

The Rose of Persia: Anniversary of False Arrest

A Rose has bloomed in Persia,
Watered by women's tears;
A branch extends its flowers,
And teaches Evil fear.

Upon what beds have martyrs lain,
Their female bodies wracked by pain,
Their nerves afire from butchery?
Why do we call it 'destiny'
That some should die anguished, alone,
While others live on, safe at home?

Say, rather, 'responsibility'
Marks the line twixt 'slave' and 'free':
Some come to lie on freedom's floor
To make things better than before.
Their suffering at torture's hands
Cannot enslave their soul's demand:
O Freedom!

Outrageous to make holy claims,
That dead can rise with glorious fame,
Kept fresh in heart, made live again
When Memory recites their name:
"Here was a flower, and such was her life—
Strong beauty in the face of strife."

Enthroned on rivers of martyred blood,
The Rose of Persia blooms;
She sends out tendrils to the world
As desolation looms.
Light of the East, the dying West
Knows not what it should make of you:
Mother of democracy,
Or harbinger of doom?

A Rose has bloomed in Persia,
Many millions strong:
Its roots are deep and spreading,
Its blossom Woman's song:
O Freedom!

Carole R. Fontaine; March 2005