

## THE SURRENDER

Diane Hale

Light revolves

patterning grey age faces  
 in flashing momentary brilliance—  
 exposing shadow dreams  
 of victorious kingdoms  
 built in bottle caps  
 the shrapnel of hope's treachery—  
 to be swept away with  
 debris of belief

Laughter ricochets against worn plastic battlefields—  
 benches belching the seat-formed slogans  
 of dispossessed compatriots  
 united in common cause.

Sullenly one sings the songs no one heard

Sways in rhythm to promises  
 no one granted

Crys to his hands for the wisdom  
 no one heeded

Action displaced by words  
 "Another beer, old man?"

cap flipping toward the ground in a smooth uniform arc,  
 destiny lost beneath the roar of combat—  
 eye to eye

Seventy years extends its hand  
 reaching for more than,  
 less than,

accepting defeat with the nothing sought and paid for

The nightmare carousel dances over terror-stricken victims,  
 stabbing with effigy reflections of failure  
 questioning command

Trails of smoke push through thickened lips  
 that speak of tarnished medals  
 flaunted to the no one filling the next stool—  
 heard by the no one and smiled away

