

“Ethnic Cleansing”

for Kosovo

Reporters pronounce “ethnic cleansing” with dumb determination
Their nimble tongues thicken, stung by that prickly twain
Civilized palaver undoes the sick scent of cadavers
Which dislodge inferior complexes and awaken recriminations
Words which barely knew each other, wed at gunpoint
Balk on lips, then shatter death’s dignity with understatement
The bride “Cleansing” scours the free air, hesitant to arrive
Tripping into cold arms, embracing a hushed, attentive room
Quieted by her mysterious, surly groom, “Ethnic”
Whose checkered past shows through careworn seams of American history
A Southern European who sweated our dirty, brackish, chores
Who gladly clocked overtime to support how many? Dozens? of colorful relatives
Hidden in ghetto tenements, wasting in some poor, once proud, homeland
Becoming long corrugated Afros defiantly hunted down by white-collared society
With Reagan imperially presiding while Mandela languishes in jail,
Ethnic’s motley faces peer from righteous T-shirts into our hearts, our checkbooks
He conjures spicy food onto oily paper plates in buzzing Central Park stalls
Keith Haring softened him in thick-brushed expressive cartoons
Which make white flight from urban color look paranoid, like chocolate-phobia
Like running from the Stay-Puff Marshmallow Man in *Ghostbusters*
This servant desperately tries all slippers, even Bruno Magli loafers
Rehabilitation is name-branded Nikes dancing rich in three point land
Now “cleansing” suffocates “ethnic” like “cancer” eradicates “breast”

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