

# Spirit of Bosnia / Duh Bosne

An International, Interdisciplinary, Bilingual, Online Journal  
Međunarodni, interdisciplinarni, dvojezični, online časopis

## Checkpoint

Mario Suško

at the checkpoint made of tree  
trunks and barrels filled with sand,  
a group of pale bus riders standing  
in a meandering line depends  
on one man whose belly will  
soon have his blouse buttons burst.

am I a Jew: a Muslim: a Catholic:  
which one does he want to hate more:  
will my name on the soiled piece  
of paper confuse him or make him  
pull me out by my shirt sleeve  
as if I were a disposable part

of the human race, deemed perhaps  
to be worthy of living or dying,  
as my uncle used to say, by the look  
of my penis: am I saved or doomed  
if he suddenly remembers, or I do,  
that we went to the same high school:

as I try to keep my sternomastoids  
from twitching, my mind from being forced  
to accept that someone who has no power  
over life is a bigger coward than someone  
who does, he positions himself before me,  
his sourish breath becoming my breath:

Do you know if Maria's still there:  
his words burn on my face like ember:  
there, meaning in the city: and I feel  
cold sweat run down my spine: am I  
done for if I say yes, or if I say no,  
pretend I did or did not recognize him:

but he just grins and hands me

---

back my papers, moving to a young woman  
next to me and motioning with his hand  
for her to step out, still glancing at me,  
while I rock back and forth, staring  
past him, past my life, at the jagged line  
of skeleton trees on the mountain ridge  
where the dying daylight still lingers.

*From Closing Time, Brownsville, VT: Harbor Mountain Press, 2008 - © 2008 Mario Susko*

The preceding text is copyright of the author and/or translator and is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License.