

times out of time

by strannikov

strangely met

I woke to words of World War One
the farewell colloquy of Wilfred O.'s—
the pity of his woes that leapt from Hell
some days before his blasting into sleep.

amidst his dramas Dylan Thomas read
his voice met early for his task—
the boy whose past was blasted into sleep
by howls and thuds and flames of later war.

just yesterday, in truth, was Hektor burned,
his pyre scaffolded across ten days—
his body sank into those mourning flames
his bones recovered wrapped in purple clothes.

we never never need to go to wars
while eager wars arrive to find us out.

warfare not well documented

what was it killed those men in that Great War?
couldn't've been the poetry of Brooke
alone—neglect of unexamined blights
had burrowed motives:

crouched in trenches deep
in mud, fiends sprang across the top, quick-turned,
sprayed fire into trenches barely left
to the curt dismay of barely scrambled men.

this warfare never documented well
(Owen's "S. I. W." began to tell):

blue-mired deep trenches slimed with dying men
who killed themselves in suicidal glee.

our allegiance to gravity

desolated skies, meet desolated earths:
go sick with green gases, turn grasses blue
to confuse farting herds so methane-rich.

—or go brown and yellow, orange and red
with wind-borne dusts: sick oceans won't care much,
the planet's atmosphere can wear its disease.

(would it matter if the mantle cracked the crust?
geologic stress might need relief—
a country-long cut through the crust might do.)

outnumbered in the end by skies, seas, and earths,
we add our sands to settling sediments soon.

muse of low ambition

muse of my heart, with each palace in love:
when Januaries lash with storm and sleet,
their dread dark nights all muffled in bright snows,
will you find coals to warm your purpled feet?

will starlight your cold marble shoulders thaw
within the patch of light in which you'll stand?

your mouth dried out, your purse dried out of coin,
will you squeeze gold from vaults of azure skies?

to make out at all, you may have scant choice:
join choirboys, swing censers wild, chant out loud
Te Deums with no decibel of faith,

or stroll a sad starving clown, lifting smiles
while stashing tears away, laughs lifted wide
to sick'ning sneers from leering drooling hordes.

