

**CHRISTOPER HOWELL**

**Edvard Munch**

She came down the road  
like a piece of the road dis severed  
from itself by two legs and a shoe.  
She carried a rat trap basket of brown  
and brittle flowers: her companion, compass  
and advisor of whom she asked, What  
is the name of that bright red unseen bird?  
This is East Prussia, perhaps, and the beaten  
armies drag through the orchards leaving a trail  
of dented canteens and coal scuttle helmets.  
The soldiers walk right past her, they know  
death when they see it: always the withered  
flowers and haunted look of a girl  
going nowhere and a road that stops  
while seeming to go on. Always someone  
lifting tea through its own steam  
as he writes on a yellow pad.  
Always the disgrace of his probing  
and then the rain  
dark as blackbirds falling into ditches  
the girl would see if she could see anything  
but rain. And what does the Kaiser have to say,  
now? The soldiers are through listening  
and after a while the tea is cold. The ragged child  
picks a few flowers and asks their names.