Charlotte Delbo's Writings

Prayer to the Living to Forgive Them for Being Alive

You who are passing by
well dressed in all your muscles
clothing which suits you well
or badly
or just about
you who are passing by
full of tumultuous life within your arteries
glued to your skeleton
as you walk with a sprightly step athletic awkward
laughing sullenly, you are all so handsome
so commonplace
so commonplace like everyone else
so handsome in your commonplaceness
diverse
with this excess of life which keeps you
from feeling your bust following your leg
your hand raised to your hat
your hand upon your heart
your kneecap rolling softly in your knee
how can we forgive you for being alive...

I beg you
do something
learn a dance step
something to justify your existence
something that gives you the right
to be dressed in your skin in your body hair
learn to walk and to laugh
because it would be too senseless
after all
for so many to have died
while you live
doing nothing with your life.