

## **Vale *Vijećnica*\***

The incinerator disgorged black birds+.

They flapped and winged, they swooped and soared,

belched out in flames or singed,

plumed jets, they rose and floated,

plummeted, adhered, then melted.

Icarus upended.

Scrolls, parchments, incunabula, manuscripts,

atoms, carbon crumbs were toasted,

showered down to stain the voyeurs' follicles

obsidian pellicles caped their shoulders,

Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, Bosnian,

Aristotelian, Hegelian,

whole oeuvres no more,

but here or there a twisted spine, a sooty sentence.

Elsewhere, singed remnants of a word or two,

once testament to a civilising code,

now murdered by barbaric hegemony.

Alphabetical confetti took flight,

escapee letters *grand-jetéed*, arabesqued on air.

Was that a P, a C, a decapitated T?

Fragments, enumerations, Dewey-ed, stacked, archived,

the Sarajevo sky ablaze with vilest inferno

and days and days of ashen, pitch-fogged haze.

Dazed citizens, they wailed and wailed.

Flaming Alexandria revisited,

athenaeum scorched and charred,

logos cauterised, lobotomised,

soiled texts and tomes un-embalmed.

all now entombed

in sarcophagus of once-words.

Vale Vijećnica.

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\*The library in Sarajevo was burned down, almost 10 years ago, on 25 and 26 August 1992 by the Bosnian Serbs when Bosnia-Herzegovina was under siege. The leaders were later charged with war crimes.

+With thanks to the author Valerian Zujo.