

Poetry by Amalie Flynn: “Ours”

Poem by Amalie Flynn: “Ours”

New Poetry by Amalie Flynn: “Strip”

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Poetry by Amalie Flynn +
Images by Pamela Flynn:
“#150,” “#151,” “#152,”
“#153”



Flow #150

SPIDER / 150

Thick in Louisiana swamps
Atchafalaya Basin
Hot cypress shooting out
Stretching in that bayou
Where pipelines
Pumping black gold oil
Cross across the swamp
Like spider veins.



Flow #151

TRACKS / 151

How I find tiny cuts
The skin of my inner
Thighs outer lip my

Labia

Cuts from his finger

Nails small bloody

Crescents

Like beetle tracks.



Flow #152

SPOIL / 152

Or deep in a swamp

How oil companies

Create canals

Push earth into piles

Push mud into banks

These spoil banks or

Dams

That block blocking

Water so it cannot
Flow.



Flow #153

CLAM / 153

The sky is full of trees

Now after

After he hits me over

The head

With a pipe metal pipe

Hard on

The crown of my skull

Bone and

Suture cracking like a

Clam shell.

[Pattern of Consumption](#) is a year long project featuring 365 poems by Amalie Flynn and 365 images by Pamela Flynn. The poetry and images focus on the assault on women and water.

New Poetry from Amalie Flynn: “Married”



MARRIED TO A MORNING / *image by Amalie Flynn*

For twenty years I have been married to a morning. Of blue sky that stretches and pulls across me like water filling up a suburban swimming pool. The pit that formed a hole. The bodies falling down as if bloodless dolls instead of kneecaps and muscle shins and thighs hot fingers letting go of metal or chests and ribs an artery that runs down the length of a leg like a hose cheeks that hold in teeth and

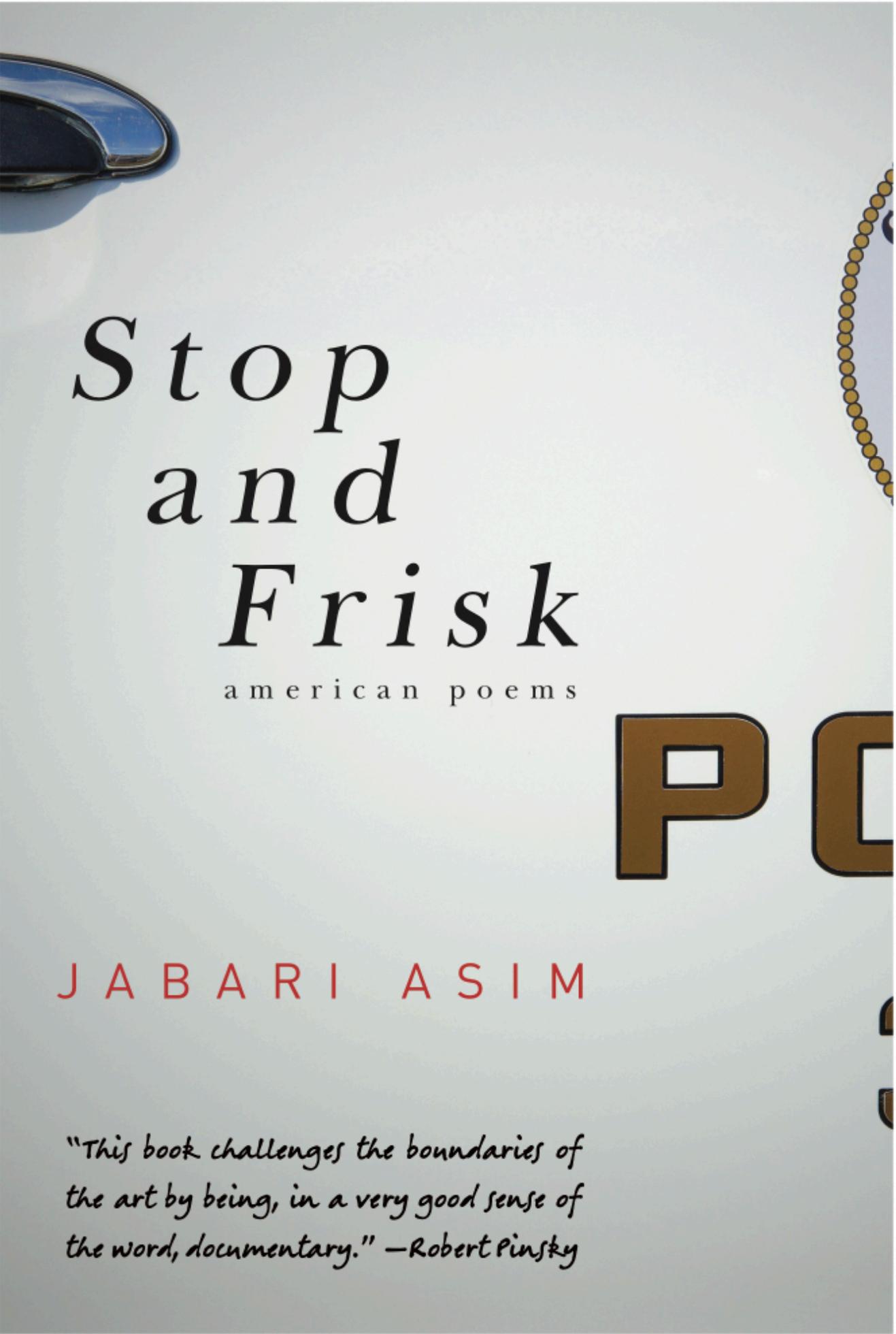
tongues jaw and soft palates or a brain
inside of a skull. How the sky was full of
bodies so many falling thoughts fell down
or how the word *land* crashes and breaks
breaks and breaks apart on impact. How
the day still drowns me.

Today my husband is crouched in our
garden calves flexed. Today I reach out
and I run my fingers across broad fields
of skin between the shoulders. Shoulders
of my two sons. And I know.

How I know beneath.

We are bones.

Poetry Review of Jabari Asim's STOP AND FRISK



*Stop
and
Frisk*

american poems

J A B A R I A S I M

"This book challenges the boundaries of the art by being, in a very good sense of the word, documentary." —Robert Pinsky

1.

They say

Stop-and-frisk

Is a *brief* and *non-intrusive stop* of a *suspect*.

Which can be deadly in America where
Statistics show being black in America
Makes you a *suspect*

Even. When you aren't.

2.

They say

In order to *stop*

Police must have *reasonable suspicion* of a crime.

Which can be deadly in America where
Statistics show being black in America
Makes you a *criminal*

Even. When you aren't.

3.

They say

In order to *frisk*

Police must have *reasonable suspicion* of a gun

Which can be deadly in America where
Statistics show being black in America
Makes you *armed and dangerous*

Even when.

Even. Even. Even. Even. Even when you aren't.

4.

They say

The word *reasonable*

When statistics show police in America are
Racist.

5.

Jabari Asim's poems sing and scream *America.*

6.

And here
Here is what is true about America.

7.

America is racist.

America is unjust.

And being black.

Black in this

America is dangerous.

8.

How being black in America

Can get you.

Get you killed.

9.

The Talk is instructional.

How being black in America means giving the talk

Talk to children.

How there is

A hope it will keep them

Alive.

Asim writes –

*It's more than time we had that talk
about what to say and where to walk,
how to act and how to strive,
how to be upright and stay alive.
(The Talk)*

But throughout Asim's poetry there is
A painful futility.

How being black in America means *no matter*.

No matter. What someone does. How many
Talks they have. How high. Up in the air they
Raise their hands. Where police can see them.
No matter how many times
They do as they are told. During another and
Another and another traffic stop. No matter
How many times they
Say *no* and *yes* or *please don't kill me*

It will not matter

And they might get killed anyway –

*But still there is no guarantee
that you will make it home to me.
Despite all our care and labor,
you might frighten a cop or neighbor
whose gun sends you to endless sleep,
proving life's unfair and talk is cheap.
(The Talk)*

10.

Asim gives us America.
All its unfurled and bloody white supremacy.
He marches America up and down the pages
Of *Stop and Frisk*

Like a parade.

And makes us.

Makes us watch.

Makes us listen.

Makes us *watch and listen*.

And wonder *what the hell*.

How I am wondering *what the hell I am doing here*.

Standing. On the grass. Holding an American flag.

11.

In *Warning: Contains Graphic Violence and Menace to Society*,

Asim structures the poems as police dispatch calls.

Where a dispatcher sends police to a scene of someone who is Black and doing nothing wrong

Encouraging police to respond

Brutally.

12.

The woman in *Warning: Contains Graphic Violence* is a woman

In her fifties. A grandmother armed. With a pink purse.

Walking

Eastbound on 1-10. Or how the dispatcher uses the word *suspect*.

Or how the dispatcher says she will resist by walking away slowly.

And how. How police should respond –

Throw her on her back and squeeze her between your thighs.

Raise your fist high and punch her face until she is still.

(Warning: Contains Graphic Violence)

Or how –

*She may resist by
continuing to breathe, in which case
raise your fist high and continue
to punch
(Warning: Contains Graphic Violence)*

13.

The woman in *Menace to Society* is a professor.
Not a menace. How the dispatcher calls her in
Anyway –

*Attention all units,
black woman walking
outside the lines
near College and 5th.
(Menace to Society)*

The dispatcher warns police. How –

*She may resist by flexing her vocabulary,
insisting on respect and kicking your shin.
(Menace to Society)*

At which point –

*consider your life in danger.
Be advised that promising to slam her
conforms to university police patrol,
as does twisting her arm behind her back
before you throw her to the ground.
(Menace to Society)*

14.

Asim's *Walking While Black* is an American
Play
In three acts.

How it starts with –

A man walking in the middle of the road.

A man walking in the middle.

A man walking.

A man.

(Walking While Black)

Then the muzzle flash. Blast. And whip of a gun –

Firing

(Walking While Black)

Or how this American play ends painfully. Predictably –

A man dying in the middle of the road.

A man dying in the middle.

A man.

Dying.

Heat.

(Walking While Black)

Curtains start to shiver. Before lowering. Smattered

Applause. Hands coming together again and again.

This impact of a performance that happens every

Day in America. When you are black in America.

15.

Asim's *Stop and Frisk* poetry is a poignant profile

Of a racist America. Heartbreaking poems about
People who are racially profiled.

16.

A man looks for loose cigarettes outside a gas
Station. Making noise in *Cancer Sold Separately*.

Asim writes –

*Apparently he slept on the surgeon general's warning
to black men: bellowing in public
may be hazardous to your health.
(Cancer Sold Separately)*

17.

Again. In *Loosies*. The warning –

*Enough loosies over time can be hazardous to health,
As deadly as breaking up a fight in an intersection crowded
With witnesses or dashing through drizzle for Skittles and
tea.
(Loosies)*

A man rummages in the glove compartment of his own car
In front of his own house –

*But a black man in the middle
of the night knows better than
looking for loosies beyond his own driveway.
Safer instead to root around the glovebox
For that previous, planned-ahead pack.
(Loosies)*

The man. The man
Rummages in the glove compartment of his own
Car. In front of. Front of. Of his own house. And
Gets shot at by the police –

*Later he'd say it felt like a firing squad
when deputies opened up from behind, leaving him
not only smokeless but sixty years old and shot in the leg.
Suspected of stealing his own car in front of his own house,
he thought his neighbor was joking when he heard a
command to put his hands in the air.
(Loosies)*

18.

This is a profile. Of an unjust America.
That does not care. Care about the pain
Of being black and brutalized in America.

19.

Of course, there is the accusation. White
Supremacist accusation of –

*All he had to do was comply and he would not be dead.
Tough shit and too damn bad.
(Found Poem #2)*

*In One thousand chokeholds from now,
It powerfully lingers.*

Or how Asim's poetic response is a
Measurement of necks squeezed or
Choked and strangled. He writes –

*One thousand chokeholds from now,
Black and brown people will no longer insist on access to
taxis.
They will not step into elevators when white women are already
inside.
(One thousand chokeholds from now)*

20.

Because how many chokeholds will it take.

How many beaten bodies. Bloodied cheeks.
How many
Broken hyoid bones
Snapping strangled necks. How many. How
Many penetrated raw rectums. How many
Will it take.

21.

Or what it does. What is does. To people
When a country does this.

22.

In *We Have Investigated Ourselves and Found Nothing Wrong*
Asim shows the effects of racism and injustice in America by
Manipulating font. Using a strikethrough. And crossing out
All the references to rights. Or how. All that's left are
words
And lines like this –

remain silent

broken

choke

you're next

(We Have Investigated Ourselves and Found Nothing Wrong)

23.

Every poem in *Stop and Frisk* is an answer
To the question of compliance. The accusation
of *One thousand chokeholds from now.*

Because no matter how many necks get choked.

No matter.

Backs or chests get

Shot up.

No matter how many abdomens get ripped up. High velocity
Muzzle or shred intestines. No matter how many heads get
Shot. Bloody hole matted by hair and follicles. No matter
How many.

24.

The. Brutality. Will. Not. Stop.

25.

Furtive Movements gives us names. A poem
Made up of names. First names last names.
Targeted by racial profiling. And brutalized
By police. How almost all of them are dead.

Killed by police.

26.

Because Eleanor Bumpurs did not leave when evicted. How police
Shot her dead. Because Tyisha Miller was unconscious in a
broken
Down car. How she had a gun in her lap or when police woke
her.
She sat up and grabbed it. And they shot her 23 times. And
dead.
Because when his football hit a police car. How Anthony Baez.
He
Resisted arrest. And police choked him. How he died of
asphyxiation.
Because Jonathan Ferrell crashed his car. Went to a house.
Banged
On the door. Or how he ran at police. And they shot him 12
times.
Dead. Because Claude Reese was 14 and standing on stairs in
such
Darkness. How police thought he was holding a gun. How he
wasn't.

How the bullet entered his skull behind his left ear and how.
It never
Came back out. Because Amadou Diallo looked like someone else.
Or
Did not put his hands up in the air. How he reached in his
pocket for
His wallet. But they shot him. Shot him and shot him 41 times
dead.
Because. Because Michael Wayne Clark. Because Jonny Gammage
Did not pull over. Because Oscar Grant. Police had him face-
down.
On a subway platform. Shot him in the back close range.
Because
Police beat Mohammed Assassa when he struggled. Broke it.
Broke
His hyoid bone when they strangled him. Because police hit the
car
That Sean Bell was driving. Hit it with more than 50 bullets.
Because.
The Central Park Five were innocent. Because LaTanya Haggerty
was
A passenger in a pursued car. How police thought she had a
gun. But
She was talking on a cell phone. And police shot her dead.
Because.
Henry Dumas came through the turnstile. Shot dead. Because
Sonji
Taylor was on the roof of a hospital. How police say she
lunged at
Them with a knife. But they shot her 7 times in her back.
Because.
Jordan Davis. Because Johnny Robinson threw rocks at a car
draped
In the Confederate flag. Because Eula Love resisted. How it
was over
An unpaid gas bill. Because Michael Stewart sprayed graffiti.
How

Police hog tied him. And then choked him to death. Because
Rekia
Boyd was in a park. Because Prince Jamel. Because Gavin
Eiberto
Saldana. Because Aiyana Jones was 7 and in a house that got
raided.
How police shot her. How it was the wrong house. Because
Marcillus
Was homeless and sleeping in a bush. How he threatened a K-9
dog
With a screwdriver. Police shot him dead. Because Rodney King.
And
Everyone. How everyone saw. Because Abner Louima got strip
searched
Outside a nightclub. Police kicked him in the testicles. Raped
him at the
Station with a broomstick. Broke teeth when they shoved it in
his mouth.
Because Kenneth Chamberlain was wearing a medical necklace.
Because
Julio Nunez. Because Patrick Dorismond. Because Jimmie Lee
Jackson who
Police shot in Selma. How he was unarmed. Because. Because.
Because.

27.

Their names are eulogy.

Presented in *Furtive Movements* as a list. Their
Brutalized bodies paraded out. The letters that
Make up their names are the drumbeats rolling
The low guttural groan of a tuba. This screaming
Trombone. Or how Asim capitalizes some of the
Letters. These are the lyrics to the song that is his
Poem. How it reads *FUCK THA POLICE*.

28.

But we cannot. Let's not. Forget
Renisha McBride. Crashed her car –

*Renisha reeling
Head full of fire, wreck and
Ruin behind her.
(Reckoning, for Renisha McBride)*

How Renisha ran to a nearby house
For help.

For help and Theodore Wafer came
To the door. Shot her through it. The
Screen door dead.

Let's not. Let's not. Let's not forget
How racism and injustice in America
Is all encompassing. Dark streets or
Racist neighbors. How a bullet can
Tear through a screen door like
Skin. Which is why. Which is why –

*No more odes for the Confederate dead.
Let's grieve for Renisha instead,
All the Renishas, the broken sisters crushed to dust
And bone in our neighbor's tangled pathologies.
(Reckoning, for Renisha McBride)*

29.

Asim makes the powerful point in his poems
Not to. Not to forget women. Because racism
And injustice in America crosses and breaks
Gender lines. Being black and a man in this
Country means. Getting thrown against the
Hood of a car. Cheek bone. Zygomatic bone
Crushed. Horseshoe hyoid bone fractured

From the gripping. Pressing and strangling.

Or shot dead.

But so are women.

And girls.

Because when you are black in America
And a woman. Racism and injustice in
America means you may be expendable.

30.

Asim's poems *don't start none*, *A House Is Not*, and *Wild Things*
Offer a portrait of a woman caught up in the racism and
injustice
Of America. She is an abused wife who. Finally shoots at him.
Her
Abuser. She is –

*A woman wreathed in smoke,
standing her ground.
(don't start none)*

And when she misses. Bullets hitting air. How police come.

Drag her half naked outside. Breasts exposed. Outside of
Her apartment complex and her neighbors. How they are
Standing and watching and filming. Or police. How there
Are 12 officers. So many. So many men. Asim writes –

*Good men stood all around all around the good men stood all
around
(Wild Things)*

Conjuring. For her and for us. A memory of –

*your great-grandmother
raped by white men with guns on the dirt floor of a bar what
she*

remembered most were those who stood and watched, doing nothing
(Wild Things)

31.

Asim's poetry serves as a gut-wrenching indictment.

How brutality may come in the shape a man's hands make
When he wraps them around the neck of another man and
Squeezes until he kills him. How brutality is also standing on
The stairs of an apartment complex and watching a woman
Dragged out of her apartment by police. Her breasts exposed
And the skin of the back of her thighs and buttocks scraping
Raw against cement.

This is the parade.

Parade of what America is. And who is responsible.

32.

Or Relisha. In *Vanishing Point*. A child in a DC shelter
with –

*A numb mom and three hungry brothers,
dirt, scabs, bedbugs, and a teddy bear
named Baby.*
(Vanishing Point)

How the janitor preys on her. Reveals his plan to
Groom her with candy. And kidnap her. Or how.

It will not matter. Because –

*Don't nobody care about these kids.
Half they mamas don't want 'em
and the city sure don't.*
(Vanishing Point)

33.

Vanishing Point is terrifying.

That moment. The one where Relisha will
Disappear –

*You'll see her for the last time at Holiday Inn,
Pink boots and paper bags streaming light
From a security camera.
(Vanishing Point)*

But Relisha is just one. Just one.

One of the already. Forgotten.

34.

In *The Disappeared* Asim writes –

*Every portrait posted on the Black and Missing website
looks like someone I know.
(The Disappeared)*

How –

*Sixty-four thousand
mostly missing in New York, Georgia,
North Carolina, Maryland, and Florida:
signs of struggle, prints wiped clean,
empty cars with engines running.
(The Disappeared)*

35.

The dead and gone haunt Asim's poetry.

Or how they should. Should haunt all of us.

36.

In *Young Americans*, they march in the streets –
Dead children make mad noise

*when they march. The doomed, solemn-eyed youth
of Chicago are putting boots in the ground,
gathering in ghostly numbers
to haunt us with their disappointment.
(Young Americans)*

How they will keep marching. Keep marching.

How –

*The slaughtered innocents of Chicago
ain't going nowhere gently.
Circling the sad metropolis
in loud, unearthly ranks,
they raise their voices to the bloody sky,
above the roar of the monstrous guns and the
bullets, falling like fat rain.
(Young Americans)*

37.

Asim shows us America.

America where being black means
A bullet will come for you. Where
Police will come for you. America
Where you will be forgotten even
As you lay on the floor of a subway
Platform. Police knee in your back.

Laying on the on ramp of a freeway
Pinned. Pinned between the thighs
Of a police officer.
Where you struggle. Struggle to just
Breathe one more time. Pleading.
Pleading for your humanity to be
Remembered.

38.

The men and women and boys and girls
Brutalized and beaten. Raped and killed
For being black in America march in the
Powerful and heartbreaking poetry of
Stop and Frisk.

39.

Poems that are snare and are bass.
Skin stretched over the drum of this
Country. Poems that are percussion
Of police brutality. Pounding beat in

This American parade

Of black bodies assaulted. Performative
High step. Poems that are the alto and
Tenor. The deep bassoon.

Sharp piccolo of human pain.

40.

Poems that are 8 and 8s on loop. That
Are feet hitting cement. Feet strapped
In showstoppers and patent leathered
Marjorette boots. Leather tassels that
Shake. Heels smacking asphalt.

41.

Asim's poems sing and

Scream *America.*

42.

How every day America assembles its
Racist and unjust formation. And how.
Every day. Racism and injustice march

In an endless and brutal loop.

43.

I am a white woman.

Asim's poems coil around me like a marching
Tuba. Around my body like a metal snake.

How they blare what is true in my ears.

These are American poems.

These are beautiful brutal bloodied American
Poems.

**Poetry Review: Graham
Barnhart's THE WAR MAKES
EVERYONE LONELY**



1.

The book arrives. By mail and on the cover. There are clouds.

Gray clumped in altostratus heaps. A military helicopter headed.

Into thick sky that stretches off. The bottom right hand corner of cardstock.

Or how the title. *The War Makes Everyone Lonely* makes me think of 2007.

How my husband deployed to Afghanistan. And how lonely we both were.

When he came home.

2.

Graham Barnhart's poems are about war.

What war is.

What war is not.

Like clouds his poems
gather.

3.

There is a musicality to them. Barnhart's poems.

The transformer outside his sister's house –

still humming somehow

(Everything In Sunlight I Can't Stop Seeing)

How the hum makes memory.

Reminds Barnhart of war –

electricity quieting in the wire when the sun

scrapes its knee bloody up the mosque steps

(Everything In Sunlight I Can't Stop Seeing)

Or how. When he was at war. For Barnhart –

every insect droning is a cicada

(Unpracticed)

4.

Or bullets. How –

Bitterness sounds like this: steel-tongued

cascades pouring out by the handful.

(Range Detail)

5.

At home there is. A child playing an oboe.

Through a window and after.

After Barnhart comes home from war dull.

Growing dull or the music of it.

Human breath pushing down an oboe's neck.

Blast of sound. How the boy –

he sounds like a robot learning to speak,

but now and then an almost "Ode to Joy"

or "Lean on Me" outlines itself, and I forget

I am going to die.

(Belated Letter To My Grandmother)

6.

Barnhart's poems are electric.

Like voltage in a box. Or moving down a wire.

How it is this constant current.

The persistent hum of still being alive.

And then the jolts. When you remember.

7.

Remember yes.

Writing to his grandmother a letter about the letters
he never wrote.

While he was away. How Barnhart writes –

to say yes

yes, the guns were loud –

loud like gods applauding

(Belated Letter To My Grandmother)

8.

But most of all there is tension.

Tension in Barnhart's poems.

9.

Tension between war and home. Between remembering war and leaving it behind or how –

Flashbacks

don't announce themselves.

It takes so little.

(Everything In Sunlight I Can't Stop Seeing)

In one poem, Barnhart is flooded with it.

Memory of barracks and army green wool.

White sheets. Film reel dark rooms.

Passing moon.

The fire watch and screams. Of a drill sergeant.

How Barnhart writes –

*I told her all of this when she found me
standing in the bedroom doorway.*

(Somnambulant)

10.

The tension is a distance. Between
what happened and how he cannot
describe it. Or regret. When he does –

*Behind headlights growing darker
night against the snow, I regret saying
kind of like Afghanistan aloud
with my mother and grandmother
in the otherwise silent heat of the car
(Sewing)*

11.

In Barnhart's poems, there is a sense that
coming home from war is displacement or
this placement outside of time. How –

*tree branches, black
in the dawn sky, resume their grays and browns
by lunch. The black wrought fences continue
leaning into their rust, rigid and failing
(Everything In Sunlight I Can't Stop Seeing)*

Everything remains. Goes on.

And Barnhart writes –

there

is no war in this but me.

(Everything in Sunlight I Can't Stop Seeing)

12.

Or the tension between what is real
and what is not. How there is training
for war. Watching grainy videos of men
over there. Placing bombs. Or defecating
under almond trees. Set to pop music.

Only to emerge in America –

sunbright Texas

tobacco juice hissing on the tarmac.

(Capabilities Brief)

13.

How soldiers play *Call of Duty*. To pass time.

This game of war. Where –

*Rifles were weightless. Bombs fell with nothing
close to oversight. Injuries meant
heavy breathing –*

a red-tinged screen.

(Medics Don't Earn Killstreaks)

But in a video game, war is fiction. And unreal.

How –

there's no difference between urgent and expectant.

No need to estimate under fire

the percentage of a body burned.

How much fluid to administer. How much per hour

they should piss out. No need to pull the bodies to cover.

They disappear without you

checking their pulse.

(Medics Don't Earn Killstreaks)

14.

And the unreality of war is not limited to what is virtual.

Barnhart describes an army recruiting advertisement.

A child hugging a soldier. Her brother or her father.

How the word *army* is used five times. *Strong* six.

But there is little war. How there are no –

piles of feet

on airport roads

and no one assigned to shovel them.

(Notice and Focus Exercise)

And –

No blistered trigger fingers.

No depressions in quiet skulls

(Notice and Focus Exercise)

15.

In Barnhart's poems, war is –

Another year refusing water to children.

When they made the universal gesture for thirst

along roadsides you wouldn't stop.

(Days of Spring, 2016)

It is bombs –

*A bombing at the gate before you arrived
was just a story you knew about rubble.*

(Days of Spring, 2016)

It is guards at a gate –

hired to die so you wouldn't when another bomb came.

(Days of Spring, 2016)

16.

Barnhart's poetry acknowledges militarism.

Acknowledges aggression.

The physicality of deployment.

Occupying space in a country

that is not your own.

Barnhart remembers arriving in a village

raided by American soldiers. Arriving and –

Dressed

like the men who killed

their

husbands, we passed out sewing machines

to

widows so they could make clothes

for their children and embroider cemetery flags.

(Sewing)

17.

Or in Iraq. Dinner with a man who called himself. King of Kawliya.

Who fed them meat peeled from goat bones.

How they fed each other from their hands.

Barnhart writes –

I remember my fingernail

against a man's lip .

(Shura)

Or how later –

the women who had prepared our food

and waited with their children for us to finish

were given to eat what we had left.

(Shura)

18.

There is leaving in Barnhart's poems.

War and

what it leaves behind.

Remembering transitioning a village, Barnhart writes –

all the small corners in that small base

were pulled open. Picked blessedly clean.

Before our dust-wake settled, no stone,

if we had stacked it, was left standing on another

(How to Transition a Province)

This is the tension.

Between going to war but not staying.

Between leaving a mark and wanting

to leave nothing at all.

And the complicity when it is not possible.

19.

Barnhart remembers H.E. rounds. Their smoke and

dust. How –

illuminate

shells – packed light and smoke

and

shot too low – drop phosphorous

*through
civilian fields we aren't
supposed
to burn, so we wait down
the cease-fire in the bus that brought us.
(Indiana-Stan)*

There is privilege in leaving. Because –

*Over there, if the wheat
or poppy crops catch, we can leave
those fires as soon as they start.
(Indiana-Stan)*

20.

This is the complexity of going to war.

21.

When imagining himself on a dating site.

And choosing a profile picture.

Barnhart writes –

*Hope it all says: confident
and responsible.*

As an aggressor

aware of his complicity.

(Tinder Pic)

He acknowledges –

there will be left swipes

for that arrogance.

For trying to play imperialist

and dissenter without seeming too

patriotic or worse –

apathetic. Naïve or too reckless.

Unwary and soon to explode

(Tinder Pic)

22.

This is the complicity of it.

23.

Or how

because. Because Barnhart is a medic. D18.

U.S.

Army Special Forces Medic. There is a tension.

Between going to war and going to war as a medic.

24.

How the word medic in Latin.

Mederi

Means to heal.

25.

During
deployment, Barnhart works with a physical therapist –

*learning
to scrape sore tissue*

*with
a slice of machined steel*

*curves
to match the shape of the musculature.*

*Like
a cradle or scythe, you said to no one*

(Days of Spring, 2016)

In
Barnhart's poems. This is the tension.

How
he is both. A cradle. And a scythe.

He writes

–

And that was how morning found you,

sometimes

a cradle, sometimes a scythe

(Days of Spring, 2016)

26.

But out

of it. Out of this complexity of war.

The

complicity of it. Comes Barnhart's poems.

Like

the purple loosestrife he describes. That

grows

at the prison near Mazar-i-Sharif –

gathered

trembling

against the walls

(Tourists)

27.

Barnhart

imagines himself –

a glowing green eye in a gargoyle mass.

(0300)

28.

He
describes going to see an informant.

How
he is remembering the man and his cell phone video –

Hacksaw tugging neck skin.

*The careful
way you spoke in English*

*my
uncle, my brother, my uncle's son. Your
finger*

*touching
each shemagh-wrapped face.*

*The
one you couldn't name I knew was you*

(Informant)

Or how
Barnhart's poetry is like this.

How in
his telling it. He straddles worlds.

Reveals
secrets. Identifies himself. And

invites

the reader. To find themselves.

29.

The
war. The war stretches on like sky.

Across
countries and deployments.

How this
war does not ever end.

30.

Because how many years ago. When I stood on that corner
watching.

As a plane
hit the first tower. And a plane hit the second tower. Fire.

Or
people clinging to the metal. Slipping and jumping and falling
and

how
the two towers crashed down.

31.

There is a poem about post 9/11 tear gas training.

Words *PRO PATRIA MORI* in red.

Above a cement hut door. *To die for your country.*

Or how. After. Barnhart writes –

*Somehow
outside, somehow after*

*on my
knees with everyone else, purging
years
of sediment phlegm from scraped alveoli,*

*I saw
the line waiting to go in, heard
the
men behind me learning to drown.*

*Learning
to breathe that evil pure as air.*

*Motes
of gas, like dust in sunlight,
wafted
from the exit labeled DULCE ET*

(Post 9/11 Gas Training (II))

32.

How
many. Soldiers have gone to war. Gone to
war
post 9/11 and how many have come home.

And how
many.

How
many dreamed of its *sweetness*.

33.

There
is a futility.

Poems
about training and more

training
or the feeling that it may

not
matter.

34.

Barnhart writes –

Today
I can deadlift four-oh-five.

When
I can move four-ten it will

not
stop a bullet or

the
overpressure of a bomb

(Cultivating Mass)

There is a sense of inevitability.

Because

—

A

tourniquet will work

*unless
it doesn't*

(How To Stop the Bleeding)

35.

Language
is questioned.

Its
privilege. How Barnhart inscribes diplomas in Pashtu.

Only
to be told. By the Major. To write them in English —

*The
Pashtu,*

*he said,
is lovely*

but unofficial.

(Certificates of Training)

36.

Or the
task of announcing he will deploy again.

How Barnhart
imagines his words as bats. How –

*I'll
probably just open my mouth,
wait for something to fly out
(Telling You I Will Deploy Again)*

Or when the words don't come.

Barnhart describes hitting them
with a racket.

Scoops and sloughs them outside.

And –

Regretting,

*only
a little, the need, the abrupt*

*cessation
of a fragile thing,*

*that terrible
satisfaction, even*

*with
these apologies hanging limp,
crumpled in the rhododendrons.*

(Telling You I Will Deploy Again)

37.

In
trying to describe to his father –

*the
dull machine chunk*

*of a
rifle's sear reset between rounds*

(What Being In The Army Did)

Graham
offers –

*maybe
there is no word*

(What Being In The Army Did)

Just
space.

Air
between bars. Distance between keys.

To
which his father replies –

*No,
he said,*

*there
is definitely a word*

(What Being In The Army Did)

38.

And
Graham questions poetry.

Remembering
a photograph of two dead bodies.

Men wrapped and left on a dirt field. Barnhart writes –

bodies

*sloughed
in a field then photographed.*

*In
their repose*

*deserving
more than this poem*

*and
its portions*

*of
sky framed by power lines.*

*(Deserving
(II))*

39.

Of
course. Loneliness is this.

This
futility. The question.

Of
whether anything makes a difference.

Or if
words are enough.

40.

But
in Barnhart's poems. His words
are
the answer. The raveled call to
prayer.
Or his surprise to see a boy –

kneeling beside his bucket to kiss the dirt.

*(Call
to Prayer)*

The shared
humanity of experience.

Even
in war. Even in our loneliness.

41.

In
his poems, Barnhart sews together.

The pieces
of war. Memory. Leaving

and coming
home. What it means to

fight
a war and care for its wounded.

42.

He
describes history as a skeleton –

each city suturing

new skin to the skeleton.

(Pissing in Irbil)

Or
how his poems are flesh.

Attaching
themselves to the

skeleton
of what happened.

Wrapping
bone in meaning.

43.

At a poetry
reading, Barnhart sees a bee
dragged
by a spider. As the poet who is
reading
says –

*Those
with the time*

*for
poetry don't deserve it*

*(Deserving
(I))*

Barnhart wonders –

*The
poetry or the time*

*(Deserving
(I))*

44.

I am
not certain we deserve either.

But,
as I read Barnhart's *The War Makes Everyone Lonely*,

I am
grateful.

Grateful
for both.

New Poetry from Amalie Flynn: “Celebrate”



TREE / SKIN / BONE *image by Amalie Flynn*
1.

Celebrate them.

2.

Celebrate the soldier who went to war

Just to kill.

This soldier accused of shooting and

Killing civilians. How the men from

His own platoon. They say *he did it.*

He shot civilians. He shot at civilians.

Shot a girl in Iraq in a flowered hijab

In her stomach.

Blooming wound. Like a daisy eye or

Hole in her gut. How he shot an old

Unarmed man dead. His white robe

Drenched red. The stain a spreading

Blood sun.

And they say they saw him. Saw him

Kill a teenager.

An ISIS fighter. Wounded and waiting

For a medic on the dirt floor in Mosul.

How they say the soldier said

Lips into a radio

Don't touch him.

Because *he's mine.*

Before driving his knife deep and deep.

Hunting knife

Into the boy's neck. Through skin and

Muscle. Tissue and ligaments an artery.

3.

Or how

There is a photograph.

The soldier squatting in the sand.

Full battle rattle next to the ISIS boy.

His dead body. Face up. Arms bare.

Calves exposed. His legs sprawled.

And the soldier. How he has the boy.

His hair. Gripped in the fist. And he is

Yanking. Yanking him. The boy's head.

His face up. For the camera.

How in the photograph.

The boy is dead.

And the soldier is smiling.

Because the boy is not a boy.

He is *deer kill*.

3.

Celebrate him.

Celebrate that soldier and the way it felt

When he held that soft sweat tuft of

Human hair.

Between his thumb and fingers like.

Like feathers.

4.

And why. *Why stop there?*

How there are more. More soldiers

5.

Soldiers who stood over dead bodies

On a video. Standing over the dead

Bodies of Taliban fighters they killed.

Killed in war in Afghanistan.

How the soldiers exposed their penises

And urinated on the bodies. Urinating

On the dead bodies or how

They are laughing.

Celebrate them. Celebrate those soldiers.

Celebrate how they felt when that stream

Of urine. Their urine.

Hit the men. Hit the dead bodies. Hit dead

Legs and dead torsos. Dead faces. Splashing

Open dead eyes. Into dead mouths.

Celebrate how.

How it felt. When their urine

Filled the dead men's nostrils.

6.

Celebrate Abu Ghraib.

Celebrate that it happened. Celebrate

Soldiers who stripped prisoners naked.

Raped them with truncheons. Strapped

Dog collars around their necks. Soldiers

Who dragged men on leashes like they

Were dogs. Who placed bags over heads.

Made men stand on boxes with wires

And electrodes attached to fingers and

Skin. Soldiers. Soldiers. Soldiers who

Tortured men.

Soldiers who piled men. Piled men up

And into contorted piles. These piles

Of tortured human flesh.

7.

Celebrate them.

8.

Celebrate all the soldiers who do it. Who

Do things like this.

Celebrate them even though. Even though

The military is filled and filled and filled

With soldiers who

Would never. Who never do these things.

9.

Just don't say. It is because

They did nothing wrong.

Don't say. Don't say *they didn't do it.*

10.

Celebrate them because you know.

You know they did.

11.

Celebrate them because you like it.

Poetry Review: Aaron Graham's BLOOD STRIPES



1.

I'm reading Aaron Graham's war poetry. And I think *violence is a volcano*.

How pressure builds. Between layers of rock. Trapped in a chamber. Or when magma pushes. Fissures like rivers. Up through the upper mantle. Finding surface. How it erupts. Spews hot lava and ash. How bodies can blow. Apart and across a desert named Fallujah. Hurtling and pyroclastic. Or the aftermath.

Graham's poems remind me.

How war is.

2.

This is Graham's Iraq.

Come see the valley –

the death-cradle of civilization

(Boots On The Ground)

Iraq is where war is. Where Graham was. Deployed as a Marine. It is where I find him now. A soldier narrator. On the pages of [*Blood Stripes*](#), his debut poetry collection. It is where his poems take me. To Iraq where. Violence erupts and

shells of men are spit out

(Boots on the Ground)

To Iraq where. Skies are shrapnel

whose maw expands in the air

teeth like flame plumes

scorching gouts

(Boots on the Ground)

To Iraq where. Soldiers learn

fresh-burnt flesh

smells like roast beef

(Since Shit Went Sideways)

To Iraq where. There are
limbless boys
whose beautiful bodies
collided on football fields
in Iowa not six months before

(Boots on the Ground)

To Iraq where. Where
infantrymen are now the law
and the law is a pack of white dogs
hunting high-value targets
covering bearded brown faces
with black bags

(Since Shit Went Sideways)

To Iraq where. Children die and
There are bullets in young Sunni boys
mothers must take to a morgue

(Conjunctivitis)

Where the question. This question
did I bury a Sunni girl no larger than my arm?

(Marine Corps Leadership Training)

Dares to exist. This is Graham's Iraq. Where bullets pierce organs and

When a tracer round

becomes a collapsed lung

(Marine Corps Leadership Training)

How

breath

becomes a sparrow flapping

(Marine Corps Leadership Training)

Graham's poetry makes me think of J.G. Ballard. How he [said](#) *our civilization is like the crust of lava spewed from a volcano. It looks solid, but if you set foot on it, you feel the fire.* Graham's poems are full of fiery war. The violence of its eruptions. Graham's words forcing themselves up the throat of a volcano. Exploding like lava onto a page.

3.

Graham writes violence as a woman. How even before. War or enlistment. There is a craving

Until bent and jointed,

I hung

Between your breasts

(Midnight Runner)

Or how at war. Violence becomes anatomical. Between fingers.
Coating tongue and gums. How

with each trigger pull

until death is a second skin to me,

is the film I rub

between my index and forefinger –

a charnel film I grind against

the backs of my front teeth with a raw

and bleeding tongue

(The Situation on the Ground)

And how after war. How it never goes away. Graham writes

I wear my violent acts

like a hand knit cap – reserved like a fossil fuel

a blubber slice

(Repatriation)

Graham writes of the aftermath. How after the eruption. Lava
will flow. How even after. War can push into a house. Seep
into a marriage. How

I tell her there are things you know only

*after you've seen combat, there exists depths,
intimacies, I cannot will into existence
even when in her arms*

(The Curse of a Hammer, About to Drop)

Magma cools and hardens. Forms new igneous rock and PTSD. How
*Your curse is the hammer about to drop –
hyper-vigilance. Doors you always lock
when you're on the wrong side*

(The Curse of a Hammer, About to Drop)

For Graham PTSD becomes its own violence. One that violates
but also beckons. Graham writes

I give thanks to the dead

(Marine Corps Leadership Training)

And. How it is

Because so many of the dead

they're always here

at the table

I've set,

like a mother's breast

(Marine Corps Leadership Training)

Graham's poems tell a truth about war. Its intimacy. How
there's nothing as intimate as bleeding
with those men in the desert. A devotion
you'll never share with a lover, child, or spouse

(The Curse of a Hammer, About to Drop)

War is not just what happens on the battlefield. War is what happens after. What keeps happening. To the soldiers who fight it. The civilians who survive it. After deployment is done. Armored trucks move out. Or a soldier goes home. Graham's poems offer us the aftershocks of what explodes. And the truth. The truth that. For those it touches. War does not end.

4.

In Graham's poems, the landscape haunts. Graham writes
I know my way around velvet

(Marine Corps Leadership Training)

How the air in Iraq is alive and cellular.

Electrons sway like the boiled wool
hides – hanging in Yezidi doorways

(Marine Corps Leadership Training)

Landscape is a language. The shape of it shapes meaning. On the pages of *Blood Stripes*. The desert stretches. Almost endlessly. Across Graham's poems. Across a war. Across all

wars. Years that span a history that can feel ancient. Endless
like a horizon line or how

Still the magnitude hits.

A thousand years stretch

down this street

(Mythos (Deployment))

But Graham's landscape is not endless. This is a landscape
marked by war.

The golden sands

that appear

a cold dark green

an eternal crystalline lawn

surveyed by rifle scopes

(Funeral Pyre)

Here is the desert. Where war and dunes heave. Like dying
lungs.

This is Graham's Iraq. How it seems endless. And how. It is
also a place of endings. A landscape cropped by the
circumference of a rifle scope. Cropped by what happens when.
Bullets tear through a chest wall. And hit heart.

This is the striking duality of Graham's landscape. Because

the cost of invasion is

how something beyond

fathom is lost

or, rather –

comes to end

(Sandscape: Mojave Viper)

This is where. The desert nurtures.

Iraq sand holds your face –

like friends and family used to

(Repatriation)

And this is where war also takes and takes. Until everything
is gone or dead. How

in deep deserts

there is only

the abrupt – blast –

cracked windshields

and punctured MRAP

husks. Their rhinoceros bodies –

(Footfalls)

This is where soldiers patrol streets alive. But almost dead.

We trod the pavement on dead

patrol. Deep desert has no edge.

*Our third day over the line
outside the wire
horizons merge, a cusp
of bright sky bleeds into earth
where being and not
being
touch impossibly*

(Footfalls)

Graham's poems offer us the duplicity of war. It is the craving and the curse. The eternal and the instantaneous. The invigorating and the deadly. And when soldiers are lucky to live through it. War is a landscape they leave behind. Before realizing they took it home with them.

5.

There is a tension. In Graham's poems.
Of whether to tell his story of war. Or not to.

*I pulled back from the vastness
where nothing needs
– and does not need –
to be written*

*(Sandscape: Dunes Overlooking Balboa Naval
Hospital)*

There is the question of how to write war. Because

Violence has a language all its own

(The Language of Violence)

There is a feeling. How war is

Just us bleeding in the desert

(Ode to a Wishing Well)

And that no one. No one else will understand.

Because. Americans do not know war. How they

probably learned

the words that describe

what happens to Marines

in the desert by watching

Anderson Cooper's lips –

round words

(Speaking Arabic with a Redneck Accent)

War for civilians is somewhere else. A running body of chyron.

About a third of the way into *Blood Stripes*. On page 32. A poem entirely in Arabic. I make a list of who I know who speaks Arabic or how. I decide not to. Decide not to try to find out what it says. What the words mean. Because the poem speaks to me in Arabic. How I can read it in Arabic. Even

though. Or because I do not know. What it says.

This is a truth of war. It belongs to those who fight it. The land it is fought on. The civilians who endure its wrath. How there are parts of it. Parts of war. That are hard to translate.

Still Graham does it. In poem after poem. He writes war. He writes war in its own language. Where

a statement is a scar

(The Language of Violence)

Where

The voice of the wound

has a flickering tongue

its syllables escape

with fine bits of lung –

falling wet, into sand

(Speaking Arabic with a Redneck Accent)

And where. A Syrian amputee standing on a road speaks. Speaking in scars

the sacred scars,

which are a language

I can read to you at night

(The Language of Violence)

When Graham writes

how to sing bombs out of the air?

How deep to listen?

(Repatriation)

This is the task. The poetic task Graham takes on. Arming himself with words and war memories.

The result is *Blood Stripes*. And war. Written into being in Graham's poems.

Vivid and startling and forceful.

6.

I wake up thinking about Baudrillard.

And how [*The Gulf War Did Not Take Place.*](#)

It happened obviously. But it was something else. Something other than what we thought it was. Different from what we were told.

For Baudrillard. The Gulf War was a series of atrocities. Not a war. The Gulf War was a performance of war. Not a war. The Gulf War was a media narrative constructed. Not a war. Where even the word fighting defied its own definition. As Iraqis got bombed by Americans flying in a technological sky. For Baudrillard. The Gulf War was hyperreal. A simulacrum. It was a not-war war.

And yes Iraq.

How the Iraq War was like this too.

A war. Where American soldiers went. Because of *weapons of mass destruction*. To look for *weapons of mass destruction*.

That did not exist. How the war they thought they were fighting. Was a war that did not happen.

And yet. Graham.

He writes

dry bodies

bloating and broiling

fattening in the desert

(Marine Corps Leadership Training)

How he writes

the purple lips of a wound

(Speaking Arabic With A Redneck Accent)

And I think to myself *there. There it is.*

Because war is not what our country tells us it is. War is what happens. To the soldiers who fight it. To the civilians. To the men and women and children and land it surrounds and engulfs and assaults. To the ripped bodies and roads. Roads of sun and bones it leaves behind. To everyone who carries it after. To everyone who carries war for days and weeks and months and years after. Long after we say *it is done.*

The Iraq War happened.

I know it did.

And not because my country told me it did.

But because it is there. Because I felt it. In the viscerally

powerful poems of Graham's *Blood Stripes*.

—

Blood Stripes is available for [purchase](#) at your local independent bookstore or wherever books are sold.

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.

Amalie Flynn

October 2018

New Poetry by Amalie Flynn



POLLINATE

When I dream about the words

They fall from the sky. Dropped

From planes that hover and the

Words are dropping and dropping.
In clusters. And again and. Again.
How the words are dropping. Like
Bombs.

I wake up my husband. Shake his
Shoulder. Our two children. How
I shake their shoulders and we go
Outside. To watch the words fall.
Stand feet bare on grass. And we
Look up. At a sky full of munition.
How it stretches as far as it goes.
The sky full of words falling. Falling
On us. Falling on this town.

And the letters bend and curl. How
The arc of the stems twist in the air.
Crotch and vertex. The descenders.
As the letters fall down. The letters
Of the words. This typography of
The words we use now. Hear now.
Here in America.

And the words are hitting. Hitting
Our house. How the children are
Covering their heads with hands.
With letters and syllables slapping
A roof. The word *liberal*. The word
Fascist. Hitting and again. *Liberal*
And *fascist*. How *liberal fascist* hits
Until the house is covered. A *liberal*
Fascist hanging. Closed bowl of the
Letter *b* split and hanging from a
Gutter. Or how *merit-based* falls.
Hits the ground. Making explosion
Craters in our backyard. How the
Word *elitist* floats. How there are
Elitists in the swimming pool.

Down the street. All over this town.
The word *liar* hangs from the trees.
Dud bombs that are quiet. Hanging
Like leaves. Or ready to detonate.
And the word *white* sprays down.

Pelts down. Followed by silence.

And then *power*. How the words
White and *power* fall down onto
This town.

A canister opens and releases the
Word *globalist*. How *globalist* hits
The synagogue. Hits the synagogue
And hits it and hits it again. Over the
Mosque words fall down. A fleet of
Terrorists attack a mosque. How
The words *terrorist* and *ISIS* and
Radical Islamic terrorism attack a
Mosque. Leaving holes in a wall
That faces Makkah.

And under the lights on a football
Field some men kneel. Their heads
Bowed. With the word *ungrateful*
Wrapping around their necks like
Snakes. Or other men. Kneeling
In a church. Who pray and use

Words like *our manifest destiny*

And *this Christian nation.*

Across the fields. Where berries

Grow. But no one comes to pick

Them. No one comes. Because

They are scared of ICE and the

Roundups. How the fields are

Littered with overripe berries

And land mines made out of

The word *illegal* and *rapist* or

Drug dealing murderer. And in

The lakes. In the rivers. Which

Are drying up. Where fish and

Bacteria die. In the warm ocean.

How the word *fake* floats.

Over neighborhoods where every

Day is a day of guns and bullets

And broken dead bodies. Over

The schools. The schools that

Have been lucky. Where there

Has not been a mass shooting.
Where a man with an assault rifle
Has not forced his way in and shot
All the children dead. Over these
Schools. And over the schools that
Were not lucky. How the words.
The words *thoughts and prayers*
Are falling down from the sky.

And in this driveway I am holding
My husband's hand. Because his
Car is buried. Buried deep under
The word *unpatriotic*. And he is.
He is shaking his head in disbelief.
Saying *how*. How he loves this
Country. Went to war for it. How
He would go again and again or
How I tell him *I know*. Because
The words *liberal elite* gather
At my feet. A ring of *socialists*
Like land mines sunk into the
Ground.

And my youngest son. Who has
A disability. Who cannot vocalize
A lot of words. He is running under
The words as they fall from the sky.
And he is laughing. As if the words
Are fireflies. His hands flying up. Into
The air to catch them. Or how we
Are chasing after him. But he reaches
And grabs the words in his fist. And
I am still running. Calling to him or
Saying to him *no* and *no*. How *those*
Words are not for you. The words
Burden on the system which are
Caught in his hands like fireflies.

How I am peeling his hands open.
And my husband is saying *please*.
To our son. And *give them to me*.
Or our oldest son. How he is telling
His brother. Saying over and over.
How *none of those words are true*.

And I use my hands to dismantle it.
A phrase that is not. Not for him.
And I am jumbling all of the letters.
Sweeping some away. And making
New words. Words like *bud* or *stem*.
Things that grow.

And I make the word *bee*.

How I hand it to him. Hand him *bee*.
And I am kneeling in dirt next to him.
My son. Who is holding a *bee*. And
I am telling him about pollination.
How the bees are pollinators. How
They pollinate flowers and plants
And crops. And how we need them.
How our existence depends on the
Bees. Because *without the bees*
I say. *Things would collapse*. And
I reach my hand out. Touch his cheek.
And I say *bee*. How *this word*

The one that *the world needs*.

How *this word is for you*.