Sonnet Two

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Would not I carry my rugged pride
When element to element will mingle and reside
In perfumed consummation of interstellar space
In a new planet cast out of Brahma’s rage
For ever wishing my nibbled pen could trace
A line of haughty verse to silence the deadly state
The world’s affairs And all its cloud clapped might
But ends in poor surrender shorn of man’s pride
Shorn of all honour when our tattered rags do show
The imprints of tempters all their dishonest row
Then we hate to touch our mortgaged flesh and bone
When souls are slaughtered in church yards of Rhone
It might have been better to explore salient venues
The spirit of dark waters or some sealed avenues.

Anthony Swofford is Assistant Professor of English at Saint Mary’s College of California. His first book, Jarhead: A Marine’s Chronicle of the Gulf War and Other Battles, is a memoir detailing his experiences as a marine sniper during and after the first Gulf War. Released on the eve of the second war in the Gulf, the book received considerable critical attention and Swofford appeared in several interviews with the popular press during the spring of 2003. During the summer of 2003, disclose was fortunate to catch Swofford giving a reading from Jarhead at Lexington’s Joseph Beth Bookstore. After several hours of gentle pleading, Swofford agreed to a phone interview later that month.

In his interview with disclose, Swofford discusses the U.S. wars in the Gulf in the contexts of the emergence of globalization, the transformations of nations and national identities, and the changing social and political characteristics of the soldier.

dC: Your connection with this issue’s theme—globalization—seems almost intuitive. You fought in and wrote on the first Gulf War. Have you given much thought to the way your work addresses any sorts of global as opposed to national concerns?

AS: When a writer in this century decides to write about war, the issue is instantly global. That’s largely a result of the Gulf War movements toward globalizing warfare. This happened