

DREAM ON A TRAIN

(written to describe an actual dream)

Thinking about *Cost of Discipleship*,
I slept and found myself with two boys
watching a hollow-faced German
shuffle by numbly with explosives
systematically destroying houses,
and unafraid, one boy threw a rock,
was caught and beaten cruelly.
“Stop!” I cried. “These are just homes!”
“But they may harbor weapons,” he said.
“Look for yourself and see they don’t.”
“I have my orders.”
“Think of your own family!”
But pausing briefly, he went on blasting.

A German girl followed in the same task.
“Why?” I asked. “You know this is wrong!”
“I know, but war changes things.”
“But evil is always evil! Flee it!”
And she left her post, escaping on a train.

Awaking on one of the cars, I saw him,
a young German officer with soldiers.
“How’s this now?” wondered the passengers.
“Blitzkrieg!” he laughed proudly
and kept dropping soldiers at each stop,
until, when his unit had dwindled,
a few on the train attempted to revolt,
meeting only torture or death.
Even the fleeing German girl was caught,
and amid her screams of terror I asked
this lieutenant, boasting his heritage,

“Did you ever read Bonhoeffer?”
“He’s in prison for his treason!”
“He’s not the real traitor, if Jesus is King.”

“He’s a would-be assassin and must hang!”
“He will, just days before the War ends,
when you will know that it was better
to die trying to stop a madman
than feigning an allegiance to Germany,
to hide your compliance to his madness.”
“But we will win!” he shouted.

Yet at the last station, on disembarking,
with worried eyes he asked, “You really know?”
“I was born after Germany’s shame was exposed
in the trials at Nuremberg after the War.”
“But I had my orders,” he said fading back
out of my dream into his eternal regrets.

— *David L. Hatton, 9/25/1990*