

Soldiers Despite Ourselves

Downstairs a trumpeter is playing
Gershwin badly but somehow
truer that way.

 The squat
chimney of my pipe keeps offering
smoke signals to the moon.

The sea-waves glitter like a zillion
nickels...

 Two wars ago
the battle of the Riviera happened
here.

 Two wars ago
the author of *The Little Prince*
flew southward from this coast
and crashed at sea without a trace.

That's how I tell the time
these days- by wars, the madness
of wars.

 I think of Mussolini,
who believed each generation
needed war to purify its blood.

He leaned on history to show
that life's unlivable except
through death.

 I palm the ashes
from my pipe.

 To hell

with Mussolini.

I'll take
bad Gershwin to a bullet
any time.

To hell with history.

The moon's manna on the sea
outshines the glory that was Greece.

To hell with those who say
the earth's a battleground we're doomed
to govern with a gun.

Because
of them we have to fight to live.

But win or lose, they've won
since fighting proves they're right.

Why ask if they outnumber us
or not?

It takes just one.