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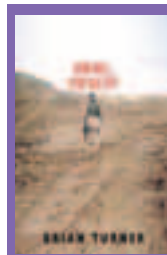
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# Poetry



## Here, Bullet

By Brian Turner  
 £8.95, 80 pages  
 Bloodaxe, 2007  
 ISBN: 1852247991

*Brian Turner's collection of poems in his book, Here, Bullet won the 2005 Beatrice Hawley Award. Turner (callsign Ghost One-Three Alpha) earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Oregon before serving for seven years in the US Army, including a year as an infantry team leader with the 3rd Stryker Brigade in Iraq.*

## Ghost Stories

It is Hallowe'en as I write this, and I am being visited by ghosts, friendly little ghosts who go away when I give them a piece of candy.

It is Hallowe'en as I read this, and I am being visited by ghosts, some friendly, some not, whom I have kept away, locked inside me for years, but Brian Turner, Ghost One-Three Alpha, that son of a bitch, he is calling them back.

I have put them away, kept them inside, the ghosts of the lieutenants and the Captain and the First Sergeant, their bodies torn by shrapnel or a sniper's bullet or gone, just gone, into hundreds of shreds of flesh the size of my still-living hand, but Ghost One-Three Alpha speaks to ghosts, he calls to his ghosts, and they bring mine along for company, and now they will not go away.

If you have been to war – if you have held a microphone in your hand, begging

## Here, Bullet

If a body is what you want,  
 then here is bone and gristle and flesh.  
 Here is the clavicle-snapped wish,  
 the aorta's opened valves, the leap  
 thought makes at the synaptic gap.  
 Here is the adrenaline rush you crave,  
 that inexorable flight, that insane puncture  
 into heat and blood. And I dare you to finish  
 what you've started. Because here, Bullet,  
 here is where I complete the word you bring  
 hissing through the air, here is where I moan  
 the barrel's cold esophagus, triggering  
 my tongue's explosives for the rifling I have  
 inside of me, each twist of the round  
 spun deeper, because here, Bullet,  
 here is where the world ends, every time.

### What Every Soldier Should Know

To yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will;  
it is at best an act of prudence.  
-Jean-Jacques Rousseau

If you hear gunfire on a Thursday afternoon,  
It could be for a wedding, or it could be for you.

Always enter a home with your right foot;  
The left is for cemeteries and unclean places.

*O-guf! Tera armeek* is rarely useful.  
It means *Stop! Or I'll shoot.*

*Sabah el khair* is effective.  
It means *Good Morning.*

*Inshallah* means *Allah be willing.*  
Listen well when it is spoken.

You will hear the RPG coming for you.  
Not so the roadside bomb.

There are bombs under the overpasses,  
In trashpiles, in bricks, in cars.

There are shopping carts with clothes soaked  
In foogas, a sticky gel of homemade napalm.

Parachute bombs and artillery shells  
Sewn into the carcasses of dead farm animals.

Graffiti sprayed onto the overpasses:  
*I will kill you, American.*

Men wearing vests rigged with explosives  
Walk up, raise their arms and say *Inshallah.*

There are men who earn eighty dollars  
To attack you, five thousand to kill.

Small children who will play with you,  
Old men with their talk, women who offer chai—

And any one of them  
May dance over your body tomorrow.

for MEDEVAC with the blood of your friends on your hands, pouring out your soul over the airwaves to keep your friends from becoming ghosts, from joining the shades in an unholy company of men who have given limbs and eyes and hearts – if you have held that bloody hand mike, then Ghost One-Three Alpha will take you back to that day, that day when time stopped and life stopped and never really started again, no matter how hard you try to make the ghosts go away.

Here, bullet. Here. Take me, so that I can join the ghosts, so that my company will again be complete, armless, legless, eyeless, a company of memories, a company of shades.

We will again visit the land of the Two Rivers, where the Tigris and the Euphrates meet, where the elephant grass grows man-high in the irrigation canals. We will return to the warren of Baghdad streets, where the women wail and the children beg, and Ghost One-Three Alpha will call commands and Apache Red One will take point and Bulldog Six will grin again, that wonderful grin he had, full of joy, back when he still had a face.

We will join the company of ghosts who were our enemies, who waited for us in alleys and in canals, who wore sandals and man-dresses and spoke in a language we could not understand and fought for reasons we could not understand but they fought well, these men we turned to ghosts, they fought us and we fought them and now we are all together, what is left of us, in the half-light shadows that Sergeant Turner weaves together, calling ghosts, ghosts that will no longer leave me.

### Lieutenant Colonel John A. Nagl ■

*Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl commands the 1st (US) Battalion, 34th Armor at Fort Riley, Kansas. He served as the operations officer of Task Force Centurion in Al-Anbar in 2003 and 2004, where the task force lost twenty-two soldiers Killed in Action and was awarded more than one hundred Purple Hearts and a Valorous Unit Award.*