

War Games

—*Janet Brown*

When Pete was only thirteen
the war game first appeared
that blew cardboard boundaries
off a carved wooden map.
The made-in-Japan soldiers
guarded tinfoil munitions
and fought their multi-wars
with suspicions brittle and plastic.
Each war was played authentically
(he knew each major plan)
and every night at bedtime
he put it gently in the box.

At twenty, he played again
this time a different war—
mosquito nets and guns
put him among “his men.”
The Union men weren’t there
nor glorious Churchill’s claims
nor hateful Tokyo Rose
was heard among the mortars.
The dusty clay warriors
are shoved into metal boxes—
his little brother now plays
his dead brother’s game.