HEARTBEAT  
(21st November 1944)

Chatter, nervous restless chatter
Awaiting air warriors all a-clutter
One swift move the curtain is drawn.
Mersburg--ignites the eye with
A hush--stillness measures the silence

*Thump-thump-thump-thump-*

Through drizzle and clouds we climb
In one continuous corkscrew--eagerly
Awaiting the top--blind in the soup
And blind in bright daylight--moments
Pass and vision returns--one thousand and one
Hunted Flying Fortresses--jockeying to position

*Thump-thump-thump-thump-*

Formation after formation--streaking
Contrails, clouding the sky and easy to see.
No need to worry for Gerry knows.
His monitor above--too fast--too high--

Technology superior.
The issue is moral so on we go
Knowing with no spirit or soul
Science swallows itself--year after year
Never reaching the end goal.

In the distance at 9 o'clock, I see
Mersburg reacting with furious rebel.
Iron and metal takes its toll.
Fireball plummets through the aftersmoke
Fortress no more.
Beautiful Mustang good-bye--thanks--
See you on the way back.
Ninety degrees we turn, straight for
That foul-smelling manmade black cloud of Hell

*Thump-and a thump-and a thump-and a thump-*
We left the target with three turning
We now have two--
Jettison our guns, armament and all weight
Available we lighten our burden and set
A course for Paris.
Eight o'clock high three war birds
Closing fast--sitting ducks we wait.

*Thump-and a thump-and a thump-and a thump-*

Morale ebbs--one of God's natural purifiers
Spans from horizon to horizon, rejecting
All contaminants.
Headlong without a choice the giant B-17
Rams into the darkness and is engulfed by snow.
She hovers, trembling, quivering and shaking
Fighting that dreaded stall.
Power and lift yielding to weight/gravity
And drag.
The contaminant is put down

An eerie spiral groan in the distance
Culminates in an ear-jamming explosion.
Indifferent snow scintillates in a frigid silence.
Floating down, silk overhead in serene
Aloneness, no view of sky or ground, it is the
Perfect lifesaving cover With joy I greet it
Streaking toward me yielding its
Path as it bends around my torso.
Coming down backward I plunge into
The trees

*Thump-and a thump-and a thump-and a thump-*

Feet on the ground--bedlam around
Men yelling, dogs barking, gunshots fill the air

*Thump-and a thump-and a thump-and a thump-*
Vines and underbrush entwine my movement
Dropping to my hands and knees I crawl
On all fours Heart palpitating I come
To a screeching halt.
Under my nose a pair of boots,
At my head a double-barrelled shotgun.

_Thump-and a thump-and a thump-and a thump-

Glancing upward I view a civilian of
Short stature, with a cigarette dangling
From his lips—the ash end longer than the butt.
His hat is green, pointed at the top
With feather attached.

Switzerland, I thought.

With a wave of the barrel, adolescence
Aborts: I stand militarily with hands on high
German soldiers with guns and grins
Inspect their prize.
So I made a mistake; it’s not Switzerland
And Paris I won’t see—
Back at the base I wonder what lucky
Airmen got my shot of scotch.