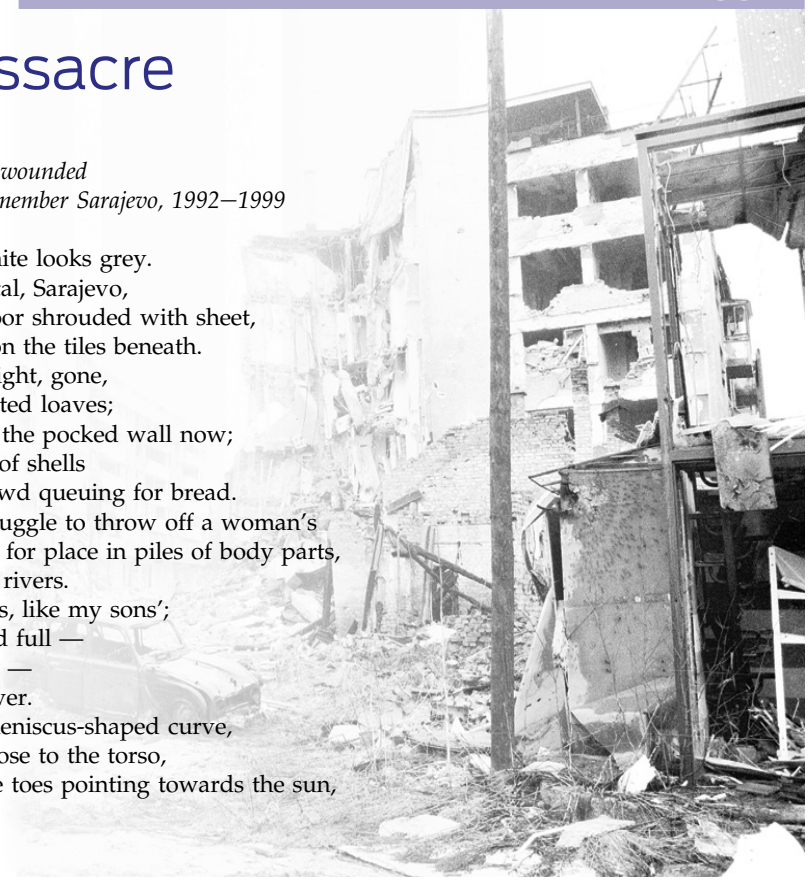
Bread line massacre



Sarajevo, 27 May 1992: 20 dead; 160 wounded
after Roger Richards' photos, *Remember Sarajevo, 1992–1999*

Black and white clarity, though white looks grey.
In the cold morgue, Kosevo Hospital, Sarajevo,
his body lies on a flat wardrobe-door shrouded with sheet,
its stark shadow a jigsaw of lines on the tiles beneath.
His left leg protrudes, naked; the right, gone,
crushed somewhere under incinerated loaves;
bones mere shattered fragments in the pocked wall now;
or tossed to powder by the power of shells
lobbed with deliberation into a crowd queuing for bread.
Survivors covered with carnage struggle to throw off a woman's
torso, head, as random limbs jostle for place in piles of body parts,
or pulped, run down drains in red rivers.
This is a strong leg, like my father's, like my sons';
the muscle clumped, calf broad and full —
what you love about a man's body —
its strength, its assumptions of power.
The knee is smooth, lovely in its meniscus-shaped curve,
thigh pale from lack of sunshine close to the torso,
and the foot, its cardboard tag, five toes pointing towards the sun,
surprised almost, caught off guard.

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