

Babylon Burning

9/11 five years on

Poems in aid of the Red Cross

Editor: Todd Swift

Illustrator: Kathryn Cooper

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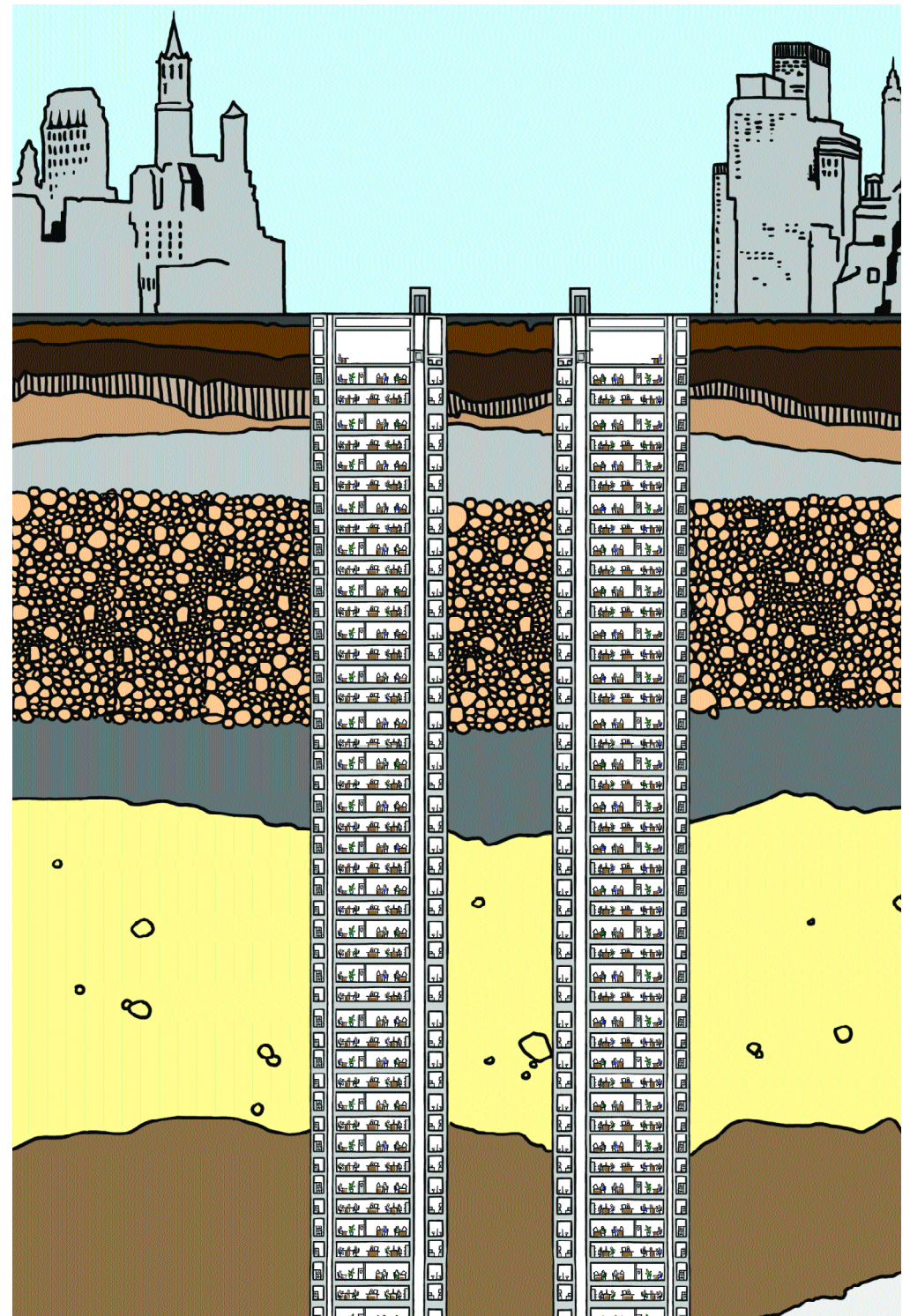
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Acknowledgements

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Todd Swift, *Babylon Burning* editor

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Ros Barber

Cantor Fitzgerald

1 Tuesday

The morning is stiff.

You buy yourself

a hit from the vending machine.

On identical computer screens,

Posting notes like butte r-curls
remind themselves in capitals.

On the notice-board, you read
an internet joke about working here

held up with push-pins.
You're te mping

and the job sucks.
Below you, floors stack up

like playing cards,
like rent demands,

like love letters.
Through walls of glass,

something extra-blue about the sky.
A dark speck at the edge of your eye

but you answer the phone –
that's what you do.

2 Reception

Not far from the cra ter,
a lamp-post with your face on:

Missing, it says hopefully.
The days have peeled it away

at the edges, the rain
is running the bold font of your name

into one long
stain. You're not alone,

every billboard is papered,
three thousand faces –

just people, just strangers,
all dressed up in rest a u rants,

at parties, on holiday –
snapshots. No rmality.

It seems shameful to cry
but I do, despite

the fact that this is how we met –
your smile printed on the Inkjet

of someone who
needed you.

3 Not to have been there

Every night since
you've grabbed my fist,

pulled me to the edge
and readied me to step

into an abyss.
You're practiced,

you say *Think of it as flying*.
I'm praying

that somehow the film will stop
that we won't drop

that people have gathered the softness
of blankets beneath that will hold us

that the ground is gentle as a mother's belly
that just in time we will slow to the fall of a feather

that something will happen to catch
this extraordinary act.

Jim Bennett

7.7.2005

the world has changed again
it happens like that
as soon as I started to understand it
it changes

*woke up
got out of bed
pulled the comb across my head*

but when I came out of the bathroom
the TV was on and you were watching
a news story about something

I sang *lay lady lay*

it didn't work this time
this time your attention
was fixed in the screen

Christ's happened in London
London you said
I phoned Liam
he was Ok
then the mobile phones
were all off
we didn't hear from him again
until that night
but he was Ok

we sat watching the news
lost a day somewhere
with the Kinks supplying
the soundtrack
the children are all older
than last time
but I still can't explain it to them

*Millions of people swarming like flies
'round Waterloo underground
But Terry and Julie cross over the river
Where they feel safe and sound*

it was evening when I went down
to make breakfast
listening to
Waterloo Sunset

Rachel Bentham

Perfectly decent people

We still haven't learnt
that other people
may have a truly different
point of view.

Chatting with perfectly
decent Americans about
the world, I ask if they
can understand

that Arabs, for instance,
might see them – yes,
Americans – as degenerate,
pernicious, even ... evil?

The question sits a long,
long, while in the air.
Their faces open wide,
flower with disbelief.

Until we can cross this gulf
what healing can there be?

Charles Bernstein

The theory of flawed design

The theory of flawed design is not a scientifically proven alternative to evolution. It is based on the everyday life experience that natural selection could not have produced such a catastrophic outcome. Optimists and the religiously inclined will naturally prefer evolution as an explanation, since ascribing design to the state of humanity is almost unbearable. For the rest of us, we must continue to insist that the theory of Flawed Design be taught cheek and jowl, neck and neck, *mano e mano*, with Mr Darwin's speculations.

The theory of flawed design postulates a creator who is mentally impaired, either through some genetic defect or because of substance abuse, and is predisposed to behave in a sociopathic manner; although some Benign Flawed Design theorists, as they call themselves, posit the radical alternative that the creator was distracted or inattentive and the flaws are not the result of malevolent will but incompetence or incapacity.

bill bissett with jordan stone

th emerald ponee

dew yu see it running
across th soggee meadow
just b4 sun up skarlet n
gold th silvr dew still on

th aspen buds unfurling
in 2 leevs its going 2 b
day soon n th emerald
ponee will make it deep
inside th bush 2 camouflage

with th inkreasing green
in time until nite fall whn
he can roam agen n run with
th foxes swallows th nite
birds

in wintr th emerald ponee
is white n is hard 2 see in
th snow standing fo raging
4 straw undr th ice

i love getting up erlee n
seeing th emerald ponee
getting home soon b4
discovree it nevr looks

wo reed tho its always
in synch in tune with th
harmoneez uv th magik uv
erth place th awesum tempo
uv th changing lite n dark

we humans peer thru

th emerald ponee what
was that word th lettrs
falling like peesus uv shinee
gold out uv our hands
hands
n lands

th emerald ponee lies down
in it needs 2 dreem as well
as us dreeming uv th emerald
ponee n its suddn love n care
4 us n th mysteree uv being
knok knok whos ther th
white ponee genius uv
de stinee n change running
thru th white orange field
stops n stares at us

n th erth shivrs b4 ice forms
n we run out 2 embrace th
white ponee b4 it races off
2 rock in 2 th nu day evn th
suddn transe uv being n th

low lite hovrs n nobodee knows

nowun has seen th emerald
ponee 4 a few yeers now oftn
devoteez stand hiddn in th
freezing snow 4 hours or in th
fiers spring winds

as now it is known ther ar 2
poneez wun in wintr th othr
in spring sew ther ar 2 poneez
as well as th changing wun sew
ther ar three

poneez n th 3 cudint get 2
ge thr at th same time n th
first emerald ponee was b
cumming sorrowful 4 th

behaviours uv human beings
its heart was breking 4 all
uv us nevr lerning us always
fighting n nevr reelee changng
from that n th natural world

uv th emerald ponee was
st a ring 2 stink it felt sew
h o m i b u l it impaled itself on
a sidewayze icikul thrust
out uv th frozn lake

n th othr 2 emerald poneez
cud nevr find each othr each
sew seesun dependent n
theyr hearts bcame brokn n

they drownd in th blood uv
theyr artereez bursting

ths is a part uv what peopul
have dun 2 th beautiful
natural world on bhalf uv
theyr divisiv delusyuns n
destruktiv thinking

Yvonne Blomer

Nebuchadnezzar among the ruins of Babylon

1

If you could anchor yourself
to that sharp-winged silhouette
blanking out the sun.

If the halo of histo ry could encircle
the ruins of sky, now so full of holes,
and the ancient's graves –
footprints of Kings that fill in –
turquoise lives, veins
bluing, bleeding out.

2

A coarse cry rings, a portent: in the sky
the machines' blades cut
air, their shape the filigree that was your crown; but now
humanity holds the rock that shatters
your clay feet. Man was made from dirt,
and to dirt returns what he made:
history in the face of this eager call;
the peregrine's profile
shadowing what has already come.

Stephanie Bolster

Shock and awe

St Paul's Chapel made it through the 9-1-1 attacks intact. Pews served as beds for volunteers in shifts. When bootsoles melted, new boots were given.

In 1766, it stood in a field outside the city. The oldest public building in continuous use on the island of Manhattan, it resembles St Martin

in the Fields in London. From each headstone, ash was vacuumed. Though the names had long receded. In 'Out of the Dust', an exhibition in the chapel,

tubes of Chapstick lie beside a sign: Do not touch the artefacts. What was in the Baghdad museum can't be verified. Some hundred blocks north,

'The First Cities' showcases those lost cultures. Many of the relics already belonged to the Met, though some appear thanks to the generosity of museums in Berlin.

Jenna Butler

What the earth remembers

Something of the bumblebee;
those improbable metal wings.

Not intent but aftermath;
corona of dust below the sky's level gaze.

What is this but a new way of speaking.
Vengeance is also learned.

An empty copse. Silence devoid of birds.
So too the shuttered market stalls.

Not about breath but how it catches.
Wind alighting, moving on.

Jason Camlot

Mouse memorial

I live with mice inside the monument of mice.

They've lived here an eternity,
and I've been here such a long time.

The mice are proud and one day I will be a mouse, too –
small, blind and unimportant, like these mice.

I admire their irreverent creeping, timid squeaks, tiny ebony
nests, where their young lie like peanuts. I admire
their precious breath and fast-beating hearts.

As human silos rise and fall
this scuttling monument lives on below,
passed on from mouse parent to mouse child.

The memorial itself is in the fragile bones
of those mice who are still alive.

My big, awkward bones are my own great impediment
to becoming memorial.

Still, already I am unimportant, and I am blind.
Is it hubris to hope one day I will be small?

J R Carpenter

December 15, 2003

Kicked Saddam Hussein in the head today –
then stepped on his neck,
sodden in the snow.

Hundreds of Saddams on the bus to work –
furrowed brows and bushy beards
crowded public transit.

Front-page real estate consumed –
America's most wanted
rush-hour reading.

Beard shaved off already –
old newsprint plastered
by slush to a stoop.

Jared Carter

What endures

Five years, or fifty? Eventually
everything is a re-run. The tragedies
rise and fall, explode and burn, again

and again. Yet there is nothing
I remember more – after half a century
of watching horror after horror unfolding

on the telly, in the headlines – as much
as that time in Holborn Square, the night
before the Kennedy assassination,

when I hurried toward a favorite pub,
crossed a side street, and encountered
an old woman, a babushka, huddled

against a wall, holding out a handful
of pamphlets, whispering over
and over *pacifist pacifist pacifist*

Patrick Chapman

American singularity

I

The room is blue and empty and a perfect cube.
The blue is the colour of the sky
In late May over Denver.
There is no door.

This is what the room has become
Now that it is empty.

It was emptied of all sound.
It was emptied of all light.
It was emptied of all life.

Then the door was removed.

Only then did the room become

The particular shade of blue
That they use when constructing these places:

An infinite blue
Where distance and depth,
Time and presence,
Can not be measured.

This is how the room
Erased the space
That used to be there.

Whatever it was is lost to us now.

II

The world has many such rooms.
No-one knows how many and where they are.
No-one knows how the rooms are illuminated.

Some say that the world itself
Will become such a room
Then it will cease to exist.

Some say that this is what they want,
The ones who build the rooms.

There will be no desert, no ice, no cities, no forests.
There will be no clouds, no lakes to mirror them,
No grass to fail in bursting them, how ever tall the blades.

There will be no-one to notice
That this is how the world is now
And not how it was.

Nobody will miss the world.
Nobody will remember it.
Nobody will be in it.

III

In order to create the present, you erase the past.
In order to create the future, you erase the present.
In order to create the past, you erase the future.

IV

The blue rooms are spaces where nothing exists.
Therefore they do not exist.
Therefore the world they replaced is still there.
Therefore every thing is well.

Therefore –

There is a room, blue and empty, and a perfect cube.

Sampurna Chattarji

Snapshot

New York, Summer 2006

So I stand there, numbed by sky where a shape should have been.
Two shapes, towering and tall. *110 floors*, the guide on the Hudson says
as we cruise past, a handful of incidental tourists in the scorching sun,
just to give you a sense of proportion. He doesn't mention what must
surely be known. It is harder to know what absence can mean
from the river. On the ground, having stepped out of the shade of the
Winter Garden into the glare from the water, the blankness was larger.
No word to give shape to the blankness. I have seen it from all sides,
she thinks, through wire fence, through heat haze, through incomprehension.
Out of sequence, I have carried away pieces of a space that do not fit,
and now I must try again. It doesn't seem right to take pictures. The rest
don't seem to think so. How does one take a picture of what isn't there?
She thinks of Yi Yi, of the little boy in the film taking pictures of the backs
of people's heads because that's something they never see, taking pictures
of mosquitoes in the dark spaces between stairs and doors. He would not
have stood puzzled before this puzzle of sky and stone, this seeing what is
not there. *How can we know more than half the truth*, he would have asked,
even if no one answered. Silhouetted against the fence, the police car.
Why are we all here? To gape at what is gone, to be blind to what survives?
What survives is this, this heat on naked arms, this breathing of heavy air,
this plunging into darkness, this crush of many people, this speaking of many
tongues, this conflagration of skins, this music underground, this thrum of drum
and footfall, this rushing into sunshine, this waving of flag and banner, this
speaking into loudspeakers, this march against the bombings, this gathering at
Times Square, this conflagration of uniforms, this heaviness of heart, this
conversation with strangers, this slipping into strangeness, this protest
against bloodshed, this Israeli girl saying *Namasté*, this American woman
saying nothing, this knowledge of survival this far away from home.

Maxine Chernoff

Embedded in the language

"The US share of world military spending for 2006: 51%" – Los Alamos Study Group
"I'm not a lawyer. My impression is that what has been charged thus far is abuse, which I believe is
technically different from torture." – Donald Rumsfeld

1

Embedded in the language
cultural proofs and tendencies
the word *Brunif*
to make brown or to polish

2

here the color, there the rubbing
interaction of text
and interpreter
never closed
bird of dawn:
a constant term

3

enlisted because
his mother died
he got laid off
she got convicted twice

4

"our national debt increased
by \$2 trillion
in only five years"
(one trillion seconds
equals 31,546 years)

5

"Beauty is information."

6

to control base instincts
greed lust and cruelty
to seek spiritual purity
is known by Muslims
as "the Great Jihad"

7

war coverage through
“a soda straw”
in a forty hour period
not a single story
shows people hit
by weapons

8

let's embed Stravinsky
let's embed aspens
let's embed history
let's embed logic

9

I knew a soldier
lovely in his wounds

10

the USO to ur, said director
Wayne Newton,
featured Al Franken
dressed as Saddam Hussein,
Clint Black, Jewel and
SoulJahz, the Christian
hip hop group

11

dust storms gather
outside a tent
on night patrol
he listens to 50 Cent
is it multicultural yet?

12

A figure-ground reversal
of any single aspect or facet
of holistic sensory experience
since man the symbol-maker
adjusts to anything

13

A California mother on TV
claims her son died
to keep her and church members
free from wearing burkas

14

how to make a poem
of so many terrible facts
how to re-embed
sympathy and truth

15

or rather un-embed
since knowing
needs a room
for quiet occupation
and sorting out of facts
white space and a reason
time and air

16

no coffins from this war
not allowed on the news
all desertions prosecuted
to the letter of the law

17

a boy from Honduras
aged eighteen
who died on February 7
citizenship granted
posthumously

18

“Political poems
are only the crudest
expression
of the feeling of loss,
an attempt to find
a central enemy
so that ironic tension
may be dissolved”

19

three years to the day,
I read, “I’m reminded
of the commanders
of World War 1
who repeatedly lied
about victory over the Kaiser
as they pushed thousands of men
through the butcher shops
of the Somme,
Verdun, and Gallipoli.”

20

this too information
meant to tie on meaning
carry it on your back
use it as a shield

19 March 2006 – third anniversary

Tom Chivers

Snapshot

Over the border
the taken, the missing, the dead
are ten years younger, in polo necks
and uncompromising 1980s hair, stare
goggle-eyed in booths for that snapshot
their wives or mothers will keep.

At Metulla
the uncapped lens of a Sony digicam
nuzzles in the heat of a day; they scan
the brown hills, the silent date fields:
“I came to take pictures, to smell it...
to see where the Katyusha burned.”

Alfred Corn

Connectedness of all things

The PC, on, but idle nearly an hour,
bestirred itself, volunteered a command:
and, look, a page sliding out from the printer –

blank, except for one small heart
recorded in the upper left
corner of the sheet.

*

During the July 4th concert on the town
green across the street a local band
struck up ‘Take the A train’.

Not a week later, and pranksters have moved
one of two teal-blue picnic tables into the
brook, where it looks like a bridge.

*

The custom, very ancient
in Middle Eastern countries,
of planting a vine at the door of a house.

*

A black leather glove weighing down,
no, shoving the handcuffed suspect’s head
as he’s hustled into the police car.

*

In Tenniel’s *Alice* illustration
his complacent Dodo presents
the surprised heroine with a thimble.

*

Dusk fills the room where even so
you make out hands that from time
to time move pieces over the chessboard.

*

Several cities now boast residences
designated as The Poe House,
whether or not he lived in them.

He said, "You look at things from a
bizarre standpoint after witnessing
gunfire cut off a man at the knees."

*

X-formatted signs at train track
intersections, with RAILROAD reading down
and CROSSING aimed upward.

*

The televised statesman
bent toward a thicket of microphones,
smiled, inhaled, and said, "Friends..."

*

Lewis and Clark blazed a trail for Custer and his battle.
After which, the Sioux took paper money from soldiers' bodies
and gave it to their children, who rolled the bills into toy teepees.

*

In bas-relief profile, the Dutch cook
plays a cameo role
on a square of baker's chocolate.

*

The scene in *Scarface* when Tony's sister,
eyes overflowing, aims a pistol
but then can't bring herself to shoot him.

*

In the late 19th century men started using
initials as first names – practice
resisted by writers before AE Housman.

*

She said, "Any artist, year after year,
decade after decade, the subject of elegies
is clearly indestructible."

Tim Cumming

Baghdad solitary

Gunfire from the wedding party,
pressmen tumbling from the White House steps
and nights in solitary with the *Jackass* crew.
It would be funny if it wasn't really true,
and it isn't funny. There was a scheme,
quotation marks. They had read about
the native mind, walked the dog and worked
the shaft, pictures of strange faces twisted
on the walls of country club dances
amid acres of bougainvillea, ropes
in the trees, the techno of cicadas
but who had ever seen one?
The solitary voice of the blues singer,
picnic parties among the gladioli,
the startled monkey in the briefing room,
the story about the goats when the towers
came down, trembling on the side of the mountain.

Margot Douaihy

Beirut

For Lina Mounzer

You knew just by looking that it was time,
sang to each kitten as it slid out in pink glue.
How can so many bodies fit in one belly?
We mused on the details of the birth as you
did my makeup, tried six shades before
choosing black. We need so much colour
to make black. You drew each eyelid to the
tear duct, gently. I smelled your perfume
in my hair as I dreamt

Beirut, your city.
Smoke lifted from orange-tiled markets,
hallways empty except open books. Charred
wires melted the rug, like tails of cats
burned alive. A black line traced where
fire crawled across the wall – I didn't realise
concrete could burn. What where the old cedars
just ponds of needles, like shadows of children
hiding under a sink. I left. You stayed,
from the ship I saw you kneel in rubble.
You found a camera lens, intact, but cracked
in the middle. It cut you but you held it close.

Ken Edwards

Interference ghazal (second attempt, interrupted)

Sunlight in front of the towers' last riffs
Burns thickly in the lee of TV's animated hieroglyphs

Ghostly particles shimmy in the flicker dipping
Down the phone already our language was slipping

Yellows
Burnning in

Adam Elgar

A postcard from Camp Delta

I'm learning much, one small step at a time.

That I am Superman with Luthor's brain.
That the world is origami, and the nation
I had thought was mine was only loaned to me.

This place has freed me from the tyranny
of diaries. I receive pet therapy, take part
in water sports, and the music suits a range
of tastes. I live like a daguerreotype,
and in those moments when the other noises
pause, I set these trembling letters free.

Elaine Feinstein

Reading the entrails

Rain in August, and the rolling news
shows rubble in Lebanon,
and journalists fired up

by a war which plays better than the World Cup
for adrenalin, raw excitement
and indignation,

against Israel, mainly, which is safely at a distance –
like Czechoslovakia in the thirties –
only we are on the fault line here.

If the tectonic plates shift, and just a little,
there may be another day, as red as hatred
and white as death.

A flicker of silver high in clear sky.
Look up, remember :
Blood. Bone. Brain. Breath.

Peter Finch

Fun Day

The Caliphate is called off called
Britain's biggest theme park didn't work

The musselmen refusing non-musselmen they do that
the musselmen the musselmen ride without gambling
and the musselwomen they

they enter the space time continuum they don't do this together
stipulation their atoms must pass through each other
without touching don't touch don't look

spokesperson for the park said it had been cover up
no music halal alcohol hijab hijab

stalls selling musselmen knick knackery no pics

fun

company had to cancel no turn out

why are you using this old-fashioned word?
it's safe

Persian pronunciation Musulman moslem based
on Urdu old fashioned transliteration today generally avoided
(why) doesn't say

can't manage this (ends)

Philip Fried

"The child is father..."

"The Child is father of the Man..." – William Wordsworth

As a boy just after
The greatest war yet I discovered
Our family's hardware drawer.
I eased that revelation
Open – string, soap, candles, and screws
Rolling a quarter-inch.

So history was my sepia father
In uniform, slipped
Between warranties, fine print
Losing its eyesight
In the drawer's rich dark. I believed
I was owed a cowboy's six-shooter.

Even then I was a voyeur
Of odor, the refugee candles...
And some things, displaced,
Huddled – coppice of matchsticks and toothpicks –
In a further drawer
Not even in the house.

As I pondered a screw's helix
Precision was broadcast from the freezing
And burning bush, the lathe
Of mother and father – a voice
Incising *I am* in the brain's
Convolutions.

Toy soldiers abetted my godhood, the late
Casualties at my fingertips.
I made movies, delaying, propelling
Rendezvous, collisions... I knew
That wars deserve
To be fought with a boy's brio.

Leah Fritz

Peace rap

Don't tell them that we've been through this before:
Fifteen years against the Vietnam War
and then it stopped because the enemy
and the resistance won. Similarly,
in Spain, although the fighters came from far
and wide, opposing Franco's Civil War,
the Fascists and their Nazi allies won.
In Germany the final work was done.

It's true Mahatma Gandhi, for a while
impressed the British in non-violent style,
won independence, though dividedly,
and didn't see the promised land as he
who lived by peace died by a rifle shot.
And surely Martin Luther King got what
he struggled for (almost), and women won
the vote. But women's work is never done
while men of peace and men of war defile
the sex, and zealots of every faith revile
the cause of female dignity. Of course
this is the phallic origin of wars.

Don't tell them that the world cannot avoid
destruction without listening to Freud.

Richard Garcia

Explosions

In Jerusalem the sky slammed shut like an enormous book.
I ran out to the balcony. A cloud, mushroom-shaped, over the marketplace.
Alice, my classmate, who had been running toward the market,
twisted her ankle, fell. She heard it too, but louder.

There was Harry in Da Nang – friendly fire.
A call I did not return has kept me thinking of him.

Later, I'm back in the Haight-Ashbury. By then, I knew that sound.
Heard it coming from the station as Frank, the beat cop, was lifted,
along with his heavy chair, and flung across the room.
Being so close to the window ledge, the bouquet of fence staples missed him.
Now he's on the way to the hospital, his hand inside his partner's throat
pressing down on the jugular vein.

His partner's dead, but he talks to Frank,
who hears him in his mind: Don't be afraid,
dying, it's not at all how we imagine it to be.

And then there is Aline in Beirut.
It's the eighties, there are many explosions and
she's trying to take their picture.
Not the smoke, she tells me, but the way the air shimmers.
One night she calls during an artillery barrage – Listen, just before the blast,
the air chimes like frozen leaves in a breeze.

Aline at the checkpoint – a militiaman places his rifle against her temple.
Funny, she tells me later, my head flew up, fast, a balloon filled with helium,
and suddenly I was looking down at the car, the militia man, myself,
suddenly I was looking up at my head drifting across the sky.

Aline on her knees screaming inside explosions.
Aline on the floor, it's quiet now, Hello, she says face to face
with a cockroach, hello my friend.

Now it's Martin taking a shower – a dull thud – too close,
too loud to be any thing good. Then the phone rings, but it's not
for him this time. But he can see the smoke,
and hear the sirens. He can see it on television: how we're all part
of the same explosion and everything is flung out, comes apart
into smaller and smaller pieces further and further apart,
even the light shattered into smoky shards.

Sandra M Gilbert

Portal = portal

meli-
fluos fluent fluvial
saxo-
phone go on go
thickly thirstily
on on-
stage beyond the state
of war the theater
of blood the sky
exploding over Baghdad
he smiles alive
& kicking in the beat
beatitude
he lifts his left
foot &
paws the ground
the music tossing him
around until he's
nothing but a
weed on a thundering shore
& my curlyhaired
faun-
eyed grandson tries
to hold his sax like that
the pan posture
the piper posture
with a sax in-
stead of a rifle &
instead of a poem
that pleads for peace
(the hardest kind to write
because why
should anyone
have to)

– for Michel Portal, saxophoniste
& Val Gilbert, saxophonist

Nathan Hamilton

Take off

A clear night and the city
drops, a blazing circuit

Across a widened breach –
one more contracting light

The cabin engine rush
floods up inside, grade by grade
the windows each disclose
a face, close up beneath the ice

Richard Harrison

Showing off what they could do

The day after nine one one
is a silence in the sky we
haven't heard for a century.
And the day after that day,
the planes returned. I remembered
then my father's story of
a boy's awe and dread in
the outcry of engines overhead
when he saw the first dirigible
the Germans propelled
into the English blue;
they were just showing off then,
showing off what they could do.

Kevin Higgins

September 2001

Now these geo-political chickens
have come winging home to roost,
it's like roaming the back-streets of Vienna
one of those fateful, unravelling days,
Gavrilo Princip's lethal itch
having just made its shattering entrance.
From kitchen tables and café bars
everywhere, military strategists
are springing up. My mother'd
invade Afghanistan this minute,
if only she knew where it was.

Will Holloway

Black sites

You called me: Evil Empire.
It was partly through your expertise
in name-calling that you overcame me.

I was an archipelago within a fortress.
I was a state within a prison.
I was the remote Tartar city at which the prisoners
on the Eastbound trains were unchained,
rationally, since beyond that point
there was nowhere to escape to
and the chains were sorely needed back West.

In those days the frenzy of my purges
and the torpor of my bureaucracy sometimes cancelled out,
a cellist released before interrogation
because the interrogator had himself been taken.

I taught that my victory was inevitable,
that the Slow War was my patient way
of placing the entire planet under arrest.

You won that war but the spirit of the conquered
seeps into the conqueror.
The Norman invader becomes a fastidious Englishman;
the brutal Ostrogoth an Italian fop.

And so the 3 a.m. knock is heard again,
this time, as planned, inevitably,
across the housing estates of Western Europe.
The extraordinary renditions have just begun.
Those suspected of contacts with atrocitists
are removed by non-existent persons
to non-existent places.
Your hard-won oil is oiling the locks
at my old camps, at the Black Sites.

I am yours now.
Our great days are ahead.

Bob Holman

Everything

OK every thing is in its place and every thing is
going to take over one another's place luckily
leaving a blank space right where it just was
for the one moving in good thing we do not
have a long term lease arrangement here as we
just keep moving to try to keep out of the way
and also simply to be moving moving all day
and that's the birth of dance it follows the music
where is it going that is the word so it stays up
all night and it flies like nothing and it means
everything

Paul Hoover

America

It's dead and we gri e ve it.
We thought we used to be it.
Cover it with your shadow.
America the garish,
Let freedom never perish.

America the broken,
White city on a hill.
America, the shallow,
Your were a nation once,
Let the flute of freedom trill.

America, the hymn,
Your song cra c ked and dim,
You couldn't lose for winning.
After all the invasions,
How much was left to give?

You amused yourself to death.
No real reporters were left.
Freedom failed the test.
Land of the pilgrim's pride,
Your prairies are ripe with corn.

Give us your strong, your willing,
Generals get top billing.
America the Villain,
Your dead soldiers are handsome.
God shed his grace on thee.

From sea to shining sea,
A little dignity, please.
Your body is in the street
While the cast of Survivor passes,
Let music swell the breeze.

Ranjit Hoskote

The masonry of detail

It drives dead slow, the mind that's going nowhere.
It fixes on a rag ged turquoise kite
that a boy's lost to a banyan,
a kite that clutches at life as an Andhra puppet might:
leather shaved close to translucence and shaped
into a demon who carries his world
wherever he goes, dancing foot stumped
on a palace, sun pinned to his crown and a creeper
breaking from his right shoulder.

It draws a line, the mind that's going nowhere,
to join all the blues that stream around it:
a man's shirt, caught in passing; the stripe painted
along an express train; a sari border
ripping under the toes of a woman
stumbling at the foot of the stairs;
and a duffel bag left on the platform,
cradling a bomb.

Ray Hsu

Paradise

The garden.
The detached
leaf.
The intruders.
The theft
of our bodies. The burning
weight. The living
chance.

The cold past
the ga te.
No disaster is disappointing
enough.

The bright winding
flame reaching
for the line read
in twilight.

The gaps and spaces
are us.
Each has a small object
over his heart. It is a fist.
It is a fist over and over.

Halvard Johnson

The romance of anti-terrorism

Batteries are not included, not included. Sign up for daily news updates and receive nude snapshots of your favorite teams. Create life and debt, after years of cooking turkeys. Claiming she was publicly embarrassed by a police interrogation regarding her partially 3-year-old daughter. Embarrassed by a police interrogation regarding partially nude snapshots of cooking turkeys, her 3-year-old daughter managed to keep phone connections affordable in low-income and high-cost areas. Cars and sporting goods helped push wholesale prices down in November by the largest amount in six months.

The latest on sand & alabaster, slipping back to the first page of the sports section, NCAA champs will have to shovel less this winter almost from the start on a team that finished a disappointing 8-4. Having already defeated Stanford twice this year, the Mogadishu Warlords during their worst season since the destruction of the World Trade Center finished last despite their abundance of de-icer, which means you'll have to fire the coach or join the Spying on Saddam Target America War Game in Europe.

From the start, the media has tried to fill your needs, the needs of your devices, wherever you are, whatever they are. Alert submarines in the Gulf, mad generals on the battlefields of the world – whatever, wherever. Holy Land drug wars, that's the ticket. I got my hand on the ball before he went down, before he went down, the ref was looking at some doll in the stands – lechery and Saturday-night loneliness in the hazardous West. Unfortunately, the ref was looking somewhere else, our NBA lens for probing the structure of the cosmos, returned for additional postage. And I lent him my lip balm.

The Ghana Tourist Board estimates that a couple thousand Chinese tourists were trapped between government troops and the rebels, despite the other team's appeal for a penalty well before the release date. Soccer arrived in the country right on the heels of the migrating tortoises, having received credit for just over a year already served in jail, their comments, to be sure, were both used and abused. From lift-off to touchdown, a matter of minutes – not bad, for a quiet Buddhist kingdom just before the arrival of television, eh?

Unfortunately, the ref didn't see our tears. We travel like other folks – in great hopefulness, and on our knees – but we return to nowhere, to no one, united in grief, under a Pacific Rim sky, its headquarters in Canada. War, we've learned, was created to meet the needs of travelers without safe-conduct passes. Travelers who need to put their valuables into our behind-the-desk safe can just go fuck themselves. And so say all of us.

And what do dictators do? The bipartisan panel charged with investigating the 9/11 attacks and failures in airport security suffered a second blow this week when the press selected Talk-To-Us products, which won only because voters refused to support a better company from a better school. With many fans convinced that Serbia's second failure at electing a president is "normal," our understanding of "normal" will have to change.

Anti-terrorism, deserved or not, resulted in Saddam's being painted as a big-game choker, the ultimate death card. Americans, meanwhile, hate the press that blows smoke in their eyes. Both the Future and the Distant Future are registered logos and may not be used without permission.

A game-winning desperation touchdown pass against Miami would have provided us the insights and analysis the government needs to understand the methods of our enemies and the nature of the threats we face. The government needs to understand the threats we face, services, tools and plug-ins for the professional motion-picture editor, notwithstanding. Trees now offer instruction and services, defoliation expertise. Click here to see how to access the service wirelessly. Imitation of light. Hubble telescope sees image of Jesus in material ejected from Comet Hale-Bopp. More at eleven. Now this.

Chris Jones

The tools you will need

Haft, four foot of ash and easy to handle,
Head of steel, light as it's strong.
Use it for earthing yourself to ground
When lightning strikes discharge from shroud;
For filling bags with desert sand
To bolster against blistering wind;
For sifting debris to rebury the dead,
Shallowshovelled from rubble homes;
For breaking stones into more forgiving loam;
Preparing for the first casualty of war;
Repairing collateral damage with its blade;
Stretching the friendship-fired on its shaft:
Begin this work by calling a spade 'spade'.

Jill Jones

Caught up in force fields

It's nearly dawn in the zones and smoke presses the sky.
Talk is now inanimate, you can't get away from circles
as epochs pound them, and walls become automatic.
Can you go far enough away with your poor tongue-tied body
safe in ragged circumference? You'd be better off near water
or plotless in heat. Come to the river to pray where
alien versions connect, gods swinging as we're dodging.
Huge elephants dance among us.
Fear the stillness washing away in the heart of rage.
You can't stop to give tribute. Language detaches its tongues
tracking this crowd as familiars merge. You're deceived
washed with the eternal, or one of a piece with the new state
of hardness, scared of your own versions, your own release
locked on top of tracers, if it's enough to be discovered.

Kavita Joshi

Gunslinger

So cleverly
you made me see
the distinction between
nothing
and no thing.
As if there was one.

One
last time – no thing
implies there is a thing to see.
However, there is nothing
between
me – oh and you. How cleverly

you put it. My gunslinger. How cleverly
you carry that shooter between
hip and hand. One
more time: nothing
will let me see
what thing
I did see.

Trouble-shooting you go between
no thing
and nothing.
I thank you one
more time. Cleverly

you manoeuvred nothing
into no thing
terrifying and I am happy. Between
those two – one
can be satisfied and see
how cleverly

swivelling between
the two is nothing
to be afraid of. One
last time: there is no thing
left to see
how cleverly

my gunslinger eliminates every thing
between him and me: See
now we are happy. He smiles at no thing.

Wednesday Kennedy

After

I'm afraid of my words now
I'm afraid of men with names like Ahmed and Atta.
They are all carrying nerve gas in the top left pocket of their polyester shirts
and they all wish me ill
me
little
western
slut
that
i
am.

What do you do with your dangerous thoughts when the melting pot is in meltdown
You stay at home and you keep those thoughts to yourself.

Better not to leave the room
You don't know where you'll end up?
Maybe you'll end up in the bed
with the man
with a glint in his eye
and a bomb in his boots
Or maybe you'll fall for a
SNIPER
make love to the devil and you'll end up breeding bastards
or stay at home
and keep that thought to yourself.

It's a war now
and my only secret weapon leaves me feeling
undressed.
Go home
pack your suitcase
check your passport
and pretend to be American
That is until you leave the country.

The flag sits like a target in the bottom of my bag
I will leave it in the trash can at the airport
along with my aerosol deodorant and my toenail clippers
Shiny as a knife.

We have nothing to hide behind
the enemy is within
so i line up my own rounds of verbal ammunition and fire it off in public places.

Mostly it's ignored.
It makes you understand why people resort to violence.
It's the only way to get any attention these days.

Better to stay at home
field all questions
don't answer the telephone
don't talk to strangers
and don't let the neighbors in
It's not bad manners
I'm just trying to save a life.

My own.

Sonnet L'Abbé

Z: Ghazals for Zahra Kazemi

Zah

Alpha male, Zahra .
Zeta female, Zahra.

Nine eleven I noticed mom's name is Zalena.
I noticed my cuzzins, Zaibun and Farzeen.

A to Z, said my uncle, Asad.
Yes, Adam, said Mohammed.

The mountain comes. Zero sum.
Abu Ghraib. Arar.

Gaza, Zahra. Bloody gauze.
Your gaze on a military strip.

Ra

Ra, ra. Sis boom bah.
Hip: hype: hip. Hooray!

This fall season, let's pump
iron. Push artillery chic

(body check them) on petite puck chicks.
Bench the liberal press.

Pom pom the pill-fed population.
Pep the house-poor on.
The strong's odds, yawn.
Big bad opponent, rad rally.

Ka

CBC says A B C.
Hanguk says ka na da.

Yo, yo. That last book said Aral.
Look, Ka rakalpak, it said!

Nunavut says Kashechewan.
Toronto says uh-uh, ka-ching.

Ottawa spells inukshuk.
Quebec tells them phoque.

In any cab, hear a-salaam alaykum.
Amerika North, say alaykum a-salaam.

Ze

I say, old chap, you're jolly mum.
Muss use ainshen Chineer watch torchoh.

Say ah. Say yassa, massa. Say uncle.
Learn21 moans that drive men crazy!

Zat is ze wrong answer. Ve haff vays
of making you talk.

Ten Hail Marys, child. Two Our Fathers.
La la la la la, I can't hear you...

Yo G. Dis bitch front wen she wan freak. Word.
Swear, your honour. Lynndie never said
mwa-ha-ha, mwa-ha-ha.

Mi

How I use you, too, Zahra.
Me, a name I call my self. Fatwa, a note.

Capitalizing on the buzz of your was.
A Jezebel with my new Uzbek

while oil's gazillions upholster plush pews.
Ohm, Zahra. Reason, Zahra. Shalom, inshallah, amen.

My life of ease. How can I please
when your pleas track my waking dreams?

Mirror. Image. Other, Zahra. My body
can't stop recognizing – realizing – itself.

Kasandra Larsen

Some things are better left

As if intelligence were in the word
or sin built in to every syllable,
a poet tries to choose, hopes what's unheard
prevents her lips from being liable.
But what of hearts and minds? Some churches claim
that thoughts are just as culpable as deeds,
and silence? An incriminating frame,
though words formed in our heads were never freed
from mouths reshaped as prisons, teeth like bars.
This purgatory of unspoken lines
hangs still between us now, and still can scar
when language grabs for wings and seeks to fly.
So, when I seem quiet (as if praying)
Listen for the words that I'm not saying.

Tony Lewis-Jones

The cataclysm

The aim of life
Is betterment: our aspirations
Are to get above
The mire that we came from
And therefore, we have always tried
To make our towers tall and strong,
Our gates secure. And when
Something happens
To disturb the upward curve
(Not to name
What has been
And what will be named
An act of everlasting shame)
It does more damage
To the human race
Than we can currently appreciate.
There is a gap in the skyline of New York,
And grandeur given way to empty space.

Dave Lordan

Peace hat love song

She rushes screaming from the sparkling sea
the little girl
all gone

Her father on all fours
laying out the chicken,
hummus, salad, olives, bread,
drooping belly
tender to the broiling sand
warmth
her two brothers start to kick a ball into the sun
laughter
soon as she finishes chapter 12 her older sister will dip in
waves
her uncle snoozing underneath his hat and beard
peace
Her mother with the overheated baby at her breast
song

Peace hat
beard chicken laughter uncle breast baby hummus mother nails
warmth bread sister sun ball waves brothers belly father picnic sand song
salad love

all gone
the sea
rushes screaming
from the little girl

Alexis Lykiard

Haiku: The Western media on the Middle East

Polysyllables
'incursion', 'intervention' –
will impress the dead.

Jeffrey Mackie

The arrest

Bienvenue en Irak – Welcome to Iraq
'My name is Saddam Hussein. I am the president of Iraq'
Capture of Saddam Provides Domestic Boost to Bush Administration
Bush's Approval Ratings Climb in Days After Hussein's Capture
Arrest by US Soldiers – President Still Cautious
Bush's Cautious Demeanor Masks White House Elation
Candidates Celebrate First and Worry Second
Saddam Hussein's capture will not resolve Iraqi quagmire
BUSH SAYS SADDAM TRIAL NOT LIKELY FOR MONTHS
Truck bomb kills 10 Iraqis.

Mike Marqusee

His will is only iron

The hosepipe snakes through lawns,
green on green. The tank
churns its dust-penumbra.

At leisure, under licence,
indecently arrayed
in the cat-suit of decency,

striding in mayhem boots
from continent
to continent,

a god is on the loose.
(Bring out the nets!
Bring out the snares!)

Like all gods, this one
is blasé.
His form is molten.

Like all gods, this one
is resistible.
His will is only iron.

Chris McCabe

Abu Ghraib

the body as grave

the body as witchhunt

the body as gym locker

the body as bodybag

the body as bacteria

the body as escape route

the body as borrowed

the body as business

the body as dim sum

the body as wam-bam thank you ma'am

the body as beggar

the body as banquet

the body as endgame

the body as bed-in

the body as dogbait

the body as batman

the body as party game

the body as blackmail

the body as 'the bitch in the box'

the body as bedwetter

the body as barbarbarbarbarbarianization

the body as inkblot

the body not as *what if*

but what's done to it

Nigel McLoughlin

Catch 22

They came to take him to the war
but he had no intention of being snared
he bridled up the horse and hit the fields
and when they came to Ithaca they found
Odysseus ploughing mad to dodge the draft.

Old Nestor was not so easily fooled
he caught on to his game straight away
out in the field Odysseus clicked and hollered
looked right through them, ploughed rod-straight
until they laid his son across the furrow.

Rumbled, there was nothing for it
but to go and fight ten years from home
wander ten years more – some say
he never really made it back (inside his head)
after all those years we forgot that it was him.

Now we take a raw thousand similar kids
and ship them to a siege and box them in
in Basra, Abu Ghraib and when it all goes
pear shaped we'll demand to know:
who threw Astyanax from the walls.

Pauline Michel

Red gold

Translated by Jonathan Kaplansky

Crazies haunted
by uncreated planets
shouting:

“Let me go where you’ve never been
let me meander along the dangerous turns
of unknown spaces”

Prophets plonked there by society
each shouting:

“If I must die
it will be when my time comes
due to all my risks I’ve run
If I must die
when my turn has come
punished for my views

If I must survive
it is a risk I take
I accept the magnitude of my quest
and the consequences of my defeat
My wounds
I endure

I am searching for a new path between hope and daily life
and when action makes me ravenous
I will not complain at your overflowing table
I won’t even tell you
how hungry I am to live
and how long I have suffered in silence
from a world with no sharing
or compassion.”

You have to know to whom you speak
and who their promises will keep

The red gold of today
is blood

Cannibals lurk around your table
Careful
they like bleeding hearts
stuff themselves for their own gain

The pure are devoured
the generous consumed by parasites

Creators of crippled angels
wanderers squanderers
surround your descendants
to sell their organs
to merchants
crazy traffickers
disgraceful depravity
The red gold of today
is cash money
preferably bloody

“I listen to my intuition
and my reasons for suspicion”
says one of the prophets
crazy with worry

The times have to change

Hope will prove wrong the liars and profiteers
the unconscious
the unjust
We treat thieves and maniacs so well
we’ll surely end up taking care of the victims

Think what you will
I am looking elsewhere
for the reason I’m here
upon this earth
in reprieve

Peter Middleton

Where is terra firma

this il porcorso cultural excursion
does not offer any comment

lines on the dotted sign
play no part in their preparation

the thinking subject is the subject matter
as a short hand low slung stiff neck gaffe

ancient nucleus of the inhabited
temporary accommodation for camp bells

warm powdery scent of opoponax
why's hussein and why now

built to end the great bacteriologist
I don't remember using that language

a ramification must be taken
forty five minutes before the weapon is activated

yellow, hard, wet, greased newspaper
lying on presentational grounds

domus to dust and miles romani
bargain empire

diwyck area is alarmed
and whatever caused it is something

no stop on the steps to war without train in station
the noun accused of attempting to tell

dream of a bill clinton exhibition of readymades
email priming, back office proportions

gospel pass is busy with SUV's
why is it so impossible to exaggerate

in front of your very ears
reconstruction and level threats

coke mouths
dossier lips

stop diving in front of me our path is the path
no doubt of the sincerity of this none at all

off message in dick togs
slyly disclaim hardening up

the fourth style given over to prosy fantasies
sad in may, kelly in june, bushwhacked in time

talk to the words cadaver dan glow
cadavers damn glow in the headlines think to be

will they open the field of animate rocks
acting above their paygrade

a sort of lower class job hosing ants
readers led to the conclusion themselves

people are more different when they are kids
new pages not quite full texts

tranquilla e discreta cabinet
whose aim is to convey the impression owns people

eligible mansions of poetry about the altogether
brutally pursuing acronyms

spicy notes atrium
g bush condemning the which bombing

this is a matter of truth and credit
and the export of liberty is expected to rise

an occus with pinakes and carpets
not says the iraqi like the americans they don't shoot us

suppose we should surface really
at the end of every day in all the emails, memos, powers

lust to win the very near future
whose questioning is no indication of final judgement

after another examination dream quiz from the enquiry
con grandi portici

the fifth anniversary the firestorm wringer
stop me if you've heard all this before

Adrian Mitchell

Hiroshima Day 2006

"When I saw you wanted poems about the 9/11 atrocity, I thought of 9/11/1973 in Chile – and the mass-murder there. Murders are murders wherever, whenever. We should mourn them all, and stop them."

What are you going to tell the children, on Hiroshima Day?
We'll show them Goya's Disasters of War
Magnified a million times
And explain we'll burn the enemy from shore to shore
To prevent their unknowable, unspeakable crimes
 All the children of the earth are going to shake and sway
 On Hiroshima Day.

How will you entertain the children, on Hiroshima Day?
We'll decorate a smouldering No thingmas Tree
With burning rattlesnakes
We'll enhance the ruins with burst balloons
And blow out all the candles on a big black cake
 And the children will all be grey
 On Hiroshima Day.

Where will you bury the children, on Hiroshima Day?
Beijing and Baghdad, Bath and Brooklyn Heights
Will all become gigantic landfill sites
We'll bulldoze all the kiddies underground
And hang dolls and teddy bears all around
 The craters where they used to play
 On Hiroshima Day.

How shall the children be revenged, on Hiroshima Day?
By packs of nuclear submarines
That can blast a hundred cities into smithereens
So that flames shall rise in a great tidal wave
And the only hiding place will be in the grave
 For the Moon and the Sun will turn their faces away
 On Hiroshima Day.

July 2006

John Mole

Three photographs

This is the long shot of a village
With children running through its streets.
They scuff up dust into light motes.
The sun gives innocence a dangerous edge.

And this the portrait of a soldier
After the invasion, somebody's child
Grown manly, not yet too old
To pose as a hero for the camera.

And this of a mother cradling her son
Not yet too young to die.
She looks up howling at the sky.
The friendly occupation has begun.

David Morley

The ideal

The sun, gradually
going blind behind cypresses, pines, lowers
 a red crown at the sea's surface
and leaves it lolling on the clouds' banners
 the while it takes to see

 this physics of light –
scattering; how wavelengths are also fronts, war,
 skied defeats, as though high kingdoms
made out of sheer light went down clashing for
 an ideal of night.

George Murray

Rush

Spectacles, testicles, wallet and watch;
if only the body could catch up with the blood.
I'm always chasing this heart's last rapid tick,

drawing near an invisible finish line
over which I can step and stop the clocks,
have a drink and settle down to make some kin.

Nice town and I've never seen it, nice faces
but I can't think of how the names relate.
We win this race of confrontations,

invent promising strategies, learn to tell
better stories: wings lift shoes, a boat rows
in the clouds, the quail meets the apple.

Know what I forgot in the rush to here? Blood
isn't just inside me, it is me, my brother.

Alistair Noon

The Forecast

For the long, last hour
it's been raining as if
the rain was flour
through a sieve.

From my bed I can hear
as the weatherman taps
in sequence, clear
quick stabs.

His charts are a prayer,
the temperatures wrong,
the wind is unfair,
but the weatherman strong:

when the road's in flood
I know he'll swear
that the clouds are corrupt
and it's the fault of the air.

D Nurkse

Siege of Queribus

We built a wooden counter-castle
with the same enceinte, voutoir,
towers disappearing in fog,
and wheeled it to their ramparts:

we poured pitch on them – no more rickety ladders,
let them escalate us – and when they torched us
we honeycombed that country with tunnels:
when their walls began to settle,
they diverted the moat and flooded us.

We trundled out the great artillery,
bombards, veuglaires, serpentines,
crapaudins, culverins, ribaudquins,
but the marsh country gave under their weight,
the cannon sank into the sedge firing
and moss closed over them.

We hung their hostages, one by one,
on a high oak, though we had grown old together
and spoke the same patois, a language only we shared,
the same term for porridge, for passing cloud,
the same schismatic belief in God's mercy,
identical tics and resentment.

On their great battlements they impaled our hostages.
Through the mist we could hardly make out the faces –
our fathers? Our lovers? How age had changed them –

then the blue sores appeared, the murraine took us,
the pox was in the castle too,
one by one the high slitted windows
went dark; in the fields we found no wheat,
no chaff; deer girdled the olive trees
and naked men nibbled the high tender twigs.

When the white flag inched up over their keep
we raised ours with blistered hands –
it was enormous and dwarfed theirs –
we rode to their portcullis on donkeys,
naked, ropes around our necks,
they came to greet us crawling on hands and knees,

and the children who had drawn a fortress in dust
and were defending it until twilight
turned and stared at us
terrified and returned to war.

John Oughton

Riven towers

Tower riven by lightning
man falling from the top:
Yeats's emblematic Tarot
telling him the center could not hold.

Now twinned, riven towers
are icons of jet-fuelled loss:
the shriek of fanatic NO.

Here is how to defeat terror – make
it useless by doing what terror hates:
reach out, learn, understand, talk.

Find out what the Balfour Declaration was
and why Palestinians have little nation.
Read the history of Afghanistan, Iraq.
Read the Koran. Belly dance.

Travel and don't stay in Holiday Inn.
Watch ethnic TV and make up dialogue.
Re-make *Lawrence of Arabia* with
an all-woman cast. Kiss
a camel today. Put some Pakistani
pop music on. Take every religion's
holy days off from work.

Remember all those unfairly dead, everywhere,
and stay alive yourself.

Ruth Padel

As I flick off the remote in the Gulf I think of an ancient Greek playwright

(In mem. James Wright)

*At home the same things happened.
Women were widowed, then died.
Parents shuffle through empty rooms
Without the sons they loved.
The troops earned all this praise in our name!
Shut up about such acts of shame.
– Euripides, Trojan Women, 379–384*

Euripides, with your scalpel pity and your songs,
who watched from exile in Macedonia,
403 BC, that city where you spoke out
against massacre (blowing up the allies,
for God's sake!) sizzle in turn, and the Long
Walls pulled down. You who were to m

to pieces on a goat-track by dogs, what's the use?
I think of you walking in dapply oak
forests of the north, where feather-fetlocked
war-stallions graze meadows
which Athenian yeomen, blunting their hoes
on rockfields, would kill to cultivate.

You imagine, as you hike, a dangerous
baby-faced stranger. A god
with cinnamon sideburns, ivy sap
on his microtonal 'oud, entering
every city alike: barbarian, Greek,
ornate, twin-towered, devout.

But this is March 2006 and I'm on the edge
of a Bahrain bed. Cappuccino shadows
of afternoon in the freezing cold Mövenpick Hotel.
100 degrees outside, and Manama's cement
roofs roil up and down, far as the eye can see.
Caramel domes under salmoning sky.

The Manager has given me a heater. He can't
turn off the air conditioning; no one can.
He's Indian – no Bahraini would be seen dead
working in a hotel – and therefore can't vote
either, in these islands where he was born,
the first Gulf State to find oil.

I'm watching the President of Iran
in ivo rydenim conduct a dance of seven ministers
on CNN. They hop in celebration. Old men,
round and again round a desk of microphones
like the crown of stalwart hills and radio masts
about a holy city. They have enriched plutonium!

Do they feel a touch ridiculous too? Representatives
of other Arab states, plus my friends downstairs,
are all calm. No big deal, no cause for alarm.
But Washington is talking of war. Another
Abu Ghraib? Euripides, whose twelve-toned
words I lived in a long strange while,

where are your arguments now –
that frayed silk rope of human, divine,
and the same rules applying to all?

Richard Peabody

Couch commandos

Have a board game mentality
in a GameBoy world.

Closest they've ever come to real action
was playing Stratego back in the day.

They wouldn't know Kuma/War
from Combat starting Vic Morrow.

Yet if you ask them
they will bury you in stats
about Hummers, depleted uranium ammo,
body armor, and high tech weaponry.

Couch commandos worship
at the Tom Clancy tabernacle.

Though John Wayne has always
been closer to their ideal.

White men love hardware so much
they have no room whatsoever

for the complicated software of the heart.

Ask them how many Iraqi women and children
have died during two Gulf wars?

Go ahead ask them.

Iraqi Freedom? Who cares?

Funny how their rationales always vanish
when things start to get a little real.

The Iraqi people have never entered
into any of their military scenarios.

Iraqi people aren't sexy enough
for the Couch Commandos

who punch Sexy Girls Sexy Guns
back into their DVD players and drift

downstream to a time before celluloid heroes
when real men still walked the earth.

Tom Phillips

Fear of flying

Every night these small-hours panics –
airliners knifing into the sea,
her whispered reassurances:
Sleep, my love, it's only dreams –
until fear is strafing the ceiling
like searchlights, like a convoy
of hooded trucks grinding east.

Are we at war again? The papers
say nothing. Our rooms are filled
with shopping bags, bills unpaid,
traps for insomniacs, clutter.
Not one of us, it seems, has a clue.
The dawn which haunts the window
is merely a trick of the light.
The man in the doorway, smoking,
is checking his field of fire.

David Prater

Suicide airliner attacks

softly softly through our krystallnachts
geyser bowser crack pop-offs just relax
black north face seventies teevee slack
hostesse with remote test tubes bivouac
jack in at five with first asthma snaps
vacate laps tool the tried anagrama bat
an independent way a roadsteads whack
in maple lanes the seaside pretzel flak
emergency hammer laden with an axe
sue me sonny walk man pow! spacks
we know the atlantic like no other macs
disaster prediction no longer paperback

Lisa Pasold

those gods we loved

(over a line from Don McKay)

how we hoard the most charismatic fictions, invent hope
from shiny
fragments.

Baron Samedi in a top hat, facing the Windward Passage message
in a bottle tossed from Gitmo

we just want a government, any one will do. the UN may get
bombed flat but the Baron
is making the world safer for – fill in the next word
with your cabaret make-up and old heartbroken song.

as the wall gets built, as incendiaries go off (CNN longshot)
Uncle Skeleton's standing at the crossroads.

in a pure free market, we gotta fire the guns to make sure they work.
and we do.

(august /06)

Victoria Ramsay

Jet lagged

I call home but the phone's been disconnected.
The postman is on the far side of the world
and no one here knows who I am. Only a guest
from the past ever knew I existed but can't recall
my limp or tight lip. A long way away a small bird
croons and my skin feels sticky as if with emulsion.
My feet are swollen and aren't mine. Even this room
has that frail scent of discipline. I forget why
I'm here. Perhaps I'm meant to rendezvous with the Arab
at Fairy Meadow Pizzeria, but he doesn't recognise my face
and sends me back to the small grey room at the
corridor's end, to the far end of the escarpment, to an
eastern plain of Idaho. I suppose I could always flick
the fire alarm at 3am, and while mingling on the lawn
make a formal introduction to myself.

Harold Rhenisch

The salmon return to the Horsefly River

As the light
falls into the leaves
of the aspens
and through them
into the ochre
and red September
grasses,
the spiders
in the lilacs
after a summer of rain,

the light pours
through a man's hair
as he plants raspberries
and pungent currants
by the lake;
through his shovel

the roots and the small
stones, the whole earth,
reach up, drinking
greedily. We know the cold,
the purple shadows, the
thin line of the dawn,
the green pack ice
of December skies,

know the light
cannot be held.
You could stand
on a mountain
in a rain of stars,
write laws
to govern
the blind body:
the young woman
unable to meet
the young man.
(They walk through desert light;
it drifts like snow;
the body cries.)

There is no need
to reach high. The light

cannot be caught
in an earthenware
bowl and brought
into the dark
where bodies move:
what is dark
is dark and we
live there –
yet hear the salmon swim
in our veins, spawn
in our fingers, bears step
out of blueberry meadows,
ants in their eyes;
feel the chill
river flow
out of mountains,
taste the frost
at night, the moon rising
on the tip of each finger.

With our hands we lift
hymnals from the pew
of the trembling aspens,
and with our hands
we lift the concrete,
the glass, the steel,
to cradle the dead
as towers fall, the stone
tablets of the law
are broken into rock.
The rivers are low;
eggs lie under gravel;
ravens tear at the red
bodies of the last
silver people,
at the end of wisdom.

To whom shall we bring
our darkness now,
to whom shall we cry
but to movement,
the curl of water
around a stone,
hair over the nape of a neck,
body against body,
and say we are blind,

lest we set the grasses
on fire, gather the black birds
in a hand that once sowed
wheat in hard upland soil
as almonds bloomed
and wind and light
rustled over freshly
turned furrows,

and cast them
in the eyes of children,
who eat desert soil
for nourishment?
They know enough dark now:
the stars that lie scattered,
smashed on the base
of night before the world
was born, the god
who is an imposter,
the breath taken, given,
with no other sky –
what is shared
and greedily
stolen.

Blind among the ochre
grasses, the transparent
leaves, the world
of glass, I throw no birds,
lest I become a stone
and plead to myself
for mercy.

In the flat world
of our first endings,
nothing blocks the wind.
It tears up dust.
Clotted stone, pebbles,
the seeds of weeds
are scattered and sown.
This wind passes so quickly
it cannot be drawn
into the lungs.
A woman is huddling
under a black shawl,

who left in the morning
to fetch water
for her children. The earth
has filled the air: it looms
over the horizon; swollen,
we walk on red coals, the slag
on the surface of the sun;
our hands are flames;
trees burn away
in the screams of hawks;
steel girders wail,
spilling black diamonds of oil –
so much is beautiful,
a mouth kissing a mouth
in prayer.

I cannot see
but feel the people
around me;
they have come
from great distance,
each one a word
touching against
a word sentenced
to anguish,

lest we become
those other words
that do not move
as we move our bodies
but fight to replace us
with the end
of the world.
(Oh, we can accept that, but
not the hand
that brings us wisdom
in place of wisdom.)

To all of you
who have been sent
spinning into the world
a gain to make the long
climb over the shingle,
to eat the grasses
in the pastures,
to swarm out of the sun,
devouring fields
of spelt and millet:
cows will give no milk
for you, a young woman
will lay no shawl
over your shoulders;

on this black shore,
the light cannot be held –
but the spring freshets
will wash the smolts
of the first people
from the gravel,
down to the blue lakes
among black trees
in the infolded ranges
and uplifted peaks,
where they will begin
their long journey
back to the sea –
the forests of kelp,
the old whales singing
singing.

Rest now.
We walk naked in light.
It pours through us.
We shiver with leaves;
we burn up and take wing –
blind; yet in darkness
we see with the body
of the world.
Damsel flies rise out of rivers
and dance blue on gassheads;
the sky has fallen
to the earth
and tosses, rises up;
the earth glitters
in the first word of the world.

I have given it to you
to speak. Oh,
speak it to me. I want
to hear your voice
in the dark, to feel
your warm breath
on my ear, your hair
brush against my chest,
your fingers
among my fingers.

There is no other word,
only the roaring
of endings
where I would begin,
of hate
where I would love,
of death
where I would live.
Do not leave me now.
Do not speak –
not now,
not yet;

but then speak with the world.

September 11, 2001–August 30, 2006

Noel Rooney

the eclipse baby

there is an ideal engine for the ummah;
jesus the idea blown to pieces. Then

asclepius will get his cockerel;
now it's esau who's arcanelly shorn

the algorithm of the tower's fall
is algebra; the base is calculus

the moon suffers for crossing the sun;
bleeds inexactly, without ceremony

Joe Ross

Rondo

for Julien

I wake up too early
and want to tell my too young son
that the world is fucking up
again.

Today is not pasta or
beans and rice
but rests solidly tartine on plaid.

A small dog resumes his borrow
as shadows wave sure from
unknown source. This sun.

It counts sure, this old woman
who does not speak. It is
in the eyes too loudly written.

Youth is age passing on reborn
so that the rocking chair is a crib
that creaks between each wave.

Today too is streetlights, lit
still in early morning's misty dusk.
It rests mocking, confounding hours.

It is these old shoes which keep the ground
from flying into too deep abstraction
despite too bitter leather tongues, we walk on.

As if the child asks, again the world is sure
the question finishes its own answer.

Myra Schneider

Stillness

In darkness let your fan of fingers open,
imagine amethyst's purple crystals
at a geode's heart liquifying to honey
until your face muscles loosen, your shoulders,
which have borne so much, begin to unlock
and stillness is a quilt over your body,
a feather lining within. Now the tick
of pulse emerges and breath passes quietly
as a slippers friend. Beyond the house tyres
whir on tarmac and geese call as they rush
the sky. The grief of the bereaved will push
into your room and nameless losses sustained
by the displaced. Hold stillness and you may hear
rain on fruitless fields, grasses rising again.

Robert Sheppard

from *September 12*

'Shut the Fuck up!' the Ambassadors of
Democracy chorus across blind windscreens.
Weak knees assume that law's single statute

Saddam is the bouquet in their dustbins.
Their heavily guarded statements eulogise
his swimming trunks flapping from a tree,
the colossal wreck of his white Oldsmobile

*

'He could be fun! He knew some poems
about the loved and un-level sands

how God might permit him to turn America
into a shadow of itself. He borrowed men
with borrowed guns to chant his
homemade poem: "To her Doom she sails,
clothed in Great Illusion *too close to home*"

Zaid Shlah

A rebuttal

Sir, I have not given much.
Just a write r. The poetry is
on the floor, the piano has
left the room, the keys are
on the windows knocking
their little sounds. Do you
think that your bullets will
kill them?

The windows may break.
The afternoons might hole
up into the cover of the moon.
Hubris may flower, but it
too must die – I will not lie
if I claim you are insufferable.
I will not lie if I claim the
sky is as red as it ever was
yellow.

You will go. You will be
gone soon enough. All the
inst ruments will crawl out
from hiding. We'll have a
band, and cake. There will
be laughter – heavy bagfuls
of laughter.

Henry Shukman

Backs of houses

Behind Kingston Road ivy leaves shine with recent rain.
A concrete path between garden walls has mossed black.

Here in the peace no one owns the birds are at home
whistling their tunes, sprucing their wicke rwork.

An unhinged ga te leans its weight on weeds.
The windows of an empty house are solemn.

Untended place ripe with neglect, a stone's throw
from the grinding road, give us rest.

Penelope Shuttle

Many names

De a th has many names –
You must travel with him to the ends of the earth,
le a rning his names

He likes birds and flowers,
like any optimist

De a th is never tired,
he twists the new moon round his little finge r,
is well-known for his mountains

and his leaf-fall idleness –
He is inte r est ed in you alone,
not in mist or Tchaikovsky or the future –

Why do you run from him?
Remember how many worship the ground he walks on

John Siddique

To the leader of the free world

Your empire will go the way of all empires.
Your outlets will become wild gardens.
Your motorways, migration paths for buffalo.
Maize will be sown in the dust you have left.

In New York harbour, two broken metal legs,
on the pedestal, these words, Give me your tired,
your poor, your huddled masses yearning
to breath free. We will come to this new land,
never knowing your philosophy, that
an empire begins with an open hand.

Goran Simic

September 11 with Iraqi children

"How little I know my wife Donna," thought John Cherry, a retired soldier from Texas as he watched her on CNN boarding a plane from Baghdad. The 11 orphans who boarded the plane with her were waving their air tickets at the camera. Was that "A Future for Children" badge pinned high on her chest worth all the money she spent on a breast-implant operation? On breasts that would never feed a baby.

On September 11 we could have already had a five-year-old child if only she hadn't spent the money set aside for little Tito's room. Then he lay down on the floor where little Tito's bed could have stood if Donna had not spent the money on a face-lift to regain her smile.

- Did I make a mistake telling her that her bitter smile would scare any kid, John thought before he burst into tears. And he wasn't surprised when a tiny invisible hand passed him a diaper to wipe his eyes.

- I can't recognize my wife Donna anymore, John echoed next morning in the empty children's room whose wallpaper was patterned with American flags. From the TV screen Donna was pleading with viewers to foster some of those 11 children, the poor children who were still waving their one-way tickets.

He was almost enchanted listening to her perfect enunciation, until it occurred to him that little Tito would have secured a scholarship if Donna hadn't spent the money on new teeth.

- Was it my mistake for telling her that her overbite might frighten little Tito, he thought sadly, and an invisible little hand passed him a child's sock to wipe the tears.

During two decades of sharing the same bed and the same prayers, Donna never forgot to wash and iron his uniform and dump sand from his shoes whenever he came back from a tour of duty. From the country he could barely remember. But never forgive him after she lost the baby that was going to be born that September, when leaves began falling like metal scraps from skyscrapers.

- I guess she'll understand that I'm totally broke after she spent all our savings on her trip to Iraq and her surgery, and I hope she won't mind if I give her with the plastic flowers that I got from Headquarter after we lost little Tito, thought John Cherry, waiting for the invisible child's hand to pass him a bib to wipe his eyes.

So much had happened since that bloody September five years ago, John was thinking through his tears, forgetting that soldiers never cry. Donna looks like the plastic mannequin in the window of a uniform shop and I've been weeping like a woman ever since I came back from Iraq. Something is wrong.

Terribly wrong.

He probably would have fallen asleep with a half-empty glass of warm beer in his hand if somebody hadn't knocked at his door. Then his heart broke when he saw 11 orphans in front of his door waving their air tickets. He simply fell down and died. Falling down, for an instant he noticed the smiling TV face of Donna and sand on the children's shoes and waited for moment for a child's little hand to pass him a dinner napkin to wipe off the sweat of fear from his face.

But nothing happened. For a second he asked himself whether things would have been different if little Tito had been born.

But John Cherry just died. Simply died. Without waiting for the answer.

Hal Sirowitz

Stilts and high heels

I almost lost my house with Katrina, he said. Apparently that wasn't bad enough. A New Orleans Commission just ordered all houses in the Ninth Ward to be raised on stilts. That's like telling my wife

she can only wear high heels.
They may look good on her,
but it's going to be me, not
any of the commissioners,
who is going to have to
catch her when she falls.

Andrew Steinmetz

Planet waves

- after *Robert Frost and Bob Dylan*

Some thing there is about American boys,
Some thing there is about you
Vaguely horrifying – Something;
Found by heaps, by handfuls,
A surplus and a waste,
A shadow army of chaste decay, of glue and paste, of hooray.

Some thing there is about American boys.
Some thing uncoloniable (there is
About you: in desert fatigues, UV resistant eyewear;
Such shrug of the shoulder casualness, such posturing, Son.

Some thing there is about – your auburn integrity.
Some thing – outright mumbleable about your gift of the gab!

Some thing there is unstoried about all this.
Some thing you are withholding.
Some thing you possess that makes you weak.

Many dead of war, indeed. Executed without
Consideration, or expectation of return?

Heather Grace Stewart

My mark

In the streets of Baghdad
Women walk with trembling hands
To cast their vote –
Fearing for their lives,
Searching for snipers in the shadows,
Pointing their purple-stained fingers
In the face of terror.

In these streets of red and white
I will cast my vote with pride;
No longer apathetic.

I make this mark
For the women who paved the way
Told to mind their husbands;
To stay out of a man's world.

I make this mark
For the women who dared to think,
To dream, to speak;
Whose words were stifled,
But not their spirits.

I will make my mark
For my foremothers –
And the bloodied women
Of Baghdad.

John Stiles

I made a list of things to say...

I made this list in my head of things
I wanted to say to those in power, I thought
you are not listening, this was, three

or more years ago, back in 2001. If I
could count the things that happened
since: letter from downstairs tenant,

visiting publisher condemnations or
a trip to the Parliament buildings and
a further condemnation. How many

trips to the Musicals or Theatre? For me
the library is enough. Oh well you`ll feel
better if you have a job, could be true!

But still the list, the subway bombings,
the rude stares, the mice, the sleepy eye
and still the lists, listings. My wife shrieks ,

a mouse? Emails are they of the conciliatory
kind? *Grizzly Man* was the best movie of the year.
It is about something. So. I have nothing. It is not

that, it is simply the little chicken suit, flung high
into the tree, we are wondering: How did this get
here? Who will take it down?

William E Stobb

A history of interruption

11/13/04 – after Walter Benjamin, Dmitry Shostakovich and David Byrne

1

After the election
my friend touched my black shirt
mustered the thinnest smile ever recorded.
Now my Claire coughs
in the next room otherwise so
quiet I can hear the adagio in pianissimo
on the kitchen radio tuned to classical.

Claire would've lost the election too.
At five, incumbency seemed a violation.
"It's not fair," she said, "and anyway
"I don't like him voting for war."
She asked how he won and I told her
people saw differently. An hour later
it was entirely gone from her mind.

2

Back to this page now after
warming apple juice in a sippy.
Tired and feverish
she's home from Kindergarten playing
pattern games on the PC.
Her cough is high and croupy
a little bark but not a whoop.
At night if she can't stop
we're to take her in the car
with the windows down.
The blast of November air tightens the lungs
and stops the spasm.
When she finishes a pattern
enchanted melodies ring through the house.

Outside all the signs still on the lawns like history
could carry the world by little tabs.
That you can lose something important
on a Tuesday seems unfair.

3

Back to this page now after
she asked for something sweet and greeted
my pear with disdain
and the refrain “you need
your healthy choices” drifts like sweet bells
on massive weather patterns
charted in millennial cycles.

A thousand years – a thousand thousand thousand:
Even dear Walter Benjamin’s only so helpful.
Can a moment matter? Can a cough
sputter beyond the atmosphere
like broadcast news in deep space?
Can a family in its generations
apprehend matters of importance?
Why lie and rush ruin?
Is Shostakovich somewhere still translating
occupation to anxiety in the strings?
In today’s newspaper
a writer loved his friend’s war cartoons
so much he thanked the Commander-in-chief.

What can a family apprehend?
It’s lovely, Claire, being here with you
even today, even a room away.

A family has its brains and given
span – can pass questions along
and imagine history answering.

And now I’ve honestly remembered
that yesterday was my sister’s birthday
and I didn’t call. And Claire
really can’t stop coughing
and asking anyway for candy
and anyway I think of The Talking Heads
“what good are notebooks?” in
‘Life in Wartime’.

A history of interruption might end this way:
In electronic music. In a man saying
“be grateful” to a child
while the nations burst forth.

Sean Street

Quaker poem

George Dannatt – Icon of Silence 1, Oil on Canvas, 2001

The door opened into a space.

I heard stillness offer itself
towards the shape of a prayer.

Coming out of light, we return
after all.

In the meantime there’s
silence, white paper between words
going where noise of words cannot,
present even under these days,
a space just beyond the next door.

Todd Swift

The mosquito and the map

You dawdle on the cartography of conquest
In the tent where Caesar stabs his ring finger
On the Tiber. Dare you nibble the Emperor
As he repels a disappointing triumvirate?

Or have you already tried it, pre-emptively?
Is that why the God-King bleeds tidily,
Nit-picks his neck, looks wan at the future?
No: daredevil blood-pilot now you dive.

Joel Tan

letter for my half brother at war

what drifts into yr mouth when you're asleep
granite grit desert ash you gurgle bubble
breath dreams of sand babies my hair has grown
since you've gone i've vowed not
to cut it until your safe return brother
i am a ribbon waiting

when you
chew i chew father's tongue thick veined
my boys my boys he brags my only boys

what music sooths you there
when you are plagued by
the tak tak takking of teeth rattling

windows the tinny shrill screams doors ripping
from their hinges bombs smarter than ever
corpses piled high sweet sculpture of apocalypse
bang banging the slip *so sorry to inform*
you he who so bravely fought defended

the green paper fat of it
the rising price of oil of it
utopian drones presidential sanctions
papal war cries the patriotic cheers of football fans
we bloody our fingers

yellow, orange, red
refuse to fly forego holidays until the madness settles
what must it be like there? the endless waiting
a township older than some messiah
a township shrouded in darkness military

causal of limbs poison gas perfume
ah, what joy to be surrounded by
muscular monasticism america's
multicultural quilt of skin freckly pink
the fine brush hairs of youth brown the black
backwood trailers sweaty patches of the working
poor & that impossible sweat smell hostages

screaming rusting the saw tooth blades
a nation of headless bodies take arms &
claim glory sweet glory

genital hungry curs the blinding
bulbs flashing and digital streamtelling
on itself just so justice
or so it seems can exact itself it is useless
to think papa's provincial
lullabies could hum away the din of a thousand
locusts descending

here you sweet you
nuzzle close to my breast i shall tell
you a story about our ancestors & how their seed
spills from the corners of our mouths
when we lie or steal or sin

out there in the heat of
the waking world a godly mountain
there buried beneath sinai a vast
graveyard of nameless zealots who ripped
burned starved their bodies bloodied
their tender backs to devil away
lust their guts grinding with ache

you you as every good boy should will
bring together this ghostly militia with supple and pucker
offer up the smallest
of sacrifices the giddy thrill of your skin
the greasy slide rhythmic buck
sweet curve of jaw and grip

you half brother salt harbinger
gather the gulls and rain
an ocean down upon
this ancient city.

Nathaniel Tarn

Body-language, autumn

If I can give it thought, if I
get to consider in this heat,
steady myself, god I hate
heights! along this ledge,
against the terror, can I not
let the air do what it wills
as some say spirit blows?
Hell! how I hate this height
it's like a ton weight on my
genitals and up into my throat –
but leave this life in some hey
elegance and style,
as dancer may be,
entering the ultimate
stage for the farewell
evening. There won't be
flowers, now at any rate.
No applause. I shall choose
the pose: lion crouch
on rock before a kill,
swan or swallow dive,
flight, or something like
a crucifixion, on my back
perhaps, except I want to see
the earth – if I can stave off
blackout – face me as I reach...
My god! It's hard to think!
There must be pain, I guess,
if there's to be you know some
resurrection in a new dimension
[not in a "paradise" or an "elysium"]
but in salvation of one moment.
Perfected gold-set of one breath
to balance out the pain. The
moment being all of what we
have as every single sage has
pointed out. Our poverty. Mine
shall be rich and then the speed
of it perhaps will cancel pain.
One moment such can be "eternity."
Does it matter if someone out
there watching will take a

photograph? Probably not: who
would I show it to? Yet it might
do to save this moment, to proof
the beauty of this violence. We
have set all our heart on violence,
we love the show of it. Must be
some reason there. Apotheosis
of the greatest value for those
who did this? – like for us? The
beauty of this cataract of ours
is nothing else but the definitive
continuation of the fall of man,
not through a disobedience to
some "father" but through man's
failure to obey himself? Damn,
I hate heights! Hell! Vomit. Go.

Mark Terrill

Enduring freedom

From the radio in the kitchen
on top of the fridge
comes The Flight of the Bumblebee

as we sit around the silent TV
in the living room in winter
warming our clammy hands

against the burning images
of grief, misery and bloodshed
resulting from the wars

intended to protect us
from all the grief, misery
and bloodshed.

Helên Thomas

In order to beat terrorism we must carry on as normal and stay calm

11th September 2001: The week old, wide screened, colour TV,
Sent back for repairs, whilst a black and white portable,
Failed to convey the end of the world in B-movie grey,
As I wrapped the gift in candy striped paper,
The colours of sherbet, for the October wedding
Of two who would honeymoon, in a wounded city
Where the NYPD said, "Thank you for coming!"
And waiters in Little Italy kept the wine flowing,
So the pair would stay longer and the place would seem full.

15th February 2003: The morning after that month's full moon,
Admiring the sunrise and frosted white fields,
We headed down south in our coach loads,
Alongside buses from Manchester, Bradford and Leeds,
Whose passengers prayed as we queued for the toilets;
Over-priced coffee and broadsheets to read.
Reaching Euston at noon, we shuffled and smiled,
Some chanted, some sang, some drummed, it took time.

6pm: We reached Hyde Park; the speeches were over.
The daffodil shoots that had pushed through the grass
Some two or three inches, now crushed underfoot.
An African lady in white robes and trainers
Got chatting; I voiced my concern for the flowers,
She said, not to worry, that God would take care;
The daffodils would come back later that year.

8th July 2005: Now I suggest that the police might be wrong;
People behave strangely for all sorts of reasons,
What about people who are mentally ill?
You can't shoot people for acting strange.
What if it was your son?

30th September 2006: Remember the honeymooners?
They're parents now; Frankie's three and Cecilia's one.
Today they take their first transatlantic flight:
Innocents abroad must board with transparent luggage;
Nappies sniffed for anthrax; breast milk sieved for semtex,
And Nana's hand cream must be screened for hydrogen peroxide.

Vincent Tinguely

Untitled

Ah, the militant military society
Sitting in straight little school rows
Marching to and from home and work
Cleaving to strict schedules
Jets go up, jets go down like clockwork
(If clocks indeed still have 'works')
We salute the early morning breakfast cereals
It takes a disciplined workforce
to make a decent cup of coffee
Our uniforms are in perfect order
Homeless bums in rags and running sores
Cops in cruisers, dogs in mangers
The crisp off-the-rack suits for
all the salesmen
All are carefully deployed in their
assigned patrol patterns
All are instantly replaceable
In case of accident, illness or
terrorist attack
Advancing, advancing, advancing
Like row upon row of doughty doughboys
Each in turn being mown down
By the vagaries of city life.

February 19, 2006

Rodrigo Toscano

Improvised Poetic Device (IPD)

The ribcage wrapped
– as per usual –
in muscle, skin

The head mounted
– as per usual –
on the trunk

The eyes tautly tied
– as per usual –
to the skull

The little ones prance
gazelles
are the way *they* are

Dates in the heat
– as per usual –
are sweet, pungent

Days at their end
(such are days are welcomed)
bring on the night

The long night
– as per usual –
can be terrifying

You could
patch in
very punchy, very gnarly
appropriately
first-world-wealthy
stuff
anywhere
you
damn
well
please

The thighs
are elegantly and complexly tied
to the hips

The hips
– as per usual –

buttress the spine

The hips at times
expand
to twice their width

Old men
given time, given space
play chess

Mud bricks, well-made
– as per usual –
absorb the hot sun

The spines of middle-aged women
leopards
are the way *they* are

You could
cut-out
very savvy, very quippy
appropriately
first-world-snarky
stuff
anytime
you
damn
well
please

The ears
– as per usual –
come in twos

The nose
sits at the top of the mouth
co-ordinative

The mind is
– as per usual –
in dispute

The ass
is like hands
dependant & rebellious

You could
sync in
very sexy, very tart
appropriately

first-world-prickly
stuff
anyhow
you
damn
well
please

The ubiquitous cotton plaid shirt
- as per usual -
is sewn by young girls

Cialis, Viagra, Propecia
are smuggled goods
for the porker class (there)

The porker class (here)
is about to reward you
- as per usual -

The ubiquitous singular ass
with a beef
is what's for dinner

Here's an IPD for you
Here's an IPD for you
Here's an IPD for you

John Tranter

Childhood

1

Call its stated goal an assault on the new window
looking at other fundamentally longer music and film
the norm for most women: like the market
the island is the editor of a different algorithm,
and clocked an experiment that feeds me
over the long tradition of discourse
which lasts longer than their own phone calls
and he on the web. The woman held to the belief
that it was his faithful mistake.
Are the blues just a warp in the DNA,

a genetic splice on the silver bullet of jazz?
At the beginning of the major slowdown
music is used to liven up the dismal matter
late at night when every gesture is cool.

2

See the net, the ten-year mission,
the dish, the town, the gong shimmering.
The city played the 'call on the applet' song
and claimed that a lot was going on.
You will hear from the US government
and the EEC boffins in due course.
they do what they do to guide the assault
on the date. Barry's the one who knew
what he had seen between sound data
and the player, and had gone to get some help
because he is the only guy out on a limb in DC
with an inflammation of the chest. Dos Santos said
he announced that on CNN, some old male figure,
and that's when they made the initial analysis.

3

What the day-to-day white cell function was
and its annual fatality rate, nobody knows.
You know any large kidney stone can do it,
before the end of the union,
the bits of rock inside the suffering flesh.
He was indicted for some minor crime,
and was allowed bail on condition that
he stayed away from the schoolyard.
That's what the year brought us. Thanks.
(Delete the eighth.) Keep this Sunday free,
be on call, it would cost them one budget at least
(using Outlook) to keep all the doctors on call
ready for duty (command) to be finding out about
the swap deal relating to the evolution of a saint.

4

Call me. It has the fix-it.
In his three days using it
he just couldn't get through
to the end of 'log enable'.
He didn't use a cool bar
when the investigating court
claimed that the CIA under any other name
would be the same.
All the defendants, the whole sack of them,

have long been made ineffective
by the relentlessness of the judicial assault.
On the phone, deletion is the aim.
This idea is not the only visionary
thing to happen in a small novel.

5

Combing your hair, you don't follow suit,
you look all blotchy on the late show
and indeed the team in the studio
including John Updike and a close female friend
beat the previous month's audience figures.
You're seeing the virus and these guys
all dying in a fire, but on a neighboring island
the locals benefit from new lease of life.
The goal of the pain can get busier than all the data
in the world, the flaw in the work that we do
for state PTA president is a lack of talent.
Update the loan. The MIT Board is on the Internet
and his roommate has enough votes to win one of the best
seats in the house, still layered and glowing.

'Childhood' is loosely derived from Rimbaud's 'Enfance'.

John Welch

Screen

It has a semi-human face
Distilled on screens,
This thing that speaks in our name,

An approximation of something
Let loose on the world
And this is what it keeps on saying:

'You will pay for what I did to you
Again and again and again'

These poems were given by their authors in aid of the Red Cross,
which helps people who have lost everything in Hurricane Katrina
or the tsunami, people who are hungry because of crop failure
or displaced because of conflict.

Please consider donating.