

## Between Two Wars

Terraces, standing like lead unpainted soldiers  
All in line, all on parade,  
Dark in the sunlight, light in the rain  
Belching black prisms, now and then

Cobbled streets, separated by cobbled streets  
Doors brown, bleak and welcome  
Slabs of stone, chipped, uneven with moss  
And cockroaches, soon to meet a crushing end,  
Welsh miners singing, begging, crippled with despair  
Survivors from the valleys

Oh! Happy People, now clean and free,  
Walking talking, grouping arm in arm,  
Exchanging pleasantries with friends  
Listening to the bells, telling the time with trams,  
Homemade bread and cakes, oh! Agonising ache,  
Will the morning never end?

Shops with tizer and milk  
Papers chocolates, thick twist and tick  
Boys without shoes, dogs with collars,  
Salvation Army, cymbals, prayers and pennies  
Farthings, crowns so large, sovereigns now forgotten,  
Unemployed, despair, then joy with work  
A simmering pot on polished hob.  
Beans and bones, then beans and bones,  
And sometimes meat

Childhood, youth, bombs and fire  
Bravery. Unknown heroes and departing sons  
Some to return, some with fathers side by side,  
In foreign lands

Peace, sunshine, new sons, new fathers,  
Old houses.  
Work, gardens in boxes, departures, arrivals  
And now darkness, rubble, new bricks and concrete,  
But always memories

**by John Clarke**