



Medic Against Bomb: A Doctor's Poetry of War

Frederick Foote

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With haunting imagery and consummate skill, Foote has created a masterpiece that deserves a place alongside the very best war poetry.

War poetry is a genre unto itself, and poets from Thomas Hardy and Wilfred Owen to Siegfried Sassoon and Randall Jarrell have all made their mark upon it. In *Medic Against Bomb: A Doctor's Poetry of War*, Frederick Foote brings a new and penetrating perspective to a new age of war.

The truest tell of good poetry is its ability to transform the reader's point of view, and in this Foote succeeds tremendously. Mostly inspired by his service in Iraq, Foote's poems offer profiles of the nurses, doctors, civilians, and soldiers (of both sides) who populate the battlefields. Foote brings a unique sensibility to the poetry of war: he is a soldier, but also a doctor and a poet. The respect and admiration Foote has for the nurses he served with is clear, for example, but his poetic ability sets scenes apart with images so vivid and effective that the reader doesn't just understand the author's feelings—there's a kind of transference, as what Foote experienced is brought to life through his words.

The work stands strong technically as well, with Foote using rhymes and near-rhymes like a master, as in the short, powerful "Premonition":

*To give it credence seems absurd,
and chanting ghosts don't carry guns,
and yet the voice repeats, Third tour.
Third tour is when the ruin comes."*

The book includes an introduction and explanatory notes that will help nonmilitary readers with some of the jargon and acronyms, but Foote keeps his poems grounded in humanity. While the additional descriptions are helpful for a complete understanding, they're by no means essential to the enjoyment of the poems.

With haunting imagery and consummate skill, Foote has created a masterpiece that deserves a place alongside the very best war poetry. To those who might wonder how much another war poetry book might offer, after so many before, the author's own words tell it best:

*They say everything's been written; it hasn't.
Darkness and light are vast, and poets have barely begun.
Even when it hides, the hand knows when it's writing a final death.
Like the heart's, its mourning is always new."*

Foote is a retired U.S. Navy physician, and is currently the director of the Warrior Poetry Project at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Some of the poems in *Medic Against Bomb* have appeared in respected journals such as *Antietam Review*, *The South Carolina Review*, and *Haight Ashbury Literary Journal*, and as a collection, *Medic Against Bomb*

won the 2013 Grayson Books Poetry Prize.

PETER DABBENE (November 12, 2014)

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