

Another Country
by Barton Sutter

First wife, lost friend, sad ghost
My long amnesia lifts at last,
And guess what memory haunts me most.
More than fifteen years have passed

Since we caught the bus to Ullapool
But failed to ditch the damned tourists
Who swarmed like minnows in a school.
We'd crossed an ocean to come to this?

Mobs of Americans everywhere.
I sulked in a corner of our B & B,
Numb with anger, cold despair,
Knocking back the gold whiskey.

You coaxed me out to take a meal,
Where we met a boy from Aberdeen
Just back from hiking in the hills.
Shy but warm, windburned and lean,

He looked so much like our dead friend,
The one you'd once betrayed me with,
We didn't want the talk to end.
He told us we'd been tricked by myth

But sympathized and laughed a lot.
"The Highlands crawl with nice tourists
Who'd like to meet authentic Scots.
The trouble is, we don't exist."

That night we found a loud Ceilidh
And met a singer my brother knew
Whose northern hospitality
Included a room and brown homebrew.

Why didn't I dance with you that night?
I ordered one more glass of booze,
Stiff, as usual, too uptight,
And focused on those boots and shoes

That thumped so hard they had me asking
How the floor could bear the load.
They finished with that wild anthem:
You take the high road, and I'll take the low road . . .

And I recall Scotland without you.
We won't be bending over pics
To reminisce. Like me, no doubt, you
Try to forget what can't be fixed.

Remember, though, how we drove that night
To the singer's village of Rosehall,
And how, in the mist, our bright headlights
Caught the flight of a short-eared owl?

And then another and another,
Rising off the steaming road,
Two dozen, maybe, altogether.
Each time, of course, the driver slowed,

And time did, too, till we were back
In a supernatural Scottish ballad,
Flush with omens, knights who hack
Through steel and mail to bone and blood.

We hoped our driver wasn't lost.
Each owl gave our nerves a thrill,
Fluttered like a great, soft moth,
And left us happy, hushed, and chilled.

We wandered Europe hand in hand,
Less like lovers than two friends
Who couldn't start to understand
How the fairy tale would end.

Back home, we learned to curse and howl
And found an ocean we could not cross.
These days, when I recall those owls,
They rise as ghosts of all we lost.

by Roger D. McGrath

Whose Atrocities?

The Last Samurai is the latest movie to treat us to the spectacle of the U.S. Army slaughtering American Indian women and children. Playing a disillusioned captain, Tom Cruise suffers from nightmares for his role in the dastardly deed. He finds honor and redemption as a Great White Samurai in Japan. Many movie reviewers have criticized the \$120-million epic for making Cruise the King Kong of Samurais. None have criticized the movie for its portrayal of Cruise and the Boys in Blue killing squaws and papooses.

What is most surprising about the Army's campaigns in the Old West is how few women and children were killed, although you would never know it from Hollywood portrayals after the mid-60's. Moreover, such deaths were almost always unintentional and a consequence of skirmishes and battles taking place in or near Indian villages. This contrasts sharply with Indian warfare. When one tribe caught another by surprise, wholesale slaughter of women and children was common. The same was true when Indians caught whites by surprise.

From the southern plains to the northern plains, from 1850 to 1890, it is difficult to find an engagement in which more than a few Indian women or children were killed. Only Wounded Knee, at the very end of the period, would be a significant exception, and, in that case, the Indians started the fight, and explosive rounds from the Army's Hotchkiss guns were the cause of most of the indiscriminate killing. More typical was the Battle of Rush Creek, in the Texas Panhandle in the fall of 1858. Maj. Earl Van Dorn led some 200 soldiers and 150 Indian allies against a Comanche village at dawn. After an hour of battle, the Indians broke off the engagement and fled, leaving behind 56 dead warriors and two dead squaws. Although seriously wounded, Van Dorn recovered in time to lead his men in the Battle of Crooked Creek during the spring of 1859. Again, the battle involved an entire band of Comanche—men, women, and children—but left only warriors dead, 49 of them by Army count. Thirty-two women were taken prisoner.

It was no different on the northern

plains or in the Great Basin. During the late summer of 1855, Gen. William Harney reached Ash Hollow in western Nebraska, where he caught up with the band of Brule that had been responsible for the Grattan massacre. The ensuing battle left 85 warriors dead and 70 women and children prisoners. In Utah, at the Bear River, Col. Patrick Edward Connor met Chief Bear Hunter and his Shoshones early in 1862. The Shoshones were in well-fortified positions and thought that they would make short work of Connor's boys, who were near exhaustion after a long march from California. The Shoshones did kill 21 soldiers and wounded many more but lost 224 themselves, all warriors. Some 160 women and children were taken prisoner. And so it went for the rest of the century.

Meanwhile, Indian rape, torture, and slaughter of white women and children were typical rather than exceptional. Such atrocities were perpetrated by the Comanche on the southern plains, the Apache in Arizona, the Shoshone in the Great Basin, the Cayuse on the Columbia River plateau, the Sioux on the northern plains, and by nearly all Indians between. This was not something that the Indians later regretted or held courts of inquiry about, nor was it something that they reserved for white women and children; it was what they did when they could.

The Santee Sioux uprising is but one example. During the summer of 1862, the Civil War interrupted the normal delivery of supplies, food, and money to the Sioux reservation in Minnesota. There was suffering on the reservation and the anticipation of dire consequences should the delivery be postponed for very much longer. The tension was exacerbated when most traders on the reservation, who had been selling goods to the Indians on credit, refused to accept any more debt. Then, some young Indian men stole eggs from a white farmer. They fell to arguing over the theft and, taunting one another about who was the bravest, returned to the farm and killed the farmer and his wife and children. This was the spark that caused a general Santee Sioux uprising.



Most of the whites in the region were taken entirely by surprise. Some of them were recent German immigrants, members of pietistic sects. Many had no arms, had shared their food with the Indians, and had shown them nothing but kindness. They were now butchered. Other whites suffered likewise, until more than a thousand of them lay dead. The atrocities committed by the Indians boggle the imagination. When a band of rampaging warriors rode up to Johann Schwandt's farm, they found the German repairing the roof of his cabin. They riddled him with bullets, killing the immigrant instantly. He was lucky. The Sioux then butchered his wife, his two sons, his pregnant daughter and her husband, and a hired hand. One of his sons, 12-year-old August, although bludgeoned by a tomahawk and slashed by knives, was somehow still alive and conscious. He watched as the Indians ripped open his sister's belly, pulled out the child, and nailed it to a tree.

Multiply the atrocity at the Schwandt's farm by a hundred, and you have an idea of what happened to unsuspecting white families. Women and girls were gang-raped, then tortured and killed. Many were dismembered while still alive. Small children were nailed to barn doors and posts. Most of the other corpses were decapitated and mutilated beyond recognition. All were scalped. The Sioux had an easy time of it. Most farmers had treated the Indians well and thought of them as friends. When bands of Sioux rode up to the farms, the families greeted them. The Indians smiled and then slaughtered the whites like cattle at a meat-packing plant.

Seen any of this in the movies lately?

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