

## THE PLAZA: TROTSKY IN EXILE

—that Russia was divided in two  
on the government office's map at the fissured Plaza's edge in Mexico City,  
“astronomical mirage of hovels, dust orbiting the boots of tax collectors,”  
the Plaza laid out in the image of what the brain thought the brain looked like,  
yellowed involutions worn into 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 jewelry 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. Day after day passes.  
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—