

Aladdin's Lamp, March 4, 2003

on the eve of first strike in Iraq

Emma Lou Thayne

Out of a dream
a fragrance overwhelms me:
not saffron, not lavender
but something in between:
the aroma of Grandma's Rose Jar
on the bookshelf above our bed:
lid of amethyst-embedded silver
lifted from fluted glass coddling
six generations of rose petals,
savings of life and death, savor
salted to dry, settle, never to fill.

Arabian Nights perfume with scent and vibration
my half waking to rub Aladdin's lamp:
See the Genie tell his Semite brothers
Jews and Arabs, "Wait." In some aroma
is written a message also to my torn world
bludgeoned by hatred, "Wait."

EMMA LOU THAYNE received a B.A. in English in 1945 and, in 1970, an M.A. in creative writing from the University of Utah, where she later taught English and coached women's tennis. Author of thirteen books of poetry, fiction, essays, and travel stories, she has published internationally concerning kinship and peace among people and nations. Her suite of poems "How Much for the Earth?" appeared in DIALOGUE's first war and peace issue twenty years ago. She and her husband Mel have five daughters and sons-in-law, nineteen grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

I confess bewilderment. Was I coaxed in
by something too big to see over except
by dream? By prayer? With the acrid smell
of war in every headline
am I simply scared with needing
the compromise that will be a human thing,
admittedly the hardest part?

But there she is: My Bedouin woman I met
in her goatskin tent thirty years ago
now shining with sand the lamp
to free you, Genie: Over oceans and continents
unfurl your aura for my Americans here
bent on battle in that far-off land: Take up
the gaps between ideas,
let them relish the scent of peace.