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The Plaza: Trotsky in Exile

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THE PLAZA: TROTSKY IN EXILE

that Russia was divided in two
on the government office’s map
“astronomical mirage of hovels,
at the fissured Plaza’s edge in Mexico City,
the Plaza laid out in the image of
dust orbiting the boots of tax collectors,”
yellowed involutions worn into
what the brain thought the brain looked like,
the skull—
—Norway: the photographs with Natalya which lose their gray definition
Pale clothes &
hair bleaching to historical white
The pictures themselves a remnant of Not the camera
 thinking (the light shirring through the lens)
Across the face of the lens)
Him slumping into the light
From his desk as the background
Blacks out What’s left in the room
What blacks away into A grand subtraction
Slurring through it
The light tearing open the silvered paper
the fever again This is the fever again
This is the hospital—

—the new chess machine, star of Le Cirque de Fantôme-Mimes,
not the lone & false automaton of scandal fame
housing a tiny grotesque (an exile from the freak show)
but 2 child-sized dolls, oiled, masqué, rigged to queue
ivory & marble figures through an involved rote-play
which soon bored the hosts, richest jewry of St. Palais,
though a man with friends in Munich agreed that Europe’s
mind was divided against itself, resting in his car—
—There it sinks into a coma between two thin stretches of woods.
More and more empty tins are lying by the side of the train.
The engine, one carriage hitched to it, makes daily trips to a larger station
to fetch our midday meal and newspapers.
Influenza has invaded our compartments.
Our engine keeps rolling back and forth to avoid freezing . . .
we do not even know where we are.

“Thus twelve days and twelve nights passed during which
no one was allowed to leave the train”—

—how long til the frontier? Alma Ata to the south,
Archangel also never reached by the royal family—

—had wanted once to sleep with just
her voice, her whole hatful of fetishes stripped off,
her silk slip dropped over the black boots,
St. Petersburg swaying down past her hips
—the way sickness came into her home,
a mother slipping from the steambath
unornamented as an eggshell & damp
from the veil of enriched atmosphere
to find the attendants dismissed,
jewels sprawled across her bed
& a pale Nicholas sweating with brain-fever
loose in the folds of her auricular chambers
that rose from the gated square
into towers described often from a distance,
from the western slums where certain doors
were annotated with coal one November,
carbon over red, & burned off their hinges
—fearing iconography her body liquidated
in a coal mine with sulfuric acid with her family
—a skullcap: the White Guard’s blind horses
that held the city back & away from her head
—off with the whole disastrous family
& how the end ran in their skin’s
anarchic cartography, veins so verging
on the surface of their bodies
—slinking out of her bad blood,
shedding her children’s flesh of her flesh
down the coal chute, the last Winter Palace,
the drought-dust rising like water
—but the city’s towers, remember,
still rendered as “onion-shaped & conspiring
ripely into the azure evening”
—so he wrote hurriedly in his notebook,
already late for an appointment with an icepick
that would divide his head from his head,
the whorled lobes of cinder landscape
resembling each other more & more
in the permanent approach to the frontier,
rolling back and forth, the southern asylum,
back and forth, the gray mind finally loose
from the center, century, mother country—