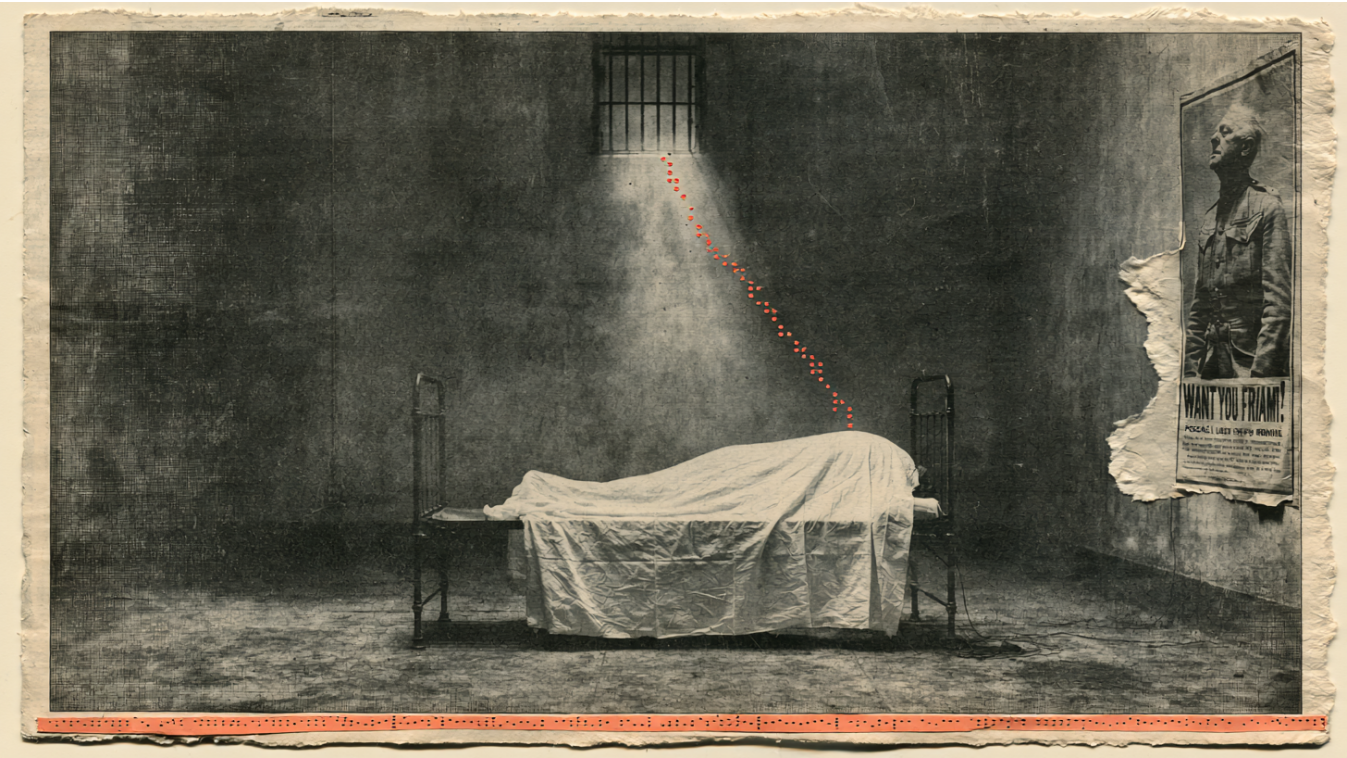

FRIEDENSNOTE NR. 77

Trapped in the Hell of War

The band Metallica turned an unbearable soldier's fate into a rallying cry against every kind of war-readiness propaganda, of the sort we are once again witnessing today.

In 1939 Dalton Trumbo's „Johnny got his gun" appeared as an indictment of the unbearable madness of war. After the United States entered the war in 1941, his book was banned on the charge of „undermining military morale". The novel enjoyed a renaissance with the peace movement of the 1960s, after Trumbo had been persecuted as a communist during the McCarthy era for „un-American activities", as one of ten Hollywood directors, the so-called „Hollywood Ten".

Despite the 1971 film adaptation of his work and the Grand Prix of the Jury awarded to it at Cannes, it largely fell into oblivion for a broader audience. By using sequences from Trumbo's film in their video clip for the track „ONE" from the album „And Justice for All", Metallica at least brought the novel and film back out of obscurity for a time. It was moreover the band's very first music clip ever, thereby breaking their earlier declaration that they would never produce a music video.

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AUTHOR Roman Huber

SONG One

PERFORMER Metallica

ALBUM ... And Justice for All, 1988

Above all, Tina Hohl's new translation of the work from 2011 – fully twenty-three years after Metallica's adaptation of the material – is worth reading. The haunting and often disturbing illustrations by Felix Gephart literally draw the viewer into the inner world of the utterly mutilated victim of a shell impact in the France of the First World War.

Joe – Johnny – Bonham has lost both arms, both legs and, through a piece of shrapnel, practically his entire face; he is deaf, mute and blind. He sees himself as one of the „chosen" among millions of wounded, whom the war has left behind as a living corpse, equipped with nothing but a more or less living torso. Imprisoned in silence and darkness, bound tight in bandages, penned back into an imagined womb with no hope of the liberating birth into a new life, while his mind and reason remain wholly intact.

> *Back in the womb, the world is much too real*

Metallica's musical realization could hardly be more gripping and more haunting, and it is a fascinating soundtrack to Hohl's adaptation of „Johnny got his gun". ONE follows the narrative manner of the book. Almost dispassionately, Joe Bonham describes the loss of his hearing, his eyes and his limbs, and then tips over into the unfulfillable wish to die, which could only be realized by holding his breath.

Metallica's masterpiece makes the inner and outer inner conflict and despair of J. Bonham palpable, torn between hope, fear and rage. The piece shifts from a ballad-like introduction to hard, fast speed metal with such force that one literally feels hurled into artillery and machine-gun fire.

After the humanitarian and military catastrophe of the Vietnam War, the military and the responsible politicians of the USA concluded that the press, with its unsparing reports on the horrors of the war, had borne a considerable share of the blame for the demoralization of the troops,

for the dwindling support among the population, for the worldwide protests against the actions of the USA, and thus for the failure of the war.

In the desert wars of the USA in Iraq and later in Afghanistan, the corresponding conclusions had been drawn, and war reporting, with a press brought into line, was now presented in gaming format.

It seems that the German and European armament and war fanatics in particular have gotten stuck in this fantasy world, as the frighteningly foolish and childish Star Wars analogies of Holger „Hawk“ Neumann regarding the „Russian enemy“ strikingly demonstrate. The man is, after all, Inspector General of the Air Force …

„It can be a once-in-a-lifetime experience to go to war — it could be fun.“ The quote is spoken in Kathryn Bigelow’s war film „The Hurt Locker“ during a conversation between the military psychologist Cambridge and the despairing soldier Eldrige of a bomb-disposal unit in Iraq. It describes the current approach of our politicians very aptly and could just as easily be heard in one of the Bundeswehr’s current propaganda clips, pimped up into an adventure holiday.

The dark flip side of the coin — the abyss of traumatization and the high suicide figures among veterans of combat deployments — is studiously withheld from the future Johnnys. That is as mendacious as it is consistent.

Virtually unlimited technical possibilities furthermore fuel a rapturous, morbid fascination of „our“ politicians with automated killing, without ever having to endure the physical and psychological consequences in their own bodies.

The war-readiness propaganda of the Bavarian „Minister of Health“ Judith Gerlach juggles with casualty figures of more than a thousand a day in the event of a war. The health system, she says, must be prepared for this. Germany is moreover a hub for transports of the wounded. What a wonderful property of numbers, to come across entirely devoid of emotion! Gerlach and company pass judgment on the fates of the Johnnys of this world as if they were cooking recipes.

Amid all the enthusiasm, they have apparently forgotten to make the funeral homes war-ready too. We are going to need them. All the same, a soldier’s family should keep a little shovel and a small

brush on hand, in order to be able to gather up the remains of their loved ones.

The mercy of a quick death, however, is by no means granted to all. For those, Dalton Trumbo's Johnny stands as a beacon of a future as a living corpse.

And yet: the more than one-hundred-year-old fairy tale of the defense of a fantasized democracy, of war for peace, freedom and countless further empty phrases, is after all worth every sacrifice.

It is hard to bear. And of a great peace movement there is still no trace.

Hear and see the unbearableness of the renewed militarization, of the seduction of our children into war, of the trivialization of mass physical and psychological dying, while you still have ears and eyes. And for the survivors too there is no way back out of the hell of war:

> *„Darkness imprisoning me*
>
> *All that I see*
>
> *Absolute horror*
>
> *I cannot live*
>
> *I cannot die*
>
> *Trapped in myself*
>
> *Body my holding cell*
>
> *Landmine has taken my sight*
>
> *Taken my speech*
>
> *Taken my hearing*
>
> *Taken my arms*
>
> *Taken my legs*
>
> *Taken my soul“*
>
> Left me with life in hell (Hetfield/Ulrich, ONE, 1988)

LISTEN & WATCH

FIRST PUBLISHED ON MANOVA

www.manova.news/artikel/gefangen-in-der-holle-des-krieges

THE SONG IN ITS ORIGINAL · YOUTUBE

www.youtube.com/watch?v=WM8bTdBs-cw

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roman Huber

Roman Huber, Jahrgang 1964, ist Heilpraktiker mit dem Schwerpunkt Homöopathie, Chakrablütenessenzen, Impfungen und Impffolgen. Ab 2019 schrieb er regelmäßig Leserbriefe bei der Landshuter Zeitung vor allem zur Masern-Impfkampagne, dem Masernschutzgesetz und den Corona-Verwerfungen. Ab 2020 organisierte er zusammen mit einem kleinen Freundeskreis Demos zur drohenden Impfpflicht und viele Vorträge zu aktuellen gesellschaftlichen und medizinischen Themen.

Er ist langjähriger Triathlet und passionierter Freiwasserschwimmer mit einem Faible für schnelle, lithiumfreie Fahrräder.

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