

Grief touched The Sky at Night
by Gloria Mindock

*Interview by Doug Holder/Co-President of
the New England Poetry Club*

For Poet Gloria Mindock 'the 'doves are in the trash' in her new poetry collection--Grief touched The Sky at Night

Gloria Mindock --former Somerville Poet Laureate, and the founder of the Cervena Barva Press has published a new book of poetry " Grief Touched The Sky at Night." It is inspired by the Ukrainian/ Russian War--and it is unflinching with its depictions of violence--and the horror of war. I caught up recently with Mindock to talk about her new collection.

First off—how has it been for you as a writer in Somerville, Massachusetts for all these years?

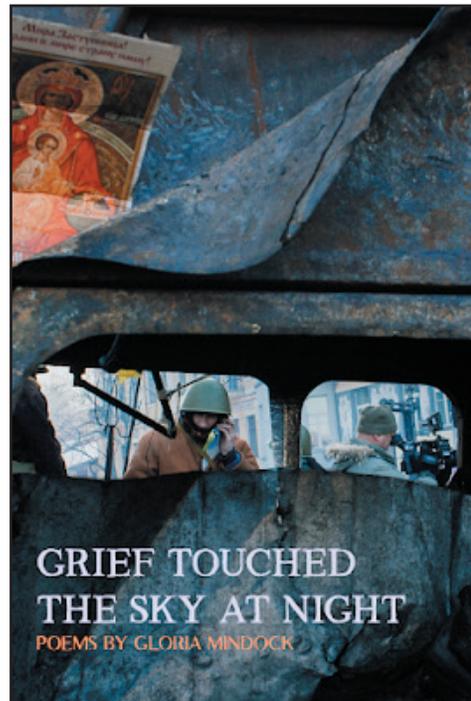
I moved to Somerville in 1984 from the Midwest. Somerville is a wonderful place to live and write. I feel right at home because there are so many writers and artists that live in Somerville and the area. The community is very supportive of one another. When I tell writers (from all over the world) about this place, they cannot believe all that this city offers. There are so many events happening all the time. I can't think of a better place to live.

You dedicated your poetry collection to the Bulgarian writer Svetoslav Nahum, who wrote "Escape from Crimea." Tell us why?

Svetoslav Nahum (Svet DiNahum) is a hero and a dissident. His actions against Putin's men, is enormous. It is amazing to see what one man can do. His book, "Escape from Crimea" was published in Bulgaria, Ukraine and Červená Barva Press published it in 2021. Since this book came out, he has been persecuted and harassed in Bulgaria by organizations that are defending the interests of Putin's regime in the Kremlin. He was threatened with "friendly advice." A Bulgarian writers union member told him to be careful and that he will be defeated. He was referring to the nerve agent used against a former Russian military intelligence officer who defected to Britain, that same "friend" warned him: "You might eat Novichok just like Sergei Skripal."

(Some of the above paragraph was paraphrased and quoted from a letter Svet wrote to the American people in his book "Escape from Crimea.")

Svet has a show called "Counterpropaganda." He has had some interesting people on this show which can be watched on YouTube. The interviews are discussions and information about the war between Ukraine and Russia, global security, Balkans security, China danger, Iran threats,



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Crimea, Russian danger for Bulgaria, and Mriya Aid which helps Ukraine. Guests have been many including: General Ben Hodges, Dr. Fred Hoffman, Mark Voyger, Alex Plitas, Professor Janusy Bugajski, Alexander Bakus and Paul Massaro. Experts have appeared from Congress, the Pentagon, Think Tanks, DC foundations, professors, and NATO. Svet has many other broadcasts on TV and other platforms, but they are in the Bulgarian language.

Over the years, I have gotten to know Svet very well. His courageousness speaks volumes. Svet continues to speak up against Putin's regime. He risks his life for freedom, for Ukraine, for Bulgaria, and for Europe. I am so honored to call him a friend.

This year Svet was the recipient of the first Červená Barva Press Dissident Award. This award will be given every year to a dissident who has stood up for freedom.

Your poems deal with the Russian/Ukrainian War. They are unsparring—the poems bleed from page to page. If these poems have a mission—what would that be?

My mission is to be a voice for the Ukrainian people and to show my support. One of the most important things about my poetry is to bring awareness to those in the US and abroad. What Putin is doing is wrong. I believe he will attack the Baltics and other countries if given the chance. He will continue to advance if not stopped. My poems show the evil of this man, this dictator, who will stop at nothing to defeat the Ukrainians.

In one of your poems you write "The doves are in the trash." If the doves returned from the ashes—would you be able to write as passionately about that?

Probably not. I tend to focus on the atrocities committed. This planet has never been at peace. I just don't see that ever happening. I pray for it, wish for it, but it is only a dream. Therefore, I feel the doves will stay in the trash. I do not have to worry about them returning to us from the ashes.

Doves have been a symbol of peace. I saw them on posters and images with the word "PEACE" in the 1960's and 1970's. I even had them on my bedroom wall as I was growing up. I have a peace symbol in my living room now but no doves. Here it is years later, and mankind is still killing each other. Unfortunately, I do not see the symbol of doves much. Sad. I have seen the symbol used in Ukraine. This brings hope for freedom.

Birds, nature are balms for the horrors of war in your book. But nature can be brutal as well--how can you reconcile that fact?

We all are surrounded by different landscapes and every place has its own weather woes. Some places are more prone to floods, tornadoes, earthquakes etc. Not everyone can choose where they live or are born.

Nature is nature whether mankind contributed to its disasters or not. Most families have 2 cars or more, plastic ends up in our oceans, Fracking is happening in many states, and I could keep listing the "bad" things that destroy earth. We all know what they are. Many people just don't care.

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Thankfully, there are some people who speak out and try to bring awareness. The fact is we need to change if this planet will survive.

War is man-made. It is a choice. Mankind continues to destroy each other. We must change if peace is going to be achieved. Money, power, ethnic cleansing, religion, land, are just some of the things that starts a war. This needs to stop but it won't. This world is pitiful at times. I look at the bright side of things and have faith because I have met so many wonderful people who speak out for change peacefully.

Why should we read this book?

I put my heart and soul into this book like I do all my books. Putin is power hungry, brutal and a force of evil. Grief Touches the Sky at Night should be read just like my other books on atrocities. I speak up for the oppressed, the slaughtered. I want my voice to be heard. I want their voice to be heard.

My book is not a lecture on what one should do. It is simply looking at the toll war has on the innocent, oppressed, and a country fighting for freedom.