I have a taste for burnt, crusty things: food brittle and carboned to black, houses where the Serb militia have been. I adore the hard surface, the finality of things charred and distorted beyond belief, the decaying corners of morning toast, a pie crust singed, scarred skin.

I’ve grown accustomed to jagged peaks, watching for snipers where lonely hikers once streamed, wandering paths with their tri-coloured packs. Give me hospitals inscribed in shrapnel, unlocked closets of abandoned, anonymous bones. Bring bouquets for the market massacres; kiss back streets studded with the Sarajevo Rose.¹

Rest assured, knowing all is exactly as it seems:

bruised, recast, burnt-out, impaled—somehow cleaned; as I write only of what I cannot leave, a body awakening in the contours of waste and disease.

Susan Rich

¹ The Sarajevo Rose is the pattern made by a shell exploding, in this case the imprint is left on the tarmac.