Revisited Prompt on Moral Injury (Eileen)

A term that has emerged in discussions about veterans processing the aftermath of war and military service is "moral injury." Moral injury involves the transgression of an individual's moral beliefs or ethical code, which can result in a serious "inner conflict" or schism within the self. Psychologists like Dr. Edward Tick have referred to moral injury as a "soul wound." As Syracuse Veterans' Writing group member Don Western said of moral injury, you "saw wrong, did wrong, didn't stop wrong."

Keeping in mind the prevailing definition(s) of moral injury, make sense of the concept in your own terms. Write about a specific time in your combat experiences or experiences serving in the military where "you saw wrong, did wrong, didn't stop wrong." How do you make sense of that experience now? And what do you feel are the long-term effects of that experience as you think back on it?

This writing prompt is part of a larger effort through Hendricks Chapel to address the concept of moral injury among veterans. A group of SU faculty, veterans, staff, and SU chaplains are working to address the issue of moral injury. Members of our writing group, including Don, Bob, Pete, Andrew, and Bill have taken part in some of the meetings, and Andrew, Eileen, and Jen are serving on the planning group.

As part of a set of events addressing moral injury, the Hendricks Chapel group on Moral Injury will hold a public reading on Veterans Day, November 11th at 7:00-8:15 p.m. at Art Rage Gallery. I will work with our group to determine who has pieces to develop/share for this reading. I hope all of you can come to the reading if you do not have plans that night.

Transformations of Body & Health (Ivy)

Many veteran writers (both in our group and beyond) have described how their bodies went through big changes in the military or as a result of their service. Some have written about the physical challenges of boot camp and what it meant to “get in shape.” Others have discussed the intense strain of carrying heavy equipment long distances day in and day out, and the toll that took on them physically. Still others have written about residual health effects of combat: getting wounded, being subjected to Agent Orange, or some other bodily trauma. Consider how your body and/or health was seriously affected either during your time in the military or as a result of your service. Focus on writing a scene that gives the reader a sense of what your body went through, or what you are going through now.
Public Events around Veterans and Writing

Brian Turner

“My Life as a Foreign Country: An Evening with Poet Brian Turner”

Thursday, Nov. 20, 7 p.m.  Humanities Center/DWC event

Downtown Writer’s Center of the YMCA Arts Branch (340 Montgomery St.)

U.S. Army veteran Brian Turner reads from his critically acclaimed memoir My Life as a Foreign Country (Jonathan Cape/Random House, 2014), recounting his wartime experiences in Iraq and Bosnia. Turner is also the author of the two award-winning poetry collections: Here, Bullet (2005) and Phantom Noise (2010), both published by Alice James Books. His appearance is part of the Downtown Writer’s Center’s Visiting Author Readings Series.

Opportunity to meet Brian Turner

The Downtown Writers Center is partnering with the Syracuse Symposium to host noted veteran-poet Brian Turner. He is the author of two acclaimed books of poems, and a brand-new memoir that is making waves: My Life as a Foreign Country.

The DWC has invited our group to meet with Brian Turner on Friday, November 21st, from 12:30-2:00 PM at the DWC. Free of charge. This will be a Q&A/discussion session. Let me know if you want to attend.