

Acrobats

Ever since we met –
was it Brussels Copenhagen
St. Germain en Laye
across a crowded lobby
and the restaurant clatter
elevated our conversation
to the slow-moving ceiling fans
oiling the slippery air
streetwise saltimbanques
leaping over the transient bases
noting that re-arrivals like monuments
are not so monumental after all
the climbing to get there
and might it be better to prefer
if we could to forget
how the past ten years
were greasy palmprints
on a door no longer open.

Mataveru Airport, Easter Island

No place else on earth keeps its distance
from everything including itself an
origin wrapped in a disappearance

so far removed in a separate age
it can only be the omphalos long sought
through many hazards and seas

on the way to Ultima Thule
landing on Easter Island enacts
a rolling back of the stone

and 887 statues excised as in
a caesarean birth from
the caldera of Rano Raraku

the vision of it inchoate in the volcanic
rock taking massive shape sloughing its tuff
soft outer skin to become a *moai*

and *abu* statue and plinth
rolled lifted wrestled jostled as the elders
say 14 miles and 5 days walk

past the villages like Hanga Roa where
the streets have changed names marking yet

another era's end and a new baptism

again hopeful that the island amid
a sacramental sea will not repeat the cycle
advance increase squander war collapse

those primal self-possessed giants
with uplifted heads and coral and
obsidian eyes long noses and ears

and always close-mouthed
with nothing to say now past hope
lips chiseled away by the wind

some stare out to sea in all directions
home in families awaiting promised visitors
lost kin who never come

some collapsed in exhaustion
from the eroding watch for a glimpse
of a sail on the horizon and then some

in Orango from the island's western
edge maintain a vigil for Make-Make
enshrined in petroglyphs stone watching stone

Bird-God for a year as winner of the contest
for the first swallow's egg while in
Ahu Tongariki on the island's

east 15 of them stare back at the quarry
as the last palm tree is chopped down and ask
why were they born for this

Mexico City International Airport

Below layers of hardened clay
relics suspended in an amber
chamber wait to be revealed
reverenced through this discovery

in that slow brushing away
of specks and motes that says
it wasn't all for nothing
not even a discarded heap

that may contain a bone
fragment or a sliver of armor

or a wedge of saddle alone where
someone met that end

marking an inevitable defeat
a battle that often shifted sides
eliminating cohorts and families
and left only traces

years apart a few clues
scattered like mustard seed
on arid soil it would take
a lifetime to assemble

a warring heart greedy for blood and oxygen
and no matter how swollen
must declare itself the first and
last to be lost

the clocks have betrayed the hours
again in that ongoing lie of time
always a victory from the darkness away
from living forever

what we are after
believing what we can't see
we tell others in order that
we keep digging

After the Coup d'Etat

"Who writes your name in letters of smoke..." Neruda

Amid the remaindered avenues and plazas
a constant scent of spent firewood
wet from the night rain and sweat
the sky pulsates in a blinding sweep

the hologram of a face glowers from La Moneda
restored into a postcard
overseeing the changing of the guard
a whirl of rifles and gloved hands

a seabird's caw lodged in the throat
sounds an alarm though rush hour
searches for a certain X on the map
deep then deeper an aquifer of molten lapis lazuli

and copper pours into the Maipo Valley
taste the bitter elements of earth and fire
below the acres of thorns and broken glass
distilled in each drop of wine

is it possible to gather the tears
in a basket floating among the cypress reeds
a tincture of burnt vows
footsteps stormed and gone

Hitchhiking Back to Ottawa

Facing backwards,
I was calculating the miles, asphalt
layered on asphalt, a pleading thumb
on Route 81 in short rides
north, the cambered road
through the mountains bridging
the small rivers.

I was thinking
of miles and you at the end
of those miles. It was in these distances
that we saw too late the chiseled fact
on the frozen canal: *No, I don't
want that now.* Our affair etched into chance rows
by the day's skaters. A single cry crashed down
the burlapped wooden stairs onto the ice
colliding into us. When the thaw
came the scratches washed toward the locks
of the Rideau River. You didn't watch them
from the look-out post on the bridge.
Will you tell me I'm wrong again?

In the downpour
unable to catch a ride, walking across
the Thousand Islands Bridge, a cold wind
at night, I lost it, the acrid impulse that fed us
from the first and for the last time
meshing our veins as we gamboled
all those years, vanished in the waters, and wanting
and unable to turn back, seeing Ottawa
hours away and the miles we carry between us.