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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
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, chief editor and publisher 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 refind 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
 kleelee 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:

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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.