DEATH ON A STRICKEN FIELD

Mud enshrined
*dust thou art*
mud was his home now
and the grass was mud too
since the howitzers passed here
and the tanks
and the heavy weary feet
which had relinquished again
all they had ever gained
all, but the blood and the sorrow

Mud was his home now
hunched and sprawled
where the sniper left him

And all his cocky arrogance
and all his proud boast
gone too.
These fled faster even
than the general staff did
faster faster than the guns
the motorized units
and the frightened foot troops

Only pity stayed
keeping his side
pity in every fold of flesh
slack as his lifeless garments
pity only
and the diffident mud

And terror
terror stayed by his side too
there on the drenched shore

And when his comrades found him
these two still at his side
those who hated him wept
and those who loved him fled.

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