

Poetry: "Nostos" by T. Mazzara



Photo by Lance Cpl. MaryAnn Hill

i. the deadweight of a crooked hook

we crossed any strange boundary in our youths. all amongst some hitch in what aught-wise (or maddenin) might normally be tattooed the standard trajectory of a set, masculine life. unvigorous, but then: the word appropriate means the same as mediocre. pretend studs, almost in-step, fat x nasty no-names mistakin stiffness for bearin. x anon on prints of warnin paint. warrin paint. the same color as cowardice. the same shape as the souls what's glued to the bottom our go-fasters. choked back inglorious tears whilst some anonymous civilian, some nasty-ass non-rate, who's better'n us (ever-body better'n us), gripped our slow nogs x used a dull set of clippers to scrape our empty pates as bare x bumpy as dead stones or pingin, spoonless, hand grenades arced toward fulfilment. x we gots ourselves poplar pants, but they ain't pants no more, them's trousers x they's medium reg, like we's come to ken our dicks is medium reg thanks to bein told so at decibel. they smelt new like us. new before the smokies got them clubbed mitts, the size'a halteres, deep in our guts x twisted. what kinda fuckin faggot wears a blouse? a query. landed faster'n

what's a country? borders? them lines ain't shit but bloody illusions drawn in the sand with dead an'en marked by colored fabric. how could we know patriot might well means the same as a narrow mind, but also might mean diomedes. we can't know that. not that. not what imperialism tastes like (corned beef hash). not what consequences smell like (bad apples x human shit). certainly not while some leather-faced smokey is spittin agro to get in line for chow now, cover now x align to the right. breathe in that coffee x coffin nail breath, his halitosis insides, his hard grit x his life seemin harder still. that stale tobacco, x man. he's yellin again. why the hell is he yellin again? all so funny to me, but i never smile. i's secret grinnin somewhere hid from all my non-buddies x all them bosses. i know the deal. i know the fuckin deal. i grew up with the deal. all them e-g-a tattoos x meat tags at the zero club pool x e-club pool. get on my quarterdeck, push now, x side-straddle hop now, push now. side. straddle. hop. x get the fuck off my quarterdeck. get the fuck off my fuckin quarterdeck.

ii. κλέος x νόστος

we was all after hittin a piece of paper downrange. a mob of bolts flyin back. x goddamn if i wasn't in love with pinchin that slick trigger. worn smooth by other men's (boy's) caresses. i groped her long lines x all that warm when i made her go off. my dearest. my colleen. it weren't all fucks x blowjobs though. sometimes i failed to give her proper attention. like i missed them trainin me to rapid fire, cuz (near enough for me to see) there was this grasshopper chewin on a leaf of clover like it was his last fuckin meal. focused on that instead of listenin to the pith helmet barkin instructions. yeahyeahyeah. got the general gist that we's supposed to squeeze that pulsin trigger a bunch of times real fast. when she went off, she kicked a little. though they told us not to, thumbed her into burst just to see if the devil would appear. he didn't. so i clicked her back to semi. but

then wasn't payin attention when they taught us how to tie a hasty sling cuz a pale paper butterfly decided to tic her hairy feet gainst colleen's front site post. threesome. nice. nothin means nothin. shot expert. up inside my colleen. but not all did. those most in love with touchin that delicate clit. those most in love with the idea of murder with impunity. i suppose. i's wrong. we moved on. cease·fire, cease·fire, cease·fire.

iii. bad apples x human shit

our lot. sometimes we found ourselves sawin aggregate with dune-shaped skin on our palms, like rolled wales on a grounded ship beside the atlantic. that remembered firth. only remembered cuz it weren't there. that remembered us. those slips. those lappings x rage. foam x weather. over there. over where? sensed x yearned. smelled, maybe. x we wiped that same wet salt from fore to clean-shaven jawbone x flicked a spray gainst the loam, x greens, x dust, x olivine, as we handled awkward entrenchin tools under hot-ass darkness x still a threat of rain, like some mofo green god what's born in a distant country was gonna come over x blanket us in cool water. only, just like the devil, he also never showed. we. erect, or bent. thrust fuckin fightin holes en un humedal, en la vieja florida. this earthen bed, these layers. the frogs built this place. then los españoles. x god, ever swingin dick dissemblin our mom-fuckin father's fetishized imagination of what tough must be. x all whilst we was shattered to pieces twixt kleos x nostos x there is the covert knowin home was always the better choice. my nostos has perished, but my kleos will be unwilting. foreals tho: we's all just pansies in the groundwork, down to our heels. our youths in hard-on blossom. but-no homo.

iv. love with the idea of murder

we humped. god, we humped. march. run. march x run. that accordion behavior of a ruck run. with alice on our backs x l-b-e x mags x full canteens. x we became individuals when one amongst us shit his pants cuz he was too afraid to ask for a head call. we grateful for the break afforded us as them smokies took shitpants off the dirt path x did godknowswhat to him out past the treeline. we breathed x drank water x thought of her at the end of the line. goin again. run, motherfucker, run. we was troubled dissimulators all, uncolored, uncouth, middlin claimants to whichever (sweet) mary jane (rottencrotch) we might once have seen. smoked. once. upon a time or actual. then clutchin our shafts, cuz we too are afraid to ask for a head call, we hear x agree with the smokies that we is "out there" x double-timin whilst we "waitin for scotty come beam [us] the fuck up,"—up, up—out some godawful, risin regret: ewe signed the muthafuckin contract, brother. we's in-step now, clenched in vigor, all together: a single, strainin, sweatin, fist—We—forty inches back to chest. so says that make-shift swagger stick, that cut-off broom handle taped x tapped in time gainst steamin cement til, together, we all trek, bangin heels gainst bitumen blacktop, then out—out x through dun salt—salt x sandy basins, out amongst sallow pines x up in this undeveloped estuary, no sign of civilization anywhere beside the red brick lines of covered x aligned bully buildins x all them pressed uniforms. by the end, we, all us, ever swinginfuckindick, would fuck our mothers x off our fathers (we learned how in hittin skills x on the bayonet course) to wear that scratchy blue tunic, to be diomedes, or don them crossed rifles, or the auric fuckin parrot grippin that big, dirty ball we been stompin over for months, that mud globe what's stabbed through x through with the deadweight of a crooked hook. a small bit of metal what could stop a ship. but what hook ain't crooked? doing exactly what it's meant to. we column left x align right x stand at

parade rest as moms x dads (who can't know we'd kill em just soon look at em) cheer x applaud our crossin the shadow-line. we's dismissed in the heat, in our blue deltas, in our spit-shined leather dress. we's discarded for a week's leave, like droppin'a handful of sharpened crow's feet on the blacktop, about an hour north'a zabana.