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The War against the Jews

Gerald Stern

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The War Against the Jews · *Gerald Stern*

Look how peaceful these wooden figures are going to their death.
How happy they were to go instead of me.
They love to march back and forth under the iron clock.
One tips his hat endlessly to a mother and her three children.
One dries his tears in front of the water fountain.
They bump their heads as they bend down to drink.

Over there a German soldier is blowing his whistle.
He was carved while he still could remember his mother's garden.
How glad he was to go to Poland.
How young he felt in his first pair of boots.

I would give anything to bring them back:
to let them sit again on the polished benches;
to let them see the great glass roof again;
to rush through the noisy crowd screaming
"Stop! It's a dream! It's a dream!
Go back to your schuls. Go back to your mother's garden.
Oh wooden figures, go back, go back."