

Between Wars

Incendiary firestorms
before the half-century,
left church shells,
the organs silent.

Ossuaries of a million bones
satisfied the curious,
until the fields of flags
faded in the summer sun.

In another quarter-century
Through defoliated forests,
tank-tracked rice fields
and empty villages,

The scream of the monsoon winds
could not cover the cries
of dying cultures.
But who listened?

Now
used arms and fighter planes
are carelessly sold
half a world away;
cities bulge above the ashes
and green shoots
cover the mass graves.

Peace
—the time
called “permanent pre-hostility”
—the time
when we ask
Who is the new enemy?

Poppies and rice grass
have always made
a transient floral
spray.

—Sally T. Taylor