

Only When Women Sing

Do not show me tiny crowds of handpicked men;
do not regale me with films of gunfire in the air—
these mean nothing.

Show me instead the mothers,
pictures of long-dead sons at their breast;
show me their sisters, whose brothers
and husbands never came home;
let me see their joy, if they have it.

Show me battalions of little girls, if you can—
healthy and learned, with futures and names.
Show me their mothers, with homes all arrayed
in abundance and peace, with color and song.

Do not pronounce victories, missions accomplished,
when tyrants go skulking from palace to hole:
show me the women, show me the old,
wreathed now in hope, with a sense of 'it's over',
formerly broken, now a little more whole.

It will only be victory when women sing in the streets,
their veils firmly chosen and anchored in place,
or off and waving, if they have the taste,
but both equally safe—to choose, to live, to learn, to love.
It will only be victory when the women sing.

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