

REVIEW BY BRIAN HANLEY

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*Ulysses S. Grant*

by Josiah Bunting III

New York: Henry Holt, 2004

**R**EADERS OF THIS JOURNAL will want to get hold of this book. For starters, *Ulysses S. Grant*, written by former Superintendent of VMI Lieutenant General Josiah Bunting, is unscholarly in the most endearing sense of that term. Too many biographies and histories nowadays are swollen beyond all reason: stuffed with digressive passages on humdrum topics, contrived dialogue, gossipy anecdotes, not to mention a multitude of footnotes and a clutch of appendices—the cumbersome logistical tail of academic projects—that do nothing but perpetuate the silly idea that humane letters must imitate the sciences in their reliance on accumulated data and in their quest for ground-breaking discoveries. Bunting’s first work of biography—he’s authored four novels of lasting value—is a most welcome departure from what one normally finds among recently published books of this kind. In fact, “Classical” aptly describes Bunting’s biographical account insofar as it brings to mind Plutarch’s *Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans* and Tacitus’s biography of his father-in-law, the Roman commander and statesman, Agricola.

Bunting offers a clearly written and wholly reliable summary of Grant’s life and its intersection with contemporaneous circumstance. But what makes this book a treasure is Bunting’s exposition of Grant’s character. Bunting’s manner of proceeding is thus: each of the volume’s fourteen chapters surveys a period in Grant’s life—childhood, West Point, the Civil War years, his two terms as President, his return to private life and death from cancer at the age of sixty-one—animated by telling observations on Grant’s moral and intellectual constitution.

It is not too much to argue that the quality in Grant which Lincoln most admired, and for which he was most constantly appreciative, was already visible in the boy of ten or twelve: that of not asking for help or advice, not freighting problems with imagined difficulties, but just doing them. Forty years on, when General George B. McClellan was demanding and pleading for more soldiers, Grant was asking simply, when do I start? 'What I want is to advance.'

What many of Grant's contemporaries interpreted as dull-wittedness was in fact an expression of stalwart self-reliance, forbearance, and singularity of purpose: in other words, the habits of mind and character that make for successful command and statesmanship.

Bunting deserves praise not only for rehabilitating Grant's historical standing but also for delivering an eloquent rebuke to the manner in which modern culture determines reputation and, collaterally, for illustrating the proper ends of biography. As Bunting points out, even though we acknowledge Grant as the victorious commander of the Union Army the terms that dominate the popular image of him are all pejorative: Grant the frowzy, cigar-chomping lout; a general indifferent to the slaughter his decisions invariably brought forth; the superintendent of a procession of governmental scandals; a boozier. Bunting does not shy from discussing Grant's frailties, particularly during his presidential years, but he is careful not to exaggerate matters. Take, for instance, the "Black Friday" episode, September 1869. A pair of wealthy swindlers, Jay Gould and Jim Fisk, tried to manipulate the price of gold by influencing an unwitting Grant through his brother-in-law, the result being a collapse in the stock market and the ruin of many traders. Grant eventually did what was needed to put things right, but as Bunting points out, "Grant's handling of his administration's first domestic crisis was laggard and uncertain." In this and in the other scandals that afflicted his administration Grant was certainly not guilty of anything beyond naiveté; on the other hand he deserves no credit for astuteness, either.

All due allowances being made for the influence of the 'times,' of the pervasive corruption of government at all levels and both parties, and for the absence of any proof that Grant was personally culpable in any of these episodes, there remains an unavoidable impression of a certain moral obtuseness in Grant: a solipsism.

Bunting's unflinching treatment of Grant's failings gives his appreciative commentary all the more authority.

Bunting argues that historians have under-valued Grant's achievements during the harshest years of "Reconstruction"—a period beset by political challenges that rivaled those faced by Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt. Grant "represented in his firmness, dignity, disinterestedness, and independence those qualities most important to citizens in extended periods of national confusion and stress."

One might describe Bunting's portrayal of Grant as ultimately celebratory but perhaps a better characterization is undistorted and thus faithful to the proper ends of biography. In Grant we find an embodiment of the traditional and distinctively American strain of gentlemanliness that is scarcely to be found today: well-mannered but never priggish, kind but not patronizing, a man possessed of a fine mind and an aesthetic sensibility who sympathized with, but never attempted to flatter, common men. At heart a man of high principle and refined humanity, Grant faced the world with impassivity—he did not give public expression to his emotions, nor was there any trace of self-serving calculation in the way he discharged his professional obligations. Grant's actions and thought, as expressed in his letters and memoirs, were marked by a perceptive and vigorous devotion to the public good. Military professionals in particular will find him worthy of emulation.

There is an old saying that if you wish to understand a man, ignore what people say about him and instead read what he has written. The saying may be true—in Grant's case the volume to get hold of is *Ulysses S. Grant: Memoirs & Selected Letters* (New York: *Library of America*, 1990). But anyone who appreciates finely written biography and who seeks to profit by an incisive discussion of Grant's character should read Josiah Bunting's most recent book.

WLA Contributing Editor **BRIAN HANLEY** surveys  
three books that bear on the current war

B R I A N H A N L E Y

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*The Iraq War*

by John Keegan

New York: Knopf, 2004

**J**OHN KEEGAN'S *IRAQ WAR* has received more than its share of unfavorable reviews. The chief complaints are as follows. First, Keegan tried to write the history of a war that was, many months after the book was published in March 2004, still being fought—a fact that supposedly undermines the credibility of his conclusions. A second criticism is that the material in *The Iraq War* is largely unoriginal, being drawn either from existing histories or, in the case of the battle commentary, from Keegan's own journalism published at regular intervals in *The Daily Telegraph*. These judgments are not without merit—Keegan should have anticipated such criticisms and neutralized them in a prefatory note—but they cannot be allowed to stand as the last word on what really is a fine book.

To begin with, *The Iraq War* is a traditional military history; Keegan's focus is on operational warfare placed in a suitable historical and political context. The first half of the book discusses Iraqi history and also offers a biographical survey of Saddam Hussein. The information here is essential to understanding the nature of the recent war as well as the reasons why it needed to be fought in the first place. Iraq—or, more accurately, the place currently named so—is possessed of an ancient past, in fact it is the cradle of civilization. But as Keegan demonstrates modernity has not been altogether kind to the country, rich though it may be in oil reserves and blessed with a strategically significant location.

Political turmoil has afflicted Iraq at least since the beginning of the twentieth century. Had Saddam Hussein never been born the various cultural and political influences of the last fifty years would almost certainly have brought forth

someone just like him. “Saddam Hussein, a poor and uneducated provincial youth,” Keegan observes, “came to exercise absolute power in Iraq by a mixture of violence and political intrigue.” Keegan goes on to argue that Hussein’s “rise followed a novel and unusual path,” but students of European history will see parallels between Hussein’s biography and those of Adolph Hitler and Josef Stalin—emotionally cold men, satanically egotistical, who were skilled at exploiting conventional pieties and political arrangements to serve their boundless ambition. In fact, Keegan correctly points out that Saddam Hussein is far more a product of European history—he admired Hitler and emulated Stalin—than he is of Arabian culture. War between the United States and a despot bent on becoming a regional strongman was thus inevitable.

In the second half of the book Keegan concerns himself with major combat operations—and rightly so. There would be little point in waiting for Iraq to mature, politically and economically, before writing a history of the war that deposed Saddam—just as it would have been foolish to refrain from writing histories of the Korean conflict until the armistice was replaced by a settled peace. Keegan’s narration of operational warfare is first-rate. Writing in the tradition of the best historians, Keegan has mastered the art of synthesis. One could comb through his journalistic pieces in *The Daily Telegraph* and not draw out the underlying themes that are given full treatment in *The Iraq War*.

An example of Keegan’s ability to convey a great deal in a brief space can be found in his description of the battle for Nasiriyah.

Careful planning failed, in circumstances fortunately unique during the Iraq War, to deliver the desired result. There was to be an unforeseen battle for Nasiriyah and it was to take a messy and costly form, seized on gleefully by anti-American elements in the Western media to demonstrate that the war was not going the coalition’s way.

Here Keegan does justice not only to the coalition forces but also to the academic discipline of history. That no plan ever survives first contact with the enemy is a cliché that was probably well-worn before von Moltke set it to paper in his history of the Franco-Prussian War (1890), but apparently few journalists nowadays are familiar with the idea. As Keegan suggests here, the chaos that accompanied the battle for Nasiriyah was a rare thing. Combat operations in Iraq were carried out with unprecedented efficiency and resourcefulness—a tribute to the warfighters certainly but also to the planners as well. Perhaps more importantly, this passage illustrates that Keegan in *The Iraq War* has done future historians a big favor.

When writing about a campaign from the past, scholars look at a variety of sources—amongst the more valuable are official war records, memoirs, and contemporary news reports. Skepticism is in order as one examines these kinds of documents: official records written at the time may be incomplete, first-hand accounts are by their nature shaped by partiality or narrowness of perspective, and as Keegan points out journalism in our time—though noble exceptions can be found—is warped by ignorance of history and a thinly veiled contempt for aggressive employment of American military power. The historian writing fifty years from now who reads Keegan will gain a balanced and reasonably complete picture of *Operation Iraqi Freedom* that no other contemporary source is likely to offer.

Keegan's book is valuable also for its commentary on the political situation in Europe. Keegan persuasively argues that the anti-war posturing in Europe can be tied to the misbegotten belief that the balance of power among states can be maintained without armies—and that the unilateral use of force is disreputable. Member states of the European Union—nations formerly part of the Soviet Union excepted—have come to believe that international disputes can be managed by supranational regulations and treaties. Force is no longer needed, so the current political wisdom in Europe would have us believe. Organizations such as the European Union, the Hague Tribunal, and the European Court of Human Rights aim to “influence and eventually control the behaviour of states not by traditional means of resorting to force as a last resort,” Keegan asserts, “but by supplanting force by rational procedures, exercised through supranational bureaucracy and supranational legal systems and institutions.” The trouble with this point of view, as Keegan's book proves, is that it encourages and rewards tyranny.

*The Iraq War* is, in truth, not quite as good as many of Keegan's other books: *The Face of Battle*, *A History of Warfare*, and *Six Armies at Normandy* come immediately to mind. Even so, *The Iraq War* is a solid piece of scholarship when measured against traditional standards of impartiality, perceptiveness, and lucidity. That Keegan managed to finish this book within a few months after major combat operations ceased is an apt testament to his gifts as a military historian and as an astute observer of contemporary politics and strategy.

BRIAN HANLEY

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*Our Oldest Enemy: A History of America's  
Disastrous Relationship with France*

by John J. Miller & Mark Molesky

New York: Doubleday, 2004

**N**EWSCOVERAGE OF THE IRAQ WAR often remarks on the unprecedented antagonism between the United States and France. Take for instance the following analysis by reporter Craig W. Smith in a story published in *The New York Times*, 18 November 2004. “French-American relations, rarely easy, have lingered near historic lows since Mr. Chirac’s government fought bitterly last year to avert the war,” Smith declares in his report on President Chirac’s recent claim that the Iraq War has worsened the threat of terrorism. Mr. Chirac’s “unwillingness to reach out to the United States as the Bush administration heads into a second term is certain to keep those relations at a low ebb for now.” The assumption here and in much of the recent reporting on diplomatic relations between the United States and France is that the two countries have always enjoyed an essentially amicable relationship—until President George W. Bush threw it all away by ordering the invasion of Iraq.

John J. Miller and Mark Molesky thoroughly and engagingly discredit this point of view. *Our Oldest Enemy* argues that the French have always viewed the United States either as an impediment to empire or as a potential stooge in their centuries-long rivalry with England. In fact, disagreements between President Bush and President Chirac over the Iraq War—far from marking an “historical low” in Franco-American relations—are actually mild and of minor significance when compared with earlier disputes.

The book is organized by historical period and covers the colonial years through the immediate aftermath of the Iraq War. There are no surprises in the chapters that deal with current issues. French diplomatic objections to American policy in Iraq were based not on philosophical reservations about war, or blind faith in the United Nations, but on a national self-interest that identified the United States as an economic and political obstruction to French geo-political ambitions.

One myth exploded in *Our Oldest Enemy* is that France came to the aid of the American colonists on behalf of high-minded motives: devotion to liberty, eagerness to see America become a nation so as to further a mutually profitable trade relation, and so on. Miller and Molesky show that France was an enemy long before it became an ally. France began several aggressive wars against British colonists during the first half of the eighteenth century, the aim being to diminish British influence in North America. These conflicts did not feature set-piece battles fought by regular forces and governed by chivalric codes of conduct. Quite the opposite. Partisan Indian tribes cooperated with the French in perpetrating one massacre of American colonists after another. In February 1704, for example, nearly two hundred settlers at Deerfield, Massachusetts, were murdered and nearly as many carried away—to be used later, if they survived a forced march to Canada (few did), as barter for French prisoners held by the British. Miller and Molesky rightly argue that incidents of this kind engendered a distinct American identity more than fifty years before the passage of the Stamp Act. Fighting a common enemy who preferred terror to negotiation or peaceful co-existence went much further to carve out differences between the American and the British experience than any taxation rate, or arguments about political philosophy, ever could.

*Our Oldest Enemy* also offers a fresh perspective on the reasons why France allied itself with the colonists in the Revolutionary War. The French cared not a wit for ideals of liberty or America's aspirations for nationhood—much as they might have wanted the Americans and posterity to believe otherwise. What the French saw in American discontent was a way to injure the British: economically, morally, and politically. French foreign minister Charles Vergennes “remained focused on finding ways to stymie the British,” Miller and Molesky point out, “and if that meant temporarily aiding an upstart little republic, then so be it.” Even so, the French would not intervene until the Americans proved that they could defeat the British, and such help as they provided was of varying quality. While French aid “was a tremendous help to the rebellious colonists, especially at Yorktown, much of it was also grudging, sporadic, and undercut by the incompetence and vanity of French commanders.”

For a century after the Revolutionary War French diplomacy toward the United States was every bit as devious and self-serving as its dealings with colonial America might have foretold. France had no use at all for American professions of

neutrality. Much of French diplomacy was aimed at cajoling, tricking, or coercing the United States into becoming a French ally in that country's wars for European supremacy. In 1793 the French—once again at war with the British—hoped to use North America as a naval staging base. The French minister to the United States, Edmond-Charles Genet, did not scruple to “arm privateers and encourage U.S. citizens to join French expeditions against British shipping”—a subversive action that in itself might have justified a war between the United States and France. During the American Civil War, France supported the Confederacy—short of provoking a war with Washington, D.C.—as part of a grand strategy. By weakening the Union and by installing a French puppet government in Mexico, Napoleon III hoped to restrict American influence south of the Rio Grande and thus establish an imperialistic foothold in the western hemisphere.

Contrary to what one is likely to read in current news reports, the diplomatic wrangling surrounding the Iraq War does not reflect a worrisome departure from what is falsely assumed to be America's long-standing friendship with France. Rather, such jousting is merely the newest limb from a very old tree, as *Our Oldest Enemy* illustrates so well.

BRIAN HANLEY

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*The West & the Rest: Globalization  
and the Terrorist Threat*

by Roger Scruton

Delaware: ISI, 2002

**T**HIS BOOK DESERVES TO BE PLACED on professional reading lists under the category, “Understanding the Enemy.” Scruton’s work joins Bernard Lewis’s recent volume, *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*, and *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*, by John Lewis Gaddis, as indispensable sources for strategic planners, specialists in information operations, and Eagle Scout students of political science. Scruton looks at the underlying political and cultural antagonism between Islamic and Western societies and explains what needs to be done to counter the spread of radical Islamism and the terrorism it breeds.

Scruton begins with a discussion of the political philosophy that obtains in the West and which is exemplified by the United States: ordered liberty based on individual rights, free trade, and laws that are binding upon all members of the state. This social contract restrains state power so as to leave society—which is a citizenry united by a common language, territory, historical memory, customs, and a collective responsibility for self-defense—unmolested by political pressures. Scruton rightly calls attention to the debt we owe ancient Rome—the laws of which were “secular, unconcerned with the individual’s religious well-being,” and devised to govern people “regardless of their credal differences; and its decisions were not validated by tracing them to some sacred source, but by autonomous principles of judicial reasoning and explicit statement of law.” The legacy of Roman law was its

emphasis on membership in a secular community that was separate from, but not hostile toward, the private loyalties to family, creed, and so on.

*The West & the Rest* also illuminates the vital contribution of Christianity to Western political and social culture. The rise of Christendom instilled in European culture an element of conciliation that, even today, distinguishes Western politics from its Islamic counterpart. One “must recognize that the idea of forgiveness, symbolized in the Cross, distinguishes the Christian from the Muslim inheritance,” Scruton asserts. “There is no coherent reading of the Christian message that does not make forgiveness of enemies into a central item of the creed.” Christianity, moreover, makes provision for self-defense even as it expels vengeance as an acceptable means of effecting justice. “Christ suffered the most violent death, not in order to recommend defenselessness, but in order to redeem mankind,” Scruton declares.

The right of defense stems from your obligations to others.  
You are obliged to protect those whom destiny has placed  
in your care. A political leader who turns not his own cheek  
but ours makes himself party to the next attack. Too often  
this has happened. But by pursuing the attacker and bringing  
him, however violently, to justice, the politician serves the  
cause of peace, and also that of forgiveness, of which justice is  
the instrument.

The moral outlook discussed here justifies violence only in the service of a moral good: maintaining a just peace. But this frame of mind is alien to the Muslim political understanding; and certainly it is the polar opposite of the strain of Islamic thought that endorses the annihilation of non-believers.

In the book’s third chapter, “Holy Law,” Scruton avers that Islam derives its appeal from the clarity, comprehensiveness, and relative simplicity of the Koran—which puts it at odds with the ascendancy of Western political, economic, legal, religious, and social norms. Unlike Western legal and social systems, Islamic society is largely devoid of influences outside of the Koran. Little is said in the Koran about political institutions; theology dominates every aspect of life—complementary or distinct loyalties, such as thrive in the West, are not tolerated. Law “is the will of God, and sovereignty is legitimate only in so far as it upholds God’s will and is authorized through it.” The upshot of this is that Muslim cultures lack the kind of political sophistication that has fostered the material progress, social freedom, and international influence of the West, and herein lies the sources of Islamic hatred, of which terrorism is the most prominent expression.

The globalization of Western culture generates resentment most especially amongst Islamic immigrants in the West, who emigrate to Europe and the United States seeking the benefits of modernity even as they despise the society that generates them. The animosity of Muslims in the West festers and metastasizes because the nations in which they reside don't expect them to assimilate into the dominant culture. In fact, the institutions that once transformed immigrants into citizens—schools, legal and civil courts, governmental departments, the entertainment and artistic communities—positively discourage assimilation. The source of this cultural self-loathing is a point of view commonly referred to as “political correctness.” Political correctness is nothing more than a secular creed, the central premise of which is a virulent contempt for the West. Political correctness is characterized by an aversion to recognizing, let alone celebrating, the cultural achievements of the West and a corresponding eagerness to dwell on, exaggerate, and fabricate its failings.

Making matters worse are the bureaucratic agencies whose success must come at the expense of the nation-state. The idea of the nation-state is gradually but inevitably yielding to supranational organizations—the European Union, the World Trade Organization, transnational corporations, the International Criminal Court—a development that undermines the obligations, as well as the rights, that attend national citizenship. The Islamic immigrant is thus under no pressure to embrace Western culture—though every day he is surrounded by a way of life that is defiantly, aggressively contemptuous of the piety he sees as necessary to eternal salvation.

The attacks on America were a response to the world's most successful attempt at nation-building, which projects its power, its freedom, and its detritus so effectively around the globe. All the principal actors in the atrocities of September 11 had resided in Europe, and received there both training and indoctrination through local cells of al-Qa'eda. The plot to attack America was not hatched in any Muslim country, but on the continent where the West began.

Radical Islamists are not strangers to Western ways. Many—Mohammed Atta is an example—were educated in Western universities, while others became wealthy from the sale of the oil that feeds Western prosperity.

Scruton doesn't mention the Global War on Terror, though there is nothing in his book suggesting that he does not endorse military action. What Scruton calls for is a revival of traditional Western culture as the most effective means of extirpating the philosophical underpinnings that inspire the Islamic terrorist. Western policies

on immigration, multi-cultural education, unbridled free trade, and a handful of others are in immediate need of re-evaluation. Subduing the Islamic fanatic by force of arms is vitally important, but to defeat him in a decisive way “requires a credible alternative to the absolutes with which he conjures.” Scruton concludes that only a substantive reassertion of Western self-respect can bring about victory over Islamic terrorism.

REVIEW BY BRIAN HANLEY

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*TakeDown: The 3rd Infantry Division's  
Twenty-One Day Assault on Baghdad*

by Jim Lacey

Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2007

**O**PERATION IRAQI FREEDOM has been a boon for the publishing industry if not—as yet—for America's strategic position. Many of the books that treat this subject are of doubtful or perishable value but a handful are authentic gems that illuminate as well as promise to transcend the historical moment that called them into being. Jim Lacey's *TakeDown* fits squarely in the latter category. This is historical writing of a very high order: clearly written and painstakingly researched yet free of even a trace of pedantry and never reliant on the jargon and hyperbole that too often hampers sympathetic narratives of contemporary military operations.

Clearly Lacey admires the soldiers he writes about; but his lively, efficient prose also demonstrates his respect for prospective readers and, most important, he has done posterity a service by capturing the state of mind of field commanders and their soldiers in the immediate aftermath of combat. Readers of every sort—the military buff as well as the non-specialist book buyer who enjoys an engrossing story—will find putting down this book to be a challenge.

*TakeDown* offers readers a detailed operational and tactical account of the 3rd ID's drive into Iraq and the ensuing battle for Baghdad. The point of view here is, naturally enough, predominantly that of American soldiers but Lacey also gives us the contemporaneous perspective of the Iraqis and, where suitable, he also includes cogent surveys of Iraqi battle plans and the military and political

outlook that they served. The tactical maps are well placed within the narrative and easy to read. The dozen or so photographs are of varying graphic quality but never do they fail to complement Lacey's story; the soldiers who operated the cameras doubtless had a great deal more on their minds than the artistic perfection of their snapshots of battle.

Two themes emerge from *TakeDown*: that the nature of combat has hardly changed from the age of Achilles—despite the hoopla that attended the “shock and awe” conceit—and that the American press more often than not distorts rather than clarifies the character of battle.

Lacey's account puts the lie to the idea that the war was somehow a walk-over: that it represented the victory of a space-age force—weapons of astonishing complexity and power served by technicians—over a collection of ineptly led, poorly motivated thugs. There is an element of truth in such a view, but Lacey rightly points out that combat in Iraq was as brutal and confusing as ever—the outcome pivoting on the mettle and discipline of troops more so than on the particular equipment they carried. Here is one passage that aptly illustrates the narrative casting of *TakeDown*:

Captain Wright and his small force fought off one attack after another [during the battle for Baghdad]. As other units had discovered at Samawah, Najaf, and other locations, the Iraqis did not lack for bravery. Hour after hour they continued to make suicidal assaults, only to be broken by hails of concentrated fire.... To beat them off, Wright had to call for more than twenty danger close artillery missions and another six danger close mortar missions. When, after eighteen hours, the Iraqis seemed to melt away it was discovered that the battalion had used up almost twice its normal basic load of ammo. If the Iraqis had continued to press their attack, in less than an hour the company would probably have had to resort to hand-to-hand combat. (250)

Lacey's description here—there are plenty of other vignettes that are at least as harrowing—echoes accounts of combat on Guadalcanal and at Bastogne.

Lacey, who was an embedded reporter for *Time Magazine* during the war, is unsparing in his criticisms of the mass media. Emanating from news broadcasts in particular was a pessimism that did not reflect the outlook of the troops doing the actual fighting—emotionally and physically taxing though many of the combat encounters proved to be. Far from demonstrating a useful skepticism about conventional points of view, Lacey argues, the media chanted a litany of

despair as if the volume and repetition of notions about the war that obtained in editorial offices in New York City, Atlanta, and Washington D.C. represented a truth more compelling than fact (119-22).

In a word, *TakeDown* should be read by anyone with an intelligent interest in the Second Gulf War, as well as by those who relish history as it should be written.

REVIEW BY KRISTINE GOULD

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*Afghanistan and the Troubled Future  
of Unconventional Warfare*

by Hy S. Rothstein

Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006

**E**XOTIC PHOTOS OF UNSHAVEN, ruggedly handsome American men dressed in a mismatched combination of U.S. military gear and traditional Middle Eastern clothing, sitting astride various pack animals loaded with high-tech communications equipment, flooded the news markets in October and November 2001. For most Americans, this was their first glimpse of unconventional warfare.

Waging war on horseback in the abyss of Afghanistan in the 21st century was beyond comprehension (after all, the Russian military flailed about Afghanistan for eight years before turning tail in defeat), but lightning-fast victory over the Taliban brought immediate visibility to Special Operations Forces, the men on the ground who conducted wildly-successful combat operations with the Afghan military. As President George W. Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had promised, this was a different kind of war waged with unconventional capabilities. However, the failure of U.S. military forces to capture Osama bin Laden at Tora Bora coupled with the inability of U.S. forces to win the peace in Afghanistan soured the victory over the Taliban. Moreover, following the buildup of conventional military forces in Afghanistan, the tides shifted away from successful special operations missions back to the same large-scale conventional military operations that have driven nearly every conflict in U.S. military history. Six years later, we remain entangled in combat operations without a strategy for victory.

Lessons learned from Vietnam and other non-conventional conflicts had shown time and time again that enemies who engaged in non-conventional warfare could not be defeated by conventional forces. More specifically and most recently, the Russians proved that the Afghans could withstand a long-term conventional war. So how did we end up exactly where we said we didn't want to go, fighting a conventional war in Afghanistan?

In *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare*, Hy Rothstein sets out to explain why the U.S. military gravitates to conventional warfare and more importantly, why the United States will not fight with the unconventional capabilities promised by both President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld. Drawing concepts from organizational theory, Rothstein posits that the inherent bureaucracy within the U.S. military prohibits the innovation required to change its operational strategy. According to Rothstein, waging anything other than conventional warfare would require political and military patrons who are adaptable, educated, and willing to risk change, which he believes are not present in senior civilian and military leaders. As such, the U.S. military will remain oriented towards conventional warfare, regardless of the consequences.

Unfortunately there is a critical flaw in Rothstein's writing which starts with the title of the book and extends through the final paragraph of the conclusion, namely his pervasive misuse of the term *unconventional warfare*. Unconventional warfare is not warfare on the opposite end of the spectrum as conventional warfare; rather, it is a very specific mission assigned to Special Operations Forces to conduct operations by, with, or through irregular forces in support of a resistance movement, an insurgency, or conventional military forces. By doctrinal definition, unconventional warfare is not the same as irregular warfare, asymmetric warfare, or guerrilla warfare, and more importantly, it does not describe the manner in which special operations forces operate. Yet Rothstein, a career Special Forces officer, consistently interchanges unconventional warfare with irregular, asymmetric, and guerrilla warfare throughout the book, even though he specifically acknowledges the correct definition of unconventional warfare and he specifically admits that his use of the term unconventional warfare exceeds the doctrinal definition.

Even more inexplicable, Rothstein vehemently denies that Special Operations Forces conducted unconventional warfare in Afghanistan, that "the United States executed its impressive display of power in a totally conventional manner." I would argue the opposite, that integration of Special Forces teams in support of Northern Alliance military operations against Taliban forces was a textbook unconventional warfare mission. U.S. Special Forces provided training, equipment and supplies, advice, and assistance to an irregular, indigenous force in support of a resistance movement. If that's not unconventional warfare, then what is it?

Moreover, Rothstein is exceptionally critical of the ability of Special Operations Forces to conduct unconventional warfare. He devotes an entire chapter explaining his rationale, skipping from one definition to another, at times using the correct doctrinal definition and at other times using the specific terms or even definitions for irregular, asymmetric, or guerrilla warfare, which are all conducted by conventional forces as well as Special Operations Forces.

However, perhaps the most illogical part of his argument is his recommendation that legislation be passed to create a separate service to conduct unconventional warfare (but does he really mean irregular warfare, or asymmetric warfare, or guerrilla warfare?), with assets pulled from U.S. Special Operations Command. Rothstein argues cogently that the U.S. military bureaucracy has paralyzed its ability for innovation but then recommends increasing the bureaucracy to solve the problem.

Readers of this article may ask “So what? What difference does it really make? It’s all a bunch of semantics, so who really cares?” From a planning and operational perspective, I’d offer that it makes a big difference. The key to military success is using the right force for the right mission at the right time, which is largely a factor of education. Leaders and strategic planners at every level need to understand the capabilities that are available to them, and they need to be able to integrate those capabilities into a single coordinated effort.

Of final note, President Bush, Secretary Rumsfeld, the entire military establishment, and media of all forms have perpetuated the incorrect use of the term *unconventional warfare*. At times, commanders and senior leaders within Special Operations Forces have misused the term and have knowingly allowed others to misuse it as well. United States Army Special Operations Command has undertaken an active campaign to correct this deficiency, starting with promulgation of the definition provided in this article to Special Operations Command units. It’s the first step in a long process of re-education.

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**KRISTINE GOULD** is a member of United States Forces Korea (Special Operations Command Korea).

REVIEW BY BRIAN HANLEY

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*An Essay on the Life of the Honourable  
Major-General Israel Putnam*

by David Humphreys

William C. Dowling, ed.

Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000

**B**IOGRAPHY SEEMS TO BE POPULAR with the public these days but one is left to wonder if this type of writing hasn't suffered as a result. There is, for example, an "award-winning" *Biography* program and a *Biography Club* that caters for dedicated viewers, both produced by the *Arts & Entertainment* network. Thick books on the lives of famous people—Harry Truman, Benjamin Franklin, Joe DiMaggio—disappear rapidly off the shelves of the chain bookstores, prompting several additional printings. So prevalent is the idea of biography that no topic seems off-limits. The illogically titled *Zero: the Biography of a Dangerous Idea* is still in print five years after it first appeared.

The indiscriminate popular appetite for the details of another's life has obscured the traditional end of biography, which is to emphasize the connection between character and achievement and, ultimately, to inspire emulation. The *Biography* television program is a perversion of the term—it does nothing more than appeal to low curiosity and endorse celebrity worship. The biographies retailed by the major publishers are on the whole an indifferent lot. A good biography, for example, doesn't need to be any longer than 200 pages or so—and plenty of fine biographies take up far fewer pages than that. But many recently published biographies are swollen beyond all reason. They are over-stuffed with details of private life and quotidian affairs to the point where the subject's genuine accomplishments are thrown out

of proper perspective. And often the style either does not transcend humdrum journalism—thus failing to reflect the gravity of the subject’s accomplishments—or the writing is crippled by the conventions of the academic world: jargon-laden prose that apparently aims at bedazzling a Ph.D. committee rather than pleasing and instructing the ordinary educated reader. What is more, many biographies nowadays—Tripp’s *The Intimate Life of Abraham Lincoln* is an example—seek either to diminish their subjects or pressgang them in the service of some modern-day issue, doing violence not only to the subject’s reputation but also to the idea of biography and history.

David Humphreys’ *Life of Israel Putnam*, originally published in 1804 and reproduced in a fine edition by *Liberty Fund* under the editorship of William C. Dowling, reminds us of the noble end and traditional method of biography. The first part of Humphreys’ narrative focuses entirely on character traits in the young Putnam that foretell his later greatness. The latter half of the book illustrates the extent to which Humphreys’ character shaped the destiny of a nation devoted to ordered liberty.

A word should be said here about the quality of the *Liberty Fund* edition. The cloth-bound version, with its high-quality illustrations, sewn bookmark, and easy-on-the-eyes print set on sturdy paper, would adorn anyone’s bookshelf; at eighteen dollars, the *Liberty Fund* edition would be a good buy at double the price (a very good paper edition is available for ten dollars). The *Liberty Fund* edition also includes a couple of bonuses: a speech by Humphreys, “An Oration on the Political Situation of the United States of America in the Year 1789,” and a letter from George Washington to Putnam, in regards the debt the newly created nation owes its first veterans.

Major-General Israel Putnam (1718-90) is best known today for an utterance he supposedly made during the battle of Bunker Hill, “don’t fire ‘til you see the whites of their eyes,” but his fame ought to rest on a more substantial foundation—which is something Humphreys sought to create with his biographical account. Humphreys (1752-1818) served as Putnam’s aide-de-camp during the American Revolution. Much of the material here comes from either Humphreys’ own observations or from Putnam himself. But the greatest influence on this book is Plutarch (*fl.* 80 A.D.), whose biographies of Greek and Roman statesmen and soldiers were much admired in the eighteenth century English-speaking world. Colonial Americans drew inspiration in particular from Plutarch’s depiction of political and civic virtue which Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, Jay, and like-minded citizens believed would find fullest expression in an independent American republic.

Putnam was a fitting subject for biography in the tradition of Plutarch’s *Lives of the Noble Grecians & Romans*. Born into modest circumstances in rural New England nearly sixty years before Jefferson penned the *Declaration of Independence*,

Putnam's thrift, husbandry, and diligence allowed him to prosper as a farmer. His first military service was as a company commander in the Connecticut militia at an age—Putnam was thirty-seven—when most men would have been content to build on their achievements rather than take up arms against a savage and resourceful enemy. Putnam performed with great skill and courage during the Seven Years War; his captivity at the hands of the French and Indians is a harrowing episode and worth reading by itself. Colonel Putnam returned to civilian life in 1763.

When war broke out between the American colonies and Great Britain Putnam—by now approaching sixty years of age—was one of the first to join the fight:

All eyes were now turned to find the men who, possessed of military experience, would dare, in the approaching hour of severest trial, to lead their undisciplined fellow-citizens to battle. For none were so stupid as not to comprehend, that want of success would involve the leaders in punishment of rebellion. Putnam was among the first and the most conspicuous who stepped forth.

From this point forward Humphreys' account of Putnam is a catalogue of his subject's valor, and that of the troops he led, in the face of unrelenting privation and long odds.

Modern readers should not allow themselves to be put off by the scarcity of details about Putnam's private life, or by Humphreys' elevated prose style—which is meant to project the solemnity of his subject matter. Unlike many of today's biographies, Humphreys cared little for the workings of Putnam's psyche or the ways in which Putnam in his personal habits might have resembled ordinary folks. Recorded here are the heroic deeds of a man who deserves a place in history alongside the founders of the Roman Republic.

Humphreys' portrait of Putnam may strike modern readers as aloof or, at worst, lacking in humanity. But for Humphreys' generation biography was never meant to be an exhaustively intimate exposition of a life. Readers turned to biography for inspiration—they sought examples of excellence in all its variety. Humphreys' *Life of Israel Putnam* is thus an ambassador from another time, not only for the vivid picture it gives of the kinds of men who delivered to posterity the American republic but also because the book shows how biography ought to be written.

REVIEW BY WALTER JONES

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*Walking It Off: A Veteran's  
Chronicle of War and Wilderness*

by Doug Peacock

Eastern Washington University Press, 2005

“I WANT TO WALK BEYOND WAR,” declares Doug Peacock, author of *Grizzly Years*, in his latest book, *Walking It Off: A Veteran's Chronicle of War and Wilderness* (183). This fine little work is an autobiographical account of Peacock's experiences as a Special Forces soldier in Vietnam, as a friend (albeit in a troubled relationship) with Edward Abbey, and as an *isolato* who wanders throughout much of the American Southwest to find redemption from the mental suffering he sustained as a result of being a warrior in one of his country's longest and most controversial wars.

Peacock admits in his work that he is a victim of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, a condition he relates to his exposure to the American war in Vietnam—a conflict he describes as “that nasty little Asian war” (27). In that *Walking It Off* is very much about Vietnam, the book fits with the growing and complex genre of combat veterans' accounts of their Indo-China experiences. Specifically, Peacock tells the reader that he worked with a group of mountain people called the Hre while serving an eighteen-month tour in Southeast Asia (at a time surrounding the Tet Offensive of 1968) as a medic with cross-training in demolitions. To demonstrate how firm a grip the war has on him even now, he states at one point in the narrative:

Let me be clear: I would not trade my time in Vietnam for anything. The war prepared me, hardened me, for the only

life I wanted or that I felt was subsequently possible. At the same time, the syndrome known as PTSD was real; it permeated daily life. It was an inescapable trade-off: for me, to fit back into society meant living a half-life, devoid of significant passion. (63)

Yet Peacock provides the reader with only glimpses of the war. Mostly he dwells on two long-term, post-Vietnam aspects of his life: the first being his conflicted relationship with Edward Abbey who used Peacock as the model for the fictive character George Washington Hayduke of *The Monkey Wrench Gang* fame. As Peacock makes abundantly clear, he and Abbey did not always experience the happiest of friendships. But the two men connected in a profound father-and-son manner in which there existed a deeply intense attraction that led Peacock to be Abbey's care giver during the final, painful stage of the old man's life. Peacock inherited from Abbey an enduring love of nature and the wilderness: "Ed Abbey had brought me to this primitive belief in the wilderness. The land was everything; one's own concerns were dwarfed by the immensity of our need for it" (56).

A second aspect of his life that Peacock defines in *Walking It Off* is that of his unquenchable desire to be in the wilderness, to be a wanderer, an *isolato* with the troubled soul of Herman Melville's gloomy Ishmael. Peacock makes no secret of his own reclusive nature, of his wanting to be alone and refreshed in the mountains or deserts of the great American West. Herein lies much of the appeal of this book: the author's fine skill at describing the physical environment around him in terms of its plants, animals, birds, soils, and rocks. *Walking It Off* rises to a scholarly level in its narrative as Peacock describes the physical landscape through which he travels mostly alone.

Much of Peacock's book reflects his desire and ability to link the wilderness through which he wanders with a philosophical framework found within the volume: the profound connections that exist between the land, nature, human suffering, and healing. At one point, the author acknowledges his debt to Utah poet, author, and naturalist, Terry Tempest Williams (*Spirituality Is Solitary*) and her contributions to his understandings of the power of nature to influence his wounded soul and damaged spirit (114).

Yet, despite its praise for nature, *Walking It Off* possesses a caution concerning the long-term psychological damage war can do to a person's personality. Peacock strongly suggests that some of his mental wounds will not easily mend even through a close association with magnificent wilderness landscapes. In spite of the therapeutic nature of his wanderings, Peacock warns:

My war was neither fiction nor an unfortunate slice of life from which one slips cleanly away. There remains the unavoidable price to be paid for discovering that all things are indeed permitted. Beyond this door lie dread as well as knowledge, partially compensated by the closing other pathways, which could have led to the kind of existence you might, when younger, have imagined lay in store for you. That part of life is hacked off like a finger or an ear. You mourn the loss but never really try to get it back. (109)

One final aspect of Peacock's book deserves discussion: A strong Utah connection to the work's publishing history. Eastern Washington University Press' edition of *Walking It Off* is a paperback production offering a split front cover that features on the top half a line of soldiers marching, while the bottom half shows a red rock desert scene. Ken Sanders, the guiding light of Salt Lake City's Dream Garden Press and a close acquaintance of Doug Peacock, negotiated with Eastern Washington's press and with Peacock to do a limited hardbound edition of the book. While the story of Sanders' hardcover edition is complicated, the bottom line is that he produced fifteen red-cloth copies in November 2005, then 100 brown-cloth copies each with a laid-in copy of a "Hayduke" print by R. Crum, and finally a twenty-six-copy edition done in gray cloth and leather spine. Peacock and Crum have both signed the gray-cloth edition copies. In addition to these three sets that Dream Garden has already published, Sanders plans to issue approximately 350 more copies in three additional editions. So there exists the possibility of an extended Utah-related history to the publishing of Peacock's book.

Overall, *Walking It Off* is a literary masterpiece dealing with war and wilderness. The element of psychological gloom—when combined with the vivid, restoring aspects of nature—mark the book as an extremely complicated volume that deserves more than one reading to appreciate fully. It is neither light nor totally uplifting fare because of the devastating nature of Peacock's Vietnam War experiences and the persistence of his subsequent readjustment problems. The work is a worthwhile publication that fits into several areas of overarching American experiences: war; wilderness; the West and Utah; and even the concept of Manifest Destiny as a mechanism which links a belligerent side of the United States' westward expansion to the American conflict in Indo-China (123). Above all, *Walking It Off* deserves to be read because it may well become a classic in the area of autobiographical narratives that illuminate the profound relationships among human values and activities, mental health, and the landscapes in which we live and find our redemption or condemnation. The book is for serious readers and for libraries that acquire books attempting to enlighten us on the profound mysteries confronting the inhabitants of our planet.

REVIEW BY JON ALEXANDER

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*Arms and the Self: War, the Military,  
and Autobiographical Writing*

Alex Vernon, Editor

The Kent State University Press

**T**HERE ARE SEVERAL STUDIES OF MILITARY LIFE WRITINGS that were written by participants in particular wars, and there are some examinations of the writings of selected groups of participants in war, but I cannot think of any study as comprehensive as *Arms and the Self*. This study not only spans the centuries from about 400 BCE to the 1990s, but its comprehensiveness goes beyond chronological sweep to examine a variety of writing genres including letters, diaries, fiction, autobiographies and memoirs written by a variety of authors in terms of nationality, ethnicity, race, and gender. An outstanding introduction by the editor admirably sets the stage for the wide ranging reflections of the twelve contributors. The editor considers how to define military life writings when the line between combatants, support troops and civilians is increasingly blurred, and he makes an excellent case for the diverse and wide-ranging approach that will guide the subsequent essays. The issues involving authorial intentionality, genre, and audience are thoughtfully considered in a way that provides an excellent perspective for the subsequent examinations. These appear in a roughly chronological order from Xenophon to Anthony Swofford and Joel Turnipseed.

John W. I. Lee's perceptive examination of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, a text which describes Xenophon's experience as soldier in a Persian war and then as a leader after a catastrophe requires the Greek soldiers to fight their way home, provides the information needed by a modern reader to understand the context of the

*Anabasis* and its influence in the West (which resulted from its use as a standard text for beginning Greek as Caesar's *Gallic Wars* was used for beginning Latin). Lee presents a thoughtful consideration of the trajectory of the *Anabasis* that indicates how it can be read as an apology, a coming of age narrative, a travel narrative as well as a military chronicle. It seems appropriate that the first essay that examines one of the oldest known military life writings, would raise several of the interpretive issues that subsequent authors will consider.

The examination of the development of the modern military autobiography by Robert Lawson-Peebles focuses on the 17th and 18th centuries. This essay provides an informative and thorough examination of various types of military writing including the captivity narrative, the military manual, and the historical memoir. Lawson-Peebles proposes a three-part classification of the precursors of the modern military life writing: the indirect narrative, a largely didactic and historical work written by an officer (often in the third person); the purposive narrative, written to defend an author's record or to obtain remuneration; and the mundane narrative based on diaries or journals usually with dated entries. The *Journals* of Major Robert Rogers published in 1765 (which incorporates the indirect, purposive and mundane types of narratives) Lawson-Peebles convincingly argues is likely the first modern military autobiography because it is written in the first person and it communicates a sense of Rogers' self even though the narrative is presented in journal form.

Terry Reilly's examination of T. E. Lawrence's military writings is fascinating. He places Lawrence's writings in the context of Lawrence's life and in the literary context in which Lawrence was writing. The focus of the essay is on the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, probably Lawrence's most influential work, and here Reilly's analysis is enhanced by his consideration of Lawrence's writings from his bachelor's thesis on crusader castles to his last publication, a technical manual for motor boats. The essay illustrates how Lawrence adapted his authorial persona and voice to fit each particular writing, and how Lawrence drew on other texts from the *Iliad* to James Joyce's *Ulysses* in constructing his narratives. This examination shows that the *Seven Pillars* is a complex text with significant intratextual references written by a sophisticated writer well acquainted with the literary developments of his time.

"The Female Subject and the First World War" draws insightfully on several studies of women's life writings. Andrea Peterson focuses on Vera M. Brittain's war writings, especially her *Testament of Youth*, and she shows that several aspects of this text, such as, an emphasis on group relationship identity, embodied identity, a resistance to linear narrative, and subjective identity as an ongoing process are characteristic of women's life writings. Through her carefully crafted analysis, Peterson demonstrates that the enduring popularity of *Testament of Youth* is based on Brittain's innovative style that constructs a credible twentieth century female subject.

Lynn Z. Bloom's essay proposes that internment can be liberating in some ways for a woman on the basis of a close analysis of the diaries of Natalie Crouter and Margaret Sams. Crouter, the wife of an American businessman, and Sams, the wife of a soldier, were civilian internees in the Philippines. Both diarists come across as intelligent and resourceful, and Bloom's analysis of the diaries illustrates how the drastically changed circumstances in both women's lives propelled and compelled them to exercise their abilities and to assume roles previously unimagined. Bloom shrewdly notes that both women achieve a new level of autonomy, choice and leadership both in spite of and because of the adversities of confinement. Bloom also mentions the interesting story of the publication of the two diaries which were initially rejected because of publishers' disinterest in civilian war stories that lacked atrocities. Both were printed in the 1980s when changed sensibilities produced an audience interested in narratives that showed how women's character issued out of struggle.

Margaretta Jolly's essay on published collections of World War II letters finds that these collections tend to construct unity, whether the basis of the collection is national, familial or academic. Although Jolly finds that collections of letters sponsored by national institutions or collections that are based on a national perspective exhibit adaptations in editorial practice to adjust to changing perspectives, she finds that overall they tend to view World War II as a social leveler and a national unifier. Family collections tend to emphasize fidelity, the longing for reunion, and personal transcendence over frightening or frustrating situations. Jolly shrewdly notes that families broken by war may not leave an epistolary record. Academic collections which tend to be constructed around themes of ethnic, social or gender identity tend to "capitulate to happy endings." I found Jolly's essay and the following essay by Pat C. Hoy II significantly instructive, because it is easy to be charmed by a well written narrative and to begin to think, even when we know better, that a narrative is a transparent window on what happened. Jolly's outstanding analysis demonstrates that constructive agendas guide the writing of narratives and the collection of narratives for publication.

Pat C. Hoy II focuses on the two secondary works most frequently cited in this collection: Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* and Samuel Hynes' *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War*. Hoy's analysis shows that the romance of battle, the excitement of being pulled out of obscurity into something intense and historic that renders ordinary life flat, is a constitutive dimension of both studies. Hoy then insightfully connects this theme of romance with the elegiac impetus to remember and mourn—an impetus that connects authors and readers. I think that this is an important insight because life writings are somewhat like funeral eulogies given by the deceased, and most readers, like most mourners at funerals, want the narrative to succeed because we don't want human life to be

meaningless and futile. Through the concept of “War Elegy,” Hoy tellingly indicates the connectedness of authors and readers as “a part of the human family.”<sup>1</sup>

Through a close examination of Primo Levi’s *The Drowned and the Saved*, Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*, and Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Chris Daley considers the limitations of language to communicate the unspeakable. Daley perceptively examines how the witness to war and atrocity fractures genre, language, morality, memory, and the capacity of the witness to express truth. Indeed, Daley notes that the three authors hint that ordinary narrative construction is partly responsible for the horrors they have witnessed because it privileges rational forms, in Levi’s words, “what may not be cannot be.” In struggling to communicate, witnesses may stress silence, employ body language or vulgarity, and construct a fractured language to communicate situations that fracture ordinary narrative.

Bettina Hofmann examines three women’s narratives from the Vietnam War: Lynda Van Devanter’s *Home before Morning: The Story of an Army Nurse in Vietnam*, Marian Faye Novak’s *Lonely Girls with Burning Eyes: A Wife Recalls Her Husband’s Journey Home from Vietnam*, and Jim and Sybil Stockdale’s *In Love and War* (a memoir co-written by an officer who was a POW in Vietnam and his wife). Although Hofmann finds that the three women rely on traditional male strategies for representing war, she finds that the women present themselves differently in these narratives with different scars and a degree of passivity not mentioned in men’s narratives. The difference is most notable in the narratives of Novak and Stockdale who tend to defer to their husbands and to male officers even though it seems clear that both women are exceptionally capable. Van Devanter, the least deferential, describes her initial acquiescence to the resistance of the presence of a woman in the Veterans Against the War, but her narrative is fractured in ways that resemble the narratives of male veterans, and it deviates from the more polite language of Novak and Stockdale. I found Hofmann’s essay particularly interesting because of her choice of narratives written by women whose experience of the war was different: Novak was the wife of an officer; Stockdale was the wife of an officer who was a POW, and Van Devanter was herself an officer in Vietnam serving as a nurse. Many differences in the three narratives seem to result from these differences in the war experiences of the authors, but the similarities that Hofmann finds are, therefore, all the more striking.

Eleven Vietnam memoirs written by African-Americans are thoughtfully examined by Jeffrey Loeb. The writers include a woman journalist, an Air Force officer (also a POW), a Marine officer and a private, four Army privates (one a POW), an NCO, and Colin Powell who had served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before his memoir was published. It is significant that Loeb finds a description of the experience of racism in all eleven accounts in spite of the diversity

of the authors' war experiences and the diversity of narrative styles of the memoirs. Loeb's analysis focuses on how what he calls "witnessing racism" is described in terms of accommodation or resistance and how it is constructed in terms of a narrative that is affirmative or critical overall. Loeb classifies as affirmative four memoirs two written by officers, one by an NCO and one by a private. In these memoirs racial discrimination tends to be described as occurring outside of a military context, while hard work and discipline often overcome military discrimination. Four memoirs that Loeb classifies as critical, written by three privates and one officer, tend to connect the racism the authors witness to the military and to American culture.<sup>2</sup> Three narratives written by an officer, a private, and a journalist Loeb classifies as accomplished narrative constructions that describe the complex interactions of opportunity and discrimination, patriotism and dissent, traditional values and radicalizing experiences. Loeb's investigation of these eleven texts is an interesting and valuable contribution.<sup>3</sup>

Jennifer Sinor's examination of the life writing of a military child is a fascinating consideration of a virtually overlooked topic. Drawing on a number of secondary studies and her own experience as a military child, Sinor proposes that military children experience "ordinary trauma," a paradox in which the differences between the ordinary and the extraordinary are obscured because the deracination arising from relocations, unanticipated deployments, and the paraphernalia of war that lead military children to experience feelings of loneliness, loss, and anxiety can not be articulated because speaking about these feelings would seem to conflict with a willingness to sacrifice for defense. Drawing on her own diary, written between years ten to fourteen, Sinor perceptively analyzes the entries to show how extraordinary things, such as an imminent atomic attack, and ordinary things, such as getting contact lenses, are constructed as equal and how she copes with the sense of loss and isolation from repeated moves by scolding herself and denying that there is anything in her life that could make her feel bad. This is an insightful essay and I applaud Sinor's willingness to share her own diary since the primary sources for this inquiry are hard to obtain. I wish that Sinor could obtain access to the diaries of several military children and compare how "ordinary trauma" is articulated by military children in ways different from the children of parents who work in other hazardous professions (e.g., as miners, firefighters, police) or children who are deracinated because their parents are divorced or deceased.

The final essay by Elisabeth Piedmont-Marton examines how two Marine memoirs from the Persian Gulf War, Anthony Swofford's *Jarhead* and Joel Turnipseed's *Baghdad Express*, extend and break from the narrative constructions characteristic of Vietnam memoirs. Piedmont-Marton makes a good case for the influence of the Vietnam memoir, notably the appearance of a Vietnam veteran in both Persian Gulf Memoirs (262-3), but sometimes I think the argument is

pushed a little too far. For example, analyzing the bar scene after Troy's funeral in *Jarhead* she comments, "It's a testament to the power of the *Deerhunter* images that neither Swofford nor any of his editors or readers would have noticed that the men would not have been legally able to 'buy a bottle' of whisky in a bar in the 1990s." (261) But I do not see any mention on pages 80-81 of *Jarhead* that the purchase was legal.<sup>4</sup> However my reservations about how influential Vietnam memoirs were on Swofford and Turnipseed are not based on minute details like buying a bottle, but on my impression that both authors write erudite texts. To my reading, *Jarhead* alludes to many narratives, and some are specifically mentioned: Camus' *The Stranger* (213), *All Quiet on the Western Front* (183), the *Iliad* (154, 213). The mirage trope (e.g., 15, 83) employed in different ways throughout the text reminded me of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, one of the greatest battlefield meditations of all time, but retold as Yeats' Crazy Jane might tell it to the bishop. Perhaps I am overreading, but the epigraph at the beginning of *Jarhead* from Ezra Pound's *Canto 72* is surely a sign of an erudite text.

*Arms and the Self* is an outstanding accomplishment that provides a valuable introduction to the field of war life writings. I used *Arms and the Self* as a resource in preparing a seminar on American veterans' memoirs, and I found it very helpful. Any library that has a military history collection should buy a copy. Of course it would be impossible to cover all the possible topics in one volume, and if one might wish for an essay on Caesar's *Gallic Wars* or some other text, that is really a wish for a second volume. If there were to be a second volume I would like to see an essay on what might be called the theodicy issue in war life writings, that is, how the texts consider what sort of world it is that is so destructive and what sort of creatures we are who so often find the sacrifice for war more appropriate than the sacrifice for reconciliation—an issue rarely addressed directly in war memoirs, but involved indirectly everywhere. I would also urge the authors of that second volume to watch for intratextual references to other war writings. There is a long and vast tradition of war life writings, and the authors of these texts are sometimes aware of the tradition, and sometimes write in dialogue with it. Indeed, could the title, *Arms and the Self*, be an allusion to the first line of Vergil's *Aeneid* (*Arma virumque cano*) translated in a gender inclusive way?

#### Notes

1. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series Two, vol. 1, eds. John Blassingame, et al. (New Haven :Yale University Press, 1999), p. 25.

2. Since three officers and one private write affirmative memoirs, and three privates and one officer write critical memoirs, could there be a correlation between rank and how authors witness racism?
3. I wonder if Loeb is on target in applying Robert B. Stepto's classifications: eclectic, integrated and generic narrative (Loeb, 227) to Vietnam memoirs written by African-Americans. I read Stepto's classifications as a proposal designed to illustrate the generic development of African-American literature from Henry Bibb to James Weldon Johnson, Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison. A distinctive feature of the eclectic narrative according to Stepto is authentication (*From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative*, 2nd. ed. [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991], pp. 3-11.), but I do not think that a Vietnam veteran would need to authenticate a narrative in the way that an unknown, escaped slave author would need to authenticate a narrative in the antebellum period. I would think that being a veteran would be sufficient authentication to write a war memoir in the 20th century. Authentication was important for escaped slave authors because fictional narratives, for example, Richard Hildreth's *Archie Moore* (1836) had been considered authentic and its exposure had damaged the testimonial value of escaped slave narratives. I am unaware that any texts presented as Vietnam veterans' memoirs have been exposed as fiction written authors who had no military service.
4. Perhaps Piedmont-Marton means that the Marines were under 21 and that the drinking age had been 18 in the late 60s and 70s, but this is a tricky point because the age of the Marines is not given in the text. Mr. Swofford's date of birth is not given in the book (his date of conception is given as "between the thirteenth and twentieth of November 1969," p. 39) or on the Library of Congress electronic card, but Wikipedia provides 1970 as the date. Since the scene in the Greenville Michigan bar occurs after the Gulf War, Swofford could have been 21. Perhaps Piedmont-Marton means that it was illegal to buy a bottle in a bar, but I find no specific prohibition of buying a bottle in a bar in the on line *Michigan Liquor Laws and Rules: A Guide for Retail Licensees* (May 2004), p. 25, but then Swofford evasively uses the words, "drinking establishment," rather than bar (79).