly the size of Texas. I've seen breathtaking photographs of this place, but Bagram is only dusty flat, with the mountains in the distance. I am hopeful that six months here will give me some opportunities to see more than the inside of this fence.

Russia built this place during its decade-long occupation of the country—beginning with a 1978 invasion. Recent hurried construction and tents and ingenuity have made it into a fortress and home for those of us stationed here.

I get used to seeing Hesco barriers (wire crates lined with felt, filled with dirt and rock) and unrolled concertina everywhere, playing its deadly razorwire music. I get used to the inconvenience of carrying a weapon all the time.

I get used to the wind that whips through this land like blame, howling like thousands dead. At night, the tent flaps like a blanket pinned to a clothesline

in a hurricane, but the stakes hold tight to the ground. The morning sun seems somehow like absolution.

I get used to the dust, the wind's friendly sidekick, fine dust like talcum powder. It blows loosely around the streets and piles up wherever it finds a niche. When the wind is high, you can taste it in the air as you speak. The dust is smart enough to ground an aircraft. Our uniforms are three shades of brown, not—I think—so we can hide in the sand but so the dust won't show.

And the gravel. Much of the base is covered with it to help settle this dust. The stones—the size of … oh, cat skulls maybe—make simple walking an adventure.

Hearing the bugled reveille at 0600 in the morning is not romantic. It's realistic, and it brings you back to this place from wherever your dreams might have let you wander in the night. But there's a day going on. Work to do.

The traditional war-fighting in Afghanistan ended quickly. Reconstruction after war, however, is the hardest part, taking the longest time and the most resources. So we are still here, partnered by many countries who believe that international terrorism is worth fighting. Worth defeating. This is Operation Enduring Freedom.

This place is a tinderbox. That's an old word for a metal box used to store firestarters. But this is an old place with a long history, and we're only a recent part of it. The situation remains volatile. What we're trying to do is give some hope to the people of Afghanistan, that a safe and secure future is possible.

Hope can't stand still. It has to move forward.

* * *

Bagram Air Base blacks out at night, a safety measure that reduces its chance of becoming a target. So we move across the gravel like ghosts with flashlights, filtered blue or red.

A flashlight in the dark is as much fun now as it was when I was a kid. In my cherry-colored beam, I make hand-shadows on barrier walls of birds and beasts. It is utterly absorbing, and I ignore the strange looks sent by others passing me in the night. Shadow animals?

A couple of nights ago, I forgot my flashlight. I had to make my way back to my tent in the dark. The risk of stumbling is traded against the greater risk of not moving forward at all.

There are different kinds of darkness, and not all of them have to do with absence of light. Ignorance is its own darkness. Lack of certainty can be a kind of darkness. So can fear. How do you navigate dark, whatever its source? How you must when there are no choices. On faith, that you're doing the right thing.

12 Oct. 2003: SPARKS

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan—Our lieutenant general, Army-size, wears on each side of his collar three stars. There are whole constellations with less than that.

He's luminous enough. No telescope necessary.

He's got a lot to throw his arms around, a whole world. Everything in Afghanistan. As commander of Combined Joint Task Force 180, he chases more than two dozen nations and so many moving parts that it's impossible to absorb every detail. He knows more than anyone here. He has to. And to fill in the gaps, his circle includes the subject-matter experts who can tell him what else he needs to know in language he understands.

He's practiced and sharp, this general. He asks hard questions, the kind that start with Why or How or sometimes When, but they're the right questions, and he asks from an honest corner: he needs the information. And, if the question is directed at you, a tip: be ready with a right answer.

We have, after all, a nation to rebuild. We promised. He's doing all he can, not just to hold it together but to push it forward.

Vines is his name. John R. Vines, from the 18th Airborne Corps out of Fort Bragg, North Carolina. If anyone can squeeze the dark and produce sparks, you reckon it's him. He inspires confidence, mentoring without even being aware, because the best of that particular breed are illustration artists rather than storytellers: they show instead.

This one will look you in the eye and identify you by name, and when you get over that surprise, you find yourself grinning for more reasons than that. If you work for him, he knows what you do. You're on the team and expected to pull your oar. He says he finds his own inspiration in the brave soldiers and airmen who press the fight daily.

And do not underrate the importance of a sense of humor. Here, after all, is a man who says, "There's no such thing as a lie. On occasion, however, a statement may be no longer operative."

Well, God bless him, this man who claims that his dogtags are stamped "infidel" on the line reserved for religious preference. Everyone laughs when he announces this—to the coalition chaplain, no less—and I make up my mind to ask to see sometime before the general departs.

Which is sooner than I expect and much sooner than any of us want. A routine physical examination has identified an impatient tumor, and the general must return home to North Carolina to get it cut out. Serious business, but his chances of recovery are good; he says "don't ask for my knife or my truck yet."

On his day of departure, he sponsors a cookout behind the headquarters building. A last chance for some of us to say goodbye. And on this last day, I ask my question, and without hesitation, he fishes the dogtags out of his shirt

and hands them to me so I can verify that, under his name and blood type and branch of service, he is stamped as he said: infidel.

"You didn't believe me?" he says. He is enjoying himself.

"Of course I did. I just wanted to see."

"I want to remind myself of how they think of us," he says. *They*. The terrorists. The enemies of Afghanistan, of progress, the future. "There are still a lot of people out there that need killing," he says. "Never get complacent. Never forget."

Someone shoots a photo of us and gives it to me later: himself scowling, his arm across my shoulder, and me grinning.

We lunch together, side-by-side on a stone wall in the sun, paper plates in hand. I ask him about him. He has, he tells me, a son in the Air Force Reserve, like me. He tells a story about a former soldier of his who called him at home at three o'clock one drunken morning just to talk, and the general invites me to do the same sometime if I find myself in a similar condition near Fort Bragg. I suspect he means it.

I like the way the South stretches across his words.

Before his departure, he tells us, "It's been my highest honor to serve with you." More importantly, he reminds us to remain focused: "You never know, on any given day, which piece of the puzzle will complete the picture. Maybe it's the intelligence piece, or the communication piece, or the operations piece." Even—and this is my spot—the public affairs piece. So he challenges us to remain vigilant, believe that what we're doing is important and give it what is in us to give.

John R. Vines. Three stars on each side of his collar. And he is his own constellation, with all the attendant mythology worthy of any Pegasus, any Seven Sisters, any Orion hunting, any Perseus chasing after an evil Medusa.

28 Nov. 2003: SPIN

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan—Artificially-colored cardboard cut-out turkeys with sad cartoon eyes hang in the dining halls here—reminders of elementary school bulletin boards many Novembers ago, symbols of pilgrims progressing.

Far from America's borders, what harvest can I find to celebrate in this hard, dusty land of want?

We lost a helicopter a couple of days ago, an air force MH-53 Pave Low that went down with perhaps two dozen people on board. It crashed in the night soon after taking off from here.

Five killed, Army passengers as well as Air Force crew. Seven wounded. The rest walked away, shaken, knowing it could have been worse. Initial reports—in error—suggested that enemy fire may have brought down the bird; "officials" in the states, quoted anonymously in the papers, have suggested that a mechanical problem may be blamed. The weary investigation will continue for weeks.

One recent midnight finds me doing laundry, a necessity every eight or nine days, inside a plywood hut lined with dingy washers and exhausted dryers. The plumbing provides only hard, cold water, so sorting whites and colors and permanent press (life-and-death business back home; just watch the commercials on TV) is pointless.

Usually I spend as little time as possible in the laundry room, stuffing things into two washers and then bolting for forty-five minutes. This night, as I measure soap powder and wait for the tubs to fill, a gentleman comes in—tall, lanky, generously mustached, with sad eyes the color of hazelnuts—with three bags of laundry. Small ones, with little in them.

He asks where he can get detergent around here. I hand him my box and watch, curious, as he dumps the laundry into three separate washers—odd, I think, as the few items of clothing would easily fit into one medium-sized load.

He wears a desert-tan flight suit, the two-piece kind, with no markings on it, identifying him by not identifying him as special-forces air crew. I introduce myself. He gives me a single name: Diz. I don't ask for more, not wanting to put him in a position of not wanting to say more.

His words colored with British, he says he is an MH-53 gunner. I extend my ignorant sympathies to him for the crash, and he shakes his head, disgusted.

"It was a re-supply mission," he says. "Not even a combat sortie." Had the crash occurred during a combat mission—even if the helicopter had been forced down by enemy fire—he would not be as troubled. One can make peace with such things under war. But such cost for an ordinary re-supply mission insults all who fly and fight.

Three colleagues lost. Friends, perhaps, at least brothers-in-arms. And somehow or other, the task has fallen to Diz of doing the laundry of these three, prior to sending their personal effects to their families. "Don't want to send them home dirty," he says.

I listen, since he seems to want someone to. He tells me a little about the deceased crew members. One was divorced, he says; one was a recent father and another had teenaged children. Through wash and rinse and spin and tumble dry, I stay with him, each of us sitting on the edge of a dryer, our feet hanging down. The air smells of fabric-softener sheets; the rhythmic click of buttons and the soft thud of damp clothes turning underneath us punctuate his story.

After he spends his quiet rage and grows silent, I ask some questions. I learn that his mother is English, that his dad served in the US Navy. Diz tells me he has remained single himself because it is easier. He has twenty-eight years in the air force and has grown tired, he says. He's assigned to a base in the southeastern US, and when his enlistment is up this time, he will get out.

And after retirement? He tells me he has bought himself a metal detector, the kind you see old guys using at the beach sometimes, looking for coins in the

sand. And Diz plans to spend his own time on the beach to see what he can find.

Carefully, he folds his three bags of clothing, mundane socks and undershirts, some gym shorts, uncommon only because they're forced to bear the weight of wasted potential, of the price extracted for freedom to endure. Courteously, gravely, we shake hands. I would like to meet him again, I tell him before he departs, and he says the same. But we will not (one of the less remarkable costs of deployment, though such things will empty one's pockets eventually).

And he goes.

Alone again, I fold. The water here contains enough cautionary bleach to kill the worst bacteria in it, but brown T-shirts turn pale purple and the desert-camouflage uniforms take on a salmon-pink tint over time. I count socks to make sure I have an even number.

In the cold dark of the early morning, I stumble through the empty compound, back to my tent, arms full of these clothes, baked hot and scented with boxed springtime.

Diz will find his treasure, buried. I am certain. He has earned his reward. And for my part, I will choose the important things and summon thanks.

5 Dec. 2004: NEED

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan—Around here, need is a "given." It's how things are, perhaps how they have always been.

We are still working to eradicate the threat of the Taliban, no longer in power though its influence remains more than mere concern in some parts of the country. In the aftermath of war, we aim to promote long-term stability, to assist the Afghan people as they build some kind of normal life that isn't stripped naked, ashamed, by the needs of war.

For such stability to take hold, Afghans have to agree that such a future is worth having. But there are practical needs of living that must be met first.

The Air Force attempts to address a small portion of that need one or two Sundays a month with its "Adopt-a-Village" program, designed to share the generosity of Americans who send cartons of clothing, shoes, toys, school supplies, and other household items to the base for distribution to the local citizenry.

No one on the current rotation of the 455th Expeditionary Operations Group here knows exactly how long the program has been going on, but it will continue as long as the boxes keep coming, one or two or eight or ten at a time. And they arrive almost daily, thanks to the persistence of schools, churches, Scout groups, and military organizations across the US.

We have requested non-perishable food, of course, but now that winter is arrived, boots and gloves and blankets and caps and coats become the priority. School supplies come next, as many of the local schools—lacking any sort of

budget—refuse to allow children to attend unless they possess their own tablets and pencils. Toys are useful as well: balls, kites, dolls, little trucks and cars, for who can argue with play? But we take whatever we can get, recognizing that postage to Afghanistan from some parts of the US costs more than the contents of the boxes.

Currently, 455th EOG representatives make a field trip every two or three weeks, looking for suitable candidates to "adopt," remote settlements in need of some assistance.

They are easy to find.

We choose villages that respond favorably to our coalition's aims, of course, and once a location has been identified, we send an advance party to get the lay of the land, to explain to the leaders who we are and what the program is about. We hope that visiting some of these places and presenting gifts will earn us an ally or two, or at least reduce a threat. We want the people to know that we are here, and that we are trying.

There is a waiting list of airmen wanting to participate in an "Adopt-a-Village" mission. Everyone wants to see the Afghan people up close, perhaps to put a human face on our reason for being here, like bringing an image into sharp focus in the camera viewfinder.

I'm lucky enough to get a spot on today's excursion. We meet in the Air Force compound early in the morning to load the trucks and review the route, as well as the safety precautions for traveling off the base. Security is an issue. Away from primary roads, travel is a gamble in more ways than one.

Arrival at the village—like this one, Qau'eh-ye Musa (that's approximate)—equals something like pandemonium. Children whoop and run. The village elders wait sedately in the center of town. A large handmade wool rug, rich maroon and blue, has been set out in the dust, chairs, a table with flowers.

Our Air Force support-group commander meets the elders—who are mullahs, or religious leaders—and communicates with sign language and a broad smile, his ear to the mouth of the interpreter who is busy converting local words into English and back again, delivering the message.

Our own security forces patrol the area carefully. Youngsters and adults alike view our airmen—bulky in desert-camouflage uniforms, Kevlar helmets, and flak vests—with awe and a little apprehension: who (and what) are these strangers? The electric rainbow-hued clothing of the children seems out of key with their somber faces.

Our group unloads two truckloads of cardboard cartons as the leaders discuss and drink tea. The boxes make an imposing pile in front of the assembled villagers.

We have not examined the contents of these boxes. There are too many to sort through. We run on faith, trusting that no one would go to the trouble of

shipping crates of anything from Philadelphia or Des Moines or San Francisco that might communicate the wrong sort of message. We will let the mullahs sort them out after we go.

I would like to stick around, to watch the unpacking of the boxes. Perhaps I want only to see for myself that the contents of the boxes are—if not exactly life-changing—at least appropriate, useful, worthwhile, necessary. Because worthwhile charity must judged not on intention but on result.

But perhaps I need to be less doubtful about the good intentions of those who sent the boxes and remember that people choose to be generous in this way because it is tangible. Eighty-seven billion tax dollars for war and reconstruction is an unfortunate (and frightening) abstraction, but a carton stuffed with sweatshirts and new socks and coloring books for a village to adopt is concrete.

At the conclusion of the brief visit, the elders deliver a handwritten letter to our commander explaining the greatest needs of the village. They are simple: water and a school.

Such field trips as this may serve the purpose of capturing hearts and minds. May serve another basic need for our airmen to explore, to get outside the wire now and then. But for me, I just want to see the faces: the elders, courtly and severe in their high standing; young children, holding tight to a father's hand; a baby in the arms of a boy barely big enough himself to carry such weight; a girl grinning as she tastes rainbow-colored candy; the handsome man and his nod of recognition as he realizes my camera eye has found him.

Were it not for these people assembled in the square, I might have thought this mud-and-stone town abandoned until looking closer. Is it true that we leave a little piece of our soul everywhere we rest?

19 Dec. 2003: WANT

KABUL, Afghanistan—I have reached the halfway point already, three months disappeared and three to go. The days grow shorter, colder, with Christmas imminent.

I'm now one week at a new location south of Bagram Air Base: Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, assigned to the headquarters for the new Combined Forces Command and part of the new three-star army general's command staff—currently as his deputy public affairs officer and speech-writer. A general, using my words. Imagine.

We're not a base, per se; our workplace/lodging is simply referred to as the Kabul Compound. It's a group of former private homes corralled inside Hesco barriers and concertina wire.

Everywhere there are signs of old, vibrant civilian life—tiled bathrooms, marble porches, a rose garden in the landscaped courtyard outside my office, a cou-

ple of sad, derelict swimming pools—evidence of a gracious way of life that hasn't existed around here for a quarter of a century. The new reality is this: inside, behind the curtains, you will find sandbags heaped on the windowsills.

I miss Bagram. Down here, there are few airmen (or sailors or marines); this joint environment seems to be almost exclusively army. Space is premium, with little privacy. We're expecting an influx of people to be part of the new command, and billeting is extremely tight. By the end of next week, there will be four people in my room (which fits three with minimum comfort) and fourteen on my floor with only one bathroom. Yes, I live in a building now, but I miss my tent.

We also lack central heating; the substitute appliance in my room glows like a small sun and warms us to a tropical 60 degrees when pushed to its limit. Ice on the sidewalks in the morning reminds us that worse is due, and I have gratefully unpacked my wool sweater and longjohns.

Still, it's interesting to be here at the hub of the wheel, though the workload will intensify accordingly. Two years after the overthrow of the Taliban government, our coalition force concentrates on rebuilding and stabilization. Condition-setting, if you want to look at it that way. What has to happen to establish an Afghanistan that offers a measure of security for its citizens? How can we help the process along, support the legal transitional government of Afghanistan, and gain the confidence of the Afghan people? They want the same as anyone for themselves and for their children: food, clean water, jobs, education, medical care.

They want a future; we have promised it to them, and we can't leave until—with their help—we lay the groundwork for it.

Reconstruction afterward is the hardest part of war but the most critical, because it impacts literally every person in this country. Part of the process is the rebuilding, but equally important is shifting the point-of-view of the people. They have to see the progress, but they also have to believe that their lives are changing for better and forever.

Consider our own Civil War. Reconstruction, one hundred forty years later, is still going on. We can't blame the Afghan people for being wary after twenty-five years of instability, and we can't become impatient ourselves when progress is slow. It's hindered in part by the reality that we must continue directed combat operations to rout the terrorists who don't want stability because it doesn't serve their cause—and thus continue to lob rockets at us and plant explosive devices in the roads to trap our vehicles.

We will disrupt the enemy and deny it sanctuary using the best intelligence we can glean, though there are tragic consequences sometimes, as you've surely read in the papers this week—the deaths of children in two separate incidents, as a result of our targeting operations.

The (other) big national news in country this week is the *loya jirga*, or grand assembly council meeting. Representatives from all thirty-two of Afghanistan's provinces are gathered here in Kabul to vote on the first-ever constitution for this country. Think about that for a minute.

A draft of the proposed document has been circulating for a couple of months as representatives struggle with devising a system of government that guarantees human rights for women as well as men yet remains true to the tenets and spirit of Islam. It's a fine line. Though our coalition is supportive, we can't create a constitution for the Afghan people. We can offer suggestions and even a model, but ultimately, they have to choose something they can live with, and they've never had to make such a thing before. Do the provincial representatives know that a curious world is watching?

The *loya jirga* will continue as long as necessary until its work is accomplished, and Kabul hums and buzzes, restless. We hold our breath, hopeful that no bombs or other violence will mar the occasion.

A couple of days ago, I had my first experience driving in this city. Afghans inherited the British tradition of right-hand-drive vehicles with everything reversed inside (try shifting with your left hand for a change, and see if you don't activate the windshield wipers every time you want to signal for a turn). However, the Afghans did *not* adopt the tradition of driving on the left side of the road. Traffic laws are generally ignored; other drivers seem to regard lights, signs, and lines on the road as mere suggestions. The roundabouts—traffic circles—are particularly harrowing.

The cracked, pockmarked roads are hazardous enough in the daytime and, after sundown, nearly impossible with no streetlights and the dusty air like fog. Even after dark, the streets are clogged with pedestrians, bikes, food vendors with carts, donkeys, and other cars. I could devise a particularly violent videogame with these ingredients.

I'm doing all right, I guess. I map the big things, like constitutional conventions and combat operations, but it's the little things—a laundry bag slowly filling up, the moon waning again, a lieutenant colonel at the breakfast table unexpectedly becoming less of a stranger—that really prove the passage of time.

Last month, I marked the birthday of a close friend who died over the summer. Half a world away, I'm still angry with him for going, and still miss him. My own birthday followed his, and a dreadful Thanksgiving spent escorting a television celebrity.

Christmas, with its traditional carols and neon-colored lights and promises for peace on earth, seems far away in this dusty land where we are considered the infidel. But Christmas will come, and the New Year too, promising all the fear and anger and disappointment you can crush into 365 days. But if you can pour in some hope and a little faith and keep strong, the rest won't matter so much.

* * *

At night, for a few minutes before bed, I make time for some reading, a brief escape from this place. Right now, for no reason other than the fact that it was handy, my book is a Louis L'Amour western called *The Quick and the Dead*. The hero—dark, laconic, lean, smart—appeals to me. Sam Elliott's handsome cowboy is on the cover, advertising a movie made from the novel.

I can't remember, when I was a kid, what I wanted to be when I grew up. Certainly the military was never part of the picture. But, seventeen years of Air Force later, having reluctantly grown up, I can say now that I want to be a cowboy. The job would fit me, solitary, thin and hungry and hard, mustached like a whiskbroom (or Sam Elliott), burnt brown from sun, horsebacking the wilderness.

Well, my job here at Combined Forces Command is deputy, a title with a hint of old-west flavor. Perhaps I should wear a star, a tin one, to go with my gun. I'm building the right-sized mustache, at least until somebody notices how far I've strayed from the regulation. And I would gladly trade my shapeless brown cap, camouflage pattern, desert, Class 2 (3-color) for a Stetson if I could get away with such insolence.

If you travel into the Afghanistan territory, particularly the troublesome spots, you can find "wanted" posters hanging on the walls and in the public squares for the most notorious of the Taliban and al Qaida leaders. The posters—provided by our coalition—spell out the grim details of criminal activity in two of the most common languages here, Dari and Pashtu.

There are tabs at the bottom of the posters with a phone number on them. If you have information to share, you can pull off a tab, take it with you, and place a call. It carries risk, certainly, but it could be worth your while if you know the right secrets. The price for Osama bin Laden and his sidekick Mullah Omar is $25 million.

The posters also spell out clearly that the money to be paid for these hombres is US dollars.

Here in Afghanistan, the search for these desperadoes continues. "The enemies of peace," we call them as we head for the new frontier. I lope through this dusty, desolate wilderness and wonder if this is not as close to cowboying as I will ever come.

1 Jan. 2004: RESOLVE

KABUL, Afghanistan—All is quiet. New Year's Day.

Only in the West do we celebrate the occasion on the first of January. In this culture, this community, the New Year begins sometime around our March.

I know nothing about their calendar. But then, so much of the culture here remains absolutely foreign to me.

We are the tourists.

We employ local Afghan men to work on our posts and camps. Hundreds every day, skilled (carpenters, masons, electricians) and unskilled. They work always under guard, a bored junior-ranked soldier or airman seated close by to keep an eye out for sedition. But there is none. The men need work and, in exchange, endure our ignorance.

Bearded black, swarthy, as thin and hard as want, their utter commonness in Afghanistan still seems exotic to me. They wear the traditional loose-fitting robe called a *khalat* and equally loose-fitting trousers that match; a rolled felt hat, a *pakol*; a patterned square scarf, and a fringed wool blanket that serves as cloak and protection from dust and winter's instructive cold.

I can't even speak to them beyond "salaam," which equals hello, and "tashakor," approximating thanks. The men will return my gaze but rarely my smile.

I watch them; they regard me with similar curiosity. Sometimes, guilty, I will show them my camera and raise my eyebrows, a mute question. May I? They shrug, nod. My greedy machine snaps the images with more clarity than I can decipher when I view the pictures later, each worth a thousand untranslatable words.

Their faces reflect the bewildering hard times they live in. They could be a hundred years old or a thousand, though many of those I see are probably younger than I. These are handsome men, dignified men, resigned to traveling a hard road. We have pledged something better. Schools, clinics, clean water, jobs, a stable and safe country, a viable national army that will protect it. The men mark the days—twenty-four hours by anyone's calendar—and wait for us to keep the promise.

No amount of book-learning will fill the chasm between what I understand about this place and what truly is.

Last night, the last of 2003, I had a long conversation with a brown-eyed Army-issue lieutenant colonel responsible for planning and building the medical capability for the whole Afghan National Army. His architecture is critical, of long-term consequence, and he describes it at length and with an urgency I have not often found here.

"A soldier who knows he's going to be cared for is willing to engage an enemy," he says. Effective combat medicine ensures that a wounded soldier will be treated—"fixed"—and returned to duty, he says, and if we can do that, we've earned a significant victory: an army capable of sustaining itself. He worries about funding. He worries about lack of resources. But he cares passionately about what he's doing and believes in it implicitly. Such concern is fuel for progress.

I have breakfasted with him quietly on several occasions and never guessed

he had so many words in him. His hopefulness is contagious; his commitment inspires me to strive for the same end: to make a difference because it needs to be made. I can think of no better way to begin a new year.

* * *

Late night, walking down the street in the cold dark, I pass a man whistling the "Dick Van Dyke Show" theme from—when? Thirty-five years ago? I don't know if I am more startled by the tune or the fact that I can readily identify it. Either way, I have to stop for a second and remind myself that I am, in fact, still in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Unexpected snow comes down; I skim enough of it from the fire escape of my building to make a wet ball and wish there were someone friendly to hit with it. But perhaps I have battles enough to fight. Tomorrow I will skid on wet sidewalks, but tonight the snow seems a little like music, notes high and soft, a coda for the end of a year and a suitable overture for the start of another.

Come midnight, I wonder if I should call my mother and dad, nearly ten hours behind, and put their minds at ease a little. Tell them everything will be okay. I know, because I'm calling from the future, see. It's already tomorrow on this side of the world. I could tell them, You're going to make it—2004 will really come.

I may not remember most of the New Year's Eves in my life; they will, most of them, blur one into the next, with little to distinguish any of them.

But I will always remember this one.

14 Feb. 2004: HEART

KABUL, Afghanistan—The calendar tells me it is Valentine's Day back home.

Here, I take heart. Looking backward, I see how quickly five months passed. Now my replacement is due in four weeks and I will remain a fortnight beyond that to train her and then disappear, my adventure coming to an end.

As of early January, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan has officially taken over command of the US-led coalition forces in Kabul. The activation of this new joint-service command signals a strategic change in our ongoing efforts to ensure a stable and secure future for Afghanistan—critical, if we are ever to go home. Nineteen different nations make up our coalition just now, and they share our goal.

Under Combined Forces Command, coalition military operations here will take on a new form, according to our commander, US Army Lt. Gen. David W. Barno. In his speech at the activation ceremony, the general said that the coalition's primary focus will shift to reconstruction and setting conditions for long-term security.

He also said recently that we will capture Osama bin Laden this year, a tall

order. That means the combat operations will continue as necessary, because one of the conditions for enduring security is neutralization of the threat posed by the Taliban and al Qaida.

I remain busier than ever, working longer days to less effect, it seems. It can discourage. A friend here has said that we should ask ourselves this at the close of every day: "What have I done to make a difference for the people of Afghanistan?" Most nights, sadly, I don't know how to answer the question.

Part of my work involves drafting what we refer to as "talking points," concise comments and statistics related to various facets of our mission here. Built for speed and efficiency, these talking points are thumbtacked efficiently into speeches and news releases: sound bites.

The talking points are based on a variety of sources, including previous interviews given by the general, remarks made by the Secretary of Defense or the US Ambassador to Afghanistan, current events, casual conversation, common sense, luck, and imagination (a co-worker says "don't forget the Magic 8 Ball and the Ouija Board").

My complete document of talking points on a variety of topics—reconstruction, combat, Taliban threats, Osama bin Laden, opium poppy production, and more—runs dozens of pages at this point. It's quite unwieldy, and when the general has an interview, I extract from the master document those topics that we think are likely to come up, a refresher for him as he prepares to engage the reporter.

Last week I spent a couple of days at my old home, Bagram, taking care of some business. The air base seems strange now. I recognize very few faces. And there is so much new construction, the smell of cut plywood and wet cement competing with the dust in the air.

I took advantage of my overnight at Bagram to run the perimeter road around the airfield, about seven miles altogether, and I set off around 5 p.m. specifically because the sun was beginning its set, which bathes the magnificent mountains with lavender-and-rose-colored optimism.

About six miles into my run, I was stopped by the flashing blue light of a military police "humvee." Recent rain had washed away some of the dirt-and-gravel road, revealing a landmine right in the middle of the passage. The cops detonated it in place as I watched in the dim light.

After the all-clear, I continued running, a little shaken up. How many times had I—and hundreds of others—run along this road? How many vehicles had driven through the dusty gravel? The edges of the road are marked with barbed wire hung with trouble-orange triangles that warn "MINE!" (which makes these devices seem strangely possessive)—and common knowledge dictates that you remain faithful to the well-traveled road. Safe or not, we cross our fingers and run on.

Two suicide bombers got lucky last week here in Kabul on consecutive days.

One Canadian and one British soldier were killed, as well as several Afghan citizens. And an additional dozen wounded. Such things serve as reminders of where we are. There is progress all over the place. And people all over the place who want to stop progress.

Disappointingly, I have seen very little of the country in five months. Apart from numerous short spurts of local travel—from here to the Embassy, from here to the International Security Assistance Force Headquarters, from here to Camp Phoenix or the Afghan National Army Training Center at the village of Pol-e-Charki and occasionally Bagram—I am bound to this crowded cluster of walled-in houses, this urban fort.

Our little compound grows more crowded, an influx of new people every week as Combined Forces Command expands. I've shifted offices twice and living quarters twice. Privacy is still premium; I'm torn between wanting some time (and space) entirely for myself and some time to share with the handful of others I've met here whom I'd like to know, like to learn from.

We need both. Situation dictates settling for neither.

Our compound contains one stray dog, tuxedo-colored and friendly. I feed her the leftovers after my meals. And—too many to count—we have cats, the noisiest and most fretful I've ever heard, yowling under the nights and days.

Early this week, we had the biggest snowfall Kabul has seen in a decade, according to one of our local interpreters. Probably about seven or eight inches altogether over two days, and great fun while it lasted. I even skipped lunch one day to build a snowman.

Afghan snowflakes on your tongue taste remarkably like the homegrown kind.

By the third day, however, the temperature warmed up considerably, and the compound has turned into a swamp of mud and slush. It freezes overnight, only to thaw again and annoy the next day. I would characterize the weather as cranky right now. It suits my mood.

I begin to think ahead to my end of tour, about boxing up much of my gear and sending it back to 4th Air Force in California so that I don't have to drag it halfway around the world. It's still too early, though. I need to concentrate on what's here now, because there is still work to do before my departure.

My active-duty counterparts grumble about being extended as our military resources are stretched thinner and thinner across Iraq and Afghanistan and pockets elsewhere. Iraq—roughly the size of California—has 100,000 US troops. Afghanistan—roughly the size of Texas, about 100,000 square miles larger—has little more than one-tenth that amount.

Janet Jackson's "wardrobe malfunction" during the Super Bowl halftime show has gotten more news coverage lately than our mission here. We were, however, featured on *60 Minutes II* this week, and Tom Brokaw stayed with us for a couple of days, reporting for *NBC Nightly News*.

Operation Enduring Freedom continues. We're working with our international partners to remove the causes that enabled terrorism to take root in Afghanistan in the first place. We are committed to standing firm with the Afghan people against those working actively to prevent the establishment of security.

Afghanistan has been at war for nearly a quarter of a century. It's easier to destroy than rebuild. Such rebuilding must be done right, and doing things right takes time. Reconstruction is perhaps the most critical part of our mission because it impacts every citizen of the country. We're placing special emphasis on concrete, visible programs that will demonstrate conclusively to the Afghan people that their lives are improving.

The Taliban and al Qaida are enemies of progress, enemies of the future. The fact that they continue to go after soft targets—such as the recent suicide bombings in Kandahar City that killed innocent civilians, including women and children—indicates that they are either desperate or afraid to attack the coalition directly.

We will continue to engage in specifically targeted combat operations as necessary to destroy, disrupt, and deny sanctuary to the enemies of Afghanistan.

Okay, they're "talking points." But they explain a little of what we're trying to do here, in case you were wondering.

25 Feb. 2004: TITANIC

KABUL, Afghanistan—I am on guard, 0400 to 0800.

We augment the security forces here by pulling guard duty at night sometimes, in one of the posts on the edge of the compound. Your qualification for duty is nothing more than rank. If you don't have enough, you're added to the roster.

Unlike many of my co-workers, I do not view this task as penance. I look forward to it, in fact, and my favorite shift is the 4-to-8 because it bridges night and day. A little sleep beforehand and a cup of coffee, and I'm fueled and ready.

That's me one recent frigid night with my flak vest and helmet and mug, climbing the stairs to Outpost 7, a tin rectangular box with windows all around that give me a view of my portion of the compound and the unknown street outside. The windows are tinted; I can see out but others can't see in. The only light in the place wears a dark red cover, casting a shadowy tint over everything. I feel as if I am in a photographic darkroom.

There is more to the task of guarding than one might think. It is responsibility of a sort I am unaccustomed to here. I can look after myself, but now I am charged with looking out for everyone else.

A three-ring binder full of official-looking correspondence and maps spells out the directions, the first being to use common sense. Fine, and why not? But the rules after that are harder to follow. Defend yourself against hostile intent.

Use only that amount of force that is necessary and proportional to the threat. Treat all persons with dignity and respect.

Obey the law of war.

There is an automatic rifle on the table as well; it's been years since I fired such a weapon, and I review the instructions and examine the diagram posted by it and hope that I will not be tested.

A thin slice of moon, maybe a dime's worth, hangs in a sky streaked deep blue. There are no streetlamps, but we have positioned mercury lights amid the concertina wire unrolled atop the Hesco barriers that mark our territory, lights harsh as cops asking questions of recalcitrant suspects, lights to antagonize the darkness and render it sullen.

I pace from one end of my box to the other and slide the windows open to lean out into the forbidden street. I know all about curiosity and cats, but I want to see, unfiltered.

Dim lights make distant windows glow. Who would be up and awake this late, and why? The only sound outside—and it keeps on, down the nights and days, white noise—is the hum of generators that power the camp's fierce electrical demands. An occasional vehicle passes below.

Otherwise, I have for companionship a little radio manufactured by the Grundig Company, its model FR-200, AM/FM/Shortwave World Band Receiver radio. Now, here is an ingenious piece of equipment. This little box—perhaps six inches square and two inches deep—has a built-in magneto and a small hand crank, and ninety seconds of vigorous rotation will win you about an hour's worth of power. (The radio also runs by batteries, but who would bother? That's no fun.) It's even got a flashlight built in, and a carrying handle.

Our coalition has its own radio station and its own transmitters. The broadcasts, however, are not intended for us but for the people of Afghanistan. "Peace Radio" goes out via shortwave, covering a large portion of the country, no small feat, considering the unfriendly terrain. And perhaps the content includes propaganda, but the persuasive messages—get along with each other, be careful of landmines, that sort of thing—are not intended to cause harm. They are broadcast in the local languages amid the music programming.

We have given out those Grundigs by the tens of thousands in this country. The people here do not read much, and few have electricity, let alone TV. So if you have a message, you'd better have a means of conveyance too, if you want anyone to tune in.

The Taliban banned all forms of non-religious music. Can you imagine a government that would deny music to its people? Imagine if the soundtrack for your life were a crime.

Now, even at 4 a.m., there are stations broadcasting in Kabul. In addition to several local outlets, the BBC also comes through loud and clear, clipped British

accents discussing the news. But I get enough news elsewhere and settle for one of the local stations instead.

I keep the radio on low. The music, for all its obvious foreignness, still sounds mostly comfortable to my western-trained ears. Pick out patterns, verses and choruses, and musical shapes emerge. Only the vocals sound truly exotic.

I reckon the songs are about love, what it feels like to give or get, or not give or get, because that's mostly what all pop songs are about, and the station plays one after another, without even a break in between to identify the artists.

Unexpectedly—inexplicably—amid all this, the station plays a lone American tune. I recognize it as the theme song for a movie that came out a few years back about the first and last voyage of a huge passenger ship. Virtually everyone in the universe saw the film except me, but even so, the song was inescapable.

It's a lament, a song about loss crosshatched with hope. For the first time, I listen to the lyrics all the way through. "I loved you," the song says. Now you are gone, for reasons left unclear. But "near, far, wherever you are, I believe that the heart will go on." And if it's so predictably maudlin, why do I feel such overwhelming sadness all of a sudden?

Indistinct stars fade and morning creeps in, unaware, like a stranger tapping you on the shoulder from behind, and—thus startled—you turn to look. The light reluctantly gives shape to the walls and buildings.

A city wakes up on a cold morning like a middle-aged man. Like me.

We stretch, cautious, so that nothing snaps, shivering a little. Days like these, you can see your breath in the air, proof of life. But the frigid air serves as a warning, too, as if breathing in too deeply will freeze your plumbing.

There is such honest potential in mornings, precisely at that moment before the day decides how it's going to be. It is the most hopeful time.

In this Islamic country, the call for prayer punctuates the day. The first comes at dawn, and when I hear it begin to echo from town, I turn off my Grundig to listen to the keening urgency of the call. It bounces from one mosque loudspeaker (for they all have bullhorns affixed to their towers) to another, as if the clocks are all slightly out of time—dueling voices from distant corners.

I have no idea what is being chanted and only know that it reminds the faithful to stop what they are doing for a minute and give thanks. Who could not use such a reminder?

More light lets the details of this world gradually come into view. A flock of black birds settles into a bare tree and then just as suddenly scatters, whisper to scream, and flies. Outside, I hear muffled voices, a dog, a door slamming shut. More cars. Pedestrians, moving briskly.

Soldiers from the Afghan National Army—a company, perhaps—run down the street, recognizable by their bright green berets and dark green camouflage uniforms (I wonder why ours are brown). Some look up and see me. "Salaam!" I

shout down. They wave and grin and shout back.

Gradually, the bicycles appear, some with two or three riders, all wrapped up in blankets against the cold. They are all men; some are in western dress, others in more traditional garb. Among the dozens who pass, I see no women at all.

A blue corrugated tin box across the street is not, as I had surmised, some kind of trash bin or storage container but a stop-and-go. Its shopkeep arrives, folds up the side and props it up, and he's open for business, offering cigarettes and soda and packaged food.

The street breathes to life quicker than the camp behind me, inside the fence. There are hints: the scent of frying bacon (more proof of our blundering infidel status: pork) blows from the dining hall's exhaust fan. A few people head for breakfast, though the compound—at least in my corner—remains mostly still.

Outside the wall, the locals ride or hike through their neighborhood, indifferent to our patchwork fort as if it is of no consequence. Perhaps, after a quarter century of fighting, they are inured to signs of war. The pockmarked wall across the street from me and the building protected by that wall both show evidence of bullets and shelling from years past. Two years ago? Thirty? Either could be the case.

One of these days, perhaps, they will mend the wall with some confidence that it will be the last time such repair is required.

No metaphor is quite large enough for the scale of what we're doing in Afghanistan. We can't afford complacency. Can't afford arrogance. We push on, navigating these treacherous, uncharted waters as best we can, anxiously scanning the horizons for such icebergs as may come.

Once my shift is over, I will have a little breakfast myself and then take up some work I am more suited for than this. I have that song running through my head.

There will be torches for you to carry through your life. Choose wisely and tend the important fires. Remain on guard. Heart will go on.

2 March 2004: SOLD

KABUL, Afghanistan—The war stops on alternate Fridays for the bazaar. Local vendors offer local products for sale to our captive audience of US service members.

Since we are forbidden from shopping in town—it's a force-protection concern, as are most issues related to privileges—we have little choice, and the bazaar is eagerly anticipated. Shopping, even in an exotic place such as this, reminds us a little of home, or at least of habits that we associate with home.

Cars clear Front Street on bazaar Fridays, and the vendors come early to claim choice spots to display their wares. The official starting time is 10 o'clock, but sales begin as soon as customers begin filing out of the compound,

intent, wallets fortified by recently cashed checks.

There are few rules. Apart from *caveat emptor*, the primary one is that, if you buy in quantity, you are a preferred customer. Every salesman has learned to say "for you, my friend, a special price," but once a vendor knows you, he generally will give you a better deal.

The one vendor who knows me sells rugs: Zamir has been in business for twenty-two years. I am a repeat customer, having purchased his rugs to send home for my mother and sisters. I've also recommended him to my co-workers shopping for Afghan rugs, and he appreciates my endorsement. He and a partner own a shop in town, and they bring several hundred of their finest specimens to the bazaar on these alternate Fridays.

Zamir is not handsome but there is something electric-charged about him that is most persuasive, an ideal quality for a salesman. He is as bearded, brown-eyed, thin as chance and just as wiry, dressed in the traditional garb of the loose-fitting trousers and matching overgarment. I estimate his age in the middle fifties. And his English is not bad, another useful trait for a salesman here.

And, as I am his friend, he invites me to sit down with him this warm day. "Tea?" Yes. Thank you. He fills a clear glass mug with steaming golden liquid from a thermos. "Sugar?" I decline, but he insists and pours in far too much.

We sit in the shade of his well-stocked rug display. Piles of rugs, several hundred, neatly folded, various sizes, every one patterned differently, colors as rich as stained glass: burgundy, emerald, gold, indigo. Sheep's wool. Camel's wool. Silk. Silk and wool mixed. Rugs long or narrow, square, rectangular, folded and stacked.

Some shoppers know how to look at the back of the rug and see how tight the weave is. They can judge the technique and the quality, make an objective assessment of the value, and determine the size of the bargain based on the selling price.

But how many thousands of hours are represented in the knots that equal a rug? What history and traditions are betrayed or celebrated by the pattern? From what part of the country has it come? Who made this tapestry, and at what cost—personal or otherwise? But such questions do not concern our clientele. This market for buying and selling, and its central idea is getting the Best 4 Less.

The culture here demands dickering over cost, but it's exasperating; I—and there are others like me—would prefer simply to get a fair price without haggling. But that won't do here. And many customers at the bazaar believe inherently that the vendors' primary aim is to shortchange unwitting Americans, so they employ rudeness and suspicion as negotiating tools.

(I recently watched a lieutenant colonel argue with a seller over an amount equal to thirty cents in US funds. How can an officer in the United States military have so little sense of proportion?)

Apologetically, Zamir leaves my side to dicker with a prospective customer whose size and bulk and tiny beard mark him as one of the numberless civilians here filling positions as private contractors or as employees in our dining halls or other offices.

This customer has his eye on a large, handmade silk rug. Zamir asks $2,000 for it, but the customer insists that he had been quoted a price of $1,800 that morning.

Zamir demurs. The customer, I think, knows the price is fair, but admitting as much simply won't do. Instead, he berates, curses, insults. ("You must be on f—ing crack if you think I'll pay that much.") He starts to swagger away, certain—I think—that Zamir will call him back and agree, docile, to the lower price. But Zamir does not, and the man stalks off.

It is a risk. Quite possibly, he has noted the identification number written on Zamir's hand with a marking pen. The man could go right to the military police and generate some unpleasantness, accusing Vendor #39 of trying to rip him off.

But inwardly I cheer Zamir's willingness to stand ground against the ugly man. I am glad he's not serving in our military, but I wonder if the citizens of Afghanistan make such distinctions. Perhaps they simply regard all of us generically as "Americans." All ugly.

Zamir sits by me again and we sip our tea. I apologize for the man's behavior. Zamir shrugs. "God grants us the gift of speaking good words to one another," he says (I paraphrase), but it's our choice to use this gift or not. Hearing good words is like receiving a million dollars, he says, a generous image.

Zamir tells me that he used to be a soldier in the Afghan army, fighting the Russians who occupied the country for more than a decade. He would have been a young man then. He prefers selling rugs. "Twenty-two years war," he says.

"But never again," I say.

He shrugs. He won't argue, but I know he's skeptical. However, it is too nice a day for such talk. "Sunny day," he says. "Smiling. Friends. Good conversation." He holds up one finger, making a point. "Sweet," he says, nodding. Like our tea.

Curious, I ask Zamir his age and am startled to hear that he is but forty-four, only a year older than I. He is married with eight children. Four boys, four girls, he says. "A big family, ten," he says. He realizes his luck, being able to make a living here.

He is startled that I remain unmarried at my age. Why not? he demands. Not met the right girl? That's as good an answer as any. He shakes his head. He wonders why I should be so particular.

He scoffs at all the soldiers who look at carpets, take photos, tell him "I have to ask my wife first." In Afghanistan, Zamir says, a man brings home a rug and puts it on the floor and there is no discussion.

I ask if he has registered to vote. "Three weeks ago," he says. He's looking at

the candidates, uncertain that he will support Hamid Karzai, who has run the transitional government since the emergency election held in 2001—and who is expected to be the only viable candidate by default, though others (including one brave woman) have formed political parties and declared their intent to run.

Zamir has seen little improvement in the two years since Karzai has been in power, he says. So, wisely, he will consider the candidates and make an informed choice.

I forget to ask Zamir if his wife has also registered to vote.

He happily poses for some photos for me. They look forced, unnatural. Later, when he's not looking at me, I will take a few others that capture a little of his hunger.

Elsewhere around the bazaar, children sell postcards of Afghanistan sights that I will never see and some that no longer exist, like the gigantic Buddhas of Bamian that were destroyed by the Taliban. The postcards are as aggressively, artificially cheerful as the boys who hawk them.

Bootleg digital video discs are extremely popular, and dueling vendors hawk them to our eager customers by the thousands; after all, copyright is of no consequence here. The lone woman vending this day offers lovely handmade lace, scarves, shawls, table runners—too beautiful for our crowd—and she sells but little.

All invite you to look. Costs nothing, they urge, hopeful. And perhaps you will buy. Marble chess sets or tea sets in startling colors that look as if they were jigsawed together, turn-of-the-century rifles and cavalry swords, garish velour blankets (very popular), hats, silks, varnished wooden chests, old coins and bills. Improbably, a tuba. Caricatures of traditional costumes for buyers who will not know the difference.

You want a western-style tailored suit? A couple minutes of measuring, then you choose a fabric, and it will be made to your specifications for $60—$50 if you bargain well, or buy more than one. There will even be extra buttons sewn on the inside of the coat in case you lose one. All the pockets will be functional too, not merely decorative.

If you can't find what you want in this dominion of buy and sell, ask, and one vendor or another can probably have it for you next time. Someone jokes that the whole country can be had for a nominal price. But dignity is not for sale, nor is the soul. And the US dollar will buy nearly anything these days but respect.

At the end of the day, I hope our dollars make a difference. I hope we are encouraging honest work, promoting commerce, feeding families.

Once home, these souvenirs—these rugs, these wooden chests, these blankets and leather jackets and postcards—will remind us that we served in Afghanistan. That we tried to make a difference.

2 April 2004: FLIGHT

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan—On the back road this sunny afternoon, I am flying a kite.

I arrived a couple of days ago at my old home, Bagram, gone for good from Kabul, in the status referred to as "awaiting transportation"—a seat on a flight heading in the direction I want to go, which is homeward. In the meantime, I have a sunny, dusty afternoon free and a kite.

What would you do?

This kite came from the International Security Assistance Force, which operates in Kabul, separate from Operation Enduring Freedom.

We fight as necessary. ISAF is our opposite, a peacekeeping force, troops from approximately thirty nations serving as police. Earlier this year, ISAF began cautiously extending its influence beyond Kabul. How far it will spread into the other thirty-one provinces of Afghanistan is unknown. Many, many more troops will be needed from weary contributing nations (or from other, fresh participants) if this expansion is to happen.

But I am not thinking of such things on this sunny, dusty afternoon.

ISAF's kites are trisected into black and green and red, the shades of Afghanistan's flag. In the center of the kite, outlined in white, is a dove and (very small) the ISAF logo and a sentiment—I don't know what—written in Dari. Two bright yellow streamers make the kite's tail.

I'm accustomed to kites that are shaped like, well, kites, a paper diamond with crossed sticks and a long knotted-rag tail. But the ISAF kite is made of some kind of sturdy fabric-like plastic, I guess, and it's more or less square. It has no sticks, but it has pockets built into each side of it that catch air. I'm skeptical but determined to try it anyway.

I run a couple of miles down the perimeter road, past the power lines (which, I recall, tempt kites) and out to a deserted stretch. I unfold the kite and tie the string to it and, without ceremony, offer it to the wind, and it goes up.

It is a good day for up.

Air Force pilots make much of slipping the surly bonds of earth. I am not a pilot, but attach your soul and imagination to a kite in the wind and blue sunny sky, and I believe you can accomplish the same result. A kite rising takes your spirit with it.

The wind—and it's a good, strong wind with mischief on its mind—likes this kite, and I'm pleased and surprised at how easily it rises, tugging persistently and persuasively on the string as I unroll more and more.

Kite-flying is hardly an everyday occurrence at Bagram. I wonder if I am violating airspace by sending this one skyward. Three helicopters take off, and I suppose it is possible that a high-enough kite could pose some sort of hazard, but our birds steer clear of me—or I of them.

Runners, single or in pairs, trot past. Everyone notices what I'm doing; most offer a grin or a thumbs-up. I assume someone will come along at some point and tell me to stop, but I decide to continue at least until ordered otherwise.

The kite bobs and dips occasionally, but mostly it just aims higher. Sometimes it loops downward, catches itself and struggles back up, regaining lost lift. One time, however, it begins its dive and can't recover and continues downward to the ground. With no sticks, at least, the kite sustains no damage from its impact with the dirt.

I should say that the whole length of the road back here is fenced on both sides, barbed wire with ubiquitous red "minefield" triangles. Some of the land, of course, actually is mined. Some of it simply hasn't been cleared, so it's unknown whether there are explosive devices buried in it or not.

The Soviets mined the place years ago, and they thoughtfully put up posts, rows of them, in the ground to identify the path. The posts are distinctive, reminding me of giant erector-set girders shoved into the ground. Such a fence surely kept away anyone who might have attempted to infiltrate along its line. It's certainly kept us away. One would be ill-advised to trailblaze.

After the kite goes down, I carefully begin rewinding the string. It's snagged in the concertina wire, and the kite itself appears to be tangled in a bush. With some coaxing and gentle tugging, I get the kite into the breeze again and it flies itself out of the minefield. I'm relieved.

My kite soars over the rusted hull of a MIG fighter, over piles of twisted, corrugated iron, skeletons of trucks, scattered scrap and ghosts. Even years later, quietly rusting under the harmless sun and blue sky, these tons of scrap metal suggest the cost of war.

On the other side of the road are the remains of mud-brick structures that were surely houses in the not-distant past, though their current condition makes them look like the ruins of an ancient civilization.

There is, not far from our road, a whole settlement that appears abandoned, broken and empty windows and no color. I've run by it numerous times and seen no signs of life until this evening (it's around 5 p.m.). I can hear, quite distinctly, the call for prayer from within the settlement. I locate the bullhorn speaker atop its mosque.

As I continue my kite-flying, I also hear the voices of children playing. Their squealing and shrieking—only children can hit such pitches—carry across the coming dusk.

The Taliban outlawed kites. Too frivolous. Imagine. In town today, riding through Kabul, you can see children flying kites now because they can. We forget sometimes that genuine progress is measured in small increments.

Once the sun begins setting behind the mountains, I decide it's time to quit. The wind is reluctant to let go of my kite, but slowly, I rein it in and begin my

jog back to the main camp. I round the corner at the closest point to the settlement and spot two young boys waiting there, probably not more than five or six years old. They point excitedly and chatter. I don't have to guess why they're so interested. I guess they saw it in the air. Saw me holding on at the other end of the string.

Three coiled strands of concertina wire separate us. I fold the kite securely and toss it neatly over the barricade. The boys pounce, tussle; one of them triumphs and holds the prize aloft. They run off together and don't look back at me, but I suspect they had the thing in the air within a couple of minutes, riding the coat-tail of daylight.

Kites are for children after all. I hope the boys have as much luck as I did making it fly. Maybe they will know someone who can read the Dari message on the kite and derive some encouragement from it. But if the dove depicted on the kite stands for nothing more than two Afghan boys having some fun for a day or two, perhaps no other significance is necessary.

7 April 2004: STRAY

WASHINGTON DC—Thinking back, for all my anticipation of the last day in the Kabul compound, I met it cautiously.

On that last day, I breakfasted with a friend not given to much talk, my Army lieutenant-colonel medic. Afterward, we hiked to his office building and stood in the sun outside for a few minutes, quiet. I wanted to tell him that I'd met too few people like him here: hungry, obstinate, hard-working longshots who believed they could change a world.

I don't think I told him. And since—how could I let him know I would miss him?—I didn't tell him that, either.

I remember my final trip from Kabul to Bagram, four duffel bags and a backpack, thirty kilometers of road and me, trying to take everything in for one last time.

Did the other passengers in our little convoy notice that spring has begun its cautious descent into this land? Suddenly, against the beige and black of the landscape, there is green, the color of hope.

The nomad tribes have returned, another sign of spring. They winter in the warmer south (we do the same in the United States!) but—tent dwellers—theirs is an urge for survival rather than the luxury of mere comfort. Their homes are patchwork, faded, pieced together from canvas augmented with blankets.

Some of these tents wear "UNHCR" in faded letters—the United Nations High Commission for Refugees—and all sit low to the ground, pitched and staked in the lee of ledges, in gorges or in the shelter of a large rock formation. Protection from the wind whipping across flat land unencumbered by trees.

The nomads, old and young, tend their precious stock. Their very lives depend

on these sheep and rams, donkeys, goats, and camels scavenging in the scrub foliage, nibbling away the new green. I wonder about these nomads, whose lives are eaten up with survival from one day, one season, to the next. Do they perceive their days as long, their lot difficult? Their lives as something potentially malleable or unchangeable? Or is it just how things are?

After a couple of days' wait, I caught a Black Hawk helicopter flight out of Bagram for Kandahar in the south. En route, the sky wrote its own Eugene O'Neill play, full of drama and color and man-versus-nature. A furious dust storm finally enlivened a long day spent waiting at the terminal for a flight delayed, then canceled, and its follow-on that put me in Kyrgyzstan, one step closer.

At Manas Air Base, near Kyrgyzstan's capital city, Bishkek, I waited for the rotator flight home, four days (was it five?) in stasis, like suspension in chemical solution. The dreadful twenty-eight hours elapsed between Manas and the Baltimore-Washington airport are not worth detailing any more than these twenty-eight words it takes to mention.

And now I am home again with thousands of photographs that no one will ever ask to see. I am home looking for news of Operation Enduring Freedom in the newspaper, but there is none, because we remain very much the "other war." People still need to be reminded that we have troops and a commitment in Afghanistan.

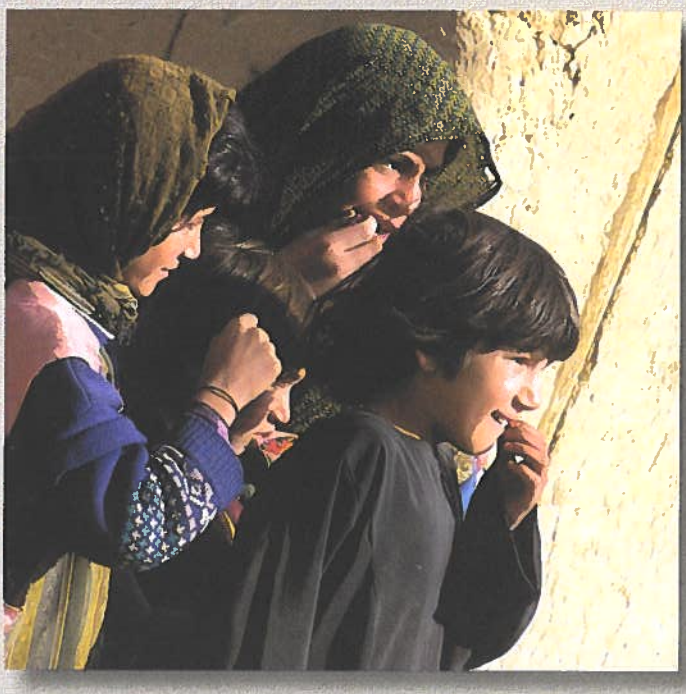
The end of a deployment always marks a change. Imagine driving a hundred miles an hour and then suddenly downshifting into first gear. For a reservist, assimilating into civilian life again is like that. I am expected, instantly, to pick up a mongrel life where I left it off: paying the electric bill and buying groceries and working from 9 to 5 with an hour for lunch and weekends off. No wonder I feel out-of-sync. (I do happily reacquaint myself with fresh milk, butter, and real cheese, however.)

People ask politely about my experience in Afghanistan and expect a concise answer. They have neither the time nor the frame of reference for an in-depth reply. I don't know what to say.

Stray, eagerly anticipated E-mails from a handful of friends still in Kabul remind me of the distance from there to here.

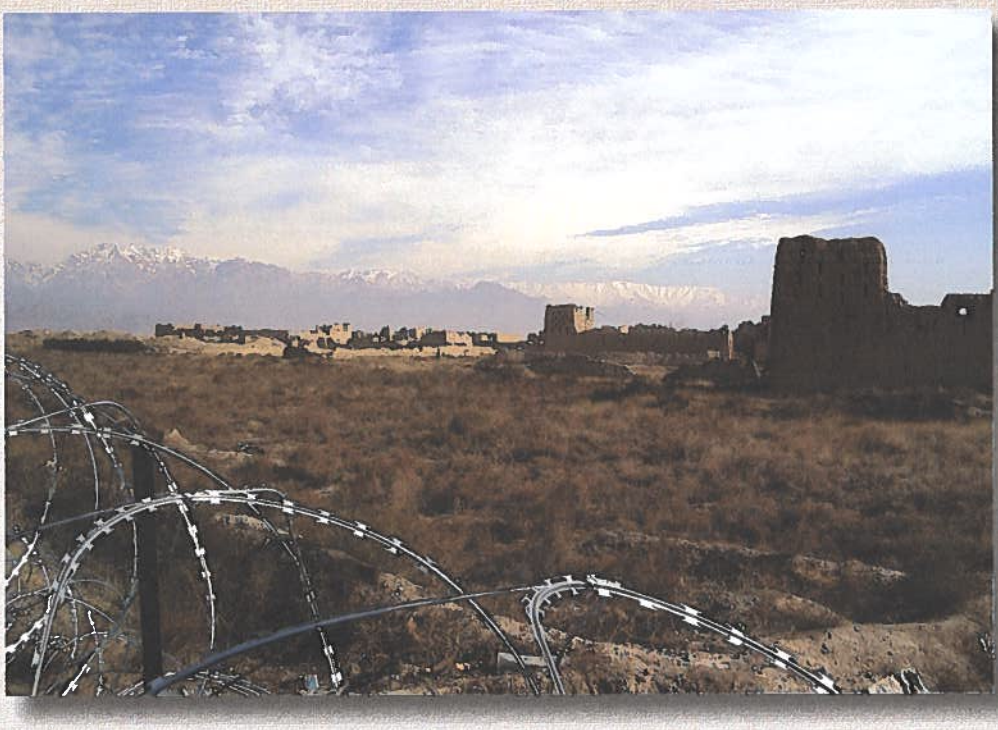
I realize I know more about Afghanistan than I will ever know.

Air Force Reserve Major Richard C. Sater was activated for a one-year tour of duty in support of the war on terrorism in May 2003. He was initially assigned to 4th Air Force, March Air Reserve Base, California. In September 2003, he deployed to Afghanistan for seven months in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, assigned first to Combined Joint Task Force 180 at Bagram Air Base; and later to Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, Kabul. He kept a journal during the deployment, from which the preceeding is extracted. On the civilian side, he has been a college professor of English and the arts and a classical music announcer for a National Public Radio affiliate station. He currently resides in Millfield, Ohio.

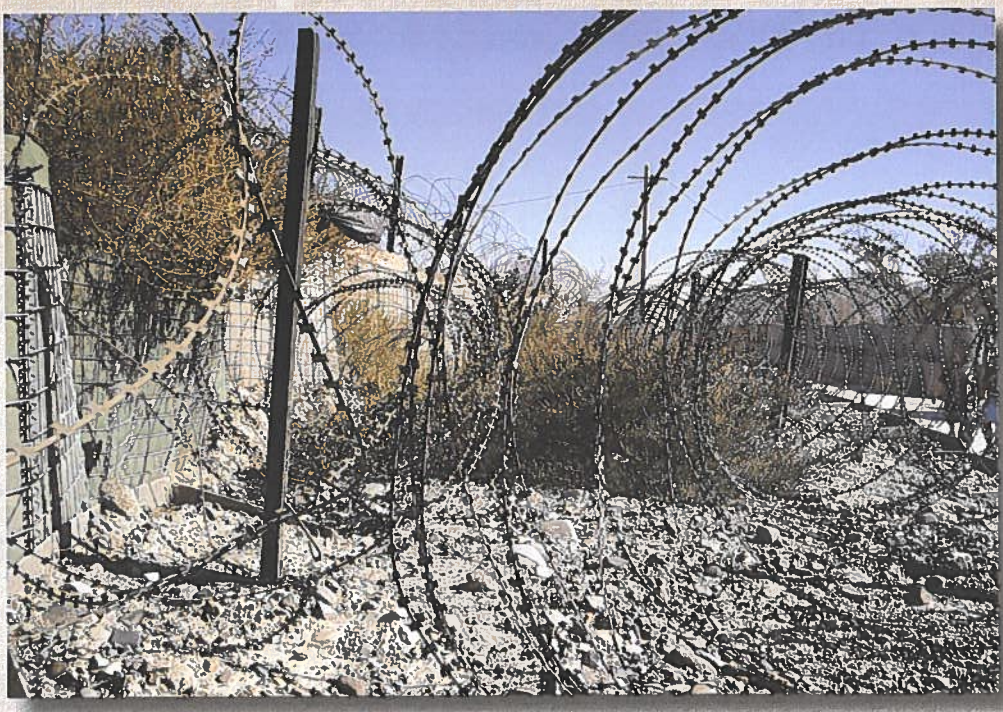


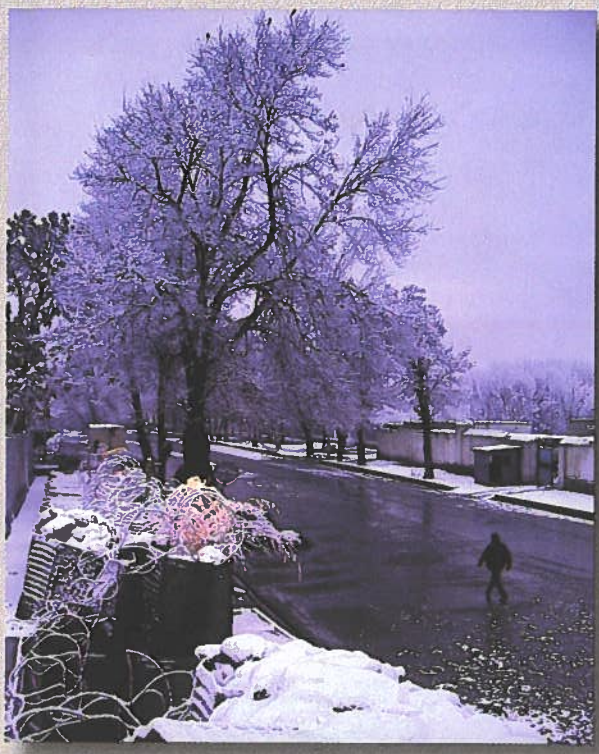


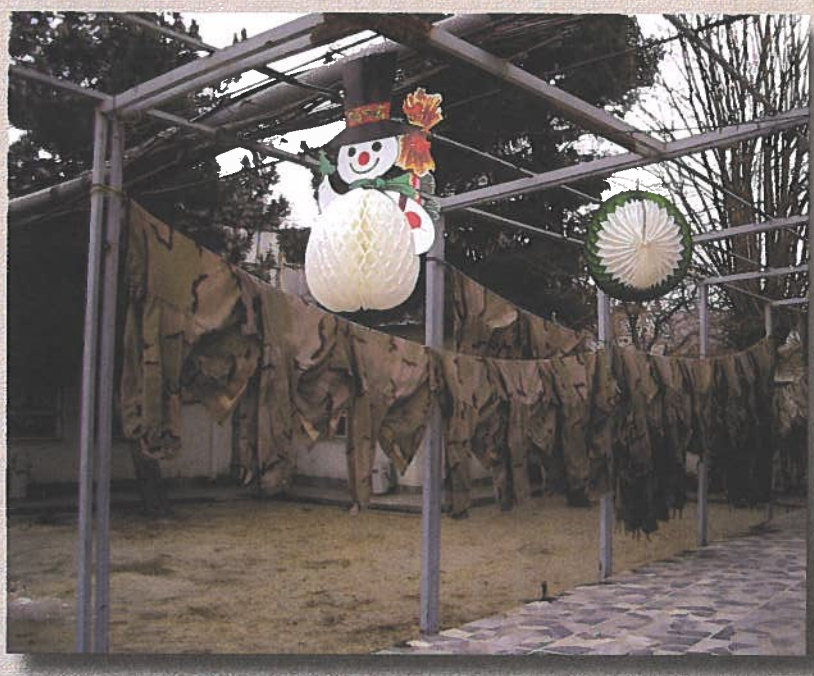


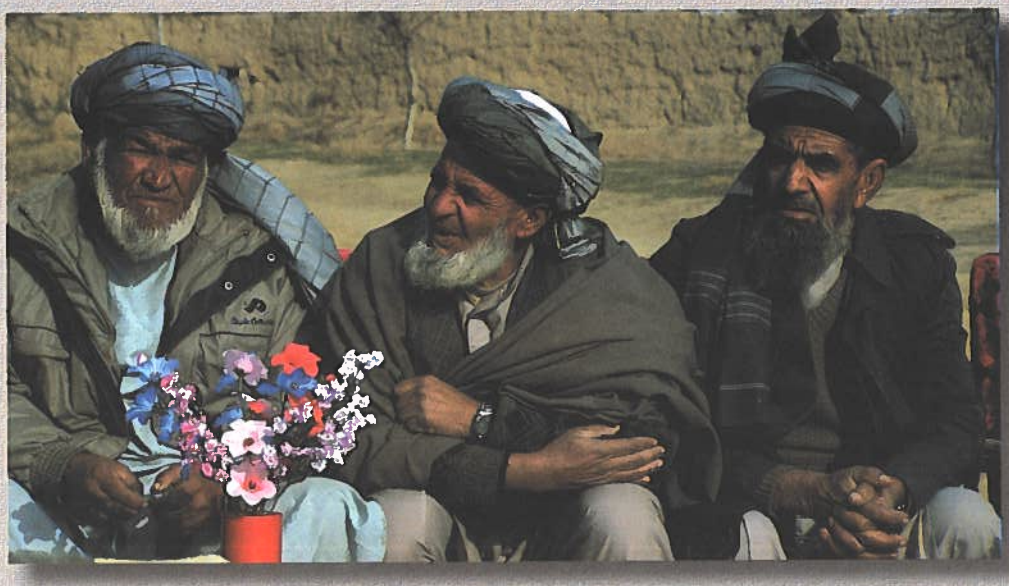


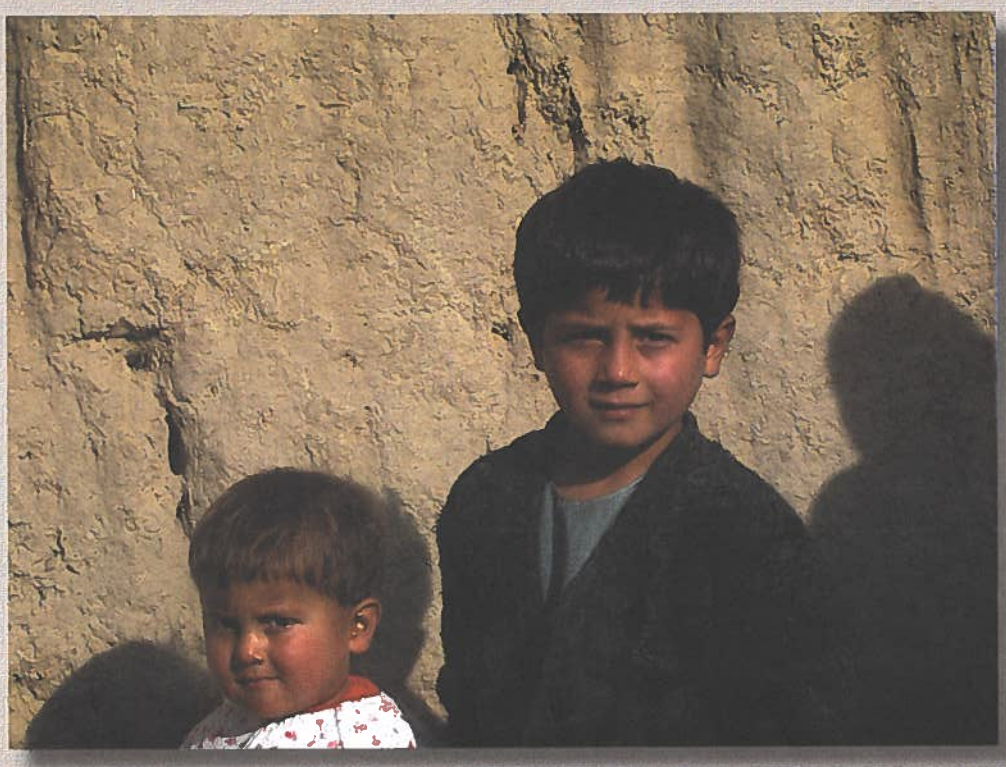


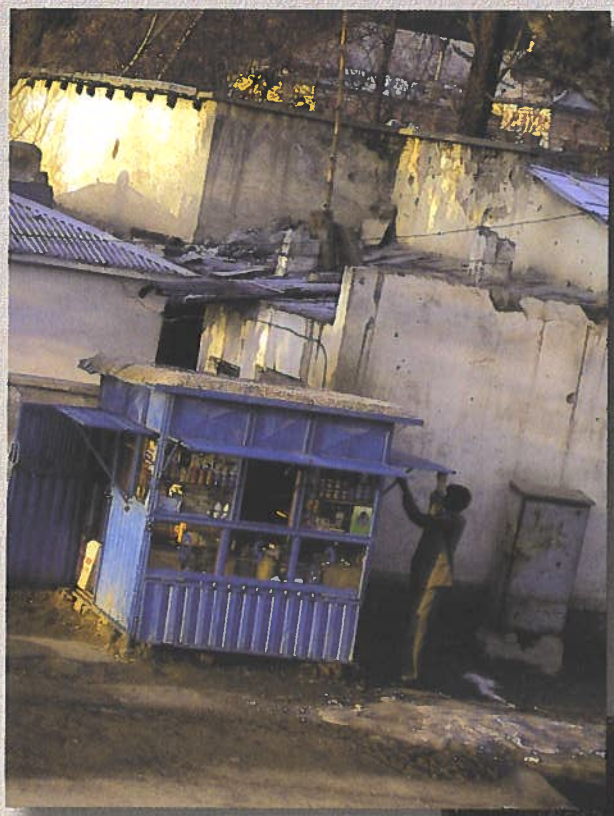


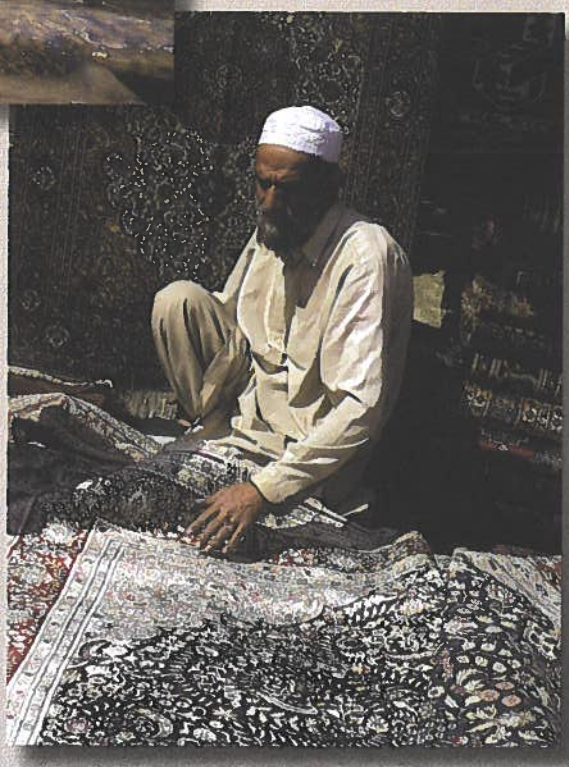












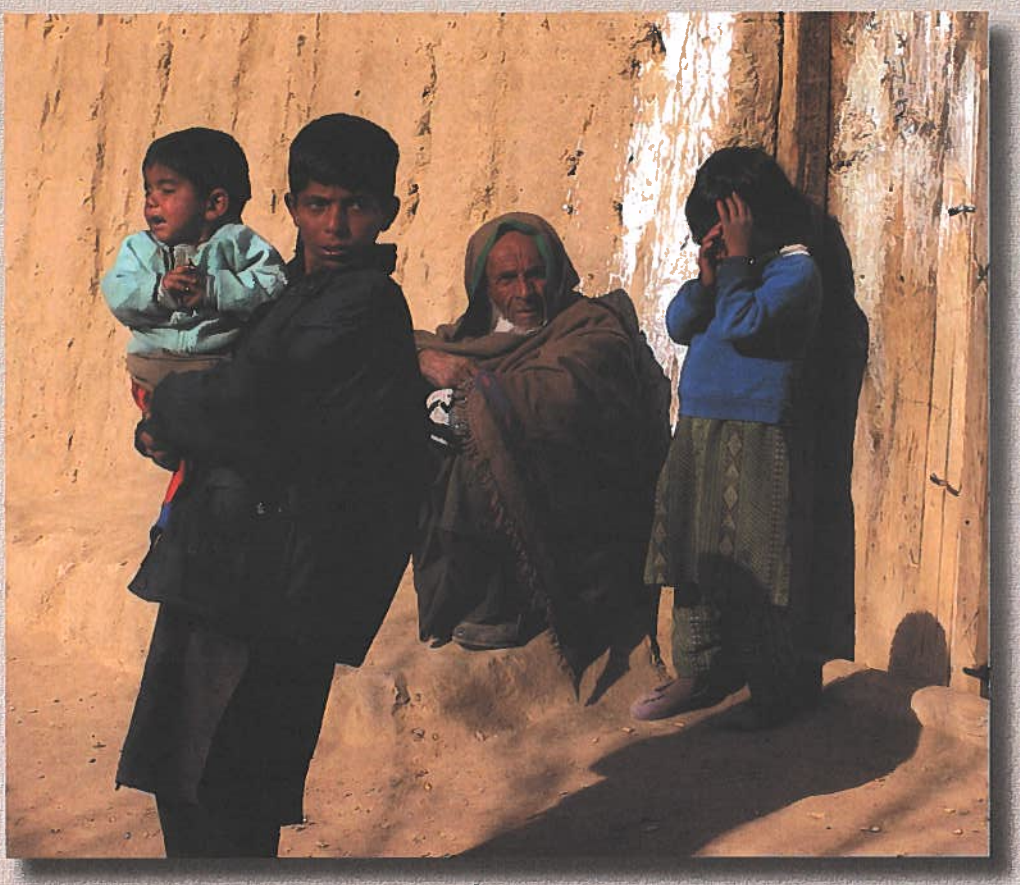












Photographs courtesy of Major Richard C. Sater

Terry P. Rizzuti

Willis

Willis Cleaver was my friend. He didn't have no legs nor wheelchair, just a short set of old wooden crutches that he had taught himself to get around on like they was extensions of his arms. He could balance and spin and work all sorts of ways to be mobil. Sometimes, like when he was workin his way down the street, it looked like Tarzan swingin from trees, one limb to another. Just watchin, you had to respect the man.

I seen ol' Willis on the streets since my rookie days, mor'n twenty-five years. He's pleasant enough was my impression, minds his own business. But that changed this past summer. I got the call of a disturbance down at Charlie's Pub in Bricktown. Willis, he'd been scootin along the bar top, pitchin bottles, glasses and ashtrays at everybody and cursin in a language only he understood. He stopped when I got there and glared at my uniform, then resumed throwin. I had to rush at him, pin his arms back and hold on tight. I remember thinkin he's really strong for somethin so small, and that he stunk of alcohol, tobacco and real bad sweat. Then I hauled him off to jail.

Another time I got a disturbance call at Tyler's Clothing store on Rodeo Street. When I finally worked my way through the crowd at the door to the trouble, Willis had aholt of Mr. Tyler by the neck and was swingin on his back, beatin him all about the ears and head. Mr. Tyler was crashin around the store tryin to free himself, and yellin somethin about no filthy little street urchin gettin to try on clean pants in his store. I grabbed Willis hard in a headlock and hauled him off to jail. That was last summer, too.

Three, maybe four more times like this, and me and Willis got on a first-name basis. "Hey Buckaroo," he called me, "you still picking on cripples, putting them in jail?" "Willis," I answered, "what's got into you?" but he didn't say nothin. Another time he said, "Hey Buckaroo, do I count as a whole arrest or just half?" That's when I told him we cops get a bonus for cripples cuz they can fit more in the jails and save all the taxpayers. He seemed to get a kick outta that cuz it was the only time I saw him laugh.

Here lately, seems like Willis got to be about the angriest man I ever run onto, and the ornriest, and when he got to drinkin whiskey, well that'd bring out the boogyman in him, the absolute devil. I bet if you check, I arrested him twenty

times last summer. One time I found him sittin in the sidewalk shoutin and swingin his crutches at everybody walkin by. People was havin to sidestep into the street to get around him. I asked him, "What I gotta do, Willis, get my shotgun out the trunk, blow you here to kingdom come?" I was just kiddin but he took it serious. "Fuck you Buckaroo," he said, and swung a crutch at me. And then somehow in one quick motion he was up on them crutches and swingin on down the street. It surprised me so, I liked to never caught up with him. Once again, I hauled him on in, but it got to where it was harder and harder, cuz he put up a hell of a fight. And it's not easy whuppin a man that's got no legs. It bothers you in the gut, know what I'm sayin, specially when you know the man and where he's comin from.

You see, I'm a Vietnam Veteran, and word on the street was Willis lost his legs in Vietnam back in '66. That's when I was there, too, so me and him's samiesame, sorta. Word was he's a medic with the 173rd Airborne, and one time they got choppered into a hot LZ and a boobytrap took his legs out from under him. They say he sat in his own blood insistin they bring the wounded to him so he could do his thing, and that they gave him a Silver Star for his action. I believe he earned every ounce of that medal. He's a hero to me.

Anyway, my name is Roo, Officer Johnny Roo. I spose I shoulda said so earlier. I'm 46 years old and work for the Oklahoma City Police Department, as you know. When the call come in and the suspect described as havin no legs, they dispatch me, even page me off duty cuz Willis say he won't come peaceable less'n it's me that arrests him. Not that he ever come peaceable for me either, you understand. And every time I put him in back of the unit he'd disrespect me the whole ride. I reckon Willis was my cross to bare, probbly cuz I bucked the system all these years and understand his anger. Maybe I never made sergeant, but I have legs so it's easier to keep the lid on.

Like I said, I bet I arrested Willis twenty times last summer, and that was in about forty days stretch. I was gettin tired of it and told him so, told him he needed to straighten up or we'd put him away, just throw him in lockup and not let him out. He looked me in the eye, right in this here cell, and said, "Do it, Buckaroo, do it," like he was darin me. You'd have to know Willis good as me to know he was sayin to figure a way out of his misery.

One time he cracked a crutch over a bank manager's head. He was tryin to cash his VA check at Bank of America down on Sheridan Avenue and they wouldn't. That didn't make sense to Willis, drunk as he was bein one reason, but also by his way of thinkin he had a right to every penny in that check and no bank manager was gonna dispute that, no way no how. To my way of thinkin too, but that manager kept statin bank policy. Now it's true Willis didn't have no account there, or anywhere else, but any fool could see it was a good government check and everybody downtown knowed Willis by sight. I hauled him off

to jail again, and Willis put up a fight, but his heart didn't seem in it. I could tell by the way he pleaded in his eyes. That was this past fall.

And I remember the time I fished Willis up out of the dumpster in the alley behind the Town Tavern by the bus station. It was bad. Somebody had beat him to pulp. His shoulder was dislocated, and his face looked like some horror film. I put him in the ambulance myself and met him at Mercy Hospital. When the one eye that could open opened, he said "Damn you, Buckaroo, damn you to hell." It sounded like his last breath.

I think there were three or four more incidents like this last fall, maybe two, three more arrests this month. I reckon Willis was cryin for help, and the only help any of us knowed to give him was to keep puttin him back on the street. As though freedom was the only thanks we could think to give him for what he'd done when we was kids.

It was Christmas Eve the other night that I got the call of a disturbance and traffic jam at the corner of Reno and Walker. It was dark and bitter cold with the wind blowin the way it does come December. I knowed right off it was Willis sittin in the middle of the street with no coat on. "I'm just a cop, Willis," I said, "it ain't no life neither, whadda you want from me?" "Well Merry Fucking Christmas to you too, Buckaroo," he said, "I bet it's a real big bonus you get tonight." I was so mad right then, but sad, too. There he sat aside his crutches, flailin around and cursin in that foreign language. He was all bloody and shivverin, and looked maybe seventy years old in a baby's body.

I ran back to the unit and flung open the trunk. I don't know what ran in my head exactly. I pushed all the gear aside and spread out the emergency blanket. Then I rushed back over to Willis and grabbed him up by his shirt and belt like a bale of hay. Hell, he weren't but about three foot long, and I just hurried him over and flung him in that trunk and slammed the lid down. "Don't say another word," I shouted, "don't say one fuckin word." And he never did, the whole time. I guess he figured that shotgun back there could do his talkin for him. When I got the trunk open, there weren't much in there but a torso.

And that's my statement. Like I said, Willis Cleaver was my friend. He called me Buckaroo. I shouldn't have locked him in that trunk. I'm sorry about that and I'll take what's comin, but I swear I didn't mean for nothin bad to happen to him. He was a hero to me.

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Lucy Bucknell

The Kite

I know the boy they're talking about, though I didn't realize until now. On the news they say a pilot, a navy pilot or airforce. They might give his rank, but not his name or his hometown, not at first. I never knew this boy's name in any case, but they were just now saying he lived on Grey Lane. Lots of boys must live on Grey Lane but the one I remember had the haircut, a military haircut. And he carried himself a certain way. He might not have been a soldier at all of course, a pilot. He might have worn his hair short just for fashion, or because the summer had been hot.

He'd come out out across the dunes for a swim though it was rough and kind of cool. It wasn't September yet, but the water was getting that dark blue look, blue with black underneath; and it was afternoon so there were shadows in the troughs of the waves. It was one of those days you sometimes get in late August, like a premonition of winter: the sky hard and clear, dune grass more silver than green. And the breeze was up, a stiff breeze. You get a day like that where the sand never even gets warm, then the next day it's summer again. We were down there trying to fly Luke's kite, the three of us, and either the wind was too much or we're no good at kite-flying because the kite whipped around like a fish on a line, doing those whistling figure eights kites do. Then next thing it ripped skyward and came down way out in the water.

Gene was wearing his bathing suit but I wouldn't let him go in. When you got right down to the water line the waves looked pretty big, and wild; unpredictable, moving in all different directions at once then slamming together unexpectedly and throwing spray way up the beach. Gene said he could handle it but I was adamant. Luke wanted the kite back of course. I'd never seen him so interested in that kite as when it went into the ocean. And we couldn't count on its washing back in, with the current the way it was.

So we were standing there arguing and watching the kite appear and disappear in the foam and out across the dunes comes this boy—man I guess, though he seemed like a boy to me, a great tall handsome one, lean and tan, and strong looking in a lithe sort of way. Like I said, he had a crewcut but it became him. He looked utterly clean and economical, a long smooth muscle with a towel over his shoulder.

I said I hoped he wasn't getting in now that he'd seen the waves up close, and he laughed. But even Gene by now had stopped boasting. Another thing about those late August days, evening comes on quickly, the water gets rougher; all at once it isn't day anymore. And the ocean feels more separate from the

land somehow, more like another world that we're not designed to survive in. Probably I worry about these things more than other people; I see risk everywhere. But as I say, even Gene thought we'd better let the kite go.

But the boy, young man, said he was getting married the next day and wanted a swim before the rehearsal dinner. The rough water was just what he liked, he said. He'd grown up here, swimming in these currents, on this beach. I guess he felt he knew the ocean pretty well. So in he went, in a low dive, bursting up through the colliding waves. He held up a hand briefly and smiled, his head glistening like an otter's or a seal's. I couldn't even see the kite anymore but Luke was hopping up and down pointing and yelling and I guess the boy must have drawn a bead on it before he went in because he headed straight out and soon we saw he had it in his hand. Then he furled it up like a little sail and started back. I honestly didn't think he'd make it. The waves looked huge. They seemed to rise and crash down in place, not moving in at all. In fact almost moving out, as though willfully drawing him eastward. He stroked these long strong strokes but he just didn't budge except to go under once in a while, then emerge again, the kite now in his teeth. He never even let go of the kite. I knew Gene was thinking he'd have to go in. And I was thinking that they'd both be lost. Then all at once there he was, climbing up out of the sea just a few yards down from where we stood, laughing, with the kite in his hand.

He was indomitable that boy, as strong as could be. He just radiated vigor, and pleasure. He handed the kite to Luke who was looking at him like he was a god. So were we all I suppose. Luke actually shook his hand when he thanked him and I could see the young man was touched. And I was thinking how lucky his bride was, what a lover and husband he might be, this tall handsome boy with the crewcut, who went into such an ocean and came out again and was happy about it, happy and never afraid.

He dropped his towel back over his shoulder and went away through the dunes, still wet, not looking back once he'd said goodbye. And I suppose he got married the next day, with all his friends around him; with a hangover maybe from the rehearsal dinner, sand between his toes despite his shower.

I've thought about him now and again. Gene sometimes tells the story at a cocktail party, but he doesn't linger on the boy's beauty, just on the power of the waves, and how he thought the boy might not make it back. I linger on his beauty; it's hard not to. A picture like that of a fine body emerging from the sea stays with you. And if he *is* the one on the news, if his plane fell out of the sky and they took him from the wreckage and shot him the way they claim, that would stay with me too. The boy and the airplane, blue water with black underneath.

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Melinda Braun

The Cost of Living

In 1952, the population of the United States was 151,684,000. Of this number approximately 3.3 million were unemployed. For the rest, an average working salary might be $2,992. A Wear-Ever salesman could make $10,000 a year, a waitress $175 a month, a counter girl $50 a week, a painter $15 a day, and factory help $1.25 an hour.

In 1952 a loaf of bread cost 15 cents.

In 1952 my grandfather, Harold Dahlstrom, left Wisconsin for Korea. One year of active combat. They called it a police action at first, he told me when I asked him on the phone. I stared at the black and white photograph of him standing in his army uniform in an unnamed street in Seoul, an enormous grin across his face, and pressed the receiver closer against my ear. I recognized and remembered the familiarity of that grin, enough to know that the young man smiling back at the photographer was a relative of mine.

If you died during a police action, he said, the family got $5,000. If it was a war they got $10,000. The bureaucrats in Washington were ready to have them fight, but weren't ready to pay. Truman changed that, he said. Two words became one and doubled their worth. He spent three months of basic training in Florida, one month on a ship through the Panama Canal to the Pacific, and another month in the harsh climate of Hokkaido. He said his first impression of the Japanese was surprising. He thought they were slender, elegant people, taller than he expected, dark-eyed and brown-skinned, the type of skin used to the climate, used to hard winter. He said the Japanese looked like Indians. He said they had beautiful white teeth.

In 1952 a tube of toothpaste cost 31 cents.

I asked my grandfather what Seoul looked like in 1952, after the Marines came through Inchon. Destroyed, he said. Bombed to bits. Chunks of concrete and rubble next to miraculously untouched buildings, red and green banners and electric lights. Acidic dust and smoke still burned in the air. Lovely people, he said. Nice people. Very polite. Very clean. They rubbed their eyes and wiped their noses in the smoke and ash.

In 1952 a 200-count box of Kleenex cost 19 cents.

They humped it north of the city, Mortar Company, 7th Infantry division, 3rd platoon. They dug hootches and bunkers on Heartbreak Ridge, fired 4.2 high angle mortars off the backs of modified Chevy's, fired high explosive M3s, white phosphorus shells, smoke M2s at the Chinese front line 2500 yards away. They spent whole afternoons watching the 105 and 155 howitzers pound the Chinese, watching the air fill with white smoke. They watched the engineers build cable lines up the steep hills, and the lines ran supply conveyors to the top. They looked at maps and counted the hills. On odd days they had classes and drills, the platoons took turns being the enemy. They did night marches. They had parades and practiced marching because the Army impressed upon them the importance of parades. They watched the human line push and pull below them. They carved into the sides of sheer walls, wrote letters in the rain, counted the number of days till R&R, added up their points, and waited for mail, magazines and packages. They waited to be sent someplace else.

In 1952 a 2-door Buick sedan cost $2,280. A half-quart of Allstate quality motor oil cost 14 cents.

They caught shrapnel and mortar fragments in their T-52 body armor. They wore Doron vests over gray green fatigues. The vests used over-lapping, curved Doron plates around the upper torso, and nylon duck covered the shoulders. It was designed to be worn under a field jacket, covered with 6-ounce nylon that could be rinsed easily of blood, front fastened with zippers and snaps, available in small, medium, and large, and covering approximately five and a half square feet, which wasn't quite enough to prevent Corporal Mutt Meier from bleeding to death.

A Doron vest cost $39.04.

Harold's nickname was Lucky Bastard, given to him by Corporal Leonard "Mutt" Meier, who turned out not to be quite as lucky. Mutt had nicknames for everyone. PFC Keith Christensen was "Wiseguy," since he had an answer for everything. Harold arrived two weeks after Keith and when Keith asked him how many days he'd been at war, Harold said fourteen. Wiseguy smiled over his plate of ham and beans and shook his head, "No man," he said. "One day. You've been at war one day. And tomorrow will be your first day too. And the day after that." Wiseguy grinned wider, "It's always your first damn day." This was what Wiseguy had been told himself, two weeks before Harold arrived, though Wiseguy liked to believe he'd invented it. He also liked to repeat often quoted words of wisdom, "There's only three things an American soldier is afraid of: Diarrhea, Gonorrhea, and Ko-rea." He always laughed after he said this, as if he found himself to be extremely impressed with his own cleverness.

Mutt called Private Henry Dewey "Big D." Big D was from Meridian,

Mississippi. He stood 6'3" and weighed over 250 lbs. His skin was black as coal tar. Big D scared the bejasus out of the Chinese, who had never seen anything like him before. He also scared the bejasus out of Harold the first time he met him, since Harold had never been in such close quarters with anyone who looked like Big D either. The Army had only been desegregated for two years, but Harold found he got along fine with Big D. He liked his laugh. Big D moved l a dancer, a disguised agility that no one would have expected when appraising his physique, which as it was commanded immediate attention and respect, deserved or not. He was the gunner and could almost lift the whole M2 mortar himself, which completely loaded weighed 333 lbs. Harold noticed that he always felt a little bit safer when he was near Big D, who had been in country for nine months, who terrified the Chinese and North Koreans, and he always wanted him as his partner when they were given a job to do, hauling logs up the sides of the hills in the rain to build mortar platforms. Big D worked hard. He said that was the one thing he knew how to do. He liked to work, liked the Army, because, he confessed to Harold more than once, no matter what happened there would always be, "some'pin to do."

Mutt Meier called PFC Peter LaDuke "Frog." Frog was half French, half Crow Indian. He always had a cigarette dangling between his lips, lit or unlit, like a security blanket. He was French or Indian depending on his mood. He was French when they ate their C-rations, and he examined the contents. "Mon Dieu. Merde. *This* is shit." Frog always traded with Warren Lindquist, his candy for Warren's cigarettes. Warren was from Ames, Iowa and his nickname was Sweets. He was the medic.

Mutt gave Harold his name when a beam collapsed inside their hootch after grenade fire, or mortar fire, or friendly fire, or whatever fire it was had shrapnel flying about. Harold had just entered, standing in the middle when whatever it was exploded. He didn't move, just stood straight, squeezing his eyes closed and trying to count. No one was hit. They coughed in the dust and then the wooden beam came down. It hit Harold on the helmet and dented it. It hit him so hard his helmet curled his ears down.

"Dammit," said Mutt, when they got the helmet off. "Jesus Christ, you're a lucky bastard," he stated, eyeing the dented metal dome.

"Why didn't you take it off when you came in?" asked Ronnie Krammer. Mutt called Ronnie Krammer "Spud" because he had a face that looked like a bowl of mashed potatoes. Two month later, Spud would have his round face burned with white phosphorus. He would go blind. "You're always supposed to take it off," said Spud.

"I don't know," said Harold and rubbed his ears.

"You goddamn lucky bastard," repeated Mutt, who, as stated before, did not have the same kind of fortune. Seventeen days after, a high explosive M3

fragment removed his left arm at the shoulder. He bled to death on Sweets before the squad could even radio back for a MASH unit. His vest was spotless. They found just a tip of a finger lying in the dirt, looking like a strange pink stick. They buried it.

Harold rubbed his temples. He had a headache.

In 1952 a bottle of 50-count Aspirin cost 39 cents.

In 1952 the Defense Department announced that American battle casualties in Korea totaled 114,685. 20,167 deaths, 82,134 wounded, 9,446 missing, 1,553 captured, and 1,885 previously missing but returned. The defense budget was 55.5 billion dollars.

In July 1952, the Company gave them a party. They had parties quite often. Whenever they came off a hill or when a large batch of people rotated home. The Army was throwing money at the Company anyway and the CO found a way to spend it. Parties. The CO ordered $10 cases of beer, cases and cases of Coca-Cola. They went swimming and got sunburned. The cooks made them sandwiches and potato salad.

In 1952 Kraft Mayonnaise cost 41 cents. A dozen eggs 55 cents.

Harold floated in the river and imagined 10,000 Chinese coursing through the mountains to shoot his stomach open, tear out his guts, cut out his tongue, stick his head on a stake, string a necklace with his teeth. He tried to count how many ways he could die, and wondered if he would do it well - bravely and honorably. Or would he mess his pants, freeze up, start to cry? He didn't think anyone got to choose.

Mostly, he thought, it was all very stupid. Stupid ways to die. Gross. Idiotic. Things he never wanted to think could ever happen, happened. He remembered the story about the paratroopers' bodies, the skeletons, still in fatigues at the bottom of a pond some G.I.s had been swimming in. The bodies had been there over a year, and they had to call the graves registration to come and pull them out.

He drank a Coke and closed his eyes. He pictured his wife's face, her voice so soft compared to the harsh grunts and screams he was getting used to. The 105 howitzer blasts and chopper blades became a constant background noise. Background sounds. He remembered with sickly unease the sound of a trip wire, even though it had been a drill, the zing, the popping, the way his bowels felt when he rolled on the ground, aware of himself and the way his skin felt, noticing for the first time it would split as easily as a balloon. He was only a balloon floating over a thistle field. He was aware of how alive he was. Most of all, he was aware of how afraid he was, afraid of being lost, afraid his body rotting

at the bottom of a pool where no one would find him. He drank the rest of his Coke and kept his eyes shut, pretending he was floating in the cool, deep water of Lake Michigan. He thought about his family in Wisconsin and wondered if his son was walking yet.

At home my father crawled across an eggshell white linoleum kitchen floor. They lived in a three-bedroom bungalow that cost $12,500 to build. A three-piece bedroom set cost $109.00. A ten-cubic foot GE refrigerator $439.95 at Sears.

My father gurgled and squawked and used a chair to pull himself up into a bowlegged stance, wavering on chubby pink legs and smiling at the beam the sun made through the window.

In 1952 10 jars of Libby's baby food cost 93 cents. A boy's bicycle $37.88.

In September 1952 Harold lived up to his name again when he caught a North Korean burp-gun slug in the chest. His $39.04 vest took the bullet and left him with a purplish green bruise. Lucky Bastard. Spud Krammer was lit up with white phosphorus and caught a bullet in his leg, and it tore off his kneecap. His face was burned, they called in a MASH unit, and he screamed hysterically until the shot Sweets gave him took effect. He was shipped back to Japan, lost his leg, and received a purple heart. Harold never heard from him after that but figured that Spud would rather have his leg and eyes any day, instead of a pin that probably cost 2 cents to make.

Harold's hands were covered with Spud's blood, and he stared at them, unable to stop thinking how much Spud's knee had looked like raw hamburger. The blood dried and crusted into the grooves and ridges of his skin, got under his nails, smelled sweet and pungent.

In 1952 a 2 bars of Dial deodorant soap cost 27 cents.

Fifty years later I asked him things he could and could not remember, or didn't want to. The long distance phone call costs 10 cents a minute for the evening/weekend rate. I asked him what it was like in the Fifties. He said you could swim all day at the city pool for a dime. They'd stamp your hand and you could just come and go as much as you wanted. The daily paper cost a nickel. Since I didn't know anything about the cost of things I just listened and nodded. Occasionally, I interrupted to ask what certain things meant, what the numbers stood for, how much it was worth, what things looked like. I asked carefully. I asked about the weather. Like here, he said. The Midwest. Hot, humid summers, bitter winters. Many died of exposure. Frostbite. I was afraid of the things I might hear, what he might tell me, what I wouldn't understand. He said he lost a lot of good friends. Good guys, he told me. I could not ask if he ever killed

anyone. It didn't matter, I thought, because he could have said yes or no. He could have said both and it would have been true.

He called back a half-hour after we said goodbye, and my father handed me the cordless phone with unusually bright, curious eyes. I knew why he was calling back, but my head was pounding, my tongue dry and swollen, afraid of the thoughts I had left him with, unable to prepare myself for what they would be, a confession I was not qualified to listen to or understand. I took the phone, and left the kitchen, walked into the dining room, moving straight for the large picture window. His voice was small, like a child's, tightly pleading with the grief of things I would never know about, things I could barely imagine. "I just wanted you to know," he began, "I wanted you to know I didn't want to hurt them. I didn't want to hurt anybody. I didn't want to hurt them."

I rubbed the knot at my throat, looked up, and pressed my head against the windowpane. "I know," I repeated, realizing that I didn't know anything, I didn't know anything at all about my family, I didn't know anything about their lives, and I knew nothing of my history.

I stood at the window after we said goodbye a second time, not ready to answer my parents' questions because something had wrapped itself around my neck and I could not speak, I could barely breathe. I imagined Harold in his house, sitting in his recliner in front of the TV, sitting in the dark, sitting and thinking about things that happened fifty years ago, things as fresh as new milk and as sharp as razor blades, trying to remember the price of each, remembering how much the cost of living was in 1952.

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Marcia Phillips McGowan

"A Nearer Approach to the Truth": Mary Borden's *Journey Down a Blind Alley*

As Nosheen Khan notes, at present, "The First World War is regarded as having transformed women's conventional role of mere spectator of a male event into one of active participant, at various levels, in the war machine" (2). When Mary Borden joined the war effort, however, women's services at the front were frowned upon. Feminist literary critics and historians often allude to an all too characteristic remark by the surgeon and director of the British Red Cross, Sir Frederick Treves, that there was "no work fitted for women in the sphere of war" (qtd. in Marlow 5). Courageous women like Borden violated the traditional boundary between home front and battle front. In fact, Margaret Higgonet notes in *Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I* that "[. . .] in France by 1916, fifty women had received the Croix de Guerre" (xx). As Sayre P. Sheldon has remarked, though war literature was once limited to combat and hence claimed by men as 'their subject,' it can be no longer, as "modern war reaches everywhere. There is less demarcation between where war is and is not taking place and where it begins and ends" (x). Many recent studies have recognized that such a division was indeed spurious in World War I, so it is surprising that besides selected stories reprinted from *The Forbidden Zone* (1929), most recently in Higgonet's *Nurses at the Front*, Mary Borden's opus is still so little known.

Little has been written about Borden's work, despite her having written twenty novels, as well as stories, poems and essays, and having formed and administered front-line hospital units during two world wars. The daughter of American millionaire William Borden, Mary spent most of her life abroad. She graduated from Vassar, was a pre-war suffragette, met and married her first husband George Douglas Turner in India in 1908, had three daughters with him and began publishing fiction in England under the pseudonym Bridget MacLagan. Nosheen Khan notes that Borden was "prominent on the literary scene in the pre-war days," that Wyndham Lewis first met Shaw at her house, and that Lewis and Ford Madox Ford were staying with the Turners when the war broke out (120). Borden met Captain Edward Spears during the Battle of the Somme in 1916, married him in Paris in 1918, and had a son with him (Marlow 403-4; Higgonet, *Lines*

363-64). Though she had funded a hospital unit in The Great War, the Wall Street crash forced Borden to seek external funding for a multi-national hospital unit in the Second World War.

Outside of introductory notes in various anthologies and Margaret Higgonet's *Nurses at the Front*, which includes stories from *The Forbidden Zone*, little critical analysis has been devoted to Borden. However, an essay by D.A. Boxwell, analyzing the rhetorical elements of stories in *The Forbidden Zone*, recognizes the collection as "One of the greatest autobiographical-fictional works about the Great War to emerge in that annus mirabilis, 1929," the year which saw Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Graves' *Goodbye to All That*, Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War*, among other literary hallmarks (275).

Borden's memoir of her involvement in World War I has, however, been entirely overlooked. This memoir, first published in 1946, has, unaccountably, yet to be reprinted. Except for the first few chapters, which reminisce about Borden's "forbidden zone" experiences in World War I, *Journey Down A Blind Alley*, which records her administration of the Hadfield-Spears multi-national surgical unit, funded by Sir Robert and Lady Hadfield, is an embittered recounting of Borden's experiences not only on the Western Front, but in Northern Africa, where the unit was ultimately stationed, miles from the two embassies in Damascus and Beirut where Borden's husband served as British Minister to the Levant. The Hadfield-Spears Unit started in Malo-les-Bains in a typhoid hospital, then moved to the frontline, following battles along the Franco-Swiss border. The orderlies and nurses of the unit, serving under General Joffre, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, were a multi-national group, selected by Borden. They were ultimately stationed in Syria, Libya, and Egypt.

Initially, Borden seems impelled to write her memoir because of the similarity of her extraordinary service, if not her attitude, in both world wars:

> And now that both wars are over they tend to blend into one. Soon if I am not careful, I shall confuse their events, mistake the road I followed in 1916 on my way down from Flanders to the Somme, for one I took in 1940 from Paris to Lorraine, or transpose frail Miss Warner with her eye-glasses and gray hair who came to Dunkirk from Philadelphia in 1915 as my head nurse, and put her down on her slender feet in one of the wards at St. Jean de Bassel behind the Maginot Line. What more natural? Miss Warner, if she still lives, is old, but the valiant women who answer the call of pain, disease and death are all like her [. . . .] (7)

Soon, however, Borden begins to recount what she perceives to be the political and social differences between the two wars, and her tone alters from nostalgia to bitterness. Yet her admiration of the women who join her unit is evident throughout her memoir, and there is no doubt that the effect of its publication is, as Nicola Beauman remarks of *The Forbidden Zone*, an insistence that women in wartime "can be as staunch and heroic as any man" (34). Also evident, however, is Borden's self-doubt about her ability to lead these women:

> As I looked at the circle of expectant faces, I had another of my moments of doubt and dismay. What did I mean by daring to assume responsibility for taking these girls overseas? Impossible to tell what lay in store for us. Impossible to say how this one or that would behave in an emergency. Could I be certain that I myself would not lose my head in a crisis? No. I couldn't. (17)

Such moments of "insecurity" and self-doubt are typical of women's autobiography, as Nancy Walker (278), among others, have noted. However, in Borden's memoir, they are momentary, and she concludes, "No turning back now if I wanted to" (17). It is this attitude which won Borden the Croix de Guerre and the Legion of Honour, but perhaps more important to her was the ultimate benefit:

> So many hospitals and all of them essentially the same. A convent in Lorraine, another at Deraa in Syria, a great broken building in Tobruk, our tents at Bir Hakim, Sidi Bouali, Lake Bolsena, the battered walls or flapping canvas made no difference, there had been only one 'Ambulance Hatfield-Spears.' A place of refuge, a resting place, but dramatic, at a crossroads between life and death, a place of suffering and laughter that defied it, of torn bodies and trusting eyes, of death defeated by unwavering vigilance, a happy place where men felt safe. (285)

This is the reward for Borden, and in two world wars, it suffices to put to rest all insecurities.

Borden's memoir is a curious autobiography which, in a longer paper, would suggest detailed comparison with her husband, Major General Edward Spears', memoir of the same time period. In *Fulfillment of a Mission: The Spears Mission to Syria and Lebanon 1941-1944* (1977), though Spears infrequently mentions

Borden, he claims that "in two wars, her beneficent and always courageous initiatives have not only proved to be the cause of much pride to me but of very great anxiety as well" (87). He frequently conflates incidents related at length by Borden and relates his disgust at the Vichy French treatment of the Free French, particularly in his wife's hospital in Damascus. The one incident described by Spears in great detail is de Gaulle's snub of the Hadfield-Spears unit during the final victory parade in Paris and the General's success in ultimately dissolving the unit, despite its having treated twenty-one thousand Free French soldiers in the war in the desert. Having been responsible for the introduction and advocacy of de Gaulle to the English high command at the beginning of the war, Spears finds this snub of his wife unconscionable.

Unlike Spears' *Fulfillment of a Mission*, Borden's memoir guards the privacy of those involved in Borden's personal life in the Levant by referring to them—and to her husband—by initial, rather than name. Whereas Spears names all principles and refers to Borden as "my wife" or "my American wife," Borden refers to him as "B." and to his close relatives and places of residence in France by initial as well. Borden's memoir, published in 1946, is closer in time to the war than her husband's, and though it precedes the settlement of the Jewish state in 1948, it makes clear her husband's pro-Palestinian sentiments. Her decision to protect his identity may also be attributable to the controversy over his opinions, about which she later relates that though he was often at odds with Duff Cooper and other highly placed individuals in the British government, he was supported by his friend Winston Churchill. Borden clearly tries to keep her private and public lives separate: "I have said little about the Caseys and almost nothing about our very brief visits to Cairo. Their friendship is a private thing, and this narrative is not meant to deal with my private life" (237).

Yet recent feminist theory would suggest that this memoir is actually remarkably transgressive in its merging of a political, authoritative voice with personal perspectives on those with whom Borden served in her endangered unit. In *Journey Down a Blind Alley*, there is, as Susan Cahill suggests there should be in women's autobiography, a "connectedness of self and story, of contemplation and action" (xi). The memoir is a hybrid, a curious admixture of private and public, with public service nevertheless emphasized above all else. The upper class Borden's identification with the *poilus*, the medical workers in her unit, and the women of the Levant leads to a connectedness Cahill alludes to as a "writer's acceptance of political responsibility and the priority of social justice over individual aggrandizement" (xi). Borden's ultimate denunciation of Charles de Gaulle is an astonishing assertion of her right to question authority, to deny greatness to a man she believes betrayed his allies and the French colonies in the Mid-East during World War II.

Borden's sense of injustice is strong, and much of this injustice is laid at the

door of de Gaulle. She remembers at their first meeting "the curious discomfort I felt when he stalked into the room. It was almost like fear. It was certainly mingled with a painfully strong feeling of aversion [. . . .] It was as if when I looked full at him I saw nothing, nothing but a lifeless figure, wrapped in a palpable coldness that hid him as a damp cloth hides a sculptor's clay" (112). Borden's novelistic analysis of de Gaulle's character is scathing:

> I believe pride is the basis of his character. I think he felt the dishonour of France as few men can feel anything, and that he had literally taken on himself the national dishonour, as Christ [. . .] took on himself the sins of the world. I think he was like a man [. . .] who had been skinned alive, and that the slightest contact with friendly, well-meaning people got him on the raw to such an extent that he wanted to bite, as a dog that has been run over will bite in its agony any would-be friend that comes to its rescue. The discomfort I felt in his presence was due, I am certain, to the boiling misery and hatred inside him. His one relief, in fact his one pleasure, was to hate. And he hated all the world, but most especially those who tried to be his friends." (113-14)

Borden's personal aversion to de Gaulle is played out against a larger canvas of politics and war.

In fact, this memoir is remarkable because in it, gender is somewhat de-centered, as it is in many contemporary women's autobiographies, and Borden's experience as a woman at the front is enacted as part of a much larger, more complex history. Borden's modernist concern is to tell the "truth" about her own experience: "I like the truth. I like to get at it and I like to tell it. I have stuck to it in this narrative and I mean to tell it now in so far as I am able" (226). The postmodern question of whether there can be a stable subject that can be revealed by language, when, in fact, the self is the object of interrogation is complicated in this autobiography by the gendered attempt to present self in relation to others—the nurses, orderlies, surgeons, commanding officers in Borden's unit; the North African officials, as well as de Gaulle and her husband. The immediacy and enormity of the experience, the attempt to meld past and present, are reinforced by the Vera Brittain-like insertion of diary entries in the present tense into a past-tense narrative. Like Jane Addams and Ida B. Wells, Borden "submerges the personal" into a larger purpose in order to convey "a message about history" (Culley 15-16).

One example is Borden's account of an incident at the President's residence

in Beirut, in which several people who were peacefully demonstrating for Levantine independence from France were killed on the steps and troops were shooting into the windows. Independence was at this point favored by both the American and English high command, and de Gaulle was furious at the demonstration. Borden was called by the President's wife, and Spears relates that the "long flight of steps outside the President's residence were running with blood when my wife arrived. Madame Khoury implored to be given a British guard, but as this was impossible I offered her and her children the hospitality of my house" [...] (232). Borden's role is reduced by Spears to that of visitor. However, Borden's detailed account in a diary entry grants her and the participants greater agency and subjectivity. She had heard of the shooting and that the "outside stairs were streaming with blood" and "thought I'd better go and see if it was true" (229):

> A large crowd had gathered since my morning visit, not violent, rather scared. There were shouts of 'Vive l'Angleterre,' 'Vive le Général Spears,' as I went in, and much applause. Very embarrassing. Madame Bechara was evidently frightened. Emile Eddé had passed with his armed escort, and the troops in the lorry had fired on the crowd. Then the Senegalese on the roof of the barracks overlooking the house had joined in and begun firing at the front door and windows [. . . .] As the Lebanese gendarmerie have all been disarmed Madame Bechara cannot appeal to them for protection. The French are the only people who could give protection, and it is the French who are doing the shooting.
>
> I asked her if she would like a British guard for the night or would she prefer to come to us. She said she would do whatever the General thought best. Went to the office to consult B., who said a British guard was impossible but by all means take her and the children home for the night. So I went back and brought them here. (229-30)

Borden had, before this incident, already been to the President's palace three times that day. The fact that she went there on a day fraught with danger to comfort the frightened family is nowhere evident in Spears' memoir. Borden reports on the next day that four children have been shot on their way to school by Senegalese, that the French have denied involvement, that telephone service and classes at the American University have been suspended, that the following

day French troops fired on a deputation of students and wounded six outside the Spears mission—"B. was out when it happened"—that the President's wife has gone home, and that Borden continues to visit her (230). She also reports that French troops continue to fire on the crowd as she visits Madame Read Sohl and that the Syrians have swarmed her car, which is carrying the British flag, for protection. Borden decides to leave the residence at this point, thinking that her presence is drawing French opposition and defies a French order to drive a different route back (231). Not only is her motivation clear and her description of the days' events more detailed than that of her husband, it grants subjectivity to the women and children she visited, who were terrified at the form French opposition to independence in North Africa was taking.

Borden's insight is often presented as fact. Not only is her own aversion to de Gaulle made plain, but the point of view of de Gaulle himself is bared for the reader, as novelistic license with character is taken. The use of metaphor and metonymy, familiar to readers of *The Forbidden Zone*, heightens the sense of fear and loathing of de Gaulle which pervades the narrative. The voice that speaks of de Gaulle is always bold and assertive. There is no sense of the divided, fragmented, or fissured self which has been said in the past to characterize female autobiography. We do observe, however, throughout *Journey*, a sense of what Susan Stanford Friedman calls "relational identity" (35). For it is not only Borden's relationship with de Gaulle which is subject to analysis, but her husband's as well. It is as if the fate of nations is consonant with that of this curious triad. Borden's use of figures of speech makes clear the conflation of personal and political:

> De Gaulle was France; literally in his own eyes, he was his nation [. . . .] He was setting himself up [. . .] as the living proof that France was not conquered and had a right to be proud.
>
> B. loved France as a man loves an adored woman who has disgraced herself. He too felt, though inevitably to a lesser degree,the shame and the hurt [. . . .] Two men bound by a common disappointment, a common sense of outrage, two men forced to drink from a single bitter cup; it was a curious bond. They might quarrel, get on each other's nerves, long to be rid of one another, they couldn't get free. They were in bondage to France. (114)

Though she can delineate *their* relationship so clearly, she has more difficulty with her own:

> [. . .] it isn't easy to remember de Gaulle, and that is another queer thing about him. I cannot see him at those dinner tables as I see the others [. . .] It is as if his chair were empty. There is only his voice. Now, as I think of him, he fades out, becomes a ghost. I see his photographs plastered on a hundred boardings, framed in a thousand windows, but I cannot see him.
>
> It wasn't his irascible temper nor the raw state of his nerves that puzzled me in the end. I understood all that. It was, finally, the sense of something wanting in him, the lack of a vital element, needed to the make-up of a human being. (115)

Borden goes on to say that only one event keeps her from thinking of de Gaulle as "quite inhuman" (115)—his spending the holiday with them and their son Michael at their farmhouse on Christmas Day. The French general talked sympathetically about Oxford with Michael who, to Borden's astonishment, told her, "'I would like to serve under General de Gaulle'" (115). In Borden's memoir, de Gaulle, the public figure, is woven into the web of family life, as he is not in Spears' autobiography.

The post-structuralist question of whether there can be a stable subject that can be revealed by language when the self is the *object* of interrogation is not only complicated, as mentioned above, by the gendered attempt to present self in relation to others. It is further compounded, as Shari Benstock remarks, by "the double referent for the first person narrative (the present 'I' and the past 'I') [. . .]" ("Authorizing" 19). Benstock notes that often in women's autobiography "the self that would reside at the center of the text is decentered" ("Authorizing" 2). In *Journey Down a Blind Alley*, one does not feel such decentering as a jolt, but as a seamless transition from the more deeply centered episodes involving Borden with her unit because of her concentration within these episodes on crediting others—the c. o., the drivers, the nurses—with much of the unit's success. Here, for instance, is her recounting of receiving six hundred surgical cases in three weeks in Deraa after the battle for Demascus:

> The hospital throbbed. Night and day the fight went on, our special fight to save men's lives. Everyone was engaged in the battle, most of all perhaps the sisters [nurses] in the small hot crowded wards. With caps awry and stained aprons limp, and the sweat streaming down their faces, they fought for their patients tirelessly, quietly; quick and vigilant they were and faultlessly efficient,

> and the men in their steaming beds knew, and complete understanding existed between them and their nurses, and all the while the ambulances kept rolling in at the gate and the tempo of the battle increased, until there came a day when we were bombed, and the patients we were to send down to Nazareth by train were killed in the railroad station, and the ammunition dump near the church went up, and the church bell began to ring its alarm. (136-37)

What a change in tone between the breathlessly long, desperately recalled sentences and the bitter descriptions of de Gaulle, with their clipped, analytical pronouncements! One senses not only a "connectedness of self and story" (Cahill xi), but the feeling that "self and others are experienced as part of a single web of life" (Cahill xi)—and death.

The immediacy and enormity of the experience, the attempt to weld past and present, are reinforced by the inclusion in the present tense of the diary entries. Borden relates in an entry dated October 15th, being called to London because of bombing damage to her home in Strathearn Place: "The two houses next to ours in Hyde Park Square are gone. Big bits of them crashed on us. All our windows are blown out by a blast, the ceiling in my bedroom has fallen on my bed. There seems to be a biggish hole in the roof. Very dirty and dismal with the rain coming in, rivulets of mud running down the stairs" (122). But even in the diary, the present is subject to analysis and reminiscence:

> But there was a kind of poetry about the desolation, the eloquence of trivial objects, contents of cupboards strewn about, whitish dust inches deep over everything, like ashes, and the view from the stair landing is like the last days of Pompeii. I remember dinner with B. in the dining room, lighted candles on the table. The plates in the pantry cupboard came from Strasbourg. Many are broken. They were made in the factory we visited at Sarreguemines. Now they are bombed in London. (122)

Borden's sense of irony, noted by critics such as Margaret Higgonet and D. B. Hoxley in regard to *The Forbidden Zone*, surfaces in her memoir as well. Even the diary entries—meant to recapture the events of the time—are suffused with feeling, with relational importance. There is little separation between Borden's public and private lives.

If autobiography as genre traditionally demands such separation, those

demands are overridden by gender. As Nancy Walker notes of women's autobiographical writing, it is "[. . .] the immediacy of the [. . .] journal entry that engages us; we feel closer to the humanity of the writer as she or he records the minutiae of life, and are better able to surmise the influences on more formal and public utterances" (275). Walker asserts that journals of male public figures have often been intended as "records of 'great lives,' and their autobiographies have served as guides or cautionary tales" (277), whereas female autobiographies are both "more diffident and more intimate: insecurities [. . .] are part of the record, as are, usually, the details of domestic life—the private arena in which so much of women's lives has played out" (278). She finds in women's autobiographical writing a "variety of roles or poses [. . .] in an apparent effort to find one that fits both the self and the public" (278). These poses no doubt account for the frequent shifts in tone and blurred genre boundaries between Borden's diary and memoir.

Another major component in Borden's memoir is what Margot Culley calls "the appeal to the utility of one's life story," which is "the most persistent of the conventions of autobiography" (14). Culley notes that often female writers "submerge the personal in some 'larger' purpose" [. . .] (15-16). One senses such a purpose in Borden's memoir, particularly as she ends it by reproducing de Gaulle's letter to her after her protest of his sudden dissolution of the Hadfield-Spears unit, "not on my own behalf or that of the British volunteers, but on behalf of our French officers, who took the sudden closing of the hospital as a punishment and were actually being punished for having collaborated loyally with me for many arduous months [. . .]" (295). De Gaulle alleges himself "astonished that you could have attributed it to a discourtesy on my part" and cites his "lively gratitude to the personnel which, under your orders, has gained the most solid title to the friendship of the French army" (296). Borden adds briefly, "My answer closes this story" (296). Though her answer is too long to reproduce in its entirety, Borden tells de Gaulle that she has heard that the reason for his displeasure was his accusation that her unit had unfurled the Union Jack as it passed de Gaulle's stand in the victory parade and shouted "'Vive Spears, vive les Anglais'" (296). Borden replies,

> We unfurled no British flag. We passed before you in silence. The shout 'Vive Spears' came from a group of our old patients who had arranged to come on their crutches from their Paris hospital to see the parade. It was a spontaneous expression of the gratitude and devotion to their English nurses, for it is by the name of Spears that the unit is known and loved in the Division.
>
> I would add finally that the gratitude of the

> Division and the affection of 20,000 patients is a sufficient recompense to us for the service we were able to render to your troops.
>
> From you I have had no recognition since February, 1941, when you inspected the unit on its departure for the Middle East, until today, but I know that I am speaking for my entire British staff when I say that our four years with the 1st Free French Division have bound us to the officers and men of that Division with bonds that can never be broken. (296)

These are Borden's final words in *Journey Down a Blind Alley*.

The intentions of reprinting this letter seem to be to tell the "truth," to embarrass de Gaulle, and to claim Borden's due and that of the others in the unit. It is the public, not the private, voice with which she leaves her readers, for her letter is not only to de Gaulle, but to the world. If postmodernism has rendered the essential self a fictive entity and blurred the boundaries between fact and fiction, Borden's ending her memoir with a personal statement that serves, too, as a historical document further challenges such boundaries and seems, in her mind, at least, to privilege the primacy of the public record over the private. In fact, Borden ends by accomplishing what feminist theorist Sidonie Smith posits as an autobiographical goal: "[. . .]autobiographical practice for twentieth century women would engage the autobiographer in the art of sedulous recovery and celebration of an experience erased from history, an experience wrongly hierarchized as subordinate, suspect, and specular" (370). Borden not only recovers the experience of the Hadfield-Spears Unit and the contributions of women to the war effort, but celebrates the "connectedness" or bond which she insists will remain—a "bond which can never be broken."

In *Writing a Woman's Life*, Carolyn Heilbrun calls May Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude* a "watershed in women's autobiography" because in it Sarton "deliberately related the record of her anger. And, above all other prohibitions, what has been forbidden to women is anger, together with the open admission of the desire for power and control over one's life (which inevitably means accepting some degree of power and control over other lives)" (13). Sarton's journal was published in 1973, Borden's memoir in 1946. Borden's attempt to control her anger at the Vichy, at de Gaulle, at the high cost of war to those on the battlefront, is ultimately unsuccessful because of her honesty, integrity, and deeply felt responsibility to those "other lives" to which she administered in her Division and in the field. In a genre which has traditionally demanded self-assertion and self-display, she has, through embracing herself as subject and using novelistic license in creating character, granted agency to others as well as herself.

The fact that *Journey Down a Blind Alley* has been out of print for over fifty years is a disservice not only to a fine author, but to World War II history and the place of women within that narrative. It is difficult to think of a model for a female writer in 1946 recounting a political history, one which assumes at once a voice of authority and humility. *Journey Down a Blind Alley* is such a model. A further examination of the text would lead one to marvel at Borden's seemingly conflicting duties as Division head and wife of the British Ambassador to the Levant. Indeed, the reader often witnesses Borden leaving her unit and donning fashionable dress to host important political figures at her husband's request. Though Borden seems to manage these role transitions seamlessly, she hints at the fact that they demand tremendous energy and devotion to both aspects of her life—the private and the public:

> It became evident at the end of the summer ('42) that unless I gave up all connection with the Unit, I must take to the air and manage two lives separated by several thousand miles. For I was involved in two distinct spheres of activity with two centres of gravity, and the centre of gravity of the hospital was going to move further and further away from my fixed Base, the British Legation in Beirut. (188)

Borden relates that her husband supported her work in both spheres: "Neither in '42 nor at any time did he ask me to give up the Unit or object to my leaving him to rejoin it. On the contrary, he made it easy. I had duties in Syria and Lebanon and he expected me to discharge them, but he knew that I had put my heart into the making of this field hospital and he took it seriously as a creditable war effort" (188). Like Borden, Spears knew "that winning the war was what mattered most, and that the smallest individual effort toward that end was important" (188).

Despite these asseverations, Borden's service in both World Wars must have caused conflict between her profession and the demands of marriage and children. That story remains to be told, perhaps by close examination of her personal papers. But the extraordinary story of Borden's involvement in positions of authority in two World Wars should certainly be more widely known. In a journal entry of January 27th, written in Abyssinia, Borden asks herself about her involvement in this second war: "'What has impelled you to let yourself in for this?'" She continues, "I don't know the answer. Vanity, curiosity, sense of adventure, the will to keep you, defy time, distance, all these vague discreditable reasons come into it and muddle up the decent impulse to do what one can in this bloody war" (123).

Borden recognizes that, despite her desire to tell the "truth," she cannot tell "the whole truth of the Lebanese crisis, for I don't know it," as dispatches and telegrams were kept from her (226). She acknowledges that Spears' "truth" would be different from hers, though it is clear that she admires him for his "great determination" and championship of the Lebanese "against the French in the crisis of November '43" (227). Borden is Spears' defender, his advocate, believing that "he saved the French from the worst consequences of their own folly" (227). Borden's memoir is almost as much Spears' story as it is hers. Her discerning eye, her description of the events of the time, convinces us, however, not only of his heroism in a time of war, but of hers.

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Pam Ullman

No Safe Distance

Like a mirror, the ice reflects the sky and everything in between. Pryde treads the weather-beaten faces of young boys, stomps on their narrow chests, leaves scuff marks on the Kalashnikovs that stretch their scrawny arms like well-chewed sticks of gum. Shivering in the colorless light, she takes in their clothes, their wet and wooly smell, the premature crows' feet etched in a month's worth of dirt. When she was their age, she hauled forty-pound bags of feed from the truck to the barn every afternoon after school. She mimicked her father, tossed the bag over her shoulder and folded neatly in half, her face hovering around her knees, eyes on her boots as they crunched the gravel path to the door. The soldier-boys haven't learned this trick; they stand around like baby monkeys, great bunches of black bananas rounding their narrow shoulders. The summer she turned twelve, she shot a coyote that charged her horse at the head of the Cumberland River. She knows how to shoot and shoulder a rifle, but it isn't her job to show these boys what to do. Her job is to listen.

Now that Ismail is dead, Nazeer has taken charge of the group. He is startlingly handsome, golden eyes in a still-smooth brown face, seemingly wise beyond his years. He speaks softly, compelling her to move closer, and she wonders if he does it on purpose, if she reminds him of someone left behind in the village: a sister, a girlfriend, a mother. Standing beside him she smells tobacco and something else she can't decipher, a hint of sweetness, some childhood memory long misplaced, his or hers, she can't be sure. She hangs on his words and studies his hands, still clutching the old rifle; she is charmed by the lovely half-moons of his fingernails. She is old enough to be his mother. He is young enough to be her son.

Over there, he says, nodding eastward toward the snow-covered peaks of the Sia Mountains. *We tracked some movement there last night.* He shifts his weight from side to side, but when he rocks on the sides of his feet, the rifle remains centered; it seems to have a life of its own. *There was a full moon, so I held my men up one kilometer from the base.* Pryde translates word for word, and becomes in that moment, something she is not and never will be: a fourteen-year old Afghan boy. Though inclined to omit the reference to *my men* (likely to draw an insulting chuckle from the American colonel), she leaves it alone. There is a fine line between interpreting and translating; she straddles the line but does

not cross it. Predictably, the American laughs out loud. Three weeks in this god-forsaken place and she knows him better than she knows her own husband.

How far? the colonel inquires.

A day's journey on horseback, replies the boy. *Provided we leave immediately. Provided the snow holds off, and the night holds no surprises.*

Pryde ducks back into her tent and rifles through the contents of her knapsack: a single change of long underwear, six pair of thick woolen socks, a toothbrush, a dozen chocolate bars, a dictionary, a map, and a leather-bound journal—a gift from her husband, all wrong and naïve, its pages even blanker than when she lifted the book from its box six weeks before. Alone in her tent, a cavern of fear in her stomach, there are no words to describe the howling dogs, the braying donkeys, the periodic clicking of the Kalashnikovs, their chambers empty as the boys take aim at one another in the darkness. Last night, as she tumbled into a bumpy sleep, she heard Nazeer speak in perfect English: *If you fail, I'll have you spread eagle on a wagon wheel. If you desert you'll be found. Tracked down and broken into bits.* It is the only English she has ever heard him speak; he has mastered every Wayne-like breath and pause. The words swagger and strut through the night air, and yet she doubts he even knows what they mean. But if she gives him the translation, John Wayne with a Pashtun accent would be far too much to bear. She doesn't know how she might react, and it isn't worth the risk of finding out.

Some nights, with the war a gentle thunder in the distance, she manages to dream. Up to her elbows in Joy, in the sink at the kitchen window, she scrubs a pot while her husband yanks carrots from the garden. She feels his eyes on her and looks up from her pot, raises the window just a little. He holds up a carrot, and says something, smiling. *Purple!* she thinks it is. His voice is the urgent voice of the colonel. *What did he say? Ask him how far. Ask him if he can take us there.* She wakes up alone in her tent, the cold ground a needle in her spine. *Purple?* she says out loud, a question mark in her heart. She tries to picture every purple thing she has seen in her life and is surprised to recall so few: a pot of chrysanthemums, her grandmother's nubby old cardigan, an eggplant at the local farmer's market. *Chrysanthemums, cardigan, eggplant,* she murmurs, running her tongue over her sticky morning-teeth, each word brand new, their images only hers to imagine. She ponders and remembers and wonders in Pashtu, the language of the Afghan soldiers. She combs her fingers through her breath, raking up the warmth, piling it up like leaves in her small tent.

Pryde reaches for her nerves, her toothbrush, and her gloves, and stumbles back into the morning. Her back is sore, the soles of her feet throb hot and cold; she can no longer tell the difference. A gentle snow falls all around her. She heads away from the camp toward a snow-covered boulder in the near distance. Behind it, she squats; her cheeks melt the ice like a flame. She stands and pulls

herself together, catches her bulky glove in the zipper's jagged teeth. She takes a travel-sized bottle of SCOPE from her pocket (admittedly, a stupid indulgence), jogs the ice with the tap of her finger, and tosses her head back to the sky. She lets her mind wander just a little, to Paris (though she's never been to Paris), to a small hôtel in St. Germain-des-Près, an eighteenth-century abbey with vaulted arches and a garden bursting with asters and zinnias. She washes her hair in a tiny porcelain sink the very pink of a baby's cheek. She bends at the waist and spits into the snow. Mint green. She marvels at the color. Everything here is gray and white.

On her way back to the camp, she meets the colonel. His eyes skim her face before settling on her boots. *How are your feet? Do you need fresh socks or bandages?* His sole concern is her feet; without them, he cannot do his job.

I'm fine, she says, though the blister on the ball of one foot is on the brink of a stunning rupture. Like a puddle, its center nudges the edges into a lopsided circle. If she is lucky, the second half-mile will numb the sting. For the rest of the journey, her feet will move, but she will not feel them. She will push the pain to some idle corner of her brain, and bury it there with words: *Lookout, fire, ridgeline, surprise, dead.* As deliberately as possible, she meets the colonel's eyes, as gray as the sky behind him. *I'm fine*, she says again, too tired to care if he believes her, not sure if she believes it herself.

The colonel looks up at the mountains, his nostrils twitching like a housecat sniffing at the autumn's first frost. The hairs in his nose are crusted with ice. He stuffs his gloves under an armpit and takes a cigarette from the inside chest pocket of his Army-issue parka. Pryde watches as he rolls it between his palms, flattening the swell of his fear. The cigarette is as thin as the haricot vert her mother served with the Thanksgiving turkey, green beans smothered in a pungent mushroom sauce. She remembers how the afternoon sun lit up her place at the table, how the meat fell silently from her father's carving knife, a tap dance of shadows on the white linen tablecloth. She squeezes her eyes and sandwiches the scene between last night's horror, and what might happen today.

Above the colonel's shoulder, the sun rises with a scream. It echoes off the mountain and hammers at the center of her chest, white hot. It is quiet enough to hear the colonel breathing beside her; she is aware of their opposite rhythms, see-sawing back and forth like the bow of a violin. She holds her breath, tries to time her exhale with his, seeks comfort in the sameness. It doesn't work. They have little in common, her breathing comes shallow and fast. She is twenty years younger, her boots are too tight, she will never grow accustomed to the altitude.

How she came to this place is a mystery; there is little in her past to explain it. Shooting the coyote was a fluke; she put it behind her, she has never been brave, she has never had the urge to do brave things. To the contrary, really. The

spring she turned thirteen, a thick miasma of doubt crept into her life like a cataract, and what had once been very clear turned blurry: her hopes, her plans, her impractical dreams. She had wanted to travel the world, to live among strange tribes like Margaret Mead and her adolescent Manu girls. At night, when she should have been asleep, she took a flashlight to bed, and lost herself in a slippery pile of magazines—*National Geographics* and *Smithsonians* mostly—bewitched by photographs of lush-leafed jungles and big-breasted women who stretched their lips over what looked to her like ping-pong paddles. She dreamed of paddling down the Amazon in a hollowed-out tree trunk, painted faces peeking out at her from the bush, a camera around her neck like Bourke-White, a notebook in her lap like Mead, savoring the danger, communicating in a curious language, earning the trust of strangers. She hoped to discover some lost tribe of supra-pygmies who would adopt her as one of their own; she would love them the way that Camilla Wedgwood is said to have loved the tribes of New Guinea. PBS would commission Sir Richard Attenborough to make a documentary of her extraordinary life. Jane Goodall, Dian Fosse, Pryde MacAllister.

But then something happened. Overnight, she grew irrationally timid. Ordinary things seemed inordinately threatening and intimidating. Example: She defected from the Girl Scouts to avoid a camping trip to Lake Shantituck because she feared that the lake might break the dam and flood the camp. Though she'd trailed her mother through the Army-Navy store, helping her assemble the endless punch-list of required equipment—the metal plates and utensils, the sleeping bag, the giant flashlight—she knew that she would never use them. She felt no connection to them. Their strangeness jangled her nerves.

In her room that same night, Pryde shut the door and sat cross-legged on her bed. She spread her flowered flannel sleeping bag out in front of her and dumped her camping gear on top. She fingered the lip of a battered tin cup until a marshmallow floated on a cloud of hot chocolate, and when she closed her eyes, wisps of steam tickled her nose and warmed her face as she and the other girls gathered silently around a campfire. In the middle of the night, she flicked on the flashlight and cut a path through the woods to the latrine. And when the boogey-man jumped out from behind a rock, she blinded him with the light, then crept back to her tent and slept, triumphant.

She opened her eyes, stashed her gear in a cardboard box, and pushed it to the back of her closet, behind a pair of go-go boots that she hadn't worn since the second grade. She rolled up her sleeping bag, flattened it down, and slid it under the bed where it would soon gather dust as thick as cotton balls. On the morning of the trip to Camp Shantituck, she faked an earache so convincingly that she actually ran a fever; the mercury hovered near the danger mark while she conjured up floods, deer ticks, the call of an owl, poison oak, snakes and

spiders crawling around in her sleeping bag. By the next week, Saturday morning cartoons frightened her, and cobwebs blanketed her orange Schwinn Varsity three-speed. She even quit the softball team after Jody Maxwell (accidentally) banged a line drive straight into her chest beside third base.

Pryde kept her distance and surrendered her dreams. She catalogued her *National Geographics* for future reference. Someday she might teach social studies in the local high school.

If her parents noticed the change in their eldest, they did not seem particularly disturbed. Pryde (strong-willed and opinionated, bordering on impertinent) grew quiet and polite, respectful of her elders and shy around her peers, rarely leaving the farm except for school. She spent a great deal of time in the barn, palming apples to her father's horses, hanging out with the trainers on the track, a bandana at her throat, a stopwatch tickling her palm like a moth. Like Jemma Parker, who woke up one day in the seventh grade, awfully and perfectly blind, Pryde adjusted. She accepted the change without question, and, like Jemma's sudden blindness, its cause seemed destined to remain a mystery. She forgot about Margaret Mead and the Samoans. In the afternoons when she finished her chores, she lay on the grass behind the barn, elbows cradling her head, and swallowed huge cumulous clouds, letting them puff up inside her. With very little practice, she learned to float. She moved sideways through life, buffeted by winds she had no urge to control.

Until her senior year in high school, when her father's sizeable contribution to the Committee-to-Elect-the-President was rewarded with an ambassadorship. The family (excepting Pryde, who had no intention of going anywhere) pinned its hopes on London, Paris, Rome, or Sydney—and waited for official word. Kabul was not even on their radar. Getting the news was like being told to pack for Mars. The most diligent of the four children, Pryde was dispatched to the University library, and told to bring home whatever "educational material" she could find. At the dinner table, she picked at her brussel sprouts and read aloud from her notes. Her reports had the distinctly cautionary flavor of a State Department Travel Alert: *The country faces daunting challenges. American citizens must be vigilant for child abduction, banditry, land mines, and armed rivalry among political and tribal groups. Basic services are rudimentary or do not exist. These factors may contribute to crime and lawlessness.* One night, when her mother had had enough of such pessimistic talk, she said simply: *Pryde, dear, this isn't Camp Shantituck.*

And reluctantly, Pryde surrendered.

They arrived at the end of March. The ground was still frozen, and snow draped the mountains from Kabul to the Khyber Pass; a bitter wind blew south from Kazakhstan. The narrow windows on their crumbling brick residence were

crisscrossed with steel bars, and for one long year, they lived as hostages to their own foolishness, cowering in the basement whenever the city came under fire. Bombs exploded in the street and cracked the concrete foundation of the house, tickling the soles of their feet the way that a subway train shudders deep inside a sidewalk. And still, they flattened their hands against their ears and strained for the all-clear, then buried their fears until the next time.

They lived in practical isolation. At first, a moon-faced Pashtun girl with a long, elegant neck and the lipid brown eyes of a giraffe was the family's only regular visitor. Her name was Spogmay. In the afternoons, Spogmay prepared their dinner in the enormous kitchen that faced onto a courtyard full of armed men. The girl smelled of basil and chutney; her golden skin shimmered like olive oil beneath the gauzy veil of her *tshaaderi*. She had a habit of talking to herself, of whispering the names of the items that she removed from her straw basket and set upon the knife-scarred butcher-block counter. Her voice had the seductive timber of an alto clarinet. Her words were like a reed, bitten more than spoken. She barely moved her lips.

Near the end of that summer, Spogmay brought her eldest brother to the house. Ismail—sienna-skinned and green-eyed—was as mischievous as Spogmay was tractable. While Spogmay kept her eyes on the floor, tiptoeing round the kitchen on her bare feet, Ishmail was dangerous, vaulting onto the counter, snatching apples and pears from the silver bowl that Pryde's mother had dragged halfway across the globe. Watching him chomp on an apple one day (baring chunky white teeth, licking his lips, even relishing the seeds) she was reminded of Pooh Bear—the pony she'd lost in a stable fire the December that there hadn't been a Christmas. Ismail was a flirt. He liked to sit on the counter and braid her hair; she would back into the space between his legs and close her eyes and when his fingers glanced her skin, gathering hair at the nape of her neck, she felt a stirring between her own legs. He flirted in silence, and in Pashtu, and she fell in lust, and then in love, as much with the language as with him. For a while, Ismail made Pryde forget who she was. And then he was gone (a dream-like kiss in the shadows of the courtyard), and she was left with only Spogmay and the strangely beautiful language that kept him close.

Like a magnet, Pryde gravitated toward the enigmatic Pashtun girl, the stone floor cold beneath her own bare feet; daily, her hips jutted forward to greet her. At first, she merely listened; soon enough she let the strange new words roll off her tongue. Her first nouns were eggplant, chutney, and mutton; her first verbs were sauté, toss, and cube. At night, she memorized recipes like flash cards of multiplication tables. While she slept, silvery skeins of grammar threaded their way through her subconscious, connecting words to form full sentences: *Sauté the eggplant in a half-inch of olive oil. Toss in a tablespoon of chutney. Cube the mutton and shred the onions. Stir.* Eventually, she dreamed in Pashtu, and

thought of herself as more Pashtun than Kentuckian, and when the rest of the family fled Kabul for home, she enrolled in a highly regarded linguistics program at a venerable university on the Thames. Two years later, she graduated with honors, the only student of Pashtu in the school's ancient history.

After university, she took a job as a translator for a thriving London outfit that hosted conferences and seminars for a wide variety of international audiences. Astronomers and medical examiners, economists and psychologists, archeologists, meteorologists, astrologists, and cartographers. Week after week, she translated *white dwarfs* and *poison puts, bradycardia* and *rigor mortis* into Pashtu for the handful of Afghan conferees; one or ten, it made no difference to her. She made maps, charted stars, and measured earthquakes, all from a safe distance. She craved certainty and quietude, safe harbors and calculable odds. On an ordinary Tuesday in October, she married a mathematician named Tom. Each night, she dreamed of Ismail. Neither happy nor unhappy, she merely was, and that was enough. She floated through life on a lovely bank of English clouds.

And so she could not have predicted how completely her life would change. One warm summer night, as she was sitting in her office, locusts buzzing, lost in a textbook on Jungian psychology, Pryde looked up to see a stranger beside her desk. He was tall and dark, and vaguely familiar, dressed in neatly pressed khaki slacks and a brown, collarless shirt buttoned up to the neck. A ragged scar, rough as a rocky riverbed, reached from his hairline to the corner of his mouth in a perfect half-moon. In the light from the hallway, he looked like a ghost. She reached up to touch her own face. The curve of her cheek was smooth beneath her fingers, more lake than river. Her breath scraped her throat like a razor.

I did not mean to startle you. I knocked, but you did not hear me.

I am a very heavy reader, she replied in the same language (more flirtatiously than she'd intended), and smiled, surprising herself, since she did not normally warm to strangers. In her head, she'd translated his Pashtu into English, and then back again to Pashtu. She spoke formally, the words strangely stilted and uncertain, like matchsticks standing on end. She looked at him hard. *Ismail,* she whispered.

Six weeks later, she returned to Afghanistan.

She had not been back since the Soviet occupation. Circling the airfield in a military transport (sharp air whistling through an ancient bullet hole above her head), she looked down upon the snowy mountains and wide plains, and was reminded of the winter Alleghenies, starkly cold and beautiful. South of Kabul, in a muddy field rutted with snow and ice, the plane bucked and lunged its way to a near disaster. And yet deplaning, turning her collar up to the cold, she felt oddly calm, as if she'd just drunk a warm glass of milk in front of the fire at home with the cat asleep on her feet.

Ismail was waiting for her, though she barely recognized him this time, the long scar on his face was thick and red, it spilled down his cheek like a blistering stream of lava. Beside him stood the American colonel, short, squat, and clean-shaven. Boots the color of mud. Black leather gloves that made his hands look like King Kong's. When they shook hands behind the battered jeep, she fought the urge to scream. Fay Wray in a Taliban stronghold. A far cry from Margaret Mead playing house on Samoa.

They'd headed north, past mere suggestions of houses, slippery shells of packed mud stapled with branches and sticks. Now and then, a glimpse of a child, a goat, a few sheep. The nicest building she saw was a mosque: windows, a roof, a patch of snow-covered grass. The drive to the camp was endless, and after a while she slept, oblivious to the ruts in the road, the burned-out tanks, the decimated villages, the occasional shepherd, a single Black Hawk hovering overhead. When at last they made camp, it was dark, and she crawled into her tent and slept some more. Once, she awoke to the touch of Ismail's fingers in her hair, and twined her fingers through his before drifting back to sleep.

In the middle of the night, she awakened to the rat-tat-tat of gunshots punctuated by the simultaneous cries of the soldier-boys, and the sharp commands of the American colonel, their voices like the dissonant chords of a minor key; music without melody, language without words. She lay very still and listened hard with her fists hooked under her chin, her warm breath snaking through the cold air in the tent, her body pressing down on the commotion outside. Between the thunderous beats of her heart and the clanging din of the confusion outside, she made out the muffled crunch of boots in the snow, the flap of a blanket in the wind, the sorrowful whinny of a horse, abandoned. She put words to the sounds but could not divine their meaning.

In a strange reversal of roles, it was Nazeer who made the translation. Minutes or hours later (the time eaten up by darkness and fear), she felt him beside her in the tent, his arms around her, his smooth cheek in the curve of her neck, warm, like water on ice. Without a word, he answered her unasked questions. *A single sniper. Ismail is dead.* She tensed and he held her tighter, his thin arms surprisingly strong around her waist. *Sssh, sssh* like the wind. He pushed a lock of hair off her neck and bent closer. *He was feeding his horse in the moonlight. A stupid man. A brave man. I will miss him.* His lips kissed the lobe of her ear, and she broke away, and rolled over and found his eyes, a glimmer of gold in the darkness. *The sniper is dead. Now go to sleep.* His breath smelled like mulberries. Once, during the night, she awoke to find him beside her, and then slipped back to sleep, like a child tucked safely in her bed.

In the morning, the colonel had asked about her feet and Nazeer had pointed to the mountains as if nothing had changed, even as a boy in a moth-eaten prayer

shawl led Ismail's mare away from the camp. Now, as the sun continues its motionless climb above the mountains, the blister presses on the ball of her left foot, and Pryde wants to believe that she imagined the gunshots, that Nazeer's breath on her ear was nothing more than the tease of the wind through the canvas folds of her tent. But then he catches her eye, and she knows that Ismail is dead. Killed only yards from where she slept.

The colonel hands her a pistol, a question mark in his eyes. Without a word, she shoves it into the waistband of her pants, the act, she suspects he concludes, of a competent shooter. Satisfied, he walks away, leaving her alone with her grief.

Theirs is a reconnaissance mission; if all goes well, no shots will be fired. The enemy is believed to be hiding in the caves of the Sia Mountains. Only months ago, Nazeer and the other boys were holed up in the same caves. Recently, they defected to the American side. They are brave and determined, but unused to the cold. Some wear open-toed shoes, and tattered Russian Army pants topped with shawls like the one worn by the boy with Ismail's horse. A mile or two into their trek, Pryde rummages through her knapsack for her socks and offers them to Nazeer and the others. Shyly, they accept her gift; they seem surprised by their perfect fit. The colonel scowls and scoffs at her stupidity. *You're crazy*, he tells her. *You are bound to regret this.* Within minutes, of course, the boys' socks are wet and soggy. Each step leaves a colorful trail of wool in the snow, tiny specks of blue, red and green. Pryde follows the trail, one hand on her pistol, imagining the scene in Mary Poppins where Bert's chalk paintings run on the sidewalk in the rain. She thinks of Ismail, and her husband and his carrots, and begins to suspect that she may never see Paris.

Two hours later, they reach the base of the mountains and make camp for tea and bread. Nazeer and another boy build a fire behind a man-sized rock. In an effort to hide their position, they wave at the smoke, gathering it up in dirty fists, the way that Pryde swallowed clouds in another life. A single cup is passed around and refilled as needed; the cup is cracked and chipped and beautiful. A hunk of brown bread is shared silently among them. No one speaks. There is nothing to say. She knows they are thinking the same thing. She gets up to stretch her legs and finds the hint of a path up the rocky mountain. She means to climb until it hurts, a safe distance, until she feels the stab of each breath in her chest. And then, in the mouth of a cave, she glimpses the snow lion, and she is back on the Cumberland River.

The pistol's hammer is deafening. It rings in her ears and confounds her sense of place and identity. When the colonel drops the teacup, the boys can only stare in disbelief; it is a clean break. From her place on the ridge, Pryde feels their eyes burning into her back. She returns the pistol to her waistband, and turns for a moment toward the camp. But then the blister bursts against the sole of her boot, and she bites down on her tongue, and keeps climbing.

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Casey Clabough

Confronting Traumatic Anxiety: William Manchester's *Goodbye, Darkness*

Beginning his memoir, *Goodbye, Darkness* (1987), with a description of a dream in which he records his first war-time kill, William Manchester sets the tone for a book in which—through dreams, rigorous self-analysis, and revisiting sites of prior trauma—he explores and attempts to overcome the lingering traumatic anxiety[1] he developed as a Marine during World War II. More complex and problematic than an obligatory war memoir, Manchester's book constitutes a loose history of the war in the Pacific, as well as a riveting exploration of one man's psychological profile both during combat and in postwar America—the psychological dynamics of being a wartime soldier who takes lives and a veteran struggling to live with and accept that experience. Manchester's book reads not unlike one of Freud's case histories and conveniently includes significant pre-war traumas from his latent[2] and adolescent stages of development, providing the reader with a better understanding of the traumatic anxiety from which he suffers as a mature adult. Considering Manchester's collective experiences in the text (his childhood trauma, child-parent relationships, and war-time trauma) from a perspective centering around psychological trauma, provides a unique and unusual understanding of the author, the memoir's central figure (the portrayed William Manchester), and the book itself—which, in turn, constitutes a unique and noteworthy personal as well as archetypal, memoir of war.

Before examining Manchester's episodes of traumatic anxiety, it is important to make a fundamental interpretive distinction between Manchester "the man" and Manchester "the writer." Although *Goodbye, Darkness* is in many respects an autobiography[3], a significant difference exists between the textually portrayed autobiographer and the living, breathing person who writes. Manchester, for example, claims to have exorcized his traumatic anxiety and resolved his recurrent dream after physically revisiting Sugar Loaf Hill during his return trip to Okinawa in 1978 (*Goodbye* 453-454). Thus, his primary traumatic anxiety—his need to accept and make peace with an event from the past—would have been resolved (at least according to him) long before he began any therapeutic writing process and the development of his textual persona. In other words, the

writing itself would not be a working out of his anxieties since Manchester "the man" claims to have resolved them beforehand. Charles Hanly addresses the theoretical problem of the writer and the written in a portion of his discussion on applied psychoanalysis:

> Studies in applied psychoanalysis can take several forms. The study of the relation of the life of the creator to his creation is essentially psychoanalytically informed biography, although the emphasis may be placed primarily on the work [. . .] there is the problem of the intentional fallacy—that of basing the interpretation of a text on what its author intended its meaning to be. (Hanly 46)

The primary concern of this study being an analysis of the Manchester presented in the text of *Goodbye, Darkness,* biographical information on Manchester "the man" will be brought in only in places where it interacts with the content of the text and serves an interpretive purpose. As Hanly notes, "A knowledge of the life of the artist may be useful in shedding light upon [. . .] unconscious intentions, which form the deepest source of the artist's inspiration" (Hanly 46). Though not artistic in the traditional literary sense, Manchester's historical memoir contains highly personal psychological dynamics which often are illuminated through biographical information.

Turning from the question of the autobiographer and the portrayed autobiographer to the text, it is important initially to consider the rough organization of the work. Reviewing the book, Marvin Fletcher complained, "The various elements of this 'memoir' when brought together do not constitute a cohesive whole" (96). Fletcher's general comment—in addition to addressing the book's confusing chronological shifts between dreams, personal experiences, and historical events from Manchester's life—intuitively reflects the historical circumstances under which the work was composed; for *Goodbye, Darkness* is actually a byproduct of several other projects. Manchester described how the memoir was developed while speaking at the University of South Carolina's World War II Writers' Symposium:

> I read that my chances of surviving the war would have been much better under MacArthur, so I wrote about MacArthur and then having finished that I wanted to go back to the islands. *Life* magazine agreed to pay my expenses and I got back from visiting all the islands, mine and the other battlefields, and wrote the piece for *Life* and I wrote 150 pages. *Life* took what they wanted, but I

kept writing, and the result became *Goodbye, Darkness*. ("World" 177-178)

Explaining the evolution of his idea for a personal history, Manchester's inception of the memoir is linked to three seemingly unrelated projects. However, having moved from the MacArthur biography[4] and the *Life* article (both dealing with aspects of the war) to the memoir, it seems probable that Manchester had been slowly, though perhaps unconsciously, working his way toward writing about the war from a personal perspective. In fact, this process had begun long before he ever decided to write about MacArthur, as demonstrated by the sections of the memoir (and particularly the historical chapters) drawn from Manchester's previous writings. For example, many of the specific battle histories in *Goodbye, Darkness* come from *The Glory and the Dream: A Narrative History of America, 1932-1972* and "The Island War" chapter of *Controversy*, a book-length collection of previously published essays.[5] Furthermore, in a more personal example from *Controversy*, the "Corps d'Elite" chapter contains a memorable sentiment regarding the Marine Corps that also appears in *Goodbye, Darkness*: the passage in *Controversy* that reads, "The Corps is like the memory of an old affair" (147) becomes, "[The Corps] is like recalling a broken marriage" (*Goodbye* 148) in the memoir. Consisting of numerous elements drawn from different periods of Manchester's writing career, the memoir's organization might come across as bewildering at times. More importantly though, the previous writings reflect both Manchester's ever-present interest in the war and his gradual evolution from writing about the war as a scholar and through the lenses of others, toward being able to address it in relation to his personal experiences.

Having established the memoir's organization and developmental history, it is essential to consider the Manchester persona presented in the text—the projected man who is interpreting both history and himself. Introducing his central problem in the memoir's "Prelude," Manchester relates that following the assassination of Robert Kennedy and the disposal of his World War II Colt .45 his repetitive "nightmares began" (*Goodbye* 19). As Lenore Terr argues, in her brief discussion of *Goodbye, Darkness*, "Manchester [. . .] developed a repeated World War II dream shortly after his friend, President John F. Kennedy, was assassinated. The dream was stimulated by the sudden, unexpected stress of a national and personal tragedy" (*Too Scared* 215). Terr associates the stress of Robert's death with the anxiety-tinged beginning of Manchester's recurring World War II dream. In addition, Terr's general theoretical observation that "once [traumatic] anxiety is set in motion, it may recur with new life stresses" (*Too Scared* 214), is applicable to the "triggering" relationship between Kennedy's death and the beginning of Manchester's dreams. Although Terr accurately establishes the death of Kennedy as the central "triggering" mechanism for Manchester's recurring dream, an

important aspect of the text she overlooks is his abandonment of his wartime sidearm. This seems significant in the context of William Rivers's antiquated but applicable observation regarding World War I trauma: "New symptoms often arise [. . .] at home which are not the immediate and necessary consequence of war experience, but are due to repression of painful memories and thoughts, or of unpleasant affective states arising out of reflection concerning this experience" (Rivers 173). With Kennedy's death, Manchester immediately thinks of and "reflects" upon his pistol—the weapon he used to record his first kill. In discarding his Colt .45, he seems to be both repressing and rejecting an instrument of his wartime past. Faced with a new episode of anxiety, he connects the gun—which, with the exception of the "Raider" cap, is his last remaining possession from the war—to a similar trauma he experienced during the war and throws it away. Thus, the symbolic disposal of the pistol and the assassination play major roles in provoking the development of Manchester's recurring dream.

Although viewed today as somewhat less enlightened in his understanding of trauma, Freud nonetheless has a useful passage which speaks to the setting of Manchester's dream and its connection to Kennedy's death: "Dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident" ("Beyond" 598). Faced with a new source of anxiety (the Kennedy assassination), Manchester projects back, in his dream, to the time and physical site of his most powerful experience with traumatic anxiety—Sugar Loaf Hill. Relating, near the end of the memoir, that Sugar Loaf Hill is "the hill in my dreams" (*Goodbye* 450) and that the overpowering events there resulted in a "traumatic amnesia" (*Goodbye* 436), the mound serves as the Freudian "accident" which stands out from all others; and thus appears in every dream as the geographic barrier upon which the two dream Manchesters (the young Sergeant and the old man) ascend from opposite slopes. In addition, the figures, as well as the hill, seem to be manifestations of what Manchester claims is "a lost past." Influenced by his recurring dream, the chief reason he returns to the Pacific is to "find what I had lost out there and retrieve it" (*Goodbye* 22). "Like Merlin in *The Once and Future King,* the old man in my dreams knows the future; it is the past that is unrevealed to him" (*Goodbye* 56). With the old man's interest in the past supplemented by objects from it (the Sergeant and the hill itself), it is clear that Manchester's answers (and the reader's)—the ability to cope with "what was"—rest in an understanding of his life's earlier experiences.

In his "Dora" case history, Freud writes, "If [. . .] trauma theory is not to be abandoned, we must go back to her [Dora's] childhood and look about there for any influences or impressions which might have had an effect analogous to that of a trauma" ("Fragment" 183). Freud's general theoretical observation here, problematic as it may be, constitutes an effective approach for linking the older Manchester's condition with earlier childhood experiences; and an examination

of Manchester's early childhood must necessarily address his father. Strong, stern, and demanding, the elder Manchester, a decorated war veteran himself, served as the shaping force in young William's life. However, the father's very "manliness"—his courage, idealism, and "war hero" status—also seems to have served as a catalyst in undercutting his son's strength; for, compared to the decisive force of the father, the young William is portrayed as a weakling, frequently experiencing feelings of inferiority. This father/son relationship and the implications of it are initially observed in Manchester's chagrin at being referred to as "Little Bill," the ex-Marine's diminutive son: "I hated being called Junior—I have always regarded 'Jr.' as a sly boast of legitimacy—and throughout my life I was mortified by people telephoning our house who had to be asked whether they wanted 'Big Bill' or 'Little Bill'" (*Goodbye* 33-34). Furthermore, as a result of a debilitating bout with pneumonia, Little Bill physically remains "a feeble Bill" (*Goodbye* 35) and a "sissy" (*Goodbye* 36). In addition, Little Bill's "lesser" status is often accompanied by humiliating events which stand out in stark contrast to his father's pride and honor. In *Controversy*, for example, while describing a Memorial Day on which his father and other Marines are being honored, Manchester recounts his own embarrassing miscue: "The column appears [. . .] led by my father [. . .] everyone was cheering, but I saw only him [. . .] blinded by what was later called Gung ho I took off at high port, tripped, and fell into a patch of dense shrubbery" (*Controversy* 147). The son of a man who seemed unreachable in his idealized stature, the younger Manchester repeatedly found himself wallowing in fear, shame, and embarrassment—the absolute opposite of his decorated sire.

Despite his childhood inability to live up to his father's standards, Manchester's writings do not seem to harbor any bitterness or resentment toward him. One reason for this may be cultural. Discussing the role of the American patriarch at the World War II Writers' Symposium, Manchester maintained, "In the 1930s the man, the father, was the head of the household. He was obeyed and he was respected" ("World" 139). With the idea of questioning his father prohibited, Manchester probably also felt a great deal of inhibition about expressing any feelings of bitterness and insubordination. Furthermore, this "obedience" and "respect" also seems to have caused Manchester to sympathize with many of his father's feelings. For example, based on his father's experiences, he could probably not help but develop a love/hate view of the Marine Corps. Having been reduced to his pre-combat rank, designated "unfit for service" (*Goodbye* 29), and deprived of any compensation for his World War I injury, the elder Manchester could never fully appreciate the Corps without some feelings of resentment. This relationship seems to transfer over to his son when, as the father is dying, the younger Manchester projects[6] onto his father's eyes the message, "*Avenge Me!* [Manchester's italics]" (*Goodbye* 45). Guided by this self-imposed crusade, Manchester believes he is doing just that (attempting to avenge his

father's dishonorable treatment) when he joins the Corps. However, keeping in mind the fact that the father's message is projected, it seems just as likely (meaning both arguments appear sound) that the "me" in "avenge me" is the younger Manchester, seeking to avenge himself of his childhood inferiority to his father. This is evident in his constant self-comparisons to the patriarch once he joins the Marines. For example, when Manchester is dismissed from OCS training, he nonetheless takes pleasure in at least having "outranked my father" (*Goodbye* 159). Furthermore, when injured in battle, the most significant issue Manchester ponders is if he will, like his father, receive the Purple Heart: "Three days later, on Saturday, June 2, I suffered my superficial gunshot wound. I remember asking a corpsman, 'Will I get a Purple Heart?' He nodded, and I thought of my father: '*We're Even* [Manchester's italics]"' (*Goodbye* 441). It is also significant to note, in the context of this passage and the one in which he projects "avenge me," that the words "we're even" and "avenge me" are in italics. This seems important since Manchester hardly ever uses italics for narrative purposes throughout the entire memoir. Furthermore, "we're even" attempts to answer the command, "avenge me," pointing to the fact that Manchester has—in addition to achieving all that his father achieved—satisfied his own personal desire to rise up from his childhood humiliations and match the man of war and honor his father had been. Finally, "we're even" also answers the question of Manchester's lack of bitterness and resentment toward his father. Having equaled and even surpassed his accomplishments, Manchester has no motive, conscious or unconscious, to resent the father's former superiority.

Although Manchester does eventually "even" the score between himself and his father, as a weak, prewar adolescent he remains in worshipful awe of the patriarch. This is all too evident in the self-described "traumatic amnesia" that follows the elder Manchester's death:

> The others were weeping but I just stared down at the grave. I wondered: *Where has he gone?* [Manchester's italics]. Then a curtain falls over my memory. It is all a dark place in my mind. I recall nothing that happened in the next four months. It was my first experience of traumatic amnesia, or fugue. I was in deep shock. [. . .] . None of it has ever come back to me. (*Goodbye* 46)

Having lost the dominating force of order in his life, it is too much for Manchester to try and define a world in which he no longer has his father as an overarching reference point. This overwhelmed state of traumatic amnesia closely echoes the association Lenore Terr draws between the death of Virginia Woolf's mother and her subsequent problems: "Virginia seems to have been a bipolar

patient—and 'patient' she indeed was, seeing doctors, nervous and mental specialists, and breaking down into several hospitalizable illnesses beginning at the age of 13 after her mother suddenly died" ("Who's Afraid" 535). Although there are important cultural and gender differences between the Woolfs (Virginia and her mother) and the Manchesters (the boy and the father), there does appear to be a shared sense of trauma in the two adolescents' loss of powerful parental figures. In fact, Woolf would go on to memorialize her mother—just as Manchester honors his father in the memoir—most notably in her highly autobiographical work, *To the Lighthouse*.

Woolf comparisons aside, Manchester's use of italics in asking "where has he gone?" underscores—as it does in his other italicized narrative dialogue regarding his father—the importance of the exclamation. Furthermore, the loss of his father also results in a desire to replace the patriarch's most prominent characteristic—discipline. As a consequence, Manchester "adores" (*Goodbye* 145) Marine boot camp since it calls to mind the authority of the father: "I wanted to surrender my individuality, curbing my neck beneath the yoke of petty tyranny. Since my father's death I had yearned for stern discipline, and Parris Island, where he himself had learned discipline a quarter century earlier, gave it to me in spades" (*Goodbye* 147). Without the forceful guidance of his father, Manchester simply replaces his lost enforcer of tyranny with the original essence of his father's discipline—the Marine Corps. Once in the arms of this abstracted step-parent, Manchester is able to temporarily escape his debilitating amnesia before being confronted with the powerful traumas that await him in the Pacific.

Turning from Manchester's father to his mother, it is significant to note that his idealization of the paternal figure is not accompanied by a low opinion of the maternal one. This seems all the more important in that Manchester appears to feel that his childhood relationship with his mother was largely responsible for his boyhood weakness:

> The mother-child dyad is central to any man's development, and this was especially true of me, for I had always been more anima than animus, more 'feminine' in the Jungian sense—sensitive, poetic, creative, warm—than 'masculine': direct, orderly, logical, assertive. I had begun to change since putting on a uniform but my mother was still the sun around whom I orbited. (*Goodbye* 175)

Effeminate throughout latency and early adolescence, Manchester's gender transition coincides not only with "putting on a uniform," but with his simultaneous need for sexual relations. On page 176, Manchester ends the paragraph

on his mother relating, "In many ways I was still a boy." However, the following paragraph begins:

> But I wanted to be a man, and an essential step in the process—one my mother wouldn't have understood—was the forfeiture of my own virginity. To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven [. . .] . There is also a time to get laid, and I was due [. . .] . I was surer of myself, readier to take charge [. . .] . (*Goodbye* 176)

Thus, Manchester's farewell to his mother and the transition toward maleness he describes are approximate to his need to "get laid." Eugene Kaplan's discussion of the male adolescent's initiation into dating is useful in conjunction with Manchester's developmental transition: "As boys became more at ease in the dating relationship, the ambivalence in their relationship to their mothers is diminished significantly" ("Adolescents" 220). Manchester's shift, therefore—the decline of his shared feminine association with his mother—is linked to his impending sexual experiences with Taffy Meredith and Mae. Yet, in the midst of his transition, Manchester's gradual rejection of femininity should not be confused with a complete rejection of the maternal figure; for, as Kaplan also notes, "Although this regressive tendency [the need for the mother's presence] diminishes with age, the regressive wish for reunion with the mother of early childhood is never fully outgrown" ("Development" 140). Thus, while Manchester rejects his identification with the mother during late adolescence, he still maintains a strong, though distanced, connection with her. Finally, the simple fact that Manchester mentions his mother so little with the memoir—as opposed to the numerous digressions on the father—points to the fact that he had few, if any, negative conflicts to overcome with regard to her.

Although Manchester appears to possess a positive—though perhaps unusually strong—relationship with his mother, his early experiences with other members of the female sex are far from beneficial. During advanced latency and early adolescence Manchester's femininity and physical weakness result in constant schoolyard beatings and his most humiliating childhood experience—a pummeling at the hands of a girl named Betty Zimmerman: "To inflict the ultimate humiliation upon me, one gang decided to let a girl beat me up [. . .]. Flattening me with a single blow, she straddled me in what Masters and Johnson call the female-superior position, swatting away until she had given me two shiners. I recall with amazement that I felt aroused" (*Goodbye* 37). Interestingly, Manchester's most traumatic and memorable scene of humiliation—and his first significant

non-maternal experience with the female sex—also serves as his first instance of sexual arousal.

The paradoxical relationship of physical abuse and sexual stimulation in the Betty Zimmerman beating is reflected later in Manchester's life during the war, when he has his brush with the imaginary Whore of Death. As Freud states, "If the memory which we have uncovered does not answer our expectations, it may be that we ought to pursue the same path a little further; perhaps behind the first traumatic scene there may be concealed the memory of a second" ("The Aetiology" 100). Although Manchester's hallucination of the Whore of Death and his ensuing masturbation may simply be a release of his survivor's guilt—a soothing of his "overstimulation"—after having his entire squad wiped out, it is also likely that the paradoxical elements of the Whore of Death—her erotic sexuality and physical threat—mirror the traits of the young girl who had aroused young Manchester with her flailing fists and "toiling loins" (*Goodbye* 37). In further support of this reading, the Whore is "somehow familiar" (*Goodbye* 87), "dressed like the girls I remembered at Smythe and Mount Holyoke" (*Goodbye* 88). Therefore, the hallucinatory vixen is also connected to the earlier experience through both its indescribable familiarity and its association with school. Haunted by two experiences in which he was victimized by females, Manchester's mature view of women calls for an authority he never had. Accordingly, in his foreword to *Chronicle of 20th Century Conflict*, he laments, "In time the prospect of nuclear war altered the balance between the sexes. The image of man as protector and defender of the home had been destroyed, and that thought eventually led women to re-examine their own role in society" (Foreword 9). Shaped by experiences long since past, these are the words of a man who feels that the masculine sphere of his society has been compromised, violated, and subordinated by femininity just as he was once subjected and humiliated by Betty Zimmerman.

Exhibiting a fear of women he developed as a child in a foreword published in 1993, Manchester exhibits—in more than one respect—that, "The child within us never vanishes" (*Goodbye* 119). Yet, in both a conscious and unconscious manner, Manchester's 1978 journey through the Pacific does constitute a determined effort to "vanish" or banish the wartime trauma of his late adolescence. In fact, this is precisely what is depicted in the memoir as Manchester "island hops" his way toward a resolution of his recurring dream. His transition toward acceptance is first apparent on Guam, where, "My dreams of the Sergeant begin to change [. . .] . He,—himself, viewed now as through a prism,—is subtly altered. His self-assurance has begun to ebb [. . .]. He is becoming confused. He hesitates; his attention is divided; every third or fourth night I sleep through without any sign of him" (*Goodbye* 348-349). Interestingly, the confusion of the Sergeant and the occasional absence of the dream are approximate to a conscious event in which Manchester stands while the "Marines' Hymn" is played during a parade

on Guam. This appears significant in that part of the original "triggering" action for the dream was Manchester's denial of an aspect of his past—the throwing away of his Colt .45. Thus, in opposition to his original rejection, Manchester, rather than disowning his past, is able—for the first time in the memoir—to accept and even feel "moved" (*Goodbye* 352) by the fact that he was once a Marine. Although he does not "understand why I did it" (*Goodbye* 352), the action appears to set off a reverse "triggering" of acceptance—an acceptance that works toward resolution rather than the perpetuation of his conflict.

As Manchester labors toward resolving his past while physically moving through the Pacific, the Sergeant in his dream continues to fade and weaken. In the Okinawa Hilton, he again dreams "of the Sergeant, the old man, and their hill. It is a shocking nightmare, the worst yet. I had expected irony, scorn, contempt, and sneers from him. Instead, he is almost catatonic" (*Goodbye* 447).[7] As with the dream on Guam, the Sergeant's deterioration seems to be connected to Manchester's examination and resolution of his past; for, in the same paragraph that Manchester records his Okinawa dream, he also wonders, "I have, I think, done this to myself, I have been betrayed, or been a betrayer, and this fragile youth is paying the price" (*Goodbye* 447). Occurring simultaneously, the catatonia and simultaneous weakening of the sergeant and Manchester's speculation upon his responsibility in the unconscious conflict he is experiencing appear to be linked. Earlier, when Robert Kennedy was shot, Manchester's reaction had been to throw his gun—a physical symbol—away rather than to try and resolve his new trauma. As a result, unconscious conflict developed in the form of his recurring dream. Now, consciously facing his conflicts and their connection to himself, he finally encounters a means by which to lessen their presence in his dreams.

In the dreams Manchester experiences on Guam and Okinawa, conscious events—his standing at the "Marines' Hymn" and his acceptance of responsibility for his trauma—clearly are linked to the changes that occur in his unconscious. This is also true for the conscious event that occurs on Okinawa just before his final dream in Hong Kong. Locating Sugar Loaf Hill on modern Okinawa, Manchester consciously realizes that it is "the hill in my dreams" (*Goodbye* 450). Contrasting the "healing mantle of turf" (450) he now sees against the naked rock it had been in 1944, Manchester invokes Carl Sandburg's "I Am the Grass" (450) and asks Christ to take away his "*murdering hate* [Manchester's italics]" (450) before realizing why he jumped hospital to be with his men all those years ago: "It was an act of love" (*Goodbye* 451). In a moment of conscious realization Manchester comes to an acceptance of why he returned to the front at the risk of additional danger and anxiety following his initial wound. In addition, through his religious invocation he subordinates the hatred and outrage that had fueled the unconscious persona of the young Sergeant in favor of the love he feels for

his comrades. In the context of the memoir, Manchester would have the reader believe that he has consciously made peace with his past.

Taking in the commercialism and Japanese presence on modern Hawaii early in the memoir, Manchester says of his Sergeant, "I have begun to realize that it will take a great deal, a fire storm of passion, to exorcize him" (*Goodbye* 67). Though Manchester would have the reader think he is "redeemed" by love and purged of his hate on Okinawa, he must still resolve the unconscious conflict that has fueled his recurring dream. His physical tour completed, at the Ambassador Hotel in Hong Kong he experiences his final dream, in which the old man climbs the hill only to find that the Sergeant is gone: "He saw nothing, heard nothing" (*Goodbye* 453). Having consciously resolved his hate and unconsciously banished the Sergeant, Manchester finally experiences his "fire storm of passion" and the old man turns away, "blinded by tears" (*Goodbye* 454). Concluding the memoir with this final dream, Manchester wants to imply that his conscious and unconscious conflicts both finally have been resolved.

Summing up the book's multiple elements in a single sentence, N. Kent Goldsmith relates, "There is a great deal of ambivalence in *Goodbye, Darkness*" (Goldsmith 91). Among other things, Goldsmith's general statement is accurate in terms of Manchester's resolution; for, despite the tears shed at the end of the memoir by Manchester's textual persona, there is still the question of whether or not Manchester "the man"—to return to the interpretive distinction addressed earlier—has truly worked out his conflict. In conjunction with this problem, Lenore Terr relates her clinical opinion of Manchester "the man" in the following terms:

> I would venture to guess that the dream, Manchester's travels to the Pacific islands, and the act of writing itself, each a kind of personal, post-traumatic repetition, would not have completely dissipated William Manchester's anxiety. The feelings stirred up by scary battles from the teen years would not necessarily disappear with ease. Time helps. But we know from examples like Alfred Hitchcock that time does not cure everything. If we dared to ask William Manchester today whether he still occasionally dreams his repeated dream, his answer might well be 'yes.' (*Too Scared* 215)

Although Terr does not go into great depth in arguing for the continuation of Manchester's conflict, her analysis seems to be supported by Manchester, himself. Reading from a letter during the World War II Writers Symposium, Manchester movingly explained, "The martyrs of World War II have been dead for half a century. Many, if not most, belong to my generation, and each year, my awareness of

them, and my sense of loss grow stronger" ("World" 168). Considering Terr's analysis and Manchester's ongoing and increasing sense of loss, it does in fact seem unlikely that Manchester "the man" would have completely resolved his wartime conflict through his respective conscious and unconscious "fire storms of passion." This answer, however, does not make his written persona—the memoir's healed Manchester—any less poignant or heroic in his tedious journey through a haunted past toward a dramatic conclusion. As a record of an evolution from volcanic rock to flourishing grass, debilitating repression to overdue tears, and "murderous" youth to the realization of love, *Goodbye, Darkness* provides the reader with a powerful and compelling representation of a life crippled by visceral and psychological conflict, yet redeemed in acceptance and resolution.

Notes

1. The use of the terms "traumatic" and "traumatic anxiety" in this study are drawn from Sigmund Freud and Lenore Terr, respectively. Freud defined "traumatic" in the following manner: "We describe as 'traumatic' any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. It seems to me that the concept of trauma necessarily implies a connection of this kind with a breach in an otherwise effacious barrier against stimuli [. . .] the pleasure principle is for the moment put out of action. There is no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus which have broken in and of binding them, in the physical sense, so that they can be disposed of' ("Beyond" 607). Lenore Terr builds upon Freud's understanding of trauma and his idea of "neurotic anxiety"—which is developed in "Anxiety and Instinctual Life" (782-783)—in establishing her definition of a traumatic anxiety mechanism: "The anxiety stirred up by trauma is far too massive, far too intense, to be handled by one or two ordinary nightmares. Dreams, the ordinary coping devices for warding off internal emotional conflict, do not 'work' after massive horror, terror, and disgrace. Dreams are simply too weak a mental mechanism to handle this kind of intensity. The psyche will use its ordinary, old coping devices, dreams, but it cannot successfully work off a trauma in this way. The mechanism overworks. The dreams repeat and repeat. In many instances the mechanism fails to burn out on its own, however. The traumatized dreamer many be granted a month's rest or even a year's respite. But sooner or later the post-traumatic dream will come back. Traumatic anxiety apparently does not spontaneously dissipate during one's lifetime. Once this anxiety has been set into motion, it may recur with new life stresses, especially those that carry echoes of the old helplessness and loss" (*Too Scared* 214).

2. The term "latent" is used in conjunction with Eugene Kaplan's definition of the "latency" period of a child's development: "Latency corresponds roughly to the grade school years, ages six to eleven. The designation of this period as the time for grade school is society's institutionalized response to the child's developmental advances in self-control, tractability, cognition, and socialization. The latency child is capable of functioning for hours away from home and parents, of sitting, listening, and learning, and is therefore considered educable" ("Development" 140). This period is significant for Manchester in that he suffers his most severe pre-war trauma—the pummeling at the hands of a young girl (*Goodbye* 37)—sometime between advanced latency and early adolescence.

3. The appropriate genre for *Goodbye, Darkness* is an issue that has been debated by reviewers of the text. Although the book frequently appears on military history course syllabi as secondary

reading, most reviewers—from retired military personnel to academic military historians—see the text as a riveting, successful personal narrative, which leaves much to be desired as a history book. As one reviewer explains, "The book cannot be considered a history of the war in the Pacific because the story presented is incomplete, inaccurate, and disjointed. A number of campaigns and battles, such as Midway, are almost totally ignored" (Fletcher 96).

4. Manchester's biography of MacArthur is *American Ceasar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964.* See the list of works cited for publication information.

5. The chapter "Counterattack" (263-287) in *The Glory and the Dream* addresses the major military campaigns of World War II. In *Controversy,* "The Island War" (129-146), "Corps d'Elite" (147-163), and "The Man Who Couldn't Speak Japanese" (164-182) cover personal and historical episodes from World War II that appear in *Goodbye, Darkness.* Some portions of these chapters are quoted verbatim in the memoir.

6. The use of the term "projects" is based loosely on Freud's description of projection in conjunction with his theory of paranoia: "The determining element of paranoia is the mechanism of projection involving the refusal of belief in the self-reproach. Hence the common characteristic features of the neurosis: the significance of the voices as the means by which other people affect us, and also of gestures [I call attention here to the look in the elder Manchester's eyes], which reveal other people's mental life to us; and the importance of the *tone* of remarks and *allusions* in them—since a direct reference from the *content* of remarks to the repressed memory is inadmissible to consciousness [Freud's italics]" ("Draft K" 95). Although it does not appear likely that Manchester suffers from paranoia in regard to his father, it does seem probable that what he projects onto his father's eyes is a manifestation of a repression pertaining to the inferiority he feels with regard to his father's idealization and his own childhood humiliations. As I proceed to argue, the "me" in "avenge me" is a reference to Manchester as opposed to his father. His repressed urge to vindicate himself of his shame and humiliation takes the form of a meaningful message from his father's eyes.

7. In using the term "catotonic" it seems that Manchester has in mind a state of catatonia (or "catatonic schizophrenia") defined by "stupor" and "automatic obedience" (*A Supplement* 456) as opposed to "excitement" and "impulsive automatism" (*A Supplement* 456). This can be seen in the fact that the Sergeant does not exhibit the "irony, scorn, contempt, and sneers" (*Goodbye* 447) Manchester had expected. Instead, there is a decided lack of animation in his behavior.

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Ghost Imagery in the War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon

A Toronto newspaper once called Siegfried Sassoon, who was on a speaking tour of Canada in 1945, " 'an avenging angel through whom the voice of slaughtered youth was speaking' " (qtd. in Sassoon, *Siegfried's Journey* 297). Indeed, Sassoon did still speak on behalf of his peers who fought and died in the First World War, even though twenty-seven years had passed since the war ended. His ardent pacifism during the war led him to denounce England's continued involvement in a conflict he deemed unjust, and he saw those killed in battle as sacrificed unjustly. Their ghosts seem to have haunted Sassoon and caused him to regret mightily the cause of their deaths. In "Prelude: The Troops," Sassoon imagines a horde of dead soldiers trudging off into eternity:

> O my brave brown companions, when your souls
> Flock silently away, and the eyeless dead
> Shame the wild beast of battle on the ridge,
> Death will stand grieving in that field of war
> Since your unvanquished hardihood is spent.
> And through some mooned Valhalla there will pass
> Battalions and battalions scarred from hell.
> (*Collected Poems* 67)

Sassoon conceives of these ghosts as scarred, eyeless figures deformed by the hell of battle; they are supernatural figures of the macabre whom he pities for the loss of their youth. Ghosts appear frequently as images in his work on the war, and they tend to play three roles in the course of his poetry. Sassoon transforms his ghosts from heroic others to pathetic others and finally into peers, provoking in him such emotions as admiration, pity, and empathy. The ghosts remind him of the war and make him feel guilty for having survived, prodding him to seek justification for their deaths. They remind him also of the importance of living worthily, ultimately becoming comforting friends.

Sassoon did not expect the war to have such haunting effects when he arrived in France during November of 1915. Just before entering the trenches, he met

Robert Graves in the "C" Company mess of the First Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers. When Graves showed him a few pieces of his own war poetry, Sassoon objected to their harsh and realistic view of trench warfare; he thought he was familiar with the true face of war after four months of home training. Much of the poetry Sassoon wrote before he went into the trenches suggests that he was naïve about the war, that he thought dying in battle could actually benefit the soldier. In "Absolution," he writes:

> War is our scourge; yet war has made us wise,
> And, fighting for our freedom, we are free. . . .
> There was an hour when we were loth to part
> From life we longed to share no less than others.
> Now, having claimed this heritage of heart,
> What need we more, my comrades and my brothers?
> (*Collected Poems* 11)

Sassoon initially felt a great camaraderie with soldiers, many of whom were his subordinates, and understood death as a mystical force that could provide an ultimate brotherhood. In his prose *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928), Sassoon's alter ego, George Sherston, feels very brave upon his arrival at boot camp in July of 1915, and he is completely credulous of war propaganda painting the enemy as evil incarnate (221) and portraying the English dead as "gloriously happy" in the afterlife (364). Of fighting, he finds "nothing imaginatively abhorrent in the notion," and he feels "very much a man dedicated to death" (220). His dedication is to visiting death upon the enemy, not to dwelling on its inevitability at the Front. These impressions are formed, however, before Sherston experiences the Front for himself. Sassoon's own ideals changed as the war came to a stalemate, and he was forced down into the trenches.

By the early months of 1916, Sassoon began, he says, to write his first "genuine" trench poems (*Siegfried's Journey* 25). Dying in battle became not a heroic act but a senseless waste to him. He became a staunch anti-war poet, concerned with giving an impersonal, authentic ("genuine") description of conditions at the Front in order to inform readers back in England of the less-than-honorable slaughter and to strip the euphemistic language away from the generals and propagandists perpetuating the war. In his war poems, he tried to record his surroundings with detachment and create a whole new genre of poetry based on flat objectivity (26). Bernard Bergonzi claims that Sassoon's poetry thus took on "a deliberate simplicity and hard outline that recalls the impact of good poster art" (97), of blunt anti-war propaganda.

This poetry after 1916 generally tends to juxtapose the soldier's daily boredom and discomforts with the madness of battle. Many of his poems rely upon

banal images like barbed wire ("Trench Duty"), "crumps and lice and lack of rum" ("Suicide in the Trenches"), "sodden bags of chalk," and "mounds of glimmering sand-bags, bleached with rain" ("A Working Party") to counter any idea of the battlefield as a glorious place. Indeed, "A Working Party" is set during routine trench maintenance and begins with a crude detail: "Three hours ago he blundered up the trench, / Sliding and poising, groping with his boots." The tedium of work, though, is not to be taken for granted in the trench, as the poem ends:

> He pushed another bag along the top,
> Craning his body outward; then a flare
> Gave one white glimpse of No Man's Land and wire;
> And as he dropped his head the instant split
> His startled life with lead, and all went out.
> (*Collected Poems* 20)

"A Working Party" relies on irony, the great disjunction between what one expects at the beginning of the work and what one gets by the end, to shock its reader. Yet both parts are presented in unsentimental detail, making use of the familiar, unremarkable objects of a trench; the poem's realism suggests that such tragedies occur all the time for men at the Front. Dying at the Front, then, is less heroic and transcendent than it is an absurd mistake. The drill sergeant in Sassoon's "Conscripts," for instance, asks his idealistic young charges " 'Magic? What's magic got to do with you? / There's no such thing! Blood's red, and skies are blue,' " to disabuse them of the notion that war is anything but real and ruthless (*Collected Poems* 31). To this day, most scholars focus on the hard, politically-charged realism of Sassoon's work.

While realism is a powerful method of protest in war poems, it nonetheless has its limitations for Sassoon. Jon Silkin argues that Sassoon is preeminently a visual poet; he first submits his intellect and his politics to the emotional force of whatever he perceives. After forming an impression of an experience, he attaches to it a didactic message or posits a social significance (167). Some memories, though, seem too horrible, too personal, for him to move past their emotional force. In much of his work, Sassoon revisits horrific war memories to contemplate their bizarre appeal, saying "Moments like those are unreproducible when I look back and try to recover their living texture. One's mind eliminates boredom and physical discomfort, retaining an incomplete impression of a strange, intense, and unique experience" ("Infantry Officer" 311).

The boring and uncomfortable realities hold less interest for Sassoon when they divert him from the task of understanding a traumatic personal experience. For instance, when Sherston comes across a group of mangled soldiers in *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930), he remarks that, to him, unlike perhaps

to others who saw only its immediate irony or misfortune, the experience was particularly moving:

> I was doubtful whether they were asleep or dead, for the attitudes of many were like death, grotesque and distorted. But this is nothing new to write about, you will say; just a weary company, squeezing past dead or drowsing men while it sloshes and stumbles to a front-line trench. Nevertheless that night relief had its significance for me, though in human experience it had been multiplied a millionfold. (432)

He remarks on the scene's power to him personally and suggests that its macabre qualities will always haunt him. The scene is fantastic to him and thus is meaningful, more so than to others who see it merely as harsh reality. The dead had the power to visit him in this fashion.

In his poem "Sick Leave," for example, he is visited by ghosts even when he is safe and away from the Front:

> When I'm asleep, dreaming and lulled and warm,—
> They come, the homeless ones, the noiseless dead.
> While the dim charging breakers of the storm
> Bellow and drone and rumble overhead,
> Out of the gloom they gather about my bed.
> (*Collected Poems* 85)

Many of Sassoon's otherworldly images emanated from such visions occurring after sleepless hours in grief and fear; these "mysterious visualizations," he says, come with "inventive spontaneity over which one has no seeming control" (*Siegfried's Journey* 105). Nonetheless, these spectral visions tempted Sassoon with a "delusive sense of power to put them into words," to understand these memories by describing them in poetic language (105). He mediates his discomfort by casting some of his memories as grotesques. He notes in *Siegfried's Journey* (1945) that "somehow the workings of my mind brought me a comprehensive memory of war experience in its intense and essential humanity" (80). This comprehensive memory often takes the form of ghosts.

Ghosts would become the chief image of death in Sassoon's poetry both during and after the war. As supernatural figures of death, Sassoon's ghosts embody his subjective feelings about the war. For Sassoon, as for many other artists from the Great War, returning ghosts served as powerful reminders of a cataclysmic experience, giving a not-so-physical presence to the "war-hauntedness" which

afflicted so many veterans. The return of the dead was a popular theme in post-war Europe for veterans and civilians alike; traditional conceptions of the supernatural once again found their way into artistic consciousness and served as progenitors of bereavement and memory (Winter 223). Such a preoccupation was obvious in European cinema, poetry, fine art, and in popular culture as well.[1] That life continued post-mortem, that soldiers killed tragically could rise up in testament to life, was an important idea in much of the poetry written during and after the war (221). Those who were most grief-stricken over the loss of loved ones often participated in séances where the deceased were summoned to make an account of how they died (since such information was usually restricted by government censors) and how they were getting on in eternity.[2]

Sassoon himself, though, seems not to have engaged in such communal hysteria. In fact, he once threatened Graves with a libel suit when Graves recounted in his memoirs a visit to Sassoon's mother. Graves supposedly awakened in the night and heard Theresa Sassoon using spiritualist means to communicate with her dead son, Hamo (Graves 232). Siegfried judged his mother's behavior as pathetic and insane (Moeyes 172). However, Sassoon clearly saw nothing outlandish in his own belief in ghosts. He was disinclined to go looking for the dead, since so often they would come to him; he reports in *Siegfried's Journey* that, at least during the war, "I was a believer in the power of spiritual presences" (81). Whether Sassoon believed in ghosts as having any thing other than a purely metaphoric character is immaterial, for, with Sassoon, the grotesque is a special figuration that takes on its existence in his writing. Wolfgang Kayser argues that ghosts function within the grotesque literary tradition as manifestations of insanity, as the link between the artist and the estranged world (184). Sassoon's ghosts are only subtly estranged from the world of the living, which, for many in the Great War, was a world turned on end. His ghosts walk the terrain of recognizable landscapes, yet they are removed from normal time, often maimed, and seem purposeful in their wanderings.

In Sassoon's poetry, one sees ghosts playing different roles at different times, whether they are terrifying accusers during the war or beneficent friends in the years after. Ghosts remind him of his duty to his fellow soldiers, and they evoke emotions in him that belie the passionless detachment he so worked to attain in his descriptions of the war. For instance, in his entry for May 27, 1916, Sassoon laments the loss of one of his men; the boy died after a shell explodes, but, says Sassoon, "when I go out on patrols his ghost will surely be with me; he'll catch his breath and grip his bomb just as he used to" (*Diaries 1915-1918* 68). The spectral presence of dead comrades (Hamo Sassoon was one) also pushes him to action, for, as he writes in "To My Brother,"

Your lot is with the ghosts of soldiers dead,
And I am in the field where men must fight.
But in the gloom I see your laurell'd head
And through your victory I shall win the light.
(*Collected Poems* 11)

Sassoon still holds in this poem to the promise of reward so palpable in "Absolution," but he recounts in his diaries how he became truly enraged at the Germans for killing his brother. Indeed, he was often called "Mad Jack" for his zeal in going over parapets. The war became personal to him. Sassoon could neither release his anger nor the memory of his beloved dead, for such memory "is the inevitable effect," he says, "of death on the living, when the living have loved the dead" (*Diaries 1920-1922* 163). Very simply, lost comrades during the war were not truly lost to him, only transformed into a different sort of soldier. Yet, in their transformation, Sassoon's ghosts are separate from him. Their heroism comes in their demise, while he is left to fight on. At this point in his work, ghosts were different from him because they died, heroically, in battle.

At some stage, though, presumably when Sassoon was beginning to write "genuine" trench poems, the ghosts he envisioned became less heroic than pathetic. In Sassoon's eerie work "Enemies," he describes a deceased comrade standing alone on the battlefield of Armageddon. Soon he is joined by other ghosts:

. . . suddenly there thronged
Round him the hulking Germans that I shot
When for his death my brooding rage was hot.
He stared at them, half-wondering; and then
They told him how I'd killed them for his sake—
Those patient, stupid, sullen ghosts of men . . . .
(*Collected Poems* 26)

The German ghosts blame the narrator for their slaughter, and his friend is left speechless to apologize for their deaths. The narrator, presumably Sassoon himself, stands alone as a living man, and he must listen to their litany of complaints. His friend does not answer but merely smiles, and somehow the Germans understand. The dead Germans are more tragic victims than foes, and the narrator's comrade seems to join them in their pained questioning of his friend. The ghosts in "Enemies" bear a resemblance to those in "Sick Leave," who stand around Sassoon to "whisper" to his heart the question "Why are you here with all your watches ended? / From Ypres to Frise we sought you in the Line" (85). They are pathetic because no answer could justify their deaths or bring them back to life, but they also accuse Sassoon for not dying with them, as if he has betrayed them.

The ghosts who accuse Sassoon do so largely in protest of his survival. While convalescing in a hospital (the 4th London) in April of 1917, Sassoon imagines a host of dead soldiers creeping across his floor. They are grotesque in their markedly livid faces, in their decomposing flesh which falls from their bones. Sassoon's ghosts are not magical; they do not fly about, move furniture, or cast spells. The only natural law they seem to flout is that of the impossibility of re-animation. They are rather frozen, often in the moment just after death (hence their often mutilated features), as if they were not dead but merely free to leave the war. The ghosts who come to him in the hospital glare at him in silence, but

> They are not here to scare me; they look at me reproachfully, because I am so lucky, with my safe wound, and the warm kindly immunity of the hospital is what they longed for when they shivered and waited for the attack to begin, or the brutal bombardment to cease. (*Diaries 1915-1918* 161-62)

That Sassoon marks in them a reproachful glare suggests his own sense of guilt about ordering men to their deaths and for having survived the war, despite his early mad forays into No Man's Land. As an officer who sent men into battle, Sassoon feels some complicity in their deaths. But they and he were obeying orders; the men followed Sassoon's and he followed his superiors'. By 1917, Sassoon fully distrusted the military authorities over him, writing in "A Soldier's Declaration" that the war had become less about defense and liberation than aggression and conquest: "I can no longer be a party," he says, "to prolong these sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust . . . . On behalf of those who are suffering now I make this protest against the deception which is being practised on them" (qtd. in Graves 260). His own guilt lessens as he protests the war and seeks justice for his men.

At some times then, Sassoon feels great affinity for his ghosts, as if they are fellow sufferers from the plague of war. The ghosts stand with him to accuse the powers that be of perpetuating the war, and they become an inspiration to the prophetic figure Sassoon envisioned himself, the avenging angel. This sense of vengeance is strongest in the poem "On Passing the New Menin Gate." As he strolls through a newly opened war cemetery in 1928, Sassoon resurrects the dead with the power of his memory, saying

> Who will remember, passing through this Gate,
> The unheroic Dead who fed the guns?
> Who shall absolve the foulness of their fate,—

Those doomed, conscripted, unvictorious ones?

. . .

Well might the Dead who struggled in the slime
Rise and deride this sepulchre of crime.
(*Collected Poems* 188)

Sassoon sees it as his duty to remember their sacrifice and justify it, to make it meaningful by refusing to let a new generation forget them. The souls who return to him attired in the gear of war serve as a focal point for his memory and his duty: "It seemed," he says, "that my companions of the Somme and Arras battles were around me; helmeted faces returned and receded in vision. . . . These were the dead, to whom life had been desirable, and whose sacrifice must be justified unless the war were to go down in history as yet another Moloch of murdered youth" (*Siegfried's Journey* 80). Even in death, they are his companions, but justifying their deaths politically, by simply protesting the war, did not satisfy Sassoon. He still lived on and with his own traumas.

Ultimately, Sassoon finds himself merely a substantial ghost, like the dead in his inexorable isolation from a more desirable world. To Sassoon, the more desirable world is one in which he is able to ride free on his horse, hunting foxes rather than men, and to live in peace as a gentleman-poet. In poems like "I Stood With the Dead" ("I stood with the Dead . . . They were dead; they were dead; / My heart and my head beat a march of dismay" [*Collected Poems* 103]) his dismay over the war causes him rather to identify with ghosts. His sense of duty to them prevents Sassoon from engaging fully in the world of the living.

While stationed in Egypt in April of 1918, Sassoon imagined a concert party—women and men singing and dancing, oblivious to the horrors of the war. The scene becomes the focus of his poem "The Concert Party." He reckons the party-goers mere puppets, masked fakeries who unwittingly entertain those who are truly real: a squad of deceased soldiers. They are pitiful in their separation from the lovelier world of the living; Sassoon describes them thusly:

This wall of faces risen out of the night,
These eyes that keep their memories of places
So long beyond their sight.
(*Collected Poems* 100)

His diary entry at the time he wrote the poem gives finer details about these ghosts:

In front [of the party-goers] there are half-lit ruddy faces and glittering eyes, and behind they grow more dusky

> and indistinct—-ghosts, souls of the dead—-the doomed—till on the edge high above the rest one sees silhouetted forms motionless, intent—those who were killed three years ago—and beyond them, across the glimmering levels of sand, legions of others come stealing in—-till the crowd is limitless; all the dead have come to hear the concert party in this half-lit oasis of Time. (*Diaries 1915-1918* 235)

By the end of the poem, Sassoon has identified himself among the visiting dead, saying "We hear them, drink them; till the concert's done," but soon the ghosts separate from him: "Silent, I watch the shadowy mass of soldiers stand. / Silent, they drift away, over the glimmering sand" (*Collected Poems* 100). He has been left alone, neither a ghost nor a reveler. The bile raised in his throat upon contemplating the concert party indicates that, in essence, he identifies more with the soldier ghosts, though they are insubstantial, timeless, and imagined, than with the living civilians: "It is too much," he says, "I cannot bear it; I must get up and go away. For I too am a ghost, one of the doomed" (*Diaries 1915-1918* 235).

Sassoon implies with such thoughts that he found himself isolated by his war life. He considered himself separated from people back home because of the fundamental disjunction in their experiences. Even upon his return to England, though he became a celebrated writer, he could not escape the public's perception of him as a war poet. So too, of course, did he feel the sort of political isolation brought about by his unpopular declaration of 1917 and his resulting incarceration in Craiglockhart hospital. He also recognized the fundamental disparity between himself as an officer and his own living soldiers. Though Sassoon's sense of connection with working-class men at the Front was remarkably solid, more so than at any other time in his life (Moeyes 68), he nonetheless acted as an observer, detached from the wistful hopes and frailties of other men. He only realizes a spiritual connection with them once they have died, when they come to him as ghosts.

In 1922, he would describe the living and the dead as equally inscrutable. However, he can at least hear the voices of the dead because they have "a sort of silver quality," or rather, a quality that is remarkable and priceless to him. How so? Because they are products of his own making, wrought like silver out of his imagination. Thus the dead, Sassoon says, "are more real than the living, because they are complete" (*Diaries 1920-1922* 231). This completeness—in essence the cessation of uncertainty—Sassoon found in his ghosts would become a quality he hoped to achieve as he became an old man. Many of his later years were spent in contemplation of the afterlife, and such speculation eventually led him

to convert to Roman Catholicism in 1957. In 1953, he would write that he was " 'a fly buzzing against the window pane of 'reality' beyond which there is the world of the spiritual and the supernatural' " (qtd. in Moeyes 236). The only ones who can penetrate such a barrier are his ghosts, who finally come to him as memento mori. Sherston recalls that dead soldiers were like "mangled effigies" who warned the living of a fruitless existence ("Infantry Officer" 435). These ghosts, like Sassoon's memories and hopes, are summoned and crafted by the power of his mind.

Upon remembrance of the dead, Sassoon understands the power of memory in summoning their presence. They are alive continually, and they prod him to live a life set apart. In his diary entry of July 7, 1922, Sassoon determines that "Death is merely a reminder, to the living, of their duty toward life. It is a stimulus," he says, "which should urge them to fight on in that immortal war in which the spirit of man must be victorious over his grosser elements" (*Diaries 1920-1922* 191). Perhaps this is how the soldiers who died so unheroically in the Great War are finally justified for Sassoon: they assist him in justifying his own life, in giving him a sense of purpose in the aftermath of his own trauma.

In 1919, just a year after the war ended, Sassoon published a collection of poems called *Picture-Show*. The poems deal with the war largely on a spiritual level, as they were to be his proof to the literati that he could write poetry without gory or highly politicized references to the Front. The collection generated a mixed reception, however; he was seen by some to have lost the passion in his harshly realistic work. But the passion remains in the intimacy with his memories of the men who died around him. The title of the collection is a nod to the burgeoning popularity of the cinema, the then-silent medium which captured the "silver quality" of speechless forms on its silver screen. The screen serves as a metaphor for his recollection of the most powerful experiences he had in the war, for it too features silent apparitions. In "Wraiths," a work from *Picture-Show*, Sassoon serves as an apologist for the dead who haunt the living:

> Strangely they seek a place
> In love's night-memoried hall;
> Peering from face to face,
> Until some heart shall call
> And keep them, for a breath,
> Half-mortal . . . (*Hark to the rain!*) . . .
> They are dead . . . (*O hear how death*
> *Gropes on the shutter'd pane*!)
> (*Collected Poems* 112)

The ghosts merely seek someone to remember them lovingly. Sassoon's heart calls out to them over and over again, and it is the only way he knows how to deal with the disconcerting experiences of the war—he must remember them. He has not lost his passion about the senseless tragedy of the war; rather, he has focused that passion on the war's most tragic personae—the ghosts of the unjustly dead.

Notes

1. Take, for example, Abel Gance's film *J'Accuse* (1919) and his remake of it (1937) that imagined the ghosts of dead soldiers rising from their graves to stop the spread of war. Also consider Irwin Shaw's remarkable play *Bury the Dead* (1936), in which dead American soldiers refuse to be buried because they died too young and for no real purpose.

2. Winter notes how even such a well-regarded figure as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle attended séances and was fascinated by "spirit photography" (a practice based on the idea that a camera can capture a ghostly spirit on film) after the death of his son, Kingsley, from wounds received at the Somme (58).

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Jeffrey C. Alfier

Paleo Warrior at Blackwater Draw

Near the cold blank stare of an empty cave
he crouches, waits for a seam in the clouds
of a sensuous line of thunderstorms
as lightning fractures the face of ice fields.

Letting the dark labored miles of his mind
unfold before shadows of nine-foot wings,
he summons blooded faith in stone spearheads
—smooth as grinding stones, or a mother's touch.

He thinks the hunt and his tribe unfading,
his fists like condors leaping into the wind.

Jeffrey C. Alfier is a US Air Force officer currently serving in Germany. His work has previously appeared in **WLA**.

Rawdon Tomlinson

Two Poems

Corporal Fun's War Dance (Mount Vernon Barracks, Alabama, March 1892)

The doll She-had-a-red-spot-on-her-somewhere sewed
for Maggie moulds and falls apart. All is background
another pine barren's winter ending
with bird call and dripping branch;
TB melts the people like ice in summer.
Madness fits snugly into this nest.

The barracks bet the coil bed heard everywhere
is two Tontos sparking your wife.
Corporal, polish the cartridges;
see that the shoe mirrors your inspecting
dis-embodied face, that the Springfield
clicks in sync

with the tongue you've learned, barking
"Right shoulder, arms! Present, arms!"
Some days it takes a hundred rounds on the range,
shoulder and chest bruised. Skirmish drill shooting
is best, nailing the silhouettes
that off duty, move . . . whisper.

The Captain assigns Geronimo—medicine man—
to act as your counselor: Geronimo who now
teaches Sunday school ("I don't think
I'm an Indian anymore."); war shaman
who once called you *segundo*, now jokes,
"So, you have taken

The-path-that-runs-down-between-two-hills
and gotten stuck down there!" But you don't laugh.

"If you train to fear surprise," he says,
"sometimes you'll see enemies where there are none.
This jealousy is like *haškegojitat*, angriness dance:
night-fire rippling the rocks with shadows."

Though you nod, he knows better, tells the Captain,
"Nothing wrong with wife, problem Fun's Brain,"
and warns you, "There is no smoothness, your mind's
a scorpion"—but you don't care. Awakened,
it has already climbed from the burrow
into night, already tuned antennae for the least

alterations of vibration and current.
It cocks claws and arches stinger forward.
It orients itself to stars, who knows why?
Everything's in order. It sits and waits
for a soft body to devour headfirst.
When it happens, it looks more like defence.

Camillius Fly: "Geronimo and His Warriors" (Canon de los Embudos, March 26, 1886)

Mr. Chase lugs the tripod and plates
while I arrange them in a line
along the horizon, waving my arms,
pulling on their sleeves Bourke said
"with the nerve of a Chicago drummer,"

holding them with soul-catching lens,
as though they'd risen from a trap door
onto the lava bed of smokelike grass
they float between earth and sky
with guns, a sky so uniformly blank

it swallows everything unless toned
and framed—to the north, ash-faint, swell
the Little Pear Mountains, an apparition

in one of their exile-dreams—none of them
or it really here, like a dead star's light

travelling through empty space
to make a child's wish–Print No 180:
posed as though for a wedding, or an execution,
heart and hope of hummingbird medicine
tied around their throats, like props,

Geronimo in the center with stick and drum:
I ease the cover from the barrel, for light—
while they wait in silence in the wind
switching grass with eyes and ears from elsewhere—
to draw their shadows on glass.

Rawdon Tomlinson is the author of *Deep Red*, published in 1995 by the University of Central Florida Contemporary Poet Series. In 2007, LSU Press will publish his second collection: *If You Could Lick My Heart: Geronimo after Kas-Ki-Yeh.* Tomlinson lives in Denver, Colorado, where he teaches at Arapahoe Community College.

Shelley W. Moore

The First Woman Marine

When I meet her she greets me with a smile
Her eyes and skin are the color of a sunflower
Little does she know she will wilt before my eyes
Neither do I
She tells me of better days when she was healthy
She paints with oil—people, nature scenes, animals
From pictures, she says, not from real life
I ask her if she will paint me someday when she is well
She smiles and says, of course
She never returns home to her palettes and oils

At first her yellow skin and eyes are the only symptoms
But the disease progresses and her body fails
Pneumonia attacks
When I ask her how she is feeling
She tries to turn the conversation around
In between coughs and gasps for air
She says she is not in pain
I know better

Soon she is too weak to breathe on her own
I tell her she needs a tube down her throat
and a machine to help her breathe
We will do everything we can to make you better
But you may not survive this
She understands and agrees to press on

She dies in front of my eyes
One organ at a time
Liver
Lungs
Heart
Kidneys
Still, the machine pumps her lungs and the medicine runs through her veins
Keeping her alive
Until her son comes to rescue her

He arrives and kisses her good-bye
Modern medicine turns off
She leaves, finally in peace
Tears in his eyes, he says with pride
First woman in the marine corps

Shelley W. Moore is in her third year of Emergency Medicine Residency at the University of Arizona in Tucson. She received her B.S. in Biology from Trinity University in San Antonio and graduated from medical school at the University of Texas in San Antonio.

Jim Simmerman

At the Peace March

It wasn't a march but, rather, a walk;
and the cynic part of me had become
bemoaned the word. But the part of me

that got me there, that once wore its hair
long and flashed the peace sign at authorities,
was glad to be among the bodies marching,

walking, moving like a storm-swollen river
or, in fact, Time itself, and holding hands
with other hands that still had bodies,

through the downtown streets. Police
would estimate the crowd at 200, later.
But I was there to count and be counted

among the thousand-plus of us: the gray
or bald, bespectacled retirees; the pierced,
tattooed, and Mohawked high-school teens;

the college kids cracking, for the first time
maybe, the great, sad book of America;
the janitors, clerics, nurses, cooks; some

whose bodies were red or brown or black;
some whose tongues had not been sliced,
yet, by the knife of the English-language-

only state; and dogs; and children too
young to walk, who rode the shoulders
and backs of their parents like a small, sweet

cavalry; and some who had lived through
other wars and, so, were not marching, but
galumphing on crutches or rolling among us

leglessly, backing up traffic, speaking our
peace, before the other bodies, which would
also need counting, later, returned to speak theirs.

February 15, 2003; Flagstaff, AZ

Jim Simmerman is the author of four full-length collections of poetry, most recently *Moon Go Away, I Don't Love You No More* and *Kingdom Come* (both from Miami University Press); and co-editor of *Dog Music: Poetry About Dogs* (St. Martin's). A new collection, *American Children*, is forthcoming from BOA Editions, Ltd., in 2005. He is Regents' Professor of English at Northern Arizona Univ. And lives in Flagstaff, Arizona.

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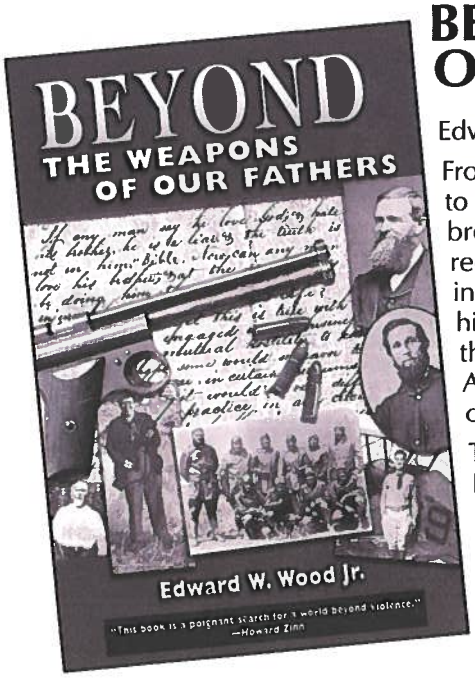

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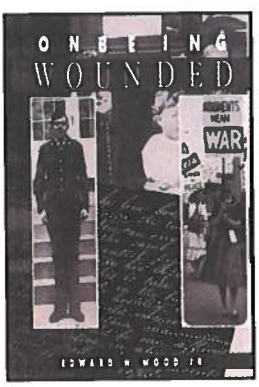

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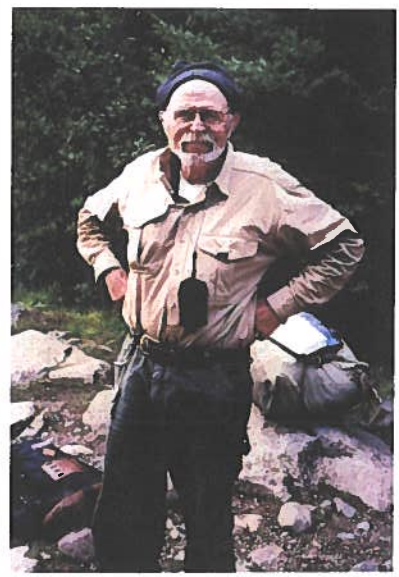
Commentary by Glenn Leinbach

Ed Wood: Wounds, War, and Friendship

I met Ed Wood last fall, when Sam Halpert, a B-17 navigator during World War II, spoke at the United States Air Force Academy. Ed and Sam hit it off that evening, trading what war stories they had, bonding in a way the rest of us could not. As the evening wore down, Ed and I were introduced; my wife and I sat next to Ed while Sam Halpert read from *A Real Good War*, his novel about the air war over Europe. I watched Ed nod in agreement as Sam read. Afterward they gravitated back toward each other, but not before Ed and I had struck up a friendship of our own.



That friendship has continued, and we e-mail each other, always signing off with "Best," or "Take Care." Ed always includes greetings to my wife, and when we meet next for lunch, he's asked that she come along. I appreciate that. I appreciate Ed, and I am grateful for his story. He's the sort of anonymous guy you pass by on the street every day, but I know the stories you don't. It's only right that you meet Ed Wood, as well. You'll be better for having done so.

Since I met him I've read two of Ed's books: *On Being Wounded* (1991), and *Beyond the Weapons of our Fathers* (2002). Both, he tells me, have the support of Paul Fussell and Howard Zinn. So I'm supposed to automatically like them, right? Well, they are good books, but sometimes tough to read—mainly because I don't agree with some of what he writes. Our biggest area of disagreement is over guns. Ed hates them. I, on the other hand, have two semi-automatic pistols at home. Both are loaded with 5 hollow-point bullets each. When I lived in Montgomery, Alabama, a police officer with whom I spoke said, "hollow points have better stopping power." *What he means*, I thought to myself, *is killing power*. I wasn't fooled by euphemism, but his sugar-coating didn't stop me from buying hollow points later that week.

Ed wouldn't approve of my weapons. He wouldn't approve of my lifetime

NRA membership. He wouldn't approve of the lapel pin I have at home. It reads, "I ♥ my semi-automatic." But that's the great thing about our friendship. I read his books, and don't always agree, but I still respect the guy. He's been through a lot, and I can respect that, and him.

In fact, *On Being Wounded* is all about what he's been through. Ed was in France in September of 1944. He was wounded pretty badly, and now, years later, he writes about his experiences. He says, "I had seen shrinks but they never were able to resolve the problems of my disquiet. I had never faced out the impact of my experiences in World War 2, including combat and being severely wounded at nineteen after only two days of combat. Those experiences had been repressed and were knocking—no, screaming!—at the door to be let out and examined."

Being wounded. I wince at the thought of being wounded as badly as he was. In *On Being Wounded* Ed tells the story of taking shrapnel in his skull, having his right buttock sheared off, and how a hot piece of metal punctured his pelvic area. The shrapnel in his head temporarily paralyzed him. When I ask him how his wound changed him, he says, "the physical impacts were loss of much sensory feeling in my right hand, a hitch in my walk, problems in my privates, and a great loss of faith in my body as a functioning organism. My emotions were smashed. Linked to this was a curious sense of shame—in a real way I think most of us seriously wounded experience shame for being hit. And, for me, that shame was exacerbated by only having been in combat for two days and by being hit in the buttock. Both together made my life extremely difficult. The massive nature of my wound, physical and emotional impacts, has made me search the literature of war and peace for the causes of war, and the consequences of war."

Ed works through these problems in *On Being Wounded*. Beyond them, however, he talks about the tremendous role his family played in his life. When he returned from the war he shunned his mother and father, and it was only after his father died that he was able to make peace with the man who had raised him, the man of whom Ed was so proud. Even though he was proud of his father, however, it was his father who "showed me the ways of war," and Ed does not like war.

It is his father's way of war Ed seeks to extinguish, when he shares what is, for me, the most moving piece in *On Being Wounded*. After his father dies, Ed drives south from Massachusetts with the rifle his father had taught Ed to shoot. He charters a sailboat and sails out to a point off the Mississippi coast, and there, in the same spot where he and his father had fished so many years ago, Ed holds the rifle over the edge of the boat, and opens his fingers: "the rifle tumbles down into the clear artesian water below me. The barrel glints and twists as it sinks deep into pure water, surrounded by the dark and murky sea" (*Wounded* 166). By doing so, Ed begins the process of giving up, of rejecting, the weapons of his fathers.

That process continues in Ed's second book: *Beyond the Weapons of our Fathers*. In this book he enters into a "conversation" with his ancestors, men who fought in our country's wars. He argues with them, and tries to get them to give up their weapons, to move beyond the call of the gun. It is a difficult thing, because his family has a history of violence: "I have had forebears in all major American wars since 1675: King Philip's War in Massachusetts/Rhode Island, then the French and Indian War, the Revolution, the Civil War, two ancestors wounded on both sides in that one, World War One where my father flew."

These men lived a life of battle, Ed notes, and hundreds of thousands of American men like them have joined with the men of his family, making this country one of warfare, one which kills first and considers its actions later. Ed found a distant relative, however, who is what he calls a Person of Peace: Levi Tiffany asked "how can any man love his brother, and at the same time, be doing him the greatest possible injury, by seeking to take his life?" (*Beyond* 45). Ed finds in Levi a compatriot, and it is Levi, and the people Ed lists on pages 48-50 of *Beyond the Weapons of our Fathers,* who will help us become a peaceful nation.

I'm a young man, and as I read *Beyond the Weapons of our Fathers* I found myself drifting toward the cynicism of youth. How can we not have solved our conflicts without weapons? Was King George simply going to leave us alone? Would Hitler have given up if we asked nicely? While I like the *theory* of People of Peace, the *practice* is often much different than how we would like things to be. Perhaps that's due to my age. Perhaps in a few years I'll think differently. So what do I do with these books? What do I do with Ed Wood? Do I dismiss him as another raving peacenik? Do I sit across the restaurant table and let the words flow around me, but not really listen? What do I think about Ed Wood?

First, I think he's a hero. Anyone brave enough (or, as Tim O'Brien would say, cowardly enough) to put himself in harm's way, specifically if he doesn't necessarily agree with what he's doing, is heroic. In that case Ed Wood is a hero for doing what he did in 1944. Ed doesn't think he's a hero. He tells me so: "I don't think of the word 'heroic' when I think of myself. For a couple of days I did my duty. . . and that is enough for me." Nicely worded, I think, but off the mark. You're a hero, I tell him. Again, he doesn't think so.

So I ask him for his definition of "heroism." He says, "there are really two kinds. The first makes a stand, kills the enemy, protects his or her comrades from the enemy, often gives his life for the cause, or for those friends. The second is the medic, the guy who heals others under fire. These are quite different actions and need to be considered separately as our thinking about the first is often masked by myth."

He's right, of course. He's right when he says that "we don't want to see the consequences of the first type of hero's actions, the enemies the 'hero' has

mutilated, body parts bleeding on the ground. We want our wars to be acts of glory with the killing denied, hidden, masked. Since war is a brutal process of killing, being wounded, the taking of lives and body parts from both combatants and innocent civilians, by making the acts of the 'hero' glorious we deny what war really is, killers and victims." Ed wants us to favor the second type of hero: "the company medic, the guy who, under fire, begins the process of healing the wounded. He needs no victims to define his heroism, the highest form of courage."

We are sitting in the Grumpy Gringo in Castle Rock, Colorado over lunch. He says to me, "the American hero is that man or woman who sacrifices life, career, wealth for a principle greater than self." The problem, he decides, is that America too often finds its heroes in war. Why is that? I ask. He looks at me: "heroes and heroism make war more palatable to our taste. We see the hero as destroying the dark enemy and, in so doing, war begins to have a quality of glory. We seldom look at the dark side of the hero's actions, the victims made, cities destroyed, children made fatherless. Since war is so intimate to our past we tend not to think of the 'hero' as the doctor who saves lives or the man or woman of peace who struggles for a compassionate world. We tend to see the hero as the man with the gun, slaying our enemies."

He's right, damn him.

He's right about something else, as well. We talk about how memory affects war, another tender subject with Ed. He tells me that "the memory of war tends to change over decades so that the war we remember after thirty or forty years is not the war that was fought, not the war of the sweet stink of blood but the war of glory and heroism." He gets angry when he talks about Tom Brokaw, about movies such as *Saving Private Ryan*, and the HBO series *Band of Brothers*: "we don't know what war is like. The media, particularly in such movies as *Saving Private Ryan,* except for the first few minutes, give us a lie. To begin with, there are many points of view in a real combat situation, not the single one of the camera. It's seldom a place of men together. Rather, it's a bunch of men widely separated. Occasionally there is the mutter of fire; one man falls down and doesn't get up. It's eerily silent much of the time. Men don't talk in sentences, rather in grunts, exclamations, gesticulate a lot." I'll let Ed talk for a while. He recently wrote to me:

> The memories of war are made by those who were never there except for a few writers who get it honestly: Hemingway, E.E. Cummings, James Jones, Paul Fussell, Howard Zinn, Sam Halpert, Norman Mailer, and Philip Caputo, for example. Movies and TV lie. What did someone say? The first victim in war is the truth. We turn war

into something it never was. And not just the media, but those who were in it and recall it. A perfect example is this baloney of *The Greatest Generation.* We don't want to know what our soldiers really do in war. A friend of mine in the Fourth Division which went across Europe from D-Day to V-E Day says he was terrified as he watched American Rednecks rape and loot their way across Europe. Scarcely the picture of *Saving Private Ryan.*

Scarcely *The Greatest Generation.* The truth of World War Two has yet to be told.

So what is the truth, I ask him? How can you find out the truth about war? I relate a story, about a time several years ago when I wrote to a World War II veteran and asked him how he could remember in such vivid detail the things he wrote about in his book. The vet told me, "I see them in my mind—things that happened 60 years ago are as clear as day." When I tell Ed that story he laughs. "That guy can't remember things so clearly. Much of the things I write about are hazy. That's war. Some things were so hazy to me that I had to leave them out of *On Being Wounded.*"

I ask him this: If you have one hundred guys in the same battle and give one hundred interviews, are you going to get a hundred battles? His answer is emphatic: "YES! A hundred stories. Each soldier has a slightly different viewpoint of what is happening in a firefight. His is never the whole story. It is only when they are all put together that one gets that story. It's something movies, the media, and most books don't do."

This gets us back to Ed's books. I ask him, what do you hope to gain? In response he refers back to the falsehoods he sees in much of the movies and books about war: "I'm always searching for the way to say my truth about these issues of war and peace. I certainly haven't been very successful in terms of books sold or money made, but I know I have been successful in sticking to the truth as I see it. I know I am an honest writer and I intend to remain so."

Easy enough, I think, but let's up the ante. I e-mail him to ask the big one: what have you learned in your lifetime? Can you sum up what you have learned? After a few days he responds: "that's a damn hard question. Most of all, that thing of honesty. . . as a person and as a writer. So many facts of our lives lead us to dishonesty...careers, the need to make money, authority, sexual temptations, a whole range of pressures in the real world. If one is going to write, one simply must struggle to be honest in both one's personal life and one's artistic life. Without those there is no hope for the art and truth of prose. What the world needs now, to paraphrase a popular song, is honesty. . .for, maybe, honesty comes

before love?"

And finally (I can imagine him smiling as he types this): "without honesty, one has nothing."

Ed Wood has been around for a long time. He's seen a lot of things. He's been in more hospitals than I'd care to, he's walked a lot of miles to overcome his wound, and he's struggled to make ends meet while trying to tell his story. It's a story people need to hear. Ed Wood is many things; the one thing he is not is insincere. He's a man with a good heart, a man dedicated to what he believes is right. He's a man I'm honored to call a friend.

Glenn Leinbach served as an instructor in English and Fine Arts at the United States Air Force Academy. He looks forward to a long friendship with Ed Wood.

Commentary by
Lori A. Davis Perry

Women at the Front: American Nurses

And If I Perish: Frontline U.S. Army Nurses in World War II,
Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

Between the Heartbeats: Poetry and Prose by Nurses,
University of Iowa Press, 2002.

Intensive Care: More Poetry and Prose by Nurses,
University of Iowa Press, 2003.

As a young girl, well-meaning adults often asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, "a teacher or a nurse?" Curiously, no other options appeared to be available. Women who worked as scientists, engineers, aviators, veterinarians, architects, and photographers were literally invisible to the adults who surrounded me.

Yet, even the generations of women who had worked as teachers and nurses, the most traditional of women's careers, were strangely inaccessible as role models in the literature I read or the movies and television shows I watched. The nurses portrayed in adolescent literature were far less interesting than Nancy Drew, who was the heroine of her own narrative. And the best nurses, whether in literature, film, or television, appeared to excel at becoming and staying invisible—competent, but entirely subordinate to the real heroes of the story. Even today, if you ask an American on the street to name a famous or heroic nurse, you will probably hear the name Florence Nightingale, perhaps even Clara Barton. Who are the others? They remain nameless and invisible in the popular consciousness.

It has taken sixty years to build a memorial to the men who fought and died in WWII. It may take another sixty to acknowledge the sacrifices of the women, particularly the nurses, who served and died with them. Curiously, their stories remain eerily silent. Entire genres of literature, film, and art have grown up around the experiences of the men who fought. Their stories have been transcribed by

biographers and writers, immortalized in film, passed along to grandchildren. Literature and film, in particular, have chronicled their sacrifices, the pain, suffering, and loss of war. An entire generation of combat veterans survives in the memory of our culture's popular imagination.

Yet there is another generation of lives and stories that remains largely unexplored in the popular consciousness. In the case of World War II nurses, at least, Evelyn M. Monahan and Rosemary Neidel Greenlee have attempted to capture some of the remarkable personal stories of these women while there is still time. *And If I Perish: Frontline Army Nurses in World War II* chronicles their experiences as told by surviving nurses themselves.[1]

Much of what the authors have uncovered has been lying in plain view for decades. But, as the nurses point out, no one asked them to tell their stories. It was no secret to the people involved, of course. But their experiences were quickly forgotten in the popular imagination after the war. For instance, who remembers today that Army nurses landed in North Africa on D-Day, with the assault troops, in order to treat the wounded on the beachhead. It was the first time in American history that military nurses went ashore with an assault force, and the results were so remarkable that the Army planned to repeat the performance in Italy and Normandy. It was only Eisenhower's concern about the reaction of the American public that caused him to decide, against the wishes of his commanders, to keep the women from landing until D+3, in order to ensure that a popular backlash did not prevent military nurses from serving on the front lines altogether.

The North African campaign was tough for the soldiers and the medical personnel who traveled close behind them. The hospitals were set up so close to the front lines that chief nurse Lt Archard missed a turn in the dark and ended up sleeping in her jeep in no-man's land. Medical personnel were constantly at risk of being over-run by the enemy during hasty retreats from the Kesserine Pass. Moreover, the supply lines were abysmal. After working 12-hour shifts, nurses and orderlies spent hours boiling used bandages, for they were too precious to waste, putting in 18-to 20-hour days. When surgeons ran out of sutures, nurses prepared long strands of their own hair. The pace of operations soon overcame traditional boundaries between doctors and nurses—nurses were co-opted as anesthesiologists and performed surgery on patients side by side with doctors.

The nurses worked themselves to exhaustion in North Africa, but the Italian campaign was to prove even more formidable, as the challenges of combat medicine were compounded by the horrors of Anzio, where the hospitals found themselves trapped between the bogged down front lines and the sea. Nurses and other personnel endured continuous strafing, mortar attacks, and artillery rounds that easily tore through the canvas hospital tents. The hospitals were so dangerously exposed to enemy fire that wounded patients frequently went

AWOL by slipping out of the hospital at night to return to the front lines where they felt significantly safer. As Menehan and Neidel-Greenlee write:

> Approximately 5,500 US Army nurses served on the front lines in Italy. Many saw some of the roughest combat conditions of the war and earned themselves Purple Hearts, Silver Stars, and Bronze Stars for heroic action in the face of enemy fire. At Anzio—'Hell's Half Acre'—six army nurses were killed by enemy bombing and shelling. (147)

Lieutenants Elaine Roe, Rita Rourke, and Mary Louise Roberts became the first US Army nurses to earn Silver Stars in WWII, and the first women in American history to be awarded combat medals. They were not the last, as women landed on D+3 in Sicily and Normandy and continued to serve on the front lines until the end of the war. As the authors point out, approximately 1,600 Army nurses "won awards and decorations, including the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart. More than two hundred died while in military service" (458).

It was during the North African and Italian campaigns that the nursing corps began to realize the physical toll that front line duty was taking on the bodies of these women. They rapidly lost weight, suffered from anemia, dysentery, and malaria. Their hair turned white. And they began to lose their teeth. As Lt Archard, a chief nurse in North Africa, wrote at the time, "Missing back teeth were one thing, but when the front ones started to go, it was time to do something" (168).

As medical noncombatants, the nurses were supposed to be protected from enemy attack by the Geneva Convention. This was hardly the case, however. Two hospital ships were deliberately sunk by the Germans, and nurses perished along with doctors, many of the ships' crew, and patients. The first to be attacked was the HMHS Newfoundland, en route to Salerno. Attacked in the middle of the night, the ship caught fire and quickly began to sink. Many of the nurses had been sleeping nude in the sweltering cabins, and their clothes were blown out with the bomb's concussion wave. They had to struggle through debris and flames to reach the top deck. When they arrived they discovered a terrible screaming:

> The sound of screaming grew louder as they walked, and as they approached two British sisters [nurses] and the fourteen year old cabin boy, they saw the source of the awful sounds: a British sister was trapped in a burning cabin. The German bomb had . . . killed all of the officers on the bridge, the ship's doctors,

and six of the British sisters. The bomb that had killed the six British nurses outright had trapped one more in the same cabin. There was no hope of escape or rescue; the unfortunate victim was still alive. Each scream sounded less and less human, more and more tortured.

'Her head was sticking through the porthole, and her body was on fire,' Glidewell said. 'Her face was twisted with pain as she pleaded for help. The stench of burning skin was overpowering.' . . . Without a word, the young cabin boy stepped forward . . . He was crying softly as he bend and picked up a two-by-four from the debris-strewn deck. The boy brought the two-by-four down as hard as he could against the woman's head. The screaming stopped . . . (192)

All the officers were dead, and the enlisted men organized the evacuation. As Lt Sigman recalled, "Some of the girls would start down the ladders nude and sailors would pull them back and give them their pants. They were dressed in the strangest assortment of garments ever seen at sea" (192). Lt Ruth Hindman was fortunate enough to survive not only the sinking of the *HMHS Newfoundland*, but also the subsequent sinking of the *HMHS St. David*, a second hospital ship attacked by the Germans.

The Italian campaign was difficult and bloody, and the nurses showed the strain. Yet despite suffering from malaria along with their patients, they continued to work until they collapsed. In November, a C-54 medical evacuation flight veered off course and crashed behind enemy lines in Albania. Thirteen nurses and twelve corpsmen hiked 800 miles through the frigid Albanian mountains. For most it took two months, but for three Army nurses trapped in a German-occupied town, the journey took four months. The British OSE and the American OSS became involved in their escape. A year later, another medical evacuation flight was shot down outside of Aachen. The crew, including their nurse Lt Whittle, parachuted to safety but landed amidst German troops. It took nine days to transport them to their POW confinement area. Since Lt Whittle was the first female POW the Germans had seen, they didn't really know what to do with her. She was sent to Frankfurt, where she spent the rest of the war treating Allied POWs, and was eventually repatriated through the International Red Cross in February 1945.

By June 1944, seasoned Army nurses were preparing to land at Normandy. Medical personnel landed on D+1 and the nurses followed on D+3. Dressed in full combat gear, they boarded the *Pendleton* and joined the invasions forces en route to UTAH beach. They were fortunate to make it at all, for the ship wandered off course into a mine field parallel to OMAHA beach. When they finally

waded ashore, the nurses once again found themselves pushing past dead bodies floating in the water. This was only the beginning of the final campaign, of course, where they would frequently find themselves under enemy fire, including the Battle of the Bulge.

One of the most horrifying experiences were the concentration camps at Nordhausen and Dachau. Combat hardened veterans who liberated the camps continued to have nightmares about Dachau for decades. As the Allies advanced, the Germans massacred as many prisoners as possible, sometimes to hide their numbers, and sometimes simply to finish what they had started while there was still time. They were unwilling to allow any prisoners to survive if they could prevent it. At one of the camps, prisoners were locked into barracks which were doused with gasoline and set on fire. Those who tried to claw their way free were bayoneted. At Dachau, prison guards burned the corpses of prisoners killed before the Allies arrived. When the nurses arrived one or two days later, bodies were still smoldering as they entered the camp. For months, medical personnel worked to treat and save inmates, who were suffering from starvation, typhus, and other infections. The authors record that "Medical commanders believed that human beings could deal with the horrific conditions of the camp for no more than a few days at a time without acquiring psychological scars that would affect them far into the future" (451). Nevertheless, the nurses continued to work in the camp for weeks and months.

If the Army nurses working in the European theater performed heroically, the nurses in the Pacific had much to endure. Within a matter of weeks, 67 nurses working at the naval hospital in the Philippines were captured by the Japanese when Corrigedor fell. The head nurse, Lt Nash, made sure that every nurse was supplied with a lethal dose of morphine before they were captured—tablets which they hid in their hair during the years they spent at POWs.

And If I Perish: Frontline US Army Nurses in World War II is critically important in capturing and preserving some of the stories told by these combat nurses. Yet it also raises questions about why it has taken so long to hear their stories. Almost 30,000 nurses served in combat zones, in the front lines of every American battlefield of the war. Lt Glidewell recalls an incident shortly after the war that bridged the divide between men and women veterans: "Not quite six months after the war ended, I was talking to a man about repairing the well pump at our new home when lightning struck the corner of the house," [she] recalled. "Without a word, the repairman and I hit the dirt. When we got up, the repairman said, 'Well, ma'am, I can see you were in the army too'" (463). Combat nurses transcended gender barriers and prejudices in ways that appeared at the time to be permanent. The critical moment for Capt Rosenbaum happened during the invasion of North Africa:

> When Captain Edward E. Rosenbaum, MC, starting down the cargo net into a landing barge for the invasion of North Africa on 8 November 1942, looked at his side and saw Lieutenant Vilma Vogler, an army nurse, descending the net with him, a paradigm shift occurred in his own mind and heart. "At that moment, she and the other nurses had ceased to be 'the women.' We were all comrades in equally dangerous footing, trying to survive the insanity of combat." (458-459)

Despite the revolutionary changes that took place on the front lines of WWII, the roles of women that had expanded during the war contracted sharply after the war. Lt Ruth Hindman later moved to Washington D.C., where her neighbors included Jesse Helms and his wife. As the authors relate, "During lunch one day, the subject of difficulty with hearing came up. 'The Senator told me how he lost some of his hearing,' Ruthie [Hindman] recalled. 'And I told him how mine was damaged when the Germans sank the second hospital ship I was on—the *St. David*. He hadn't realized before our conversation that US Army nurses had been aboard hospital ships attacked by the German air force'" (463). In the early 1970s, state Senator Jim Tysinger of Georgia replied to a woman's group "Why should women have equal rights? They never went to war for this country. They never got shot at by the enemy. I was on Guadalcanal and there were no women there" (461).

History shows us that the same dynamic has repeated itself many times, as women's involvement in war and combat is quickly forgotten with each generation, and traditional roles are assigned based upon ideology rather than reality. It appears that where gender and war are concerned, our culture's tendency is to project rather than remember, to recall what "should have been true" rather than what actually was true. Even during wartime, traditional projections about what women "should" need or desire interfered with the actual requirements of combat nurses. When chief nurse Lt Archard traveled from the front lines to the quartermaster's supply depot in North Africa, she was taken aback at the discrepancy between fantasy and reality.

> Unfortunately, not one article of clothing that Archard needed for her nurses was available, but when the supply officer learned she was with the 48th Surgical Hospital, he opened up his storerooms to her. Archard was allowed to take all the lipstick, face powder, deodorant, cold cream, and facial tissues she wanted. Archard marveled at the wisdom of a War Department that did not supply nurses with long underwear, overalls, or shoes, but did not stint in providing the women with such essentials for front-line duty as lipstick and face powder. (113)

But is it only the enormity of WWII that occasioned the forgetfulness of these women's contributions? Were the sacrifices of male soldiers so overwhelming that ignoring the nurses' roles was inevitable?

It is tempting to believe that these women's lives have been only temporarily overlooked, and that eventually they will be recovered and earn the respect they deserve as military veterans, professionals, and witnesses and survivors of war. But history suggests otherwise—that their stories risk sinking from popular view, available only to the most obscure academics. For centuries, women have been present and active on the front lines of combat, yet their contributions quickly disappear from official records. It is only through the detailed research of academics that oblique evidence of women's combat experience can sometimes be rediscovered. For instance, Dianne Dugaw researched the role of women in eighteenth-century combat, both on land and at sea.

> Probably because military life in the early modern era was not the regulated profession it is today, women's service was taken for granted. In fact, their ongoing contributions on naval ships were recognized in official circles well into the nineteenth century. As late as 1847 Queen Victoria directed that the Navy General Service Medal be awarded 'without reservation to sex.' However, when two women actually stepped forward and claimed medals for their participation in the battles of the Nile and Trafalgar, the Medal Committee refused with embarrassed bureaucratic shuffling. Interestingly enough, the navy did not challenge the worthiness of the women claimants, but rather pleaded an obligation to forego the two medals in order to spare itself—and the army as well—a multitude of similar requests. In the Committee's words, 'there were many women in the fleet equally useful, and it [would] leave the Army exposed to *innumerable* applications.' [2](8)

The only counterweight history has to projections of wishful thinking, therefore, appears to be the personal stories themselves, which rely not upon official records, popular awareness, or traditional assumptions.

If nurses are to appear as individuals, whether in combat situations or not, they must tell their stories, for they cannot rely upon others to remember them. The collective memory, despite the hard work of academic researchers, wants to forget. Fortunately, two recent publications have appeared in which nurses tell their own stories through the art of poetry and prose. *Between the Heartbeats: Poetry and Prose by Nurses* and *Intensive Care: More Poetry and Prose by Nurses* have provided a forum for nurses to add their own voices to the literary

conversation, and to become active in shaping their own literary genre.[3]

Like any new genre, these selections are various, imaginative, and uneven. Some of the poems and short stories are gripping, haunting, and powerful. Others appear to be attempts at working through trauma. However, the collection as a whole provides an important contribution to an emerging category of literature, a category that has the potential to bring the experiences of individual nurses into the popular consciousness in a way that the academic world has not yet succeeded in doing. For it is only through personal narratives that nurses will take control of their own stories, histories, and experiences. As Aeschylus wrote centuries ago, "Memory is the mother of all wisdom."[4]

Notes

1. Monahan, Evelyn M. And Rosemary Neidel-Greenlee. *And If I Perish: Frontline U.S. Army Nurses in World War II.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

2. Dianne Dugaw, "Balladry's Female Warriors: Women, Warfare, and Disguise in the Eighteenth Century." *Eighteenth Century Life.* January 1985 IX. n.s., 2, pp1-20.

3. *Between the Heartbeats: Poetry and Prose by Nurses.* Cortney Davis and Judy Shaefer, ed. Iowa City: U Iowa P, 2002. *Intensive Care: More Poetry and Prose by Nurses.* Cortney Davis and Judy Shaefer, ed. Iowa City: U Iowa P, 2003.

4. Also quoted at the end of *And If I Perish: Frontline U.S. Army Nurses in World War II*, p. 461.

Lori A. Davis Perry holds a PhD from Brandeis University. Recent research has focused on the British poets Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674-1736), Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, Isaac Watts, and Alexander Pope. She teaches English at the United States Air Force Academy and is the Book Review Editor of **WLA**.

Dana Gioia

Recall Roster

Recalling forgotten, neglected, underrated, or unjustly out-of-print works

This Man's Army by John Allan Wyeth, Jr. (1894-1981)

John Allan Wyeth, perhaps the finest American soldier poet of World War I, was born in New York City, the third child of a noted surgeon. His father John Allan Wyeth Sr., a former Confederate soldier and published poet, was a founder of New York Polyclinic Hospital and Medical School. Wyeth attended the Lawrenceville School, a private preparatory school in New Jersey, where he was president of the drama club and class poet. In 1911 he entered Princeton where his literary acquaintances included fellow undergraduate Edmund Wilson, who said that Wyeth was the "only aesthete" in the Class of 1915. After graduating Wyeth went on to earn an M.A. from Princeton in 1917. Wyeth enlisted later that year in the army to fight in World War I. His fluent knowledge of French led him to an assignment in the Corps of Interpreters with the 33rd division. By May 1918 he was in France and soon involved in the late battles on the Somme and Verdun. Eventually the 33rd division became part of the Army of Occupation in Germany. Discharged in 1919, Wyeth taught French at St. Paul's school before quitting to become a painter. He spent the next two decades mostly in Europe. He returned to the United States in later life and converted to Catholicism. He died at eighty-six in Princeton.

Wyeth's literary importance rests solely on one remarkable and neglected book of poems, *This Man's Army: A War In Fifty-Odd Sonnets* (1928). This striking, naturalistic sonnet sequence chronicles the movements of an American troop division from receiving sailing orders and embarkation in France through the battles across the western front. Using slangy dialogue and vivid description, the poems present the war in brief, memorable scenes. Each sonnet begins by creating a narrative scene but ultimately rises to a lyrical conclusion. Wyeth's poems are also technically innovative. For the book-length sequence, he created a new

rhyme scheme based on the Petrarchan sonnet, but better adapted to the paucity of English-language rhymes. While formal, Wyeth's language is as fresh, varied, and contemporary as that of most free-verse poets of the period. There are no inversions, no forced rhymes or stale language. (Most of the poetry by our soldiers was written in more traditional Romantic style—as in the work of Alan Seeger.) Wyeth's sonnets have the narrative vitality and stark realism of prose but with the concision and lyricality of poetry. There is nothing quite like *This Man's Army* elsewhere in modern American poetry. It is comparable in scope and quality to the best British poetry from the Great War. Long neglected, it deserves careful reassessment. Wyeth never wrote another volume of poetry. *This Man's Army* is out of print.

The current chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, **Dana Gioia** is also the author of three books of poetry.

The Train from Brest

A haze of dusk behind low roofs of thatch
and sloping moors and barren gouty trees—
dim roads and earth-walled fields—the steady flight
of blinking poles and the rhythmic sweep of wires.
Darkness outside—
"Hey Tommy, gimme a match—
now gimme a Lucky."
"You're sorta hard to please—
you don't want much."
—"Somebody turn off the light
I want to sleep."
"Hell—with these frog flat tires?"
A stifling blackness—sweat, and the jiggling scratch
of cloth on your neck and tickling under the knees,
and the clank of iron beating a rackety tune—
and like a secret calling in the night
waking to see the black cathedral spires
of Chartres against a low-hung lazy moon.

Notes: "The Train from Brest." The port city of Brest on the west coast of France was the disembarakation point for U.S. Troops during World War I. *Lucky*: Lucky Strike, a brand of cigarettes. *frog*: slang for Frenchman. *flat tires*: suggests that it is a bumpy train ride. *Chartres*: Notre Dame de Chartres, a thirteenth-century Gothic cathedral.

Corbie to Sailly-le-Sec

High staggering walls, and plank-spiked piles of brick
and plaster—jagged gables wrenched apart,
and tall dolls' houses cleanly split in two—
Rooms gaping wide on every cloven floor,
pictures askew that made your throat go thick,
and humble furniture that tore your heart.
"By God let's get out of here!"
We motored through
to the poplar marsh along the river's shore.
Sailly-le-Sec—her church one candlestick
on a broken altar, and beyond it, part
of a rounded apse—a dusty village husk
of rubble and tile. Low hills ahead, all blue,
and twinkling with the phosphorescent soar
of rockets leaping in the fringe of dusk.

Note: "Corbie to Sailly-le-Sec." The title names two towns near Amiens in France, site of one of the last major battles of World War I.

Fromereville: War in Heaven

A reek of steam—the bath-house rang with cries.
"Come across with the soap."
"Like hell, what makes you think
it's yours?"
"Don't turn *off the water*, that ain't fair
I'm all *covered* with soap."
"Hurry up, get out of the way."
"Thank God you're takin' a bath."
"He wants to surprise
us."
"Oh is that so, well anyway I don't stink
like you."
"Air raid!"

We ran out into the square,
naked and cold like souls on Judgment Day.
Over us, white clouds blazoned on blue skies,
and a green balloon on fire—we watched it shrink
into flame and a fall of smoke. Around us, brute
guns belching puffs of shrapnel in the air,
where one plane swooping like a bird of prey
spat fire into a dangling parachute.

Note: "War in Heaven." ***green ballon*****: a barrage balloon used for observation.**

Chipilly Ridge:
Regimental Dressing Station

Squat walls of sandbags—and above, a sky
all thin and cool with dawn and very far.
Black empty stretchers. On the parapet,
light out before the clangor of the gun.
The bliss of strong fatigue—and where I lie
the canvas breathes between me and that star
a bitter steam of blood. The air feels wet,
and the stars go, forgotten one by one.
Time to start back—and watch those towns go by!
"You ready to go?—we got a lift in a car."
"Already?—"
"Yeh, let's start, we got a long way
to go."
O God the ruins of Sailly-Laurette!
—like dying men that wake and find the sun
and shut their eyes against another day.

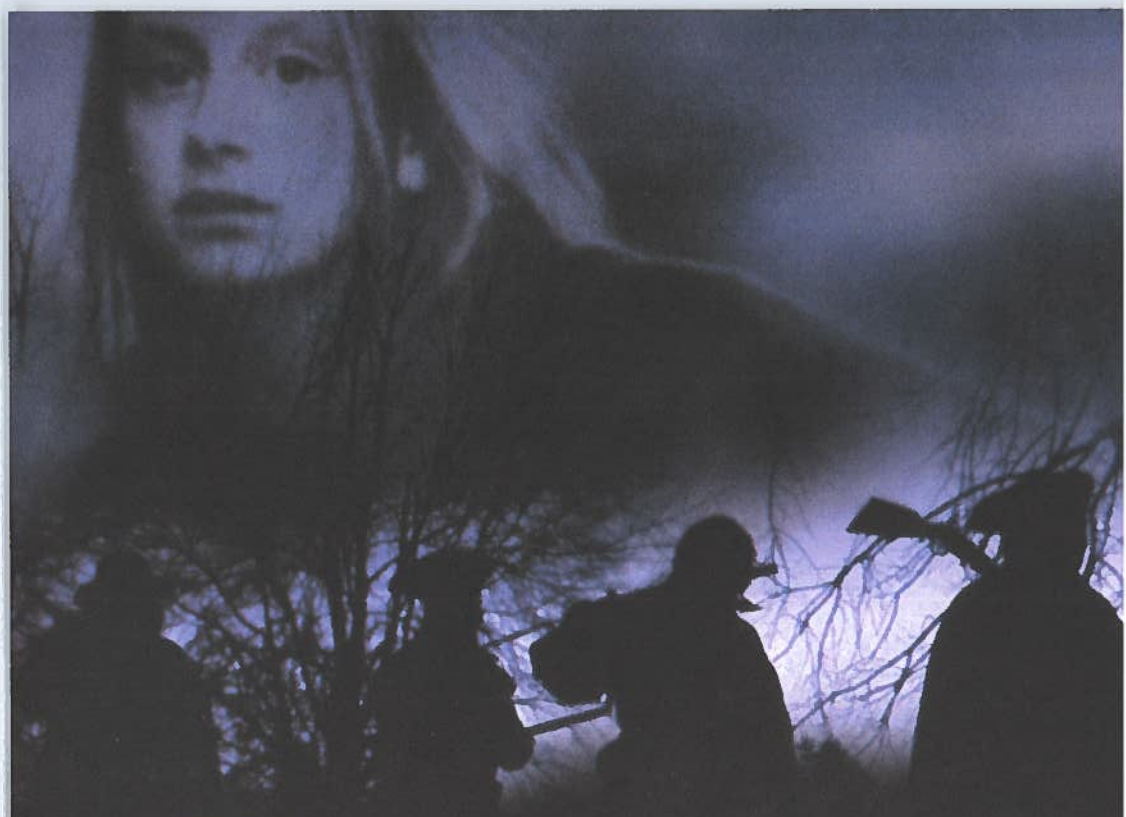
Molliens-Au-Bois:
Air Raid

Reading, at night, the shutters closed and barred,
a candle by my mattress on the floor,
my Virgil open to the mellow flame,
I heard what seemed a racking change of gear—

like some truck mired outside the stable yard . . .
The stricken pages shook—A vast smash tore
at the room, and through the rush of blackness came
a bestial angry grinding drone, and fear.
Arms crossed, fists clenched against my throat gone hard,
my body straining at the engine's roar,
at every blast a thing like joy . . . And soon
a lifted spell, and life somehow the same,
dragging me out to join the others near
the pond—a mud pit gaping at the moon!

Brest:
The British Front

Noon on the white cathedral of Beauvais,
a glaring brittle hull of stone and glass
long after glittering above the plain.
A halt at a junction—
"*Get* back—*Stay* where you are!"
"All out!"
"My God I'm *shaving*—"
"Get out of the way—"
"Jump *damn* you—"
"Throw the bags out—"
A breathless mass
crushing and scrambling in the moving train,
and men and packs plunge out of every car.
Another train, through slow green hills all day—
American troops that wave and shout as we pass
"What outfit—*Hey*—
Long salvage trains. We shunt
along and stall. And like a pumping vein,
our eardrums jump and catch from very far
the muffled pulse of guns along the front.



BRAVE ENEMIES

A Novel of the American Revolution

ROBERT MORGAN

Author of *Gap Creek*, a *New York Times* Bestseller

Editor's Choice

Becoming America
by Lori A. Davis Perry

I was the only one nearby who wasn't running around. The redcoat threw down his musket and held his hands up. I thought he was hoping to surrender. The cavalry was coming toward him, and I stepped forward to protect him from the sabers. Col. William Washington's men were hallooing and chopping at every Tory still standing. A man's head went flying and rolled on the ground like a musk melon.

So begins Robert Morgan's latest novel *Brave Enemies*. Set in South Carolina during the Revolutionary War, the story follows the surprising path of Josie Summers, a sixteen-year-old girl who eventually ends up disguised as a soldier fighting in the Battle of Cowpens.

Morgan's novel tackles the most human—and thus dangerous—aspects of civil war and revolution, the moments when power vacuums appear, social structures dissolve, and the most violent impulses toward chaos and disintegration manifest themselves through individuals, gangs, and even entire communities. These moments of transition from one state of existence to another leave individuals and communities terrifyingly vulnerable to the violence that always lurks beneath the surface of human societies, a violence normally restrained by the rule of law and the strictures of communal life. Rend the fabric of this restraint, and the brutality of violence begins to feed upon itself, threatening not only the present, but the future as well. As Morgan puts it, "*I wanted to portray a world going through such rapid change everyone is disoriented. It is a struggle for a new definition of society. It is the threshold of a new country and new world, emerging from the violence and hate.*"

Morgan explores the vast possibilities of these moments at every level in his novel—political affiliations, family life, neighborhoods, villages, and even the landscape itself seem caught in a liminal state from which they can descend into endless blood feuds or emerge as a nascent political body with some hope for a better future. In the 1780s the colonies are neither liberated nor pacified. With violent gangs roaming at will and British regulars rounding up and executing any person viewed with suspicion, it is safe to be neither a Patriot nor a Tory, an agitator nor a pacifist. Houses are burned, women raped, entire families hanged together. The horrors of civil war emerge with frightful clarity in Morgan's tale, for there is no place to hide from seemingly inevitable brutality. As he puts it, "*As I did research on the Revolution in the Carolinas I was astonished at the*

violence of the times, and at what I called the 'moral ambiguity' of the times. I think it was hard for most people to decide which was the right side. Both Whigs and Tories did such horrendous things.... As I studied the Revolution in the South I discovered it was a civil war, neighbor against neighbor, brother against brother. It was hard to know what was right. Two brothers fought on opposite sides at Kings Mountain and killed each other.

But there are people who take to war and killing. Often these are men who have been failures at everything else in their lives. It is sometimes called 'the war lover' types, as in John Hersey's novel about the 8th Air Force. Grant was not really good at anything else. It is the ultimate form of being in control, to kill and be paid to kill, and be decorated to kill. I guess we are all killers just under the surface, and combat training is designed to bring that out." The joy of killing and the rampages of gleeful killers cast an eery chill over the novel, and reinforce the day-to-day terrors of war not only for soldiers, but for the many families, including women and children, who are inevitably victimized by it.

Morgan displays a special affinity for the topography of the region. It is a place he knows well from his boyhood. The land itself re-enacts the multi-layered metaphors played out by the characters, for in the 1780s it teeters ominously between wilderness and civilization, wild and tamed—the Indians who own it have retreated into the mountains and the settlers who will claim it have only begun the long struggle to domesticate it. Isolated neighbors are not yet villagers. Churchgoers are not yet solidified into real congregations, but simply meet briefly for services and then melt back into the forests. Attempts at constructing communities are met with frustration at every turn—even a barn raising is broken up by British soldiers who have outlawed group activities to prevent treasonous meetings. Nor is the land immune to violent destruction, as a raging forest fire reinforces the dangerous escape and unlikely survival of Morgan's protagonists.

Both of Morgan's characters are caught up in the chaos of this unsettled place and time, neither of them by choice. Josie Summers is a sixteen-year-old girl whose maturing figure brings out the worst in her lascivious stepfather. Adolescence is her first shocking experience of the dangerous violence that can surface during moments of change, and the delight in cruelty that human beings can bring to any situation. When her stepfather rapes her, she murders him with an ax and escapes in his clothes disguised as a young man, her first act of violence appearing as simple self-preservation and vengeance. Terrified of what she's done, and seeking to lose herself in the wilderness, Josie heads west into the mountains. She finds herself attending a church service led by John Stretham, a Methodist circuit preacher, who offers her a place to stay and trains her as his supposedly male assistant.

Josie's identity is in constant flux—no longer a girl and not yet an adult, she is neither the Josie she has always known nor the Joseph she pretends to be. In

this sense, Josie's life is a metaphor for the country itself, as it grows away from its past but has not yet determined its future. Caught in a state of transition, already guilty of murder and thus demonstrably capable of real violence, Josie struggles to establish a future with John Stretham defined by the best within them, rather than the worst. Her guilt over the murder strengthens her resolve to maintain control over herself despite the lawlessness that surrounds her.

Nor is John Stretham without demons, for he possesses a violent temper that threatens to overwhelm him during moments of stress and uncertainty. Yet Stretham is determined to exert control and self-discipline over himself for the sake of a higher purpose. "*In John Stretham*," Morgan writes, "*I wanted to create a character whose ambitions are very different from what is happening around him. He wants to bring a message of peace and hope, of fellowship and love to this rough backcountry torn by the rebellion. The dynamics of the novel are built on this contrast. He and Josie dream of a peaceful life in the mountains, a family, a future, an asylum from the madness around them.*" Deeply shaken by his discovery of Josie's true gender, and horrified at the effect of this discovery on his congregational mission, he must fight with all his will to control his own passions. How can he reconcile his highest purpose—spiritual leadership as a missionary—with the shocking reality of a woman living in his house without his knowledge? Worse yet, he realizes he is in love with Josie and wants her to remain, a situation which the lawlessness of the backcountry makes all the more tempting. It would be so easy to give in to his guilty desires. Stretham finds an uneasy solution to this paradoxical situation by secretly marrying Josie in a fireside ceremony.

All of this sets up the poetic structure of the novel by preparing the reader for the Battle of Cowpens, the defining moment not only of several individuals, but of the Revolutionary War itself. For Robert Morgan, as for his characters, the battle is a deeply personal experience: "*I grew up hearing stories of the Revolution as well as the Civil War. Three of my ancestors fought in the Revolution, and my dad, who was a great storyteller, loved to describe General Daniel Morgan's great victory over Bloody Tarleton at Cowpens January 17, 1781, and the Overmountain men killing Ferguson at Kings Mountain October 7, 1780. The Revolution ended in battles in the South and in Kentucky at the Blue Licks in August 1782.*" Cowpens is an important battle historically, for it turned the tide in the ground war. And once again, Josie Summers finds herself in the center of a historical moment while trying to maintain an identity as a man. In the guise of a young soldier, separated from John Stretham by British soldiers who burn their house and drag him away, Josie inadvertently becomes a rebel soldier in Morgan's army, facing down the British cavalry on a smoke-filled battlefield.

Morgan's description of the battle through Josie's eyes serves several purposes. "*I knew there were women dressed as men fighting in both the Revolution and*

the Civil War," he writes. "*They fought for at least three reasons: to accompany their husbands, to look for their missing husbands, and to get revenge for the death of a husband, father, or other relative. But I chose Josie as my narrator because I wanted to see the war with a fresh eye. I wanted the story told by someone who has never been to war or studied war. The challenge was to convey the confusion, boredom, uncertainty of militia life, and disorientation in battle scenes without confusing or boring the reader. I worked to make those scenes seem authentic, but comprehensible.*" Josie, of course, does not fight for any of the reasons Morgan mentions. She fights because she is hungry and signing up can get her both food and an opportunity not to be hanged as a Tory. And her perspective on the battle provides not only a personal account of the battle, but a metaphor for the war itself.

General Morgan visits each militia group the night before the battle and explains that he needs them to fire two shots and fall back. "'All I want from you is two shots,' he said. 'You don't have to stand up to a cavalry charge or a bayonet charge. Shoot twice and retreat to the next line. Fire at the epaulets and stripes. Don't waste your powder on privates. Two shots and fall back.'" Josie has been given a rifle—a significant shooting advantage, for the British were still using muskets which had a shorter range. Colonel Tarleton and his Dragoons had hoped to engage the Continentals before Morgan's riflemen militia arrived, but he miscalculated and the riflemen were already waiting for him. In the first moments of the battle, Josie becomes overwhelmed by the sight of the British soldiers, forming in ranks, the dragoons charging with sabers and the infantry fanning out. Terrified, she struggles to aim and fire, with mixed results. She runs back as the British unleash a volley of bullets around her and walk out of the smoke fixing bayonets. Waiting for the British infantry to advance to their new line, the militia are outraged by the British bayoneting of a wounded soldier and fire prematurely. Josie loses her ramrod and panics as the militia try to reload for a second shot. "But all around me men started dropping back," she recounts. "They saw just as I did there wasn't time to reload before the bayonets reached us. . . . Our line began to crumble and melt back. Wasn't anything could hold it firm before the coming bayonets."

As Josie's line breaks and begins to run, she finds herself surrounded by wounded and fleeing men. She walks backward away from the British bayonets, determined not to run and trying to reload. She fires into the advancing smoke, unable to aim and unaware of whether she has hit anyone. Despite her determination to do what's expected of her, Josie becomes disoriented after she stumbles over a dead body. She has lost her sense of direction. She begins running, presumably in the right direction. Then she turns to see the Green Dragoons bearing down on her with sabers. As the Dragoons are diverted away from the fleeing militiamen by Colonel Washington's cavalry, the men continue running. "I couldn't tell where we were going, but everybody seemed to be running in the same direction."

At this moment, when the battle threatens to turn into a British rout, officers try their best to turn them back but they keep running. Lt Joseph Hughes of the South Carolina militia leaps in their path, trying to turn them back. "'Tarleton will ride you down and chop you to pieces,' he shouted. 'Your only hope is to turn and fight.'" He continues to berate them to no avail. But as suddenly as they had started to run, they stopped. "I don't know what came over us," Josie recounts. "It was a mystery, like everything else that day. Lieutenant Hughes hollered at us and pointed back toward the line. As soon as we got behind the pines the terrible panic went out of us. It all happened at once. We saw there was no use to run."

The decisive moment of the battle, as Morgan recounts it, does not come when the militias hold the line, but when they return to the line after breaking and running. The mystery of their return to sanity in the midst of chaos is the mystery of the Revolution itself. Whose voice is it that penetrates their panic and how did that voice come to be in that place at that moment in the middle of a pivotal battle? What inner resources of self-control were summoned in that moment? In this small but momentous battle, the struggles of the war itself take place in the hearts and souls of each participant. Where does that "something" come from that allows Marlowe in *Heart of Darkness* to step back from the precipice into which Kurtz has tumbled? What is the mystery of self-control, leadership, higher purpose, or simple serendipity that kept the American Revolution from descending into the uncontrolled bloodbath of the French Revolution? Certainly the same impulses rose to the surface in both places—blood lust, the will to power, the desire to use lawlessness for one's own ends and purposes, as well as altruistic and progressive motives. What voice can penetrate fear and self-preservation? What kind of leadership can order such chaos? The mystery of the American Revolution itself, and the leadership that somehow—against all odds—wrenched it back from the abyss of lawless banditry comes to life in Morgan's account of the Battle of Cowpens. Josie cannot run from the destruction of the Dragoons, no more than she could outrun the forest fire in which she and John become trapped. In the final moments of the battle, as in the forest fire, self-sacrifice is the only option for survival. It is the survival of others, rather than themselves, that propel Josie and John to heroic action.

Although Josie and John end up on opposite sides of the battlefield, fighting their battles in apparently opposite ways, they represent the same impulse toward creating order out of chaos, channeling—through the force of their own wills—the potential violence of human experience into something more—something better than simple survival, with a higher goal driving them to an awareness of their situation that many of their companions never grasp. In both cases, their final hope is for peace, not war.

"*While we are all potential killers*," Morgan writes, "*given the right conditions, most of us are potential pacifists also. Amid the horrors of war it*

is only natural to decide such bloodshed is meaningless. Many soldiers express that sense of carnage as waste, a meaningless sacrifice. The justification of war is seen better from the outside, or in the aftermath." Certainly John Stretham's experiences confirm his disgust toward war in all forms. And from the perspective of the participants, the battle like the war itself is both baffling and terrifying. Yet the mystery of the voice in the wilderness lingers hauntingly over the novel, infusing Morgan's tale with poetic pathos that transcends the lives of two people, the horrors of war, and the impact of the Battle of Cowpens. At its heart, the novel is about the human heart, and the mysterious power of the will in the face of shocking brutality and violence. Though one may believe less in the efficacy of war at the end of Morgan's novel, no reader can fail to believe more in the resiliency of the human heart.

Robert Morgan is the author of seven previous books of fiction including *The Truest Pleasure* and the award-winning bestseller *Gap Creek*. He was raised on his family's farm in the North Carolina mountains and now lives in Ithaca, New York, where he teaches at Cornell University.

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Dismantling Glory: Twentieth-Century Soldier Poetry. Lorrie Goldensohn. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003. 372 pp. $34.50 cloth.

Reviewed by Douglas Higbee, University of California, Irvine

Few books have enjoyed such scholarly longevity within the field of modern war literature studies as Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*. This is in part because it manages to be at once highly readable and well worth reading. More precisely, though, the book's impact and continued relevance stems from its then-unconventional method. As a whole it eschews a traditional chronological organization by author, while each chapter weaves a salient rhetorical-historical theme with analysis of poetry and memoir, covering such topics as war front/home front relations, war writing and pastoral, and the English homoerotic tradition, among others. In so doing, Fussell enlivened scholarship on war literature by injecting it with a provocative cultural history of modernity; rather than being a separate or parallel discourse, war literature was now understood to be integrally related to currents in culture at large. While more than a few critics, primarily feminists, have taken issue with Fussell's relatively restricted canon, it is his claim for the war's determinative influence on 20th century British identity that has received the most criticism, mainly from revisionists of the 'Myth' of the Great War. Nonetheless, the growth of the field of war literature studies in the last couple of decades has been powered in no small part by more tightly-focused cultural histories that often rebound off Fussell's historical claims.[1] Convincing or not, nearly thirty years after it first appeared, *The Great War* continues to have a salutary heuristic effect.

In the wake of these criticisms of Fussell, few scholars of modern war have been willing to hazard such temporally broad claims. Even studies with an explicit 20th century frame, such as the recent spate of 'end-of-the-century' books, were reluctant to offer summary theses.[2] Perhaps the last of these 'end-of-the-century' studies is Lorrie Goldensohn's *Dismantling Glory*, a lucid series of readings of major 20th century British and American war poets informed by relevant biographical and historical contexts. Her relatively narrow range of selection is augmented by frequent and fruitful connections to poets of other periods, ranging from Homer, Archilochos, Gascoigne, and Hardy. A central question Goldensohn traces is the extent to which, in our era of modern industrial warfare, soldier

poetry has revised glorified (i.e., traditional, or pre-modern) concepts of the heroic. While her intention to excavate the anti-war strains in this body of work is clear from the outset, to her credit Goldensohn is well aware of the ideological substrate in many purportedly anti-war texts that locates various attractions and consolations in war. Thus, if one of Goldensohn's principal historical interests is to "track the nature of antiwar feeling in soldier poetry," she also has one eye peeled to see the "reluctant but defensive reaffirmation of violence and bloodletting that so often resurfaces in these poems" (xii). As the title of her study suggests, then, the process of "dismantling glory" is a difficult and ongoing project.

Goldensohn's approach is a useful qualification of a common hard-and-fast moral absolutism that often obscures the fruitful ambiguities embedded in 20th century war writing by contrasting, to take a common example, the imperialistic narcissism of Rupert Brooke with the trench-borne outrage of Wilfred Owen. Both are more complex than this scenario allows. In his very last poems, written aboard ship en route to Gallipoli, Brooke strikes a more reticent, apprehensive note, while Owen's putatively firm anti-war position is often unsettled by an undertow of masochism and by Christ imagery awash in holy sacrifice. Indeed, Goldensohn's reading of Owen—her focus in the second chapter—homes in on the ways Owen's poetry often refuses a thorough-going rejection of war for the consolations and attractions of suffering in the context of male fellowship. As Goldensohn puts it, Owen's poetic language often "transforms anguish, pain, and suffering into a nobility of heroic endurance" (76).[3] While this reading of Owen is not wholly original—for instance, over a decade ago Adrian Caesar's *Taking It Like a Man* convincingly elaborated upon Fussell's early reading of Owen's Decadent-inspired homoeroticism—Goldensohn's emphasis on Owen's redefinition of the traditional heroic in terms of a heroism of witnessing and suffering nicely encapsulates a longstanding scholarly preoccupation. If experienced readers of First World War poetry and criticism may not require another review of Yeats' instructively off-target censure of Owen's "passive suffering" or another reading of "Dulce et Decorum Est" that translates the Horace for us, readers interested in a robust introduction to the salient issues regarding Owen's work would benefit from Goldensohn's analysis.

Goldensohn's chapter on Keith Douglas, on the other hand, presents us with a long-overdue synthetic appraisal of a relatively neglected Second World War-era poet that moves beyond William Scammell's excellent but dated monograph.[4] Bringing together readings of Douglas' verse from Oxford, North Africa, and pre-Normandy with a nuanced analysis of the prose memoir *Alamein to Zem Zem*, Goldensohn rightfully refuses Douglas' own claims—made in such essays as "Poets in this War" (1943)—that all Second World War writing was doomed to repeat the arguments of the Great War poets. On this last point, Goldensohn finds Douglas's poetry deflecting an Owen-esque emphasis on the sacrifice of

innocents by callous non-combatants and more squarely delineating the extent to which soldiers themselves are implicated in war's destructiveness. While in part this departure may be due to the real differences between trench warfare and tank warfare in the open desert, Goldensohn's main point is that Second World War poets like Douglas, writing in the shadow of Auden's ethical ambivalences of the 1930s, simply did not have available to them the ideological traction that informs Owen's disillusioned anger. In Douglas, this commonly results in a cooler, fatalistic tone: the soldier's dual role as both victim and victimizer draws Douglas away from questions of Why? and toward metaphysical ruminations cauterized with scenes of battlefield wreckage. Goldensohn brings out this strain in Douglas most clearly in her reading of "How to Kill," in which her tracking of the poem's parallels between the drama of combat and the metaphysical co-implication of death and life demonstrates her critical acuity. As Douglas's persona fires at the enemy:

> Death, like a familiar, hears
> and look, has made a man of dust
> of a man of flesh. This sorcery
> I do. Being damned, I am amused
> to see the centre of love diffused
> and the waves of love travel into vacancy. (130)

On the other hand, her contention that these lines express "more than a shade of swagger" rather misses their quiet tone and perhaps slights the emotional price such honestly-hewn ironies must have cost the author. Goldensohn is precisely on target, however, in relating the metaphysical focus in Douglas's war poetry to his own longstanding preoccupations with identity and mortality, a critical move convincingly demonstrated in her reading of Douglas' pre-Normandy "Bete Noire" poems. Noting Douglas' achievements in memoir and in criticism, Goldensohn's claim for his exceeding, in the span of a brief career, the rather restrictive category of "war poet" as a well-rounded "man of letters" is certainly earned and welcome.

Moving to the American side of the Second World War, Goldensohn finds in Randall Jarrell a retention of Douglas' emphasis on soldiers as killers combined with an Owen-esque political consciousness. Jarrell's status as a non-combatant flight instructor—which places him simultaneously near the war's center and at its periphery—informs an *oeuvre*, that, in essence, widens the circle of moral responsibility in order to include not only those who drop bombs on European cities but also those whom these airmen represent. While Owen focuses his outrage on accusations of civilians, Jarrell's implication of non-combatants refrains from excusing those doing the fighting; at the same time, Jarrell's broader scope produces a more politically pointed poetry than Douglas' metaphysical

ruminations. Though at times Jarrell over-emphasizes the extent to which modern war is the product of "the systems that have bred and empowered the modern state" (a sentiment that provides the bite of poems such as "The Death of the Ball-Turret Gunner"), for her part Goldensohn is especially interested in those poems which provide a more complex rendition of war's moral calculus (225). In "Eighth Air Force," Jarrell casts his soldier-victims as both murderers and Christ-figures, civilians as the "people" demanding blood, and his speaker (perhaps a stand-in for Jarrell himself) as an anguished Pilate. Goldensohn ably reads this tripartite network in terms of Jarrell's general interest in the moral gray zones of twentieth century war. The speaker as Pilate concludes by considering the airmen as a collective Christ:

> I will content the people as I can
> And give up these to them: Behold the man!
>
> I have suffered in a dream, because of him,
> Many things; for this last saviour, man,
> I have lied as I lie now. But what is lying?
> Men wash their hands, in blood, as best they can:
> I find no fault in this just man. (224)

While perhaps she could have spent more time unpacking the concluding line's dense ironies, in which the complex status of the key terms "I," "fault," "just," "man," and the deliberately slippery syntax of "this just man"—the very terms of her discussion of Jarrell's ethics—are all brought explosively together, Goldensohn's illuminating connections between his life and work are an important contribution to Jarrell scholarship and the study of modern war poetry in general.

Goldensohn completes her study with an extensive discussion of four anthologies of Vietnam War poetry. Published from 1972 to 1998, each volume successively broadens in scope to include not only poetry by American veterans, but also work by civilians, non-combatant nurses, and Vietnamese writers, with the result that formerly implicit issues such as gender and race become increasingly more explicit. This emphasis is in line with Goldensohn's overall task of excavating the complex inter-penetrations of peace and war: for instance, how the demarcation of wartime roles along strict gender lines—a major facet of the traditional heroic ethos—duplicates and often reinforces the gender hierarchies of peacetime. On another level, however, Goldensohn's aesthetic criteria bear some examination. While arguing for the historical importance of the 1972 anthology, she argues that on the whole its poetry suffers from a lack of "polish," claiming that "direct witness...constricts or oversimplifies many [of the] poems" (250, 253). Though many readers may concur with this judgment (including myself),

and though her claim is in keeping with her general argument for the thematic and formal evolution of the successive stages of Vietnam War poetry, perhaps Goldensohn doesn't sufficiently allow for the ways in which the achievements of the later poetry depend on those initial works. If, strictly speaking, the complexity of later poetry is visible only by dint of its comparison with prior works, then relegating early Vietnam War poetry to the aesthetic dustbin fails to underscore the dialectical relation between, say, the work of W.D Ehrhart and Bruce Weigl. On this score, one may wonder whether Virginia Woolf would have retained her reservations concerning Sassoon's poetic achievement if she had considered the influence of his realism on what most agree are Owen's more elaborate and nuanced revisions.

Reservations such as these aside, and though we may still await a successor to Fussell's ambitious and influential work, Goldensohn's study convincingly brings together the complex and variegated body of 20th century war poetry by combining analysis of its major practitioners with exploration of overarching themes such as the evolving valence of the twentieth-century heroic. And as it seems fairly clear that the twenty-first century will continue to provide fresh occasions for interrogating the diverse inter-relations between war and heroism, it can't but help to have Goldensohn's work close at hand.

Notes

1. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male* (1996), Allyson Booth, *Postcards from the Trenches* (1996), and Vincent Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (2003) are a few such studies. Hynes present a cogent summary of the Great War 'Myth,' while Brian Bond's *The Unquiet Western Front* (2002) is the most recent critique of the 'Myth' thesis.

2. See Margot Norris, *Writing War in the 20th Century*, pp. 9-10.

3. For example, see "Greater Love," "Insensibility," and "Strange Meeting."

4. *Keith Douglas*. Faber and Faber, 1988.

Honoring Sergeant Carter: Redeeming a Black World War II Hero's Legacy. Allene G. Carter and Robert L. Allen. New York: Amistad , 2003, ix + 212 pp. $24.95.

Reviewed by Eric Ensley, United States Air Force Academy

Perhaps the highest cost of freedom is not so much how truth becomes cryptically lost or found, but how more often than not, it is crushed into some ideological can, then systematically manipulated, covered up, and purposefully forgotten. Such was the case with Sergeant Edward A. Carter, one of only seven African-American soldiers in World War II to posthumously win the Medal of Honor. The authors begin Sergeant Carter's story in September 1941, when he enlisted in the Army. Having risen within a few years to the rank of Staff Sergeant in his all-black company, in the autumn of 1944, Carter found himself driving trucks in England and southern France. Spurred by heavy losses during the Battle of the Bulge however, the Army began recruiting black soldiers for combat duty. Of the roughly 4,500 who volunteered, 2,221 became infantrymen, one of whom was Sergeant Carter. The only catch was that these volunteers, if they had them, had to turn in their stripes, for in those good 'ole days of sweet tea, Jim Crow, and separate-but-equal segregation, America's Great Christian God forbid a Black Sergeant from California from commanding a White Private from Georgia. Soon thereafter, Private Carter was charging towards the Rhine as part of the Fifty-sixth Armored Infantry Battalion in Patton's Third Army.

On March 23, 1945, during a mission to capture a bridge over the river at Speyer, Carter's column came under intense 88-mm artillery fire. Volunteering to lead his squad to attack the enemy position, what happened in the course of the next few hours changed his destiny. Shot seven times, hit in both legs by 88-mm shrapnel, all of his squad wounded or dead, in the space of a few hours Carter effectively destroyed one machine gun nest, killed a German mortar crew plus a dozen or so German soldiers, and took two German prisoners who provided his unit with valuable information on enemy-troop dispositions. But in keeping with the findings of a later study by Shaw University concluding that the Army's racism prevented black soldiers from receiving America's highest military award,

Carter received a Purple Heart and Distinguished Service Cross for his actions, even though he clearly should have won the Medal of Honor. As the authors so convincingly instruct their readers however, not receiving the Medal of Honor was a trifling, almost insignificant offense compared to the ordeal he would later undergo.

Strangely enough, Allene Carter did not learn about her deceased father-in-law's heroic actions until the Department of Veterans Affairs called the Carter family to inform them that the White House was planning to award him the Medal of Honor. It was only when she started gathering information for the White House that she started learning about and piecing together the darker side to Sergeant Carter's story—a side that had clouded his family's memory of him and filled them with bad blood concerning Carter's military experience. The strength of what follows lies in a narrative that bristles with Allene Carter's strong sense of retributive justice and fearless efforts to discover the redemptive truth about her father-in-law.

Allene Carter, herself a 911 dispatcher turned self-taught researcher, in what seems like a perfect case study in *Government for Dummies: How to Honor Your Fallen Heroes Instead of Trying to Disgrace Them*, describes the series of injustices she unearthed in her research. She uncovered how General Mark Clark, with his "when loyalty is doubted, the individual must suffer" philosophy, knowingly resisted Army policy by limiting black reenlistment and ensuring that Sergeant Carter, this "audacious, proud black soldier who shone wherever he was assigned," was humbled (185); how Adjutant General Edward Witsell, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, and Johnson's assistant, James Evens, all had a guilty hand in using that all-too-common government memorandum smokescreen of "confidential information" to deny attempts by Carter and the NAACP to overturn the Army's decision to deny his reenlistment; how Sergeant Carter faced repeated insinuations of disloyalty by the Army throughout his efforts to learn the reasons behind this denial. As Allene Carter accurately deduced, every time an Army newspaper published a laudatory article concerning Sergeant Carter, the flood of investigations began anew.

In the late 1990s, when Allene Carter finally gained access to Eddie's Freedom of Information Act file, the only information to support the government's allegations against Sergeant Carter was that he had fought with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, grew up with his Christian missionary parents in India and China, and had a father living in Shanghai, China, and an Indian mother. On this so-called "confidential information," Carter found himself repeatedly denied reenlistment. Too late to do Sergeant Carter any living good, Allene Carter angrily notes how "The institution that he so faithfully and heroically served...had betrayed him cruelly" (177).

The hard-won apotheosis of Allene Carter's work came after the 1997 Medal

of Honor ceremony, when, in 1999, upon learning—largely from Allene Carter's research and aggressive advocacy of her findings—of what he called "the additional injustice [Sergeant Carter] had suffered by being denied reenlistment," President Clinton issued a formal apology to the Carter family on behalf of all Americans. The postlude to Sergeant Carter's story occurred on one of those typically hot and humid June days in Norfolk, Virginia, when his daughter-in-law stood in a shipyard for the christening of the Navy ammunition carrier, the *M/V SSG Edward A. Carter, Jr.* Admonishing her audience of 300 guests, Allene Carter reminded us of something we forget often and too easily:

> When we go back to our respective communities, we can take back a legacy with us. We can change history. We can reopen the history books to make corrections. I would ask that you hold on to what the Carter family has started, and continue on with us as we make a journey to insure that the truth is recovered and preserved. (204)

In this day of corporate cover-ups and increasing governmental secrecy, we would be wise to remember that truth does not just happen; instead, it is fought and bled for, lied over, and comes with high costs. We should honor Sergeant Carter and his biographers for helping teach Americans of every color once more how important the battle for truth is—and that this battle can be won.

The Vietnam War in History, Literature, and Film. Taylor, Mark. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003. 176 pp. $48.00 cloth, $22.95 paper.

Reviewed by Matthew Hill, University of Maryland, College Park

Writing about the complex cultural reverberations of the American war in Viet Nam is never an easy task. The war, "America's Longest War," as George Herring aptly put it, is extraordinarily difficult to describe, much less understand. It was both a stunning military success and a dismal failure, a hard slog through jungles and rice paddies and a breakneck Huey flight over them, a "noble cause" and a quagmire. Writing and film on the war have only complicated the task: in many

ways, creative work on Viet Nam has created a new meta-history, a narrative apart from the facts and figures of the (supposedly accurate) historical record. The elusive thing called "Viet Nam"—both the country and the war—exists as a constructed "thing" somewhere between these often competing histories, its tenuous truth buried in layers of historical inaccuracy and poetic license. It is the analysis of this daunting problem that defines Mark Taylor's 2003 book, *The Vietnam War in History, Literature, and Film.*

In a brief introductory chapter, Taylor offers a prospectus for his project, suggesting that the complex nature of the war (Frederic Jameson called it the first truly "postmodern war") requires that one attempting to "understand" it consider both "historical" texts and "creative" ones:

> In the context of the Vietnam War, questions about the usefulness of particular disciplines are particularly relevant because of the skepticism with which many attempts to portray the war have been received. History, it has been alleged by some, cannot fully explain this first "postmodern" war. The scale, confusion and "unknowability" of events in Vietnam require, according to this view, alternative forms of representation which writers of fiction are best equipped to provide (Taylor 2).

Attempting to resolve the perilous dichotomy between the writing of "history" and "literature" or "fiction" as it relates to the notion of "how it really was" is the core aim of Taylor's book. Echoing Henry James, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy,* Taylor argues that texts outside of conventional historical discourse may be able to provide readers with a different kind of "truth" about the war in Viet Nam. Not simply advocating an unqualified acceptance of creative texts as "sources of truths" (2), however, Taylor suggests a healthy skepticism, arguing that one should assess "what sort of dangers" are inherent in reading creative texts historically.

Awareness of the split between "historical" and "literary" representation, Taylor allows, is nothing new—readers for centuries have had to negotiate through complex layering of creative and "objective" representations of events, particularly in regards to warfare and the infamous "fog of war." The Great War poetry of Sassoon and Owen, for example, is commonly held to be far more illustrative of the "real" truths of modern war than many conventional histories of the period, portraying more accurately both the abjection and suffering of soldiers on all sides and their resultant "modern" psychic isolation. The fact that this *is* such an old problem to me is the central weakness of Taylor's book. The introduction seems to imply a binary ("history" vs. "literature") approach to examining the war

that I feel only the most naïve cultural critics or historians would advocate. Many of the brightest scholars working in literature and history departments—and their respective course syllabi—often draw from both historical and creative texts in order to expand and complicate their work. In calling for an "interdisciplinary" approach to the war, then, Taylor seems to be advocating a solution that is already being implemented by many critics.

This is not to say, however, that *The Vietnam War in History, Literature, and Film* is not an important contribution to the scholarship on the war. While the exigency for the problem that Taylor posits might be a bit weak, his skill in working with texts is considerable. In an academic environment where "high theory" and overt political proselytizing are the fashion, working closely with actual texts is a skill not many critics possess; Taylor's attention to detail—both in the historical and literary sense—is significant, as is his command of the body of secondary literature. The book is extraordinarily well-researched and offers genuinely insightful, sophisticated and accessible readings of each text that it examines.

The organization of the book is unique. Rather than organizing chronologically, by text, or by genre, Taylor structures his analysis thematically, grouping texts around common dominant motifs. Chapter 1, "Telling True War Stories," interrogates the complex problems of understanding the historical "truth" of combat and offers a summary of the ongoing theoretical dialogue between fictive and "objective" representations of history. Chapter 2, "Heroes," offers a particularly compelling interdisciplinary analysis of *The Green Berets*, in which Taylor examines the representation—in most cases celebration and mythologizing—of the U.S. Special Forces in both Robin Moore's 1965 novel and John Wayne's 1968 film. Taylor skillfully casts both versions of *The Green Berets*—commonly considered to be of questionable historical accuracy, yet extremely popular—as unintentionally valuable in imparting some level of "true" historical knowledge about the war, particularly in regards to the development of American *ideas* on guerilla warfare and counterinsurgency:

> Determined to assert the heroism of the Green Berets, Robin Moore and John Wayne produced versions of the war that are highly flawed but historically valuable for reasons neither writer nor actor / director might have imagined: as reflections of the attitudes of Americans; as evidence of the appeal that the Special Forces and the mythology surrounding them continued to have, despite an increasingly peripheral role in Vietnam; and, individually, as indications of some of the views of a small group of soldiers in Vietnam and the avowed views of the American government in Washington (Taylor 54).

The novel and film, then, the book argues, are worth examining as cultural artifacts, as productions arising from a unique moment in American history. While Taylor's reading of *The Green Berets* is indeed interesting—some of the best and most true criticism on the work that I've seen—its core assertion of the film and

novel being "artifacts" of ideas is fairly conventional: such premises underlie much of the current theoretical work on popular literature and culture.

Chapter 3 examines the contribution of cinema to the study and understanding of history, oddly enough through an analysis of Oliver Stone's deeply speculative *JFK*. Taylor investigates both Stone's use of historical documents as a means to advance his own theories on Kennedy's assassination as well as the implications that use has—within the particularly persuasive genre of film—on the credibility of the film as "history" for popular audiences. Taylor ultimately sees value in Stone's willfully misleading text as both an artifact of political consciousness and as an event provocative of dialogue on the Kennedy assassination, the war in Viet Nam, and the process of presidential decision making in the 1960s. "Battles," the book's fourth chapter, deals with "objective" representations of combat contrasted with those in literature and film, focusing on texts (*Dispatches* by Michael Herr and *Hamburger Hill* by John Irvin) dealing with the battles of Khe Sahn and "Hamburger Hill" in the A Shau Valley. Chapter 5, "Villains," discusses the depiction of war crimes committed by American soldiers, paying particular attention to investigative accounts of the massacre at My Lai and Tim O'Brien's narrative strategies *In the Lake of the Woods*. In a fitting coda to the work, "Veterans" traces the representation in film of the Viet Nam veteran in relation to cultural attitudes on the war. In this chapter Taylor discusses Hal Ashby's anti-war drama *Coming Home*, Michael Cimino's complex parable *The Deer Hunter*, and the ultimate examples of Cold War revisionism, the *Rambo* films.

While *The Vietnam War in History, Literature, and Film's* overall point—that any serious scholar of history and culture needs to take an interdisciplinary approach to understand the war in any meaningful way—seems a bit conventional in the post-cultural studies age, the book's analyses of both the creative texts and historical record are complex and well thought out, making the book a valuable resource for anyone seeking a greater understanding of how journalists, filmmakers, novelists, and historians have sought to represent the most complex conflict in American history.

Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film. Lawrence H. Suid. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2002. xvii + 748 pp. $50.00 cloth, $29.95 paper.

Reviewed by Major Jeffrey C. Alfier, USAF, Ramstein Air Base, Germany

Film and military historian Lawrence H. Suid's *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film* is an updated version of his original book published twenty-six years ago, one that now encompasses films produced in the last few years, including depictions of the Gulf War and the US intervention in Somalia. Younger readers will be pleased to see that movies such as *Black Hawk Down* (2002) and *Windtalkers* (2002) come under Suid's updated study. His chronological approach highlights the US military in the vicissitudes of Hollywood image making since the film industry's inception. As such, *Guts and Glory* is, at its crux, a study in cinematic sociology, with ramifications for political science. Suid's span runs from classics to lesser-known movies. He includes fantasies such as *The Final Countdown* (1980), smarmy failures such as *Pearl Harbor* (2001), the humorous—like *Stripes* (1981), assorted millennial and survivalist works, and those that otherwise suffer from "the ambiguity of conflicting images" such as *Pork Chop Hill* (1959) (201).

World events are often midwife to the film industry; hence, Suid discusses at length the effects of the Cuban Missile Crisis and growing atomic arsenals (229*ff*) in the making of the American military image. With extended implications for the American mythos, politics and popular sentiment impact the minds of producers and screenwriters. For most films, producers worked closely with the Pentagon, providing them scripts to get their comments. This has always been more for material than spiritual support.

There is a pleasing balance in Suid's analyses. He lauds films such as *The Killing Fields* (1984) and *Southern Comfort* (1981) for at least nominally standing "above the political issues" to let "the visual images of slaughter speak for themselves" (468). Throughout, he addresses issues surrounding whether or not certain films

proved effective or interesting, and why others did not—why *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) "became a strangely detached and uneven movie" (525), or why *From Here to Eternity* (1953) proved "one of the few Hollywood portrayals of the armed forces that ranks both as a great military film and a great American movie" (151). Several are cross-categorical, such as *Dr. Strangelove, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), a film that exemplifies one of Suid's major themes: how each military service attempted to aid Hollywood in repairing or enhancing their respective images. In the course of his scrutiny, Suid includes some surprises, such as *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), brought to light because of the Air Force's staid approach to the existence of UFOs (494). Discussed at length are the movies depicting and interpreting the Vietnam War, a study worth a separate book. John Wayne and his role in military movies warrant two chapters (116-135; 247-277).[1]

A work of this broad a reach bears a few criticisms. Suid seems a bit over-determined when he states that Spielberg did a "great disservice to the men he was trying to memorialize" (633) when he produced *Saving Private Ryan*. Secondly, Suid omits the Western genre in its portrayal of Native Americans and Mexicans in conflict with the US Cavalry. He discusses John Ford's productions, and Ford made several movies where racist dynamics were bound-up with Cold War politics—such as *Fort Apache* (1948) and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1950).[2] Finally, Suid could have briefly spoken to how Hollywood movies affected perceptions of America for international audiences.

Still, Suid's research remains a paradigm of thorough inquiry. He includes a helpful index to the 220-some films that come under his purview. There is an interesting appendix delineating Suid's vast number of interviewees, which includes dozens of directors, producers, screenwriters, actors, technical advisors, US military personnel, critics, and studio executives. In the end, Suid believes that Americans likely watch war movies not out of bloodlust, but to enjoy "watching other people challenge death" (673). This book will likely remain for years to come a major source for studying Hollywood and the American military image.[3]

Notes

1. Suid is also the author of the now out-of-print, *Scenes of Conflict: Hollywood, the Pentagon, and the Films of the Vietnam Era* (Madison Books, 1990). Also see William J. Searle's *Search and Clear: Critical Responses to Selected Literature and Films of the Vietnam War* (Popular Press, 1988).

2. See John A. Price, "The Stereotyping Of North American Indians In Motion Pictures." *Ethnohistory* 1973 20(2): 153-171. To say this genre is freighted with malign realities would be understatement. Suid only mentions Westerns in passing on the last page of his Epilogue. Overall, a wider study is needed of American military films in relation to the intellectual dynamics of modernism.

3. See also Frank J. Wetta and Martin A. Novelli, "'Now a Major Motion Picture'": War Films and Hollywood's New Patriotism." *The Journal of Military History* 2003 67: 861-862. Suid falls into the

same trap that Wetta and Novelli do in asserting that war's *causus belli* be included in most, if not all war movies (On Suid, see 634). Films, like literature, need not foreground ontological issues to be effective.

Billy Mitchell. James J. Cooke. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002, Illustrations, introduction, notes, bibliography, index. 305 pp. $49.95 cloth.

Reviewed by William Jeanes, Pass Christian, Mississippi

James J. Cooke, emeritus professor of history at the University of Mississippi, has done much to reduce the widespread confusion about United States aviation activity in World War I. In a previous work, *The U.S. Air Service in the Great War, 1917-19* (1996), his presentation of the U.S.A.S. included not only the over-glamorized pursuit units but also the observation, bombing and balloon squadrons. He did perhaps the best job extant of explaining how these elements were intended to function as parts of a unified war effort, and his book stands out among the massive body of work done by aviation historians of the "Curse you, Red Baron" school.

In *Billy Mitchell*, Cooke moves from history to biography and sets out to add dimension to an aviation legend. He achieves this without banging the drum of sensationalism and without in any way muting his subject's strengths. Rather, he is unfailingly even-handed in his treatment of Mitchell—who rarely accorded such fairness to objects of his own scrutiny. Cooke neither idealizes nor demonizes Mitchell, but he convincingly reveals a mercurial man whose qualities ranged from military greatness to personal pettiness. Cooke's many sources range from trial transcripts to unpublished Mitchell family papers—notably correspondence between Colonel Mitchell and his mother—and he draws the richest picture of Mitchell yet seen.

Beyond the realm of the U.S. Air Force and aviation enthusiasts, Billy Mitchell is all but unknown today, but there was a time when he mesmerized the American public. He orchestrated much of the U.S. Aviation success in World War I, including its first strategic bombing effort. Postwar, he proved that planes could sink battleships. His many and popular writings called for a unified air service and for a department of defense that would unite the nation's air, land, and sea forces

under a single cabinet officer. Both the separate Air Force and the Department of Defense became reality after World War II. Cooke demonstrates, however, that Mitchell's prescience was marred by a mulish conviction that only Billy Mitchell could conceivably head such a department.

Following the end of the 1914-18 World War, Mitchell's battleship-baiting and strident demands for a unified air service infuriated Army and Navy traditionalists. Almost never content with presenting his views through military channels alone, Mitchell wrote several books and a flood of magazine articles. He wrote for pay and without the prior approval of his commanding officers required by Army regulations.

Mitchell testified before several congressional committees and on each occasion let fly at his superiors. Cooke notes that Mitchell's constant sweeping criticisms, with the single exception of a stinging—and accurate—critique of the nation's Pacific air defenses, frequently lacked or shaded facts.

In the wake of the 1925 wreck of the Navy dirigible, *Shenandoah*, Mitchell issued a 6,000-word statement containing this sentence: "These accidents are the result of the incompetency [sic], the criminal negligence, and the almost treasonable administration of our national defense by the Navy and War Departments." To no one's surprise, this insubordination led to his arrest and court-martial. President Calvin Coolidge referred to Mitchell as "lawless."

The politically incendiary court-martial of Billy Mitchell is a familiar story to aviation students, but Cooke brings it concisely alive. The court, among whose judges was General Douglas MacArthur, found Mitchell guilty and suspended him from the Army. Mitchell resigned his commission in February 1926, but continued writing and speaking—with diminishing effectiveness—until his death in 1936.

But what of Mitchell the person? Cooke humanizes Mitchell, though the process is frequently painful. He explores in depth and for the first time Mitchell's ugly divorce from his first wife, his constant financial troubles and his fiscal dependency on both his mother and his second wife. He examines Mitchell's drinking problems, his love of horses and the tweedy life of a Virginia gentleman—a life he could ill afford. We read also of Mitchell's estrangement from his first three children, his unwillingness to cooperate with anyone who could not further his causes, his political activities, his often-slipshod work as a writer and his constant willingness to ignore or, at best, twist reality.

Cooke also describes a young officer who showed exceptional merit in his pre-aviation years. As a Regular Army officer—though not a West Point graduate—Mitchell earned distinction in Cuba, the Philippines and Alaska and, at 33, became a major and the youngest officer on the General Staff, all before he took his first flying lesson. We learn that Mitchell could judge subordinates if not superiors. Three of his early disciples, each of whom remained faithful to Mitchell until the

end, were Henry "Hap" Arnold, Ira Eaker and Carl Spaatz. All rose to the highest levels of military aviation.

In a 1924 report made during a tour of U.S. bases in the Pacific, Mitchell savaged the Hawaii air defenses. When the Japanese attack of December 7, 1941 came, it set off new efforts to anoint Mitchell a "prophet without honor." In the 1955 film, *The Court Martial of Billy Mitchell*, Gary Cooper, himself a legend, portrayed Mitchell. The script presents Mitchell as an apolitical, visionary saint. Cooke shows that he was nothing of the kind. Mitchell's wealthy grandfather was well connected politically, and his father served Wisconsin as both a Congressman and U.S. Senator. Mitchell harbored a clear understanding of political clout and used it from the moment he donned an Army uniform in 1898. Additionally, Cooke does something rare for a historian: he argues that the movie, stunning in its inaccuracies and omissions, had an important positive impact on the public's perception of Mitchell, even two decades after his death, and further blurred the true picture of the crusading airman.

Cooke succeeds in bringing to life a man often revered as a founder of the modern U.S. Air Force, and in so doing reminds us that even a crusader can benefit from restraint. *Billy Mitchell* is the history of a man who had none.

Crossing the Sauer: A Memoir of World War II. Charles Reis Felix. Short Hills, New Jersey: Burford Books, 2002. x + 189 pp. $22.95

Reviewed by George Monteiro, Professor Emeritus, Brown University

Many of the unheralded members of the Greatest Generation—the World War II generation celebrated by Tom Brokaw—have now written their own war memoirs. To mind come a number of accounts by non-professional combatants such as Paul Fussell, Samuel Hynes, James Colvert, and Daniel Hoffman—all of them college teachers, by the way. But Charles Reis Felix's *Crossing the Sauer* may well be the first such war memoir published by an American of Portuguese descent since Aristides Monteiro's *War Reminiscences by the Surgeon of Mosby's Command* (1890).

Born in 1923 in Southeastern Massachusetts, Felix was raised in New Bedford, attended the University of Michigan, graduated from Stanford University, and has lived in California for nearly sixty years. This memoir, his first book, focuses on his experience with the American military, including three months of service in France and Germany in 1945, where he arrived as an artillery man, was promptly reassigned to a rifle company, and just as promptly (fortunately for him, he says) turned into a radio man. As he says, by way of an epilogue, "[war] was a profoundly 'good' experience. But how can something so horrible be so good? I will leave that one to the philosophers." What he does not refer to philosophy, however, is the narrative of his experience, of what he saw, thought, and felt as a draftee in combat, inspiring in the reader the conviction that this book tells us how things went, without adornment or aggrandizing, in the combat soldier's daily life. Frequently under bombardment and seemingly the specific target of potentially fatal fire, he continued to live out the mundane details and often petty emotions of existence. Without *The Red Badge of Courage*'s (sometime) theatrics or its insistent overall irony, *Crossing the Sauer* occasionally calls to mind Stephen Crane's writing. If the nostalgia Felix shares with his "Portagee buddy from Taunton" over the "hot juices" of linguiça making "a big chunk of Portagee bread" turn orange just before the first bite marks this autobiographical work as Portuguese-American, it also recalls the moment of absurdity in Crane's story "The Open Boat" when straight out of the blue the cook asks the men about pie and other good things to eat.

Felix's writing is clear and crisp, at times bordering on the aphoristic. The foot soldier's prudence inspires a half-truth: "Thank God for the mind. It's the only place where we have freedom of speech." Freedom of speech is in the mind, yes, but sometimes it is on the page, too, as is the case in this highly commendable account.

Armoured Guardsmen: A War Diary, June 1944-April 1945. Robert Boscawen. Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword, 2001. 224 pp. $34.73 cloth.

Reviewed by Brian Hanley, Williamsburg, Virginia

This estimable volume made its way into print quite by accident. Robert Boscawen, who was a Tory Member of Parliament from 1970 to 1992 and was

Government Whip throughout Margaret Thatcher's premiership, had never considered publishing his war diary. A fellow member of the House of Commons happened to mention its existence to the publisher—who then managed to persuade Boscawen to go forward with the project.

In addition to what probably will strike some as the author's astonishing reluctance to seek fame by making public his private observations, *Armoured Guardsmen* will impress readers as refreshingly unusual in other ways. To begin with, as a physical object the book is attractive. Pen & Sword Press, an English publisher that specializes in war literature, does not skimp, as many other commercial houses apparently do, when it comes to paper, binding, dust jacket, and illustrations, all of which are of a very high quality. Second—and of greater importance—is that Boscawen clearly benefited from an excellent education (Eton; Trinity College, Cambridge). He does not need to employ a ghostwriter or rely on an editor or literary agent to make his work presentable. His prose is expressive yet unadorned and matter-of-fact, characteristics that reflect the author's self-effacing disposition and critical discernment, though it should also be pointed out that the narrative is by no means destitute of memorably elegant passages, and here and there an ironical turn of phrase adds spice as well as nutrient to Boscawen's observations. Put another way, Boscawen's writing is free of the kind of sub-literate buncombe and self-admiring impulses that blight many autobiographical accounts by public figures that clutter the shelves of the chain bookstores nowadays. Boscawen kept up his diary in response to demands he placed on himself, that is, he sought to record wartime experiences that were to him deeply affecting or, at the very least, worth recalling; there are no traces of apologetic or self-aggrandizing sentiments here. On the whole, the temperament of this book brings to mind that of Cecil Lewis's World War I memoir, *Sagittarius Rising* (London: Peter Davies, 1936), which is no longer in print, unfortunately.

Armoured Guardsmen is unusual also on account of its arrangement. There are no chapters. The introduction, which follows an indispensable "Glossary," provides essential context but—and this is to Boscawen's credit—nothing more: a mention of the author's education and his military training and experience up to the point at which the diary begins in 1944. What follows is the author's journal of his experiences as a commander of a squad of Sherman tanks, divided only by the dates of the various entries and occasionally provided a gloss, or "Later Comment," which Boscawen added to the diary afterward to clarify or correct his on-the-spot observations. A "Sequel" (an epilogue) and a first-rate index complete the volume.

It must be said straight away that this book cannot be expected to compete with such titles as *The Forgotten Soldier* and the recently published compilation, *With Our Backs to Berlin: The German Army in Retreat, 1945*, works that emphasize to a much greater extent direct combat experience. *Armoured Guardsmen* is

largely a record of Boscawen's day-to-day affairs enlivened occasionally by the author's commentary: waiting to be moved up to the line; bivouacking in the French countryside; attending tactical briefings; maintaining equipment; taking a couple of days of leave in recently liberated Brussels. This manner of proceeding has two advantages. First, the reader is given a reasonably full idea of the character of military life at the front—an admixture of boredom, anxiety, and miscellaneous petty vexations that is appended to the terror and exhilaration of actual combat. Second, the pedestrian spells in his tour of duty give Boscawen the opportunity to impose some sort of order on the things he has seen and done, which adds a necessary element of humanity to his diary. The entries that are especially moving are, as one would expect, the eulogies. Sergeant Major Brough, killed when his tank was destroyed by a German self-propelled gun, is remembered in this way:

> To me it meant the loss of a great personal friend. I made Brough troop Sergeant two years ago against a deal of opposition; he was then aged twenty-two. During that time he had become someone I could rely on for almost anything if I had wanted to. Many people had a different opinion especially the Sergeant Major, as he had several faults, but militarily he was a first-class tank commander and could read a map as well as anyone I know. He was keen to do anything, however pointless it may have seemed at the time. . . . It was part of his exceptional character that I never heard him swear once. With ample sense of humour he always smiled whatever happened, and as a friend I could always tell him what I felt. In action he was a brave man and in action he had a brave man's reward. (120-21)

Without reflections of this kind the author might come across as an impassive chronicler of the exchange of gunfire between faceless opponents.

Scarcely less important is that these reflections provide indispensable material for the historian (which is the chief value of autobiographical accounts). Witness his commentary on the first day of the battle for Caen, which, as Boscawen points out, "was heralded by all the press as the great breakthrough towards Paris." In truth great numbers of allied tanks were destroyed while German losses were relatively light. From Boscawen's point of view, the day's fighting "was not a real success, and by no means a breakthrough. It lost us a lot of confidence in our Shermans. We knew that their armour could stop nothing serious and their guns, except for the 17-pounder, could not knock out enemy armour" (40).

The diary ends abruptly on 30 March ("Good Friday") 1945—the day that

Boscawen's tank was destroyed by a German battery of 105mm anti-aircraft guns. An exchange of letters between Boscawen and an officer who commanded a tank operating nearby, written months later, gives an account of the event and makes for an absorbing read. Boscawen received disfiguring wounds, which required months of convalescence. He was awarded the Military Cross for his bravery.

Boscawen's diary, handsomely set forth in this Pen & Sword edition, is a necessary supplement to the literature of the Western Front in World War II. Those who enjoy reading the finest examples of first-person accounts of life on the front lines will find much rewarding material here.

In Deadly Combat: A German Soldier's Memoir of the Eastern Front. Gottlob Bidermann. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000. 344 pp. $34.95 cloth, $17.95 paper.

Reviewed by Brian Hanley, Williamsburg, Virginia

While perhaps not quite as relentlessly enthralling as Guy Sajer's Eastern Front memoir, *The Forgotten Soldier* (what book is?), Gottlob Bidermann's *In Deadly Combat* is a lucid and altogether engrossing narrative of the author's experiences on the Eastern Front. Certainly it makes for a welcome addition to what seems like the ceaselessly-expanding inventory of World War II memoirs, not many of which can approach *In Deadly Combat* in their contribution to our understanding of the infantryman's life in its most distressed and brutal aspects. Bidermann began as a private in the Wehrmacht reserves and ended the war as a lieutenant and, like Guy Sajer, did his fighting on Russian soil. But unlike Sajer, who, having escaped the Russian onslaught on the Baltic ports of Memel and Pillau, managed to get himself captured by British troops weeks before Nazi Germany surrendered and was able to return to his Alsatian home immediately afterward, Bidermann spent three years in Soviet labor camps; he was repatriated in the summer of 1948, eighty-two months—nearly seven years—after his unit, the 132d Infantry Division, marched out of eastern Poland and into the Ukraine in the wake of the armored spearheads of Army Group South.

Bidermann's memoir is remarkable for the variety of experience it records. In

April 1942 Biderman fought in the battle for Daln-Kamyschi, the southernmost point of the Eastern Front; some months later he took part in the fighting around Lake Ladoga, east of Leningrad, the most northerly position held by the Germans. Bidermann's narrative begins with a recollection of the tiresome, but triumphant, march of his unit across western Russia in the summer of 1941. The latter portion of the book comprises accounts of increasingly grim and straitened, if not obviously hopeless, defensive warfare against a determined, better equipped, and much more numerous enemy that culminated in the encirclement, surrender, and nightmarish internment of the remnants of "Army Group Courland."

Bidermann's memoir gives new life to commonplace facts about the German war effort in the east. The Eastern Front produced something on the order of 90 percent of German combat casualties, an astounding statistic illustrated by Bidermann's experience. All twelve members of Bidermann's gun crew who crossed the Polish frontier on 30 June 1941 ended the war as casualties. Nine were killed in action, two others were severely wounded (one a multiple amputee) and discharged from the army in the early years of the war. Bidermann, who was wounded seven times, was the only one left of the twelve to surrender on 8 May 1945 (318-19).

One also finds in this volume no shortage of anecdotes that call attention to the general excellence, and the good discipline in particular, of German units at the tactical level. Directing the crew of a 37mm anti-tank gun, for example, Bidermann destroys three Soviet tanks at close range within a few minutes—in one case firing just as the gun barrel of the victim trained on the crew (77-79).

Equally well known is that one of the reasons Germany lost the war was because of insufficient mechanized transport: supplies regularly moved to the front by horse-drawn cart; the bulk of the infantry could not keep up with the panzer spearheads because they moved across the steppe on foot, thus endangering lines of communication and giving the Soviet army and industry time to recover from early defeats. The snail's pace of the Wehrmacht's advance is memorably illustrated by Bidermann's experience. His unit disembarked from rail transport in Poland on 30 June 1941; Bidermann and his fellow *landsers* then marched to the Kanev area, a distance of some 550 miles—one step at a time, sun-up till dusk, through thunderstorms and clouds of dust, covering as much as 35 miles but usually around 20 miles each day—until they reached their destination five weeks later.

Bidermann's narrative also throws fuller light on circumstances of the Eastern Front that are sometimes misrepresented. Often the war in the east is given an over-simplified if essentially accurate portrait by television programs and summaries designed for high school and collegiate history survey courses: the Germans destroyed opposing Russian forces with ridiculous ease until the advance stalled outside of Moscow in December 1941, but victories continued to pile up until

the tide turned against the Wehrmacht following Stalingrad in January 1943; the average front-line soldier's faith in a decisive victory evaporated following the defeat at Kursk; Germany was doomed for good when the Nazi leadership failed to seek peace in the summer of 1944, just as Russian troops began menacing Prussia. Bidermann's memoir leads us to believe that German infantrymen suspected in the opening weeks of the war, if only vaguely, that Russia's defeat was by no means a sure thing, and that, at the tactical level, the opponents were evenly matched from the start. In fact, there is an underlying sameness to the battle scenes in Bidermann's memoir, from beginning of the war to its end, that puts the lie to any idea that a Wehrmacht soldier's life in the early weeks of the invasion, as it was in the latter months of the conflict, was anything but an alloy of privation, dread, fierce exertion, and sorrow—most especially following the death of comrades. In the opening days of their march into the Ukraine, for instance, Bidermann and his colleagues note ominously the makeshift graves of Russian and German combatants; they also are "astonished" by the extent to which the Russian army was mechanized—the large numbers of "Lend Lease" American trucks were particularly impressive—as they pass the debris of battles fought by the advancing panzer units (15). In describing the aftermath of his unit's inaugural fire fight, an event of no significance that takes place west of Kanev six weeks after the war began, Bidermann touches upon the disquiet that, only weeks into the war, often overtook elation in the infantrymen's outlook. "With no joy of victory in our ranks, the feeling of excitement quickly drained away, to be replaced by an overwhelming sadness and longing to leave this place" (23).

Some twelve weeks later—following another isolated but fierce skirmish in which a fellow infantryman dies of a stomach wound, Bidermann makes an observation that echoes the kind of reaction one finds in the *Iliad*: "one could not escape feeling an intense pity for our brother in the gray tunic who had been struck; yet with these thoughts each man turned to concentrate upon himself, about how he could be the next to fall, the next to meet his destiny in Russia. We became at times possessed by these thoughts," Bidermann adds, "as helpless against them as against the death that had quickly enveloped our brother soldier. Thus began the realization that we were being consumed by this foreign land" (52). Bidermann ruminates in this way weeks before the Wehrmacht's assault on Moscow gets under way, and shortly after the surrender of the Kiev pocket—where two thirds of a million Soviet troops marched into captivity, bringing the Russian casualty figure to two and a half million scarcely 100 days after the first shots were fired. Strategically, the war at this point appeared to be approaching its end, but the ferocity and resolution of the Russian soldier, which Bidermann and his fellow soldiers encounter daily, suggests otherwise.

Readers will not find in this volume trenchant or sustained commentary on the Nazi cause, or observations on the German brutality toward civilians and POWs,

or discussions of grand strategy. These subjects are treated at encyclopedic length elsewhere, so their absence here cannot be considered a fault. What one can expect to find in this book are the bracing, insightful recollections of a veteran of the Eastern Front, set down in clear prose.

Love After War: Contemporary Fiction from Viet Nam. Edited by Wayne Karlin and Ho Anh Thai. Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 2003. 626 pp. $19.95.

Reviewed by William J. Searle, Eastern Illinois University

"There is no mistaken love," utters the narrator of Nguyen Huy Thiep's "Love Story on a Rainy Night," a belief reaffirmed by nearly every tale found in the superb anthology of Vietnamese short fiction, *Love After War*, edited by Wayne Karlin and Ho Anh Thai. Containing fifty stories by forty-six different authors published in either Vietnam or America between 1982 and 2001, this collection provides a window to contemporary Vietnamese culture for American readers. Although a handful, perhaps ten, of these stories has appeared in English elsewhere, the vast majority, some forty stories, appear for the first time in English, thus increasing our awareness of literary style, social issues, and ethical concerns of Vietnam's most recent and successful authors. For readers committed to the virtues of cultural diversity, and especially for scholars studying Vietnamese narrative, this anthology is a vast trove of valuable resources, in which established writers, like Ma Van Khang, Duong Thus Huong, and Le Minh Khue join the newer voices of Y Ban, Phan Triue Hai, and Ta Duy Anh to comprise the largest sampling of Vietnamese fiction available in one volume.

As its title implies, this collection deals, on one level, with the emotion of love in its various manifestations, whether it be unconditional, self-sacrificing, spiritual, faithful, sensual, selfish, adulterous, frustrated, or abusive. More than once in this anthology, love becomes a commodity, as in Tran Thi Truong's poignant story "The Bejeweled Maiden," to be purchased or rented. Simultaneously, however, readers witness the many customs, rich heritage, and enduring spirit of the Vietnamese people. References to religious holidays, the Mandarin system, traditional theater, folklore, and legend are complemented by the lasting effects of the Land Reform Movement, the flaws of socialism, hardships during the French War, suffering

during the American War, and the perils of the struggle with the Khmer Rouge. But the daily grind also has its dangers, as couples, grandparents, and children endeavor to embrace the new while age-old values slowly slip from their grasp. Indeed, the fiction within *Love After War* invariably privileges individualism in the face of an often-stifling tradition.

In the five sections of this anthology, love's variety and vagaries often highlight the clash between the new and the old. In the first section, named after the title of the book, we read of the widowed Thom in Da Ngan's "The House without a Man," who, not wanting to appear self-centered, abandons her desire to remarry because the other four widows of the household—her grandmother, aunt, mother, and older sister—staunchly support the family tradition that a widowed mother remain single, in effect, sacrificing her own future for that of her offspring. "They had neatly plucked out of the young woman's heart," the author confides, "her natural passion for love, not understanding that this is the most important thing of all." The theme of her story is echoed by her male counterpart, Ma Van Khang, in "Mother and Daughter," a story which dramatizes how Dr. Huyen's self absorbed daughter does all in her power to make certain her widowed mother does not remarry. Her favorite ploy, inflicted at the most inconvenient times, is to remind her of how her own mother-in-law remained single to devote all of her attention to Huyen's now-deceased husband. The constant mention of Vietnamese custom causes her guilty mother to forgo her best opportunity for a fuller life.

The nine stories of the next section, ironically entitled "Couples," deal with frustrated relationships, loneliness, and painful breakups. Doan Le's "The Last Night in our Double Bed" delineates the cruel impact of custom on the lives of its characters, especially that of its female protagonist who learns after twenty-eight years of marriage that her husband intends to bring a second wife into their home. During the evening, she reminisces about her current life with him, her profession as a maker of documentaries, and Vietnamese custom that so often favors males. In particular, she remembers that her mother became a wife at fifteen, and, after thirty years of marriage, had to participate in the arrangement of a second marriage for her husband to a much younger woman. In addition, her husband's affair is with a woman whose own husband has abandoned her for an attractive twenty-year old. "Clearly a vicious cycle," the protagonist thinks to herself. But the labyrinth becomes intriguingly complex when the film maker meets her rival, who reveals that before her own marriage and before that of our protagonist, the soon-to-be second wife had been lovers with the protagonist's husband, who, in turn, was rejected by her family for a more suitable match! Out of honor, the protagonist's husband feels he should fulfill his earlier vow to his first love. For her own sense of integrity, the protagonist intends to leave the next morning, though the pain of her husband's betrayal will always remain. The other stories in this section, fraught with adultery, abandonment, murder, and

their consequences make readers sympathize with and admire the courage of the victims.

"Love in the time of Renovation," by far the longest segment, containing sixteen stories, captures the ambivalence of this time of flux, suggested in the title of the lead narrative, "Crying and Singing," by Trang The Hy. The policy of *Doi Moi*, or renovation, was introduced by communist officials in 1986 to eradicate the country's extreme poverty, a shadow that casts its pall over many of the stories in this section. The impact of grim economic times is readily apparent in Le Minh Khue's "The Professor of Philosophy," as we learn that female college graduates have to work as bar girls to make ends meet. When two of them learn that their roommate's college professor is unmarried and has a coveted apartment all to himself, they urge her to start a relationship with him so that she might "move into the Philosophy Professor's flat." Because of the harsh economic realities in Hanoi, one of the "ex-students-present-bar-girls" stated, "I'd be ready to marry an eighty year old if he'd get me a job." Not one to contradict her elders, young Ha slowly insinuates herself into her humble, yet slovenly teacher's life. Soon she notices that she has rejuvenated the older man, who now not only cares about his appearance and acts more youthfully, but is also genuinely smitten with the college student, who admits similar emotions. "Love comes as suddenly as pain," the narrator acknowledges. On the other side of the proverbial coin, as readers move from joy to misery, is Tran Thi Truong's heartbreaking story, "The Bejeweled Maiden." In this wrenching tale, a virtually non-existent job market in Hanoi forces two young lovers apart: the mining engineer to the western mountains for a three-year stint, while his beloved, a recent graduate from an Arts College, remains behind trying to find any job available. During an interview with the director of a theater turned pander, she learns that such luxuries as virginity and love "can also be useful in a market economy." The insensitive Ph.D. who purchases her services, seeing her tears of shame, first announces, "Your private issues aren't my concern," and then later cruelly explains, "And now that there are no tools and no work for people, then human beings need to evolve back into orangutans in order to assume their proper place in the world."

The concluding segments of the anthology—"Lost Love" and "Last Love"—while evoking the sentimental, romantic tendency within Vietnamese literature, also celebrate the persistence, indeed the resilience, of humanity's undying need for its most complex emotion. Lost love in these tales is never forgotten and those of last love assure us that it can return. Nguyen's Huy Thiep's graceful rendering of the passion between and inevitable separation of two very different characters, the romantic, provincial outlaw with folk artist aspirations, Bac Ky Singh, and his practical, independent beloved, Muon, who's inspired by wanderlust. Ironically, Muon, after marrying Bac's rival, becomes a respectable wife and mother in the region she always wanted to abandon and vehemently denies having an earlier

relationship, while her first love, who once vowed never to leave his homeland, relocates to New York City, where he remains single, still suffering from the loss of Muon. Most representative of the final series of stories, those dealing with love late in life, is Nguyen Khai's "Sunlight at Dusk," in which a former suitor, rejected by his intended's family and now twice widowed, returns at the age of seventy to his sweetheart who never married. At first skeptical of their relationship that he saw as comical, the narrator gradually recognizes its warm authenticity, so much so that he praises the matchmaker who arranged the union: "Only a great human heart can re-germinate the buds of love." As in so many of the stories in this volume, the characters defeat expectations, defying tradition.

The twenty or so typographical errors, while mildly distracting, do not diminish the range, scope, and depth of this marvelous anthology, a welcome addition to Curbstone's excellent translations of important Vietnamese writers, all of which serve as pathways to the Vietnamese soul.

Depictions and Images of War in Edwardian Newspapers, 1899-1914. Glenn R. Wilkinson. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003. 185 pp, $75.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Michael S. Niberg, United Stated Air Force Academy

This short (137 pages of analytic text) book has a rather unhelpful title that reveals little of the argument that the author really wants to make. That argument states that during the period under study images of war in the media became more positive and increasingly detached from the horrors of combat. Negative images appeared only rarely. Consequently, by July, 1914 a generation of young Englishmen had been exposed to images that showed war as a positive force with features that made it akin to safe, familiar pursuits like hunting, sports, and theater. Thus, the book contends, did England arrive at the scenes of that fateful summer, with large crowds volunteering to join the army, their youths lasting, in the famous words of poet Philip Larkin, "a little while longer."

"Attitudes," the author argues on page one, "make war possible." Perhaps, but unfortunately the attitudes of the men exposed to Edwardian media remain much less thoroughly examined than is the media itself. Wilkinson does not attempt to connect the images he analyzed with their actual impact on the men

of 1914. Neither has he consulted the major historical works on the myth of war enthusiasm in the early months of the Great War. Adrian Gregory, Jean-Jacques Becker, and Jeffrey Verhey are among the scholars who have worked to debunk the image of men naively and innocently joining the army, seemingly unaware of the death and gore that might await them. These historians have shown the danger of oversimplifying one's conclusions from photographs or from the pro-war poetry of the essentially unrepresentative Rupert Brooke. The dominant attitude of the volunteers of 1914 was more grim resignation to an odious but necessary task than an optimistic hope in winning the war by Christmas.

Thus this book has to be read less, as I think the author intended, as an explanation of 1914 than as an analysis of images from 1899 to 1914. Here the author is much more successful. War, he argues, came to be depicted as a potentially civilizing force when applied across the far reaches of the British Empire. British soldiers in Africa and Asia represented development, law, and order in contradistinction to the "barbaric" and "premodern" ways of foes like the Mad Mullah or even the quasi-European Boers. Images of British soldiers as martial, but civilized, also helped to calm the fears of Britons who suspected that the luxuries of the Edwardian age were sapping the essential strength of Britain's young men.

The images of war depicted it as a necessary, even beneficial, activity that could force an evil enemy to abandon his uncivilized ways. It could also induce social behavior among British soldiers and act as a kind of life lesson to teach civics. The physical training accompanying war, moreover, had obvious benefits for man and society alike. Images that likened war to sport endowed the former with an aura of gentlemanly conduct and honor that transcended class while removing the newspaper reader from the reality that war, unlike sport, kills those who either cannot play the game or who, like the injured athlete, fall victim to caprice.

The use of soldiers and images of war to sell products demonstrates that the author's point has much to offer. Advertisers, naturally, would not use an image like a soldier to make their products more appealing unless they believed that such usage improved the chances at sales. Thus soldierly images revealingly sold health products like medicines and tonics, as well as masculine products like cigarettes.

Newspapers also took great care to create layers of remove between the reader and the ugliness of war. Euphemisms like "cleared out," "swept away," and "fallen" disguised the horrific ways that large numbers of men died on the battlefield. Other phrases like "out of action" or the foreign "hors de combat" described the destruction of entire units in ways that minimized human suffering. Photographs rarely showed individual men in agony and often took great care to provide the "merciful soft focus."

From this book, the reader will learn much about how a rapidly expanding media saw the military and warfare in the Edwardian period. These images,

however, inform a change more closely connected to the Boer War than the First World War. To fully understand how the media may or may not have affected the young Britons who became soldiers in 1914 will require a deeper and more nuanced treatment than is offered in this brief but insightful book.

Crossing the River: Short Fiction by Nguyen Huy Thiep. Edited by Nguyen Nguyet Cam and Dana Sachs. Willimatic, CT: Curbstone Press, 2003. Pp.352. $16.95.

Reviewed by William J. Searle, Eastern Illinois University

Writing in a time of an evolving social context, in which contemporary Vietnamese are increasingly isolated from the bonds of the past, whether those strictures involve recent Marxist beliefs or ancient feudal hierarchies, Nguyen Huy Thiep captures the alienation, opportunism, and amorality of a country adrift, one that currently has only tenuous links with a rich cultural heritage. This new collection of his fiction, metaphorically titled *Crossing the River*, suggests a departure still in process, whereby the author examines both the mores of his people and the literary structures that preserve them. The clarity of his skeptical vision is reflected in the book's front cover art, a print of a portrait by Nguyen Trong Khoi, "Seed of Life," which depicts a boat's prow gently kissing the shoreline. In front of the prow, a very young child, no more than a year old, stands alone, appearing baffled; all the while an eye painted on the prow observes the infant without a trace of sentimentality. No more appropriate icon for the author's work could have been selected.

Of the seventeen stories in the anthology, the fewest in number might best be categorized as pseudo-historical. The three in this group—"A Sharp Sword," "Fired Gold," and "Chastity"—present, seldom in a flattering way, fictionalized versions of historical characters. The initial two merit special mention. In the first tale, Nguyen Phuc Anh, later known as King Gia Long, comes under satiric fire. Depicted as self-centered, politically obtuse, and limited in his ability to lead, the future king depends heavily on the wisdom, guidance, and good sense of his advisor, Dan Phu Lan, beheaded by Anh, regardless of his nine years of flawless service, because within the last three months his mentor's activities have been inconse-

quential. Thiep's addendum that new evidence implies that Lan may have eloped rather than returned to court, thus avoiding his execution, is a distinction without a difference, since it too indicates the unsavory nature of life at Long's court. The perfidy of Gia Long continues in "Fired Gold," where we see the king accepting Francois Poiree as both confidant and counselor, laying the foundation for European colonization of Vietnam. In his diary, Poiree is patronizing of the Vietnamese king, the poet Nguyen Du, author of *The Tale of the Kieu*, Vietnam's national epic, and Vietnamese civilization, which he compares to "a virgin girl raped by Chinese." As the story progresses, Thiep includes a fragment of an account by a Portuguese prospector who recounts an ambush of Poiree, himself, and other Europeans searching for gold. Since only a portion of the memoir survives, Thiep provides three possible conclusions—one in which only Poiree survives, one in which all the Europeans survive, and one in which all Europeans in the expedition are killed. After pointing out that Gia Long's dynasty was horrific, the author warns, "Please pay attention, dear reader, for this dynasty left many mausoleums."

Four of the stories—"The Winds of Hua Tat: Ten Stories in a Small Mountain Village," "The Salt of the Jungle," "A Drop of Blood," and "The Water Nymph"—appear to have been inspired by legend, folktale, and fable. As a unit, they reveal a variety of narrative strategies and thematic concerns. The aging protagonist of the finely crafted tale "The Salt of the Jungle" is juxtaposed with the more humane behavior of a family of monkeys. As the hunter loses the accoutrements of civilization, his rifle and clothing, and then abandons his quest for the kill, he is reborn into a fuller humanity. The more panoramic "A Drop of Blood," which spans several generations, is an extended exposé of the essential corruption within the Mandarin system. The ten stories which make up "The Winds of Hua Tat" present a wide range of human behavior—fidelity, greed, gullibility, pride, lust, irresponsibility, betrayal—based upon folktales that circulated among mountain villages where the young Thiep once taught. According to the narrator, however, they are worthy of preservation in print because "maybe these old stories will dwell on the miseries of human beings, but when we understand those miseries, then wisdom, morality, nobility, and humanity will bloom within us." As implied above, despite its often harsh depiction of contemporary Vietnam, at times, a much more refined sensibility is visible beneath the grim surface of Thiep's prose. Although "The Water Numph" is, in part, inspired by the tale of a watery spirit, the beautiful, yet mischievous Me Ca, whom the first person narrator, Chuong, views as a symbol of hope amidst his own economic and sexual exploitation by those more fortunate than himself. "Only Sorrow is eternal," he remarks at one point in the story, a pessimistic tone that this vaguely picaresque tale shares with the anthology's largest group of stories, those starkly realistic tales of modern Vietnam.

Two of these harsh tales—"Crossing the River" and "The Woodcutters"—serve as bookends for the entire collection. In the initial story, a student on the ferry

establishes the atmosphere for all ten stories in this group when he utters: "The nature of human life is cruelty. People run after sexual passion, money, and vain glory." When one of the passengers on the vessel, a thief, outwits two gangsters in order to prevent the mutilation of a young boy foolish enough to get his hand stuck in their antique vase, the others on the boat label him a hero, a revolutionary. A discordant note punctures their praise, however, as the unimpressed ferry woman provides balance, revealing the truly dark soul of their impulsive and very transitory savior. "The Woodcutters" revolves around the motif of the trickster tricked, as laborers cheat their employer who in turn cheats them. The story's only bright spot occurs when the narrator, one of the laborers, interrupts the attempted rape of his employer's teenage daughter by his kinsman, another woodcutter. "I was full of hatred, hatred for all the transience of the conditions of my era," he confesses, but he continues that if we do not follow a system of morality, "There would be ruin."

In large part, eschewing sentimentality as though it were a pestilence, Nguyen Huy Thiep reverses a tendency prevalent in the literature of Vietnam. The luxuriant countryside, religious holidays, the perennial rhythms of daily life do not resuscitate, reinvigorate, or revitalize in Thiep's work as they so often do in the fiction of Duong Thu Huong or Bao Ninh. Instead we read in "The Remembrance of the Countryside" that "the afternoon empties the spirit of anyone who hopes to prove that anything has meaning." Thiep's characters, weighed down by the burden of living, exist in very a grim world, one in which self-absorption, hypocrisy, and greed reign supreme, as a country and its people try to establish a new identity and a means to express that identity in the midst of ever accelerating change, which, in turn, reinforces the loss of traditional ways.

MICHIGAN QUARTERLY REVIEW

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VIET NAM: BEYOND THE FRAME

Edited by Rebekah Linh Collins and Barbara Tran

For everyone there is a Viet Nam "beyond the frame": the one they never read about or saw depicted on their TV and movie screens; the one they came to know intimately, lost in the myths of history; the one they heard about from families in the diaspora but never experienced personally.

This special issue of MQR is the most comprehensive forum so far in which writers from a variety of academic disciplines, as well as creative writers, explore the terra incognita of a nation and people insufficiently studied and understood.

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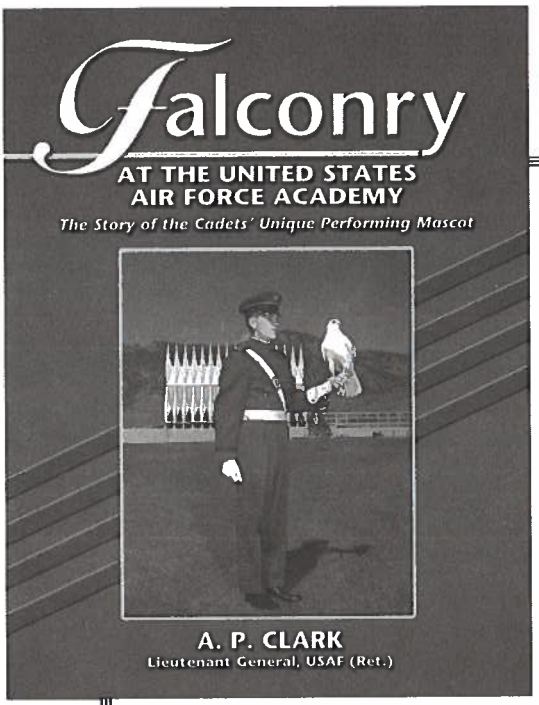

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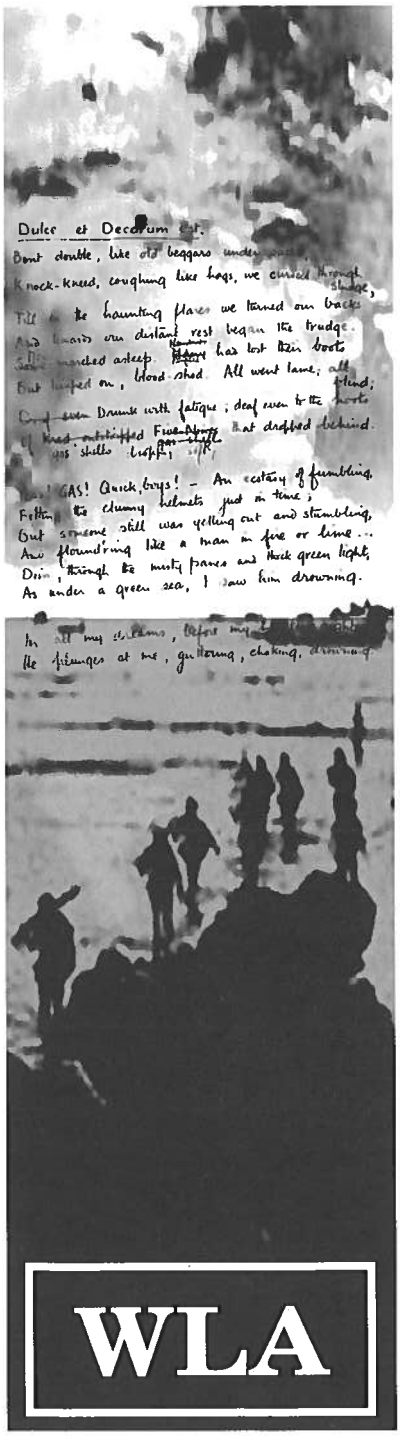

War, Literature & the Arts

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I get used to the wind that whips through this land like blame, howling like thousands dead. At night, the tent flaps like a blanket pinned to a clothesline in a hurricane, but the stakes hold tight to the ground. The morning sun seems somehow like absolution.

I get used to the dust, the wind's friendly sidekick, fine dust like talcum powder. It blows loosely around the streets and piles up wherever it finds a niche. When the wind is high, you can taste it in the air as your speak. The dust is smart enough to ground an aircraft....

And the gravel. Much of the base is covered with it to help settle the dust. The stones—the size of... oh, cat skulls maybe—make simple walking an adventure.

— from "Notes from a Journal: Afghanistan, 11 September 2003 – 7 April 2004" by Major Richard C. Sater

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