



Influence—Helmand Province—2012

The elders (though that word does not contain
Sufficient substance to describe the strained
and weathered faces, demarcated by
a hurried youth disrupted and denied) approve of my entreaty to their sense
of liable paternal influence.

They linger though, reclined, content to drone
In colorful, if futile, martial tones,
On lavish (Persian) carpets on the floor,
As old Kalashnikovs in younger, more
Determined hands (paid in rupees), sow
That lethal seed—unrestrained, row on row.

—Capt. Chad Lewis, U.S. Army
January 2015