

## *The New Antiquity*

Edited by Matthew S. Santirocco

Over the past two decades, our understanding of the ancient world has been dramatically transformed as classicists and other scholars of antiquity have moved beyond traditional geographical, chronological, and methodological boundaries to focus on new topics and different questions. By providing a major venue for further cutting-edge scholarship, *The New Antiquity* will reflect, shape, and participate in this transformation. The series will focus on the literature, history, thought, and material culture of not only ancient Europe, but also Egypt, the Middle East, and the Far East. With an emphasis also on the reception of the ancient world into later periods, *The New Antiquity* will reveal how present concerns can be brilliantly illuminated by this new understanding of the past.

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## Combat Trauma and the Ancient Greeks

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COMBAT TRAUMA AND THE ANCIENT GREEKS

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First published in 2014 by

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in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN: 978-1-137-39885-7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Combat trauma and the ancient Greeks / edited by Peter Meineck and David Konstan.

pages cm—(New antiquity)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-137-39885-7 (hardback : alk. paper)

1. Greek literature—History and criticism. 2. Post-traumatic stress disorder in literature. I. Meineck, Peter, 1967— II. Konstan, David. III. Series: New antiquity.

PA3015.P67C66 2014

880.9'3581—dc23

2014011518

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Knowledge Works (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: September 2014

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*Not even sleep can relieve the painful memories*

*That fall upon the heart, drop by drop*

Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 179–80



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *When War Is Performed, What Do Soldiers and Veterans Want to Hear and See and Why?*

THOMAS G. PALAIMA\*

For the typical American soldier, despite the perverted film sermons, it wasn't "getting another Jap" or "getting another Nazi" that impelled him up front. "The reason why you storm the beaches is not patriotism or bravery," reflects the tall rifleman. "It's that special sense of not wanting to fail your buddies. There's sort of a special kinship."

An explanation is offered by an old-time folk singer who'd been with an antiaircraft battery in the Sixty-second Artillery: "You had fifteen guys who for the first time in their lives were not living in a competitive society. We were in a tribal sort of situation, where we could help each other without fear. I realized it was the absence of phony standards that created the thing I loved about the army."<sup>1</sup>

Ancient Greek and modern Western societies have in common the creation of works of artistic expression in response to the effects of wars and other forms of social violence. These include masterworks like the Homeric epics (the mythical war against Troy that the Greeks placed *in illo tempore* in the very late Bronze Age, our thirteenth to twelfth centuries BCE), Euripides' *Trojan Women* (performed ca. 415 BCE during the Peloponnesian War, 431–404 BCE), Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War, and Studs Terkel's oral history of World War II. We also have poems and stories about war, for example, by Walt Whitman (American Civil War), Wilfred Owen (World War I), Ernest Hemingway (World War I), W. H. Auden (World War II), Yehuda Amichai (mainly post-World War II), Charles Patterson (Vietnam War), Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* (World War II), Nick Arvin's *Articles of War* (World War II), and the American short stories of Larry Brown (World War II), Tobias Wolff (Vietnam War), and Tim O'Brien (Vietnam War), as well as songs from Blind Willie Johnson (World War I) to Steve Earle (Iraq War). I cite these as authors and works that stand out as essential and enduring creative responses to the realities of war and war



trauma in their given periods of human history. All of these works, including also modern memoirs, essays, and films, live beyond the times in which they were originally composed, heard, viewed, or read.

These masterworks survive not by chance, but because they contain, preserve, and present truths about war and violence that human beings want and need to take in and hold onto. These truths can be pleasing or displeasing depending on who is taking them in or refusing to take them in. The things that happen in times of war are disturbing to experience even secondhand—or for those who went through them, for a second time—and are also threatening to the higher values upon which our lives as members of what we call “civilized societies” are based. Therefore, truths about war have to be spoken, sung, and shown in ways that make it possible for those who have experienced war and violence in different ways, or not at all, to accept them.

How do soldiers who have been at war experience presentations of war? How do the messages of such works change as they survive beyond their original contexts? Are there distinctive or timeless characteristics of what we might generally call the “performances of war”? What is it about the modern experience of war that makes those who know war appreciate ancient Greek epic, tragedy, and history? What qualities appeal to them in positive and negative ways?

These are big questions. Here we will consider the last question, but we should be thinking about all of them as we do so. These questions are important, because war is important and it is not going away.<sup>2</sup> War is with us today, as it was yesterday and as it will be tomorrow. This is a truth that stretches back to the fifteenth century BCE in the Western tradition, the period to which we can assign linguistically some of the earliest lines in the *Iliad* of Homer.<sup>3</sup> It is a truth embedded, embodied, and communicated in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the two oral songs that made sure the ancient Greeks, for generation after generation, would never forget what happens to soldiers who are sent off to war; to soldiers who fight in defense of cities under siege; to men, women, and children waiting anxiously in besieged communities, or waiting back home long separated from their sons, fathers, brothers, uncles, cousins, and nephews fighting in far-off campaigns; and finally to soldiers who try to make it back home and to soldiers who actually do make it back.

It is a truth attested by the themes taken up in Greek tragedies. The surviving tragedies were written in a roughly 60-year period during which the ancient city-state of Athens, in which they were performed, was at war nearly constantly as it aggressively pursued the course of becoming an imperial power. Athens eventually found itself at war and under attack for much longer than the city of Troy. The tragic playwrights Aeschylus and Sophocles were themselves veterans of war. Aeschylus was a Μαραθῶνομάχης (*Marathōnomakhēs*), a “Marathon-fighter,” the Athenian equivalent of an American veteran of the D-Day landings. He proudly and simply declares this fact in the epitaph he is said to have written for the marker of his tomb in the Sicilian community of Gela, where he died. The inscription makes no



mention of his great achievements as a tragedian. His claim to fame is that he fought in the Athenian victory over the Persians in 490 BCE.

Αἴσχυλον Εὐφορίωνος Ἀθηναῖον τόδε κεύθει  
μνῆμα καταφθίμενον πυροφόροι Γέλας·  
Ἄλκην δ' εὐδόκιμον Μαραθώνιον ἄλσος ἀν εἴποι  
καὶ βαθυχαιτήεις Μῆδος ἐπιστάμενος.

Page (1975, 42)

This monument conceals an Athenian, Aeschylus, son of Euphorion, who passed away in wheat-bearing Gela [a city in Sicily].

The grove at Marathon could recount his well-regarded soldier prowess as could the long-haired Persian who knows it.

In historical times, the Greeks believed that the normal—not to be confused with the desired or preferred—state of existence was war. Peace intruded upon war periodically, and it did so in this way. Greek city-states effectively suspended formal military conflicts by truces that they set at anywhere from 10 days to 30 years. They expected that war would eventually reassert itself. In 421 BCE, the Spartans and Athenians were so worn out by war that they contracted an unheard of 50-year truce.<sup>4</sup> They stipulated that both sides renew the truce every year. They were on opposite sides of the battlefield again within 3 years.

By contrast, consider what H. G. Wells wrote about World War I in his 1914 essay, “Why Britain Went to War”: “For this is now a war for peace. It aims at a settlement that shall stop this sort of thing for ever...This, the greatest of all wars, is not just another war—it is the last war!”<sup>5</sup> Call to mind two place names, Ypres and Somme.<sup>6</sup> Think of two British poets, Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Hold in your thoughts the contents of one novel, Erich Maria Remarque’s *Im Westen nichts Neues*. Then you will understand why, when we remember Wells’ remarks now, we do so with irony.

But his ideas were not laughable. Wells was no fool. He was a man who thought sound thoughts. Wells had the wisdom that comes from the stern and hard experience of being apprenticed to a draper at the age of 13. He saw the world clearly and reasoned well. As a novelist and an observer of life, he knew that individual human beings and whole societies were capable of doing monstrous evils. Wells’ *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) is a profound, simple, and clear parable about the good and evil elements in our human natures, our animal impulses, and how and why we succeed or fail at controlling them, and how our loftiest thoughts and best scientific methods can be corrupted. It is on a par with Jack Schaefer’s American classic *Shane* (1946). Schaefer, just after the end of World War II, examines how and when violent force can, must, or should be applied to resolve conflicting ways of life and disputes arising from competing desires and competing claims to resources. His parable is told through the eyes of a young boy witnessing violent adult events for the first time.

Contemporary luminaries shared Wells' views. In 1918, after four years of senseless slaughter, President Woodrow Wilson and David Lloyd George, the British prime minister, joined Wells in optimistically predicting that World War I would be the last. Wilson called it "the culminating and final war for human liberty."<sup>7</sup>

It took men who knew war firsthand to size things up correctly. French Field Marshall Ferdinand Foch commented on the Treaty of Versailles, as he declined to attend its signing ceremony, "This is not peace, it is an Armistice for twenty years."<sup>8</sup> Foch was not far off in his calculations. Douglas MacArthur, too, came away from World War I with hard-earned knowledge, supported by his own fuller study of human history. He had led troops bravely in combat in World War I. In his famous Rainbow (Forty-second) Infantry Division reunion speech of July 14, 1935, he calculated that "in the last 3,400 years only 268—less than 1 in 13—have been free from wars."<sup>9</sup> MacArthur's estimate of 268 years of peace was optimistically generous.

One substitute for the practical wisdom of the battlefield is philosophical speculation. Just after the armistice that ended World War I, George Santayana visited a coffee house near Somerville College, Oxford, where wounded officers were recuperating. They were singing "Tipperary" in high spirits, as he noted, because they would not be going back to the trenches. Santayana looked at them and thought sadly, "Yet the poor fellows think they are safe! They think that the war—perhaps the last of all wars—is over! Only the dead are safe; only the dead have seen the end of war."<sup>10</sup>

But men like Foch, Santayana, and MacArthur, whether we call them "realists" or "pessimists," were then and still are in the minority. Most human beings do not want to look at war as it is and what it tells us about who we are as members of a society that engages in warfare and what we are willing to let men and now women, mostly young, go through in wars that are fought under the authorization of our governmental leaders and representatives. Here is one small indicator of our reluctance to see war as it is. Wilfred Owen's stark and honest poems about what men go through in times of war were published, after his death, in a first edition of two impressions in 1920 and 1921. By 1929 fewer than 1,500 copies had been sold.<sup>11</sup>

It took until late 1928 early 1929 for Erich Maria Remarque's classic indictment of the Great War to appear. We shall see that this time lag of ten years for a participant to see and to make some sense of a war is not unparalleled. Remarque's literal German title, *Nothing New in the West*, speaks poignantly to the futility of static trench warfare with gas, barbed wire, machine guns, artillery, and tanks. Its English title, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by inviting us to believe that times of tranquility were real, is characteristic of our refusal to see things in war for what they are.

Take, for example, high-command decisions about troop movements and tactics, despite the terrifying technological changes in weaponry in World War I. "Even when the machine-gun had obviously gained a dominance of

the battlefield, General Headquarters in France resisted its growth from the puny prewar scale of two in each battalion. One Army commander, Haig, declared that it was 'a much overrated weapon' and that this scale was 'more than sufficient'.

On the first day of the Battle of the Somme "July 1, 1916, thirteen British divisions marched towards the enemy like ceremonial troops down Whitehall, led by subalterns blowing whistles and clutching one-shot revolvers. At the end of the day 19,000 lay dead."<sup>12</sup> Notice the disconnect in Haig's report on the slaughter: "Very successful attack this morning...All went like clockwork...The battle is going very well for us...Our troops are in wonderful spirits and full of confidence."<sup>13</sup>

After initial ill-conceived attacks were unsuccessful, according to Liddell Hart, "Haig reverted to the method of nibbling, now to be exalted as a definite and masterly strategy of attrition, and to be defended by optimistic miscalculations of the German losses." On the left flank, Australian units suffered horrific losses (23,000 men) "for the ultimate gain, after six weeks, of a tiny tongue of ground just over a mile deep."<sup>14</sup>

The Australian official history of the impact upon the soldiers in these units echoes all the way back through history to the *Iliad*'s account of the soldiers under Agamemnon and other Greek regional commanders at Troy<sup>15</sup>:

Although most Australian soldiers were optimists, and many were opposed on principle to voicing—or even harbouring—grievances, it is not surprising if the effect on some intelligent men was a bitter conviction that they were being uselessly sacrificed. "For Christ's sake, write a book on the life of an infantryman (said one of them...), and by doing so you will quickly prevent these shocking tragedies." That an officer who had fought as nobly as Lieutenant J. A. Raws should, in the last letter before his death, speak of the "murder" of many of his friends, "through the incompetence, callousness, and personal vanity of those high in authority," is evidence not indeed of the literal truth of his words but of something much amiss in the higher leadership... "We have just come out of a place so terrible (wrote—, one of the most level-headed officers in the force) that...a raving lunatic could never imagine the horror of the last thirteen days."

The unsound sizing up of events, and the ignorance of what soldiers in the field were put through—Lieutenant Raws flatly states, "Hell must be a home to it"—in executing the strategies of commanders back at headquarters, as exemplified by Wells, Wilson, and Haig, is rivaled recently by the two-word phrase "Mission Accomplished" that marked the end of the so-called combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Imagine being a soldier or someone who knows what soldiers are going through and hearing such naïve predictions, assessments, and declarations. It would make you, like the two Australian field officers just quoted, desperate for some corroboration

of what had actually happened, or what was actually happening, or what was likely to happen. Greek citizens and most of their state leaders shared the views rather of Foch, MacArthur, and Santayana.

If we want a reason, then, for why soldiers and veterans of modern wars respond to recitations of Homer and performances of Greek tragedies, it is because they sing forth a certain kind of “truth” and reflect what is real. They speak truth as the Greeks defined it. The Greek adjective for what is true, *a-lēthēs*, describes something that cannot escape our notice or is unforgettable.

Homer’s *Iliad* is 15,000 lines of song distilled from songs sung about war for people who fought and lived through wars for at least seven hundred years. Homer, or the process of construction of the grand epic that is represented by his name, was a kind of Alan Lomax, an ethnomusicologist, with original, creative talents of his own. Imagine piecing together an enormous folk song from, say, the ballads and variants collected by Francis J. Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (ten volumes from 1882 to 1898). The *Iliad* has the same folk realism. It does not shy away from depicting the hard facts that folk songs sing to people who are leading hard lives.

For example, the *Iliad* is full of gruesome combat deaths. One is a ghastly decapitation in which the beheaded body of a soldier momentarily stands spurting blood and spinal fluid upward like a water fountain. It occurs in book 20, when Achilles has descended into what Jonathan Shay rightly terms “berserker degradation.”<sup>16</sup> It is an apocalyptic vision of violence of the sort too many soldiers have witnessed:

In almost the same motion, Achilles struck  
Agenor’s son Echeclus full on the head  
With his hilted sword. Echeclus’ blood  
Warmed the whole blade, and death came  
In an overpowering violet haze.  
Deucalion was next, Achilles’ spear-point  
Piercing his elbow just where the sinews join.  
His arm hung uselessly as he stood there  
Staring death in the face. Achilles closed in  
And sliced into his neck, sending the head,  
Helmet and all, flying through the air.  
Marrow spurted up through his spinal cord,  
And then the corpse was lengthwise on the ground.

(*Iliad* 20. 491–503)

Compare this pathos-infused report of the death of Army Specialist Joshua Reeves, a 26-year-old soldier in the Second Battalion, Sixteenth Infantry Regiment of the Fourth Infantry Brigade Combat Team, First Infantry Division, on September 22, 2007, during what was called “the surge” in Iraq. The Humvee he was driving was hit by an EFP, or Explosively Formed Penetrator, a particularly deadly kind of IED (Improvised Explosive Device)

that drives a copper plate that has melted into the form of a projectile through the protective armor of armored vehicles.<sup>17</sup>

He'd been in the right front seat when the EFP exploded...He wasn't breathing, his eyes weren't moving, his left foot was gone, his back side was ripped open, his face had turned gray, his stomach was filling with blood, and he was naked, with the exception of one bloodied sock—and as if all that weren't enough with which to consider Joshua Reeves in these failing moments of his life, now came word from some of the soldiers gathered in the lobby that he'd begun this day with a message from his wife that she had just given birth to their first child.

The truly cruel irony of a young man's losing his life to gruesome injuries from an enemy assault in Iraq while his loving wife is giving birth to their son back home has a parallel at the beginning of *Iliad* book 6.13–20. The Greek warrior Diomedes, on a killing spree, ruthlessly cuts down Axylus, who is described as being in peacetime a paradigm of a generous host and friend to all human beings who passed his way. Yet none of those whom Axylus hosted and befriended could protect him from his grim fate later on the battlefields around Troy.

The *Iliad* also shows us soldiers and gods behaving ruthlessly. Slightly later in book 6 than the episode that describes the killing of Axylus, Agamemnon angrily rebukes his brother Menelaus for even thinking of holding the defeated Trojan Adrastus captive for ransom, although Menelaus would be following an honorable and civilized practice, of which there are numerous examples in the *Iliad*:<sup>18</sup>

“Going soft, Menelaus? What does this man  
Mean to you? Have the Trojans ever shown you  
Any hospitality? Not one of them  
Escapes sheer death at our hands, not even  
The boy who is still in his mother's womb.  
Every Trojan dies, unmourned and unmarked.”

(6.55–60)

In the *Iliad*, religion provides no solace to mortals in the grips of war. The gods themselves are cavalierly merciless even toward their most devoted worshipers. Hera says to Zeus in book 4:

There are three cities especially dear to me:  
Argos, Sparta, and broad Mycenae.  
Waste these if they ever annoy you.  
I won't stand in your way or take it too hard.

(4.62–5)

The *Iliad* sang to the Greeks and still sings to us about things that human beings should not forget about war, even if many of us do not want to learn

about them in the first place. The *Iliad* gives an honest picture of what goes on during times of war. In war what we know is right will be betrayed or ignored. Commanders away from the action will issue orders in disregard for the suffering of the rank-and-file soldiers who do the fighting. The effects of Agamemnon's decisions in books 1 and 2 of the *Iliad* put us in mind of what we have seen of the effects of Field Marshall Douglas Haig's decisions at the Battles of the Somme and Third Ypres. Agamemnon shows little regard for the well-being of his troops in general and little understanding of their morale at this point in the fighting of what has become a protracted war.

Nonetheless, soldiers will experience what the Greeks called the *kharmē* of war, an exhilarating kind of pleasure that can be remembered and reignited, as when an addict takes another dose of a drug. Whether men die or live, stay whole or are maimed, will depend on blind luck or chance. The bravest and strongest and most battle-hardened soldiers will experience intense personal feelings of humiliation and fear—even the noble Hector admits that he is finally facing Achilles because he has been driven by his feelings of public shame (*aidōs*) for having squandered his army. When Hector does come face-to-face with Achilles, he immediately runs like hell trying to escape.<sup>19</sup> The *Iliad* teaches us that in war very few strategic plans will be drawn up well. Most goals will not be well set. Few will be reached efficiently.

As for war having a purpose worth losing one's own life, Achilles, the best field commander among the Greek military leaders at Troy, states clearly in two prominent passages that the war that the massed Greek army has been fighting into the tenth year has no valid *casus belli* and is tantamount to a personal vendetta on the part of Agamemnon, the ineffective commander-in-chief, and his brother Menelaus, king of Sparta:

*I don't have any quarrel with the Trojans  
They didn't do anything to *me* to make me  
Come over here and fight, didn't run off with *my* cattle or horses  
Or ruin *my* farmland back home in Phthia, not with all  
The shadowy mountains and moaning seas between.  
It's for *you* [Agamemnon], dogface, for your precious pleasure—  
And Menelaus' honor—that we came here.*

(Iliad 1.162–8)

Achilles later rejects Agamemnon's poorly conceived offer of reconciliation by stressing that what men do in battle does not matter, in the big or small picture, and that their longing for the human comforts of their women and families means little compared to the vain and petty desires of the highest ranking officers:

It doesn't matter if you stay in camp or fight—  
In the end, everybody comes out the same.

Coward and hero get the same reward:  
You die whether you slack off or work.  
And what do I have for all my suffering,  
Constantly putting my life on the line?

I've raided twelve cities with our ships  
And eleven on foot in the fertile Troad,  
Looted them all, brought back heirlooms  
By the ton, and handed all over  
to Atreus' son, who hung back in camp  
Raking it in and distributing damn little.

Why do the Greeks have to fight the Trojans?  
Why did Agamemnon lead the army to Troy  
If not for the sake of fair-haired Helen?  
Do you have to be descended from Atreus  
To love your mate? Every decent, sane man  
Loves his woman and cares for her.

*(Iliad 9.324–9, 335–40, and 345–50)*

It is noteworthy here that, even though Achilles feels strongly that the campaign to take Troy has become futile and purposeless, he does not pull out and head home with his troops. He seems to find the kind of meaning in the special kinship of men at war that Terkel's World War II veterans (cited above) found.

Is it any wonder that the *Iliad* still speaks to soldiers who know from deeply felt experience the insanity of what they are called upon to do when at war? The cover of Lombardo's translation of the *Iliad* uses, courtesy of the US Coast Guard, the famous photograph, *Into the Jaws of Death*, showing the backs of soldiers who have plunged into the waters off the opened front hatch of a landing craft on D-Day. Homer's *Iliad* plunges us into those same jaws immediately at the start of his song. In its opening lines, the *Iliad*, the national epic of a culture that knew what war was in practical and honest terms, gives us countless sufferings, rotting corpses fed upon by roaming dogs and vultures, a commander-in-chief committing sacrilege against a priest, a sudden plague killing horses and men, and dreaded discordance among chief officers in the high command. The *Iliad* keeps us in those jaws relentlessly and makes us feel, in describing a few days during the siege of Troy, the realities of human beings harming and killing other human beings on a grand scale for years. In our modern period only one creative work rivals the length and intensity of the *Iliad* in portraying and making us feel what Robert Burns called "man's inhumanity to man"<sup>20</sup>: Claude Lanzmann's nine-and-one-half hour documentary film (distilled from 350 hours of rough film) about the holocaust, *Shoah* (1985, filming begun in 1974).

It is not easy to find examples of soldiers reacting to "performances" of war. But two such examples help explain why the take on war in Greek

song poems and song drama holds a strong appeal even now. We approach this topic in a necessarily roundabout way by using one song about Vietnam War veterans. It stands for many other such songs that get at the real experiences of soldiers.

“Drive On”

Written and sung by Johnny Cash 1994<sup>21</sup>

Well, I got a friend named Whiskey Sam.  
 He was my boonie rat buddy for a year in Nam.  
 He said, “I think my country got a little off track.  
 Took ‘em twenty-five years to welcome me back.”  
 But it’s better than not comin’ back at all.  
 Many a good man I saw fall.  
 And even now every time I dream  
 I hear the men and the monkeys and the jungle scream.  
 Drive on.  
 It don’t mean nothin’.  
 My children love me, but they don’t understand.  
 And I got a woman who knows her man.  
 Drive on.  
 It don’t mean nothin’.  
 It don’t mean nothin’.  
 Drive on.  
 Well, I remember one night Tex and me  
 Rappelled in on a hot LZ.  
 We had our 16’s on rock and roll  
 And with all of that fire I was scared and cold.  
 I was crazy, and I was wild.  
 And I have seen the tiger smile.  
 I’ve spit in a bamboo viper’s face.  
 And I’d be dead, but by God’s grace.  
 Drive on.  
 It don’t mean nothin’.  
 My children love me, but they don’t understand.  
 And I got a woman who knows her man.  
 Drive on.  
 It don’t mean nothin’.  
 It don’t mean nothin’.  
 Drive on.  
 It was a slow walk in a sad rain  
 and nobody tried to be John Wayne.  
 I came home, but Tex did not.  
 And I can’t talk about the hit he got.

But I gotta little limp now when I walk.  
 And I gotta little tremolo when I talk.  
 But my letter read from Whiskey Sam,  
 "You're a walkin' talkin' miracle from Vietnam."  
 Drive on.  
 It don't mean nothin'.  
 My children love me, but they don't understand.  
 And I got a woman who knows her man.  
 Drive on.  
 It don't mean nothin'.  
 It don't mean nothin'.  
 Drive on.

Although there are exceptions, phrases like “don’t mean nothin’” and “there it is” are used in songs and writing to focus attention on concrete meaning or what would be incomprehensible except for soldiers having been there and having seen what they saw or thought they saw, as in the deaths of Echelus and Deucalion in the *Iliad* cited above.<sup>22</sup> The narrator in Cash’s song sings about things that Hemingway and Orwell and doubtless Lieutenant Raws would have understood and appreciated. “Drive On” is simple and direct and has real punch. There are no abstract thoughts. There is no sentimentality. The veteran’s wife “knows” her man through long experience of the posttraumatic stress he clearly suffers. Sentimental love is not part of the human equation here. Even the kind of “old lie,” in Wilfred Owen’s famous phrase, that society inculcates into its young men to get them to go and fight, to kill and/or die, is expressed here forcefully by using with irony the image of John Wayne.

Cash’s song uses common words of one or two syllables. Besides the proper noun that Cash emphatically pronounces Vi-et-naam, with a lengthened open “a” sound, the only three-syllable words have real force: the unattainable “understand” in the repeated refrain; “remember” in stanza two for the still vivid memory of hitting a landing zone under intensive fire from the enemy, “a hot LZ”; “nobody” to express the universal feeling among the soldiers that stereotypical John Wayne heroics are senseless; “tremolo” for the lasting psychological after effects, here almost a medical diagnosis; and “miracle” for what the narrator-soldier is, in the eyes of his fellow soldier, as a veteran who survived the horrific violence and dangers that he faced in Vietnam and can still function and communicate with others.

We may think here of the straight punch of the lines in Bruce Springsteen’s song “Born in the U.S.A.”<sup>23</sup>:

Come back home to the refinery  
 Hiring man said “Son if it was up to me”  
 Went down to see my V.A. man,  
 He said “Son, don’t you understand”

I had a brother at Khe Sahn fighting off the Viet Cong  
They're still there, he's all gone

Here the only three-syllable word is again what soldier veterans want to get from others, but rarely get: "understand." It takes real storytelling genius to sum up the futility of the war and the deep sense of the unjustifiable personal loss of a soldier brother-in-arms flatly in this way: "They're still there, he's all gone."

Compare the similar qualities and tone and messages in these two gems of poems by Ernest Hemingway.<sup>24</sup> These are words that soldier veterans can hear and take into their souls.

"Champs d'Honneur" ©1979. Printed with permission of the Ernest Hemingway Foundation.

Soldiers never do die well;  
Crosses mark the places,  
Wooden crosses where they fell;  
Stuck above their faces.  
Soldiers pitch and cough and twitch;  
All the world roars red and black,  
Soldiers smother in a ditch;  
Choking through the whole attack.

"Poem" ©1979. Printed with permission of the Ernest Hemingway Foundation.

The only man I ever loved  
Said good bye  
And went away  
He was killed in Picardy  
On a sunny day.

In war stories told, sung, or written by soldiers or by those who can get inside their experiences, what gets told about socially and culturally sanctioned violence? The samples we have so far discussed from Homer to modern times get across unprocessed and unfiltered what violent acts do to those who use violence and those who are its victims.

What does the violence of war do? It destroys, and when it does its job well, it keeps destroying. It destroys human bodies, human hearts, human minds, human psyches, and human souls. It destroys what humans build, physically, spiritually, emotionally, socially, culturally, historically. That is why in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, O'Brien tells Winston Smith during his torture session that Smith "will be lifted clean out of the stream of history."<sup>25</sup> Violence destroys existence, present and past. It destroys belief in God, belief in love, belief in virtue. It "disappears" human beings, a verbal usage made familiar to us from politically motivated atrocities in Latin America.

What does this mean about performance literature dealing with the violence of war that really does its job? It too destroys man-made artifice. It is

no surprise then that George Orwell, after his firsthand experiences with violence in the Spanish Civil War, despised Latinate, abstract writing and metaphors that did not speak what was real about the subjects to which they were attached. Great stories about human violence, as we have seen in our samples, are simple and direct and strip away illusions. A true war story can therefore look like it is debasing us. The Homeric poems do much the same thing in a different way. Although they use polysyllabic words and even artificial dialect forms of words that were never used in common speech, these are used in phrases, lines, and whole sections of the songs formulaically again and again. Thus the listeners absorb the many commonplace realities of war as familiar actions and experiences not unlike how Roman Catholics who knew no Latin took in the meaning and feeling of the *Gloria in excelsis deo*; *Kyrie, eleison*; *Pater noster*; and *Credo* when the mass was performed in Latin.

Those who write about war by reaching down into their own souls and speaking directly to their experiences can be accused of dishonoring the sacrifice that soldiers have made, even the horrors they have seen and felt. They can be accused of self-indulgence for violating the code of “not voicing grievances” that World War I soldiers followed even when being maimed (physically and psychologically) and slaughtered on an almost incomprehensible scale. Those who write honestly about war can be condemned by those who would hide the realities of war from us and even from themselves. But the soldiers who lived through what the stories tell us affirm their accounts. Those who want to hide what war is speak of IEDs and VBIEDs (Vehicle Based Improvised Explosive Devices). Yehuda Amichai, a veteran of the Jewish Brigade of the British Army in North Africa during World War II and the Arab-Israeli Wars of 1948 and 1956, speaks about a plain old bomb, in a poetic war story so masterful that it was chosen for a collection of recordings commemorating the first-year anniversary of 9/11.<sup>26</sup> Amichai’s poem consists of four sentences. The narrative voice tells us one thing after another in plain language using simple grammar. There are no vivid or emotionally charged words.

“The Diameter of the Bomb”<sup>27</sup> © 1996 by Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell. Reprinted by permission of the University of California Press and Chana Bloch.

The diameter of the bomb was thirty centimeters  
and the diameter of its effective range about seven meters,  
with four dead and eleven wounded.  
And around these, in a larger circle  
of pain and time, two hospitals are scattered  
and one graveyard. But the young woman  
who was buried in the city she came from,  
at a distance of more than a hundred kilometers,  
enlarges the circle considerably,  
and the solitary man mourning her death



at the distant shores of a country far across the sea  
includes the entire world in the circle.  
And I won't even mention the howl<sup>28</sup> of orphans  
that reaches up to the throne of God and  
beyond, making  
a circle with no end and no God.

There it is. Don't mean nothin'.

In 16 short lines, we are told matter-of-factly that a bomb no wider than the length of a young schoolboy's cheap wooden ruler can kill or wound 15 people. A 12-inch bomb can cause the pain of loss to be felt throughout the world. It can even bring the existence of God, or of a God who cares about innocent human beings, into question. Loss and pain without remedy radiate outward from the bomb's single, quick, and relatively small explosion. Its blast destroys love and families. Its blast sucks hope, faith, and belief in divine providence right out of the universe.

Notice here, too, the preponderance of one- and two-syllable words, the absence of any abstractions, and the concrete terms that convey to us the idea that the detonation of one small bomb can cause sorrow around our world and beyond. As in the two Hemingway poems cited above, no time or specific setting is given,<sup>29</sup> Amichai tells us what happens anywhere, any time, any place a bomb explodes and people are killed and wounded.

Homer, Owen, Hemingway, Springsteen, Cash, Amichai, and Australian soldiers of World War I, like Lieutenant Raws, teach us how to tell the truth about war and how to tell when the truth is being hidden. So, for example, official US Department of Defense reports speak of casualties, while O'Brien, in a chapter from his first novel *If I Die in a Combat Zone*, speaks of severed legs, shredded feet, heels ripped off by various forms of mines, and booby traps.<sup>30</sup>

True war stories make clear that soldiers are, in a real sense, prisoners, or, in more modern terms, forced laborers. That is why in my opinion O'Brien uses a quotation from John Ransom's *Andersonville Diary*, an account by a Union soldier of his life-threatening incarceration as a prisoner of war in arguably the worst of Confederate prison camps, as an epigraph for his collection of short stories.<sup>31</sup>

This book is essentially different from any other that has been published concerning the "late war" or any of its incidents. Those who have had any such experience as the author will see its truthfulness at once, and to all other readers it is commended as a statement of actual things by one who experienced them to the fullest.

What was true in the American Civil War and in Vietnam, was also true in the "good war." Yossarian and his fellow pilots in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* fight back against their feelings of being compelled to risk their lives senselessly against their wills with phrases like, "Who is Spain?," "Why is Hitler?,"



“When is Right?”<sup>32</sup> They have to break down the false system of logic and language, of regulations and orders, that keeps them in prison.

Knowing what to say and how to speak clearly about war and its many forms of trauma is not easy. It takes a long time to figure out what went on in a war. It requires reaching way down into hearts and souls and often forgetting what enters the mind as explanations from other sources. Producing good “performance art” about war then understandably is a long, hard process. I have already mentioned the ten-year time lag for Remarque’s World War I classic. Think of the 16 years for Heller’s *Iliad*-steeped *Catch-22* (first published in 1961), or the 24 years for Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse Five* (first published in 1969). Think of the fact that all classic Hollywood movies about the Vietnam War, except for the jingoistic melodramatic *The Green Berets* (July 1968), starring, naturally, John Wayne, were made after the fall of Saigon. A similar time lag occurs between the end of the Persian Wars (479 BCE) and Aeschylus’ play *The Persians* (dated to 472 BCE).

Samuel Hynes, a United States Marine Corps bomber pilot in World War II, takes a serious look at war memoirs in his *The Soldiers’ Tale: Bearing Witness to a Modern War*. Like Aristotle analyzing Greek city-states in the *Politics* or Greek song poems in the *Poetics*, Hynes aims at describing the characteristic qualities of the works that soldiers write about the wars they are fighting or have fought: “Generally, the telling of war stories is direct and undecorated, which is the way soldiers seem to prefer it.”<sup>33</sup> Hynes is right about style, wrong about it being a preference. Soldiers and veterans do not choose war language like choosing ties off a rack, or preferring to go to *this* restaurant or *that* one, *this* movie or *that*. They tell their stories the way they tell them because that is how they have to tell them. Soldiers and veterans have no choice. The stories cannot be told any other way.

Hynes quotes T. E. Lawrence’s appraisal of the famous anonymous *A Soldier’s Diary of the Great War*: it is “sane, low-toned and natural.”<sup>34</sup> Being sane and low-toned about the abominable madness of trench warfare is quite a feat. An author using such a voice is in effect saying, “There it is.”

James Holoka reminds us that Matthew Arnold described the style of the Homeric poems as “rapid, plain, direct and noble.” We can also apply to Homer what Holoka and other critics have noted about Simone Weil, who used Homer and Greek tragedy to get across her ideas about what war in the twentieth century should teach us. The hallmark features are sincerity, urgency, an incomparably humane accent, and depth of feeling.<sup>35</sup>

Write or speak or sing or act in a style that is direct, blunt, matter-of-fact, clear of vision, sincere, urgent, deep of feeling, and humane, and you will have a good chance of being heard by soldiers and veterans. This has been true for over three thousand years. This proves, as if proof were needed, what Vietnam veteran and now Hollywood screenwriter Bill Broyles tells us in his classic 1984 *Esquire* essay, “Why Men Love War,”<sup>36</sup> namely that stories about war exclude those readers or listeners who do not hold the truths of war sacred, who cannot take in the truth.<sup>37</sup>

I think it is fair to say then that war stories, songs, and performances try to tell us something about what war really is. Read enough war stories and you will know four things. War is not pretty. War is not good. Only the human agents caught up in war can try to be noble or moral—war itself is neither. And war is ultimately unknowable.<sup>38</sup>

Soldiers are virtual prisoners. They cannot escape their circumstances, even being ordered to face virtually certain death, without suffering serious consequences. We have already mentioned the epigraph for *The Things They Carried*. The same sentiment is found in the World War II oral histories put together by Studs Terkel in his “*The Good War*.” Think also of Yossarian in *Catch-22*, Fife in James Jones’ *The Thin Red Line* (1962), or O’Brien’s entire platoon under Captain Smith in *If I Die in a Combat Zone*.<sup>39</sup> Soldiers have the feeling of being virtual prisoners of war, even when they have not been captured and incarcerated by the enemy.

Replay in your mind Greek tragedies, most notably the *Trojan Women*, any random scene from the *Iliad*, and the wartime comedies of Aristophanes like *Peace*, *Acharnians*, and *Lysistrata*. Then think of why Johnny Cash’s Vietnam vet narrator and Vietnam veterans like O’Brien use the John Wayne movie portrayal of what war is as the prime example of the seductive illusion-making that gave young men false opinions about what fighting for their country would entail. The Greeks, of course, had texts that exhorted young men to fight and die bravely for their communities, their families, and their own lasting honor. The “old lie” that Wilfred Owen, Ezra Pound, and Tim O’Brien do their best to persuade us and all their readers not to tell our own and future children in fact was told first by the Greek poet Callinus (seventh century BCE) and passed down to Owen, Pound, O’Brien and the rest of us through the Roman poet Horace. And ancient Greek political speeches on public occasions, like Pericles’ Funeral Oration for the fallen Athenian war dead, emphasized the gains and rewards of fighting and dying in a successful cause. But these essential texts that the ancient Greeks used to inculcate military virtues like courage, honor, discipline, obedience, endurance, and supreme self-sacrifice did not falsify or hide war’s brutality and dehumanizing effects. Greek tragedies and comedies about war and its effects were not suppressed, censored, or seriously discouraged during times of war.

In writing a review for the *Times Higher Education Supplement* of a collection of scholarly essays on the *Anabasis* of Xenophon, a firsthand account of an expedition by a mercenary force into the heart of the Persian Empire and back (401–399 BCE), I realized that the Greeks for centuries had no use for war memoirs.<sup>40</sup> War was so omnipresent that no one was interested in being told about its particulars. Few, if any, extended clan groups in fifth-century Athens were without relatively direct experience of the human, social, and economic (there was no deficit spending) costs of warfare and what was at risk for soldiers and their communities when armies of their men took to the field.

Let us try to transport ourselves to ancient Athens midway through the 27 years of the Peloponnesian War. It is late spring 415 BCE. According

to modern revised estimates, 3,700 to 6,000 (perhaps more)<sup>41</sup> adult male Athenian citizens, all of them veterans of war, some of them of the campaign in summer 416 through winter 416/415 against the island of Melos, sat viewing Euripides' play *Trojan Women*. They were participating in their city's Greater Dionysia festival. They sat in the open air in daylight in the Theater of Dionysos built against the south slope of the Athenian acropolis. In the open air, they could look around and see one another as the play was performed.

The Melian matter, whether or not it had all played out by the time Euripides had to submit a proposal (or even fairly finished drafts) for the plays he was intending to have produced at the Greater Dionysia in 415 BCE, certainly was being discussed among Athenian leaders and citizen soldiers, in the same way that what to do about city-states on the island of Lesbos that were in revolt had been hotly debated a dozen or so years earlier.<sup>42</sup>

Euripides had ample grounds to think that a play dealing with what happens to a besieged city, according to the conditions of what is called "Homeric warfare practice," once it is taken by the besieging army, would provoke lots of interest. The Melian incident is considered by some the first act of genocide in Western culture.<sup>43</sup> It probably does not fit the technical definition, but, using modern moral judgment, it was a large-scale atrocity and surely wasn't the first. All the adult male citizens of the island of Melos, which preferred to remain neutral in the conflict between Athens and Sparta, were killed and the women and children were sold into slavery. With our modern moral sensibilities, we may find another fact deeply disturbing. The ruling oligarchy of this island community had purposefully not permitted the Athenian negotiators to speak directly to the "people," for fear that the pro-democratic element among the people at large would cut a deal with the Athenians whereby only the recalcitrant ruling party and their close allies would be put to death. The party in control effectively denied the citizens at large an opportunity to save their own lives.

Once the negotiations between Athenian representatives and the Melian leaders broke down, the Athenians, to their discredit, did not differentiate among those who made the decision and those who did not even have a say in it. They killed all the adult males and sold all the women and children into slavery. Peter Green, in a fine, if not wholly persuasive, article on ancient and modern moral concepts and their relationship to the Melian affair and the *Trojan Women*, speaks of "the jungle mentality governing [Athens'] conduct."<sup>44</sup>

*The Trojan Women* gives us an intense and close-up look at how captive women feel when this Homeric form of warfare is practiced. But the very men who duly voted in the Athenian assembly to commit such brutal acts of terror, many of whom then went out and committed them, watched Euripides' tragedy in the theater. The play served in my opinion at some level as the ancient equivalent of the phrase we have already quoted several times regarding what happens in times of war: "There it is."

The Athenians may not have taken in the play as a comment on their lack of morality in acting as they did in the Melian affair. They may have used the play as a way of accepting the miserable consequences of what citizen soldiers had to do in times of all-out war. They may have received Euripides' tableaux of suffering among captive women and unsympathetic conduct among most of the Greek leaders in the same way modern veterans take in Johnny Cash's "Drive On" or Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A."

Let us now look at the promised two examples of how modern soldiers have reacted to performances of war, in this case two modern motion pictures. Both films depict war in other than "direct and undecorated" or "sane, low-toned and natural" terms.

The first is a reaction to Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979, with narration drawn from Michael Herr's *Dispatches*,<sup>45</sup> a fine capturing of the atmosphere and feel of the Vietnam War) by Private First Class Reginald Edwards in Wallace Terry's *Bloods*, an oral history of 20 African-American soldiers in Vietnam.<sup>46</sup> Here is Edwards' reaction to the film:

I went to see *Apocalypse Now*, because a friend paid my way. I don't like movies about Vietnam 'cause I don't think they are prepared to tell the truth. *Apocalypse Now* didn't tell the truth. It wasn't real. I guess it was a great thing for the country to get off on, but it didn't remind me of anything I saw. I can't understand how you would have a bridge lit up like a Christmas tree. A USO show at night? Guys attacking women on stage. That made no sense. I never saw us reach the point where nobody is in charge in a unit. That's out of the question. If you don't know anything, you know the chain of command. And the helicopter attack on the village? Fuckin' ridiculous (13).

I'm in the Amtrac with Morley Safer, right? The whole thing is getting ready to go down. At Cam Ne. The whole bit that all America will see on *CBS Evening News*, right? Marines burning down some huts. Brought to you by Morley Safer. Your man on the scene. August 5, 1965 (1).

Safer didn't tell them to burn down the huts with they lighter. He just photographed it. He could have got a picture of me burning a hut, too. It was just the way they did it. When you say level a village, you don't use torches. It's not like in the 1800s. You use a Zippo

(3).

Edwards was worried when the "My Lai" story broke, that what had happened at Cam Ne had been caught on film. "You can get away with murder. And the beautiful thing about the military is there's always somebody that can serve up [sic] as a scapegoat" 14).

The second is World War II veteran Paul Fussell's reaction to Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*, a widely acclaimed motion picture (1998)<sup>47</sup> that made into icons World War II veterans about whom Tom Brokaw would soon thereafter write an immensely popular hagiography.<sup>48</sup> In Fussell's

honest and angry account about what rank-and-file soldiers went through in Europe after the hell of D-Day, he writes<sup>49</sup>:

I'd like to recommend the retention of and familiarity with the first few minutes of Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* depicting the landing horrors. Then I'd suggest separating them to constitute a short subject, titled *Omaha Beach: Aren't You Glad You Weren't There?* Which could mean, "Aren't you glad you weren't a conscripted working-class or high school boy in 1944?" The rest of the Spielberg film I'd consign to the purgatory where boys' bad adventure films end up.

Both Edwards and Fussell take movie representations of war that are now considered classics and find fault with them for not getting across what war really is. For Edwards, the problems lie in the overheating of Coppola's mythic images that tap into both Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. For Edwards, Coppola's surrealism sacrifices too much military realism. For Fussell, too, after the opening minutes of terror and death on Omaha Beach, the rest of the Spielberg's movie unfolds as a typical Hollywood melodrama, an adventure film for boys of very low quality, effectively a John Wayne movie.

Christine Leche, who has recently taught creative writing to soldiers deployed to a forward operating base (FOB) in Afghanistan, tells us that "it is much more than just the writing that heals—it is *being heard*." She continues, "For veterans, it is knowing their pain is felt vicariously by those who possess the strength to listen, by those with courage enough to tilt a human ear toward wartime stories and to risk being changed by the tremor in their voices. PTSD is, after all, a shared experience: when one family member is affected, the entire family suffers, and thus the community suffers."<sup>50</sup>

It is clear that Johnny Cash's and Bruce Springsteen's songs, Yehuda Amichai's and Ernest Hemingway's poems, Homer's *Iliad*, the short stories of Tim O'Brien, and Euripides' *Trojan Women* pass the litmus test of communicating the real experiences of war in ways that can be seen, heard, felt, and understood by veterans of war and by civilian nonveterans who try hard to absorb what is being said, sung, recited, or performed. Fussell and Edwards show us the negative reactions that veterans have when what happens in war is represented in phony ways, when we take in an account and cannot say, "There it is."

The realities of war need to be taken in with all five senses and understood not only with the mind, but with the heart and the soul. Soldiers and veterans have confronted things that most civilians will never have to face<sup>51</sup>.

World War II veteran Dr. Alex Shulman puts it this way<sup>52</sup>:

Americans have never known what war really is. No matter how much they saw it on television or pictures or magazines. Because there is one feature they never appreciated: the smell. When you go through a

village and you suddenly get this horrible smell. Everybody's walking around with masks on their faces, 'cause it's just intolerable. You look out and see those bloated bodies. You no longer see humans, because they've been pretty well cleaned up by now. You see bloated horses and cows and the smell of death. Maybe if Americans had known even that, they'd be more concerned about peace.

Shulman, in recounting his experiences to Terkel, mixes his sense memories together by using what is known rhetorically as "zeugma": "you *see*...the *smell* of death" (italics mine). Yet I think that what he went through in war had such a harrowing impact that he came close to *seeing* the smell of death both at that time and later in tapping into his visual and sense memories while talking with Terkel. On such occasions sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch must combine in truly grotesque ways. We can get partway there if we use our imaginations and our capacities for empathy.

Charles Patterson, who served as a US Marine at Khe Sanh, has a poem that complements Shulman's thoughts where our emotions are concerned. His poem about the loss of one of his brothers-in-arms, Marion Henry Norman, at Khe Sanh, comes in two parts, one written in 1968 in Vietnam, the other written in 1983, when he had processed as best he could, and come to terms with, the grief of loss and the absurdity of war.

“Marion Henry Norman Khe Sanh, 1968”<sup>53</sup> Reprinted by permission of Charles E. Patterson from the Signal Tree Publications edition.

*They took your life  
As if it belonged to them.  
If only they had told me  
They needed a life,  
I would have given them mine.*

*I wonder  
What they did with your life?  
Perhaps,  
If they don't need it now,  
They'd give it back.*

—Ca Lu, March 1968

I saw you dead  
But never buried.  
In my heart you've lived,  
Laughing, smiling Hank.  
I would keep you there forever,  
In a memorial more perfect  
Than hands could build.

Finding an end to my war  
I can mourn you now.  
And, in sadness, leave

AQ: As per house style, the sources of poems are set at right side. Hope it is fine with you.

This loving, painful,  
Magic caretaking,  
So I may live  
At peace.

To celebrate your death,  
To elevate your life,  
And its conclusion,  
Which was neither sweet,  
Nor fitting,  
Duty's harshest price  
For which the consideration  
Should have been honor.

—*The World*, 1983

What should the consideration have been for the soldiers whom the Athenians sent off to Melos to do their dirty work? How did the citizen soldiers feel en masse and individually as they were leaving the Theater of Dionysus at the end of the set of plays that included the *Trojan Women*? Did the performance of the play help them to see the radiating circles of pain and time, to use Amichai's metaphor, that their actions caused? Were their gods as deaf to the cries of the Melian women and children being carried off into slavery as Amichai's Judeo-Christian God is to the cries of orphaned infants? Could the veterans of Melos see the smell of the exposed bodies of the men they killed? Were the Melian men who died defending their city accorded honor, even begrudgingly, by the Athenian soldiers? Many of the same questions could be posed about soldiers sent off to wars any time and anywhere.

There it is. The truth is all there in true war stories. But it takes real effort to take it all into our hearts, minds, and souls. And, as Patterson reminds us, echoing Wilfred Owen and Horace and Callinus long before him, the truths of war are neither sweet nor fitting.

### Notes

\*Translations from the *Iliad* are here from Lombardo (1997). Line numbering refers to Lombardo's line numbers. I thank the editors for their very helpful comments and suggestions. I thank Colin Yarbrough for closely reading my final draft and making several key observations that improved how I here convey a few key thoughts and ideas. I dedicate this chapter to the late Joel Cryer, PJ and friend, and to Michael T. Palaima, combat controller, brother and friend, for their stories told and untold.

1. Terkel (1984, 5). The old-time folk singer is Win Stracke. His full account is on pp. 159–62.
2. According to Carter (2011, x), Barack Obama, a president who received the Nobel Peace Prize in December 2009, has “expanded the battlefield, both geographically and technologically, and is prosecuting America’s wars with a stunning ferocity.”
3. Palaima and Trible (2013, 727 and n. 1).

4. Tritle (2010, 114–16).
5. Wells (1914, 14).
6. The Battle of the Somme, July 1–November 13, 1916, caused 420,000 British, 195,000 French, and 650,000 German casualties—9,300 per day. The Third Battle of Ypres, otherwise known as Passchendaele, July 31–November 6, 1917, resulted in 585,000 Allied and German casualties, 5,900 per day. For capsule commentaries on the futility of each battle, see [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/battle\\_somme.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/battle_somme.shtml) and [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/battle\\_passchendaele.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/battle_passchendaele.shtml) (both last accessed November 12, 2013).
7. Woodrow Wilson, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress, 8 January 1918.” In Link (1984, 539).
8. Sempa (2007) (last accessed May 16, 2013).
9. Imparato (2000, 111).
10. Santayana (1922, 102). The passage occurs in Soliloquy 25. On the problem of tracing the true origin of this quotation and its widespread attribution to Plato, see Palaima and Tritle (2013, 734–5).
11. Goldensohn (2003, 117).
12. Andrew Grimes from the *Manchester Evening News* November 1998, accessible online at *Retrospectives on People and Places*, “Douglass Haig (and Lloyd George) by Andrew Grimes: Blood on Their Hands,” <http://www.aftermathww1.co.uk/grimes.asp> (last accessed May 20, 2013).
13. <http://www.gcsehistory.org.uk/modernworld/britishsociety/Haigandthebattleofthesomme.htm> (last accessed May 20, 2013).
14. Liddell Hart (1935, 326).
15. Liddell Hart (1935, 326–7). For vivid images directly from the letters home of Lieutenant John Alexander Raws, see [http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au/stories/stories\\_war=W1\\_id=130.html](http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au/stories/stories_war=W1_id=130.html) (last accessed November 12, 2013). In a letter dated August 4, 1916, Raws wrote, “For the horrors one sees and the never-ending shock of the shells is more than can be borne. Hell must be a home to it.”
16. Shay (1994, 75–99). Shay (1994, 77, 238), in fact refers to Achilles as the “prototype” of the soldier traumatized into a “berserk” state.
17. Finkel (2009), 143. For fuller impact, go to <http://nrcdata.ap.org/casualties> (last accessed May 21, 2013). Then search for Reeves, Joshua; and read his biography.
18. Achilles’ berserker state is marked by the fact that, while in this state, he kills mercilessly and savagely, as he is gloating and boasting, Lycaon, a young son of Priam, depicted as an unlucky innocent, whom Achilles had, on an earlier mission, captured alive and set free for a ransom payment (*Iliad* [book 21.140–5]).
19. *Iliad* 22.150–285. The whole of Arvin (2005), based on the memories his father and grandfather had of their combat experiences, is a meditation upon a soldier in post D-Day fighting who recognizes that he is a coward. See here, too, Hue (1954). On courage and fear, see O’Brien (1990, 39–61, 137–54), and generally Palaima (2000).
20. Robert Burns, “Man Was Made to Mourn: A Dirge” (1784). For the full text of Burns’ song poem, background information, the tune to which it was set, and an audio file of a recitation, see [www.bbc.co.uk/arts/robertburns/words/man\\_was\\_made\\_to\\_mourn/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/robertburns/words/man_was_made_to_mourn/) (last accessed June 3, 2014).
21. Drive On. Words and Music by John R. Cash. © 1993 SONG OF CASH, INC. (ASCAP). All rights administered by BMG RIGHTS MANAGEMENT (US) LLC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.
22. O’Brien (1990, 78): “True war stories do not generalize. They do not indulge in abstraction or analysis. For example: War is hell. As a moral declaration the old truism

seems perfectly true, and yet because it abstracts, because it generalizes, I can't believe it with my stomach. Nothing turns inside. It comes down to gut instinct. A true war story, if truly told, makes the stomach believe."

23. "Born in the USA" by Bruce Springsteen. Copyright © Bruce Springsteen (ASCAP). Reprinted by permission. International copyright secured. All rights reserved.
24. Hemingway (1979, 27 and 61; photo image of working drafts of "Poem" on p. 60).
25. Orwell (1949, 257).
26. <http://audiopoetry.wordpress.com/2006/07/13/the-diameter-of-the-bomb/> and [http://www.clal.org/911\\_clal\\_cd.html](http://www.clal.org/911_clal_cd.html) (both last accessed May 20, 2013) from the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, recording of *A Ritual for Beginning to Remember*. Amichai's "bomb" is placed and detonated among civilians. Although the time and place are not given or even hinted at, we deduce that this is what we would call a "terrorist act" of war.
27. Amichai (1996, 118). See also <http://www.chanablock.com/amichai.html> for text and Chana Bloch reading and commenting on details of the poem.
28. Amichai (1986, 118), reads "crying,"
29. In "Poem," Hemingway refers to the general region of Picardy in northern France; but, like Amichai, he leaves the particular place, time and circumstances of the death—and even the very identity of the main victim—unknown.
30. O'Brien (1979, 125–30).
31. O'Brien (1990, no page number, after table of contents).
32. Heller (1996, 43–4).
33. Hynes (1997, xv).
34. Ibid.
35. Holoka (2003, x).
36. Broyles (1984).
37. Graves (1995, 467), speaks of those who went through trench warfare as "bound to one another by a suicidal sacrament." Those who did not experience the horrors of the Great War were then uninitiated outsiders.
38. It should be understood that I strongly disagree with MacArthur's claim in his Sylvanus Thayer Award address (May 12, 1962): "However horrible the incidents of war may be, the soldier who is called upon to offer and to give his life for his country, is the noblest development of mankind." This is Owen's "old lie" and it still lives and thrives. For the full speech, see <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/douglasmacarthurthayeraward.html> (last accessed November 13, 2013). Also Whan (1965, 355–6).
39. O'Brien (1979, 148–61).
40. Palaima (2005) (last accessed May 20, 2013).
41. Roselli (2011, 65 and n. 5). There were also theaters in the towns in the territory of Athens that had seating capacities as high as 2,000–2,500 people (Roselli 2011, 68–9).
42. Because the chief city-state fomenting the revolt was Mytilene, the section of Thucydides that tells us of the deliberations of the Athenians is called the Mytilenean debate, in contrast with the Melian dialogue. See Tritle (2010, 67–71, 133–6).
43. See succinctly Palaima (2001).
44. Green (1999, 107).
45. Herr (1977).
46. Terry (1984, 1–15).
47. *Saving Private Ryan* won five Oscar awards, including best cinematography, best sound, and best director, and was nominated for six other awards. The focus on editing, sound, and visual effects makes clear that the opening of the film gave people a strong vicarious sense of the horrors of the landing on Omaha Beach.

48. Brokaw (1999).
49. Fussell (2003, 34–5).
50. Leche (2013, 134–5.)
51. For the horrific sense memories that veterans may carry inside them, see the blunt, honest and graphic story told by Kenneth Ashworth's father in Palaima (2012, 37).
52. Terkel (1984, 287).
53. Patterson (2002, 24–5).

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