

iraq

war

poems

2000-2004

richard russell

these poems have no hindsight. i've avoided redraughts, whether for self-aggrandisement or factual correction. poetry isn't usually sociological, political, let alone military analysis. had I known the dirth of critique, checks and balances of the blair years I might have included a few percentages and a bibliography.

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1. EASTMINSTER

written in 2000

Summertime in Upper Nazareth: the new-town the
Israelis

Built for themselves in this twenty-first century.

Further down the hill sits the

Old town, living in all the other centuries at once.

As the cameras flicker, and all those electric clocks

Click round to nought, there's no room for any of them at
the inn.

Baghdad in the autumn, after the blitz. Libraries and
museums

Ruins themselves, but nobody cares: are the leader's
allies good

For penicillin? The oldest civilisation leans on a battered
zimmer

Frame, bloody to the knees. Streets like these grow more
dictators.

The White House glows in the winter lights. All clear now
The washing's done. They wash anything here: money,
hands,

Private lives, right-wing thugs in foreign lands.

They will not pause to tell us when their global

Government requires a Secretary for McDonalds;

A Governor for Disney State; Senator for Coca-Cola.

They will not ask us the next time they use their rain

Of death from their invisible 'planes. It might be us; or

Friends of yours. Snow falls peacefully: traffic muffled.

The cries of a newspaper seller are briefly stifled

By a siren: in this land you are free to hold

Up the 'liquor store'. You have the right to bear arms, but

No right to walk safely in the streets; and the biggest

Mass murderer is the State of Texas.

Lethal injection; run for election.

2. twice upon a time in the west

some bloke called george bush says we gotta bomb iraq
'cos he's "sick and tired" of the dangerousurisation of dark
forces from the gulf- the gulf of misunderstanding.

the plot sounds familiar; i've seen this episode before.
when we decided to stop being iraq's favourite gun store.
the "supergun"? remember? saddam waves back from his landing.

he's waving at you, British Aerospace and you, Rolls Royce.
was you guys who gave him that civilised delicate choice
between bombing iran or invading kuwait- a gentlemen's misunderstanding
osama bin laden, cia training, doesn't mind in the slightest bit.
he hates hussein and wanted WW3 in the first place. he sits
by the pool in Pakistan, singing "don't you want me, baby?"
eating goat jalfrezi and phoning Al Jazeera about "maybe
We bomb Sluff this time.or Staines: yes Staines: that Ali-G
in-da house really gets on my tits, praise be to allah."
meantime the weapons inpectors continue their ten-year old tour:
if they don't find any then we know it's safe to have the war.
hussein's had his weapon inpected: it's purple, circumcised, no more
than three inches long, and has the word 'mum' tattooed up one side.
still, you know what they say: it's all about what's inside.
george's weapon has never been spotted:
except once when seventeen he slotted
his father's peruvian maid.

as for tony, well he must think the smells of texas burger herds:
for his sins and those of cheryl. here's some words
of support to his noble cause:
tony, don't do that.
ignore those words
from sheep you like to love you; they say those nice things because you
PAID them to. the rest of the nation thinks you're a gun-crazed loser,
burger-addicted, wine-sodden, duplicitous, megalomaniac user,
whose new age charm wears off like a snort of cheap glue,
sir, a nuclear-capable armchair general, a parsimonious bruiser
who rules with spin and rules with slur; who likes best to stir
up the masses in best british far right zenophobia
with asylum this and algerian that and most of all woe be you
if you're muslim and young and male and live near anne widdecombe.
but not to worry.
when I was young they'd always tell me
world war three won't last five minutes
and i've wasted that long in your life already by page three.

3: propaganda- the evitable solution

tony benn's got chemical weapons hidden in his garden shed.
union man andy gilchrist's best mate's sister bought a kebab once-
Shirley Williams surely is a worthy suspect. it's
al-fayeds-under-the-bed-time. life during wartime. read the sun: play spot
the difference between disinformation and racist agitational nonsense.
cops say "we don't target muslims" as they storm the mosque
and home office ministers keep up their chant of grotesque
platitudes: "our figures are down", while they know the risk
of annoying the racists is far worse in political terms
than any hint of 'truth' or 'moderation'. Tony Blair squirms
as he sends 30,000 troops to a war he's definitely not
decided to fight. he's not decided: George has, his shot-
gun bride, they bombed afghanistan to tie the knot;
honeymoon is moonlight over Baghdad. a nice hot
war. oil for votes. votes for oil. it is a little thing to boil
the tigris in blood. to spoil the euphrates. political turmoil
as the sunnies hang on against shirs and kurds over soil
that was poisoned by depleted uranium the last time.
that's if tony 'wins' the war, then he can justify the crime
he's committing. if he loses toomany of us limeys
in this mistaken crusade then he's made his bed. he'll try slimey
speeches at funeral services- "listen..you really can't blame the MOD..
it was saddam who killed them with no provocation, not me."
life during wartime. meantime, an upwardly thrusting skin-head
called uday hussein plays the successor in this chicken-fed
regime change operation. uday is one mean sod. not scared
of killing a few hundred puppets of George's oil magnates
he is said to have people shot for fun. and he really hates
tony and me and you. but most especially he really hates
Jews and they're very much nearer with the missiles we
sold them. George's little 'hit the wrong kid back'-party
will probably backfire. as london, for one, eats a hearty
breakfast. so we kill saddam. what then? so we
kill uday. what then? so we kill the whole barth party
and all the poor soldiers ordered on death to defend
them. what then? oil and votes. votes and oil. in the end
George has a fair idea for his second term. he'll lend
his skills to iran, while he's in the neighbourhood. then
north korea, then libya, then cuba. the freedom to buy dollar
and sell your soul. all to boost an opinion poll. tony follows
like a devoted pet rabbit. we complain. he twitches his nose
and says: "listen..you can't tell me this is murder..
you can count all the bodies in a murder..
our figures show we didn't kill anyone..no, honestly.
why on earth don't you believe me? why on earth don't you believe me?"

4. the reshuffler

tony blair doesn't care. the one-man bomb scare:
we want one man, we bomb you- that's fair. he lives
upstairs
at margaret thatcher's old place. beware the murky lair
of ghosts dictating legislation. take care as the greying premiere
sits in his leather armchair on his prime ministerial derrière
with his official prime ministerial Winston Churchill teddy-bear
and in a trance stares past his whiskey-glassware
away into space and in a bare whisper says "yes, George.
Of course, George. Anything you say: I will obey."
his best mate's called Alastair. you know: the big bloke with dark hair
who peddles his journalistic wares: a pack of prime lies he shares
out to the tabloids. he who dares snares the shallow opposition and then
denies it all and blames civil servants. "yes, Alastair. Of course, Alastair.
Anything you say. I will obey."
tony's wife's called Cheryl Blair. she has an evil glare
and wears a wig and scares juries for a living. somewhere
in some attic there's a portrait of her that never ages a day.
she's been known to pay thousands to life-style gurus who give
away
her beauty tips to the Mail On Sunday
which is brought to her on a little silver tray
deliberately to heighten her dismay. and tony says:
"yes, Cherie. Of course Cherie. Anything you say. I will obey."
then there's gordon brown: he of the prudent frown
he was the Blairs' friend before they found
they so enjoyed looking down on everyone. now he goes around
waiting most impatient for the crown like some soiled hand-me-down
gaining a certain renown all over town
economic slowdown from the capitalists' clown
delaying the leadership showdown meantime the breakdown
in relations deepens and gordon drowns
his high ambitions in gordon's gin. while the blairs hardly ever let him in.
anyway, maybe one day Martians will invade Earth: the whole bit:
improbably lit flying saucers flying down from orbit
turning the queen into pink rubble and philip into a dead stupid git
deathrays abundant. and all the brits like the courageous twits
they are will neither stand nor sit for any alien invasion: they'll fight it
all the way to the very pit of death. all except tony he'll be
standing on a hill somewhere waiting for the Martians
and as the death ray reaches him, he'll just pull his rubber mask away
and triumphantly display his long green antennae and he'll be
plainly heard to say, in an alien gargling porridge sort of way:
"yes, great uncle general big blue bug-eyed monster.
of course great uncle general big blue bug-eyed monster.
Anything you say. I will obey."

5. high-chair generals

there's a place called the United Nations. as I understand it, this is a big room filled with people from all countries who support Man Utd. one fine day, the friendly general turned up and announced the business was war on iraq. he had a friendly name: colin. he came from a friendly place called United States which has never had a war with anybody; except maybe Mexico and Russia and Cuba and Korea and Vietnam and Columbia and Grenada and Nicaragua and Libya and Sudan and Afghanistan and Cambodia and Laos and Serbia and iraq last time. but they fought hitler when we paid them enough money and we love them for all their funny beefburgers and that very funny little cartoon mouse called Michael Jackson. Of course they don't have a clue how many wickets Truman took in a season or the rudiments of rummy or what's involved in a rugby competition but "nobody's perfect" as one of their charming cine-movies reflects. colin is the accepted friendly one in the us regime. he's a respected general and respected generals kill people as a rule. it's accepted by the UN that colin's killed some 140,000 people in his time, but that's not a crime because he is so friendly. and in his friendly way he spoke all day about iraq's display at disobeying Hans Blinks, who wants them to collect up all their toys, take out all the batteries, put them back in all their shiny boxes and send them back to that friendly Mr Rumsfeldt and that friendly Mr Mellor, who they might remember from twenty years ago. and by the way, saddam has got to go. saddam is friendly enough. may not have killed as many people as colin but he sure wants to. trouble is Hans Blinks no sooner fixes his specs and the silly Iraqis hide all their toys in the desert. blick's isn't allowed. so back in the US, where blacks weren't allowed til colin's day, we get the cia crudite of sliced 'phone taps served on a bed of circumstantial rumour with a side order of friendly anthrax panic: "one teaspoon of anthrax" could wipe out an entire re-election campaign. can't have that. might get a US leader with some self-control and a sane disposition. the people want peace, but friendly colin has nothing to gain by peace; there's oil, political control, and glory to be had by getting a bit gory and the tory blair wants some too. as those tories do. war. the british people would rather have a prawn vindaloo washed down with a hoppy brew and beat Saddam Hussein at darts or maybe pool: blue ball in the corner pocket you give us back a few of those rockets you've got pointed at Tel Aviv. Point them at Terry Venables instead or something. no. we get very friendly colin with his spy photos: I saw one; they are stupid those iraqis; next to this site in the desert they had "nuclear bunker" written in English, in what must have been fifty-foot high yellow letters in the sand. what a give-away. george tells us to pray. he ought to. he's doing the lord's work; that is to say he's looked at the calendar, decided the apocalypse is three years late already so he'd better start it now or there won't be any revelation. in his case of course the revelation is he finds out quite how stupid he really is. meantime he eats his pretzels, polishes his cap-gun and watches Batman. and that's how the New World Order began.

6. moral majority

The cops said there were 750,000 people frozen up
in Hyde Park on 15th of Feb.

An almost endless processional tide
Of aware humanity desperate to
fight against the slide
To weary war.

The cops always lie: their esteemed bosses,
A bunch called acpo,
are all senior ranking freemasons
Who consider it their sacred duty
to protect the tossers

In the pubs at Westminster Palace
at all costs against the masses

Who might speak out in rank civil disobedience. Truth
Was nearer 2 million people.

2 million folks mixed youth
And age; mixed rich and slaves.

There was Tony Booth,
Cheryl's dad, yelling "give peace a chance".
Distinctly couth

Crowds of pensioners,
labour and tory; little Charlie Kennedy,
The political choice of the under fives,
in his steady Eddy
Tone invoking Suez.

The Jacksons: skinny Glenda and Jesse
With their slightly messy politely liberalism.

Entire posses:

2 million people.

If you took just two seconds with each to say
Hello to 2 million people it would take you roughly
47 days.

If 2 million 'phoned a radio
request spot and got them to play

A record for each of them, then the entire show would last
12 and a half years.

If I went and ordered a slight tasty repast
Of biryani, rice and popadoms for this cheery shivering vast
Bunch of Brits,

Then I would still be paying for the bill past
My 127th birthday.

If 2 million in their dissident counterblast

Against Tony Blair's fuhrer tendencies each pencilled their
Full name and address on a single, solitary piece of paper
You'd have a list nearly 95 miles long.

One well-favoured,

Brisk allegro performance of
"Two Million Green Bottles" would
Take you from now until round about
January 2005 if you could.
You'd probably need help.
If those protestors all hadn't just stood,
But laid down end to end from
Hyde Park outwards they would
Have reached the pyramids, if that would've done any good.
Trouble is Blair won't listen:
He's gotten quite used to unpopularity
And he's quite immoved by the untold destruction and misery
He's about to unleash.
So him and Slimy Jack go blithe unblinkingly
Along with the idiot
George and his idiot plan: they've just democratically
Appointed Hussein's successor: he's a
US general called Tommy Franks
Who knows all about exporting
US dollars to carve up a country twixt banks
And bananas and billionaire bovine oil speculation.
Line up a few tanks
For a once in a lifetime
Investment opportunity: a battered
Nation in need
Of US redevelopment/rationisingness.
So what so a hundred thousand bleed
For the priviledge.
Strategically, of course, the
US can then plan misdeeds
With their military against
Iran and Syria and then Riyadh.
Laying the seeds
Of terrorism for long
Generations like a cow that shits poppies.
The biggest
Weapon of mass destruction is imperialist
Injustice of this sort. The
US fist
In the glove of misplaced revenge.
2 million said no with their feet, the largest
Protest we've ever had; but
To the generals
Might is right and
Murder is best.
That was the news: now to
Trent Bridge for a forthcoming Test.

7. war is the new peace

there's a useful truism about political spin:
sooner or later they divert so far into fiction
that they get back round to the truth:
war is the new peace.
war is the new peace-
that is the new masterpiece
spouted by tony and his clockwork supporters
war is the new peace.
we can't sleep safe in our bed
until the muslims are counting their dead
and there's an iraq civil war instead
of the dictatorship we so used to adore;
hussein has got wind of the score,
he wants one last swipe at israel before
his kingdom of babylon is no more
last orders for his secret police
and war is the new peace.
war is the new peace
the british people don't want it
the french and the germans don't want it.
half the americans don't want it. the russians don't want it.
the pope and the archbishops don't want it.
the turks, saudis, syrians, jordanians don't want it.
121 labour mps don't want it
you don't want it. I don't want it. my mum doesn't want it.
but blair and little george and dodgy jack straw all want it
so while the threat of terrorism will increase
war is the new peace
the thing about war is you can do lots of things
you can't do in peacetime like keeping tanks on brighton beach
like trampling on freedom of speech
emergency powers to make supreme governance complete
do special terror laws make blair feel replete?
is jolly john prescott obese?
war is the new peace.
if he could, the lord tony
would be handing out ration books, calling
up school-leavers for installing
in the services, running around calling
you to "put that light out" and jailing
critics like me and you with no hope of release.
our own liberties set to decrease and decrease
while war is the new peace.

8. on the sodding beach

Dawn on the sodding southern front,
Tent stale sodding air filled with grunts
And snoring from the sodding old world
Courageous on this sodding late crusade.
A bomb-proof sodding cd-player sonic booms
Across bomb-proof speakers, the dooms
Day machine awakes for another exercise.
Still no sodding bacon, so bomb-proof sausages
Feed the dragon while it effeciently brushes
Its thirty thousand sets of sodding teeth in strict
Formation: formidable specimens, hand-picked
Solution to our sodding little globalism problem.
The lower ranks commence the task that takes them
Half the day: cleaning sodding sand out of the guns
While they can still do something so strenuous; the sun's
White power makes you cower for an sodding hour or two,
Then you get sodding used to it just in time to chew
On some sausages for lunch. The sodding american crew,
Stationed past the next sodding sand dune or two
Have a different type of routine: they sleep through
To eleven am, they do a bit of sodding sunbathing
And then retire to to a big bomb-proof marquee watching
Sodding stallone movies and doing us-army issue crack
Cocaine to keep them on the right motivational track.
None of that down here though with our brave sodding
Lads. There's the sodding heat, keep an eye open for sodding
Scorpions, moan about the sodding cricket and sodding
No sodding bog-roll and me brother says I shouldn't sodding
Be here. Evening meal: more sausages. Bit of sodding
Semolina. Evenings, you get to write home: dear
Mum, it's just like the beach except there's no beer,
No ice-cream, no birds, no sea, no arcades and this
Sweaty american bloke in keeps shouting at us
All day. We're all told not to say where we
Are but you can probably find out from the telly.
They're making us spend our own money
On bare essentials like sun-tan lotion and
This month's Loaded and the sand
Gets everywhere. Please send
Marmite, frosties, gold blend,
Lip salve, and they're saying
We might have to buy a new
Camp stove. Lots of love,
Tommy.

9. pep pillow talk

“now listen

Men. I know it's getting tough on you but I have some
Encouraging words: first we're being joined down
Here for the weekend by geri halliwell; she's found
Out she can definitely lose another three or four pounds
If she stays for a bit. Second I'm proud to announce that
Owing to some marvellous work from our delta-sat
Logistics team we will have all the necessary bullets
Arriving here before our scheduled hostilities.
As you are aware, our invasion must commence
Before April the eleventh. This is because
Our boots are all likely to melt on or before
The seventeenth. So you all know the score.
We planned for a two-pronged attack. Here
From Kuwait and also from the area
In the north through Turkey and the Kurdish areas.
Unfortunately, this may well not occur.
The turks won't let us unless we take turkish
Troops with us and if we do then the kurdish
Won't let us. We've tried offering the turks 19 billion
Dollars but it didn't help. We might now have to threaten
Them. In the meantime, of course, over a third of our
Combined forces are completely immobilised until our
Navy can transport them the short distance along the
Mediterranean, through the suez canal, down the
Egyptian coast the length of the red sea, around the
Southern coast of saudi arabia, and along the
Seven hundred miles of the iranian border, up here to the
Persian gulf. Now I must stress that this is a minor
Setback. We have the latest flying machines and aircraft carriers,
All fully operational, and we have been assured that all
We have to do is bomb them enough, and the regime will fall
Without any difficulty; and we can set about setting all
Our off-licences and betting shops up in baghdad high st
In no time. Of course we might have to do it in our bare feet.
Now, it has been pointed out that in 1940 adolf hitler thought
The british would overthrow churchill if he just taught
Them a lesson and bombed london for long enough.
Now this is precisely the crass demotivational stuff
We don't want you hearing, which is why we don't let
You have any newspapers. Anyway: on your marks; set;
Hang around for two more weeks won't you there's a pet,
Because the politicians still aren't sure we can get
Away with it. And remember: the iraqis may not like it,
But ronald mcdonald for one, will be eternally in your debt.”

10. merry-go-round of mass murder

you say you want a un resolution- we-ell, you know
you've sent our soldiers, sent our tanks,
sent our planes because the yanks
want iraqi oil and iraqi banks
and the iraqi people are supposed to give their thanks
for bombs that fall upon their heads-
they wanted freedom, what they get is dead
the night they painted baghdad red
again.

you say you want a resolution we-ell you know
it was gorgeous george turned down the resolutions
for an international court with a constitution
to arrest hussein and end the sanctions destitution
in case it questioned george's right to rule by lethal injection
and invade exactly who he likes
and continue with his daddy's reich
treating moslems all alike
again.

you say you'll get a resolution- we-ell you know
vive la france: they're acting tough
and guinea hasn't been paid enough
the russians want support for their chechnyan stuff
and pakistan doesn't believe the guff
about the threat from terrorism
iraq don't have no fundamentalism
it's just applying global capitalism
again.

now you say you don't need a resolution- we-ell you know
kofi annan won't sanction it
and the lawyers say it's dodgy shit
and tony benn will serve the writ
while the cabinet falls to bits
and blair might tumble down a class
when the hague finally gets his arse
not william hague and his tory farce
but the war-crimes tribunal behind bullet-proof glass
while all of george's highest brass
will bomb libya in africa
and we'll learn to live in america
after the baghdad massacre

11. bleak Thursday

The day war broke out:
I had a late breakfast of
Troop movements and a baked scud
How they'd sent thirty-six Cruise Missles and hadn't
Drawn any blood and they
Lined up jack straw-man and he
Talked a lot of crud and he was followed by
Geoff hoon the right-wing loon who
Told us what a marvellous thing it was of us to do
That they'd be liberated corpses
Except for the few who
Escape in the flood to
Syria. by blue afternoon we had
"Clashing" of troops and we're
Told that soon we would win; and then
We'd begin "reconstruction" of the corpses. it wasn't a battle
But a predictable rout the day war broke out
The day war broke out: it was made very clear in
Parliament square that "public order" would be maintained
By the lucky twats in their big blue hats and their
Big black boots and it's true that in
Proving-it's-great britain nobody shoots you
Any more they can certainly video-tape you to death.
The meek of the mild of the populous all held its breath
To see if protestors would have any clout the day war broke out
The day war broke out: at 17.30 hours greenwich time
The white house sealed its little crime
By announcing it was formally handing control of our
Only grimy little globe to the pentagon. diplomatically
They branded hussein a slimy nasty liar for
Pretending to be still alive and that all further
Iraqi negotiations would be conducted with a rocket-launcher
And we'd see fleeing iraqi soldiers in no time.
a little more than twenty minutes later they began to bomb baghdad
which we could now see on tv because we'd paid for it but I decided
To go without, settled for the Simpsons with the bush-jokes taken out
The day war broke out. As night fell, blair got the fuck away
From london so if a scud thuds down round here
He'll miss all the fun. He's hustled off to brussels, flexing his muscles
Parading his corpuscles, expecting a tousel from the french and the germans
And the swiss and the belgians. He's left us a tape-recorded message bless
Him. we're allowed to see it tonight: something along the lines of "dear
people, i've got us into a rather large fight. don't protest. don't panic; but,
above all, don't breathe out" and I wonder whether by Monday will there still
be guinness stout? the day war broke out

12. seven days of distant thunder

on Sunday 'we' took Basra. no problem:
crowds in the streets shouting "we love Mr and Mrs Blair
and we hope they can repeat this moral humanitarian mission all over our
country, blessed be Donald Rumsfeld". Er, well i'm kidding. but that's what
my tv said, pretty much.
on Sunday. on Monday 'we' were only fifty miles from baghdad. on Tuesday,
'we' were only sixty miles from baghdad. now, we are only a hundred and
fifty miles from baghdad. are they facing the right way?
the fact is the politicians think propoganda is dandy, and they'll say
anything at all that wins the day,
from Sunday to Sunday. by the first Wednesday
we had twenty dead britons. two
killed by iraqis and eighteen killed by their own side. you can't joke about
some things. fifteen iraqis killed in a baghdad market and hoon the loon
says it wasn't one of our lads' missles; it must have been someone else's.
you can't joke about some things.
the bloke's a sick cynical parrot; the bloke's a battery-operated yobbo
opining lies about dying
from Sunday to Sunday.
then blair went to meet bush. what for? mutual blowjobs I wonder? maybe
that's why Cheryl always looks so dour as they plot another assault another
seven nights of distant thunder
incinerating city-blocks with
another seven nights of distant thunder
using a blunder-buss to crack one thick black moustache. attack attack !
the man who shoots back is a "Saddam supporter", black out the tv and cut
off the water
from Sunday to Sunday.
we took Nassiriya. except we didn't. there's an uprising in basra. except
there isn't. whole armies are surrendering. except they aren't. but they
might with a bit more humanitarian pounding and i've never seen fifty
thousand troops capable of "surrounding" a city of five million. that's like
the Millwall taking the whole of Berlin. so they stick to making great big
holes in the ground and claiming hussein is dying and claiming a chemical
factory and claiming the turks won't kill any kurds and claiming the oil
fields aren't on fire and claiming they're doing this for the people they're
bombing
from Sunday to Sunday. We're only one week on.
More than five hundred people are dead and gone because george can't tell
between Al-Queda or Al Capone or Al Jazera or El Alamein or Alan Partridge
or Alkaseltzer. And once a week he gets his picture took outside a church
and he stands with that scary vacant look and immediately forgets all those
long words from that book: 'forgive us our trespasses. as we forgive those
who trespass against us'
from Sunday to Sunday.

13. the missing link

The USCIA came out to play the day
The very minute they realised the only way
To defeat Bin Laden was to take him off the pay
Roll and to keep very quiet about ever
Employing him in the first place. A clever
Wheeze was to stress the links between
Al-Queda and the middle-east iraqi scene.
They had little joy: the ploy although coy
Had little in it that would deceive a little boy-
The trouble is hussein thinks bin laden is a religious nutcase who needs
shooting just like we do, while hussein according to bin laden is a godless
despotic gangster who needs shooting just like we do- so
for a time the slimy uscia had to settle for
pointing at a pile of twisted metal and saying
"there's the links between saddam and the hole in our pentagon scene
only...we've already blown it up."
Then they got a break. a link.
the sort of link they'd pray for. at the height of the war
they heard tell of a man in the middle of the kurdish advance
pell mell who'd met hussein at the height of his reign and had
also been seen in afghanistan. his name: john simpson.
the cia logged on and did its homework.
simpson was a member of the bbc, a shadowy cult
that lurked in some dingy offices based in
north-west london. it worked as a shapeless
unaccountable umbrella organisation for such terror outrages as
al-creatures great and small, al-bert square, al-as smith and jones and
al-nimal hospital.
uscia swiftly acted alerting military intelligence
who alerted a more workable
form of intelligence and they flew a
precision-fighter-bomber-gun-ship-flying-missile-rocket-
-launcher on a precision course straight at simpson
to "sock it to him"
in the strategic technical parlance.
the precision weapon
took precision aim and precision fired at him when it reached
a range of five yards. it missed him by a mere ten yards
killing 18 of their own people and an
innocent civilian translator called
kamaran abdulrazaq muhamed.
he was 25. a hole in the sand repairs itself in time as eons of erosion cover
any explosion. any death leaves a hole in peoples' lives, gut-pit sour emotion
where the flowers won't reach. the fruit in a suit makes another speech and
we teach hussein another lesson in western morality.
all for someone else's beach.

14. sporadic outbreaks of peace and quiet

the troops are coming home !...er, well, just as soon as
brear blair and brear strawman and brear hoon the loon
have 'successfully established a stable democracy'
worthy of the rather western label in the middle east.
one slightly bothersome fact:
that the only vaguely noticeable anti-saddam pact
consists of the ayotullas and the communists
meeting in madrid while in iraq they persistently insist
they want rid of the u.s.
bush can't believe the ingratitude
as he bids for another oil franchise
and lightens the mood with his favourite eggy soldiers.
in order to aid george's strategic grasp
the pentagon have paid fourteen generals nominal overtime
to turn u.s. middle-east policy into a game he can learn
with a pack of playing cards.
george doesn't mind.
he can still have hussein shot in the back of the head
as is his will while tariq aziz quite fancies surbiton.
stick or twist. there's a slight snag. our dyslexic president does persist in
shouting "snap" each time they catch one. one day he'll learn.
meantime they turn over every factory looking for the famous 'smoking gun'.
all they've found so far are three smoking nuns and after poking around in a
burnt-out baker's they discovered several smoking buns. there's a pun there
somewhere. the kurds are having fun with a new dictator: j. garner.
the 'j' stands for jumped-up general desk-jockey jerk.
this berk thinks a puffed up beaurocrat can deliver a water supply, er,
perhaps in a month or so. the kurds think he'll deliver half of syria and a
swathe of turkey for their own stable democracy.
redraw the map. you take the high road, i'll take abu dabi.
the syrians, iranians, jordanians and saudis wait to see if this call for
democracy includes bombing their cities while ahead of events north korea
plays you won't get me i'm part of the nuclear union.
the troops are coming home?
well, first they have to switch back on the electric and comb the streets for
snipers and sort out any coppers or lawyers at all who weren't barth party
members and rebuild a bright and shiny new government and contain the
growing anti-u.s. demonstrations and prevent ayotullas or communists from
getting the nation and fly any child who makes the newspapers to a proper
hospital in kuwait and hide any bomb-damage or mortar blast that's too
horrible for daytime nbc and trace 3 billion quid in numbered accounts in
stockholm and all the time remain reasonable, restrained, the absolute
epitome of british decency for a year or two. then maybe
the troops are coming home. meantime they are caesar's cohorts:
hot, bothered, a thousand miles from rome

15. the age-old lie rides again

another round of depleted uranium shells hits a russian-made tank and we know hell's twenty-five miles west. this isn't world war three: it's just a bloke evening the score for his daddy. eat your grits, there's a good mass-murderer; remember your training in texas death-chamber your domestic economy needs a darn good slaughter and if they question you call it freedom: hegemonic alchemy turning base acts into freedom.

and george's peasants kill hussein's peasants while the rolling news tells you it's a pleasant computer game- i'll be in basra in a challenger tank you can be a redevelopment account in a new york bank and remember a yank with a rocket-launcher outranks a un lawyer everytime.

and baghdad shows its thanks welcoming every cruise missile that lands wide of its target by huddling and trembling and hiding. some of them are so joyful they can't help dying.

a grandad of mine had a spell serving as a desert rat under old modest monty he was fighting some cat called erwin. by the time I knew him he was a hackney rat surrounded by train sets and french polish and tat from the ages. catch the three-fifteen from catterick.

so his heirs to the glory make the desert sick. the euphrates runs wild and the tigris runs thick with the blood of statistics as the screaming yank licks his own sense of insecurity after that twin catastrophe.

if we can't protect our borders, we can at least extend them to tehran.

they're fighting the war to end all peace. the war to end all ideology.

you can defend yourself by joining the enemy

or they'll send your soul to nassiriya.

new world order.

ends justify moabs and b52s and cluster-bombs and endless

lies to your own people. if your victims are penniless

then no reparations are necessary.

just buy this burger just like in the movie

there is no pain only john wayne straining to win his day playing frankie laine at poker.

sins of the tory fathers.

teenage crusaders in gas-masks.

and the latest news is in:

richard perle is retiring from the Admin-

Istration 'coz the war is making him such obscene

amounts of money.

Illiteratim Verbatim for you twenty-first century scholars:

Sweet and fine it is to die for \$400bn dollars.

16. sweet smell of success

There's a roaring old trade at the barbers
Down Basra way: half a million fellas
Want rid of their moustaches. They're ripping
Down statues of Hussein, and swift stripping
Out of the palaces complex. Mind out
Though, walk on tiptoes, don't shout
Out, because they might not be statues
Of Hussein, they might just be statues
Of his body-double: you never can tell,
When you're running with the sweet smell
Of success. I hate Saddam. I hate Saddam.
You've got three tanks and a rocket-launcher, man,
Of course I hate Saddam; and the
Marines blew The Baghdad government and I don't know where to
Pay my rent; and some bloke's selling Uday's
Horse, while Uday doesn't care if he lives or dies:
They got his money, and his football team. His spell
Of despotism at rest, no more for him the sweet smell
Of success. Where is Saddam? Where is Saddam?
A kebab house down New Cross Rd does a mean lamb
Shish: he'll hide out there until the owner of the kebab
Shop round the corner that's run by Kurds catches him, stabs
Him, and serves him up with English onions and a dab
Of chilli sauce; with chips of course- the sweet smell
Of success. Tony Blair's insufferable: can't wait to tell The Iraqis how much
he'd love to be their next dictator. He's dashing round at a rate: Monday he
tells commentators It's peace in Northern Ireland; Tuesday it's peace in
Palestine; there's a shopkeeper wanting peace for his sins
In Baghdad high st- he's lost sixteen vcrs in
Forty-eight hours and the crater where his
House was gets on his tits- town gone to blazes. Some teenage GI loses his
mind and raises
The wrong flag before blowing the wrong
Hotel away with his tank. This won't take long.
Mopping up, they'll call it.
Shooting looters, while the looters are looting some shooters,
Install your own dictators, rig up a bullet-proof
Cop shop somewhere, recruit the local Hitler-youth:-
Baghdad city will look just like Harlem in no time...
...Swoosh, there, it's happened, before I even got to this rhyme
Liberty minus security equals terrifying chaos more or less
But the acrid scent of barrel-loads of rich black reparations
Spewing out of Um Quasar make it worth some backward nation-
It's your oil; but here's our bill for cleaning up our own stupid mess:-
You can of course pay us with.....
your oil. Ah yes: the sweet smell of success

17. that was the news that was

War sells.

it sells newspapers; it sells beer as the populous
fuels up on the patriotic cheer to hide the distant fear.
it sells a few extra tins to frightened old ladies
with too few sins- it sells the idea that the best thing
we brits do is trot overseas to kill the poor gits who live there.
but when you've won your war and you've bombed their cities,
evened your score- you've got peace then and peace doesn't sell anything.
basra has hardly any water.
they smell pretty bad and there's already warnings of cholera.
the baker's opened up again- owned by hussein supporters,
the takings all go to a numbered account in st. johns wood.
the money still has hussein's face on it.
the fire-wood is sandalwood
from where a beautiful palace once stood.
pictures of hussein are still everywhere,
although cheeky brits have
given him a des lynam moustache
and a silly frank spencer hat.
the brits help out wherever they can.
in basra they sort out the petrol queue
by commandeering most of the petrol and telling
everyone else to fuck off.
in russia blair's helping the americans
by letting putin take the piss out of him
instead of colin powell. in gaza, our stout
left-wing lads are dodging the bullets meant
for twelve-year-old palestinian stone-throwers.
the law of averages leaves two dead already.
we're even giving a helping hand to the suicide bombers
in israel. none of this matters 'coz peace doesn't sell anything.
the newspapers look elsewhere. the spell wears off.
we're back to michael douglas, the talentless son of spartacus,
and his very ugly welsh wife.
we're back to the everyday story of intelligent life
with the beckhams as we suffer with them their strife at having not enough
hours in the day to buy everything. we're back to john prescott, the pie
eaters pin-up as he goes three rounds of pissed incoherence with the
firemen. to finish the list we're back to a tv show, set in a jungle latrine,
starring a mediocre left-arm-spinner, two gleaming northern comics who
might be funny when they grow up, and three whining tarts. what can I say
when the best thing on my box is a sweaty fat chef with a snotty
double-barrelled name. at this point I take it all back and beg upon my
knees: tony blair, tony blair, start another war. please.

18. obese in our time (an homage to bbc radio five live) written late 2003

the footy season's over:

the away win at baghdad was crucial, though the u.s. own goals were sad.

the tel aviv tie is much more in the balance:

with israel playing troops and nukes up front,

you'd give them a certain advantage,

but mazy runs through the middle of the shopping centre from hamas

are too troubling even for a seasoned back four

with begin, moshe dayan and golda meir at left back. plus,

a win for bin laden's lads in ryadh puts the whole draw for the next round up for grabs.

the americans should score when they play syria early next season with

likud's inspiration on the wing. then there's the predicted grudge match in

london between the brits and al-queda.

prejudge that one and you're a brave little punter.

osama's squad is still strong despite the cuban transfers

and they have god on their side. there are rumours

that a tactical move from the english might involve

evacuating all the population to finsbury park mosque.

then there's the sturdy defence that no terrorists are going to settle down

long due to the expense. the congestion charge passed a fitness test despite

worries. all the hardy commuter has to watch as she or he hurries across

this twitchy city are the battalions of new parking meters spread outside the

zone. the roving vandals are taking full advantage: whereas in belgravia or

pimlico a parking meter is tacitly accepted, up in dalston junction a parking meter is merely money on a stick.

still, when match day finally does come round, you'll be able to catch

the whole thing live on bbc. unless of course the bbc is chosen as the venue.

the support from the showbiz boxes is encouraging:

several are hiding in the australian jungle while clare short scorns riches

and tells tales of the arabian nights

starring bitchy mandelson as scheherezade.

of course if the first half action gets tough, then prescott will have to force

the firemen off the bench, now, after their recent changing-room bust-up

and they'll be expected to prevent the city's certain doom

by marking all bin laden's wingmen as well as defending and clearing up the

loose play in the centre of the park. the firemen's eyes are on the cup-

of tea they might get that isn't made of polystyrene.

i've never been in a war

the irish one missed me by short yards once.

well twice and i've seen every movie john wayne chewed through.

then there's the cold war, the class war, the cod war, the drugs war, the big

bold falklands war that made a man of thatch. but i'm fearing this war we

think is all over will be like Dad's Army.

we'll be pointing past the sandbags straight at tony blair and saying:

"stupid boy"

19. seeger no evil hear no evil

where have all the weapons of mass destruction gone
long time passing
the one's blair based the case for war upon
long time ago
I was looking forward to armageddon
we sold them nukes and now there's none
when will we ever learn; when will we ever learn

where have all the chemicals gone
long time passing
now that hussein is on the run
long time ago
he's hidden them down near wimbledon
open up a chemist's shop with his mum
everyone has to earn; everyone has to earn

campbell says he'll send them some
long time passing
he'll get them cheap off some dodgy chum
long time ago
campbell will secretly send them some
telling tony "we shall overcome"
soon we'll get gordon's turn; soon we'll get gordon's turn

bush says we gotta search iranians now
long time passing
bush says the terrorists are iranians now
long time ago
there wanting us to start another murderous row
with dodgy donny rumsfeld and and his 'christian' crowd
then there's their second term; then there's their second term

war only gets you more enemies and hate
long time passing
anyone who hates you a potential 'rogue state'
long time ago
you can't protect your people with your military weight
and just picking on the moslems is really tempting fate
when will they ever learn; when will they ever learn
you can't have freedom with foreign soldiers on the street
long time passing
every person killed is another defeat
long time ago
let iraqis run iraq: it's the only thing to do
you can't have 'war on terror' when the terror comes from you
when will we ever learn, when will we ever learn.

20. that blair speech to congress in full : “my fellow americans. darling george. we are gathered here in the midst of criticism from commy cowards, so let me make it clear that there are without doubt thousands of weapons of mass destruction: chemical long-range missiles and biological agents in many nations-united states of america's got eighty per cent of them; britain's got plenty, and if they think the many reports of our brave troops finding empty cylinders which, according to the label used to house the deadly toxin "fairy liquid" is not evidence enough of saddam's plans to destroy our entire galaxy then they better have a chat with alastair. when I was a boy my father used to say to me: "mein fuhrer, do you want them shot or do you want to play with your scalpels first?" he meant a lot to me. but I think what he meant to say in his caring sensitive servile way was more to do with achievement: don't walk when you can go for miles on some poor sod's back. america is about achievement. i've got scars on my back: I got them from the nhs when they had to remove a shower attachment from my anus. ha, the freemasons ! america is about achievement. fast cars, faster women, amphetamine fuelled capitalist robots dressed for power, seeing what price in gilts for their mother. america is about achievement. it achieved a civil war, hiroshima, assassinations, mccarthy, sent troops to vietnam, elected nixon and reagan, and now they've picked our dear sweet george to strap on his holster every day til he's licked every commy moslem terrorist who dares to breathe the same air we make our own good people pay for. I believe in god's good game. george believes in god's good game. george believes god is the little man who brings his bacon cheeseburger at breakfast time but god's plan is bigger even than a presidential bacon cheeseburger. I had a dream. and in that dream god said to me: "fuhrer, i've picked you to head my team to lead the chosen people into the promised land." now I know what he meant. it's sodom and gamorrah all over again. the world happens to be like sodom, full of liars, rapists, other members of the house, and literally thousands of officious traffic wardens. there'll be a flood. well, seriously, not so much a flood as us picking on some bastard who really does have chemical weapons and we all get our come-uppance.except.we'll have an ark. well, more of a bunker underneath whitehall but we'll feel safe for long enough. now I know the chosen people happen to be me, cheryl and the kids gordon dale winton three nice birds and little prince willy and I know the promised land will consist of four thousand tins of baked beans and sausages and some tea bags. but life begins anew. like adam and eve, cheryl and me will live on human remains in the sewers until george's courageous lads arrive in their space planes, and fly us off to a beautiful island with coconut trees and gypsy music. as george has explained to me, I have nothing to worry about. as for my side of the bargain: I will tear up the red white and blue turn downing st into a burger king and support any war you blunderinto.that's all folks. or as the old song goes: kiss my arse i'm a yankee-doodle-do”

21. will those goal posts please sit still ...

will those goal posts please sit still
because i'm feeling rather ill
at all these arguments changing
all over the place. they're re-arranging
the sound bites they forced on us last year
into fresh new morsels with a meaning unclear
to all but a really clever scientist and he's
dead. first off we are to rejoice and be pleased
to have got rid of hussein when we made
it quite plain he could stay if he played
our game of super-gun pass the parcel
and anthrax hide and seek. now they sell
'regime change' the same 'regime change'
they couldn't sell last week but by strange
manipulation of language they play the switch
straight at camera and orate without a twitch
that 'evidence' of weapons will be found
just as soon as the experts who are on the ground
can plant some there like the met with cocaine
then blair will look justified and hoon will look sane
and we will look past the so transparent snowballing lies
and ongoing casualties and alastair's sinister spies
as they ooze through our tv screens feigning surprise
oh look everyone: they've found them. three large cardboard
boxes with the words 'weapons of mass destruction' in a cupboard
under the stairs. are they genuine? well they've got
'made in uk' written on the side and we know our lot
sold them some very dodgy shit. the yanks take them away
without thanks for analysis: a few weeks later they start to say
what was in those boxes. the first one contained two
hundred copies of celine dion's latest, known to cause flu
like symptoms coma and eventual death. the next box contains
several pot noodles: a lethal concoction of powdered pig remains
and partially reconstituted mad cow disease. but box number three
was the worst. enough of prescott's keep fit videos to flatten italy.
apparently when he stops dancing and his beer gut doesn't, the sight
causes dizziness migraine vomiting and insanity; and the sheer fright
of him in a leotard can make a marine weep. they keep this stuff
locked up tight at the pentagon. so we are all quite safe enough
unless some saudi nutcase makes a sequel. to give him credit blair never
said he could guarantee i'd could ever sleep sound in my bed.

22. the day the beast stood still

baghdad's so soft and peaceful now
the troops are only using rubber rounds
before too long they might even allow
a few iraqis to tend the burial grounds
the locals complain of power cuts
since sweating is against islamic law
yanks shoo them from their air-conditioned huts
the riots are all right with no-one keeping score
of casualties. so it's 57 degrees and your fridge won't
work, but you're free from tyranny and fear.
you queue for clean water like peasants and you don't
say thanks. not as if any of you need a cold beer.
over in new york though there's a different tale
a disaster of the scale only americans ever get:
power-cuts, a 'Canadian' electricity supply problem:
there's no ben and jerry's, no chilled chemical light ale,
and you can't see your way when the fat sun sets.
they had to camp out in the open streets
like the down-and-outs they sit in doorways as the phone
runs out of running. as the president repeats
in his funny reassurance from a moron tone
that these aren't terrorists they're canadians,
and canada's on the list of places they can't invade.
now had it been the french, cubans or panamanians
we could sort it all out with a delta force raid.
bombing someone won't make traffic lights come to life,
though, which leaves genius george a bit stuck.
if you can't do it with string and a bowie knife,
then georgie really don't know fuck from fuck.
"it's a wake up call" he hasn't woken up for twenty
years, not since he stopped his car with that shit
bag democrat tree after doing cocaine
and "none too sure" how many beers.
electricity is essential for yankies: they have electric
heaters, electric coolers, electric razors, electric
tin openers, electric arse-wipers. they use more electric
playing rounders than we use on prince philip's electric
body rejuvenator in a year. the world's most powerful
nation and they can't power a toaster. i'll remember
that next time one boasts to my toothless brit face.
I know we all have to love them since September 2001, but there's six billion
others in the human race. i'm not an anti-american, i'm an anti-hypocrisy,
anti-war, anti-untamed capitalism, anti-xenophobia,
fake christianity type, which puts me at odds with the flakiest democracy;
so when I see blacked out streets in great new york city I pity them,
but only with a certain timid guilty hilarity. ..

23. transparent government:

(on the sad death of Dr. David Kelly, defence academic)
we could tell they were serious: a man was dead leaving blair perilous,
despite the well-worked plan selling spurious
intelligence to a populace clearly blessed
with more intelligence than you'd
credit. robin cook said it: robin cooed
on from a top branch avoiding campbell's smears.
scott ritter said it, telling all of us any fears
of iraqis were misplaced zeitgeist.
be afraid of the motorist so pissed
he kills your cat. be scared of monsanto
playing out a terrifying globalised panto
that could cost every species dear.
save your underworn darkest fear
for the nukes and nuclear power on your own doorstep
capable of destruction on a level inescapable
if just one engineer slips up. be afraid
of a president so plainly stupid he'll raid
new cross instead of north korea
just because the directions weren't too clear
on his bert and ernie's book of the big world.
but a man is dead. and the government unfurled
a full public enquiry headed by a proper judge in
a proper wig. so bereft are we of men with no sin
nor corruption, they took the unusual step
of digging up Len Hutton to act as the rep
for good old british decency. he'll interview blair
about the best way to play spin without bagging a pair
and they'll retire before tea with a hundred and three
on the board. by the time sir len concludes we
will have forgotten what the question was but still
a man is dead. not a soldier, though too many of them will
not be coming home. not a journalist, though seventeen
of those so far have fallen to 'friendly fire'
to coin an obscene phrase.
no. speculation is raised by our leading
scientific expert on iraqi weapons proceeding
to his own tragic 'destruction' before anyone
got to ask him where all those 'WMD' were.
after the fun of hutton playing 'headmaster's office' to downing
street's unruly playground we'll just be found drowning
in beaurocratic spaghetti and upsetting the bbc. don't they see? a society
approaches maturity with cynicism and an all-embracing contempt for all
the parasites in westminster palace and elsewhere in-----NEXT LINE HAS
BEEN CENSORED FOR SECURITY PURPOSES-----

November 2006.

british soldiers dead: 121

us soldiers dead: more than 1200

iraqi civilians dead?

iraqi civilians dead?