

I can't tell...

I can't tell what this land could mean for someone else,  
for me it is my homeland, a tiny place, up in flames,  
it's the ever rocking cradle of childhood memories.  
I grew up out of all this, a twig out of the tree,  
and I hope it will be this soil where my body returns one day.  
I am home here, and when a bush kneels at my feet,  
I'll know it by its flowers as well as by its name,  
I know who they are on the road and where they're going,  
I know the summer sunset's painful red walls in the glow.

From their planes, flying above it, they'll see it as a map  
having no idea where that Hungarian poet lived  
what'd they see on this map? factories, army camps?  
for me it's grasshoppers, cows, friendly towers, ranches,  
through their telescopes it's factories and fields,  
but I see working men, working in that field,  
I see forests, orchards, vineyards and lonely graves,  
I see an old lady there who solemnly grieves,  
what's bombing targets for them, railways or factories,  
it's the house of the track-watchman and he's watching a train to leave,  
a red flag in his hand, around him children play,  
n'I see the playful dogs too in the yards of these factories;  
and there's that park, holding footprints of old time rendezvous,  
those kisses I can still taste, some of them really felt luscious,  
and on the way to the school, on those bright an' sunny days,  
I'd step on this stone of the curb just for good luck's sake,  
that stone is here, you see ... but for them it's imperceptible,  
from above no device can make this discernible.

For we are guilty just like the other nations here,  
we know our crimes correctly, when and what we did,  
but there are workers here as well, poets who never sinned,  
sucklings, bright and new minds, all ready to spring,  
they keep it in dark basements, the brightness of their minds,  
until white feathers of peace mark afresh our sky,  
our stifled words will then be answered by their shout  
Holy guarding night cloud, spread your dark wings above us!

*Miklós Radnóti, January 17, 1944*