

(Sarajevo)

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.