

New Poetry by David Burr: “Harvest”



HARVEST OF THOSE / image by Amalie Flynn

I don't know whether war is an interlude
during peace, or peace an interlude during war.

-French Prime Minister Georges

Clemenceau, 1919

Hurl of metal – iron, steel – as shrapnel,
as bail hail, as HE detonation, all
forged and spit out again with new fire,
matériel barrae, meat-mincer for
extruding the mortal mettle of mere men.
The sowing and the reaping are all one –
short is the harvest of those born to it.
After the wrecking, reaping, reckoning,
all are scuppered on the killing field,
khaki men with hopes of home snuffed out.
Sheaves of men scythed down mid the muck-mire-mud,
bowels churned with the disemboweled earth, red wet.
Gravity flows to the lowest reach, but not
here in the gorge of this blood-gutted earth,
saturated but not satiated.
On and on this crimson stain will drain,
young men will come to fill the gap – futile
like a record where the sylvus is stuck
in the groove over and over again –
out of trenches to fatal, final ground.
They die individuals, but banal
as communally their yield is too large –
none a hero in this no-winners game

nor a tragedy – just raw statistics.
All that grieve them soon too, to oblivion.
After this Great War comes the entr'acte
before World War roman numeral II,
just in time for those who survived and bred
to lose their sons in the next harvesting.
Never an end, merely an ellipsis ...