

John Ashley

Bad Day at the Office

The young girl from behind touches my shoulder.
Could she please look on the floor beneath where I'm sat?
She scours amongst our shoes. We shuffle, move our feet
so she explore each footwell in front of her seat.

What had dropped slid forward when she rang the bell
and the driver braked. 'What is it?' I ask. 'My eyelashes'
she whispers. 'Oh' say I, shake my head gravely and sigh.

The driver of airport bus 226 waits to no avail.
She dismounts by her office in Cork Business Park,
distraught and under-dressed, her world just blown apart.

At the next stop I alight for my flight to Afghanistan.
By and by outside my Ministry, a *rhino* armoured
bus in a NATO convoy leaving Camp Darulaman
is rammed at speed by a Toyota of the Taliban.

Soldiers roast where they are sat. A child nine years old
vaporizes on her way to school. Eighteen die all told,
including young Taliban recruit Hazarboz Abdul Rahman.

My office window splinters from the blast wave, I dive
headlong from the flying shards, a silver mist of sliver,
and by my feet rolls to rest the bomber's head, eyelids still aquiver.

Kabul, Oct 29, 2011