

Poems for Sixfold
January, 2023

Birth of a Pulsar

Born in the midst of catalytic chaos,
from the sudden death of a neutron star,
the distant yet spectacular flash
of supernova 1987A
lights up the Magellanic cloud
with a cosmic light show, itself born
of ancient and numberless electrons dancing
in a neutrino shower. And all of it erupting
a mere million light years away.

“Like winning the triple crown,” they
said, timing each revolution
to the microsecond, recording each minute
pulse fragment as though it were
a message from God beamed across
time, as though the future of our world
suddenly depended on precision,
as though all life seemed to ebb
and flow from a million short light years
away.

Gray Mist

Gray
 mist
 swirls
 above
the warm lake
on a
sunless October morning.

 Beautiful
when viewed
 from a distance.

Wallflowers

These are the cocktail hours.
These are the lifeless hours
when brains ooze into bottles
while their bodies water the wallpaper
with sweat.

Outside, a city
has folded its blooms for the night,
but no-one wants to notice,
not in this cemetery
where flowers abound
and never seem to die.

The occasional rustling of verbiage
vibrates through the peeling gardens
of paper roses planted in the
hard, dead soil of cold bricks.
And standing there, pampered backs
trampling the vertical earth, while
detached voices softly speak politics:
“If the inflationary spiral isn’t stopped
we’ll all be papering our walls
with dollar bills.”
Or something like that.

And someone somewhere is sick.
And everyone else, just standing there,
worrying about the latest rise in the
price of toilet paper, wondering if
this Earth really is, after all, square.

In the twilight,
a solitary butterfly floats
through the room, totally unafraid,
totally unaware.

Mortgage Due

What a plain to pay for
on a tornado night
(having a bite of tomato,
home grown).

Dew drips from
the sod roof;
a wagon atrophies
in the uncut grass.
An adhesive wind
binds the soil to the soul:
two deserts.

The Final Chorale

Slumping in the overstuffed chair,
eyes rolling back in the head,
brain feeding on Krips
and the London Symphony
celebrating Beethoven's
final chorale.

Right arm twitching,
syncing with the beat,
anticipating the last
joyous climax when
the composer floats through the gates
of Heaven on the wings
of a triumphant major chord
and looks God straight in the eye.

At that moment I am
impotent, barren; the words
cease and there is only
music and time. And I am
lost with all senses primed.
Not at all like Beethoven
who went deaf in order to hear
the subtle voice of God
speaking through Schiller.

All the beauty in the world
compressed into a single
moment of victory; every soul
of every person dancing
in the shadow of his
death—a spontaneous glory
into which his genius flows
on a river of honey.

I can only listen,
imagine, awestruck
and speechless,
weeping quietly.