

# SUBMISSION TO *SIXFOLD*, spring 2023

## **Songs: War, Peace, and Poetry**

### **War- Two Places Near a Border**

The rain in Ukraine breaches the broken window pane.  
Half of an adjoining apartment wall lies scattered on the ground.  
A little white dog with a red collar whimpers,  
Standing over what remains of a small child  
face down in the mud. And then, a second blast.

*Nearby-*

In the trenches of the land, words-  
“conscript”, “conspire”, “confound”, “command”  
torment my thoughts and dreams. I curse  
the trench, the war, the universe.  
A baffled soldier shrugs, and hugs his gun.

In the trenches of the mind— thoughts,  
ideas, and weapons of every kind—  
divisions marching, marching, marching.  
Vodka, strategy, blood, and mud-stained truth.  
A baffled commander refills his 100 proof.

In the trenches of the heart— where maybe  
broken goodness finds a stuttered start.  
A baffled child looks down a lonely path  
and begs a shivering dove to be his friend.  
The frightened dove flies away... again.

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## **Peace- Renaissance Humanism, Music and Art** “Pachelbel Canon” and “Giotto’s Tower”

### *Music*

How did heaven happen such a hymn  
To the beauty, sadness, and mystery—  
Silencing all fear, all anger,  
Centering the soul in a melody so still,  
Each note a twinkling star?

When triumphs are forgotten,  
And lust lives only as an ember,  
And heart forgives all hearts—  
The infinity of time and space  
Sings this song.

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#### *and art*

Sunrise sweeps over the sleepy Tuscany city  
as first light baptizes a constellation of beginnings.  
Slowly the Arno flows to the Ligurian sea,  
Its fish and frogs see nothing of the newfound flourishing  
Where Giotto conducts his tower symphony—  
Those 414 steps from middle ages to modernity!  
There Brunelleschi envisions his Duomo,  
and from that high balcony above the Florentine cityscape  
Ghiberti ponders those “gates of paradise”.  
Yearning— Dante’s Beatrice and Petrarch’s Lora— language, learning  
Ignite a meteor shower of talent, and emblaze the tower’s panorama.  
Did Lorenzo and Michelangelo savor that heavenly horizon?  
Medieval walls shield, and gates of heaven haunt—  
That weaving and those banks of the Arno,  
Those guilds, the flood of craft and daft—umanesimo.  
Even Plato becomes new. Religion has wings and feet!  
Genius and imagination energize, ennoble, transfigure—  
A tapestry of language, music, marble, sonnets, sculpture.  
Philosophy flourishes, and dignity—your name is mankind!  
A mason’s son listens to talk of Donatello’s *David*,  
Botticelli imagines raindrops as angels from Ponte Vecchio,  
And Leonardo paints what was, but could not last.

## Poetry- A Difficult Craft

### “An Approach” and “A Maine Seascape”

As I approached the uphill dogleg  
with the sandtrap at the edge of the green,  
a mockingbird landed nearby and sang-  
*birdie, birdie, birdie, birdie, birdie*  
and continued-

*whiff, whiff, whiff, whiff, whiff.*

I looked up at that sassy bird and then  
surveyed the fairway and the ruff before me,  
and the bird sang-

*swing, swing, swing, swing, swing,*  
before mocking me with-  
*miss, miss, miss, missed, missed.*

I knew then that golf was hard, but other things,  
like finishing this poem are much harder,  
with no closure of a ball that skims,  
half circles, then drops- the disappearing  
ball trick that no word craft or end rhyme can equal.

So I wondered- “How can I possibly end it?”

Just then an eagle flew overhead, down the fairway,  
And landed on the imaginary green!

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*Nearby- from where I try to compose poetry*

A Maine seascape hangs slightly askew on my living room wall.  
I see it every day, though I hardly see it at all,  
but today my craft has lost its mooring,  
and I watch that crash of white-capped poetry assault the shore.

I study how those smears of tintured oil on surf-plumed canvas  
create that sky blue sea, those autumn-colored sands,  
and weed-green tidal pools hidden among huge garnet rocks  
where as a child I climbed and jumped and hid  
during those forever sun-swept summers. And now—

The single color of lead, scratched on this icy bed  
must near create that garnished rock and sea,  
and from these tidal pools of seasoned memory-  
a red lobster boat bobbing beyond the painted rocks,  
an orange-billed tern splashing into a fish filled sea.