

DAVID MOOLTEN

Korczak

Here he comes, guiding his orphans through the streets,
No, keeping them in the dark, leading them on
With their picnic satchels and stories
Of spruces and reaching the sun on foot,
The brilliant pedant, the hater of shouting,
Of slapping, of red pen, here failing his castoffs
By joining them, doctor of that madness,
All of Warsaw rapt with his lesson
Of how to walk, that last field trip, the parade
To the station. The soldiers would let him
Jump the fence like a truant. But he repeats
Their careless mistake of caring, donning
His boots in August and holding hands even
As he tutors them, so patient, like teaching
The teachers arithmetic, three miles times one child
Times two hundred and all of them know
How to borrow from zero, the balance kept,
The left foot raised and the right planted, then
Again the reverse, and from there Treblinka,
The same as learning the polka, the life cycle
Of the mayfly, how to breathe or hold their breath.