

New Poetry by Amalie Flynn for the WWI Centennial

Zone Rouge

(for the centennial)



photo by Amalie Flynn

1.
When the land was.
2.
Full of bodies dead. And twisted.

3.

When the fighting was.

4.

Sustained.

5.

With bodies. Dead. Twisted on a riverbank.

6.

Wrist bent. Hand hovers. Over water.

7.

Dead bodies with fingers. Like feathers.

8.

Stretched feathers or the calamus.

9.

Attaching to bird skin.

10.

These are bodies. Bodies of war.

11.

Dead with. Feathered fingers.

12.

Wing of a bird.

13.

300 days of shelling.

14.

The shells were 240 mm. Full of shrapnel.

15.

Mustard gas.

16.

Hitting men and hitting ground.

17.

Making holes. Upon impact.

18.

Shrapnel bursting.

19.

Bloom and rip.

20.

Ripping through dirt and faces.

21.

Ripped skin. Ripping off tissue.

22.

A nose.

23.

Hole in the center of an ear.

24.

Exposing canal and bone.

25.

Missing teeth. One lower jaw is.

26.

Gone. A set of lips.

27.

The chunk of a chin.

28.

And the shells. Shells from Verdun.

29.

Are still there.

30.

Unexploded ordnance. Sunk.

31.

Into dirt pockets. Like seeds.

32.

This blooming. Metal war.

33.

Shrapnel that looks like rocks or.

34.

Smooth egg of a bird.

35.

Soil made of mud and men and metal.

36.

How. Metal leaches and clings.

37.

This soil of war.

38.

Chlorine and lead and mercury and arsenic.

39.

Where every tree and every plant and every animal.

40.

Each blade of grass.

41.

Where 99% of everything died.

42.

Ground stripped raw.

43.

Stripped earth tissue or how this is.

44.

What war also.

45.

Also does.

46.

Damage to properties: 100%

47.

Damage to agriculture: 100%

48.

Impossible to clean.

49.

Human life impossible.

50.

The government declared it *uninhabitable*.

51.

A no-go zone.

52.

Broken skeletons of villages.

53.

And the craters that bombs make.

54.

Deep and round holes.

55.

How the bomb craters filled with water.

56.

Making. War ponds.

57.

This is a place.

58.

Where almost everything died.

59.

But the land.

60.

The land was still alive.

61.

Grass stretching again and.

62.

Grafting itself over the bone.

63.

Bone of what happened.

64.

Stretching over trenches and scars.

65.

Like new skin.

66.

And plants and trees and vines.

67.

Rodents and snails and voles and mice.

68.

Deer. Wildcats with metal stomachs.

69.

Still living I say. To my husband.

70.

Who went to war.

71.

War that he did not want.

72.

Afghanistan.

73.

How he came home with hands and feet.

74.

Covered in blisters. *Lesions* the doctor said.

75.

Skin burning. Waking up to him crouched.

76.

On the floor and scratching. Saying *I don't know*.

77.

And I know.

78.

That this is how war is.

79.

Or later. I will lay in the darkness.

80.

And think about burn pits in Iraq.

81.

Black smoke and jet fuel and fumes.

82.

About Vietnam sprayed. The bare mudflats after.

83.

Defoliation of trees. And birds. Missing mangroves.

84.

How dioxin poisons wind. Sleeps. In a river or sediment.

85.

The fatty tissue of a fish. Atomic blasts in Hiroshima and.

86.

Nagasaki. The incineration of bodies and land.

87.

Tearing skin off people. Tearing trees out of ground.

88.

Tearing everything.

89.

Away.

90.

How black rain fell. Radioactive bomb debris.

91.

Into mouths. Of people and rivers.

92.

How radiation lives. In grass and soil. The intestine of a cow.

93.

About the GWOT. Blood soaked years and streets and.

94.

How many miles of land. Where we left bombs.

95.

Unexploded or forever.

96.

I will think about Zone Rouge.

97.

Trenches like scars.

98.

My husband gardening. The tendons in his arms.

99.

Moving like trees.

100.

Or how war never goes away.

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