

STÄDERNA / THE CITIES

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said his name. to whom. why. a crossing point. a home. army hotel. attachment building zone. adoptions. Hanoi. soldiers. infants. storm's coming. we were at the red river. saw a wholly naked bleeding man wrapped in blue plastic. two policemen followed him. humidity rises. after the rain. storm now over Ha Long Bay. literature's temple. the black space he falls into. rain falls over the streets. people wander in large plastic sheets. hurry. a Chinese man. or Vietnamese. wide round eyes. when I turn around we look each other in the eye. a glance. a glancing moment. double stage. the actors laugh. at our naiveté. examine how it feels. to be able to feel such confidence. to tell a sad story about a family in peacetime. in the morning. in half-sleep. in precisely his eyes. it is raining. I had no luck finding any cigarettes. dial 209 he says. to order. is not the heart the organ of repetition writes M. Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum. do you lose. or find. so many people everywhere. at each task. in clusters. taxi drivers waiters flower vendors. high humidity. the seven eight month-old children. the expectant parents. how does it sound. she asks the Vietnamese actors. the village you come from. big clusters. flocks of mopeds move among each other. rush between the cars. rapid movements of sadness tenderness run over her face. one pillar pagoda. disgust and pleasure. desire and anger. delta. the black square. darkness. at six o'clock already. begins to fall

the red river's red-brown waters. we cast ourselves out into the traffic stream. the broad street. five motorcycles in breadth. in bike traffic measurements. much higher speed. at the lake we saw a dead fish. the shore. the water's edge. full of offal. fruit skins. scraps. the dead fish on its side. its staring eye. understood only then what he spoke about. the environment. the problems. only then. for the surgical masks on women. children. and piled up in shops. and the family he says. the family unit splintered. the cities are too big. the difference between poor and rich. increasing. freedom of speech. not being allowed to say everything. anything. to give the site away to someone else. or understand justice differently. how it arises. how its horizon is drawn. Gulf of Tonkin. boat all-the-way still. surrounded by other boats lit up in darkness. full moon. the mountains are dark silhouettes. I swim. paddle. into something immense tall green. vast nature. look out into darkness to the opening to the sea. his eyes become sensitive. wounded. when I ask him about the war. dragon of the sky. that is what Ha Long means he says. or in the sky. what do you hope for I ask. peace he answers. no more war. nature. the tide he says. they fought with nature. with the help of nature. when the tide went out the whole fleet ran into steel-covered pilings. hidden underwater. three victories. he says. long border. history. he saw a dragon in the sky. twice the clouds shaped themselves into a dragon. a thousand-kilometer border with China he says. shows me his sandals. the sole's underside. halo. a large magnetic ring ringing the sun. blue outer edges. unnerving he says. the sun. the doubling. before major natural disasters

in reverse. reverberations. two boys went home from the baker's. crossing the paving stones. puddles. the systematic blasting. by hand. house by house. went astray. went along the canal. Spree. construction site. castle. cathedral. a large open space. snow sculptures. mirror-cubes. every time I try to imagine the city I see Sergel's Torg fronting me. the black and white plaza. snow crystals outside the city center. like a blockade. volcano. volcanic ash. bashful Pompeii. cats in Istanbul. junction. a glimpse of the Bosphorus. je t'interpelle dans la nuit. Anatolia. seagulls angle. two by two. across the sky. the courtyard. filters down into the alley. the passage. sun through the clouds. awnings. closed eyes. the choice not to travel. yet. maybe I am hallucinating he says but it feels like you already said that. at the gates. started bleeding freely. from all wounds simultaneously. huge cargo ships went toward the strait. the opening. disappeared out to sea. two sides. the alley. the courtyard. the face. strange amalgam. freezing. all the coins I cast into the tollbooth. emptied my pockets. for a prayer never to have to return again. see their faces are so alike. in some angle of consciousness. over the bridge. felt that it was unhelpable. loss. departure. the first. the second. I do not know. I will try to feel pain all the time he says. the abyss I say. has started moving. the dark alley. a cat rubs against my leg. a man whose legs are capped off at the kneecaps moves across the sunlit sidewalk. a heavily loaded truck gets stuck in the broken street. sways. a phrase with two memories. the bottles clink. open so to speak. until they are wholly still. on both sides. thus set free. city glittering. in sunset search after eros

a test of the heart. the membranes. could come in the morning. sleep. a measure of  
 freedom. somewhere dogs bark. in the night. anxiety like a contraction. dizziness in  
 the body. a state of shock. kicks. kicks. against fetal membranes. the streetlight-lit  
 greenery. horned owl in the awakening city. searching gaze. over the facades.  
 boulevards. all the cars. among lilacs and chestnuts. pollution. bullet holes in house  
 walls. no wind in the night. homeless dogs. a flock. beyond sight. earthquake.  
 Vrancea. six point five on the Richter scale she says. the replica. I stood in the  
 doorway. the house swayed. all the concrete. books fell from the shelf. porcelain.  
 the piano she says. like a black monster slowly moving across the floor. the last  
 books fell. the body's sensors. the hair stood up on my neck. in that moment I could  
 have strangled someone she says. out of terror. I knew I could kill. in winter morning  
 stillness. a flashing string of images. understandings. in the borderland. beyond the  
 border. Stalin square. famine victims. a black dog in darkening mist. the unlit city.  
 in haze. trembling exhaust light. the voice that speaks. has spoken. about birthing.  
 across continents. pazhalsta. woman and child. at the crossing. the baby was all-the-  
 way silent. cried silently. in reluctant light. the white room. I shudder every time I  
 hear it she says. the tragedy of being a human being. after being a woman.  
 Ukrainian. doubling in the labyrinth. to enter the darkness. change places. be left  
 behind. become one of them. unable to be re-translated. at the very threshold of the  
 station. birth. second birth. to feel the unexperienced. the squinting glance. the  
 double. to embrace. life. death. winter-shadow. black or white magic. each  
 reconstruction a loss. an erasure of erasure. it began to happen in my own life she  
 says. Andrea's Slope. acacias. agile and burning. fire smoke in December chill. gray  
 military coats displayed on the fence. a line of men raking leaves on the hillside.  
 reluctant dawn light. white church. white patterned synthetic curtains. stillness over  
 the cobblestone streets. silent subway tunnels. despite the many people. breath like  
 a cloud over her frozen fingers. pork fat. the taste. the smell. a strange perfume in  
 the orange soap. revenge. torture. transition period. no end of history. no end of  
 geography she says. archipelago in a bleeding sunset. during landing. with incredible  
 speed.           the           sun           sinks           at           the           brink

the camera died in the wet snow. moisture. looked out the window. the hotel room's. darkness. city lights. the giant highway. for the all-too-few cars. a man's movements. a woman's. a man so drunk he falls to the floor. crawls up. tries to sleep in a woman's lap. falls when his friends try to raise him. across the chair. the table. falls. a surplus. seventeen years he says. repeats. answers nothing when I tell him some people said I should not come here. the fear of not getting out. home. wakes me up. keeps me awake. the day they celebrated spring. pancakes. round like the sun he says when I ask why. about the many heated burners. and points toward the gray sky. after showing us the monument at the subway to those trampled to death in the panic. women in traditional folk dresses dance on the big stage in the cold. with big coats over their dresses. when I ask her about the children. the music. her face lights up. see a small saxophone. an earring. glimmering under her long hair. their lives were destroyed. they say. after the protests. they will never get any work. be monitored. outcasts. the rest of their lives. they repeat. terror almost a smell in the room. in the restaurant. the entire city was destroyed in the war they say. we walk through the tunnel to the subway. the similarity cuts deep and quick. golden color. a small intense glowing fire-flame is the only thing that makes me ascend the stairs. through memory. detours. sun. the necessary movement. what they know. what they here call the events in Africa. what they are told. an uprising. a revolution. closed rooms. enclaves. established. several. one. one long image chain. dissonance. drunk men stumble into the hotel. four-thirty in the morning. I rise. drop the big key to the floor. move                                  toward                                  the                                  lift

heat of hurricanes. or air currents. while oil flows over the forehead. along the hair. an image of the quay at the city hall. the view from Katarina Street. like a photograph. in blue twilight. flashes. as a photograph is taken. in sleep. through sleep. in sleep's onset. still image. Scandic Hotel. lights. lights reflected in the water. Japanese garden. when I turned the corner after seeing its patterns. microcosm. a monk sat singing next to them. a few words in Swedish. the running water. the flowing oil. the sound of running water. over the forehead. streaming heat from left to right. along the hairline. a heaviness in the hair. as if it were longer. stretched farther. with one bare foot in the snow. land increase. December second. moves towards nightfall. snowfall. I turn around. three men in black winter coats. new-fallen snow. the first tracks. music through the speakers. blaring music. otherwise wholly still. a jogging man passes by. the second after I do not know if I was dreaming. the electric cross illuminated by hundreds of tiny light bulbs. lights up the hillside. the other side. the night of fires. an elusive child. gray snow. wrought iron. balconies. the whole house gutted. emptied. ice-blue. ice-green. color. fallen plaster. the crown of his head in my hand in the early morning. in the slow dawn light. the phantoms of Europe. falling snow. snow crystals. monumental crap as esthetic objects. I couldn't imagine the creative crisis was so deep. a photographic reconstruction of a flight through a city. a large star in the shape of a lance lit up in the west. from the fifteenth floor of Hotel Moscow. breathing is darker. famine victims. a void. where the stomach should have been. and the medicine of night brings more hope. at the site where the church once stood. before it was blown up. or if it just breaks open. hear her say his name. many times. talking about food. greengrocers. an evening by the water. fish. many people. rushed through the streets. went over the bridge. up in the tower. saw the whole city from that highpoint. people gathered on the square. flocked to. the lights. the strong experience of light. the individual. the community. the labyrinth. the nightmare. the event. the handprint. I stood all-the-way still in the nearly-white light. the women's line. water vendors. coffee. cigarettes. conversion. the voice. of the people. counter-forces. want. a drought. a taste of sand. sandy taste in the mouth. fearless. sunlight. electrical shock to the senses. a widening aperture. light intake

legitimacy. fear. the heart at the ruptured street. hear the sounds. the language. the brink. bolting event-sequence. perfect chance. change. love's angle. knowledge's. dark corridors. clear glass. hard. at violence's crossing-point. violent movement. flight. struggle. the streets ended. had the wrong number. wrong name. in some alley. with many birds in the spaces between rooftops. the well. cats. in sunshine. one blind eye. peers. pregnant. the other black. the alley. it bleeds. in the veins. out of the body. construction workers. carrying building-materials in under the curtain. richer. deeper. risk. rich. soil. the up-and-down heads. on the side. Medusa's. underwater. the opening. Jason's path. large cargo ships slowly disappear into the mist. haze. sleek pigeons on the rooftops. a flock of white storks. across the bridge. a heron. in the silence of life. high rooms. in running water. the sound of running water. life. love. bleeding through the veins. jump. jump. they shouted. in the silence of life. stared out over the Bosphorus in the gray cold. hungover. barely awake. drank coffee. sent an sms. went past fish restaurants by boat to the Anatolian side. under Galata Bridge. cold from the water. looked out over it. illuminated mosques. saw the muezzin in the open minaret door. the immense force. the enforcement. silence. the voice of another muezzin in it. when I came to Sweden he says. after a long flight. where he remained hidden in the country for eight months. before he could get out. always had a gun with him in the bathroom. the first apartment. he says. in May. no blinds. hardly anything in the apartment. it was light until eleven at night. he did not understand anything. how it could be so bright. so long. the central station. snow crystals. the arrival. the dry cold. first time. first memory. how it is inscribed in you. a second nature. pain's abyss. having drilled deep enough. or not deep enough. Basilica Cistern. Medusa's two heads. up and down. on the side. innermost. among the pillars. high stakes. the navel stone. marble disc in the high room. the heated burner. the naked body. the two faces. sides. another protest marches slowly through the streets. the bare sand scenery spreading. there is blood on the streets now. he says

movement and silence. sixty seas. circles. enemy in the figure. morning sun. channels. straight roads. the storm system. the green fruits. small zucchini. long rhythms. lines. breathing. the channel's reflections. window to the street. centerline. trespassing. vowels. an interval. no thing. to open the body. movement. truck convoys. they emerge by accident. stood like a flame in the middle of the room in the house. the overseen. the unseen. trees delineating. dark silhouettes. the airport was lit up. cut into me. cut me. his bent figure on the other side of the canal. fragrance. a sudden breeze. one second. two. some spot in the world. affirming. negating. Leonardo da Vinci. he created a river. after the men lowered the roses. uncovered their faces. said Bangladeshi. the naked eye. or just pointed at their stomachs. heimweh und verbrechen. to ignite the fire. when everything stands in wonder. blinding. in light's large entry. a sudden and violent widening. like a birth. the intimate voice. or the sea. rhythms. didn't we. world circumstances. events. hopeless cross purposes. forces. counterforces. migratory paths to massacre. I learnt nothing he says. when I repeated everything he said in Swedish. I learnt nothing I smile. burns. shines. anytime