

War & Peace

Pick me up and travel through journeys of hope and struggle

“There will be today, there will be tomorrow, there will be always,
and there was yesterday, and there was the day before...”

Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace

2017-18

Positive Images Festival

www.positiveimagesfestival.co.uk

All writers have full ownership of their poetry



War & Peace

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INTRO

“War and Peace” has been produced to commemorate Coventry’s Peace Festival and celebrates the diversity and unity of different communities within the city.

This booklet contains many of the entries of the Second Annual Listen to the World Poetry Competition 2017. The competition entitled *War and Peace* was organised by Positive Images to commemorate Coventry’s Peace Festival and attracted over 100 entries.

On November 11th 2017, Positive Images organised an Awards event at the Hope Centre in Hillfields where the winners, runners up and other entrants were able to read their poems. The 2016 *Listen to the World* Winner and local poet Emilie Lauren Jones, and local poet and artist Leanne Bridgewater, hosted the event which attracted 70 people.

Positive Images will continue to work to promote peace and harmony in the city and will organise many events, including the Positive Images Diversity Festival which runs from 16th June to the 7th July 2018 and will celebrate Coventry’s City of Culture award 202.

We hope you enjoy this booklet of hope and love.

Thank you for reading.

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An African Mother

by Nasra Huran

She has journeyed distances to flee the war back home,
this is the African mother.

Left all that she has known: family, friends, and her motherland.

There is no other choice left for her.

With uncontrollable tears leaving lasting marks on not only her face but her
heart too;

she leaves in hopes for a better life, one that does not include such
inhumanity.

Relentless anxiety clutches on to her.

Where will she go? Whom can she trust?

She takes her first footsteps in to the dark secrets ahead,
with not a helping hand in sight.

For every man that can protect himself, must.

I cannot accentuate much further her pain

for every breath she takes, it is as if she is breathing for a nation.

And the beat of her heart?

It is nothing but the ancient sound of drums that have lost their rhythm.

But she must keep going. She knows nothing else.

With her children on her back and no place to call home;

she must believe in a better future.

Yet it is not as simple as that.

Tell me, what has she done to deserve this?

She bleeds just like you and me

but instead,

her wounds are kneaded in with distasteful salt.

They attempted to stifle her courage but she did not give up.

Not only was she the light that kept glowing

the only person who believed in me when nobody else would,

she is also my African Mother.

The Wails of War

by Tanya Kaur

I hear the wails of war,
Crying out loud
I see soldiers fighting
Dropping to the ground
I can smell smoke in the air,
Almost as thick as blood.
All I see is hatred, but where is the love?
Mothers and daughters
Fathers and sons
There is no guarantee of returning as the war has begun
We pray for peace
We pray for hope
We pray for safety
We pray for love
Take a look around you
What do you see?
People are dying
People are begging to flee
We're killing each other
We're killing ourselves
We're murdering humanity
We need each other's help
Let peace come to our minds
Let peace come to our hearts
Let peace come to our world
Let peace lie within our souls

Let us replace the wails of war with the pulsation of peace.

War and Peace

by Thalia Porretta

Darkness and fear fill the air,
hate reigns.

Anger!

No food, no colours, no music, death calls ...

Light and love fill the air.

Love reigns.

Joy!

Tasty food, beautiful colours, birds sing, life for living and sharing

Is good....

A Refugee

by Alexandra Bonsall

We are not just
labels.

We have
souls.

We are
human.

The day they came.
Heavily armed.
We ran.
Pets became strays.
Belongings
lost.

The days when running
was just a race
The days when leaving
was just a holiday.

Call me stateless
An asylum seeker.
A refugee.

The only name
that is false is

Human
I wish.

Little Grey Dot

by Conan Tan

On that warm December night¹,
where the streets were filled with fright,
where hatred and violence spread,
were the roads I dared not tread.
Through the city, beasts rampaged,
unvoiced rancour was uncaged,
flames engulfing lifeless cars;
cuts and burns leave hidden scars.
Our hearts that were made of stone
shattered as thousands dropped dead.
I weep for this war-torn country,
There's nothing wrong— I try to deny
but the place I called home was long gone,
for too much damage had been done.

*I
renounce
war,
and
am
therefore
determined
not
to
support
any
kind
of
war.*

¹ Refers to the 2013 Little India Riot in Singapore.

Nature's War

by Kianna Sims

Perfect plants, we grow strong, years and years it took us long,

On our own, us trees have grown, from a single seed that was sown,

Life, our life you cruelly took, you chopped us down for your books,

Lies you told, from tales of old, you don't hear our silent cries,

Unlike others, nature's crown, one of a kind, our bark is brown,

Trees have no voice, no song, no sound, will you stop cutting us down,

In our plans we will rise, you humans we do despise,

Our kind tried to make peace; but you mankind a terrible beast.

No one hears us, no one tries, even through our silent cries.

War & Peace

by Vithyan Sivamyooran

Happiness and joyfulness,
Summons the sweet aroma of peace.

Anger and hatred,
Brings out the dreadful sound of war.

Children and families are locked away,
Whilst the guns and bombs come out to play.
Tearing up valleys and hills,
Tanks provide so many kills.

As peace starts to fade away from humanity,
Around the world war starts to cause calamity.
Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and Pakistan,
War has turned them all into trash cans.

Utopia's of peace have been dreamt across the land,
Why can't the world all just be like Thailand?
Some people think war is the solution,
But why can't peace be the resolution?

Soon it'll be time until the children play,
Since war will have been gone away.
Happiness will soon fulfil the lands,
Whereas war will have been completely banned.

War has killed billions around the world
Peace has killed none around the world
War brings out hatred and conflict
Peace brings out joyfulness and tranquillity.

The Colour of...

by Ashish Patel

The colour of red caressing each flower

The colour of red signifying power

The colour of red breaking alliances

The colour red drawing one closer

The colour of red representing anguishes and pain

The colour of red showing us pure disdain

The colour of us as we bleed as a nation

The colour of us as we breathe in correlation

The colour of blood for those we have lost

The colour of blood... but at what cost?

Death of a Lionheart

by Daryl Hughes

Do you remember that first moment of mortality?
That second where death becomes a reality?
When you realise your body isn't made with elasticity.
Where a next life is just ...fantasy?

Cuts gape, bones break, muscles tear,
But when it's tough who's actually there?
When the injuries of the mind spark and flare,
And you find yourself playing truth or dare,
With that devil of a brain that doesn't care,
That malignant monster goading you into its lair,
Exposing entirely the secrets you couldn't share,
Like a lost, suffering soul losing their hair,
And having to suffer with the never-ending glare,
Suffering that alone surely isn't fair?

How does one fix a malfunctioning mind?
What hope is there to cling to, to find,
When all your worries act like a bind,
Perhaps you should have been more open, more kind
But thinking like that just acts like a grind,
Searching for the first indication, the first sign,
The first stumble when you replied "I'm fine",
Telling concerning lovers a similar line,
When that thought of illness was foolish and benign,
And the brightness in you lost all its shine,
"It's not your problem, it's mine"

Solitude traps you like a jack in a box,
At the door, cancerous thinking knocks,
Then hounds you like dogs hunting the fox,
You hide in that monsters lair and the door locks.

Search of the beginning...

by Preeti Rath

Scattered, battered completely broken,
It takes time and courage, as words are easy when spoken;
The battle ahead is tough & hard,
But I know I have made a humble start

The roads look unfamiliar when I look ahead,
But there isn't fear as inhibitions are shed,
The sky is dark when I see above,
I'm asked to practice selfish love

Where has gone the world I lived in once,
Dreams, dazzle, demure & dance;
From shadowy room of heart where
the door is left ajar...has slipped away
Optimism, celebration & prance

There will be a new day
There will be a new way
Until I find them let the heart & mind fray....

Four Long Years

by Andrew Goodison

I joined the British Army
a hundred years ago.
For a shilling a day
I'd send home my pay
And I'd face the German foe.

I left the port of Dublin
and I crossed the cold salt water.
I learned to salute
And how to polish a boot,
Then I sailed out to slaughter.

I took my gun and my webbing
and I crouched down in my trench.
I clutched the sod
and prayed to God
and breathed in my own stench.

At last the fighting finished
And all the Brits went back,
each one of them a hero
with a medal in his pack.

I came home to Dublin
and found a foreign land,
the Easter rising come and gone
when my brothers made their stand.

My country turned its back on me
turned its face away.
No-one would employ me,
nor give the time of day.

My life was made a misery,
my wife and child ignored.
We lived in dingy tenements,
the most we could afford.

I lived and died in poverty,
my life just left to chance –
reward for risking life and limb
on the battlefields of France.

A hundred years have come and gone
since I marched away to serve.
So spare a thought for me this day –
it's the least I deserve.

War and Peace – What is it actually?

by Megan Evans

War is a harmful thing,
Fighting and killing.
Peace is a helpful thing,
Love and calmness.
That's what everyone thinks.

Everyone thinks that the world is full of fighting,
And that everyone wants peace.
But is that true?
What would the world be like without war,
With just peace?

Many people would be jobless,
Causing them to be homeless.
No need for armies,
Leaders or followers.
Without any fighting.

Peace would lead to,
People being the same.
How boring would that be?
Nobody at war,
Big or small.

But what if there is just war?
Everyone would be fighting

Day in and day out.
Getting no rest,
And always fearing the worst.

Always imagining,
The worst happening to your family.
Always scared,
Of the constant gunfire.
Never knowing if you will make it another day.

At the moment on Earth,
We have a balance.
It might not be perfect,
But there's neither,
Too much fighting or too much resting.

What actually is war?
War is big or small,
Argument or killing.
Verbal, mental or physical.
War can be a whole lot more than fighting.

What actually is peace?
Peace is also,
Big or small.

Preventing a war from happening,
Verbally, mentally or physically.

Can you see how,
All this conflict,
Is actually leading to peace?
And too much peace,
Would lead to war.

War and peace.
Fighting and calmness.
War and peace.
Killing and love.
War and peace.

Interminable Agony

by Adesina Aanuolowapo John

Arise, O compatriots is drowned by the thundering tanks,
the earth trembles at the ejaculate of the holy war.
Teachers lie prone from the bullets delivered to their shanks,
dismissing dreams of being lawyers to become a dastard's whore.

My notebooks bore the brains of my beloved friend,
her ambitions flowed on the crooked lines of the pages.
The crow sings of the deaths that have known no end,
our burkas reek of the vagabonds seed that leaves ivory traces.

I am forcefully wed to my scurvy captor,
as a confetti of shell casings bless this unholy union.
We are rescued from the bridewell and conclude this spiteful chapter,
but our oppressive liberators would prove to be the masters of delusion.

For a paltry morsel of tuwo they possessed us,
and our honour flows from the vulva confessing their lusts

WORDS

by Ann Evans

What could I say about war and peace
That hasn't been said before?
What words could I conjure up
That would put an end to war?

How can I inspire those who fight
To change their warring ways?
How can I reach hardened hearts
To tell them war never pays?

The words really are all we have
And remember that old saying:
The pen is mightier than the sword
And effective without slaying.

If words would stop greed and desire for power
Bring forgiveness before that final hour.
If words could banish revenge and retribution
Bring peace – words are our only solution.

A Human Perspective

by Christine Foxon

Any good news in this paper?
Any small, green shoots of hope?
Anything in here worth reading
Something positive - let's see. Nope!

I must wake up every morning
Wondering if the world's still there
While two angry monsters threaten
'Cross a world that's in despair.

Or perhaps a world in darkness
Where no voice of peace is heard,
People not gagged but blindfolded,
News is rationed, it's absurd.

But she looks good at the Oscars
And the pound is doing well,
And with *Strictly* back on the tele
We will all be O.K. Hell!

Kim Jong Un has long range missiles
That can reach the States with ease,
Nuclear warheads to fit on the...
Donald goads on Twitter. Please

Don't let boffins get their sums wrong
And bombs fall on Coventry.
We just want to live securely
That hubby, dog and me.

Let's put tele on instead now
Find some better news, some hope
I've just got time for shudder
Before I watch my favourite soap.

On the bottom of the screen there
'Twixt the storms and Brexit gloom
'U.S. Secretary of State wants
To hold talks with Kim Jong Un

And he has an open channel'
So I pray to God that he
Can bring to closure this madness.
Better news on my T.V.

The Meeting Place

by Kitty O'Shea

"We are receiving distressing scenes"

The Newsreader warns:

War flashes into our rooms,

Death, destruction, dereliction loom.

Cascading fires light up our screens

Darkness highlights harrowing scenes

Skies ablaze, homes burn black –

Our world, mankind under attack.

Where are the people hold up in the shell?

Where is escape from living hell?

Then from the debris a drifting haze –

People emerging in an orderly daze,

Hunched shoulders bearing injustice of war,

In horror we stare, misery so raw.

"You may wish to turn away".

The newsreader says:

They journey outwards ...where to go?

Stumble, falter, fuelled by hope.

Through nights, hungry days, over land, across seas

Hear pounding hearts marching for Peace.

Clinging to the promise

Somewhere is a land,

Breathing freedom,

Shaking hands

We will them along through tears and pleas

When barriers, gunshots, stormy seas

Foil their journey, refuse a pass

The nightmare goes on, hope stretched to its last.

Does the world listen or hear the pain? –

Yes! Hope is lifting, there's a sweet sense of change.
Strong hands rescue weak souls of the sea,
Food in their hands, a place to sleep:
Only in hearts is their journey complete
Where everyone and all can meet
Equal, together, in rights and needs;
There for all is a place called
PEACE
A time for peace

She found some comfort
Dozing in the cool sheets
In the quiet of her strange room.

Sirens in the distance
Screaming through the night.
And in her head
Whilst brutal scenes of war
Played again and again
As she dozed.
The unexpected touch of friendship today
Gave her a kind of peace
At last a new beginning.

Silent Screams

by Ashaur Rahman

Bullets hail down making us all scatter
Five children died today, but does that really matter?
This won't even make the news, especially the latter
Our pain is not reported to make people's hearts shatter

My home is not what you call a home
How can it be? When it's a war zone
We are forced out to be on our own
All we have left now is our flesh and bones

Like animals we are treated
Working all day and not being seated
"More food for my children..." I pleaded
It was the same harsh answer,
repeated

A plane flies through the sky
A glimmer of hope appears in our eyes
The plane is not for us, it passes by
We look at each other and ask "Why...?"

All I want is the basics to survive
We wait daily for the help to arrive
Dreaming of a life where I can thrive
I fear I won't make it out alive

War and Peace

by Christine Stafford

Peace is difficult to find when Gods of war are rife.
Tranquillity, a sea of calm, within a world of strife.
The dove of peace seems flightless nowhere for it to fly.
As o'er each continent, and sea, humans seem to die.
Reminders of the aftermath are marked with crosses, graves.
For war kills many victims, the innocent, and the brave.
When anarchy is prevalent and quiet seems in vain.
When minds are programmed to destroy, obliterate, and maim.
Drops of blood, and emotions flow from vein, and saddened eye.
Through centuries, and history the question is oh why?

And peace seems often hidden behind a shrouded veil.
A cacophony of weapon fire resounding in the air,
Can deafen all who listen, and only bring despair.
Peace can only blossom when a world unites as one.
Like a flower unfolding gently, beneath a warming sun.
So let all conflict cease today, and war desist we pray.
And calmness dwell upon the earth forever, and a day!

Take My Hand

by Conor Johnson

Where do we stand?
With our heads in the sand?
Just take my hand
and let's leave this place.

Bullets whistle
and bombs drop.

Just take my hand
and let's leave this place.
The beneath our feet bloodied
and now we are drowning.
Drowning in our bloodline
of families removed.
Removed from the neck up.
And now father is no longer head
at the table.

Just take my hand
and lets leave this place.
This bloodied sand doesn't run
through our fingers.
And the clocks have stopped in time
in rhythm and motion
as the toxic notion
lays our bodies in the naked sun.
You've taken my hand
but we still remain
in this place of blood on sand.

Untitled

by Daniel Flatman

Do not cry my dear
Stand tall and have no fear
For I shall go to do my bit
To fire guns and clean kit
There is of course a possible chance
That I may not return from France
And if that should be the case
Smile when you remember my face
Know that I have done my part
And your name is engraved on my heart

What shall we do when the guns no longer smoke?
When the smell of flowers replaces the stench of gunpowder
And battlefields turn to fields of golden wheat where children play
Turn our hate to love? Hands that once struck each other reach out in
friendship?
Shall we know peace?

What starts as small pops turn to loud bangs
And gentle waves to raging torrents
Heads bob above the water
Some disappear beneath
Our small boat takes on shattered souls
And then we must turn back
To leave, to live... or die

The Face of Peace

by David Gilbert

I saw the face of peace
It was riddled with war
I saw people sat alone amongst the ashes
Their weeping hearts bludgeoned
With the dead red tears of a thousand souls
The pounding fury of fire
Raining from the blackest night
Alone they wept, in sorry they united
A city on its knees
A people trampled beneath
Fighting
For the last gasped breath of life
To heal and rebuild
And later question why
Why
We seek to blame those afar
The distance between us and hate
Born in a foreign tongue
They did this
They
We mourn a place now changed by the landscape of war
Our lost children, our burnt homes
We look closer
And closer still
Into the faces of our enemies
Until we see in those raging eyes
The deep fires that burn within
Our kind
Mankind
Ugly, distorted, twisted with fear
Fuelling the flames beneath us all
And we will learn
It is not our buildings that need healing
But ourselves

Uncle Tommy

by Graham Law

Tommy worked hard and Tommy worked well,
Painting airline planes each day,
Then home to five women each evening,
To cocoon all his cares away.

I envied my Uncle Tommy,
Surrounded by women in life,
Fussing and caring around him,
Yet none of them was his wife.

Two were Tommy's blood sisters,
While one was his brother's wife,
A brother regrettably gone, yet,
Giving Tommy two nieces in life.

Each day of the week he worked,
Then a whisky or five every night,
He was never aggressive or angry,
The drink seemed to soothe him just right.

We saw him odd Saturday evenings,
More slurring, each time he did speak,
"He's tired" the five used to say,
"He's been so busy all week".

With age we learned it was different,
The slurring was not "being tired",
It was whisky downed with beer chasers,
His speech became bottle inspired.

And then one night it happened,

I forget the year, or the week,
Its cause is long forgotten,
But it brought a tear to his cheek.

He cared not who looked or who saw,
He cared not by whom he was seen,
Word perfect he croaked to the tune,
'I'll take you home again Kathleen'.

Like many of that generation,
It dated back to the war,
German bombs hit Clydebank,
And his Kathleen was no more.

He never looked at another,
From when Kathleen's life did cease,
Tommy never went to war,
And Tommy never won the peace.

We're Getting There, Slowly, But Surely

by James Williams

I may be old
and lived through the Second Great War,
but we are doing well,
that's for sure.

It breaks my heart
to see and hear
the cries and whines and tears
of war, of innocent lives living in fear.

But upon reflection,
everything's clear
for all I hear
is cries and whines and tears of happiness
...
of love.

Those two doves
over there, perched on that bench
will be us, my dear.
We'll fly high up there knowing ...

(no matter what)
there'll be peace everywhere.

On Ringing the Bells In Coventry

by Keith Murphy

The old cathedral sits aloof
With toothy tower and absent roof.
Its nave has puddles brimmed by rain,
And silent walls all cracked with pain.
An open window spans one end,
And sawn off columns to earth descend.
Its bells for Reconciliation ring,
For Peace, not Hate that War doth bring.

Brave they are who sit and stare,
And contemplate the lack of care,
For gentle people forced to fight
And what they lost to save what's right.
Fought to right those awful wrongs,
And paid the price with moonlight's bombs.
Its bells for Reconciliation ring,
For Peace, not Hate that War doth bring.

'Coventried', goes the name,
When people died from air raid flame.
It marked a turn up of the wick,
To long and bloody, not short and quick.
Rebuilt cities tell the tale
Across the globe, of war's travail.
I've rung those bells, their voices rail
'Let not War, nor Hate, but Peace prevail.'

Yesterday, Today – Tomorrow

by Mary Ogilvie

A child picked a daisy,
An old man had fears,
When worlds apart,
They had grown,
Yet that future was so near.
Of death and destruction,
What might come about,
Yet the grass was blooming,
And twilights were so bright.
The old man gazing,
Knew what had gone before,
And at the child playing,
He saw his life as one.
Of trouble and hardship,
Just around the corner,
If men's minds were not to think,
Of the slow decimation,
That was waiting,
Just over that very hill.

Yet the child's beautiful future,
Full of dreams,
As childhood should be,
Was without that void awaiting,
That the old man's eyes could see.
For he knew of death and destruction,
Aimless lives being mercifully,
Thrown to dust,

Yet his hopes on the child's future,
Were so for very much.

A world sparkling with cleanness,
Air so pure and dreams secure,
When cities would be united,
And man of creeds in one brotherhood,
And childhood so precious, young and tender.
Just that one step away,
Is that holocaust nearer,
And that dreaded day so far away?

The child kneels to flower,
To earth so warm and true,
And the old man's eyes sprinkle with water,
Of tears real and so true.
And had he the power to change around,
A world full bent on cataclysm,
To its end,
He would give the child,
Those green meadows and flowers for all time.

War and Peace

by Fran Roberts

It's the ache in your heart
And the hole in his head
When you lie in the dirt and not in your bed

It's the fear and the misery
You see all around
As the earth starts to tremble
At your feet on the ground

The buildings are black,
The windows are shattered
The streets are all dust
No one cares, nothing matters

The stench of death is all around
I stretch out my fingers
Dig them into the ground
The light falls on a petal
A daisy is flowering
Soft, white and pure as the day we are born

I feel a glimmer of hope
Burn through my fingers into my heart
Could there be peace
On the horizon?
Hold tight, keep hoping all is not lost

Conscript Blues

by Stuart Lanigan

Well, here I am,

Totally twisted

I should have said no,

I could have resisted

I could have got with the program

I should have enlisted

But I fired up the bong

And got totally twisted

I sat here stoned

In the fog of my drug

The world's going to hell

And all I can do is shrug....

It ain't my problem

I didn't sign on for this

So don't give me a rifle

You know damn well, I'll miss

I'm a stoner, baby

I'm a stoner, yes I am

But I ain't fighting your wars

Because I don't hate that man.....

Oh you ain't... are you...

Listen up... boy... I got something you need to hear
Move a little closer, just so I can whisper in your ear...

Pay attention now, listen to what I have to say
Charlie is in the wire, and he's not going away

Charlie's out there waiting
Waiting for his chance
Charlie is out there planning
He wants us to dance

Charlie is out there hiding
Keeping out of the way
Charlie is getting closer
Charlie wants to make us pay...

I can see what you are thinking
This has got sweet FA to do with me
But let me tell you one thing boy...
This freedom isn't free....

Over the top

by Lynn Osborne

I take out the picture of my dear wife,
I think very soon I will lose my life,
I crawl along in mud and water and remember
My small daughter,
Gun fire and bombs reign down on me,
I am doing this so we can be free,
Over the top into the unknown,
Cannot see and grenades are thrown,

Men fall, they do not moan,
On I go I will not cease,
I am engulfed with pain, and drop to ground,
No more thought, no more sound,
Tell my family where I was found,
Tell them I died for peace.

Dead

by Jordan Oziegbe Eguavoen

I want to write a piece
On war and peace,
Something different,
Something unique,
I hope,
So I switch on the TV
And turn up the news,
It's there on display
For all to see,
Marching numbers,
Brave statistics,
Faceless uniforms
Who for the price of peace
Pay theirs without hesitation
On the battlefield.

But I also see something else,
Something more sinister
Than a little child
Gasping at the cruel fists
Of the eggs of war,
I see myself,
While the newsman reels on
About some dead and more injured,
I see how collected I am,
So much loss and so much blood,
Brothers, fathers, mothers, lovers,
But none of these faze me,
I am not shaken,
My tears stay imprisoned
And my heart is not laden
With grief.

Is this even me anymore?
How far have I fallen into my own self?
Right now
I cannot tell me apart
And it tears me apart
How comfortable I am
In the heat of this madness,
Because that's where we all are,
In the heat of the madness,
You're just too dead to feel it.

Grandad

by Martin Brown

It's hard to credit now
that the gruff and stooped old man
with the thick shock of stiff white hair
had fought at Ypres, Passchendaele,
kept to fragile duck boards, avoiding
sucking mud, drowning shell holes and vicious metal.

I don't recall any overt affection,
physical contact or gratuitous kindly words,
just the faithful , panting, overweight collie,
and grandad's quickness in shovelling away
the fledgling blackbirds whose nest fall
to the yard below made my sister scream.

My childish time was busied with toy cars,
making sandy tracks in the abandoned barn
and helping, in my limited way, amid the autumn
apple trees he'd once been waged to maintain.

And then, those journeys home, pretending
the evening clouds were exotic dreamy lands
where I would one day tread among creatures
and beings who were quite beyond the war

I ask you private

by Sebastian Dunn

Unwillingly six feet deep in a trench
Opposite the supposed Obermensch
A thin veil a pale Fuhrer wields
While all on the foreign fields
Counted blessings whenever a bullet missed
Even those coerced by a cowardly white supremacist
But on that sombre snow covered 25th day
All homesick boys wanted to play
They approached and reached out their hand
Taking a chance, taking a foot on no man's land
Not rounds, only shooting goals
Not shells, inside they all had souls
Regardless of their mother nation
Friendship found in in a pact of insubordination
But then it's "back to your station"
Sirens and the ground's unwelcome vibration
Undisturbed dew under the moon until Boxing Day morning
Letters due from frightened mothers who'll soon be mourning
They'll never see their beautiful little boy again
A boy robbed of his chance to join the ranks of men
Who fell to protect sisters and a sweetheart left at home
We remember each sacrifice with a poppy and a gravestone

This is what we can do, give time and thought
To how bravely the old boys fought
So that I could become a simple pacifist
Who's never had to hold weapon heavier than his fist
So I need not ever imagine the atrocities of war I never saw
I ask you Private, do I have the right to write
Having never been forced to fight
Despite never witnessing my brothers die
For you, can I still be permitted to cry

We all want the same

by Maureen Metcalf

Today it's raining down, gunfire and dust everywhere
The sun is shining but the skies are grey, gunfire and dust everywhere

It seems only yesterday we played with our friends, *where are they now*
It seems only yesterday we were surrounded by laughter and love, *where are they now?*

Do we know why people are fighting, some say freedom, some say love,
what are they teaching us now?

This is my land stay away, *what are they teaching us now?*

Bring back yesterday where we played, loved and worked together, *we all want the same*

Bring back peace, harmony and tolerance, *we all want the same*

Why are we hating and fighting

When we all want the same?

1970's

by Stella Backhouse

Now starts the seven-thirty rite -
the same thing every Thursday night:
'I don't know if they'm girls or boys.
The army - that would stuff their noise'.

Of manhood no man greater score
may boast than this: he fought in war.
Aye - mortgaged he his youth's brief lease
that these - his children of the peace -
would live their lives 'neath freedom's lamp,
unshadowed by the jackboot's tramp.
But do they thank him? No, not they -
old squares like him they wave away
and fealty in his place declare
to nancy-boys with girly hair
whom fate to face has not required
a single shot in anger fired.

A bunch of berks in sparkly suits -
behold of sacrifice the fruits!
An honest turn would be their death.
For this his comrades stayed their breath?

He snorts; not with contempt only.
If these be men – then what is he?

Coventry's Lighting War

by Jessica Hammond

They came at night to find us, one cold November's eve,
Five hundred and fifteen bombers left generations to grieve.
They tried to take our strength and to make us all afraid,
But what they couldn't count on was that we're Coventrian made.

We will rebuild and defend for it's our city that we love,
No matter what gifts you bring us falling down from above.
We shall fight on the beaches and join you at the shore,
For the Blitz have not stopped us, we'll bring you the Lighting War.

Back to the War

by Kevin Jackson

When all is done –
nightmares seen square
wounds repealed
shattered roots reformed
and silence overcome –

that blasted oak
still sticks up proud
and young faces
leave to die again.

George

by Margaret Mather

"George, wake up, it's ten o'clock,
I've made you some breakfast,
and it's getting cold" Mary cried
from the bottom of the stairs.

"George, listen, birds are singing,
food's in the oven keeping warm.
The family will soon be here to
celebrate our diamond wedding."

"George, come down, stand with me.
Remember the day we married?
Handsome in your naval uniform,
an officer and his blushing wren."

"George, answer me, the stairs are steep,
My knees ache, and hip's clicking.
Love you more and more each day.
Heart's full to bursting with pride."

"Oh no, George, not today of all days,
you promised we would go together.
Here, let me cradle your tired body,
sooth the scars that remind of torture."

We made it though, didn't we, George?
Lives lived in a world of reconciliation.
Fought for by us and other brave souls,
sleep soundly, George, you are at peace."