

MARILYN HACKER

Pomegranate

Remembering Mahmoud Darwish

Mid-October, ripe as a pomegranate
on a market-stall, in a myth so often
turned by Western women, you'd think that each one
had lived the story.

He, from elsewhere, draws upon other stories,
other rhythms in which to tell them, echoes,
numbers, and an alphabet which I trace out
halting and childish,

while he speaks to the Greek, the Kurd, the Spaniard,
questions language with the displaced Iraqi
and the Jew who riddled in nomanslanguage
the trope of « homeland ».

Waits, and reads the paper, in some small café:
who will be the foreigner, who, the lover?
After years' displacements, the words risk having
a double meaning —

risk, or have the luck of a double meaning
in their roots. Some words have their own ideas,
so a line with bullets in it transforms them
deftly, to sparrows.

Why not, waiting, write in the spiral notebook:
birds, remembered bullets, the rooftop terrace
pots of bougainvillea? Autumn rain clouds
mass above rooftops

in a city where women read the paper
in cafés, yes, just the way he does, waiting
for, not more than sunlight, the jolt of caffeine,
a glass of water.

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I reach out and pick up the pomegranate,
palm its blemished rind, purple-pocked by clustered
egg-like ruby seeds, that could splash a bloodstain
across a doorstep,

memorizing new verbs and nouns: home, journey,
write, school, study, family, brother, sister
and a mother's name, which can mean, in context,
pilgrim, or exile.

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