Looming above the fertile plains of Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley,
The columns of the Temple of Jupiter –
Grand memorials to the pride and power of Imperial Rome
bake in the sun,
White at midday, rose-red in the evening.

Of the original fifty-four that stood around the great sacellum,
A splendid colonnade of six rose-granite pillars still rise
Atop the ancient acropolis, ever skyward
As an apogee, perhaps, to please the gods
Or bring truth to the prophecies of the oracles.

The tragedy of Lebanon lies in its history –
Constantly invading armies
Storming the ancient Phoenician lands,
Drawn to mark their passing
With great monuments to false gods.

The nation boasts not
Except among its own ruins,
The only accolades that now remain
Of a nation divided into fragments,
Whose statesman is a fox,
Whose philosopher is a juggler, and
Whose craft is that of patching and parody.

Phoenicians and Romans, Assyrians and Crusaders
As if the modern history of Lebanon
Has been reduced to the sum of its ruins – defaced in antiquity
And assaulted by time.

~ Holly Butchyk