Ode to a Marine Who Died in Iraq

Matthew Diomede

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them.
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,
I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war
But I saw they were not as was thought,
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not.
The living remained and suffered, the mother suffer'd
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.
Walt Whitman, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"

You went to war because you had to,
probably a member of the Reserve.
You left behind, us, but we are
with you. You take us with you, and
we take you with us—in our
memories, heart and soul as they now
lower you into your foxhole grave,
no more bullets will fly past you or
your armored vehicle. We hold you in
reserve—to draw upon future memories of you.

Two Worlds Recollected in Tranquility
What is the connection we
have with the dead? In
seeing my dead mother, dead

father, and my Marine friend

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who died in battle in Viet Nam,
I fight my own battle of
juxtaposing the real
moment and the moment
of the past, knowing I
can touch myself and
say I am alive as I
traverse two worlds. I
shall not erase that very live, cherished
moment of the past.

Waves of Movement
When I see small waves flow
toward my dock, I think of the dead:
my mother, my father, my buddy who
died in Viet Nam, and others. The thoughts
keep coming at me like the waves and the
breeze, gently prodding at
my living state, prodding at my worries,
my dislikes. Tonight or
tomorrow I will again sit at my dock, eating
my orange in living sunlight on a live
day, just to see the breeze and waves
push another way, forces of inexhaustible
time stopped in a moment of reflection, alarming
me to the continuum of life.