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## poem

## Dulce et Decorum Est

Wilfred Owen

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
 Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
 Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,  
 And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
 Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,  
 But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;  
 Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
 Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! Gas! Quick boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,  
 Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,  
 But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
 And floundering like a man in fire or lime. –  
 Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,  
 As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.  
 In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,  
 He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace  
 Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
 And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,

His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
 If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
 Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
 Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
 Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, –  
 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
 To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
 The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*  
*Pro patria mori.*

Selected by Femi Oyeboode.

The British Journal of Psychiatry (2014)  
 204, 461. doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.114.148304