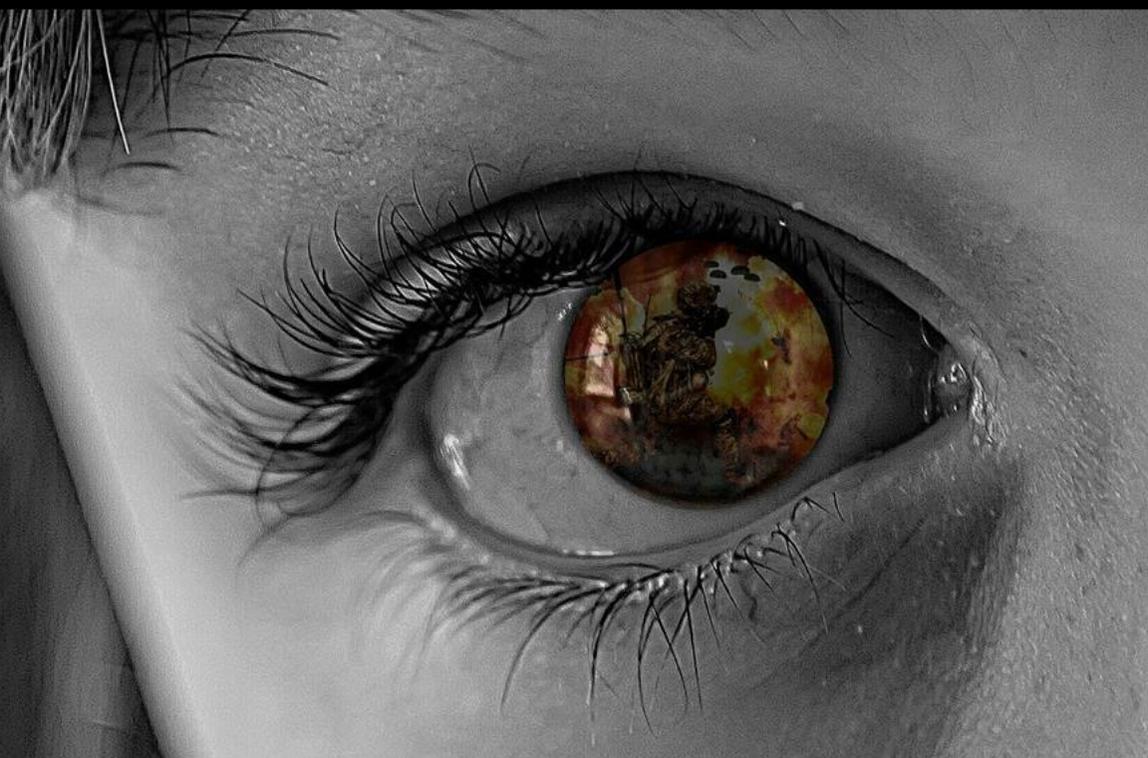


Twenty Moments



That
Changed
The
World

John C. Goodman

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locofo chaps

chicago, 2017

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Locofo Chaps is dedicated to publishing politically-oriented poetry.

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Some of these poems have previously appeared in
Anti-Heroin Chic, Sprung Poems and VOX

1.

there was an explosion
 <everyone knows that>
it left traces in time
 smoke and cinders
 ache and absurdity

change is forgetting
there will never be a moment of different colour
lips that will not kiss
 have touched the blueness of the sky
they are finding pieces of the past in the strangest places
 in weddings
 in poems

2.

Grief

there is no other word for it

: Grief

the shrouds are white

the tears are reflexive

the anguish is profound

it is quiet here

except for the crinkle of newspapers

as the cat walks over them

scratch of sunlight on the carpet

it is loud there

with the crying and thunderous tears

the shrouds make a soft ploufing sound

like fresh bedsheets on a summer morning

3.

today only!

beside the photograph
is an advertisement

the photograph shows a woman
barefoot
in the ruins of her home
<what was it? – tornadohurricanetsunamiearthquake>

she appears to be weeping

the advertisement is for shoes
50% off – hurry! today only! buy now!

it is impossible to buy shoes for the woman in the photograph

for her
there is no today only

4.

eyes

follow the eyes

the eyes

follow

they are a prelude to a different pretense of looking

in the pupil

a reflection

a slow blues song

playing over an incandescent sorrow

behind another eye

following

with a look of disbelief

5.

the color of a tree is varied

 some are up and some are down

the convention of a tree is erasable

the memorial of a tree has no capacity

 and no smell

it is bronze and copper and silver and aluminum

 like a reflection of an objection

the touch of a tree is debatable

 there are singular barks and leaves to be taken into account

one day a theory of a tree will form

 from the veins of leaves on the forest floor

in which we can live our own lives

 contrasting the existence

 espaliere

 for us

6.

green

so green

the bayonets seem out of place
and the rifles they are attached to
and the soldiers holding the rifles

blue

so blue

the bodies beside the road
seem out of place
their positions
awkward unaffected unique

no one can smell the stench from here
nor hear the silence
of their breathing

7.

there was blood

 a lot of blood

storming from her nose mouth eyes

her father laid her gently on the ground

a crowd gathered taking pictures

some of the people in the crowd wore white shirts

 some blue

 some green

the colours were interlocked

some wore sandals, others leather shoes in black or brown

some wore running shoes

 (in some places running shoes are called sneakers

 in other places sneakers are called trainers)

no one knew where the bullet came from

the crowd took pictures as she died

some of the people got blood on their shoes

8.

it is a common failing
to mistake enthusiasm for vision
impulses are magnetic

but these people are running for their lives
their lives are multicolored and textured with sound

their clothes move with them
accentuating the panic

they run together
united as fish in a school
the terror of their misdeeds
forgotten in a greater terror

what will become of us all
and the regret for what we have done?

9.

black

the road is black
except for a single yellow line
dividing

black

the sky is black
the clouds thick and uneven

black

the lights are black
the flashing red and blue
black against black

black

the blood is black
on the road on the windshield on the sky

black

death is black
except for a single yellow line
dividing

10.

it seems they are always waiting
just there
just off to the left
the vultures

there is no escaping them
like time they are always with us
waiting

curved beaks shaping space
bending reality
with the gravity of oblivion

one day we will fall into their clutches
if we haven't already
unconscious

11.

disappearance

is a function of loneliness

– the loneliest loneliness

names string together in a vibration

the innocent who bleed the most

<look under your fingernails>

they resonate with isolation

a frozen moment ends a life

12.

in this case it was the wind

<so they said>

in this case it was the ocean

<so they said>

in this case it was an act of terror

<so they said>

in this case it was an accident

<so they said>

in this case it was an absence of caring

<they wouldn't admit that>

the pattern is the same

coming and going

the outcome is quite different

depending on the notice of eviction

and the inconsequence

of amputations

13.

they are laughing <before the revolution>

– there is death in their smiles

their berets are blue

their shirts are green

their belts are brown

their guns are black

their boots are covered in roses

the sky is an indeterminate colour

the ground is grey

when they are dead

someone will remove their uniforms

and wash the futility from their bodies

14.

it's all been done before
the tanks in the square
the opposition to the transposition
the martyrs to the manifesto
yet we do it again
birds build new nests
every spring
the significance of a leaf to a tree
the leaning of river reeds

it is all gathered in a completion
of its own making

an ending born in pressure

15.

one wonders about the shape of her legs

– were they the cause?

and the water

– was there a diversion there?

some things <people> belong inside

some things <people> belong outside

– was there a thread or a string?

sometimes wire is used due to its superior tensile strength

but usually it is just ingratitude and condemnation

the only clarity

is that no one understands

not even her <least of all her>

but the shape of her legs

cannot be denied

in spite of implications

16.

right side up is no longer valid

tangents to a circle are curved

what was above is now beside and what was beside is now below

tangential motion was never subject to inertia

the seabed is not parallel to the surface

if the bottom were level

the surface would be inclined at $22\frac{1}{2}^\circ$

sinking ships have a tendency of inclining

emotion is curved

17.

that sudden spring shower is not water

– it is concrete shattered by hammer blows

the colours are not colours

– they are tones and tints

the smiles are not smiles

– they are indicators in a structure of intent

when the barriers fall

only the steel reinforcement bars are left

no less a prison

their jagged ends embedded

in systems of remaining

18.

the past

is a shadow behind him

it grows shorter each year

the ghosts grow shorter

the anger becomes a friend

acrimony shifts from stilted to styled

some statues solidify before their time

some deaths outlive their usefulness

there is a message in the shadows

it speaks a language of alteration

it will never be intelligible

<to some or the others>

19.

the triumph of anarchy

is fear of everything

if only it were a matter of time

there is an instruction for everything

in the end, light is a figure of shadow

does everything have a cost or a value?

a value or a worth?

a worth or a meaning?

freedom is an instrument in E \flat or B \flat – never C Major

the persecution of notes is inherent in transcription

therefore, money is superfluous

for the poor

but essential to the affluent

20.

you would never know she was a genius

– she looks so ordinary

except for the rings of Saturn

and the frozen seas of Europa and the eruptions of Io

the notes form a sequence of becoming

there is no end to them

they are arranged in hope and shining

what will become of her now?

the intervals are rearranged to suit the mood

there is a semblance of meaning

About the Author

John C. Goodman is a Canadian writer and Pushcart Prize nominee. He has published three collections of poetry, most recently *Dark Age* (Grey Borders), as well as a novel which was short-listed for an Arthur Ellis Award, and a novella, *The Duck Lake Chronicles* (Quattro Books). He also authored the non-fiction work *Poetry: Tools & Techniques* (Gneiss Press). John is the past editor of *ditch*, (www.ditchpoetry.com), an online magazine of experimental poetry.

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Charles Perrone – *A CAPacious Act*

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