

For **UKRAINE**



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*By Women
of the World*



For Ukraine

by Women of the World

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Published by the Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW)

Compiled by Dr Diann Rodgers-Healey

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Alyona Herez stepped into the church to pray for peace, but was confronted with the scene of a coffin draped with the Ukrainian flag (23 March 2022).

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Preface

On 21 April 2022, in solidarity with all the people in Ukraine, and to raise funds for them, I invited all who identify as women, globally, to come together to express their concerns in poetry or prose about Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine, its impact on Ukrainians and the reactions of world leaders to the war.

Below is a summation of the context that fuelled our resolve to use our voice to stop Putin and Russia in its war against Ukraine.

On 24 February 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a full-scale military attack on Ukraine. The conflict has led to the largest [humanitarian crisis](#) at an alarming scale and speed, not seen since the Second World War. Millions of Ukrainians have fled to the west and abroad, seeking safety and assistance. In the first five weeks, more than four million refugees from Ukraine crossed borders into neighbouring countries. Many were forced to move inside the country. Many were unable to move to reach safety and continue to face an ongoing humanitarian crisis with acute shortages of food, water, and heat.

With highways and residential buildings being destroyed by air and land bombings, the Kyiv School of Economics reports that damage to Ukrainian infrastructure from the war amounts to an estimated \$100bn.

Antonio Vitorino, Director-General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), [expressed](#) grave concern over the situation of women and children particularly as trafficking in persons was a known phenomenon in the region. He urged all neighbouring and impacted countries to ensure the immediate identification and registration of unaccompanied and separated children fleeing from Ukraine.

As of 2 June, 6.9 million [refugees](#) have fled Ukraine since 24 February. Poland recorded the highest [number of refugees](#), at over 3.9 million as of 7 June 2022.

A comparison of the [military](#) capabilities of NATO and Russia as of 2022 shows that NATO is in a powerful position militarily, but directly engaging with Russian forces was ruled out. Stressing that Ukraine would be fighting [alone](#), NATO, the U.S., and its allies were [clear](#) about defending NATO territory should Putin decide to escalate the war beyond Ukraine.

Western powers responded to Russia's invasion with a growing [number of restrictive measures](#) on Russia to cease its invasion of Ukraine. As of May 2022, over 43 global territories imposed [sanctions](#) on Russia. Furthermore, 36 countries banned Russian airplanes from their airspace, and Moldova and Ukraine closed their airspace completely. [Over 33 territories](#) cut several Russian banks off the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT).

In addition to the wave of economic sanctions against Russia, a number of countries have sent various types of [military aid](#) to Ukraine since the war began. Rockets will be the centrepiece of a \$700m support package for Ukraine, the [11th package](#) of military aid approved by the US for Ukraine since the invasion began in February.

Russia, however, remains undeterred in its resolve to continue its war in Ukraine, and civilian casualties continue to rise. Efforts of diplomacy have failed against the Russian ethos of "[might is right](#)." The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) verified a total of 4,169 civilian deaths during Russia's military attack on Ukraine as of 1 June, 2022. Of them, 268 were children. 4,982 people were reported to have been injured. OHCHR specified that the real numbers could be higher. On 23 May 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that since the start of the war, Russia has launched 2,275 missiles and 3,000 aerial strikes against Ukraine.

Despite global calls for a ceasefire, voicing shock at reports of executions and gender-based violence, the destruction of Bucha and Mariupol continued with escalating violence. [Human Rights Watch](#) (HRW) has documented several cases of Russian military forces committing laws-of-war violations against civilians including rape and executions. HRW also cites that "Filtration camps and torture chambers are being set up in Russian Federation-controlled areas, forcibly transferring citizens to Russian Federation territory — with 20,000 people kept in one camp, and 5,000 to 7,000 in another. More than 500,000 Ukrainians have been forcibly transferred, which qualifies as kidnapping..."

A resolution condemning the Russian aggression against Ukraine was passed in the [United Nations General Assembly \(UNGA\)](#) on March 2, 2022, with 141 members out of 193 countries voting in its favour. Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea, Russia, and Syria voted against the resolution. A total of 35 countries, including

China, India, Iraq, Pakistan, and South Africa, abstained. UNGA resolutions, however, are not binding.

Soaring global energy prices give Russia a [windfall](#) for its oil and gas exports, which remain unsanctioned, though the [EU oil embargo](#) is expected soon, as Russia flags closer ties with China.

With Russia continuing to threaten consequences against countries including Ukraine wanting to join NATO, a security alliance of 30 countries from North America and Europe with a fundamental goal to safeguard the Allies' freedom and security by political and military means, the world is now starting to see Putin as a threat to world peace and global order.

But in all the time it is taking for substantive action to be taken to stop Putin, the deaths of children, women and men have been one too many, as Russia's war against Ukraine war enters its 108th day on 12 June 2022.

This collection of poetry and prose written by women of the world from 21 April 2022 to 22 May 2022 comprises 41 contributions of poetry and prose from 35 women predominantly from Australia, and also from Fiji, United States, United Kingdom, England, New Zealand.

For Ukraine would not be possible without each author's contribution. My deepest thanks go to each of them for joining me in this initiative and in courageously using their words to individually and collectively call for Putin to stop the war in Ukraine and recognise the horrific suffering he has caused in Ukraine and for its people.

The author's poems and prose are published in this E-book in the order of their receipt of submission so that the [timeline](#) of Russia's aggression against Ukraine provides some particular and cumulative context.

Very minimal editing was undertaken as I believed presenting each author's expression to the war in Ukraine was important. The right to freedom of opinion and expression, and its responsibilities guided the acceptance of submissions. Selection of poems, if there were more than one submitted, was based on introducing different perspectives to the collection.

I am incredibly proud to present Professor Shirley Randell's Foreword for this E-book. Professor Randell is Patron-in-Chief of the Australian Centre for Leadership

for Women (ACLW). Her understanding of the plight of women worldwide and the systemic barriers they face is profound, catalysed by her work in Rwanda, Bangladesh and in Australia as a gender equality expert. Professor Randell understands all too well the impact of domination and subjugation on women, children, families and their communities. She contributed to the development of Rwanda's first Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, and national girls' education and gender policies in Bangladesh.

My very special thanks are extended to Richard Healey for volunteering his talents in designing and organising the publication of this E-book, and in a short space of time.

My gratitude also goes to our supporters and this E-book's authors who promoted the invitation to women to participate in this initiative via social media and their networks.

This is an entirely volunteer initiative for Ukraine, from concept to writing to compilation to designing and publication. ALL proceeds from the sale of this E-book are being donated to UN Women Australia for assistance for Ukrainians.

We are indebted to you for your support in joining us assist Ukrainians through purchasing this E-book and promoting this initiative to others. Please use the hashtag **#ForUkraineByWomen** in social media.

Together, we stand with Ukrainians in their pain and suffering caused by President Putin's and Russia's war on Ukraine. We ask President Putin to stop the war on Ukraine.

Thank you.

Dr Diann Rodgers-Healey

Director, Australian Centre for Leadership for Women

aclw.org

Foreword

By Professor Shirley Randell AO

It is an honour to write this Foreword on the 108th day of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine. According to Vadym Boichenko, Mayor of Mariupol, Russia has demolished 1,300 high-rise buildings in the city of Mariupol without removing dead bodies of residents. He said cholera and other deadly diseases could kill thousands of people in the southern Ukrainian city as the corpses lie uncollected and summer brings warmer weather. Ukrainian forces are holding their positions in intense street fighting and under day and night shelling in Sievierodonetsk. The Ukrainian first lady, Olena Zelenskam reports that 37,000 women are in the Ukrainian army and more than 1,000 women have become commanders: “Most of our doctors are women, as well as 50% of our entrepreneurs who work to support the economy at war.”

Meanwhile, here in Australia, Diann Rodgers Healey, distinguished founder of the Australian Centre for Leadership for Women, has called for and brought together these 35 poems and prose, *For Ukraine*. This extraordinary compilation of writers, women from Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, United States, and the United Kingdom, all have an intense interest and have been profoundly moved by the tragedy affecting the people of Ukraine. I have read each contribution written in solidarity with Ukraine people, many connecting Ukraine with other countries in strife, including Afghanistan, Syria, Myanmar, Yemen, Somalia and Hong Kong. I have chosen just a few reflections that stood out for me to include in this Foreword.

Some authors in the book have been writing poems and short stories all their lives, like Beverly Mary Louise Lawes, currently working as a gardener in Yorkshire England. She compares Putin to the ‘Pest man’ bringing guns and deadly chemicals to destroy people as though they were vermin. She cries out in anguish to ask if there will ever be a time in human history where we will say No to destruction and greed? And grieves that all she can do until that time comes, is to *walk the fields in prayer and hope*.

Manpreet Kaur from Fiji, a younger aspiring creative writer currently devoting her time to writing short stories and composing poems, also continues this theme. She despairs that although countries can use their choice to use a common voice, her call is still to Putin to put humanity first:

*Peace talks remain
just talks
No one listens, no one hears*

*World leaders are shackled
Put humanity first, Putin.*

Ellie Wong, an international development advisee, pleads for women, girls, and marginalised populations to be put at the centre of the humanitarian response in Ukraine. Key to this is listening and responding to what organisations on the ground are telling us about their experience. Women in particular suffering sexual violence must be prioritised by countries and organisations assisting in investigating and gathering evidence into war crimes.

Another major theme in *For Ukraine* is the way writers are reaching out as mothers to the women of Ukraine. Lauren Elise Daniels, an American/ Australian expresses the keen love and identity mothers around the world have with Ukrainian mothers.

No one need explain what mothers know by heart: In war, we cross rolling seas and ashen fields to lace our hands with yours.

Lynne Samson writes poignantly about not being the woman: running from a home that is collapsing around her...clutching a small child and a bag and fleeing in the dead of night...gathering young children, waving a husband goodbye as their city crumbles around them...an elderly woman, frail and unsteady, crossing a border in freezing conditions, and claims:

*I am none of these women
But I lean towards them
And I see them*

*Women everywhere
Are leaning towards you
Holding you*

*The world is holding you
We are raising our voices in song
For you.*

For Ukraine also breathes with hope.

Jenni Nixon, in prose titled "*postscript (after all is said and done)*"

Invokes a range of atrocities, and ends with *john lennon + yoko ono's bed-ins against the vietnam war singing:*

*all we are saying is give peace a chance
three hundred-fifty european radio stations
private and public broadcast song against russian invasion
all we are saying is give peace a chance.*

Libby Sommer, reflecting on when she splattered all over the floor the last of her favourite twisted Oolong loose leaf tea produced in Ukraine, concludes:

*I'm holding as tight as I can
to the thought that one day
we will be able to celebrate
with a pot of rare twisted oolong loose
leaf tea produced on a small farm
tucked away somewhere
In a corner of Ukraine.*

Fijian writer, Dr Kamala Lakshmi Naiker, sharing the powerful image of women as “splendid suns” when Ukraine is free, with women’s strength, and their importance to Ukraine society.

*Flowers grow everywhere symbols of hope
Our children are flowers...*

*When it happens, when Ukraine is free
The children must see it too, they'll see it through our eyes
Nothing is more potent than one's home, a thousand splendid suns
The powerful image of women as “splendid suns”
Tie in with women's strength, their importance to Ukraine society.
The people of Ukraine shine with the bursting radiance of a thousand suns.*

It is hard to do justice to the wide variety of responses in *For Ukraine* to Diann Rodgers Healey’s call to women of the world to express their concerns in poetry or prose about Putin’s illegal invasion of Ukraine, its impact on Ukrainians and the reactions of world leaders to the war. I ask all readers to take time to reflect on the contributions of the wide variety of women who welcomed this invitation.

Diann has compiled this E-book with very minimal editing to present each author’s original voice on the war in Ukraine. She has photographs of each woman with a short biography, also illuminating. I congratulate her and the Australian Centre for Leadership for Women once again on a splendid contribution to a key issue in society.

As Susan Lane from Australia concludes,

*People of Ukraine,
Know that we see you and we stand with you*

I hope that readers will accept Diann's call to give funds for the people of Ukraine.

Shirley Kaye Randell

- Australia

AO, PhD, Hon.DLitt, FACE, FIML(ANZ), FAICD(Life), AIE, MEd, BEd, DipDiv, DipRED

World renowned for her work with women in Rwanda after the genocide, Professor Shirley Randell AO has had a fascinating and eminent career as an educator and expert in public sector and institutional reform in developing countries across the globe. Dr Randell was recognised in the 2012 Inaugural Australian 100 Women of Influence Awards - global category, the 100 World of Difference Awardees - community category for 2013 by The International Alliance of Women, and the



Inaugural Winner of the Sir John Storey Lifetime Achievement in Leadership Award by the Institute of Managers and Leaders Australia and New Zealand in 2018. She is an Officer of the Order of Australia and Distinguished Alumni of the Universities of Canberra and New England, Armidale, Australia.

During her years of service in Rwanda and Bangladesh, Dr Randell played key roles in discussions for the development of Rwanda's first Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy and national girls' education and gender policies, as well as gender mainstreaming in Bangladesh. A world vice-president of GWI (formerly the International Federation of University Women) from 2007-2010, she is a founder and Board member of one of the biggest associations for women graduates in Africa - the Rwanda Association of University Women, and was Founder Director of the Centre for Gender Studies at the University of Rwanda's College of Arts and Social Sciences. Dr Randell is Patron-in-Chief of the Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW). She is the author of numerous journal articles, books and training manuals. She is a renowned public speaker with regular speaking engagements at conferences, seminars and workshops in North America, Europe, Asia, the Pacific and Africa.

Now 'retired' in Sydney Australia she has numerous roles as Patron, Ambassador, Board Director and office holder in many government, non-government, and not-for-profit organisations.

Authors

- Shirley Kaye Randell - Australia
- Diann Rodgers-Healey - Australia
- Nikhat Shameem - Fiji
- Padmini Murthy - United States
- Rose O'Neill - New Zealand
- Magdalena Simonis - Australia
- Kerrie Duff - Australia
- Toni Hassan - Australia
- Ellie Wong - Australia
- Beverly Mary Louise Lawes - England
- Johanna Skinner - Australia
- Shivani - Fiji
- Karina McRoberts - Australia
- Manpreet Kaur - Fiji
- Rosalie Fishman - Australia
- Kamala Lakshmi Naiker - Fiji
- Claire Kearns - Australia
- Vandana Vikashni Nath - Fiji
- Helena Bryndzej Studdert - Australia
- Evelyn Grace Quinlan - United Kingdom
- Lauren Elise Daniels - USA / Australia
- Doga Demir - Australia
- Karen Arnold - United States
- Natalie Scanlon - Australia
- Lynne Samson - Australia
- Linda Stewart - Australia
- Julie Miller - Australia
- Parvin Lata - Fiji
- Washni Warsha Kumar - Fiji
- Jenni Nixon - Australia
- Libby Sommer - Australia
- Nur J. Alam - Australia
- Noa Gomberg - Australia
- Susan Lane - Australia
- Bethany Williams - Australia

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Meanwhile...

By DIANN RODGERS-HEALEY

We are the Meanwhile People
Living life as if nothing's happening
While everything *is* happening
In the killing of one child
The raping of one woman
The slaughtering of one civilian
The destruction of *our* children, mothers, fathers, brother, sisters, grandparents
In Ukraine.
Ukrainian freedom, dignity, humanity – all pummelled away.

Our world leaders do 'meanwhile' leadership
Looking at Ukraine, but really the other way
As Putin crushes everything
Sovereignty taken by thuggery – his rule for the day.
Yet, we have absorbed our leaders' message -
We cannot interfere, no matter what
Hand over aids, do sanctions – Yes, but do More?
Why risk a fate of existential proportions
Guaranteed by toys, dangerous for humankind.

Meanwhile, Zelenskyy pleads on stately screens
Stop the war. Recognise. Intervene.
But meanwhile ears hearing 'no fly zone,' applause instead
Shower heartfelt praise, promises to right unjust wrongs
One day for sure,
While military tokens quicken 'End Meeting'
And the elephant of 'no action,' lies kiddingly under the radar

Meanwhile, Covid, climate change, economic inequality,
Taliban abuse, Afghan starvation, fighting in Syria, Africa,
Cyber terrorism and children weaponised in conflict,
Abused, married off, used as cheap labour continues,
Relentlessly.

While meanwhile-delights
Like shiny oscars
Movies, comedy, simply plain living
Comfort, even in the slightest
Relieves the engaged
Dashed somewhat by tweeted war gloom
Keeping our desensitisation at bay.

For sure we care. Well, up to a point
Fight for freedom. Up to a point
Lead fearlessly. Up to a point
Seek peace and justice. Up to a point.
The point being – will it harm me and mine?

War and Peace, alongside nuclear weaponry
has made our silence our peace
Passive, watchful, cautious, conservative,
Eyes in the back of one's head
We weigh what stares at us
Frozen in deadly games of leaders' creations
Thawed by leaders' plans to nuclear-pile more
Peace now protects one's own
Soft-stand-downs
Dished at the victim's cost.

So what do we do in this world of our making?
Stay with, or stop being Meanwhile People?
We know the path is now set
That our turn could come,
When others meanwhile us.

And in the end what might be left
Of humanity and morality?
Only that we had a choice
To protect another like our own
knowing what we do to others, we do to ourselves.
What we walk past, is our children's world.

Surely, we can be better – than being meanwhile
Here and now is death and destruction
Demand elected leaders stand together
Power a stop, define the line
Tolerate violations no more.
Enough being a bystander
Step in now to stop the war
Be the change they need to breathe.

Diann Rodgers-Healey **- Australia**

Dr Diann Rodgers-Healey is the Director of the Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW) which she founded in 2000. Advancing the leadership of women and marginalised individuals, she has enabled executives to lead authentically, transformed workplaces to value and enact diversity and inclusion, and challenged systemic gender barriers in institutions and workplaces through research, writing, facilitation of public forums, submissions to formal government reviews and contributions to NGO gender initiatives.



Diann established national Awards that ran from 2004 to 2016 to recognise individuals and organisations in Australia advancing marginalised women and LGBTIQ. She has through youth leadership programs worked with marginalised youth to make them visible as leaders and enable their leadership capacity. Diann lectures in leadership and management and has published and reviewed academic journals focusing on gender and leadership.

She is Adjunct Professor at the Cairns Institute in James Cook University and is a recipient of a number of awards that recognise her social impact and her excellence as a tertiary educator.

Letter to Putin...

By NIKHAT SHAMEEM

A train station
A bus depot
A queue for bread
A mark of death

Hollowed rooms
Full basements
A spill of red
A mark of blood

A child
A mother
A soldier
Banished
A mark for territory

Territory for life?
Treacherous bombs
Putin
Treacherous balls

Boom boom
Bang bang
Whoosh
A bomb
explodes,
shatters bones
A mark of war

Dogs, cats, babies, chickens
Grandparents, siblings, families

Ceramic chickens
Champagne courage
A cacophony
A mark of life

Ukraine bleeds
Young people die

A mark of power
to keep
your balls
in place.

Nikhat Shameem

- Fiji

Nikhat Shameem is the daughter of Abdul Azeez and Ayesha (née Sahu Khan) Shameem of Leka Street, Suva, Fiji. She studied at Suva Methodist, Dudley Intermediate and Suva Grammar School. As a student at the University of the South Pacific, she studied with signature Indo-Fijian writers, Nandan, Pillai and Subramani. She went on to direct Pillai's Fiji Hindi play Adhura Sapna in 1993 in Wellington, New Zealand. The world premiere of Adhura Sapna, the first Fiji Hindi play ever written, ran to full houses.



Her work has appeared (in English) in Sport, Landfall, Mana, Pub Poets, and Just Another Art Movement among other collected works. In 2019 she published "Let the Conch Speak," a book of poetry chronicling her voyage through life. She is a strong advocate of Fiji Hindi, her mother tongue, and has published several articles on its status and future. She is currently supporting the development of a standardised FH orthography for use of Fiji Hindi writers.

She believes there is an urgent need for interventions to maintain, standardise and promote Fiji Hindi for its survival. She has lived and worked in New Zealand, England, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and the Sudan. She returned to live in Fiji in 2018. Nikhat has a PhD in Applied Linguistics and a Diploma in teaching English for speakers of other languages, from Victoria University of Wellington, NZ, and an MBA from the University of Cumbria. She teaches at the University of the South Pacific.

Ukraine

By PADMINI MURTHY

The Ukraine war,
Has gone too far,
This continued lack of food,
Does no good,
There is no gain,
From peoples' pain,
There are no winners in conflict,
So why continue to inflict?
And go down a slope,
Where is no hope,
Let's stop this destruction,
And start construction!

“Written in solidarity for the Ukrainian people”

Padmini Murthy

- United States

MD, MPH, FRSPH, FAMWA

Dr Padmini (Mini) Murthy is a globally recognized health professional in her roles as a physician and public health expert. Currently she serves as Professor and Global Health Director at New York Medical College School of Health Sciences and Practice, USA. She is chairing the International Health Section of American Public Health Association and global health lead for the American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) and the NGO rep to United Nations.



For the past 30 years Murthy has been working globally on projects and programs promoting women's health and human rights with UN missions, first ladies and other NGOs. Dr Murthy has made over 150 presentations nationally and internationally is widely published and is the author and editor of Women's Global Health and Human Rights, Technology and Global Public Health (used as textbooks worldwide). Her other books include Mini's Musings and Glorious Global Ganesh. Dr Murthy's research interests focus on women's health and human rights, social determinants of health, and global health diplomacy.

Dr Murthy has been the recipient of numerous national and international awards, including:

- First Indian born American in over 75 years to receive the Elizabeth Blackwell Medal from American Medical Women's Association for her work in promoting women's health globally.
- Recipient, Sojourner Truth Pin given to those women who excel in community service
- Recipient, Jerusha Jirad Oration for service to women
- In December 2021, Murthy has been the recipient of President of The United States Lifetime
- Achievement Award for Volunteer Service

Marigolds for Mariupol

By ROSE O'NEILL

Putin: a man with options;
Unlimited options
Chooses death, terror, destruction

Death of souls
Death of cities
Death of rationality

The distortion of reality
Acute
Life lived rendered meaningless

The prize
Obscure
Dripping tendrils of hate

The end-game
Delusional
Insanity the only certainty

Marigolds for Mariupol
Blood tinged
Where sunflowers once flourished.

Rose O'Neill

- New Zealand

PhD, MMgmt, M. Soc Sci, BA (Psychology & Sociology).

Rose is a New Zealand writer and poet. She is a retired public servant and academic who has worked for 40 years specialising in social change, leadership, and strategic technology development. Over her career she has led significant social policy and organisational change initiatives.

“Marigolds for Mariupol arose from a deep concern that sovereign rights of an independent nation are being violated and will irreversibly, and negatively, impact the course of human history. The poem reflects the deep grief this action by Putin has created by his reach for even greater power and control. Actions which have the illusion of being in the long-term interests of his country, but are more likely to serve his own personal quest for self-aggrandisement.”



Thoughts and Meanderings: war in the time of COVID

By **MAGDALENA SIMONIS**

I've been home with COVID, languishing away
As if lockdowns weren't enough
Just as I started to live normally again,
and after getting my third vaccination too
Watched so much TV, even the news
Nothing left on Netflix for me now

Now there's a war in the Ukraine
That's just near Russia
It's about Russia not wanting them to join NATO, right?
Or something like that
Communist state, partnering with non-communists and all that
Was the Ukraine part of Russia?
Or Russia thinks it should behave like Russia.
Right?
Are they still communist?
Their politician was a comedian they say
Whatever it is, I'd hate to be there
Their streets are bombed
They're shooting babies, mothers and children
The news is so graphic these days
It's a horror story

They say that a quarter of them are now displaced with more than four million
refugees
We should be bringing some here
Seems like everyone is getting involved
World peace is at risk
This could be the big one
It's scary
We're helping by sending them weapons
Is that a good thing?

I have a Ukrainian friend who has relatives there
I feel sorry for her, she's so worried about them
She makes the best Chicken Kiev though
I thought that whole issue around the East – West conflict ended when the Berlin
wall came
down.
What was that about again?

Hope it's not like Afghanistan.
After Forty years of conflict, glad that's over now, right?
We helped sort it out
It was always in the news
Hardly hear a thing now
It had something to do with anti-communist Islamic guerrillas fighting with
Afghan
communist government
Something like civil war
Then Russia invaded and helped one group kill the other group
USA helped the other anti-communist group, by giving them weapons too
I saw it on Charlie Wilson's war
In another movie, it showed how USA finally invaded after 9/11 happened
They say it was to help the locals, too
We sent some soldiers
Our job is done there, we've done our bit.
Time for them now to sort their mess out.
That's why the troops left, I think.
Right?

Every time I watch the news it sounds like there's a new civil war
They're happening everywhere,
Like bushfires on the Australian weather map during total fire ban days
Some are very close to us
Myanmar, had a Spring Revolution last year
It's a war, not a festival
Awful number of fatalities – thousands just last year
It's the longest running civil war they say
Have no idea when or why it started.
I think it was once called Burma, back when Britain owned it

What were the English doing there?
Weren't they in Hong Kong too and then handed it back to China?
That was when Hong Kong was the place to go shopping!
Now that's changed
Anyhow, it's just next door.
Sounds rather scary.
Put that on the list of places to avoid next holidays.

I saw a commercial on TV this morning
It showed babies starving in Yemen
It was so sad.
Their big eyes and tiny bodies wrapped up in tiny bundles
They were being fed tiny dots of food, something like porridge
So helpless
So present
Staring into the camera
One dies every ten minutes.
I had no idea

I'm going to sign up and donate monthly
I felt so sorry for them
I had no idea this was a country in war.
When did that one start?
Why aren't we talking about them and sending them food?
We throw food out all the time!

As for the conflict in Somalia – that's been going on for at least twenty years
And Syria – that's been off the news lately. I still don't understand what is or was
going on
there
What happened to all those Syrian refugees?
So many went to Germany, Greece, and all of Europe.
Did we bring any here?
Have you met some?
We can't fix it.
We can't do a thing from here.
It's all so depressing

Just recovered from COVID
Thought I'd cough my lungs out
Still not myself
Think I might have long COVID now
Always tired and flat
Everyone at home got sick too
They're fine
Just me, with the long COVID
Just my luck

Everyone is talking about Tik Tok these days
It might even outdo Facebook in popularity
It's so cool, they say it 'democratises fame'
Anyone can become famous,
Really!
No talent required
The Z-Generation are using it up to five hours a day
Now I've started and on it almost all the time
Spent hours on it the other day
Got creative
Made a clip
Now have so many views!
Feeling better now
Needed something to pick me up.
The news is so depressing

Magdalena Simonis

- Australia

MBBS FRACGP DRANZCOG MHHS

Magdalena is a full-time general practitioner, based in Melbourne's CBD and works as an educator and a researcher with the Department of General Practice, Safer Families Centre of Research Excellence, at the University of Melbourne. She has a Masters in Health and Human Services and has ongoing deep engagements with the Royal Australian College of General Practice (RACGP) which includes chair of Women in General Practice and is currently on the RACGP Expert Committee Quality Care, prior to that on the RACGP eHealth Expert Committee.



She is a regular media spokesperson on numerous health issues, being interviewed most weeks by mainstream and medical media. Magdalena has represented the RACGP at senate enquires and has worked on several National Health Framework reviews. Her current appointments include the National Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategy Expert Advisory Group and the National Endometriosis Expert Advisory Group and Director Melbourne Health Teaching Clinics University of Melbourne.

Both an RACGP examiner and University examiner she supervises medical students and trains GPs. Other roles outside of RACGP include the Strategy and Policy Committee for Breast Cancer Network Australia, Board Director of Women's Health Victoria, AMA Victoria GP Committee, President of the Australian Federation of Medical Women (AFMW), co-Chair Medical Women's International Association (MWIA) Scientific and Research Subcommittee, and Chair of the MWIA Mentoring and Leadership group.

A passion for health equity, health literacy and community fuel her.

- *President, Australian Federation of Medical Women*
- *Medical Women's International Association co-Chair Scientific and Research Committee*
- *Chair, MWIA Mentoring and Leadership SIG*
- *Women's Health Victoria, Board member*
- *Safer Families Centre of Research Excellence, A/Prof, University of Melbourne*
- *RACGP Expert Committee Quality Care*
- *AMA Victoria GP Subdivision Chair*

The voice of history repeats. But why?

By **KERRIE DUFF**

Fake news. Power. Hunger and greed. How does one person endanger so many?
Directly and indirectly. Intentionally and unintentionally.

Putin and Zelenskyy. Strong men. Inspiring followers, leaders. Catalysts of change. One holds cards to the chest, his people unaware of alternatives. Wag the dog. The other. The other risking all. Uniting. Together with his people. Inspiring and empowering.

Who hears the people cry? Where will the people go? What future when they arrive?

Where is the food, the shelter? The peace?

A culture is known by the way it treats its most vulnerable.

May the voice of the margins be heard, supported, assisted, aided. The fight for freedom not futile.

To ignore is assent. Action by civilians taking supplied across lines beyond heroic. Humane. A must.

Newborns arriving before their time; into what type of a world? What will their future hold? People protecting their dogs, share rations, trekking across a barren and darkened, destroyed landscape. No colour. Explosions becoming the norm. Yawning gaps in apartments. Bodies – someone's mother, father, grandparent, aunt, or uncle. A child.

Listen to the cries of men and women, children, the disabled, the aged. Citizens supporting citizens. Hospitals and orphanages overrun or obliterated.

Red youth led into the unknown. People on the street fed lies and half-truths.

Consider the aftermath. PTSD on both sides and afar. Extended families unable to aid their loved ones. Neighbours affected and resources stretched.

Displacements. Covid 19 an added barrier to unity. Families broken. Divided.

Cultures in ruins. No one wins.

Let the past not be forgotten but the wounds heal. May sheltering in theatres from bombs and destruction no longer be needed, or even considered. Repair the homes, the schools, farms, and galleries. Live in peace together. Greater battles are apparent- silent viruses. An added tragedy and peril to previous wars.

May the sense of reason and hope; safety and reassurance, be reasserted amongst the craziness, chaos, fears, and thirst. The stench. The cold. The freezing cold.

Melt hearts. Restore justice.

Rebuild. Reunite. Reconnect. Connect.

Recreate the song of joy and peace, of shared needs met and unity upheld.

Bring back the laughter and smiles. Ease the traumas of horrors unspeakable, unspoken, and unforgettable.

Bring truths to rest on both sides of the border.

Harmony. Do no harm, the new manifesto.

One person's hunger ought not separate families – no matter the nationality, race, or creed. All lives matter. We are all one, past, present, future. Full of hope and dreams, potential. Not devastation and destruction.

Share. Live and let live. More than that. Let flourish.

It's up to you and me. It's our story too. Not figures far away. Our ancestors, neighbours. Others.

April is a time when many people ascribe to sentiments of lest we forget.

The time for word and action is now.

Kerrie Duff

- Australia

Kerrie grew up in Victoria and moved to Western Australia after working with World Vision Australia for 12 years. She is passionate about social justice and has worked/volunteered in human rights-based organisations for most of her life. This has taken her interstate and overseas on numerous occasions building extensive networks across the globe.

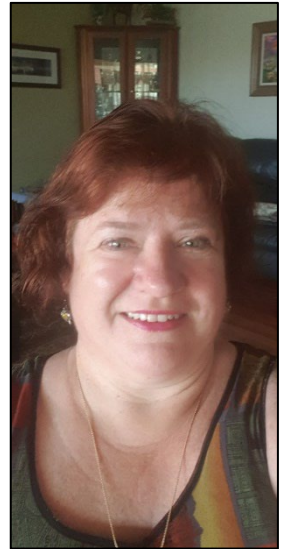
Kerrie holds a Bachelor of Arts (Monash), a Master of Human Rights (Curtin), her Certificate IV in Training and Employment and is a Leaders for Tomorrow graduate.

Throughout her swimming career Kerrie competed in local, national and overseas swimming competitions, most significantly representing Australia in the 1984 Paralympics - games for disabled athletes parallel to the Olympics. She won bronze for the 400m Freestyle and was later honoured to be inducted into Monash University's Hall of Fame.

Kerrie has worked and served on the Boards of peak advocacy bodies in the disability sector, locally and overseas. She completed small business development and Institute of Company Director training and used her dedicated citizen-centred leadership focus to establish her own disability awareness raising business. She has worked with the National Disability Agency (NDIA) and then later as a support coordinator.

Currently Kerrie works p/t at North Metropolitan TAFE in the Health portfolio with students undertaking their certificate III Individualised Support (disability).

Kerrie is a mixed media/craft-o-holic, married to Martin and they are both owned by Lucy, a bichon frise. Her favourite quote is 'to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.' (Tennyson)



Loss and litany

By **TONI HASSAN**

Most days I am confronted by graphic accounts of some of the most appalling things. Human beings feel compelled to take in stories of human horror most nights of the week, in fact, all day with our palm-held-smartphones.

When the ABC started telling listeners that Russia was preparing to invade Ukraine, I had an almost pathological curiosity, safe enough from my vantage point in Canberra. When Russian tanks rolled into eastern Ukraine, a decent impulse to look away turned into a compulsion to look. My heart, hot with indignation, moved heavily in my chest.

All the globe seemed to be watching. It was as if the suffering had a strange, almost marvellous ability to pull us into oneness for a moment, as in the early days of the pandemic before our dualistic politics and domestic obsessions got in the way.

What to do with that crisis, in a country I have never been to, never will; one aching with grief and defiant resistance, but just like so many other places across the world?

I asked my friend, an artist who paints abstract landscapes, what she does with the stories coming out of war-torn Ukraine.

She said, "I have tuned out". "Too dreadful."

When we tune in we are witnesses. If we do nothing, are we complicit?

I have always felt the call to be 'in the world, but not of it'. I feel I do not have the option of tapping out, entirely.

I resolved that I could at least express solidarity with the suffering and take it into prayer. The invasion began at the start of Lent, a season when Christians contemplate the dramatic story of surrendering to pain for renewal.

I went to a Palm Sunday rally, joining many others on foot carrying banners in support of refugees, among them members of the Ukraine community wearing sky blue and yellow. I was happy to hear that Australia would welcome more refugees from Ukraine but was then reminded of the pawns refugees have become who come by boat. They are the nation's political prisoners, for whom pain has no reason but to show who has power and who has not.

In my day-job I work for a better world for women and girls. It's well understood that women and girls are disproportionately impacted by conflict. I anticipated what came to pass: the repeated rape of women, naked to their enemies in uniform.

History is not a series of isolated events. Things swing between repression and progress. Russia's senseless invasion of Ukraine came at the same time as severe floods on the east coast of Australia. The pendulum seemed to have swung dramatically towards discombobulation; displacement and distress caused by rising temperatures, real and political.

I was rostered this Easter to do the intercessions (a fancy word for prayers) at a Sunday service. Easter Sunday is the day Christians remember the story of Jesus overcoming death. The servant-king tenderly washes the feet of his followers the night before he is betrayed, and later on a cross, asks his Father to forgive his captors. "They do not know what they do."

It is hard to forgive. When I do this, shaped by a bigger self, I refuse to let history's events harden me to hate.

Toni Hassan **- Australia**

Toni Hassan is a writer, facilitator and social practice artist. She is a Walkley Award winning journalist and the author of Families in the Digital Age (Hybrid Publishing).

Toni has worked in government and the not-for-profit sector in advisory, management, media and community development roles.

She is currently the Project Coordinator at the Equality Rights Alliance, Australia's largest network advocating for women's leadership and economic security.



Putting women and girls at the centre of the humanitarian response in Ukraine

By **ELLIE WONG**

The 24-hour news cycle spins with news of war,
Updates rush in too quickly,
To handle – Mariupol, Irpen, Bucha, Kviv –
Yet in this internet age of digital updates,
atrocities that are happening are centuries old.

[La Strada](#) Ukraine reports that [“violence and rape is used now as a weapon of war by Russian invaders in Ukraine”](#). Atrocities are being committed against young women, older women, girls and boys.

The NGOs supporting survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault warn that this is just the “tip of the iceberg”. Like most countries, including Australia, in Ukraine rape is an underreported crime during peaceful times.

Rape and sexual assault are war crimes and crimes against humanity. Yet they remain key tactics of modern warfare in the 21st century to terrorise civilian populations.

We have witnessed this recently in Myanmar. Rohingya women were forced to give birth to their rapists’ children in the camps in Cox Bazar. We have witnessed this in World War II, the Balkan Wars, the Rwanda genocide, and the list goes on. And on.

The response to sexual violence needs urgent global attention. Gender responsive action needs to be at the heart of the humanitarian response. Key to this is listening and responding to what organisations on the ground are telling us about the experience of women, girls, and other marginalised populations in the Ukraine.

Local and global women’s rights, human rights and sexual and reproductive health organisations in Ukraine, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia [have called on decision-makers in Europe and the broader international community to prioritise the sexual and reproductive health](#) of those still in Ukraine, as well as refugees residing in neighbouring countries.

This should include medical care and psychosocial assistance to support the clinical management of rape. UNFPA's new 'Seeing the unseen' report notes that [unintended pregnancy is exacerbated in conflict settings](#) due to high risks of sexual and gender-based violence.

"The consequences of these situations spill over generations. Not only are women and girls forced to grapple with pregnancies they did not choose, under circumstances they did not choose, but the children born from these situations can also face extraordinary hardships."

However, the reality is that reproductive health will be one of a multitude of intersecting challenges faced in the immediate response and into what will be a longer recovery phase.

UN Women's [rapid gender assessment](#) in partnership with 67 women's civil society organisations highlights seven key areas for concern for women and girls in the short-term.

In addition to sexual and gender-based violence, there are concerns for immediate safety threats; a lack of basic necessities; the loss of livelihoods; the psychological impact of war and constant fear; a lack of communication, information, and social services; and the exclusion of women from planning and decision-making at all levels.

With their country in crisis, and so much uncertainty ahead, survivors of violence might have little incentive to come forward and seek justice. Indeed, globally, shame and stigma often still shroud issues of rape and violence with survivors themselves often shunned in their communities. For those women that do come forward and recount their experience of trauma, every effort needs to be made to support their pursuit of justice.

As many countries and organisations offer to help with the investigations and evidence gathering into war crimes in Ukraine, sexual violence must be prioritised. These includes [trained staff to sensitively document these crimes](#), including physical evidence and testimonials.

While it is widely acknowledged that the [precedent at the International Criminal Court \(ICC\) is not strong when it comes to conflict-related sexual violence](#), the international community must demand better and more for Ukrainian women – and all women.

Ellie Wong

- Australia

Ellie Wong is an international development professional with 14 years of experience in the sector. She currently leads strategy and technical oversight of World Vision Australia's economic empowerment programs across the Asia Pacific, East Africa and the Middle East.

She manages a team of specialists responsible for inclusive market systems development, financial inclusion, and women's economic empowerment (WEE) programs.

Ellie joined World Vision in 2015. Prior to her current role, she was WVA's Senior WEE Advisor, leading the development of World Vision's WEE framework and technical approach and the expansion of WEE programs in the Asia-Pacific region, largely under the Australian NGO Cooperation Program. This framework has now been adopted across the World Vision International global partnership in the 65 countries working on livelihoods programs.

Before joining World Vision, she held roles with various United Nations and non-government organisations. She previously managed the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)'s mixed migration program in China focused on vulnerable migrants and survivors of human trafficking from the Greater Mekong Sub-region.

Ellie holds a Master of Social Development from the University of New South Wales, which focused on international development, refugees and forced migration.



Putin and the 'Pest' man

By BEVERLY MARY LOUISE LAWES

The 'Pest' man is coming today
He brings with him his guns,
And the deadly chemicals
Which will destroy so much.
The bunnies that are burrowing
Rearing their young deep in the earth.
The squirrels that run and play
Scurrying from tree to tree.
The Muntjac which lives in the wood pile
And its baby which peeks out nervously.
The mole, digging away in the meadow,
The pheasants strutting across the lawns.
By tomorrow they will be a pile of lifeless bodies.

To me Putin is cast in the same mould as the 'Pest' man.
His guns and deadly weapons leaving a pile of bodies.
Putin and the 'Pest' man share the same justification.
The animals and the Ukrainians are only vermin,
They are causing havoc, they are destroying 'my' property.
They have no right to live and breathe and play.
And when the bodies are piled up and burned
Long before the stink of burning flesh dies away,
Putin and the 'Pest' man will turn their backs
And walk away.....,
With their pockets filled with money.
They will sleep easily at night, no nightmares.
They will live another day, probably even laugh and play.

Who are we to decide what life is right or wrong
Who and what deserves to live or die,
Who will draw breath and who will live to laugh and play.

The 'Pest' man will come today and Putin will continue
By tomorrow those bodies will be on those piles.
All I can do is walk the fields sending silent prayers,
Shout to the wind to warn the animals, beg them to hide.
And Ukrainian mothers and fathers, children and grandparents
Will kneel beside piles of ashes, and weep and mourn and rage.
Will there ever be a time in our history when we say no.
No to destruction, no to greed, no to judgement.
I don't know. But I will walk the fields in prayer and hope
Until that time comes. It is all I can do.

Beverly Mary Louise Lawes ***- England***

Bev Lawes was born and raised in Zimbabwe, Africa. She has worked with organisations which included orphanages, feeding schemes for destitute elderly and animal shelters. She has been an administrator, project manager and bookkeeper for most of her life but is currently working as a gardener on an estate in Oxfordshire, England.

As passionate as she is about the welfare and well being of humans and animals, she is loving every moment of feeling the soil in her hands and watching plants grow.

Bev has written poems and short stories all her life.



The War to End All Wars

By Dr JOHANNA SKINNER

25/04/2022

Rains slides off umbrellas,
Pools around muddied feet
To the haunting echo of the last post.

24/02/2022

Skies still
The eerie quiet of false assurance
As missiles launch
Explode the sanctity of peace.

25/04/1915

Predawn darkness,
Another quiet
The slap of water
Tread of boots
Drowned in a red sea
Of casualties.

25/04/2022

Day 61.

Bodies huddled in basements

The stench of death

Of loss.

Hollow eyed grief,

Disbelief.

Streets a twisted tangle of metal,

Shattered stone,

Broken dreams.

25/04/2022

Sifted flour like drifting snow

Oats, sugar, white shards of coconut

Melted butter, sunflower gold

Sweet syrup

The smells of remembrance

Reminiscence,

Lest we forget the war to end all wars.

25/04/2022

Streets muddied,
Snow dirtied, tracked by tanks
Livelihoods crushed
Beneath their tread.
The defiled and broken bodies of women
Wide eyed children
Fatherless,
Maimed,
Murdered
Opportunities erased.

25/04/2022

The rising toll
Of fallen cities,
Villages captured.
Shallow graves of shame.
2,345 civilians dead
2919 injured.
Another day
Another war.

25/04/2022

Abide with Me

Drifts between rain

As those who remember

Disperse.

Others cling to their last redoubt.

To hope.

Their port city 'liberated' from freedom.

Another war to end all wars

Lest we forget them,

Lest we forget.

Johanna Skinner

- Australia

Dr Johanna Skinner is a Brisbane-based GP who has worked in regional and remote Australia and Ireland. When she is not working, she is writing or running marathons. She is married with three teenagers, a cat and a dog.

Her flash fiction and short stories have been long listed, short listed, won a range of competitions and been published in anthologies. Her novel, 'A World of Silence' was longlisted with the Hawkeye Manuscript Development Program in 2022 and her essays, including one about domestic abuse, have been published by MiNDFOOD and The Big Issue.

She is the founding member of a local writer's group, Brisbane Scribes. In 2020, she initiated and co-edited an anthology, Stories from the Heart, a diverse collection of stories and poems written during the initial COVID lockdown. Queensland Writer's Centre assisted with its publication, and it is now part of the State Library of Queensland collection.

Brisbane Scribes have also been commissioned to write an anthology celebrating seventy-five years of health care in the Camp Hill region. It will be launched at Custom's House, Brisbane in early September 2022.



The soft cry...

By SHIVANI

The soft cry barely audible.
set apart from the wail of agony
the cry was soaked in agony of a different kind
the often unknown afters of tyranny.

The soft cry was from despair.
broken heart, broken spirit
the walk was lonely and fearful
the paths seeming far, the cry subsumed in it.

The soft cry took in the sight.
destruction, wreck, devalued lives
the walk was hard, the path seemed unending
the cry promising to last, the resilient survives.

The soft cry walked on, without choice.
trying to detach from the sights, hopelessly
trying to salvage home, heart, Self
the effort exhausting, gait advancing bravely.

The soft cry physically driven, but was it?
sorrow deeply embedded, driven yet aim-less
tomorrow unknown, today uncertain, traumatised existence
finger-pointing, the cunning, the cruel—none blameless.

The soft cry was withdrawn, forlorn, tortured.
the oppressor far more than the obvious
the oppressed varied, stigmatised
the walk could have been different, less dubious.

The soft cry was unassuming.
suffering not new although a different pain

when the dust settled, the tears glistened
books will fill quickly labelling the inhumane.

The soft cry needed a breath!
glanced at the teardrops trampled
they who passed by
knew not of the foreboding harboured.

The soft cry was knowing.
the oppressor by no means the one, the evident
for oppression is to be endemic
each time a heart-broken, power corrupt, the fakely benevolent.

The soft cry tried, many a time.
holding true, walking the difficult journey
knowing this path is often deserted
companions of Truth and humanity hardly any.

The soft cry, mind made up long ago.
the fight would be arduous, treachery-bound
the hatred rampant, nothing would make sense
yet that glimmer of faith so profound.

The soft cry breaking inside, held fast to that faith.
one day tyranny, treachery and evil annihilated
the dignified would continue to walk on
no pleasure in vengeance, smite- truth need not be defended.

The soft cry sighed, how long would this last?
obscure view, human lives without worth
good shall rise one day? A glimmer of hope
no matter how scary, virtue in dearth.

The soft cry found restraint.
resilience, the power within, surpassing human knowledge, unmatched
harnessing inner strength, rising to the forces
the cry pitched to a shriek, in resilience unabashed.

The soft cry chose.

The soft cry bold.

The soft cry changed.

The soft cry waiting... future to unfold.

Shivani

- Fiji

Professionally identifying as an academic, Shivani strongly believes in broad, accommodating approaches to teaching and learning with an aim to be more than just instructors to impart doctrines—to instead become pillars of support for our students.

Shivani comes from a Law/International Relations background and finds deep contentment in low-profile meaningful contributions be it in research output or lending a hand, to make a change. She takes inspiration from the “quiet” who have changed the course of history and how we view the world.



Pathology of the Abyss

By **KARINA McROBERTS**

There is a new disease – we are in peril.

Diagnosis:

The chronic excoriation of the human spirit.

Target:

The People of Ukraine

Causative Agent:

A soulless corpse of feigned humanity.

Evolutionary lineage:

Descended from previous butcher species.

Toxic Principle:

What passes for a tongue, in reality—a wretched mass, breathing necrotic lies into the faces

of his own people. Now, they will assist their master demon.

Appearance:

Fixed expression—cold, soulless eyes. Have you ever noticed???

Treatment:

What can kill death???? But still, we must try.

Courage – indominable. Young and old.

Music that soars above heaven to lift the soul.

Grandmothers for the Defence.

Who toil tirelessly, even in the bomb shelters from hell – no one can get in, but they cannot

get out.

See her.

A child's tear in her pocket...a remnant.

She works on. Works to forget.

Prognosis:

Fatal.

No hope without sinking from the sea and shielding from the sky.

Stand up! Be not cowed!

Use stealth – a corpse has no eyes.

So divers, drill the ships! One night in heaven.

Pilots clean the sky. Our space is sacred. Do not enter it.

Finally, a stake through the heart

Of Evil.

Karina McRoberts

- Australia

Karina McRoberts is an Australian author, illustrator, musician, and theatre producer. Previously working as a conservation scientist, she was struck down by a mosquito-borne virus.

No longer able to work, Karina now spends her time writing fiction to inspire, encourage, enlighten, and entertain: especially those readers active in social justice, humanitarian work, and protection of the Earth.

Her fiction is filled with characters and stories designed to give readers a lift. Karina also writes self-instruction books on illustration and creative writing. There is something for everybody, children included. Her project this year is assistance to older writers wishing to publish a novel or novella, entitled 'A Novel at Ninety.'



Put Humanity first Putin

By MANPREET KAUR

My heart is drenched
For we see gluttony and power
Humanity overshadowed
For personal gain.

What has the world become?
Russia invades Ukraine...
Is this for real? I ask...
And countless others are restrained
from helping.

Someone shot dead as we speak
Someone brutally bleeding
Many more unaccounted for
While the world pleads.

Ukraine in shambles
Lives lost, homes invaded
Boom...boom...boom
Humanity degraded.

Our common voice
must end this wrath
We have this choice.

Peace talks remain
just talks
No one listens, no one hears
World leaders are shackled
Put humanity first, Putin.

Manpreet Kaur

- Fiji

Manpreet Kaur is an academic teaching English at The University of Fiji, Saweni Campus, Lautoka. She is currently a PhD Scholar working on a thesis titled: 'From Borderlands of History and Imagination: An Indo-Fijian Woman's Perspective'. Manpreet Kaur began her teaching career as a graduate of the University of the South Pacific, where she majored in Literature and Language.



After teaching in prominent secondary schools in Fiji for a decade and completing a Master of Arts in English Literature, she joined The University of Fiji. She is actively engaged in research work and passionate about creative writing. She has presented scholarly papers and participated in various international, regional and local conferences in Singapore, Australia, Germany, Trinidad and Tobago, India, Solomon Islands and Fiji. Manpreet has published papers in peer reviewed journals and have an anthology of poems titled: 'Echoes of My Footprints', her first book, to her credit.

She is engaged in numerous interdisciplinary research work and her areas of interest include diaspora studies, gender studies, climate change, role of women in climate change and adaptation, language awareness and language issues and educational needs of Fijian children. As an aspiring creative writer, she currently devotes her time in writing short stories and composing poems. Manpreet loves to effectively contribute to community work through her service work, volunteers in community engagements that ultimately fosters knowledge creation and service to humanity.

Does the Soul Bleed

By ROSALIE FISHMAN

The carefully crafted face doesn't show
even as we inch along the footpath etched in black,
the light reflected off the white wall against our back.

The space a dark grey, in shadow play, over there a tank,
here the sound of thudding boots hard wired to pain,
the screech of the air-raid siren we strive to shut out.

It's not me, it's over there, in a dream I'd heard about,
or read or saw on my iPhone's news app.

A father farewelling his family across the border,

he cannot leave his Ukraine, he's of restricted age.
Another sheltering his brood, in a railway car heading back
to Kiev. *It's the wrong way*, my closed throat howls.

This little family group is my Ukraine to save, he says.

Soul blood, the slow, seeping dribble drains.

My veined hands work my eyebrows, trying to lift the furrow
that forms and the eye bags that settle deeper each morn.
I try to smile, to put back my face for the day to come.

Rosalie Fishman

- Australia

Rosalie Fishman comes from a post-holocaust, immigrant background. Having worked as an educator and consultant in the fields of leadership and culture building, her experiences became ripe fruit for her excursions into the art of poetry. In retirement, she actively pursues this art as one of the founding members of New Voices, and in her approach to life as a lasting source of learning, renewal and the quest to give back.



A Plea

By DR KAMALA LAKSHMI NAIKER

I will not pretend
The whole world is shivering
Putin can do anything
Creating history to wage a war
A fruitless war.

The great Putin
Confuses cruelty and vindictiveness
With a generous spirit for your own people.
Commit murder, killings
Havoc and violence on innocent
children, women and men

Cruel, inhumane in war
Victory, power and ego
Another Hitler!

History will remember
Tankards of blood
The ground is churned in blood
Of Ukrainians and Russians

Greed for power, violence and war
On one man's command
Families are scattered
Separated
Distressed
Down-hearted
Insecure
Fleeing their homeland to find another home
Pray! Where is humanity?

Please Putin
Stop the war
And Your brutal destruction of human lives
In the name of hollow ideals
Peace and harmony must prevail
in the world to live without fear
Tin our God-given world.

Ukraine, Splendid Suns

By DR KAMALA LAKSHMI NAIKER

One cannot count the moons that shimmer on Ukraine's roofs,
Or the thousand splendid suns hidden behind her walls
Nor the beauty of Ukraine and of its cultural triumphs
Scented flowers represent hope for a new Ukraine
Beauty grows out of chaos and destruction

Flowers grow everywhere symbols of hope
Our children are flowers
Highlight the tragedy
forcing us to remember
What it used to be
As we visit the prayer places
Before destruction.

The beauty of Ukraine lives on in love and sacrifice
We develop together
The children are the splendid suns
Who refuse to yield to despair
Reflecting the incomparable beauty of Ukraine

*When it happens, when Ukraine is free
The children must see it too, they'll see it through our eyes*
Nothing is more potent than one's home, a thousand splendid suns
The powerful image of women as "splendid suns"
Tie in with women's strength, their importance to Ukraine society.
The people of Ukraine shine with the bursting radiance of a thousand suns.

Kamala Lakshmi Naiker

- Fiji

Dr Kamala Lakshmi Naiker is a scholar and a dedicated teacher at the University of Fiji. She is a Senior Lecture and heads the Language, Literature and Communication Department. She writes reviews on a range of subjects such as women's writing, postcolonial literature and creative writing in Fiji and internationally. She inhabits a prominent place at the University of Fiji where she has served since the University's inception. She has attended conferences nationally, regionally and internationally.

She has presented papers at many conferences in the capacity as a Resource person and invited guest speaker. A Fijian Reading of Bharati Mukherjee is her first major book. Her many publications are in peer-reviewed Journals, book chapters. She is a Primary Supervisor for PhD students and Masters' students.



I hear Ukraine

By **CLAIRE KEARNS**

In my house
I hear
Every woman
Screaming

I hear the lack of support
The terrified children
The shrieking missiles
The idling tank engines

In my house
I pace and pace
I need to escape
The noise

I hear the pounding footsteps
The wailing sirens
Hitting blocked roads
Ascertaining how to get
Around

In my house
I work and work
I need to escape
The noise

I hear the visitor
Unescapable
Sneering at me
“что ты делаешь, шлюха?”

In my house
I hear freedom

Punctuated
With visits of noise

I hear the sounds
Of bombing
Of dying
Of fighting

In my house
I strive and strive
To no longer be surrounded
By noise

I hear the silence
Of absent
Father, brothers, sons
Of chatter

In my house
I am stuck on the fringe
Of where the war has got up to
Entombed

I hear
Women screaming
The night
With no sleeping

In my house
I write and write
To everyone who might
Survive me

I hear my world
Where every other woman
Is like me
With their world splintering

In my house
I write and write
So that you will
Hear what I hear.

Claire Kearns

- Australia

Claire Kearns is a staunch disability and neurodiversity advocate, writer, and social media content creator. In 2021, Claire won the La Trobe University Excellence Academy Inaugural Art Competition for her poem entitled “I Was”, about her experiences as a neurodiverse student at university.

Claire is a postgraduate student in international relations. In her spare time, she enjoys hiking in nature and gardening.



Ukraine and Us

By MICHELE FERMANIS-WINWARD

Our vocabulary expands
here tongues and minds learn
to navigate the streets of Kyiv
Kharkiv, Kherson and Mariupol

we see the faces of its citizens
they come into our rooms
tell us of their fears and prayers
beseech the world for aid

we know Zaporizhzhia is Europe's
largest nuclear plant as Putin's
bombs explode against its walls
and learn how powerless we are.

The Darkened Cities

By MICHELE FERMANIS-WINWARD

Troy, Carthage, Ypres, Aleppo
and more, destroyed by battle
now the plague of war
strikes Europe's shores again

as king or czar the ruler's need
to be their country's premier god
sees lies and threats disseminate
no dissident voice can rise again

this creature with a childish spite
a mind too wild for its heart
seek lands beyond his own
so thousands starve and die again

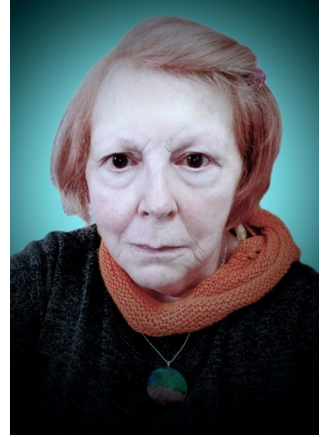
this land of grain, this land of flowers
smoke cruels the timbers of its towns
he calls them Nazis in this genocide
the old relive that war again

no place to hide, no place to run
what hope for children now
they learn that guns are power
and history will repeat again.

Michele Fermanis-Winward **- Australia**

*Michele Fermanis-Winward lives in bushland close to the summit of The Blue Mountains National Park. She comes from a background in visual art and has four poetry collections published by Ginninderra Press, another *The Symbiotic Web* is due out later this year.*

She is a recipient of a Varuna Writers Space Fellowship. Her poetry focuses on Climate Change, Indigenous Rights and Social Justice. Michele lives and work on the unceded lands of the Darug and Gundungurra people.



Should She Weep

By VANDANA VIKASHNI NATH

The *Independence Monument* in Maidan Nezalezhnosti
And The *Motherland Monument*,
Wept helplessly as the giant waves crushed,
And devoured everything round.
Oh! she could no longer endure the aggression,
Alas her defiance weakened and she cracked.

The superior force was ruthless,
It spared none.
Hunted them down,
Exploited their bodies,
Scrapped their minds,
Bared their soul,
Until there was no more.

She is called illegitimate,
not rightfully part of the force.
How can they forget,
the longstanding cultural and historical ties
But alas, they don't have a heart.

The intolerable conflict grew
Like the fire in the Amazon.
Oppressing and menacing the innocent,
Severely impacting the meek and weak,
Threatening safety and security.

The crisis and displacement,
Saw increased violence and abuse.
Women and children threatened,
And victimized,
Yet humanity was blinded
And deafened.

How much more should she weep,
The knife had fallen
And the cut is deep,
But does he care
To at least pause
And see
The end of his ambition,
Or is it the beginning?

Waiting

By VANDANA VIKASHNI NATH

She stumbled upon her
Sitting by the wreck,
Blinded by blast, and left.
The plane had dropped another bomb on Saturday,
And the firefighters plucked her from within.
Then came young soldiers, said she
Asking my name.

I am a mother,
A wife and a woman,
Ask me not my name.
As the blaze and bombs bleated my voice,
And he said 'It's not funny.'
And I said 'Are you a nightmare in my empty head?'
He laughed and exclaimed,
'Poor woman, you are lost!'

And we stood, and watched the dawn,
'He would have turned twenty-two, I said.'
Turning his sockets, he uttered
'My mum must be waiting.'
She could see the hopelessness,
And she looked up,
As he walked away.

Vandana Vikashni Nath

- Fiji

Vandana Vikashni Nath is an academic teaching English at The University of Fiji, Saweni Campus, Lautoka. She is currently a PhD Scholar working on a thesis titled: 'Writings of Sia Figiel: Literary Representation of Women in South Pacific Literature'. Vandana Nath began her teaching career as a graduate of the University of the South Pacific, where she majored in Literature and Language. After teaching in prominent secondary schools in Fiji for sixteen years, she joined The University of Fiji, after completing her Masters in English Literature and Language, with a Gold Medal Award. She is actively engaged in research work, mostly on women in the Pacific. She has presented scholarly papers and participated in various international and regional conferences.



Of war

By **DR HELENA BRYNDZEJ STUDDERT**

Oh Papa, what can I say, your home is under siege
again.

I imagine you turning in your grave with tears of pain and
disbelief

Because another oppressor has taken up the reins
of war.

We see old and young: men, women and children
dying.

We see fields, villages, cities bombed; a people, in vain
crying.

We see the ravaging, raping and mindlessness
of war.

Oh Papa, you lost your country, your family and your
home.

Hard labour, cold and hunger with millions, but yet
alone.

Hitler tried to subjugate; Putin plays the same game
of war.

Again, the world is powerless to save lives on the ground.

Missiles scream; buildings explode; blood and terror all around.

We see proud people fleeing - displaced by the cruelty of war.

Oh Papa, history teaches us how easily evil can invade.

Why did we not see the ruthless forces and plans being laid?

Instead, we see lives shattered; destroyed by the malice of war.

But rest Papa. Your people are strong; songs echo around the land.

Brave men and women defy the darkness, standing hand in hand.

They will not yield and they will not bend to the horror of war.

Rest Papa - Ukraine will be free once more.

Helena Bryndzej Studdert

- Australia

Dr Helena Bryndzej Studdert was an Australian diplomat for over 20 years. Her appointment as Australia's Ambassador to Serbia and as the Australian Consul-General in Bali, Indonesia were highlights of her diplomatic career. She also worked in New Zealand, Poland, PNG and Nauru and travelled extensively throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

Helena's first profession was in the Australian Army where she completed Officer Training and served for nine years, reaching the rank of Captain. Between the military and her diplomatic career, Helena combined tertiary study and academia with raising her two children. She has a First-Class Honours and a Doctorate in Australian History from the UNSW. Helena retired from the diplomatic service in late 2019. Her first project was to publish her father's story. No Bed of Roses, Sid Harta Publishing Pty Ltd, 2020, tells of a 15 years old Teodor who was taken from his village (now in Ukraine) and forced into labour in Germany during World War II. In 2007, Helena met her father's family in Ukraine and remains in touch with them. Helena lives in Western Australia and is currently writing her own life's journey.



Closure

By EVELYN GRACE QUINLAN

Ще не вмерла Україна
(Ukraine has not yet perished)
– *State anthem*

In the beginning *is* no word;
pictures of innocents have to serve
as histories, the best we have.
Truth is a whisper, overheard.

It seems there *is* no middle ground
except the snow the dead dream on,
the spaces in 'some mother's son',
the void between unsafe and sound.

But let the despot not depend
on whispers fading over time,
for every picture screams a crime.
To every one must come an end

when black marks may be *truly* writ
on white, their polar opposite.

Evelyn Grace Quinlan **- United Kingdom**

Evelyn Grace Quinlan was born much later than you would imagine, and fortunately, therefore, her juvenilia went unwritten. Her senilia, however, is in full flood.

She previously published widely under a nom de plume (Philip Quinlan), but is now flying solo, wearing different feathers, and loving it. Hurrah for samsara! (S)he previously co-edited Angle Journal of Poetry in English, though said journal has sadly now departed to that bourne from which none returns.



Of Returns

By LAUREN ELISE DANIELS

No one need explain what mothers know by heart:
In war, we cross rolling seas and ashen fields to lace our hands with yours.

We read your dreams like telegraphs and see home as yellowed prayers folded
into pockets.

We see your children, quiet, walking blistered on blue-black roads
And offer our hearts for tender feet.

We warm your babies, held close, wipe mouths and cheeks and whisper:
Slava, slava, please, you must live, littlest darlings,
And shield their eyes with our coats.

We stand in your farmhouse, *Baba*, watching black-eyed soldiers pick across
muddy soil
And we know how you cannot stay—and we know how you cannot go.
We return again to sweep these nightmares from your door.

We stir up clouds of bruising questions now: *How could a boy carve such hatred*
Into the soft flesh of the world? Does a man bury himself in the shallow graves
He digs? And how does he return?

And when ache and exhaustion creep and your strength wanes, we offer ours to
you—
Fierce with knowing and determined by our love for your belonging in our world.
We join you under rumbling skies and hold fast for the light.

We walk beside you in pitted streets: our pockets brim with seeds. Green shoots
uncurl,
Sunflowers shine life over rubble and make promise of your return to a land
Lit once again by golden pollen, laughter, and honeybees afloat.

No one need explain what mothers know by heart:
In war, we cross rolling seas and ashen fields to lace our hands with yours.

Lauren Elise Daniels

- USA / Australia

Lauren Elise Daniels is an American author and editor who has lived in Australia for 22 years. She won Rhode Island's Newport Poetry Contest in 1987, earned her BA and MFA in Creative Writing, and worked in Boston for Ziff-Davis Publishing through the 1990s. In 1999, she relocated to Queensland, Australia and supports writers as a mentor and editor.

*Her novel, *Serpent's Wake: A Tale for the Bitten* was published in 2018 and shortlisted with Singapore's Half the World Global Literati Awards, ranking fourth in the People's Choice Award. In 2020, Lauren co-authored the bestselling *Winning Short Story Competitions: Essential Tools for the Serious Writer* with C. Sawyer.*

An editor for over 100 titles, Lauren directs Brisbane Writers Workshop. Her website is www.brisbanewriters.com



The Lost Ones

By DOGA DEMIR

The map of Ukraine is crying.
It is not healing;
It is bleeding.
The map of Ukraine is crying.

Why won't they stop?
On the news each night,
Another family's fight,
Another city bombed, why?

Three lads from the land that bleeds
Are lost.
I only knew their game names.
We would laugh at their jokes and old flames.

Behind a screen,
Sending your blessing
Does nothing.
They haven't replied for three weeks.

The lost lads in their twenties
Left my heart empty.
It is a strange feeling.
Sorry for being melancholic.

I cannot help this mood.
But they were here in January,
Now disappeared and the other lads wait, wary.
Strange. Life is strange.

Mykolaiv is the next stop.
I should expect the other lads to drop.

They didn't expect our video game
To be their reality.

Not sure if the missing lads are alive.
I have to be honest with myself;
They were in Kherson,
Probably not.

Doga Demir

- Australia

Doga (Doa) Demir has been writing poems since she was 10. She has been writing for Medium for the last 6 months and has published articles in Newsworthy. Prior to that, she was a travel blogger for a year. She sees poetry as the language of all powerful feelings, seen and unseen and that writing is a way of healing and connecting with herself and the world.

In relation to this poem, Doga says,

“This poem is very special to me. My boyfriend has been playing an online game with his Ukrainian friends for the last 3 years. They had regular video calls to rant about life and talk about what they will get up to over the weekend. The three friends of my boyfriend have been missing since March. I have never seen him unable to cover his feelings before. He looked helpless, struggling to process his emotions. He tried to reach out to them for weeks, but nobody replied. This is when I wrote this poem.”



Ukraine

By KAREN ARNOLD

I go to bed with thunder and wonder
what the world would seem if those deep sounds,
that terrified me as a child, and made our pilot father
roust us from our beds when midnight storms
crashed overhead because he knew the fury of the skies,

were not the work of clashing air but clashing armies —
close enough to shatter night, leave me uncertain
except for knowing men sent them relentlessly
and that I could not know where they might land
or where there was a place to shelter, childlike.

Rain pelts our roof; I shift, burrow, warm and quilted —
waiting for the storm to pass, leave night-dark stilled,
a new-drenched world just hours from day aware that
half a world away, cowering women, men and children
feel the shaken earth, sure fire rains down near at hand.

Sleep deserts me then; I hear again my father tell us not to
take for granted safe night's sleep when thunder roared
just seconds after lightnings' neon flash, for then
the storm was over us. I tense, recoil — images of
Ukraine fires, plumes of smoke, destruction raining down

disturbing hope of finding rest. I long for some assurance, respite
from assault to find Ukrainians, war-beleaguered, staggering
in a storm whose limits has no natural progression as fury
dissipates, moves on. The only solace I can muster over
oceans, mountains, borders is faith in their resistance —

faith that nations' wrenching memories of war when fear, destruction,
made refugees of all, will rise, a cloud of stubborn, dark resistance
ready to fund their struggle, rain aid in any form
that helps them raise a clamor equal to the onslaught,
lift them above the threatening flood.

Literally (from the Greek)

By KAREN ARNOLD

Trauma... wound
and who is to say how bad the wound must be,
which century has a corner on most stunning,
barbarous, unimagined, malicious or clandestine
but effective?

We name the aftermath, post-traumatic stress
disorder — no side-stepping phrases: drinks to forget,
back from war a different person. Incest; abuse psychological/domestic;
sexual harassment; street violence —
pepper public conversation.

Nightly we're assaulted, new nightmares waken —
echoes of old wars in black and white, Ukrainian, in real-time,
flash nightly... black and white shelled husks of buildings,
scorched tanks, charred cars, smoke plumes, fire flare
literally, from the Greek.

Aegis... under the protection of a powerful force —
Greek mythology, Roman-adopted, Norse, Egyptian echoes:
our lives spun beyond the tales of warring gods
plotted by technology... sonar, radar, drones, jets —
satellite-birds transmitting higher power.

Our mission clear, the path constrained by treaties,
nuclear threats, roaring national beasts arrayed across borders;
the damaged streaming toward relief, dragging duffels,
backpacks, shopping bags full of wounds of every
definition, trauma, from the Greek.

Karen Arnold

- United States

Karen Arnold, literary gypsy, was Poet-in-Residence at Montpelier Cultural Arts Center, Laurel, MD; creates and moderates a veterans' reading and discussion group sponsored by Maryland Humanities, Baltimore libraries and cultural centers; has taught at universities in the US, Sweden, and Norway; teaches creative writing and autobiography writing workshops. Her chapbook, Looking for Disappearance, is due out from Finishing Line Press in 2023. The Midwest gave her wide skies and openness, the roots of her love for Atlantic shores... her house is FULL of stones, shells and driftwood!



A Backward Letter In A Backward World

By NATALIE SCANLON

With love and strength,

Our words hold your hopes.

They clench, even tighter, the thunders of your fears.

And as war floods the lives of those beyond our borders,

It's our words that bring us together, united over years.

Helpless in feelings,

Strength personified.

Take solace in my musings;

Your power is in your pride.

When your head is filled with uncertain thoughts of tomorrow.

When home feels abandoned, unloved, drenched in sorrow.

Please take my words as they're written on this page

Allow them to give you strength through every mountainous stage.

Strength within you.

Below you; above you.

Capture my words, let them move through you.

To The Ukrainian Heart,

*You can read this piece from beginning to end, or end to beginning.

Natalie Scanlon

- Australia

Natalie Scanlon is a writer and the Founder of WritComm- International Copywriters for Business and Brand. Passionately motivated by social justice and intrigued by the written word, Natalie has studied both journalism and law, re-written constitutions as a Board Member and has experience as an Associate Producer for Network Ten.

Natalie truly believes that enjoyment comes from helping to create a culture of forward-thinking, creativity and encouragement. This is stemmed from helping those around you, no matter where you are or what you do.



Ukraine 1

By LYNNE SAMSON

I am not the woman
Running from a home
That is collapsing around her.

I am not the woman
clutching
A small child
And a bag
Fleeing in the dead of night

I am not the elderly woman .
Frail and unsteady
Crossing a border
In freezing conditions
Her home a skeleton

I am none of these women
But I lean towards them

I am not the woman
Gathering young children
Waving a husband
goodbye
As their city crumbles
Around them

I am not the woman
Finding ways
To make a small child
Smile
On a sub-zero night
In a strange land

I am not the woman
About to give birth
Holding her body,
Clutching hope
In a hospital
Shaken by bomb blast

I am none of these women
But I lean towards them
And I see them

Women everywhere
Are leaning towards you
Holding you

The world is holding you
We are raising our voices in song

For you

Ukraine 2

By LYNNE SAMSON

In the rubble:

An icon

Mother and child

A wooden toy

A hand woven rug

Rosettes, flowers, birds

A doll made of fabric.

A talisman

A shredded scarf

A framed photo

A china cup

A tea pot

Smashed jars

Of jams and preserves

A beret

A child's book

Fragments of plates

A sewing machine

Glass beads

And mirrors,

Cracked, broken,

Scattered.

Catching light, clouds, sunshine.

Do the invading soldiers

See themselves

In the shards?

Lynne Samson

- Australia

Lynne Samson's background is in teaching: English, ESL, Drama and Literacy. She dabbles and fumbles in both writing and visual art. She gets inspiration from her poetry group, a diverse group of wonderful supportive women who take creative risks. Lynne lives in Brisbane where she was a teacher for many years.

"Many of us have felt at a loss as to how to respond to the Ukraine. A choir which I am in did a flash mob recently and sang a beautiful Ukrainian lullaby in two significant public places in Brisbane. If our voices in some way can be heard and 'seen' then at some level people might know that there is a world out there feeling for them."



UKRAINE – an Acrostic

By LINDA STEWART

Unbelievable that in the 21st century

Killing instead of kindness and co-operation

Rips lives and land apart.

 Images of mums with children in Playschool colours

And elderly women clutching pets to broken hearts assault our senses

It was the Great War which caused many to vow

Never

Ever again. Yet wars persist. Today, Ukraine. Tomorrow?

Linda Stewart

- Australia

Linda Stewart is a Brisbane-based writer with a particular interest in articles, book reviews, short stories and memoir. Her writing has appeared in various magazines (including Queensland Writers Centre's Writing Queensland.) For a number of years she wrote monthly financial planning/lifestyle articles for Australian Hairdressers Journal – under both her own name and her employer's.

Other work has been broadcast on radio and appeared in newspapers, short story collections and online publications. She once worked for a living. Now she writes for a life.



Sunflowers For Ukraine

By **JULIE MILLER**

In Ukraine earth, sunflowers grow,
Drawing radiation from below.
Absorbing toxins, spreading seed.
Simple yet so strong, we know.

Her gift was spurned, but we all saw,
The innocent killed, the cost of war.
The hearts that break, the lives destroyed.
And smiles that grace the earth no more.

Do not forget our brethren's plight,
Their courage, grit, their stand, their fight.
Children, women, men all stand.
Lest fallout birth a soulless night.

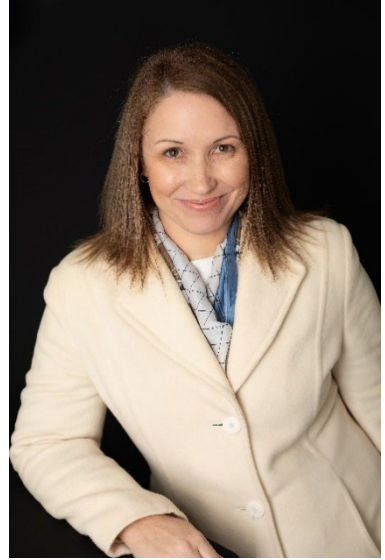
Throughout the world, sunflowers sway,
Drawing tyranny away.
Absorbing hatred, spreading hope.
Simple yet so strong, we pray.

Julie Miller **- Australia**

Julie Miller has been writing since childhood. A former teacher and now full-time author, she has an international award and best-seller to her credits. In addition, she holds a Bachelor of Arts in English literature and Post Graduate Diplomas in education and psychology.

Julie spoke to hundreds as the guest speaker at Anzac Day this year about the tyranny plaguing Ukraine, offering a prayer for swift and lasting peace. She is an elected member of Rotary International, supporting humanitarian aid and refugee care for the people of Ukraine.

Raised by strong women, Julie raises her children with the same courage, determination, and resilience, hopeful that they will always strive to leave the world a little better than they found it.



A Notorious Act

By **PARVIN LATA**

Those born, are born to live
Those die, die after they have lived
Their cycles depend on their deeds
But now it is your greed

On the global stage, Russia outstays a pariah
And yet your personal prestige not unsacked!
Your powerful military led you boasting
Though dangling, you chose to announce the beginning

The beginning of Putin's illegal invasion and explosions
Forcing Zelensky for self defence with Westerners sanctioning
You bored old man!
Think of the people alive, the ones yet to be born and live

Their sigh coming out of pain
Is it not anyone's concern?
Your concern! Just Ukraine, just that land?
But aww! What for those who nurtured that land?

Violence, aggression, destruction to others
Barred are your Russians too
Is it the history repeating?
Or is it your arrogance, and cheating?

Let live the common people, drag them not along
Be a wise politician and not a zoo keeper
Be a balanced man as depicts LIBRA
Let live them peacefully in this era

May the dark clouds dissipate
May the vision of change dominate
May Putin understand the legislation
Siding the rumination

May death and despair enshroud
And I pray for you dear Ukrainians

Parvin Lata

- Fiji

Parvin Lata began her career as an Administrator at Nadi Multi-Ethnic Cultural Center, Nadi, Fiji and later joined The Jet Newspaper as an Administrator as well. After completing her Bachelor of Arts Degree at the University of Fiji, she started teaching in Hindi Language and Indian Culture (as a parttime assistant lecturer).

Later she was appointed as a fulltime assistant lecturer in Hindi at the University of Fiji where she teaches Undergraduate level in Hindi Language.

She has also completed Graduate Diploma in Teaching (GDT) and Post Graduate Diploma in Hindi Literature at the University of Fiji. She is a gold medallist in Post Graduate Diploma in Hindi Literature. Currently she is doing Master of Arts in Hindi Literature.



A Ukrainian's Plea

By WASHNI WARSHA KUMAR

That tiny lad opened his eyes in Ukraine
With closed fists and called innocence
But the mother's thoughts, hanging in terror
All because of the Russian man's fear.

Is there any fate of this child?
Gunshots here, gun shots there
Bombs blasting, buildings collapsing
Would this be his toys?

Hey you, Putin!
Get out of your egoistic conscience
Let our children grow too, without suffering
Same way as they grow in yours.

The world is aware of us dying
Warnings given
Sanctions imposed
Yet, it didn't stop your evil plans

Oh, dear Lord! Do you not exist?
Have mercy on us, on our children.
We wish not to die of a selfish man's wrath
That is all I plea.

Washni Warsha Kumar

- Fiji

Washni Warsha Kumar has completed her 3 and a half years of tenure as a Part-Time Teaching Assistant at The University of Fiji. She has also worked as a Tutor at Edupia Co. (Fiji) Ltd. She has completed her Bachelor of Arts majoring in English and Hindi, Graduate Diploma in Teaching and Postgraduate Diploma in English Language and Literature. Currently she is pursuing her studies in Masters in English Language and Literature.

Washni teaches undergraduate level English and conversational Hindi under Medical Ethics & Cultural Terminology. She is a Research Scholar and is passionate in Indian Diaspora, Girit Ideology and Gender Studies. She is a hardworking and dedicated person in her profession who has the capability to motivate her students to a better future.



postscript (after all is said and done)

by JENNI NIXON

ukraine

1. is this how the world ends
'not with a bang or a whimper'
nuclear blast in an illegal land grab
that annihilates the human race?
takes courage to leave a hero to stay
brother against brother peace talks fail
under threat of nuclear war long range missiles rain down
russia under financial siege while *ukraine* blown apart
days after putin said he wanted to 'de-nazify' democracy
tv tower hit metres from babyn yar holocaust memorial
(genocide by bullets thirty-four thousand *jews* massacred
marched to deep ravine *german* soldiers shot in two days)
putin's war against 'degenerate degradation attitudes' (*lgbtqi+*)
he's just another 'cook in the kitchen of politics' (*antigone*)
threats of chemical warfare biological weapons
the aged women children shelter underground
when sirens stop witness catastrophic destruction
no water no food no power bombardment continues
five million refugees+ so many more than during *syrian* crisis
some freeze to death at the border
donations of weapons from *nato* pour into *ukraine*
skies fill with snow rain *russian* aircraft blitzing cities
shopping malls apartment blocks theatre are blackened shells
maternity hospital hit pregnant face cut by flying glass
dressed in polka-dot pyjamas teddy bear t-shirt
disorientated gives birth to a girl women are dehumanised
raped as trophies of war (easier to murder)
mud bogs down tanks on road to *kyiv*
deadly attack at train station missiles target fleeing families

the message scrawled in *russian* 'for the children'
moscow crowds courageously chant *no to war*
called *scum traitors* face years in prison
officials condemn 'unprecedented atrocity'
celebrities public figures workers from state tv speak out
john lennon + yoko ono's bed-ins against *vietnam* war singing
all we are saying is give peace a chance
three hundred-fifty *european* radio stations
private and public broadcast song against *russian* invasion
all we are saying is give peace a chance
oligarchs suspicious deaths *mariupol* falls *odessa* next?
russians launch obliteration on eastern front in battle of *donbas*

lismore *nsw australia* (it's not the same but...)

2. unrelenting rain imagine losing everything you own
held precious escaping with your life
homes flooded to ceilings residents drown holding on
older women still in nighties carried to safety
children hold dogs chest-high tight through water to safety
native animals die cattle drown trees uprooted by high winds
top soil stains water red flushed down rising rivers
ses volunteers the community in small boats save lives
residents and shopkeepers return to stinking toxic mould
mud army with brooms and spades pull people's lives apart
piled up on pavements ruined stock and furniture stacked high
electricity outages sewage spills landslides
airdrops to isolated communities as army called in
a war zone no food no power no phone no pm (missing again)
huge waves batter beaches that now are unrecognisable
flood death toll rises
in the shadow of trauma there's more rain on the way
sceptics of climate change drowned out by heavy rain
extreme temperatures soar in the *antarctic* as sea ice falls
news reports are of fresh *covid* cases – ba2 omicron variant

Jenni Nixon

- Australia

jenni nixon: feminist, amateur painter, australian writer/performance poet with readings at diverse venues: town halls, pubs, writing festivals, anti war concerts, school rooms to bookshops. published by ginninderra press swimming underground (2015) interactive press café boogie 2005, and among journals / online more recently: cordite, southerly, rochford street press, spineless wonders, wild, i protest and milestones (ginninderra press), not very quiet anthology, and musings during time of pandemic, also i can't breathe, black lives matter, anthologies, kistrech, kenya.



Twisted Tea

By LIBBY SOMMER

I splattered the last of my favourite
loose leaf tea all over the floor today,
when I lost my grip on the lid.
Twisted Oolong produced in Ukraine
it said on the label.
But it is a time of such sadness,
a spilt canister of loose leaf
is hardly worth mentioning.
So many shattered tea sets
buried in the rubble.
Ceramic pots and porcelain mugs,
smashed.
Fierce railroads bombed, buildings, farms.
Civilians tortured.

“Filthy scumbags,”
said President Zelensky.
“What else can you call them?”

I watch a woman sob on camera.
“Their soldiers are barbaric.
They don’t understand.
They are murderers.”

It is hard to consider sipping tea
without crying into the cup.
Will the small tea plantation
—out of the line of fire for now—
be spared?
I'm holding as tight as I can
to the thought that one day
we'll be able to celebrate
with a pot of rare twisted oolong loose
leaf tea produced on a small farm
tucked away somewhere
in a corner of Ukraine.

Libby Sommer

- Australia

Libby Sommer is an Australian award-winning author of My Year With Sammy (2015), The Crystal Ballroom (2017), The Usual Story (2018), Stories from Bondi (2019), Lost In Cooper Park (2020).

Her debut novel, My Year With Sammy was Pick of the Week, Sydney Morning Herald and winner of the Society of Women Writers Fiction Book Award 2016.

She is a regular contributor of stories and poems to Quadrant magazine.

Her first poetry collection, The Cellist, a Bellydancer & Other Distractions will be published by Ginninderra Press in May 2022.



Tick tock

By **NURJ. ALAM**

Tick tock, tick tock, tick,
The clock sounds, and sunlight flicks.
There is happiness, innocence and song,
Life is good, what could go wrong.

Tick tock, tick tock, boom
The room is filled with dust and doom.
The clock is silenced and shattered,
Glass, bodies and metal are scattered.

Where are the laughing children and their dreams?
Lives extinguished; aspirations replaced by screams.
Where is their future? Who came to their defence?
A kindergarten silenced by Putin's bomb offence.

Tick tock, tick tock, tock.
The surgeons race against the clock.
Saving a mother and her unborn child,
A delicate operation if they are to survive,
A duty to see everyone thrive.

Tick tock, tick tock, boom.
The theatre is filled with dust and doom.
The clock is silenced and shattered,
Glass, bodies and metal are scattered.

Dripping blood, plaster and more,
Putin's bomb they choose to ignore.
For to stop is to die,
None asks the reason, why
Putin's revenge falls on a maternity hospital.

Tick tock, tick tock, tick.
Hurry, run, hide everyone, quick.
Thousands leave with nothing when they can,
Taking loved ones on any mode of transport and ran.
Women and children first.
Tears and fears, hearts ready to burst.

Tick tock, tick tock, boom.
The country is filled with dust and doom.
The clock is silenced and shattered,
Glass, bodies and metal are scattered.

Men, boys and old stay to defend their land and more,
Come what may, they will win tomorrow for sure.
Many hide in trenches and stations for trains,
Under floorboards of farm houses and drains,
Desperate calls for help go in vain.
None are safe when the bombs and bullets rain.

Tick tock, tick tock, boom.
Ukraine is filled with dust and doom.
The clock is silenced and shattered,
Glass, bodies and metal are scattered.

No train departures and arrivals,
It has become a matter of survival.
Silent children deprived of food and light,
Run up steps to breathe and avoid the fight,
Shield their eyes from the heart-breaking sight.
Broken homes, trees, dead and dying,
Why isn't the world sending help or replying.

Putin postures, struts, parades, weakens the defences,
For those who help, he threatens dire consequences.
The western media lies, he is liberating his people he says,
Nuclear bombs are on display, don't stand in his way.

Tick tock, tick tock, boom.
The world is filled with dust and doom.
The clock is silenced and shattered,
Glass, bodies and metal are scattered.

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Nur J. Alam

- Australia

Nur Jehan Alam, is a published writer, poet and playwright. She is passionate about social justice, equality and human rights. As such her writings reflect that and the ordinary moments which make life extraordinary.

Born in Fiji, Nur migrated to Australia in 1963 with her Fijian Indian parents and siblings. She received her education in Sydney, married a Pakistani national and achieved her Masters in Arts (History). She raised three children whilst working in various Superannuation and Customer Service roles. In 2000, she was invited to join the Who's Who of International Professionals for her contributions to the community and customer service.



During her role as president of the Auburn Community Development Network, the organisation was able to provide more in-depth support programs for youth, migrants and refugees as well as nurture a multicultural hub through arts programs including calligraphy, community murals, publishing plus public performances of poetry and stories, and community market establishment and small business education to assist stall holders.

Nur is a one of the founding members of Auburn Poets and Writers Group which has performed in the Sydney Writers Festival since 2006. In 2017 a play about dinner table prejudice written in collaboration with other writers, "The Laden Table" received outstanding reviews at its world premiere.

Although officially retired, Nur continues to work with the community, write poetry, stories and plays.

The Blue over The Gold

by NOA GOMBERG

Babies born in burning hospitals
Bellowing not because they are alive
But because they do not know for how long they will survive.
Millions of children clasp onto a loaf of bread
Crossing over borders
Without the warmth of their mothers.
With silent tears streaming down their sunken cheeks
And sobs trapped somewhere between their lungs and throat.

14 hearts filled with dreams
Love
Hope
Future
Possibility
14 minds
Bubbling with curiosity
Scouring to uncover the secrets of the universe
14 bodies
That ran
That danced
That doubled over in the sweet agony that is laughter
14 hearts that will never beat again.
14 minds that shut down.
14 bodies that went limp and frigid under the attack of a monster.
14 girls that dreamed of becoming
Doctors
Nurses
Activists
Writers
Singers
Scientists

Mothers

One billion dreams stolen with every life taken.

Mothers whose only dream was to see their children live

Whispering final goodbyes onto their temples

As their children's heartbeats

Slow.

Down.

With.

Every.

Beat.

And now, we try to help.

Picking up your flag

Putting it high above the ground

Where the blood can't stain

The blue over

The gold.

Noa Gomberg **- Australia**

Noa Gomberg is a girl who immigrated to Australia at nine years old without speaking the language and rapidly found comfort and escape in books. As time passed, she slowly saw the development of her speaking and writing skills and found that maybe her passion for reading could also be shared with writing! Noa is an ambitious and dedicated girl whose purpose in life is to leave the world in a better state than she found it; whether that is through educating those around her, feeding her mind with books and dreams or pouring her passion and knowledge into writing.



Some Things We See

By **SUSAN LANE**

An older man rides his bike along the street in his village. He is minding his own business. He is shot in the head, pointlessly, callously, by a Russian soldier. He dies and falls to the ground, hits the cobblestones. His trousers are caught in the bicycle chain.

A woman marries her sweetheart. Her groom swirls her around in her wedding dress, holding her above ground. Her legs finish at the knees, she is a victim of a landmine.

A dozen civilians stand in line outside a bakery, hoping to buy bread. They are shot.

A young woman has her period but is unable to access sanitary wear. She cries and screams among the ruins as the blood runs down her legs. Her mother does not know how to console her.

A child looks bewildered at her mother. They are in some strange new place, so they can be safe, says her mother. It is very, very cold, below freezing. Her father is back fighting in the war. She doesn't understand this war that he is fighting in, or why they have had to leave their home. She has never seen her mother so sad. She just wants her to be happy again, to sing and laugh and play games with her the way she used to.

A hospital is bombed, a school.

A Ukrainian Jewish woman in her nineties survived the Holocaust but is killed this time around.

An elderly woman sits next to a plastic bag that contains the body of her son, who was killed by a Russian soldier.

These are just some of the things we see on the TV news or read about in our newspapers. Through war, violence is inflicted on the lives of ordinary people, inflicted without any care for the lives it impacts.

Dear citizens of Ukraine

By **SUSAN LANE**

Dear citizens of Ukraine,

We see you.

From thousands of miles away in Australia we see you in our newspapers and on the TV. Most nights the news here leads with the latest developments and disasters in your country. We witness your suffering, the attacks on your independence.

Zelensky wont let the world forget what's happening there. We see him in the newspapers and on the TV news. He advocates tirelessly for your cause, your people. He addresses parliaments, leaders, citizens of the world. He wont let us turn away in apathy or indifference. He holds the rest of us accountable, if we stand by and do nothing. He brings our attention to this war, the violation of your human rights, and in doing so reminds us of the human cost, the suffering, of all wars.

My next door neighbour of many years, Maria, has now passed. I have warm memories of her. She was originally from Ukraine. As a young teen in World War 2 she was taken to an Austrian work camp. She told me stories of atrocities and barbarism. More than half a century later, her emotions were still raw. If she were alive now I know she would be devastated to see this new war happening in her homeland. It would trigger unwanted memories, as well as feelings of fear and worry for those living through this current time.

How much insanity do the people of Ukraine have to endure? How many damaging, heartbreaking wars?

People of Ukraine,

Know that we see you and we stand with you.

Susan Lane
- Australia

Susan Lane is a writer who worked in the Public Service as a Psychologist for many years.

But there for the grace of God, go I UKRAINE

By **BETHANY WILLIAMS**

When I think of Ukraine, I think of sunflowers, war and mothers fleeing with their young children. I think of fathers in military uniforms, staying behind to protect their country. I wonder if they have ever held a gun before. I think of grandmothers too old to flee, staying behind in their villages that have been decimated by the Russians. I think of the villages and cities that look like a war zone – because they are. I wonder how many innocent people have been murdered by the Russian invaders.

When I think of Ukraine, I think of love and hate. I feel so much love for the leader of Ukraine – Volodymyr Zelenskyy. This former comedian who was never expected to win the leadership of Ukraine has been thrust into war. Nobody knew what a great man Zelenskyy would become when put to the test, but now the free world celebrates his courage and strength. When he speaks to the world, the world listens.

But I feel hate for Vladimir Putin. Not a passing dislike, but a visceral hatred. I want him to be taken down. I want him to be humiliated and I want him to suffer a million times for the suffering he is deliberately inflicting on Ukraine for his own ego.

When I think of Ukraine, I can see in my mind so many stories I have seen on the news. A mother crying with grief, alone. Her only son was taken out of her home and shot by the Russians. She had to retrieve his body and drag it back to her home, where she dug a grave and buried him in her yard. But she then had to find timber to cover his shallow grave so that the digs didn't dig him up.

This mother was the same age as me.

I think of a man in his 60s who was simply riding his bike along a road when he was assassinated by a young Russian soldier. I think of the masses of Ukrainians who have had to spend months in basements all over the country, unable to

escape because the Russians are bombing the escape routes that are supposed to be safe. I think of the young mother who was just about to give birth when the maternity hospital was bombed. She was being carried out of the hospital on a stretcher, stroking her bloody belly – no doubt terrified for her baby's safety.

Both the mother and the baby died of their injuries shortly afterwards.

I feel so much sadness, so much anger, and so much helplessness. And so much guilt. I feel guilty that I live in a safe country, that I have a secure roof over my head, and a job that allows me to feed and clothe my kids. I feel guilty that I can protect my children from war when so many mothers can't.

I can't even imagine how I would cope with going through what thousands, maybe millions of mothers are going through in Ukraine right now. At the beginning of the year, they were living their normal lives. Now they are simply trying to protect their children from being killed.

I hate that there is nothing I can do. And I hate that the free world are standing around watching and offering superficial assistance while Ukraine is being decimated with impunity by the Russians. I know they are afraid of a third world war, but HOW MANY innocent people need to be murdered, tortured and raped because the free world steps in and says ENOUGH IS ENOUGH?

This should not be happening. Didn't we learn our lesson after World War I and II? The latter was supposed to be the 'war to end all wars'. We are supposed to be more evolved and more civilised now. We are meant to have learned our lesson and go forward with the confidence that atrocities of the biggest scale should never, ever happen again... right? We did learn this, didn't we?

But the situation in Ukraine has made me rethink my own place in the world. Maybe the free world doesn't place the high value on human life that I thought it did.

Maybe I'm just really naïve.

Maybe this could happen to me?

But for the grace of God, go I.

Bethany Williams

- Australia

Bethany Williams lives in Canberra. She is a mum of two teenagers and a self-declared political junkie who in her own small way, wants to change the world. She grew up in small country towns in Victoria and NSW, and has been lucky to have lived in almost every state and territory in Australia except for SA and NT, and even a stint in New Zealand.

Bethany's passion for politics was lit several years ago when Sarah Hanson-Young experienced incredible misogyny in the Senate. While watching the toxic masculinity play out on Parliament, Bethany decided to try and enter politics so she could stand up to the sexist bullies that far outnumbered women in government.

In 2020, Bethany ran in the ACT Government election, and while not getting a spot, her results for a first-time candidate gave her a lot of confidence that people do want to support women in government outside of the two-party system.

Since then, Bethany has grown her voice through Twitter – where she doesn't hold back in calling out corruption, sexism, racism and transphobia.

Her proudest accomplishments – aside from raising two healthy teenagers – are the creation of two Canberra Nippers clubs in the ACT. Recognising that there was a lack of opportunity for Canberra kids to learn ocean safety and survival skills, Bethany single-handedly established the Canberra/Broulee and the Canberra/Mollymook Nippers, with the former winning the national Surf Lifesaving Australia Award of Excellence for Community Education Program of the year in 2018.

