Flinders University

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10,000 Poems

On the eve of war, 10,000 poems are to be sent to the Prime Minister, calling for peace.

the PM is up late
in dressing gown and slippers
hunched at a desk lamp
for the seventh night in a row
furrowing his brow
as he works his way through
the piles of poetry
answering no calls
refusing visitors
biting his lip
misty-eyed

actually, the poems have been jammed into boxes unread
a mute petition in a locked courtyard
at the back of a concrete building
not far from the incinerator -
and the emailed ones have been dismissed to Trash
with a finger-flick

but there is an infiltrator
a single haiku already smuggled in
that will slip under his guard
when he is deep in the morning papers
expecting only politics
and the images of war -
no one yet knows what it says
or who wrote its three short lines
but he will startle
at his own tears
his heart wide open
Steve Evans teaches writing at Flinders University. His fourth poetry collection, Luminous Fruit, is due out in May 2003.