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The wars we've lived and are living through:
the Holocaust and other thermal devices
the parallel lines where that buck didn't stop
the madness of Mutual Assured Destruction
the ethnic cleansings and subtler genocides
the villages they had to destroy to save them
the humanitarian aid for slaughter
the tac squads and death squads and torture schools
the thousands disappeared into mass graves

Under the desks in class under the table
at work under God by executive order
all those sweaty palms and sticky fingers:
the Declaration of Human Rights never
ratified by the U.S. Congress
the global ban of patents on life forms
never ratified by the U.S. Congress
the Genocide Treaty ratified but only
after amendments twenty years later
guaranteed the stars and stripes would never
have to face charges in the World Court

Hardly a breather between the Cold War
and Culture Wars when Uncle Strangelove
wasn't bombing someone or paying someone
to do the dirty work: the White House
a wing of the Pentagon the Pentagon
a five-star property of Wall St.
conspicuous destruction the most efficient
means of keeping the wheels of production turning
while necktied ministers of the state religion
in collusion with millionaires on the Hill
unbuckle the regulatory restraints
put on the financial Frankensteins
who caused the Crash and Great Depression
so the cycles of scams and bailouts
can roll again every ten years or so
from Vietnam to Afghanistan — junk
bonds high risk real estate
high tech start up dot coms
layoffs bankruptcies foreclosures
each bubble bigger than the last one
more taxpayer money in corporate hands
more people fleeced and lives ruined

The war on poverty sold out for napalm
the peace dividend invested in teargas
to keep the heads bowed down in the Middle East
southeast Asia Central America Watts
Harlem Detroit Newark South Chicago
to put the red flag down for the long count
to keep the meter running to give the sick
economy a shot in the arm to pay
for the glitz and greed and disbelief
suspended under a B-grade father figure
asleep at the wheel dreaming Buck Rogers plots
updated with 007 props
building the biggest national debt yet,
the shadow economy of violence
(military spending domestic crime
a shoot-em-up entertainment culture)
that dwarfs the GNP, the great
communicator of hogwash succeeded
after a sordid comedy of errors
in the cockpit of the free world
by a dynasty afflicted with
congenital free speech dysfunction,
signaling in winks and code words
to the lay order who voted them in
while putting the country even deeper in hock

The gulf where our bombs and radioactive bullets
were no smarter than us: the cities burned
the millions raped and maimed the brainless babies
stillborn in border-town free trade strips
the free-fire zones the *jefes* swear contain
no people only terrorists,
lend me your ears more than a figure of speech:
death as method extinction as tactic love
of order gone ballistic, desire itself
a debt owed to the government, the young
sent off to combat, marriage, prostitution
by men with bleary eyes over bird-beak smiles
our lives eaten up with fear and hate commands
of the national insecurity state
increasingly controlled by and for
minorities of fundamentalist bigots

The myth of imminent military invasion
by a hideous malevolent alien

cooked up by a bloated arms industry
grown out of all proportion since Yalta
*(Of course the people don't want war said Goering
but get enough to believe the threat is real. . . .)*
propaganda more subtle now than ever
a politics of fear turning the country
into the spitting image of the state
they said had to be eradicated,
hard to find anyone who doesn't believe
under the spell of news spasms timed
to create moods of widespread consensus
prolonged by rituals of grief and vengeance
there really is one crisis after another
that only generals and admirals
and neocons on their payrolls know how to manage,
keeping the permanent war economy state
on the brink of utter catastrophe
while upping the output of nonrenewables
squandered in perennial destruction

Billions spent on better mousetraps
billions to field-test the latest spear
twenty-five million US citizens
active or formerly active military
millions more paramilitary
thousands in office good for nothing
but to rise on occasion, light up
the little screen and big board, toot
their horns take a stand for the right make us
feel again the old glory the passionate
story of market truths and consumer goods
without doing squat to better the common lot

The checks and balances without which
democratic liberty can't work
skewed by the weight of big money,
elections bought by fortunes spent on ads,
sell-outs on both sides of the aisle
voting for corporate deregulation
bigstick diplomacy consumerism
dumbing us down with cut-rate classrooms
miracles of science passion-play sports
sex and infotainment until it's hard
to find anyone but wackos and wingnuts
keeping even one eye on Uncle Sugar

dismembering the Bill of Rights
with his *Secret Government* joy stick

Our schools an anti-intellectual joke
designed to keep kids off the street
off balance locked down in narrow courses
funneling into the divide-and-conquer
grid of pigeonhole career tracks
leading not to what used to be called education
certainly not to creative liberation
the integration of body mind and spirit
but to time clock and credit card
rituals of cutthroat competition
desires conformed to market values
belief to the myth of unending consumption
in order to justify subsidies for research
into novel ways of subverting nature

Our bodies turning on themselves unable
in the blood soup of renegade chemicals
electromagnetic mishmash and mutated genes
to tell disease from health, good cells from bad
our moral fiber twisted into legal
briefs religious tracts and arms brochures
our sacred desires spun into market demands
our future condemned by nuclear winter or aberrant
planet wobble to hells of fire and ice —
a global greenhouse filled with off-gases
or a global deep freeze from a few
degrees drop in the average annual mean

Our inner cities a national disgrace
clogged with human waste and misery
occupied by armies of sadist police
our mentally ill and chronically poor turned out
with runaway kids and shellshocked vets
begging for food and shelter so we can play
Great White Father to captive markets,
brokering nations into client states
under threat of hostile takeover
forced by the terms of economic war
to privatize their countries' public resources,
put their people in permanent debt to the banks
turn their subsistence farms into factories
for chemical agribusiness export crops

until they raise so little food for themselves
they have to import high-priced staples from us,
precluded from even beginning to think in terms
of economic independence or freedom
to use their resources for their own needs
let alone global equity

Our prisons hotbeds of patriotism and rape
growing faster than the cells on a President's nose:
the highest hard time rate in the First World
millions of young men of all colors
locked up in privatized cages (more blacks
than the South had slaves), disenfranchised
so come election day the law-abiding
who put them away in the first place can count
on that many votes against them not cast —
three percent of the US population
twelve percent of black men in their twenties
under some form of criminal supervision
the only crime of most besides being poor
non-white or both, believing the killing should stop
this leaf makes better smoke than that
privacy is a basic human right
equal opportunity is a scam
freedom without equality a lie