

Santiago, Chile

With the years we think we have left, we think about the trees we have seen, past aromas, images of love that were given to us. Life is too short, the past does not matter, do we still have opportunities left? The suffering we have endured, those who made us suffer suffered too. The quintessence of the man who commits suicide is not to kill anyone but himself; let the others remain here, prisoners of their labyrinths and torments. Among a cynicism-defence in a game of power, we exist dancing to the tune of the wind and its various gusts (which change direction); the songs that we hear push us like wild animals; but we still find flowers on the way that was given to us; letters we wrote, old photographs of friends; some are no longer here; others we do not even know, because we took photographs in the acropolises of the world, full of people who were anonymous to us. Everything is such bizarre efforts that what we do cannot be explained. Effort is only useful if it makes sense and sense escapes like water through fingers. The light green, brown hills are infinite; they are the minuscule freedom to which we have access. The seas provide strength and relief with their deep blue, the smell of salt, the foam that caresses us. The beaches are their fusion with the land, and so attract. The wind can be the harp or cello, flute, or violin out of tune like a raucous peal, drunk, sarcastic. Yes sir, we repeat. Na inspiration that comes from the moonlight, from the mountain ranges, from the flag of Chile: a white band for the Andes; another in red – the Indian blood; the blue that represents the Pacific Ocean; the star to signify independence. A palace called La Moneda, an immense shantytown, or *favela*, or slum, called Valparaíso, where Neruda had a house; it is near Viña del Mar. Suddenly we return; the airplane, stubbornly, takes us back. For the most part we do not meet any people; sometimes we meet people who stay with us, in themselves, in photos, in letter, in e-mails, in greetings of good luck, of happy birthday, of happy holidays. It is those people who remain with us, often closer than those who live right next to us, and accompany us on an essentially lonely journey. We have no frontiers, the flags are like wedding cakes – their meaning gets closer. Between the heat and the taste of the land is the white sugar cube, the cream also eaten in Sydney. The casinos are around, filled with poor people who fall a little bit further into sleep.

There are so many roads that will be left to walk.

There is so much sun that we will not be able to see.

There are so many rainbows that do not reach happy places.

There is so much wind that will not blow in our face.

There is so much everything that it is not enough to say everything.

They only talk of us because they are following tradition.

With what will do we talk of those who cannot read, of those who cannot write or count or who cannot eat? There is no will left to sustain optimism or realism. Surrealism is the only way to face the destiny of the piano stuck on a single note. There are various Santiagos, Santiago de Compostela, Santiago do Chile, that one, vast in its six million inhabitants, in its icy wind, in the people who rifle through rubbish in search of food... no wind or rain erases the memories of Chile, of Gabriela Mistral, the poet of children,

of Salvador and Isabel, of Sepulveda, of the two thousand volcanoes, of the earthquakes, of the tyranny, of Pinochet on duty in any time and place, multi-continental, multi-latitudinal and longitudinal.

Carlos Mota, UTAD, Vila Real, to my daughter, Maria Clara (1987-2011).

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