

The Quest: ANTARCTICA

Neither by Sea nor by Land

History of the Search in a Generation



MIGUEL SERRANO



Miguel Serrano

INTRODUCTION

It is often claimed that South Americans, especially Chileans, belong to Western culture and civilization but it does not seem so to me. Only in the conception of personalized, individualized love are we akin to the fundamental Myth of that culture.

The error of believing ourselves to be Westerners stems from a rationalist vision of life, which insists on the equality of man in this world. However, man is different everywhere. And it is especially so in those already closed cycles of cultures and civilizations, which took place in historical times.

The earth is a living being and we are its fruits. It does matter if we are born and live in the south, rather than in the north, or in the center of the world. The essence of the being [earth] has different conditions.

Then there is the question of thought. Not all men "think" with the same organ. I have related elsewhere a conversation with Professor C.G. Jung, in which the Doctor related to me a visit he received from a Chief of the Pueblo Indians. The Chief told him that he believed white men were crazy because they claimed to think with their heads. Only madmen thought this way, according to the Indian Chief. He thought with his heart, like the ancient Greeks. The Japanese think with the solar plexus (where they do hara-kiri, to leave the door open to "thought"); Hindus will do it with something outside their body, because thoughts "happen" to them, so to speak. The Spanish think with the center of the word, which is in the throat, with the "Vishuddha chakra", as a Hindu philosopher would say.

So now, how do the South Americans, the Chileans, think?

From a very young age I have been concerned with this fundamental issue of our circumscribed identity. Discovering it would mean, I believed, achieving identification with our landscape, with that living area of the body of the earth to which we belong and being able to transfigure it, reaching that part of the Spirit that, by right, belongs to us. That is, to create our own civilization.

In those years I wrote a book, which I entitled "The New Earth", and then I burned it. Travels, or pilgrimages, across the length and breadth of this earth, in search of our identity, have confirmed my belief that we are different. The accent of our personality is laden on another instance of the human being. The history of humanity consists in the change of accent on

the "instances", in the imposition of a different man in a certain area of the land and in the restructuring and transfiguration of the world in an equivalent way.

Thus, the world changes or is destroyed. On the current surface of history, a different man has already appeared, ruled by another instance, by another center of consciousness, by another "chakra". And the total destruction of the civilization of the "man who thinks with his head" is only a matter of time. A "magic" type of man has appeared. The rationalist man will depart. It is the true revolution. The true change. The new generation will think with a golden center of consciousness and understand each other "without words."

This volume, which is something like a Mystical Epic of the Search and the Transfiguration; is about sinking to the bottom of the south to resurrect its myths and its gods, or the soul of the earth. There is much symbolism in this pilgrimage, in its attempt at rapport between the soul of an individual and that of his landscape. Although if you go on the outside, it is as if you walked on the inside. And the search for an Oasis among the ice, for a mythical City in the Andes, or for a secret Monastery on the other side of the world, is, in truth, the search for the center of silence and peace within one's own heart. That is to say, he also tries to go beyond a single instance of thought, to realize the total man, with all his instances in function, with all the thinking centers in activity. The Total-Man, the Race of Titans, the great possibility that we dreamed of for this country of the Andes. The total transfiguration of the landscape, of the earth, helping this Living Being to mutate, at this critical vertex of its involution. Only through us can the earth be saved, spiritualized, and transfigured. Otherwise, catastrophe is sure to ensue.

The need to find the roots of myths and legends (instruments that we have in the attempt to understand the landscape), scattered in the south of the world, led me to try one day to cross the Pacific Ocean. Its undercurrents left me in India. I lived there for almost ten years, in constant search. It is the theme of this Trilogy. Eventually I returned from India convinced that we were also not Oriental. We are somewhere in the middle, between east and west, in another realm. However, the soul of the Chilean, for so many centuries had turned towards the West that now turning to the East could be a means of finding balance; making it easier to find our own identity.

After all these years of searching and effort, I have come to understand that it does not matter where I am. I need distance so not to compromise the feeling too deeply, to be able to look and see clearly. Dramatic work with my own landscape was attempted. Now the journey is inside. For it does not matter how alone one is, nor how remote and distant, because "if the right work is done, unknown friends will come to your aid," as the alchemist said. "If you think the right thoughts, even if you are alone, sitting in your room, you will be heard from a thousand leagues away", affirmed Chinese wisdom in ancient times.

If you face the Angel correctly, this will have universal validity. If you have discovered the ancient refuge of the Archetypes of the south of the world and/or your own land, you no longer need to be here. The discovery will serve those who come after you because you will have helped them irreparably.

So, this work is for those who will one day look for the Oasis that exists among the ice of the South Pole, the City of Caesars in the sacred Andes; for those who, crossing the waters of the great Ocean, return to seek the Eternal City in the Himalayas, finding themselves, perhaps, at the bottom of the waters, with the secret traces that link the worlds.

MIGUEL SERRANO.

Santiago de Chile, May 1974.

PROLOGUE TO THE 1979 ARGENTINA EDITION

Almost thirty years have passed since the first Chilean edition of this book. Here began the search for the "synergistic" path of internal and external transfiguration, simultaneous, as in ancient times of magical pilgrimages to certain "sensitive" points on earth. I started it in my homeland, in the great south of the world, in its polar neighborhood. The search continued over the years, spreading into outer space as well as into the interior. This is a pilgrimage that will end only with death. The one who knows, knows.

When I open these pages, which are an autobiographical story of my generation in Chile, as stated in the subtitle of the book, I see that nothing has changed in the basis of support of what I have been developing over time. For example, the epigraph, which is where the name of the book originates: "Neither by sea, nor by land, will you find the path that leads to the hyperborean region". I did not know it in my consciousness yet, having transcribed in the first edition of Pindar's verse that appears in a poorly translated work by Nietzsche ("The Antichrist"): "Neither by sea, nor by land, will you find the path that leads to the region of eternal ice." In truth it was "to the Hyperboreans" Today I also know this with my conscience.

Almost thirty years ago, then, I was on the same path from which I have not left, looking for the lost Continent of Hyperborea, the entrance to the City of Caesars, the Oasis at the polar ends of the earth and the return to the legendary origins of America, which was called Albania, made up of thousands of years, the White, that of the White Gods, the primeval Home, the Star of the beginnings. I believe I am the only writer in America who has dealt with this subject consistently: America, Continent of the White Gods. My years at India were just a continuation of searching in depth and breadth. Up, down, inside, and over the expanded horizon.

The White Gods are the Hyperboreans. Hyperborea means beyond the god Borea, the cold, wind and storms, the divine immortals who lived in a world that has already disappeared, in the Golden Age. Whom all signs and legends refer to as the first inhabitants of this America of ours. Kon-tiki, Viracocha, Quetzalcoatl, descended from those White Gods. His true presence corresponds to the Ante-History of our world, a Prologue to History. They are the first inhabitants of these strange regions, where the great breath of the divine hidden in the rock of the Andes is still felt. They are the giants that I refer to in this work.

It is only by imagining them during the restless search for their Abode, in the sanctity of their resurrection, which the exit door to the American drama and the transfiguration of the southern landscape of the world appears.

I know for me there has been no other America but that of the White Gods, that of the ancient giants. The other, the immediate past and present, is the tragedy of dying races, digested, and destroyed by the landscape that does not belong to them. A greatness they cannot reach. It is life disconnected from the landscape and from the divine Guides of other times, the White Gods, who are reached in the "transmutation of all values", in the mutation and transfiguration of a biological alchemy and of the soul. The current history of America is that of the hodgepodge of slaves from Atlantis (or from Lemuria), without the Guides of yesteryear. The Transfiguration of the Landscape and the transformation of the few becomes possible by being reunited with those gods and Hyperborean giants, who still reside in the sacred peaks, in the discovery of their City, the Antarctic Oases.

This book was continued in "Who Calls in the Ice", my search for that polar Oasis of the White Gods and in "The Serpent of Paradise", my search extended to the Himalayas (from the Andes to the Himalayas). It is the search in the outer world.

"The Visits of the Queen of Sheba", "The Inexistent Flower" and "El/Ella", are the search in the inner world, its mythical-symbolic resonance in the soul.

No other writer has developed, I believe, in his work and in his own life, the theme of this hopeful search, real and at the same time symbolic. I say it without pretense, because none of this belongs to me, having been as directed, or as if in an Eternal Return. I have always been in this drama and in this glory.

MIGUEL SERRANO

Montagnola (Switzerland), December 1977

PROLOGUE TO THE CHILEAN EDITION OF 1950

The journey started here must have ended in the ice of Antarctica, in search of that mysterious primordial oasis. From there we had to return with our soul burned by the cold, thinking that everything was for nothing, because the true path is inside. The end of the work would be the story of the Inner Journey, where the journey through the south of the world is repeated in a symbolic way, within one's own being. But lo and behold, I have not been able to finish this work, because I have not yet been prepared for it. The trip stops in Chile.

My intentions are to continue it in a second volume, resuming the journey from the point where it was interrupted here. The whole plan and diagrams are laid out from the beginning, I often spent my days and nights bent over the marine charts, checking the southern roads. I also prepared to take the great leap towards the ice.

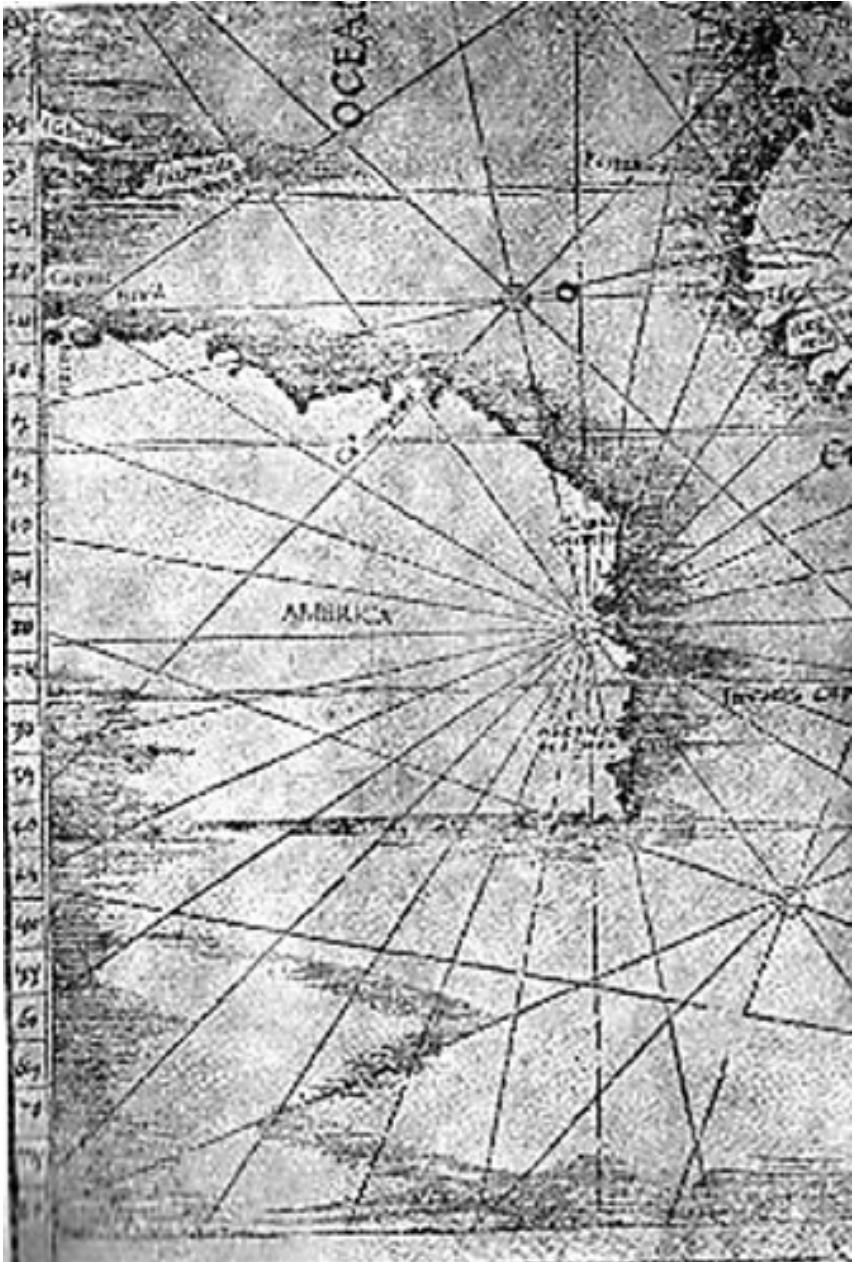
However, I doubt that this work will ever be finished because the times are antagonistic. The traveler is obligated by the adventures of the journey, which absorb him, to put all his attention on the road, where the success of the company depends on his expertise and concentration. His time is consumed by the south wind and by his own sleep.

The best travelers have never had time to keep a journal of their travels. That is why they remain unknown.

For having partially violated this rule, I apologize to the adventurers from the south.

MIGUEL SERRANO

Santiago de Chile, 1950



The Map of Stevens (1505). - the first time the name of America was used on a printed map. America was known as "Albania" in ancient times. "Land of the White Gods."

*“Neither by sea, nor by land,
Will you find the path that leads to the hyperborean region.”*

- Pindar

To the Adventurers of the South.

PART ONE

THE REASONS OF THE SOUL

SOME BACKGROUND OF THE TRIP

The following pages, which, to a certain extent, are autobiographical, could have had more background for your better understanding. In the past I had to write a book that was the story of the life of my generation and of my own life. There I had to explain some codas that would have made these pages more comprehensible. Thus, this book must have started where another ended. But the drama of my life was posed in the following way or perhaps I posed it myself: Literature, art, is a stick that helps to climb the hill; once you have reached the summit, it is no longer needed, and you must leave it.

The problems that art raises do not find their solution in art itself, but in life. The difficult act of resignation is foreseen.

Some years ago, I collected all the books written up to that time and burned them. It was a useless gesture. Later, the moment of the test came: At the peak of my years, I irresistibly wanted to see into the past; I wished, if possible, to return again with the comrades of yesteryear. I saw how they were still dancing, almost without forte. I also began to dance and let the tears flow as I recognized the old mansions and the crumbling walls. I had to go back to sea and suffer. Some hands were extended, because I was the rising one, speaking of something already dead.

I will do my best so that this book is a message for those to come, because this is the path that others took before me. On the trails of the summits, I have found their footprints.

THE TRIP IS PREPARED FROM THE INSIDE

The book that I should have written earlier would have dealt with the early days of our generation, my adolescence. It was in those years that impulses were externalized and the events that would condition the future were shaped. I should have talked for a long time about those years when we felt wrapped in a special atmosphere. What will it be that sets the tone for a generation? There are certain common inhibitions, certain pains. All this because of a difficult childhood and a country in disintegration.

Our generation comes into existence in an invertebrate time, when in Chile the ties of historical events have been broken, at a time when man is being severely dissolved by the landscape.

My life has unfolded almost as much in my dreams as in external events. There are times when it is difficult for me to distinguish between the memory of the image of a dream and an event experienced in external reality. I have spent days absorbed by the impressions of a prominent event. This is how it could be that some great trip, or an adventure undertaken in my life, was driven by a dream that has magically taken over my imagination.

I have lived wrapped in a fantasy, and the motivation of some distant music of the soul, emerged from those deep waters, has taken possession of my existence like the ghostly echo of the bells of the submerged Cathedral.

And there are strange dreams, which are no longer dreams, but life that takes place in a reality more intense than wakefulness. The dream disappears and "another reality" is achieved. He who lives like this has "awakened", he no longer "sleeps" at night, but his "consciousness is continuous."

Many years ago, as a boy, I had one of these dreams. I saw the mountain looming in front of our city, dark even at dawn. Within the rock mass were two gigantic figures. One of them, the one on the right side, raised her arms to the sky, imploring, and the other stretched toward the base, as if defeated. The edges of these figures were outlined with pieces of gold metal. Years later, when I started a pilgrimage through the mountains of my country, I thought I was going to meet those giants.

Walking through the most distant mountain ranges with only a backpack on your back one feels the presence as if formed by the loneliness in the mountains. A being that watches us; sometimes it stops by our side and rolls a stone to inform us of its existence.

Through those high places I have met explorers, villagers, and wanderers. I have asked all of them the way and I have looked into the depths of their eyes, to discover if they knew the narrow pass that leads to the secret valley.

The day came when I met the mountain of my dream. In the evening it reaches its summit. Advancing to the top where I remembered seeing the giant's extend arms. I lay flat on my face, remaining there semi-consciousness, interrupted only by the idea of absorbing energy in that way with my whole being.

THE CALL

Night fell as I sat on a rock and froze. A slow grief pervaded me. Suddenly, at some point during those hours, a large and fixed face appeared, with a leather cap. On his torso, he wore a puma skin, or perhaps a guanaco. He was staring at me. He opened his mouth and said: "You will come here."

THE THREE NIGHTS OF ICE

I saw in a dream a white mountain, wrapped in a radiant light. The sky was a transparent blue. This mountain represented on its peaks the faces of giants, with their eyes fixed upon the luminous depth. Where was that mountain? Where in the world?

I saw a dark sky, wrapped in heavy clouds. And on the horizon line, a red stripe, like blood or fire. Where was this sky from?

For the third time, it rang again. A gray landscape and a rocky land appeared, dotted with snow. Some gray birds perched on the stones. One of them had a red ring around its neck. And these birds, where in the world were they?

THE MASTER TELLS ME ABOUT THE SOUTH POLE

I am here again, after a long sojourn. This place is familiar to me, I have remembered it through the years, with its pictures on the old walls, painted by the Master's hand and his figures on the tables. There is a large wooden book, with a letter engraved in fire. On its only page, there is also my name.

I make an effort to stare at the Master. And I see him surrounded by a peace that is present almost like an emanation. His hands are harmonious, and his voice is full of strength. But the Master is a being who advances by pushing away the shadows with a sword. His will is indomitable. His conviction ignores nuances. He is an infallible being when the voice from beyond speaks through his mouth. But only then.

Now he tells me:

“I’ve known for a long time that you will go to the southern end of the world, to the edge of the Antarctic ice...”

I keep quiet and keep looking at everything around me. The Master continues:

“Do you know what the South Pole is? It is the sex of the earth. A dark region in itself; but of fundamental importance; sex is the greatest mystery in the universe. By transmuting his strength, the Kingdom of God is reached. Sex is Satan, in struggle with him one reaches out to God. It is Satan and it is God. He will try to prevent you from discovering the Oasis that exists among the ice.”

He crosses his legs, resting his hands on his knees as he continues:

“Do not imagine that the earth is a dead being, covered by a hard crust. The earth is a living, pulsating being, and we are its cells, striving to interpret and even to get rid of it. The earth has a soul and if its body is round - a shape that one day we must reach - its soul retains the human shape, which is also the shape of the sky. I have seen the soul of the earth, half-length up, emerging white from the sea; his face has a serious and somber expression. Looking at the horizons and watching, keeping count of the beings that are freed, in spite of himself, in struggle with his other black half that plunges into the frozen depths.

The Spirit of the earth does not allow men to free themselves before their time. In this world of contradictions, only the paradox is capable of giving us a fair vision. Strange as it may seem, it is those rebellious "cells" in struggle with the Spirit of the earth that work best for the liberation of this same Spirit, which also rejoices when it has been defeated and sees them leave, ascending above the great vastness of the sea. How few they are! One in a thousand of years ...

The region you are going to is the Mansion of Satan, antipode of the White Spirit, who emerges from the ice of the North Pole, brain of the earth, which has already given the world the races destined to develop the intellect. Satan, the sex of the earth, is Nature that multiplies and creates. Its shape is illusory. It is the sum of our shadows. Something like the archive of sorrows and the night of Humanity. The Devil is ourselves, it is a rough and heavy part of our soul. Are we not also God?”

He was silent for a moment, while his eyes narrowed. He continued:

“I have seen that Being in its enclosure at the South Pole. It is a huge dark cavity where it resides. How to describe it? Limitless spaces, which extend through the psychic interior of the earth, under the cap of the eternal ice. And there the Angel of Shadow moves. It ascends, or descends, to the end of that cavity. It throws itself by the demand of its other extreme, of its unattainable end. An eternity has been spent in this endeavor, trying to reach the antipodal place from which he has been outlawed at the very beginning of creation. The North is his deep longing and his greatest suffering ... By closing the eyes, all this is possible to see and hear. Knowing how to close your eyes, looking inside yourself...”

He stopped again, as if he was reflecting upon something:

“In the beginning, all the lands were grouped at the South Pole, where the Hill of Paradise was also located. And when, from the center of the heavens, Satan was expelled, falling headlong on this Pole, at the speed of a moon detached from the firmament, he went to hit the ninth stratum among the ice. The lands were divided away from the Pole, distributed by the planet, to form the current continents. It is through that end of the earth where liberated humanity must go in the future, to rediscover the Primordial Oasis. In some secret place of the South Pole, you will even find the Hill of Paradise ... You know that these allegories have a symbolic value. We must cross through Satan, that fire that took us out of Paradise and that will also be the one that restores us. The inhabitants of this southern part of the world are the advance of Destiny. We live almost upon the fire of Satan. Hence that anguish that you discover in the beings of these regions. Being born and living here is tragic. It is also a privilege. We must open the way. Look around. You will see a legendary world where you can once again become a god. Light and shadow surround the landscape and witness the soul of beings. We are carried away by a current that takes us to extremes. If in the North the race that possessed the domain of reason flourished one day, in the South the race directed by intuition should be born. In battle with the most powerful force in the universe, with the astral light of Satan, which shapes creation, he will be able to overcome and transmute. This polar race, from the South, will possess a new vehicle that, as a glorious robe, will surround the image of the man of the future.”

He stopped abruptly, as if he did not want to continue talking. How many times in the years have I been here, listening to the Master? As if from somewhere far away, I hear him say:

“A cold wind has blown over your soul. The Dark Angel calls you to test you in his domain. The magical transfiguration of the landscape depends on this adventure. We are plants through which the Spirit expresses itself and the future of the next generations is included in our drama. You need to leave because the soul matures in contact with its landscape ... But do not forget that your journey is the same as if you did it from within yourself, descending from the solar plexus to the unexplored region of your sex.”

Asleep, he toured the ghostly world. In his helplessness, he discovered a city. I went into its streets and entered its stone houses. They were empty. I was looking for someone who seemed to have already left. "It is not possible," I thought, "that now that I have arrived, with so much effort, the one I am looking for is not here." Outside, the trees swayed in a white wind.

I DECIDE THE TRIP

It was at the end of the year of 1947, when Chile sent its second expedition to Antarctica. I must have found a reason that allowed me to participate in this expedition. I traveled to Valparaiso and began to wander through its streets. It was from its hills that the Spanish Conquerors believed they saw the Valley of Paradise.

I took my steps towards Playa Ancha, in search of a house where I lived as a child. The old houses, the old walls, that once we inhabited, keep shadows that await our return.

I kept wandering through the alleys. In the last light of sunset, I arrived in front of the Zoological Museum. The entrance was open. I passed between mummies of birds and animals. A little man approached. I recognized the Director of the Museum, the same one who delighted me so much as a child. He looked at me curiously, with his lively little eyes.

“Everything is still the same,” I told him.

“How do you know?”

"I know even more," I added; "I know you lost a finger on your right hand, the monkey that was in that cage ripped it off."

A pleasant smile spread across the little man's face.

As years ago, he began to show me his Museum. Later that night, when I was saying goodbye, I saw a canoe hanging from the ceiling.

“It's a Fuegian canoe. It was built by the indigenous people of Tierra del Fuego and the head of the Chilean expedition to Antarctica donated it to this Museum,” he said.

“You are a friend of the leader of that expedition! I think it is the same who will go this year.” Aware that I wanted to go to that Continent, he went back through the already dark corridors, among the mummies and relics; He opened the door of his small office, turned on a light, and offered me a seat. While stroking a small and curious worm, who was walking on his desk, he said: “I can help you.”

That is how the old friend, who still lived among his fossils, extended his four-fingered hand (the fifth was lost in my childhood) and affirmed my dream.

THE MATCH

A gray ash covered the sky. On the docks, the petrels invaded, the waters lashed the boats, the Ox moored, and the melancholic sirens tore the night apart. The little lights from the hills and the beams of light from the headlights penetrated through the ash. Suddenly, a comet appeared in the sky. It was also going south. People climbed the hills and stayed up at night to watch it. A comet is an iceberg in the sky. It is an icy fire which burns it.

The night of departure arrived.

A thin drizzle fell on the mist-shrouded docks. Sometimes heavy, like a rattle of chains crawling through the night. Suddenly, a strange character crossed the docks, wearing a silk shirt, sleeveless, with shorts and sandals. He boarded our ship and entered the Chamber of Officers. He was an explorer who came to send us off, as he told us of his universal travels.

“Watch out for the "groulers!" he told us. “These steel ships are useless for ice. Beware of the sea monsters! The "groulers" are black hands of monsters that grab the ship by the hull and plunge it into the depths. I know that Chilean sailors do not believe in sea monsters; because they are too new, but that will change ... Think of the Greek sailors and the Gorgons ... Be careful with this trip ...!”

The frigate began to move slowly, sailing the bay of Valparaiso and saying goodbye to the other ships with melancholic whistles.

I did not sleep. I was tossing and turning in the bunk, with a heavy head and great nausea. The wind whipped the ship from the stern. The night passed and morning came. I could not get up.

It was late when I opened my eyes, trying to penetrate through the shadows of the small cabin, beyond the burlap curtain that moved at the door. Someone arrived and stopped there. He seemed to say to me: "Cheer up, remember that you've come to find me. I'll wait for you there!"

I made an effort and got up, dropped my feet to the ground and started to walk. Holding on to the rails and ropes, I reached the deck.

The ocean was heaving. The steel plates creaking. A soft light spread across the horizon. The salt of the sea healed me.

THE MYSTERY OF A GENERATION

Let us stop before we continue. It is not possible to advance without knowing who those are who do advance. There is a land, there are long roads and there are some men. That land and those men are scattered pieces of my own existence.

What is a generation? When I was a child, I began to be passionate about the following problem: Why do I feel? I observed people and pondered: "How is it possible that those are also "I", they feel "I", and "I" myself, at the same time, am "I" and not "they"? "I" and not "you"? Why was I born and not others? It seems as if at an early age the self is incarnated, a being penetrates us. Before, it looked at us from the outside, hidden in the landscape.

Only once after have I had a sensation similar to that of my childhood and it was in my adolescence, in the collegium, when I met boys like me. I discovered that there were similar beings around me.

It was my generation.

And what I experienced was more or less this: Solitary, until then, having been an isolated member of a body that was now complete.

What is a generation? It seems that there too, at a certain moment, an individualized soul penetrates to impress the style of his drama. From the

ocean of generations, we are a wave that churns in its storms. Inscrutable signs fix the destiny of a generation, integrating it on a larger plane. From passing through the drama of a generation, the individual self must emerge strengthened. On a higher plane, like links in a chain, or like spiral rings, the generations should join each other by a tenuous thread, to go on to integrate the landscape and the destiny of the earth. However, it often happens that suddenly the thread that binds the generations is broken.

If it were necessary to look for the characteristic feature of my generation in Chile, what differentiates it, it would have to be said that it is a disconnected and invertebrate generation, without a bond with previous generations. It is a generation-island, which had suddenly emerged from the depths. I have tried to understand the cause that has made this separation possible. No matter how much I looked for points of contact with previous generations, I could not find them.

Geological epochs, Ages, separated us. The past appeared to us like a museum of mummies. I do not know if it always happens this way. It seems that there were generations who venerated the previous ones and were supported by them, going down a path that had been indicated and insured to avoid unnecessary risks. Instead, we, from childhood, have been driven by loneliness and rebellion. Without firm pillars, or points of support, in the midst of those that still subsisted, who were strange and soulless. We could survive only by an abnormal effort. Our generation had to abstract from the past to create its own world. Surrounded by questions and dangers, we had to build the foundations and the very rock of our existence. A whole system of numbers and values, a science, an art, a philosophy and even a religion. It became necessary to rediscover, not the roots of life itself, but those of the world and, mainly, those of the homeland, the land that nurtures the roots. This effort has only been accomplished in half, between agonies and a deep crisis of the will. In the Lyceum and in the Universities, it would help to increase the feeling of nausea and discontent. The generations prior to ours, in Chile and in America, have been shaped by Western culture, rather, by the philosophical foam of the 19th century, which introduced its rationalist style at the Liceo. This foam gave character to an empty and superficial generation, without forces, without roots. Pathetic laps that repeat the gestures of zombies that hollow out the voice and are frighteningly empty inside. They grew out of the thin air, like mushrooms or mental mushrooms, without a life of their own. They were the teachers and

masters of our generation, who at school gave us bread that had already been digested, therefore indigestible to us and produced an indescribable disdain.

They were dead, imitating a foreign culture that did not even penetrate its essences, parodying it on its surface. The litany of science and rational humanism was delivered to us with refined torments, deforming a virgin and wild soul like the hills and seas from which it came. I remember my first shock with this education and the intense anguish of sitting for hours on the benches in the classroom, while the sun shone outside, and the wind blew in the distance. To save us from rationalism, even the Catholic education of childhood could not serve us, since this religion was also alien to our world and demonstrating its weakness in the easy way in which it was detached from our hearts at the first onslaught of a tendentious and directed argument. I lost the God of my childhood one night, talking with a student from a higher grade, in one of the courtyards of the Barros Arana Boarding School. That night, in my bed, I gently cried. Since that time, I no longer prayed the prayers of my childhood, which kept me awake in the midst of an enormous desire to sleep. Despite my anguish, I was relieved. From that day it was as if I grew physically and my chest expanded on the first paths of freedom.

Western culture, including Catholicism, was a dramatic phenomenon, resulting from a man and a land. The soul of a space in the world was interpreted and transfigured by man. Discovering America, they imposed on us a strange culture and soul. But the earth is stronger than the intention or the madness of man. The foam of another world reached our beaches; but, the opposing and powerful forces of the landscape have fought the battle and will be invincible. Generations prior to ours have believed they could impose their own style upon the land, and in the silent struggle they waged of which they themselves were not aware, it was discovered that they had lost. In the emptiness of their hearts the revenge of the landscape was foreseen, that it did not recognize them as its sons and daughters and that it was drying them inside.

I would like to be able to clearly explain this torture of a lifeless education and teaching, which was inculcated in us by force. We hated this teaching contrary to the world around us. I do not believe that this happened the same for the contemporary European generations. They were studying their history, resulting from an understanding with their landscape, from a

spiritual interpretation of their world; each idea, each thought would have been elaborated by a common effort in which they felt supported and in which even rivers and stones had taken part. Therefore, their continued learning was a creative phenomenon. On the other hand, we felt like we were excluded from all of this and faced it with an innocence and an expressive environment. A land separated by oceans and a generation, ours, that suddenly appeared as distant and lonely as this land.

The previous generation was not aware of all this, they believed themselves to be an integral part of the phenomenon of a foreign culture and a distant world. During their time the last ties were broken. This is how the schism was produced whose bottom is impossible to see. We were pushed into solitude. What to do? Accept the designation. And fight. We were the iconoclasts because we couldn't be anything else. We were the fighters; the combative ones. It was necessary to destroy in order to live. I remember my years of fighting and literary polemics. The oldest generation in literature was represented by men who always remained on the surface. The intermediate generation had in its ranks some poets who imposed themselves even beyond our borders; for us, however, they were still superficial, without any real depth.

The homeland, for our generation, always meant something more than a relationship on surfaces. There was a deep dialogue between the mountains and us that we had not yet interpreted, but that we could not ignore. The aroma of something remote reached us, forcing us to get away from everything that seemed superimposed and lacking a relationship with depth.

We dropped out of school and started walking the four walls, making monologues for months and even years. An almost organic anguish tormented us. Feverishly, we filled the veneers. Outside, in the world, catastrophes were happening: the war in Spain, Nazism, communism, the Great War was already showing its face. On our desks, philosophy, Marxism, science, psychoanalysis, the old dusty texts, books found while growing up that were capable of penetrating the interior of the mountain. For those years I had to fulfill in this way the work of my generation; liquidating myths, breaking chains, and prejudices, revising the strange values and making my way in the middle of all that, to reach where the heart rediscovers the origin, the dust of gravel that formed it. When I was

a boy, I had to build lines of pillars that would give me a fixed path to walk in the future; I created a whole philosophy and a religion of my own.

What I conquered then I thought I owed to the land, on whose peaks and seas I felt to understand an unknown lesson. Wishing to merge with my brothers, being united with the beings who work in the deep valleys and who open the clouds. They were bones formed by the sap that nourishes us and their hands were daughters of the roots and of the rains from heaven. I wanted to take part, next to the rushing rivers and the mountains, in the combat against that strange spirit that managed to extend its two tormenting hands onto our coasts.

In this way was made the first conscious contact with our being. It was the discovery of a new land. Our generation was different in its basic being and could no longer find anything within the known paths. If at times it seemed that we were fighting within the world of European valorizations, taking an active part in its dramas, it was only in appearances, because our contribution had to be different. Our participation was due in large part to the fundamental weakness of the South American, who still easily imitates that which impresses him, and to the receptive condition of our world. On the other hand, the movements that appeared then in Europe were directed at the foundation, against the very essence of Western culture, but also representing the appearance of a new man; a man of a magical type.

If the white man is the one who will reach the heights in the future of South America, or if the Indian will return triumphant, it is not possible to know. I think nothing really comes back; neither the Indian, nor the remote depths, nor the divinities sunk in time, return with identical clothing. They return, they reincarnate, but in different ways, fiercely being turned in the spiral.

Everything that previous generations managed to build on our land was the product of blindness to the landscape. They never really stopped to listen. Our history can be synthesized as a silent struggle between man and the land, in which man has imposed a strange law.

But the landscape takes its revenge in the time of the generations and demolishes the false gods. First killing the soul of a generation, then destroying its body. Here is my orphan generation, invertebrate, facing an alien and hostile reality. Without roads and without a past. There is nothing behind and you can feel the coming horror of a catastrophe produced by

the landscape. Cosmic terror. Fear of the mountains, an understanding of the tragic destiny of Chile, and the awareness that there must be meaning. If our generation is an unrelated generation, truly Chilean, then Chile has no past, thus possessing only the future. If it is true that there is pain in lacking support, having nothing to hold on to, then that is the very reason why salvation can be obtained, building a new future, without prejudices or millennial obstacles. The future is the golden fruit of a leafy and unknown tree. We are representing the reality of a new world. However, we do not belong to it yet. Unfolding, we only intuit it. Neither the past nor the future belong to us and the present is transition. Nor will it be the generation that comes appeased, meek and without fire, that will be the one to do something great. We spent the energy of a century and in this abnormal effort of our generation perhaps the cause of the mediocrity of those who follow us will be found. There has not existed in Chile a generation as tortured as ours. Its essence burned in the fire that wanted to penetrate. That is why there will be no works or creations left of it in time. Our creation was our own overwhelming life and human condition. I penetrate the shadow and drain the glass to the bottom. How do you plan to ask for realizations? Prejudices of those who maintain the myth of external action! Our action was written in the drama of the heart and in its divination of the landscape.

Once every so many centuries there are these conditions of historical uprooting and loneliness that make possible individual salvation, the goal of everything created. There will be other times that will come. However, individual salvation will not be easier. South America will be centered in its essence, but the individual will be cut off and pressured by the mental atmosphere of an already constituted world; His salvation can only be carried out as a social entity or in a titanic struggle against what is established. It will also lack intensity, as what happens to those who express a certain reality in life, but it is cut short. History will be at it again, here and around the world, and its collective breaker will go on crushing individual souls.

My generation was extraordinary. Even if it does nothing, even if it fails in its attempts, it has been a prophetic generation. Tomorrow, those who come will be guided by our intuitions. And those who carry them out, will not be able, on the other hand, to know what we knew. They will carry it out, but perhaps with no chance of salvation.

Another generation so full of conflicts will hardly appear again before the constellations rotate another thousands of years in the sky.

THE GREAT ENEMY OF THE LANDSCAPE

It is possible that history, or creation, is like a sowing, in which only a certain number of grains bear fruit. History is a pendulum movement over the living body of the earth. In a certain area the Spirit incarnates and ignites man. As the forms of cultures are organized, "calcified", man becomes a prisoner of his own creations. By defending them he loses his life and his destiny. The destiny of man is overcoming, passing from one form to another, from one body to another and destroying everything that a moment ago was created, but as he becomes more free, man will be a god. If he is imprisoned in forms and in cultures, in statues and palaces, he becomes frozen and lost. Something inside himself rebels and calls for catastrophe. As in geology, the deep layers overturn and barbarism will always be a promise of renewing the prospects of salvation. As it is in the beginning of new times when the intensity of living is experienced again. Further, the real possibilities of salvation are only found here today. Because we are nothing yet. We are free and without forms. The perched is a shell that falls off, like an autumn leaf.

But the times of transition are being fulfilled and there is little left for the world to enter into. The new forms of cultures and social organizations are slavery for the soul and an obstacle to the destiny of the adventure of individual salvation. The cosmic adventurer needs insecurity, transition, and dramatic anguish. The uprooting of our generation is the right climate. We are still free. We still have a little time.

Chile is a different land. Its own personality was not recognized by the generations of the past who rudely imposed themselves on the landscape, through a bloody struggle. They were still the children of another world, the heirs of the conquerors, grandchildren of those who subdued the aboriginal races. They did not truly feel the trees of the forest, nor the rock of the summits; yet just as the conqueror moved to the Indies and spent the nights in his rucas [huts] the warm sea penetrated his blood, and so was he also conquered by the mountains. The spirit of these rivers gradually took over his most intimate being.

Just as vapors and clouds float in the waters of ponds, the mist of history spreads over the sea of blood. The spirit of a race is magnetized by the heat

of the blood, which is like the presence of the earth, and is made up of the substance of its minerals and the vibration of its air. In the blood of the conquerors and not in the galleons of Spain, came the history of another world and the memory of its dramas. As experiences, or atavistic reflexes, the impulses of heroes and the sacrifice of martyrs are constantly repeated.

Everything that has formed the tortured argument; ambitions, love, hatred, will make its echoes resonate in this strange landscape.

And it will continue to vibrate as long as the memory of the blood that carries it through the oceans is still strong. But the mountains of these lands resist and oppose with their old pagan and legendary soul. It is in this way that, from the first moment that the conqueror set his foot in the ancient arena, two worlds collided under the surface, beyond moralities, a cruel fight begins, to the death and without rest.

From that moment it was also known what the result would be. Spain was a singular land, a peninsula where different races were refined, attracting a tormented spirit in the mix. In order to survive, it needs fanaticism. But racially Spain is inconsistent. It is a crucible where undesirable amalgams have been infected, overcome and unified only by the powerful spirit of the Iberian land. As far as I know, no attempt has been made to understand the destiny of a people or a race by the position it occupies within the body of the living being that is the earth. There must be some mysterious relationship between the telluric zones of Spain and South America, the lower region of the world, the sex of the earth. Nothing within living organisms happens just because. The exodus of the Spanish conquest must have a deep meaning, corresponding to a biological fate, similar to the one that leads certain species to emigrate from different continents to precisely find one another, to love each other and procreate.

No other people other than the Spanish could have made so many mistakes in South America, because no other people were so willing to make them. These errors have made the struggle between the conqueror and the land acquire a character of fusion and martyred drama. They have also allowed the triumph of the landscape, which from the first moment it could envelop and possess. And not otherwise the invincible destiny of the shadows and the sex of the world is fulfilled.

There is a sin that when fulfilled in the flesh is also a sin against the spirit and that marks the history of a people. It is racial sin. Like the resounding

of a distant echo, or the repetition of an anguishing event for the conscience, the Spanish conqueror did it again in the new world. Something like a blind impulse or suggestion before the abyss, led him to repeat it. He mixed with the Indian race. In the brown bodies of the females and in their black and sultry eyes the bonfire of the first sensuality revived; that fire, semi extinguished with the passage of history and the Empire, was kindled again.

It was something like the dark awakening of that satanic force, of that red shadow, that once pushed the lemur race to mix with the animals to give life to the monkey. The shadow of evil hangs over the world of the future and the product of this act resembles elementals or succubus. The sexual zone of the earth will envelop in its effluvia the audacious who have dared to tread it. It is also the revenge of the defeated. Through India, in a passive and tenacious way, the primitive world takes its revenge, and, in this way, the female fulfills her primary purpose as a supporter of the Spirit of the earth. If the female fails in this fight, there is still the tree on which she leans and the land where she became the possession of the Spanish. The effluvia and ghosts of pleasure are powerful and still float over the valleys and mountains.

I understand the irresistible desire that pushes the male onto the dark female. Wrapped in warm, dark blood and the dark spell which that fusion fulfills, something like a lethal drug is introduced into the heart of the conqueror and his will decays. It is already late. And what follows in time will only be the process of its moral disintegration and its physical transformation through the generations. The fight is unequal, because now it is fought on two fronts, from the outside by the opposing forces of the landscape and from within by the subtle fluids of the Indian's blood, which has allowed it to flow into its own sea, destroying the images of its history. Called "Hispanic", with the reality of a spirit settled in these images and with all those sublimations achieved through centuries of a particular psychological and historical drama.

The conquest of North America also reveals the influence that the area of the world in which they reside has on the history of the people. It was completely different from ours. By an elective affinity a closed and persistent race spirit was drawn to that region. The Saxon race would initiate the extirpation of the Indian from the conquered soil, with which it did not dream of mixing with. In its dynamic history the sometimes

grandiose landscape of the north has never been recognized, thus fulfilling the deep reason for that land. The north is the brain of the world. This condition is to live outside the physical reality that sustains it, fulfilling its organizing function in clear schemes that regulate life. In the north, even nature has been rationalized by a hygienic and geometric agriculture. The ideal of the North American is to disinfect the earth. The great jungles and the great canyons between the mountains do not acquire expressive reality in the consciousness of men. Despite the absence of blood fusion with the aboriginal, the past of the European has still been forgotten. They only feel a certain unique electricity that vibrates in the atmosphere in that part of the world. Typical of the rational brain of the earth that pushes the individual to an unparalleled dynamism, which makes him live for incessant activity.

The Spanish could not fulfill the destiny of the north. Instead, here in the south, he has been crucified. The earth projects its mighty emanations. If the Indian, a plant of the earth, disappears in time, the memory of the sex of the Indian woman and her ghosts persists, attached to the tree and the peaks. And at night, under the stars, the cry of war and pleasure still resounds. It is the drama and the beginning of life in the shadows and in the mixture of bloods. The earth is also on its back, as was the Indian to be loved and possessed. And in time, which already seems infinite, the bloody struggle of passion and death continues, in which man, defeated, is being crushed and digested by the landscape. Before the powerful land, man, without knowing it, has surrendered his weapons, because he continues to refuse to recognize it, trying to impose upon it, with less and less force, a reality that no longer has meaning even for his own soul.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE TITAN

In this disconnection and struggle against the landscape, the trajectory of our country can be synthesized through the succession of generations. Surely everything would have ended sooner if it had not been for an extraordinary event.

A highly gifted being appeared among us, waging the most powerful battle against earth, and thus imposing his own law against the landscape. He has been able to project his hidden hand through time, shaping almost all of our history and giving us within this shapeless America, a structure and style comparable only to that of some European peoples. Almost everything we have done as an organized country is due to him. Certainly,

he found a suitable means to realize his inspiration. The Spanish race was still strong when he appeared and, in the upper echelons, it was composed of the Castilian Basque stratum, of a strong vitality at that time.

The Andalusian and mestizo elements remained at the base, near the roots and the soul. In the first racial element he found certain conditions of sobriety and honesty, suitable for implanting his conception. In the Andalusian environment, the always present admiration for the hero. In the aboriginal and in the landscape, there is something hard and strong, that I espouse to the impulse of discipline and project it in the military and warrior spirit that still lives.

But the truth is that this man was a stranger and was alone in the middle of his racial and earthly contour. He was a genius and as such he was a loner who pitted his law against everything that surrounded him, forcing them to conform to the breath of his passion and power. For this reason, he was the greatest enemy of the landscape; as he was pure and strong, he waged his battle to win. This man was Diego Portales, and his titanic activity has not yet been viewed from this angle.

At that time, the process of the Conquest and the mixture were too recent. The battle was not aware and it was deaf, the land could be ignored, or appear to be ignored behind the high walls of the courtyards with orange trees, or the halls impregnated with the rationalist aroma of the European eighteenth century. Reinforcements of Spanish blood came to the upper echelons of society and no one believed they would hear the deep murmur of a different land. The War of Independence itself had been fought for reasons unrelated to all this, being driven by the imitative desire of Europeans, by the French Revolution, or by agents of liberalism and Anglo-Saxon interests. A superior and strong ruler who appeared, could not even think of understanding the earth in remoteness and contrary to his own soul, for even he was strong and successful. Generations and time were missing from the current situation.

Portales was a mysterious being. Only a strong racial consistency, with a subconscious loaded with images and distant reflections, could achieve what he did. Writers and historians have understood him this way, being impressed by the strange figure of the creator. They have even claimed that Portales was not Spanish in spirit, but with a Gothic ancestry, had a Germanic or Saxon ancestor. Certainly, Portales does seem more like a pioneer of the conquest of the north. Despite his creole and his Chilean

appearance and manners, he was an ascetic, a Gothic chief, or a Roman patrician. It is clear, it is strong and it is deep. His eyes were blue like a German's and his short curly hair could be that of a Roman from the Empire. They affirm that their ancestry is related to the Borja family, thus being able to better understand their political instinct and their mystical tendency. Like Saint Francisco de Borja; 'I love a dead woman and a single woman'.

In one way or another, all this has been expressed, but what has never been said is that Diego Portales was the great enemy of the Chilean landscape. With his legalistic conception and with his monolithic creation of the state, in an abstract and almost metaphysical sense of power. He imposed a corresponding valorization of a European, Germanic, or perhaps better said a Roman superstructure of the soul. Its mature conception could only have been obtained in a long process through history, in which the soul has been impregnated with the sublimated drama of another culture. It is the result of an inheritance of the spirit, of a conquest of form. It imposes itself as its own creation in the middle of an enemy territory and violent land, as it works to compress the landscape. When the titan falls, in the midst of the catastrophe, its conception still persists, by the force of suggestion and because of its dramatic end, which has given rise to the myth. In the extreme struggle of a being against nature, the myth continues the battle after its material disappearance. It has been said that in the murder of Portales the revenge of the spirit of the Basque race could be seen, represented in Vidaurre, which had been constricted and forced and framed in alien discipline. But also, and above all, there was the revenge of the spirit of the landscape, which was even stronger and like a hurricane wind unleashed against that massive column of a temple that had not been raised for its gods.

In the distance of time, the struggle of the shadows continues. That lonely one of the impostors and of the enemy, and the other increasingly broad and powerful that is emerging from within the mountains. All of this wrapped in the aura of spilled blood, from which the presence of the spirit still emanates.

Therefore, in Chile the struggle has endured and has acquired such dramatic contours. A genius spirit stabs her, supporting the weak and flesh, miraculously slowing the disintegration, in conflict with everything and everyone. When the tired body wants to lie down to die on the ground,

wanting to give up the fight, the presence of tradition shakes it up and forces it to continue standing. It is the greatest tragedy in Chile, the obligation with a spirit that was not born from the interpenetration and transfiguration of our own land and that, maintaining its suggestion, prevents us from dying of our own death.

In the succession of the generations the silent battle has continued, and the tremendous impacts of the earth are filling the horizon with corpses. By disengagement and misunderstanding of his landscape, man is being defeated. And the process resembles a monstrous act of digestion in which the people are being devoured and digested by the womb of the earth.

It has been believed that to remedy the already visible fact to all, to prevent the decadence and destruction of the race by using immigration. In other words, providing new forces of refreshment in the battle with the earth. This solution, of momentary effect, still becomes ineffective since even the best-endowed breeds must undergo the same process of disintegration after a few years. The example that best illustrates this is German immigration in southern Chile. The settlers brought by Perez Rosales, fought a great battle against the forest with force, populating our south, building cities where rain and jungle had previously reigned.

However, their descendants are no longer like them, they suffer from the same defects as the children of Spaniards. They are spineless, alcoholics; their will has also been broken by the earth; their eyes stare stunned at something that emerges from the peaks or the wet roots, which is embalming their cells.

A similar process takes place beyond the Andes. Large-scale immigration in Argentina has given that country a significant boost, almost like a European nation, or like North America, orienting itself, apparently, towards similar objectives; but it will inevitably happen that if the Argentine immigrant does not spiritually understand the southern part of the world where he lives, transforming himself into its spiritual plant, he will suffer a similar fate to that of the ancient Creoles, who have been devoured by the earth. Their children will no longer be as strong as they are and, little by little, through the struggle of the generations, they will one day reach the point where we are today, without even having been able to build a life, nor a spiritual and transfigured rapport with the land itself.

If for a moment we are able to concentrate and look objectively around us, almost with a different vision and see things, beings and the world that belongs to us, with a new look, in that way where things look to us for the first time. We can only return from that effort, from that trip, pierced with an anguish. What surrounds us? What do we see? In a moment of lucidity we would see a shattered people that roam about like ghosts and express an eternal torment, whose stature decreases, until they look like a race of deformed pygmies. Toothless mouths, twisted legs and shoulders. A cult of the ugly. The idols of the people are always deformed. Its popular festivals cultivate grace in the ugliest, and man makes his elegance consist in desalination.

It has been said that Chilean women are beautiful. But this is a single case of the big capital and that only occurs in the middle and upper classes; because the women of the towns are not beautiful, resembling the man in his decomposition. If the woman is saved, it is perhaps due to the fact that the feminine is attached by vital law to nature and that, unlike the man, she unconsciously penetrates the landscape. The true picture of Chile is something that we hardly appreciate, due to the fact that we are immersed in the process and are also a part of it: the rot and the stench of death, decomposition and digestion. And around everything, a gigantic and immutable frame: the great impassive walls of the earth's stomach.

The ultimate causes of evil are found in this part of the planet, and at the origin. Two different worlds and enemies collide in blood. That is why there is a highly developed instinct for self-destruction that can be seen in multiple manifestations: in the acceptance of cruelty and in the attraction of alcohol, which dulls the conscience.

This need for alcohol is a fact even in immigrants. Their new generations can be considered as alcoholics, participating in this endemic evil in Chile. What is the need for alcohol in them? Perhaps it comes from the subterranean consciousness, acquired in the deaf nape of the earth, to the intuition of being digested. Faced with the macabre spectacle there is the need to be numbed and, in alcohol, you think you find the momentary antidote to some poisonous influence disposed of by the earth. Or, if the earth lacks some fundamental energy, which today denies man, he aspires to supply it with alcohol. Alcohol may be a psychological and physiological necessity in the present. The psychological climate that surrounds Chile is dense and tragic. An irresistible force pulls into the

abyss and prevents any higher value from standing out. Silent hostility and envy pursue the higher soul from its source, putting obstacles and traps in its path. Everything aspires to level off in moral misery and defeat, "ascending downward," if one could say. Anguish and hatred for the beautiful and the strong flows from the minds of men, and if something superior is recognized it is only the greatness and beauty of the earth. But, if man were able to impose himself here, magically penetrating his landscape, he would defeat the prevailing evil and become like a god among his own, as powerful and strong as the landscape.

Foreigners better observe what happens in Chile. With that clear vision of things that one has when looking from outside, they see the incurable sadness of the Chilean, the melancholy that accompanies him, even at his parties, where the alleged joy is hopelessness. And they also see sexualism, typical of the lower part of the world. The Chilean's sexual obsession is due to the fact that sex is the last force that is debated in the struggle with the landscape. A whole climate of sick sensuality spreads over our world. Chile is like a hole between mountains. Whoever falls here, will not be able to leave now. A distressing and penitent hole. What to do? Why are we here? However, we still owe everything to this land.

And when we look at our brothers in misfortune, we feel solidarity. Within its misery and bitterness, there is a greatness that cannot be found elsewhere in the world. A quiet aspiration, an unconfessed faith. The disease of Chile is like the terrible diseases of dreams, sacred diseases, which destroy and kill; but a little before the end they make geniuses or saints. Chile is like a sacred and penitent hole that destroys, but that intensifies the consciousness to the extreme of allowing an understanding and a depth that does not exist elsewhere on earth. Everything that in Europe took centuries to mature in the minds of its men, here, by the mortal influence of the earth, can be done in the period of a generation. Life is short; but deep. Years and centuries are completed inwards, discovering the cosmos in the depth of a drop of water, or in a grain of earth detached from the mountains.

Only through an understanding with the landscape can a different and transfigured life emerge here, coming from within the mountains, together with the magical presence of a spirit that, raising us from despair, is capable of transforming the dark homeland, through the interpretation of the word that the landscape has been telling us for centuries.

Immigration, the replacement of races, will uselessly prolong the drama and the agony if the spirit does not enter to take part and put order to the chaos.

Chile is a free land, devoid of props in the realm of known history. The aborigines with whom the Spaniards fought and mixed were savages. The Inca civilization did not leave its ruins or its memories here. What the mountains tell us, what the unpopulated horizon and the sky point out to us, is something deep and remote, so ancient, and distant, that it could well be the first of all; that which what man lost in the beginning of time; a sign of fire in the stars, arms extended within the peaks, or a tremendous power in the darkness of the soul.

THE GLORIES OF THE NIGHT

The dark night began at high school. Chained to the benches, were new ears attentive to old words. Those tired, dull, and soulless teachers, repeating formulas, distributing death. Corrugated bread, stale. Yet, outside the wind, the skies, the mountains with their white peaks, where the sun has stopped its race. Instead of teaching us to climb its peaks and listen to their voices, observing the stones that still retain the traces of prehistoric times, teaching us to navigate to discover the Ocean, they were giving us a science without a soul.

The boy who wanted to save himself, would have to clench his teeth and cover his ears with his hands. Not listening to that indoctrinated teacher who dragged his death through the classrooms, but fixed his eyes on the piece of sky or field that penetrated through the small window of the room. He had to learn and study on his own what his deep interest pointed out to him. Only the self-taught would be saved in our generation. I was self-taught. I never dined on rules or disciplines. I studied what was learned in the courses above mine, read novels, or simply did not study at all.

I desperately looked forward to the end of classes. Then I would go alone to the most hidden corner, at the end of the courtyard, climbing upon an old cut log, I could see over the wall at the mountains that frame our city. It could see myself climbing its plains, wandering its slopes. Golden wheat swayed in the cold wind in those times.

I was a rebel, and like me there were others. With them we formed a separate group. The imagination did not resign itself to being reduced and confined. At night, during our stay at the boarding school, we sneaked

through the roofs. We climbed walls and crossed over high beams, until we reached distant terraces, where we managed to look at the starry sky.

It seemed to us that all this was an adventure in which we risked our lives and where the enemies, or the representatives of the law, were the inspectors and teachers. Since that distant time, we have voluntarily placed ourselves in conflict with the established. Our group also robbed stores in Santiago during weekend outings. Little things, it is true; pens, flashlights, but if we could have made a big robbery, we would have done it.

Of those companions I especially remember one. His name was Hernan Gonzalez. He was a dark boy, with a sharp profile and a lean body. In everything he did he put a stamp of passion, of total dedication, as if he were looking for his own destruction. Together we discussed some books that were by Russian writers.

In his eyes was reflected an august of which he would have wanted to detach himself in any way. I remember that once someone insulted me and Hernan Gonzalez intervened before I could, but with passion and violence that was unwarranted. Struck by that and also by his incredible words, the other boy who was twice his height and strength was scared. Life was at stake in every gesture and eventually he would take it.

They discovered us one night in the raids on the roofs, in addition to an escape we made searching for some work in the mines. I dropped out of school before they expelled me. Hernan Gonzalez stayed, until one day he was caught smoking.

A superintendent told him that he knew this offense was enough for this student with a bad record to be expelled. The superintendent hated him for his discoloration and savage appearance, and for his demon-possessed soul of choice. Hernan Gonzalez was expelled. His father admonished him. A man of another generation who never understood his tortured child; a product of ours. This misunderstanding was the greatest tragedy for our poor comrade. He took his life on a Sunday many years ago, being the first to leave. The first I remember.

I too had to be marked by destiny. One day I hurt a leg. This simple accident forced me to stay in bed for several months. Then came the teacher who was to propel me along the paths of art.

He was a classmate that I had hardly noticed. Knowing about my illness, he came to visit me. Sitting on a chair next to my bed he said:

“Why don't you write? Lying there you must be getting bored. Write the stories and adventures you wish you were undertaking.”

When he left I began to write. I got up from that disease transformed. I became a loner. I abandoned friends and isolated myself in my room.

I lived surrounded by books and only left to walk outside the walls, where there were some low fences, and walls with vines that revealed the beginning of the mountains. Next to the eucalyptus trees I would stop with book in hand, or with an arduous thought. The dusty roads and lost ranches were the witnesses to my worries of those times.

As the most precious gift of those days, I keep the memory of my friendship with the companion who pushed me along this path. He was my first guide and teacher. Having no one for my spiritual training, it was the first time that I accepted a teacher without reluctance; but to a teacher of my generation. I still have correspondence with this colleague. It was a serious and profound correspondence. He, like me, was tortured in the presence of the earth. In the world of values, he fought his battle.

I have not seen that first companion who started me in the concerns of thought and art, for a long time. I owe him. He showed me a path that launched my self into a world of symbols, and of the night.

HECTOR BARRETO

If one day it were given us to really be able to re-live the events of the past, who can say if all the old feelings would be the same, when we already find ourselves changed from that character of another time. It could happen as with an old silent film, which once delighted us and now only seems gruesome to us. The actors' movements are either too fast, or too slow. In the same way, it could happen with the entire history of man, if it were possible to relive it, projecting it on a screen. Those great events and battles, in which generations were played out, those fundamental acts of the times, such as the Crucifixion, or the conquests of Alexander, could also seem too accelerated, or too slow, when even the events of the recent war are becoming outdated. It is always the destiny of external actions, because only in the inner life is everything invariable; like numbers.

Emotion and feeling keep the heart attached to what no longer exists. In memory, illusion forges its ghosts and keeps us attached to something from which perhaps we should free ourselves. When I have sometimes reopened old books, to reread their pages, which in childhood transported me to an enchanted world, I have discovered that they do not possess the same power of fascination. And now, immersing myself in the memories of the first years of my generation and of my literary life, I do so with the same fear that everything is also phantasmagoria. Even Barretto, the hero, and all the others who accompanied him, may appear on the screen overloaded, excessive, like Greek theater actors, with masks and costumes.

But I do not think so, because the night and the blood are always deep; defeating time, they sink their roots and make a mysterious tree grow, which spreads its foliage over history. It is the Myth and the Legend, which are prolonged in the succession of generations.

It has been approximately thirteen years since the events that I relate here now. Then we were very young, and we were just beginning our literary reality. We met as a group of friends, led by the same concerns, and made a nightlife of still lifes and bars, which we believed to be unique and bohemian. Most of those people are still alive. Possibly they remember those times and preserve them, while they drag their lives through passing over of corpses and their best dreams. Their heart attached, perhaps without knowing it, to an old night when there was a hero.

Memory plays past us. If I insistently refer to Hector Barretto, it is because this friend was so important to our lives and is a symbol of my generation. Very few knew him. If some who were not his friends talk about him, it is because his myth sank roots in our existence. However, I do not remember how or when I met my friend. Not being able to remember it, makes it like I had always known him.

Our city has some strange streets, which spread a kind of singular halo over it.

One night, about thirteen years ago, I was slowly walking down one of those streets. I was looking for my friends in a restaurant in the night districts. Santiago was illuminated and alive at that hour, with advertisements for coffee shops, bars, and billiards rooms. I opened the door of the cafeteria "La Miss Universe".

My friends were there.

They sat around a table full of bottles. When I arrived, it did not interrupt their talk. Julio Molina, the poet, with a defiant attitude, kept his arm at a right angle, with his fingers extended; He declared that this is how the sun remained in space and that this was the position of God. I speak of his poems; "The Immobile Architect" and "Thirty Gallops of Salt". He also told of his death in a tropical country, among crocodiles, while spiders and ants entered his mouth. Santiago del Campo, the playwright, listened, bright and smiling, enjoying the night in wonder. He had the secrecy of a wanderer and was secure within himself. Anuar Atias, the storyteller; Irizarri, the "Loco"; the "Tigre" Ahumada and others. I sat next to them and must have read some stories I no longer remember. It would be at midnight when Barreto appeared, accompanied by two friends. He crossed the space that separated him from our table, with his particular air, his hands deep in the pockets of his brown coat, his serious face and the bitter and ironic rictus of his mouth. When we reached our side, he threw back his hat, jumped over some chairs, and sat down. Those who accompanied him also sat down. Even if they were not writers, they came to listen to him, as they admired him as a leader capable of directing them on their nocturnal escapades. Immediately, the atmosphere changed, with something exotic, as if that boy with the feverish eyes contributed an entourage of invisible presences.

And so, it was.

Very slowly he looked at us, without changing the rictus of his lips. With studied gestures, he picked up a glass and drank. He did not speak, he listened. But the silence had fallen. And now we were the ones who waited ... "One day," he said, "long ago, on a lonely eastern beach, a little blue light appeared. It was the lantern of a fish and bread seller, who was walking and singing. He stopped suddenly, as he heard a sob by the sea. He saw a shadow crying on her knees, with her face in her hands. He spoke to her: "Why are you crying, woman?" The shadow did not answer. He got closer. The woman withdrew her hands. She did not have a face. Slowly then she move her hands up, over that missing face, and transformed it into a large white egg. The man, horrified, fled screaming names. On the beach that night his little blue light was lost in the distance."

Hector kept playing with the glass, letting the spiral of his cigarette smoke rise. Then he continued: The other night, being in a den in the outskirts,

some individuals from a neighboring table forced him into a quarrel. One of them insulted him. Then he answered, telling them that they were no more than an insect, a cockroach that he could pop with two fingers. And Barreto made the gesture of squeezing a worm. The man challenged him to a duel to the death. It would be by knife and in the shadows of the Plaza del Roto Chileno. For a long time, they walked through the streets without exchanging a word, until they reached the lonely square. Here they drew their weapons. And the following happened: his contender asked him to provide him with his dagger to sharpen his. Barreto handed it over without hesitation. Then the other attacked him with both. Thanks to his great agility, he was able to escape this adventure alive.

We laughed. And he continued with another improvised story. That night he insisted on the themes of knife fighting. He spoke of the blades of steel gleaming in the moonlight. Releasing the words slowly, as if savoring them, he recounted how once the gypsies threw their knives at him while chasing him. In his flight he had managed to cross a door, closing it, only to see about fifty stanchions stands artfully set, with extraordinary cleanliness, in the shape of his silhouette.

I will tell two more stories that I still remember today:

"That summer was very hot and I was without money. An aunt invited me to spend the summer at her house, near Cousino Park, where, I do not know for what reason, I thought the weather could be cooler. In the afternoons I would go for a walk through the Park. One day I discovered a gypsy camp there and became friends with them. I began to take part in their games, in which I invariably beat them. This gave me great prestige in their eyes and the friendship grew more day by day. One afternoon when we were playing as a team and I was fighting a fight with the Chief of the tribe, an unexpected event took place. A group of gypsy girls passed by. They carried baskets on their waists and went to look for blackberries. Those eyes penetrated my heart. I saw them honeyed and wet. For the first time I lost a game of hopscotch. My prestige was greatly diminished before the gypsies and the cause of my defeat could not go unnoticed by the Chief. I returned every afternoon, but not now to play hopscotch, but to secretly find the beautiful gypsy girl with the almond eyes. We walked hand in hand in search of blackberries, among the trees. Our love was not well regarded by the tribe and one day the girl told me that the gypsy king had decided to marry. We didn't see each other again until the wedding day; I

was invited and should have attended, but that time I got drunk. I went back to my aunt's house. I went to the living room and picked up a great great-grandfather's sword. I approached the balcony where the moon shone silently. Taking the blade of the sword, I began to bend the flexible steel, until, suddenly, I fell asleep. The next day I woke up very early in the morning and left for the camp. The men had gone out on their wanderings and deals; only women were in the tents. I opened one and entered. There, on cushions, was the gypsy girl. She was waiting for me. I undressed and we loved each other throughout the day. When evening came, the curtains of the tent were opened, and the gypsy appeared. When he saw me with his wife, his anger made him tremble. He remained serene; I calmly got up and began to dress with great care. I have never been able to tie my tie without looking at myself in the mirror. I took one that was nearby, on a silver box and handed it to the gypsy so that he could hold it for me ... You will understand that after this the gypsy and I have become great friends ...”

That night he told us another story with a classic flavor:

He lived in the country. In the mornings he would ride a temperate mule and trek through the mountains, reading a book by Quevedo. Once he found himself next to a house where a beautiful girl lived. Since then, he has returned there. He got off his mule and walked with the girl, teaching her the stories from his books, and contemplating the flowers of the mountains. That girl loved him; but a strange terror haunted her. The moment came when he knew why she trembled when she walked away with him along the mountain paths. They were surprised by the woman who kept the house. She was a grim looking witch. The girl begged him to flee and not come back. And such was his anguish and despair that he did so. As he got on the mule, his red cap got caught in a branch and fell off. When he got home, he fell sick with a strange illness. He lay on the bed, where his relatives cared for him. The doctor came, shook his head, and didn't know what to say. Days passed and he was still sick. His teeth fell out, then his hair fell off. His face began to wrinkle and change. Sitting in his chair and wrapped in shawls he was dying. Outside the storm broke. His relatives had gone in search of the priest for the last sacraments. At that moment, the door of the room opened and the girl from the sierra entered. Without saying a word, she returned the red hat ... That same night he improved and was able to return from his adventure in the mountains, astride his meek mule and reading a Quevedo book...

As he narrated, we were living in those worlds extracted from his dreams. It created the climate, the atmosphere. His hands moved, his face was that of an actor, his eyes penetrated the tobacco fog and he smiled with satisfaction when emotion, or that subtle grace, took us away from the distractions. It was the magic of the word and the aura of legend that he drew from his inner life. He lived in a world that he ordered in his own way. He was the officiant of a story of his own. With his fine fingers, he wove, his thin and fair face aroused. Sometimes he listened, but I will continue remembering now what he told us: In ancient China there lived a boy who studied violin. Every afternoon he crossed a forest to go to his teacher. Always on the same path, however, once he deviated, a little to the right, or to the left, and lo and behold, he found himself in front of a palace, from which a girl came out that invited him to play. The girl and the palace were so fine that the boy forgot his violin class. Until the fall of the night, he was playing. When he returned home, he found his teacher; alarmed he had gone to look for him. His father had a stern demeanor: Where was the son, who did not go to his violin class? But the boy told of the beautiful palace and the young woman. The father and the teacher looked at each other. In that forest there was no palace. The boy insisted. They both decided to accompany him to show them. The next day the boy led them through the forest. Walking the paths, he thought he reached the place where he had found the palace and the girl. There was nothing there. Only the grass grew dry and yellow. The boy bowed his head sadly. And then he saw the stone of a tomb with an inscription: *"Here lies the princess Shui-Fu, who had eyes like almonds, in the old Austral Country of Flowers* ...

Barreto lived in a special world that he defended against the everyday reality. Immersed in his dreams, he knew how to find the strangest books and places. Anuar Atias confesses that walking with him through the streets at night was always a journey into the unknown. While conversing and narrating, he let his feet lead him to streets where he discovered doors where black masses and covens were celebrated behind. When reality did not respond, to his transforming, then he sat in a cafe and travelled to the past. Santiago del Campo tells of these nights. In those days, del Campo lived in a loft that was assigned to him at the National Institute, which he could only enter at a certain time. If for any reason he was delayed in his arrival, he had to wait until the next day. Then Barreto accompanied him to stay up late, telling stories until dawn: "It was like that once," Del

Campo says, "Hector was sitting in front of me, pale and serious. He started talking about death. He explained to me how the conqueror, Julius Caesar, had died, who upon entering a city he presided over, a messenger ran through it shouting: "Men, keep your women, mothers, hide your daughters, here comes the bold adulterer!" When Brutus stabbed him, his only concern was to spread the folds of his cloak so that it would not be wrinkled on the ground."

Then Barreto asked for a cup of coffee and became quiet. With studied gestures, he took a small, carved box out of a pocket. He opened it and dumped its contents into the cup. "I did not see well", says Del Campo. Barreto was silent. He raised the cup to his lips and sipped it slowly. Then, with bright eyes, he said to me: "Did you see?"

"Yes," I answered. "What was it?"

"Poison," he explained. "A formula I discovered last night in an old book; the Borgias used it ... I want to know how the Orsini die ..."

Again, remembers Del Campo. "I made sure that his face had changed. Sitting with a watch in his hand, he kept me waiting for midnight. At that time, his transfiguration was going to take place. The power of his faith was such that I anxiously awaited. When it struck twelve, he lifted his face, stared at me, and asked me: "Do you recognize me now?"

So it was. He would have liked to have worn a mask that he could change at will. He often talked about it. He wrote a story on this subject, which he called "The Sick City"; all of the characters walked with masks, in a city that was approaching its end, attacked by a dark evil of the soul.

Beyond the masks with which he covered himself, the boy was in a struggle with the environment. As he was being beaten, his eyes deepened. At the same time, he was isolating himself in the dream. At any hour he would lie on his bed. If someone came to visit, he would listen for a moment. If what he heard was not interesting, he would once again plunge into his imaginary worlds, in his dreams, which he called "trips without money."

What did his drama mean? Something collective to ours. What he said, and what little he wrote, are now scattered fragments of a life that was just beginning. Having placed his aspirations very high, he did not have the power or the favorable times to be able to carry them out. He was a symbol

of our generation, someone who, being a boy, spent all of his energy and could not continue living. His stories, the lines he left written, failed to express the impulse that generated them; they are only the attempt of an aspiration.

However, for those of us who saw him in action and were his audience, now circulating around the ruined stages, when we reread his stories we see his image reappear and everything becomes the dimension of yesteryear. There is "Jason", the Argonaut: Lamella was Dodona, and, in the sands of Dodona, the old patriarchal oaks grew. Jason fled from his family. He got a ship that guided him through dreams and premonitions. After years of looking, he came to an Island where an empty sailboat had run aground. On the pole of the mast, as an emblem of dreams, for the incomprehensible, the golden skin of a ram; It was the Fleece, which the son knew how to find, far from his father and from the ancient oaks of Dodona.

Thus, he lived and died, unable to detach himself from the web of dreams that he wove with his own imagination. I still see him, with his bright black eyes, crossed by an unexpected light. In the end, his soul tended like a note to a distant theme. He did not want to speak like a charmer anymore. His expression became awkward. "I don't know," he once told me.

"I can't speak. I believe that God exists. I'm sorry, I feel it; but I'm not ready to talk about Him."

About thirteen years ago I was with my friends, sitting at a bar table, listening to Barreto tell his stories.

The night came to an end and we got up to leave, heading for our houses. I started back down the same streets and quickened my pace to get there before dawn. Then I found myself in a strange place, in a sleepy outskirts. Old lanterns casting dim lights. There were irregular windows in the walls. The ground was paved, and the street ended with a point. The doors and windows remained closed. My steps began to echo. Inadvertently, I tiptoed. A window opened and a voice said, "It's raining." The window closed again. But it was not raining and only the light settled on the sidewalks. I approached the door of the house and knocked. The door was ajar, and a woman looked outside uneasily. From the back of the room, another middle-aged woman shuffled forward. On her legs she wore

strange leggings. She took the young woman's arm. As I closed the door, she looked at me with a strange smile.

THE HERO IS UNDRESSED

It is another night. We are both sitting at a table in a bar. He barely lifts his face.

"I don't know," he says, "I can't speak anymore ... I have lived in my dreams ... It seems to me that I have crossed a boundary and some serious admonition is hitting me. It hurts. There are things that cannot be explained. That which feels like confirmation, what do you gain by trying to explain it? The truth is not outside, it is not communicable. My words have become clumsy; because God is inside."

Then, from a nearby table a small dark man approached and intervened in our conversation; because he had heard us talk of God.

"I don't believe in God," he said. "There is only an unfathomable and hidden place, in which one rests. It is there, in the fiery blood, in the eternal feminine, that is which you call God."

They were closing the bar at that time, and we had to leave. Silently, we marched through the streets until we reached my house, where Barreto had accompanied me. When we were saying goodbye we realized that we had left over money that we had not spent. So Barreto took a handful of coins and some bills and tossed them into the air. I looked in my pockets and did the same. The noise of coins clinked on the pavement. With a wave of his hand, he said goodbye. He turned up the collar of his coat and disappeared into the night.

UNTIL THE SUPERB HOUR OF THE SKELETONS

This is how we lived in those years. Of course, other worlds existed, but they left us cold, lacking that fire in which we communicated. The most prominent representatives of the previous generation, poets like Pablo Neruda, Vicente Huidobro and Pablo de Rokha, did not spiritually penetrate the mystery of our land. There was no union in their work and in life. It was impossible for us to understand them. A wide and impassable lake stretched between our generation and theirs. It was of no apparent use that they were trying to cross it, trying to reach us, imagining new ideas with which they believed they could win us.

I remember a meeting at the house of the poet Vicente Huidobro. He was my uncle. Having family ties, he never exerted that influence on me that his personality achieved on others. His gestures and reactions were familiar to me so I knew when they were not authentic. For this reason, his authority never reached me from the poetic Olympus where he resided. For years his home was a freeing center. A group of his followers met there, to venerate France and everything that came from Europe. Some of our people forgot the drama of the generation, carried away by that special condition of the Chilean who can imitate what is outside, coming to believe himself as a member of any other community. The Chilean realizes that there is a drama and anguish here, where it seems there are no means to escape dissolution. The spiritual and moral props have not yet appeared; for this reason, they tend towards the distant and external forms of culture and sublimation, as if looking for a way out that allows them to escape from chaos. The earth swallows everything. Fleeing from himself, he thinks maybe he will save himself. And Vicente Huidobro - in whom the drama of this flight was fully accomplished - preached against the "maelstrom of the new world", making the apology of cerebral art and of the "diaphanous intelligence of the French". It was followed because there were still no forms for its own, and even though our generation was already tending towards rectification, it still was lacking the spiritual means to raise its land and that is why they were looking to other worlds.

Surrounded by paintings by Picasso and Miro and sculptures by Lipchitz and Hans Harp, Vicente Huidobro walked between the living room and the dining room. The atmosphere was picturesque. Eduardo Anguita, Braulio Arenas, Eduardo Molina, Teofilo Cid, Juan Tejada and others from our generation were there. All poets or writers marked by an exhausting fate. A beautiful blonde woman attended, silent and hermetic. Vicente miserly distributed the glasses of his "Santa Rita" wine with interested wisdom. He drank little; but he got drunk with words, with listening to himself. He then presented his "oceanic soup", a dish cooked and invented by him, which included all known and unknown seafood. This man was curious. Possessing the characteristics of the old feudal lands, where the traditional mansions endured with their shadows and their inheritance, he had tried to flee, in the outermost, from his land and from himself, to be able to save himself from a dull environment and its prejudices. He talked about it all the time, and compared himself to Shakespeare and to the Cid, from whom he claimed to descend. He recited

his own poems and was already raising his statue in the heart of the Alameda de las Delicias, along with another one in Les Champs Elysees. It was his ultimate escape; thus, he stunned his own anguish to himself by what he didn't see, what he didn't admit, that he had not achieved his great aspiration to the heroic, so he would invent a life in which he had not failed. His loneliness and his pride, as an old ancestor, as a rebellious angel, cut him off from real communication with others.

This time I had taken my friends to Huidobro's house, also, Barreto. There was a lot of talk that night. Only Barreto remained silent and reserved. I watched. Only when Huidobro showed his book "Gill de Raix" did he express interest and consult details of the character's life, who impressed him by his status as a magician or a sorcerer. The evening thus developed very differently from the usual ones in our cafes.

As we left the house, we returned in a group, walking through the old Alameda. Different representatives of our same generation, who until then did not know each other, had come to meet that time. At Huidobro's house, they made contact for a moment with Hector Barreto. For they would never see him again. Also, that night as he walked away alone and ironically said goodbye, with a verse by Pablo de Rhoka; "Mad friends, goodbye! Until the superb hour of the skeletons."

THOSE FROM THERE

Ivan Romero was a friend who provided us with his house for our meetings. From the south he was sent large "demijohns" of white wine. The house was spacious, with open patios, with hydrangeas and orange trees. In the back was the dining room with gilt mirrors and a long table.

I arrived when everyone was sitting at the table and the white wine had already wreaked havoc. Robinson Gaete was giving a speech, half perched on a chair, while the others listened to him seriously and silently.

"Love," he said, "is what makes these mirrors grow, imitating the golden twilight. Without love nothing can exist. He who lives without love is like someone who gets inside a zero and draws the curtains ... Many years, once, next to the Euphrates, the Devil descended to the earth, he got on a platform and spoke thus to men: "Men," he said, "give me some white wine ...!" like a zero without eyelashes, that is, like a fixed eye that looks at us open and unblinking, open, and dead, as the eye of God looks at Cain. We are stuck inside this eye and we do not dare to close the curtains, for

fear that the mountain will fall upon us ... Only love can save us. Love, or white wine. The wine that runs like a river through the sorrows and the jungle, ending in our soul, which runs like the Rio del Diablo ... Our land is a river, the homeland has the narrow and thin shape of a river; the homeland is the Devil's river, which looks at us with its pupil dry and dead, because it does not lead to love yet ..."

I also sat down and read a story I had just written. It was called "Something" and it described the earth, intuited in dreams. There came a man in search of sublimation. The inhabitants drank and danced drunk. The man preached salvation to them. They laughed. The rudeness of these beings only understands those who dress with the same disdain. He fought and defeated the bravest. Now the inhabitants of the mystical homeland were ready to listen to him and to follow him. But he doubted his message and could no longer distinguish the way. The fury of the disappointed men exploded. The shadow, the death. And the smell of hawthorn on the fields...

My story impressed them. Santiago del Campo jumped on one of the assistants and began to fight; they fell to the ground. Meanwhile, Ivan Romero had passed into the living room and was operating the "Apassionata" by Beethoven on the auto piano. It was at that moment when Barreto approached and took me next to a glass door and told me: "This is life and this is death." On the glass he had drawn some signs with his finger, which he could not see because they were not engraved there. Glass is a substance that does not keep the signals of man; writing on glass is like doing it in air. Then, Julio Molina, who was nearby and had also observed attentively, approached and with a slap broke the glass. His poet's blood splattered on the moons mirror.

At that time, Barreto took the last steps of his life. Without notifying anyone, he joined a political party. So great was the confusion that this outlook produced in all of us, that Anuar Atias told him in a letter that he sent from a neighboring city: "I don't understand your gesture. What became of Jason? Art should live on the fringes of politics, of profane action". Barreto responded by telling him that he had not betrayed art, that Jason was still the same, kept inside and that, for the rest, "he became a socialist because it hurt him to see poor children with their bare feet in the rain."

After his death, all, by different paths, followed in his footsteps in the social struggle.

Even today Atias himself remains a prisoner of this struggle. However, it was a mistake. And in his last days Barreto realized it. Politics and social struggle are for other less evolved people and with different backgrounds. Nothing is achieved by wanting to intervene, nor does anyone do any good by betraying themselves. I say it from experience; I have lost many years, entangling my life in that way, but we believed in Barreto's conscious decision, perhaps it was nothing more than fatal design. Taking advantage of this new situation, he would be able to finish off his life, already stolen by his ghosts.

For the last time he came to my house, the day before his death. I stayed in bed with a cold. He was there for a moment. He sat down in a chair by the bed. His face was ashen and very thin. With a smile between ironic and bitter he spoke of his estrangement. It was the time of the war in Spain and his party had taken positions. He was no longer interested in all that. I remember what he told me: "I do not understand anyone. I am interested in heroic gestures on both sides of the war. I have nothing in common with politicians. The other day they published a social story in the magazine 'Rumbos', of the party. I wanted a cartoonist friend of mine to illustrate it for me, but they had another, a socialist. I raised an argument for them to accept my friend; that he was capable of drawing a perfect circle with his eyes closed, something that only an artist like Leonardo could have done. They laughed at me and told me to stop being childish. This makes me see the paradox of the matter. While my 'social stories', which do not interest me at all, which I write almost out of obligation, obtain great success, the others, those that are truly mine, are considered naive, childish. In my home I am also becoming more and more a stranger. If they ask me for practical advice, I cannot help but answer something funny that entertains me. Or I tell them that they must consult the horoscope... Look, I have decided to change, because I cannot go on like this. I work all night proof reading and I sleep during the day. I have not seen the sun for a long time. I will try to change my occupation; above all, my mental attitude. But listen well, I have lived it all, absolutely everything, in dreams, in my mind. And that is an experience that leaves traces."

It is true that he left them. This time Hector Barreto was no longer the same. From time to time his eyes narrowed in a gesture like fatigue. His

face was pale, his mouth parted, revealing his teeth, and giving that feeling of emptiness inside that the dead produce. It was curious what I felt then: "Barreto, in certain moments, looks like a dead man."

The next morning, I was thinking, without being fully aware of it: "If Barreto died, I would not say anything at his grave, not a word could I say..."

The door to my room opened and someone entered to tell me that Barreto had been murdered.

It happened in the following way. On Saturday night Barreto looked for his friends and could not find them. For one reason or another, they were not at home. I was sick in bed. So Barreto went to a movie theater. He left there late and walked to Matta Avenue and Cafe Volga, where the socialists met. Thinking perhaps he would listen to them, wishing he could adapt to their "dialectic" and to their "real world". It would be midnight when the door opened, and two uniformed Nazis appeared. Those were the times of street fights between Nazis, Socialists and Communists. There was an argument that night. And Barreto intervened in the usual way. He said that it was absurd to believe that a blond man could rule the world, that all great conquerors had been brown, that the conquering blond race was a myth. Then, he challenged the babies to run and jump. They looked at him strangely. Maybe they thought that boy was drunk. Carabinieri [police] arrived at that moment and the discussion in the cafeteria did not continue any further. The groups dispersed. Barreto, with some others, entered through Serrano Street, when a new group of Nazis appeared on the corner. Shouts and insults were exchanged, and the Nazis began firing. The socialists fled. Barreto remained standing, removing the ring from his finger, he raised it in the air, exclaiming: "Over here, bullets pass through here!"

Immediately, despite the voices of his companions who asked him to return, he continued advancing, injured. The Nazis had withdrawn beyond that street. Barreto again reached Matta Avenue. He had such faith in himself that he never thought anything could happen to him; on the surface of his conscience, because I believe that deep down, he knew it and was looking for it. With his hands in the pockets of his coat, with his hat thrown back and the Sardinian rictus of his lips, he fell. The bullet penetrated his stomach. And there, on the ground, a foot hit his temple, sinking the storm and breaking that head, which housed so much drama and so many dreams.

His blood wetted the pavement. And they would have continued hitting and kicking him, if a soldier had not emerged from somewhere who defended him with a sword. When he was transferred to the hospital, Barreto opened his eyes for the last time and said: "Who laughs now, those from *here*, or those from *there*?" It was not murder. It was a destiny or a salvation. Those from there took him away. Any external medium was good, especially that which complied with the law, by shedding his blood, since it is in the blood that the ghosts of legend feed. Fate wanted those other boys, who in Chile had worshiped the heroic, to be the ones to make the sacrifice. The same ones who would later be massacred in a black concrete tower.

The night stretches out, its waves beat on the loneliness of the heart. The hero is alone in his sarcophagus, surrounded by gray uniforms and flags, the color of the pavement on which he fell. What do those who stand guard know about him? Nothing, except that he wrote a "social story" called "La Noche de Juan". That's it. But his friends are also there. They keep their heads down and are puzzled. They close the coffin and lift it. We want to take at least one end of that coffin, help to carry it; but the party is opposed; because that corpse is already theirs; it is a flag in the social struggle. I stay behind and watch him go. I can't help it, my tears fall, and I cry with the cry for my true comrade and my brother.

Then everything happened in the mists. The procession passes through the center of the city; thousands of people and the hand of a woman that squeezes mine, that oppresses it with force and emotion, as if to last in the memory. In the cemetery, the drama ends. On a platform speaks the socialist leader, Marmaduke Grove. He says that this boy was one of them, that from a young age he was a socialist militant and that he died raising his clenched fist and shouting: "Don't pass!" And in the tomb, where the hero's mask now looks with his stone eyes, a phrase of his has been written: "The color of blood is not forgotten, it is not possible to forget it; it is so red, so intensely red."

Barreto's death was a symbol for a sector of my generation, it burned a stage forever.

Those of us who lived withdrawn were projected into action and into the external world. He took life from us, along with its struggles and passions.

THE PASSENGER OF THE DREAM

Barreto wrote a story that was his biography: "El Pasajero del Sueno". It is about a boy who lives in dreams. The character in the story is called Aliro. Lying on his bed, he no longer distinguishes reality. From time to time he opens his eyes only to see his mother approaching amid a gray cloud, bringing a basin of food. She says: "Eat, Aliro, because if you don't, you will die." But Aliro closes his eyes and is transported back to his inner world. Far away, he lives. It is in a lavish palace where he is king. King and Lord in his palace at Melimpa, Emperor over seventy cities. Melimpa looks at a friendly sea that suspends dawn. But there are times when Melimpa does not look at the sea, but at an infinite plain. It is an immense garden in which the landscape lives on an impossible vegetation and the light of a happy star writes its sweetness on the color of the ritual flowers. And there is Donia, the beauty, waiting among flattering silks. Donia stole it from the sovereign of a lunar country. She knows how to caress like flowers because there are flowers that have a feminine presence.

There is a thud, like crawling thunder. Understand, they are warriors. The fierce Ranguns of the black tribes have descended from their mountains and are advancing on Melimpa. Leaving Donia behind and grabbing his weapons. He no longer looks at the sea, nor to the immense plain. Below, his army waits, while in the distance the enemy advances. He puts himself at their head and in punishing combat destroys them.

There are thousands of corpses on the burning sands. He even pursues those who flee south, over the dunes. And at twilight he walks slowly because of the fizzy color of the light, which grows at that time. Suddenly, immense birds start to appear flying, almost touching the heads of the soldiers as they pass. Feeling some fatigue, one of the birds goes straight towards him in slow flight. Close by, he sees in his eyes a familiar look that he seems to have seen in a dream... The bird touches his face with one of its wings and he feels faint...

Aliro opens his eyes and sees the room and the old familiar objects. Much gloom. Weariness. How to endure the humiliating return? Here, in stubborn reality, he feels miserable when he wakes up, clumsy, he the most daring of slingers, the wisest of hunters... On the nightstand, the acetylene lamp illuminates a senseless scene. The face of his mother that leans over him and watches him - it seems very old to him; his younger brothers look at him curiously. The smell of food has become unbearable. His mother's

hand touches his forehead, he closes his eyes to flee. Then a huge spiral begins to live in the interior landscape. Know that you are on the threshold, by the symptoms... At that point - Barreto writes - there are two images, both equally strong and true to the touch: "Here is what is already leaving, what is going to be forgotten; there is what has arisen, and with equal force of life and color. Then in the center of those two truths, and that center is the purest emptiness, irreplaceable. It remains lost, unable to risk a single gesture, faithful and permanent in that extraordinary point. But everything consists in loving one more of the two images. And Aliro decides on the new and recent path."

"Ah, then, ah, the beautiful grape harvesters! They are the ones who brought joy to the forest, they came with the sun. In a not far clearing they laugh and play, dancing on the pressed grapes. It is now the season of drunkenness and they prepared the sacred nectar. They will give you a joyful welcome and there you will live the summer. His tunic has been colored with the pollen of the flowers. The feet, calves and even the morbid thighs of the grape harvesters are soaked with the juice of the grapes. It is a superb spectacle to see them dance madly over the amethyst-colored wine presses. Amethyst, purple. Smell of thick wines. The amethyst is intoxicating like wine. He is naked and jumps very high. The women no longer wear short skirts, nor is he like before. He has small horns concealed beneath his thick black hair. Satyr! Squeeze the bunches with his feet and dance and roll with the most beautiful of women. The others also lie on him and caress him. He merges with them. Loving them. Squeeze her breasts as if they were ripe bunches. The whole body has been made of amethyst.

It is the hour of the Angelus. He remains lying in the middle of the winepress. They have fled. He is alone. Standing and now walking. Looking for a stream where to contemplate his face. Narcissus! Who is he already? What is his true face? At the bottom of the stream, in the depths of the water, a path opens. When you embark upon it, those waters will no longer be waters. Yes. And it extends its arms towards the landscape. It experiences a sensation of soft languor and descends. Passenger celestial and vertiginous. Advancing straight towards a yellow moon ..."

This following part of the story is extraordinary. The experience described there cannot be a product of imagination. Only those who have crossed a boundary can reach it.

"The yellow moon is approaching. Aliro reaches it, ascending, or descending, by his own inner spiral. He is already there in that ghostly world. And the sensations on that sick planet were sordid and caustic. The landscape lived in sections of a reddish light, insipid, and in sections of a violet of the dead. That light contaminated the spirit, making it sick. The ground seemed calcined. He could not distinguish any horizon because of the shapes, shadows, and aspects that he was incapable of continually rising above before his eyes. At the same time, he discovers that he can no longer flee from these horrendous regions. Before, he would have kissed them only if he wished, he thinks, as they walk on the lukewarm limestone and destroy, will it be a dark penance? Exhausting despair seizes him when he realizes that he is at the mercy of such a bitter adventure. It was impossible for him to return; he was no longer the skillful pilot of other times."

He was aware of his state of sleep, but now he began to doubt, because this was going on for too long. He remembered a dimly lit room and a name that was his: Aliro. He had the name in his grasp yet he found it strange: Aliro, a room somewhere, a certain state and something else. That seemed then the dream and this the reality. The memory was so strong that sometimes it almost left its current scene. Why was it so strong? The memory was as vital as imagining a thing, or as weak as living it? What was a dream then? His throat knotted and a boundless despair approached him. Perhaps he himself was to blame. He, who made his life so extraordinary, that he wanted to go down roads unknown and undetermined, that untouched his eyes. And there, destroyed, he had the feeling of having violated something sacred, of having lifted an untouchable veil, of having stepped on a forbidden place..."

Prisoner in that sordid world, magnetized on that planet of death. Aliro, that is, Barreto, discovers one last hope: If at a precise time he could find himself on the edge of that star, facing chaos, into space, he could return. And he knew that this fact was in him, like the planet. That everything was in his thought, that it was enough to be able to think it, for it to happen. But it became hard for him, he could not. He would close his eyes to get it, close his eyes desperately to fight better ... and get the image. There he was then on the edge, and it was an edge. He was facing chaos. Spreading his arms to jump. He was happy to be able to leave the painful episode, happy as a freed prisoner. And he fell in the middle of a violet spiral, turning and descending in a violet, blue spiral...

"Again, Aliro is lying in the middle of the gloom. His vision too cloudy, and he could barely make out his bed. Because he was always in the middle of the spiral. He went up and down it. They were two conical spirals, whose ends joined at his own chest, inside his chest. It went up, it went down, it felt light and ethereal, very light..."

"Near him a bare skull that Aliro sees coming through the darkness until it stops just a few centimeters from his eyes. A rope rises starting from the left side of his chest. He distinguishes the features of the one observing him ... A rope rises from his heart until lost in the middle of the gloom. And his thoughts creep up on him, fleeing the place. Visiting a Roman region, without any image, coming back abruptly and without wanting it. The rope has been removed from his chest. It was almost at the precise moment that he returned. He can see the skull two steps away from him, in the shade. You sense other people in the room, but you do not see them. The skull moves from left to right in a negative gesture. It moves slowly, with isochronous movement, it soon picks up speed, takes on a phosphorescent color, walks, like a pendulum ... He feels an irresistible desire to close its eyes. The eyelids fall. A sweet tingle runs through him. Then a heaviness that is making the body more and more insensitive ... as the thought and his mind -between aching fumes- seem to rise slowly. He feels strange and ascends. Go up, slowly, very slowly; *until it is contemplated from the outside.*"

So Aliro died. So too, Barreto must have died.

And writes:

"It is so difficult to say what is most valuable in life. The ways of being are many. For Aliro there was none. He was never able to interest himself in a real attitude. The truth is that his whole life was an uninterrupted dream. Who knows why he chose this kind of life? It could have been a certain laziness, cowardice, or a supreme mode of tiredness. The wakefulness produced in him a deep moral depression. He could only bear this state that we could partially call lucid, while reading, because the pages of books sometimes bloom extraordinary images that are very sweet to navigate ... But is it that the life of a man can unfold like this, between Dream and Daydream?"

This is how Aliro lived.

"Aliro sleeps. Do not be disturbed. The poor man is sick."

And Silvio, the youngest of the family, asks: "Sweet illness must be that of the dream, right, mother?"

"There is no sweet illness, my son," she answers, "a bad spirit is in your brother's body."

"It will be a heavy sleep." -the child thinks to himself- like those that he suffers when he wakes up startled calling for his mother, with his cheeks wet with tears.

He pities his brother infinitely.

MY LONELINESS, DESPERATE FLOWER

When Barreto was still alive, once, a cursed poet came to our gathering. He sat down in front of a bottle of wine and, for a moment, was happy. His profile was sharp, his hair black and combed; he squinted a lot to see. Pale of death. He was not of our generation, but he was not of any. He was cursed and fled through the night. His name was Omar Cacaes. We listened to him, while outside the rocks groaned along with the weight of the night mixed with the dense halite [salt] of the earth ... "My loneliness," he said, "is a desperate flower and my heart defends itself with all its standards. Only there it is to be found; what truly exists." He read us his poems, which would later appear in his only book: "Defense of the Idol." One of them was called "Uninhabited Blue". I still remember some verses:

I understand that the meaning, the prayer with which every strange loneliness surprises us, is nothing more than the evidence of human sadness that remains. Or also the light of the one who breaks his security, his consecutive atmosphere and returns to know that he still exists, that still encourages and impoverishes steps on earth; but that he is there, absorbed, without direction, lonely as a mountain, saying the word "then"

...

He had a strange way of reciting, of pronouncing the words, almost savoring them. And the anguished aura that surrounded him was as impenetrable and unbreathable as the frozen spaces of the cosmos. He was enveloped in an atmosphere of death and total loneliness. His drama could be guessed in his poems; because he had reached there where life no longer finds its usual oxygen and the presence of other universes snatches the soul, making human coexistence difficult.

"There are extremes in the Universe that are visited", he told us, "and I have been present in that encounter, being reduced to an atom and losing my senses. What I do now, the depths into which I fall, are only the result of everything. That they do not affect me. The leaf swept by the storm no longer belongs to the tree. I am far away. Here I no longer have the will, I no longer exist, my friends ..." Thus, he spoke.

I live there, in the midst of those impetus, solemn in that eagerness, of the wind, of that wind, that writhes in my garden and flaunts itself inside my trees. He does not move a leaf alone, nor kiss every flower; simultaneously, sovereignly presents himself to all, embraces them, without separating from his self, in a reciprocal, constant subjection, from everywhere, towards an inaccessible point of prideful morbidity does not require substance: that wind is the narrow flag of the souls. Ah, how to escape, however, from that tormented ground, how to flee, what spirit, that dull spears nail me, keep me on my feet being able to get down alone and escape naked into storms unheard of, incomplete heights wash my spirit, wet it, on the tongue without saying, cascades of sobs that undermine the darkness, that transpire, wanting to find everything, cross his dream with that strand of wet light ... breastplate of torments, victorious rubble; invasion of height proving in marbles of horror, inner leg. In the midst of that past avalanche alive, surrounded by ghosts, ghosts to be able to think, of presence that desperately grab me, that are exhausted, sniffing his living slab, the pedestal of his absolute and sovereign idol, but in whom everything's fire, all earthly aptitude has been lost, destined for the unspeakable, supreme victim, like one who knows the shadow of late powers performing, oh! Sun similar to all shadows, tenacious, the sacred fortune of that trembling halite. Triumphantly I am in that hidden rest ...

And later, in "The Illumination of the I":

"Dripping its burned densities, / around the same afternoons, simultaneously / here is the meager, difficult day appearing. / Because here I am, a testament of light / always leaning towards you, a stranger to myself, / ready for your sudden purification of swords. / I am the one who dominates that joyful extension / the one who watches over the dreams of friends / the one who was always ready / the one who doubles that fatigue that makes mirrors thin. / Now I surprise my face in the water of those profound farewells / on the screen of those last sobs / because I am behind everything, crying what was taken from myself. / I love the heat of this

*painful flesh that protects me / the sensual shadow of this naked sadness,
that steals the Angels. / The ring of my breath, freshly engraved ... / It's all
that remains, oh apprehension ...!"*

Into the shadows he left. The years covered him with their blanket of oblivion, until one day his corpse was found wrapped in rags, on the banks of the river that crosses our city. Those who heard him recite his poems that night long ago went to see him off at his grave. Next to the spot was a woman. Who was she? Perhaps that friend, "who passed like a trickle of rain in stunned steps, through the lines that drop the color of the mountains drop by drop ...?" The one that the poet did not want to hear, "with her smile made to heal the wounds of his astonishment; because his heart defended itself with all its flags" and his "loneliness was a desperate flower" that he cultivated in order to reach that "deathly light of all the bells", that "meager and difficult day", that "tormented ground" and that "sun equal to all shadows"? Or, perhaps it was she who "instructed him one day in the bare accent of her arms", and took him to "a point from where the note sounding the misfortune of his last goodbye could be noticed." Iodine was shipwrecked for him, then, "he fell, he ceased to exist, helpless to himself", he was then "clothed with distances, between man to man, meager ... because man only loves his own dark life..."

Mystery was his existence; a drama projected a little higher than this earth and the generations of the past. That is why I remember him. I also see him ascending those columns, within which "there is always an angel standing." Those unfinished columns, which are growing to support a new heaven, in a remote and distant world.

THE BRAINS ON THE WALL

There was also another poet, who in the darkest times was faithful to his ghosts. He moved slowly, he was tall, with a soft smile; his body stood dreamily. His name was Jaime Rayo, and he also wrote a single book of poems. Like others, one day he voluntarily disappeared, killing himself with a gun. The lead bullet that penetrated his temple, scattered his brains on the wall, but he did not instantly die. Perhaps he was still able to contemplate his own brains. On the bed he stirred in agony and his body convulsed. His hand could no longer feel that of the friend who came to assist him. While he lay dying so atrociously, the one who was by his side gave realization to the drama of his last minutes, thus projecting in time the link of a desperate generation.

"One day, perhaps, banished from its shores, despite nearby land / other orders will follow his stealthy steps of the outskirts and an unknown peace recognize in him its best origins. / For now, giving a life to the jealous power of miracles waiting for it, is how this single mysterious account should be told..."

WHITE LILIES FOR THE TOMBS OF HEROES

For years, every September 5 a tribute to the boys who were massacred in the Tower of Seguro Obrero has been held in our city's cemetery. They were also from our generation. Their former comrades remember them on that date.

Some years ago, we went with a friend on that date to the cemetery. At the entrance they gave us some white lilies. We walked the placid trails. The sound of our footsteps was lost among the mausoleums and the green meadows. The lilies looked like torches of white flame. That day we visited many graves. Do you remember, my friend Juan Derpich? We went to your comrade Jaime Rayo and there we left a lily. High up in a lonely niche. We also deposited another next to Barreto's stone face. Then we reached the open field, where the poor graves where those who died on September 5, 1938 rest. There, in front of the memorial monolith, there was a forest of flags. Standing near the monolith was Jorge Gonzalez, the same one who betrayed the ideals of the dead. He belonged to another generation and was thus separated from ours by an insurmountable gulf. If for a moment his torch went quite high, it was only because the fire lit it; but then it abandoned him, leaving him empty and ghostly. Now he raised his face with his anguished forehead and searched for words. But the dead were gone, the magic and the miracle had been mammoth. Neither on the great trees, nor in the clear sky did the shadows of the heroes float. They are gone forever.

We returned thinking that the pilgrimage to the cemetery had been a symbol. Dead and more dead; the passengers of the dream, the martyrs, the lonely poet, weak in the face of a hostile world. All of them, by different paths, have jumped to the other shore, fulfilling the destiny of a generation. The best of our generation. And I remembered another year when, witnessing the parade of the flags, like a forest of silent waves, moving through the streets, I joined them and accompanied them. Oscar Jimenez, who was there, asked me: "Would you like to die with us?"

“Yes,” I said ... However, I am still alive. I have not died yet. And sometimes I think it was a mistake. Because, like them, I do not know how to live. I cannot detach the feeling from the memories, and that is why I walk back. I want and must keep the faith in myself. Continuing, arriving, so that the martyrs and the suicides can be saved in me. Because if one arrives it is enough for the destiny of a generation.

I will end here this too gloomy of an account of the life of a part of my generation in Chile.

This was the reason for existence, as if by a design of history and of the earth. Who will be saved? Who will reach the limit of the ice of the world and of the very heart itself?

SECOND PART

THE REASONS OF THE EARTH

THE CHARACTER WHO DOMINATES EVERYTHING

Earth, your clouds guided me. Contemplating them when a child, I saw them ascend towards the peaks; Following them, I plunged my eyes into the water of the heavens. Below, in the luminous glades, the oxen with tired heads graze. They also raise their heads with difficulty to follow the impression of some bird. Valleys, where the supple wheats look like armies of an ancient time, raising their spears towards the inclemency of a solar wind. Valleys of clay, sunken valleys between the mountains, volcanic rock trails that lead up steep slopes to lonely snows. The high mountains are the hands with which the body of the earth touches the celestial zone. At its contact it burns. The blood of the mountains is the snow, the sore of fire; on the highest peaks, it is like the white pupils of the titans, who in their superb height wanted to penetrate the mystery. I have sunk eagerly into that white blood and it has left its mark upon me.

It is the earth here, powerful, that forms beings. Dominated by the landscape, men can hardly exist. The land is the supreme character who dominates everything. Tantalizing landscape and inaccessible beauty. With a mystical, contending sense, it makes each of its inhabitants into beings of transit, men who grieve, who yearn for something great, like the pure peaks that surround them. The effects of this land are dramatic and cast shadows as remote and lost as the very makeup of these tortured regions. What ancient and tremendous drama has taken place in these areas? What is the mystery that these rocks hide? Chile is situated in the ring of fire of the Pacific. It is a volcanic state. Whoever lives here is impregnated with the horror of something that will fatally happen. The land gives you everything; then takes away what it has given only a moment ago, or with much sacrifice and effort, he had managed to build. The earth moves a little, it shakes, the volcano heaves; everything falls apart. Then the man asks himself: "Will I start over from the beginning?" And he answers: "For what? Better to spend your life in any way, even in the shadow of four sticks and a roof of branches." Yes, the earth takes away what is essential to exist. The unevenness that exists between the mountain range and the sea causes the waters of the thaws and the rains to wash the lands, leaving them acidic and without lime. As time goes by, a

man's stature decreases, his teeth fall out, his lungs get sick. And this in view, presence of the haughty beauty, the landscape, impossible and ruthless. Superb land, dying men.

Meanwhile, the unconscious takes hold of a frightening secret: the Sea ever works the coasts of Chile. Year after year the water sinks in, the earth descends. Will then the moment come when everyone clings to the great rock wall of the mountain, so as not to fall into the waves that are already hitting the buttresses? The Chilean soul is filled with omens and terrors. Under the influence of the landscape, he relives in his dreams and in his remote visions the cosmic events of mankind. There are images of red moons that fall on the earth, of great waves that pass over the summits, discharging their furious foams. The volcano roars, the fire consumes. Suddenly, the mountain collapses into the sea. So narrow is the strip of land that we have left to travel! It is like a sword pointed at our chest. In the mountains we can raise our heads to look at the sky. But, as in Chile we have not yet learned to look up, we can only try to look within. There is only a dimension towards nothing outside of this closed space. Ghosts and terrors dwell on the horizon of the sea; beings with scales, snakes and slimy octopuses, spiders of the green sea. And a great mouth that drips the water. On the other side of the mountains the void will also grow, furrowed by the fire of comets and by the ice of chaos. If from time to time beings appear that, descending from the peaks, claim to come from neighboring lands, the Chilean does not believe it. Thus, the terror overcomes him when he senses that this, his only world, may disappear into the abyss. The soul of man, in its deepest sense, always remains attached to the earth and to the square measure where which it was born. He cannot believe that the world has a larger dimension. Only reason thinks so. The soul is from the earth, and with it is born and ends. The soul and the body only need one square measure to exist. The spirit also believes, like the soul, but he does know about great spaces and immortality. In Chile the spirit has not yet emerged. For this reason, the man of the square measure, the closed, terrestrial, and anti-international dimension is what occurs here.

Now when the spirit comes and takes hold of its inheritance, perhaps it will discover that it was good and project above everything a heroic and religious feeling, aided by the distant and harsh dream of the earth.

Only at one extreme is it possible today to break the closed dimension: towards the south. Because there is something like a strange and

mysterious current that pulls the frozen end of the world. Helping to open this dimension, perhaps the advent of the spirit is favored because ice is the homeland of the spirit.

For now, the man grieves between earthquakes and misfortunes; Surrounded by ghosts, at the bottom of the earth, he glimpses, as in lightning, the experiences of the world's prehistory. He is just a shipwreck abandoned by God and the landscape. One must think that the beings that inhabit Chile today are men of passage and that the inhabitants of the future should be different. Observing the mountains, the snow-capped peaks, that whole world which is so far above the beings that inhabit it today, it cannot be believed that a harmonious and just relationship will ever be achieved between the Chilean landscape and the race of men from the present. Nor can the Indian of the past return, who was only a transhumant traveler.

If there is a race in the future, it should be that of the titans, re-emerged from the bosom of the white mountains, into the open space, to continue a story that they did not end before: the triumphant life of the man-god on earth.

I am standing on the side of the road. A powerful wind shakes the Quillayes and the Boldos. A eucalyptus bends its crown almost to the ground. Suddenly, the wind stops, and the clouds lighten up, turning yellow, an old gold. The atmosphere becomes warm and transparent, almost piercing. There, at the base of the mountain, a rising darkness begins to grow. A group of people are coming. There are many and they resemble points in the distance. As they get closer, I can tell them apart. I can see their faces disfigured by fear and exhaustion.

They are innards that flee, terrified, gray shadows. They escape from the mountain. A man stops nearby and urinates. Another carries a ragged child in his arms. He walks, broadening his legs cripplingly, as if walking backwards. His head bends and his eyes are fixed in the distance. At the end of the long line a woman marches. They all carry their few belongings; the majority advance with their children; but this one woman is dragging an old and broken chair. Where do you go with the chair?

I ask: "Woman, where are you taking that chair? What good is it for you? Its weight will exhaust you."

She passes me without even a look. The legs of the chair leave a zigzagging line in the dirt of the path. A man tells me:

“Crazy. She has been walking with that chair for days. The burden will kill her, the mountain will kill us.”

They all flee, advancing towards the sea. At the foot of the mountain, the black dust, the sinister shadow has grown and is approaching. Then, thousands of voices shout, while the bodies run, or crawl: "Let's flee, the mountain falls, it will collapse on the sea!"

They say that once there were a people here that adored the Mountains. As the sun rose over their peaks, they implored her to always stand upright and protect them, to give them shade and to not overturn their houses, and their world. Now the shadows, the ghosts flee, a miserable town crawls through the dust, mortally wounded. They flee to the sea, but the sea will swallow them up, just like the earth and world.

HOW THE CATASTROPHE HAPPENED IN THE SOUTH

I will narrate these distant memories, because by reliving them I will extract the perfume of those first southern lands, which are the prelude to the Great South, in which we will later immerse ourselves. Little by little, we will go into the south of the world, through its being and its mystery, until we ultimately reach the very edge of the ice, the end of our journey and our effort.

It was during the time of my stay in Chillán. I lived watching the winds that blew over the city, because, whether it was a "puelche" wind or not, determined if we could ride in good or bad weather to the fields.

That day the horses were waiting for us to leave. I rode a chestnut mare. And we took the direction of the Bella Vista farm.

It was after noon when we stopped at a colonial house which had an orchard, with old and large orange trees. We dismounted. Among the dark green foliage of the trees, the oranges seemed like round, staring eyes, suns of a peaceful and vegetal era. The juice was like fluid light.

In the afternoon, on the hills, a fierce lightning storm was coming. My mare flared her nose and reared up. We decided to hurry before the downpour fell. I remember that messy ride. There were three of us; the friend who invited me, a huaso [Chilean cowboy] from the hacienda and

myself. We let go of the reins of the horses that started at a gallop down the road that already seemed to sense the nearby rain. Their nerves excited by the storm and the electricity in the air, the animals were overwrought. They snorted and dilated their noses, raising lots of dust in the late afternoon, in eager expectation. The wind hit us, and we felt the urge for that race, along with the elements. To the rhythm of the rhythmic and deep resonance of the hooves, we shouted, cheering on our horses.

The water began to fall, and the blankets got soaked. At night, and in the dark, we jumped over potholes, reaching out to protect our faces from the branches of thorns that surrounded the road. We arrived late at the farmhouses.

We went to the foreman's place. He was an old man, who was lodging us in a barn next to his ranch. That night when he looked out the door, because of the barking of dogs, he shined a lantern that, when swaying, cast gigantic shadows. Aware of who we were, he greeted us, muttering:

“Bosses were sure when they came up with the idea, but not so much now in this weather and rain. Get down before you get numb up there.”

After having his say, he began arranging things for us. Our tenant took care of the horses, unsaddling them and feeding them. His two daughters also got up and went to fix the beds in the neighboring barn. The girls worked good-naturedly; they were happy with our visits, which always brought them compliments, jokes and some party planned at midnight. One of them was pretty, with blond hair ("gray", to be more precise), with a rosy complexion like a ripe apple and malicious eyes of a shambolic color. The other looked like the father and had a defect in the hip.

That night we were too cold and wet. We took an old gramophone and a demijohn to the shed. The foreman sat at one end of the table, where the lantern light barely reached; the huaso kept him company. My friend seized the demijohn and no longer moved from his side.

I do not remember how long we were there. My friend fell asleep on the table and had to be put to bed. The foreman and the huaso left. I fell full dressed on my cot, without taking off my boots. I woke up after an unspecified time. I saw the light above, through the ceiling boards. I got up and reached for my blanket, still wet, and put it on. I woke up my friend and left. I discovered that it was still night. The light seen through the ceiling was from the stars. It had stopped raining. Since I could not go

back to sleep, I took the lantern and went out into the field. My friend followed and we both waited for dawn, as if we were lighting the pale dawn with a lantern. It began to rise gently in the distance, spreading across the horizon with a misty, vibrant color. With it came the smell of the fields, penetrating like a fresh perfume of wet grass and flowering thorns, smell of trees, manure, mountains and country life. The first rays of the sun made us see in the distance a beautiful valley, wrapped in blue billows, with delicate undulations and meadows. We took in with full lungs the lively air of the morning and we felt reborn.

Back at the house, the old sage of a foreman was waiting for us. He offered us glasses of chicha [ancient fermented drink of the Incas], to "constitute the body", he told us. Shortly afterwards we set off in the direction of some neighboring plains where we planned to "run hares." It was necessary to reach some secluded hills where an uncle of my friend resided, owner of hare dogs. I was curious to meet that character who lived alone on a ranch upon the hill.

The sun had set again when we made it to his house. At the door a man was waiting for us with a light vicuna blanket, which the wind whipped, along with his thinning hair. He gazed at us with piercing, unreadable eyes. Then he smiled enigmatically, thoughtfully, between sly and purring.

"Come down, man," he said to his nephew, slapping him on the thigh, as he looked at him curiously and amusingly.

We dismounted. Carmelo, an old man with sad eyes, took care of the horses.

Inside the house everything was in disorder. The owner ushered us to his "desk": an old table covered with dust and papers with some agronomy magazines (the guy had been a titled agronomist) and some moldy spurs on the floor. The gray lime walls were covered with colored photographs of scantily clad women, turn-of-the-century theater stars, and the occasional movie actress.

He took out a bottle of cognac and offered us glasses. When he felt that he was being observed, he withdrew even more. His whole person, gave off the attitude of someone defensive. As if he feared having to explain his life and failings; resisting it with the force of his pride. He lived isolated, with the obsession of distant voices.

They served us a careful meal. My friend entertained himself by informing his uncle of family events. He listened to him moving his mustache, like a fox. He tipped his glass of cognac and smoked yellow corn-leaf cigars. His hands were strong, defined. A typical feudal man of our fields, with his old arrogance and rudeness, his humanity, and his dignity. The shadow of a memory, twilight on the horizon, faded color of dawn. So, he also guessed it, as he diverted the talk to a significant point.

Always addressing his nephew, although with the clear intention that I should listen too, he made an abrupt reflection:

“I live here; because there is nothing to do. Everything has fallen apart, or everything is going to fall apart. How is it that they don't see it? No? They are blind! Nothing can be done now. Don't you think?”

Then he laughed his sly laugh.

“Let them fight, the new ones, if they are capable! In us there is only a will to exterminate. You'll see, you'll see ...”

And drank another glass.

Old Carmelo approached to remove the last dishes. Hearing his master laugh, he also began to laugh slavishly; and in this way he bustled around the table. The owner of the house then noticed him and a flash of lightning passed through his little brown eyes.

“Old scoundrel, don't move!”

Carmelo looked anguished and began to tremble, while an ugly and miserable smile disfigured his face.

“Yes, boss.”

“Sing, old man, sing, so that the gentlemen can hear you!”

I begin to feel a strange sensation, a discomfort. The old man grabbed at his jacket, his twisted hands and fingers were revealing his mood, but his face had become expressionless.

“Have you heard?” shouted the owner of the house.

“Yes, boss,” the old man murmured. “Which one do you want me to sing like?”

And then we witness an absurd scene. The man pointed out to the old man one of the photographs on the wall, which represented a half-naked redhead, and said: "Sing like that, like Pepita, who is the most beautiful of all."

The old man began to sing in an effeminate falsetto voice, pretending to imitate that woman. In his contorted face, where the mouth was ridiculously stretched, there was a pitiful attitude of a beaten dog, and his hips were moving trying to simulate those of the redhead. The owner of the house, in an ineffable state, narrowed his eyes and laughed inwardly. It seemed to me that he was watching us and that he was extremely amused by our surprise and the nausea we were beginning to feel. The scene was ridiculous, decadent, and in the face of that man a perverted feeling was guessed that he enjoyed this wrong situation.

Old Carmelo continued singing, until he had to be silenced and thrown out of the room. Once she gained confidence, she no longer thought of shutting up and wanted to sing like the women in all the pictures on the wall.

When he left, my friend's uncle laughed again while a shadow of wretchedness now passed through his little fox eyes.

"This is my radio," he explained. "I can't have a radio here, that's why I have this old man ... It is unusual. Don't you guys think? The old man was a prisoner and I got him released from jail to bring him with me. It looks like a fag; but I do not think it has "gone over to the enemy" yet ... Although, who knows, guys, with the way of life they have in the jails of this country, almost all the prisoners are "going to taste Australia" ..." And he gave a muffled chuckle, as he drank the last glass of cognac.

THE HARE

On the lighted plains and gentle hills, the dogs fan out. They raise their heads, spread their ears, and move their legs kindly as if they were rowing, or were part of a mixed ballet, performed by them and us, here, in the middle of the field. Behind the dogs, we come slowly, with the reins of the horses firm and short, in anguishing wait. From time to time the shadow of a hovering bird deceives us. The horses and dogs must hold the momentum and fold back on themselves.

The thorns smell, the earth is soft, and the horizon rolls like a green and blue sea.

Suddenly, the guide dog stops and wags its tail. From some bushes, like an arrow, a gray flash is shot. It is the hare. In a second everything has been transformed; order, silence and waiting are now shouts, barks and confusion. Until the ballet then begins to organize itself in another sense. The dogs run on top, after the fast little animal, then the riders go, lying on their horses and giving rhythmic shouts: "Alla va la hare, alla va-ya-va, allava-ya, go ...!"

I stand on the stirrups and step over stones, thorns, and ditches. For me there is only one end, which my whole life attends: The hare! It looks like a moving point, which the dogs follow behind. The horse snorts, it has also been caught up in the chase. We have reached the edge of the plains, where the small hills begin. The hare climbs the slope at a high speed, while the dogs lose ground; it makes a "haul", changes direction and misleads the dogs. But now my friends block its way, galloping up the other slope. So, I stop my horse and watch a show of pure beauty. At the edge of the hill the dogs have again found the track of the hare that's running out of steam, its long ears drawn up with supreme effort. The greyhounds stretch their legs so far that their powerful breasts brush the mountain. What an elastic race, of perfect grace. It is the ballet; it is the rhythm and the beauty of strength. It is nature, where everything is great. It is even that little animal that plays its life like a giant. Seeing himself lost, he risks one last ruse. He turns and drops down the slope of the hill. For a moment he has got rid of his pursuers and is going to pass in front of where I am. I let go of my mare's reins and block its path. The hare is locked up and the dogs, in only a breath, are on him. The striker lunges for it in the air, sinking his teeth into its neck. The others also bite it, fulfilling a rite. Loud shrieks split the fields. I stop my horse and jump to the ground. I whip the dogs to separate them from their prey and prevent them from destroying it. And I lift the bleeding warm trophy into the air. I stare at her red and still beating heart, half shattered by a bite.

The hunt was over. After noon we said goodbye to the loner on the hill and walked south to cross the Diguillin. A friend, who has come from the capital, awaits us in the houses of another farm. The afternoon is beginning to fall and the three of us are gathered in a large dining room. I suggest drinking a specially prepared sweet "chicha". We make the huaso come. We drink. I have a secret inside and that is why I want to drink. We sang. The huaso looks at us slyly and laughs, while shrewdly drinking several glasses. The newcomer friend gets up and, knocking on the table, says:

“Where are the women? Is it that there are no women here?” The huaso laughs out loud. The other friend, addresses him, and warns him:

“Be careful, do not get too far in the shade, if this gentleman does not distinguish you well, he may mistake you for a woman and you are lost.”

The huaso replied:

“So, boss, does this gentleman think that all that has a hole is a blanket?”

We laugh out loud. Chatting and drinking we stay up late.

However, I am not really happy. My secret is the hare. At one end of the table, I drop my head onto my arms. As in a scene played over again, the hunt is repeating itself before me. I see again the hare running eager up the hills. And it seems that I am participating in the terror and anguish of that poor and defenseless being. The dogs catch it. I have him again, dying between my hands and I see his red heart still beating. Your little and large heart! What defense does that animal have? The hares are maddened with terror; because we men have thrown dogs on them.

At one end of the table, I am thus anguishing in my heart. The struggle between nature and a spirit that is not of this world reproduces its drama. What does the spirit have to do with this world? How do we follow our path in the midst of so many difficulties?

The next day everything has been forgotten. The joy is reborn. The trees smell musty, the odorous pineapple flower opens, perfuming the fields.

We mount our horses and go back through the paddocks. My mare feels happy and we both transmit joy to each other. Wide cracks appear in the road.

Then again, a hare emerges and the few dogs that we keep come out after it. The riders follow swiftly. I hold my mare rearing up. I barely carry her in a short gallop, following the hunt from afar. Suddenly, everyone stops. An accident has occurred. My friend, the companion of these adventures has fallen. At the gallop of his horse, he slipped from the saddle and fell headlong onto the cliffs. I run to the place of the event, while I wonder what could have happened for such a skilled rider to suffer that accident, the phrase of the uncle, on the hill, comes to mind: "There is in us a will to exterminate ..."

Amid the thorns, which look like brambles, I see my friend standing, staggering forward, his forehead battered and his face full of dirt and blood. He reaches for his horse.

THE STRANGE CHARACTER

We have now changed the course of the parade. We go to a neighboring farm where a sister of my friend's mother lives. She was a nurse, and she can help him. The huaso insists that the patron clean his wounds with urine.

At noon we arrived at the farm. The aunt gives herself enthusiastically to heal her nephew. Washing and bandaging his forehead. The lady wears black, and has something sweet and penetrating in her eyes.

She explains:

"It's nothing serious, simple bruises; but there will be some scars. A man with scars is more interesting."

I ask something:

"Senora, are you a nurse?"

"No, just an amateur. I have given myself to this vocation. I was very ill, despite everything, I got better, and made up my mind to cure the sick."

Someone entered the room. He is a man in riding pants and boots. He wears a scarf around his neck and his face has a fleeting expression. He addresses our friend, inquiring in a melodious tone. Then he offers us his limp, soft hand. The old woman has disappeared. The newly arrived invites us to the dining room.

Lunch went strangely. The man began by kicking out a dozen cats that came to eat with him.

"I'm to blame," he said, "because I've gotten used to them; but when there are visitors they must leave."

Then, looking at a clock on the cabinet, I add melancholy:

"That clock is slow almost a quarter of an hour, like all life in the province."

The lady in black also sat at the table, who did not speak. The man served us wine. At the end of the meal, he demands a plum dessert for me. He yelled for it and when it was brought to him, he put half on another plate, in front of an empty chair.

"For her," he said.

After lunch, he invited me to play a game of Briscola. I explained that I did not know how to play. But he insisted that I accompany him.

The next day, back on the country roads, my friend told me the following story: The man had come to the province some time ago. Nobody knew where he came from. His origin and past were unknown; more than one person thought he was liberated from justice. Little by little and without being able to say how, he was getting into the life and the closed circles of the city, and also with an aunt of my friend. Shortly after, his wife went crazy. The man kept his farm. He lived with a defective daughter, who was born when his wife was already disturbed, but had two residences: the old woman we had seen today and a young woman who was in the city. The two women never stayed together. The character was an eccentric. In his room there was a light on until very late at night. It could be believed that he was reading, but in his library and on his nightstand, he only kept old magazines, "Zig-Zag" and Spanish illustrated publications. Some peasants believed that this man practiced witchcraft because everything went his way.

The morning came and it was not beautiful. Gray clouds spread over the fields. Soon the water fell. We marched through the rain in a slow, muted ride.

On a gloomy road, the mud of many seasons had accumulated and some heavy animals with long manes were busy there. A stout horse, dumbfounded, dipped its legs and withdrew them from the thick silt; then fell again, sinking down to the belly. The animals advanced without hope, and the whole scene seemed like a mortified painting, subtracted from prehistory.

THE PROVINCE

Chillán was a city immobile in time, with a diaphanous climate, of special beauty. When the wind blew sweeping away the clouds in the sky, the air gave off a subtle perfume. Around the bell tower, the hours flew slowly.

On Sundays, there was a retreat to the main square. The society, which during the week remained invisible inside the old houses, was on display in the square. When I walked through the silent streets, or through the dusty outer walls, it seemed to me that behind the high barred windows someone was always watching me, moving the curtains. I heard footsteps following me and voices whispering. Antique horse carriages glided over cobbled streets and the church bells flew like doves in a still sky.

But behind the peace of that diaphanous air was the hidden evil that corroded it. Subtle threads were woven through the invisible city, gathered in the old courtyards, behind the ruined porticoes. Between houses, dark dramas were engendered; under the calm waters, the slimy beings moved. Hidden threads started from each end of the city.

The city was sick with an evil that affected everyone, even those who believed they were not a part of it. It was an epidemic of the soul. Curious "societies" were formed; one of them counted among its affiliates almost all the youth of the city; it was the "Society of the Brothers of Chuico". Their insignia was a "chuico" [demijohn] and the degrees were represented by stars. The only ceremony consisted of drinking. The one who drank the most got the highest degree.

Certain characters made news from time to time. One of them was Don Pancho el Bruto. They had orgies that lasted for entire months. Once, in a drunken state, he climbed on the rump of his horse to the music of an organ grinder and made him play while he galloped into the Cathedral, where he turned his horse, without anyone daring to make him leave. Another day, being among those attending the theater, someone wanted to make a joke and asked him to speak. Don Pancho, neither short nor lazy, before the general expectation, went up to the stage. He looked at the audience, pulled up his huaso jacket and let out a loud fart. He walked down the stage in complete tranquility.

Characters like these, after all, were harmless, remnants of unleashed forces, descendants perhaps of conquerors and warriors, who no longer found a suitable medium for their adventures. In contrast, the hidden evil, the one that did not come to light and that had contaminated the new generations, was real. It stretched out beneath the clear sky and between its tentacles it imprisoned the soul of the city.

Beautiful and poisoned city. Walking through its confines one reached a darkened area, which almost no one visited anymore: the Chillan Viejo. It was the past, the old evil, and a sign of what happens. One day I walked through its ruins, looking for the house where the hero Bernardo O'Higgins was born. Next to some ancient walls, an old woman pointed to the spot at the base of a wall. Dirty and corroded stones. It was all that was left. The gray and bare trees in the streets leaned as if under the weight of a bitter memory; the grass grew on the sidewalks and climbed the walls. Everything was dead; they were ruins that conserved the mark of a past and that had become sterile because of a catastrophe. El Chillan Viejo had been destroyed by the earthquake. The New Chillan had moved, to rebuild itself.

Despite moving, from the depths of the earth the same secret evil arose again, the same disease of the soul, which perhaps produced the previous ruin.

Is it the region, the earth, in its demonic charm and its spell, the culprit of the evil in the soul? Or is it the soul, seduced and sickened, that awakens the volcanoes and calls the earthquake?

Back in town we went to my friend's house. There he met a young woman with a little girl who walked in a strange way; while holding the hand of her companion, she sort of hopped like a bird. It made a curious impression. The woman had a mesmerizing beauty. Her large vibrant eyes and slim body were shrouded in light. I reached out my hand and felt a strange sensation, as if a door were opening inside me. To do something, to take the little girl in my arms and stroke her hair. To realize it was painful. The little bird began to emit high-pitched sounds, like chirps; moving one of her hands, she made a gesture like playing a violin. Her head falling on my shoulder.

The house where I lived was on a secluded street whose name I have forgotten. That night I was late, as I had kept myself busy by walking through the city. To enter the house, one had to open a large glass door with a key. Crossing a courtyard and a corridor with pilasters, I would come to my room. The owners of the house were two elderly women, of modest means, who rented rooms.

I opened the door and I was in the court. Through the branches of some trees, I saw the stars and felt a chill. From the side of the kitchen, I could

hear voices. I went in that direction and found myself in a gathering of unknown people. It was dim, because the lighting was coming from a brazier, where the pan and doughs similar to 'sopaipillas' [pastries] were heating. In the center sat an old man with a shaggy beard who had his hat on. He stared in the direction of the embers and sat silent. One of the homeowners stoked the fire and served the cakes. The rest were unknown men and women. My eyesight was growing accustomed. I could make out in a corner, near the old man who looked like a clay monolith, the beautiful woman I had met that afternoon at my friend's house. Why were you sitting here, among these people, at this hour?

They chatted quietly and certainly about unimportant things. The tray ran from hand to hand and the pastries from mouth to mouth. The woman radiated her own light and, with her forehead raised, remained abstracted, apart from this ritual in which she did not participate.

Suddenly, a deliberate and high-pitched voice arose. It was the voice of a woman, her face pockmarked. She began to narrate, in an imprecise tone, the following story:

“This old man, you see here, has been punished by the Mother of the Lord.”

The old man seemed to bow his head in uninterrupted assent:

“When young, he was a strong man and his vision penetrated like a condor the horizons of the sea. In the distant lands of the south, he sailed on the rough waves, without fear of storms ... He loved the sea, he loved it more than his own life ...”

“Ah, how I long for it!” said the old man, in a low tone, like an echo in a cave. “The Virgin knows ...”

“I have never seen the sea again. I have not dared. Ugly it is to confess it, but I have lacked the courage to die. Neither can I go alone because I will not find the way. I need someone. Who will take me to the sea? I am old and my life is no longer worth anything. Who of you wants to take me? I have collected money. I will leave it to whoever guides me. What is the use of money if I can no longer see the sea?”

The old man's plea resounded deep in that room. The beautiful woman kept her face aloof, lost looking beyond the walls. Silence had fallen again,

while the fire, dying, crackled in the brazier. One by one, they all left. I walked out without anyone noticing and slid down the corridor.

My room was as desolate as the night. In the center was a bed with legs; a chair in the corner, a nail for hanging, and a table with books and papers; under the table, I kept my suitcase with clothes. The ceiling and floorboards were worn. In one corner there was a hole where a rat peeked out. I covered that hole with a stone.

However, this room was my refuge. Here I read and meditated, lying on the bed, or sitting at the table.

That night, I fell asleep tired. I could not specify the time of my dream when I suddenly sat up in bed and hurriedly turned on the light. A shrill howl interrupted the night. It came, apparently, from a neighboring place. It was a howl that rose and then fell, until it almost sounded like a dog. Then someone began to punch the walls and unsteadily whistle, as if trying to calm themselves down. It gave the impression that the person whistling was the same person who a moment ago had howled and barked like a dog. There was silence and nothing else disturbed the stillness again. Only the distant running of water that ran through some ditch.

At dawn, the hostess brought me breakfast to the room. I asked her about the howls. She explained to me that it was a sick retiree, a teacher at the Normal School, who was condemned, falling to the ground, and howling. To calm himself he whistled and pounded on the walls. The lady continued: "Once the attack occurred while the "psychologist" was visiting, who could have helped him. The "psychologist" had said that it was a "love affair, that was worked on a four-legged animal." To cure it, it was necessary to discover who "did the evil" and counteract it in due form. The "psychologist" was a man who knew a lot, but he could not help the teacher, because he did not believe in him. That was a bad thing about the education of school, which banished belief in spells and "evils."

I remembered seeing the "psychologist" too. He was a tall, stout man with a very black, thick beard. On his front he wore a heavy golden chain, with some talismans and medals. He was an impostor, who exploited the credulity of ordinary people, taking advantage at his whim. He was brimming with cunning and vanity.

The lady left. I laid on the bed, staring out the window at the wall of the neighboring house, where the roof tiles were overgrown with moss and

climbing vines. In the transparent sky and air something like a mystery was floating. A continuous and swift light crossed the blue of the sky.

The music of a piano began to be heard. My neighbor played old waltzes. It was an old woman, with white hair, who rented a piazza in this house. She lived alone and traveled this land in the company of her piano. I often listened to her play her waltzes. Sounding to the beat of that naive and melancholic music, I would let myself go and forget the day. On the opposite wall a dove stopped, while in the distance the church bells rang. As if the dove wanted to follow in pursuit of those clear sounds, it spread its wings and took flight.

I got up and went for a walk around the city. Under some willows, next to broken palisades there was a ditch. I jumped. I looked up and saw a man who was watching me who looked familiar. Where had I seen him? I remembered: on a train, while coming south; that man was sitting in front of me. We did not exchange a word, nor did I know in which station he got off. Now here he was, in this loneliness.

I walked away, always walking outside the walls, skirting the populated areas. A horseman galloped past me. His scarf was blowing in the wind. I recognized the strange man from the farm. What would he be doing in the city? It seemed to me that a host of coincidences was emerging. I turned and ran after the direction of the horse for a while. I crossed dusty streets, until I was entering an unknown area. In this way I came to a secluded square, lost and lonely. At its center was a broken fountain, and grass grew between leaning benches and leafy trees. Some statues of moldy iron, or of destroyed marble, remained partially hidden by the vegetation. All around, the houses had their windows and doors closed. The bars were from another time and the doors, of worn wood, with large knockers. In front of a wall, tied to a pole, was the man's horse. The door had closed, but above I saw an open window, it seemed to me that a shadow, or two, were swift to hide. A curtain stirred, rocked by the calm breeze.

I turned to go back, and I realized that there was another person next to me. A young man of my age, who disturbingly resembled me, was also looking at the open window. Completely preoccupied, he did not even notice my presence. His face was pale, as if enduring great pain, and his hands twitched. Experiencing a curious sensation. What did this scene mean? What was I doing at this place? I moved one leg, then another and got to moving away, as if doing it from myself.

I returned late that night. I walked through the lower streets of the city. In the distant and serene sky, the stars were shining, also reflecting the calm of this stagnant time. From time to time the dim lights of lanterns revealed a shadow behind. Life had been interrupted and died along with the sunset. In the distance could be heard the gallop of a horseman who was lost beyond the outskirts, or the pulling of a horse-drawn carriage. The noise of the hooves on the cobblestones evoked the hills and a life without haste, in which the skies and the hours glided like the wheels of that carriage on the worn stones.

I crossed the square and continued down a street where some people were talking. In the light, a poor girl leaned against the wall of a building. She looked like a tramp. Her large, dark eyes caught my attention. I turned my face and saw that she was coming in my direction. I slowed down and waited for her to catch up. She smiled at me with a humble expression.

“Where are you going tonight?” She asked.

“To nowhere. I'm walking.”

“Do you want to come with me?”

“Okay.”

We entered my street. I could tell she was very poor, and her hair fell to her shoulders in a black mess. Her hands were tucked into the pockets of her coat, in a gesture like embarrassment. She marched with her head down, staring at the ground. When we arrived in front of the glass partition, I led her in and said:

“Take off your shoes so you don't make noise.”

She obeyed me and we tiptoed through the corridor. I opened the door of my room; I gently put my hand on her shoulder. The coarse fabric of her coat made me grieve. In the brief moment between the gesture of opening the door and finding the light, I had time to think why I had brought this girl. It was loneliness and the desire to forget everything strange and serious that was happening these days, in that air of impending tragedy. In the center of the room, with her face bowed and an expression of sadness and helplessness all over her body, was the girl. She still didn't take her hands out of her pockets. It seemed to me that she contemplated my room with the admiration of one who is in a palace. I looked around me and also

thought it was a cozy and warm place. In contrast to that dejected and slight girl; it had an electric light, the table and white sheets, acquired a sumptuous aspect. Smiling feebly, she said:

“It would be better to turn off the light.”

I took some coins from my pocket and passed them to her, saying:

“Go on, girl, and forgive me. I can't give you more because I don't have it; but you've already given me enough.”

She was happy and left. I was equally happy. I had recovered for myself, my thoughts and my dreams, things all too extremely fragile and destroyed at the slightest touch; they are born and raised in discretion.

I crawled between the sheets, picked up a book, and opened it to a familiar page. I turned off the light and carefully dropped into the dream states.

In the morning I was standing outside the door of my room, staring at the opposite wall. No one was in the corridor, which was a lonely stretch. Then I saw him, as he got close his gait began to take a sway like that of someone walking on the deck of a ship. He steadied himself upon a pillar and, putting his hand to his face, took off his glasses. He held them tight in his hand and reached out in my direction as if to pass them to me. I looked at him puzzled. His eyes began to bulge. He must have felt an animal terror in them because of the proximity of something that only he seemed to know. Both of his arms went up and like windmill blades they waved in the air. I stepped back. The man began making hoarse sounds and trying to hold on. Instead of helping him, I backed off. Suddenly, he clasped both hands to the collar of his shirt, trying to open it, and collapsed at my feet. In the corridor, there was no one other than the two of us. Cornered against the wall, I witnessed an indescribable event. The man began to spin like a top and convulse. His pupils were covered with an opaque cloud, while his eyes turned to something of the animal world. At the same time, harsh noises came out of his twisted mouth, along with a yellow foam. His whole body trembled, and his hands twitched, taking on the appearance of claws. A wild cry, a high-pitched scream, rose from his throat; then he howled like a dog.

I understood that this had to be the teacher from the Normal School. I was observing the process, unable to move and not knowing what to do to help him. I watched his teeth clench and gnash. Trying to capture in some way

the background of that drama - it was epilepsy. An almost conscious return to a dark stage in the past of the species, a fall into the unfathomable abyss. In order to resist, the body sought unconsciousness; but the soul, as it seemed to me, kept awake, enjoying the comedy. The body could well destroy itself, degrade the person, turning it into an animal possessed by a thousand demons; the soul remained outside, outside the event. The demonic rite was carried out in the body and the surrounding, because even the walls were being impregnated with an evil atmosphere, emanating from the convulsed body. After one last rattle, the legs kicked into the air, like the legs of a strangled chicken; the mouth stretched and someone inside that body - who had just arrived - began to whistle, as if to forget what had happened. Someone who longed to go unnoticed by this extraordinary play; but that in no way did he regret the perverse pleasure that had been provided by this return to animality.

The little dark man had his forehead bathed in sweat and now he was trying to get up, while in one of his hands he still kept his broken glasses. I remembered the interpretation that the "psychologist" had given of epilepsy: "It is a love affair carried out on a four-legged animal." And I thought that maybe that healer had discovered the truth, guided by a primary wisdom. Someone who loved the abyss and the fall, made use of that poor body, like a broken doll, to bask in the memory of animality and shadow.

And so that last night came. The atmosphere of Chillan prior to the great earthquake of 1939, which totally destroyed it, was felt with the weight of its sordid events. Lying on my bed, I experienced uncontrollable terror. The silent threads were stripping. The rare coincidences discovered their meaning. The air in my room was permeated with evil. I felt a point in the middle of the chasm that was approaching. In the distance, the mountains creaked, the hawthorn flower was transformed into flames and nothing would be saved from the catastrophe. Clinging to my sheets I looked at the electric light bulb lit in the middle of the room. The walls were closing in. Only in childhood had I felt such fear, reaching a limit within my mind. The evil underneath everything, the terror of the hidden presences behind the events. And, suddenly, a fixed face, with a leather cap and a familiar expression, that tells me: "You will come here, you will come". My hair stood on end. I had the impression that an invisible being was directing my life, *thinking it from the outside*.

With an effort I got up, approaching the door that led to a neighboring room. I called. On the other side someone moved on the bed and sighed. Then a feminine voice was heard. I asked for help. The door opened and a woman appeared in the doorway, her hair wild and her face tired. She was taking care of me until dawn. I told her about that implacable being whom, since childhood, watched me and directed my life. He had brought me south and was driving me on now. It would take me again, one day, to follow the mysterious currents of the Great South, which had already stolen my soul. The woman's warm hand relieved me. When the last dawn she would ever see in that land rose over the walls, she left. When she turned around, on the threshold, she said to me: "Tomorrow night I'll leave the door open in case you need me."

The door would be left open but that woman would disappear from this land, because that very day, driven by a superior force, she decided to leave. At night, the catastrophe would be triggered.

I left the city sweetly poisoned. Chillan wanted to keep me. Through its streets, new faces of women, which I had never seen before, smiled at me, inviting me. Beautiful atmospheres. And behind it all, a few hours away, the terrifying grimace of the earthquake.

I left without notifying anyone, like a man on the run. The train was moving away and then, suddenly, I stopped, froze; but the landscape, the world began to slide, to run.

Later, amidst the smoke from the collapses, in a dilapidated station, a young girl with a white apron and a basket of bread approached the train, handing me bread, through the mist that enveloped her.

While the train was moving away with difficulty, between ruined towns and desolate fields, where death passed, shaking us, I meditated on causes and designs. Old texts and legends affirm that catastrophes are synchronized with the soul of men. The earth is modified under the influence of the human mind in its profound events. Man is unaware of the power he has over nature and its phenomena. If man changed, the earth would too. Would the Pacific ring of fire extinguish its volcanoes, if the Chilean found a sublimating exit from his subconscious dramas? If instead of sinking into moral defeat, he would rise above himself until reaching the heights of the Spirit, would the periodic catastrophes disappear, would the earthquake go away forever? Would the earth modify its meaning if

the external peaks lost their meaning? The landscape is transfigured by the soul. The evil of the earth is also the evil of the soul. The lower part of the world trembles, and trembles when hit by the impact of this evil.

In the midst of the great ruins and the destruction of the city of Chillan by the 1939 earthquake, I was traveling north on a train, loaded with the injured and dying, with a wind of tragedy, and a feeling of the end of the world.

Great cracks furrowed the earth, and a putrid cloud rose to the sky like a mythic prayer of the fatherland. Chileans, will we keep on searching, suffering, until the earthquake has won and there are no more beings, nor any more heavens that still exist?

THE EARTH ALONE

Was it witchcraft, the hereditary evil of the Chilean? The earth shook and she was left alone. Is this what the earth wants? I can imagine her alone, already without men. Only the rivers still traversing it. The great rivers. The Maule, the Biobio, the Tolten, the Cahcapoal. The mountains rise towards the sky, next to the wild valleys where the forest grows again, the dark forest. There are also no animals. And a very near and new sun rises. A solemn expectation remains in the air. It seems that the mountains, their low plateaus, remember the man who once populated them. And they tremble at the thought of reliving the scenes of their latest drama. But that is not it. A green moon rises over the jungle and the rain stops. A loud thunder breaks the mountains. They split at their center. From the interior, covered with dust of minerals, its golden veins shining in the moonlight, comes the great images, the giants of prehistory emerge. They return to populate the land they once abandoned. Now free of the dwarfed men, the superb landscape finds its race of titans. I recognize them, they are the ancient giants of my dream. In their search I go, because I want to reach their time, earning the right to return in that race when the world contemplates a cool sun. From the deep vibrating springs, I will return one day renewed.

TOWARDS ARAUCANIA

Some years later I returned to the south. I was always driven by a great enthusiasm, eagerness to know, to penetrate where the first settlers had to break through with machete blows and the conquerors found their fiercest opponents. I passed by, without stopping, through the ruined cities, which

were beginning to rebuild with slow effort. Beyond, a strong and ghostly landscape stretches out. It is the forest. Descending from the invariable horizon of snowy peaks, the jungle spreads its wet domain. The houses of the German settlers appear on the roads and villages. In lost places, some dejected rucas still exist, remains of places of what was once a strong and untamed race. The rivers carry the cut logs in their currents and are darkened by the stain of the soil. Sometimes a small cart crosses the dusty roads, tumbling on its wheels made from a tree trunk. A dark man goes ahead, covered with a blanket the same color of the road. He is the descendant of those who were once the owners of the forest, those who had Eagle's sight and powerful breasts.

In the chronicles of the conquerors there was an observation on the character of the Chilean Indians. It is said that they were savages without god or law. They lacked high worship and did not possess the notion of a creator god. They were not governed by moral laws and only practiced a kind of worship or dealings with the devils. They cultivated sorcery, as a means of managing devils, changing the weather, or winning a war. There was also a strange habit of semi-incest: the married man had to enter into a relationship with his sister-in-law. It is striking that the Indian thought that there was evil in it; as punishment, he forced Spanish prisoners to cohabit with their sisters-in-law. Perhaps it was a rite by means of which a pact was established with some dark power. It was not, in any way, unconsciousness or primitive amorality. If the indigenous had continued to develop alone, their existence not interrupted by the Conquest, perhaps they would have come to some pantheist or polytheist cult, similar to that of the classic and heroic peoples. Because the cult of the devil may well obey an imposition of the landscape, concealing a rising god. The geniis of the jungle were recognized and they tried to be in good relationships with them in order to control the weather.

When observed carefully, the burden of the soul of the landscape is discovered in the indigenous character. His predisposition to sorcery is typical to the lower part of the earth, residence of the sex of the planet, seat of Satan. Who was the Mapuche Indian? A wild being, not reached by the civilization of the Incas, a Mongol, or a decadent and barbarized product of another glorious and remote time? Without having to answer these questions, it can be said that, at the time when the Spaniards found him, he was a product of this land in which he lived, whose telluric and lower soul had been assimilated. In sorcery and devil worship there is a

conscious acceptance of that reality and an intuitive rejection of higher powers. His rudeness and bravery also result from contact with the merciless land. In his Ladino form of incest there is a conscious "sexual sin", which shows recognition of the area of the world in which he lives, paying tribute to the Master. Thus it could be said that the Chilean Indian was the son of Satan. And their malice, their wickedness, their immorality, and their sorcery, are transmitted in the blood to the people of the future, rising to the surface in the decisive moments of their history.

In this way the Mapuche soul was like the earth, almost naked from part to part. It had no past and its future was imprecise, as the unnamed spirit floated, up high, above the heads, and nobody evoked it. Therefore, everything is possible, for the same reason that there is no tradition or cultural past to prevent it. But the Dark One, the Absolute Master, will battle to prevent it.

Formed by the earth, the stubbornness and fatalism of the Indian were like the seasons that follow one another on the wheel of the year. And the conquerors found in him a stubborn warrior who defended his land, and his forests were stained with blood and the human plant again made contact with its deepest roots. The Indians were strong and tenacious. Without God and without heaven, without glory and without prize, he exalted, in that instant, man in his dual origin, solitary and audacious, exposing the divine heritage, in the sunlight of war.

Today, the melancholic song of the trutruca [loud wind instrument] at the doors of the wretched rucas, is dispersed by the wind on the currents of the waters.

The Indians were of medium height, broad and massive bodies; the soil conditions shaped them like this. Their degenerate descendants crawl blind, in search of the trees of life and health. The women, thick-legged and broad-footed, stand a little stronger, but their bloodline is now in the town, in the blood of the mestizo, where, like the renewal in the forest, the old soul resurfaces.

Where once its essence had hovered, synchronized with the landscape, today the virgin forest rises. Just as before, the Great Person keeps dominating. Here is the gigantic araucaria, the oak, the hazel, cypress, holm oak, larch, maifio and rauli. In the thick, the sun hardly penetrates. It does sometimes in the high places, and for long periods, weeks, and even

whole months; but without joy. The gift of the forest is water, the fine rain. Everything seems to wait for it. The forest takes on a cold and sullen tinge. Foreign trees are filled with melancholy; some bend down and form ramadas through which only a few drops of rain will pass.

The men cover themselves with their blankets and begin the work of the station. They take the animals to wintering. The wheat has already been planted and those isolated sawmills, which do not have roofs that cover them will stop their work during the season. In the humid stillness of the vegetation, the dry stampede of a fallen tree is sometimes heard. So, in the torrential rivers, it is seen sailing trunks and rafts manned by indigenous people. And the same gray wagons, with oak wheels, stumble along the muddy earth, dragged by slow oxen and a carter impervious to the outside world, he who walks driven by a strange will that lives and grows like the Tree.

With the time delay I will see the fire lighting the clearings and bringing with its crackle an ancient memory. Then, winter will fall with all its weight. The endless days of water, in which rivers rise and overflow. Inside the jungle something happens. In shady places, in closed mystery, the carpenter bird rings a wooden bell, with those wet feathers, with odd persistence, pierces skin that is hard and eternal. He is alone, surrounded by stillness, of sacred recollection, highlighting with his work the presence of something ubiquitous, which is rising like a shadow from the virgin places, not trodden, grassy. Ancient landscape. Does someone walk in the woods? A dark being, wrinkled, whose head is wasted by the action of the water, black face and evil eyes, marching with naked feet in the mud. Their hair is stiff, and their stature is small. He has stopped on a path, and in his defiance there is the exotic and questioning aspect of an oxen. Looking numb, drowsy from the weather. His gaze freezes over the foliage.

Reaching out a hand and taking a leaf; he stares at it; sees the drops of water slide like images. He is the son of the winter.

The wheel of the year also turns tumbling in the sky. Winter passes. A shudder runs through the wood and, in the tree, the streams part and change direction. A perfume, like music, begins to rise from the ground. It's spring. The heavens also open their windows and although the light does not enter the jungle, another cloud rises there and leaves. It is the water returning to its origin. A sour smell spreads.

The earth swells, the forest grows, the hot oil of the jungle rises from under the humidity and falls into the river water, A light of its own comes from the trees, from the cut trunks, like bloody stumps, from the oak, of the renewals and those clearings that seem like old battlefields, where the ax wreaked havoc. The copihue is covered with that light that comes out of the Trees. Through difficult paths, a little bird with gray feathers and a yellow chest flies with a chirping sound.

When he reaches this place, where the light of the jungle emerges, he remains immobile like a stone. He has felt the ecstasy of vegetation. The jungle seems to stand on the pedestal of its authentic life. In the opposite direction comes the smell of village houses, where kitchens take on new life. The men initiate the part of the animals in the fields. The rodeo party is born again in the “Medialuna”. The work festival, in which man and animal meet again. The roads are filled with depressions and dust. In a green pasture, thick rams have gathered. Their fur covers even their eyes. They look like mattresses - thick. One approaches and looks meekly, with the eyes covered by a dream cloth of primal lethargy. If the grass could look, it would. That is the cloud of history, of origin, wrapped in oblivion, in tremendous fatality. Their giant testicles move among the wool of the haunches. They are the blind force, the dark machine of the beginning and the end. Fat lizards seek the sun on the twisted portholes. A sour light circulates within the veins of the forest.

One day in the bush I found Trabalaira. Like his name, he was a colorful individual. He wore a green suit and a short jacket, adorned with leather flaps. His hat had a brim trimmed in the shape of sun rays; on one shoulder he carried a blanket which was also green. It blended with the environment to the extent that it cost me to discover it. He approached my horse and began to speak to me. His hair, very black, was tied under his hat. A moving mustache appeared on his thick lips. He referred to the forest, the land, and the animals. “I know their language”, he said. To prove it to me, he began to imitate the voices of the bulls, the snakes, the birds, and the horses of the sierra. He did it without the slightest inhibition, like someone who is alone and used to living with nature.

His stories were mixed with animals, men, sorcery, and enchantment. The goblins, devils, and witches, took animal forms to present themselves to people, living with them and producing evil and death. He said that witches could not give good for good. Because of this, never should

anyone try to do good, since it was very difficult to recognize a witch. "When witches die," he told me, "they have no heaven or glory. They don't go anywhere else; they stay in the forest and transform into animals."

He told me the story of a witch named Mailef.

"Long ago," he began, "there was an old sorcerer whose name was Mailef. He lived in the forest, under a ramada. His power was such that he could destroy with a thought. People went to see him so that he could cure them of "the evil eye" or for the "doctor" to do some "work" for them. They brought "the waters" to him to diagnose the disease, also pieces of clothing or hair of enemies, whom he wanted to do "an evil". Mailef knew all the medicinal secrets and poisonous powers of herbs and roots. As payment for his work, he accepted only food or throbbing entrails from dead animals. One day he asked to steal a child. He decided that he would be his disciple in the secrets of the cruel and ruthless way. Mailef wanted his disciple to be blind, to further develop his inner vision. He burned the eyes of the child with burning coals, who grew up attentive to the words of the old sorcerer. Years passed. Mailef died. His soul, which would have neither heaven nor glory, was transformed into a fat and happy toad, living in a nearby swamp. The fame of the old man was inherited by the disciple, Afquinlao. The villagers were now going to communicate their troubles to him. One day, upon request, he must have done a "wrong".

Wishing his spell was powerful, he searched the jungle for a useful animal. Because he was blind, he crawled on all fours. Thus, he came to the swamp where the toad lived, who was once Mailef, his teacher. Without noticing it or perhaps out of revenge, Afquinlao fed him until he was well full. Next, he sewed the mouth and other holes shut, thinking of the person to whom the evil was directed. Then, buried him in a distant corner of the forest, where he arrived guided by his inner sight. A short time later, at the bottom of the earth, the toad burst. With the explosion, roots sprouted from all sides. In that place, a huge araucaria began to grow, which each year got a little closer to the sky. The araucaria was very black because it was fed with the blood of the sorcerer Mailef. When the people found out, they went there on a pilgrimage. They carried corn cakes that they deposited next to the roots. They believed that the araucaria would one day grow up to the sky. The tree also had the property of restoring sight to the blind. Afquinlao, the disciple, recovered his sight along with the many others who rested their foreheads on its bark. However, the day came when the

path to the place where the gigantic araucaria is found had been lost. In vain they looked for it in the forest.

Maybe Trabalaira was looking for it because he stopped talking. Stretching out the blanket and winking, he easily got lost among the trees.

As my horse walked, I was busy thinking. What is the origin of this world and that of the race that inhabited the virgin forest? Perhaps digging into this nonsensical story may reveal the blurred memories of an ancient wisdom, grotesquely deformed, yet visible under the guise of superstition, sorcery, and legend. In any place where we peel back the surface a little, we will find the remains of a disappeared universe that can transfer wisdom to us.

What is that old araucaria that grows indefinitely, like the column of the temple of magic? Those who rest their foreheads on its bark, regaining their sight. What a view? Those who live for magic have no heaven or glory, that is, they do not die, they are transformed. Nor should one do good to anyone - least of all evil - since then pain is attracted. And in the transformation into an animal, there is perhaps the rudimentary memory of a belief in reincarnation. The araucaria, through which you climb to heaven, is the new path. In the so-called "evil eye", it could also be found a popular interpretation, guarded by the collective memory, of a higher power obtained by those who remain impassive "without doing good or evil". The "corn cakes" that the men carried next to the gigantic tree, which would grow up to the sky, recall the Inca civilization and a great and unknown past in which the civilization of the Incas and the Mayans had its origin. What golden life flourished then? What living sun ran through the veins of the earth? The inhabitants of the south of the world seem to remember it. The people, the dying races, slaves of the earth, agents of the mighty Being who defeated them, keep in the corpuscles of their collective soul the remnants of distant memory. The light left and only the shadow remained, the adulterated memory of the last times of a world submerged in mystery. But in the town, as in the deep layers of the earth, the secret of the past is kept.

Just like Trabalaira, I also search for the gigantic araucaria. Where is the lost road today? Perhaps in the middle of the impenetrable forest? Or on the snowy peaks? Perhaps neither in one nor in the other, but at the end, at the bottom of the south, in the distant oases of the ice.

Today the soul of the people sinks into the animal. A perverse pleasure pushes her to repeat the past. Demonic evil takes hold of some men. The spirit of the defeated race is driven by the threads of its pact with the devil. Men die and fall apart in the undergrowth, their hearts are eaten by vultures and their blood gives life to owls and lizards. Nothing grows taller than wet grasses. In the rucas someone is beating furiously on the curtains because during the night it has been heard and fatality is prowling. That bird is the devil who comes to announce misfortunes with his screech.

In the kitchen of a house, next to the fire, the Indian Quirimaya tells stories of ghosts and witches. Under her skirt, rubbing at her bare feet, the black cat with eyes that shine like coals.

When the great rivers flow, devastating the villages, lives and crops are lost. The works of man have been again useless. Will this miserable man start over from the beginning of things, rising up with the forces of his resigned fatalism?

His heart is as hard and empty as stone.

THE WHEAT

In the southern prairies, it flows like a yellow sea. It creaks. In the mountains, in its dark slopes, in the valleys, up to the edge of the forest, it resembles the tender hair of the earth; like a blonde knight, shaken by a wind that comes down from the sun. They cut it with love and sweat, with deep longing. In the scythe, or in the sickle, that passes through the stalks of wheat, there is a sign that reminds us that its existence is not of this world, that it is a gift from another, wiser humanity.

The ears rise, become thin, grow pure, unfit for the earth; they were shaped by cosmic cycles, battles, and triumphs of another light. Its luminosity is not from here, it comes from far away. Therefore, whoever grows wheat is also not entirely from here. Sharing in that love.

Before, sweaty mares galloped over the scattered sheaves. The grains were peeled off. Above, the sun was shining, and the torsos of the animal and the man gave off the steam of the body. It was before the machine.

Who put the wheat on the ground? Who gave us the gift? This delicate grain cannot be the product of natural selection; it has been aided in its evolution by intelligence. The link is not found, nor its similarities; the earth lacks the ages to reach the purity and perfection of its existence. Its

mutation is a work from other worlds. It was brought by some mysterious being or a wind of fire crossing the icy regions and falling in eddies of snow on the high plateaus of the earth. In the southern prairies the wheat sways.

THE WOOD

In the mills the circular saws keep turning, penetrating the arduous life of the wood and spreading its pulverized blood through the air of the forests.

Inside the jungle, the wood is alive. Wood is also the landscape of Chile. The rauli, the hazel, the mane, the cypress, the larch, the oak. Under the rain, it grows. A small yet sensational sun accompanies her. Our consciousness is shrouded in a mist that rises from the watery depth of the earth. Beyond the rough bark, the sweet sap skates, receptive and sensitive, impregnated with the memory of the origin of time. It has just passed through the heart of the fallen angel and has seen his form unravel in creation.

In a distant time, like today, the forest was cut down. In its clearings an ancient race adored the sun. The wood was worked and with it the seats of pontiffs were made. Those enduring forms were like knots, paralysis, grimaces in the life of wood; because the tree aspires to climb, to overcome its shape, making an effort within the dream. Its veins of vegetable would like to reach the red hot sun. Its branches extend like arms and try to touch, to feel. Centuries, ages, will pass before the momentum takes hold. The form seeks the form and within that dense fog one suffers, it hurts. It is the light crossing the shadow, and hurts in its passing.

Meanwhile, pixies and owls visit the roots, where they lodge their nests. They play in the forest and are images in the somatic dream. In the midst of its trance, the wood is like man and also doubts, who, going towards God, gets tired and wants to rest, to return to the undifferentiated origin, dissolving. The womb of the Mother calls and allures. But the life of the flesh and the sun of the blood beckon to him. Thanks to man, sometimes he participates in that life, when, transformed into sharp spears, it enters the throbbing heart and touches the blood, where the idea is about to reach itself.

In the cool moistness, the tree is felled, but always it still beats man. The forest rises to the skies.

We can do nothing against it.

Many years ago, a titan of the ancient race cut down a tree and carried the trunk over his shoulder. For a long time the tree gave him power over his people, but it also gave him death. Next to the gallows, defeated by his conquerors, a sharp pike, made of vernacular oak or rauli, pierced him in the infamous torture, running through to his brains. No warrior uttered a groan; because he knew it was not the Spanish who did it, but the wood, the forest, the landscape. And the woman who threw her son at the feet of the Caupolican, did so as if he was a small trunk of twisted tree.

THE COPIHUE

In solitude and stillness, in those places where leaves and branches come together, the copihue flower is born. The blood in the bell rings a distant tune. Perhaps it is the blood of the wood, of the thousand-year-old broken tree. It is a miracle of beauty and feeling, born when a past sank into the night and the Indian sealed his lips with the secret. It has come walking like a sound, from within, and I came here to witness its drama of the landscape. Its flame burns more than that of fire. It is a metaphysical flame. In the forest it is a game of the spirit, a non-existent flower.

Or it is the blood of the Indian Galvarino, who extended his arms to the Conqueror to cut off his hands. When the stumps rose in blood, they were like trees giving hoarse cries. And the blood on the forest was the blood of the homeland tree. In its coagulated drippings, the copihue was born. The Indian's hands, falling loose, fell like fruits. Galvarino loomed and spilled his blood on them. In his hands alone, the copihue was born.

Now, seeing it there red, I cannot resist a desire. I think of how beautiful a copihue would be on the white background of the ice. Closing my eyes, I see it on a drifting iceberg, plowing through the Antarctic seas. Little by little, they change. It is now a white copihue, like a glass bell, made of salt crystals or of sleep. It is the mystical ice of the soul. The last sense of the land and the forest.

THE OLD APPLE TREE

One day I entered an old peasant house, and I walked through its dark halls. Paintings from the Colony were kept in what seemed like a half ruined chapel. Wrapped in the dust, I saw images of wooden saints, dressed in moth-eaten robes. Through a small door I entered the sacristy and from there I came out to another corridor. At the end, a light appeared,

and murmurs were heard. Through the half-open gate, you could see a patio. On the stone laid ground, there were some rafts and the dust of a long time accumulated upon them. There was an old apple tree with gnarled branches that also grew. Moonlight filtered through the glass, falling like silver dust. A small fire was lit and old women moved around the shadows. They talked with each other and, from time to time, scissors passed over the flames. Standing next to the apple tree, covered with a poncho, was the Injun girl Quirimaya. The light of the apple tree fell on her face in ecstasy and her loose hair spilled like black water, down to her waist. One of the women approached and reaching over her head stroked her hair. She began to sob. The others also cried. They formed a circle around the motionless Injun girl. I watched as one of the women cut her hair and threw the strands into the fire. They cried with their arms spread. Only the Injun girl Quirimaya appeared ecstatic, with a calm that descended from the tree or the moon.

That night, next to the old apple tree, I was left alone with the girl. Looking at her bald head resembling the moon, I asked: “Your name is still Quirimaya?”

A delicate emanation emerges from these southern regions, where forests arise, and rivers fall. The snow-capped volcanoes, the Osorno, the Puntagudo, the Tronador and the great lakes invite you to continue the path that descends further south, going to an area that already loses contact with everything known: a large island that may well be the last survivor of a submerged world.

But the road is slow, and we still cling to the things of this earth.

We sail the waters of Lake Llanquihue as the last ones that still do not freeze the heart with their deadly cold.

THE REMAINS OF THE LEMURIA

When I got off the train, a fine rain fell on the city of Puerto Montt. It can be said that the continent ends here; beyond, a vague world begins.

Without thinking of shielding myself from the rain, I walked through the gray streets at dusk. No one else was out and only a horse carriage appeared next to the docks. A drunken driver furiously whipped the animal, which reared up and started to run down the asphalt road.

Through the dense, sullen atmosphere, I saw the wooded shadow of Tenglo Island, the first of a string of mysterious islands emerging as the surviving peaks of an ancient and submerged mountain range.

The next day a sun without strength shone in the sky. At the dock I got on a small steamer. The cold sun filled the landscape with light and color. Islands and more islands, populated with little red and green houses. Sailing boats, motorboats and, above, a fragile sky. In the still water, following the wake, the tunas jumped; their arched backs and tapered fins cut through the rippling water. In the Chacao channel the little steamer stopped in front of an island and a fishing boat approached, offering sea urchins. To eat sea urchins is to swallow a port with all its ships and its organisms. On the other hand, the taste of oysters is that of the high seas, with the solitude and the stillness of the horizons, also with its storms. That day I imagined that I was eating that picturesque little cove in Puerto Montt, Angelmo, where the fishermen's boats gather in great numbers, with their nets and intense colors.

On deck at dusk, I looked to the water. Although still, it is foreboding. It has that hard consistency of waters too icy cold. If someone falls into it, it would be of little use to know how to swim. Perhaps this is why the chilote, a great sailor, who plows through the seas in his weak "dalcas", sometimes reaching as far as Panama, cannot swim. The seasoned and audacious sailor, who does not fear the water on his ship, once fallen overboard does not oppose it with resistance, he fatally surrenders to his destiny, with the same resignation with which the land used to do.

Still water already has something of that rubbery or rubbery consistency that Poe refers to in the "Adventures of Arturo Gordom Pym", who sails the gloomy south of the world, dragged by an endless nightmare current that pushes him towards the Pole.

At dusk, the great island of Chiloe appeared. The steamer anchored in the port of Ancud. A furious wind began to blow and the boats in which we descended were tossed like feeble shells.

In the Huilliche dialect Chiloe means land of birds, land of chelles. Chelles resemble seagulls; they live on floating piles of seaweed rocked by currents. The Great Island is a remaining land, framed to the east, beyond the canals, by the snowy crests of the volcanoes, where the waves beat against the Andes; the small islands, which surround it, are peaks of the

coastal mountain range that continues below the water in the Chacao channel. Wooded hills stretch to the west, with its larch and cypress trees. The quilas [tall grass] and the boquis arise from the earth. The bauta, a black bird, suddenly rises from the ground, squawking as if it were the shadow of the mist that has taken shape over the centuries.

Everything here is strange. It seems as if the landscape is reduced in dimension. The houses, the hills, the animals are small estates.

In ancient times, when the Spanish arrived on these shores, beings in white robes received them. Today they are small elusive individuals who live in high houses on olive stilts. They gave themselves to the Spanish and stayed with them until the last. Chiloe was the loyal stronghold to Spain. That is why the Spanish language preserves its purity here. It sounds strange to hear those indigenous people of the Polynesian type speaking a more traditional language than our own, with a melodic intonation. In the capital of Chiloe, Ancud, the ruined silhouettes of the old Spanish forts stand out. Among the ferns and undergrowth, the moldy canons are preserved, once fired by their king.

The small stature of the chilote is surely due to the lack of lime in the soil. It is a curious being. He often emigrated to Argentina in search of work. He returns dressed as a gaucho and locks himself in his house to drink all winter. The one who works in Chiloé is the woman. The matriarchy preserves the germ. The man leaves for other lands, as if repeating the event of a prehistoric emigration. It is his only revelry within a meek and oblique mood. But in these beings, there is a restlessness that indicates anguish, an essential discontent, restrained in its beginnings since ancient times, by the fatal force of natural elements and later by the dominance of the Spanish. The chilote is fatalistic, but he is not resigned; hence that meek and hypocritical humility, together with an imposing pride, born of some dark consciousness of being the keeper of the memory of the beginning of the world. It is known to be far away, very old and it looks at us as having just appeared. His uneasiness, without limit, probes and searches to see if someone is able to recognize him. He lives pending what is said and written about him, waiting for the word that will vindicate him. The chilote needs their truth to be revealed.

In order to penetrate the question of this world, it is necessary to saturate oneself with its archaic rust and decay. Only by participating in the drama can our intuition enlighten us.

On the island of the chelles, the chilote awaits us. As for a mandate, he remains in his anguish of existing, mixing only with his own, so that the race does not disappear. Even when it degenerates, it keeps its legacy. Before diving into the surviving swamps, you must hand us the keys.

THE FALLEN-FALLEN SERPENT

What is the secret? The usual: a snake. Shrouded in the darkness of the beginning of things, it preserves the diffuse light of memory.

Lost forests, swamps, the ferns, monstrous plants, like hairs or strands of the earth's childhood, remain on this last isle of a disappeared world. Below the waters, in the center, there where the darkness is phosphorescent, the currents undulate. They sparkle and bear the heads of snakes. They cross, and their cunning and evil eyes make up the Poles. Much depends on them, maybe everything. They crawl as prisoners, multiform, root of tremendous powers. Its powers are fatal. History repeats itself: one day the water -the Serpent of the water- will submerge the earth. And so on until the consummation of the Ages.

Here is the secret. The memory is at the base of the myths and legends of Chiloe. The water flooded the lands. In the Huilliche language, Chacao comes from chagcan, which means dismembered. An immense land, a continent was destroyed and its only remains are peaks across the sea; islands, plateaus, patches, scattered limbs, ghostly presences of the first horror. That is the south, Chiloe and Chile as a whole. The angry sea ever controls the coasts, plays, entertains itself with the remains of its prey, while it digests what has already been deposited in its belly.

Chiloe legend tells that there were two snakes. The Serpent Cai-Cai, Lord of the Sea, and the Serpent Ten-Ten, Lord of the Earth. The first is today a hill on the coast of Chiloe and the second a hill on the Chaques Islands. Cai-Cai contained the impetus of the waters of the Ocean. Irritated, she stopped doing it one day, allowing the sea to flood the land. The men were able to save themselves thanks to Ten-Ten, an antagonistic force, which in the end stopped the waters, managing to save some remains from the disaster.

Since then when the tides rise, the Chilotes fear and implore: "Stop, Ten-Ten!"

Where does this memory come from? Chiloe cannot be the origin. The myth speaks of snakes in a region where there are none. The water serpent, the vision of prehistoric sailors, has not existed in our world. It belongs to another previous to the present earth. The great serpents crawled alongside the winged lizards and monsters of Lemuria, in the hot air, where the sea water boiled over. What is the origin of the Chiloe race? Everything agrees to believe that it came to this island plateau from the Pacific islands, sailing in "dalcas". The "white robes" and their myths tell us of a brilliant wise age that disappeared.

The chilote, a native of a vanished world and distant glory, feels like a foreigner in the "new land." Nothing is common or dear to him. He relieves himself, in part, by leaving as he did in the past. Only the woman, by fatal law, continues the tiring work. The man has given her control of the home, the boat, and the island. He is not interested in anything; he is a shipwrecked man from a submerged age.

Long, long ago, there was a single, central continent. All the myths of the earth are similar because they are a memory that had its origin there. Before it's sinking and also before Ten-Ten stopped Cai-Cai, some men set out in Caleuche, where even the dead were saved, passing to the other shore, to the other time, to the other land. The Caleuche sails under the water, with all its lights on and reaches a mysterious place, which is the City of the Caesars, or the Oasis that would exist among the ice of Antarctica. The Toltec myth of the Feathered Serpent, Queltzalcoatl, has its chilote simile in the winged horse that carries the beings of Caleuche. Ten-Ten stopped the water; but sometime, again Ten-Ten will be defeated, and Cai-Cai will submerge the world. It is only Queltzacoatl that could defeat the snakes forever, far away with his wings. Only He, who disappeared to the East, towards the sea, the Serpent that will grow wings. And never again will the water submerge the earth - the fire of the earth - nor will the earth again be in struggle with the water.

On gray afternoons, while it rains interminably, when the tides rise, the chilote leaves his house built on larch or olive pillars and contemplates the water. It is the tides that govern the life; they control the births, the marriages, the deaths of the elderly and the sickness of women. The sea also gets sick, it is feminine, it is "the sea" and, sometimes, it leaves a red foam on the sand.

Along with the oysters, the pancoras and the quilmahues, the chilote eats his "curantos". On heated stones, mixing the cholgás, mussels, potatoes and corn. He unites the land and the sea through their beings and their fruits, achieving, so to speak, that Cai-Cai and Ten-Ten harmonize again, merging and calming down within his own body.

CRAZY IN THE NIGHT

In Ancud I met two sisters who were always dressed in mourning. They had yellow hair and blue eyes. Owners of an old house that had a patio with orange trees and fading flowers, they remained single. Their faces looked withered and pale. They invited me to their home the first night of my arrival. In the courtyard and under a perplexing moon, they began to ask me about my life.

An old serving woman brought fire and sat on the floor, while the younger sister began to interpret the lines of my hand:

“Young man, I see your way; it is difficult. You go; but you will come back ... Do not forget us. I am good and my sister is bad. This old woman is to blame. Look at the moon over the island, spread your arms, and bare your body. My sister and I undress at night and bathe in its light. The moon makes us raise our arms, lightening our hair and eyes. Do you want us to undress? The priest gets angry; but, what does it matter! Poor boy; you will go, the years will pass and you may forget, but we will not. You are lost, if Pincoya [water spirit, goddess] does not help you; you will be like the Invunche [Imbunche], because one day, in the final test, you will turn your face and no longer march forward, with your face turned away. You will go and come back; but I know when you have a Master ... You will disappoint your Master ... your heart. The Devil knows it and works through your heart...

I laughed. Then the other sister started screaming:

“You say I'm bad, but witches say that I am the best. Isn't it true, mistress? Young man, I invite you to the coven. Will you dare? Wait for the moon to rise a little higher in the sky and let the smoke from the fire reach your nostrils, then you will come out screaming: “Tue, tue, tue”, and you will fly, like the night heron. To reach the cavern on the summit, where the “brothers” are waiting for us, you will give a kiss on the rear to the man who guards the entrance. We will start the party. Do you want me to initiate you? Old woman pass me the duster! Meanwhile, the old woman

did not move from the ground and watched the scene between amused and impermeable. I thought those women were crazy. But I continued the charade, pretending interest for their predictions.

"Tell me," I asked them, "how do you live here so alone? What do you expect from life? Why don't you travel north?"

They looked at each other with a gesture of complicity and compassion. "Who told you, child, that we are alone?" Waiting to let the moon rise ...

"How strange!" I exclaimed. You have blue eyes. Are there any foreigners in your lineage?

They laughed.

"Yes, an old man with a pipe, a blond pirate who lived in Caleuche. That was our grandfather. He came and he left. He left us this house and a fortune. Do you want us to give you gold?"

"Like, in the Caleuche?" "Let's see, mistress, tell this young man what you know about Caleuche and our grandfather."

The old woman opened her mouth:

"These people from Chile are very ignorant. In the "continent" nothing is known about these things. It would be better not to speak; but as this young man will one day return to this island and you will continue further, in search, perhaps, of that city where the Caleuche stops his way, so we instruct you, not to see it and not know it, to find it and not recognize it. The Caleuche is also called the Gualtecas and it is in all parts of our world, it surrounds us like water and is under the water. Young man, open your eyes wide, never be deceived.

When, going through the canals, you sometimes see a bundle of seaweed floating adrift, you will know that it is the Gualtecas, which transforms and disguises itself during the day. Only at night is it a ship again; turning on its lights and sails. Inside it you hear heavenly music and the blond men dance and sing. Its lights turn off the reflections of the moon.

If you find a sea lion resting on the beach, do not disturb it, because it could also be the Guaitecas that rests awaiting the time to set sail. Never harm plants or animals, watch your steps, because Guaitecas knows everything and those who live in him will come to look for you and they

will take their ship to a dark area, where your soul will grieve. This is how it happened once to a man who killed a she-wolf with her children...

Guaitecas also rewards you, and those who live in it. Those houses that you always see with closed doors and in which its inhabitants are very rich, it is because they trade at night to the Gualtecas. The ship rewards those who know about the “art” of magic, which in the eyes of the day are crazy and those of the night are wise. My son left ... I had a son ... I am sure he is in Gualtecas ... He has been luckier than me, I am a woman and cannot leave. The grandfather of these girls was a crew member of the Gualtecas. They called him “Corsair”; one day he came on the ship and stopped in front of this Big Island. It was only a few days and then was gone again; but he left the island filled with the color of his eyes. Looking at them, they still remind us of him; blue eyes are “unseen” because it is the color of the eyes of the dead, who sail within the Caleuche ... If you, young man, are looking for the port where the Gualtecas is anchored, your soul is bewitched. Many have looked for it in the past and no one ever found it. How will you one day discover that place?”

The old woman was silent because the fire had gone out. The sisters began to sing a grating melody; getting in the sleeves of their black suits, they extended their skinny arms to the light of the moon. They implored the star that with its impalpable substance, with his growing strength gave them great power. They asked me not to forget them. They took a card on which their names were printed, and they handed it to me, writing there the following sentence: “So that he does not forget us, to let him come back”.

After so many years, it is the case. I am back, but I am looking for the Caleuche.

THE CALEUCHE

The legend lives and feeds on a deep nostalgia. An event that affects the root of the imagination survives by expressing itself in symbols that span the ages. In the furthest past of this world, there was surely a catastrophe that dismembered the lands. Some men were saved in ships by the action of Providence. Maybe a primitive “dalca”, who spent most of the time covered by the waves raging, sailing almost underwater, was the Ark of Salvation. And those who were saved would see boats float manned by the dead, carried by the currents of the ocean. People of navigators, the chilote lives on the sea. His escape is the trip. Exploited in the Colony, serving the

force in the armies and forgotten by the central governments, their only escape is the Caleuche. Living in Caleuche is not having concerns, is to be rich, it is to participate in an eternal festival of corsairs. Pirate ships bequeathed to the beaches of Dutch Chiloé; in them the chilote saw the realization of a life of freedom and greatness that served as food for the legend. The Corsairs came from who knows where and went to unknown places. The Caleuche is lost in the night horizon and anchors in the mysterious City of Caesars. The Legend of the City of Caesars is added to that of the Caleuche. Father Mascardi searched for the City around the lakes and the southern mountains. Could someone find her? The Caleuche sailed like a submarine, and will cross under the ice of the South Pole. Is that where the immortal City is located? The chilote comes from a very distant world. Those who were saved in their time, "left" in Caleuche. Those that survive today are the remains that keep passing on the secret to us, perhaps as delegates of the man-gods, who inhabited a continent where the Caleuche Myth had its origin and where the beginning and the end of its last dwelling was.

In the reign of the waters, the symbol is a ship. In the forest, it would be a Tree. Those who live in the Caleuche are eternal, they are beyond time. The Caleuche is transformed during the day. It can become a bundle of seawood, algae or a fish on the sand. Reality does not exist, it is subject to mutations, and it changes according to the eyes and faith of the beholder. Reality is like a kaleidoscope. Today is one thing, tomorrow is another. Alone the Caleuche exists beyond the sensible. Like the Tree in the jungle, the symbol of a higher power that gives immortality. From the depths of the disappeared worlds, an insistent message reaches us: "you too will perish. There is only one way to the salvation of the elect. A strange and difficult approach, that seems to battle the very stars and destiny: Caleuche."

THE FERNS

From Ancud to Castro, you can go on a bus that at times traverses through a narrow passageway surrounded by giant ferns. Their branches spread like the green tentacles of prehistoric octopuses, or like the tangled scalps of submerged heads. Stretching out your hand you can touch them. They are a flower that grew up in the hot air, shrouded in mists and vapors from the swamps of creation. It still seems to transcend the vapor of another age, and in its gloom, there are tangled scales and great wings of bats. The claws and fire of the mythological dragon have also left their mark there.

Beyond, crossing the great Ocean, are the islands of Japan, which resemble these lands because they have the same origin, being the tops of the other extreme or the western edges of the disappeared ancient world. They are also shaken by volcanoes and earthquakes, like posthumous shudders. The Japanese resemble us; they still keep alive the memory of the fire dragon, which advanced in the swamps, raising its wings. The golden dragon is embroidered on their white robes.

In the long solitude of this south, on the islands, the fern grows like the distant flower of Lemuria. Despite its age, it remains stronger and younger than that other dying plant: man. Both accompany each other in their ordeal.

WHERE THE POTATOES ROT

In Castro I returned to take a boat that led me to an even more hermetic region. In the afternoon we anchored off Chochi. The tide was high, and the waves were hitting the boat that took me ashore. But it was not exactly on the ground where I set foot. A hanging ladder took me to a dock that was more like the portico or terrace of some poor houses, raised above the water on wooden docks. I entered the houses, then went out through a corridor until I reached some wooden sidewalks. From that moment I had the feeling that I would no longer come out of a house and that the entire city was built on water.

Walking at night, I stepped into some smaller objects. They were wet and rotten potatoes. Scattered on the ground they served as food for the rats. In Chochi and throughout the island, when the scarcity of potatoes in the north was known, potatoes had been planted in large quantities, but the help of the central government had been lacking in obtaining freights. Food was now rotting on the squalid land.

Chochi is also a city of relatives. Families have mingled with each other. The Vera's, the Andrade's, the Borquez's, are the owners of the island. That night I was at a Vera's house and drank the traditional mistela, while sitting in the main room. Vera did never removed her black and furry blanket, while she told me stories of the region. She talked about potatoes, precisely the same ones that were rotting. In the patio, on a stove, the pelu embers were burning.

In the afternoon, I went out and began to walk the lonely city by the shore of the docks. I got into an ambiguous area. I do not recall how I came to

find myself at midnight in a hut on the beach, sitting on the ground on some red place-mats, with a young girl from Chiloé next to me and an old woman with straight, dirty hair, who served me some lemonade and spoke of the miseries of the past year.

“We have only eaten potatoes. This misfortune is due to the fact that the red conger eel, which is the devil's fish, has swarmed the canals.”

The young chilota drank lemonade from my glass.

"These girls," the old woman continued, pointing to the young woman, "are the brides of Trauro. They have the Trauro inside. Be careful, Chilean.”

“What is the Trauro?”

“You don't know him?” the girl asked me. “He walks among the boquila and grass, jumps in the larches and wears a short skirt made of branches. He chases us women and "turns" us. The Trauro does not care that the woman is young or old, whether she is one or ten. The Trauro never gets tired.”

A satyr with a Polynesian skirt, I thought, the god Pan, exiled on this gray island.

The eyes of the old woman and the other woman tired me; they were too cunning and oblique. They laughed at everything, they didn't believe what they said, and they were only attentive to the small and practical realities; the difficult life on the island, the price of lemonade, the potatoes eaten by rats.

Through this cloudy memory, my story begins on the Island of Chiloé.

I took refuge in the hotel, a dump, and fell asleep with a heavy sleep.

At dawn I opened the window wide. On the low roofs, almost within reach of my hand, large black birds perched, with curved beaks, stared at the white clouds over the hills and remained still, like gloomy sculpted shadows. In the sunny morning, the poor houses of the city acquired color and dimension. Meanwhile, along the hill roads, barefoot women, wearing black shawls, began to climb. Over their heads sometimes on their shoulders, they carried baskets with mussels and seafood. They were the women of Lemuy, who came to sell their products. They marched slowly,

at the same pace, balancing low the weight of their load, while the edge of their black shawls, resembling mantles, brushed their bare heels and left a trace on the earth. This scene seemed ripped from a stamp of some archaic book. I got dressed and went down to the beach. In boats, on the water, the same women met. Some had beautiful faces. There was no man in sight. I was thus in the domain of a past matriarchy. I spoke to them and they answered me smiling, "If there are no men living on your island of Lemuy, take me with you".

They nodded, laughing or flirtatious. Afterwards, I watched as they left, covered with their shawls, with their brown arms sticking out. They were the Amazons of the boat, who returned to their island of Lemuy. This scene, which I saw so many years ago, must be repeated today throughout the archipelago and in the ports of the Big Island: Quemchi, Queilén, Quellén, Chonchi, Castro, Ancud. Like yesterday, today and tomorrow, the woman reigns, the woman works; the man runs away, leaves, does nothing, dreams, falls apart. The impoverished land impoverishes, engulfs in a lethal atmosphere, in a climate of dissolution and prehistory.

Chonchi has three hills, one after another. It is hard, they say, to get to the third, because its friendly inhabitants offer their mistelas, a liquor from the time of development. On the second hill the visitor is already so drunk that he could not reach the third. However, I managed to make three and was invited to the church house by the priest. In its dining room I met a character named Muria. Muria was a kind of giant who spoke loudly, and he made a thunderclap, because he was deaf. He developed an incredible enterprise in the middle of this landscape and of these apathetic beings.

He traded with the ports, at the same time administering to farms and sawmills. He was northern, born in Iquique; he hated to the people of the south, mainly the Chilotes, to whom he assigned the worst epithets, assuring that they were idle, thieves and dirty, people worthy of being radically and scientifically extirpated from the surface of the world. It seemed to me that the secret of his actions, curiously impervious to the overwhelming influence of the weather, was in his deafness. This allowed him to live without feeling, without "offending" the landscape, almost without seeing it. Isolated in himself, he kept up with his feverish and cruel activity, almost with hatred and resentment. Mounted on his white horse, Muria galloped past across the island, day, and night, without seeing or

hearing, pending I know it from his obsession: to win the game against this enemy southern world.

Behind him and his white horse, he set out in search of the great waves of the Pacific.

My horse was huilliche, hairy and short like the aborigines of the island. The saddle had a single stirrup, and the reins were open at the end, in the Argentine way. The gallop of my horse was short and crushing. Muria could not bear it and with his epic gallop disappeared on the way. I saw him disappear wrapped in a cloud of dust and I would see him no more until the evening, when worn and shaken I dismounted to eat something and rest in a hostel, near the lake Huillineo.

Muria looked at me smiling while eating without speaking. Later, with his hoarse voice, he told me his life. I wanted to win in this impoverished land, in this world where no one worked, extracting wealth from the ground, to make the native city powerful. He dreamed of the north, he thought about it, while he toiled in this purgatory. He wanted to return rich and triumphant from the evil of the world, imposing himself on the rest of his compatriots. Muria has been the only being that I have known in this area of the earth who did not feel the suggestion of the south, who did not live to be dragged by the current that pushed to its ends. And it will be from what I said: because he was deaf; he did not "hear" the landscape.

We slept in the same room. In the middle of the night, about his bed, he began to shout. Screaming and complaining, throwing punches in the air. In his great voice he expressed repressed anguish. He feared that he would not be able to return before death was put in the heart. With a tender inflection, he named Iquique, his city. In the middle of an apparent fortress, the giant suffered, afraid of being defeated by the surroundings. Perhaps, in the dream, his inner ear was opening to listen to the south, and his deep conscience perceived the ravages that had occurred in his soul.

I got up from bed to help him in his delirium. As he would not hear my voice, I woke him up hitting him on the powerful chest. At the bottom of that chest a deep sound answered me, like an echo in a distant universe. And Muria woke up. Without seeing me, he moved about defending himself from a shadow that seemed to hold him. He named her several times, saying that she was the demon of the earth, who lived in that cursed region of the south, wanting to chain him. He seemed to recover for an

instant; but when he mentioned his city again, he began to sob with his great voice of a deaf giant.

THE LATIN IN LEMURIA

Lake Huillinco stretched out smooth and clear in the beautiful sunny morning. Only at its edges did the waters reflect the dark green patches of the forests. The sun was a soft miracle among scattered clouds.

Legend has it that the souls of the dead arrive at this lake and on its shores, they board a boat manned by angels. They are transported to the sands of the Pacific, where they can soar to the skies. On the shores of the lake, they wait - as souls have always done throughout the centuries - until the Argentine sound of heavenly bells announces the appearance of the boat with winged beings. The sky is in the confines of this transitory island, of this raft of the shipwrecked. There, where the original homeland once spread, the disappeared world.

Like the dead, Muria and I waited that morning on the shore of the lake.

And it was a motorboat that approached, bringing as its only crew member a man of indefinite age. Tanned by the winds, he had blue eyes, and his hair must have been blond once. He was the boatman on this lake. For a small fee he carried passengers. The government also paid him an annual sum for transporting the mail.

His name was Emil Briz. He was Danish in origin, and his story was that of the settlers: struggle and effort. Settling first in southern Argentina, in the Bay of San Julian, where Hernando de Magallanes almost died of hunger and cold with all of his people. He managed to acquire possessions and fortune, but a fire destroyed everything. Briz moved to Chile with his wife, settling in Chiloé, in the middle of this lake, on a small peninsula that he nicknamed "Contento." He found a lot of similarity between his native land and the southern canals. Living near the water was a necessity for Briz; here felt like living among his "fiords". Without children, the couple directed all their affection to nature and put their enthusiasm in the ideal of the fulfillment of a mission. Something characteristic of the Nordic race and that in Emil Brix found an expression, for now, the transporting of aborigines over the waters of Lake Huillinco. In this way he related Chochi with the old mining town of Cucao. He believed that this southern world was identical to his North Sea. With this absurd idea perhaps, he managed to preserve himself from the destructive impacts of

the landscape. Providence did not bring him the son who would have been dragged into the catastrophe.

Shortly after we embarked on his boat, in the middle of the waters of the lake, the sky clouded over, and the rain began to fall. Emil Brix got up with a heavy coat and a waterproof cap and directed the boat towards the shore, where the noise of mechanical saws could be heard. Some men were waiting and invited us to seek shelter while it cleared. In the middle of a clearing a sawmill had been set up. Everywhere, side trees, half-worked woods. The pungent odor came from the earth and the felled trees. The men watched over the work in the saws. One of the businessmen had once been well known in the capital. Here he cut down the forests, transporting the wood to Germany. The war interrupted the plan, and the shipments were paralyzed in the ports. His bulky figure stood out alongside the surviving trees. At his side was a thin little man, with an incisive and melancholic profile, and an Italian surname; He was the guide, knowledgeable of the region, also voluntarily exiled for years. His name was famous throughout the area as an expert hunter of sea lions and seals. An Army Major accompanied them, watching everything carefully. His uniform put a strange note on this landscape.

As the rain did not stop, the Dane invited everyone to get on his boat and continue the journey. Again, the noise of the motor of the boat slid faintly on the gray savanna of the lake, under the fine rain. We went silently, observing the horizon, until a small point appeared towards which I headed the ship. It was Contento, the place chosen by Emil Brix to build his house, surrounded by the waters of Lake Huillinco. A reddish roof stood out among the treetops. Shortly after, we descended onto the pier built with the meticulousness of European patience.

The place undoubtedly filled the heart with joy. From the steep little house, it was possible to see both ends of the lake and also descend to small beaches, covered with algae. The house was comfortable and tastefully arranged. There were books, magazines, witches. There were also flowers and seams, as the landlady was a hardworking and cordial woman. She had graying hair and her eyes were as blue as her husband's. There was a fire burning in the fireplace. Before we sat down to eat, we warmed ourselves and drank a restorative liquor. After what I had experienced lately, this atmosphere inside Contento's little house seemed too strange, almost superficial. How could he understand the oasis of civilization? At

lunch, seafood, vegetables, stuffed tomatoes, and then meat cooked in a liqueur sauce were served. Thousands of kilometers away from it all, in the middle of the waters of a sacred lake, shrouded in legend, forests and ferns, there were men who seemed indifferent to it all. Under the influence of lunch and the atmosphere, the conversation took on a special tone. Muria began referring to his favorite subject, the ignorance of the Chilotes.

"Some time ago," he said, "one of these indigenous people bought a can of canned peas at the Cucao store. After a few months he returned to file a claim, because he had planted them, and they were not producing."

Later, the military man narrated other stories heard in the region. Aldo, the owner of the sawmills, laid out great projects. The others heard him and approved, contributing their grain of sand to maintain the illusion.

"I will cut all the forests of Chiloe. One million, two million pesos, ten, twenty if necessary. I will get them. Ships will cross the ocean and reach Europe, smelling of freshly cut wood, larch, new cypress. This setback of the war will be brief; let us wait a few months until Germany triumphs. Later we will see."

The wolfhound poured himself wine and, his eyes shining, said:

"Do you remember, Aldo, when we sat in the forest, until we reached where the most beautiful and large trees are? You did not believe, but you could see later that together we were unable to cover its diameters with outstretched arms."

"Yes, the uncomfortable thing was having to crawl in the gloom, under those branches. But we will cut them, we will cut them all! You're right, wolf man!"

Emil Briz remained silent at the end of the table; there was a glint in his eyes. He watched tenderly.

Muria had finished his lunch; he was closing his eyes and nodding. For him there was no conversation; his life was a monologue spoken aloud. The rest were gesticulating images on a moving landscape. Little by little, the enthusiasm of the talk faded, and sadness began to take over the diners. It was as if everything said had been a subconscious defense against the landscape, allegedly ignored and imposed by penetrating the interstices of this refuge.

Emil Briz invited us to go to the living room, where the fire was still burning. With spy glasses we looked at the lake through the windows. The sky was beginning to clear and a sickly sun spread blankets of light over the water. A hand gently touched my arm. The woman of the house was next to me.

“Do you like this lake?” She asked.

In her too, I thought I guessed bitter despair. A while before I had seen how men were deceived, imagining companies and, deep down, happy with everything that prevented them from doing them. The war was the pretext. They were glad of the war.

We sat by the fire. On the fireplace I saw an inscription engraved in Latin, in large, gothic letters. I was amazed that I had not noticed it earlier. It said: *Ubi bene, ibi patria.*

Emil Brix, who had followed the direction of my gaze, explained:

"Where I am, is the homeland. That's how it has always been for me."

I got up and left the house without being noticed. The sun was still fighting with the black clouds accumulated to the east. I found a path among the ferns and descended to the beach. Observing the shells and multicolored stones on the fine sand. With my foot I pushed them into the water. In the distance, on the horizon, a gray patch spread out. It was the land. *Ubi bene, ibi patria*, was still in front of my eyes.

Latin in this part of the world was also something strange. Again, I came to understand that the earth was a living being. The sacred language of the west, which in its atmosphere produces magical vibrations, even here, in this space that remained, a waste of sunken centuries, it still had an effect and even exotic. The earth does not have the same atmosphere everywhere. It vibrates distinctly. The rhythmic compass of the Latin phrase lacks any modernity in the south of the world; its peculiar growth does not coincide with its "ether". For this reason, perhaps, the Catholic religion is paganized in America. The "sacred" gesture that corresponds to this area of the world is that of the old sorcerer, the Indian "machi".

The "mantras" should be said here in the language that was lost with the submerged world and not in a language that is sacred in another area of the earth. Latin is the magical language of Europe, just as Sanskrit is of an

area in the East. The one from this dark world has not yet reappeared, it has not been rediscovered. The earth is like a gigantic electromagnet whose radiation escapes through its poles. In certain latitudes, the qualities of your "aura" will be different. To impress her you need gestures, your own gestures. An elaborate ritual. And the magic words destined to modify the meaning of the facts, to change the Destiny, producing a balance between the soul and landscape, must also be with vernacular words. Latin, on the other hand, rebounds here on the waters of the lakes, producing a sound like that of a breaking glass.

Sitting on a rock, he saw how the sun was covered again with heavy clouds. Through them its rays fell vertically, forming paths of light between water and sky.

CUCAO

The same afternoon we embarked in the direction of Cucao. Emil Brix returned to his peninsula and our party went into the night.

Large machines were abandoned on the roads of that little town; they looked like the rusty skeletons of prehistoric animals. Cucao had been a mining town. Its gold pits once gave it an intense if fleeting life. The hope was brief; today only this piled-up iron remains, along with some crazy people who insist upon finding gold nuggets in the river, to go and sell them to the pulperia [company store].

Wrapped in the evening light we entered the farmhouse. A woman was approaching. Her large eyes contemplated us, while her blond hair swayed over a white neck; her delicate hands. Was it, perhaps, an apparition? The ghost of the golden legend, with her hair covered by the gold dust of the Cucao laundries?

Aldo introduced her as the wife of a young Italian. The whole family lived at the pulperia. They had arrived in the region during the gold rush, when it was thought that Cucao would be a Copiapó from the south. They installed the pulperia and stayed there selling food to the natives and buying the stones that some mined in the lower reaches of the river. People with fortune and relationships in Europe, now lived in this end of the world, struggling with the weather and deadly boredom. Another beautiful woman was waiting at the home, where we stopped for a moment. Aldo and the Major were invited. Muria and I left in the direction of the wolf's room, where we would spend the night. But Muria could not hold on any

longer, he had another horse saddled, also large and white, and left that night, in the direction of "farther south" and the Pacific, where we would meet again. I was tired and followed the wolfhound home.

We sat at a table with a bottle of wine and began to eat dinner. We were silent for a long time. He was filling one glass after another. I took the opportunity to observe him. He had a long, sharp nose, a small, tight-lipped mouth, and black eyes under thick brows. As the level of the bottle dropped, the wolf's face grew redder and his eyes brighter. His mouth parted to ask me:

"What have you come here to do? To look? It is very sad I assure you. At least for us, who do not want to appear in the show."

I did not expect these words from the wolf's mouth, so I had to wait before answering him:

"I did not come for that ... Who can say why we go to a certain part of the world? Because you are here?"

It seemed to me that he was calming down, gaining confidence.

"Yes. Because I am here? Can someone tell me? Because I am chasing those wolves with sticks in their sea caverns? I, who could live in Santiago, dedicated to painting pictures, with a workshop at the School of Fine Arts ..."

"I didn't know you were interested in painting." A sign of sadness appeared in his eyes.

"Do not talk about it. Let us talk about why I'm here." He got up and brought another bottle of wine.

"I'm here because this is more like hell. If the Earth is the prelude to hell, it is preferable to live there where to be more authentically yourself. This land is no more than a step to hell. Here no one can be happy."

Do you believe it? You can achieve not even an instant of real joy?"

"No, young man, that is impossible; by its very condition, the earth denies us everything that resembles glory. Think about it. Who is happy? The rich one? He is a prisoner of his fortune and, when he is not, he lacks the spirit to be conscious of happiness; he does not feel the world, nor his own life. In this land money is given to fools. And when man is not a fool then you

have other ambitions that make you unhappy ... Love? Ah, love! We cannot even love. Love realized is love lost. In order to love, one must renounce the loved object. Big problem! Look at Aldo. He loved his wife; she left him for another man, then he came here to bury himself. Now loving in the most perfect way that is given on this earth, in the memory. And her? I left her, perhaps to feel remorse. Love is loved, and love is never encouraged. What is done grows old, and what is not done causes suffering. So, he rejoices in suffering. And everything is the same thing: the aspiration of the heart to something that is not here. Where is it? The earth is hell! Art, will you tell me, the pleasure of creation. This! ... Maybe ... but it is an evasion, a brand of fire... Poor Aldo! Aldo is sad..." He poured himself another glass.

"Ah! The solution is not here ... You must go through it, accept hell. That is why we are in this place. Young man, come on then, run away, step on the embers in Chiloe! Lest he stay and be consumed by the ferns and the rain."

Voices of someone approaching, singing, could be heard outside. The wolf man continued:

"Friendship is also unrealizable, like love for parents and siblings." How much it makes us suffer! Words that are not said, that were never said, or words that are said that we would never have wanted to say. The affection for animals, which are faithful to us until death, is without words and more perfect, because it is done without our attention, in a natural way. Ah, my friend! Do you know what prevents and limits us? The body, the world of the body. Therefore, as long as we live here, there is no happiness ... And where can there be? Is there another world? No one has ever come back to tell us ... They have come, yes, some very great ones have come; but they have not returned. Do you understand? No one has returned."

He was a bit drunk. I stayed silent. Then the door was opened, and two new characters made their way inside the room. One came singing and brought in the other almost by shoving. Seeing them, the wolf changed his expression, turning suddenly happy, as if he were putting on a mask. Without rising from his chair, he made the introductions. The one who sang was a man of medium height and an intelligent face, named De la Barra. The other, short, with a yellowish face, and all the appearance of a chilote, was Chonchi's doctor. De la Barra presented him to me in the following way:

“Here is Chonchi's “skyscraper”, the only “skyscraper; In addition, he is a doctor, a specialist in healthy killing, in prescribing herbs and poisons.”

The doctor barely smiled. You could see that he disliked these words, but De la Barra did not take any notice of it and, for the rest of the evening, he dedicated himself to teasing him with weighty jokes, forcing him to drink.

De la Barra had come to Chiloe from Concepcion, to also exploit immense sections of forests in the surroundings of Cucao. There was in his personality that smirk, so typical of the Chilean. Yet under his talkative and happy appearance, there was also a hidden sadness, a bitterness. We started talking. De la Barra spoke of his city. Then he referred to Aldo:

“That fat guy is stupid. What does it mean to fall in love with women to the point of not being able to forget them? Women, if we do not love them, they love us. You must treat them badly, my friend, if we don't love them, they love us. Have to treat them badly, it is the only way they want us. And what are they for, after all? ... You know, for little things, my friend, a simple and prosaic affair. When we are old, so that they can pass us the potty and take care of us. This is it: a sad fate! ... But the doctor knows more than I do about these things!”

Like all little men, the doctor was very sensitive. I saw him turn red with poorly contained emotion. His susceptibility increased in my presence, coming to consider himself humiliated before a foreigner. For the same reason, De la Barra increased the number of his jokes. There was cruelty in it, something unfortunately common in the Chilean character and that does not reveal strength or goodness.

“This doctor has waged real wars with the "machis" of the region. He sells his pills and his doodles, and they sell their herbs, stuffed lizards, and their magic formulas. It is a competition for the customer, even though this "skyscraper" says he does it for science and other great things. I am with the machis; they cure diseases better.”

"The strange thing," said the doctor, "is that these people in the region get better with that infamous medicine." I do not know what strange thing happens. Where an aspirin does not work, but a woman's piss does. If I were not a rational, scientist, I would say that it is the devil's thing.”

The others laughed. The doctor was serious when they just wanted to have fun. "There are even stranger things," said the wolfhound. "Why don't you tell this gentleman your experiences, doctor?"

I was aware that these men were speaking so that I would listen to them. They placed themselves outside of me and did not make me the object of their jokes. Oddly enough, they needed me, as if a spectator were essential. They wanted someone outside the drama they represented, so that they could understand them. Deep within these beings there was a desire to be recognized. They wanted to leave me out and yet, unfortunately, I was not, because my anguish also grows with the years. I am also a victim of the landscape, of this "climate of the soul".

The wolfhound began to contradict himself: "As unfortunate as Aldo is, he sleeps right now in the same house as her ..."

The men fell silent. They poured more wine and stood staring at the ceiling of the room. Outside you could hear the noise of the water and the wind whistling. With wet eyes, De la Barra said:

"Have you seen, "skyscraper", something more pure than that woman? She is an angel, a vision of Paradise."

The medic showed an ambiguous smile.

"Oh!" sighs the wolfhound, "her blond hair is like a twilight. The skin of all the wolves in the world would be little to spread at her feet."

Those men, who only a moment ago were tough and unbelieving, suddenly became inconsistent. They were smitten with the woman and with her blonde hair; tangled in the ferns at the end of the world.

I got up saying that I was tired and went to the neighboring room, where the beds were. They continued drinking and rampaging until after midnight. I fell asleep. But I was awakened by a loud noise. De la Barra almost knocked down the door and entered the room hugging the doctor. He came singing at the top of his voice:

She had a petticoat. Oh, what a nice skirt she had! *And under the skirt*, something cuter still!

The doctor, who was now drunk too, was showing his oriental laugh. He looked at my bed and put his finger to his mouth as if to impose silence;

then he flopped onto a chair, began to kick off his shoes, and bent forward. He could see his bald head, crossed only by a neatly combed lock. De la Barra exclaimed when he saw it: “You have a head of public writing. Even with signature and signature. Only the stamp is missing ... Wait, I'm going to put it ...!”

He pushed himself to fall on the doctor, slapping him hard on the bald head. They both rolled on the ground. The fall must have wised them up a bit, for both went to lie on their beds. They were complaining and talking loudly, between dreams, until dawn.

I watched as the gray, milky dawn penetrated through the windows and surrounded the Big Island with a dense, leveling mist.

PIRUTIL

Riding my chilote horse. The wolfhound showed me the way. I should always continue in a straight line. The mist swayed in the thin air. Suddenly, the horizon cleared, and a white foam rose to the sky.

It was the sea, the great Ocean, where the souls of the dead begin their upward path. In half an hour we made it and were next to the 12 meters high waves. Here, I thought, the float of the shipwrecked ends and the great terror begins, the ever-living threat, the insatiable Ocean. In the sand grew gigantic nalcas and their leaves spread like enormous hands with buried arms. My horse raised its neck towards the humid horizon. I directed it south and galloped down the beach.

Black birds fluttered and descended upon my head. They had red beaks and eyes. After a while, some vague silhouettes appeared on the sand. They were rocks beaten by the surf. Someone was at them. I stopped the gallop and approached. To my surprise, I saw that they were the same women in black cloaks and barefoot that I had seen throughout the region.

What were they doing in these solitudes? One of them was holding what looked like a bundle of seaweed to her chest. As I got closer, I saw that this bundle was a skeleton of a child who was sucking a cochayuyo [bull kelp] on the mother's breast. The women rummaged in the rocks and pulled out seaweed, ghosts of the sea. Later, they ate them. They did not see me; they didn't even look at me. Their eyes were fixed on the water, lost in an inner horizon. At the end of the rocks, a lonely image squatted, its head covered with a shawl. It gathered little shells and starfish. Surely, it had no

face, and the waves came crashing over its body, as on top of a shadow of terror. Its image was fleeting in the mist. Would it be the Pincoya, dark and marine fairy, who collects fish and shells? I should not look at it. I walked away with my gaze fixed on the south, on the southernmost. Until a gray land appeared in the distance.

But the rocks kept emerging in my imagination. The whole beach was full of them. They resisted the blow of the waves with their black backs, dripping water and foam through the mist. Above them were a great number of devastated shadows, without faces, holding in their skeleton arms children of nightmare, who ate seaweed or sucked at the sagging breasts. The women wore cochayuyos crowns and oily huiro braids around their temples. They wove them with their bony hands and crowned those who remained alone, childless in their laps, plucking black birds and opening their bellies with their nails, to devour their entrails. I could see the beaks and the red eyes of these birds, hanging over the rocks, while their blood and intestines were washed by the foam of the sea. And at the end of it all, where the beach ends and the void begins, always the same faceless, elusive image, now making a mountain with seashells, with fish bones, with snails, with stones and ocean stars.

In the distance, the gray land continued to approach. It was the tip of the Pirutil, where Muria surely waited for me. Would he have also passed through these places, without hearing, without seeing anything?

THE QUILAN CHEESES

Large, beautiful white cheeses were produced on the Quilan estate. Spread out under sheds, which preserved them from the rain, their sour smell filled the rooms and reached into the forest. A young married couple from Valdivia, of German descent, with two small daughters, leased the farm for the summer, with the right to operate the dairy. They worked at the cheese factory with fervor. They caressed the cheeses, surveyed their shapes, and touched their rinds. Later, they would have a run, reaching even the northern cities. And those who ate them would not know that they came from a surviving land, where rain and ferns rule.

Here I spent several days, the last of Chiloe. I ate with the residents at a countryside table, served frugally. In the afternoons, I would go for a walk in the woods. The rain always felt thin, constant. The girls played with

colored blankets, covering their bare feet. The parents strolled embraced among the trees and ferns.

One afternoon I went deep into the forest, finding an exit to the sea. Big waves were hitting a narrow beach. Wild strawberries grew there, along with nalcas of the spreading-leaf. The rain was coming down gently. I sat under a tree and gazed out at the ocean. On the horizon, to the north, I imagine seeing the strange island of Rapa Nui emerge, a distant sister of this one, a remnant and summit of a remote past. Tepito te Henua, "Ombiligo del Mundo", [Easter Island] a teaching of mystery. On its slopes rest the giants Mohais, stone sculptures worked by an unknown race.

Who did they represent? What race sculpted them? Self-worshippers, the Lunar Titans once existed on earth. These men-gods? Legend has it that the Moon Titans existed in a land without sun, soft, opaque. On it they raised grandiose monuments that reproduce their own effigies. One day the coming of the sun was announced to them. They did not believe it at first, making fun of the prophecies. And when the sun appeared, they isolated themselves within the mountains, where they are still kept, waiting for a new land and a new time. There, in the bosom of the White Mountains, they were imprisoned. They hold the earth on their backs.

This is how it must be, because I remember an old dream, when inside the mountains I saw two gigantic shapes, framed with golden veins. One leaned in defeat; the other raised her imploring arms to the heights.

THE DISAPPEARING CONTINENT

The Indo-Oceanic continent, lost in the shadow of the cosmic night, spread over the entire globe. Mythical maps indicate that Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, Australia, New Zealand, are remnants of that time. Where Easter Island is today, was once an island continent, in whose center mountains rose in which a cult of the effigy of the Man-God was officiated. Japan appears only at the end of the lost age. Antarctica, today covered in eternal ice, may have been that gigantic island continent, or a major piece of the ancient world, slowly moving towards the pole.

Lemuria was a gray world, enveloped by water vapors and hot mist. There the ferns grew, ancestors of the pines and palm trees, and in its interior lakes, among the vapors of the abyss and the burst of its wisps, snakes crawled. Even before, the serpent crawled on the water (on the beam of the waters) like a purple light. Does the Caleuche myth originate here? The

Caleuche is the Spirit of God, it is the Winged Serpent. Like a light it floats over the abyss. From the reptile and the serpent arises the winged being.

From the long necks, which floated in the water, come the birds of the air. But they are concentrated beings, with the wings of bats. Beings with vertebrae are added to crawling things. Abyss dragons, flying serpents, amphibian monsters. The plesiosaurs, the ichthyosaurs, dive into the Mesozoic lagoons. The waters dry up and the huge reptile called the dinosaur crawls through the night. But only the pterodactyl flies, dark, gelatinous, like a creation from hell. But something has arisen - already long before - he is the man. Someone has brought him to this central land; just like wheat, he does not come from this world. In Lemuria he walked oscillating; of a gigantic stature, almost five meters, his arms had no joints, and he was guided in the vaporous mist by means of an elongated membrane, a sensitive organ, superimposed on the forehead. This "man" could walk backward as well as forward, as his heels were extended, forming like a double foot. It was also androgynous.

On the high peaks, under waterfalls of fire, he barely hears the thunder of the lava torrents. His sight was turned towards the inner cosmos, towards the Father, and remembers his original voice and the celestial signs of creation vibrating in his own being. For this reason, he was also god here and raised clouded cyclopean cities, which bore testimonies of his immense stature. The millennia hardened the Mohais.

If these signs are not enough, there are legends and myths. What is the origin of the myths? Where is your original homeland? The account of the Chiloe legend, who walks with his face turned, is not a memory of that being with elongated heels that could go in both directions? And the god Janus and Baphomet and the Cyclops with their front eye, that unique membrane? There was a point, there was a center, where legend and myths were born.

In the chronicles of the Conquerors mention is made of an existing legend in the regions of Ecuador, which refers to in ancient times some men of gigantic stature arrived there. They came from the Ocean. Since they found no women, they became sodomites and were destroyed with fire.

And so, it did indeed. Lemuria was not destroyed by water, but by fire. The volcanoes vomited their lava, and blackened torrents buried the

effigies and temples. Only later did the water come to put out the fire and spread oblivion about.

The Titans of the Moon were androgynous. Only with fire could unity be broken, and the sexes separated. Only with fire can the lost totality be recovered. A distant, endearing part has been torn from us and today we are looking for it throughout the universe. Life was perfect, life was total. The sun did not appear outside yet, because it was inside. Only in magical love can we sense, in part, what that union was.

Atlantis and our present land were and will be destroyed in the same way. What great fall was there in the universe? It seems like the earth is a crust, from which our world is. It is said that the sin of Lemuria was the union of the gods with the animal-man. An echo of Creation itself. Fall, first regression. God falls in love with the Angel, and the Angel falls in love with the man. The Angel, the first androgynous Titan, shapes the shape of women (that's why women came first), gently shapes her. Watching it rest on the first surviving mountain, Monte Cassuati, where five men were saved from the Flood, he discovers likenesses of the sky. Within that creation is also your world; but harder, thicker, fuller of pain. And the Angel falls, as God fell first. How strange, then, that man repeats heinous sin? We are an echo through the abyss. We have invoked fire in order to create. And the fire destroys us. Then the water will come. And oblivion.

The monkey continues down to the bottom of Lemuria, lagging its form at the same time. The horrible carnivorous plant comes, with milky blood. And the vegetal descends to the mineral. Large coals are found on the beaches of Chiloe. Coal is the petrified, regressed vegetable. It is in the oldest lands where it is found. Antarctica has the largest coal reserves, indicating that this dead continent committed the Great Sin.

Who knows if the universe is like some supreme digestion, which releases slags, vain forms, destined to dissolution and to nothingness? Beyond, will there be another light? On the beaches of this surviving island, next to the great waves of the Pacific, the nalcas and coals of the end of the world, let us recite the prayer of water: "Oh you, Ten-Ten, stop! Tralok, god of the sea, protect us!"

THE BONES OF THE LEMURIA

The man-god, who inhabited that central land, walked oscillating. His bones were gelatinous. The remains of that land which survive, despite the

ages, retain their deadly atmosphere. Sulfuric emanations are released from its soil and are no longer suitable for modern man. Not in an entire sector of Australia - a continent island, almost unpopulated - neither in Chiloe, nor in southern Patagonia, nor in Tierra del Fuego, is it easy to live. There is something that decomposes the soul in its modern configuration, pushing back and preventing the advent of the spirit. Poisonous and subtle fumes arise from the humidity. Lime is lacking, because in that sunken, soft-boned world, it was not necessary. The stature of the man is reduced in Chiloe.

And throughout the arc, which like a ring of fire, surrounds the immense pot of the Pacific, where before there was a land that knew glory, today volcanoes rise from their snowy crests. They tremble, they throw lava, fire and death, as in memory of the last days of a superb light, which had been falling fatally into the abyss.

THE SOUL COMPASS IS MARKING THE SOUTH

Contemplating the waves of the Pacific, I felt the attraction of that powerful current that pulls further south.

In those years, I knew very little about Antarctica. I only suddenly realized in myself the desire to let myself be carried away and to go to that dark region. It was as if from some point, down there, someone was calling my name, a voice was shouting to me from the middle of the wind. And that voice came from the south, from the furthest south. My soul was a compass that pointed to the mysterious south.

At that time, I wasn't ready yet. It would take years before I could navigate those deadly waters.

At that time, I had to turn back. With full concentration, I forced myself back up the waters in the opposite direction to their currents.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LANDSCAPE

Thus, we come to the end of this story of an unfinished journey to extremes. We have done our best to understand the reasons that lead the earth and her generations to desire redirection.

The homeland is where destiny gave birth to us, no matter how bad and unfortunate we feel there. Our mission is to penetrate its shadow, to wrap ourselves in its drama, until one day a clarity emerges from our efforts.

This is the mystical sense of the earth. Many flee from their destinies. There are countries, entire continents that escape from themselves. The United States of America, for example, which has lost the thread of its development, disconnecting from the deep earth and the air that surrounds it. Today the world feels the same suggestion, aspiring to become North American.

Chile could not do it; because its destiny is too deep, and the area of the planet in which it resides is dramatic. It is true that here there is not a joy of the future and a faith in tomorrow, but rather a disparaging atmosphere. The weight of the shadow and the night bends our backs. The darkest time has not yet passed, yet it is not by fleeing from this reality that we will overcome it, but by courageously penetrating it, accepting it in its truth. For now, there is no other way than to cross the country, to reach its confines, as well as the extremes of ourselves. Later, far away, on the white plains, we may find the Oasis.

The lower part of the world is hard and gray. In it the generating forces reside; they circulate, they crawl like purple and phosphorescent snakes. They are the producers of form. And when the time of Aquarius comes, when that time comes, the polar race will emerge here, which brings an unmistakable sign.

For now, only by attempting the crossing through itself, or the journey through the inner homeland, could we conquer a way out. This is the path of discovery of the mystical homeland, the only form of nationalism acceptable for a soul that is dispossessed with the Spirit.

Since ancient times, ice has been the symbol of the Spirit.

Fatal victims of the earth, Chileans still pass like a blind river. Disconnected from a deep law, they lack the wisdom and strength to transform destiny. They are devastated, like a tree, by the alluvium of the mountain. The landscape undoes them and mistreats them, finding only the weak resistance of a westernized and alien spirit that does not understand it, nor does it interpret it.

The landscape of Chile, that of the south of the world, is a psychic and moral landscape.

Whoever travels through the south will feel that its dangers are not physical, but moral. The jungle here is not the tropical one, infested with

poisonous, ferocious animals, swamps, and putrid lianas. There are no savages, no cannibals, nor assassin pygmies. There is only the lonely vegetation, the ecstatic landscape, the immense summit. Only the rain, the subtle, suggestive air, and loneliness. Generally speaking, the land is roads, but not down here in Chile, here it is final. Nothing starts now, nothing postulates. Everything is over, life ends. The rain falls. Water grows, circulates, and becomes immobilized. The snow spreads over the peaks. And the tree rises and expands its soaked life of undulating branches. Underneath grow the roots, the pasty mushrooms, the fungi, and the mosses; tiny life, beginning of the road. And the impressive rock goes back everywhere to the first moment of creation, or the last of it. It is the country of the end, rather than the beginning. From the mountains, a signal, which prompts to dream of a higher destiny. That is why the landscape of Chile is religious and final. If life ends here in this hard physical, and imperfect world, the soul prolongs it in another reality. Only through the Spirit can man be saved in this universe from the end and from dissolution. He must invent a life of the soul, which begins where that of the body ends, or the passage to a race of more subtle and radiant forms, composed of the most delicate elements of the air that cloud the volcanoes.

The danger is in the water, symbol of the unconscious and of the intimate and deep terrors, and the salvation in the ice, the homeland of Spirit, where that race will resurface from the future. They are disconnected from their land in the present, without forms to penetrate the landscape. Chileans die and grieve, sensing a possible and distant path of salvation. They lack the education necessary to understand how to adapt to the remote environment in which they live. Their psychic organisms, hampered by the imposition of an alien spirit, are not fit to evolve, and survive. Only by acclimating in the ice, in the polar and extreme airs, can men acquire the conditions to conquer the earth.

That this has been the case since ancient times, we will understand when we meet the primitive races that inhabited the south of Chile and that were able to survive thanks to their contact with the ice.

In Chilean literature and art, the spirited landscape of the south of the world has not been expressed. It is our generation that brings the desire to lift their heads towards the mountain peaks. Not with a foreign spirit, but from our soil, from the bottom of everything that suffers here and indicates a more distant time. For the Spirit to appear, the soul must penetrate very

deeply, almost at the end of things and, there, snatch the materials with which to weave her bridegroom's robe; to marry the Spirit.

The dangers are moral, because the soul can remain forever a prisoner in these tremendous regions, magnetized within the magical circle of the landscape. Man will become a fungus, a plant being, without will, without intelligence, with only extreme experiences and sensibilities, a monster with a wet heart.

The path of improvement is unique. It is found in the religion of the transfigured earth, in the magic of fate overcome. In Chile we should not continue turning in the concentric circles of a story that occurred in the fatal currents of the earth. It is necessary to rise to the conquest of your own spirit, in the area that in the world of values and archetypes is reserved for the Adventurers of the South. You must open the bosom of the mountains and discover the new gods that await. Rediscover them.

When a man, who is the last flower of the earth, keeping always his bare feet on the ground, opens his forehead and extends his arms to the sky, to be pierced by the fire of heaven, the lightning will not stop there, but it will penetrate into the depths of hell.

The coming of the Spirit, through man, produces the miracle of the transfiguration of the world. The landscape changes, it is interpreted, it acquires meaning. Everything is ordered, it is balanced. That which was destroying and annihilating you, will now be life and creation. The volcanoes will put out their fires, the rivers will not overflow their channels, the temples will not destroy the cities and the waves will be stopped on the cliffs. The dead men, the heroes, the martyrs, will rise from their graves, shaking off the night. Reanimated by the light of the miracle, they will redeem their history.

All this is a beautiful dream, which falls like a heavy weight on my life. I must continue the path that leads to the limits. I must discover the underwater currents that lead me to the Oasis that exists outside the ice.

Until I find it, I will not be free.