

Poems for Sixfold
Winter, 2019

I Can Say Nothing

“My subject is war, and the pity
of war. The poetry is in the pity.”

Wilfred Owen

Some fool like Keats would say,
“Ah, this most glorious and terrifying
clash of arms shall wax eternal
in the frozen mind of mortal man.”

And I would say nothing.

Only in man-dreams have I ever
lived it, embraced it, squeezed the
last pathetic ounce of meaning from
its death, destruction, and despair.

And then I say nothing.

And even in my youth did I
wear the soldier’s mantle
in a time of war.
But it was not my time.
Nor was it ever my place to accept
the worthy challenge of the trench,
to fret over frozen feet,
to embrace the strident glory of dissent.

And so I say nothing.

In a thousand bloody dreams
I have followed Owen to the Front.
I always fall.
But he lives on--
and on to endure the simple pity
of confused minds.

While I can say nothing.

Leaping the Chasm

You leap the chasm of
years like Evel Knievel
jumping a canyon,
daunting but daring,
dangerous but doable –
a full frontal attack.
The secret, they say,
is to keep your eyes
on what's ahead,
to never look down,
to never look back.

The Pine

Walking through the snow
in the deepest part of winter,
we found an old pine
standing alone, its long
spiral limbs reaching out
like a mother's arms, the
ground beneath still warm
and plush with soft needles.

And for a giddy instant,
just before turning
back to the trail, I
caught a glimpse of
you and me lying
side by side,
flesh to flesh,
under the gentle spread
of that great tree,
listening to a cool breeze
on a summer day, gazing
up at small specks of blue sky
and wondering if there was
anything better in life
than spending this time
together: voyagers,
lovers and explorers of love.

The tree is here,
the sky is here,
the voyage has been taken.
And the love we found
is in every step,
every silent needle,
every single tear I let
fall upon the darkness.

The Useful in Life

You seek for the useful in life
that hides like the snake
in the old woodpile out back.
Days spin like clock hands, methodically
dissecting human lives like microtomes;
blue sky days painting over stars
from a palette of explosive sun colors.
Image after golden image wasted on the
writer who dabbles in the dark.

As with all things misunderstood,
the night flows through the consciousness
like a swollen river, bearing
the muddy remnants of an upstream
world, exposing soft lives and
tender mercies begging for
a quick clarification. Slowly
regarding its potential, you
let it pass, like the water, unclarified.

And then you sleep and dream,
mired in all the majesty your
subconscious may inspire. At
dawn you will rise up and
walk along the river, searching for
the words to match the power of
a single photon of light bouncing off
a molecule of water. But
you will find only the snake,
flicking its curious tongue
from under a log.

And God Smiles

[for Wanda]

In the creamy half-light
of this early morning, I
awaken from a dream
and ease into my life. My
eyes open and I see your
naked body veiled in the
pre-dawn mystery. The
dewy dream fragments
dissipate like fog when
kissed by the rising sun.
I reach out through the
cool air, my fingers seeking
the warmth of your flesh.

We are two people tainted
by life's darkest tragedy, now
blessed with the gift of being together.
A man and a woman,
two lovers melding into one body,
silently giving thanks for being
alive, for being in love.

And God smiles.