THE LAMENT OF THE DEMOBILIZED
Cheyney Ryan[1]

> You sad-faced men, people and sons of Rome,
> By uproar sever'd, like a flight of fowl
> Scatter'd by winds and high tempestuous gusts,
>
> O, let me teach you how to knit again
> This scatter'd corn into one mutual sheaf,
> These broken limbs again into one body.

- Shakespeare, Titus Andronicus (Act V, Scene 3)

[I]/ When Justification Comes to Grief

In his Philosophy of Right, Kant acknowledges that "The determination of what constitutes right in war is the most difficult problem of the right of nations and international law". He proposes this constraint: war must be waged "according to such principles as render it always possible to pass out of that natural conditions of the states in their external relation to each other and to enter into a condition of right". That "natural condition" is one of war, which Kant identifies not just with open conflict but as much if not more with armed hostility between states inducing a constant state of fear, and which states are obliged to put behind them. He specifies this constraint on war in "On Perpetual Peace" thus: "No nation at war with another shall permit such acts of war as shall make mutual trust impossible during some future time of peace [emphasis mine--CR]." He gives several examples of acts thus prohibited, such as assassination, poisoning, and breach of surrender. But they all reflect the same assumption that mutual trust after a war requires maintaining trust during a war. "Some level of trust in the enemy's way of thinking must be preserved even in the midst of war, for otherwise no peace can ever be concluded."

Kant's thinking presumes a larger conception of what war and peace are all about. It assumes that the aim of war is to establish peace with the adversary; or more accurately, to reestablish a peace that has been broken. He contrasts this with wars of "extermination" which aim at the annihilation of the enemy. And it assumes that the peace to be sought is what he terms "permanent peace" rather than a "faux-peace" that is just a temporary truce until the war starts again. It removes the causes of war, which include the reasons for threatening war as well as actually waging it. It presumably does this by establishing the kind of trust between parties that allows for resolving disputes through discussion rather than conflict. Thus he writes, "No treaty of peace that tacitly reserves issues for a future war shall be held valid. For if this were the

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case, it would be a mere truce, a suspension of hostilities, not peace, which means the end of all hostilities, so much so that even to modify it by "perpetual" smacks of pleonasm [redundancy--CR]." The points are linked insofar as a war that aimed at <u>less</u> than "permanent peace" would be a war whose aim was just more war.

[1]/ "Who Takes Us Home Again?"

A hundred thousand million mites we go
Wheeling and tacking o'er the eternal plain,
Some black with death--and some are white with woe.
Who sent us forth? Who takes us home again?
- Charles Hamilton Sorley (1915)

This bears on reestablishing peace with <u>another</u> community. What about reestablishing peace within one's <u>own</u> community?

This is the problem raised in the speech from <u>Titus</u> <u>Andronicus</u>, above. It has special salience for a republican vision like Kant's which saw a distinctive feature of republics to be their capacity to be at peace with themselves, in contrast to other polities riven by discord; so living in a republic was an education in peace-making which its citizens could then impart to other communities. War rends the social fabric. It disrupts lives, severs connections, strains the bonds of community--so that afterwards the populace must be "knit together again". And this peace-making begins with those who <u>fought</u> the war--those "sad <u>faced</u> men" who now return to become part of the community again.

[a]/ Cynicism to the Process of Death

As I construe this republican vision, the problem of welcoming back the soldier begins with how they were sent to war in the first place.

This is implicit in its conception of why wars must be "publicly declared". Traditionally, the requirement that a nation be forthright about its reasons for war was meant principally for its adversaries, and since the monarch had sole authority over such matters a declaration was really a proclamation informing others what the monarch had in mind. By contrast, the republican doctrine of popular sovereignty saw war as an act of the whole community that was only legitimate if done with the full consent of the community. A declaration of war was, as it were, a performative act in which the community as a whole spoke and by which the community as a whole entrusted itself to a common project in which each citizen was accountable to the others for participating in that project. Republicanism termed this mutual

accountability "fraternity". Then what if this was done fraudulently, or not at all--what happened then to the social fabric?

This was a lesson of the Vietnam War. There was never a declaration of war partly because its leaders could never agree on why it was being fought. So they improvised--fabricating various justifications, equally vacuous and often inconsistent with each other. This impacted the prosecution of the war in the decline of popular support and the rise of outright resistance, especially in military ranks. The leading antiwar voice before he was assassinated, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., stressed the breach of trust with ordinary soldiers. Along with all the other hardships, duplicity about the wars purpose had "added cynicism to the process of death."[2] And it impacted the peace afterwards. Other American wars had cost more in lives and treasure. But none so shattered the community's bonds of trust. In time, this brokenness came to be identified with one "sad faced" soldier—the Vietnam veteran. His personal struggles to return to normal life came to symbolize the country's larger struggle to "knit itself together again".

[b]/ Coming Home

But all of this assumes that soldiers _do_ return to become ordinary citizens. By this I mean it assumes that soldiering is not some permanent occupation that sets them apart from everyone else.

Yet this is what soldiering has been for much of history and what it was in Europe prior to the republican model. The British military was typical. Its soldiers were so much a class apart that many did not come from Britain or even speak English. When the Colonists condemned them as a "standing army" essential to the "permanent military establishments" at the heart of British society, they were invoking the contrast between this model and their own citizens-based model.

Here is what they had in mind:

The older model was an _army_ _of_ _professionals_. For it, there was no problem of soldiers returning home because the military constituted its own _type_ of home distinguished by its own way of acting and its own way of thinking. Or more accurately, _non_-thinking. Its spirit was one of subservience famously captured in Frederick the Great's remark in his _Art_ _of_ _Commanding_ _an_ _Army_ that "If my soldiers began to think, not one would remain in the ranks". Discipline was a matter of mindlessness, instilled by a mixture of bribery, fear, and alcohol. Its hierarchical nature meant that relations within the military were monologic insofar as some ordered and others simply obeyed.

The newer model--or ideal--was what one Thomas Paine termed an _army_ _of_ _principles_. For it, soldiering was a voluntary commitment assumed by some as part of the sacrifices assumed by all citizens in

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[2] In his speech "Beyond Vietnam", delivered April 4, 1967.

times of war. Its egalitarian nature meant that a defining feature of its relations were their <u>dialogic</u> character. In his influential pamphlet, "Easy Plan for a Militia" (1775), Thomas Pickering insisted that "Soldiers are <u>reasonable</u> beings, as such they are to be treated." Benjamin Franklin put it in terms of the citizen-soldier's right to challenge what he was told:

> It has been for some time a generally received opinion, that a military man is not to inquire whether a war be just or unjust; he is to execute his orders. All princes who are disposed to become tyrants must probably approve of this opinion, and be willing to establish it; but is it not a dangerous one? Since, on that principle, if the tyrant commands his army to attack and destroy not only an unoffending neighbor nation, but even his own subjects, the army is bound to obey. A Negro slave in our colonies, being commanded by his master to rob and murder a neighbor, or do any other immoral act, may refuse, and the magistrate will protect him in his refusal. The slavery, then, of a soldier is worse than that of a Negro![3]

George Washington famously remarked that "When we assumed the soldier, we did not lay aside the citizen". This imposed a twofold burden on the reasons given to citizens for soldiering. They must justify the citizen's leaving home given the sacrifices that soldiering could involve, hence must be ones that the citizen recognizes as valid in that regard. We might term this is the <u>prospective</u> burden on reasons. And they allow for the citizen's returning home, given the sacrifices their soldiering has involved. They must be ones that the citizen can live with--and in so doing live with what they have experienced. We might term this is the <u>retrospective</u> burden on reasons (it is the kind of burden Bernard Williams addresses in his writings on regret). Both were seen as constraints on irresponsible war making. Citizens would refuse to become soldiers to participate in unjust wars, given the costs it would involve; former soldiers would refuse to endorse unjust wars, given the costs they had involved.

The problem of coming home was important to the Revolutionary generation and later. The "Headless Horseman" in Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" was the ghost of a Hessian mercenary who symbolized both the professional soldiers' inability to think and their fate to wander forever with no place to call home. But debate persisted throughout the Revolution and after whether an army of principles was really possible. It involved a host of issues. The problem for us is that of coming home: once citizens have been called to war, is returning home truly possible? Or are the "sad faced" soldiers that return destined to remain forever among society's "broken limbs"?

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[3] "On the Criminal Laws and the Practice of Privateering", Letter to Benjamin Vaughan, March 14, 1785.

[2]/ Soldier-Pacifism

"I am the man who has known affliction"
- Lamentations 3:1

The question of a soldier's coming home is as old as the Odyssey. But it only became a focus of cultural concern as related to the common ordinary grunt with World War I. Wars had been fought for millennia, but this was the first one in which common ordinary soldiers gained a voice about their experiences due mainly to spread of literacy. The upshot was a literature of disillusionment as exemplified by novels like Erich Maria Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front. A central focus was the disconnection between the dominant ideologies of war and what the first-hand experience of war was really like; in the extreme, some doubted the ability of language to capture it at all. The literature of disillusionment involved a deep skepticism of war but not a flat-out rejection of it. Rather, it insisted that the fate of the returning soldier was a heretofore hidden cost of war that needed including in a full assessment of the endeavor.

The sharpest expression of this disillusionment was what I call the literature of "soldier-pacifism". This is my term for a tradition of antiwar thinking that emerges from those who have experienced war and who have concluded that knowing what war is really like leads to a commitment against all war. Pacifism is often regarded as the height of naïveté, oblivious to war as it really is. This type of pacifism reverses this accusation, claiming it is pro-war thinking that does not know what war is really like. So it is a pacifism from the ground up, or the inside out. Tolstoy, the leading pacifist of the 19th century, was such a figure. My title is from a major pacifist text of the 20th century, Vera Brittain's Testament Of Youth (1933), who came to her views as a front-line nurse in World War I and who lost her brother, her fiancé, and many of her friends to that war. Her phrase means to capture the claim of soldier pacifism that the experience of war is such that the "sad faced" men who fight it can never be fully welcomed back, and that this constitutes an indictment of all war.

My aim in what follows is to reflect on this soldier-pacifist tradition, in part for the larger issues it raises of how we approach the topic of war. "Just war theory" as it is now understood approaches matters from the standpoint of the observer, via the impersonal discourse of individual rights. This reflects its close relation to concerns about the laws of war. The soldier-pacifist tradition approaches matters from the standpoint of the participant--by which it does not mean officers or the professionally committed but the common ordinary grunt, via the personal discourse of individual experience. A strength of this approach is reminding us that those who actually fight wars--soldiers--are not abstractions. But the appeal to personal experience obviously raises a great many philosophical issues about the force of such appeals, given how

differently war can be experienced and how differently those experiences can be interpreted. So a concern of mine will be how to understand what the soldier-pacifist means by "knowing war" in the kind of conclusions they hope to draw from it.

A starting point is why this critique might construe itself as a "lament". To begin with, a lament is an expression of grief. Like Antigone, Vera Brittain mourns a lost brother; both suggest that there is an intimate relation between knowing war and grieving war. And here, it is grief <u>at</u> the grief of the "sad faced" returning soldiers. They are isolated by their grief, entombed in their grief, still at war with society in their grief (Hobbes defines the "state of war" as one in which men have "only grief in the company with one another").[4] Moreover, a lament is a complaint. It is similar in that regard to a legal objection but its logic is quite different from the legalistic (hence it is different from philosophical arguments modeled on the legalistic). It does not aim to establish claims about an endeavor so much as reorient our responses to it. I shall note how the soldier-pacifist often conceives of themselves as a type of prophet, or as speaking with a prophetic voice. In the Hebrew Bible, that voice often takes the form of lamentation (as with the prophet Jeremiah). Its aim, writes Walter Brueggemann in <u>The Prophetic Imagination</u>, is to nourish an "alternative consciousness" to dominant ideologies of the day. So we may think of the lament of the demobilized as bearing witness to the experience of war in the hope of nourishing a fundamentally different response to war. What this means and whether it succeeds can only be determined by exploring the position further.

[3]/ Saigon, 1970

> They say that war is hell, but I say it's the foyer to hell. I say coming home is hell [because] hell ain't got no coordinates. Hell is no place at all, so when you're there, you're nowhere— you're lost.
>
> - Tyler Boudreau   <u>Packing Inferno: The Unmaking of a Marine</u>[5]

A guiding thought here is that soldiers are not abstractions. Let me say a word about how I came to this issue.

Every young man of my generation faced the question of serving in the Vietnam War. The result in my case was spending a brief time in Saigon in 1970. Upon becoming draft eligible, my plan was to do two years of alternative military service that a friend of mine, Bert Bigelow (himself a prominent soldier-pacifist) offered to arrange with a medical project run by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in Vietnam. They had run two projects during the war, both of them in Quan Ni province. One was making artificial limbs

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[4] <u>Leviathan</u>, Part I, Chapter 13.
[5] Tyler Boudreau, <u>Packing Inferno: The Unmaking of a Marine</u>, Feral House 2008) p. 5.

for amputees, the other was a pre-kindergarten school for refugee children. But this meant going to Vietnam to arrange it personally. My efforts, like the Vietnam War itself, were ultimately pointless. An AFSC project director had been captured during the Tet Offensive and while she was eventually released the projects were still on hold. More to the point, the draft lottery was held at exactly the same time and my number left me basically exempt. So instead of going to Quan Ni province I went to graduate school instead.

Following the Tet Offensive, Saigon itself was an uneventful place but bustling with American soldiers whose average age was the same as mine (22) though they seemed both younger and older at the same time. Many were younger (American killed in the war were as young as 15.) But they seemed older because their fates were so uncertain. How many of the young faces I saw eventually returned to shattered lives, or who never returned at all?

I didn't have much dialogue with anyone at the time. But ever since, my thinking about war has been shaped by the thought of dialogue with those young soldiers. One questions it raises is the one just noted about rights-oriented discourse versus the discourse of personal experience. The issue is not one of rejecting rights-oriented discourse (and just war theory framed in such terms); rather, it is one of questioning how well that discourse captures the full reality of war and the depth of what is wrong with it. Consider this remark by Camilo Ernesto Mejía, a former Army Staff Sergeant and prominent Iraq war dissenter:

> It can be claimed that a particular war is justified politically, or that it has the support of the international community and the blessing of international law. But these arguments can never convey the images, the sounds, the smells, or anything that remotely depicts the full horror of war. Escaping those arguments is the irreversible damage war always inflicts upon humanity, and upon everything worth living on earth.[6]

The claim is that the experience of war attunes us to what "escapes" the received justifications of war and what constitutes the "full horror" of war, a horror insulting not our individual identity of personhood but our shared identity of humanity. But how should we construe the latter?

The question relates to another topic relevant here, the question of moral injury and how to understand it. It is typically characterized as an assault on the soldier's conscience, but in significant attention is given to the meaning of "conscience". It is often described in cognitivist-type terms, as involving the violation of a soldier's "deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" contradicting their "belief system

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[6] Camilo Mejía , Road from ar Ramadi: The Private Rebellion of Staff Sergeant Mejia: An Iraq War Memoir (New Press, 2007). p. 299.

and worldview".[7] I do not doubt that the young soldiers I encountered in Saigon had consciences capable of being injured; but translating this into talk of their "belief system and world view" strikes me as minimizing the problem as experienced. How should we speak of the violation of their humanity? Here is another quote from Camilo Mejía:

> When I opened fire that day, I violated that law and desecrated the most sacred sanctuary of my being. As I observed that young man through the sight of my rifle, I was staring at a point of no return, the very Rubicon of my life, and I crossed it. My moral injury is the pain I inflicted upon the very core of my being when I took something I could never give back.[8]

What strikes me in the literature of soldier-pacifism is how often the horrors of war are spoken of in terms of the "sacred"--or rather, the violation of the sacred, though without any suggestion that such talk is only intelligible with a prior theological framework. Rather, this is what the experience of war reveals--that some things are so sacred, and some acts are so sacrilegious, that they constitute a challenge to our standard discourses of justification. This fits with the traditional prophetic understanding of lament, as a cry against the violation of the sacred by those who had lost any appreciation for it. But the question remains of how that cry should be understood.

Ultimately, how we talk about war will reflect who we take ourselves to be talking to. In a revealing 2002 article, "The Triumph of Just War Theory (and the Dangers of Success)", Michael Walzer characterized the audience for just war theory by way of contrast by what he termed "doctrines of radical suspicion", which would include the type of pacifism that interests me. He wrote of such doctrines, "This is the radicalism of people who do not expect to exercise power", whereas "By contrast, just war theory, even when it demands a strong critique of particular acts of war, is the doctrine of people who do expect to exercise power". This strikes me a right--up to a point. As it is now practiced, just war theory approaches war from the standpoint of the policymaker, who if not someone that "exercises power" imagines themselves speaking to those that "exercise power". Whether this presumes a limited conception of "power", and exaggerated conception of the just war theorist's impact, are matters for another time. By contrast, the assumption of my approach--which I call <u>critical</u> <u>war</u> <u>theory</u>--is that the audience for reflection on war begins with those who actually fight the wars, meaning the young men I encountered in Saigon and

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[7] Brett T Litz, Nathan Stein, Eileen Delaney, Leslie Lebowitz, William P Nash, Caroline Silva and Shira Maguen "Moral injury and moral repair in war veterans: a preliminary model and intervention strategy", <u>Clincal Psychology</u> <u>Review</u> 2009 29(8):695-706.

[8] Camilo Mejia, "Healing Moral Injury: A Lifelong Journey", <u>Fellowship</u> 76, no. 10 (2011): 26.

expected to be joining had my draft number not been #321. Theirs is a power that begins with a radical suspicion of what Vietnam vet W.D. Ehrhart has called the "pigeon-breasted fantasies" of leaders.

[II]/ A Meditation

> Why didn't they want him to speak? Why didn't they want him to be seen?
> - Dalton Trumbo, Johnny Got His Gun

The young man, a soldier, lies in a hospital bed. It is dark, so silent he can only feel his heartbeat. He is alone, or at least he can sense no one present. He thinks back on his experiences as a youth, joyful ones but also ones of the transition; his father dying, as his family surrounds his bed. What he remembers most is the faces: the face of his first friend, the face of his first love, the faces of both joy and mourning. He wrestles to weave together his memories in ways that constitute a single narrative, a coherent whole.

His thoughts grow curious about himself. Slowly, the self-realization begins. He is lying in bed from the injuries of war—whose full extent slowly dawns on him.

It is dark because he's lost his eyes, ripped from their sockets by an explosion. It is silent because he has also lost his ears—in fact, he no longer has a face, just a jellied mass. But he cannot touch his face, or any part of his body, because his arms have been amputated; he cannot shift his weight because his legs have been blown off. He senses no one present because he has lost the means of sense: no ears to hear others, no arms to hold another, no eyes to look into the face of others.

He is a brain in a vat. In his thoughts, he is like a child stuffed back into the womb.

"Jesus, I'm in an awful mess," he thinks.

"Let us suppose that we are dreaming," Descartes writes in his Meditations, "and that all these particulars–namely, the opening of the eyes, the motion of the head, the forth-putting of the hands—are mere illusions; and that we really possess neither an entire body nor hands such as we see." The soldier wonders if he is dreaming. Then he wonders how in his entombed state he could tell the difference. "He was in an awful mess if he couldn't even tell whether he was awake or asleep." It should be a simple matter. "It's asking very little for a man just to want to be able to prove that he's awake."

This blurring of reality and dream is not unlike the experience of war itself. Here is Vietnam vet Ron Kovic: "He heard a small girl moaning now. She was shot through the stomach and bleeding out of the rear end. He felt crazy and weak as he stood there staring at them with the rest of the men, staring down onto the floor like it was a nightmare, like it was some kind of dream and it really wasn't happening."[9] The specter

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[9] Ron Kovic, Born on the Fourth of July (Akashic Books, 2005), p. 200.

here is one of madness, "craziness" in Kovic's words, which Descartes likened to falling "into very deep waters" where "I can neither make certain of setting my feet on the bottom, nor can I swim and so support myself on the surface." For our young soldier, this "inability to tell dreams from thoughts" made him "nothing and less than nothing. It robbed him of the only thing that distinguished a normal person from a crazy man." He worries that his uncertainties will ultimately "rob" him of "any respect for his own thoughts and that was the worst thing that could happen to anybody."

So how can this soldier, he is a guy named Joe, ward off this fate and think his way back to existence? The first step is already happening, of awakening to his full predicament. It is as if every malady of war has been compressed into his person: he is a refugee, a displaced person, victim of a kind of torture, a prisoner of war, as well as a living abstraction that former soldiers become.

The next step is questioning. "Oh why the hell did you ever get into this mess anyhow?"

He enters into a retrospective self reflection on what he has done. He says it is a "duty" he owes himself. But it is also part of reassembling himself, piecing himself back together psychically in the hope of enduring what he now faces by trying to construct a narrative of how he ended up where he is. Vietnam vet Tim O'Brien writes eloquently of how stories can play this role, how they are especially needed "for those late night hours when you can't remember how you got from where you were to where you are." Joe's whole life now is such a midnight hour.

The final step is challenging what has happened, of moving from grief to grievance. He reflects on how, as the sum of all war's maladies, he could be a fitting monument to war. Not a monument of stone to console the grieving, but a monument of flesh and blood to war's bodily reality to awaken others to the full grief that war bring. Almost like a carnival display: "See that red gash? That was his face girls. Here girls touch it don't be afraid. Bend down and kiss it. You'll have to wipe your lips afterward because they will have a strange rotten stuff on them but that's all right. He would put a sign over it that said: he is war, concentrated into one place—and they will never forget it as long as they live." His role would be a prophetic one, alerting people to the meaning of what they do, his bodily mass a kind of resurrection. "And then suddenly he saw. He had a vision of himself as a new kind of Christ as a man who carries within himself all the seeds of a new order of things. He was the new messiah of the battlefields saying to people as I am so shall you be."

The story of Joe is from the major American anti-war novel of the 20th century, Dalton Trumbo's <u>Johnny Got His Gun</u> (1939)[10]. Young men like me first learned of it in the Vietnam War era from Ron Kovic's memoir, <u>Born on the Fourth of July</u> (1976). Kovic, a disabled Marine turned antiwar leader, wrote "This

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[10] (Citadel Press, 1991).

novel came into my life when I desperately needed to know that I was not alone. I wanted to not feel so lost, so angry and afraid, and I wanted to reconnect with a part of me that I was so afraid of." It finds a new audience in every American conflict. Cindy Sheehan's son, Casey, was killed in Iraq in April 2004. She has written of how the novel was central to her own "quest for truth and for peace" that led her to become a tireless opponent of that war, and later war generally.[11]

 In the talk of becoming a "messiah of the battlefields", Trumbo's novel especially evokes the prophetic role that survivors of war sometimes envision for themselves. It is as if there is something about the experience which compels them to this role. Here is Kovic: "The one gift I was given in that war was an awakening. I became a messenger, a living symbol, an example, a man who learned that love and forgiveness are more powerful than hatred, who has learned to embrace all men and women as my brothers and sisters."[12] Their fate in war has imposed this special burden. Writes Kovic, "It is we who must cry out for a world without war," for "Nothing is more important than for us to have experienced war to share its awful truth."

The problem posed by what I call soldier-pacifism is how we should understand this "awful truth"--that they feel compelled to share. I approach it with two thoughts. We may assume that the "truth" here question is not an esoteric one, i.e. it is available to anyone who has experienced war. But at the same time, it needs articulation to be fully present to people including to those who have experienced war. It needs in Kovic's words a "messenger" whose principal concern is to find the proper language in which the experience can be cast. Some accounts of the "awful truth" are actually quite straightforward. Here is Vietnam vet Camillo Bica: "In fact, no one knows the sacrilege of war better than we who must fight it and then have to live with the memories of what we have done and what we have become."[13] So here we encounter the appeal to the sacred/sacrilege. And talk of such notions seems to fit the kind of truth just identified. Traditionally, something's being sacrilegious has been seen as something that everyone is capable of acknowledging. It is available to everyone but it still needs presenting in the right way, especially if ideologies seek to obscure it--in the case of war, by claiming that individuals, actions, and even spaces are sanctified by its carnage. Hence its critics have conceived of themselves as messengers, prophets--those whose role is to awaken us to the sacrilegious in our lives.

But how can we unpack such talk through the experiences recounted?

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[11] Cindy Sheehan, Peace Mom: A Mother's Journey Through Heartache to Activism (Atria Books, 2010).
[12] Kovic, op. cit., p. 23.
[13] Mac Bica, cited in Rita Brock and Gabriella Lettini, Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War (Beacon Press, 2013), p. 21.

[III]/ War, the Face, the Face to Face

Every war has its signature injury. A history of war could be written by its distinctive maimings. Anglo-Saxon skirmishes gave us blunt trauma by clubs, maces, and battle hammers; the American and French Revolutions, amputations. The American Civil War added gangrene and sepsis, World War I lung injuries and trench foot. Brain injuries have been a prominent feature of recent conflicts. Iraq and Afghanistan have witnessed unprecedented numbers of wounds to the genitals.

But injuries to the face have a special status. World War I trench warfare proved diabolically conducive to facial injuries to the point that combat could be experienced as an ongoing encounter with damaged faces. "We see men living with their skulls blown open; we see soldiers run with their two feet cut off, they stagger on their splintered stumps into the next shell-hole. We see men without mouths, without jaws, without faces; we find one man who has held the artery of his arm in his teeth for two hours in order not to bleed to death. The sun goes down, night comes, the shells whine, life is at an end."[14] But this always hidden, it constituted a "hidden history" of that war in one historian's words.[15] Photos of facial injuries were banned. Limbless veterans had many support groups but the facially disfigured were left to themselves. In Sidcup, England, site of the first hospital devoted to facial wounds, some park benches were painted blue as a warning that the man sitting on one would be distressful to view. Some proposed that entire villages be designated where the "maimed and shattered" could live by themselves. But this did not address the problem of soldiers facing themselves. Hospitals banned mirrors because men who glimpsed themselves often collapsed in shock.[16] A recent estimate was over 38,000 facial injuries in Iraq. One of the more famous stories to emerge from that conflict, Brian Van Reet's "Big Two-Hearted Hunting Creek", speaks to facial injuries in that conflict.[17]

The face is the site of our most deeply human capacities like grief, shame, and tears--and anger. The face-to-face is the site of our most deeply human interactions with each other. What does it mean to lose your face?

[1]/ The Face as Site of Reckoning

We are the ones who have to live
with the memory that we were the instruments
of your pigeon-breasted fantasies.

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[14] Erich Maria Remarque, All Quiet on the Western Front (Ballantine Books, 1987), p. 134.
[15] Caroline Alexander, "Faces of War" Smithsonian Magazine, February 2007.
[16] Olga Khazan, "Masks: The Face Transplants of World War I", Atlantic Magazine August 2014.
[17] In Roy Scranton and Matt Gallagher, eds. Fire and Forget: Short Stories from the Long War (Da Capo Press, 2013).

We are inextricable accomplices in this travesty of dreams:
but we are not alone.

- W. D. Ehrhart, "A Relative Thing"

Let me begin with the face of anger. Anger and retribution are persistent themes in the literature of disillusionment. A "favorite fantasy" (writes one authority) of British soldiers in World War I was "visiting of violent and if possible painful death upon the complacent, patriotic, uncomprehending, fatuous civilians at home."[18] Correspondent Phillips Gibbs wrote of soldiers that "They prayed to God to get the Germans to send Zeppelins to England--to make the people know what war meant."[19] And the anger turned to rage when the war was over. Siegfried Sassoon's "Fight to a Finish" which imagined soldiers marching through London in a welcome-home parade fixing their bayonets and attacking the crowd. Poet Charles Hamilton Sorely put it bluntly: "I should like so much to kill whoever was primarily responsible for the war."[20] A half-century later the "pigeon breasted fantasies" of those responsible for the Vietnam War were the target of former Marine Sergeant and Purple Heart winner W. D. Ehrhart in the poem just cited. "My day of reckoning is upon me. Yours will come"--these are the words of Thomas Young who was wounded and paralyzed in Iraq five days after arriving. His powerful "A Message From a Dying Veteran" is an imagined dialogue with the architects of that war, written on behalf of "those who will spend their lives in unending pain and grief" and confronting them to "face what you have done to me and to many, many others who deserved to live."[21]

Thomas Young's dialogue is an imagined one because there is in fact no dialogue of the sort that animated the army of principles model. Invoking some ideas of GA Cohen, the breakdown of accountability can be understood as a breakdown of the face-to-face justifications identified with fraternity.[22] In his critique of Rawls, Cohen invites us to contrast justifications that are "blandly impersonal" with interpersonal--or face to face--ones. The first is a third-person type justification, meaning it is a justification from no one in particular for people in general. If successful, it establishes an abstract moral obligation on everyone to do some X. The other is a second-person type justification, meaning it is a justification from someone in particular to someone in particular. If successful, it establishes a concrete normative claim of one person on another that they do some Y. And the conditions of their success are quite different. The validity of a third-person justification solely a matter of what is said, while the compellingness of an

[18] Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 83-84.
[19] Philip Gibbs, Now It Can Be Told (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014) p. 195.
[20] Quoted by Jon Silkin in Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War (Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), p. 52.
[21] This letter can be found, along with a video of Tomas Young reading it, at https://www.democracynow.org/2013/3/21/exclusive_tomas_young_reads_in_full_his_letter_to_bush_cheney_a_message_from_a_dying_veteran
[22] G.A. Cohen, Rescuing Justice and Equality (Harvard University Press, 2008).

interpersonal face-to-face justification is also a matter of the relation between the parties, of who is speaking and who is being spoken to.

The problem with third-person faceless justifications is not just whether you agree with them, abstractly, but whether you can care about them, concretely, which is a matter of your caring/fraternal type relations with the community of which you are a part. Implicit in the orientation of soldier pacifism is that anything like soldiering, involving killing and dying, should only be done for reasons that one cares about, which partly involves a community of mutual caring. But despite all the rhetoric this is precisely what does not exist nor can it exist in the conditions of modern war. The upshot is that, despite the rhetoric, the relation of society to soldiers is inevitably one of turning away their face. Indeed, I think another "hidden history" of modern war would concern the many different strategies employed for this turning away of the face. The most recent one is today's mantra of "Thanking the troops" without the slightest interest in who is being thanked and what they are being thanked for. I wonder about the reaction of the young men I encountered in Saigon if I had begun by "thanking them for their service". Maybe anger: there is a moment in Johnny Got His Gun where Joe sense is that a group of officers have arrived to pin a metal on him. The whole situation is absurd. Given his physical condition, they can't really know whether he fought for their country or the other side. He is just a faceless "soldier", but they are careful to cover his face while there so they cannot see the full meaning of what they are "thanking" him for. Joe is increasingly angry, though they cannot know this by his hidden face.

[2] The Face as Site of Revelation

The face is a locus of identity especially as fashioned by our trials and tribulations, so to look in the soldiers face is to look for what soldiering means. But what if there is an inscrutability to that experience which thwarts not only full comprehension by others but by the soldiers themselves. This is the struggle for a language to articulate the experience, driven by a frustration at how the received discourses fall short.

Here is an episode from Kovic's Born on the Fourth of July. It is typical of this literature in describing an incident of true dilemma, i.e. one where terrible things are done yet not in violation of the rules of engagement, so raising the question of the claim that such rules have on the experiences in question.

 The soldiers of his unit fire into a village where they honestly believe the enemy is firing at them.[23] Afterwards, one of them enters a hut. "'Oh God,' he said. 'Oh Jesus Christ.' He started to cry. 'We just shot up a bunch of kids!' The floor of the small hut was covered with them, screaming and thrashing their arms back and forth, lying in pools of blood, crying wildly, screaming again and again. They were shot in the face,

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[23] Kovic, op. cit, pp. 198-202.

in the chest, in the legs, moaning and crying. 'Oh Jesus!' he cried. There was an old man in the corner with his head blown off from his eyes up, his brains hanging out of his head like jelly. He kept looking at the strange sight, he had never seen anything like it before."

A dialogue ensues between them and their commanding officer. As others arrived, "The men were not moving and some of them were crying now, dropping their rifles and sitting down on the wet ground. They were weeping now with their hands against their faces. 'Oh Jesus, oh God, forgive us.' The men in the hut were just sitting there crying. They could not move, and they did not listen to the lieutenant's orders. They just sat with the rain pouring down on them through the roof, crying and not moving." Their lieutenant is honestly concerned with helping the victims, but is frustrated by his men's reactions. He finally blurts out: "'You're men, not babies. It's all a mistake. It wasn't your fault. They got in the way. Don't you people understand—they got in the goddamn way!'"

We might take the point of the lieutenant to be that the rights of the children and older people had not been violated because the killing was accidental; he might even invoke the lessons of liability theory to establish this. But how much does this show? Part of the problem with the juridical language of rights, responsibilities, personhood, etc. is that it imagines a kind of closure, a yes or no answer, in these contexts. One wonders if it can really address the problem I raised above of living with what one has done, Kovic and others consistently speak of being "haunted" by what they have done--what kind of ethical claim "haunts us" in this way? It seems to involve the claim of the face. Kovic stresses heads blown off, brains hanging out. Remarque's <u>All</u> <u>Quiet</u> <u>on</u> <u>the</u> <u>Western</u> <u>Front</u> famously stresses the <u>eyes</u> of the enemy which, in his words, "cry out", "yell" in ways that are disempowering, or in the Kovic incident debilitating. Remarque links this engaging the enemy's identity. He writes:

> But you were only an idea to me before, an abstraction that lived in my mind and called forth its appropriate response. It was that abstraction I stabbed. But now, for the first time, I see you are a man like me. I thought of your hand-grenades, of your bayonet, of your rifle; now I see your wife and <u>your face</u> and our fellowship. Forgive me, comrade. We always see it too late. Forgive me, comrade; how could you be my enemy?

But the moral resistance here involves the inability to fully capture it in words. Kovic speaks of the "strangeness" of the experience. Camilo Mejía speaks with the same tentativeness of a similar case where he acted within his rights but the moral problem remained. "For weeks after the incident, my mind could not shake off the images of the young man walking, and breathing, and then down on the ground, bloody,

and dead. I had also followed a lawful order, and I had not opened fire until I was convinced that he was indeed going to throw a grenade. The problem was that as I observed that young man through the sight of my rifle, when he was still alive, there was something inside me, a voice one could say, that was telling me not to squeeze the trigger. And I knew, without a shred of doubt, that I should not disobey that voice, and that if I did, there would be serious consequences to face."

[3] The Face as Site of Meaning

The "voice" here is the voice of conscience which continues long after issues of abstract justification have been resolved. All of this pertains to killing in war, let me now extended to dying in war.

The dead are those who never return, but the post-World War I institution of "memorials" to the dead, including "tombs to the unknown soldier", suggest that they are nevertheless still with us. Ever since, the quarrel about war has involved a quarrel about the meaning of such memorials. William Faulkner's anti-war novel A Fable recounts a Christ-like soldier who sparks a mutiny on the Western front, is executed for his resistance, but then by a series of flukes ends up being the "unknown soldier" buried to "honor the dead".[24] Significantly, the pro-war ideology of honoring the dead invokes the question of accountability. Beginning with such pro-war poems as John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields" killing--and ultimately dying--in war is something that citizens are called to do by the voices of those already dead. McCrae stages it is a dialogue in which "we, the dead" hold the living accountable to "Take up our quarrel with the foe". It is as if impersonal justifications are not enough, something more personal is required.

The discourse of soldier-pacifism reverses this. A recent striking example is Larry Heinemann's Paco's Story in which the tale of a broken Vietnam veteran is narrated by the ghost of a fellow soldier (ghost stories are common in both the American and Vietnamese literature of that war). In Johnny Got His Gun Joe ridicules the idea of the dead speaking while claiming the right to speak as one who is as close to being dead as possible. (Kovic speaks of his standpoint as that of a "corpse, the living dead man".) I quoted at length his interior monologue about the reasons for dying in war:

> And all the guys who died all the five million or seven million or ten million who went out and died to make the world safe for democracy to make the world safe for words without meaning how did they feel about it just before they died?

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[24] William Faulkner, A Fable (Random House, 2011).

If the thing they were fighting for was important enough to die for then it was also important enough for them to be thinking about it in the last minutes of their lives. That stood to reason. So did all those kids die thinking of democracy and freedom and liberty and honor and the safety of the home and the stars and stripes forever?

You're goddam right they didn't. They died crying in their minds like little babies. They forgot the thing they were fighting for the thing they were dying for. They thought about things a man can understand. They died yearning for the face of a friend. They died whimpering for the voice of a mother a father a wife a child. They knew what was important.

I take these remarks to be addressing the status of the reasons for what happens to soldiers and the distinction between agreeing with reasons and caring about them, the assumption being that reasons we can live with must be ones we can care about and even more--reasons that we die for must be ones that we can care about. Before, the question was killing for abstractions, now it is one of dying for abstractions which in both cases are posed in terms of the experience of the face-to-face. If killing requires turning away from the face of the other, the suggestion here is that dying compels us to turn towards the face of another, specifically of a loved one. Or, to put it another way, the only type of meaning worth dying for is that which can be found in such face-to-face encounters. But this is what the inhumanity of modern war denies.

[IV] Conclusion: The Cry of Hope

No one truly "recovers" from war. No one is ever made whole again. The best that can be hoped, I think, is to achieve a degree of benign acceptance. To that end, I strive each day to forgive and absolve myself of guilt, and to live with the wounds of war that will never heal."
- Camillo Baca[25]

From the start, the troubled story of the returning Vietnam vets was one of grief. Their plight first gained attention with the 1971 story of Sargeant Dwight Johnson.[26] Sargeant Johnson was the first African-American soldier to be awarded the Congressional medal of honor in Vietnam, but after two more years of distinguished service he came home increasingly dejected about his experiences and fate. He was shot and killed robbing a liquor store. This was the result of many factors. But in one of the first discussions of the

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[25] "Personal Legacy of the War", December 17th. 2011, from his website Peace Vet (http://www.svaphilosopher.com/Peersonal-Legacy-of-War.html).
[26] "From Dakto to Detroit: Death of a Troubled Hero" By Jon Nordieimer, The New York Times May 26, 1971

"Post-Vietnam Syndrome," psychiatrist Chaim F. Shatan suggested that the inability of soldiers to truly come home was the profound consequence of "impacted grief."[27] The talk of "impacted" invokes my characterization of Joe as embodying all the maladies of war in his one person.

What does it mean to construe this as a violation of "humanity"?

I want to conclude with some observations by the French philosopher Simone Weil on the language of protest. Weil was deeply critical of characterizing forms of deep oppression in the juridical language of rights. She is among those thinkers who feel that the evils of our time can only be captured in the language of the sacred/sacrilege while recognizing the challenges to finding a place for such talk in our secular culture. Here she is writing about the degradation of labor in modern life, and how workers should understand what might be termed the "moral injury" which it involves:

> It is sacrilege to degrade labour in exactly the same sense that it is sacrilege to trample upon the Eucharist. If the workers felt this, if they felt that by being the victim they are in a certain sense the accomplice of sacrilege, their resistance would have a very different force from what is provided by the consideration of personal rights. It would not be an economic demand but an impulse from the depth of their being, fierce and desperate like that of a young girl who is being forced into a brothel ; and at the same time it would be a cry of hope from the depth of their heart.[28]

The are two thoughts here that I think further reflection on the discourse appropriate to appraising war could pursue. One is the concern that the frame the costs of war, specifically the grief it induces, in the language of individual rights is ultimately to privatize that injury in a way that compounds the privatizing impacted grief itself. Weil sees the language of the sacred as articulating our pains by lifting us out of them, as it were. The second thought is one that informs the lament of the demobilized especially as expressed in the voices we have considered. How do we maintain hope? This is the question that confronts all grief and I think it is a question that confronts any sober-minded reflection on the persistence of war in our time. Weil's suggestion is that any discourse that construes itself as a dialogue with the afflicted must enable the "cry of hope". And this begins by listening to its voices.

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[27] "Post-Vietnam Syndrome" By Chaim F. Shatan New York Times May 6, 1972.
[28] Simone Weil, Selected Essays (Wipf and Stock, 1962), p. 18.