



Michael Lee Phillips

Flash

Many years ago I slept in a bunk on an overnight  
train bound for Istanbul.

Once, when I awoke, I was told I was looking at  
Sofia,  
Capital of communist Bulgaria.  
Then thunder rolled into our compartment  
searching  
for the lightning,  
Which we had observed striking its allegiance in  
the  
hills  
Above the city.

It wasn't lightning at all, really.  
It was that cheap stuff you would see putting on a  
show for the masses  
Or in a woman's eye,

Perhaps,  
Like in Belgrade—the fear, then, the fear

That would flash

In the eye that caught yours as the two of you  
passed each other  
In Terazije Square—

The possibilities! Infinite, they would seem, for a  
moment,

Like thunder.

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Michael Lee Phillips has published work in *New York Quarterly*, *The Stinging Fly*, *Poetry Northwest*, and elsewhere. He is author of a book of “noir poems” (an “editor’s phrase,” according to Phillips), *Nights of Naked Manniquins*.