

Sonnet Scroll

Armistice Day with the Dissenters By Polly Brown

for Sev Bruyn

*War is a racket conducted for the benefit of the very few
at the expense of the very many.*

—Major General Smedley D. Butler

At the rag-tag end of the swaggering parade,
carrying flags that name you Veterans for Peace,
you gather in a courtyard, stand in the power
of a circle. We applaud your miniature marching
band (clarinet, tuba, sax, a tambourine)
while a gentleman old enough for our fathers' war
dances, waving his arms as if conducting.
Though a well-coached crowd in the next block jeers—
though the few who profit feed war's rising flames—
“Young we were, and used,” your brave survivors say.
“The wars that lamed our bodies, broke our hearts:
worse than useless, harm with no good to show.”
May terrible truths told straight inspire hope.
Late light in all our eyes, we stand together.