

If Poets Must Have Flags

They
ask for graceful poetry
to decorate their tyranny
poems to make the hideous picturesque
entrails look like streamers
blood like wine
death like sleep

They
ask for wreaths
to strew murdered men's graves
posies of sweet scented words
to drench away the stench

They
want anger to be buried
in the carved tomb of verse
the people to have music
to fugue human cries of pain
the organ of high mass
to drown out sounds of massacre

They
ask the poet to be
a songbird in a cage
a eunuch in a choir
a slave of art
manacled his anguish
in tinkling silver chains

We refuse.
We'll go ugly and free
exhuming the corpses
releasing the rot
revealing the holes
ripped by the shot.
We'll wrap around our banners
the guts of the dead
- if we must have flags
let them always be red.

by David Evans