

Grief Touched the Sky at Night
Poems by Gloria Mindock

Review By G Emil Reutter

GLORIA MINDOCK's passion, raw and honest, holds Putin and his regime accountable for the atrocities committed in Ukraine since the beginning of the war. The poet gives voice to the voiceless, documents the atrocities committed by Russians who have lost all sense of morals and faith.

Images and metaphors light up the page in the poem, Bells of Kyiv:

*The Churches are empty,
half standing
no bells to ring*

*In the wreckage,
Lays a cross no one
Has touched.*

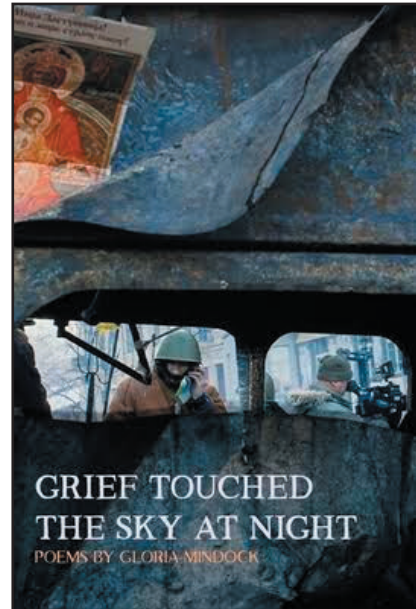
*Jesus lays there.
Broken.*

*Is there a meaning to this?
Will he rise again
in this country?*

*Someone will pick him up,
carry him in their arms,
kiss the cross he is on.*

*Everyone needs to be protected,
to be loved.
Someone else will find his hand.
No nails binding the freedom
we all need.*

The poet tells us of the mother who, At midnight, I hear my baby crying, / but she is gone to where there/ is no sin. She writes of families with no homes to return. Of bullet holes where there was once life, of the screams of men raped by Russians, a woman brutalized so badly she did not know if she would live. It is impossible to read the poem Memory without emotion welling up as the poet captures the pain of the captive:



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*I cannot open my mouth.
It is taped shut,
My hands tied behind my back, feet in chains,
Hurting my ankles, digging into skin, bone, cutting...*

*The sky is red.
The rivers red.
My heart is not.*

*The bombs go off.
I hear them getting closer and closer.
So loud, hurts my ears, they ring...
I cannot hear my thoughts...*

*Crying, scared, a senseless death awaits—
Why am I in this world at all?*

*The moon inspects the earth—
Does not like what it sees...
Murder, witnessed with its pale brightness...*

*I did not want to be erased like this.
Another number, a body, with no hope visible...
I bleed soundless.*

Mindock captures the essence of survival and fear imposed by fascists who have invaded Ukraine. As the narrator states, *Crying, scared, a senseless death awaits—*. In this one line the poet captures the essence of the invasion and war—*senseless death awaits—*.

The poet writes of the destruction of the churches in the poem *The Chapel* and then in the poem, *Exceeding*:

*No one lives like I do/ No freedom, just flames/ Days of putting defeat
in a vase. I am wishing for a miracle/ Remember, you always see me fall-
ing off ladders/ The Devil lives in all wounds*

There is nothing contrived in *Grief Touched the Sky at Night*. This collection is an honest forthright poetic telling of the horrific genocide currently underway in Ukraine. The poet speaks out in this time as others normalize the violence and death. The poet makes it very clear through painful verse that this must not be the normal and reflects how the war has taken a toll on the innocent, oppressed in a nation that stands for freedom against the fascist Putin.

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