

Claudio Durán

PART TWO of *La Infancia y los exilios/Childhood and Exile*: UNEXILE SANTIAGO

*to Carlos Ruiz and Alejandra Undurraga
to José Miguel Arteaga and Marcela Mewes
to Ron Bordessa*

I] Introduction

How much city, ex-mine and post-mine
almost mine now, this part of you
when silence submerges itself
into your flesh.
I walk through your silence, then
I do not recognize voices, faces are obscured
during the day rain falls though the alleys
of my memories in heavy sorrow.
City, tell me that you still
have earth for me
that my cells have a place
in ancestral soil.
Santiago, I carry your landmarks on my skin
and nonetheless, old corners have left me
like birds in winter,
the yellow flowers of your hills are there
but I can not see them as a dwelling
where are you hiding, Santiago
where are you really
in which streets or boulevards or hills
are you hiding from me?
Santiago, when night fog falls
upon the snow and then my eyes remember
what does not exist,
from the line of my circumspect family
the respite in your gaze is born:
you are the region that presides over
an Esperanto of geography:
you are in me what now is not:
Neither the language soft or harsh
at irreverent cocktails parties
nor the soft movement of the hills
in the hot fog of summer.
I was your gaze
I was your smile
every Sunday morning
I went to your aristocratic churches
and in the evening to your notorious parties
I had drunk wine without expecting anything
you were in me
what I was in you
Sunday after Sunday.
But, the blood that boiled in your flesh
took me from the sun to cold and to hunger.
Today I drink white snow
and the longitude of your destiny
shows me that in you
I will not be again just another citizen.
City, city
you stopped loving me when I left ,
I did not return to you for fear of death
death pierced my skin

and stopped there
and you, city, told me
that not to die then
was the same as not to be in you.
And that way the streets and horseshoes of your bicycles
left my eyes through the black labyrinth
of insomnia
and nights preceded years
and the river water that inundates the aromo trees
left my thirst for a decade
and I did not have the certainty of your hills
nor the white distance of your seasons
and the roads of my adolescent inertia
were no longer in your movements and
I followed other routes in silence.

II] After 11 days

Where are you, my city,
where did you empty your avenues in the arteries
of your inhabitants,
where are you hiding
when I go through you in the tunnel
that separates life from night.
And then, my city,
where, where are you
when I feel you from afar.
Santiago, your corners rain upon me with the sun
and the sun sprinkles its melancholy
from the snow that surrounds your waist:
I embrace your waist, city,
your breasts and your towers
and the sky that falls at dawn
through the red of your soul,
city, city will you be
perhaps at daily breakfasts
in the tea, in the flowers, in the water?
I listen every morning
to the traffic of your blood
and wake from the night
and I sleep without sleeping
with you on my shoulders
and I raise a crystal glass and wine
and the red of your edges
falls upon me like the mirror
in which my eyes surround
the muscle structure of your eyelids,
where, where will you return to me and me to you?
I will gather your strings
and make a picture
with your daily events
with your eyes of clean simplicity
my city
where, where did you go
for these long years of absence?
Tell me, Santiago
that I am not different
even though my fingers may speak another language
tell me that my eyes still
fit inside your pupils.
Santiago, I loved you in the mornings
you were of cold in July
and hot in the summer sand
and the green grew on your knees
and fell the water pure in autumn.
Your song, Santiago,
in the infinite belts of the day
I used to dream of a world made of your heights
you came at each instance through the distance,
I used to wake up at night
when only the invisible sounds of dawn

moved through your veins.
Your blood, Santiago, carried the ocean
from the salt to the summit of your stones
you were in me
you begged in me
you walked in my feet
you loved my love for seed
you arrived in the sway of heat
you carried me up to your borders
you lowered your expectations.
City, city
in me you were, I was in you
you grew up in me, I grew up in you
you were my fortune, my destiny
you were the heart of the centuries
and I prayed your prayers until
that same ethereal silence.
Santiago I was in you
I was your size, your incentive,
your source, your discretion.

III] Epilogue

Santiago, your buses carry me today.
I go through the world with your symbols.
I carry your structure in my bones.