

— This text is also known as 'Thou Shalt Not Die'

O My Brother, You Must Not Die

by Akiko Yosano

O my young brother, I cry for you
Don't you understand you must not die!
You who were born the last of all
Command a special store of parents' love
Would parents place a blade in children's hands
Teaching them to murder other men
Teaching them to kill and then to die?
Have you so learned and grown to
twenty-four?

The state (Emperor) is subtly being compared to parental figures. This line shows the difference between family and 'family' (soldiers, military, state, etc.)

— May be a Western perspective but the capital "H" gives off Biblical undertones.

O my brother, you must not die!
Could it be the Emperor His Grace
Exposeth not to jeopardy of war
But urgeth men to spilling human blood
And dying in the way of wild beasts,
Calling such death the path to glory?

"Dying" and "wild beasts" to suggest something animalistic/inhuman

If His Grace possesseth noble heart
What must be the thoughts that linger there?

actual glorification of death to justify the killings or martyrdom

Challenging the Emperor by asking how his heart can be "noble" while asking for violence. Akiko is asking what other atrocities are there, waiting to be unleashed.

— The last stanza is particularly "outlandish" since it's criticizing the Emperor/state for violence that they will never participate in, despite benefiting politically.

— Most lines have key words that relate to death.