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## 100 poets against the war

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## Photocopying

Front cover	Back cover
This page!	Page 95

This chapbook has been designed to be photocopied double-sided. If you keep the pages in the order in which they print out, all will go well! To make clearer how it will look when photocopied back-to-back, please consult the illustration on the left.

## The land of hope

### Ethan Gilsdorf

An opening between anvils blocking the sky:  
was the dark age parting?

The clouds outside contain their own ideas,  
and release them as they fly eastward over the bois  
towards the steely blue city states and principalities,  
their fortresses and parking garages.

The 10 am sun just kisses the facing rooftop  
on its journey up its snowy blue trajectory, its infinite  
orange-white core blinds me so I shift left to where the sun blast  
is bisected by the window frame, crucifying my good vision  
trying to look only towards the east, to the forest,  
the ring road, to the land of hope, they say,  
because we are gradually revealed by the  
roving planet repeating,  
because that direction endlessly lights itself along the way.

The late afternoon light surprises someone hoarding  
his dogs and chicken coop in the shadow of the overpass.  
Surprises the houseplants and herbs left outdoors  
too late into winter's subterranean tunnel.

Would a pot of coffee  
shimmering on a hotplate bring 100 years of peace?

### *excerpt from* little dead things

#### Maggie Helwig

the small bones of birds  
meaning: death from the air

it is not clear where this is happening, this  
is happening everywhere

## transit

## Rip Bulkeley

taken dog to put down  
in the British queue  
stiffupperliping  
their saddened bits

\*

wearing heavy burka  
squats in sodden verge  
just outside Eynsham  
hand she supplicates with  
lavishly scrolled in henna

\*

motorway sacrificed lane  
with army convoys  
stride into service-stations  
bursting fulfilment

\*

all along Calder ravine  
big gasmask and little  
bouncing gasmask  
warmly ferried by  
yellow lollipop gasmask

\*

again big again bouncing  
again lollipop  
gasmask and again

\*

treading about under the hill  
beneath steep birches  
sick and tired of beauty  
magpie cracks “wait”  
with its back to the stars  
“you just” – sorrow

## Editor's introduction

This chapbook anthology, *100 Poets Against The War*, has been timed to appear on January 27, 2003, the date on which Hans Blix delivers his weapons inspections report to the United Nations. It is widely expected that this report will either act as a trigger for war, or begin the process whereby the United States of America in fact disregards the will of the UN, and makes a unilateral (give or take a few cronies) pre-emptive strike upon Iraq. There is a tendency in some quarters to believe that poetry (in the ironic words of Auden) “makes nothing happen.” *100 Poets Against The War* is proof that well-written (political) poetry does happen, and matters: it reveals powerfully (and poignantly) how many people oppose imperialist wars of aggression, or want peace, rather than full spectrum domination.

*100 Poets Against The War* is, in its own way, a document of astonishing uniqueness. Among other things, it may hold the record for being the fastest assembled global anthology; it was first conceived and announced on January 20, 2003, a mere week before its first appearance. Only the speed of the Internet, and the overwhelmingly positive support of so many poets, who shared the project with their colleagues and personal networks, could have made it happen.

These poets are from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, Canada, Australia, India, France, America and elsewhere; many are cultural and/or peace activists; some are emerging poets, others very well-known. Many fine poets could not be included (this time) as we had to keep to 50 pages or less. All typographical errors are the editor's; in a few instances, the poems presented are excerpts from longer works. We have decided to forgo contributor's notes, letting the poems speak for themselves; besides which, the space reclaimed has allowed more poems to be included. The poets retain copyright, and grant you permission to make as many copies of this book as possible.

You are encouraged to download, host, share, swap, print and copy, this powerful book of poems, in all its versions. By photocopying on both sides, and then folding (and binding as you choose) you will have a classic DIY chapbook. We encourage you to spread the word about the *100 Poets Against The War* project – in your community, and beyond. This anthology could not have been assembled so well and on time without the dedicated intervention of Val Stevenson of [www.nthposition.com](http://www.nthposition.com) (the primary source of the file online).

Peace.

## Todd Swift

Editor, *100 Poets Against The War*  
Paris, January 27, 2003

## Bigger than time

**Dawna Rae Matrix**

I heard them scream  
in the valley of hatred  
when Lucrezia was in my mind  
I hear them wail, as Mona prayed:  
This tear in my eye  
is bigger than time

I heard them grieve  
when the president was shot  
I heard them sing  
to keep the others alive  
I heard them shout  
as they went over the top  
and I heard them weep  
at the sorrow he had brought

I heard their voices over the hills  
in a sad old earth tongue  
I heard the death-cry at night  
when only the good die young

I heard the plea  
I heard the laugh  
I heard the sigh  
I heard the sigh  
when I found we were destined to  
destined to  
the tear in my eye  
is bigger than time

## Women washing clothes in the Kabul River

Susan Gubernat

Their men, our men, are pulverizing cities  
 into truckloads of human dust, bone splinters,  
 ash that floats back into red lungs.  
 And freeing them, for what? For laundry,  
 hiking up the burkah and venturing out,  
 the first time in years, to wade in a river,  
 to find, at the shallow end, their wavy  
 reflections in the mirroring waters.  
 One girl bunches up her skirt and stares  
 at her own pale legs extending down  
 into the riverbed into another, matching pair.  
 Her half-naked twin, attached at her soles,  
 looks up. They laugh, squeezing the invisible  
 muck between their toes. Her mother's broad  
 ass is captured in the photograph on page one,  
 millions will see her now, bent over, scrubbing  
 in the old way, against a flat, wet rock. This  
 is how we invade without apology, this display –  
 the backs of her calves, her loose underwear.  
 Our own homes are draped in flag cloth:  
 the windows and the doors some of us peer  
 out from now, furtively, in this other purdah.

## Are there children

Robert Priest

are there children somewhere  
 waiting for wounds  
 eager for the hiss of napalm  
 in their flesh –  
 the mutilating thump of shrapnel  
 do they long for amputation  
 and disfigurement  
 incinerate themselves in ovens  
 eagerly  
 are there some who try to sense  
 the focal points of bullets  
 or who sprawl on bomb grids  
 hopefully  
 do they still line up in queues  
 for noble deaths

i must ask:  
 are soul and flesh uneasy fusions  
 longing for the cut –  
 the bloody leap to ether  
 are all our words a shibboleth for silence –  
 a static crackle  
 to ignite the blood  
 and detonate the self-corroding  
 heart  
 does each man in his own way  
 plot a pogrom for the species  
 or are we all, always misled  
 to war

from *Blue Pyramids: New and Selected Poems* (ECW Press 2002)

## Collateral damage

Jackie Sheeler

In a place of sand and wind and want, worn  
cotton looped across her forbidden face  
a woman without pleasures tends to her sons.  
She believes what she is told, owns no flags  
knows life by the taste of cloth at her mouth.  
Bread and leaflets drop from the sky, then  
other things. We meant to bomb the airport  
one mile north of this village with no name,  
this village on no map,  
this village of no more.

## Regime change begins at home

Sue Littleton

“Like fish in a barrel, man,  
it was like shooting fish in a barrel!”

The barrel has no water in it;  
the fish lie stacked on their sides  
like silver playing cards,  
gills gasping frantically,  
mouths opening and closing  
in silent screams.  
The pupils of their round lidless eyes  
reflect flashes of light  
as their bodies jump and twitch  
beneath the hail of bullets,  
their flesh splitting to release pale blood.

The barrel holds no water...  
but somewhere in its depths  
there is the dark, iridescent sheen  
of oil.

esting as love love is alwayze mor  
beautiful mor giving mor uplifting

mor intricate generous reind nevr  
gross goez thru walls doors makes  
mor opnings that carree mor love  
bettr thn who controls th oil field

## Psychotic sea

Sonja A Skarstedt

The spread of algae amplifies undercurrents of disease  
crabs stutter and starfish are hooked on obliterations of lichen and foam  
did radios hiss like this  
the day before Pearl Harbour  
the day after Hiroshima?  
shores and shores away through foreign skies  
the crawl of bombs migratory as lice  
predatory wings deposit larvae  
their mothlike bodies sophisticated as microchips  
satellites map a watery screen  
each slick, foreseeable blip  
impassive as allegory  
goads the ocean's trampoline  
its red-tide arrogance  
its coral-toothed caves  
its bric-a-brac processions  
the sea spits out poxes  
parasitic brigades  
each trauma drives the malignant tide  
lacerations upset the sepia sand magnifies its scathed surfaces  
interplanetary jaundice  
post-radar transmissions  
inland inspections pump its arteries  
with purple connotations of mourning  
civilian echoes  
a woman's palms dipped in tuscan  
mark a wall for the dead  
the sound in her throat  
is permanently pierced.

## war is gud 4 bizness in th 19th centur

### bill bissett

war is gud 4 bizness in th 19th centur  
 ee addiksyun 2 fossil fuel mind set sens  
 but not sew gud 4 pees or life or 21st  
 centuree aims receipes n realiteez

or is it th wepons sales by evree  
 countree 2 evree countree n th  
 kontinualee shifting allianses  
 changing tongues killing mor

that have made th world sew  
 unsafe sew squirellee that th  
 i m f dusint seem 2 mind inkrees  
 uv defisit 4 war yet 4 peesful

programs that is seen as sew  
 kleeerlee fiscal irresponsibilitee  
 munee 4 health 4 th environment  
 not as gud as munee 4 big bizness

deth masheens that will definitlee  
 keep konsumrs down ducking n  
 lying being lied 2 hurts us toxiciteez  
 now we can sell yu all thees wepons

uv kours but yu need 2 promise 2  
 follo our leeds in almost evree thing  
 n 2 not use thees wepons un less we  
 say theyr onlee 4 yr proteksyun n 4

paying us n 4 downgrading individual  
 human life preventing wind powr n  
 solar panels being usd as frendlee  
 enerjee sources wch dont kill us like

a lot uv organizd religyun can war  
 famine povrtee hate is nevr as inter

## Hot milk

### Patrick Chapman

Your father would hardly speak to me.

One afternoon, he brought home cans  
 Of carrots, peas, Carnation, Spam.  
 He reinforced the concrete walls  
 With mattresses.

*Strontium in the milk, they'd said, but  
 No cause for alarm.*

I might as well have suckled you  
 – My babe-in-arms –  
 On long-range missiles' noses  
 As on the teats of bottles, warmed  
 At four a.m. to quiet you.

## killer

### Marcus Moore

a woman's child is ill  
 she will have to buy a pill  
 she will have to pay the bill  
 she will have to earn a shilling  
 she will have to use her skill  
 she will have to use a drill  
 she sits behind a grill  
 the poor woman makes weapons chilling  
 a rich man owns the mill  
 he has an iron will  
 he sits behind the till  
 he likes to watch the coffers filling  
 selling arms gives him a thrill  
 so while on some distant hill  
 a poor woman's blood doth spill  
 the rich man makes a killing

**At home, at war****Tony-Lewis Jones**

Now there is silence in the house, except  
 The pipes tap-tapping under floorboards and  
 The clocks' slow rhythmic messages. You are  
 Late coming home for an argument:  
 The night holds terrors every parent knows.  
 Your mother is away. She, I'm certain,  
 Would have played this same weak hand  
 Quite differently. The morning paper  
 Demonstrates with images how words  
 Can lose all meaning: mouths that cannot speak  
 Tell how desperately we need to understand.  
 Wars begin when language fails us. The missiles  
 Fall, undiverted by the right command.

*Bristol 20.1.03***Ode to all concerned with that 'baby milk' factory in Iraq****Helên Thomas**

Bombs go off and so does milk,  
 And both events make you grumpy,  
 But given the choice between the two,  
 I'd rather have milk that's lumpy.

**from How it's been****Elmaz Abinader**

How has it been for you... since 9/11?

You, the Arab, you mean.  
 You say it with such sincerity  
 and love that I almost forget to be frightened.

\*

Might as well ask how it's been for me  
 forever... how it's been watching hatchet  
 images of my uncles starring enemies on t.v.

How it's been for almost twenty years  
 not one year, standing in airports, pronouncing  
 my name, verifying my birthplace, and wishing  
 it actually was different.

\*

But don't ask me how it's been since 9/11.

Ask them: the boy soldiers in lions' cages  
 in Guantanamo bay,  
 the Afghani villagers, standing at the tub  
 while their homes are ransacked,  
 the American boys shivering in the encroaching  
 winter in a mountainside that does not  
 remind them of Macon, or West Chicago  
 or Harlem.

Ask them where they lay their heads  
 at night, and will it be there tomorrow.  
 Ask all the them in the Sudan, Somalia, Ivory  
 Coast, Nicaragua, Colombia, Vieques, Philippines,  
 Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, East Timor, Tibet,  
 the countries in the Axis of Evil.  
 South Central L.A., West and East Oakland, Newark,  
 Chicago, Chiapas, Pine Ridge; Wounded Knee.

Ask the people of Iraq whose prayers now  
 must condemn our country because we have  
 bulls eyed them, hair lined them; taken aim.

## Women in Black

### Leza Lowitz

fields of gypsies  
 growing dark across the Danube,  
 dark across the desert,  
 across the world, now at home.  
 Widows and weeds.  
 Homes of broken chairs,  
 half-standing walls,  
 empty door-frames,  
 another fresh grave.  
 Town square, open market  
 rows of orange-red tomatoes,  
 tattered clothes,  
 blood-stained plaza  
 centuries-old buildings  
 stripped bare to brick.  
 Across the Danube  
 across the desert  
 across the world  
 now at home  
 old women in black,  
 fields of young men,  
 families laid to waste  
 women waiting for bread,  
 counting grains of sugar,  
 grains of salt, minutes,  
 the hours, waiting for peace.  
 Once friends, now enemies.  
 Once lullabies, now eulogies.  
 Old women in black  
 bent in half, whispering  
 across the world... when will it end?  
 "Will they fight  
 even over the moon?"  
 Hands lain  
 over another coffin,  
 hands lain  
 over their hearts,  
 women in black  
 praying, praying.

## Notwithstanding

### Harriet Zinnes

Notwithstanding  
 and so forth  
 But it is oil  
 and the dark tunnels disappear  
 and the ghosts of tanks  
 the sand covering dead bodies

The missiles, where are they stored?  
 And imports of uranium and of aluminum tubes  
 for making missiles  
 and stores of VX nerve gas  
 and United States spy planes?  
 And weapons inspectors  
 The United Nations  
 Oh, they did not include a meeting with  
 President Saddam Hussein

Ah yes, stopping weapons proliferation  
 Notwithstanding  
 and so forth

## The day after

### Seán Street

There's no time now,  
at least we won't notice anyway,  
seas can't be tidal any more,  
no time today.

No seasons now,  
and lost the loving interplay  
of light and dark. No dusk or dawn,  
no night and day.

No future now,  
all options, choices gone away.  
Time signatures? Impossible,  
no songs today.

Just sadness now  
because Time heals, they used to say,  
and without Time of course our pain  
will always stay.

Stars? No. None now  
turning, nothing dances today,  
no winds, there's nothing linear,  
today's the day

all ends, and now  
is when, this stasis is the way.  
Transmitters fail, the clocks are still.  
Time stops today.

## Circling the Gulf a gain a loss, ingrained

### Penn Kemp

**Signs proliferate as we pass by. Plastered on the auto dealership plate glass: SAVE THOU SANDS SAVE THOU SANDS. Save thou souls, save thy soul, grain of sand, rain of rant, cycles of want and plenty.**

We are so defined by the stories we tell and those we as children hear. For years, as I was growing up, 'war stories' were served with dessert at the table. Over and over, I listened to my grandfather's tales of leading a regiment of Iroquois troops in battle on the killing grounds of France.

**This warrior tradition emerged in my son in a fantastical, twisted way. During an acute psychotic episode, my son was hospitalized. His terrible adventure, coinciding with the Gulf War, took on metaphoric overtone. Even the word "gulf" loomed between realities. Mind the gap, mine hole.**

At the height of concern about the possibilities of chemical, biological or nuclear warfare, he became convinced that he himself was radio-active, a bomb about to explode. Yet who is to say what his response to threats of nuclear annihilation should have been? To me, his was a tortured way of reinventing personal history, of linking himself up with our tradition of war service, of families disrupted by early deaths from wounds borne on the field of battle. With the end of the Gulf War, my son recovered.

**As a child, he had listened to my father's stories about his work as a bomb disposal expert in Scotland during the Second World War. That stress was internalized by my son with dreadful accuracy. I believe this literalization of memory occurs down the generations all the time. Our work is to stop the war in art and life so that the children don't continue to enact conflict.**

How do we experience peace as a fullness of life, not an absence of action and adventure? How do we live peace without constellating its opposite?

*A dream speaks: Dad gently warns me not to pay more attention to the dead.*

*Their time is over. Sparse spring rains demand we plant the desert in grain.*

**Easy****Sampurna Chattarji**

Death is easy to pronounce.  
 He deserved to die.  
 They ought to be shot.  
 Hanging's too good for him.  
 The words fall glib.  
 Throwaway lines  
 sentencing them to death.

Distant observer,  
 you speak without guilt, or fear  
 of misplaced allegiances.  
 You just need something to say,  
 that's all.

The right sentiment, rightly declared  
 whichever way your loyalties blow  
 in the gust of the smokefilled air.  
 A country burns.

The death-dealers deserved to die, you say.  
 Death is easy to pronounce.  
 It's the smell of burning children that's hard.

*January 2003, Mumbai, India.*

**Mickey Mouse came, Mickey Mouse saw, Mickey Mouse conquered****Vincent Tinguely**

Looking for clean copies in a post apocalypse with skewed scan lines.  
 Whenever I stand up straight my head smears across the screen; still,  
 the soundtrack's good. If I lean at a forty-five degree angle, walk  
 laterally across a grassy knoll, one hand keeping balance, the other  
 against the ground, I almost seem to be what I am.

George W Groovy and his GWGs electric chair their way to the Oh So  
 White House. God, I remember your father and his father before him and  
 all the fathers before that. Brows knit in the media glare, a penchant  
 for current affairs leaving songs like legal briefs littering the  
 clear cut swath of history. The stupid shall inherit the system and  
 everything else shall follow, like unto dominoes or fractal equations.  
 Sail on oh mighty shit of state.

It's the end of a thousand years of book-keeping and I'm doing my bit.  
 A gunshot across the bow of the ship of progress. At least the  
 Egyptians had aesthetics, Amerika has all the bad taste money can buy.  
 Power rabid and destructive just out of view, the other side of calm  
 pronouncements. They march in video formation in their desert  
 camouflage, their helmets, those Aryan cutaways.

There's nothing worse than a good idea whose time has come and gone.  
 Religion, the car, capitalism, it's all turned into a freak show for  
 the living dead. Actors all around me chasing the script, everybody  
 should just fuck their time away, forget the oil and the geopolitical  
 bullshit. A good, healthy obsession is all anyone really needs, take  
 that shampoo hair and jazzy beer ad body out of the television and  
 re-install it in reality.

## Hyperbole for a large number

Stephen Brockwell

Not the hair that you or I have touched  
but the follicles all lovers hands have combed  
their fingers through, that number so much  
greater, say, than all the teeth from speechless

mouths that now the fish and birds  
perceive as stream and garden pebbles.  
Not the breaths our mother exhaled  
since mud filled her father's lungs

at Amiens but all the breaths of children  
put to rest since Iphigenia's sacrifice.  
Not the drops of blood that have  
fallen on all the battlefields of spring

but the particles of mist the sun has scattered  
from them – enough to weigh your khakis  
down after a patrol, enough to resurrect  
your face from its evening mask of ash.

Not the number of the stars that burn  
and burn out like eyes of but the number  
of the particles that give the stars their fire  
surely exceeds the number of our crimes.

## To a veteran of the last wrong war

Susan Ludvigson

Every time we speak of it I understand  
another loneliness. What lives in us?  
Every atrocity, a landscape filled  
with mountain paths, every prayer committed  
to a deeper wilderness.

The morning sky twists yellow  
above the nearest peak.  
I think of the spirit dissolving.

You lift yourself onto a shaky elbow,  
your voice so low I can hardly hear.  
You speak of the origin of hymns,

move your head slowly from side to side.  
You talk about the mind, its grooves carved deep.  
The hollow the head makes.

Shocks to the psyche, buried in years,  
no light touching the body  
as detonations ripple through.

From time to time, my hands warm on your skin,  
I dream what was intended. As the world threatens  
to implode, I turn in a strange kind of hope,

though I am a child of the only myths  
in which the gods die too. What can we do  
against the determined dark?

**Untitled****d.m.**

Since the death  
of 500,000 Iraqis goes unmourned  
so I will not mourn them  
but continue drinking to excess.

Though it has been written  
that under the eternal threat of war  
children gain anxiety disorders  
and are found banging their head against floor and other available cement –  
I will not mourn them.

I will not mourn the dying and deformed  
because an idealist cannot be happy.  
And I want to be happy.

So I will laugh and marry  
and continue drinking to excess.

**Divine haiku for the New Patriotism****ryk mcintyre**

i don't like you, so  
i am blessed by gods that don't  
like your ass either

“I ain't gonna study war no more”,  
but Woody Guthrie should've said,  
“I'm gonna study war some more  
so that it never needs to happen again.”

**Mark the day****John Asfour**

I will light a candle  
and read Justice books, only  
to find out that justice will be abused.

Light a candle and talk about humanity, only  
to find out  
that humanity, in the time of crisis  
resorts to revenge. I will

light a candle  
and talk to the children, ask them  
how they tolerate one another,  
how they abandon play once they disagree  
and later invite their playmates  
to the same game. I will

light a candle and  
die for a day, only  
to see if death would  
teach us to choose peace  
over war.

**un-UN inspected****Tony Hillier**

five hundred marched to Fairford  
 stealth home of wealthy Yanks.  
 Marchers came in peace for peace for Pete's sake.  
 December grey skies threatened  
 but seeing five hundred march to Fairford  
 held back their inconvenient though life-giving rain.  
 Even the cold war gave its respects  
 to these peaceful, non-military marchers  
 out of step with some legs  
 in step with millions of caring minds worldwide  
 to Fairford's barbed wire front door came placards, plays and protest  
 came music, singing and love.  
 Yellow Gloucester bobbies shielded from exposure  
 khaki-violent yanks whose mass destruction weapons lay  
 another day  
 un UN inspected  
 lay, until another day  
 when five mill will march to Fairford  
 with letters and es to MPs  
 and quiet talk with neighbours

**On election day****Jennifer Dick**

On election day, we came to the  
 edge of our continent to watch  
 a boat depart.  
 It was a green day and if it were  
 long ago or a cruise line  
 we might've waved kerchiefs,  
 thrown multi-colored pastel confetti,  
 drunk champagne bubbling into sea-froth.  
 But as it was, we stood silent.  
 Some of us had forgotten to vote,  
 others no longer cared, calling it a  
 conspiracy, arguing, "makes no  
 difference anyway."  
 In a still row we raised our palms to  
 shield our eyes from the glaring sun,  
 watch the battleships set out to sea.  
 Men in green, men in beige and grey camouflage,  
 men in neatly-cropped hair, loins still stinging  
 from all-nighters. Blue, brown, green, red-eyed  
 men with round fingertips, earth-hand, fire, air,  
 water hand men answered: "All hands on  
 board, Sir!" Cutting a dark swath across the  
 blue swells they looked back at us,  
 believed we were saluting.  
 Brothers, sons, uncles, fathers  
 drift out. We stand ashore, waiting  
 as if the net in our fingers were not  
 sufficient to catch even one.  
 This net spinning forth from our lips  
 like webbing overnight,  
 this rattle and din now ceased.  
 The day was green and the tide  
 buoyant. From afar years later  
 perhaps you and I shall return  
 to this shore of our continent  
 and believe we can hear them singing  
 robust songs  
 as they return.

## Good morning middle age

Robin Lim

I woke with a backache.  
It's no use blaming the mattress, I got older.  
Here it is, the time I waited for, promising myself  
that my peers and I would change the world.  
From the clay of our hands and a few seeds of justice,  
we would grow peace and food for the people.

Today I can't bear the pressure of listening to my friends, my goddamned friends,  
talking about meditation and art. Their heads twist side to side, puppets.  
They do this because they woke up with backaches too.  
They do this because they can't admit that they really care about their two or three  
cars,  
their VCR, their vacation in florida.  
They earned their wealth, the right to ignore the lies.

The lie that we in the United States elect a President,  
and all the lies he tells, smiling on their TV sets.  
The lie that this nightmare will be over after the next election.  
The lie that demonizes an underfed Iraqi child,  
who might, if we let her grow up, become a terrorist.  
She might give birth to a whole litter of terrorist pups,  
every one of them with a grenade arm,  
poised to take out your recreational vehicle with one thrust.

When Congress gives this so-called President the infinite power to protect  
our jobs  
and our schools, where our children are taught  
to talk about meditation and art,  
these men will go home and try to have sex  
with their wives, or someone, anyone.  
Ignoring all the phone calls and the cries of the constituents, our Senator  
just wants to get it on. But this time, having gone too far,  
having betrayed every last dream, he can't get it up.

In the basement, his son, and all our American  
babies, are huffing glue and household chemicals.

## Why I want to be a Baconaut

Eileen Tabios

*Sometimes when I put something full of flavor in my mouth, I close my eyes and  
feel like I'm flying – drifting into eternity, above and beyond all the craziness of  
the world below, and I dream that all there is in the world is love, harmony and  
bacon.*

– Dan Philips, owner of The Grateful Palate and “Future Baconaut”

A painter lays down his brush  
to speak the unspeakable –  
“The artist painting white flowers  
against snow while others march  
is as political as those who laid  
down brushes to wield placards.”

Today, I am a poet  
writing bad verse because  
a headline blares  
“Politics and Science Mix Badly.”  
I read its significance  
as the inexplicable  
inability to understand  
BOMBS AND BULLETS KILL, KILL, KILL...

I begin to search for “comfort  
food”. I find a “Family-size” package  
of bacon. I fry and eat them all,  
welcoming the heat  
burning my inarticulate tongue.

With the most avid mouth  
I eat and eat – cramming the strips  
quicker and quicker  
into my ravaged, ravaging mouth.

I eat them all, I eat them all, I eat them all...

**The field****George Murray**

The sky has been aged, is ancient enough now  
to have lost its teeth, clamping one smooth gum

down on the other in a wry horizon's bite.  
That the violence we have witnessed

was not random while the kindness was,  
how insulting to our attempts at existentialism!

Can we not even frighten ourselves  
with philosophy anymore? That intent

could replace randomness as our greatest fear  
speaks of how far we've come;

from there to here, from right to just left of right,  
from fallen to the lower part of down. The corn

that stretches into the distance,  
once an orderly army, has grown slack, wild,

and hoary, each stalk standing at ease  
instead of attention, and in a place of its choosing,

bearing those heavy yellow arms in a silence  
similar to hushed anticipation. Listen to the wind,

the brewing rain, the field of fire, the flight  
of distant machinery, the coded plan of attack.

**the sand that is everywhere****rob mclennan**

you would be so very nice  
to question

& be ready w/ a believable  
excuse

seeking out the cause, so much  
left here has been broken

a rattling of chains

this is a noise you hear  
on a bus

a context that supplies its own  
geographical

chest pulld tight, as watching  
worlds collapse

announcing the death of irony, even  
before the fires are out

ash covers all in his apartment

the space of weeks, & a few  
short blocks

## A poem for my Muslim poet friend

Larry Jaffe

I was not taught to hate or love,  
 my depression era parents only  
 trained survival of the meekest.  
 When parental guidance spoke,  
 it was work or be worked  
 from above as slaves.  
 Family was to be cared for  
 as extension of self,  
 blood of course thicker than water.  
 Love was bestowed by gods not mortals.  
 Liking was taken personally –  
 "You are always loved," they said.  
 "We just don't always like you,"  
 they spoke true.  
 But I did not need to learn to hate you  
 it came naturally a by product of heritage  
 a natural extension of ancestral strife.  
 One day I dropped out of ancient conclave,  
 never having learned these lessons,  
 actively fighting thoughts intrusive.  
 It was then I decided if I was going to hate  
 it would be for good reason and not self-indulgence.  
 And it is for this reason, that when we met  
 I saw no colour of nationality or culture  
 I only saw poet.

## Dancer

Hugh Hazelton

we are watching  
 the dancer  
 spread her arms music body  
 forward into space  
 beyond the light  
 robot armies  
 push through gutted streets  
 fire into straw villages  
 empires  
 of death's heads  
 reflection in  
 poisoned molten rain  
 circuits connected  
 set at  
 command  
 waiting  
 the dancer  
 arms clasped with her companion  
 rolls herself slowly across his back  
 slender shoulders linked through  
 steel-plated insects  
 bullets coming  
 from their eyes  
 there is no  
 Official Violence  
 lies in  
 a conspiracy to kill  
 the dancer  
 slowly raising her head  
 beautiful throat  
 held curved  
 taut  
 against  
 air

## Other demands

### Colin Morton

Peace makes other demands: unfailing  
 years of neverfailingness;  
 the courage to reach into a wound  
 and begin to heal; the bravery  
 of a Barry Armstrong, the blue beret doctor  
 who stood up in the Somali sun  
 and told the truth to power.  
 Retired from the military now, demobbed  
 to the woebegone lakes of northern Ontario,  
 he feuds with the hospital, which would cut corners,  
 and the picture over his mantel at home  
 shows it is conscience the forces drove out,  
 paid off, retired and forgot:  
 in the muted colours of a tent at night  
 somewhere in the Kuwaiti desert  
 the army doctor bends over his task  
 of suturing the shrapnelled brain of an Iraqi  
 soldier wounded at the start of the war  
 and found on the battlefield at its end days later  
 by advancing allied forces.

## The 20th century man

### Robert W Proctor

In 1918, I, a man of the 20th century, ordered 10,000 men  
 like me over the top. A similar man, on the other side,  
 ordered machine guns, howitzers, and mortars to fire.  
 He had to stop my men.

He did. Few of them returned. And most of them – like me –  
 were scarred in mind for life.  
 I did it. He did it. His Emperor did it. My President did it.  
 Our Stone Age ancestors did it.

In a hundred days I sent a thousand bombers across the Channel  
 to blow apart and incinerate my fellow man, just as some of them  
 had gassed and burned to ashes many more of my fellow man.  
 They did it. We did it. I did it.

And you know something? I wasn't even born when I sent  
 my fellow man to death at Belleau Wood;  
 and only a child when I rained fire on Hamburg.  
 But as certain as I live today, I did it.

Years later, when I am gone, when others bemoan  
 the slaughter at Verdun, the fiery atomization of Hiroshima,  
 the disembowelment of Vietnam, the consuming fireballs of 9-11,  
 death grants me no rest, because if others don't know him,

I know the 20th century man behind those horrors.  
 If it could, my earth bound fleshless jaw, bone grating against bone,  
 would try to form these words:  
 I – did – it.

*November 2002*

**Sim Shalom****Susan Freeman**

In a rush of air and wings, soaring up, they arrive,  
small, still statues in the open spaces  
of an old and rangy tree.

Three, four, and finally, twelve mourning doves  
dark against the fogbound sky,  
one week beyond that indelible darkness, that fear,  
as the world begins again the slow circle of renewal  
we call the new year.

I stand alone in the turning garden  
lifting a song for the ash-covered city,  
for its tumbled dead and the living  
who search, exhausted, remembering life.  
Words fly up, begging solace,  
and the answers that come sound nothing  
like the raw noise in angry men's throats.

Between the fire and our fury, dreams  
disconnect from our hearts. Apples turn to ash,  
the honey of ironic prayer thickens to ash in the mouth.  
Everything we believe lies open for inspection;  
who shall live and who shall die, and who will be inscribed.  
From the east, the smoke floats up the river,  
across the country, over our eyes.

The doves offer no song, absolutely still in the bitter day.  
The weight of war clouds the sky  
and twelve birds sit watching.

**Georgie Porgie****Rochelle Ratner**

*Georgie Porgie pudding and pie  
Kissed the girls and made them cry  
When the girls come out to play  
Georgie Porgie runs away.*

Except it isn't girls, exactly,  
But women in veils,  
Who without them might look  
As old as Mother.

And it's not the Father  
Going after the bully  
But the Son setting out  
To avenge the Father.

And the oil, of course.

When even Tony Blair  
Turns against him,  
He pouts.

Damn the UN,  
We offer them a home  
And this is the thanks we get.  
They're foreigners, all of them,  
Not part of this One Nation,  
Under God.

## the war is on the kitchen table

Myrna Garanis

the war is on the kitchen table  
 the war is on the kitchen table  
 waiting to be read,  
 I brew the coffee black as buildings,  
 charred, collapsed,  
 I load the toast with butter,  
 chew my way through cluster bombs,  
 smear raspberry jaw on screaming headlines  
 which do not disappear  
 I flip the page to guaranteed results:  
 hockey scores, ice dance competitions,  
 there the gains and losses  
 line up in soldierly columns,  
 no wavering parades of souls,  
 filing down disfigured roads,  
 walking, falling, left behind,  
 long after the page is closed

## God decides to press the mute button on his remote control

David Siller

*Sometime during Eternity\**

the sounds of “Cowboys and Indians”  
 outside a window, picket fences, sons and daughters playing  
 a little game, giggles, ‘ready or not here I come’

stomping and marching, hustling and hiding  
 the roar of a fire hose, the shhhh of a shower  
 the bells and bulls and bears of a stock market, flags in a breeze  
 the sounds of cowboys and Indians

outside a window, picket signs, sons and daughters pleading  
 a little restraint, grumbling, ‘we’re not ready here or there’

glug glug glug of oil, boom boom boom of timber, click click click of clips  
 the rumble of bulldozers, useless thud of rocks

outside children whimper, ‘no food, no home help us find one’

wolf calls to broads, whistles of bombs  
 whispers of mass(s), whinings of missiles  
 ‘Fire’ burning woods  
 ‘Fire’ blasting weapons  
 ‘Fire’ in a crowded theatre, no one listens  
 the sounds of “Cowboys” and “Indians”

somewhere grandmothers making soup for kids hiding in bushes  
 somewhere dictators massing troops, hiding behind bushes  
 somewhere people seeking truth, hidden just hidden

everywhere windows are closed

the only sound is the hum of the television  
 then a snap to black  
 the grinding halt of humanity  
 to which no body listened

*\*quote from Lawrence Ferlinghetti*

## Off the record

**Maureen Gallagher**

He tippexed the twin towers off  
the *Guinness Book of Records*,  
the World Trade Centre no longer holds  
the title; there's meat here for a class

recording statistics; not so much anti  
as pedant: concrete examples  
are always best; not so much cynic  
as blind to the tragedy of so many lives

lost in a massacre; blind to the backlash  
such terrorism unleashes on people  
around the globe; the gendarme-in-chief  
of the New World Order promises revenge:

scapegoats will be found; the lesson learnt:  
the importance of history is not about  
the circumstances of an ordinary crowd,  
the towers of commerce are what count.

## The Virtual Total Information Awareness Office

**Allen Cohen**

After Sting and Santa Claus  
The Virtual Total Information Awareness Office  
is watching you  
virtually wherever you are.  
It knows what you are buying.  
It knows where you are living.  
It knows where you are working.  
Every step you take  
every move you make  
the Total Information Awareness Office  
is watching you.  
It sees you on the street  
on the train and in the buses.  
It knows your diseases  
and measures every drug you take.  
It knows who your lover is  
and keeps track of your divorces.  
It wants to put a chip in your head  
and give you a number like 666.  
It counts debts and can collect.  
It can steal your identity and make you dead  
The admiral is keeping a data base  
and he's checking it twice  
in the total information awareness office.  
Every step you take  
every move you make  
the admiral will be watching you.

**The flying flag****Eric Paul Shaffer**

Call them mad, call them evil,  
 they are men with ideas  
 like the ones we celebrate  
 on the proper occasions: God,  
 freedom, forgiveness, justice.

But none of us love one long.

Witness now: we turn again,  
 arms above our hearts,  
 to pledge allegiance to vengeance.

Eyes raised to blue, we look  
 without learning the first lesson  
 of the sky, stars, and stripes:

The flying flag follows the wind.

**“Christendom”****Graywyvern**

there was once a king  
 a stupid king  
 son of a king

and he ruled a great empire  
 greatest of his time  
 and a pious king was he

so pious  
 he wanted to punish  
 everyone that didn't believe

and he made a department  
 to spy on his own people  
 this pious king

but it was war he loved  
 constant war  
 war with no object

he made war till he exhausted  
 the wealth of this richest empire  
 he ruined his country

to utter bankruptcy  
 and it became  
 the most backward country in Europe

and after this king  
 whose name was Philip the Second  
 a Golden Age of art & literature

was snuffed out  
 like it never existed  
 and it was three hundred years

three hundred years  
 till Spain produced anything good again

**What did Adorno say?****Jeffrey Mackie**

Do you think anything really matters  
 In the extreme?  
 Do you think (country)  
 Should be capitalized?  
 Is it any different  
 Now that the war is over?

And the bodies found  
 And the bodies counted  
 And the bodies  
 Continue to be found  
 Will continue to be found

Do you think civilians  
 Should be bombed from the air?  
 Running again  
 As they did from snipers in the hills  
 It's all the same  
 Bodies are collateral

Is there a flag in the world  
 Without the colour red?  
 Without  
 The colour of blood,  
 Hidden somewhere?

**a short list of short lists****devorah major**

miracles:  
 silk worms  
 pearls  
 thousand year-old redwood trees  
 lightening  
 the sun rising every day  
 the ocean and its tides  
 human existence in a universe  
 that is mostly ice rock and fire  
 tragedies:  
 starving children  
 oil drowned gulls  
 sonar beached whales  
 rape  
 murder  
 uranium dust  
 bullets and bombs  
 that shatter peoples'  
 walls, doorways, beds,  
 heads, hearts, lives  
 remedies:  
 justice  
 peace  
 love

## Dragonseeds

### Jem Rolls

On a white field stands out the red flower... bodiless names... baying voices of death...  
 the sun catches the dying, exposing their grief and terror and destruction  
 to the looking eyes of dawn... the heavens singed, tattered... bodies dashed  
 on the random reefs of war... the dead and dying lead the living into death...  
 to the boy who falls comes only the sound of other bullets making other death...  
 death the almighty rolls in remorseless from afar, visiting where it will with  
 impunity,  
 crushing the strongest defences, annihilating the strong the weak the proud the fearful  
 the bold...  
 perfume of death... men planting rootcrops of death... flames climb high onto the  
 sky...  
 harvesting the dragonseeds of hatred sown by previous generations...  
 the skeletal arms of the last war's dead youth reaching up through the earth  
 to bitterly strangle the finest hopes of this world turned to noxious hell,  
 this life turned to victorious death... horizons topple... house of god implodes...  
 stuffing mucky insides back into wound... the head an eggshell smashed,  
 the brain splattered on the wall, the congealing blood dripping down the dirt...  
 cry bursts out, shearing through the long night with unspeakable terror...  
 but who shall return them their sons?... burst bodies... smiling corpses...  
 death by lead death by steel death by fire... the life through flutter dyings struggles  
 going going struggling goes...the steam of sweat rising from the already dead  
 into the wintry morning still ...the dead and dying leading the living into death...  
 hours tautened, elongate with fear... daily words with avuncular death sat grinning  
 on the sandbag wall... choking the very lungs and life from a body now cored  
 by death...a world always to be, now ending... but who shall return them their  
 children?...  
 life despoiled crying out up to the emptiness... have you forgotten yet? look down  
 and swear by the slain of war that you'll never forget... gone howling and screaming,  
 bitter and tormented, into the void of death... a child weeps now for the death he  
 shall die  
 in ten twenty thirty years time as besuited men stride proud and pleased from peace  
 conference hall... river of death overflows... innocence kills innocence fear kills fear  
 youth kills youth strength kills strength father kills father ...no red roses no glows  
 from the hearth no sunday worship no nurtured pie no grimy-faced children...  
 a sorrow as far as the mind can stretch...a world always to be, now ending.

## The white-throated sparrow can't compare

### Eleanor Wilner

He had made it through so many winters,  
 an optimist in the blizzard's heart, staying on –

so it seemed wrong, unfair (if such a word  
 has any currency), that the gray expanse  
 that used to mean the rain of spring  
 should be the solid metal of a sky  
 in motion overhead, and nowhere  
 for a small and singing thing to fly,  
 now that the bombers had come back,  
 a phalanx overhead, a Roman legion  
 given wings, and the land below  
 grown dark – the way a shadow slips  
 across the land when a cloud passes  
 overhead. But there resemblance ends.

As does ours with the sparrow, who, resting  
 on a shaded branch, shakes his wings  
 and gives the clear, reflective whistle  
 for which his kind is known.

And now the very thought of him  
 has flown; the mind can't hold for long  
 the sparrow and the bombers  
 in a single thought. Mad  
 to make them share a line, as if  
 to balance power so unequal  
 on the creaking fulcrum  
 of the merest *and*:  
 a pennyworth  
 of weight with its live, pensive song  
 against a roaring overhead – pure dread,  
 its leaden tonnage, and its tongue.

## Wedding war

### Buster Burk

To my father:  
 Those brutal spots decading old  
 Seek to be red again,  
 Failed, failing tongues of Quinyon

Are we born each nude new generation?  
 To be so forged to suit tradition's weigh?  
 Does New Man facile limitation?  
 Yet centuries tick the same old fate?

We have broken sound with jetting ease  
 We have mooned our dreams and touched Great Space  
 We have mastered ford machine-light needs  
 And turned it Auschwitzing a race

We have changed and social custom's bearing  
 Lets loose the cinched tight shaming ways  
 And since customs difference times uncaring  
 Can man divorce himself from man's beast frays?

Because if not then hopes like newlyweds  
 Fall from where we rose, old newlydeads

## Water dragon

### Jason Camlot

Twelve years ago my love left me  
 for the war. He was no soldier  
 but he swore he must go  
 or else random accidents  
 would destroy our home.  
*Take care of our little one,*  
 he said, pointing to this terrarium  
 and the strange sea creature that lived inside  
 on a tiny island, shielded  
 by these thin glass walls.  
 Light from one flickering, yellow bulb  
 was all the food the water dragon  
 needed to survive. Likewise, my hope  
 and comfort fed on the flickering  
 of some remote war.  
 I used to watch the dragon  
 pace the strand,  
 survey the water  
 that I changed religiously,  
 afraid that parasites were there.  
 Once I even touched its skin  
 and let its threadlike tongue  
 draw gleams of tea  
 from a spoon  
 my lover left with me.  
 I clutched my arms  
 in my sleeping gown  
 and watched the monster sleep  
 beneath the little mango tree—  
 fallen now, and petrified.  
 What can it mean?  
 I fear what it can mean.  
 Last night before I went to sleep  
 I thought I heard a whispering  
 and rose to find the amber bulb  
 had left a million glistening shards  
 across the dragon, lying dead.

**We accept****Vicki Hudspith**

We accept that things have changed  
 Walk past closed shops to the movies  
 Little League fields hold equipment, debris trucks  
 We accept that everyone

Will wear photo ID necklaces  
 Bags and briefcases will be searched, scanned, X-rayed  
 We accept that though we walk through all of this  
 We may still pass through metal detectors to enter a building

We accept that we won't eat as well, sleep as sound  
 Too many appointments will produce confusion, inertia  
 We accept that we will check exits  
 Crowds will make us nervous

The subway will be a target of captured life  
 Overflowing wastebaskets will be potential hiding places  
 Sirens will make us jump  
 Sudden, loud noises, will irritate, even enrage

We've accepted mountains of information but so few facts  
 We've accepted politicians who don't read their mail  
 We have waited and waited for the other shoe to drop  
 Accepted seeing ordinary people in air filter masks

And that everything is fine, for now  
 We've accepted so much  
 Will we accept or even recognize  
 When we've given up?

**let us step around this time****Lisa Pasold**

take my arms, we might dance  
 do you know how to tango? or maybe some kind  
 of boogie-woogie, is there music there? can we listen.  
 this is a story for which there is no witness, for I wasn't born or even  
 thought of. I was only told about this war  
 by my elder brother and then he died. in this story, the century is still new,  
 my brother is tall and no one expects him yet  
 to sicken and cough through my childhood, no one expects  
 we will disappear.  
 when I am not yet born, this story: uniforms, you see. the cloth needed by an  
 army  
 of new recruits. they were given freshly-made fatigues. let them go  
 cleanly. some blessing, some clean shirt. there's a lot of cloth needed  
 in wartime. a war is good for business  
 when you're in textiles.  
 after a while the shortages set in. this is the real beginning of most war stories.  
 they began sending us old uniforms. I mean, taken from the dead.  
 any denomination of man, when dead, his body's not worth the next soldier's  
 cloth.  
 you know how they died in that war, don't you? the shortest english word  
 is mud. what they turned into.  
 trucks piled with empty uniforms arrived at our factory.  
 my brother's job, it was to cut off the buttons, medals, any  
 clasps or zippers, anything that wasn't cloth then take what remained, fabric,  
 to soak. vats full in the factory, break down the fibres,  
 reweave it into new cloth for fresh lambs. my brother only wondering right at the  
 end  
 whether these uniforms were coming through  
 repeatedly, unending, his hands going over the cloth, the buttons, the dead men.  
 he would wash his hands. he was only thirteen and he had buttons  
 from all over the world, he was proud of his metal collection. it included  
 colours from every country. you understand what I mean. the dead  
 came from everywhere.

## The tooth

Robert Minhinnick

*(Amiriya, Baghdad)*

In your head I whisper:  
A tooth, blue as a cinder  
And I ask: Coward,  
Whose pain is it anyway?  
Your cells are a blizzard,  
Your mind a ragbook, yet  
I dream you into growth  
Luscious as papaya flesh  
Around my black seed.

Why this need to condemn?  
I have felt your bones  
Gasp in their foundry,  
And at night you do not know  
But I have heard your blood  
Like a bench of silversmiths  
Pause at its work.  
Then continue.

Once I dreamed  
You inside a laboratory  
When you stared at a kernel of phosphorus  
Until it sprouted fire;  
And thirty years later  
Ached in your skull  
As you stooped in the shelter  
Of Amiriya to pick the tooth  
Of a child like a rice grain  
From the ash.

We've been together  
Such a long time now.  
And my roots  
Go all the way down.

## Sirens

Pat Jourdan

They waited for you on the landing  
on winter nights, black figures  
ready with guns.  
on the way to the bathroom, the bedroom,  
they hunched in the shadows.  
at the peak of my terror and bravery  
they disappeared, until next time.  
(Torches or candles made it worse,  
menacing shapes against the walls.)

They could appear at any time—  
always be ready to run,  
leave the plate or the bed.  
I don't know where we went  
or what we did.  
Pyjamas, coats, cold, running;  
crowded shapes, hushed voices,  
adults in adult talk.  
A mattress under the stairs – why?  
and her making tea at the corner  
of the iron table, a slice of light  
showing exhaustion in the set of her shoulders,  
the radio sacrosanct, the only guardian we had.

**Treasured ghost****T Anders Carson**

Fields of turmoil  
sown with pain.  
Festering wounds  
hold power.  
Free the foothold  
of insanity,  
as the sacred bush  
of Golgotha  
is charred  
by military observers.

**pEACE iCON 21c****rYAN kAMSTRA**

The red g-tar is larger  
than hysteria.

Anyone who plays the red g-tar  
is stealthier than atom bombs.  
Anyone who sings  
can have my phone number.

Anyone who looks to the blue sky  
not expecting a sleek all terrain coffin  
knows that clouds  
are the river's soldiers.  
To kill them is poison.

Anyone who helped build  
those buildings keeps them standing long after death.  
In desert clubs, playing a red g-tar.

This is the valley of death.  
A mass grave inhaled  
at red lips with a hint of gloss.  
Or you with us or against us?

**The moments silence****Peter Hunter**

In the moments silence,  
Hearts don't beat,  
They grow and shrink  
Worlds expand and break the air  
As other, bigger worlds contract  
Tiny holes appear from nowhere  
Having nowhere to react

In the space between the flash and bang,  
The stroboscopic afternoon,  
The sudden drop from can to not,  
A cobweb softly snaps.  
Between the answer and the question  
One hand deafeningly claps

As the tree becomes the seed  
Pausing just enough to take a life  
The tension slips  
The perfect pane becomes a pain machine  
And as the drop releases grip  
The mind lets go the dream

In the moments startled argument  
The cell divides again  
Two voices stall in emptiness  
The first wave hits  
Between the tock and tick  
And understanding clicks.

In the moments silence  
Death knocks at the door  
And roars and shits.

**Haunted house, October 2002****Sherry Chandler**

Nearly Halloween and the high spooks tell  
us we should be afraid, our boy king fumes –  
we must exorcise the desert demon.

The old cold warriors creak and shriek like ghosts  
of desert storms past.

Meanwhile our school  
children bleed, our war vet sniper fades  
into a fog of pundits.

The boys down  
in Lubbock, who believe in evil, kiss  
their virgin wives goodnight, pray  
the thunder god will give mojo  
to the boy. They put their faith  
in F16s.

The tang of wax and rotted  
pumpkin fills the air. Is the smell  
of front-porch jacks stronger than the reek  
of burning oil, the copper smell of blood?

**Moonblood****Sharlie West**

my wooden pail is split from carrying:  
mother's at home with brother

where have all the people gone?

faces of towers in the distance  
haggard against the landscape

pebbles stones cutting rocks of mite  
dirt mounds and glistening red objects

night-circling buzzards  
the heat is all around

people wind across the desert  
in bands of yellow

the colors of coughing and spitting -  
onions mixed with salt

a fog of sulphur sends our heads  
reeling into dawn

likening the empty streets  
to a doom of lessons

a house with gashed shingles  
and gutted windows

an old woman staring out

**From After the anti war march****Neeli Cherkovski**

...The news had been one-sided as usual  
 quick to point out most of the people  
 are for destroying whatever remains of Ur of the Chaldees  
 and the ziggurats of life

we are doomed, the National Security Advisor said  
 as much, we either bomb them first or  
 they'll bomb us eventually, we either step  
 into the abyss or get pushed into it

The Security Advisor is a nice looking woman,  
 she speaks in clear, even tones unlike her boss  
 who has a mean expression whenever he invokes  
 the name of our patriotic god

We're victimized by one conspiratorial voice  
 demanding silence, we don't even have to  
 listen, we are asked to surrender our bodies  
 our minds, our children

On the way home it's the Secretary of Defense  
 defining our desire, telling us who  
 and what we are, the radio screams  
 and I manage to listen

At home the President tells us  
 he is running out of patience  
 like a storm offshore, he is ready  
 able and willing to make his move

It's the day after the march, I should  
 have been there, but here I am now  
 walking through my words to where  
 we must reclaim the land and its language

**on the night she didn't feel like it anymore****danika dinsmore**

she stuffed herself to claustrophobic proportions  
     belly ache a reminder she still had work to do  
 she baked during moments of frustration listening  
 for the difference between fireworks and gunshots  
 she had been startled the week before by a  
 strange man in the yard tonight  
 she baked without looking out the window

perhaps it was the *New York Times* story  
 the Israeli tank blowing up two little boys  
 on bicycles who didn't know the curfew was still in effect  
 the whole one      the one who maintained his limbs  
 was buried with his chocolate bar in his hand

perhaps it was Noah's impending flood God with crumbs in his beard  
 or the appearance of an angel-afraid-of-dogs in the forest

perhaps a lot of poets had died in the last few weeks  
 and with them their hats

or perhaps it was the rose on the bus lying on the dashboard  
 in wet paper towels confiscated at the border      a memento  
     a kiss      an apology

what she really wanted was to stay up all night creating a path  
 of words burning clay singeing the wick of mortal time

what she remembered was this is not a dress rehearsal  
 what did it matter the embarrassment of being human  
 when we are all pedalling away from the same tanks  
 with our chocolate bars and  
 our misinterpreted dreams

## Broken fall whispers

Adam Pettet

Broken fall whispers  
 on windows and eyelids  
 the kisses of granite laughter  
 crushing saffron under boots  
 of burnished steel.  
 Marching in the graveyard  
 the sullen turns away  
 another dream citizen  
 behind a breaking door.  
 From side to side  
 the blades turn  
 a tail disappearing  
 through the hail.  
 Children kissing,  
 the carnival,  
 damp panties by the seaside.  
 Blowing the gremlin  
 in the breakdown lane  
 she rises  
 blood red lips streaked  
 across her face.  
 Red on red  
 on a crumpled blue sea  
 black sails in the wind  
 bugs in my teeth  
 war on my TV.

## Where there's war

Ken Waldman

Where there's war, there's an anti-war  
 of writers writing, readers reading,  
 veterans recalling what they served for —

to make the world more  
 open for children, to share understanding.  
 Where there's war, there's an anti-war,

and in between a heavy warped door  
 old, creaky, and infuriating. Seething  
 veterans, recalling what they served for,

can't find sense in making only the poor  
 pay for the needs of the rich — and suffer dying.  
 Where there's war, there's an anti-war

of you and I walking into the music shop, the food store,  
 greeting friends, finding peace in being.  
 We're veterans who recall what we serve for —

not god, not country, but the chore  
 after chore that is the daily chore of living.  
 Where there's war, there's an anti-war —  
 writers, readers, veterans recalling what we serve for.

## The man of principle

Mr Social Control

I absolutely refuse to go  
 on this insane and murderous  
 suicide bombing mission to Oxford Circus  
 unless  
 we first have the full agreement  
 of the United Nations Security Council.



## What you call it

**Tony Brown**

What d'you call it/that thing  
 that came in the night/that hung above our village  
 while a war fell onto us from its mouth  
 what d'you call it/that thing  
 I couldn't see it too well in the dark  
 I think it had grey skin/know it had red eyes  
 it wasn't a dragon  
 it was too hungry to be a dragon/it was too angry  
 a thing like that ought not to be free  
 ought not to be let loose to do that / ought to be locked up  
 ought to be somewhere else  
 What d'you call that thing that  
 roasts your children/cinders your wife  
 takes your father in flame  
 melts your tongue to the roof of your mouth and burns the consonants out of you  
 until all you can do is scream open throated in only vowels  
 with nothing to give shape or form to the sound  
 what words could you have had before this to describe– this  
 what d'you call it?

yes I suppose  
 you could call it a helicopter  
 a vertical takeoff and landing armored air support vehicle  
 an Apache/a Cobra  
 and I suppose its anger and hunger could be  
 a mistake an unfortunate incident  
 nothing to deter us from our mission  
 but  
 HELLMOTHER – BLADECLOUD – DARKRAPER – CHILDBURNER –  
 SKYEATER  
 STORMSWAN – DEVILROAR – DEATHBIRD – WIDOWERMAKER  
 GODFLAMEHAMMER –

all work just as well  
 just do not call us “collateral damage”  
 there are no clean words for some things

## Harvest

**Barbara Berman**

*For Amos Oz and David Grossman*

There are no enemies  
 insist your rugged hands  
 and muscled backs half hidden  
 in olive branches shading  
 women darkly veiled.

There are no enemies  
 but the enemy of a piece  
 of fruit, its oil, its balm  
 for the rest of us  
 who need to be so brave.

## Untitled

**Tom Bell**

Dearest Angel,

As I said I will be for us while I can still stand. But I do have a story to tell you, today. They just told me that pill popping pilots are protecting you from terrorists. We've watched television together, you and I. I know you didn't understand all you saw, but also felt your fear of the pill poppers. I don't want to hand your care over to the world out there.

It's not all hippos hoppin'. It's not all mamas shopping at the mall and grampapas bopping. Be strong, dearest.

Love,  
 Grampa

## Who shall be hung

Margo Berdeshevsky

How he writhes, bottle-eyed animal moaning for an eager war, how a president stamps for orgasm not to be denied for – now his troops are massed and time, the all we have, chanting.

In a dank stone prison cave in middle Paris, time-balm for the hour, cave kitsch-ily named la Guillotine, its shined blade-machina alertly cornered, wall behind our heavy heads we note has words carved in since fourteen-twenty-one: *je serai pendu*.

I shall be hung. Who shall be hung, all souls, our damp impatience for - I think that time's invented helm is wacky spinning Weimar bodies, think it's spewing signs we can't elude, this night a poet prays, her head lolling and as though in her own bottle-glass-eye, blind too, she now can see

a blade's truth of it, how it lowers so necessarily out of this historic – glow, more then more our nineteen-thirty-nine lifts now with each sun's knife, lifts now. How friends position to demand their prejudicial shoe to stand in – is the human fact I find most evil to bear. It stands so tall for – thrumming drum and trumpet ready letting blood notes for – Indeed "Israelis have chosen their Jews," dear poet. How deserts choose their endless sands. The dead, their eyes. Indeed self righteousness grows toes and fingers hourly, what monster child is this we call our safety for -

A taller man at dinner – motor-minding so from the bowel of his hates for fears for I must wish to leave the table and the de-boned sole not to hide but out of protest for – oh I must not weep how a brown-shirt rhetoric so spits like vomit from descendants of the last world war. What world shall we defend, God, as we bear our beautiful rope of causes, who'll be hung – for hoping?

## The hawk who became a dove

Hal Sirowitz

Most people start off supporting  
their country's war efforts,  
Father said, but as soon as someone  
close to them gets drafted,  
they suddenly change their tune  
& begin to question their government.  
Your friend's father was a hawk.  
When his son received a draft notice  
he became a dove. Instead of swooping down  
on anyone opposed to the war he  
started to do lots of cooing. He's  
easier to listen to now, because he  
isn't always ruffling someone's feathers.  
It's a shame that he needed the possibility  
of his son's death to improve his personality.

**Untitled****Jennifer LoveGrove**

We live on a fat red  
 lifeboat, heaving and tossing  
 on a geyser  
 of melted gold  
 siphoned from  
 the veins of the dead.  
 A pox of small explosions  
 tears up the rubber  
 beneath our feet. You  
 can even see it  
 from the moon,  
 if you squint.  
 Some of us  
 fall over the sides,  
 and do not even splash.  
 The rest are overfed  
 Cupids, charming enough  
 with our little crossbows,  
 but confused  
 by all these lights  
 and noises!  
 Those of us  
 who still have legs  
 try to jump –  
 as the fiery dots  
 connect themselves,  
 hungry as barrels.

**clash of civilisations?****Ilija Trojanow**

(on the bombay suburban)

swallow your pride  
 an elbow in point  
 choke on the last  
 morsel of comfort

there is no doubt  
 we all are one  
 shedding our skins  
 to reach the exit

pick up the odour  
 like a callus a cold  
 strain with the flow  
 catching a whiff of border

when the jostling starts  
 grab the waist  
 of the nearest prayer  
 stumble to shanti to amin

body-reading your way  
 onto the platform  
 protected by union  
 from another other.

## All those home spun places

David Plumb

The old man's fist  
thumps the dais again.  
Flags wave. Slick  
cars stream cool.  
The price of gas  
runs down, runs up.

Cell phones ring.  
Oil Oil Oil screams  
the endless whopper  
click click game  
show of them all.

Bombs bomb bomb  
pipelines run  
who knows where  
the stink started?

What do we dance  
on this moonless  
night of cut off thumbs  
and business as usual?

## After the anti-war march

Minnie Bruce Pratt

We had a different driver on the way home. I sat on the seat behind her, folded, feet up like a baby, curled like a silent tongue in the dark jaw of the bus until she flung us through a sharp curve and I fell. Then we talked, looking straight ahead, the road like a blackboard, one chalk line down the middle. She said, nah, she didn't need a break, she was good to the end. Eighteen hours back to home when she was done, though. Fayetteville, North Carolina, a long ways from here. The math of a mileage marker glowed green. Was Niagara Falls near Buffalo? She'd like to take her little girl some day, too little now, won't remember. The driver speaks her daughter's name, and the syllables ring like bells. I say I lived in her town once, after another war. The boys we knew came home men cocked like guns, sometimes they went off and blew their own heads, sometimes a woman's face. Like last summer in Ft. Bragg, all those women dead. She says, "One was my best friend." Husband shot her front of the children, boy and girl, six and eight. She calls them every day, no matter where she is. They get very upset if she doesn't call. Her voice breaks, her hands correct the wheel, the bus pushes forward, erasing nothing. There was a blue peace banner from her town today, and we said stop the war, jobs instead, no more rich men's factories, refineries, futures built on our broke bodies. She said she couldn't go to the grave for a long time, but she had some things to get right between them so she stood there and spoke what was on her mind. Now she takes the children to the grave, the little boy he wants to go every week. She lightly touches and turns the big steering wheel. Her hands spin its huge circumference a few degrees here, then there. She whirls it all the way around when she needs to. Later I hear the crinkle of cellophane. She is eating some peppermint candies to stay awake.

## Nation

### Nora Gaines

in this field,  
and upon its sowing, they ask  
for rain,  
they pray  
by the three saplings  
for dew  
in the gap of the espalier;  
tears,  
stationary,  
awake,  
but as  
the trouble-child;  
a loose stone wall  
restoring the wind,  
the trees themselves,  
the reed grass  
unloved,  
listing like a  
paper thief.

may I put seed  
for more trees  
under this branch  
as if they were  
for their saplings' sake  
the reeds  
as if they were  
tears  
and the rain of one  
is close to  
the rain of the other.

## Peace poem

### Charles Potts

"The young men and women standing against the war  
have made a green place in my heart," sang Robert Duncan  
protesting the Vietnam War in a former time but in the same place.

The earth doesn't need us; we need the earth.

Let us try to act as holy as we'd like to think we are.

War is the attempt to control the economic future by force.

There are better ways to be secure than by making paranoia public policy.

Intellect and moral integrity are under assault and must survive.

Where the powerful sleep in fits and starts  
with their troubled dreams of death,  
the death of their system with its interlocking privileges,  
no amount of security devices can ever make safe.

They want a stage to pose upon  
from the depths of their gated communities  
where they can throw fear into the hearts of others  
to eclipse the fear in their own.

We are safe in love with truth  
willing to march, live and die by and for it.

Peace is the way you live your life.

**Imminent****Fred Marchant**

even the heavy machinery seems tentative,  
as if the engines would like to quit,

as if the road itself was glass,  
as if iron or ice or anything solid we touch

wants only to fall apart,  
give way in relief

the jets cut across the morning  
nothing seems to stop them, says the pessimist

but sometimes I think the cold deepens  
forever and more, and like us

even the bombers will be grounded  
and all good pilots will want to stay inside

go nowhere all day,  
speak with no one they do not love

*1/23/03*

**Against the war****Susan McMaster**

Against the war I'll refuse  
to be insulted today.  
Against the war I'll smile  
at my boss till he smiles back.  
Against the war I'll recite  
this poem on Wellington Street,  
drive my car not at all,  
gossip about love,  
play Für Elise badly.  
Against the war I'll take  
a break from doing bills  
to watch the squirrels play  
on the wires outside my room,  
sign up for Italian,  
listen closely to a child,  
joke about the cold  
with the newly arrived Ph.D.  
who sweeps my office floor.  
Against the war I'll laugh  
at Bush's foot-in-mouth,  
make love in the afternoon,  
send clothes to St. Vincent de Paul,  
learn to spell Qur'an,  
phone up my daughter,  
light a birch fire  
and turn off the furnace,  
shovel the walk for the mailman,  
clean up after our old cat,  
leave the door unlocked.

Against the war I'll act  
today, as I can, for peace.

*Ottawa, 24 January 2003*

## We believe

**Kasandra Larsen**

“[US administration officials] acknowledged that the case must be made in a negative fashion: Iraq has failed to disprove the contentions of the U.S. [...] about its weapons of mass destruction. The administration asserts, without offering evidence, that Iraq has thwarted inspectors by hiding the weapons.” – from *The New York Times*, 23 January 2003

WE BELIEVE

in Democracy.

But without evidence, we will still proclaim you Guilty.

We enjoy playing global Judge and Jury. We will stridently enforce Accountability

as we avoid our own disclosures or Transparency.

We fully support the concept of Liberty

(with exceptions for those with whom we Disagree).

We prefer to call it War and not Brutality.

We strive to promote human Dignity

but call you Evil, Liar, warn of your Duplicity.

We have smart bombs but will risk civilian Casualties.

We joined the U.N. but like acting Unilaterally.

Let us avoid discussing our Economy,

ensure oil for our mighty S.U.V.s.

How dare anyone question our Authority,

our blatantly impatient, greedy Policies?

One nation under our own Divinity,

we hold that might makes right

and not Diplomacy. Prepared to march, we will ignore

all calls for Peace.

You would not bend. We gave you time. Now you will bleed.

We are America. We believe in Democracy.

## Brainstorm

**Bruce A Jacobs**

We've got to

Um,

Protect families children

Weapons mass destruction

Yeah, that's it,

A war fought from

An SUV. Stomp Saddam

In time for soccer practice.

Trust me, they'll buy it. Uh-oh:

North Korea.

Shit. Okay: Um,

It's different.

Help me here, Colin.

Possession isn't everything.

No proof he'll use them.

Huh? Contradiction? Well,

Shit. You tell me

How to duck a fucking A-bomb.

Okay. Okay. Think

Story. It's all in the

Telling:

Mustard gas becomes

Weapons Mass Destruction.

New Hiroshima becomes

Matter of Discussion.

See? We'll rev up an SUV,

Splat Saddam, give Kim the finger

And peel out. He'll never dare.

Damn! That's it. That's definitely

It.

## Miranda Rights

**Marcos Flores**

You have the right to remain silent...

Silent about the injustice that exists, about underground modes and methods of survival...

About love and compassion and peace and giving and sharing...

And all that this earthly experience gives, what life's cycles bring and more.

You have the right to remain silent...

And be arrested for the homeless, for the sick, for the lame, and the poor, for those faceless, nameless, invisible human beings suffering, right outside your nation's living room door.

You have the right to remain silent...

And go home to your family while political tyrants plot paths to war.

You have the right to remain silent...

And live your life... living and looking through glass...

In a pseudo democracy, forgetting the past, forgetting to pay homage to all those things that truly make men, women and children free.

You have the right to remain silent...

And not ask questions, when you already know in your heart the answers.

You have the right to remain silent...

Because action is needed...words have no meaning...time is fleeting.

The world and its peace...our community...they're calling for more, not war.

*January 2003*

## Taking sides

**Aoife Mannix**

There will be another war,  
many people will be killed,  
and I will be expected to have an opinion.

But what can you say about a man  
who'd rather let thousands of children die  
then give them access to medical vaccines  
he claims could be used in bombs.

Or for that matter a man  
who when the supplies finally arrive,  
locks them up in a warehouse,  
preferring to let his own people starve  
then weaken their hatred of the enemy.

Talk about a rock and a hard place.  
The fundamental difference is questionable.  
Neither Jesus nor Mohammed  
would have allowed themselves  
to be pushed into this kind of choice.

**blood in the snow****Congus**

storm clouds full of war & suffering  
 threaten from the mountain.  
 winter snow buries old men near the border  
 in Afghanistan, while young children in Detroit  
 protest the killing fields in Iraq, Israel, & Oakland,  
 with boycotts of Disneyland and McDonalds.  
 january half over and the ground is wet  
 with blood in the snow.  
 the war, just over the next mountain,  
 and threatening summer; a long way off.  
 somewhere, between the white rock and blue sky,  
 gray bones lie drying in the sand.  
 the day is like a soldier,  
 creeping slowly to a freshly dug grave,  
 and mourning flowers on a hillside,  
 somewhere near the far horizon  
 & red desert morning.

*San Francisco, California*

**untitled****Kathleen Spivack**

although she moves in a personal winter --  
 a red scarf against a black chair --  
 that red gash widens like the outcry of a widow:  
 a woman keens the world kills.

from *The Jane Poems* (Doubleday & Co. NY, 1974)

**Dubya Anabasis****Richard Peabody**

Dubya Anabasis. Original name, George W[alker] Bush. (1946–?) 43rd President of the United States (2000–?) and the man who started Word War III. It's difficult to understand how Dubya became president. His Republican Party (GOP) was famous for rewriting history in the style of evil dictators Stalin and Hitler before them. What we know now, post World War III, is that he was installed into power after a disputed election in which he lost the popular vote but won the electoral vote. A petty criminal, it appears he was a pawn of the corporations who expected to get rich on military excursions into Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea in order to corner the market on the world's oil reserves at a time when natural resources were dwindling. The son of the 41st President (George Herbert Walker Bush) Dubya is thought now to have been a puppet of his father and his father's staff. He disappeared in the fallout following the vaporization of Washington, D.C. For years it was claimed that he died in a bunker in West Virginia, or was hiding in caves in Texas or Argentina. (*See* Dick Cheney, Chomsky, Gulf War, Heroin Smuggling in Southeast Asia, Iran-Contra, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, Zinn).

Dubya appears briefly as a Taniwha in Keri Waratah's rock opera Whiro, he is presented as a bland and puritanical man of relentless torpor, the "child is father to the man" who gradually mutates into a mythical demon, as contrasted to the heroic characters like Good Soldier Schweik, or Xing Zi famous for his magical feather cloak.

Dubya is to this day a curse word passed down by generations of Maori people. (*See* also: fuck, merde, scheisskopf, walker, wang ba dan, *et al.*)

## Talking with the cat about world domination the day George W Bush almost choked on a pretzel

**Kevin Higgins**

Now that pretzel's gone and done  
something an expert like you never would  
– loosening its hold a split-second too soon –  
I think it's time we revised our strategy.  
Just sitting back waiting for the big collapse?  
Face facts. It isn't happening.  
If there's a job to be done, why not us?

This time tomorrow we'll be in Washington  
telling Bush to come out with his hands up.  
Faced with me and you, Puss, I bet he'll just crumble.  
And we'll whisk him off to Guantanamo Bay  
where he'll share a cage with the Emir of Kuwait.

I see from the frown wrinkling your brow,  
you're worried, perhaps, how  
Mariah Carey fans everywhere might react.  
Too late for all that. To put it in terms  
I think you'll understand: after the years wasted  
here in this litter-tray, it's time to deliver  
for me and you, Puss. Our battle-cry?  
Something snappy? Like?  
Yes, I have it! Repeat after me:  
Don't make me angry, Mr Magee.  
You wouldn't like me when I'm angry.

## Unleashed

**Kate Evans**

Wild legs flying, my dog barks into the waves  
full force. Planting her feet,  
she pushes her body down,  
haunches up, and flies off. Tangled white fur,  
her legs lock and spin and her alien blue eyes  
whirl. Sand whips thick and wet.

After the flash  
he put his hand to his  
face. It slid down  
with his skin,  
a Hiroshima survivor  
said on TV.  
There are too many ghosts,  
he said.

Terrorist warnings,  
countries and people  
stretch rubber band taut,  
nuclear edge. And the President  
promotes pre-emptive strikes.  
Full force.  
Dogs of war,  
wave after wave.

My salt-matted dog spins, red gums  
flashing, suspended tongue  
quivering. Ignoring my calls,  
she flies to the gray waves,  
an angry wraith. I touch my sea-cool face  
and wonder why wildness takes us.

## Life after wartime

### Tom Phillips

Some things never change.  
 The garden bushes wag their beards  
 like arguing theologians while the orange fists  
 of passion fruit take cover in the leaves.  
 The sky aches with unmapped distances  
 and the sun hides nothing.  
 At dusk, it surrenders to the moon.  
 When there's small-hours muttering in the street  
 remember it's only someone deciding to go home or go on,  
 pushing through the night for the last of the great good times  
 and into a shell-shocked morning-after.  
 At least there's coffee again.  
 It takes our minds off the radio,  
 the smooth-voiced reassurances,  
 the metaphors encrusted like barnacles  
 on every announcement – your almost  
 imperceptible jump at the sound  
 of a pamphlet shoved through the door.  
 Somewhere further resolutions are signed.  
 Things never change.  
 People wear their silence like a cawl.  
 To bring them luck against drowning.  
 They were parents. Or siblings. Or both.  
 They are the ones that nothing surprises,  
 the ones who no longer look up  
 when a jet comes roaring in above the city,  
 framed against the orange sky,  
 seemingly picking its way among the towers.

## Yellow jackets

### John Rybicki

I inhale this yellow bell, too late to warm the car engine  
 to the emergency room. I kicked the dirt from a woodchuck  
 hole, and thought, that soft tear of the arrow

through the cardboard deer in my yard: woosh  
 it went through the lungs, that wind hole just like love.  
 Watch with me as the dead leave their bodies lunging

like Astaire up no staircase at all. I'm searching for the arrow  
 when those yellow jackets swirl up from the scrub grass  
 to twang their stingers into my vocal chords, which need cutting,

of course. All over my eyelashes, in my ear lobes and hair,  
 these little people with their harpoons. See your cartoon Johnny  
 pantomime a man on fire, into my house and flailing my shirt about,

my love up from her own nest of a nap, woken by Jesus Christ,  
*I'm a tall building*, and, *they're all over me*. Shocked awake  
 the way soldiers spring to when bullets rip through their tents.

She's swatting yellow jackets off my blue jeans and stomping  
 embers on the carpet. I have gasoline. I'll pour it down their hole  
 tonight and light the match. Late night another tickle

along my throat I swat down on my knees now with my Buddha,  
 my boo-dawg beside me sniffing the carpet to find that yellow  
 spasm on its back. I swat swat swat at it with my tennis shoe.

My hound awes over my power, God knows he might be next.  
*Don't be scared booger*, I say and we lower our noses together  
 to sniff the little carcass. At least with the crusades all we had

were swords to butcher each other. Let's see what we have  
 learned: abcdefg... here we go again.

## A verse to war

### J R Carpenter

I am afraid  
 (of what will happen  
 of the rhetoric  
 of the silence  
 of not knowing).  
 I am afraid I don't know what to contribute.

I am afraid  
 (of destruction  
 of waiting  
 of doing nothing  
 of adding fuel to the flames).  
 I am afraid I don't have any answers.

I am afraid  
 (of trivializing  
 of propagandizing  
 of margins  
 of error).  
 I am afraid it is but a meager thing to add  
 a verse adverse to war.

## Priests' skulls

### Michael R Brown

"Hell is paved with priests' skulls"\*  
 laid gently in place by nun's hands,  
 and soldiers' boots have worn them flat.

The archbishop of Madrid blesses fascist cannons.  
 The cardinal of Berlin admires newly acquired art  
 and chats with Hitler about ethnic purity laws.  
 What the Pope can't see can't be pointed to.

First the Jews and gypsies go.  
 When the war goes badly, Nazis disappear,  
 and no one can say where anyone went.  
 Trains run to Auschwitz and to Switzerland.

Mass deaths draw crowds out of Serb towns;  
 rosaries dangle from bloody hands.  
 Scapulars and blessed medals  
 ring their necks like strings of garlic.

Ministers foam at the mouth with oaths  
 against strongest enemies, weakest friends.  
 Add another bead to the charm bracelet:  
 Carthage, Jerusalem, Carcassone, Mostar.

A Rwandan nun sprays huts with holy water,  
 screams at the devil in arms wielding Hutu machetes,  
 justifies God's destruction in hands firing Tutsi guns,  
 with never enough salt to sow bloody ground.

Priests in eternal fire give each other absolution.  
 Burning nuns lay hot bones in mocking patterns –  
 swastikas, stars of David, fasces, crosses –  
 crushed into paving by military boots.

After the final judgement day  
 archaeologist angels spend another eternity  
 excavating layers of bone floors in hell.

*\*John Chrysostom*

## Bubble girl song

### Wednesday Kennedy

I shop with my white girl immunity and i'm safe till i get on that plane  
 I want to stuff myself stupid and go back to sleep  
 branded right down from my head to my feet  
 yeah it's fat and obscene my american dream  
 but you're only jealous cause you want the same  
 tell me...

*Who's gonna die for my SUV*

*come on...*

*Who's gonna die for my SUV*

*And i'm thinking i might get a facelift*

*because that might make the world seem more fresh*

*because it's not been the same since the day the world changed*

*and the war cry keeps beating it's tired old refrain*

*I mean how can i shop in this negative frame.*

*who knows what'll be the fashion next week?*

*Tell me*

*who's gonna die for my SUV*

*come on*

*who's gonna die for my SUV*

And it's just not the same as it used to be

the mcmuffins just aren't quite as sweet

and the tips have dried up and the times nearly up

on the joker who's taking the heat

And i want another mcsunrise and i want another mcsweet

a mcfuck, a mcstock, a car built like a truck

a gas guzzling rip roaring empire's last wank

*come on...*

*Who's gonna die for my SUV*

*tell me...*

*Who's gonna die for my SUV*

## Anna's meal

### Nuala Ní Chonchúir

If it had not been for the fighting in Dagestan  
 the two of us might never have met:  
 the tinned meat of the Semikarakorsk  
 processing plant and my digestive system.  
 I was invited to share a meal with the troops  
 in a border cellar, two flights down,  
 and if the darkness wasn't enough to scare,  
 the slovenly guardian of the kitchen was.

She disembowelled rows of unmarked tins,  
 slicing the aluminium as easy as silk,  
 "Tin 23, rotten. Tin 39, the same. Tin 42,  
 for you. Try a sample of our daily fare,  
 and tell Moscow how we feast,"  
 and she plunged the blade through each tin,  
 so I sniffed and licked - what else could I do?-  
 then spewed my bile all over her floor.

The soldiers earn twenty-two roubles a day,  
 for no medicine, no fuel, no faith; and for hours  
 of ducking bullets their bellies are rewarded  
 with putrid meat from the government's stores.  
 If it had not been for the fighting in Dagestan  
 the two of us might never have met:  
 the tinned meat of the Semikarakorsk  
 processing plant and my digestive system.

**Rhetoric for peace****Susan Hankla**

Let us examine the loneliness  
of war,  
how when something is ripped  
it can never be restored.

How we make ourselves  
bigger than God  
and then, that done,  
carry all we love  
in frayed coat pockets -  
sometimes whole villages  
end lining coats.

Why do it?  
Why rip, then think things  
will be better?

Why strip earth,  
never to build it up again?

Why say goodbye, wipe out memory, civilization?

We're more same than not -  
DNA isn't reserved for Capitalists.

Why can't we stop and live again?  
Why do we cling to death?

Why hasten the leaving of birds  
and miracles?

**Streetcars and crosswalks****Anita Santarossa**

In the battlefield of crosswalks  
I join the dancing band, circling the courtyard  
Tapping my finger on the edge of the trigger  
I wait.  
Silently.  
And over the hill, just slightly over the hill  
I crawl.  
The conflict boils and blasts  
Along the horizon,  
Is a streetcar named  
Genocide.  
She uncovers her breasts exposing  
A tattoo of a butterfly  
Always changing.  
Now it's time to take cover  
Hiding from the masochists, capitalists.  
Trying to take the next cab  
As it pulls over, I run toward it  
My mother shouts out, "Don't Go!"  
The slow motion film tries to speed up  
But it was all over too fast  
As I sit here wishing to re-wind it all.

**A light****Anita Govan**

they that know  
 the truth of it  
 with such brilliant color  
 in bright eyed remembrance  
 its breath upon the fire  
 a light  
 that feeds  
 the very birth of it  
 shattering  
 into the quite chaos  
 like some bright bell  
 in still silence

a moment  
 to change the world

**An untitled place****Suzy Morgan**

this used to be  
 a city, town, local  
 wherever  
 maybe over there, maybe  
 here.  
 a splintered dreg  
 of wood is the only object,  
 passed over by the usual  
 chaos and trivial frivolities,  
 terrors – of war – and it  
 stands  
 this post.  
 and the shell-spangled sky leans  
 down upon it  
 with such weariness.

**No seasons, only weather****Meghan Nuttall Sayres**

You say about life  
 in Kabul that you remember  
 a childhood of orchards  
 and roses.

I see you in sepia tones,  
 Ramazan, in this newspaper  
 photograph: white turban,  
 beard and robes.

Are you proof that it is possible  
 to carry on when your children  
 have been blown up  
 by a single bomb?

Javaid 7  
 Zamoor 6  
 Hidayat 4  
 Mushabana 1.

Your eyes asking  
 will Allah hold them; restore peace  
 "like it was," wish the pomegranate  
 trees into bloom?

## Leavening

Kate Newman

Walk beside us hear our time.  
 Know that a perfect purchase is heaven here  
 as leavening bread on Clark Street,  
 likewise the pane gathering light  
 on the east line down.  
 If I catch a spark of knowledge  
 on Tuesday, maybe Wednesday  
 ever after I will give thanks.  
 Lie as I have not lain  
 sit without disdain.  
 Crows shelter at the smack centre  
 of the four way on Main  
 while somewhere a lark sings  
 what will not be heard.

## Gulf War – aftermath

Mary Trafford

*“Depleted uranium is the super weapon of the '90s: [it was] used in the Gulf War and conflict in Kosovo.”*

One decade down this hazardous way  
 wrings a freak show out of Iraq,  
 where silver bullets of depleted uranium  
 linger in dust and debris, detritus of war,  
 infect the babies; split atoms / split genes,  
 and a toddler stares at life's cruel turn  
 through a single eye – all that nature  
 can bestow of beauty; twisted hairpin  
 turns of chromosomes, unlike  
 anything scientists have  
 ever seen, while young mothers  
 bleed out foetal remains:  
 unrecognizable might-have-beens  
 the teratology of war.

## Terror on warism

Ian Ayres

Bloody warmongering  
 perpetuates the endless cycle  
 of bullets >>>>>> of weapons >>>>>> of mass destruction \*  
 Unthinking obedience is the point at which democracy breaks down:

DE C A Y

m

o c

r

We must speak out when we feel  
 our / government / is / wrong. We have that right.  
 In a time of terror,

PROTEST IS PATRIOTISM

Our flag isn't some bloody rag to be waved by politicians.  
 The red, white & blue is for Arab Americans, too.

**STOP THE WAR!**

**STOP ANNIHILATION!**

Bombing people only fuels anger, resentment, & desire for revenge.  
 & let me tell you,

there's nothing casual about casualties.

Such rhetoric that deafens us to slaughter blinds us  
 to our quickly approaching end. For we have already entered

A PERIOD OF MASS EXTINCTION

not seen since the age of the dinosaurs.

Or in other words, I mean Albert Einstein's:

*'I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought,  
 but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.'*

## the killing fields

Di Brandt

but don't we all dear Em doesn't everyone  
 have cut off hands gripping knives in their  
 too big heads aren't we all blood crazy thirsty  
 in our midnight selves to avenge the curdled  
 mother's milk rotted on our parched cracked  
 tongues convinced the death of the little princes  
 & princesses in the baby tower & the enemy  
 their king will release us from her untimely  
 abandonment like the Pharaoh like Herod  
 like Hitler like Bush is this a dagger divine  
 Will Shakespear said giving the words to  
 regal Lady MacBeth I see before me handle  
 toward my hand come let me clutch thee  
 we must be able he taught us to imagine at  
 least this much darkness in us & then & then  
 Em then to wrestle down the spirits who  
 would delude us into attacking the living  
 breathing world turning to face the hot fanged  
 wolves that haunt us who if we're brave enough  
 would rather play & full leafed trees dancing  
 toward us & the frozen child huddled asleep  
 deep in her forest bed shivering in slow  
 thaw as we remember ourselves her father  
 her mother & the enemy our sister brother

## A dark little psalm against war

John B Lee

*"poem written after seeing a documentary on the rise and fall of Hitler"*

lost  
 between fear and the fairgrounds  
 to the cult of fire  
 and the idolatry of death  
 these skull-browed men in red and black  
 bowing to accept bouquets  
 from bare-legged little  
 flower girls  
 blowing almost away in thin summer dresses  
 or patting the forehead fidelity of dogs  
 their own fuhrer in final scorched repose  
 his uniform coat  
 his pair of pyjamas  
 a burned body in a bomb crater  
 in April in Berlin bearing the tight-boned grin  
 of eternity  
 with sixty-million souls  
 for company, remembering  
 those sentimental interludes  
 that poisonously sweet tea-cake ambrosia  
 tasting of the smoke of burning flesh  
 and the ash-drift confection  
 like a Christmas evening snowfall  
 oh, the wrong gods are in the mountains  
 above the overcast  
 or riding a red river of crushed roses  
 when weeping and harp-willowed  
 is the world  
 it dashes our children on stones.

**Even****Nathalie Handal**

Nothing is even, even this line  
 I am writing, even this line I am waiting in,  
 waiting for permission to enter  
 the country, the house, the room.  
 Nothing is even, even now  
 that laws have been drawn and peace  
 is discussed on high tables,  
 and even if all was said to be even  
 I would not believe for even I know  
 that nothing is even – not the trees,  
 the flowers, not the mountains or the shadows...  
 our nature is not even so why even try to get even  
 instead let us find an even better place  
 and call it even.

**Still true?****Clive Matson**

Yesterday I dreamt the sky  
 turned orange and white,  
 spawning giant mushrooms.  
 I jumped into a ditch.  
 Held my head in my hands  
 for a few seconds until

everything went.

Today the western hills  
 are hazy green and brown.  
 I have things to do.  
 People wander in and out  
 of shops. Sun shines on  
 the shimmering road as if

nothing happened.

**This is the war that George fought****E Russell Smith**

This is the land  
 where the war was fought  
 that George fought.  
 This is the oil  
 that comes from the land  
 where the war was fought  
 that George fought.  
 This is the tractor  
 that runs on the oil  
 that comes from the land  
 where the war was fought  
 that George fought.  
 This is the farmer  
 who drives the tractor  
 that runs on the oil  
 that comes from the land  
 where the war was fought  
 that George fought.  
 This is the son  
 who lies in the sand  
 and this is the oil  
 that burns on the land.  
 This the war that George fought.