

# Fausto and oblivion

Sebastián Moscoso España

The year was 1950 and Fausto Condori was walking up a steep cobblestone street in the center of the city of La Paz, where people in a hurry swarmed between puzzling places, unwilling to look towards the deep sorrows of their fellow men. On his bronze back he carried a large wardrobe with lacquered doors, Gallic reliefs, and carved mirrors. The master was telling him to hurry, infected by the urge of the people around him.

A few drops of sweat began to trickle down his temple, and he frowned. In a superhuman effort, he tensed every muscle in his numbed body. Perhaps in the depths of that body, perhaps in his soul, he felt he was not merely carrying a majestic piece of furniture, but also the great sorrow of his miserable life despised by others.

Maybe things weren't as he remembered, "indios (indigenous people) have no soul", the words spoken by the owner of a boarding house who had accused him of stealing. Raising his head from time to time as he climbed that slope, he could see people hurrying, looking at him with contempt and annoyed that he would block their path.

Having unloaded the wardrobe in the first courtyard of a large house, and timidly taking off his chulo (cap), he got but a few coins. He accepted them resignedly. They would pay for some bread. After buying bread, uttering a few tired words in Aymará, and biting off a big chunk of bread, he walked around aimlessly, to a puzzling place just like all the others. He found a square with benches where no one sat, he sprawled on it comfortably and tried to satisfy his intense hunger. His guts were making noise, as if complaining about the maelstrom of want and untimely feelings.

A man and a woman sat on a bench opposite him, their gazes resting on him once again.

- My goodness, where will this end? If they now even come to the squares - said the woman, pointing at him.

Fausto lowered his head in regret. An urge to cry pressed against his chest and throat; but he held back his tears, just as he had been taught. He left, wandering through the arteries of that enigmatic vibrant city in the highlands. Eventually he sat down on a stair, outside a bar. With tears in his eyes, he remembered his community. These memories were his most precious treasure. The people who passed him had forgotten, had forgotten compassion and generosity. Some were well on their way to forgetting even their own humanity. But Fausto, with an open heart, felt sorry for them.

