



Anatomy of a Soldier

Harry Parker

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***Anatomy of a Soldier* is a stunning first novel—of patriotism, heroism, and profound humanism—that will immediately take its place on the shelf of classics about what it truly means to be at war.**

Let's imagine a man called Captain Tom Barnes, aka BA5799, who's leading British troops in the war zone. And two boys growing up together there, sharing a prized bicycle and flying kites before finding themselves estranged once foreign soldiers appear in their countryside. And then there's the man who trains one of them to fight against the other's father and all these infidel invaders. Then imagine the family and friends who radiate out from these lives, people on all sides of this conflict where virtually everyone is caught up in the middle of something unthinkable.

But then regard them not as they see themselves but as all the objects surrounding them do: shoes and boots, a helmet, a bag of fertilizer, a medal, a beer glass, a snowflake, dog tags, and a horrific improvised explosive device that binds them all together by blowing one of them apart—forty-five different narrators in all, including the multiple medical implements subsequently required to keep Captain Barnes alive.

The result is a novel that reveals not only an author with a striking literary talent and intelligence but also the lives of people—whether husband or wife, father or mother, son or daughter—who are part of this same heart-stopping journey. A work of extraordinary humanity and hope, created out of something hopeless and dehumanizing, it makes art out of pain and suffering and takes its place in a long and rich line of novels that articulate the lives that soldiers lead. In the boom of an instant, and in decades of very different lives and experiences, we see things we've never understood so clearly before.

From the Hardcover edition.

Anatomy of a Soldier Details

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From Reader Review Anatomy of a Soldier for online ebook

Evi * says

Millanta anni fa per un esame all'Università dovetti leggere un libro di filosofia della mente abbastanza complicato *Uno sguardo da nessun luogo* di tale Nagel Thomas.

Il filosofo diceva che possiamo pensare ad uno sguardo sul mondo che non sia esclusivamente umano, togliendo all'umanità il privilegio di essere l'unica prospettiva (valida) da cui osservare la realtà, così da ridimensionare la centralità dell'uomo e del suo modo di rappresentare le cose.

Un nuovo sguardo sul mondo che diventa uno sguardo proveniente come da nessun luogo.

Il libro di Harry Parker non ha alcuna pretesa filosofica ma in un certo modo fa eco inconsapevolmente a ciò che quel filosofo disse, e che allora tanto mi colpì, e lo utilizza come procedimento stilistico narrativo per raccontarci la sua storia, lo fa assumendo il punto di vista di alcuni oggetti che entrano in relazione con un arco di tempo della vita di Tom, un militare britannico in missione in Afganistan che durante una ricognizione salterà in aria a causa dell'esplosione di un ordigno bellico e subirà l'amputazione di due gambe.

Ogni capitolo, dei 45 di cui è composto il libro, è dedicato ad un oggetto diverso e, all'inizio di ognuno, si prova come un fremito di spaesamento quando sulla riga si legge *quell'io sono*, pronome personale, usato quasi sgrammaticalmente dall'autore perché riferito non ad una persona ma ad una cosa, *quell'io sono* pronunciato da un oggetto è di fortissimo impatto emotivo.

E dunque io chi sono?

Io sono il tuo anfibio destro

Io sono la sega che il chirurgo brandirà e farà oscillare sul tuo osso ridotto in poltiglia:

Il chirurgo chiese la sega oscillante.

Gli consegnarono me. Lui impugnò la mia maniglia e piazzò un dito guantato sul mio pulsante di metallo. Mi teneva in mano come un'arma, e all'estremità della mia "canna c'era una lama piatta di acciaio inox, con i denti affilati che puntavano in avanti a file sovrapposte. Premette il grilletto e il mio motore ronzò, e il filo della lama si fece sfocato.

Fu in quel momento che diventai utile.

Il chirurgo disse che era pronto ad amputare

Sono la bicicletta di un ragazzino afgano

Uno zaino

Sono la tua piastrina di riconoscimento

Io sono una ricetrasmettente

Io sono la sacca di plasma che sta nutrendo il tuo corpo devastato:

Io ero appesa sopra di te. Sono una miscela di globuli bianchi e rossi, fattori coagulanti, plasma e piastrine. La forza di gravità faceva scendere il mio contenuto lungo un tubo. Il liquido gocciolava attraverso il cilindretto della regolazione del flusso e la cannula, fino a entrare dentro di te per sostituire quello che avevi perso quando ti avevano sfigurato.

Ero appesa a un sostegno attaccato al tuo letto..

Sono il proiettile scagliato dal caricatore che segue la sua parabola discendente se non incontrerà ostacolo

Sfrecciai fuori dalla canna a 940 metri al secondo, volando via dall'arma [...] La mia traiettoria era prestabilita: su di me agivano contemporaneamente la gravità, la pressione atmosferica, un leggero vento da sud e la rotazione della terra sul suo asse. L'attrito mi riscaldò fino a 135 gradi mentre praticavo un buco silenzioso nell'aria, creando un centro di pressione davanti a me. Il rumore continuo che producevo mi seguiva in un cono di fragore e turbolenza, si dilatava in un'onda d'urto che colpiva tutto ciò che avevo in scia.

Molti altri proiettili erano in movimento attorno a me, e l'aria ribolliva di energia cinetica. Alcuni mi sorpassarono ma la maggior parte erano o davanti o dietro di me, e convergevano sul bersaglio. Io volavo verso l'obiettivo finale descrivendo un arco schiacciato.

Sono la tua protesi ipertecnologica, fatta di metallo, bulloni, tubi di carbonio, plastica e gomma

Il catetere vescicale che scorrerà dentro la tua uretra per aiutarti a svuotare la vescica,

Il tappeto persiano intrecciato da alcune donne afgane

Sarò il primo boccale di birra che berrai dopo essere tornato alla vita

Sarò una busta, frusta da un lungo viaggio che contiene una lettera per te

Sono la tua sedia a rotelle

Io sono...

E questi oggetti si animano, osservano, commentano, descrivono il reale senza retorica né sentimentalismo, descrivono se stessi, non giudicano, non soffrono, ci offrono una prospettiva imparziale, quel punto di vista quasi da nessun luogo.

Con queste coordinate oggettuali, come nel gioco del “cosa apparirà” della Settimana Enigmistica che, dopo aver unito tanti punti insieme da bambina mi restituiva una immagine chiara e soddisfacente, Parker ricostruisce il reticolo del racconto del Capitano Tom, nome in codice BA5799, di Faridun ragazzino afgano (un civile) e di Latif un giovane ribelle, tre destini che si incrociano confluendo nell'esatto punto dove l'ordigno nascosto esploderà.

Anatomia di un soldato è un'opera vivida, profonda, che mi ha commosso, catturata, che mi ha lasciato con il fiato sospeso, mi ha restituito il contesto della vita militare con i suoi addestramenti, i suoi acme di tensione e i lunghi momenti di pigrizia indolente, la paura del pericolo e dell'agguato, la prossimità con la morte, la sofferenza fisica di corpi che saltano in aria rimbalzati e scaraventati a terra, sfigurati in un nugolo di polvere sangue e carne macellata.

A quasi fine libro ho scoperto che l'autore non ha fatto altro che raccontare la sua storia, che dunque è una storia verosimilmente vera, ancora una volta il balsamo lenitivo della scrittura che cura chi legge e mai, come in questo caso, anche l'autore che al ritorno dal deserto afgano non sarà più lo stesso soldato, né lo stesso uomo e con dentro di sé un concetto nuovo di quello che è il nemico.

*Cioè, che cosa faresti se quelli che hanno costruito la bomba entrassero qui nel pub in questo momento?
Cazzo, io li impalerei con quello sgabello».*

Tom lo fissò. «James, mi sa che tu non capisci», disse, e cominciò ad alzarsi.

«Dove stai andando?»

Tom si tirò su dalla sedia e si chinò un po' in avanti, facendo leva sulle gambe per mettersi in piedi, riaccostò la sedia al tavolo e guardò l'amico.

«Se le persone che mi hanno fatto questo entrassero qui adesso gli offrirei da bere>> .

E' il suo primo libro, un esordio d'eccezione.

Anne says

I have never read a novel quite like Anatomy of a Soldier. It is original and clever and told in voices that are savage and brutal, yet beguiling and beautiful at the same time.

Harry Parker recounts Tom Barnes's story of survival, and the stories of the young boys who are reaching maturity in a homeland that is a battlefield by using inanimate objects as the narrative voices. This unusual and intriguing structure and style has enabled him to tell the story without any human emotional baggage, or viewpoint or bias. We all have objects that remind of us certain things, and it is often the inanimate thing that plays a large part in the memories that shape our world, this is so evident in this story of life, and death on the battlefield.

I cried before I reached the end of page two of Anatomy of a Soldier, as Tom Barnes suffers the injury that will shape the rest of the book. The words are brutal and savage, and the reader is not spared from the full horror of what humans do to each other, on a daily basis, all over the world.

After the initial horrific incident, the reader is taken back and forth. We learn about Tom Barnes before he was blown up, and about his recovery. He meets his family, and his friends, even the woman who always quite fancied him, but doesn't know what to say to him now. But this is not a one-sided story, it also looks deeply at the lives of the insurgents; the people who were born and raised in the land that is now littered with bombs and land mines, where tanks and guns and soldiers march past front doors and gardens every day. We see the human side of the so-called enemy, we meet their parents and friends, we share their joy at riding a bicycle and flying a kite. Harry Parker gets under the skin of his characters, allowing the reader to take a good look at what makes men become enemies and how death and injury can impact feelings and beliefs.

There are times when the novel feels disorientating, it switches quickly, from place to place, from time to time and from one viewpoint to another, but having read an interview with the author, I now realise that this was his intention. Anatomy of a Soldier is about a bomb exploding, it's about opening your eyes and wondering where you are, and what is happening and he creates that feeling with his words and structure.

Anatomy of a Soldier is brilliantly written, it certainly shows rather than tells, and the horror and brutality is there in every detail. Yet it is also a story of hope and new beginnings, of tenacity, determination and stamina. The words are creative and artistic, yet genuine and so very very important.

<http://randomthingsthroughmyletterbox...>

Leo says

Een meer dan bijzonder boek, a.h.v. 45 objecten/voorwerpen/‘dingen’ wordt het verhaal van Kapitein Barnes verteld. Hij vocht voor het Britse leger in Afghanistan.

Er zijn hoofdstukken met de ‘ik’ persoon als bloedzak, kogel, nachtkijker, prothese, veldbed etc. Zeer interessant!

Amy | shoutame says

We follow the story of a young British soldier named Tom who is posted to a war zone where the threat of injury is constantly looming. At the very beginning of the novel we learn that Tom has had to have his leg amputated after he stepped on a camouflaged bomb. Over the course of the novel we flick back and forth between present day and the time just before Tom encounters the bomb. Alongside Tom's story we also follow that of the terrorists and civilians in the nearby village.

I struggled to connect with any of the characters throughout the entirety of this novel. The reason for that is the way the story is told. We are guided through the events via the perspective of objects that are near or on the person at the time (for instance Tom's boots or rucksack). This separation from the mind of the protagonist left me with very little to connect with - I wish I had been able to see more of the characters thoughts and feelings rather than the observations of his prosthetic leg!

All in all it was an interesting read and I would recommend to anyone who enjoys reading about conflict or recovery from war.

Bee (Heart Full of Books) says

8/10 Last Year's Novels module

Maddie (Heart Full Of Books) says

6/10 Last Year's Novels module

Lorilin says

The entire book of *Anatomy of a Soldier* is written from the perspective of inanimate objects: a bag of fertilizer, a boot, a backpack, a mother's purse, a surgeon's saw. Each object gets its own, single chapter (there are no duplicates), and all of the chapters are connected. Together they form a story about soldier BA5799, a.k.a Tom Barnes.

Tom is a captain in the British armed forces, and he's pretty good at his job. He's not totally sure of himself, but he cares about his men, he cares about his mission. He's a good leader. Unfortunately, his good luck in the field runs out, and he steps on the wrong patch of ground. Now he's missing body parts. The story follows him in real time, struggling to survive, and it also gives backstory, showing the events that led to his current situation.

It's hard to know how to describe this book. It's unexpected, unsettling. When inanimate objects do the narrating, everything becomes an object--even humans, even pain. You get an eerie feeling when you're reading, like people don't matter. Not in a cruel way, but in an ambivalent "we are so small in this universe; our lives are so short" sort of way. And there's no arguing with it, really, because, it's true. In the grand scheme of things, we may be important to each other, but we aren't actually important.

I like that this book made me feel something. It made me see the world and people and war in a different way, and I appreciate that. I do think I would have appreciated a bit more variety, since the "object narrator" gimmick, though effective, gets old about halfway through. But I still enjoyed reading *Anatomy of a Soldier*. Author Harry Parker has definitely brought something new to the table. I'll be interested to see what he writes next.

ARC provided by Amazon Vine. See more of my reviews at www.BugBugBooks.com.

Laura says

From BBC Radio 4 - Book at Bedtime:

Captain Tom Barnes is leading British troops in Afghanistan. Two boys are growing up there, sharing a prized bike and flying kites, before finding themselves separated once the soldiers appear in the countryside.

On all sides of this conflict, people are about to be caught up in the violence - from the man who trains one boy to fight the infidel invaders to Barnes' family waiting for him to return home.

We see them not as they see themselves, but as all the objects surrounding them do - shoes and combat boots, wheelchairs and wheelbarrows, a bag of fertiliser, an exploding IED and the medical implements that are subsequently employed.

Anatomy of a Soldier is based on the author's experience of being in a war zone and his journey of survival against all the odds.

Written by Harry Parker

Read by Paul Bazely

A Pier production for BBC Radio 4.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07v03fc>

Donna says

"I was made carefully on a wooden table with buckled legs that rested against a dry mud wall. I was made by two men silhouetted in moonlight from the doorway behind them and the jaundiced beam of a torch placed over me and sweat glistened on their temples."

That was narrator number four, an improvised explosive device that changed Tom Barnes' life when he stepped into a field to lead his men back to camp after an exhausting mission. Barnes, a British captain, known mainly as BA5799 by the 45 narrators in this book, stepped onto the spot where the IED was buried and his body shattered, but not his mind or his will to live.

I wanted to read this book mainly because I was curious about a story that had forty-five inanimate objects as narrators. How would the author treat them? Would he personify them? Would the story, despite its promise of being literary, become something silly because it was told through the viewpoint of objects such as a

helmet, dog tags, a bed, and a catheter? I had to find out. But when I went online to learn exactly where and when this story was set, I discovered a whole new reason to read this book. I came across an interview with the author. It turns out that this story was based upon the author's true life experiences when fighting in Afghanistan in 2009 where he sustained catastrophic injuries that might have leveled most other people. In the interview, Mr. Parker said how he did not want to write his story in his own voice. It would have been too raw of an experience, I gathered. He needed the distance that his inanimate narrators created so he could tell it from their perspective. This put a whole new spin on the premise for this book which I now know wasn't based upon a gimmick, and the results were dead serious.

The reader will listen to inanimate objects speak dispassionately, though at times poetically, of not only Captain Barnes' experiences, but of those whose lives he touched and of those who touched his, before deployment, in battle, directly after his injuries, and during recovery from them. The narrators tell of what they observed and how those they came into direct contact with felt and what they were thinking. The reader must go with the flow and not question any of this in order to gain the biggest benefit from this book.

"He was already waking before his alarm clock rang. It was the brightening sky that made him turn over on me, and the chill that made him pull his sleeping bag up. It was a half-conscious bliss, being elsewhere, and the day ahead didn't exist, only dreams of home that slowly corroded as he woke and realized he was lying on me, inside the netting, and a different sun was rising above him."

Narrator number 21, an army cot.

This book also tells a larger story than that of one man. It tells the story of the people living in the region Captain Barnes and his men were fighting in, both those who supported their presence and those who fought against it. But again, the narrators merely relayed what they saw and heard, and they did not give their opinions or make judgments. It was for the reader to collect all the information and see the smaller or larger pictures they wished to see.

This was an ambitious debut novel that I had high hopes for and was intrigued by. I learned much from this painfully honest account of a soldier injured not only physically, but emotionally. Not knowing how much of this story was fact or fiction didn't matter. It was real in all the ways that mattered.

But the book fell short in some areas that prevented my total immersion. I wished for a more linear storyline that would have made this into an even more powerful novel. As it stands, the novel jumps around in time and place quite a bit which made it confusing, though that's what the author was aiming for since little made sense to him during that time. And while I appreciated the importance of other people's experiences besides those of Captain Barnes, those other experiences diluted what could have been a more concentrated effect of the captain's story. And some sections became repetitive when attempting to show more than one side to the story. This grew tiring at times when those sections provided little new information from others already presented. Also, some narrators didn't seem to serve much purpose and their sections were dull in comparison to others. The best narrators were those that interacted with humans and didn't just observe. But each section was brief, so none were a burden to get through and many were poignant such as the ones narrated by a woman's purse, a bed, a catheter, and a beer glass, among others.

So as a whole, this is a gritty and occasionally poetic and sometimes graphic book. A very worthwhile novel that is more than a novelty. This is one man's story and many people's stories by association and by representation. But above all, this is an important book for anyone wanting to contemplate the cost of war.

In closing, here are a few more quotes from some of the narrators:

"The falling rain was foreshortened to white rods against the stone sky."

"I am a desert combat boot. I have BA5799 written on my tongue and he walked me across the tarmac towards a city of white tents and cream hangers, floating on that shimmering desert mirror."

"I had become part of him, another layer of courage that let him step out of the gate."

"He thought of the destruction required to create peace."

Bettie? says

BABT

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07v03fc>

Description: *Captain Tom Barnes is leading British troops in Afghanistan. Two boys are growing up there, sharing a prized bike and flying kites, before finding themselves separated once the soldiers appear in the countryside.*

On all sides of this conflict, people are about to be caught up in the violence - from the man who trains one boy to fight the infidel invaders to Barnes' family waiting for him to return home. We see them not as they see themselves, but as all the objects surrounding them do - shoes and combat boots, wheelchairs and wheelbarrows, a bag of fertiliser, an exploding IED and the medical implements that are subsequently employed.

Anatomy of a Soldier is based on the author's experience of being in a war zone and his journey of survival against all the odds.

Stephen says

This was really different and unique. Every one of the 45 chapters is written from the point of view of an inanimate object such as a gun cartridge, wheelchair, dog tags, even snow. Takes some getting used to as it sometimes takes a while to work out what the object is and the story dots about between characters/perspectives/places (even countries) and in timescale it doesn't all run in order. By about halfway through I was hooked, though - it is so realistic and could only have been written by someone who had been there (author was a serving soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan). Very powerful telling of the central message that everyone loses from war.

Jasi says

Erzählt wird dieses Buch, dass das Thema Krieg behandelt, außergewöhnlicher Weise aus der Sicht unterschiedlicher Gegenstände. Diese sind zum Beispiel Handtaschen, Waffen, Schuhe, Briefe und medizinische Geräte. Zu meiner großen Überraschung gab es aber auch sehr abstrakte Gegenstände wie etwa ein Kapitel das auch der Sicht von Schnee erzählt wird.

Der Klappentext des Buches hat mich direkt angezogen, doch besonders interessant für mich wurde das Buch erst als ich erfuhr, dass der Autor selbst große Teile seiner Vergangenheit in die Geschichte miteingebracht hat. Er selbst war Teil der britischen Armee und verlor im Einsatz in Afghanistan seine beiden Füße. Dadurch habe ich das Buch mit ganz anderen Augen gelesen.

Natürlich gewinnt man durch die besondere Erzählweise des Buches einen anderen Eindruck, als wie man es vielleicht durch eine Personenerzählung tut. Es dauerte etwas bis ich mich damit zurecht gefunden habe und obwohl ich die Idee sehr schön finde, hätte es mir besser gefallen wenn die Geschichte aus der Sicht von den jeweiligen Protagonisten erzählt worden wäre. Dadurch hätte ich noch mehr Einblick in das Gefühlsleben erhalten. Es fiel mir so nicht so einfach den Protagonisten nahe zu kommen.

Abgesehen davon, hat mich die Geschichte sehr gut gefallen und mich auf zutiefst berührt. Der Autor hat sehr viele private Gedanken und Erfahrungen eingebracht, weshalb es sich für mich nur noch schmerzlicher anfühlte. Der Schreibstil ist trotz der Sichtweise, die mich nicht ganz erreichen konnte, ist sehr realistisch und gefühlvoll. Er rundet die bewegende Geschichte perfekt ab und damit kann ich das Buch sehr empfehlen!

FAZIT:

Eine außergewöhnliche Erzählweise, die mich leider aber nicht ganz erreichen konnte. Abgesehen davon fand ich das Buch sehr bewegend und es war ein besonderes Leseereignis.

Tammy says

Very interesting perspective. A British soldier's experience is told from the point of view of 46 objects that impact his life. Sometimes you have to figure out what the object is, other times the object introduces itself.

Valentina Accardi says

Tom Barnes è un giovanissimo capitano dell'esercito britannico in missione in Afghanistan; Latif un ragazzo che milita fra i ribelli; Faridun, un suo amico che invece cerca di vivere pacificamente nel suo villaggio. Attorno a queste tre persone, Harry Parker fa ruotare la storia (vera) di come è rimasto ferito e ha perso entrambe le gambe. Il libro, autobiografico, si articola in 45 capitoli in cui la voce narrante è quella di un oggetto di volta in volta diverso, un qualcosa che è entrato in contatto con almeno uno dei tre protagonisti (di cui, ovviamente, Barnes è il principale): un tubo endotracheale, un sacco di fertilizzante, una borsetta, una scarpa, ecc.. La genialità di Parker nell'uso di questo espediente sta nel fatto che alcune di queste ministorie si riferiscono agli stessi momenti che vengono narrati, però, da punti di vista diversi.

Parker, attraverso il filtro Barnes, non si piange addosso, ma racconta le sue sofferenze, condivide i ricordi e i suoi momenti più bui col lettore con grande dignità. E soprattutto rivela una grande forza di volontà e un'immensa voglia di vivere e di apprezzare ciò che ha.

BELLISSIMO!

Vasco Simões says

Forma diferente de escrever um romance sobre a guerra. O narrador, que muda a cada capítulo, é sempre um

objeto diferente. Curioso porque ficas naquela de tentar saber o que é nalguns casos. Já noutrous é bem fácil. Mas se isso é giro ao inicio, lá para o meio aborrece. Tudo o que é demais enjoa e creio que é o caso. You get the bigger picture...mas não era preciso tanto. Valeu o esforço. Gostei particularmente da mina!

Renee says

Wow.

I heard some hype online from some fellow book bloggers, so decided to hunt this book down. The concept sounded intriguing - a story told from the perspectives of a series of inanimate objects. The result far surpassed my expectations.

The author never tells you which objects are narrating the chapter, he shows you. I loved stringing together the clues and working out what the object was. I was amazed by how different each objects voice was, from the factual military objects such as the main character's helmet, to the caring medical objects such as the call buzzer.

The story is told in non linear fashion, jumping back and forth in time and retelling sections of scenes from a different perspective. I read an interview with the author where he said "You could chuck the chapters into the air and read them in any order – that's what it's like to be blown up." He certainly achieved that. This technique also added to the build up of suspense as the full story was slowly unveiled. The story didn't feel slow though, as I often find with literary style writing..

This was more than a literary tale, it was: a collection of short stories, a tragedy, a romance, a personal growth story, a story of grief, brutal, tender, a British story, a Middle Eastern story, a story that made me smile, a tale that brought a tear to my eye. It's the story of a soldier, but it's so much more than that. It's a story that has me talking.

I received this book free from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Sally Green says

Incredibly moving story told by 45 different objects (including energy and water/snow and a fungus) related to a soldier's life and near death. The soldier is known as BA5799 by most of the objects though not all are used by him. I struggled for a while with the voice of the objects - they are all the same - and have a flat reporting voice that is totally emotionless, though some of the objects do know the feelings of BA5799, which at first seemed unlikely but then I warmed to the idea that a helmet might know the feelings of its owner. I took the voice to be that of BA5799 (he is a soldier's soldier) but also it seemed like the objects were making police statements which in a way they all were as they all related to a traumatic incident involving BA5799. I know I'd have been keen to give each thing a different voice (45 would have been a challenge) but the point of the story is not the objects' characters but their unemotional witness statements, which are incredibly moving, possibly more so for their lack of emotion.

The objects give a surprising insight into the detail of a soldier's life, more so than any other soldiering story I've read.

Have the tissues ready.

Michael Finocchiaro says

An unforgettable reading experience - living a soldier's tragedy and triumph through 45 inanimate objects. *Anatomy of a Soldier* is breathtaking and features an extremely original narrative technique from this gifted writer, Harry Parker. Fortunately, it does not moralize. Rather it describes coldly and brutally and realistically the horrors of war and the trials of recovery. A beautiful and important book.

E.P. says

In "Anatomy of a Soldier," the wounding and subsequent rehabilitation of British soldier Captain Tom Barnes is told, in non-chronological order, from the perspective of the objects that come into contact with him, from the IED that rips off his legs to the prosthetics that he is eventually fitted with. Along the way we meet those who engineered the attack, the friends and family members of both sets of fighters, and the strangers who work to save Tom's life.

The conceit behind "Anatomy of a Soldier" is clever, and the subject matter is fairly gory, but the book avoids hiding behind either clever conceit or gruesome depictions of violence, whether military or medical (although the squeamish may have a hard time reading about the surgeries that Tom undergoes). Highly detailed and seemingly detached, it nonetheless conveys the pathos of both Tom's life-shattering experience, and the tragedy of the shattered lives of those on the other side.

Like a number of works about recent conflicts, the focus is not on the characters' courage and plucky fight against the odds, but on how all the courage and pluck in the world cannot, in fact, protect you from the damage caused by modern explosives. Tom had imagined getting wounded before it actually happened, but had always envisioned it as a flesh wound from a bullet, which he would bravely shrug off and lead his soldiers back to safety before seeking treatment. The reality is quite different, the catastrophic nature of his injuries rendering all possibility of courage moot.

This could be a depressing narrative, and it is indeed bittersweet, but the multiple points of view work to suggest that, far from being alone, we are all living in an animate, interconnected world, something that even war cannot, fundamentally, destroy.

Angela says

"I was making you die and when that happened I would die too. But I had no option, only oblivion. I had to persist and would consume you to do it."

The **unusual** way of telling a story was the main reason why I read this book. It was a bit of a challenge for me in the beginning, but after awhile, this new way of writing became normal, and I really enjoy it.

A series of *inanimate objects* are telling the story of Captain Tom Barnes and his fellow soldiers in a

warzone. Through these objects we get access to the develop of the main character, his interior conflicts and the way he deals with the fact that(view spoiler)

This was a simultaneously fascinating and devastating reading about a man who been trough hell and back, returning to a brand new life with a different perspective on the world around him.
