

Stirrings of Conscience: Dreams of a Soldier for Peace

by **Jennifer D. Friesen**, *Winnipeg, Canada*

An autobiographical docu-poem

In memory of my grandfather

Paul Victor Snyder

who died November 11, 1981

Jennifer Friesen was born and raised in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia. She attended Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg and the University of Winnipeg where she majored in English. In 1989-90 she travelled in Europe, Israel and Egypt and upon her return to Winnipeg worked as an attendant for physically disabled adults. Her future plans include graduate studies at the University of British Columbia and possibly Education. "In the future," she writes, "I hope to take my love for writing, history, and different cultures overseas where I would enjoy teaching and doing relief work."

The events dramatized in this poem are based on Paul V. Snyder's personal memoirs and letters. An attempt has been made to remain as close to the actual facts as possible.

relentless spray
I cannot breathe
first hot now cold
dark shapes with voices
in a wall
around my fear
and now just one
black thrashing world
of wanting numbly
praying
please
to die

May 1, 1980

Palmer told me I woke him last night. The third night in a row I've had that dream. Why is it coming back like this? It's unsettling to be fearing the memory of Camp Lewis every night before I fall asleep. That was so long ago.

I felt I owed Palmer an explanation of some kind for whatever he heard through the wall. He said I was crying for Jesus to take me home, and I'm not ready to be classified as "one more of our dear souls ready to walk that road between the Villa and the Home beyond," as Myra Swartzendruber would say. I told him it was probably some nightmare about the war, but he wouldn't leave it at that. He had to know what exactly I meant — I hadn't been a regular in the service, had I? No, no . . . I reassured him that like any good Mennonite ("Old" Mennonite, then) I went the route of conscientious objector. He seemed satisfied, and I didn't ask him what his experience had been. Why stir up the waters at this late date?

It was all so long ago. A different spring.

May 24, 1918

Here I am, it's spring, and I'm on the troop train, ripping off the flower from my lapel. I should have done it at the station except mother would have cried, thinking it was so nice, at least, to be given flowers as the band played and we all got ready to leave. There was no point in telling her that wearing their flowers makes me feel like I'm part of the whole thing. What am I part of then, if this great team spirit that the fellows next to me obviously feel? Conscientious objector — do they have a special car for us? Has there been a mistake and I'm seated in the wrong place? Five hundred men; there must be someone else sitting quiet and silent by a window somewhere, watching Jackson County, Minnesota roll away beneath the wheels as we head west to Washington and Camp Lewis.

What a feeling boarding the train this morning. Like my eyes were blindfolded, stepping toward a cliff that might be nearby. I suddenly remembered my military registration a little over a year ago, June 5, 1917, when I felt so confident because everything was going to be all right. Because the Selective Draft Law had said it provides for certain types of exemption for members of any church whose principles don't allow them to be involved in war. I figured President Wilson understood the Mennonites and all the other "peace churches", as they're called. He'd know what to arrange.

Boarding the train this morning and remembering the Paul Snyder of that distant, innocent year — I could have cried. Once there was still so much to believe in. And now I'm alone.

I'm not your boy with the sun in his eyes
the straw in his hair
horseplay outside after supper
That was back in a time
I often still smell
during the auburn sinking
of an evening in Indian summer
But you stopped checking my equations
and the part in my hair
long ago
and today they call me a man

So I ask you no questions
I don't look for your hand
A man must stand on his own
sole owner of his fears
and mindful always of the silent agreement
between father
and boy-turned-man
this last handshake
as I turn to go

May 2, 1980

Today when I woke up I thought I was back on the farm. It's the journals. I called Jim yesterday and told him to hunt down the years 1917 and 1918. I didn't tell him why I wanted them. Do I know why myself?

So much for not stirring up the waters. I've started reading and I can't stop. It's May, and I suddenly have this need to remember another May when things weren't right. When I wasn't newly turned eighty-five, but nearly turned twenty-three. With no one beside me. God was getting pretty hard to find. I remember as I read.

I wasn't a man; I was a boy. A mere boy, and all my father said to me was, "What are you going to do when you get to camp?" My answer ricocheted in my ears as I boarded the train with five hundred other men: "I don't know." I don't know. I don't know. I don't remember anyone — not my pastor, not my father — saying: This is how you fill out your draft papers. This is the kind of service you can do once you're in camp. This is our position. Some ministers were afraid they'd be caught giving advice under the Espionage Law. So they were very careful. So careful, that one of our elders wouldn't even tell me what the boys already at camp were going through, how they made their stand. He said it wasn't fair to give me much information on that. Not fair?

Once there had been sermons. My kingdom is not of this world. They that take the sword shall perish by the sword. War is sin. But now, suddenly, nothing was to be said to us. After all, these were “matters of individual conscience.”

May 27, 1918

I’ve been on this train for three days. Last night one of the men sitting behind me in the dining car was telling his friends about some Hutterites who were on an earlier train to Camp Lewis. It seems they’d been cornered by some others who had then chopped off their beards. Everyone in the dining car seemed to find this extremely funny. The Hutterites were conscientious objectors. I didn’t stay for dessert.

Today the whole story has been tossed around with relish. And there are several new versions. But I’ve started listening carefully to what people are saying. One fellow said he heard these Hutterites had papers from the Secretary of War which granted them segregation in the camps — no interference with their religious beliefs. The general reaction to this wasn’t a pleasant one.

It lit a small fire for me, though. I remember meeting George Miller in town one day last year, several months after we’d registered. He was excited because some kind of delegation appointed at the Mennonite General Conference had gone to Washington and interviewed Secretary Baker himself. According to George, Mr. Baker ruled that segregation will be granted CO’s at the military camps. And I’m sure there was more. Didn’t he also say something about permission to reject the list of noncombatant services if they conflict with one’s conscience?

Four days ago I boarded this train with a feeling of panic that has gained momentum across the miles, beginning with the knowledge that the folks don’t stand between me and whatever I have to face. And neither does the other thing I waited for so breathlessly — the definition of noncombatant service. The paper back in March said it’s the Medical Corps, Quartermaster Corps, or Engineer Service. All of it still under the arm of the military, like everything else. The question is: Does that make it war? I remember how I felt the day I found out. There’s a lot more of that feeling now.

It’s all getting to be too big for us, for me. The church doesn’t seem to know what’s going on, thrown by all the careful wording in Washington, my parents stand by silently and watch me get on a train, and in the end it’s just me . . . What are *you* going to do, son? This shouldn’t be how it works. Me, Paul Snyder, sitting alone on a train amidst eager soldiers more than willing to jump into battle; and so they start with available Hutterites. My, Paul Snyder, trying to stave off his dread and his ignorance with the scrambled memory of some understanding gesture that might have been made a year ago about rejecting noncombatant service.

Why don't I just admit that there's nothing to take over the burden left to my conscience, a burden I am scared to face.

May 29, 1918

Camp Lewis, Washington

Dear Folks,

I don't know when you'll receive this letter. It's to let you know I'm here. Today was the first full day at Camp Lewis. Something has become clear and I guess it had to wait until this moment when I could see it in front of me.

We never talked about any of it at home, really — how involved I should get. Did you think I'd already decided? By the time I got off the train yesterday afternoon I wasn't sure of anything anymore.

This morning we were marching across the grounds to get our inoculations and physical examination when we passed a group of men doing a bayonet drill. One of them hesitated in thrusting his bayonet into the stomach of his dummy victim. The officer saw him falter and swore at him. The man was commanded to step to the front and cut out the dummy's guts while his officer shouted, "This is a war, not a Sunday School picnic!"

I don't know what happened to me then except that I was gripped by the conviction I'd been seeking; I wanted to run up to that scared soldier and tell him this can't be right. I'm sure it can't be. It all comes down to the belly of a man being ripped out, in the end. That's why they're all here, aren't they? Any kind of service, noncombatant or not, is an ingredient of what I tasted through that soldier today. Death, not love, reigns here.

Pray for me. I see the route to take.

May 4, 1980

I thought I had forgotten most of it. I'm remembering more clearly what it is I wanted to forget, the place the dream comes from. Paul Snyder, the unyielding young man who just grit his teeth.

I've been doing some reserach. Approximately 2000 Mennonites were drafted during World War I. The majority, they say, refused all service. I wonder what the author's definition of service is? We thought we knew back then, as I recall.

The first morning in camp I finally figured I'd better do something quick or be lost in the shuffle. It was when we were issued bedding and uniforms that I made my first dissent, refusing the army clothes. I told them I wasn't a soldier. I was a CO, and I figured that meant I should try to separate myself as well as I could manage.

The real trouble came, though, when I went to my captain and told him I couldn't accept service. I couldn't take part in the war. He said that was no problem; he'd assign me to permanent kitchen police. I told him that was out as well. That was when he really took notice, I remember. "You refuse?"

“Yes.” I didn’t even know what kitchen duty was, but I knew I wasn’t going to do it. I was so young then.

He told me if I persisted in this attitude one of us was going to be in serious trouble. I suppose he thought it wouldn’t last. One of the books I was reading today said that the War Department had given the army officers the right to deal on their own with the COs for three or four weeks, I guess to try and scare them into accepting military duty. Secretary Newton D. Baker had issued confidential orders to the camps to treat the COs decently, but to also try and persuade them to accept military service. None of us, then, knew that, of course. The part about treating the COs decently.

But the persuasion . . . the persuasion we can’t forget.

Take this fellow to the guardhouse

I feel a headache coming on

right about

now

The rhythm of their response is flawless
two stacatto points fixed immediately
against my chest and back
marching me in this fairy tale
of soldiers with bayonets
across the parade ground in 6/8 time
and the chorus begins its chant
What did he do?

I’ve done nothing

I will not wear your uniform

I will not dump the waste

I will not cut the brush

I will not fix the roads

I will not take your dollar a day

 You will take down your pants

 or shall we do that for you

 you yellow German-loving pig

 let’s see you dance awhile

now let’s see you pray

Dear God dear Jesus

take me home

they’ve sentenced me to fifty lashes

the jury screaming Guilty Guilty

and now after they’ve had a rest

I’m gagged and given fifty more

a fire licking, crawling

consumes my back
takes its time
no day no night
just this
my trial

they say they'll clean me up
 you look a mess
 you dirty bastard
 you need a bath before you die
I'm thrust into a stall of steam
and everything is slipping
slipping
down the drain

June, 1918

I don't know what day it is anymore. At least I can try and think again. They let me write one letter. It must have gotten there because E. Z. Yoder visited Camp Lewis yesterday. Or that's what they told me. These noncoms, they love to play with us here in the guardhouse: I never know what's the truth. I want to believe that Brother Yoder was here and helped stop the worst of it. But why should they have listened to him?

I've heard that sooner or later all COs will appear before some Board of Inquiry for a review of their sincerity. The officers around here just laugh, telling me I'll be court-martialed before then. If this Inquiry is anything like the mind games I've already had played with me, I won't hope for anything. The chaplains here are bright. It's too easy to get confused by their logic.

Three of them came and visited me two days ago and asked me if I believe in the doctrine of nonresistance to evil? When I said yes, they asked if I think the military is doing work of evil? I said for me to take part, that would be doing evil. They jumped on this quickly. Why do other Mennonites, then, wear the uniform and do noncombatant work? All I could say was that I live by what I believe, not by what someone else thinks.

One of them asked me again if I believe in the nonresistance of evil. Hadn't he heard me the first time? He asked me what I call it, then, when I get a military order and fail to obey it? Isn't that resisting? Of course this led to the inevitable logical conclusion that because I believe the military is evil and resist the orders I'm given, I'm not really a nonresistant of evil, am I, but a resistor. One point in semantics for them.

They asked me, Do I think Germany or the US is right? I told them that is not for me to say. Don't I ever judge the right from wrong, they asked? Yes, I do if I can, I told them. When the Germans assault the Belgian and

French women, they asked, can I judge that as right or wrong? What did they want me to say? It's all wrong. Then — What about when the government destroys the life of a criminal — is that right or wrong? Again, I told them that is not for me to judge. I should have asked them what makes them so sure a German is any more criminal than our soldiers? Is the German inherently bad? The American inherently good?

None of it was going anywhere. It got a little more personal when the one who was doing most of the talking said, "Well, I support the war against the German Hun, do you think I am lost?" He asked for my opinion, didn't he? So I told him. "Yes, I think you are lost."

May 5, 1980

I'm eighty-five years old. What an amazing thought that I was a child once. It boggles the mind, and yet reading the journal entries, I *am* that Paul Victor Snyder of twenty-three. We are the same man. The same, though it's not completely like looking into a mirror. The face I've been seeing staring back at me from the past seems different than mine, too.

I squirm to think how I judged the ministers in uniform who tried to change my beliefs. Did I realize that I had contradicted myself? God alone has the right to judge. But I was young. And they were playing games with me. Is denouncing others easier when one is determined not to compromise his ideals in the slightest degree? But how often did non-compromise result in demonstration plain and simple, something I thought I'd wanted to avoid? I could have cooperated more in the non-essentials. Does Christian idealism excuse one from sweeping a compound?

For the four German boys, Hutterites from South Dakota, it excused them from keeping even their own rooms in the guardhouse clean. They wouldn't make their beds, wash dishes, nothing . . . just sat on the bunks and read the Bible. I don't remember talking with them much. They'd been in the guardhouse for a month already when I got there, and kept to themselves, not speaking English unless they had to. Less than a week after I'd heard about them on the troupe train, these paragons of nonresistance, I ended up imprisoned with them.

Imprisoned — I suppose it was they who experienced the real meaning of the word. We had left the guardhouse at the same time — at the end of June, 1918. They had been court-martialed and were on their way to California's Alcatraz federal prison; I had been transferred to Special Detachment No. 1, the new company set up to house COs. They say approximately ten percent of the Mennonite majority who declined all military service were court-martialed. I was among the lucky thirty percent who remained in the camps till the war was over.

The Hofer boys and their friend, Wipf, must have been considered extreme objectors or else the camp officials were getting so frustrated that they

wanted to make some kind of extreme statement, I don't know. But I've never heard of any other American CO in 1918 — no political dissenter, IWW, socialist or pacifist — who was subjected to the inhumane treatment those boys were. After the war we heard the whole story.

They arrive at Alcatraz and refuse military uniform. They're thrown into a small, damp cell of concrete without clothing, wearing only light underwear. No beds, no blankets. At one point they're strung up in their wrists with their toes barely touching the floor, then beaten with clubs. One of them becomes unconscious before the beating stops. Four months of solitary confinement, and the boys are transferred to Fort Leavenworth. Two of them die there.

All this happened in enlightened America sixty-two years ago? Targeted COs? Men who were sentenced because it was arranged that they be given a command they would be compelled to refuse? And this then the grounds for that most serious charge: disobeying military orders? Punishable by twenty years in prison, or death if that happened to come first?

Oh dear God, I am remembering.

August 30, 1918
Cascade Mountains,
Washington

Dear Folks,

I am writing from a tent in the Cascades beyond Lewis, Washington. We've been here a month and it looks like we'll be staying awhile. No, they haven't changed the location of the company.

One day at the beginning of August the captain called for volunteers to fight some forest fires for a few days. About fifteen of us were quick to volunteer, figuring this would be exactly what we needed. A chance to escape camp life, to be out in nature doing some meaningful work for a change. A vacation as far as I was concerned.

That was the fantasy of a month ago. I don't know when I've known this kind of exhaustion before. The fires we fight never seem to die; there's always a new puff of smoke somewhere. Food, sleep, being clean . . . it's all one wants.

But at least we can be doing something wholeheartedly, fiercely, without worrying about violating our conscience. I throw myself into it almost recklessly, making up for the months of inactivity, of having to be passive and misunderstood. That's the only exhilarating thing about being up here, but it's enough.

I've been starting to think that if this war is ever over I'd like to do some work overseas as a volunteer. If you hear of anything at home. . . .

Will write again when I can, thanks for your prayers.

October 24, 1918
Camp Lewis, Washington

Hi, all.

Thanks for the news from out that way. I'm glad all of you are "doing fine for the shape you're in," as Dad would say. I guess that's true for me, also.

The Board of Inquiry finally made it to Camp Lewis, having been anxiously awaited by many of us. It wasn't unlike the feeling I used to get the night before an examination. Except that then it wasn't my sincerity being tested. At least the government is on the right track in considering an army officer unqualified to judge the religious sincerity of a CO. It's frightening to know that in general we Mennonites (and there aren't many of us here), besides being seen as bigoted, ignorant and dirty, are viewed as dangerous as well. A good number of those at camp see it this way: Mennonite COs that refuse all military related service are less pacifistic than they are pro-German. We're not only yellow slackers but some kind of front for the German underground as well. If left to the mercy of the camp officials here, I don't like to think what would happen.

I was classified by the men on the board (Judge Stone, Major Kellogg, and Judge Mack) as a sincere religious objector which means . . . sometime in the near future I'll be out on a farm furlough here in the States! It should go through soon, and I'll keep you posted. Thanks for all your prayers!

May 17, 1980

It's Sunday today. And something isn't right. All through the service here at the Villa I was trying to catch whatever it is back there in my memory that's sliding around evading my grasp. It's like trying to grab the soap once it's slipped from one's hands in the tub.

I had that same dream again last night in all its intensity. And there was just as much fear, the same feeling of choking panic, the same incredible helplessness.

What is it that I haven't remembered? It's been almost two weeks since I put all those memories back in the box. I took a long look at where the dream came from. I thought it would have left.

I have no words
what is there to say
a canvas rolling with new colors

they have seeped their glory into my pores
and my blood is pounding with a terrible beauty
I need to see again
we slide by moonlight through these mountains

skimming into purpled valleys
on the brush strokes of an Eastern sun
always there is wind
in our hair

I have no words
what is there to say
an old cemetery and we crack nuts
on tombstones of unknown villagers, people
who lived and knew nothing of us,
loving and dying in a forgotten land
where this little girl now stands
looking fearfully at our clean faces,
then washing her hands in a puddle.

May 17, 1919

We've just arrived. Aleppo, after an amazing trip through this unimaginable landscape of Asia Minor. I sat comfortably on the cow-catcher platform of a German locomotive the whole way. When I think of the sickly, stormy Atlantic crossing of three months ago on the former German troop ship, SS Leviathan, with its pitiable food and terrible cabins and wanting to be back in New York harbor, I have to laugh. I wouldn't give this up for anything now.

Tonight I'm only excited as I'm finally about to begin work in Turkey, a place I could never have imagined. I'll be transporting relief supplies and personnel, mainly, between Aleppo, Aintab and Marash. They say the English army is getting along well with the Turks. Maybe things have changed since the Armenian Massacres of 1915. It'll be interesting to see what happens while we're here.

May 18, 1980

I didn't know there was another journal in the box. Turkey. How in the world could that have slipped my mind? Eighty-five years old, yes, but the trip Kathryn and I made to Israel in 1969 is still as clear as day. So are all the others — Argentina, Puerto Rico and British Columbia to visit all the kids. And Turkey was my first time. The one everyone always remembers. Always the most important. The most important. . . .

I remember the Christmas I got back from Camp Lewis. Many people were urging the Mennonite church to send some young people to the Near East. And then when we found out that the newly formed American Committee for Relief in the Near East was extending an invitation to the Mennonites to contribute workers . . . it was too good to be true. I remember

there were four of us Mennonites on that ship — some others had sailed a few days before. There were Turkish language lessons every day, and I think even a lecture in the evening that described the land and people of Turkey, or else the kind of work we'd be doing.

I don't think anything they said, though, could have prepared us for our encounter with the infamous Turk, or for the dangers some of us encountered at our jobs.

ACRNE

Inter-Office Correspondence

From: Paul Snyder, Q.M.

A.C.R.N.E.

Marash, Turkey

To: The Snyder Family, Plainview Texas

Subject: Most anything

January 25, 1920

Dear Folks:

This morning Dr. Crathern of the American Y.M.C.A. sent two telegrams, one to Consul Jackson at Aleppo and the other to Admiral Bristol at Constantinople:

American flag fired upon repeatedly and American lives threatened and imperiled on road from Marash to Aintab.

Somewhat uninteresting to the ordinary person, but when one knows the story behind the dry facts. . . .

In October of last year the French moved into the country along with their five hundred Armenian foot soldiers. This irritated the Turks no end and it's only become worse. The upsurge of Turkish nationalism plays into it, of course, but I think the fact that the Armenians are helping the French is even more of a sore point. All the minorities, especially the Armenians, have warmly welcomed the Allies throughout the war. Conflict between the French and the Turks has been coming to a head.

On Monday, January 19, Armenian Christmas Day, we heard firing in the direction of Aintab and there were rumors of a clash between a French supply convoy and some bandits. I was scheduled to make a trip to Aintab with the light Reo truck, and the next day, Tuesday, January 20, we were given the ok to leave. There were seven of us: Dr. Crathern, the YMCA man, who shared the driver's seat with me; Miss Schultz, the ACRNE nurse; a French lieutenant; two Armenians; and one of our couriers.

It was halfway to Aintab when we saw the first signs of the trouble the French wagons had encountered. There were overturned wagons, a dead mule in a pool of blood beside one of them, a soldier's tin helmet. . . . We began to hear rifle shots up the mountains ahead of us but kept going. Suddenly I happened to remember the small silk flag I had in one of my pockets, and we quickly stuck in on a stick and held it out the side of the truck.

We were starting to climb the winding mountain road, a rather treacher-

ous thing that skirts dangerous gulches. The shots were sounding alarmingly loud but no one mentioned turning back. We were all confident that being in an American vehicle was our safe passageway. One of the Armenians had gotten out his automatic pistol, though, and the French officer had brought his rifle to a convenient position. I told them there'd be no firing while I was driving.

As we rounded the curve of the mountain we came in full view of French Moroccan cavalry having a running fight with the enemy — Turks who were hidden among rocks and bushes. The French were trotting down the road toward us, and it wasn't too hard to see that in a little while we were going to be taking the bullets intended for the cavalymen. I somehow managed to turn the truck around on that narrow road, and we started leisurely down it again, not wanting to let on that we were in a hurry. I think we were quite pleased with ourselves for having witnessed a pitched battle, getting away with it. But then some shots came from right above us.

The French officer yelled, "That's for us," throwing Miss Schultz onto the floor of the truck. Dr. Crathern started frantically waving our little American flag, and everyone else tried to flatten themselves out as much as our flying speed would allow.

If I remember right, there is something about all points in a circumference of a circle being equidistant from the center. I learned it all over again as we went back down that giant semi-circle of a road. All the Turks had to do was shift positions slightly and keep firing. Talk about meeting Death — I think we all heard the rustle of its wings that day.

The closest thing to disaster was when a shot came down from forward and to the right of us and grazed the underside of the steering wheel — it was six inches from my arm. If they had gotten me at that speed. . . . We continued on down the hill, actually taking sharp corners on two wheels, just managing to avoid the French wagons in the road at the bottom. We were under fire for at least a mile.

We got back to Marash after dark, entertaining the visiting missionaries and Red Cross people with the story of our miraculous escape, never knowing that the things we'd see in future days would make this seem like child's play. The Marash war started the day after, January 21, and this has now been the fifth day of fighting.

Maybe I shouldn't have written what I have, but I want you to get the story right if it gets out. I won't send it till the danger is past, though, and don't be worried for me. I'm very sure I wasn't raised to be a target for a Turk! Due only to God's protection, I've escaped a number of dangerous things already since this war of Marash has been going on.

I must stop now and see what the bombardment is doing to the enemy. I'll try to write again soon.

You cry for your Allah
to spread himself over your mosques
where you pretend to pray
where the French shells still find you
you are decorating your own houses
in bullets and blood
and I will not cry
as the fire's spray claims your fanaticism
as the fiend in you shudders into dust

Answer me this:

one Armenian drops in the ditch
the rest keep running on the wave of their fear,
the dust alive with your bullets
and we see the hand
the flutter of cloth
waiting

 then
hurry oh hurry
faster faster
it's not far now
almost
keep coming
 he's down
 you end the suspense
 what victory

And is there also victory
in this old woman's blown off arm
does the Koran permit your knives
to be sharpened against children's throats
and why stab seven times
when once is too much?

I am sorry
I see you creeping through those trees over there
and must also end the suspense

I will remember you by
this shell case I pick up afterward
as a souvenir

it is still hot

May 19, 1980

I have no words. I've looked into the mirror a second time and . . . close my eyes. It's here, somewhere, in the midst of all this — strong feeling. Why don't you just put it down, Paul? Say it. This hatred.

But I was justified in my feelings. What was I? Not yet twenty-five — still so young. Still impressionable. Who wouldn't be consumed with anger, outrage, loathing the Turks for what they were doing as they resisted the French and massacred the Armenians? The war was over. All that the French were doing was occupying Turkey. And they were completely outnumbered — no big guns, no aeroplanes, no tanks, not even a competent doctor. Hardly an army. And the sharpshooting Turks just kept at it. Snipers everywhere.

Maybe it would have been easier to excuse them if it had remained strictly battle. But after seeing nearly a thousand Armenian refugees in our American Mission Compound, hearing about the hundreds slaughtered every day, seeing groups of them fleeing Turkish bullets . . . what does one feel but hatred for all the evil? What does one do but inform the French officers that you've spotted a crowd of Turks coming up through trees on a hill half a mile away? What does one do but watch as the bombardment begins? Maybe slipping one of the shell cases into a pocket.

So why is it that I still feel unsettled somewhere, here, among all this? It's here, the dream — floating, looking for it's owner. If it's not my dream from the guardhouse at Camp Lewis, maybe it's about the Armenians. They were a minority like us COs. Discriminated against. They were hated, reviled by the Turks. A Christian minority persecuted by pagans, by those who were in the wrong. Maybe that's who I keep dreaming about.

"When the Germans assault the Belgians and French, can you judge that as right or wrong?" What do you want me to say? It's all wrong. "Oh, so a German is the same as a Frenchman or an American?" How can one be any worse than the other? "So the German isn't inherently bad?" No . . . just like the American isn't inherently good. "And the Turk. Where does he fit into all this?" Wait a minute. Stop it. You're trying to trap me again. "Maybe the dream isn't yours or an Armenian's, but a Turk's. Maybe he felt trapped and terrified when the French dropped their shells through the dome of his mosque, when he was surprised by shell fire coming up over that hill, and he called out to Allah, to his God, to let him die."

Whose panic and helplessness was I dreaming about?

What kind of alternative service was I doing when I told the French officers about the Turks coming up on the other side of the hill? I chose a side. Paul V. Snyder, who once ripped a flower from his lapel because it made him feel like he was part of the whole thing, the grand team spirit. Who struggled with the burden left to his conscience: how involved should he become? A burden he was scared to face. A burden that is here still — slung across my

conscience like a deadweight, like the body of a Turk that I hated and sentenced.

I resisted his evil but not my own.

It is his dream that has plagued me.

Oh, God, I am remembering. I am remembering.