

*Weihnachtsfrieden, Trêve de Noël*

Grenade rolls across battlefield

wrapped in thick mud.

But no – not grenade.

The explosion never comes.

Rattle of rifles sings

bitter December air,

fresh with death's odour -

but no body count rises.

Battalions face the other,

divided on a bloody field

where so many have fallen.

But no more fall today.

*For 'no man shall lift*

*a sword against another'*

and no bullets exchanged

by piercing the air;

no mines shatter

shells of men

and not a bayonet

is fired. No souls escape

this field today.

Only carols, sung  
in guttural German  
harmonised with rough  
English and feathered French.  
Only gifts unravelled,  
not lives of men,  
like ribbons floating  
into the empty sky.

On this day scores of enemies  
play as one, kicking the bladder  
from one end of field  
and back to the other.

Lights in Europe will flicker  
back on, gas lamps of hope  
as laughter sings in battlefields  
and opposition soldiers  
clap one another  
on the back, grinning.

*By Gareth Davey*