

the flame of the candle  
trembles  
as the television blue light  
is on

leave each detail untouched  
to preserve it as it is  
a split second  
lit with an antique light bulb

late when my grandmother  
is mending some worn out garment  
the heavy wood kitchen table  
cleared of the evening meal  
the cast iron stove the fireplace  
the water pump above the stone sink  
the quietness that hangs on tight  
calm & surrounding

I take a thick pencil  
me & the paper  
carefully intensely  
I draw  
every object around holding still  
to watch me absorbed in the act  
a bit unusual  
for a 3 year old child  
that has gone through the day  
full of restless movement  
with a thirst for discovering the new  
in hidden places

two separate movements  
one of perennial motion  
the other totally  
deeply  
absorbed in concentration  
excluding all  
but full of precious meaning  
in the act of drawing  
I knew then I was an artist

at night  
the mind is a surviving somnambulist  
walking a tightrope above a crowd  
unnoticed by the people below  
going about their business



"Let my body rest in the mountains  
Bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao  
Let my body rest in the mountains  
in the shadow of my flower  
Bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao

This is the blossom of those that died here  
Bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao  
This is the blossom of those that died here  
for land and liberty"

Song of the Partigiani

suddenly  
the painting reproduction of the deserted Italian piazza  
appears

is the embalmed white dove still  
trying to find the nourishing seeds  
that Dante's shadow used to scatter  
over worn-out marble steps

before entering the majestic Saint Michael's Church  
my aging fingers touch with tenderness the Romanesque patina  
up above  
the archangel protecting the city  
the spear slaughtering the satanic dragon  
under his feet

suddenly  
the mind is on random search mode /  
another time/ frames / fragments / another zone  
nostalgia sleeps by the neighborhood bombed-out fountain

suddenly  
I fill again the empty flask  
with fresh drinking water from the aqueduct  
flowing from distant mountains  
freedom-fighter Partigiani hide somewhere there

they have painted the gas tanks with abstract patterns  
camouflaging the surface  
close by  
the locomotive never departed from the main station  
dark dense smoke fills the atmosphere  
the air strike is blowing up the rails

was there ever a mutilated monument  
commemorating the hero who lost the battle & the horse?

plaster-casts of endangered antiquity remain silently frozen  
inside the art school galleria  
this evening an elongated young girl's shadow is running  
playing with a hoop over the bare evacuated space  
have all the people gone inside the shelter?  
*mystery & melancholia of a street*

suddenly  
a restless boy is riding a rocking horse  
at the edge of the approaching dangerous unknown  
censored war news interrupts the Florentine songs  
playing everyday before noon on the radio

suddenly  
I hear fierce battles over imaginary deserts  
Tobruk / El Alamein / Benghazi

age testing memories  
dark Libyan sitting proudly on camels  
Somalian & Ethiopian  
friendly African faces on colonial colorful posters  
from my youth familiar images affixed on walls  
black & white photos of African villages in the newspaper



propaganda & lies  
from loud speakers  
echoing through a wind tunnel  
I walk on streets with white facades  
huge black painted handwriting  
CREDERE - OBBEDIRE - COMBATTERE  
(believe - obey - fight)

signed with the ever-present big **m** – Mussolini

they're marching singing war songs  
trucks pass by each home  
collecting iron bedposts for guns  
copper pans for shells  
wool for soldiers' uniforms fighting in Russia  
women line up to melt gold wedding bands  
paying for the war effort  
coming back wearing stainless steel rings

has a time capsule faded away with  
that obscure menacing sky?

suddenly  
it's July 25 '43  
the radio says to the people  
Mussolini is taken prisoner  
THE WAR IS OVER  
we all embrace each other  
in the street shouting:

*the war is over*  
*it's over / it's over*  
not knowing we are embracing  
a deceitful illusion  
just before destructive reality arrives

we were soon to be trapped inside  
the powerful **German Gothic Line** war-machine  
cutting across Tuscany stretching over the Appennines  
ghosts of guerrilla Partigiani  
throughout villages & mountains mysteriously sabotaging  
risking their lives & ours

new laundered clouds float with sunlight  
empty rooms resonating silence live here now  
somewhere is hidden *the enigma of a day*

suddenly  
on the living room wall I stare at  
the precious black & white lithograph of  
Garibaldi with courageous Anita dying by his side  
she is shooting the last bullet for the old country's liberation  
a Brazilian chorino turns 78 rpm on the antique victrola

among grammar school memory pages of my 1<sup>st</sup> language  
I find the deserted piazza by De Chirico  
I hear the piercing repetitive air-raid sirens  
amplifying day to day  
the alarm echoing outside the piazza  
bouncing outside the defensive walls  
embracing the historic city of Lucca

bouncing to the working class neighborhood to my street  
roaring motors fly between anti-aircraft shells during the day  
search lights illuminate the night sky  
flares & anti-aircraft guns redefine the constellations  
fear of the uncertain moment  
fear of the uncertain future

every Sunday diffused in the air  
you hear a clarinet playing the aria "e lucevan le stelle" from Tosca  
Verdi/top hat & white scarf/quietly listening from inside the oval frame  
facing the factory the B-23 bomber planes pass by almost every day

on that Epiphany Day of '44 they unload the explosive cargo  
leaving only the tallest chimney as an archeological relic  
to witness the human collateral damage

my body & bike lying on the street – alive

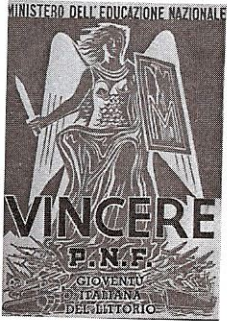
suddenly  
the neighborhood of youth crushed in 1 eternal moment  
has disappeared  
the monumental hand-forged iron cross still standing  
over street ruins  
which friends died / who was wounded / who survived /  
who is still breathing under the rubble?



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the damaged home is abandoned after the air-strike  
one bomb is unexploded in back of the house  
fear of the uncertain moment  
fear of the uncertain future

we took refuge a few miles away  
where my Brazilian aunt lived  
the waterfall under the Concord grape pergola  
was turning time over the wooden wheel of the mill  
where the round stones used to grind wheat  
we befriended an Italian-Jewish family  
that left the city to hide in the country

suddenly  
this village is taken over by  
some of the youth last fighters of the III Reich  
who still believe in a last moment victory  
from the powerful secret weapon  
promised by the Fuehrer

by our drinking water well  
under the camouflaged net  
the mile long German cannon  
is facing the Tuscan mountains  
waiting

suddenly  
mysterious words on the airwaves  
coded messages from the Partigiani?  
listening to forbidden shortwave news from London  
is risking arrest & interrogation  
heavy fighting continues with the Allies  
unable to break through Nazi resistance in Cassino

suddenly  
the SS proclamation:

*whoever knows where the partigiani are  
& does not report the information  
will be shot  
whoever gives shelter or food to the partigiani  
will be shot  
any house hiding a partigiano  
will be blown up*

whispering voices are saying:  
a young priest who believed in freedom  
hiding Jews from the Nazis in his parish house  
was found with a radio transmitter  
accused of sending information to the Allies  
given a shovel / forced to dig his own grave /  
was executed under the city walls

the day after the night of the shooting stars  
not far from Lucca  
there is the **BIG MASSACRE** in Sant' Anna  
over 560 women-children & old men  
from random population  
are executed then burned  
in the village church piazza  
an SS retaliation against the Partigiani

days of oppression follow  
days under fascist martial law terror  
days of silent resistance  
days of surveillance & paranoia  
who's to be trusted?  
days when the SS raid the homes  
& people disappear never returning  
days when life is between battling crossfire  
days waiting for the Americans then the liberators  
coming from the remote land where my father is & I was born

### DAYS ALL COMING BACK

suddenly

from the mountains  
shells explode on our side  
we hide inside dug out holes under the earth  
the mile long cannon responds with fire

suddenly

the German soldiers-their trucks-the stolen horses  
the Polish prisoners forced to labor for their enemy  
all silently vanish in the night  
we waited

suddenly

on a noon  
white dust is blowing from the serpentine mountain road  
white dust & faint humming motors coming closer  
white dust & Black GIs with rifles riding in a long jeep column  
led by the white commanders



people come out  
they embrace & kiss  
the Black Americans GIs  
of the Buffalo Infantry Division  
people come out embrace & kiss  
the liberators of this ancient  
Renaissance land from the Nazi oppressors



## FREE AT LAST

the long awaited day of freedom has arrived  
not yet in the land of the segregated Black Freedom Fighters

which fanatic fascist in Lucca  
hung the courageous leader of the Partigiani?

## DAYS ALL COMING BACK

back again as a citizen  
on my foreign native land  
in the new world where my mother  
a war collateral damage  
still in fear of the SS raids  
haunted by Fascist spies  
microphones-hidden devices-surveillance everywhere  
her paranoia taken to the State hospital in up-state NY  
where experiments with electric shocks  
erase cells in her brain  
not the fear

## DAYS ALL COMING BACK

the new surveillance / censored news /  
updated techno-war brutally flashing over TV cold screen /  
savage surgical strikes /  
cluster-bombs killing the trapped expendable population /  
civilian corpses rotting under the rubbles /  
Triumph of the Mighty Will ruling through domination & fear /  
who is fighting now for freedom?  
fear of the uncertain future  
echoing consumed days over this old man's eyes /  
a survivor of World War II's endangered population /

suddenly  
reliving the shock & awe coming of age

still  
there is no end in sight over the horizon

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