

POETRY

Lullaby

by Eva Michely



"November" by Emma Knight

For my grandfather

As he lay stretched out on the rosy settee
in their brassy be-cushioned sitting room
Next to the radiator running on oil
that never ran out, that was in abundance,
Beneath the panoramic window that
gave on to the garden's moss, bush and plush
Under the rug she'd crocheted that winter
of no return, against the encroachment of loss
There was no warmth to speak of, no
comfort then. For in his bones there was
The memory still of days spent in darkness
mining the cold for coal he'd never burn
That once delivered to the broad light of day
and disconnected from any association
With him and his pals, would bring warmth,
would bring comfort, while he shivered and
Shuddered to the core of his bones under
the surface of a foreign soil that he'd sought
Out over the country he'd loved and left,
a country of terror and nothingness
Where his mother gave birth on the fields
and birds on the fields meant nothing but dinner.
Left it he had under no pretense of returning
giving no hope his departure might not be final
For these were days of finality, hopelessness,
hunger, when a spark in one's soul might turn out
A furnace in the soul of another, had taken
leave and after the mines found a wife in need

Of a husband and a boy in need of a father,
and I refuse to think their watery bond worth less
Or less firmly binding than other men's blood.
Yet the older he got the more red-hot the terror and
Nothingness burned in his chest, a flame fed
by no hope of recovering what was abandoned.
And as he pressed the muzzle to his head
or heart, counting to ten, eleven or twelve,
Snug on the settee in the sitting room he had
paid for twice or thrice over in one single life
I'd like to think that what he saw last were
birds taking wing on the fields of his birth.