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HOME ALONE

IT IS ADMITTEDLY crude to call a country stupid. It may not even be valid, but so long as we accept that polls venture into the vicinity of some collective truth in virtually every other area of life, then recent surveys reporting that Americans favour sending troops back into Iraq by 57 (CBS) or 60 (Fox) or 62 per cent (Quinnipiac University) indicate that a great slab of the United States is indeed stupid, and getting more so by the minute. In the Quinnipiac poll, the latest of the three, 69 per cent of voters also said they were confident that the US and whatever alliance it might cobble together would be victorious in Iraq and Syria. Washington may not be so confident, but Republican presidential hopefuls are with increased thunder reviving the old mantra of ‘taking the fight to the terrorists’. And the corporate media, which in 2013 spoke solemnly of ‘a war-weary nation’ and last year lured customers with desert beheadings, are advancing a predictable path to mindless amnesia. ‘Americans aren’t very war-weary anymore’, *The Washington Post* announced online in February. A month later the liberal television network MSNBC used almost identical language: ‘War-weariness fades; most Americans support ISIS ground war.’

Meanwhile, the tiniest minority of the population—about 0.16 per cent by standard measures—is so weary, so lacerated, so hyper-acute to the realities of war that its members cannot sleep, function, or, often, bear to go on living. These are the soldiers who have fought the long wars and been diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Their relatively small number, generally placed at 500,000, bulks larger when seen as a percentage of all troops deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan—they are an estimated 20 to 30 per cent of the total—and when the multiplier effect of parents, spouses, lovers, children and others implicated in their lives is taken into consideration. It is also an undercount. It does not reflect the nature of PTSD, whose fullest impact can be delayed. It does not include those wracked by memories of prior wars, or those suffering secretly. At

least half the 2.7 million soldiers who have been in Iraq and Afghanistan have never sought evaluation or treatment. The mental wounds of war are a stigma. They also present an excruciating paradox: the soldiers are in real pain, sick with guilt and rage and, for the sake of themselves and others, in urgent need of relief; yet the society that defines normalcy in the popular, if not therapeutic, imagination is vapid, remote, unserious, irresponsible. ‘Normal’ isn’t very war-weary anymore. What rational person, what moral soul, would wish to be normal then?

Traumatic weariness is not, in any conventional sense, heroic. It is not particularly attractive. It does not satisfy the appetite for dramatic story-telling. We remember Achilles’s savagery more than his torpor, Odysseus’s cleverness and adventure more than his tears, US Navy SEAL Chris Kyle’s unmatched kill record and racism—especially evident in *American Sniper*, his autobiography—more than his unravelling. David Finkel won acclaim and a MacArthur genius grant following his 2009 book *The Good Soldiers*, about the experience of an infantry battalion out of Fort Riley, Kansas, sent to Iraq in 2007 as part of the surge. Steven Spielberg bought the rights to the 2014 sequel, *Thank You for Your Service*, which tracks some of the same soldiers and their families trying to survive the ‘after-war’, but the movie project has been held up: not enough action, it’s been rumoured. It is a better book than its predecessor, a harder book. Reading it is an act of endurance. Its violence does not have the *frisson* of embedded war reporting, whose events have a beginning and an end, and which tends to redeem the terrible acts of the band of brothers while placing the terrible acts of their enemy beyond explanation. Violence here, and in Laurent Bécue-Renard’s recent documentary *Of Men and War*, is embedded in the soldier’s being, an emotional EFP, waiting, exploding anywhere and in every direction, again and again and again.

The term ‘Thank You for Your Service’ developed early on in the long wars. Like ‘Support the Troops’, it was a way for a sheltered people to perform unity. In towns across America yellow ribbons, yellow lawn signs, balloons and car decals sprouted like team colours on game day. War would be a sport, the people spectators, and ‘Thank you for your service’ the high-five to combatants after quick and decisive victory. When that proved a vain hope, team spirit settled into the rhythms of commerce. ‘Support the Troops’ appeared the way ‘Buy American’ once

had—a slogan on shop windows, billboards, bumper stickers. War was an enterprise, security its product, the people consumers, the soldiers trained workers and ‘Thank you for your service’ a kind of tip. As the enterprise (though hardly the business) failed, the signs faded, sometimes replaced by an image of folded hands, ‘Pray for Our Troops’. War had become a problem, the soldiers exhausted, the people clueless and ‘Thank you for your service’ a bit of empty etiquette, or a penance. By the time Finkel was writing, what remained among civilians was a desire to move on, and among soldiers, bitterness. ‘They wouldn’t be fucking thanking me if they knew what I did’, many would say, in almost exactly the same words.

Finkel, a *Washington Post* reporter, is masterful at conveying the absurdity and pathos of the moment. His Pulitzer Prize-winning series on the efforts of one foreign service agent to realize George W. Bush’s policy of ‘exporting democracy’ to Yemen in 2005 was a tale of good intentions (the agent’s) and false fronts (both governments’), of money, danger and overlapping crises. *The Good Soldiers* was a tale of a lost war. Both may be read as episodes in the history of an empire on the rocks, but what their author believes about those imperial projects beyond the absurdity that he shows—whether he thinks American adventures in the Middle East are simply misguided, or thwarted by unworthy foreign partners, or executed by inept civilian leadership, or rooted in a larger, longer strategy of domination and exploitation—he doesn’t let on.

In interviews since the publication of *Thank You for Your Service*, Finkel has been at pains to say that not all soldiers are broken by war; most readjust and do fine. He wants to acknowledge Americans’ collective responsibility for those who are not fine, but otherwise, he has said, the book is ‘agenda-free’. That is not exactly true, since there is a default politics in accepting war as an eternal fact and militarism as an essential feature of US policy and culture, as he does. The book and everyone in it are silent on the politics of the war, and how it inflects the after-war. That, too, is a political decision. But then, as lived by Finkel and the soldiers to whom he entrusted himself for eight months, the war was felt to be outside politics, with no logic or argument, only fear and heartbreak and the effort to survive: or as he writes, ‘over time the war came to mean less and less until it meant nothing at all, and meanwhile the other soldiers meant more and more until they came to mean everything.’

And so *Thank You for Your Service* is a book about what happens when meaning vanishes; when the soldiers disperse and their experience of extremity collides with the intimate and social politics of home.

Danny Holmes returned from the surge with a set of photographs that were supposed to be classified but which he had anyway, in a computer file named Iraq/Graphic. They documented a day in the war that has become notorious because of a grainy video posted on Wikileaks: the day a Reuters photographer, his assistant and seven other people were blown apart by Apache helicopter fire. Danny was among the troops on the ground that day, and his pictures, Finkel writes, were taken for after-action reports:

Heads half gone, torsos ripped open, spreading blood, insides outside.

Close-ups, auto-focused, sunshine lighting, perfect colour.

The war, in other words, as it was experienced by the soldiers who were in it and asking what had happened to Harrelson [who burned alive] and wondering after a mortar attack if anything might be sticking out of their heads.

Danny's girlfriend, Shawnee, would find him twitching sometimes, staring at those pictures on the computer. She was nineteen when they met, after he'd come home. He was thirty. He told her war stories, terrible ones, funny ones. After their daughter was born, the story he told most was of killing an Iraqi man who was shooting with one arm and holding a little girl in the other. Danny had to shoot, and killed them both; now 'I see children everywhere', he told her. His fellow soldiers say it never happened. It happened for Danny. He became increasingly lost; she urged him to get help—an old story. On the last day of his life she'd made plans to go out with friends at night. 'I need to talk', he said that morning, but she had laundry to do, then tanning; 'I gotta talk' . . . 'I gotta talk', while she cleaned the house, washed the car, showered and got ready to go. She drank too much that night, got pulled over, went to jail and came home at dawn to find her man hanged on the staircase. Shawnee was twenty-one by then, with a baby and no money and no job. A woman just trying to cope, and now with nightmares of her own, she might have been any American on that day full of distractions, and Danny any haunted soldier.

Danny probably did not figure in official statistics of soldiers suffering from PTSD. Having never got help, he wouldn't have been diagnosed.

But as the officers who meet every month in the Pentagon to review the latest suicides have found, diagnosis and treatment are not guarantees against the final annihilation. Soldier suicide has been in the news for years, more prominently now that the number dead by their own hand, just over 5,000, is on the verge of exceeding the number of Americans killed in the wars. Remarkably, fourteen years after ground troops were first sent to Afghanistan, there is no research combining data on suicide and combat. A study of 3.9 million US troops between 2001 and 2007 published by *JAMA Psychiatry* found high rates of suicide for all soldiers, whether they were deployed (19/100,000) or not (18/100,000).¹ It didn't distinguish combat veterans (deployed troops are not all in combat) but did find that rates in the Army and Marines were 25 per cent higher than those in the Navy and Air Force. 'We are slowly connecting the dots', Michael Schoenbaum of the National Institute of Mental Health told *The New York Times* in April.

The dots of common sense, and of history, do not require such laborious proof. Whether Americans as a whole can connect them, or choose not to, or don't care—or have accommodated to suicide, as rates for the general population have climbed, since 2000, to 13/100,000—this most-publicized domestic impact of militarism and the wars seems not to have inhibited a newfound enthusiasm for sending troops into battle. 'Boots on the ground', television pundits repeat as a prophecy waiting for fulfilment. The common observation is that the vast majority of people are simply untouched by the wars. But everyone knows of these deaths. Perhaps, as in a recent CNN special, people want to believe that the suicide problem can be licked with a few days' training in transcendental meditation, and regular application of same in war zones.

In all events, the pantomime of support, of thanks, of *a nation* at war, was never for the benefit of 'the troops' except superficially. And that superficiality—the apparent ease with which American society can switch on or off to the gravest human undertaking, its dismissal of uncomfortable facts and satisfaction with hoopla (the soldiers' surreal return to cheers, family and the strains of 'Let's Get It On'), the cavalier questions ('Did you kill someone?') and swift judgement ('You signed up for it')

¹ The retrospective study included all uniformed service personnel in both active and reserve components of the US Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, Navy and National Guard. See Mark Reger, Derek Smolenski, Nancy Skopp et al., 'Risk of Suicide Among US Military Service Members', *JAMA Psychiatry*, April 2015.

or waving away of guilt feelings ('It's not your fault!'), the weightless normalization of immorality ('Show Dem Arabs Who's Boss. Nuke 'em. Happy Thanksgiving', some Arkansas schoolchildren urged soldiers in a care package), the allergy to introspection—is at odds with the profound struggle in which many veterans are trapped.

Suicide is but the farthest end of extremity. Adam Schumann was in the furnace room of his house with a rifle in his mouth when his wife, Saskia, interrupted. He had seen a thousand days of combat in Iraq, three tours, and numerous psychiatrists and counsellors in the two years since coming home early, in a mental-health evacuation. He was known as 'a great soldier', a sergeant, and none of his troops or officers had guessed how dark his inner life had become until he could no longer hide it. Once home in Kansas he had prescriptions and programmes and a job. Each morning, as Finkel describes his rituals of alienated work, Adam swallowed antidepressants and headed to a cubicle at an Army call centre, carrying an enchilada from WalMart and a Mountain Dew for lunch, there to help retirees figure out their benefits, and wishing he could call for help himself. The first thing he did on the job was look for another job; then he tried to hold himself together one day longer:

The ringing in his right ear is particularly loud today, but not loud enough to drown out the woman two cubicles away. 'Right . . . right . . . right . . . right', she is saying into her headset, like a metronome, like a pile driver, like a car alarm, and Adam fantasizes about picking up his pencil and stabbing her in the neck.

Adam did not attack the woman at work, and did not kill himself in the basement. By chance his wife walked in; and by chance his Veterans Administration caseworker found a place for him at a treatment centre in the California Napa Valley called The Pathway Home. It helped him save his life, and is the setting for Bécue-Renard's *Of Men and War*. The film opened last year in Cannes and has had a limited distribution in the US this year. Pathway's founder and director, Fred Gusman, told me he wished it could be required viewing. He said it with no tinge of self-promotion.

At first, *Of Men and War* appears to be as artless as *Thank You for Your Service* is artful. The film opens *in medias res*—some men riding in a van; who are they? The one talking on the phone is instantly unappealing. The

van rolls on, and when it reaches its destination, a white stucco veterans' home deep in the country, there are more men but still no introductions. The viewer has, nevertheless, been drawn into the encounter. You sense, initially, their rage. You think, 'Jerk'. No doubt, they know you think that. Or you think, 'Damaged', and they know that too. You think one might want to punch you. Another just stares, hands scratching the table in front of him or rubbing up and down the sides of his thighs. Forty minutes into the film, you are still an outsider. They are still alien, but now you know why.

Bécue-Renard had earlier worked on a long documentary film project with a post-war women's therapy group in Sarajevo, *De Guerre Lasse*, (2003). He now spent six months at Pathway getting to know the patients before they agreed to let him film their Trauma Group therapy sessions for *Of Men and War*. This has never been done before; what TV news shows and other media have presented are scripted re-creations or approximations. The film proceeds slowly because the sessions do; it has abrupt breaks, tetchy squabbles, skewed perspectives and some breakthroughs for the same reason. It runs long, evoking Pathway's approach: four-month stays, which may vary depending on the individual's needs—a unique feature among the two hundred or so treatment programmes that, as Finkel writes, 'claim to help soldiers' and, if residential, have stays of four weeks, or seven, or a few days. The film involves families and the community because Pathway also does, and because the problems of a soldier's isolation are social problems. It returns to some of its protagonists five years later, for the sake of interest but also because the Pathway programme does regular check-ups. Some of those continue for years.

'What we have is embarrassing as shit', a thick, tight young white man says in the Trauma Group. 'You feel small—you feel defective.' And so it goes, and so men trained for toughness talk of being weak and scared and monstrous, or just diligent. Of working in Mortuary Affairs: 'breaking the rigour down' to get the corpse of a 19-year-old who killed himself flat enough for a body bag, or untangling the remains of a group of faceless soldiers burned in a truck who are fused 'like a bunch of rope'. They talk of their dreams, of their frightened wives. Maybe she moved out and got a restraining order before he came home, or maybe she has the divorce papers but is holding back as long as he's getting help. 'I have no clue what it's like to be a woman married to a man twice your size and that's lethal, in the military, and takes his rage out on you—

someone that's supposed to love you', a former medic says. He is slim, white, deer-like. You don't know his war story yet, and you don't know when you'll find out, if you'll find out, but you listen as he and one after another after another deals with a world of pain. And maybe men balk, and maybe they storm out of the room, and maybe Gusman, whom you've also never really met but who is always there, has to remind them that 'being a hostage to the war zone is not a life'. You follow them out of the room, taking smokes, meditating, visiting their wives or parents, calling on locals, trying to be well or pass for well, knowing they're not. You watch their children doing typical childlike things, running, laughing in a high-pitched scream, and you feel anxious for everyone in the room. You itch to get back to the Trauma Group and, amazingly, don't feel like a voyeur, because this isn't war porn; this is the shit, as they say.

It isn't beautiful or horrible, it just is. And you don't like all of these people, but that isn't the point. They are all struggling to be human again, and you have to ask yourself if you know what that means. You lose track of the time, but it's been a long while since one blustery fellow refused to speak, and now he tells a story of shooting up a family that ran a checkpoint, killing the two men, 'the breadwinners', and feeling terrible about it; trying to make amends, visiting the family, bringing money and once, thoughtlessly, asking the oldest girl what she'd like for her birthday if she could have anything. 'I want my dad back! I wish you guys would leave us alone. I wish America would leave. I hate you guys', she said. And then he pauses: 'I thought about it when I slept. I thought about it when I shit. I thought about it when I went to the shower. I thought about it when I was with my kid. I thought about it when I was making love to my wife . . . It still fucking kills you inside . . . We don't use "killed". We use "hosed", "zapped", fucking "blew up", you know? We *killed* someone's dad.'

Gusman has been at this a long time. He started the country's first residential treatment programme for veterans with post-traumatic stress in 1978, three years after the official end of the Vietnam War and two years before the condition would be given a name. He was a therapist for the Veterans Administration then, and helped lead the agency's impressive expansion of trauma services through the 1980s. He observed the health effects of the Pentagon's base-closings in the 1990s, as hospitals disappeared and programmes for active duty or reserve troops were cut. At about the same time the VA embraced the efficiencies of managed care,

meaning fewer beds, more outpatient appointments, more runaround for veterans, less time, maximum residential stays. In the 2000s Gusman was seeing soldiers' problems firsthand on military bases, and it was clear the VA wasn't ready for them. Pathway Home was a philanthropist's idea. For Gusman, it posed an opportunity to innovate in trauma therapy, 'open it up', allow people recreation (a word that was never more apt) and help them to understand their illness in the context of their lives:

Trauma is a violation of the self. How do you know who the self is if you're stuck in the moment? If you're looking at life through combat lenses? So you have to search for the whole self, who you were before the trauma. You're a whole person; to make a comeback you have to look at the positive, the negative and the questionable.

Pathway measures progress not by the state of a veteran's memories—experience can't be erased, especially after three, six, eight, ten deployments—but by the quality of his life: can he learn, can he love, can he work, can he feel empathy again? As a charity established with seed money to cover its first three years, it is independent of the VA, independent of insurance companies, which means, now, Gusman goes begging.

While *Of Men and War* was playing for one night at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, box offices across the country were continuing to go ka-ching for Clint Eastwood's film of *American Sniper*. This was at about the same time the first poll came out indicating Americans' renewed appetite for war. It is possible to watch the latter film and rue the invasion of Iraq, but from the time it opened there came reports of audiences erupting in cheers every time Kyle the sniper scored another hit. It is possible to read his book, which has sold more copies than both of Finkel's combined, as a document of the psychopathology of war, but there is no evidence that this was the author's, or publisher's, intent. It does present the disjunction between Kyle's perspective and that of his wife, Taya. She prizes love of family; he prizes what he calls 'country', which probably really means love of his fellow Navy SEALs, though the love he speaks of most is the love of war. His book is something of a manual on the work of war, and he explains the adaptation to homicide thus:

The first time you shoot someone, you get a little nervous. You think, can I really shoot this guy? Is it really okay? But after you kill your enemy, you see it's okay. You say, *Great*.

You do it again. And again. You do it so the enemy won't kill you or your countrymen. You do it until there's no one left for you to kill.

That's what war is.

I loved what I did. I still do . . . I'm not lying or exaggerating to say it was fun.

Kyle was being realistic when he wrote, 'That's what war is'. Was he healthy? The soldiers in Finkel's book who mugged for photographs with corpses or body parts in Iraq, saying, 'Cool', now say, over and over, 'What was I thinking?' That kind of 'fun' is not supposed to be part of war under the various laws of war, but those laws exist precisely because it is. (Having 'fun' was the primary outrage for which low-level military police in the Abu Ghraib scandal were prosecuted; tormenting prisoners as part of their jobs was not included in the bills of indictment.)

Killing 'until there's no one left for you to kill' is not supposed to be part of war, either. Taken literally, it means shooting the wounded, the prisoners, the civilians, in other words extermination; taken figuratively, in the argot of 'good guys and bad guys'—'savages' to Kyle—it is the stuff of blockbusters. Here, the work is uncomplicated. Every shot is justified, every corpse a savage, any after-effect ignored (ISIS?) or easily resolved. Like bad knees, bad nerves are a work-related malady. Kyle decided that the best way for wounded and mentally injured veterans to get over it was to go out on a range for shooting practice. When one such veteran, Eddie Ray Routh, a diagnosed psychotic, turned the gun on Kyle and another veteran, he was charged with capital murder. Routh was convicted in February, while *American Sniper's* revenue was on its way past the \$300 million mark. Before Routh was sentenced to life in prison, one of Kyle's SEAL friends, a decorated war hero, boasted on social media that prison inmates would know what to do with him—they would have their fun with him, in common parlance. No experts lined up to say that Kyle and his friends had been anything but normal.

'You don't ever get over killing somebody', says the combat veteran in *Of Men and War* who is trapped by the memory of ruining a family. 'You can *there* [in the war zone]', Gusman remarks, 'because you've got to function.' That exchange encapsulates the paradox of mental health in a war culture. The soldier is grounded in the insanity of war. Now returned as a veteran, he is still grounded there, but his context has changed. On paper, his words make moral and logical sense to anyone who opposes

that insanity, along with the aggression and imperial ecstasy that is said to be the mark of the patriot. To be changed by death and wrong seems healthy, or at least natural; to ‘get over it’—the phrase of the loose put-down—seems possible only with cynicism or gargantuan repression; to love it is monstrous. Early in his stay at Pathway, Adam Schumann (who is not in the film) texted his wife at 2 am:

‘I can’t sleep. All I can think of is all the death I’ve seen, caused.’

‘You didn’t cause any of it’, she writes back after a while. ‘You can’t have that kind of guilt. That’s the cost of war.’

‘Yes I did’, he replies.

Again, on paper the dialogue reads like the voice of responsibility versus that of justification. But people don’t live on paper. Like the other veterans, Adam is not well, and Saskia is not wrong that his guilt is punishing. Where every zone is a war zone, he cannot function any better in the one called home than he could in Iraq by the end. Their marriage is a ruin. A sweet guy, by all accounts, Adam nevertheless screams at her and smashes things when he isn’t just shut down. She snipes at him and can’t forgive him for everything that his coming back changed has involved, including her own transformation into a road-raging scold. Among their many dubious records, the long wars post the highest rate of domestic violence among returning veterans, as well as the highest rate of suicide. To listen to the men in Pathway’s Trauma Group—one who is zombified, one whose daughter has started hitting kids in school, one who’s scared about what he might do to his children, one who can empathize with other veterans but with nobody else—is to know that there is only danger in the overwhelming responsibility and rage that they carry.

From a therapeutic standpoint, the soldier needs to accept that, yes, he made decisions and yes, those had a cost; they were made in a circumstance when any decision was likely to have been a bad one. Now how does he understand his actions, and how does he fit the experience into a larger matrix so he can live today? ‘You can’t train people to kill people without consequences; the psychological toll is inevitable’, Gusman said when we talked. ‘But we don’t recognize it. People say, “They should be happy, they’re home, they can take showers.” The reality is this: they’re not happy and can’t be. There’s nothing new about trauma; it goes back to the ancients. But we’re not very good historians.’ And when it comes

to war and its meaning, 'We still don't get it. We have a responsibility to accept that there is a price.'

On the price in death and destruction of foreign peoples, it's as if America is a nation of Madeleine Albright: sanctions were 'worth it'; death to perhaps 500,000 Iraqi children even before the war was worth it; a world in flames was worth it, then it wasn't, now it might be again—except for certain killing zones, like Ramadi, which isn't worth fighting for after all, Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in late April. Some 9,000 Iraqis and 1,335 US troops are said to have died in the battles of Ramadi and Fallujah, in Anbar Province, between April 2004 and September 2007. The Costs of War Project based at Brown University estimates that over 50,000 combatants and perhaps 160,000 civilians have been killed by US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan so far. The wounded and mentally injured on both sides are many times those numbers. Now some in America's protected class agree with Dempsey, while others, like the right-wing columnist Cal Thomas, ask, what kind of a military it is that 'can't seem to find the will to win wars?' But in neither case is a policy position publicly conjoined with any seriousness about the historical and human costs of war. 'We didn't cause any of it' might as well be the national motto, a combination of ignorance and feigned innocence.

Thus Americans can hope that the answer to soldier suicide might be meditation. And the answer to yet another 'signature wound'—two legs blown off, with accompanying genital and pelvic mutilation—might be contracts to corporate labs to develop extra shielding for the crotch. And the answer to PTSD and traumatic brain injury might be a checklist of warning signs for soldiers to fill out before returning, and when they're home a 'Thank You for Your Service' plus a jumble of veterans programmes the rest of the country doesn't have to think about. On the left, the antiwar movement hoped the answer to perceptions of marginality might be anodyne calls to 'Support the Troops'. In the Army, reformers hoped the answer to low morale in the ranks might be an optimism programme to develop on-the-job resiliency. (It hasn't worked. Six years and \$287 million later, 403,564 active-duty, National Guard and Army Reserve troops—52 per cent of those required to answer an annual assessment—say, 'I rarely count on good things happening to me', and 48 per cent report little commitment to or satisfaction in the job.)

Americans don't, as a rule, challenge 'the job'—the professionalization of the military that has made the wars and the multiple redeployments and all that flows from them inevitable. On the actually existing American left, there has been no serious debate on, let alone demand for, a universal draft as a democratic check against offensive war. We talk against empire, but are beneficiaries of the imperial state's professional and technological adjustments to the anti-war movement's past victories. We talk about the invisible draft but, perhaps encouraged by the bravery of Iraq Veterans Against the War, still hope that soldiers whose food, clothing, shelter, families and identity depend on the job of war-fighting will mutiny en masse. We talk, from time to time, about the culture of abuse in basic training and on military posts, but are silent on the regimens of discipline that are being hyper-enforced in anticipation of downsizing, in other words layoffs. And for the one thing the military, however twistedly, provides—belonging, solidarity, a sense of honour and family-feeling as against loneliness—we have no alternatives at all.

Gusman, who thinks every American at age eighteen should be required to do some public service for two years to develop a sense of social feeling and responsibility, says that some of the soldiers and veterans with whom he works call civilians 'the stupid people'. The stupid people are abstracted, disconnected. In supermarket check-out lines they dawdle, ogle celebrity gossip rags, chitter-chat with the clerk, hunt for their money. 'They aren't ready!' the soldier/patient fumes. He is not well. Nor is the society in which he now finds himself mostly alone.