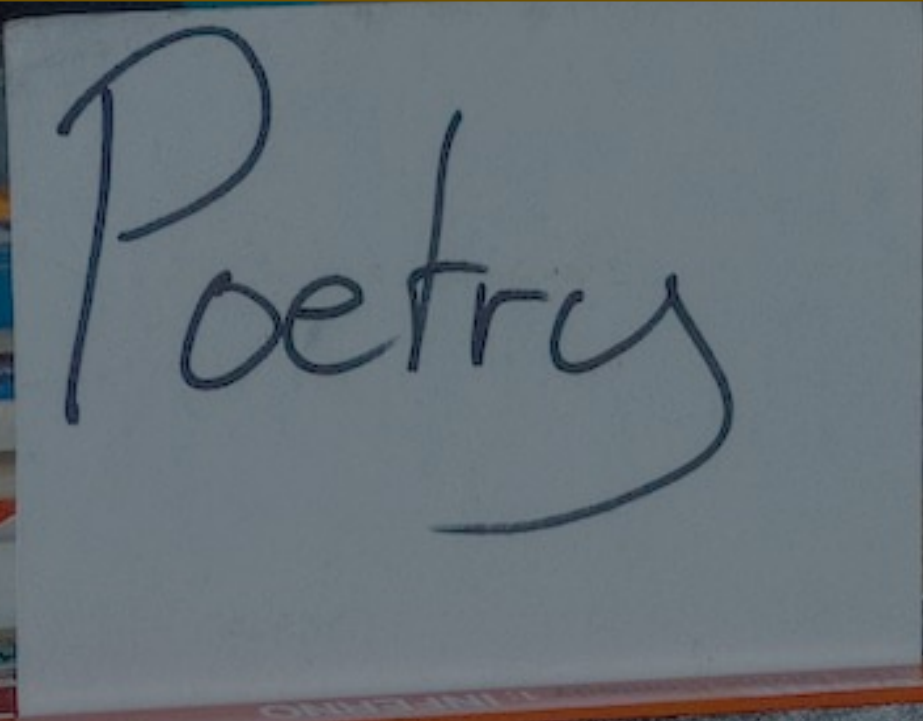


My capstone: Portfolio of poetry-related projects

- Edited and published a special Moral Injury issue of a literary journal.
- Resources re: encouraging reading/writing poetry as part of working with morally injured.
- Some original poems of mine.
- APOLOGIES FOR THE NON-LINEAR NATURE OF THIS PRESENTATION.

Potential problems connecting MI & Poetry

Poetry

A white rectangular card with the word "Poetry" written in a cursive, blue ink font. The card is placed on top of a stack of books. The background shows a large collection of books, some with visible spines and covers, creating a sense of a library or a study area.

The game enforces smirks; but we have seen
The moon in lonely alleys make
A grail of laughter of an empty ash can,
And through all sound of gaiety and quest
Have heard a kitten in the wilderness.

--Hart Crane

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And through all sound of gaiety and quest
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Making the case for poetry & MI

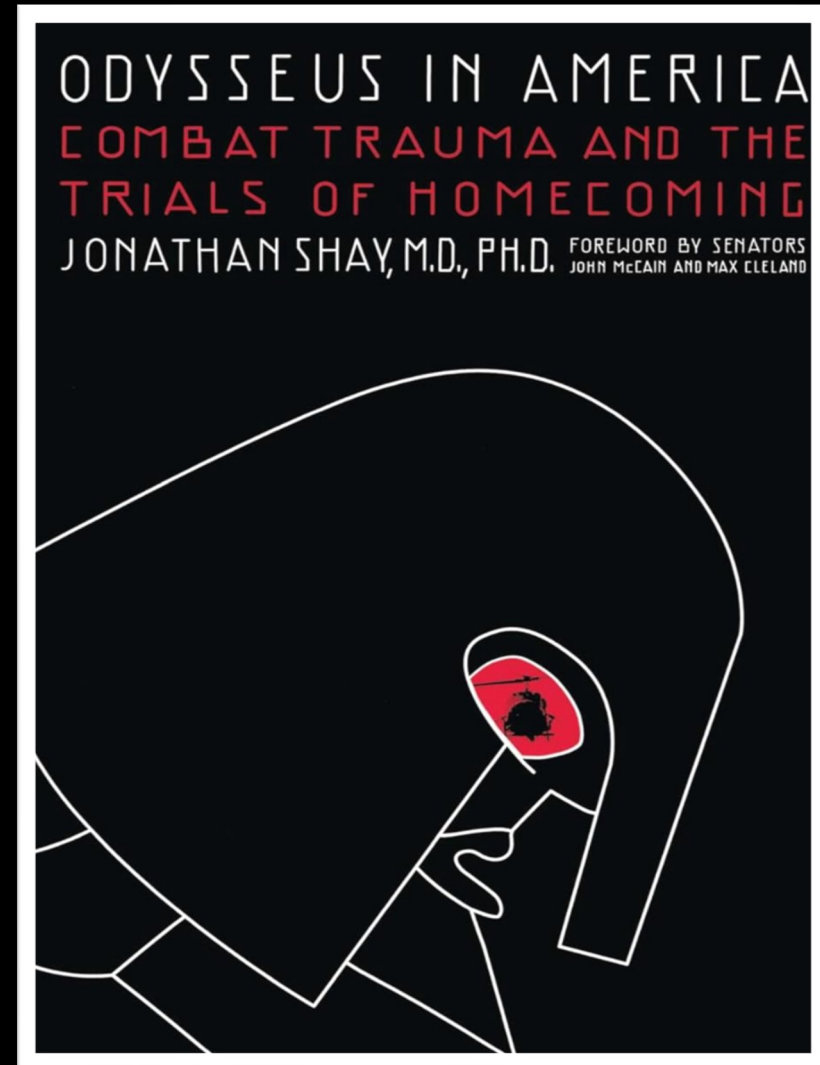
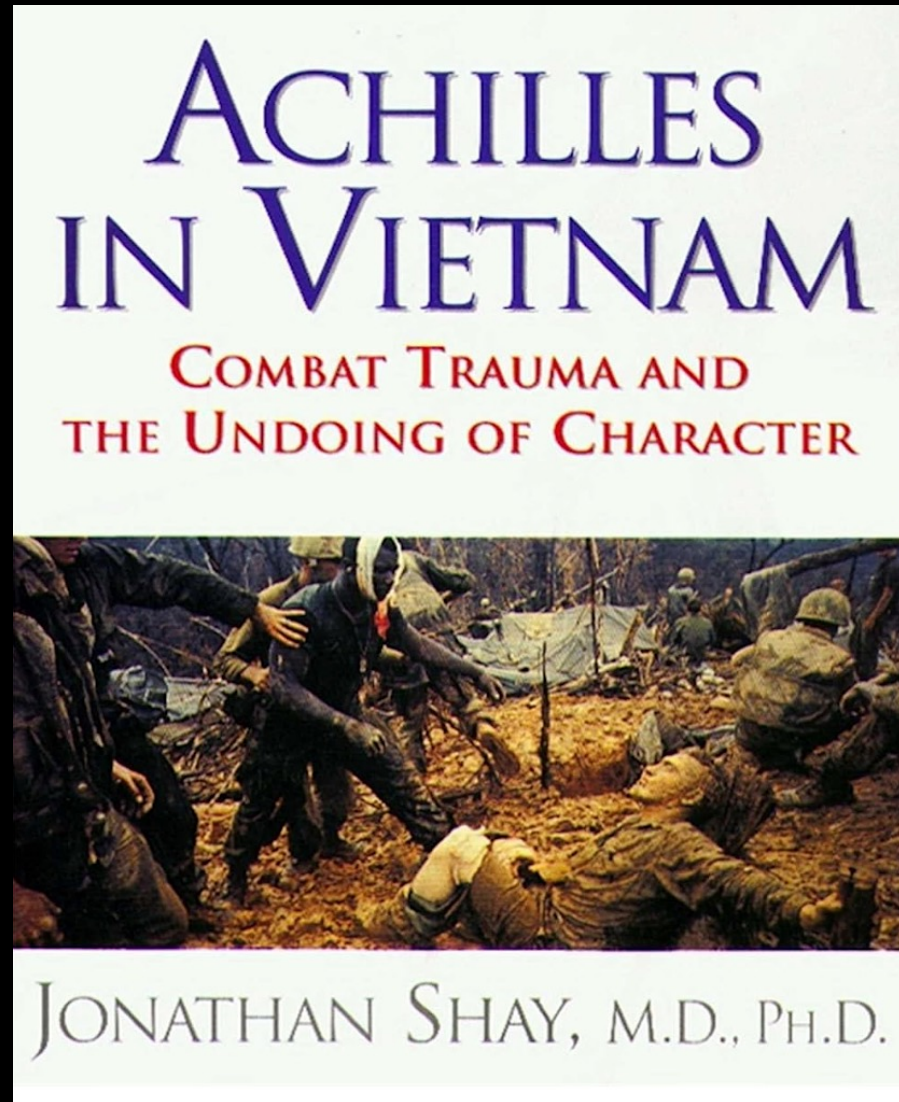
“Poetry gives us a vocabulary for the feelings
that don’t fit into language...”
(Tracy K. Smith)

Some things are unspeakable.

Art gives us an alternative to speaking.

A solid yellow horizontal bar at the bottom of the slide.

Poetry about war & trauma through all human history



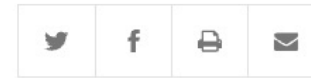


COLLECTION

The Poetry of the Vietnam War

Poems from and about the American involvement in Vietnam.

BY [THE EDITORS](#)



Ode to a Drone

BY AMIT MAJMUDAR

Hell-raiser, razor-feathered
risers, windhover over
Peshawar,

power's
joystick-blithe
thousand-mile scythe,

proxy executioner's
proxy ax
pinged by a proxy server,

winged victory,
pilot cipher
unburdened by aught

but fuel and bombs,
fool of God, savage
idiot savant

sucking your benumbed
trigger-finger
gamer's thumb

Narrative medicine



Can we be healed by telling our stories?

Can healers be healed by hearing our stories?

Spiritual/Prayer: Lamentation & lamentation

One third of the Psalms are laments. Book of Lamentations, of course. And etc.

Common form:

- Complaining to God/Expressing our pain & misery. *Why me? How long will I suffer? Why are you doing this to me?*
- *Then, a turn, and a statement of trust in God.*

Accepting lamentation as spiritually healthy allows us to give ourselves permission to complain to God. Even to whine, as if we were in the presence of a loving parent.

Complaining is not incompatible with trust & gratitude. See, for example, the PSALMS!

Stand

*--He has filled me with bitterness.
he has saturated me with wormwood.
My soul is rejected from peace,
I have forgotten goodness.
(Lamentations, 3:15,17)*

Stand before your God
in your naked fury,
drenched in tears.
Demand that God look upon you.
look!, you cry, *look!*
slapping your chest
and smearing the blood
on your hands with
the salty fluids there,
look at me!

then: no words, and God
must hear what *you* hear come
from your throat--
your weeping mixed with bugle call,
your wailing mixed with sirens,
your growls with rattling gunfire,
your groans with the groans
of the wounded.
Stand before your God
in your naked fury
in an intimate piety of rage.

Moral Injury issue of
RIGHT HAND POINTING

THE LAW OF FORGETTING



poems on moral injury

right hand pointing

Luther Allen

Harvey Schwartz

William Cullen

Heidi Slettedahl

Nate Didier

Dale Wisely

Arvilla Fee

Lorna Wood

Michael J Galko

jim kacian

Edited by

Don Kriger

Dale Wisely

Bill McCloud

Bill McCloud

Vera Salter

Ina Roy-Faderman

www.righthandpointing.com

AMERICA by Bill McCloud

I saw his eyes
Pleading
Then blood was running between them
and he stumbled
and fell to his knees
and it was over
He lay on his back
and still his eyes were open
moist
I checked his pockets
and found only a snapshot
of a beautiful child
with shining eyes
A younger replica
of the man who lay before me

I dropped my gun
and replaced the photo
buttoning back the pocket
I sat beside the body
until Harper came up and said, "Let's go"
I said, "Go ahead
I'll follow"
but I knew I wouldn't
I began digging in the ground
and worked
and sweated more than an hour
then rolled the body into the hole
and followed it with my gun
I filled it back
and sat beneath a tree a few feet away

Desmond Piper

from “When I Was Young”

From taxpayer to sniper
we have blood on our hands.
Some righteous, some collateral.
We so easily become what we have vowed
to destroy. Yet destroy it, we must.
Bitter justice requires impossible accuracy.
The exact recipe has been lost to humanity.
Maybe we only briefly had it, traded it
for a forbidden flavor so long ago.
Maybe the righteous knight is a myth.
Maybe he wrote poems in the evening
trying to make sense of his day job.

Enhanced Interrogation*

*Engaging in torture damages
the torturer because
the dehumanization process
is self-corrupting.*

—Larry D. Miller

“Every morning,” he said,
“when I shave, I imagine myself
shaving off the animal part of me.
It’s how I feel human again.
That’s why you’ll never see me
with stubble.”

**based on a story told by Eli Dowell*

Some ideas on working with poetry & Moral Injury

Who?

Three groups?

Yes! Those who are open, even drawn to poetry for working on moral injury and trauma.

Maybe! Those aren't now but *could* be after being exposed to poems to which they relate.

No! Those who just can't/won't for any number of reasons.

MANY factors can turn potential participants off.

- “Let’s do an activity!” can be hard on embittered, isolated, mistrustful folks.
- Recommend: No pressure & certainly no coercion
- Demonstrate & demystify poetry with good examples: Probably essential.
- Find speaker who is easy to identify with, a physician poet for physicians, veteran for veterans, etc.

Some guidance on reading / writing poetry

- Poetry can express what is hard to express in conventional language.
- Read poetry that you CAN understand.
- Also, don't worry so much about understanding.
Relax and see what happens.

Some guidance on reading / writing poetry

- Write for yourself. You're not required to let anyone else read your work.
- Write free verse: Rhyme and rhythm are not necessary.
- Just write a block of text and break the lines later.
- Know the rules. So you can break them.

- Say to yourself: *This poem is going to suck, at least at first*, and then start writing! It's a skill development.
- Think of how you can imply (show) emotion without stating it.

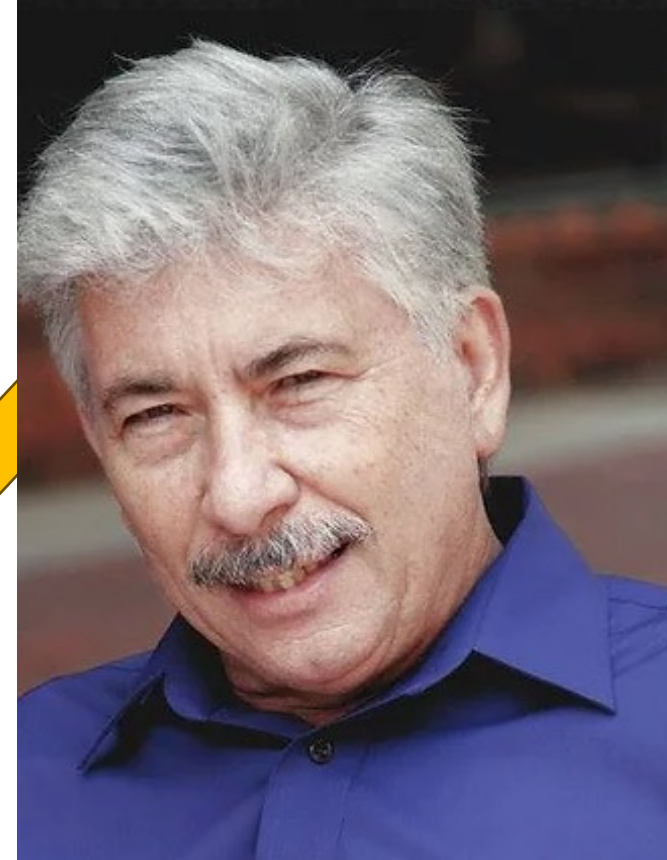


Bill McCloud

Slow Motion

Once I put my fist
through a window
for no reason at all

and watched the
glass breaking
in slow motion



A WWI haiku

zero hour

going over the top--

last thoughts of home

Ewen Toghill



Resources re: poetry and MI at www.dalewisely.com/mi.resources

- Relatable, MI-Relevant Poems
- Teaching reading & writing poetry to adults who are new to it
- Guidelines specific to PTSD & MI
- A few academic papers
- Narrative Medicine