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1779

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1779: Blood

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts
Creative Writing

by

G. M. Palmer

B.A. The University of Florida, 2000

May, 2007

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For all who have lost their lives
to the greed of the state
or the carelessness of men.

1779: Blood could not have been written without the support of my family: Heather, Cordelia, and Josephine. I am indebted to the many historians who mined the richness of the Sullivan-Clinton Campaign, especially Glenn F. Williams, author of *Year of the Hangman*, whose text guided much of my feel for the political situations surrounding the campaign, and whose assistance with period illustrations helped my visual interpretation of the text; Stanley J. Adamak's "The 1779 Sullivan Campaign"; Robert Spiegelman's website sullivanclinton.org; and Donna Bluemink of rootsweb.com, whose text files of the soldier's diaries were invaluable in developing a feeling for the language and sonic landscape of Revolutionary America.

My thesis committee, whose diligence and hard work helped me to shape a great idea into a great poem, is appreciated for approving my "non-traditional" poetry thesis. They are Bill Lavender, Director, Kay Murphy, and Joseph Boyden, who I would especially laud for stepping out of his comfortable prose narrative and into the unmapped world of poetic narrative to work on this poem.

I must also thank my dear friends and readers to whom I owe so much. The Scotch is always, always on me (except for Scott – he gets chocolate milk): R. Allen Shoaf for reading it backwards, John Fairweather for "burning blood," Orson Scott Card for enthusiasm and encouragement, Michael Griffith for tireless and continual reading from the first MS to the final draft, Scott Morrison for telling me to figure out what everybody knows and ignore it, Claire McQuerry for her brilliance and precise reading, Amberly Fox for "more is more," Michael Bobbitt for his recording equipment, and Mathew Safer for wanting to read it as soon as it was "fit for public consumption."

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	v
Introduction.....	1
1779: Blood.....	9
Vita.....	60

Abstract

Besieged by Iroquois raids, a massive army led by General John Sullivan enacts a scorched-earth campaign against the Iroquois.

Notes Towards the American Epic

Once society has lost its myth-based community, it loses all the reference points of truly common language until such time as the divisions within the inactive community can be overcome by the inauguration of a real historical community. When art, which was the common language of social inaction, develops into independent art in the modern sense, emerging from its original religious universe and becoming individual production of separate works, it too becomes subject to the movement governing the history of all separate culture. Its declaration of independence is the beginning of its end.

-- Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 134

Destructive and irresponsible freedom has been granted boundless space.

-- Alexander Solzhenitzen, "The World Split Apart", 8

The tiresome repetition of this "new," now twenty years old, disfigures every journal.

-- William Carlos Williams, "The Poem as a Field of Action", 4

I am for balance.

-- Ezra Pound, *The Cantos*, 543

I: Collapse: The American Epic from 1900 -- 1980

Hastiness and superficiality are the psychic disease of the 20th Century.

-- Alexander Solzhenitzen, "The World Split Apart", 13

An epic poem is built of two parts: history and language. Its history must be relevant to its audience. Its language must allow such history to be absorbed. Anything less than the conflation of these two parts is not an epic poem.

The twentieth century, and especially American poetics, have presented a great challenge to the writing of epic poetry. The solipsism of American poetry, fed by Emerson and Whitman (Bloom, 135), has clipped for decades the first rule of an epic poem, its relevancy. Therefore we read *Leaves of Grass* not as epic, but as monograph.

There was a serious effort to alter this deficiency led by the Modernists. Pound, Crane, Eliot, H. D., and Williams all wrote expansive works that focused out as well as in. They were rooted in personal experience but built their symbolic structure on Classicism and an early twentieth century world. They strove to, as Pound said, "contain history." Unfortunately, the Modernists sinned doubly in their writing. First they ignored the second rule of epic – a language which allows such

history to be absorbed. The Modernist trope of Latinate vocabulary, Classicism, and winding syntax created formidable barriers to the absorption of their ideas. Though these barriers could be overcome, they guaranteed the Modernist personal epic an audience of “a few people with special interests whose curiosity reaches into greater detail” (Pound, 679).

The greater sin of the Modernists, however, was in the ambiguous teaching they did. It is true that poetic descendants constantly, continually, and willingly misread their forbears (Bloom, xiii) and in this, the Modernists can be partially absolved. But they cannot be forgiven for imprecision in language and statement, especially as they cut their teeth on the exact language of imagism. Pound’s full quote:

If we never write anything save what is already understood, the field of understanding will never be extended. One demands the right, now and again, to write for a few people with special interests and whose curiosity reaches into greater detail. (679)

is misread in two, dangerous ways. One is that poets enamored of this quote forget the qualifier “now and again” and instead choose to “never write anything save what is already understood” all of the time. The second, more destructive, misreading is the reading that Pound’s statement applies to language when it applies to complexity of subject. It applies to substance, not syntax. The dissolution of language fed by the “tiresome repetition” of experimental verse in the second half of the twentieth century can be linked substantially to quotes like this tossed off by the Modernists.

Another quote misappropriated to language and syntax comes from William Carlos Williams’s seminal essay “The Poem as a Field of Action”:

The one thing that the poet has not wanted to change, the one thing he has clung to in his dream – unwilling to let go – the place where the time-lag is still adamant – is structure. Here we are unmovable. (27)

Williams is, justifiably, speaking of the structure of American poetic lines. They had been largely copies of English verse through the early 1900s, Longfellow being Williams’ image-in-mind. Dickinson and Whitman had both striven to alter this, but with little effect. Eliot and Pound had done much to “break the pentameter” but the resulting “free verse” was floundering and unwieldy. Williams goes on to praise and then scold W. H. Auden for coming to America in order to free himself up from Iambic Pentameter. His entire essay is devoted to the idea that American poets need to unshackle themselves from the English language and begin writing poetry in the American tongue. An admirable idea, certainly, and wholly correct in its intention. Again, however, Williams is misread. In misreading Williams, Language poets and experimental poets abandoned the structure of language alongside poetry’s metrical underpinnings. They threw out not only strict, staid meter as Williams suggested, but recognizable language itself. As a result, poetry, especially American epic poetry of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, “lost all the reference points of truly common

language” (Debord, 45) and became something consumed only by Pound’s precious, voracious few.

A specific, and excellent example of this is Charles Olson’s *The Maximus Poems*. Olson’s opus contains, at times, brilliant and beautiful language. It, just as often, however, contains language like the following:

Homo Anthropos
-- and our Lady: Potina,
and Poseidon (Potidan (II.146)

It is difficult to assign meaning or prominence to this fragment – it is partially linked to II.145 and II.147 but what, one asks, is it doing all alone? There is nothing within it to give it immediate meaning, nor does it make syntactical sense. It is just words. Olson is not alone in this – he learned it from Pound:

And that Athelstan set up guilds there
kadzu, arachidi, acero,
not lie down (Cantos, 703)

The ability, even propensity, of the Modernists and their descendents to allow language to fall apart has given rise to a poetic beast, gasping at the gates of Bethlehem. That beast is named “literary poetry.”

II: Return to Form: The Late Twentieth Century Epic

For half a century it has been universally assumed that literary poetry is a moribund art with no audience support outside the university and little vitality without institutional support.

--Dana Gioia, “Disappearing Ink”, 23

In the 1980s, with the rise of Rap and Slam Poetry, many American poets began to reject poetry that had “no real existence as spoken language” (Gioia, 24) like that of the Modernists and the Language poets. Much, if not all, of this work was done outside of Academia.

Epic poets, too, began to reintroduce themselves to form and the wholeness of language outside of the established literary world. Fred Turner’s two epic poems *The New World* (1985) and *Genesis* (1988) were written in a strict Iambic Pentameter not seen since the Victorian age. They used the meter to carry their stories along nicely. They did not, however, correct Williams’ astute observation that American poetry needed to break out of its English language and into an American language. They remain interesting artifacts but have had little impact on the world of poetics.

Vikram Seth’s “novel-in-verse” *The Golden Gate* was written in Iambic Tetrameter and, though “breaking the pentameter” was still written in a meter that would be easily recognized in nineteenth-century London. Seth also played with rhyme, as each section of the poem is a sonnet-esque fourteen lines. But instead of

embracing his orality and “the most conspicuous auditory technique” of rhyme, Seth instead buried his sound in enjambment and the eschewal of alliteration (Gioia, 17). Indeed, Seth was wise to play down his rhymes, as the tetrameter combined with the sonnet structure over 6,000 or so lines gets tedious at best. For all of Seth’s versifying, ultimately Milton was right: English is not a language of casual rhyme.

Turner and Seth, and even Berrigan (*The Sonnets* [2000]) and Mayer (*Midwinter Day* [1999]), were unable to overcome the ghosts of the past. Turner, Seth, and Berrigan wrote in English verse that tied them to a language no one speaks. Mayer’s writing in Postmodern messiness prevents her fascinating magnifying-glass *Ulysses*-like-one-day-epic from reaching a wide audience. Even Derek Walcott, whose great *Omeros* (1990) falls outside of the scope of this introduction, was finally unable to break himself from the obsession with poetry-as-something-to-read-only, the incurable disease of twentieth century poetry. All of these poets, though writing works that read well, “neglected or underplayed the auditory elements of their verse” (Gioia). They could not see that their poems must live on the page and in people’s ears.

The one poet whose work does approach the audiovisuality of Homer, Dante, and Milton is Alice Notley. Her epic *The Descent of Alette* is written, explicitly, in speech. Notley notes:

Each phrase is a thing said by a voice: this is not a thought, or a record of thought-process, this is a story, told. (i)

Notley, however, is either not confident in her readers or not confident in the strength of her lines, as she finds it necessary to “measure the poem” “enclosing poetic feet” in “quotation marks” that “make the reader slow down” “and silently articulate” “the phrases at the pace” she “intends.” If Notley truly believed in the audiovisual nature of her poem – that is, if she believed that her poem was both thing-to-be-read and thing-to-be-heard she would neither address her audience as “readers” nor feel compelled to use such an obvious and off-putting device as surrounding her “poetic feet” in “quotation marks.”

These shortcomings are, greatly, a result of the age of the poets. Turner, Seth, and Notley all cut their poetic teeth in the 1960s and 1970s, full-deep in the throes of silent poetry. They rebelled in the natural ways – against the anti-form and anti-language poetics of their forbears. Unfortunately, they did not explore deeply enough the intent of their forbears and their forbears. They did not discover what the problem was they were trying to fix.

III: An American Epic: *1779: Blood*

Sight isolates, sound incorporates.

--Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 72

The best literary poetry is brilliant, educating, and wide in its view of the world. It is connected to the literature of the past and the pulse of the present. The best popular poetry is engaging and easy to understand. It makes its audience stand up and shout “speak poet!” at the top of their lungs.

Literary poetry, however, is often forbidding in its language and structure. It turns off the “serious and intelligent nonspecialist” (Gioia, 25). It is filled with coin that is only purchased with extensive education and is devoid of koine. Popular poetry is equally off-putting in its embrace of cliché and triteness. It often celebrates the poet irrespective of the quality of the verse. It is frequently far too willing to embrace style at the expense of substance.

The dance in between these two styles, literary and popular, should be a dance familiar to all writers of verse. Unfortunately, the cords between the two where the excellent walked were severed in America’s twentieth century. The dance exists in nearly all other forms of art – indeed, it had existed in poetry before – the popular fuels what becomes the established. The derailment in poetry, however, came largely from the establishment’s becoming “caught in [the] conceptual framework” that poems were things-only-to-be-read (Gioia, 6). This decimated the audience for poetry.

Until, that is, some enterprising black poets in New York City turned “Talking Nines” into rap. At nearly the same time, on the Western half of America, some lonely cowboy poets began meeting to save their dying verse. Then, on both coasts, nearly simultaneously, Performance Poetry and Poetry Slams grew from nothingness. By the time the mid-1980s came along, the largest teen television audience in history was watching Yo! MTV Raps! for two hours a day. Now cowboy poetry festivals are standing-room-only and Def Poetry Jam is the only place where kids can listen to Amiri Baraka and Rap lyrics are memorized by the thousands by teenagers who refuse to even open their literature books.

Now that it is clear that there is a large audience who “reassuringly demonstrates the abiding human need for poetry” (Gioia, 7), the time has come for an American epic poem that can dance between popular and literary poetry. *1779: Blood*, is written to do this.

1779: Blood is about the Sullivan-Clinton campaign of the American Revolutionary war. A war was chosen as the topic of the poem for two main reasons. The first was to connect it explicitly with the epics of Homer and Beowulf and Milton. The second was to disconnect it with the personality-charged epics of Pound, Eliot, and Notley. *1779: Blood* is about itself, not its author.

The Sullivan-Clinton campaign of 1779 was a scorched-earth campaign created by George Washington in order to “destroy, not merely overrun” the land of the members of the Iroquois Nation who were allied with the British. Its conflict is the heart of America’s sin – that of greed and blood and theft in the name of peace.

It is filled with imperfect men whose choices, made blindly, ended or enriched the lives of hundreds, if not thousands. The Sullivan-Clinton campaign's flaws and triumphs can be seen played again and again in every war America has fought, from the Civil War to World War I to Vietnam to Iraq.

The poem is constructed in six sections with a proem. Section I: Cherry Valley foreshadows the entire poem. In it violence, stupidity, martyrdom, and bravery play equal parts. Section II: The Western Army covers the war planning on each side of the campaign. Its list of soldiers is a requisite in any war epic. Section III: The Battle of Newtown is the only time the two armies meet. Its jubilant, unison songs mask the soldiers' fears and play against the tension of the divisive British and Iroquois camp. Section IV: Honeoye dovetails with Section VI: Return in their oracular glory. Much of their language was taken from transcripts of Brandt's and Sullivan's own speeches distilled against the war- and religion-mongering of Homer, Vergil, Dante, and Cotton Mather. Section V: The Parker-Boyd Ambush, like Section I, is an overlay of the whole of *1779: Blood*. Ineptitude and sacrifice lead to safety and victory – the tragic luck of war.

The language of *1779: Blood* is built upon the reading of dozens of soldiers' journals on both sides, from now-forgotten privates to Captain Joseph Brandt to Generals Sullivan and Washington; from the slang and religious speech of the eighteenth century; and from popular eighteenth century songs, some of which are included in the text.

The meter of *1779: Blood* is a line that rests somewhere between *Beowulf* and the Blues. *Beowulf*(1) opens with:

Hwæt we garde na in geardagum.
þeodcyninga þrym gefrunon
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.

which can be read with nearly the same weight as the following Blues verse from George Thorogood's "Bad to the Bone":

On the day I was born the nurses all gathered round
and gazed in wide wonder at the joy they'd found.
The head nurse spoke up said "leave this one alone."
She could tell right away that I was bad to the bone.

which can be seen mirrored in *1779: Blood*'s lines:

Blood built America! Our wars are fought
brother against brother, tribe against tribe,
and it is our blood that burns in battle.

These verses are essentially a line of four beats cut in half with a caesura. More technically, four beat accentual-syllabic verse. This verse is the earliest and "most common meter for spoken popular poetry in English from Anglo-Saxon verse and the border ballads to Robert Service and Rudyard Kipling" (Gioia, 14). Amazingly,

though, when it is employed by American poets, unlike other metrical forms, it does not sound English.

Accentual-syllabic verse is the metrical structure that allows American poets to cast off the stultifying English language for the embracing American tongue. Its ability to mold itself into the current idiom allows accentual-syllabic verse to not be tied to the diction of an era or place. This is why it can be the favored meter of Robert Burns, Robert Johnson, and Robert Diggs. Had Williams looked backwards as well as forwards for the solution to “undermining” English verse, he could have seen the hammer with which to “break the pentameter.”

The use of accentual-syllabic meter in *1779: Blood* is to both “produce a heightened form of attention to increase mnemonic retention” and to “provide an innate physical pleasure” in the poet and his audience (Gioia, 13). *1779: Blood* eschews the use of regular rhyme in order to avoid the sing-song nature that rhymed long English-language verse often has, viz. Vikram Seth’s *The Golden Gate* and Longfellow’s *The Song of Hiawatha*. It does employ rhyme, though infrequently, to the effect of sonority.

A poem must be engaging and moving on its first read and its hundredth read. This is doubly true of the narrative epic poem, that must set up and resolve the same plot ad infinitum. *1779: Blood* was written with this dictum in mind. Its goal is to create metrical, accentual-syllabic verse that is a pleasure to hear and a story of war that is important to know. It is written to be heard, whether aloud between the ears or from a bard chanting by a fire. It should be enjoyed in one sitting, approximately two hours of auditorium.

It is the express wish of the poet that the dance between the literary and the popular inflame all poets to create poetry of the vulgar tongue filled with patrician knowledge; poetry that will change the world.

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1779:
Blood

Proem

I: Cherry Valley

II: The Western Army

III: Newtown

IV: To Honeoye

V: Parker-Boyd Ambush

VI: Return

Proem

Blood built America! Our wars are fought
brother against brother, tribe against tribe,
and it is our blood that burns in battle.
It is in our blood that our promise lies.
It is by blood we conquer both man and land.
The Iroquois Nation was America
before England seized her. Their great warriors
conquered nations and breathed in blood.
They gave life and death and nations fell
prostrate or broken to hate or bow
before the mighty Iroquois' gates.
We could not be born but through their blood.
I sing the song of fertile soil
salted in blood that grows only blood.
Listen to my words and reap vernal tears.

I: Cherry Valley

The falling snow became ice rain
as the half-moon rose over the trees.
The fifty Redcoats cursed the hard luck
that drug them here to serve with Rangers
more savage than the Seneca.
Captain McDonnell promised them glory
in the service of the King and the safety of their land
he swore the homes of allies and friends
would open for them with comfort and warmth
But now they sat amidst the Seneca
and Butler's Rangers all of them draped
with feathers and blood and bragging about
Wyoming scalps and the homes they burned.
The Redcoats knew that McDonnell had lied.
Sergeant Newberry saw the chance to rile their hearts.
"McDonnell lied! No Loyalists are here
only thieves of homes, who light our fires.
We can not think of them as the ones we loved,
they are Rebel scum. They dragged us here
by their guile and sloth. We will repay them
with the musket and the axe for their barefaced sins.
We will salt their fields with their kin's blood."
Sergeant Newberry's eyes shone in the rain.
His words built a fire in Tory hearts
that kept them warm in the icy rain
with slaughter dreams and vengeful hearts.

Restless in the rain and hungry for blood,
Cornplanter's men departed for home.
"We did not come here to wait in the cold,
Garganwahgah we came for cold revenge.
Brandt-who-is-white may follow Butler's lead
but we will attack when our blood is hot
we cannot wait for the morning's light
we are not scared of the cold we must strike now."
"Joseph Brandt is a man," Cornplanter yelled,
"as Sayenqueraghta told me you were
but I only see kids whose leather is wet
and want to go home. Well fly little goats
go back to your homes that are burnt to the ground.
We hawks will wait to taste the vengeful flesh
while you will starve in your untouched skin.
Remember Onaquaga! We served the King
and these Rebels razed our homes, and they burned our crops,

and starved our kin who we saw grow thin.
We begged the King like starving dogs
because of Rebel crimes and white-men's lies.
Let us give their gifts tenfold back to them.
Let them beg their father Washington for food.
He will let them starve. But our father the King
will remember us when these Rebels are crushed."

Captain Walter Butler inspected all his troops.
He added up the strength of their hate and fear.
He wore a turkey feather and a tomahawk
he walked with Little Beard to survey the men.
"No Quarter, Men!" He shouted over all
"These Rebels burned your homes and they stole your land
They cut the wrists of our Mother's arms.
But here they stand to mock us all
bordering our land. Now battle calls!
Cherry Valley is a canker and a blight!
It is a most foul jewel it must be plucked out
to ease our pain and make us safe again.
No Quarter, Men! No Quarter at all."
Joseph Brandt called out to Walter Butler
but Butler ignored the counsel of Brandt:
"There are Loyal men with children and homes
in Cherry Valley's street; we have forsworn
to hold them dear in our hearts and give
them safety and succor from the death we bring."
"Silence, Captain," Butler said "I will not hear you.
These Rebels spared nothing when your long homes burned.
We will not spare one beam of their town.
True Loyalists would have felled this tree
two years ago but here it still stands,
ripe for our axe. we will cut it down
No one will escape. No quarter, Brandt!
We will kill these traitors as they break their fast.
We will end their dreams as they would end ours."

Walter Butler left Brandt and Brandt's head was low.
He told his men both Tory and Mohawk
where the Loyal families lived and they made a plan
to save those true to the British Crown
their lives would be saved as their homes burned down
With a grim face and bayonets fixed
Brandt and his men waited for the morning's light.
But before the dawn Walter Butler sprang to life
he rallied his troops from their frozen dreams

with a song of blood and a map of death.
“McDonnell’s Rangers and Cornplanter’s men
you take the Vanguard, be the first to shed blood!
My Rangers to the sides, we will crush their homes!
Brandt’s men take reserve and protect our backs!
We will first take their fort and then their homes.
We will not leave one stick standing tall,
all who flee or fight we will kill them all!
Remember your homes! Your starving kin!
These devils rejoiced in your kin’s sorrow!
Pray that you may here return it tenfold.
May their savage defeat lead to our wealth and peace.”

The most vicious men moved to the vanguard.
Led by McDonnell and his shouts for Blood.
The uneasy watched from the center ranks
as they marched into Cherry Valley.
McDonnell and his men and fifty Rangers
and the Seneca marched half a mile ahead
of the main body as Walter Butler stopped
to check the men’s guns whose powder was wet,
leaving McDonnell’s men to march on their own.
The Greencoats and the Iroquois
charged quickly ahead into the town
eager to begin the bloodletting and revenge.

McDonnell sent two men to scout ahead
they were from New York and knew the land.
As they snuck into Cherry Valley’s fields
they saw two men chopping wood in the dawn.
Neither man was armed with more than an axe.
The scouts fired fast and one man fell
his dead skull split like an oaken log.
The other man fled with a bleeding arm
to warn Colonel Alden at Judge Wells’ House.

“The intelligence says we are not in harm.
Two men with guns does not make a raid.
I am sorry for your friend but we all are safe.
There is no cause for alarm. It’s too late for raids.”
Then the shouts were heard of the Greencoats
and the Seneca who burst into the house
Colonel Alden fled into the dawn.
They spread like bees throughout the rooms
with the sting of death held tightly in their hands
Judge Wells’ oldest son and his pregnant wife

John and Jane Wells were murdered in their bed.
Mrs. Wells was struck down and scalped
by a Seneca as she reached out
to protect her girl, little Emily
whose throat was cut with a cruel knife
sharp and splattered with her loving mother's blood.

Walter Butler and Little Beard broke the knees
of the three young sons who still survived.
They were praying for their family's souls.
Laughing, Butler said "Now you can pray with ease!"
Judge Wells was held and his eyes were forced
as Little Beard scalped each of his boys
before slitting their throats, as they collapsed into death
prayers and blood pouring out from the mouths
of the silenced sons of Judge John Wells.
"Here is your reward" Walter Butler said
"for betraying the Crown and helping this scum!"
"You have been here as a family friend"
Judge Wells choked out through blinding tears.
"Like a brother to me your father has been.
Not five years past you wintered in this home.
We shared the cup and we shared the bread.
We sang sacred hymns, our quilts kept you warm.
What sin has brought you down to this?"
"Silence!" Butler said. "I will not hear you.
The King has no friends in Rebel lands.
You may pray to God to deliver you.
but I do not think it will do you good."
And as Judge Wells clasped his hands to pray,
Butler cut his scalp and slit his throat.

Eleanor Wells ran to the woodshed
where she was found by a friend who wore the Red.
Peter Smith loved her but loved England, too.
He had grown up in Judge Wells' house,
playing with his sons and flirting with his girls.
He had promised to marry Eleanor
before the war carried them away.
"Stay here, Eleanor; I cannot save you.
But I will come back with Brandt and his men.
We will take you from this forsaken place.
Little Beard heard them hiding in the shed,
He grabbed Eleanor's neck from behind.
"No, Little Beard!" Peter Smith cried,
"She is my kin, do her no harm!"

but Little Beard was deaf to his words.
With one hand he shoved the Tory away
and with the other hand he split the skull
of Peter Smith's childhood betrothed.

Cherry Valley was alive with Hell and death.
General Hand's Continental troops
were still two days' hard march away.
Fort Alden's guns were filled with grapeshot
and the muskets aimed true but they were too weak
to save their town from the British bloodthirst.
Men fired through tears as they watched their homes
and their families get torn apart
by the Rangers and the Redcoats
and the Seneca and the Mohawk.

Colonel Alden ran to the fort that bore his name
but he was caught by Joseph Brandt
Alden turned to shoot but his gun was jammed.
Brandt's axe split his skull and Alden was scalped
before he even fell dead on the cold ground.

Reverend Dunlop saw Rangers and Seneca
running to his house. He barred the door.
He and his kin prayed out to God
to deliver them into his arms
their words were cut by shattered wood
as the Seneca and the British troops
broke through their door and seized them all.
Dunlop was held by a Redcoat's hands
while the Seneca stripped his wife and girls
tearing skin and clothes over their screams.
They were defiled and then were killed
as Dunlop prayed for God to blind his eyes
before Reverend Dunlop could be murdered.
the Redcoats were ready for more blood
but Little Aaron of the Mohawk men
a sachem and a respected sage
took the Reverend's youngest girl in his old hands
and put his arms around Dunlop.
"No man may take any more from him.
Your jealous lust for filthy vengeance
has cursed you all you must leave him now!"
The Reverend was left alone to grieve.

Joseph Brandt saw the Loyalists' homes
burning to the ground like Rebel trash.
He saw Loyalist blood spilled on Rebel lands.
He knew Walter Butler, Cornplanter, and McDonnell
had promised blood and the beautiful pull
of death was too strong for the men to restrain
from taking all the lives they could find.
He could only fight faster than his their men
and take the Tories into custody
before the other troops, blinded with bloodthirst
made corpses in revenge for their burned homes.

William Mitchell heard the sounds of war
as he was working in the morning fields.
The end of the harvest was coming in now.
He has to store the last winter food
for the precious mouths of his four children.
He looked across the fields to Cherry Valley
and saw his home surrounded by flame
he threw his tools down on the wet earth
where they would rust for the rest of his days
but he was too late to save his wife.
She was stripped and scalped surrounded by their kids
five broken heaps that once held him.
Her skin was torn by the blades that broke
their children's heads through her loving arms.
Their children were flayed into broken, mocking stumps
of the ones he loved. His world was gone.
A groan came from his daughter Anne
and gave William hope that he could still live.
He carried her body to the doorway's light
so he could see her wounds and stop her blood.
But he heard the sounds of troops on patrol.
He laid Anne down and told her to play dead
while he hid nearby under a pile of wood.
He could see his Anne and told her to be strong.
Sergeant Newberry was hungry for blood
Where there was no blood he burned down homes.
At the Mitchell house the fire had gone down
so Newberry returned to stoke the flames.
He saw that Anne's body had been moved.
When he saw her breathe he said it was a shame
that her pretty skin would be wasted.
Then he cleaved her head and Mitchell's heart.

Colonel Campbell returned home from the field
to see his town destroyed like Wyoming.
Rangers and Redcoats and the Iroquois
fled with their spoils from the spoiled town.
At his broken house Campbell saw his head servant
murdered at the threshold and his wife and kids gone.
He could hear the whole town crackle and wail.
He heard the cry "Damn you, Joseph Brandt!"
Colonel Campbell ran from his house to see
Walter Butler ride on his destrier
screaming "Joseph Brandt has done this to you all!
I tried to stem his violent tide
but he was too much, I could not stop him!
The King is not your enemy,
it was the Iroquois who killed you today!"

As the ashes and tears cleared in the rain
only Fort Alden remained untouched.
Thirty-two homes were burned to the ground.
Thirty-two barns were burned to the ground.
The two stone mills that ground the flour
and the smith-works that gave hammers and shot
were burned to the ground there was nothing left.
Eleven soldiers were dead and nineteen more
were bleeding to death in their enemies' arms.
The Wells house lost thirteen bright souls
Reverend Dunlop lost two children and his wife.
The Johnston house lost their oldest child.
The Scot house lost two children to the knife.
William Mitchell lost all his children
and his loving wife, everything he had.
The Cannon house lost half of their kids.
Colonel Campbell lost his best servant.
All four Hurlburts were killed by Seneca.

More than seventy others were taken prisoner.
But forty-five of the prisoners
were those Tories who Brandt had saved.
They were released terrified and alone.
They returned home to ashes and want.
The survivors all were homeless and starving.
They prayed that God would deliver them
from their ruin and their biting strife
as the freezing rain turned back to snow.

II: The Western Army

Washington the town destroyer
could not forgive such careless death:
“We must bring scourge to these Iroquois
we must bring the war to their country
we will fight them in their manner
it is the way I learned to fight
when we defeated the clever French
who fight with us in this backwards war.
These Seneca, these Iroquois,
these murderers, these savages
must be chastised, and intimidated.
If we cannot drive them from our land
then we will drive their land from them
and throw them starving and bloody, naked
at the gates of Fort Niagara.
At the Summer’s birth we will send soldiers,
expert marksmen and cunning woodsmen,
the Army’s best to Iroquois land
and bring destruction. They must be crushed
as they brought sorrow. Terror will not stand.

Washington gave orders to General Gates
that he should lead the Western Army
But Horatio, who was a wise man
saw great disaster and sickness and death
and gave a cautious and subtle reply:
“Your Excellency, it grieves me deeply
that you should give me the one command
to which I am extremely unequal.
The man who leads this Indian service
must enjoy his youth and strength in full,
these are requisites I do not possess.
and I shall forward as you request
this great command to John Sullivan,
may he have more luck with the savages
than he has had with the British troops.

John Sullivan who failed three times
in Canada, on Staten Island
and at Rhode Island received these words:
“You are to lead three thousand men
into Iroquois lands in June of this year

you will take the war to their homeland
so that they may be broken and chastised
and put forever from threatening our homes.
Nothing may be spared, no talk of peace heard
until their crops lay burned in the seed
They must be made to starve and hunger
a thousand days for every scalp they stole.
Under your command will be Clinton and Hand.
Your brigades will meet at Tioga.
The strong back of the Western Army
will crush these Iroquois and free their land
and as we crush them we can build peace
for our children and our descendants.”

As Sullivan received his orders
a scout named Boyd came from the field.
He had a letter intercepted
from the British Commander General Haldimand
that there would be no British troops
for Fort Niagara until the next Spring.
“Then we have time” said Sullivan
“to build an army greater than the British
and the Iroquois can stand against.”

General James Clinton was the first commander
to gather his troops for the Iroquois war.
They met at the mouth of the Susquehanna
in early May, to leave in June.
The troops he lead were matchless men:
Colonel Gansevoort, a deadly shot,
who cursed in Dutch like his father.
He lead his men from Old Beverwyck,
their shoulders draped with fine fur collars
and in love with the New York woods;
he wanted to pay for blood with blood;
William Butler, from Pennsylvania,
barely lived through fierce Wyoming;
he lead his men with a grim awareness
of the bloody trials that lay ahead;
and Morgan’s Riflemen led by Major Parr
who were the greatest marksmen in America.

In Pennsylvania General Sullivan
was furious with slow progress.
States had promised him several hundred troops
but when the call came they would send him none.

Many townsfolk feared the Iroquois raids
and asked him for protection and aid.
With an angry pen Sullivan replied:
“I have no troops to spare for you”
he wrote to the Pennsylvanians.
“I am sure that if you ask your Congress
they will provide ample men for you
as they have given none of the promised ones
for us to clear this expansive land
of the constant threat of the Iroquois raids.”

While Sullivan waited for more troops,
General Clinton’s men raided and attacked
to clear the land near the Susquehanna
of all its hostile Iroquois bands.
The Iroquois told tales of woe and battle
of leather-clad men with black-blue pants
and ten-foot rifles who stalked the woods
carrying their guns and silent knives.
They crept into the Iroquois homes
at night unseen like nightmare dreams.
They would slit the throats of the warriors
and steal their scalps to feed their dogs.
Many Iroquois made plans to flee
from the terrible men and the terrible war
that they all knew was sure to come.

Joseph Brandt heard their schemes and fears
and preached against fleeing from their homes.
“These men are not gods they will bleed for you.
Do not leave your homes for these thieves to steal.”
Captain Brandt cried “we will fight them here!”
But his Mohawk tribe would not listen,
their ears were full of their burning homes
and only the Seneca promised enough men
to fight a war and save their homes.
But the Seneca who loved blood and war
and came to fight against the Rebel tide
were taken in with a pulse of dread
as Brandt remembered the death he could not stay.
And as he welcomed the Seneca
who were so sure of victory
he saw in the black eyes of a Mohawk child
the future of men and he felt his knife
cut into his leg and he felt the warm blood
where the strap that held his knife

was tied too tightly. He drew his knife,
in the metal shine he saw his eyes.
They were the same as the fleeing child's.

General Washington was growing tired
of Sullivan's excuses for delay:
"You cannot wait for a perfect time.
An ideal war is a foolish dream.
You must act now to cut the Iroquois
before their harvest so that they may starve.
their country must not be merely overrun,
it must be destroyed in fire and lead
and it must be done before the winter
so its snowy breath will sing death to them.

To reach Tioga with all due speed,
Clever Clinton dammed the Susquehanna.
As the swelling waters swirled and eddied,
he put his supplies into twenty-five bateaux
and all his men on either bank.
They watched the water black and muddy
rise with the power of a million arms.
When all was ready, he broke the dam
and as the men ran along the banks,
their gear floated on the bloated tide
of the Susquehanna down to Tioga.
The Iroquois living near Tioga
saw the waters rising and sixteen hundred men
ride along its banks with blazing war-calls
and they were afraid of the end of the world.
The Iroquois priests said it was a sign
from the Great Spirit, who never lied,
that this land soon would be taken from them.
They preached the truth to all who would hear
and there were many who fled to Canada
and the protection of the British Crown.

Sullivan's Army, three thousand strong
left for Tioga in the August heat.
Lieutenant Thomas Boyd and Michael Parker
led the "Indian Scouts." They were white troops
who had grown up in the Western woods.
They knew the ways of the Iroquois
and could see trouble before it saw them.
They rode before Sullivan's troops
who were divided into three brigades.

General Edward Hand led the Light Corps who charged into battle before the main force. They were terrifying: foolish and brave. The Light Corps was filled with lively men who were always singing and carousing under General Hand's brilliant command whose quickness and skill inspired his men to greater glory and victory in war.

Brigadier General William Maxwell led the First Brigade of Sullivan's men, with Colonel Matthew Ogden's First Regiment, who were nervous under Maxwell as they had not fired one shot together and General Maxwell's reputation for uneven dealing was widely known.

But Enoch Poor, Brigadier General who led the Second Brigade was a different man. His troops were proud to be his men. Colonel Dearborn from New Hampshire and his cousin Colonel George Reid volunteered to leave their militias so they could serve under Enoch Poor; they would fight the ocean at his command.

Colonel Thomas Proctor was the master of the Artillery and the magazines. Well-armed, they carried two six-pound guns, four three-pounders, two howitzers, and a Coehorn Mortar that could be carried by two strong men to anywhere. To support the Army, Proctor maintained a traveling forge, twelve-hundred horses, eight-hundred head of cattle, one-hundred-twenty bateaux.

At Tioga Lieutenant Thomas Boyd brought the news to Sullivan that General Clinton and his seasoned troops would meet them soon and raise the strength of the Western Army to five thousand men. The Western Army was a breathing monster with ten thousand hands all waiting to rip the Iroquois' heart and homeland to pay them for their bloody raids.

Three days before the march to Newtown
Three Oneida Chiefs came to Sullivan
they were led by Hanyost Thaosagwat
who was called Hanyerry. They became guides
for the Western Army in the Iroquois' lands.
Hanyerry and Boyd who both were skilled scouts
often left the Army far behind them
as they beat the paths for the men to follow
through forests, plains, defiles, and swamps.
On the morning of August Twenty-Sixth,
the Western Army marched to Newtown.

III: Newtown

When word reached John Butler of the Western Army
he called a council to discuss the war.

“Joseph Brandt, Sayenqueraghta,
Walter Butler, my son, and Little Beard,
we are outnumbered here at Newtown.
I have a scant two hundred men.
Brandt has three hundred Mohawk and Redcoats
and Sayenqueraghta, three hundred Seneca.
Eight hundred men are not five thousand
no matter how full their hearts are filled.
We must flee today so we may gain strength.
We can defeat these filthy rebels
on another day at a place we choose.”

“We will not run you coward lap-dog”
said Sayenqueraghta. “We will stay and fight.
You tell your tales of Alexander
who conquered the world in three short years.
And of Jericho that fell to the Jews
whose only weapons were music and faith.
And of Spartans who held an army
ten-score stronger than Sullivan’s kids
with fewer men than we possess.
If the Godless Greeks could delay an army
of one million with only naked men
then our warriors with painted faces
and sharpened axes and cunning knives
can bring defeat to five thousand boys.

“There will be hard times if we see defeat”
John Butler warned to those earless men.
“A better plan is to knock them down
one at a time and stick to the ground.”
But the Delaware and the Seneca
said “No, John Butler. No, we want blood.
Our cunning plan is to catch them sleeping.
Our swift attack will have them scared.
On the high ridge over yonder plain,
our men will wait to bring them pain.
They’ll come through defiles so hot and tired
they’ll beg to die from our first shot.

We'll build a breastwork over by that creek,
and make it seem to be a hill.
Behind it all your British soldiers
afraid of war can lurk and sneak.
Their frightened bullets will lead the Rebels
into our trap above the ridge.
Captain Joseph Brandt and his Mohawks
will tear through the woods with their vicious cries.
While Walter Butler and the Rangers
will fire shots from the Breastwork's side
and between us we will crush them.
They will have no safe place to hide."

The Western Army marched through the fields.
From the Light Corps to the Artillery,
the Western Army stretched for two miles.
The march was easy until they came to
a swamp thicker than the Summer's heat.
And though the men could trudge through the mire
the artillery's iron became bogged down
and the men could not free it lightly
only hours of pulling could move those guns.
There was a cry against Colonel Proctor:
"You break our backs, drown our feet in mud!
And for what things? These iron deadweights?
When will we use them against Iroquois huts?"

In between Tioga and the fields of Newtown
were Chemung's ruins left by Hand's brigade
filled with eighty acres of corn and squash
growing green and tall ripe in the summer's heat.
The golden squash and the ears of corn
were reminders of the wealth of the land.
The eighty acres were left untouched
by Hand's brigade just a month before
They were impatient for war to boil
and so they raided the town of Chemung
where the Iroquois had taken captives
from Cherry Valley a year before.
Hands men fought with bitter Redcoats
and Iroquois defending their homes.
No one could count up the dead and wounded,
they were carried off by the Iroquois.
When the Western Army entered Chemung
only one small idol and the timbers
of the long homes remained intact.

Edward Hand's men burned it all down
but left the fields untouched and full.
But Washington's orders were clear:
no field left full; no seeds to grow.
And the Western Army put torch to stalk
and eighty acres of corn and squash
turned from green and gold to red and black,
burned to uselessness, the spoils of war.

As the fires burned, Hanyerry and Boyd
brought in reports of the abattis
built up by Butler at the fields of Newtown.
"By the little creek a hidden breastwork
is being raised and ditches have been dug.
The troops can hide there in unseen numbers
to surprise our men and take their toll.
The British Rangers and the Iroquois
led by John Butler are making a stand."

The rumors flew that Sayenqueraghta,
the Seneca warrior was leading the troops.
His rage was famous. They said he grew stronger
with each passing year as he grew more cruel.
His house was built from scalps and skull bones
and he fed on the blood of the dead.
The men grew restless with vicious stories
of what would happen if they should fall.
Each was more gruesome than the one before it,
Sergeant Michael Parker was especially good
and stringing horror tales of blood and gore
about what the Iroquois would do to them.

The Generals feared that the men would flee
and so they gathered to make a plan.
"Such a foul test before our march is started?"
General Maxwell said, "what more will come?"
"Nonsense," said Clinton, "they are bluffing.
They have no strength to oppose our men.
The Iroquois have fled to Canada.
They've left their homes for the protection of the Crown.
This is just a shadow of what their forces
were before our men began to march."
"Though it may be," said Sullivan,
"we will bring them hell like a million men.
The Light Brigade will advance to gunshot
of the hidden breastwork to draw their fire

and once the Redcoats are engaged in battle,
Colonel Ogden will flank to the right
and in this wise we will reforge
their steely courage into molten fear.
The first Brigade will serve as the Corps de Reserve
and Poor and Clinton will flank to the ridge.
They will flush out any Iroquois
waiting in the bush to fall on us.
At an hour past noon the Light Corps will march
and Proctor's men will give them hell
while we engage our steel-jawed trap
to win this fight and begin this war."

The troops were eager for the sounds of battle.
And General Hand's men began to sing.
The Western Army laughed and sang along
as they marched to Newtown with an easy step.
sure that the battle to come would be theirs.
"Goody Bull and her daughter together fell out,
Both squabbled and wrangled and made a great rout.
But the cause of the quarrel remains to be told,
So lend both your ears and a tale I'll unfold.
Derry down, derry down, hey derry derry down,
Then lend both your ears and a tale I'll unfold.
The old lady, it seems, took a freak in her head,
That her daughter, grown woman, might earn her own bread,
Self-applauding her scheme, she was ready to dance,
But we're often too sanguine in what we advance.
Derry down, derry down, hey derry derry down,
But we're often too sanguine in what we advance.
For mark the event, thus for fortune we're cross,
Nor should people reckon without their good host,
The daughter was sulky and wouldn't come to,
And pray what in this case could the old woman do?
Derry down, derry down, hey derry derry down,
And pray what in this case could the old woman do?
Alas, cries the old woman, and must I comply?
I'd rather submit than the hussy should die.
Pooh, prithee, be quiet, be friends and agree,
You must surely be right if you're guided by me,
Derry down, derry down, hey derry derry down,
You must surely be right if you're guided by me."

"Another Song!" Shouted Sullivan
and the fife and drum joined in with the men:

“Young ladies in town, and those that live 'round
Wear nothing but your own country linen;
Of economy boast, let your pride be the most
To show off clothes of your own make and spinnin'.
And as one all agree, that you'll not married be,
To such as will wear of London factory;
But at first sight refuse, tell 'em you will choose,
As encourage our own manufactory.
Throw away your bohea, and your green hyson tea,
And all things of a new-fashioned duty;
Get in a good store of the choice Labrador,
There'll soon be enough stuff here to suit ye.
These do without fear and to all you'll appear,
Fair charming, true, lovely and clever,
Though the times remain darkish, young men will be sparkish,
And they'll love you much stronger than ever.”

“And now sing of the kegs!” Shouted Lieutenant Boyd
“and how we'll roll the Redcoats across the sea!”
“Gallants attend, and hear a friend,
Trill forth from me harmonious ditty;
Strange things for sure I will now tell,
Which late befell, In Iroquois Cities.
'Twas early day, as the poets say,
Just when the sun it was rising,
A soldier stood on a log of wood,
And saw a site was so surprising.
As in a maze, he stood to gaze,
The truth it can't be denied, sir
He spied a score of kegs, or more,
Come floating down the dark tide, sir,
A sailor too, in jerkin blue,
The strange appearance he was viewing,
First damned his eyes, in great surprise,
Then said, here some mischief's brewing.
These kegs now hold Continentals bold,
Packed up like fresh pickled herring:
And they're come down to attack the town,
In this new way of military ferrying.
The soldier flew, the sailor too,
And both were scared almost to death, sir,
Wore out their shoes, to spread the news,
And ran till both were out of breath, sir.
Sir Butler was he snug as a flea,
Awaked by such a foul old clatter;
He rubs his eyes and then boldly cries,

“For God's sake my man, what is the matter?”
At his bedside, he then espied,
Sir Joe Brandt who was in command, sir,
Upon one foot he had one boot,
And the other it sat in his hand, sir.
“Arise! Arise!” Sir Joe he cries;
“The Rebels come! The Rebels come!
Without any boat are all on float,
And ranged for war before the city.
The cannons will roar, from shore to shore,
The small arms will make such a rattle.”
Since wars began, I'm sure no man
Ever saw such a strange mode of battle.
From mornings sludge, these men of porridge
Displayed their amazing big fat bottoms;
And when the bright sun had barely passed one,
The Rebels cunning surely had got 'em:
Such failure did they perform on that day
Running on their thin useless legs, sir
That years to come, if they ever get home,
They'll drown their shame deep in their kegs, sir.”

John Butler knew his force was doomed
and as news came of the marching troops
he tried again to sway the deaf men.
“Winter comes too soon! Let us take the harvest
and flee to Niagara while your homes yet stand,
and while your crops have not been burned.
We will come back tenfold strong in the Spring
to crush these Rebels and take back your land.
But if we stay your crops will die
and the Rebels will kill your sweet homeland.

Joseph Brandt agreed “A warrior who leaves
a losing battle is not fleeing war.
He is not a coward but is strong
and a savior-hero to his people
if he saves his home and his family.
Let us listen to Butler's wisdom.
Let us return, let us fight this war,
let us save our lands when we will not die.”

“You are a coward!” shouted Sayenqueraghta
“I fought along with your father's father
and you were both yellow slinking men,
unfit to swear an oath to pigs.

You are no sachem. You are not to be heard.
Listen to me, men! The Rebels are weak.
They let us take their lives with no repercussions.
When we cut their scalps they bow down for more.
When cut, they cry; when beaten, they lie.
We will show them what strength can do.
We will fall on them like flies to their stench
were they five or fifty thousand saplings weak.
Who has fought them longer than I?
I know their ways. My Seneca men,
and my Delaware men, listen to me,
stay and fight these fools, Washington's goats,
and feel their blood on your shining blades!"
The men all heard Sayenqueraghta's words.
Their hearts were stirred all thoughts of flight flew
and they looked death in its Rebel heart
and sharpened their knives on their desire for blood.

Brandt and his men climbed the high ridge
and waited for the battle to begin.

John Butler's son Walter Butler
commanded the men behind the Breastwork.
The Iroquois and the British soldiers
waited to spring a broken trap.
A powder thud from the four-pound gun
threw dirt from the Breastwork into the air.
General Hand's Light Corps marched into gunshot
as the Breastwork shuddered with another blow.
They waited for the British soldiers
to show their heads before their guns would sing.
"Fire!" Butler called from behind the Breastwork
And his men's bullets flew into the Light Corps
who fired steady with bayonets fixed.
With grim, set faces they slowly marched
to the Breastwork while the four-pounders
blew up the ground around their feet.
With straining legs and rifles cracking
the surrounded the muddy Breastwork
to bring their death to all the King's men.

Clinton and Poor heard the battle sounds
as they led their men through a thick, foul swamp.
The called to their men to drive them on:
"Don't let the Light Corps win all the rewards!
We will take the Breastwork's side and paralyze them.

We will trap them in our leaden jaws.
We will show them how subjects treat their kings!"
As the last man stood on drier ground
between the ridge and the Breastwork,
a tree blew up from a rifle shot
and Brandt's men charged down the rocky ridge
at Clinton and Poor's muddy, tired troops
They both gave fire but the Rebels had more men
and even with the high ground Brandt still had to flee.
Clinton and Poor didn't know the trails
Joseph Brandt and his men disappeared into
leaving Clinton and Poor to attack the breastwork.

Colonel Ogden's flanking soldiers
neared the breastwork with rifles loaded
as a four-pound shell tore apart its side.
Greencoats and Redcoats poured out like ants
with Walter Butler leading them on
and stinging with their deadly lead.
Colonel Reid's men escaped the swamp
before Poor and Clinton had rounded the ridge.
They had marched behind the creek and Breastwork
away from the battle into the forest's calm.
Joseph Brandt's retreat caught them by surprise
and Brandt saw a chance to beat the Rebels.
Reid's men were matched bullet for bullet,
caught unawares and pressed sorely hard.
Colonel Dearborn heard the fighting
and called his men over the ridge.
They came in time to see the fighting
wrap up Reid's men in blood and lead.
On the left side of the Mohawks
they burst in pairs with cracking guns.
They flanked Brandt's men and cut down five
before the Mohawks and Brandt disappeared again.

Walter Butler was caught at the broken Breastwork.
He saw Rebels on three sides who were hungry for blood.
He had to withdraw and run in shame.
He told his men to leave no body behind.
"The Rebels cannot know how deep they cut us."
The Seneca and the Greencoats fled
through the burning fields of wheat and corn.
They knew defeat would not rest now
that it had felt an easy win.
They prayed that their homes would be spared the torch

that burned the trail of America.
But the Iroquois felt as they were running
that their holy land now hated them
and the bitter Earth grabbed at their feet,
tripping their legs and tearing their eyes.

The Western Army repaid their dead.
by setting torch to forty long homes,
filled with boiling pots and mending piles.
One home was set for a family dinner
abandoned at the sounds of war.
The Western Army then picked the crops.
They piled the corn in golden heaps
beside the apples and summer squash
and then they burned the empty fields
one hundred-fifty acres in flame.

With the flames behind him, General Sullivan stood:
“My men, you fought one hell of a fight!
One thousand troops running naked like kids
to holes and swamps instead of their homes.
You are the kings of this fulgent land!
You have made its soil free from the King.
Since we first met at the height of June,
I have known that I lead the finest troops
that Washington or any General
has ever seen! You are the finest,
the prime example of honor in war.
You are the rock, the one foundation
on which our nation will soon be built.
We have fought and beaten the Indian Butler
and we have fought and beaten the British Brandt
and we have fought and beaten the ancient warrior
Sayenqueraghta, and we have crushed them all!
No one can stand before our might;
the very earth burns at our command.
But there is a danger we are not prepared for:
We move too slow. We may yet be caught.
We will be surrounded too slow to react.
Our scalps will fall like this blackened ash.
We must move light through the woods and defiles
and to shed our weight I am sending back
the heavy cannon to Tioga!
But even as I hear your relieved cheers
I must ask you to make a sacrifice.
With only this will we be able

to complete our mission and save this war.
If you will take half of your rations
then we may move at a lightning pace.
We will be able to fight an ambush.
We will be able to win this war.
And though you say that you will starve,
just remember that God provides!
See how our late start led us to harvest?
The fields are ripe with fifty times the food
than you could ever grow on your own.
We will collect all the food we can save.
We will fill our bellies when we return.
Let the sick men guard this bounty,
The healthy and strong will march to victory.
On to Catharine's Town! On to victory!
On to free land! On to freedom from terror!
The Iroquois must be crushed for all time!
Sing Huzzah! Huzzah! Huzzah! Huzzah!"

IV: To Honeoye

Catharine's Town was well-defended.
General Sullivan led cautiously
The Indian Scouts and the Light Corps
would creep into town like the angel of death
and cut its head off before it could awake.
But the Western Army was not so quiet
as Sullivan hoped they would be.
and as the Light Corps approached the castle
with bayonets fixed and ready to charge
the Iroquois departed slyly
with burning fires and water left to boil.
And the vanguard who took the castle
without sweating blood had to wait for hours
for the Western Army guarding empty pots.

The Western Army was covered in muck.
Twelve-Mile-Bear-Swamp had closed them in.
It looked like a good path before they touched it
but it was then too late to turn around.
The muck and water grabbed at their stiff legs.
It threw each man to the soggy ground.
The horses stumbled, the artillery sank.
The men would curse but it did no good.
And so they stopped and trudged on mute.
Watching his soldiers sweating curses
as they were pulling the four-pound gun
that had fallen on an Artillery Private
General Maxwell said "what can men endure;
what will price they pay in order to be free?"
But no one laughed. Their filthy faces
only looked ahead to endless swamp.
The men were exhausted and laid down in the mud
to try to sleep in the gnats and the filth.
Before the dawn they rose like corpses
to fight the swamp and reach the town.

When they got there they met the Light Corps
and saw an old crone staring on a stump.
She had been abandoned by her brethren
she told Hanyerry who spoke for her.
Her name was Sancho. She told her story:
"As a young girl I fought the Delaware.
They were no match for the Seneca
and now we own them. They are our kids.

To fight I dressed as a Winter-man
and I tasted blood with the warriors.”
She held a dry scalp in her dry hands;
her one trophy from that old battle.
But now she was old and of no use.
She had no kin and held no wisdom.
The men left her when they fled north.
They were followed by John Butler’s Greencoats
who hung their once proud heads in shame.
“If Sayenqueraghta can fight today,
then I can hold the tomahawk
and taste again my enemy’s blood.”
The Western Army listened all night
to her tales of war, plying her with ale
Hanyerry spoke her passionate words.
Each story was richer than the one before.
Their words together made such a rich world
that the Army wondered what they were fighting for.

In the morning General Sullivan
sent a letter to the Oneida’s chiefs
asking for guides who knew this land
as the four they had were overworked.
The runner left him with light provisions
to return to the Army at Appletown.
The Western Army left for Candaia
a place that the men called Appletown.
Madam Sancho said she would not be going.
She reveled in her anger and hate
and the Army’s troops made her heart too glad
“Hate keeps you living,” she said smiling
as they departed leaving her to frown.
As the Western Army marched to Candaia
three Oneida chiefs with the runner came.
“General Sullivan we have your words,
we have your request, but you have your brightest.
There are no more able guides than these.
Hanyost Thaosagwat knows this land better
than a hundred others that we could send.
But we have come here for another matter.
Our Cayuga brothers want to seek peace.
They have sent us to offer to you
the pipe of kinship. Take it and smoke.”
But wily Clinton knew the Cayuga.
He knew their words were worthless gas:
“They lie to you! They do not want peace;

the Cayuga only want power!
They may have peace when their crops are ruined,
their seeds are burnt, and their homes are razed.
Until that day comes there will be no peace
until that day come there will be no smoke.
They lost their tongue when our children died.
And you Oneida! You trust their lies?
They call you brother then stab your back.
They only wait for your eyes to close once
and then they rob you and cut your throat.”
The other generals led by Sullivan
stood with Clinton against the chiefs.
Seeing no peace the Oneida chiefs went home,
embracing Hanyost before they left.

As the men marched to Candaia
they chattered loudly in the summer's heat.
The breeze was blowing and their marching
was full of spring steps from the easy fight.
When they got to Candaia Castle
the Light Brigade marched with bayonets fixed.
They surrounded the town but only saw one man,
William Butler knew Luke Swetland
taken at Natikote in Wyoming
as a surrogate son to replace a warrior
fallen in the first raids in Seventy-Seven.
He was left behind, thought a rebel spy
and not worth the food from starving mouths.
His new mother cried and tried to save him
but lost her son for a second time.
Swetland told them of the Iroquois' plans:
“The Tories and the Iroquois
are one thousand men strong but bicker like kids.
Butler blames Newtown on the Iroquois.
He suspects that Sayenqueraghta
botched up the fight and changed the plans.
Butler is leaving soon for Niagara
to bring more men and artillery.
He plans to crush your Rebel forces
at Genesee Castle, Little Beard's Town.
His Rangers are distressed and hang their heads
at losing their first battle of this war.
and being left under John Butler's son
Captain Walter who they fear is more cruel
than any Seneca or Delaware.
The Iroquois,” Luke Swetland said,

“are distressed for food to feed their kin
as this harvest was poorer than last year’s.
The corn is short and the squash is thin.
The apples are sour and the pears are meal
and everything else is small, shrunken and dried.”
The Western Army’s men who farmed the land,
marveled at the food that was found lacking.
They thought the fruit was full and good
and the corn was sweet and the wheat stalks high.
They wondered what spells the Iroquois knew
for growing such crops in this great land.
Many of them mourned that such secrets should be lost
in a flood of blood and bullets and flame.
Swetland also warned of an ambush
on the wooded path to Canadesaga.
An ambush was the only hope of Butler’s son
who wanted revenge for his swift defeat
at the Breastwork of the Battle of Newtown.

On the morning march to Canadesaga
the men walked in fear, for every branch
held a rifle stock, every tree a tomahawk,
every fleeing deer was a Seneca,
every mossed pine tree was a Ranger’s coat.
Maxwell’s Brigade broke into a run
entangling themselves in the Light Brigade
who turned to face the terrors they had seen
in their sweaty minds from the forest behind.
Two hours of march were lost along the road
as the men were called from tree trunks and holes.

“Were there an ambush” General Sullivan roared
“we would certainly be dead now that we are stopped
and waiting for boys to untie themselves!
Men, do not fear what you cannot see
and kill that which is trying to kill you.
Fear only God, for it is his Word
that keeps you alive or cuts you down!”
Being so chastised, the men marched on,
reaching Canadesaga before the dusk fell down.

There they found a boy crying by the fire.
He was no Iroquois but spoke Seneca.
He had no words in the English tongue
though he could nod and show he understood.
Captain Thomas Proctor of the Artillery

had learned Seneca in the French and Indian War
and adopted the boy to raise as his own.
Canadesaga was abandoned like the rest
and like the rest the men burned it all .
They had to throw gunpowder on the stalks
of corn and wheat because they were so green.
It sickened the men to waste so much food
but their bellies and packs were already overfull.
It scared the young boy to see the buildings burning so
and Hanyerry and Captain Thomas Proctor
above the roar of the flames sang him to sleep:
“Ho Ho Watanay Ho Ho Watanay
Ho Ho Watanay Kiyokena, Kiyokena.
Slumber little one, slumber little one,
slumber little one, gently sleep, gently sleep.”

While Canadesaga burned to the ground
General Sullivan called a council of his men.
“My officers, how long can our provisions stand?
we have limitless food but limited lead.
Our powder has been lost to nerves and swamps.
These fickle men stumble on their dreams.
How far can we push in the interest of war?
We must reach our goal of destroying the land
but we cannot be caught defenseless, without guns.
What crop will we burn that will never grow again?”
General Hand was the first to speak:
“We have done enough. Let our men return home,
or to the Eastern Front in Southern New York,
where they can fight the Crown, our true enemy.
We have had enough of this blood dispute
between the Oneida and the Seneca.
Let the Iroquois fight their own war.
We will concentrate on the terror’s source.”
Both General Maxwell and Colonel Proctor
agreed with Hand. “There have been enough flames.
Let us send our troops armed with boats and carts
to bring this food back to our homes
and to the Eastern Front to feed our kin.
We have burned down enough Iroquois land
that we will be untouched on our return home.”
“Fools!” Clinton said. “We are on Niagara’s door!
We must bring Canada into this great war
as the fourteenth state, fighting on our side!
We will show them that the shackles of the Crown
are not made of gold but are leaden and dull

and unfit for freemen to wear.
If we crush more of the Iroquois' towns
they will be thrown naked, starving, like death
on the cold gates of Fort Niagara.
With no crops to feed the Iroquois
or the British troops, they will not fight,
the British will be overwhelmed.
We can end this war and win the fight
that Washington refused to let Sullivan win!"
James Clinton's fire swayed many men.
General Poor spoke the loudest of them all:
"On to Niagara! Destroy the Iroquois!
Show us Butler and Brandt's heads on stakes!
Free Canada! End the Western Front!
The Western Army will save America!"
The officers were on their feet,
ready to lead their men into death
to take Canada into America's fold,
all thoughts of home pushed from their minds.
General Sullivan was also moved
but he remembered the cold of Seventy-Five
and how the snow surprised the marching troops
and the bitter cold that killed far more men
than British lead or Indian knives.
The cry of the ice, men forced to retreat
again and again after every surge.
Though it was September, in the Iroquois land
Winter came early as in Canada
and more quickly than the men would expect.
A Canadian victory would be sweet to taste
but Sullivan knew from his own deep wounds
that it was a false, elephantine dream:
full of golden smiles and ivory lies.
"We will not march to Fort Niagara"
General Sullivan said "though I wish we could."
The murmur of the officers
sounded like they would march on without the words
of Sullivan to lead them on.
before Sullivan said "our mission is clear:
destroy the land and the Iroquois'
ability to harm our families and land.
And we have are close to grasping this goal
and but one gem remains for us
to be ground down into the dust,
one more great fire so that we can remind
the Iroquois that terror will not stand.

Genesee Castle, Little Beard's Town,
the greatest of all the Seneca towns,
where Butler will wait to blow us down.
We will bring to him the promise of war
and cut his thin legs and feed them to the dogs.
With Genesee destroyed and its crops burnt
the Iroquois will surely starve
and the British will not dare to send them again
to attack our towns and scalp our kin."
General Sullivan's officers could not see
The glory of another Iroquois town
burnt to a heap along with its crops.
General Sullivan heard their whispers loud.
He answered them: "War is not glory.
"War is the knife on which survival stands.
We must cut out the warring heart
and purge this land and the Iroquois
of their hate by blade and bullet and blood."

Garganwahgah, called Cornplanter,
Sayenqueraghta, Joseph Brandt,
Walter Butler, and Little Beard
met at Genesee Castle, Little Beard's Town.
There were Rangers and Iroquois:
Mohawk, Seneca, and Delaware.
The Delaware and the savage Seneca
were hungering for the sounds of war.
"Too easily your planning and knowledge,
your white-man's plans, your British hope
have failed us, Butler" Sayenqueraghta said.
"Were it not for my warriors' hearts
all would have been lost by your foolish son
at the failure of the fields of Newtown."
"It was your arrogance that bought our defeat!"
Walter Butler said rising to his feet.
"If you had followed the battle plan,
we would have caught the Army in our grip.
But you let them slip like water into dirt.
You bloodied this land with your ignorance!"
Little Beard's eyes dreamed of blood and gleamed.
"Your teeth are long," said Little Beard
"but not your cunning. You lost Newtown."
And Little Beard rose with his hand on his knife
"Peace!" said Joseph Brandt, speaking over all.
"Newtown was lost. Do not lay blame.
It does not matter who loses a fight."

It only matters that the war is not lost.
 We must gather strength away from Genesee
 and wait for the cannon Butler promised us.
 We were outgunned but not outfought
 at the bitter fields of the Battle of Newtown.”
 “Look! Brandt-who-is-white trusts the English Crown!
 He trusts white men to fight our war.
 Cannon are dead weight in the forest night.
 We must come to them when there is no light
 and cut their throats like they cut our land.
 Then they all will leave and we can rebuild
 what our trust and patience have here cost us.”
 “Little Beard is right” Walter Butler said.
 “My men have trained as Iroquois.
 Let us fight like them. Let us slit their throats.
 Let us choke them when they cannot see.
 We will trap their men in an ambushade
 as they march puffed up to Genesee.
 Where the forest is thick we will bog them down
 and pen them in and slaughter them
 where they cannot run. We will give no quarter.
 There will be no peace until they all are dead.
 We will buy back with their sacrifice
 our ruined land and our bruised pride.
 We will be bathed in our enemy’s blood,
 our cheeks and land red with their life.
 Washington will flee from the New York coast
 when he hears the news of the violence
 and the terror we gave to Sullivan’s men.”
 “Though Walter Butler is vengeful and blind,
 he is also right” Cornplanter said.
 “Our only hope lies not in the Crown
 but in our arms and in our hearts.
 We know these woods and we must use
 their secrets to save us or use them not at all.
 If we fight as white-men and lose this war,
 we will have lost more than land or men.
 We will have lost the treaty and soul
 of Iroquois, the nation of words.
 We are not a land or warriors or songs.
 We are a spirit of Civilization
 and we will live by our words or we will lose them.”
 So Garganwahgah, called Cornplanter, spoke.
 And all the men listened and Butler’s Rangers
 who lived in both worlds knew what would be lost
 if the Iroquois won the battle with cannon

supplied by the Crown and fired for the King.
But Joseph Brandt who lived in both worlds
knew what could be gained as a child of the King
and the husband of the earth but did not speak,
knowing his words would fall on deaf, proud ears.

As the Light Corps reached Honeoye
they saw men flee leaving sleeping dogs
to guard cookfires and boiling pots.
Hanyerry told the men that Honeoye
meant "sweet water" and a creek that ran
through the Seneca town gave the sweetest draught
that the men had ever put to their lips.
"This water is sweet, like our victories"
General Sullivan said, "drink it up, boys!
Tomorrow we march for Genesee!
Tomorrow we march for Victory!"
Tonight we break the casks of ale!"
The soldiers' cheers roared louder than
the waterfalls of Niagara.
The men drank their ales and told tall tales
of scalping squaws and giant birds
and when they slept they were so drunk
that a jagged stone was just as soft
as the down pillows on King George's bed.
At reveille Colonel George Reid
was told to lead all the lazy and sick
who feared the fight or lost their beer.
His men would hold all the extra food
and guard it well for the Army's return.
With five thousand guns the Western Army marched.
Ten thousand arms waiting to cut down
Genesee Castle, Little Beard's Town.

V: Parker-Boyd Ambush

General Sullivan told Lieutenant Boyd
to take four men to Genesee
in order to scout for the final attack.
Boyd counseled with his fellow scouts
Sergeant Michael Parker and Hanyerry.
Together they decided that only four men
would be no match for the Seneca
who were on patrol through the thickest woods.
So Lieutenant Boyd picked the 12 best men
from Major Parr's rifle company
who had gone with him to scout Newtown.
Hanyerry called the six craftiest Scouts
including his three Oneida brethren.
Sergeant Parker chose six brave men
who had traveled with him from Pennsylvania.
The twenty-seven men left deep in the night
and wandered like stars across the dark woods.
They came upon many small towns
that were abandoned like empty graves.
It made them shake as all the weapons
and all the horses had also disappeared.
But they could never find Little Beard's Town
until they came to a path they passed
where a fallen branch had blocked the way.
Sergeant Hungerman moved the large branch
and knew it could be a Seneca trap
He had spent time with the Oneida
learning to hate the Seneca
and to notice their guises and tricks.
He told the scouts to be on guard.
Along the new path they came upon
Genesee Castle just before the dawn
and like the other Seneca towns,
everyone was gone. It was a ghost.
The soldiers fed on day-old stews
and half-stale bread left in the homes.
Their broken fast was filled with dread.
Where were the men whose fires still burned?
Lieutenant Boyd told his scouts to stay.
They would meet the Army at Genesee
and he sent four men to take the good news
to General John Sullivan
that Genesee had been abandoned
and Butler's cannon had not appeared.

About an hour after the men left,
four Seneca rode into Genesee.
And when they saw Boyd and his brave scouts
they raised their guns and their battle calls.
Lieutenant Boyd called his men to act.
Their rifles shot back but only hit one man.
The Seneca fell from his grey horse
and Hungerman fell on his corpse
and, pulling out his deer-horn knife,
he scalped the dying Seneca scout
as the three other men rode with warnings and fear
for the Iroquois that Boyd was sure
where surrounding them in the deepest woods.
Lieutenant Boyd was furious
with Hungerman for his savagery.
He swore to whip him at Conesus
because they had to abandon Genesee
and find the Army to warn them of
the Seneca who knew their movements
and now would lust for more revenge and blood.

Led by Hanyerry, Boyd and his men
crept through the woods without a sound,
sure every snapping of a fallen branch
was a Seneca with deadly hands.
Two Oneida scouts sent by Hanyerry
to clear a path brought news to Boyd
that the Seneca were camped off the road.
They looked to be few in number
and the scouts had seen the spotted horses
of the Seneca who broke the morning.
The men cried for blood but Boyd was cautious.
He asked Hanyerry what he should do.
Hanyerry knew that it was a trap.
and Hungerman knew this as well
but Hungerman kept his mouth shut
because his lust for blood and scalps
was greater than his love for his friends.
“We will not find” said Hanyerry
“only four men to fight this time.
We must be ready to fight one hundred.
If we engage them we must be ready to die”
“Then we will climb to higher ground”
said Thomas Boyd, “where we can plan
a cunning strike to cut their body

and break their force and will to fight.
Twenty one men may face one hundred
with a crafty plan and the higher ground.”
Then Lieutenant Boyd sent two runners
to tell Sullivan of their battle plans
and Boyd’s men climbed up a steep hill
with the Seneca camped on the right below.

The men took aim and began to fire
when they were sure of a flawless kill.
But like a storm of stinging red ants,
the forest burst with bullets and blades.
Four hundred Redcoats and Seneca
fell like the leaves out from the trees,
their bullets’ rain tore into the men
whose first, precise shots had awakened the beast.
Boyd and his Scouts returned the fire.
They were aiming true, they were shooting straight,
but they were surrounded a score to one
and against such odds even Washington,
Julius Caesar, or Alexander
would proudly fall, giving thanks to God.
They fought like Spartans against the Persians,
a sacrifice for the greater war.

They killed five men for each one that fell.
Private Floyd fell first, with his rifle in hand,
his muzzle buried deep in the neck
of a Tory Ranger whose apple farm
was just two miles from Floyd’s own house.

Then came Calhoun with an axe in his head.
He never saw his killer’s face
as his body was pressed into the mud.

Conray stayed low, a knife in his hand;
his filthy rifle was always jammed.
He had no care for noisy guns.
He trusted in his rusty blade
that met the heart of a Seneca chief
as the musket-ball of a Redcoat’s gun
shot through the pocket where his Bible stayed
that he forgot to bring with him.

Cawsway and Curvim fought like brothers.
They came from the hills of the Alleghenies

and when they fell, fighting together,
their blood was mixed like family.

William Marvey carried two rifles.
They blasted and cracked killing Seneca.
He felled strong men like they were saplings
His deadly aim took seven men
before a Seneca who was called Red Tree
caught him between two sapling oaks
and as Marvey reached down to reload,
the crafty Red Tree slit Marvey's throat.

Jim McElroy sang with delight
as he killed Redcoats and Seneca.
He was a Scot and hated Brits.
He worked the land and hated Iroquois.
And the full pride of his two nations
chafed under the weight of England's King.
His death was swift and his wounds were deep
as the bullets from several guns
tore into him to stop the onslaught
of rebellion against the Crown.

Hendrick and Faucemew and Private Miller
fell giving cover for five quick scouts
who left under fire for Conesus
to warn Sullivan of the ambushade.

Private Putnam swore he saw the ghost
of the Scalped Seneca coming through the trees.
He cried in fear and cursed Hungerman
and caught the ear of the Seneca
who was crouching to Putnam's left
and answered his cry with a rifle's crack.

Sergeant Hungerman was hunting more scalps.
He was a ghost of life and death.
He dropped from trees and rose from the ground.
His knife was silent, his knife was sharp,
His eyes were filled with his enemies' blood.
his back was shot out by American lead
as Putnam's rifle dropped from his dead hands
firing its shot when it landed on a rock.

The fighting could be heard in Conesus.
The Western Army, already alert

was waiting for a battle's signal
when General Hand heard the rifle's call
and rallied the Light Corps to meet the fight
when the two runners Lieutenant Boyd had sent
reached the Army's camp and warned the men
of the battle and the ambushade
and told the Light Corps of the massacre.
The Light Corps mounted and rode like hell
to save the scouts of Lieutenant Boyd
but their thunder warned the British
and the Seneca of the coming troops
and so the Light Corps found the ambushade
abandoned but fore the corpses and guns
of thirteen brave scouts on the wet ground
covered in the blood of one hundred more.
Some of the bodies had been dragged away
but Parker and Boyd's bodies were gone.

Parker and Boyd had been bound and gagged
to be drug back to Genesee.
Walter Butler came to the men
and, laughing, pulled out his long, cruel knife
as a Seneca scout brought the bad news
of Hand's Light Brigade riding to the fight.
The three hundred men grabbed their seventy dead
and their prisoners and fled to Genesee.

At Genesee, Walter Butler
showed Parker and Boyd in chains like slaves
at the center of Little Beard's Town
which was full with soldiers flush from the fight,
their bodies smeared with blood and mud,
and the hungry women waiting to be filled.
Walter Butler and Little Beard
eyed Parker and Boyd sharpening their knives.
"Your death will be long" Walter Butler said,
"and we will dance in your Rebel blood.
You will live to see your hearts torn out
and you will beg to die swiftly tonight
but first you will tell us everything you know:
how strong your troops are, where they will march,
and when Sullivan will attack Niagara."
Then Walter Butler began to cut
Lieutenant Boyd's flesh from ear to cheek.
And as he bled, a Mohawk cried out
"You must wait for Joseph! You must wait for Brandt!"

All who watched cried "You must wait for Brandt!"
They were silenced by Little Beard
who stepped in front of tall Christine Brandt,
the youngest daughter of Captain Joseph Brandt.
"Your yellow father will be too late
Christine-who-is-White" said Little Beard.
"We will be warriors, not weakling white-men
who save their enemies as prisoners.
We will conquer, we will not fall."

"Only God will conquer," said Joseph Brandt,
walking into the camp from a scouting raid.
"We must decide how He would treat these men.
They will tell us nothing we do not know.
Their torture will bring us nothing but harm.
We must kill them soft and quickly.
Let them pray now to save their souls."
Brandt looked upon Boyd and Parker
with pity in his warrior's heart.
Their scouts had fought, with a martyr's courage,
an unwinnable fight to save their friends.
He knew they had earned a seat of glory
but now they must be killed for this war.
He could not spare them any rations,
his kin were starving and needed food.
He could not release them back to Sullivan
and there were no prisoners to trade them for.

Boyd prayed for guidance, prayed for deliverance,
he prayed each breath would not be his last.
Closing his prayer, he was reminded
of a rumor that he had heard.
It was his only hope for freedom:
that Joseph Brandt was a Brother of Light.
"We know that brothers should not fight brothers!"
Lieutenant Boyd called to Joseph Brandt
"let us unite, let us find the light,
let us clasp our hands and end this war!"
Joseph Brandt heard the sacred language
of Brotherhood come from Lieutenant Boyd.
He ordered the Rangers to untie Boyd
and they clasped hands and Joseph Brandt knew
that in good conscience he could not harm
another Brother who walked in the Light.
Brandt ordered Boyd and Sergeant Parker
to be released as his prisoners.

Brandt shouted loudly to the soldiers
so that none could say he did not hear.
“These men are mine now! I will make them
into true Mohawk: Kanienkah,
or I will make them my family’s slaves.”

Brandt took them men into his long house
and warned them not to break his ruse.
“I must hold you close like convicts
until our nations can stop this war.
Washington Townkiller will not be placid
until all Iroquois are dead or starved
and Haldimand is hungry for blood.
The British Crown will not give lightly
its precious jewel to Rebels and thieves.
You cannot go back to Sullivan
to carry arms against your kin
and I promise I will not kill
any more children of our mother earth.”

“But we are five thousand men strong,” said Boyd
“holding two of us will do no good.
you will be killed, your crops will burn,
your land will rot, and your kin will die.
We, as Brothers who walk in the Light,
must find a new way to birth a new peace
but if Sullivan finds you at Genesee,
he will not stop until all is lost.”

“Then we will flee. We know your strength.
You spied our trap to destroy you
and sprung it early and though we beat you
in the battle we now feel the claws
of the Eagle come to destroy.
You speak a hard truth for my people
who laid their debts on the English Crown.
Were this foul war ended this day,
you would be my Brother. You would be my son.

Smiling Christine said “dear Father,
you saved these men. Don’t promise them
more than you can give. I am not for trade.”
Joseph Brandt laughed with his daughter
but soon his eyes were hard again.
His people trusted that the British
would keep the Rebels far from their gates

but now an army of five thousand
was set to burn all the Iroquois' lands.
How could he turn this death to life?

Lieutenant Boyd knew that he and Parker
had been delivered from slaughter and death
and they stopped a grave ambushade
from destroying the Western Army.
Perhaps the Iroquois war could be ended soon.
He grieved for Hanyerry, his closest friend
who fell protecting Lieutenant Boyd from harm.
As he was thanking God for deliverance
Joseph Brandt stood and called for his horse.
"I must speak to Colonel Butler
and tell him of this bitter news.
Christine, protect our new Brothers.
I trust that they will be safe from woe.

And when the sound of Brandt's horse's footfalls
faded away and could not be heard,
Walter Butler and Little Beard
sent in six men to grab Christine Brandt
and drag Sergeant Parker and Boyd from the house.
"Deserters will not be given quarter!
A traitor to one is a traitor to all!
You cannot join with the British Brandt.
We will give you one chance to live.
You must tell us the position of your troops.
Talk, Thomas Boyd, or you will die."
Boyd stared at Butler in defiant silence.
While Christine stared from between two men.
She tried to shout out but they grabbed her mouth
and shoved her down on the dusty ground.
"Seize them by the shoulders! Make these dogs kneel
before England and her two sons,
the English and the Iroquois.
Hold a sharp axe above their heads.
Be ready to drop it if they will not talk.
You will tell me where your troops are,
Lieutenant Boyd and Sergeant Parker,
or your blood and bones will sing to me."

"You have killed my troops," Lieutenant Boyd said,
"that is all I know. I will say no more."
Walter Butler swelled up with anger
his heavy boot cracked Boyd's thin chest.

“Life is sweet, Boyd, you will answer
or you will meet your maker who is dead.
“On my honor, I will say nothing.”
Lieutenant Boyd said, spitting on the ground.
Walter Butler kicked Boyd again,
this time his boot me Lieutenant Boyd’s groin.
“We will kill your army, we will kill your Sergeant
you may yet give your life for his
you only need to tell us where we
can find your troops. Just tell us that.”
“I will never betray my brothers.
for the false hope you might not kill me.”

Then Little Beard cried “Strip them naked!
Then we can strip them of their flesh!
It is not death that you should fear, Boyd,
but the pain of life prolonged in blood.
At the Great Tree we will skin you.
At the Great Tree you will beg for death.”
“We will whip you like your dead Christ”
Walter Butler said until you bleed.”
“He is your Christ as well as ours”
Sergeant Parker said. “He died for you
and now you want to kill and maim
just like the Romans tortured our Christ.”
Parker was struck down for professing his faith
by Little Beard and Walter Butler.
“I serve myself and I serve England”
said Walter Butler. “I serve no Christ.
He is your God he is not mine
and now you will bleed just like him.
But your spilt blood will only bring more death.”

The Seneca and the Redcoats
tied Boyd and Parker to the Great Tree
and Little Beard and Walter Butler
whipped the two scouts with a knotted rope
until their flesh hung from their backs
in bloody strips like cannon rags.
Christine cried out against the violence
and she was joined by the Iroquois
who did not wish to see such torture
and thought swift death would be less cruel.
But Little Beard would not be swayed:
“Their backs are but a tiny portion
of all the land that they have raped.

And when we gave them a chance for reprieve
by only talking, through simple words
they spit on us like they spat on our land.
Death is too kind for monsters like this.
If they will not talk, we will make them cry.”
Walter Butler grabbed Boyd’s right hand
like Joseph Brandt, as a Brother would
and Little Beard seized the ragged nail
of his index finger in a pair of tongs
and pulled Boyd’s nail out from the root.
Boyd would not cry but bit his lip
until the blood came and held his tongue
until he could ask through ruddy teeth
“are we not men? have we not bled?
Is your hatred now satisfied?
Then let us die so that your hate
in boiling over may not damn you all.”
Walter Butler and Little Beard
laughed at Lieutenant Boyd and ripped out another nail.
And with reverence they repeated this ritual
tearing every nail from his fingers and toes
and then they turned on Sergeant Parker
and gave to him the same fate of pain.

Boyd asked again for the mercy of death.
“Our greatest pain will not heal wounds
and our dripping blood will not feed this land!”
Walter Butler mocked Boyd’s desire for death.
“If Jesus Christ, with his bleeding side,
could save the world, then perhaps your blood
will feed my people who you tried to starve.
You ask for death, for heaven’s kiss,
but you will find only the dark of night.
There is no rest in eternal death.
As Parker’s last nail was ripped away
Parker and Boyd began to pray aloud:
“Father forgive them and let us rest.”
Butler was enraged and sliced off their ears.
“It is only you who hear your prayers
and soon you won’t hear them at all!”
With blood in their mouths and blessed with pain,
Parker and Boyd continued to pray
for the falling souls of Little Beard
and Walter Butler and for their own souls.
Little Beard screamed and with his knife
he cut the nose from each bleeding face

and tried to stuff them down their throats.
to silence the words that cut him deeply.
Spitting them out, Parker and Boyd
began to sing their favorite hymn:
“Sing to the Lord, you distant lands
and all ye tribes of every tongue.
His new power of grace demands
a new and noble forgiveness song.”
Made mad with hate, Butler and Little Beard
grabbed the tongs that held the nails
of Parker and Boyd and grabbed their pink tongues
and cut them to stumps like Philomela.
Their bloody mouths could only bubble
but their silent lips formed wordless prayers.
“Sing your hymns now!” Shouted Walter Butler
“and read your Bible now!” Cried Little Beard
as he gouged the right eyes of Boyd and Parker
with a burning branch he tore from the fire.
And with their eyes hanging by their mouths,
Boyd and Parker lifted up their heads to pray
and from their throats came a gurgled moaning,
a wordless hymn they sang to God.
“If you want to serve your Christ forever,
then we will make you eunuchs for your Lord!”
said Walter Butler, laughing wildly
and cut their pegs from between their legs
and let them dangle like their eyes
by a strip of flesh beside their thighs.

“Let us gut these pigs!” Cried Little Beard
and the Redcoats and the Iroquois
with bloody hearts and blackened souls
held up the men for Little Beard.
Butler took his cruel knife and cut their bellies,
spilling their guts onto their boots.
Then Little Beard took their entrails
and nailed their futures to the Great Tree.
And then the mob began to chase
Boyd and Parker with axes and spears
and when they fell they dragged their bodies
around the Great Tree, disemboweling them.
Walter Butler shouted “you must feel like God
to be nailed to a tree, will you save the world?”
As Boyd’s black bowels were drug from him,
he glared at Butler. He did not cry
when his heart was ripped from beneath his ribs.

He closed his eyes and gave his soul to God.
Walter Butler beheaded the wrecked men
and Little Beard began to sing and drum
and he and Butler danced with the heads
of Parker and Boyd shoved onto spears.
The maddened mob danced until dawn
to the sound of drums and the weeping of
those whose inactions tortured Parker and Boyd.
At dawn's first light, scouts came to warn
that the Western Army was on the march.
They had already burned Egitsa
and its ten-foot corn down to the ground.
They were coming for Genesee
and the mob panicked and everyone fled.
As he was dressing his snow-white horse,
Walter Butler slipped Parker's head
into his tack, leaving a scarlet
stain on the ribcage of his charger
that mingled in with his muddy boots
and then Butler fled to Niagara,
leaving the bodies of Parker and Boyd
to be guarded by Christine Brandt.

General Sullivan and the Western Army
arrived at one in the afternoon.
to find Christine praying over the bodies,
barely recognizable, of Parker and Boyd.
She told them the story of the torture
and cruelty of Butler and Little Beard
and of the honor of Joseph Brandt
who was tired of fighting and wanted peace.
"Peace is too far for us to see now"
said General Clinton. "It is no use
to beg for scraps when the dinner table
has been broken down. There will be no peace."
Hearing his words and seeing more death,
tall Christine Brandt left for the North.
The men were struck dumb by the bodies
of Parker and Boyd mutilated on the ground.
As they buried the fallen, brave scouts
with all the honors of soldiers at war,
they swore that they would never go alive
and then they burned the orchards and the green crops
and the long homes of Genesee.

VI: Return

The whole of Genesee was hell and flames
but Sullivan was still unmoved.
“Were this soil stone,” said Sullivan,
“we should burn it into ash and dust
so that no man could benefit
from its bounty. It will feed no one!
We will leave here nothing but timbers,
nothing but ash, nothing but death.
This town will cry like Parker and Boyd
and all their scouts and Hanyerry.
Where was their succor? Where was their mercy?
They were shown none and this land will pay.
With no Seneca, no fleeing Greencoats
to punish in battle we will kill this land.
Each flame a tribute to our fallen saviors!
Each broken long house a hymn to their strength.
Their cunning wits flushed out the trap
that the Seneca and Butler’s Rangers
had set for us to kill us all.
Their sacrifice saved all our lives.
We owe them more than this victory,
we owe them the land that they bled to cleanse!
So remember them in this burning hymn:
when you thank God that you have breath,
remember to pray that their severed limbs
will be made whole in Jerusalem,
and remember that until we build
the glorious streets of peace and gold,
we will build this new land with fire and blood!”

A stone was raised for the fallen men
and set in the ash of Genesee.
The army marched back to Honeoye.
By the bloody copse of the ambushade
Colonel Ogden and his soldiers
broke off to search for the other scouts
They found eleven men all torn and mangled
with Hanyerry’s corpse subject to pain
and depredations and tortures that were
hardly less worse than Parker’s or Boyd’s.

At Honeoye good “Fort George Reid”
was guarded and full of food and ale
the sick and lame were now strong and sober.

They filled their skins with that clearest water
before they poisoned the crystal creek
with filth and ash as they burned Honeoye
and its soft crops to the hard ground.

At Canadesaga, a Wyoming scout
brought the good news that the King of Spain
had entered the war alongside France
in strong support of America.
The soldiers all cheered and sang loudly:
“Our worthy friend Spaniards, let's give them a cheer,
To battles unknown do courageously steer;
Thro' oceans to deserts for Fighting they come,
And fighting, will help win our freedom and homes.
In Freedom we're born and it's Freedom we'll gain.
Our glasses are ready. Steady, friends, steady;
We'll drink till we sleep for the Good King of Spain!
Then join hand in hand, brave Spaniards all,
By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall;
In so righteous a cause let us hope to succeed,
And kick out fat George with a riotous screech.
In Freedom we're born and it's Freedom we'll gain.
Our glasses are ready. Steady, friends, steady;
We'll drink till we sleep for the Good King of Spain!”

The Western Army laughed as they marched
to Canandaigua, towards their homes.
At Canandaigua, four Oneida Chiefs
returned again to sue for Cayuga peace.
They would give themselves as prisoners of peace
to show the Cayuga meant no one harm.
William Butler and Parr's Rifle Company
followed the Oneida to Cayuga land
but entering the towns of those false Cayuga
they saw the scalps of Americans
scattered among the beaver pelts
and tanned deer skins and were outraged.
The Oneida knew that the sworn words
the Cayuga gave them were worthless lies.
The four Chiefs joined the Western Army
in razing five towns of the Cayuga
and together they burned two-hundred acres
of excellent corn and the fullest fruit trees.
The smell was like a kitchen in hell,
the acrid leaves and the sweet, ripe pears.

Colonel Gansevoort led one hundred men
on a mission to destroy Lower Mohawk Castle.
The Mohawk's spying and aid to the British
could be borne no longer. Even if Joseph Brandt
truly wanted peace, his people would pay
for choosing the Crown over the olive branch.
After they burned Lower Mohawk Castle,
Gansevoort's men reached the Tuscarora,
and they were met with boiled corn and eels
for crushing the towns of their enemies.
The soldiers and the Tuscarora
chanted and danced into the deep night
giving thanks to God that they had gambled right.

When the Western Army reached Conowalohala
General Sullivan ordered its master
to open up his stocks and magazines
and feed the soldiers like they were wealthy kings
to pay them for their sacrifices.
Their half-rations and clever scrounging
and empty stomachs had won the war.
And in addition, he was to give them
a double ration of beef and a gill of whiskey
to cover the toasts made with water and beer.
The men praised the food of "beautiful Fort Reed"
and rested there for five full days:
two for imbibing and three for sleep.
On the fifth day were two feu de joyeux
like hallelujahs of powder and fire.
The Western Army cheered for Sullivan
and the King of Spain and for Congress
and the Oneida and the Tuscarora
and their fallen scouts and the camp women
and Washington as they feasted on beef
and stolen crops and victory.

On September 29, the Western Army
marched back to Chemung where they passed by
the shattered ground of the fields of Newtown.
They inspected the grounds and they were frightened
by the dumb luck of their victory
and what a slaughter a force of one thousand
led by a great man would have given them.
They camped at Chemung, not able to sleep
near the Newtown ghosts and the battle shades.

At September's end, the Western Army
marched to Tioga with colors flying,
Hand's Light Brigade was decked in ribbons
they had cut from their Chemung sheets
and Maxwell's soldiers were singing loudly,
still mostly drunk from the night before.
Enoch Poor's men marched like giants.
They knew their homes were safe, that they had won.
Clinton's army was marching slowly
for they believed the war was lost
when Sullivan ignored Niagara.
Procter's Artillery was overjoyed
to be where the roads were firmly packed
they would never hear again cries of anguish
as leaden cannon sank in the mud.
The fifes and drummers matched the cheering
of the soldiers flush with victory,
glad to be alive and Americans.
Glad to have conquered a noble race.
And their marching shook the Autumn
and the Fall leaves fell from the trees.

Fort Niagara was aflame with fear.
Five thousand Iroquois camped at the gates.
A Western Army of homeless soldiers
promised protection by the British Crown.
Promised protection and promised shelter
in payment for their service to the King
in payment for their murdered land and homes.
They sat together at Fort Niagara.
They chanted songs, they prayed to God.
They waited outside for Colonel Bolton,
the young commander of Fort Niagara,
to open his gates and let them in.
They felt their land, their crops burned to ashes,
their orchards ground down and they cried out
for the promises and the sworn kinship
that lay as empty as their barren fields.
Lieutenant Colonel Bolton had no food
to feed his soldiers, two hundred men.
Twenty-five times the mouths and faces
and fifty times the arms and eyes
of his hungry soldiers waited outside,
owed food and shelter he did not have.
He felt the promises, he felt the lies
of the King and Butler in every broken face.

General Haldimand had ordered that
the Iroquois could only be fed
after the troops and after the horses.
They could sleep in the fields with the shelter of clouds.
Colonel Bolton could not do injustice
like this to enemies and never to friends
but had nothing equal to their need.
His hands were as empty as his pantry and stores.
These Iroquois had blindly mortgaged
their land and lives on the word of the King.
They fought for England as faithful children
not senseless chattel to be slaughtered at will.
With such a debt in every steel eye,
Bolton opened Fort Niagara's doors.
The Iroquois owed England nothing.
They had paid their debt in land and blood.

Vita

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