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## The Wine Table Spins

By Bushra Al-Bustani

Translated from the Arabic by Wafaa A. Abdulaali<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

Bushra Al-Bustanic (b.1949) was born in Mosul, Iraq. She is one of the most famous poets of the Arab world. She is also an academic and a critic. She has published fifteen collections of poems and numerous critical essays on Arabic literature, besides a collection of short stories, called *Night Calls*. She chaired several literary journals in Iraq and throughout the Arab world. Her epic poem, *Andalusian Songs for the Wounds of Iraq* was translated into English by Wafaa A. Abdulaali and Sanna Dhahir and published by the Edwin Mellen Press (2008). Most of her poems talk about the love of Iraq, its glorious history of Mesopotamia, as well as themes of war, the oppression of woman, and the domineering, patriarchal society. This is a translation of the Arabic by Wafaa A. Abdulaali titled "The Wine table Spins" offered in both Arabic and English.

*Keywords:* Al-Bustani, Bushra; Iraqi poetry; modern, Arabic poetry; translation; women's poetry; Wafaa Abdulaali; Sufi poetry.

### Introduction

Bushra Al-Bustanic (b.1949) was born in Mosul, Iraq. She is one of the most famous poets of the Arab world. She is also an academic and a critic. She has published fifteen collections of poems and numerous critical essays on Arabic literature, besides a collection of short stories, called *Night Calls*. She chaired several literary journals in Iraq and throughout the Arab world. Her epic poem, *Andalusian Songs for the Wounds of Iraq* was translated into English by Wafaa A. Abdulaali and Sanna Dhahir and published by the Edwin Mellen Press (2008). Most of her poems talk about the love of Iraq, its glorious history of Mesopotamia, as well as themes of war, the oppression of woman, and the domineering, patriarchal society. This is a translation of the Arabic by Wafaa A. Abdulaali titled "The Wine table Spins" offered in both Arabic and English.

"The Wine table Spins" is a poem about a woman who goes through the Sufi experience of intoxication with the dizziness that takes her into a world full of miseries, where the woman is marginalized, but thoughtful and mindful of the plans woven by Imperialists and Colonists to usurp her home, personal home, and the birthplace. Everything around her shares her feelings: nature, her own home, the trees, the mountains, the sea, Tigris and Euphrates, etc. The contradictory feelings overwhelm the poem, such as when she says:

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Love blesses my palm and  
sprouts in it a camphor flower.  
I am sick of the pink honey  
when it shreds in darkness.

However, the wine table transforms into other things to embody the subjects of the poem: the mystical longing, war, love, patience and death. However, like all her poems, optimism weaves as the griefs loom and surrender her. The poem is a strong rejection of all wars where woman is the first victim. The woman-speaker is truly Iraqi, in body and soul. She is also the earth, the poem, the Iraq map, and the Arabic language:

My heart's stone leaps from a caravan and turns into a guide.  
Earth is a night's bet on a lantern.  
The soil is my eyes' kohl and my perfume.  
Land is engulfed in grief and wailing hymns.  
The earth is my two arms I raise to the thunder,  
a fever of the green rain,  
a feast of this earth,  
and promised bait.

The poem ends with an optimistic note:

The hunter lies in wait for me and grabs it.  
I write in wine on the glasses: I love you.