Words

Words, garlands that link continents, 
shorelines stretching imagination, 
rainbows bridging conflict.

Words, tendrils reaching above life’s canopy, 
secatuers of experience, protest, rage, 
bouquets of desire, pleasure.

Words, spades of loneliness, 
sods of grief turn, unearth poetic pathways- 
Ritsos, Cavafy, Rich, Tsvetaeva, Akhmatova.

She sits at end of pink table, 
legs crossed, head propped on left arm, eyes shut 
black hair, black skirt, red top. 
Papers, books set aside. 
Giant vase of flowers reflected in mirror, 
hanging with paintings on black walls. 
Matisse’s *Liseuse sur fond noir.*

Reader sits in Village Square, goats pause, 
stare at stranger, turkeys cackle, donkeys bray, 
valley explodes in pain.

Words, hibernating fragile petals, 
creep slowly along blackened trunk 
of carob tree, purple outbursts.

Words, furtive snowflakes, 
decant gestures of love, 
confront androcentric scholarship.

Her dour face, framed by back seat car window, 
peers out vacantly, sluggish eyes, 
taut lips, bony shoulders. 
Black and white photograph. 
Besankos’ *La Pensee,*

Thinker writes, her balcony vista a shifting canvas, 
temper of Corinthian Gulf, 
mystique of Parnassus.

Poet celebrates her framed gifts of affirmation.

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1 Reader on Black Background. Print, gift from G. 
2 The Thinker. Photograph, gift from M.

Interlude

Sunny Saturday morning.
Through Naschmarkt
contrapuntal culinary aromas
entice exploration.

Shimmer of colour.
Volksgarten rose beds
swathe us in scents
of companionship.

Swaying white acacias,
umbrella Rathaus Garten benches,
eavesdrop on our international
mobile call.

Studded with gold,
Klimt’s canvasses hang in
Schloss Belvedere,
reminiscent of mother’s tapestries.

St. Stephansdom,
beacon to Stephansplatz.
Black clouds overshadow exuberance,
collude with our disquiet.

Shelter, awning to awning,
in Kaetnerstrasse, swirling puddles.
We laugh, dance through downpours and
thunderous guilt.

Strike of lightning,
Mozart restaurant respite.
Deluge of customers,
escape from life.

Sunny Saturday afternoon.
Vienna resonates with tourists,
black clouds give way to white,
brooding to delight.
Sunday misty sunset, 
forlorn steps pass gold crowned 
Secession building, peeing addicts. 
Mournful Opera House finale.

Statues of philosophers, 
scientist, composers 
serenade us, 
placate foreboding.

Stadtpark Lake reflects despondency. 
Two joyful but careladen days ending. 
Wings folded, swans glide across 
our feelings, forage deep for understanding.

Sorrowful flight via Athens 
to Melbourne. Weekend interlude. 
A tussle between life and death, 
celebration and lamentation.

Solace in mother’s final embrace.

“I’ve never lived through a war Mum!”

Most of the English middle class are trained for war from the cradle onwards not technically but morally.³

The Gulf War
January 17th 1991

“I’ve never lived through a war Mum!”
Sixteen-year-old innocence reverberates
in our embrace.

Baghdad lit up like a Christmas tree.
An exuberant American bomber declares.
Promise of a swift war  no ground troops  no civilian casualties.

I don’t know what to do Mum. Should I come home?
Twenty-three-year old confidence   in final medical residency
quivers across globe.

A dreadful thing to say but it will be a good experience!
Israelis in gas masks  nuclear casualties expected.
European hospitals on alert.

Sinking into bloodied desert sands
heads of the enemy’s sons razed.
Metal debris  twisted like war conspirators  violate our TV screens.

Stench of incinerated humanity decanted by media
into suburban life  showering masses of twinkling stars
dazzle our eyes  camouflage slaughter.

Saddam Hussein sets oil fields alight
George Bush Senior at peace.⁴
Coalition lackeys jubilant.

Intermission
ball games supplant war games
years pass
granddaughters

⁴ Labour MP, Tony Benn, was reported as saying ‘The people who have called for this war are not going to be killed themselves. A few hours ago President Bush let it be known that he was at peace with himself. He is now at war with humanity.’ The Australian, 18 January 1991.
wake in warmth of a Melbourne Christmas
don tutus and tiaras,
dance under jacarandas in merriment.

_Invasion of Iraq_
March 20th 2003

George Bush Junior  a legacy to honour  a father to assuage
like a conductor spars with WMD’s  liberation
sways to key board trills of deceit  incites invasion.

Tony Blair poses with his troops for photo shoot.5
Extols sacrifice  corona of saluting fists and smiles
except for one sullen face of defiance.

Dictator’s demise  tribal enmities unleashed
Democratic deceits ‘double speak’
For Robert Fisk they have not read
nor of families imploded in their beds.

A regime overthrown under the Baghdad sun
where daughters and sons now play amongst
the rubble of bereavement  where invasion
seeds enslaved wombs and retaliation.

_Loula S. Rodopoulos_

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