THE RECKONING

I grew up in a country that did not exist anymore,
wanting to leave it behind. It was a fiction, a lie,

a past that couldn’t be reckoned with, ruins,
a place I vacated and tried to forget about.

My self-declamation appals me, it is as though
I make excuses for myself as well as whoever

ransacked my memories for damning context
and clues, tampered with the evidence, added

to my guilt and shame. I wait for an opportunity
to put things right, to mount my own defence,

argue back, provoke speculation about who
may be behind the invented plot. Characters

float within questions of existence, concepts
we create to keep ourselves away from all that

is essential. Those who put my name out there
are not my friends, have little understanding.

Everything defies gravity, sends shadows
into scratched images, reels of faded film

recycling the same old stories, urban myths
about nations which have been destroyed.

Self-sacrifice might lead to judgement or
recompense, create further significance.

I am decidedly still here, perhaps even alive,
a collective hallucination, a ghost among ruins

of transcendence, trying to identify the dead
and find the missing. It is easy to lose faith,

to tell different kinds of stories about ourselves
and construct the person talking to you now.

From dust and debris something awkward stirs,
despair and terror rather than any sense of awe.

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