

WILLIAM CHILDRESS

PARATROOPERS' NIGHT OUT

Sashaying down the Rue Pigalle,
holding the flowers that bloom in the dark
(Marie and Jeune, Fifi, Bette and Lola),
goaded by hormones and cunning Pernod,
we are bombs ready to go off.
and in a bar called L'Elephant Blanc,
we do go off. Goddamn Brits,
what are they doing here,
strutting on our turf with their
asshole Aussie buddies?
We'll show them American paratroopers
are the best— maybe kick some
frog soldiers' asses to boot.
An accented remark, and the brawl is on;
ambassadors in uniform,
we wade into the fray.
Gutsy Disharoon is a small buzz saw;
he puts the boots to a downed
Frenchman; Baxter, a black trooper,
punches smoothly at all who come
before he disappears under three Union Jacks.
Me, I'm punching and getting punched
(strike anywhere in such fights
and you'll hit someone).
There's screaming from *les filles*,
(Marie and Jeune, Fifi, Bette and Lola)
as they cringe from the flailing fury
of the soldiers making this war.
A bottle sails through the air,
and Madam cranks the telephone
as cognac murals a wall.
"Gendarmes! Gendarmes!" she screams,

and *shit* that hurt, the grim French cop's
hard baton, his silly whistle.
Now the brass trill of big MPs,
wooden dances on our skulls, the smell
of blood and leather. Disharoon
goes down for a nap, Baxter can't be
seen, and the last thing I'm aware of
as the clubs come down again,
is Marie and Jeune, Fifi, Bette and Lola,
huddled in a corner,
excitement on their sweet French faces.