



1997

## Appomatox Battleground Tour

Whitney Fox

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### Recommended Citation

Fox, Whitney (1997) "Appomatox Battleground Tour," *Inscape*: Vol. 17 : No. 1 , Article 24.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/inscape/vol17/iss1/24>

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## Appomatox Battleground Tour

*Whitney Fox*

When our tour guide says, “This is American  
as apple pie,” I am skeptical. She points to the grass  
heaving under corners where  
a steel monument grazes an ear of the sky. Sharing our D.A.R. heritage, we read  
the thin pamphlet and turn pages in synchronized time  
to a taped snare beating

like a thin heart beating.  
Maybe our own. We think of this as truly American—  
an afternoon of surplus time  
meets Brother Walt’s *Leaves of Grass*.  
Do we read  
more between the battle lines where

historians have forced emotion? Where  
only a stone marks the place, men beat  
down other men in the sfumato of daguerreotypes. I read  
the pamphlet and only want ice cream. Now *this* is American.  
In my mind, I see women, memorials in the grass  
and wind whipping clotheslines. “Here,” she points, “was a time

when days were measured in anti-time,  
when women were slaves to weather and plundering soldiers, where—”  
I push the grass  
with my toe. Was this worth dying for? A man beating  
a woman was expected of an American?  
I wonder for which: the man or the woman? and continue to read

the pamphlet that tells less the more I read.  
It’s the Japanese tourists who’ve got it right this time—  
lambswool sweaters folded with tissue, all of America  
in a Bennetton bag. They press together with cameras where  
mothers and grandmothers once beat  
hooked rugs, concealed double-barreled guns. The grass  
still sweeps the floor of the sky. “This grass  
has seen it all,” the tour guide reads

my thoughts. “Look! Here was the final battle. Beating had its drawbacks, though. A time of mourning swept the country.” Did pioneering women ask *Why? Is this where we have to go to reach America?*

The Virginian grass smells old for its time.  
I read the language of the rocks, where  
women beat cream into butter, waiting for their own America.