BOOKS

Wave Me Goodbye—Stories of the Second World War, edited by Anne Boston. New York: Viking Penguin, 1989. Pp. xx-274. $19.95 (hardcover), $8.95 (paperback).

Articles of War—A Collection of American Poetry about World War II, edited by Leon Stokesbury, introduction by Paul Fussell. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1990. Pp. xxix-229. $24.95 (hardcover), $12.95 (paperback).

by D. A. Boxwell

These two important and judiciously edited anthologies give us the opportunity to pause and reassess the creative literary output of a war which has had to suffer odious comparisons to that of World War I. The earlier war has been seen by critics, as well as many of the artists themselves, as a revolutionary source of inspiration. It is no exaggeration to say that the Great War was a *primum mobile* of High Modernism in literature. The poetry and short fiction in these anthologies allow us to reconsider the received wisdom that would have us believe that the creative efforts of British and American writers after the great efflorescence of Modernism before 1940 are comparatively unimportant or lacking in interest. The deaths of that great Modernist triumvirate—Yeats, Joyce, and Woolf—in the initial years of the War, as well as the legacy of the Great War poets, have loomed large over the war literature of the Second World War, shaping our view of it, more often than not, as an *oeuvre* which pales in comparison to its predecessor.

Yet aside from purely aesthetic considerations, from the historical point of view, many of the works in these anthologies stand as a rebuke to certain conventional ideas about the Second World War which have emanated from the rosy haze of nostalgia and the process of mythification. This process began with the declaration of war, and an overly optimistic and sunny portrayal of the War assumed predominance as the ''reality'' of what the War was ''like.'' Paul Fussell describes, in convincing detail, this act of historical fictionalizing in his recent *Wartime*. Fussell's overarching thesis is:

> The damage the war visited upon bodies and buildings, planes and tanks and ships, is obvious. Less obvious is the damage it did to intellect, discrimination, honesty, individuality, complexity and irony, not to mention privacy and wit. (ix)

Determined to redress the balance, *Wartime* demonstrates how the Allied war for the past half century has been romanticized and sanitized beyond recognition. In short, a sickening war has been made safe for consumption. Moreover, the best works in Boston's and Stokesbury's collections also astonish by their refusal, at the time, to participate in the mass culture's strenuous and propagandistic efforts to ''purvey to the credulous a satisfying, orderly and even optimistic and wholesome view of catastrophic occurrences'' (Fussell 22).

The comforting notion of an Edenic home, a domesticated and feminized ''safe place'' which could serve as a refuge for men in war, a refuge which was possible only before the technological developments of mass bombing, receives a proper debunking in *Wave Me Goodbye*, Anne Boston's collection of 28 stories by 27 British and American women (Sylvia Townsend Warner is represented twice). The terrifying realization that war no longer had fixed or separate geographical boundaries underscores all the stories here, many of which are set on the ''home front'' (but also range as far afield as Colonial Africa in Doris Lessing's ''The Black Madonna'' to Occupied Germany in Inez Holden's ''According to the Directive''). Boston has scoured now-forgotten or largely ignored wartime periodicals, fiction anthologies, and short story collections to add some remarkable works to our small fund of well-known stories about how the Allied domestic sphere was invaded by the hitherto distant arena of battle. Keith Douglas, perhaps the foremost British poet to emerge from the war, was quite mistaken, as Boston points out in her comprehensive introduction, in stating that the only interesting things to happen in war happen to men in the field. Families on the home front were experiencing war as directly as Douglas was in the sands of North Africa. Boston's collection demonstrates that women refused to be silent, marginalized sufferers in Total War. Better-known stories like Elizabeth Bowen's ''Mysterious Kôr'' and Rose Macaulay's ''Miss Anstruther's Letters'' are supplemented by remarkable and unjustly neglected pieces like Pat Frank's ''The Bomb'' and Margery Sharp's ''Night Engagement'' to remind us that people in England experienced the disorienting terrors of mass air and rocket bombardment in their homes without the ability, as Douglas had, to retaliate. This was a development of war with which few were prepared to cope with the kind of plucky and stoic aplomb on display in certain popular Hollywood portrayals of this experience such as *Mrs. Miniver* (1942).

Stevie Smith's mordant view of this situation is at the heart of ''Sunday at Home,'' a story which depicts, in a quirkily comic way, a ludicrous marital squabble occurring during a V-1 attack. The ordinarily risible eccentricity of her characters in peacetime tips over into uncontrolled, and embarrassing, hysteria in war. Smith's story ridicules the saccharine notion of domestic order in war. A slovenly and chaotic effort at maintaining the great British institution of the copious Sunday lunch serves as the metaphor for the desperate, and rather pathetic, attempt to maintain an air of domestic normality in war. One female character, casting a waspishly critical eye around an unheated and blacked-out sitting room, remarks to her friend:

> ''I like your dressing gown with the burn down the front and the grease spots, somehow that is right, and the beastly dark room is right, and the dust upon the antique rare ornaments; the dust, and the overcooked meat and the undercooked beans, it is right; it is an abandonment. It is what the world deserves.'' (177)

Smith's story, an affirmative celebration of female friendship in wartime, offers a sardonic critique of the kinds of fantastically blissful domestic order portrayed in such popular ''women's pictures'' as David O. Selznick's self-congratulatory paean to the Allied home front, *Since You Went Away* (1944). ''This is the story of an unconquerable fortress, the American home, 1943,'' proclaims the introductory title card to a film which presents, as James Agee put it, The Home not as an average U.S. reality, but as average U.S. dream, and an ''incurably virginal'' one at that (350). Not a shouted or discouraging word is allowed to interrupt this haven of tranquility. While the war overseas does disrupt the lives of the Hiltons, the film derives much dramatic impetus from such burning problems as how Mrs. Hilton can possibly cope with all the household chores, on top of her volunteer work, since an officer's pay can't cover the black servant's wages. (Of course, in Selznick's Dream Home at War, the cook stays on, providing free labor to her white employers, out of loving loyalty, after hours spent in the factory).

Unlike the characters in Smith's story, the Hiltons could luxuriate in their unconcerned distance from "doodle-bomb" attacks on their home. Yet in many respects Selznick's film is a serviceable archetype for the countless cinematic portrayals of the Allied Home Front at War which projected not the reality of it all, which as Fussell shows would have been disturbingly messy and unpalatable, but instead had to be "fictional, an image of pseudo-war and pseudo-human behavior not too distant from the familiar world of magazine advertising" (164).

The only story in Boston's collection which is guilty of this kind of bad faith is Edna Ferber's "Grandma Isn't Playing," a manipulatively heart-warming story of a 60-year old woman, an immigrant from Eastern Europe, who confounds her family by going to work in an aircraft plant. This is the type of story in which the characters say "Gosh" and "Gee" a lot; and although Ferber admitted she wrote the story to provide "necessary propaganda," Boston includes the story in her anthology because it is "relatively unusual in making women at work" outside the home its subject (xviii). "Grandma Isn't Playing" is too deliberately "wholesome" to provide the kind of interest afforded by a story like Jean Rhys's flagrantly subversive "I Spy a Stranger," perhaps the most remarkable of all the stories in *Wave Me Goodbye*.

Rhys's work discomfits by daring to challenge what Fussell calls the "High-Mindedness" of the Allied front. "A unique context of public credulity and idealism" was based on a stark, simplistic, and unironic belief in the opposition between the purity and goodness of the Anglo-American Allies and the amorality and evil of the

Enemy (164). Associated with this belief was a resolute insistence on the unified nature of the forces of good arrayed against the Axis. It should be said that "I Spy a Stranger" was written in the 1940s, during Rhys's exile from the publishing scene, and the story saw print only after her rediscovery in the 1960s. As Boston astutely remarks, Rhys's work expresses an otherwise barely acknowledged public sense of alienation from, and recognition of, the pointlessness of war and the patriarchal institutions which fuel it. There are no noble, chin-up-smiling-through-tears sentiments expressed in stories like Rhys's (or in Macaulay's story or Anna Kavan's study of wartime madness, "Face of My People" for that matter). Instead, this story is about how free-thinking nonconformists can be destroyed by a society demanding uniformity in war. This fate is compounded if one is a woman without the husband and children by which society can define and constrain her.

"I Spy a Stranger" concerns a lonely woman named Laura and is narrated, in retrospect, by her feckless and garrulous cousin, who has offered her room and board on Laura's return to England, at the outbreak of war, from a long-term residency in Central Europe. When Laura openly criticizes the "high-mindedness" of the Allied side, she is hounded by vicious gossip, graphically obscene poison-pen letters, and the police for her suspect loyalties. Laura is another in a line of Rhys's worldly but world-weary female protagonists who drift through life, wearing their anomie on their sleeves, but determined not to submit to society's dictates about the proper place of women. Misfits, barely tolerated in peacetime, however, have no place in a war "effort." Since Laura has been carted off to the madhouse before the story opens, her presence in the text is confined to remembered conversations, letters, diaries, and her collection of scrapbooks containing egregious examples of Allied propaganda. These documents are in the possession of the story's uncomprehending narrator. In one of her journals, Laura has written the following explosive commentary about the war:

> There is no opposition. The effects are criticized, for some of the effects are hardly advertisements for the system, the cause is seldom mentioned, and then very gingerly. The few mild protests usually come from men. Most of the women seem to be carefully trained to revenge any unhappiness they feel on each other, or on children.... But no one can go against the spirit of a country with impunity, and propaganda from the cradle to the grave can do a lot. (91)

Laura's desperate catalogs of her tawdry possessions, which are merely junky souvenirs of her travels, take on freighted significance as some effort to hold on to tangible objects in a world of impermanence and destruction. The abject futility even of relying on things as a kind of orienting compass in war is also a theme of Rose Macaulay's story, ''Miss Anstruther's Letters,'' a rare excursion into the short story form by this underappreciated contemporary and rival of Virginia Woolf. ''Miss Anstruther's Letters'' is an ironic and bitter account of Macaulay's own experience of losing her possessions in an air-raid on her London home. Macaulay's fictional creation, Miss Anstruther, seizing the opportunity to remove a few belongings from her bombed-out apartment, does so but forgets the letters from her dead lover until it is too late to re-enter the building. All that is left of him, after the fire is put out, is a tiny, unburnt, accusatory fragment of text which rebukes her, ''Leave it at that. I know now that you don't care two pence, if you did you would'' [no end punctuation] (47).

Writers like Macaulay, Rhys, and Smith serve to remind us that the war provided an artistic spur to some compelling fiction. While Woolf's suicide in 1941 was, according to the pacifist and feminist Vera Brittain, an ''escape from the disorderly barbarism of contemporary life'' (qtd. in Fussell 216), other women viewed the war as the chance to enter the fray and offer meaningful critiques of contemporary life. Boston quotes Elizabeth Bowen's suggestion that ''all wartime writing is . . . resistance writing'' (xx) and the idea of writing as an expressive endeavor which resists the annihilating effect of war receives triumphant affirmation even in these tragic, often satiric, and often emotionally wrenching stories.

By contrast, few women's voices contemporary with the war are heard in Leon Stokesbury's comprehensive anthology, *Articles of War*. (The presence of only Marianne Moore, May Sarton, and Phyllis McGinley raises questions about the degree to which American women poets responded to the war). This useful anthology is the first such devoted exclusively to American poetry about World War II. Stokesbury's collection begins with poets who were too old to fight (MacLeish, cummings, and the stridently isolationist Robinson Jeffers), and ends with those poets who were not yet born at the end of the war (Mary Jo Salter, Edward Hirsch, and David Bottoms among others). Like the women of Anne Boston's collection, the 53 poets represented here provide valuable service by combatting the comforting mythification process, occurring over the past half century, which has denied or ignored the full horror of the Second World War.

Paul Fussell makes a welcome reappearance as a critic of war texts in his introduction to Stokesbury's selection of poetry. Fussell argues here that American poetry gained renewed vigor from the Second World War, ''whose occasions—irony, guilt, horror, black comedy, boredom—

seemed to imply themes irresistible to the modern American character'' (xxiv). In contrast to the stories in *Wave Me Goodbye*, almost all of which were written during the decade between 1939 and 1949, Fussell and Stokesbury both point out that much of the best American poetry needed a decade or more of incubation to come into being. Examples of experience ripening into full expression are such significant works as W. D. Snodgrass's ''After Experience Taught Me'' and Howard Nemerov's haunting—and haunted—recollection of post-war alienation, ''Redeployment,'' whose final stanza runs thus:

> The end of the war. I took it quietly
> Enough. I tried to wash the dirt out of
> My hair and from under my fingernails,
> I dressed in clean white clothes and went to bed.
> I heard the dust falling between the walls. (16-20)

In his introduction to the collection, Fussell reiterates the vast geographical and social scope of this World War in contrast to its predecessor. It is this factor which governed the poetry actually written as an immediate response to the war in progress. There was no sense of the juvenile romanticism of Rupert Brooke behind the war poetry of such witnesses to the war as Randall Jarrell, Richard Eberhart, Karl Shapiro, Louis Simpson or in the particularly underestimated work of Lincoln Kirstein, better known as the director of the New York City Ballet, but who, during the war, served under Patton in the Third Army's arts, monuments and archives section. These poets adopted a style that was ''studiedly modern,'' as Fussell points out. This was a style which drew on vernacular usage: it was terse, pithy, stripped down like an M-1 to its bare essentials. These poets deliberately avoided the flowery diction and public school Classical allusions of World War I poetry, most of which had issued from an entirely different culture rooted in the previous century. Jarrell's much anthologized Ball Turret Gunner speaks as a *'voix d'outre tombe'* in only five highly charged lines; "A War" is even more cynically laconic, making its statement in a mere four lines:

> There set out, slowly, for a Different World,
> At four, on winter mornings, different legs...
> *You can't break eggs without making an omelette*
> —That's what they tell the eggs. (1-4)

The deliberately affectless irony of much of the poetry written during the war by American servicemen stems from the sense that, as Linda Shires put it, "the Second World War stunned the imagination instead of liberating it. There was no development from initial optimism about war to rejection of it, a development clearly evident in the poetry of World War One" (53). Hence, a narrative poem like Kirstein's "Rank," which tells the story of a drunken Army captain who shoots up a French village "bistro-type bar," killing the proprietor's wife. Told by an enlisted man who witnesses the crime, the central irony of this work is that a court martial is convened for considerations based on the poem's punning title:

> The charge was not murder, mayhem, mischief malicious,
> Yet something worse, and this they brought out time and again:
> Clearly criminal and caddishly vicious
> Was his: Drinking With Enlisted Men.
> I'm serious. It's what the Judge Advocate said:
> Strict maintenance of rank or our system is sunk.
> (61-66)

Kirstein's poem, like so many in *Articles of War*, shows a critical awareness of the increasing systematization, bureaucratization, and sheer depersonalization of Total War. The individual's sense of selfhood becomes a casualty of the war; fighting soldiers become expendable components in some vast, inconceivable mechanism of war. This idea gets its fullest expression in Jarrell's work. In "The Lines," inductees and soldiers endlessly wait

> To form a line to form a line to form a line;
> After the things have learned that they are things
> Used up as things are . . . (6-8)

Kirstein's brilliant "Tent-Mates," the penultimate line of which gives Stokesbury's anthology its title, reduces men living in oppressively close communal conditions to the sum of their excretory systems:

> From living in each other's laps,
>   From sniffing at each other's pores,
> From glimpsing every function of
>   The human mechanism's chores,
> From dozing next to unloved flesh,
>   From swimming in the common stew,
> We're trigger happy to the touch
>   At our compulsive rendezvous.
> I do not mind my own shit.
>   Why then avoid another's?
> Answers are articles of war:
>   Men are seldom brothers. (17-28)

The Louis Simpson selections, as well as Peter Viereck's "Ripeness is All," are especially noteworthy as evocative reminders of the gore splattered around in this war by ''hard-to-believe artifacts'' (Fussell xxviii), like booby-traps and anti-tank mines. Simpson's poem ''Memories of Lost War'' opens with this memorable image:

> The guns know what is what, but underneath
> In fearful file
> We go around burst boots and packs and teeth
> That seem to smile. (1-4)

Similarly, Viereck's poem, published in 1949, is a beautifully sustained metaphoric description of mines planted to harvest exploding bodies, which are blown into petals ''white with red borders'' tossed up by the wind toward the sky (13). Even more viscerally gruesome is a very strange poem by Winfield Townley Scott entitled ''The U.S. Sailor with the Japanese Skull'' (1945). This poem sets out to shock with its insistently detailed description of a tow-headed and boyish young Bluejacket skinning, eviscerating and preserving the wartime souvenir of the title. Scott's gallows humor is on full display in the poem's conclusion:

> All scoured out now by the keeper of this skull
> Made elemental, historic, parentless by our
> Sailor Boy who thinks of home, voyages laden,
> will Not say, ''Alas! I did not know him at all.''
> (29-32)

Works like these are a far cry indeed from the patently unrealistic representation of physical death and injury which Fussell draws our attention to in *Wartime*. Movies, he asserts, have rarely, if ever, shown the full effects of the dismemberment and filth sustained in war, showing instead clean, whole victims in the final act of orating nobly. Optimistic publicity and the full blast of euphemistic language, he states, have rendered the true experience of the destructive impact of war, on the individual human body, as well as the collective body politic, ''so falsely that it would never be readily communicable'' (268). Those who experienced war first-hand, like Fussell himself and so many of the artists in these two collections, needed to write, whether as an act of protest, resistance, expiation or catharsis, to convince listeners and readers that the Second World War has been systematically ''sanitized and Norman Rockwellized, not to mention Disneyfied'' (Fussell 268). It is therefore encouraging that the younger poets in Stokesbury's collection are carrying on the cause, telling some much-needed essential truths about a nasty and brutish war which has too often been falsified as different from all other wars.

United States Air Force Academy

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The Grotesque Depiction of War and the Military in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction, by David McNeil. Newark: Associated University Presses, 1990. Pp. 229. $37.50.

by Thomas W. Krise

When live television news reports poured into our living rooms from the war in the Persian Gulf, we had the opportunity to experience war in a way unknown to earlier generations. Although the images we saw were immediate and often disturbing, we were also aware we were not directly threatened by the images. This distance—literal and aesthetic—between us and the images offered us the chance to back away from them emotionally and to see, at once, the farcical, the horrible, and the bombastic sides of warfare. David McNeil describes this phenomenon as the understanding that ''while the external trappings of military pomposity are ludicrous, the grim reality of war remains fearful'' (173-4).

The grotesque is the aesthetic experience in which the reader or observer feels both repelled by and attracted to a description or an image. For McNeil, the grotesque embodies three principal ideas: 1) the ludicrous-fearful duality, or the fine line that divides the humorous and the horrific; 2) the spectacle of war and the military, or the panoply and orderliness which accentuate the ''play'' aspect of war; and 3) the cyclical theory of war, or the idea that ''war begets poverty, poverty peace, peace begets prosperity, prosperity envy, and envy leads back to war'' (157).

The Grotesque Depiction of War examines the grotesque aspects of the works of four disparate eighteenth-century writers: Jonathan Swift, Tobias Smollett, Henry Fielding, and Laurence Sterne. McNeil places the grotesque examples of these authors' works both within the context of the history of the literature of war as well as within the sociopolitical context of the works and writers themselves. The chief works examined are Swift's *Gulliver's Travels, The Battle of the Books,* and his anti-Marlborough tracts; *Smollett's Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle,* and *Ferdinand Count Fathom;* Fielding's *Amelia, Tom Jones,* and *Joseph Andrews;* and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey.*

McNeil introduces his study with an intriguing vignette about the Battle of Fontenoy (May 11, 1745), during the War of the Austrian Succession, in which toasts were exchanged between Anglo-Hanoverian and French lines of infantry just prior to a face-to-face slaughter. He argues that this episode is a quintessential example of the ludicrous-fearful duality we associate with the experience of the grotesque. Using many such examples from history and literature, McNeil offers both a practicable guide to the literature of war (ranging from Homer to the present) as well as a handbook for the use of the literary grotesque for scholarly or classroom purposes. His approach is historicist, using the theories of John Ruskin, Wolfgang Kayser, and Mikhail Bakhtin to give his selected works coherence. But, McNeil argues that ''applicability must remain the first and foremost criterion for any theory'' (172). He acknowledges that although the grotesque has fallen from favor in recent years as a theoretical construct, it remains ''a valuable generic category with no mean background'' (172).

In the opening chapter, McNeil places his four authors in literary-historical context by defining grotesque and by identifying important examples of it from Homer to Samuel Johnson. Thus armed, we proceed to examine the four writers, each of whom illuminates a different aspect of the grotesque. Although McNeil uses other chapter headings and subheadings, it may be helpful here to think of the four authors as subjects under the following headings: ''Spectacle and Satire'' for Swift, ''Spectacle and the Picaresque'' for Smollett, ''Spectacle and Unruliness'' for Fielding, and ''Spectacle and the Quixotic'' for Sterne.

The chapter devoted to Swift colorfully demonstrates how certain types of satire represent a major category of the grotesque, provided satirists maintain a suitable distance from their subjects. In contrast to Swift's bitingly satiric attacks on Field Marshal the Duke of Marlborough, in which Swift ''did not have any distance from his subject,'' McNeil points to *Gulliver's Travels* as Swift's most successful foray into the grotesque because Swift was more detached and ''was able to reverse the emphasis from the political 'agon' of satire to a metapolitical statement on the human condition'' (64-65).

Taking Gulliver's detailed description of European warfare to the Houyhnhnms as a starting point, McNeil includes a fairly detailed comparison of satiric battle descriptions to the military paintings of Louis Laguerre and Charles LeBrun, in Marlborough House and Versailles, and the tapestries of Judocus de Vos at Blenheim Palace. McNeil points out how the idea of spectacle is enhanced when one considers the way these artists represent warfare. The highly organized display of armies, coupled with the occasional stripped corpse or terrorized soldier, help to excite the feeling we associate with the grotesque: we are attracted by the martial pageantry but repelled by the horror of the ''real'' battlefield. McNeil's explication of these tableaux is sure and informed; the reader might wish, however, for more and larger plates.

McNeil closes his chapter on Swift by touching on the aesthetic theories of Edmund Burke, particularly the links between the grotesque and the sublime. McNeil argues that Burke's notion of the ''artificial sublime'' can apply to ranks of uniformed soldiers, and can thus contribute to the fearful sensation common to both the sublime and grotesque aesthetic experiences. While this link receives only limited attention, McNeil does provide superb notes and bibliography to enable readers to explore fully the place of the grotesque in the larger field of aesthetic theory.

In the contentious debate over "whether or not Smollett is a writer of the picaresque," McNeil argues the side of the picaresque, and he uses this picaresqueness of Smollett to demonstrate another aspect of the grotesque. McNeil makes his case for the grotesqueness of the picaresque in interpretations of episodes from Homer, Hesiod, Ovid and others. Thanks to Smollett's detailed descriptions of battles, this chapter offers the most vivid examples of grotesque episodes in the book. In Roderick Random's particularly gruesome endurance of a sea-battle while chained to a ship's deck,

> Smollett touches a primitive nerve by bringing together the grotesque horror of human carnage and the more mundane, yet delirious, feeling of not being able to wipe a foul substance from one's face. (94)

McNeil makes his strongest case for the critical usefulness of historical knowledge in his discussion of *Roderick Random*. He thoroughly examines a variety of historical aspects that make an impact on Smollett's novels, including publishing practices, the purchasing of commissions, recruiting methods, the billeting of soldiers, and international politics. Even apart from the investigation of the grotesque, these informative and provocative passages make *The Grotesque Depiction of War* worth reading.

The chapter on Fielding focuses on the role of unruliness in depictions of the grotesque. Here, McNeil links

Fielding's *Amelia, Tom Jones,* and *Joseph Andrews* to five engravings by William Hogarth, T. Colley, and R. Athwold, all involving civil-military relations. This chapter is especially valuable for its literature-based examination of the English public's attitudes toward the standing army as well as the popular image of military training.

Using episodes from *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews* and engravings of Hogarth to support the point, McNeil identifies the ''great irony of the army'' in the eighteenth century: while it was ''established to quell civil disorder, the army itself is feared for exactly the same reason'' (117). The English billeted their soldiers among the people because they feared barracked soldiers might be a source of tyranny. But, when billeted in homes and inns, soldiers ''stole, assaulted men and women, plundered, raped and often refused to pay the whole or part of the bill for their billets'' (qtd in McNeil 114). Such unruliness is the source for the grotesque scenes in Fielding, Hogarth, and others.

Most of McNeil's study of military training concentrates on the officer corps and especially on the counterproductivity of the practice of purchasing commissions and on the large number of ''child-officers'' which the purchase system created. His examples, culled from a variety of eighteenth-century sources, indicate that the harm done by the purchase system to the encouragement of merit in the officer ranks exacerbated the chaos that generally reigned in the military at home. The general result of the officer management system was to create an army ''officered by gentlemen of anything but a studious turn of mind'' (qtd in McNeil 134), who ''were taught to please'' and who thus ''live only to please'' (qtd in McNeil 135). The unruliness of an army under the command of untrained plutocrats was heightened by the long-term quartering of troops in public inns and private houses. The final military assault on domestic order was the wholesale disbanding of troops at the conclusion of wars. The resulting bands of unemployed men added to the unruliness that provides Fielding and Hogarth with such fertile ground for depictions of the grotesque military. By focussing on the domestic side of the military grotesque, ''Fielding allowed himself the opportunity to explore both the absurdities of human conflict and ultimately the grotesque nature of humankind's fascination with military grandeur'' (143).

Fielding's image of the soldier as one of a mass of men discharged into the cities of Britain at the conclusion of a war provides a nice transition to the figure of Sterne's Uncle Toby, who ''remains one of the most, if not the most, single quixotic figures in English literature . . .'' (144). McNeil links the comic figure of Uncle Toby to the grotesque by way of Johnson's definition of grotesque as ''Distorted of figure; unnatural; wildly formed'' (qtd in McNeil 150). Uncle Toby fits this definition by being wounded both physically and mentally. His resultant antics in the veterans' home provide the material for McNeil's analysis of the carnivalesque nature of the grotesque. Uncle Toby's and Corporal Trim's impoverishment of the home to provide miniature materiel for their war games offers an aesthetically distanced caricature of the real-world War of the Spanish Succession (which takes place contemporaneously with the action in *Tristram Shandy*), and thus, it is fertile ground for the appreciation of the grotesque.

Having begun his discussion of the literary grotesque by considering the most bellicose literary form, satire, McNeil leads us through the less-obvious forms of grotesqueness—the picaresque, the unruly, and the quixotic—in an effort to demonstrate the broad applicability of this theoretical construct to eighteenth-century fiction. His concluding chapter balances the introductory chapter by contextualizing the grotesque in the aesthetic theory of the late eighteenth century and on down to our own time. McNeil here reiterates the notion that the grotesque is linked to the ludicrous-fearful duality, the cyclical theory of war, and the spectacle of war and the military. McNeil sums up his argument by showing once again, in one of his final vignettes, how the grotesque may be applied. He quotes from James Boswell's German journal the passage describing his observation of King Frederick the Great:

> I then went to the Parade. I saw the King . . . As a loadstone moves needles, or a storm blows the lofty oaks, did Frederick the Great make the Prussian officers submissive bend as he walked majestic in the midst of them . . . I beheld the king who had astonished Europe by his warlike deeds. (qtd in McNeil 168)

McNeil points out that, for all its grandeur, this description has a ''certain Lilliputian quality'' to it ''that strikes one as ludicrous'' (168). He drives home the importance of aesthetic distance to the experience of the grotesque when he concludes with Boswell's witnessing of bombed-out Dresden three months after seeing Frederick on parade:

> I strolled about and viewed the city. It is finely built of freestone. It gave me great pain to see the ruins made by the Prussian bombardments. I hated the barbarous hero. He was under no necessity to bombard Dresden. It was from mere spite that he did it. (qtd in McNeil 173)

In this latter passage, Boswell is too close to experience the grotesque. As McNeil puts it, ''the grotesque captures us in an intensely ambivalent aesthetic experience. We may inwardly laugh, but we then feel guilty for doing so'' (169).

The twentieth century is at least as warlike as McNeil's eighteenth century, and we are the first generation to encounter war as a live, prime-time performance. The frequency and immediacy of war images on television may enhance our understanding of the grotesque experience, and we may become well-qualified to testify to McNeil's assertion that "the grotesque is a mainstay of the human imagination" (169). The on-and-off button on the television offers people the opportunity to test the aesthetic distance between actual war and themselves in a way earlier generations could only achieve by personally experiencing—and surviving—the effects of combat. The enhanced judgment of the ludicrous-fearful duality gained from this prime-time experience of war may make this and subsequent generations more sensitive to applications of the grotesque in literature. Students of the literature of war and scholars of the grotesque will find reading David McNeil's book a rewarding experience.

United States Air Force Academy