

Women And War

To Faten

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A year or two past the 2006 war.
At an American College
The scene sets itself:

A conference room seems to hold
A quiver of youngish graduates,
Arrowed for the day's
Splendid talk, splendid foray.

Here we've a keynote speaker,
American like the space,
And visiting Lebanon
For the first time, face to face.

Her brief: Women and War –
The stories her penning, famished mind
Might gather, seas of fraught, taut
Narrative, plus, of course,
The apposite brine.

Our keynote speaker here
Wants to hear the woman's tale
Grow larger, how women fit their fate
In times of manly war.

Some of the girls attending
Are veiled, some are not.
Some wend down
From families like liberal, opened knots,
And some

Descend more slowly downwards

From your more traditional lot.

The first to speak to the visiting lady,
The first to speak from woe,
Was a girl who'd worked a small while for
The red of the Red Cross, helping
Throughout that horrid space
Of wounds, the agonizing loss,

Heart-colored
And good succor for the lost.

She spoke
Of the unity of the Lebanese
And how all and all chipped-in
As one deep pocket, holding
A vagary of coins and a vagary of sins.

She spoke of the heartfelt
Soldering
In time of war, and how
Nothing proved the lay

As lie-less as the way

The people joined as one, when
The solid rock
Of solidarity
Was dearly needed

And once again: begun.

It was a rosy tale
To which one deep girl, veiled
And speaking next,
Chose to object.

At that time, in that liberal space,
The next veiled girl spoke with avid grace
Of her background
Which was written on her opened face.

She lived in Dahieh, the most-bombed-out
place,
A hotbed for the tongues of war,
For the lava and for all its hate,

And she begged to disagree
To her peer's rosy tale
Of somewhat rosy pedigree.

Speaking-up, she told the visiting
American lady
That Lebanon
Was rarely, rarely one.

That it was always, always split, riven
By the graveyards of the cynics,
Where opportunity proves a wake

For any large and rosy sense
Of hale-blooded oneness
Or the unity
Of one sole fate.

After regaling about the root
Of her well-worn veil, a family's route,
She supposed, quite traditional,

She began, with irate fire,
To denigrate
The Party of God
At the vital, beating center
Of that horrid war. And it was strange
To hear such a glaring gloss
From one such as this:

She claimed to speak of facts,
The cists that others missed,
The pins that pierced the heart
Of their clueless fancy –

The duped, the duping foolery
Of their so-called, imagined
Community.

She railed against Hezbollah
For one main reason:

That while they claimed to be
Fighting for a nation
A nation's war, they were fighting
Their own, and that alone.

While the whole nation felt
The vicious bite of the Zionist state
The war in truth was the acid-child
Of one group's steady, visceral hate.

She gave facts to back her case:
The cynicism
Of strong, of high-strung parties,
Proving in the actual, frail.

For instance,
 How a certain murderous chief
 Back in the year of 1990, a man
 Who'd led the slaughter
 At Sabra and Shatila,
 A Christian faction's leader,
 A monstrous man, once set and phased
 In the mold of the dark-lit pay
 Of one of Israel's greatest monsters –
 How such a one was granted aid
 To turn a new and leafy page,
 To turn due and valid once again –
 A new-found politician
 In post-war Lebanon –
 And helped by that very party
 Of God's good way
 And those who hated most of all
 The monstrous part
 Of your staple, Israeli
 State. It was merely
 An example,
 She seemed to say,
 Grippled to spread her view
 That the war of 2006 was nothing,
 Was in truth nothing, nothing new:
 That there was nothing rosy-tinted
 About Lebanon, from the many
 To the few.

Meanwhile, another veiled girl,
 Seated close-by, whose uncle
 Was smashed and cut and killed by
 A missile, some mad Zionist's thrill,
 Wept and wept, unceasingly.
 She wished to offer the opposite view,
 But her tears prevailed, a veil beneath the veil,
 A covering of the eyes and lips
 With the salt of the earth, with tears
 About the reigning fact, for some,
 Of the vast opposite of birth.
 The conference hall turned to a fracas.
 Frank Sorries between the girls were later
 Solicited. And while
 The American visitor, a writer for all her troubles,
 Must have gained a good, grim taste
 Of the realities
 Between a rock and a far harder place –
 The hoopla and the angles
 Of all that viscid brouhaha
 Meant the recordings on the tapes
 Of this one sad conference
 On women and their war,
 Ended up
 In some dust-colored grate,
 Fired and flamed away,
 To be seen, or heard, no more.