

The Power of Number

a timed exercise

by Rosalyn St Pierre

It is believed that there are numerals that deliver the answers to the eternal questions of humanity. Why was there the sudden understanding of zero from a fingertip in the sand, the powers of minus one, or the language of algebra delivered by the Persians?

The power of 180 is only recognised by poets and architects and often, far too late by politicians. The dimension of a circle so profound in verse, so essential in the design of monuments - and yet in the never-ending churn of empire building, collapse and putrefaction, we ignore the eternal cycle of humanity.

The year is 1846. The year of famine and clearance. We see a young woman, alone, facing the tirade of the sea that carries away her husband, the father of her young children hounded by landlords when all he wanted was food. It is Ireland? Is it Scotland? What hope is there when simple cottages are burnt, when starvation lingers on the horizon.

Turn the circle, the year is 2026, 180 years later, 180, yes the magic number. A young woman stands alone, facing the tirade of the sea that carries her husband away hounded by invading troops by illegal settlers all he wanted was food. Is it Gaza? is it Lebanon? Where schools are bombed, where simple houses are destroyed and where starvation lingers on the horizon.