Primroses in Sarajevo

They grow everywhere
Between the grey blocks of crumbling concrete
Competing with the litter by the roadside
Around the shell of the old barracks, and along the river
They defy ugliness, decay, despair.
And I think of that first time in Sarajevo
Picking my way around the craters in the road,
among the ruined buildings
Insect skeletons of cars and buses rusting in the street
Flower shapes on walls where shells had hit
Shrapnel tracks like petals of daisies
Sheets of plastic covering the blind eyes of empty windows
As people, weary and pale, began the task of clearing up
Hoping the worst was over
And primroses surprised the banks of the Miljacka.

Pat Allen