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ANTON KRUEGER

st petersburg

*Known as "the city built on bones", St Petersburg's foundations sit above the skeletons of the press-ganged slave labourers who toiled to erect it. Historians believe the remains of some 100,000 serfs are buried beneath its wide Parisian-style avenues and grand Italianate palaces. (Andrew Osborne, *The Independent*, 8 July, 2006.)*

this stone still fresh from
dostoevsky's tomb

in the necropolis
in leningrad,

& with a slightly
different taste

still on my tongue,

still in my ears the deep sighs
of a people who do not
like to compromise,
and who haven't,
yet, much, ever...

aztec, roman-esque
standing delicate
& dali-esque,

palatial elephant on stilts,
this beauty built up on
the million broken bones
sunk into this swampland...

white guys can't beg

white guys can't beg,
they haven't learnt the ropes yet...

you see them standing at the robots,
their signs limp in hand, looking stolidly ahead
while the zimbabweans work the crowd –

“even for you only R50.00”
says the one at my window,
“for a ticket to bulawayo”.

the whiteys just stand there, morose,
as if the audacity of having ended up
on the street is outrage enough.

on moving house

if only I'd taken up a
hobby like kayaking,
or flying a light aircraft;
instead of collecting books...
you know – something easier
to pack up, not as heavy.

quit

nine notes on lisbon

NA could Pessoa

1. love letters

fernando pessoa courted her with ten years of words,
but finally, indignant, she tells him he's a *personne*...

in portuguese a *peessoa* is a person, but in the french it's
no-body...

he was in love with words and not the flesh,
his love extinguished him –

2. juggler

a juggler with his two dogs walks across the plaza
in front of the national theatre shouting “love”, “love”, “love” ...

in my hotel room i'm watching pornography as
louise runs a bath...

the tram runs down the hill past a poster saying
“do something positive – sleep.”

3. sleepy lisbon

stately buildings
slowly sinking in
to an emptying centre.

4. only once

the monastery, the church,
the palace, the crypt have
ceased to fulfill their functions,
can they open their doors
to the masses, representing ~~them~~ *of*
what they no longer are...

5. walking tour

our guide has told the stories so many times before,
he tells them now entirely w/out passion –

so the tales of a cardinal's affairs with a whole convent of nuns;
of families of nobility butchered by the marquis de pombal;
of bishops thrown from the parapets, their bodies dragged
around the masonic streets by a madman for a week

are all explained & clarified & consumed & digested
in a way that makes them sound quite ordinary...

6. on the subway

two suits recognise each other instinctively,
and gravitate towards each other's orbit
in the mottled population of the carriage...

7. patronising

folks from the smaller countries
– lithuania, portugal, mayotte –
have a slightly deferential
slowness i find attractive:
they know they're no
world power...

8. at lisbon aeroporto

i keep thinking I'll see somebody i recognise;
but of course i don't – i only see everybody
i recognise as those others also operating
within the realm of the gods, moving smoothly
through the clean world, boarding planes,
coasting on the shifting light, afloat in dineros...

9. these days

these are the last days of the travellers,
fifty years ago air travel was
exotic & difficult & expensive & in
fifty years the resources will be done...

they'll be marvelling at how easy it was
for us to skip around...by then ppl will
be escaping the noxious atmosphere by
staying safely at home...

the future will be in awe at our
waiting here at the airport,
sipping espressos, waiting for
a delayed flight to barcelona
on a sunday night...

the last able to traverse the earth
with such impeccable glibness...