

Argument

The first section with its title poem uses as meditative springboard actual phrases from *Beowulf*, one of the ancient great poems of these islands. The motif is saving leadership, and associated heroics. The hero is ultimately expendable as in the case of an ageing Beowulf who meets his end, in his own backyard, confronting the Lord of the Hoard.

In the second section, the scene shifts from the Anglo-Saxon to related Germanic tradition in the figure of young *Hans Castorp*, the hero of Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, at the end of which the youth enlists for the Kaiser at the outset of WW1. The aftermath follows in German 20th Century Nazi History, with a critique of this as seen through the films *Amarcord* and *Shenandoah*. In *Shenandoah*, WW1 bomber pilot, carpet-bombing James Stewart – his own family and home violated now – is spokesperson in the powerful anti-war movie.

Section three brings the reader to a medieval Celtic Ireland wilting at the charms of that first royal charmer, a youthful King John, *First in the Line*, as he extends his British Kingdom. The post-coitus is portrayed in Henry Luttrell's *Ériu* and the '98 poems.

Section four, *the Somewhere Sonnets*, focuses on a worldly *anywhere*, which is always somebody's homeless *somewhere*, as in the sonnet sequence: in Syria 1, 2 3, in a German Concentration Camp for Homosexuals, with Tristan and Isolde, in the U.S. Civil War, with a forgotten Kunchok Tsephel Gopey Tsang in Tibet, and god-forsaken Wolgalied soldiers in their motley uniforms by the Volga.

Section five commences with the massed cellos of Shostakovich in his famous riposte to Stalin, then moves to Musashi's Japan and finishes with Alexander the Great turning home for Greece (after his victory at Poros) beneath the title of the famous Robert Graves memoir on WWI. The poet's duty was to slit the throats of the wounded in No-Man's Land lest they, his own comrades, with their cries for help, upset the boys in the trenches.

Section six reverts to the multi-faced *Champion*: Reflections at Hofði, David, the Dying Gaul, Chief Cleleman, Noeleen, Munster Champion, General Séan McKeon, Lorca to La Pasionara, El Cid and Ibn Jahhaf, Qadi of Valencia, a victim of continuing torture by the righteous Cid.

Section seven, *Gaza Ground Zero* with biblical myth and Grabber Consciousness smiting hand in glove.

Section eight with *Lines for Moor Mahomed Taraki* critiques the dubious nature of western intervention, as in Afghanistan and Darfur, in the context of the re-emergence of the Concentration Camp in Europe.

Section nine. As the book begins, so it ends with a piece for "home": "Going Home to Wyoming", based on John Ford's controversial last film *Cheyenne Autumn* and with Guest Appearance of the Jerusalem Temple Berserker. A dispossessed first nation, driven from their lands to die in neglect and starvation, fight their way back to a homeland, long overrun by white settlers, a homeland that exists in consciousness only.



Pat Porter

1 hr ·

In this March 31, 2003 file photo, an Iraqi prisoner of war comforts his 4-year-old son at a regrouping center for POWs captured by the U.S. Army 101st Airborne Division near An Najaf, Iraq. The man was seized in An Najaf with his son by the U.S. military.



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. . . A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again, but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born.

from "The Second Coming" W. B. Yeats

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Dedication

for Yaron Caplan, resisting the forces of de-humanization.

Proceeds from the sales of the book go to MAP (Medical Aid for Palestinians).