



# One Hundred+ Poets Against the War

Todd Swift, Editor

## Table of Contents

*Editor's Introduction* 7

*Are There Children* 8

*Collateral Damage* 8

*Regime Change Begins At Home* 9

*Hot Milk* 9

*killer* 10

*At Home, At War* 10

*Ode to all concerned with that 'baby milk' factory in Iraq* 10

*Notwithstanding* 11

*The Day After* 12

*Mickey Mouse came, Mickey Mouse saw, Mickey Mouse conquered* 13

*Hyperbole For A Large Number* 14

*Mark the Day* 14

*un-UN inspected* 15

*Why I Want To Be A Baconaut* 16

*The Field* 17

*Dancer* 18

*Other Demands* 19

*Georgie Porgie* 20

*the war is on the kitchen table* 20

*The Virtual Total Information Awareness Office* 21

*The Flying Flag* 21

*a short list of short lists* 22

*Dragonseeds* 23

*Water Dragon/* 24

*We Accept* 25

*Sirens* 26

*Treasured Ghost 26*

*pEACE iCON 21c 27*

*Moonblood 28*

*From After The Anti War March 29*

*Where There's War 30*

*The Man of Principle 30*

*War - the concise version 31*

*Harvest 31*

*Untitled 32*

*clash of civilisations? 32*

*All Those Home Spun Places 33*

*Peace Poem 34*

*Imminent 35*

*Brainstorm 36*

*Miranda Rights 37*

*Dubya Anabasis 37*

*Talking With The Cat About World Domination The Day George W. Bush Almost Choked On A Pretzel 38*

*Yellow Jackets 39*

*A Verse to War 40*

*Anna's Meal 41*

*Rhetoric for Peace 42*

*No Seasons, Only Weather 43*

*Leavening 43*

*Gulf War – Aftermath 44*

*A Dark Little Psalm Against War 45*

*Even 45*

*Still True? 46*

*This is the War That George Fought 46*

*the killing fields 47*

*Terror on Warism 48*

*A Light 49*

*An Untitled Place 49*  
*Streetcars and Crosswalks 50*  
*Bubble Girl Song 51*  
*Priests' Skulls 52*  
*Life after wartime 53*  
*Unleashed 54*  
*blood in the snow 55*  
*untitled 55*  
*Taking Sides 56*  
*We Believe 57*  
*Against the War 58*  
*Nation 59*  
*After the Anti-War March 60*  
*Untitled 61*  
*The Hawk Who Became A Dove 62*  
*What You Call It 63*  
*The Paloma's Lament 64*  
*Broken fall whispers 65*  
*on the night she didn't feel like it anymore 66*  
*Haunted House, October 2002 67*  
*The Moments Silence 68*  
*The Tooth 69*  
*let us step around this time 70*  
*Wedding War 71*  
*The White-Throated Sparrow Can't Compare 72*  
*What Did Adorno Say? 73*  
*"Christendom" 74*  
*Off The Record 75*  
*God Decides to Press the Mute Button on his Remote Control 76*  
*Sim Shalom 77*  
*The 20th Century Man 78*  
*A Poem for My Muslim Poet Friend 79*

*the sand that is everywhere 80*  
*Good Morning Middle Age 81*  
*On Election Day 82*  
*Untitled 83*  
*Divine Haiku for the New Patriotism 83*  
*To a Veteran of the Last Wrong War 84*  
*Easy 85*  
*Circling The Gulf A Gain A Loss, Ingrained 86*  
*Women in Black 87*  
*from How It's Been 88*  
*war is gud 4 bizness in th 19th centur 89*  
*Psychotic Sea 90*  
*Women Washing Clothes in the Kabul River 91*  
*Bigger Than Time 92*  
*transit 93*  
*The Land of Hope 94*  
*excerpts from little dead things 95*  
*Press conference 96*  
*Filofax 97*  
*Nets At Gennesaret 97*  
*King Rat 98*  
*In The Abundance Of Oxygen The Refugee Is Choked 99*  
*Ballad 100*  
*The Palace of Art 101*  
*My peculiar talents 102*  
*I Dream of War 103*  
*Candle, Flame, Stained Glass and Prayer for Peace 104*  
*News Theatre 105*  
*Letter to Hayden Carruth 107*  
*Unrhymed Peace Sonnet 109*  
*Crossing Kurdistan 110*  
*This Sky of Lost Miles 111*

*Dear Lady, Fear No Poetry 112*

*January meadow, 113*

*From Peace Walk & Rally, San Francisco 113*

*Can We Have Some Peace and Quiet Please? 114*

*To Miklós Radnóti 115*

*For The Birds 116*

*N.O.T.R.O.T.C. 118*

*No War Then 120*

*My Collaboration with George Bush 120*

*Waiting for the Marines 121*

*Rania 123*

*The Servant 124*

*The Border 124*

## Editor's Introduction

Never before has a book travelled the globe so quickly. Or so it seemed the week of January 27, 2003. *100 Poets Against The War* was launched at [www.nthposition.com](http://www.nthposition.com) to coincide with Hans Blix's report to the UN. Within days, news had spread around the world, via print media, Internet, radio and TV. More importantly hundreds of web-sites hosted the PDF, tens of thousands of people emailed and downloaded the "instant anthology" and many more printed it up and made copies. Our DIY chapbook has become part of various peace demonstrations, readings and rallies world-wide, from Oxford to Seattle. And all this week, hundreds of new poems, from Gambia to China, kept arriving by email. This proves that electronic books still have a future - so long as their content reaches an interested global community.

Clearly, a nerve *was* touched. The interest in *100 Poets Against The War* has been in proportion to how unpopular the planned attack on the nation of Iraq is. As the Copper Canyon initiative - and the week's surge of interest in poetic protest - lead to the First Lady cancelling her White House poetry event because "poetry and politics" shouldn't mix, the rest of us realised an important cultural point had been made. Walt and Langston and Emily can't be silenced by any politician - poems rise above the moment, and echo across history with power to speak to all people working to stop injustice and oppression. Poetry *does* make things happen: in people's lives, in the way they see the world and act in it.

One week later, on Monday, there was *100 Poets Against The War Redux*. If our first version made history by being the fastest anthology ever, then maybe this was the quickest second edition. But it is more than that. Due to the many exceptional poems that arrived this week, we added more than 20 new ones and corrected some typos.

Thanks to Ms. Benoit, President of the Canadian eAuthors Association, the version you have has been designed for access in new ways. *100 + Poets Against The War* features nearly all the poems from both previous versions and is a welcome addition to this project, which aims to generate peace through protest and poetry.

Once again, let me thank all the poets who have generously donated their work to our project - it is brave and good of them. While we are not able to feature all of the nearly thousand poems we have received since January 20, 2003, every poem has been appreciated and read, and contributes in its way. While the poets whose work *is* here retain copyright, they have agreed to let you freely share their words.

I also wish to thank Val Stevenson, publisher of [www.nthposition.com](http://www.nthposition.com) in the UK, where all versions originated and can still be found; her vision and hard work have been indispensable. Val and I hope that you, poet, reader, activist for peace, will email and snail mail this book of poems to friends, family, colleagues, media and leading hawkish politicians everywhere. We want to keep the momentum for peaceful poetic protest going, until we are able to say we stopped this war before it started.

Peace.

### Todd Swift

Editor

*100 Poets Against The War*

*100 Poets Against The War Redux*

*100 + Poets Against The War*

Paris, February 4, 2003

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**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.

\* \* \*

**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**  
**Helèn 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.

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

**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.

**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

**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.

**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.

**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

**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.

**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 nidorous hell, this life turned to victorious death...horizons topple... house of god implodes... stuffing muddy insides back into wound ... the head an eggshell smashed, the brain spattered 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.

**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?

**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?

**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

**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.



**Untitled**  
**Tom Bell**

Dearest Angel,

I 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

**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?

**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*

**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*

**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 World 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.

**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.

**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?

**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  
wrigs 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 fetal remains:  
unrecognizable might-have-beens  
the teratology of war.

**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 pajamas  
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.

**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 Pharoah 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

**Terror on Warism**  
**Ian Ayres**

Bloody warmongering

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

DE C A Y

m  
o c  
r

We must speak out when we feel

our / government / is / wrong. We have that right.

In a time of terror,

**PROTEST IS PATRIOTISM**

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

**STOP THE WAR!**

**STOP ANNIHILATION!**

Bombing people only fuels anger, resentment, & desire for revenge.

& let me tell you,  
there's nothing casual about casualties.

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

**A PERIOD OF MASS EXTINCTION**

not seen since the age of the dinosaurs.

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

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

**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 quiet 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.

**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 tatoo 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.

**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*

**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 judgment day  
archeologist angels spend another eternity  
excavating layers of bone floors in hell.

*\*John Chrysostum*

**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.

**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.

**blood in the snow**

**Conyus**

storm clouds full of war & suffering  
threaten from the mountain.  
winter snow buries old men near the border  
in Afghanistan, while young children in Detroit  
protest the killing fields in Iraq, Israel, & Oakland,  
with boycotts of Disneyland and McDonalds.  
january half over and the ground is wet  
with blood in the snow.  
the war, just over the next mountain,  
and threatening summer; a long way off.  
somewhere, between the white rock and blue sky,  
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 keeps the world kills.

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

**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.

**We Believe**  
**Kasandra Larsen**

*“[U.S. 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.

**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*

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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

**The Paloma's Lament**  
**Rebecca Villarreal**

*for Our President, January 23, 2003 Washington, DC 20009*

(paloma = dove)

i cannot name you  
son of sons  
for you only go by the bastard of your middle initial

i can only ask you  
how many palomas  
white feathers  
curucucú  
must fall to win?

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

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

Were you afraid of sand and outdoor markets?

Or was it the trill of another tongue?

now you embrace the last resort of the incompetent  
despite halting words  
from the civilized

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

the weight of dead palomas  
rests on you, your middle initial  
and the lands you never visited

**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.

**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 pedaling away from the same tanks  
with our chocolate bars and  
our misinterpreted dreams

**Haunted House, October 2002**  
**Sherry Chandler**

Nearly Hallowe'en 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?

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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

**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.

**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?

**“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

**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.

**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*

**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.

**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*

**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.

**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

**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.

**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  
bouyant. 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.

**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.")

**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?

**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.*

**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.*

**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.

*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, Phillipines,  
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.

**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  
kleerlee fiscal irresponsibilitee  
munee 4 health 4 th environment  
not as gud as munee 4 big bizness

deth masheens that will definitlee  
keep konsumrs down 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  
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.

**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  
backside 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.

**Bigger Than Time**  
**Dawna Rae Hicks**

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

**transit**

**Rip Bulkeley**

taken dog to put down  
in the British queue  
stiffupperlipping  
their saddened bits  
\*

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

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

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

again big again bouncing  
again lollipop  
gasmask and again  
\*

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

**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?

*excerpts 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

\*\*\*

dawn in a distant place  
these houses are burning  
while warriors move in an absence

a yellow mountain

small girl, blood on her face

parts of a leg in the desert

there is fear at the pass, the birds like living bullets,  
eddies of wind, beings that fly and fall

\*\*\*

sit in the dust  
and number the little dead things

hold them in your guilty hands

there is not much left to be known  
except that we are here  
we are all here

the world is a single place

and there shall be rumours of war  
and we shall attend in the dust

**Press conference**

**Ana Doina**

It's hard to keep your senses orderly  
when hearing the general's words  
to visualise how all the heavy equipment  
will be moved through an alien landscape  
how the food will be cooked  
the laundry done  
while everything around is advancing  
or retreating, worst yet, exploding.

It looks simple; all the toothpick flags  
stabbing the map; here a town we had  
conquered, there one where heavy  
fighting is still going on. On the flat map  
places look as nothing had happened  
though reports tell of old temples  
destroyed, roads closed, hospitals on fire  
children orphaned, people maimed. Today only  
the smell and the smoke of burned flesh, blood  
and smouldering ruins blackened  
an incinerating sunset.

The general  
his voice calm, his poise almost jovial  
answers questions shuffling papers  
he rarely glances at. He seems to know  
all the answers, as if the war had  
taken place in a history book  
centuries ago.

It is hard to keep your senses orderly  
when he, rolling his papers like a scroll  
says: we don't expect more  
than 2, maybe 3% casualties for our troops  
as if the forecasted dead  
their life pre-written on scrolls  
are ready for eternity like mummies  
packaged in history's embalming.



**King Rat**  
**Edwin Torres**

*the rain in Kabul smells like smoke*  
*overcooked mist burned by an ocean of fear*

All followers want to be leaders  
All leaders follow themselves  
All rats follow the king rat  
All king rats are rats

In a pack of rats  
The newest one will be trampled  
The biggest and brightest will stand out  
The one who stands out will be killed eaten  
Stomped into the earth  
All rats follow themselves  
All tails as long as their outcome

In a pack of rats  
The sharpest teeth  
The dirtiest dirt  
The slickest spit  
The lowest low  
The damnedest of the damned  
Will win every time

All rats are rats  
    In a world of rats  
All followers are rats  
    In a world of rats  
All kings are rats  
    In a world of rats  
Who needs cheese  
    When we got rats

**In The Abundance Of Oxygen The Refugee Is Choked**  
**Essa Bokarr Sey**

Sparks! o! sparks!  
The rumbling sound shook our walls within the dusty  
desert.  
Earth quakes?! No! Typhoons?! No way!!!  
B fifty twos...Hmmm...souls are being wiped by  
styles and smiles.  
Is the bomber feeling the pain?  
Refugees are spreading like wild geese.  
Oxygen is abundant but they are choked by the  
whistling stones that are  
propelled by flames!  
Gunpowder cannot save us from napalm!  
Save the refugee-operation or save the  
powerful-operation?!  
Resolutions have been buried. Is might the answer?  
Shadows behind gallows or silhouettes upon pillows?  
Who's who within these wars of our time?.  
Those jailed cannot be bailed by truth and those  
bombing cannot snore when  
flying.  
Our time is as sour as lime.  
Please stop it! The ghosts that are peeping through  
a futuristic window will  
haunt our generation.  
Some want to rest in the west and eat cheese in the  
middle east.  
Oh lord! our time is sour.  
Kindly grease our world with peace.

*Gambia, 2003*

**Ballad**  
**Sean O'Brien**

*with apologies to William Empson*

Here we go to war, boys -  
Rally round the flag.  
Tony cleans it up, boys -  
He's the oily rag.

Tony talks in sentences  
And even paragraphs:  
When Dubya tries a speech act  
Half the planet laughs.

Wonder what's at stake, boys?  
Why we're off to war?  
Someone on the take, or  
Was that the time before?

Just keep it in the Firm boys,  
Like the OSS:  
Take away the 'O', boys -  
Familiar address?

Could it be the oil, boys,  
Waiting in the ground?  
Could it be the oil, boys?  
Is the planet round?

Treat us all like mushrooms,  
Hidden from the light.  
Here it comes again, boys,  
Lorry load of shite.

Let 'em show the way, boys,  
Dubya and Tone,  
And if they want to fight, boys,  
Let 'em fight alone.

Let 'em ride a missile  
Down to old Baghdad.  
Never coming back, boys -  
Wouldn't that be sad?

*1 February 2003*

**The Palace of Art**  
**George Szirtes**

In a classical porch two angels  
Are steadily beating their God.  
You must train your deities properly.  
No point sparing the rod.

St Veronica lends her hankie  
To the fallen. Next day  
she opens it up: Oh my god!  
I have taken his face away.

A wheel on a pole. A raven.  
The crowd has formed a ring.  
In the centre: death.  
And still they keep coming.

Always this bare hillside and the crowd  
huddling and thinking aloud,  
thoughts that collect in the valley beneath  
with folded spectacles, shoes, gold teeth.

It is awfully black down there,  
And their limbs are terribly bent:  
How lifelike the darkness is  
We seemed to be doomed to invent.

Hell is muscular and crowded  
Like a gym where the demons work out  
Their frustrations on apparatus  
Unhindered by rust or by doubt.

God slides down the chute of his robe:  
His body seems almost to float.  
The late romantic chorus of love  
Belts on in full throat.

We watch the universe collapsing  
About the victim's head.  
The living are turned away from us.  
Not so the dead.

Soldiers asleep, he stands  
Stiff backed: his eyes burn.  
Resurrection begins.  
Now it is our turn.

You put your fingers in the wound  
Gingerly, since you doubt.  
The problem is not so much poking it in  
As getting the damn thing out.

**My peculiar talents  
Ifor Thomas**

I linger next to the school ice cream van  
Threaten the angelic horrors  
As their tongues lap the cones  
Say I believe in child slavery

I bite the neck of the strange woman  
I'm standing next to in the lift  
growl into her flesh  
"take me to Transylvania - now"

I wander into the art gallery  
reeking of gasoline and carrying a flame thrower  
exclaim there's a need for more spontaneity

I steer this car into the queue at the bus stop  
and as my wipers beat away blood  
say "whoops"

I sprinkle white powder into an envelope  
send it to the mayor with the message  
Snort anthrax sucker

I stand up in the plane  
shout – my shoes are filled with gelignite  
we are all going down

And if I had a powerful rifle  
And if my cross hairs  
Were fixed on your chest  
do you think I'd hesitate before pulling the trigger?

When they drag me into the dock  
wearing an orange suit  
weighed down with chains  
wild-eyed, spitting feathers  
the judge accepts that I am a victim  
of a violent society  
offers me 999 years in high security -  
Or he says perhaps  
a spell in the army may suit your peculiar talents  
It's the army for me  
I agree.

**I Dream of War**  
**James Cervantes**

I dream of war. I dream of poets being poets  
along a riverbank in a war. There are no books, no prizes,

and they pack food in boxes: cereal, rice, dried fruit,  
bread, and beans, each in their plastic bag,

for they must row across the river to gather. They must leave  
their parapets of three stone walls open to the land

away from water, and open to the sky. They are dreamless  
in the dream and wake to row every day. When they bend

to fill their boxes or sweep bare ground, they are faceless,  
and it is only hands and arms that row, only hands

that open palms up to read the air. If you are one  
of them and stay behind, you see the broad, brown river

and a face, finally, across the water, too small  
even for a child, and there is time before you hear the sound

of bloodless hands, a clap that starts the song.

**Candle, Flame, Stained Glass and Prayer for Peace**  
**John Kinsella**

*for Veronica Brady*

Heliolithic, the taper honing the flame  
ready for the passing, a plastic dish  
of solid naphtha awaits its passive melting,  
set rigidly as counterbalance, a wrought  
iron candelabrum bracing ceramic insulators  
left over from the town's rewiring — now  
ensuring the thought is delivered safely.

The trinity unsettles and reseats itself,  
the late morning sun cuts through the glass  
and foot-notes the altar. Ezra moves through  
the large print of text and looks far into  
Babylon. A child unknowingly prays for peace,  
enjoys the church as a house with thick doors  
to keep the fear out, though he's not sure  
about the glass. His father considers the candle,  
the flame, how it fills the room, climbs  
beyond the roof, outreaches itself.

From beneath the pews a liquid almost gold  
seeks to flow freely over the floor — boards  
parted by tremors preventing this. The father  
knows it to be the candle, the flame wallowing  
in its downfall, drowning at the source.  
Legend would have it a bird passes through  
a panel of stained glass to resurrect  
the flame by lifting the wick and with rapid  
movement of its wings cooling the naphtha.  
Legend has it the flame hardens in its beak  
and follows the release, that the gold  
beneath the pews retreats, that the father  
prays aloud for peace.

**News Theatre**  
**John Hartley Williams**

Meanwhile Mouse  
straight-arms the doorframe of the hole in the wainscot,  
eyes up Tarnished Tom,  
whose floorbrush tail  
sweeps the carpet.

The vast thighs of Doris Blooper squeak together.  
From the door her nasal voice  
calls *kiddy kiddy kiddy...*

Bucko male chauvinist Tarnished Tom Pussycat  
has eyes on Meanwhile Mouse,  
who's got Doris riding shotgun.  
Wait till Doris' thighs go shuffle-piffing off.  
OK, OK, mouse -  
enjoy a little feminine mouse irony, why don't you?  
Show a bit of slender rodent leg.  
Taunt old Tarnished Tom.

Just wait.

Doris squeaks into  
her radiant stainless blossom kitchen  
and back into the living room.  
Imagine mouse horror, cat consternation  
when Doris slides  
her skirts up to her waist,  
tips herself into a chair,  
and stirs a broom handle briskly  
in the warm soupbowl between her thighs.  
All together...in italics now!  
*Academymiceawards*  
*Irradiatedhorsetesticlehamburgers,*  
*Gimmerockets*  
*Gimmebiggerrockets*  
*Nukethealiens*  
*Gimmethestars*  
*Gimmethecosmos*  
*Ooooooh...*

Meanwhile Mouse,  
Tarnished Tom Pussycat...hey!..  
they just look at each other  
in creaturely crumpleface  
doom cartoon dismay.

Exaggerated hush-hush tippytoe goose-step...  
They're leaving by the kitchen door.  
They're vanishing down a winding road.  
They're spinning in a highly-coloured whirlpool.

A loopy kind of writing is writing by itself:  
*No joke babies.*  
War is next.

**Letter to Hayden Carruth**  
**Marilyn Hacker**

Dear Hayden, I have owed you a letter for  
one month, or two - your last one's misplaced. But I'm  
back in New York. The world is howling,  
bleeding and dying in banner headlines.

No hope from youthful pacifists, elderly  
anarchists; no solutions from diplomats.  
Men maddened with revealed religion  
murder their neighbours with righteous fervour,

while, claiming they're "defending democracy,"  
our homespun junta exports the war machine.  
They, too, have daily prayer-meetings,  
photo-op-perfect for tame reporters.

("God Bless America" would be blasphemy  
if there were a god concerned with humanity.)  
Marie is blunt about it: things were  
less awful (Stateside) in 1940.

I wasn't born... I've read shelves of books about  
France under Vichy after the armistice:  
war at imagination's distance.  
Distance is telescoped now, shrinks daily.

Jews who learned their comportment from storm-troopers  
act out the nightmares that woke their grandmothers;  
Jews sit, black-clad, claim peace: their vigil's  
not on the whistlestop pol's agenda.

"Our" loss is grave: American, sacralized.  
We are dismayed that dead Palestinians,  
Kashmiris, Chechens, Guatemalans,  
also are mourned with demands for vengeance.

"Our" loss is grave, that is, till a president  
in spanking-new non-combatant uniform  
mandates a war: then, men and women  
dying for oil will be needed heroes.

I'd rather live in France (or live anywhere  
there's literate debate in the newspapers).  
The English language is my mother  
tongue, but it travels. Asylum, exile?

I know where I feel more like a foreigner  
now that it seems my birth country silences  
dissent with fear. Of death? Of difference?  
I know which city lightens my mornings.

You had New England; I had diaspora,  
an old folk song: "Wish I was where I would be,  
Then I'd be where I am not." Would that  
joy claimed its citizens, issued passports.

"First, do no harm," physicians, not presidents,  
swear when inducted. I'm tired of rhetoric,  
theirs or journalists' or my own ranting.  
I'd like to hole up with Blake and Crashaw -

but there's a stack of student endeavours that  
I've got to read, and write some encouraging  
words on. Five hours of class tomorrow;  
Tuesday, a dawn flight to California.

**Unrhymed Peace Sonnet**  
**Marilyn Nelson**

Who are the Good Guys now? Who are the bad?  
Nobody's wearing Stetsons, black or white.  
Each has a history of evil deeds:  
one individual, one centuries  
of rapine and ideals. It's almost noon.  
One leader straps on bombs. The armies mass.  
We'll blow that s.o.b. to kingdom come,  
everyone thinks; bring on Armageddon!  
Yosemite Sam, frustrated and enraged,  
jumps up and down, shooting holes in the clouds.  
And Africa is dying out, of AIDS.  
Why the hell doesn't the moving finger write?  
What the hell are you waiting for, my God?  
Why don't you tell those bastards not to fight?  
For Pete's sake, send an angel! Burn a bush!

*January 28, 2003, a.m.*

**Crossing Kurdistan**  
**Nadine McInnis**

The sky is a country we cross  
with our heads bowed down.

We no longer notice the mud,  
so chilled  
the bones of our feet ache.  
It is not our mud,  
these are not our mountains,  
complicated  
with invisible borders,  
rising and falling like a fever.

But when the sky speaks,  
we strain to listen  
to dialects we cannot understand:

thunder and helicopters, sleet  
cooling the babies in our arms  
until they are still  
as stones.

The burden we carry  
lightens  
as they drift up  
and become citizens of the sky

and what falls from the sky  
is called relief.  
Sweet and strange, fall  
chewing gum, hard candy,  
powdered instant tea.

This must be what children eat in heaven,  
or in America,  
after they've already  
had their fill.

**This Sky of Lost Miles**  
**Ranjit Hoskote**

Shield your eyes from this oblong patch of light  
where the towers once stood, where now there floods  
on our TV screens this sky of lost miles, miles yet to be  
– now never to be – redeemed, this sky that showers  
a rain of ash and scorched maple leaves,  
of powdered glass that settles on bridges and cars, a rain through which  
phantoms trundle their barrows, carrying heads, arms, bricks  
that rained from the burning towers, and through this poisoned rain we see  
as if for the first time, a sky that showers missiles without warning,  
striking without prejudice the present sacrifice.  
Heap up your cinders, pray for your dead, our dead:  
Baghdad, too, was a city of high towers once, New York.

**Dear Lady, Fear No Poetry**  
**Rebecca Sellars**

Dear lady, fear no poetry

Those you revere so highly

Twain,

Whitman,

Hughes

Even your beloved Emily

Wrote beyond

Bees and blades of grass

They wrote the human condition

How can you turn your back

on the human condition

of all times

now?

Now is the time to look

beyond

the sweetness

the goodness

the pleasantries

of poetry read

in parlours

And consider the reflection

poetry

all poetry

evokes

not to remain silent

but to provoke thought

to provoke question

not to ignore the eyes we have all seen,

Children's eyes,

black moons reflecting emptiness,

Do not promote war, Dear Lady,

let the children live

Do not fear it, Dear Lady

Let the people speak

Do not turn your back

Patroness

of poets

Give open your parlour

Our Parlour

Let the poets read

**January meadow,  
Sandra M. Gilbert**

whistles and simmers in the low, south-sliding  
California sun, clack of crows  
in hedgerows, prickle of grasses still abiding  
winter pallor, silence of cypresses  
upholding sheaves of needles—*here they are!*--  
like gifts of darkness to a sky whose light's  
so fierce and clear it arches like forever  
in the tiny shine of noontime minutes.  
The tree guy's dragged and dumped the tree that toppled  
last week (when the power failed). Let's gather  
sunshine now, lounge in the hot tub, tipple  
a little, watch the twelve o'clock news together--  
(peace marchers shouting in the city  
under a sky like this, so blue, so pretty.....)

***From Peace Walk & Rally, San Francisco*  
Stephen Vincent**

If You Are Not Outraged  
You Are Not Paying Attention

No Blood for Oil  
Did Your Car Start This Walk?  
How Many Lives Per Gallon?  
Go Solar Not Ballistic  
Start Drafting SUV Drivers Now

Bush on Crack  
Don't Attack Iraq

Somewhere in Texas  
A Village (Crawford)  
Is Missing An Idiot

Clone Change Needed:  
A Heart for Cheney  
A Brain for Bush  
Courage for Powell

War Is A Tragedy  
Not A Strategy

War Orphans Make  
Great Terrorists

Homeland Insecurity

*January 18, 2003*

**Can We Have Some Peace and Quiet Please?  
Eliot Katz**

The belligerent voices are yelling in the streets  
& on the radios calling for the big bombs of peace  
to fall, the smart bombs, the bombs that have passed  
their college entrance exams. It's Orwellian the way  
everyone claims Orwell for their side--these days  
everyone is fighting on behalf of Orwell and God.  
Years ago Don Rumsfeld & Saddam Hussein met in  
the corner & exchanged secret diplomatic handshakes--  
it is only after peaceful gestures like these that the missiles  
can fly. In the meantime, the time between the world  
mean as is and the world we mean to become,  
the endless rains are Yehuda Amichai's tears watching men  
still violently beating their swords into ploughshares and back  
into rifles & remote-control fighter planes. On the corner  
of Spring & Broadway, a taxicab driver threw a baby lamb  
out the passenger-side door--everyone in a two-block radius  
ran away screaming. In New York City the yelling is  
so loud and the quiet so quiet that everyone I know, just below  
the surface, is scared out their wits, knowing the violence  
these days that can follow an apparent peace. They are calling  
Senators with empathetic American voices, urging earthly  
generosity and kindness, which their elected leaders interpret  
as a vote for pre-emptive strikes. The next century's gods  
have not yet been born and the last century's are no longer  
able to show a child the simple magic trick of pulling  
its fingers away from a newly lit flame.

**To Miklós Radnóti**  
**Yerra Sugarman**

*Radnóti was a well-known Hungarian poet, whose "body was exhumed from a mass grave in 1946. His widow, going through his pockets, discovered a notebook full of [his] poems."*

My mind throws its crumbs into the night's stopped river.  
This is its ceremony to cast off sin, to become pure,  
What we Jews call Tashlich, an emptying of pockets.  
Night's dark darkened by the museum of human ash, its lights switched off.

The stars' corollas stammer and, muzzled by clouds, vanish.  
A spot of blood throbs under God's moony thumbnail.  
I would like you to know our foundations for burning flesh have not yet been razed.  
I pay their victims homage by day's inebriated bright.

But understand, I still love the glass scent given off by groves of lemon.  
I gladly feel the olive trees' arthritic branches pulsing in my knees.  
And despite everything, I participate in the crime of music.  
My body still an instrument, strums its many forms of abandonment.

(Although I ask you whether what's truly ephemeral can be abandoned.)  
My lips, after passion, scrape like leaves along pavement, incoherent, tarrying...  
Yes, my mind flings crusts into the night's taut river.  
And I see by the moon's weak lamp, it's as flat as the bottom of a pot.

The night so motionless, it seems an inertia devised by angels or devils,  
Who pull on it from both ends.  
The night's surface like a trampoline, resistant, rubber.  
And so, my sins fly back at me.

They splash my face like spindrift, leaving river on my lips.  
They reenter me through my eyes and teeth,  
As my mind rears up, a wild horse.  
For I understand, you were murdered by hands like mine.

And I understand I am helpless, a reveler at the table of the void,  
A pilgrim who's journeyed only to discover herself.  
And I'm ashamed to speak you or read the poems you shine on my skin.  
And the sky does not kindly let me empty my pockets.

**For The Birds**  
**Bob Holman**

The Birds are whispering  
Tweets into my ears  
Tweet tweet  
Tweet tweet  
I must be a Saint  
St. All of a Sudden

What are they tweeting?  
That is between  
Me and the Birds

Now I am in The Birds  
And they are in me  
They are dive-bombing me  
They seem no longer  
To regard me as saint  
And I seem to be running  
As St. Alfred Lord Hitchcock  
Screams out "Cut! Cut!"

However the Birds are not cutting  
They are not whispering Tweets anymore either  
They are slicing and diving  
And I am running across the desert

Is it because I would not tell my own people  
The secrets of the Birds?  
Who are my people, anyway, I ponder  
Now that I am a movie star

As I stumble on in the desert  
Upon the answers I receive  
Divine illumination and I see  
Tiny insects swarm round the heads  
Of the Birds that swarm round me  
Tiny insects dive-bomb Birds  
Birds dive-bomb me

I can no longer translate  
Tweet tweet into Bzz bzz  
Why do you hate me so  
I wrote this in the movies  
Even in the dark these thoughts  
Do not stop dive-bombing  
It is dark here  
It is hard to write in the dark  
It is hard to think in the dark  
The bombing outside takes on a steady rhythm  
As I pull down my mask, get runway clearance  
And take off with my babies under my wings

Claws extended, bill open and screaming  
Tweet tweet

**N.O.T.R.O.T.C.**

**Mark Rudman**

ROTC struck the wrong chord with me.  
I couldn't take it seriously.  
I raised the question with my friends, no, they  
didn't like it but it was required  
to graduate high school in Salt Lake City.  
I hadn't thought much about pacifism  
by the age of fourteen, but had warred  
against war all my life; I tormented  
the Rabbi with the question why?  
Why why why? A dispute over land.  
Was this a reason for a man to die?

ROTC struck the wrong chord with me.  
I kept wondering how to be excused.  
Asthma would keep me out of the army  
but not exempt me from ROTC.  
We were required to wear the heavy woolen  
uniforms all day every Monday,  
but since drill preceded first period  
I wore a tee shirt and jeans underneath  
and changed in the bathroom--  
a simple, elegant solution until a tall  
senior crashed through the BOYS bathroom door

while I, now in my tee shirt and jeans,  
was stuffing the woolen uniform into my briefcase.  
He asked "what's your name private."  
"Tom Jones," I fired back.  
"That's insubordination," he said,  
and grabbed my left arm hard with his right  
and marched me down to Colonel Will.  
I shook myself free of his grip and glowered.  
"Do you know what insubordination means, private?"  
They stared, jaws clenched, faces red.  
Private--what a joke. "Not telling the truth?"

"To an officer, and that makes it worse.  
I regret to say you're out for the year.  
Unless you're willing to get here an hour  
before school and march around the track  
carrying your rifle and infantry pack."  
"For how long?" "How long do you think, Private  
RUDMAN, until school lets out, is that clear."  
When he said "clear" I glanced down at his spit-  
shined shoes, saluted, and asked if he cared where I dropped off  
my uniform, swivelled and walked away while he,  
apoplectic, boomed abuses, threatened repercussions—

ROTC struck the wrong chord with me.  
In another life the Colonel'd been a pit bull.

Yet he appeared almost likeable when I glimpsed him  
waiting in line at the 7-11 or chopping at a golf ball.  
To be fair, I take it back, to be accurate,  
I had more freedom to behave this way  
than the Mormon kids for whom this was life.  
I knew that my real father would take my side  
when I said that there was no way I would stay  
and finish high school in Salt Lake City.  
ROTC struck the wrong chord with me.

**No War Then**  
**Fred Johnston**

*To The Lighthouse* lay on a pillow  
Big enough for both of us.  
The curtained room was warm, quiet –

We made love here. No war then.  
The radio was a long way off,  
A voice in another part of the house.

A gasometer gloomed on the garden,  
Blood-rust coloured; we were near  
The sea, and we had a few friends,

Innocent as dust, as leaves falling –  
We know better now. Too grown for  
Our own good, war is everywhere.

These bad days I think (forgive me)  
That it could be no possible sin now  
To feel your breath in my breath  
In such a warm, quiet room.

**My Collaboration with George Bush**  
**Robert Adamson**

*Quote of the Day: New York Times*  
*"Our wars have won for us every hour we live in freedom."*  
*PRESIDENT BUSH, at a cemetery above Omaha Beach 27-5-2002*

Our wars have won for us every hour we live in freedom  
our freedom is for us a thing of countless hours  
and after we win each war we wait in fear once more  
the more we win the less time there is for living

The more we win the less time there is for living  
yet our wars have won for us every hour we live in freedom  
as we fear what war brings we rejoice in the hours won  
and go on to live out fears in the way we wage each war

Our wars have won for us every hour we live in freedom  
even though to afford this freedom costs a bomb  
we teach our youth that war will make them free  
their freedom is for us a thing of countless hours

and as we take away from them their secret liberties  
they understand that living here involves a dreadful fee:  
Our wars have won for us every hour we live in freedom  
our freedom is for us a thing of countless hours

**Waiting for the Marines**  
**Fadel K. Jabr**

*Translated from the Arabic original by the poet*

Twelve years have passed  
And the Iraqis are turning over  
Like skewered fish  
On the fire of waiting.

The first year of the sanctions  
They said: The Arabs will come  
They will come with love, flour, and the rights of kinship.  
The year passed with its long seasons  
The Arabs never came  
And sent no explanation for the delay.

The second year of the sanctions  
They said: The Muslims will come  
They will come with rice, goodness, and the predators' leftovers  
The year passed with its long seasons  
The Muslims never came  
And sent no explanation for the delay.

The third year of the sanctions  
They said: The world will come  
They will come with manna, solace, and human rights  
The year passed with its long seasons  
The world never came  
And sent no explanation for the delay.

The fourth year of the sanctions  
They said: The Americans will come  
They will come with hope, sugar, and warm feelings  
The year passed with its long seasons  
The Americans never came  
And sent no explanation for the delay.

The fifth year of the sanctions  
They said: The opposition will come  
They will come with victories, water, and air  
The year passed with its long seasons  
The opposition never came  
And sent no explanation for the delay.

The sixth year of the sanctions  
They said: We will sell whatever is extra  
We will be frugal until relief comes  
The year passed with its long seasons  
The Iraqis sold all unnecessary things  
Relief never came  
And sent no explanation for the delay.

The seventh year of the sanctions  
They said: We will give up our semi-necessities  
We will be patient until we get support  
The year passed with its long seasons  
The support never came  
And sent no explanation for the delay.

The eighth year of the sanctions  
They said: We will sell some of our organs  
We will be strong until the coming of justice  
The year passed with its long seasons  
Justice never came  
And sent no explanation for the delay.

The ninth year of the sanctions  
They said: We will sell some of our children  
We will sacrifice until the coming of mercy  
The year passed with its long seasons  
Mercy never came  
And sent no explanation for the delay.

The tenth year of the sanctions  
They said: We will emigrate  
To the wide world of Allah  
We will entertain ourselves with hope  
Until the coming of the gods' orders  
The Iraqis separated east and west  
The year passed with its long seasons  
The gods' orders never came  
And sent no explanation for the delay.

The eleventh year of the sanctions  
They said: The best thing for us is to die  
We will stay settled in our graves  
Until the coming of the day of judgement  
The year passed with its long seasons  
Cancer, tuberculosis, and leukaemia consumed their bodies  
The day of judgement never came  
And sent no explanation for the delay.

The twelfth year of the sanctions  
The Iraqis found nothing to wait for  
They said: Now is the time  
For the earth's worms to devour us  
They might rescue us from this hell  
Where we are turning over like skewered fish.

**Rania**  
**Curtis Doebbler**

*(based on an interview with 5 year old Rania in Baghdad)*

Wildly flinging arms,  
the furry of colour of a child's lit eyes,  
the tales of dress and hair,  
flung into the sky,  
mixed with holler.

Her ornamented animation,  
tears lingering in perpetual balance,  
failing to fall, glimmering, Silver,  
under her black eyes.

"From the sky will come the fire.  
and men will come, all in black  
to take daddy and mommy..  
and my brother, he will stop them.  
He will hit them. He will defend me.  
But they will put off my arms and legs."

Shuttering in excitement,  
terrified by what she sees,  
Rania, just one little girl,  
cowering under the clouds of war,  
waiting, hoping, losing, day by day,  
her life in any other way.

**The Servant**  
**Mimi Khalvati**

Ma'mad, hurry, water the rose.  
Blessed is the English one that grows  
out in the rain.

Water is scarce, blood not so.  
Blood is the open drain that flows  
out in the rain.

Bring in the lamp, the olive's flame.  
Pity the crippled flame that blows  
out in the rain.

Where are the children? What is the time?  
Time is the terror curfew throws  
out in the rain.

Hurry, Ma'mad, home to your child.  
Wherever my namesake, Maryam, goes  
out in the rain.

**The Border**  
**Grace Schulman**

Perhaps because of the twiggy cigars  
he offered me, his showy "Come, American,"  
the outstretched hand, the hasty, sidelong stares  
at shorts I packed to wear in whitehot sun

and windblown hair, I knew he was a friend.  
On my side of the gunfire, date-palm fronds  
waved in groves. On his, white sand. In Kfar Saba,  
they warned, don't walk the path too near the border.

Soldiers were shot, and would be, ours, theirs;  
and new borders, none deadlier than the mind's.  
Why was it then I had to cross, and why,  
at that dizzying moment, fear disguised  
as ignorance, I asked: "Where is the border?"  
"Moved," he answered. "Now it is where you stand."