

“Another Army Poem”

by Anthony Albright

I read them a lot ...
these Army poems—
They're sometimes crass,
sometimes graphic, ALWAYS
hard to read.

On knees—

I don't struggle with the language
I struggle with the struggle I see
inside—I see—can't unsee the seeing
that's in me. We say that freedom isn't free
as if that's enough to convey
what we actually want to say.

It's not.

We're simultaneously put on a plinth
and pushed aside. Idolized, but not
interrogated; incarcerated and not educated.
For dedication's wages are death
of the place we thought we'd protect.

Neglect—

It's what we see and do.
It's in finding out who
got your life while you were away—
shoulda stayed, shoulda played the game,
shoulda humbled yourself and cowered
like the prick from high school she said was gay.

It's okay—

Cause now you get to be in plays
and collect a check from the VA.
And all the little sycophants who stayed
and played the game you shoulda played
now want to create art ...
With all your gore and guts, tears and sweat
as paints.

Dr. Anthony James Albright is a Choctaw poet living near the Mississippi River in Minnesota. He is a veteran of the Army's 1st Special Forces Group. His primary focus as a writer and scholar is the recovery of underrepresented voices, like veterans and natives. He has been published in *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Northern Narratives*, *Northern Ecclecta*, *Beyond Parallax*, *News from the Mothership*, *The Rapids Review*, *The Blue and Gold*, and the *New Jersey English Journal*, among others. His poetry takes inspiration from oral tradition, Anglo-Saxon Bob and Wheel, Shakespeare, and more modern forms of poetry, including advertising and video game literature. He has occasionally lectured at public schools, community spaces, and colleges throughout the Midwest.