

IN DISTRUST OF MERITS

Strengthened to live, strengthened to die for
medals and positioned victories?
They're fighting, fighting, fighting the blind
man who thinks he sees, --
who cannot see that the enslaver is
enslaved, the hater, harmed. O shining O
firm star, O tumultuous
ocean lashed till small things go
as they will, the mountainous
wave makes us who look, know

depth. Lost at sea before they fought! O
star of David, star of Bethlehem,
O black imperial lion
of the Lord -- emblem
of a risen world -- be joined at last, be
joined. There is hate's crown beneath which all is
death; there's love's without which none
is king; the blessed deeds bless
the halo. As contagion
of sickness makes sickness,

contagion of trust can make trust. They're
fighting in deserts and caves, one by
one, in battalions and squadrons;
they're fighting that I
may yet recover from the disease, My
Self; some have it lightly; some will die. 'Man's
wolf to man' and we devour
ourselves. The enemy could not
have made a greater breach in our
defences. One pilot-

ing a blind man can escape him, but
Job disheartened by false comfort knew
that nothing can be so defeating
as a blind man who
can see. O alive who are dead, who are
proud not to see, O small dust of the earth
that walks so arrogantly,
trust begets power and faith is
an affectionate thing. We
vow, we make this promise

to the fighting -- it's a promise -- 'We'll
never hate black, white, red, yellow, Jew,
Gentile, Untouchable.' We are
not competent to
make our vows. With set jaw they are fighting,
fighting, fighting, -- some we love whom we know,
some we love but know not -- that
hearts may feel and not be numb.
It cures me; or am I what
I can't believe in? Some

in snow, some on crags, some in quicksands,
 little by little, much by much, they
are fighting fighting fighting that where
 there was death there may
be life. 'When a man is prey to anger,
he is moved by outside things; when he holds
 his ground in patience patience
 patience, that is action or
 beauty,' the soldier's defence
 and hardest armor for

the fight. The world's an orphan's home. Shall
 we never have peace without sorrow?
without pleas of the dying for
 help that won't come? O
quiet form upon the dust, I cannot
look and yet I must. If these great patient
 dyings -- all these agonies
 and wound-bearings and bloodshed --
can teach us how to live, these
 dyings were not wasted.

Hate-hardened heart, O heart of iron,
 iron is iron till it is rust.
There never was a war that was
 not inward; I must
fight till I have conquered in myself what
causes war, but I would not believe it,
 I inwardly did nothing.
 O Iscariot-like crime!
Beauty is everlasting
 and dust is for a time.

Marianne Moore