



# Journal of Veterans Studies

---

## Epistemological Interference and the Trope of the Veteran

*Liam Corley*

---

Military veterans as a group have received much deference in the United States during the post 9/11 era. For many Americans, recognized veteran status confers authority on a person to speak to issues related to military service, foreign policy, and an array of tangential domestic policy issues. This authority to speak, however, comes with a host of expectations and constraints upon what veteran speech will contain. In a related development, veterans' achieved status has begun to be discussed and treated like an attributed racial status, and a host of essentialist assumptions dog veterans in their interactions with others. Given the demographic and experiential diversity of post 9/11 veterans, the attribution of a narrowly construed veteran status can place a millstone of expectations and beliefs around the necks of current and former military service members attempting to enter the public sphere either as academic writers or citizens. I call this socially constructed and historically ungrounded version of veteran identity the veteran trope in order to distinguish it from the multitudinous experiences and identities of former military service members. Even without conscious acknowledgment, the trope of the veteran constitutes a constraining influence on military veterans, especially when they are hailed or attempt to speak *as veterans*. Gaining awareness of the existence and influence of the veteran trope is an essential precursor to honest speech by veterans, and those whose work is to facilitate or analyze veteran writing would do well to consider how the specific authority and areas of insight attributed to veterans affect the genesis and possible scope of their productions.

Military veterans are acutely aware of audience expectations whenever circumstances arise where their status as a former service member might be linked to the reliability or insightfulness of their words. A veteran's approach to composition, whether it be in the classroom or in a more public sphere, depends upon an awareness of a particular audience's orientation toward the location and period of service with which he or she is associated, and temporary ignorance of an audience's predisposition is one factor that contributes to the frequently observed circumstance of veteran reticence. To use a classical example, when Odysseus is washed ashore on the island of the Phaiacians, he initially hides his identity because he is uncertain how the local residents will respond to him as a veteran of the Trojan War. For wily Odysseus, such reticence is instinctual policy. Silence gives him maximum latitude for action, a rhetorical position Roger Thompson elucidates in his contribution to *Generation Vet* as "an embodiment of power and agency" (201). Within the military and upon a given field of combat, conspicuous peculiarity can lead to devastating results. Covert reconnaissance is a reasonable tactic in response to such high stakes, and the ensuing silence need not be permanent or disabling.

Part of the hospitality Odysseus receives as an anonymous guest of the Phaiacians involves a bard singing the renown of Greek heroes from the Trojan War. Twice Odysseus hears the bard sing of his exploits and the travails of other Greek warriors, and twice the unknown and unmarked veteran is deeply moved and welcomed, even in anonymity: "So the famous singer sang his tale, but Odysseus/ melted, and from under his eyes the tears ran down, drenching/ his cheeks. As a woman weeps, lying over the body/ of her dear husband, who fell fighting for her city and people . . . Such were the pitiful tears Odysseus shed from under/ his brows" (Lattimore 8:521–32). Either undone by his emotions or determined to exploit the atmosphere of knowledgeable welcome (Homer

characteristically allows for either interpretation), Odysseus signals his strong emotional connection to the warriors praised by the bard. Homer's arresting image of a grieving widow evokes Hector's Andromache more than it does Odysseus's Penelope, and it suggestively expands the scope of Odysseus's empathetic sorrow to include all those lost in the siege of Troy, Greek and Trojan alike. This Odysseus grieves for what he has done as much as for whom he has lost. The range of his emotional responsiveness would complicate an ethnocentric audience's ability to hear his expansive grief, a further spur towards careful self-disclosure.

Likewise, Aeneas, in one of many parallels with the *Odyssey*, enters Carthage secretly after a shipwreck, uncertain of how he will be received until he finds in a public temple images of the siege and sack of Troy:

Here, for the first time,/ Aeneas dared to hope he had found some haven,/ for all his hard straits, to trust in better days. . . . all at once he sees,/ spread out from first to last, the battles fought at Troy,/// the fame of the Trojan War now known throughout the world . . . . 'Oh, Achates,'/ he cried, 'is there anywhere, any place on earth/ not filled with our ordeals? There's Priam, look!/  
Even here, merit will have its true reward. . . / even here, the world is a world of tears/ and the burdens of mortality touch the heart./ . . . So Aeneas says, feeding his spirit on empty, lifeless pictures, groaning low, the tears rivering down his face/ as he sees once more the fighters circling Troy. (Fagles 62-63)

For Aeneas, the fresco of the sack of Troy serves both to reignite his grief and reassure him that the Carthaginians have empathy for the victims of warfare. The civic task of planting a new city on a coast of dubious welcome has given the Carthaginians insight into "a world of tears and the burdens of mortality." Virgil, of course, also has in mind the future destruction of Carthage by Rome. The Carthaginians' sympathy for Rome's eventual founder is tragically prophetic, an instance of the mixed sources of emotional connection that can animate any warrior's welcome.

Both Odysseus and Aeneas acknowledge demonstrate the need for a pre-existent community of sympathetic and knowledgeable civilians in order for them to experience grief fully and discover a new place in a world away from war. The burgeoning research on effective strategies for inculcating literacy and rhetorical agency in the current generation of veterans is evidence that a growing number of scholars are working to create such communities for veterans entering college today. Though millions of them are enrolling in higher education, veterans in the classroom are often alone, anonymous, and unfamiliar with the grief they may or may not bear. In his essential memoir, *What it is Like to Go to War*, Karl Marlantes emphasizes the importance of veterans writing for an audience:

Each and every one of us veterans must have a song to sing about our war before we can walk back into the community. . . [I]t isn't enough just to do the art in solitude and sing the song alone. You must sing it to other people. . . // When the child asks, 'What is it like to go to war?' to remain silent keeps you from coming home (207).

For Marlantes, the returning warrior assumes the role of a bard, at least in a small way within his or her own community, in order to demonstrate the reciprocal nature of communicative acts and communal responsibility for war. After the time for strategic silence has passed, the veteran must feel free to speak lest the wounds, wariness, and wisdom gained in service fester.

Within a democratic society, the social contract between those who serve and those who send creates an often unacknowledged structural reciprocity of moral responsibility for war even as the physical and emotional injuries of returning service members eerily mirror neuroses, denials, and compulsions within the social body. This implicit social contract informed a promise made by Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Chair Marilyn Valentino in 2010

when she spoke of the “ethical obligation” members of the writing profession had to returning veterans. General education requirements make first-year writing classes an important checkpoint for veterans whose transition from military service takes them into higher education. Pioneering work by Alexis Hart and Roger Thompson for a CCCC Research Grant (2013) has smoothed the way for several journal special issues focused on composition and veterans.<sup>1</sup> Sue Doe and Lisa Langstraat’s edited collection, *Generation Vet*, is the first volume to begin consolidating what can now be considered a vital and expanding field of research. Finally, the establishment of the *Journal of Veterans Studies* is a powerful indicator that the field is full of practitioners ready to graft their individual research into a larger endeavor. The potential scope and effectiveness of these new initiatives demand awareness of how the trope of the veteran informs and constrains both veterans and instructors in their common task of making the strategic journey from silence to speech a wise and worthwhile endeavor.

Civic organizations, many founded by veterans who have benefited from recent university training, have far outpaced academic communities of welcome. Although many of these writing and reading communities are explicitly therapeutic in focus and have no expectation that veterans will produce work for public consumption, a great many of these organizations see their mission as incomplete if veteran writing doesn’t reach a larger audience. One of the most staggering things about the rhetorical landscape confronting veterans today is the immense number of venues for their songs of grief and return, from blogs and online journals like *Military Experience and the Arts*, *O-Dark-Thirty.Org*, and the *Veterans Writing Project*, to anthologies and collections published by university presses and established literary journals, like *Fire and Forget* and the *Proud to Be* series published by Southeast Missouri State University Press. While such writing communities seem to answer the primal call for the reintegration of warriors into civil society, the democratization of publishing technologies—from social media to a variety of hybrid and self-publishing opportunities—has turbocharged the rhetorical pressures faced by veteran writers to understand themselves as involved in a public discussion with a long cultural history. In our largely valuable and successful efforts to mitigate the type of silence that stems from the perceived hostility or indifference of civilian audiences, we have also increased their exposure to a different obstacle, the discursive pressures resulting from self-consciously thinking and writing as a veteran.

As a veteran, scholar, and creative writer, I meditate on the effects of pre-existent representations of veterans and veteran experience upon those veterans we welcome into discursive communities through writing instruction. I have seen firsthand how the trope of the veteran—the historically ungrounded and culturally produced version of veteran identity—distorts, constrains, and even creates veteran thought and speech. The trope is a powerful shaping force that operates on veterans even before they decide to enter its discursive arena. Among its many effects, I limit myself in this essay to considering only how the trope’s attribution of experiential knowledge and authority to veteran-writers immeasurably complicates their sense of audience and appropriate evidence resulting in an epistemological dilemma for many that can lead to frustration, anger, resentful rather than strategic silence, and even self-stereotyping speech that surrenders individuality for the easy eloquence that subservience to the trope enables.

The cultural construction of veterans is an issue of great concern for a democratic society, especially one like ours where military participation rates have declined even as our global power projection ability has increased. While some commentators decry the cultural gap that has grown between the nation’s all-volunteer military force and the civilian citizens responsible for their employment and complicit in the outcomes of their service, the widespread unfamiliarity of civilians with military questions and personnel has led to an inordinate degree of deference to current and former military service members. This deference may seem desirable, but it becomes dangerous when two further conditions arise: one, when civilians discount their own access to knowledge essential for

the responsible use of military force in a multipolar world; and two, when former service members recognize the gap between their military experiences and the sorts of deliberative knowledge solicited by their fellow citizens in order to guide future military actions. In both cases, the prospects for wise policymaking in a democratic society are blighted by epistemological interference, a phrase I use to describe a conscious or unconscious mismatch between the means used to gain knowledge and the context within which that knowledge must be employed. Although valuable work can be done on the topic of civilian engagement with geopolitics, my research focuses on the literary and cultural history of the veteran trope so that its role in the epistemological crises confronted by veteran writers can be understood and mitigated. By laying bare the genealogy of our current pathological and depoliticized construction of veterans, I hope to lay the groundwork for a renewed engagement by American veterans with a broader range of citizenly duties.

My larger manuscript project, *The Voice of the Veteran in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, analyzes the depiction of veterans in literary texts by popular and influential American authors—not texts authored by veterans themselves—except where those categories overlap, because the trope of the veteran, as it has developed in American history, literature, and culture is the product of many intersecting forces. Moreover, the type of knowledge and authority attributed to veterans has shifted over time. While the connection between veteran status and exemplary citizenship as expressed through political leadership was fairly straightforward in the early republic, the meaning and presumed transformational effect of wartime service shifted over the course of the nineteenth century as veteran depictions reflected a growing chasm between the ideological rationale for a given war and the existential crises of individual experience within that war.

Veteran characters from the first fifty years of literary production in the United States most often reflected the citizen-soldier ideals held by many Americans in which military service was seen as an important but not transformative event in a given life, one that contributed to but did not define identity. Military service was shown to reflect values widely held in the society and was not in itself a basis for political authority. For example, in Royall Tyler's popular 1787 play, *The Contrast*, Colonel Henry Manly embodies values of simplicity, chivalry, and duty that make him an exemplary American, not an exemplary soldier. Participation in the war confirmed these values; it did not create them.

By the time of James Fenimore Cooper's 1821 novel of the American Revolution, *The Spy*, the depictions of military participation in the war are considerably more nuanced. The narrator of *The Spy* frequently comments on how Revolutionary War service will be misremembered in ways that transform villains into patriots and patriots into villains. The most famous soldier of Cooper's novel, General Washington, is shown to have required a secret civilian alter ego so that he can exemplify the whole range of civic virtues necessary for his future election as president. After the Civil War, however, military service, as John Casey argues in *New Men*, came to be seen as an epochal turning point for soldiers. Historians John Resch and James Marten look at the depiction of suffering soldiers in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars respectively, to conclude that maimed and disfigured veterans became more important in the public's perception of all veterans as deeply impacted by military service, with a concomitant increase in the assumed transformational effects of military service. In this new regime of veteran depiction, veteran characters grew increasingly useful for authors interested in critiquing nationalist projects even as their literary construction of those characters made the status and social perceptions of actual veterans as a class less central to political leadership.

Some of the most important veteran characters in postbellum literature, such as Henry James's Christopher Newman in *The American* or W.D. Howells's protagonist in the eponymous *The*

*Rise of Silas Lapham*, were not characterized as being able to adequately describe the nature of the interior changes resulting from their Civil War service despite these changes being crucial engines in the plots of these novels. These veterans may know something valuable about life or war, but they cannot wield their knowledge for the benefit of others or themselves. Such characters do not seem likely candidates for cultural influence in the way that Colonel Manly or General Washington had been in the earlier novels. By the time of Stephen Crane's 1895 *The Red Badge of Courage*, veteran status is scrutinized and deflated in what John Casey identifies as an intergenerational struggle between Civil War veterans and postbellum youth over access to masculinity and civic influence. The knowledge of the veteran at the end of the nineteenth century pertained primarily to foot soldier's narrow scope of vision, the physiological effects of violent scenes and actions, the psychic trauma and bonding of imperiled or violated comrades, and the bitter denunciation of a callous or uninformed chain of command. Literary depictions of war and its veterans as marked by a limited scope of loyalty and experience often contributed to a larger willed amnesia within the country concerning the sectional debates that led to the Civil War. Keith Harris describes in *Across the Bloody Chasm* how depoliticized veterans became sites of sentimental unity between North and South, but this cultural function came at the cost of a broader cultural authority based on intellectual and executive skills honed through military service.

The tension between matters of policy best determined through deliberative, intellectual processes that can be debated and demonstrated in the public sphere and the revelatory insights and idiosyncratic modes of thought believed to be derived from combat experience in national wars is a particularly potent intersection in a longer-term epistemological dialectic within American culture between personal experience and social knowledge. Literary veteran voices in the eighteenth and nineteenth century drew on an epistemological framework established before the American Revolution that contextualized the distinctive blend of empirical and revelatory authorities attributed to them. The empiricism of both scientist Benjamin Franklin and theologian Jonathan Edwards illustrate the ways that personal experience functioned philosophically to authenticate truth claims each made about social reality. Both were interested in distinctions between intellectual knowledge and a more robust form of knowledge that combined intellect and experience within a community of other knowers. While science and religion have, at various points in American cultural history, been seen as incommensurate or clashing systems of knowledge, the relationship between these larger systems and the dialectic of personal experience versus social knowledge has oscillated over time. In the early Republic, there was considerable commerce between their distinctive claims to authority.

The intersection of religious and scientific knowledge claims informs the political debates about the insight, trustworthiness, and authority of veterans in the early republic and suggests what a broad swathe of Americans at the time would have accepted as compelling evidence for civic policymaking. As my research for *The Voice of the Veteran* continues, I am finding that over the course of the nineteenth century, veterans become the locus for a particular form of authoritative knowledge that is both empirical and revelatory, but that the possession of such knowledge comes to be seen in the postbellum period as exceeding human capacity, thus leading either to the death, derangement, or silencing of the veteran. I follow the depiction of veterans in a variety of literary and political texts over the course of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, culminating in our present moment in which veterans are expected to speak and also to be pathologically unable to speak, to have authority but to be unable to coherently wield that authority, to be both trustworthy and unwilling to undertake the burden of trust.

Literary historical work on the depiction of veterans partially explains the highly subjective and largely apolitical literary work by veterans of our current wars. From these works, we may learn about warriors, but we do not learn much about the larger strategies and culpabilities of our current

wars. The effects of the veteran trope can be seen in all sorts of interactions with veterans today, particularly the tremendous burden many vets feel to say “something” even while being angry at the exaggerated authority attributed to their speech, which often leads to reticence. In a 2012 essay in *College English*, I described at length how clashing forms of evidence between military and academic modes of expression complicated my reintegration into academia after my deployment to Afghanistan. Even as a highly educated and passionate writer, I struggled to reconcile “two worlds of expression, two poses of authority, two systems of stylistic allegiance” (Corley 354–55). In the years since my emergence from silence into poetry, memoir, and now literary history, I have observed many other veteran writers navigate the same epistemic pressures. Consider, for instance, how one of the most recently celebrated veteran writers, 2014 National Book Award winner Phil Klay, responded to an interviewer about his fictionalizing of the Iraq War:

I needed years to untangle all my thoughts and do enough research to be able to approach the war honestly. The temptation is to say, ‘I was there, this is what it was like, and you must respect the authority of my experience.’ But I don’t trust those sorts of claims. People lie to themselves all the time. (n.p.)

Klay’s standard of honesty causes him to discount attributions of authority based on experience in favor of research-based claims that can be verified and subjected to scrutiny by civilians. Klay’s skepticism about experience-based claims is itself derived from experiences of “temptation” and the observation of others, not necessarily veterans, who succumbed to it.

Later in the interview, Klay is asked if he feels “a different pressure or responsibility writing about war than if he were writing more civilian fiction?”:

What we think about war says a lot about what we think about America, about American politics, about citizenship, about violence, and about masculinity. It says a lot about what we think about people in other countries and our responsibilities to them as human beings. It says a lot about what we think of death, and sacrifice, and patriotism, and cruelty. It says a lot about our limits as humans, our ability to endure and our ability to break. It says a lot about the stories we tell ourselves so we don’t have to examine what we think about war too closely. So, sure, I feel a lot of pressure writing about that. (n.p.)

And who wouldn’t? The list of topics he invokes—politics, citizenship, masculinity, death, patriotism—are a panoply of perennial concerns and represent a huge burden of significance for Klay, making it understandable why he would feel that the claim of personal experience had to be buttressed with years of research in order to address these issues. Klay is not alone in feeling these pressures, though he remains unusual in the extent to which he has pursued the deliberative knowledge necessary to substantiate his attributed authority.

Brian Turner, one of the best-known soldier-poets of the Iraq War also openly struggles in his poetry and his recent memoir, *My Life as a Foreign Country*, to understand the Iraqi context of his war. One section, for instance, considers the perspective of an Iraqi bomb maker as “he makes the one mistake which the explosives cannot condone” (79). Various poems in his collections *Here*, *Bullet* and *Phantom Noise* explore the experiences of women drowning after a bridge stampede, gun smugglers, and detainees. And yet he and many other veterans who feel that the only ethical response to their wartime experience is to attempt to understand the people they fought against, among, and, occasionally, alongside, also feel adrift in taking up that task because they have little personal experience upon which to base any claims about the effects and meaning of the American wars for Iraqis and Afghans. As veterans, they are supposed by the society at large to have something

profound to say about these wars, and yet as writers they understand that they are no better off than most civilians and are almost entirely dependent upon research into Iraqi and Afghan history and literature and socially negotiated insight into Islam in order to construct their narratives. The narrowly circumscribed scope of veteran knowledge derived from the existential experience of wartime service finds its complement in attempts to sympathetically represent the individual experiences of Iraqi and Afghan noncombatants, often in a depoliticized, existential manner, confirming ultimately only those facets of war and conflict that shape individual lives, not nations and regions.

A recent contretemps between two veteran public intellectuals and writers over Klay's work further illustrates the almost parodically formalized expectations created by the trope of the veteran. In a January 2015 column for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, Roy Scranton updates Paul Fussell's well-known archetype of the veteran writer:

The truth of war, the veteran comes to learn, is a truth beyond words, a truth that can only be known by having been there, an unspeakable truth he must bear for society. So goes the myth of the trauma hero. . . . Klay, embodying the moral authority of a veteran, assures American readers that a dead Iraqi needn't trouble them any more than a dead dog would. . . . If the point of literature is to help us "recognize [our] own suffering in the stories of others," as George Packer sententiously asserts, rather than soothing our troubled consciences with precisely the stories we want to hear, then novels such as *The Yellow Birds* and stories such as [Klay's] "Redeployment" are gross moral and literary failures. But the failure does not belong to the writers. It belongs to all the readers and citizens who expect veterans to play out for them the ritual fort-da of trauma and recovery, and to carry for them the collective guilt of war. (n.p.)

Scranton's complaint about the morally enervating literary effects of the traumatic war hero for civilian readers shouldn't blind us to its other effects upon veteran writers as one of the most-recognizable and pervasive incarnations of the trope of the veteran. Veterans, for instance, must write about war, must be traumatized, must be articulate, and must also be the means of ending articulation. In Scranton's formulation, a self-silencing, traumatized veteran is the ideal mirror for an intellectually disengaged but morally and politically culpable general public, and his review is a suggestive critique of the flood of novels American publishers have acquired from aspiring veteran writers, including forthcoming work from Scranton and his *Words after War* compatriot, Matt Gallagher.

In a scathing yet comradely reply, Michael Carson on the blog *Wrath Bearing Tree* takes issue with Scranton's manipulation of his authority as a veteran to comment upon matters that extend beyond personal experience:

In the spirit of Scranton's essay, I will describe a third myth: the Philosopher-Warrior-Hero Myth (or PWH Myth for short) – one who has gone to war and seen through the narratives that others abide. . . . I too use my war experiences to make arguments that need to be made. People would have little interest in what I or he had to say without these experiences. I simply believe Scranton should exercise a little humility when accusing others of using their war experience (or lack thereof) unjustly. We cannot draw lines in the sand about false and true epistemologies. When we do, we end up condemning vast swathes of very different authors and stories to the dust bin of self-help nonsense. (Carson n.p.)

As a counterpoint to Scranton's scrutinizing of the type and extent of wartime service by veteran writers, we might also look then at the effects of doctoral and MFA programs on the narratives and

narrative poses made accessible to veterans. In what must be the nadir of the history of the connections between the veteran trope and civic influence, the contemporary understanding of war as reflected through literature defines it almost entirely in relation to its effects on the moral and psychological health of individual soldiers. As such, contemporary war literature would be better described as solipsistic battle literature or soldier literature rather than something that presumably might give readers insight into the motivations and justifications for the national policies leading to a specific war.

The American trauma war hero has the burden of ineffable knowledge that can only be paraded before readers, not transmitted, a transatlantic version of what James Campbell calls combat gnosticism. The Philosopher Warrior Hero, on the other hand, has the burden of all sorts of knowledge that can only be transmitted to readers by means of an epistemological shell-game, whereby their authority to speak is disconnected from the content of their speech. Although I've illustrated one contemporary version of the trope of the veteran by means of quotations from highly literate and well published veteran writers, the trope is insinuated throughout the fabric of American society by means of the usual suspects of popularization and literary canon transmission, and I believe that all veterans attempting to write *as veterans* must grapple with it to some degree. Consequently, university instructors who intend to help veterans write should be aware of the trope's malevolent and beneficent faces. In particular, we should be aware that the trope of the veteran places writers in a rhetorical demilitarized zone where the urge to communicate, the content of communication, and the authority to communicate are often at odds with each other.

In truth, literary critics like me have also been part of the problem faced by veteran writers because of the ways we've popularized literary trauma theory as a means of describing how language is inadequate to the task of communicating the effects of war. In our eagerness to demonstrate interpretive skill in identifying and making meaning from a text's traumatic lacunae, we have ignored other lacunae in works by veteran writers. Moreover, by focusing on combat trauma as the most salient lens for considering literary productions that represent war and warriors, we have enforced a needlessly restrictive and individualistic formulation of veteran identity. A traumatized veteran is also, in most cases, a depoliticized one, because the origins and effects of the trauma are experienced from an individual frame of reference. More darkly, a traumatized veteran is perceived as disordered and no likely contributor to a larger social order.

Fortunately, literary trauma studies have begun grappling with revelations in psychological research that traumatic amnesia may have no basis in fact. Joshua Pederson has recently proposed an alternate model of literary trauma theory based on the research of Richard McNally that emphasizes "both the accessibility of traumatic memory and the possibility that victims may construct reliable narrative accounts of it" (338). This is good news both for veteran writers and their preceptors. Where once blood was the only truth and, to adapt Lao Zi, the war story that could be spoken was not the true war story, we may yet discover the synthesis of knowledge that our society has long craved and resisted, a peaceable kingdom where the lion of experience will lay down with the lamb of research, and revelation and science will meet without immolating the veterans who serve as their epistemological meeting ground. Then some future American Virgil will be able to sing not just of arms and the man but also of the tragic empire whose justifications and costs Aeneas prophetically enacts.

---

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See *Composition Forum* 28 (Fall 2013) for a special issue on "Veterans and Writing," edited by Alexis Hart and Roger Thompson; see *Women and Language* 37:1 (2014) for the "In the Salon" section entitled, "Women in the Military: Feminist Issues and Reflections," featuring essays by Marie

Thompson, Mariana Grohowski, Laura Prividera and John W. Howard; and see *Pedagogy* 16.3 (2016) for a special cluster of essays on veterans in academe, also edited by Hart and Thompson.

This essay is adapted from a talk given at the April 18, 2015 CCCC Workshop on “Working with Post 9/11 Student-Veterans: A Workshop for Composition Teachers, Scholars, and WPAs.” The author is grateful for the feedback and encouragement from other workshop participants and the anonymous journal reviewers.

---

### Works Cited

- Campbell, James. “Combat Gnosticism: The Ideology of First World War Poetry Criticism.” *New Literary History*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1999, pp. 203–215.
- Carson, Michael. “The Philosopher Hero: From Socrates to Scranton.” *The Wrath Bearing Tree*, 2015, <https://wrathbearingtree.wordpress.com/2015/01/27/the-philosopher-hero-from-socrates-to-scranton/>. Accessed 1 March 2015.
- Casey, John A. *New Men: Reconstructing the Image of the Veteran in Late-Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2015.
- Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Spy*. 1821. New York: Penguin Books, 1997.
- Corley, Liam. “Brave Words”: Rehabilitating the Veteran-Writer.” *College English*, no. 74, vol. 4, 2012, pp. 351–65.
- Crane, Stephen. *The Red Badge of Courage*. 1895. New York: W.W. Norton, 2008.
- Doe, Sue and Lisa Langstraat, eds. *Generation Vet: Composition, Student Veterans, and the Post-9/11 University*. Boulder, CO: Utah State University Press, 2014.
- Fagles, Robert, transl. *The Aeneid by Virgil*. New York: Penguin, 2006.
- Gallagher, Matthew and Roy Scranton, eds. *Fire and Forget: Short Stories from the Long War*. New York: Da Capo, 2013.
- Harris, M. Keith. *Across the Bloody Chasm: The Culture of Commemoration among Civil War Veterans*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2014.
- Hart, D. Alexis and Roger Thompson. “An Ethical Obligation”: Promising Practices for Student Veterans in College Writing Classrooms. 4Cs Research Grant White Paper. Urbana, IL: NCTE/CCCC, 2013.
- Howells, W.D. *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. 1885. New York: Penguin, 1983.
- James, Henry. *The American*. 1877. New York: Penguin, 1981.
- Klay, Phil. “The Interview.” *The Short Form*, 2011, [theshortform.com/interview/phil-klay/](http://theshortform.com/interview/phil-klay/). Accessed 9 Jan. 2017.
- Lattimore, Richmond, transl. *Odyssey of Homer*. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.
- Marlantes, Karl. *What it is Like to Go to War*. New York: Grove Press, 2011.
- Marten, James. *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.
- Pederson, Joshua. “Speak, Trauma: Toward a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory.” *Narrative*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2014, pp. 333–53.
- Resch, John. *Suffering Soldiers: Revolutionary War Veterans, Moral Sentiment, and Political Culture in the Early Republic*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.
-

- Scranton, Roy. "The Trauma Hero: From Wilfred Owen to 'Redeployment' and 'American Sniper.'" *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 25 Jan 2015, [lareviewofbooks.org/essay/trauma-hero-wilfred-owen-redeployment-american-sniper/](http://lareviewofbooks.org/essay/trauma-hero-wilfred-owen-redeployment-american-sniper/). Accessed 9 Jan. 2017.
- Swartwout, Susan. *Proud to Be: Writing by American Warriors*. Volume 1. Cape Girardeau, MO: Southeast Missouri State University Press, 2012.
- Thompson, Roger. "Recognizing Silence: Composition, Writing, and the Ethical Space for War." *Generation Vet: Composition, Student Veterans, and the Post-9/11 University*. Ed. by Sue Doe and Lisa Langstraat. Boulder, CO: Utah State University Press, 2014, pp. 199–215.
- Turner, Brian. *My Life as a Foreign Country*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2014.
- Tyler, Royall. *The Contrast: A Comedy*. 1787. New York: Burt Franklin, 1970.

---

**Liam Corley, English and Foreign Languages Department  
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona // [wccorley@cpp.edu](mailto:wccorley@cpp.edu)**

---