

Miklós Radnóti

Deathmarch

Holocaust poems,
translated from the Hungarian
by Thomas Land



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ABOUT MIKLÓS RADNÓTI

THE BEST POEMS in this selection were found by chance in the communal grave of 22 Hungarian prisoners executed because they were also Jewish.

They are treasured as some of the most flawless modern additions to their country's rich poetic heritage. They have gone a little way towards teaching tolerance to new generations of Hungarians in the treatment of their racial, religious and ethnic minorities.

Born 100 years ago in 1909, Miklós Radnóti was probably the greatest among the mature writers of the period to witness and record the Holocaust. He was murdered in 1944, shortly before the close of the Second World War, a victim of the National Socialists'

attempt at the permanent "ethnic cleansing" of Europe.

Anne Frank, Éva Láng and András Mezei were children. Primo Levi and Paul Celan were very young men eventually compelled to turn to literature in order to comprehend and digest the brutality of their experience, for which they had been totally unprepared.

Unlike many others, Radnóti had plenty of opportunities to escape forced labour and death at the hands of the Nazis. He was at the height of his literary powers when he chose to enter the storm, notebook in hand, deliberately seeking to transform the horror into poetry, as he put it, "for reminders to future ages". His last poems transcend the limits of race and tribe in a universal appeal to humanity.

Read in chronological order, the poems follow the author "along the highways, down the soul's appalling deep chasms" to his clearly anticipated death. These intensely autobiographical pieces describe a writer stripped of all the security and comfort of civilized existence and caught up in history's insane march towards collective destruction, who yet maintains his stubborn personal dignity and fierce concern for the future.

Radnóti went on publicly fighting back until the end. According to the legend that has grown up around his figure -- which I have checked against reality in interviews with survivors of the same camps and the eventual "deathmarch" -- the poet bribed his Hungarian guards to smuggle his work to the outside world. The notebook containing his final and most moving poems and found in the end on his body had been going around from hand to hand, giving encouragement to fellow prisoners.

A facsimile edition of the notebook, containing the work in careful, even handwriting and complete with printers' instructions, was published in Hungary in 1971. Popular demand necessitated an immediate second printing. Copies have become prized collectors' items.

He was born in Budapest and educated at Szeged University. He was prevented from pursuing an academic career because of his racial origin as well as his humanism.

He was obliged to make a meagre living by producing what are recognized today as brilliant translations from classical Greek and Latin as well as English, French and German poetry. Some of his own poems were seized and others not allowed to be published at all, while the rest attracted little attention. Most of Radóni's contemporaries never heard of him at the time.

Radóni introduced himself in his tragic notebook as "a Hungarian poet" despite his deprivation of Hungarian status and identity as well as civil rights because of his Jewish birth. He was executed as a Jew, exactly as he had described in his very last poem the mass shooting of civilian captives, despite his earlier, deeply felt conversion to Christianity.

Today, his poetry and legend mean many things to many people. To me, they are a flame of hope against racist and religious bigotry. For Radóni's dogged refusal to tolerate hostile discrimination against any minority has in a way triumphed in the end.

The inane ideology that triggered the Holocaust has blighted the lives of generations of the descendants of its authors and their

followers with shame and remorse. They are now the first to cry: *Never Again!* We know very little of the execution squad comprising retreating soldiers who murdered the poet at the age of 35. Radóni goes on, gathering disciples.

*Thomas Ország-Land,
London & Budapest, 2009*

PORTRAIT

I'm nearly twenty-two years old. Thus
Christ too might have appeared in the autumn
at the same age when he
still had no beard, he was blond and maidens
dreamt of him nightly!

(1930)

MARY

Just look at her hands! like dying
flowers in frost. Her hair cascading.
She's resting, a graceful dove
on a pillow. She's Mary!
but you have known and loved
girls with such faces!

(1930)

THE BULL

Hitherto, I lived the throbbing life of a youthful bull
bored in the noonday heat among pregnant cows in the field,
running around in unending circles declaring his powers
and waving amid his game a foaming flag of saliva.
He shakes his head and turns with the splitting, thick air on his
horns
and behind his stamping hooves the tormented grass and earth
spatters widely about the terrified green pasture.

And still I live like a bull, but a bull that suddenly stops
in the heart of the meadow singing with crickets, stops nostrils
lifted
and sniffing the air. For he senses that far in the mountain forests
the roebuck too stops and listens and lightly flees with the wind,
the hissing wind that carries the stench of a distant wolf pack --
thus the bull snorts, but he will not escape like the deer
and considers that when his time is to come, he will fight and fall
and his bones will be scattered about in the district by the horde --
and slowly and sadly the bull bellows through the fat air.

Thus I will struggle and thus I will fall when the hour is come,
and the district will treasure my bones for reminders to future

ages

(1933)

BEFORE THE STORM

You sit upon the peak and on your knees asleep
that youthful woman ripened for your love; behind,
the bristly deeds of war; beware! hold dear and keep

your life, hold dear your world which you with hardened hands
have built around your life while all about you death
in circles hovered around and around above the lands --

behold, it has returned! the garden's nests from the high
treetops come plunging down in terror stricken flight,
all things are about to break! and keep an eye on the sky

because already lightning shakes the firmament;
wind tussles, drags the cradles as the men-folk whimper
asleep as weakly as the helpless innocent;

the wind blows on their dreams, they grumble and turn around,
they wake with a start and stare at you who's been awake
and sitting up amid the fleeting thunder, the sound

of roaring future battles being prepared; above,
the splendid wind speaks of the storm and so do the clouds;
it's time to wrap your woman warmly in your love.

(1934)

YESTERDAY & TODAY

Yesterday in the light, cooling drizzle,
two sizzling lovers with peach-ripe lips emerged
from the kneeling shrubs, and leaning each to each
walked past, proceeding across the meadow;

and today, ferocious cannon with muddy wheels
arrived at daybreak, served by steaming soldiers --
their skulls protected by gray combat helmets,
their bodies dragging strong, bitter odours,
the heavy flags of urgent male loneliness.

(Oh, seedling blond childhood, how far you have passed!
oh, dove-white old age, I will never reach you!
the poet stands knee-deep in slippery blood
and each song he sings is his last.)

(1936)

THE SECOND ECLOGUE

Pilot:

Last night we flew so far that I had to laugh in rage;
their fighters droned like bee-swarms trying to engage
us from above with strong defensive fire -- but, my friend,
our fresh squadrons showed up on the horizon in the end.
I thought they'd prang and pick me up with dust pan and brush
but I'm back, see! and tomorrow cowardly Europe can rush
again to air-raid shelters to hide from me while it may...
but never mind, friend. Did you write since yesterday?

Poet:

*I did, what else could I do? The poet writes his lines,
the pussy cat miaows and the puppy whines,
the fishy coily spawns. I write about everything
so even you should know, up there, while soldiering,
how I live when the bloodshot sick moonlight staggers down
among the ruined streets as the bombs destroy the town,
walls cave in, homes explode, the squares curl up in fright,
breath falters, even the sky is disgusted with the sight,
the bombers come, persistent, sometimes they disappear
to swoop in rattling frenzy on the houses drowned in fear!
I write, what else could I do... Poems too can be vicious
and dangerous, you know, odd lines are too capricious
for words, demanding bravery... The poet writes his lines,
the pussy cat miaows and the puppy whines,*

*the fish -- and so on. Can you make... anything? No! you sit
and listen to your engine until your eardrums split;
you cannot even hear me! You are fused with the plane.
How will you feel when flying over us again?*

Pilot:

You'll laugh. I fly in fear... desiring, up, above,
to lie on a bed, eyes closed, caressing with my love.
Or just to hum about her and to conjure up such a scene
daydreaming in the steamy chaos of the canteen.
When I am up, I would come down! down here, I long to fly,
without a place of my own between my own earth and sky.
I have grown much too fond of the aeroplane too, I know,
we've learned to share a rhythm of pain so long ago...
You understand -- and please... write about me! make it known
that I too was a man: destructive, homeless, alone
above and below. Who will grasp the causes of my deed?...
Explain me, won't you?

Poet:

If I live -- with some who still want to read.
(1941)

ENCHANTMENT

We're sitting in the brightness
and scowling in the glare,
a rosebush is leaping
over the hedgerow,
the light leaping also
as the rain-clouds gather,
lightning streaks by
and the lash of thunder
clashes with thunder
again and again, high
high up in the sky,
below them the blue
of the lake is withering,
its waters rising --
come into the house
and take off your dress,
out there it is raining,
and take off your blouse
and let the rain, the rain
wash our hearts together.

(1942)

A HESITANT ODE

How long I have prepared, dear, to describe to you
the secret constellation of my love,
perhaps its substance only, just in a single image.
Your teeming sense within me floods like life itself
and sometimes it is timeless, certain and secure:
eternal like a fossil shell within a rock.
The silken, feline moonlit night above my head
begins the hunt for buzzing tiny dreams in flight.
And still I have not managed to describe to you
how much it means to me to sense your caring gaze
as it hesitates upon my hand when I'm at work.
No similes will do. I scrap them as they come.
I will begin this whole attempt again tomorrow
because I am worth only as much as the words
within this poem, and my search will keep me going
until I am reduced to bones and tufts of hair.
You're tired. It's been a long day for me also.
What can I say? The objects, look! exchange their glances
in praise of you; a broken cube of sugar sings
on the table; and a drop of honey falls and, like
a ball of gold, it glitters on the tablecloth;
and spontaneously now, an empty tumbler rings out:
it's glad it lives with you. Perhaps I'll have the time
to tell you what it's like when it expects you home.
Descending darkly, flocks of dreams approach you lightly,

they flit away yet keep returning to your brow.
Your drowsy eyes still send a last farewell towards me.
Your loosened hair cascades in freedom. You're asleep.
The lengthy shadow of your eyelids softly flutters.
Your hand, a resting birch twig, falls upon my pillow.
I share your sleep: you're not a different world;
and even here I sense as a multitude of secret
and thin, sage lines relax in the tranquil
palm of your hand.

(1943)

HOW OTHERS SEE...

How others see this region, I cannot understand:
to me, this little country is menaced motherland
engulfed by flames, the world of my childhood swaying far,
and I am grown from this land as tender branches are
from trees. And may my body sink into this soil in the end.
When plants reach out towards me, I greet them as a friend
and know their names and flowers. I am at home here, knowing
the people on the road and why and where they are going --
and how I know the meaning when, by a summer lane,
the sunset paints the walls with a liquid flame of pain!
The pilot cannot help seeing a war map from the sky,
he can't tell below the home of Vörösmarty Mihály;*
what can he identify there? grim barracks and factories,
but I see steeples, oxen, farms, grasshoppers and bees;
his lens spies out the vital production plants, the fields,
but I can see the worker, afraid below, who shields
his labour, a singing orchard, a vineyard and a wood,
among the graves a granny mourning her widowhood;
and what may seem a plant or a rail line that must be wrecked
is just a signal-house with the keeper standing erect
and waving his red flag, lots of children around the guard;

* Mihály Vörösmarty (1800-1855), poet

and a shepherd dog might roll in the dust in a factory yard;
and there's the park with the footprints of past loves and the
flavour
of childhood kisses -- the honey, the cranberry I still savour,
and on my way to school, by the kerbside, to postpone
a spot-test one certain morning, I stepped upon a stone:
look! There's the stone whose magic the pilot cannot see
for no instrument would merge it in his topography.

True, guilty are we all here, our people as the rest,
we know our faults, we know how and when we have
transgressed,
but there are blameless lives too of toil and poetry and passion,
and infants also, with infinite capacity for compassion --
they will protect its glow while in gloomy shelters until
once more our land is marked out by the finger of peace, then they
will
respond to our muffled words with new voices fresh and bright.

Spread your vast wings above us, protective cloud of night.

(Jan. 17, 1944)

NEITHER MEMORIES NOR MAGIC

Concealed, my many angers lay in my heart before
this hour as brown seeds ripen within the apple-core,
and I was always certain that, sword in hand, a friendly
strong angel followed behind me, an angel to defend me.
But when, one wild dawn, waking, you see your whole world
crumbling
to dust and must go forward confused, a phantom fumbling
and all but naked, your few belongings left behind,
then you will find arising in your lightened heart, a refined
and musing, humble yearning, laconic and mature --
if still you can rebel, it's not over your own sorrow
but for a glowing, distant, sweet freedom for tomorrow.

Positions and possessions I've never held and won't,
but spare a moment's thought for this wealthy life: I don't
concern myself with vengeance, my heart is free of rage,
the world will be rebuilt -- and, although this ugly age
has banned my words, they will yet ring out beneath new walls;
alone I must live through all that in my time befalls
me knowing that neither memories nor magic can defend me;
I will not glance behind me -- above, the sky's unfriendly,
and should you see me yet, turn away, my friend, and go on.
Where in the past a mighty protector stood behind me,
the angel might be gone.

THE HUNTED

From my window I see a hillside,
it cannot see me at all;
I'm still, verse trickles from my pen
but nothing matters in hiding;
I see, though cannot grasp this solemn,
old-fashioned grace: as ever,
the moon emerges onto the sky and
the cherry tree bursts into blossom.

FRAGMENT

I lived upon this earth in such an age
when man was so debased he sought to kill
for pleasure, not just to comply with orders,
his faith in falsehoods drove him to corruption,
his life was ruled by raving self-deceptions.

I lived upon this earth in such an age
that idolized the sly police informers,
whose heroes were the killers, spies, the thieves --
and the few who held their peace or only failed
to cheer were loathed like victims of the plague.

I lived upon this earth in such an age

when those who risked protest were wise to hide
and gnaw their fists in self-consuming shame --
the crazed folk grinned about their terrifying
doomed future, wild and drunk on blood and mire.

I lived upon this earth in such an age
when the mother of an infant was a curse,
when pregnant women were glad to abort,
the living envied the corpses in the graves
while on the table foamed their poisoned cup.

.....
.....

I lived upon this earth in such an age
when even the poet fell silent and waited in hope
for an ancient, terrible voice to rise again --
for no-one could utter a fitting curse of such horror
but the scholar of dreadful words, Isaiah the prophet.

.....

THE SEVENTH ECLOGUE

Evening approaches the barracks, and the ferocious oak fence
braided with barbed wire, look, dissolves in the twilight.
Slowly the eye thus abandons the bounds of our captivity
and only the mind, the mind is aware of the wire's tension.
Even fantasy finds no other path towards freedom.
Look, my beloved, dream, that lovely liberator,
releases our aching bodies. The captives set out for home.

Clad in rags and snoring, with shaven heads, the prisoners
fly from Serbia's blinded peaks to their fugitive homelands.
Fugitive homeland! Oh -- is there still such a place?
still unharmed by bombs? as on the day we enlisted?
And will the groaning men to my right and my left return safely?
And is there a home where hexameters are appreciated?

Dimly groping line after line without punctuation,
here I write this poem as I live in the twilight,
inching, like blear-eyed caterpillar, my way on the paper;
everything, torches and books, all has been seized by the *Lager*
guard, our mail has stopped and the barracks are muffled by fog.

Riddled with insects and rumours, Frenchmen, Poles, loud Italians,
separatist Serbs and dreamy Jews live here in the mountains --
fevered, a dismembered body, we lead a single existence,

waiting for news, a sweet word from a woman, and decency,
freedom,
guessing the end still obscured by the darkness, dreaming of
miracles.

Lying on boards, I am a captive beast among vermin,
the fleas renew their siege but the flies have at last retired.
Evening has come; my captivity, behold, is curtailed
by a day and so is my life. The camp is asleep. The moonshine
lights up the land and highlights the taut barbed wire fence,
it draws the shadow of armed prison guards, seen through the
window,
walking, projected on walls, as they spy the night's early noises.

Swish go the dreams, behold my beloved, the camp is asleep,
the odd man who wakes with a snort turns about in his little space
and resumes his sleep at once, with a glowing face. Alone
I sit up awake with the lingering taste of a cigarette butt
in my mouth instead of your kiss, and I get no merciful sleep,
for neither can I live nor die without you, my love, any longer.

LETTER TO MY WIFE

Mute worlds lie in the depths, their stillness crying inside my head; I shout: no-one's replying in war-dazed, silenced Serbia the distant, and you are far away. My dreams, persistent, are woven nightly in your voice, and during the day it's in my heart still reassuring -- and thus I keep my silence while, profoundly detached, the cooling bracken stirs around me.

No longer can I guess when I will see you, who were once firm and sure as psalms can be -- you, as lovely as the shadow and the light -- you, whom I could seek out mute, deprived of sight -- you, now with this landscape you don't know entwined --you, projected to the eyes, but from the mind -- you, once real till to the realm of dreams you fell -- you, observed from my own puberty's deep well -- you,

nagged jealously in my soul for a truthful pledge that you love me, that upon the youthful proud peak of life you'll be my bride; I'm yearning and then, with sober consciousness returning, I do remember that you are my wife and my friend -- past three wild frontiers, terrified land.

Will autumn leave me here forgotten, aching?
My memory's sharper over our lovemaking;

I once believed in miracles, forgetting their age; above me, bomber squadrons setting against the sky where I just watched the spark and the colour of your eyes -- the blue then darkened, the bombs then longed to fall. I live despite them and I am captive. I have weighed up, item by painful item, all my hopes still tended -- and will yet find you. For you, I've descended,

along the highways, down the soul's appalling deep chasms. I shall transmit myself through falling live flames or crimson coals to conquer the distance, if need be learn the treebark's tough resistance -- the calm and might of fighting men whose power in danger springs from cool appraisal shower upon me, bringing sober strength anew, and I become as calm as 2 x 2.

À LA RECHERCHE...

Gentle past evenings, you too are ennobled through recollection!
Brilliant table adorned by poets and their young women,
where have you slid in the mud of the memory? where is the night
when the exuberant friends still merrily drank the native
wine of the land from slender glasses that sparkled their glances?

Lines of poetry swam around the glow of the lamps
and bright green adjectives swayed on the foaming crest of the
metre
and still the dead were alive, the prisoners home, and the dear
vanished friends wrote verse, those fallen long ago whose hearts
lie under the soil of Spain and Flanders and Ukraine.

Some of them charged forward gritting their teeth in the fire and
fought
only because there was nothing they could do to avoid it,
and while their company fitfully slept around them under
the soiled shelter of night, they remembered their rooms of the
past,
calm caves and islands, their retreat from this society.

Some of them travelled helpless in sealed cattle trucks to places,
some stood numbly waiting unarmed in freezing minefields,
some also went voluntarily, silent with guns in their hands
for clearly they saw their personal place and role in the fighting --

now the angel of freedom guards their great dreams in the night.

Some... doesn't matter. Where have the wise, winy evenings
vanished?
Swift swarmed the draftnotes and swift multiplied the poetic
fragments
as did the wrinkles around the lips and eyes of the wives
with enchanting smiles. The elf-footed girls grew dull
and heavy in loneliness over the silent and endless war years.

Where is the night, the tavern and, under the lime trees, that table?
Where are the living and where are the others trampled in battle?
Still, my heart hears their voices, my hand still holds their
handshakes,
thus I quote their works and behold their proportions and stature,
silent prisoner myself in Serbia's wailing mountains.

Where is the night? Such a night perhaps may never recur, for
death
gives always a different perspective to all that has vanished.
They still sit at the table, they hide in the smiles of the women,
and they will sip from our glasses, the friends still unburied and
waiting,
lying in distant forests, asleep in foreign pastures.

THE EIGHTH ECLOGUE

Poet:

Greetings, handsome old man, how swiftly you climb this rugged mountain path, are you lifted by wings or pursued by an army? Wings lift you, passion drives you, lightning burns in your eyes -- greetings, grand old traveller, I comprehend that you must be one of the ancient wrathful prophets -- but, tell me, which one?

Prophet:

Which one? Nahum am I, from the city of Elkosh, who cursed the lewd Assyrian city of Nineveh, chanted the holy word with a vengeance. I was a vessel brimming with rage!

Poet:

I know your ancient rage for your writing has survived.

Prophet:

It has survived. But evil multiplies faster today, and the Lord's purpose is still unknown to this very day; for clearly the Lord has said the majestic rivers would dry up, Carmel would weaken, the flower of Bashan and Lebanon wither, and mountains would tremble and finally fire consume it all. It all came to pass.

Poet:

The nations rush to slaughter each other;

like once Nineveh, now humanity's soul is degraded.

Did proclamations and ravenous, hellish, green clouds of locusts serve any purpose? man must be surely the basest of creatures! Tiny babes smashed to death against brickwalls in many places, the church towers turned into flaming torches, the houses turned into ovens, their residents roasting. The factories go up in smoke. Screaming, the streets run with people on fire and stumble and faint.

Stirring, the heavy door of the bomb-bay opens above, leaving corpses on city squares lying shrunken as cow-pats on meadows. All you have prophesied is fulfilled again. So tell me, what made you leave the primeval vortex again to return to earth?

Prophet:

My anger. That man should remain so utterly lonely all this time while surrounded by armies of man-shaped heathens -- Also, I'd like to behold again the fall of the sinful cities, to see and to tell, to bear witness to future ages.

Poet:

But you have spoken already. The Lord has said through your words:

Woe to the fortifications laden with loot, to the bastions built of corpses! Tell me, in all the millennia, what has fanned your anger to rage with such obstinate, heavenly burning?

Prophet:

*Back in ancient times, the Lord touched my mis-shaped lips
with his burning coals (as He also touched wise Isaiah's), thus He
searched my heart; the embers were hot and glowing, an angel
held them with tongs. "Behold," I cried to the Lord, "I am waiting,
ready to go out to spread Your word." Once sent out
by the Lord, one neither has age nor peace ever after;
the fire of heaven burns in one's lips through the ages. And how long
is for the Lord a millennium? Only an fleeting instant.*

Poet:

You're very young, I envy you, father! How could I presume
to measure my life by your awesome age? Already, my time
wears me down -- like rushing rivers wear down the pebbles.

Prophet:

*Only you think so. I know your latest poetry. Anger
keeps you alive. The rage of prophets and poets is similar,
food and drink to the people! Those who want to survive
can feed from it till the birth of the kingdom promised by that
young pupil, the rabbi who fulfilled the law and our words.
Come with me to announce that the hour is already near,
that country about to be born. What might be, then, the Lord's purpose?
Now you can see that it is that country. Let us set forth
and gather the people, bring your wife and cut two staffs,
for staffs make good companions for wanderers. Look, I'd like that one,
I like a firm, knotty hold on a staff that is strong and uneven.*

DEATHMARCH

Collapsed exhausted, only a fool would rise again
to drag his knees and ankles once more like marching pain
yet press on as though wings were to lift him on his way,
invited by the ditch but in vain, he'd dare not stay...
Ask him, why not? maintaining his pace, he might reply:
he longs to meet the wife and a gentler death. That's why.
But he's insane, that poor man, because above the homes,
since we have left them, only a scorching whirlwind roams.
The walls are laid. The plum tree is broken. And the night
lurks bristling as a frightened, abandoned mongrel might.
Oh, if I could believe that all things for which I yearn
exist beyond my heart, that there's still home and return...
return! the old veranda, the peaceful hum of bees
attracted by the cooling fresh plum jam in the breeze,
the still, late summer sunshine, the garden drowsing mute,
among the leaves the swaying voluptuous naked fruit,
and Fanni waiting for me, blonde by the russet hedge,
while languidly the morning re-draws the shadow's edge...
It may come true again -- the moon shines so round -- be wise!
Don't leave me, friend, shout at me, shout! and I will arise!

PICTURE POSTCARDS

I

The roar of cannon rolls from Bulgaria dense and broad,
resounds upon the mountain crest, then hesitates and ceases;
the maned sky runs above; but recoils the neighing road;
and men and beasts are tangled, and wagon, thought and load.
You're deep and constant in me despite this turbulence
and glowing in my conscience, forever still, intense
and silent like an angel when wondering he sees
destruction, or like beetles entombed in dying trees.

II

Nine kilometres from here, look, the haystacks
and homes consumed in blaze,
the peasants smoke in silence by the meadow
and huddle in a daze.
But here, the shepherdess leaves in the water
light ripples in her wake
and gently dipping down, her curly flock drinks
the clouds up in the lake.

III

The oxen slaver red saliva, people
pass urine mixed with blood, my squadron stands
disorganized in filthy bunches. Death
blows overhead its cold, infernal breath.

IV

I tumble near his body. It turns over
already taut as string about to break.
Shot through the nape. *You too will end up like that,*
I mutter to myself. *Lie calm. Be patient.*
The flower of death unfolds in fear. I wait.
Blood mixed with dirt grows clotted on my ear.
I hear a soldier quip: *He'll get away yet.*

(Oct. 31, 1944)

An Epilogue, by the Translator

Unmarked the moment when our forebears lost
our innocence to automated killing.

The prisoners' feet were kissed by winter frost,
their hunger ached. Some gave up hope, unwilling
to stumble on with pride and will run out.

They deemed a small delay a meagre prize,
fell gently and remained there calm and solemn,
unless one were to shout at them to rise,
awaiting death behind the marching column.
Some people had the stubborn strength to shout.

They've left to us the throb of phantoms' feet
and monuments esteemed by every nation,
a world of wealthy customers to eat
the feast of plenty set by automation --
and now and then a fearful, halting doubt

when warplanes scrape across the sky a scar
above our loved ones' heads or when the telly
brings for our entertainment from afar
a child with hunger bloated in the belly
and we have lost the voice or will to shout.

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