

Topic: Memoirs of a Civil War Photographer

I wanted to write something historically accurate for this project, and as I'm already taking another course on the civil war, I thought it would be fun to combine my interest in the war with creating a monologue. I'm going to be researching Matthew Brady and his assistants, and create a piece out of that research. The goal, socially, is to depict the imagery of war with words alone, describing the pictures and the battlefields.

a girl finds her great-grandfather's letters--he was a civil war photographer--reading the letters interspersed with commentary on today's media

October 5th, 1862.

Today we exhumed and photographed the bodies of Bloody Lane. It has been 17 days since the battle, and already the men are beyond recognition. Flies buzz around their carcasses as their decaying flesh flops off their bones like putty.

October 5th, 1862.

anecdote

personal

tangential

sentence fragments

second voices

October 5th, 1862.

Today we exhumed and photographed the bodies of blahblahblah. The remaining troops do not use that name anymore, however. They simply call it "Bloody Lane". It has been 17 days since the battle, and already the men are beyond recognition. Flies buzz around their carcasses as their decaying flesh flops off their bones like putty.

Every year my mother picks a room of the house to attack, and we go at it for three or four days. Some kids get to go to Disneyland on their spring break. I get to come home and work in the attic.

Taking the exacto knife from my art supplies kit downstairs, I tear open the first box. My old elementary school stuff. Not of much interest to me. It goes. I take out my miniaturized Sharpie, a random three dollar acquisition while waiting for a plane, and mark a big red X with a circle around it, so that when mom gets back, she knows to toss it.

I go through a few more of these soon-to-be Xed boxes. Student of the Week awards, old baby shoes, things that parents keep because they think it will make their kids proud to look back on when they're older. What a load of shit. The only thing I see looking through this box is a metric ton of wasted trees.

Pretty soon I'm nearing the end of the attic, where the roof slants down and everything becomes five times dustier and five times friendlier to spiders and bugs. I consider stopping and waiting for my sister. I've done enough, she can take over the grimy duty when she gets back. But something draws my curiosity forward.

I go straight for a box that looks like it's been patched over three or four times with various kinds of tape. Riiiiiiiiip, goes the knife as it saws through the wispy thin remains of packing tape. I love technology.

I move the opened box carefully into the light. There are letters and some framed yellow photographs that look years old.

I pick up a letter, and my eyes go bug-eyed for a moment as I look at the date. Post-mark October 5th, 1862.

I can't believe I have to go back to my mom's house for spring break to fucking spring clean. I've put up with this nonsense every year since I was old enough to carry a broom, and I certainly don't need to have her bringing me back to it now that I'm out of the house. My friends are off on Floridian adventures and London time springs, trekking to Disneyland while I trek on up to that bug-eaten old house.

How is this fair? I'm paying for my tuition. I'm paying for my rent. She doesn't need to be involved in my life, and I'd rather she not. Yet she fucking insists on me coming back there. Back to a house I've wanted to leave since I was ten.

Coming back to my room, it feels like nothing has changed. I've been gone for a week but nothing's been touched or moved around. And when I really think about it, I don't really remember leaving. I suppose that's just the way traveling works.

I wonder if businessmen feel like this? Like their life is never progressing, never going anywhere, just a series of dreamlike adventures before coming back to the same old room with the same old wife and the same old story. "This is your life and you're missing it one moment at a time." Isn't that what Fight Club says about that whole charade?

But then you really have to wonder. Is the trip the dream, or the coming back? What do you really call home? Where do you belong in all of this?