

# MUSTARD GAS OF YPER

Shake each others hand again.  
In Yperen, last post.  
At the poppygate.  
'The captain of the kiwi-rugby team  
was shot here; he was a volunteer'.

From wheelchairs everywhere & buses from abroad  
soldiers rise. Murmurings:  
'From nitrogen was my uniform'.  
That's why the sombreness. Death is red.

Black sun. Old wind. Dark water.  
And years on end December.  
That fox-red sombreness at twilight.  
Kiss of ice & mustard at it's sharpest.  
In Yperen (clarion, praline & trumpet).

JORIS DENOO

# 11 NOVEMBER

I don't remember the weapons  
but all who disarm  
I don't remember the brave bullets  
but do remember bullet holes

the words I will remember  
which vainly spoken  
at tables: the oaths,  
the promises that were broken

by bosses thinking of business  
and especially those who hold  
the order dreamed  
of glory and lustre upon their collar

don't ask me to honour the breast  
on which the crosses gleam:  
those who refused I shall salute,  
their murdered contradiction

heroes, friends, they look at us  
with pain and sadness in their eyes:  
they dreamed of a brotherhood  
and that was not allowed  
partisan

peace, he is not good at that:  
she goes on caressing and he interrupts,  
runs away from this oasis

patience is needed  
and that he doesn't have: a lot  
has to be done at the same time  
like writing this poem

shalom, he wanted to murmur,  
your peace I take along  
like a schoolboy  
his backpack: dangling  
or bravely on his back

in him hides a rioter  
always screaming way to soon  
peace, he is not good at it  
unless partially – the other part  
is a partisan in the bush  
and doesn't care for timeless play

STAF DE WILDE

# FIRE BOUNDARY (fragment)

In the morning I meet my lover  
in the eleventh town of ghosts.

His hands are branches,  
his skin is bark,  
his hands were branches.

I looked in his deep veined face  
and felt only around.

His hands were branches,  
branches became strings,  
I thought of a flower in his voice.

LIES VAN GASSE

# FRAGILE PEACE

Behind shadows of a curtain  
towers grew in her eyes,  
sails navigate their ships  
to the fringe of knowing never again.

Where the sea with wild whippings  
heaves the waves and breaks the waves  
a siren's voice kills  
all hope in her drowned song.

To caress and no compassion,  
no consolation in the white sand  
when storm deposits her life and limbs  
leaves her on a deserted beach.

If chaos finally finds order,  
war ends in brittle peace,  
the chase for clouds is open again,  
unrest resounds in soft southern wind.

LINDA VAN MIEGHEM

# DEAD WITNESSES

*Dedicated to Käthe Kollwitz*

The Passendale circuit in three dimensions, three days  
that unbearably slowed down the world.

Mourning is: having to stick out, sit out, lie out  
the toothless grinning of the future in fractions of seconds.

There are horses in the meadow. The poppies are spent.  
Ground mist hangs at the cemetery gate.

The parents are slow and sluggish from never more to each other.  
Now November creeps into their heads, only cobwebs remain.

There will always be horses.  
The grass will bear mustard seeds.

HILDE KETELEER

The battle of Passendale on the IJzerfront in 1917 lasted for one hundred days. Five hundred thousand soldiers fell during the temporary capture of eight kilometres of terrain. Explosives continue to be found to this day, and mustard gas continues to seep out of the ground. Siegfried Sassoon wrote: 'I died in hell – (they called it Passchendaele)'. The most famous lines on the Great War were written by John McCrae: 'In Flanders Fields the poppies blow/Between the crosses, row on row.'

At the entrance to the cemetery in Vladslo there is a statue of the mourning parents of Käthe Kollwitz, who herself lost a son in that war.

# WHERE WE SEE

Where we see many corpses, there is plenty of love.

The destroyed love of the dead ones  
and the hated love of the killers.

Holes in the ground, in heads,  
in words. A gap in a god.

Everybody claims love. Stroked.  
A gap in the skull of a doll.

I do remember a war. Outside  
rages a new one. Counting doesn't

work. Individuals don't count.

JOHAN DE BOOSE

# PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

We have been created to create  
not to destroy  
and yet we have to wake up after each riot  
in a empty landscape  
we have to stop again the fight  
and start from scratch.

They taught us to play  
with tin soldiers or with star wars.  
We beat up the enemy  
in our games.  
We learned when young to hate.

It should be possible  
to live outside the walls  
cut barbed wires  
and to surprize the other  
with well meant goodness  
even if we don't know him  
or don't speak his language.

FREDERIK LUCIEN DE LAERE

# REHABILITATION

Young boys, shoulder to shoulder  
in bullet grey rain, hidden  
behind the marbled face

of Lord Eats a Lot. How clear  
the grass now. How eager  
the grenades shoot

in the polder. Nine olms  
in worn overcoats  
overlook what hurts

the eyes: Mother McFarlane.  
every day a piece of her heart breaks  
in that rain of friendly fire.

Every day she sees her boy:  
shot at dawn.  
What to do with the flowers?

All the years refuse  
to die. Head held high,  
hopefully waiting for that one word.

PETER THEUNYNCK  
FROM: *The legs of heaven*, 2014

# PEACE

Who shall give us wings as of a dove  
So we can fly over all kingdoms of the earth  
And enter the southern sky  
And who shall lead us to the City  
The City of the great king who sees us  
Whom this writes, writes in stanzas about the stay

He writes his stay in verses for this rampart.

HEDWIG SPELIERS

# KAMIEL TOP

Kamiel Top dead and buried,  
In Germany without a cross.  
Near the sluts and the ravens,  
dear the rubble and the grit.

Being sick when evening falls,  
from the descending red.  
With thugs and vandals,  
With the water and the bread.

And nevermore see the climbing of the sun,  
like the colour of beating blood.  
Only capo's and shadows,  
only the ovens and their glow.

Near the sluts and the ravens,  
Far from mother and home.  
Kamiel Top dead and buried,  
In Germania without a cross

MARK BRAET

All the Poems were translated by Annmarie Sauer, except Dead Witnesses that was translated by John Irons