

Rosemary Winslow

White Peonies

Rain wrung to rot
about to take them

I saw it coming
that's why I cut them

their heads so heavy
so blind

bending all the way down
— I confess!

I wanted to keep them
clean voluptuous

.

Thousands of petals
crowded like worlds!

How I wanted to save you all!
How I said —

This, That, Try it!
How I thought: *I know best!*

Oh, you were so blind and heavy!
I knew you'd be sullied. And ugly.

.

How still you are in my room!
Orderly arching stems, gracious heads!

My neighbor fashioned this vase
as a pregnant belly, for such as you.

Did you prefer the rain's peril?
To carouse with the clamoring wind?

Who will tell me?

Palimpsest

What is this? ashen heap —
mountain of papier maché?
maybe?
Some order of experience?
the function of art . . .
pitiless emptiness . . .
smooth
glossy page

Srebrenica

hot silence

the human erased
the dead piled on

Where were we?

.

Leaf-life of June
forgetful of news
in our honeymoon
we walked arm in arm
suffused the museums
where the Gates of Hell
black vault
twisted & human
pressed into his thigh
to kiss
which is time without end
O, torn side of a world . . .

in beautiful Paris
we walked happy
on the manicured lawns
our happiness
even the northern expanse
opened to lawn
thing of the past
figures
a thinker's elbow
lovers straining to
a fraction
of space
waiting

Afterward

fresh fruits heaped on tables in the *plein air* markets
hens minus feathers eyelids down beaks tucked under wings as in sleep
feet and toe-claws skinned of their yellow curled as in long-fingered hands in sleep
my downturned sadness

arms of stopped pendulums
pend in the photo
eerie
fingers
clasp a
knee
twisted twisted
unnaturally legs

we didn't know, I
I didn't know
We said, They said

And I was happy
We were happy
the past sank backward
no faces

. . . the sole of one shoe

“The brothers and brethren had gone a little mad”:
Slobodan Milosovic, his own counsel, at trial, The International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons
Responsible for Serious Violations of Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Former Yugoslavia
Since 1991

“The triggers should have been held back
a little.”
or *a little longer*, perhaps S.M. meant. “They are not free. My name *Slobodan*, in my
language, means Free.”

When we said *I do, I will* to each other
we meant
Love
no matter what happens
till death parts us

We meant each other, (specified, one)
you a stranger situated my heart

which opened for you
increased for you
to know you
and then
others came through

sole of one shoe
where once lived a man
who once walked
who walked in those days
in those days

before

stares
out to my eye
his eye vanished

3 indictments: 66 war crimes:
Croatia, Bosnia, Cosovo

"Hazbi Loku happened upon
his brother's corpse one afternoon
walking a road" *walking a*

road "two weeks before
NATO bombed"

*his worry beads his worry beads
working over*

time He "choked
back tears"

*walked through
the forest trees
he had walked among
in delight all his days*

before
" he watched 21 neighbors shot

and bombed: "nothing
left
of
them,"
he worried, said,
*wept, vibrated, eyes
blank
black*

in the witness stand
*Where Art Thou? vibrating
murmuring*

.

When I was ten I read straight through the holy book
of three religions. *Love the stranger*, it said.
I thought it meant, love others as your own people
your country
and others flowed across my borders

.

And yet I knew nothing,
the happiness we knew
inexplicable splendor
two together

gift of our lives

the past sunk-down thing

Of the past

mitigated

as we walked down aisles, grass, museums

Alive

.

red flashing sirens

bearing S.M. (whose name

means Free)

from station to trial

3 indictments: 66 war crimes:

buried buried covered

That happiness we knew . . .

That happiness:

a music

crept by us

I turned away

O little towns (gone)

how silently your wondrous gift

was taken

.

(palimpsest, worked, formed, framed,

milky shades with honey, amber

flecked with blue, soot, red

appearing through the parchment surface

newsprint, oils, d'Arches deluxe, glue,

given for our wedding by a Turkish artist:

he should know how peoples cover

others and still they bleed through

and our country's past, our own

our selves Earth o each day o

brain, convolutions, erasures, flecks,

this art of remembrance

over my desk — word unto

deliver uncover remember us)

Note: Quoted material from the trial as printed in *The New Yorker*, May 27, 2002.

Out

If I cast the knife edge of my eyes
on the waters
I can move

If I kneel down on a bank with willows
shadows lie down
like sleeping dogs

If I turn west other shadows I meet
flicker and stay
as I pass

If I look up a gull's white underside catches
and splits gold light

If I look north snow beyond eyesight
blue streaking across

Each crystalline flake different they say
hard to imagine

Where am I going from here?
stuck to my heels interminable shadow
faithful won't say

Sun ascends
snow white blinding
If I cast my knife edge on the waters I can move