

## Three Poems

### 1. JORDAN VALLEY

I shouted at a bird  
As he flew westward over Jordan Valley  
'Are your papers all in order?  
Do you have the right to fly  
across this border?'

But he flew on unheeding  
To where my loved ones cry  
And pray in silent pleading  
As the weary years trudge by  
And all our fields and vineyards lie  
Beneath the hands of strangers.  
And I am bound with paper chains  
Of documents that won't be signed  
And boundaries by fear defined,  
And treaties of men's selfish claims,  
The rule of dogs within their mangers.

That bird in his unhindered flight  
Was totally within his rights  
What irony, I wondered then  
That birds possess more rights than men.

*Michael Dooley*

## 2. MARTYR

precision lazer guided xenophobia  
dismantling the rubble of dreams  
awakening the silence of screams  
disseminating random death  
with pinpoint accuracy  
extinguishing a child's breath  
to make a world safe for hypocrisy

half a century  
of compressed frustration set to detonate  
at the precise location to achieve  
the greatest damage to the road  
the beauty of the girl before she died  
it seems there was one thing we never tried  
there was still love

I must believe  
although at times I barely want to  
it is written in my contract  
not the fine print  
but the main clause  
I cannot ignore it  
even when the anger gnaws  
away at sensibility  
and I dimly understand  
the rusted barbed wire of futility  
that confined you  
that defined you  
that degraded you  
that persuaded you  
to throw a bomb  
or become a bomb

I feel your pain  
but I must tell you once again  
as I have always told you  
pain alone cannot condone  
your right to kill  
but still I long to hold you  
till your tears explode,  
hot, scalding fragments on my cheek

Three Poems by Michael Dooley.

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and speak the words  
I have no right to speak:

When you give way to hate  
You step into the snare they set for you  
A trapped falcon  
Proving itself worthy of the hunter's blows  
By flailing wings and scrabbling claws  
Suddenly black clad outlaws  
Masking your own nobility.  
Tarnishing the glory of your cause  
By passion's importunity

One day amongst the piles of debris  
you may look into the eyes  
made dreamy by the clearing smoke  
of the ones who sought to crush you  
whose hands you sought to thrust  
violently away  
and say  
perhaps somewhere within us  
we are more alike  
than we ever dared to realise  
perhaps the blood that long ago  
stained the cobblestones of our great city  
can still cleanse us from this present hell  
perhaps together we can find our way  
And there is no hatred  
that can undo the redemption  
of that day.

*Michael Dooley*

### 3. TO A PALESTINIAN POET FRIEND

It is not hard for me to speak of peace  
For I have never known a war  
I've never seen my brother die before  
My very eyes.  
I've never heard the cries  
Of wounded children, tried to calm their fears  
Or dry a mother's bitter tears  
For sons who will return no more.

It is not hard for me to speak of love,  
But you, my brother, you have seen the worst:  
Your homes seized by an iron fisted glove  
Your numb ears ringing from the burst  
Of rocket shells.  
Yes, you have tasted of the deepest wells  
Of war's insanity  
Yet somehow have retained the cool  
Untainted waters of your rich humanity,  
And kept your faith  
A hidden polished jewel.

I wish my eyes concealed two reservoirs  
Of tears, that I might weep them all for Palestine.  
But I know you would take my hand in yours  
And tell me not to cry,  
But look up where the stars of God still shine  
And dream of love and opened prison doors  
And talk of olive groves and flowering vines  
And breathe the mountain air of hope divine:  
that peace shall one day wash  
the world's embattled shores.  
Oh my brother, you are braver far than I.

*Michael Dooley*