

Sending Off the Godhead in the City of Light

1. The Kiss

Early Monday morning the night train from Hamburg pulls into the Gare du Nord & I step down from the train & make my way through the crowded bustling station & emerge through the front doors & am confronted with the spectacle of intense rush hour traffic now almost at a standstill making the Place de Roubaix seem like a giant sea of sheet metal or a vast cubist-futurist collage accompanied by honking horns & idling motors & clouds of exhaust & the staccato rattle of jackhammers & the piercing blasts of the traffic policemen's whistles as they struggle to maintain a semblance of movement through the obstacle course of metal barricades set up by the street department who have torn up huge sections of the street for some expansive construction project while people are loading & unloading luggage from cars & taxis & pedestrians are streaming in & out of the station working their way through the maze-like ever-shifting gridlock & delivery drivers & motorcycle couriers are vainly struggling to inch ahead as the collective tension increases exponentially becoming a palpable pulsing presence & suddenly I catch sight of a young couple standing beacon-like in the middle of the stagnating chaotic scenario locked in an embrace apparently totally oblivious to their surroundings deeply immersed as they are in the obvious sensual pleasures of a prolonged & passionate kiss putting a particularly Parisian-romantic spin on the otherwise harrowing reality of another Monday morning in the grinding-to-a-halt City of Light.

2. The Time Time Takes

I'm sitting in the café La Madeleine de Proust in the Rue Descartes on a mild sunny October afternoon having just finished a tomato & basil tarte & green salad & a glass of red wine now leaning back in my chair lingering over a cup of espresso aimlessly soaking up the atmosphere admiring the cloudless blue sky & the sheen of the black slate roofs & the stalwart stone edifices of the buildings & the cobblestone streets polished to a high gloss from all the endless years of use & eventually my eyes come to rest on the receipt in the little silver tray on the green metal table with its patina of age & spots of rust & reading the name & address I find myself in a sudden interstice where the names Proust & Descartes are overlapping & refracting my perspective & perception accordingly & then I'm thinking about thinking and the time time takes & all that goes with it when it goes & what little actually remains as proof that we are what we are merely because we're able to think about it which in terms of substantiality really doesn't seem like very much at all.

3. Paris-Macbeth Vortex

The slightest purpose with its featherweight resolve has me going down the Rue Lacépède from the Place de la Contrescarpe toward the Jardin des Plantes for a leisurely walk in the park & halfway down the hill I see two grubby red-faced winos in a little corner niche between two buildings which provides just enough shelter for the two of them & their meager belongings & my passing cursory glance becomes a prolonged study as I walk by looking closely yet discreetly at how they're living right there on the street amidst the empty bottles & rubbish & dirty blankets grumbling & muttering & puttering about in a sort of squalid-domesticated-oblivious-anarchy which catches me up in a sudden vortex of conflicting emotions repelled as I am at the filth & neglect but simultaneously sympathetic toward their plight & finally almost sort of envious at the display of such resolute stoicism & overall psychic immunity in the face of such otherwise hopeless odds making me think of that scene in *Macbeth* where Banquo comes out of the castle with his son & makes a passing remark to the men outside about the impending rain only to be answered by the flash of a blade & the admirable four-word sentence so succinct & brutal: "Let it come down" which of course meant the end of Banquo but also implied something of the fatalistic going-with-the-flow-of-things & spiritual resilience which I could stand to cultivate

myself if I wasn't always so caught up in the endless play of appearances & the spectacular imagery while walking down the street just ghosting along through the thick of it all.

4. Because it's French

The gray wet glistening streets of Paris on a cool October morning through which the complexities of life are moving with their intricate fervor in the form of rumbling traffic & mothers pushing baby carriages & students striding toward the Sorbonne & bent-over old ladies lugging shopping bags from which leeks & baguettes protrude with Parisian matter-of-factness all followed closely by my eyes from behind the big front windows of the Brasserie Le Poliveau where I sit alone at a table as warm & dry & content as a gecko in a terrarium pleased that my broken French & the waiter's somewhat superior broken English allow us a modicum of communication & pleased as well to see how he takes a certain pride in his work which is made all that more apparent as he serves my café au lait & orange juice & omelet with *fromage* & *jambon* with a series of unnecessary yet well-meant flourishes accompanied by snappy little English one-liners like "Yes sir" & "You bet" & later when I'm finished eating & he's clearing the table he asks "It was good?" to which I reply "Excellent" & with a wily grin & a last blast of irrepressible pride he looks at me & says "Because it's *French*" & turns on his heels & leaves me sitting there smiling & looking out the big windows at the endless flow of complexities no less baffled by it all but definitely somewhat wiser as to the source of certain small contentments.

5. Sending Off the Godhead in the City of Light

Time to kill before the reading at the gallery—walk over to the Seine & descend worn stone steps in the darkness—fractured shimmer of neon & streetlamps scattered across the wavelets—over there two lovers kissing in the shadows—over there a dope deal going down—over there a lone cigarette glowing secret agent-like in the inky gloom under the bridge—& just downstream Notre Dame all ablaze in the zillion-watt glow of the incessant incandescent full-fathom perennial millennial fossil-fuel maximum blowout illumination apparently necessary to eradicate the brooding darkness in which all our latent fears might otherwise take root as a party boat motors by with oblivious revelers unknowingly celebrating the end of an age not yet named.