

## Reviews

***The Hill Fights***. Edward F. Murphy. New York: Ballantine Books, 2003, 304 pp. \$24.95 cloth.

**Reviewed by Glenn Leinbach, United States Air Force Academy**

On January 27, 1971, Roberto Canas, John Neill, Dewight Norton, Steven Olcott, William Reichert, and James Weathersby were killed in action in Vietnam. It was the day I was born.

Several years earlier, in the hills surrounding Khe Sahn, men died as well. They had names, too: James Anderson, Francis Benoit, Dana Darnell, Michael Gibbs, David Hackett, Michael Morgan. Each name is important. Some left wives behind, some left children they never met. All their names are on the Wall—on panels 16E, 17E, 18E, and 19E.

Their names are in Edward Murphy's *The Hill Fights*, as well. In his book Murphy details the battles leading up to the siege of Khe Sahn. While America knows the name Khe Sahn, and knows the pounding American troops took there, few Americans know of the battles our troops waged in the hills surrounding the fire base before the siege began. Those battles are named "The Hill Fights," and they presaged what lay in Khe Sahn's future.

Murphy's book starts by detailing high-level disagreements in early 1966 over both the amount of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops in the hills surrounding the base, and their intentions regarding it. He tells of the rifle company tasked to seek contact with the NVA in the hills, and how the men on patrol relayed troubling reports of increased enemy activity to their commanding officers at Khe Sahn, who relayed those same reports to headquarters. To their dismay, the men quickly learned HQ didn't believe the NVA were massing such a large force around Khe Sahn. When battle broke out, and more and more men died, commanders such as Westmoreland started to pay attention. Murphy moves on from his discussion of the politics surrounding operations in Khe Sahn's hills to detailed descriptions of the battles for those hills, and briefly covers the siege of the base itself. Finally he follows the last convoys out of the flattened and desolate fire base as the Marines abandon what they fought so hard to maintain.

The book's greatest impact comes not from its politics, nor from the chronological history Murphy presents. Its impact comes from the names of the men who fought so bravely and who, in many cases, died so far from

home. Not only does Murphy give names, though; he gives hometowns and other bits of information where he can. On page 34, he introduces his reader to “Private First Class George D. Johnson,” a “Naples, Florida, nineteen year old.” One page later, PFC Johnson is on the ground, having been shot. He is “in a heap, thrashing wildly in his death throes.” By page 37, a friend is gathering up Johnson’s body in a poncho to take it back to base. These stories go on. First, Murphy introduces the reader to a soldier. He gives the soldier’s hometown, age (many are trying to stay alive long enough to celebrate a nineteenth birthday), and whether there’s a wife and children waiting at home. Then, a page later, the soldier is on the ground, chest shredded by NVA bullets. Soon his buddies have his body in a poncho, trying to get his decomposing body down to a landing zone for removal. Some men continue through Murphy’s narrative; many do not.

Their names fill pages 257-273 of Murphy’s Appendix; they include the dead (“**JAMES D. CARTER, JR.** (B/1/9) was killed in action on June 7 1967. He is survived by his wife and son, Scott, whom he never saw.”) and the living (“**LANCE M. CAMPBELL** (F/2/3) was wounded during Operation Buffalo but returned to duty and completed his tour. He is a customer service representative in the printing paper business and lives with his wife in Rancho Cucamonga, California.”). Whether the men live or die seems more a question of fate, rather than of the tactics their officers use, or of their preparedness for battle. Of course, one could make that point about most wars.

Knowing these names is important. Remembering them is as valuable as remembering what the men accomplished, what they survived, many years ago. The Vietnam Memorial shows us the importance of our names. In his book Murphy not only points out the struggle these men went through, but chronicles their names. He does so in order that we remember both the horrors of war and those who experienced that horror. These men fought in nameless hills above a fire base whose name we will always remember. Murphy wants to ensure we never forget the names of the men who sacrificed so much in a war that came to so little.

***When Broken Glass Floats: Growing Up Under the Khmer Rouge—a Memoir.*** Chanrithy Him. New York: W.W. Norton, 2000. 330 pp. \$23.95 cloth; \$13.95 paper.

**Reviewed by David M. Kirkham, United States Air Force Academy**

Perhaps not since Anne Frank's diary has there been as stirring an account of a young girl's efforts to survive and thrive in a world torn apart by terror as Chanrithy Him's *When Broken Glass Floats*. In the mid-1970s, when American children were watching "Laverne and Shirley" on television, practicing piano, playing Little League Baseball or grinding through schoolwork, thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of Cambodian children were rising each morning at dawn for a breakfast of boiled leaves and a full day of exhausting toil in Khmer Rouge rice paddies and labor camps. These children, many of whom were starved or worked to death, form the ensemble cast of Chanrithy Him's memoir of the life she and her family had thrust upon them during the Pol Pot regime.

Now a medical researcher in Oregon studying Post-Traumatic Stress disorders among Cambodian survivors, Him intimates in the book's introduction her own lingering trauma and that of the four members of her family of twelve who came through the killing fields and camps. Her history takes her family from difficult times through times of utter horror, relentlessly taxing the imagination and tearing at the heart of the reader until the last page: first she loses two infant brothers—to circumstances likely avoidable in better times. Then her father is executed, hands tied behind his back, with sharp blows to the head with a garden hoe. Soon another brother, then a sister dies. Her mother, despite months turning into years of privation, holds the family together under the most unmanageable of circumstances until she too succumbs to starvation, with its accompanying edema and dysentery.

It is estimated that perhaps more than 2,000,000 Cambodians died in the few short years of Pol Pot's power—up to a fourth of the population. As in all cases of genocide, the numbers themselves are too great or abstract to comprehend, and numbers alone generally fail to move human beings to action and strong policy. Him's book takes the reader out of the numbers game, however, by providing representative samples of just a few of the mass of victims. Those few become very human and real to us in the process.

Him's style is to state facts directly and to understate emotions, in such a way that resonates truth without recourse to hyperbole and rhetorical flour-

ishes. The most figurative aspects of her account arise from her sprinklings of Cambodian folk sayings, folklore and superstitions, of the sort that still find modern Cambodians sacrificing cigarette butts and Cola cans at the grave of Pol Pot, to invoke his blessings to win the lottery (*New York Times*, June 23, 2001). During the transition from plenty to poverty, for instance, Him's father encourages her not to be picky about food. "There comes a time when a grain of rice sticks on a dog's tail, and everyone will fight for it," he explains (52). On another occasion, when her brother, Tha, becomes mortally ill, her parents are told by a "spiritual adviser" that he cannot urinate or speak because "Tha has peed on someone's grave" (39). When food is nearly non-existent, and Him herself becomes ill, she cries out for fried fish with tamarind paste. "These are foods her father would ask for," declare her onlookers, who then determine she is possessed by his ghost (112). The title of the book itself comes from Him's wiser older sister, she also to perish, explaining to Chanrithy that broken glass floats when evil is winning over good, but that "soon *klok* [a type of squash] will float instead, and then the good will prevail" (23-24).

Throughout Him's narrative, the reader senses her sadness, but also her graciousness and gratitude, and commitment to do what she can to help Pol Pot's victims and to try to prevent similar situations within the extent of her power. This account is a significant contribution to that end. She ranks with Anne Frank among sensitive, adolescent observers of the worst that humanity has offered. Him's memoir is simply and hauntingly powerful. Born in a country where literacy was once a death warrant, her writing reminds us what reading can do to preserve those institutions most likely to protect the human spirit, mind and body. Read the book—it is well, well worth the time.

***John Updike and the Cold War: Drawing the Iron Curtain.*** D. Quentin Miller. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001. xi + 192 pp. \$29.95, cloth.

**Reviewed by Stephen J. Rippon, United States Air Force Academy**

While some critics look to John Updike as the voice of suburban America, and others see Updike as “the twentieth century’s great white Protestant hope” (13), Suffolk University professor D. Quentin Miller argues for the Cold War as a “lasting and pervasive context for considering his work” (14). Miller’s claim may be premature considering that Updike continues to write prolifically and innovatively, but his study does shed helpful light on much of Updike’s work to date, especially the *Rabbit* novels.

Miller effectively shows how Updike’s stories of marital tension and adultery parallel America’s Cold War competition with Russia in a chapter entitled “Zero-Sum Marriages, Global Games.” As Miller says, “Problems arise in Updike’s fictional world when characters misappropriate the importance of global competition by attempting to translate it into marriage” (39). In a later chapter entitled “Seeing How the Other Half Lives,” Miller advances his argument by bringing together several Updike passages that portray the Soviet Union as feminine in contrast to the masculine United States, deepening our understanding of the resonance between international and domestic conflict in Updike’s fiction.

Miller makes commendable use of Updike’s manuscripts at Harvard University’s Houghton Library to demonstrate the author’s ambivalence toward Americans’ responses to the Cold War. He examines Updike’s corrected drafts of two “Notes and Comment” pieces written for the *New Yorker* in 1959 about the Soviets’ unmanned moon landing and the infamous American quiz show scandal, respectively. Updike, as the manuscripts reveal, revised passages that were overtly critical of Americans’ indifference to the events; for example, the quiz show scandal seemed “scarier than twenty Sputniks,” Updike wrote and then deleted (48). Updike scholars should note the success of Miller’s methods and expand on them—in contexts beyond the Cold War—as more manuscripts become available. In addition to his fruitful archival research, Miller draws on Updike’s generous responses to questions posed in personal correspondence with the author.

A chapter entitled “Vietnam and the Politics of Undovishness” explores how the *New York Times* in 1967 identified Updike as “unequivocally for” U.S.

involvement in the Vietnam War—an unpopular stand among his literary contemporaries. Here Miller uses a chapter from Updike’s 1989 memoir *Self-Consciousness*, “On Not Being a Dove,” to show that while Updike’s position was more nuanced than it appeared, Updike “was not quite prepared to accept the idea that the clear-cut global issues of the 1950s had become complicated and difficult to think through in the 1970s” (75).

After Vietnam, Miller argues, Updike’s characters longed for the simplicity of the early days of the Cold War. Harry “Rabbit” Angstrom’s lament, “I miss it [. . .] The Cold War. It gave you a reason to get up in the morning,” from Updike’s 1990 novel *Rabbit at Rest*, inspired the title and theme of Miller’s final chapter. Miller explains, “As Harry Angstrom says in his dying years, the Russians, like the afterlife, kept America within bounds somehow. Without predetermined boundaries, Updike’s Americans will have to set their own” (171). Miller points out how Rabbit worried about more chaotic possibilities for the future after the terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Scotland.

While Miller credibly traces Updike’s works through the lens of the Cold War, his study sometimes betrays its limitations. For example, he writes: “The Vietnam era, if not the war itself, was about the break-up of a nation, and it is no accident that divorce becomes Updike’s leitmotif during Vietnam and after, biographical considerations aside” (84). That last phrase, “biographical considerations aside,” is worth noting as an indication of what Miller’s book does not attempt to do: for all his discussion of marital tension, adultery, and divorce in Updike’s fiction, Miller only hints at the parallels these troubled marriages have with Updike’s first marriage, which ended in divorce in the mid-1970s. Readers might have a hard time weighing Miller’s argument for the centrality of the Cold War in Updike’s work, because he too quickly dismisses other possibilities: not only biographical influences, but those of place, religion, reading—and sheer imaginative giftedness.

The danger of publishing studies of living writers is their art continues to develop. In the last decade Updike has published experimental fiction such as 1997’s *Toward the End of Time*, with its mystical/science-fictional elements and futuristic setting. Miller admits, in considering *Toward the End of Time*, that Updike’s recent work implies a “willingness to move into that future” (182). In time, the Cold War may prove not to be as “lasting and pervasive” a context as Miller claims; it would be a shame to see a single era close the Iron Curtain on Updike’s fiction.

***War, Memory, and the Politics of Humor: The Canard Enchaîné and World War I.*** Allen Douglas. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. 385 pp. \$65.00 cloth.

**Reviewed by Michael S. Neiberg, United States Air Force Academy**

If, as the axiom states, truth is the first casualty of war, one might expect humor to be the second. Not so, demonstrates Allen Douglas in an insightful and rich account of the 1915 birth and subsequent development of the French satirical weekly, The *Canard Enchaîné*. This book is in part a history of the weekly's ability to not only survive, but flourish during wartime. It is also, however, a perceptive study of how a society reacts to the official lies and half-truths (*bouillage de crâne* or "skull stuffing" in French) that inevitably accompany war. Subversive, left-leaning, and anti-clerical, the *Canard's* creators envisioned a magazine that would stand against the patriotic gore of the more mainstream newspapers. Through satire and irony, the *Canard* beat the censors and lampooned elements of French society without appearing anti-patriotic or treasonous.

As Douglas argues, this approach was uniquely French. A German or even a British journal would have had great difficulty affirming its support for the war while at the same time savagely criticizing the people who led it. The French tradition of patriotic opposition to entrenched authority gave the *Canard* and its editors tremendous latitude, even in wartime. That it was able to do so is a function of the essential consistency of its message with French democratic tradition. The *Canard* divided French society between those who did their duty (especially, but only, at the front) on the one hand and the *embusqués* (shirkers) and *mercanti* (war profiteers) on the other. The *Canard* was thus able to position itself as the newspaper of the trenches, juxtaposing its content to that of the more conventional newspapers, seen as mere organs of the establishment.

Douglas's great challenge is to bring to the reader the humor of a journal that was so dependent upon context, pun, and irony. These traits are not easy to convey across several decades and a foreign language. What could have been a great drawback to the book, however, becomes a strength as Douglas successfully places the jokes and satirical quips in context. For example, the 1919 *Canard* headline "A Great Sports Anniversary, the Second Paris-Bordeaux" needs to be understood as an insult to the French government's two wartime evacuations to Bordeaux, one in 1914, the other (the one com-

memorated in the headline) in 1919. The headline also underscores the essential *Canard* outlook on the war: it was the government, not the troops, who had ignominiously fled.

The paper's pessimistic view of the post-war period is evinced by its frequent use of the phrase "the next last war." It pilloried the government for fighting the Rif war and the war against the Druze in Syria, offering a prize to the first person who could explain "what the hell we are doing in Syria." It saw in the French financial crises of the 1920s an abandonment of France by the United States (whom it called "Uncle Shylock" for its insistence on repayment of war debts) and an unwillingness of the Germans to pay reparations. Most importantly, it criticized the French government for letting victory turn into ruin. The latter theme of victory as no better than defeat was a common feature of the 1920s. In one cartoon, two Frenchmen stand in front of a food store and tax office. The younger man says, "August 1914! *Belle époque*, sir, *belle époque*." "Yes" replies the elder, "we were not yet victorious."

The book would have benefited from more illustrations and more direct reproductions of the cartoons and illustrations that made the *Canard* so effective. The book contains only thirteen illustrations, and many of these are not very helpful for understanding the main argument. Still, this book is important for its analysis of French reactions to both the horrors of the war and the offensive ways that profiteers, politicians, and shirkers sought to use the war for their own gain. It is also an insightful study of language and the ways that it both supports and opposes war.

***The Spy Novels of John LeCarré: Balancing Ethics and Politics*** Myron J. Aronoff. New York: Palgrave, 1999. 316pp. \$21.95

**Reviewed by John M. Shaw, United States Air Force Academy**

Being a LeCarré buff for almost thirty years now, reading Myron Aronoff's study of John LeCarré's works was an enjoyable trip down memory lane. However, Aronoff successfully shows the novels are more than just good stories; they also include sophisticated views on topics of importance to every thinking citizen of a democracy.

A professor of Anthropology and Political Science at Rutgers University, Aronoff developed the book from a series of seminars and lectures during the late 1980s and early 1990s that considered the relationship between democracies and their intelligence services. He argues LeCarré's novels use espionage as a metaphor for politics, the characters embodying the conflicts between individual morality and the needs of the state. Analyzing many of these figures, Aronoff believes the ones most successful as both spies and people are those who achieve a balance between the demands of self and state, a condition he describes as "ambiguous moralism."

Aronoff develops *Spy Novels'* major themes, summarized in pages 11-13, in nine chapters. Chapter 1 looks at George Smiley, LeCarré's central protagonist, as a liberal humanist beset by doubts about the institution he serves (British Intelligence) and the assumptions his fellow spies hold. The next six chapters are more thematic, focusing on loyalty and betrayal, deception, the relationship between ends and means, how communication and personalities may cause ambiguity and misunderstandings, Britain's intelligence services in the context of its decline relative to America, and LeCarré's depiction of the craft of intelligence. Chapter 8 involves the parallels and differences between fiction and actual intelligence work. The final chapter argues for establishing and keeping "a *balance* between ethical and political imperatives" (13).

Aronoff is most persuasive in his discussion of LeCarré's characters as illustrative of the various problems existing in democracies' use of intelligence. His frequent (if repetitive) use of pertinent examples sufficiently supports his main arguments for LeCarré's works as being metaphors for politics, and for the tensions between individual conscience and the national interest. Particularly helpful in this sense is his inclusion of a 21-page *Dramatis Personae* following the final chapter, giving a paragraph on each of LeCarré's key figures: for the reader lacking Aronoff's knowledge of the complete

works, this is a useful aid. Nearly as valuable are the extensive endnotes, generally expository.

The argument falters when Aronoff turns from the literary criticism and analysis of the first seven chapters to assess real-world intelligence. Chapter 8, "Fiction and the Real World of Espionage," is the weakest in the book, bottoming out with his quoting former CIA Director John Deutch on how other CIA officials' arrogance "let them ignore the fundamentals of their profession" (189). Given Deutch's many security violations while Director, Aronoff's heavy reliance on his opinions is a major error.

There are other flawed claims. For example, "The CIA knowingly gave the president and the Department of Defense reports from agents it knew were under control by the Russians" (188). The last sentence on that same page, however, complains that the CIA ought to have suspected those agents had been turned. Either the CIA knew or it did not, yet Aronoff damns it both ways. He criticizes Allied commanders in World War II for not bombing rail lines to Auschwitz, missions that "could have easily been undertaken" (91). This cavalierly dismisses both the difficulties of military operations and the temporary nature of interdiction strikes. The National Reconnaissance Office, he says, gets perhaps 80% of the US intelligence budget; the Federation of American Scientists' website puts the figure at closer to 22%.

*Spy Novels* is superb when it sticks to analyzing LeCarré's works as both literature and metaphors for politics; Aronoff's discussion of the fictional spies' struggles between the dictates of conscience and duty is particularly strong. When he starts judging "real world" activity, though, his arguments falter. Aronoff is not necessarily wrong; the CIA's Winter-Spring 2001 issue of *Studies in Intelligence* includes two opposing articles on the need for openness in an intelligence service and its records, the point he is making. That the CIA is at least thinking about and discussing the topic is encouraging, but Aronoff appears unwilling to give it the benefit of the doubt. Until he acknowledges the real problems and enemies that democracies' intelligence services face, and offers practical solutions instead of sanctimony, readers should approach his book solely for its insights on LeCarré's novels.

***Poets of World War II.*** Edited by Harvey Shapiro. New York, New York: The Library of America, 2003. xxxii + 262 pp. \$20.00 paper.

**Reviewed by Jeffrey C. Alfier, Ramstein AB, Germany**

Was it so hard, Achilles,  
So very hard to die?

—Patrick Shaw-Stewart, Gallipoli, 1917

This anthology is one in a series published by the American Poets Project, an effort intended to produce a first-time “compact national library of poets” (back cover). The volume under review here consists of 120 poems by 62 poets, where 42 are veterans, the others non-veterans, thus making it similar in concept to kindred anthologies such as Jan Barry’s *Peace is Our Profession: Poems and Passages of War Protest* (1981). As such, it includes works by conscientious objectors and other war-resisters such as Robinson Jeffers and William Stafford. All the contributors are a credible collection of Objectivists, Imagists, “followers of the formal school of Southern verse and dense rhetoric...” (xxxii). The editor is Harvey Shapiro, an Ivy League-educated poet, and veteran of thirty-five combat missions as a B-17 tail gunner. He sets a solemn tone for the volume, stating that although the Allies were victorious, “the sight of dead bodies is scattered among these poems the way bodies were washed up on the shores of invasion beaches...” (xix). Moreover, his purpose for this anthology is “to demonstrate that the American poets of this war produced a body of work that has not yet been recognized for its clean and powerful eloquence” (xx).

Shapiro gathers some of the best poetry of the war. Included are those infrequently published but no less majestically poignant air war poems by John Ciardi, James Dickey, Richard Eberhart, Richard Hugo (though his *opus magnum*, *Mission to Linz*, does not appear here), Randall Jarrell, and Howard Nemerov. Some of the best poems of ground combat are by Louis Simpson, George Oppen, and Anthony Hecht. Several poems are quite moving, such as James Tate’s *The Lost Pilot* (218-220), written for his father who was killed in action when Tate was five months old, and Peter Viereck’s ‘*Vale*’ from *Carthage* (110-111), which Viereck wrote on the occasion of his brother’s death in the European theater. There are sublime elegies like Vladimir Nabokov’s *When he was small, when he would fall* (20), and Richard Eberhart’s *A Ceremony by the Sea* (31-34). Many poets achieve a powerful austerity through

just a few lines, as Samuel Menashe does in his 18-syllable, 5-line poem, *Beachhead* (214). Yet the poems here are not solely about combat and its affects, for they also inform the wider ontology of war verse that emerges into the foreground of military victory to ask the unanswered questions of race and class. Compelling examples are Witter Bynner's *Defeat*, and Gwendolyn Brook's *Negro Hero* (1, 115).

For enthusiasts of poetry and studies of how war relates to literature and the arts, Shapiro's book proves an exemplary and diverse collection, and a perfect companion to Leon Stokesbury's *Articles of War: A Collection of American Poetry About World War II* (1990). It includes an Introduction by Shapiro, and a very helpful biographical notes section. Ever since Plato's *Cratylus* (ca. 360 BC) there has been a debate over how poetry can close the aesthetic space between the poetry reader's expectations and the poet's ability to meet them. This work accomplishes that closure quite effectively despite the decades that have passed since the end of the Second World War.

***With Sheridan in the Final Campaign Against Lee, by Lt. Col. Frederick C. Newhall, Sixth Pennsylvania Cavalry.*** Edited by Eric J. Wittenberg. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2002. xxvi + 212 pp. \$34.95 cloth.

**Reviewed by Jeffrey C. Alfier, Ramstein AB, Germany**

*I forgive you. I know you are deluded.*

—RM Campbell, Confederate soldier, from a note to a Union soldier

For much of the American Civil War, Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick C. Newhall (1840—1898) served as provost marshal and staff officer for Union cavalry commander Lieutenant-General Philip Sheridan. Written in 1866, Newhall's memoir records events fresh in his mind. The editor of the work, Eric J. Wittenberg, is an historian and lawyer who is an expert on Sheridan, and author of *Glory Enough for All: Sheridan's Second Raid and the Battle for Trevilian Station* (Brassey's, Inc. 2002).

As erudite as he is, at times Newhall's encomia for Sheridan—complete with quaint limericks—borders on fawning. However, his dotting does not blur the primary value of the book: demonstrating Sheridan's excellence at the operational level of warfare as he directs the maneuver of divisions and corps to interdict Confederate troop movements and deny them the use of march routes and approaches. Throughout the narrative, Newhall conscientiously records Sheridan's part in key battles in the Virginia area of operations in the latter part of the war, including Saylor's Creek, Dinwiddie Court House, Five Forks, and Appomattox. His inclusion of Sheridan's troop dispatches is a valuable part of this historical record. He not only details the actions of Sheridan in the pursuit of retreating Confederate forces, but he also sorts out divergent accounts of the same battle, where different Union generals take credit for victory.

Wittenberg includes several enlightening appendices. The first one is a helpful order of battle for Union and Confederate forces in the Appomattox campaign. A second appendix includes Major General Gouverneur K. Warren's defense of his conduct at the Battle of Five Forks, on April 1, 1865. Sheridan had relieved Warren as V Corps commander for slackness in responding to attack orders. A third appendix is Newhall's rejoinder to Warren. In his footnotes, Wittenberg includes brief and interesting biographies of the Union and Confederate soldiers Newhall mentions, explains obscure terms, and summarizes the combat actions cited by Newhall.

The fact that Newhall wrote his memoir just a year after the end of the war coupled with his weaving Sheridan into florid literary analogies makes one wonder if he was writing a preemptive broadside against the general's potential detractors. Admittedly, this is subjective surmising on this reviewer's part. Wittenberg's introduction of Newhall's English heritage may seem pedantic to some readers. The maps are few, but very useful. The print is small, with the footnotes being of even smaller font. Notwithstanding, the author's research compares favorably with broader biographical studies of Sheridan (e.g. Paul Hutton, *Sheridan and His Army*, 1999). Wittenberg is an expert historiographer, making his book an outstanding addition to studies of generalship in the final campaigns of the Civil War. He has done readers of this formative time in American history a genuine service by bringing Newhall's memoir back into print.

***The Wound and the Dream—Sixty Years of American Poems about the Spanish Civil War.*** Cary Nelson. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press. 2002. x + 329 pp. \$19.95 paper.

**Reviewed by Jeffrey C. Alfier, Ramstein AB, Germany**

The fate the world has given me is to struggle to write powerfully enough to draw others into the horror.

—Bruce Weigl, *The Circle of Hanh*

With the publication of *The Wound and the Dream—Sixty Years of American Poetry about the Spanish Civil War*, English professor and cultural historian Cary Nelson has produced a meticulous and compelling anthology of poetry that underscores the fascination that the antifascist cause of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) has long held for American poets. When the war ended two groups of poets more than all others returned to the undying theme of Spain: Spanish exiles and Americans. Throughout his book of one hundred and twelve poems compiled from fifty-six poets, Nelson gives readers a sense of “the collective and almost choral nature” of the war’s poetry, as well as its “lyrical and rhetorical invention” that gives it its most moving and persuasive expression (6, 28). Moreover, as he reminds us, the poetry of this war was read on the streets and in the trenches.

Like poems of any tragedy the magnitude of the Spanish Civil War, the best are not the ones gloriously trumpeting broad causes or agendas, but instead are those that reveal poignant particulars of individual lives. In an allusion to Clio—the first Muse—and the inevitability of wartime death, James Rorty writes, / Life takes its final meaning / From chosen death; this stirrup-cup / History, the ancient, greedy bitch (92). Describing the lives of children crippled by bombing from Franco’s aircraft, Leslie Ullman speaks to the way, / Someone dressed them / in lace and gabardine, like the antique figures... / Their deaths seemed to rise inside them / like the sleep of the newly-born (240). Yet, in many of the poems, polemic slogans interspersed in the lines disturb the continuity of the verse. Norman Rosten inserts, / MADRID!—TOMB!—FASCISM! /—amid the lines of his poem, *The March* (97). However, the war’s contemporaneous poets could not afford the literary luxury of distance from their subject; theirs was a moral urgency.

There is little to criticize in this enlightening volume. Nelson goes a bit far when he asserts that Americans willfully forgot the meaning of the Spanish

Civil War. Secondly, a more complete index would prove helpful. Perhaps the year the poems were written should have been included with the poems themselves, not in the Contents pages (better access to context).

These light criticisms aside, Nelson's volume is a welcome addition to the growing body of poetry resurrected from under the avalanche of High Modernism, and is an excellent companion to earlier anthologies such as *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse* (Valentine Cunningham, 1980), and *Poetry of the Spanish Civil War* (Marilyn Rosenthal, 1975). Though many question the motives of the Stalinists and the Iberian Left that composed so much of the antifascist forces, the poetry of the Spanish Civil War—as Nelson conclusively shows—“was one of the indisputable terms in which history burnt its name into the living flesh of its time” (54). This certainly makes historians and poets appreciative of Nelson's volume.

***Rendezvous With Death—American Poems of the Great War.*** Mark W. Van Wienan. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002. xiv + 363 pp. \$19.95 paper; \$44.95 cloth.

**Reviewed by Jeffrey C. Alfier, Ramstein AB, Germany**

We owe the future  
the past, the long knowledge  
that is the potency of time to come.

—Wendell Berry, *At a Country Funeral*

English professor Mark W. Van Wienan has mined a wealth of poetry from over 140 mainly obscure sources that underscores an explicit American response to “the push and pull of political commitments” of a society coming to grips with the war which irrevocably ended their last vestiges of international isolationism (26). In *Rendezvous With Death*, Van Wienan expands upon his earlier work, *Partisans and Poets: The Political Work of American Poetry in the Great War* (Cambridge, 1997). The book is arranged in chronological chapters, with a 64-page Introduction, and illuminating introductions to each chapter.

Before its declaration of war against the Central Powers, America had to a large extent inherited Britain’s Kiplingesque belief that the Great War was being waged for the survival of the entire civilized world. Yet, many Americans were non-interventionists, or outright pacifists, believing that the country should not support the Allies unless the rights of the oppressed at home were satisfied first. Whatever modern readers determine about the aesthetic and literary quality of these poems, a high percentage of them tethered debates surrounding American intervention to woman’s suffrage, international socialism, civil rights, workers quality of life, the cause of world peace, and militarism. As such, this poetic outpouring must be seen in its cultural and social context, for how else are Americans today to make sense of poems supporting such causes, or those calling for patriotic knitting, food conservation, or expressing simplistic jingoism and angry polemics. But as Van Wienan reminds us, the poems of those war years were evaluated not for literary quality but for their partisanship. Still, today’s readers will find many of them quite good, their subject matter transcending the age in which they were written, an age where newspapers, booklets, pamphlets, and journals became the exigent tool of a poetry that rose from all levels of society. There are a few American

female poets who are not included in Van Wienan's anthology, but they may not appear because they were expatriates, or were otherwise obscure (see Nosheen Khan, *Woman's Poetry of the First World War*, 1998).

The broad themes of the 150 poems of this anthology touch upon issues still relevant in the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: institutionalized violence, political repression, militarism, and international relations. I agree with Van Wienan's assessment that the most important legacy of these poems is that of the war's dissident voices, since in them lies the true expression of American pluralism and democratic tolerance. This fact alone makes this book an invaluable contribution to the study of wartime poetry.

***War Stories: Remembering World War II.*** Elizabeth Mullener. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002, xxiii + 332 pp., photos, bibliography, index. \$34.95.

**Reviewed by Matthew H. Adams, United States Air Force Academy**

Opening a book about World War II is like standing in the chow line during boot camp: you dream of getting something new and exciting, like lasagna or angel food cake, but alas, you're just served the same old chipped beef you've stomached since day one. If the book is a typical history, it is likely to do justice to the war's big picture, like detailing large troop movements, analyzing political alliances, and dissecting important battles, but its third-person point of view is so detached that you will probably struggle to connect emotionally with the subject matter. Memoirs, on the other hand, are more affective because of their immediacy, but often wind up as a mass of vague memories with little historical mooring because they are produced by amateur writers who fail to place their recollections adequately within a broader context of events.

One of the beauties of Mullener's *War Stories* (which she began as a series of articles in the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* on September 1, 1989, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of WWII) is that it capitalizes on the strengths of both genres to create a portrait of the war that satisfies our need for history broadly considered, but that also quenches our thirst for those concrete, first-hand accounts that make history pulse and breathe. It is these contextualized accounts, derived from Mullener's interviews with war veterans—all, remarkably, living in New Orleans—that makes the book such a compelling read.

What is most amazing about Mullener's compilation of 53 interview-based vignettes is that despite limiting itself to the stories of veterans from just one city, it contains a stunning variety of perspectives on the war. One sailor talks about his fear of getting trapped in the belly of the USS *Yorktown* during the Battle of Midway. An airman explains what it was like flying in Jimmy Doolittle's famous Tokyo raid. An army nurse who worked in Italy shares anecdotes from her wartime diary. An engineer remembers the nightmare of directing traffic on Omaha beach during the Normandy invasion. A briefer to General Patton, Hungarian resistance worker, Tuskegee airman, combat medic, Red Ball Express trucker, witness to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Potsdam Conference band leader, liberator at Dachau, prisoner at Dachau,

Nuremberg trial guard, Russian soldier in the Battle of Stalingrad, Medal of Honor recipient, Bataan Death March survivor, and Women's Army Corps (WAC) member, among many others, all tell their stories, with Mullener's superior help, to paint a wholly original and composite portrait of the war.

If unearthing such a wide spectrum of experience in one city shows that the narrowing of focus can paradoxically expand understanding, so do many of the interviewees' stories. While they build upon tight anecdotes and concrete details, the stories reveal human values and truths that transcend the words on the page. If one wants to learn about honor, courage, or humility, one could do worse than read about Jefferson Joseph de Blanc's Medal of Honor ceremony where Harry Truman told him, "I'd rather have that medal than be President of the United States" (100-101). And it is difficult to imagine the human spirit's longing for justice better encapsulated than by the story of Christine Strevinsky who, when she was only nine years old, and after learning that a mother and baby were brutally killed by a Nazi soldier, coolly decided to take the law into her own hands. And a U.S. Army soldier who still keeps in touch with the Italians he captured during the invasion of Sicily, as well as an infantry captain who to this day writes letters to the German colonel whose troops he fought at the Siegfried line along the Mosel river, both show that as time goes on, wartime ideologies and political loyalties are trifles compared to the power of personal attachments and a common recognition of human worth.

But perhaps what will be most indelibly stamped in readers' memories are the hundreds of vivid images elicited by Mullener's interviews. Some of these snapshots are horrible, like the shark attacks in the Pacific or the lampshade made of human skin at Buchenwald. But some are festive, like the wedding in New Guinea where the bride, a WAC member, wore boots and parachute material for a wedding dress, or the Mardi Gras ball in Tunisia attended by "four Hitlers, a Churchill, a Hirohito, and an Eleanor Roosevelt, the latter two of whom were equipped with false teeth fashioned by the unit's dental corps" (127). In the end, such pictures resurrect the war's human dimension, with all of its heroism, horror, happiness, and heartbreak.

Mullener's *War Stories* is a unique addition to our knowledge of World War II. Its historical research is informative, and the anecdotes are so idiosyncratic and illuminating that it would have been a tragedy had they not come to light. But one final feat of Mullener's should be mentioned in parting. Despite the fact that *War Stories* contains relatively little cynicism and skepticism towards America's actions in the war, and though its tone is predominantly

patriotic, the queasiness typically produced by such a presentation is conspicuously absent. Mullener manages to instill patriotic sentiment without being sentimental, which, in this reviewer's opinion, is a minor miracle. Thus, when Robert Bourgeoise sums up his participation in Doolittle's raid, his subsequent trek across China to escape the Japanese, and his eventual return to America by saying, "Man, there ain't nothing like this old U.S.A.," we can all say the same thing, and actually mean it.

***Sherman: A Soldier's Life***. Lee Kennett. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001. 448 pp. \$35.00, cloth; \$14.95, paper.

**Reviewed by Jeanne T. Heidler, United States Air Force Academy**

The publication of four scholarly biographies of William Tecumseh Sherman in the last decade bears testimony to the controversy that still surrounds this fascinating man. The latest effort is Lee Kennett's *Sherman: A Soldier's Life*, an excellent analytical examination of Sherman as a young officer, a failed businessman, a struggling commander early in the Civil War, and finally one of its most successful generals. Sherman's complex personality has stirred many biographers to the difficult task of comprehending the man and the forces that seemed to drive him. Lee Kennett not only tries to plumb Sherman's motivations behind his personal life, he also clarifies his subject's contributions to military science.

Kennett's Sherman begins the Civil War as an insecure man, anxious to do well, and fearful that the conflict will be his last chance to become a success. His apprehension temporarily paralyzes him, causing him to overestimate his enemies, and prompts him, even after his successful rise, to continue blaming others for his occasional failures, a disagreeable habit that Sherman carried beyond the war in his famous *Memoirs*. Kennett believes the tendency and other eccentricities resulted from Narcissistic Personality Disorder and thus joins a long line of historians and mental health professionals who have attempted to attribute Sherman's more bizarre actions to mental illness. Kennett, however, cautions that "a posthumous diagnosis of mental illness . . . is at best tentative" (146). Nonetheless, he agrees with John F. Marszalek and Michael Fellman that Sherman's disordered childhood made him angry, insecure, and obsessive, at least shaping his personality and perhaps causing a form of mental illness that afflicted him as an adult.

Kennett generally strives for a balanced view of Sherman's behavior. For example, while some biographers believe that Sherman's post-war womanizing resulted from his failed marriage to Ellen Ewing, Kennett sees the relationship with Ellen as more multifaceted. He acknowledges the couple's difficulties, largely blaming them on Ellen's extreme religious faith and her strong and persistent ties to her parents. But he conversely cites considerable evidence to prove that the pair's strong bonds of affection never withered and that Ellen's death dealt the aging general a sharp emotional blow.

Biographers tend to divide on Sherman's motivation for conducting his

notably destructive March to the Sea and subsequent Carolinas Campaign. Some claim that Sherman was provoked by rage at Southerners for starting the war, while others say he was spurred by a genuine affection for Southerners that drove him to end the war quickly for their benefit. Kennett's careful reading of Sherman's wartime papers and his post-war *Memoirs* has caused him to adopt a simpler explanation: Sherman unleashed his soldiers on the Deep South because he plainly believed that treating noncombatants in a conventional way merely prolonged a war already too long as it stretched into its third year.

In that context, Kennett also explains how Sherman contemplated not only military solutions for ending the war but also long-term political answers for the nation's postwar problems. In some of his most interesting interpretations, he offers a detailed analysis of Sherman's *Memoirs*. While the general's lively writing style and willingness to confront controversial issues produced an excellent autobiography and memoir of the war, Sherman did not limit himself to these subjects. His recommendations for the future make the *Memoirs* an important contribution to later military developments, and Kennett ably explains these facets of Sherman's thinking.

Kennett has done a fine job in a lively narrative that provides us with a comprehensive, analytical biography of William Tecumseh Sherman that justifiably takes rank with the best scholarship on this captivating and complex figure.

## Society for the Interdisciplinary Study of Social Imagery

Fourteenth Annual Conference

### CALL FOR PAPERS

#### THE IMAGE OF THE HERO

(Heroine, Anti-hero, Villain)  
in Literature, Media, and Society

March 18-20, 2004

Colorado Springs, Colorado

An interdisciplinary conference exploring the image of the HERO – in culture, literature, philosophy, history, politics, economics, film, television, art, music, social theory, business. All versions of the hero are included – heroine, anti-hero, superhero, real-life hero, etc., as well as all foils of the hero, that is, all villains. All eras and cultures are appropriate, including traditional heroes and tricksters. **A special symposium on War, Terrorism, and the Hero will be part of the conference. This symposium is sponsored by *War, Literature, and the Arts: an international journal of the humanities*. Papers accepted for this symposium will be considered for publication in an upcoming issue of WLA. Send symposium papers to Donald Anderson, Editor, WLA.** All aspects of heroism, and all contrasts with heroism (villainy, cowardice, passivity, etc.) are relevant. Possible topic areas include:

- \* The hero in literature, art, popular culture: novels, statues, movies, TV, songs, comics
- \* The hero and class, religion, culture, ethnicity; the issues of race, power, social control
- \* The classic hero (honorable, idealistic, noble): the anti-hero (cynical, violent, criminal)
- \* The hero through time – changing roles, images, contexts; the decline of the hero
- \* The male hero and the image of women; the role of sex
- \* The female hero and the image of men: the issues of gender
- \* Traditional heroes (honor, sacred order); individualistic heroes (freedom, defiance)
- \* Creativity and genius (science, literature, art); business and politics (leaders, charisma)
- \* Superheroes, action heroes, ordinary heroes, real-life heroes; genres and heroic images
- \* Villains (enemies) as heroic context; also cowardice, passivity, fear, danger, disorder
- \* War and terrorism [special symposium – see paragraph above and WLAjournal.com]
- \* Other imaginative variations - eclectic and innovative approaches are encouraged

An annual conference on the influence of images with a different thematic focus each year, including The Image of Violence, The Image of Technology, The Image of the Outsider (visit [www.colostate-pueblo.edu/sissi](http://www.colostate-pueblo.edu/sissi)). A conference *Proceedings* will be published from selected papers (and a special journal issue on War, Terrorism and the Hero is planned - see above).

Please submit a one-page abstract or a panel proposal with abstracts by December 8, 2003. Graduate students are welcome and organized panels are encouraged: *fax*: 719.549.2705, *email*: hero@colostate-pueblo.edu, *mail*: SISSI-Hero, Colorado State University-Pueblo, Pueblo, CO 81001-4901. Organizers: Will Wright, Professor of Sociology, Colorado State University-Pueblo and Steven Kaplan, Chancellor and Professor of English, University of Virginia-College at Wise. For further information contact Will Wright: 719.549.2538, wright@colostate-pueblo.edu. Sponsored by Colorado State University-Pueblo.

# BABY, LET'S MAKE A BABY

PLUS TEN MORE STORIES



KIRK CURNUTT

*Baby, Let's Make a Baby* is a collection of eleven stories that mine a range of mood and emotion, from comic absurdity to somber reflection. Whether set in the American South or in South America, in the war-ravaged cityscapes of Eastern Europe or along the eroding shores of the Great Lakes, these short fictions explore the dilemmas of complex and conflicted people trying to live with the things that they can't quite overcome.

featuring

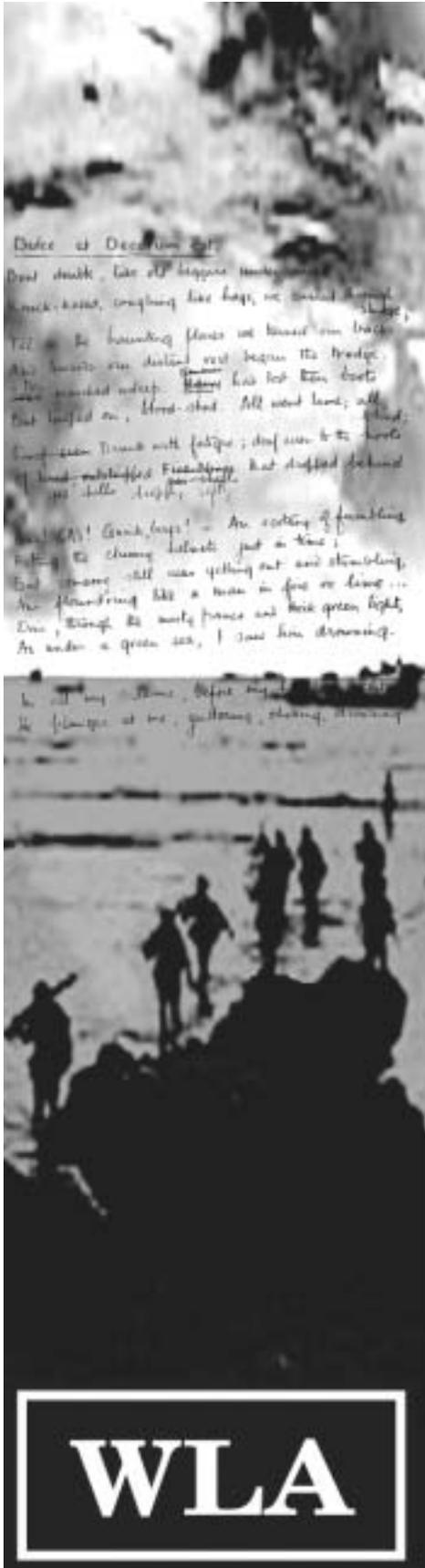
'Etude and Bell Tower'

Strangers' lives intersect on an Easter-  
eve interstate . . . A reluctant sniper  
receives an unexpected education in  
music . . . A husband withers under  
the weight of his wife's infidelity . . .  
The paterfamilias of a rural Brazilian  
city is shocked by the lengths he's will-  
ing to go to fight a tuberculosis out-  
break . . . A former teen-pop  
princess watches in dismay as a docu-  
mentary is culled from her life . . .

---

For information contact Tangelia Parker,  
[tparker@rivercitypublishing.com](mailto:tparker@rivercitypublishing.com)  
1-877-408-7078 • [www.rivercitypublishing.com](http://www.rivercitypublishing.com)





# War, Literature & the Arts

*An International Journal of the Humanities*

## Recent contributors:

Paul West	Samuel Bak
Richard Wilbur	Wendy Bishop
Andre Dubus	David Willson
W.D. Ehrhart	John Gery
Rolando Hinojosa	Carolyn Forché
Reg Saner	G.S. Shara Chandra
John Wolfe	Maggie Jaffe
Robert Pinsky	George Monteiro
Robert Morgan	Philip Caputo

## Praise for the journal:

Published since 1989 by the Air Force Humanities Institute at the U.S. Air Force Academy, WLA has long been an unusual and enticing journal. Orienting itself in relation to a topic many find abhorrent and coming from a military organization, it may, in some people's eyes, be foredoomed. But even the least prescient reader must realize the creative result of individual war-time experience. The literary artifact is not responsible for the situation; instead, the evil at least has this singular positive result. WLA provides a forum for the discussion of this material. Its 300 pages are so full of amazing material that one wonders how the editors manage matters. Essays, poems, fiction, reviews, interviews, and artwork round out extraordinary issues. This is a superior publication.

– Robert Hauptman, Editor,  
*Journal of Information Ethics*

## Further information:

<http://www.WLAjournal.com>  
Donald Anderson, Editor  
e: [donald.anderson@usafa.af.mil](mailto:donald.anderson@usafa.af.mil)  
p: 719.333.3930 f: 719.333.3932

Subscriptions for biannual journal available:  
one year \$10 | two years \$18 | three years \$24

**WLA**

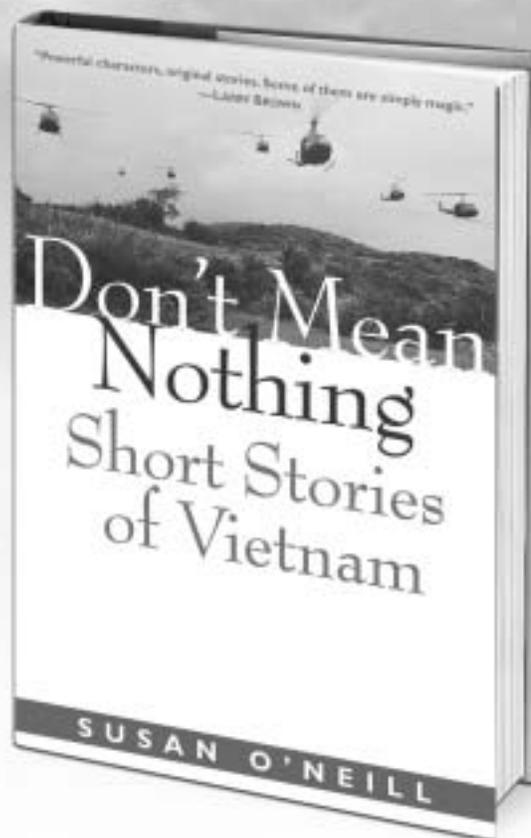
# What you don't know about Vietnam could fill a book. Now it has.

The first collection  
of stories by a woman  
who served in Vietnam.

They were the nurses who  
tended to the wounded, be  
they ally or enemy. Now their  
experiences are captured in a  
superb short story collection,  
filled with all the pain,  
power, love, and loss that  
Susan O'Neill knew in life—  
and recreates as art.

"Powerful characters,  
original stories."  
—LARRY BROWN,  
AUTHOR OF *BIG BAD LOVE*

"DON'T MEAN NOTHING  
is a valuable addition to  
the literature."  
—STEWART O'NAN



Ballantine Books  
[www.ballantinebooks.com](http://www.ballantinebooks.com)

A Ballantine Hardcover

## ABOUT THE TYPE

The Garamond typeface used in this book is based on the work of the sixteenth-century printer, publisher, and type designer Claude Garamond, who modeled his types after those of Venetian printers from the end of the previous century. The Garamond typeface and its variations have been a standard among book designers and printers for four centuries.

The italics are based on the types of Robert Granjon, a contemporary of Garamond.

The book was typeset by Lisa A. Ward of the Rohmann Joint Venture Air Force Academy Graphics Department.

