Santiago Esteve

My Poetry Anthology: War

February 29, 2016
Table Of Contents

1. Preface
2. Poems
   1. Bottle Opener by Colin D. Halloran
   2. Footlocker by Colin D. Halloran
   3. Gear Shift by Colin D. Halloran
   4. War by Alexis Molina
   5. Marching Men by Marjorie Lowry Christie Pickthall
   6. Afghanistan by Paul Muldoon
   7. Jundee Ameriki by Brian Turner
3. Acknowledgements
Preface

I did my poetry anthology of poems of war. I chose this as the theme because since war is such an intense thing, there is a lot of emotion packed into a short piece of writing, a lot of these poems take you on a rollercoaster of emotion. Some of these poems also keep you guessing what's going to happen, Along with the emotional ride they take you on, the poems I chose all have very good imagery. The poems are able to paint a vivid picture in the reader's mind of what the poet is writing about. Putting this together was a good experience, looking for other poems that we did not use in class, I was able to find some very good ones that really stood out to me. One thing during the process of finding poems that was a challenge, but a nice challenge was figuring out how the poem should be read. Slow, fast, when to pause, and when to tie words together. I enjoyed putting this together, and hope you enjoy reading it.
These first three poems are all by Colin Halloran, a military vet who served in Afghanistan in 2006, and is now a Professor at Fairfield University. These poems were published in 2012.

BOTTLE OPENER
by Colin D. Halloran

Shades drawn, I sit on the floor and pry
my honor’s edge under corrugated rim: first
of six. Release cutting illusion of silence
drone of the muted box, unseen
where I contemplate and combat
the spin-out since coming home.

I wanted nothing more than home,
those I’d missed, but others pried
into events of seven months in combat.
I was bombarded with inquiries first,
before I could even process what I’d seen.
I greet them with a distant stare and silence.

In Uruzgan, in rare moments of silence
and solitude I would cling desperately to home:
New England’s shell strewn shores, not children’s blood seen
spilled on sand, a violent new day-by day to pry
me from my dreams. Mission First.
Constant alert, plan, execute, the rhythm of combat.

MOS 11 B: Infantryman. Front line combat,
my weapon’s frequent bursts will lead to silence
ringing. I am not the first
to earn this badge, to risk home
to protect abstractions. It’s not about fighting through combat
until death, or injury, or pride, or peace begin to pry
you apart. I am a recluse, an uninvited vow of silence
and isolation, an early, guilt-ridden return home.
The injury I tried to push through. Med-Evac. Not the first injured to leave my platoon, and even though at first I fought to stay, when the knee began to give, when doctors had seen the damage, the incapacitation, the risk I posed, I was bound for home. Forced to leave the violent province, newfound brothers, life of combat, return to this life that lacks adrenal kicks, my head hung in the silence Of guilt, pain personal defeat, and the slow slipping away of pride.

Now I assault this six-pack, try to pry myself away from all I've seen, from the silence of being caught between those I left in combat, and the unknowing faces of home that once were first to know me.

This was one of the darker poems that I chose. The author is struggling with his return from combat, and his re-acclimation to a new life. He starts off talking about how he misses home and wants to go home. He does in fact get to go home, because of an injury suffered during combat, but that was not the way he wanted to go home. It was almost as if he felt a little bit guilty, because he did not finish his stay, and he was leaving his “newfound brothers behind”. I chose this for my anthropology, because it talks about the struggle adapting to the old life you used to live pre combat. How even though each soldier’s dream is to go home to their families safe and sound, coming home is not simply a “ride in the park”
FOOTLOCKER
by Colin D. Halloran

Each soldier is issued a footlocker-
approx. 32 ½ x 15 ¾ x 13 3/4 "-
for personal effects:
clothes, magazines, movies, mementos
of a home they're leaving behind,
or essentials like cigarettes and jerky.

Pornography and booze have no place
in these silver-latched intimate havens,
they violate General Order 1.

Each person's is different, though
there are some items found across the board,
namely baby wipes and sunscreen,
but they say you can learn a lot about a man
from his box's contents.

My box is my own.
A five pound jar of Skippy,
the latest issues of Surfing and Whitewater-
so at least my dreams are not left dry in the desert-
most of the remaining space is dedicated to an infantryman's anomaly: books.
I can't seem to go to war without Shakespeare, Uris, Whitman, Keats.

I am not a typical grunt
is what my footlocker says.

I picked this poem because it was the poem that stood out to me the most out of
the ones we read in class. I liked it because it's about something so small, a shoe
box, and how even though it's small, each shoebox is able to tell a story. Each
shoebox tells a different story about the soldier that it belongs to. It painted a
picture in my head of opening each soldier's box, and inside each box was a
slideshow about their life.
Gear Shift
by Colin D. Halloran

1. I've heard Bottles beckon. So much Ounce by ounce I drown.

2. Shackled and so much about this straw I seek but cannot find the point to break

3. I've heard Bottles beckon. As the needle creeps toward ninety so much Ounce by ounce I drown. my eyes begin to glaze, blurring the speedometer blue and red.

4. I'm sick of all this idealistic cheap romantic, I just want to cut the wheel

5. My mind needs only second for the image to unfold: more twisted metal, maybe flames. Or maybe I just coast, spin, emerge unscathed. I can't decide. for the image to unfold:

This poem fits into my poetry anthology because it's different than the rest, in the way it is written, not in the normal up and down the page manner, but spanning across three columns, makes it unique. This poem is also about returning home from combat. He is struggling to adapt, and he is having flashbacks to afghanistan. He’s questioning being alive, and wondering if he rather be dead “in the unwilling Arms of Allah.”

I need a free fall. Hypocritical idolatry. Maybe flames. Or maybe I just coast, spin, emerge unscathed. I can't decide.

Craving the cold, harsh unforgiving reality, that place with no room for shades of grey, that blanket of achromatic ash.

This poem fits into my poetry anthology because it's different than the rest, in the way it is written, not in the normal up and down the page manner, but spanning across three columns, makes it unique. This poem is also about returning home from combat. He is struggling to adapt, and he is having flashbacks to afghanistan. He’s questioning being alive, and wondering if he rather be dead “in the unwilling Arms of Allah.”
War
by Alexis Molina

Looking around,
The battle scene was harsh,
bodies lay scattered on the ground,
with the nauseating scent of blood,
surrounding me.
I can hardly see,
for smoke blinds my eyes,
and as I look around,
my heart sinks,
and fills with sorrow.
I want this battle to end.

Noises of gunfire hurt my eardrums,
Piercing and killing lives.
The images and feelings,
scar me for life.
This is the place of death,
and I try hard to keep hope.
My men call my name,
I am in war.

This poem goes through multiple aspects of war. It starts off talking about war itself. One part that I liked was “The battle scene was harsh bodies lay scattered on the ground with the nauseating scent of blood, surrounding me I can hardly see for smoke blinds my eyes and as I look around my heart sinks”. It gave me the image of a soldier in the middle of combat, with everything around them slowing down, their heart beating fastly, with screams in the near distance, and them thinking about everything about them, the scent of the blood, the smoke that blinds them. I really like the imagery used in this. It also briefly touches on the impact war has on the soldier after the war saying “The images and feeling, scar me for life”.

Marjorie Lowry Christie Pickthall was a Canadian writer in the late 1800's-early 1900's. Was considered to be the best Canadian poet of her generation.

Marching Men
by Marjorie Lowry Christie Pickthall

Under the level winter sky
I saw a thousand Christs go by.
They sang an idle song and free
As they went up to calvary.

Careless of eye and coarse of lip,
They marched in holiest fellowship.
That heaven might heal the world, they gave
Their earth-born dreams to deck the grave.

With souls unpurged and steadfast breath
They supped the sacrament of death.
And for each one, far off, apart,
Seven swords have rent a woman's heart.

I chose this poem because it gives a totally different aspect of war than the others. The rest of my poems are more about modern war, while this poem is from the early 1900s. It's about soldiers who are traveling somewhere, and how they are risking their lives to protect. This poem is also different than the others I chose because it's more about bravery, and the other ones show a lot more fear. Some of the lines that stood out to me were “That heaven might heal the world, they gave Their earth-born dreams to deck the grave”. This is saying that because they are risking their lives to protect, they are going to heaven when they die. Another line that really made me think about its meaning was the last line. “Seven swords have rent a woman's heart”. After spending a lot of time trying to figure out what this could mean or symbolize, I finished with this idea. Seven swords is symbolizing seven soldiers, and when it says rent a woman's heart. It is saying that they are only renting the woman’s hearts, because they are going to war, and may not come back.
Paul Muldoon is an Irish poet, and also teacher poetry. He has written over twelve collections of poetry, which has been translated into 20 different languages.

Afghanistan
by Paul Muldoon

It's getting dark, but not dark enough to see
An exit wound as an exit strategy.

This poem fits into my anthology, because it is very short, yet it packs a big message. One thing I like about poems that are this short, is they really make you think. I had two interpretations of this poem. One being life getting rough in Afghanistan, and it is getting to the point where “an exit wound as an exit strategy” meaning One-that he is contemplating killing himself. Or the other way I interpreted it as, thinking back to an earlier poem Bottle Opener, maybe he is thinking that if he gets wounded he will be discharged.
Brian Turner is a military vet who served for seven years. He served in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and in Iraq. He now teaches English at Fresno State college.

Jundee Ameriki
by Brian Turner

At the VA hospital in Long Beach, California, Dr. Sushruta scores open a thin layer of skin to reveal an object traveling up through muscle. It is a kind of weeping the body does, expelling foreign material, sometimes years after injury. Dr. Sushruta lifts slivers of shrapnel, bits of coarse gravel, road debris, diamond-shaped points of glass—the minutiae of the story reconstructing a cold afternoon in Baghdad, November of 2005. The body offers aged cloth from a burka dyed in blood, even shards of bone. And if he were to listen intently, he might hear the roughened larynx of this woman calling up through the long corridors of flesh, saying Allah al Akbar, before releasing her body’s weapon, her dark and lasting gift for this jundee Ameriki, who carries fragments of the war inscribed in scar tissue, a deep, intractable pain, the dull grief of it the body must learn to absorb.

This poem fits into my anthology, because it contains the two things I really looked for while searching for poems, imagery, and little things telling being able to tell a story. In the case of this poem, Brian Turner is saying that each of his wounds tell a different story about how he got it. One example of this is when he says “Dr. Sushruta lifts slivers of shrapnel, bits of coarse gravel, road debris, diamond-shaped points of glass—the minutiae of the story reconstructing a cold afternoon in Baghdad, November of 2005.” Here he talks about when the doctor removes the glass, how it brings him back to the day and what he was feeling the day of the injury. He was able to put a film in my head as if I was watching a movie of him in combat.
Acknowledgements

Blackboard:
Poems 1-3
Bottle Opener by Colin D. Halloran
Footlocker by Colin D. Halloran
Gear Shift by Colin D. Halloran

4: War by Alexis Molina
http://igbis-20190014.blogspot.com/2015/10/protest-poetry-war-poetry.html

5: Marching Men by Marjorie Lowry Christie Pickthall

6: Afghanistan by Paul Muldoon
http://y1.blog.sbc.edu/2011/05/20/exit-wounds/

7. Norton
Jundee Ameriki by Brian Turner