

JOEL BROUWER

“24 Marines and 72 Journalists Land at Mogadishu”

Each thumbs-up and chocolate bar, each jeep
and clutch of dusky grenades, ramifies
in uplink, and the pixels back home warm
with expectancy, warm to their story,
proliferate our forces in every
waiting room, tavern, airport lounge, and den.
It is our duty in this dark hour to
remember those less privileged, those lacking
cable and/or dish, who may suffer some
static, who if they wish to know what's on
fire or the blood's exact tint and hue must
open a window and adjust their antennas
by hand as best they can. Each G.I. agrees
to give his exclusive twice, but then all
their caskets slam shut like a skein
of firecrackers. Which is really awesome
in surround-sound. Also helicopters.
The clatter scares our cats shitless.
It is our duty in this dark hour not
to hog the remote. To review the distinctions
between *afmaal*, *aftahan*, *afmishaar*,
and *afgarooc*. To serve as *hafidayaal*
in the food courts and bowling alleys.
To italicize words we don't know. To take
Anthro 101 at the junior college,
where we'll learn African cities always
come doubled: knot of village lanes coiled
around the market and boulevards
stretched straight across the dust by whites.
The latter useful for parades, tanks,
and quelling coups; the former for undulant
dances, gris-gris, and malnutrition. It's
all right here in the textbook. Review
this question before the exam. If after

we confiscate the children's guns
bullets fire directly from their mouths
as they crouch behind sacks of rice rotting
in heaps on the docks will they ever run
out a) of entrepreneurial zeal
b) into the open where we can get
a half-decent crack at them c) of blood
d) all of the above, on their bellies,
in the crawl along the bottom of our screens.