

correspondence

for la paz

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It was there that I learned, perhaps for the first time, how thoroughly the notion of travel has become corrupted by the notion of power.

–Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Triste Tropiques*

We arrive in Quito in January. A dozen delegates, suspending for a moment the contradictions and rivalries which involve them, pose for a photograph. We are in Trujillo in January. The position of these delegates, their attitudes, and the angle of their glances are deflected. We are in Lima. It is still January. This picture is historic. The bodies disclose an interplay of character and sensibility that articulates a grand collective aspiration.

We depart from Otavalo. Beware of thieves, the signs say. In the open lot that is the station, there are no thieves. Only three volcanoes and a cloud. One cannot make a world with some sand and a bucket of water. We depart in January. The position of the bus is slightly slanted as it circles the town in search of more passengers. This bus is historic. A castle. A sandcastle. An old tire. A church. A museum of animal embryos in a church. One can make a world with. A cattle. We depart when the bus is a human eye.

from the edge of the camera
we approach dividing line of an eye
you recognize the uniforms-banana groves-
airports : losing
taken as cultural referendum

developing only
frontiers of imitation

in the bahia before the rock unhinged language

water refracts light unconcerned

presidents preside over miraflores

(then) the cord was cut the tiger grass mown

(the line of an equator wanders north)

deliver me

from human motion

migration

the rows and rows
refract

alight

a rose
and for a moment
an aberration of seeing

We arrive in the worst state, separate from the world. Sealed off by windows, but moving. Not watching the world pass us by, but passing by ourselves. It is a form of perpetual tourism. The tower-building-temple-landscape is removed from actual events. Eyes glaze with wonder at the self-perfecting objects, at the images begging for recognition. The postcard departs from_____. Arrives in _____.

We depart from Baños with three magicians. Here is the show. Here is the candy. Here is the card trick. Please, buy a pen. As we descend, they sway back and forth, as if in a bath. Here quickly disappears. "I have made a deal with the devil" one says, "to move my hands this fast. It has broken my mother's heart."

Ecuador 3 weeks before birthmark
appeared before earth rippled
making equal
the meridian rises as much above
the horizon as clouds

volcano
.this mark,
or overexposed film
a bite less than

even before the road for wheeled vehicles
there was a road

this is the message

they came on horseback to bathe in the mineral springs

this is the address

in the 1930's the Shell Oil Company opened the road as far as Mera:
drilled a few holes abandoned the well sites

airplane from parasitic city or a better life consumed

sent by web or stamp

other immune systems or labor pools

track : fly over

what wilds me is this:
mangroves sent by post
to the mountain's eyebrow

We arrive in Cuenca. The postcard was sent from here to there. This is the level of involvement on which the postcard operates, freed from responsibility. Walking along the banks of the river, laundry is lain out to dry; a drunk is asleep in the shade. We board the bus, as if to return to "actual" events of "production."

We depart from Chiclayo. The entire coast of Peru is a desert. Buses leave on time and are extremely clean. Tickets are sold by computers. Video Coach. You watch dubbed Hollywood action movies and try to sleep. Dunes engulf the large passenger bus. At this, I am, and have been, ill for days: dotted yellow lines, dank curtain, dotted yellow lines, dubbed Braveheart, dotted yellow lines, dark aisle, do not, ill, depart from Trujillo.

the procession moves along the bricks
and along the missing
bricks

Post: an obsolete map of the city a newspaper
framed by a table a phone call or other unit
of measurement: from the flat future the words
stop it

limitrophe
this is not a contingent formation
an approximation or an account of an event

but a hop in the sack
a ride on the bus
a guinea pig for dinner

another mirror bursting

We depart from Trujillo at night. Some vehicles drive without lights. From the bus window, you see only openings in a series of shacks. One bare bulb. In medieval labyrinths, one "read" statues and topiaries as they walked past. In the walking galleries of sixteenth-century mansions, one passed paintings at three miles an hour. On the bus, nothing is set up or illuminated. We speed by an eye. An eye becomes a human eye when its object becomes human. The sight of a few stars only occasionally obscured by headlights.

locating ourselves
among bodies

we recognize a star

and can only consider
where it ought to be :

seas in the center of the continent

(a circular seal placed over maps)

1857: the Peruvian government sent 300 German families
to settle eastern Peru

people anxious to avoid wars conscription laws and land shortages
fled to Eidt

lost under new stars out of breath
drowned in rivers

edited out of Eidt

some villages settle themselves

a planetarium of instants housing
species from all the andes
when the puma growls you freeze
this bus schedule busy for years this leg

we're the only ones with fear

they've tamed a wild boar

(here) (now)

We arrive in Pisco in February. An eye becomes a human eye when its object has become human. You discard the photograph, suspending for a moment the image. Two delegates are missing from the photograph. You think back to the word "Trujillo," the place and the person. Near the beach, we enter a dilapidated house surrounded by grazing cows. This house is missing its windows, though furniture (a wardrobe, table, and chairs) is visible. Other images of this tower-building-temple-landscape flash onto the world-screen. This is the postcard's level of involvement.

We depart from Lima. Never pack anything you can buy on the bus: nuts, plantains, salteñas, empanadas, banana chips, humitas, refrescos, water, soda, candy, pens, small cards declaring your love. Transit : buses, paratransit, rural public buses, and intercity transit : new transportation systems and technology : capacity and quality of service. The world comes back, walking and sitting. In Pisco there is no bus. Stand by the road and wait for a passing van, cargo truck or taxi. Stand by and beside.

Post: from the parking lot we examine the lobes
of biography murky at first from the plane
we examine the depth charts: torso, bay, bahia
a place soon enough exchanged

cards in albums have foxed
small brown spots

marks of time's marks

there are already 15,000 squatters in the valley
utilizing 100,000 acres of land
we wade through our loses
and buy a stalk of sugarcane

scattered along the left side of the Upano and Jibaro

everyone loves a ticket:
for instance, we use a public restroom,
receive a slip of paper
with a number in the thousands
and an image of the toilet

which is missing his hands

We arrive in Machu Picchu in July. There is no more talk of delegates or free trade agreements, only freedom. That is, your position frees you from all responsibility. Except to the state of perpetual tourism. Other images of this tower-building-temple-landscape have already flashed onto the world-screen. This is how the postcard operates. Climb the hill and pose next to a llama. How we operate. Responsible to no one. Sender-and-receiver take another photo.

We depart from Cusco in March. Two delegates are still missing from the image. One, somewhat removed from the public scene, the other could have no place in this picture. A postcard has spread over everything. We arrive in Puno. In the photograph, "the old man" is in the center of the first row. He clutches his large leather brief case, which likely contains elaborate notes. We arrive in Sorata. You forget the old man, what he is carrying, and walk up to the cemetery to stare at the cats. There is a path here heading up to the mountain.

the method began
somewhere in the borderlands
where we were taken for a ride
exposure to a place means
hiding your camera

asnu gringu (the stupid gringo)
cura bandido (the rascal priest)

indignant tourists handling guns

perched on scaffoldings

to lose specific gravity

they strike brief sparks

time, all at once inflects the line

this epode
shrinks at the sight of it

the camera pulls away
alone and in several places
while lying down

I don't know where I was last night (don't ask)

but all around me the wounded danced

(that's where I was last night)

god himself host of this place that is nowhere

fade out with night anthem

“valuable friend”

No camouflage

or silhouette

We depart from Copacabana. In order to reach the other side of the lake, our bus is driven onto a barge. We cross, adjacently, on a fishing boat. The barge, not much larger than our bus, tilts to one side, and the angled edge conceals a harbor. Poem including bridges. So with weight, and with weightlessness, a type of plowing down, a type of washing over, a trackless passage. Into which the water rushes. We are left ten miles from town. We are left with a color image affixed to a slice of cardboard.

having navigated the waters
for centuries

the currents hold and keep
his foot on the rudder

maybe we all come
to the isla del sol

in a blessed car decorated with flowers

an avalanche slides
here until dead
for the real

"a tree sags in the city of telephones"

throwness or

 one international corporation
 one postmark

one bottomless

we climb to the top of a hill overlooking a lake

there is a navy base below guarding telephones

deployed

a call-hitting mark an era or portrait
the postcard secretly delivers us from the toil of letter writing

standing license to forget

*physical geography accounts
for only a small part of the variation*

Bus or the litmus of civil society. Before entering Bolivia, we deboard the bus. Curiously, from the checkpoint's hill, we can no longer locate the lake we've been following. A border incident. Nothing happens suddenly. A sleepwalker delivers the mail, making haste. We finally shake the land's dark cloud, the shadow of waterbirds and aboveground powerlines. We happen hastily to unfold our documents, to document an unfolding scene in which you have lost your papers, suddenly.

sold off power and gas : sold the night

the instants a dot

a visible dot hardly visible

twice
folded

slipped
under
door

well here i am,

we are going through tough times here, no food no gas no peace, tomorrow the hole country has decided to stop everything so i wont go to the university until wendsday or who knows, and some people will go into hunger strike, the city next to La Paz (El Alto) is militarized so the airport is blocked, no planes leaving no planes arriving, yesterday someone try to take the government? (coup d'état, golpe de estado, don't know in english) so we are kind of worried here, today we tried to buy food and there was no meat or eggs that was scary. i'm fine, worried 'cause i'm alone with my sister here (my parents are in the USA) and i don't know if they can come back with so many problems, but lets hope evrything will get better soon. for more infomation check CNN (en español) we are after Irak news, sad isn't it?

so, take care

love you all

kisses,

Vale

if only we could sleep on our feet
act quickly that is
we may have saved our sack
from its horrible destiny
destination that is that is
it is somewhere else

elsewhere

Post: here on earth everything has been traded in.
this head other translation of erasing teeth
t.v. blares erasing tongue — dubbing tongue
we are encountering a tunnel lie still

address: a la palms
san fran with his wolf
in the catacombs

We arrive in La Paz. It is still March. In the photograph, a man, just barely smiling, leans over the shoulder of "the old man." The altitude is beginning to bother you. You move slowly, buy some coca, rest. Here is the mestizo cathedral. In a state separate from the world, it is an object to be photographed. We exist for the tower-building-temple-landscape removed from actual events. We arrive in Sucre in April. In the photograph, only one of them stares at the camera. His eyes beg the lens. It is the air of assembly. Outside your window there is a web-like jumble of black power lines.

We depart from Rurrenabaque. The driver stops for a sloth in a tree, but not for a passenger. Someone yells "scoundrel," or its Spanish equivalent. We pass two Mormon missionaries in neckties. In the jungle, even the old women wear their bathing suits as they run errands. A family of three on a scooter stops for a passenger. The driver stops for a sloth, or its Spanish equivalent. A sleepwalker reads her mail, poses for a photograph.

"I have a story filled with rockets
and jungles
it's called the Minifundismo and the Machete"

Guzman [his nome de guerre is Gonzalo]

a count reveals we are living among less
of these attendant spirits

per square mile than the world's other nations

how the chupadores suck men's souls

everybody goes to sleep no one can wake

not even the animals

postcard scene : little bell of Paucartambo,
ring farewell for me,
I am going to the great forest
I will never return

Dispidikuy (The Farewell)

Anchaynata qharip dibilidad nintaqa yachanku
(that's how you find out about a man's weakness)

We arrive in Potosi in May. To the right of "the old man," another man, looks on attentively. The cerro rico is an old man, his briefcase emptied and pillaged. The eyes of this other man fix upon a moving object: his old adversary. The cerro rico, or rich hill, swallows men. You forget the photograph and stare at the rusting machinery that borders the city. The streams stained gray and light brown from the silver industry.

We arrive in Uyuni in June. In the photograph, you become fixated on a man with a necktie. He rests slightly slouched, abandoned in meditation. It is very cold along the edge of the salar de Uyuni, a giant, white saltpan bordering Bolivia and Chile. The man with a necktie remains unchanged. His gaze is perpendicular to the camera, and he looks far left, apparently at nothing in particular.

there is nothing to do but cut wood
the government has declared a quarantine
will not let us cross the boundary
creek

catalogue of rivers
cemetaries
rituals

three copper objects:

a folded copper sheet
a bent piece of copper
a folded piece of copper

one broken hammerstone

which strained the right hand
which strained the left hand
in the mouth

the burial was one of a series of burials

three extra human hands (listen attentively)
one next to the left hand

two fetus burials

one next to the right hand
one along the south wall

llama long bones

someone must move through the dirt
someone must lay the bricks
and below
the site must begin to become ancient

walk briskly across mined terrain
somewhere else means afraid of burglars
somewhere (one second more) trembles
you hear the little click of a key in a lock
as something comes loose and falls

We depart from Potosi. We pass patches of salt, patches of desert, patches of cacti, patches of boulders in the dirt road, and patches of snow, but still, our bus overheats. As we wait, we nearly re-live all the landscapes we have lived before. Passengers litter the desert, relieving themselves. It is not that the climate is confused, but as we wait, we wade in snow banks and tumble weed. A collision of some origins we thought we had once willed away.

We arrive in Ururo. It is still June. We leave quickly. Board a plane. They are likely friends: "the old man" and the slender man who leans over his shoulder. In Rurre, the photograph begins to warp. It is hot and humid here, along the edge of the Amazon basin. Lifelong friends, or perhaps co-workers, the two smile gently. Their faces composed of a smooth blend of black and white. Now the postcard, obsolete, spreads its images over everything electronic. How would you look as a tower-building-temple-landscape? The photograph thickens.

selling things means noise

but this is the wrong place

we run all night before finding water

or seeing headlights : my electricity my

capitol

condensed

tenderly bordered

the story is already over:

the least obedient people in the world

pin milagros across a map of

mountains never mentioned by name

vagrants

extravagant

Post: we went looking for symmetry after the riots

we found the glass box at the gas station

without being continuous you stop removing

old photographs from newspapers

clippings from

phantom - nation

or amputation

We arrive in La Paz. Again. Where is the man who could have no place in this picture? This tangle drives the viewer to distraction. Climate change adversely affects the photograph. The positions of the delegates, suspending for a moment the contradictions and rivalries which involve them, begin to blur. We find a room near the Mercado Negro. You purchase a bag, likely made in Asia. There are, of course, other pictures. Pictures of the two who could never be included. Pictures of the twelve that closely resemble this one. Pictures approaching a postcard. Distant images draw near. Tower-temple-building-landscape.