Doucette, Fred. *Empty Casing: A Soldier's Memoir of Sarajevo Under Siege*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2008.

Any kid in his state would have devoured the candy, but he was looking at that little pin as if it were the gift of life. As I watched, he took the fastener off the back and pinned it on his grubby T-shirt. Once he had put it pinned on he looked at it, admiring the splash of colour he now possessed. Then he put the candy in his mouth and, like a man savouring a cool drink, put his head back, faced the sun and relished his good fortune. I realized I was looking at someone experienced far beyond his years. As I drove away, I left him basking in the midday sun.

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I thought, *Interesting, after almost two months, and only after I inquired, did they realize I was special.* It was as if they were required to ask us on paper how we were doing, but not required to tell us how we were doing. For them, it was simply a paper exercise that had no link to the mental health of the soldiers.

I was infuriated, and this just added fuel to the anger and resentment that had begun to boil in me since my return. No one gave a fuck! I booked an appointment with one of the social workers and tried to quell the rage I felt towards those who had never seen the face of war.

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What pissed me off, as well as the others who had been to Bosnia, was that no one was testing the clerks on typing, the mechanics on vehicle maintenance, the cooks on cooking; yet here we were, being put through endless training. It was as if we were required to do this training so that desk soldiers in Ottawa could tick the items off of a list and declare us operationally ready.

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Our eyes met. His dark brown eyes were wide with shock and surprise. They were burning a hole in me. He knew he was dying. *Everyone is dying in this fucking war,*I thought. But I said nothing. I knelt down beside him. His blood was pooling under his ass. I took care to notice where the blood was; I didn’t want to kneel in it, because I had only three pairs of combat pants and had no way of cleaning them. *His life blood flowing out of him and I don’t want to get blood on my pants.*

-pp. 190

THIS BOOK, which began as a small daily journal, grew to become a way for me to expand on my experiences and memories of Bosnia. I did not realize that “talking to the paper” would be therapeutic, but some of my demons have been laid to rest in these pages. I hope that the writing has also honoured all those who were caught up in the Balkan war.

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