

I enter the common childishness and brittleness  
Of the sons and daughters of the human tribe.

And I preserve faithfully the prayer in the cathedral:  
Jesus Christ, son of God, enlighten me, a sinner.

6. I—consciousness—originate in skin,  
Smooth or covered with thickets of hair.  
The stubby cheek, the pubes, and the groin  
Are mine exclusively, though not only mine.  
And at the same instant, he or she—consciousness—  
Examines its body in a mirror,  
Recognizing a familiar which is not quite its own.

Do I, when I touch one flesh in the mirror,  
Touch every flesh, learn consciousness of the other?

Or perhaps not at all, and it, unattainable,  
Perceives in its own, strictly its own, manner?

7. You will never know what I feel, she said,  
Because you are filling me and are not filled.

8. The warmth of dogs and the essence, inscrutable, of doggishness.  
Yet I feel it. In the lolling of the humid tongue,  
In the melancholy velvet of the eyes,  
In the scent of fur, different from our own, yet related.  
Our humanness becomes more marked then,  
The common one, pulsating, slaving, hairy,  
Though for the dogs it is we who are like gods

Disappearing in crystal palaces of reason,  
Busy with activities beyond comprehension.

I want to believe that the forces above us,  
Engaged in doings we cannot imitate,  
Touch our cheeks and our hair sometimes  
And feel in themselves this poor flesh and blood.

9. Every ritual, astonishing human arrangements.  
The dresses in which they move, more durable than they are,  
The gestures that freeze in air, to be filled by those born later,  
Words that were pronounced by the dead, here and still in use.  
And erotic: they guess under the fabric  
Dark triangles of hair, are attentive to convexities in silk.  
Faithful to the ritual because it differs so much from their natures,  
And soars above them, above the warmth of mucous membrane,  
On the incomprehensible borderline between mind and flesh.

10. Certainly, I did not reveal what I really thought.  
Why should I reveal it? To multiply misunderstandings?  
And reveal to whom? They are born, they mature  
In a long pause and refuse to know what comes later.  
Anyway I won't avert anything. All my life it was like that:  
To know and not be able to avert. I must give them reason.  
They have no use for lives lived sometime in the future  
And the torments of their descendants are not their concern.