

The Gift of Valor: A War Story

Michael M. Phillips. New York:

Broadway Books, 2005, 241pp. \$19.95.

Reviewed by Elizabeth A. Muenger,
United States Air Force Academy

It is, of course a different time and a different war, a different theater, different tactics, different and better medical care, but as I read Michael Phillips' wrenching book, *The Gift of Valor*, I was struck by a great temptation to compare it to Lt Gen Hal Moore's and Joe Galloway's *We Were Soldiers Once... and Young*, which I had recently reread. *We Were Soldiers Once... and Young* captured in sad detail the battle of Ia Drang in the first year of active American involvement in Viet Nam, sparing no detail of the hand-to-hand fighting that took place, the gallantry and bravery of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry and companion units, the desperate measures taken and wounds received by its participants. We learned the stories of many of the soldiers, and briefly knew them as they struggled for three days to hold their positions against heavy odds. Above all, we heard the voice of an honest commander, who grieved for those who lost their lives while under his orders, and who after the battle felt "pride in what we had done, grief at our losses, and guilt that I was still alive."¹ We learn also of Lt Col Moore's wife Julie, who took it upon herself to be the one delivering the yellow telegrams of death to unknowing widows, forestalling their delivery by anonymous taxi drivers. Finally, we know, through the lengthy appendix, what the survivors of Ia Drang did after the battle, after their wounds, after the war. It is a sad and sobering book, one that brings us closer to the American infantrymen of Viet Nam, perhaps, than any other book about the war.

We Were Soldiers Once... and Young, however, remains the story of hundreds of men, and we remember the battle's ebbing and flowing more than any one combatant, striking though their stories are. In *The Gift of Valor*, Phillips introduces us to one soldier, a young Marine corporal, Jason Dunham, Third Battalion, Seventh Regiment, who died in Iraq in April 2004. Like so many others, he was young, only 22.

Jason Dunham, by all accounts, was a magnetic young man, handsome, eager to acquire the training and career opportunities the Marine Corps offered, eager to do a stint in the military as his father had. His parents, Dan and Debra Dunham, and his three siblings were proud of him—the eldest, the athlete, who had enlisted at 17 and who showed every sign of great success in the military. He was a sunny, competent commander of his squad, one who could lead other young men, inspire affection, and mediate the squabbles that beset any unit of people under stress and danger. We like Jason; there's nothing not to like.

Sent to Iraq in February 2004, Jason's regiment was one of the many employed in holding villages that were still displaying insurgent activity. The regiment's job was a combination of the old carrot-and-stick technique used only partially successfully in Viet Nam. In Husaybah, on the western border of Iraq, sticks were more common than carrots, for it was a contentious city, with staccato confrontations between American troops and insurgents. And, as in Viet Nam, who was to know exactly where the enemy was? Jason and his buddies sat around talking about defense tactics, patrol procedures. Grenades were a constant problem, for they could be rocket propelled, hand-held and thrown, or activated in close combat situations. A constant subject of discussion was Jason's assertion that one could effectively blunt the damage of a grenade by quickly smothering it with one's kevlar helmet, thereby containing the blast. Discussion went back and forth; Jason brought the subject up almost daily over bull session beers.

Out on ambush patrol one morning, several units ran into an insurgent attack. One was Jason's squad. In a hand-to-hand struggle, an Iraqi dropped a grenade at Jason's feet while struggling with him. There were others nearby. The explosion that followed left three wounded, one very seriously—Jason Dunham.

The heart of Jason's story is what followed—heroic effort by several medical teams to save his life. Jason's injuries were myriad, but his head wound threatened his survival. Initial examination categorized him as an "expectant," a gruesome term meaning "expected to die." In triage procedure, those who are "expectant" are made as pain-free and comfortable as possible, but are not treated, since their condition is regarded as hopeless. In the following few hours, however, one of the nurses thought he responded to her voice by hand squeezes—the doctors decided to send him to a better-equipped hospital to see if there were anything that could be done.

In the following eight days, Jason was transported to three different hospitals—two in Iraq and one in Germany, in an effort to save his life. In Baghdad, shrapnel was removed from his brain; nurses fought for stability in his cranial pressure readings; all who treated him worked and waited for a sign they could call a response. Eventually, in Germany, surgeons admitted that there was no hope, and

at that point the medical teams worked to get him back home so that his family could say their goodbyes.

Jason Dunham died on April 22, 2004 after his parents made the decision to remove his life support. His unit later discovered that indeed, the fragments of Jason's kevlar helmet proved that Jason had tried out his grenade-smothering theory to save his men. He has been nominated for a Medal of Honor, the second nomination of the Iraq conflict.

Jason's story is told with detail and dignity by Michael Phillips, a *Wall Street Journal* staff reporter who has had four tours of Iraq with the Third Battalion, Seventh Marines. He writes with the specificity of one who has seen what routine patrols involve, who knows how to read a mortar crater to plot its origin. Jason's story is one of valor, but only one heartbreaker among the many.

1. Lt Gen Harold G. Moore (Ret.) and Joseph L. Galloway. *We Were Soldiers Once... and Young*. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), p. 236

*Old Glory: American War
Poems from the Revolutionary
War to the War on Terror.*

Robert Hedin, Editor. Forward by
Walter Cronkite. New York: Persea
Books, 2004. 370 pp. \$22.50.

Reviewed by Kyle Torke,
United States Air Force Academy

Robert Hedin's collection *Old Glory: American War Poems from the Revolutionary War to the War on Terrorism* offers a handful of poems from every major military engagement in America's brief history. The anthology's ambitious sampling

provides an exciting taste of many different eras, styles, and perspectives; its breadth, however, compromises its depth: no one reading the collection will come away with a galvanized sense of the range of poetry in any one conflict. I can't fault Hedin for doing exactly what he sets out to do, though—skim the surface of the vast lake of American war poetry and scoop up a representative selection of the genre's poems. Hedin admits, at the conclusion of his comments, that the volume "represents only a sampling of the vast amount of war poetry." As with any good sampler, most of the bites are delicious.

The collection, however, posits a unique argument about how styles and sensibilities of poetry have changed as much as about how attitudes toward war and war itself have changed. We've come a long way from William Cullen Bryant's Revolutionary war poem "Song of Marion's Men" and the lines

Woe to the English soldiery,
That little dread us near!
On them shall light at midnight
A strange and sudden fear:
When, waking to their tents on fire,
They grasp their arms in vain,
And they who stand to face us
Are beat to earth again

When we get to Stephen Dobyns' poem "Favorite Iraqi Soldier" and the character, a man who should surrender to the conquering American army, slips into a tuxedo and breezes past the front line, dreaming of escape:

In his black suit he is already dressed for the part
and hopes to hitchhike to one of those Antarctic
islands and stroll around with the penguins.

The collection represents a series of trajectories that are marvelous for being together, like seeing in a graphic print the slime evolve, step by step, into the fish, each stage carefully drawn—or like watching the hunched-over ape-like creature come erect, ten degrees taller with each frame: the vision of the change is only possible outside of nature, perhaps only in a collection like Hedin's that puts the specimens side by side. As samples taken from flourishing habitat and collected, in a neat line, along other specimens taken from their environment, the collection provides a useful glance at the evolution and maturation of American war poetry.

Hedin's introduction, which is instructive and useful, and the table of contents attest to the volume's diversity of writers (two hundred poems and 140 different authors), though the voices of ethnic and women poets seem under-represented. I especially enjoyed the individual introduction to each selection that creates a historical and personal context that adds value to the poem as well as the sense of our culture's changes. When we learn, for example, that Phillis Wheatly was a slave whose book *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* was the first published collection by a black American, lines from her poem "To His Excellency General Washington" have more resonance:

Columbia's scenes of glorious toils I write.
While freedom's cause her anxious breast alarms,
She flashes dreadful in refulgent arms.

The (usually) prose pieces Hedin includes as prelude to each major section also provide a fresh and unique frame for the poems. President George W. Bush's address to the nation on October 7, 2001, announcing that U.S. strikes against Al-Qaida in Afghanistan have begun, which precedes the poems clustered under the title "War on Terrorism," provides a chilling political threat whose shadows lay across every poem in the group. Lawrence Ferlinghetti writes, for example, in his poem "Speak Out"

And a vast paranoia sweeps across the land
And America turns the attack on its Twin Towers
Into the beginning of the Third World War
The war with the Third World.

Many of the early poems are most valuable for their peek at history. I didn't enjoy reading the poems as poems until I arrived at those concerned with the First World War; but the earlier pieces informed and educated me in ways no text books has. I found the poems in the section about Vietnam especially vigorous and worth reading. When Hedin argues that "The Gulf War of 1990-1991 and the current War on Terrorism have produced no soldier-poets" and then includes no poems soldiers or others involved in the conflicted wrote, I felt cheated out of the immediacy I felt in all the other sections. The section on "The War on Terrorism" feels a little like a negative exposure of the poems from the "American Revolution": not uniformly poems of acclaim and hero-myth making, but uniformly poems of dissent and distrust.

My complaints about Hedin's collection *Old Glory* are minor, and his omissions are probably the consequence of editorial demands more than a malicious desire to exclude a particular group from his attempt to construct a serviceable canon of war literature. As an anthology, *Old Glory* provides a reasonably complete and valuable resource for anyone interested in a compendium of war poetry, and I imagine students (and their professors) taking (and teaching) war literature courses will find it an excellent resource to access the many voices and opinions necessary for an introductory essay of the terrain.

Walter Cronkite's foreward, though brief, empowers the contents of the book by laying squarely at poets' feet the power to relay and represent the truth of war: "the gift of telling what war is really like has been bestowed upon the poets." And Hedin's introduction confirms the poet's role as truth-teller, especially when he declares, "In moments of individual or national crises, poets sweep away the many layers of illusion and uncover a deeper stratum of meanings that otherwise might be lost." The collection represents, for Hedin, "the truth" about war, but the trajectory of concerns and tone from the Revolutionary War poems to writings about Desert Storm suggest something quite different: poets create myths, and those myths can celebrate the heroic achievement of battlefield glory or reveal the horrible ironies, deceits, and ravages of warfare. Poets of the Revolutionary War, for example, "kept the war's terrible realities at a distance" and glorified commanders and the epic struggle for America's freedom from an evil oppressor. By the time we encounter the poets of the First World War, however, "one finds little if any glory, no exultation, and no embracing of nobility." Rather, we encounter instead a "modernist stance of irony and defiance, disillusionment, and bitterness." Poets of the Gulf War complete the trajectory from celebration to despair to becoming "unequivocally dissenting in spirit." If, as the common saying goes, the winner writes history, then poets are the true historians because, ultimately, their insights—independent of wins or losses on the battlefield—tell the stories, and their stories become the tools culture uses to pick the complex lock of the experience of war.

Baby, Let's Make a Baby

Kirk Curnutt. River City Pub: 2003.

260 pp. \$23.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Dave Buchanan,
United States Air Force Academy

My friend's fiancé, drawn by the title, saw Kirk Curnutt's collection of short fiction sitting on my coffee table. "Baby, Let's Make a Baby?" she asked, picking it up and thumbing through the first few pages.

I explained; "It's a collection of short stories. 'Baby, Let's Make a Baby' is the title of one of them. I haven't read it yet."

She took the book to the porch and sat down on the front steps. After reading in it, she came back in with an odd look on her face; "So?" I asked.

"I didn't like it."

So I read it, and while I did not share her opinion, I was not surprised that she had reacted that way. As a woman in her mid-twenties, engaged to be married to an older man, the title story was surely uncomfortably familiar to her. The story is about a couple engaged to be married. His past (he has more of it because he is ten years older), her hopes (to have two children by age thirty), and the decisions they both make (her infidelity and his insistence to wait two years before they have children) have consequences that demand both characters to quietly accept seemingly inevitable outcomes.

Like these two, the rest of Curnutt's characters in other stories reveal lives that can be reduced to one moment, one instant and decision. The characters aren't regretful, but they do seem to calmly accept the sources of whatever conflict got them where they are. And that is refreshing. In "Sleeping Bear," the protagonist is a likable alcoholic named Baby Doc who takes his son—a son who doesn't know him—camping in an attempt to establish some sort of paternal relationship. After a hike, Baby Doc backslides into a bottle of rum and echoes the theme of necessary conflict that runs through much of the collection. After chopping the power cord of a loud radio at a nearby campsite with an axe, he awaits the cops and simply asks, "Did I just do what I think I did?" (87).

In "Fall of the House of Oxley," a lonely homeowner discovers the remains of a missing boy buried under his front porch. After we discover that the former

owner/mother murdered her own son, the story demands that our sympathy falls on the murderer, not Oxley, the man who now owns the cursed murder scene.

The rest of the stories draw attention in unlikely places. In "Down With the Flood," a paramedic recovers the body of a drowned woman from the flooded Chattahoochie River, only to discover that he once slept with her. In "Overpass," a group of bored teenagers throw a brick over an overpass through the windshield of a passing Honda, killing the driver, but saving the life of a woman locked in the trunk of another car that is caught in the resulting collision.

The title of the collection draws our attention, but the characters keep it. They demand answers from the past; like Baby Doc, they all seem to ask, "How did I get here?" Their stories reply with a knowing sideward glance at decisions and directions, behavior and past lives that lead to seemingly inevitable endings. That is the strength of this collection; all of us can connect with Curnutt's stories because we all know that, when we step back and look anew at our own stories, we are more to blame than our decisions or the conflict they create.

Conflict is what Kirk Curnutt writes about in many forms: social, emotional, physical, or economical—on continents, in relationships, within our own psyches. Conflict. It is the commonality of conflict that allows war to exist. Thus, the most germane of his stories (and the most lyrical) to the theme of conflict is "Etude and Bell Tower," a "crazy quilt of words" that parallels, in structure and depth, the "nimble brutality" of a Prokofiev sonata (43, 40).

The short story delves into "the discord between dream and nightmare" (40). It is a story about the conflict between warfare and art viewed through the scope of a Mauser 86 sniper rifle. The catalyst of the plot is not the enemy; rather, he is a "roly-poly man in a tuxedo" who appears daily atop a Volkswagen/baby grand contraption to serenade the sniper rifle and panic created by the narrator and his comrades. Oscar, the block commander of the snipers in the bell tower, best summarizes the nature of art and war: "... resolution is what music is meant to give us: a sense of unity, completeness, order... In all aspects of composition the effect must be to reassure the listener that there is an order that is pleasing because it reflects the natural structure of our way of living."

Curnutt offers us that exact sense of unity Oscar derived from the pianist's Prokofiev performances. His stories are engaging and praiseworthy because, like the pianist, he indeed offers the reader another key to completing any sense of order from lives full of war, tragedy, and disappointment.

*Soldier-Artist of the Great
Reconnaissance—John C.
Tidball and the 35th Parallel
Pacific Railroad Survey*

By Eugene C. Tidball. Tucson,
Arizona: University of Arizona Press,
2004. xvi + 226 pp. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Jeffrey C. Alfier, Ramstein AB, Germany

 Eugene C. Tidball, a distant relative of John C. Tidball (1825-1906)—the prime subject of this book—is a lawyer by trade, and an extensive biographer.¹ A careful and meticulously done history, *Soldier-*

Artist is a refreshing re-examination of the 1853 Arkansas-to-California railroad expedition conducted under the guidance of a survey team headed by Amiel Whipple. Following the 35th parallel, the expedition set out as an engineering study to map feasible routes and note potential obstacles to a transcontinental railroad. Lieutenant John C. Tidball was assigned to provide security to this entrepreneurial team that consisted of scientists, soldiers, artists, and their variously talented “guides.” Although Whipple already collected a staff of artists, Tidball’s talent as a sketch artist and memoirist proved an unexpected windfall throughout what would prove to be one of the most important explorations of the American Southwest.

What amplifies our interest in a book about an expedition from two centuries ago is that it is based on a newly discovered manuscript of Tidball’s memoirs. Many of the book’s titles are taken from incisive remarks in Tidball’s writings: chapter 7: “We Will Be on Mule Meat before we are Through;” or chapter 10: “The Clothes of the Murdered Mexican Were Riddled with Arrows.” Yet this book is not solely a retelling of Tidball’s experiences; the author examined and redacted the works of several other participants of the expedition in order to include the varied perspectives of Tidball’s fellow travelers. The result is a multi-faceted history. Throughout the text, the author inscribes an amazing amount of detail allowing Tidball to provide his latter day auditors with descriptions of weather, topography,

flora and fauna, and the responses of Native Americans to this odd conglomerate of men. The expedition's interaction with the Mojave Indians—who would come to work on railroads in the succeeding decades—would be worth a separate study altogether. Throughout their long and arduous journey the expedition's assignment took them through dangerous, beautiful, and little explored terrains. Tidball provides insightful descriptions of these vast landscapes of America, and the author includes several examples of Tidball's sketches and drawings.

In the end, this ambitious survey to find the best route to lay down a rail system met with problematic success, and cost hundreds of thousands of dollars—even in that day. The author discusses at length whether the expedition was a success or not, and the drawings of the artists may have been the greatest contribution in the whole adventure. Nonetheless, important findings from the expedition were eventually published in several private and official publications.

Well-researched and documented, this book is a vital contribution to the literature of American westward expansion. The author's main concern was less the geography or topography Tidball wrote about than the personalities the latter brought to light. Although full of anecdotes of mules and recalcitrant characters, the author always tells the story of the expedition in an intellectually interesting way. While the author may fall into an old trap by claiming that the region the expedition passed through was hitherto "without history" (175), in the end, *Soldier-Artist* records the consummate American travelogue of the 1850s' American Southwest, and it is well-worth the price since it fills an important historiographical role. Furthermore, this work will prove of interest to students of western American geology, art, and sociology, 19th century railroad history, and military history as well. Those incited by this book to take interest in wider impacts of the westward expansion of railroads, and historical and literary interpretations of the West in general, should consider Kevin M. DeLuca, *Trains in the Wilderness: The Corporate Roots of Environmentalism*, Rhetoric & Public Affairs—Volume 4, Number 4, Winter 2001, pp. 633-652; and Patricia Limerick's *Desert Passages: Encounters With the American Desert* (University of New Mexico Press, 2001).

1. Hereafter, Eugene C. Tidball, as the book's author, is referred to as "the author" to avoid confusion with his distant relative; "Tidball" then, refers to the soldier-artist John C. Tidball.

*Amache: The Story of Japanese
Internment in Colorado
During World War II*

Robert Harvey. Dallas: Taylor Trade
Publishing, 2003. 245 pp. \$22.95 cloth.

Reviewed by William Newmiller,
United States Air Force Academy

Irony abounds in Robert Harvey's account of Amache, the Japanese internment camp located in southeastern Colorado from 1942 through 1945. The greatest irony may be how war—even a universally acclaimed just war—can result in our becoming, to some degree at least, like our enemy. Harvey points out in his introduction that although conditions at Amache and other internment centers were far better than those at concentration camps in Nazi Germany, the internment centers were, nevertheless, concentration camps: places where members of an ethnic minority were imprisoned by executive order for reasons of state security. In later chapters, Harvey makes it clear that the motivations behind Japanese internment included exploitation and racism as well.

This well-documented book depends upon many personal interviews with Japanese who had been evacuated from the west coast, media accounts, special collections, and government records to tell the story of Japanese internment beginning with the earliest calls for internment immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor. It ends with a contemporary consideration now that the southeast Colorado land once called Amache has become again the domain of jackrabbits and rattlesnakes. Harvey points out that the social climate in America was conducive to racism directed toward the Japanese, even before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Japanese immigrants were prohibited from applying for U.S. citizenship; only their children born in America could be citizens. Along the west coast where Japanese residents were more common, their success had often led to jealousy on the part of European Americans. The conjoining of racism with military authority as America reeled from the attack on Pearl Harbor fueled an astonishingly quick suspension of constitutional rights for Japanese on the west coast—citizens and non-citizens alike. Harvey identifies Lieutenant General

John L. DeWitt as a major force who propelled internment. Only 12 days after Pearl Harbor, DeWitt recommended a plan to relocate Japanese immigrants and citizens, whom he designated as “enemy aliens,” to “interior zones” where they could “be held under restraint” (13). The forces encouraging such internment also had allies in the popular press. Harvey quotes Hearst columnist Henry McLemore, who supported “the immediate removal of every Japanese on the West Coast.” He declared, “I hate Japanese. And that goes for all of them. Let’s quit worrying about hurting the enemy’s feelings and start doing it” (16). Against such a background, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which legalized the subsequent internment of Japanese immigrants and citizens.

The revulsion readers of this book must have for the thinking that led to the Japanese internment gives way to the poignancy of the stories of internment that Robert Harvey has gathered here. Harvey describes Tom Shigekuni’s train ride from Santa Anita to Colorado, how the shades had to remain drawn. Shigekuni speculates, “maybe they didn’t want the Americans to see us or us to see the Americans.” Harvey points out that evacuees endured the long trip “uncertain of their destination” (73). He describes the building of Amache, much of it by the evacuees themselves, and the creation of the camp community, which included the structures one would expect in a community that at its peak housed over 7500 people: homes, a school, a hospital. But there were also guard towers with machine guns and search lights. Still, Amache was a place where George Hirano would meet his future wife at a sophomore dance, a place where young people competed in Sumo wrestling, basketball, football, and baseball (110). Like the rest of WWII America, Amache was home to victory gardens, and Amache was even a destination for military recruiters. Over 900 of Amache’s residents would leave the camp to serve in the military. And many served with distinction. Harvey reports that Kiyoshi Muranga gave his life in an extraordinary effort to save many of his fellow soldiers. Not until 2000 was he posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor (183).

Such recognition, even long delayed, does much to resolve the ironic darkness of America’s building concentration camps at home while fighting against enemies of freedom abroad. Illumination comes in the aftermath, even from some who were central to the War Relocation Administration (WRA). Harvey quotes the first director of the WRA, Milton Eisenhower, who wrote “I have brooded about this whole episode . . . for the past three decades for it is illustrative of how an entire society can somehow plunge off course.” More important illumination comes from former evacuees, such as Grace Kimoto, who visits schools to tell about her days at Amache. She tells students that they live in the “best country in the world. What other country,” she asks, “would apologize” (215-216)? And

there's the cautionary observation from Yoshi Tanita who recalled suggestions that Iranian Americans might be imprisoned in response to the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979 (214).

Readers will also appreciate the book's eight pages of photographs from the Joseph McClelland Collection in the Auraria Library Archives. These vintage photographs show the camp's structures and document the daily activities of its residents. The final picture, taken in late 1945, shows an entrance to the camp with a sign announcing that the camp is "closed." Harvey reports that after being closed, the camp's buildings and equipment were sold for pennies on the dollar, and the reader is left to ponder the real cost of the interment program, not only to those who suffered the loss of freedom and personal property, but also to a nation that squandered precious wartime resources on fear and distrust.

*Faces of the Civil War: An Album
of Union soldiers and Their Stories*

Ronald S. Coddington. Baltimore:
Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004,
251 pp., index, \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Matthew Stewart, Boston University

eaders of *Civil War News* will be familiar with Ronald Coddington's regular column "Faces of War," which reprints a *carte de visite* and limns a brief sketch of the man whose picture is found there. In the present volume he has collected seventy-seven such cartes, reprinted them in enlarged format with accompanying mini-biographies, some of which are updated versions of his recent CWN columns. The book contains a short and informative foreword by Michael Fellman that outlines both the photographic/technological and the

social context that made the *carte de visite* craze coincident with the American Civil War. In an era of institutional-pricing practices (the seventy-dollar monograph), Johns Hopkins Press is to be congratulated for continuing to produce reasonably priced books of high material quality.

A graphic artist and visual journalist, Coddington declares that the photographic images of the men are the starting point of his interest, but the men's stories ultimately carry the most meaning. Thus the author spent many hours poring through various archives to extract the details out of which his biographical sketches are constructed. The details are a nice combination of the exceptional and unexceptional. The author makes clear that his work is intended to honor and memorialize the service of these men as well as to contribute to historical understanding.

One near-constant theme is illness and injury. Here is Albert Robinson, himself a physician, who finds himself "prostrated with Malaria Neuralgia" in camp at Falmouth Virginia (32). He suffers week-long and even month-long debilitating attacks several times a year for the rest of his life. Here is James Brownlee, smashed by two musket balls at Gettysburg, hospitalized for two years after, at one point weighing eighty-seven pounds. He is left bent for the rest of his life, and suffers frequent spells of weakness and pain that leave him clutching for support. Here is George Hardy, already recovered from one gunshot wound to his leg, when he is shot in the back at Petersburg. He is ever-after plagued by recurrent episodes of intense pain, possibly becomes addicted to the morphine which helps him endure these episodes, boards a train in 1868 and is never heard from again. Here is Andrew Marlatt. Several days after George Hardy fell victim to a rebel sharpshooter at Petersburg, Marlatt merely pricks his left middle finger on a green briar thorn. His hand, then his entire arm, swells enormously, and he discharges copious amounts of pus. After hospitalization and the passage of several months, his medical discharge releases him to his former life, but with a permanent paralysis of left hand and arm that does not bode well for a return to his civilian job of wood working.

While some of the men here apparently returned to life with few lasting service-related problems, the overall impression is of a great collective price paid on behalf of the Union. Indeed, the book makes one begin to think of this as the greatest American generation—or perhaps, strictly speaking, one should say generations, for one is struck by the middle-aged volunteers frequently pictured here along with the many young men whose photos are more predictable to the modern reader.

At any rate, this generation accomplished the truly great tasks of holding the country together and helping to transform it into a more egalitarian version of itself. Anyone who has seen a handful of *cartes de visite* can avow that they comprise a stiff and studio-posed genre, utilitarian in its social purpose, not

without a period charm, interesting if one is already interested in the historical period, but seldom rising to the artistic or even the remarkable. Collectively such photos reveal much about their period, but as individual examples are not usually particularly revelatory of either their unique subjects or their photographers. One feels that the author has done a service to posterity by breathing life into these forms with the details he has found in words.

*Understanding the Literature
of World War I: a Student
Casebook to Issues, Sources,
and Historical Documents*

James H. Meredith. Westport,
CT: Greenwood Press, 2004, 183 pp.
\$45.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Thomas Coakley,
United States Air Force Academy

James H. Meredith has brought a palpable confidence to his highly competent *Understanding the Literature of World War I: a Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents*. From the Greenwood Press's "Literature in Context" Series, Meredith's new book explores and illuminates the First World War and its aftermath for both beginning students and general readers of WWI literature.

Meredith, a former Lieutenant Colonel and Professor of English at the United States Air Force Academy, has an extensive publishing history on the literature of war (including an earlier Greenwood book on the literature of World War II); this background alone should make his work an ideal first resource for students immersing themselves in World War I literature.

But there's much more to Meredith's work than his personal credibility. The *Literature of World War I* teems with invaluable resources for the ambitious student. For example, a detailed war chronology in the book's opening pages begins with the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and ends with the Treaty of Versailles, but it also includes critical (and often overlooked) moments such as the British evacuation of troops from the Gallipoli Peninsula and the Italians' chaotic retreat at Caporetto—two events which profoundly affected the morale of both troops and civilian citizens supporting the war effort from afar, events which later became fodder for artists seeking to capture truths about the "Great War".

Meredith follows his chronology with concise analyses in chapters titled "War at the Front," "Women and the Home Front," "War Poetry," "Propaganda and Civilian Bombing," and in "Aftermath," a chapter which examines the psychic wounds of a generation embroiled in violent conflict.

Following Meredith's analyses are his straight-forward historical summaries (an example is his introduction to Henry Sheehan's Verdun memoir: "No single battle of World War I exemplifies the futility and utter waste of humanity than does the one fought at Verdun, France," p. 63). Meredith bolsters his summaries by guiding readers through the historical archives to uncover important texts, ranging from "major" documents, such as "President Wilson's Declaration of Neutrality," to a wonderful array of lesser-known documents—like the extended excerpt from Charlotte Kellogg's memoir/study, *The Women of Belgium*—to create for readers a realistic context of what the war felt like.

This book is set apart from other recently published guides to WWI literature in that it provides students a general overview of a wide body of WWI literature and themes, rather than just some small aspect of the war. (One WWI text looks only at the issue of hysteria in the literature.) Also unique are sections in each chapter called "Topics for Oral and Written Discussion." In these Meredith works to make WWI more relevant to students by encouraging them to find links between the literature they are reading and the contemporary and ongoing conflict in Iraq.

Perhaps what makes Meredith's book most remarkable, though, are his unexpected juxtapositions. Not only are anticipated classics like Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* and Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* examined, so too are unexpected surprises like Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*, and especially Paul West's brilliant *Love's Mansion*, which was written in 1992 and explores how war veterans live with the consequences of war. (West's genius is in his ability to channel those consequences to show how the war's legacy affects contemporary culture.)

By including these varied works, Meredith, an expert on the literature of war, brings substantive personal experience to his project—animates each piece, providing a richer, more satisfying context for students who may not immediately grasp the

literature's historical subtleties. James H. Meredith's *Understanding the Literature of World War I: a Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents* is an excellent first resource for students new to the study of World War I literature.

*America the Vulnerable: How
our Government is Failing to
Protect Us from Terrorism.*

Stephen Flynn. New York: Harper
Perennial, 2004, 242 pp. \$13.95.

Reviewed by Steven W. Mccarty,
United States Air Force Academy

In December 2001, I flew from Denver to Washington for the first time since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In the good-old-days before swarthy terrorists emerged from motion pictures to reality, men dressed as cowboys greeted arriving passengers to Denver International Airport; they reminded me a great deal of the Wal-Mart greeters: genial, retirement-age men with friendly faces. On my return from Christmas break, the slow ride up the terminal's escalator eventually revealed Colorado National Guardsmen wielding M-16s. A drastic change had taken place, but the show of force had a disturbingly comforting effect on me. We may live in a world with terrorists, but at least these men were here to protect us. Three years later, the cowboys are back, friendly as ever. Now another kind of uneasy comfort overwhelms me. The terrorist threat had not been neutralized, but the intimidating men-at-arms were gone. They were only a superficial measure from the beginning, something not so much to deter terrorists as to reassure a frightened American populace. The inconsistency of perceived security and actual protection is at the heart of Stephen Flynn's *America the Vulnerable*. His book represents a quest to

wake America from the slumber of passivity and the belief our government is doing everything in its power to prevent another terrorist attack.

As the title suggests, this volume is largely a manifesto from a prophet of doom. What separates Flynn from the other prophets is that he actually offers constructive remedies for the problems he exposes. He paints himself much like S.T. Coleridge's mariner: a man who possesses a terrible knowledge of the world and is unconsciously compelled to tell his story. At one point, he even mentions the spirit of volunteerism among individuals he met on his book tour and how this selfless spirit contrasts with the apathy of the general public, suggesting intimate contact is the only way to institute a new mode of security consciousness. His apostolic mission is to get more Americans to take the concept of "national defense" seriously.

Americans should not need Flynn to tell us how vulnerable we are. He notes the disruption caused by the electrical outage on August 14, 2003, in the northeastern U.S. and Canada, and how this near catastrophic failure should have been an indication of a fundamental weakness in our energy infrastructure. Flynn does not include the Graniteville, South Carolina, train accident that killed nine people when a punctured tanker released chlorine gas (because it happened after publication)¹, but this incident should also serve as a harbinger for the ineffectiveness of our terrorist response, especially considering the proximity of the accident (a little over 100 miles upriver) from Savannah River National Laboratories, a nuclear material management and storage facility.²

Yet, somehow, we do need him to tell us because public officials have ignored the harbingers and bad omens, largely because the public has allowed them to do so. *America the Vulnerable* does offer some constructive solutions for our national security problem. Flynn is careful to make sure he does not make the same mistake Cold War strategists made. The arms race with the Soviet Union created a massive stockpile of ICBMs; the main purpose for these weapons was (is) deterrence, a policy whose effectiveness is only proven when nothing happens. Billions of dollars were poured into the ICBM program with no tangible return; now policy makers are deciding what to do with them, even going so far as possibly mounting conventional munitions on the re-entry systems. I commented to a friend this would never happen because nobody in their right mind would launch a missile-system costing hundreds of millions of dollars simply to destroy an electric substation. He replied (quite rightly), "It is either that or all the money goes to waste."

Flynn avoids the monomaniacal strategy of focusing entirely on military capabilities and presents more heterogeneous solutions. He offers an intricate plan for tracking shipping containers arriving in the U.S. Holding private shipping companies accountable for their shipments would not only be beneficial to the greater good in

terms of preventing a terrorist act, but would benefit the private sector in the form of lower insurance costs and less theft. A better organized epidemic response network would allow a more pliant response to a terrorist attack and to a “natural” outbreak of disease, such as SARS and West Nile virus. Most of his solutions are practical and would greatly benefit our security on the macro level.

Unfortunately, his fixes require a serious amount of capital from both the public and private sectors. His one estimate for upgrading hospitals to an accident-ready status is around \$8 billion. An improvement of this magnitude does not guarantee readiness for an epidemic and terrorist attack, and the author’s calculations do not include maintenance costs for this extra equipment that will likely remain in storage. Certain items are even beyond the control of Flynn’s audience; medical response is contingent upon the availability of medical personnel, and a simple piece of legislation is not likely to ameliorate the critical shortage of health-care workers.

The author spends nearly a third of *America the Vulnerable* attempting to establish his credibility and the plausibility of another terrorist attack and what our government is not doing to prevent another 9/11 from happening. At times, his ego establishment (à la Dick Morris) gets tiresome and bogs down the already brief argument. A casual glance at his sources reveals a great deal of desktop research: he cites many government documents, but nearly half of his sources are culled from the internet, leading to doubts about the validity of some claims.

Flynn wants to implement risk management measures in the American concept of homeland security, but gets frustrated when members of congress do not realize the rationale of his approach. He criticizes Senators Pete V. Domenici (R-NM) and Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) in the “Afterword” for being “unmoved” by the gloom-and-doom testimony of Flynn in January 2005. What Flynn fails to realize (or refuses to) is that public officials like Domenici and Stevens are playing their own risk management game. If a terrorist attacks Miami or Detroit, the scenario of an Arkansas senator voted out of office for homeland security complacency would be unlikely; a constituency could very well evict the same senator for lack of attention toward social security reform, because it personally affects them.

Ultimately, Flynn bases his argument on revising our national defense strategy. He argues that our economic interests have far outpaced our ability to secure the means of doing business. Although he is careful not to make his attack on the military explicit, his proposal is to change the current offensive-minded strategy in the War on Terror into a defensive one. In other words, he wants to change the Department of Offense back into the Department of Defense. Given the current political climate, moving security focus from the Middle East to states-side ports is a Sisyphean task. Like other commentators on the subject of Iraq and the budget³, Flynn notes the glaring imbalance between money spent on the wars in Iraq

and Afghanistan and funds allotted to the Department of Homeland Security. And like the other commentators, he is largely ignored. *America the Vulnerable* is not about a minor shift in public policy, like raising the federal interest rate a quarter percent (even when the American public can understand what Allan Greenspan is saying, few rarely care until they try to sell property or apply for a loan). Flynn wants the government to make a severe move from current foreign policy, a move that has dangerous political risks. The current administration is unlikely to withdraw from the Middle East any time soon, and record-setting deficits will make an increased Homeland Security budget improbable. The mariner's conscience may be cleared by telling his tale, but giving utterance does not necessarily translate into political action.

Notes

1. <http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/01/07/train.wreck/>
2. <http://srnl.doe.gov/xnucmat.htm>
3. "Human Rights Index." *The Iowa Review*. 34:3, Winter 2004/05, v-vi, to name one, but I'm sure the colossal numbers involved in the rebuilding of Iraq has inspired others to see what they could do with that kind of capital.

Heavy Metal: A Tank Company's Battle to Baghdad

Captain Jason Conroy, USA, with
Ron Martz. An AUSA Book. Dulles,
Virginia: Potomac Books, 2005.

Reviewed by Thomas Bonner, Jr.,
Xavier University of Louisiana



Cavalry from Caesar's campaigns in Gaul through Stuart's forays beyond Virginia to Patton's race across Europe has attracted the attention of historians and imaginative writers. A whole generation of Americans grew up with John Ford's films of horse cavalry dashing through Monument Valley. Another generation thrilled to the title character of the film *Patton* directing armor through a crowded intersection on the way to Germany. As a WWII soldier's child, I recall the vestiges of change from horse to armor on a post immediately after the war. The title of this volume draws on the music popular during the years of the author's youth. Jason Conroy, writing long after the peak of "heavy metal" does not offer the more recent Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Music of the Night": rather he gives us the base of tank engines, the treble of voices, and the percussion of combat. As important as Conroy's documenting the initial strike into the heart of Baghdad is, his reflections on leadership constitute the more lasting feature of this volume.

Conroy begins his story with a "You Are There" narrative of a tank battle in the Baghdad suburb of Mahmudiyah: "Sgt. Scott Stewart saw the tanks first" (1). From that first sentence the reader rides into battle with the crews of the Abrams tanks of Charlie Company, Task Force I-64 Armor, 3rd Infantry Division and with the point of view of its commander, Captain Conroy. The initial words of this chapter title are "Point Blank," and that is the spot where narrator and reader view the confrontations with the enemy. For veterans of battles the ever present confusion and lack of an organizing focus should not be new, but for readers who have not had this experience Conroy offers this reality of combat available in only a few forms of art, notably films like *Glory* and the opening sequences of *Saving Private Ryan*.

After the action of the first chapter, Conroy reviews the history of his outfit in the context of the Gulf Wars, evoking the division's WWI moniker the "Rock of the Marne."

He then addresses "The Making of Charlie Company," in which he introduces the soldiers whom readers will encounter throughout the narrative. His emphasis on his unit's training and preparation for combat in Kuwait reveals a thoroughness of physical, mental, and material details. The actual assault into Iraq and the subsequent battles leading to the risky "Thunder Runs" into Baghdad itself constitute the *entre* of this book. The closing chapters offer views of the "post major combat" phase of Charlie Company and its anticipation of a return to its home at Fort Stewart, Georgia.

The epilogue reflects questions about the morality of the war and the soldier's roles in the endeavor. Conroy displays an uncommon honesty in posing his own questions and those of his soldiers, especially with the publicly stated purpose of the war and the subsequent failure to find weapons of mass destruction. He offers responses that go beyond the political ends of the war to wider philosophical contexts in sending a country's military forces to battle. In this section, Conroy also offers an *apologia* of the M1A1 Abrams main battle tank in the conduct of urban fighting, not usually the venue for tank battles. In fact, the Abrams has the role of a character throughout the narrative, almost like that of Nature in Thoreau's *Walden*.

Conroy never lets the reader forget the important relationship between an officer and his troops. This aspect struck me especially after hearing my father's accounts of officers from a nearby allied division in line of battle who failed to place the welfare of their soldiers above their own. From the beginning Conroy demonstrates the importance of leading by example and making sure that his soldiers are in the best condition to achieve their mission and to survive doing so. It is important to note that Conroy had both experience as an enlisted trooper and the tradition of a family who had served in WWII and Vietnam. Furthermore, he explicates the importance of competent senior non commissioned officers, personified by First Sergeant Jose Mercado, "a strict disciplinarian, physically fit enough to outlift and outrun most of the younger soldiers, and neat almost to a fault"(28). This book reminded me of one of the most influential websites for junior Army officers, one devoted to company commanders and their responsibilities. This focus on leadership as Conroy explores it has value for military officers and non commissioned officers as well as those engaged in corporate and public civilian service.

While the book has immediacy for readers with military experience, it is also easily accessible for others with index, maps, candid photographs, glossary of terms and abbreviations, and roster of Charlie Company. Even with the glossary, the book's impact for a wider audience could have been improved by

a reduction of abbreviations and acronyms in the text. Nonetheless, the prose is clear and forceful.

In writing *Heavy Metal*, Conroy had the assistance of Ron Martz of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, who had been “embedded” with his company during the attack into Iraq. Martz has previously contributed to books on conflicts in Korea and Vietnam. General Gordon R. Sullivan, former Army Chief of Staff (1991-1995), observes in the preface that this is “a story of the humanity and endeavor of men fighting for a cause in which they believe” (xi). Conroy indicates that the humanity of the troops was evident to many of the Iraqis, who cried when Charlie Company was withdrawn from Baghdad. Finally, the memoir of this tank commander’s experiences training his unit, leading it into battle, and guiding it in the aftermath, reveals his growing self-knowledge and his courage addressing the hard questions and responsibilities of leading others into battle.