Rhubarb

Summer 2009, Issue Number 22

War+Peace

The* Mennonite Literary Society *thanks the W.H. & S.E. Loewen Foundation Inc for its support.

CANADA POST MAIL SALES PRODUCT AGREEMENT NO. 40032695
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO: RHUBARB MAGAZINE, 606-100 ARTHUR STREET, WINNIPEG, MB R3B 1H3
PRINTED IN CANADA

Rhubarb

Guest Editor (this issue)
Victor Enns

Editors
Lois Braun, Paul Krahn
Sarah Klassen (Reviews)

Layout & Design
Paul Krahn

Publisher
The Mennonite Literary Society

Charitable Registration
#111924 4986 RR0001

Advisory Board
Garry Enns, Aganetha Dyck, Hildi Froese Tiessen, Julia Kasdorf, Rudy Wiebe

Board of Directors
Lois Braun, David Elias, Garry Enns (President), John Goossen, Paul Krahn, Ken Reddig, Armin Wiebe

Rhubarb (ISSN: 1481-4153)
606-100 Arthur St.
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1H3
rhubarb@rhubarbmag.com
submit@rhubarbmag.com
www.rhubarbmag.com

Single copy price: $8 (Cdn)
Subscription rates: $30/4 issues (Cdn); $30/4 issues (US). Please contact us regarding advertising in the magazine.

Submissions
E-mail and surface mail submissions welcome, and should include mailing address, telephone number, e-mail address, and a contributor's biography. High-contrast artwork is welcome on slides, transparencies, or in high resolution digital files on CD, or via email. Do not send originals of art or writing.

No manuscripts will be returned. Art will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

***

Thanks to our supporters, in particular the Manitoba Arts Council, and organizations and individual donors who have provided support for this issue.

Letters

Correction?

Dear Rhubarb

Thanks for publishing two of my poems. I think *Rhubarb* is a wonderful publication. Just wanted to let you know that there was a mistake with my poem "Things That Matter" (Spring 2009). The last two lines are the ending to a different poem I sent you. Perhaps it was my mistake, perhaps the publications. No huge deal, those last two lines almost work okay.

Peace,
Cheryl Denise

Oops!

Hello Cheryl,

I checked the files you sent me, and the file of "Things That Matter " does not include those last two lines. I don't quite know how to explain how those errant two lines appeared, however I'm quite sure that the error was mine. (I think it was one of those electronic strays —I must have had the other poem copied into the layout and then decided against it, but not erased all of it, and then not copy-edited thoroughly enough.)

Mea Culpa! Terribly sorry and embarrassed about that. The corrected poem appears, in its entirety, on p. 40 of this one.

Paul Krahn
Rhubarb Magazine

Rhubarb is an independent magazine designed to provide an outlet for the (loosely defined) Mennonite voice, reflect the changing face of the Mennonite community, promote dialogue, and encourage the Anabaptist tradition of reformation and protest.

Rhubarb is looking for contemporary art and writing of excellence. Writing should be clear, stimulating and persuasive without being didactic. *Rhubarb* publishes poetry, drama, creative non-fiction and short fiction (generally, 2,000 - 2,500 words or less), and black and white artwork and high-contrast photographs that reproduce well. *Rhubarb* also publishes humour, book reviews, commentary and articles related to theme.

Send submissions electronically or by surface mail to:

Rhubarb Magazine
606 - 100 Arthur St.
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1H3
submit@rhubarbmag.com

War + Peace

By Victor Enns

There is a Mennonite taboo against anger, against violence, against killing. There are plentiful huzzahs! for peace. Most of the writing and the images in this issue will articulate arguments (can Mennonites really have arguments?) as to why "thou shalt not kill"[1] is the banner on which we pledge our hearts, that leads our legion down main street, and our souls to light.

I want to make love, not war. Both wants are desire. I want fulfillment in another, "but you can't always get what you want, sometimes you get what you need."[2] Do men want or need to kill each other? Eros and Thanatos argue while bodies seek a comfortable resting place. I imagine fucking someone is more fun than killing someone, though I'll never know for sure. What would a woman think?

My argument is there is nothing this easy, and death has no one to please.

The returned soldier has killed, but will not speak of it. We cannot touch him without contagion. He knows he is a ghost. Few soldiers look for validity in the real world, for the real world, as we know it, is not for them. They will not speak, except to those in the same boat, their hearts "sinking in mid-ocean."[3]

Yet, I insist, "The basis of taboo is a forbidden action for which there exists a strong inclination in the unconscious."[4] However powerful, it is not only training that loads my gun, but (unconscious) desire to kill another. How else to proclaim victory?

Even though I miss him, God is dead,[5] to paraphrase. As a humanist I argue there are universal human rights. Blood-thirsty, god-fearing Taliban (they are the enemy, tell me how you love them?) say these human rights are only western values and an affront to their God. Who will judge this debate? For the humanist, is not killing another human the ultimate anti-human act? Throw the Lacanian net over the equation, and by killing the Other I am killing myself. Good soldiers[6] know this like no other.

Throw acid in the face of an Afghan schoolgirl and she may never learn to read. Where is Allah in her literature? Will she see past her brothers?

There are no articles in this issue about the selbstshütz in the Old Country. The stories we are brave enough to tell are how we have been martyrs to our faith, or to our mothers and fathers, or about what we have learned in our journeys to other countries. We all know Mennonites have never killed anyone.

"But as it is, death is everywhere
In more shapes than we can count,
And since no mortal is immune or can escape,
Lets go forward, either to give glory
To another man, or get glory from him."
—Homer

Christian soldiers are not Mennonite soldiers. Not even Boy Scouts or Girl Guides, the military is there somewhere rummaging in the uniforms My father would not even wear a uniform to drill with the other medical students. He was cast out. He became ill. Which came first? What drills did I learn? Ah, we're back to the martyrdom at the hands of our fathers and mothers. So much less than the Muslims at Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo Bay.

How do I earn the right to speak? How do I earn the right to speak for heroes, for soldiers, for killers we train in the art of war, an art like no other? I listen. I make it up.

No one wants to speak for soldiers. They are now called "perpetrators," all war-dead victims at the end of a gun. The others, killers—fingers on the triggers. And if I'm holding that gun and survive to return to Trenton or Shilo, what does that make me?

From whence cometh my healing, and do I need more than sutures?

[1] ***Or is it: Thou shalt not murder? How do you read the sixth commandment?***
[2] ***Rolling Stones***
[3] ***Anna McGarrigle***
[4] ***Freud***
[5] ***attributed to Gore Vidal and Julian Barnes***
[6] ***Ford Maddox Ford,*** **The Good Soldier,** ***a must read.***

Healing the Soldiers

by Carolyn Holderread Heggen

My childhood fascination with the copper-plate etchings of torture in Grandma Katie's worn copy of The Martyrs Mirror was not unusual, I've since learned. Others tell me they, too, were mesmerized by the incomprehensible courage of the martyrs and the creative cruelty of their tormentors. I feared I would not be strong enough to faithfully endure such persecution if ever put to the test.

I deduced early that armed people working for the state can cause much pain, destruction, and dislocation for the innocent. Soldiers were clearly bad, and those faithful Anabaptists were unfathomably good.

> DOES OUR UNRESOLVED GRIEF AND UNHEALED PAIN EXPRESS ITSELF TODAY IN A SENSE OF "US AGAINST THEM," IN UNHEALTHY WAYS OF HANDLING CONFLICT

Years later, as a beginning psychotherapist, I informed my supervisor that because of my strong beliefs about war and personal feelings about soldiers, I'd rather not work with vets. I couldn't imagine developing an appropriately compassionate therapeutic alliance with someone who had knowingly killed. I preferred working with victims of rape, sexual abuse, and domestic violence—those I saw as innocent victims.

Because I lived in a city with a large military presence, I soon was asked to see my fair share of Vietnam veterans. Thus began my recalcitrant journey toward a more compassionate, nuanced regard for combat veterans whom I now regard as both perpetrators and victims of the destructive violence of war.

One step on this heart-softening journey was learning about the dreams deferred for veterans who had been drafted involuntarily. Many had wanted to go to college, begin building a career, or start a marriage before the draft altered those plans. Others who had volunteered to serve soon realized that the reasons for waging war in Vietnam were less clear and noble than they'd once believed. Once in, it became almost impossible to get out.

Many of the veterans I learned to know had been mere teenagers while in Vietnam. Caught up in the adrenaline, fear-fueled chaos of battle, some had knowingly committed acts that continued even decades later to haunt their dreams and torture their consciences. Others had seen comrades seriously wounded or violently killed, causing disturbing flashbacks by day and nightmares at night. Because war has a way of creating bonds deeper and more intimate than many men have experienced elsewhere, the death of a war buddy creates an enduring loss.

There is an almost universal rule against killing another human that spans times and cultures. The military, well aware of this, has devised creative and effective training techniques to override this innate inhibition. But when veterans leave the battlefield, return to civilian life and reflect, the significance of their combat behavior sometimes becomes a terrifying insight. In my psychotherapy work, veterans sometimes speak of having lost their soul, of having crossed a line that puts them outside the human family, of feeling dead inside, of having condemned themselves to a place beyond the reach of God's grace. When they speak of the violence they have perpetrated, many express deep sorrow, moral anguish, and existential shame. The fact that they were doing what their government told them to do does not relieve their burden.

Not knowing what else to do with their guilty conscience and troubled minds, some veterans turn to destructive, addictive sexual behaviors. Others self-medicate with alcohol or drugs. Others try to feel alive and energized again by engaging in such adrenaline-producing behaviors as risky driving or criminal behavior. Too many choose suicide as a way to escape.

Because of advances in imaging technology, we can now see how violence and trauma alter the brain and affect subsequent behavior. While this technology is relatively new, we have long known that participating in combat changes soldiers. The malady is old and consistent, but the labels have changed. In the US Civil War, doctors spoke of "the staggers," "irritable heart," or "soldiers' heart." In WWI it was called "shell shock;" in WW II it was "combat neurosis," "battle fatigue," or "combat exhaustion."

Soldiers returning from Vietnam War forced the mental health community to pay increased attention to the psychological cost of combat. And so in the early 1980s the diagnosis of Post (after) Traumatic (deep

wound, serious injury) Stress (adverse reactions to the trauma) Disorder (problems with thinking and feeling that cause distress and interfere with daily living) was added to the vocabulary of mental disorders.

As more soldiers return from the current wars, the severity of readjustment problems has become front-page, prime-time news. It is no longer just the mental health community and soldiers and their loved ones who are aware of the lingering pain of combat. For anyone who follows the news it is hard to ignore the reports of high rates of domestic violence, divorce, alcoholism, substance abuse, criminality, and suicide among veterans.

Our Mennonite theology and practice of peace is central to who we are as a people. Our forebears left us a legacy of unwavering willingness to migrate, be jailed, or even die rather than participate in the taking of life. Today we offer an articulate voice denouncing the evils of violence. We have developed models of conflict resolution and peace-building that are employed around the world. Where wars have been waged, we have creatively tried to bring healing and hope to victims and to right the wrongs that injustice and violence have created.

At this time in history, is God perhaps inviting us to move out of our comfort zone to embrace not only innocent victims of war, but also combat vets and their families? Because we understand that violence and warfare are a serious violation of the way of Jesus and of God's intentions for humanity, we may be in a good position to address combat's psychological and spiritual damage.

Father William Mahedy, a Vietnam chaplain who has devoted his life to working with veterans says, "The guilt of war is the guilt of having been a bearer of death and terrible suffering to one's fellow humans." As Mennonite Christians we should understand that such guilt cannot be eradicated alone with deep-breathing techniques or visualizations of peaceful meadows.

I am grateful for the committed work of community psychological services and the military mental health system. They provide invaluable training and support for symptom management, substance abuse rehabilitation, anger control, and individual and family counseling. But only welcoming communities of faithful people can speak with healing power to soul-terrors and paralyzing shame. Psychology alone neither provides language nor constructs to effectively address deep soul wounds. But my faith community has, at its best, taught me about confession and forgiveness, transformation and conversion, mercy and grace—all important resources for healing the spiritual residue of war.

There may, however, be deep inner work to do before we are ready to engage with veterans and welcome them into our community. Have we as Anabaptists faced our own traumatic history of forced migration, persecution, and martyrdom, and understood how that history may still be affecting us?

Does the central Anabaptist injunction to not respond violently to violence and to forgive our enemies make it more difficult to fully acknowledge the depth of the violation against us and thus truncate our grief and inhibit our healing?

Burning of Anneken Hendriks, Amsterdam, 1571.

Does our unresolved grief and unhealed pain express itself today in a sense of "us against them," in unhealthy ways of handling conflict, in personal and institutional rigidity and lack of empathy for those outside our group?

If we acknowledge our personal and corporate brokenness and history of trauma and are healed, we may become a transformative community and a refuge of hope for soul-wounded veterans and their loved ones. This is not a project to "fix" veterans to return to battle. Rather, it is a commitment to listen to their unsettling stories, to call them to repentance and extend God's mercy and forgiveness. It is an invitation to work together in acts of peace building and justice making. It is a commitment to love veterans and welcome them into our community of faith, where we can together learn what it means to experience God's healing and grace. **R**

Afghanistan Confession 20

By Victor Enns

They didn't have to ask
me in my gear, walking up

to the point. "Here,
this is yours,"

a position
all sand.

Substance in the
breath of God

blowing away
fear. I see

traces of gunfire
in the night.

This desert is cold,
what I've seen before

is not, through
and through

until tonight.
My weight

against these bags;
altar light

flashing, pock
pock, a miss.

I load, targets
illuminated

flares iridescent –
blue the night.

Afghanistan Confession 30

By Victor Enns

this village
has no business

can only sell
cartridges.

the guns
in another village

wait to be loaded
for a quick look

down the street.
left, right.

sulphur trace
a quick up and down

this is the hole
we're marketing

for democracy, hey
hey, look at the salvage

on the side
of the road.

walk on by
walk on by.

Aghanistan Journal

by Victor Enns

May 7th, 2008, Kabul

I'm here. The hotel is modern with no battle scars, though there are always two guards with Kalashnikovs guarding the entrance and the elevator. The hotel has electricity, Internet, and a wonderful shower with hot water, but it's not flash enough to attract potential serious targets. I check the TV to see what's available and catch a few minutes of Nicholas Cage on HBO being a hero in the movie World Trade Centre before I crash and get some sleep.

May 8th, 2008, Kabul

Some of my friends—Mennonites, pacifists, humanists, lefties—are horrified that I would write poems in the voice of soldiers that are trained to fight and kill, and that I might in any way support an imperialist adventure in a country so far away as to be meaningless.

I suggest it may be possible to write effectively and persuasively presenting views, actions, and experiences that are not my own, however strained they are, through my own imagination, research, and voice.

Isn't that some of the fun of being a writer? It certainly is for the reader. To realize imaginatively an experience outside yourself. Of course, there are those that say it's totally impossible, as your self is all there is. The plethora of memoirs and the dominance of non-fiction books sales certainly carry the point.

Or is this all a smoke screen? Maybe I have already decided, as early as the first poem, that there is a strong case for killing oppressors to free the oppressed. But who gets to decide? Are there "universal" values and principles worth fighting for? Is it ever right to kill others, even if they are depriving their mothers, sisters, and wives of basic human rights, including freedom of movement and education, and stoning women accused of adultery? My father, a conscientious objector in World War II, must be rolling in his grave. I imagine my mother, who had to fight for her freedom, education, and independence in fundamentalist Mennonite southern Manitoba, is cheering in hers, or at least making coffee and buns for my journey.

"In dreams begin responsibilities." — Delmore Schwartz.
"In freedom begin responsibilities." — George Ens

May 8, 2008

A frustrating day. Though I arrived in Afghanistan on time, my suitcase did not. The fixer provided by the hotel and serving as a driver and interpreter does not speak enough English to communicate with me, which is a particular concern since I really need one to make this visit a success. I spend most of the afternoon trying to program my cell phone so I can start making appointments and track down my suitcase.

There is a bar/restaurant on the penthouse level of the hotel that serves only non-alcoholic drinks and Heineken. I have a view of the hills of the Hindu Kush from the outdoor patio as I enjoy a beer and the sunset and try to figure out how I'm going to break out of what is already beginning to feel like a prison. I don't feel I can go anywhere by myself, not needing a bodyguard so much as a fixer, to translate, get me from place to place, and make sure I don't do anything stupid.

These two weeks I am looking for a counterpoint to the poems I'm writing from the Canadian soldiers' perspective. Or am I looking for a justification for Canadian soldiers to be fighting in Kandahar?

This is the first time I've had the experience as a writer where the material has chosen me rather than me choosing the material, and it's wildly out of the range of my experience. I'm beginning to understand that the dictum "write what you know" might be to know more, and that my father was indeed called to the lay ministry. How dangerous is it for anyone to make such a claim of providence, or is it provenance? No matter how these poems are presenting themselves, it is a hard slog with research and revision to make them artful rather than just explicit images of war.

"The closer you get to the front lines, the fewer the abstract nouns."
— Gwynne Dyer

May 11th,2008

I've just met Miriam, probably the only Afghan woman I will get to talk to while I'm here, and always, of course, with a chaperone. She grew up in Kapisa, an hour's drive from Kabul. Her family moved to the city, but she couldn't leave the house or go to school during the time the Taliban where in power. Her father had to leave to find work in Iran. Miriam supported the family by sewing the all-covering burqas that women were required to wear outside the house.

Once the Taliban were driven away, she was able to go to school and finish her education. In Kabul that was possible, but not out in the coun-

try. She trained with a midwife in Canada, a woman I'd met in Winnipeg who had worked for thirteen months in Afghanistan. Miriam works full-time now in a Kabul hospital. She is an exception, an exception possible only in the city.

* * *

Tomorrow I'm spending the day with Hafiq, my guide and interpreter. I met him at the airport where he was responsible for reuniting me with my suitcase, then offering me his services.

He is a contemporary Afghan male wearing western clothing. He has a television and computer at home, though limited access to electricity. He has always lived in Kabul and has the advantage of being a male. He worked hard in school, and enrolled in private courses to learn English and computer skills.

The most basic education is still not available outside of the cities. The old ways live on in much of the country because the only learning there is what is passed from one generation to the next, as the assumption is that tribal and family values are all they need to survive. Those survival skills usually do not include reading and writing. Illiteracy is a huge problem in Afghanistan, with only 50% of the male population and 20% of the female population literate.

May 12th

Yesterday I had the good fortune to have a traditional Afghan lunch with an 81 year-old carpet merchant, who had sold me a beautiful hand-woven silk and wool Bamiyan shawl two days before. We were joined by two of his sons, my interpreter, and our driver as we sat cross-legged on the carpet to eat. The merchant has done well in his 60 years in the business. He argued that it was only by being good to other humans that goodness would come to you through the beneficence of Allah.

He is an expressive story-teller, conversant in body language and five others, including German. He throws himself into the tale, telling two parables from the Koran which in a Biblical context would have been "turn the other cheek," and "as you sow, so shall you reap." In the first instance, it is about a Christian throwing dirt on Mohammed every time he passed on his way to prayers in the morning, but Mohammed returning to heal the man when he fell sick and was no longer able to harass him. This showed the Christian the true way and he converted to Islam.

Though they were pitching me, the parable was told in the context of American domination, clearly indicating that the U.S. bombings and civilian killings were the dirt that good Muslims would repay with kindness. Within minutes, though, he implies that the Americans would reap evil from the evil they were sowing in the country.

The key, everyone around the lunch agreed, was that anyone trying to help Afghanistan must respect the dignity of the Afghan people. If the dignity of the

Afghan people is not respected, all Afghans will unite to drive out the intruders, as they have the Russians and the British before. I asked whether elections and new leadership would make a difference. They say, not likely, since it will be the U.S. presidency that decides who the next "king" of Afghanistan will be. They go back to the reapers parable, suggesting it was because of the corruption of the government that Allah was allowing the country to suffer another occupation and the continual cycle of war and poverty.

* * *

In the evening I meet Ahmad, accompanied by his uncle visiting from Canada. Their take on the situation is a little different. Ahmad works from 8 a.m. to 4:30, and then attends university from 5 until 8 p.m., returning home for dinner at 9, then straight to bed, six days a week. He spends his Friday holiday, the one day a week most people have off, for religious observance, doing his homework assignments, and whatever chores there may be around the house. He is the main breadwinner for a household of five.

Ahmad says clearly the most important thing to his future is his security and the security of his family. His family returned from Pakistan, like so many Afghans, after the Taliban were driven out of Kabul. He is pleased by the changes he sees and is working his butt off to get ahead, but thinks it may not be enough. He and his uncle don't see the current situation as an American occupation. They stress repeatedly that it is NATO that is here, not just the U.S., and they must finish what they have begun if the country is to have any kind of the future.

According to Ahmad and his uncle, a representative government of all the many ethnicities is needed; and for security, a strong well-trained army, a good, honest police force, and a national security service. This must come first, they say, otherwise how can any rebuilding take place, like the development of water resources and power so crucial to Afghanistan?

Ahmad also feels he has little or no power in the development of the country, indicating NATO must take responsibility for security and the development of Afghanistan. Then he looks over at his uncle who is staying with him for two months. He has a much easier life in Scarborough, Ontario, enjoying peace and safety of person, something Ahmad has never known in his young life. His choices are ones I'm glad my children will never have to make.

May 14, 2008

There's something spooky about Kabul. It's the near absence of women from the life of the city. Men are everywhere.

The staff of the hotel is completely male; in fact, so are the guests. Even the majority of foreigners here are men, as few women are willing to come even to visit such a repressive society. For many Afghan men, relationships with each

other will be their most important relationships, and ones where the word love might have some meaning. Men are affectionate with each other and it's not unusual to see policemen or soldiers holding hands.

It's as if women are a different species. Men love their mothers and respect their fathers. Obedience is expected, and the family is possibly the strongest social unit in the city, where the tribal influences are less prominent. As far as I can see, most Afghan women are still at home, protected from the gaze of men who are not their close relatives.

That is changing, and some are defensive about the slow progress women are making to take their rightful place in the community. There are women working with women, which is accepted and necessary, as it is still considered improper for a man to touch a woman who is not his wife. So the midwives, girls-school teachers, and hairdressers work with women and are nearly invisible, since they are rarely in the street.

Some women do venture out on the dusty street with just a headscarf, but most still wear burqas, led by a male relative because it's required by conservative practice, and because it's nearly impossible for women to see where they are going. The relative may be a young son as they go to the market. If a woman is living a conservative tradition she is not to conduct business with a male shopkeeper, so the boy must handle the transaction. All shopkeepers and street vendors are male, and you will usually see only men in the shops or buying from the vendors as a result. If women are on the street, it is usually because they are going to visit someone.

There are also many beggar-women in dusty burqas, some with infants, walking between the cars in traffic, imploring those inside to spare a few coins or Afghanis so they can eat. Many husbands have been killed in the 25 years of war and others may take up to four wives and decide to divorce one they're finding troublesome in the household. Widows and divorced women have no means of support unless their families of origin take them in. Most will be illiterate and not prepared for any job, which they would be discouraged from taking, anyway.

I meet with a Japanese woman working for the Mennonite Economic Development Agency (MEDA) inside a compound with a large house. We meet in her office where her baby is sleeping. She says they are careful not to be heavy handed with a women's rights agenda. Their approach is subtle, especially since most of their work is in rural villages. The female field workers train women in horticulture so they learn to grow produce, which can be sold to others in their villages, or taken to market in Kabul. The MEDA administrator told me they had a meeting recently with all the women, and the field staff asked what they did with their money, expecting to hear that they turned it over to their husbands. Instead they gestured

to their embroidered wallets and purses and said simply, "We keep it." The men in the villages were also concerned the women might be learning more than they, but instead of trying to stop it, they asked the women to teach them what they had learned, seeing the benefits it was having.

May 16th, 2008

I'm packing. Last night I had my last interview with Miriam and her cousin Yasin. Miriam explained that some of her school records are missing, burnt by the Taliban, which is making it difficult to complete the paperwork to start emigration proceedings.

Yasin sits silently until the end of my interview with Miriam, then he speaks: "When I heard about you visiting Kabul, I knew you were God's messenger, sent to help me. My father promised my sister to my cousin when she was just a baby. The Taliban shot my father for teaching English. Though it is very hard, we make our way to Kabul where I earn a bit of money as a tailor. I sew clothes for women, and the Taliban beat me for not strictly observing their law. This is not the worst of it. Then my cousin came, it had been enough years and my sister was now a woman of 14, and my cousin wanted to marry with her. My mother stopped him, and they beat us, hitting my mother in the head with a rifle butt. The police come and take them to jail, but the police are corrupt and my cousin's family give bribes and my cousins come back asking for my sister and again beating us. We have to go and hide. But my mother is beaten so badly she dies, and now it is just me and my sister, and I don't know how I can protect her. That's why you are here to help us."

There is nothing I can do or say to help.

We exchange email addresses, and I agree to change all the names in my articles to protect them in case the Taliban should ever read about them in Rhubarb magazine. I point out, reading is unlikely considering the literacy rate, but they say the Taliban have spies everywhere.

After my daily eggs this morning, I call Afghan Logistics for a cab. I feel guilty for being as happy as I am to leave, driving to the airport, the sun filtered by the dust, the smell of diesel heavy in the air.

7:00 a.m. Saturday morning, May 17th, Frankfurt

Tired already, with most of my journey home still to go. It's been a long night on the plane from Dubai, uncomfortable seats, crying children through the night. I tried to set it up with a couple of scotches in the airport back in Dubai before my flight left. I met a man in the bar there who was just getting off work for Blackwater to spend some time with his family in Texas. The Americans, so enamoured with the private sector, don't even trust the security of their ambassador to government employees, and hire Blackwater men.

The contractor was a young Latino who couldn't wait to get back to his girlfriend. He'd made enough cash to buy a really nice house and a new truck. He had enjoyed his time with the ambassador's security detail, especially since his ambassador had gone to school in Kabul and would take the security detail into places that will be unknown to his successor—new ambassador, new job. He was shunted to training other Blackwater recruits on the shooting range. He complained there were so many Afghans being trained to shoot, it was hard to get the Americans, or even himself, any time at the range. He was not sure he'd come back.

When he left the bar, his chair was taken up by a heavy-set, tattooed young man in expensive casual clothes. He ordered a beer and let me know he was from Avonlea, Saskatchewan. He attended the school at Notre Dame de Lourdes and played some serious near-professional hockey, spending some time in the majors as a pro hockey scout, before he turned his skills set to business. He said he now makes his living as a professional arms dealer, or so he would have me believe. You never know—over a drink in the bar in Dubai Airport, you can pretty much be anyone you want. All I want to be, is home. **R**

Victor Enns thanks the Manitoba Arts Council and Winnipeg Arts Council for assisting with the costs of the trip to Afghanistan. Victor also thanks Corporal Neil Maclean, CD for his reflections on his time in Afghanistan and his response to Afghanistan Confessions.

Photographs courtesy of Victor Enns.

Afghanistan Confession 47

By Victor Enns

I give the boy
in the green tunic

a kite with the red
maple leaf

to fly
and turn

away from Christ
from Mohammed

to the clear
air. Red kites

in Canada
the dominion

of poets, peace
a whisper

left
behind.

Shrapnel

By Elinore Wieler

My mother was nine when her father, the village teacher and church's minister, was taken to Siberia by Stalin's soldiers where they shot him some months later. She was thirteen when she and her remaining family fled their home in front of the advance of Stalin's army. Their yearlong retreat to a German refugee camp, plagued with hunger, deprivation and lice, put an end to her education. She was never able to finish school, a lifelong disappointment, because she had to work for food. My mother was fifteen when her eldest brother was caught, trapped behind the impenetrable iron curtain. Her sister succumbed to scarlet fever in the refugee camps. My mother arrived in Canada accompanied only by her mother, the remaining family dead or scattered across Europe.

It would take almost fifty years before I could accept that my mother had no choice but to weave the harsh lessons of her survival into the tapestry of my life. Illness had been a life threatening experience, so when I caught cold after sneaking out of the house without my ugly homeknit hat and mitts, she spanked me with a wooden spoon. If I was sick, I went to school until a teacher sent me to the nurse's office where I begged for permission to lie on the mustard-coloured vinyl daybed until it was time to go home. I must have sounded desperate, because the nurse always let me stay. At home, I pretended I was well unless I had what my mother would designate as a legitimate illness. Unlike the vague laziness of a cold or flu, something with a specific name like mumps, measles, or scarlet fever could rouse my mother to deliver endless cups of flat lemon soda, aspirin crushed in plum preserves and head rubs that tingled down to my toes.

When I was ten a boil appeared just above the crook of my right arm, an interesting little bump my mother squeezed and covered in dark orange iodine. It puffed up quickly and painfully after this treatment. "This is nothing for the doctor," she insisted. We'd try her poultice recipe instead, a disgusting mix of green herbs and mustard powder smeared on my bloated arm, then wrapped with strips of clean white cloth. Between poultice applications, I had to soak the elbow in a steaming cauldron, my mother periodically adding freshly boiled water. The lump grew until I couldn't write or go to school, the thin cloth of a blouse touching the bloated skin brought on agonized sobbing. My whole existence centred on the throbbing golf ball in the crook of my arm.

Three fresh little boils emerging down the arm from the original mass made my mother accept defeat. I lay on the couch in a feverish haze as we waited three days for an appointment with a doctor who attended our church. When it was finally time to go, my mother stood at my right on the crowded bus so I wouldn't scream if someone jostled the arm.

"We are so sorry to trouble you, Herr Doktor," was her response to his friendly greeting. His eyes widened when he saw my arm. He helped me onto the examining table, covered me with rubberized cloth and positioned my mother across from him, beside my healthy arm. "Squeeze that hand," he told her. To me he said, "Face toward your mother." I started to turn obediently, but curiousity overcame fear and I turned to watch him wield his scalpel. A quick jab released a spray of greenish yellow pus in a wide arc splattering the doctor's white coat and my mother's dress. That she followed the doctor's lead in disregarding the gunk on her best Sunday dress surprised me almost as much as the immediate relief from pulsing agony. The doctor pushed at the skin to expel the remaining pus until he reached bright red blood. I hardly noticed the sting of disinfectant as tears of relief and gratitude poured down my cheeks.

The doctor assured me the three baby boils would disappear if I completed the prescribed dose of antibiotics. He shook my mother's hand firmly as we left, saying, "Don't ever wait so long again." She curtsied, thanking him, apologizing all the way down the hall.

If illness was unacceptable, emotional displays were equally so in my mother's experience and she found opportunities to pass the lesson to me. My mother was twenty-two when she was reunited with her three surviving sisters and one brother who arrived in Canada in 1952. The siblings needed the comfort of regular contact in those early years after their reunion. Spontaneous visits were a common occurrence, especially on Sunday afternoons.

I was only five when we dropped in at my aunt's for fasba to find that my uncle's and other aunt's families were already there. I could see Tante Anna's hand in

the pickle jar, adding juicy preserves to a crystal bowl. At the table, Oma heaped platters with savoury cold cuts to eat with the rich white buns heaped in baskets lined with lacy napkins. Tante Liese cut the cream tortes that stood on the counter alongside plates of buttery cookies. The uncles greeted us from the living room and I waved at my cousins playing a frenetic game of tag in the small porch behind the kitchen. My mouth watered and my heart swelled in anticipation of an afternoon's fun. I tried to run to my cousins, but my mother kept a firm grip on my hand. Tante Anna came into the hall drying her hands on a clean white tea towel, a welcoming smile just for me and assurance for my parents that there was room for everyone. My mother interrupted to say, "No, no, we couldn't think of staying. You already have more than enough company." I cried, probably even wailed at the injustice, dropping to the floor so that my father had to haul me off to the car while my mother apologized for my disobedience.

At home, she took the worn old wooden spoon out of the kitchen drawer to reinforce the lesson that my tears had been inappropriate, that she had felt embarrassed. After the spanking, she sat me down on her knee to make sure I understood. She expected me to smile and appear cheerful anytime we were out of the house no matter how I felt. The only place we could speak freely was in our own home, but only if no one else was around. I learned these lessons from spankings that hurt my pride more than my behind. I also learned by watching her, as I did on Advent Sunday the year I was fifteen.

My cousins and I had an afternoon rehearsal at church for an evening choir concert. My mother offered to save her sisters the extra trip from their new bungalows in the suburbs because the rehearsal fell between morning service and evening performance. She invited the two girls to our house in the old neighbourhood a short walk from the church.

My mother had scrubbed others' floors for years, scrimping to buy shining china, gleaming silver and crisp linen to set a perfect table. What she had neglected to do was to marry a man who wanted to join her in recreating the splendour of her childhood home. My father had experienced similar losses to hers during the war, and cared only about forgetting them. My parents fought over his resistance to moving out of our immigrant neighbourhood to a Kildonan bungalow next door to other Mennonites. They had furious fights when my mother tried to save money on food to spend on crystal and china. He wanted his meals plentiful and on time, his newspaper in place to read after supper. Fights and unexpected changes to his routine brought on a bout of drinking.

My cousins and I arrived from morning service that Sunday to find my mother putting food on a beautifully laid table that was missing one place setting. My father's absence from Sunday dinner made the hairs on my skin stand up like antennae, probing the air for the possibility of an embarrassing appearance. By age fifteen, I had integrated my mother's lessons to the point that the dread remained stuffed down my throat at the centre of my chest. I just couldn't maintain the good cheer with which she served us a delicious roast chicken dinner. My cousin's, 'Where's Onkel?' received only a quick laugh and short reply, 'Sleeping.' Then she loaded our plates while the ceiling vibrated with his drunken snores, asking questions about school and music lessons, anything to keep the conversation going, our guests distracted.

I bargained with God as I picked at my food. I'd practice piano without whining, help my mother without being asked and memorize Bible verses before the walk to church on Sundays, if my father would just stay out of sight. My prayer was answered during dinner and I relaxed to the point that, back at church in rehearsal, I managed to forget about my father. On the walk home with my cousins through gently falling snow, I listened to their happy chatter about Christmas and was halfway up the front walk before I noticed the ominous darkness shrouding our house. My heart dropped when I turned the knob to find the door locked.

My mother opened it so quickly, I knew she'd been waiting. "Welcome back, girls," she whispered. Behind her, a dark form lay in the hallway, almost completely covered by a large quilt, barely visible in a ray of light from the streetlamp. Carefully, my mother ushered us into the dining room, stepping around my father and the sour odour that rose from the quilt. She closed the doors to the hall and kitchen to enclose us in the room, warmly lit by one red candle on the Advent wreath and six smaller candles set in delicate crystal stars. My mother's homemade buns, Christmas cookies and stollen lay on seasonal platters, artfully arranged between branches of evergreen. German carols played softly on the stereo.

"I just love Advent," she said. My mother hummed as she poured steaming coffee into china cups from an elegant silver service. Clearly, we would ignore the fact that my father lay passed out in our front hall. My cousins reached for goodies and ate greedily while my

mother sighed at her favourite carol and told us of her childhood Christmases. So completely did she hold the folds of reality within the edges of the candlelight, my stomach unclenched and I forgot about the reeking hulk on the other side of the door. Warmed by coffee and cake, we stepped over him during our departure for the concert. My cousins kissed my mother and thanked her in whispers at the door, held in thrall to the spell she'd woven around us, just as I was.

I returned from a successful performance free of the icy hand that usually resided in my gut for the duration of my father's binges. When I opened the door, I could see an empty hallway and candlelight flickering in the kitchen. I didn't ask where my father was and she didn't mention him as we enjoyed the hot milk and cookies she had waiting for me.

That's how it was with my mother. Even as an adult I never knew whether I would encounter a hard or soft edge in our meetings, yet I never learned to keep my defenses up when we were together. Her soft side seduced me into opening my heart, opening myself to her painful attempts to raise me long past childhood. It was easier to avoid her entirely, but I was never able to sustain distance for long either.

I was almost fifty when she asked me to join her for some shopping downtown. After helping her with her purchases, we went for coffee, and I told her of my new joy in writing. She listened intently, smiled warmly, striking just the right note by asking for stories to read. Then, the same loving look on her face, she leaned forward as if to share a most intimate secret. "Just promise me," she said, gesturing at my clothes, "you won't embarrass me again by dressing so poorly when you're writing fulltime." My breath stopped. I'd dressed casually but carefully for this afternoon with my meticulous mother. The place where her words twisted and squeezed used to house my expanded and open heart. My smile wobbled precariously and I left as quickly as I could.

But learning stoicism is not the same as becoming immune to pain. I used my writing as an exorcism, pouring criticism and harsh words onto paper in an effort to lance the wounds. Eventually, mulling over which mother incident to use in my next piece led to a deep yearning to understand her history, to uncover what might have caused the wounds she passed on to me. I decided to interview her, a process I hoped would allow objectivity and a new perspective of my unpredictable mother. In response to my questions, she recited the familiar stories. For the first time I became aware of the flat monotone she used in the telling. She spoke as impassively of soldiers arriving to take her father to his death as she would in reading a grocery list.

"It must have been awful to lose your father so young," I suggested.

She sounded surprised, and asked sincerely, "It is a sad story, isn't it?"

Her question flipped the switch for me, the one that revealed the emotional shrapnel. After her happy and abundant childhood, came the many wartime losses: father, brother, sister, home, education. The trauma shattered parts of her into the shards that later pierced me. The real surprise was that she retained any tenderness at all.

It took time to unravel the war victim from the mother who hurt me. I am glad to say that before she died, compassion gradually replaced grief. She ended our last conversation saying, "I hope you see I was right." I almost laughed aloud but smiled instead. Something inside me had finally softened so that I could accept her with genuine love and appreciation. **R**

Cutthroat #10

By Ted Dyck

Like a sign in the east, the comet* throbs quietly
in the morning sky, blurred by a fish-scale cloud,
paling before the rising equinoctial sun, shrouded in a light greater than its own false piety.
The last comet, Cutthroat, you will ever see—
and the first. Alpha and omega, the vicious round
of the snake, tail in mouth, that will have bound
perfectly your imperfect desire for perfection.
You had not thought it would begin to end like this.
You had thought you would slouch heroically toward
a waiting dragon, your puny blade ready, your shield
over your pumping heart. Lesser foes would have yielded
place to one worthy of your desire, of your rusted sword's
wish. Not this comet, this false light, this snake's hiss.

** Comet Hale-Bopp was clearly visible in Canada in March 1997*

The Bridge From War to Peace in Afghanistan

By Ernie Regehr

"You can just call me Abdullah." Such was the greeting, through the interpreter, of one of the visitors. His two companions remained silent during the introductions. One was presented simply as a cleric; the other offered a courteous half bow by way of greeting and took a seat on the couch with the others. But once settled, with the tea poured, he got straight to the point: "Foreign forces should not be in our country. They insult Islam and kill our innocent people, and we will fight them to our last breath."

The Presidential Palace destroyed in the 1990s civil war

The identification that mattered was my Afghan contact's earlier assurance that the three men that would be knocking on my hotel room door shortly after nightfall were "very close" to the Taliban. This being Kabul, it was an association they did not themselves advertise, but the conversation left little doubt where their sympathies stood.

They explained that the Bonn "peace" agreement on the heels of the American invasion in 2001 sidelined the majority (by which they meant, the Pashtuns) and installed the Afghan allies of the Americans, the Northern Alliance groups, to run an imposed Government. Now, seven years later, as they put it, a corrupt and illegitimate regime still occupies Kabul. It is rejected by Afghans and will not survive "the war of the just."

The day before, the director of an NGO resource centre documented the deadly stream of Taliban attacks on schools with the temerity to teach female students or, worse yet, employ female teachers. The field reports and news stories in her bulging folder recounted schools that were burned, teachers maimed or killed, girl students killed. A librarian clearly committed to the NGO's mission of promoting literacy and peace education in all districts and among all population groups, she for at least a brief moment set aside the formal equanimity of one committed to reconciliation and dialogue: "The international community cannot, it must not, allow the monsters who do this to return to Kabul to impose their perverse will on all of us Afghans."

For some, the armed forces of the international community represent all that is wrong with today's

Afghanistan; for others, those same forces are all that stands between them and all that is wrong with contemporary Afghanistan.

At its best, the international community's bulging military and civilian presence in Afghanistan should be a bridge to new and more promising future. A group of senior high school students, encountered on an evening visit to their crowded dormitory on the edge of Kabul, wanted it to be so, but they remained heavily burdened by doubts that turned readily to anger. "Forty of the world's richest and most powerful countries in the world are here to help little Afghanistan," said one, "but our lives only get worse. Why is that?"

The students, in Kabul from all parts of the country and representing all the major ethnic communities, drew on a shared reservoir of indignation to describe what they said was the callous disrespect of international forces, especially US forces, toward their religion and culture and the people themselves. The students portrayed the foreign military forces as squandering a once-in-their-lifetime opportunity for a steadying and constructive presence to rescue their land from the political strife that is endemic and regularly transformed into war. What they saw instead was repeated acts of betrayal, through either indifference or deliberate disrespect. Home searches by foreign forces, in which women are routinely manhandled and humiliated, leave a pervasive and lasting impression, reconfirmed and entrenched when civilians are killed by international forces.

Especially striking was the extent to which the attitudes of the outspoken students were reflected in two weeks of conversations with many others, from village elders to senior government officials to academics and representatives of international NGOs.

And yet, almost none concluded that "foreign forces should not be in our country." Even my Taliban visitors drew back from their bold opening declaration. The cleric cautioned that it would not really be wise, at last not at this time, for all foreign forces to leave, for that would send Afghanistan into a new level of war that would not be easy to end. The old Taliban-Northern Alliance conflict would immediately escalate into a generalized and destructive round of fighting. And a key source of his caution was the fear that, given the present state of the Taliban and the Northern Alliance's access to sophisticated weapons through their western friends, the Taliban and other anti-government forces could not prevail in such a civil war.

And most analysts believe that the same goes for the pro-government forces. Neither side (and there is little likelihood the ensuing fight would be confined to only two sides) would have the capacity to prevail. Both of the main protagonists now have only the capacity to deny victory to the other and thus to prolong the chaos. That is certainly what the students feared. Instead of leaving, the students said, the international military forces should learn what should be obvious to them anyway, that to earn the respect of the population they will have to show some respect in return. Some were insistent that the Americans should definitely leave, but be replaced by forces from Muslim countries (though obviously not Pakistan or Iran or some others).

If the international presence is indeed a possible bridge to a new future, most of those engaged on this visit certainly didn't want it torn down; but they also had little doubt that if urgent repairs were not soon carried out, the whole structure would collapse. International forces cannot now reliably protect local communities in the provinces where the insurgency is centered to enable the educational and reconstruction activity that is needed. On the other hand, though they fail at the level of micro- or community-security, those same international forces nevertheless do help to prevent all-out civil war. So, while public confidence in the international military presence is severely tested, and probably declining, the international community through the UN and International Security Assistance Force still must be credited with creating space for not only some badly needed self-repair, but also for what is both most neglected and most needed, namely,

Hazara IDP camp in Kabul

energetic initiatives in support of social and political reconciliation.

Afghanistan is a text book case of states in which the absence of public institutions capable of mediating intra-national disputes inevitably leads communities or regions to seek out alternative sectarian, tribal, or regional institutions that they hope will better serve their interests and on which they feel they can depend. In particular, in the absence of trust in national security institutions (like the police), communities logically try to develop their own means of security, especially armed security. Local reliance on armed militias in much of contemporary Afghanistan obviously reflects the state's inability to secure a monopoly on the resort to force.

This longstanding distrust of national mediating and security institutions was not redressed by the 2001 defeat of the Taliban and the subsequent development of a new government. Nor will trust be built through military combat. Indeed, it is now the widely accepted recognition, even among military leaders, that victory will not come on the battlefield—or, as some have put it, international forces will not one day kill the last insurgent and go home, leaving a harmonious country behind them.

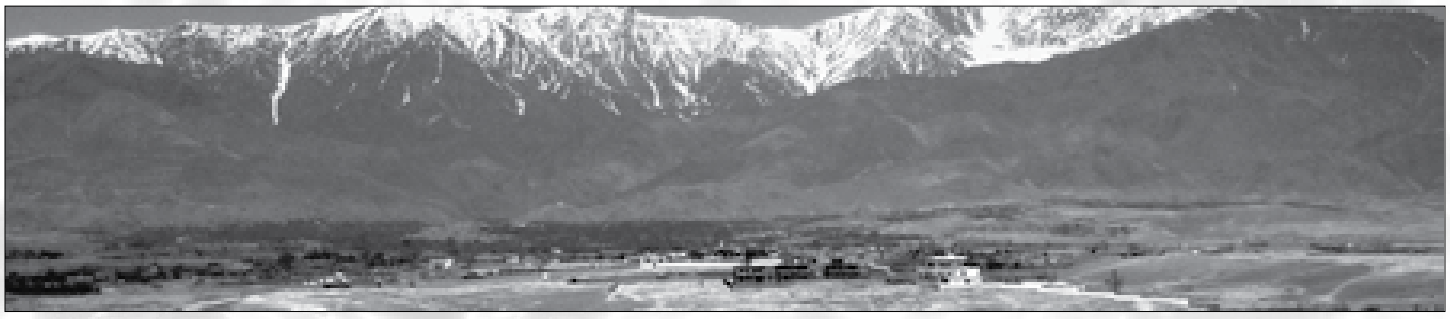
The challenge is primarily political, not military. In July 2008 a Canadian Parliamentary Committee agreed when it recommended that Canada's diplomatic, military, and reconstruction efforts should all be oriented, not to winning a war, but to creating "conditions favorable to a peace process." It saw "broad-based negotiations," and "dialogue among all sectors of Afghan society and all communities of interest" as the route toward a new national governance arrangement with a genuine chance of winning the confidence of Afghans.

The Harper government has not yet unreservedly embraced the broader reconciliation mission, but in Afghanistan itself certain types of reconciliation efforts are building. They include national government programs to persuade moderate Taliban to renounce violence and to join the government (essentially amnesty programs). The international community manages programs that focus on the disbandment of illegal armed groups. The bi-national peace jirga between Afghanistan and Pakistan is seeking ways for the two governments to cooperate in bringing some law and order into the huge Pashtun belt that spans their common border. The Independent Directorate of Local Governance includes local reconciliation mandates. Beyond that, various informal or freelance efforts also promote reconciliation in local situations.

None of these is notably successful. To date, the international community largely follows an amnesty model and is supportive of political/reconciliation efforts only if they are broadly under the leadership of the Government of Afghanistan. The UN is understandably insistent that reconciliation efforts be initiated and owned by the Government of Afghanistan—given that it is a sovereign country under a constitution and government legitimated through national elections; but it is a formal framework that does not sufficiently recognize that substantial elements of Afghanistan society regard both the present government and the constitution as products of flawed processes that were not inclusive. Thus, the government and constitution are neither fully respected nor owned by all Afghans, nor can they realistically be the exclusive context for erecting a political order with some chance of working.

Establishing trust between communities and building confidence in pubic institutions are linked objectives and involve a wide range of governance, security sector reform, anti-corruption, representational, and reconciliation imperatives. States without national institutions capable of generating a broad national consensus on key issues, and of mediating the inevitable economic, regional, and inter-communal conflicts common to most states without the resort to violence, are destined to descend into chronic armed conflict.

Clearly, Afghanistan does not now have such



The water reservoir for Kabul, a bit of a resort in the old days, but no one there now

institutions—and the armed conflict is there to prove it. Current institutions, of varying degrees of effectiveness, do not enjoy the levels of trust and confidence needed for regions and communities to submit fully to prescribed political processes and to believe assurances that such processes will be fair and equitable and produce compromises that will be acceptable, even if necessarily imperfect. The suspicions remain great, and few of Afghanistan's communities are currently inclined to entrust their fate to processes or institutions that they cannot ultimately control.

Accordingly, Afghans increasingly call for programs

A female student practicing penmanship in the school

and processes to promote dialogue, trust-building, and other efforts toward political accommodation. In effect, they see a need for a new peace process that can take reconciliation efforts well beyond the offers of amnesty to those willing to switch sides. Instead, the focus needs to shift to engaging with, and addressing the needs of, disaffected communities.

It is not simply or even primarily a matter of negotiating with the Taliban. Not only is the insurgency broader than the Taliban, but reconciliation efforts will also have to reach beyond warring parties to promote regional cooperation, inter-communal dialogue at the national level, local (people-to-people) reconciliation initiatives, and sustained education programs in support of a culture of peace. These multiple efforts need to involve civil society and educational institutions, as well as official delegations, and must be assisted with the same levels of urgency and resources that now go to supporting and training Afghan military and police forces. The international community, with countries like Canada taking the lead, is in a position to promote and fund reconciliation efforts and especially encourage the government of Afghanistan and opposition groups to embrace such opportunities.

The students in that Kabul high school, the librarian in the NGO resources centre, and even the Taliban sympathizers taking a turn at quiet diplomacy on a Kabul evening, have demands and expectations that are basically in line with the rights and aspirations of young people and citizens anywhere. They want a government and public institutions that are honest and nondiscriminatory. They want the international community and international forces in their midst to respect their religion and culture. They want their families to have access to food and the basic necessities of life.

There is a currently a concerted effort to scale back the definition of success in Afghanistan. Stop thinking, we're told, that we're building a liberal democracy in Afghanistan. If we can be reasonably assured that Afghanistan will no longer be a haven for terrorists planning attacks on the West, then our interests and obligations have been met.

But if the rhetoric about honoring sacrifice is serious, it is unworthy of either the international community or of the needs of Afghans to settle for such meager spoils. The hundred-plus Canadians who have died there, the teachers who gave their lives in daring to welcome girls into their modest and often clandestine classrooms—these and the thousands of other victims demand more of an international "community" that lays claim to that title. At the very least, solidarity demands the continuing collective pursuit of a level of local stability and confidence sufficient to allow Afghans to at least embark on what promises to be a decade's long struggle to achieve basic levels of human well-being and human security that are reliable and sustainable. The objective is simple: a society in which Afghans can go to bed at night confident that their family's sleep will not be shattered by night time raids and attacks, and confident that when they rise from their sleep the will enter the new day fed, clothed, and equipped to participate in the collective life of an increasingly nurturing and productive community. **R**

Photographs courtesy of Ernie Regehr.

Apocalypse of the Beasts

By Berni Friesen

The first cherubim are seen
as roadkill, winged
porcupine,Vulpes Vulpes, a fox
with a halo of blue fur bleeding.
A unicorn rubs its shoulders
in a bowl of dust on the highway,
a ritual bath before revenging
a planetarium of wrongs:

the way women lift squid from
the ocean, boil them alive
in red squirming soup,
the way men pay money
to gnaw the smile off a pig,
deep-fried faced cracked
and cleavered in two,
the way they force infant
insect seraphim to suck
up the effluent,
spew it out of their mouths
into a swipe of sky.

Vengeance is mine sayeth the lord
of beasts and fields and fish and seas.
Even the Thessalonians will clamber,
go lemming at the cliff edge,
when the earth is a flame thrower and
the ocean a hollow of chemistry.

Men will be so desolate, desirous,
they will mimic the sound of the waves
with a mouthful of pebbles,
each a gray egg, sticky with salt.

Finally, all will be converted,
the sea of granite, the stone of water,
the Jews and converse,
beast to beast,
goat to impala,
whore to hound,
book to paw,
hammer to rose,
city to avalanche,
lead to gold,
water to wine.

Then the lions, too, will hope:
oh, for the earth once more
to be cinnamon with rain.

Artist's Statement

Colin Vanderburg

As a lens-based artist, I am attentive to the moments when forms converge within the confines of my lens. My composition depends on the rare moments when seemingly disconnected elements begin to play with one another to create a separate, invisible form existing in the relationship between them. It is in this invisible form that I hope to communicate something beyond the reality of the image's content. Though I often represent the politically, socially, and economically oppressed, my work is never meant to further ostracize those living under this oppression. Rather, I mean to reveal, through unexpected points of access, the similitude of the human experience, and the connection between my subjects and my audience.

In my recent body of work, "Abu Hammem," meaning "Father of Doves," I document the practice of keeping doves in the ruins of Palestinian Refugee camp Nahr el Bared. For several years I have been drawn to the transformative, existential nature of these birds and in the context of war and destruction was further drawn by the common association doves have with ideas of peace and freedom. In a community completely destroyed by war, and inhabited by those who have been repeatedly displaced for sixty years, men stand on rooftops at dawn and let their doves fly through the coming light. R

The things that make for peace

by Esther Epp-Tiessen

When Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem and his certain death, he saw the city and he wept over it. He also expressed a deep longing that no doubt thousands have uttered in the millennia since. "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace . . ." (Luke 19:41-42).

I could not help but think of these words during Israel's attack on Gaza in late December and January. Israel asserted that it was defending itself against Hamas-launched rocket attacks on Israeli citizens. But I fail to understand how Israeli officials deem that their assault—with overpowering military force and callous disregard for human life—could possibly contribute to Israel's peace and security. Even as a response to Hamas' rocket attacks, the offensive was disproportionate, and it violated international humanitarian law. As I contemplated Gaza, I also wept with grief and anger.

My tears drew from many layers of experience. My first trip to Palestine-Israel took place in 1974 when, as a naÔve teenager, I accompanied my father on one of his many journalist research trips to the region. In the last decade, my own work as a peace staff person for Mennonite Central Committee Canada has taken me to this broken yet profoundly beautiful land on several occasions. I have grown to love the dry, rocky hillsides, the fragrant scent of olive oil, the muezzin's haunting call to prayer, and of course the people in all their splendid diversity. As my father's heart ached for peace among all the people—Israelis and Palestinians; Jews, Muslims and Christians—so mine does, too.

But what are the things that make for peace in Palestine-Israel? The media would have us believe that the region is filled with people whose only interest is to destroy one another. Yet there are many people, Palestinians and Israelis, who are bravely and persistently pursuing peace and seeking ways to live together in peace. Their courage, creativity, and obdurate steadfastness have inspired me deeply. At the same time, these individuals and groups bring different approaches to their peace-building efforts. Their different approaches set the agenda for an ongoing debate which I encounter with co-workers, friends, even within myself. One view says that the things that make for peace are personal relationships. The other view says the thing that makes for peace is justice. I wonder, what are the things that make for peace?

Those who argue that relationships are key to peace between Palestinians and Israelis insist that it is important for Palestinians and Israelis to know one another personally. Only relationships can shatter stereotypes and build bridges. Only relationships can help the two peoples find some common ground. Only relationships can help to humanize "the other" and begin to dismantle the prejudice, hatred, and even simple misinformation that one group holds of the other. Moreover, only relationships allow for the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation.

THEY SEEK TO BUILD PEACE ONE STORY AND ONE RELATIONSHIP AT A TIME.

A group that takes the relationship approach is a group called the Parents Circle Family Forum. This group brings together Israeli and Palestinian families who have lost loved ones in the conflict. It was begun soon after 2000 by a courageous Israeli woman named Robi Damelin. Her son David was an Israeli soldier (all young Israelis, men and women, are required by law to do several years of military service after high school) who was on duty at a checkpoint in the West Bank. He was killed by a Palestinian sniper. A talented musician and beloved teacher, he was shot dead in his mid-twenties. Robi was devastated at the loss of her son, but she knew that the answer to her grief was not revenge or retaliation. Rage, yes; retaliation, no. She began a journey of trying to comprehend what led a Palestinian militant to kill her son. That journey led her to meet Palestinians who had been killed by Israelis. One thing led to another, and before long, a group emerged actively seeking to bring together Israeli and Palestinian families who had lost a family member to share grief and to build understanding. Today her group, Parents Circle Family Forum, consists of some 400 families, Israelis and Palestinians. In the highly politicized and polarized context of Palestine-Israel, they defy a system which tells them that they are enemies. They seek to build peace one story and one relationship at a time. Not only that, they go out in pairs—one

Israeli and one Palestinian—and speak to school and community groups, as well as international visitors, conveying the message that ordinary people can build bridges of understanding across the deep chasm that divides their two peoples.

The work of Robi and her colleagues in the Parents Circle Family Forum is profoundly moving. I first met her in April, 2008, when she and her Palestinian Muslim partner Aishah spoke to a learning tour that I was co-leading. There was not a dry eye in the room as our group listened to these two women tell their stories and as we also watched them interact. Although these two women have been taught that they are "enemies" and not to be trusted, they sat together, hands tightly clasped, throughout our meeting. Later, as they posed for photos, they put their arms around one another. They have become dear friends. And although their two "nations" continue to fight one another, they know, because of their friendship, that peace is possible; not only that, they are making it happen.

There are many other groups in the region which seek a resolution to the conflict, but who take a more structural approach. By this I mean that these groups seek to address the longstanding injustices that stand in the way of a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians. In 1948, after the State of Israel was created, some 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes and their villages were occupied or destroyed. To this day, their descendents live in refugee camps or other places around the world, unable to return home or receive compensation for their losses. In 1967, after a six-day war, Israel captured what became known as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, creating more refugees. These two regions have been under Israeli military occupation ever since, with their residents living an increasingly impossible existence. Since 1967 and particularly since the early 1990s, Israel has built Israeli-only settlements on West Bank land. They have added Israeli-only bypass roads, checkpoints and other roadblocks, and a massive "separation barrier" (an eight meter high concrete wall or electrified fence) which not only keeps Palestinians from Israelis, but, because of its circuitous route, keeps many Palestinians from one another and from their land. About 10,000 Palestinians linger in Israeli prisons. And thousands have been killed.

This analysis does not deny that many Israelis have their own history of suffering as victims of the Holocaust. Nor does it deny that some Palestinians continue to resort to violence themselves and thereby harm the cause of peace. But it does insist that if Israel wishes a secure future in the land of Palestine, it must address the injustices that it has committed in the past 60 years—injustices committed with the moral, financial, political and military backing of the western world.

One group that works with these structural questions is Badil. A Palestinian organization based in Bethlehem, Badil describes itself as the Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights. It carries out research, advocacy, and community participation in the search for a durable solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. Its work is based on relevant United Nations resolutions on Palestinians' right of return and international laws relating to refugees. Another group is called Stop the Wall. Although this Palestinian group's name suggests that its primary concern is the wall itself, its campaign is actually about dismantling the mechanisms of what it calls "Israeli apartheid." So it urges supportive folks, not only Palestinian, to join in resisting the wall, the settlements, the bypass roads and checkpoints—in other words, the entire military occupation. It has, in fact, taken the lead among Palestinian organizations in calling for a strategy that helped to topple the South African apartheid regime some twenty years ago—a strategy of boycott, divestment and sanctions.

Palestinian organizations are not the only ones that take a justice approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Israeli Committee against House Demolitions (ICAHD), headed by Jewish anthropologist Jeff Halper, helps to rebuild Palestinian homes. (Some 25,000 Palestinian homes have been deliberately demolished by Israel since 1967.) Halper makes it clear that the rebuilding of homes is not about charity or humanitarian assistance; it is about political resistance. Halper travels the world speaking about what he calls Israel's tightening "matrix of control" over Palestinians—something that is not only destroying Palestinians but Israelis as well. Another Israeli group with a similar analysis is called Zochrot; its name means, "to remember." This group tries to educate Israeli citizens about what happened to Palestinians in the wake of 1948. While the creation of the State of Israel meant liberation for many Jews, it meant "nakba," or catastrophe, for Palestinians. Zochrot carries out research and documentation about destroyed Palestinian villages within Israel, organizes visits to these village sites, and in other ways attempts to recover a history that is officially denied.

What are the things that make for peace in Palestine-Israel? Relationships or structures of justice? In truth, I'm learning that it is wrong to set up these two approaches as opposites or even contrasts. In truth, all of

the groups mentioned in some way or another draw on both approaches, even if they lean one way or the other. The Parents Circle Family Forum, for example, is mostly about relationships, but it cannot help but address the insanity of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. The checkpoints, the wall, the restrictions on movement, and all the other visible signs of occupation increasingly stand in the way of Palestinian-Israeli relationships. It is virtually impossible for Palestinians and Israelis to come together in one place without being arrested. So Robi Damelin, while her focus is on relationships, nevertheless insists that the occupation must end. Because if it does not, relationships will become virtually impossible.

In the same way, the organizations that are more focused on the structures of injustice also depend on relationships with the "other side" in order to do their work. Badil (a Palestinian organization) and Zochrot (an Israeli organization), for example, work closely together to identify Palestinian villages that were destroyed in 1948 and to determine what the possibilities of return might be in the future. As they work together, friendships are forged between the members of their groups. Stop the Wall (Palestinian) actively solicits the support of Israeli peace activists to support its anti-apartheid campaign. Jeff Halper and the volunteers with the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions work with Palestinians to rebuild destroyed Palestinian homes. Invariably, days that are devoted to the work of rebuilding are also days that involve food, games, and growing friendships.

It seems to me that the things that will make for peace in Palestine-Israel are approaches that incorporate both relationship building and justice-seeking. For to build relationships across the enemy divide without seeking to understand or address the context seems dishonest and ultimately unjust. It would be as if I, an educated white middle-class woman, were to befriend an Aboriginal woman living in poverty, and we were never to name or explore the racist system which grants me enormous privilege and which colonizes my friend. The staff of a Palestinian conflict transformation program expressed this sentiment to me in 2005. For years the organization had worked hard at bringing Israelis and Palestinians together for dialogue and relationship-building. They stopped the practice around 2005 because the discussions could not address the "elephant in the room," namely, the Israeli occupation. Relationships, if they are to be truthful and authentic, must grapple with the contexts of injustice and inequity that shape the individuals or groups involved.

In the same way, those who pursue justice without connection to or concern for the actual people on the "other side" may do great harm as well. The blind pursuit of justice for one group can in fact lead to injustice being perpetrated on others. It can also alienate those very allies that are so necessary to the cause of justice and peace. Naim Ateek, an Anglican priest and key figure in the Palestinian liberation theology movement, speaks of "justice with mercy." Palestinians, he says, should seek justice, but it must be a justice with mercy.

The search for strict justice, with its overtones of retaliation, can all too easily lower people to the level of the inhuman or even the subhuman; while the exercise of mercy and reconciliation can lift them up to the level of the genuinely human and even to the divine. (Justice and Only Justice, Orbis Books, 1990, p. 142).

I continue to weep for Gaza, and for all of Palestine-Israel. So much needs to change, particularly the foreign policies of countries like Canada, which blame Palestinians alone for the ongoing hostilities. My hope is nurtured by those "things" that make for peace—the dear souls, Palestinians and Israelis, who reach out in relationship to "the other" and who pursue a merciful reconciling justice. **R**

Photographs courtesy of Esther Epp-Tiessen.

The Yellow Transparent Apple Tree

By Leonard Neufeldt

In the eternal orchards apples grow
round and smooth as a man's rib
cage or a woman's breast, perfect
as bodies of children hand-shaped
on God's wheel in the garden's
green and the sun's dream-sparks.

Our tree blossomed months ago,
branching upward like a pear,
its hunger for sun
overripe
but the fruit small and green,
bole thin from the ground up
to the oozing stress fracture
at the first branch—in Uncle Jacob's
water colour a dark corridor
of brown and blue to a bias
of crown, and outside his leaves
large apples bolder than the gold
of fresh flowers

at a cenotaph deepening
the green and black of the lawn.

The year I learned to read, Father
photographed the tree taller by half
than me in my sailor suit,
an implausibly small shade leaning
toward the boy, darkening his bare feet,
feet that can easily step out before
the tree grows into him,
step out of the picture,
go inside the blue and white house
to practice on a violin too large
for him but turn instead to headlines

bleeding through to the second page,
pictures below them
and havoc of sentences moving
with his lips word for word
into a war. Six hundred
Canadian sailors torpedoed
deep into an ocean, rising like apples.

I imagined gathering them
four and five at a time, carrying them
to the porch, putting them down
on the table until there were no more.

"The Fraser," Father said, "like our river.
The ship is called a destroyer."

On V-E Day Mother shouting
and dancing with me and others
on Central Road among daffodils,
apple blossoms and the fury of buckled
newspaper pages,
an old man kneeling by himself
in the middle of the street, praying
as the firehouse siren wailed.

I'm walking with my son,
taller than me, into evening
between the sun and trees, past
apple crescents drying on cotton-
white racks to where
fragrance of ripe apples clings

to the air. Before us
in the crush of shadows and grass
a large apple split almost
its length, the flesh plain and white,
and all around a litter of golden apples
bruised by small sharp moments of light.

Collateral damage in the old country

by Maurice Mierau

—an excerpt from a memoir about his father's childhood and the adoption of his two youngest sons in Ukraine.

Now the end of the war was near, and my father and Tina lived on the beautiful Simon estate with their mother Helen and her in-laws, directly in the Soviet army's path to Berlin. Their two-storey house overlooked a small lake and tall chestnut trees. The house had three balconies, and summer guests from Berlin went rowing on the lake. The Simons made some extra money putting up these tourists. Helen's in-laws lived on the main floor, along with the city folks. In the basement Mrs. Simon, Hartmut's mother, cooked for everyone and had storage room. Helen, dad, and Tina lived on the second floor. Tina and my father enjoyed living in the house, on the big estate. They even attended school. For a few months, life was normal.

Then Germany began to conscript all available men to replace the millions of dead soldiers in the east. In 1944, Simon had to go too. Helen had just given birth to the only child she had with Simon, also named Hartmut—the baby was six weeks old when his father Simon left in the fall. Simon wrote home from the front in Stettin, on a Feldpostkarte or "postcard from the field." Fields were for farming, for crossing, for killing and burying. The postcard said: "I am an ordinary soldier, which I thought I'd never be in my life again."

She thought she could hear her mother talking in German almost as if she was talking to my dad, trying to get him to do something he didn't want to.

There was nothing ordinary about the eastern front. The Germans had killed 97 per cent of Russian POWs, and the Red Army rank and file knew that. There were no more postcards from Simon. Helen inquired with the Red Cross later but nobody knew what happened to her second husband. Everyone talked about the Russian advance on Berlin and about the barbarism of the Russian soldiers.

What my father remembers is this: He was playing beside the lake when a Russian plane came out of the sky, shooting at him. He ran inside. It was early June and cherries and strawberries ripened on the estate. The Russians drove their tanks and personnel carriers through the fence around the Simon estate. They drove over the cherry trees and strawberry vines until the tracks were red with squashed fruit. They threw grenades into the lake. My father felt the explosions in his feet and legs as he hid in the basement. Later he saw the dead fish and toads on the lake's surface as they floated there, quietly.

But right then the soldiers had entered the basement and were shooting their guns, bullets ricocheting off the concrete walls, making musical sounds as they broke the bare light bulbs. Dad saw one soldier pull up old Mrs. Simon's dress and thrust into her from behind. He did not know what the man was doing but Mrs. Simon cried. Dad did not know where his mother was.

My aunt Tina knows. Tina was in the basement hiding in the chute under a pile of coal. Helen had told her not to move until she called her. Tina could hear the Russian soldiers shouting on the stairs as they dragged my grandmother. Tina understood what they said but it was mostly cursing. She thought

she could hear her mother talking in German almost as if she was talking to my dad, trying to get him to do something he didn't want to.

Tina heard a thump like a body falling. The soldiers called Helen names, their speech slurred and overlapping. Tina could not guess how many there were, but more than two. Once, her mother made loud sounds, like an animal in pain, but then her voice subsided. Had they gone to the second floor? After what seemed like a long time the men's voices went away. Helen called Tina. Her dress was torn and her lip bled, but she acted like nothing had happened.

The same nothing happened over and over for about a week, at any time of day or night; it was unpredictable. One of the guests, a beautiful young woman from Berlin named Liza Henninger, was raped so many times she decided to drown herself in the dead lake. Tina remembers her mother blocking the doorway and saying to Liza very firmly, "You can't do this, you must live for your children." Later Helen and Liza walked seven kilometers together to the town of Storkow to get medical treatment.

One of the last trees still standing on the estate, a sapling, fell over when a drunken soldier backed into it with his tank. My father has told me about his memory of the trees on the estate, but not much about the people. For that I needed aunt Tina. **R**

Dachau: From Darkness to Light

by Joyce Nickel Harback

Dachau – the significance of this name will never be erased from German history. It stands for all concentration camps which the Nazis established in their territory. - Dr. Eugen Kogon[1]

I rise early. It is the sixth day of our European tour. Sleep is impossible as I consider today's destination: Dachau—the first Nazi death camp.

When planning a European tour, I had little interest in concentration camps. I felt I had enough knowledge from graphic movies like *Schindler's List* and books like Corrie Ten Boom's *The Hiding Place*, or *Night* by Elie Weisel. I would rather not subject myself to this up-close-and-personal encounter with darkness, but I am here and I will go because Dachau is part of the packaged itinerary.

Haunting words invade my thoughts from a friend who first toured Dachau at age 18: "It left such a deep impression on my heart," she confides. "I struggled with sadness and despair for weeks afterward, when I realized how abhorrently evil man can be. I will never forget it."

Why do we memorialize a place such as Dachau? What is the necessity of preserving locations that burden our sensibilities? Are there horrific places in the wider world, such as these death camps, that we should attempt to eliminate from our emotional memory?

Historian Wolfgang Benz writes: "Remembering is an element of self-reflection, an element of identity. Remembering forges self-confidence and peace, but remembering also torments and is painful. Nowhere does memory crystallize with more power and oppressive force than at the authentic sites of history."[2]

Everyone is somber as we board the bus to Dachau. Our tour guide is German, and today she begins grimly as she briefs us on our destination. It is difficult for her to speak of Dachau and all it represents. She explains that all German school children are reminded about this black time on their history. Every year they learn how Hitler took the best German qualities—efficiency, precision, pride—and exploited them for his own dark advantage; how he took nationalism to the extreme and made ethnocentrism an integral part of Nazi ideology. The succeeding generations, as they learned of the atrocities committed by their own people, abandoned any sense of patriotism or pride of country. Our guide urged us to imagine growing up with this burden, this blemished heritage, and think about the natural biases and antagonism that surface.

"Be honest," she says, "When you hear the word German what is the first thing that enters your mind? Is it not the Holocaust?"

I am taken aback at her words. They shed light on my own lurking prejudice. Yes, Germany and the Holocaust are inexorably linked. Even my own German roots are a source of some indefinable discomfort. Was that why I resisted this visit? As if reading my thoughts, our guide pulls me back to reality.

"Make no mistake," she concludes. "It was not just a bad German gene that allowed Hitler to rise." Recent world history concurs. Genocide can occur anywhere aggression is tolerated, an ethnic group is singled out, or governing powers are allowed to rule unchecked.

All of us are silent as we reach our destination. Huge, broad, and barren, the graveled hue of the camp blends with washtub clouds above. Overcast and sullen, the sky seems ready to cry with me, as if to wash away the specter of death I am about to encounter.

A former prisoner describes the feeling in his memoirs: "Something pitiless loomed over everything, something awful, something icy that was frightening."[3]

My first stop is to view a 20-minute documentary. The theatre is hot and crowded, standing room only. The film outlines shocking conditions in the camps and a rule of terror by SS officers: forced labour, humiliation, intimidation, medical experimentation, inhumane crowding, beatings, pole hangings, starvation, torture, and execution. The visual images are devastating. As it ends, I am utterly overwhelmed and desperate to get outside but a large crowd of school children sweeps me along toward the exhibition hall. Heart pounding, I struggle against the flow and finally stumble out into the brooding light.

As I look up, a large sculpture fills my gaze: a caricature of bodies caught in barbed wire. I turn away, aghast, and head for the next station on the walking

tour: the prisoners' quarters. Only two barracks remain, reconstructed for the exhibition. Designed to hold 200 prisoners, over 800 were occupying each one at the camp's liberation in April, 1945.

I imagine myself living in such conditions. Entering the first barrack, I step into an overcrowded corridor clogged with visitors. The pace is unbearably slow. Bodies press against me at every turn. An uncommon sense of claustrophobia begins to rise and I wonder, along with death camp survivor Terrence Des Pres, "How much self-esteem can one maintain, how readily can one respond to the needs of another, if both stink, if both are caked with mud and feces?"[4]

I escape through an early exit and head toward the far end of the compound. At this barren and crushing place, I crave the comfort of wide-open space. Sharp rocks underfoot ensure no grass grows on the pathway. Above me, two tall columns of trees line the centre pathway of the prisoners' block. At least the prisoners had this small consolation of nature: leaves to whisper in the dark night, rough bark against which to lean in the few moments of daylight they treasured outside the barracks, remnants of creation, testimony to light and life which will not be silenced.

Continuing to the far end of the camp, the site of the original crematorium now gives rise to three memorial chapels; places of remembrance for Jews, Catholics and Protestants. Yet, even here where my heart yearns to cling to faith, the horror and anguish of the camp are integrated into each design.

The Jewish memorial slopes downward. Bounding both sides of the entrance ramp is a sculpted barbed wire railing. Inside burns *Ner Tamid*, the eternal light. A menorah rises through an opening in the roof, stretching into the light like an arm reaching up for freedom. Above the entrance, an engraved psalm: "Put them in fear, O Lord: that the nations may know themselves to be but mortals."

The center memorial is the Catholic Mortal Agony of Christ Chapel. Its open, circular form symbolizes liberation from captivity. Suspended over the entrance is a crown of thorns. On the back of the building a plaque declares: "Here in Dachau every third victim was a Pole. One of every two Polish priests was martyred."

I shudder, feeling besieged by the sheer numbers and move on to the Protestant Church of Reconciliation. There are no right angles in the chapel, an intentional design in direct opposition to the ordered terror and uniformity of the camp. Steps lead down to a narrow, dark entrance that opens into a light interior courtyard. At the point where darkness and light meet, a steel gate is inscribed: "Hide me under the shadow of thy wings."[5] Inside the church, the sculpture of a metal cross depicts a crushed person still rising up within. A statue shows an angel supporting the dying. Yes, represented here alongside the torment is a distinct measure of comfort: there is divine support for those in whom no strength remains.

Leaving the memorials, I find respite in the heavy green foliage of a retreat formerly enjoyed only by the SS. By now, it is nearly midday and the time for our departure is near, yet my steps slow on the path toward the gas chamber and crematoria. As much as I want to flee to the safety of our tour bus, I continue. I am walking in the steps of the prisoners; should I turn back now when I face the most difficult station?

I take deliberate deep breaths and step inside. The gas chambers are surprisingly sterile and clean, resembling shower rooms. Moving ahead, I can barely bring myself to look directly at the brick ovens. Other visitors stop; some pray, some stare. The light of a flash camera startles me. Some are taking pictures.

I wonder how one would display photos of death rooms. What is the attraction of preserving images that burden our sensibilities? The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum recently acquired a WWII scrapbook containing selected personal photographs of Auschwitz SS officers relaxing, off duty, while hundreds of prisoners were being murdered only a short distance away.

The archivists who maintain the collection say the photos remind us "that Nazis weren't red-eyed, pointy-tooth monsters. They were people like you and I, whose society had gotten to a point that (murder) was morally acceptable behavior and that's a very scary concept. When you see people who look like nice guys in a benign setting and we know for a fact they were doing monstrous things, then it raises all sorts of questions about man's capacity for evil. In a different setting, would they still be monsters? They don't look like monsters, they look like me. They look like my next-door neighbor. Is he capable of that? Am I?"[6]

As I view the gas chambers and the crematoria, the images freeze in my mind. Exposed at a deeper level, I am unable to de-personalize this vision of death. I picture those perpetrating the crime. As the crowd crushes against me, I see my family, my best friend, myself—entering those showers, consumed by those flames. The possibility terrifies. The exit cannot come soon enough.

Behind the building, I seek solace on the secluded path wrapping around the burial sites of prisoners'

ashes. I pause to reflect. The atrocities are unimaginable, yet the facts are clear: human beings committed these acts. Do I understand how humans can be so abhorrently evil? Not at all. I am not certain I want to understand, but in condemning these vile actions, I dare not raise the self-righteous scales of comparative goodness and glibly dismiss my own capacity for hatred, for evil. When we view history, even recent history, we see many examples where humans—by nature—selfishly choose hatred, war, and darkness rather than reconciliation, peace, and light.[7]

So, why do we memorialize a place that represents evil? The purpose of the Dachau Memorial is "to unite the living in their defense of peace and freedom and in reverence of human dignity."[8] It exists to help keep humankind from repeating a similar disaster.[9] It is now that I realize darkness is not the opposite of light. Darkness is the absence of light. The Dachau exhibition preserves and declares the truth. It shines a light to dispel the darkness.

Just like my friend years earlier, I will never forget Dachau. I leave my coddled North American existence and I open my eyes to the truth. Dachau enlightens. It spotlights the capacity of humanity for both evil and good.

My response? I choose to share this light. To remember. To try to understand. To teach. To actively unite with others to preserve peace, freedom, and respect for human dignity. No prejudice. No silence. No genocide.

Never again. **R**

[1]Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site website, http://www.kz-gedenkstaette-dachau.de/english.html
[2]Distel, Barbara, ed.. *The Dachau Concentration Camp, 1933 to 1945* (Comité International Dachau, 2005), p. 30.
[3]Kupfer-Koberwitz. *Edgar: The Powerful and the Helpless*, 1957.
[4]Des Pres, Terrence: *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps* (Pocket Books: New York, 1976), p. 66.
[5]King James Version, *The Holy Bible*, Psalm 17:8b.
[6]United States Holocaust Museum: Auschwitz Through the Lens of the SS: Photos of Nazi Leadership at the Camp. ushmm.org (retrieved Jan. 21, 2009).
[7]John 3:19-21.
[8]http://www.kz-gedenkstaette-dachau.de/memorial/station03.html
[9]Distel, Barbara, p. 5.

An excerpt from

A Cossack in the Grass

by Ted Dyck

This novel-in-progress begins in the Eichenfeld Massacre of October 26-27, 1919. As my own father's family, by sheer coincidence, escaped the night in which all his boyhood friends were killed, I have access to a memoir which details first-hand the experience of the massacre. The specific fictional event described below is based on this memoir: a Ukrainian insurgent under Nestor Makhno's command is ordered to kill an infant being nursed by a young Mennonite woman discovered hiding in a barn. What he does or does not do marks his life forever, and leads him to emigrate to Canada to search for the young woman who has preceded him there.

This approach deconstructs re-tellings of the massacre from the Mennonite point of view. It seeks, that is, a fuller historical reading of the role of the Mennonite colonists in the aftermath of the Communist Revolution, namely, the civil war in Ukraine. This reading is informed by writings by and about the anarchist, Nestor Makhno, as well as by the most recent writings about this period by Mennonite scholars.

TARAS

"It's an order." Taras turned. "I command you!" said the man they called Atman, his voice rising. "Do it—or you die like the Cossack you think you are!" His sabre grated as he drew the blade, red in the sun's rays trembling through the barred window of the stable, from its scabbard. He pointed to the woman cringing against the manger in the bedding at the far corner of the stall, pulling closer a child now mewling against her breast. Atman lifted the sabre, tip swinging upward toward Taras and then slashing down through the air until it rested on the yellow straw at his feet. "I said—" and Taras at last stumbled forward, his long moustaches dark against his pale face.

"Ahhheeee— " The sound from the woman's open mouth hung in the dust curling about the soldiers shifting uneasily in a half-circle around the stall, touching each hard face until it reached Taras where it sank like a morning's fog to envelope the image in his mind.

… her bare legs locked around his waist her heels

set against his naked buttocks her blouse pulled away from her young dugs pink areolas red nipples rising to his rubbing thumb and finger their backs arching pubis to pubis her grey eyes rolled up into their sockets their grinding ach mein gott mein gott….

Taras halted, swaying on his feet, rubbed his fists into his eyes, shook his head to clear it.

"No," he whispered hoarsely. He looked at Atman, put his shoulders back, cleared his throat. Louder. "I cannot."

"Kill the child then, coward!" screamed Atman. He grasped his sword by its blade and jabbed the hilt at the soldier's right fist clutching his pant leg. Taras's rough fingers uncurled and curled again about the handle. His left hand closed over the right, He raised the sabre high above his head and angled inward as he had been taught. The ancient fighting techniques of the Cossack raiders on the Turkish borders of their lands. The last rays of a bitter fall sun knifed from the windows of the church on the eastern edge of the village, cut through the slatted stable window, and slashed across his chalky face.

"Forgive me, Anna," he whispered.

And the sabre whistled like a hawk on the steppes hunting a marmot already dead yet scrabbling frantically deeper into dried and yellowed grasses along the banks of the fast creek running down to a dam which slowly overflowed into the great Dnieper and losing itself in the sea forever and ever amen o god.

She had never forgiven him, he thought, though she had borne him a son and two daughters, now fully grown. He lay facing away from her, unmoving, almost unbreathing in their wide bed, growing hard against his will under her questing hand, his naked back curled into the fullness of her belly against her gown, white, yes, always virginal white. It was the Cossack woman's way, he thought. A woman needed her relief. She tugged at him, and as he turned to her, she drew away to give herself space to pull up her gown and roll on her back, spreading her legs, opening her sex. He was as always dismayed by her ready wetness when he entered her, by her unbridled lust.

That her wild, silent clenching was a revenge, that she reveled in her own animal readiness as much as in his quick hardness, was unspoken between them. He knew she had long ago given up praying for her soul. Had she not been fully punished, and enough? God, who was also just, surely knew what was in her heart. So she no longer knelt with him before the guttering candles he still lit secretly, always in memory, every October. When he would come to bed later on such nights, and those were not the only nights of the year she insisted on the luxury of full satisfaction, she would touch him, easily overcoming his guilty resistance, stroke him until he was hard, take him over and over in the way of the Cossack maids with whom she had grown up, free-striding long-legged women who tossed their terrified lovers to the ground and fell on them. That he wept on these nights when she exhausted him only increased the pleasure of her power.

She pushed up with her belly. "Get off," she said. "I'm done."

They killed the men who had guns first. Young men, mostly, brave men who soiled themselves as they stared into a rifle barrel or at a flashing sabre and died. Then came the landowners, squealing like the fat German pigs they bred, kneeling in prayer in their granaries, cradling the blue-grey coils of their guts in their arms, their god-fearing eyes turning opaque as their blood seeped into the pale wheat. What they did to the young women was worse than death, for if a Cossack's manhood failed him there was always his sabre, always hard. Old women and children were ignored, the grandmothers rocking and moaning mein gott mein gott, the children staring silent and amazed. Who among them had ever seen a man's genitals forced between his lips? Or arms and legs and heads scattered about, no body to be seen. Or so much blood, so much human shit and piss. When the sun rose and the soldiers rode away, the villagers who had been spared tried to reassemble the body parts to properly count their dead.

At the make-shift Sitch downriver, most of the spent troops lay about, drinking vodka hopelessly. They had bolted down the potato perogies the kerchiefed women had fried in deep black pans, only to run retching into the willows, and the commandeered cooks had finally to throw their unwilling labours to the dogs.

"Get away, you curs!" The Atman, who had been talking quietly with a group of soldiers around one of these fires, sub-alterns tossing the ponytails dangling from their shaved heads as they tossed back small tumblers of vodka, turned to kick angrily, fruitlessly, at the creatures skulking wraithlike from one stinking dung-fire to another.

"Leave them," said one of the men. "Better that than they go to the village. May the Holy Mother of Christ have Mercy on our Souls and on those of our Enemies." Some of the older men crossed themselves, muttering, when they heard the ancient prayer of their dead fathers.

"Stop talking rubbish. They deserved to die," said Atman. "We are comrades in the Revolution."

"But we are not Russians," said the man. "We are Cossacks first, and only then are we comrades." He spat into the fire. "Ukrainian Cossacks, remember?"

"The people are one," said Atman coldly. "Watch your tongue. Long live the proletariat!"

The man, for it was Taras, turned sullenly back to the fire. Fuck Atman. That's not what Little Father had taught. Atman. What was it Anna had told him—something about the name—it was German, was it not—better not think about the Germans and last night—and then it leapt clear in his mind—no, she had spoken of Hetman, that was German—a bastardized German, to be sure—commander—Atman, what was that anyway? Kuzak, he knew—Turkish—freeman—are all our names bastard? Damn the Cossacks anyway. And double-damn Atman. Probably not even a Cossack.

"You!" Atman addressed Taras's back. "I'm talking to you. You're already in trouble. A Cossack is not a coward. Why couldn't you take her? Not Cossack enough? Or just not man enough? "

… he had taken her bent over a manger that first time in the stall the Master and Mistress away to the city lifted the heavy petticoats she was wearing nothing over the gleaming whiteness of her bare thighs kicked her legs apart felt for her sex wet and ready for him trousers at his heels she standing like a mare to a stallion turned when he finished took his unbloodied member in her hands kissed him hard again laid him on the ground and mounted for her own pleasure o my god my god my god….

Taras stood unmoving, staring into the glowing, smoking pile of dry dung. Perhaps the Atman was right. Perhaps she had tricked him after all that summer that now seemed so long ago. He felt the commander's eyes boring into his back. He was expected to turn, to face the punishment that was surely coming. That was the code. But he also had the hereditary right to challenge the leader. That, too, was the code. "You are above all Cossacks," Little Father had said so often. "Never forget that. You have the power over yourselves that your leader has been given by you." Something stirred in him, then, an ancient power or cunning of the fathers before him, passed on to him in the gleaming saddle that had been his grandfather's, a saddle too small for the broader backs of the improved Cossack ponies interbred with the Germans' horses. Out of the Horses of the Madonna. He remembered the Master's lips moving in careful explanation … lips which now shamefully and intimately kissed his own genitals….

"I'm speaking to you! "The Atman's scream startled Taras out of his reverie, and he turned slowly back to the man. He was always turning away, turning to the always screaming Atman. He longed for the calm hypnotic voice of Little Father. Not this raging madman who ordered unspeakable acts on men who had bravely died. Who would kill infants at their mothers' breasts—to prove what, exactly?

> They killed the men who had guns first. Young men, mostly, brave men who soiled themselves as they stared into a rifle barrel or at a flashing sabre and died.

They were driving into the country on a fine fall evening. Taras guided the truck around a gravelly curve and into the deep valley of the creek. He glanced at his wife's profile—she was unsmiling, her lips pulled tight—and he turned quickly back to the road. Then they were over the creek, climbing away from the small, clear stream barely visible as they had rattled across a steel and wood bridge, going up a long hill out of the valley. Ahead of them stretched the rolling prairie, the road disappearing periodically, then reappearing further ahead as they drove up and down, up and down, toward their destination.

"And they call it flat," said Taras, grinning at his wife. He suddenly jerked the steering wheel sharply to the left, and the truck swerved dangerously, rear end fishtailing and spraying stones, heading toward the ditch. A deft touch of the wheel, a mere flick, really, and the truck straightened out and settled itself back into the graveled ruts. "See that? Damn near got him, too!" Anna released her grip on the holding strap above the truck door. "Did you see that one I dodged back there? Woulda taken out a wheel, just like that." It was always a good idea to be careful around Taras, but he was still grinning. She took the chance.

"You mean you weren't trying to take out a gopher back there a minute ago when you cut the wheel and nearly put us in the ditch?"

"Hey!" he said. "Relax. Been years since I actually tried to get one. And miss another. I used to be deadly. Years." He looked at her again. "Aren't you wondering why I'm taking you out here?"

Anna stared stolidly into the distance. They were

turning east now, the lowering sun behind them casting long shadows accentuating every dip and hollow. Down into and across a small flat, a dried-up slough, actually, another turn, and then climbing almost imperceptibly—the V8 settled down into that lugging sound—when Taras suddenly cut the gas, the truck slowed, and he turned left off the road into a bare spot at the edge of what appeared to be a pasture. He set the brakes and rolled down his window. The prairie-wool pasture falling downward and away from them turned upward toward a bluish-grey ridge, a corrugated kind of thing that seemed much higher and much farther away than where the rising pasture abruptly ended, or maybe turned downward.

"Well." He could barely be heard in the singing wind that passed for prairie silence. "In case you are, here's the answer, blowing in the wind." He raised his left hand, index finger extended, and turned it slowly around in a circle that took in the entire landscape about them. "Welcome to Turnhill."

The Atman's lips were moving but whatever sound was coming from his throat was drowned by the remembered marmot's scream louder and louder than the hawk's whistle as its talons thudded into the rodent's frail neck gripping instinctively, the hawk slamming into the ground almost rolling before it recovered and lifted heavily into the blue sky over hither Asia where Turkish maidens once upon a time had danced their slow and loving dance of death on richly carpeted sands in the gracious tents of the Tatars before his raiding Cossack ancestors lost their heads for glory.

The small head must have rolled into the straw bedding, he had seen the blood spurt, the woman's shawl thrown over the body still clutched to her breast, he had seen it, he was sure, before the Atman's next screaming order had hurried them all out of the stable and on to the more serious business of killing Germans.

The Master lying twitching on his back in the kitchen of the big house, horribly mutilated, something bloody something awful stuffed into his mouth choking him as he lay dying. His eyes Taras thought beseeching him and he had not hesitated but had run his sabre cleanly through the man's fibrillating heart had watched as the Master's life had poured like piss from a bladder of blood emptying itself through the empty groin onto the floor where he had played tops with her in their childhood…. Na, bengel….

The Atman was staring at him. Was the man deaf—or just insolent?

"Sir?" The Atman's question. What had it been? "Sir, I would like to go back to the village. The dogs... the bodies must be properly….

"Let them do it," said Atman. "It's their dead. Not ours." He looked sharply at the younger man. A good-looking Cossack type, almost pretty. Wide-set black eyes. High cheekbones. Full lips under black curling moustaches. Body spare and straight. Even the shoddy uniform of the Makhnovists couldn't hide the man's fitness, perhaps on the thin side. This one could go far, he thought. The Revolution could use him. Better bring him along carefully. Did Batko know him? "Go then," he said. "But no plundering. Now if you find a pretty young maiden, that's a different…."

But Taras had already turned away, surprised and relieved. Unsuspecting. **R**

Compromising Positions

by Susan Fish

I was fifteen years old the summer my mother turned forty. I had precisely fifty dollars in the bank and I felt I should buy a present to mark the occasion of my mother being officially ancient, but I also desperately wanted new clothes for school in the fall, now that the boys in my school had turned half-decent and were also noticing us. I felt too grown up to wear the dresses my mother bought. I wanted to show up in September in a pair of Jordache jeans, with a rounded yellow comb handle sticking out of my back pocket. No matter that I couldn't run a comb through my curly hair without screaming. My parents would never buy me Jordache jeans, but their compromise was that I could wear what I wanted if I bought it myself. They would have to revise this rule, when Madonna made it semi-fashionable to show your brassiere, but that was still a few years off. I had some money but I was prepared to delay my gratification in order to look good. Which was a step up from when I spent every cent on Charlie's Angels cards on the very same day I got my allowance, and tried to figure out the show I was forbidden to watch.

> All it said was: Equal parts Coca Cola and antifreeze. There were so many things to shock me in that.

I needed to come up with a gift for my mother's birthday, but it needed to be—well, cheap. I got the idea when my mother recruited me to help her make pickles. I was mad at being called inside while my two brothers were allowed to go on playing.

"Yes, it's because they're boys," my mother said, elbow-deep in a green sea of clunking cucumbers. I could hear the grit scrape on the bottom of the stainless steel sink and it did not help my mood. "You need to learn how to cook."

My parents lived in a world of compromises and at fifteen I thought they were exasperating and spineless. Either they should be Mennonite, or they should just give it all up and be normal like everyone else's parents. I would be ok either way, but this half-hearted weirdness was weird: I was allowed to cut my hair, but not to wear makeup. My brothers were allowed to have toy guns if their friends gave them to them at birthdays, but they weren't allowed to spend their own money on them, and they had to put them away on Sundays or when my grandparents came. We went to church and we said grace and now-I-lay-me prayers, but that was about it. Once in a while, my father smoked a cigar.

You might think that compromise meant that they could be easily swayed one way or the other on things. But they were surprisingly rigid and clear in their beliefs. I wondered sometimes if they had charted their path, like dropping stones before you in a creek, crossing the water with sideways hops and long stretches. Had they sat down one day and decided it all: We'll be hard on television but we'll go to the drive-in movies once in a while? Or, cards bad, magicians ok?

I knew that girls learning to cook was high on my mother's list and there was no escaping it. It was not high on my list, though, and so I kept holding my breath and letting it out slowly to tell her what I thought of her ideas. However, it did feel good on a hot day to soak my arms in the cool water and to feel the light spray coming off the brush I used to scrub the cucumbers. But the hot part was coming.

My mother had an unearthly fear of botulism, which meant that anything we cooked had to be boiled into the next world. I would have thought she would be glad to send someone into glory, but she thought she could never live with the guilt of having killed someone with gooseberry jelly or pickled beets. Just when you were trying to be kind. She had already scrubbed the jars and the rings before she even called me in. Now, she stood right next to me so that I could smell her Dove soap (Dove ok, Wella Balsam shampoo not ok) while she filled pots with water to set on the stove. Soon the kitchen would be steamed up. I pushed my hair back with my hands, just thinking about getting sweatier.

"Essi!" I knew this part too. I went to the bathroom and washed my hands ("With soap!") and dried them carefully. By the time I got back, she had the pots on the stove and she was inverting glass jars in the water.

"Get the recipe book," she called over her shoulder to me when I sighed once again, and watched my brothers wrestling in the back garden. "I can never remember the exact brine recipe."

I went to the sideboard where she had forty cookbooks lined up, but I didn't need to ask which one. There really was only one cookbook she used: a

beaten-up old scrapbook she had made when she was engaged to my father. She had written in all the recipes she thought she would need, and her handwriting was loopier then, filled with curlicues and hopes, unlike the quick slant she used for signing notes to our teachers now. The cookbook weighed more than it had initially, I was sure of that. It had become a storybook, the story of twenty years of cooking meals, illustrated with dried egg and cocoa and sugar. Flour or dried spinach might fall out from between the pages, so I had learned to open it carefully, over a counter or a table.

I found the pickles page toward the beginning, near recipes for what to do with zucchini and how to make gallons of punch and sun tea, but I could not read the recipe. Blotches of brine, like tears, had fallen on the page, smudging the numbers I needed to see. I could see that someone had written the list of ingredients a second time, doubling the amounts, no doubt after the boys became pickle fiends, but I couldn't read it.

My mother took the book from me and could not make it out, either. It was her turn to sigh. "Take your bike and go to Oma's house." My grandmother had no telephone. We lived at the edge of town, a compromise between country and city, I suppose, and it was all of a fifteen-minute bike ride to my grandmother's house. There had been a time, a few years ago, when riding my bike alone to Oma's would have seemed like the height of independence. Now, as I backed my bicycle out of the garage, I looked longingly at my father's truck. "Only one more year," I thought to myself, running my finger through the dust on it as I went past.

By the time I drove back, with my Oma's cookbook in the basket, the heat of the day had broken, although you would never have known it in the steamed-up kitchen. My mother had sterilized all the jars and had put them in the oven to keep them safe. When she heard me come in, she began taking the jars out with tongs and loading them with cucumbers.

"One cup of pickling salt for every four cups of water," I called to her from the front hall. "Plus dill."

That I could have remembered without bringing the cookbook home, but standing in my grandmother's kitchen, looking at her recipe book—cards strung together with twine—I suddenly knew what I would give my mother for her birthday: I would go to the dollar store and buy a notebook and copy all her recipes, and the good ones from my Oma, into it. Cheap and useful.

I started the next day, only I decided to use an old school binder and paper, after I ran out of space in the section I had designated for muffins. Who knew there would be so many kinds of muffins? It took longer than I thought, but I couldn't keep the recipe book for long, even though Oma rarely referred to the cookbook, as far as I knew. I stayed up late for a week, copying recipes until my hand cramped. I wished, for the first time ever, that school was still in so I could use a typewriter (ok at school, not ok at home).

Like my mother's, you could tell by the stains which recipes were Oma's favourites, but I sorted them out. It was probably just as well that the recipes didn't come with nutrition information, like store-bought food did. I was surprised to find out why some foods tasted so good: They were filled with sugar and fat. I found one of those cheesy recipes for friendship: Take a cup of kindness, add a spoonful of patience and stir well. I found a recipe for making your own window cleaner, which I didn't copy, either. I found one recipe in my mother's cookbook written by my Oma—it said that my father liked his pie served at room temperature. And I wondered why my mother and my Oma weren't best friends.

On the afternoon that the end was in sight, I found a recipe without a title. It did not look like my Oma's handwriting. All it said was: Equal parts Coca Cola and antifreeze. There were so many things to shock me in that. For one thing, ginger ale, good, Coca Cola very bad. For another, I couldn't imagine my Oma buying Coca Cola by the case, bottle or can. For a third—antifreeze was poisonous, wasn't it? I did not copy that recipe, but persevered through the last few recipes and then set off to return the book to my grandmother's house. And to bring her a jar of our pickles.

I decided I would ask about the strange recipe. My Oma was the kind of woman who was always on the move, even if she wasn't actually bustling about. Her mind was always ahead of me, or behind me.

"Oh, my gopher recipe. Ya, it works well for gophers."

"Oma, antifreeze is poisonous, isn't it?"

"Sure it is. That's why I use it."

I know I looked confused because I was.

"Your Opa, he used to make traps for the gophers. Groundhogs, you call them. They were eating all the lettuce and the peas and even my zucchini!" (Oh the horror, I thought. No more zucchini? Whatever will we do?) "After he died, my sister give me this recipe and I put it out and it tastes so good to the gophers that they eat it and go off to die."

Here is what I know about my grandmother: She is

so Mennonite she wears a little white prayer cap. She prays all the time. She writes letters to the government telling them that war is wrong. She makes rows and rows of jams and jellies and pickled everything and she has twenty ways to deal with zucchini. She took in a Vietnam war resister when her kids were young. She was born in Canada, just after her family escaped during the war, but the shadow of it has hung over her all her life. She goes to church and she prays for my family. She gave me a Bible when I turned seven and a book of martyrs when I turned twelve. (Bible good, martyrs book, bad).

Only now there was this new fact I had to add to the mix: My grandmother, my sweet old lady Oma was a groundhog murderer. This might equal all my parents' compromises put together. But what could I say to her? Could I say that pacifists don't kill gophers? Because apparently they did. And why did I care so much if my Oma killed groundhogs? We had one that lived under our deck at home and he was a nuisance. And it wasn't like I was a pacifist myself. I had a moment's pause in my Oma's sitting room off the kitchen:

What was I, anyhow? What did it mean to be a pacifist?

On the way home, I biked past fields and farms and I got thinking about chickens and cows. Should Mennonites should eat meat at all? One of my friends had turned vegan and she said they could record the screams of carrots being pulled from the ground, but I thought that might go too far. But where was the line? I wished it was clearer to me or that I had never started thinking about it. That I had never found the recipe.

That night it was pork chops and beans and potatoes for supper. And pickles. As I loaded my plate, I realized I would have to draw the line for myself. I decided I wouldn't eat any pork chops that night. I wasn't sure exactly why, but it seemed like a start. **R**

Rhubarb Mousse with Strawberry-Gin Sauce

Ingredients

3 c Diced **rhubarb**
1/2 c Brown sugar
1 pk Unflavored gelatin
1/4 c Tanqueray or other juniper-flavored gin, such as Gilbey's or Beefeater
2 c Cream
2 Egg whites
1/4 c Sugar
2 c Strawberries, hulled
5 T Sugar
1/4 c Lemon marmalade, the type with shreds of lemon rather than chunks
2 T Tanqueray gin

Procedure

Sprinkle the brown sugar over the **rhubarb** and let sit for an hour. Put in a saucepan, cover, and simmer gently for 15 minutes or so, until fully tender and quite thick. Puree in a processor.

Soften the gelatin in the gin for 10 minutes. Combine with the **rhubarb** and heat to dissolve the gelatin. Set into an ice-water bath (a large bowl filled halfway with ice and a couple of cups of water.) Cool until cold to the touch, but do not allow the gelatin to set.

With an electric mixer, combine the cream and **rhubarb** mixture. Whip until fluffy and light. Do not overwhip or the cream will break down.

Beat the egg whites until soft peaks form. Add the sugar and continue until stiff peaks have formed. Carefully fold the egg whites into the **rhubarb** and cream mixture. Turn the mousse into a clear glass, 6-cup, straight-sided souffle dish or into individual 1-cup souffle dishes and refrigerate for 2 hours or more.

To make the Strawberry Gin Sauce, puree the strawberries and sugar together in a processor. Strain through a sieve and reserve. Warm the marmalade just to melt. Combine the marmalade, the gin, and the pureed strawberries, mixing well. Chill thoroughly.

Serve each portion of mousse topped or surrounded with sauce; pass the sauce separately.

Things That Matter

By Cheryl Denise

And there they are
outside my kitchen window
in backhoes and blue jeans,
smoking cigarettes at eight a.m.
thick and stubborn as cattle
shovels digging trenches in the rain.

While I worry over red marks on my manuscript,
consult dictionary, thesaurus,
crumple poems for the trash,
they lay pipe, pull electric, chug Pepsi,
fix what I did wrong myself two months ago.
And if there's anything I know now,
it's that you need to lay Schedule 40
to pull electric.
All you need to know in life
is what these men know.

If I were my mother,
I'd serve them lemonade
and molasses cookies
from a wicker tray.

I wish I'd been born a man.
Old Mrs. Evans said a girl
could hurt something female working like them.
But most women don't even try,
don't own a proper work shoe,
won't break a sweat outside a gym.
The only thing we're better at
is multiple orgasms,
and that's important
but men figuring, calculating,
getting something done
something real
pulling cable
sliding in and out of days
green as grass
the mist rising
working under whatever the sky will give

real men, making things electric.

Reviews

A voice from the choir

Braun, Jan Guenter. *Somewhere Else*. Arbeiter Ring, Winnipeg, 2008, 195 pp.

Reviewed by Lois Klassen

Somewhere Else reminds me of an impassioned coffee room discussion between a couple of young Mennonite medical students around 1985. They were going over the results of a recent Mennonite Church General Assembly in Saskatoon. The assembly had produced, for an engaged but divided membership (if those students were any indication), the "Resolution on Human Sexuality." Informed by experts like doctors, psychologists, biblical scholars, ethicists and church leaders, the resolution offered both give and take. It declared homosexuality a sin while also confessing to a collective "lack of compassion" for those of non-heterosexual orientations. As if in direct challenge to those articulate students, it also urged ongoing discernment through continued study. What I recall of that conversation was an impression that the resolution involved a lot of talk and listening. Experts and individuals bearing witness were at least heard if not valued by more than a few.

Jan Guenther Braun's first novel is about a different time, though nearly the same place; and it is about a very different way of talking. It begins with the anxious diatribe of a young lesbian woman who feels forced to internalize her church's literal application of biblical texts concerning homosexuality. As a teenager pressed into a corner, the narrator faces the reader and her emerging life with rage and confrontation. Though endowed with prodigious intellect and academic promise, Guenther Braun's character is unfortunately not gifted with agency. More often than not, she reacts viscerally to the onslaught of the troubles that are part of life as an outcast and run-away: vomiting and taking blows to the face punctuate the story. All the while, Jess talks back directly to the reader in an imagination-less voice that serves only to recount cyclical violence and entrapment. This on-going monologue effectively restricts both the book's characters and prevents the reader from re-imagining or taking ownership of historicized and institutionalized intolerance.

If the narrative follows the biography of the writer (at least the locations do, according to Geunther Braun's website), then the story begins in the 1990s. In terms of the story of North American Mennonites' treatment of homosexuality, this was the decade in which discernment met with division. While my memories are taken up by the moment in the 1980s when compassion and dialogue were evident, a later era of more overt intolerance was its sadder legacy. Within some congregations like the one described in this book, the proscription against studying the issue was effectively used to shame and silence gay youth with heavy-handed use of biblical authority. *Somewhere Else* is screaming evidence of the cost to individuals of the unspoken aggression and intolerance that have also occupied the Mennonite story. Unfortunately, Guenther Braun has essentially mimicked the intolerance in her relentless use of a singular, reactionary perspective, and thus perpetuates the cycle. It effectively made this reader, like the narrator, wish for either a saviour (another voice) or an end. Both are finally delivered, but only weakly in the last seven words.

Guenther Braun interjects some mystery into the story in the form of an isolated female poet living on the margins of the community. As with some of the other characters, Martha Wiens is out of place against the hard realism that fills the book. Still, her slowly revealed life is a relief and her poetry is welcomed as an alternate voice. It is unfortunate that the book's designer neglected to give hers and the other pieces of poetry adequate space and shape. This is another missed opportunity to give the reader a chance to feel and see the story from various perspectives.

Feeling much more sympathetic to the writer's cause than to her craft, I prefer this ending that Jan Guenther Braun has included in the final acknowledgements:

"To the countless queer Mennonites who have stayed silent. This story does not pretend to speak for all of us; it is only an attempt to add a voice to the choir. One day we will dance through the doors of our churches unafraid and with joy. For those whose

pain is too deep to ever dawn the church door again even if one day the dogma crumbles to the ground, thank you for having the courage to begin."

For a comprehensive history and bibliography, see "Homosexuality and the Mennonite Church," by Loren L. Johns, 2006. http://www.ambs.edu/LJohns/H&MC.htm

Lois Klassen is a Vancouver based artist. She and her husband Carl Wiebe stopped attending church in 2007 when its intolerance for gay marriage wounded their friends.

Visual storytelling

Friesen, Steven "Reece." *Pax Avalon: Conflict Revolution.* Herald Press, 2008.

Reviewed by Perry Grosshans

Steven "Reece" Friesen's message is clear, although at times almost overpowering, in his graphic novel aimed at promoting peace. *Pax Avalon: Conflict Revolution* is about one woman's mission to use her miraculous God-given power of healing to bring peace to the inhabitants of Avalon city. Friesen has chosen to tell this story through an unusual medium: a comic book.

What is a graphic novel? The definition has come under constant evolution and controversial scrutiny for years. The term differentiates it from the comic book counterpart, implying that the graphic novel is more serious, mature, or literary in nature, and has a definite beginning, middle, and end. Although the term has been used for decades (in various forms since the 60s) it is agreed by most that it saw modern usage in mainstream media during the 80s with the publication of two definitive works: *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (1986), Frank Miller's four-part comic-book series focusing on an older Batman in a dystopian future, and *Watchmen* (1987), a collection of a 12-issue series by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons which looks at contemporary issues through a radical reworking of the superhero concept (Wikipedia, Graphic Novel defined).

Pax Avalon is written, pencilled, inked, coloured, and lettered, all by Friesen. It is his personal project, and as he explains in his preface, "drawn in the style of the books that I loved when I was growing up: superhero comics." His goal was to tell a superhero story where violence is not the sole solution to problems.

The story focuses on Julianna "Pax" Embry, who has been given a unique gift from God to heal others by touching them and thereby transferring their wounds to her own body. She joins an elite team of trained specialists, the Avalon City Special Operations (ACSO), in the hope of making a difference through this organization. What she finds are people who try to exploit her gift, either through her own organization by making her a celebrity, or through the machinations of an evil genius intent on forcing his own design of peace on the city of Avalon.

Central to the book is Julianna Embry's pursuit for peace in everything she does. She lives, for example, in an "intentional community" with people who share her ideals, and unlike the others of her special team, she volunteers for the ACSO without remuneration. Although she has found her own peace, she does not believe that force is a way to bring peace to others—people must find their own path. She refuses (much to the chagrin of her teammates) to carry any sort of weapon or to hurt anyone no matter how villainous they are—for Julianna there are numerous alternatives for dealing with problems without resorting to violence.

Friesen himself is currently pursuing a Masters of Theology at Canadian Mennonite University, and it is hard not to notice the loud and strong role that God plays in the book: Julianna is constantly reflecting upon her path, prays to God frequently, and discusses openly with others God's message of peace. But for all the references to God, the book does not come across as religious propaganda. Julianna is actually the only major character in the book who pursues such a devoted path. Sometimes she disagrees with her teammates when dealing with certain situations, as most of them believe that violence is the only answer to violence.

The artwork and colouring of the book itself is serviceable, meaning that they do the job in relaying the story. Those familiar with the mainstream artwork of the genre may be a little disappointed. The characters sometimes look stunted and lack fluidity in their movements, and at times they are drawn like some sort of Thunderbirds marionette. The colouring is decent, if a little dark at times. Overall, for a one-man operation, *Pax Avalon* is a solid bit of visual storytelling.

Those who normally read superhero comics may approach this book with a bit of trepidation, and it will most likely not be for them, either because of the

artwork or the strong messages about God and peace. For those with similar religious interests, particularly when it comes to pursuing community peace, whether they read comics or not, this book will be a pleasant surprise.

Perry Grosshans is the General Manager of the Winnipeg International Writers Festival.

An exploration of grief

Penner, Christina. *The Widows of Hamilton House.* Enfield & Wizenty, 2008.

Reviewed by Lori Matties

Christina Penner challenges many boundaries in her first novel. As a volunteer in the gift shop once located in the house in which the novel is set, I was curious. Hamilton House is famous in Winnipeg for its former seances and distinguished guests, Prime Minister William Lyon McKenzie King and Sir Conan Doyle among them. Penner capitalizes on this history and the house's reputation for being haunted to write a story about Ruth, a young woman who moves into the upstairs apartment and discovers for herself what ghosts live there.

Ruth is the daughter of a Mennonite minister who lives in nearby Steinbach. She has recently returned from Edmonton with an unfinished Master's degree in history, and is now employed at the University of Winnipeg library. The reader soon discovers that while she loves her family, she no longer lives in the world of their faith. As she pushes religious boundaries, she also pushes gender identity boundaries. Partway through the story we learn that the failed relationship Ruth left in Edmonton involved another woman. And as she learns more about the Hamiltons and their seance experiments, she also pushes psychic and spiritual boundaries. Through Lon, the doctor who becomes her lover and then her husband, she meets Naomi, her mother-in-law, with whom she finally also pushes social boundaries.

Ruth studies the Hamilton archives out of curiosity and in the hope that she can turn this curiosity into the Master's thesis she never finished. She keeps a diary of her feelings and imaginings about the research she is doing on the Hamiltons, which she occasionally shows to Naomi, a history professor at the University of Manitoba. Ruth is puzzled by the records of the seances. To her the photographs of ectoplasm and ghostly bodies are obviously fake. Why, then, the prolonged experimentation?

Early in their relationship Ruth tells Lon how, in their childhood, her sister named their two kittens Romeo and Juliet. After the kittens died eating crickets poisoned by the girls' father, Ruth's sister thought their death was her fault because she had named them after tragic literary characters. Lon asks Ruth, "Could a name hold a fate?" (p 53).

As the story unfolds, it seems the answer is yes. At the heart of this story, which loosely follows the plot line of the biblical story of Ruth and Naomi, is an exploration of grief. Naomi has lost her husband and older son to an accident, and then Ruth and Naomi lose Lon. Lillian Hamilton lost her three-year-old son to the influenza outbreak in 1918.

It is from Ruth's grief that she gains an understanding of Lillian's desire to reach beyond the psychic/spiritual borders of her life to make contact with her lost loved ones. And as Ruth's and Naomi's lives join, Ruth also discovers her own gift as a channel for communication with the dead.

There are some inconsistencies in this story. Ruth tells Lon she doesn't trust words, yet she needs her journal to articulate and sort her thoughts. It is the words from Gray's Anatomy that help her to piece together the reality of Lon's death. Her complaint that, "Write it down and even history vanishes into fiction" (p 53), becomes an ironic reversal when her fictionalizing of Lillian's story about her son on the pier becomes a true story about Lon and Naomi. Readers may also find the transposition of the biblical story of Ruth and Naomi into a contemporary setting not altogether convincing. The biblical story rests on the unwavering loyalty of a young woman who knows exactly what she wants. The contemporary Ruth never convinces me that she really knows what she wants. Though Naomi tells Ruth she wants her to be free to live her own life, Naomi's actions feel manipulative. It seems she chooses her dead son over Ruth and that she is giving Ruth an ultimatum rather than a real choice. When Ruth chooses Naomi over the "terrified convictions of right and wrong" (p 284) of her family, we have very little idea what those fears are. Whether the reader agrees or disagrees with the idea of a lesbian relationship between a woman and her mother-in-law, the relationship between this

Ruth and Naomi, based as it is on the threads of posthumous connection to a dead husband/son, leaves me less than convinced.

Much in this story is strong. Penner writes beautiful prose with humour and poignancy. I enjoyed the Winnipeg backdrop and Penner's use of Ruth's journaling to tell and imagine the Hamiltons' story. Her description of Ruth's grief over losing the love of her life is strong and moving. Her weaving of the complicated and somewhat slippery strands of contemporary sexual, social, and spiritual life is done with some skill. Although perhaps she has tried to tackle too many large issues in this novel, it is an engaging story that leaves the writer looking forward to more of her writing.

Lori Matties lives and writes in Winnipeg.

Not re-establishing Christendom

Rempel-Burkholder, Byron & Dora Dueck, Editors. *Northern Lights: An Anthology of Contemporary Christian Writing in Canada.* John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd., 2008. 260pages.

Reviewed by Elfrieda Neufeld Schroeder

When I applied for a creative writing course during my undergraduate studies, the professor asked to see samples of what I had written and where I had published. When I supplied her with names of Christian/church journals she told me not to bother with those. I was annoyed and decided not to take a course from someone who seemed prejudiced toward my focus at the outset and automatically dismissed Christian writing as moralizing and didactic. It is true that too often such reputation has been earned. Rather than allowing readers to engage with a problem to which there may be no easy answer, Christian authors sometimes provide a quick fix.

This anthology proves, for the most part, that Christian writing need not be mediocre. The book is divided into six parts, centering on themes of "birth and incarnation, suffering and death, transformation and glory." Practical and helpful is the inclusion of an author bio under each submission.

The title of the first section, "Dance to Creation," brought to mind my first experience, as a nine-year-old European immigrant, of the northern lights doing their brilliantly colourful dance in a black Alberta sky, a magic I had not previously encountered.

In this section I especially enjoyed Ralph Milton's "Dancing the Rubber Ice." This article about a prairie boy delighting in the first signs of spring illustrated precisely the question Rempel-Burkholder, one of the editors, asked himself: "What is our spiritual landscape as Canadians? What is our relationship between spirituality and geography?" "I know about hope," writes Milton, "because as a small boy I learned to dance the rubber ice and feel the passion of a prairie springtime."

Perhaps some contributions in the second section, "A Place in the World," come closest to the type of writing my instructor dismissed as not worth a glance. The first two articles captivated me but I lost interest while reading Michael W. Higgins "On Monks, Monsters and Manuscripts." He writes: "I hope it will not be said of me... 'that he has given us more than we can easily digest—a surfeit of self-exploration.'" Ironically, that is precisely how I felt about Higgins' piece, a long and tedious monologue on how he tries to find his own writing voice. Bill Blaikie's article was more enjoyable after a second read, but some of the writing in this section seems mediocre.

On the contrary, in the section that follows, entitled "Sorrow and the Wild," I discovered Christian writing at its most excellent. Rudy Wiebe underlines the significance of story as he describes the chopped down poplars of the Canadian boreal forest "shivering for shame, for endless, endless sorrow" because there is a legend of Christ being nailed to the poplar. "You can hear trembling aspen leaves shiver. At the slightest breeze the dark green leaves flicker into their underside paleness and a sigh like great sorrow flows through the forest."

Joy Kogawa portrays the emotional upheaval a daughter experiences when her aging father is accused of sexually abusing his students years ago. Desperately she wonders: "Where are You, my God, my Goddess, at such times, in such places? Where, in the mystery of the absence of love, are You?" Her answer lies with the compassionate female archdeacon who comes to interview them, showing respect for the father's work in the church and comforting and encouraging the distraught daughter.

Other writers who received my undivided attention are Mary Jo Leddy and James Loney in the section

"Leaps of Faith," Ron Rolheiser in the "Transformation" section, and Maxine Hancock in "Glimpses of Glory."

Two decisions the editors made at the outset strike me as oddly un-Canadian for a Canadian anthology. One was to have an English edition rather than a bilingual one, the other was to have a Christian edition rather than an interfaith edition. The anthology would certainly have had a wider appeal had the editors been willing to broaden its emphasis to include all faiths as well as both languages. That would have been a true reflection of Canadian spirituality. Certainly there is much we as Christian Canadians can learn from our fellow Canadians of other faiths that will help us understand one another better and be more accepting of each other. Bill Blaikie, in his article "Finding a Prophetic Perspective," writes: "[T]he inappropriate offense in the post-Christendom world is ... sounding like you want to re-establish Christendom. It may also be inappropriate to be hostile to the reality of a multifaith, multicultural, secular, pluralistic society, but not inappropriate to ask constructive, even difficult, questions about how such a reality is to be understood and managed." The editors did ask themselves the questions but opted for a narrower focus and the book will therefore also have a smaller readership. Perhaps other editors will take up this challenge.

Elfrieda Neufeld Schroeder received her PhD in German Language and Literature in 2001 and is a German instructor, translator, English language tutor and freelance writer. She has recently moved from Ontario to Manitoba. **R**

Contributors

Ted Dyck is in his second year as writer-in-residence with the Festival of Words (Moose Jaw). He spent twenty years teaching and running workshops, is the author of four books of poetry, and editor of three collections of essays. He also served three years as chief editor for *Grain* magazine.

Victor Enns is a writer and arts administrator living in Winnipeg, and the founding editor of *Rhubarb*. His 2005 poetry collection, *Lucky Man*, was nominated for the McNally-Robinson Manitoba Best Book Award.

Esther Epp-Tiessen serves as peace ministries coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee Canada. Currently residing in Winnipeg, she has previously lived in Altona, Ottawa, Kitchener-Waterloo and the Philippines, as well as three months in Jerusalem. She has worked as a writer, researcher and pastor. She is married to Dan and is the mother of two grown sons.

Berni Friesen has written a novel, *The Book of Beasts*; a book of poetry, *Sex, Death, and Naked Men*; and a book of young adult short fiction, *The Seasons Are Horses*. She started her creative life as a visual artist, and her work has been on and between the covers on many books and periodicals. As a writer, she has earned various awards and honours.

Susan Fish is a writer and editor living with her husband and three children in Waterloo, Ontario, where she makes pickles and wrestles with tough questions.

Carolyn Holderread Heggen lives in Corvallis, Ore., and is a member of the Albany (Ore.) Mennonite Church. She is a psychotherapist who specializes in trauma recovery. In 1993, her book, *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches* was published by Herald Press.

Maurice Mierau is a Winnipeg writer and editor. His latest book is *Fear Not* (Turnstone Press).

Joyce Nickel Harback lives in Calgary, Alberta where she skis, hikes and sings with her humorous husband, freestyle skiing son and sleepy old dog. She writes poetry, non-fiction, book reviews and blogs. Find her online atliveaquietlife.blogspot.com.

Leonard Neufeldt, a literary and cultural historian born and raised in yarrow, BC, has published several volumes of poetry, including *The Coat Is Thin* in 2008. His poems have appeared in, besides Rhubarb magazine, various literary publications throughout Canada and the US. He lives in Gig Harbor, Washington.

Henry Peters

Ernie Regehr is cofounder of Project Ploughshares, Adjunct Associate Professor in Peace Studies at Conrad Grebel University College, and Fellow of the Centre for International Governance Innovation.

Colin Vanderburg is a Canadian photographer who has been developing his lens-based art since 2002. His most recent bodies of work were conceived of and developed in Beirut, Nahr el Bared, and several rural communities in Ghana. Colin currently resides in Winnipeg.

Elinor Wieler moved on from her teaching career in Winnipeg last June to pursue her passion for writing at Delta Beach on Lake Manitoba. She remains active at First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, conducting the women's choir and singing in the senior choir's special events.

Michael Yoder is an artist currently living and working in Philadelphia, PA. He earnd a BFA in Painting from Penn State University. He then attended the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) where he earned an MFA in Painting. Yoder is the recipient of several awards, most notably an Artist-in-Residence Fellowship from The Chinati Foundation in Marfa, TX where he had a solo show in 2004 and a fellowship from The Bronx Museum of the Arts in New York, NY where he exhibited work in The 24th Annual A.I.M. Exhibition.

Coming up in Rhubarb

#23 Rhubarb's 10th Anniversary issue—Fall 2009
Top 10's of Top 10

#24 The American issue—Winter 2009
Guest edited by Ann Hostetler

General submissions also welcome.
When submitting work by email, please include name & contact information on attachments.

For further submission information, see pages 2 & 46.

Continued from page 48

the economy had a slight downturn or youth became unruly, it was not unusual to hear comments in the barbershop that a war was needed to get things back on track.

Of course, when you have guns, sooner or later somebody will start shooting, and so even though the kings and kaisers and czars just threatened each other, there would from time to time be shooting in different places, but usually it was not clearly said that this constituted a war, even when this shooting went on for much longer than the big chess games with all the poppies and checkmate weapons. During one of these long undeclared wars the young men got unruly and grew their hair long and the women decided that appliances and nylon stockings weren't what they needed to be fulfilled and so young men and women stuck flowers into gun barrels and eventually this long undeclared war was ended without checkmate. And for a while it seemed that the strangest dream had come true and many soldiers wore blue berets and kept peace without firing a shot.

But kings and kaisers and czars have a hard time dealing with their people when there isn't an opposing king and queen on the chessboard. It is hard to get flags waving over cooperative gaming and filmmakers find such games too challenging to make movies about. And the people for the most part like to keep things simple.

Still, a time came when the walls were torn down, and enemy territories were freed up for gangsters to take over, and the kings and kaisers and czars appeared to stop threatening each other with their unused weapons. So all should have been well, except that when the big enemy disappeared, and the big kings and kaisers and czars faded into the background, suddenly all manner of little kings and kaisers and czars sprung up with their own poppies growing row on row and neighbours started fighting neighbours without any regard for the rules of chess and the next thing we knew we had women as well as men gaily marching to war. Young men and women, instead of sticking flowers into gun barrels, were energized by the sight of uniforms and the prospect of firing guns at enemies and burning poppy fields after 50 years of wearing blue berets to keep warring sides apart. And they never batted an eye at the cost even though it was said to cost $17 millions dollars for each kill.

The famine returned, even while this new undeclared war dragged on longer than the Pharaoh's lean years, and the kings and kaisers and czars began a new war, a cooperative war in a way, in which they mortgaged the futures of their children and grandchildren in order to put men to work building appliances and roads and hockey arenas and home renovations for the women, but no childcare, of course. And even the women who were kings and kaisers and czars didn't see the infrastructure of women and children and people as worthy of their consideration in this stimulating cooperative war. After all, only real work was worthy of consideration by the kings and kaisers and czars of all sexes.

And the poppies kept on growing, and the pepper-shaker pods kept on scattering their seeds to the children in each and every land. **R**

Armin Wiebe encourages readers to add details to his "stub" entry on Wikipedia, since it would be unethical to do it himself.

The Mennonite Literary Society declares:

You are a Mennonite if...

...you think you are

...you want to be

...your friends think you are, even if you don't

...you're fighting it tooth-and-nail, but can't quite shake it

If this means you, please send* Rhubarb *your work. Thank you.

See ***Submissions (p. 2)*** *and* ***Coming Up*** *(p. 40) for what's new in* **Rhubarb**.

An Historical Rumour of Dubious Credulity

By Armin Wiebe

One time, it is said, there was a long famine, even longer than the seven lean years shown by the seven skinny cows in Pharoah's dream. This famine came after there had been a bad war where kings and kaisers and czars played chess on the world using their subjects as game pieces. Each gambit caused such blood to flow and so many poppies to grow, that when the war was over orators said it was the chess game to end all chess games. But poppies that grow, row on row, have a way of blooming on and spreading seeds from their pepper-shaker pods, and then for some years prosperity ruled, at least in some parts of the world: work and cars for all and baseball teams in every town.

But then the famine descended on the world, long, dry, and dusty. For a long time the kings and kaisers and czars didn't do much, but at the back of the world's brain was rememberance of the poppies growing row on row and the roaring fat years that followed, and so one day kings and kaisers and czars took their queens and kaiserins and czarinas on tours across the parched lands and promised a return to abundance.

So the chess game was on again. Trainloads of men rattled across the land to board ships to cross the ocean to fulfill the needs of the chessboard squares. Left behind were the boys too young for chess and the women. To support the chess effort the boys and women tilled the fields and riveted tanks and airplanes and fielded baseball teams in towns and villages across the land. And to free the women to toil in the war factories, the kings and kaisers and czars provided childcare for the fatherless children too young to go to school.

When at last, with a checkmate move more devastating than any ever used before, the war ended and the soldiers who had survived came home and went from house to house collecting the baseball uniforms and gloves from the boys and women, and the kings and kaisers and czars cancelled the childcare programs for fatherless children too young to go to school. So the women went home and to keep them at home the men built fridges and stoves and washers and dryers and sent men in seersucker suits to sell them vacuum cleaners and floor polishers and waterless cookware to keep their hands occupied as they listened to mellow men's voices on the radio selling them soap. So a woman's biggest challenge was keeping the seams in her nylons straight and her husband's shirts whiter than white for the Sunday drive in the multi-finned automobiles that killed hundreds, if not thousands of citizens on long weekends.

In fact, the notion that war brings prosperity was so ingrained in men's psyches ... it was not unusual to hear comments in the barbershop that a war was needed to get things back on track.

The kings and kaisers and czars were somewhat fearful of having another all-out war of chess, but they did like the spin-offs that came from war, the chemicals, the rockets, the fortunes that could be amassed by building weapons, so they built walls to divide up the chess board, and decided to have a war without fighting, a war where they just built weapons too horrible to use, but good for a continuous threat. And because the checkmate move that had ended the last war had been so devastating, it was quite easy to keep the people frightened and submissive to the idea that this prosperous time of cars and appliances was due to the war effort. In fact, the notion that war brings prosperity was so ingrained in men's psyches that whenever

Continued on page 47