

Post card

1

A post card sent by a friend
Haunts me
Since its arrival –
Warsaw: Panorama of the Old Town
He requests I show it
To my parents.

Red buses on a bridge
Emerging from a corner –
High-rise flats and something
Like a park borders
The river with its concrete pylons.
The sky's the brightest shade.

2

Warsaw, Old Town.
I never knew you
Except in the third person –
Great city
That bombs destroyed,
Its people massacred
Or exiled – You survived
In the minds
Of a dying generation
Half a world away.
They shelter you
And defend the patterns
Of your remaking,
Condemn your politics,
Cherish your old religion
And drink to your freedom
Under the White Eagle's flag.

For the moment,
I repeat, I never knew you,
Let me be.
I've seen red buses
Elsewhere
And all rivers have
An obstinate glare.
My father
Will be proud
Of your domes and towers,
My mother
Will speak of her
Beloved Ukraine.
What's my choice

To be?

I can give you
The recognition
Of eyesight and praise.
What more
Do you want
Besides
The gift of despair?

3
I stare
At the photograph
And refuse to answer
The voices
Of red gables
And a cloudless sky.

On the river's bank
A lone tree
Whispers:
"We will meet
Before you die."