

Where Does “Yours” End?

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For four years, the First World War . . .massacred an entire generation of young men, ten million military and seven million civilian. The war aims were never clarified. It was indeed a “lethal absurdity.” Such warlike insanity creates a sense of vertigo. We lose any sense of balance and proportion. The behavior of leaders intoxicated by power, determined to retain it at any cost, corrupts language itself. [. . .] War means peace and peace mean war. Peace means the safeguarding of an unbalanced system that preserves the privileges of a few. Security means an artificial stability built on fear and prejudice.

The ability to discriminate between the real and the unreal, let alone feel the power of truth to set us free, is disabled and itself becomes an object of suspicion. [. . .]

The feeling of unreality eerily generated by political debate today is mirrored by the fantasy world of mass advertising offering images of continuous self-gratification and a world of self-centered relationships. With the emergence of mass communications we have invented a whole new scale for the ancient sin of lying.

But the struggle between truth and illusion is perennial: “Speaking the truth in love, we grow up in every way . . . into Christ. . . having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. (Eph 4).

After meditation: “During a War” by Naomi Shihab Nye in EVERYTHING COMES NEXT (New York: Greenwillow Books/HarperCollins, 2020), p. 84.

Best wishes to you & yours,

he closes the letter.

For a moment I can't

fold it up again—

where does “yours” end?

Dark eyes pleading

what could we have done

differently?

Your family,

your community,

circle of earth, we did not want,

we tried to stop,

we were not heard

by dark eyes who are dying

now. How easily they

would have welcomed us in

for coffee, serving it

in a simple room

with a radiant rug.

Your friends & mine.

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