

Spring 1979

For My Father: On Looking at a Robert Capa Photograph

Howard Levy

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Levy, Howard (1979) "For My Father: On Looking at a Robert Capa Photograph," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 12 , Article 36.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss12/36>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

FOR MY FATHER: ON LOOKING AT A
ROBERT CAPA PHOTOGRAPH

1

I come across a photograph of Spain.
it is Barcelona, 1938. these are soldiers
of the International Brigades, scarves
tied around their necks like dockhands.
they are losing and going home, but they salute,
right arms bent at the elbow, fists clenched.

you were not there, but I see you in the photograph.
I see you whenever Spain comes up, though
you were not there. you raised money for them
in Manhattan.

2

it is unimportant what you did.
Spain has become a word
that stretches between us,
a rope bridge across 30 years of ordinary life,
the cliffs of father and son.

I remember you on the blue sofa
telling me about the Ebro,
the Jarama, door to door fighting in Madrid,
Guernica and the war lost. quiet and subdued,
the words fell into the canyons between us.

and now, it is 1978. I am on a bed in a rooming house
in upstate New York, a photograph of Spain
on my lap. we have never been further apart.

3

and I am also a photographer of loss.
this room, picture this: the gray, green
carpet, the drawers with knobs missing,

not even in a pattern, the sunken bed
I don't fit, the obligatory
cracked mirror.

a closeup of me with the photo on my lap.
my face grave and childish.

I am haunted by these men.
they seem from a world that has blown up,
their sun gone nova.