

Sinéad Garrigan-Mattar

‘War is not nice’—Barbara Bush

There is a picture of you that we love,
Taken when you were only three months old.
In it you’re lying on the sun-warmed, deep-veined wood
Of an old pine table. Between the wood and you,
There is the day’s newspaper, blazoned with
The spin of a world that isn’t yours and can’t
Seem true. But there you lie—innocently
Staring past the camera’s smitten gaze,
While Bush stares out from under you.
You look so nice: fresh-dressed and still warm from
Your bath—calm as the sun’s unknowing light,
New but not news, a sign that all is right.

—

The line of bodies on the table in
The dust-white room are children.
Part of the news they lie upon, they can’t
Look out at me, because their faces are
Rubbed out. In Beit Hanoun, the sun seems spent:
The blasts drop like a shutter’s blink and break
The moment when the child looks and the lens
Looks and the newspaper image blithely grins
Into a million messy shards.
The table and children and paper and dust appear
Recycled as the morning’s front-page news,
And we—we turn it over so you will not see.