



Dancing with Teresa

The music was harsh, atonal; the scale, changing and unknown.
I, her chosen partner, must dance, though tipsy and quite slow.
Teresa's steps were faster than the notes; her hair, wind-blown.

She and other women of the village had worked the land and kept the homes alone.
Other guests, those not chosen for the dance, clapped and laughed, for fun, for show.
The music was harsh, atonal; the scale, changing and unknown.

Older than her years, her face at rest had turned to furrowed stone.
On her dresser, a photo of groom and bride, the last with that same face aglow.
Teresa's spins were faster than the notes; her hair, wind-blown.

The men had marched away, she said, to arms had gone.
The war killed brothers and husband; neighbors were lost or lay close in ground below.
The *lijerica* was harsh, screeching; the scale, jarring and unknown.

Next, the enemy from over the mountains looted and burned; their mortars crumbled stone.
This evening, years later, invited strangers share *rakija* and dance and hope for the morrow.
Teresa's spins were faster than any could expect; her steps, light as if wind-blown.

That night *Gromača* village brooded damp and chilled; even so, her dark eyes shone.
Behind black clouds, the Croatian moon rose, a mirror to sorrow.
The music was harsh, atonal; the melody, changing yet well-known.
Teresa's spins were faster than my arms could catch; her face, dry; our tears, wind-blown.

—Louis Girón