

## **“THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE”**

Veterans' Day,  
Rockland, Maine, 2010

We don't send soldiers into war anymore  
We send troops.  
We don't send persons into war anymore  
We send troops.

There was a training ground  
on a hill behind Rockland  
for citizen soldiers  
who saw the “glory of the coming of the Lord  
trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored.”

There used to be soldiers' homes  
for the war half dead  
for soldiers with broken spines,  
soldiers with scrambled brains,  
for soldiers with severed legs, arms.  
We don't have troops' homes.

There was a time when bankers  
sent their sons to war.  
Now they spend 54,000 dollars a year  
and send them to a private school  
in a new shiny MG.

Now only the poor send troops,  
desperate to extricate themselves  
from poverty, from drug infested streets,  
from domestic despair and hopelessness,  
the un and under employed.  
Blacks, chicanos, poor whites  
are expendables in a consumed society.

The gullible, the naïve, the ignorant:  
Off to training camp you go  
to become killers of enemies at the gates  
of corporate interests, for oil, for pipelines,  
for corrupt, unaccountable war profiteers,  
the Haliburtons, headquartered in Dubai.

Off to Iraq you go to find WMDs:  
“Shock and Awe”,  
spreading hundreds of billions of our public treasure,  
manure for the desert,  
blood and flesh for oil  
and the seduction of war.

Off to Afghanistan you go.  
Don't step on the poppies,  
the poppies that feed our war lords  
and their Taliban.  
Poppies increased four fold  
with eight years of sacrifice  
while farmer's children go hungry.

We now have permanent undeclared war;  
yes, we need Osama bin Laden.  
Ten years ago he had terminal kidney disease.  
We needed to kill him then,  
we need him now.  
Everyone knows he is long dead. Everyone knows  
except our Presidents, our Senators, our Representatives,  
those who craft our war rhetoric, wrapped in flags.  
Everyone knows except our troops.

Afghanistan is a cold and desolate place.  
Alexander the Great went through there to India.  
He died in the sands of south Iran.  
The moguls went through there to India.  
They did not stay.  
The British Empire went through there.  
They did not stay.  
The Soviet Union stayed awhile, then retreated.  
Defeated they imploded back home.  
Now we sit there, mired in hopeless quandary  
and troops come home, maimed for living.  
Corporate TV copy readers call them our “heroes.”

After Vietnam, when we were unkind,  
our veterans suffered in anonymity.  
It is now p.c. to intone, “Thank you for your service.”  
I wonder how it feels, after three dozen refrains,  
“Thank you for your service:”  
that hell on earth over there,  
that seduction into killing,  
that miserable landscape,

enemies filling villages --  
enemies filling houses --  
enemies filling roads with IEDs  
(improvised explosive devices).  
Welcome back to the "homeland!"  
Oh, and there is no future for you here.  
"Thanks for your service"

(We don't send soldiers into war anymore  
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We don't send persons into war anymore  
We send troops.  
"Thank you for your service")

Peter T. Richardson  
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