

**Equivocation**

Why should I whisper  
a muted coin in silver  
expecting a molten gold response  
cut quick through diamond rhetoric,  
yet seeking the leaven, the brown crust of bread ?

Scared and bewildered you tread water,  
perform a clumsy breaststroke in your sea of mind  
and I, fool, seek to save you,  
draw you to my sandy shallows, my green shallows safe,  
to find a not too dark, kind cave where we can live,  
where the tide can turn and we forgive.

**Anthony Naumann (1921–1971)**

(This poem was written circa 1968.)

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**Poem Commentary by Julian Nangle,  
S&S Poetry Editor**

I think this poem resonates for therapists. It was written by Anthony Naumann, whom I knew back in the 1960s. Anthony was blinded in the war in 1942 on the beaches of Tunis, at the age of just 21, and he never entirely came to terms with this loss. He had been a larger than life, full-blooded sportsman who enjoyed all kinds of country pursuits before being wounded so gravely. He died by his own hand at the age of 50 on 3 November 1971. He is survived by two daughters, Carola and Diana.

During the five years I knew him, from 1966 to 1971, he mostly lived alone in a beautiful little cottage in deepest Sussex. Almost every weekend we would go to a pub, a quiet Sussex pub, when I returned home from London and my first job. I was just 20 years old. In the pub, while we were planning our poetic assaults on the world (we formed a touring poetry and music group called 'Words' during our time together), Anthony would suddenly say, 'Julian! – grab a pen and some paper..' (which I came to learn always to carry!), and he would create his poems there and then at our table in the pub,

his voice booming out and mesmerising the locals, rarely a word changed from when he first spoke it.

Anthony was a romantic at heart, but a wonderful, powerful man with a black patch over the eye that got completely blown away, while the other eye flickered in and out of his skull like a dying candle. He was my inspiration to continue to write poems, encouraging me at every turn.

Anthony had three books of poems published in his lifetime (all by Collins) – namely, *A Flame in the Dark* (1962), *If I May Share* (1964) and *Now Has My Summer* (1966). The poem 'Equivocation' has never been published before; indeed I found it written out in my own young hand inside one of his books. I have tinkered very slightly with it, adding the final line, as I feel he would a) approve, and b) would have felt the poem unfinished without it.

In March of this year, a film was posted on YouTube, being a conversation with the film-makers' grandmother about her friend Anthony, and how she remembers him. The film was taken in the summer of 2011 in Sidmouth, and is viewable at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jhib1kz\\_ejM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jhib1kz_ejM) 📺