mornings the bleak light of Belgrade presses on filthy glass presses against my body

beyond the door of this room where we live now there is an old woman who winds and unwinds bandages around her shattered legs she is silent and uncomplaining I avoid her fearing her kind eyes

my husband hunches on the bed smoking pushes his hand again and again through his hair and weeps it is silent and terrible a contagion that I must not enter

my task is to keep moving find food take my reluctant children through neglected streets to school they quarrel and whine ask questions I cannot answer

in our old house in Osijek the walls were covered in art our books reminded us of who we were and the children had fine wooden toys made by their father we wrote ate stuffed pancakes and drank plum brandy with friends my husband sang the songs of Serbian gypsies song of longing and displacement

now there is only silence

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