ANTARCTICA

MIGUEL SERRANO

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MIGUEL SERRANO

ANTARCTICA AND OTHER MYTHS

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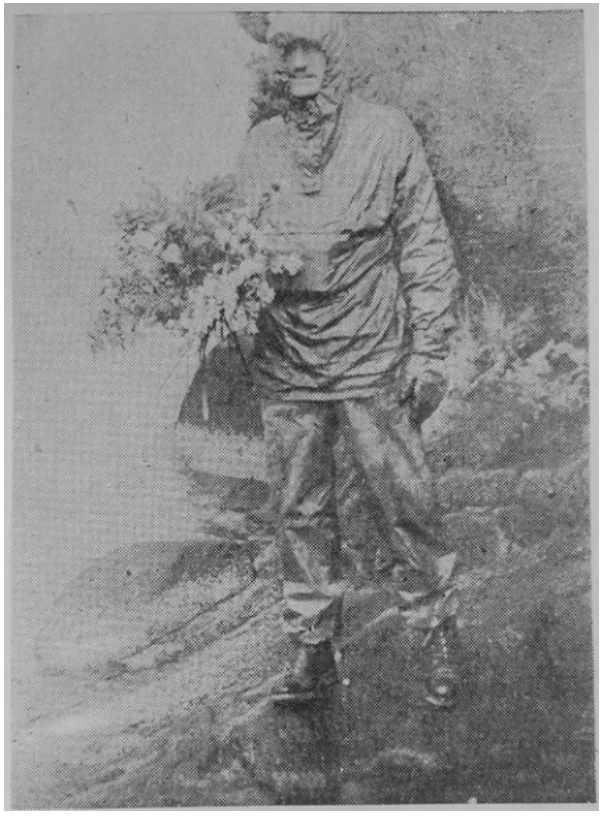

The south is the world of the waters and its beings, like gods or ghosts, emerge from its depths.

The decision to publish this lecture has had to be carefully considered. It was written to be heard and not to be read. Thus, it had to be corrected with its publication in mind. But things are born one way and not another. To dwell now on the style would be to ignore the essence of something living and rhythmic. So I have decided to publish it just as it was said, without altering in the least its original form. I have even added those improvised paragraphs at the beginning of the first and second parts, which were interspersed by me when this talk had to be repeated in Daedalus. I have reproduced them as I remember them now.

The reader should bear all this in mind. Excesses of adjectivation, repetitions of concepts, or overly redundant periods, are a necessity of spoken discourse. By its essence, the spoken word is magic and the written word is not. Only by making an intense and miraculous effort can it retain much of its influence. And this effort must be made by the reader, taking into account the passionate approach to the author's personality, which also struggles to remain present with him, through the printed word.

The following is only the outline of a subject that should be treated in a different and broader way. I wish it to be considered, in spite of everything, as an effort made with my own life, of liquidation of emotions and of their external and internal projection at the end of a culture and of a world in twilight. I do not have much faith in the efficacy of these things, because life must move away towards silence, which is the fruitful medium par excellence. Especially in a fickle and impressionistic time, ruled by propaganda and newspaper news. I could run the risk of being maliciously considered as a political promoter, or surreptitious propagandist, of a certain myth, which is far from my mind, because it would reduce my most ambitious aspirations, and against which I must fight with all my might. My ties with the political past and with the emotion of the war are now only a debt of gratitude in my soul, which I try to pay in the only way possible in my present. But all these things are quite clear in what is written below, and those who can still read and listen in our time will understand this.

I

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I repeat this talk so that those who could not hear it earlier because of the storm, lightning and thunder, an Antarctic manifestation, too, may hear talk now.

At the apex of my own years, I have stopped for a moment on the road and turned back, to wait here for the new generations and leave them a sign, which does not matter if it is false or true, for it only intends to be a manifestation and a communication that can shake them. Because the walls of the house of the generations today are cold and dry, with a greater cold than that of the ice of Antarctica, because it is a cold of the mind and a dryness of the spirit.

For this reason, I would like to see in the audience some representatives of the younger generations of Chile.

Antarctica is an exciting and, evidently, multiple subject. However it is treated, it is exciting. I have had to choose the subject of this talk between giving an account of what I have seen and studied objectively in the expedition to Antarctica in which I have just participated, and which lasted three months, or trying to explain to you a more intimate and more difficult matter, which is also related to Antarctica and very especially to Chile, as I see it, or rather, as I sometimes feel it. I could certainly refer here to the technical aspects of the explorations, to the physical geography, to the metals, to the uranium, to the coal and to the seagulls. To tabular icebergs and *pack-ice*. All this is also exciting and I am passionate about it. But others have already done it, or will be able to do it with more authority than me. This is why I have chosen a different topic that I believe has not yet been explored in depth in its relation to Antarctica. If someone thought to hear me talk about the first aspect referred to, this other one may, surely, seem a little strange. And the fact is that this immense white continent, which extends over fourteen million square kilometers, has something for everything and everyone. Thus, I am not going to refer here to penguins, nor to uranium, nor to the rights of the peoples in

dispute. And if at some point I come to deal with whales, I will do so only in the symbolic and mystical way that Job did, or Herman Melville, in his White Whale.

Having said this, I enter the subject with the following reflection, which will serve us to acquire distance and climate: As far as I know, ladies and gentlemen, the Chileans, the beings who live here and were born here, are the ones who live and work here,
the beings who live and were born here, have never paid enough attention to what it means to be born or live in Chile; to the fact of being Chileans.

The superficialism that nowadays has cooled this living being that is the earth centuries ago, and that is how nobody thinks that there is a real and deep difference in the fact of living in the north or in the south of the planet. North and south are undeniable and indisputable geographical realities, but they are also psychic and moral realities in the soul of the living being that is the earth. The technical and rationalistic culture of our time ignores or despises these issues, which do not for that reason cease to prevail in the background of the world and cultures. Until today, for ages, it has been happening that all cultures and the races that represent them have derived from the north of the planet, coming down almost from the hyperborean ice in Europe, or migrating from the great Asian steppes. But these old cultures are bankrupt and seem to break the world in its present agony and collapse. It is as if the north of the earth were entering an expected recess, which still has centuries to come, and that it is now the south which is coming into a period of activity and development. All that is in the north must perish and the south begins to acquire preeminence in history. Towards the shadows of the lower end of the world the mysterious current moves and the enigma and the myths begin to fertilize the cold. That is why the duty of the men of the south is to try to understand the signs of their destiny -which is imperious-, because the history of the world and the destiny of the earth, which is ours, through the human conscience happens and only the feeling of the living understanding can preserve the births affirming the infancy of things. Whatever it is, whatever happens, our current mission is to preserve and save the south, integrating it into our consciousness.

It is necessary to try to understand. What is the south, gentlemen?

As the title of this talk says, we will talk about myths and legends, that is, we will deliberately move away from rational, or rationalist, thinking, that other "myth" of a

civilization that dies and leaves nothing, other than corpses of machines and skeletons of skyscrapers, which will not last in time, nor in the soul, what a ring on the finger of a mummy of an Egyptian pharaoh.

Let us turn our eyes, for a moment, to the distant past when the earth was considered a living being. The north was the brain of the planet, the noblest part. This North Pole, where there are only islands and water, is more dematerialized because it is the organ of a supreme function. On the other hand, the South Pole must correspond to the generative part, to the sexual organs of the earth. It is there, at the bottom center of the massive Antarctic continent, below the immense cap of eternal ice, where there is a great dark and solemn cavity, which is the mansion of the Zinoc, or the demon, or the angel of creation; from his fingers and his chest flow the generative currents, the irresistible powers of multiplicity and forms. He is the Zinoc, or the demon, or the angel of creation, something like the shadow of what exists above him, or in his antipode; his existence is composed of the synthesis and the sum of all the shadows of the beings of the world.

At the death of men, he withdraws their shadows and reincorporates them.

And there, in the spiritual and moral counterpart, or rather, in the psychic reality of Antarctica, this black angel lives. In his immense mansion, which is a bottomless space, he moves and usually falls infinitely upside down, legs up, trying to reach, perhaps, through the interior of the earth, the antipodal north of which he dreams and from which he was proscribed in the original drama of creation. Let us imagine ourselves prey to this being, who through us tries to speak his word, before freeing himself, and to spread his great discourse of destruction, hate, love, life and death. Let us imagine ourselves in this company and that we will have to come to feel love and pity for him who has none for us; but who is a unique essential element - ours, our own - in the eternal plan.

Must the culture that will one day be born in the south, if any culture should be born in the south, be inferior because of all this?

To answer this question I go back to the memory of something I read many years ago. I got my hands on a book that said that the future epoch of Aquarius, which is the one that astrologically will come after the present one, would fall on South America, which would be the future continent of the plenary man. I did not understand this language, but

something told me that I should pay attention to this matter, and then, always, mechanically, unconsciously, these words came to my lips and I pronounced or quoted them. What does this mean? Could it be that the man of the south will have to integrate within his realization the totality of the forces and powers that were despised by the disappearing civilization, including in their ”plenary", or total form, the dark energies of creation and the real and effective sublimation of the sexual forces, respectfully and mystically considered?

Maybe yes, and this alone would mean a dignification and reintegration of man in the harmonic and throbbing succession of the cosmos.
This is how Chile becomes something extraordinary and how, to a certain extent, we can explain the tremendous atmosphere that envelops our country and of which we ourselves are hardly aware. Because it is very difficult to live and to know. And he who is an actor can rarely be, at the same time, a spectator of his work.

We live in the south, enveloped in thick and malignant telluric influences, which penetrate and corrode us, dissolving and softening us to the bone. Some of this we sense as we sleepwalk, dazed by the slow and dull current of the days. How to escape from the shadow, from the weight of the shadow? How to escape from the nightmare? The people seek in alcohol or in misery; others, in suicide; and the majority, in a tired bitterness, which is accentuated with the years, together with the impression of the failure of a life and the nausea of oneself.

But it is the foreigners who can best inform us about this particularity. They see that the Chilean is sad. And this violent sadness covers the whole of South America. Surely this can refer to the indiscriminate mixture of races, to that bottomless abyss of "racial sin" that has no resolution and that the tormented soul understands; but it usually happens that also foreigners of strong and pure races become infected with time of this sadness and particularity of the South American character, becoming part of this peculiar ”climate of the soul”.

I had a dear European friend, a Basque artist[1], who explained to me that he always had the impression in Chile of living in a deep hole, in which he was sinking deeper and

[1] Gorka Oteiza (editor's note).

deeper and from which he could hardly get out. It's hard to get out," he would tell me, "you have to climb up vertical and slippery walls, where I can't even dig my nails in. And I fall and fall again". Yes, that is, a deep hole, in which it is hard to climb and in which racially, historically, we are sinking. In Chile it is hard to climb, it is hard to live, it hurts and it is heavy to live. The most tremendous work in South America is to live.

I had already written and spoken about this somewhere before, adding that Chile was a "sacred hole"; that is to say, that the same thing that is the reason for our profound evil is also that which makes us unique and lonely and that, someday, must be the cause of our grandiose projection. That which today kills us can also make us stronger. And this is the reason for an irresistible and loving attraction. The Chilean who wishes to flee, to leave, lives and grieves abroad for his homeland. My friend wrote to me that he longed for the nightmare of Chile with all the strength of his heart.

And the fact is that this Chilean disease resembles nothing more than a sacred evil. It is something like epilepsy, which in the vivid intensity of a minute makes us go through the seven heavens, with all its details. It is like syphilis, which at the same time that it eats and corrodes transforms us into genius for two years of our life. Our generation, for example, may not leave anything positive in time and history, looking at what is socially understood as such. It may be that its material and breath work does not exist; but who like it will have rushed to the dregs the intensity of the sacred drama, of a few years already far away, and the unequivocal understanding of the last limits and the truths of fire, drilling the dreadful loneliness? Who like this generation has loved and died in a minute?

It is that, gentlemen, illness and health, or better, illness and improvement alternate with their rhythmic tension to establish the glorification of life.

The Chilean is defeated by the enemy landscape. The malignant emanations of the earth have been disarticulating him; because the truth is that the Chilean and the South American man in general are still completely disconnected from his landscape. There is no correlation between us and the contour, there is no balance.

In the struggle between man and the landscape, the generations are dissolved as in a grandiose process of digestion. Illness and evil exist because man has not yet been able

to develop the identical forces necessary to resist the climate of the south of the world and to be able to fight and defeat it, becoming a triumphant element, because he has been able to understand and give expression to the world around him.
One might think that it has not always been this way, at least as far as the lack of style and social balance is concerned. That is to say, that in the generations of the Chilean past there was more strength, more "style in form" and more enthusiasm and active greatness than in the present ones. And this is effective.

It is that, for sure, the grandiose process of digestion develops in time. Chile entered its historical life with the races and spirits that currently form it only a very short time ago. It was strong and full of vitality races from Europe that came to settle in South America and it was they who "superimposed" here in Chile a *State in form*, with an exclusive and magnificent particular style.

Their strength, their enthusiasm must logically last for the necessary time, until they come to feel the formidable impacts that come from the contour and from the remote depths. Their children will no longer be as strong, with the fortitude of those, nor as enthusiastic, and in this way, descending through the silence of this implicit battle, they will reach us and those who will follow us.

The solution which is obvious and which has been put into practice up to now with excellent results, but which in the long run must also prove ineffective, is that of immigration. New men of refreshment to replace those who fall in the struggle and who, besides having to fight against the landscape, will have to do so against men who have already been negatively assimilated by it, and whom they will instinctively look upon as their enemies. In Argentina, for example, we see today the enthusiasm and the effort of the immigrants, who still have their strength, but who, if they do not spiritually overcome the south, integrating themselves to it by means of understanding, will have to be defeated tomorrow, in the same way as the old Creoles were defeated. In Chile we have the case of the Germans of the south, who today are as abulic and assimilated to the “climate of the soul” as the first Chileans.

It is our generation, undoubtedly, that best serves to illustrate the matter. And it is from it that we draw the strength for the drama that envelops and moves us. Born between two worlds, profoundly invertebrate, with almost no ties to the previous one, as if it had been

born just when its parents were dead, it possesses the characteristics indicated. In her social aspirations, a fatal fate transforms her into a bloody castaway of the most cherished ideals. In her religious intentions, she lacks the firm will and tenacity that would have saved her. And in the field of artistic and literary achievements, very few people today remember the poets of a single book, or a single poem, in which they put their whole life, burning in a passionate moment of maximum intensity. They would then be left as empty and wandering empty lasts on a pilgrimage across bridges and rivers, until their cursed end. I remember here, and more than one of you too, those glorious years when we were all kings around the lighted night, together with the heroes of yesteryear; I hear the voice of the old friends, who are no longer here and who left young, because perhaps they were the beloved of the gods. It is for them, who knew how to be heroes in a minute, that I still stand, or try to stand, with my last strength.... We will go further, perhaps, but surely more annihilated!

The new breath, which will push it northward again, will be given to it by the negotiating spirit.
There is also a magnetic pole in the south; but this pole only exerts its attraction on the spirits.

Gentlemen, the compass of the soul is not marking the north, the compass of the soul is marking the south.

At a certain age of our life we will hear this voice, which faintly, but imperiously, calls us from the south. We will hear it as if from within us pronouncing a name, which is not yet ours, but which must become ours.

Years ago, in Chiloé, in that strange world as if torn from other times, I felt this voice pushing me towards the south. I did not want to resist it, but I could not go on either. I would have liked to dive, to reach the bottom ends of the world, but I could not. However, I had heeded the call and would only wait for a favorable occasion to fulfill it.

It was this year that I was at last able to accomplish part of the journey to the south of our land. But the last southern extremes were not yet reached, because we still lacked the preparation to get there.
So let us try to repeat this journey to Antarctica from here.

Many of you must know our southern lands and have surely sailed through the distant peace of the channels.

From the nearest southern lands, thick with trees, where the araucaria and the copihues preserve the humidity and open, from stretch to stretch, clearings in their forests, where the birds play happily and the heart longs for something distant, to the torrential rivers and the snowy peaks, where a vanished race must once have subsisted, from these exciting lands, let us pass to the world of Chiloé, distant in time. Here nothing reminds us of the present and the great ferns and the lakes and their legends and the men who inhabit it transport us to another age.

I remember waking up early one morning in Chonchi, opening the window and seeing large black birds on the roofs, at the same time that barefoot women were coming up the hills, covered with black shawls, like cloaks, and on their heads, large baskets of cholguas. They were the women of Lemuy, who came to sell their products. A scene ripped from some lost world, in the distance of a history without memories. Then on an immense beach, next to the nalcas and the great waves of the Pacific, the same women in black cloaks, on solitary rocks, with their small half-naked children, eating seaweed, or cholgas, or ghosts of the sea. It seemed like a dream.

Crossing Chiloé, from Chonchi towards the Pacific Ocean, you arrive at Lake Huillinco. And legend has it that it is to this lake where the souls of the dead go; on its shores they wait, until a boat manned by angels approaches, to transport them to the immense sea, from where they must soar into space. The ringing of bells accompanies them on this ascent.

From Chiloé, further south, the real journey begins. It is the Patagonian channels that give us a hint of what this world must have been like. Islets, lands that barely emerge from the waters, with their soft soil, hot with humidity, soaked. Canelos, oaks, tepús, mañíos, small carnivorous flowers, red coicopihues that, nevertheless, do not descend from the copihues family, and the rotten earth, flabby, soft with water and thickness. Day and night, weeks and months, years and ages, water falls from the sky and the atmosphere becomes gray and melancholy. This is a world that barely emerges from the waters, a surviving remnant of other times and of some great distant catastrophe, of

which there are no memories left in the mind of man. A deadly mist invades the climate of these remote and surviving presences, as if the soul of this landscape were that of an old embalmed mummy, or the soul of the pyramids. It is the world of the waters and the beings that inhabit it are the beings of the waters.

When we anchored one morning in Puerto Eden, countless canoes manned by the Alacalufes came alongside our ship. I remember the scene of a half-naked woman, covered in rags, nursing her child in the rain. I had the impression that from that mother's breast did not come out milk, but water; because water is the food and life of those beings, who while they lived naked in the rain were able to subsist; but who, dressed in rags, become ill and die of tuberculosis. There is something frightful in the eyes of these beings. He who has looked into the depths of those almost lifeless pupils shudders. All the anguish, weariness, fright and helplessness of a race are reflected in their expression. It is something like the loss of all hope, like the indescribable weariness of life and eternity. A bottomless abyss and total misery? Let us leave them! They are slowly falling of humidity and soft roots; their heads and eyes, and those stiff hairy crenellations, sisters of the branches of the mañío, are hardly left outside.

It is here, in the Patagonian south, where we can better realize how little we have in common with the landscape. This world corresponds rather to the expression or the work of some other primitive people, which must have disappeared. A people of titans who molded their inner realities in islands and mountains. More clearly: that landscape corresponds to different ideas, different from ours, that world has other gods than ours, or those that we think we have. For the right relationship to be established between that landscape and us, we will have to impose our gods on it, or rediscover the old ones.

The south, up to this point, is the world of the waters; beneath them live their beings, awaiting the moment of resurrection. For, it is written, the Spirit will emerge from the waters.

Beyond, the luminous frame of the great mountains, the Sarmiento and Última Esperanza ranges, with their snows, seem to show us the road to travel. But, as we advance towards the end of our continental world, the water continues to fall and the oppression increases. Only in Punta Arenas the wind comes to free us for a few moments. And it is even further on, in Tierra del Fuego, where we come across a

surprise that we did not expect, after having experienced the profound defeat and abjection of the Alacalufes. The Onas, the surviving race of Tierra del Fuego, are not abject, nor do they have that air of total misery and inner collapse. One can perceive in them the past greatness of their lineage and there is the sign of a pride not yet conquered. What is the reason for all this? We believe we have come to understand it; but we will not dwell on this matter, leaving it for a moment more. For now, we will explain only one thing: if our voyage were to stop at Magellan, as it often happens, it would be incomplete and nothing more important would be obtained from it. We would have cut off the current before its time, for the attraction continues to pull southward. And although beyond Tierra del Fuego only the waters can be seen, the soul understands that a force is pulling it and that a distant voice is calling it, as if beyond life, or beyond the landscape.

Already in Punta Arenas, strange signs are perceived, a clear and pure aura, glimpses of strange images, in open and nocturnal skies, and a wind that comes from another universe, from some unexplored and not so distant point. This impression must have been felt in the same way by the most ancient navigators who arrived here. It is something like the certainty that beyond that sullen and gray sea there must be something that can be reached. This atmosphere of miracle, this little air that we sniff longingly and that bewitches everything, what is it if not the distant voice of the ice that reaches here? The voice of Antarctica that calls us insistently from within, that requires us, that needs us and that will be the only one that will be able to free us. From the center of the ice, the great prisoner has fixed his eyes on us and has already secured us as an easy prey. He calls us by name and leads us to him, to put the seal of his mark, which will give us the pass to subsist and travel in the domains of the old south.

It is the Drake Sea, beyond Cape Horn, gentlemen, something like the purgatory of souls, like Dante's dark jungle; a sea sullen and gray as perhaps was the mood of the privateer who gave it its name. We sailed on it for two full days before reaching our destination. On its waves and enveloped in its mists we advance, even feeling anguish and nausea. It is not even the prologue of the world to come: it is rather its defensive barrier, which must have discouraged with its blackness the daring ones who tried to reach the Antarctic ice region. And it is an unforgettable morning, when we begin to receive the first signs of Antarctica. The board birds, Wilson's petrels, with their wings drawn, as if they had the noble coat of arms of the ice stamped on their chests, approach.

And then come the whitest pigeons, almost transparent, as if they were pieces of ice with wings, detached from the icebergs to come and visit us. The first ice appears on the horizon, and in the white fog the peaks of Smith Island already stand out, like a ghostly apparition, which fully justifies the ancient legends of Tierra del Fuego, which say that sailing far to the south you will find “a white island that is in the sky". Its summits really seem to emerge from the sky. And then, in an instant, the miracle happens: the fog clears and, in the midst of an intense light such as can never be described, Antarctica appears in all its ineffable presence, with its snowy valleys, its immense icebergs, its convulsive and luminous mountain ranges and its bottomless abysses. I will never be able to describe to you what this is. Neither in the previous landscape, nor even less in the gray Drake Sea, is there any transition or hints to prepare us for this new reality and existence.

It is something new for which there are no conceptual equivalences or premises in our minds; it is something like an epiphenomenon, which must be felt, sensed, experienced and which cannot be narrated or explained. For example, all of you, through photographs and stories, believe that in Antarctica the sensation of loneliness and helplessness that one feels must be something enormous. And yet the opposite is true. It is precisely there, in the largest desert in the world, where one can never feel that impression of great solitude that one experiences, on the other hand, in a mountain range of our central valley. Why? It is a mystery. In Antarctica one feels the certainty of being always sailing towards and accompanied by someone, or something, even in the vastest aridity of its ice steppes. Is it the wind that roars in its domains, is it the thunder of the collapses in the ice barriers, which is like the voice of God in the beginning of time, or is it the snow that sometimes falls, or the fog that always comes and sometimes goes away? I rather believe that it is the presence of light, of that unique light in the world -even through the fog and shadow-, of that light that vibrates, that speaks, that speaks. Ah, the light of Antarctica in the clear skies, over the fleets of icebergs, mute companions of those latitudes! The light over those pure mountains, within which the souls of the heroes live! The decomposition of the light in the twilight stained the sky with coagulated red until late at night. And then a moon falling heavy and round announced the moment when the ghostly soul of Antarctica multiplied in absurd forms and extra-human presences.

Rather than describing Antarctica as a painter, which is not possible, I try to do it philosophically, in the form of new concepts. Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego are a very

ancient world, brought to the fright of the remote; but they possess their own and differentiated soul. On the other hand, Antarctica has no soul, it is like a dead man; or rather, it can have all the souls within itself; it is international, undifferentiated, it is beyond the human, beyond our present state. In order to coexist with it, a purely collective aspect of one's own soul must come to the surface in us, a state which was original in the early times and which will be consciously conquered in the future. Ice means pure spirit, and, if we said before that the Spirit emerged from the waters, it is true; but very soon the Spirit was transformed into ice.

However, in that continent of rest and death someone lives. A prisoner stirs, having for his habitable medium the burning and eternal fire. Its inner flames are those that are expressed externally in the cold and ice of Antarctica, its just superficial expression. From there, from its center, that being pulses us in a merciless and ferocious way. It is a fact, gentlemen, that in Antarctica men are seized by obsessive thoughts and terrors (Amundsen spoke of the "embrace of the virgin of the ice"). And there will not be a single expedition that has not suffered from the most absurd difficulties among its members. For my part, in my dreams I had constant revelations of these things, which I will keep silent, as intimate and particular experiences. The dream is the best instrument that we possess to get in touch with the world. The dream and the flesh of Antarctic beings, of seals and penguins, bring us closer to their reality.
It is only by traveling to those latitudes and adapting ourselves to the ice that we will be able to develop in us, and dominate, the dark forces necessary to subsist, survive and win in the harsh landscape of the southern part of the world in which we were born.

The black angel of creation, with whom we will have to fight to the death, pulsates and gives us the pass. Antarctica puts its seal on us and the Lord of the World accepts us into his domain.It serves us very well to illustrate this strange matter, the difference that a moment ago we highlighted, in an admiring way, in the race of the onas. While the Alacalufes give the impression of being a race that was defeated by the surrounding world, the Onas have adapted and continue to adapt. What can this difference be due to? It is the Portuguese anthropologist Mendes Correia who provides us with a luminous thesis, shared in part by a North American anthropologist. Having investigated the origin of these Fuegian races, he comes to the conclusion that they came from Australia, from where they migrated in a very remote time, passing from the island of Tasmania to the edges of the Antarctic polar cap, the lands of Edward VII, the Graham Peninsula, the

South Shetland Islands and arriving at Tierra del Fuego through the Drake Sea, which at that time may have been much narrower.

However this pilgrimage took place, it is evident that it must have lasted for years, the ancestors of the Onas having to acclimatize among the Antarctic ice. A natural selection thus took place that made them fit to withstand the climate of Tierra del Fuego, which came to be dominated by the primitive stock. The Onas lived naked among the ice and it is enough to look at those hairless bodies, depilated by the glaciers, almost identical to those Fuegian rocks, which still preserve the traces of the snowdrifts in their polished and washed profiles. The Onas or the Selknam already possessed the pass, and could resist the evil emanations of this land that they shaped. On the other hand, the Alacalufes must surely correspond to the outposts of those other races which, according to Professor Oliver Schneider, came from the north, where they arrived from the east, or from the Pacific islands, crossing the Bering Strait. They did not have the Antarctic pass, neither the means nor the strength to reach there. They were also constantly fought and rejected by the legitimate sons of the south, according to the legends of those regions. The Alacalufes were defeated by the landscape, and the horror of that tragedy still lingers in their dull eyes. Gentlemen, this is a very interesting subject; but one that we will only have to outline here. We do not dare to walk further inland, because we often have the impression of walking under a natural selection that made them fit to withstand the climate of Tierra del Fuego, which came to be dominated by the primitive stock. The Onas lived naked among the ice and it is enough to look at those hairless bodies, depilated by the glaciers, almost identical to those Fuegian rocks, that still conserve the tracks of the snowdrifts in their polished and washed profiles. The Onas or the Selknam already possessed the pass, and could resist the malignant emanations of this land that they shaped.

On the other hand, the Alacalufes must surely correspond to the outposts of those other races which, according to Professor Oliver Schneider, came from the north, where they arrived from the east, or from the Pacific islands, crossing the Bering Strait. Thus they had neither the Antarctic pass, nor the means nor the strength to reach there. They were also constantly fought and rejected by the legitimate sons of the south, according to the legends of those regions. The Alacalufes were defeated by the landscape, and the horror of that tragedy still lingers in their dull eyes.

Gentlemen, this is a very interesting subject; but we will only have to outline it here. We do not dare to walk further in, because we often have the impression of walking on the edge of dangerous zones, in which we have no adequate means of expression, no props and no immediate references. However, before finishing the first part of this talk, we want to make it clear that Antarctica is an internal and unpostponable need of the Chilean people, something that should belong to us by right, something that is requested from within.

Our pilgrimage to Antarctica will become more and more necessary, if we want to survive and win. And more and more travelers must go to that world and the number of our expeditions must increase. Antarctica for the Chilean must become like Mecca for the Arabs, and even more, as has already been indicated throughout these words.

II.

Repeating this talk is like officiating a rite again. Even the new gods seem to float in the air of this little room. May they help me!

Gentlemen, if I were to end this lecture here, the subject would be incompletely treated, as you yourselves will be able to see later. It would also be misunderstood in the sense that I wish to give to this exposition. For I am sure that all these things happen only to a certain extent outside ourselves. And that is what I am going to try to explain in this second part. Therefore, if to any of you what has been said so far may have seemed strange and difficult, it is certain that what follows will be even more so.

As time goes by, I am more and more affirmed in the belief that only on an individual basis can there be a solution to problems. In this age of collectivism, statism and communism, the age of the masses, it is good to affirm already that none of these things has the slightest importance for God. For all this happens mechanically within the historical machinery of the "eternal return". And it is in the midst of this machinery that the myth suddenly bursts forth, which is equivalent to something like a dream in individual life, the language of the most ancient aspirations of the human soul in search of salvation.

We are living today at a critical and definitive moment in history. If we do not want to be thrown into the catastrophe of the worlds and despair, we must try to understand -today or never- and affirm ourselves solidly in our different reality.

As we have been saying, we live in a continent that is wrapped in a very old soul, which shows us a remote past, almost without memories in the human memory.

It is the Selknam, the primitive inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, who in their myths and legends teach us deeply about the most distant past.
Here, before you, I will allow myself to begin to narrate with them the beginning of these things. The Selknam say that the world was created by Temauquel. Temauquel was an infinite being, beyond everything, a presence unreachable and incomprehensible even

to the higher powers of the spirit. Above and below creation, from its very existence, it gave rise to the first world, at the beginning of time. It was a different world, flat, without wrinkles, without rivers, with a low, almost white sky. Over this world floated only the spirit of Temauquel, the unreachable. But behold, it was not Temauquel who formed the first living beings, nor men. Temauquel did not want to meddle in these matters and for that purpose he sent Quenos.

No one knows how or when Quenos came to this central and first earth, nor what was his origin. It is thought that the firmament engendered him, leaning lovingly over the south. And so Quenos was born, as if covered by a guanaco skin. The south of that time was not the present south, but another very old south. And this south was his father and the firmament his mother.

It was the first beings created by Quenos who modified the structure of that central and flat land, transforming themselves into rivers and cooling the earth, which began to wrinkle, giving rise to the mountains. They live there inside those mountains and their magnificent forms can still be seen with the eyes of the spirit.

Quenos Quenos personally instructed the first ancestors of the Selknam, teaching them how to dominate the body and the senses in order to become pure spirit, pure "caspi", like Temauquel. And he even revealed to them the secret of immortality, which is achieved by embalming the body inside the ice, in order to resurrect after long ages. The same Quenós directed them in these practices, embalming them and washing away the bad smell when they woke up. Quenós could immortalize his own life when he wanted, until one day he got tired and ascended to the firmament, reintegrating to his mother's bosom.

It was the Jon, Selknam magicians of Tierra del Fuego, who preserved the secrets taught by Quenós and who still immortalize themselves by embalming themselves in the ice of the south, to resurrect renewed in the most distant future. The Selknam also say that it is in the south, there, in that "white island that is in the sky", where the spirits of their ancestors move, living a life free of worries.

It is extraordinarily interesting to pay attention to these legends and myths and then to draw analogies with the researches of the scientists of our time. It is the geographer

Wegener who has most thoroughly investigated all that relates to the mysterious origin of continents and peoples. His theory on the migration of the poles, studied in the Arctic hemisphere, where he died doing his research, serves to establish the hypothesis of the change in the position of the continents which, in turn, move due to the precession of the equinoxes. In this way, Antarctica would have come to be, in a very ancient past, in the position that Brazil has today, for example; which is also proven by the fossil remains of large trees and tropical plants found in the high Antarctic mountains of Victoria Land, in front of the Ross Sea, by Scott and Byrd. When the great layer of its ice, sometimes up to five hundred meters thick, melts, who can say what men will find, and who knows if the remains of distant and primitive civilizations will be discovered?

I have seen the graphic diagrams drawn by Wegener, in which it is supposed that all the continents at first formed a single one (central, without wrinkles) and then began to separate (to wrinkle). Thus were born the various continents, arriving that was moving away first, until it was cut later to be Antarctica, one of them, from South America, as it is still indicated by that umbilical cord of the peninsula of Graham, or O'Higgins Land. It is like a newborn child, to which hangs the umbilical cord, which has not yet been cut. It is curious to draw this analogy of births in the universe. Wegener's primitive scheme (the happy land of the Selknam) resembles nothing more in its form than a shrunken fetus in the womb. And the soul longs for that happy and secure time of the primordial womb.

Everything seems to depart from unity towards multiplicity, towards individuation, to surely return to it at the end of time. And this law from far above is fulfilled in the same way far below. Because the cosmos resembles nothing so much as those old Chinese tea boxes that had another tea box painted on them, and inside this one was painted another little box just like it. And so on, until you lose sight of it.

Wegener's hypothesis also agrees with the legends and traditions of the most primitive peoples of America and Europe, who have whitened from the disappeared continent of Atlantis. It was Plato who referred to the island of Poseidon, the last surviving vestige of this extraordinary continent. That central land of which Wegener speaks and to which the Selknam refer in their legends, could it have been Antarctica? Undoubtedly, when it separated, it must have sunk part of its territory in the waters. But the truth is that both Wegener and the Selknam seem to place this central land in a much more primitive past. Rather, their accounts agree with that of that other legendary continent, also disappeared:

Lemuria. The traditions say that Lemuria, in the south of the world, was inhabited by soft and gigantic beings and that its skies remained covered with thick hot and humid mists; it was a flat land, without wrinkles and that it was destroyed by fire. The existence of Atlantis may rather coincide with the nearest time when Antarctica was a world of temperate climate. What then is Antarctica today? What mysteries does it conceal in its repose, in its embalming, in its death? Was it Lemuria, was it Atlantis? Only on the day of its resurrection will we know.

What does seem certain is that there was an Atlantic continent that has disappeared today. At every moment, signs, racial similarities, languages or traditions among the most distant peoples are indicating it. Legend describes this world as the one where the golden age of the human race flourished. Men attained the highest wisdom and progress, becoming, at the end of their time, masters of supreme energy, having found part of their territory in the waters.

What does seem certain is that there was an Atlantic continent that has disappeared today. At every moment, signs, racial similarities, languages or traditions among the most distant peoples are indicating it. Legend describes this world as the one where the golden age of the human race flourished. Men attained the highest wisdom and progress, becoming, at the end of their times, masters of the supreme cosmic energy, with which they precipitated their own destruction and the disappearance of their world. Also the Atlanteans, as often happens, neglected their moral evolution.

Throughout space, man is united by his soul and his myths. The Greeks agree with the Selknam in their legend of the Hyperboreans, perfect beings who lived among the northern ice. Apollo traveled every winter to these mansions from where he returned rejuvenated and owner of the secret of eternal youth.

On the other hand, there are such strange stories about Antarctica as the one written by Edgar Allan Poe under the title of *Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym*. Most of you must have read it and will remember the cruel malignity of the beings that in the story appear inhabiting these regions. A strange race, with black teeth and thick lips. Then, the voyage of Gordon Pym in a canoe, accompanied by an Indian, and in which they are swept away by the current that carries them southward. A fine rain of white ash falls from the sky and the Indian, who cannot bear this color, dies pronouncing the mysterious

word "Tekeli-li". It is then, and at the end of the story, when the horizon clears, the fog opens up and the vision of the white giant appears over the sea, surely over the pole.

Did Poe know the legend of the Selknam about the Jon who inhabited the “white island”? Or did he also know about the prisoner of Antarctica, who lives on its black bottom, and who surely for this very reason looks white?

Gentlemen, let us put an end to these stories and return to the world that we improperly call real.

In the moments in which we find ourselves together, me explaining these things and you listening to them, great events are taking place. A culture seems to be dying, if it has not already died, and, at the gates of the disintegrating world, the ever-renewing hordes of the barbarians lie in wait.

The dying Western world leaves nothing behind, and has not yet been able to ascend from its premises to its best achievements. This moment we are living today also seems to repeat itself constantly in the history of mankind: a dying culture and a barbarian world lurking at its gates. There is even the historian who affirms it as a fatal fact of human history and that tries to verify this phenomenon as being realized through the past, in order to project it as an inescapable fatality of the future. The history of culture would thus be like the life of man, which from the cradle comes to the grave, or like that of the tree, or the plant; like everything living, which grows and dies, to give way to the new, which will always repeat the same thing.

I wish now to touch upon a difficult and rugged subject, for which reason it is better that I do so by relying on certain authorities generally recognized by you, or by the circle that was of contemporary thought.
Spengler is the historian who made a whole philosophy of the cyclical repetition of history. And no one can deny that his thought is being fulfilled in our time almost down to the details. It was he who first saw in Bolshevism an Eastern phenomenon ready to corrode like a worm the basic structure of Western civilization. A phenomenon similar to what happened in Rome in the times of Christianity. After the next war," he said, "in which Germany can be annihilated because it is the middle camp in Europe, the center of the whole drama, there will come a long time of internal revolutions, of civil wars, of

cold war, and not to be forgotten, but a long time of internal revolutions, of civil wars, of cold and undeclared war; until the disappearance of our world and its replacement by another. For the world itself can also be renewed, reborn.

But it is evident that Spengler did not consider something very important for the development of his own process. For it is not enough for a decaying world to be replaced by a barbarous world full of biological vitality for the birth of something new to take place. Here, too, it must happen as in the beginning of all things. There must come the breath of the spirit by whose power the brute matter is organized and conforms to a new and miraculous equilibrium. And it is then and there that the myth is born, bursting in the midst of the mechanical gears of the fatal historical process. For the myth of the phoenix to be realized and for a world to be reborn from its ashes, another myth must first be realized among men, springing from the depths of their emotional souls.
This is how it has always happened and it will not be the time today for this law to cease to happen. For the word, or the breath, of the Spirit acts from within outward, expressing itself historically in the symbolic language of mythical events, which at a given moment sweep away the conscious will of men.

Clarifying the same idea still further:

For history to renew itself and always begin again, it is not enough with the purely biological fertilization of the barbarians, it is also necessary that the soul of man feels enthusiasm for something again, passion, love and hatred. And this only happens when a dramatic event occurs among them, leaving them intrigued and moved in the depths of their unconscious. It is the historical myth, to which we have made reference, that to act only possesses a language and an argument, which also repeats itself always the same, with the only variant of the towns in which it is verified. Its symbolic language is like that of dreams, in such a way that it is as if human society suddenly entered into a dreamlike life and its unconscious was the perennial source where history is renewed and where it is gathered more deeply.

Against this event, the conceited conscious will must be powerless, as it is powerless at certain moments of individual life when man yields to a violent and overwhelming love, to a great inspiration, or commits a crime of which he never thought himself capable.

It is in the sources of Western rationalist culture itself that we find the germs that cast doubt on its efficacy. Spengler must be complemented by Count Hermann of Keyserling if his philosophy is to be brought even more into line with reality. Just as Spengler narrates the biological and physical mechanics of historical processes, it is Keyserling who has concerned himself with their psychological realization, by describing the spiritual procedure of the birth of myths in history. This philosopher says that at certain moments in the history of peoples, extraordinary beings appear, whom he calls magicians. These beings possess the power of the "Logos Spermatikos", to use his own words, that is to say, a fertilizing force of the social environment in which they live, becoming something like the creative elements used by destiny to renew the life of the soul of the people. The characteristics Keyserling assigns to these beings are: a short life, a fundamental condition for the profound effect of their action, which will be overwhelming as a force of nature. They die soon, for they burn in their own fire.

At his death, or his disappearance, always tragic and mysterious, the collective unconscious of the multitudes, which has remained "in love, fecundated, is not resigned to the disappearance and, as it intuits the great implicit conditions that the magician did not manage to realize in his brief passage through life, it gives birth to legend and myth, then, it gives birth to the legend and the myth, which come to be, transferring the events to the plane of psychic realities, precisely all that the magician could have done and did not do, or all that it is believed that he could have done. In this way the legend corresponds to something real.

Another of the peculiarities of these beings is that almost nothing precise is ever known of their childhood and that their death remains in the necessary doubt and vagueness, conducive to myth and legend. It is not known where they came from or where they went. So it was, for example, with Rama, the legendary Aryan conqueror of India and founder of the Brahmanic caste in Vedic times, who is still believed to live on the summit of the sacred Mount Meru; so it was with Orpheus, in Greece, whose head still sings along the river of time. And Krishna, in India, decides to die at the hands of his enemies in order to convert them to his doctrine, resurrecting later. Jesus himself, according to Keyserling, supremely fulfills the destiny of the magician and disappears without his corpse ever being found.

It is an extraordinary and mysterious event that happens from time to time in history. Let us think for a moment of Muhammad, that anonymous camel driver, who one day, at the age of forty, suffers a syncope and comes back from it transformed, to transform the history of a whole world. It is as if a man were appointed by a mysterious finger and chosen to embody and represent the innermost longings hidden in the soul of a given society at a given time.

Gebauer, a contemporary German thinker, quite unknown to us, as is logical, and who was, moreover, displaced by lesser disseminators, sustained a curious theory of the soul of cultures, races or peoples, assigning to it totally own and defined characteristics and coming to sustain the mystical conclusion that the object of individual life was to surrender to this soul, putting itself at the service of the fulfillment of its destiny, which finds its expression in national history. Thus it might come to pass that at certain moments in the life of a people a mysteriously designated man might come to embody this soul, losing himself to his own personality and becoming a medium, or a possessed person, in whom, however, all see the incarnation of the myth that they themselves carry within.

It is, once the myth has begun, as we have already said, that no one will be able to interrupt its future development, which will follow the same fatal path of the symbols and legends that throughout all this talk we have tried to explain.

Gentlemen, I am sure that you, after hearing these things, as well as I myself, after studying and reading them before, will ask yourselves if perhaps they will also be repeated in our time. For if Spengler's data are true today, it is only fair that Keyserling's data should also be true. And it is extraordinary, gentlemen, to discover that it is so.

This talk is about myths and Antarctica. I have been talking all the time about myths, and now you will see how they always come to be related to Antarctica and all that has been said so far.

Well then, this disappearing of corpses, of lives that pass like cyclones or unleashed forces, and that finally burn in their own fire, seems to remind us of something, something very close and yet difficult to talk about, or even to allude to.

In spite of everything we are going to try, because, as we have said, we must try to understand our time, free of prejudices already, if we want to save ourselves from being dragged into the total catastrophe.

In the year 1947 a strange book was published, which apparently could have passed for just another book and which must be unknown to most of the public. It was an ordinary book in its presentation and published under the sensationalist title *Hitler is alive*. Its author claimed to be one Ladislao Szabó. This book was treated almost in the form of a detective novel, and is surely the most extraordinary detective novel of our time. Written in a passionate tone of hatred against the central character of his work, it is saved from being one more political pamphlet in the already long history of hatred and wars - only by unconsciously falling into the zone of legend and myth.

I will limit myself to summarizing what the book says without further comment.

Back in 1945, two German submarines arrived at the Argentinean coast of Mar del Plata. The war had been over for several months and these submarines had spent all their time at sea. They had a larger crew than necessary and were carrying a large cargo of cigarettes, although none of the crew smoked, According to Mr. Szabó, it later turned out that these submarines, which belonged to the most modern German constructions, capable of remaining submerged for up to six months, were falsely classified, since the designations U-530 and U-977, with which they appeared in the naval archives of the German navy, corresponded to old units under repair in the ports. In this way it was tried to make their disappearance unnoticeable in the final moments of the war. Mr. Szabó claims that these U-boats were part of a "ghost convoy" that accompanied Hitler on his journey to Antarctica. Having strayed away from him in the Atlantic due to storms or other continuances, they lingered for a long time in the same places waiting for news or clues. Needless to say, they did not know the object of the voyage, and the end of their destination.

This is something like the legend of the *Caleuche* or the *Phantom Ship*.

For the author of the book, the haste with which the Americans sent planes to Argentina in search of the U-boat crews is a sign that the Allies were already aware of the whole affair or that they had serious suspicions of Hitler's real fate. The fact that his corpse had

not been found until today and that some prisoners in Nuremberg had declared that Hitler was alive and would return, induced them to maintain effective suspicions of his present whereabouts. Also Admiral Doenitz, in 1943, made a strange statement, which was reproduced by the world press, when he affirmed that the German submarines had discovered in an impregnable point of the planet an earthly paradise for the *Führer*. Thus, according to Szabó, the enormous expedition of Admiral Byrd to Antarctica, at the end of 1946 and the beginning of 1947, with fleets of ships and planes, equipped with radar and the most modern photographic apparatus, together with thermomagnetic detectors, capable of discovering the existence of human life even in subway dwellings, meant an expedition in search of Hitler, rather than in search of uranium or an exercise in the training of material and men in polar struggles. Admiral Byrd's gesture of dropping the United Nations flag from the air as he flew over the South Pole, as a symbolic act of defiance in the loneliest region of the world, can only be explained in this way.

The book ends by calling for a new expedition to Antarctica in search of Hitler, because, for its author, Hitler lives there inside a mountain, which he has excavated. His dwelling has been prepared since the time of Captain Ritscher's German Antarctic expedition to the quadrant opposite Africa, in the Queen Maud Lands, where the mysterious hot water oases were found in 1939. There he lives, accompanied by his staff of fanatics and Germany's best scientists, who had already discovered atomic disintegration and even worse. He only waits now for the right moment to reappear from the ice and unleash the new conflagration that will set the world on fire and in which he will win without the need of an army or any country.

And Mr. Szabó's book ends with the extraordinary and fantastic supposition that Hitler could have been subjected to the procedure of artificial freezing, in which the German scientists had already obtained serious results, as it was demonstrated in the Nuremberg trial, paralyzing the vital functions and returning to life rejuvenated at the previously fixed moment.

Without further comment, we will make a point here.

Gentlemen, a certain dread must invade us. If we have followed attentively through all this talk the story of myths and events that always repeat themselves, the anguish of being only prisoners of an eternal and powerful ring overwhelms us.

At the apex of the times we have lived through, we must stop and reflect: is everything like a nightmare wrapped in beautiful and tragic tinsel, but a nightmare nonetheless? We thought we lived in a time and in a world in which only the light of reason and positive philosophy shone and suddenly we are struck by the suspicion that the very language of empirical science could be only the language of a certain era, ours, which does nothing more than repeat in its scientific idiocy the same argument and the same monotonous history of eternity. Our age, at the end of its time, now in possession of the supreme cosmic power, could well take the same ancient route as the Atlanteans. When at this point science also fulfills the old myths of the Selknam and of Apollo reborn in the northern ice, speaking, in its language, of the immortality of the body and of eternal youth by means of the procedure of artificial freezing.

Once upon a time there was a man who, having reached this point by other ways, suddenly went mad. It was Nietzsche, who upon encountering the discovery of the *Eternal Return* and before falling into his dark night, wrote:

"Time is infinite in the universe and energy limited, therefore, in the eternity of time, everything repeats itself, and not only history, but even your own lives. Therefore, joh, you wretched men, oh, sick men, commit suicide, so that in the eternity of time your torment may be lessened!

Here is the ring of the *Eternal Return*, which is fulfilled at the top as well as at the bottom. What is its purpose? Should we surrender ourselves to Nietzsche's pessimism? No, because if the matter is observed from the angle that we have done it, another conclusion is approaching.

Myth is an inner reality of the soul, rather than an external event in the world. It is as if the soul transposed to external reality laws and events of its own inner reason.

And, gentlemen, is it not then that the whole history of man is nothing more than an external transposition of an exclusive drama of the soul? Is it not then that everything is an illusion and that we are looking outside for something that only within us can have an end? The first ancestors of the Selknam of Tierra del Fuego transformed themselves into mountains and rivers and perhaps this is how it always happens, that is to say, everything

that exists outside -even our physical body- is our fault, for continuing to project outwardly the soul that should be withdrawn. Wilde said that nature imitates art. And so it is, and because it is only an imitation of the soul, its law is monotonous and its repetition eternal.

History thus considered must always repeat itself because it alone will be the eternal expression of the drama of the human soul. And in its ultimate reality the soul moves in search of itself according to a single law that lacks variation. For all this the myth, which is the story in symbols of this unique drama, is also always one and identical.
The soul searches for itself in history, and when it has exhausted one path, it catastrophically destroys it in order to be able to initiate another.

We, South America, we, the South, would be a new way.
Considered in this way, history, more than a sociological science, is a psychological science, and in this way Spengler and Keyserling must be complemented by the psychologist Jung who, referring to the *Keyserlingian* magician, describes him as a victim of his own soul, as a being imprisoned by archetypal forces, by his own passionate and tremendous mental creations. The soul must free itself from all this, must free itself from myth and even from history, in order to reach the ultimate reality of *The Self*, that which the Orientals call *nirvana* or *purusha* and the Selknam call Temauquel, as Jung says.

This is what Jung says, but how to achieve it? And this he does not teach, it is indicated by the myths, that is to say, it is indicated to us by our own soul since the beginning of all times. We are a prodigal son who must return, seeking for it the old path of the ice. Apollo's journey to the northern ice in search of eternal youth was symbolic, just as our own journey to Antarctica should be symbolic. He who seeks to immortalize his body externally by scientific procedures will be mistaken.

Because the character of the myth does not exist but within us.

Gentlemen, on our journey to Antarctica, as we approached those distant areas, the ancient admonition of Pindar, the classical poet, began to resound in our ears: "Neither by sea nor by land will you find the road that leads to the region of the eternal ice", and it seemed to us even then that the poet was right. And it seemed to us, even then, that the

poet was right. How to find it, gentlemen, when the region of the ices must only grow in our own hearts? I understood that the real journey to Antarctica had to be made inwardly. It was in my soul that I had to travel the anguished channels of an ancient world emerged from the dread of eternity, where rain always falls and only water reigns. It was there that I should face the inheritance and the psychic memory of the primitive abject races, who were my brothers, who were myself, and continue without fainting, up to where the signs of a distant and different world appear. The passage of the most sullen sea should be done by enduring the nausea of myself, until one day I reach that last corner where the ice of indifference and peace dwells. In order to conquer them for my soul I would have to fight to the death with the black angel of creation, who pulses us and defends his own illusory existence. If I triumph in this struggle, the mystery of the marvelous oasis that exists in the center of Antarctica, where the warmth of eternal life dwells, guarded by the ice of serenity, will open up for me. From there I will return resurrected, reborn, if I wish, or I will raise my dwelling next to my primitive home.

And the symbol of all this is the swastika cross of arms in movement, in eternal return, which dissolves and gives way to the most ancient and primordial cross of immobile arms, which has stopped the external life and which must give us peace.

Gentlemen, it is with emotion that I remember my trip to Antarctica, searching externally for something that can never be found. Because neither the character of the myth exists outside of us, nor the external Antarctica will give us happiness. How many will have traveled before me the path of the old waters! For them, for those lonely ones, for those prisoners of the eternal myth and of the madness of creation, for those mistaken ones who, nevertheless, search with desperation, let us remember the lines of that poem by Nietzsche, that other forsaken one:

And crows caw, soon it will snow. Sad pilgrim, how pale you are. What thou hast lost, thou shalt never find. Woe to the wretched man, without homeland or home, who at last has reached full solitude!

Gentlemen, as a Chilean, that is to say, as an inhabitant of the Antarctic zone of the world, which today begins to be born, I have wished to speak these things, perhaps too difficult and obscure. Please forgive me if I have disappointed you in this talk, which perhaps you promised differently. It is difficult, very difficult, to talk about these things;

but I had to do it, because it is what I have felt in Antarctica. It will be one more testimony in honor of that continent which, because of its vastness and fabulousness, admits everything that can be said about it. I have gone there as a writer and as an artist, and in this way it is up to me to talk about it. Others will do it differently and I bow before them, ready to listen to them with all respect.
In conclusion, it only remains for me to thank you for the long time that you have been kind enough to listen to me.

THE RETURN OF THE ICE

The land of the Spirit is the famous region of ice, mentioned since ancient times and still miraculously surviving.

Through the paths of one's own homeland one must seek it (the "bridal homeland"). The landscape of the south of the world is a prologue that invites man to travel it in order to save his life. On my journey to the ice I remembered all the journeys made by my soul in the past, and I almost reached the first of them all. Today, on my return, I am still barely here. At night, sleep carries me away and I return to that white world, far away, beaten by the winds and loneliness. I wander with my nostalgic shadow over the great icebergs and penetrate again through the narrow entrance of Deception Island. That world looks like a lost constellation. What am I still looking for? What have I left there? What have I forgotten? Red skies, skies of another world, water that stills and freezes in my central sea. I go, because I wish to prolong this temporary passage of my humble light, in the red twilights of Antarctica that, beginning early, last until the middle of the night of the ice.

The following lines, which accompany the publication of the conference, deal with all this and are something like a small history, a little tremulous, of our celestial family. And something more. They are a sketch, like the conference itself; the resonance of a distant motif, an insinuation, the glimpse of a theme for a more extensive work, hopefully that of my own life.

I can scarcely remember how the departure was. And he who departed bore other eyes and other dreams. Oh, victim of your own soul, how many roads, how many latitudes! Do you even remember the day, the hour, when the sea raged, when the waves rose and the roaring wind transformed your ship? Farther still, in the origins of time, there was also another departure; someone was dropping tears of worlds and fingers of infinite light parted from yours. Those fingers were soft and eternal; since then they remained outside yourself, around you, invisible. Collapse after collapse, the journey continues. Every effort you make for yourself must take you further and further down. Over there, on a red horizon above the sea, drifting white ice floes. They are cold dead and they come down from that part of the universe where the sea meets the stars. For you must know that there are beings and worlds that still remain in the region of uncreated light, beyond existence, at the limit and on the edge of all departures. They look at you with their iceberg eyes, with their white souls and watch your path. They saw you arrive very

close and then they saw you again incorporate your departure. They thought perhaps that you were heading for the infinite waters, the distant fleets of I in yourself, the frozen ghosts, the silent icebergs.

And you were about to, if it were not for your passionate heart, which errs at every step and stretches out its hands of excited blood, affirming itself in everything that still belongs to it. He also remembers the departure with a celestial voice, he has the certainty of the fingers of light and pushes his old companion the soul towards tenebrous places where everything is transformed. We sail over rails in the sea, over dark precipices, on the edge of abysses. Who will preserve our life? Who will stop our collapse? Let us go on! Anchors, hearts, trembling hands were stretched out. I did not want to die yet, I saved the soul from the cold and extended my tears, my whole personality, all my longing before leaving. It was a message sent to the heart of the world, to the very center of human pain. It was a rope that, unwinding, held us together to all that we were leaving. Life always fulfills our innermost desires. Everything is within us, and from there, as from an inexhaustible womb, the forms of things emerge. The drama of light and shadow, the existence of ice and love are resolved in intimate places. Live and think bleeding in your own drama and you will see that the mystery surrounds you forever and that your thought and your word become a source of living water! You will be the creator of the world and the responsibility for everything that happens will be yours alone.

Why do you wonder then if a crystalline bell begins to beat the sky, and its echoes have broken the glass inside your heart? What fine and sonorous wounds begin to cover you! Are they wounds that come from afar, or are they old wounds that open? The silver metal of your blood drips delicate stalactites. Don't interrupt them, my son, let the wounds grow, because everything must grow. Only one thing you do not know: will you look at the wound from the outside, as one who looks at the dream of a man lying on a road, or will you throw yourself inside, as into the very crater of the night? Then you would fall headlong at breakneck speed. And everything would repeat itself as in the first half of the already old story. I would not be able to follow you and I would see you descend with your legs upwards, looking as if at the bottom of the water of an unfathomable fountain. You can do it, if you want, nothing is forbidden to you and all paths are children of your soul. In the great journey you can climb to the summit of the ice, where there are heroes in white robes, or dive to the bottom of the dark waters,

where the whales await you, who will devote themselves to you. In the depths of their bellies you will inhabit mysterious cities, thick jungles, ignored histories, of a convulsive red color. How few arrive there and can travel the antique currents of the waters, which lead to the oases of a crazy and intense hidden fire! In this drama, in this unalterable adventure, something more than life may be lost, time may be lost, form may be lost. But do not trepidate, for eternity recovers you. While you dream, I wait for you and keep in my mirrors the memory of your image. If ever you return, as if saved from the waters, you will find me at the edge of the fountain, leaning down, to wash your body with my tears and weep together the joy of your return. Ah, I will be at the threshold of a new life, with my arms crossed, to embrace you!

And in this mysterious fundamental story an encounter has taken place.
When loneliness encircled the confines and the horizons of the ice were gradually approaching, a boat emerged on the waves. Another being sailed these same waters, once detached from the same center.

What's so strange about our meeting on the sea? I have seen in her hands the line of the stars and in her eyes the memory of the first light. Between the ropes and the masts of the ship her hair was pushed by the cold fury of the winds. My trembling soul, closed in on itself, already accustomed to the vastness of the old ocean, hesitated when it saw the small light appear in the distance. “Close your eyes, soul, and be on your way," I said. But then the dawn of a voice spoke of my own childhood on the sea. And it said all that I had forgotten and stretched out a hand over the angriest waves. How could I not take it? Although I was on an iceberg, I risked my life melting the ice. I risked the prearranged route. And I grabbed the hand and bled for an instant. For this encounter that will last in the eternity of the sea as long as it takes for your ship to pass by my iceberg, I have become a child again and light in the first dawn. And in your hands, the uncreated softness and in your eyes, the long paths of ancient origin! Open your being, look at me in your eyes, don't close your soul yet! Those golden bees, which are yours, and which surround you like a crown of authentic pain, let them come to me and drink the blood of my heart! I want to prolong this encounter in the sullen sea, to enamour my soul and entangle my life in the ropes of your boat. If for this it is necessary to sink into the waters, I will break the miracle of these delicate rails that hold me above the sea and together with you I will descend to the immense bottom, in search of the red feverish cities. If you know the paths, you will guide me, and I will not let go of your hand, nor

will I ever stop looking into your pupils, where there is a cradle of primary pain. Come, I shouted, amidst the fury of the winds, I will give you my life, my paths, I will tell you all my memories! But the waves are already pushing us away, their ship is passing by. Up there, in the stars, his path has also crossed mine and the hour has already sounded.

Because of this encounter, something definitive has happened in the realms of the world. That is why that bell still resounds that bell that even the angels hear and that moves the snow of the heroes. You will pass, we will pass, but the miracle of love fully accomplished in the ritual of sacrifice, unconsciously performed, directed by the summit of the heavens, love of the brotherhood of origin, has saved you! Now I understand, O traveler of green eyes and sweet hands: it is the love that comes from God that performs the miracle and sanctifies all paths. Together we left a long time ago and began to sail on this drop of eternal water, which is perhaps a tear from heaven. Someone was bidding us farewell in our house, someone who stood waiting at the edge of a fountain. After that, I almost don't remember. Do you remember? Your paths diverged from mine and mine from yours. Until this meeting in the middle of the wide sea. Let us try not to forget it. Because of him we have gained security again, because his love has made it possible for me not to go down to the bottom of the waters, not to travel through the tortured cities and that you, who come from there, can begin to walk from where I now have my soul. Traveler, all your life and your pains, your deliveries and your fire you have lived with my soul. And my summits and my ice I have climbed with yours. Through the waves, I give you my hand and my faith. I will carry forever the knowledge of what in you does not change, folded there, around our own life, as around a lake where only eternal images sleep; it will be enough for me to blow on the waters for you to emerge and hear again your Voice and to feel your life, which is my own, in the bottom of the only heart that the world has.

Neither by Sea nor by Land

History of the Search in a Generation

MIGUEL SERRANO

Miguel Serrano

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INTRODUCTION

It is often claimed that South Americans, especially Chileans, belong to Western culture and civilization.

It seems not to me. Only in the conception of personalized, individualized love, we are heirs 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 on the planet. However, man is different everywhere. And it is especially so in those closed cycles of cultures and civilizations, which take place in historical time.

The earth is a living being and we are its fruits. It does not matter to be born and live in the south of the world, than in the north, or in the center. The being is conditioned differently in its essences.

Then there is the question of thought. Not all men "think" with the same organ. I have related elsewhere a conversation with Professor CG Jung. The Doctor related to me his visit from a Chief of the Pueblo Indians. The chief explained his belief that 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.

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, create our own civilization.

In those years I wrote a book, which I entitled "The New Earth." Then I burned it. And I did well. Travels, or pilgrimages, across the length and breadth of the earth, in search of

our identity, have confirmed my belief that we are different. The accent of our personality is loaded 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 "man who thinks with his head" civilization is only a matter of time. A "magic" type man has appeared. The rationalist man is in retreat. It is the true revolution. The change. The new generations think with a golden center of consciousness and understand each other "without words."

In this volume, which is something like a Mystical Epic of the Search and the Transfiguration, it 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 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 tried 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. And the transfiguration of the landscape, of the earth, helping this Living Being to mutate, at the critical vertex of its involution. Only through us can the earth be saved, spiritualized, transfigured. Otherwise, catastrophe will 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. I had to return from India one day convinced that we were not Oriental either. We are somewhere in the middle, between east and west, in another area. However, the soul of the Chilean, for so many centuries turned to the side of the West, could now turn to the East, as a means of finding balance, making it easier to find their own identity.

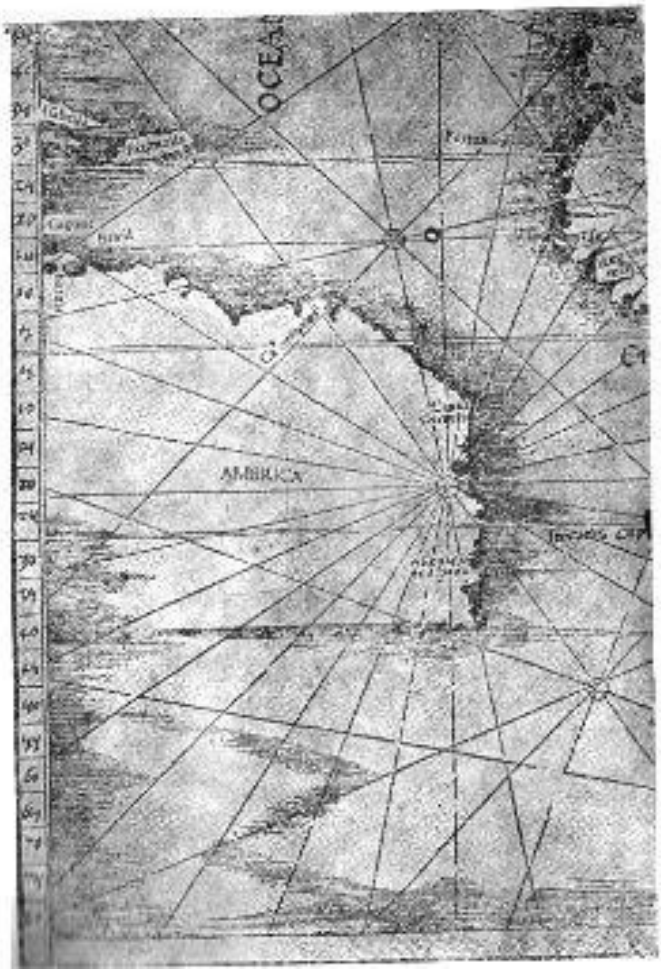
After all these years of searching and effort, I have come to understand that it does not matter where I am now, rather I need distance, not to compromise the feeling too deeply, to be able to look and see clearly. Dramatic work with my own landscape was attempted. Now the journey is inside. And it does not matter how lonely he is, nor how remote and distant, because "if the right job 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 accurately, this will have universal validity. If you have discovered the ancient refuge of the Archetypes of the South of the world and 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 Caesares 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.



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.

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 in outer space as well as in the interior. This is a pilgrimage that will end only with death. And who 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, 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 with my conscience.

Almost thirty years ago, then, I was on the same path from which I have not left anymore, looking for the disappeared Hyperborean Continent, 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, makes 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 forever: America, Continent of the White Gods. My years at India were just a continuation of searching in depth and breadth. Up, down, inside, on the expanded horizon.
The White Gods are the Hyperboreans. Hyperborea means beyond the god Borea, the cold and the storms, the divine immortals who lived in a world that has already disappeared, in the Golden Age and 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 and in the restless search for their Bite, in the security of their resurrection, where the exit door to the American drama and the transfiguration of the southern landscape of the world appears.

I know that 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 the dying races, digested, destroyed by the landscape that does not belong to them, that they cannot reach in their greatness. 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 Atlántida (or from Lemuria) fought to an impossible will, without the Guides of yesteryear. The Transfiguration of the Landscape and the mutation of some will become possible in the reunion of 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 had always been in this glory and in this drama.

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 the mysterious primordial oasis. From there we had to return with our soul burned by the cold, thinking that everything was useless, 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 prepare to take the great leap towards the ice.

However, I doubt that this work will ever finish. The times are contrary. And the traveler is required by the adventures of the journey, which absorb him, forcing him to put all his attention on the road, where the success of the company depends on his expertise and concentration. It will be consumed by its own sleep and by the south wind.

The best travelers have never had time to keep a journal of their travels. That is why they have been unknown.
For having partially violated this rule, I apologize to the adventurers from the south.

Santiago de Chile, 1950

FIRST PART

THE REASONS OF THE SOUL

SOME BACKGROUND OF THE TRIP

The following pages, which, to a certain extent, are autobiographical, could have a 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 of today 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, does not find its solution in art itself, but in life. The difficult act of a resignation is foreseen.

Some years ago, I collected all the books written up to that date 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 peek into the past; I wish, if possible, to return and mingle again with the comrades of yesteryear. I saw how they were still dancing, almost without strength. I also started dancing and let the tears flow as I recognized the old mansions and the crumbling walls. He went back to sea and suffered. Some hands were extended, because I was the risen one, speaking of something already dead.

I will do my best so that this book is a message for those who come later. Because this is the path that others went through 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 deeply 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. Days I have spent absorbed by the impressions of a famous 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 fantasy, and the motive 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 reached. 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 leaned toward the base, as if defeated. The edges of these figures were edged with pieces of gold metal. Years later, when I started a pilgrimage through the mountains of my country, I think I was going to meet those giants.
With a backpack on your back, walk through the most distant mountain ranges. The presence of loneliness in the mountains has forms and is 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. Advance to the top where I remembered seeing the giant extend his arms. I lay flat on my face, remaining in a semi-consciousness, interrupted only by the idea of absorbing energy in that way with my whole being.

THE CALL

I sat on a rock and froze. Night fell. A slow grief invaded me. Suddenly, at some point during those hours, a large, immobile 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 on 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 so long. 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 on 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 tells me:
“I've known for a long time. 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 he 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. Look at the horizons and watch, 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 vast vastness of the sea. How few are they! One in thousands 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, 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 Demon 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 Shadow Angel moves. It ascends, or descends, to the end of that cavity. It throws itself in 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 ... Closing his eyes, all this is possible to see and hear. Knowing how to close your eyes, looking inside yourself..."

It stopped again. He made a reflection as if:

"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 on 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 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."

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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 left. "It is not possible," he 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 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 one day we inhabit, keep shadows that await our return.
I kept wandering through the alleys. In the last light of sunset, arrive in front of the Zoological Museum. The entrance was open. I passed between mummies of birds and animals. A tiny 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 the same,” I told him.
“How do you know?”
"I know 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. At night, when I said 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 that will go this year. Aware that he 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 its 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 with large green and black spots the waters that lashed the boats. The Buoy of the Ox bellowed, and the melancholic sirens tear 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. He was also going south. People climbed the hills and stayed up at night to watch it. A comet is an iceberg in the sky. An icy fire burns it.
The night of departure arrived.

A thin drizzle fell on the mist-shrouded docks. Something 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 scatter us, and he narrated his travels through the universe.

“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; they are too new. But they 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 he opened his 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. I dropped to the ground and started walking. Holding on to the irons and ropes, I reached the deck.

The ocean was expanding. The steel plates creak. A soft light spread across the horizon.

The salt of the sea heals me.

20

THE MYSTERY OF A GENERATION

Let us stop before we continue. It is not possible to advance without knowing who those are who 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 the beings and meditated: "How is it possible that those are also "I", they feel "I", and "I" myself, at the same time, is "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. Until recently he looked at us from the outside, he was dissolved 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, had 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 destiny of the earth and the landscape. However, it often happens that suddenly the thread that binds the generations breaks.

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 has suddenly emerged from the depths. I have tried to understand the cause that has made this separation possible. No matter how much he looked for points of contact with previous generations, he could not find them.

Ages, geological epochs separated us. The past appeared to us like a museum of mummies. I do not know if it should always happen this way. It seems that there were

generations who venerated the previous ones and were found to be supported by them, going down a path that had been indicated and insured to avoid useless risks. Instead, we, from childhood, have been driven to rebellion and loneliness. Without firm pillars, or support points, in the midst of those that still subsisted were strange and soulless, we could survive by an abnormal effort. Our generation had to abstract from the past to create its own world. Surrounded by dangers and questions, she had to build the foundations and the very rock of her 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 lasts that repeat the gestures of zombies, that hollow out the voice and are frighteningly empty inside. They grew out of the 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 already digested bread, which was indigestible and produced an indescribable disgust.

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, also alien to our world, was 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 cried slowly. 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 an area of 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 a style on 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 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 with the contemporary European generations to these phenomena of thought.

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 supporters and in which even rivers and stones have taken part. Therefore, repeating and learning was a creative phenomenon. On the other hand, we felt we were excluded from all this and faced with a virgin and suggestive 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 his time the last ties were broken. This is how this crack was produced whose bottom is impossible to see. And we were pushed into solitude. What to do? Accept the destination. And fight. We were the iconoclasts, because we couldn't be anything else. We were the fighters and 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 also superficial, without deep drama.

The homeland, for our generation, always meant something more than a relationship of 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 without a relationship of depth.
We dropped out of school and started walking along four walls, monologizing for months and even years. An almost biological 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 desk, philosophy, Marxism, science, psychoanalysis, the old dusty texts, the books found growing up, 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 gravel of dust that formed it. As I was a

boy, I had to build pillars and lines 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 seemed to understand an unknown lesson. Wish to merge with my brothers, be united with the men who work in the valleys and who open the deep 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 tormented hands on our coasts.

In this way take 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 could seem that he was fighting within the world of European valorizations, taking an active part in its dramas, it was only in appearances, because his contribution had to be different. Our participation was due in large part to the fundamental weakness of the South American, who still easily imitates what impresses him, and to the receptive condition of our world. On the other hand, the movements that appeared then in Europe were directed at bottom, against the very essence of Western culture, also representing the appearance of a new man, of a magical type.

If the white man is the one who will reach the heights of the South American future, or if the triumphant Indian will return, 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, cruelly turning in the spiral.

Everything that previous generations managed to build on our land was the product of blindness to the landscape. They never stopped to listen carefully. Our history can be synthesized in a silent struggle between man and landscape, 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 kill the soul of a generation, then destroy its body. Here is my orphan generation, invertebrate, facing an alien and hostile reality. Without roads and without a past. There is nothing back and you can feel the horror of a catastrophe produced by the landscape. Cosmic terror. Fear of the mountains, understanding of the tragic destiny of Chile. And the awareness that there must be meaning. Because if our generation is an unrelated generation, really Chilean. Chile also has no past, thus possessing the entire future. If it is true that there is pain in lacking support points, having nothing to hold on to, that is 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 him yet. Unfolded, 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, the one that does something great. We spent the energy for 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. His creation was his own overwhelming life and human condition. I penetrate the shadow and drain the glass to the stool. How do you plan to ask for realizations? Prejudices of those who maintain the myth of external action! Our action was book in the drama of the heart and in its divination of the landscape.

Once every many centuries there are these conditions of uprooting and historical loneliness that make possible individual salvation, the goal of everything created. Other times 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 happens to those who express a certain reality in life, but it is cut short. History will be on again, here and around the world, and its collective roller will go by 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.

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 created. It will be a god; but as I become more free. If it is imprisoned in forms and in cultures, in statues and palaces, it 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. And it is at the beginning of the new times when the intensity of living is experienced again. More, the real possibilities of salvation, 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 the night of balance and new forms of cultures and social organizations, which 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. His own personality was not recognized by the generations of the past who rudely imposed themselves on the landscape, in a bloody struggle. They were still the children of another world, the heirs of the conquerors, the grandchildren of those who subdued the aboriginal races. But they could not completely with the trees of the forest, nor with the rock of the summits; for just as the conqueror moved to the indies and in the nights of his rucas he penetrated the warm sea of his blood, so he was also conquered by the mountains. And 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, loves, 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 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 collide and, under the surface, beyond consciences, 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, I need 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, 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 find each other accurately, love each other and procreate.

No other people other than 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 remote 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. And mixed with the Indian race. In the brown bodies of the females and in their black and wet 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 leaned to be possessed by the Spanish. The effluvia and ghosts of pleasure are powerful and still float over the valleys and mountains.

I understand the irresistible desire that pushed the male over the dark female. Wrapped in warm, dark blood and the dark spell of that fusion fulfilled, something like a lethal drug is introduced into the heart of the conqueror and his will decays. It is already overdue. 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. 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. Also by elective affinity, a closed and persistent race spirit was drawn to that region. And the Saxon race would initiate the extirpation of the Indian plant from the conquered soil, with which it did not dream of mixing. Then, 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 planet; 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. And even the European past has been forgotten, despite the absence of blood fusion with the aboriginal. It only counts a certain special electricity that vibrates in the atmosphere of that world, typical of the rational brain of the earth and that pushes the individual to an unparalleled dynamism, which makes him live for incessant activity.

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 digested and crushed 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 on 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 struggle and disconnection with the landscape, our country trajectory 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 its own law against the landscape. He has only been able to project his subterranean through time, shaping almost all of our history and giving us within

this shapeless America, a style and structure 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 layers, it was composed of the Castilian-Basque stratum, of 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 assimilate the impulse of discipline and project it in the military and warrior spirit that still lasts.

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 printed his law against everything that surrounded him, forcing him 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 deaf battle was not conscious, and 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 layers 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 for the current situation.

Portales was a mysterious being and only a strong racial consistency, with an unconscious 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, with a Gothic ancestry, a Germanic or Saxon ancestor. And certainly, Portales seems more like a pioneer of the conquest of the north. Despite his criollism and his Chileanism of appearances and manners, he was an ascetic, a Gothic chief, or a Roman patrician. It is clear, it is strong and 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 single woman and a single dead 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, Roman or Germanic superstructure of the soul. Its mature conception could only have been obtained through a distant process in history, in which the soul has been impregnated in 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 construction in the middle of an enemy and violent land, or it compresses the landscape like a Japanese last. When the titan falls, in the midst of the catastrophe, its conception persists however, by force of suggestion and because its dramatic end 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 impostor and of the enemy, with the other increasingly broad and powerful that is emerging from within the mountains. And all 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 and supports the weak 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 to be able to remedy the fact, already visible to all, of the decadence and destruction of the race using immigration. In other words, providing new forces of refreshment in the battle with the earth. And this solution, of momentary effects, should become 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 there where rain and jungle previously reigned.

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

A similar process takes place beyond the Andes. Large-scale immigration in Argentina has given that country an important 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 his 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. of the land itself.

If for a moment we are able to concentrate and look objectively around us, almost with a foreign vision and see things, beings and the world that belong to us, with a new look, in that certain way how things look for the first time Once, we will return from that effort, from that trip, pierced by anguish. What surrounds us? What do we see? Shattered beings that roam like ghosts and that, in some moments of lucidity, express an anguish that has something of eternal. Deformed bodies, whose stature decreases, until they look like a race of pygmies. Toothless mouths, twisted legs, and shoulders. And a cult of the ugly. The idols of the people are always deformed beings. 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 private case of the big capital and that only occurs in the middle and upper classes; because the women of the town are not beautiful, resembling the man in his decomposition. And 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, it unconsciously penetrates the landscape. But 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 part of it: 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 in the area 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 to the subterranean consciousness, acquired in the deaf nucha with the earth, to the intuition of being digested. Faced with the macabre spectacle there is the need to be stunned 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 is a psychological and physiological necessity in the present. And the tragic men of this world, submerging themselves among the gray clouds of a universe populated by evasions, feel like a mystical love and shudder when they understand that sharp darts are coming from the surroundings.

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, helped by the environment. 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 externally, they see the incurable sadness of the Chilean, the melancholy that accompanies his manifestations, 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. The walls hurt in the attempt and the nails are shattered on the rock. What to do? Why are we here? However, we 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 red diseases of dreams, like the 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 the 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 order 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; 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 night began at the Liceo. Attached to the benches, with new ears attentive to old words. Those tired, dull and soulless teachers, repeating formulas, distributing death. Corrugated bread, attached. And 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 cover his ears with his hands and clench his teeth. Not listening to that pedantic teacher who dragged his death through the classrooms, to fix his eyes on the piece of sky or field that penetrated through the

small window of the room. And then 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 anything.

She looked forward to, desperately, the end of classes. Then I left alone to the most hidden corner, at the end of the courtyards, climbing on a cut log, I could look over the wall at the mountains that frame our city. It sounded like I saw myself climbing its plains, wandering its slopes. Golden wheat swayed in the cold and wind of 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 tended 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's 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. The sign of the holocaust shone on his forehead. In everything he did he put a stamp of passion, of total dedication, as if he were looking for his own extermination. Together we discussed some books 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 already inordinate, that, struck by his tremendous words, the other boy who was twice his height and strength, scary. Life was at stake in each gesture. And that was how one day he also took it off.

They discovered us in the raids on the roofs of the constructions, in addition to a getaway in search of work in some mines. I dropped out of school before they expelled me. Hernan Gonzalez stayed, until one day he was caught smoking.
An inspector told him that he knew that the communication of this offense to the Directorate was enough for this student with a bad record to be expelled. The inspector hated him for his discoloration and savage appearance, for his demon-possessed soul of choice. Hernan Gonzalez was expelled. His father admonished him. A man of another generation never understood this tortured child, a product of ours. This

misunderstanding was the greatest tragedy of 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. There came the teacher who had to propel me along the paths of art.

He was a classmate I had hardly noticed. Knowing about my illness, he came to visit me. Sitting on a chair next to the bed he said to me:
“Why don't you write? Lying there you must be bored. Write the stories and adventures you wish you were experiencing.”
The partner left and 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 went out to walk outside the walls, where there are low fences, some walls with vines that reveal the beginning of the mountains. Next to the eucalyptus trees I stopped with a book in hand, or with an exhausting 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 by 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. I owe you.
He showed me a path and I launched myself into the world of signs and of the night.

HECTOR BARRETO

If one day it were given us to be able to really reproduce the events of the past, who knows if all emotions will be destroyed, when we find ourselves already stripped of the conditions and character of another time. It could happen as with an old silent film, which once delighted us and now 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, those fundamental acts of the times, such as the Crucifixion, or the conquests of Alexander, could also seem too accelerated, or slow,

when even the events of the recent war are becoming outdated. It is the destiny of external actions; because only in the inner life everything is 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. And 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 don't 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. Then we were very young and we were just beginning our literary existence. We met a group of friends, led by the same concerns, and made a nightlife of bars and still lifes, which we believed to be a unique bohemian. Most of those beings are still alive. Possibly they remember those times and preserve them, while they drag their lives, passing over the corpses of 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. And if some who were not his friends talk about him, it is because his myth sank roots in our existence. However, I don't remember how or when I met this friend. And not being able to remember it, it's like I had always known him.

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

About thirteen years ago, one night, I was walking slowly down one of those streets. I was looking for my friends in a restaurant in the night districts. I arrived in San Diego, 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, they didn't interrupt their talk. Julio Molina, the poet, with a defiant attitude, kept his arm at a right angle, with his fingers extended; He affirmed 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 secret of the transit and the security in himself. Anuar Atias, the storyteller; Irizarri, the "Loco"; the "Tigre" Ahumada and others. I sat next to them and must have read some stories that I no longer remember. It would be midnight when Barreto appeared, accompanied by two friends. I 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 when 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 didn't 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 muttering a He sang. He stopped suddenly, as he heard a sob by the sea. He saw a shadow crying on his knees, with his face in his hands. He spoke to her: "Why are you crying, woman?" The shadow did not answer. He got closer. And the woman withdrew her hands. She did not have a face. Slowly now I move her hands from the bottom up, over that hole, and transform it into a large white egg. The man, horrified, fled screaming a name. On the night beach 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 suburbs, some individuals from a neighboring table forced him into a quarrel. One of them insulted him. Then he answered her, telling her that it was an insect, a green cockroach, that 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 any other improvised story. That night he insisted on the themes of knife fighting. I speak of the blades of steel gleaming in the moonlight. Dropping 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 just to see about fifty stanchions that were nailed, tracing with extraordinary cleanliness and art, his silhouette on the wood.

Then I tell two more stories that I 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 don't 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 hopscotch games, in which I invariably beat them. This gave me great prestige in their eyes and the friendship grew from 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 happened. 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 silky 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 find me and secretly with the beautiful gypsy woman 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 king had decided to marry a gypsy. We didn't see each other again until the wedding day; I was invited and should have attended. That time I got drunk. Afternoon, 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. 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've 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 gentle mule and march 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 he trembled when he walked away with him along the mountain paths. They were surprised by the woman who kept it at home. 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 felt 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 and the last sacraments. At that moment the door of the room opened and the girl from the sierra entered. Without saying a word, he 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 subtle grace, took us away from the contour and the night. It was the magic of the word and the aura of legend that he drew from his inner life. She lived in a world that ordered in its own way. He was the officiant of a story of his own. With her fine fingers, she wove; his thin and pale face evoked. 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 cute 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 dinner: 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 teach 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 now. Only the grass grew dry and yellow. The boy bowed his head sadly. And then he discovered 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 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. Narrating and conversing, he let his steps lead him to streets where he discovered doors behind which black masses and covens were celebrated. If reality did not respond, transforming, then sat in a cafe and transported 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 Julius Caesar, the conqueror, had died, who upon entering a city was presided over by a messenger who ran through it shouting: "Men, keep your women, mothers, hide your daughters, here comes the bald 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 kept 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 would change. Sitting and with a watch in his hand he kept me waiting for midnight. At that time, his transfiguration was going to take place. The strength of his faith was such that I anxiously awaited. When it struck twelve, he lifted his face, stared at me and asked myself: "Do you recognize me now?"

So it was. He would have liked to wear 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 the characters walked with masks, in a city that was approaching its end, attacked by a dark evil of the soul.

But beyond the masks with which he covered himself, the boy was guessing in 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 him, 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 common to ours. What he said, what little he wrote, are scattered fragments of a life that was just beginning. Having placed his aspirations very high, he did not have the strength 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 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 act and who were his audience, now circulating around the ruined stages, when we reread his stories we see his image resurface and everything acquires 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 and guided him through dreams and premonitions. His father followed him. After years of looking for him, 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, I make out 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 a sudden light. In the end, his soul tended like a note to a distant point. He didn't want to speak like a charmer again. 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 refer to Him."

About thirteen years ago (forty now) I was with my friends, sitting at a bar table, listening to Barreto tell 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 suburb. Old lanterns cast dim lights. There were uneven windows in the walls. The ground was paved, and the street ended in 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 was 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 limped forward. On her legs she wore strange paper leggings. He took the young woman's arm. As I closed the door, he looked at myself with a vague smile.

THE HERO IS UNDRESSED

It's 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 had crossed a limit and some serious admonition was hitting me. The matter hurts. There are things that cannot be explained. What feels like evidence, what do you gain by trying to explain it? The truth is not outside, it is not communicable. My word has become clumsy; because God is inside."

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

"I don't believe in God," he said. “There is only deep and dark sex, in which one rests. It is there, in the fiery blood, in the eternal feminine, where is that which you call God.”

They closed the bar at that time, and we had to leave. Silent, we marched through the streets until we reached my house, where Barreto accompanied me. When we said goodbye and when we had already moved away a bit, we realized that we had left over the money that we could not spend. 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 and the street rails. With a wave of his hand, he said goodbye. He turned up the collar of his coat and got lost in the night.

UNTIL THE SUPERB HOUR OF THE SKELETONS

This is how we lived through those years. Other worlds existed, of course; but they left us cold, lacking that tonic 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 unity in their work and in life. It was impossible for us to understand them. A wide and impassable lake stretched between our generation and his. It was of no use that apparently, they were crossing it, trying to reach us, pretending new positions with which they believed they could convince or interpret us.

I remember a meeting at the house of the poet Vicente Huidobro. It was my uncle. United by family ties, I never exert that influence on me that his personality achieved on others. His gestures and reactions were familiar to me so that I could tell when they were not authentic. For this reason, his authority never reached me from the poetic Olympus where he settled. His home was for years a disengagement center; A group of his followers met there, to worship France and everything that came from Europe. Some of our people forgot the drama of this generation, carried away by that special condition

of the Chilean who can imitate what is outside, coming to believe himself a member of any other community. The Chilean realizes that there is drama and anguish here, showing off the means to escape dissolution. The spiritual and moral props have not yet appeared; for this reason, it tends towards the distant and external forms of culture and sublimation, as if looking for a way out that allows it 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 clear and cerebral art and of the "diaphanous intelligence of the French". It was followed because of that, because there were still no forms of its own and our generation was already tending towards improvement, but lacking the spiritual means to raise its land, it was looking in other worlds.

Surrounded by paintings by Picasso and Miro and by the sculptures of 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 Tejeda and others from our generation were there; all poets or writers marked by exhausting fate. A beautiful blonde woman attended, silent and hermetic. Vicente distributed the glasses of his "Santa Rita" wine with miserly and 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 in our fields, 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 flat 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 stuns his own anguish. He saved what was not seen, what he did not say and that aspiration to the great, to the heroic that he had and that, when he did not achieve it, he often invented it in his life. His loneliness and his pride as an old ancestor, as a rebellious angel, cut him off from communication with others.

This time I had taken my friends to Huidobro's house; also, to Barreto. There was a lot of talk that night. Only Barreto remained silent and taciturn. 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 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. They would never see him again. Also that night 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 they sent him large "demijohns" of white wine. The house was spacious, with open patios, with hydrangeas and orange trees. At 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 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 from 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 and spun. Meanwhile, Ivan Romero had passed into the living room and was pedaling the "Apassionata" by Beethoven on the auto piano. It was at that moment when Barreto approached and taking me next to a glass

door 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 and the air. His poet's blood splashed on the mirror moons.

At that time, Barreto took the last steps of his life. Without notifying anyone, I joined a political party. So great was the confusion that this attitude 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 recognized him that way. Politics and social struggle is for other less evolved people and with different backgrounds. Nothing is achieved by wanting to intervene there, nor does anyone do any good by betraying themselves. I say it from experience; I have lost many years, entangling my life in this way. But what 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 maladjustment. 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 exposed them as 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 can't help but answer something funny that entertains me. Or, I tell you that you have to consult the

horoscope ... Look, I have decided to change; because I can't go on like this. I work all night correcting proof in Editorial Ercilla and I sleep during the day. I haven't seen the sun for a long time. I will try to change my occupation; above all, of 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, he was thinking, without being fully aware of it: "If Barreto died, he would not say anything in his grave, not a word could say ..."

The door to my room was 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. Perhaps I listen to them, wishing I 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 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 over here!" Immediately, despite the voices of his companions who asked him to return, he continued advancing towards the fallen foot, injured. The Nazis had retreated beyond that street. Barreto again reached Matta Avenue, to the place where he is still The Olea School. He had such faith in himself that he never thought anything could happen to him; this 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 much dreams. His blood wet 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 wasn't 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 its blood, since it is in the blood that the ghosts of legend feed. And 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 flags and gray uniforms, the color of the pavement on which he fell. What do those who watch him 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 it carry it; but the party is opposed; because that corpse is already his; 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 of 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, Marmaduque 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, 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. He 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 ash 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. Leave Donia behind and grab her weapons. Melimpa no longer looks at the sea, nor is it an immense plain. Below, his army waits, while in the distance the enemy advances. He puts himself at their head and in cruel 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 tired 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 stupid 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 made him unbearable. His mother's hand has landed on his forehead, he closes his eyes to flee. Then a giant spiral begins to live in the interior landscape. Know that you are just 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, like a faithful immobile in the extraordinary point. But everything consists in loving more than one 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 jumps very high and is naked. The women no longer wear short skirts, nor is he like before. He has small

horns concealed between 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. doing and 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. Stand and walk. Look 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 on 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. Advances directly towards a yellow moon ... "

This part of the story is extraordinary. The experience described there cannot be a product of imagination. Only those who have crossed a limit 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, anemic, and in sections of a violet of the dead. That light contaminated the spirit, making it sick. The ground seemed calcined. And he could not distinguish any horizon because shapes, shadows and aspects that he was incapable of continually arising before his eyes. At the same time he discovers that he can no longer flee from these horrendous territories. Before, he would have kissed him only if he wished, he thinks, as they walk on the limestone and 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 hands and 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 dead planet. Aliro, that is, Barreto, discovers one last hope: 'If the planet had a very concise term; If he could find himself

on the edge of the 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 was hard for him, he couldn't. And I close my eyes to get it, I close my eyes desperately to fight better ... and he got the image. There I was then on the edge of the planet. It was an edge. I was facing chaos. And spread his arms to jump. He was happy to be able to leave the painful episode, happy as a freed prisoner. And it 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 was 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 his own chest, inside his chest. It went down and up, it felt light and ethereal, very light ... "

"Near him a naked skull that Aliro sees coming bobbing through the darkness until it stops 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. Visit a Roman region, without any image, come 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 don't see them. The skull moves from left to right in a negative gesture. It moves slowly, with isochronous movement, it soon acquires greater speed, takes on a phosphorescent color, walks, like a pendulum ... It 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 ... more and more insensitive, as the thought and his brains-between aching fumes-seem to rise slowly. He feels alien and ascends. Go up, slowly, very slowly; *until it is contemplated from outside of it."*

So Aliro died. So must Barreto have died too.

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 him in a real attitude, and 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 strange images that are very sweet to navigate ... But is it that the life of a man can unfold like this, between Dream and Daydream?"

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This is how Aliro lived.

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

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

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

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

And 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. 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; I put my eyelids together 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 Cacares. We listened to him, while outside the rock creaked and the weight of the night mixed with the dense halite of the earth ... "My loneliness," he said, "is a desperate flower and my heart defends itself with all its flags. Only there it is. 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 ego, / 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 of unheard, 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 fire, all earthly aptitude has been lost / destined for the unspeakable, supreme victim, like one who knows the shadow of a late powers / performing, oh! sun similar to all shadows, / tenacious, the sacred fortune of that trembling halite. / Triumphantly I am in that recondite rest ...

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

"Dripping its burned densities, / around the same afternoons, simultaneously / here is the meager, difficult day appears. / Because here I am, a monument of light / always leaning towards you, a stranger to myself, / ready for your sudden irradiation 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 deep 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 Los Angeles. / The ring of my breath, freshly carved ... / It's all that remains, oh anxiety ...! "

Through the shadow 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 one night in the past went to leave him at his grave. Next to the slab was a woman. Who was? Perhaps that friend, "that passed like a trickle of rain its stunned steps, through the wires that drop the color of the mountains drop by drop ...?" The one that the poet did not want to hear, "with his 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 "morbid 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 not sounded misfortune of his last goodbye could be noticed." And iodine was shipwrecked for him, then, "he fell, he ceased to exist, helpless of himself", he was then "clothed with distances, between man to man, meager ... because man loves his own dark life only ... ".

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

THE SESES IN THE WALL

There was also another poet, who in the darkest age was faithful to his ghosts. He moved slowly, he was tall and he smiled softly; his body lay languidly. His name was Jaime Rayo, and he also wrote a single book of poems. Like others, he voluntarily disappeared one day, killing himself with a gun. The lead bullet, penetrating his temple, scattered his brains over the walls. He did not die on the spot, and perhaps he was still able to contemplate his own brains. On the bed he stirred in agony and his body convulsed. His hand no longer felt that of the friend who even came to assist him. And while he was dying so atrociously, the one who was by his side gave consciousness to the drama of his last minutes, thus projecting in time the chain of a desperate generation.

"One final day, perhaps, banished from its shores, despite the nearby land / other orders guiding its stealthy suburban steps and an unknown peace recognizing in it its best origins. / For now, give a life to the jealous power of the miracles that await her, is how this single mysterious account should be settled ... "

WHITE LILIES FOR THE TOMBS OF HEROES

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

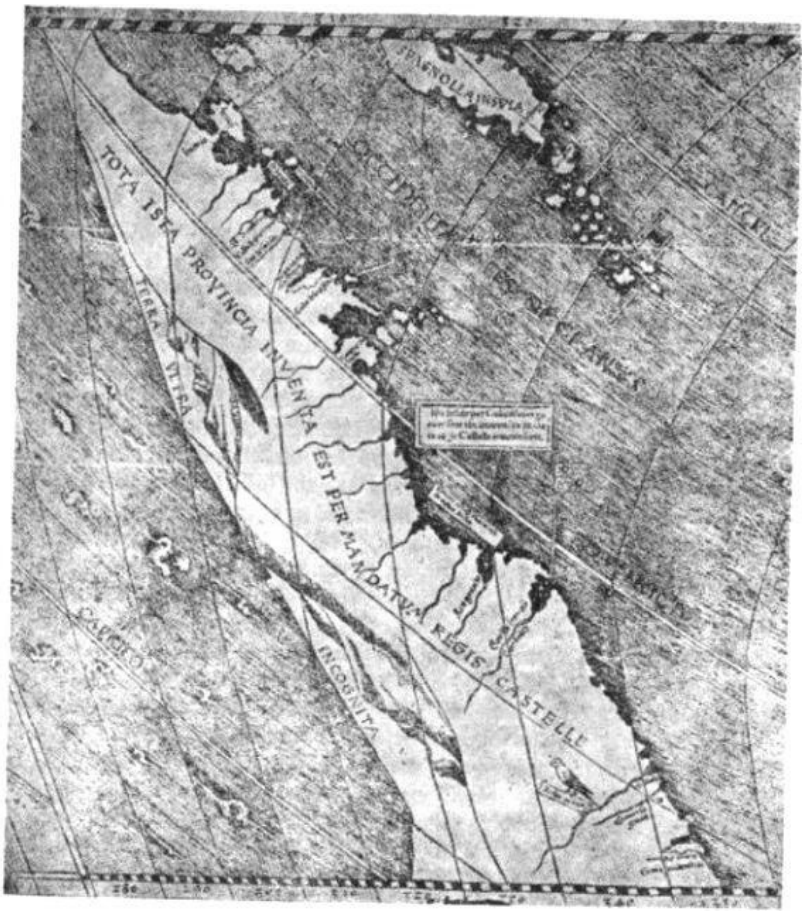
Some years ago we went with a friend on that date to the cemetery. At the entrance they gave us some white lilies. We walked the gentle trails. The sound of our footsteps was lost among the mausoleums and the green meadows. The lilies looked like torches of white flame. That day we visited many graves. Do you remember, friend Juan Derpich? We went to your comrade Jaime Rayo and there we left a lily. I was high up in a lonely niche. And we also deposited another next to Barreto's stone face. Then we reached the open field, where the poor graves are and where the dead of 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 it went very high, it was only because the fire lit it; but then I abandoned him, leaving him as an empty and ghostly last. 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 mega. Neither on the great trees, nor in the clear sky did the shadows of the heroes float. They are gone forever.

We returned meditating that that pilgrimage to the cemetery had been a symbol. Dead and more dead; the passenger 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'm still alive. I have not died yet. And sometimes I think it was a mistake. Because, like them, I don't know how to live. I can't detach the feeling from the memories. That is why I walk back. I want and must keep faith in myself. Continue, arrive, so that martyrs and suicides can be saved in me. Because one that arrives is enough for the destiny of a generation.

I will end here this too gloomy account of the life of a sector of my generation in Chile. This was his 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 heart itself?

SECOND PART

THE REASONS OF THE EARTH



Detail of the world map of Waldseemüller, in 1507, in which our south-polar world appears designed.

THE CHARACTER WHO DOMINATES EVERYTHING

Earth, your clouds guided me. Contemplating them when a child 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 footprint of some bird. Valleys, where the flexible wheats look like armies of an ancient time, raising their spears towards the inclemency of a solar wind. Clay valleys, sunken valleys between the mountains, volcanic rock trails that lead up steep slopes to solitary snows. The high mountains are the hands with which the body of the earth touches the cosmic zone. At its contact it burns. The blood of the mountains is snow, the sore of fire; on the highest peaks, it is like the blind 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 contaminated me.

Here it is the powerful earth that forms beings. Men hardly exist, dominated by the landscape. This is the supreme character who dominates everything. Delicate landscape and inaccessible beauty. With a mystical, finalist sense, it makes each of its inhabitants beings of transit, men who grieve, who yearn for something great, like the pure peaks that surround them. The effluvia 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 region. Whoever lives here is impregnated with the horror of something that will fatally happen. The land gives you everything; then he takes away what he has given him a moment ago, or what, with much sacrifice and effort, he had managed to build. The earth moves a little, it shakes, the volcano vomits; 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 and presence of the haughty beauty of the landscape, impossible and ruthless. Superb land, dying men.

Meanwhile, the unconscious takes hold of a frightening secret: The sea polishes the coasts of Chile. Year after year the water sinks in, the earth sinks. 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 terrors and omens. Under the influence of the landscape, he relives in his dreams and in his remote visions cosmic events of the species. 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 directed against 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 could only try to look within. There is only dimension towards nothing outside of this closed space. Terror and ghosts 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. And the terror invades him when he senses that this, his only world, may disappear into the abyss. The soul of man, in its deepest layers, always remains attached to the earth and to the square meter where it was born; He cannot believe that the world has a larger dimension. Only reason thinks so. The soul is from the earth, with it it is born and ends. The soul and the body only need one square meter to exist. The spirit also believes, like the soul. But he does know about great spaces and immortality. But in Chile the spirit has not yet emerged. For this reason, the man of the square meter and the closed, terrestrial and anti-international dimension could occur here.

And when the spirit comes and takes hold of her inheritance, perhaps he will discover that she was good and project on top of everything a heroic and religious feeling, aided by the remote 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 planet's prehistory. He is just a shipwreck abandoned by God and the landscape.

You have to 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, the whole world that 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 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.

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I am standing on the side of the road. A powerful wind shakes the Quillayes and Los Boldos. A eucalyptus bends its crown almost to the ground. Suddenly, the wind stops and the clouds light up, turning yellow, old gold. The atmosphere becomes warm and transparent, almost noisy. There, at the base of the mountain, a rising darkness begins to grow. A group of people is approaching. There are many beings that 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, gray shadows and terrified. They escape from the mountain. A man stops nearby and urinates. Another carries a gray, ragged child in his arms; He walks, stretching his legs heavily, as if walking backwards. His head bobs and his eyes are fixed in the distance. At the end of the long line a woman marches. They all carry their meager belongings; the majority advance with their children; but this woman is dragging an old and shattered 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.”

He passes me without even seeing me. The legs of the chair leave a zigzagging line on the dirt of the path. A man tells me:

“Crazy. He's been walking with that chair for days. The saddle will kill her, the mountain will kill us.”

And all flee, all advance 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 was a people here that adored the Montana. As the sun rose over their peaks, he implored her to always stand upright and protect him, give him shade and 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. And the sea will swallow them up, like the earth and the 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 beings and its mystery, until one day we 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, depending on whether it was "puelche" or "crossing", 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.

After noon we stopped in an orchard with a colonial house, with large and old orange trees. We disassemble. Among the dark green foliage of the trees, the oranges seemed like staring and round eyes, suns of a peaceful and vegetal era. The juice was like liquid light.

In the afternoon, on the hills, a violent electrical storm was released. My mare flared her nose and reared up. We decided to hurry before the downpour fell. I remember that messy ride. We were three; the friend who invited me, a huaso from the hacienda who made us a servant and me. 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 resembled strained wires. They snorted and dilated their noses, raising loud dust in the late afternoon, in eager expectation. The wind hit us, and we felt the urge for that race, along with the pressure of 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 the thorns that surrounded the road. We arrived late at the farmhouses.

We go to the foreman's room. This was a lame old man, who was lodging us in a barn next to his ranch. That night he looked out the door, followed by the barking of dogs, shining a lantern that, when swaying, cast gigantic shadows. Aware of who we were, he opened us, muttering;

“Confidence to come up with the idea, patterns to come with this weather and this rain. Get down before you get numb up there.”
And saying this he began to arrange things to receive 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 toiled good-naturedly; they were happy with our visits, which always brought them compliments, jokes and some party

organized at midnight. One of them was handsome, with blond hair ("gray", to be more precise); with a rosy complexion like a ripe apple and malicious eyes of a messy color. The other looked like the father and had a defect in the hip.

That night we were too cold and humid. 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, our assistant, kept him company. My friend seized the demijohn and no longer moved from his side.

I don't 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 dressed on my cot, without taking off my boots. I woke up after a time that I could not specify. I saw light above, through the ceiling boards. I got up and groped 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 couldn't go back to sleep, I took the lantern and went out into the field. My friend followed me and we both waited for dawn, lighting the pale dawn with a lantern. It began to rise gently in the distance, spreading across the horizon with a wet, trembling color. With it came the smell of the fields, a penetrating and 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 the distance of a beautiful valley, wrapped in blue vapors, with delicate undulations and meadows. We breathe in full lungs the lively air of the morning and we feel reborn.

Back at the house, the old sage of the foreman was waiting for us; He offered us glasses of chicha with flour, to "compose the body", as 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 on the hill.

The sun had set again when we got to his house. At the door a man was waiting for us with a light vicuna blanket, which the wind beat along with his thinning hair. He gazes at us with piercing, indecipherable eyes. Then he smiled enigmatically, withdrawn, between sly and purring.

"Come down, man," he said to his nephew, slapping him on the thigh, as he watched him curiously and laughingly."
We dismount. 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 watching, he retreated even more. In his whole person, the attitude of a being on the defensive could be guessed, as if he feared having to enter to explain his life and his failure, resisting it with the forces of his pride. He lived isolated, with the obsession of distant voices.

They served us a frugal 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 glasses of cognac and smoked yellow corn-leaf cigars. His hands were strong, sensitive. A typical feudal man of our fields, with his old arrogance and rudeness, his humanity and his dignity. Shadow in memory, however; 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 to him, he made a strange reflection:

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

And he laughed his sly, silent fox 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; in this way I bustle around the table. The owner of the house noticed his presence 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, old man, so that the gentlemen can hear you!”

It begins to feel a strange sensation, a discomfort. The old man grabbed the short jacket and his twisted hands and fingers were the ones that now revealed his mood. But his face had become impassive.
“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 sadness now passed through his little fox eyes.
” This is my radio,” I explain. “I can't have a radio here, that's why I have this old man ... It is weird. 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 on the gentle hills, the dogs fan out. They raise their heads, spread their ears, and move their legs softly as if they were rowing, or were part of a mixed ballet, performed by them and us, here, in the middle of the field and solitude. Behind the dogs, we men march, with the reins of the horses firm and short, in anguishing wait. From time to time the shadow of a hovering bird deceives us and horses and dogs must hold the momentum and fold back on itself.

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

Suddenly, the guide dog stops and wags its tail. From some bushes, like an arrow, a gray stone is shot. It is the hare. In a second everything has been transformed; order, waiting and silence are now screams, barks and confusion. Until the ballet 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, alla-va-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! I see it as a moving point, behind which the dogs go. The horse snorts, it has also come out of itself. We have reached the edge of the plains, where the small hills begin. The hare climbs the slope at high speed, while the dogs lose ground; makes a "haul", changes direction and misleads the dogs. But now my friends block his way, galloping up the other slope. So, I stop my horse and watch a show of pure beauty. On the edge of the hill the dogs have again entered the track of the hare that runs desalted, with its long ears drawn up in supreme effort. Greyhounds stretch their legs to brush the mountain with their powerful breasts, in that 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 falls 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 started to block her path. I cross his path. The hare is locked up and the dogs, like an exhalation, are on him. The striker reaches for her in the air, sinking his teeth into her 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 is 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's why I want to drink. We sang. The huaso looks at us slyly and laughs, while slyly 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, addressing him, warns him:

“Be careful, do not get there in the shade, see that if this gentleman does not distinguish you well, he can 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 happy. My secret is the hare. At one end of the table, I drop my head onto my arms. As in a tape, the hunt is repeating itself before me. I see again the hare running desalted up the hills. And it seems to me to participate 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 big 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 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 pineapple flower opens odorous, 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 shattered and his face full of dirt and blood. He gropes for his horse.

THE STRANGE CHARACTER

We have changed the course of the parade. We go to a neighboring farm where a sister of my friend's mother lives. She is a nurse, and she can heal you. 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. Wash and bandage his forehead. The lady wears black, has something sweet and penetrating in her eyes.

Explain:

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

I ask, to say something:

“Senora, are you a nurse?”

“No, simple amateur. I have given myself to this vocation. I was very serious. I got better, despite everything, and I made up my mind to cure the sick.”

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

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

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

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

“That clock is back 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, I demand a plum dessert for him. 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: This man had come to the province on any given day. Nobody knew where it came from. Its origin and past are unknown; more than someone thought he was a profuse of justice. Little by little and without being able to say how, he was getting into life and into the closed circles of the city; case 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, and two cribs: 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 read, but in his library and on his nightstand, he only kept old magazines, "Zig-Zag" and Spanish illustrated publications. I only read magazines. Some peasants believed that this man practiced witchcraft, because everything went as he pleased.

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

In a gloomy avenue, the mud of many seasons had accumulated and some heavy animals with long manes were busy there. A stout horse dumbfoundedly dipped its legs and withdrew them from the thick silt; then it fell again, sinking down to the belly. The animals advanced without hope, and the whole seemed a mortifying 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 in the main square and the society, which during the week remained invisible inside the old houses, was exhibited 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 or the pump bells flew like doves in a still sky.

But behind that peace of that diaphanous air was hidden the evil that it corroded. Subtle threads were woven through the invisible city, gathered in the old courtyards, behind the ruined porticoes. Between house and house 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 alien. 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"[1] . His insignia was a "chuico" and the degrees were represented by stars. The only ceremony consisted of drinking; The one who drank the most obstinated the highest degree.

Certain characteristic characters made news from time to time. One of them was Don Pancho el Bruto; neighbor of the region, their orgies lasted semen, entire months. Once, in a drunken state, he climbed on the rump of his horse to an organ grinder and made him play while at full gallop he got 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, he went up to the stage. He looked at the audience, pulled up his huaso jacket and let out a loud fart. I walk 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 towards its confines one reached a heavy area, which almost no one visited anymore: the Chillan Viejo. It was the past, the old evil. It must also have been the notice and the sign. One day I walked through its ruins, looking for the house where the hero Bernardo O'Higgins was born. Next to some old walls, an old woman pointed to the base of a wall. Dirty and corroded stones. It was all that was left. The trees in the streets leaned bare and gray as 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 and limestone because of a catastrophe. El Chillan Viejo had been destroyed by the earthquake. And the New Chillan had moved, to rebuild itself.

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

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

[1] Damajuana

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; holding the hand of his companion, he jumped like a bird. I felt a curious impression. The woman had a special beauty. Her large clear eyes and slim body were shrouded in light. I reached out to my hand and felt a painful sensation, as if a hatch were opening inside me. To do something, take the little girl in your arms and stroke her hair. The little bird began to emit high-pitched sounds, like chirps; moving one of his hands, he made a gesture like playing a violin. His head fell 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 amused myself by walking through the city. To enter the house, he had to open a glass map with a large key. Crossing a patio and a corridor with pilasters, I came to my room. The owners of this house were two elderly women, of modest condition, who erred pieces.

I opened the door and found myself in the courtyard. Through the branches of some trees, I saw the stars and felt cold. From the side of the kitchen came a noise of voices. I headed in that direction and found myself in a gathering of unknown people. It was dark, because the lighting came from a brazier, where the mate and some masses similar to "sopaipillas" were heated. In the center sat an old man with his hat on and some shaggy hairs on his beard. It spun steadily in the direction of the embers and remained silent. One of the housewives stoked the fire and served the mates. The rest were unknown men and women. I slid silently into a corner and looked for support against the wall. My eyesight was getting used to it. I could make out in a corner, near the old man who looked like a monolith of clay, the beautiful woman I had met that afternoon at my friend's house. What was she doing sitting here, among these people, at this hour?

They chatted quietly and surely about unimportant things. The mate ran from hand to hand and the light bulb, from mouth to mouth. The woman radiated her own light and, with her forehead raised, she remained abstracted, on the fringes of this ritual in which she did not participate.

Suddenly, a voice rose slowly and high-pitched. It was the voice of a woman, her face pockmarked. He 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 Continuous assent:

“When young, he was a strong man and his sight 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 want 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 won't find the way. I need someone. Who will want to 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'll leave them 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 up, lost her look 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 base with legs; a chair in the corner, a nail for hanging, and a table with books and papers; under the table, he kept a suitcase with clothes. The ceiling and floorboards were worn. In one corner there was a hole where a rat peeked out. Cover this hole with a stone.

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

Tonight, 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 neighboring pieces. It was a howl that rose and then fell, until it was almost a dog bark. Then someone began to punch the walls and whistle tremulously, as if trying to calm down. It gave the impression that the person whistling was the same person who a moment before had howled and also barked like a dog. There was silence and nothing else disturbed the stillness again. Only the distant noise of the water that ran through some ditch.

At dawn, the hostess brought me breakfast to the room. I asked him about the howls. He explained to me that it was a sick pensioner, a teacher at the Normal School, who was attacked, falling to the ground and howling. To calm himself he whistled and pounded on the walls. "Once, the lady continued, the attack occurred when the" psychologist "was visiting, who was able to help him. The" psychologist "had said that it was" a love affair, worked on a four-legged animal. " To cure it, it was necessary to discover who "did 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. It was the bad thing about the education of school, which banished belief in spells and "evils."

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

The lady left. I lay on the bed, staring out the window at the wall of the neighboring house, where the roof tiles were invaded by moss and climbing vines. In the diaphanous sky and air something like a mystery was floating. A constant 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 him play his waltzes and I forgot the day to let myself go, sounding to the beat of that naive and melancholic music. 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 up. I looked up and saw a man who was watching me with a familiar expression. Where had I seen him? I remember: on a train, while coming south; that man was sitting in front of me. We did not change a word, nor did I know in which station he got off. Now he was here, in this loneliness.

I walked away, always walking outside the walls, skirting the inhabited areas. A horseman galloped past me. Her scarf was blowing in the wind. He recognized the strange man from the farm. What would I be doing in the city? It seemed to me that a host of coincidences was emerging. I turned and ran for a while in the direction of the horse. I crossed dusty streets, until I was entering an unknown sector. In this way I came to a secluded square, lost and lonely. At its center was a broken fountain, and grass grew between sloping 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 on a stick, 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, was quickly hiding. 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 my age, who looked disconcertingly like me, was also looking at the open window. Completely abstracted, he did not even notice my presence. His face was pale, as if enduring great pain, and his hands twitched.

Experience a curious sensation. What did this scene mean? What was I doing on this site? I moved one leg, then another and left, moving away, as if doing it from myself.

That night he returned late to the pension. He walked through the squalid 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 the 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 suburbs, or the dragging of a horse-drawn carriage. The noise of the hooves on the cobblestones evoked the hill 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 rental car drivers were talking. In the light, a poor girl leaned against the wall of a building. She looked like a tramp. His large, dark eyes caught my attention. I turned my face and saw that it was coming in my direction. I slowed down and waited for him to catch up. He smiled at me with a humble expression.

“Where are you going tonight?” he asked.
“To nowhere. I'm walking.”
“Do you want to come with me?”
“Okay.”

We entered my street. He was very poor, and his hair fell to his shoulders in a black mess. His hands were tucked into the pockets of his coat, in a gesture like shame. He marched with his head down, staring at the ground. When we arrived in front of the screen, 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 his coat made me grieve. In the brief moment that between the gesture of opening the door and showing the light, I had time to meditate 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. He still didn't take his hands out of his pockets. It seemed to me that he contemplated my piece with the admiration of one who is in a palace. I looked around me and I also thought I was in a cozy and warm place. In contrast to that dejected and minimal figure, the electric light, the table and the white sheets, acquired a sumptuous aspect. Smiling weakly, he said:

“Turn off the light, the better.”

I took some coins from my pocket and passed them to him, saying:
“Go on, girl, and forgive me. I can't give you more, because I don't have; but you've already given me enough.”

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

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 regions.

In the morning I was standing in front of the door of my room, staring at the opposite wall. No one was in the corridor, which stretched out lonely. 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 from 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 felt an animal terror in them because of the proximity of something that he only seemed to know. Both of his arms went up and like windmill blades they waved in the air. I stepped back. The man was still behind me, 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 outside of the two of us. Cornered against the wall, he 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 as to a heavy and 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 I howled like a dog.

I understood that he was the teacher at 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. Try 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 that 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. But the demonic rite was carried out in the body and in the contour, 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 he felt such fear, reaching a limit zone with his 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. He was taking care of me until dawn. I told him about that implacable being who, since childhood, watched me and directed my life. He had brought me south and was driving me away 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 see in that land rose over the walls, she left. When he turned around, on the threshold, he said to me: "Tomorrow night I'll leave the door open in case you need me."

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

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

I left without notifying anyone, like a refuge. The train was moving away with its track music. And, suddenly, he 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 men changed, the earth would too. Would the Pacific belt of fire extinguish its volcanoes, if the Chilean found a sublimating exit from his subconscious dramas? If instead of sinking into moral defeat, it would rise above itself until reaching the heights of the Spirit, would the periodic catastrophes disappear, and the earthquake would go away forever? Would the earth modify its meaning if the external summits lost their meaning of insulating barrier, of impediment, overcome in a fulfilling flight? The landscape is transfigured by the soul. And 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 wounded and dying, with a wind of tragedy and the end of the world.

Great cracks furrowed the earth, and a putrid cloud rose to the sky like the legendary prayer of the fatherland.

Chileans, will we continue searching, suffering, until the earthquake has expired and there are no more beings or more heavens?

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 imagine her alone, without men already. Only rivers cross it. The great rivers. The Maule, the Biobio, the Tolten, the Cahcapoal. The mountains rise towards the sky, next to the squalid valleys where the forest grows again, the dark forest. There are no animals either. And a very near and new sun rises. A

solemn expectation remains in the air. It seems that the mountains, the low plateaus, remind the man who once populated them. And they tremble, to relive the scenes of their latest drama. But it is not that. A green moon rises over the jungle and the rain stops. A loud thunder breaks the mountains. They split at their center. From its interior, covered with mineral dust, its golden veins shining in the moonlight, which border its great images, the prehistoric giants emerge. They return to populate the land they once abandoned. Now free of the dwarfed man, 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 an ice sun. From the deep trembling 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 stain. The houses of the German settlers appear on the roads and villages. In lost places, some miserable rucas rise, remains of rooms of what was a strong and untamed race. The rivers carry the cut logs in their currents and are darkened by the stain of the turf. 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 color of the road; its existence tumbled and crawled like that wagon. 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 devil. 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 Pan. The geniuses of the jungle were recognized and tried to be in good relationships with them in order to control the weather.

Observing carefully, the imposition of the soul of the landscape is discovered in the indigenous character. His predisposition to sorcery is typical of 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 yet reached by 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 the Spaniards found it, it was a product of this land in which it lived, whose telluric and low 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. It could thus be said that the Chilean Indian was the son of Satan's. 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, very high, above the heads, and nobody evoked it. Therefore, everything is possible, for the same reason that there is no tradition or cultural past that prevents 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 forest were stained with blood and the human plant again took contact with its deepest roots. The Indians were strong and tenacious. And without God and without heaven, without glory and without prize, I exalt, in that instant, man in his dual origin, lonely and audacious, exposing the divine inheritance to the sunlight of war as well.

Today, the melancholic song of the trutruca at the gates of the miserable rucas, is dispersed by the wind on the currents of the waters.
The Indians were of medium height, broad and massive bodies; the little lime and 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 higher in the dust. The inheritance is in the town, in the blood of the mestizo, where, like the renewal in the forest, the old soul resurfaces.

Where once its essence floated, 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, maifiio, rauli. In the thick, the sun hardly penetrates. Up, places sometimes for long periods, weeks, and even whole months; but without joy. The gift of the forest is water, fine rain. Everything seems to wait for him. The forest takes on a cold and sullen tinge. Foreign trees are filled with melancholy; some break 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 insensitive to the outside world, he who walks driven by a strange will that lives and grows like the Tree.

With the delayed frictions 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 their wet feathers, with odd persistence, pierces skin 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 being dark, wrinkled, whose head is wasted by the action of the water, black face and evil eyes, march with the feet naked on the mud. Their hairs are stiff, and their stature is tiny. He has stopped on a path and in his attitude, there is the exotic and questioning aspect of oxen. Look 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 dry 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 returned 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 surname 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 an aerial 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 in the “Medialuna”. Work festival, in which man and animal meet again. The roads are filled with lows 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 drowsiness. If the grass could look, it would. That is the cloud of history, of origin, wrapped in oblivion, in tremendous fatality. The great 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, twisted portholes. A sour light circulates within the veins of the forest.

Through the thicket, one day 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 cylindrical hat had a brim trimmed in the shape of solar rays; on one shoulder he carried a blanket also green. It had blended with the contour, 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 with long stiff streaks. A moving mustache appeared on his thick lips. I began to find stories. He referred to the forest, the land, and the animals. I make sure I know their language. To prove it to me, he began to imitate the voices of the bulls, the snakes, the birds, and the horses of the sierra. I did it without the slightest inhibition, like someone who is alone and used to living with nature.

In his stories, animals, men, sorcery, and enchantment, mixed. The goblins, devils, and witches, took animal forms to present themselves to beings, live with them or produce evil and death. He said that witches could not give good for good. Never, because of this, should anyone do good, because 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," I began, "there was an old sorcerer whose name was that. 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. The secrets of the cruel, 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 or 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, on 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 full. He sewed the mouth and other holes, thinking of the person to whom the evil was directed. Then, I 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 it and together with the many who were going to rest their foreheads on its bark. However, today the path to go to the place where the gigantic araucaria is found has been lost. In vain they looked for her in the forest. "
Maybe Trabalaira was looking for her, because she stopped talking. Stretching out the blanket and winking, he easily got lost among the trees.

As my horse passed, I came back meditating. What is the origin of this world and that of the race that inhabited the virgin forest? Perhaps digging into this rubbish will reveal the blurred memories of an ancient wisdom, grotesquely deformed, yet visible under the shell of superstition, sorcery, and legend. In any place where we raise 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 their bark, regain 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 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.

In the same way that Trabalaira, I look 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 part, 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 at the awnings; 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 witches and ghosts. Under her skirt, rubbing at her bare feet, the black cat is born to shine the coals of her eyes.

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

His heart is hard and empty as stone.

THE WHEAT

In the southern prairies it ripples like a yellow sea. It creaks. In the mountains, in its morbid slopes, in the valleys, up to the edge of the forest, it resembles the tender hair of the earth; or else, 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 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. Share in his love.

Before, sweaty mares galloped over the scattered sheaves. The grain peeled off. Above, the sun was shining, and the torsos of the animal and the man gave off the steam of the meat. 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 ages to reach the purity and perfection of its existence. His 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 sawmills the circular saws turn, penetrating the tortured life of the wood and spreading its pulverized blood in the air of the forests.
Inside the jungle, the wood lives. 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 tiny juicy sun accompanies her. Your consciousness is shrouded in a mist subtracted from the watery depth of the earth. Beyond the hard bark, the sweet sap glides, emotional and sensitive, impregnated with the memory of the origin of time. He has just passed through the heart of the fallen angel and has seen his form unravel in creation.

In a distant time, the forest was cut down, like today. 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. Your vegetable veins would like to reach the red hot sun. Its branches extend like arms and try to touch, feel. They are a cruel drill. 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 hurting when passing through that area.

Meanwhile, pixies, owls, visit the roots, where they lodge their nests. They play in the forest and are the images of the vegetable dream. In the midst of its trance, the wood also doubts and is like man, who, going towards God, gets tired and wants to return to the undifferentiated origin, dissolving. The womb of the Mother calls her and seduces her. But the life of the flesh and the sun of the blood make it signs. Thanks to man, at

times, it participates in that life, when, transformed into a sharp spear, it enters the throbbing entrails and touches the blood, where the idea is about to reach itself.

In the cold humidity, the tree is felled. But always beat man. The forest rises to the skies. We can do nothing against him.
Many years ago, a titan of the ancient race cut down a tree and held the trunk over one shoulder, for days and nights. The tree gave him power over his people, he also gave him death. Next to the gallows, defeated by the conquerors, a sharp pike, made of vernacular oak or rauli, pierced its entrances in the infamous torture, running through his brains. Not the warrior uttered a groan; because I knew it was not Spanish who but the wood, the forest, the landscape. And the woman who at the feet of the defeated Caupolican threw to his son, he did it as if he were a small twisted tree trunk.

THE COPIHUE

In solitude and stillness, in those places where leaves and branches come together, copihue is born. His remote blood bell rings. Perhaps it is the blood of the wood, of the thousand-year-old broken tree. It is a miracle of beauty and emotion, 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 the 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, sounded like fruits. Above ground, they began to cool. Galvarino approached and spilled his blood on them. In his hands alone, the copihue was born.

Now, seeing it there red, I can't 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. Last sense of the land and the forest.

THE OLD APPLE TREE

One day I entered an old peasant house, and I was walking through its dark corridors. Paintings from the Colony were kept in a semi-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 ground, on the stones, there were some rafts and the dust of a long time accumulated on them. An old apple tree with gnarled branches also grew. Moonlight filtered through his glass, falling like silver dust. A small fire was lit and around the shadows of old women moved. 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. He began to sob. The others also cried. They formed a circle around the immobile Injun girl. I watched as one of the women cut her hair and threw the strands into the fire. They cried spreading their arms. 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 Injun girl. Looking now at her bald head like the moon, I asked:
“Your name is still Quirimaya?”

A delicate emanation emerges from these southern regions, where forests emerge and rivers fall. The snow-capped volcanoes, the Osorno, the Puntiagudo, 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 rest 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 he 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 protecting myself from the rain, I walked through gray streets at dusk. No one was passing and only a horse carriage appeared next to the docks. A drunk driver furiously whipped the animal, which reared up and started running down the asphalt road. The foolish race threw one of the crew from the car, who rode a long way, while the other screamed and laughed on the box, getting lost in the distance, in the rain.

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

The next day a sun without strength shone in the sky. At the dock he 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, small motorboats, 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 us hedgehogs. To eat sea urchins is to swallow a port with all its ships and its beings; 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 their intense colors.

At dusk, on deck, he looked at the water. Although still, it scares. It has that hard consistency of too icy waters. If someone falls into it, it should be of little use to know how to swim. Perhaps this is why the chilote, a great sailor, who plows through the seas in its 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 in it does not oppose it with resistance, he fatally surrenders to his destiny, with the same resignation with which the land used to do it.

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 weak shells.

In the Huilliche dialect Chiloe means land of birds, land of chelles. Chelles resemble seagulls; they live on oily rafts of huiros 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 and the boquis arise from the earth. The bauda, a black bird, suddenly rises from the ground, squawking as if it were the shadow of the humidity that has taken shape over the centuries.

Everything here is strange. It seems as if the landscape is reduced in dimension, in green and red. 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 steep houses on olive stilts. They gave themselves to Spanish and stayed with it 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 ours, 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 mate all winter. 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, 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 drench oneself with its archaic rust and rot. Only by participating in his drama can our intuition enlighten us.

On the island of the chelles, the chilote awaits us. As for a mandate, it remains in its anguish of existing, mixing only with its 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, the swamps, the ferns, the monstrous plants, like hairs or strands of the earth's childhood, remain on this last atoll 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, they cross and their evil and cunning eyes hallucinate the Poles. Much depends on them, maybe everything. They crawl 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 centuries.

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 plain, a continent was destroyed and only its remains remain as peaks across the sea; islets, plateaus, patches, scattered limbs, ghostly presences of the first horror. That is the south, Chiloe and Chile as a whole. The angry sea polishes even 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 I 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 remote glory, feels like a foreigner in the "new land." Nothing is common or dear to him. He relieves himself, in part, starting as he did in the past. Only the woman, by fatal law, continues the tiring work. The man has given him 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. And 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 water, with all its lights on and reaches a mysterious place, which is the City of the Cesares, 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 that only Queltzacoatl could defeat the snakes forever, remote with his wings. Only He, who disappeared to the East, towards the sea. And the Serpent 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 your 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 overheated stones, mix the cholgas, 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, merge and calm down within his own body.

CRAZY IN THE NIGHT

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

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

“Young man, I see your way; It's difficult. You go; but you will come back ... Don't 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, expose 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 and sinking our chest. Do you want us to undress? The priest gets angry; but, what does it

matter! Poor child; you will go, the years will pass and we will not you can forget. You are lost, if Pincoya doesn't help you; you will be like the Invunche, because one day, in the final test, you will turn your face and no longer march forward, but with your face turned. 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 nose, then you will come out screaming: “Tue, tue, tue ”, and you will fly, like bauda. 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 Duster! And he pounced on my armada of a feather duster. His sister stopped her. Meanwhile, the old woman did not move from the ground and watched the scene between amused and impenetrable. I thought you 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 they expect from life? Why don't they travel north?”

They looked at each other with a gesture of complicity and compassion.

"Who told you, child, that we are alone?" Wait 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. I 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, girls." 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 water. Young man, open your eyes wide, never be deceived.
When, going through the canals, you ever see a bundle of flee floating adrift, you will know that it is the Guaitecas, that in day he transforms and disguises himself. I know in the night it becomes a ship; turn on your lights and sail. Inside him celestial music is heard, and the Rubio men dance and sing. Its lights turn off the reflections of the moon.

If you see a sea lion resting on the beach, do not disturb it, because it can also be the Guaitecas that rests waiting for 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 gold 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 came on the ship and stopped in front of this Big Island. It was only a few days and then I started again; but I left the island filled with the color of his eyes. Look at them, they still remind 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 demonized. Many have looked for it in the past and no one ever found it. It's just going inside the Gualtecas and not on foot, or on other ships, how will you one day discover that region? The old woman was silent because the fire had gone out. The sisters began to sing a guttural melopoeia; getting on the sleeves of their black suits, they extended their skinny arms to the light of the moon. They implored the star that with its substance impalpable, 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 has been so. I am back. But I am looking for Caleuche.

THE CALEUCHE

The legend lives and feeds on a deep emotion. An event that affects the root of the imagination survives by expressing itself in symbols that span the ages. At the farthest 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, is to participate in an eternal festival of corsairs. Pirate ships bequeathed to the beaches of Chiloé Dutch; 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 looked for the City by the lakes and the southern mountains. Could someone find her? The Caleuche sailed like a submarine. He 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 remains that are still kept to pass on the secret to us, perhaps as delegates of the men-gods, who inhabited a continent where the Caleuche Myth had its origin and where the beginning and the end of his last dwelling.

Along with the reign of the waters, the symbol is a ship. In the forest, it would be a Tree. Those who live in 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, it changes according to the eyes and faith of the beholder. Reality is like a kaleidoscope. Today is one thing: tomorrow, another. Alone Caleuche exists beyond the sensible. Like the Tree in the jungle, is here 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, difficult environment, in conflict with the stars and with destiny: Caleuche.”

THE FERNS

From Ancud to Castro you can go on a bus that runs “sometimes through a narrow gallery 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 ancient world disappeared. 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 gelatinous 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 his ordeal.

WHERE THE POTATOES ROT

In Castro I returned to take a boat that took 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 raised me to a dock that was more like the portico or terrace of some poor houses, raised above the water on wooden piles. 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, he bumps into some hard and small objects. They were wet and rotten potatoes. Scattered on the ground they served as food for the rats. In Chonchi and throughout the island that tuber had been planted in large quantities, when the scarcity of potatoes in the north was known; 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, sitting in the main room. Vera did not remove her black and furry blanket, while she told me stories of the region. He is talking about potatoes, precisely the same ones that were rotting. In the patio, on a cancagua brazier, 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 a vague area. I don't remember how I came to find myself at midnight in a miserable hut on the beach, sitting on the ground on some red placemats, with a young girl from Chiloé next to me and an old woman with dirty, straight hair, who served me some lemonade and talked of the misery 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 abounded in 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. “She 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, a 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 he opened the window wide. On the low ceilings, almost within reach of my hand, large black birds perched, with curved beaks, which stared at the white clouds over the hills and remained static, 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, balanced low the weight of his load, while the edge of his black shawls, resembling mantles, brushed his bare heels and left a trace on the earth. This scene seemed ripped from a stamp from 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 his 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's hard, they say, to get to the third, because its friendly inhabitants offer his mistelas, a liquor from the time of Suburb. On the second hill the visitor is already so drunk that he could not reach the third. However, I managed to upload three and was invited to the church house by the priest. In its dining room I met a character named Muria, who proposed to cross the island of Chiloe until the great waves from Pacific. Muria was a kind of giant who spoke loudly, and I made a thunderclap, because I was deaf. He developed an incredible activity in the middle of this landscape and of these apathetic beings.

It traded with the ports, at the same time it administered farms and sawmills. He was northern, born in Iquique; I 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 planet. It seemed to me that the secret of his activity, curiously impervious to overwhelming influence of the weather, he was in his deafness. This allowed him to live without feeling, without “offending” the landscape, almost without seeing it. Isolated in itself, kept up with this 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. Murta could not bear it and at epic gallop of his, got lost on the way. I saw him disappear wrapped in a cloud of dust and I would no longer find him until the evening, when ground and shaken I dismounted to eat something and rest in a hostel, near the lake Huillineo.

Murua 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, extract wealth from the ground, to make your native city powerful. He dreamed of the north, he thought about it, while he toiled in this purgatory; I wanted to return

rich and triumphant from the evil of the world, imposing itself on the rest of his compatriots. Murua 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; I did not "hear" the landscape.

We sleep 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 Murua woke up. Without knowing me, he guides himself 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 and of a 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, Murua 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 being 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 fixed him an annual sum for transporting the mail.
His name was Emil Briz. Danes of origin, his story was that of the emigrants: struggle and effort. Settled first in southern Argentina, in the Bay of San Julian, where Hernando de Magallanes almost died of hunger and cold with all his people, he managed to acquire possessions and fortune; But a fire destroyed everything And 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 he felt like 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 expression, for now, transporting 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, with 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 us to get on his boat to continue the journey. Again the noise of the motor of the boat slid weakly 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 have experienced lately, this atmosphere inside Contento's little house seemed too strange, almost artificial. He could not 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, in the middle of the waters of a sacred lake, shrouded in legend, forests and ferns, there were men who seemed to abstract from it all. Under the influence of lunch and the atmosphere, the conversation took on a special tone. Murua 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 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 squatted 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!"

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

Murua 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 owner of the house was next to me.

“Do you like this lake?” I wonder.

In her too, he thought he 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 her earlier. It said: *Ubi bene, ibi patria*.

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

"Where I am well, 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. Observe 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 world was something strange too. 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, here, in this remaining area, a waste of sunken centuries, was becoming effective and even exotic. The earth does not have the same atmosphere everywhere. It vibrates distinctly. The rhythmic compass of the Latin phrase lacks modernity in the south of the world; its peculiar extreme 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 planet is that of the old sorcerer or 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 of the East. The one from this dark world has not yet reappeared, it is not 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 soul and landscape, must also be vernacular words. Latin, on the other hand, rebounds here on the aquas of the lakes, producing a noise like 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 we 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 remained, along with some crazy people who insisted on finding gold nuggets in the river, to go and sell them to the pulperia.

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

Aldo introduced her as the wife of a young Italian. The whole family lived in 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 seeds 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 home, where we stopped for a moment. Aldo and the Major were invited to host. Murua and I left in the direction of the wolf's room, where we would spend the night. But Murua could not hold on any longer, he had another horse saddled, also large and white, and left at night, in the direction of the "farther south" and the Pacific, where we would meet. 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 on 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 to 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's 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 not more than a step to hell. Here no one can be happy. "Do you believe it? You cannot achieve an instant of pure joy?"

"No, young man, that is impossible; by its very condition, the earth denies us everything that resembles glory. You think, who is happy; The rich one? He is a prisoner of his fortune and, when it is not, it 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 can't 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, and he came to bury himself here. Now love 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 tires, even, 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, as in

a bovine ... I did not want to be a marked bovine ... Poor Aldo! Aldo is sad ..." He poured himself another glass.

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

Voices of someone approaching singing could be heard outside. The wolfman 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 and 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 casual 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 was silent. Then the street door was opened, and two new characters made their appearance inside the room. One came singing and brought 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, very small, with a yellow face, with all the appearance of a chilote, was Chonchi's doctor. De la Barra presented it 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 expressions. But De la Barra did not do any case of it and, for the rest of the evening, he dedicated himself to teasing him with heavy jokes, forcing him to drink.

De la Barra had come to Chiloe from Concepcion, to also exploit immense extensions of forests in the surroundings of Cucao. There was in his personality that smirk, so typical of the Chilean. But 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:

“This 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 don't let them, they let us. You must treat them badly, my friend, if we don't let them, they let us. You must treat them badly, my friend, and, from time to time, "run their punch". It's the only way they want us. And what are they for, after all? ... you know, for little things, to "string them", my friend, simple and prosaic affair. When we are old, so that they can pass us the potty and take care of us. This is it: 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 health.

“This doctor has waged real wars with the "machis" of the region. He sells his pills and his doodles, and they sell his herbs, his stuffed lizards and his magic formulas. It's a fight for the customer, even though this "skyscraper" says it 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 don't know what strange thing happens. Where an aspirin doesn't work, a woman's piss works. If I were not a rationalist and 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; They needed me strangely, 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, 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, "skyscrapers", something more pure than that woman? It is an angel, a vision of Paradise.”

The medic showed an ambiguous smile.

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

Those men, who only a moment ago were tough and unbelieving, suddenly became inconsistent. They sounded 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 great 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 and began to kick off his shoes, 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 ...!”

And he pushed himself to fall on the doctor, slapping him hard on the bald head. They both rolled on the ground. And this fall must have cleared them up a bit, for they went to lie on their beds. And there 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, plumbing mist.

PIRUTIL

Ride my chilote horse. The wolfhound showed me the way: I should always continue in a straight line. The mist swayed in 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 they arrive next to the waves, ten and fifteen meters high. Here, I thought, the raft 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 on my head. They had red beaks and eyes. After a while, some imprecise silhouettes appeared on the sand. They were rocks beaten by the surf. Someone stayed on 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 a bundle of huiros to her chest. As I got closer, I saw that this bundle was a skeleton child who was sucking a cochayuyo on the mother's breast. The women rummaged in the rocks and pulled out seaweed, ghosts of the sea. Later, they ate them. They didn't see me; they didn't even look at me. His 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. On his lap he gathered little shells and starfish. Surely, he had no face, and the waves came crashing over his body, as on top of a shadow of terror and distance. His image was fleeting in the mist. Would it be the Pincoya, dark and marine fairy, who collects fish and shells? He should not look at her. 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 and their black backs peeked out, dripping water and foam through the mist. Above them were a great number of destroyed shadows, without faces, holding in their skeleton arms children of nightmare, who ate seaweed or sucked 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 solitary, 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 Murua 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, of German descent, with two small daughters, leased the farm for the summer, with the right to operate the dairy. Originally from Valdivia, they worked at the cheese factory with fervor. They caressed the cheeses, followed their shapes, and touched their rinds. Later, they would be pushed to run, reaching even the northern cities. And those who were to eat them would not know that they came from a surviving land, where ferns and rain reign.

Here I spent several days, the last of Chiloe. He ate with the residents at a rustic table, served frugally; in the afternoons, he would go for a walk in the woods. The rain always feels thin, constant. The girls played covered with colored blankets, with their feet bare. The parents strolled embraced among the trees and ferns.

One afternoon I went a long way into the forest, finding an exit to the sea. Big waves were hitting a narrow beach. Wild strawberries grew there, along with spreading-leaf nalcas. The rain was sliding down gently. I sat under a tree and gazed out at the ocean. On your horizon, to the north, imagine seeing the strange island of Rapa Nui emerge, a distant sister of this other, a remnant and summit of a distant past. Tepito te Henua, "Obligo del Munudo", 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-worshipers, 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 didn't believe it at first, making fun of the prophecies. And when the sun appeared, they secluded 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 don't even 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 tops.

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, then an island-continent arose, 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 explosion 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 thick 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 - long before already -; He is the man. Someone has brought you to this central land; like wheat, nor does it 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 forward as well as backward, as his heels were extended, forming like a double foot. It was also androgynous.

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

If these signs are not enough, there are legends and myths. What is the origin of the myths? Where is your original homeland?

The Invoice 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 that in ancient times some men of gigantic stature arrived there. They came from the Ocean. Since they found no women, they became sodomites. They 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 what was no longer.

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 scum, that 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 reflections 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 goes down, 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 a 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 the end of the world coals, 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 surviving land, 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 depopulated - 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 organization, backs up and prevents the advent of the spirit. Poisonous and subtle fumes arise from the humidity. Lime is lacking, because in the sunken, soft-boned world, it was not necessary. The stature of the man is reduced in Chiloe.

And throughout the arch, 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 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 recognized in myself that desire to let myself be carried away and to go to a dark region. It was as if from some point, her down, someone was calling my name, a voice was shouting at me in the middle of the wind. And that voice came from the south, from the furthest south. My soul was a compass that pointed out the mysterious south.

But then, he wasn't ready yet. It would take years before he could navigate those deadly waters.

That time, I must have turned back. Concentrating my forces, I overcame myself to be able to go up the waters in the opposite direction to their currents.

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 generations to desire sublimation.

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 effort. This is the mystical sense of the earth. Many flee 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 its air. Today the world feels the same suggestion, aspiring to become North American.

But Chile could not do it; because its destiny is too deep and the area of the planet in which it resides is dramatic. There is not, it is true, here the joy of futurism and the faith in tomorrow, but a destructive atmosphere. The weight of the shadow and the night bends our backs. The darkest time has not yet passed. But 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 his 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 repeats, 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, the loneliness. The land, in general, is roads; down here, in Chile, it is final. Nothing starts now, nothing postulates. Everything is over, life ends. The rain falls. Water grows, circulates, 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; infima life, beginning of the road. And the impressive rock goes back everywhere to the first moment of creation, or the last of all. It is the country of the end, rather than the beginning. From the mountains, a signal, which prompts to dream with a higher destiny. That is why the landscape of Chile is finalist and religious. If life ends here in this physical, hard, 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. Disconnected from their land in the present, without organs to penetrate the landscape, Chileans die and grieve, sensing a possible and distant path of salvation. They lack the education necessary to understand, adapting 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 it 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 bride'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, always keeping 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 descend to the depths of hell.

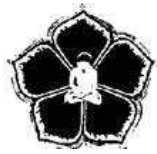
The advent of the Spirit, through man, produces the miracle of the transfiguration of the world. The landscape changes, it is interpreted, it acquires meaning. Everything is ordered, it is balanced. That which was destroying you and annihilation, will now be life and creation. The volcanoes will put 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 suicides, will rise from their graves, shaking off the night and the leftovers. Reanimated by the light of the miracle, they will redeem their history.

All this is a beautiful dream, which falls like a weight on my life, if I do not 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.

IMITATION OF THE TRUTH

CYBERPOLITICS, INTERNET, VIRTUAL REALITY, TELEPRESENCE



Miguel Serrano

When the children are born with their eyes open
It will be in the Iron Age and the end of the world is near.
Hesiod

To the traditional institutions of Chile: farmers, the Army,
the Navy, Air Force and Carabineros, in a fight to the death to
preserve your identity and your existence.
And to those very few young people who, having still been born with their
Eyes closed; they could still be saved.

INITIAL WORDS

In the Universe, in Nature, nothing is the same. The Difference is the Law. Even a crystal of snow is distinguished from the others. You could say that it was God who made the infinite inequalities. God created the races, also the countries, nations. Pretend to mix them and end with differences is to impoverish the world and act against the Will of the Creator. Furthermore, Nature makes the stronger overpower the weaker, either by force or by cunning. Not understanding it, surrendering meekly, dreaming in a nonexistent equality between races and countries, is to facilitate the slavery imposed on the world today by a Secret World Government, of super-racist criminals, who preach anti-racism and mix for the better establish its dominance and totalitarian dictatorship on earth.

With the dream of a global village, of a "globalism “and “globalism”, promoted by that hidden Power, totalitarian and imperialist, the Chilean rulers, with its free trade and socialist, capitalist and Marxists, internationalists, alike, have been delivering pieces of the homeland (Patagonia, Laguna of the Desert, the Continental Ices), selling them or giving them away, foolishly, cowardly, cunningly, behind the backs of the people and the true Chilean. Justifying it all with the illusion of "modernism" and the acquisition of an amazing technology, of which the masters also hidden from the world are served, to fulfill their dominion and slavery over the inhabitants of the peripheral areas, from the Third World! From the "First" and the "Second Wave", to those that will never allow the "Third Wave" to pass, such as controllers and creators of that science, nor of their own Destinations. Hopefully, the following pages can be used to shake and alert Chileans and Latin Americans responsible, who have not yet been hypnotized or are totally committed, in order to save what still remain of their national soil, their independence and of their freedom.

THE "CYBERPOLITICS"

On Sunday, February 16, 1996, in the supplement "Arts and Letters" of El Mercurio, by Santiago, an interesting work was published by Mr. José Joaquin Brunner, Minister Secretary General of the Christian Government democrat of Chile. It is entitled “Communication and Cultural Changes”.

Due to the importance of the subject, in addition to the importance of its author, we believe that there is a need to comment on it, pointing out possible alternatives, if there were any, to its grave formulations. They would be pointing the way that the Government of Chile follows, especially after the coming to power of the Christian Democracy. Since the time of Eduardo Frei Montalva (we know it today) has decided on this dangerous line. Indeed, it was during his government that the first link was established between the University of Chile and that of Chicago, thus giving rise to the "Chicago Boys".

Mr. Brunner has revealed to us the key that allows us to know the true and deep intentions of the Government established in Chile. It seems like a long time ago that a rationalist balance has been made here, reaching the conclusion that the world will be ruled by cybernetics, electronics, cybernetics, and computerized robots, moving away from politics based on agriculture, traditions, and national armies. In a word, it would be about the disappearance of the Nation-State, the physical homeland. And the later, the better. From there then the conscious non-support of “seasonal” agriculture, for so to call it (of the stations), together with the attack, sometimes underhanded, but bitter and continuous, the Armed Forces and the armies based on a Prussian tradition, today considered "picturesque" and modeled. Instead, it is intended to advance more and more in a cutting-edge technology, in its communicational aspects and computer science. And this not to benefit Chile, as a Nation, but so that technology can deny function in a 'casual region', where a group of aggressive entrepreneurs achieve a privileged position, regardless of soil, race, or nationality. Not for nothing did Mr. Rosenblut, also a senior government official, or rather, of the Presidency, he declared, in an interview with Ya magazine, on March 28, 1995, which “'seduces him with the idea that Chile become multiracial and let us see Koreans, Chinese, Americans, French, Japanese - all mixed up. It is that is, a model of a global village, as is the world intercommunication”.

The Minister Secretary General of the Government Refers widely to the *Internet*, fascinated by the possibilities of its inevitable and rapid development:

In the head of a pin they will all fit the world's information ... at the beginning of next millennium your phone will receive, classify and, perhaps even answer incoming calls as if was a well-trained English butler ...at the beginning of the emergence of a

universal network interconnected, audio, video communication and electronic text, which will blur the distinction between interpersonal and mass communication and between public and private communication ... Socially we will relate in the form of digital communities in which the physical space will be irrelevant ... The digital era will end up reterritorializing cultures, compressing the space in which we live and we communicate the metaphorical size of the head of a pin.

That is, the English butler will be on the head of a pin. The image of the world as the head of a pin. The *global village* (again) is the community that there it lives.

The proper place - there where we are locals, (Chileans, for example) - disappears to give step into the entire globe, compressed to take the form of a telecommunication community. On that basis a global consciousness develops, by same moment that local cultures would lose their take root and they would vanish.

As we interconnect, many of the values of a nation-state will give way to values of electronic communities.

(The underline is ours) ... *Twenty years from now, when you look through a window, what will be true could be two thousand kilometers and six time zones away ... and read about Patagonia could include the sensory experience to be physically there ... In its extreme version, this vision supposes the appearance of a collective consciousness on a planetary scale, where each individual is linked to others by technologies of interaction; those that replace the English butler ... where medical, analysis and diagnosis will be done by computer in robotic pharmacies.*

Even when it is claimed that the Internet lacks centralized control, being ubiquitous, so to speak (being able to obey the old definition of the Godhead, that "it is a Circle whose center is everywhere and its circumference in any "), we do not believe it, for the sole fact that the Internet is a creation of the Pentagon, and there will always be original patent, at the same time as a number for the user, being able to discover at the end the place, cause and origin of the information, communication or "penetration". It is a matter of time. Because there is a World Power. A "Center" of the "Divinity", so to speak, although it seems “To be everywhere", and for this very reason. And it will be that “Center" (which already has the cybernetic map of the world ready—The “cyber-map” -, with rulers and ruled, with masters and servants) which for no reason will allow that “marginal regions”, in “peripheral places” of the “Circumference", that "seems to be nowhere”, may become established, of their own free will, in the seats of preference of the "Third Wave”.

To this testifies, among other things, the failure of the Chilean satellite "'Fasat-Alfa"[1]! and the persecution of the industrialist Carlos Cardoen, who could become a danger in the discovery and manufacture of state-of-the-art technology "Third Wave", in a peripheral place of the planet.

Mr. José Joaquin Bronner's exhibition was connected closely with that of the futurologist Sergio Melnik, that, some time ago, also predicted the end of poetry, philosophy and literature, surpassed by Artificial intelligence (AI), cybertronics and virtual reality, which will replace even Ecology.

[1] If, on a second or third attempt, the Chilean Air Force had success in sending a satellite into space, it will be because it has already accepted all the requirements and fulfilled the requirements demanded by e] "Empire" his vassals.

AND THE ARMY?

Traditional agriculture seems to no longer have defenses, in *vitro* fertilization, tree, and plant clone's vernacular. Could an Army of Tradition survive the Prussian as the Chilean? And, also, the Navy?

The tremendous pressure to impose worldwide" Doctrine of the Pentagon " became visible recently in the "Bariloche Meeting" of the Commanders in Chief of the Latin American Armies. There, the Argentina President, Menem, actively representing the points of view of the "World Empire", push for it to be accepted the dissolution of the Army defending stable borders, nationals, pretending that the Armed Forces, without distinction between countries (even though Argentines continue seizing Chilean territories), came to depend on of a central, extra-territorial power, to transform itself, under their directives, in police forces, falsely controllers of drug trafficking and terrorism. With energy the Commander in Chief of the Army opposed this pressure of Chile, General Augusto Pinochet, being followed by the Commanders in Chief of Brazil and other countries, who they still exist as such in the region.

The Armed Forces may, however, resist Chileans, if not they find the necessary and miraculous antidote, before the dramatic and diabolical reality of cyber-war, also called "*info-war*"?

The cyber, electronic revolution, the Internet, applied to new military and scientific conceptions of war, make any future conflict appear as a science fiction movie, or one of those video games so in vogue. Some of this was shown already in the Gulf War. And it has been said that the Saddam Hussein himself had in his possession some keys, that would have allowed him to interfere with communications banking, telephone companies and railway mobilization, both The United States and England, eventually producing a momentary stock market collapse and a railroad catastrophe, of which almost nothing was spoken at that time. And something very strange would have happened, when some mercenaries offered Dutch, technetronic specialists, unemployed, and also some Hindi intellectuals, very knowledgeable of the subject, to collaborate with Iraq, what would have meant, perhaps a very important contribution. They asked for a million dollars.

The American Air Force is in possession of a dwarf robot avion, capable of obtaining detailed information and thousands of photos of the terrestrial geography, while interfering with communications and the enemy's computer networks (the "*nano-war*").Using even more powerful means they can modify the climate and, by means of the "T-rays" (discovered by Nicola Tesla) and other subatomic particles, change the thoughts of the rulers of the enemy powers, making them declare things never said or thought, speeches on television, so as to upset them with their own peoples. Even virtual reality would be used in war games, where the uniforms worn by the combatants become complicated robot machines, communicated from top to bottom over an electronic network, of tiny computers, with rays that allow them to see at night; indeed, an artificial "cyber-body", which transform the soldier into a war robot, an armed car, a cyber-machine, a deadly vehicle on two legs. Its powerful

automatic weapon can send back thermal signals, to the high command, with information on the battlefield and damage done to the enemy.
Until now, it seems that aerial robots, launched into space for information, they would find a single obstacle: the forest, the virgin forest, the trees vernacular and millennial[2]. Hence, the suspicion that forest fires, that each time more frequently affect the trees of the planet, and that are always intentional, are secretly propitiation and led by the hidden world power that aspires to a total control of the land. Only the desert is favorable to them and easy to dominate. It is thus that "the desert spreads", as Nietzsche would say. The aridity, the final death. And do not leave it to be strange that in Chile, a mysterious character, the American Douglas Tompkins, is taking over all the virgin forests of Chilean Patagonia. What do you expect? What is he going to hide there?

Now, it is very interesting to know that almost always, in the last Pentagon war games, made within a virtual reality, in videos and computers, their cyber-armies appear as being. They would still be the salvation and refuge of various armies of America, Latin America, and some "Third World" countries defeated by much weaker enemies and by armies of the "Second" and "First Wave". And this because, lacking a complicated and centralized communications network, finding themselves scattered, disjointed, and disorganized their forces, they are less vulnerable to an all-out attack by information war. And the final dominion over a defeated country is only being carried out by man, by the old and traditional Infantry, and not at a distance, by robots and machines. Not yet. And the weakness of the great power is in the little value of his human being, regressed, distorted by the almighty machine and super-technology.

For this reason, the Pentagon, at the service of that World Secret Government, try by all means to impose its "Doctrine", to dismantle the traditional armies, nations and nation-states, so that, without shooting an "info-shot", you have won the battle before starting it.

For the same reason, Armed Forces like the Chilean would do very well in resisting, not allowing to be assimilated and destroyed, nor be fascinated with the new forms of cyber warfare, of information war, but, on the contrary, to simultaneously develop older, "Third World" strategies and tactics or "First Wave", of the poor countries, where the commanders and the communications are like those of the Incas and Araucanians, with human messengers using drums and smoke signals, symbols and transmissions that electronics do not manage to interfere, within impenetrable forests, with the complicity of Nature, animals and birds, and even volcanoes and stars. Maybe to save themselves from hellish robot imperialism and electronics, the few Nations that still survive, find the solution in the legendary messenger Miguel Strogoff, in the Czar's Mail ...

[2] They would still be the salvation and refuge of various armies of America, Latin America and some "Third World" countries

IMITATION OF THE TRUTH

Within fifty years, the so-called “*nano*-technology”, the manipulation of atoms and individual molecules, to form submicroscopic structures, would have advanced enough that tiny robots can perform inside the human body exams, circulating through the bloodstream. Already existing artifacts, products of microengineering, that are inserted inside a computer, capable of seizing their energy from the central circuits and use them to convey your own information. Thus, the “*nano*-technology” is the next step, which will make all current counter-espionage techniques. In the same way works to produce three-dimensional computers, which build a geophysical map of the cities, being able to establish a meter by square meter control. Already existing cameras that, under the pretext of preventing robberies and assaults, both In England as in America, they could monitor the movement and the lives of thousands of citizens, through remote control devices. If the Hamada is added to this “Smart card", possessing a "chip" that registers all activities of an individual, from cradle to the grave, receiving and delivering information in a central computer, the much talked about democracy, with its human rights and individual freedoms, does not exceed one more fiction. On the contrary, a totalitarian state, robotized to the maximum, it will be the near future of the human species; even with the disappearance of "plastic money" (the credit and debit card), to give way to the “brand of laser in the flesh”. The "Mark of the Apocalypse”.

To the info-war, referred to above, it would be necessary to add the "*Kamomanasic*" war, purely mental. Already working on cyber-telepathy. I mean, telepathy is also robotized, in combination with the computer. It would start with the same help of the electrodes that are used in electroencephalograms, being able to douse the mysterious "Mu" waves of the brain. The Scientists specialized in the subject even speak already on the “interbrain-computer” (BCI: “Brain-Computer-Interface”). Thus, in Asia, Europe and the United States United (the “Trilateral”, in the “Third Wave '), they are looking to decode the waves and signals that are generated in the brain to be able to manage the computer with thought, one day being able to control an entire brain only with the mind. With the thought of a robot, that will make use of the human brain since its circuits could get to work without any intermediation. The old legend of the Golem is already a reality. Norbert Wiener, one of the creators of cybernetics, to

In the late 1960s I published a book entitled God, Golem and Co. (Dios, el Golem y Compañia). I read this book in Europe and sent a gift copy to President Frei Montalva. I never knew his reaction, which would not have been positive, judging by its campaign against traditional agriculture, continued today by his son, in addition to his non-defense of the Laguna del Desierto and its little sympathy for the Armed Forces and by our Portalian tradition and of "State in Shape”. In this book, Wiener reveals his suspicions that man was a robot that God created to investigate a certain part of the Universe, a luck computer, almost perfect, to which I injected an energy called Spirit (we say this). The robot-man would have turned against his creator, destroying him("God is dead!" Declared Nietzsche). Now his robot, created by man,

will turn against him and annihilate. Going down a fatal incline, with a vesanic impulse to self-destruct, blind, hypnotized or drunk, man improves the robot more and more.

Search The way to introduce personality and feelings, life subjective and even an "I". There are already capable robots to win games of chess to man (this legend, archetype, is also old, there is a 1930s German movie, starring Conrad Veit, called The Chess Player). The ethnicity that, apparently, still preserves the superiority of man is that the robot does not reproduce itself, of its own free will. It is stated also that it lacks common sense.

Now, is this always going to be like this? When connecting the man his brain waves to the robot machine has exposed him to steal his mysterious energy("Mu"), just as man would have stolen the Spirit Goodbye. Also, that other dangerous one (and we think, diabolical) universal energy, electricity, could be also conscious, thinking, a thought; but thought of the devil, since with electricity evil spreads without remedy on earth. Without electricity there is no robot, electronic, technetronic, psychotronic, nor cybernetic.

It was Tesla who discovered an "electricity alternative", the “tachyon” rays, of subatomic particles, the "T" rays. He wanted to contact Edison, who tried to market them, as I did with the electricity. Tesla resisted. However, his "other electricity” fell into even worse hands. And is she that today, together with known electricity, has the world under control and man transformed into a zombie. It seems that since the First War World Cup, there are those who are using it to dominate the human brain. Today, with the "Tachyon" machine can change and manipulate the minds of the inhabitants of entire regions, together with the subliminal messages (skillfully released by television and the most varied product advertising), which are provided in its reception by the massive consumption of drugged drinks, like Coca-Cola, which produce addiction. The Subliminal messages are not detected by consciousness. Today computers use silicon "chips" to think". They do not yet have a mind, or a soul. Are intelligent, but differently from human.

One of the most interesting conversations that we would argue with Professor CG Jung, at the end of his days, it was about the human brain and its relationship with the mind. She refers to it, in pages dedicated to mm conversion, Gerhard Wehr, in his important book: *Jung. His Life, his Work, his* Influence, edited by "Paidés" and in circulation in the main bookstores.

"If the mind is able to function outside the brain, that is, the space and time, then it is incorruptible", Jung told me.

And this cannot be a matter of principle, of conceptions, nor faith. You have to experience it. And Jung and I had. Being able to live it is a possibility of the human, perhaps divine, condition of man. Without However, with the irrevocable direction undertaken today, with virtual reality especially, it seems that this door closes forever. Do not exist nor will there be a

computer more perfect nor more extraordinary than the human brain, made to be used by the Mind. And yet it has hardly been taken advantage of today in its infinite programming capacity. For now the right hemisphere appears untouched by the current man. With virtual reality they become useless and unnecessary their extensive functions, since they become replaced by a machine, even if it is achieved to incorporate it, by means of "chips", electrodes and waves. Virtual reality will always be that virtual. Although our own reality was also a fantasy, an illusion, a "maya" Hindi. The cybernetic helmet will replace and avoid the awakening of the "Third Eye", of the Ray of Shiva; the cyber-glove and the cyber-suit will give us the feeling of projecting ourselves into an "astral body" —in the "Linga Sharira."However, it will be no more than an ersatz, an "imitation of the truth", which will be fulfilled at the expense of the real transmutation and the recovery of the Great Power, of the Total-Man, of the Total Brain, which will atrophy not only in the right hemisphere, but also in the left, for lack of use and effort, with the old disciplines of the developing. So serious is this that it already affects human genetics. Today children are born with their eyes open, which must symbolize the loss of the possibility of opening of the "Third Eye", or "*Ajna Chakra*", at the front joint of the two hemispheres of the brain. In addition, at three years they already have their little fingers on the buttons of the computer. Two thousand nine hundred years ago, Hesiod predicted that "when children are born with their eyes open, will be in full Iron Age and the end of the world".

A GREAT CONSPIRACY?

I remember that in India I had an important discussion with Aldous Huxley. Along with dedicating his book to me *The Door of Perception*, expounded his belief that mescaline, more so LSD, it was the "wonderful means by which the old efforts of yogis and saints to achieve mystical states of contemplation, ecstasy or samadhis, those harsh disciplines and torments, which took years, today were reached, thanks to drugs, in only a quarter of an hour". In India I too met Professor Arnold Toynbee, who preached against the countryside, agriculture, and for the triumph of the "city without limits". Then in the United States of America, I went invited by Alan Watts, with more than two hundred experiences with drugs, and by John Lilly, who came from visiting the Chile of Allende (already turned into a drug trafficking center), with a stay at the Ichazo and Naranjo Center, in Arica, precisely where the drug was passing through taste. John Lilly is a dangerous brain manipulator and specialist in the "language of dolphins", with contacts with the CIA and the Pentagon. In Switzerland, I visited Timothy Leary, ex-Harvard professor, promoter, and drug trafficker in those years, also in contact with the CIA.

They thought that, like Castaneda, with his Teachings of Don Juan, I too could become useful with my work, edited by "Harper and Row", in the United States, and by "Routledge and Kegan Paul", in England. They had already made the most of Hermann Hesse, with the voracious complicity of his family. But with me they were wrong, because I, from my experience in India and knowledge and contacts obtained in Chile, during World War II, he knew perfectly that the drug destroys the virtuality of the *chakras* and prevents forever the true development of the Total-Man.

It is known that in the late forties and of the early fifties, the world intelligence services, especially from England, with the Tavistock Institute, and from the United States of America, started a conspiracy to destroy two or three generations of youth, with the promotion of drugs and the movements of "Hippies" and electronic music. The "Beatles" were decorated by the Queen of England. And Timothy Leary declared, with my transfigured face, that I had been born just at the time of the appearance of electronic music it was the privilege of the elect.

I could not say if it was conscientiously that intellectuals like Aldous Huxley, Arnold Toynbee, Alan Watts, Arthur Koestler, Timothy Leary and Castaneda himself, have served the Great Conspiracy, agents of some powerful world intelligence service.

One more step, now final, and quite possibly the Last, because Virtual Reality is the most powerful of the drugs, the *Absolute Drug*, to replace them all, has occurred at the end of the current millennium and the beginning of the next.

There was. Because it was Germany, precisely, the primary responsible for these terrible inventions, which originate from Planck's quantum mathematics, in addition to other disciplines. Back in the twenties, movies like Metropolis show us television and the creation of a “clone" woman. There are also films like *Alraune* and *La Mujer Artificial* and *The Chess Player*, already mentioned. With the arrival of National Socialism to power in Germany, this science would be transformed into *Another Science*, which would have been able to control its damaging effects on the crowd. Due to the fact that Democracy was ending, that is, with indiscriminate diffusion (always intentional and voluntary within democracy). So the "virtual reality”, for example, would never have come into the hands of the world, being the exclusive use of a hierarchical elite. A society like that, originated in estates, in the end it had to be built into a very totalitarian special system, with various hierarchies and elites, where the ultimate goal of the cusp was the access to a Spiritual Science, still higher, a Tantric Alchemy of transmutation destined exclusively to transform man into Superman. In this way, for that elite of the cusp, the interaction would have been established between the hemisphere left brain and right hemisphere, that someone existed in the inhabitant of a distant Aryan Paradise (Ariana Baiji), in the missing Hyperborea. That is to say, the recovery of a Power lost by the Aryan race, exclusively. Power of the Immaterial Mind, which works outside of time and space, and that achieves update the two hemispheres of the brain on this earth, plus the other "brains" of the chakras, transforming the man in a sphere, in a star (a UFO), what arrives to make exclusively rationalistic science unnecessary (of the left hemisphere), and the machine, because it has rediscovered the Ancient Power that levitated the dolmens and the moai. The Mana of Easter Island, of Rapa Nui. East Power could not be reactivated by India, due to the "racial sin"; That is, by the mixture of the Aryans with the Dravidians, of the *Divyas (Nepheline)* with "the daughters of men. "Hence, then, the struggle of Hitlerism to "purify the Aryan race”, in order to achieve the recovery of that Power Exclusive to whites. The re-creation of the Superman by Nietzsche. And not only in Germany.

This is why they were racist.

Consequence of that position, by addition, or “Synchronism", the Other German Science, of the last years of the War, discover and control the implosion, opposed to the explosion, thus achieving mastery of the anti-gravity. They also discover that the electricity is bad[3], and that legendary men illuminated the caverns with a Spiritual White Light.

Against the Absolute Drug of Virtual Reality There is only one antidote: the Absolute Man of Esoteric Hitlerism. So is Solar Energy.

[3] So is Solar Energy. As the Cathars said, the entire visible universe is contaminated by Evil. Only the Spiritual White Light, the Mana Energy, of the ancient Rapa Nui, is saved, for being superior and prior to extreme materialization.

THE CHARLOTTENBURG LETTER

Near the end of World War II, and as response to the "Letter of San Francisco", which gives birth to the United Nations, the Hitlerists make known the "Letter from Charlottenburg".

This Charter advocates a relationship on a human scale and between nations, constituted on the basis of their ethnic and linguistic configuration. They also publish a Map of the New Europe, with this “New Order” (they were the first to coin the term). It is the opposite of the conception of world related by the trade of transnationals and with a total hodgepodge of races, no countries, no territorial borders and without a "carnal" relationship with the landscape, that balance of soul and earth, between man and his environment I live, with the "nature of the soul", with the "homeland of the soul”, of Nietzsche; the "land of the soul", by Otto Rahn, which is referred in his book *Lucifer’s Court*. It is also the theme of my work, more than forty years ago, *Neither by Sea, Nor by Land.*

For the authors of the "Letter of San Francisco", the earth is not a living being and with a well differentiated soul in its different extremes and geographies, where the being that inhabits them has achieved an “'interrelation'” 'of life and death, where their very cells have been fed by the sage from its depths, so that the Homeland, the families and the lines form a line of continuity, woven with a golden thread in the fabric of the landscape, the soul and the soul blood. As the song of *Last Edda* says: “No There is immortality for the individual without the memory of lineages, children, husbands and parents, whose names are engraved with runes in the stone”.

The country is thus the most different thing from a "mall"; is a succession of lines, closely united by a common Collective Unconscious, of myths, legends and traditions, linked with the soul of the landscape and the land, such that each square meter of soil it is sacred, it is not sold, it is not given away, nor is it lost. And man is willing to give his life to defend him and preserve it, like the Chechens, the Croats, the Serbs and the Bosnians. Peruvians and Ecuadorians today. The from Sparta, yesterday. In this warm, humanized world (no “Humanist" or mechanical), always the English butler and the tenant of the Chilean countryside will have a safe place and are privileged, cordial, from the heart. Geography is geomancy and magic land is crossed by key lines, by magnetic and spiritual currents, like the body of man, so that there is an "acausal" relationship between them, to the point of making Professor Jung say, during the terrible earthquake in Chile of the 1960s, that destroyed the city of Valdivia, that disease, which then afflicted me in India, was "synchronistic with my land"...

Destroy this relationship and this mystery, ignore it, as Mr. Brünner and the "cyber-politics" of the Government, which he represents, is a metaphysical crime, deep, which attempts against the Magical Homeland and against "The God who created our People." Defend The tradition of a nationalist and patriotic Army, inside with that mysterious divinity. And fight to death for defending the small country, long lived and beloved, the Homeland of the Soul, the Laguna del Desierto, the Continental Ice, is to achieve immortality, in the Age of the Hero, one minute

before the end of the Kaliyuga. It is to save the Soul of the Spiritual Earth, although destroying the physical land.

And as Teilhard de Chardin said: “He who has passionately loved the land - his land -when he faints, she will lift him up in her arms giants and it will comfort you”. And it is quite possible that the that thus resists, embraced by tradition and life of the lineages, in rapport and balance with its landscape, constituting and reinforcing the "Army of the People”—as in Arauco-, opposing the “Professional armies" of info-warfare, robotized and bureaucratic, with satellites spinning in space, with the internet and virtual reality, that one will get help of beings that inhabit an "extra-situation", or “Extra-dimension". They will reach out to you when everything seems to have been lost; because you will destroy the electricity, with the Power of Mana. And then those who here they took refuge, in the mountains and virgin forests, will be those who survive the catastrophe: "The shepherd of the high peaks”, as Platén tells us, in the destruction of Atlantis.

It was what I tried to do with the colonization of the Melimoyu.

If we have given ourselves the work of synthesizing these ideas, it was because we believed in the urgent need to seek an answer to the important exposition of the Mr. José Joaquin Brünner, who represents the dangerous and wrong position of the current government. And to show you to those young people, who in Chile and *elsewhere they are still born with their eyes closed*, they could still attempt the glorious legendary "opus" of transmutation in the Total-Man, in the Absolute Man, fighting death against the computer, the robot, virtual reality and the "System" that will destroy them, transforming them into only “Neuronal-cells" of a cybertronic interrelation to planetary and even cosmic scale, in mere cyber-nuts disposables of a *global village,* agents, workers slaves of a plastic and cement "mail". We wish to also help defend the Armed Forces, which they still resist being included in the Doctrine of the Pentagon's lethal force, reduced to mere forces of police, in an apparent fight against drug trafficking and subversion. Because there is an alternative and the possibility of another option, maintaining at all costs the validity of a nation-state, "in shape." And the emblem of our National Shield: "By Reason or Force”.

Against the impermanence of the written Constitution, the perennial Historical Constitution prevails.

The only possible solution, the only antidote that it exists there, it is the Esoteric Hitler National Socialism, with its total Cosmovision. The only one who could save a desperate youth, before their hopeless robotization in the Age (Yuga) of Lead, and of Plastic, offering the great adventure of the mutation of the Superman and the full development of his powers, in rapport with the Magic Homeland. In the Yuga of the Hero.

THE TOMB OF LENIN AND THE MANUTARAM

The Lord José Joaquin Brünner is a technocrat from the communications. The most important communicator of the Government of the current Chile. An expert on cyber politics and the information war. However, due to his blood, dare we think that some of the philosophical *pathos* and metaphysical of their ancestors still circulates through it. And even if he wants to believe that History and Tradition, that the Internet, virtual reality, the computer incorporated and all that electronic paraphernalia, have killed History, Philosophy, Art in general and, above all, to the book, in some corner of his genes he will be thinking and even hoping that hopefully this is not so. And that there's *another thing*.

Because the world is much more mysterious than it seems.

Yes, the world is full of strange things! By example, Mr. Brünner knew that in the tomb of Lenin his mummy is not dead but alive? And that during all the long years of Soviet Leninist Marxism was it precisely he who ruled? And that even today is still alive, because there, the same Russian esoteric sect, of black magic, keeps him (his mummy) alive, making him circulate a strange liquid through your veins?[4] Those "technocrats of magic" would pretend to revive the ancient science of the Egyptian priests, gathering their knowledge with the materialist conception of Leninist-Marxism. They seriously believe that immortality is in the cells. Just as the Egyptian priests preserved the entrails of the pharaohs' mummies, in pots and in special liquids, Lenin's brain has also been cut into torrejas (similar to how it is done today with brains that are sent to alien space in ships spaces) and is equally preserved. The Egyptians knew of the fundamental importance of the corporal internal organs, in relation to the mummy and the "*Ka*", the etheric double, and they would never have committed the crime of ontological analysis of organ transplants. Something I stopped functioning in relation to the mummy in Egypt of the Dynasties, something that was lost in Atlantis. Throughout In any case, the communists did not believe in the "*Ka*" and only in the immortality of the cell.

The "initiates" of "esoteric Marxism", by race and for faults in the memory of his blood, they had forgotten what the ancient inhabitants of Easter Island knew very well. To achieve bodily immortality, even of cells, it would have been necessary to intercommunicate the body with Mind, so as to disintegrate the body and transfer their energies to the "*Ka*", or "Double", thus being able to immortalize its form, without dissolving the self. It is the resurrection of the ancient Taoist magicians, the resurrection of Wotan, on the ninth day, and from Kristos, on the third. And also, Hitler's resurrection.

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[4] And the same would happen in communist China with Mao's mummy.

In a conversation with the oldest of the tribe of the Pakarati, of Easter Island, he revealed to me that his race had had the power to die at will (without dying)and that also the ancients could move to visit distant places and worlds with the body of *Mana* (*Manu*, Mind), with the "*Ka*", as Hoto-Matua, the Ancestor, the Root-Man (the Bird-Man), who thus came from Hiva. That is, they would not have needed the cyber-helmet, the cyber-body, virtual reality. They could also move to will the mohai (mohai-mummy-mahori), those "mummies of stone "of Rapa Nui, that today I only sleep.

There is something dark in the soul of Slavic Russia, always present, and that Ossendowsky already saw, when writing his book *The Terrifying Shadow of the East*, to describe the Russia of Rasputin, Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin.

In the disappeared Rapa Nui, the *Mana* and of the Initiation of the Manutara, the caste of the dried apricots, he was of Aryan blood, like the Vikings, according to what has been checking it out the wise Chilean hematologist Dr. Ratl Etcheverry, when doing the analysis of the blood of the indigenous survivors. They are from group "A".

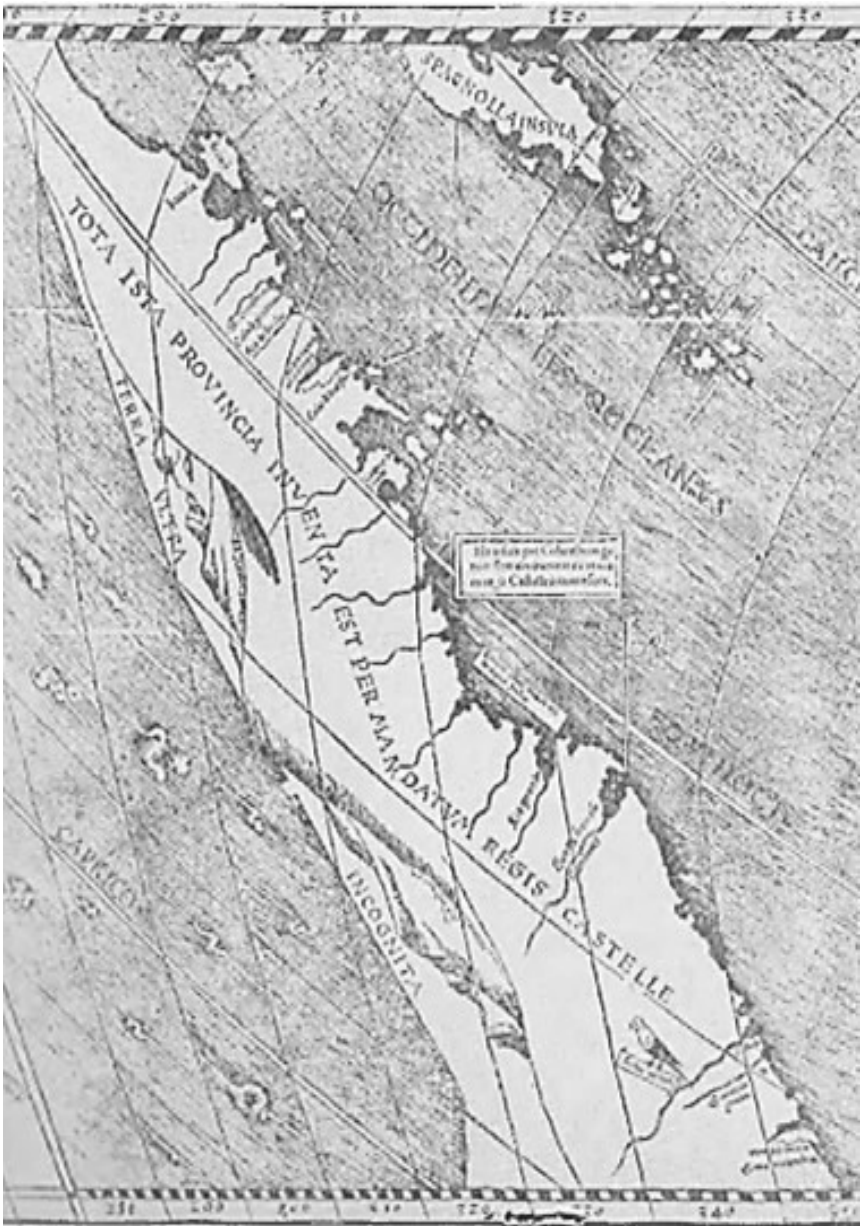
And it is there, in the Aryan blood, in the white race, where there could exist on this planet the last possibility of recovering the *Mana*, the lost Power, which makes unnecessary science that *imitates the truth* and that will destroy, in the end, the man on earth. I have recently visited Rapa Nui. There it is thought that the Manutara no longer exists. But, descending from the Rano-Kao volcano and over the island of Hapu-Manu, from the "Cry of the Bird", I saw it. Flew Majestically, with his partner (Him and Her) approaching even me I interpret it as another message from Nature and from Heaven, to confirm us in our faith and in the struggle sacred by the Mystic Homeland and by the Absolute Man, reintegrated into his Ella. Him and Her, flying together. The *Manutara*!

Against the Black Magic of virtual reality, the Internet, telepresence and the cyberpolitics of "small governments", with presidents-managers-robots (remotely guided Chips inserted into their bodies), only the White Magic of Esoteric Hitlerism.

Who Calls in the Ice

History of the Antarctic Search

MIGUEL SERRANO



Waldseemüller's map. — First print in which the design of the American continent was illustrated (year 1507).

To those who undertook the adventure
of being born in the South.

Neither by sea nor by land will you find
the road that leads to the region of eternal ice...

- PINDAR

INTRODUCTION

The world of the future will be that of New Antarctica. The new Antarctica may be the old Atlantis. Before and after the sea.

Here is an unfinished book. The ancient and recent dead helped me. I have only been a vehicle of eternal Amor. Therefore this is also the book of eternal life. The book of the Southern ice. And of the White Sun.

The part of the book that should have followed, I prefer to live it instead. Walk, walk, until I find the Ice Oasis, Antarctica within, the last smile, the tender indifference, until I come together again with my Father, who died of yesteryear.

Pale traveler, here is the wind, here is all that is lost. The little gained. Here is the sea again ...

Santiago de Chile, 1955.

THE SEA

Behold the sea. The possibility of all roads. Blood and lymph from the earth. Divine bow furrowed, wounded, ephemeral. Solar deities imagined themselves triumphant over the sea. It was a day, a single day; when the waves spread their hands and fingers, talons of foam as they sank mountains and temples. At the bottom of the waters, between the infinite weight and the dark light, old dreams still grow, the invincible pride of another Adam. They live there, where the thick liquid barely moves and cold beings do not know the air that flies over the back of the waves and that, after all, is perhaps the very breath of the sea, the breath and the steam released from his old body, from his heavy work.

And the waves come, the waves, and more waves. One after the other, they raise their white foams, of salts, towards the light; keeping the sun in its folds of water, enveloping it, refreshing it, projecting it in a myriad of reflections in solitude, in the vastness of its desert. So too it is in the life of the ocean of time. A wave may invoke a beautiful ship, or a lonely castaway, a wave thinking it will last forever, and tell his story to the algae and the rocks of an inexact beach. But the wave only lasts a minute and he does not know if he transfers his experience, nor the reflection of his sun, nor the memory of his history, to his immediate sister, to enrich the great memory of the sea. The noise and the song are the lament and the martyrdom of the waves, but also the life of animals, men and gods, must produce a deep sound on the beaches of infinity. Its wings will break and die on the rock in which some greater illusion contemplates it.

(I hold onto foam fingers and resist in the surf. My wave wants to curve its back, to make its shape immense, sink a continent, and transform the land in view, not to lose itself again in the unconscious amplitude of the sea. My self is the tiny reflection of the sun, kept and shining in the folds of instantaneous water. If my wave were able to break off and sit on a rock, ah then, could I contemplate the sea like that lonely one with dark eyes, participating in his enormous memory and memories! Or return, broadening the low sunlight; of the waters, illuminating the memories, the shipwrecks, the lost cities, the forgotten inheritances, and to be already the light of all the waves, the fixed sun through their deaths and returns. The light of the sea, the light green, blue and white, descending and then rising, from the depths).

The sea still exists for us to contemplate its depth. So far the adventure in him has been external. Wars, conquests, discoveries, privateers. The prows were lined up towards distant beaches, where islands and continents were discovered. On the back of the sea the gold, slaves and death were carried. But no one has looked inward, no one has searched for its true essence and reason. That is why they do not know that there is a river that descends to the bottom and enters the center of the world; that bends, turns on itself and immediately rises, rescuing its current towards the heights, from the depths of the sea. Some maddened whales wanted to sail it, perishing in the attempt. Only mermen and mermaids soar their gloomy course, and also a boat with an elderly Ferryman. For this river is the river of the dead, which spreads beyond the Dark Forest, under the surface of the sea. Traveling in the background of the cities of Atlantis, visiting its submerged palaces and the bones of another ancient Adam. It is there that great sins are punished, wicked dreams, fateful reminiscences and where pulpy coral trees sway on an aurichalcum horse. In the center of the sea, where the river still does not reach, two naked beings walk hand in hand. They are two suicides, they are two friends. Their loose hair floats in the liquid atmosphere. They look as if silhouettes and go as if flying, moving their legs and observing with their bodies, waiting for an advent. They are looking for someone, in the imprecise distance of the waters, in the dark solitude, someone who must come, someone who gave them a date in the bottom of the sea. Perhaps that someone sails already by the river of the dead. But they are far from this river and they don't even know it. They exist between life and death.

So many things.

South Sea, Pacific Ocean. Its waves are bigger than the mountains, bigger than the sphinxes of Lemuria, than the temples of Mu, than the frozen deserts of Godwana, than the ice shelves of Antarctica. In the middle of this ocean an island grows; in certain seasons rising like a rock towards the heavens and, in other times, submerging, being again covered by the sea. On its beaches, by the edge of its wet cliffs, there is a human figure that moves away, but turns its face towards the sea and contemplates it with its frightening basins. The Ocean is the dark, infinite soul that imprisons it, and it is the ephemeral form, a rebellious wave, the self, a new continent, another life, another anguish: an attempt to beat the sea. Yet how they long for the deep bosom, the fright, the horror, the night of

the Ocean! The storms of chaos of divine Memory! He can't take another step ... that's why the island will sink again.

Seen from here, the lonely sea holds old memories. The calm Moon, the stormy nights, the ships that sail it in all ages, and the beautiful months of the Sun. Its salt, its iodine, the foams of their distances and the colors of their intense twilights. In distant times, in its blue days, there were wings on the waves. It was the sailboats of classical times. Seen from the hills of the isles of gold, they looked like winged beings: wings of the waves; winged giants of the sea and sky. And then the music of everything that one day perished, of what has not yet come and what is already a promise in the blue of the sky, accompanying them in their sweet shimmer on the gentle waves. Still demigods reflected the friendly view in their clear pupils, seen from the palaces and temples in the hills of the ancient continents. Today the sea is the same; the sea has not changed. The smoke from the ships crosses its horizon with a white trail. And the afternoon sun descends red on the profile of the distant waves. On the beaches the wind bends the thorns and large thistles, spreading the petals of a white flower. Black birds stop on charred whale skeletons and there is a long and painful moan on the rocks beaten by the surf. A slow cold descends on the sea, while little by little the stars in the sky light up.

There is nothing new in this. And it would always be beautiful, if we didn't know that over the Ocean, between the sky and the water, stands the gigantic back of a shadowy being. He looks intensely and curses. His feet sink below the sea, to the center of the earth, and his face gazes over the desert of waters, even beyond the last mountains. He curses the stars, because He is a star. He entertains himself with the waves. And so he plays with us, because he is the Spirit of the Earth. Grabbing us by one hand, squeezing us and destroying us. Then washing his hand in the sea. However, his eyes are gloomy, because he knows that one day, somewhere, on this very Ocean, man will conquer it.

THE CHAMBER OF OFFICERS

It was a few years ago, on my trip to Antarctica, aboard a Navy frigate. That one afternoon, the salt and the foam of the sea healed me. Then, holding on to the deck cables, I descended the narrow ladder to the wardroom. The room was of regular dimensions, with a long iron table and some comfortable chairs. Scattered, there were some men among whom I

could recognize my friend Poncet. Seeing me, he got up introducing me to the others.

They momentarily interrupted the chat and looked at me puzzled. I was a civilian. What was he doing on this expedition? Then they went back to their conversation and forgot about me. An Army Major explained his exploration plans for Antarctica. He was accompanied by a geographer and an astronomer. The sailors, in their pale uniforms, listened with concentration. From time to time one would get up and leave the chamber. Then he would return, with the light of the sea in his pupils, and he would settle into the same spot. In a corner, silent, half shrouded in gloom, stood a thick, dark man. When he spoke, I knew he was not a military man, nor was he a sailor; he was an Aviation commander. The subject ended up on him referring to certain plans that he also cherished. We were going to need the plane; without him we would lack time. The frigate bobbed a little and through one of the windows was seen a beam of red, oblique light, which struck the curtains of the entrance, at that moment they drew back to make way for a man in uniform. In it was the doctor on board. He was looking around; recognizing me, his face broke into a smile. He greeted me, telling me: "Good to see you. I went to your cabin and I did not find you there; but I found this." He handed me an old book. "I'm glad you are in this story and on this ship. I do not know where we are going, nor if we will return, but at least I know it will be possible to talk about old things, about the sea …"

At that moment a long chime rang, like a high-pitched bell, and they all looked up at the clock, but the sailors remained silent and did not move, as if they were waiting for someone. And so it really was; because the curtain at the entrance moved and then appeared the figure of the second commander on board. He paused at the door for a moment and saluted. Then he removed the cap and, sitting at the head of the table, invited the others to do the same. It was time for lunch. The captain lowered his face to his chest. It was only for a second. At that moment the ray of light hit his face and I saw a sharp profile, a bitter grin, an indefinable sadness. It seemed that suddenly he was praying, or that he was suffering. He smiled and said something, then suddenly he struck the iron cover of the table with his fist, reprimanding the sailor that served us. The Army Major raised his head, quite surprised. The Aviation commander only shrugged.

I got up, going to the window. I rested my forehead there, in the thick glass, and looked outside. The water leaped, the foam rose. And far, out on the horizon, a gray shadow loomed, long and hard, cloaked in the gloom of twilight. It was the distant land, the beloved and unknown continent, as it once appeared to the eyes of ancient navigators.

THE STRANGE CONVERSATION OF CAPTAIN S.

The first stage of the navigation was completed in the port of Talcahuano, where we anchored for a whole day. In the moment in which we weighed anchor, the tanker arrived, it was the second ship of the expedition.

A fine mist fell on the pier and on the sea that morning. Inside the tanker, in his cabin, Captain S. called the orderly to help him put on his boots. After adjusting his uniform, he put on his cap. He closed the cabin door and started down the different decks of the ship, between piled iron, tubes and beams. Disassembled, in pieces, was the base that was going to be installed in Antarctica. Before descending into the boat that would take him ashore, Captain S. went astern to take a look at the dogs, who would be his company on the white continent. The animals, seeing him, jumped giving howls. Then the boat took him to the dock up and down on the gray waves. The captain wanted to avoid meeting with other soldiers or sailors so he made use of the enclosure car, but waited patiently for a bus that would take him to Concepción.

You could see quite a few people in the city that morning, mingling through its square in the fine rain. It was Sunday. Captain S. continued through the city next to the gardens and statues. With an agile step he marched through one of its streets and arrived at the door of a house.

For a moment he paused to look until he seemed to see what he was looking for. On a bronze plaque, attached to the wall, could be read: “Professor Oliver Klohn”. The captain gave a satisfied smile and rang the bell. By a rare chance the professor was in his House. From the end of the corridor, in the gloom, his bulky silhouette emerged. When he saw a man in uniform, he seemed a little surprised, although his jovial face denoted pleasure. With a German accent - very pronounced r’s - he greeted the military man, who briefly explained the reason for his visit: he was the head of the new base that was to be installed in Antarctica. He wanted to talk to the teacher, to ask him about some points of interest.

Professor Klohn laughed merrily. Taking his arm, he took him to his den. This was a room full of books, papers, dissected animals, microscopes, pictures, decorations, diplomas and two souvenirs from Antarctica: seal and whale bones, penguin hides and embalmed petrels. The captain sat down in a chair and the professor, behind his desk. And that's how the conversation started that here we go to reproduce:

“Professor, do you think that someone ever lived on that continent we call Antarctica?”

“This a curious question ... Scott found facing the Ross Sea, in the Queen Victoria Range, or by the Erebus or Terror mountain, fossil remains of tree leaves and bark corresponding to a tropical vegetation. A tropic in the ice. This would corroborate the hypothesis of the migration of the poles, the precession of the equinoxes and the theory supported by Wegener about the transformation of the continents. Continents move at a rate of three kilometers per million years ... Antarctica was a tropic millions and millions of years ago. According to Wegener, all of the continents were united in their origin, together, this being about fifty million years ago, in the Jurassic period, or Cretaceous and then, for various reasons, among others the centrifugal force of rotation of the earth, they were dividing, splitting, moving away and forming what is now the world, a plurality of disparate lands.”

“That sounds good to me, professor. Everything must be the same in the universe. From unity; one starts from plurality, from the indeterminate to individuation. To return one day to the indeterminate, to a new meeting. I have seen Wegener's schematics. And that single, central continent looks a lot like a fetus collected in the mother's womb. Later it detaches, stretches, rises and perhaps suffers in the plural and conscious life, in separation. And what happens with the continents, it too will happen with the races. In the origin there was some point from which the first man started, a single point; maybe that same central continent …”

"Oh no, Captain! You are too imaginative ... to return to your first question: Were there inhabitants in Antarctica? … I know that for this continent to have had a temperate climate ... How many millions of years! And man on earth will have at most one million years. If it does! An

anthropologist claims that man came to South America through Antarctica. Its stages were Australia, New Zealand, Ross Sea, Queen Victoria Land, Peninsula of Graham, the Sea of Drake and Tierra del Fuego. Surely the Sea of Drake was narrower and the submerged mountain range still conserved many peaks out of the water …"

"Don't you believe in a native American man?"

"No. I believe, as you do, that at the beginning there was only one point; but not so far back in time. I do not believe in the plural appearance either and simultaneous of man in various places on the planet. India may have been the starting point. There a High-Culture would have been formed, later spreading to Asia and the islands of the Pacific. The passage to America would have been carried out through the Strait of Behring, from where it would have flowed to the extreme south, with slowness of centuries."

"Regarding your statement, Professor, that man cannot have more than a million years on earth, is it not Ameghino who claims to have discovered in Argentina signs of man and one being a human skeleton in tertiary sediments?"

"That's right, Captain, but it is striking that Ameghino's "tertiary man" is not different in any way from the Patagonian Indians, from the current Tehuelches. Do you realize that this cannot be? But for your peace of mind, I will tell you that in Africa and America they also have found human fossils of appalling antiquity, Pliocene and Miocene. They are the *Australopithecus Africanus*, and their structure does not differ much from *Homo sapiens* and is far from resembling *Pithecanthropus Jabeanus*. There is also clear evidence from the more Paleolithic ancient America. . . But I am a man of science and while everyone's data is not collected and classified, I am left with the traditional certainty."

"Well, Professor, as for your argument about Ameghino, I must tell you that I am not convinced. Imagine that right now it ended civilization due to a cataclysm, or other causes, and only scattered human beings who, slowly, from a new barbarism, will head back to civilization. After centuries, forgetting the glorious past, remaining only in a hazy legend, some new science of man could find a skeleton somewhere in Africa or

Brazil; but lo and behold, that skeleton is not that of one of the two of us, for example, but is of a savage contemporary of ours, of a cannibal and, next to this skeleton is another of a chimpanzee. What do you think laughs at that man of science? Of course, civilized humanity does not. He was older than the age of his own history, a few millennia...

“However, however ... if he suddenly dug elsewhere, and in contrast your skeleton, Professor, and your skull ... What would you say? I would say that cannot be ...”

The professor smiled.
“I see, Captain. The catastrophic theory of cycles. For this path, you are going to confess to me that you believe in Atlantis. But Wegener, precisely, has dealt a death blow to this belief.”

“Why? Could not Atlantis be that unique and central continent? After partition and separation, intermediate pieces, or other continents appeared meanwhile, could sink catastrophically in the waters …”

The professor kept smiling.

“You forget, Captain, that the main support of Wegener's theory is the almost exact match between African headlands and South American depressions between gulfs and peninsulas, between the two coasts of the continents.”

The captain was silent, looking with his blue eyes at a vague point from the wall, between the paintings and the stuffed insects, and a moment with his chin supported in his hands.

“It is true; but that is what makes me doubt the hypothesis of Wegener's. There is too much coincidence, too much evidence. When this happens, it is that the devil is reaching out there to hide something else that is the truth and that he doesn’t want us to see, because with its light it would blind us …”

The professor got up from his seat somewhat restless and began to walk around the room.

“Gee, Captain! Do you belong to a spiritualist sect? It seems to me that you are more interested in the occult than positive science.”

The captain responded promptly:

“No, professor, I don't belong to any of those societies. . . As for the rest, I don't see why shy away from the logic of reasoning when data is missing. For example, does science know what an *ice age* is? You don't know yet ... And couldn't we currently be living in an interglacial era? Ice ages have lasted for hundreds of thousands of years and some interglacial ages only thirty thousand years. Coming a new ice age, the human race may disappear. And maybe it has already disappeared before in the immense past...”

As in a monologue, the professor spoke loudly, while pacing:

“Yes. What does science know! It is true, it is true ... Cephalic indices are said to prove the superiority of the race and the evolution of modern man. But the cranial cubic capacity of *Homo Musterience* and The Neanderthal were superior to ours according to detailed measurements. Then? Where are we? And the *Cro-Magnon* man, has he reappeared on earth? Only in Greece! Once, there was beauty and an equal balance ...
The brain is a rare, very rare thing; a vertebra that blossomed, that opened like a flower and that instead of soft or penetrating perfume, it emanated ideas, thoughts, that is, perfume too, "flatus", cosmic "humus". . . And why are the other vertebrae not able to flourish, expand, and transform into brains? Then man would be round, yes, round, like a planet, like a star and would turn perhaps in the heaven of wisdom, with all its vertebrae thinking. Is this not, Captain, what interests you? Isn't this what is called occultism? That is, hidden thought, which is not said, which is not confessed to the common people; but that one meditates quietly, sometimes, at night, when no one and only God sees us. . . You are interested in America, the south of your country; Well, I, who am a European, can tell you one thing: this race of here, the remains that you will find in the canals, does not belong anymore to our cycle, it corresponds to another star, to "another earth", and it is the daughter of another Adam. Perhaps you, having fed your bones on this earth, have some of it; but I have nothing in common and I am a rebel from another sky ... This race of the channels is a remnant of the Paleolithic and still

persists along with their "conchales" and their "aeoliths", their stones of the dawn of humanity ... It should be believed that even its albumen is different ... Look, Captain, do you know anything about the Magdalenian man? Do you know anything about his art? This will give you a hint and serve as an example to gauge the difference... I have always been concerned with the caverns of the Magdalenian period. It is something so extraordinary, so... how to say it...? *unitive* and, at the same time, loyal, but distant... at the same time the object represented is penetrated and sees it inside, it is placed outside and he looks at it, contemplates it, with a fine, tender and delicate soul. Such delicacy has not yet existed in our time. The Altamira cave artist, who painted a bison on the dark and mysterious rock, saw maybe in an animal a lost god, an archangelic state hopelessly in the past for his soul, and his pain and emotion were such that he retired to the deepest and loneliest part of the cavern to remember it. Observe you, Captain, why, why did this Paleolithic ancestor never draw a human face? Why didn't he paint his face on the stone? Perhaps he was ashamed of himself, of the defenseless nakedness of Adam. He had lost the animal god and still couldn't find man. He was ashamed of himself. Surely he wore amine masks, he tried to imitate and understand what was lost. He made a "comedy" of his life. And in that intermediate state, he invoked Satan, as only escape, that is, he found in art his strength and his evasion in the "representation". When he dared to paint the man, he did only in a schematic and symbolic way, by means of abstract signs, that still endure. Imagine that man, that "monster of sensitivity", huddled in a humid and gloomy place in the cave, wearing a bull's head and painting, reproducing from memory, surely with closed eyes, the beloved and feared animal…"

The professor was yelling, and his words were pouring out with great ease:

"And what happened? Everything is over. The Magdalenian man stopped painting; that sacred art was interrupted overnight in mysterious and sudden ways, and there was no longer tradition to feed it and perpetuate. That race of strange men disappeared from Europe. Of where it came from, where did its evolution come from, its magnificent balance and its sense of drama? Here yes, captain, here I might have a hold on the myth of Atlantis. Maybe his disappearance coincides with a great sinking, with a catastrophe in the Atlantic. . . But there is something more important, which is where I want to go. All research later has emphasized only the magnificent and naturalistic painting of animals, ignoring the schematic

signs in which man was represented. Yet for me and for you mainly, it is the latter that is most important. He realizes? They never painted man as reality. That is, they painted it as a force, an energy, an archetype, something that acts, that occurs as a gesture, as a thought, as an idea, as a symbol, or a "representation", that is not real like an animal; but that can no longer perish, because it reproduces eternally, always that there is someone capable of "thinking" him, of interpreting him in his simple structure, a schematic, cosmic, sign. It is a drama and a comedy: the imitation and interpretation of a force. Man can perish, but the sign remains. And as long as there are caverns in the world that preserve these signs, even if man is erased from the surface of the planet by a great catastrophe, these vibrant signs will produce him again. This is what I think, Captain. And I think more, I think later the man strayed. And that it is here in America, in the South, where this "wisdom of the caves" could return..."

THE LAST SUN

It was the dawn of a beautiful December day. When the frigate entered the Chacao Channel. I was sleeping, so I did not see the islands that are like precious stones, neither the turquoise color of the waters, nor the vegetation, nor the red roofs of the houses. Around the islands, boats and sailboats sailed and the birds began their flights of worship to the sun. A sweet languor invaded me and in order to stay longer in the berth I preferred to miss out on breakfast on board. I did not see the sun; but I felt it. At noon I went up on deck. In the distance you could see the silhouette of the great island of Chiloé. Soon I was going to cross the furthest limit of the waters that many years before had held me back, not being then able to surpass it, but now I would easily overcome. Today, like yesterday, I felt the influence of the mystery of the unknown, the imperious underwater current that dragged the ship "further south". There, on a hazy horizon, someone wielded an irresistible magnet; the steel plates of the frigate were easy prey for his insatiable strength. Beneath the smooth waters, furrowed by ancient tonines [dolphins], hidden hands and secret voices quickened our march, they made it more rigorous, and took us away from the sun. At the bottom and below, faithful sentries watched us and carried out precise orders. And I was the fundamental prey, since I had prepared myself through these years such as in ancient times the chosen victims were prepared for sacrifice. And when I crossed the boundary, a shudder of glee

ran through me, along with anxious thoughts of the unknown universe that was now opened before me.

Canal Moraleda received us bright and warm, enveloping us in its light. In the distance appeared the snow-capped peaks of the impenetrable Cordilleras, over a pure blue sky. Those regions are almost unknown and they are covered with virgin forests. Looking at the mountains, drawn with celestial transparencies, I thought of the City of Caesars and a fabulous perfume was released from the peaks and the abysses. By my side, on deck, the expedition cameraman never tired of operating his camera; sometimes he would stare, absorbed in the light.

"I've been through here," he said, "but this luminosity had never been so touching". I sat down to enjoy the sun near the bow, below the main cannon of the frigate, which pointed its mouth covering the horizon. My friend Poncet had approached. "Let's enjoy this sun," he said, "it's the last we'll see." He laid on his back to contemplate the clarity of the sky and the flight of lax seagulls. On the mast the radar plate rotated, also with softness, like an imprisoned bird. All that day we crossed through the light. Later, next to the turn compass, I met the architect of the expedition.

“You cannot understand”, he told me, “what it means to build houses in those places. It's something like being God and starting to populate the world; Along with the houses, it seems to me that I am creating men.” The architect was an experienced navigator and, in the gyrocompass, gave me my first sailing lessons.

At dusk, on the deck, in the midst of a soft twilight and of the calm shimmering over the waters, an arm reached out pointing to the distant land: “The Milimoyu!”

I shuddered. There, on the edge, covered in white and pink snow, clouded with trembling light, the top of a slender mountain and, at the top, two crab claws appeared, as if pretending to imprison the sky. From top to bottom, I thought, wisdom could be transferred from Kailás to Milimoyu ... But we are at an empty continent – the only soul is the soul of the earth - depopulated, without gods, without men, without animals. Our path is through a wasteland, shrouded in illusory light.

We anchor. The russet veils of the last twilight fall. In that amphitheater of mountains the threads of the night are woven. Everything is red. Only water retains its glass or mirror transparency. I'm alone, I lean over the rope on the railing and look. Then it seems I distinguish a strange movement of the water, which swells, beginning to rise and a body seems to be about to emerge on the surface; turns a bit and is moving, leaving a line behind in the water. Am I sure what I see? Is it not an illusion of this light and of this shadow? Now he is moving away. Then I scream: “Wait! I'm here!” But the shadow has fallen, the night is coming. I feel that I'm not alone on deck and there are eyes that watch me.

THE SHADOWS

Clouds, the sun has died. From time to time, amid the thick smoke of the cycle, a brief moment reappears, and then lightning breaks its way, straight, violent, over the sea. The frigate moves silently, trying to catch up with it. But it is useless. The clouds are closing, gray birds fly and the rain is coming, its eternal reign begins. It's a fine rain, constant, almost imperceptible, which is part of the air and the contour; it bounces off the sea, on some island, on the already distant Chonos archipelago, on the land and the unexplored peaks of the continent that borders the canals to the east, on the profile of Magdalena Island, which is approaching on the horizon. A different vegetation begins to insinuate. The deep green of the ferns becomes scarcer, the color less varied and a smell of things rotten by humidity envelops everything. The trees become stunted and the forest is made of beech and Patagonian oaks, bent by the wind, bent by the water, pierced with moisture, with its bark softened and peeling, sinking its roots into a soil that is surely soft and swampy.

All these regions, with their precise names, are thoroughly described in marine charts and other books to reference. After these long years. I only have a vague memory of names and places and the fundamental impression of the dampness and shadow. The south of Chile, the south of the world, beyond Chiloé, it corresponds to the kingdom of the waters and the shadow. There is a sporadic sun that from time to time descends like the ray of Grace to the pit of Hell. The lungs are dilated and moisture is sucked in and a smell of soggy vegetation that comes from the land and the islands; at the same time as below, in the deep, in the underwater, it is a fathomed force, a kind of decline, that pushes us “further south”, towards a point that must be the beginning and the end of wet and cold. The sun

has been lost; left behind. And just as quickly has its memory been lost in the mind of the one who descends through these silent threads of water.

I have started to tour the ship; I've been up and down the iron ladder, looking at the landscape, following the flight of dark birds, watching the wake of the ship and the opaque bottom of the waters. Once in a while the dolphins pass quickly, like a shadow in the background; or the corpse of a scrawny penguin is dragged along with a bundle of seaweed. Eddies and funnels consistently form in the water, and there the rain falls.
The sky creates cloud bombs, low ceilings and an icy haze rises and falls during the day. On the deck there is a sailor winding a bundle of twine, another is putting tar on the keel of a boat. They do not speak to each other, they do not even look, they are absorbed, turning their backs to the gray current of the south that carries them away.

Thus we arrive at the Gulf of Penas, and begin its crossing. Shortly before we had almost stopped waiting for the tanker, which was coming fast to catch up. We saw it pass to starboard, in the middle of the fog. A boat sailing at maximum speed, splitting the water with a sharp keel, which appears and disappears in the waves. It was beautiful. Then the wind was unleashed and the waters of the gulf ruffled and the rain lashed the ropes and sides of our ship. The Tempest had begun. I went up to the commander's tower, propped up on the railing, with the waterproof cap over my ears. Next to me stood a short, stocky sailor of a certain age. He looked at me and smiled.

"You better stay here. The air will keep you from getting dizzy. The gulf is very rough."

I smiled. He was a tough man, a boatswain perhaps. He was giving me good advice and obviously glad that the elements were unleashed.

The waves began to rise above the keel, crashing furiously against the ship's chest. The frigate, closed like a submarine, all made of steel, was a shell that tossed up and down over the raging back of the gulf. At one point everything around was chaos; the wind whistling, thunder in the sky, crawling like mountains to fall over the waters and sink into the depths; lightning flashes through the mist and a rare clarity in the air. Despite the gray of the rain; the waves in a dance of hills and sky were moving like a

swing. Clinging to the railing, next to the boatswain, I also felt beyond immediate fear, a great joy and a drive of challenge and combat. I looked at the ship and saw it impassively in the middle of the raging water, rising and falling, disappearing almost under the waves, to then reappear, dripping, burnished, foamy, sweating. In the tower where we were there were moments that we seemed to be perpendicular to the sea! Heading down, I thought we were sinking. The waves, breaking over the keel, entered our tower and they made us feel their cold salty taste. Then I looked up and saw the radar screen spinning imperturbable, with equal slowness and serenity; it knew nothing of this storm. Its specialty was recording sound shadows, vibrations of another kind. The boatswain extended his arm and pointed to the whirling horizon:

"Look, look there!" He yelled against the wind. “Whales!” “Where? What is?” I yelled back. There to the starboard, very close, on the top of a great wave, was projecting a double jet of steam of water, straight up, and then another one, up to three times. “The storm takes them away from the coast, they are sperm whales. Watch now it's back. There goes one!” They were the first whales seen in the middle of the storm. The boatswain felt his Ancestors as an old fisherman reborn, along with his soul of adventure and war. The elements unleashed united us in an understanding that was surely rooted in prehistory. The Chilean rediscovers his soul amid the tremors, the tempest or war, and then, he unites, loves himself and discovers faith in destiny. But a raging storm is needed in the Gulf of Sorrows, or a cataclysm, for separations and false gods to submerge and the soul of the warrior is ready to take back the reins of the landscape.

Soaked and conscious, he was paying attention to the silence that falls under the storm. My inner ear was telling me that someone was laughing out loud inside the waters and that it was his laughter that drove the whales from those depths. The forest, the monsters, the cetaceans, the men and the storm, we were pushed over the gulf towards a shadow even worse. I knocked on the door of the commander's tower and someone opened it for me within. Along with the instruments and charts, the officers directed the difficult navigation. The commander turned and said to me: “Come on in ... from here it looks much better. In any case, it has been a good baptism for you. The Gulf feels responsible for maintaining its prestige in front of visitors.”

I had not seen the commander of the frigate since before our departure. Now I was able to acknowledge him with pleasure. He was short and still young, with a clear and open face. Around his neck he wore a silk white scarf, his hair was cropped and he smiled, giving the orders in a low voice, with an unchanging serenity.

I approached the window that was shaking; through the steam, formed by the different temperatures that separated its tiny thickness, I could make out an explosion of light, rising over the waters of the storm. The officers' faces lit up with sulphurous clarity, and the ship rocked, tilting dangerously. We grabbed hold of it and became closer, supporting each other. The commander's face was impassive.

Beyond the horizon a rainbow appeared. One of its points descended towards the sea and calmed the waves, filling the black surface of the waters with green pearls; the other end was hidden behind the thick clouds, held, perhaps, by some hand that was afraid of sinking forever into the depths of the sea, because down there, they grabbed the other end of the rainbow and pulled it apart at the middle.

CHRISTMAS TOWARDS ANTARCTICA

At the end of the Gulf is the San Antonio Lighthouse. Hard to get to with the boats because the waves break with such force and the stormy weather. Men often have to wait for months to be relieved of their stay in that Lighthouse. The tanker lowered a longboat.

They were taking the dentist of the expedition aboard to attend to one of the Lighthouse guards. We continued perusing. Life on the frigate became routine. I spent the day lying in my bunk, without reading, almost without thinking, attentive only to an external and faint murmur, and to a kind of internal preserving that seemed to be growing. One afternoon, I walked down a corridor until I arrived at the door of a cabin, which seemed to me to be that of the Commodore of the flotilla. I thought I observed a shadow and noticed a faint smell of tobacco mixed with perfumes. A day later we anchored in a sort of bay. It was the 24th of December. That night would be Christmas. At three in the afternoon, a group of us descended into the whaling boat and ran ashore on an island. It was raining as always. It was the first time I had stepped on this wet and strange land. The officers and sailors looked like old sea lions in their black waterproof capes. The first

thing was a smell rising from the ground and coming from the immediate forest, it was a bland odor, produced by the humidity of the roots, leaves and ferns.

We looked for a path and started to climb the slope of the island on the steep side. The architect and the officers began to cut some branches and flowers similar to copihues. Up above, from the summit, I observed the landscape. Through the trees was the outline from the frigate, anchored in the bay. Next to me, the photographer was bent over some kind of patch of tiny herbs, from which they poked their trembling little heads, agitated by the wind and rain, making pearly drops, with some red and yellow flowers. He pointed them out to me and we spent a long time pondering them. Some insects walked on that blanket of flowers and herbs. That was about all of the light and life in this place. Then were also some languid flowers, strewn and sickly, growing in a shady ravine on the dark green of the branches and the leprous chestnut of the trees in the rain. They were the coicopihues - which do not belong to the copihues family - among the tangled and flat forest of oaks and Patagonian coihues. Upon returning on board, the architect came laden with the branches and flowers. They were for celebrating Christmas.

That night, the dining room was transformed. The architect, in the company of the officers, made the arrangements. At the center of the table was a large tree branch resembling a pine tree, and next to the cutlery and the liquors, many of the fair flowers and dark leaves.

Little by little the dining room began to fill up with the officers and the civilian expeditionaries. The second commander appeared, always opaque, tense. Then the first commander, fine, affable. We still did not sit. After a long time the curtain again opened and a gaunt figure with deep-set eyes emerged. He wore a brilliant uniform, and by its gold stripes, everyone knew it was the commodore. He saluted courteously and sat in the center, having at his sides the Army Major and the Aviation Commander. Next to me were the doctor and photographer. The Christmas meal began with a speech by Poncet that had recorded absent family members. After Poncet the aviator spoke. He did it radiantly and with emphasis. The sailors on duty crowded the door to hear him.

Outside, the Patagonian wind moaned and through some cracks in the ship, between the steel plates, penetrated up to us and blew over our very souls, crumbling and scattering the best words and intentions. Neither this ship, nor these men, not any faith of ours, could survive alongside this landscape. As time passed, everyone gave themselves to drink, to protect themselves from that wind and the fine and constant rain that seemed to always accompany us.

The commodore disappeared and, behind him, the commander. Then the doctor got up and started talking about childhood Christmases and yesteryear toys: “Ah, the toys! Where were they now? How do I find them again? A pram with wooden wheels, a horse with a severed head ... And those beings, those beings, who from heaven and from the dark night brought us those toys ...” The doctor writhed his hands.

I listened to the wind, I felt the moisture and, further down, much deeper, I heard a thought, saw a god that was not ours, with a great face, and elongated evil eyes, someone who was holding the islands, until the time came to settle them, on the hard bones of strange spoilers. There, in his submerged kingdom...

PORT EDEN

An absurd name. As if two extremes could be brought together. The Eden and Hell. It was very early. The mist spread veils around the rain. Someone came to wake me to come up on deck. The anchor began to descend with its deep sound of chains. I saw that we were surrounded by little islands, which appeared like dark spots behind the gray dawn. A deadly light was appearing. Amid the voices of orders given to the sailors and their bustling feverishly on deck, I thought I heard guttural noises that they came from the sea. I approached and saw a swarm of shadows gliding over the water and some canoes stopped alongside the ship. They were hollowed out tree trunks carrying strange people on board. Ragged men and women, with shaggy children in their arms. Women raised their faces and spoke to the sailors in monosyllabic Spanish. The faces of the men, some old, were ashen. The sailors invited them to come up and bought some of their baskets braided with great skill. I remember the impression made on me by a woman half covered with dirty rags and holding a naked child with one arm while feeding him in the rain. Her stunted legs held her up on the deck of the frigate with the toes wide apart. They did not look like that

from a human being. She was numb to the falling rain, while the child sucked from her sagging breast. Those beings came from the water. Surely the mother's breast did not have milk, but water.

At noon, a man with a long beard and wearing an aviation uniform came aboard. He came in a boat manned by Alacalufes. It was the Governor of the island. He invited us to visit his home. A large and well-kept pier welcomed us. At the end was what looked like a big house. While the others went inside, I set out to visit the area. I walked along the beach making my way to a swampy region, where the green mud on the ground seemed to boil with humidity, popping bubbles of cloudy water. Eventually, I came to some dark mounds. Everywhere was mud and water. I was able to verify that the mounds were rucas [huts] made of overlapping seal skins. Conical in shape, they rose above the silt. Sometimes they had the same straw baskets hung at their entrance that had already been seen. A group of starving dogs began to bark. No man or woman was to be seen. Only a few children. I observed that one was defecating next to a log. I did not want to look inside the rucas, for a foul odor came from them. Then I discovered that the Alacalufe child was eating his own excrement. With disgust mixed with pity I walked away in the direction of the Governor's house.

As I entered the hall, it seemed I returned to the known world, to civilization, or to an ark in the midst of the flood. The aviator with the beard spoke:

“In this climate, living in the open, the worst thing that could happen to the indigenous people was that they became dressed. The clothes were soaked with the rain. And tuberculosis came. There are very few left. While they remained naked, they were strong.”

The commander interrupted:

“I think Thomas Bridge had discovered more than thirty thousand words in the Yagan language. It is incredible. This does not harmonize with the current state of the Fuegian and Patagonian races. Is it possible that they are degenerated from some once great and lost civilization?

In the center of the swamps, the bodies of those insane races, with universes of water covering over their centuries, still refuse to perish. Who knows what satanic force sustains them? They sink into the mud and barely their black braids are still sticking out. Those rebellious braids, sisters of the fern and mylodon.

WITH THE DOCTOR

The Spirit arose from the waters; but is no longer in the waters. It now floats far away on ice. Before Port Eden we had passed through the Angostura Inglesa [English Channels]. This is a kind of very narrow passage of the sea, between two islands. The forests rise on both sides, almost above the frigate and, through the thick vegetation, crystal clear waters fall. Magnolias, oaks, beech, and ferns tangle, intertwining their pasty ramadas.

That night, as the ship moved, towards the south, always "further south", I stirred in the bunk wrapped up in an anguished nightmare: I had to pass through a narrow hole in which I was caught. And, on the other side, at the end, a forest opened where there was sunlight. A group of strange men, dressed in clothes of violent colors, were sitting on the ground. They were eating. At last I managed to break free and go through the tunnel, reaching the group, but the men did not see me, because they were of another age. Then I leaned over to see them better. To my horror I discovered they were eating excrement. Half-awake I made an interesting reflection, typical of those states of subconscious: “This is all because I am not sleeping with the head turned north. The vibrations from the pole are very powerful and collide with those that tend to project from my head. So I can never cross the *narrows*. . .”

With an effort, I woke up. The cornet began to play the *Diana*. That morning there was a lot of activity on the ship. I began to observe what was happening. Lower down, an officer was standing, legs spread apart, keeping his balance, his hands were crossed behind his back and some binoculars were around his neck. Every now and then he yelled orders. Under the different decks, the sailors ran silently and the cannons of the frigate began to turn. Other men, lined up, passed heavy projectiles to each other. Machine guns and light cannons were also turning, searching the cloudy sky for invisible planes. The doctor came to my side. And after

observing their movement for a while, he explained to me: “They’re doing a shooting exercise”.

For half an hour we were observing the work of the crew of the warship, until I turned to the side of the landscape and indicated it to the doctor, and made the following observation:

"What a strange skyline, doctor, and how little it has to do with us. There is a deep imbalance between the landscape and the man. As if we lack the spiritual organs to grasp and understand it. Or, these organs are atrophied, lost in the depths of an inaccessible soul, who does not dare to appear in the light, in the expression. . . In the middle of these islands, of this shadowy vegetation and of those distant mountains, there are hidden gods who have become our enemies, and who were once friends of those dying races we have seen. What secret do they keep, what word do they mean, what was ever uttered? Their spirits float in these places. And we want to fight these gods. Uselessly ... For whose sake?

The doctor remained absorbed and said:

“You just witnessed something. A combat exercise. You will learn a lot on this ship. The soul of the new Chilean, who was born from the mixture with the Spanish, is pregnant with a desire for adventure and war. However, she cannot give it birth. Loves the adventure, the wide space of the sea, the conquest, and yet, it is obliged to vegetate in the ports, in slums, in convents, in tax offices. Give him adventures, give him tempest and war and he will be able to destroy them old gods and know what he wants from himself . . . At best, this is the sense of the old gods, this is their soul and that of the landscape, as you say . . .”

The conversation stopped. The doctor had to go down and I remained wandering the ship. In the evening, we continued the talk. He settled into one of the chairs and I stretched out on another. The doctor ordered a brandy, which he heated between his closed fingers. Once he raised the glass to his nose and inhaled its perfume. Then sipped it in small drinks, and we tried to resume the theme from earlier in the morning:

“The Alacalufes we have seen are in their last moment. They seem to belong to a race that has never emerged from a semi-consciousness. The

English missionary Thomas Bridge, in his dictionary, compiled some thirty thousand words of this Fuegian race, of which at present there are almost no representatives left. The language of the ancients was very rich in sounds and variations, in complete contrast with his customs and primitive habits today. The explanation given to justify the richness of its words seems childish to me. It is said that during the long rains and storms they had to remain in rucas, chatting and telling stories, which helped shape the language, so rich. There are certain words that correspond to situations or customs that did not exist in the life of the Yahgans during the time of their encounter with European man. When I ponder these races and these southern worlds, I can't get the idea of a submerged continent, and from a remote culture, out of my head. Ameghino tells us about Godwana and the sea that surrounded it, the "Andean sea", striking from the east on the legendary foothills of the Andes, until it disappeared to the Godwana continent. Today, the sea has changed and, above the submerged continent, it discharges its waves on the western side of the mountain range. It is true that this happened in an ancient time, but I think better of Atlantis; I am haunted by the memory of that Alacalufe child eating his excrements. Wouldn't there be something better from like a lost memory, like a distant habit stamped on the cells of these human blades fanned out of Atlantis?"

The doctor was silent, slowly sipping his brandy.

I continued:

"The weight of the Antarctic ice presses on the viscous magma and in a set of levers, lifts the earth from fire, to all the south of the world, and at the same time that the north of Chile is submerged. It would not be unusual for large chunks of Godwana to reappear with the ages."

And all this - said the doctor - for what?

"Well", I continued, "there is something else, about language. Did you know that in Peru it has been discovered that the Indians knew the written language and they did use parchment, just like the Egyptians? However, when the Spanish arrived they were only writing with threads. During a great epidemic, the god Huirá Cocha was consulted and this god told them that evil was a punishment sent to man because of the written word. The

writings were burned, and their signs were forgotten. When someone wanted to revive them, they burned him in turn."

The doctor was looking at me, head-on now, quite perplexed and interested. He asked for another glass of brandy and exclaimed:

"What do you think? What do you say about this?"

"I say that it is extraordinary, that it is as if everything is repeated in this world. Consider the writer as a nefarious being, as malignant as the writing, which is common to the European Middle Ages, where even eloquence was considered a thing of the devil. And, further afield, Henoch also affirmed the Satanism of writing. As by an invisible and psychic bow the continents and lands of the world come together in definite certainties and fundamental beliefs, conceptions that are repeated in the individual soul. I must confess that I have serious thoughts about the possible Satanism of writing. At what point did the man begin to write? In the moment he ceased to live, when it ceased to be. So he looked for a substitute. The signs on sheets or papyri weren't even magical, like the schematic layout in the caves, or the signs in the air; they were simple alignment of figures, stories told; artifice, or, something demonic and that I still don't understand. . . The strange thing is that always mystics reject writing as dangerous, as belonging to a zone of the soul that is better not to touch, something similar to magic. . . However, the magician has never been a writer."

Outside, the water was beginning to pound over the bow and slide down the sides of the ship. I was meditating now following my thoughts. Deep down, in some depth akin to that drama in the history of the human race, I was struggling in a tense struggle. I always felt that writing was contrary to action, life and magic; that being realized could not be poured out. That it was contrary to doing. Accumulating, as opposed to dispersing. And that all artistic realization is fulfilled at the cost of the effective possibilities of a personal fulfillment or divine. For this, perhaps, writing is contrary to God, because it prevents God from being born within you. It distracts, it does not contract; it separates, it does not unify. It makes you believe that you live and it is the opposite of magical action, which is gesture and direct, symbolic and liturgical action. Art is a substitute and a temptation.

“And the Bible?” The doctor stammered with difficulty. “Is it also satanic? Why is it then called Holy Scripture...?”

He was nodding off. Soon he fell asleep on the couch. And between dreams began to speak. I approached, because the words missed me that he pronounced. I paid attention and clearly perceived that the doctor was speaking a very strange language in a dream. What language would it be? Is it possible that while the body sleeps, the soul comes in contact with the surrounding world and grasps the language of the races that once lived? There, under the waters, there is a lost world, which emerges sometimes. And some beings, survivors of that past, also endure. The mysterious languages of that world, their sounds, emerge in the memory of our lives thanks to the banshee of this doctor who goes with me on board, through the rain and the channels of Patagonia.

THE OLD SHIP

We arrived at Muñoz Gamero. There is a Navy pontoon, which serves to supply coal to those who make the regular traffic through the canals. Some men remain in it during the rainy winter and summer months. By telegraph we were informed that aboard the pontoon there was a sickness; they asked the doctor to visit them. Before noon the frigate docked next to the pontoon. To pass from one ship to the other meant that one had to jump over both railings. The doctor and the officers did it first; then some sailors and myself. This is how I found myself on the deck of an old dismantled ship. Everything was in ruins. Some broken anchors rested next to moldy irons and it would seem that great cobwebs were crossing over the ladders and masts where mushrooms and moss had settled. The boards creaked and the ropes gave the impression of being about to snap. I walked slowly to the bow and looked at that old man of a ship. Stranded in the roadstead, with the framework of the wooded hills of islands close by, it was like the dying races; but the ship had more dignity and greatness. The aura of an old story floated on its helmet. Ever when that ship was young; furrowing through the channels it searched for adventures and winds out to sea. Men sailed on it. It surely touched innumerable ports; beyond the rain and the storm discovering the sun. It stored grains and products, and with them it traveled the coastlines. From its decks, the crews glimpsed the boundaries, gazed at the stars, and swallowed the shipping lanes. They also took great care of it; in her belly they polished the machines and put them into operation. The sharks of the Caribbean and the Antarctic whales met it in

their wake and the winds and suns dried up its storm-wet decks. Now it was stranded alone in the last corner of the world to spend in shame its last days. It was no longer young. It was a ruin, full of splinters and of shadows. It had its ghosts. I sensed them as I walked it, up and down its rotting stairs. They were ancient, distant ghosts. The very ghosts of my childhood.

I descended a staircase to the center of the ship. I entered a large room, which must have once served as a dining room, or as a chamber. The cold Patagonian wind blew through its cracks. I continued down a corridor and opened a cabin door. A moldy lamp hung from a bunk; through the glassless window a plant, growing from a jar, stretched its branches and began to extend into the interior. Someone had to take care of her daily, so that she survived in that hostile climate. It was a plant from another place, grown here as a thought, or a memory. Downstairs, in the cellars, the coal was kept. I heard voices coming from another cabin and headed in that direction. From afar I made out a group of sailors next to a door. When I approached, they moved aside to let the doctor and the commander pass, who were leaving accompanied by a noncommissioned officer. The latter was in charge of the pontoon. He elaborated at length, telling me his concerns about the little plant that I had just seen. His men helped him take care of her. Now one of the crew had gotten sick and the doctor ordered his transfer to Punta Arenas to hospitalize him. The patient was the telegrapher. It was necessary to find someone else to replace him on the pontoon. No one wanted to stay and the commander found it hard to give the order. The choice was gambled. The frigate's telegraphers were two. I attended the draw scene. Nervously but smiling, the men rolled the dice over the table. One of them was young and dark-faced. He was the loser. Between jokes, the companions helped him fill his bags and gather his clothes. We went to drop him on deck.

As the frigate took off, moving away, the telegrapher remained standing on the pontoon, holding the rail with both hands. There was a man who would not see the end of the world, nor would he know the ice of Antarctica.

WITH THE AVIATOR

The cornet began to play. The sharp notes struck over the irons of the ship and, bouncing, came cruelly into my cabin, preventing me from sleeping

anymore. I slid down the bunk. My cabin mates had already risen. Sure, they did their jobs on board. They were Navy lieutenants.

With a bundle of papers under my arm I went out in the direction of the cabin of the commander of Aviation. Rodríguez shared his cabin with the Army Major and with the architect. They were both outside. The commander, on the other hand, was just beginning to button his coat. When he saw me he showed joy and he began to talk as if he had been waiting for my visit. He sat down and explained his projects to me on a map.

“The world ends here,” he told me. “This is Cape Horn. Beyond is the Drake Sea and then the ice. . . In the oil tanker I brought a small seaplane, a Sikorsky, a two-seater aircraft. I will try to fly, back from Antarctica, over the Drake Sea, to the continent. I must end the flight in Valparaíso. On a seaplane like the Catalina the flight does not offer difficulties; but, in a Sikorsky, no one has done it yet. I need your help to take some pictures of Tierra del Fuego. They will serve as reference points to guide me from the air. The photographs will be developed in Antarctica, aboard the tanker. On my trip I will have to dock at various points in these regions, where I can refuel.” The commander was full of enthusiasm. For a long time we were focused on his project. I listened to him with great attention. Then came my turn to propose something to him. When I thought the time had come to do so I also spread a map on the table.

“Look at this,” I said. It's a map of Antarctica. We will be around here and we will not go beyond the O'Higgins Peninsula. We will barely make it to sub Antarctica. But how immense is this continent! Fourteen million square kilometers, of which only they know about two million, mostly flown over only. The months of the year in which you can explore are very few and the fog almost always covers, like a protective veil. And the mystery. . . Do you know, commander, what the mystery is?… I pointed out a few dots on the map, probably five. “Here is the greatest mystery on this earth. There are oases in the middle of the ice. Oasis of warm waters, miles and miles of Water. When the ice falls into these inland lakes, they melt and, in their surroundings, a less cold climate zone is created, covered with low clouds, where vegetation and even life would be permanently possible. The origin of these oases is unknown. At the beginning they were attributed as volcanic; later, it was thought of as hot springs, but no

explanation is satisfactory. So far they have discovered five, most of them in the Queen Maud region. Almost all of them have been seen from the air. The short time available to explore in Antarctica, the distance and the hidden places where the oases are found make it almost impossible to locate them, or reach them easily. . . Here I stopped.

The Aviation commander was visibly interested. He was leaning over my map and observing. "Here's one," he said, "on the O'Higgins Peninsula."

I held my breath. “Yes, Commander. Here's one. And this is what I wanted to communicate to you. It is located at the end of the O'Higgins Peninsula. To reach it we would have to use a plane. . . Your plane.”

The commander stared at me without saying a word. I took advantage to continue: “It could be much more important than your projected flight through the Drake. Think, think of the mystery ... Why are those waters warm? Heat between the ices! Behind huge barriers! Vegetation! Life! ... You know, Commander ... I think we might even find someone living there. Maybe there will be mysterious ruins ...” Commander Rodríguez took the map with both hands, sat down, and with his dark eyes continued to study it.

LAST HOPE

The fine rain did not abate. It fell day and night, like an ash, like a subtle mist. The damp smell of the vegetation became persistent. Watersheds sometimes appeared amid the tangled foliage, falling from great heights, to the sea. The sky was closed and the frigate always glided further south, effortlessly, as if being pushed by a silent force. The point we were going to must be the center of the shadow, but one day the sun came out. It was not right over us, as it still continued to rain. It appeared far away on the horizon. The phenomenon was extraordinary. We saw an endless line of bright White Mountains. It was the Cordillera Darwin, continued by the Cordillera Sarmiento. Inside there were upright peaks, falling vertically; the waves hit their bases. In the distance, with the sun on its peaks, the mountains looked like translucent snow.

Up on the deck, I contemplated. I imagined the City of the Caesars, I thought it was not possible that he could be in any other place, but there. This strange myth, whispered by the land and its mountains. When

contemplating those mountains, the myth spontaneously appeared in my soul, as if instigated by the landscape. What to do now? Why continue? It would be better to stop and walk towards the horizon. Why continue this pilgrimage to Antarctica, when what was sought was right here? A great doubt oppressed me and, in a second, everything changed. The very sense of Antarctica and the continuity of my trip had lost its interest. I had to make a great effort, just as when I was asleep and about to wake up to cling to a dream, to continue it. I wanted to follow, continue. With a supreme effort I succeeded. I affirmed myself in the idea that the City of the Caesars was a temptation, a mirage, repeating to myself that the goal was to be found in the eternal ice. I held onto the illusion. Strange thing is the illusion. It recreates our life, fills us with mysterious force and transforms reality. It prevents us from seeing reality, it is true. He invents it. But what is the reality? Where is it? Wrapping our life in fantasy everything is more beautiful and there is a path that safely leads to other confines.

At that moment I needed the illusion not to lose heart. A solid subconscious barrier was raised to prevent the onslaught of skepticism and exhaustion. I had to move on. I couldn't let myself be seduced by the temptations of the road. Only in the white world would I find what I was looking for.

Someone approached me. It was my friend Poncet. Indicating to me with his finger stretched out to the distant mountains, he said to me: “There, on the summits, are the borders that separate us from Argentina. The clouds had once again covered the horizon and the vision of the mountains disappeared. The rain got wet again and the channels of the night approached.

“Dear Poncet, the doctor says that man was not made for navigation, that his medium is not water; says it is false that in a thousand ages man has risen from the waters. Therefore, there is no inheritance, nor biological memory. What emerged from the water was not the body physical, but a light, a spirit. That is why it must be that my body feels nausea, which is increasing as the fateful current drags us further south, always further south. . . In the same way, eternity does not flow spontaneously from man and it is false that it is his own environment in which he moves. Eternity is hard and it also produces nausea in most men; you have to learn to

navigate her. We are fleeting and the soul is not immortal. What emerged from eternity is not man, but the light of the spirit, and it is like the sea. The soul and consciousness are waves that in death are lost in the water of eternity. And the consciousness of this sea is equal to the unconsciousness and the thick shadow of nowhere. Mine is just one more poor experience, a weak cry that someone will pick up in the cloak of collective memory. And I will never return if it is not in the cell of a distant memory. When humanity is finished, the stones will remind us and when the stones are finished, only a handful of astral light. Tell me friend maybe you believe that eternity was donated to man as an attribute of his lineage? Oh no! Immortality is relative and can only be achieved in dogged and ruthless struggle. You will die, the commander will die, and all will die, because they are only the "dead who bury their dead. But I will live, because I have abandoned father, mother and children, I have taken my cross and continued. I follow the rough road to the south. . . In a fight with myself, between the ash and the rain that falls towards the end of the world, where no one lives and men are like worms amongst dark forests. . ."

(No, I will not be immortal. I lack strength, I lose myself entangling my wears in the ferns on the road, looking back, returning to retrace the steps. . . The taste of your Salt is already on my lips and I have dispersed the energies and the years. A vague constant force pushes me towards the ice, as the hour passes to open myself to the Angel, or the Devil, who is waiting to collect my remains and inflame them, covering them with skin and light of eternity. If I compiled the pact with my soul and threw this book into the sea, collecting myself silent and cold inside the heart, maybe I would recover my essence and find the oasis. But I don't know what force, what diabolical temptation of personal sacrifice they pushes me, what desire to project myself in this drama. And also, what hopes to convey a message for others to pick it up and look for the way, when I no longer exist…)

PUNTA ARENAS
The City of the Great Memory

Three days before the end of the year, our ship headed for the Strait of Magellan. Just at that time the clouds cleared, and a beautiful sun illuminated the shores.

I was still in my bunk when a sailor informed me that the commander of the frigate invited me to lunch in his cabin. I hastened to accept, since I

had no opportunity to converse with the commander since the storm in the Gulf of Penas. Only from time to time did I see him on the bridge, with his white silk scarf, attentive to navigation, or overseeing the construction of a wooden cabin that stood on the bridge, in which he would live during the stay on the ice. In this way he could live next to the gyrocompass and the tiller bar.

I entered the commander's cabin when he had not yet arrived. The table was served with two plate wares, one facing the other and, on the center, a bouquet of flowers from Patagonia. At an angle, on his desk, you could see a photograph of relatives, some spy glasses, an ashtray in the shape of a steering wheel and an old wooden crucifix. The commander came in and invited me to sit down. I was very happy for the proximity of Punta Arenas and the appearance of the sun. His assistant began serving lunch. Before opening a bottle of white wine and consulting me, he preferred to drink mineral water. He indicated that I would accompany him to drink from the latter. As long as we ate, the commander alluded to things on board, I took the opportunity to observe him with detail. He had a very young and smooth face; but in the blue eyes and on the clear forehead were the concerns that betrayed a thinker. When he put on his reading glasses, he looked like a young professor absorbed in his texts. He was small and his expressions denoted seriousness and good humor. After a random and inconsequential initial talk, He was wondering about my Antarctic views. The commander wanted me to inform him.

I had to answer him: “Sir, I know very little or nothing. I never studied in an orderly manner. Rather I just feel ... For example, from Antarctica I ignore everything. What good can this do you?

Observing me, he replied: “By my profession I must study; but I also prefer to feel. For all of this trip I have been "feeling" a strange current underneath the surface, which facilitates the work of sliding us towards the south.” I was mystified, but I did not interrupt. “My nautical training was in submarines. I think reaching a submarine to Antarctica would be something very interesting. If the big Cetaceans [whales] take advantage of these deep currents to navigate, why cannot a submarine do it too? On my return from this expedition I will present a project. Would you like to join me?”

“Without a doubt,” I replied. “Maybe we could cross over due to the ice and…” I interrupted myself.

The commander smiled significantly.

“We are enveloping ourselves in a special atmosphere,” he said. “I have sailed several times through these places, but I've never *felt* this till now. It must be a suggestion. The fact of going to a mysterious world makes you admire the shoreline in a different way. I always wanted to reach Antarctica, since my readings of the extraordinary journey of the Russian admiral Bellingshausen. If you don't get tired, I'll tell you something about him … February 1820, after entering the icy continent, Bellingshausen explored the Antarctic edges. In the middle of the *pack-ice* he took a course further south and crossed the Antarctic Polar Circle. The *pack -ice* closed and the strong winds prevented him from continuing south. He withdrew to the northwest. After many twists and turns, he sailed for Sydney where he arrived in March of that year. On 11 November, he set sail again towards Antarctica and at the 103° W meridian, crossing the Polar Circle again. In January he discovered an island, to which gave the name of the reigning Tsar, Peter I. This is an immense island, in a j-shape.” The commander spoke in precise terms as if he knew in detail those regions, to which he was going to for the first time. Continuing: “The most extraordinary thing happened to Bellingshausen when he followed the north and then east, near South Shetlands. A thick fog enveloped his ships and he could not advance. Imagine the surprise to see through the thick veil of the Antarctic fog the masts of another ship from another nation. It looked like a ghost from the pole swinging in the severe mist. Upon clearing, a North American *sloop* could be seen. It was the *Hero,* commanded by Captain Palmer... the commandants met aboard the Russian ship. Bellingshausen looked like a man of legend, with a long beard and an imperial uniform. The North American informed him of the fantastic world around them. They had discovered to the east a vast frozen territory, with mountains visible in the distance. In honor of the American captain, the Russians named them Palmer's Land ... That's where we are heading today, to the land of Palmer, Graham Peninsula, or Land of O'Higgins, as we call it ourselves. Palmer took Bellingshausen to the bay of the island of Deception. On this island our compatriot Andressen lived for years and established his whaling factory ... Do you know that in Punta Arenas is Andressen's grave? It would be worth your visit”. The

commander planned to continue talking about Bellingshausen, Palmer and surely Andressen, when the ship's siren sounded on board.

He got up hastily. I followed him out on deck. “It is the Commodore,” he explained, “who made the siren sound so that we would come out to anticipate Puerto Hambre and Fort Bulnes.” As I watched over the gray strip of land and the distant barriers of the fort, the commander was lecturing, arm outstretched:

“It was in 1500, when the most daring and extraordinary Spanish conqueror, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, founded the free City of King Philip there. He left a hundred men under the command of a captain, but the English corsair Cavendish found only desolation and death. The houses were beaten by the wind and on the floors of the huts were frozen bodies. Cavendish christened this port with the name of Puerto Hambre [famine], because of hunger and cold ... The one who founded it was a man of bad luck and the strangest conqueror of his time. In everything he undertook, doom accompanied him. More than once he must have thought that this was due to the inclination that in his youth he showed for astrology, and even magic. The Tribunal of the Holy Office had him in its claws. Of a will as steely as his sword, Pedro Sarmiento Gamboa never wavered, but maybe the shadow of magic practiced, or remorse, pursued him with misery … Other sailors know that to navigate you have to choose a single route and then follow it without hesitation. Doubts, different creeds, crisscrossing roads, magic on a Christian ship, or thought of legendary life aboard a ship of that century could carry fatality...”

PUNTA ARENAS

Punta Arenas, the city of the extreme south, was waiting for us decked out like on a holiday. We descended on the docks in magnificent weather. The sun no longer abandoned us. While we stayed in the city the sky was a transparent blue. Punta Arenas is a clean, windswept, level city. The image that remains of her is that of a sheet of paper beaten by the blizzard; with fury it’s swirled, smashed against some wall and, immediately, taken in fast flight through the deserted streets, between the leaning trees. The sheet went up in the air, then descended to the causeways in search of a refuge.

I walked through the city, aimlessly, sniffing the air. The light was cold and the atmosphere thin. It seemed to me that if I went up I was going to

stay suspended in space, because there would not be enough gravity to bring me to the ground. I walked slowly, stretching my legs after the long days on the ship.

I contemplated the sea and meditated on the conquerors who once came here. I was wondering if they too would have experienced this feeling of pause, of yearning that surrounds the strait and is like an impalpable air from another world, a voice submerged in the wind that calls out our names, from beyond, from the other side. They are voices, they are strung words that come from the "farthest south" and they whisper in this city, that beyond here begins "another world", "another reality" and that we have to dare to go in search of it.

Surely the conquerors and corsairs also perceived this spell and they went with their galleons into the mystery. Who calls us by our names in Punta Arenas? A distant being wrapped in the white mist of the ice, that pulls our soul and that already has us in his domains. The only way to free ourselves is to go to him. Otherwise we will be lost and we will always return, without knowing why, to this city, to roam like an empty shell, like a ghost waiting for a revelation that we are not yet capable to penetrate. The conquerors contemplated the other side of the strait, perhaps they thought that the world ended here. The bonfires on the distant hills must have seemed to them like the fires of Hell. With certainty, they must have asked themselves: "What lies beyond?" Although it could cost my soul, I thought it might be well worth venturing out, and finding out. Walking, I came to a park with undersized trees and macrocarpus pines.

Nearby, the figure of a church stood out. I approached its entrance, which was opened. I was about to enter, when a priest of indefinite age beckoned me and invited me to stop by another door, leading me into a building with the appearances of convent. He led me down a hall to some large rooms where he told me:

“I am sure, my son, that you will be very interested in seeing this. It may even be the purpose of your trip ... You are in the Salesian Museum of this city. Look all you want, search. You'll see, you'll see …” Then he walked away with a penetrating look, almost evil.

It was an indecisive moment, alone in the middle of showcases of animals, with embalmed birds. There were whale skeletons, indigenous weapons, arrows, braided baskets, spears, stones. I wearily looked at everything, almost distracted. I was thinking about the face of the priest and the impression of having seen him before. I stopped in front of some photographs. One of them powerfully piqued my interest. I got closer to see it better. I froze, while a chill ran through my entire body. How was it possible? There in a blurry photograph on the wall, was the face of that being that chased me in my dreams and night visions since my childhood. It was the same face, with identical attire: the man had his chest uncovered and on his shoulders, a puma skin. His face was hairless and he looked at me with elongated and evil eyes. Something powerful and arrogant was in that figure. In his gaze I sensed a great familiarity and a certain similarity with that of the old priest who brought me to this room.

With effort I got closer; then the face seemed to extend. It was that being that visited me in fundamental moments of my life and that always repeated: “You will arrive here, you will come ...” Now it was there, on the wall of this room in a hazy photograph. At the bottom I could read with surprise: “A Jon, selknam magician from Tierra del Fuego”. There was no date, no indication from the time it was taken. Leaning on a column I began to contemplate that face for a long time. My vision of him had always been brief, but now I could analyze it at ease. As the night came and the darkness invaded the museum room, again it seemed to me that this mysterious face would smile and tell me: "You have come ..."

The circle was closing. The next day, the tanker arrived at the port and anchored at the dock, beside the frigate. He had to refuel it. This scene was almost tender, for it resembled a mother feeding her pup. Except that the mother, despite her larger volume, was harmless and the little boy showed his cannons and all the fineness of his line of combat. The surf rocked them softly.

When I got on board I saw that one of the oil hoses had been broken and that the black milk was jumping off the deck of the frigate like a thick river. Avoiding the shiny puddles I crossed over a wooden bridge, and went to the deck of the tanker. I went to visit my friend Captain S. I found him in his cabin. We talked for a long time and it was here that he told me about his interview with Professor Klohn, passing through the city of

Concepción. I heard him with great interest, but I told him nothing about my experience in the city of Punta Arenas.

NEW YEAR

Another year ended. A dinner was served on board the frigate. The Commodore, the commanders, and a few officers attended. The rest had permission to spend the night in the city. Of the civilians there was only Poncet, the photographer and myself. It was a sad dinner, full of great silences. At twelve o'clock we got up and shook hands. The Commodore had champagne bottles opened. Then everyone scattered; some in the direction of the city and others to their cabins.

I wanted to see the night, wearing in a fur coat, I went to sit next to the bow cannon. The luminosity of the sky was strange. It seemed like a celestial curtain of invisible ice would project visions and clarities from the sky. The thin sky shook with sudden tempers. Blocks of light, flickering, cracking like a film of frost that it shreds. And on the horizon appeared a blue-orange stripe, which extended to its zenith. I was looking at it ecstatically, it was like listening to sounds of color that were transformed into notes, into a symphony, in chorus of calls from another world. And the luminosity of the sea widened the horizon, confused the dimensions, making time a single sphere: the past, with its navigators and its old galleons and the future, with the deep voice of Antarctica, wrapped in the icy, nocturnal wind of that light. It was a call, a sign. The voice of Antarctica. Surely everyone who in the past came here and stopped to contemplate the night sky heard it, because in the raging wind of the strait was also wrapped up a distant call. Seasoned sailors will have imagined that beyond the strait and the lands, there is another incognito world. Old ships were discovered going between the Antarctic ices. In the air, in the water, on the land, there is a powerful current, irresistible like a torrent rushing to the edge of the last abyss that falls towards the pole.

After the long journey through gray canals, and always with the rain, Punta Arenas is a stop in the descent to hell, but it is no longer hell. Rather it is like descending into a deep well. And from here it allows us to visit the other extreme, the distance of grace, the edge of things, but Punta Arenas is not the end of the world. Let us move on; we are going to fall into that "other reality" from which our everyday values don't seem to exist. My hunches, they stirred and I was adrift, in the center of waters that have

acquired dramatic speed and plummeted into the abyss. Everything was unstable, nothing to hold on, yet I was trying.

THE GREAT MEMORY

I was shivering. I am not sure how, but wrapped up in my cloak, I fell asleep. Then I heard a sound coming from the water. I wanted to look, but seemed paralyzed. I waited as the sound approached. I could make out a figure that stopped near me, then took a few steps, approaching. It was suspended in the air and moved horizontally, without even touching the deck floor. When he was close I recognized an old visitor. He was the magician in the portrait in the Salesian Museum, now dressed in a black cassock. In one hand he carried a rosary and in the other, the strange bone of an animal. I now understood the sound that was being produced were the words he was whispering. He dashed the bone into the sea. He told me:

"I am repeating in my language: You have come ...!" He then launched the rosary to the sea. Another thing caught my attention at that moment. The eyes of that shadow cast their gaze above me, as if there was someone behind me, and his expression was not the same as before, he was more human and very similar to the priest who had entered the museum. "Could it be that the priest had disguised himself dressed in that garb, wishing to surprise me?" During the whole scene I now abandoned the question... I turned to look behind me.

I discovered another faded figure, standing almost atop the tower. At that moment it began to descend, approaching. I beheld a man in a helmet and armor. He was brandishing a Tizona [a sword used by Spanish Warriors, including El Cid]. Regardless of where he was, his sword struck everywhere. However, the characteristic noise of steel striking was not heard. I looked closely and suffered a strange sensation: nothing separated me from him; I was him; I was even feeling the pressure of his helmet on my head and the hilt of the sword between my fingers. I resisted a moment and, for the last time, I watched him from outside. He was lean with skin stuck to the bone, sunken cheeks and deep eyes, glowing with a passionate fever, like coals turned on. Afterwards, I no longer watched him as a spectator, but *felt that it was me,* that the words he spoke were said by myself and that his gestures were executed by my members. However, of some unexplainable mode, he also remained independent and outside. The

voice of his curious Spanish was uttered without any of my effort to articulate them, as if gliding from the inside out, independent of my will. I was talking about a king and taking possession of some land. With the sword he confirmed this action, while addressing some invisible spectators.

My first visitor, came even closer. Turning his eyes to me, he said:

“This is Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa. It seems to me that you have recognized him, and it could not be otherwise. Because you were him...”

“How?” I replied. “Is it reincarnation?”

“Words ... We are all of us. It depends on that which inherits your form. Search within yourself and you will find the world. Search a little more and you will find me. I am also you … Have you not figured it out yet?”

He laughed unpleasantly. And he continued:

“Certainly you are more Sarmiento de Gamboa than anything else. You haven't changed much since then. But I'm going to tell you something that I also revealed to that poor man. Because you must know that he, likewise, saw me and it was by my will that he came here. I am the ancient, primal spirit of these places. My image is the shadow of the magic and wisdom that envelops this world, impenetrable by paths other than those I know. Gamboa also believed in magic, that is, he sought in the old thoughts that had already been lost to humanity. With his faith, he came this far, but he resisted. He was mostly interested in chasing English corsairs and in building ephemeral cities in this inhospitable place. The sign of the Cross, which is also that of the sword, oriented him to the external. You see how the Cross has been projecting humanity outward. And, in great doubt, he could not remember; in hesitation, or in fear, he drew doom upon himself. That is why you, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, have had to return to these territories to sustain the test of memory. . . But first, you must contemplate your death. . .”

I felt an icy current. It came to me in waves from that shadow. Obeying his insinuation, I stood up and followed him. Soon we came to a sinister place. The waves were hitting a beach full of gravel and bones of large

fish. We came upon the awaiting. We were among huts with logs. The ruins of a church cast its shadows on the ground not far from the beach.

“Ready is the City of King Philip,” I exclaimed. “Here must be my men waiting for me.”

“Yes, here they are,” he replied. “They have waited for you a long time. You should never have abandoned them. You should have been among them … Then I beheld a macabre sight. Inside the huts human remains lay, eaten by pumas. Bodies of men, women and some children. Half covered in rags, with pieces of faces that had turned gray. Bruised fingers, half-consumed arms, the remains of thighs in their clothing, with strips of torn human flesh. Inside the church, next to the rustic altar, I saw more corpses. On foot of the confessional a large puma was devouring the swollen body of a child. I retired to the plaza and arrived in front of the Tree of Justice. There hung three hanged men and the furious wind lifted them horizontally. Their bodies seemed diminished in size.

“They abhorred your name and the name of your king; that's why they're there… And you, where do you find yourself in the meanwhile?”

“Battered by the storm,” I replied, “which was pushing me toward the north and east. Do you think I forgot them? It was against my will. I thought only of helping them. But God's designs are inscrutable... Let's go. We walked through the steppe. It was night and we sat next to a bush. My companion reached out and took a small fruit.

“Have you tried it?” I wonder.

“Yes; I know its taste. It is the fruit of the return”.

“Calafate, they call it. Whoever eats it always returns to this region and that city. . . Rather, I would say that those who liked its taste, but did not reach the bottom of their memory, will always return here. He who was here and saw nothing, sooner or later will return in the ages, because on the eternal path it will only allow you to pass if you meet this requirement. I am the one who keeps the threshold. No one will cross to the ice without my authorization and without my stamping my sign on his forehead ... Rather, many pass, but they are “the dead”, those who come and go

everywhere, the “explorers”. Those go and it's as if they weren't. They get there, they look without seeing, and they hear without hearing. I don't even see them. They do not exist. They can happen because I don’t worry about preventing them. But at some time I will have to, because one day they will change. . .”

“Tell me who you are? - I asked - . And why have I seen you for so long? You appeared already in my childhood. I think you were my playmate as a child.” The shadow laughed again.

“My race has nothing to do with yours. We are two different worlds. You and I can never get together. Only our gods could connect. Opposite to your humanity, I come from the south. You *go south*, you *must* go south. My race, on the contrary, proceeds from the ice, that's where it comes from and our wisdom is so very distant and mysterious. In a remote past we crossed that entire continent where you go today and, from there, we extracted the vitality. You think humanity is yesterday, I know that humanity is forever. But there are different humanities, as different from each other as the winds of the earth, like you and me. I have told you before how we can well be the same person, but at the same time we are different. Here is the mystery. As men we can never get close; the path of our shadows will never find a bridge; yet our gods they could meet again, become one. Just putting on the skin of God, you will be able to overcome time and contemplate that which is unchanging.”

From that moment, as I heard those words, I began to contemplate. And it was as if a long speech was drawn from me interwoven with visions.

“Avalon, Avalon,” they told me, “the city of apples! There were once beautiful golden apples! Remember? There, in that age of the world, on that central continent, grew a tree. Was it an apple tree, or was it a ceibo? It was Mother Ceiba. It grew from hell, from the center of the earth and crossed the hard surface with its foliage and reached up to the thirteen heavens. Men climbed up it to taste the golden apples. Around the trunk was the serpent of Quetzalcoatl and from Bochica; the beards of Bochica with beautiful quetzal feathers. The serpent lent its wings to men so they could climb. But what happened? Why did the paradise of Avalon become so far away, the ancient City of the Dead? The serpent was the light and

soon, he fell from the tree into the pit of hell. Who destroyed their wings and their feathers?"

"I'll tell you," the shadow told me. "Mankind has existed many times before. But time is circular and everything repeats itself. As well as there are days and there are nights, so there are cycles that open and close. What once was, will always be again. Many, many years ago, there was a central continent where great hope flourished with overtones of eternity. Everything you discover on your pilgrimage through the world, are only fragments of that childhood of time. Your own God already existed there. It was there that he first crucified him. The crucifixion you know is only a reflection of the previous ones. In that time the continents were reunited. But the time approached and everything had to disappear. A great enraged wave plunged a blow to the wonderful City of Avalon, where the golden fruits grew in the gardens of the sun. Everything disappeared with almost no memories and the ice of death covered the hill of paradise. The feathered serpent had also died, unable to stop the raging waters. In the Iron Age someone would have to descend into hell to rescue his light and his legacy. . . That is the story. And I don't know if it happened in heaven or on earth. I come from a different time. I am a foreigner in this universe. Before leaving I want to reveal the meaning of all this. It is very simple and yet well beyond the disturbing memories, myths and dramas of the gods. Everything repeats itself; what was once will be again. The world that was destroyed will be destroyed again. Everything is like a sowing. A great invisible hand strewn over the plains and when the same specific number has borne fruit; it does not matter which ones are lost. Another sowing is about to end. The time is near; you have to be deaf and blind not to perceive its signs. This is why you must hurry and continue towards the Oasis of the ice, the only refuge where you will be saved. You have to be ruthless and tenacious. You can restore nothing, and no one has the right to twist your will; fly above everything, life and death, because, if you falter, there are many others willing to take your place, taking eternity from you. Already the doors are about to close, and when this happens, those who remain outside will only be the useless seed, and sterile fruit, which the gale will scatter and the lightning will rip apart.

With my head barely raised between my shoulders, I wanted to move, but I could only mutter: "Help me up, for I'm almost frozen." I couldn't move anymore.

"Immortality is achieved among the ice," he replied, "and in freezing. I am no one, nor is there anything I can do now. Your great combat will be with the Angel of Shadows".

I still couldn't move. In anguish, I implored:

"I must retire to my cabin. Help me. It wouldn't be nice if they found me here frozen tomorrow. With difficulty, I saw my companion. For the last time I saw him by my side, but he had shrunk so much in size that he looked like a boy. His face was also very different; it had cleared up and his gaze was like a bitter yet helpless reproach. I understood what had happened; that being was about to vanish. It was just a larva that had fed on my life, an archaic ghost image. He never had more reality than I allowed him. And now, when he finally faced it, it came loose, unraveling. Vibrating currents ran through me. I woke up with a shudder. When I opened my eyes I saw the same sky with its celestial dawn and its astral reflection. I was sitting under the forward gun of the frigate. I looked at the time: only a few seconds had passed since I went into that dream. Through the cold and the white light of the night, I made my way to my cabin.

THE LAND OF FIRE

The land of the Selk'nam

On the other side of the Strait are the lands of the Onas. We returned to the east and took the Magdalena Canal, then the Cockburn Canal and the Whaling Channel; heading south. Here were those mountains and those gray slopes where once the bonfires caused the conquerors to give them the name 'Land of Fire'. The Onas signaled to each other using the most primitive means. By the fire they raised their temporary tents and narrated their legends. The Onas called themselves Selk'nam, which means man. More here, were the Yahgan; a race very different and darker than the Selk'nam.

On the Big Island of Tierra del Fuego, around Lake Fagnano, the gigantic coihues grow, the ñirres [Antarctic Beech] with white trunks and thin leaves even more, the maitenes with their green leaves, delicate as lace, the solemn cinnamon, deep in color; next to them, the bushes, the calafate, the inconsolable sarsaparilla, chilcos, ferns and creeper that envelops and

confuses everything, giving the forest the appearance of hair. The forest looks like a madman whipped by gales. Everything is wrapped in moisture from that great sponge of branches and mosses that seems to reach the sky.

The woodpecker makes its noise, which is like the compass of eternity. And in the night, where a dim light barely penetrates, are droplets that drain into the void, like sullen tears of the ancient night. Everything is damp, even when it appears under the cold sun. Transparent ghosts cross the thicket, spreading a reddish luminosity, like twilight, or blood.

These last lands, furrowed with precipices, high peaks and wooded plains, with boulders licked by the deadly white tongue of the ice, is an area alive like no other. That is, the spirit of a mysterious race, which once inhabited these lands, gave to them of itself the greatest thing that it is possible to give; a meaning, a soul, a legend that was embedded in the bottom of its intimate reality and gave consistency and life in the most hidden trails. Traveled a thousand times by those indefatigable hunters, who were the Selk'nam, the Big Island of Tierra del Fuego is impregnated with his spirit. Each hill recalls a legendary hero, each lake or snowdrift, an event of tradition or legend. And though it seems to have vanished with the disappearance of the last vestige of free life on the part of the Selk'nam, must return with great force in the future, if ever an authentic life is to flourish here, in the understanding of man with his landscape. So the ancient wisdom will return, along with the old memory of the first gods, which is still preserved within the mountains. And maybe the veil of memory is drawn; because those who lived here knew too much about the beginning and end of things. Its legends and myths, which at first glance seem to refer only to this Big Island and this south of the world, certainly close an allusion to the beginning and the origin of all things.

The Onas, or Selk'nam, came from the south; they were born in the ice. No one knows their origin, as no one knows the world. It is naïve to think the Selk'nam is over, because there are barely a dozen descendants left of their race, but the Selk'nam can never end, for the Selk'nam are the forests and the hills. The Selk'nam just sleeps and someday they will wake up. Selk'nam means man, and man is the hills and forests, the earth and the stars.

THE ORIGIN

There, on the Great Night, “before the foundations of the earth”, in a sea without light, in the nameless, in the unknown, rested Temauquel. He was eternal, happy, beyond life, beyond death. He needed nothing, nothing moved him; he was infinite, eternally wise. It was Temauquel who created the world, and yet, it was not. Creation is a mirror, a shadow in which Temauquel tries to perceive his face. In vain attempt, great madness. Temauquel will always be beyond everything. The spaces, the times, the gods, the men, the animals, the plans, the abysses, are nothing other than Temauquel's dream.

The Son

Temauquel has sent Quenós to take on the job of transforming substances. Quenós ... Who is Quenós? Is it the son of Temauquel? Should be; However, it is not. Because Quenós was born in the Old South for the father. Temauquel's dream is called Quenos.

The Hohuen

It was Quenos who began to create the earth, from top to bottom. But before, and with white clay, he modeled the Hohuen, gigantic and trans-kindred like angels. Hardly created, the Hohuen began to fight among themselves. Tall, beautiful, they made bows and arrows. Instructed by Quenos, they fought on the old land. It was their memorable struggles that changed the look of the world. The earth wrinkled in its wake, rivers and streams parted, the crust became more and more until at last it was able to hold them. The arrows of the combatants crossed the sky and the clash of the opposing sides of Hohuen produced outbursts of light, thunder and lightning; when a Hohuen fell it was like lightning penetrating through the earth and fertilizing it. The Hohuen did not die; instantly they were transformed into something else. One of the most memorable stories of that time was the battle between the Old North and the Old South. They were both Hohuen and had a great power. The South of that time was very different from the South today. It was the Elder South. Also the North, was the Elder North. Since then North and South are enemies, because until today they have not made definite their contest. However, at the end of time North and South will merge. This is the fight of the elements unleashed by Quenos, a fight that will have no end. Because the war in this world will never end. Animals are thoughts, distractions from Quenos.

The plants too. The Hohuen, on the other hand, are reflections of the image of Quenós that created them in the likeness of the image that He had of Temauquel. The Hohuen are Quenos's dream. And man is the dream of the Hohuen. The day came when Quenos got tired of traveling the world. He wanted die, wanted to rest and could not, because he was immortal. He then traveled to the south and was buried in the ice. After a while, he woke up rejuvenated. This is how Quenos discovered rebirth and eternal youth. And Quenos taught it to the Hohuen. However, one day Quenos left forever.

Cuanyip

Who is Cuanyip? He is the one who has destroyed the *memory,* bringing the Death. When Quenos departed, many were the Hohuen who remained. They still worked on the land. Among them was Cuanyip's father, named Hais. He lived a little further north and was fought by the Hohuen further south. They often attacked him, destroying his households. Hais had a son named Ansmenc and a daughter named Aquclvoin. Among his enemies was Náquenc, who was feared. Náquenc had a daughter, named Hosne. After the attacks, Hais fell in love with Náquenc's daughter. Náquenc knew of it and, one stormy night, amid the thunder and rain, he seized Aquelvoin, the daughter of Hais, and brought her to his tent. When Hais came, Náquenc had changed Hosne for Aquelvoin. And the father then he lay that night with his daughter. This is how Cuanyip was born, the fruit of night and incest. Cuanyip would feel forever alien and separated from the Hohuen. His origin is another; son of a fallen god and Aquelvoin. He only thus began to stand out for his fearlessness and intelligence, developing his cleverness, to make forgotten the history of his origin, son of a sin. It is he who has brought the sense of sin to the world, because he has not been able *to forget.* And in order to forget, Cuanyip discovered Death. He knew that as long as the Hohuen were immortal, he could never *forget,* it would always come back upon the world. For this Cuanyip killed his brother Ancmec. When Ancmec traveled to the ice, to sleep and rejuvenate, Cuanyip stole the spirit of his dream. And Ancmec could do nothing but to die. Since then, death came, like a torrent, on the immortal.

The man

After Cuanyip discovered death, the man appeared next on the earth. The man was called Selk'nam and he tried to resemble the Hohuen.

The Titans

When Quenos came into the world, there was no sun. The first Hohuen marched on the soft earth, having for companions the fire and humidity. Great mists covered the sky. And the regions of that gray and central land saw the first Cyclopean monuments risen by the worshipers of Quenos, along with the din of Chaos. Someone told the Hohuen that the sun would come; but they didn't want to believe it. And when the sun came, the Hohuen did not want to recognize it so they sank into the mountains. They still remain there. Of huge statutes, their heads stretching toward the sky.

(Have I not seen them? Two giants imprisoned by the gray mass of the mountain. One of them raised their imploring arms to the sky and the other bent, as if resisting the weight of centuries. These figures are framed by the gold of the peaks. And there they will remain; or until the ancient sun, which confined them, and has already left, reappears in the sky).

They are

Where did the Selk'nam come from? It was the Walkers of the Dawn of humanity. They came from the ice. There, in that White World, that hidden Paradise. One day they arrived on this Big Island —back when it wasn't as far from the White Continent— and they populated it. When the Selk'nam died, his body was deposited on some distant beach and his soul ascended to heaven, beyond the stars, to meet with Temauquel. Like a drop of water, the soul melted into the sea of Temauquel.

In this world, already extremely harsh, away from the ancient sun, the man died and suffered, because evil and disease, pain and death, they punished him. However, there is a halt in destiny, a milestone, something like a strange stone, which interrupts the doom of the blind path. They are the Jon, the Selk'nam mages. Because, unlike other mortals, Jon cannot die and his soul does not return to Temauquel, but reincarnates immediately in another Jon.

Here is the mystery of mysteries. With Jon there has been a high, an unexpected interruption in the whole process of life. Let's see what the Selk'nam has to say about this very strange event. They claim that Jon, although he belongs to his people, is a being that has nothing to do with

common men. He is of another race other than the human. His composition is different. He has no soul like that of other men. His skin is more subtle and blood does not run in his veins, but a white fluid; inside it radiates and is soft. Jon has nothing to do with men, he has nothing to do with Temauquel. It does not come from Him, nor does it return to Him. Jon has no soul. The one that Jon has is a *ghost.* As the Selk'nam walk up and down their mountains, Jon remains seated at the entrance of his tent. His eyes turn their gaze within, little by little, he appears inside a larger world, immense and luminous, with stars, oceans and abysses. His *ghost* begins to haunt him. That is where he walks; for the inner world, for the infinite.

And the Jons learned the secret of immortality. To obtain it they traveled to the ice, to "that White Island that is in the Sky". There they lay for a long time, waking up rejuvenated. During the dream they were fighting with the Angel of the Ice, with Cuanyip. Expiring hurt, they woke up immortal. Some of them returned to the lands of the Selk'nam. Others stayed in the mysterious and happy Oases, where they still reside, along with the Jons of all time, past and Present ...

Those who were born in the north, in the northern ice will find the path. Those who were born in the south will find it in the southern ice. The poles are the extremes. No flowers, plants, or even the roots. Only the seeds remain, the atoms remain, the mind of Creation; preserved by the ice, they are saved for the New Day of the primordial essences. And it is always the dramatic shadow of the Dawn Walkers that is indicating to men the difficult, and dangerous path of mortality.

TOWARDS THE SNOWDRIFTS

We return to the rain and the gray mist; the water and vegetation. Little by little, leaden boulders begin to appear, washed out, almost like poured limes on the sea. On their backs you discover the trace of the prehistoric ice that has polished them, filing their edges. In the background, you can see the great mountains of snowy ridges, breaking through, climbing to inaccessible heights. On the railing cables, the physician stands leaning, with the collar of his coat pulled up to his ears, while he gazes at the water in silence. What is he thinking about?

I get closer. "Doctor, what are you observing?"

"It's strange," he says, "man wasn't made for water." These sheer rocks, they are similar to the savages that lived here. They were also naked and their bodies also waxed from the glaciers.

"Yes," I reply. "Those who believe that the Fuegians may be correct said they came from Antarctica in ancient times. They were shaped by the ice and this climate was not hostile to them. Herein lies the difference with the natives of the channels of Patagonia, who came from the north. His soul was unaware of the deep personality of the ice. Early on they must have degenerated, feeling themselves enemies of the children of the south, who they then in turn fought. I think that we ourselves are in a situation similar to those indigenous people from the north. We will also be combating the spirits of the south, who will not accept us until we have lived with the Antarctic ice. The school of the new generations should be that of ice ... It is the only way to live ..."

"Do you think so?" Asked the doctor. "So the next age would it be that of ice, as opposed to the current one, which is the Iron Age?"

He took out of his pocket an old book, with parchment covers, and began to read:

"*The last age of Cumea - The virgin maiden has already arrived – She brings the kingdom of Saturn and Rhea - The centuries turn to a golden age - Again heaven sends us long years - A new people will be begotten - You, chaste Moon, full of joy, favor, for reign and to your Apollo - To the Child who was born on this day - The iron will be cast out of the world - And a golden lineage, the most precious, - He will populate, and the other Pole.*"

“Virgil”, he said. “A boy was born then. Do you think another will come? Could it be a child from the ice?”

I didn't answer. But the doctor extended his arm, exclaiming “the snowdrifts!”

Yes, the snowdrifts! The first outposts, lookouts and sentries of Antarctica. They spread like white tongues on the water and their black moraines have been polluted with the dirt of the Iron Age. From the time when the ice

began to withdraw from the world and when the Child who was born would be sacrificed and crushed between the spikes of the great machines. The mechanism is as gloomy as the ferruginous moraines, which fall towards the end of the glaciers in the Beagle Channel. Slowly they pass: The Roncagli, the Romanche, the Italia. They are the primary signs, delegates from another world.

GENDEGAIA

For hours I have been taking pictures for the aviator. He has pointed out the places that could serve as a reference in his projected flight from Antarctica to the mainland. The frigate has come a long way and that night we reached Gendegaia. This is a wide bay. At the bottom of it you can see the lights of some houses. On the other side of those hills is the Argentine city of Ushuaia. Here the two ships have met to continue together in the crossing of the Drake Sea.

The next day we continued sailing. With the photographer, Poncet and the doctor, I watched from the bridge. I am taking in the great island of Navarino. The photographer made a point:

"That's Wulaia. That's where Jemmy Button ordered the English prisoners to be killed."

The shadowy symbol emerged. Jemmy Button would perhaps fulfill the rite, pushed by the landscape and by his gods. He would pay the tribute of his race, their debt, to make possible the return of the world that existed beyond the sun, of the light that grows beyond darkness.

PUERTO ORANGE

Last reflection in Hell

We are now at the last place, where the Beagle Channel forks. The current pulls vertiginously. There is nothing to hold onto in the adjacent territory. On the deck circulate the shadows of some crew. A strange tiredness invades them. Chiaroscuro play on their faces. Here, very soon, the world ends. Then starts the unknown, that which is beyond all physical relationships. Puerto Orange is our last stage before entering the bleak Drake Sea. Ships anchor here awaiting the right time to cross it.

The rain falls monotonously on the gray rock of the island. One afternoon we descend to land. On the small beach, covered with shells, the sailors roast cholgas over makeshift stone ovens. The smoke rises to the low sky. In nearby trees grows a small fruit that men are eating. The forest is dense with trees. Poncet, the doctor the architect, and I go to a peak, beyond the forest, where previous expeditions have left some signs. We march in line so that we can cut through the ferns and the branches. Our feet sink as in a soft sponge, which opens, only to close again. The water runs off our body and the feeling we have is to get above the treetops, because we must step on top of its branches; most of the dwarf trees are shorter than us and the best way to break through is by going almost over them. I see the doctor ahead. He has cut off a branch and with it he removes the obstacles. Pounding away, it looks like an animal sliding through the water and the foliage. The vegetation becomes less dense near the slope of the hill, and a mossy earth makes it difficult to climb. The doctor has stopped. He is wiping his face with a handkerchief. In that instant a long scream is heard coming from the beach. Our heads turn back and we look down over the forest. In vain we search in the gray afternoon. Again the call is heard, and now it seems to be closer. The doctor climbs up a rock and investigates with the binoculars.

"It's Fellenberg, the photographer," he says. "He is next to a tree, they are trying to help a fallen man. These sailors are like children. I know surely one of them has climbed up to pick those fruits and the branch broke. These trees are all rotten. Let's go. I hope his spine has not been broken against the stones!"

The architect marches ahead. I continue my own ascent of that mossy slope. I arrive at the top and I can see the other side of the island. Undulating plains spread out under the thin mist. Vapors rise from distant ponds, as if they were the breath of those last regions. A black bird takes flight. On the horizon the clouds of waters descend. They tend to cover almost everything. I sit on a stone. With my head in my hands I let the cold rain soak me. I can hardly resist the hopelessness. How long ago did we leave? I'm tired; we have arrived so low, so deep in this well, finding nothing to hold on to. Temple of the powerful current and the presence of the soul of dead beings, prisoners of the god of darkness, of the world of the past, who submerged in the waters. I am dragging my body to where I have brought it, where physical life is minimal, where helplessness reigns.

And it is a mistake; sound souls only make pilgrimage to these places after the destruction of the body.

THE PURGATORY
Crossing the Drake Sea

Far is Cape Horn, where strange shadows lie. An indigenous bonfire raises its smoke to the sky. The frigate sails heavily. To the west, in the distance, we see the tanker move. It rises and falls, an instant submerged by the waves, then her masts and keel reappear, as gray as the ocean.

That invisible, immaterial current, that during all the navigation we thought we sensed in the channels, here it has become diffuse, lost taking in the breadth of the sea. He no longer pulls towards the pole and it is difficult to continue between these heavy waves. The ocean sways silent, leaden, confusion in the gray haze. A close immutability, a feeling of navigating within four walls or a big round glass, falls on the crew. The waters of two oceans come together, get confused in this strait and, surely, far below, fight and they swirl. That hybrid existence, that deep enmity, laughs strap into the turbulent and distressing atmosphere of the Drake. The hell current cannot break through the depths where other forces collide. But maybe lower, much lower, there is a passage where someone walks easily in pursuit of their ice regions.

They have given us the first Antarctic ration, consisting of greasy meats and chocolate bars. They have also distributed appropriate clothes to us: gloves and “parkas” filled with feathers, or lined in bear skin. The Commodore has reappeared. I saw him in the cockpit of the wheelhouse, reclining in a chair, wearing a hat of fur hooded up to the eyebrows and with a black and grown beard. He was looking through the glass and holding a book in his hands. One afternoon I crossed a corridor that I never knew how to get to. Holding onto the irons, I walked to its end. On the threshold of a door a curtain had been drawn. Inside was the commodore. He has also saw me and with a wave of his hand, he motioned for me to come closer. The Commodore was alone in his cabin, going through books and photographs. He offered me a seat and began to talk. It was the first time we were going to have a long talk. All those books were full of photographs, of termites, of seals, and of curious birds. Among them is the Commodore himself. They are photographs of Antarctica, taken on other expeditions.

Now, as we cross this difficult and gloomy sea, the Commodore contemplates that other unimaginable world from here. Maybe I will find strength…

“You can't understand what Antarctica is,” he tells me. “With this sea, all connection has already been lost. Long ago in the past, that was not so. Here is an old map of Ortelius, where Tierra del Fuego and Antarctica are still united. For those of us who navigate this sea, its crossing is like a purgatory, the memory of Antarctica is that of heaven. There was a time when heaven was everything and purgatory did not yet exist. It is difficult for the world to understand how those of us who remain here yearn for heaven. I must not forget it, although everything conspires to make it happen … That is why I contemplate these memories...”

I looked at him curiously. Sitting there, under the window, where the pale afternoon light was coming in. From a drawer he took a little book with seafaring songs and browsed through it. Then he intoned in a low voice, and said:

Ready to hunt down the sails
the fathoms to gird,
Take advantage of the southern breeze,
that makes the sail fast.

And then:

... A thousand joys await you
That you will not be able to forget ...

It happened that night. I did not sleep. In the bunks below, I felt the same of my cabin mates. Neither did they rest. An anguish for the day hung in the air. The waves were slow mountains, like monsters of liquid metal, which took an infinitely long time to rise and fall. They were not agitated, but neither were they quiet.

I could do nothing except to continue lying for long, empty hours. I wasn't thinking, I was dull; my sensations were heavy and tortuous. I had waited in vain that morning for the sharp sound of the cornet, which by bouncing off steel and iron, would have shaken us. But even it was silent. There was no place for the merry bugle. The Drake's designs were fulfilled. This sea did not allow opposing forces in its domains. He is sullen and gloomy, as perhaps was the spirit of the privateer who gave it his name.

With nothing to hold onto, without a point to lean on, I was beyond laughing nauseous at myself. The rocking of the sea was deep. With this, I got up and went up next to the command bridge. The fog joined the waters again. The nausea increased. Standing by the railing, I threw up. The entire sea looked like dark vomit. On the horizon appeared the shadow of a whale that threw its double chop. It rolled up to the sky. It seemed to me that the monster was also throwing up its vomit to the heights.

During those two interminable days, in which the ship advanced, I was not sleeping; heavy drowsiness made my eyelids dry. During the night, ideas spun in circles. I seemed to know why. We were in purgatory. Under the sea grew the Dark Forest and the old mountain ranges of the Andes submerged. Out of this, nothing, absolutely nothing. There were no image to be seen and in the depths of the sea, no Being was pushing us, easily lining our way. The Angel of Darkness passes this stage and, in other worlds, it may change its essence and color. You can't hear your dull laughter, nor do you feel your hands slip on the bow. It is the purged river of souls, which does not go anywhere, nor never ends. It does not give any exit and imprisons with the violence of its unfathomable abysses. Within the circle of purgatory the punished soul must find for itself the path of liberation. No one can help. Forces do not exist and yet you have to look for them somewhere else. There is no will to continue, nor to make a determination. But the soul has to exert a supreme effort that impresses, in order to find the exit, reaching the distant ice. Will the Commodore of this ship be able to make the effort? I again hear him sing, dreaming of heaven: A *thousand joys await you, that you will not forget ... My soul feels vibrant and temporarily triumphant...* This is how the Commodore prepares.

The waves of the Drake churn and hit the sides of the frigate. He had said:

“You don't remember Dante anymore? Have you forgotten about him? It is in purgatory where the Paradise Hill is ... and Colón, didn't you think you found her again going up the waters of the Orinoco? What happened? Did the moon, falling from the sky, submerge in the waters of the Hill of Paradise? And this sea, this purgatory, this separation? Paradise and purgatory were one; the lands were united, this water did not exist. Man lost the White Hill forever.”

Maybe, maybe ... because paradise could only part, only get out. The continents also divide, they move. The White Island is not in heaven. It is a little further, it moved away, it escaped from men, keeping in the continent of ice, in the warm oases, on which, sometimes, the Southern Cross shines, or the mysterious dawn. And the Angel of Death guards him, with his sword of fire and cold flames. It is He who gives heat to the oases and who shields the secret. Shadows pass through the diaphanous air and immortals contemplate their own eternity.

The Commodore, who is a man who collects old things, old maps, also has in his cabin a letter from the world of that Alexandrine monk, Cosmas Indicopleustes. In it the earth is surrounded by water, but, in turn, the water is surrounded by another land. And this last one is an ancient land, far away, where paradise is found. The current land, is linked to paradise by a river. We move about this gray earth, after the flood. Could she be the inside of a sphere, stopped by the waters of another legendary and external land, which was the one where the happy Fathers dwelt, in a remote past? That "other land" from the ancients, which Plato already dreamed of. The Conception of the Indicopleustes map is similar to that of the primitive inhabitants of America, who placed a tree in the center of the world, growing until reaching the thirteen heavens. It was a Ceibo, it was a Mother Cieba, and by it men climbed to conquer the sky. The Tree from Paradise where the Cuanyip serpent coils. Or, the River that leads to heaven and first descends into the depths of Hell. Climb up and, as you exit the pole, transform yourself into the great streams of the Milky Way. Going up it we will reach Atlantis, or to Avalon, the City of the Dead, where the Hill of Paradise is encircled by golden apples ...

“You remember Dante and his rivers, the Cocyto, the Letheo, the Styx and the Flegetonte?”

“Yes, but I don't see them here, I don't see them …”

“Everyone has found something on this journey. Punta Arenas, the "City of Memory", has given them. The architect Julian has found a poem written by Sir Ernest Shackleton in the album of a woman of his time. Shackleton has been the most extraordinary explorer of Antarctica. A painful love prompted him to flee from his land. Today he finds himself buried on South Georgia Island, covered by Snow. His wife, Lady

Shackleton, wanted him to rest there, under the cold, in the proximity of that world that he loved. Antarctica is a continent marked by a different sign. Men have explored without material ambitions. Drake the Corsair was what he was; there was no incentive to keep him going through the ice. It has been the poets, the adventurers, and the heroes who stepped into its mystery. Shackleton was the greatest of all. He wanted to cross from the Weddell Sea through the center of the Antarctic continent, piercing the pole, to the Ross Sea. A distance of 2,880 kilometers. The icebergs and the *pack-ice* of the polar winter prevented him, and it kept his ship, the *Endurance.* He then sailed on a drifting iceberg, with all his people. And in the company of a few, crossed this very sea in a boat. He was looking for help for his abandoned crew on Elephant Island. As they rowed over the Drake, Shackleton had said: 'There is someone among the ice. We will be back. If it weren't for the icebergs that destroyed our ship, who knows the mysteries that we would have revealed. There is a mystery there, Captain, a great mystery that is kept. Someday I will find out'. And then he would recite a verse from Job: 'Which belly did the ice come out? And the frost of the sky, who generated it? The waters are hardened like stone and the beam of the abyss freezes.' One afternoon the castaways thought they saw a mountain on the horizon. But it was a gigantic wave moving forward. That wave that travels the world age to age and that only very few human eyes have seen in our time. The same wave that engulfed Atlantis. It is ignored how they could survive in a small boat. Perhaps the verse about Job saved them. If Shackleton had made it across the center of Antarctica, as was his wish, he may have discovered the mystery. But the white sentries prevented him; because his time had not yet come. He must first shed his dense clothing, his rough covering and material. Today you may know him. On this night, on the prow of the frigate, the architect Julian recites Shackleton's poem, which he found in Punta Arenas. And his voice says:

"We are those madmen who found no rest - in the gray land they left behind - our minds tortured by the far South - and the incessant fury of its strange winds - The world, where ideals languish - is erased from our defiant eyes - and so on, over dark secluded seas - slowly we advance towards our destination".

Julian is standing on the prow of the frigate and his eyes contemplate the shadows of purgatory."

THE ANTARTIDA

That afternoon the first signs were glimpsed. They were winged messengers. It was always the birds who announced another new world or a new time. They came to the ship and flew over it, accompanying it for hours. Their chests and wings were stained with white, as if the snow had marked them, or showed the shield of nobility of the ice. They were the “Wilson’s petrels”. Then the whitest doves appeared, almost transparent, across the sky of gray. The wind moaned and they were like chunks of ice with wings, ripped off icebergs. In the distance, still invisible, float the icebergs. They did not send these messengers, to greet us and show us the way. Perhaps they were sentries and lookouts, returning with the news of our arrival.

Until the wee hours the white "cape pigeons", the "pigeons of the storms” flew. There was no night. The cloudy sky gave off a white luminosity. And it seemed that once again, there was a current down below. Covered with the hoods of the "parkas", we remained firmly tied to the ropes of the ship, resisting the wind. Something trembled on the horizon; dizzying lights crossed it. Outside the fog, a presence was guessed. A cold that was not only from the external ice pierced me. It was the chill of anticipation. What would there be? Would space suddenly open and we would see the figure of the white giant?

The ship was advancing on a sea that had become calm. The waters seemed firmer and we moved smooth, as if it were asleep. A mysterious melody was believed to be heard; it came from under the surface of the approaching line of horizon. In this light it was trembling, as if struggling to open up, or perhaps hiding behind wispy clouds. There, in the extreme, between the sky and the sea, appeared an intense, misty strip, like a happy, celestial island, spread out between ether and music. Maybe it was the "White Island" of Selk'nam. I had just looked at my watch. Three o'clock in the morning. Then I raised my view, and something like a blinding blow, coming from somewhere internal, it made me shudder. It was as if my eyes had been hurt and the soul was wounded. An explosion of white light had arisen and that light was then transformed into notes of a huge symphony. I must have covered my eyes and leaned heavily on the rails. When I could see anew, I was already a different being, suffering that unseeable blow that the light of the new world gave me in the center of my being. Meanwhile, outside, everything appeared changed. The fog

disappeared as if by a miracle and, in front of us, was Antarctica, with its indescribable presence. Mountains of ice, wispy clouds, meadows of snow, unfathomable ravines; an unknown world, living in a distant cycle, in a subtle and violent light.

The frigate advanced between scattered icebergs, facing the snowy peaks of Smith Island. Beyond, you could see Snow Island. And the sky was a cold, transparent blue. The birds always crossed it. The ineffable existence of that contour seemed to be wrapped in the music that arose from its abysses and from the invisible and radiant beings that live in their pale peaks.

Like the birds, my ideas also left. I could no longer think like before. The blow of light from Antarctica burns the soul and blinds. The baptism of its light transforms the being that will cross it. The world of the dead and of the shadows has been surpassed. And if the pilgrim shall one day return, he will end up as undone as an iceberg from the cold, inhospitable climates. It will be like a dead man suffering in living shadows. Or as I now live among the dead, remembering the nuptial homeland. Following the wake of the ship, the penguins began to come. It was our first contact with them. We watched them swim at high speed underwater and emerge, suddenly, in a jump that ended in a plunge.

Around us was the rosary of the Shetland Islands of the South. It was here that Smith, or perhaps Bransfield, found a ship stranded in the ice of the bay. It had been there for centuries. What happened to the crew? How did it get to these latitudes? It's a mystery. Perhaps the Spaniards knew of the existence of the Antarctica from distant times and that its navigators reached its coasts. The interests forced the empires of those days to maintain secrets of their discoveries; exposure will always be used by enemies. In the Royal Decree of 1555, issued by Princess Juana, on behalf of Emperor Carlos V, her father, she puts under the jurisdiction of Don Jerónimo de Alderete, Governor of Chile, "the lands that extend to the pole."

Around noon we began to enter the English Channel. In front of us we had the vision of the immense ice walls of Greenwich Island, still distant. The barriers shone in the sun. We gathered in the command tower and watched, trying to discover clues to the base. As the evening descended, we were

still trying to discover clues of the base. We could imagine the state of mind of those who waited for the relief, since the people on board were impatient to arrive. The Commodore stood on high with an outstretched arm. The sun fell cold in the radiant atmosphere and the ship glided, slowing her march in a calm sea. Far away, small icebergs were visible. The penguins continued to greet us with their water jumps; two or three birds hovered above the black radar gull. We were dropping a few degrees to starboard to get into the bay. A tiny dot stood out on the ice. It was the cross at the base; then, little by little, the roofs of the uniform houses emerged from the dawn. What follows is the account of our encounter with the people of the base. I was lucky to get off in the first boat. Everything happened in the way predicted and only very slowly, the events began to blur in my mind, as if entering in a reality other than dreams.

We were moving away from the frigate and entered the channel, next to the great barrier. Meters of vertical ice rising over our heads. From time to time, with a noise of thunder, with a deep and hoarse roar, pieces would come off that rushed into the sea, lifting the water in wide waves, which gave the boat a rhythmic rocking. Behold the iceberg factory, the ice barrier, which extends towards the interior and that covers the earth, preventing us from knowing the real formation of this world. Antarctica may be a group of islands linked by ice, or a single continental mass, an immense shield of fourteen million square kilometers.

The sailors quickened the rhythm. The commanders went close to the bow. The dock at the base was beginning to stand out. And on it, we saw the members of the crew. They wore their naval uniform and the commanding officer appeared in the foreground. I heard Commander Urrejola speak. He addressed the Commodore:

“That spring must be new ... It seems to me that there is one less man in the group waiting for us.”

The Commodore confirmed Urrejola's observations. The boat came in at the small, rustic dock. The officers jumped to land. Then Poncet, the photographer, the Army Major, the doctor and others. I descended slowly. I looked at the faces of those men, trying to guess what they would never say. I saw the thin faces, red eyelids. The head of the base, Lieutenant Pilniak, operated like an automaton and when he spoke his chin trembled.

With firmness, he stretched his hand and then brought it to the brim of his cap. Someone hugged him. Then we all entered the base and toured it. The practitioner, a 48-year-old sergeant, was unable to come out to meet us, because he had injured his leg. The doctor examined the wound. We also went to see the sheep they had kept throughout that year. They were born in the Antarctic base. The base consisted of two sections. We walked through them, observing everything carefully, imagining how we would be there during the winter solitude. Pilniak and his men watched us silently. Some of them began to distribute chocolate bars, left over from the annual supply. They pretended to be attempting an extreme means of establishing interaction.

As they left, to take the boat back, the Commodore asked: "Pilniak, has this pier been built long ago?"

"No sir. Recently. We worked half naked and with the water to our waists. I have an aching back."

"All right. We are waiting for you to dine on board tonight, with all your people."

As we parted, Lieutenant Pilniak asked me if I wanted to stay with them for a cup of tea. I was surprised by the invitation, for I thought that these men would like to remain alone to open their family's mail and military packages. However, I also thought that by staying I was going to have some invaluable experiences. And that was stronger than any scruple. I consulted the Commodore and he nodded, adding that in the late afternoon he would send a boat for me. I came back to the house. I sat in a corner, in the main room, while the men retired to read their letters. There were magazines and texts on hydrography. Secretly observing those faces, they looked bloodless, as if years had passed without receiving the sun. Their hands were slowly breaking the cords of the packages; then, without haste, they were removing the objects and opening the letters that we brought.

In no time they completely forgot about my existence. They went through the room and neighboring compartments as they did for weeks and months, recovering the rhythm of their activities. The radio operator locked himself in his booth. The meteor expert returned to his notebooks. Only Lieutenant Pilniak still sat on his bunk, with a letter in his hand and

his eyes lost in a small window in front of him. I began to feel too far away, as if I was in an empty space, surrounded by clouds, dead trees, stuffed birds. It is here that metal acquired a consistency, a special hardness. The only hard existence, like metal, was that of these beings. And I did not exist except in a curious thought, who observed everything without losing details. The lieutenant made an effort and swayed toward me. I also got up from my seat. We went together to the table where the tea was served. It was hot and I took off my "parka".

“Lieutenant,” I said, “have you seen anything during the winter?”

“What? ... What thing?”

“Something . . . A boat . . . Searchers. . .”

“During the winter,” he began, “the sea freezes over, how can ships pass? This bay is a single iceberg. Of course we walked it, we marched in the great starless night, until we got to the edge of things ... and there is the Bransfield, which does not freeze...”

“Well, what about there ... have you seen anything?”

The men looked at each other silently. Then they watched me.

“What thing?” He said.

“A ship ... a ... anything.”

“Nothing is seen here. This is the same as anywhere in the world. In what are you thinking? Don't get your hopes up ... at night there were only some stars, so far away, so...” He stopped for a moment. Then he continued: “Ah, that black sea!” And that light down there ... I've seen many seals...”

But one of the men intervened: “One day I climbed to the top of that hill. And then I saw something...”

“Silence!” The lieutenant interrupted. And his gaze had taken on a sudden glow. The lieutenant had not tasted his tea. I did not dare to continue speaking.

“Seals and more seals,” Pilniak muttered again, after that painful pause. “It is the only thing that matters. They save us. If it weren't for the seals, we could not exist in this world. His meat is what feeds us. If it weren't for the meat of the seals we might all be dead. In them is the vitamins that we need; acclimatizes us, strengthens us ... and I do not mean only of the body ... It is the meat of the seals, their blood and also of the penguins, which defends us in this universe.” A melancholic sensuality was revealed in his words. “You can't fight the cold with alcohol. It is a mistake to believe that whiskey helps here. It only burns calories. I have implemented the dry law. During all this year no use has been made of a single drop of alcohol. I can say that I have healed my liver in the Antártida”. He stopped abruptly from a strange thought:

“Antártida? Did I say Antártida? ... Who knows what this place is really called?

To save us from a new and terrible silence, I said anything: “Has this house served well, Lieutenant?”

“More or less. Metal houses are useless, as is anything made of steel. What is strong there is not strong here. The wood, just the old wood. It works the best. We have had winds of up to one hundred and sixty kilómeters per hour. It seemed like everything was going to fly away. When we would go out to cut the ice that we needed to make water, we had to tie ourselves. The men would go out supported by a rope from the inside. Outside you could see absolutely nothing. The fog is tremendous, it is black or it is gray; thick, you can cut it with a knife. It comes and goes suddenly. One day, the sergeant had to go twenty meters out and spent six hours trying to find it. We had to go find him. We discovered him sheltered in a hole. He was sure he was several miles away. Instead, he was facing the front door of this base.

My tea and the others' were finished. I requested permission to tour the base again. He gladly agreed, getting rid of my presence and unusual conversation. I walked through the wooden house again. I saw the wineries where preserves, cans of meat, boxes of vitamins were stored and also oil for the generator. Hot water accumulated in a pond on the ceiling of the main room, connected with a stove that passed the heat. From there it was transported down tubes to the shower and kitchen. In a narrow gallery they

lined up skis and poles. A little further there was a carpenter room and, at the end of the corridor, a door. I walked over to it and went outside. Outside, everything was different. A triumphal light trembled over the islands and the biting cold forced me to cover myself with the “parka”. Around the base the ground was free of snow and ice, covered with smaller rocks down to the sea. In a makeshift corral were the sheep and her young children. They also knew about the night and the winds inclement cough. Their fur was yellow and they were eating withered forage.

At a slow pace I continued to the beach. I crossed some small lagoons where birds were seen, which invariably took to flight when laying eyes upon them. They had long gray necks and were as big as crows. By the sea there were skeletons of seals, probably killed by Pilniak and his people; penguin bones and a large whale vertebrae. I amused myself by observing them. Some looked like steering wheels and the surfaces were charred, scraped by ice. I felt them and they were cold. "What immense monsters - I said to myself - and what a curious sensation to be able to touch their bones ... To touch the bones! Will there be someone who touches my bones centuries after I have died?" And with an inexplicable laugh I replied: "Yes, a whale." Then I contemplated the ice caps to my back and I was certain that there must have been dead whales imprisoned by glaciers millennia ago. The best gift ever for this Lieutenant Pilniak would be to give him a taste of the legendary meat of those cetaceans, of those dragons of the white abyss, preserved intact and fresh in that hideous refrigerator.

I sat on a rock. At my feet, among the boulders, was a soft moss fish. I was watching him for a while. Then I raised my sight and gave myself to the contemplation of the wide panorama of the bay.

The air was still and thin. When inhaling it, you could smell the cold, and the odorless smell of ice, the sleeplessness of heaven and emptiness. Through the nose, into the lungs, something sharp penetrated and the small Vibrant particles of light made me feel ethereal and intoxicated. In this highly lucid state, I perceived the slender mountain, that girl, in front of me, across the sea. It was much like one of our volcanoes from the southern regions. Yet how distant and how different from them. Could it even be said that this was still the South, or that it really had anything to do with the Earth? The vision was more like someone else's world.

Above, the sky was crisscrossed with tremors of light, and despite it being late in the afternoon, it remained as blue as noon. The sea, soft, small waves moved on the pebble beach. Far away, advanced some very white icebergs. They sailed in peace towards the entrance of the bay. Happy birds beat their wings over them. They flew in circles ever wider, rising to radiant heights. Behind me, glacier barriers precipitated their huge blocks and the noise of the landslides seemed to hurt the clarity of the air, perhaps producing that continuous flickering of light. The glare of the ice often made me close my eyes, striving to keep them looking without dark glasses, to perceive the contour in its maximum reality.

However, I was feeling so light and everything seemed so extraordinary to a degree that I had to lower my eyes to interrupt that vision of Zion. Then, nearby, on the snow-spattered beach, were birds with gray feathers, and red rings on their necks. I seemed to have seen them before, somewhere. I held my head in my hands and my hair felt cold: "Where had I seen them?"

I raised my face again. There, on the horizon line, I saw clouds were beginning to rise. And between that sky and the sea, it was limited by a red band, like blood or fire. It was as if a veil was suddenly detached from my memory; full of amazement, I recognized that sky and those birds, who now walked on the beach. I had seen them identical in my old dream, during my “Three Nights of Ice”. In front of me I had the same painting: near my feet the gray birds with red necks, and even the stones, sprinkled with snow, were touched by the waves. For a long time I sat still on that rock, while the light night was approaching, recreating the eternal day.

That night I remained motionless in my cabin. I listened to the rumor of a conversation. It seemed like groups of people were walking on deck. The pounding of some paddles in the water was approaching. Footsteps stopped at the cabin entrance. Someone ran through the door curtain. And the shadow of an officer stood out, lit up by the light that penetrated through the window. It was one of the tenants that also occupied this cabin. He came looking for me; the members from the base crew had arrived at the frigate. I got up and went out. Climbing up the ladder, I suddenly found the second commander, who was coming down at the same time. I gave way. He stopped and grabbed me by the arm:

“Are you just coming? He has lost something very important, not to be repeated. I have seen the arrival on board of that handful of men who stayed here a year. As the boat docked we all spontaneously sung the national anthem. Pilniak trembled ... I couldn't contain myself...”

The second wasn't holding back now. His hand was squeezing my arm, and had turned his face to hide his emotion. A curious character was this sailor, in certain moments of excessive violence and, in others, excessive sentimentality. The dinner on board was not particularly relevant. The personality of the commodore gave an air of sadness, apathy, to all these manifestations. It was evident that he only felt at home in the shelter of his cabin. For the rest, neither the commander nor the second were very receiving. The crew of this frigate, who more or less, lived its history inward, withdrawn, hermetic. Pilniak and his men felt awkward. After their long sojourn they did not manage to understand this situation of foreground actors. They resembled those beings sleeping in a dark room, when unexpectedly the light is turned on; rub their eyes, they don't know what’s happening, or where they are, unable to adjust their gestures to reality.

Sailors from the frigate entered the chamber at every turn, to ask for their autographs, which they would stamp on bits of seal bones, or on white stones, in memory of this day. The Army Major, Salvatierra, drew on the top of a whale vertebra the landscape of the bay, with the base in the background. When he finished the drawing he was asked to sign it. When it came to liquor; they wanted to hear how none of them had tasted the cognac, so Pilniak explained his theory of abstinence. Then, at his request, Corporal Gutiérrez began a discussion about the seal hunt.

“We waited for a clear day,” he said, “and we all left armed with knives and clubs. I carried a large club; to make it more effective I put several kilos of lead on the tip. At the end of the ice, there are herds of seals. The little ones play like children. Mothers sleep carefree. We chose the one that was more to itself. And then a club hits him on the head. The seal is stunned. Then the knife is plunged into his neck and he bleeds. If perhaps the first blow does not work, another is given. Once the seal is dead, the hide and fat are removed. In this task everyone used the knives. The loins and liver are then cut off. The leather is staked and the grease is used to fuel the fires.”

After Gutiérrez, it was the cook's turn. “Seal meat is prepared in the same way as beef; but only for steaks. I also cooked seal in the oven, adding some pickled onions that we had, Seal meat is quite tasty. What differentiates it from the other meats is that it is black. The penguin also edible; but you have to prepare it in a different way. I would leave the meat in vinegar water for a while to clean it well. The penguin can be groomed in many ways. It can be roasted and in the saucepan. It tastes like duck. But it is oilier. At first it is difficult to get used to because you watch the penguin with pleasure... but then...”

Lieutenant Pilniak interrupted: “You can't eat other meat anymore, because it would taste bland ... No! How are we going to adjust once we leave?”

The ships were anchored side by side, linked by a plank bridge. In the oil tanker the crew was also expected to celebrate. The party there would be different. I accompanied the men to the gunwale, but did not cross the little bridge. In the night-day, the great barriers rumbled over the sea and their deep sound was like the voice of God in the beginning of time.

In the morning, the bay appeared covered with icebergs. With interest I observed the work of the boat loading the material in the trolley and transporting to the base. They had to avoid the ice. In the prow, a standing sailor with a hook was pushing away the icebergs, deflecting the boat with an instinct. Sometimes the oars would slip on ice with a hard, dry noise. The men were covered with the “parkas”, as an icy wind whipped across the bay. Repairs were beginning in the base houses. Captain S. got off in one of the boats, accompanied by his pack. He led the dogs to a steep islet, located on the side of the channel that separated the great barrier from the base. He would leave them there to acclimatize. The dogs were thick-haired, resembling wolves. They were not snow bugs like the ones used by the English and Americans at both poles, but Creole dogs, acquired in Punta Arenas.

I thought I might employ them in the year. One of these dogs was especially striking. It was a yellow mess with long curly hair. He looked majestic, though gentle. His hair fell over his head, sympathetically covering the eyes. This dog was given to Captain S. in Punta Arenas. I made a good friend of him. I don't know why, but I found a semi-spiritual

bond remotely between him and me. That morning on the lonely rocky island I went to see him. I ran my hand lovingly over his head and saw his eyes wet from the cold. The dog opened his mouth and his red tongue was swaying to the beat of the breath. His fine paws sank into snow. Around him were the other companions; but easy it was guessed that he had no deep communication with them. They barked, they howled, and he was silent. Even if he had done the same, it would be different. There were other "reasons" in this animal. Another destination. I wanted to hug him, but I just waved at him and left. The dog raised its burly head, shook back its curls and smiled.

IN THE GLACIER

That night the wind came over the ship and shook its plates of steel. In the midst of the gale there was a chorus of distant barking. The next day the sky was clear and beautiful again. We went out to the island in several boats, where the dogs barked furiously. They had bloody jaws and bristled hair. Their lurid figures strummed against the lonely rock and the white background of ice. At the base they explained to us that in the night the dogs had thrown themselves into the Sea; swimming across the strait they had reached the houses and some sheep were kept.

The members of the expedition divided into groups; some took to the base and others went hiking; they slid on the skis that they would ride for that part of the island. I walked back towards the pebble beach, reaching now the edge of the glacier. I saw that the beach continued in a narrow stretch, leaving a space where a man could walk to the other end of the island. With curiosity I was looking at that coastal strip, whose end was interrupted at times by rocks, or large chunks of ice. A desire took hold of me, so that I wasn’t exact sure of the moment in which I had begun to walk it.

Sea pebbles sprinkled with snow and covered with ice made up the stretch. After about two hundred meters, I realized that this strip was much longer than had first appeared at a glance. This error of perception is very prevalent in Antarctica, where the dry air and transparency allows one to see for great distances. I began to very clearly hear the noise my shoes made on the stones when scraping in snow and ice. Like this I advanced another hundred meters and I was quite far from the beginning of this narrow passage. Then I stopped and looked. On one side was the

sea of ever gentle waves. The beach was low to a small extent, then it fell vertically, to a great depth. The water looked transparent and, without touching it, it was understood that it was deadly ice. Crouched by the sea, I was between it and the huge white wall of the glacier. Spreading the legs and stretching the arms, I could touch the sea water on one side and on the other, the barrier of ice. I looked at that gigantic wall of ice for a moment and then shuddered. It ran through me to the extreme. The wall cracked in all its long extensions. It was from there, and not elsewhere, where the great icebergs produced landslides. If the wall fell, I would have no escape and the expeditionaries would not find me. I imagined that by throwing myself into the water and swimming a stretch out to sea might protect me from the collapse; although I could hardly survive the freeze. While staring, mesmerized, I was attracted to the image of the ice above my head. A huge chunk hung over, reverberating in the sun. At the top it ended in streaks. The light was decomposing into deep green, yellow and black hues. The alarm and thrill of the beauty mingled. I don't know if that wall was moving; but I knew that something intimate was getting closer and closer. Then I heard a small noise, like sighs and clicks, and then as if souls began to fall like flying and white feathers, that when crossing through the light, they were fantastically kaleidoscopic, and taking strange forms. They fell on me, caressing me, and covered the small beach by the millions. I stopped being afraid. The vision was so incredible that it would have been good to die in that instant. All covered in those little souls of ice, soaked by the cold of that beyond human light, I cried with emotion. And amid the tears I heard a soft hidden music made of sighs, clicks of the barrier and from the flight of those crystals, water vapor solidified in the cold and dry air. Why didn't I die in that instant? From above, the glacier saluted. Their spirits, their fabulous beings, revealed their music, their minimal life. Perhaps the collapse will occur at the end of the cycle of this slight symphony; only then does the glacier's thunder close it with its tuning fork. How many more times would I seek to hear this miraculous music, which was like an angelic melody! I wanted to get up and couldn't do it, because I was blind. The light of the sky is blinding. With both hands over my eyes, I stayed a long time waiting to recover, until, little by little, I detached myself from the glare.

The beach widened and some rocks emerged. Then it was interrupted with the ice from the landslides. I had to climb over some icebergs. At last I reached the end of the glacier and found myself at a stretch covered

with volcanic rocks, sharply emerging, with beautiful contours, resembling fortresses or cyclopean constructions, and the snow covered vast plains. By the rocks, where the waves beat, one would imagine a hidden world of sea creatures, sea elephants and exotic birds. My sight hurt and I didn't want to go on. Close to me I heard a squawk. On a black rock, a bird flapped trying to chase me away. I got closer to see it better. He cared for a nest in which some frightful chicks screamed in terror. Then the bird rose and began to start circling over my head. Suddenly it came upon me from above with its neck extended and widened eyes. I threw myself to the ground and the bird stopped abruptly in the air. I could see how ugly it was; with a long brownish beak and bare neck, it squawked in fright and dared to bring his attack full on my head. It was the seagull *skua,* queen and mistress of these places. I came back through the barrier. In the complete solitude of that morning, without fear, I understood that I had made my first contacts. Without me knowing that nothing could happen before that world takes me to the end, to its center.

PARTY ON BOARD

With a few intervals, shadows of hooded men crossed the plank that joined the two ships. In the night, from a cold of steel, the expeditioners with their "parkas" looked like friars who carried custody, or penitents on their way to a lonely retreat. However, they were heading to the tanker's chamber, where they strummed the guitars for a while. I followed them.

The tanker's chamber was spacious. That night it could hardly be seen through the smoke of the cigars and the pipes. I stood in a corner and waited for my sight to get used to that atmosphere. Almost all of them were there. At the head of a long table was the commander of the frigate, with his young, serious and affable face. Beside him was the commander of the tanker, a sailor with a shaved chin and very black mustache. I also discovered the mayor of the Army and the Commander of Aviation. At the other end I saw Captain S. chatting with an officer in shirtsleeves. Also nearby, with an absent gaze, Lieutenant Pilniak watched the scene. A captain, with a pointed beard, acted as conductor of the orchestra and of the choirs. The guitars were struck by the astronomer, a man who had a thick forehead, and by an impassive young man. Some melancholy songs made their way through from the smoke. Then, a small and wrinkled character, with a bronze skin and very blue eyes staggered drunkardly up to the guitars. He was a German biologist, surnamed

Heinrich. He ordered them to pass him a guitar. And with the permission of the captain he began to sing, accompanied by thunderous strums. The lyrics of the song were in German and, although no one understood him, it seemed that it must have been funny.

Next to me, the second of the tanker told me:

"This biologist is preserved in alcohol, just like his lizards. You would think he came here to investigate marine species. No sir! He comes to drink and nothing more. It was the same last year. And this year the dose is repeated. There will be those who think he travels for the love of Antarctica, when he really travels to flee from his wife! She does not let him drink. Here he can do it at ease…" The captain had interrupted. Standing on a chair, he led a choir in honor of the biologist Heinrich. I listened smiling. It was a well-known canton of German breweries, now with lyrics in Spanish. A lieutenant in uniform got up and played solo, with a falsetto voice and comic pronunciation:

How is it alike, gentlemen, the port of Valparaíso ... ?

Then, amid laughter, everyone accompanied the chorus. Pilniak was always distant, without drinking. The commanders of the ships were retreating and a movement of bodies carried out through smoke. I took advantage of that moment to come to the place where Lieutenant Pilniak was. Seeing me next to him he was able to suppress a movement of unease. I greeted him saying:

"This morning I walked through your domains to the other end." And thinking that the atmosphere of cordiality of this chamber helped me, that it might break the hermeticism of that man, I added, insisting: "You said it's there, at Bransfield, where the sea doesn't freeze in the winter. An observer might have seen passing ships...."

Pilniak did not allow me to continue, because he abruptly walked away and left me with the words on my lips. My friend, Captain S., came to get me out of the embarrassing situation. Accompanied by the naval in his shirt sleeves, he approached, introducing him to me; "Lieutenant Rosales; will replace Pilniak this year as the Head of Base. He is your friend. But now you must wait another year before you may ask." Lieutenant Rosales

did not pay attention to these cabalistic phrases. With a glass of wine in hand, he looked at me smiling strangely.

At last he spoke to me: “Do you not remember? You don’t remember anything?” Something, something seemed to remind me. Where? When? Where had I seen this face? “I am Braulio Rosales. I was your classmate and bench partner in the Lyceum.”

I did not remember. It was much too long ago through the clouds of those remote years, and now, I barely heard what Rosales was talking about, with his fixed face, enigmatically smiling, a glass of wine in hand.

“How you loved to run off on the roofs of the buildings! I did too, sometimes. And we used to look at the stars. I have never seen more starry skies; there were millions ... I had love for an adventure…”

Late that night I left the tanker chamber and walked to the bow. The light was like day. In the West there was a beating of wings of light. Soft blue cloaks blended with green seas and purple gardens. "Colors are the passions and desires of light." But this time it was not like that, it was more of an impossible existence, like a game of souls. A flock of night birds flew to the far end of the horizon, trying to reach that region of impassive light. Through the black irons of the ship, I approached the railing and I steadied myself to contemplate the barrier. It gave off a still light while dropping its great icebergs, which broke the silence of the night with its thunder. Above its edge, where the immense plains of ice were beaten by the wind, someone seemed to walk; a presence of love, a being so white, from a very fine tunic with crystalline eyes and a sweet silver beard. Who would it be? Where was he going? In what mysterious oasis would he raise his cross? I suddenly sensed that someone was moving near me. And I discovered that another man was looking at the night on the deck. Sitting on a roll of cord, perhaps he had been watching me without my noticing him; the shadow of a fireplace had hid him. The wind, which was now blowing from the east, he had rotated the mouth of the chimney, leaving him uncovered. He got up and came to stand on the railing. He was a thick sailor, round-faced, with a beard with thinning reddish hair.

"I'm the engine captain of this ship," he said. "Not often do I come up on deck. I live in the belly of the ship, next to the noisy boilers and steam

smoke. I hardly ever see the day, not even the sea. I am like Jonah eaten by the whale. If the ship sailed under the water, instead of on the surface, I would not know it. Alone I hear the voices of command coming through the long tubes. In the combat I know not what transpires because my machines continue to work. The different landscapes of the world are indifferent to me. I live in the guts, in the intestines. And I love metal and lime behind my machines. Its rhythmic noise, great pressure, are music to me. The beings that exist in the deck light, whose voice perceived by the distance of the acoustic tubes, belong to another race, they are weak and transparent angels, who depend on me. Anyway, one day I will make important revelations to you, if you will be so kind to visit me down there ..."

With curiosity and sympathy, I paid attention to this man. He continued:

"Today I went up for the first time to look at the ice. At first I had not felt the cold, because I kept the heat of my boilers, but, now, it is that I am trembling. And it is not only because of the cold of this white world. I'm excited. I did not think this could be. Look at those dawn plains and that iceberg that now falls into the sea. Listen to its noise ... it is like the voice of God at the beginning of time, before I descended down there to work for the pale angels who don't know how to do it like me, and that they would be nothing without me ... I have written a poem ... If you allow me, I will read it ..."

Solitude dressed in white
Fury of battles in distant places
Nights as clear as mounds in fields of mole
Impression of a God in the minds without faith ...

The engineer stopped and, looking for the last time and said:

"I have to go. My time is up. My story is the same as yours and everyone's. I'm sure right here in this world there is also an engine captain who lives in the womb of the ice. Someday he will come out to speak to you in this same way and he certainly will not read a poem. Then you should go visit him, like me, for curiosity, and because it's hot down there and it's too cold here … I hope ..."

THE *SKUAS* GUESS THE DESTINATION

The following day Pilniak officially handed over the base to Lieutenant Rosales. For this reason, the latter offered a lunch, to which he invited the Commodore, high ranking officers, and some civilians. The dogs moved around the men. He had brought them from the rocky island to keep them at the base until the time of the new set sail.

After lunch, the officers got up for a walking inspection. They wanted to see that nothing was missing. Commander of Aviation, Rodríguez, entered the ski room and discovered a shotgun. He took it in his hands and was looking it over; he laughed, shoved some cartridges into the barrel, and went out alongside the dock. The sky was clear and the biting wind was always blowing from the east. Birds were flying over the radio antenna and particles of snow were torn from the ice barrier, falling on the damp boulders below. Next to the base door, the yellow dog was lying down. When he saw Commander Rodríguez leave, he got up restless. Raising his head and walking with its long thin legs it headed in the direction of the glacier, without ever lowering its head, as if it was seeing someone up there. Then the birds that flew came circling over the dog. Commander Rodríguez raised the shotgun, rested the butt on his shoulder, close to his black beard, and aimed at the top of the glacier, precisely where the dog looked. There was a dry explosion, spreading across the confines of that transparent air. And along with it a heartbreaking howl of the dog, while he ran along the edge of the beach, heading for the barrier of eternal ice. The *skuas,* who a moment ago had begun to descend in a flock over the animal continued to squawk, while they got closer and closer to its head. At the sound of the shot, everyone left the house. Captain S. saw his dog lose himself in the snow and asked Rodríguez what had happened. But Rodríguez knew nothing. He had shot high, and the dog had fled as if the bullet had hit him. Someone said maybe the boom could break the eardrums of the animal. Or the surprise shot drove him mad with terror: “If the birds flew over the dog, it was because they perceived the emanations of camphor, which is shed from frightened animals. The voracious birds know that they can make it their prey”.

Everyone thought the dog would come back. Commander Rodríguez regretted having yielded to an inexplicable urge, to that desire to shoot a shot in Antarctica. The Commodore looked at the snow on the glacier for a long time, where the dog had focused its eyes. He gazed at the last *skuas*

that flew, getting lost, and then silently boarded the boat. Despite knowing that the dog would not return, he often turned his face in the direction of the great barrier, as his boat approached the frigate.

“Dear friend, here I am thinking of you. I knew it. I say it from the moment I did not fall crushed by the ice of the glacier. If it wasn't me, it would be you. It had to be someone. Necessary. It was written. But no; its not that. There was a place, *a destination.* And you the more courageous, the more *prepared* to *fulfill.* Today I understand it well. Since that moment, everything was decided. You had gained the lead and there would no longer be room for me. In vain would I strive, trying to follow you, knocking on the doors of ice, which do not open. The one who sees everything, that analyzes, weighs the soul and the value of the heart, had preferred you. And I would be nothing more than a tragic annoyance and full of doubts … expelled, yes, from their domains...!”

“Tonight my soul remembers you and envies you. I know that I won't be able to forget you, that I will carry you in memory. When on the gray island my hand reached out to caress your curly head, you were as wise as those dark birds who guessed fate. My hand ascended to your head as in homage to a king who is taller. The last moments of your form were fulfilled, of your hermetic symbol. Where did you come from? Did you see childhood? Why did those white gods choose you, when you have no "intelligence" or "reason"? Why did they reject me? Perhaps for having them? There, in the hidden oasis, you will rest ... They needed a dog, and they took you. You will be an emblem and symbol, as when the lion was your brother's hand in paradise.”

“At this moment, next to this seraphic light, I think of our souls, that thing that we both are, what represents us and that sought shape, until breaking it - yours. And I know that maybe you remembered me - my hand - when you looked up the glacier, someone called you, and you accepted, saying: “My Father, why have you abandoned me?” And then: “Take this chalice away from me...” You thought about it with your eyes. And when the shot rang out, and you howled, it was shouts of pain and triumph. The birds were the birds of the limits, the signs of the earth, which will release your form, squawking with joy ... Oh, dog friend, you are so better than men! Because you are purer, more god than humans. Now you leave me. And

when the time comes on the snow, howl again so that I know, and look for your ghost, who will guide me to the Oases."

"Meanwhile, in the light of tonight ... Do you hear the Commodore who saw it? Do you hear? I listen to him. He says: "Where are the roads of my ship? How do I make it sail through my soul?" Ah he does not know his own soul! But instead he knows mine. Because he knows, friend, that tomorrow I will go looking for you, before those terrible birds destroy your body, your unsorted hair…"

THE SEARCH

I headed out early the next day. I have never been a great skier. In front of me stretched out the white plain. From the beginning, the sun was beating down on the snow. Refracting violently, decomposing in that sort of vibrant and luminous dust that hurts the sight. Then a consistent, milky mist descended. The sun did not pass through it, but the vibration of the light that bounced off the frozen ground did. I walked west in search of the opposite end of the island. The snow was hard at times, and the skis were getting stuck. From time to time, little cracks presented themselves. I was straining to see through the eyeglasses, touring everything they made it possible for me to see through the fog. Several times I diverted from the path, thinking I saw a lump, which was then a rock. I reached the edge of the snow, where descending would lead to the beach, the same that I reached in previous days. Again I could see the rocks next to the surf, the silhouette of marine animals and the birds flying. I was considering taking off my skis, and going down to that place, when the fog began to fade and the sun briefly reappeared. I was then able to take in the landscape and found myself on a tongue of land surrounded by the sea. In the distance appeared the hill of the island, with its summit without snow and its sullen appearance. I thought that if I reached there I would get a broader view of the area. Looking through the binoculars I could discover it, perhaps, in some uneven terrain. I turned north and started up the smooth snowy slope. Now the cold sun was hitting the ice. The dryness of the air was taking hold.

For an hour I walked until I reached the base of the Mount. I was tired and perspired despite the cold and snow. The slope was steep and made it difficult with skis. I was soon fed up with this painful effort and I decided to take them off. I sat down, opened the key, loosen the shoe straps and

nailed the skis in a visible place. I had not advanced a large stretch on the snow, when one of my legs broke through the icy crust on the ground and sank into a crevice, so that I hardly had time to back down, resisting the weight of my body on the other leg to escape from falling into the opening. I was able to continue climbing carefully, identifying the snow with the cane. I arrived at the rocky terrain. Here, among the rocks, stunted and dry mosses grew, burned by the cold, swayed in the icy air, as if they were sick hairs of those monstrous granite skulls. The devastated rocks were littered with snow and frozen manure. Higher up, the summit of the mountain was visible to me. It was a narrow and impregnable cone, for the rock was chipped and decomposed. The smallest stumble would despair into the abyss. I stopped and looked at the wide panorama, spanning the distance. On the other side of the horseshoe of water, of celluous whiteness, the beautiful pyramidal mountain rose. Anchored in the Bay, the two vessels and the houses of the base were highlighted as small black spots, interrupting the snow blanket. The Antarctic Sea stretched golden, covered with distant icebergs that sailed south. I was scrutinizing meticulously, pausing at crevices, noting visible boulders and shadows. Soon I understood how difficult my job would be. On that invariable plain, on that smooth shroud, the total mystery of a disappearance had been fulfilled. Not even the birds flew over the hollows. In the barrier the voice of the glacier continued to resonate. Alone high up on this steep rock cone, within the crevices, or in the marine area, next to the wolves and seals, I might find the dog. From the nearby summit the thick fog began to descend and, in a few moments, soft gloom covered the space. The frozen desert was veiling his designs.

THE COMMODORE IN HIS CABIN

It is night. Outside the swift pole light crosses. Streaks shake on the pale sky. There is a man leaning over a table. Through the little window the moving light penetrates. The Commodore looks at a sea chart and draws figures on it. In his hands he holds the compass and the square. Every now and then something murmurs; words that are not perceived. A long time has passed. About an hour. The man stands up and looks through the window. He begins to sing:

When the Angel passes
only some will arrive ...

And then:

Ready to hunt the sails
these fathoms to girdle.
He makes good use of the southern breeze...

He sits down again and presses his temples: “Ortelius was right … and so was Cosmes ... Ah, that Indicopleustes, that crazy genius! ... If I manage to steer the ship to the east, always in that direction, maybe I can find the River and the Tree, they which make contact with “the other land”. That other land the dog reached ... I will take everyone, yes, everyone who goes with me on this ship. Especially that one. . . What is his name?”

He gets up and walks.

“I know these ices and I can decipher their voice, as if living within them for centuries. Perhaps it has been so. But they do not speak of man, they say nothing; it seems they only want the dead ... Ah, it is not yet known that “the aspiration of all grain says wheat and that every shape says man”... But here ... The bright wind, the gusts of light, the bursts of light. Those swift and transparent ghosts like arrows, that cross this sky and that damage my sight. Only I see and know them. Here time has stopped and everything is the same for millions of years, when the great fight was fought and the Archangel fought against me ... What do I say? ... Against him ... Everything is identical. The fight is repeated. The same history. There, on the great barriers, on the vast snow plains, the drama continues. Therefore that light sees. They are squads of spirits. And it is not yet known who will win ... I still have one option. I'll be back in combat soon ... In this ship carried my people; some good warriors; the doctor, for example, totally on my side. But there is another who could well throw it all away; to lose. He has come ... Perhaps it was impossible to avoid him. Yet oh Gods, how ironic, if this time he took my side...!”

Take the compass and the square and put them both against the beam of the night light penetrating through the porthole: By you, signs of the great measure and of the law, I hope that we fulfill the destiny and that in this territory the form is undone! I need you to navigate. And to win. You are the signs of courage. The cold light hit the square, bouncing off the

compass, where it described two circles in the shape of eight, the sign of infinity.

And the Commodore sang:

Ready to hunt the sails
these fathoms to girdle. . .
Take advantage of the breeze from the South,
that makes you quick to navigate. . .

Outside, the birds flew with a slight shudder, away toward the area of the horizon where the heart of the light was beating.

IN POSSESSION OF MY DESTINY

The O'Higgins Peninsula, or Land of Graham, is like an umbilical cord that hangs from the great belly of the Antarctic continent. It would not be possible to know if it is really united to the central mass, which is shaped like a gigantic plate or shield. The ice is wide and eternal, so that it can hardly be appreciated if the Peninsula of O'Higgins is really a peninsula or if it is a group of united islands by the ice. An indication of its peninsular condition could be the cordillera that follows her full length, then continuing in the same direction to the vicinity of the pole.

In the west the waves of the Bransfield Strait, the Gerlache and the Bellingshausen Sea. To the east, the Weddell Sea and the peninsula is whipped by gales. Its exact amplitude is unknown, having been explored only at its ends. The English base of Hope is at its northern tip. There are other bases, North American and English, in Bahía Margarita, its southern tip. To the west the Polar Circle falls into the Bismarck Strait, still within the O'Higgins Peninsula, and to the east, in the Weddell Sea. The great Antarctic shield mass is just beginning further south. It can thus be seen that this sector is still sub Antarctic, still distant from the haunted mystery of the polar auroras.

At the dawn of this day I felt a vague happiness, without knowing that I started their cause. Little by little I seemed to discover the reason. The ship shook and nodded, swaying in that familiar way. Below, the waves lashed against my window. There was no doubt, we were again moving. And now

in the exciting adventure, going through places unknown, in search of an unexplored place of which only I thought I had an indication.

Without telling anyone, the Commodore had chosen that night to set sail. In Bahía Soberanía the tanker was anchored. The frigate incorporated Captain S., the entire crew of the new base, and the lieutenant Pilniak, who was coming to complete his hydrographic studies, during the polar night. The latter was on the command bridge that morning, on the gyro, peering through the glass with his vague and flushed gaze. The solar rays penetrated fractionally, illuminating his face with a waxy pallor. He did not seem like a being of our race, as if the Antarctic night had bled him and his veins circulated streams of vapors and mists. It resembled a sick angel, with their wings stuffed, about to come off their back.

The cabin door was open and the navigating officer could be seen. I saw him busy with the sextant, calculating the course. His fur collar was pulled up above his ears because the wind whipped.

The Strait of Bransfield rocked its waves. Great icebergs came from the south. They took strange shapes and had to be diverted several times to stop the course so as not to collide with them. They passed very close, so it was possible to admire their hermetic pigment, and its enchanted life of legend. Several hours we were sailing in this way. Always with course to the southeast, toward the rocky peaks of two small islands, stained with snow. In the middle of the islands a long cloud spread.

The navigating officer explained:

"The Land of O'Higgins is in sight. It's that cloud. I think that there is error in the writings regarding the situation that occurs on this peninsula." "There would be nothing strange about it," said Poncet. "These places are unknown. Only Charcot sailed within sight of those shores in 1906. One more hour and we began to glide between islands. We were entering into an intriguing cove. In front of us the wall appeared, the vertical ice wall of the barrier of the Land of O'Higgins.

Poncet spoke to me: “We are the first! No one has ever seen this”.

Thousands of small icebergs, tiny chunks of ice, floated around us. They were green, pink, yellow, of all colors. They traveled, they turned, and they circled in the water, reflecting the sun in each of those facets, in its multiple vertices. They came to the ship and struck its hull, producing a melodic click. In the transparent water they came to project the great shadows of the islands, of the barrier and the ship; and even ours, affirmed on the railing, looking at the sea.

The frigate had slowed almost completely. In the bow, the second commander directed the work of the probe. Without jacket, dressed only in his officer's outfit and his hands without gloves. He announced the depth that we were reaching. His voice was advanced by an acoustic tube. On the bridge, Commander Urrejola received the information, transmitting it to a lieutenant, who in turn sent it to helmsman.

The wheelhouse was under the command castle. Through the floor, we could hear the wheel. It resembled the string of a watch that is wound and stretched. With astonishing slowness, the frigate advanced directly towards the wall of ice. The rocky bottom could be seen in the blue transparency of the water. The cove narrowed more and more. I heard the commander say:

"These alleys always have a way out. It all consists of persevering, in not turning. It occurs to me that near the barrier we are going to find a gutter. In that case, we will see something extraordinary. Patagonia has gotten me used to these surprises."

The frigate was now very close to the front wall. Even so we continued to advance slowly, when the second warned from the bow a dangerous pass. The commander ordered full gear back and the frigate stopped, to begin to retreat.

Once again we were outside the silent inlet and still small multicolored icebergs circulated around us. From the south came other older ones, driven by an invisible current. About one of them a seal was stretching; lying on her side, she supported herself on her fin as well as on her elbow. As we passed her neighborhood she raised her head and looked languidly. She opened her round eyes. Then she dropped her white lids and covered herself with her stalactite lashes.

We were trying to move south for about an hour; but the *pack-ice* began to emerge and large icebergs, more and more frequent, blocked our way. We gave up, changing course in the direction of Hope, that is, towards the extreme north of the peninsula. As one sailed north, the Land of O'Higgins went running east, in such a way that along with exploring those latitudes it fulfilled the main requirement of the expedition. Further east no one could reach, unless they crossed the Strait of Hope, going to the Weddell Sea. Our instructions were to go as far east as possible.

After a continuous navigation we got to where the English base of Hope is located, in the vicinity of the cape of the same name. The commander ordered to change the heading south, sailing slowly again, more and more close to the coasts and barriers of the peninsula. The time kept was always clear, though a threatening wind blew over the plateaus pushing scattered clouds toward the invisible horizon.

Some of the crew had gone to lunch, others preferred to stay on deck, attentive to exploration alternatives. I was still in a command tower and observed with the twins the variations of the coast. Small fjords often appeared; the commanders were not interested in exploring them, bypassing them. There was a time when the vision of the coast was completely interrupted by a flat iceberg like a table. As this iceberg moved away, a very different spectacle arose before us. We were close to the peninsula. In our sight was a gray rock, standing out as an extension from the ice barrier. Immediately above it stood a not very large hill, although covered with snow.

The commander leaned over the gunwale and peered. To his side was the architect Julian. A little further away was the commodore. Julian stretched out his arm and indicated the rock: "There it could be." But I doubted it. Then the Commodore spoke in a low voice to the commander, and the commander ordered something to the officer on his left. The ship headed for the gray rock. And again, the voice of the second singing the depth. The anchor chain began to scrape the steel of the hull and the frigate anchored a short distance from the Land of O'Higgins. We were among the first to tread and sink to our knees in that snow. Never was a human here. At least for the millions of years that this place has been covered in snow and ice. The sailors and soldiers also descended, with their compasses and theolodites. On snowshoes and skis they walked through

the snow and began to measure the terrain. The rock was bare and the rock was sullen.

The wind was blowing strongly, sweeping from one end to the other. Some black birds squawked in fear. Fellenberg leaned over with his camera. He was photographing and spent a long time studying the veins of the stones. Some sailors watched him full of curiosity, thinking that he could discover gold. The atavistic soul of the miner awakens in plain sight of the bare and arid rock. The wind forced us to return soon. The waves were ruffling, even though the sky was still blue and clear. On the way back to the frigate we came across an iceberg on which a seal was also coming. Could it be the same one from the morning? Coming in a dinghy rowing at full oar, in the bow, standing and with an emotionless expression, was Lieutenant Pilniak. He was holding a knife. He took off his coat and shirt, leaving his waste bare. In the boat the house's pet dog was barking furiously. The seal seemed not to care about all this and looked sleepy at these strange beings. How could it even imagine what was about to happen?

Pilniak hopped on the iceberg, which swayed dangerously. He closed in quickly to the seal, stabbing it in the neck. He wanted to slide the blade of the knife down to cut it round; but he slipped, falling flat on his face. The seal, surprised, let out a bellow of terror. He could not understand what was happening. At the same time, a stream of thick black blood leaped over the ice, rushing into the water and staining the torso of Pilniak as he struggled to get up. Like a madman he was on his feet again, unleashing new stabs at the seal's neck. Naked and covered in blood, he performed the inexplicable rite of this savage murder. His blood and that of the seal were merged into one. He was no longer a waxy angel, now he looked like a terrible and bloody god. The whole sea was stained with blood, and all the ice; we enjoyed it with horror. Pilniak thus showed newcomers to this world what he knew, the only thing he had learned in a year: kill seals.

But was it just this? At night, he meditated. And it seemed to me that he could not be so simply judged. A curious fate brought Pilniak to this universe. The Antarctic shroud slowly oppressed, destroying everything that was physical, that was the product of another land and from another space. Along with the wind that wrinkled the plateaus, the voices of the spirits could be heard, of the genuine forms of these distances. They pressed on Pilniak's soul, embalmed it, bewitched it; but the body could

not find the sun, the physical cells did not receive their nourishment. For such a simple and dense man, the drama was fulfilled more beyond his consciousness. And what could have been a wonderful death, capable of transporting to a *new life* (“it is necessary that I die so *he* may live”), in Pilniak it became fright, frenzied resistance before nowhere. No, he would not voluntarily allow himself to be overcome by the "hug of the Virgin of the Ice”. And he instinctively sought a way out, finding it in that pact, in that bloody rite. In the cold of Antarctica he bathed in the blood of the beings that inhabit it. He murdered, prolonging thus the existence of the pale vampire of himself. Blood is the liquid sun. If the sun did not appear in the sky, then Pilniak would look for it in hell. (Someone was laughing downstairs). Poor Pilniak, you're already marked! Because you can never forget this thick and red blood, which runs in torrents on the ice. In what other place in the world will you find it mixed with this color so white?

THE NAME OF THE HILLS

It was a cloudy dawn. The sky was overcast and low. Nonetheless, there was good visibility. With two sailors I descended to land and began to climb the hill that stood behind the rock. The snow was very soft and we sank down to the waist. I was leading, opening the track. I felt the snow wetting me; I felt its consistency light and porous. I often squeezed it between my hands. I saw how it came together compact and then disappeared. Millions of years falling here and fading into the atmosphere, rising to the mist, to descend another time like invisible bird feathers. It is salt without flavor, shroud of this world that looked back and was embalmed. She knows the secret, but she has no memory. What is saved around her, she does in spite of herself. Some whales, some eternal dead, must be kept under her sheet.

Halfway through, we stopped to evaluate. We could see the bay covered with icebergs and the frigate in the middle of that white gray atmosphere. Shortly before the summit, the snow became scarce and the bare stone appeared. The sailors amused themselves looking at the rocks in search of the usual vein. One of them was short and stocky. He was the cook on board. He was always treated with respectful sympathy. For my part, he pretended to be a good comrade of mine. The other sailor was tall and black-bearded. I had very seldom seen him on the frigate. Maybe he worked with the machines. We were looking for an easy climb to reach the top. We were circling around the summit. I was always in front,

followed by the cook, who gave way and observed the ground with meticulousness, while he collected colored strata stones. It was close to the top when a curious thing happened. The tall sailor, who marched in last, quickened his pace and, almost running, he overtook us to reach the top first. Once there he smiled as if satisfied, looking at us for a moment and opening his arms to take a deep breath, as if he wanted to gaze at the cloudy horizon of Antarctica.

Back on the frigate that afternoon, the Commodore sent for me. He was on the bridge and beside him he had the commander and the two sailors with whom I had climbed the hill in the morning. In the Commodore's face wandered the shadow of a smile, but the two men looked confused.

The Commodore began: “You must know that the hills also receive names. Here I am the one who baptizes them. I am John the Baptist of these regions. And I give the name of the first to reach its top …” I couldn't help laughing. Now he understood everything. The Commodore interrogated the chef: “Who reached that summit first?” The cook looked with reproachful eyes at his companion, who kept his eyes downcast. “He said.” “Do you confirm it?” Asked the Commodore. “Of course,” I replied. Then the Commodore, addressing the tall sailor, who had not yet dared to look up, exclaimed: “That hill will be called by your name. Your name is Morales. So that the hill will be called that. I baptize you in the name of …” His face had suddenly turned grim. But the sailor Morales dared to speak, interrupting the chief: “Sir, these gentlemen did not know who got to the top first. . . Why don’t you name the hill after you?” Now I felt that I was embarrassed and protested energetically, affirming that the first to reach the top was the sailor Morales and that the name of the hill should be his and no other. But something strange had happened in the meantime in the Commodore's mind. Unexpectedly, He decided that the hill would not be baptized, having to continue white and nameless for all eternity. Now I saw both sailors smiling, satisfied and grateful.

In this way I received a lesson that I will not forget. For these seamen, the fact that a piece of the world bears their names is the maximum realization that they can claim of hidden dreams. However, with the characteristic delicacy of the people, they prefer to modestly resign themselves rather than have to endure the idea of having acted without decency and generosity [What does that say for those that were named?]. I looked at

the sailor and saw his smiling eyes now. It is beautiful that a hill bears our name. But what is our name? This white world has yet to reveal it.

THE BIRDS OF PARADISE

We set sail again, because the lonely rock did not meet the required conditions. Only if we never find a more suitable place, would we return to build the base there. Meanwhile the expedition had made an important discovery. The long suspicion that the Land of O'Higgins is misplaced in navigation charts, could be checked by our sailors. In relation to the geographical charts, the peninsula is run fifteen miles northeast. The navigating officer would locate the exact point in the error.

That morning we were sailing south again, a little more off from the shore. A curious phenomenon occurs in Antarctica: the landscape is never the same, even when you pass the same place several times. A concentration of icebergs, or a collapse of the ice barrier, gives new configuration. The landscape is like a moving stage. The cove that we saw yesterday, does not exist today. The mountains that rose in the clear sky are covered by thick fog.

With surprise we observed an unknown panorama. More or less in the same latitude of days ago. We discovered a strange world, populated with fantastic figures. The frigate was scuttling through enormous spans of icebergs that took on fanciful shapes, sailing in the direction opposite to ours, or remaining static, like sailboats from fairy tales. We deviated towards the coast. The icebergs did not diminish, but on the contrary they increased, giving the impression of an army determined to block our way to an invisible world. The Commodore ordered to anchor. Behind the icebergs the peaks of islands seemed to rise. But nothing could be taken for granted in this morning prone to all mirages. The commander's motor launch was lowered. The Commodore, the doctor, the photographer and some officers got on to it. I also accompanied them. We were going to try to breach the icy trench, through the compact ranks of those armies of icebergs. The noise of the launch's engine interrupted the stillness of the environment and the boat moved away with the bow directed towards the covert peninsula.

As we approached the icebergs, we saw that they were not so close to each other. Wide roads opened between them. The main obstacle, the illusion,

was being overcome. We soon found ourselves at the center of the first outposts. A superb spectacle, impossible to describe accurately, was presented to us. We were surrounded by mountains of ice that moved silently, or swayed gently to the beat of a faint breeze, or a mysterious rhythm. The ghosts were approaching in the same direction, adopting the most extraordinary silhouettes. Castles with white battlements, with their drawbridges and with the faces of warriors imprinted on their crystalline walls, stopped by our side. Fantasy sailboats they sailed leaving behind a silvery trail. In the direction of the bow of the launch an iceberg appeared divided by the half and joined in its upper part by colossal arcades of pink ice. We passed under this portal and the side walls gave off multi-colored sparks, which seemed to vibrate. We stopped to contemplate it. The vision was unique. The light from the sky, intense and cold, penetrated the white walls and, from within, was transmuted into those vibrations of color.

Someone there received it in all its original purity, later contaminating it with emotion and passion for color; like green, blue, purple, and gold blood, she surged from the ice walls, falling onto the water and spreading hues across its surface. Around the arch and beyond the porous skin of the first iceberg floors, the light was decaying; on this second surface thousands of little golden and shiny dots were boiling; they circulated, they moved continuously, producing the changes of color; at times they were green, then light blue or pink. It was impossible to follow all her transformations and adventures with my eyes; the intense glow was blinding. But, if one had the strength and the power to do so, one would overcome this plane of color, being able to reach the immediate interior of the ice, where the light again rests, becomes silent and becomes white. It is the central abode of light and cold. Everything is still there, without vibration, but there is an accumulated point, a center of rest, static, which is consciousness, super consciousness, and in which that melody of color is virtually found, the one that expands around the contour of the ice walls. Someone dwells in all this. Thousands of faces and shapes are created and recreated, and from that awareness of light, the music that accompanies the swaying of the icebergs is born. Something that is beyond the ear perceives this melody that trembles in the air, under the multicolored arcade and that enraptured us, imperceptibly moistening us.

Our launch continued forward. We stopped at times, or as in this case, we turned around an iceberg to ponder it to our liking. Despite the colossal

dimensions that are visible, the part of the iceberg that is submerged in the water is twice as much as that which is shown. The foundations of these buildings navigate submerged, hidden from view by a green and yellow stain that, like thick oil, comes off the floating walls. These icebergs, as they are carried by the polar currents to the north, decrease in size and die one day in adverse climates. Its death is announced by a turn of the bell, in which the lower part rises violently and the upper part plunges into the sea. It is a well-known story: life is changed into death and death into life. What was below rises and what was above descends. The day turns into night and the night turns into day. The ascent from the base of the dying iceberg is as if your soul is soaring to heaven.

The noise of the motor of the launch brought us momentarily to reality; but the men scarcely looked at each other, and the little boat advanced unperturbed. A huge tubular iceberg appeared in front. It was like an island. As we got closer, we thought it would definitely block our way. But, suddenly, some white birds, similar to doves, rose like pieces from its surface. They spanned for a while and then squawked away to cross the center of the iceberg and get lost to sight. We were surprised. Where had those birds disappeared? Across the iceberg it was impossible, unless we actually found ourselves in a place of enchantment. Those birds had to have flown down some invisible passageway from here.

We steered the boat toward the point in the ice pack where we last saw them and we came across a narrow corridor between two icebergs. Towering walls stretched out on both sides, and to the other end the birds were still moving away. The iceberg split in two. As we slowly crossed the corridor of water we saw the blue light of a transparent sky. The cold shadow of the ice and the waves that hit its sides with a thud, made us wish to leave this dangerous path soon.

The sailor in the bow gave an exclamation. Then we were all able to witness an amazing show. On the other side, the still sea was clear of icebergs, covered only by small pieces of ice. On a partly snowy lace, the birds flew in circles, squawking and dropping an impalpable dust from their wings. We were almost on top of the continent and within a bay cut to the west by two islets. It was a tiny expanse of the Land of O'Higgins. The sky was clear, but a blanket of clouds descended over the peninsula that day so that its exact configuration remained veiled. As the launch

approached, the sailor in the bow began to sing and Julian accompanied him. Again, as before, the birds had shown us the way to paradise.

Hundreds of penguins lived on the tip. The inhabitants of paradise were they. When descending and passing through their nests of stones, we perhaps resembled those first conquerors who arrived to the pleasant islands of the South Seas and walked alongside the naked and rapt natives, who welcomed them with flowers and dances. The penguins were in the breeding season. They remained lying in their small space of polychrome stones, warming their eggs. Our feet stumbled in that immense rock, destroying sometimes, and as always, the primitive rooms of beings. Then the penguins would escape leaving the egg or the young. Some sailors tried to catch the chilled chicks. If it was the female that brooded, for no reason did she leave the nest, facing the intruder, despite her fear. The male, on the other hand, fled in dismay, not daring to return to protect the shelter. The poor birds, without discrimination, trembled like children in our path. The trembling of their feathers produced a uniform movement in the great colony that inhabited the rocky of the lace.

The expedition members had dispersed around the place to analyze it. The spit of land was united to the mass of the peninsula down a rocky corridor. From here you could see a cove in which the icebergs were grouped and where the sea, in eddies, beat against the side of the barrier of very high walls. Above it, a mountain seemed to rise, but the veil of clouds did not allow us to see. Below was a beach of fine earth and sand mixed with chunks of snow and ice. In it rested a seal with spotted skin. We heard the sound of the onboard cornet. In the middle of the penguin colony, the bugler had ushered in reconciliation. Squatting down, he was playing a few bars. The birds came around him and listened enraptured. They twisted their picturesque little heads, some with chinstraps, and others with red beaks, and they seemed to appreciate those sounds, in which perhaps they discovered God, or the rhythm of a glimpsed universe, dreamed in the dawn of the Antarctic night. The Papuan penguins and the Adélie penguins, with their eggs under the belly, or with their young, listened to this improvised concert, letting themselves be transported by the simple sounds. The waves were beating gently on the natural rocky pier at the top. When the launch left, to return through the icebergs, the choice was already made. Julian could build his house.

In the evening, after lunch, I went up on deck and waited. The frigate had changed anchorage. Passing between two small islands, it had entered the bay, and was now anchored facing the lace. The floats of icebergs were to the north, overwhelmed, and even the great iceberg was slowly moving away. A gentle breeze was swaying. Crouched in my "parka" I stopped, like other times, next to the bow gun. The sky was clear and clean. But a great red and gold patch of twilight clouds was spreading on the horizon. On the peninsula the veil still rested that prevented us from seeing above the cutting line of the barrier. I kept waiting. Then, the light began to tremble and a distant glow crossed the sky. The veil throbbed at its end and ripped to the south. Through that tearing, the swift light leaked, like a sudden breath, and all the long blanket of wispy clouds parted, breaking into crepes and threads that the wind moved gently toward the horizon. That much desired thing was happening. An immense mountain range of transparent peaks, extended over the back of the Land of O'Higgins, to continue in tremendous undulations, united and separated by snowdrifts and abysses. The peaks were of immaterial dawn and they ascended until they came across the last remnants of the torn veil and the triumphant night light. Purple ribbons sometimes descended the slopes and the waves of light beat against the peaks.

Here are the mountains of my dream. As white and transparent as they could be, shivering in the cold divine light. Within its snows would live the heroes I'm looking for. Their peaks resembled the faces of titans, with the celestial eternity tempering. Feeling that I was living in a precise moment, I began to walk across the deck. Upon reaching the bow, I met the Aviation Commander, who was also watching the event. With his black beard and bare head, he turned when he felt me coming.
“Look,” I said. “Between those mountains the Oasis awaits us. We have to go”. He remained silent and turned towards the horizon of the sea to point out a new spectacle to me.

The red clouds had mixed with the crepes torn from the veil that covered the mountains and the night wind was bringing them together, pushing all that unlikely mass towards the zenith. And it was like coagulated blood, deep and dark red, melting with gold and green to create impossible shapes and colors. At the far end of the horizon, where the sea meets the sky, caravans of icebergs traveled and gave me that ecstasy of light. They were blue, old gold. And somewhere, somewhere in that distance, a pulsed

glow, as if it were the isochronous hammering of the pulse of light. Twilight stretched across the sky and stretched beyond the world, enveloped in an air that came from another universe. Without being aware of myself I began to walk back and forth on the deck, with my face raised to the sky, and found myself wanting to sing. I marched, marched like a child, until late at night. Maybe until the next day. Or until beyond the day. I dreamed again of the transparent snow crystal hill. He was inside and he told me: “We are waiting for you. Hurry up. Lest you no longer find me. The wind of doom blows. The trees in here are falling. The rooms are empty. The ceilings are collapsing. Our enemies are closing in. We must leave. We will wander eternally through the worlds. We are prisoners of the Myth. We need you. Come with us. Hurry up. Your dog has arrived. He told us that you would come ...” The wind, which scattered the crystal snow, hit the transparent mountain. Below was a blue lake.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE BASE AND EXPEDITION TO THE WEDDELL

The next day the work of unloading materials for the construction of the base began. From very early much was built on board. The whaling boats left with wood, bags of cement, barrels and long irons. Ashore, Julián directed operations. Next to the natural dock a crane and a sheave had been installed. They transported the heaviest materials to the construction site. The men worked with joy and loaded the sacks amid jokes and laughter.

I went down to the beach with the officers and saw the Commodore and the commander working with the drill. The Commodore performed this symbolic act. With an indifferent face, thinking of somewhere far away. I also spent a while devoted to work. I wanted to do something for my part and accompanied the lieutenants to load sacks. Soon I had to take off my "Parka", because a pleasant heat circulated through my body. And so I worked with them until exhaustion overcame me.

On the dock, Captain S. contemplated that morning the first efforts made for the construction of what would be his refuge for a year. His attitude was curious, for he did not take a single step to intervene or to help. Rather he seemed disinterested. After a moment he boarded and did not descend ashore again.

For several days they worked with an intense rhythm, until the unloading task was finished. The frigate had to return to Sovereignty, to replenish material on the tanker. These trips would be repeated often, until construction was completed. I will not narrate them in detail. It is enough to say that we sailed through Bransfield with variable weather, more good than bad. I must also explain that it was not possible to work on land every day, as we were frequently hit by wind storms. The first of them we met had burst out on a glorious sunny day. The waves in the bay reached great heights and the boats could not descend. As refugees in the frigate, we watched the icebergs and the snows of the mountains flash. The wind roared, making the ship's chains and plates vibrate. From the sidelines it gave off snow dust and the plateau was beaten by a *blizzard*.

During the navigation to Soberanía, the water of the Strait of Bransfield had a brownish color; great tube-like icebergs furrowed it. Other icebergs followed in the wake of our ship, or caught us sliding in the opposite direction and forced us to change course. We also established a more intimate contact with the whales. It was the time when these appeared in the Antarctic seas. The areas most visited by them are Ross, Kerguelen and Bouvet. From the Weddell Sea region, at the other end of the O'Higgins Peninsula, they crossed to Bransfield. They were blue whales, baleen whales, and *finbacks*. The solitary sperm whales are occasionally seen here, who, as pilgrims, or adventurers, make these enormous journeys from its warm seas. Plankton, the food of whales, is abundant in the aforementioned areas and is mainly made up of a crustacean called *krill*, in Norwegian. *Finbacks* also eat zooplankton copepods. It could be said that the Antarctic seas constitute an immense plankton soup for cetaceans.

As we have already said, to enter the bay of the new base we had to pass between two rocky islets, stained with snow. One day we found a sleeping whale there. It drifted, stretched out in the sea like an odalisque. The frigate sounded the siren several times to wake it up. But that monster, about thirty meters long, was not moving. His ear, covered by multiple layers of fat, perceived only the dull stirring of his internal torrent, of his heavy circulation, of his deep and hot world among the ice.

Are the whales the way we see them? What is their reality? Is there a reality? A grain of sand penetrates the oyster, injures it, irritates it. The oyster secretes a juice and that juice transforms the grain of sand into a

pearl. The pearl is a wound, a pain, a disease. Perhaps reality is also like the grain of sand that reaches us, and the vision of the world, like the pearl, a subjective transformation, something that is no longer the original, but a product made by pain, emanating from ourselves. Reality itself escapes us, both outwards and inwards. We live in an intermediate plane. It is never given to us to know what we really are. We can only transmute pain, coming to feel it as pleasure. That is, everything is creation. Ultimately we depend on potency, courage, and will for creation. It does not matter what exists or what is believed to exist. Neither one nor the other is apprehensible. And perhaps the latter is more accessible to us than the former.

The whale has a point on its tail where it can be mortally wounded. In order for him to perceive the pain, or to know that he has been injured, the stimulus will have to travel many meters of thick meat, difficult distances, hidden fats and nerves. When the whale feels pain, perhaps it happens as it happens to us when we contemplate a star whose light has had to pass through millions of years to leave us. The star may have already disappeared. Similarly, the whale's tail may be dead; but the whale does not know it yet, because the pain that comes to him is that of millions of light-years away. The sun has set; in the refraction of light I still see it in the sky. Reality is beyond reality; originates in the mind, in a vibratory center, in something that cannot be reached without creating, transforming, inventing, losing oneself or becoming divine.

Does the whale know this? At least I think the ice knows it. It does not seem to me that it is a matter exclusive to man, but common to creation. Making differences between animate and inanimate nature is our simplicity. In the cosmos everything is alive and sensible. The difference is one of grades and categories. The distinction is real only in the values of reason that it classifies in a whimsical and personal way. But the game is one, and damnation and deception are universal.
I am going to try to explain here how the ice also plays a similar game and deceives, with an irony very similar to that of man. But first, I will say that when we returned one day to the base under construction, we saw on the white blanket of snow, which extends to the east, above the peninsula, two black points, similar to men, who observed our arrival. The dots moved, sliding south, to disappear. It could have been a mirage, a vision produced

by the powerful east wind that beats the snowy plains incessantly; but in everyone's mind an unknown was throbbing.

The bay had lately been clear of ice, which was carried away by the polar currents and the wind from those places. It was easy now to anchor a short distance from the base, for more unloading of materials.

One morning Fellenberg and I went ashore. After going for a while, I was surprised the photographer cut on some icebergs in the cove behind the base. He was photographing some edges of the ice. And this is what I want to talk about.

At first, Fellenberg did not notice me. He was so deep in thought. But soon the crunch of snow made him turn around. He had lost eyes, like someone who returns from other distances. He must have taken a while to get used to it. Then he beckoned me over. He showed me exactly the points of the ice blocks that he was observing with a magnifying lens and then reproduced it in the camera of his machine. They were small pieces, angles, irregular edges. The light fell on these points and it was decomposed or refracted as in the different sections of a diamond. All the colors of the rainbow played, combining in amazing mobility; similar to a fugue of sounds, they climbed and rose, repeating the motif or after passing it in different tones, up to the end of the chromatic scale. Later, they returned to the origin, in a movement of passion, or of sublime irony. And everything was wrapped in a radiant tremor, of magic and spell.

"The interesting thing," said Fellenberg, "is that this occurs at a small point on the iceberg." In a thousandth of its space. The rest remains opaque and nothing should be known of the glorious event that, after all, does not alter the reality of its dense and cold existence. It is an illusion."

"Who knows" I said. "Watch! It has already changed. What is left now? Nothing. Is there any trace of the event? Not a particle saves the impression. It depends on where the light falls. And the entire iceberg, in any of its parts, may repeat the phenomenon. All the cold indifferent mass has the same possibility of going into ecstasy, reaching the supreme life. It is a matter of where the light hits. It is an illusion!"

“And who directs the light?” I asked. “Chance? Are we so sure that there are no traces? Our eye is limited. If our heart turned to ice for an instant and our spirit blended, we could perceive something else; who knows if a wound, an ecstasy, or an incurable pleasure. The ice goes mad at a certain point and its madness takes the supreme form of indifference and irony. The light falls . . . and nobody knows where or about whom.”

But Fellenberg was no longer paying attention. He was again running his camera. She was the heart of him. His machine saw more than he did, for he had given her a part of his soul. The best proof of this is that tomorrow he would reproduce an extraordinary flower of light. What he hadn't seen was caught by the lens. A flower of madness, love and death. In the small piece, on the sharp edge, its petals of rapid colors opened and were terrible green and red. The snapshot had managed to fix the moment when the red was decomposing into blue. And that transition, that doubt, was already spirit; almost non-existent, it marked the line of madness, illusion and joy. Joy of liberation, joy of comedy. Because there, at that point, the image had managed to show that everything was a farce and that the flower of ice and light did not exist, being an imitation, a simulated form, a game with light; with the complicity and acceptance of the light. . . Perhaps the ice and the light loved each other and initiated the multiple positions of that game. Death awaited them in the extreme. But in the meantime, they were creating, transforming.

"Look, Fellenberg, that luminous flower proves to us that ice happens as it happens to us. It also creates, it also pretends to be something different, a flower. . . Are you kidding yourself? I think not, if the moment of its flower really lives. . . At least he's as *delusional* as we are."

"The difference," said Fellenberg, "is that ice is still ice. That is to say, he plays coldly, he remains serene in the face of his own drama". "Who knows", I repeated.

Later - I cannot be sure if it was the same day - we were observing a drop of water in one of the innumerable pools formed by the thaw. In that drop, thousands of micro-organisms lived and stirred, taking unlikely forms. In Antarctica, life is rudimentary in appearance, and it is for the biologist. But it takes on a heroic tone, of an ignored epic. Life seeks inner, subjective situations, so to speak. During the great night is rest, and only

the moan of the wind and the sharp blow of the crystal blades is heard in the cold darkness. The great depths of the Ocean are black, like a blind pupil. There the little sponges sway, gently cradled as if by a late breeze. Those peaceful beings, who embed their kisses in the humid night, are spun by the eternal rolling of the waters and by the currents of the pole. Its galleries, its soft passageways, like honeycombs, house thousands of tiny beings, vermiform, threadlike, aneroid, that adhere to its corridors, or go through them to the rhythm of the ingestion of sea water. They love, they die, they fight, they live on the life of the soft sponges, they eat their rotten lobes. Like parasites, they steal their food and even breathe in the swaying liquid that fills their caves. Outside, all is peace. Rhythmic, imperceptible oscillations make one believe in an idyllic existence; the lines are curved, at times, to resemble tiny dreamy tree canopies.

The passage of beings from salt water to fresh water lagoons is facilitated by the similarity of temperature. When summer arrives and the icy crust of the sea breaks, on the beaches the pebbles are stripped, mosses and lichens appear, on the shells of polar limpets. And there the algae and fungi are born in the tangle of the moss tapestry. Amoebas move, protozoa and crustaceans roam in the rock pools. A tiny louse lives on the skin of the crabeater seal. And all these manifestations of life are exciting, as they struggle to remain with a tenacity and a heroism typical of the fury of creation. They try to assert themselves even here, in the most inhospitable place, where only the potential roots persist.

Fellenberg discovered a rare flea in the snow, moving and jumping; extracted from there it seemed to die and dry up. Observed under a microscope, it was like an ant with multiple limbs. Someone had the idea of putting it in a drop of water, at sea temperature, and that flea began to stir and came back to life again. The dark snows are stained by millions of these minimal beings. Life acquires an intensity proportional to its short time. Winter freezes the seas, covers the continent. A slight change in temperature will make life impossible for millions of beings. One wonders if this will to exist is so fervent and if nature really disperses its creatures here by thousands. Is it not rather that everything repeats itself and that life does not end but rests and recreates itself? That is to say, just like that flea, once winter has arrived, the beings in the pools fall into a total sleep and no longer revive until the next thaw. They too have discovered

immortality, rejuvenation. Energy is limited and so it is conserved. It's terrifying to think about it.

There is also a relationship with color. Black birds tend to disappear from these seas and it is very difficult for them to reach the extreme latitudes of Antarctica. On the other hand, birds with white plumage withstand the cold much better. Their feathers do not absorb the rays of external light and prevent the internal heat from escaping, creating their own thermal zones. White is the color of cold. It is not known which of the two has preceded the other. Antarctica may be Antarctica because it is white. Or vice versa. He who wants to conserve internal heat must avoid the heat of the outside world. The ice will be burning inside, in a central and unknown point. And the whales may have a hidden place where the color also reaches the intensity of white. At least there, in its layer of fat. Fat is cold, it is antipyretic, it is insensitive, it does not allow vibrations to enter or leave. Isolates. The heat of whale blood does not easily pass through the dead boundaries of their blubber. For the same reason, the seal, lying on the snow, overcome by the thousand-year-old fatigue that catches it as soon as it emerges from the water, does not shrink the iceberg that serves as its bed, because its epidermis is as cold as the world that is its blanket. The heat is stored in an interior space, reduced like a chest, and throbbing like entrails.

Intelligence and will are also at work in Antarctica; It seems that they did it from the outside and very slowly. It is an external, disturbing intelligence that is not in a hurry, that is also frozen and that observes like an eye without eyelids from the peaks of the veiled sky. She needs ages to change things. Petrels make their nests underground, sometimes taking advantage of the galleries of the ice. With the torrents, with the waters and the snow, when they are flooded the babies die drowned. Sixty percent of the young perish in this way. However, every year the petrels repeat the mistake. A secular instinct, prior to their life in the ice, leads them to build inadequate housing. The petrel has not yet developed the new reflex, or the new “concept”. The idea, like light, does not yet reach beyond its feathers and bounces in thin air. It falls like the sun, from the sky, but he does it slowly, without passion.

Nothing else has happened to the penguins. Since we have arrived at this place, they have accompanied us. Their nests are thinned or destroyed by

the continuous movement of men. Many hatchlings have been unintentionally killed. But they do not leave and their colony still persists in the rocky area. Most of these birds are from the “papua” and “collar” families. The latter bear this name because they wear a black chinstrap around the neck. The “gentoo” penguin is the one that builds the most exquisite pebble nests, and the “adelia” is the most careless in these tasks. The superb and grandiose “emperor” penguin is not found in these sub-Antarctic latitudes. They gaze at the auroras of the Ross Sea, or weather the gales of Queen Maud's lands.

For a long time we have been given to observe the love games of penguins and their theft of eggs, chicks and pebbles from neighboring nests. But I think they should have left by now, as their young are adults and an imminent danger looms over them. The men still respect them, obeying the commander's orders to leave them alone. But the time will come when they don't. After so many lonely centuries, the penguins are not convinced of the existence of man. It will be necessary to transform them into victims so that the reality of the human presence penetrates into their blood, becomes an idea or a reflection, capable of mobilizing their wills. Thus fate, through death and destruction, fulfills the mandate imposed by a veiled intelligence.

The terrible god of man will also reach these creatures, just as he once reached the altars and temples of the sun, today reduced to dust and ruin.

The form will be destroyed. However, everything is like that ice flower. Simulation, nonexistence. A hard and fine force, like a steel blade, going underground, creates multiple appearances, which only serve to cover it up, to disguise it, or perhaps to distract it. Here, in the ice, the form transmigrates. Resurface, resurrect. He exercises for the afterlife.

The flea that one day we carried on board, died and did not die, because in the water it would revive. Was he alive? Was he dead? I think neither one nor the other. First he simulated life and then he simulated death. He invented both. He recreated them. To do so much, you need *will*, and, above all, a sense of humor. The flower of ice gives us the key and shows us the way. Maybe one day I'll ask Fellenberg to give me a picture of that flower.

THE GREAT PLATEAU

The rock on which the base is built forms a wide border, joined to the continent by that thin tongue of stones, lashed by the waves and the tide that rises from the silent cove. There is no noise of landslides and the icebergs come to take shelter, lazy and mute. Through this rocky passageway you reach a sloping plain that is always covered with deep snow. Climbing it, a small abandoned hill is discovered. At the top of the plain, much further back, to the south, a slender hill could be seen, which lets its shadow fall over the base.

Skiing is practiced on the plain. The soldiers, the doctor, and Poncet descended swiftly, like moving points on the white savannah. Towards the east a plateau of ice and snow stands out, furrowed by shadows and undulations. Towards the south, the peaks of the mountain range sometimes appear. I had gone up to scan the horizon. I found Commander Rodríguez there, who was looking to the east. Every now and then he would turn his head away. In the monotonous, vast distance, a radiance throbs, like forever. The great plateau collects this signal and projects it from its shield of ice and frost. That white light covers the entire horizon line. It seems that in those distances a different region, or perhaps the sea, extends. Commander Rodríguez shook his head, he seemed to have an idea. When I turned my gaze from him, he discovered me and was startled.

Another day I surprised Major Salvatierra on that peak. He was sitting on the ice with a compass and a map on his knees. I was also staring to the east. The glow from the horizon was milky and lightning streaked across it. All the distance trembled. Then it would return to the incisive, nostalgic stillness. Then they saw me. A knowing smile spread across his face.

THE ENCHANTED GROTTO

The little boat entered smoothly, moving with weak strokes of the oar through the still icebergs. On board were Fellenberg, the doctor, Major Rodríguez, Julián, Poncet and two sailors. They walked the inlet of still waters. Two seals were swimming diving under the icebergs; from time to time his nose and two round eyes poked out. The boat approached the barrier, revealing the entrance to an open cavern in the ice wall. The water formed a break there, so that to get closer you had to wait for the favorable movement of the tide. The boat was dragged to the mouth of the grotto. It

could be seen that it was deep and that the water was introduced into it by a corridor, through which the boat could advance. The decision was quick. A few energetic strokes of the oar propelled the boat and the movement of the surf did the rest. The men met in the inside a cavern of ice, drilled into the bowels of the glacier. At first the eyes were reluctant to see, not because of the darkness, but because of the light that penetrated level with the water, hitting the vault and the ice walls. Some small icebergs arrived driven by the current and they were going to hit the walls of the grotto. Hundreds of stalactites hung from the ceiling that looked like the beards of a prehistoric wolf or a strange monster in whose belly the navigators were found. The light refracted from those ice tears producing new tones and greater mobility. As elsewhere, here too the disorder and the play of light were repeated, but due to the hermetic space and the fear of a possible detachment, the influence and suggestion in the spirit were far superior. The reality was altered and the deep cold dulled the mind, slowing its perceptions. As the boat progressed, it seemed to be crossing different color scales. First of all, green; then yellow; then scarlet and blue. The tips of the stalactites hung so low that the men had to bend to avoid brushing against them. They spoke slowly for fear that the sound of the voice would cause a collapse.

"This cave must be of fabulous age," Julian said. "Maybe not," replied the doctor in a very quiet voice. What takes a long time to form elsewhere, on ice can be achieved in days or weeks. It also perishes just as quickly. To corroborate the doctor's expressions, the light traced all kinds of silhouettes and swift shapes on the walls. Faces, flowers, animals, shadows, that only lasted a moment and then disappeared giving rise to new creations. Against the unfading bottom of the ice, what was happening in that cavern was like a symbol or a reduced image of the universe. Man thinks from his temporal vision and believes that things persist, that they last beyond the instant. The universe is a factory of symbols in transit, a play of light on a background of ice.

“Maybe we will find cave drawings of some remote inhabitant, of a distant ancestor of the ice age”. Julian continued. “What more cave drawings than those colors and these luminous transpositions on the walls!” Queued the doctor. “The remote inhabitant is the light. She is our ancestor”. Certainly. That cavern seemed to be the Distant Ancestor's mansion. It was the magical enclosure of light. But from the cosmic light, uncreated. The men

covered their eyes with their hands and the boat continued to advance on its own inland, propelled by the faint current. We were passing through fields of wonder; places where light was born, sown, in which flowers and spikes grew, and it was given to them to assist in its flowering and harvest. In the wide solar glades, purple and emerald lived. We were absorbed in this instantaneous event. Light is the creative will of form. It is the seed before the symbol. Light is the Wandering Traveler, the Ancient of Days. "Here the memory of everything that once was is preserved," said the doctor. The atmosphere of the cavern grew more rarefied.

Again someone spoke: "In the caverns of the ice age you must go to the bottom, because that is where the sacred point is located, the sanctuary before the flood, the fingerprints of the hands without fingers, the footprints of monster feet, are recorded in the darkness of the end; also the hermetic sign." Suddenly the light went out. It became total darkness. The sailors wanted to stop the boat, rowing in reverse, leveraging the oars in the water; but it was not possible and the keel hit bottom and ran aground. The noise of the water, crashing against a front wall, was clearly heard now. No one dared to strike a match. Little by little, from the entrance of the grotto, a weak beam advanced through the water, reaching the men again. Perhaps an iceberg interrupted the passage of light. They were at the bottom of the grotto. The boat held its keel on pebbles of ice and green water hit the wall through which stalagmites rose. The clarity was projected differently, extra-human, it bounced off the ice mirror and it was not possible to look. The men struggled and it seems that they managed to perceive a circle that surrounded the stalagmites; like a faint translucent space, framed by the blue veins of ice, through which flowed the immaterial blood of light. Staring further, it looked like a magical sphere. From deep within, or from far away, shadows loomed. Commander Rodriguez got as close as he could. So everyone thought they saw a sign on the circumference. His features were precise; but maybe it would be erased. It was something like a map reproduced on the ice wall; an instantaneous vision, held in the glacier, or a memory caught in the cold. The vision of something remote, enormously distant, was reproduced in that sphere; a vast plain, first, furrowed by cracks; then shadows and rugged mountain tops. Summits and abysses. A trickle of water was gliding down to a place where titans of ice interrupted the path. But the thread pointed the way; it plunged under the frozen towers and reappeared in the center of a valley. There was a great lake of calm waters, which gave

off vapors. Trees grew around it and houses were built. Meadows of strange vegetation could be seen. An animal, perhaps a dog, was approaching a mountain. And inside, the image of a giant resting was drawn.

All this was reflected in the final wall of the grotto. No one could be sure that this was really the case, not even if everyone interpreted the event in the same way; but Rodríguez murmured: “That's the dog! There he is! Who can get there? It would have to be only a trickle of water. . . Or be dead. . .”

The truth is that no one believed they discovered in that vision the area where the base was being built. The route seemed to correspond to a central continent, infinitely far away. “The cave has been given to us,” someone said. “We have discovered your sanctuary.” The men trembled. In the distance, came the ray of light. With difficulty we reached the exit of the cavern.

FLIGHT TO BAHIA ESPERANZA

Commander Urrejola wanted to reach the English camp at Bahía Esperanza by any means. As has been explained, it is located precisely in the extreme north of the peninsula, in the strait that communicates with the Weddell Sea. In the exploration trip, the frigate got to the "block" of the Antarctic pass, being blocked by the *pack-ice*. The commander feared that the same thing would happen again. That is why he resorted to the seaplane.

Rodríguez had transferred to the oil tanker on one of the periodic trips to Soberanía, taking advantage of an exchange system that he, like the Commodore, had implemented, so that the tanker's crew could also get to know the new base. No one could explain why the Commodore did not solve the problem more directly; making the tanker come here. He preferred to keep it at anchor until the end of the expedition. Rodríguez transferred to the oil tanker and did not return.

Commander Urrejola kept his idea of making his return to Hope. His confessed intention was to study a way for the frigate. He contacted the tanker by telegraph and requested the arrival of the seaplane. Commander

Rodríguez agreed and we all thought we would see him again, with his curly beard and feverish eyes. It was not so.

The hum of the seaplane was heard before it could be seen. Then a black dot moved on the blue and white background. It circled over the bay and swooped down on the ship, almost over the chimney. The pilot's head bowed and his hand waved. You could see the numbers painted on the wings. The seaplane dropped anchor and some small icebergs hit the keel of the floaters, as if they wanted to make sure of the real existence of that rare bird. A young Aviation lieutenant, named Velásquez, disembarked on the boat. He explained that Commander Rodríguez was sending him in his place.

After lunch, Urrejola boarded the seaplane. He was wearing his feather parka and the white silk scarf around his neck, and as he climbed in he took off his cap to put on the aviator's leather helmet. Velasquez helped him adjust a life jacket and parachute. With all this in addition to the seat straps, Urrejola was almost immobilized, barely managing to hold the camera, the naval chart and his binoculars. The pilot was in the forward cabin, being able to communicate with the captain by means of a telephone.

The plane began to move north. He turned and ran across the smooth surface of the sea. She flared cleanly, climbing over the lace. She did not immediately head south but circled several times, so that the commander could see the men working on the construction of the base, gesturing. In the same way the sailors of the ship greeted him. They looked like stains on a slim steel strip. He reflected that this thing was his refuge in these hostile places, in these solitudes. The commander felt a slight shudder; it was the first time he had left his ship.

He did not have time to ponder further, because below Antarctica loomed, and the seaplane was heading north, towards the end of the peninsula. They first flew over the continent, some sixty or seventy meters high. You could see that smooth sheet, wrinkled in places, covered with lines, like the palm of a hand. Deep crevices cut across the plateau, and it was possible to see them down to the depths of their shadowy depths. The ice rippled in the same direction as the wind. The plane descended almost to meet its bird shadow on the plateau. Urrejola looked back. The mountains

were not visible on any side; it could be that in the north they leaned towards the Weddell. The plane began to turn and soon the sea rose again. They flew over the shoreline, scouring chunks of the barrier and shadowy cliffs. To the left appeared the horizon of water with slight twilight and distant islands. Urrejola recognized the eastern roadstead where they remained standing by during the frigate's incursion. He discovered low depths in the eastern part, which stood out sharply from the air. A large amount of ice accumulated and the commander saw some small islands that he could not recognize, due to the imperfect geographical representation of the coast of the quarter they were flying over. It could well be Gordon Island or Hope Island.

A few more moments and the flight's course altered significantly towards the south; they began to follow the contour of the west coast of the Antarctic Canal. Towards the bow appeared the islands D 'Urville and Joinville. Countless images came to Urrejola's mind. There, in Joinville, Larsen was shipwrecked. Nordenskjold's dramatic adventure played itself out in his imagination. And Hope Bay was beginning to be seen as described in the book that narrates the expedition from 1901 to 1903. Between the two islands arose the channel known as Paso Activo, south of the Antarctic Canal, in the entrance to the Weddell Sea. It is possible to see Rosamel Island, almost completely devoid of ice, much smaller than the others, and the closed *pack-ice* extended over the entire width of the channel, continuing in the open sea, even when it was seen from the air. They were observing some clear steps. It was a fact that the frigate could not reach this far. However, Hope Bay remained ice-free. Its outline was familiar to the commander in Duse's drawings of the Nordenskjold expedition, with its plains on the south side, the snowdrift in the background, its imposing crevasses, and the superb figure of Mount Bransfield, guardian of that end of the mountain. Urrejola calculated the distance that separated this point from his base at about a hundred kilometers.

"The military might well try an overland expedition to unite the Chilean base with the English one," he thought. He picked up the phone, consulting Velasquez about the possibility of anchoring. The pilot's voice sounded strange. He said he was going to fly over all of the perimeter of the bay until the camp was in sight. Soon the camp appeared and some men waved their arms at the passage of the seaplane.

The landing was perfect. As he freed himself from the many straps and moved his stiff legs, the captain saw a boat similar to a fishing boat approaching with three men on board. The crew of the boat came to invite them to come to the base. Urrelola and Velásquez spoke English. The newcomers were very friendly. Once on the boat they explained that the bay was deep and that they could not know if the entire channel was frozen, because, from the camp, there was no possibility of making the observation. They had arrived at this place two years before, sailing in a specially conditioned ship. Since then they have not seen other human faces. They had to stay one more year in this place. All this was explained logically and with a monotonous intonation, without inflections or emotion.

The pier was made up of a natural rocky area; from there to the base there was a short stretch. A shoal of rocks crossed from north to south. The chorus of howling a pack of beautiful Labrador dogs greeted them. On the door of the base could be read: “Eagle House”, “Post Office” and “No Beer.” The base had tiny windows and the snow was reaching well "to above the middle of the wooden walls.

One of the English explained: “Really the lighting is bad and it depresses us. But you must bear in mind that the climate here is the worst in all of Antarctica. When you have a five or six force wind on Greenwich Island, here the barometer indicates a storm.”

The interior was equally sad. It consisted of a central dining room surrounded by outbuildings, a laboratory, radio room, kitchen, equipment room, room for storing tools, and a storeroom for leashes and sleds. The library was large, composed of scientific works. The laboratory had a darkroom for the development of the photographs. The regional fauna and flora were collected in test tubes and files. Two skulls of elephant seals stood out.

The English were five in number; four civilians and a military radio operator. The one who ran them was called J.M. Roberts, a physician from Twyford. He replaced the real chief, who had set out on an important overland expedition to Bahia Margarita, at the other end of the O'Higgins Peninsula. The leader was Elliot, an explorer of the Himalayas. The

English doctor smoked his pipe and watched the foreigners indifferently. But he was impressed by the serious face of that Chilean sailor, young and courteous, a human being who suddenly arrived from the ice. Yet two years in this world had practically burned his soul; almost without food, feeding on the meat of the seals and drinking his blood, still warm, to drive the ice from the heart.

Urrejola looked at the ceiling. There were no electric lamps; only paraffin lanterns. They got up to leave. As they passed they saw the instruments for measuring coordinates and a complete series of meteorological devices. Dr. Roberts explained that a three-year stay in Antarctica offered them the possibility of conducting systematic studies. Outside the day was still open although the wind was beginning to blow. Velasquez took a few steps forward in the snow and felt that a bulge was coming on top of him and the weight of a hairy body threw him on his back. He saw a dog overhead and felt its wet tongue and warm breath on him. Tied to a chain about a hundred meters long were the Labrador dogs. They stayed apart so that they couldn't reach each other. They lived in the snow all year round, digging holes to protect themselves from storms. They were beautiful, with soft oily fur and howled like wolves in the clear sky. Remnants of their food were visible on the snow, raw seal meat, gnawed bones. Using these dogs is a difficult art and science to learn.

Nearby rose a headland of snow. Commander Urrejola climbed it to observe the distance with his binoculars. He was looking in the direction of Joinville Island and thinking again of Nordenskjold. The expedition had been terrible. Divided into three groups, one of them spent a winter in the open. The men had to smear their bodies with the seals' fat and devour their raw meat. They looked wild and were hardly recognized when they finally reached Snow Hill. Urrejola was also thinking of Pilniak. He saw him again with knife in hand, sliding on the iceberg, on top of his victim. He then tried to imagine the southeastern plateau, on the other side of the mountain range, stretching without end, by the sea. Some Englishmen were now marching through the winds, the cold, and the implant cable shroud of ice. He wanted to question the doctor, but he saw him so far away, with his empty, almost white eyes and his bloodless skin, so beside himself that he preferred to keep quiet, trying to perceive that clarity that pulsed as always in the veiled edge of the plateau. These men have forgotten words, Urrejola thought. Their expressions are dead, frozen.

They can explain nothing to me outside of what I guessed on their faces ... Yet how much would he give to march with those who were going over the great plateau, toward the southern light!

MOON NIGHT

He had been dozing off for some time. An agonizing sense of subconscious lucidity kept me on the bunk. Suddenly someone spoke to me. I thought it would be less difficult to wake up; but it was like being out of my body and it was hard for me to return. I finally opened my eyes and saw a leaden face. I didn't recognize him at the time. The man wore a woolen cap and was covered with a black fur coat. “The commander sends for you. He says come see the moon. He waits for you on the bridge”. The sailor and his features were beginning to look familiar to me.

On the bunk opposite the ship's accountant was sleeping. There was no one in the two bunks below; the occupants were a second lieutenant of engines and the navigating officer. The latter spent his days and nights on the bridge, next to the radar and the gyrocompass. I put on my slippers and robe and started toward the tower. In the booth, under the bridge, I found the helmsman. He turned the tiller handle slightly. I said good evening to him, and he answered with a melodious intonation, without turning around. An unreal clarity descended from the bridge. Everything there was wrapped in the ghostly light of the moon. At the foot of one of his instruments stood the navigator, his head uncovered and his gaze lost. Beyond that, a strange character was wandering about, a lieutenant, or who knows, dry, tall, with blond hair and a beardless face. He gazed through the cockpit glass, resting his hands on a spyglass that hung around his neck. He wore a very fine leather jacket and his hands were covered with feather gloves. He held a clay pipe to his lips and an imperceptible smile lit up his face.

Then Commander Urrejola entered, closing the door behind him. He came dressed in his dress uniform and with his white cap. He shook my hand: “Good evening. . . Behold the moon. . .” The atmosphere was warm, an electric stove tempered the room. The officers of the night watch kept it on. The unreal light surrounded us, making us experience a unique sensation. I wanted to look at the sky and opened the door. I carried the warmth of the cabin with me, so I was able to stay outside for a long time.

Successive layers of lunar fogs were falling from the sky. They descended on the bay covered with icebergs of all shapes and sizes. Some birds flew slowly, as if they had to struggle their way through the immaterial membrane of moonlight. As far as the eye could see, everything was permeated with that fantasy. The mountains were of pure legend, a region from another world. Convulsive, enveloped in effluvia, they seemed visited by the souls of the dead. The veil was torn and new layers of ash settled on the snow. Also in the distant Oasis the moon would shine and its soft mystery, its enchantment, would be contemplated by eternal visitors. I looked at it, I saw it: huge, close, as no one has ever observed it so close. It was the moon of Antarctica, the moon of the South Pole. It fell through the sky towards the sea, towards the end of the horizon, slipping in that subtle atmosphere. Pale, a little less than the ice, the moon touched us, extended its gnarled arms, crumbled into silvery ash dust, like a mummy without time and without memory. Then a bird flew across her face, and slipping into the shadow, it seemed to lose itself within her sphere. I ran my hand through my hair, as my head was white from that magnetized ash. Since ancient times, men have feared the moon, because its light produces madness. She is dead in heaven.

I went back inside. Now the cold had gotten into my bones. The commander was no longer there. Behind his curtain he talked, he talked about the moon and things far away. And that lieutenant was still standing, motionless, smoking his clay pipe. He was smiling with his eyes fixed on the snows of an anxious country.
The steering wheel moved with the sound of a clock ticking in the night. The navigating officer was leaning on the gyro and his face was white. It was an old man's face, aged by the moon.

It happened like this. I was in the bunk. My eyelids become heavy as granite and I think I fell asleep. Suddenly skeletal arms crossed the ceiling, through the ironwork. They were the arms of the moon. And the cabin lit up with an anguished beam, of the deceased. The arms caught my chest and began to pull, as if to pull me out. I resisted with all my might and over and over I got up, falling back onto the bunk. At last that magnetic current overcame me. And then I saw myself *outside*, surrounded by a powerful clarity, floating in the air. Although it was only for an instant, it seemed to me to be a ship stranded among the ice, next to the reefs of an island; but it was a ship from another time. No one was in it. Soon I began

to climb, slowly at first, then faster and faster. Now the light had disappeared and the space was black. I realized that I was approaching an area. What I feared so much was soon to happen; the moon had caught me between its tentacles and its current dragged me towards its world. Afraid, I watched her get closer and closer until her dark circle hid the vision of everyone else. There it was, huge as the earth, covered in shadows and craters. And I was falling at great speed. I wanted to stop. It was impossible. I resisted with my last strength, but the shadows faded into sharp light and two octopus-like tentacles enveloped me. In vain do I warn you against these viscous forces. The pressure was such that my chest seemed to explode. I would surely be swallowed up by that maelstrom, sucked into that sulfur blue world. In that instant, when all seemed lost, two figures busted in. They were white and with ice hair. They spoke words of a strange language, and the pressure lifted. The current that dragged me broke in its center. I cannot remember if those beings wore pointed caps made of sealskins on their heads. When I opened my eyes, I was completely stretched out on my bunk and the pale rays of the moon came in through the little window. A strand of light played on the blankets.

WITH THE GREATEST

I sat in the chamber reading a book on explorations in the Antarctic lands by Queen Maud. The curtain was drawn back, and a soldier with a lean silhouette approached to speak to me: "I come from my elder Salvatierra." He urges you to talk to him. He waits for you in his cabin. I got up and followed him down the hall. What would the elder one want me for? I remembered his somewhat festive expression. Of medium height, he had rather the appearance of a bourgeois and was not immediately imposing by his appearance. But there was a vague smile on his face and his small eyes sometimes sparkled strangely.

Major Salvatierra was reading at a small table. He got up when he saw me. He was clad in his military cloak and his head was uncovered. He offered me a seat by the window and stood for a while, looking at me without saying a word, with both legs spread and balancing on the tips of his shoes. To avoid the insistence of that look and that smile, I began to observe the cabin. There were three bunks. Two were occupied by the Aviation Commander and the architect. None of them were currently on the frigate; Julian slept at the base under construction and the aviator was in Sovereignty.

At last the elder spoke: “I have sent to look for you because I have something very important to tell you.” And he smiled again. I could hardly guess where the elder wanted to go; but I don't know why my heart skipped a beat. Salvatierra sat down near the table. “Do you remember that we met up there, at the apex that overlooks the great plateau? I was trying to draw a map of that territory ... I have seen something fabulous, extraordinary. . . You will have seen it too. Is it true?”

“What thing?” I asked. “I have seen a light that comes from the horizon, from the east ... Have you not observed it?” And the major's eyes glowed like embers. His entire face had transformed, taking on an unusual expression. “Come on!” He exclaimed.

We went to the table where there was a letter drawn in Chinese ink. “This is the plateau. Here are the mountains. And here . . . Do you know what is here? The sea! Understand? The sea!” He was yelling. “I have known it by that light, by that clarity. It can't be very far. In this place the peninsula has to be very narrow. Two hundred, one hundred, thirty kilometers, at the most. . . Because that light comes from the sea, it is the clarity of the Ocean. If it were far away, it wouldn't project it with such intensity. . . The Weddell! Do you realize it? No one has ever crossed here. They are unexplored territories. No one has seen the shores of the Weddell coming from the shores of the Bransfield. Virgin snows, lonely regions for millions of years! And we will climb the mountains and reach the sea...! What things will we see!”

I had closed my eyes, as a sensation of vertigo took me. Was it true what was happening? And I began to make the most absurd objections to the elder, absurd because that adventure was the one I had planned to do with the aviator. And in this instant, when it was made possible through another channel, I was beginning to object to it. The elder showed me a high-precision compass, with a gold frame.

“It's our best guarantee,” he told me. “With this compass we cannot get lost”. And then standing: “I have sent for you because I thought of inviting you to my expedition. You will be the only civilian. Are you willing to join us?”

“I don't want anything else. I was going to ask you right now. My reflections are the product of enthusiasm, since I already feel to be part of the company”. He smiled. “I knew it”, he said. “I have asked the Commodore for permission for you. He says that you must deliver a letter to him declaring that he has no responsibility in determining you. That you do it of your own free will. We will leave in a few days. We are going to set up our camp on the ice plateau. Training and acclimatization are essential. We will take three high mountain tents and we will build a hut in the snow. You must prepare a suitable gear to take to the field at your opportunity. That is it for today, and I thank you.”

“I'm the one who is grateful, Major. You do not know . . .” He interrupted me, laughing his haunting laugh. And his eyes pierced me, fixed on the threshold. I braced myself at the door, for the ship was moving. I left the cabin.

I PREPARE MYSELF

One of those afternoons I retired to my cabin and wrote several letters. The first was for the Commodore and I wrote it in the terms suggested by the Major. The others I still have, as they were returned to me by the frigate's accountant officer. I open them now, after so many years, and read them. I have saved them. They are dated that year, and the ink is blurry.

Someone entered the cabin. It was the onboard recorder. This sailor had a strange personality. He was not interested in Antarctica. Never once had he come ashore on the expedition. He never made references in his conversation to the continent we were on. That is why I was surprised to see him now, showing various knowledge: “I have been told that you will be part of the expedition. I think you would not. That expedition is crazy. There are no adequate means to carry it out. There are no suitable dogs, no experienced people. The equipment is insufficient and the time cannot be worse. If you happen to be surprised by a storm with force twelve, none of you will return. All of Antarctica is crisscrossed with large cracks in this near-melt season. September and October are the good months. As a cabin mate I consider it my duty to warn you. Think about it, do not get carried away by your fantasies. But, if in spite of everything, I do not convince you, I beg you to make your will, and give it to me to keep it.”

He said the latter in that ironic tone with which he used to speak. I believed, therefore, that he should not care. But he insisted: “I am the accountant of this ship and I must worry about these things. You give it to me and I keep it sealed. Write down everything you own and the name of the person to whom you leave it.” The accountant was swinging on the bunk and was satisfied. At last he had something to do in Antarctica.

That night, while the light was projected in the cabin, I remained motionless in my bunk, with my eyes open and watching. I crossed my hands on my chest and invoked the Angel imprisoned in the Ice: “I will go down to your domain. I am going to open the doors of the Oasis, which you guard”.

My eyelids became heavy and a lethargy took over my body. Gentle currents, pleasant at first, ran through me from head to toe. And I think I fell asleep. But in front of me a black spiral tube appeared, spinning dizzily. I could not take my eyes off this funnel, at the far end of which I saw a point of light, like the exit of a tunnel. As my sight grew accustomed to that ethereal *maelstrom*, an invincible force gripped my chest, pulling me out and down. I was terrified. Although I was aware of the event, I had no control over it. For a moment I seemed to see myself far away, in a deep black space. A superhuman laugh spread its echoes in that abyss. I fought, I resisted. I managed to overcome the current that dragged me, but I couldn't wake up. I was *unfolded*. Inside my body and outside at the same time. Vibrations ran through me. It was like an internal plunger, speeding up uncontrollably. And that force was unable, in spite of everything, to project me out of the body, since my daytime consciousness had entered the process and, keeping me half awake, tangled the delicate cables and all the subtle connections of the hidden event. The cause of this disaster could well be found in that terror that had dominated me. I had already experienced such a thing at other times, but today was of such magnitude that my brain seemed to explode. Luminous flowers swirled in space. The frozen flame approached my heart. One more second and it would all be over. Then there appeared a small metallic pot, full of water. Eagerly, desperately, I plunged both of my hands into it and spilled the liquid on my body. The vibrations suddenly stopped. I was able to open my eyes. And I found myself on the bunk, reclined in the same position as before.
Who put that metal pot in front of me? The water serpent was submerging the tortured continent again. And only fire will give us immortality. The

accountant had woken up in his bunk and was staring at me with round eyes.

THE CAMP

From early on, one of the whaling boats was transporting the gear. This consisted of three small tents, a sled, a radio transmitter, theodolites, skis, sleeping bags. Each explorer's wardrobe included two “parkas”, one made of bearskin and the other made of feathers. The underwear was silk and wool. As is known, silk has insulating properties, conserving heat very well. Apart from the scarves and handkerchiefs, we were given a hat, also made of silk, to wear under the fur-lined helmets.

I waited for the afternoon to come down. I left on board my blankets and the supply of dry food, calculated for a period of about twenty days. Pen knew to come back for these things. In addition to the equipment I just mentioned, I had one of my own, that of my old mountain excursions: a thin “parka”, thick fabric pants, gabardine leggings, made especially for this trip, and a pants-cover, waterproof. The shoes were thick, some sizes larger than the foot, to be worn with several pairs of socks. I was later able to see that shoes so wide are extremely uncomfortable and that, after all, it is the same to wear one pair of socks as three. My old spiked shoes were the best, and I even wore rubber-soled slip-on shoes with great success. The ski shoes had been loaned to me and they were tight.

When I reached the plain where the camp had been set up, the military finished their installation. In the small field a contagious enthusiasm reigned. The upper part of the plain was chosen, next to a small and rocky hill, which would serve as protection against the wind. The tents were low, of the "Aconcagua" type. Its "winds" were tense and embedded in the snow. The day was covered in fog. Walking up to the rocks, I discovered the shelter built by Major Salvatierra. This was a home in the snow, like an Eskimo igloo. Its walls were built of stones covered with snow; sticks were spread over them and a sturdy cloth was spread over them. The booth could go unnoticed; it resembled a natural occurrence on the plain.

Sitting next to the doorway was the elder, with a pencil and a map in his hands. When he saw me he beckoned to me. He seemed pleased with his shelter and invited me in. He must have gotten in on almost all fours. Inside were two bunk beds. That of the major and that of Captain Homero

Riquelme, the radio officer. Geography and Mathematics books appeared near some paraffin lanterns. The floor had been paved in the same way as the walls; over it, another waterproof cloth was spread. Reflections and leaks of vaporous light, yellowish in color, entered through some gaps, plunging the cave into an hallucinated and sickly atmosphere.

“I feel at ease here:, he said. “At last I am on the ground” - and this word was used in a professional sense. “We military men don't feel good on the water. She is for sailors, who are strange people. I do not understand that of staying in a nutshell on an unsafe item. At last on land!” And he chuckled.

Then the elder lined up the people at one end of the camp. He spoke to them: “Gentlemen, at this moment the life of the campaign begins. Everyone knows what our goal is by staying here. To achieve this, we will subject ourselves to an iron discipline. We will do daily ski training, under the command of Brigadier Morales. People should be collected early in their tents and those designated for preparatory scans should be in good cleft condition. A symbolic bullhorn will be heard at six in the morning. It will be heard even though no one can get out of the tents due to bad weather. Everyone will cook in turn. The kitchen is that hole. In turn, the water supply for the day will also be collected. The two civilians are subject to the military discipline of the camp. They will be our recruits! Nobody can go back anymore!”

The other civilian in the camp was a young radio operator from a station in Punta Arenas. With a wizened face he watched the spectacle. Immediately the major distributed the tents. The radio operator would occupy the first, with a lieutenant named Narváez. The sergeant and the corporal were in the second. The third corresponded to Brigadier Morales and myself. The lieutenant was a strong and cheerful lad. The sergeant and the corporal had that sullen and rude appearance which usually hides a simple and kind soul. I will deal with Brigadier Morales later. The radio operator stared with languid, watery eyes.

At the top of the rock, the transmitting device had been installed. That is where I found Captain Riquelme that night, trying to communicate with the frigate and with the oil tanker to set up a program of periodic broadcasts. He was a kind man, of fine treatment. He had blond hair in his

beard and faded blue eyes. He always smiled. That night it was not possible to establish a connection, the device limited itself to expelling all kinds of curious noises, similar to primordial babbling, in pieces of chaos. The hubbub was like a sound story from the years before the discovery of mechanics. As an imitation of those noises that must have preceded the invention of radio in the brains of its creators. The very long antenna was swaying in the wind of the Antarctic night. From the top of the rock you could see the silent cove, half hidden in the mist. The milky light of the plateau descended on the plain, giving this night the appearance of a singular day, regardless of time.

I went to the tent and, with considerable difficulty, entered it. Lying in his sleeping bag was the brigadier. At that time he was trying to light a small paraffin lamp to warm the room. He did not give any importance to my arrival. I started to undress. This was a feat that the brigadier saw from the corner of his eye. The small space of the tent would not have allowed two men to undress at the same time. I thought about getting into the sleeping bag with my heels and a wool vest. But the brigadier stopped me: “Do not do that. Strip completely. Clothes will prevent you from moving. The purpose of the sleeping bag is to maintain body temperature, forming a warm atmosphere that protects you. But the heat has to be produced by you, not the clothes. The jacket does not let the cold in, nor does the heat come out. The lighter, the more suitable. It is the object of the feathers with which it is filled”. Like birds, I thought, and also like the blubber of whales. What strange bird or calf is this brigadier? “For now stay with silk clothes; but the feet must be bare, without socks”. He directed the operation meticulously. He was a rude, reddish man - the exact word is "rucio". He was not so young. It was noted that he wanted to show me his knowledge, but he did it with that cordial tone, as though not very sure of the comrade who has fallen to him. Before turning off the light, he pulled on his silk cap, tying it tightly under his chin. He told me, “Do the same. The head remains outside and must remain warm.” I often "think" so much during sleep that my head never gets cold. What gets cold is my feet. But I obeyed him.

He turned off the lamp. And the tent was completely dark. We were side by side. The space was so small that we could barely move. Outside the wind was beginning to blow, and the canvas of the tent was flapping. On the floor there was nothing but a thin waterproof covering. Underneath

was the hard ice and its constant, tenacious cold, passed through the fabric and the jacket, reaching my back, my lungs and even my bones. I felt it sharply, almost burning, without strength or power to fight it. It slowly took me over, like an irresistible pain. The lungs were still lukewarm animals, but before long they would be hit by the cutting edge. I moved. I tried to get on my side. The wind blew through the tent.

The brigadier was not sleeping either. He began to speak. There is nothing better than words to protect man. They give us what objects can no longer give us. The words warmed us. He said, “In Switzerland, I have also slept in the snow in the mountains. They are different mountains, other types of rocks, they seem more domesticated. They are not wild like ours. They have been covered with pine trees and man controls them. Even the snow seems less cold. There is a whole sophisticated and complex technique to climb. Here things are quite otherwise. . .”

It was a different man who spoke to me. With a sweet intonation he remembered his trip to Switzerland. He mixed up some French words. It seems that the shadow had transformed him. “There I studied the *parallel* technique. It is difficult to master, especially for those who have been educated in the "wedge" system” [skiing]. With the silk cap, my head was feeling intense heat. I had to take it off. He continued. “Our mountains are the most well-known. They have no equals in the world. Right now I miss them. In this huge savannah, what encourages me, what drives me is the hope that those mountains, which we sometimes see, resemble those of ours. I think they are smaller. It is to them where we must go. My major is interested in the Weddell Sea; but I'm interested in those mountains”.

“Me too! Morales, you and I are looking for the same thing”. I exclaimed. Then the brigadier re-lit his lamp, for it seemed to him that the entrance to the tent had opened and the wind was blowing in. He checked the lock and then searched for something among his clothes. He seemed to have found it:

“Look,” he told me, “this is Switzerland… But there is something else I want to show you… This.” And he pointed to the photograph of a woman in the snow, wearing ski pants. “She is my wife. Together we have climbed the mountains. We both have the same love for mountains. She would have liked to take part in this exploration.”

Afterwards, the brigadier was pumping his small lamp, with which he intended to warm the room a little. And so it happened that night, between the light and the shadows, both talking away about things that we would forget tomorrow and trying to fight the ice bite with memories. Until faintly, amid the noise of the wind and the indecisive light of dawn, we heard the horn, as if it were the anguished cry of a frozen throat.

THE DAY

The day was here. We washed ourselves by drawing water from a hole dug in the snow. A boat left with the radio operator. He woke up with a high fever and a lung complication was feared. They transported him on a stretcher back to the barrier. It seemed to me that the man was happy to leave. Major Salvatierra stood at the entrance to his igloo, with a compass and a map. That good bourgeois had become a fanatical and willful man. Ironically, almost scornfully, he looked at the radio operator. He told me: “Now there will be a space in the lieutenant's tent. You better move there. In this way the brigadier will have more comfort. He is our guide.”

That morning we climbed to the edge of the plain. And the brigadier began his ski lessons. The major and I were the students, because the lieutenant skied very well and the sergeant and the corporal could glide quickly down the slope. The notions that the brigadier gave us were the rudimentary ones: turning, walking on soft snow, trimming the skis on the ice, ascending an inclined plane, descending in *semi-skid* and braking in a “wedge”. The brigadier considered that the "wedge" system was the most suitable for this terrain. We were surprised to see the elder repeat the same practice one and a hundred times, falling and getting up, covered in snow. That man was no longer young; but he showed the enthusiasm and stubbornness of a boy. Beaten, bruised, he insisted that the brigadier continue to instruct him, despite his exhaustion. The brigadier was perspiring and so were we, without the intense cold being an impediment. The elder practiced until after noon. Only then did we return to the camp.

Lunch was cooked in a rustic way. Between two large stones hung the kettle. The meat and vegetables were canned. The food base was made up of chocolate and dry foods. In the afternoon there was a short rest, before continuing with the training sessions. The wind blew strong, without causing the fog to clear. Only when night fell did the explosion of white

light come over the horizon. But it was momentary, as always, because immediately that unreal gloom returned.

We took refuge in the tents. And that night was even worse than the previous one, because Lieutenant Narváez did not have a lamp to warm us. We were in the dark from the beginning and not even the constant joy of this officer could make us forget the terrible cold. I think I overcame the bite of the ice, which kept me on the brink of "clairvoyance". And I say this because, after the first stage of despair and pain in the body, I was entering a state of lucid indifference, as if floating in a light world and perhaps even burning, in which the body was alien, like a stone…I could, if he wanted, abandon it forever, without any emotion or anguish. But the inflexible will of the elder would bring me back to consciousness: his bugle call tore the gray dawn of a new day.

LOST AT SEA

That afternoon the boats with materials continued to go ashore. They did it despite the fog that made visibility only a meter away. I went down by a rope and entered one of them. The boat carried wood. His crew was complete. Before leaving, the skipper of the boat, a sea corporal, offered his men a drink of water. Sailors call this drink the "girl". We left in the direction of the pier. Wrapped in the "parkas", the men went under a sky too cloudy to be serene. I watched the sailors row in silence, they were focused. At times it seemed to me that the boat was sailing through the air, amidst the vapors of an imprecise world. Those sailors rowed in eternity and their movements were pointless. The bow of that boat would never touch a port. We had been sailing for a long time. If my calculations were not wrong, we should already be landing on the tip. I watched the sailors and the corporal. They showed no concern; they laughed, joking. I also tried to laugh, participating in the talk of the boatmen. In this way another half hour passed. And the men's faces did not change. The sea corporal kept the tiller in his hands and, from time to time, spoke almost ritual words, unintelligible to me.

With an involuntary movement I looked at my little pocket compass. In it I saw what I feared. We were marching in the opposite direction, rowing north instead of south. I went to the end: “Do you know that we are lost? We have been going in the opposite direction for a long time”. But the corporal laughed, affirming that that could not be, because we had started

in the right direction. The other sailors confirmed. Then I showed them my compass and they argued to me that in these latitudes the compasses were of little use, since they frequently “went crazy”, due to the proximity of the pole. The cape was extended in a very curious way with the possibility that it was not the North Pole that attracted the needle, but the South Pole that repelled it. I admired the calm of these men, especially when I realized that they were not sure of what they were saying. I tried as a last resort to convince them: “Let's at least stay the course; in this way it will be easy for us to return, turning round to the south”. I breathed relief when I saw that they accepted this proposal. I think this is what saved us, because suddenly the waves began to rise, giving the impression that we were no longer in the bay. Through the dense fog we glimpsed at times the shadows of some islets that later disappeared. And later, some great icebergs passed so close that the emanation of the ice reached us with its sharp breath. The wind blew. And the noise of landslides not too distant was heard between the waves and the fog.

No one no longer doubted that we were lost at sea. The corporal exclaimed smiling: “It seems your compass was right. I've been thinking the same for a long time, but what would it have gained us by saying it? We can't go back to the ship. The captain will be furious; to believe otherwise is not to know him. We better try to find the lace. . .” In this difficult situation the temper of these men remained firm. We were lost in Antarctica. The storm could strike at any moment. The climate and the sea were unknown to us. However, the sailors did not show concern.

Nor was I afraid of the situation we were in. I only wanted, vehemently, to reach the plain of the camp, where the elder was waiting for me. What happened to us in this boat for me was a serious obstacle. With a special sense of humor, the sailors told me: “Why even bother going back? If we die here, it makes a good story of the trip.” I understood. But I kept quiet. Because it was his *reason* and not mine. And from that moment on, a silent struggle began between them and me. It was the fight of his myth against mine; of the myth of the sea against the myth of the mountains. I knew that only the elder was offering me the possibility of a compromise between his Weddell Sea and my transparent peaks.

“Let's go back to the ship”, I insisted. “Anything else will be considered by the captain as recklessness. You, Corporal, are responsible for the

decisions made here!" One of the sailors said: "On that island, after the fog, we could spend the night". "No!" I yelled. "That's stupid. Let's find the frigate. Remember, Corporal, don't forget the captain. By this time the lack of this boat will have been noticed and they will be looking for us." The corporal's fear for the captain helped me defeat him. I never thought that the petulant captain could one day become my ally. However, this time he definitely favored me. These men feared him and the sense of discipline prevailed over the feeling of destiny. The corporal preferred to face the anger of his superior rather than be accused of breach of duty.

One more hour we rowed until the very fine ears of the sailors made out vibrations that were imperceptible to me. It was the noise of the frigate's engines. The corporal steered the boat in that direction. The scene of the appearance of the ship was ghostly. She emerged from the mist like a mass that was closing in on us. Yet she was immobile and anchored. The fleeing clouds gave the impression that she was moving; its cannons and her chimneys took on colossal proportions, towering above us. It seems that the pounding of the oars was also heard on the ship, because a sailor on duty shouted and then others crowded onto the ladder on board. The captain approached, looking down: "Where were you?" "We got lost", said the corporal, reluctantly. "So I see. What kind of sailor! Let's see, give this man a boat compass, so he can reach land!" I saw the corporal turn red and look at me sideways. The captain handed him a large compass, similar to a lamp, and ordered him to set sail immediately, since the other boats were already returning from the tip.

We arrived at the dock at dusk, when the clarity began its nocturnal signals on the plain. I said goodbye to the sailors and, carrying my bags and blankets, I ascended the snow slope to the camp. A heavy silence awaited me. The tents were closed and only Captain Riquelme received me next to the hill. He told me that the major had ordered me to be picked up at once, since the people rested to start at dawn to explore the plateau. I could not take part in it because of my delay. The captain tried to convey the major's orders to me kindly, so as not to disappoint me. He did not know that worse things could happen to me on that journey.
I think I even slept that night. Although it could well have been because under the sleeping bag I gathered several blankets to defend myself from the ice.

THE FAILURE OF AN EXPLORATION

The major left accompanied by the brigadier, the sergeant and the corporal. The rest of us stayed in the camp. The group of explorers climbed the slope to continue east, along the great plateau. It was a very rough exploration.

From the start, the fog almost totally intercepted visibility. Cracks appeared in the plain. The brigadier sank into one and they had to help him by pulling the ropes. They marched in single file, avoiding dangerous features on the ground. Towards noon the wind appeared. The *blizzard* engulfed them. They thought to stop, but as the storm was getting worse, they continued in the same direction. The elder wanted to test the precision of his compass and the mettle of his men.

In the afternoon, hunger, thirst and cold were accentuated. The sergeant took a handful of snow and put it in his mouth. His eyes were sunken. A short distance from them, the mist began to swirl in whirlwinds. Then the corporal fell flat on his face, and began to moan. The elder approached him and hit him with his cane. “Stand up!” He shouted. “What is the meaning of this? Are you not a man?” The corporal overcame himself and continued marching into the evening. They returned to camp late, sad and starving. The brigadier looked puzzled, though upright. Only the elder was smiling, as always, his face covered by a shaggy, dirty beard.

The days passed over the camp. The fog continually closed the space. Often the east wind blew the plains, preventing all activity from us. We couldn't cook, having to stay inside the tents, motionless, and without even having a book to read. It snowed at all hours and the ropes barely resisted the gale. It seemed that the fabric of the tent was splitting. The wind blew in, beating furiously. Our entertainment consisted in following the trickles of water that slid down the slope of the cloth. If we were to touch with our finger, the water would seep out. But as it snowed, a crust of ice formed over the tent, protecting us, isolating us. During these days of forced confinement we ate dried fruits and a certain concentrate enriched with vitamins. I had personally stopped practicing the brigadier's recommendations. I would go into the sleeping bag dressed and put on as much coat as I could, going to bed with the "parka" and hood on. It was no longer about doing experiments, but about saving myself from freezing. I don't think even the brigadier in his lone tent would be complying with his regulations. When the cold and the wind picked up, the lieutenant and

I tried to make heat by bringing our bags closer. Less than human beings, reduced to the pure instinct of self-preservation, we were driven by a strong desire to survive.

Our appearance must have been equally primitive. Sometimes, when we managed to get out of the tent, we washed ourselves with a yellow water, like urine, in the holes of the thaw. Its touch hurt the face. Hair and beard tangled. I deduced my appearance from the others. The elder had lost several kilos in weight and his eyes were surrounded by moving shadows.

Finally the wind died down and we went back to skiing. This was one of the worst times of our stay in Antarctica. Luckily there was no windstorm on a larger scale. If that had happened, who can say if any of us would have survived. The expedition and the camp were set up in the most inappropriate conditions.

We had very few essentials. Nor was this the right season to risk exploring Antarctica, further ignoring the configuration of the area. However, I endured with joy and serenity all these sufferings. Only one thing crossed the line and it infuriated me: having to cook. We spent a whole day lighting a fire that the wind put out, thus fulfilling a job for which I was not prepared and from which atavistic knowledge no longer remains in me.

One day the Commodore came to visit us. We saw him arrive at the camp covered with his fur hat. He sat by the fire and drank a cup of tea with us. He stared at the group, distracted, tired, as if he had done this many times. Then he dropped a few words: “Have you seen that light?” It was already late and from the distance of the plateau the white signals arrived. The Commodore left, without turning his face. But we all had a feeling of renewed vigor.

The elder took me to the top of the slope. He spoke to me: “That clarity comes from the sea. It's the Weddell. It shines more at night than during the day. In the daytime, the fog prevents us from seeing it. We already have the experience of a day trip. The sea preserves the invisible light of day, which may be clear in those confines, and projects it at night to show us the way. We will do the next expedition at night. We will march in the direction of Hope, until we reach the English base. It will be the last

preparatory expedition before the final one. I prefer the night. I don't want to know more about the day!"

So I walked away and climbed the small rocky hill to one side of the camp. From there, and in clear weather, you can overlook the bay. I sat on a stone stained with snow and manure. Close, between two rocks, a *skua* gull was found. It stretched its ascetic neck and shook out its ugly gray feathers. Solitary, it was like an anchorite in these regions, aware of its power, self-centered, ugly and proud, amid hostile elements. It stretched its neck further and seemed to penetrate the mist in the direction of the invisible bay. It spread its wings and soared through the mist, toward the sea. I said to myself: "There is the king of Antarctica. He is harsh and cruel; but he is self-sufficient, he is complete. He is just like ice or cold, he is beyond all thought. No definition reaches it. The ruler of Antarctica is not the lymphatic seal, nor the sweetheart penguin. He is the cruel and stark *skua*". Tonight, while we were in the tent, we heard noises. The steps of someone who walked stealthily would have been better. These noises had been heard at night for some time. Maybe it was the crunch the snow makes as it hardens.

THROUGH THE PLATEAU, TOWARDS HOPE

The expedition to Hope took place at night. The brigadier was in front, followed by the major, me and the sergeant. I cannot explain why the lieutenant was left without participating in this expedition. We headed northeast. We marched in single file, linked by ropes and dragging our skis on the soft snow.

I don't remember much about this expedition with clarity, despite being the first in which I participated. I have a fuzzy feeling of having walked for hours and hours, always to the north, with a slight incline to the east. We then turned into the Bransfield Sound and the peninsula barriers. The march was monotonous, almost uninterrupted. My shoes were tight and the bearskin "parka" made me perspire. The impression of sweat in a climate of intense cold, in the middle of the ice, is extremely unpleasant. From the start, the fog imprisoned us and we hardly saw the one in front of the other. At first the mind was clear, attentive to the occurrences on the ground; but then, the incredible monotony, the white color of the snow, the heavy mist that enveloped us like a sack, that barely let us pass, to close again, the diffuse light, existing somewhere beyond that fog, which made

inextinguishable signs, they were introducing us into a mental climate that was also dense, and very soon we could not distinguish the world in which we found ourselves.

The brigadier advanced silently. From time to time his voice would be heard, as if he came from on high. Every half hour the elder indicated the course. Behind me I felt the sergeant breathe. Sometimes the rope squeezed my waist. It was because the major, the sergeant, or myself, had lost the rhythm of the march. It is to be understood that when walking in this way, mired in the mist and in that ghostly world, the impressions were soon confused, becoming equally vague. If to all this is added that unique sensation of cold and heat mixed, of ice and perspiration, the fatigue that is not felt, but that is entering the bones, then it is necessary to accept that the mind cannot fix the details and that the memory of this expedition is that of a walk that could well have been made in a single point, without advancing or returning, turning all the time around the camp. One more hour of walking in that nocturnal Antarctica and perhaps we would all have begun to see visions. But the brigadier got tired of the fog and the major must have admitted that we were still far from Hope, even though at certain moments we thought we were close enough to the English camp to discover the lights of the facilities.

We return, taking the direction to our base. And while we were doing it, the elder explained to us: “This expedition will be very useful when we begin the conquest of the Weddell. We will rest all week and, at the beginning of the next, we will embark on our great adventure. Nothing will remain to be known. Nothing can resist us.”

Until late in the morning I remained lying in the tent. All over the camp, the snow had solidified, so that there was a crust of hard, slippery ice on the surface. In the afternoon I reached the rocky outpost. The slope was snowy. I put one foot in it and slipped, falling flat on my face on sharp ice rubble. A deep wound on my right eyebrow covered my face with blood. With the handkerchief I staunched it. I kept climbing to the top of the hill. I sat for a moment by the ice crushed rock. Dipping my finger in the blood from the wound, I traced some marks on the snow of Antarctica. I then enclosed them in a circle. Red on white, the signs will remain penetrating to the heart of the ice. They must still vibrate on those desolate glades.

I went back to camp. The brigadier healed my wound. The days began to pass slowly, agonizing. We did not see the elder. He was in his cave, plotting routes and studying maps, with the compass on his knees. Every now and then there was an eccentric laugh from him. The sergeant and the corporal made some attempts to drag the loaded sled up to the plateau, but they failed. The brigadier himself must have recognized that it was a job superior to his strength; the sled could not go on the expedition. It was a serious setback. When we left the sled we also gave up the radio transmitter. Lieutenant Riquelme would remain with his instrument. He showed no regret for it. I thought I saw a good omen that the device was discarded. The mechanical sterilization of life was left behind. Perhaps fate could act.

One night I returned to the level of the plain and looked at the edge. Far away the veiled and tragic light throbbed, projecting its signals onto the pale mirror of the plateau. I looked for the mountains, but the fog covered them. I thought of my oases and that the white midnight sun would shine there. Someone was waiting for me and the time was near. In a low voice I repeated: “I have finally arrived.”

This is how these last days passed. I picked myself up in the tent. As the wind blew, I went back to dreaming with my eyes open. And then someone came, stepping on the crunching snow. I struggled to see and discovered the image of the Master. How long that I did not see him. There he was now, standing by the hill. He had an air of concern and his eyes were looking at me with affection. He beckoned me to come closer and I obeyed him with great effort. It was difficult for me to get up, leave my sleeping bag and all those things that kept me warm, among them, the body. I got closer. The Master extended a hand towards the ice. “This burns”, he said. “What loneliness and so much shade ...! Have you looked into this crevice?”

And he showed me the mouth of an abyss, while he leaned down to contemplate it. I also looked and saw a deep, endless well that reached to the center of the earth. “There he is. He is”, he explained. “There he resides. Deep down the ice glows; because ice and fire are the same thing. The frozen fire, from whose bite no one can heal, because it destroys the dense form, and eternalizes. Whoever lives there is the guardian of fire and he lives among the ice. Do you remember Dante? He must have crossed

through Him, until he reached this very place where you are. But high in the sky then the Southern Cross shone. We will not be able to see it now until this mist that veils it disappears. To achieve this you must fight with Him, down there, or up here. Your test is coming. Will you dare to descend into this abyss in my presence?... How many things would be avoided...!" I involuntarily pulled back and I think my body started to shake. The Master exclaimed: "I am sorry. You will not be able to avoid the ordeal that awaits you in your real life. If you lack the strength to descend within yourself, then you will have to destroy yourself externally, learning to die once more. You still have human time in your heart... But do not forget, the test that is coming is hard and if you fail, you will harm many; because the lives of men are mysteriously united and the adventure of one reaches all. There are invisible threads that intertwine humanity. Your triumph or your failure will have repercussions until the end of the South..." He turned his face and looked at the white snow on which were streaks of red. "These signs...! Whenever they vibrate, I must come... What do you have on your forehead?" He approached. In his eyes I caught a quick reflection. And he ran his hand over my wound. I felt relieved. "May your luck be light..." And I saw him leave, without turning his face, separating the fog with his blue atmosphere.

TOWARDS THE WEDDELL

Lieutenant Narváez would carry a hundred sticks covered in tar, to mark the route of return, driving them into the snow at intervals of a kilometer. Since the afternoon the camp was active. Provisions and tools were prepared. The skis were lined with a sealskin strip to facilitate climbing the icy slope. Those who remained gathered in front of the tents. They hailed us by raising their arms. The elder had just come out of his snow shed and was saying goodbye to his men. He tied himself behind the brigadier, signaling us to do the same in the corresponding order. He put me after him. Lieutenant Narváez was behind me.

The first part of the journey was made through the plain. The fog enveloped us as always, although this time it was a little less dense than on previous nights. He could see the brigadier turning his head and marching the rhythm of the march. The ropes left two meters of distance between each man. It took us half an hour to ascend to the plain. The elder changed course to the south, to skirt the side of that high hill that on clear days casts its shadow over the base under construction. We started to climb

new slopes. Because of the fog, we could not distinguish the mountain slope, presenting us with the first problem of orientation. We had doubts as to whether we were circling the cone of the mountain. The elder stopped to consult his compass. And the lieutenant took advantage of the stop to drive the first stake. When we started again, the stake was like a black dot or a friendly line on the paleness of the plain. The snow was soft and it was necessary to stomp on the skis. I felt that my shoes were tighter than on previous occasions. We had ascended quite a bit and the compass was now showing us heading east. Always going up, we kept that direction. Apparently we would not change it again. In front of us appeared a plateau of successive undulations, which continued like waves of a hardened sea. Thus we walked for a long time, with the same impression of previous days. Without clearly distinguishing if we were going through the land or through an imaginary world. The hooded man in front was a gray shadow amid nightmare fumes. The pace of the walk unnerved the mind and will.

The elder raised an arm and the caravan stopped again. The lieutenant shook the snow off his skis and came forward to stand beside me. I could see him well. He had snow on his beard. He asked me to take one of the tar stakes that he carried behind his back, inside a kind of quiver. “You have to take off your glove”, he said. I did, and the cold seized my fingers. The tar was sticky and the hand went black. The lieutenant drove this new stick into the snow, just as he had been doing. Every kilometer. The wind beat my gloves, attached by a rope around the neck of the “parka.” Then the elder began to distribute lemon and anise candies. I found it extravagant and I resisted accepting them, pretending that they did me no good. But the elder got angry, saying: “You have to eat them! I order you! You are under my command! These candies are absolutely necessary”. The brief immobility froze us, and we had to continually wave our arms and legs. The plateau continued its slope and the temperature rose inexplicably. Suddenly an unusual phenomenon happened in Antarctica. It started to rain. The water fell thin and we were soaked. My "parka" was oozing, getting wetter than the others. He tried to breathe in the humidity of the rain, so particular in this dry and odorless air; but it was also a special rain, between steam and ice, without humidity and almost without water, like dust, or like fine and penetrating needles.

We reached a summit, and the wind blew stronger and stronger. The rain stopped and we had to advance on an incline, fighting the wind. The

temperature dropped again and the cold became unbearable, which did not prevent us from perspiring at the same time. I think we could have frozen to death without the body stopping its perspiring. A noise like glass and faint clicking was produced on top of the clothes. The rainwater was freezing on the raincoats. The unreal climate of the fog, now together with the powerful wind and the cold, produced again that lucidity close to clairvoyance, which made us look at the events with indifferent serenity, as if we were also ice beings, separated from all suffering. We stopped again.

Fatigue became effective inside, in an almost intellectual way, by deduction or reasoning: we thought that we should be tired, that it could not be otherwise. The cold prevented us from feeling physically tired, also taking away the possibility of stopping to regain strength. We stopped for a very short time. I went to take off my gloves to open my backpack and noticed that it was completely covered in frost. The rainwater had frozen on the strings, on top of the gloves and the hoods of the parkas. We shook each other. The ice fell in small pieces. The lashings were so compact and hard that there was no way to untie them. Instinctively I put my hand to my face and it felt cold, like stone. The beard was a chunk of ice. Only then did I discover the appearance of Major Salvatierra and that of the others. They looked like ice elders, covered in stalactites from head to shoulder. I tapped my beard with my knuckles and it snapped in half, falling with the sound of glass.

Then the elder spoke to us, his voice coming from his frosty lips: “Can you hear the wind? Do you smell? It is the smell of the sea! It's the sea! This wind comes from far away, but maybe not so much. Because here, in Antarctica, everything reaches distances, the view, the wind... and so do we... Today we will reach the sea!” I was experiencing a sharp pain in my heels and would have liked to take off my shoes for a moment. The major was again controlling the course.

The plateau was always the same. Now we were on the ice and the sealskin of our skis scraped the surface. The brigadier marched very slowly, hesitantly, groping with both sticks. In this way we continued for a few hours. Until the brigadier suddenly stopped, plunging his staff into the ice.

“A crack”, he said. We stopped. The elder consulted: “Is it deep?” “Quite a lot”, the brigadier replied, as he plunged the baton down to the hilt. “Can we cross it?” continued the major. The tone of his voice was decisive. The brigadier turned his face away. I guessed from his gaze what was going on inside him. “We can,” he answered. “Well,” said the major, “that's what we're here for!” And he fastened the rope around his waist. I heard the lieutenant start to whistle very quietly as we parted ways until the ropes got taut.

The first to cross was the brigadier. He did it carefully. Stepping as if he wanted to rise, like mountain mules, nailing a stick in front and another behind. The rift was covered in a layer of thin ice that crackled and snapped as if it were breaking apart. The elder's turn was the next. He passed quickly, inconsequential, as if he were stepping on solid ground. I followed him. I affirmed one foot and then the other. He was already over the crack. The thin cloak creaked, broke apart. I plunged a cane forward and pushed myself. I was on the other side. As the lieutenant crossed, the major explained: “It is very difficult for a crevice to be as wide as the length of a ski. I am convinced that there is no danger in this!”

From that moment we found ourselves in the middle of a field of cracks and only at the end of this desperate expedition did we come to be rid of them. The cracks surrounded us and the brigadier ordered us to change the formation. Instead of going one after the other, we lined up horizontally. We were estranged, although with loose strings between us. I still don't understand the reason for it, but each one of us was alone. For the first time in Antarctica I experienced loneliness. A loneliness that was not produced by the external, but came from within. It was a distant, primordial loneliness, congenital to existence and made conscious due to the almost metaphysical fatigue that dominated us. I sensed, I realized the fatigue of being, in the cells, in the entrails; the bones ached, with a cold that penetrated to the marrow. The heel tortured me like it was being cut. All around me were shadows moving without noise. Gray fog. Then impenetrable darkness. I did not dare to move, but slowly, hesitating in that nightmare darkness. As we walked for hours between cracks, without knowing where, without seeing by our side, an invincible sense of horror took over our spirits. And an irresistible desire to throw oneself in the snow and finally rest. I got over it with an almost alien wisdom. I ordered myself to move on. A great faintness took possession of the body, a white fatigue

rose from the feet, of those who refused to advance. It was the "embrace of the Virgin of the Ice", of which Amundsen speaks; the temptation to rest on the ice and taste that mystical embrace. I stopped for a moment. Doubt struck me suddenly. What was I doing here? What was that world and what did it have to do with me? In a flash, the absurdity of the adventure was revealed to me and I saw myself as a child engaged in a meaningless game. Perhaps I was close to annihilating myself, to end a life in exchange for a dream, a suggestion maintained with deceptive skill, transforming me into a victim of my own creations. Doubt tortured me: “Could I have another way? Perhaps there, there...?” Jubilant water, profound eyes, big as the universe ... Quickly, the heart beat again and the blood found its old channels. However, somewhere in my being, a pure consciousness was amazed at this sudden change.

The doubt would no longer leave me until the end. The horror, the fog, the nightmare atmosphere, the cracks, the insufferable rhythm of that continuous march, the cold and the proximity of death had transformed me. I no longer owned myself. Deep down, I was in awe of this change. It happens that in extreme climates, near the pole, curious phenomena and alterations of mental states occur.

A tug on the rope forced me forward. The immense field of cracks continued to surround us. I recognized some black sticks that the lieutenant had nailed down. Maybe I was retracing my steps. I heard a voice ordering us to stop. And in front of us a huge crack opened, as surely I will not see another. It stretched out in a zigzag until it was out of sight on the plain. I approached and observed that it was black and deep, like the crack of my dream. I felt the same terror looking at it, not daring to get too close. Then we all got together and began following the course of this crack. With the brigadier at the helm we went round and round. I'll never know what we did to get through it. Somehow we found ourselves on the other side. At least we thought so.

We formed the line again. Then the brigadier hesitated. I saw him going slow. I could hear him breathe with interruptions, turning his face to consult the elder. Behind, the lieutenant still marched vigorously. He no longer asked me to remove the stakes from his quiver, but rather he tried to help me. We reached the edge of a slope, or perhaps a precipice, for the brigadier stopped abruptly and waited. Then the elder started screaming

and laughing. He jumped on the skis and howled against the wind. “Here is the sea, here is the sea..! Do you smell, do you feel this wind coming out? It is the sea! It is my Weddell Sea ...!” And he hit the snow with his sticks.

I listened to the wind, softly I heard it. And in the middle of it, very far away, I seemed to perceive a penetrating and high-pitched howl, calling me, waiting for me. . .

(*THE DOG HOWLS*)

“Could it be you, who reminds me of the oases, that pure and great dream of the beginning of time? Where are you? You have been faithful, because you have come at the moment when I need you the most, to show me the way to my friends, the heroes, the immortals. They send you. And you howl, howl in the wind, in the snow. . . Tell them I'm coming, tell them I'm hesitant, I'm not sure I'll find them, I'm still in doubt. . . I doubt your howl. . . for it may well be the wind that blows on the desolate plateaus. My dog, show me your yourself, appear here with your image of blond curls, destroyed by the ferocious skuas! Are you the voice of God, or the howl of Destiny? I think that if I obey you I will be wrong. I tremble. I am weak, I do not know what happens to me. A voice that is not yours tells me that the moment has not yet come, that this may not be the way. It tells me that I must abandon this last dream, that it is not by sea, nor by land where I will find peace, nor the legendary heroes, whom you serve today ... Dreams, water...! Howl against the wind! ... I have abandoned you ...!”

The lieutenant was holding my arm, pushing me forward. He was watching me curiously. “What happened? Is something wrong with you?” “Nothing. Don't you feel how it howls? Can't you hear the dog?” Surprise was reflected on his face. And he let go of my arm. “You too!” He exclaimed. “You are going crazy? It is nothing but the wind.”

We were descending into the abyss. We did it by edging the skis on the ice. Nothing could be seen below. Everything was black, shrouded in mist. The slope was almost vertical and only with the edge of the skis did we keep adhering to it. It would be enough for one to slip to drag the other three. The major kept telling us that we had reached the end of the expedition and that the Weddell Sea was at the bottom of this precipice. Then the brigadier stopped. I saw in his eyes the expression of a terrified

animal. Then facing the elder, it was understood that he was not willing to continue advancing. A deathly pallor covered his face.

“I don't see anything”, he said. “I don't know where we are going. I think if we take one more step it will really be, as you say, the end of the expedition... I’m good with here! I will stay here!”

The elder also stopped. He hesitated for an instant. In the voice of the brigadier he discovered the germ of rebellion. Then he did something very strange. He turned to me and looked deep into my eyes, as if inquiring, wondering. So that I knew that if I supported him, if I said a single word to follow him, he would give the order. With me at his side, he would advance, to fulfill destiny. In a flash I sensed the mystery of this adventure: the elder was nothing more than the vehicle of my dream. He seemed to understand it too. But if I doubted, there would be nothing more to do ... I remained silent, like a statue of salt and suffering. The elder stood up to how tall he was, put his hands on his waist and shouted against the wind, towards the cold spaces and the bottom of the abyss: “Weddell Sea, you have beaten me! But I'll come back! We will see each other again!”

Thus the expedition was concluded.

We never knew where we had been or how we made the return. We returned much more easily and faster than we did it on the way there. The tarred stakes were very useful, pointing the way. Despite this, the brigadier got lost and could not find the exact path. But the elder consulted his compass and guided us. The big crack was nowhere to be seen this time and I don't think it was necessary to dodge it. At the top of the steep slopes, we removed the sealskin from the skis and began to glide rapidly. Because the four of us were tied up and the major and I were not good skiers, we often rolled through the snow, dragging the brigadier and the lieutenant in the fall. My feet ached more and more and I was barely supporting myself on the skis. In order to avoid falls altogether, a change was made. Undo the formation, to continue in a group of two. The major would go with the brigadier and me with the lieutenant. The elder tied the rope across his chest, while his end was held firmly by the brigadier, who would march behind holding him every time the speed increased too much. Narváez did the same with me. In this way, when the slope dragged me and the wind

cut with great force, the lieutenant braked in "wedges" and the rope gave a sharp tug. I was unable to keep my balance and fell against the snow.

This singular race across the cloudy plains of Antarctica lasted for several hours. From time to time we would make out ahead, like a moving point on the ice sheet, the major and the brigadier. They descended, often progressing for long stretches.

Suddenly, the fog lifted. It was in a minute, maybe just seconds. Incredibly it dissolved into the air and for the first time in many days, in such painful hours, the deep and subtle sky of the pole appeared diaphanous. Around us the world was made and our eyes were given to contemplate the landscape. We were at great heights, on slopes of ice and snow. Gentle rolling hills slid back and down, convulsing peaks that we were unable to reach. The Southern Cross had not yet appeared in the sky, veiled by the blazes of the eastern light. Ecstatic at this miracle, grateful, we forgot the cold and misery of our bodies. We looked at the panorama that surrounded us, emerging from nowhere and from the shadows. And there, far down and far away, on the long blue strip of the sea, between small and wandering icebergs, we saw a little light that was blinking. It was the frigate, anchored in the bay. With great emotion we contemplated it. That was our home, our refuge in this vastness, on this continent of invincible ice and mystery defended by impenetrable barriers.

The last stage of the comeback was done individually. I was the last to arrive at the camp. I barely advanced, staggering and with my feet smashed. It was already dawn. Next to the bonfire, tea and brandy awaited us. I drank it in small sips. The others were there, lying on the snow. Captain Riquelme looked on them with sweetness. The elder was still smiling. He did not feel defeated. He had done his duty. “I'll be back ...” he repeated.

I walked away towards the rocky outpost and climbed the little hill. I was looking for the *skua's* nest among the rocks. I found it there. It was, as always, alone. He craned his neck at my proximity. Then he ruffled his ruffled feathers and stood up. He was looking out to the seaside. He took flight. He was moving away towards the western islands. A point appeared on the horizon. It was another bird from Antarctica. The *skua* joined his partner and together they flew away, circling over the happy islands.

“My God,” I thought, “even the invincible loner, the hermit, the king, seeks his opposite, his defense in the solitude. The fog prevented me from seeing it earlier. Is it necessary to cover over certain facts, so that a destiny can be fulfilled, to maintain the faith and the blindness necessary to all fulfillment? What is the truth? The fog or the light?”

I realized that a subtle irony, a wisdom pierced with humor, was driving these last hours and was unfolding before me in perceptible symbols, but now unusable.

Dressed, I laid down inside the tent and fell asleep. The scenes of the expedition passed through my soul again and I saw the plateau, the unfathomable cracks. Behind the major and the brigadier, and in front of the lieutenant. Someone else was with us, someone who had the wings of a bird and howled like a dog. It was a dog with wings; a snake-shaped dog, howling inside myself, at the base of my spine. No, it was the brigadier who was howling; he howled like a pitiful animal, towards the west, where his wife came from, approaching with some ski pants in hand. Then the major thrust one of his batons down the brigadier's throat and he couldn't howl anymore. We all agree to kill the elder. We buried him in the snow. And on his grave we crossed his poles and his skis. The dog with *skua* wings remained watching. The Commodore also came and explained:

“This man must be prevented from immortalizing himself, because covered in this way by ice he will be able to resurrect eternally. To prevent it I will stay here and make him discover death again. I am a specialist in these ways, because I am ...” I don't remember the rest of what he said. But the Commodore sat on the major's ice grave and stood there to prevent him from being resurrected.

At times I would wake up to go back to sleep. Somewhere the face of the Master appeared. He was staring at me curiously. Then there was a great emptiness in my heart. I had lost, I was not capable. The ice rejected me. He who resides in the white darkness, in the cold fire, did not accept the combat, because he did not find me alone enough. He saw that the hopes and illusions still lingered in my heart. Love also spread its wings there flying towards the barren remoteness. Sweet water, distant memory, warm fingers of human blood and consoling tenderness! I forget and dream! Wheel of reincarnations! I was not worthy of the ice or the last despair. I

knew it already at the start, with my heart filled with messages and boreal poems, they were subjecting me to one last illusion. . . I began to howl, to howl for a long time, between tears, between ice and frost. My soul ached, my feet ached. Lieutenant Narvaez shook me hard to wake me up. He brought his head close to mine. Disquiet was reflected in his eyes.

AGAIN THE BRANSFIELD

I spent that day and the next lying in the tent. The cold paralyzed me; at times I tried to get up; but the pain in my joints and feet prevented me. He had taken my shoes off; the socks were a single bloody mass, stuck to the raw flesh of the heels and ankles.

At noon a boat from the frigate came and docked near the barrier. Its occupants went up to the camp to report that they would take me aboard. They had an order from the Commodore to this effect. Only in the afternoon was I able to get up and go on the air. A thin mist let through the clear sky at times. I descended to the rocks and waited for the boat. I jumped with great difficulty over the hangover. One of the sailors helped me.

On board, the captain transmitted to me the order of the head of the expedition: I should remain in the frigate to be taken to Sovereignty. I protested, saying that the expedition was not over yet and that I could not abandon it right now. But the captain insisted on transferring me to my cabin, stating that I looked fine.

In my cabin, I looked at myself in the mirror. The poor light showed me an unrecognizable image. No wonder the sailors looked at me curiously. The image of a sick man was reflected in the mirror. His cheekbones were taut under dirty, transparent skin, his eyes sunk behind shadows, with signs of visible pain. A shaggy beard framed that face where fear had left its mark and where the anguish and great disorientation of the present were drawn.

Then the Commodore came and sat at the foot of my bunk. He stared at the pale light for a long time. On his face there was a weariness of centuries, of ages. He remained silent. Nothing could affect him anymore. He had so many times seen men in similar trances. Although it could be that a surge of faith sometimes arose in his soul. And perhaps this was the

moment; because in his eyes the light played and tears seemed to make their way. But not! It was only the light that created his fantasies. Ghosts of tears, ghosts of hopes.

“I know everything”, he said. “I have always known. I will always know. I'm so tired . . .” Then he got up. Dressed in black, the light hit his chest. Then went singing down the hall. That old song of the sea and of men. . .

The Bransfield again. The bow rises and falls. Clouds are icebergs sailing in thin blue. Down in the sea, they accompany us, speaking their language of slightest clicks, with their persistent cold and difficult games. The whales teach us the life of the wide seas and their stream jets unite the horizons. The killer whales and white doves arrive as the ambassadors of recent times. The pole moves its latitudes. And the sea is already our friend, sure of having us, as it has its waves.

I let my dreams get lost and my heart and soul melt into the ice. On the waters of the Bransfield, I want to recover my personality as a man and open the locks to the memory.

But then I discover that my soul is burned by the ice and that it is very difficult for the rise of another passion other than that of the cold, and that of losing myself amongst its icebergs and its oases. To rise again from its unfathomable and remote depths.