

Kelley White

What Our Fathers Didn't Tell Us About the War

that they were young, but the enemy soldiers were younger
that they sometimes loved their buddies more than they loved
 their wives and girlfriends at home
that they made up bawdy words to the most sentimental and sweet
 of songs
that they hallucinated
 on liquor
 on marijuana
 anti-freeze
 and heroin
that they dream of it now and dreamed of a war in their own back
 yards while they were overseas
that they loved their mothers
that they feared their fathers
that they lost religion
that they gained it
that they kept a single toe from an enemy soldier for a few months
 and can't remember why or where they threw it away
that they were hungry and ate food from another man's backpack
that they were thirsty
 and drank water that was mixed with blood
that they slept while their best friends masturbated to their sister's
 pictures
that they cried
that they didn't cry when their hometown buddy drowned
that they saw children die
that they killed children
that they loved their children
that their children grew forgotten
that their children ran away