

POETRY



*Now the sun has come to earth,
shrouded in a mushroom cloud of death.*
~KATE WOLFE

I WOULD BE A WITNESS FOR HIROSHIMA

It was August 6th in 1945,
At an early hour of the day;
Men and women were to start their daily work,
When unexpectedly
The city and all were blown away;
Blistered hideously, each and all;
The seven rivers were filled with naked corpses.

I wish as a survivor,
To be a real human being;
Besides as a poor mother,
Fearing a day when the blue sky
Above the red-cheeked children
And those thousands with promising futures
May be smashed to atoms all of a sudden,
Endangering their bright futures
And now, to be repeated at the nation's cost.
I resolved to shed tears supposedly to be shed on dead bodies,
Afresh for those people living now,
Declaring against all war, first of all.
Even if I should perchance be punished under a disgraceful name —
From a mother's protest against death for her own son's sake,
I should never dare to hide myself, never!
Because the day was too much impressed on my retina,
The hellish day of that fatal blaze.

Supposing there is a tale of the inferno
Which a man caught a glimpse of once,
And happens to warn me of its horror
To be called back by the lord of the inferno,
The moment he tells it to someone else,
I would go wherever it is, as a witness of the Hiroshima Tragedy,
That I might proclaim its misery;
I would sing for my life
"No more wars on the earth!"

~SADAKO KURIHARA

PAPER CRANES

Radiated into the consciousness of thousands
August 6 will be remembered.
The atomic agony of Hiroshima staged in silent stillness of
burned flesh and radiation puking and hairless nakedness.
The incredible heat that burned friends into concrete walls,
also photographed shirts
onto backs, chests and stomachs.
In quiet hunger and thirst the desperate survivors
could not count their dead.
And, yes, there were no apologies.

The United States sent scientists, engineers,
to assess and measure the damage.
American grandchildren have not forgotten that our government
ended the war and saved thousands of lives.
In our inherited guilt, we, too, have seen
the arbitrary callousness.
And our Japanese brothers cannot forget their opportunity
for first-hand observation,
the chance to study the atomic particle as it eats,
still insidiously,
into the bones and skin and hearts of the survivors
as they fold paper cranes.

~KAY HILGENBERG

I TRY TO EXPLAIN TO MY CHILDREN A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE WHICH SAYS THAT ACCORDING TO A COMPUTER A NUCLEAR WAR IS LIKELY TO OCCUR IN THE NEXT 20 YEARS

Death (I say) used to have
two faces — one good, one bad.
The good death didn't like to do it,
Kill people, dogs, insects, flowers,
But had to do it. It was his duty.
He would rather have been playing cards.
Without him the earth would get too crowded,
The soil would become tired, feuds would
Overtake love. That was what death
Believed — and when we thought about it
We agreed.

The bad death was a bully.
He would kill angels if he could.
He settled for children, poets,
All flesh increased by spirit.
He bragged and made bets and said
Disparaging things about the human race.
People made his job easy, he said.
They were full of a confusion that
Soon became hatred. He would shake
His head in wonder, but he understood.
The nations of the world offered him
Their love.

The new death doesn't
Have a face. He will kill us but
In the meantime he wants to kill life too.
He is calm, devoted, gradual.
He is crazy. The other two deaths
Do not like him, the way he wears
A tie as if death were an office,
The way he wants to be efficient.
Fate and fortune bore him. He has
Reasons. There cannot be enough death,
He says. You will put us out of business,
The other two say, but he doesn't listen.
Things seem the same, my children, but
They aren't.

~BARON WORMSER

ARMS RACE

nuclear balance
slowing pendulum swing
to where zerotime
awaits the final touch
of a madman

who would cut
the hair of
Damocles' sword

~E. A. ANDERSON

last gasp earth
terror flash
hydrogen blast
a false quickening
left to fester
slowly
giving death's head
ugly reality
while
sins left undone
seed the galaxy

~E. A. ANDERSON

HISTORY LESSON

Class,
I must apologize
for the film we are about to see.
If you would like to be excused,
I will give you a pass to the library.
If you have a weak stomach,
you may wish to be excused.
(I cannot be held responsible for any
sudden loss of innocence.)
I cannot be held responsible
after the rain, or when the skin slips
off like a glove, or when you see
the person without a mouth.

You will be held responsible for anything I write
on the blackboard:

50,000 dead instantly,
within 10 miles of center.
100,000 died later,
within 50 miles of center.
Today's bombs: 200,000 x Hiroshima,
Nagasaki.

(And you will be held responsible
for the knowledge.)

~GERALDINE HELEN FOOTE

JULIE & VJ DAY

You might have been named
Victoria Jane
You knew a girl who was
Poor girl, you said
You are 60
VJ day
the day you were born
the World War ended
Millions dead
gone
Nevermore forever
You are new life
born amidst burial
a sad world you make warm
You unconditional mother
You wonderful woman
I love you always

~MPMc

CITY KILLER

Portrait of death
a tactical target
the blasted city
footprints of Mars
nine million dead
a trillion dollar loss

Portrait of abstract beauty
laser-carved rubble-sculpture
crushed cars on asphalt
and that mineral of bones & glass
rock and vaporized steel:
Hiroshimite

Portrait of political process
the top-level negotiators drunk
at the whorehouse in Geneva

~JON POST

EYE FOR AN EYE

Fall
Geese
Passing
Overhead.

Nothing
Like
Tomahawks
Or
Cruise
Missile
Guidance
Systems
Finding
Their
Way
Home.

But
Wait,
More
Hatred
Grows
With
Each
Explosion.

~LLOYD K. MARBET

TILLAMOOK AIR MUSEUM

The behemoth beckoned
for eons
dwarfing cows
in pacific pastures
until I came
to pay for a neck-craning
view of the vault.
Zeppelins extinct,
the hanger is home now
to scores of
war birds gaily arrayed
in rows with legends.
Winter chill invades
when I encounter
a companion of old,
Angst
of enemy air raids.

First words
of the child at war:
Mutti, Tata, Bombalarm.
No sleep is safe
from the wailing
of sirens,
struggles with buttons
and shoelaces,
staccato
of running feet.
From my blanket cocoon
I mark the migration
by tunnel lights
overhead.
Heavy tread
wears down the stone steps
to the Bunker where
my mother pitches her songs
against the rumble and roar
of planes
waxing and waning
in black-out skies.
I learn my lullabies
to rocking walls
and a basso continuo
of fear.

There is no nostalgia
in war
if you have ever
been bombed.

~KAREN TEMPLE