

prams A pushchair usually used for transporting children, used for a different purpose here.

meagre A very small amount.

grams A small unit of measuring weight. Together, 'meagre' and 'grams' emphasise the scarcity of food during the siege.

shells Explosive missiles or bombs.

bread Serbo-Croatian has several dialects used in Bosnia and Herzegovina. 'Heljeb' (intentionally mis-spelled by Harrison) is the Ljekavian term for bread, while 'hleb' is Ekavian. 'Kruh' is the term for bread in Croatian.

plays Plans or actions used to gain an advantage of some type.

▼ 'THE BRIGHT LIGHTS OF SARAJEVO' BY TONY HARRISON

After the hours that Sarajevans pass
 queuing with empty canisters of gas
 to get the refills they wheel home in prams,
 or queuing for the precious meagre grams
 of bread they're rationed to each day,
 and often dodging snipers on the way,
 or struggling up sometimes eleven flights
 of stairs with water, then you'd think the nights
 of Sarajevo would be totally devoid
 of people walking streets Serb shells destroyed,
 but tonight in Sarajevo that's just not the case—
 The young go walking at a stroller's pace,
 black shapes impossible to mark
 as Muslim, Serb or Croat in such dark,
 in unlit streets you can't distinguish who
 calls bread *haleb* or *hleb* or calls it *kruh*.
 All takes the evening air with a stroller's stride,
 no torches guide them, but they don't collide
 except as one of the flirtatious plays
 when a girl's dark shape is fancied by a boy's.
 Then the tender radar of the tone of voice
 shows by its signals she approves his choice.
 Then match or lighter to a cigarette
 to check in her eyes if he's made progress yet.

And I see a pair who've certainly progressed
 beyond the tone of voice and match-lit flare test
 and he's about, I think, to take her hand
 and lead her away from where they stand