

## WELCOME BACK TO EARTH

by Adrian Matejka

—after Yusef Komunyakaa, & for C & my uncles

Since Vietnam is Vietnam & whatever it takes  
to get bodies there: brass-band parades, flags  
flown on all the major buildings in the sparkling  
cities & patriotic local singers, tonsils like exclamation  
points when they sing *home of the brave*. The draft,  
too, where the draftee leaves the most important  
pieces of himself spinning at violent speeds from  
over here to over there. Propeller rotation by propeller  
rotation, tour rotation by tour rotation. C rations  
nobody wants to eat & they're left on jungle trails  
like inedible directions. Fire fights night & day  
& even the words *fire* & *fight* aren't enough to blot  
the tracers from eyelids. Finally, left arm looped  
as tight as one day warring is to the next—one  
puncture at a time, one flamed rotation at a time,  
in latrines & closets, behind fronded trees  
& their columns of shining ants. Loop, poke, puddle,  
repeat—all the way back to the States after the third tour.  
The next thing you know, you're in Los Angeles  
& the whole party is laughing at you behind pointy  
birthday hats & cigarette dragons while you try  
to undo your pants to pee with hands like mittens.

The record spinning *Mothership Connection*  
but you're not dancing. You're not even trying  
to get up off of the awful green couch when a country  
of wet divides on your jeans & the smoke gets into  
your mouth like the smoke is in all the smiling mouths  
at this welcome home party like a redacted apology.

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