

Dachau

A gravelled plain, low buildings—edged by trees—
Black iron limbs wired in symbolic pain;
Warm sun from a blue sky, a gentle breeze,
One plaque, five tongues, two words: “never again”.

Inside, the endless beds in which they crammed,
Shared lockers for men stripped of property;
Their rest, to clean the barracks of the damned,
Their work, by grinding death to make them free.

Some found relief before the scheduled time:
They fled into the bullets and the fence,
Or died at roll call, falling out of line;
A few survived the end, small recompense.

Now nightmare with survivor slowly fades,
As of the barracks only graves remain.
A desperate shrine proclaims its deadly shades;
Elsewhere, fresh hands raise the walls once again.

Reuben Thomas

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