

“Song of Napalm” by Bruce Weigl

Bruce Weigl’s poem “Song of Napalm” juxtaposes the speaker’s visual experience of a thunderstorm after the war with the images of combat in the Vietnam that still haunt him. The speaker and his wife are looking out his door at a field as a storm subsides. He imagines that the branches on the trees are barbed wire and the thunder the mortar fire of war. The last image of the poem is of a young girl being burned by the effects of napalm. The speaker attempts to imagine her lifting out into the air, out of the pain, but his imagination fails him and “The lie works only as long as it takes to speak” and he is left with the image “burned behind [his] eyes”(35, 42). Weigl leaves the reader with an indelible image and a sense that these visions are ones that veterans constantly struggle with and recall even in common experiences like a thunderstorm. I chose this poem because it achieves the same purpose as O’Brien’s repetition of images in *The Things They Carried*. Both texts convey to the reader that these are ghastly images that soldiers are doomed to remember despite their efforts to transform them into something gentler and less horrific.