

## **AESS Composers Prize 2018**

### **Six poems reflecting on war.**

#### **Making or breaking - David Roberts 1999**

We inherit the world,  
the whole of history,  
our place on earth,  
our place in time,  
our fortune, good or bad,  
pure chance.

Now,  
in one picture,  
we see our entire planet:  
one world,  
one race,  
one future,  
bound together  
for the first time.

Ours  
for the breaking

or making.

Copyright: David Roberts 12 December 1999

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#### ***A violent or a peaceful world – the note that accompanies the poem, Making or Breaking, in the collection of Kosovo war poetry:***

*The promoters of narrow patriotism, nationalism and racism suffer from a moral short-sightedness which leads to the kind of misery and horror we have witnessed in Yugoslavia in the last 10 years of the 20th century. Not only Serbs in Kosovo but Albanians too acted on racist motives, but NATO nations, too. Leaders who base action on racist attitudes lack a vision of the world appropriate to the needs of their people and the world as a whole.*

*All races are in a minority. All need the support and co-operation of others. All could make better use of their time and talent if they directed their energies to co-operative problem-solving, rather than the harassment and extermination of others they have picked on to blame for their troubles.*

*The fate of the people of the world is linked. We prosper or die together. We have a choice.*

***Kosovo War Poetry by David Roberts is published in paperback by Saxon Books .***

*In 2016 the poem was set to music by Norwegian composer, Kim André Arnesen, with its premier with The Kantorei Choir in Denver, Colorado, 26 February 2016. The music is available from Santa Barbara Music Publishing. Inc.*

## **Dreamers – Siegfried Sassoon 1886 - 1967**

Soldiers are citizens of death's grey land,  
Drawing no dividend from time's to-morrows.  
In the great hour of destiny they stand,  
Each with his feuds, and jealousies, and sorrows.  
Soldiers are sworn to action; they must win  
Some flaming, fatal climax with their lives.  
Soldiers are dreamers; when the guns begin  
They think of firelit homes, clean beds and wives.

I see them in foul dug-outs, gnawed by rats,  
And in the ruined trenches, lashed with rain,  
Dreaming of things they did with balls and bats,  
And mocked by hopeless longing to regain  
Bank-holidays, and picture shows, and spats,  
And going to the office in the train. 1918

Permission to set this poem is being sought

*Siegfried Sassoon's "Dreamers" is a sonnet, a lyric poem with fourteen lines and a specific rhyme scheme. There are two types of sonnets: Petrarchan and Shakespearean. "Dreamers" is a Petrarchan sonnet, named after the Italian poet Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374), known in English as Petrarch. A Petrarchan sonnet consists of an eight-line stanza (called an octave) and a six-line stanza (called a sestet). The first stanza presents a theme or topic, and the second stanza develops the theme or topic.*

*Sassoon observes Petrarch's stanza format but ignores his rhyme scheme. Petrarch's scheme in the first stanza of his sonnets is abba, abba. In the second stanza, it is cde, cde (or cdc, cdc; or cde, dce). By contrast, Sassoon's rhyme scheme in the first stanza is abab, cdcd. In the second stanza it is efefef.*

*"Dreamers" was published in New York in 1918 by E.P. Dutton & Company as part of "Counter-Attack" and Other Poems, a collection of Sassoon's works.*

## **Anthem for Doomed Youth - Wilfred Owen 1893 - 1918**

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?  
— Only the monstrous anger of the guns.  
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle  
Can patter out their hasty orisons.  
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;  
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—  
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;  
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?  
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes  
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.  
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;  
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,  
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds. 1917

## **Easter Monday, by Eleanor Farjeon 1881- 1965**

In the last letter that I had from France  
You thanked me for the silver Easter egg  
Which I had hidden in the box of apples  
You like to munch beyond all other fruit.  
You found the egg the Monday before Easter,  
And said, 'I will praise Easter Monday now –  
It was such a lovely morning'. Then you spoke  
Of the coming battle and said, 'This is the eve.  
'Good-bye. And may I have a letter soon'.

That Easter Monday was a day for praise,  
It was such a lovely morning. In our garden  
We sowed our earliest seeds, and in the orchard  
The apple-bud was ripe. It was the eve,  
There are three letters that you will not get. 1917

Permission to set this poem is being sought

## **IV: The Dead - Rupert Brooke 1887-1915**

These hearts were woven of human joys and cares,  
Washed marvellously with sorrow, swift to mirth.  
The years had given them kindness. Dawn was theirs,  
And sunset, and the colours of the earth.  
These had seen movement, and heard music; known  
Slumber and waking; loved; gone proudly friended;  
Felt the quick stir of wonder; sat alone;  
Touched flowers and furs and cheeks. All this is ended.

There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter  
And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,  
Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance  
And wandering loveliness. He leaves a white  
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,  
A width, a shining peace, under the night. 1914

Brooke wrote the five poems that were published in 1914 in the autumn after the outbreak of the First World War when he enlisted in the Royal Naval Division. Also in this collection is 'The Soldier', one of Brooke's most famous poems, though 'The Dead' (IV) was one of his personal favourites. The poems were published in New Numbers before being published in 1914. Brooke published five poems for this collection: I: 'Peace', II: 'Safety', III: 'The Dead', IV: 'The Dead', V: 'The Soldier'.

**Drummer Hodge - Thomas Hardy 1840 – 1928**

They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest  
Uncoffined — just as found:  
His landmark is a kopje-crest  
That breaks the veldt around:  
And foreign constellations west  
Each night above his mound.

Young Hodge the drummer never knew —  
Fresh from his Wessex home —  
The meaning of the broad Karoo,  
The Bush, the dusty loam,  
And why uprose to nightly view  
Strange stars amid the gloam.

Yet portion of that unknown plain  
Will Hodge for ever be;  
His homely Northern breast and brain  
Grow up some Southern tree,  
And strange-eyed constellations reign  
His stars eternally. 1901