

PERHAPS

Have you ever heard the words, have you ever said the words: “Walk with me past the dropping of the moon to where you inhabit the ocean, earth, and sky of my heart, to its center, where you kiss it, and set the world to a new beginning.” Perhaps you have, perhaps someone else has walked beside you hand-in-hand through those feverish nights of sudden flame and wind, thy private rights of magic sent, all the literati I do keep, thusly so, thine imaginary lover/ friend, as I think of such consequence to want what anyone is given, if I want perhaps, if in its own way, I have tried to teach, and yet, what tempts man into envy when he weeps and begs to stay? What do you say when he reaches inward towards those silent springs of sorrow, saying perhaps, perhaps it is love without desiring all I am not. Perhaps these tired letter fonts appear adrift, typed in tenor’d error, a pathway of poetry lost, poetry found, perhaps fluted with plaintive woe, a wilderness of wish with a lawyer’s wit (betrayed) vociferously amid all doubt, Socrates doubt, a road now traveled, his fare unpaid. Out of this, out, destiny be still, falling in and out of love is the longest way round to the shortest way home signing the name of yours truly, A. F. Foley, never called to be famous, but called to be faithful, perhaps, perhaps I wasn’t, perhaps it’s time to bring these verses to a close. Most Dismal to her eyes will be the shadowy letter read 35 years foreboding long thereafter, its postmark lost, its traumatic disguise still tormented and unimpressionable as written, reciting wounds of the sword and wars eternal human suffering, its sublime message wandering, never, no never, would there be a place thereafter called home. O’ it is all a vain delusion, in a words definition, its ordained fate retained/unknown, Mnemosyne, mother of the muses has called my injury: “encephalomalacia.” Simultaneously begotten, is a disease non-discriminating, bi-lateral in silence stalking, unbiased, and where the frontal lobe is irretrievably filled with vascular insufficiency, pondering, I am, through these 35 years of degenerative brain damage, explaining in dire consequences: “this Death & this Life & this Jehovah!” Cerebral is the lament of art and war, the faults now known of my existence, calling forth thy smiles of soft deceit: calling forth thy cloudy tears, I forgive you, you forgive me, ‘this the Wine & this the Bread.’

O’ is it all a vain delusion? Perhaps I am not one to flinch from these most intractable fears, and dissolution in the face of suffering, redemption without pain, or the sulfurous vapors repelling all creatures (you) that might stray near. The “rift in the human soul” is my audition, before and after Virgil, reminding us, too, this illumination is often accompanied by disillusionment and that the spiritual awakening which allows us to see more clearly may well leave us in despair. What tempts man into envy when he weeps and begs to stay? Perhaps we are, I am, the one who awakens first, perhaps, too, you will be the first to see me in the first dawn thereafter, the stranger, and a night in summer, sounds of a summer storm – perhaps, ‘this the Wine & this the Bread!’

Maybe “again,” maybe “not,” have you, can you, will you: “Walk with me past the dropping of the moon to where you inhabit the ocean, earth, and sky of my heart, to its center, where you kiss it, and set the world to a new beginning.” I am only here for a day or two auditioning for thereafter, but tomorrow, although, not forgotten, I may be gone!

“I am in blood step’t in so far that,
should I wade no more, Returning
were as tedious as go o’er.”

From Macbeth, Act III, Scene IV

On the remote periphery of a Maine dirt road lies the sobered self, in its poverty, itself lost in impercipient is an aluminum bud-light (empty) beer can. Pick-it-up the homeless Vietnam veteran does! It’s worth a nickel. Repeated endlessly, continued endlessly, he needs a hundred of the same to buy a “pack of smokes.” He owns no stock in the Veterans Administration even though it sells for less than a penny a share. And no more can he go there to hear his doctor say: “smoking will kill you!” So what he says, “I am already dead from words, from sounds, from colors, from stones thrown, and from things that perish. And O’: “for this voluptuous knowledge and distaining pleasure, none concerned that your abandonment of my ill health continues to proclaim itself as the law, non-gratifying, paying me (only) eleven cents a mile to pass existence for my travel back-and-forth to the VA Hospital (where mourning is at fault) for scheduled appointments. What are you paid per mile Senator Collins when you travel on official business revealing the woe of limitations: buying stock in pharmaceutical companies, or paving paradise to put up a parking lot in (spatial finitude), when the allotment to my service of country (my combat wounds) (my wounded soul) should be space common to both?

The last two poems: “The Hitch Hiker (Shadows Passing...),” and “Perhaps,” explain a nightmare filled with unknown things crossed by a winter’s ray of hope, a crucifix, and a warning that writhes poetically in tearful prayer: “tomorrow, although, not forgotten, I may be gone, and comes to die at the edge of a governments false eternity!” It’s a cry repeated by a thousand wounded warriors: these curses, these blasphemies, these complaints: where, under a gloomy sky, a silent noise, like the muffled sigh of a bullet passing though this bone, this muscle, and this sinew – for it is in truth – we give of our dignity – a soldiers forlorn and haunted testimonial under the shadows of a green forest of firs. It is a beacon lighted on a thousand citadels, a call of the homeless Marine lost in the deep woods. Do you hear these cries, these tears, these Te Deums, these hearts of men, these hearts of woman, mirrors, poets and storytellers, the uncomprehending, the unnoticed heroes: Shall I give up now? If I give up, then... Yes, then? The ink (the argument) the color of morning stalking and lurking in the shadows of hidden motives and ruined lives (death cometh), in both ceremony and salute: to the fallen, mourning their loss. You could have done more! You can do more! It is cold. It is raining! “It’s clouds illusion I recall, I really don’t know clouds at all.” (Symbolism) Turn them on turn them off... ‘At least the moon shines through the window – the thieves left that behind!’

Amiss, all-within this excessive significance of poetry and prose is a little sliver of jungle in Southeast Asia. Forgotten men and woman who still cry (induced by memory) about this missing page in American History, soon to be vanished by those instead, the son of a president who chose to follow the lead of a vice-president who, like himself, had

“other priorities” when his own time came to serve in Vietnam, though together have no compunction about putting the lives of young Americans at risk in the volatile killing fields of the Middle East. “It’s for freedom,” they say, when from coast-to-coast, country-to-country, we contemplate the thereafter in shallow graves and wounded souls. Or like me, the Wide-awake-Self, misdiagnosed as a “suspect class” damaged “no need to surrender” to a traumatic brain injury, suffered in the killing fields of Vietnam, 37 years ago, degenerative, no cure.

We, the veteran, many of us, live below the poverty level, going from job to job, if in fact, we can find work. We are like a small sail trembling on the horizon, imitating in its minuteness and its solitude (not knowing the reasons of or why) of our own irremediable existence.

“Bare renew’d choirs, where late the sweet birds sang”

“Poore soule the center of my sinful earth,
My sinful earth these rebbell powers that thee array”

Othello

It’s ironic, but the final estimated cost of electing a new President of the United States of America in November of the year 2008 will be somewhere close to one billion dollars. And yet the care for the disabled Vietnam Veteran becomes (is) (has been) ill-calculated sketches mostly destined for an abandoned Handbook! Many of my comrades have died. Too many of my comrades were (and still are) homeless. And so to declare an imperfection and submit to judgment is (in my situation) a character more telling. Poetry is often a disabling condition for serious criticism (and vice versa); exposing the skeletons of lost souls that litter our country’s landscape unconvincingly, and too, quite conceptually written as American History, more often than not martyred as butchered versions of some disguised truth, rather than actual events, while being married willy-nilly to a political climate crippled by censorship, annihilating human tragedy by being politically correct.

Robert Johnson once wrote:

“I have folded instead

my sorrows like a winter
garment – moth filled

unwashed – I will
no more wear.”

I am both life and death, radical and desperate, and much like a man going through an identity crisis in a falling elevator. I have a traumatic brain injury. Ironic, is it, the seriousness of this issue had hardly been heard before or until our brave and wounded soldiers started to return home from Afghanistan and Iraq. I am, until recently, the forgotten, sometimes homeless, sometimes lost, the Vietnam Veteran.

Written by Allen Francis Foley SGT/USMC/Medically Retired
A Poet's Memoir/exploring the "rift in the human soul"/July 2007

Unlike hope, the death of a wounded war veteran is a horrible repetition –

This is a Marines audition/sacred spells/life speaks/a guilty world forgiven

Toward him comes with inhuman swiftness

Dreams learned, learned from what humanity lacks

All refus'd to lament – drowned in lamentations

Traveler/travels now O' loneliness

Through these discontented windows see/weep

God's truancy, time...