

**For Prague/The Girl Who Cuts My Hair**

*. . . and round her neck she'd tied a scarf  
the color of pale smoke.*  
—Jaroslav Seifert, "A Song at the End"

There are so many cemeteries. The Baroque buildings,  
gaudy as carnations, like brains. As brains, like carnations.  
*Neither quite the same, nor quite different* the founder of the French  
fashion label claims about an unnamed thing: women's shoes,  
a silk scarf the color of despair, which is not unlike  
the color of smoke. And when I missed home I wanted  
only pictures of places in the city with no water. No bridges,  
no ornamental saints stilled in their agony. Their love of God, too, so  
agonized. Uplifted hands catching snow over the river  
in mid-winter, when night is a reverent black, and you'd cover your hair  
in yellow scarves. A series of yellow scarves. Lemons in a bowl  
or slices on the radiator. Scent of clean rooms, murder, early evening  
in August. Memory has this bite. I heard we are losing it, our minds  
now trained that all information is stored somewhere. Somewhere  
is the way I described you for so long. Folk-pattern wildflowers  
on your ankle bone. And leaving what. Some trace amount  
of dead skin. The scent of smoke which is not unlike despair.  
We've learned this a few times in history—which is a reliquary—  
which you are, also: a holding room for history, in fragments.