

Family Recipe

On Saturdays my mother baked
and with the pastries came the stories

Take two hundred grams of *feinste schokolade*
break it into pieces and melt it into acquiescence

Cream the butter. Let it be slick and soft
solid and yellow as the wily Viennese *volk*

Separate the eggs, after all some are yolks
and others whites – beat them, whip them

Then sift the flour of memory. It will drift
like snow and disbelief onto the Stefansdom

After forty minutes at a moderate heat
the kitchen oven disgorges a dark and risen feast

I am permitted to place a crystallised violet
shrivelled, cold and purple as my pale heart

My mother wields the pastry knife
you won't starve she says

But my mouth is black and crammed with ash
my teeth the tombstones they never had
my breath the smoke of chimneys

Only my tongue is still moving, licking up
my sweet, young life, hollowing me out into shame

Such delicacies take a lifetime to digest
bitte Mutti ich kann nicht mehr essen

Sylvia Paskin

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