

## “Raqqa Suddenly Becomes Holy”

by Christine O’Leary Rockey

Oh son,  
my son,  
oh, my soldier boy,  
trained to heal, who needs  
to heal, who left because you could not heal  
and now I fear you are desperately holding children  
as their skin falls from them like paper, pulled  
from a smoldering school. I am crossing myself  
praying none look like your sister- she is fine  
I swear to you she is fine, I promise you  
that she is growing by the day. I swear  
she will not fall to guns or carnage  
she’ll not be smashed beneath  
rooftops or burnt between  
walls, I swear to you,  
I swear, I oh so  
solemnly  
swear  
that these  
are not  
your  
own  
and you  
can operate  
and know they  
are not yours. You can  
triage them, and bandage them...  
You can stitch them up and carry them-  
you can dig them out and bury them...  
But I swear it’s not your sister  
that you pull from  
broken walls

but know:  
the child  
beneath your  
hands is just as  
holy, just  
as small  
And was just as scared  
when happened the walls  
shook, and its mother held it  
just as tight  
the way you’ve seen me  
hold your little sister  
on many a dark and fev’rish night.