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Between Wars

Incendiary firestorms
before the half-century,
   left church shells,
   the organs silent.

Ossuaries of a million bones
satisfied the curious,
   until the fields of flags
   faded in the summer sun.

In another quarter-century
Through defoliated forests,
   tank-tracked rice fields
   and empty villages,

The scream of the monsoon winds
could not cover the cries
   of dying cultures.
   But who listened?

Now
used arms and fighter planes
   are carelessly sold
   half a world away;

   cities bulge above the ashes
   and green shoots
cover the mass graves.

   Peace
   —the time
called "permanent pre-hostility"
   —the time
   when we ask
   Who is the new enemy?

Poppies and rice grass
have always made
   a transient floral
   spray.

   —Sally T. Taylor

Sally T. Taylor is an associate professor of English at Brigham Young University.