

## On the Borders of Wordsworth Country, In a Troubled Time

*by Marion Montgomery*

Natland hills are gentle, sloping down  
From Helm to the trough-cutting Trent;  
My tower is not your shadowed Grasmere cottage  
High-circled by fells and scree, like Druid stones  
Shaggy in mists, lowering in spring light.  
Grasmere, couched down in mountains by deep water;  
Rydal Fell, the slant of Grasmere Common,  
Loughrigg and Langdale to the south and west—  
You know these places I am naming  
With sounds that echo as if my own familiars.  
A country of stark peaks and ridges  
Where sheep and tourists may yet be lost  
With a little careless pilgrim labor;  
You know weathers on Helvellyn northwards,  
Its Striding Edge a ragged knife blade.  
That white ridge path on the mountain back lies  
Teasing in the god's eye color photo  
I fondle at the tourist's stand, first aid  
Stations to our lagging eyes till  
Transported,  
Whereon believing with my eyes closed,  
I walk arms out as if on stunted wings,  
As on a rope, for fear of tumbling two miles down  
Into blue tarns the staggering sky must envy,  
A last quiet valley there north beyond  
Farmer Dodgson's raucus tractor grinding  
Natland air into his sweet hay rows.  
Less wild than desolate, your steep reach  
Of crags toward Scotland looks familiar  
To an eye subdued by meter's desolations.

But when the clouds come down among the silences  
Of thinned tourists at their random wonders,  
May not old Roman ghosts of civil order  
Stand pale behind stone walls against the glance  
Of tipped shafts?

Flint strikes spark,  
A hard name burning low still in the settled mind:  
Westward across the slight sea, song and chant  
Steel the steady vise of order born of cold  
Caesar and Cicero, of the fading Senate.  
A chaos of words stirs the firm music,  
Milk bottles flame on shields in Ulster evenings,  
Tin tops from garbage bins bang concrete  
While a tribal chant rises past meter,  
Higher than the cry of these static ravens.



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

## Don't Tread on Us

by Thomas Fleming

In the closing days of 1993 two familiar specters, recently absent from our nightmares, returned to haunt the global consciousness: the Russian bear, in the person of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and the Yellow Peril, in the form of North Korea. There were, of course, other bugbears to frighten the children of democracy—the parade of new Hitlers led by Miloshevitich and Aidid, but neither the Serb nor the Somali possess the great talisman of fear, nuclear weapons.

Why is the bomb so important? After all, even our conventional weapons could pave over North Korea in a matter of days, and until the Russians can manage to subdue Ukraine and Kazakhstan, they are hardly in a position to menace Poland, much less Western Europe. But the bomb is a symbol both of American supremacy—we are, so far, the only nation barbaric enough to use it—and of the Cold War, whose principal strategy consisted of a vast computer game that measured victory in terms of potential megadeaths.

Yes, the world is a dangerous place. It always has been. Only in America could an idiot become rich and famous by predicting the end of history. The same people who promoted Francis Fukuyama are the type to laugh at our ancestors for table-rapping and witch-hunting, but no superstition of the past can possibly rival the absurdities promulgated every day by university professors prophesying doom and bliss in virtually the same breath.

There is more than one way to confront a dangerous world. The governing classes of the United States, knowing that much of their power derives from the terror they have systematically inspired for 50 years, would like us to go on wringing our hands and rattling our sabres till the end of time. But after so many years the sabres sound more like rattles designed to pacify a baby—in this case, the American people.

Pacifists have their own perilous answers to the problems of

violence—unilateral disarmament, and turning the other cheek until the victim's head spins and there is no more cheek to punish. The older American attitude, which might be described as an armed and dangerous neutrality, was summed up in Teddy Roosevelt's maxim, "walk softly and carry a big stick." Our first flag, the coiled rattlesnake, bore the legend: "Don't Tread On Me," and we have adopted it here as our personal motto, both in foreign and domestic affairs. Leave others alone; respect their property; treat them fairly; and punish them swiftly and severely, whenever they break faith or violate your rights. Such a "Tit-for-Tat" strategy is the long-term winner in the computer games analyzed by George Axelrod, and it is the most secure basis for all human relations.

It was also the American foreign policy, in a nutshell, down to World War I. (In the Spanish-American War we managed to deceive ourselves into thinking we were the injured party.) But the "war to end all wars" was, in Woodrow Wilson's opinion, a crusade to change the world, and in sending an army onto European soil, the President was repealing the policy of isolation that had been declared by George Washington. Ironically (in the modern sense of "inevitably"), we went to war not for the sake of France but for the very empire from which we had to liberate ourselves in two wars.

"Lafayette, we are here." This famous declaration was made on July 4, 1917, in the Parisian cemetery where the Marquis de Lafayette lay buried. On behalf of the entire American Expeditionary Force, Charles E. Stanton proclaimed that "here and now in the presence of the illustrious dead we pledge our hearts and honor in carrying this war to a successful issue." An army of conscripts was an odd tribute to a man who had gone to America as a volunteer, but the Wilson administration knew that world power could never rest upon a basis of citizen-volunteers. Empires require conscripts and mercenaries, and