

**Havana trip**  
(Qasida on cigarette)

1.

I miss  
[cigarettes  
in] my Havana  
          nostalgia  
intentions  
unfulfilled  
on the divan  
          morning  
recurring dream -  
I smoke again  
& wake up in sweat  
          “Y., what have you done?” –  
*plavi dim, nicotine-nuage-sans-neige*  
Nico & heartbeat  
palpitations, white  
          iguanas  
smoker identity  
out of place  
I have arrived  
too late  
          in Havana  
& I have never  
arrived  
in  
Havana  
          *cigars, tabacos,*  
*fumée de cigarettes*  
*perdues*

2.

Not a damn dog on the road. I arrived in Havana at five o'clock in the morning. In fact, I don't know whether I ever really arrived in Havana. “We never had Havana, we only had the dream”; I was constantly arriving in Havana and at the same time I was never arriving in Havana. The sea

breeze, the screeching and squawking of seagulls. One-eyed iguanas & “Dos gardenias” in the air.

3.

bodies on fire,  
senses numb

[cigarette smoke  
up up up in the air ]

4.

one last cocktail  
before I leave  
rainfalls flip flop  
in my] Havana  
nicotine  
desire-*puros*  
I can't find my exit  
my love-r  
guitar sounds  
“Sueño Latino”  
on the radio  
disappearing sun  
smells of cedar  
mahogany ironwood  
abandoned *bongo*  
on the floor

5.

She was sitting alone in my favourite wine bar in Barcelona, ‘La Vinya del Senyor’; a plate of sardines, *pan con tomate* and a pack of Cohiba on the table; her name was Rocio; she had soulages-black tattoos on both her arms. “*No hay zapatos buenos en Zaragoza*”, she confessed to me after two or more glasses of amontillado.<sup>1</sup> She smiled in flamenco-saudade style.

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<sup>1</sup> *There are no good shoes in Zaragoza.*

6.

in] my Havana  
    eyes open  
        mad dogs      barking

three fire petal-shots  
*sonidos muertos*  
&  
    perfume of butterfly jasmine

7.

the evening star  
    glows in your eye –

soft tear  
  
    cigarette burning

8.

The wine bar 'Café de la Nouvelle Mairie' is almost empty. A night in late November. Opposite my table, a woman in her thirties - tiny constitution, long blondish hair, a *Gauloise* in her left hand, sleeveless off-white T-shirt under a knitted jumper, jeans, cowboy boots - tones of charm; she could be the younger sister of Lou Doillon. With her, two men, one tall & skinny, the impersonation of cool & the other one, short with glasses, the intellectual type. The talking, the laughing, the fooling around; we are on a movie set, Godard is about to enter. The tall man sings *Joyeux Anniversaire* as I sip my glass of celebratory champagne; more banter, more drinking, more smoking... first inside, then outside; Gainsbourg's *Aux armes et caetera* from a close by window facing down the square; crescent moon. Dark & light.

9.

too few cigars  
    [in my    suitcase]  
too many void dreams

I've spent  
all my available credit  
[warm the bedsheets]

10.

Did I say I would meet you in Cordoba?  
Or in Seville?

Long is the night  
the last cigarette  
burning

Follow the traces  
[ ] I left for you –

Do you still smoke?

I don't give a damn, actually.

11.

Grenada, twin city of living ghosts melancholy in hearts

Sultan's tears imprinted on the back of the memories of the city wanderers.

Salsa  
lingering in the air.

12.

*Tabacos*  
play  
black death –

who ate my oranges?

13.

Shooting stars  
straight           to the bone  
screaming scars  
    from my arrow-ariel  
        goodbye Havana  
it was nice while it  
lasted, I inhale  
    one last smoke-bone  
marrow-cigar-trace  
    *Ersatz Zigarette*  
in the company of Lady  
Lazarus, Spider-woman, and The Man  
Who Shot Liberty Valence.

14.

Somewhere in my memory are stored the one thousand and one windows of Trieste, infinite variations of narratives within narratives within narratives. A window into the story of Esmeralda Garcia, a young Spanish winemaker from Madrid who arrived in Trieste one rainy afternoon in March in nineteen fifty-nine. She was searching for the legendary wine, "The Madrilian Rose". Then, a window into the story of Santiago de Campos, Portuguese poet and *flâneur*, the grandson of Fernando Pessoa; de Campos wrote in Portuguese, Italian, French and English. He was working on the fifth edition of his twentieth collection of poems in prose tentatively called "The Book of White Disquiet"; it starts with the words "*Que per la forza delle cose...*", an excellent beginning according to critics praising its prosodic rhythm and lyrical force. Or the window into the story of Isabelle de la Grange rumoured to be Magritte's illegitimate daughter; she pioneered post-surrealism, but through bad luck never achieved fame. Some of her best paintings are kept in the private spaces of the Castello de Duino once owned by the Prince and Princess Thurn and Taxis. She is in her sixties and no longer paints. Or the window into the story of the Sicilian-Tunisian Luigi Burguese from Vigata, a public storyteller turned forensic pathologist... And all the other windows rushing back to me in moments of anamnesis triggered by the sight of an unknowable flower or a rubine sunset in the deserts of my childhood.

15.

on the divan  
    eleven thousand virgins mourn

loss is loss is floss

16.

I am sipping my *cortadito*

parfums  
of red Havana  
in the cup

17.

The Greenwich fog has overtaken everything. Senses locked, minds stunned, bodies in fight-flight mode. Lost connections; light and darkness. A feeling of disorientation. I am blinded by light, unable to project myself into the future. I am breathing with difficulty; my past bound to a continuous present. The river has stopped flowing, words are covered by mud underneath our memories, nostalgic excavations. Place of non-being. I have no choice but to leap forward into the abyss. I am a fish swimming aimlessly in a fishbowl. What else is there? A feeling resembling love.

18.

the evening            long  
cigarette                    short

one of us will

surrender

19.

X: Does my Havana poem sound decent enough?

Y: I don't know.

X: ... (*Reverses some verses*) How about now?

Y: I am not sure.

X: Does it sound less or more decent than my previous poem?

Y: It depends.

X: On what?

Y: On the universal principles of sonic decency.

X: On the principles of what?

Y: ... (*The clock strikes midnight*).

Y: According to the universal principles of sonic decency, vowels in the third, fifth and seventh syllable of every fifth verse in a decent poem in any natural language must be soundless.

X: Who says?

Y: The universal reader.

X: ... (*A few hours later*) *¿Es mi poema suficientemente decente?*

Y: *Si, bastante.*

X: *Si? Si?*

Y: *Si, si.*

X: *Bastante, bastante? Bueno!*