

## Edith Stein: the Final Steps

the line of women shuffles  
on that uneven concrete path  
treading bare feet tenderly  
the building block ahead  
of brown used brick  
looks like any other well-used factory  
on each side guards stand on the ready  
some look bored, some scowl  
any semblance of obscenity is in the straining dogs  
some of the women know  
why they were told to leave their clothes  
that this before them is an oven  
from hidden jets up in its ceiling  
poison gas will noise and hiss  
and throw them reeling to the ground  
that Jewish woman stands tall  
there is of her a quiet of one who thinks  
she is now preoccupied in prayer  
and also consciously gives strength  
to her companion-sister  
who holds so close to her in fear  
while unmistakably at peace  
the woman accepts what's coming  
as answer to her earnest gift  
as each step now is love  
reaching out to all her chosen race  
never is she more happy to belong  
just now the pebbles underfoot  
distract and as her wont of mind  
she marvels at their sheer unself-explained reality  
that everything disparate  
and everything in its place  
yet shares the equal need for origin  
“let everything that exists sing praise”  
a thought from out the psalm lights up  
the songs she knew so well from childhood  
and with this, leaning forward  
Edith Stein in wonder says:  
“Rosa, we will be with our Mamman soon”  
a guard astride the entrance wonders idly  
why on this humdrum day, two women smile  
as they approach that steelsprung door in Auschwitz