

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT – A PERSPECTIVE¹ (2000)

The following poem deals with a situation shared by two women who have never met before in their life and happen to meet in an emergency.

It was long ago _ my son is now twenty-one
and the blue dress I wore to Maternity
has long been ripped into rags² and thrown away,
piece by piece. But that night it was
the most comfortable thing I owned,
and while I was alone waiting in Reception
(the nurses were probably out to dinner,
and my husband didn't really believe
it was time yet), and leaned against the wall
to counter³ my backache, I was grateful for it.

I wasn't alone - the Bedouin⁴ woman in her black robe⁵
Was also in pain and pushing too against the wall
But we had no common language,
each other and could only show
what we felt, and what to do.
There were no chairs,
and the gentle lined⁶ woman
was my only inspiration and succor,⁷

and I got the idea of crouching⁸ in a corner,
pushing at both walls at once
and the floor as well. Ah, she said,
and joined me in the niche⁹ by.

And I knew she was telling me that corners
Were a great invention of society, and I agreed.
Better than the nurses who eventually came along,
picking their teeth¹⁰ and scowling¹¹ at our primitivity.

We never did
Get to talk. Both of us left
With our sons the next day.
(Karen Alcalay-Gut)

¹ *Perspective* = prospettiva

Perspective = one's opinion about facts, ideas, etc., and their relationships: [countable] an interesting perspective on the situation.

² *Ripped into rags* = stracciato

to rip = to tear apart roughly or vigorously

rag = a piece of cloth, esp. one that is torn or worn:

³ *to counter* = neutralizzare

to counter = to oppose, esp. so as to weaken

⁴ *Bedouin* = a nomadic Arab of the desert

⁵ *Robe* = a long, loose or flowing gown or outer garment

⁶ *Lined* = rugosa

lined = a mark or wrinkle on the face, neck, etc.

⁷ *Succor* = support

⁸ *Crouching* = accovacciarmi

to crouch = to stoop low with the knees bent ; to stoop = to bend the head and shoulders, or the body generally, forward and downward:

⁹ *niche* = nicchia

Niche = a recess in a wall or the like, usually in the shape of a half circle with an arch, as for a statue or other decorative object.

eventually = finally; ultimately; at some later time:

¹⁰ *picking their teeth* = stuzzicandosi i denti

¹¹ *scowling* = guardando accigliate

to scowl = to frown deeply