

Extract from "The End and the Beginning" by Wislawa Szymborska, quoted by
Alkmaar's Mayor M. van Rossen in a Commemoration speech on 4th May 2005

After every war
someone has to clean up.
Things won't
straighten themselves, after all.

Someone has to push the rubble
to the side of the road,
so the corpse-filled wagons
can pass.

Someone has to get mired
in scum and ashes,
sofa springs,
splintered glass,
and bloody rags.

Someone has to drag in a girder
to prop up a wall,
Someone has to glaze a window,
rehang a door.

Photogenic it's not,
and takes years.
All the cameras have left
for another war.

We'll need the bridges back,
and new railway stations.
Sleeves will go ragged
from rolling up.

Someone, broom in hand,
still recalls the way it was.