



BLOODAXE CRITICAL ANTHOLOGIES: I

**TONY  
HARRISON**

EDITED BY NEIL ASTLEY

And every pound of this dead weight is pain  
to Thomas Campey (Books)...



TONY HARRISON

BLOODAXE CRITICAL ANTHOLOGIES: I

# TONY HARRISON

EDITED BY NEIL ASTLEY

*To Panicos & Elli  
with kindest regards  
and fondest memories  
of Cyprus*

*Tony  
October  
1991*



BLOODAXE BOOKS





The Guardian sent poet Tony Harrison to Bosnia. Last night he filed the following poem from Donji Vakuf, which had just fallen to the Bosnian Muslim army

## The Cycles of Donji Vakuf

*We take emerald to Bugojno, then the opal route to Donji Vakuf, where Kalashnikovs still shoot at retreating Serbs or at the sky to drum up the leaden beat of victory.*

*Once more, though this time Serbian, homes get pounded to facades like honeycombs.*

*This time it's the Bosnian Muslims' turn to cleanse a taken town, to loot, and burn.*

*Donji Vakuf fell last night at 11.*

*Victoria is signalled by firing rounds to heaven and for the god to whom their victory's owed.*

*We see some victors cycling down the road on bikes that they're too big for. They feel so tall as victors, all conveyances seem small, but one, whose knees keep bumping on his chin, rides a kid's cycle, with a mandolin, also childish size, strapped to the saddle, jogging against him as he tries to pedal.*

*His machine-gun and the mandolin impede his furious pedalling, and slow down the speed appropriate to victors, huge-limbed and big-booted,*

*and he's defeated by the small bike that he's looted.*

*The luckiest looters come down dragging cattle, two and three apiece, they've won in battle.*

*A goat whose udder seems about to burst squirts out her milk to quench a victor's thirst which others quench with shared beer, as a cow, who's no idea she's a Muslim's now, sprays a triumphal arch of piss across the path of her new happy Bosnian boss.*

*Another struggles with stuffed rucksack, gun, and bike,*

*small and red, he knows his kid will like, and he hands me his Kalashnikov to hold to free his hands. Rain makes it wet and cold.*

*When he's balanced his booty, he makes off, for a moment forgetting his Kalashnikov,*

*which he slings with all his looted load on to his shoulder and trudges down the road, where a solitary reaper passes by,*

*scythe on his shoulder, wanting fields to dry, hoping, listening to the thunder, that the day will brighten up enough to cut his hay.*

*And tonight some small boy will be glad he's got the present of a bike from soldier dad, who braved the Serb artillery and fire*

*to bring back a scuffed red bike with one flat tyre. And, among the thousands fleeing north, another,*

*with all his gladness gutted, with his mother, knowing the nightmare they are cycling in, will miss the music of his mandolin.*

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του περιοδικού "ΘΕΣΣΑΛΙΚΗ ΕΣΤΙΑ", και της  
"Διαρκούς Ιστορίας Νεοελληνικής Λογοτεχνίας".



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