

We Poor Splendid to Look On

by strannikov

No, Homer, take your distant voice hence—
we pilgrims think it best to not see Troy:
though Ilion towered over plains
where strong-kneed Argives camped with fires thick,
waystations from Olympian climes.

Spare us the din and clamor of their kills—
limbs lopped, heads lost, guts spilled, hearts speared—
clatters of bronze fallen heap on heap,
wheels spun halt and charioteers slain,
heroes leapt to shaken ground, leapt to slay.

Of all these slaughters tell us not,
nor of their Aegean, wine-blue crosst:
of waves adrift beneath their clouds' shades,
black ships benched ashore as suns lit rest
once wearinesses of war arrived.

Say naught of bodies retrieved to be burned
that cherished bones might go back to their homes,
the silent souvenirs of heroes' deeds
kept alive in your deathless account:
immortal heroes with their shadowing spears . . .

We are not armed with iron or bronze
(we don't know how to hurl one spear of ash)—
let heroes sleep in dust-stained rust:
our souls sedate stand silent of our deeds,
we acolytes of hollow, doubting gods.

Leave us to hide our sundials in our caves—
discard our scrolls that guide no more,
to time our nights to learn if we can grieve
—we've too much noise or less than we can hear,
our microphones speak words too small to say:
superfluous to say gods mock us now
when we let doorways lie to us each day.

