

BENJAMIN HERTWIG

Stigmata

cut two holes in a pillowcase
and place it over your head.
look through the eyes of sixteen
years, stand next to the black soldier
once more—head covered, arms around
his waist. watch the other soldiers
laugh, force yourself to laugh along.
this photo exists in a reality you
no longer understand. the stigmata of
race with and without hate.
catalogue the discomfort, place it
in the cargo box next to your bloody
combat pants and the prone man on the road
his body holes blooming bright.

BENJAMIN HERTWIG is a former infantry grunt and current PhD student. He is the recipient of a 2017 National Magazine Award and his writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Pleiades*, the *Sugar House Review*, the *Maine Review* and the *Literary Review of Canada*, among

others. His debut book of poems, *Slow War*, is out with McGill-Queen's and concerns his 2006 tour in southern Afghanistan.