

COMMENTARY BY JAMES GLEASON BISHOP

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*Can Be Wee C a Mea e a dP c a*  
*Mea e e : P e a T e Te*

*All of Your Messages Have Been Erased.* Vivian Shipley. Louisiana: Louisiana Literature Press, 2010, \$21.95, hardcover, 128 pp.

*Poetry in a Time of Terror: Essays in the Postcolonial Preternatural.* Rukmini Bhaya. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, \$39.95, hardcover, 224 pp.

The loudest cry I've ever heard echo down my office hallway came from a co-worker whose computer had failed. All of his administrative "memory"—emails, appointments, contacts, and several weeks of unsaved work—were erased by one rogue chip, and everyone along the corridor understood why his cries were justified. When later, my colleague's mother died, he grieved silently, privately. He never recovered his computer's memory, and he never lost his memories of his mother. Two recent books explore regions of the quotidian terror: erasure, the double-death of ceasing to exist and ceasing to be remembered. In Vivian Shipley's *All of Your Messages Have Been Erased* and Rukmini Bhaya Nair's *Poetry in a Time of Terror*, being loved, or at least understood, serves as one remedy against erasure.

In her quietly haunting eighth collection of poetry, *All of Your Messages Have Been Erased*, Shipley writes an eight-part poem about James Joyce's daughter, Lucia, who spent 47 years in an asylum in Ivry-sur-Seine, France. Speaking in Lucia's voice, Shipley writes,

In 1979, trying to get me to speak, my doctor brought  
The Norton Anthology of English Literature. No mention of me

in the introduction of my father, sieved from everything. I wasn't even a semicolon in his life story...

Sieved is the perfect verb—in this narrative, Lucia believed herself intentionally extracted from her father's story—and the line break after *I wasn't* extends the notion of erasure. This is terror: not just death, but being shunted to oblivion by some faceless Other. Shipley was aware of Carol Shloss' influential work, *Lucia Joyce: To Dance in the Wake*, which contends that Lucia was the inspiration for *Finnegan's Wake*. Indeed, in the 1930s, Lucia's psychosis grew worse while her father was trying to finish *Finnegan's Wake*. Joyce was spending his energies trying to keep Lucia at home; Joyce's wife Nora, among others, wanted her institutionalized. In her review of Shloss' book in the *New Yorker*, entitled, like Shipley's poem, "A Fire in Her Brain," Joan Acocella comments, Nora won, "but as Shloss tells it, the silencing of Lucia went further than that." To avoid negative publicity, Acocella writes,

[Lucia's] story was erased. After Joyce's death, many of his friends and relatives, in order to cover over this sad (and reputation-beclouding) episode, destroyed Lucia's letters, together with Joyce's letters to and about her. Shloss says that Giorgio's son, Stephen Joyce, actually removed letters from a public collection in the National Library of Ireland. When Brenda Maddox's biography of Nora was in galleys, Maddox was required to delete her epilogue on Lucia in return for permission to quote various Joyce materials.

I had a lover's quarrel with Rukmini Bhaya Nair's essay collection, *Poetry in a Time of Terror*. She uses too many commas. She misquotes the title of Auden's "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" as "Elegy on the Death of William Butler Yeats." Twice. This points to a larger tendency to raise the intellectual ante a smidge—to use "elegy" when "in memory" is called for. Several chapters left me wondering whether they are fillers: meandering essays on women's sexuality in poetry and Indian poetry in translation.

Yet the chapters that strike at the heart are worth the wait. I hope you read "The Sensuous Conch of Theory," in which she concludes that Nobel laureate Derek Walcott's epic postcolonial poem *Omeros* "stands its ground as a poetic manifesto against both those two great historical foes of free speech: colonial meanness and postcolonial meaninglessness." The typos and tangents diminish in importance. Nair is too astute for anything else to matter.

I hope you discover, as I did, the discussion of Seamus Heaney, in which Nair sees Heaney's Bog Poems as reversing the natural order of death and memory. Typically, as with Egyptian mummies, nature kills the king and human ingenuity is used to preserve the body, "but with Heaney's peat dwellers . . . it is the humans who do the killing and nature that achieves the perfect levels of preservation. Nature here is the poet, the historian—the one who communicates with the future" (Nair's emphasis). Nature stops the "natural" erasure of the victim's very bones.

Poet-as-critic Nair, in her essay collection, re-examines the question: why bother with literature when there are so many terrors lurking? In her remarkably insightful and readable Preface, Nair speaks of art—and poetry as art's zenith—as antidote to the poison of terror: ". . . an exposure to literature guarantees, in slow but sure degrees, an immunity to that debilitating terror of 'otherness' which can otherwise take whole communities, not to mention individuals, by the throat."

Poetry, she argues, allows us to "love" (her quotation marks) the Other by living a few moments of their lives vicariously. "Civilization is a process in the service of Eros," she writes, quoting Freud ("who may have been mistaken on particular psychoanalytic matters but was dead right on certain civilizational issues").

Rukmini Bhaya Nair is Head of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences and Professor of Linguistics and English at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. Author of three books of poetry and four scholarly books, Nair writes criticism like a poet, and she allows herself the license—the self-erasure of Negative Capability—to entertain a question without torturing an answer from it.

Early in Poetry in a *Time of Terror*, Nair revisits her thesis and asks, "Is poetry the antithesis of terror or is it terror's very essence?" By mid-collection she responds: "Poetry unfolds in time as a natural antidote to terror-speak, while it simultaneously attempts to capture, in its suddenness and power, something of the preternatural essence of the terror-attack, and display in its formal properties, some of the pragmatic techniques of administering terror."

What are some of those pragmatic techniques? She doesn't say, but I think I understand. A simile in the wrong hands can become a rhetorical bully, waterboarding the reader into acknowledging the comparison. Do a Google search for the phrase, "the new Hitler," for example, and you'll find among the 37,100,000 results comparisons to comedian Jay Leno, Explorer Scouts, GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender) media, personal and national debt, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and President Barack Obama. Going up the ladder of rhetorical subtlety, there is even a certain intentional inaccuracy about a metaphor. "My love is a raging fire." Except when it's not. A fire can't languish from rejection

or write a poem about how it's love is like, for instance, the clamor of a speeding locomotive. A metaphor is a "device," designed at bottom to manipulate the reader into agreement, or exploration, or admiration of the metaphor-maker.

In the right hands, of course, metaphor is a wonderful device. Auden's "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" at once makes the poet's death more awful and more beautiful. I'm chilled by the coldness and finality of Yeats' death, but by poem's end I'm lifted above death, though still inhabiting the prison of my days.

Robert Frost said "Education by poetry is education by metaphor," and I wonder about the metaphor of terror. The book cover of *Poetry in a Time of Terror* is telling. Dark smoke rises from a city skyline. Nothing new there. But then, blindfolded children carry oversized model airplanes in their hands—not military fighter jets; they're carrying civilian passenger airplanes.

Oh.

The most striking image on the cover, however, is of a shirtless, muscled man yelling at nothing. He could have just come from a tall office building. In fact, his blindfold looks like a red power tie—the sort former President George W. Bush favored.

The metaphor on the cover of *Poetry in a Time of Terror* is the metaphor on the pages inside: technology in the hands of blind children becomes one cause of terror. Responses from blind, normal adults becomes another. Poetry helps remove the blindfold.

Seen in Nair's light, Shipley's poems lift off some essential blindfold. Shipley's long poems—on Mary Shelley, James Joyce's daughter Lucia, the last witch tried in Connecticut, Adolph Hitler's sister Paula, and a 97-year-old former "Radium Girl,"—are especially compelling. These narratives and monologues give words to women who have been, in some crucial sense, erased: abandoned by her poet lover, sent away to an asylum, imprisoned on false charges, overshadowed by a notorious brother, and poisoned by licking radium-tipped paintbrushes so clocks could glow in the dark.

The penultimate poem of the book—which should have ended the collection—is titled "The First Poem I Have Ever Labeled: Love Poem." There is a sense in which many of these poems, especially the longer ones, are love poems, reclaiming the subjects from erasure.

A companion poem to the one on Joyce's daughter, "SISTER," about Paula Hitler, tugs at me on several levels. After reading the first of eight parts, I had the illusion that I "know" Paula Hitler: she loves her brother and hates his legacy. Then each section complicates, refocuses. Paula seems wise enough to see that her

brother created his own parody of himself, yet remains pathetic and sympathetic enough to take him seriously.

A brother I was born to like the grave, Adolph,  
you must have had a road map I didn't get.  
In interviews, I use sibling, avoid your name.

By section V I think I finally understand: this poem is not about the terror of the Holocaust. Worse. It is about the terror of loving the ultimate Other, the one who appalls: "my heart still cartwheels if I hear your name." But my facile understanding is another form of erasure. By section VI, Paula Hitler tells Army Intelligence Officer George Allen that her brother "battered toast as if flaying sinew from a bone." It is calculated to please the intelligence officer, interviewing her in 1945, to give him at once both something to write but nothing of substance. George Allen writes in his notebook, not knowing Paula reads English, "lower-middle-class woman of great religion / but no intelligence."

In his rush to condemn the Other, or in his busy-ness or laziness, George Allen has erased Paula Hitler, as I did after reading the first sections, trying to categorize her too soon. Shipley exposes the lie of easy dismissiveness and demands that we be better than we are.

Nair, quoting Australian novelist Jeanette Winterson, calls poetry "a lie detector . . . When you bring poetry into your life you find that it asks you not to lie, not to lie to yourself and not to lie to others, because art has a way of challenging our laziness, our apathies, our inertias and asking that we be better than we are."

Spin and cunning political speeches, conversely, urge us to be worse than we are. On October 5, 1938, Hitler spoke at the Sportpalast in Berlin about capturing the Czech and Slovak republics.

By October 10 we shall have occupied all the areas which belong to us. Thus one of Europe's most serious crises will be ended, and all of us, not only in Germany but those far beyond our frontiers, will then in this year for the first time really rejoice at the Christmas festival. It should for us all be a true Festival of Peace . . .

A month later, on November 9, Kristallnacht occurred, in which Nazis destroyed thousands of Jewish businesses and synagogues and killed or injured hundreds of Jews and deported 25,000 more to concentration camps.

Could poetry have prevented the last holocaust, or the next? Nair suggests that the habit of staring at a few true words can make something happen. “Literature,” she writes, “symbolized in its essence as poetry, is as potent an agent in the ‘war against terror’ as a well-armed state.” Auden wrote the famous line, “Poetry makes nothing happen.” The craggy-faced poet would have been surprised at the popularity of those four words, since the energy of the line, the stanza, and section II of the poem in which they appear—“In Memory of W.B. Yeats”—all argue against a flatly literal reading of those four words. Contrary to the four-word refrain suggesting poetry-as-weakness, the line continues to a simple climax, “it survives,” which answers the erasure question and predicts why both Shipley’s poetry and Nair’s prose matter.

For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives  
In the valley of its making where executives  
Would never want to tamper, flows on south  
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,  
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,  
A way of happening, a mouth.

When I was a freshman in high school, the kid with ballooned biceps and identifiable lines of muscle running down his back—Jimmy Scherer—fell in love with a girl named Robin. Jimmy never recited poetry; I’m not even sure he went to English class, and he was explosive enough that several teachers accepted his hastily-scribbled excuse notes in his own handwriting. But one day in the locker room before baseball practice, he turned to the other players and started telling us how much he loved his girlfriend Robin. Then he made up a poem: “Oh Robin, I love you so. And if you have a problem, tell me, ‘cause I really want to know.” Not Auden, to be sure, but none of us laughed (right away). And somehow I remembered the day Jimmy Scherer, football and baseball star, composed a poem. Jimmy could have stopped after telling us he loved Robin. We understood. But poetry exists for a higher purpose than delivering information or asking questions. Nair’s central claim is that “poems are texts of crisis; they are our first language when confronted with the incomprehensible, with sublime joy or with terror out of the sky” (her emphasis). I feel a little silly writing about poetry-as-salvation. Yet when depressed or euphoric, I pull poetry off my shelf.

I’m not terrified of Adolph Hitler; his day has passed. I’m not much terrified of Osama bin Laden; he is yesterday’s news. Like my hall-mate, I too would cry out in

something like grief if these words were suddenly erased from my blue screen. Then I would be silent. But Shipley reminds me implicitly and Nair explicitly that poetry, unlike terror, survives, giving voice to the eternal.

## *Pacific Air*

David Sears. Cambridge, MA: De Capo Press, 2011, \$27.50, hardcover, 416 pp.

Reviewed by Mike Crane, United States Air Force Academy.

Winston Churchill was famous for many things: Member of Parliament, cousin of the Duke of Marlborough, Prime Minister of England (twice) and First Lord of the Admiralty (twice). Most who have heard of him are aware of some of these things, perhaps along with the fact that Diana Spencer was a distant relative.

But few know he was a prolific historian.

Readers of Churchill's works note a signal characteristic: his narrations are full of heroes (and often villains as well). His critics find this deplorable; his devotees laud this feature. In the interests of transparency, I will state at the outset that I am in the latter category.

All of this is significant because it sets the context for David Sears' *Pacific Air*. His narrative is filled with heroic characters, with not a villain among them. The book reads like a movie script: fast-paced, interlaced story-lines, weaving an array of historical personages into a vivid tapestry. Mr. Sears writes well and the book is difficult to put down.

From another angle, history comes in two primary flavors: chronicles and analysis. A few historians attempt both (Stephen Ambrose comes to mind; his body of work was exceptional, despite a minor black mark near the end of his life). Mr. Sears, though he makes a few analytical points here and there, is clearly in the camp of chroniclers: he is a story-teller first and foremost.

It is worth a closer look at the subtitle of this book: *how fearless flyboys, peerless aircraft, and fast flattops conquered the skies in the war with Japan*. These elements deserve close examination, each in their turn.

The fearless flyboys are the most readily identifiable heroic figures of World War II in the Pacific. In the spirit of this particular age (as opposed to the spirit of the age during and immediately after the war), Sears includes a Japanese ace in his narrative. Basing his work on oral histories and some interviews with the pilots themselves, he paints a both-sides-of-the-story picture, albeit with more American hues. There is good reason for this: the large majority of great Japanese pilots did not survive the war.

Indeed, one of Sears' main characters is Alex Vraciu, who won the Medal of Honor. Others won the Navy Cross, the second-highest decoration a military member can win. On the Japanese side, we are witness to the exploits of Saburo Sakai, one of the leading Japanese aces of the war. And at first glance, one might conclude that the stories are only about fighter pilots.

That is not the case.

Early in the story, an unusual cast of heroes are introduced: aeronautical engineers of the Grumman Aircraft Company and the test pilots who worked for them either as employees or as freelance "hired guns." This part of the story is as fascinating as the descriptions of aerial battles; in some ways, more so. The unsung test-pilot heroes often gave their lives in pushing prototype aircraft to their limits in an age when design-stage testing was an embryonic art at best. One such example is Jimmy Collins, who died days shy of his thirty-first birthday, leaving a young wife and family, never knowing the critical impact his efforts would yield.

The achievements of engineering visionaries are also discussed. These men didn't risk their lives, though they did risk their fortunes in the difficult times of the Great Depression. Roy Grumman and his cohorts are chronicled early in the book, and it is perhaps here that Sears comes closest to offering brand-new material. And it is this part of the book that is in many ways the most interesting.

Taken from a different angle, the story is not the story of World War II in the Pacific, nor is it the story of the air war in the Pacific. It is the story of the United States turning the tactical tables on Japan in World War II, and in the context of the naval-air war only. Moreover, the final stages in the last year of the war are omitted (and with good reason: by summer of 1944, at which point the narrative draws to a close, the war had become a matter of time, not a matter of outcome). As a result, the portion of the story devoted to the war itself runs primarily from Midway (June 1942) until the Marianas Turkey Shoot in summer of 1944.

A side note: Sears refrains from using that name, which was found in the literature for years, and was used widely among authors, readers, and especially participants alike in my youth. Sears does mention one flier whose off-the-cuff remark gave the

battle its colloquial name: “Ziggy” Neff, a farm boy from Missouri whose wartime total of four kills was achieved in two sorties on that single day commented that “it was like an old-time turkey shoot.” Needless to say, the name was picked up by the press and subsequently by historians. In any case, it was the battle that achieved strategic air superiority at all levels in the Pacific war.

Unlike many books of its type, the story includes narrative from the Japanese point of view. This is notable if for no other reason than because of the difficulty in finding Japanese survivors who could comment on their war experiences. As a result, the book gives a much fuller picture of the war, including the Chinese theater early in the war, than might otherwise be the case. In other words, Sears writes about heroes on both sides of the war.

The story of the aircraft themselves is treated almost as if they were living things—or at least an extension of the engineers who created them, and also of the pilots who flew them. The early superiority of the Zero (light, fast, and maneuverable) is eventually eclipsed by the engineers at Grumman who responded to the needs of the warfighters at the sharp end of the spear. Likewise, the early superiority in numbers and design of Japanese carriers is overshadowed by the ship-building industry in the United States. That said, though it is an important part of the story, it is not Sears’ focus and as a result is only a background to the rest of the story.

David Sears is a former naval officer living in New Jersey. He served in the Navy during the Vietnam War and was a ship’s officer aboard a destroyer. He is not a history professor, it might be noted, but is instead a passionate chronicler of naval history. This is perhaps his greatest strength: unshackled by academic expectations, he is free to tell the story he has to tell.

Sears, as alluded to at the outset, writes history that includes heroes; this has fallen from fashion in professional historical circles over the last thirty years. It is well that he writes this way, lest the human element be eclipsed by factors the mainstream academic writers consider irrelevant. Sears’ history is composed of people, and the people he chooses to write about do great things.

Nothing could be better.

Unlike the earliest examples of World War II narrative, there is no emotional baggage: the Japanese are the enemies of the United States in this story, to be sure, but it is equally so that the United States is the enemy of the Japanese state. How the war started or why is not the purpose of this book; as a result there is no bias for one side, nor the often-found counterpart of bending over backwards to prove oneself unbiased. Sears writes of heroic deeds, plain and simple. And that, above

all things, recommends this book to readers interested in the Pacific Theater of the Second World War.

*O n the Battlefied Memory : The First World  
War a d A e ca Re e b a ce,*

1919-1941. Steven Trout. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010, \$44.95,  
hardcopy, 289 pp.

Reviewed by Max Despain, United States Air Force Academy

Steven Trout challenges American memories of the First World War in his book *On the Battlefield of Memory*. Examining the role of objects and writing in the remembrance of “the war to end all wars,” Trout asks readers to scrutinize the way that society and government remember major events. By unearthing less-familiar artifacts such as unit histories, the martial pride of the “American Legion Monthly,” poetry and prose of The Tomb of the Unknowns, painters, and other forms of memorialization, Trout relies on his readers to open their already formed memories up to a reinterpretation of our collective understanding of World War I.

The scope of inquiry in this work makes Trout’s assertions about popular and re-fashioned official viewpoints utterly convincing. From his preface providing a detailed understanding of Eisenhower’s editorship of the guidebook to American battlefields in Europe, Trout loops back to a discussion forming a collective or even national memory of the First World War that shows more complexity than “inspir[ing] pacifism and an isolationist sentiment.” In fact, we learn that America intensely memorialized their war dead in important and public forms of remembrance. And while these memories covered the range from the American Legion’s somewhat one-side perspective to more multifaceted readings of racial discrimination and anti-war sentiment, Trout convinces us that we should rethink the platitude that WWI becomes “America’s forgotten war.”

Trout's candor about what is not included in this study is refreshing, and he encourages other scholars to complete that work. What he offers in his research is an understanding about collective memory from varied cultural sources. His study follows a narrative arc from the purveyors of American memory through artifact forms of memories to proving that the war cannot be forgotten if we're still speaking, writing, and creating art about it. In the first chapter, "Custodians of Memory," Trout explores the role of organizations and their publications in influencing a national consciousness of the war. "Soldiers Well-Known and Unknown," Chapter 2, moves from the written narrative to physical monuments for remembering the war dead. The controversy over the Tomb of the Unknowns brings Trout back to the written word and the complexity behind shifting a homogenized viewpoint of the participants in war. This viewpoint becomes further complicated as Trout studies "Painters of Memory" in Chapter 3: men who made WWI their subject. The variation between illustrating the "American Legion Monthly" and painters whose soldiers are "faceless automatons" reveals the shifting images of the war as competing versions of memory expressed to prove different points. Finally, Trout closes with "Memory's End?" Chapter 4, challenging readers to note that the First World War's image constantly changes in the context of the ever-changing present. He emphasizes how even the banality "America's forgotten war" reminds readers that we haven't forgotten, creating "paradoxically, a construction of collective memory no less vital or meaningful than any other."

Anyone interested in WWI needs to read this well-researched and unique study into the artifacts of remembrance from the First World War. Readers will enjoy the precise and well-defined way Trout produces his concept of collective memory, as well as his nuanced explorations of the difficult issues of racial discrimination and bias in the context of remembrance. This book is an important and much-needed foray into new avenues of discovery about WWI.

*F e a d D e c*

H. Palmer Hall. Cincinnati: Turning Point, 2009, \$18.00, paperback, 80 pp.

Reviewed by Brian Dumm, United States Air Force Academy

A saying about binaries concludes there are two types of people in the world: those who divide the world into two kinds of people, and those who don't. While binaries afford a way of creating the occasionally useful, albeit often over-generalized heuristic, every now and then they also provide the exigencies for insightful and revelatory juxtaposition. H. Palmer Hall's latest collection of poems, *Foreign and Domestic*, circumvents the former to moor itself in the seas of the latter. Richly detailed in sentiment and sound, these poems work together to divorce simplicities from their supposed binaries rather than reinforce them. To this end, Hall examines training/war, present/history, love/apathy, Vietnam/Iraq, children/child soldiers, home/not home, and peace/conflict—all with an ear for musicality and a mind for clarity. In short, Hall explores those aspects of life which for everyone, but especially the soldier, prove themselves to be either—or both—foreign/domestic.

The poems are not a one-for-one trade, nor are Hall's subjects so blunt as to be simply dichotomous. They don't meet each other head-on or appear opposite of each other across the book's binding. Rather, the collection builds toward suggestions of truth elicited by juxtaposition, to a fundamental frequency begat from the myriad internal cacophonies of each theme and idea encountered. Hall collects a number of seemingly dissimilar topics into one space, lets them associate with each other, and craftily and deftly proves them to be an ecosystem.

Take as an example "To Wake Again," the book's thesis and opening poem. Suffused among the distinct topics of the foreign and the domestic are nods toward

histories and civilizations, music, memory, languages, and the routine humanity of sadness and chronology. Hall begins at the breakfast table

...We sit, alone together for too long,

drink coffee, do not speak for some minutes,  
read the newspaper, a wooden table between us,  
the morning sun slanting through mini-blinds...

and moves toward dreamscapes and vague recollections

...I dream in old languages, Greek, Latin,  
Vietnamese, languages I can no longer speak, do not know.  
It is never too late to hear tones rising, falling, breaking.

Finding his way to memory, Hall notes music in the gamut of human endeavor,  
from war to family.

“Khong phai quen roi” I cannot forget clouds lying  
over low hills, mists in the mountains, deep green  
in the highlands, red blossoms, the shrill cries of jets,

staccato hammering shredding leaves, the weight  
of guns, the heavy thought of children, the nattering  
sounds of women washing clothes.

Keeping aloft his many and seemingly-mired thoughts, Hall draws them  
all together in clarity

...Choi oi, dep lam  
they whisper, ah, c'est merveilleuse, so beautiful, words,  
words more beautiful than I had thought, eyes turned

turned to see, not merely look, for this god  
of fundament whispers through a thousand  
leaves. Listen: a short laugh, silence.

The effectiveness of Hall's incision into binaries is his ability to cut into them facets through consideration of their subtleties. His method is not a reduction of things to this/that or either/or, but is a production of illustrations and elucidations that inform the complexity of every side. He makes "many" out of the assumed "both" while maintaining the original connective tissue.

His binaries find both divergence and confluence between themselves, but they also do so among each other. The dynamism operates beyond the expected this/that relationship, allowing the dominant themes of family, love, religion, society, history, peace, and war to be cross- and collectively-informative.

Excerpts from Hall's "Something" speak to this relation, and show the genealogy and inevitability of war.

Something whistles in the wind, some bird, perhaps  
a rocket, some sound that breaks the silence...

...The same very old war  
keeps being fought, people die as they have always died,  
only, something new—children clad with bombs—  
people weep for some cause as old as the thought of war.

The music that accompanies death plays on and on...  
...Flowers fade, weeds squeeze them out. A single bouganvillea  
struggles upwards, blossoms like napalm in the hot sun.

Hall's poetry is successful in that it lays bare conflict and confluence without prescribing denouement. Every turn of the page delves deeper into the author's and audience's literal and figurative coming to terms. Hall provides a vocabulary for comprehension without succumbing to definition. We come to know war, foreign lands, foreign people, family, enemies, friends, marriage, death, and youth. We come to see ourselves as both the movers of history while simultaneously immobile in its presence.

"An Old Story" arcs with poignancy to demonstrate participation in both the ever-combat of history and its ever-seeming futility.

Snipers sing shells through desert air  
and ranks of troops drive by in tanks,  
Bradley Fighting Vehicles, APCs and

the latest Hummers made for war.

They roll across Euphrates, approach  
Tigris, eye the hanging gardens in  
that old cradle of Mesopotamia.  
Eve reaches once more for the fruit

and Adam wonders, agape, watches  
precision bombs, antiaircraft weapons,  
Blackhawk and Apache helicopters—  
all that puffing and display of destruction.

So, this is why, we ate, drank, why  
we wanted what the fruit could give—  
that glimpse taken with eyes not yet  
open until we opened them ourselves.

The lights are on in Baghdad, water  
flows through old streets, crossroads  
of armies for ten thousand years, of  
traders, conquerors, squabbling kings.

*Foreign and Domestic* is, then, a work of compelling and complimenting contrasts—one that associates different stripes together so as to highlight the deeper hues of each. Themes, topics, and words are understood better this way. H. Palmer Hall constructs with aptitude and beauty a collection of highly readable and connective—but not symbiotic—poems. He brings forth each issue in its own right, poses it against its reciprocal, and then moves subtly beyond its assumed and associative binary. The audience is, perhaps predictably, left feeling at once both home in a foreign world and displaced in a familiar one.

*The Clash: The Marathon and the Greek Victory at Marathon and Its Impact on Western Civilization*

Jim Lacey. New York: Bantam Books, 2011. \$26.00, hardcover, 272 pp.

Reviewed by Claudia Honeywell, St. John's College

In his second epilogue to *War and Peace*, Tolstoy writes that a modern military historian can be “like a deaf man answering questions no one has asked.” Jim Lacey offers us a lot of such disembodied answers in his latest book *The First Clash: The Miraculous Greek Victory at Marathon—and its Impact on Western Civilization*. Lacey’s thesis is that when analyzed from a military perspective, the Athenian victory at Marathon is not a miracle but a logical outcome. Despite the huge disparity in the two forces, “what is truly remarkable is not that the Greeks won, but that any Persians left the Plain of Marathon alive.” Lest this thesis lure you into thinking that the Persians must not have been much of a threat (think the movie 300), Lacey also argues that the Persians were an experienced and prepared force, perhaps the greatest the West has ever faced. If the Athenians had lost at Marathon, Lacey warns us, “Western civilization would have been smothered in its cradle.”

Throughout this book, Jim Lacey shrugs off the recent negative press about the virtues of Big War and attempts to refocus our attention back where he feels it so obviously belongs, on the indomitability of the Western force of arms. A self-professed champion of Victor Davis-Hanson’s thesis of a Western way of war, Lacey hastens to show that the ‘miraculous’ Greek victory at Marathon owed nothing to irrational factors but was rather a foregone conclusion given the brilliance of the Athenian general Callimachus and the irresistible battering power of the hoplite phalanx. In order to present Marathon as a foreordained triumph of military strategy and tactics, Lacey fills in the gaps in the classical sources with what he thinks likely and probable from his own military experience (Lacey was

an army infantry officer before the Iraq war and accompanied the Iraq expedition as an embedded reporter). Although his experience makes a nice balance to the sometimes dry evidence, Lacey is too often tempted to play the armchair general and his account at times reads like a screenplay, with directions for the deployment of imaginary troops and generals (always tactically brilliant, of course) wherever in Lacey's opinion their absence is "unthinkable."

Lacey's Big War bias is apparent in more ways than one. That "an army is only as good as its leader" he offers as a truism and his account contains no discussion of the problems of communication that hamper his model of unitary command. Since Lacey makes moral as well as physical excellence a prerequisite for his model general, he finds the flawed character of Miltiades unworthy of a battle as glorious as Marathon and places Callimachus in this role instead despite the admittedly "uphill task" of "overturning two aeons of glorification of Miltiades." Lacey mourns the end of the Big War era and itches for another such showdown between west and east. "If the [Western way of war] is ever again unleashed in its decisive barbarity," he muses hopefully, "it will be many generations before our enemies recover."

Lacey's thesis would have been better offered as an article. The historical evidence for Marathon is sparse and Lacey has to stretch to make this a book-length study. The two parts that comprise the first half of the book are a prolonged survey of the rise of Persia and Greece over the centuries prior to the Persian Wars. Part three gives the context of the first Persian invasion and part four is a digression on the merits of Davis-Hanson's thesis of a Western way of war. Only part five (25 pages) discusses the battle of Marathon. The chapters in this climactic section are anticlimactically short; the one on 'The Day Before' is only 2 pages long.

As a historical account, *The First Clash* has a lot of flaws and Lacey has not so much proved his thesis as shouted down the opposition. Nonetheless, Lacey's very chutzpah makes this a fun book to read. Lacey leaves us with the image of the Athenians marching to their drums, shouting their war cry, locking their shields and charging their mighty opponents. For those jaded by recent graphic portrayals of the limitations of Big War, this book might for a moment reconstruct your faith in Western military might and glory.

*The Sword of St. Michael: The 82nd Airborne Division  
in World War II.*

Guy LoFaro. Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2011, \$40.00, hardcover, 746 pages.

Reviewed by Claudia Honeywell, St. John's College

For those who have seen the Air Force Academy's Wings of Blue sail elegantly onto the parade field or into the football stadium, it might be hard to imagine a time when leaping out of an airplane, even onto a peaceful field, was more a matter of nerve than of polish. Yet long before they saw combat, the 82nd Airborne's pioneer parachute and glider troops were put to the ultimate test, learning to handle their unreliable, sometimes deadly equipment and overcoming their dangerous lack of experience in order to realize the potential of this entirely new form of warfare. Guy LoFaro follows the 82nd as it moves through its grueling training into some of the fiercest combat of WWII, forging in the process a division of extraordinary warriors, which some thought by war's end was "the finest division in the world."

*In The Sword of St. Michael*, Guy LoFaro gives us a comprehensive history of the 82nd Airborne Division that begins in 1918, when Brig Gen "Billy" Mitchell first proposed to Gen John Pershing the novel idea of an airborne division, and continues to 12 January, 1946, when the 82nd Airborne led the victory parade up New York's Fifth Avenue, having demonstrated the "potency of a new form of warfare" in some of the toughest fighting of the war, and having served "at the forefront of the Allied effort in Europe."

While Guy LoFaro's research is valuable scholarship, his first-hand military appreciation of the raw courage and tenacity that it took to realize the potential of

the 82nd makes this a compelling and fascinating study in what constitutes success in combat. In the introduction, LoFaro points out that his work is a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate between military historians about the relative combat effectiveness of the American and German armies during WWII. LoFaro approaches this issue pragmatically rather than dogmatically, and illustrates how effectiveness depends on a complex combination of leadership, training, and troop cohesion, as well as on individual qualities such as tenacity, ferocity and endurance in battle. The troopers of the 82nd Airborne had these qualities in abundance, and were fortunate to have strong support in their leaders as well. LoFaro brings to life the crucial roles played by the 82nd's founding father, Lt Gen Matthew Ridgway, and his successor, Maj Gen Jim Gavin. In LoFaro's powerful presentation, the personalities and abilities of these two men intertwine with those of their men to create a division committed to excelling at all aspects of airborne warfare, which was just emerging as a "revolutionary means of waging war."

The 82nd's story begins in earnest in 1940, when Major William Lee overcame tactical and bureaucratic obstacles, and "obtained War Department approval to organize a parachute test platoon." After a successful demonstration only four months later, Army Chief of Staff Gen George Marshall constituted the 1st Parachute Battalion and announced its activation "at the earliest practicable date." The 82nd Airborne was conceived, and its initial command went to Maj Gen Matthew Ridgway.

Ridgway envisioned the paratroopers as unique soldiers, a breed altogether apart from regular infantrymen, whom he hoped would come to represent a "fighting spirit second to no troops in the world." Over the next few years, Ridgway followed through on his vision. From the beginning, selection was rigorous, and the training regimen was brutal. Ridgway's high standards ensured that only the toughest made the cut, and had the added benefit of fostering intense camaraderie among those who did. Under the charismatic Ridgway, the paratroopers and glider troopers of the 82nd developed a fierce spirit of competition and vied with each other to excel. Ridgway began a policy that Gavin would continue, of choosing officers who exemplified the lean, hungry attitude he demanded in the troopers. Foregoing the "mindless drills that had been the norm," Ridgway focused on making every minute of training count. His pragmatic approach earned him the respect and love of his men, who appreciated that he was "ruthless but never cruel." Ridgway's hands-on leadership helped the 82nd survive its demanding regimen. On 15 August 1942, Ridgway told the troops of the War Department's decision to split the fledgling unit and make out of its halves two divisions, the 82nd and the 101st. As a testimony to the spirit Ridgway had developed in just a few months of training, "despite the

shock and predictions that casualties would be high” as novices filled the expanded positions in the glider ranks, only a “very few requested a transfer.”

Despite Ridgway’s insistent lobbying, little was done to educate the other service branches about how the airborne would operate. The 82nd’s first combat mission, in Sicily in July 1943, underscored how critical these lines of communication were. As a result of the lack of coordination between the service branches, the 82nd’s attempted entry into Sicily was turned into a tragedy by intense friendly fire that destroyed 23 transports, 6 with their paratroopers still aboard, and crippled 37 more. Many paratroopers who survived being shot down were killed by Navy anti-aircraft gunners in the water. Even those who made it to land were not safe, as “it quickly became apparent” that they had been given the wrong password. Despite this tragedy, the troops that made it in performed heroically on the ground.

In his depiction of the aftermath of this tragic initial launch of the airborne, LoFaro depicts Eisenhower as a shortsighted strategist who lacked diplomacy and tact. In LoFaro’s assessment, “Eisenhower’s insistence that those responsible be found and punished impelled the services to close ranks and engendered an atmosphere of defensiveness and recrimination.” Ridgway, by contrast, felt that disciplinary action was “of doubtful wisdom,” and hoped instead to use the occasion to foster inter-service communication. LoFaro’s doubts about Eisenhower’s vision emerge frequently, particularly in LoFaro’s account of Ridgway’s successful fight to hold the 82nd together after Operation SICILY, despite Eisenhower’s lack of faith in its efficacy and his desire to break it into piecemeal units.

Although tragic, Operation SICILY revealed that the 82nd’s training would hold in combat. Their 2nd mission would give them more opportunities to show the stuff they were made of. In Italy, the paratroopers of the 504th Combat Team showed their exceptional will to fight, and began to demonstrate how Ridgway’s unconventional training policies could pay off in the coming cross-Channel invasion. Although rough and ready by infantry standards, the paratroopers showed that they did not lack discipline in hard combat. One trooper summed this up: “Discipline, hell yes, we got it, but not the lady-faced kind.”

With the Allies gearing up for the Normandy Invasion, many of Ridgway’s concerns about coordination were addressed by Gavin’s work in Britain to produce a satisfactory SHAEF memo on “Employment of Airborne Forces.” With this in place, the 82nd prepared for their role, Operation OVERLORD. As plans for the airborne drop were drawn up, Ridgway’s rivalry with British Lt Gen “Boy” Browning intensified. Later in the war, this rivalry would begin to haunt Ridgway. In Normandy, it spurred Ridgway to jump alongside his troops, contributing to

the exceptional cohesion and loyalty displayed by the 82nd as they seized causeway crossings and established bases prior to the D-Day invasion.

At Ste. Mere Eglise, La Fiere, Chef du Pont, and other points in between, the 82nd had a chance to display the determination, speed and aggressiveness that would become their trademark qualities. Beginning with their scattered drop, which they turned to their advantage by confusing the enemy about their mission, the men of the 82nd consistently overcame unfavorable odds through sheer grit. LoFaro tells a number of stories of individual heroism from both troopers and their officers, characterized by his assessment of Lt Col Shanley's daring gamble: "Shanley had no time for doctrinal solutions so, counting on the speed and aggressiveness of his troopers, he attacked. It was the right call." Ridgway's and Gavin's policy of empowering their junior leadership to use their own judgment paid off in Normandy, where the initiative of troopers, NCOs and commissioned officers enabled the 82nd to accomplish their missions despite being outgunned and outnumbered.

The 82nd's success in Normandy was apparent to all. LoFaro summed up the sea change that even Eisenhower's attitude toward the airborne experienced after Normandy: "Virtually without exception everyone in First Army, SHAEF, and the War Department was convinced that the invasion would not have succeeded but for the airborne divisions." Ridgway's point of view, that "airborne operations should be massive affairs and the centerpiece of campaign- or war-winning efforts," now became the view of supreme command as well.

The Airborne's success in Operation OVERLORD led to the founding of a joint Allied airborne command, the Combined Airborne Forces. Ridgway was tapped to take command of the United States' contribution, the XVIII Airborne Corps, made up of the 17th, 82nd, and 101st Airborne Divisions. Command of the 82nd now went to Gavin, who was eminently suited to lead these battle-hardened and newly confident troopers on the tough missions that lay ahead. Gavin's example of active leadership in the field, and his insistence that all his officers, commissioned and non-commissioned alike, display "up-front leadership by example" leads LoFaro to an important distinction: "Instead of being sent into battle, the troopers of the 82nd Airborne Division were led into battle" (LoFaro's italics).

Gavin's insistence on cultivating ferocity in both troopers and their leaders would pay off in the 82nd's next mission, Operation MARKET-GARDEN, a joint airborne/infantry mission to liberate Holland. Although the infantry half of the mission, Operation GARDEN, failed, the 82nd accomplished its goals for Operation MARKET. The drop into Holland was the 82nd's most polished yet,

described by one captain as “a perfect jump.” Ironically, this mission’s auspicious beginning enabled the Germans to guess its intent (just the opposite of what happened in Normandy), and the 82nd’s attempt to cross the unsheltered River Waal began “to look like a suicide mission.” Despite staggering losses, the 82nd fought on undeterred, “transformed . . . into rampaging soldiers of destruction.” Here, LoFaro includes evidence that the 82nd’s medics and chaplain corps were imbued with the same spirit and tenacity as its troopers. The 82nd’s medics sat upright to care for the wounded even as the ships crossed the Waal under heavy fire, and a company chaplain decided to board one of these seemingly doomed boats, reflecting “if there ever was a time that the men may need a chaplain it was now.”

Once again, the 82nd succeeded against all odds. Before they could be deployed on the next planned airborne mission, though, the strategic failure of the Allies to predict an assault through the Ardennes would necessitate the Battle of the Bulge. Although the 82nd was exhausted and had suffered extensive casualties, they mobilized, literally overnight. If they were to stop the German advance, though, the 82nd would have to race against time. LoFaro’s description of this race against the tide of retreating American infantrymen invokes images of the NYFD racing up the stairs of the burning Twin Towers against the tide of fugitives. His reports include two evocative eye-witness accounts: “Some of the retreating soldiers wanted to know if we thought we could turn the tide. We told them that was what we intended to do,” recalled PFC Goodwin. Sgt Wurst had similar memories: “We leaned out and hollered at the retreating men, ‘Hey, you guys are going in the wrong direction.’ They would look back at us and earnestly say, ‘Oh no, you guys are going in the wrong direction’” (LoFaro’s italics).

The 17th Airborne Corps paid a high price for what it accomplished in the Battle of the Bulge. The prognosis for the Corps holding its gains finally grew so dire that Ridgway ordered a retreat. The men of the 82nd, who held a perfect record of “no ground gained ever relinquished,” had to swallow their pride and move back, although both those who fell back and those who remained behind to cover the retreat carried on in characteristic spirit and made a number of significant stands. Once away from the untenable front, the 82nd immediately resumed its offensive until granted a relief in early January, 1945.

The 82nd’s penultimate mission exposed a growing rift between Ridgway and Gavin. Although Ridgway had been an early champion of the uniqueness of airborne warfare, his rivalry with Browning had turned into frustration when Browning was selected over him for the command of Operation MARKET. With his ambitions thwarted, Ridgway’s personal interest in keeping the tenacious

fighters of the 82nd at the heart of combat operations began to outweigh his commitment to preserving the 82nd for uniquely airborne operations. At the war's end, Gavin emerged as airborne's most powerful advocate. In LoFaro's assessment, "Though every bit the combat soldier as was Ridgway, Gavin was more fixated on the potentialities of airborne warfare . . . It was Gavin who was the brains behind the doctrinal publications that guided the use of American airborne units throughout the war, and it was because of him that the 82nd forged new ways to better its performance." Nonetheless, "Ridgway's view prevailed," and the 82nd stayed with the 17th Airborne Corps as it entered Belgium and Germany for a standard infantry mission. The fighting was fierce and the mission was decisive, further demonstrating the paratroopers' willingness to advance under heavy fire. There were some highlights, including one engagement that one of Gavin's officers would describe as "the perfect battle."

The 82nd returned to France a few weeks later to rest, refill its ranks, and do some training. Allied command could not confirm its next mission, but told Gavin to be prepared for the most dramatic operation yet, Operation ECLIPSE, "an airborne assault into the very heart of Nazi Germany—Berlin." When the time came for launch, even the indefatigable Gavin was beginning to grow weary, and feared that his division might be coming to the limits of its courage. Once again, his men came through in combat.

The 82nd's final mission stretched its resources of courage and endurance. Once again, the 82nd's "race was on," this time to get into place to synchronize with the British VIII Corps. With time of the essence, and with a unit "on which he could rely to react with speed and aggressiveness," Ridgway decided to break with conventional tactics, and ordered Gavin "to cross the Elbe . . . and attack, without awaiting the arrival of reinforcing units." As Gavin later reflected, "it seemed a bit risky, but since the war was coming to an end, it was a risk worth taking." The gamble paid off. By 30 April, 1945, the 82nd reported "it was obvious that the German was disintegrating rapidly and it was of the utmost importance that regardless of the physical condition of our troops, the momentum of our drive be maintained until the enemy was completely destroyed or overrun."

The 82nd saw WWII to its close with its spirit unbroken. Somewhat sadly, despite the 82nd's heroics during the war, Gavin found himself fighting not only to keep the division intact after the war, but even to take its rightful place in the planned Victory Parade in New York City. Gavin and Ridgway had come full circle, and were working together again to persuade supreme command that the 82nd must remain intact. They made their case compellingly, and Eisenhower was persuaded:

“I concur fully in the presentation made by General Ridgway . . . In spite of my admiration for the 101st, if a choice must be made I am quite certain that the 82nd should be the one to be retained.”

I was sorry to finish LoFaro’s book. His style is both academically rigorous and personally engaging. While troop movements and engagements are scrupulously recorded, LoFaro includes individuals’ reminiscences in his characteristically unsentimental and honest way. LoFaro avoids frills, but allows himself one literary indulgence: the book’s title. LoFaro says nothing directly about his choice of the title, but he includes as an epigram a quote from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, in which the sword of Michael breaks the sword of Satan and “Satan first knew pain.” During the Battle of the Bulge, after a single company of the 82nd destroyed approximately 800 SS troops who marched headlong into the slaughter, “some prisoners taken during the fight were asked why they employed such unimaginative tactics. They replied that ‘that was what they had been doing ever since the start of the offensive, and up to now everybody had run away or surrendered.’” St. Michael became the patron saint of paratroopers. In a symbolic coincidence, a main shrine of St. Michael, the Mont-Saint-Michel, is located in Normandy near where the 82nd fought.

*Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the "Iliad" to Iraq*

Kate McLoughlin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.  
\$88.95, cloth, 221 pp.

Reviewed by Holly Faith Nelson, Trinity Western University

To read Kate McLoughlin's remarkable and compelling monograph *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the "Iliad" to Iraq* is to bear witness to the linguistic patterns that relentlessly recur throughout the literature of war across the centuries. Not content to attend to the poems, prose, and plays that emerge from a single war, McLoughlin audaciously goes against the critical grain by adopting a "formalist approach" to the genre of war literature, insisting that it is possible to uncover similar tropes or figures of speech in such literature regardless of the historical moment in which each work was composed. Though McLoughlin does not deny that a historical approach to war literature is necessary and valuable, her emphasis is on what might be discovered if we examine war writings across time and space from a telescopic perspective, alluding to particular historical and cultural circumstances when necessary along the way.

McLoughlin believes that reading war literature within a formalist framework allows us to uncover the "thickly textual" nature of war writing, as authors turn to prior texts or past voices to help them speak what cannot, yet must, be expressed. Though she rejects the notion that there is a single way of writing war in all of its extremities, McLoughlin is convinced that some universal aspects of war ("violent death, adverse conditions, the requirement to kill and risk one's own life") undeniably produce "similarities in written representations across periods and cultures." She identifies six categories in which such similarities coalesce: credentials, details, zones, duration, diversions, and laughter—the subjects of the

six chapters that constitute the volume. All relate to the way in which authors overcome the “representational challenge” posed by war.

McLoughlin first addresses the difficulty of reporting war effectively. After outlining some of the non-linguistic ways in which war conveys its own story, via “noise, wounds and other imprints left on and in the body,” McLoughlin turns to the representation of reporters of military events in war poems, plays, and fictional and non-fictional prose. She finds that in literature of war, the messages of official or unofficial war reporters are only accepted as sufficiently “credible” and “salient” by recipients if such reporters establish their credentials as commissioned couriers, prove themselves singular men and women capable of undertaking a grueling journey to impart reliable and vital knowledge with candor and authority, and demonstrate their “first-hand experience” of warfare. McLoughlin’s final reflections on the periodic failures of military messengers remind us that the reportage of war is a fragile business fraught with potentially insurmountable obstacles.

McLoughlin next considers the challenge of depicting the overwhelming details of war. She wonders how authors of war literature can “frame the huge scale of war for human comprehension,” a question often thematized in war texts themselves. And yet while war writers recognize the problems posed by efforts, for example, to compute the number of those killed in a war, many still attempt enumeration, driven, as McLoughlin argues, by a need to “witness accurately” and “record with scientific exactitude” the details of war. In reaction to the reality that such “numbers” often become “numb-ers,” many war writers, McLoughlin proposes, choose either to tally names (“talliation nominatim”) or to employ synecdoche to represent a totality with a lone element. The former results from an irresistible impulse to “recuperate, catalogue and enunciate” the names of the missing and the dead, thereby honoring them—and even salvaging a part of them. Such a strategy goes some way to representing the enormous scale of the war which has consumed those named. Other war writers favor synecdoche because it allows the mind of the reader to narrow its focus to a significant representative detail—one victim, one body part, or one scene of conflict—which, McLoughlin argues, best conveys (oddly enough) the enormity of war. In a similar way, a single nameless soldier can stand in for the thousands, even millions, destroyed by war: “the one unnamed and unknown permits unlimited significance—significance that may be both universal and deeply personal.”

Moving from the details to the zones of war, McLoughlin turns to various theorists of space to make sense of these “specially charged” locations, which are at once geographical, psychological, and physiological sites. The war zone,

for McLoughlin, is both an alien and threatening space and an emotional place to which combatants are deeply connected. She is convinced that in order to re-constitute this zone in war texts, authors paradoxically turn to and radically transform the pastoral tradition, despite the fact that landscapes of war can be rightly read in anti-pastoral terms inasmuch as the locus horribilis of war is the antithesis of the locus amoenus of pastoral. However, the distinct consciousness required of the bucolic, McLoughlin claims, is similar to that needed in war zones; the “thought-space” of pastoral, like that of war sites, demands “an existence of intellectual intensity, focused reflection in isolation” which involves inhabitants “blocking out distractions, focusing, visualising what lies ahead, preparing and motivating the self, achieving and maintaining a hyper-vigilant out-look, [and] experiencing and managing extreme physical and emotional feelings.” McLoughlin concludes that all who populate pastoral or bellicose spaces, which demand this distinct way of knowing and being, are inevitably and lastingly altered. The challenge of representing the war zone is matched by the difficulty of depicting the temporal dimension of war, which McLoughlin believes is experienced as the continuous and aimless present. McLoughlin scrutinizes how writers convey the “open-endedness or endinglessness” of war time, which is decidedly resistant to narrative employment. In response to the temporal experience of military conflict, a great many authors, McLoughlin finds, reject “finality” and simply stop in media res instead of providing a definitive conclusion or ending.

McLoughlin leaves the challenge of the literary handling of the spatial and temporal experience of war to deal with the specific linguistic problems of writing that which exceeds language. After all, war is something of “a representational state of emergency,” as many war writers openly admit. Rather than focusing on the actual silence to which the terror of war often reduces us, McLoughlin considers how war writers consciously and intentionally use literary “diversionary tactics” to “stage” or perform silence “as a textual event.” Many authors who write war, she insists, consciously engage in linguistic evasion and indirection, relying on a series of figures of speech and literary devices, most notably abstraction, adynaton, cliché, euphemism, inference, paralipsis, and periphrasis, to write around war. In this way, war writing should be viewed as a kind of Blanchotian “not writing,” which, according to McLoughlin, reveals the “transcendent sublime;” however, unlike the Kantian sublime, there is no rational component to the “sublime of war” and it ends with desolation rather than any sense of pleasure.

The subject of McLoughlin’s final chapter in *Authoring War*—laughter—may initially strike the reader as inapt, but she leaves us with little doubt that a

“mirthless, senseless, side-splitting,” “nihilistic” bodily laughter typifies much war writing, a laughter she relates to the irrational, despairing war sublime described in the preceding chapter. This bodily laughter portrayed in war literature emerges from the incongruity produced by the gap between the hypo- or hyper-logic of the “war machine” and the lived experience of men and women in the trenches. McLoughlin posits that readers of war literature are made to laugh joylessly at the apparent non-sensical nature of the “regimen of rules and requirements” that govern the war zone (which are often “inimical to human needs”) in order to learn that war is, in many respects, “beyond human comprehension.”

A particular strength of *Authoring War* is McLoughlin’s concern with the relation of aesthetics and ethics, a matter she discusses at some length in her conclusion. McLoughlin’s interest in war is not purely academic, as she meaningfully theorizes the ethical impact that war literature can have on individuals and communities. She sets forth the kind of war literature that should be written in an effort to halt war, though she recognizes that it will no doubt fail, as have the works she examines in *Authoring War*. Regardless, this does not mean that war literature is without influence on the world. To render and keep visible the brutality and terror of war, to expose the way in which language is manipulated in war, to participate in the work of healing by recording, reflecting on, and processing the trauma of war, to aid in the transition of military personnel from the war zone to civilian life, and to advocate love and peace are some of the means by which, McLoughlin contends, war texts work ethically to bring about change in the non-textual world.

Kate McLoughlin’s *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the “Iliad” to Iraq* is, in sum, an exceptional monograph that incisively and originally engages with a great number of war texts and a vast body of research on war literature. Though one can think of a number of war writings that do not fit into the categories she associates with the genre, her bold attempt to classify similar strategies employed by war writers (over twenty-five hundred years and on several continents) to overcome the “representational challenges” posed by war is laudable and her perceptive claims are an invaluable resource to those working in the field. Ideally, *Authoring War* should be read alongside historically-oriented studies of war literature of a particular period as this will allow scholars to differentiate between historically-specific and more universal facets of the literature of war.

## *S a B a , W e a S a e , D M e*

Martin N. Murphy. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, \$28.00, hardcover, 540 pp.

Reviewed by Alexander X. Milhous, United States Air Force Academy

If you are looking for an extraordinarily technical, in-depth explanation of maritime piracy and terrorism, Martin Murphy's *Small Boats, Weak States, Dirty Money* is the most comprehensive text available. Spanning nearly every vantage point from pirates, terrorists, weak states and international organizations, Martin Murphy, an expert in maritime irregular warfare, describes the environmental factors necessary for piracy and terrorism to take place, the current struggles and treatments of the problems, in addition to the strategic implications for the future.

Murphy seeks to answer three questions set forth in the introduction to the book: What form does piracy take in the contemporary world, what is maritime terrorism, and is there a link between piracy and maritime terrorism? Answering these three questions, Murphy states that while piracy is a global threat, it is a local problem that must take place in weak or volatile states. Furthermore, the problem stems from instability, making efforts to deal directly with piracy often misguided. He distinguishes piracy from terrorism, arguing that piracy is essentially stealing, whereas while maritime terrorism often appears to be piracy, it actually has political objectives, and is a completely different issue than piracy. In his conclusion, Murphy states that while the problems of piracy and maritime piracy have not been fully exploited, it is necessary to respect the difficulties of addressing the problems and eradicating them, as well as the consequences maritime terrorism could have for the United States and international trade.

The most interesting aspects of *Small Boats, Weak States, Dirty Money* concern the variety of means available to terrorists attempting to control the maritime

domain. For instance, terrorists could use an oil frigate as a bomb, capture and/or destroy a cruise ship, plant underwater mines, or hide nuclear bombs in shipping containers, to name just a few possibilities. Murphy concludes that, while maritime terrorism does not currently pose the most imminent threat, the international community, as well as the United States, needs to begin addressing the problem.

*Welcome to the Suck: Narrating the American Soldier's Experience in Iraq*

Stacey Peebles. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2011, cloth,  
\$29.95, 208pp.

Reviewed by Sonja K. Pasquantonio, United States Air Force Academy

It's a different time, a different war, a different theatre, different tactics and, not surprisingly, war stories are being told in—you guessed it—different ways. As an Air Force Academy instructor and twenty-three year veteran, I understand the lure of war. Evan Wright's motley crew of hardened and hyped *Recon Marines* is a favorite in my war literature class because of the platoon's fist-pumping tribal roar, "Get Some," along with über-talented warrior, Lt Nathaniel Fick, who later writes his own book, *One Bullet Away*. I could quote articles likening the enticement of war to military pornography. Or quip quotes from war correspondent Chris Hedges, "war is a drug." But I don't need to because Stacey Peebles, in her book *Welcome to the Suck: Narrating the American Soldier's Experience in Iraq*, does it for me. When the editor tossed a bright yellow and orange book jacket on my desk with a nonchalant, "This will be important," I turned the page.

Stacey Peebles, a University of North Carolina at Greensboro professor, takes a detailed look at several well-known war books, two movies and one documentary to carefully study the long-lasting and far-reaching implications of war. By investigating war through the Information Superhighway and a "digital battlefield," Peebles brings her personality to the project, animating each chapter and providing a richer context to the subject.

The range of research Peebles uses for her book is impressive. Every time I thought, this is a good place to add X, Y or Z, Peebles anticipates my desires. She covers every

medium and most big name authors, ranging from Dave Grossman's seminal study *On Killing* to Colby Buzzell's blog turned book, *My War: Killing Time in Iraq*.

Peebles' prose is expressive and matter-of-fact, without the overt proselytizing that blights many academic texts. The book is extraordinarily well-researched and offers genuinely insightful, sophisticated and accessible readings on each of the mediums it examines. Minor typographical errors, while distracting, do not diminish the range, scope and depth. Ultimately, this is a welcome addition to an academic shelf.

Peebles' focus is huge: she discusses culture, gender, sexuality, and psychology and she covers, in true reporter fashion, every aspect: the social, emotional, and physical. Each chapter peels back the layers and illustrates how various characters display striking similarities to wars gone by, but use 'talk story' in assorted mediums as a catharsis, all of which are designed to understand the implications of trauma--both at war and on the homefront. Take for example the first chapter, "Line of Sight." Like famed Vietnam author Tim O'Brien, Peebles recognizes and explores the "passion to witness actual war as an illicit pleasure . . . a visual lust." Rightfully, Peebles recognizes the importance and establishes a precedent for the new generation of military personnel who have unlimited access to technology, stating, "The Internet is a weapon the military would prefer soldiers didn't have." For the military, the media movement—blogs, Twitter, Facebook—is a dangerous influence that enables the soldier's voice to rise publically, without stifling by command bureaucracy.

By the same token, Peebles does not back down from exposing the dirty underbelly of war. In a discussion about Anthony Swofford's book-turned-movie, *Jarhead*, Peebles narrates the story of a marine wife who sends a sex tape as an act of "cinematic revenge." Swofford's quote, following the Marine's decision to view the tape even after the affronted Marine sees his wife is, ". . . the damage is done . . . And fuck that poor jarhead anyway." Another classic illustration how "information about war, as the military and the soldiers realize, can be fragmented, can come through a multitude of channels, can be spun one way and then the other."

The discussion on Joel Turnipseed's *Baghdad Express* is especially poignant, as Peebles, acting as part researcher, part psychologist recognizes how war has fractured Turnipseeds' identity while literally and figuratively transforming him. Here, Peebles' resounding argument is that texts outside conventional historical discourse may provide readers with a different kind of "truth" about the Iraq War and we would do well to remember that combat—and perhaps the military culture—encourages men and women of the armed forces to perpetuate the lie that

we are somehow immune to war's psychological fallout. No matter what happens, we're 'fine'. The lie is functional.

In Chapter Two, "Making a Military Man," Peebles offers what may come across as a condemnation on the "unapologetically, openly phallic" desire for men, like the Recon Marines, to be "defiantly male" and impenetrable. Even Kayla Williams' wonderfully titled book, *Love My Rifle More Than You*, offers the standard response in a manner that made me—a woman—feel like Peebles pitied the unenviable position of being female and military: "... no matter what anybody says, it's a man's world. You have to either equal a man or be controlled by men." Peebles completes a thorough discussion on gender identity and transformation in this chapter, but somehow, I came out feeling dirty. Maybe because her discussions hit too close to home; "it's the challenges of balancing motherhood and a military career" coupled with breaking the combat barrier and suffering because of it. Peebles sees the potential to break down this gender trouble, but recognizes the current gender dichotomy in relation to war still prevents us from doing so.

However, it's not simply the gender dichotomy that interests Peebles. She's equally entranced with war's impact on the human psyche. She's fascinated with Colby Buzzell, a one-time blogger who wrote about his war experiences, recounting how Buzzell, "describe[d] his time in Iraq as a blank—an empty space, flat, lacking any emotional content whatsoever."

What sets Peebles apart from other war literature of similar ilk is that she allows the Iraqi voice to burble up from the oasis. In Chapter 3, "Consuming the Other," she pairs novelist John Crawford with poet Brian Turner in an apparently dichotomous relationship. Crawford, "is raw and unapologetically racist" towards the Iraqis while his foil, Turner, focuses an empathetic eye on Iraqi culture and history as a way of catharsis. What fascinates me is how Peebles aptly discerns that both men use language as a buffer zone, albeit in different ways. Crawford loses his voice in war's black hole while Turner articulates that the "truth cannot be effectively communicated" and "everything is consumed by war."

Peebles understands that, for the military, the enticement of war isn't a steady income; travel to exotic locations—well, maybe that—and the opportunity for education. Instead, it's the "anticipation, experience and aftermath of the lethal confrontation with the enemy." We call it military pornography and in the end—as many Iraq war veterans discovered—"war shatters us, and leaves the national body and mind fragments."

A final note: students everywhere heed these words. Peebles mentions how Swofford and Buzzell were once intoxicated by the visual catalog of war, but later

found “military pornography” wasn’t enough to fulfill their pleasure zone. Instead, they turned to writing as an outlet from “combat’s inevitable trauma.” The English teacher in me purrs with pleasure. Yes . . . writing matters. Ultimately, *Welcome to the Suck* is a vital contribution to anyone looking to expand their knowledge on the war in Iraq. To my end, I have notes and highlighting liberally scribbled throughout the book, both for my war literature class and a paper I’m working on about identity, women and war. So, thank you Stacey Peebles for an erudite book, you’ve done half my lesson planning.

*M* *B we*

Elijah Imlay. Huntington Beach, California: Tebot Bach, 2011, cloth, \$15.00,  
cloth, 88 pp.

Reviewed by Sonja K. Pasquantonio, United States Air Force Academy

Are you familiar with the page 99 game? Turn to page 99 of a prospective book, read one paragraph and make the snap decision to ditch it, or read it. Tired of grading a seemingly endless barrage of papers one night I picked up a small orange-colored book and stared at the cover. French horn. Trombone. M-16. Monsoon Blues. I thought about grading again. Instead, I fanned the book where it fell open to page 36 (the book is only 88 pages) and the poem, "Large Orange Pill." Four lines in I'm introduced to mamasans occupied with "roll[ing] the 50 gallon barrels to the burning place." I see "buttocks, four to a plank . . . depositing turds in metal drums," and I meet Lewis, who apparently "skipped his quinine pill." This is the scurvy underbelly of war, and thus far, I'm intrigued. Elijah Imlay is a Vietnam veteran—a clarinetist in the Army band, who spent the majority of his time in Vietnam playing music and practicing the Lotus position. I don't bring this up to discredit his war experience, but Imlay's lens is vastly different from other poets informed by their war experience. His is an insight—a nuanced perspective—from a soldier who spent his time watching—and listening—to others. Some of Imlay's most powerful poems are written as the mouthpiece for his motley cast of characters. From the hooker with a conscience in "Last Visit to Saigon," to "Fat Sam from Philly," who loses his daughter in "the hot jelly of napalm," to Deer Running Backwards, we meet a litany of complex creatures who gain voice and authority through Imlay's retelling.

As a poetry editor for our international journal, I have ample opportunity to read submissions from all over the world. People are passionate about war, an

aspect I appreciate as a fellow veteran. Initially, I didn't recognize Imlay's name, but I remembered the poem title, "Deer Running Backwards." We selected it for publication, one of four poems in that particular issue. The title resonates because, just as Imlay is fascinated with the Native American man who owns the name, frankly, so am I.

Not every poem is remarkable. The real story behind "Last Ride" is horrific and I recognize Imlay's motivation to fragment the poem's form in an attempt to visually, and viscerally, represent the unnamed man's filleted strips of skin, skillfully removed by the Vietcong while Imlay played dead nearby. Unfortunately, the schizophrenic form detracts from the poem's actual message: bad things happen in war and good people stand by and do nothing. It's a characteristic human flaw and I admire Imlay for being strong enough to actually address this aspect of his psyche.

I'm not a musician, but Imlay's love of music is clear in every verse. It's a little off-putting if you're not fascinated by how music shapes war, but Imlay's interdisciplinary poetics is certainly avant-garde. For me, the most fascinating aspects of his poetry are the war-wounded characters who stagger drunkenly through the lines. Imlay has a musician's ear, fine-tuned to hear the slightest change in pitch. As he delves into each character's soul, acting as part psychoanalyst, part storyteller, Imlay uses that same skill to compose his verse. Imlay writes in piano when treading softly through the uncut jungle grass, fortissimo if soldiers are caught in the actions of war, and crescendo when you know something bad will happen, but are powerless to stop it.

Ultimately, readers gain a different perspective that is both 'talk story' and dirty underbelly of war. We learn about Imlay's near draft-dodging exodus to Canada with the lost Suzette—with whom I think he's still half in love. Later, Imlay introduces us to Bird and the camp mascot, aptly named War Dog. Finally, we're immersed in the wonderful military vernacular from stogy sergeants who seem to haunt every firebase.

If you're looking for a new perspective of war, one that is oddly refreshing and nuanced, Imlay's poetics in *Monsoon Blues* may be just the antidote to clear the mind and cleanse the palette.

*Pearl Harbor Christmas: A World War II Deceit*

Stanley Weintraub. Cambridge, MA; Da Capo, 2011. \$24.00, hardcopy, 216 pp.

Reviewed By Christopher M. Rein, United States Air Force Academy

In *Pearl Harbor Christmas*, prolific author Stanley Weintraub (Emeritus, Humanities, Penn State) has provided another richly detailed examination of an eleven-day period surrounding a wartime holiday season, but this time that of 1941 when the leaders of the western world plotted a strategy that guided the conduct of the Second World War. Though the book is not specifically about either the attack on Pearl Harbor or the Christian holiday, it does capture the mood of the United States and the world in the first tumultuous weeks after that nation's entry into the war. Employing the same formula he successfully used in *A Long Day's Journey into War*, Weintraub again jumps from the frozen steppes of Germany's Eastern Front to the jungles of Malaya to bring together events scattered across the globe but linked by the growing menace of imperial domination. The focus, however, is on events in Washington, D.C., where British war planners, led by Prime Minister Winston Churchill have arrived for discussions with President Franklin Roosevelt and his staff on the pressing strategic considerations of the war. While future conferences would include other important members of the allied team and address more momentous issues, such as the fate of the post-war world, this initial meeting was essential for laying the groundwork of successful cooperation that would lead to the ultimate defeat of both Germany and Japan.

In a version of Clifford Geertz's "thick descriptions," in which not even the mundane details of attire and menu escape his attention, Weintraub seeks to explain the Allies' wartime actions by illuminating the social backdrop that guided them. For example, America's future critical economic contributions to the effort and its immunity from foreign attack are foreshadowed by descriptions of the well-

stocked store windows beckoning holiday shoppers in the brightly-illuminated towns that contrast sharply with England's desperate shortages and pervasive blackouts. Weintraub also mentions that, for many, this is the first holiday season since the Depression that they will be able to participate in fully as consumers, thanks to the economic stimulus of rearmament contracts that will fuel America's postwar prosperity. At the same time, it also suggests a naiveté or unpreparedness for war and reminds the reader that, for too many American servicemen, this first Christmas of the war will also be their last.

The reader will find little new material that will alter our understanding of the dark, early months of the war, but several of the details are illuminating, such as Weintraub's account of Churchill's address to a joint session of Congress on 26 December. After opening by describing his Anglo-American heritage (and suggesting that, had his parentage been reversed, he might have found his way into the esteemed chambers without an invitation) Churchill offers a prophetic analysis of the Japanese actions that fortuitously brought a powerful ally into the war on Britain's side. He asks his new allies, "What kind of a people do they think we are? Is it possible they do not realize that we shall never cease to persevere against them until they have been taught a lesson which they and the world will never forget?"

Aside from minor errors (naval ranks do not include Lieutenant Colonels, but rather Lieutenant Commanders, and the Japanese carrier Akagi instead of Agaki), Weintraub's work is an excellent introduction to both the formal cooperation and genuine warmth between the two men that will ultimately alter the course of history. While he does not provide the same level of attention to those who will actually fight the war, he does attempt to balance the accounts of state dinners and high-level conferences with vignettes from, for example, sailors fleeing the Japanese conquest of the Philippines and citizens suffering under German occupation. Still, the work serves as an excellent introduction to the high-level friendship that marked the Anglo-American team throughout the war and will be of great interest to both scholars and casual students of the period.