

August 2000

Saturday 5th 3:13 a.m.

Here commences the “Diary of the Scholarship.” It’s been months since I attempted to do something of the like, but I’ve avoided it systematically. The objective is to put my writing into gear, no matter the topic, and to maintain a continuity until getting into the habit of creating. I must associate the computer with Writing. The program most utilized must be Word. This implies disarticulating a series of cybernetic habits in that I have been submerged in for five years, but I ought not to think of disarticulating anything, only in articulating this. Every day, every day; even if only to write a line to say today I have no desire to write, or that I have no time, to give any excuse. But, at least, something every day.

Surely I won’t be able to do it. That, experience tells me. Nevertheless I have hope that this time will be different, because at the heart of this is the Fellowship. I have already received the first half of the total, with which I will be able to maintain myself until the end of the year in reasonable idleness. As soon as the confirmation that I had received the scholarship, I began to undo, to a certain extent, my job agenda, erasing some things and spacing others out, so that only a few days were committed, non-idle days per month. Idleness does take planning. One cannot obtain it just like that, from one moment to the next, because of a simple absence of tasks. For now I tend to fill the gaps, to occupy the free hours with stupid and unconstructive activities because, almost without realizing it, I too, like those people I’ve always despised, I have created a strong fear of my selfhood, a fear of being alone without occupation, with those phantoms that from the basement push the trapdoor of my unconscious, looking to climb up and scare me.

One of the first things I did with the first half of the scholarship money was to buy myself a pair of couches. In my apartment there wasn’t the any way to sit down and unwind. For years I have organize my house as if it were an office. Desks, tables, uncomfortable chairs, all in function of work—or computer games, which is a form of work.

I have scheduled an electrician to come and change the computer’s outlets so I could relocated it out of sight, out from the center of the apartment; now I am using the computer in a small room next to the bedroom, while in the center of the apartment, where the computer use to be, is a strange couch, of a very pretty color, grayish sky blue, very fluffy. The two or three times I have lain on it, I have fallen asleep. On that couch, one can unwind, cannot help but unwind, and immediately, if there is a deficit of

dreams, one falls asleep, and dreams. For some reason, I have been avoiding that couch. The other couch, on the other hand, I haven't even used once; I only sat down in it to try it at the furniture shop. It's of a type they call bergère, with a high backrest that's pretty hard—ideal for reading. In reality I only thought of buying one couch, but when I began trying out these two at the furniture store, going from one to the other, I realized it was not going to be easy to pick. One was ideal for reading; the other was ideal for resting, for unwinding. In the latter one cannot read; it's uncomfortable to sit up and read; one's back ends up twisted and sore. On the other couch, one cannot unwind easily; the hard backrest helps to maintain oneself upright and attentive; again, it's ideal for reading. Up until now, and for a many years before, I would read only during my meals, or in bed, or in the bathroom. A small note: the reading couch I have also been eluding. But its moment will come, as the moment has come for this diary.

Today I was able to start writing thanks to my friend Paty. A long time ago I had introduced her to Rosa Chacel, whom I discovered by chance at a liquidation sale of used books. The book of hers I came across, *Memorias de Leticia Valle*, seemed to me an extraordinary novel, and I made it circulate between my witch friends, because there wasn't a doubt in my mind that Madam Rosa was an authentic witch herself; a witch in the best sense of the word. One of my witch friends is Paty, and of course the book left her enchanted. As a token of her appreciation, a few days ago, she left with the superintendent of my building a book by Rosa Chacel that I did not know, *Alcancia. Ida*. It is the first part of an intimate diary (if it can be called that, because Madam Rosa Chacel revealed very little of her intimate life), whose second part is called *Alcancia. Vuelta*. Paty informed me by way of email that she had sent the book because it would help me with the fellowship, since Madam Rosa in her time had been chosen for the Guggenheim award, and the fluctuations of that are recounted in her diary. Effectively, even before getting to the fellowship, which is mentioned halfway through the book (and I have less than half from finishing it) I noticed that the diary was inspiring me, it brought on the desire to write. I was marveled by the amount of coincidences between Madam Rosa and I. Perceptions, feelings, ideas, phobias, very similar discomforts. She must have been a very unbearable old hag. On the back cover, the book displays a photo of her; she bears a striking resemblance to Adalgissa (I never learned how to spell this name; I believe that it has an H somewhere. Perhaps: Adalghissa), whom we would all call, when I was a young boy, "The Fat Aunt." In reality she was my great aunt, sister to my maternal grandfather. But the difference between Madam Rosa and the fat aunt lay in their gaze; although partially dissimulated by round glasses, and with eyelids that don't open completely, one notes in them, nonetheless, the powerful

intelligence of the brain that animates them. The fat aunt, on the other hand, was not intelligent.