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*Dedicated to my Father  
along with every soldier who confronts death on the battlefield  
and must come to terms with it.  
Because sometimes it may feel as if the dead are the lucky ones.*

In thy faint slumbers I by thee have watched,  
And heard thee murmur tales of iron wars,  
Speak terms of manège to thy bounding steed,  
Cry 'Courage! To the field!' And thou hast talked  
Of sallies and retires, of trenches, tents,  
Of palisadoes, frontiers, parapets,  
Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin,  
Of prisoners ransomed, and of soldiers slain,  
And all the currents of a heady fight.  
Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war  
And thus hath so bestirred thee in thy sleep,  
That beads of sweat have stood upon thy brow  
Like bubbles in a late-disturbèd stream;  
And in thy face strange motions have appeared,  
Such as we see when men restrain their breath  
On some great sudden hest. O, what portents are these?

— *1 Henry IV, Act 2 Scene 4*

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## Introduction

“open, doors of time! open, hospital doors!”: The Combat Medical Narrative

When writing about war, authors often seek to clarify complex issues through a particular perspective. A survey of selected war literature from the late nineteenth century to the present illustrates some of the techniques seen in different works on similar themes. Because war is so intimately connected with the issues of life and death, an effective method for demonstrating its consequences is the combat medical narrative. Works of literature inspired by and in response to war trauma offer a way of understanding the complex issue of human conflict. Authors of such medical narratives invite their readers to follow them through the hospital doors or walk out onto the battlefields to hold the bandages and listen to the screams of wounded soldiers. Stories about the wounded and those who care for them provide insight like no other war narrative by confronting death—the most devastating effect of combat.

While scholarship on the literature of war is extensive—some of which I will cite in the following essay—the analysis I offer of the combat medical narrative is fairly unknown. The recent academic interest in the field of medical humanities represents an exciting moment for researchers to explore an emerging field and connect the humanities with real world social concerns in a practical way. The goal of this interdisciplinary field is to re-humanize the medical profession by studying the ways in which literature and narrative forms can encourage positive communication between patient and provider. I view the combat medical narrative as a subgenre of war literature, deserving of its own scholarship and analysis on the basis of the potential benefits that further research can offer to the field of medical humanities.

The traumatic experience of war remains a lasting burden among those who have witnessed its direct effects and the countless casualties who have suffered wounds, visible or unseen. Authors' involvement in such conflicts affects their perception of wounded bodies, medicine, and the role of the caregiver on the battlefield. The ultimate consequence of war is human suffering, and authors choosing to investigate the subject through the lens of the medical narrative make a conscious effort to place value in that sacrifice. The dedication of those who administer aid during war is a testament to both the ethical and emotional burdens of caring for the wounded and dying. Medical narratives in which authors study the traumatized or wounded soldier serve to elucidate the complicated issue of war and its implications. Individual suffering is one of the most tangible characteristics of war; the visible effect of an abstract concept. Forcing the reader to witness this suffering firsthand encourages emotional connections and allows the author to present the truth of war.

Individuals serving as field medics, nurses, or physicians have a responsibility to ease suffering on the battlefield. This responsibility complicates their perspective of war. The constant confrontation with wounded bodies, along with the dead and dying on the battlefield, allows military caregivers an opportunity to observe and reflect on these grim realities. An investigation of selected texts will show that literary accounts of battlefield medicine—including the wounded or traumatized soldier and the confrontation of death—have contributed to the modern perception of war. These narratives “subvert the expectations of romance” as Samuel Hynes says in his book *The Soldiers' Tale*, “They make war actual, without making it familiar. They bear witness” (30). The realism expressed through the combat medical narrative may serve as the strongest counterpoint

against a romanticized view of war by representing the harshest and most basic fact about war: people die. Hynes says that in war, “death is the whole point, the truest truth, the realest reality . . . death, when you see it up close, isn’t what you expected . . . it’s uglier, more grotesque, less human” (19). The writers of medical narratives, by addressing this aspect of war and inviting their readers to witness death up close, are able to convey truth in a more powerful way through their use of realism. The responsibility then rests on the reader to decide what that truth means for them.

This essay will examine the common techniques used by the authors of combat medical narratives to provide a better understanding of the truth of war. In the following chapters I will provide a map of these stylistic devices, and argue their individual importance and contribution to the larger understanding of war. The authors draw greater attention to the reality of death by employing these different techniques, thus increasing their readers’ conception of that reality which forces soldiers and those that care for them in battle to question the very nature of war. The shared experiences of these authors, spanning over a century of warfare, informs their ability to utilize these stylistic devices with such effect and therefore strengthens their readers’ understanding. I will begin this discussion in Chapter 1 by examining the use of narrative voice and identifying how both Whitman and Hemingway employ a particular persona in order to represent the effects of witnessing death on the battlefield. In Chapter 2 I will analyze how graphic imagery is used in the combat medical narrative to provide the reader with a shocking visual representation of death, as well as its use in dehumanizing the wounded for emotional detachment. I will continue this idea through Chapter 3 by addressing the ways in which authors represent coping mechanisms in order to deal with the emotional burden of

confronting death. In Chapter 4 I will examine the representation of gender in the combat medical narrative, focusing on the ways in which the authors characterize by gender those who provide care on the battlefield. Chapter 5 will be a short discussion of the history of sport metaphor in war literature, and how Richard Hooker employs the technique ironically as a coded language among his characters. Chapter 6 continues the discussion of language; I will examine what Hemingway called the “abstract words” of war and identify the ways in which characters and authors alike communicate in military terms. In Chapter 7 I will address the psychological effects of treating the war wounded, and their representation in the combat medical narrative. I will conclude the essay with a discussion of war literature and how the combat medical narrative fits into that canon, along with its importance as a subgenre.

## Chapter 1

### “An old man bending, I come”: Narrative Voice

The hospital tents were a fitting place for Walt Whitman during the Civil War, who carried with him the love he expressed for his country and those living in and dying for it. He reflects on this focus in the first pages of his *Memoranda During the War* when he says, "I know not how it may have been, or may be, to others—to me the main interest in the War, I found, (and still, on recollection, find,) in those specimens, and in the ambulance, the Hospital, and even the dead on the field" (6). Whitman's deep connection with the nation and its citizenry was indeed tested by what he witnessed, yet he endeavored to present the truth of war to his readers through prose and poetry. The man who answered Emerson's call for an American bard to rise up and become a spokesman for the nation shed the idealized perception of war to present an accurate and truthful—however painful—depiction with his poem “The Dresser.”<sup>1</sup> The experience of caring for wounded soldiers changed Whitman, and this poem from his collection *Drum Taps* is one of the works that successfully encapsulates that transformation. The poet's disillusionment when confronted with the horrors of war can be understood in relation to his earlier work “Leaves of Grass” in which he effuses great love and pride for his country, fascinated with an ideal that each individual is a single part of the whole. He begins that long poem by saying, “I celebrate myself, / And what I shall assume you shall assume, / For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you” (ll. 1-3). This democratic ideal developed in his earlier work became, through his focus on individual soldiers, a voice for the unknown and nameless dying masses on the fields of battle. Peter

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<sup>1</sup> “The Dresser” refers to the 1865 edition of Whitman's poem (as cited in the Schmidgall text) unless otherwise noted.

Coviello writes in his introduction to *Memoranda During the War* that "[p]erhaps no other writer in the American cannon [sic] better exemplifies precisely this ideal [of connectedness], or brings it to a higher state of articulacy, than Walt Whitman. And there is, quite certainly, no single event that tests that ideal, or Whitman's ability to imagine its fulfillment, as dramatically as the Civil War" (xiv-xv). "The Dresser" illustrates Whitman's attempt to address a newfound understanding of death while helping the actions of a generation of brave men to live on in the American memory. Whitman immortalized these wounded soldiers in the hopes that they would not be forgotten and that their sacrifices would not be in vain. Through the narrative of "The Dresser," Whitman invites the reader to make the journey with him and witness the scenes of death and dying in the field hospitals to memorialize the nameless and faceless young men for whom he cared so deeply. The technical elements and writing style of the poem illustrate Whitman's fall from innocence in the wake of the Civil War. Whitman shows the reader his struggle to make sense of the war and its effects while fighting to keep the soldiers' ultimate sacrifice from being forgotten. Coviello writes that "the project of national history—clearly the province of Whitman's national poetry—comes up against a vision of the soldier who dies in utter solitude, to whom the nation can offer nothing in recompense, save this flattering, closely observed, yet also deeply mediated testament to his heroism" (xxix). Whitman's work can be viewed not only as an attempt to address the horrors of war, but also a recording of the "minutia of deeds and passions" in the history of the war that he argued would "never be written" (*Memoranda* 7).

Despite being only 46 at the time of the poem's publication in 1865, Whitman begins "The Dresser" by employing a framing device that paints a distinct portrait of the

narrator. He adopts the persona of an aged soldier recalling the events of the war many years after they happened. The perspective that he develops encourages the reader to envision “an old man bending” (l. 1) as he is asked by his children and family “what saw you to tell us? / What stays with you latest and deepest? of curious panics, / Of hard-fought engagements, or sieges tremendous, what deepest remains?” (ll. 7-9). The use of the framing device allows Whitman to explore his ideas about the physical and psychological effects of war. Though he is relatively young when writing this poem, the horrors of what he has witnessed have exacted their toll on his mind and robbed him of the youthful light and vigor that was so prevalent in his earlier work. The voice of the aged soldier that he adopts for this poem reflects that change and allows him to look back on the events and describe “what deepest remains.” Whitman’s use of the aged narrator thinking back on these scenes years after the fact also gives the reader a sense that the poet, from his time spent in reflection, has gained an even greater understanding of the war and what he has witnessed. Whitman offers to the reader through this persona the idea that his service as wound dresser informs his perspective of war in a more accurate way than the infantry soldier serving on the front lines. He presents the notion that pivotal battles and famous generals are not the important and memorable aspects of war, and suggests through the narrator’s perspective that the victims of war are what truly deserve remembrance and tribute. Without someone to tell this story, Whitman emphasizes that “so soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the imprints off the sand” (l. 19). His focus is the individual suffering of brave young men and his attempt to commemorate their sacrifice, while dressing the wounds and being witness to the gravity of the task.

This technique can also be seen at work in Ernest Hemingway's short story "A Natural History of the Dead," in which the author employs a persona to present the horror of war to the reader. Hemingway satirizes the naturalist essay, a form better associated with explorers like Mungo Park<sup>2</sup> and scientists like Charles Darwin. He describes his observations of the battlefield dead in scientific-like detail, as if he were categorizing new species on an undiscovered island. In his first paragraph the narrator says, "Can we not hope to furnish the reader with a few rational and interesting facts about the dead? I hope so" (CSS 335). However, the author's intent is to illustrate the complete lack of rationality in war by observing the dead and pointing out the profound shame of the discarded and forgotten bodies. Susan F. Beegel asserts "through a pseudoscientific study of corpses decaying on an Italian battlefield, Hemingway provides positivistic proof of an absence at the heart of the universe" (77). Through the satirized essay and the use of the naturalist's voice, Hemingway presents the idea of what is absent from the universe in a way that naturalism seeks to find it. He achieves this by pointing out the shame and disgrace of the forgotten bodies:

The surprising thing, next to their progressive corpulence, is the amount of paper that is scattered about the dead. Their ultimate position, before there is any question of burial, depends on the location of the pockets in the uniform. In the Austrian army these pockets were in the back of the breeches and the dead, after a short time, all consequently lay on their faces, the two hip pockets pulled out and, scattered around them in the grass, all those papers their pockets had contained. (CSS 337)

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<sup>2</sup> An eighteenth century Scottish explorer that Hemingway refers to in order to ironically represent the observations of battlefield dead, setting the tone for his story. Hemingway anecdotally describes an episode in which Park was close to death in the African desert and was inspired by finding beauty in the form of a moss-flower. Hemingway then juxtaposes Park's revelation with his own assertion to "see what inspiration we may derive from the dead" (CSS 335).

This dry observation of the dead, their pockets having been looted and their final letters home left scattered in the wind, clearly illustrates the author's message to the reader by inverting the naturalist voice. Hemingway is satirizing the failure of the naturalist to communicate the senselessness of war through this style of observation, and by doing so he emphasizes his message about the reality of war. Instead of discovering some great truth about the universe in the beauty of nature, the narrator convincingly denounces that truth through the careful descriptions of discarded corpses. In his book *Hemingway's Nick Adams*, Joseph Flora argues that Hemingway's story is "a heavily satiric piece, told by a narrator who is full of bitterness toward effete humanists who do not really know what war is like" (126). Hemingway addresses the nature of humanity by first presenting the cold facts of battlefield death in essay form, then transitions to his more familiar style of prose driven by character dialogue. His juxtaposition of form, switching from satiric scientific essay to fictionalized narrative, is an attempt to show the reader the multiple conflicting perspectives on this issue.

The character of Nick Adams appears in many of Hemingway's short stories through which his fictional life is chronicled. Several of Hemingway's stories featuring Nick as a central character are focused on his time at war and the aftermath of his experience. It is no coincidence that both Hemingway and Nick share similar wartime experiences, and some of the Nick Adams stories seem to lay a foundation for the character of Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*. Hemingway's use of Nick and his development of the character illustrate a young author's attempt to confront his feelings about war and come to terms with the trauma of his wounding. In Hemingway's "Big Two-Hearted River," he uses Nick as a vehicle to explore the effects of the battlefield in

an extremely subtle way. Flora addresses the importance of the story and contends that “[a]t least one of the things ‘Big Two-Hearted River’ is about is the trauma of war, although the story never mentions the war” (147). The voice of the narrator is engaged solely in description with very little dialogue from Nick, and the reader is reminded of the scenes of destruction from earlier Nick war stories. But the persona that Hemingway creates is vital to the theme of the story, and contributes to the idea that this soldier must deal with the tragic event of a wounding even while he is consciously occupying his mind with other thoughts.

In his article “‘Big Two-Hearted River’: Why the Swamp is Tragic,” critic William Adair argues that “certain elements in the story—the fire-destroyed town, the burned-over countryside and fire-blackened grasshoppers . . . his memory of seeing dead fish floating belly up in streamside pools . . . suggest images which he had seen during the war” (584). Although Hemingway’s story never explicitly mentions the war, his imagery clearly illustrates a young veteran attempting to deal with his experience and the trauma of his unspoken wound through the structure and comfort of a fishing trip. Hemingway shows his reader that no matter how Nick attempts to forget and leave “everything behind, the need for thinking, the need to write, other needs” that these images continue to stir emotions within him that have been ignored (CSS 164). The narrator attempts to reveal some insight into Nick’s perspective during a scene in which Nick smokes a cigarette and observes a blackened grasshopper. The narrator describes Nick’s reaction “as he watched the black hopper . . . he realized that they had all turned black from living in the burned-over land. He realized that the fire must have come the year before, but the grasshoppers were all black now. He wondered how long they would

stay that way” (CSS 165). Hemingway uses this interaction to show the reader that Nick is subconsciously wrestling with the effects of his own wounding. The blackened grasshoppers symbolize Nick’s internal trauma through the physical representation of how they were changed by the burned land in which they lived—the burned land that so closely resembles the destroyed earth that Nick has witnessed on the Italian front. When he wonders “how long they would stay that way,” Nick is actually questioning his own condition and projecting his concerns onto the grasshoppers. Flora suggests that “Nick is hypersensitive to the simplest forms of life after his encounter with mass destruction” and this hypersensitivity is the direct result of his inability to deal with his wartime experience (133).

Hemingway clearly outlines what he calls his “iceberg theory” of writing in *Death in the Afternoon*:

If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an ice-berg [sic] is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing. (192)

Hemingway’s narrative voice in “Big Two-Hearted River” exemplifies his “iceberg theory” by omitting certain elements to subtly address the invisible wound from which Nick suffers. This omission helps the reader to understand precisely what Hemingway is attempting. Through his sparse use of dialogue and intricate detailing of Nick’s actions, Hemingway focuses the reader’s attention on the minutiae of Nick’s work in order to represent the soldier’s need to distract himself from what he has left behind: the horrors of war and its destruction. This stylistic device is apparent in a passage when the narrator

describes Nick as he sets up camp: “Nick was happy as he crawled inside the tent . . . Now things were done. There had been this to do. Now it was done. It had been a hard trip. He was very tired. That was done. He had made his camp. He was settled. Nothing could touch him. It was a good place to camp. He was there, in the good place. He was in his home where he had made it” (*CSS* 167). The simple syntax and sparseness of these sentences represent Hemingway’s attempt to utilize all the aggregate elements of his story to contribute greater meaning to Nick’s seemingly commonplace fishing trip. The role of the narrator in achieving this goal is essential, and Flora suggests that the descriptiveness of the story and “Hemingway’s prose in its steady detail [mirror] the values that Nick is seeking in his life—order, neatness, purpose” (159-60). The precision of Nick’s actions, as he focuses on each task step-by-step in a disciplined manner, illustrate his attempt to regain structure after the chaos of war. Hemingway’s use of a third-person narrative voice successfully represents Nick’s search for purpose, because the focus on minute details leaves the real subject—Nick’s ability to cope with the trauma of his wounding—just beneath the surface.

## Chapter 2

### “The cold fingers of fear”: Graphic Imagery

In her book *Healing the Republic*, Joan Burbick argues that Whitman’s focus on the idealized body in *Leaves of Grass* symbolizes the vitality and strength of America. She claims that “Whitman’s poetry immortalizes the healthy body as the perfect ‘natural symbol’ for the nation . . . [and] represents not only the present greatness of the republic but its future destiny as a nation of nations” (116). But compelled in the American Civil War to volunteer in service of his country and care for the wounded, Whitman witnessed firsthand what Hynes calls the “truest truth” of war: death. His exposure to death in war had a profound effect on the way he viewed the nation, as is evident in both his prose and poetry. Among the works in his war collection *Drum Taps*, “The Dresser” is one of the strongest examples illustrating his fall from innocence and his newfound perspective. Burbick suggests that “[Whitman’s] representation of the body becomes a morbid examination of death and disease. The healthy body remains the image of American political utopia, but the dismembered body, stinking, amputated, and decaying with gangrene becomes the image of political reality” (129). This chapter will focus on the use of graphic imagery and the physical body in the combat medical narrative to express the horrors of war while simultaneously serving as a mechanism for developing emotional detachment on the part of those providing care.

“The Dresser” exemplifies the twofold purpose of graphic imagery in the combat medical narrative: first it provides the reader with a greater understanding of the absolute horror of the scenes in which the narrator is a part; and secondly it allows the disconnection between emotion and duty by dehumanizing the patients in order for the

narrator to focus only on the wounds. The tone of Whitman's lines suggests how repulsive the task is as he describes "the perforated shoulder, the foot with the bullet wound . . . the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so sickening, so offensive" (ll. 50-51). These words are meant to evoke a reaction within the reader that stimulates the senses, bringing with it a strong and resonating image of the infected wound. Whitman wants the reader to see what the narrator is doing as he develops these images one by one, slowly emphasizing war's grisly reality. This tactic illustrates the poet's attempt to undermine the romanticized idealization of war and to approach realism by presenting the scenes in a stripped-down and painfully truthful way. By forcing the reader to imagine such a gruesome and disparaging situation, Whitman commemorates the selflessness and substantial sacrifice of those wounded, dead, and dying soldiers—and by extension all others of the war.

Whitman's poem takes a drastically different approach than what he intended in his *Memoranda During the War*. At several moments in his *Memoranda* Whitman warns the reader, through direct address, that these scenes are not for the faint of heart: "As you pass by, you must be on guard where you look. I saw the other day a gentleman, a visitor apparently from curiosity, in one of the Wards, stop and turn a moment to look at an awful wound they were probing, &c. He turn'd pale, and in a moment more he had fainted away and fallen on the floor" (31). Whitman warns that these scenes are difficult to witness and not suitable for those who are motivated by curiosity alone. He provides these images to an audience he deems worthy to witness such suffering through his poem "The Dresser," in order to memorialize the sacrifice. The scenes are slowly constructed in the reader's mind with each description as Whitman writes, "From the stump of the arm,

the amputated hand, / I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash off the matter and blood” (ll. 42-43). By focusing on the wounds, the narrator is able to suppress his instinctive emotional reactions and try to ignore them for the good of his patients.

As he tends to the patients, moving along the rows of cots, there is a strong focus on the wounds as individual parts of a human being. In this way, Whitman allows the narrator to disconnect his emotional response from the mechanical process so as not to become overwhelmed as “an attendant follows, holding a tray—he carries a refuse pail, / Soon to be fill’d with clotted rags and blood, emptied, and fill’d again” (ll. 29-30). By focusing on these images, Whitman encourages the reader to empathize with the narrator’s situation. This technique facilitates the reader’s comprehension of such an overwhelming task. The monotonous cycle of moving from one patient to the next carrying a pail filled with blood-soaked bandages is a quite horrific scene. If the narrator were to stop and register the severity of the suffering and allow his emotions to control his actions, he would likely fail at his appointed task. To fail in the face of horror and inhumanity would not serve the wounded, so he commits himself to the work, saying, “I onward go, I stop, / With hinged knees and steady hand, to dress wounds” (ll. 31-32). The narrator directs his attention only to the wounds, focusing on his role as military caregiver and suppressing his emotional response. Whitman takes care to describe the actions of the wound dresser as he carries out his duty while struggling to ignore the bodies that lie in pain and suffering.

In order to complete his task, the narrator chooses to ignore (with great inner conflict) the full bodies of the patients in all their physical and psychological suffering. In doing so, he is able to carry on and assure himself and the reader with the lines “I am

faithful, I do not give out; / The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen, /  
These and more I dress with impassive hand (yet deep in my breast a fire, a burning  
flame)" (ll. 53-55). The "burning flame" he feels is a deep emotional connection and  
strong sense of compassion for the young men who have fought and sacrificed for their  
country. In his book *Whitman and the Romance of Medicine*, Robert Leigh Davis argues  
that Whitman's technique for directing the reader's view of the hospital scenes in  
*Memoranda* is a way to protect his patients' dignity:

The presence of textual obstructions—like the professional restraints built into the  
doctor-patient relationship—limit how the body can be looked at, how it can be  
approached, and what can be done to it. By writing these restraints into his  
representations of the body, Whitman seeks to recover the sense of limit erased by  
the wholesale death and violation of the war. Unlike the hospital, the battlefield  
offers indiscriminate access to the body. It is that place where the body can be  
seen and touched without restraint. Nurse and physician are granted intimate  
access to and knowledge of the body, but this access is presented as a desirable  
alternative to the unrestricted trespass of the war. (107)

However, in "The Dresser" Whitman doesn't present "stray glimpses" as in his  
*Memoranda*, he actively forces his reader to look at the wounds he is dressing  
(*Memoranda* 7). His language throughout the poem encourages the reader to see these  
difficult images without restriction, and to feel the pain along with the patients and  
empathize with their suffering. Whitman explains to the reader his actions and what he  
sees as he says "The crush'd head I dress . . . The neck of the cavalry-man, with the bullet  
through and through, I examine" (ll. 37-38). His use of graphic imagery succeeds in  
dehumanizing the patients and promotes the ability of the narrator to disconnect his  
emotions from the work at hand, while his language invites the reader to follow him and  
witness it for themselves.

Miss G.M. Mitchell's poem "The Nurse," written in 1916, uses an approach similar to Whitman as the narrator struggles to perform her duty in the hospital ward while hoping her lover is not badly wounded. Mitchell's poem is rhythmic and meditative and expresses her professionalism and devotion to duty while remaining distant. Like Whitman, she uses images of body parts to avoid picturing the wounded as men because they would painfully remind her of her own lover. The narrator touches "a restless fevered hand" and says she feels "the cold / Fingers of fear about my heart" (ll. 3, 5-6). At this point in the poem the narrator begins to come apart emotionally, and the final stanza reveals the nature of her inner conflict: she worries about her "beloved" being in the same situation as the men she is caring for. Though these men are strangers and she finds it hard to carry on and be in control, she pushes forward knowing that she would want a strong professional caring for her lover if he was wounded.

Just as Whitman presents the wounded soldiers of his poem using vivid imagery to commemorate their suffering, Hemingway forces his readers to confront death on the battlefield in "A Natural History of the Dead." Hemingway addresses the nature of humanity by presenting the cold facts of battlefield death, drawing on his experience as an ambulance driver in Italy during World War I to illustrate the scenes. He presents the true account of an explosion at a munitions factory where women were injured, and the narrator describes this as an "inversion of the usual sex of the dead" because "one becomes so accustomed to the sight of all the dead being men that the sight of a dead woman is quite shocking" (CSS 336). This "shocking" effect is precisely what Hemingway is concerned with, and he seeks to elicit that response from his reader by using this style. The narrator addresses what he calls the "unreality" of a situation in

which there were no living wounded. His dry and emotionally detached descriptions emphasize this notion when he says “I remember that after we had searched quite thoroughly for the complete dead we collected fragments” (CSS 336). Much as Whitman focuses on body parts in “The Wound-Dresser,” Hemingway does so in an even more literal sense in order to dehumanize the dead. He focuses his descriptions to highlight the shocking horrors of modern warfare, as illustrated through a discussion with the other Red Cross workers as they return to Milan. The narrator recalls the conversation by saying, “We agreed too that the picking up of fragments had been an extraordinary business; it being amazing that the human body should be blown into pieces which exploded along no anatomical lines, but rather divided as capriciously as the fragmentation in the burst of a high explosive shell” (337). The irony of the situation is that the narrator is not shocked by the way the bodies had been blown into fragments, but rather intrigued by the novelty of how it occurred. Beegel writes that “for Hemingway true obscenity resided not in graphic descriptions of sex or death, but in attempts to deny with comfortable abstractions the harsh realities of mechanized slaughter” (79). This idea of presenting the effects of modern warfare to an uninformed audience can be seen in the writings of nurses during World War I such as Vera Brittain, who were confronted so often with the dead and wounded.

In her memoir *Testament of Youth*, Vera Brittain approaches the horrific scene of gas attack victims by presenting the reality of modern warfare to a heavily propagandized society. She addresses the “people who write so glibly about this being a holy war” by describing “the poor things burnt and blistered all over with great mustard coloured [sic] suppurating blisters, with blind eyes . . . all sticky and stuck together, and always fighting

for breath, with voices a mere whisper, saying their throats are closing and they know they will choke” (395). Brittain’s experiences as a wartime nurse provided her with first-hand accounts of human suffering. She used this episode to illustrate the unnecessary suffering caused by war and to denounce the romanticized depiction of war promulgated during the time. Brittain’s exposure to war was deeply personal having endured the loss of her fiancé, her brother and a close friend. Their deaths shaped her perspective as she confronted their faces in every soldier she treated. In Roberts’ biographical notes he explains that Brittain “wrote her *Testament of Youth* to record the effect of the war on her generation” (378). Brittain’s emotional connection with her work serves to bolster her message, and the record of her experience establishes a link with her audience in order to show the gruesome reality of war. However, as will be discussed in the next chapter, becoming personally involved with the work of caring for the wounded can have dramatic emotional consequences. Yet the responsibility of the military caregiver still remains, regardless of emotional involvement with the task.

## Chapter 3

### “Turn you to these, dependent on your care”: Emotional Breakdown

In the foreword to *MASH: A Novel About Three Army Doctors*, Richard Hooker’s humorous yet thoughtful insight lays the foundation for the rest of the novel and sets the tone of satire and dark humor to come. By the author’s own admission, despite strategies for coping with the constant confrontation of wounded bodies, these doctors were still vulnerable to emotional breakdown:

The surgeons of the MASH hospitals were exposed to extremes of hard work, leisure, tension, boredom, heat, cold, satisfaction and frustration that most of them had never experienced before. Their reaction, individually and collectively, was to cope with the situation and get the job done. The various stresses, however, produced behavior in many of them that, superficially at least, seemed inconsistent with their earlier, civilian behavior patterns. A few flipped their lids, but most of them just raised hell, in a variety of ways and degrees. This is a story of some of the ways and degrees. It’s also a story of some of the work. (5)

Hooker shows the reader that even when faced with these difficult experiences, the doctors still understood their responsibilities and struggled to accomplish their mission of saving lives. In many cases throughout the novel these coping mechanisms manifested themselves as hijinks perpetrated by the three doctors known as “The Swampmen”—Captains “Hawkeye” Pierce, “Duke” Forrest and “Trapper” John McIntyre. While not entirely accepted by the members of their unit, the three doctors’ penchant for theatricality and practical jokes was understood as normal behavior by their colleagues and their commanding officer. However, these coping mechanisms provided little comfort when a young Korean houseboy named Ho-Jon, who had become well acquainted with the Swampmen, returned to the MASH after being wounded. The young boy was their friend and had been drafted into the Republic of Korea Army, and the narrator explains the difficulty with which the doctors were dealing with his return and

the life-threatening operation that loomed ahead: “In The Swamp the next week the tension grew. Humor was nonexistent. Unmilitary behavior tapered off. One evening Hawkeye passed around a bottle of Scotch, feeling that, for the sake of efficiency, they should attempt some sort of comeback” (69-70). This scene is the reader’s first glimpse of the true emotional side of these doctors. Despite their sardonic perspective of the war and military life, Hooker shows that the doctors are still vulnerable to being personally affected by the consequences of war.

The lowest emotional point experienced by the Swampmen results after two weeks of treating a nonstop flow of casualties due to the increased combat activity in an area known as Old Baldy. “The Great Deluge” forces the doctors to operate on wounded soldiers one after another with little sleep, which puts them on edge and had a drastic effect on what was viewed as their normal behavior. After one of his patients dies during surgery, Hawkeye is led into the priest’s tent and expresses his frustrations. Father John Patrick Mulcahy, better known as Dago Red, attempts to rationalize with Hawkeye about his role as a physician in war by saying “you people in The Swamp have got to get over the idea that you can save everyone who comes into this hospital. Man is mortal. The wounded can stand only so much, and the surgeon can do only so much” (120).<sup>3</sup> The priest’s words fall on deaf ears as Hawkeye begins to lose confidence in himself and question his abilities. The other doctors of The Swamp feel these pressures as well, and the narrator expresses the pain they feel after losing a patient of their own. Dago Red

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<sup>3</sup> Also refer to “Sometimes You Hear the Bullet.” *M\*A\*S\*H*. By Karl Kleinschmitt. Dir. William Wiard. Perf. Alan Alda, Wayne Rogers, and McLean Stevenson. CBS. 28 Jan. 1973. Television. This episode of the television series highlights a similar theme when Hawkeye’s childhood friend dies on the operating table, and Lt. Col. Henry Blake attempts to console him: “Look, all I know is what they taught me at command school. There are certain rules about a war. Rule number one is young men die. And rule number two is doctors can’t change rule number one.” This is also the first episode of the series in which a patient dies.

goes in search of Trapper and Duke to console them, and in The Swamp he finds that “The Duke had already opened a can of beer, but he wasn’t drinking it. He was crying into it” (124). These emotional responses illustrate that the confrontation with death in war can have a tremendous psychological impact. This effect is amplified in the case of medical caregivers whose responsibility is to save the lives of war wounded—a responsibility which increases their emotional involvement with their patients.

Pat Barker examines the idea of emotional breakdown in *Regeneration*, her novel that fictionalizes the life stories of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen as they are treated for shell shock at Craiglockhart War Hospital by Dr. William Rivers. At one point in the novel Rivers is conducting a session with one of his patients, Anderson, a doctor being treated after a traumatic episode that left him unable to deal with the sight of blood. Anderson recalls the incident: “I missed it. I treated the minor wounds and missed the major one . . . He started to haemorrhage, [sic] and . . . there was nothing I could do. I just stood there and watched him bleed to death” (30). Anderson claims he had dealt with worse situations during his time as a military physician at the front, yet this episode paralyzed him with fear. Barker is showing her reader that physicians—trained professionals who are supposed to inspire faith and confidence—are still susceptible to these paralyzing fears. Their vulnerabilities are amplified because of their responsibility to ensure patient survival; in Anderson’s case, his mistake caused the death of his patient and he was unable to cope with that loss. During the session, Anderson asks Rivers “What do you do when the doctor breaks down?” (31). This rhetorical question encapsulates the complicated issue of a doctor’s responsibility to his patients to be strong when faced with such complicated emotional situations.

Vera Brittain uses this feeling of responsibility to her patients as motivation to continue her work in the poem "Hospital Sanctuary." She addresses the reader directly, expressing the need for a caregiver to put aside his or her own suffering in the interest of the patients: "When the sad days bring you the loss of all ambition, / And pride is gone that gave you strength to bear, / When dreams are shattered, and broken is all decision – / Turn you to these, dependent on your care" (ll. 5-8). In a sense, the poem serves as a self-affirmation as well as an address to the reader. Her use of the pronoun "you" is ambiguous, and can be read as an attempt to console herself and affirm her duties as a nurse even when faced with the difficulties and stresses that arise in wartime. This reading is validated in reference to her personal history of loss during the war as discussed in Chapter 2. She explains that her patients "too have fathomed the depths of human anguish, / Seen all that counted flung like chaff away" (ll. 9-10). Her claim is that no matter what she has lost, the wounded soldiers in her care are more important and deserve her attention despite her personal feelings. The narrator finds solace in that responsibility, and struggles to internalize the notion that though she may be suffering, her patients still need her.

## Chapter 4

### “This man’s army”: Gender Politics and Characterization

In the introduction to his book *Civil War Nurse: The Diary and Letters of Hannah Ropes*, John Brumgardt describes the role of female nurses during wartime and their desire to serve the wounded soldiers:

And so the women, including Hannah Ropes, came to tend the sick and wounded. Untrained, [and] motivated by a variety of intentions, many brought to their activity the preconceptions that had been so much a part of their domestic lives. Imbued, like Ropes, with notions of woman’s maternal calling, mission as homemaker, and responsibility as a bringer of refinement, tenderness, and gentility to a male-dominated society, they in many cases approached the military hospital as an extension of home and the patients as their ‘boys.’ Since many soldiers were young men, often away from home for the first time and desirous of motherly care, these attitudes were normally reenforced [sic] rather than refuted. (33)

The perception of the nurse as “mother” to young male soldiers was a common theme not only among the writings of the Civil War, but continued through World War I and beyond. Vera Brittain’s intensely personal connection to the war through the loss of her fiancé, brother and friend seems to indicate a similar motivation for her search in making the hospital “an extension of home.” The male physicians in Hooker’s *MASH* perpetuate stereotypes by the continued use of terms like “honey” and “mother” when referring to females, even when those nurses hold positions of authority within the rank structure of the Army. However, when Whitman writes of the necessary “qualifications” of a nurse in his *Memoranda*, he explains the need for motherly attributes: “. . . few or no young ladies . . . answer the practical requirements of nurses . . . The presence of a good middle-aged or elderly woman, the magnetic touch of hands, the expressive features of the mother, the silent soothing of her presence, her words, her knowledge and privileges arrived at only

through having had children, are precious and final qualifications” (71). This “magnetic touch of hands” to which Whitman refers is related to his belief that a physical and emotional connection must exist between the patient and caregiver in order for them to recover (Murray 72). According to Whitman, this was a necessary requirement for a successful nurse. For him the nurse as “mother” was precisely the role that was required.

In a letter to her daughter Alice, Hannah Ropes refers to an episode when she was called to administer aid to a large group of wounded men. She describes how the men “bent, clung, and stood, in dumb silence . . . grim, dirty, muddy and wounded” and Ropes explains to her daughter that she began to think of her son Ned “when he came down from the mountains, and it seemed as though these were he, in fifty duplicates” (53). This episode reinforces the idea of nurse as mother, because Ropes explicitly links the group of wounded soldiers to her own son. Brumgardt’s argument that women were searching for “an extension of home,” as well as Whitman’s qualifications for a successful nurse, are further strengthened in the next passage as Ropes describes caring for the wounded men:

When all were up, we each took our portion and commenced to wash them. We were four hours. Everything they had on was stripped off—and, weak, helpless as babes, they sank upon us to care for them. With broken arms and wounded feet, thighs, and fingers, it was no easy job to do gently. One quite old man, sick every way, and a bullet hole through his right hand, called me ‘good mother’ when I laid his head on his pillow, and soon he slept as though he had come to the end of the war, unto a haven of rest. (53)

While the motivation for these women to serve their country and care for wounded soldiers may have been the result of a “maternal calling” as Brumgardt argues, there is no question that this motivation helped to bolster their resolve while administering aid.

Louisa May Alcott also articulates this attitude in her book *Hospital Sketches*, a

fictionalized account of her experiences as a Civil War nurse. Upon seeing the first wave of wounded soldiers from Fredericksburg, Alcott's protagonist Tribulation Periwinkle expresses that "[t]he sight of several stretchers, each with its legless, armless, or desperately wounded occupant, entering my ward, admonished me that I was there to work, not to wonder or weep; so I corked up my feelings, and returned to the path of duty, which was rather a 'hard road to travel' just then" (21). Nurse Periwinkle is motivated by duty and chooses to forcibly repress her instinctive emotional reactions and commit herself to the task of caring for the wounded. However, more generally in the fictional representations of nursing and the roles of men and women during World War I, the issues are slightly more complicated.

Known for his terse prose and affinity for machismo, Hemingway wrote much of his fiction about war — arguably the most masculine of enterprises. Yet his characterization of Catherine Barkley, a nurse and the prominent female character in his novel *A Farewell to Arms*, clearly illustrates his ability to explore the complicated issues that war represents. Hemingway displays the depth of Catherine's character early on in the novel during her first meeting with Frederic Henry as she describes her motivation for becoming a nurse in support of the cause. Catherine explains how she followed her fiancé, saying "I remember having the silly idea he might come to the hospital where I was. With a sabre cut, I suppose, and a bandage around his head . . . something picturesque" (*AFTA* 20). Catherine entertains an idealized version of war with her lover that is chivalrous and genteel, far removed from the harsh reality of modern industrialized warfare. However, Hemingway shows the reader through this exchange that she soon begins to understand the horrors of the modern battlefield when she goes on to say

“People can’t realize what France is like . . . He didn’t have a sabre cut. They blew him all to bits” (*AFTA* 20). The author uses this interaction to present a character grounded in the reality of war from having been exposed to it so closely. Hemingway’s nurse acts as a mouthpiece to express that reality to his audience and show how romantic perceptions can be so easily shattered with the truth.

The character of Catherine and the evolution of her pragmatic war view echo both Lesbia Thanet’s poem “In Time of War” and Miss G.M. Mitchell’s poem “The Nurse.” Thanet’s poem idealizes the concept of war with the perspective of a young woman waiting for her soldier back home. The romantic diction of the poem has a dream-like quality, and the poet invokes this chivalrous tone when she says “As heroes’ women say, perchance, / When the deep drums awake – / ‘Go forth: do gloriously for my dear sake’” (ll4-6). The narrator ships her soldier off to war in an attempt to realize her misguided fantasy. However, an abrupt shift in tone between the two stanzas illustrates her newfound perspective that he is “no lover made of dreams” but real flesh that is vulnerable to the machines of war (l. 8). In stark contrast to Thanet’s poem, Mitchell’s “The Nurse” depicts a woman who has suffered greatly and has no delusions about war. The narrator’s practical view is rooted in her dedication to her patients. The slow, meditative rhythm of the poem illustrates her somber understanding as she begins “Here in the long white ward I stand, / Pausing a little breathless space” (ll. 1-2). Her exposure to war has hardened her perception and reinforces her responsibility as a caregiver to be calm and detached.

Hemingway again illustrates his clear understanding of character and the way people interact with the final section of “A Natural History of the Dead.” He transitions

from the naturalist essay form to his more familiar, character-driven style of prose. The narrator describes a still-breathing wounded soldier who is mistakenly placed in a cave with the dead, and the other characters then struggle to deal with the situation.

Hemingway's use of characterization in this final act breathes life into the issue that was the focus of his preceding essay—the irrationality of war—by showing the reader several conflicting perspectives. There is a dispute about the appropriate way to handle the wounded soldier who is near death. The doctor will not allow the stretcher-bearers to remove him, and an artillery lieutenant suggests giving him a lethal overdose of morphine. The doctor refuses and tells the lieutenant “My business is to care for the wounded, not to kill them. That is for gentlemen of the artillery” (CSS 340). However, by neglecting a soldier who is still alive among the dead, the doctor has effectively killed him by doing nothing to ease his suffering. Conflict arises because the characters are forced to confront their death. Hemingway explores the nature of humanity and the role of men in wartime by presenting his characters with a harrowing situation the effect of which is unsettling on the reader. He rejects the romantic view of war and instead chooses to present these episodes in their truest form. Beegel asserts that “fulfilling Hemingway's insistence that literature must depict war with unflinching realism, the final story of ‘A Natural History of the Dead’ treats war's psychological disasters as graphically as the satirical essay treats war's physical refuse” (84). Although Hemingway's story contains two very distinct parts, separate in both tone and form, throughout the narrative he weaves the common theme of how men deal with death on the battlefield.

The author contrasts the dry and emotionless descriptions of the dead from the first section of the story with an explosive final scene as the two men resort to violence over the dying soldier. With this scene Hemingway illustrates that the point is not what we can learn from the dead, but what we can learn about ourselves from our treatment of them. In the final moments of the dispute, the doctor splashes iodine in the eyes of the artillery lieutenant who rushes toward him with a gun. As the lieutenant lies on the floor blinded by iodine and cursing the doctor, the stretcher-bearers announce that the wounded soldier has died. The doctor says to the artillery officer, "See, my poor lieutenant? We dispute about nothing. In time of war we dispute about nothing" (341). Hemingway's character interaction is striking because the focus of the story is the impact of discovering the dead on a battlefield. Clearly, human lives are not simply "nothing" to be disputed over. The argument that the author makes to the reader is quite the opposite: dealing with human suffering is complicated, and death in war is not to be accepted blindly.

## Chapter 5

### “Play up! play up! and play the game!”: A Metaphor Suitable for War

The culture of the British army during the First World War was one that embraced the values that coincided with sportsmanship—ideas that were superimposed onto the battlefield. Hynes suggests that among the troops that fought in the first battles of the war “The officers of those regiments were soldiers in the tradition of the European officer caste, sons of the aristocracy and the gentry, for whom the army was a career, a vocation, and often the ultimate field sport” (33). This “sporting” attitude was engendered through schooling in much the same way that the history of British imperialism promoted national pride. Roberts describes the almost propagandized use of sport as a call to arms for encouraging young men to the battlefield: “To the British press, and the many it influenced, war was a game. It required selfless team work, courage, a willingness to play by the rules. War was an opportunity for heroism, self-sacrifice, patriotism, an opportunity to fight for civilisation, [sic] democracy, freedom. It was the greatest game of life that any man could take part in” (162). These cultural philosophies persisted in the minds of young soldiers, motivating them to engage in war with a strong sense of duty to their country.

In many ways, the poetry of Henry Newbolt perpetuated this attitude in the years leading up to the war. Newbolt’s school life as a young boy certainly promoted the values of brotherhood concomitantly with love for his country. Roberts argues that in Newbolt’s poem “*Vitai Lampada*,”<sup>4</sup> his juxtaposition of British military episodes in colonial Africa with images of the cricket field “famously linked the ideas of war and duty with

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<sup>4</sup> Latin phrase meaning “The torch of life.”

sportsmanship” (20). As this link carried over into the popular imagination along with the still vibrant conception of England as a strong imperialist power, the country was on the eve of war and full of young men rallying for the cause. Newbolt’s poem illustrates the strong tradition of nationalism and perseverance that was encouraged among the men of fighting age who had been brought up on the values of brotherhood: “This they all with a joyful mind / bear through life like a torch in flame, / And falling fling to the host behind – / ‘Play up! play up! and play the game!’” (ll. 20-24). Newbolt is insisting that this attitude of sportsmanship is interchangeable with duty and patriotism, and it is the responsibility of the young men to carry that attitude throughout life and even onto the battlefield if necessary. Newbolt’s refrain is a battle cry to “rally the ranks” and motivate British soldiers to press ever onward toward victory.

The use of sport metaphor in Hooker’s novel *MASH* serves as a deliberate subversion of these earlier British ideas about sportsmanship and duty by embodying the core philosophy—that war is a game—in an overtly ironic way. Sport metaphor becomes a second language for the characters, using the terminology to communicate and relate to one another on a more personal level. Upon first meeting, Duke Forrest and Hawkeye Pierce must decide who will drive their jeep to the 4077<sup>th</sup> MASH. They resort to a game of hand over hand with Hawkeye’s baseball bat: “‘Let’s choose,’ Captain Pierce said. He opened his barracks bag, felt around in it and extracted a Stan Hack model Louisville Slugger. He handed the bat to Captain Forrest. ‘Toss,’ he said” (11). At this point neither one of the characters has introduced themselves to the other, yet the narrator refers to them both by their rank of ‘Captain.’ This scene mirrors a contest that might occur between two team captains before an impromptu baseball game in order to decide whose

team will go first. Hooker's use of this image sets the tone for the rest of the novel by illustrating how his characters are able to relate to one another through sport.

One of the most frequent incarnations of sport metaphor in Hooker's novel is the role of the hospital priest Father John Patrick Mulcahy, known as Dago Red. The surgeons repeatedly call the priest to administer last rites and pray with their patients by asking him to "put in a fix," as if his religion and his relationship with God can be used to cheat at the game in which they are involved. The narrator explains the importance of this phenomenon and the reluctance with which the surgeons avail themselves of the priest's services: "With the Swampmen it was mostly a gag, but one they could not quite bring themselves to forgo when things were rough. As far as Red was concerned, of course, it was no joke. He spent many sleepless nights applying fixes and feeding beer, whiskey, coffee or consolation to distraught surgeons whose patients had not responded to the fix or who were waiting for the fix to take" (37). The act of the priest performing the last rites for a dying patient is considered by the surgeons to be an attempt to control the outcome of their game—a last ditch effort when they have exhausted all other options.

Sport metaphor is so common among the surgeons in the novel that it becomes a second language for them, to the point that Hawkeye tries to hide behind the coded language during an interaction with the priest. Hawkeye, like the other surgeons, becomes exhausted after a two week nonstop flow of casualties in "The Great Deluge" and tells the priest, "my curve's hanging, and I lost the hop on my fast ball" to which Dago Red replies "Speak English, Hawk. Maybe I can help you" (120). In this instance, Hawkeye uses the language of sport metaphor to hide his true emotions and prevent himself from becoming vulnerable. Hooker illustrates that the method of communication

through sport can also be used as a coping mechanism for the surgeons to deal with the horrors of war.

Perhaps Hooker's most powerful use of sport metaphor takes the form of a football game between the 4077<sup>th</sup> MASH and the 325<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital. The three army doctors along with several other members of their unit all played organized football either in college or high school before joining the Army. The narrator explains that "With the end of summer, the baseball that the Swampmen had tossed and batted around occasionally to get some exercise and kill some time, took on air and a new shape. It became a football and an object of pursuit as, in their idle moments, they passed and kicked it back and forth and ran one another from one end of the ball field to the other" (154). Hawkeye soon makes the suggestion that they should organize a game against the 325<sup>th</sup> Evac, who claim to be the champions of Korea. However, in normal 'Swampmen' fashion, the plan is to bring in a ringer and "clean up on some bets" (155). The ringer comes in the form of Dr. Oliver Wendell "Spearchucker" Jones, an army neurosurgeon and former fullback for the Philadelphia Eagles.

Sport metaphor takes on its ultimate manifestation in Hooker's novel as the author uses this episode of the 'big game' to symbolize the war itself. The game is a carefully crafted representation of the larger theme of the novel: young doctors considered to be underdogs are sent to fight a losing battle, but they use their wits and overcome by any means necessary. The doctors are out of shape, out of practice, and no longer at the top of their game. This situation directly mirrors their skills as army surgeons in the austere environment of the war. They are well versed in the "hurry-up, short-cut or call-it-what-you-will surgery that you have to do in a place like this" but they are less experienced

with the most current surgical practices being taught in the states (189). Hooker makes the connection between war and sport explicitly by using words like “crusade,” “battle,” and “victorious” and referring to the opposing team as the “enemy” on multiple occasions while describing the events of the game. The doctors are placed in a tough situation with overwhelming odds, but with “luck, or skill born of need” they endure (105).<sup>5</sup>

The philosophy of the Swampmen, and ultimately the theme of Hooker’s novel about war, can be explicated through a simple passage in which Hawkeye and Duke are teaching their surgical methods to a couple of fresh doctors:

We are not concerned with the ultimate reconstruction of the patient. We are concerned only with getting the kid out of here alive enough for someone else to reconstruct him . . . sometimes we will deliberately sacrifice a leg in order to save a life, if the other wounds are more important . . . Do you play golf? . . . Our general attitude around here is that we want to play par surgery<sup>6</sup> on this course. Par is a live patient. We’re not sweet swingers, and if we gotta kick it in with our knees to get a par that’s how we do it. (195)

Hawkeye uses the metaphor to communicate with the new doctors and explain the nature of “meatball surgery” as they call it, and reinforce the idea that with limited resources there are some shortcuts that must be made in order to preserve lives. This is perhaps one of the most honest moments in the novel as Hawkeye tries to convey that this kind of surgery demands sacrifices for the greater good; although he still must use the language of sport to express this profound ideology of duty that motivates him and his fellow surgeons.

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<sup>5</sup> This line comes from the narrator’s description of Duke Forrest performing a lifesaving operation to relieve a subdural hematoma caused by a head injury—a procedure which he had never performed before. Without the appropriate drill to perform the operation, Duke is forced to use a hammer and chisel to relieve the pressure caused by blood accumulating between the patient’s brain and skull.

<sup>6</sup> Also refer to “Pilot.” *M\*A\*S\*H*. By Larry Gelbart. Dir. Gene Reynolds. Perf. Alan Alda, Wayne Rogers, and McLean Stevenson. CBS. 17 Sep. 1972. Television.

## Chapter 6

### “Abstract words such as glory”: War in Military Terms

A close analysis of Hemingway’s fiction leading up to the publication of *A Farewell to Arms* reveals the evolution of a narrative voice that would enable him to express his views about war, having had time to reflect on his experiences. Hemingway went to war as a young man and spent only a few weeks as a Red Cross ambulance driver on the Italian front before being wounded and sent home. Critic Michael Reynolds writes “Frederic Henry's experience . . . bears only superficial resemblance to that of his author. Frederic is older, more sexually experienced, more widely traveled, and better read . . . Frederic, fluent in Italian, is an insider . . . he understands the war in a way that young Hemingway never did in Italy” (110). Reynolds argues that for many years after the novel’s publication, readers viewed the story as an autobiographical depiction of Hemingway’s wartime experience. However, the book is clearly the result of Hemingway’s tireless pursuit of accuracy and attention to detail in order to present an account of war that best expresses a more mature perspective. For years after the war, Hemingway experimented with male protagonists who were themselves veterans dealing with both physical and psychological disabilities. As discussed in Chapter 1, Hemingway began experimenting with his tortured veteran protagonist in the stories featuring Nick Adams as well as the character of Jake Barnes from *The Sun Also Rises*. These narratives would set the tone for the creation of Frederic Henry, allowing Hemingway the opportunity to fully realize his vision in *A Farewell to Arms*.

In a similar fashion to Whitman’s assertion through his poem “The Dresser” that the victims of war are what deserve remembrance, Hemingway is able to show his readers what is important in war through a soldier’s eyes. When Frederic returns to his

unit after having been wounded, he expresses his feelings about a conversation the men have over the possibility of losing the war and whether the events of the past summer were “in vain” (*AFTA* 184). Frederic does not respond to the phrase, but addresses his embarrassment in a narration by saying, “There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity . . . Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates” (*AFTA* 185). Frederic recognizes the grim reality of war through the lens of a heavily propagandized society after his recovery and return to the front. Hynes addresses the issue of wars as romances, describing them as “shapely untruths . . . [that] feed our imaginations with the big abstractions of war—Heroism, Fame, Valor, Glory; they make death sentimental and battle melodramatic. Above all, they make war *familiar*” (30). Through his characterization of Frederic, Hemingway is able to reject these “shapely untruths” and present war to his reader in concrete terms by describing real places and providing accurate descriptions through his diligent research.

The development of this theme can be seen in one of Hemingway’s earlier short stories “A Way You’ll Never Be” featuring Nick Adams, who arrives to a deserted town filled with dead bodies just after an attack. Nick is dealing with the effects of a prior, unspecified wounding and is clearly shaken by the scene of death. He reports to the commanding officer of the regiment involved in the recent attack, an old friend who immediately re-establishes a connection with Nick in order to calm his nerves. Flora writes of this meeting: “Aware of the effect on Nick of what he has just seen, Paravicini tries to direct Nick’s mind by talking about the battle with reference to a map—by

looking at the war in military rather than personal terms” (128). Hemingway uses this interaction to demonstrate Nick’s need to embrace the concrete ideas of war in order to understand its effects. Communicating in military terms allows for a connection between the two soldiers that might not exist among civilians who see war in abstract ways.

Pat Barker skillfully introduces this idea of communication into her novel *Regeneration*. One evening a patient, Billy Prior, sets out for a local pub and begins a conversation with a female munitions worker who explains what became of her boyfriend during the war, using only the name of a battle. The narrator describes the resulting effect of this interaction on the male officer: “Odd, he thought . . . that one word should be enough . . . language ran out on you, in the end, the names were left to say it all. Mons, Loos, Ypres, the Somme. [sic] Arras” (90). Although Barker is writing almost a century after the war, her use of these characters to illustrate Hemingway’s claim is an example of her attempt to create a piece of literary work that is true to the narrative form which seeks to represent the perspective of these veterans. Owen himself addresses the idea of the abstractions of language and their use in the romanticized versions of war through his poem “Dulce et Decorum Est”<sup>7</sup> in which he describes the horrors of gas attack victims: “If in some smothering dreams you too could . . . hear, at every jolt, the blood / come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs . . . My friend, you would not tell with such high zest / To children ardent for some desperate glory, / The old Lie: Dulce et Decorum est / Pro patria mori” (ll. 17-28). Owen subverts the idea that it is an honor to fight and die for

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<sup>7</sup> Roberts explains that the title of Owen’s poem references a Latin saying “‘Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori’ [which] was popular with Roman conquerors, and at the start of the First World War. The sense of it is, ‘it is a wonderful and great honour [sic] to fight and die for your country’” (261). The phrase was popularized by the Roman lyrical poet Horace.

one's country by explaining to his reader that this battle cry would have less meaning if the poet Horace had seen the effects of gas firsthand.

Hemingway's idea of concrete names takes on a slightly different meaning in the hands of Richard Hooker when he writes about the Korean War in *MASH: A Novel About Three Army Doctors*. In the first chapter, Hooker introduces the reader to the hospital in geographical and military terms. He describes the view as two characters approach the compound in a jeep: "Just beyond a collection of tents identified as the Canadian Field Dressing Station, they came to a fork in the road. The road to the right led northeast toward the Punchbowl and Heartbreak Ridge; the road to the left took them due north toward Chorwon, Pork Chop Hill, Old Baldy and the 4077th MASH" (15). These are famous places that are immediately associated with that conflict in the reader's mind, and like Barker's description of the way "language ran out on you," Hooker explains the location of his hospital in relation to the sites of major battles. Hooker communicates with the reader in military terms, thus setting a tone for his novel in order to subvert the "shapely untruths" about war.

## Chapter 7

“Thus in silence, in dream’s projections”: The Psychological Trauma of War

The confrontation of death during wartime—whether through witnessing it on the battlefield, being wounded, or treating others—has lasting psychological implications. Many terms have been used to define the condition of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) throughout its tumultuous history, yet the key symptoms have remained the same. Nigel Hunt argues in his book *Memory, War and Trauma* that “a host of other names have been applied to essentially the same condition: shellshock, battle neurosis, war neurosis, battle fatigue and combat fatigue . . . Whatever name is applied, the results are the same. In combat, many soldiers experience a total physical, psychological and emotional breakdown that can have a long-term or permanent effect on their sense of identity” (11). Psychological injury as a result of combat trauma has no doubt existed concomitantly through the history of battlefield conflict. Further, it can be argued that a marked increase in the prevalence of the condition has been caused by modern or industrialized warfare. As Marc-Antoine and Louis Crocq explain in a brief history of the disease in their article in the journal *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, the “*vent du boulet*” syndrome emerged from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the widespread use of cannon warfare. Crocq and Crocq explain that during the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic wars “[e]tiologic hypotheses were put forward by army physicians . . . [who] observed that soldiers collapsed into protracted stupor after shells brushed past them, although they emerged physically unscathed” and afterward the “subjects were frightened by the wind of passage of a cannonball” (48). This observed “protracted stupor” and similar symptoms, both physical and psychological in

presentation, would slowly evolve into a set of diagnostic criteria used to evaluate what is now known as PTSD.

In representing the symptoms of PTSD, the authors of combat medical narratives reveal the truth of war by outlining the concrete effects of being forced to confront one's own mortality. These authors attempt to show their readers the symptoms which have long been associated with war and traumatic experiences, yet have been officially labeled only in recent history. The authors that offer narratives presenting these characteristic symptoms—re-experiencing the traumatic event, the avoidance of painful stimuli, and increased arousal or hyper-vigilance—help the reader to understand the truth of war by examining some of its lasting effects. The fear of death and the psychological impact of having confronted it on the battlefield is a truth which must be accepted by those who suffer, and the sociocultural representation of PTSD is a way to characterize their transformation.

Whitman's enlistment of the reader by direct address serves as a very persuasive element of his poem "The Dresser." His carefully chosen words reflect his purposeful and intentioned meaning and its effect. The poem is an invitation for the reader to journey through the hospital doors and witness the grotesque horrors that wait beyond in the hopes that the images will have a lasting effect and carry on in the American imagination. This invitation begins in the third stanza, as the narrator says, "In nature's reverie sad, with hinged knees returning, I enter the doors—(while for you up there, / Whoever you are, follow me without noise, and be of strong heart)" (ll. 20-21). Whitman implies with his choice of language that the scenes to follow will be difficult to witness, yet the narrator directly addresses the reader and beckons him or her to observe the truth about

war; to see it for what it really is. And behind the hospital doors is where that truth is to be found. The narrator carries the reader along, saying, “To the long rows of cots, up and down, each side, I return; / To each and all, one after another, I draw near—not one do I miss” (ll. 27-28). He makes it clear that not a single suffering soldier should be missed or forgotten; as if the reader were his attendant, stopping with him at every bedside.

Whitman needs the reader to be a spectator to the actions of his narrator, so that these scenes of suffering will be acknowledged and made real. Further, Whitman chooses words that connote physical sight, explaining “. . . the bullet through and through, I examine” (l. 38). Yet, when describing the soldier with the amputation he says, “. . . he dares not look on the bloody stump, / And has not yet looked on it” (ll. 44-45). These lines imply that the wounded soldiers have seen and suffered enough, and the narrator would sooner spare them the pain of having to look at their own sickening deformities. Whitman forces the reader to look upon these wounds, bandages uncovered, in order to sear the images in their minds so they will not forget the sacrifice. He gives the reader another patient’s fatal diagnosis and again invites him to look on as the narrator explains “but a day or two more—for see, the frame all wasted and sinking, / And the yellow-blue countenance see” (ll. 47-48). Whitman takes the reader down into the pits of hell and with his carefully chosen language shows what the narrator is seeing and doing, forcing the reader to become a part of the suffering and pain. As a result, the images are forever displayed on the page, in the reader’s mind, and in the memory of America—just as they are forever painted in Whitman’s memory each time he closes his eyes to dream.

One of the most important pieces of evidence that illustrates the profound impact of these events on Whitman's life, and his determination that they not be forgotten, is the concluding stanza of "The Dresser":

Thus in silence, in dream's projections,  
Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the hospitals;  
The hurt and the wounded I pacify with soothing hand,  
I sit by the restless all the dark night—some are so young;  
Some suffer so much—I recall the experience sweet and sad.  
(Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have cross'd and rested,  
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips.) (ll. 56-62)

Years later after the war's end, these images still haunt the narrator even in his dreams. He can never forget the haunting images he saw behind those hospital doors and how he cared for each of those dying soldiers. To Whitman, this poem serves not only as a commemoration and tribute for the sacrifice of so many brave young men, but as a commentary on the lasting psychological effects of the atrocities of war. Haunted by these nightmarish visions, Whitman demonstrates the impact of war by describing a characteristic symptom of PTSD – flashbacks. In his final stanza, he is saying through the voice of the narrator that he will never forget the suffering he witnessed and he implores the reader to remember it as well so that those soldier's deaths will not have been meaningless. Through the poem's structure, imagery and language, Whitman struggles to reconcile the implications of war and reexamine his own understanding of death in order to memorialize what he believed was most important to live on in the American imagination. His service was not solely as the wound-dresser, but as a compassionate caregiver and ultimately a storyteller. The "kiss" that "dwells on these bearded lips" is the story of each and every soldier he saw and remembered on into old age and the oral account of their sacrifice that is told each time the poem is read.

Whitman again expresses the idea of the lasting memories of war in another of his *Drum-Taps* poems, “A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the Road Unknown.” Taking on the persona of a soldier, Whitman describes an episode of reaching a makeshift hospital after a long march through the woods in darkness. The tone of the poem is somber as the narrator tells of the “sullen remnant retreating” after a losing battle and arriving at “a large old church . . . now an impromptu hospital” (ll. 3, 6). The poet enters the doors but is unable to articulate the horror before him, describing it as “a sight beyond all the pictures and poems ever made” (l. 7). Whitman, the self-described American bard, admits that he lacks the ability to put into words the pain and suffering he observes in the church. The scene is far too much for the poet to even comprehend, seeing only “groups of forms, vaguely” and instead turns his attention to what is closest to him, saying “at my feet more distinctly, a soldier, a mere lad, in danger of bleeding to death” (ll. 10, 11). The poet goes on to express the sensory details of the scene, focusing on particulars that may serve as triggers for re-experiencing the event. Though Whitman is narrating this episode in present tense using the first-person voice, it is as if he is again taking the reader into his mind and recalling the event from memory. The poet focuses on “the smell of ether, the odor of blood” and the sights and sounds of the room such as “[a]n occasional scream or cry, the doctor’s shouted orders or calls; / The glisten of the little steel instruments catching the glint of the torches” (ll. 15, 18-19). A soldier suffering from PTSD can easily be transported back to a traumatic event by a familiar sight or sound that triggers the memory response. Whitman provides his reader with such a context by echoing the word “resume” from his poem “The Dresser,” which implies that he again is recalling an event from memory as he says “[t]hese I resume as I chant—I see again the forms, I smell

the odor; / Then hear outside the orders given, *Fall in, my men, fall in* . . . Resuming, marching, as ever in darkness marching” (ll. 20-24). Whitman expresses through his poem the effect of the horrors he witnessed during the war. He shows the reader with these lines that such events remain indefinitely in the minds of those who witnessed them, replaying over and over again “as ever in darkness” and as vividly as they first occurred.

As discussed briefly in Chapter 1, Hemingway employs his “iceberg theory” in the short story “Big Two-Hearted River” to explore how his veteran protagonist Nick Adams deals with the psychological effects of being wounded. Critic William Adair argues that this persona “has had considerably more war-experience than [Hemingway] did. So to assume that Nick's wounding at Fossalta is the only event . . . in his war history (and the only event beneath the story's surface) is to make the common mistake of reading ‘Big Two-Hearted River’ in terms of Hemingway's (rather than Nick's considerably different) biography” (586). Adair supports this claim through careful examination of Nick’s wartime experience which is chronicled by Hemingway in many of his short stories. Flora confirms the importance of the use of the iceberg theory in Hemingway’s story, but argues that it “gains immeasurably from the context that Hemingway meant [the reader] to have” (148). This context is, of course, the chronology of Nick Adams’ fictional life. Adair contends that the swamp in “Big Two-Hearted River” poses a particular threat to Nick, because of its association with similar terrain on the Italian front—terrain that Nick would have been forced to maneuver through “wading waist deep in swamp water, holding high a rifle (rather than a fishing rod)” (585). Nick’s avoidance of the swamp is a clear representation of another characteristic symptom of

PTSD. He chooses not to place himself in a situation that would recall the traumas of combat, and Hemingway writes that Nick “felt a reaction against deep wading with the water deepening up under his armpits, to hook big trout in places impossible to land them . . . In the swamp fishing was a tragic adventure. Nick did not want it. He did not want to go down the stream any further today” (CSS 180). Fishing the swamp becomes a “tragic adventure” for Nick because it disturbingly resembles past experiences from which he sought refuge by taking this trip and venturing into the Michigan wilderness.

Nick’s attempt to cope with the memories of combat continues in “Now I Lay Me,” another story in which the main character struggles with the fear of losing his soul while he sleeps. Nick suffers from shell-shock after having been injured during a night bombing raid and describes his fear by saying “I had been living for a long time with the knowledge that if I ever shut my eyes in the dark and let myself go, my soul would go out of my body” (CSS 276). Difficulty falling or staying asleep is a result of the increased level of arousal or hyper-vigilance that soldiers experience in the wake of combat. Flora writes that Nick “developed several rituals” while recuperating in order to deal with his inability to sleep, one of which was to imagine Michigan trout fishing in minute detail and “[fish] carefully the whole length of the streams he fished in his youth” (116). For Nick, the landscape of the river represents a peaceful refuge from the chaos of war that he wishes to leave behind. Flora argues that “[by] thus fishing the streams of his mind, Nick serves as his own good psychiatrist, uncovering just the sorts of things he needs to uncover. He fishes and refishes these streams of time, but he always stops when he reaches the war. That black swamp he will save for a later time” (117). However, when Nick finally makes it to the river after the war is over he is still hesitant to enter the

swamp. Hemingway's representation of Nick Adams attempting to cope with PTSD is a way to bring his reader closer to understanding the truth of war. In subtle stylistic ways, Hemingway offers a view into the mind of a suffering soldier that the reader can connect with in a personal way.

## Conclusion

### War Literature and the Purpose of The Combat Medical Narrative

The purpose of this thesis is primarily to understand the importance of the combat medical narrative as a form of war literature, and secondly to offer an argument as to why these narratives provide a deeper understanding of the truth of war. An analysis of the selected texts has shown that through the use of common stylistic devices, the combat medical narrative subverts the romanticized view of war. These narratives approach realism with depictions of traumatized, wounded, and dying soldiers—along with their treatment and those who provide their care. The authors shared experience of war helps strengthen the ways in which they represent this truth. In order to understand how these narratives help to elucidate the truth of war, perhaps we must first ask a deeper question: why write about war at all? Wilfred Owen once addressed his own role as a poet in the draft of a preface to an intended collection of his work: “Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful” (Roberts 319). These lines illustrate Owen’s intent when writing about the war in which he was involved—he meant for his words to serve as a warning to future generations about the consequences of war. Owen believed it was the responsibility of “the true Poets” to provide an accurate depiction of what they witnessed on the battlefield and to convey that truth to their readers. If the writers or poets can deliver the truth of war through their work, then the reader can decide for himself what emotions or political ideologies to attach to such conflict.

In his poem “Strange Meeting,” Owen describes an encounter between his narrator and an enemy soldier in Hell: “‘Strange friend,’ I said, ‘here is no cause to

mourn.’ / ‘None,’ said that other, ‘save the undone years, / The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours, / Was my life also” (ll.14-17). Owen demonstrates how two soldiers, who were once enemies, now meet where they must both suffer equally in death. The poet illustrates that war truly destroys lives on all sides, no matter who is termed the victor. The narrator’s enemy chooses to mourn “the undone years” and “the hopelessness” that they both suffer. The war has taken their lives not only in a literal sense, because they are condemned to Hell, but it has also robbed them of their youth. The soldier explains that they are the same; they are both men with similar hopes and aspirations, yet they were set on opposing sides of a war. The enemy soldier continues this logic and argues that their stories will ultimately be lost through death: “For by my glee might many men have laughed, / And of my weeping something had been left, / Which must die now. I mean the truth untold, / The pity of war, the pity war distilled” (ll. 22-25). Owen is arguing that “the pity of war” is the death of so many young men who could have contributed in a much more substantial way to society, but instead were sacrificed in their youth to a cause that is perhaps unjustified. By putting the narrator face to face with an enemy soldier in Hell, Owen forces his reader to question the purpose of war when the end result is death.

Whitman’s perspective on war was complicated by his task in the hospitals and what he witnessed among the soldiers to whom he provided care. His poem “Beat! Beat! Drums!” was first published in *Harper’s Weekly* on September 28, 1861 as a call to arms. Whitman believed that no one should remain unaffected by the war, and that war was essential for the nation to remain unified. The call of the drums and bugles interrupts the daily lives of citizens in his poem, and they “[m]ake no parley—stop for no expostulation

. . . Mind not the old man beseeching the young man; / Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties. Recruit! Recruit!" (ll. 16-19). There is a clear shift in Whitman's prose and poetry after his first encounters with battlefield death, and this shift is illustrated in a cluster of lines inserted into the first stanza of the 1881 edition of "The Wound-Dresser."<sup>8</sup> The lines represent his continued attempt to come to terms with the experience of war and address his feelings about the meaningfulness of his work: "Arous'd and angry, I'd thought to beat the alarum, and urge relentless war, / But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face droop'd and I resign'd myself, / To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently watch the dead" (ll. 4-6). Condensed within just three lines, Whitman expresses the evolution of his perspective and attitudes about the war that not only sets the tone for the rest of the piece, but clearly represents a larger understanding of what he has come to know during the years before revising the poem. Inadvertently, he gained a certain amount of insight as time passed after the first edition. The lines show the prodigious impact that the events had on his life, as he continually reassesses the decisions he made while groping for meaning among the atrocities of war. Whitman addresses this conflict in a letter home to his mother, Louisa Van Velsor Whitman, shortly after the battle at Gettysburg. He tells her that "one's heart grows sick of war, after all, when you see what it really is—every once in a while I feel so horrified & disgusted—it seems to me like a great slaughter-house & the men mutually butchering each other—then I feel how impossible it appears, again, to retire from this contest, until we have carried our points—(it is cruel to be so tossed from pillar to post in one's judgment)" (*Whitmanarchive.org*). Whitman's dream of a unified nation and his great

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<sup>8</sup> The line numbers for this quotation refer to the 1881 edition located in the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*.

American ideal of democracy were confounded by the large-scale death that he observed as a result of the war, and the individual suffering that he attended in the hospitals.

We can observe yet another motivation for the writer of war literature in the poetry of Brian Turner, whose poem “9-Line Medevac” juxtaposes the standard Army protocol for requesting medical evacuation on the battlefield with lines of free verse that attempt to humanize the situation and make it more personal. When asked to provide grid coordinates of his location, the narrator’s internal response demonstrates that wounded soldiers need more explanation than a brief radio transmission: “I can name this spot, but cannot make it real . . . too eager to romanticize the land and maybe even what’s happening, though there’s nothing romantic about this, unless pain and sweat and heat and blood and a grown man pissing in his pants with fear are romantic” (ll. 10-18). These lines illustrate that the standard protocol may not allow room for emotion, but the poet seeks to address what he is feeling as a result of his experience. This kind of war literature can do more than warn, it can provide useful knowledge to the soldier who has yet to deploy in a war that is still ongoing—or to any future conflicts. In this way, war literature may have a significant role to play in preparing soldiers for combat.

For some, writing about war may be a warning to future generations about its terrible consequences. War literature may serve as a call to arms or a protest. For others it may be a way to cope with their own experiences. In his novel *Born on the Fourth of July*, Ron Kovic explains how he “would stay up all night sometimes, sitting by the typewriter, trying to forget the war, the wound, by putting words down on paper” (117). This form of therapy is now in use throughout the country to help veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan deal with their experiences. The technique that Dr. W.H.R. Rivers

helped pioneer at Craiglockhart War Hospital in treating victims of shell-shock has now found its way into veteran's hospitals for the treatment of PTSD. The National Endowment for the Arts partnered with the Department of Defense in 2012 for the Operation Homecoming program to help veterans heal through writing workshops. The resulting volume of soldiers' writings produced through the program is a testament to the myriad reasons that can motivate war literature.

As Samuel Hynes said, death is the "truest truth, the realest reality" of war (19). The combat medical narrative is an effective vehicle to present that truth to the reader in its most stripped-down and basic form. Authors who have themselves witnessed death firsthand on the battlefield, the most tangible consequence of war, are the most qualified to tell the truth of war. The shared understanding of authors who have observed the direct effects of combat through more than a century of war is what informs the use of these common stylistic devices in the combat medical narrative. The field medic, nurse, and physician have all confronted death, perhaps in a more personal way than the infantryman who charges into battle. They are responsible for human lives and for intervening to save them. Those who walk through the hospital doors, or roam the battlefield applying bandages to bleeding wounds amidst cries of pain—they are the men and women who understand the truth of war.

## Appendix:

### Selected Poems

The following appendix of selected poems includes the full text of poems cited in the preceding essay that are considered to be less well known. Dates of original publication are given when known.

#### **Hospital Sanctuary**

When you have lost your all in a world's upheaval,  
Suffered and prayed, and found your prayers were in vain,  
When love is dead, and hope has no renewal –  
These need you still; come back to them again.

When the sad days bring you the loss of all ambition,  
And pride is gone that gave you strength to bear,  
When dreams are shattered, and broken is all decision –  
Turn you to these, dependent on your care.

They too have fathomed the depths of human anguish,  
Seen all that counted flung like chaff away;  
The dim abodes of pain wherein they languish  
Offer that peace for which at last you pray.

Vera Brittain  
September 1918

### **The Nurse**

Here in the long white ward I stand,  
Pausing a little breathless space,  
Touching a restless fevered hand,  
Murmuring comfort's commonplace –

Long enough pause to feel the cold  
Fingers of fear about my heart;  
Just for a moment, uncontrolled,  
All the pent tears of pity start.

While here I strive, as best I may,  
Strangers' long hours of pain to ease,  
Dumbly I question – *Far away*  
*Lies my beloved even as these?*

Miss G.M. Mitchell  
August 30, 1916

## Vitai Lampada

There's a breathless hush in the Close to-night –  
Ten to make and the match to win –  
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,  
An hour to play and the last man in.  
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,  
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,  
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote –  
“Play up! play up! and play the game!”

The sand of the desert is sodden red, –  
Red with the wreck of a square that broke; –  
The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,  
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.  
The river of death has brimmed his banks,  
And England's far, and Honour a name,  
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks;  
“Play up! play up! and play the game!”

This is the word that year by year,  
While in her place the School is set,  
Every one of her sons must hear,  
And none that hears it dare forget.  
This they all with a joyful mind  
Bear through life like a torch in flame,  
And falling fling to the host behind –  
“Play up! play up! and play the game!”

Henry Newbolt  
June 1892

## **In Time of War**

I dreamed (God pity babes at play)  
How I should love past all romance,  
And how to him beloved should say,  
As heroes' women say, perchance,  
When the deep drums awake –  
“Go forth: do gloriously for my dear sake.”

But now I render, blind with fear,  
No lover made of dreams, but You,  
O You – so commonplace, so dear,  
So knit with all I am or do!  
Now, braver thought I lack:  
Only God bring you back – God bring you back!

Lesbia Thanet

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