SELFIES: ITS ORIGIN STORY

On the night of November 13, 2015, the Paris massacres conducted by Islamic terrorists killed 130 people and injured hundreds more. People were gunned down as they sat at several outdoor cafés in Paris, and 80 concert goers at the Bataclan theater were mercilessly and carefully killed over a 20 minute time period.

I was in New Zealand when this happened, working in different cities with a wise group of educators serving children with disabilities. We were in Christchurch and I was being interviewed at a news studio when reports of the massacre came in. I met my colleagues for dinner, and told them what had just happened in Paris. We seated ourselves around a table–my seat gave me a full-face view of the TV screen. It was MTV, the U.S. music video station. No sound came from the images of black rappers angrily demanding voice, of gyrating young women pornographically eager to seduce.

I sat with this flow of images for an hour— I spoke constantly to the silent screen:
"You have no idea how your world just changed."

In the hours that followed, I became physically very ill. I couldn't work and spent two days in bed gathering enough strength to travel to Australia. Still very weak, in a wheelchair, I landed in the welcoming arms of my dearest friends in Sydney. I had stayed with them many times in their apartment overlooking Bondi beach, the beach to be at for the young and beautiful. It was there that I wrote this poem. (Later, a healer explained that my body was filled with grief, that grief had made me so ill. Since then I have become more attentive to what my body can take in as I watch the news.)

Selfies

Bondi Beach, Sydney Australia, November 23, 2015

The beautiful bodies painstakingly trained
to be objects of admiration
are taking photos of themselves on the beach.

Any one of them could be
the handsome man smiling with his love
in that Instagram he sent
from the Bataclan before
he became an hour later one of many bloodied bodies
people clambered over to escape.

The Great Flaring Forth is
how some name the new story of
the Universe and its Big Bang birth
but now it's our story
as we flare up wildly
flinging fear
that disinters our lives into
terrors no longer remote
from those on the beach
posing in their perfection.