

### **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.

### **Mataverí 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.