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Note on Peace

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TWO POEMS FOR RALPH

FOR RALPH, 3RD ARMY, IN THE BATTLE FOR GERMANY

Your shadow moves toward me, Ralph, desolate,
 unlifted; nor can I light you with my bedside lamp;
 I lie with opening eyelids here afraid, I wait:
 you deepen your path to me with night shod feet,
 my blowing lamp retches on the stand,
 and there is darkness, Ralph, darkness, where we meet.

The fault in the black rock is the concealment gleaming,
 is the acknowledgement in your bitter black sight,
 is the bend of death in the rock of your black eyes bleeding:
 you deepen your path to me with night shod feet,
 you gaze, a groan of earth blows out my light,
 and there is darkness, Ralph, darkness, where we meet.

NOTE ON PEACE

When Private Hunter returns to our lands,
 Bending beneath the weight of his dead,
 Holding his entrails in with his hands,

Shaking his fist at the mounting sands
 Of mourning memory maiming his head,
 When Private Hunter returns to our lands,

His flesh a trap where agony hangs
 In pistols, fires and mad man's dread,
 Holding his entrails in with his hands,

His expressionless face the desolate stands
 Of despair, hunter to hunted bred,
 When Private Hunter returns to our lands,

Back from the two faced war's reprimands,
 Metal splintered, his eyeballs bled,
 Holding his entrails in with his hands,

What resistance to war, what world outspread
Belief in freedom shall he find in his bed
When Private Hunter returns to our lands
Holding his entrails in with his hands?

CAROL ELY HARPER

VISIT TO MEMORY: AN ALLEGORY

I

"We want to see the stiffs," they said.
"We're going to enter here next fall
As medics."

"I shall be glad to show the way,"
He answered. "Come along with me.
I shall be glad to show you where
They hide out. You'll be glad to see them."

And so he led them wordlessly
Along the waxed corridor,
Down the marble-footed stairs,
And across the wide hall. He opened,
Opened the door of that place
Into their face—the heavy stifle
Of phenol and alcohol,
Formaldehyde, and yet one more
Bitter component, to attack
The nasal root hairs at their sore.

One by one he levered corpses
Up out of their pickle. Blackened
Skin hung to axis; shrunken
Fingers; penis mashed flat;
Bulging hoop of pubic bone;
Ballooning skulls motionless,
Lifting their bristling mat of hair.