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100 poets against the war


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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
stiffupperlipping
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) preemptive 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 (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 refine nevr gross goez thru walls doors makes mor opnings tht carrée 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
e 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 allianse
changing tongues killing mor

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

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

deth masheens that will definitlee
keep konsumrs down dancing 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 leds in almost evree thing
n 2 not use thees wepons un less we
say theyr onlee 4 yr proteksyu n 4

paying us 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 thems 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,
ever 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,
filming 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 sang, 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 nidorous hell,
this life turned to victorious death... horizons topple... house of god implodes...
stuffing muddy insides back into wound... the head an eggshell smashed,
the brain shattered 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 newlydead

**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,
rewave 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
**War – the concise version**

Rachel Bentham

contention between people
this is how we begin

specific conflicts
armed hostilities

the "art of war"
  – it’s certainly not a science,
  but doesn’t art create?

strategy and tactics
been in the wars?

war baby
war bride
war crime
international laws of war
that which violates
as if laws are effective
in wartime

war cry
war of attrition
war of nerves
war grave

war weary, just reading the words.

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**The paloma’s lament**

Rebecca Villarreal

*for Our President, January 23, 2003 Washington, DC 20009 (paloma = dove)*

i cannot name you
son of sons
for you only go by the bastard of your middle initial
i can only ask you
how many palomas
white feathers
curucucú
must fall to win?

it’s minus sixteen degrees tonight
the next zip code over
i escape to the theater
away from your headlines
away from your ranch

i only ask you why a man of means
stayed so close to home
before moving to my neighborhood

Were you afraid of sand and outdoor markets?
Or was it the trill of another tongue?
now you embrace the last resort of the incompetent
despite halting words
from the civilized

nodding, I see you embrace your wife
confused
and happy your daughters stay on dry land
drinking to old papá
and his trigger finger

the weight of dead palomas
rests on you, your middle initial
and the lands you never visited
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/knew 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
HELLOMOTHER – BLADECLOUD – DARKRAPER – CHILDBURNER – SKYEATER
STORMSWAN – DEVILROAR – DEATHBIRD – WIDOWMAKER
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 granpapas 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 whirs 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.


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

Conyus

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,
grey bones lie dying 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
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 –
wastikas, stars of David, fases, 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 Chrysostum
**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,
inflect 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

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.