

Literature and Translation

Contemporary Afro-Brazilian Short Fiction

A bilingual anthology

Edited by

Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva,

Julio Ludemir and Maria Aparecida

Andrade Salgueiro

UCLPRESS

Contemporary Afro-Brazilian Short Fiction

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Series Editors: Timothy Mathews, Geraldine Brodie and Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva

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Introductory texts

1

Making contemporary Afro-Brazilian short fiction more accessible to English speakers

Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva

The idea for this anthology was born from the lack of materials on contemporary Afro-Brazilian short fiction in English translation. Inspired by UCL's commitment to research-led learning, decolonising the curriculum and opening up the classroom to the community, in 2020, I proposed to my department a new module on the representations by and of Afro-Brazilians in prose and poetry from the mid-nineteenth century to the twenty-first century, which would be examined through the lens of major cultural movements, political events and theoretical approaches to literature and racial thought. My ambitious goal was to select works that would provide a spectrum of topics, themes and forms, including internal explorations in poetry, the social, economic and political circumstances of Afro-Brazilians, the lives of women in a racist, sexist and patriarchal society, and experimentations with language. I had a good number of translations of novels and short stories to choose from, including those by Machado de Assis, Lima Barreto's *The Sad End of Policarpo Quaresma*, Carolina Maria de Jesus's *Child of the Dark: The Diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus*, Paulo Lins's *City of God* and Conceição Evaristo's *Ponciá Vicencio*, to which we can now add the recently published *Phenotypes* by Paulo Scott and *Ursula* by Maria Firmina dos Reis.¹ This was not, however, the case for short fiction, especially by the vibrant new generation of Brazilian writers who identify as Black. The only exception was, as far as I knew, Geovani Martins's *The Sun on My Head: Stories*, the launch of which I had the pleasure of attending at Foyles, in London, on 27 August 2019. Geovani Martins is one of the literary talents emerging from the Literary Festival of the Peripheries (Flup); his book was nominated for the prestigious Brazilian Jabuti prize and became a worldwide success.²

In order to include this new generation of Black writers on the syllabus, I used UCL Global Engagement Funds to collaborate with Flup director Julio Ludemir and Professor Maria Aparecida Andrade Salgueiro, who is the coordinator of the Ana Cristina César Translation Office at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. Cida and Julio's partnership dated back to 2012 when Flup was created. Together, we arranged a series of ten online translation workshops, as part of the School of European Languages, Culture and Society (SELCS) Brazilian Translation Club, with one workshop held every two weeks from 18 March to 22 July 2021.³ For each workshop, we invited one well-known Black author and one newcomer who had participated in the Flup creative writing courses, including Geovani Martins.

The format of the workshops drew from my translation classes at UCL, based on extracts of source texts that were translated beforehand by students. At UCL, translation is a compulsory component of the language curriculum and is considered the fifth learning skill: it is needed as much as reading, writing, listening and speaking in the students' learning and future careers. Collaborative translation is particularly important because it enables learners to reflect from different perspectives and consider the alternative solutions proposed by classmates. It also promotes the development of intercultural competence, requiring therefore not only language ability but also an understanding of culture and otherness. The innovative, and perhaps most exciting, element of the workshops was the participation of the authors, which expanded the discussion to the field of literary creation, reinforcing our view that literary translation presupposes close reading and interpretation and that the dialogue between authors and their mediators is always very fruitful. This was further enriched by the input of an audience formed by academics, (aspiring) translators, students and enthusiasts of Brazilian literature, from many countries and all walks of life, who considered the linguistic and cultural challenges presented by texts so diverse in terms of structure, theme, style and linguistic register.

I will begin the presentation of these short stories with the texts from the workshops and will be referring as much as possible to the contributions of those who joined us live from all corners of the world, especially the authors, translators and guest speakers. My attempt here is to reproduce the inspiring and thought-provoking discussions that helped Brazilian literature travel further, to promote translation as a collaborative activity and, at least for myself, to get us through the second year of lockdown and to become closer to what was going on in the Brazilian literary scene despite the travel restrictions.

We started the series of ten workshops with none other than Conceição Evaristo, a Black Brazilian writer and intellectual whose works unveil ‘a atualidade das sombras e os ecos da escravidão que seguem pairando sobre o país em tempos rapidamente mutantes’ (‘the currentness of the shadows and echoes of slavery that continue to hover over the country in rapidly changing times’),⁴ and who is known for her contribution to literary theory with the concept of *escrevivência*.⁵ A portmanteau of *escrita* (writing) and *vivência* (life experience), *escrevivência*, a universal and diasporic phenomenon, possibly inspired by Toni Morrison’s ‘rememory’,⁶ is embedded in the life experience of Brazilians of African origin. It affirms and celebrates their roots and connects them with the African Diaspora and peoples. Its founding image is the Black enslaved mother who was forced to look after the future generation of enslavers by breastfeeding, telling stories and singing them lullabies. It is originally the writing act of Black women, who take ownership of the written word without forgetting the strength of the oral traditions of their ancestors: ‘se a voz de nossas ancestrais tinha rumos e funções demarcadas pela casa-grande, a nossa escrita não. Por isso, afirmo: “a nossa escrevivência não é para adormecer os da casa-grande, e sim acordá-los dos seus sonos injustos” (‘if the voice of our female ancestors had aims and roles which were demarcated by the master’s house, our writing does not. That is why I say: “our *escrevivência* is not to put those in the master’s house to sleep, but to wake them from their unjust sleep”).⁷

The celebration of the Black mother’s wisdom and the power of the oral tradition are conveyed in ‘Os pés do dançarino’ (Chapter 9), translated by Elton Uliana as ‘The Dancer’s Feet’, through the figure of the three respectable old ladies who remind the young and proud Davenir of his origins, as well as in the very structure of the short story. As Evaristo commented during the workshop, ‘o final do conto está muito relacionado com uma estética africana, onde a palavra, o conto, a história cumprem uma função moral na pedagogia da oralidade’ (‘the end of the story is closely related to an African aesthetic, where the word, the tale, the story fulfil a moral function in the pedagogy of orality’).⁸

References to music and dance run through various stories in this anthology. Davenir, who can dance anything from the *congada* from Minas Gerais to the reggae from Jamaica and the Brazilian state of Maranhão, was inspired by Michael Jackson, as Evaristo shared with us during the workshop:

Na verdade, o princípio desse conto é a imagem do Michael Jackson dançando. Pra mim, Michael Jackson era aquele sujeito

que tinha a alma nos pés, ele não precisava de mais nada além da dança. Quando eu tive a oportunidade, há uns anos atrás, de ir a Moçambique, eu assisti uma dança tradicional que me lembrava muito Michael Jackson. Então eu dizia, ou é uma pesquisa que ele fez, mas tinha um trabalho ali também que a gente poderia recuperar sentidos primordiais de uma cultura e herança; então a dança é isso.⁹

(In fact, the starting point for this story was the image of Michael Jackson dancing. For me, Michael Jackson was that guy who had his soul in his feet, he didn't need anything more than dancing. When I had the opportunity, a few years ago, to go to Mozambique, I watched a traditional dance which reminded me of Michael Jackson, so I thought to myself that he must have done some research, but there were also some shared elements between his and the Mozambican traditional dance from which we could recover some primordial meanings of a shared culture and heritage; so that's what dancing is.)

It is not surprising that music is one of the elements that connect many of the stories in this anthology, because Brazil, with its samba, *congada*, *tambor de crioula*, *frevo*, *maxixe* and *lundu*, is a key player in Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*.¹⁰ Dance, music and the use of percussion are also crucial elements in *candomblé*, especially as a vehicle through which the *orixás* are appeased. As Conceição Evaristo stated, dance 'vai pôr o sujeito em contato com os orixás e vice-versa' ('will put the individual in contact with their orishas and vice versa').¹¹ Geovani Martins alludes to Caetano Veloso's song 'Menino do Rio' in the first line of 'Sem-terra no mar,' translated by Victor Meadowcroft as 'Landless in the Sea' (Chapter 15). Seven short stories from this anthology were produced in the Flup creative writing workshops, in which well-known and debut writers from the periphery of Rio de Janeiro reinterpreted the rich musical repertoire of the *sambista* Martinho da Vila and the artist and activist Marcelo Yuka, who died in 2019, in order to create authentic and original narratives from scenarios, phrases or characters suggested in the homonymous songs. A selection of stories produced in the Flup workshops was then published in *Conta forte, conta alto: Contos inspirados nas canções de Martinho da Vila*, including Denise Homem's 'Cidadã brasileira' ('Brazilian Citizen' by Victor Meadowcroft, Chapter 11); and in *Contos para depois do ódio: Inspirados em canções de Marcelo Yuka*, including Sylvia Arcuri's 'Cortejo milenar' ('Millionary Procession'

by Victor Meadowcroft, [Chapter 1](#)), Juliana Berlim's 'Myto' ('Myth' by Ricardo Silveira, [Chapter 3](#)), Evandro Luiz da Conceição's 'Ninguém regula a América' ('No One Regulates the Americas' by Faed Breno and Natalie Russo, [Chapter 4](#)), Augusto Dias's 'Homem amarelo' ('Yellow Man' by Victor Meadowcroft, [Chapter 7](#)) and Henrique Rodrigues's 'Verbos à flor da pele' ('Verbs under the Skin' by Andrew McDougall, [Chapter 19](#)).¹²

In the second workshop on 1 April 2020, Julio Ludemir and Geovani Martins discussed the importance of the geography of Rio de Janeiro in 'Sem-terra no mar' and the relationship of this new generation of writers from the periphery with the beaches located in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro:

Essa frase do Caetano que eu trago para o início do conto – 'Rayahne é menina do Rio' – marca esse deslocamento já na primeira frase. É uma música que eu amo, não tenho nada contra essa música, longe disso, mas ela evoca um imaginário que parece que o Rio de Janeiro é aquilo, e a gente sabe que a maior parte do Rio de Janeiro é longe da praia, uma pequena parte dela está ali na costa e o resto todo está mais longe. Então, essa frase já tem muito essa função de trazer a questão para o primeiro momento do texto, onde ela já está posta, depois ela vai ser desenvolvida, mas ela é uma frase que dá conta de colocar a questão central de 'pra quem é essa cidade?', no lado mais abstrato possível, no sentido mais amplo 'de quem é essa cidade?', 'quem é o carioca?', 'pra quem foi feita essa cidade?' Estão todas colocadas ali nessa primeira frase, depois nós vamos conhecer os personagens e o que isso vai resultar na vida deles.¹³

(That line by Caetano that I bring to the beginning of the story – 'Rayanne is a Rio girl' – marks this shift in the first sentence. It's a song that I love; I have nothing against this song, far from it, but it evokes an image that reduces Rio to just that, and we know that most of Rio de Janeiro is far from the beach, a small part of it is on the coast and the rest is all further away. So this sentence has the function of bringing the question to the very first moment of the text, where it is already posed, later it will be developed, but it is a statement that manages to pose the central question of 'whom is this city for?', in the most abstract possible way, in the broadest sense, 'whose city is this?', 'who are the *Carioca*?', 'who was this city made for?' They're all placed there in that first sentence, then we're going to get to know the characters and what that's going to mean in their lives.)

Fernanda Miranda discussed in more general terms the importance of the Atlantic Ocean in Black literature when she introduced Ana Paula Lisboa's 'Até onde vai o mar', translated as 'How Far the Sea Goes' by Christina Baum (Chapter 13), at the fourth workshop, 29 April 2021:

O Atlântico é um texto sem fim, e ele abriga muitos enredos e personagens nas grafias de autoria negra. Tem muita abundância de água salgada na literatura de autoria negra brasileira, assim como naquela escrita de autores negros em outros idiomas. É como se o mar configurasse, de fato, um ponto de encontro que ultrapassa as fronteiras das línguas e das nacionalidades, reorganizando de alguma forma essa diáspora.¹⁴

(The Atlantic is an endless text, harbouring many plots and characters in the writings of Black writers. There is an abundance of salt water in literature by Black Brazilian authors and in that written by Black authors in other languages. It is as if the sea were, in fact, a meeting point that transcends the borders of languages and nationalities, somehow reorganising this diaspora.)

Marina is 'uma criança mineira' ('a child from landlocked Minas Gerais'), who 'fora do sonho nem sabia nadar, nunca havia entrado no mar' ('in real life Marina couldn't even swim, she had never been to the sea'). She is born from the same creative impulse as Rayanne and her mother: from the desire to 'disputar a cidade, atravessar vários caminhos com esses personagens e fazer com que eles dominassem essa cidade também, cruzar e fazer parte dessa cidade' ('dispute the city, cross several paths with these characters and make them dominate, cross and be part of this city too').¹⁵ It is a dispute over a spot on the beach but also over a place in the literary market that Flup has contributed to making a reality. Created in 2012, Flup is an annual international literary festival whose defining feature is that it takes place in neighbourhoods traditionally excluded from literary events in Rio de Janeiro. It was envisaged by writers and activists Ecio Salles (1969–2019) and Julio Ludemir to affirm the favela as a legitimate space for literary debate and creativity. Since its creation, Flup has fought against the regime of inequality in the world of letters,¹⁶ by carving out an alternative space in which writers on the margins of the dominant Brazilian literary marketplace can flourish. A formative process for writers always precedes the festival, and the literary works are then gathered in book format. Flup has so far published 21 books, including the aforementioned *Conta forte, conta*

alto: Contos para depois do ódio, as well as *Eu me chamo Rio*, in which ‘Sem-terra no mar’ was originally published, and *Carolinas: A nova geração de escritoras negras brasileiras*, in which Natara Ney’s ‘Cabresto’ (translated as ‘Gag’ by Isabel Moura Mendes, [Chapter 16](#)), Patrícia Alves Santos Oliveira’s ‘Vênus que se amam’ (‘Venuses Who Love Each Other’ by Andrew McDougall, [Chapter 17](#)) and Verônica de Souza Santos’s ‘A frieza da foice explica o choro de uma mãe’ (‘The Coldness of the Scythe Explains a Mother’s Cry’ by Andrew McDougall, [Chapter 20](#)) were published.¹⁷

In linguistic terms, this dispute over a literary market is also conveyed in the stories through a literary register that challenges the Portuguese standard norm by artistically representing the colloquial language spoken by various groups of different sexual orientations, such as the LGBTQIA+ characters in ‘Cortejo milenar’, ‘Ninguém regula a América’ and ‘O amor’ by Márcio Januário (‘Love’, by Almiro Andrade, [Chapter 12](#)), the rebellious school girl in ‘Metamorfose’, by Geni Guimarães (‘Metamorphosis’ by Andrew McDougall, [Chapter 10](#)) and the group of friends in ‘Verbos à flor da pele’. It was perhaps Geovani Martins who best expressed the difficulty in transforming the ever-changing and diverse colloquial language of these groups into literary discourse:

É muito doido, parece fácil escrever como se fala, mas é difícil fazer sentido porque nossas falas são muito cortadas, tem pausas, as pessoas mudam de assunto no meio da história, vai para um lugar, vai para o outro e, para colocar isso no texto e tentar correr atrás disso é sempre tentar um esforço para não ficar disléxico, tudo solto. Então eu já parti para o texto com essa intenção, eu quero usar as palavras que eu acho que são adequadas pra essa história, e isso tem em todos os contos, uma busca pelo tom ideal que cada história me pede e, por isso, acabo variando bastante os registros na linguagem.¹⁸

(It’s really crazy, it seems easy to write as you speak, but it’s hard to make sense because our lines are very choppy, there are pauses, people change topic in the middle of the story, go to one place, go to another and putting this in the text and trying to run after it is always an exercise in trying not to become dyslexic, everything is so loose. So I dived into the text with this intention, I want to use the words that I think are suitable for this story, and this is in all the stories, a search for the ideal tone that each story asks me, and therefore I end up with a great variety of registers.)

In the third, fifth and seventh workshops, we worked on Cuti, Cristiane Sobral and Eliana Alves Cruz's short stories 'Boneca' (translated as 'The Doll', by Andy McDougall, [Chapter 6](#)), 'Cândido Abdellah Jr.' (translated by Susana Fuentes, [Chapter 21](#)) and 'Oitenta e oito' ('Eighty-Eight', by Felipe Fanuel Xavier Rodrigues, [Chapter 5](#)), respectively. Like many others in this anthology, Cuti, Sobral and Cruz are multi-faceted writers with a vast individual and collective production and who are committed, as Eduardo de Assis Duarte explained to us when talking more specifically about Cuti, to 'produzir uma ficção que, ao mesmo tempo, é uma fricção extremamente bem-sucedida em construir uma narrativa outra, distinta não apenas das idealizações do "homem cordial" habitante de um país múltiplo e tolerante como o Brasil ou do mito da democracia racial ("producing a fiction that is, simultaneously, friction and extremely successful in building a narrative that differs from the idealisations of the "cordial man" who inhabits a diverse and tolerant country like Brazil or from the myth of racial democracy)".¹⁹ Cuti, more specifically, is the author of 23 individual publications, in addition to dozens of other collaborative projects. He is a poet, playwright and short-story writer who has been involved in the foundation of *Cadernos Negros*, *Quilombhoje Literatura* and Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement). A sports journalist, Eliana Alves Cruz is best known for her award-winning historical novels, *Água de barreira*, *O crime do cais do Valongo* and *Nada digo de ti, que em ti não veja*.²⁰ Cristiane Sobral has published five books, and is an actress, writer and educator; she was the first Black actress to graduate in Theatre Interpretation at the University of Brasília.

Eduardo de Assis Duarte coined the concept of 'fiction-friction' to define Cuti's work:

A ficção-fricção de Cuti cumpre o projeto de texto divergente em atrito permanente com o estabelecido. Desconstrutora por excelência, abala narrativas hegemônicas e verdades estabelecidas. É uma escrita de olhos abertos para o cotidiano das vítimas da supremacia branca, expressa nas múltiplas facetas do nosso racismo, mesmo aquele chamado, de forma hipócrita, de 'racismo cordial'. Em paralelo, essa ficção-fricção também está de olhos abertos para os procedimentos e modelos distintos de construção narrativa. Em sua prosa, convivem e dialogam o rigor da denúncia explícita, herdado de Lima Barreto, e a ironia, vizinha do escárnio e mesmo do deboche, praticada por Machado de Assis.²¹

(Cuti's friction-fiction fulfils the project of a divergent text in permanent friction with the status quo. A deconstructor par excellence, he undermines hegemonic narratives and established truths. His writings have their eyes open to the daily lives of the victims of white supremacy, expressed in the multiple facets of our racism, even the one hypocritically called 'cordial racism'. At the same time, this friction-fiction has its eyes open to different procedures and models of narrative construction. In his prose, the rigour of explicit denunciation inherited from Lima Barreto, and the irony, close to derision and even debauchery, practised by Machado de Assis, coexist and dialogue.)

The concept of friction-fiction is very useful for our understanding of the short stories in the anthology as a whole and more specifically for my personal reading of Sobral's 'Cândido Abdellah Jr.', which I presented in the workshop held on 13 May 2021. 'Cândido Abdellah Jr.' is one of the few narratives of the adoption of a Black child in Brazilian literature. Like 'Boneca', it challenges with irony the stereotypes ingrained in the fabric of Brazil and the expected behaviours of Black Brazilians. It also invites us to reflect on the construction of parenthood, the family environment and the identity of adoptive children, and more generally on adoption practices in Brazil, by dramatising the cultural and racial tensions surrounding interracial adoption. Cândido Abdellah Jr. is the name of the narrator, who tells us in the first person his life story from adoption at the age of three to adulthood. From the outset, the title of the short story symbolises and condenses the attempt to erase the child's Black identity. 'Cândido' is derived from the Latin word 'candidus', which means 'white' and connotes fair-mindedness or a lack of corruption. It has been previously used by Machado de Assis in his canonical short story 'Father against Mother' to name the poor character who makes his living catching runaway enslaved individuals.²² The agnomen 'Júnior' annuls Cândido's ancestry by honouring the adoptive father.

With Eliane Alves Cruz's 'Oitenta e oito', we enter the field of Afrofuturism. Author of three historical novels, Cruz uses the device of the time tunnel in this Afrofuturist short story in order to explore the relationship between ancestry, Black history and the prospect of a future in which these two elements are contemplated from the Black perspective. Cruz considers Afrofuturism a political act that both praises ancestry and protests against gun violence in Brazil, where, in 2020, 76.2 per cent of those murdered were Black, with the vast majority being young men:²³

Quando a Conceição Evaristo fala que literatura é um ato político, eu acho que ela fala um pouco disso, porque não é apenas recriar um passado, é imaginar futuros possíveis, finais diferentes. É imaginar vidas completas, com início, meio e fim, e um fim que continua nos seus descendentes e trazem heranças e deixam legados.²⁴

(When Conceição Evaristo is alluding to this, because it's not just about recreating a past, it also means imagining possible futures and different endings. It means imagining complete lives, with a beginning, middle and end, and an end that continues in their descendants and brings inheritances and legacies.)

In the workshops for 'O amor' and 'Ninguém regula a América', we were treated to a couple of the most beautiful love stories in Brazilian literature. Márcio Januário and Conceição Evaristo use *pajubá*, a Brazilian cryptolect spoken by adherents of Afro-Brazilian religions and by the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ community, to construct new *lugares de fala* (places of speech) that displace the hegemonic thinking and resignify identities, whether of race, gender or class, by giving voice and visibility to 'sujeitos que foram considerados implícitos dentro dessa normatização hegemônica' ('subjects that were considered implicit within this hegemonic normalisation').²⁵

Januário and Conceição explore the relationship between Evaristo's *escrevivência* and Djamila Ribeiro's *lugar de fala*, by depicting the city of Rio de Janeiro and *carioca* situations from angles not yet explored in Brazilian literature. Jorge Cauê Rodrigues told us that 'O amor' 'tem uma característica da vida do Márcio, que ele coloca nesse texto e nos outros, que é a sua própria vida: uma bicha, preta, periférica, que não é da cidade grande e vai para a cidade grande morar na favela, na qual nos conhecemos e fomos vizinhos, e ainda mora lá. E essa vivência, o Márcio traduz' ('has a characteristic of Márcio's life, which he places in this text and in others, which is his own life: queer, Black, peripheral, not from the big city, and who goes to the big city to live in the favela, where we met and were neighbours, and he still lives there. And this experience, Márcio translates in his text'). Márcio Januário 'fala de alguns lugares específicos dessa cultura homossexual, principalmente nas décadas de 1960, 1970 e 1980, que foi a Galeria Alaska. Para quem não conhece, é uma galeria que liga a Avenida Atlântica à Nossa Senhora de Copacabana e ela tem bares dos dois lados e, antigamente, tinha teatro e boates dentro da galeria' ('talks about some specific places of this homosexual culture, mainly in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, which was the Alaska Arcade. For those who

don't know it, it is an arcade that connects Avenida Atlântica to Nossa Senhora de Copacabana and has bars on both sides and, in the past, there used to be a theatre and nightclubs inside the gallery').²⁶

Evandro da Conceição made a similar comment when he spoke in the workshop about the importance of Umbanda in his life:

Uma coisa muito cara para mim é trazer essa ancestralidade. Esse conto, quando eu começo com uma mesa de búzios estabelecendo novos caminhos para esse personagem é uma forma de dizer muito obrigado para essa ancestralidade que me constitui. Eu sou praticante de religiões africanas, eu sou umbandista, nasci e fui criado na umbanda e tive um processo de afastamento de mais de 20 anos e retornei há uns 5 anos. Para além de todos os elementos que eu trago e dizem de mim, da minha essência, tem nesse conto um desejo muito grande de devir, de transformação que se consolida a partir desse amor, desse se encontrar no outro.²⁷

(One thing that is very dear to me is to bring this ancestry to my writings. I begin the story with cowrie-shell divination to establish new paths for my character and, at the same time, be thankful for the ancestry that constitutes me. I am a practitioner of African religions, I am an Umbanda practitioner, and I was born and raised in Umbanda. I had distanced myself from it for more than 20 years and returned to it about five years ago. In addition to all the elements that I bring and that speak about me, about my essence, there is in this story a very great desire for overcoming and transformation that is consolidated with this love, by this self-discovery through the other.)

To *congada mineira*, *batuque afro-tientense* ('Os pés do dançarino'), *maromba* and *pitboy* ('Sem-terra no mar'), we can add many other *carioca* slangs and *pajubá* expressions, such as *marolar*, *passar um cheque* ('O amor'), *dar um coió*, *brodagem*, *ensaiar o ejó* and *boy odara* ('Ninguém regula a América'), which made us, the editors, think carefully about whether or not to include a glossary in this book and use italics to highlight the words that the translators deliberately chose not to translate. As Daniel Hahn commented, more specifically about the short story 'Sem-terra no mar':

There is a sentence on the second page of 'Sem-terra no mar':
'Tinha gringo, patricinha, favelado, playboy, maromba, ambulante,

suburbano e mais um monte de gente, carioca ou não' ('There were gringos, preppy girls, *favelados*, playboys, bodybuilders, beach vendors, people from the peripheries and a whole load of other beachgoers, both *Carioca* and not'). Every word in that sentence is a word that as a translator I hate finding in books because every one of those words has an entire culture or an entire world. There is so much density in those words, which is amazing as a reader and, as a translator, it terrifies me completely. There is almost no word in that sentence that doesn't have a huge culture, history or social issue. It is incredibly densely packed; it stresses me just thinking about it.²⁸

Despite the abundance of culture-specific words, we have chosen as editors not to include a glossary or footnotes in this book, because the readers of a bilingual open-access anthology are not limited to the Anglophone world. We hope this anthology will reach Lusophone readers who aspire to a career in languages and Brazilian speakers from the very communities where the stories are set, for whom a glossary may be unnecessary and even daunting. Furthermore, the underlying themes of the stories in this anthology, such as the unconditional love of Lete and Adriano, Sam and Uolston, are universal, and will speak to readers' hearts even when many slangs and idioms remain untranslated.

As Evandro da Conceição told us:

Eu acredito que esse conto, para além de todas as complexidades, para além de tudo que ele evoca, eu acredito (isso já tem dois anos que ele está publicado) que é uma ode ao amor, um oceano de possibilidades, de certezas, da gente caminhar daqui para frente. É muito curioso, eu penso na minha existência que não tem a ver com os personagens, mas ao mesmo tempo ela tem a ver. Então eu acredito que o 'Ninguém regula a América', apesar de tudo que ele traz de contraditório, de complexo, de dolorido, mas ele anuncia um desejo de transformação, uma ode ao amor.²⁹

(I believe that this story, beyond all the complexities, beyond everything it evokes – and it has been published for two years now – is an ode to love, an ocean of possibilities, of certainties, that allow us to walk forward. It's very interesting that, on one hand, my existence has nothing to do with that of the characters, on the other, it has something to do with it. So I believe that 'No One Regulates

the Americas', despite all that it brings that is contradictory, complex and painful, announces a desire for transformation, an ode to love.)

The funding award by UCL Global Engagement allowed us to include ten more short stories in the anthology, in addition to Sylvia Arcuri's 'Cortejo milenar' and Augusto Dias's 'Homem amarelo' (translated as 'Millionary Procession' and 'Yellow Man', by Victor Meadowcroft, [Chapters 1](#) and [7](#) respectively), which had already been translated for the purpose of two workshops of the SELCS Brazilian Translation Club held in 2018–2019. These two short stories are among my favourite, if I am allowed to express my personal preference, but beyond personal taste they represent, together, the diversity of contemporary Brazilian short story production and, within the specific field of Afro-Brazilian literature, 'the variety of discursive demarcations that people use to express their Afro-descendant identity/ies in their literary works'.³⁰

This diversity is manifested in many layers of the texts. The omniscient narrator of 'Homem amarelo' is a kind of lexicologist, who describes the action with the same precision with which he explains the etymology of the words he remembers reading in the books forgotten along with him in the century-old prison, built in the basement of an avenue in Leblon, Rio de Janeiro. In 'Cortejo milenar', the dialogues humorously reproduce the conversation between two teenage girls as they prepare and eat *brigadeiro*, a very popular Brazilian praline that generates income for many Brazilian families. As they cook, the characters fantasise about their marriage and discover their sexuality. The dialogue resource allows the writer to transgress the rules of the normative Portuguese grammar and transform the colloquial language of Rio de Janeiro suburban state schoolgirls into literary discourse. 'Cortejo milenar' and 'Homem amarelo' parody the fairy tale and the myth of Plato's cave in order to create dystopian narratives, like Cruz's 'Oito e oitenta', through the creation of two different spaces, of dialogue and confinement, in order to make us aware that society needs to change.

Cida Salgueiro and Julio Ludemir curated the ten additional stories to feature in this anthology, following the same principle as those of the workshops, by established and new Black Brazilian writers: 'Quando o malandro vacila' by Márcio Barbosa (translated as 'When the Gangster Falts', by Emyr Humphreys, [Chapter 2](#)), Paulo Dutra's 'Tchatinha' ('Tchatinha', translated by Felipe Fanuel Xavier Rodrigues, [Chapter 8](#)), Geni Guimarães's 'Metamorfose' ('Metamorphosis', translated by Andrew McDougall, [Chapter 10](#)), Elisa Lucinda's 'Click' ('Click', translated by Emyr Humphreys, [Chapter 14](#)), 'Mulheres dos espelhos' by Esmeralda

Ribeiro ('Mirror Women', by Emyr Humphreys, [Chapter 18](#)), the previously mentioned 'Cidadã brasileira' by Denise Homem, 'Vênus que se amam' by Patrícia Alves Santos Oliveira, 'Verbos à flor da pele' by Henrique Rodrigues, and 'A frieza da foice explica o choro de uma mãe' by Verônica de Souza Santos.

Again, Duarte's analysis of Cuti's 'Boneca' can be used to connect the 21 stories in this anthology. Together, they provide us with a more varied, optimistic and alternative view of Afro-Brazilian literature today, a literature which has inherited Machado de Assis's humour and irony and Lima Barreto's sharp social criticism, and at the same time moved away from 'o chamado brutalismo, que caracteriza os enredos de Rubem Fonseca, por exemplo. Longe da espetacularização da violência transformada em mercadoria, vê-se a narrativa emanar do lugar da vítima e não do marginal agressor, desumanizado pelo estereótipo que vincula o negro à violência e à criminalidade' ('the so-called brutality, which characterises Rubem Fonseca's plots, for example. Far from the spectacularisation of violence transformed into merchandise, the narrative can be seen as emanating from the victim's position and not from that of the delinquent thuggish aggressor, dehumanised by the stereotype that links Blacks to violence and criminality').³¹

The stories from the ten workshops were translated by translators based in Brazil, the United Kingdom and Europe. The lack of recognition for translators' work, coupled with low wages, has significantly hindered diversity in the small field of Portuguese book translation. Moreover, the fact that foreign languages are mostly taught in private schools in the Anglo-American and Lusophone worlds further exacerbates this issue. Yet we were lucky to collaborate with a diverse group of translators, working in their first or second language. As expected, views on who and how one should translate what varied greatly, especially in the context of the selection of Amanda Gorman to read at Joe Biden's presidential inauguration in January 2021, which opened up conversations worldwide about representation and inequities in the world of book publishing and translation. One of the ideas that emerged from our discussions around the ethnicity of translators was Elton Uliana's *traducência*, a concept that is to translation what the concept of *escrevivência* is to writing, in Evaristo's terms.³² Uliana's initial thought was that there is an interplay in *traducência* akin to that of 'writing' and 'life experience' in *escrevivência*. In *escrevivência*, the author writes themselves into the text and is simultaneously written by the text. Similarly, in *traducência*, the translator is able to represent the author's experience or something that depicts the author's life in writing, drawing from their life and

professional background. Linguistic and cultural research and collaboration with the author and other translators are as crucial as memory in *escrevivência*. So it is through their unique *traducência* that the figure of the translator operates all kinds of transactions between texts, cultures³³ and *escrevivência*, and that translation emerges with genuine power.

Despite the great differences in backgrounds among the translators and all those who joined the workshops, how to convey the *lugar de fala*, the narrative voice and the *pretoguês* (Black Brazilian Portuguese) of the stories was a recurring topic in our discussions.³⁴ I will limit myself to recovering Victor Meadowcroft's self-reflection on the difficult task he faced in recreating the different voices in 'Sem-terra no mar':

The two main issues I encountered in this translation were, on the one hand, the context, the whole complex world that lies behind Giovani's story, and on the other, the perspective from which the story is narrated. In terms of context, I was considering questions such as: how much will an English reader need to know about the MST (Movimento Sem Terra) and the Sem Terras? How much background information will they need in order to understand who these people – who later travel to the beach – are? How much will readers need to know about the gross inequality in Rio, and the fact that you have people with next to nothing living side-by-side with others who are extremely wealthy? This last question was something that had been powerfully brought home to me on seeing Geovani talk about *The Sun on My Head* at an event at Foyles bookshop, when he described moving to the Rocinha neighbourhood, which was the first time he'd really encountered rich people, and realising that he was poor in relation to these people. From what I recall, he explained that he'd never perceived himself as being 'poor' until the move to Rocinha, and these dynamics seemed to arise again in this story, in which the characters travel to the beach and the four-year-old protagonist, who has never lived among the rich, arrives in a world containing all these different groups of people, some of whom don't think she and her friends belong there. I had questions about how much of this context readers would be aware of, and also the extent to which these dynamics were already contained within the story, therefore not requiring further explanation. And then there were issues relating to the beach itself: Julio [Ludemir] spoke earlier about the significance of Posto 9 as a beach area typically frequented by the very wealthy, so there were questions about whether that significance

would need to be explained or, again, whether it was already communicated through the events of the story. And, finally, against all of this, I also wanted to avoid overloading the translation with too much additional information, as the perspective was supposed to be that of a four-year-old girl. Although not the voice telling the story, which is narrated in the third person, it seemed to me that the narrator occasionally sees things through Rayanne's eyes. This was a factor I had to bear in mind as well, ensuring that the narrative voice I arrived at could move into Rayanne's head in a way that felt natural, rather than standing out as incongruous to the reader. Sometimes this influenced my translation decisions. For example, when Rayanne enters the sea for the first time at the end of the story and the water is described as 'geladinha', I could have translated this as 'freezing' but opted for 'icy-cold' instead, because this felt to me like the kind of thing a small child might say. Yet it wasn't only Rayanne, but also her mother Carla, whose thoughts appeared to occasionally bleed into the narration of the story, meaning that I felt compelled to find a narrative voice that would allow the text to accommodate both characters convincingly in English.³⁵

Bassnett states that translatability is connected to human experience, despite the fact that the basic units of two languages are not always equivalent. Communication can be achieved when the author's message is understood even in a situation different from the original text.³⁶ Translators have to take into consideration cultural diversities and the manner in which texts reflect such cultural elements. In Geovani Martins's words, books have the potential to achieve new readers:

a partir da identificação e do estranhamento com o mesmo texto. Porque existem várias leituras que eu venho acompanhando ao longo do tempo, e pessoas que estão em contextos muito diferentes daquele que trabalho em meus textos me falam desse estranhamento, sobre essa curiosidade sobre certos assuntos e abordagens e, outras pessoas que vivem em contextos parecidos com meus personagens me falam sobre a identificação que elas tiveram quando leram aquele texto.³⁷

(stemming from identification and unfamiliarity with the same text. Because there are several readings that I have been following over time, and people who are in very different contexts from the one I look at in my texts tell me about this unfamiliarity, about this

curiosity for certain subjects and approaches, and other people who live in contexts similar to my characters' tell me about the identification they had when they read that text.)

The underlying principle of the translations in this anthology lies perhaps in the search for a balance between *identificação* and *estranhamento* (identification and unfamiliarity), which is unique in each text. The readers of this anthology are invited to engage with and examine it further, especially given that the source and target texts are presented side by side.

The role of translation is essential for the dissemination of Brazilian literature and its insertion into world literature. We hope that this bilingual edition will also serve as an incentive for future translations of works by our 21 authors.

Notes

- 1 Lima Barreto's *Triste fim de Policarpo Quaresma* was first published in feuilleton form in *Jornal do Commercio* in 1911 and its translation by Mark Carlyon appeared in 2014. Carolina Maria de Jesus's *Quarto de despejo* was published in 1960 and David St Clair's translation in 1962. There are two versions of Paulo Lins's *Cidade de Deus*, published in 1997 and 2002. The translation by Alison Entekin is based on the second version and was published in 2006. *Ponciá Vicêncio* is Evaristo's first novel, published in 2003, and its translation by Paloma Martinez-Cruz was published in 2007. The first edition of Maria Firmina dos Reis's *Úrsula* was published in 1959; its translation by Cristina Ferreira Pinto-Bailey was published in 2022. Paulo Scott's *Marrom e amarelo* was published in 2019; the English translation from 2022 is by Daniel Hahn.
- 2 In Portuguese, *O sol na cabeça*, 2018. The English translation is by Julia Sanches, 2019.
- 3 All the videos of the workshops are available on the YouTube channel of Festa Literária das Periferias, Flup RJ, playlist 'Oficinas de tradução' and the Facebook page of the SELCS Brazilian Translation Club. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToiIro&feature=sharedSELCS> and <https://www.facebook.com/BrazilianLIT>.
- 4 Maria Aparecida Andrade Salgueiro, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Conceição Evaristo's 'Os pés do dançarino', 18 March 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Zg8-7qqR3Q&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToiIro&index=5>.
- 5 Evaristo, 'A escrevivência e seus subtextos'.
- 6 Morrison, *Mouth Full of Blood*.
- 7 Evaristo, 'A escrevivência e seus subtextos', p. 30.
- 8 Evaristo, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Conceição Evaristo's 'Os pés do dançarino', 18 March 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Zg8-7qqR3Q&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToiIro&index=5>.
- 9 Evaristo, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Conceição Evaristo's 'Os pés do dançarino', 18 March 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Zg8-7qqR3Q&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToiIro&index=5>.
- 10 Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.
- 11 Evaristo, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Conceição Evaristo's 'Os pés do dançarino', 18 March 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Zg8-7qqR3Q&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToiIro&index=5>.
- 12 Salles and Ludemir, *Contos para depois do ódio*; Salles and Ludemir, *Conta forte, conta alto*.

- 13 Martins, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Geovani Martins's 'Sem-terra no mar', 1 April 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoJP5fGAGBI&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=>.
- 14 Miranda, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Ana Paula Lisboa's 'Até onde vai o mar', 29 April 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8CgQLnyBCo&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=4>.
- 15 Martins, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Geovani Martins's 'Sem-terra no mar', 1 April 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoJP5fGAGBI&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=>.
- 16 Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*.
- 17 Salles and Ludemir, *Eu me chamo Rio*; Ludemir, *Carolinas*.
- 18 Martins, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Geovani Martins's 'Sem-terra no mar', 1 April 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoJP5fGAGBI&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=>.
- 19 Duarte, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Cuti's 'Boneca', 15 April 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8XmokiQDRI&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=3>.
- 20 *Água de barreira* (2016), *O crime do cais do Valongo* (2018), *Nada digo de ti, que em ti não veja* (2020).
- 21 Duarte, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Cuti's 'Boneca', 15 April 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8XmokiQDRI&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=3>.
- 22 Machado de Assis's 'Pai contra mãe' was first published in the short-story anthology *Relíquias da Casa Velha* in 1906. It has been translated among others by Margaret Jull Costa and Robin Patterson, 2018.
- 23 Stargardter, 'Murders'.
- 24 Cruz, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Eliana Alves Cruz's 'Oitenta e Oito', 10 June 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flrHJOHGuBAA&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=7>.
- 25 Ribeiro, *Lugar de fala*, 43.
- 26 Rodrigues, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Márcio Januário's 'Amor', 27 May 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqUdOnTx7dY&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=1>.
- 27 Conceição, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Evandro da Conceição's 'Ninguém regula a América', 24 June 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPKFUHJJJA&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=8>.
- 28 Hahn, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Geovani Martins's 'Sem-terra no mar', 1 April 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoJP5fGAGBI&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=>.
- 29 Conceição, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Evandro da Conceição's 'Ninguém regula a América', 24 June 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPKFUHJJJA&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=8>.
- 30 Duarte, 'Toward a Concept of Afro-Brazilian Literature', 106.
- 31 Duarte, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Cuti's 'Boneca', 15 April 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8XmokiQDRI&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=3>.
- 32 Uliana, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Conceição Evaristo's 'Os pés do dançarino', 18 March 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Zg8-7qqR3Q&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=5>.
- 33 Bassnett, *Translation Studies*.
- 34 Gonzalez, 'A categoria político-cultural de amefricanidade', 70.
- 35 Meadowcroft, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Geovani Martins's 'Sem-terra no mar', 1 April 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoJP5fGAGBI&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=>.
- 36 Bassnett, *Translation Studies*.
- 37 Martins, SELCS Brazilian Translation Club workshop on Geovani Martins's 'Sem-terra no mar', 1 April 2021. Accessed 25 September 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoJP5fGAGBI&list=PLK0OQf2NeLr3x5D60tMSWJjbFtpToilro&index=>.

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2

Atlantic inferiority

Julio Ludemir, translated by Laura Garmeson

The world has an enormous affection for Brazil, which is seen as a kind of tropical park reserved for the good life in which men play football while women saunter down beaches semi-naked. We celebrate life with the drums we inherited from our African ancestors and we produce the food required by rich countries, but the major newspapers devote many more column inches to the threat our agribusiness represents to humanity and the political excrescences who have supported the devastation of our forests in exchange for surplus in the trade balance. Don't be embarrassed to name the last novel you read by a Brazilian writer. Perhaps your answer will reflect that of the overwhelming majority of our population. Our own people also don't see us as an artistic force worthy of consideration.

A quick consultation of Google's web-crawlers may help us to understand the thesis presented here – and the motivation behind the format of this partnership proposed by Flup with UCL, through Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva, Associate Professor of Brazilian Studies and co-ordinator of UCL's School of European Languages, Culture and Society Brazilian Translation Club. We are one of the countries that is most closely observed and commented on by the Western mainstream media, with frequent major news reports in publications such as *Le Monde*, *The Guardian* and the *New York Times*. But this is almost always through a lens that essentially regards us as an updated version of a banana republic, albeit nowadays one with greater importance for the global economy. In the particular case of the United Kingdom, we alternate between our roles as an exporter of commodities and supplier of players for the Premier League, with the contributions of Gabriel Jesus, Richarlison and Alisson Becker, among others, being far from an

embarrassment. King Charles's subjects can rest assured that, more than bringing us pride, the bonds of football have put the United Kingdom on the map for us and have, above all, led our young people to dream of the better days that our own government is unable to provide.

If we extend this enquiry to the cultural sections of the newspapers that recognise our economic relevance, we notice that our artists are far from occupying the same space reserved for Brazilian agribusiness and our white-collar crooks, especially those who lurk in our state-owned corridors. On the rare occasions when our artists are remembered, there is a near-total predominance of our Black musicians, principally those whose performances are anchored in the rhythmic richness of our African inheritance. Brazilian cinema will never be as popular as our football, but on the few occasions when we have had a film nominated for an Oscar, a current of excitement forms in our country comparable to that leading up to the first FIFA World Cup win in 1958. The inferiority complex referred to by the playwright Nelson Rodrigues, a giant of Brazilian letters who is practically ignored on the old continent, will only be resolved the day when a Brazilian film finally wins a statue from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. That day will surely come.

Many Brazilian writers boast about having their work published in the great global seats of cultural power – and it is now commonplace to find book blurbs in which publishers write that so-and-so's books were launched in the United States, France and (the ultimate honour) the United Kingdom. But the world's relationship to the literature produced in our country can be measured through the catalogue of the prestigious and prestige-giving Faber & Faber, which features only one Brazilian: the young Geovani Martins, with his brilliant collection of short stories *O Sol na Cabeça*; he is the first and only Brazilian writer to scale the real Trumpian Wall separating us from the mainstream publishing market, for which, discounting Jorge Amado, we haven't got much further than the exoteric literature of Paulo Coelho. Another obvious way of judging the importance accorded to the books we produce would be through the programmes of major literary festivals, where our presence hovers around zero. The Edinburgh Book Festival, which normally invites around a thousand authors each year, has hosted the aforementioned Geovani Martins, Djamilia Ribeiro and Julian Fuks over the past ten years. It is worth recalling that Martins was included as part of a secondary programme, with seats for 100 people, if that. The 2022 Toronto International Festival of Authors featured no Brazilians. Between 1990 and 2022, the Étonnants Voyageurs festival in Saint-Malo has hosted eight Brazilians.

The brief reference to Black Brazilian musicians, although little makes Brazilian people prouder than their ability to entertain crowds, finally brings us to the main debate proposed by this collection of stories, which is entirely dedicated to Afro-Brazilian artists. Until the conception of this book, it seems to us that Black Brazilians only had a right to a certain kind of expression abroad: music and, at best, dance. Perhaps the most popular (and richest) of artistic expressions is the music industry, which, at least when it comes to music with a more popular angle, has been an increasingly Black stronghold ever since the roaring success of the legendary Motown in the late 1950s and especially after the Michael Jackson phenomenon. Although the success of *Música Popular Brasileira* has only just perhaps extended beyond our borders, at least on levels as decisive as those internally, it is a marker of Brazilian identity. The samba schools, even after cultural appropriation by the white middle classes, are a Black territory, as is capoeira, which is particularly popular in Paris – together with Gilberto Gil, Emicida, Djavan and Jorge Benjor.

Even with the recognised quality and moderate international acceptance of *Música Popular Brasileira*, we have not had any musical idol with a global reach since the success of the ‘The Girl from Ipanema’, which, despite its undeniable charms, is in the running for one of the greatest symbolic acts of violence against who we actually are as a people, insofar as it was celebrated artists from the white middle classes who consumed jazz and samba to produce bossa nova, and above all presented to the world a white female beauty ideal which, decades later, would be borne out with the image of the model Gisele Bündchen. Even Anitta, despite mingling with the iconic stars of US pop music, is practically unknown in cities such as Paris and Berlin. Even her daring stage performances and her efficient social media strategy have not accredited her with a global tour capable of filling a Stade de France, to once again cite France as a reference. Her touring, although worldwide, is restricted to a route that is close to the alternative circuit.

The debate over our ability to create iconic figures beyond the football pitch may have the potential to increase our psychoanalysis bills and yet, although it is a legitimate desire for a population to want to captivate the world with its cultural spectacles, it is far from an exclusively Brazilian problem that the world is indifferent to the fact that we were the country that smuggled the most Black bodies during the slavery period (1831–1861) and, as a result of these numbers, remains today the largest Black nation outside Africa and the second largest in the world, only surpassed by the Nigeria of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It is more than a show of ignorance to restrict the Black

Atlantic to a triangle encompassing Africa, Europe and North America, or at a stretch the countries of the Caribbean colonised by the United Kingdom and France. To exclude from the debate and from anti-racist struggles a country in which over 20,000 Black youths die every year, many of them in scenes as cowardly and brutal, or more so, than the episode that shocked the world at the height of the pandemic, would be comparable to ignoring the struggle of the followers of Nelson Mandela against apartheid.

This was not the first time in history that an event raised the anti-racist struggles to another level, but although Martin Luther King's assassination reignited and expanded the fight for civil rights in the United States, it was not enough to alter the list of bestselling books in the United Kingdom, with the unprecedented arrival of the novelist Bernardine Evaristo and journalist Reni Eddo-Lodge respectively atop the fiction and non-fiction lists. France wept copiously over the death of Josephine Baker, but the crowds who accompanied the funeral procession for the first Black pop icon didn't create a wave of audiovisual productions exploring themes of Blackness, as was the case with *Tout simplement noir* in France, which sold over a million tickets and was career-changing for director Jean-Pascal Zadi in the middle of the pandemic. It's true that the Djamila Ribeiro phenomenon predated the killing of George Floyd, but there's no doubt that it gained a new and powerful momentum following the killing in Minneapolis.

This new global consciousness has been growing since 2015, when the wave of fury following the killing of the young Michael Brown ended up launching the Black Lives Matter movement, perhaps the most consistent and relevant social movement of the first half of the twenty-first century. There have been certain phenomena on a global scale since then, including the success of films such as *Get Out* and notably *Black Panther*, which at the very least convinced the major film executives that Black narratives had the necessary universality to reach beyond the ghetto. But the establishment only woke up to this new reality in 2020, as is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the same Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the one that holds Brazilian cinema in such disdain, failed to nominate a single Black person in any of the competing categories in 2016. It was also the same year in which the businessman Donald Trump was elected when the largest and most important Brazilian literary festival, the Festa Literária Internacional de Paraty, had the audacity to fail to invite a single Black person. Both Hollywood and the city of Paraty have been subject to heavy criticism by the increasingly co-ordinated Black movement.

Certain events indicate that Brazil is gradually starting to appear on the map of the Black Atlantic, such as the cathartic nights when Angela Davis and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie drew crowds worthy of a rock concert to listen to them talk about a Black feminism that is gaining traction all over the world. But not even Angela Davis stating that one of her major intellectual influences was Brazilian anthropologist Lélia Gonzalez has been enough for international publishing markets to show an interest in the author of *Lugar de negro* and *Festas populares no Brasil*. We'll be able to count on our fingers the number of people who read this foreword who have heard of the phenomenon that is Conceição Evaristo, a Black woman from a working-class background who grew up in a favela in Belo Horizonte, pursuing the tradition of the women in her family to become domestic workers until she moved to Rio de Janeiro, where she changed the course of her destiny after enrolling at a public university. Another phenomenon that has yet to extend beyond our borders is *Defeito de cor*, an instant classic in which another native of Minas Gerais, Ana Maria Gonçalves, rewrote the history of Brazil, giving prominence to the Black women involved in the great abolitionist fights that led our historians to reconsider events and, above all, beliefs.

There can be no omitting the fact that Brazil is as cruel to its Black writers as the world is to our cultural production as a whole. There is no more definitive proof of this than the 40 Black novelists who have been published over the course of our history, although the Brazilian novel was inaugurated as much by a publisher as by a novelist, who were both Black – Paula Brito and Teixeira e Sousa respectively. Along with the author of *O filho do pescador* and the editor who took on the major French publishing houses controlling the book industry even before the end of the slavery period, others who played an important role in the creation of the Brazilian novel were writers Maria Firmina dos Reis and Machado Assis, the latter being the founder of the Brazilian Academy of Letters and considered to be the most important author in Brazilian literature. However, following the death of Lima Barreto, another Black writer who helped to consolidate the Brazilian urban novel, works published by people of colour became a rarity until the start of the affirmative action movement in Brazil. Between the death of Lima Barreto (1922) and the publication of *Cidade de Deus* (1997), only one Black author achieved real success: Carolina Maria de Jesus, author of the classic *Quarto de despejo*, published in 1960.

The affirmative action policies implemented at the start of the 2010s have produced extraordinary results for the country in a single generation, significantly changing Black people's presence within the

cultural landscape. There is a particularly prominent generation in the field of spoken word poetry, with events initially seeing an influx of Black men, since the end of the decade Black women and now, in the 2020s, LGBTQIA+ people. Brazilian theatre has also taken on a new colour, in a synergistic confluence in which actors, directors and particularly playwrights have not only portrayed a new Brazil on stage but also and more importantly created a Black audience with an interest in their shows. To a lesser degree, the film and television industry has recalibrated to incorporate the work of Black screenwriters, clearly demonstrated by the success of *Marte 1*, a bold production from producer Filmes de plástico, who almost represented Brazil at the Oscars in 2022. Even the visual arts, historically an unassailable stronghold of the white middle classes, have been forced to open up to this generation of Black men and women who have come up through the universities, with the rediscovery of key figures Abdias do Nascimento and Emanuel Araújo, and the appearance of artists such as Maxwell Alexandre, who grew up in the Rocinha favela and is now embarking on an international career.

All these events follow a trajectory similar to that of this book, with the minor difference that here we have no texts produced by dead writers. In the case of theatre, there is a real reverence for names from the past, such as the aforementioned Abdias do Nascimento and Ubirajara Fidalgo, who have gambled on the appearance of Black staging which has garnered even more muscle with this generation given affirmative action. Initially they focused on what they call 'Black money' and today they are potentially soaring towards a universal public. Zózimo Bulbul, creator of a Black Brazilian cinema and organiser of a festival that proposes a fluid and permanent dialogue with African production, is a point of reference for screenwriters such as Elisio Lopes, Aldri Anunciação and even Lázaro Ramos, who worked together on the successful *Medida Provisória*. The poetic output of the quota generation references the creators of a Black Brazilian poetry tradition, such as Solano Trindade and Cruz e Sousa. However, these new poets are more strongly influenced by US rap and the work of their peers, in a dynamic and dialectical relationship which locates these women's poetry within a field of a Black activist feminism, forcefully denouncing all acts of violence committed against their bodies.

In the case of these contemporary Afro-Brazilian short stories, although Black women draw inspiration from the bold example of Carolina Maria de Jesus, the more venerated influences include the aforementioned Conceição Evaristo, a wise-elder figure who these days has taken on the status of a deity, like an orixá spirit who graces us mortals with her presence. The prestige that she enjoys is a phenomenon

that is unique in the history of Brazilian literature, with for the first time thousands of people attempting to influence the choice of the new immortals for the Brazilian Academy of Letters, where the inclusion of Black people, despite the institution having been founded by Machado de Assis, reflects the inequalities of Brazilian society, with a presence of people of colour that is virtually nil. Not even included are the couple Márcio Barbosa and Esmeralda Ribeiro, even though they helped to identify, organise and spotlight many generations of Brazilian short story writers, chroniclers and poets with their 40 annual editions of *Cadernos Negros*, a platform through which the country has had the opportunity to discover Evaristo herself and other authors from this collection, such as Paulo Dutra and Eliana Alves Cruz.

There is a concept coined by Conceição Evaristo which means that she will feature forever in Brazilian literature – that of *escrevivências*, a portmanteau of *escrita* (writing) and *vivência* (life experience). This writing about oneself has become a hallmark of the literature produced by the younger generations who have followed in her footsteps, as is clearly the case for Eliana Alves Cruz, who ripped back the curtains of anonymity with a saga that focused on her family, mapping out her grandmother’s delirious memories of her ancestors in Africa up to settling in Rio de Janeiro at the beginning of the last century, after living in Bahia for many generations. Márcio Januário and Evandro Conceição tell us about their experiences in the homosexual ghetto, bringing to the table an additional obstacle for English speakers in the form of a ‘pajubá’ literature, which uses and abuses the slang from the LGBTQIA+ universe of Rio de Janeiro, with explicit references to expressions from Candomblé. Translation challenges are also present in the story by Geovani Martins, in which he reaffirms his intimacy with the linguistic universe from his award-winning short story collection, using youth slang from the favelas with the same familiarity with which he turns to words from highbrow Portuguese, which he discovered through the libraries of the public schools he attended before becoming a coconut seller on the beaches of Rio’s South Zone.

This regeneration of Black Brazilian literature has occurred within a very short space of time, including in market terms. The autobiography of the multi-disciplinary artist Lázaro Ramos, a publishing phenomenon that ignored the economic crisis of 2017, motivated publishers such as Companhia das Letras to invest in authors such as Djamilia Ribeiro, Geovani Martins, Jeferson Tenório and Paulo Scott. The same Companhia das Letras is rereleasing the oeuvre of Carolina Maria de Jesus, who, as well as the four books that established her career, left

thousands of pages unpublished. All the major publishers today have an imprint for Black literature, building on what until the middle of the last decade was seen as an irrelevant market niche, publishing classics by bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins, the aforementioned Angela Davis, and exhibiting an unprecedented sensibility for authors such as Itamar Vieira Junior from Bahia, Alê Santos from São Paulo and José Falero from Rio Grande do Sul. The leading national prizes have already recognised this production, starting with the Jabuti, considered to be the most important trophy for the publishing market: Itamar Vieira Junior won in the novel category in 2020 and Jeferson Tenório in 2021. The former won two other major prizes that same year: the Faz Diferença Prize from the *O Globo* newspaper and (even more significantly) the Oceanos Prize. This regeneration has also stretched as far as children's literature and the graphic novel, as is clearly demonstrated by the Jabutis won by Octávio Junior and Marcelo D'Saete respectively.

When we consider a book like the present one, we have the awareness and humility to admit that none of the authors you shall encounter here have the prominence and popularity of a Bernardine Evaristo or a Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. But we have the absolute conviction that the largest Black nation outside Africa has a fundamental role to play in the same debate that has helped to popularise and enhance the literary relevance of these two authors. The same country that threatens human life on Earth by burning its forests has been killing young Black people on an industrial scale, and with this genocide has been asphyxiating in the crib the only people who are able to solve this problem.

Translating Afro-Brazilian short stories into English: challenges and perspectives

Maria Aparecida Andrade Salgueiro

The 21 short stories in this volume were written by already recognised Afro-Brazilian writers and by some other promising authors who have recently been published by Flup. Most of them were part of a series of translation workshops held online between November 2020 and July 2021, amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The basic intention of the workshops was to disseminate Afro-Brazilian literature in the United Kingdom, to advance theoretical-critical debate and both to value and to shed light on the work of often-invisible literary translators.

Given the possibilities offered by the online format, the workshops involved Brazilian authors, academics, translators, and language and translation students, as well as enthusiasts of Brazilian literature who live in different parts of the world, bringing together, at several moments, researchers in areas as different as Brazilian, Comparative, Gender, Translation and Post-Colonial Studies. Given these varying perspectives, Afro-Brazilian literature in translation is shown in this volume not only through the lenses of interlingual translation, but also – and especially – through those of intercultural translation into English. The volume presents experiences of transcultural rewriting and conveys the richness and cultural aspects of this rich literary manifestation.

Introduction

This text puts forward aspects of a work that has been in progress over the last few years: it involves Afro-Brazilian and African American literatures and Translation Studies in special intersection with the

work of Afro-Brazilian authors. By observing how Blackness – or ‘being Black’ – is translated into different geopolitical contexts and geographical spaces, it observes power relations, colonial, post-colonial and decolonial identity construction processes, the emergence of literary canons, cultural hegemony and globalisation, demystifying spaces and showing translation as an activity that neither takes place in a neutral space, nor deals only with linguistic aspects, but occurs in concrete social and political situations.

Which aspects can be raised here regarding some of the different forms of transit poetics – the starting point of Afro-diasporic works, herein including their temporal aspects? In different literary works, how do identity, displacement and, from there, new geopolitical spaces, memory and trauma, promote multiple identities, represented in the time-space of literary discourse, in transnational and transcultural dimensions? Focusing on Afro-diasporic literary manifestations, how can this theme be developed? What points can I point out regarding translation issues, given this is such a vast topic?

To understand aspects of the role of literature in such a context, I begin with theoretical contributions that focus on Afro-diasporic literary manifestations as they depict the displacement of enslaved people and the brutal crime of slavery as the central pillar of capitalism, as well as their centrality to the study of transit poetics and forced exile.

Some theoretical departing points

To draw on the work of Edwin Gentzler, renowned scholar from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, a reference centre for Translation Studies, I may reaffirm that the history of translation in the Americas is actually a history of identity formation; it played a relevant role in the very design of the continent, with those who arrived being forced to ‘accept’ to a certain extent the language/culture of the coloniser in order to survive.¹ To continue, what has it been like to ‘translate’ the ‘Afro-Brazilian’ experience abroad? How has this mediation of cultures taken place? These and other points have been central to guidelines I have been studying with my colleagues in translation processes at my Translation Office at UERJ – the State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

In contemporary times, transcultural processes that do not allow silencing acquire strength when they dialogue with similar processes in different geographical spaces – being re-expressed in new linguistic codes. In one way or another, translation processes are inextricably

linked to issues of cultural domination, assertiveness and resistance – in short, issues of power. There are many examples throughout history that show translators who, through acts of resistance, have managed to bypass governments, churches, publishing houses and other loci of power, and used translation to introduce new ideas and forms of expression. In this sense, translation is one of the primary means of building cultures in various post-colonial environments.

To face problems that are raised by Intercultural Translation Studies, an interdisciplinary perspective must always be considered. One cannot discuss Africa and the African Diaspora without mentioning the decisive role that translation has in such a reality, whether through visibility or invisibility or through resulting identity revelations. The key, more than ever, is to have a clear idea about the networks of power involved, and to once again consider that relations between language and power along cultural borders reveal the decisive role of translation in redefining the meanings of culture and ethnic identity.

Contemporary globalisation means that translation is extremely relevant in the postmodern public sphere. As a way to cross borders and as a space of mutual convergence, translation represents the most crucial nexus for the understanding and the articulation of contemporary translingual identities as it considers both transcription into another language and inscription into another culture. But does it simply translate meanings or does it generate new meanings? Processes of translating Afro-diasporic texts present various intellectual attempts to answer some of the questions that surround translation from an interdisciplinary perspective, one that involves Cultural, Gender, Post-Colonial and Decolonial Studies – in terms of regionalisms and colloquialisms. Therefore, I start with the statement that translation is essentially an intercultural activity and not just an interlingual process.

Today, there is cross-cultural representation of different types. In the contemporary agenda, the globalisation of communication, multiculturalism, tradition, and cultural transmission generates constant ideological debates, which originated in politics. In this scenario, the role of translation is seen as essential for the diffusion of cultural diversity in the contemporary world. The paths taken (and those not taken) in the past are essential links with the new cross-fertilised languages that will constitute and energise the field in the future. Thus, and to return to the initial questions, the translation process raises new articulations of culture and of difference and diversity, as translators dive into the meticulous transcultural transmission of semiotic markers.

In *The Translation Zone: A new comparative literature*,² Emily Apter examines the vital role of Translation Studies through the lens of comparative literature. Among several points addressed, she emphasises the tension between textual and cultural translation, the role of translation in the formation of a global literary canon, resistance to Anglophone dominance and the impact of translation technologies on the very notion of how translation is defined. Apter's book speaks to a variety of disciplines and spans the world in defining foreign or symbolic languages in the humanities, while recognising the complexity of language politics in a world that is at once more monolingual and more multilingual. The indisputable shift to multilingualism is what has always fascinated intercultural translators.

When translating Afro-Brazilian literature into British English, as in the present book, the influence of linguistic forms or regional and community modes of communication were seen to be ever-present in written form, bringing to mind Apter's 'tension between textual and cultural translation'.³ Often, there was no word or phrase in English that emitted the same cultural symbolic meaning, making a simply 'textual' translation difficult. When encountering moments where there was no resolution to this tension, we chose to leave the lexicon or lexical phrase in the original language (in this case, Brazilian Portuguese) and offer a note to readers.

In his influential work *What Is World Literature?*,⁴ David Damrosch provides a complementary analysis of the way in which words change as they move from national to global contexts. Presenting world literature not as a canon of texts but as a mode of circulation and reading, Damrosch argues that 'world literature is work that gains in translation'⁵ between cultures, shaped by both but circumscribed by neither alone.

Established classics and new discoveries alike participate in this mode of circulation, but they can be seriously mishandled. From ancient epics to contemporary writing, foreign works have often been distorted by the immediate and hasty needs of their editors and translators, who have not given the topic highlighted by Damrosch the necessary attention it deserves.

In the attempt to bring Afro-Brazilian short stories into the corpus of 'world literature', as defined by Damrosch, the artistry of cultural-linguistic mediation, mentioned earlier as the guideline of our collective work here, has been crucial to render a translation into English that is comprehensible to an English-speaking audience, yet nuanced with cultural relevances and the poetic stylistics used by the authors. Where alliteration, onomatopoeia or any other poetic devices were used, care

was taken to manipulate the English language so that a mimetic style was offered without cultural loss in terms of content. It is in this context that studies on collective memory and trauma related to Translation Studies of Afro-Diasporic works gain special reference whenever such topic is under discussion.

Within the theoretical perspectives of authors such as Said in *Culture and Imperialism*,⁶ Tymoczko and Gentzler in *Translation and Power*,⁷ as well as Bassnett and Trivedi in *Post-Colonial Translation*,⁸ there are relevant contributions to reflections on the literature focused on in the present work, arising from those who have always been oppressed; this naturally leads us to developments in the Brazilian case.

By carrying the ancestral past – together with scars of painful wounds – Afro-descendant authors take control of their own voices and through renewed narrative strategies move towards revitalised texts in which they present transcultural representations that begin to act together in a so-called global society. Conceição Evaristo, the award-winning, renowned and most relevant Afro-Brazilian author today, in *Ponciá Vicêncio* (translated into English in 2007),⁹ and *Becos da Memória* (French translation, 2016),¹⁰ follows her own path of internationalisation for Black-Brazilian literature (as the poet Cuti would prefer),¹¹ a path already trodden by Carolina Maria de Jesus – a relevant Afro-Brazilian author of the second half of the twentieth century who has been widely translated abroad.

The 2021 workshops series opened with a short story by Conceição Evaristo. As a reference author in this context for many, if not for all, of the authors in this book, her work will be discussed as a starting point for broader reflections that impact intercultural translation processes.

Conceição Evaristo's work

In a chapter entitled 'Escrevivência: literary concept of Afro-Brazilian identity', in a reference book about Evaristo's work,¹² I was able to highlight reflections raised in academic experiences, travels abroad for classes, lectures and research, departing from dialogues on Afro-Brazilian literature, in classrooms and in conference rooms, committees and academic debates, in the United States and in Europe, when the relevance of the concept of *escrevivência* [*escrever* = write + *vivência* = life [emotional] experiences] was always reinforced, and when I could observe with my colleagues how it reverberated on the shores of the

Black Atlantic – so intensely presented by Gilroy,¹³ who presents a distinct Black Atlantic culture that incorporates elements from African, American, British and Caribbean cultures. Such identification across different groups has left Afro-descendant readers in foreign classrooms and auditoriums excited by the similarities in emotions, feelings and affections.

Based on references such as, for example, those presented by Conceição Evaristo, young and older Black intellectuals have debated transit poetics and enabled the opening of dialogues involving the reception of Evaristo's work abroad. In academic personal experiences at different times, since the defence of my doctoral dissertation in 2000, I have had various opportunities to debate her work abroad, especially in the United States. Among the author's main works that are read abroad are the novel *Ponciá Vicêncio*,¹⁴ the short story 'Maria',¹⁵ poems from the book *Poemas da Recordação e Outros Movimentos (Poems of recollection and other movements)*, translated into English by me and Antonio D. Tillis, awaiting publication),¹⁶ in addition to some of her theoretical-critical writings. It is interesting to observe the way in which this process of intercultural reading, reception and translation takes place, as both foreign undergraduate and graduate students progress in their understanding. It is worth remembering that the debates always refer to issues specific to the Diaspora and to transit poetics, passing through identifications and stories of family memories, in processes that often bring about pleasant surprise and emotion on the part of the students, as already mentioned in relation to Paul Gilroy's book – feelings that are well summarised by the respected scholar Florentina Souza: 'In the forced Diaspora, fleeing the objectification imposed by slavery, Africans and Afro-descendants sewed and wove identities and based on memory, reorganised their lives, designing new cultural configurations arising from their personal situation in foreign lands.'¹⁷

As she coined the concept of *escrevivência* – a latent contribution of Afro-Brazilian writing to the 'theory of literature'¹⁸ – Conceição Evaristo reached larger and more varied audiences, demonstrating in her texts how identity and displacement promote multiple identities, represented in the time-space of literary discourse and in transnational and transcultural dimensions, referencing the literature of African origin in Brazil. We are seeking to make this visible in English, contributing, amid the recent advances that have already been mentioned, to the expanded recognition of the value, originality and relevance of Afro-Brazilian – or Black Brazilian – literature.¹⁹ The discursive strategies of the *escrevivências*, and the scope and reach of community spaces for reading, are largely

and positively affected by Evaristo's writing, as she places subjects at the centre, both as readers and as producers of new emancipatory stories, in which the transit poetics and these new identities are always present, thus presenting challenges for translation processes.

By highlighting the actuality of the shadows and echoes of slavery that continue to hover over the country even in these rapidly changing times, Conceição Evaristo's work reminds us of the role of the literary critic Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (1988),²⁰ and also the scholar Hazel Carby (1987),²¹ who, through their work in the United States, replaced and rethought concepts as well as the role of African American writers in the broader context of American literature, bringing relevant considerations to Translation Studies.

In the same way as literary critics Gates and Carby in the United States, Evaristo with her *escrevivências*, as she crosses gender and race, engenders Afro-Brazilian literary patterns that are identified, mapped and followed as her voice is heard and understood. She moves other women to tell their own stories and to make themselves heard – examples being several female authors found in this volume. As this process takes place, privilege given over time to predominantly white male-authored texts, constructions and narratives is left aside. Evaristo places herself as both author and critic, inspiring younger generations who discover a model in which they recognise themselves, with whom they can talk during the countless occasions when she appears in public and autographs her books for hours at a time, speaking with everyone, as well as listening and exchanging stories. Carby and Evaristo place themselves, each in her own way and culture, as builders and valuers of fundamental aspects of a cultural history of Black female writing, placing it in new spaces, respectively within American and Brazilian literatures, and ending by demanding specific strategic focus on translation processes.

In a parallel way, by emphasising and working with aspects such as 'orality', 'ancestry' and 'timelessness' as some of the constituent elements of her *escrevivências*, Evaristo also brings her writing – and that of other Afro-Brazilians – closer to the ancestor tradition of enslaved people who were forced to come to Brazil. Among other particularities, such writing offers the possibility of an Afro-descendant-based critical reading/analysis, one that departs from both Afro concepts and related theoretical contributions. As Gates has written, a Black domain is fundamental in reading, in the criticism of literature – and, we add, in translation: 'I had at last located within the African and Afro-American traditions a system of rhetoric and interpretation that could be drawn upon both as *figures* for a genuinely "Black" criticism and as *frames*

through which I could interpret, or “read”, theories of contemporary literary criticism.’²²

New challenges in translation processes

Dealing with social criticism through cultural memory, Conceição Evaristo has brought an innovative discursive line to Brazilian resistance literature and opened the way for a new dialogic relationship in Afro-Brazilian literature, one that has also been embraced by so many other Afro-Brazilian authors – either her contemporaries or those from younger generations. As understood today by critics and scholars, Evaristo has developed an approach, a research method to produce knowledge/episteme not only in literature, but also in the humanities in general, with *escrevivências*. Widely known not only for the scope of her literary work, but also for her extensive theoretical production, publicly initiated with her Master’s thesis and continued until today with her constant critical reflections on contemporary Brazil, Evaristo continues to publish on topics that range from the poetics of racial identity and African heritage to the intersection of race and gender.

Taking all these points into consideration, the translation of Afro-Brazilian literary texts is not a simple task. On the contrary, insofar as it takes place in quite different geopolitical spaces, where the source and the target audiences have different cultural imaginaries of what it means ‘to be Black’, translating literary texts involves specific obstacles to be overcome, requiring either good prior preparation of translators or consistent and objective introductions in translated volumes that guide readers towards key aspects of the works in question.

It is not difficult to understand the challenges that translators encounter when faced with cultural articulations of family, religion, race, marginality, power, gender, class and ethnicity, among many others. In translating African American literary texts into Brazilian Portuguese and Afro-Brazilian texts into English, consistent efforts are being made to address these challenges. At such moments, the historical transformation and re-enunciation of these themes must be considered, as well as the role of translation in negotiating the connections between cultural history, tradition, the modern and the contemporary.

In addition to the difficulties that have been mentioned, there are also linguistic challenges in the field of culture, where the marks of racism are so often felt. According to the 2010 census, most of Brazil’s

population has self-declared as Brown or Black. However, the marks of Africanity in Brazilian Portuguese, as presented in canonical grammars nowadays, are not clear. In terms of linguistic studies, too, only from the end of the twentieth century onwards have such studies been approached consistently; it is essential at this point to cite the research work of Dante Lucchesi, former Professor at the Federal University of Bahia and nowadays at the Federal Fluminense University, and the reference work he co-edited.²³

Another key reference for Black translators, particularly when translating African American texts into Brazilian Portuguese, is the work of the Black-Brazilian intellectual Lélia Gonzalez (1935–1994),²⁴ who promoted the study of another relevant concept in the field of Afro-Brazilian and Translation Studies, which she names *pretuguês* (coined from *preto* = Black, and *português* = Portuguese), to emphasise the African influences in the several spoken and literary varieties of Brazilian Portuguese. By coining the concept, Gonzalez aimed to (re)think the formation of Brazilian cultural identity through words derived from African languages, as she studied the references of Bantu languages in the Brazilian way of speaking.

In conclusion

I reiterate that, especially when observing how Blackness – or ‘being Black’ – translates into different contexts and geographical and geopolitical spaces, translation presents itself as an activity that happens not in neutral spaces, but rather in concrete social and political situations that reveal processes of migration, ancestry and orality. Translators should be attentive to these issues when carrying out work that involves such an intense – and dramatic – reality.

Translating, with all the tensions that are involved, is seen today in a completely different light than it was a few years ago. Global conflicts and the theoretical reflections that have been taking place have brought to it something powerful and unavoidable in the contemporary world. Regarding Afro-descendant texts, one has to take into consideration aspects related to leisure, culture, well-being, the production of knowledge, the feeling of belonging, the valorisation of geopolitical space and the reach and visibility of cultural assets – all fundamental aspects that allow us to confront post-2020 pandemic racial challenges and debates.

It is unnecessary to repeat that the theme addressed here is immense, belonging as it does to different geopolitical spaces, and

involving memory and trauma. As several researchers have already pointed out, translation feeds, renews and gives life to a translated text. The translation of Afro-descendant texts continues to present great challenges to translators; but if one departs from contemporary considerations, many paths are open. And with the new paths, relevant new notes can be added, as on the great African mosaics with their vivid colours, as observed in an increasing number of translated texts, such as those presented in this volume. May the different aspects of knowledge exchange and ancient wisdom lead to new searches, research and global understanding of the relevance that these works have to contemporary literature.

Notes

- 1 Gentzler, *Translation and Identity in the Americas*.
- 2 Apter, *The Translation Zone*.
- 3 Apter, *The Translation Zone*, 18.
- 4 Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?*
- 5 Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?*, 20.
- 6 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*.
- 7 Tymoczko and Gentzler, *Translation and Power*.
- 8 Bassnett and Trivedi, *Post-Colonial Translation*.
- 9 Evaristo, *Ponciá Vicêncio*.
- 10 Evaristo, *L'histoire de Ponciá*.
- 11 Cuti, *Literatura negro-brasileira*.
- 12 Salgueiro, 'Escrivência', 96–113.
- 13 Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.
- 14 Evaristo, *Ponciá Vicêncio*.
- 15 Evaristo, 'Maria', 14–17.
- 16 Evaristo, *Poemas da recordação e outros movimentos*.
- 17 Souza, 'Memória e performance nas culturas afro-brasileiras', 30–39, quote at 30.
- 18 Salgueiro, 'Escrivência'.
- 19 IBGE. Accessed 3 September 2022. [https:// www.ibge.gov.br/](https://www.ibge.gov.br/).
- 20 Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*.
- 21 Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood*.
- 22 Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, ix.
- 23 Lucchesi, Baxter, and Ribeiro, *O Português Afro-Brasileiro*.
- 24 Rios and Lima, *Lélia Gonzalez*.

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Short Stories in English

Short Stories in Portuguese

1

Millionary Procession, by Sylvia Arcuri, translated by Victor Meadowcroft

To all the girls I've taught who still have the capacity to dream.

'Right, it's settled. My wedding's gonna be a millionaire procession!'

'A what? So now you're into those spectacles put on by the military police, the maggots?'

'Not military, millionaire!'

'As in a lot? A million?'

'That's right, a lot. Those weddings that drag huge crowds along behind them, just like the sambadrome on carnival day, you get me?'

Mahina stirs the pan containing the chocolaty *brigadeiro* she will later take to sell at school. She stirs attentively and dances, at the same time, to the sound of Djonga.

'Girl, what's with that, right? This Spotify here used to be free, now they want you to pay.'

'Take it to the guys, they'll unblock it for you. But keep going with that thing about the milit ... No, no, the million procession.'

'MILLIONARY!'

A cry with a teasing tone emerges from the bottom of Mahina's throat.

'Hey gang, listen, Mahina's gone nuts, now our girl here is saying she's gonna get married, who knows who to, and that it's gonna be this millionaire procession. Yeah, that's right, I thought it was military too, but it comes from a million, loads of people, over the top just like her.'

'Hey, Gabriela, focus on our conversation here, who're you chatting to?'

1

Cortejo milenar, de Sylvia Arcuri

Para todas as minhas alunas que ainda têm a capacidade de sonhar.

‘Pronto, tá resolvido. Meu casamento vai ser um cortejo milenar!’

‘Um quê? Agora tu tá com essas paradas de milico, dos vermes?’

‘Não é militar, é milenar.’

‘De muito? Milhão?’

‘Isso, de muito. Desses casamentos que arrastam um mundo de gente, igual no sambódromo em dia de carnaval, saca?’

Mahina mexe a panela com o brigadeiro que vai levar, mais tarde, para vender na escola. Mexe com precisão e dança, ao mesmo tempo, com o som de Djonga.

‘Mana, como pode, né? Esse Spotify já foi grátis, agora tem que pagar.’

‘Leva lá pros caras que eles colocam de grátis pra tu. Mas me conta essa parada de casamentos milita... não, não, de milhão.’

‘MILENAR!’

Um grito com um tom debochado sai do fundo da garganta de Mahina.

‘Ô galera, escuta, a Mahina pirou aqui, a mana agora diz que vai casar, sei lá com quem e que vai ser um tal cortejo milenar. Isso, isso mesmo, eu também pensei que era militar, mas é de milhão, de muita gente, exagerado igual a ela.’

‘Pô, Gabriela, se liga aqui na conversa, tá falando com quem?’

'The girls in the super deep goss group, telling them all about your madness.'

'So what are they saying?'

'They're agreeing with me, saying you're mental, a nutty girl, just like in that *Nutty Boy* book we read at school.'

'Quit messing! You don't believe I'm getting married?'

'I believe you, but how? You don't even have a boyfriend.'

'Giiiiirl-friiiiend! I told you already, I'm into girls. I keep my distance from males. You noticed? They only know how to smack, hit, boss around, beat up, run off, leave their kids. Look at me and you, where are our fathers? With a guy I'll have to take care of everything: the kid I don't wanna have; the house I only clean and tidy when I want to; the food, something I actually enjoy making, but that I do only when I feel like it. Not to mention the damn football, a total snoozefest!'

'You're so fucking laaame!'

'And you're not, right?'

'Girls, she's carrying on with the same craziness, that getting married crap, except now I've discovered it's gonna be to another woman. You don't even get it, the girl's gone nuts, it's as if she's gone haywire, just like those whacked-out guys in the alleyway. She's not even making sense. What? Marry me? No way, me and her are friends from childhood, it's sisterly love. Hey, you all talking got me thinking, could it be? I dunno, are all of you getting sucked into crazy girl's nonsense too?'

'Gabriela, quit whatsapping and come scrape the pan, don't you like it?'

The two of them sit together on a sofa, in the corner of a miniscule room that barely accommodates it and the TV table. A shabby sofa covered in a beige blanket, now already grey, not for lack of washing, but because there wasn't a drop of soap left in the house. In fact, it's been a while since those sorts of products could be found here. They wash their clothes with nothing but water, because you don't have to pay for it.

'Mahina, I get what millionaire means, but now explain that procession thing. I can't believe it! I'm out of credit. Hey, gimme the wi-fi password.'

'It won't work, they cut us off, my mum stopped paying ages ago.'

'And didn't the guys come to collect?'

'They came, but she talked things over with D'Pedra.'

'Brave woman. So, you gonna let me use your hotspot?'

‘Com as manas do grupo babado treta firme, contando dessa sua maluquice.’

‘Deixa ver, o que elas falaram?’

‘Tão me dando razão, que tu é doidinha, uma menina maluquinha ou menino? Igual a daquele livro que a gente leu na escola.’

‘Num ferra! Tu não leva fé que vou casar, né?’

‘Fé eu levo, mas como? Se nem tem namorado.’

‘Na-mo-ra-daaaa! Já te falei, meu negócio é mina. De macho quero distância. Já viu? Eles só sabem esculachar, bater, mandar, machucar, ir embora, deixar os filhos. Vê, eu e você, cadê nossos pais? Com um cara vou ter que cuidar de tudo, de filho, que não quero ter; da casa, que só vou arrumar e limpar quando quiser: de fazer comida, que até gosto, mas faço só quando sinto vontade. Sem falar dessa porra de futebol, um saco!’

‘Tu é muito chata. Pracaralhow!’

‘E tu não é não?’

‘Manas, ela continua com a mesma doidice, a treta de casamento, só que agora eu descobri que será com outra mulher. Vocês num tão entendendo, a mana pirou, parece que tá fora de ordem, igual aos caras trincados lá do beco. Num tá falando coisa com coisa, não. O quê? Casar comigo? Nem pensar, eu e ela somos amigas desde criança, amor de irmã. Pô, vocês falando, fiquei pensando, será? Sei não, vocês também entraram no embalo da doidinha aqui.’

‘Gabriela, deixa essa conversa de zap e vem raspar a panela, tu não gosta?’

As duas se sentam juntas num sofá, no canto da sala minúscula que mal cabe ele e o móvel com a TV. Um sofá carcomido, coberto com uma manta que de bege já estava cinza, não por falta de lavagem, mas porque não tinha mais um pingo de sabão na casa, aliás esses produtos já não existiam por aqui faz é tempo. Só se lava roupa apenas com água mesmo, porque não se paga por ela.

‘Mahina, já entendi o que é milenar, agora explica essa parada de cortejo. Não acredito! Meus créditos acabaram. Libera a senha do wi-fi.’

‘Não vai dar, cortaram, minha mãe deixou de pagar faz tempo.’

‘E os caras não vieram cobrar?’

‘Vir eles vieram, mas ela desenrolou a parada com o D’Pedra.’

‘Corajosa ela. Então, roteia a tua internet?’

‘Forget it! You can just quit right now! I’ve hardly got any credit left and I’m gonna need it for later. You just can’t stop messaging in those groups, and then that’s what happens, it’s over.’

With the pan of sweet leftover mix in her lap and two spoons in her hand, Mahina rests her head on her friend’s shoulder and starts explaining.

‘A procession is a celebration with loads of people, like those Batekus the Belgian throws.’

‘Shit! A fuckload of people!’

‘My millionaire wedding procession will be exactly the same.’

‘And can you tell me where you’re planning to get the money for all that?’

‘D’you think if I sell a thousand *brigadeiros* it’ll be enough?’

‘You said millionaire, right? So I think you’ll need more than a thousand. You’re gonna have to sell more like several truckloads of *brigadeiros*, and this pan here isn’t gonna cut it.’

Gabriela licks the spoon as she strokes the hair of her closest girlfriend.

‘Share my vision, come with me. I’m gonna have a word with the guys from the movement about closing off the route.’

‘What do you mean? What route?’

‘Madureira Road.’

‘The main road? You really have gone nuts!’

‘That’s right, I’m gonna ask them to put up barricades, starting at the maggots’ barracks, over where we protest when they cut the electricity and water. The street’s gonna be closed off until beyond the Emergency Care Unit, an enormous aisle for my procession to pass down. Because the distance the bride gets to walk from the church entrance to the altar or from the *terreiro* entrance to the *congá* is just too short, and I’m not making a whole dress only to take a couple of steps, right? A bride has to make the most of her day.’

‘And you’re gonna go dressed as a bride? I thought you’d be the groom, in a suit.’

‘Say what?! I’m a woman. Don’t you remember Ms. Patrícia’s classes? Gender is one thing and sexual preference another. In this case, I’m a woman who likes women and I’ll go as a bride, me and my wife.’

‘Got it.’

‘We’re gonna walk down the aisle in our gold dresses, with an enormous train and long, long veils.’

‘Gold?’

‘Nem pensar! Pode parar! Tenho pouco crédito e vou precisar para mais tarde. Tu não para com essas conversas nesses grupos, dá nisso, acaba tudo.’

Com a panela com a raspa do brigadeiro no colo e duas colheres na mão, Mahina encosta a cabeça no ombro da amiga e começa.

‘Cortejo é uma festa com um monte de pessoas, igual aquelas Bateku do Belga.’

‘Porra! Gente pracaralhow!’

‘O meu cortejo milenar de casamento vai ser igual a essa.’

‘Posso saber de onde vai tirar o dinheiro para tudo isso?’

‘Será que, se eu vender uns mil brigadeiros, vai dar?’

‘Sei que vai ser milenar, mas mil acho pouco, vai ter que vender é muito caminhão de brigadeiro e essa panela aqui nem vai dar pra fazer tudo.’

Gabriela lambe a colher enquanto faz um cafuné na cabeça de sua mana mais chegada.

‘Pega a visão, viaja comigo. Vou dar um papo nos caras do movimento pra fechar a pista.’

‘Como é que é? Que pista?’

‘A Estrada de Madureira.’

‘A estrada!? Tu tá piradinha mermo!’

‘Isso mesmo, vou pedir para eles colocarem as barricadas, começando depois do batalhão dos vermes, ali onde a gente faz os protestos quando falta luz e água. A estrada vai ficar fechada dali até depois da UPA, uma passarela enorme para meu cortejo passar. Porque o espaço que a noiva tem para andar da porta da igreja até o altar ou da porta do terreiro até o congá é muito curto e num vou fazer um vestido só pra dar uns passinhos, né? Uma noiva tem que aproveitar o seu dia.’

‘E tu vai vestida de noiva? Achava que seria de noivo, de terno.’

‘Que o quê! Sou mulher. Lembra das aulas da professora Patrícia? Uma coisa é gênero e outra é a opção sexual. Nesse caso, sou mulher e gosto de mulher e vou de noiva, eu e minha mulher.’

‘Entendi.’

‘Vamos atravessar a passarela com nossos vestidos dourados com uma cauda enorme e muito, muito véu.’

‘Dourado?’

‘Yes, for Oshun, the Goddess of Beauty. It’s gonna be just like a samba school parade, didn’t I tell you? It has to blow their minds, right?’

‘Who’ll the priest be? The one from the Church of Nossa Senhora da Conceição in Marapicu?’

‘What do you mean priest?! It’ll be Pai Ivo de Carvalho, my *pai-de-santo*, who won’t charge me a thing and already has a number of weddings under his belt, all wonderful.’

‘It’s really gonna be the event of the year in Campo Belo.’

‘I’ll enter from over near the barracks. Leading the way, like in the samba schools, will be the Front Commission with the kids from the movement all carrying machine guns at their chests, dancing the Passinho. Silvinho will instruct and lead the troops. Then the lead float, which will be Seu Toninho’s egg van.’

‘Who?’

‘The one who sells eggs out the back of his van and has a daughter at our school. His van will drive along with its loudspeaker announcing the millionaire procession to the sound of that funk track by Ludmila, *É Hoje*.’

Gabriela looks at her friend, unable to believe what she is hearing. She pulls surprised faces, her mouth drops open, but Mahina, eyes closed, snuggling even closer, continues.

‘There have to be tons of bridesmaids, all dressed in bright red, identical, because red is the colour of passion.’

‘How many bridesmaids?’

‘I dunno, tons, I think fifty would be good.’

‘And have you got fifty girlfriends to invite?’

‘Don’t I? That WhatsApp group of yours has even more. And they’ll all wanna come, won’t they? Is that good enough for you?’

‘Wanting’s one thing, but what about the cash for dresses, shoes, makeup?’

‘From the *brigadeiros* I’m gonna sell. Besides, you could always help me’ – she says in a very seductive voice, stroking her hand over Gabriela’s legs.

‘Not unless it’s “space” *brigadeiro*. There’s an idea, we’ll sell loads!’

‘*Veada*, please, and I’m the crazy one? But let me continue, because the images are coming to me: Front Commission, lead float, bridesmaids ... And then me and my beloved, queens, powerful, beautiful after all that red. With no bouquet in our hands, I don’t like that. We’ll enter together, because I’m not walking down the road with any man holding my hand.’

‘Sim, de Oxum, a Deusa da Beleza. Vai ser que nem desfile de escola de samba, num já falei? Tem que causar, né não?’

‘Quem vai ser o padre? Vai ser aquele da igreja da Nossa Senhora da Conceição de Marapicu?’

‘Que padre que nada! Vai ser Pai Ivo de Carvalho, o meu pai de santo, que não vai me cobrar nada e tem vários casamentos nas costas, tudo lindo.’

‘Vai ser mesmo o grande acontecimento do ano do Campo Belo.’

‘Vou entrar desde dali do batalhão. Bem na frente, igual as escolas, vem a comissão de frente com os moleques do movimento tudo de fuzil atravessado no peito, fazendo a dança do passinho, o Silvinho que vai ensaiar e comandar a tropa. Depois, o abre-alas, que vai ser o carro do ovo do seu Toninho.’

‘Qual?’

‘Aquele do sacolão, que a filha estuda com a gente. O carro dele vem anunciando o cortejo milenar ao som do funk da Ludmila, “É hoje.”’

Gabriela olha para a amiga sem acreditar no que está ouvindo, faz caras e bocas, mas Mahina, com os olhos fechados, se aconchegando mais, continua.

‘Tem que ter um monte de dama de honra, tudo vestida de vermelho bem forte, iguaizinhas, porque vermelho é a cor da paixão.’

‘Quantas damas?’

‘Muitas, sei lá, umas cinquenta, acho que tá bom.’

‘E você tem cinquenta amigas pra convidar?’

‘E não tenho? Ai mesmo no grupo do zap tem até mais. E todas vão querer, não vão não? Tá bom pra tu?’

‘Querem, elas vão, mas e a grana pros vestidos, pros sapatos, pra maquiagem?’

‘Do brigadeiro que vou vender. Aliás, você bem que pode me ajudar’, ela diz com tom muito sedutor, passando a mão nas pernas de Gabriela.

‘Tu vai conseguir só se for brigadeiro batizado. Taí uma boa ideia, vai é vender muito!’

‘Veada, depois a louca sou eu, é? Mas continuando, que as imagens tão vindo na mente: comissão de frente, abre-alas, ala das damas... e logo depois eu e minha amada, rainhas, poderosas, lindas depois daquele vermelho todo. Sem aquelas flores na mão, não gosto. Vamos entrar juntas, porque não atravesso avenida com homem nenhum segurando a minha mão.’

After having been abused by her stepfather, Mahina swore she never wanted another man in her life, not even a son. Her mother had believed her, sent the guy packing, but there were emotional consequences, trauma, as it had happened frequently over a few years, with her unable to speak up. The guy had sworn he would kill everyone, and this one surely would, he'd already left a trail of crimes behind him, he was a killer. The guy didn't just force her but tied the girl to the bed, so young, so tender, so sweet, he would say as he ran his hands all over her still-developing body. She would lie motionless, tears streaming from pure rage, not making a sound for fear of taking a beating from that scumbag. His revolver would rest to one side, right on top of the bed, a witness to the whole atrocity.

'You know something? You're forgetting the food, the cake for all those people, the drinks ...'

Gabriela doesn't just offer encouragement for all that madness, she allows Mahina to caress her body too. She found herself enjoying the seduction, her body called for more. It was the first time this kind of intimacy had taken place between the two of them.

'I've thought about it, we'll have *feijoada* prepared by the ladies on the street, friends of my mother's, and I'll speak to Principal Orlando about lending us the CIEP school building. The refectory there is big and so is the playground, everyone will fit. We just won't have any *cachaça*, because I don't like it.'

'Woah! Then you can forget about this procession because nobody will come. It's like you don't even know the gang.'

'Then I guess I'll allow it, right? The schoolyard will be completely decorated with unicorns, flamingos, cactuses, all those things that are in fashion and will be easy to find at the street market. Not to mention that unicorns have everything to do with me.'

'What do you mean, I didn't even know you were into that stuff?'

'I am, because of the whole gay thing, the same way I like that multicoloured flag.'

'Ah ok, but are you forgetting wedding favours?'

'Not at all, I've got that planned. Plastic cups with the brides' names and the date, all in gold. And at the end of the procession there'll be the drumming section with our friends from the United Blocks of Conjunto da Marinha, with all those shiny instruments.'

'But there aren't even ten of them, it'll look terrible, *veada*.'

Mahina, depois que foi abusada pelo padrasto, jurou que nunca mais queria homem na sua vida, nem filho. A mãe acreditou, mandou o cara vazar, mas ficou uma sequela emocional, um transtorno, porque foram muitas vezes e durante alguns anos, sem ela poder reclamar, pois o sujeito jurava que mataria todo mundo e esse fazia mesmo porque já arrastava atrás de si um monte de crimes, era matador. O cara não só forçava como amarrava a menina na cama, tão menina, tão meiga, tão doce, dizia ele enquanto passava as mãos por todo corpo em formação da garotinha. Ela ficava paradinha, as lágrimas escorrendo de tanta raiva, sem fazer um ruído porque senão levava porrada do escroto. O revólver dele ficava ao lado, na cama mesmo, assistindo toda atrocidade.

‘Sabe de uma coisa? Você está esquecendo das comidas, do bolo para esse tanto de gente, das bebidas...’

Gabriela não só dá força para a maluquice, como deixa Mahina acariciar o seu corpo. Estava gostando da sedução, o corpo pedia mais. Era a primeira vez que rolava esse tipo de intimidade entre as duas.

‘Já pensei, vai ser feijoada feita pelas tias da rua, as amigas da minha mãe e vou falar com o diretor Orlando para emprestar o CIEP. O refeitório de lá é grande e o pátio também, vai caber todo mundo. Só não vai ter cachaça porque num gosto.’

‘Ih! Então esquece esse cortejo porque não vai ninguém, até parece que não conhece a tropa.’

‘Então vou deixar, né? O pátio da escola vai estar todo enfeitado de unicórnio, flamingo, cactos, todas essas coisas que estão na moda e ficam mais fácil de achar no calçadão. Sem contar que unicórnio tem tudo a ver comigo.’

‘Como assim, nem sabia que tu gostava disso?’

‘Gosto, por causa da parada de ser gay, assim como gosto daquela bandeira toda colorida.’

‘Ah tá, mas você está esquecendo das lembrancinhas!’

‘Que nada, já pensei. Copo de plástico com o nome das noivas e a data, tudo dourado. E no final, vem a bateria dos amigos do Bloco Unidos do Conjunto da Marinha, com todos aqueles instrumentos brilhantes.’

‘Mas eles não são nem dez, vai ficar feião, *veada*.’

'No it won't, they'll join up with friends from other nearby neighbourhoods. Who isn't gonna come to an open party, with everything laid on for free? And in a place where nothing happens? They can eat away their sorrows.'

The leftover *brigadeiro* mix is finished, leaving the pan completely clean, as if never even used. Gabriela lies down in the lap of her friend, who receives her immediately and with a desire that comes from wanting much more from her body.

'Now, Gabriela, for all of that to happen we're missing the most important thing.'

'What? Haven't you got everything already?'

'Another bride, you moron. Don't you wanna be my wife?'

'Mahina, you're ok, right? You're happy?'

'I dunno, maybe.'

'Alright then, we're gonna have to sell a load of *brigadeiros*, but I'm warning you now: I only sell the "space" kind.'

‘Vai nada, eles combinam com os amigos dos outros bairros de perto, quem não vai querer vir numa festa 0800, com tudo regado? E num lugar onde nada acontece? Ainda vão tirar a barriga da miséria.’

A raspa do brigadeiro chegou ao final, a panela ficou limpinha, nem parecia que tinha sido usada. Gabriela se deita no colo da amiga, que a recebe de imediato e com vontade de querer muito mais do seu corpo.

‘Agora, Gabriela, para tudo isso acontecer falta o principal.’

‘O quê? Já não tem tudo?’

‘Outra noiva, né, sua burra? Tu não quer ser minha mulher, não?’

‘Mahina, tu tá na paz, tu tá feliz, né?’

‘Sei lá, talvez.’

‘Bora então, temos que vender muito brigadeiro, mas vou logo avisando: só vendo o batizado.’

(Arcuri, Sylvia. ‘Cortejo Milenar’. In *Contos para depois do ódio: Inspirados em canções de Marcelo Yuka*, edited by Ecio Salles and Julio Ludemir, 76–81. Rio de Janeiro: Mórula Editorial, Flup, 2020.)

2

When the Gangster Falters, by Márcio Barbosa, translated by Emyr Humphreys

A gangster neither sleeps nor dozes
Bezerra da Silva

I — On How He Nearly Left Pretinha

It was all very surreal. The all-too-silent night, the violent, menacing glare of the street lamps, the overpowering touch of Kizzy's skin on his hands. He felt that he would never make it to the main street to get the bus home. Even the approaching Volkswagen, all bashed up and painted a garishly bright blue, seemed to be bringing death up the street along with it. He was right. The driver was Mãezinha, the white man of the favela, who pulled up next to him and pointed a 38-calibre revolver at him:

'Hold it there, sucker ...'

he yelled and fired five shots. Five bullets in his chest which caused him unbearable pain and abject terror. And his face was still twisted with fear when he woke with a start at Kizzy coming into the room. 'What's wrong, William?', she asked anxiously. He let out a sigh of relief as he realised that he was still at Preta's house and that he'd been dreaming. He was sat on the sofa, his heart beating rapidly, but gradually calmed down. He masked his fear and said that it was nothing, that he had just dozed off for a few minutes and had had a nightmare while she was out of the room.

2

Quando o malandro vacila, de Márcio Barbosa

Malandro não dorme nem cochila.

Bezerra da Silva

I — De Como Ele Quase Deixou a Pretinha

Tudo parecia irreal. O exagerado silêncio noturno, as mortiças luzes amareladas despejando-se violentamente dos postes, a sensação da pele de Kizzy muito forte em suas mãos. E ele teve a impressão de que nunca chegaria à avenida principal lá embaixo. Teve a impressão de que nunca tomaria o ônibus para voltar pra casa. Mesmo aquele Volkswagen todo estourado, pintado num azul brilhante a ponto de ofuscar os olhos, parecia trazer a morte enquanto subia a rua em sua direção. E ele estava certo. O carro trazia Mãezinha, o branco da favela, que parou ao seu lado e apontou-lhe um revólver calibre 38:

‘Aí, otário, segura...’

gritou Mãezinha e jogou cinco vezes. Cinco tiros varando seu peito, provocando uma dor insuportável e colocando em seu rosto uma infinita expressão de terror. Seu rosto estava cheio deste horroroso medo quando acordou de repente e Kizzy, entrando na sala, surpreendeu-o. ‘Que foi, William?’, ela perguntou, assustada. Ele respirou aliviado ao ver que ainda estava na casa da Preta e que tudo não passara de um sonho. Sentado no sofá, tinha o coração batendo rapidamente mas, recuperando-se aos poucos, procurou disfarçar o pavor. Disse que não fora nada, que apenas dormira alguns minutos e tivera um pesadelo enquanto ela estava ausente.

They were alone in her narrow little room. Kizzy, still on her feet, cut a figure of tender beauty.

She was stunning.

Those brown almond-shaped eyes of hers had a devastating fieriness to them. But her dark face, small and round, beamed at him under a head of braided hair, adorned with hair extensions on each side. She was overcome by a maternal affection upon seeing her boyfriend so shaken by the nightmare and went to the kitchen to fetch him a glass of water.

Alone again, William checked his watch. There was a strange red, blood-like colouration to the digits. It was late and he was exhausted. He had to leave. He didn't want to go without saying goodbye to his girlfriend, however, an unknown force was pulling him out. His body was a dead weight, ignoring the signals from his brain. Something dragged him towards his inevitable destination. He saw the main street. He wanted to run to catch the bus home, but his stone legs seemed to have taken root in the pavement. And, horrified, he spotted the battered Volkswagen round the corner and head up the street towards him. It cast a garish blue light on the street around it as it headed his way. It was the same car which he'd dreamt of, he was certain of it, and his belly began to ache violently with such force that he began seeing yellow, and Mãezinha, the white man of the favela, pulled up beside him and pointed the 38-caliber revolver at him:

'I told you to leave Kizzy, sucker,'

yelled the white man as he fired five shots. 'I can't believe this, it's even funny,' William thought with irony, like a condemned man who learns, in his final hour, that life is merely an illusion. The bullets punctured his chest and he saw the blood trickling out where each bullet had penetrated. He tried using his hand to staunch the flow as it was apparent that if he lost all of his blood he would die. But he only had two hands and there were five bullet holes. So, he watched his punctured skin turning red as the blood streamed down towards the ground, carrying away his essence. It was with his face twisted in horror, between sleep and waking, his hands trying to hold in something destined to leave his body, that Kizzy found him for the second time that night. She hoisted him up by the shoulders, waking him up fully.

Estavam os dois sozinhos na estreita sala e Kizzy permanecia em pé. Era de pequena estatura e toda impregnada por uma beleza sutil

profundamente marcante.

Os castanhos olhos rasgados possuíam uma turbulência devastadora. Mas o rosto de pele escura brilhante era suavemente pequeno e redondo. Usava o cabelo trançado na frente e adornado lateralmente com tranças de canecalon. Maternal doçura invadiu-a ao ver o namorado tão assustado por causa de um pesadelo e foi à cozinha buscar para ele o remédio da calma num copo d'água.

Sozinho outra vez, William inclinou-se para o relógio. Havia nos números uma estranha coloração avermelhada. Tudo indicava sangue. Era tarde e sentiu-se cansado. Tinha de ir embora. Não queria sair sem despedir-se da namorada, contudo uma força desconhecida puxou-o para fora. O corpo era um peso oscilante e não obedecia às ordens do cérebro. Algo arrastava-o na direção de um destino inevitável. Podia ver a avenida principal. Queria correr para alcançá-la e tomar o ônibus, mas as pernas de pedra pareciam ter criado raízes na calçada. E com horror ele viu lá embaixo um Volkswagen todo estourado dobrar a esquina e subir a rua em sua direção. Espalhava um fulgor azul, tingindo de azul a rua, os postes e as casas em seu caminho. Era o mesmo carro com o qual sonhara, tinha certeza, e uma dor de barriga violenta, com muito esforço contida, o fez ver tudo amarelo quando Mãezinha, o branco da favela, parou ao seu lado e apontou-lhe o revólver 38:

‘Eu avisei você pra largar a Kizzy, otário’,

gritou e atirou cinco vezes. ‘É inacreditável. Comédia’, pensou William, ironicamente, como um condenado ao descobrir, na hora final, que a vida é só uma representação. As balas furaram seu peito e ele via o sangue sair lentamente por onde cada bala havia penetrado. Tentou colocar a mão para impedir o fluxo, pois pressentiu que se perdesse todo o sangue inevitavelmente morreria. Mas ele só tinha duas mãos enquanto os buracos eram cinco. Por isso, olhava os filetes saindo de seu peito, escorrendo vermelhos sobre a calçada como pequenos rios carregando sua essência sem que ele pudesse impedir. E foi assim, com o rosto alterado pelo pavor, entre dormindo e acordado, com as mãos tentando conter algo prestes a sair de seu corpo, que Kizzy veio encontrá-lo uma segunda vez naquela noite. Puxando-o pelos ombros, despertou-o totalmente.

‘What’s going on with you, Preto?’

Kizzy asked. An indescribable sensation of relief took over William upon seeing that nothing had happened, that he simply hadn’t left. ‘I think I dozed off while you were in the kitchen, and I had another nightmare. I must be exhausted,’ he answered once he’d calmed down. He drank the water his girlfriend had brought him. He felt a suspicious pair of eyes watch him through the glass. William had had the dream twice and he was worried, and not without cause, for days before Mãezinha had told him that if he didn’t leave Kizzy,

he would die.

He told his girlfriend and she was astonished at white man’s gall. She barely knew him. She remembered having seen him at Chic Show in Palmeiras a few times. She remembered him asking to dance to blues numbers countless times, but she’d always refused as she found him an unpleasant man. Moreover, he robbed people, something which violently clashed with the rigid upbringing she’d received from her parents. She told William he shouldn’t be scared as, after all, having two identical dreams doesn’t mean anything.

Kizzy had a personality which made William feel safe. He knew she was right. The story was self-evident, despite containing a dose of irrationality: Mãezinha was jealous and thought the girl should be his, regardless of feelings or circumstance. That man thought he had the right to take possession of women like a pirate his plunder. All perfectly common practice, although senseless. This time, however, it happened to someone who William loved. He believed he loved Kizzy and was worried; after all, he dozed off twice and had the exact same dream ... No! It must be an omen. He told Kizzy of how Mãezinha looked: bulging eyes leering out of the window, corpse-like skin, pallid and white, toothless mouth, matted brown hair escaping from underneath a baseball cap. William knew that Mãezinha, although undeniably white, thought of himself as a black man, and he was always seen hanging around with the gang. The .38 in his hand had looked very real.

Kizzy didn’t believe in prophecies. ‘Ridiculous’, she said, smiling adorably with her whole face: at twenty-four, she was two years older than William and a sceptic at heart. William asked if she really wasn’t interested in that jerk. She shot back emphatically and indignantly.

‘Que está acontecendo, Preto?’

Kizzy perguntou-lhe. Nova e indescritível sensação de alívio tomou conta de William ao ver que nada tinha ocorrido, que simplesmente ele não havia saído dali. ‘Acho que eu cochilei enquanto você foi à cozinha e tive outro pesadelo. Devo estar muito cansado’, justificou-se. Bebeu a água que a namorada trouxera e duas pupilas sinistras pareceram fitá-lo de dentro do copo. Duas vezes William tivera o mesmo sonho e sua preocupação não era infundada. Dias antes Mãezinha havia mandado um recado: se William não se afastasse de Kizzy,

iria morrer.

Revelou isto à namorada e ela ficou espantada ante o atrevimento do cara. Conhecia-o pouco. Lembrava-se de tê-lo visto em alguns bailes do Chic Show no Palmeiras. Lembrava-se ainda de que ele quisera dançar com ela melodiosas notas de inúmeros blues, mas ela sempre recusara porque ele não lhe parecia agradável. Além do mais, ele roubava e isto contrariava violentamente a rígida educação que ela recebera dos pais. Disse, enfim, que William não ficasse com medo, pois ter dois sonhos idênticos não significava nada.

Kizzy tinha personalidade e transmitia segurança a William. Sabia que ela dizia a verdade. A história era muito evidente embora guardasse para ele sua dose de irracionalidade: o cara cismava com a mina, achava que ela tinha de ser sua, a despeito de qualquer sentimento ou situação. Apenas o cara achava-se no direito de tomar posse da mulher como um saqueador se apodera do seu saque. Tudo perfeitamente prático, comum, mas sem nenhum sentido. E desta vez acontecia com alguém que William amava. Ele acreditava amar Kizzy e estava preocupado; afinal, cochilar dois minutos e ter o mesmo sonho duas vezes... Não! Deveria ser um aviso. Narrou então para ela a imagem de Mãezinha: os olhos enormes saltando para fora, a pele que lembrava um cadáver, a boca sem dentes, os cabelos castanhos escorrendo desgrenhados debaixo da bombeta. William sabia que Mãezinha, indistintamente branco, dizia-se negreiro e era visto sempre junto com a malandragem. E o 38 em sua mão pareceu muito real.

Kizzy não acreditava em profecias. ‘Bobagem’, ela disse, e sorriu adoravelmente. Mais velha que William dois anos, já completara vinte e quatro. No fundo era cética. William perguntou se ela realmente não se interessava por aquele Zé-Mané. Incisivamente ela respondeu com um enfático e indignado

‘No!’

That concluded the matter. It was late. Her parents and younger siblings were asleep. All was quiet, and they could have been spending the rest of the little time they had making love together. He ran his fingers down Kizzy’s neck and breasts as her womanly hands slid down his chest and under his trousers, anticipating his desire. Their lips touched in the darkness, and they kissed slowly. But he wasn’t feeling up to it and Kizzy ended up sending him home. ‘I think you should go. It’s late and you’re tired’.

‘Sure, Preta. I’ll get my stuff,’

William said as he got to his feet. He couldn’t have been over a metre seventy-five. He wore a leather jacket and sported a wispy moustache. Lately he’d taken to wearing his hair in cornrows. He took one last look at his girlfriend. On the wall to the right there was a clock; its digits were an intense red and the whole room was tinted the colour of blood. He left.

It was a seductively beautiful night outside. His girlfriend’s house was ancient, and its front walls were crumbling in some places. If he could have seen through the tiled roof opposite, to the glowing horizon, he would have seen blood-red stains in the clouds above.

He went out onto the street. Surely a bus line was still running. The early morning air calmed him as it cleansed each of his pores. The night gave him the impression of having wiped clean every mistake made by humans, all of their petty and hateful behaviour, and in the morning the city would be rejuvenated, fairer, ready to be debased once more by the daily cycle of human error.

However, something was worrying him, and beneath his leather jacket the .22 pulsed, reminding him that it was still there. He’d never shot it, but the gang would only ever respect him if he was armed. And with his eyes wide open he reassured himself: ‘Ridiculous, dreaming the same dream twice was just a coincidence.’ His legs became strangely heavy, and the streetlights gave off a striking, almost macabre glow. He found it increasingly difficult to get to the main street, which was already gradually swelling with traffic. Suddenly, he saw a car turn off from the main avenue, painted an eye-achingly bright blue: an ancient Volkswagen, more beaten-up than a war tank. ‘Shit’, he thought. ‘This is impossible’. Against all logic, he chose to

‘Não!’

O assunto parecia encerrado. Era tarde. Os pais e as irmãs menores da namorada estavam dormindo. Tudo estava calmo e eles poderiam preencher com amor os poucos momentos que ainda ficariam juntos. Ele escorregou seus dedos no pescoço e nos seios de Kizzy, enquanto as femininas mãos deslizavam por seu peito e adivinhavam sob a calça a intensidade de seus desejos. Tocaram-se no escuro dos lábios e beijaram-se demoradamente. Mas ele não conseguia ficar à vontade e Kizzy resolveu mandá-lo para casa: ‘É melhor você ir embora. É tarde e você está cansado.’

‘Certo, Preta. Então eu vou me adiantar’,

disse William, e levantou-se. Não deveria ter mais do que um metro e sessenta e cinco. Usava uma jaqueta de couro e tinha um bigode extremamente fino. Ultimamente adquirira o hábito de andar com o cabelo cortado à escovinha. Olhou uma última vez para a namorada. Um pouco à direita na parede havia um relógio de números intensamente vermelhos e toda a sala adquiria uma coloração sanguínea. Saiu.

A noite escura lá fora estava sedutoramente bela. Exteriormente a casa da namorada era bem antiga e em alguns lugares o reboco havia caído. Se William olhasse por sobre o telhado, no rubro horizonte, veria nódoas avermelhadas formando nuvens.

Desceu a rua. Deveria ainda haver ônibus circulando. O clima reconfortante da madrugada iniciando soprava-lhe calma por todos os poros. A noite dava-lhe a impressão de ter levado com os homens para dentro das residências todos os erros, todos os comportamentos mesquinhos e odiosos e, de manhã, a aurora encontraria uma cidade renovada, mais leve, pronta para ser ultrajada pelo ciclo diário dos erros humanos.

Porém, algo o preocupava. Apalpou sob a jaqueta de couro a arma calibre 22, certificando-se de que ela ainda estava consigo. Nunca havia dado nenhum tiro, mas a malandragem só o respeitaria se ele andasse armado. E de olhos bem abertos ia tranquilizando-se: ‘Bobeira, sonhar duas vezes é só coincidência.’ Estranhamente, suas pernas tornavam-se pesadas, as luzes dos postes espalhavam uma aura impressionante, quase macabra. A avenida principal, lá embaixo, sugerindo seu tráfego constante, era cada vez mais difícil de ser alcançada. Então, repentinamente, ele viu sair da avenida principal, num espalhafatoso azul, fulgurante a ponto de ofuscar os olhos, um Volkswagen antigo, mais estourado que um tanque de guerra. ‘Merda’, pensou. ‘Não é possível.’ E contra toda racionalidade, preferiu rapidamente

run for it.

It could only have been Mãezinha in that car. It all happened exactly as he'd dreamt it, as if the dream were repeating itself. He couldn't believe it, but he knew how it was going to end. Before he could gather his thoughts, he heard footsteps behind him. 'Those bastards,' he managed to think before he could turn around, 'they set me up. One distracts me and the other shoots me in the back.' He had to decide quickly: he couldn't go back to Preta's house, nor could he return fire on the spot, easy target as he was. There was another possibility: the piece of wasteland in the middle of the crossroads that lay between him and the blue car. It only took him a couple of seconds to get there. 'Bastard,' he spat in the direction of the blue car. 'I'm not gonna die this time.' He got to the piece of land and made for the middle, stumbling on piles of rubbish as gigantic rats fled, screeching in all directions. He got to a wall on the far side. He vaulted over it and reached the next street over. In the sky above, and getting higher all the time, a hot air balloon, in a feat of pyrotechnics, launched a series of fireworks into the sky with a sound that sounded identical to the shots of a 38-calibre revolver.

William sprinted down endless deserted streets where ancient houses were crumbling, or which had piles of rubbish in their doorways, or which were built practically on top of each other. He ran for approximately two hours, and when he finally stopped, he felt ashamed for not having hidden behind the wall back there and

busting a cap

in those fuckers. But he'd get them later, he was sure of it. The .22 was still in his hand. He tucked it away and kept running. However, he spotted a group of people ahead, on the corner where three streets met. He hid behind a lamppost, but soon relaxed. It was a group of kids playing pagode and smoking a joint. It was a pleasant evening once again. He counted seven people in the group and found that he recognised all of them.

'Well, well, look who it is,'

someone said when they recognised the figure approaching them. Someone put a joint in his hand, which he toked twice on and passed along. He realised the features of these seven figures were mysteriously identical and wondered how come he'd never noticed this similarity before.

puxar a turbina.

Só poderia ser Mãezinha naquele carro. Tudo acontecia exatamente igual ao que sonhara, como numa repetição. Era tudo inacreditável, mas o final ele já sabia. E antes que pudesse coordenar as ideias, escutou estampidos secos às suas costas. ‘Os safados’, teve ainda tempo de raciocinar, sem voltar-se, ‘armaram um esquema pra mim. Um me distrai enquanto o outro atira pelas costas.’ E viu que deveria decidir rapidamente: não poderia retornar à casa da Preta, nem queria trocar tiros à frente, alvo fácil assim a descoberto. Havia uma possibilidade: um terreno baldio numa encruzilhada entre ele e o automóvel azul. Levou poucos segundos para alcançá-lo. ‘Desgraçado’, praguejou contra o carro azul. ‘Não é desta vez que eu vou cair.’ Enveredou então pelo terreno, passou pelo meio do mato, tropeçou em montes de lixo, ratazanas enormes saíam guinchando em todas as direções. Chegou ao muro do outro lado. Pulando-o atingiu a rua paralela àquela onde estava. Lá em cima, cada vez mais alto no céu aberto, um balão em seu espetáculo pirotécnico soltava fogos de artifício. O barulho era idêntico aos disparos de uma arma calibre 38.

William correu bastante por ruas desertas que apresentavam o mesmo espetáculo de casas antigas onde o reboco das paredes caía, ou o lixo amontoava-se nas portas, ou as casas caíam umas sobre as outras. Correu aproximadamente duas horas e ao parar sentiu-se envergonhado, porque poderia ter-se escondido atrás do muro no terreno baldio e dali

jogar brasa

nos desgraçados. Mas iria pegá-los em outra ocasião, certamente. O cano já estava guardado e William continuou andando. Mais à frente, numa esquina onde cruzavam-se três ruas, viu um grupo reunido. Encolheu-se atrás de um poste, mas logo tranquilizou-se. Era a rapaziada fazendo um pagode e fumando unzinho. A noite voltava a ser agradável. Ele pôde contar sete pessoas no grupo e viu que conhecia todas.

‘Então, mano, se liga no movimento’,

disseram-lhe ao reconhecerem-no quando se aproximava. Imediatamente um cigarro aceso com seu cheiro forte de erva queimando surgiu-lhe na mão. Ele deu duas tragadas e pôs o baseado novamente na roda. Aí viu que as feições dos sete patrícios eram misteriosamente iguais e ele perguntou-se como não havia notado essa semelhança antes.

They were all tall and skinny. Their tight curly hair looked like they all went to the same barber. They all looked over thirty years old with their heavy, weathered faces in spite of the smiles that creased their jet-black skin as they jammed. He thought they might all be related, but they didn't look alike. They were the exact same person, the same person seven times. They completed each other. One spread his fingers to play the pandeiro. Another made the sound of a cavaquinho with his voice. A third imitated the beat of a tantan with the back of his throat. It was as if the sound was the body they shared. What was this sorcery? Could it be the same person spread across seven bodies? Or the same body divided into seven people? What enigma of unity and division was this, this supposed similarity? William suddenly remembered something he'd heard.

‘All blacks are the same,’

a white boss had once told him this, seconds before William punched him in the mouth. He thought they all thought that way, that black people were merely identical faces with no personality, no problems, nothing inside. But he saw clearly this wasn't the case here. This group didn't look the same; they were the same person divided. The same person who, due to some split, some rupture in their life, had been cut into pieces and had lost their identity, and was now trying put themselves back together.

William soon remembered the blue car and started to worry, so he left. His head was swimming; it was filled with lights, glaring with monstrous intensity. And for a few moments he had the impression that he had been divided or multiplied by two. He saw double, thought double. He stopped to urinate, and the urine came out double. But the sensation soon passed, and after a few minutes he got the feeling that he was being followed. At first, he thought it was Mãezinha, but he didn't even have to look behind him. He heard the noise of the engine and recognised the car:

It was a police car,

he was sure of it. His ears had become so accustomed to the C-14's engine that he could identify it from its sound, having developed an awareness for its every cog and gear, never needing to look and check. ‘They'll search me, then they'll set me up,’ he thought. He didn't dare turn back. He reckoned they could arrest him without a motive. He was used to them emptying his backpack and planting weed in it, glaring at him threateningly as he passed them on the street, and arresting him having a drink at a bar.

Todos eram magros e altos. O cabelo carapinha bem baixo parecia ter sido cortado no mesmo barbeiro. Todos aparentavam ter mais de trinta anos. As feições eram endurecidas e fortes mesmo com o sorriso largo esticando a pele azeviche do rosto na hora do ritmado refrão. Pensou que eles poderiam ser gêmeos, mas não parecia. Eram exatamente a mesma pessoa. Sete vezes a mesma pessoa. E completavam-se. Um prolongou os dedos e fez o pandeiro. Outro dedilhava no cavaquinho as próprias cordas vocais. Outro ainda cobriu com o céu da boca o tantã. De modo que o som era o corpo de todos. Que mistério seria este? Seria a mesma pessoa espalhada em sete corpos? Ou o mesmo corpo dividido por sete pessoas? Que enigma seria este da unidade e da divisão? Uma recordação relampejou na mente de William:

‘Todos os Pretos são parecidos’,

dissera-lhe uma vez um patrão branco, um segundo antes de William arrebrantar-lhe a boca. E pensou que eles achavam aquilo mesmo. Pretos seriam apenas rostos idênticos sem personalidade, sem problemas, sem nada por dentro. Mas ali ele via nitidamente que não era isto. Os patrícios não eram pessoas parecidas. Eram a mesma pessoa. A mesma pessoa que por alguma cisão, alguma ruptura, perdera a unidade, o que de melhor tinha dentro de si, e agora procurava completar-se.

Repentinamente, William lembrou-se do carro azul e ficou preocupado. Resolveu ir embora. Sua cabeça, leve, era preenchida por luzes piscando com uma intensidade monstruosa. E por alguns instantes ele teve a impressão de ter sido cortado ou multiplicado tornando-se dois. Via tudo em dobro, pensava em dobro. Parou para urinar e a urina saía em dobro. Mas esta sensação passou, pois há alguns minutos tinha a impressão de estar sendo seguido. Inicialmente pensou em Mãezinha, mas não precisou olhar para trás. Ouviu o barulho do motor e reconheceu o carro.

Era um carro de polícia,

tinha certeza. Seus ouvidos haviam se acostumado de tal forma a identificá-lo pelo funcionamento do motor, haviam adquirido tal sensibilidade a todas as engrenagens da viatura que ele não precisava virar-se para saber. ‘Vão me revistar, depois vão me enquadrar’, pensou. Não ousou voltar-se. Achou que eles poderiam prendê-lo sem nenhum motivo. Estava acostumado a tê-los sempre revirando seu bolso, colocando a erva lá dentro. Eles o olhavam ameaçadoramente quando passava na rua; prendiam-no quando estava tomando cerveja no bar.

If they found the gun ... they could kill him, steal it and dump his corpse in the middle of nowhere. No-one would ever know. He quickened his footsteps and gripped the gun. He wouldn't give in without a fight. He wasn't a coward.

William scrambled up and slid down slopes,

rounded corners and crossed roads, the sound of the engine stalking him all the while. But now he noticed that it wasn't just a single car: there were several. 'Fuckers,' he thought, 'they never come alone. They're afraid.' He had an idea. He knew this area well. Somewhere ahead there was a dark alleyway, which he headed down. The walls of the residential buildings on either side looked forbidding. He could barely make out the ground, but he knew there was a set of stairs somewhere along here. Rubbish bins, old mattresses and used condoms were all piled up on either side. He knew the way but couldn't see it, his eyesight hadn't gotten used to the darkness yet. He heard the sound of the police cars coming to a halt above. At the bottom of the steps, the alley became flat again, but the neighbourhood dogs all defecated there, which was why the passage was barely used. Their faeces formed an immense swamp, producing a fetid stench. William knew just the way to get past, back against the wall, stepping on several protrusions.

He heard footsteps behind him,

accompanied by the sound of bins being knocked over. He cleared the swamp and the rest of the way to the next street would now be easy. Behind him he heard the sound of splashing. 'The fuckers are getting drenched in that swamp,' he thought to himself with satisfaction. He wanted to laugh out loud but restrained himself until he emerged onto the large street and was certain he wasn't being followed.

He checked the time. He had been on the run for two hours and fifty-eight minutes, but he wasn't tired. He looked out for the smallest of movements, as he could be taken by surprise at any moment. He realised he was close to the space where the Zimbabwe team put on club nights. If he hurried, he could catch the end. He walked quickly, hands swinging by his sides in a sort of swagger. He still hadn't reached the door when he found people making their way to the bus stop. He greeted some of them. Hundreds of pairs of eyes imbued with satisfaction and exhaustion moved in unison. Drove of young faces invaded the streets. An endless quantity of tight curly hair and fine moustaches spread across a canvass of brown and black skin.

Se encontrassem o cano, então... poderiam matá-lo, roubar-lhe o 22 e jogar seu corpo em qualquer lugar deserto. Ninguém ficaria sabendo. Por isso apertou o passo e colocou a mão na arma. Não se entregaria sem luta. Não era um covarde.

William subiu e desceu ladeiras,

virou esquinas, atravessou cruzamentos e o barulho do motor continuava a persegui-lo. Mas, agora podia notar, não era um só carro. Eram vários. ‘Os cornos, pensou, eles nunca vêm sozinhos. Têm medo.’ Ocorreu-lhe uma ideia. Conhecia bem aquela região onde estava. Mais à frente havia uma viela estreita e sem iluminação. Desceu por ali. De um lado e de outro as paredes das residências erguiam-se assustadoras. Mal conseguia enxergar o chão, mas sabia existir uma escadaria. Latas de lixo, colchões velhos, camisinhas usadas, tudo acumulava-se dos dois lados. Ele sabia, mas não conseguia ver, pois o olhar ainda não havia se acostumado à escuridão. Escutou lá em cima os carros parando. No fim da escadaria a viela tornava-se plana, porém todos os cachorros da vizinhança defecavam ali, por isso a viela era pouco usada. As fezes formavam uma espécie de atoleiro, exalando um cheiro fétido. William conhecia a maneira certa de passar encostando-se à parede e pisando em algumas saliências.

Ouviu passos atrás de si,

acompanhados pelo barulho de latas sendo derrubadas. Ultrapassou o atoleiro e o caminho que o separava da outra rua seria agora facilmente vencido. Então escutou lá atrás o som de corpos mergulhando em alguma coisa. ‘Os cornos’, concluiu satisfeito, ‘estão afundando na bosta.’ Quis dar uma gargalhada bem alta, contudo conteve-se até sair numa avenida larga e ter certeza de que ninguém o seguira.

Olhou o relógio. Estava andando há duas horas e cinquenta e oito minutos, mas não estava cansado. Preocupava-se apenas em observar mínimos movimentos, pois a qualquer momento poderia ser surpreendido. Lembrou-se de estar próximo ao salão onde a *equipe Zimbabwe* realizava seus bailes. Se corresse poderia pegar a saída. Andava rápido jogando as mãos para os lados numa meia ginga. E ainda não havia chegado à porta do salão quando encontrou as pessoas dirigindo-se aos pontos de ônibus. Cumprimentou algumas. Centenas de corpos injetados de satisfação e cansaço ainda moviam-se ritmicamente. Imensas vagas de rostos jovens invadiam as ruas. Uma quantidade interminável de cabelos escovinha e bigodes finos espalhava-se sobre peles marrons ou bem escuras.

In the doorway of the club, he felt the beat of the last songs thudding in his chest. Some women perplexed him. They were very beautiful and transmitted something that fascinated him. Braids of all kinds, the most diverse array of hairstyles, the triumph of an aesthetic. Other women, however, did not look as fascinating. Their bodies gave William the impression of reflecting a hope sought but previously lost, a pre-emptive dreaming abandon. He was therefore quite shocked to see that young woman leave the party on her own. She was tall, her long hips accentuated by a thin belt and breasts that weren't huge, but which were imposing underneath her blouse.

'A real woman,'

he thought. Her skin was the colour of burnt honey. Her mouth and nose looked as if they had been drawn and redrawn to perfection. Her eyes were green and her curls had sadly been straightened, and they fell down to her shoulders. Her body looked as if it had been sculpted beneath her clothes, which accentuated her perfect curves. Everything was perfect. 'She could be one of Sargentelli's Mulatas,' William idiotically thought to himself as he, witnessing the sort of beauty he had always dreamt of, was unable to find a better comparison than that merchant of neo-slavery.

She smiled at him,

and William felt elevated to the highest levels of human joy. He had the feeling that he was the only one who could see her as she gestured with her head and headed in the direction opposite to the crowd. What surprises love brings. That perfect woman would crown his night with velvet-ebony joy. A wide, curvaceous behind moved rhythmically before him. An uncontrollable force took hold of him. An irresistible passion dominated him. She turned down a deserted street and came to a stop near little park. William approached as she said *baby* with a voice like birdsong. He embraced her without further ado, delving into the cosy depths of her velvet brown skin.

He gazed into her green eyes saw an endless sequence of women he had dated and which he believed he had loved. Domingas, Tereza ... Kizzy, who was the first he saw. With a sigh he put them out of his mind, but Kizzy remained. She exercised authority over him. She had him under her thumb. And what force does a woman need to exercise her authority? He couldn't shake her so he buried her under the woman's retina. Preta needed to understand this uncontrollable urge of his. He

Em frente à porta do salão, recebeu no peito os marcados compassos dos últimos sussurros nas caixas acústicas. Algumas mulheres deixavam-no perplexo. Muito bonitas, transmitiam algo fascinante. Tranças dos mais diversos tipos, os mais diversos cortes de cabelo indicavam a conquista de uma estética. Outras mulheres, no entanto, não lhe pareciam tão fascinantes. Seus corpos davam impressão a William de refletirem uma esperança procurada e previamente perdida, um abandono antecipado de sonhos. Porém, quase teve um choque quando viu aquela jovem deixando a festa sozinha. Alta, quadris largos realçados pela cintura fina, seios não muito grandes, porém imponentes sob a blusa.

‘Mulher de verdade’,

pensou. Sua pele toda era de um marrom queimado como mel. No rosto, o nariz e a boca pareciam ter sido desenhados várias vezes até atingirem a forma perfeita. Os olhos eram verdes e os cabelos crespos infelizmente estavam alisados e caíam sobre os ombros. Todo seu corpo parecia esculpido sob a roupa, que marcava curvas perfeitas. Tinha tudo perfeito. ‘Podia ser mulata do Sargentelli’, comparou William; seu raciocínio ali no momento idiotizava-se ante a beleza que ele sempre sonhara, não conseguindo melhor comparação do que esta com o comerciante neoescravocrata.

Ela lhe sorriu,

e William sentiu-se elevado ao mais alto ponto da alegria humana. Teve a impressão de ser o único a vê-la quando ela acenou com a cabeça e caminhou em direção contrária à maioria das pessoas. O amor, que surpresas nos traz. Aquela mulher perfeita iria coroar sua noite com alegrias de ébano aveludado. À sua frente, as nádegas largas e empinadas continham um ritmo próprio. Que força incontrolável atraía-o. Que paixão irresistível dominava-o. Ela entrou numa rua deserta e parou próxima a um jardim. William chegou perto e ela disse-lhe ‘benzinho’ com uma voz que parecia o canto matinal dos pássaros. Ele abraçou-a sem mais cerimônias, afundando no aconchegante veludo marrom de sua pele.

E ao olhar o verde daqueles olhos viu uma interminável sequência de mulheres com quem saía e que acreditava amar. Domingas, Tereza... Kizzy vinha na frente. Com um sopro apagou-as todas da memória. Mas Kizzy resistiu. Tinha autoridade sobre ele. Prendia-o sem nenhum esforço. E que esforço precisa uma mulher para exercer sua autoridade? Porém, a Preta teria de compreender este sentimento fora do seu controle, esta paixão pela mulher perfeita que já ocupava todo o seu ser. Beijou

kissed the beautiful woman before him, voluptuously filling her mouth and ear with his tongue. She embraced him with an extraordinary energy, as if she had the strength of a hundred women. He turned her around to fit his hard member, bursting out of his trousers, in the gap between her curvaceous, slender hips. He called her *baby*, trying to make his voice sound as seductive as possible, but he faltered.

Suddenly,

he felt something cold in his hand: it was liquid. He touched the perfect woman's face and recoiled: he was flaccid, limp, it felt like it had collapsed at his touch. The hairs on her head began falling out. He let go and she turned to face him. Her face had changed. Her skin had melted off. It had acquired a reddish tone and was now turning white. Her eyes fell out of their sockets. Her eyebrows fell out. Her mouth was twisted and deformed. Her breasts shrivelled up. Her body lost its curves, which melted away as well. It was a horrific sight. He gazed at her, terrified, paralysed. Her pallid skin didn't look like it contained any bones anymore, and within a few seconds there was an amorphous mass on top of the pile of clothes, which trickled away, or evaporated.

Unbelievable.

Had a real-life woman actually been there? Apparently not – just a pile of old clothes on the pavement. But he'd seen her, held her, and lusted after her with a passion. But she wasn't there anymore. He made his way home in a daze. It wasn't too far away, so he walked. His house was an old residential building with crumbling walls. He went in. His parents were sleeping. His mother had left him some food on the stove. She always made a fuss of him, either out of habit or overprotectiveness.

II — Destiny

But he wasn't hungry,

and he didn't touch the food. He went straight to the bathroom. Sat down on the toilet, he lamented at how someone could evaporate in his hands like that. It reminded him of a book he'd once read. The author was Amos Tutuola, if he wasn't mistaken. It took him two months to finish the book, but he'd liked it. He didn't really have any patience for reading, although

aquela beleza perfeita, enfiando a língua voluptuosamente em sua boca e na orelha. Ela abraçava-o com energia extraordinária. Parecia ter a força de cem mulheres. Virou-se de costas e ele encostou no vão de suas nádegas largas e empinadas seu membro que parecia querer rasgar as calças. Disse-lhe 'benzinho', tentando dar à voz o tom mais sedutor, mas vacilou.

De repente,

sentiu algo gelado na mão. Alguma coisa pingando. Passou os dedos pelo rosto daquela mulher perfeita e assustou-se: estava flácido, mole, parecia não sustentar-se. Na cabeça, os cabelos alisados começaram a desprender-se, voavam para todos os lados. Afastou-se e ela virou. O rosto estava mudado. A pele derretia rapidamente. Adquiria um tom roxo e em seguida ia embranquecendo. Os olhos desprendiam-se. As sobrancelhas soltavam-se. A boca deformava-se. Os seios desencaixavam-se. O corpo perdia as curvas derretendo-se também. Que espetáculo impressionante. E ele olhava estupefocado, sem poder impedir. A pele, embranquecendo, não parecia conter ainda ossos e em poucos segundos sob as roupas no chão havia apenas uma massa disforme que em breve escoou-se ou evaporou.

Inacreditável.

Teria havido ali em algum momento uma mulher de verdade? Pelas evidências, não. Apenas um punhado de roupas velhas permanecia sobre a calçada. Mas ele a vira, abraçara e já a amava tanto. Pasmado, ele decidiu ir pra casa. Não ficava longe e foi a pé. Sua casa era uma residência antiga onde em alguns lugares o reboco havia caído. Entrou. Os pais estavam dormindo. A mãe deixara seu prato já feito em cima do fogão. Sempre a mãe com este cuidado que ele não sabia se era hábito ou proteção.

II — Destino

Mas ele não tinha fome,

não tocou na comida. Foi direto ao banheiro. Sentado, pensava tristemente em como alguém podia evaporar-se assim de suas mãos. Aquilo lembrava-lhe um livro que havia lido certa vez. O autor era Amos Tutuola, se não estava enganado. Levava dois meses para terminar o livro, mas gostou. Não tinha muita paciência para ler, porém, histórias em

he did like graphic novels and novellas, although deep down he despised superheroes; always beating him over the head with their virtue, their incorruptible character. He knew very well that the real world wasn't like that. This sick world full of hypocrites practicing one thing and preaching another. He wanted to go out and kill them all with his .22. He got up and flushed. He took off his leather jacket and went to have a shower to calm down. As he pulled his t-shirt over his head,

he felt cold, very cold.

If up until then he'd been exerting a certain amount of self-control, it was now impossible: he found five bullet holes in his chest and let out a violent gasp. Five bullet holes in his dark chest, blood congealed all around them, made by a firearm of some kind. So that was that, they had beaten him, he was dead. Mãezinha must have done it as he was leaving Kizzy's house. How hadn't he known!? It could only have been him, he'd seen it in his dreams. His shirt, however, was spotless. But what did that matter? What use are signs of life after dying? He got dressed.

He went to his room,

lay in his bed and closed his eyes. If he was dead, then he should close his eyes. He crossed his arms over his chest, clinging to his pistol. He fell asleep. When he woke, still a little bleary, he found that something strange had happened to his room. Only once he was fully awake did he realise that there wasn't a bed. This was neither heaven nor hell. His bed was a wooden board laid over two stone blocks. His painted walls were covered with drawings, scribbles and doodles of all kinds. Everything exuded the miserable smell of dirt and rotting matter. He lifted his shirt again. The bullet holes had vanished. His chest was spotless. Had he dreamt those bullet holes? He remembered the gun and went to find it. He remembered having gone to sleep with it, but now it was nowhere to be seen. He spotted an iron door on one of the walls. In the door there was a little opening that was like a window with vertical iron bars.

Had they managed to frame him?

He headed towards the door and had to stand on his tip toes to see outside. He spotted a man in the distance. He could only see the man's head and torso. He had a haughty, aristocratic sort of face, as if he'd come right out of a history textbook. 'Where am I?', William shouted.

quadrinhos e romances agradavam-no. No fundo, tinha um incontrolável ódio dos heróis completos, sempre a massacrá-lo com suas virtudes, seu caráter incorruptível. Sabia muito bem que o mundo não era assim. Este mundo nojento, hipocritamente pregando uma coisa e praticando outra. Queria sair e derrubar toda a espécie humana com seu 22. Levantou-se e deu a descarga. Tirou a jaqueta de couro. Iria tomar um banho para descansar. Puxou a camiseta por cima e enquanto tinha a cabeça coberta

sentiu frio, muito frio,

e, se até aquele instante procurara manter certo autocontrole, isto a partir de então tornou-se impossível, pois olhou violentamente chocado o próprio peito agora nu e contou cinco furos. Cinco furos com sangue coagulado ao redor, no próprio peito escuro, feitos por alguma arma de fogo. Então certamente era isto, haviam-no acertado, ele já estava morto. Devia ter sido Mãezinha, quando saía da casa de Kizzy. Como fizera? William não sabia! Mas só podia ter sido ele, estava previsto no sonho. A camiseta, entretanto, não apresentava nenhum sinal. E o que importava isso? Que importam os sinais da vida depois que se morre? Vestiu-se,

foi até o quarto,

deitou-se e fechou os olhos. Se estava morto deveria fechar os olhos. Cruzou os braços sobre o peito, segurando o berro. Adormeceu. Quando acordou, ainda meio zozzo, achou algo estranho em seu quarto, parecia mudado. Só completamente desperto viu não estar mais no local onde havia deitado. Não parecia o céu, nem o inferno. A cama era uma tábua atravessada sobre duas colunas de blocos. As paredes pintadas de branco estavam cobertas de desenhos, rabiscos, garatujas dos mais diversos tipos. Tudo exalava um cheiro miserável de sujeira e coisa apodrecida. Ergueu a camiseta. Os furos haviam sumido. O peito estava completamente liso. Teria sonhado aqueles furos? Lembrou-se da arma, procurou-a. Recordou-se de haver dormido com o berro sobre o peito, mas o 22 sumira. Aí notou uma porta de ferro numa das paredes do aposento. Na porta, uma pequena abertura parecia uma janela com barras de ferro verticais.

Será que haviam conseguido enquadrá-lo?

Caminhou até a porta e precisou ficar na ponta dos pés para conseguir ver algo lá fora. Divisou um homem ao longe. Só a sua cabeça e tronco eram acessíveis à visão. Tinha rosto aristocrático, altivo, parecia ter saído de algum livro de História. ‘*Onde estou?*’, gritou William.

'In jail', the man answered, rolling his neck. A bunch of keys hung above his shoulder. 'Who are you?', William asked. 'The warden', the man answered languidly. 'What's your name?' William asked. 'Rui Barbosa', he answered proudly.

When the man pronounced his name, fire erupted out of one of the walls, spitting out numerous corpses into the prison cell. Rolls of paper were flowing out of where their eyes, mouths and ears should have been. William opened one which fell at his feet: it was an old document, a receipt for something. William stared dazedly at where the cadaver had been. His features weren't all completely mangled, and he recognised who it was. It was William himself. But it was as if he'd been dead for two hundred years. It was horrifying to recognise himself; he burst into tears.

'So, this is what it's like in

Prison?'

William asked himself. So many of his friends had been there. Some had come out again, others never did. They had died inside. Some who had never committed a single crime went in. The cops had simply taken a disliking to them because they were black. This made the gangs respect those who made it out. William knew of a few: drug dealers, most of them white, with enough money to pay for their freedom.

The first day crept by,

taking William's hopes along with it. On that first day, his hopes still did not have a definite objective: the idea of getting locked up was simply inconceivable to him. Locked up in that prison cell and not knowing how he got there. He first had to process the notion of being deprived of the world outside to be able to lose hope about getting it back. The corpses had become a layer of ash on the floor, all except for his. William realised that he'd always felt like that, as if he were two people, one of them simply a cadaver. One William loved life. The other diminished and rejected it. One had convictions, hopes, ideals. The other just pleased people, called them names, and would even kill them if needed. He didn't know which one he was. They were as indissociable from each other as they were interwoven. His whole life, William had yearned for respect, to be

‘Na Detenção’, respondeu-lhe o homem, movimentando o pescoço. Tinha um molho de chaves pendurado no ombro. ‘E você, quem é?’, perguntou William. ‘O carcereiro’, respondeu o homem, com uma voz longínqua. ‘Como é o seu nome?’, gritou novamente William. ‘Rui Barbosa’, finalizou o homem, com orgulho na voz.

Quando o homem pronunciou o nome, uma labareda projetou-se de uma das paredes e as chamas lançaram no cubículo inúmeros cadáveres carbonizados. Dos lugares onde haviam sido boca, ouvido ou olhos dos cadáveres, rolos de papel saíam. Um dos rolos caiu aos pés de William e abriu-se. Era um documento antigo. Um registro de qualquer coisa. William olhou pasmado o cadáver de onde havia saído. Não estava com as feições completamente deformadas e ele pôde reconhecer-se. Era ele mesmo, William. Mas era como se tivesse vivido há duzentos anos. Terrível foi a noção de reconhecer-se, e ele conteve algumas lágrimas.

‘Então isto é a

Detenção?’

perguntava-se William. Muitos de seus amigos haviam estado ali. Alguns haviam saído, outros jamais. Morreram lá dentro. Dentre estes havia os que nunca tinham cometido qualquer espécie de crime. Os tiras simplesmente não haviam gostado da cara deles porque eram pretos. Quem conseguia sair era visto com respeito pelo resto da malandragem. William conhecera alguns. Traficantes. Brancos, na sua maioria, que possuíam dinheiro suficiente para pagar pela liberdade.

O primeiro dia escoou-se lentamente,

consumindo as esperanças de William. Se bem que, neste primeiro dia, suas esperanças ainda não tivessem objeto definido, pois a ideia de estar preso era simplesmente inconcebível. Preso naquele cubículo, sem saber como. Precisava inicialmente aceitar a ideia de estar privado de toda vida exterior.

Os cadáveres iam formando uma camada de cinzas no chão. Menos o que se parecia com ele. E William percebeu que sempre sentira-se assim, como se fosse duas pessoas, uma delas apenas cadáver. Um William amava a vida. O outro a reduzia, anulava-a. Um tinha fortes convicções, esperanças, ideais. O outro apenas agredia, xingava e mataria, se preciso. E não sabia qual dos dois era o verdadeiro William. Eram indissociáveis de tão misturados que estavam.

A vida inteira William buscara ganhar moral, ser

a true gangster.

Had he succeeded? Perhaps he was really just a sucker, as Mãezinha had said. Perhaps he was a man, as Kizzy thought.

Perhaps both, he thought to himself. But he soon went back on that realisation: 'No. I'm either a gangster or a sucker, I either have respect or I don't. There's no in-between.' It might not just be that, he thought; perhaps there was something else.

Night fell,

and he couldn't sleep, as something caught his attention at some point in the early hours. It was dark in the prison cell. The floor was full of ashes but the ashes were alive. He was sat on the wooden bunk when he noticed the figure of a man appear on the whitewashed wall opposite. 'Who are you', he asked, 'A messenger of God?' A fair, *bearded figure with a face that took up half of his body*, now a lot clearer, opened his arms and said nothing. 'If you're real, go away, you can't do anything for me. If you're God, tell me: what law did I break? I want justice!' William yelled, to which the figure ironically replied: 'You, a black man, demanding justice in this country?' William was quiet, he hadn't expected a reply of that kind, and he had no reply. Hate was swelling inside him, alongside impotence. In the morning, when light entered the prison cell, the figure disappeared and so began

the second day,

bringing with it a more conscious kind of hopelessness. He quickly adapted to the notion that he was an incarcerated man. Sometimes he would bang against the door. Sometimes he would bang against the wall. He asked himself how he'd ended up there. He'd never shot anyone. He'd never robbed anyone. He'd gotten into numerous arguments, but he'd never had to use his gun. The only offense he'd committed was sharing a joint with that little gang, if that was even an offense. Then he remembered: it had all started with the gang.

They used to run around in groups of eight or ten. Some robbed to put food on the table. Others robbed because there was nothing else to do, they spent the day on the sofa or in some bar, unemployed, or lonely and bored, no motivation to do anything except smoke their teenage years away.

malandro mesmo.

Teria conseguido? Talvez fosse um otário, como queria Mãezinha. Talvez um homem, como achava Kizzy.

Talvez os dois, considerava ele mesmo. Mas logo voltava atrás: ‘Não pode ser, ou o cara é malandro ou é otário, ou tem moral ou não tem. Não existe meio-termo.’ Mas, possivelmente, não era só isso, concluía. Possivelmente, havia alguma coisa mais.

E quando veio a noite,

ele não conseguiu dormir. No meio da madrugada algo chamou sua atenção. O cubículo estava escuro. O chão, cheio de cinzas, mas cinzas vivas. Ele estava sentado na cama de tábuas e na parede oposta, sobre o branco da pintura, alguma coisa pareceu adquirir relevo. Firmou a vista e teve a impressão de ver um homem. ‘Quem é você’, perguntou duramente, ‘homem ou Deus?’ *A figura barbada*, clara, de um rosto que tomava metade do corpo, agora mais nítida, abriu os braços, mas não disse nada. ‘Se for homem vá embora, não pode me ajudar. Se for Deus, diga-me: que lei é esta que colocou-me aqui sem julgamento? Exijo Justiça’, William disse, exaltando-se. Ao que a figura respondeu-lhe ironicamente: ‘Você, um negro, a clamar por Justiça neste país?’ William calou-se, não esperava aquela resposta e nenhum argumento aflorou aos seus lábios. Um ódio foi crescendo com a impotência. De manhã, quando a luz entrou, a figura sumiu e iniciou-se

o segundo dia,

trazendo um desespero mais consciente. Rapidamente ele deu-se conta de que não sairia dali. Às vezes, atirava-se contra a porta. Às vezes, batia a cabeça contra a parede. Perguntava-se por que fora preso. Jamais atirara em ninguém, jamais roubara qualquer pessoa. Brigara várias vezes, mas nunca precisara usar o 22. O único delito que cometera fora queimar fumo com a malandragem, se é que podia chamar isso delito. E recordou-se: tudo começara com a função.

Andavam em grupos de oito ou dez. Alguns roubavam para comer. Outros roubavam porque não podiam fazer mais nada, passavam o dia largados na rua ou no bar, desempregados, apaticamente abandonados, sem motivação para nada, a não ser fumar sua adolescência.

Some, such as himself, had never robbed a single thing but couldn't leave the gang. When a fight broke out, bullets would fly, so he'd bought the gun. A 22-caliber pistol ... only now did he make the association between the gun's calibre and his age. In truth, he'd never wanted to buy it. Or had he? What else could he have done if he hadn't? Perhaps that was what being a gangster and having respect meant: having the confidence to decide to do something without seeking validation. Perhaps this was the thing that connected the two Williams.

He suddenly longed for Kizzy; he realised that he might never see her again and his heart began to race. He wondered about his parents. Why hadn't they ever gotten a break in life? Working had gotten them so little in life. And he himself, what had he accomplished in his time working? Where was this path going to lead him? To which punishments?

When night fell, the figure in the wall came back, and spoke in tongues all night. William wanted to grab his tongue and take it with him to where he was going; in the morning, as sunlight invaded the prison cell, he went to grab the figure and was taken by surprise:

it was just a drawing

on the wall and, at that moment, various bodies rose from the ashes on the floor. They were various Williams. A ghostly version of himself was sat on the bunk. He was all bloated, his face swollen. There were marks all over his face and arms. He smiled a smile that could curdle milk. The fetid stench of smoke and cachaça congealed in little brown droplets on the walls. Sounds flowed from his mouth; 'Destiny' it yelled. 'No,' William said, and slowly the figure returned to ash.

III — The Return

At night, sat on his bunk, he noticed a different figure emerge from the wall. He was clean shaven, wore necklaces of various kind and was very dark. 'Who are you,' he asked, 'man or orisha?' The figure didn't reply, but in the morning where it had been there was now an opening the shape of a great vagina with long curly hair encrusted along its edges. A pearl necklace lay on the bunk. The opening lead outside. He fashioned an escape rope with the pearl necklace and, once it was dark, before he escaped, took one last look at Rui Barbosa,

Alguns, como ele, não roubavam coisa alguma, mas não podiam deixar a função. Quando arrumavam alguma briga, os tiros vinham de todo lado e então ele comprara o 22. O 22, só agora notava a coincidência entre o calibre da arma e a sua idade. Não queria comprar o berro verdadeiramente. Ou queria? Se não o fizesse, que outra coisa teria feito? Talvez ser malandro, ter moral, significasse isto: apenas a segurança para decidir e fazer as coisas sem vacilação. Seria esta a conjunção entre estes dois William que ele via?

Sentiu de repente forte saudade de Kizzy, sentiu que poderia nunca mais vê-la e o coração apertou. Perguntou-se em seguida pelos pais. Por que não haviam dado sorte na vida? Pois trabalhar lhes havia trazido pouca coisa. Ele mesmo, o que ganhara com os meses empregado? Que sina seria esta a perseguir os que estavam mais próximos? Que castigo?

À noite, a figura voltou à parede e até amanhecer disse várias coisas numa língua de missa. William queria agarrá-la, prendê-la ao seu destino e de manhã, antes de a luz invadir totalmente o cubículo, pulou sobre ela mas frustrou-se: a figura era

apenas um desenho

na parede e, então, das cinzas no chão vários corpos tomaram forma. Eram vários William. E na cama de tábuas havia um William medonho. Estava todo esticado, o rosto com um inchaço terrível. Por todo o rosto e braços enormes manchas brancas pontilhavam. E sorria, sua boca destilava amoníaco. Um aroma fétido de fumo e cachaça causava náuseas. Sons de correntes vinham de sua garganta gritando 'Destino'. William afastou-se dizendo 'não' e ele aos poucos retornou às cinzas.

III — O Retorno

À noite, sentado na cama, ele percebeu uma figura diferente tomar forma na parede. Não tinha barba, usava colares de miçangas e era bem escura. 'Quem é você, perguntou, homem ou orixá?' A figura nada respondeu, mas de manhã onde ela estivera havia na parede uma abertura no formato de uma vagina grande e peluda com longos fios de cabelo incrustando-se nas bordas. Um colar de miçangas jazia sobre a cama. A abertura dava para a parte externa da Detenção. William começou a tecer uma corda com as miçangas e o fio, e, ao anoitecer, antes de ir embora, quis dar uma olhada em Rui Barbosa, o carcereiro.

the warden.

There he was: just his head, torso and the stumps of his arms, no legs, just like in the history books, perched on his chair. He didn't run after him. The guards didn't see him. He escaped and was back on the streets, a long way from home. But

the animal was now set free

into those nights and, as he rounded the corner, he didn't notice the garish blue flash speeding along the asphalt; before he knew it, Mãezinha's Volkswagen was right in front of him. Impossible, he thought, terrified. But he held his nerve. He wasn't going to run this time. He fished inside his leather jacket for the gun. The car door opened. A pair of feet came out. William gripped the gun and thought: 'If you make a decision, make it now. No more hesitating.' However, when Mãezinha got out of the car, William froze.

He was alive but decomposed, putrefied. Various creatures were crawling up his nose. And various Mãezinhas got out of the car heading in all directions, as well as other white men that William didn't recognise. They were all in the same state, decomposing, putrefied. Only their clothes were impeccable. Some were wearing white-collar shirts and tuxedos. Finally, the last person to get out of the car was the same ghastly William which he'd seen in his prison cell, the stench of smoke and cachaça which made little brown droplets on the walls. It said in a booming voice: 'These are the real dead, William, don't follow them, they'll fuck you up at the first chance. They'll never do it face-to-face, so don't hesitate to shoot them in the back'. He then got back in the car, waved goodbye and drove off, disappearing

at a crossroads

down the street. William stood motionless, not understanding a thing. A yell escaped his lips before he could stop it: 'That's right, you son of a bitch, a black man who wants justice. Not this shitty justice invented by a bunch of white men, but actual justice'. He realised then that he was on Preta's street. It wasn't very late, so he headed over to her house.

O carcereiro

era aquilo mesmo: apenas cabeça, tronco e o cotoco dos braços, sem pernas, como nos livros de História. Estava com a parte da cintura seccionada apoiada numa cadeira. Não o perseguiria. No escuro os guardas não o veriam. Assim, saiu dali e voltou às ruas buscando retornar pra casa. Mas

o bicho estava solto

naquelas noites e, ao dobrar uma esquina, ele não reparou de imediato naquele azul fulgurante tomando conta do asfalto e, quando viu, estava em frente ao Volkswagen de Mãezinha. Não podia ser verdade, pensou, entre incrédulo e assustado. Mas ficou firme. Não iria correr desta vez. Enfiou a mão dentro da jaqueta de couro e encontrou novamente o 22 no lugar. A porta do carro abriu-se. Alguém colocou o pé para fora. William puxou o cano e refletiu: 'Se for pra decidir, terá de ser agora. Chega de vacilação.' No entanto, quando Mãezinha saiu, William ficou petrificado. Estava vivo, mas decompunha-se. Estava putrefato. Bichinhos vários saíam e entravam em suas narinas. E vários Mãezinhas saíram do carro em todas as direções. Saíram também pessoas desconhecidas para William. E todos no mesmo estado, decompondo-se, putrefatos. Apenas a roupa estava impecável. Alguns trajavam terno e colarinho branco. Por fim, a última pessoa que saiu do carro foi o mesmo medonho William que ele vira no cubículo, com seu hálito fedorento de fumo e cachaça, falando com sua voz cavernosa: 'Eis os verdadeiros mortos, William, não os siga, eles o trairão na primeira ocasião. Jamais enfrentarão você cara a cara, mas não perderão a oportunidade de atirar pelas costas.' Depois entrou no carro, deu a partida e sumiu

numa encruzilhada

existente naquela rua. William ficou parado, sem entender nada, mas um grito saiu do seu peito, sem que ele pudesse impedir: 'Sim, cacete, um negro querendo Justiça. Não esta Justiça viciada, feita para alguns brancos, mas Justiça de verdade.' Aí ele percebeu que estava na rua da casa da Preta. Não era tarde e ele foi até lá.

‘What happened, Preto?’

You just disappeared for three days. I was worried,’ Kizzy said with a look of fear in her eyes, her hair extensions curiously well-kempt. William had never thought he’d feel so relieved to see her. He hadn’t realised how immeasurably beautiful she was. ‘I thought Mãezinha had followed up on his threat’, she concluded. She was genuinely pleased to see him. She was immensely relieved, overcome with waves of affection. She liked spending the weekends with him. It didn’t make her days working in the haberdashery any easier, but she was happy all the same. She kissed him countless times, and he felt guilty for wanting to trade her for the perfect woman. He loved Kizzy, he was certain of it. ‘You wouldn’t believe me if I told you, Preta,’ he said.

He pushed her lightly onto the sofa and then, lying down, she pulled him towards her. She tried to tell by the look on his face or his behaviour whether he had been with another woman. She liked him, but didn’t accept the way he did some things, and so asked him if he’d been with anyone. ‘No,’ he answered hesitantly. She embraced him, knowing that he was lying; she stroked his face, his chest, held his neck and told him firmly:

‘Don’t falter like that, Preto.’

He was submerged in her delicate, sleepy undulations; aroused, in the landscape of her dark skin, he prepared himself for a safari across her dunes, through dreams of honey and papaya. He didn’t answer her, full of love and longing as he was. Her parents and younger siblings were asleep. All was quiet. It was as if he’d not stopped dreaming and life had not stopped reproducing the dream. He then held her tightly, as if to stop her from melting in his hands.

‘Que aconteceu, Preto?’

faz três dias que você não aparece. Já estava ficando preocupada’, disse-lhe Kizzy, olhar assustado, tranças de canecalon cuidadosamente arrumadas. William nunca imaginou que ficaria tão contente por vê-la. Ele não havia percebido antes como ela era imensamente importante. ‘Pensei que o Mãezinha tivesse cumprido a ameaça’, ela desabafou. Estava sinceramente satisfeita por vê-lo. Sentia um alívio imenso e ao mesmo tempo ondas de doçura invadirem-na. Gostava de passar os finais de semana com ele. O restante dos dias não se tornavam mais suportáveis na Loja de Costura onde trabalhava, mas gostava mesmo assim. Beijou-o várias vezes e ele arrependeu-se de ter pensado em trocá-la pela mulher perfeita. Amava Kizzy, estava convencido disso. ‘Você não vai acreditar, Preta’, disse.

Empurrou-a suavemente para o sofá onde ela deitou-se puxando-o para si, tentando adivinhar pelo seu rosto ou por suas atitudes se ele estivera com outra mulher. Gostava dele, mas não aceitaria certos procedimentos seus e perguntou-lhe se ele havia saído com alguém. ‘Não’, ele respondeu vacilante. Ela abraçou-o, sem saber se ele mentia. Acariciou seu rosto, seu peito, segurou-o no pescoço e disse-lhe com firmeza:

‘Olha, Preto, não vacila.’

Ele já submergia em suas ondulações de sonho e maciez, em toda geografia daquela pele escura e preparava safadamente um safári que atravessasse, por entre suas dunas, desejos de melado e mamão. Nada respondeu-lhe, cheio de saudades e amor pra dar. Os pais e as irmãs menores da namorada estavam dormindo. Tudo estava calmo. E ele sentiu que já havia vivido aquilo antes, como num sonho, como se ele não parasse de sonhar e a vida não parasse de reproduzir seu próprio sonho. Assim, segurou-a firmemente, como se quisesse evitar que ela derretesse entre suas mãos.

(Barbosa, Márcio. ‘Quando o malandro vacila’. In *Cadernos Negros: os melhores contos*, edited by Quilombhoje, 105–128. São Paulo: Quilombhoje, 1998.)

3

Myth, by Juliana Berlim, translated by Ricardo Silveira

Friendship is a political act. Aristotle held that man was a political animal, but a political roam of the Earth's surface cannot be but if supported by the hands and feet of friends. This clarity weighs on my soul. That's what I mean when I think of resistance: fighting for endearment politics (Add this note to lyrics in the s.c.h.e.m.e.).

There I go with yet another sequence of my crazy musician's thoughts: Mythologies, title, Roland Barthes, author. Analysing mythographies of the French bourgeois society. You said you see this book as important in my case. I read it and I say, life is dissolution, volcanic lava constantly shaping reality into new volumes. So, if we can shape objects according to our most idiosyncratic demands, would there be a similar process for human beings? For instance, when is it that an individual leaves the human condition behind to become a myth?

'So you intend to become a myth when you die?' she asked.

'All I can think of, day in day out, is to remain alive,' he replied, adamantly.

The therapist bit her lower lip while staring at him, and he glanced back at a perfectly still face. After that confession, the very one he had kept to himself for more than a decade now, a somewhat refreshed Marco walked away from her office. Back on the streets, he veered his wheelchair onto the sidewalk. Metropolitan causeways were impatiently nagging, yelling blood, sweat and tears to his disability. Marco floundered on; he was not in anger, but in pain. As if there were no spiritual wound, but physical. He watched every dawn as a renewed miracle: open eyes! breathe! survive! Despite his persistence, he felt his body was

3

Myto, de Juliana Berlim

A amizade é um ato político, Aristóteles considerava o homem um animal político, mas só se caminha politicamente sobre a superfície terrestre com o auxílio das mãos e dos pés de amigos. É uma certeza que me pesa n'alma. É disso que falo quando penso em resistência: lutar por uma política dos afetos (Colocar essa anotação numa letra do e.s.q.u.e.m.a).

Lá vou eu com mais uma sequência dos meus pensamentos de músico maluco: Mitologias, título, Roland Barthes, autor. Uma análise das mitografias da sociedade burguesa francesa. Você disse que julga este livro importante no meu caso. Eu leio o livro e digo, a vida é dissolução, uma lava vulcânica que molda, a todo instante, o real em novos volumes. Então, se podemos moldar os objetos conforme nossas demandas mais idiossincráticas, existiria processo semelhante com relação aos seres humanos? Por exemplo, qual é a hora em que um indivíduo abandona a condição humana e se transforma em um mito?

‘Então você pretende se tornar um mito ao morrer?’, ela perguntou.

‘Eu só pretendo, um dia após o outro, continuar vivo’, ele respondeu, decidido.

A analista mordeu o lábio inferior ao dirigir o olhar para Marco, que se voltou na direção dela e lhe surpreendeu a cara seca de emoções. Depois daquela confissão, a mesma que ele evitava repetir em voz alta a si mesmo ao longo de mais de uma década, saiu da consulta animado. Na rua, lançou a cadeira de rodas sobre a calçada. O chão da metrópole torturava, gritava sangue, suor e lágrimas de maneira impaciente com sua deficiência. Marco seguia com dificuldade, mas não sentia raiva, apenas dor. Como se não houvesse nenhuma ferida espiritual, apenas física. Ele percebia cada novo amanhecer como um milagre renovado: abria os olhos, respirava, sobrevivia. Mas, apesar de sua persistência, sentia que seu corpo estava

tired and, as he gambled for survival, his bluff was called. He had been on the edge all those years, making it through what would be insane for others. Still, if he couldn't strike a satisfactory deal with his fortune, he did so with his soul: he'd live past hatred.

To anyone asking about the accident, he'd simply answer: 'Not an accident: an incident; though not in Veríssimo's *Antares*,' he would sum up through a half-hearted smile. It could have been anywhere. He was on his way back from a gig with his band. He decided to drive his own car so he could crash at his mom's for the night. He had just made his way into Avenida Brasil close to the Batan when he was assailed. They fired fifteen shots at the family car as he tried to break through the thugs' armed blockade of the street. He rushed out of his car in time to shield the woman coming out the back door with a baby in her arms from the five bullets originally fired against the two of them. His body collapsed. The crooks rode away on their motorbikes, releasing their leftover cartridges of ammunition into the sky. They left a couple of corpses behind: the father's and his own. Actually, unlike the other man's body, Marco's was deadly wounded but not dead; it was alive. From then on, it would be insistently alive.

Hereinafter, he would be called a myth, as if he were powder soap or food in some stupid magazine, two of the contemporary mythologies that good old Barthes analysed in his book. He sighed. He never saw himself as anything other than a survivor of the dragon of evil in the more destitute districts of the city! That was his daily battle: to keep vanity from melding into his battered armour. No merit in falling victim to urban violence! Nothing made him any better than hundreds of other victims, not even the complacency of his fans, friends or workmates. He was just a musician, as he had always been and would continue to be. To those who came with pity in their eyes, he would matter-of-factly say, 'Don't you worry!' He'd live on, with his mother, his brother and loved ones, beating the imperfect beat of existence.

The kid came in, nonchalantly as usual, glittering like only real cool kids do. And sang his song of profusely bloodstained lyrics. What do you make of it, master, he called me that way, and I could but answer: yeah, I liked it, but have you ever been shot? The kid's face shrank to a grimace and he kept his silence. Thank you for the opportunity; I'll be back. He was, and brought lyrics that carried less violence and no shots (Note 23, 15 December).

'What is it that you keep writing all the time?' The therapist was curious and brought her pen to her lips.

cansado e, no pôquer da sobrevivência, seus blefes terminavam. Vivia há anos no limite, convivendo com um sofrimento que deixaria os outros à beira da loucura. Ainda assim, se não pôde estabelecer um acordo satisfatório com a própria sorte, fizera-o com sua alma: viver para além do ódio.

Às pessoas que perguntavam sobre o acidente, simplesmente respondia: Não foi um acidente, foi um incidente. E não foi em Antares, fechava com o sorriso amarelo de cigarro. Poderia ter sido em qualquer lugar. Voltava sozinho de um show com a banda. Preferiu ir e voltar com seu carro para poder dormir na casa da mãe. Tinha acabado de entrar na avenida Brasil, na altura do Batan, quando houve o assalto. Os bandidos atiraram quinze vezes contra o carro daquela família, que fugia do bloqueio armado na via pelos assaltantes. Largou seu carro às pressas e correu a tempo de acudir a mulher que saía pela porta de trás com uma criança de colo. Serviu-lhe de escudo contra cinco das balas direcionadas a mãe e filho. Seu corpo caiu. Os marginais fugiram em duas motos atirando para o alto a munição restante. Deixaram para trás dois cadáveres: o do pai e o dele. Na verdade, diferentemente do outro homem, o corpo de Marco, mesmo ferido de morte, não era o de um morto, e sim o de um vivo. A partir de então, ele estaria insistentemente vivo.

Na sequência do episódio, passaram a chamá-lo de mito, como se ele fosse um sabão em pó ou uma comida de revista idiota, duas das mitologias contemporâneas que o tal Barthes analisava no seu livro. Ele suspirava. Nunca se viu como nada além do que um sobrevivente do dragão da maldade nas quebradas da cidade. Este era seu partido diário, evitar que sobre sua couraça lascada se colasse a vaidade. Mérito nenhum ser mais uma vítima da violência urbana. Nada o tornava melhor que tantas centenas de outros vitimados, nem mesmo a complacência de seus fãs, amigos ou colegas de trabalho. Era apenas um músico, como tinha sido e como continuaria sendo. A quem se aproximava dele com olhar de piedade, dizia sem afetação: não se preocupem comigo. Tocava a vida, ao lado de sua mãe, de seu irmão e das pessoas próximas que o amavam, soando a batida imperfeita da existência.

O garoto chegou com a marra de sempre, aquele brilho nos olhos que os garotos sabidos têm. Cantou a música dele, uma letra sanguinolenta com muitos tiros. Que que você acha, mestre, me chamou assim, e eu só consegui responder: gostei do lance, mas você já tomou um tiro? Na hora a cara dele encolheu, não falou mais nada. Agradeceu a oportunidade, disse que voltava. Voltou com outra letra, que tinha menos violência e nenhum tiro (Anotação 23, dia 15/12).

‘O que você sempre anota nesse bloquinho?’ a analista estava curiosa e colocava a caneta na boca.

‘A few ideas, loose thoughts so I don’t forget.’

‘...’

‘Oh, what do you want me to say? It’s like a diary, with ideas on it. Ideas about life and death.’

‘Do you often think of death?’ She moved the pen away and looked him square in the eye.

‘I feel it’s coming. I’m not looking for it; it is, rather, coming my way.’

Marco knew death was creeping over like a shadow while he finished his record. Many pauses to the recording efforts, many apologies to the other stakeholders, they would all understand it. That man was their idol; it was crucial to let him be; they would do it over and over again; they would work for lower wages, even for free – because the men and women in the s.c.h.e.m.e. knew that could be the last straw for the man who was ... the man! Because his departure would put an end to cracking laughter, hugs and scholarly looks, to lectures on the cartography of Rio de Janeiro, the quilombo-urbs, as Marco would have it, his own personal Euphrates. He had visited it all and met them all; he had become a giant, amiable almanac of the metropolis, and made friends for good. His lyrics made it to the slime and derelict streets and alleys of the favelas, unflinching to the lure of Eros, unwavering to the power of Thanatos. Inescapable to self-irony, as in the lyrics to Myth:

*I am called myth, a broken note
As if uttering a word written in French
All broken up in odd spelling
I am the mythe
Mythus
Myth*

‘I know I’ll be soon to die, doctor. But I’ll live in people’s memories because of my music. I’m sure it will stay. That’s all I want to remain. Everything in my life is connected to art, culture, politics, social justice and, mostly, music. Music has taken me to all the places I ever wanted to visit, and to so many others I never expected to. I can only thank the gods of music for bringing me this far. But now they want me there; I know it is high time I went. You know when you’re going. I am saying goodbye to everybody because I never know when I will see them again. There is pain all over and I don’t know how much more I can take.’

‘Só umas ideias, umas coisas soltas que registro pra não esquecer.’
‘...’

‘Ah, o que você quer que eu diga? É como um diário de ideias. Ideias sobre a vida e a morte.’

‘Você pensa muito na morte?’ Ela tirou a caneta da boca e olhou fixo para ele.

‘Eu sinto que ela está chegando. Não estou procurando por ela, ela que está vindo na minha direção.’

Marco sabia que a morte se tornava uma sombra gradual enquanto ele finalizava seu disco. Várias pausas na gravação, pedidos de compreensão aos envolvidos, todos entendiam. Aquele homem era o ídolo deles, deixá-lo confortável era vital; repetiriam quantas vezes fosse necessário, trabalhariam por um valor mais baixo, até mesmo de graça, porque os homens e mulheres inseridos no e.s.q.u.e.m.a sabiam que a bolacha podia ser a última do cara que era o cara. Porque com seu desaparecimento, perderiam as gargalhadas frouxas, os abraços, o olhar professoral, a fala longa sobre a cartografia da cidade, o quilombo-urbe, como Marco chamava o Rio, seu Eufrates pessoal. Ele tinha visitado tudo e conhecido todos, tinha se tornado um almanaque gigante e bonachão da metrópole, construído amizades eternas. Suas letras circulavam pela lama e pelo abandono das ruas dos subúrbios e das vielas apertadas das favelas, sem perder o fascínio de Eros, sem evitar a potência de Tântatos. Sem evitar a autoironia, como apontava a letra de Myto:

*Me chamam de mito, uma nota furada
Como se dissessem uma palavra escrita em francês
Toda arreventada dentro de uma ortografia estranha
Eu sou o mytho
Mitho
Myto*

‘Sei que vou morrer logo, doutora. Mas vou ficar na memória das pessoas por causa da minha música. Tenho certeza que ela fica. Quero que só ela fique. Tudo na minha vida está ligado à arte, cultura, política, justiça social e principalmente música. A música me levou a todos os lugares que eu quis conhecer e a outros tantos que eu não esperava chegar. Eu só tenho a agradecer aos deuses da música por terem me carregado até aqui. Mas agora eles me querem perto deles, sei que chego a hora de partir. Quem vai sabe. Estou me despedindo de todas as pessoas, porque nunca sei quando vou ver elas de novo. As dores só aumentam e não sei até onde vou aguentar.’

‘Do you ever think of ...?’

‘It’s up to my body. I will just say yes; I am not going to interfere. My mind is clear, my soul is open.’

Marco gave her a big hug when they said goodbye. He had been keeping this ritual for quite some time now, under the same claim that he didn’t know how much time he had left. Neither did the therapist know, though she remembered Marco had been outliving people who were visibly healthier than him. The wheelchair lurched on yet another ride past the potholes in the street.

One week later, at the same time, she waited for him to come see her. She knew Marco always came over after his oceanside ride at Praia Vermelha. He never made it to this appointment, however, because he was cut across by a massive heart attack right in front of the watershed.

He got to the beach a couple of hours before his therapy appointment. He knew his dreams all rested on the same memory shelves where they had always been. He had lived them all, one by one, in a starry constellation of events that unfolded before his eyes as if on a movie screen. People, cities, heartbeats sewn to the harmony of life. A seagull rises to the air from the tip of a rock on the east end of the beach and flies above the water line to eventually dive into the waves for a fish, just when Marco’s heart stops. He’d be sitting in his wheelchair for hours, until they noticed his death under the purple pallet of dawn. The s.c.h.e.m.e, however, a record yet to meet with public acclaim and critique, had been ready for weeks. That was his political legacy, his crossroads of endearment. Marco died; Eshu was born.

‘Você pensa em...?’

‘É meu corpo quem vai decidir. Vou obedecer a ele, não vou interferir nesse processo. A mente continua alerta, a alma aberta.’

Marco a abraçou forte na despedida. Vinha cumprindo esse ritual fazia algum tempo, sempre a mesma alegação de que não sabia quanto tempo lhe restava. Nem a própria analista sabia, embora ela se lembrasse de que Marco vinha sobrevivendo a gente visivelmente bem mais saudável do que ele. Mais uma vez a cadeira de rodas se lançava em direção a outro trajeto sobre as crateras da rua.

Na semana seguinte, no mesmo horário à tarde, ela o esperou para o atendimento. Sabia que Marco chegava sempre depois do passeio que fazia pela Praia Vermelha. Uma consulta, porém, que nunca aconteceu, porque lhe atravessou o caminho um ataque cardíaco fulminante em frente ao quebra-mar.

Chegou à praia duas horas antes do horário marcado com a analista. Ele sabia que seus sonhos estavam todos encaixados nas mesmas estantes da memória onde sempre estiveram. Vivera todos, um a um, em uma constelação siderada de acontecimentos que se desenrolaram como em uma tela de cinema diante de seus olhos. Pessoas, cidades, batidas do coração costuradas à harmonia da vida. De uma pedra da ponta leste da praia, uma gaivota alça voo por sobre o espelho d’água, até que dá um mergulho final dentro das ondas em direção a um peixe, no mesmo instante em que o coração de Marco para. Ele ficaria sentado sobre a cadeira de rodas durante horas, até que se dessem conta de sua morte sob a paleta púrpura do crepúsculo. O e.s.q.u.e.m.a, porém, disco que o público e a crítica aclamariam no lançamento, descansava pronto há semanas. Era seu legado político, sua encruzilhada de afetos. Morria o Marco, nascia o exu.

(Berlim, Juliana. ‘Myto’. In *Contos para depois do ódio: Inspirados nas canções de Marcelo Yuka*, edited by Ecio Salles and Julio Ludemir, 130–134. Rio de Janeiro: Mórula Editorial, Flup, 2020.)

4

No One Regulates the Americas, by Evandro Luiz da Conceição, translated by Faed Breno and Natalie Russo

‘Eshu tells me that new paths lie ahead, Ogun is placing into your hands all the weapons you require to conquer the enemies that stand before you. Oshosi will answer you with words of abundance and prosperity, even in hard times. Oshun asks for your heart to not turn cold, for love is going to knock on your door.’

Thusly revealed Mother Jandira to Uoshton in the bloom of his disenchanted youth.

No piece of good news was capable of widening his eyes, of putting a smile back onto that frowning black face. The lad was getting a new chance to redeem himself from the wrong paths he’d taken up until that point, and yet he seemed to have faith in absolutely nothing that was being revealed to him by the African oracle.

She cast the shells one more time:

‘Oya announces that her winds are taking the bad things far, far away from you and bringing near all that is positive. Nana Buluku will make sure you are looked after and Yemoja calls on you to stay calm, so as to deal with the comings and goings of your journey through life. The Ibejis tell me they are going to give you back your happiness and fill your coming days with hope.’

‘Anything else you’d like to ask, my dear?’ inquired the elderly *iyalorisha* before closing the session she’d begun for him right in the middle of that boiling hot Friday afternoon. It was now infringing on the early hours of the night.

‘Nope, thanks,’ replied Uoshton all arrogant, his face making him look like someone who just dined at a banquet and liked not one bite of it. A pessimist from the soles of his feet to the roots of his hair, he went through life picking up problem after problem and believing himself incapable of any sort of progress.

4

Ninguém regula a América, de Evandro Luiz da Conceição

‘Exu anuncia novos caminhos, Ogum coloca nas tuas mãos todas as armas que você precisa para vencer os inimigos que na tua frente estão. Oxóssi te responde com fartura e prosperidade mesmo em tempos difíceis. Oxum te pede para não endurecer o coração porque o amor vai bater na tua porta.’

Assim revelou Mãe Jandira para Uoston na flor da mocidade e desencantado da vida.

Não tinha notícia boa que fosse capaz de trazer ânimo e um sorriso naquela cara preta emburrada. Pela primeira vez a criatura estava recebendo uma nova chance para se redimir dos maus passos que havia dado até ali, mas parecia não levar fé em absolutamente nada do que estava sendo revelado pelo oráculo africano.

Os búzios foram lançados mais uma vez:

‘Oya declara que os ventos dela estão levando as coisas ruins para bem longe e trazendo para perto de você tudo que é positivo. Nana Buruquê te traz acolhimento e Iemanjá cobra de você serenidade para lidar com os encontros e desencontros na tua caminhada pelo mundo. Os Ibejis dizem que vão te devolver a alegria de viver e hão de preencher de esperança os dias que virão pela frente.’

‘Mais alguma pergunta, meu filho?’ indagou a velha ialorixá antes de fechar o jogo que havia começado bem no meio daquela tarde calorosa de sexta-feira e já invadia as primeiras horas da noite.

‘Não, senhora’, respondeu Uoston todo trabalhado na arrogância, com cara de quem comeu e não gostou nem um pouco da iguaria que provou. Pessimista da sola dos pés até a raiz do cabelo, andava colecionando perrengue atrás de perrengue e se julgava incapaz de qualquer progresso na vida.

The Umbanda priestess was close to 'losing her top' and putting the faithless client, sat in front of her for almost three hours now, firmly in his place. But deep, deep down, Uoshton's disregard that made him act like he ruled the roost was nothing but a front.

He didn't have any idea what he was going to do with his life. After all the advice he'd received from the orishas, he got up, left the money for the consultation on the table and made no attempt to note down the spiritual baths he should take.

On top of this, he politely refused the list of ingredients he should buy to offer to the orishas, which Mother Jandira had recommended he do so the boy's life could finally get back on track. Stubborn as a diva, he looked side-on at the religious woman, indifferently, barely thanked her and, worse still, blanked her, leaving her there talking to herself. He turned his back on the altar, found his way out scuffing the floor and didn't even pay his respects to the shrine for Eshu. Unsatisfied still, the bitch slammed the door to the temple house so hard that its clay walls nearly fell down behind him.

He was fed up, walking back down the hill and muttering his contempt like a bitter old hag. He went straight, took a shortcut through a dark alley, caught the eye of the guys from the crack den. Doubting between a twenty-ounce bag of something white or dark, all for himself in the comfort of his own place, he decided he'd rather just give it a miss.

He knew he didn't want to light anymore fires to be put out later. It would be better to avoid the risk of having a run in with the police, getting falsely arrested and ending up with a criminal record.

As he headed down towards the motorbike taxi point, Uoshton rehearsed the bollocking he was about to give his younger sister Uitinei, a joker, true, but who also thought she sung as good as the real Whitney, who he was so pissed off with he couldn't wait to start on her. He was already visualising the fight and going on what Uoshton was prepared to bring to it, there'd be slapping, hands on hips, brash shoulder-thrusting, hard-frowning faces, mouthing off and clicking fingers, it would be total havoc.

There was a reason for all the huffing and puffing: his sis was the one who insisted her sib trek across the city under a blazing sun to have a consultation with that Umbanda leader. It would be his last shot at fully freeing himself from the troubles of his past, but to Uoshton's mind it was nothing but a waste of time, patience and cash he didn't have to spare.

'Ah, Uitinei ... just you wait!' the vengeful fag thought out loud as he mulled over the back-and-forth that, as always, would bring all the neighbours out onto the street where they'd lived for years.

A mãe de santo estava perto de ‘subir nas trouxas’ e dar um coió naquele consulente descrente sentado na frente dela há quase três horas. No fundo, no fundo, aquela marra de Uoston, do tipo de quem parecia carregar um rei na barriga, era puro ekê.

Ele não tinha a menor ideia do que ia fazer no futuro. Depois de todos os conselhos que recebeu dos orixás, levantou-se, deixou sobre a mesa o dinheiro da consulta e não fez a menor questão de anotar os banhos que deveria tomar.

Também ignorou solenemente a lista de compras pro ebó que mãe Jandira recomendou que fizesse para que a vida do sujeito pudesse enfim entrar nos eixos. Tinhosa como só, a mona fez a egípcia, mal agradeceu à religiosa e pior, a deixou no vácuo, falando sozinha. Deu as costas para o gongá, saiu pisando pesado e nem a casa de Exu ele saudou. Não satisfeita, a bicha bateu o portão do terreiro com tanta força que quase jogou o muro feito de barro caiado de branco no chão.

Desceu a ladeira putu dentro das calças, resmungando feito velho ranzinza. Pegou a reta, cortou caminho por um beco escuro, deu de cara com os caras da boca de fumo. Na dúvida entre um preto ou um branco de vinte para ser consumido no conforto do seu cafofo, preferiu as mãos vazias.

Pensou bem, não quis arrumar outra fogueira para pular. Achou melhor evitar o risco de tomar uma dura da polícia, arranjar um flagrante forjado e uma anotação na ficha criminal.

Enquanto caminhava rumo ao ponto de mototáxi, Uoston ensaiava o ejó que ia armar com Uitinei, a irmã caçula truqueira metida a cantora, com quem estava engasgado até o talo de tanto ranço. A indaca de afôfô já estava formada e no que dependesse dele, ia ter batidas de palma, mãos nas cadeiras, peneirada de ombro, sobrançelha arqueada, boca de pierrô e muita baixaria.

A bronca do irmão tinha razão: foi por insistência da mana que a mona desalentada atravessou a cidade debaixo de ‘uma lua’ dos infernos para se consultar com a tal mãe de santo. Era sua última tentativa para se livrar de vez das perturbações, mas na cabeça de Uoston, perdera tempo, paciência e um aqué que nem tinha para gastar.

‘Ah, Uitinei... você não perde por esperar!’, pensava alto o viado vingativo enquanto tramava na mente o rebuceteio familiar que ia parar a rua onde morava desde que se entende por gente.

He arrived at the mototaxi point sweating like a pig, his deodorant was about to run out. He was going to be the next person to take a ride from Zulu, the hottest driver in the area, but Uoshton was so off, so seething with attitude, that he didn't even look at the motoboy's rascal face.

Truth be told: the trousers he was wearing stuck to him tighter than Jesus's disciples stuck to the ten commandments. It was difficult to imagine how he'd got those clothes onto that ripped body and even harder to imagine how he'd get them off again.

The dude looked like he was vacuum-packed. It really was out there, his ball sack bulging right between the two trouser legs and his girthy dick fixed at a 90-degree angle beneath the fabric, marking quarter-to-nine.

The worn ripped-knee jeans showed off the guy's thick legs as well as his arse crack that stuck out behind him on top of the motorbike. That booty, practically arched to his neck, didn't seem to fit inside those white jeans with their brand label on show.

Half the neighbourhood would give a kidney and a liver, their soul and a whole month's pay for a night with Zulu, but the same could not be said for Uoshton. He was acting like a bitch and paid no attention to the star boy.

He paid there and then to avoid having to talk later on and took an age trying to fit the helmet over his gigantic Black Power hair. Losing patience, he hurled the safety equipment onto the street and startled everyone hanging at the stop. No one had a clue what was going on.

After the scene he caused, Uoshton mounted the bike. The princess held onto the big black guy's waist, threw his arse back too and dared the bad luck he'd had up until that point as he raked back his hair against the strong wind. Throughout the journey he didn't say a word. Zulu picked up on this disinterest.

Zulu was used to the gay folk hitting on him and he was known for his hard sex. He swore he didn't do it, but was secretly up for anything and enjoyed a good shag with the macho men of the area, without any prior explanation.

The mototaxi driver was unsatisfied with Uoshton's attitude and started to probe:

'You came from Mother Jandira's temple, right?'

'Yup,' his passenger responded dryly. He had no interest in having a conversation with that man, up for anything and everything. To Zulu, the energy was tantalising, he was crazy to get in bed with Uoshton.

'Relax. I'm always dropping off and picking up guys like you there.'

The bitch didn't protest.

Chegou ao ponto do mototáxi suando horrores e com o desodorante perto de vencer. Era o próximo passageiro de Zulu, o cobiçado motoboy da área, mas a Uoston estava tão azeda, tão virada no catiço, que nem olhou para a fuça do mavambo.

Verdade seja dita: se Deus é justo, a calça que ele usava era muito mais. Sabe-se lá como aquela indumentária tinha entrado naquele corpo sarado e muito menos como sairia dali.

O bofe parecia estar embalado a vácuo. Era gritante o saco partido bem ao meio e o volumoso ocani posicionado do lado esquerdo da virilha marcando quinze para as nove.

O jeans surrado e rasgado na altura dos dois joelhos destacava as pernas grossas e o edi empinado do cafuçu pagando cofre em cima da moto. Aquela raba quase alcançando a nuca parecia não caber dentro da cueca branca com a etiqueta da grife exposta.

Enquanto meio bairro daria um rim, um fígado, a alma e o ordenado inteiro do mês por uma noite com Zulu, Uoston bancou a enjoada. Se Cássia Kiss, o mesmo não poderia se dizer dele. A bicha fez a Kátia cega e ignorou o boy odara.

Pagou logo adiantado para abreviar o assunto, travou uma luta para enfiar o capacete naquele cabelo Black Power gigante. Perdeu a paciência e varou longe o equipamento de segurança para espanto de geral ali no ponto. Ninguém entendeu nada.

Depois do piti, Uoston trepou na garupa da moto. A bilu agarrou na cintura do negão, jogou a rabeta para o alto, desafiou a sorte que até aquele instante não tinha e lá foi bem afrontosa com o picumã ao vento abafado. Não deu um pio sequer no trajeto. Zulu estranhou a indiferença.

Estava acostumado a tomar cantada de viado e tinha fama de socador. Ele jurava que não pegava, mas no sigilo topava tudo e curtia uma broderagem sem explanação.

O motorista não se deu por satisfeito com o desprezo e puxou assunto.

‘Tu veio lá do terreiro da Mãe Jandira, não veio?’

‘Vim’, respondeu a seco o passageiro, sem a menor disposição em render conversa com aquele cara disponível para qualquer negócio. Aquele clima pareceu instigante para Zulu, doido para quebrar uma louça com a Uoston.

‘Tô ligado. Sempre levo e busco uns caras como você lá.’

A bicha não se manifestava.

'Next time you're back, all you have to do is drop me a text, ok?' he said, already handing out his card to the guy he hoped would be his next catch.

And the bitch didn't protest. He pursed his lips shut and stayed like that.

The deadly silence of the trip got interrupted by Zulu yanking down on the brakes and almost sending the twink flying.

'I'm not doing this again,' Uoshton hit back at Zulu, who now looked sad as his passenger got off the back of the bike outside the station, not turning to look back.

He hung about on the platform where the trains headed southbound via the Central Station. Finally, after four attempts, he managed to get into a carriage. That long return journey was unbearable, the train was heaving. So many people squashing up against each other, pushing and shoving, and there Uoshton was, pissed off with it all, up to here with it.

In amongst the mass of people he had the further good fortune of someone treading hard on his foot, right on his ingrown toenail. He saw the stars. The only reason he didn't deck the offender was because it was the local blind man asking for change, a familiar face to the commuters. Otherwise, Uoshton would've definitely started something.

He also had to put up with a load of vendors having an argument about who had shouted the loudest and won over the preference of the customers in the carriage. The boy wanted to die.

As if it couldn't get much worse, the air conditioning in the carriage was broken. He got out at the next station, ran along and entered the carriage in front without realising that it was women-only. That was a big mistake.

Swearing with hands clasped together that he was gay and a feminist didn't make an ounce of difference, getting the women passengers and security guards on his side was impossible. There was nothing left for him but to be thrown out and shouted at with every single slur under the sun. He was unsure whether he'd caused or been on the receiving end of more shame.

Uoshton just wanted to be back home – he wished that Friday would end. Or even better, he wished it had never existed, same as the day his mum decided to go after her American dream, leaving him behind at six-years-old with his little sister.

'Now, you both promise mummy that you'll do what granny says? As soon as things work out for me over there, I'm coming back for you,' Márcia said to her children, Uoshton and Utinei, before leaving for the airport. She'd promised them the same thing last time and then got married to a yankee she'd met at the carioca disco-brothel called Help.

‘Da próxima vez em que voltar, se tu quiser, é só dar um toque, valeu?’, disse o boy já entregando o cartão para quem pensava ser a sua próxima presa.

E a bicha não se manifestava. Calada estava, calada continuou.

O silêncio sepulcral do trajeto foi interrompido pela arrancada dada por Zulu na moto, que por pouco não arremessou a monete longe.

‘Eu não vou mais voltar aqui’, retrucou Uoston para desapontamento do oco enquanto descia da garupa em frente à estação. Nem olhou para trás.

Mofou na plataforma sentido Central do Brasil. Depois de quatro tentativas enfim conseguiu entrar na condução. Não bastasse a lonjura do caminho de volta, o trem estava lotado. Era tanta gente se espremendo, se esbarrando e Uoston puto, com raiva da vida.

Naquela muvucada foi presenteada com um belo pisão no pé, bem na unha encravada. Chegou a ver estrelas. Só não comeu de porrada o autor da patada porque era um cego pedinte e velho conhecido dos passageiros. Do contrário, o tempo ia fechar no coletivo.

Também teve que suportar uma renca de camelôs disputando quem gritava mais para ganhar a preferência da freguesia. A bicha queria morrer.

Como todo castigo para corno é pouco, o ar condicionado do vagão em que Uoston viajava estava quebrado. Desceu na estação seguinte, correu e entrou no carro da frente sem se dar conta de que era o exclusivo de mulheres. Não foi bem recebido.

Nem o fato de jurar de pé junto que era gay e feminista convenceu as passageiras e os seguranças. Não teve jeito, saiu de lá enxotada, xoxada e xingada de tudo quanto é nome pelas manas. Ficou em dúvida se pagava a vergonha que passou no débito ou no crédito.

Só queria chegar em casa, desejava que aquela sexta-feira acabasse. Ou melhor, que nunca tivesse existido. Assim como o dia em que a mãe dele decidiu ir embora atrás do tal sonho americano, deixando-o para trás com seis anos junto com a irmã mais nova.

‘Juram pra mãe que vão obedecer a vó? Assim que tudo der certo lá, eu volto pra buscar vocês dois’, disse Márcia para os filhos Uoston e Uitinei antes de ir para o aeroporto. Já havia prometido isso para as crianças na vez passada, quando casou com um gringo que conheceu na Help.

The neighbourhood gossips say she returned three years later and in the biggest state, they say she came back empty-handed and didn't even stay a week with the kids. While his sister held on tight to their mother's promise that she'd bring back toy dolls, Uoshton didn't say a thing.

His mother hit the road again. She died attempting to cross the border between Mexico and the United States, and her body remained there. The anger that Uoshton felt only got worse as the minutes ticked by, the memories seemed to trickle back to him now as the rickety train carried onwards.

'I don't know what else I can possibly do for this boy', said Mrs Conceição to the headteacher of the school.

Once again, she had been called in as a matter of urgency owing to her grandson's bad behaviour. The curlers were still lodged in her hair. The lad was repeating sixth grade for the fourth year in a row and this time had gone and graffitied 'Donald Duck likes to suck' onto every possible surface of the school. It was the last straw.

'His sister doesn't give me any grief, she just gets on with her little life, she studies and makes the cakes she sells to earn her pocket money. The only time she gets on my nerves is when she starts making a racket with that singing of hers.'

She then turned to her grandson, whose face was like a sad puppy's.

'But this one you see here, you almost want to let go of his hand. Thing is, if I do that, he'll disappear from the world and have the same fate as his mum, and she didn't even get laid to rest. Oh, you've really got it coming for you, young man, haven't you just!'

Coming back to reality now, Uoshton noticed he'd missed the station he was meant to get off at, the train was already at Central Station – though he kind of fancied the idea of spending some time around the Arpoador rocks at Ipanema. The sunset had been and gone, but he was lucky enough to bump into some of the volleyball crew that were still there. And sure, he was a bit out of practice, but still had it in him to defend at the net and hit some strong shots, he was down for playing, it would allow him to let off some steam.

On the first counterattack, the ball flew off and hit Sam square in the face.

'Yo, you should pay more attention where you're throwing that ball!!!!'

'My bad,' he apologised dryly, and turned his back.

Tension on the beach: Sam went after Uoshton.

'What the fuck you want me to do about it?!? Tore a chunk out of you, did I?!? Did I not say it was an accident?!?' he yelled, giving the foreign guy a push.

As más línguas da vizinhança contam que ela voltou três anos depois na maior merda, de mãos abanando e não ficou nem uma semana com as crias. Enquanto a irmã se iludia com a promessa das bonecas que a mãe traria, Uoston era só silêncio.

A mãe meteu o pé. Morreu tentando atravessar a fronteira do México com os Estados Unidos e o corpo ficou por lá mesmo. O ódio de Uoston só aumentava com o passar do tempo e as lembranças pareciam vir em cascata na cabeça dele enquanto o trem seguia naquele balanço desconfortável.

‘Eu já não sei mais o que fazer com esse menino’, disse Dona Conceição para a diretora do colégio.

Tinha sido convocada com urgência mais uma vez por causa do mau comportamento do neto. Nem tempo para tirar os bobs do cabelo a velha teve. O moleque, que estava estacionado na quinta série pelo quarto ano consecutivo, desta vez havia rabiscado ‘o pluto é filho da pluta’ em tudo quanto é canto da escola. Foi a gota d’água.

‘A irmã dele não me traz aborrecimento, leva a vidinha dela sossegada, estuda e faz bolo pra fora pra ganhar o dinheirinho dela. Só me tira do sério quando ela me começa com aquela cantoria de taquara rachada.’

A avó se virou então para o neto, que estava com aquela cara de cachorro que caiu da mudança.

‘Agora esse aí ó, dá vontade de largar de mão. Mas se eu fizer isso, vai sumir no mundo e levar o mesmo fim da mãe, que nem enterro decente teve. O pau te acha, peste! Ah, se acha!’

Quando voltou para a realidade, Uoston se deu conta de que tinha passado da estação em que deveria descer, já estava na Central do Brasil. Preferiu dar um rolé no Arpoador. Perdeu o pôr do sol, mas esbarrou com as manas do vôlei. Estava meio enferrujado, mas, como ainda atacava bem, dava uma cobertura na rede e uns bons saques pesados, topou jogar para espairer um pouco.

No primeiro contra-ataque, a bola voou longe e acertou em cheio a cara de Sam.

‘Você devia prestar mais atenção onde jogar “esse” bola!!!!’

‘Foi mal’, se desculpou seco e deu as costas.

Bafão na areia: Sam partiu para cima de Uoston.

‘Você quer que eu faça o quê, porra?!? Arrancou pedaço, caralho?!? Já não disse que foi sem querer?!?’, gritou, já empurrando o gringo.

The American, who wasn't going to take any shit, gave Uoshton a stare. Then they started throwing insults. The foreigner's stock of Portuguese words ran out pretty quick and so he turned to English.

But Uoshton wasn't going to back down. He fired off a 'Fuck you' and a 'Get out motherfucker', the phrases he'd learnt from movies and the games he used to play at the Internet café when he was a kid and skipped classes, to his grandmother's distress.

If there was a language barrier between them, hot blood about to boil they had in common. All you had to do was strike a match and ... Boom! A blazing fire between Uoshton and that man who was also black, in his early twenties and had a head raging with revolt.

Sam sneered at the insults and that was it, he'd crossed the line. The fight was about to get completely out of hand and would've soon become a full-on brawl if not for the group around them intervening and telling them 'Guys, let it go', so everything ended with them joshing around at the top of the beach.

Unlike Uoshton, Sam appeared to believe in something. He had Psalm 23 tattooed in English on the left side of his chest and another tattoo, this one of Tupac, across his muscular shoulders.

The snapback that the American wore hid a scar on his forehead. The Chicago Bulls jersey, two sizes too big, showed off his strong biceps and the dark hair that came out the armholes. His hard face warded off those who didn't know him but also provoked a mixed sensation of curiosity and giddy interest from gays who quivered at this novelty on the beach of Ipanema.

What almost no one knew was that behind his hard front was a lot of hurt and a fair few open wounds.

Just like Uoshton, Sam also knew the meaning of the word abandonment, by heart, back to front. Because of his strong temper, he had been adopted five times, returned by four families and just broken his ties with the last, which had taken him in as a teenager, so he could return to Brazil in search of his origins.

He was the son of a Brazilian woman and never knew who his American father was. Then he was taken from her during an immigration raid, left to fend for himself and stand the cold of the shelters where he'd spend most of his childhood.

No news was to be heard of his deported mother ever again: the fuel for his revolt. When the day came for him to choose his own destiny, he flicked the switch, 'Fuck it,' and got out of America, coming to Rio de Janeiro for something he may never find.

O americano, que não levava desaforo para casa, encarou e deu-se um bate-boca. Como o estoque de palavras em português do gringo esgotou bem rápido, engatou no inglês.

Uoston não deixou por menos e não ia ficar por baixo. Mandou um fuck you, depois um get out mother fucker. Tinha aprendido nos filmes e games que jogava na lan house quando era moleque e matava aulas para desgosto da avó.

Se a língua separava, o sangue quente e os nervos à flor da pele uniam estes dois. Foi só acender o fósforo e... Bum! Incêndio na certa entre Uoston e aquele homem também negro, de vinte e poucos anos e cheio de revolta na cabeça.

Sam desdenhou do vocabulário dele e cutucou a onça com vara curta. Ia dar babado, gritaria e confusão. Aquela discussão estava prestes a descambar em porradaria, mas a turma do 'deixa disso' interveio e tudo terminou em zoeira pesada na beira da praia.

Ao contrário de Uoston, Sam parecia acreditar em algo. Tinha o Salmo 23 tatuado em inglês no lado esquerdo do peito e outra tatuagem de Tupac nas costas musculosas.

O boné com aba quadrada enterrado na cabeça do americano escondia uma cicatriz na testa. A camiseta do Chicago Bulls, dois números acima do tamanho dele, realçava os braços fortes e os pelos grossos das axilas que escapavam pela manga. A cara amarrada assustava quem não o conhecia, mas também provocava um misto de tesão e curiosidade nas bees mais nervosas com a novidade da praia de Ipanema.

O que quase ninguém sabia é que por trás daquela carranca também tinha dor e muita ferida aberta.

Como Uoston, ele também sabia de cor e salteado o significado da palavra abandono. Por causa do temperamento forte, fora adotado por cinco famílias, devolvido por quatro e acabara de romper o vínculo com a última, que o acolheu já adolescente, para voltar ao Brasil atrás de suas origens.

Filho de brasileira, nunca soube quem era o pai americano. Numa dessas batidas do serviço de imigração foi arrancado da mãe, ficou abandonado à própria sorte e ao frio dos abrigos onde passou a maior parte da infância.

Da mãe deportada ele nunca teve notícia e esse era o combustível da sua revolta. Quando pôde decidir seu próprio destino, ligou o botão do foda-se, largou a América e veio para o Rio de Janeiro atrás de algo que talvez nem encontre.

Once they'd made up, their clash was a thing of the past. Sam and Uoshton were sitting outside a bar on the corner of the *Farme de Amoedo*, having a drink. There was a sense of intimacy between them, with each intrigued to learn about the life of the other.

Neither of them wanted to leave. Who would've guessed it, that encounter ended up becoming so much more than expected. It's summer still, but a little cold, everything is grey, the streets and beaches deserted. While it's been raining for two weeks straight in Rio, Uoshton seems to have forgotten the stuff that pissed him off, his grudges with life and even his way back home.

Sam dropped the hard look. Now he grins wide for no apparent reason. Just like his partner, he too forgot about his past, about the blows he'd taken and about the real reason that had brought him to this city, the one he has no intention of leaving.

The windows and door to that top-floor flat on the slope of *Cantagalo*, looking out towards the sea, have been closed for days. Inside: heat, lust, passion.

Those steamed-up windows and mirror are the only witnesses to the hot water slipping down Uoshton's naked body in the shower, under the attentive eyes of Sam. He takes great care when lathering the man's back, so thankful for the love this city has given him, unbelieving and simultaneously in awe of the person he watches whilst kissing and caressing him, now his and no one else's.

Life outdoors goes on waiting for the two of them. Sam and Uoshton made a pact, holding each other tightly and onto the world they created from within those four walls where they are bound, without a date or time for leaving.

Finally, those black bodies are loving each other and never in a million years would they dream of letting go of the other's hand. No one regulates our hearts.

For Ecio Salles (in memoriam). Rio de Janeiro, winter 2019.

Quando deram por si, a treta já era coisa do passado. Sam e Uoston estavam sentados num quiosque da Farme de Amoedo bebendo. Havia um clima de cumplicidade, estavam bem interessados em saber um da vida do outro.

Não queriam se perder de vista e aquele encontro, quem diria, acabou rendendo mais do que o esperado. Ainda é verão, mas faz frio, tudo é cinza, as ruas e as praias estão desertas. Tem duas semanas que chove sem parar no Rio, Uoston parece ter se esquecido das quizilas, das amarguras da vida e do próprio caminho de casa.

Sam abandonou o semblante amarrado. Agora ele sorri alto e escancarado sem ao menos saber do quê. Como o seu par, também se esqueceu de seu passado, das boladas e das rasteiras que levou e do real motivo que o trouxe pela primeira vez a esta cidade, da qual não pensa em se despedir.

A porta e as janelas daquele apartamento de último andar na subida do Cantagalo de frente pro mar estão fechadas há dias. Lá dentro é tudo paixão, tesão, calor.

Os vidros e o espelho embaçados testemunham a água quente do chuveiro deslizando pelo corpo nu de Uoston sob os olhos atentos do Sam. Ele ensaboa sem pressa as costas em relevo do amor que esta cidade lhe deu, incrédulo e ao mesmo tempo admirado do que vê, enquanto toca lentamente e beija o que agora é só dele e de mais ninguém.

A vida lá fora segue esperando pelos dois. Sam e Uoston fizeram um pacto, apegaram-se um ao outro e ao mundo que criaram a partir daquelas quatro paredes onde estão confinados sem dia ou hora para sair.

Pela primeira vez aqueles corpos negros estão se amando e nem em sonho pensam em soltar a mão do outro. Ninguém regula o coração.

Para Ecio Salles (in memoriam). Rio de Janeiro, inverno de 2019.

(Conceição, Evandro Luiz da. 'Ninguém regula a América'. In *Contos para depois do ódio: Inspirados nas canções de Marcelo Yuka*, edited by Ecio Salles and Julio Ludemir, 123–129. Rio de Janeiro: Mórula Editorial, Flup, 2020.)

5

Eighty-Eight, by Eliana Alves Cruz, translated by Felipe Fanuel Xavier Rodrigues

The group had been in the meeting for hours without reaching a conclusion. There was a buzz in the room, and occasionally someone took over, trying to settle the matter. Doctor Josefina, with her chin and a bored gaze resting in her cupped hands, seemed oblivious to it all. Her mind was anywhere but in a room at the Institute for the Research of Feelings (IRF). She let the debate go on for a long time without interrupting it until she slowly stood up. With her stony expression and closed eyes, she imposed silence and took the floor.

‘A thousand years have passed ... A thousand years! We’re in this eternal effort to empathise, and we still haven’t managed to do it in a totally efficient way. This meeting is the unequivocal proof of that.’

The words of the head researcher snapped like a whip in that group formed of the top minds who were studying the subject on three planets. Some of them were not physically present, and this fact, instead of stifling the debate, sometimes made it more heated because the feeling of absence summoned up a kind of courage that an opponent’s glare sometimes suppressed.

‘Look at yourselves. You’re behaving like those primitive men of the twenty-first century when they displayed bravery only by the virulence of words typed on the keyboards of their old computers or devices.’

The comparison embarrassed the group of respected scientists. Still, they could not refute their boss, which was precisely why she held that position: for her deep sense of observation and accurate analysis besides all her technical skills.

Oitenta e oito, de Eliana Alves Cruz

O grupo estava reunido há horas e sem chegar a uma conclusão. Um burburinho percorria o ambiente e vez por outra uma voz queria dominar e fechar a questão. A doutora Josefina, mãos postas sob o queixo e o olhar cansado, parecia alheia a tudo aquilo. Estava em qualquer outro lugar, menos em uma sala do IPS – Instituto de Pesquisas dos Sentimentos. Deixou o debate acontecer por um bom tempo sem interferir até aquele momento em que lentamente se levantou e, com sua figura pétrea de olhos cerrados, impôs o silêncio e tomou a palavra.

‘Mil anos passaram... Mil anos! Estamos neste esforço eterno de empatia e ainda não conseguimos de forma totalmente eficiente. Esta reunião é a prova inequívoca disto.’

As palavras da pesquisadora-chefe tiveram força de açoite no grupo formado pelas melhores cabeças que estudavam o tema em três planetas. Alguns não estavam presentes em corpo e este fato ao invés de amenizar, por vezes acirrava o debate, pois o sentimento de intangibilidade dava uma coragem que o olhar do oponente por vezes suprimia.

‘Observem a vocês mesmos. Estão comportando-se como aqueles homens primitivos do século 21, em que a bravura se apresentava apenas na virulência das palavras digitadas nos teclados de seus velhos computadores ou dispositivos.’

A comparação constrangeu o grupo de respeitados cientistas, mas eles não conseguiram rebater a chefe que, aliás, por isso mesmo ocupava esta função: por seu profundo senso de observação e análise acurada, para além de toda sua capacidade técnica.

Josefina was one of the pioneers of the so-called 'Lived Experiences'. That is, time travel to see historical events on-site and observe how certain events really occurred. In these journeys, they saw the events as if in a film, but they were there, invisible in the scene. They had a set amount of time to stay, and rigid rules of conduct enforced by a strict code of ethics. Years of training were required to join an expedition. She was in charge of the psychological analyses of the characters involved, but now there was a radical proposal.

The scholar continued as if she were a general giving a speech to motivate her troops before battle.

'We'll be the first group to take the "Lived Experiences" to an unprecedented level. We'll be the first group to put ourselves in their shoes.'

And at this point, she paused dramatically to allow her words to sink in.

'When we return from our mission, we'll carry in our luggage what we lack in all its fullness: the sacred secrets of empathy. Now is the time for the grand finale. Which of you will carry on? If you think you must do so, this is the time for you to give up.'

Professor Tomás was restless from the start and stood up abruptly, speaking harshly:

'I give up! I see no point in going back to suffering. I don't get it – how can we help future generations or even planets and nations that still suffer the scourge of slavery today, just by "putting ourselves in the shoes of people" who experienced it long time ago? We've already got enough information to help in this fight without having to go through something like this. Pain needs to be sublimated, not relived. You're all crazy to go back there this way! What are we trying to prove? After intense reflection, I have concluded I cannot go along with this idea. I'm definitely out.'

Three other scholars stood up with Tomás. Dr Josefina responded curtly.

'Withdrawal accepted. You're right.'

The audience of researchers didn't understand a thing. 'After so much work and study, how could she possibly agree with Tomás?' some of them thought. But she went on:

Josefina fora uma das pioneiras nas chamadas ‘Experiências de Vivência.’ Viagens no tempo para ver *in loco* acontecimentos históricos e observar como alguns fatos realmente ocorreram. Nessas jornadas viam os acontecimentos como num filme, mas estavam lá, invisíveis na cena. Tinham um tempo determinado para permanecer e regras de conduta rígidas comandadas por um código de ética severo. Anos de treinamento eram necessários para integrar uma expedição. Ela era a encarregada por fazer a análise psicológica dos personagens envolvidos, mas agora a proposta radicalizou-se.

A doutora prosseguiu como numa preleção de general para a tropa antes da batalha.

‘Seremos o primeiro grupo a levar as “Experiências de Vivência” a um nível nunca antes experimentado. Seremos o primeiro grupo a vestir a pele.’

E neste ponto fez uma pausa dramática, para deixar que suas palavras surtisses efeito.

‘Quando retornarmos da nossa missão, traremos na bagagem, com toda a plenitude, o que nos falta: o tesouro dos mistérios da empatia. Agora é chegado o momento derradeiro. Quem de vocês prossegue? Se acharem que devem, o tempo de desistir chegou.’

O professor Tomás estava inquieto desde o início e levantou-se abruptamente, falando com rispidez.

‘Eu desisto. Não vejo sentido em voltarmos ao sofrimento. Não vejo como poderemos ajudar às gerações futuras ou mesmo aos planetas e nações que ainda sofrem hoje o flagelo da escravidão apenas por “vestir a pele” dos que vivenciaram isto em passado tão remoto. Já possuímos informação suficiente para auxiliar nesta luta sem precisar passar por algo assim. A dor precisa ser sublimada e não revivida. Vocês todos são loucos de voltar por este caminho! O que provaremos com isso? Após intensa reflexão, vi que não compactuo com esta ideia. Desisto de forma irremediável.’

Outros três mestres levantaram com Tomás. A Dra. Josefina atalhou.

‘Desistência aceita. Você está certo.’

A assistência de pesquisadores não entendeu nada. Depois de tanto tempo de trabalho e estudos, como ela poderia dar razão a Tomás? pensavam alguns. Mas ela prosseguiu:

‘The Eighty-Eight machine is all set. I suggested naming it in reference to the year 1888 on planet Earth, in Brazil, as exactly one thousand years have passed since that date. I don’t need to tell a scholarly audience about its significance. Well, then, Tomás, I think you’re right because neither your colleagues nor I want pain again. That’s madness. When we get in that machine, we’ll feel exactly like Francisco José do Nascimento, the Sea Dragon, when he refused to transport a slave on his raft for the first time in 1881.’

‘What kind of synapses did his brain make? What feelings flowed from his mind into his chest and vice versa when he led the fishermen’s strike against slavery? It has been a while since we had anything like that in our society. We no longer know what feeling is like ... and such an infectious sense of freedom doesn’t burn in us anymore! We badly need to be infected by the courage of the Black engineer André Rebouças when he said, for example, in a group of landowners, that having access to land was a liberation for the enslaved. We need to be deeply infected by the same impetus that led the lawyer Luiz Gama to scrutinise the law and free 500 people from captivity, or even José do Patrocínio when he published his compelling words in *Gazeta da Tarde*. The Eighty-Eight machine will make us fly on the wings of time and hear the sound of Zumbi dos Palmares’s heartbeat. It will place us at the tip of Dandara’s spear. Yes, friends! Our experience proves that these people really existed, as doubts remained. Now we need more! We really need to resonate with them and not with the distant coldness of research. We’ll also step on the stones and follow the paths of some anonymous people in past centuries who were infected by this “virus” of desire for change and acted in an absolutely decisive way. Damn it, we want to discover the secrets of empathy!’

Dr Josefina took a sip of water. Everyone was somewhat surprised at the direction the work was taking. She continued:

‘I know that you, Tomás, and many here were preparing yourselves to suffer and to extract from pain what moves us towards the other, but that’s not what we propose. We’ll be in the shoes of those who were empathetic enough to leave inertia behind. I didn’t explain it before because we needed those who were brave enough, if necessary, to feel pain. After all, according to everything we already know, the first precondition for empathy is to have the guts to get into somebody else’s anguish.’

‘A máquina Oitenta e Oito está pronta. Sugeri este nome para batizá-la numa menção ao ano de 1888 no planeta Terra, no Brasil, visto que se completam exatos mil anos daquela data. Não preciso dizer a uma plateia de doutores o que ela significou. Pois bem, Tomás, digo que você está correto porque nem eu e muito menos seus colegas queremos outra vez a dor. Isso é insanidade. Quando eu e eles entrarmos naquela máquina, o que vamos sentir é exatamente a mesma coisa que sentiu Francisco José do Nascimento, o Dragão do Mar, no momento exato em que pela primeira vez desistiu de transportar um escravo em sua jangada, em 1881.’

‘Que sorte de sinapses fez seu cérebro? Que emoções saíram de sua mente para o peito e vice-versa no momento em que liderou a greve de jangadeiros contra a escravidão? Há muito tempo não temos em nossa sociedade nada semelhante. Não sabemos mais sentir... e muito menos contagiar com esse fogo por liberdade! Precisamos ser irremediavelmente contaminados pela coragem do engenheiro negro André Rebouças, por exemplo, ao dizer, em uma sociedade de senhores de terra, que o acesso do escravizado à terra era libertação; e ser profundamente contaminados pelo mesmo ímpeto que fez o advogado Luiz Gama se debruçar sobre leis e livrar 500 pessoas do cativeiro ou ainda José do Patrocínio a soltar suas contundentes palavras na *Gazeta da Tarde*. A máquina Oitenta e Oito vai nos fazer voar nas asas do tempo e nos colocar no pulsar do coração de Zumbi dos Palmares. Ela nos colocará na ponta da lança de Dandara. Sim, amigos! Nossas experiências de vivência já provaram que eles existiram de fato, pois restavam dúvidas. Agora precisamos de mais! Precisamos vibrar junto com eles verdadeiramente e não com a frieza distante das pesquisas. Vamos pisar também as pedras e os caminhos de alguns anônimos em séculos passados que foram contagiados por este “vírus” do desejo de mudanças e agiram de forma absolutamente decisiva. Queremos – ora bolas! – descobrir os segredos da empatia.’

A Dra. Josefina bebeu um gole de água. Todos estavam um tanto surpresos com o viés do trabalho. Ela prosseguiu.

‘Sei que você, Tomás, e muitos aqui estavam se preparando para sofrer e extrair da dor o que nos move em direção ao outro, mas nossa proposta não é esta. Vamos entrar na pele dos que foram empáticos o suficiente para sair da inércia. Não detalhei antes porque precisávamos dos que tivessem a coragem suficiente para, se for necessário, sentir dor, pois segundo tudo o que já sabemos este é o primeiro requisito da empatia: a bravura em vestir a angústia do outro.’

Finally, after decades of preparation, they were ready. Getting a bewildered look from Tomás and the other quitters, those who chose to carry on sat around the machine, a polyhedron with timers and a screen displaying pictures of the characters to be studied. Each one set the timer for a character and a moment in history. They held hands. This touch of hands was necessary because all the researchers shared, each in their own way, the same feeling of love for the human being.

Before their departure, however, Dr Nathaniel, a religious scholar, after observing everything in silence, said to the dissenting group:

‘Tomás, never forget that Eshu killed a bird yesterday with the stone he threw today!’

And propelled by the heart of the Eighty-Eight machine, they were ready to navigate in the bloodstream of time.

Finalmente, depois de décadas de preparação estavam prontos. Sob o olhar desconcertado de Tomás e seu grupo de desistentes, os que optaram por prosseguir sentaram-se ao redor da máquina, um poliedro com cronômetros e uma tela com imagens dos personagens que seriam estudados. Cada um ajustou o cronômetro para um momento da história e para um personagem. Deram-se as mãos. Este toque de mãos era necessário, pois todos os pesquisados partilhavam, cada um ao seu modo, o mesmo sentimento de amor pelo ser humano.

Antes da partida, porém, o Dr. Natanael, o especialista em religiões, após observar tudo calado disse ao grupo dissidente:

‘Tomás, nunca esqueça: Exu matou um pássaro ontem com a pedra que atirou hoje.’

E impulsionados pelo coração que era a máquina Oitenta e Oito, estavam prontos para navegar na corrente sanguínea do tempo.

(Cruz, Eliana Alves. ‘Oitenta e Oito’. In *Cadernos Negros 40: Contos afro-brasileiros*, edited by Esmeralda Ribeiro and Márcio Barbosa, 179–181. São Paulo: Quilombhoje, 2017.)

6

The Doll, by Cuti, translated by Andrew McDougall

Not a single one! He was tired from all the walking. He had done a lot of asking and heard all kinds of answers. On some occasions he had reacted to a shop assistant's lack of tact or even to the subtle ironies. On others he had been led to self-commiseration, after hearing, for example:

'I'm so sorry!'

Or:

'You'll forgive us, sir ... They don't make them, you know?'

Disheartened? No. There was no reason to give up on trying to find a Christmas present for his daughter. He was in great physical shape at 33-years-old. Not only that, it was as if his little girl drove him through the shopping streets. To continue the search, even if trampling over tiredness, was a mission.

Enthusiastically, he entered the next shop. Busy! He waited patiently. A young white girl, with a sweet disposition and a malnourished appearance, inquired:

'Have you been served?'

'No. If you could be so kind, I'm looking for a doll ...'

'We have loads. Look, here's Barbie, Xuxinha ...' the blonde girl began to grab various dolls. She set them upon the counter, as if choosing for herself. 'Look how cute this one is with its blue eyes. It's new. It arrived yesterday and is almost sold out already. It cries, has a dummy, pees ... And this other one here, isn't it lovely?' She clutched the fair-skinned yellowy-blond doll to her chest and moved its little arms and legs around, 'Don't you like any of them?'

'The thing is, I'm looking for a black doll ...'

A half-hour pause.

6

Boneca, de Cuti

Nenhuma! Cansou de tanto andar. Perguntara muito. Ouvira respostas de todo tipo. Algumas vezes reagira à escassa delicadeza de certos balconistas e mesmo às ironias finas. Em outros momentos fora levado à autocomiseração, depois de ouvir, por exemplo:

‘Sinto muito!...’

Ou:

‘Queira nos desculpar... A fábrica não fornece, sabe?...’

Desanimar? Não. Não havia por que desistir de encontrar o presente de Natal para a filha. Ele estava em plena forma física de seus 33 anos. Além disso, era como se a pequena o conduzisse pelas ruas do centro comercial. Continuar a procura, mesmo pisoteando o cansaço, era uma missão.

Com entusiasmo, entrou na loja seguinte. Cheia! Aguardou pacientemente. Uma mocinha branca, de ar meigo e aspecto subnutrido, indagou:

‘O senhor já foi atendido?’

‘Não. Por gentileza, eu estou procurando uma boneca...’

‘Temos várias. Olha aqui a Barby, a Xuxinha...’ E a loirinha foi apanhando diversas bonecas. Colocava-as sobre o balcão, como se escolhesse para si. ‘Olha que gracinha esta aqui de olhos azuis! É novidade. Chegou ontem e já vendeu quase tudo. Chora, tem chupeta, faz pipi... e essa outra aqui? Não é uma graça?’ E levou ao colo a ruivinha de tom amarelado, bem clarinha. Mexeu-lhe os bracinhos e as perninhas e indagou: ‘Não gostou de nenhuma?’

‘É que estou procurando uma boneca negra...’

Meia hora de espera.

'We do have some,' the store owner said to his employee, 'Look better on the shelf below, just up there, by the sink.'

The girl went back up the stairs, after smiling in submissive embarrassment.

She came down again, received new instructions and smiled once more. Then, from up on the mezzanine, she waved the chubby, dark brown face of a doll. Beaming, the assistant wielded it like a trophy. She descended the stairs like that, but, careless on the steps, she nosedived. Everyone freaked out. Colleagues rushed to her aid.

Nothing broken. Just a fright. The boss was exasperated, but soon managed to collect himself, red as a chili pepper. The shop was full. He went to deal with the customer.

'Excuse the delay and the commotion, sir, but it was nothing. The important thing is we found the product. It's low in stock, you know? ... They don't send them. I ordered some myself last week, but the representative said the company was exporting to Africa. That's fine, but there's customers here looking for them, too, aren't there? Are you Brazilian, sir?'

'Yes.'

'Well ...' He swallowed his sentence and prepared the receipt.

Out in the street, the father, amongst other thoughts, some of them unsavoury, figured that some relaxation was called for after sweating out expectations on that December morning. He took a deep breath. He looked around at the beautiful arrangements of Christmas decorations, dominated by Santa Claus, blonde children, and lots of snow. He carried on, walking slowly, towards a bar.

'A cold blonde one, buddy?' Asked the barman, seeing him settle into a stool.

He smiled and gave a thumbs up.

With the first gulp of beer, he felt profoundly relieved and happy.

‘Tem sim!’ O dono da loja dirigia-se à empregada: ‘Procura melhor, na prateleira de baixo, lá em cima mesmo, perto da pia.’

A moça subiu de novo a escada, depois de sorrir um submisso constrangimento.

Desceu mais uma vez, recebeu novas instruções e tornou a sorrir. Em seguida, do alto do mezanino, mostrou o rostinho gorducho, marrom escuro, de uma boneca. Radiante, a balconista empunhava-a como um troféu. Assim desceu a escada. Mas, descuidando-se nos degraus, despencou-se. Todos se apavoraram. As colegas de trabalho foram em socorro.

Nenhuma fratura. Apenas um susto. O patrão exasperou-se, mas logo conseguiu controlar-se, vermelho como pimenta malagueta. A loja estava cheia. Foi atender o cliente.

‘O senhor desculpe a demora e o transtorno. Mas, não foi nada. O importante é encontramos o produto. Está em falta, sabe?... Eles não entregam. Eu mesmo encomendei a semana passada. Mas o representante disse que a firma está exportando para a África. Está certo, mas aqui também tem freguês que procura, não é?’

‘Sim.’

‘Então...’ o homem engoliu a frase e preparou a nota.

Já na rua, o pai, entre tantos pensamentos, alguns desagradáveis, lembrou da descontração a que fazia jus, depois de suar expectativas naquela manhã de dezembro. Respirou fundo. Contemplou o lindo embrulho de motivações natalinas, em que se destacavam o Papai Noel, crianças louras e muita neve. Seguiu, os passos lentos, em direção a uma lanchonete.

‘Vai uma loura gelada aí, chefe?’ pronunciou o balconista ao vê-lo sentar-se junto ao balcão.

Sorriu, confirmando com um gesto de polegar.

Ao primeiro gole de cerveja, sentiu-se profundamente aliviado e feliz.

(Cuti. ‘Boneca’. In *Contos escolhidos*, 43–45. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Malê, 2018.)

7

Yellow Man, by Augusto Dias, translated by Victor Meadowcroft

History repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as farse.

Karl Marx

In the Enxovia Ataulfo de Paiva, in Leblon, there is a prisoner known as the yellow man. The prison bears this name because it was built beneath Ataulfo de Paiva Avenue, while the term enxovia, Portuguese for dungeon, comes from the Arabic word *al-jub*, literally ‘cistern’ or ‘well’. The man is alone there, guarded by the military: Army, Airforce and Navy, each on an eight-hour watch. The intervention has ended, but they are still responsible for the detainee and his jail cell. In Portuguese, *jaula*. Both, jail and *jaula*, come from the Old French word, *geôle*, and, before that, the Latin *caveola*, ‘a place for keeping animals’. In the diminutive, *cavea*, ‘an enclosed place’. Sure, that makes sense.

No one can remember his real name anymore, not even the yellow man himself. He is 118 years old. The troops must watch over him, as he wanders back and forth along the corridors, dragging himself across the prison yard, which, they say, was once a shopping centre. Observing the guards closely, he tries to guess which federal forces they belong to but is unable to. The uniforms aren’t the same anymore. He isn’t the same anymore. How many years spent in that penitentiary? *Penitantiarius*, in Latin, ‘relating to penance, punishment’. Or from *poena*, ‘penalty, condemnation’. Every hour spent there is its own penalty.

The uniforms observe the tiny, fragile old man too. He no longer displays the health and vigour of his days in the Santa Marta favela, the days of hip hop in Lapa with his tribe, of samba in that hillside slum, the morro. Samba on the morro ... Suddenly, it’s commandos versus military police, auto-switch Glocks against .38s, black boots and gang members.

7

Homem amarelo, de Augusto Dias

A história só se repete como farsa.

Karl Marx

Na Enxovia Ataulfo de Paiva, no Leblon, existe um prisioneiro conhecido como o homem amarelo. A prisão é chamada assim porque foi construída no subsolo da avenida. Enxovia vem do árabe al-jub, ao pé da letra, ‘cisterna’ ou ‘poço’. Só ele está ali, sob vigilância militar: Exército, Aeronáutica e Marinha, em turnos de oito horas cada. A intervenção acabou, mas ainda são responsáveis pelo apenado e sua jaula. Em inglês, jail. Ambas, jaula e jail, vêm do francês antigo, geôle, ou, antes, do latim caveola, ‘lugar para guardar animais’. No diminutivo, cavea, ‘lugar fechado’. É, faz sentido.

Ninguém se lembra mais de seu nome verdadeiro, nem o próprio homem amarelo. Ele tem 118 anos. As tropas devem vigiá-lo, enquanto vaga e divaga pelos corredores, arrastando-se pelo pátio externo que, dizem, já foi um shopping center. Olhando detidamente para os guardas, ele tenta adivinhar a qual força federal pertenceriam, mas sem sucesso. As fardas não são mais as mesmas. Ele não é mais o mesmo. Quantos anos nessa penitenciária? Penitentiarius, em latim, ‘relativo à pena, ao castigo’. Ou de poena, ‘penitência, condenação’. As horas ali não valem a pena.

As fardas também observam o velho frágil, diminuto. Ele não apresenta mais a robustez e a saúde dos tempos do Santa Marta, do hip hop na Lapa com sua tribo, do samba no morro. O samba no morro... De repente, comando versus meganha, kits-rajada contra trinta e oitos, botas pretas e bandidos.

The tribe, dispersed; him, wounded, captured, tried, condemned. High-risk, they'd declared at trial. Me? Yes, he, who had only ever wanted to mix with others on the morro and see what it would lead to. Hang with his tribe. But those were other times, other territories. Today, none of those uniformed men who watched over him had any clue why he was there. The order of the day, which has remained unchanged for years, is that they should keep him in custody, a word that makes him think of old American films. In Latin, it meant 'the act of guarding, of watching', with its origins in another word, *custos*, 'a guard, a watcher'. In subtitles, translators would place people 'in custody', rather than 'having them 'arrested'. His life was no American film, but he was in custody. He just couldn't remember why.

His mind, his liberty. It must be an age thing, he consoled himself. At 118 years old (or 119, 120, he wasn't exactly sure), as well as reading, he enjoyed wandering around the prison and thinking. Sometimes he thought he must have been born there. If that were the case, he would surely die there too. Other times he just figured – who knows? – one day they might release him. Only one of the guards seemed fond of him, and would even refer to him as great-grandfather. Sometimes, the guard brought him news. But the yellow man didn't believe any of it. Or didn't pay attention to any of it. He couldn't be certain there really was anything beyond those walls. Protests? Riots? And what was he? An icon? He gave it no credence or attention. He preferred to have his breakfast and his wander, observing the long empty corridors, his old companions. The boy always wants to know if the great-grandfather is in need of anything. Is he? No. Perhaps a change of T-shirt, because this one is over seventy years old and bloodstained. The false great-grandson asks if the yellow man is eager for news of the community. He remains motionless, staring at nothing. Community? Did such a thing still exist? But then, over there he was nothing but an old scoundrel in strange lands and a stranger to himself. His mind, his metal grate, from the Latin *crates*, 'a fence made of interwoven canes', which is where the Portuguese phrase 'in the canes', meaning 'in the clink', comes from. And he had been there far too long already.

Why must they guard him? They weren't certain, simply following the order of the day, year upon year. It seemed some old commanders had once known why he must be kept there, but it had been so long they had forgotten. He should remain under the supervision of a military guard until his death by natural causes. Why? Nobody could remember. Almost a hundred years had passed since a news bulletin announced the reason for his being there. Something to do with the colour of his skin? Or his having worked in drug-trafficking? Or both?

A tribo, debandada; ele, ferido, capturado, julgado, condenado. Grande periculosidade, disseram no julgamento. Eu? Sim, ele, que só queria mesmo era se misturar com o morro para ver o que ia dar. Curtir com sua tribo. Mas isso foi em outros tempos, outros terreiros. Hoje, nenhum daqueles uniformizados que o vigiavam sequer desconfiava por que ele estava ali. A ordem do dia, que é a mesma há anos, é que devem mantê-lo sob custódia, esta palavra que o fazia se lembrar de antigos filmes americanos. Em latim, era o ‘ato de guardar, de vigiar’, palavra oriunda de outra, custos, ‘guardião, vigilante’. Nas legendas, os tradutores colocavam as pessoas ‘sob custódia’, em vez de ‘serem presas’. Sua vida não era um filme americano, mas ele estava sob custódia. Só não se lembrava por quê.

Sua mente, sua liberdade. Ele se consolava, era coisa da idade. Com 118 anos (ou 119, 120, não sabia exatamente), além de ler, gostava de circular pela prisão e pensar. Às vezes pensava que já nascera preso ali. Se fosse este o caso, certamente ali morreria. Outras vezes só achava que – quem sabe? – um dia seria solto. Só um guarda ali parecia gostar dele, chamava-o até de bisavô. Às vezes, trazia-lhe notícias. Mas o homem amarelo não acreditava em nada. Ou não ligava para nada. Sequer tinha certeza de que havia alguma coisa fora dali. Protestos? Tumultos? E ele era o quê? Um ícone? Não costumava lhe dar nem crédito, nem atenção. Preferia tomar seu rumo e seu café, olhando os longos corredores vazios, seus velhos companheiros. O menino insiste se o bisavô carece de algo. Carece? Não carece. Quem sabe mudar de camiseta, que esta tem uns setenta e poucos anos e está manchada de sangue. O falso bisneto indaga se o homem amarelo anseia por notícias da comunidade. Ele fica estático, olhando para o nada. Comunidade? Ainda havia alguma? E, depois, ali ele era um velho malandro em terras estrangeiras e um estrangeiro dentro de si mesmo. Sua mente, suas grades, do latim crates, ‘grade feita de canas entrelaçadas’, daí a ideia de ‘estar em cana’. E ele já estava ali há tempo demais.

Por que deviam guardá-lo? Eles não sabiam, apenas cumpriam a ordem do dia, ano após ano. Parece que alguns antigos comandantes sabiam por que ele devia ser mantido ali, mas já havia se passado tanto tempo, que tinham esquecido. Ele deveria ficar sob a tutela da guarda militar, até seu falecimento por causas naturais. Por quê? Ninguém se lembrava. Faz uns cem anos que o noticiário informou o motivo dele estar ali. Algo a ver com a cor da pele? Ou com ter seguido a carreira no tráfico de drogas? Ou ambos?

It was claimed he'd been a look out, a packer, a runner, a dealer, a foot soldier, a lieutenant, and the kingpin of the alley. Kingpin? Of the morro he has only vague and unimportant memories of samba circles and hip hop. What mattered was that, for some reason he could no longer remember, to be free, he must live imprisoned there, until he died. But his body refused to comply with this and he continued living. And being confined to that dungeon – from the Frankish *dungjo*, 'prison, subterranean cellar' – below ground.

One morning, he hears a sound other than the changing of the guard. Banging. Clashing metal. Whispers and muffled cries. Then, silence. He calls to the guards. Nothing. He yells. There's nobody to answer him. He steps out for his weekly walk. Not a sign. He completes a lonely circuit and then returns, routinely, to the cell. Not a soul arrives to shut the door when he enters his jail-cubicle. In that unexpected silence, he suddenly recalls the Roman poet Juvenal: '*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*' That's right, who will guard the guards themselves?

The sun rises again and his breakfast does not appear. Opening the cell door, which he himself had pulled to – as a precaution – the night before, he heads down the long corridor in the direction of the courtyard and, once again, finds himself alone. He carries on toward the front gate, tries to open it and – to his surprise! – it isn't locked. In a trance, wide-eyed, gripping the handle, he feels a desire to pull it wide open with a single tug, but is afraid of being unable to cope with whatever is on the other side. What will he find on the other side? Still gripping the handle, he looks back over his shoulder and then gives in. He isn't going to cross that border. Something tells him: 'Trust me, it's better not to.' So he doesn't cross the threshold and returns to his cell. He closes the cell door himself, just to be sure. Afterall, this was still a military prison, a *presidio*, from *praesidium*, the Latin for 'a military outpost, a garrison, a unit for protection or defence', a word derived, in turn, from *praesidere*, literally 'to be at the front', engendering, well would you look at that, the word president, the person supposed to lead, to be 'at the front' of the nation. However, during a war, if you have an advanced military outpost, this too can be considered 'at the front'. And, if we place prisoners within its walls, we ultimately end up with a *presidio*. This was the case here. Or so he assumed. Was this still the case?

At lunch time, the yellow man rummages for canned goods in the kitchen, but, in his weakened state, is unable to open any of them. Then, he begins to walk in the direction of the exit. The desire for liberty is stronger than he is. There, he turns the handle and peers through the gap.

Teria sido olheiro, endolador, vapor, avião, soldado, gerente e dono da boca. Dono? Do morro, só lembranças desimportantes e vagas das rodas de samba e de hip hop. O que importava mesmo é que, por uma razão que a sua memória desconhecia, para ser livre, ele deveria viver preso ali, até morrer. Mas seu corpo se negava a isso e ele continuava vivo. E confinado naquela masmorra – do árabe *matmura*, ‘caverna, prisão’ – submersa.

Naquela manhã, ele ouve um som diferente daquele da troca de guarda. Estampidos. Metais em choque. Sussurros e gritos abafados. Depois, silêncio. Chama os guardas. Nada. Ele grita. Não há ninguém para atendê-lo. Ele sai para dar o seu passeio semanal. Nenhum sinal. Circula solitário e depois, rotineiramente, volta para a cela. Não surge uma só alma para fechar a porta quando entra no seu cubículo-jaula. Naquele silêncio inaudito, acabara de se lembrar do poeta romano Juvenal: ‘*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*’ Pois é, quem vigia os vigias?

O sol nasce de novo e o café não vem. Abrindo a porta da cela, que ele mesmo encostara – só por precaução – na noite anterior, atravessa o longo corredor rumo ao pátio externo e, de novo, se vê sozinho. Segue até o portão da frente, tenta abri-lo e – para a sua surpresa! – ele não está fechado. Em transe, os olhos esbugalhados, a mão na maçaneta, tem vontade de escancará-lo de uma só vez, mas receia não saber lidar com o que quer que seja que tenha depois dele. O que haverá do outro lado? Ainda com a mão na maçaneta, olha por sobre os próprios ombros e desiste. Não vai ultrapassar aquela fronteira. Algo lhe diz: ‘Melhor não, vai por mim’. De forma que ele não transgride aquele limiar e volta para sua cela. Ele mesmo cerra suas grades, só por garantia. Afinal, aquilo ali ainda era um presídio, *praesidium*, latinidade para ‘posto militar, guarnição, conjunto para guarda ou defesa’, palavra oriunda, por seu turno, de *praesidere*, literalmente ‘estar à frente’, originando, veja só, a palavra presidente, que é aquele que deveria estar ‘à frente’ da nação. No entanto, na guerra, se temos um posto militar avançado, pode-se considerar que ele esteja também ‘à frente’. E, se colocarmos prisioneiros dentro de suas instalações, teremos, finalmente, um presídio. Este era o caso daquele lugar. Ou ele achava que era. Ainda seria?

Na hora do almoço, o homem amarelo acha enlatados na cozinha, mas, sem forças, não consegue abrir nenhum. Então, começa a caminhar em direção à porta de saída. É mais forte do que ele essa vontade de ser livre. Lá, vira a maçaneta e olha pela fresta.

What he sees escapes his understanding. Is this the outside world? Yes, it is. Or, at least, it's a sketch of what he recalls the outside world to have been. He closes this gateway to the street and returns to his cell, but leaves the cell door open, wide open. What strange sensation was this? It wasn't liberty, it was vastness. This was no longer an *ergastulum*, an archaic word that had been almost impossible to track down in library books. Ah, books. How long had he spent with them? He couldn't remember. He believed he had encountered the strange and antiquated word, that one and only time, in an old copy of the *Iliad*. Or had it been the *Odyssey*? He wasn't certain. But its Greek origins were clear, *ergasterioe*, in Latin, *ergastulum*, denoting a place where slaves were put to work in chains. Yet his own had now been broken, hadn't they? They had. Night came, he slept and dreamed he was dancing to a Cuban salsa he'd heard long ago.

The next morning, filled with energy, he made directly for the front entrance. Let him that would move the world first move himself. Who did that phrase belong to anyway? Without hesitating, he stepped out into the street. He had some difficulty walking down Leblon's long straight avenues, but, eventually, he left the place behind, heading toward Coqueirão, along the shoreline. No sooner had he managed to overcome the bright glare of the sun and gaze out to sea, than three luxury pickup trucks pulled up beside the boardwalk. From these, a number of young men descended, none of whom appeared happy to see him. Two of them tied him up and tossed him, like a rubbish sack, into the back of a truck. He tried, in vain, to loosen his bonds. He was terrified. What was this? Who, indeed, were these young men, dressed all in black and carrying so many high calibre weapons? Where were they taking him? He received no reply. After a few kilometres, they removed him from the back of the truck. They were outside a building he recognised as the former City of Music in Barra da Tijuca. But now it is emblazoned with the title Civilising High Court. Tired and terrified, the old man is brought forward to face a jury trial – only minus the jury. He sees even more young men dressed in black and armed to the teeth. The one at the centre of the hall appears to be the highest official, but it's impossible to be sure, as he is almost entirely obscured by the table in front of him. He asks what the yellow man was doing on the beach at that hour. Beach? Yes, on the Coqueirão! Did he realise this was the day reserved for residents of Prado Jr.? No. Was he, by any chance, from Prado Jr.? No. With that fifty-shades-of-yellow favela hair, of course he wasn't. In that case, he wasn't permitted to be there. And where had he come from, anyway? He couldn't remember. Perhaps from Santa Marta, or the city fringes, the street corners of the Centre, the Baixada,

O que vê lhe foge à compreensão. É o mundo exterior? Sim, é. Ou, pelo menos, é um rascunho daquilo que ele se lembrava de ser o mundo exterior. Ele fecha o acesso à rua e segue para sua cela, mas deixa a grade aberta, escancarada mesmo. Que sensação esquisita era aquela? Não era de liberdade, era de amplidão. Não é mais um ergástulo, esta palavra arcaica, quase impossível de se achar nos livros da biblioteca. Ah, os livros. Quanto tempo passara com eles? Não se lembrava. Achava que vira aquela estranha e ultrapassada palavra, pela primeira e única vez, em um velho exemplar da *Ilíada*. Ou seria da *Odisseia*? Não tinha certeza. Mas eram certas suas origens grega, ergasterioe e latina, ergastulum, nomeando lugares de trabalho onde as pessoas ficavam presas a correntes. As suas agora estavam quebradas, não estavam? Estavam. Chegou a noite, ele dormiu e sonhou que dançava uma salsa cubana que ouvira muito tempo atrás.

Na manhã seguinte, cheio de energia, foi direto até a porta da frente. Tente mover o mundo – o primeiro passo será mover a si mesmo. De quem era essa frase mesmo? Sem titubear, saiu à rua. Teve alguma dificuldade de andar nas retilíneas vias do Leblon, mas, aos poucos, foi se afastando dali, em direção ao Coqueirão, na orla. Pouco depois de conseguir vencer a intensa luz do sol e de mirar o mar à distância, encostaram-se ao calçadão três picapes de luxo. Delas desceram vários jovens que estavam com cara de poucos amigos. Dois deles o amarraram e o jogaram, como a um saco de lixo, na caçamba. Ele tentou, em vão, soltar as amarras. Estava aterrorizado. O que era aquilo? Quem eram, afinal, aqueles jovens vestidos de preto que portavam tantas armas de grosso calibre? Para onde o estavam levando? Não obteve resposta. Alguns quilômetros à frente, eles o retiraram da caçamba. Estavam em frente a um prédio que ele reconhece como o que, no passado, fora a Cidade da Música, na Barra da Tijuca. Mas agora ostenta o nome de Tribunal Superior Civilizatório. Cansado e aterrorizado, o velho é colocado frente a frente com um tribunal do júri, só que sem o júri. Ele vê outros jovens vestidos de preto e armados até os dentes. O que está no centro do salão parece ser o oficial mais graduado, mas não dá para ter certeza, pois a mesa que está à frente dele quase o encobre totalmente. Ele pergunta o que o homem amarelo estava fazendo àquela hora na praia. Praia? Sim, no Coqueirão! Sabia que era o dia dos moradores da Prado Jr.? Não. E ele acaso era da Prado Jr.? Não. Com aquele cabelo amarelo-cinquenta-tons-de-favela, certamente que não. Então, não podia estar ali. E de onde viera, afinal? Ele não se lembrava. Talvez do Santa Marta, ou do subúrbio, ou das esquinas da Central, da Baixada,

the Dungeon (Enxovia), but who could be sure, right? Distracted, the yellow man asks if they are serving breakfast. The young official starts to say that Carioca society was finally in harmony, that gang activity was on the verge of extinction, that conciliation between power and the people was underway and that, short of some terrible mistake, peace would finally reign from one end of Rio de Janeiro to the other, and yet, here was this worthless old yellow man wanting to know what time breakfast would be served. If he continued to behave this way, he and those like him would have no future. In fact, he himself really did have no future. And it was then that the yellow man watched, in horror, as his sentence was pronounced: he would be taken immediately to the city's newest concentration camp, the Catete Palace, and then, on the following morning, summarily executed alongside others of his kind on the Great Outdoor Stage of Botafogo Beach. Because that's what the system was for: improving the city, keeping the peace and eliminating evil. Eliminating that yellow man. Prison was not enough. The old man attempted to explain the various meanings of the word prison: from the Latin *prensio*, abbreviated from *prehensio*, coming from the verb *prehendere*, which means, in the first instance, 'to grab, to hold'. But which, in Portuguese, had also generated other liberating words, such as *surpreender* and *compreender*, meaning to surprise and to comprehend. However, the young official had no interest in the vicissitudes of language and drew the session to a close.

The yellow man was sent to the Catete Palace and, the next morning, on the sands of Botafogo beach, while waiting for the nine o'clock hanging session, for which a Department Store had been selected as sponsor, looking up at the rays of sunshine over Sugarloaf Mountain, he remembered the word liberty. The word had various origins, but his favourite was the Germanic branch. In German, liberty was *freiheit* and had its historic origins in the terms *freihals* or *frihals*, from which, in turn, the English language had derived the word freedom. But, in German, liberty, *freiheit* means 'free neck', a direct reference to the chains that had been fastened around the necks of slaves. The German term, at its most basic level, refers to liberty as being the obverse of coercion, the opposite of slavery. Ah, books. Ah, words. Whether in Portuguese, Arabic, French, German, English, Latin, Greek, or any language, all they wanted was to mix together and see what it would lead to.

And then a youth dressed in black put the noose around the yellow man's neck and he, at last, became a free man.

ou da Enxovia, vai saber, né? Distraído, o homem amarelo pergunta se ali tem café. O jovem oficial começa a dizer que a sociedade carioca finalmente estava em harmonia, que o banditismo estava em vias de extinção, que a conciliação entre o povo e o poder estava em marcha acelerada e que, salvo algum engano, afinal, a paz iria reinar do Leme ao Pontal e aquele velho e inútil homem amarelo ali, querendo saber a que horas seria servido o café. Se continuasse a se comportar daquele jeito, ele e seus semelhantes não teriam futuro. Aliás, ele não tinha mesmo futuro. E foi aí que o homem amarelo viu, com horror, sua sentença ser decretada: seria levado imediatamente para o mais novo campo de concentração da cidade, o Palácio do Catete, até que, na manhã seguinte, fosse sumariamente executado com outros de sua laia, no Grande Palco Aberto da Praia de Botafogo. Porque o sistema era para isto: melhorar a cidade, manter a paz e eliminar o mal. Eliminar aquele homem amarelo. Prisão era pouco. Ele tentou explicar os vários significados da palavra prisão: do latim *prensio*, encurtada da expressão *prehensio*, do verbo *prehendere*, que significa, na primeira camada, ‘agarrar, prender’. Mas que também gerou outras palavras libertadoras, tais como *compreender* e *surpreender*. No entanto, o jovem não estava interessado nas vicissitudes da língua e encerrou a sessão.

O homem amarelo foi enviado para o Palácio do Catete e, na manhã seguinte, nas areias da praia de Botafogo, enquanto esperava a sessão de enforcamentos públicos das nove, para a qual havia sido designado com o patrocínio de uma Loja de Departamentos, olhando para o sol com seus raios de luz sobre o Pão de Açúcar, lembrou-se da palavra liberdade. Eram várias as suas origens, mas ele gostava mesmo do ramo alemão. Em germânico, liberdade era *freiheit* e tinha origem histórica nos vocábulos *freihals* ou *frihals*, a partir dos quais, por sua vez, se originou, em inglês, *freedom*. Mas, em alemão, liberdade, *freiheit* significava ‘pescoço livre’, uma referência direta aos grilhões que aprisionavam os escravos pelo pescoço. A palavra alemã, em seu conceito mais básico, referia-se à liberdade como sendo o contrário de coação, o oposto de escravidão. Ah, os livros. Ah, as palavras. Em português, árabe, francês, alemão, inglês, latim, grego, em qualquer língua, só misturando para ver no que vai dar.

E então, um jovem todo vestido de preto e armado até os dentes colocou a corda no pescoço do homem amarelo e ele se tornou, finalmente, um homem livre.

(Dias, Augusto. ‘Um homem amarelo’. In *Contos para depois do ódio: Inspirados nas canções de Marcelo Yuka*, edited by Ecio Salles and Julio Ludemir, 86–91. Rio de Janeiro: Mórula Editorial, Flup, 2020.)

8

Tchatinha, by Paulo Dutra, translated by Felipe Fanuel Xavier Rodrigues

Tchatinha was already the ‘mother of diMenor’s son’ at thirteen and ‘diMenor’s widow’ at fourteen. At six months pregnant, she dropped out of school and was held back a year. So what? Nobody expected her to come back anyway. But after the baby girl was born with her father’s face, as they said, and they did diMenor in, Tchatinha went back to school. She officially returned one year older, but she felt about fifteen years older inside. For most people, things happen with certain intervals of time. For Tchatinha, a lifetime passed in a year. Of course, the family made the usual fuss when the news of her pregnancy came out. Pregnant with a crook’s child? DiMenor had been drug dealing. Pregnant at thirteen? ‘I didn’t even know she had a boyfriend,’ whined the stepfather. The father, as usual, never showed up, but the stepfather attended the parents’ meetings whenever he could. Being pregnant at thirteen with a gangster’s child in her womb might have seemed unusual to her stepfather. But Tchatinha was just another one. Another girl who got pregnant before finishing primary school. After diMenor was killed, Tchatinha had to go back home. Her stepfather was happy because he could have his daughter and granddaughter close by and look after them whenever possible. Tchatinha was so deeply angered that her dark eyes sparkled. Her tone of voice and vocabulary echoed through the school’s halls. Such anger, such sparkle, such eyes, such tone of voice, such vocabulary – the whole ensemble is unutterably mind-boggling. Here words can only vaguely produce a diaphanous sensation that vanishes before the image is formed. In class, such anger was disguised with calculated obedience that resulted in good grades. Everybody thought it was anger at life, at the world, at everything. But only Tchatinha knew what her anger was all about. One day I found out the reason for her anger.

8

Tchatinha, de Paulo Dutra

Tchatinha aos treze anos já era a ‘mãe do filho do diMenor’ e aos quatorze ‘a viúva do diMenor’. Aos seis meses de gravidez parou de ir para escola e repetiu de ano. E daí? Ninguém esperava que ela fosse voltar mesmo. Mas depois que nasceu a menina, a cara do pai, diziam, e que passaram diMenor, Tchatinha voltou. Voltou um ano mais velha na certidão e uns quinze lá dentro. Pra maioria das pessoas as coisas acontecem com um intervalo de tempo. Pra Tchatinha uma vida inteira passou em um ano. Claro, a família deu o chilique de praxe quando veio a notícia da gravidez. Grávida de malandro? diMenor era do movimento. Grávida aos treze anos? Nem sabia que ela tinha namorado, choramingou o padrasto. O pai, como de costume, nunca tinha dado as caras, mas o padrasto vinha nas reuniões de pais sempre que podia. Grávida aos treze anos e ainda com filho de bandido no ventre podia parecer insólito pro padrasto. Mas Tchatinha era só mais uma. Mais uma menina grávida antes de terminar o primeiro grau. Quando passaram diMenor, Tchatinha teve que voltar pra casa. O padrasto ficou feliz porque podia ter a filha e a neta pertinho e tomar conta delas sempre que pudesse. Tchatinha trazia uma raiva lá dentro que brilhava nos olhos opacos e ecoava no tom de voz e no vocabulário pelos corredores da escola. Essa raiva esse brilho esses olhos esse tom de voz esse vocabulário, esse conjunto enfim são indivisíveis; aqui as palavras só conseguem dar uma vaga sensação diáfana que se esfumaça antes de a imagem se formar. Dentro da sala de aula essa raiva se travestia em calculada obediência que trazia notas boas. Todo mundo achava que era raiva da vida, do mundo, de tudo. Mas a raiva de Tchatinha só ela sabia por que trazia. Eu um dia adivinhei o motivo da raiva.

It was Paulinho, the telltale, who told me the story of diMenor's death. DiMenor died from a bullet, obviously. He was shot, just like almost everyone else in Maré. But diMenor was a hero in the favela. It went like this: the Alemãos invaded the favela one day, and the shooting continued until the early morning, but they chickened out and fled. 'Dude, that was when the cops took advantage of the situation to hunt Pará down!' Whenever Jesus was on duty, criminals didn't let their guard down. Moreover, those who didn't belong to a gang didn't let their guard down either. Jesus enjoyed dishing out a beating. A chain of events that statistically would only happen in another reality came to an end precisely that morning. The Alemãos attempting an invasion, Jesus on duty, diMenor in the area that day. The cops cornered Pará and diMenor on Route C-11, near the childcare centre, and that was when diMenor showed himself and exchanged fire with the police car until the boss managed to escape. This is when the story becomes legendary. Obviously, there is an official diversion. The version that officially appeared in the daily newspaper goes like this: 'In an official statement, the Military Police of Rio de Janeiro (PMRJ) informs that during routine patrols, military police officers stationed at the Community Policing Post of Parque União came across the boy, a victim of rival drug dealers disputing the control of narcotics trafficking, who died due to multiple injuries before they could give him proper assistance.' The other versions sort of say, with few discrepancies, that the police started shooting with rifles at his body's extremities while diMenor was still alive. The only thing they didn't shoot was his right arm, and they laughed as they watched diMenor trying to fire back with only one arm carrying the rifle hanging heavy, as he was dismembered, like a chicken without garlic. His limbs were crumbled on the ground. DiMenor was chopped up and became a hero. No shit, he was the hero who didn't surrender or kowtow, not to the Alemãos or to the police. He exchanged fire until the last moment, until the last shot in his face. Only afterwards did Tchatinha hear about it. 'Yo, Tchatcha! Your husband died like a real man over there!' Nobody made fun of Tchatinha in the favela. Tchatinha was the hero's widow. Tchatinha carries a wave of anger inside her that only she knows. Her fierce anger is complete because it is twofold. She is angered by Jesus and diMenor. I hazard a guess. But Tchatinha's anger is hers alone. It's kept inside. A spark in her dark eyes. Her tone of voice. Her vocabulary. In the school's halls. Tchatinha raised her daughter. She finished junior school and didn't care about having a husband anymore. Tchatinha was just another girl pregnant by a criminal in the favela, they thought.

Foi o Paulinho papo-furado que me contou a história da morte do diMenor. diMenor morreu à bala, óbvio. Furado de bala como quase todos na Maré. Mas diMenor era herói na favela. Foi assim: os alemão invadiram um dia e o tiroteio comeu até de manhãzinha mas tiveram que meter o rabo entre as pernas e vazar. 'Aí foi nessa que os homem aproveitaram para caçar o Pará, maluco!' No dia que Jesus tava de serviço bandido não dava mole. Aliás quem não era do bicho também não dava mole não. Jesus gostava de esculachar. Uma série de eventos encadeados que estatisticamente só em outra realidade aconteceriam veio a termo exatamente naquela manhã. Tentativa de invasão dos alemão, Jesus de serviço, diMenor na contenção. Os homem encurralaram Pará e diMenor na via Conze, quarto da creche, e foi quando diMenor meteu as caras e trocou tiro com a viatura até o patrão conseguir vazar. Aqui é que a história vira lenda. Há versão oficial obviamente. A versão oficial, que saiu no dia foi assim: 'em nota oficial a MPRJ informa que durante patrulhamento de rotina policiais militares lotados no Posto de Policiamento Comunitário do Parque União se depararam com o rapaz, vítima de traficantes rivais que disputavam o controle do tráfico de entorpecentes e que veio a óbito em virtude dos múltiplos ferimentos antes de que lhe pudessem prestar o devido socorro.' As outras versões dizem, mais ou menos, com poucas divergências, que os policiais foram dando tiro de escopeta nas extremidades do corpo com diMenor vivo. Só não deram tiro no braço direito, e riam vendo diMenor tentar atirar de volta só com um braço, o fuzil pesando, pendendo, desmembrado igual frango a passarinho, só que sem o alho. Os membros esmigalhados pelo chão. diMenor, picotado, virou herói. O herói que não se entregou nem peidou nem pros alemão nem pros polícia. Trocou tiro até o último momento, até o derradeiro tiro de escopeta no rosto. Tchatinha só soube depois. 'Na moral, Tchatcha, teu marido morreu como sujeito homem aí!' Ninguém tirava onda com Tchatinha na favela. Tchatinha era viúva do herói. Tchatinha traz uma raiva lá dentro que só ela sabe. Uma raiva total porque se complementa em duas raivas. Uma do Jesus e outra do diMenor. Arrisco adivinhar. Mas a raiva da Tchatinha é só dela. Guardada lá dentro dela. Uma centelha nos olhos opacos. O tom de voz. O vocabulário. Pelos corredores da escola. Tchatinha criou a filha. Terminou o primeiro grau e não quis mais saber de marido. Tchatinha era só mais uma menina grávida de bandido na favela, pensavam.

Tchatinha got married, became pregnant, turned into a mother, and was widowed in the same year. Changing the order of events doesn't change the outcome. The following year she went back to school with short red hair and skipped to the next grade. Directly.

Tchatinha casou engravidou foi mãe e ficou viúva no mesmo ano. A ordem dos eventos não altera o produto. No ano seguinte voltou pra escola, cabelo curtinho pintado de vermelho, e passou de ano. Direto.

(Dutra, Paulo. 'Tchatinha'. In *Aversão oficial (resumida)*, 49–51. Rio de Janeiro: Malê, 2018.)

The Dancer's Feet, by Conceição Evaristo, translated by Elton Uliana

Davenir had the greatest dancing feet in the small town of Danceland where he was born. The gift of great dancing was a common trait of everyone who was born there, and everyone who chose to live there. To be more specific about Davenir, it is necessary to say that, with this young man, it wasn't only his talented feet that made him so great, but rather, his whole body. Everything about him was his ability to dance. His body with all its details. Eyes, mouth, the beautifully unkempt curly hair. Dancing was so ingrained in Davenir's body that some people would say that he wasn't even interested in love. Dance was his passion, his greatest pleasure. At the age of seven, after watching dancers on television and after dancing himself at many family parties, he was already proficient in samba and tango. His family, guessing that he could have a professional future, rose above all the malicious comments, and sent the boy to ballet school. They were right. Things went really well. Davenir got better and better. At fourteen he was an outstanding student in classical, modern, and afro ballet, as well as tap dancing and even belly dancing, all this without paying any attention to the occasional ignorant comments he heard. And at each stage of his progress, the boy who 'danced with his soul in his feet' – praise given by a renowned dance critic – continued to stand out more and more. Awarded many countless scholarships, including to study abroad, Davenir went away to experience the dance and theatre of other cultures, whilst exhibiting his own natural talent and versatility. In a single show, he could perform a congada from Minas Gerais, an Afro-Tietense batuque beat, a Czech dance like polka, reggae from Jamaica and Maranhão, as well as imbue his body with extraordinary grace and authenticity when he was performing rap. Davenir had so much skill and talent, and his technique was so precise, not to mention his competence and artistic flair, that it was difficult to know how to label

Os pés do dançarino, de Conceição Evaristo

Davenir era o que melhor possuía a arte dos pés na pequena cidade onde tinha nascido, em Dançolândia. O dom de bem dançar era uma característica comum de todos que ali tivessem nascido, ou que porventura tivessem escolhido viver na cidade. Dizendo melhor sobre Davenir, é preciso afirmar que no moço não era só a competência nos pés que fazia dele, quem ele era, mas o corpo todo. Tudo nele era habilidade para a dança. O corpo e todas as minúcias. O olho, a boca, o cabelo lindamente crespo em desalinho. A dança estava tão entranhada no corpo de Davenir, que alguns dizem que nem com amores Davenir se preocupava. Na dança, o gozo, o prazer maior. Aos sete anos, tendo observado aulas de dança em programas de televisão e participado dos bailes familiares, ele já dançava samba e tango. A família adivinhando para ele um futuro profissional enfrentou todos os comentários jocosos e colocou o menino em aulas de balé. Não deu outra. Tudo certo. Davenir foi se tornando cada vez melhor. Aos quatorze era ótimo aluno nas aulas de balé clássico, de balé moderno, de balé afro, de sapateado e mesmo da dança do ventre, sem se importar com os ignorantes comentários emitidos ali e aqui. E em meio a tantos progressos, o moço que ‘dançava com a alma nos pés’ – elogio dado por um renomado crítico de dança –, seguia se destacando mais e mais. Contemplado com bolsas de estudos, inclusive para o exterior, lá se foi Davenir experimentar palcos e danças de outras culturas e exibir sua natural versatilidade. Em uma mesma apresentação, ele era capaz de dançar uma congada mineira, um batuque afro-tietense, uma dança tcheca, como a polca, um reggae da Jamaica e do Maranhão, como também imprimia graça e verdade ao corpo, quando apresentava um rap. Era tanta a habilidade, o dom, a técnica do moço, tanta competência, tanta arte tinha Davenir, que não havia nomeação

him. Dancer, classical dancer, ballet dancer, Latin American star or even prince of the dance ... And with so much deserved success, the young man lost some of the most important and fundamental aspects of himself and picked up other less desirable qualities and values. His fellow people from Danceland were witness to what happened to him one day. And, between laments, they talked about it, genuinely wishing that Davenir would eventually 'find his missing feet'. This is what happened:

When Davenir went back to his hometown, a big party was organised in the town square to celebrate his return. Everybody was really excited by the event, since the gift of great dancing belonged to everyone born in the town, and especially those who came to make it their home. The slogan for the event was 'Dance is the most important thing'. There was no one left at home, people came from the most faraway parts of the town to the place where the celebration was being held. Everyone longed for the son of the land who 'danced with his soul in his feet', in fact, the local people had expanded on this slogan, creating the following maxim: 'only those who have their soul in their feet can be great dancers'. And after a few hours, which seemed endless to the public, Davenir finally arrived at the square, ready to receive the homage. He was absolutely certain that he deserved such an honour, and indeed, that other celebrations should happen as well. For Davenir, the town should bow at his feet, because it was thanks to him that a small town like this had become known in the world. In the vanity of that moment, Davenir didn't even notice the three old women who stood by the bandstand, at the foot of the steps as he was entering the place. He passed by them, giving no sign of recognition. Nor did he notice their open arms towards him, which ended up dissolving into empty space. All Davenir could think about was the celebration of himself and the pictures that would be taken of him with the town dignitaries.

After an emotional performance that brought the audience to tears, Davenir was ready to leave the venue. As he went down the steps, it was he who then recognised the three respectable old ladies. They still had their arms open, waiting to embrace him and to receive his embrace. That was when Davenir saw himself as a young boy again, and in that very moment he realised that the oldest of the three old women was his great-grandmother. She had been the first person to realise that he had a talent for dance. The second old woman was the one who once, with prayer and ointments, had miraculously healed his dislocated knee. An accident he had suffered on the eve of an important performance.

certa para ele. Bailarino, dançarino, dançador, pé de valsa, pé de ouro de todas as danças... E com tanto sucesso merecido, o moço esqueceu alguns sentimentos e ganhou outros não tão aconselháveis. Os conterrâneos de Davenir foram testemunhas do que aconteceu com ele um dia. E por entre lamentos contavam o fato, e desejavam ardentemente que Davenir reencontrasse os seus perdidos pés. Vejam como o fato se deu:

Quando Davenir regressou à Dançolândia, um grande baile, na praça da cidade, foi organizado para esperá-lo. O evento era de agrado de todos, pois o dom da dança era de pertença de quem ali havia nascido e de quem chegava para ficar. O *slogan* da festa era ‘O importante é dançar’. Não houve quem ficasse em casa, das partes mais longínquas da cidade, as pessoas saíam em direção ao local do festejo. Todos estavam saudosos do filho da terra que ‘dançava com alma nos pés’, aliás, *slogan* que os dançolandeses tinham ampliado, criando uma máxima: ‘só dança bem, quem a alma nos pés tem.’ E depois de umas poucas horas, que pareceram infintas para o público, Davenir chegou à praça, pronto para receber as homenagens. Chegou certo de que era um tributo merecido e de que todas outras celebrações deveriam acontecer. Para Davenir, a cidade deveria se curvar aos seus pés, pois tinha sido graças a sua arte, que um lugarzinho como aquele tinha se tornado conhecido no mundo. E na vaidade do momento, Davenir nem prestou atenção em três mulheres, as mais velhas da cidade, que estavam postadas nas escadas do coreto, em que ele deveria subir. Passou por elas, sem sinal de qualquer reconhecimento. Também não percebeu o abraço lançado ao vazio que elas fizeram em direção a ele. Davenir pensava só na homenagem que iria acontecer e nas fotos que seriam tiradas dele com as autoridades da cidade.

E depois de apresentações que levaram o público às lágrimas, Davenir emocionado se preparou para deixar o local. Ao descer as escadas, foi ele que reconheceu as respeitáveis anciãs da cidade. Elas estavam ainda de braços abertos, esperando para abraçá-lo e receber os abraços dele também. Foi quando Davenir se viu menino novamente e nesse instante reconheceu que a mais velha das velhas, era sua bisavó. Ela tinha sido a primeira pessoa que distinguiu nele o dom para dança. A segunda velha tinha sido aquela que um dia, com oração e unguentos, curara milagrosamente o joelho deslocado dele. Acidente que ele sofrera, em véspera de uma grande apresentação.

And the third, Davenir couldn't remember exactly who she was, although her face was familiar to him. Even so, Davenir still didn't stop to receive their affection, despite these women being the ones who had marked his destiny forever. And as he descended from the stage and headed towards the exit, a strange pain invaded his lower limbs. He was overcome by a desperate need to remove his shoes, which felt too soft on his feet, wobbly and unsupportive, empty of memories. He was frightened when he pulled them off and felt that his socks were empty. He realised his feet were missing, but despite that, he felt pain. In that very moment, someone from home brought him a message from his great-grandmother, the oldest of the three old ladies. His feet had been forgotten, lost in time, but that he should remain calm. All he needed to do was to go back. To go back to the beginning of everything.

E a terceira, Davenir não conseguia se lembrar, de quem se tratava, embora a fisionomia não lhe fosse estranha. Mas nem assim Davenir parou para acolher o carinho das velhas tão marcantes em seu destino. E à medida que descia as escadas e seguia o caminho, uma dor estranha foi invadindo seus membros inferiores. Foi tomado também por um desesperado desejo de arrancar os sapatos que lhe pareciam moles, bambos e vazios de lembranças em seus pés. Susto tomou ao puxar os sapatos, quando sentiu as meias vazias. Deu pela ausência dos pés que, entretanto, doíam. Nesse mesmo instante recebeu de alguém da casa um recado da Bisa, a mais velha das velhas. Os pés dele tinham ficado esquecidos no tempo, mas que ficasse tranquilo. Era só ele fazer o caminho de volta, para chegar novamente ao princípio de tudo.

(Evaristo, Conceição. 'Os pés do dançarino'. In *Histórias de leves enganos e parecenças*, 41–44. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Malê, 2016.)

10

Metamorphosis, by Geni Guimarães, translated by Andrew McDougall

The following year, on the first day of class, I carried a four-verse poem in my bag which went like this:

She was good to the slaves,
And seemed like honey,
I think she's a sister of God,
Long live Princess Isabel.

At first, I wasn't brave enough to show it to my teacher.
Whenever I tried, I froze and my heart went running off to beat in my throat.

But on the second day of class, in a moment when she told me my handwriting was nice, I pulled the poem from my bag and gave it to her.

She went to her desk and sat down with my scrap of paper in her hand. She read and reread. She took a pen and scribbled something or other over my lines and sent Pedro for the headteacher.

Suddenly I felt the need to wee and throw up. Had I done something wrong? And if so, would I get the usual punishment of being made to kneel on corn kernels?

The headteacher arrived, followed by Pedro.

Dona Cacilda gave him the paper. The headteacher read it. They talked for some time in low voices, pointing to something I had written.

Then he left and the teacher handed the poem back to me and carried on calmly with the lesson, without giving any sign as to whether the lines were good or bad. But at any slight sound, I trembled, eager for a sign, any explanation, however trivial.

10

Metamorfose, de Geni Guimarães

No ano seguinte, já no primeiro dia de aula, levava na bolsa um poema de quatro versos que dizia assim:

Foi boa para os escravos,
E parecia um mel,
Acho que é irmã de Deus,
Viva a Princesa Isabel

De imediato, não tive coragem de mostrá-lo à professora. Cada vez que tentava, ficava gelada e o coração já ia correndo bater na garganta.

Mas no segundo dia de aula, numa hora em que ela disse que a minha letra era bonita, arranquei da bolsa o poema e lhe entreguei.

Ela foi até a mesa e sentou-se com o papelzinho na mão. Leu e releu. Pegou a caneta, riscou qualquer coisa por sobre meus versos e mandou o Pedro chamar o diretor.

Imediatamente me deu vontade de urinar e vomitar. Será que havia feito alguma coisa errada? E se houvesse feito, iria para os grãos de milho nos joelhos?

Chegou o diretor seguido do Pedro.

Dona Cacilda deu-lhe o papel. O diretor leu. Ficaram um tempo conversando baixinho e apontando alguma coisa que eu havia escrito.

Depois ele saiu e a professora devolveu-me o poema e continuou a aula calmamente sem um gesto que me explicasse o bom ou o ruim dos versos. Mas a qualquer barulhinho, ficava eu toda trêmula, ávida por um sinal, uma explicação por mais banal que fosse.

I was like that until the end of the lesson, but when my row left and passed by the headteacher's office, he came out and scanned around for me.

'Well done!'

'It was nothing. Thanks.'

I went home happy. Birdsong in my soul.



It must have been the 10th or 11th of May.

Dona Cacilda spoke to us after break.

'Now, on the 13th, we are going to have a little party for Princess Isabel, who freed the slaves. Who wants to recite something?'

'Me! Me! Me!' cried various kids.

Thump, thump ... my heart pounded in my throat again. It was time to show off my poem. I couldn't lose the chance. But how to summon the courage? And what if I messed up?

'That's not how we do it,' shouted the teacher, 'raise your hands.'

I raised mine, timidly displaying its blackness in the midst of five or six excited, pale hands.

'You ... you ... you ...'

I wasn't chosen. We couldn't have that many, she explained to us. But I couldn't miss my opportunity. I ran after her, eagerly.

'Dona Cacilda, I have that one I did the other day, the one I showed you and you called the headteacher and he said well done and I can make it longer ...'

I said it all without breathing. Without blinking. Scared of not convincing her, of closing my eyes and the tears escaping my control from the excitement. I was brimming.

'Okay. Tomorrow bring your poem and we'll rehearse.'

She stroked my face and laughed softly.

Her hand felt like chicken feathers and her lips looked a lot like the cherry tomato peels my mum uses to season rice.

I went home somewhat distressed. I was already regretting having been so insistent. Filling out and lengthening the poem was no problem. The difficult part would be not trembling, not crying, not forgetting it when the time came.

I thought about not going to class for a few days, making up a stomach pain ... But I couldn't let down Princess Isabel. She deserved it. If not for her ...

Assim fiquei até o final da aula, mas quando a minha fila saía e passava pela porta da diretoria, o diretor saiu, procurou-me com os olhos e disse:

‘Parabéns!’

‘Não foi nada. Obrigada.’

Fui para casa feliz. Sabiás empoleirados na cabeça da alma.



Devia ser dia 10 ou 11 do mês de maio.

A dona Cacilda, logo após o recreio, disse-nos:

‘No dia 13 agora, vamos fazer uma festinha pra Princesa Isabel, que libertou os escravos. Quem quer recitar?’

Várias crianças gritaram:

‘Eu! Eu! Eu!’

Pluft, pluft!... Meu coração lá foi de novo pulsar na garganta. Era a hora e a vez de expor meu poema. Não podia perder a chance. Mas como conseguir coragem? E se errasse?

‘Assim não dá’, gritou a professora, ‘Levantem a mão.’

Levantei a minha, que timidamente luzia negritude em meio a cinco ou seis mãozinhas alvas, assanhadas.

‘Você... Você... Você...’

Não fui escolhida. Tantos não é possível, explicou-nos ela. Mas eu não podia perder a oportunidade. Corri atrás dela, sôfrega:

‘Dona Cacilda, eu tenho aquela que eu fiz outro dia, que eu mostrei pra senhora e a senhora chamou o diretor e ele falou parabéns e eu deixo ela mais grande...’

Falei tudo sem respirar. Sem piscar. Medo de não convencer, de apertar os olhos e as lágrimas escaparem do controle da emoção. Saturiei.

‘Está bem. Amanhã você traz a poesia e a gente ensaia.’

Acariciou meu rosto e riu chochamente.

Sua mão parecia pena de galinha e seus lábios no riso tinham muito a ver com as casquinhas de tomate caipira que minha mãe colocava no tempero do arroz.

Fui para casa meio angustiada. Já estava quase arrependida de haver insistido. O aumentar e decorar o poema não era nada. Difícil era não tremer, não chorar, não esquecer na hora.

Pensei em não ir às aulas por uns dias, inventar uma dor de barriga... Mas não podia falhar com a Princesa Isabel. Ela merecia. Se não fosse ela...

What would be the bigger sin: lying about being ill or not paying tribute to Saint Princess Isabel?

I decided to go and not be a sinner.

Better to tremble and cry than be punished by God. By God or by Saint Isabel?

By both, of course.

She would have to ask His permission to punish me, as he is the Father, the Boss, master of all decisions.

There would surely be a meeting in heaven between all the angels and saints. No. Not the angels. Children don't have a say, they don't decide. They can't even vote. Ah! But if they could ...

If they could, it would be easy. I myself knew several little angels: 1. Tilica, who died of roundworm; 2. Luzia who died of a turned stomach; 3. Jorge, who died from falling into a well ...

See. And I had even more and, luckily, all of my colour. They would be votes in my favour, I'm sure. Except maybe Ana, who was white, and João Cláudio ... but I think even they ...

But it was no use just thinking about it. A child only hears when they can. The fact is that, in heaven, everyone would find out. An immense shame came over me, like the day I was caught trying to discover how the egg got from the rooster to the hen's belly. Good lord!

There was nothing else for it. The only way was to face up to it once and for all and try to do everything nicely and properly.

I ate lunch quickly. I almost swallowed my food whole. I choked on the catfish bones. I began writing boldly. I made it longer. I added four new lines:

The men was stubborn
And them owners was mad
So the lovely Isabel
Freed all the slave

I re-read the old lines and I reckoned they should go last, to end on the cry of 'Long live Princess Isabel'.

I gave my poem a title: 'Saint Isabel'. It went like this:

Saint Isabel

The mens was stubborn
And their owners was mad

Que pecado seria maior: mentir que estava doente ou não homenagear a Santa Princesa Isabel?

Optei por ir e não ficar em pecado.

Antes tremer, chorar, do que ser castigada por Deus. Por Deus ou por Santa Isabel?

Pelos dois, claro.

Ela teria que pedir o consentimento Dele para me punir, já que é o Pai, o Chefe, dono de todas as decisões.

Haveria na certa uma reunião no céu entre santos e santas, anjos e anjas... Não. Anjos e anjas não. Crianças não opinam, não decidem nada. Nem votam. Ah! Mas se eles pudessem...

Se pudessem, seria fácil. Eu mesma conhecia vários anjinhos: A Tilica 1, que morreu de lombriga aguada; a Luzia 2, que morreu de bucho virado; o Jorge 3, que morreu de cair no poço...

É. E tinha mais ainda e, por sorte, todos da minha cor. Seriam votos a meu favor, certamente. Fora a Ana, que era branca, o João Cláudio... acho que até eles...

Mas não adiantava ficar pensando. Criança só ouve, quando pode. O fato é que, no céu, todo mundo ficaria sabendo. Uma vergonha imensa invadiu-me toda, como o dia em que fui pega tentando descobrir a passagem do ovo do galo para a barriga da galinha. Credo-em-cruz!

Não havia mesmo outro jeito. O negócio era assumir logo de uma vez, tentar fazer tudo bonito e direito.

Comi rapidamente no almoço. Engoli quase inteiros os alimentos. Engasguei com as espinhas de mandiúva. Pus-me a escrever afoitamente. Aumentei. Criei quatro novos versos:

Os homens era teimosos
E o donos deles era bravo,
Por isso a linda Isabel
Soltou tudo os escravo.

Reli os versos antigos, e achei que deveriam ficar por último, para encerrar a declamação com o 'Viva a Princesa Isabel.'

Ao meu poema dei um título: 'Santa Isabel.' Assim ficou:

Santa Isabel

Os homens era teimosos,
E os donos deles era bravo,

So the lovely Isabel
Freed all the slave

She was sweeter than sweet
And seemed like honey
I think she's a sister of God
Long live Princess Isabel

Within half an hour I had memorised the whole thing.

Then I began to recite it slowly. Sometimes, I began at the end and worked back to the beginning. Everything just right, not a stumble here nor a stutter there, nothing.

The next day, I put my writings on the teacher's desk for her appreciation. She took them, read and made linguistic corrections, such as taking the *s* off the end of *mens* and conjugating the verbs correctly.

She gave it back to me:

'Learn it, tomorrow you'll recite, okay?'

I didn't tell her that it was all on the tip of my tongue.

The party was to be after break, the next morning.

When the class began, she started speaking about the date.

'Today, we celebrate the liberation of the slaves. Slaves were Black people who came from Africa. Here they were forced to work and, in exchange for their work, they received nothing. They were tied to tree trunks and beaten, sometimes, until they died. When ...'

And she went on like that for at least a quarter of an hour.

I saw that the teacher's story didn't fit with Grandma Rosária's. The slaves she spoke about were good, ordinary, human, religious.

These ones, however, were silly, cowardly, stupid. They didn't react to punishments, or at least didn't defend themselves.

By the time I noticed, the whole class was looking at me, with pity or irony. I was the only person there representing a race worthy of sympathy, scorn.

I wanted to disappear, evaporate, I couldn't.

I could only raise my sweaty, shaking hand and ask to go to the toilet. Sat on the seat, I raised my index finger and wrote in the air: outcast. An understatement. I added: leper. I underlined it and went back to class.

Por isso a linda Isabel
Soltou tudo os escravo.

Foi boa que nem um doce,
E parecia um mel,
Acho que é irmã de Deus,
Viva a Princesa Isabel.

Dentro de meia hora, havia decorado tudo.

Daí comecei a declamar pausadamente. Às vezes, começava do fim e voltava do começo. Tudo certinho: nem um pulo nas frases, nem um gaguejar, nada.

No dia seguinte, coloquei meus escritos sobre a mesa para a apreciação da professora. Ela os pegou, leu, fez as correções ortográficas, como, por exemplo, colocando *ns* no final da palavra *homens*, concordou com adjetivos, etc.

E me devolveu:

‘Decora, que amanhã você recita, certo?’

Não contei que tudo estava na ponta da língua.

A festa seria depois do recreio, na manhã seguinte.

Já no momento em que entramos na classe, ela se pôs a falar sobre a data:

‘Hoje, comemoramos a libertação dos escravos. Escravos eram negros que vinham da África. Aqui eram forçados a trabalhar e, pelos serviços prestados, nada recebiam. Eram amarrados nos troncos e espancados, às vezes, até a morte. Quando...’

E foi ela discursando, por uns quinze minutos.

Vi que a narrativa da professora não batia com a que fizera a Vó Rosária. Aqueles escravos da Vó Rosária eram bons, simples, humanos, religiosos.

Esses apresentados então eram bobos, covardes, imbecis. Não reagiam aos castigos, não se defendiam, ao menos.

Quando dei por mim, a classe inteira me olhava com pena ou sarcasmo. Eu era a única dali representando uma raça digna de compaixão, desprezo.

Quis sumir, evaporar, não pude.

Apenas pude levantar a mão suada e trêmula, pedir para ir ao banheiro. Sentada no vaso, estiquei o dedo indicador e no ar escrevi: lazarento. Era pouco. Acrescentei: morfético. Acentuei o *e* do *f*e e voltei para a classe.

At break, Sueli came over and gave me an apple and Raquel, the headteacher's daughter, offered to swap my courgette lunch for her ham and mozzarella.

I didn't eat them, obviously. The compensation was worthless. It wasn't like spilt milk when you just mop it up and job done.

It was blood. Who could return it ... Life?

Let the thin river dry itself out by running tamely. But how do you stem it from within, where the open wound was a silence entirely mine, a companionless pain?

~

When it was time for the party, I was a mess.

However, I wasn't worried about getting it right or wrong, being successful or not. It was the embarrassment that cut me down. I thought I was the big girl of the class, just for writing a few lines. How many times must they have laughed at me, as I foolishly made up nursery rhymes ... I really did come from a fearful race, without stories of heroism. They died like dogs. It was only right that we paid tribute to Caxias and Tiradentes and all the other white men in history. Logical. They fought, they defended their country. The stupid Blacks did nothing.

That's why my dad was scared of Mr Godoy, the boss, and mum taught us not to fight with Flávio. Black was a load of crap. Even my dad, my mum.

That's why I was scared. Like father like son, like grandson, like great-grandson ... and there I was, like an idiot, forming part of that line.

Suddenly I realised the teacher was talking to me.

'Did you forget? Don't worry, you can recite at the next party. It'll soon be Saint José de Anchieta's day and then Armed Forces Day ... Let's sit down. It doesn't matter.'

She led me carefully to sit down on a chair next to the other teachers, at the front. I was very tired and thirsty. I was surprised my heart was still and not leaping into my throat.

I touched my neck just in case. I was going to check if it was in my chest, but I stopped. Could it be dead?

'To hell with it. If it wants to die, let it,' I thought, eyeing the filth that slowly fell from my nose over the neat folds of my oh-so-new blue skirt.

On the way home from school that day, no one ran.

No recreio, a Sueli veio presentear-me com uma maçã e a Raquel, filha do administrador da fazenda, ofereceu-se para trocar meu lanche de abobrinha abafada pelo dela, de presunto e mussarela.

Não os comi, é claro. A compensação desvalia. Não era como o leite que, derramado, passa-se um pano sobre e pronto.

Era sangue. Quem poderia devolvê-lo... Vida?

Que se enxugasse o fino rio a correr mansamente. Mas como estancá-lo lá dentro, onde a ferida aberta era um silêncio todo meu, dor sem parceria?



Na hora da festa, estava um trapo.

No entanto, não me preocupavam mais os erros ou acertos, sucessos ou insucessos. Era a vergonha que me abatia. Pensava que era a grande da classe, só por ser a única a fazer versos. Quantas vezes deviam ter rido de mim, depois das minhas tontices em inventar cantigas de roda... Vinha mesmo era de uma raça medrosa, sem histórias de heroísmo. Morriam feito cães. Justo era mesmo homenagear Caxias, Tiradentes e todos os Dons Pedros da história. Lógico. Eles lutavam, defendiam-se e ao seu país. Os idiotas dos negros, nada.

Por isso que meu pai tinha medo do seu Godoy, o administrador, e minha mãe nos ensinava a não brigar com o Flávio. Negro era tudo bosta mesmo. Até meu pai, minha mãe.

Por isso é que eu tinha medo. O filho puxa o pai, que puxa o avô, que puxa o pai dele, que puxou... eu, consequentemente, ali, idiota, fazendo parte da linha.

Caí em mim com a professora falando:

‘Esqueceu? Não faz mal. Na outra festa, você recita. Logo chega o dia de Anchieta, do Soldado... Vamos sentar. Não tem importância.’

Levou-me com cuidado e me fez sentar numa cadeira ao lado dos outros professores, na frente. Eu sentia muito sono e sede. Estranhei o fato do meu coração estar quieto, sem saltar para a garganta.

Apalpei o pescoço de todas as maneiras. Já ia verificar se estava no peito, mas desisti. Será que ele morreu?

‘Pro inferno. Se quiser morrer, que morra’, pensei, olhando a sujeira do nariz que saiu preguiçosa e caiu sobre as pregas estreitas da saíxa azul novinha, novinha.

Naquele dia ninguém correu na volta para casa.

Everyone was around about me, worried about why I couldn't walk faster. I felt weightless and with every step, I thought the ground before me was uneven, far off, soft.

When I got home, my mum spoke first.

'Your lunch is on the stove. When you're done, put your plate on the side, I'm off to wash the trains.'

I wriggled out of my school bag and took my plate of food.

I was on my way out to throw it all to the hens when I thought that if I took the plate straight back, my mum would suspect, because no one has lunch that quickly. I decided to keep it. I took the lid off the tub and began to mix the food around. I separated the black beans with the handle of the spoon, then chucked them into the flames that kept the stove lit. Then I threw the food in the backyard and took my plate back as my mum had asked.

Back then, women in the countryside didn't know the wonders of the brillo pad, so to make their aluminium pots shine they ground bricks and cleaned them with the powder.

The idea came to me one time when my mum took this mixture and started scraping off the carbon from the bottom of a pan with it.

As soon as she finished cleaning, she returned home. I gathered together the left-over powder and, with it, scrubbed my calf. I scrubbed and scrubbed and saw that, as it hurt so much, it was impossible to get all the blackness out my skin.

So, then, I passed my finger over the thick, red, warm blood and with it began to write obscenities on the side of the water tank.

When I got home, my mum, upon seeing me grazed, left her chores and went out back, took a fistful of honeyweed and used the herb to make an ointment for my wounds.

While she moistened a cloth in the mixture and placed it on my leg, she spoke to me.

'Lord save me. I sick of saying it: don't climb the walls, don't play at running and nothing. It goes in one ear and out the other. It's like you're a boy. Wrong: not even boys do this. See if Zezinho ...'

Her voice sounded distant, angry-sweet. Balm.

Within a week, just a few scratches told of the violence against me, by me to myself. Only my soul's wounds remained, waiting ...

Iam todos a minha volta, preocupados porque eu não conseguia andar depressa. Sentia-me sem peso e, quando mudava o passo, achava que o chão à frente estava em desnível, longe, mole.

Quando cheguei em casa, minha mãe falou:

‘Seu almoço está em cima do fogão. Depois você leva o prato lá na vasca, que eu já estou indo lavar os trens.’

Desvencilhei-me do material escolar e peguei o prato de comida.

Já ia saindo para jogar tudo para as galinhas do terreiro, quando pensei que, se eu levasse o prato logo, minha mãe ia desconfiar, porque não se almoça em tão pouco tempo. Resolvi aguardar. Destampeei a vasilha e comecei a remexer a comida. Separei os grãos de feijão preto com o cabo da colher, joguei-os no meio das labaredas que mantinham aceso o fogo do fogão. Depois atirei a comida no quintal e fui levar o prato como minha mãe havia recomendado.

Até então, as mulheres da zona rural não conheciam ‘as mil e uma utilidades do bombril’ e, para fazerem brilhar os alumínio, elas triturravam tijolos e com o pó faziam a limpeza dos utensílios.

A ideia me surgiu quando minha mãe pegou o preparado e com ele se pôs a tirar da panela o carvão grudado no fundo.

Assim que ela terminou a arrumação, voltou para casa. Eu juntei o pó restante e, com ele, esfreguei a barriga da perna. Esfreguei, esfreguei, e vi que, diante de tanta dor, era impossível tirar todo o negro da pele.

Daí, então, passei o dedo sobre o sangue vermelho, grosso, quente, e com ele comecei a escrever pornografias no muro do tanque d’água.

Quando cheguei em casa, minha mãe, ao me ver toda esfolada, deixou os afazeres, foi para o fundo do quintal, apanhou um punhado de rubi e com a erva preparou um unguento para as minhas feridas.

Enquanto umedecia um paninho no preparado e colocava na minha perna, dizia:

‘Deus me livre! Eu canso de falar: não sobe nos muros, não brinca de correr e que nada. Entra por um ouvido e sai para o outro. Parece moleque. Mentira: nem moleque faz isto. Vê se o Zezinho...’

Eu ouvia sua voz distante, brava-doce. Bálsamo.

Dentro de uma semana, na perna só uns riscos denunciavam a violência contra mim, de mim para mim mesma. Só ficaram as chagas da alma esperando.

(Guimarães, Geni. ‘Metamorfose’. In *Leite do peito: Contos*, 3. ed., 55–66. Belo Horizonte: Mazza, 2001.)

Brazilian Citizen, by Denise Homem, translated by Victor Meadowcroft

I have always marvelled at the gipsy way of life. I'm the granddaughter of folks who set out on foot from Pernambuco to Minas Gerais. I myself would continue on to São Paulo following the death of my mother. I have the impression I was born amid the dust, grew up in the fields and that my only safe havens – where I was able to write freely – were Candindé and Parelheiros. The books, paper, pencils and pens served me as husband, lover and teacher. For as long as I could, I rejected the land's call to be cultivated. I was an artist, and I learned this by listening to my grandfather's conversations with upstanding citizens – they would always refer to him as 'African Socrates,' and they respected him.

I confess that I was almost swallowed up by the big city. I worked as a cleaner, a nursing assistant, a circus performer, sleeping in squares, on streets and beneath bridges. But I refused to be just another black woman from the favela, surrounded by sexual abuse, hunger, filth and squalor. There were good periods, when I thought everything might turn out well for me, like when I worked at Dr Zerbini's house and he allowed me the use of his library. However, youth had its own appeals, and I answered every one of them – except for booze! Once I became pregnant, the dream was over: I wound up in Candindé with a child and hunger filling my belly.

I erected my house alone, dragging construction materials for five blocks. These were leftovers from building works on a church. Somewhat ironic, as I had fallen out with God for taking my loved ones too soon! I suffered for many years. I needed to talk, and yet no one but my notebooks would listen to me. I transformed them into my confidantes and began referring to them as diaries. I told them all about the world as it was, lonesome and cruel, and they helped me to forget about the back

Cidadã brasileira, de Denise Homem

A vida de cigana sempre me assombrou. Sou neta de um povo que pegou a estrada a pé de Pernambuco a Minas Gerais. Eu mesma segui rumo a São Paulo após a morte de minha mãe. Tenho a impressão de que nasci no meio da poeira, que cresci nos roçados e que meus únicos pousos seguros, onde escrevi livremente, foram o Canindé e Parelheiros. Os livros, papéis, lápis e canetas me serviram como marido, amante e professor. Neguei, enquanto pude, o apelo da terra a ser cultivada. Eu era uma artista, e aprendi isso ouvindo meu avô conversar com gente de bem e bens – eles o chamavam de ‘Sócrates Africano’ e o respeitavam.

Confesso que a cidade grande quase me engoliu. Fui faxineira, auxiliar de enfermagem, artista de circo, dormi em praças, estradas e embaixo de pontes, mas recusei ser simplesmente a preta da favela, cercada pelo abuso sexual, pela fome, pela sujeira e a sordidez. Tive momentos bons, em que achei que tudo daria certo para mim, como quando trabalhei na casa do dr. Zerbini e ele me dava acesso à sua biblioteca. Porém, a juventude tinha seus apelos e atendi a todos, exceto à cachaça! Quando engravidei, o sonho acabou: fui parar no Canindé, com o bucho cheio de criança e fome.

Ergui minha casa sozinha, arrastando o material de construção por cinco quadras. Eram restos das obras de uma igreja. Fina ironia, já que eu estava brigada com Deus por levar os meus cedo demais! Eu sofri por muitos anos, precisava falar e ninguém, além dos meus cadernos, queria me ouvir. Transformei-os em confidentes e dei-lhes o nome de diários. Eu contava a eles o mundo como era, cruel e solitário, e eles me faziam esquecer a dor nas costas

pain caused by transporting heavy cardboard, my three cold and hungry children, and the men I'd loved who hadn't loved me back as I deserved. I translated and reinvented myself on scraps of paper collected on the street. I've been told that my sincerity was lacerating, but I never came even close to the truth. It turns out I was still ingenuous.

I first met the journalist in the favela, at a time of great confusion. It was during an election period, and the usual characters would come by to pester us with handouts, while that clown Promessinha had just released a film inspired by his criminal escapades. Pure distraction, but the people fell for it. I wanted rights, not crumbs. I confronted the spectre of poverty for a general public accustomed to the idealised image of the favela, a place where you were expected to sing while lacking the essentials. Those hypocrites never came here to sink their shoes in the muck, drink water from a communal spout, catch a whiff of the mice and the sewer. They had no stomach for my bile, my pustules, my frustrations. My hunger was concrete!

I believed that the journalist was a friend, that he could save me, and I showed him my greatest treasure, hidden between the pages of the grubby diaries. He read them and saw far more than I could, taking them away and publishing them as a book. Without asking for it, I became the voice of the favela. I acquired much fame, some money, but never the respect I was due. To begin with, Audálio was my publicist, editor and tutor. Yes, tutor! Until I became famous, I didn't have a single piece of documentation, and bear in mind I was supposedly some forty-six years old.

And yet, he didn't defend me in the pages of the newspapers, and I became known as 'petulant, moody, brash, rebellious, explosive, arrogant and aggressive.' Lord, I was being robbed by all and sundry and was supposed to just keep quiet? Me of all people, someone who had never missed a confession? I tried to alleviate my pain by singing sambas, recording two albums (today entertainment for my great-grandchildren) and moving into a brick house, because now people in the favela were after my money too. They threw stones at the van when I left, can you believe it? Trust me, it's a curse: fame always brings with it someone looking to get ahead, someone after their slice. If you aren't careful, they won't just have your rings, but your fingers too.

I became overwhelmed. I found myself buying expensive clothes and jewellery, sitting down for dinner with presidents, and yet my children couldn't play in the white streets of Santana without risking beatings and insults. In Brazil, not even fame and fortune can turn 'blacks' into 'people,' and I refused to accept the position reserved for me by those above!

provocada pelo peso do papelão, os três filhos com fome e frio, os homens que amei e não corresponderam como eu merecia. Eu me traduzia e reinventava em pedaços de papel catados na rua. Disseram que minha sinceridade era cortante, mas nunca cheguei nem perto da verdade, afinal eu ainda era ingênua.

Conheci o jornalista na favela, no meio da maior confusão. Era período eleitoral e esses caras iam assediá-lo com presentinhos, e o palhaço Promessinha fazendo filme. Pura distração e o povo caía. Eu queria direitos e não migalhas. Confrontei o fantasma da pobreza para o grande público acostumado com a favela idealizada, onde cabia cantar passando necessidades. Esses hipócritas nunca vieram aqui sujar o sapato na lama, beber água de bica coletiva, sentir cheiro de esgoto e rato, não têm estômago para meu vômito, minhas pústulas e minhas frustrações. Minha fome era concreta!

Acreditei que o jornalista era amigo, que poderia me salvar, e mostrei meu maior tesouro, escondido nas páginas dos diários encardidos. Leu e viu muito mais do que eu, levou e publicou como livro. Me tornei a voz da favela, sem pedir por isso. Ganhei muita fama, alguma grana, mas jamais o devido respeito. Audálio foi, no primeiro momento, meu promotor, editor e tutor. Sim, tutor! Eu não tinha, nunca tive até a fama, nenhum documento, e olha que eu já tinha presumidos quarenta e seis anos.

Entretanto, ele não me protegeu nas páginas dos jornais, e virei 'petulante, geniosa, atrevida, rebelde, explosiva, arrogante e agressiva'. Deus, eu estava sendo roubada por todos e deveria ficar calada? Logo eu, que sempre me confessei? Tentei aliviar a dor cantando meus sambas, gravei dois discos (que hoje divertem meus bisnetos) e mudei para uma casa de alvenaria, porque na favela o povo também queria meu dinheiro. Jogaram pedra no caminhão quando saí, você acredita? Perceba, é uma maldição: a fama sempre traz alguém querendo se promover, querendo uma lasca e, se você for distraído, levam os anéis junto com os dedos.

Me deslumbrei, comprei roupas e bijuterias caras, me sentei para jantar com presidentes, contudo meus filhos não podiam brincar nas ruas brancas de Santana sem apanhar e ouvir desaforos. Preto no Brasil não vira gente nem quando tem fama e dinheiro, e eu não aceitava o lugar reservado para mim pelos de cima!

I tried to believe in the kindness of one or another of them, even when faced with boycotts. You see, there was one time at a writers' festival when my books never arrived, and I returned home frustrated and disappointed. Good news for Jorge Amado's *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon*, which arrived like bread fresh from the oven, if you catch my drift! I held out until the final blow: the guys over at *O Cruzeiro* were planning to sell the film rights to my book to the Italians. I arrived at the meeting early and, without being noticed, listened to the vast sums of money everyone stood to make once I'd given the project my go-ahead. Only they'd decided that nothing should be left up to me, having already advanced me the money for flights so that I could attend the filming in Italy, and that was good enough for the girl from the favela who was only able to eat thanks to them.

The painful treachery of those words was such that I didn't even respond, didn't confront them, just turned and left without being seen. I simply went ahead and altered the plans of those vultures. I emptied out my bank account, cancelled the flights, bought some land and moved there with my children, leaving no forwarding address, and, most importantly, retracting every single authorisation relating to my work.

The big shots were furious about my escape to Palhereiros under cover of darkness. I actually fled! Just think about it: outside Brazil, my book didn't earn me a penny, their contract prevented me from receiving so much as a crumb for the translations, and everyone knows there were a ton of them out there, you understand? I was the first Brazilian woman to sell a million copies, published in fourteen languages and forty countries. If you don't believe me, you can look it up. You'll be shocked to discover I'm right. As I've said before, you would have done the same. It was 1964 and the dictatorship decreed my erasure from the newspapers.

I, a Brazilian citizen, preferred self-exile to the back of beyond, on eight thousand-square metres containing nothing but a cabin with no lights or running water. There, at least, the earth gave something back to me, transforming everything I planted, and I also kept pigs and chickens. Finally, I understood my ancestors.

Tentei acreditar na bondade de um ou outro mesmo enfrentando boicotes. Veja bem, em um festival de escritores meus livros não chegaram, fui para casa revoltada e desiludida. Bom para *Gabriela, cravo e canela*, que saiu como pão quente de manhã, se é que vocês me entendem! Aguentei até o derradeiro golpe: o povo d'O *Cruzeiro* iria vender meu livro para ser filmado pelos italianos. Cheguei cedo para a reunião e ouvi, sem ser percebida, o alto valor que cada um ganharia quando eu autorizasse a execução do projeto. Só que decidiram que nada me caberia, porque já tinham me adiantado o valor das passagens para ir assistir às gravações na Itália, e isso bastava à favelada que só comia por causa deles.

A dor da traição presente nessas palavras foi tamanha que nem revidei, não tomei satisfação, somente me virei e saí sem ser vista. Simplesmente alterei os planos desses abutres. Tirei todo o dinheiro do banco, cancelei as reservas, comprei um sítio e me mudei com meus filhos, sem deixar endereço, e principalmente cancelando toda e qualquer autorização sobre minha obra.

Os grandões ficaram putos com a fuga na calada da noite para Palhereiros. Fugi mesmo! Pensa bem, meu livro no exterior não me rendia um tostão, o contrato deles proibia que eu recebesse um centavo pelas traduções e todo mundo sabe que foi uma porrada espalhado por aí, está entendendo? Fui a primeira brasileira a vender 1 milhão de cópias, editada em quatorze idiomas e quarenta países. Se não acredita, pode pesquisar, se espantar e me dar razão. Como eu já disse, você faria o mesmo. Era 1964 e a ditadura decretou meu apagamento dos jornais.

Eu, cidadã brasileira, preferi o autoexílio no fim do mundo, em oito mil metros quadrados com nada além de um barracão sem luz ou água encanada. Lá, pelo menos, a terra me devolvia, transformado, tudo o que eu plantava, e eu tinha porcos e galinhas. Finalmente, entendi meus antepassados.

(Homem, Denise. 'Cidadã brasileira'. In *Conta forte, conta alto: Contos inspirados nas canções de Martinho da Vila*, edited by Ecio Salles and Julio Ludemir, 96–99. Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 2018.)

Love, by Márcio Januário, translated by Almiro Andrade

It's been over three weeks since Adriano graced her with a visit. He had this annoying habit, vanishing without a single excuse or explanation. Lete was desperate; she could not sleep well and did not know what to do. When she was not working, whenever that was, she would get up and go hunting for Adriano through Copacabana or through the streets in the old city centre. She didn't want to think about tragic things, but what if a millionaire gringa had taken Adriano away, out of Brazil? Anything was possible, and if that happened it would be death. Lete could not take the fags saying that she had gone mad for good any longer. That she was one of them trashy fags, that she was living off her friends' goodwill, and that she spent what she didn't have with a male escort, and that Adriano was just like the other hustlers, he was just taking advantage of how dim she was. Fuck it, she could be all that and more, she didn't give a shit about the trash talk. Lete would spend way above her means, moonlight as a mule, anything just to be with Adriano. She knew it was crazy, to hunt that hunk down all over town, but she was going for it.

On Sunday, Lete was stuck in the theatre all day; she had a rehearsal in the afternoon and two performances in the evening. When the last session was over, Lete didn't even put out the costumes to get some fresh air as she always did; the bitch went crazy, out looking for Adriano, and only came back at dawn. On Monday, she woke up early, but she was so tired, she couldn't get out of bed. Right around midday, she plucked up the courage, forced herself out of bed, had breakfast, rolled a spliff and took a few puffs. But shit, that shit was from a can and the bitch got spaced, rolling round and round like a dizzy cockroach, and she took hours to clean up the stage, the dressing room and reorganise the costumes. When she managed to finish everything, it was 4 pm; she took a quick shower, ate

O amor, de Márcio Januário

Tinha mais de três semanas que Adriano não aparecia. Ele estava com essa mania, sumia e não dava a menor satisfação. Lete estava desesperada, não conseguia dormir direito e não sabia o que fazer. Quando não estava trabalhando, podia ser a hora que fosse, que ela se montava e saía caçando Adriano por Copacabana ou pelas ruas do centro da cidade. Não queria pensar em coisas trágicas, mas e se uma bicha gringa milionária tivesse levado Adriano pra fora do Brasil? Tudo era possível e se isso acontecesse ia ser a morte. Lete não aguentava mais ouvir as bichas falando que ela tinha enlouquecido de vez. Que ela era uma bicha fudida, que vivia de favor e que ficava gastando o que não tinha com um garoto de programa e que Adriano era igual aos outros michês, só estava se aproveitando da burrice dela. Foda-se, podia ser tudo isso e mais alguma coisa, que ela estava cagando pras fofoqueiras. Lete ficava endividada, fazia avião, faria qualquer coisa pra ficar com Adriano. Ela sabia que era muita doideira, sair caçando o bofe por aí, mas ia.

No domingo Lete ficou presa no teatro o dia todo, teve ensaio na parte da tarde e as duas apresentações da noite. Quando acabou a última sessão, Lete nem colocou os figurinos pra arejar, como sempre fazia, a bicha saiu que nem uma louca, pra procurar Adriano e só voltou de madrugada. Na segunda-feira acordou cedo, mas estava tão cansada, que não conseguiu sair da cama. Quando deu meio-dia, criou coragem, levantou, tomou café-da-manhã, apertou um baseado e deu uns pegas. Foda, que era a tal da maconha da lata e ela ficou muito turva, a bicha rodava pra lá e pra cá, que nem uma barata tonta e levou horas pra fazer a faxina no palco, no camarim e organizar os figurinos. Quando conseguiu terminar de fazer tudo, eram quatro da tarde, tomou um banho rápido, comeu

some pot noodle with scrambled egg, smoked the spliff halfway through and put the other half inside her panties. She put on a discreet pink outfit, like a summer dress. The weather was a bit cloudy, if it rained she was fucked, she had lost her fucking umbrella a long time ago and never got around to buy another one. Okay, if it rained she would look beautiful, just like Fernanda Montenegro in the final scene of the movie *A Falecida*.

Lete hopped on the 464 in front of Galeria Alaska, the traffic was great at Av. Nossa Senhora de Copacabana. When she saw her own reflection in the glass window of the bus, she realised that she had horrible dark circles under her eyes, completely shitfaced, and that her eyes were bloodshot. She looked just like those women on most-wanted posters for terrorists. She opened her hot pink clutch to get her sunglasses, but she had left it in the dressing room. To be honest, she only didn't forget to take her fucking head with her, because it was stuck to her fucking neck. Fuck it, now she was going for it anyway.

She'd better have listened when they said that shit was strong – Lete was pissed off, but the shit hit her so fast that she started laughing all by herself; when the bus stopped at the light, she saw Vagabal on the sidewalk. As usual, the skunk was high on ether, completely filthy and with his dick and ass hanging out. Only this time he was sitting, as if he were a lord, talking to invisible beings and stroking his soft dick, under the street sign República do Peru. Vagabal saw that Lete was looking at him and started to send her air kisses, smiling sweetly with a wide toothless mouth. Lete returned the kisses – people were disgusted by Vagabal because he stank, Lete liked him and they always greeted each other.

Riding the bus without the traffic jams was great and once she crossed the tunnel on Rua Princesa Isabel, the trip was even more beautiful. It was great to pass by Canecão Hall and see the posters for the shows of the MPB stars; then the bus passed by Mourisco, which was a beautiful building; and then there was Botafogo beach, Aterro do Flamengo and you could see Urca and the Sugarloaf. At dusk, the city's postcard became even more beautiful. Lete was stoned, looking at the landscape she realised she lived in Rio and had never been to Corcovado or the Sugarloaf, and that one day she would go there with Adriano. It was just the memory of Adriano, but she felt a fucking urge to cry hit her hard. Sensitive fags are the worst, and whenever she has a spliff, she would only get worse; she'd cry for anything.

She got off the bus at Glória and started the search throughout the Aterro do Flamengo cruising points. She went talking to the cross-dressers and hustlers who prostituted themselves in that area to find out if anyone had seen Adriano but nobody knew about the hunk. She walked to Cinelândia, passed by the benches in the square where the hustlers

um macarrão instantâneo com ovo mexido, fumou o baseado até a metade e mocosou a ponta na calcinha. Colocou um modelito rosa discreto, bem primavera verão. O tempo estava meio nublado, se chovesse estava fudida, tinha perdido a porra do guarda-chuvas há um tempão e sempre esquecia de comprar outro. Tudo bem, se chovesse ia ficar linda, igual a Fernanda Montenegro na cena final do filme *A Falecida*.

Lete pegou o 464 em frente à Galeria Alaska, o trânsito estava ótimo na Av. Nossa Senhora de Copacabana. Quando viu o próprio reflexo no vidro da janela do ônibus é que se deu conta de que estava com umas olheiras horríveis, com uma cara de chapada da porra e que os olhos pareciam duas brasas vermelhas. Estava igual àquelas mulheres dos cartazes de procura-se terrorista. Abriu a pochete rosa choque, pra pegar os óculos escuros, mas tinha esquecido no camarim. Também, só não esquecia a porra da cabeça, porque estava presa no pescoço. Foda-se, agora ia assim mesmo.

Bem que falaram que essa maconha era forte, Lete estava puta da vida, mas a onda bateu e ela começou a rir sozinha, quando o ônibus parou no sinal e ela viu o Vagabal na calçada. Como sempre, o mendigo estava doidão de éter, muito sujo e com o pau e a bunda de fora. Só que dessa vez, ele estava sentado, como se fosse um lorde, conversando com seres invisíveis e coçando o pau mole, debaixo da placa da rua República do Peru. Vagabal viu que Lete estava olhando pra ele e começou a jogar beijos, sorrindo docemente com a boca banguela. Lete retribuiu os beijos, as pessoas tinham nojo do Vagabal porque ele fedia, Lete gostava dele e eles sempre se cumprimentavam.

Andar de ônibus sem os engarrafamentos era ótimo e quando atravessava o túnel da Rua Princesa Isabel, a viagem ficava mais bonita. Era ótimo passar pelo Canecão e ver os cartazes dos shows das estrelas da MPB, depois o ônibus passava pelo Mourisco, que era um prédio lindo e aí, vinha a praia de Botafogo, o Aterro do Flamengo e dava pra ver a Urca e o Pão de Açúcar. Ao entardecer, o cartão postal da cidade ficava mais bonito. Lete estava marolando olhando a paisagem e se deu conta de que morava no Rio e nunca tinha ido no Corcovado e no Pão de Açúcar, um dia iria com Adriano. Foi pensar em Adriano e bateu uma vontade da porra de chorar. Bixa sensível é o ó, e quando fuma maconha, fica pior ainda, chora à toa.

Desceu do ônibus na Glória e começou a busca pelos pontos de pegação do Aterro do Flamengo. Ela saiu catando as travestis e os michês, que se prostituíam pela região pra saber se alguém tinha visto Adriano e ninguém sabia do bofe. Foi andando até a Cinelândia, passou pelos bancos da praça onde os michês

used to stop, went through the porn cinemas, looked at Amarelinho Restaurant and had no clue where Adriano was. She walked down Rua Mem de Sá all the way to the Red Cross, asking all the people she met and nothing. She was already exhausted, and it was almost 10.00p.m., but she decided to walk to Rua Gomes Freire and ask the motel porters if Adriano had shown up there. When she arrived at the Motel Hostal's door and was going to open the metal door, the door opened on its own and a beautiful gay couple left the motel smiling, with one of those happy faces of when people just had a wonderful shag. Lete was thrilled and thought it was a good omen, went up the red-carpet stairs to ask at the reception desk if Adriano had stopped by. She remembered how many wonderful nights she had spent at that motel. Of all the shagging, one was special. That night, she was sure that what was going on with Adriano was love.

He had been pounding her for hours, they had already gone through various positions, until he put her on all fours and started to pound faster, everything was great. Suddenly Lete started to feel her stomach turn. She wanted to ask him to take it off, only he was pounding her so fucking good, she didn't have the guts. The stomachache was unbearable, when Adriano started pounding harder. Lete felt an uncontrollable urge to go to the bathroom, but she didn't want to stop it and just asked him to cum quicker. He took longer than expected to cum, yet she managed to control herself; there was nothing better than feeling him shooting his load inside. When Adriano took his dick out, what she feared most had happened. Lete had shat the pole and was paralysed; she didn't know what to do. Worst of all, his dick had shit all over it and Lete was left feeling like the filthiest fag in the world. The smell was horrible. She just wanted to cry and murmured.

'What a shame, I'm sorry ... I should've douched ...'

He replied with the gentlest and most serene voice.

'All right. Let's go shower, come on.'

Adriano waited for her to give him her hand, and off they went, hand in hand, to the bathroom, into the shower. He started off the shower, got the soap, and cleaned himself up. Lete was still paralysed; he then took the showerhead and started washing her ass as if he were washing a baby's bum. When she was all cleaned, he made Lete face him, smiled and they kissed under the shower; it looked like a film shot. She had never felt so loved.

They went back to bed, smoked the rest of their spliff without saying a word, just cuddling. Lete was simply feeling Adriano's breathing until he fell asleep. She wept with happiness.

faziam ponto, pelos cinemas, olhou no Restaurante Amarelinho e nada de Adriano. Andou pela rua Mem de Sá até a Cruz Vermelha, perguntando para todos os conhecidos que encontrava e nada. Já estava exausta e eram quase dez da noite, mas resolveu andar até a Rua Gomes Freire e perguntar para os porteiros dos motéis se Adriano tinha aparecido por lá. Quando chegou no Motel Hostal e ia abrir a porta de metal, a porta abriu sozinha e um casal de gayzinhos lindos saiu sorridente do motel, com aquela cara de felicidade de quem acaba de dar uma trepada maravilhosa. Lete ficou emocionada e achou que aquilo era um bom presságio, subiu as escadas de tapete vermelho para perguntar na portaria se Adriano tinha passado por lá. Lembrou de quantas noites maravilhosas tinha passado naquele motel. De todas as trepadas, uma era especial. Naquela noite, ela teve certeza de que o que rolava com Adriano era amor.

Ele estava comendo ela há horas, já tinham passado por várias posições, até que ele colocou ela de quatro e começou a meter mais rápido, estava tudo ótimo. De repente Lete começou a sentir o estômago revirar. Queria falar pra ele tirar, só que ele estava metendo tão gostoso, que não teve coragem. A dor de barriga ficou insuportável, quando Adriano começou a socar com mais força. Lete sentiu uma vontade incontável de ir pro banheiro, mas não queria parar e pediu pra ele gozar logo. Ele demorou pra gozar e ela conseguiu se controlar, não existia nada melhor do que sentir ele se derramando todo dentro dela. Na hora que Adriano tirou o pau, aconteceu o que ela mais temia. Lete passou um cheque e ficou paralisada, não sabia o que fazer. Pior que o pau dele estava todo sujo e Lete se sentindo a bicha mais porca do mundo. O cheiro era horrível. Queria chorar e murmurou.

‘Que vergonha, me desculpa... Devia ter feito uma chuca...’

Ele respondeu com a maior tranquilidade.

‘Tudo bem. Vamos pro chuveiro, vem.’

Adriano estendeu a mão e foram de mãos dadas até o banheiro, entraram no Box. Ele abriu o chuveiro, pegou o sabonete, se lavou. Lete continuava paralisada, ele pegou o chuveirinho e começou a lavar a bunda dela como se estivesse lavando a bunda de uma criança. Quando acabou, virou Lete de frente, ele sorriu e ficaram se beijando debaixo do chuveiro, parecia até cena de filme. Nunca tinha se sentido tao amada.

Voltaram para cama, fumaram o resto do baseado sem falar nada, se abraçaram. Lete ficou sentindo a respiração de Adriano até ele dormir. Chorou de felicidade.

(Januário, Márcio. ‘O amor’. Not previously published.)

How Far the Sea Goes, by Ana Paula Lisboa, translated by Christina Baum

Marina dreamed of the sea! Blue dreams interspersed with white foam. Sometimes Marina was Marina, sometimes she was the water. At times naked, she would swim and swim. She would wake up tired, with aching arms and eyes stinging from the salt water.

In real life Marina couldn't even swim, she had never been to the sea. So how could Marina know its taste, its smell of salt, the ebb and flow of white foam caressing her body?

She was born under a full moon, at high tide. A child from landlocked Minas Gerais, obsessed with the sea, she grew up seeing the glamorous beaches of Copacabana and Leblon on TV. But her dreams began much earlier, in her mother's womb: baby Marina surrounded by water, swimming and swimming. When she cried, only a bath would calm her down, a habit she retained into adulthood. The shower was where she untied her most tangled thoughts.

It was then that she decided to live in Rio de Janeiro when she grew up. For a while, she contented herself with waterfalls, fresh water, the taps on street corners, the water gushing downhill on stormy days. When it drizzled, little Marina ran to the street, opened her mouth, and drank rainwater. She waited for the taste of salt, but it never came.

Liquid Marina ... responded without fear or haste, carrying on unhindered conversations. Life was sweet, clear, and colourless.

When she finally arrived in Rio, she ran from the bus station straight to the beach, carrying her entire life in her backpack. At the seashore, she saw a dark-skinned woman in a tight blue dress. The woman was the sea, she thought. And she really was, because the sea wasn't blue but dark green, reflecting the sky and people's brown skin.

Até onde vai o mar, de Ana Paula Lisboa

Marina sonhava mar! Os sonhos azuis, entrecortados por espumas brancas. Às vezes Marina era Marina, às vezes era a própria água. Por vezes nua, nadava e nadava. Acordava cansada, os braços doloridos, os olhos ardidos da água salgada.

Fora do sonho Marina nem sabia nadar, nunca havia entrado no mar. Então como é que Marina sabia seu gosto, o cheiro do sal, sentia no corpo o vai-e-vem das espumas brancas?

Nasceu na lua cheia, à maré alta. Uma fixação de criança mineira que cresceu assistindo o Leblon e Copacabana na televisão. Mas os sonhos eram de antes, datavam desde a barriga da mãe: a bebê Marina cercada de água por todos os lados, nadava e nadava. Os choros só se acalmavam no banho e o costume permanecia já adulta. O chuveiro era ainda o lugar de desatar os nós dos pensamentos mais amarrados.

Foi nessa época que decidiu que moraria no Rio de Janeiro quando crescesse. Por tempos se contentou com as cachoeiras, a água docinha, as bicas nas esquinas, as correntezas que se formavam nas ladeiras em dias de temporal. Quando a chuva ficava fininha, a criança Marina corria para rua, abria a boca, bebia a chuva. Esperava o gosto de sal que não vinha.

Marina fluida... respondia sem medo e sem pressa, percorria conversas sem obstáculos. A vida era doce, clara e incolor.

Quando finalmente o dia do Rio chegou, correu da rodoviária direto para a praia, a mochila com a vida inteira nas costas. Na orla viu uma mulher de pele marrom e vestido azul colado no corpo. A mulher era o mar, pensou. E era mesmo, porque o mar mesmo não era azul, um verde escuro que refletia o céu e o marrom da pele das pessoas.

Everything in Rio de Janeiro was different: the way people gazed, behaved, and expressed their feelings. Bodies, in motion or still, were there to be seen, everyone's perfect smiles, a presence that mysteriously combined haughtiness and humility.

Marina got there but didn't stay. She quickly realised that living so close to the sea had a price beyond her means. She searched and found a place that seemed as sea-like as Rio's posh South Zone: the favelas of Maré. A cramped bedsit with a tiny window, but she was delighted by the street name: Inhaúma Beach. Marina had the sea; she could feel it.

'In the past the sea used to come up to here, sweetheart!'

And then came Omar, his bleached hair reminding her of the white foam of her dreams. Omar taught Marina how to see Rio, what slang to use in different parts of Maré, when to show up somewhere and when to leave, how to skip paying the bus fare, how to bodysurf in Ipanema and finally, how to swim. Holding her hand tight, they jumped, countless times, off the Arpoador Rock into the sea.

They spent weeks applauding sunsets, warm evenings of kissing and swimming in the sea that had turned emerald green after a few weeks without rain.

Although life got harder, Marina kept going. At least she had a job in Copacabana. In the beginning, she could walk along the promenade at lunchtime and have a bowl of açaí in the evening.

Then came the recession, but Marina kept going. She still had a job to go back to. Now she had to be the first to arrive – her lunch break was just thirty minutes, and she left well after sunset. Initially, she worked from Monday to Saturday, then every other Sunday.

At night the sea was neither blue nor green but black. One day a foreigner walked into the pharmacy but refused to be served by a Black woman. Marina found herself at sea, and it was no dream.

Commuting meant four hours standing on her feet. She no longer had time for Omar. There was so much to do, a life to lead, her studies for university entrance exams. To be with Omar was like being knocked over by a wave, grazing her skin, her bikini and heart dislodged.

On her Sundays off, she tried to keep up the habit of sending postcards from Rio de Janeiro to her parents, telling them the sea was every bit as beautiful as on television. They replied with plans of spending their holidays with the whole family and friends in the city. Marina encouraged them, saying she had a big home where she could put them all up. She said she had plenty of free time and they could walk to the beach every day because she lived very close to the sea.

Tudo no Rio de Janeiro era outro: a forma de olhar, de sentir, de estar. O corpo para ser visto, em movimento mesmo quando parado, os sorrisos perfeitos, uma presença que misteriosamente misturava altivez e humildade.

Marina chegou, mas não ficou. Percebeu rápido que morar tão perto da água salgada tinha um preço que não cabia no bolso. A busca e o encontro do lugar que pareceu tão mar quanto a Zona Sul: Maré. Uma quitinete apertada, uma janela minúscula, mas se encantou pelo nome da rua: Praia de Inhaúma. Maria tinha o mar, podia sentir.

‘O mar, minha filha, o mar antigamente vinha até aqui!’

E então veio Omar, o cabelo descolorido dele lembrava as espumas brancas dos sonhos dela. Omar ensinou Marina a ver o Rio, a saber qual gíria falar em cada parte da Maré, a melhor hora para chegar, para sair, a dar calote no ônibus, a pegar jacaré em Ipanema e finalmente a nadar. Pularam juntos incontáveis vezes da Pedra do Arpoador para dentro do mar, ele segurando a mão dela bem firme.

Foram semanas de aplaudir o pôr do sol, fins de tarde quentes de beijo e banho de mar, que depois de semanas sem chuvas na cidade, se tornava verde-esmeralda.

Mas a vida apertou, Marina correu e pelo menos o trabalho era em Copacabana. No início ainda dava para passear no calçadão na hora do almoço e tomar açaí no fim do dia.

Mas a crise chegou, Marina correu, pelo menos ficou no emprego. Mas agora precisava ser a primeira a chegar, só tinha 30 minutos de almoço e a saída era bem depois do pôr do sol. Primeiro de segunda a sábado, depois também com plantões domingo sim, domingo não.

O mar à noite não era azul nem verde, era negro. Um dia um gringo chegou na farmácia e foi logo dizendo que não queria ser atendido por uma mulher negra. Marina viu-se o mar fora do sonho.

Duas horas para ir, mais duas para voltar, todas elas de pé. Já não tinha tempo pra Omar, era tanta coisa pra fazer, tanta vida pra criar, estudar para o vestibular. Omar para Marina era como levar um caixote das ondas, tirava seus pés da areia, saía sempre ralada, o biquíni e o coração fora do lugar.

Nos domingos de folga tentava manter o costume de enviar cartões-postais do Rio de Janeiro para os pais, contava como o mar era mesmo bonito fora da televisão. Eles respondiam planejando férias na cidade, toda a família e amigos. Marina encorajava, dizia que tinha uma casa grande e que certamente todos caberiam. Que ela teria também muito tempo livre e assim iriam à praia todos os dias. E que iriam mesmo a pé, porque sua casa era muito próxima ao mar.

No one knows whether either ever believed it.

On a stormy day in January, all the waters came together: salt, fresh, bitter, and acidic. Marina couldn't get back home. So she slept at work. She was soaking wet. The next day, she stayed at work, taking note of everything that had survived the flood, pouring more water to clean up.

Marina was tired, worn out from seeing so much water. For the first time she recalled the water tap on the street corner, the soothing water that came out cool, the hand holding the water and the mouth holding the hand.

There was no time to lick her wounds, her rent was late, no break from the daily grind.

A few days later when Marina was at the till, a regular customer came in, smiling. He paid for his purchases and left the change, a large sum, but things were still tight. On her Sunday off, Marina wore a tight blue dress with a fake smile, a fake hairdo, a fake makeover, pretending to be the woman she had first seen when she arrived in Rio.

Afterwards at home, with the late rent paid off, she cried, mixing her tears with the shower water. She felt like throwing the money in the water and watching it all slip away.

She lost her sense of smell. She barely spoke. Sometimes she drank, often she cried. She stopped writing. Marina had been engulfed by the saltwater city.

One day a letter arrived. Her mother said she had lit many candles to Our Lady of the Waters, but the forces had been too powerful, and her father had passed away. His last words were for Marina, saying that she was going places, that nothing could stop her.

Trying to calm herself down, she drank three glasses of water. Then Marina stood there alone, speechless, like a dirty puddle.

The following day there was no work, no strength, no food, no drinking water. Not even bathing could lift Marina's spirits. She could only think about where she was heading and what she could do and see. Who could she fall back on?

She dreamed her recurring dream – she was in the sea, naked, swimming and swimming, her arms tired, but she could no longer surface to breathe. Surrounded by the white surf, she wasn't sure whether she was awake. She cried salty tears, the sea and Marina.

Fully clothed, she dived into the sea. Her dream came true: Marina dissolved into the sea; they were finally one. Marina and the sea. The sea and Marina.

Não se sabe se algum dos lados chegou um dia a acreditar.

Numa chuva de janeiro, as águas se misturaram todas: as salgadas, as doces e as amargas, as ácidas. Marina não pôde voltar para casa, dormiu no trabalho, Marina encharcada. E no dia seguinte, continuou por lá, contando tudo que sobrou, jogando mais água pra limpar.

Marina cansada, exausta de tanta água pra ver. Pela primeira vez lembrou da bica na esquina, da água que saía fresquinha, da mão aparando a água e a boca aparando a mão.

Não havia tempo de lamber as feridas, o aluguel atrasado, a lida que vinha.

Uns dias depois um cliente de sempre, um senhor sorridente, Marina era caixa. Pagou o que comprou e deixou troco, valor alto, a vida permanecia apertada. No domingo de folga Marina usou um vestido azul apertado, fingiu o sorriso, fingiu cabelo, fingiu tudo, fingiu principalmente ser a mulher do primeiro dia no Rio.

Depois, já em casa, o choro misturado a muita água do chuveiro e o mês de aluguel atrasado quitado. A vontade era jogar todo o dinheiro na água e vê-lo correr pra longe.

Já não sentia cheiro nenhum. Já pouco falava. Às vezes bebia, muitas vezes chorava, já não escrevia. Marina soterrada pela cidade da água salgada.

Um dia uma carta. A mãe dizia ter acendido muita vela pra Nossa Senhora das Águas, mas a força era muita, o pai faleceu. Das últimas palavras, que eram pra ela, mandou dizer que Marina ia longe, que nada a parava.

Precisou acalmar, uns três copos d'água. Depois Marina sozinha, parada feito poça suja, sem palavras.

No dia seguinte não houve trabalho, não houve forças, não houve comer, acho que nem bebeu água, nem banho deu jeito em Marina. Só pensava até onde ia, tudo que podia, até onde via. Quem a seguraria?

Sonhou o sonho de sempre, ela no mar, nua nadava e nadava, o braço cansava, mas ela já não emergia pra respirar. Não lembrava bem se havia acordado, as espumas brancas em volta. Chorava, o choro salgado, o mar e Marina.

Entrou de roupa e tudo. Era o sonho realizado, Marina desfez-se, eram enfim um só. Marina e o mar. O mar e Marina.

(Lisboa, Ana Paula. 'Até onde vai o mar', Museu de Arte do Rio, Exhibition 'O Rio dos Navegantes', section 'Usos das Águas'. Accessed 28 August 2021. <http://museudeartedorio.org.br/podcast/ep-6-ate-onde-vai-o-mar-por-ana-paula-lisboa/>)

Click, by Elisa Lucinda, translated by Emyr Humphreys

Lira had a discrete and recent boyfriend who she'd call after class. Lira, a Brazilian scientist, sociologist and researcher of so-called primitive communities, lived in Spain and would call this boyfriend who she'd met at a lunch on another course. She'd call after events, after courses, after the course of events.

Click goes the photographer in the corridors of the university, drawn to her style. He watches the beautiful embroidery, the fine silk of the pearl dress that envelopes her curves, her boots, most certainly Italian. Lira had eyes like a sphinx. His gaze, like a lynx's, interrupts her, as if he were gesturing at her, which is what gazes are for, after all. She notices. She sips her coffee. She takes a cigarette from a silver *madrileña*, all gypsy-like, and tries to break this forced cordiality by asking him, only him, for a light.

'I came to photograph you, Dr Maria Lira, not to light your cigarettes. In any case ...'

'Thanks anyway. I'm not photogenic, I don't like being in front of cameras. I consider it a sort of purgatory, being in front of them. And I've got to say, I always get nervous before speaking ... as soon as I'm done I'll have to call my boyfriend ... Mr ...'

'Romano. My name is Romano. Romano Calô.'

'*Calau*? Are you French?'

'No.'

'Is it the past tense of *calar*?'

'Perhaps. We all end up in the past. And Lira, where does that come from?'

'My father is a poet and musician, so that's what he named me. The masters all ripped him, and his music and poetry, to shreds.'

Click, de Elisa Lucinda

Lira tinha um namorado discreto e recente pra quem ligaria depois da palestra. Cientista, socióloga e pesquisadora das culturas das comunidades ditas primitivas, a brasileira Lira morava na Espanha e ligaria para o tal namoradinho que tinha conhecido num almoço em outra palestra. Ligaria depois do discurso, depois do decurso, depois do curso das coisas.

Click. Um fotógrafo no corredor da universidade pesca o estilo dela. Vai olhando o linho bordado do colete, a seda fina do vestido pérola que lhe supunha as curvas, as botas, italianas com certeza. Olhos de esfinge tinha a Lira. O lince olhar dele invade seu movimento como um gesto, que é o que o olhar é. Ela percebe. Toma um café. Pega um cigarro na cigarrilha *madrileña* de prata, de cigana mesmo, e tenta quebrar sua impostada formalidade, pedindo a ele, justo a ele, o fogo.

‘Eu vim pra te fotografar, doutora Maria Lira. Não vim pra acender-lhe os cigarros, em todo caso...’

‘Obrigada, de qualquer modo. Não sou fotogênica, não fico à vontade diante de câmeras, diante de filmes. Considero mesmo um purgatório passar por eles. E tem mais, eu confesso, fico sempre nervosa antes de falar... Assim que terminar vou ligar pro meu namorado..., senhor...’

‘Romano. Meu nome é Romano. Romano Calô.’

‘*Calau?* É francês?’

‘Não.’

‘É do verbo calar, passado, calou?’

‘Talvez. A gente sempre vira passado. E Lira, vem de onde?’

‘Meu pai é poeta, músico, me deu esse nome. Os mestrados podaram muito meu pai. Lesaram sua música... sua lira.’

‘Please don’t end up like your father, ma’am.’

Lira hears her name being called. A crowd of people make their way into the auditorium. Lira, holding her notes, begins to tremble. She composes herself. Full house.

‘Studying communities and tribes, and their beliefs, arts and dialects has changed my life. It’s the reason why I became a scientist. I am more of a scientist when searching for something than I am when I find it. It’s not about what I find, but the search itself, for that which I am constantly seeking. And every day I learn to cope with negative stereotypes and ignorance, which I thought had vanished, defeated by the purity that intellectualism rightly invokes. I made a mistake. The so-called primitive communities face these pressures with ...’

Click. Lira feels his *click* in her veins and gets distracted for an instant ...

‘with self-respect. I argue that passion, creativity and everything that is genuinely human in quality, is precisely like God to these groups.’

Click.

Only she could hear Romano’s profound *click*; it was like ray beam, an arrow. She felt unwanted palpitations within herself, within that lecture. Although there were several journalists and cameras there, only his *click* sounded, like thunder, emptiness, misfortune.

Click of her drinking some water when she paused; *click* of her trying to light a cigarette and giving up; *click* of her swallowing with difficulty.

‘For example, in a community I did field research on in north Africa, I learnt that not eating with our hands was wrong. Everyone eats with their hands there. So, I joined in. I didn’t find it very comfortable at first; it was so direct, so intimate, then one day I realised how false and hypocritical using cutlery felt. We are still hunter gatherers. The difference is that we send henchmen to kill, skin and even spice our prey. Our prey turns into our meals, and our meals turn into civilised crimes committed by supermarkets.’

Laughter from the audience.

‘But we’re hunters. And we’re nasty. We eat with cutlery to distance ourselves from the crime ... now, I’m not exactly saying that from now on we must all eat our prey with our hands.’

She swallows. *Click.* Applause.

She feels quite faint and sits down for a moment. She looks over her notes and gets up again, elegantly adjusting her ivory dress whose seam had become entrenched in the valley between her hips. *Click* of her hand.

‘Não tenha o mesmo destino que a lira de seu pai, senhora.’

Lira ouve seu nome ser anunciado. Pessoas muitas se dirigem ao auditório. Treme a Lira. Ela e toda sua partitura. Encarna a dama e vai. Lotado.

‘Minha experiência com comunidades, tribos e suas crenças, artes, dialetos, tem mudado minha vida. E é por isso que sou cientista. Sou mais cientista na hora em que procuro do que na hora em que acho. Não o sou pelo que encontro, mas pela busca, pelo que procuro incessantemente. A cada dia venho aprendendo a lidar com preconceitos daninhos, mesquinhos, que eu pensava estarem há tempo absolidos, resolvidos pela depuração que a intelectualidade deve provocar. Engano meu. As comunidades ditas primitivas encaram suas pulsações com...’

Click. Lira sente na veia o *click* dele e se refaz na sutileza...

‘com respeito por si. Eu ia dizendo que o desejo, a criação e tudo o que é genuinamente da qualidade humana, é precisamente o Deus dessas organizações.’

Click.

Só ela ouvia o *click* profundo de Romano como quem recebe um raio, uma seta. Sentia palpitações inoportunas no meio de si e da palestra. Embora houvesse jornalistas e diversas câmeras ali, só o *click* dele era o trovão, o vão, o infortúnio.

Click dela bebendo água e pausando a fala; *click* dela engolindo com dificuldade a pouca saliva.

‘Numa comunidade do norte da África, por exemplo, houve um momento em que achei errado, equivocado não comermos com as mãos. Todos comiam assim ali. Eu também comi. Achei tão confortável, tão direto, tão íntimo que comecei a achar subitamente falso, hipócrita o uso de talheres. Nós também somos caçadores. A diferença é que temos capangas e os mandamos matar, embalar e até temperar essa caça. Isso é o nosso almoço e tudo vira um civilizado crime de supermercados.’

Risos da plateia.

‘Mas somos caçadores. E sórdidos. Comemos com garfos para ficarmos mais distantes do crime... bem não estou com isso dizendo que a partir de agora só devemos comer com a mão nossa presa.’

Engole a saliva e ele *click*. Aplausos.

Ela se sente meio tonta e senta-se um pouco. Revê anotações no roteiro e levanta outra vez ajustando com elegância o vestido de seda marfim atrás, cuja costura havia ficado presa no vale das ancas. *Click* na mão dela.

‘I once found a beautiful engraving on a sign in a forest in Zaire: “Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.”’

Loud, enthusiastic applause.

‘Any questions?’

Click.

‘Do you like being black, lovely miss?’, the photographer asks from the audience.

‘You’re too kind. I love it, Romano.’

‘Romano? How do you know my name?’

‘You told me yourself, in the corridor, sir.’

‘It must have been *sir* who told you, not *myself*. I didn’t tell you anything, I just came in now.’

Click

Muffled laughter from the audience. Lira tenses, but licks her wounds and elegantly carries on:

‘In some areas of the interior of Soweto, for example, photography is considered to be a danger, a – how do I say – robbery of the soul. These tribes didn’t allow us to photograph anything. It may be seen as a lamentable loss for researchers, but research cannot mean invasion, meddling, disrespect.’

Applause.

‘I believe that terms like “good” and “evil” do not exist when we talk about culture; if we did use them, we would be insensitively praising one thing to the fatal detriment of another. There are no fixed, predetermined rules that rank each group’s version of the universe. Universe: uniting versions.’

A torrent of applause. A standing ovation. *Click, click, click.* Lira thanks the audience, deeply shaken by his shots of her. But she cannot think of this right now: when on stage, one must contain one’s emotions so that they lay dormant. However, she knows that deep down these emotions will seep out and end up infiltrating and interfering with her delivery, her temperature, her tone of voice. She takes another sip. *Click.*

‘Why does he like taking photos of me drinking so much?’

Click.

‘God, I should have worn the green dress, it looks better in photos, she thinks.’

Lira bravely carries on for another quarter of an hour. She signs a few books, gets up and wraps up:

‘Vi uma inscrição linda numa tabuleta em uma floresta no Zaire: “Enquanto os leões não tiverem os seus próprios historiadores, a história continuará sendo uma versão dos caçadores.”’

Aplausos fortes e entusiasmados.

‘Alguma pergunta?’

Click.

‘Gosta de ser negra, linda senhora?’, da plateia, pergunta o fotógrafo.

‘Obrigada pelo linda. “Adoro”, essa é minha resposta, Romano.’

‘Romano?... Como sabe o meu nome?’

‘O senhor me disse agora mesmo no corredor.’

‘Só se for “O Senhor”, porque eu não lhe disse nada, comecei a trabalhar agora.’

Click

Risos discretos da plateia. Lira fica tensa, mas retoma ferina e elegante:

‘Em algumas áreas do interior de Soweto, por exemplo, a fotografia é considerada um perigo, uma... como é que eu digo?... uma ladra de almas. Nessas tribos, nossa equipe não teve permissão de realizar qualquer registro fotográfico. Pode nos parecer uma perda lamentável como pesquisadores, mas pesquisar não pode significar invasão, intrometimento, desrespeito.’

Aplausos.

‘Creio não existir critério de melhor ou pior quando o assunto é cultura; para isso precisaríamos cometer a insensatez de elegermos alguma, fatalmente em detrimento de uma outra. Não existe regra fixa ou predeterminada em se tratando da versão que cada grupo humano dá ao Universo. Universo: unir as versões.’

Chuva de aplausos. Tem gente de pé. *Click, click, click.* Lira agradece e está totalmente mexida pelos *takes* que ele pega dela. Mas não podia pensar nisso: quando se está num palco tem-se que encostar num canto as emoções pessoais de modo que adormeçam. Mas no fundo ela sabe que essas emoções se filtram e acabam por se infiltrarem inferindo no ritmo, na temperatura, no tom do tema. Bebe mais água. *Click.*

‘Por que ele gosta tanto de me fotografar bebendo água?’

Click.

‘Meu Deus, acho que eu devia ter vindo com o vestido verde, iria fotografar melhor’, pensa.

Lira prossegue com bravura por mais um quarto de hora no debate. Autografa alguns livros, levanta-se e finaliza:

'I want you all to understand how I came to learn the delicateness necessary to go about the world: every house, every neighbourhood, every favela, every palace is a whole world; the simpler, the more receptive and generous visitors are, the more they become like their homes. I love it when I go back to Brazil, but I am honoured to be living here, at home.'

She becomes emotional. Joyous applause, hugs. *Click*.

The drinks reception begins. So many people, I can't stand those looks he gives me, his camera, his joking around, his constant stream of subtle, obvious hints. My God, I've missed this. What's worse is that I don't fancy ringing that new guy ... God, how Romano looks at me.

The waiter brought over a glass of champagne in and a note:

'As soon as the time comes, I will give back what I managed to steal from you.'

I couldn't take the glass calmly. I was trembling too much, and I was never one to tremble. I thought about ordering vodka, but just then a student asks for me to sign his copy of the book I talked about in the lecture; he was a very young fan who talked a lot, I don't listen to him, instead I'm limited to nodding while reflecting Romano's gaze back at him from the other table.

I drank the champagne thirstily, anxiously and somewhat affectedly. It's enough to feel my new boots squeezing my feet and so I decide to discreetly slip them off under the table. Salsa music starts playing. Some girls and boys take to the dancefloor. I join them. It's hot. I must have danced for half an hour non-stop, barefoot and in the moment. It had been a while.

I had calmed down, but my photographer was nowhere to be seen. Good. I had a call to make. While putting on my boots, I noticed a piece of paper in one of them. Could this be a new note?

'Don't leave, don't call him, don't leave me here. Don't take off as if we were both minor tribes, for that is what we are. I want to walk in your footsteps. Boteco 13, on the left, next door to the auditorium.'

I drank the rest of the champagne, which had now gone warm, and left quite drunk.

'Dr Lira ...'

'I'll be right back,' I told the audacious students.

Perturbed, but determined: no phone call, none of this messing around, I'm going back to the hotel. It was raining lightly; I took off my cardigan, I wanted to feel the rain, I wanted to calm down. I hailed a taxi on the street corner on the left. A taxi to save me. Taxi! Taxi! One stopped. I felt like I was right in front of the bar, my back directly in his line of sight. I felt Romano inspecting my neckline, his gaze searing my back, maniacally burrowing its way to the nape of my neck. The driver asked:

‘Meu desejo é que vocês possam aprender como venho aprendendo a delicadeza necessária para se andar no mundo: cada casa, cada bairro, cada favela, cada palácio é um mundo; quanto mais delicado e simples e receptivo e generoso o forasteiro, mais de casa ele se torna, mais de casa ele é. Gosto de voltar ao Brasil e estou emocionada por estar aqui. Em casa.’

Lira se emociona. Aplausos esfuziantes, abraços. *Click*.

Começa o coquetel. Muita gente, eu não aguentava mais o olhar dele, sua teleobjetiva, seu carnaval, seu carrossel de misteriosas e óbvias intenções. Meu Deus, só me faltava essa. O pior é que não tenho a mínima vontade de ligar para o tal namorado novo... Meu Deus, como Romano me olha!

O garçom veio trazer o champanhe e um bilhete:

‘Assim que chegar a hora da revelação, lhe enviarei o que consegui roubar de ti.’

Não consegui mais pegar o copo com naturalidade. Tremia muito e nunca fui de tremer. Tive vontade de pedir uma vodca, mas nessa hora um aluno me pede pra autografar um livro onde conto o que acabei de descrever na palestra; era um jovem entusiasta que falava muito e eu não o escuto, me limito a concordar enquanto tento ricochetear o olhar de Romano lá da outra mesa.

Bebi o champanhe com sede e ansiedade e fez um pouco de efeito. O suficiente para eu sentir o apertado das novas botas e resolver tirá-las sorrateiramente por debaixo da mesa. Toca uma salsa. Algumas meninas e meninos dançam descalços na pista. Também vou. Que calor. Descalça e moderna dancei meia hora, eu acho, sem parar. Fazia tempo.

Relaxe, mas perdi meu fotógrafo de vista. Melhor. Precisava telefonar. Calçando as botas, notei um papel dentro de um pé, quando voltei à mesa. Não é que era outro bilhete?

‘Não vá embora, não telefone pra ele, não me deixe; não nos deixe como se fôssemos tribos menores, até porque somos tribos menores. Quero estar no seu passo. Boteco 13, à esquerda dessa mesma rua, ao lado do auditório.’

Bebi o resto da bebida já meio quente e saí meio louca.

‘Doutora Lira...’

‘Já volto’, eu dizia entre os afoitos estudantes.

Perturbada, mas decidida: nem o telefonema, nem essa loucura, vou é para o hotel. Chovia fino; tirei o colete, queria sentir a chuva, queria me acalmar. Na esquina, à esquerda, esperei um táxi. Um táxi que me salvasse. Táxi! Táxi! Ele parou. Eu sentia que estava na frente do tal boteco e que minhas costas davam direto no olhar dele. Sentia Romano me estudando o decote, sentia que seu olhar me queimava o dorso e entrava demoníaco em minha nuca. E o motorista:

'Where to, ma'am?'

'To nowhere,' I replied without thinking.

'What do you mean to nowhere? Do you think I'm a sucker, lady? A well-dressed woman like you, from good stock, well educated, no-one'd think you'd treat us all like clowns ... get a job, slut!'

I was dumbstruck; he was right. I drew closer to the window.

'I'm sorry, I came here to give a lecture, I don't know the city, so when you asked me ...'

'Ah, go get laid, off you go!' He sped off.

I was dazed, I thought the whole world was watching me as I made my way into the bar. Romano had ordered two glasses of Cointreau. I was feeling reserved but didn't ask when I joined him.

'I'm not used to drinking this,' I said, nervously gulping it down.

'But you love it.'

'What do you want from me?'

'To call your boyfriend right now.'

'What for?'

'So that you don't drive me crazy, for once. And vice versa.'

'How pretentious! If that's your style then you're not driving me crazy, my friend.'

'If that were true, why didn't you get in the taxi?'

'I was lost. I was asking for directions so I could find my way around.'

'Yes, that's a problem we both have. What'll it be?'

I was confused. I want more Cointreau. He orders one and I start talking about my arrival from Brazil; I filled in the silence because I was terrified of that mouth. I spoke eloquently and properly. It was like a torrent of words. A typhoon. He was watching my mouth attentively, the movements it made when I swallowed, like a drowning person gasping for air. I took my time over the topics which were always considered 'wildly interesting'.

But black Romano drew curiously nearer, asking permission, with a purr:

'Excuse me, goddess, excuse me, my love ...'

He kissed me. His pink tongue filled my mouth, which in turn gave its reply. It was as if he knew me: my rhythms, every little pause, my needs, which buttons to push. Here and there he would lick my lips and lightly bite each one, then deftly and nobly return inside my mouth. He savoured my tongue. He visited the palace of my palette and pronounced inside it the burning words:

‘A senhora vai pra onde?’

‘Pra lugar nenhum’, respondi sem pensar.

‘Mas como pra lugar nenhum? Tá me achando com cara de otário, ô meu? Quem vê uma mulher bem vestida assim, bom tecido, com jeito de estudada, não vai pensar que vai tratar a gente de palhaço... vai procurar um trabalho, vagabunda!’

Fiquei pasma e ele tinha razão. Me aproximei da janela do carro:

‘Desculpe, vim fazer uma palestra, não conheço bem a cidade, na hora que o senhor me perguntou...’

‘Ah, vai caçar um homem, vai!’ E acelerou.

Fiquei zonha, achei que estava todo mundo olhando e me dirigi sem saída ao bar. Romano havia pedido *contreau*. Sentei-me educada, mas sem pedir licença.

‘Não costumo beber *contreau*’, eu disse bebendo logo um gole, nervosa.’

‘Mas adora.’

‘O que é que você quer comigo?’

‘Que você ligue urgentemente pra seu namorado.’

‘Pra quê?’

‘Pra que você não possa me enlouquecer de vez. Nem a você.’

‘Que pretensioso! Com o seu estilo não corro o risco de enlouquecer, meu filho.’

‘Se é assim por que não se entendeu com o taxista?’

‘Meu problema com o táxi foi uma mera questão de mapa, de bússola.’

‘Sim. E o nosso problema, qual é?’

Acabei ficando confusa. Quero mais um *contreau*. Ele pede e eu começo a falar de minha vinda ao Brasil; desembestei a ocupar o silêncio porque estava morrendo de medo daquela boca. Falei eloquente e encadeada. Parecia uma corrente de frases. Um tufão. Ele olhava atento minha boca: seus movimentos, as engolidas de saliva que eu dava para me recuperar como um afogado armazenando ar. Eu me demorava nos assuntos que sempre funcionavam como ‘interessantíssimos’.

Mas o negro Romano veio se aproximando de mim estranhamente e pedindo e dizendo e gemendo um

‘Dá licença, deusa, dá licença, mulher’...

Me beijou. Foi enfiando a rosa língua na minha boca, que correspondia. Parecia que ele já me conhecia: meus tempos, meus mínimos intervalos, minhas exigências, minhas engrenagens. Lambia meus lábios e mordiscava cada um de vez em quando e aí voltava felino e nobre pra dentro da minha boca. Degustava minha língua. Visitava o palácio do palato e pronunciava lá dentro calores de palavras assim:

'I want you, to take you with my hands, my free captive, take you with my hands ... I'm so hot for you.'

To that, my whole repertoire of ready answers quickly turned into:

'I want you, I want you, I want you, I want ...'

He whispered in my ear:

'You truly are a queen, with your own kingdom, a rare style ... You are delicious.'

Then I kissed him while gazing at those reddened brown lips of his, like a great abyss. I was already so wet. I spotted his penis below the table, poking out through the tear in his jeans. My eyes widened. I always kissed with my eyes closed; how much I had missed out on, my goodness! I passed my hand over the lump. A Godly volume! He put two fingers inside me, and I squirted, moistening my dress and his fingers. They touched me and I became an instrument, a sensual cello sounding out little groans.

I spotted the woman who served up one glass of Cointreau after another and sensed her getting moist within the fabric of her polyester uniform. With his fingers inside me, he asked me in a low voice:

'How many lectures do you give a year, Dr?'

I said ... forty ... a hundred ... ten, I don't know.

'Don't you know how to count, my queen? Count for me, my love.'

I groaned again as he played with his fingers. I let it flow.

'What's all this water? Did you bring this from the desert, my saint?'

Then he kissed me. I took his penis in my hand, and I didn't know my name anymore. 'Say my name, say ...'

'Lira, Lira, Lira,' he said, and I became delirious.

'Let's get out of here, my *nego*. Let's go to a cheap no-star hotel.'

'No.'

Romano fills me with his fingers again then licks them. With his other hand he feels my behind, its secrets and curves. I am dying.

'Let's go, my love. Go to some dive, where we'll become one, where you have me all to yourself. I want you.'

'No, *nega*, I have other ties. If I enter you there would be no going back. Some encounters end at desire.'

'But wanting it is practically doing it, sometimes even worse. At the point we're at now, we best get out of here.'

'Quiet. I'm going to recite a poem I recently wrote, and you will be quiet, and behave nicely on the "Great Plains," promise?'

He fills me again with his moist fingers.

‘Quero você, te comer com a mão, minha livre presa, te comer com a mão... ai que tesão.’

Daí, todo o meu repertório de respostas prontas virou apenas:

‘Quero, quero, quero, quero...’

Ele dizia no meu ouvido:

‘Você é uma rainha verdadeira, com reinado próprio, com estilo raro... Você é gostosa.’

Beijei dessa vez vendo seus lábios marrons avermelhados como um abismo bom. Já estava era molhada demais. Vi seu pau por debaixo da mesa furando o surrado jeans. Eu estava de olhos muito abertos. Tinha sempre beijado de olhos fechados; quanta coisa perdi de ver, minha nossa! Passei a mão rápida no volume dele. Um volume de Deus! Ele enfiou dois de seus dedos em mim e eu esguichei. Um chuveiro de água no meu vestido e nos dedos dele. Seus dedos me tocavam e eu era um instrumento, um *cello* íntimo que soava gemidos dos afinados.

Veio a moça que nos servia incansáveis *contreaus* e senti que ela também umedecia o interior da costura de seu uniforme de tergal. Com seus dedos no meu dentro, Romano perguntava baixinho:

‘Quantas palestras dá... por ano, doutora?’

Eu dizia... quarenta... cem... dez, não sei...

‘Não sabe contar, minha mestra? Conta pra mim, minha fêmea?’

Eu gemia outra vez na partitura dos dedos dele. Jorrava farta.

‘Que água é esta? Trouxe do deserto, santa?’ E me beijava. Eu cabia o pau dele na minha mão e não sabia mais meu nome. ‘Diz meu nome, diz...’

‘Lira, Lira, Lira...’, ele dizia e eu delirava.

‘Vamos sair daqui, meu nego. Vamos prum hotel barato com estrela nenhuma.’

‘Não.’

Romano me enfia outra vez os dedos para lambê-los em seguida. Com a segunda mão visita minha bunda, meus segredos e curvas. Morro.

‘Vamos, meu amor, pagar uma espelunca, onde a gente se misture, onde você me tenha toda. Eu quero.’

‘Não, nega, tenho outros laços. Entrar em você não vai ter volta. Há encontros que se bastam no desejo.’

‘Mas o desejo já é quase o ato, às vezes pior que o ato. No ponto que estamos o melhor é ir.’

‘Fique quieta. Vou te falar um poema que acabo de compor e você vai ficar quietinha, comportadinha no “plano americano”, promete?’

E me enfiou de novo os dedos úmidos.

I sense the tribe is calling me
we're of a single constellation
my fingers are the science
I, Columbus
conquer maddening nations
I rub my fingers
I feel the fear
of leaving this captaincy of mine – it's me
ai, mad wounded science
calls lovingly
I will not go, it cannot be

I was completely smitten.

'Why do you, do this to me, you from the land of sorcerers? When did you write this poem ...? How did you know I would come? What do you want from me?'

'I don't know. There are people who encounter each other so sublimely and completely that yes, they can part ways. I've never acted like this, never sent notes as if I were a teenager. Our encounter comes from the same depths, Lira. They can be, and are, earth-shattering, and this is why I think your dose must be minimal.'

'I love you; I've loved you for an hour, I've never fallen in love so quickly.'

'Me neither. Imagine if we had more time. How long a volcano erupts determines the havoc it wreaks.'

'Let's go to a hotel now, where there aren't any photographers ... a hostel.'

'No.'

And he kissed me deeply again. I cut it off, thinking he was about to leave.

'Lira, let's make the most not having each other, so we don't run the risk of losing each other.'

'That's lovely, but I want you inside me. Now. Why so rational? I want to be yours ... Could it be any simpler?'

'Listen, Lira. Just wanting you occupies all my faculties. There is no space for you to live inside me now because the space you take up is so vast; it's all of me. If I let you in, I will have to leave myself, do you see?'

I took his organ and placed my bag on the table. I went down to take him and sucked on it as if it were my mother's breast, an ice lolly, a lollipop, a gift. I was protected by the long curtains made by the tablecloth. I heard his voice call to the waitress:

Cheira a tribo a me chamar
gente estrela própria única star
meus dedos se enfiam na ciência
eu Colombo a conquistar a terra que me endoideceu
chafariz nos dedos
eu com medo
de abandonar a capitania certa que sou eu
ai a ciência louca a ciência danada
me chama para amar
não vou não dá.

Eu estava absolutamente rendida.

‘Por que faz isso comigo, de onde você vem bruxo, a que horas compôs esse poema?... como sabia que eu viria? O que quer de mim?’

‘Não sei. Há gente que se encontra tão sublime, tão completamente encontrada que essa gente, sim, pode partir. Eu nunca agi assim, nunca mandei bilhetes nem na adolescência. Nosso encontro, Lira, é desses abismais. Podem mover o mundo e movem, por isso sua dose deve ser mínima, eu acho.’

‘Eu te amo, faz uma hora que te amo, nunca amei tão rápido.’

‘Eu também. Imagine se a gente tiver mais prazo? O tempo de erupção do vulcão é que determina seu estrago...’

‘Vamos prum hotel agora, prum lugar onde não haja fotógrafos... uma pensão.’

‘Não.’

E me beijou de novo fundo. Parei o beijo porque achei que se despedia.

‘Lira, vamos aproveitar que não temos um ao outro, porque assim não corremos o risco de nos perder.’

‘É bonita a frase, mas quero você dentro de mim agora. Por que essa racionalidade? Quero ser sua... tem coisa mais simples do que isso?’

‘Escuta, Lira. Só te querer já ocupa todos os meus espaços. Não há lugar pra você morar em mim agora, porque seu lugar é vasto, seu lugar sou eu todo. Se eu deixar você entrar, vou ter que sair, entende?’

Peguei na intimidade dele de novo e joguei minha bolsa sob a mesa. Fui pegá-la e o chupei como se fosse o peito de minha mãe, um picolé, um pirulito, uma lembrança. Fiquei ali protegida pelas longas cortinas que a toalha de mesa formava para nós. Ouvi sua voz para a garçonete:

‘Two more glasses of Cointreau, please, and could you make sure my partner is OK in the toilet? She’s taking a while ...’

He groaned, ah ... ahahah ... the waitress asks what’s the matter, and he responds that sometimes he gets sharp pains in his chest. Not the heart? the gentle young woman asks. Yes, in the heart, he replies.

I arose from the depths of that paradise as if I were emerging from the bottom of the sea, from far below the surface.

‘Ah, my prince, where is my composure ...? I was so horny!’

‘Your composure? I’ll find it for you.’

And he disappeared, without a warning, under the table. The waitress brought the Cointreau and, before she could say anything, I said:

‘Miss, please, did you see a man go to the toilet? I was taking a while, and he must have gone to find me.’

‘I saw him, she said. I mean, I don’t know, he also asked about you ... *ai*, now I’m confused ...! It’s beautiful, what you both have, isn’t it? Forgive me ma’am, but may I just say that everyone’s talking about it in the kitchen, about how beautiful it is to see that true love exists. I even said I was going to have what you’re both drinking tomorrow night with my fiancé. It’s my day off, you know what I mean?’

‘Yes, Cointreau makes you very amorous,’ I said, subtly writhing from his tongue inside me, in my intimacy, in the exact centre of my composure. I felt the elastic of my socks squeezing my ankles, totally unable to believe what was happening. I groaned mutely; it was as if my soul had left my body. Untethered, my soul emptied the bar of stragglers. The waitress looked at me as if watching the last episode of a soap opera.

‘Excuse me for asking, ma’am but aren’t you the lecturer? I saw your picture in the student paper. It comes out every month.’

‘No, that’s not me. It’s my sister. *Aaai* ...!’

I was close to coming.

‘Please, ask a colleague to go in and see why my husband is taking so long in the toilet, I’m worried because he has a heart condition.’

‘Oh God, I was off on one. I’ll go now. So sorry.’

Off she went. Under the table there was one single fluid, his and mine. He murmured from down there:

‘Rain down, my goddess, mysterious rain, I’m thirsty ...’

I listened to his radiant whispers as if he were an actor murmuring onstage, and the people at the back row of the theatre could hear him as clearly as if he were by their ears.

‘Minha querida, traga mais dois *contreaus* e verifique por mim se a minha mulher está passando bem no toailete... está demorando.’

E gemeu, ah... ahahah... a garçonete pergunta o que é, e ele responde que sente, às vezes, fortes pontadas no peito. Não será coração?, pergunta a suave moça. Ao que ele responde ofegante e definitivo: é coração.

Voltei do subterrâneo daquele paraíso como quem emerge do fundo do mar achando longe a superfície.

‘Ah, meu príncipe, onde está minha compostura?... Enlouqueci!’

‘Sua compostura...? Vou procurá-la pra você.’

E sumiu ele, sem álibi, por debaixo da mesa. A garçonete traz o *contreau* e, antes que ela falasse, avancei:

‘Senhorita, por favor, viu meu homem ir ao toailete? Demorei e ele deve ter ido em minha procura.’

‘Vi, ela disse. Quero dizer, não sei, ele também perguntou pela senhora... ai, agora estou confusa...! É lindo o amor de vocês, né? Sora desculpe eu falar assim, mas tá todo mundo comentando lá na cozinha da beleza que é ver que o amor existe de verdade. Eu até falei que vou beber essa bebida amanhã com meu noivo. É bem minha folga, sabe?’

‘É, *contreau* é muito amoroso’, eu disse meio atordoada com a língua dele no meio de mim, no meu negocinho, no centro exato de minha compostura. Sentia a renda da calcinha roçar meus tornozelos e não acreditava em absolutamente nada do que estava acontecendo. Gemia muda e minha alma parecia solta de mim. Desprendida, minha alma vagava na vadiaria do bar. A garçonete me assiste como quem vê uma novela no último capítulo.

‘Sora desculpa perguntar, mas a sora não é a palestrante? Eu vi no jornal dos estudante seu retrato. Eis dão pra gente todo mês.’

‘Não, não sou. É minha irmã. Aaaai...!’

Eu estava quase gozando.

‘Por favor, peça a um colega seu pra entrar lá, veja por que meu marido demora tanto no toailete, estou preocupada por que ele sente muito o coração.’

‘Ai meu Deus, me entreti aqui, já vou... Sora desculpa, tá?’

Ela foi. Debaixo da mesa era uma água só, do gozo dele e do meu. Ele murmurava de lá:

‘Chove minha deusa, chove mistério, tenho sede...’

Eu escutava sua murmurância nítida como se escuta um ator murmurando lá da boca de cena e a gente na última fila como se lhe estivesse ao pé do ouvido.

Aaaaaah ... I came like I was in death throes and wanted to howl right there in the middle of the restaurant, the city, the world. I couldn't. With the last of my senses, I burst into tears. My head fell onto the table, dead with the weight of my thoughts. Romano comes back from the depths, his face soaked with the world's waters, his clothes soaked with our infinitude.

No more words come from his mouth. Only kissing, eating my tears. Seeing my gaze in his, I had to agree: we really were made to part. Parting is for those who are able to do so, for those who stay. Parting is for the people who remain.

A part of us paid the bill. One of us got up first.

Romano takes Lira to get a taxi, both moving as if following a religious procession. They leave the bar behind, exuding true love. Both leave it whole, each with a strong taste of Cointreau in their mouths, Lira's face on the car window, moistening the glass.

Click.

Aaaaaah... gozei como quem morre e quis uivar no restaurante, na cidade, no mundo. Não pude. Meu restico de razão virou lágrima e explodi caindo a cabeça morta de pensamentos sobre a mesa. Romano retorna do oceano com o rosto encharcado de toda água do mundo. Sua roupa molhada de nosso infinito.

Ele não disse mais nada com palavra de se falar com boca. Só beijo que come lágrima. Meu olhar dentro do dele já concordava: fomos feitos mesmo para partir. Partir é pra quem pode. Pra quem fica. Partir é pra quem permanece.

Algun de nós pagou a conta. Alguém dos dois levantou primeiro.

Romano leva Lira até o táxi como quem segue um andor. O bar fica atrás exalado de amor real. Os dois partem inteiros. Cada um com gosto, muito gosto de *encontreau* na boca. O rosto de Lira na transparência do vidro molhado da janela do carro.

Click.

(Lucinda, Elisa. 'Click'. In *Contos de vista*, 112–125. São Paulo: Global, 2004.)

Landless in the Sea, by Geovani Martins, translated by Victor Meadowcroft

Rayanne is a Rio girl. She was born in the maternity ward of the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Realengo. For a year, she has been living in Seropédica with her mum in a property occupied by the Landless Workers' Movement. She's four years old, and a child who loves to run and sing. She has never seen her dad and is not one to dwell on that. Whenever the word dad comes up, she thinks just a little about why they've never seen each other. Carla, her mum, doesn't like to talk about her dad. No one knows what either of their dads are called. They only know that she, Carla, arrived at the camp all beaten up with the child in her arms. She was 15 years old. A friend once told her they'd be able to find a home there, some government scheme. She'd arrived and stayed on with her daughter; now she helps out in the kitchen and with other chores. Rayanne became a little Landless-girl, a *sem-terrinha*.

Oblivious to the problems the world has invented, Rayanne loves to play with dirt and trees, children, and ants. She loves watching grownups tell stories. Once, they were talking about the beach and the sea; an elderly black man was telling incredible tales, and everyone else was nodding along and taking the opportunity to tell their own tale of the sea. She listened attentively. Then she asked her mum about the sea. Carla told her that it was blue and full of fishes and that Brazil had lots of sea and that the country they lived in was called Brazil and that she was a *Carioca* because she had been born in Rio de Janeiro and that Rio de Janeiro had lots of beaches and that they lived in Rio de Janeiro but far from the sea. Having just turned four years old, Rayanne still doesn't know how to tell the colours apart. The blue sea is as abstract as the rest of the unknown things, but she loves it all the same.

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Sem-terra no mar, de Geovani Martins

Rayanne é menina do Rio. Nasceu na maternidade do hospital Albert Schweitzer em Realengo. Há um ano vive em Seropédica com a mãe na ocupação do MST. Tem quatro anos e é uma criança que adora correr e cantar. Nunca viu o pai e não é de pensar nisso. Quando falam de pai ela pensa só um pouquinho em por que é que nunca se viram. Carla, sua mãe, não gosta de contar histórias sobre o pai. Ninguém sabe o nome do pai de nenhuma das duas. Só se sabe que ela, Carla, chegou toda quebrada no acampamento com a criança no colo. Tinha 15 anos. Uma vez uma amiga disse que lá conseguiam casa, coisa do governo. Chegou e foi ficando com a filha, agora ajuda na cozinha e em outras tarefas. Rayanne então passou a ser uma sem-terrinha.

Alheia aos problemas que o mundo inventou, Rayanne adora brincar com terra e árvore, criança e formiga. Adora ver gente grande contando história. Uma vez falavam do mar; um homem negro e velho contava casos incríveis e o pessoal concordava e aproveitava pra contar também um caso no mar. Ela ouvia atenta. Depois perguntou à mãe sobre o mar. Carla disse que é azul e que tem peixe e que tem muito mar no Brasil e que o país em que elas vivem é o Brasil e que ela é carioca porque nasceu no Rio de Janeiro e que tem muita praia no Rio de Janeiro e que elas vivem no Rio de Janeiro mas bem longe da praia. Com quatro anos recém-completados, Rayanne ainda não sabe diferenciar as cores. O mar azul é abstrato como todo o resto das coisas desconhecidas, e ainda assim ela o adora.

The sea recalls the fervent gaze of that storytelling man. Since that day, every time she thinks just a little of her dad, he ends up looking like that man who talked about the beach. She wants to visit the sea. She asks her mum.

‘One day we’ll go, my little one,’ her mum promised, crying as she chopped the onions.

Within a week she had forgotten about the sea: she was discovering the rest of the world. Her mum was grateful not to have to keep talking about the beach. She herself had rarely been. She found herself having to make lots up to satisfy her daughter’s curiosity. She would become happy on imagining herself at the beach, in the way she described it, diving into waves that came on unrelentingly. Rayanne loved to listen and would become perfectly happy, but at the end of the story Carla was always left with the bitter taste of those invented memories.

One day they went to sleep not thinking about the sea, and the next, the whole camp was talking about the beach. They spoke of Ipanema. ‘A beach for rich people’, they said. They spoke of several buses and people from the newspaper. They would be going to Ipanema on an excursion with three buses, on a Saturday afternoon, at the height of the *Carioca* summer. Carla became far happier than she had been of late. She’d never gone on an excursion; aside from being underage, she’d also had a child to take care of.

But this time she is going. She wants to see the sea, wants to see the sea and her daughter, her daughter and herself by the sea, her daughter, the sun, and herself by the sea. At the camp there’s much talk of alerting the press. If televised, the beach trip will become a historic event.

The big day arrives and so do the buses. Before they set off, coffee, bread and butter and a biscuit. Everyone greets them as they board the buses, which will be leaving at eight-thirty in the morning. Euphoria. Everyone wants to witness the reaction of the rich people when the group arrives at the beach. And, of course, everyone wants to see the beach one more time. Call the beach’s sands their own one more time. The buses pull out. There are people filming, people from a college who want to make a film about the beach trip. Rayanne sleeps and wakes and cries a few times on the journey. She looks out of the window with her mum. She has already seen little birds and a huge number of trees on Avenida Brasil, as well as people selling fruit in the street and a load of hourly motels, ‘boyfriend houses’, her mother explains with a chuckle.

O mar lembra o olhar apaixonado daquele homem falando. Desde aquele dia, toda vez que pensa só um pouquinho no pai, ele fica parecido com aquele homem que falava da praia. Quer ir ao mar. Pede à mãe.

‘Um dia nós vamos, minha filha’, prometeu a mãe, que chorava ao cortar cebolas.

Em uma semana esqueceu o mar: descobria o que restava do mundo. Sua mãe agradecia por não ter mais que ficar falando de praia. Ela mesma fora poucas vezes. Teve que inventar muito pra satisfazer a curiosidade da filha. Ficava feliz se imaginando na praia, da maneira que contava e mergulhava nas ondas que vinham implacáveis. Rayanne adorava ouvir e ficava toda feliz, mas no final da história Carla sempre sentia o gosto amargo das lembranças inventadas.

Um dia foram dormir sem pensar no mar, e no outro, todo o acampamento falava de praia. Falavam de Ipanema. Praia de bacana, diziam. Falavam de alguns ônibus e gente do jornal. Iriam a Ipanema em uma excursão com três ônibus, num sábado à tarde, no auge do verão carioca. Carla ficou muito mais feliz do que andava esses últimos tempos. Nunca havia saído em excursão; além de ser menor de idade, ainda tinha que se preocupar com criança.

Mas dessa vez ela vai. Quer ver o mar, quer ver o mar e a filha, a filha e ela no mar, a filha, o sol e ela no mar. No acampamento muito se diz sobre avisar a imprensa. Se for televisionado, o passeio à praia vira evento histórico.

Chegam o dia e os ônibus. Antes de sair, café, pão com manteiga e um biscoito. Todo mundo os recebe ao entrarem nos ônibus, que vão sair às oito e meia da manhã. Euforia. Todo mundo quer ver a reação dos bacanas quando a galera chegar à praia. E, claro, todo mundo quer ver a praia mais uma vez. Ser dono da areia da praia mais uma vez. Saem os ônibus. Tem gente filmando, gente de uma faculdade que quer fazer um filme sobre o passeio à praia. Rayanne dorme e acorda e chora algumas vezes no caminho. Olha pela janela com a mãe. Já viu passarinho e uma porção de árvores na avenida Brasil, além de gente vendendo fruta na rua e um monte de motel, que a mãe explica que é casa de namorado, dando uma risadinha.

They arrived at Ipanema at eleven-thirty in the morning and the beach was packed. There were gringos, preppy girls, *favelados*, playboys, bodybuilders, beach vendors, people from the peripheries and a whole load of other beachgoers, both *Carioca* and not. The party began to climb down from the buses. Everyone was alarmed by the arrival of those people who looked neither Chinese nor German. Carla pointed for Rayanne: 'that's the sea and this is the beach'. People began talking; they spoke of a flash robbery. The atmosphere became tense. Everyone watching on distrustfully. Rayanne didn't like seeing grownups talk that way. They started yelling; her mother's companions started yelling back. Soon the police arrived. Rayanne asked her mother to take her over to the water; her mother didn't answer because she was busy watching the confusion caused by the beach trip. One of the police officers came and asked who was in charge. The group wanted to know what the problem was with their being on the beach. The officer said that large groups frightened the citizens. A *pitboy* with his *pit bull* began complaining about how you couldn't just relax on the beach anymore. The gringos took photos as they retreated along the sand. There was a small crowd – university students – who shouted in support of the group and argued with the others, but they left too, explaining they had a sociology paper to finish.

Everyone started to get up and go, leaving the deckchairs for the guy from the beach hut to put away. He began collecting them up, incensed that those vagrants had decided to show up at the beach on a Saturday, the day for partying and making money. Posto 9 was being left in the possession of Carla and Rayanne's group of friends. As they began to sit down in the sand, police reinforcements arrived. They formed a ring around the group to protect the honest folk. A few people stuck around, some with sour faces, others not.

Carla is finally going to take Rayanne over to the water.

'Come, daughter,' she says.

The little girl grasped her mum's hand and ran along the sand until they reached the water. The sun was strong and the sea icy-cold.

Rayanne was scared at first, but soon began to enjoy it. Her mum lifted her up by the arms and then helped her plunge in: after the plunge, Rayanne tasted the saltiness that came with the water and, illuminated by a sun that belongs to everyone, shook her curly hair, wet with seawater. On her face was the smile of a happy child.

Chegaram a Ipanema às onze e meia da manhã e a praia estava lotada. Tinha gringo, patricinha, favelado, playboy, maromba, ambulante, suburbano e mais um monte de gente, carioca ou não. O pessoal foi descendo dos ônibus, todo mundo se assustou com a chegada daquelas pessoas que não tinham cara nem de chinês nem de alemão. Carla indicou para Rayanne: aquilo é o mar e aqui é a praia. As pessoas começaram a falar; falavam em arrastão. O clima ficou tenso. Todo mundo olhando com desconfiança. Rayanne não gostava de ver gente grande falando daquele jeito. Começaram a gritar, os companheiros de sua mãe começaram a gritar de volta. Logo veio a polícia. Rayanne pediu que a mãe a levasse até a água, a mãe não respondeu porque olhava a confusão causada pelo passeio à praia. Um dos policiais chegou perguntando quem era o responsável. O grupo perguntava qual era o problema de estarem na praia. O policial dizia que grupo grande assusta o cidadão. Um *pitboy* com seu *pitbull* saiu reclamando que não se pode mais ficar em paz na praia. Os gringos fotografavam enquanto se afastavam na areia. Tinha um pessoal – universitários – que gritava a favor do grupo e discutia com os outros, mas também foram embora dizendo que precisavam terminar um trabalho de sociologia.

Todo mundo começou a sair, mas deixavam a cadeira para o cara da barraca pegar. Ele começou a recolher, bolado por aqueles sem-teto resolverem aparecer na praia logo num sábado, dia de baile e dia de ganhar dinheiro. O Posto Nove ia ficando sob a posse do grupo de amigos de Carla e Rayanne. Começaram a sentar na areia, chegou o reforço da polícia. Ficaram em volta do grupo fazendo a segurança da gente de bem. Algumas pessoas permaneceram, umas com cara de bunda e outras não.

Carla finalmente vai levar Rayanne à água.

‘Vem, filha’, disse ela.

A menina agarrou a mãe pela mão e foi correndo pela areia até chegar à água. O sol era forte e o mar estava geladinho.

Rayanne tomou um susto de início, mas logo passou a gostar. A mãe a levantou pelos braços e depois a ajudou a mergulhar: no fim do mergulho sentiu o gosto de sal que vinha com a água e, iluminada por um sol que é de todos, balançou os cabelos crespos que estavam molhados com água do mar. No rosto tinha um sorriso de criança feliz.

(Martins, Geovani. ‘Sem-terra no mar’. In *Eu me chamo Rio*, edited by Ecio Salles and Julio Ludemir, 61–66. Rio de Janeiro: Casa da Palavra, 2015.)

Gag, by Natara Ney, translated by Isabel Moura Mendes

The Maverick 77 made the journey to the maternity hospital, in Méier, in less than 15 minutes. A route the car was repeating for the twelfth time. Maria dos Prazeres was in the backseat, her strong legs spread out, and pain written on her face. In her thoughts, she pleaded for it to be over soon. This was another birth, the body expanding to welcome yet another child, yet another who would grasp nourishment from her breasts, yet another to take away the few hours of sleep and dreaming, yet another carrying a holy name.

Through the window, Maria followed the meagre decorations for the Festival of Saint John lending a touch of colour to the evening. They looked like a blurry dream, painted with strokes of nightmare. It was nicer before, she thought, when there were bonfires and dances. Had she been happy before?

Oswaldo drove with absent tranquillity. It was his decision to have many children. One for each month of the year to start with, but science is not an exact subject, and they were born in recurring months and at irregular intervals. Maria was grateful none came into the world in August, a bad month for anything. She got married in that month. If you will allow me a small observation, we are in the year of our Lord 2020.

Oswaldo was an atheist, the son of two evangelical pastors, while he himself was a bookie. A paradox if he only knew what that meant. He left his parent's house a young man, the routine of worship and restrictions did not agree with him, but he did hold on to some principles of religion. His first job was as a betting cashier for *jogo do bicho*. He was promoted to manager and ended up supervising the Méier neighbourhood stands.

Cabresto, de Natara Ney

O caminho para a maternidade Carmela Dutra, no Méier, foi feito pelo Maverick 77 em menos de 15 minutos. Um trajeto que o veículo repetia pela décima segunda vez. Maria dos Prazeres estava sentada no banco traseiro, as pernas rijas abertas, e o rosto fechado pela dor. Em pensamentos pedia que aquilo acabasse logo. Aquilo era mais um parto, novamente o corpo se alargava para receber outra criança, outro que lhe arrancaria dos seios a comida, outro que lhe tomaria as poucas horas de sono e sonho, outro com nome de santo.

Pela janela, Maria acompanhava as parcas decorações juninas que emprestavam um pouco de colorido para a noite. Pareciam um sonho borrado, trechos de pesadelo. Antes era mais bonito, ela pensou, havia fogueiras e danças. Antes ela era feliz?

Oswaldo dirigia com a tranquilidade dos ausentes. Foi dele a decisão de terem muitos filhos. Inicialmente um para cada mês do ano, mas a ciência não é uma matéria exata e foram nascendo em meses repetidos e intervalos irregulares. Maria dava graças por nenhum ter vindo ao mundo em agosto, mês ruim para todos os assuntos. Foi o mês em que ela se casou. Se me permitem uma pequena observação, estamos no ano da graça de 2020.

Oswaldo era ateu, filho de dois pastores evangélicos e bicheiro. Um paradoxo, se ele soubesse o que isso significa. Saiu da casa dos pais ainda jovem, a rotina de cultos e as restrições não eram para ele, mas carregou alguns fundamentos da religião. O primeiro trabalho que conseguiu foi como apontador do jogo de bicho. Foi promovido a gerente e por fim passou a supervisionar as bancas da Região do Méier.

With money in his pocket, the right way forward was to start a family. He went after a respectable girl, the chosen one went by the name of Maria dos Prazeres. She, oblivious to her own desires, believed that all his wishes were hers. 'I will marry, but I'll keep studying', she thought. 'I will have children, but I'll keep working', she muttered. 'I will have my life', she said rather incredulously.

On the first night, Osvaldo was enchanted by Maria's naked body, with the smell, the purple colour of her nipples. She loved that tongue moistening her desire, she thought it quick, but it should be like that. He stopped to look at the woman that was now his – she was his, this woman. He laid on her, kissed her mouth and said something, she does not remember what. He brought his wide hands down to her waist, steadied there, and entered her with a single thrust. It lasted six minutes. Maria trembled with pain, rather than pleasure.

The nights repeated themselves, his weight on hers, six minutes of straddling, sometimes five. On fortunate nights he would sleep without touching her. With time the pain went away. Pleasure never came.

Exactly nine months later came the first, Antônio. Maria's breasts turned rock solid. They bled, they hurt, the child cried, and Osvaldo insisted she should breastfeed. Teas, massages, prayers. The milk finally came out, initially a small thread mixed with blood and then in spurts.

When Antônio reached four months, another was already on its way, Thiago, followed by Matheus, then Ana, Bárbara, Teresa, Rita, Cássia and Pedro. After a while came Luzia and Inês. Apostles and female warrior saints. Osvaldo knew the names of the apostles, not the warriors.

Maria's breasts and body were drying up, there was no more time for vanity, long baths, skin moisturisers, there was no more time to care for her dense black coils – she shaved them off. The haircut earned her the first punch from Osvaldo. She fell to the ground in the middle of the courtyard, under the mango tree from which three ripe mangoes hung, Osvaldo knelt and asked for forgiveness.

At the maternity ward, Bertholeza, a Black woman who went by the name of Berthô, welcomed them when they were still outside. Berthô is known for her powerful voice in Méier's samba circles, and is also famous for having a punch strong enough to rival the best boxers. They say she became a nurse to piece together the scoundrels she herself dismantled in beatings, something related to Christian guilt, although she was from Candomblé. Maria knew Berthô from school, after the wedding they grew apart, or better said, Osvaldo kept Maria away from everything unrelated to the care of their children and their sacred home. She entered the building alone, Osvaldo stood outside, I think he lit a cigarette.

Dinheiro no bolso, o caminho certo era constituir família. Foi atrás de uma moça de respeito, a escolhida atendia pelo nome de Maria dos Prazeres. Ela, que nem sabia ter desejos, acreditou que as vontades dele eram as suas. Caso mas continuo estudando, pensou. Tenho filhos mas continuo trabalhando, murmurou. Terei minha vida, disse sem fé.

Na primeira noite, Osvaldo se encantou com o corpo nu de Maria, com o cheiro, a cor roxa do bico do peito. Ela adorou aquela língua umedecendo o desejo dela, achou rápido, mas deveria ser assim mesmo. Ele parou para olhar a mulher que agora era sua, era sua aquela mulher. Deitou sobre ela, beijou a boca e lhe disse alguma coisa, ela não lembra o quê. Desceu as mãos largas até a cintura dela, firmou ali, entrou com um único golpe. Durou seis minutos. Maria tremeu, de dor e não de prazer.

As noites se repetiram iguais, o peso dele sobre o dela, os seis minutos de cavalgada, algumas vezes cinco. Em noites felizes ele dormia sem tocar nela. Com o tempo a dor foi embora. O prazer nunca chegou.

Exatos nove meses depois veio o primeiro, Antônio. O peito de Maria empedrou. Sangrava, doía, a criança chorava e Osvaldo insistia que ela tinha que amamentar. Chás, massagens, rezas. O leite começou a sair, inicialmente um fio misturado com sangue e logo depois aos jorros.

Antônio completou quatro meses e outro já estava vindo, Thiago, seguido por Matheus, depois Ana, Bárbara, Teresa, Rita, Cássia e Pedro, demorou um tempo veio Luzia e Inês. Apóstolos e santas guerreiras. Os nomes dos apóstolos Osvaldo conhecia, as guerreiras não.

Os seios e o corpo de Maria foram secando, já não havia tempo para vaidades, banhos demorados, cremes para a pele, já não havia tempo para cuidar dos densos cachos negros, resolveu cortar à máquina. O corte de cabelo foi a razão do primeiro murro que ganhou de Osvaldo. Ela caiu no chão, no meio do quintal, debaixo da mangueira de onde pendiam três mangas madurinhas. Osvaldo ajoelhou e pediu perdão.

Na maternidade, Bertholeza, a negra Berthô, recebeu-os ainda no lado de fora. Berthô é conhecida pela voz potente nas rodas de samba do Méier, também famosa por ter um soco típico dos melhores pugilistas. Dizem que se tornou enfermeira para rejuntar os malandros que ela mesma desmontava na porrada, alguma coisa relacionada com culpa cristã, embora fosse de candomblé. Maria conhecia Berthô da escola, após o casamento se afastaram, melhor dizendo, Osvaldo afastou Maria de tudo que não fosse o cuidado dos filhos e do abençoado lar. Ela entrou sozinha no prédio, Osvaldo ficou no lado de fora, acho que acendeu um cigarro.

The infirmary's white light accentuates the loneliness and the pain of women waiting to give birth. Arduous lives were yet to start. The sickening smell of blood and cleaning products acted as labour inducers. Alone on the night shift, Berthô tries to comfort a few novices in the art of giving birth, or she tries. Hours of screaming, crying and cries for help go by until Maria was taken to the operating theatre. The decision to have a caesarean was made months earlier. Numbly, she gathers what is left of her strength and says to the doctor:

'May this be the last one,' a long hum and Maria was done.

At 10.30p.m. on 23 June, 2020, João came into the world screaming, a small black body trembling from cold and a willingness to prevail.

At 10.30p.m. on Saint John's Day, at Haras Serafim, Vale das Videiras, Mary Happy is born. A black mare, daughter and granddaughter of champions, destined for the golden harness of the most important Equestrian Centres in the world. She stretched out her hooves and immediately rose, this was expected of her. A crowd of veterinarians and breeders attended the event placing bets on how much that black body still drenched in blood, would be worth.

Mary's mother, Kiss Me Sweet, retired from racing and was groomed to become a breeder, which did not improve the animal's life. Kiss was subjected to an entire year of painful tests, exams and daily injections. When she was in heat for the first time, they boarded her immense body into a narrow trailer.

The streaks of light coming through the window traced the path, the sound of the city invaded the small space, the window showed an immense tapestry moving with the wind, she tasted salt. She arrived at a place of familiar smells, a mixture of mould, old dry grass and shit. She was afraid. Reluctantly, she was placed in a stall, and immediately after a readily excited stallion straddled her. She fought back, whinnying loudly, but they paid no attention. Was that coitus? That weight on the back, that hot member fiercely entering her virgin body? In five minutes, the body learns to deal with the pain, but the head doesn't. Her back was marked with the male's teeth, a scar which would reopen many times. This is how Mary Happy was conceived, by force.

Mary Happy's first months were full of concern, it was known that the chosen stallion was prone to rebelliousness. The fear was that such aggression was also in her daughter's blood. Mary hid it well, indeed she did have anger, urges to run away, strange desires. She turned all of this into strength, the crazy are very smart.

A luz branca da enfermaria acentua a solidão e as dores das mulheres em espera. Vidas severinas estavam por vir. O cheiro enjoativo de sangue e produtos de limpeza funcionava como indutor dos partos. Sozinha no plantão da noite, Berthô tenta confortar algumas novatas na arte de parir, tenta. São horas de gritos, choros e pedidos de socorro até Maria ser levada para a sala de cirurgia. A decisão por uma cesárea foi tomada meses antes. Entorpecida, junta o resto de forças e diz ao médico:

‘Faça com que este seja o último’, um zumbido longo e Maria apaga.

22:30 do dia 23 de junho de 2020, João veio ao mundo aos berros, o corpinho negro tremia de frio e vontade de vingar.

22:30 da noite de São João, no Haras Serafim, Vale das Videiras, nasce Mary Happy. Uma égua negra, filha e neta de campeões, destinada ao cabresto dourado das Hípicas mais importantes do mundo. Colocou as patas para fora e imediatamente se ergueu, era o que se esperava dela. Uma junta de veterinários e criadores assistiu ao evento fazendo as contas de quanto valeria aquele corpo negro ainda banhado em sangue.

A mãe de Mary, Kiss Me Sweet, se aposentou das corridas e foi preparada para ser uma reprodutora, isso não melhorou em nada a vida daquele animal. Um ano inteiro de testes dolorosos foram feitos em Kiss, exames e injeções diárias. Quando o cio foi confirmado embarcaram o corpo imenso em um trailer apertado.

Os rasgos de luz que entravam pela janela desenhavam o caminho, o som da cidade invadiu o pequeno espaço, a janela mostrava um imenso tapete que se movia com o vento, sentiu um gosto de sal. Chegou em um lugar de cheiro conhecido, mistura de mofo, capim velho e merda. Sentiu medo. Relutando muito foi colocada numa baia, logo em seguida um garanhão já excitado montou sobre ela, que se debateu, relinchou alto mas não deram atenção. Era aquilo o coito? Aquele peso no lombo, aquela peça quente entrando ferozmente no seu corpo virgem? Cinco minutos, o corpo aprende a lidar com a dor, a cabeça não. O dorso ficou marcado com os dentes do macho, uma cicatriz que foi reaberta outras tantas vezes. Mary Happy foi concebida assim, na marra.

Os primeiros meses de Mary Happy foram acompanhados com preocupação, soube-se que o reprodutor escolhido era dado a ataques de rebeldia e o medo era que a tal agressividade estivesse também no sangue da filha. Mary disfarçou bem, tinha sim raiva, desejos de fugir, vontades estranhas. Transformou tudo em força, os loucos são muitos espertos.

One day she woke up without her mother around, heard the neigh of Kiss Me from afar, ran like the wind, ran with all the courage she could muster. Her developing body was halted by a fence. In that moment she knew fear and loneliness.

Kiss Me was sold, had a few more foals, died of sadness a few years later.

For a long time, Mary waited for her mother's return. Every day she ran to the fence, pressed her girth against the wood trying to traverse the prison. Then she realised the futility of that act.

Still heavy with grief, she started training, forgot one pain and began to feel others. Harness, rope to tie her tail, blanket, saddles, reins, halter and mouth closure. The muzzle is an instrument created to show who's in charge. Still innocent, Mary accepted the gag, in time she would be free, endure the saddles and ropes. In time she would free. When the iron mouth piece tore her tongue and took her breath, innocence was gone, freedom would never come.

Sundays were Maria dos Prazeres's favourite days, she made the best of it, squeezing the last drop out of every hour. She would get up early, take a bit longer in the bath, carefully choose her clothes to hide the bruises. Osvaldo no longer hit her in the face. The chiffon blouse covered the cigarette burns perfectly, the skirt down to the ankle concealed the marks of the belt, used as a whip on some nights, winding-up bad days. Her hair, which she was forced to grow back, was tied up in a high bun. She walked slowly with the 12 children to the famous Basilica of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. On Sundays, Osvaldo would go to the Jockey Club, in the south of the city, he always returned happy, a little tipsy and with flowers for her. Maria didn't like going to mass, the church was just a quiet place, one where she could hear her own thoughts, and also make wishes. On the way home she would have ice cream with the kids. Tangerine was their favourite.

At the age of three, Mary Happy stepped onto the racing tracks for the first time. Success. For the owners, success turned into money. Her 450-kilo body found some pleasure when the gate opened, and the race was started. One thousand, two thousand, three thousand metres of small happiness. Three thousand metres of freedom. She let the little man think he was in control. For those crumbs of wind on her face, she could stand the mornings of practice, the jockey, the controlled amount of food at predetermined times, she withstood the iron mouth piece robbing her of air. On some days, the blood inherited from her father would take over Mary's body, she would think of trampling whoever came in her way, would throw away the fine food she was being served. She calmed herself down by plotting her escape.

Um dia acordou sem a presença da mãe por perto, ouviu o relinchar de Kiss Me ao longe, correu com o que tinha de vento dentro de si, correu com o que tinha de coragem. O corpo ainda em formação foi detido por uma cerca. Conheceu naquele momento o medo e a solidão.

Kiss Me foi vendida, teve mais alguns filhos, morreu de tristeza alguns anos depois.

Durante muito tempo, Mary esperou pelo retorno da mãe, corria todo dia até a cerca, pressionava o peito contra a madeira tentando transpor a prisão. Depois percebeu a inutilidade daquele ato.

Ainda pesada de saudades foi iniciada no adestramento, esqueceu uma dor e começou a sentir outras. Cabresto, corda para amarrar o rabo, manta, selas, rédeas, cabeçada e o fechador de boca. O freio de boca é um instrumento criado para mostrar quem manda. Mary, inocente ainda, aceitou o cabresto, depois serei livre, aguentou as selas e cordas, depois serei livre. Quando o ferro atravessado em sua boca lhe rasgou a língua e lhe tirou o ar, a inocência foi embora, a liberdade nunca viria.

Os domingos eram os dias favoritos de Maria dos Prazeres, ela fazia o tempo render, usava cada gota de hora. Levantava cedo, demorava um pouco mais no banho, escolhia com cuidado a roupa para ocultar os hematomas. No rosto Osvaldo não batia mais. A blusa de chiffon cobria perfeitamente as queimaduras de cigarro, a saia descendo até o tornozelo ocultava as marcas do cinto, usado como chicote em algumas noites de dias ruins. O cabelo, que foi obrigada a deixar crescer, ficava preso em um coque alto. Caminhava com os 12 meninos lentamente até a famosa Basílica do Imaculado Coração de Maria. Domingo Osvaldo ia ao Jockey Club, na Zona Sul da cidade, voltava sempre feliz, um pouco embriagado e com flores para ela. Maria não gostava da missa, a igreja era só um lugar tranquilo, onde podia ouvir seus pensamentos, e ainda fazer pedidos. Na volta para casa tomava um sorvete com as crianças. Tangerina era o favorito.

Aos três anos Mary Happy pisou nas pistas pela primeira vez. Sucesso. Para os donos o êxito foi transformado em dinheiro. O corpo de 450 quilos encontrava algum prazer quando o portão abria e era dada a largada. 1000, 2000, 3000 metros de uma pequena felicidade. Três mil metros solta. Deixava o homem pequeno achar que era ele quem conduzia. Por aquelas migalhas de vento no rosto, aguentava as manhãs de treino, o jóquei, a comida em quantidade e horários medidos, aguentava o ferro na boca lhe roubando o ar. Em alguns dias o sangue herdado do pai tomava todo o corpo de Mary, pensava em pisotear quem surgia no caminho, jogava fora a fina comida que lhe serviam. Se acalmava traçando o plano de fuga.

Twelve to eat, twelve to dress, twelve talking, twelve asking, twelve crying. One with fever, one sleepy, two with worms, three with colic. One vomits, one cuts himself, two wrestle. Twelve reasons for Maria not to kill herself. Maria tended to everything, solved everything. The hard part was feigning pleasure when Osvaldo put her on all fours and mounted. She faked it.

That Sunday, Maria woke up early, straightened her clothes for mass, prepared the breakfast table, not knowing why she started to sing an old song, maybe she even cracked a smile. Osvaldo did not understand where that happiness came from, he looked at Maria and found a way to wipe the smile off her face, he began to hit her legs. She, not knowing why she was being beaten, she never really knew, began to laugh. He smacked his wide hand on her face and the laughter was gone.

'Not in the face, it's Sunday,' she said softly, then yelled. For the first time she shouted, not today, louder, not today. Osvaldo continued hitting her, only stopping when she passed out. He told the girls to clean everything, changed clothes and went to the Jockey Club.

The Grand Prix fill the Jockey Club, high stakes, tacky hats and expensive clothes, a festival of hype. Even joy seems to have been bought by some. At the end of the race, still covered in sweat, Mary was brought back to the stable where another week of painful routine would start. Not this time. The mare saw a straight line, a gap in the middle of the way, opening straight to the outside. She reared up, knocked whoever was guiding her, bolted to the iron gate. Shouting and despair broke out among race goers. Osvaldo, full of himself and whiskey, thought he could stop the animal, Mary trampled over him, in the last two minutes of his life Osvaldo saw his blood painting a small river. Red dyed hooves drop sparks on the ground. The pain caused by the contact of horseshoes with the asphalt made Mary scream. The iron gate was the last obstacle, Mary threw in all her body weight, and the gate broke free. Free, free as the devil, free like Satan. There was pain, a lot of pain. It lasted 15 minutes. She was soon run over by one car, then another, fell to the ground once and then again and then she did not rise. She saw her trainers arrive, in a quick conversation they decided to sacrifice the animal right there and then. They could have treated the wounds, she could have been mended, she could reproduce, but both Mary and whoever sacrificed her understood that after that audacity, she could not be fixed. The lethal injection alleviated all her pain.

Doze para comer, doze para vestir, doze falando, doze pedindo, doze chorando. Um com febre, um com sono, dois com verme, três com cólica. Um vomita, outro se corta, dois se quebram. Doze razões para Maria não se matar. Maria atendia tudo, resolvia tudo. O difícil era fingir prazer quando Osvaldo a colocava de quatro e montava. Fingia.

Naquele domingo, Maria acordou mais cedo, arrumou a roupa da missa, preparou a mesa de café, sem saber por que começou a cantar uma música antiga, talvez tenha até esboçado um sorriso. Osvaldo não entendeu de onde vinha aquela felicidade, olhou para Maria e arranjou um jeito de lhe tirar o sorriso da cara, começou a bater nas pernas. Ela sem saber porque apanhava, nunca soube na realidade, começou a rir. Ele estalou a mão larga no seu rosto e o riso foi embora.

‘No rosto não, hoje é domingo’, falou bem baixinho, depois gritou. Pela primeira vez gritou, hoje não, mais alto, hoje não. Osvaldo continuou batendo, só parou quando ela desmaiou. Mandou as meninas limparem tudo, trocou de roupa e foi para o Jockey.

Os Grandes Prêmios lotam o Jockey Club, apostas altas, chapéus cafonas e roupas caras, um festival de exageros. Até a alegria parece ter sido comprada por alguns. Final de corrida, ainda banhada em suor, Mary é reconduzida para o estábulo e outra semana começaria com a dolorosa rotina. Desta vez não. A égua avistou no meio do caminho uma reta, um vão aberto direto para o lá fora. Empinou o corpo, derrubou quem a guiava, traçou carreira até o portão de ferro. Gritaria, desespero entre os frequentadores. Osvaldo, cheio de si e de uísque, acha que pode deter o animal, Mary passou por cima dele, nos últimos dois minutos de vida Osvaldo viu seu sangue desenhar um pequeno rio. Cascos tingidos de vermelho soltam fagulhas no chão. A dor causada pelo contato das ferraduras com o asfalto fez Mary gritar. O portão de ferro é o último obstáculo, Mary joga todo o peso do corpo e o portão se rompe, livre. Livre, livre como o diabo, livre como o satanás. Dor, muita dor. Durou 15 minutos. Logo foi atropelada por um carro, depois por outro, caiu no chão uma vez e depois mais uma e depois não levantou. Viu chegarem seus adestradores, em uma conversa rápida decidiram sacrificar ali mesmo o animal. Eles poderiam ter tratado dos ferimentos, podia ser consertada, poderia ser reprodutora, mas tanto Mary quanto quem a sacrificou entenderam que depois daquela ousadia, ela não teria mais concerto. A injeção letal aliviou todas as dores da égua.

It was Bertholeza who prepared Osvaldo's body for burial, she did not even try to give the dead man dignity. She regretted not having been the one responsible for tearing the guy apart. She, always so attentive, prepared for everything, did not notice that Maria was walking on hot coals.

There were a lot of people at Osvaldo's wake. Maria arrived a little late, very short hair, sleeveless shirt and a knee-length skirt, all the bruises on display. There was a minute of silence, honouring Mary much more than the deceased. She walked to the coffin, looked at the deceased and smiled. She never thought her prayers would be answered.

Foi Bertholeza quem preparou o corpo de Oswaldo para o sepultamento, sequer tentou dar qualquer dignidade ao morto. Lastimou não ter sido ela a responsável por destroçar o sujeito. Ela, sempre tão atenta, preparada para tudo, não percebeu que Maria estava caminhando sobre brasas.

Havia muita gente no velório de Oswaldo. Maria chegou um pouco tarde, cabelos muito curtos, camisa sem mangas e uma saia até os joelhos, todos os hematomas à mostra. Houve um minuto de silêncio, muito mais por Maria do que pelo defunto. Ela se encaminhou até o caixão, olhou para o morto e sorriu. Nunca pensou que suas preces seriam atendidas.

(Ney, Natara. 'Cabresto'. In *Carolinas: A nova geração de escritoras negras brasileiras*, edited by Julio Ludemir, 380–386. Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo, Flup, 2021.)

17

Venuses Who Love Each Other, by Patrícia Alves Santos Oliveira, translated by Andrew McDougall

14 July 1986

It was on my tongue that she discovered the most intimate pleasure points. The convergence of our desires made our hypocritically condemned sheets flow with enjoyment. The lilac walls of my apartment and the Moon spying on us were the only witnesses to our love. There, together, there was no space for the rationality which nullifies emotions. Together, we existed and, like an unholy gospel, we became one body. Desire exuded from the pores of our black skin.

But the scene now is a different one.

My vibrant apartment has been swapped for an ivory and moss-green hall. White carnations and yellow begonias give the atmosphere an air of elegance. Photos of the couple scattered around the place catch the eye. I stop before a frame and observe the image. His stature exemplifies the power of the phallus which for so long has threatened Venuses who love each other. She wears an acquiescent smile, absent from herself. With their arms intertwined, she performs the image of marriage as a perennial chain. I step around the room, everyone displays happiness, except she and I. The memories of last night disturb me: we had, cowardly, declared our end.

Their relationship was six-years-old; ours, four! They made a perfect couple; we would be an aberration. Her family expects that he will protect her from the dangers of the world, including from herself. The guy is practically an offering from the gods. And us, she and I, what are we? Where will we put what we feel? Where will our unsaid words, kisses not given and repressed desires all go?

17

Vênus que se amam, de Patrícia Alves Santos Oliveira

14 de julho de 1986

Foi em minha língua que ela descobriu os pontos mais íntimos de prazer. A confluência dos nossos desejos fez escorrer gozo sobre os nossos lençóis hipocritamente condenados. As paredes lilás do meu apartamento e a Lua a nos espiar eram as únicas testemunhas do nosso amor. Ali, juntas, não havia espaço para a racionalidade que anula as emoções. Juntas, existimos e, como num evangelho profano, nos tornamos um só corpo. Exalava desejo pelos poros de nossas epidermes pretas.

Mas o cenário agora é outro.

Meu vibrante apartamento foi substituído por um salão de tons marfim e verde-musgo. Cravos brancos e begônias amarelas enchem de elegância o ambiente. Fotos do casal espalhadas pelo recinto atraem os olhares. Paro diante de um quadro e observo a imagem. A imponência dele evidencia o poder do falo que há muito ameaça as Vênus que se amam. Ela esboça um sorriso complacente, ausente de si mesma. Com os braços entrelaçados performa a imagem do casamento como um elo perene. Dou mais alguns passos pelo salão, todos aparentam felicidade, menos ela e eu. As lembranças da noite anterior me perturbam, havíamos, covardemente, decretado nosso fim.

O namoro deles tinha seis anos; o nosso, quatro! Eles formavam um casal perfeito, nós seríamos uma aberração. A família espera que ele a proteja dos perigos do mundo, inclusive de si mesma. O moço é quase uma oferenda dos deuses. E nós, ela e eu, o que somos? Onde colocaremos o que sentimos? Para onde irão as palavras não ditas, os beijos não dados, o desejo reprimido?

With the hall at capacity, everyone rises to the sound of the wedding march. He is smiling, waiting, at the altar. Hidden behind a pillar, I try to swallow my tears. She is a few steps away from the yes that represents a no. I still nurture a shred of hope.

For a moment, my thoughts left there. I remembered our first kiss, our first fuck, the many orgasms. I recalled the Moon that spied on us through the window of my room. I could almost hear the sound of her breathing when my lips roamed between her legs to the sound of *Girls just want to have fun*. In that almost delirium, I missed the moment of the yes. Goddesses, might she have said no?

At that moment, I was struck by an almighty terror that prevented me from looking at them. Feeling the weight of my eyelids, I stared at them, motionless. My body froze for a few seconds, my black skin went pale. Heart cold, lips dry, I looked, slowly, at the two of them. She wasn't smiling and, faced with that devastating scene, my eyes welled up. I envied his smile and the hail of rice that fell upon the inharmonious couple.

I felt the air moving at my feet. On the floor, the white and yellow bouquet mocked my solitude.

Com o salão lotado, todos se põem de pé ao som da marcha nupcial. Ele sorridente, a espera, no altar. Escondida atrás de uma pilastra eu tento engolir o choro. Ela está a alguns passos do sim que representa um não. Ainda alimento uma ínfima esperança.

Por um instante, meus pensamentos saíram dali. Lembrei do primeiro beijo, da primeira transa, dos vários orgasmos. Recordei da Lua que nos espiava pela janela do meu quarto. Eu quase podia ouvir o som da respiração dela quando meus lábios passeavam por entre suas pernas ao som de *Girls just want to have fun*. Nesse quase delírio, perdi o momento do sim. Deusas, teria ela dito não?

Naquele instante, fui tomada por um medo enorme que me impedia de olhar para eles. Sentindo as pálpebras pesadas, eu os fitava, imóvel. Meu corpo congelou por alguns segundos, minha epiderme preta empalideceu. Com o coração frio e lábios secos, contemplei, lentamente os dois. Ela não sorria e, diante daquela cena que me entristecia, meus olhos marejaram. Eu invejei o sorriso dele e a chuva de arroz que caía sobre aquele dissonante casal.

Senti o ar se mover aos meus pés. No chão, o buquê branco e amarelo, ria da minha solidão.

(Oliveira, Patrícia Alves Santos. 'Vênus que se amam'. In *Carolinas: A nova geração de escritoras negras brasileiras*, edited by Julio Ludemir, 399–400. Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo, Flup, 2021.)

Mirror Women, by Esmeralda Ribeiro, translated by Andrew McDougall

‘A large mirror can attract lightning on stormy days, Dona Marta,’ warned the glazier.

Mother didn’t like mirrors. She said they brought all kinds of misfortune. Her great-grandparents said that lightless spirits were imprisoned in the mirrors. After mum died, I renovated the whole house. I put mirrors up on all the walls on the right-hand side. I was happy. I had inherited a large house. It had space for me and for my sister’s family to live. Inheritances always cause arguments. A vigil was being held for mum in the lounge when the argument between my sister and I became heated. We snarled our way through various rooms. No one could separate us. Mother’s wake was divided into two audiences, one watched over the deceased, the other took in the freestyle fighting between us. We disagreed on the division of the house as the will was all about *usus* and *fructus*. I would keep the house and my sister would continue to pay rent.

We tried to live together. My brother-in-law was in a famous *pagode* group. But all his money was for paying alimony to his white lovers. When he didn’t comply with the law, they made sure he was thrown in jail. My sister said her husband was a good man, that fame was to blame. They moved out of the big house, leaving behind debts for me to settle.

That house was all mine. I thought I’d never leave it. Abigail, the housekeeper, lived with me. She taught me to dodge nature’s masked subtleties. She was extremely dedicated. She had witnessed our whole lives and thus had had no family or home of her own. I lost the housekeeper a little each day. Her periods of lucidity lasted a few weeks. She looked after the house and food without saying a word. Even when she burnt her arms on the pot. Her gaze was distant and her mouth chewed gum.

Mulheres dos espelhos, de Esmeralda Ribeiro

‘Espelho grande pode atrair raios em dias de trovões, dona Marta’, advertiu o vidraceiro.

Mamãe não gostava de espelhos. Dizia que atraíam todo tipo de azar. Seus bisavós contavam que espíritos sem luz se aprisionavam nos espelhos. Depois que mamãe faleceu, reformei toda a casa. Coloquei espelhos em todas as paredes do lado direito.

Eu estava feliz. Herdara um casarão. Tinha espaço para eu e a família de minha irmã morarmos. Heranças sempre causam brigas. Mamãe estava sendo velada na sala quando a discussão entre mim e a minha irmã ficou acalorada. Saímos emboladas pelos quartos. Ninguém conseguira nos apartar. O velório de mamãe foi dividido em duas plateias, uma velava a defunta, a outra plateia assistia à luta livre entre nós duas. Divergíamos sobre a partilha do casarão porque a escritura era de usos e frutos. Eu ficara com o casarão e minha irmã continuaria a pagar aluguel.

Havíamos tentado morar juntos. O meu cunhado era de um grupo de pagode famoso. Mas todo o seu dinheiro era para pagar as pensões alimentícias das amantes brancas. Quando não cumpria a lei, elas o colocavam na cadeia. Minha irmã dizia que seu marido era bom, a culpa era da fama. Mudaram-se do casarão, deixando dívidas para eu saldar.

Aquele casarão era só meu. Pensara em nunca sair de lá. Morava comigo a empregada Abigail. Eu, quando criança, apelidei-a de velha Abigail. Me ensinara a desviar das sutilezas mascaradas pela natureza. Fora extremamente dedicada. Vivera somente as nossas vidas, com isso não tivera família nem tivera o seu próprio lar. Eu perdia a empregada um pouco a cada dia. Seus períodos de lucidez duravam algumas semanas. Cuidava da casa e da comida sem dizer uma palavra. Mesmo quando seus braços queimavam na panela. Seu olhar era distante e a boca mascava chicletes.

I was happy with the renovations, everything smelled new. In my childhood they said that my house was haunted. The neighbours commented that the dead played tricks on visitors. Over the years, I had broken that stigma, putting on numerous parties at the house. That afternoon, the house party was lively. I remember it well, it was the last party. Lots of meat, beer, samba and karaoke. Until old Abigail appeared, dragging her slippers, in her nightgown and dishevelled. She was cadaverous. My guests left the party running and screaming. I cursed old Abigail something awful. I made the most of it and damned her habit of seasoning salads with hot sauce. I cursed my mum for my solitude. She had handpicked the men I should be with. Time had passed and my love affairs as well. My uterus had left me. I had banished my sister and her children. Even yelling ceaselessly, old Abigail didn't say a word.

My joy only lasted seven years. On that day of the last party, I had woken up agitated and seen a veiled woman, with her back to me, in the mirror in my room. I only heard her voice: 'Every day, the ear hears that which it has not yet heard.' I walked through other rooms and realised that in every mirror the same woman was appearing and repeating the same phrase: 'Every day, the ear hears that which it has not yet heard.'

Time brought other women, young and old, to my mirrors. Women who danced and uttered things I had never heard. I considered getting a religious type to bless the house, however the elderly women in the mirrors said, 'A woman's religion is in her heart.' Just seven years my inner peace had lasted. Was I crazy or was all that a dream? I wanted to unburden myself to my sister, but she had never been back to see me. I decided to invite a drunk neighbour over to the house. How would he react if he saw those mirror women? Who would believe a drunk? The neighbour's image was reflected without distortion. To be sure, I asked him to look in all the mirrors in the house. The reflection was true to his sad body. It faithfully revealed a young man, aged and abandoned.

The housekeeper witnessed the images in the mirrors. Countless times old Abigail had wanted to embrace those mirror women. On the days when her memory escaped her, she didn't leave her room, remaining motionless in a corner, in the foetal position.

Those images in the mirrors. A cadaverous and silent housekeeper. Was I lucid? Might Abigail have died and become a spirit? On the day of the fight between my sister and I, Abigail had tried to take the knife from my hands, there was blood spattered all over the floor.

Eu estava contente com a reforma, tudo cheirava a novo. Na minha infância diziam que o meu casarão era assombrado. Os vizinhos comentavam que os mortos brincavam com as visitas. Com os anos, eu quebrara esse estigma, promovendo várias festas naquele casarão. Naquela tarde, a festa estava animada lá em casa. Lembro-me bem, fora a última festa. Muita carne, cerveja, samba e karaokê. Até que a velha Abigail aparecera arrastando os seus chinelos, de camisola e despenteada. Estava cadavérica. Os convidados saíram da festa correndo e gritando. Eu xinguei tanto a velha Abigail! Aproveitei e amaldiçoei pela sua mania de temperar as saladas com molho de pimenta vermelha. Xinguei também mamãe pela minha solidão. Escolhera a dedo os homens que eu deveria ter. O tempo passara e os amores também. Meu útero me deixara. Excomunguei minha irmã e seus filhos. Mesmo esbravejando sem parar, a velha Abigail não dissera uma palavra.

Sete anos apenas duraram as minhas alegrias. Naquele dia da última festa, acordara agitada e vira no espelho do meu quarto uma mulher de véu na cabeça, virada de costas para mim. Só ouvira sua voz: ‘Todos os dias o ouvido ouve aquilo que ainda não ouviu.’ Eu caminhara pelos outros cômodos e percebera que em todos os espelhos a mesma mulher se apresentava e repetia a mesma frase: ‘Todos os dias o ouvido ouve aquilo que ainda não ouviu.’ O tempo trouxe outras mulheres, jovens e idosas, aos meus espelhos. Mulheres que dançavam e que proferiam coisas que nunca escutara. Pensara num religioso para benzer o casarão, contudo as mulheres idosas dos espelhos disseram: ‘A religião de uma mulher está em seu coração.’

Sete anos apenas durou a minha paz de espírito. Estava louca ou tudo aquilo seria um sonho? Quisera desabafar com a minha irmã, porém ela nunca mais me visitara. Resolvi convidar um vizinho bêbado para ir lá em casa. Como reagiria caso visse aquelas mulheres dos espelhos? Quem acreditaria num bêbado? A imagem do vizinho fora refletida sem distorção. Para certificar-me, pedi-lhe que olhasse em todos os espelhos da casa. O reflexo fora fiel ao seu corpo triste. Refletira fielmente a imagem de um jovem envelhecido e abandonado.

A empregada testemunhara as imagens nos espelhos. A velha Abigail quisera inúmeras vezes abraçar aquelas mulheres dos espelhos. Nos dias em que a memória lhe fugia, não saía do quarto, ficava inerte num canto, em posição fetal.

Aquelas imagens nos espelhos. Uma empregada cadavérica e silenciosa. Eu estava lúcida? Abigail teria morrido e virado um espírito? No dia da briga entre mim e minha irmã, a empregada tentara tirar a faca de minhas mãos, era muito sangue espalhado pelo chão.

My sister had certainly been hurt; and I, wounded. And old Abigail? Everyone, except mum and I, had always planned on leaving the housekeeper interned in some hospital. They said: 'She's not worth anything anymore. We don't have money to spend on her. She has become mush and we throw mush out.'

On the day of the fight, I was hospitalised. Might all our relatives have taken advantage of mine and mother's absence and tossed the dead old woman in some ditch in the 'Blacks and Blacks Favela'? I remember mum and Abigail laughing for hours over her stories. She had become mute, after the fight between my sister and I. Was that woman who dragged her feet through the house real?

The moons changed and the mirror women changed with them, having their backs to me or facing me. The young women said things like: 'If you want to inherit from the dead, you'll be kept waiting.' The old women said: 'A person cannot lend their heart.' Now they were young women, now they were old women, saying these things incessantly. At the full moon, the young and elderly women formed a circle and cried in chorus: 'The secret of the elderly is not bought with money, but with good manners.' Or: 'The people of the person are numerous inside the person.'

What did the mirror women want with me? There were many voices, but the tone of voice was mine. Some time later, those known and unknown women danced to the sound of atabaques and agogos. My drunk neighbour had said on one occasion that my house was silent. Besides myself and the housekeeper, did no one else hear the sounds of those drums and bells? Those young and elderly women in the mirrors were having a party. My drunk neighbour was young, but he had never spoken about his life, he had told me once that his memories were sparse. Old Abigail was right when she said: 'An alcoholic is a body with no memory'.

On one of those changes of the moon, old Abigail joined the elderly mirror women. No. Perhaps it wasn't her. She was real. I had often separated her face from her arms and had felt the consistency of her bones. The housekeeper hadn't been lucid for a week. In her room, she could be found in the foetal position, cold and pallid, lacking that deep colour. I called my sister, but the person who answered the phone had the same tone of voice as my mother: 'A person cannot lend their heart.' Was it a trick? Nervous, I hadn't understood correctly. I called back and the same voice repeated: 'A person cannot lend their heart.' My drunk neighbour and I kept vigil, for weeks, for old Abigail in the big house's lounge. Those young and elderly women disappeared from the mirrors for weeks.

Com certeza minha irmã saíra ferida; eu, machucada. E a velha Abigail? Todos, exceto eu e mamãe, sempre planejaram esquecer a empregada internada num hospital. Diziam: ‘Ela não vale mais nada. Não temos dinheiro para gastar com ela. Virou bagaço e bagaço a gente joga fora.’

No dia da briga, eu fora hospitalizada. Teriam os meus parentes aproveitando as ausências minha e de mamãe e jogado a velha morta em alguma vala existente na ‘Favela Pretos and Pretos’? Recordo-me de que mamãe e a velha Abigail passavam horas rindo de suas histórias. Emudecera, depois da briga entre mim e minha irmã. Aquela mulher que arrastava os pés no casarão era real?

Mudavam as luas e as mulheres dos espelhos mudavam com elas, ficavam de costas ou me encarando. As mulheres jovens diziam coisas como: ‘Queres ir herdar dos mortos, ficas a esperar.’ As mulheres idosas falavam: ‘Uma pessoa não pode emprestar seu coração.’ Ora eram jovens, ora eram as idosas que vociferavam essas coisas sem parar. Na lua cheia, as mulheres jovens e as idosas formavam um círculo e em coro gritavam: ‘O segredo do velho não se compra com dinheiro, mas com boas maneiras.’ Ou ‘As pessoas da pessoa são numerosas no interior da pessoa.’

O que aquelas mulheres dos espelhos queriam comigo? Eram muitas vozes, porém o tom de voz era o meu. Tempos depois, aquelas mulheres conhecidas e desconhecidas dançavam ao som de atabaques e de agogôs. O vizinho bêbado certa vez comentara que a minha casa era silenciosa. Além de mim e da empregada ninguém mais escutava os sons dos atabaques e dos agogôs? Aquelas mulheres jovens e idosas dos espelhos faziam uma festa. O vizinho bêbado era jovem, mas nunca falara de sua vida, dissera-me uma vez que as suas recordações eram esparsas. A velha Abigail tinha razão quando dizia: ‘Uma pessoa alcoólatra é um corpo sem memória.’

Numa dessas mudanças de lua a velha Abigail também se juntara às mulheres idosas dos espelhos. Não. Talvez não fosse ela. Era real. Eu muitas vezes apertara seu rosto e seus braços e sentira a consistência dos seus ossos. Havia um mês que a empregada não ficava lúcida. No quarto encontrava-se em posição fetal, fria e pálida, sem aquela cor retinta. Telefonei para minha irmã, porém quem atendeu tinha o mesmo tom de voz de mamãe: ‘Uma pessoa não pode emprestar seu coração.’ Fora engano? Nervosa, eu não entendera direito. Liguei novamente e a mesma voz repetira: ‘Uma pessoa não pode emprestar seu coração.’ Ficamos eu e o meu vizinho bêbado velando, por semanas, a velha Abigail na sala do casarão. Aquelas mulheres jovens e idosas sumiram por semanas dos espelhos.

With the housekeeper's departing, the pillars that held up my being were collapsing. But I wanted to throw a barbecue for a few friends. I wanted to dance a romantic waltz. I wanted to awaken within me that woman full of dreams. However, Abigail's spirit might frighten my guests or chase away my beloved. When mother was alive, the housekeeper forbade visits as she said that 'Teeth are not the heart.'

I had tried to do away with those ghosts, destroying all the mirrors in the house. The three workmen had tried and tried, but those mirror women were stronger. They said, without being seen by the men, 'The people of a person are numerous inside the person.' The three workmen fell unconscious. They left, remembering nothing.

I had never dared to look in the mirrors of others. Would they be different to the ones at home? How would I handle my fears? I preferred to turn my back. Those mirror women repeated incessantly: 'The people of a person and numerous inside the person.' The beams and stone slabs within me were crumbling day by day and I was alone to support them.

As old Abigail had warned: 'The teeth are not the heart.' In the hope of finding my inner peace, one day I told everything to the drunk neighbour. He had promised to keep it a secret, but then he went telling it from bar to bar. That story of mine reached the ears of a journalist who published it in the magazine *Supernatural Events*. Everyone talked about it. Do you remember? Pilgrimages invaded the house. Day and night. But the mirrors didn't show anything abnormal. At my work it was the subject of much ridicule: 'We want to see your ghosts. Do the mirror women gossip? Did a phantom man visit your house?' I left my job. I left my home. I left those mirrors. I left those young and elderly women, with their atabaques and agogos. I left, too, the spirit of old Abigail. From afar I followed the invasions of my house by families of poor gypsies. The publication of my story in the magazine brought down the pillars that held up my being. Drink began to take hold of me. You've seen me stumbling through the streets. Tell me: how do I look? The other day I came across my sister and her family. I tried to ready a 'how's it going?' However, they moved away, terrified. How am I, you ask? You've surely seen my stumbling through the streets. I've long since stopped keeping track of the marks of experience on my face. I've long since stopped braiding my hair. Now, living on the street, I answer to the nickname *Animal Lady*.

Com a partida da empregada, estavam ruindo as colunas que sustentavam o meu ser. Mas desejei organizar uma churrascada para alguns amigos. Desejei dançar uma valsa enamorada. Quis despertar em mim aquela mulher cheia de sonhos. Contudo, o espírito de Abigail poderia amedrontar os convidados ou afugentar o meu amado. Quando mamãe era viva, a empregada proibira visitas, pois dizia que ‘Os dentes não são o coração.’

Tentara acabar com aqueles fantasmas, destruindo todos os espelhos lá de casa. Os três pedreiros tentaram, tentaram, todavia aquelas mulheres dos espelhos foram mais fortes. Diziam, sem serem vistas por eles: ‘As pessoas da pessoa são numerosas no interior da pessoa.’ Os três pedreiros caíram desacordados. Eles foram embora, sem lembrar de nada.

Nunca me aventurara a olhar nos espelhos alheios. Seriam diferentes dos meus lá de casa? Como administraria os meus medos? Preferia virar de costas. Aquelas mulheres dos espelhos repetiam sem parar: ‘As pessoas da pessoa são numerosas no interior da pessoa.’ As vigas e as lajes sedimentadas dentro de mim estavam ruindo dia a dia e eu estava sozinha para escorá-las.

Como alertara a velha Abigail: ‘Os dentes não são o coração.’ Na esperança de encontrar a minha paz de espírito, certo dia contara tudo ao vizinho bêbado. Ele prometera-me segredo, porém contara de bar em bar. Essa minha história chegara aos ouvidos de um jornalista, que a publicou no jornal *Casos Sobrenaturais*. Todo mundo comentou. Você se lembra? Romarias invadiam o casarão. Durante o dia ou durante a noite. Mas os espelhos não mostraram nada de anormal. No meu emprego faziam chacota: ‘Queríamos ver os seus fantasmas. As mulheres dos espelhos faziam fofocas? Fantasma homem visitava sua casa?’ Abandonei o emprego. Abandonei a minha casa. Abandonei aqueles espelhos. Abandonei aquelas mulheres jovens e idosas, com seus atabaques e seus agogôs. Abandonei também o espírito da velha Abigail. De longe acompanho as invasões do casarão por famílias de pobres ciganos. A publicação da minha história no jornal fez desmoronar todas as colunas que sustentavam o meu ser. A bebida foi tomando conta de mim. Você já me vira cambaleando pelas ruas. Diga-me: como está a minha aparência? Outro dia encontrei minha irmã e a sua família. Tentei esboçar um como vão? Porém, saíram apavorados. Me diga, como estou? Você certamente deve ter me visto cambaleando pelas ruas. Há tempos não acompanho as marcas da experiência em meu rosto. Há tempos eu não tranço os meus cabelos. Agora, morando na rua, eu atendo pelo codinome de *Dama dos Animais*.

Did the young and elderly women from my mirrors possess cats and dogs to escape the house and my mirrors? I recall old Abigail saying: 'An alcoholic is a body with no memory.' Might that be me? Now, where I roam, there are no mirrors.

I'm now a teller of supernatural stories. I go from bar to bar, telling them in exchange for a swig of cachaça. At the bar of a pub, even those who find this story absurd prefer hearing it to asking me:

'What secrets are you, alcoholic women, hiding in your mirrors?'

Será que aquelas mulheres jovens e idosas dos meus espelhos encarnaram nos gatos e nos cachorros para fugir do casarão e dos meus espelhos? Lembro-me de que a velha Abigail dizia: ‘Uma pessoa alcóolatra é um corpo sem memória.’ Seria eu mesma? Agora, por onde ando, não existem espelhos.

Sou agora uma contadora de histórias sobrenaturais. Conto de bar em bar em troca de gole de cachaça. No balcão de um boteco, mesmo quem acha essa história absurda prefere ouvi-la a me perguntar:

‘Qual é o segredo que vocês, mulheres alcóolatras, escondem em seus espelhos?’

(Ribeiro, Esmeralda. ‘Mulheres dos espelhos’. In *Cadernos Negros 26: Contos afro-brasileiros*, edited by Esmeralda Ribeiro and Márcio Barbosa, 49–55. São Paulo: Quilombhoje, 2003.)

Verbs under the Skin, by Henrique Rodrigues, translated by Andrew McDougall

When the news report girl got out the Globo-branded car, all made up and with long, stunning legs, Diguinho turned to us and said ‘I would, how about you?’ But we weren’t lame enough to say me too. I don’t know why everyone always makes the same jokes but I think it’s because here in Seropédica everything is always repeated over and over.

The real surprise was when, after filming the report about the lack of doctors in casualty, the girl came over to talk to us. I wanted to be polite but cheeky at the same time so she would be impressed – you know how it goes – but as we were all thin, shirtless and shoeless, I couldn’t think of anything and stayed quiet, looking down.

‘Hi there, boys, which of you dreams of studying at the Rural University?’

We stood nonplussed and speechless because we didn’t know what to say, looking at each other. There we were thinking she’d come over, flirt and the like and she asks us something nothing to do with that. But Surubinha still wanted to play the expert and be the most clued-up one because his dad was a night guard over there. So Surubinha spoke to the girl.

‘I want to work there when I grow up, like my dad.’

The reporter thought that chancer Surubinha’s reply was cool but we didn’t have time to point out that his dad didn’t work at the Rural anymore because they sent him packing last year and now he fished in the Guandu for food. And I told Surubinha the idiot that she wanted to know if we wanted to study at the Rural like the people with money who come from faraway to live and study there. And she asked if we lived near the Rio-São Paulo highway and it was only then that Big Ear, who was the quietest of us, said something with that squeaky voice of his, as if it wasn’t enough to have a flappy ear, poor Big Ear.

Verbos à flor da pele, de Henrique Rodrigues

Quando a moça da reportagem saiu do carro da Globo toda maquiada maior pernã toda gostosa o Diguinho virou pra geral e perguntou eu comia ela e tu, só que a gente não é otário de responder eu também. Eu não sei por que todo mundo faz as mesmas piadas sempre mas acho que é por que aqui em Seropédica tudo sempre se repete mesmo.

A novidade mesmo foi que a moça da reportagem logo depois da gravação sobre falta de médico na UPA veio falar com a gente. Eu quis ser educado e malandro ao mesmo tempo pra ela ficar impressionada sabe como é mas a gente tudo magro sem camisa pé no chão não pensei nada só fiquei quieto olhando pra baixo quando ela perguntou

E aí, meninos, quem de vocês sonha em estudar na Rural quando crescer?

Geral ficou bolado sem falar nada porque não sabia mesmo o que responder um olhando pra cara do outro. A gente crente que ela ia dar um mole e tal e ela pergunta um lance nada a ver. Mas o Surubinha sempre quer dar uma de mais esperto e saber mais do assunto porque o pai dele era vigia noturno lá. Daí o Surubinha falou pra moça

Eu quero trabalhar lá quando crescer, que nem o meu pai.

A repórter achou legal a resposta do Surubinha safado mas a gente não teve muito tempo de dizer que o pai dele não trabalhava mais na Rural porque foi mandado embora ano passado e agora pescava no Guandu pra conseguir comida. E eu falei pro Surubinha seu burro ela quer saber se a gente quer estudar na Rural que nem o pessoal com grana vem de longe pra estudar e morar lá. E ela perguntou se a gente morava ali pela estrada Rio-São Paulo e só então o Orelha que era o mais quieto de nós quatro falou algo com aquela voz fininha como se não bastasse a orelha de abano coitado do Orelha.

‘We live over in the Incra.’

The reporter didn’t understand and later I realised that for her, INCRA meant the National Institute for Colonisation and Agrarian Reform and not the name of our neighbourhood. I don’t know why she was giving us attention, wanting to know where we lived and if we wanted to study at the Rural. The first question fair enough because it’s not like we walk around with our addresses on our foreheads, but studying at the Rural didn’t make any sense. But it was alright because the hot reporter left then and we’d all surely end up jerking off to her later.

And as if that wasn’t enough, the next day, which as it happens was yesterday, our Portuguese teacher, going off on one as usual, said that if we didn’t study harder none of us would get out of this situation and Diguinho full of it like always without thinking asked scornfully what situation that was. Teacher Edna began ranting again, part having a go, part giving advice. She said a ton of stuff and asked about our future, to which Diguinho said everything in the future would be the same, for example Big Ear would still have a squeaky voice, and everyone laughed and so did I and she was pissed off and kept on talking, getting into it like a pastor banishing the devil from the faithful.

Later, I figured the reporter must have thought along the same lines as teacher Edna. About how we could stop being who we are to be like the folk with money who go to study at the Rural. But those ideas are almost laughable they are so far removed.

And last night I was at home having chicken for dinner, everyone happy, and I took the chance to talk about the news report and what teacher Edna had said at school about us studying to better our lives. I even thought I was talking nicely as they were listening to me until my dad guffawed loudly and I laughed too until he slammed his fist on the table. Seriously, my shoulder winced in fear because he then went fucking off on one as well all like:

Because I was lucky to be studying, something neither he nor my mother had the luck to do but it wasn’t so I could get all big boots and giving it all that dreaming of a rich person’s life. Because his hands were calloused from working the land to put that food on the table and he pointed to my plate. That in a while I’d have to stop studying and with a bit of Indian luck get a job and to hell with anyone not from round here who says that Indians are militiamen and bandits who just look after the land of rich people who don’t even live there. That those two women, the reporter and my teacher, were putting the wrong idea in my head because they were women and didn’t know what it was to be a man. And a bunch more stuff I don’t remember because I started crying.

A gente mora lá pra dentro do Incra.

Daí que a repórter não entendeu e depois eu soube que pra ela Incra era outra coisa mas não o nosso bairro ali. Eu não sei por que ela tava dando atenção pra gente querendo saber onde a gente morava e se queria ir pra Rural. A primeira pergunta tudo bem porque ninguém anda com endereço na testa mas estudar na Rural não fez sentido não. Mas tudo bem porque a repórter gostosa foi embora logo depois e era certo que mais tarde a gente ia se acabar na punheta.

E como se não bastasse isso no dia seguinte que por acaso foi ontem a professora de português que disse dando esporro como sempre que se a gente não estudasse mais ninguém iria sair daquela situação e o Diguinho como sempre falando merda sem pensar debochado perguntou qual situação? A professora Edna falou pra caralho na cara de todo mundo meio esculachando meio dando conselho. Disse um monte de coisa e perguntou sobre o nosso futuro pra que se o Diguinho mandou que no futuro ia ser tudo igual por exemplo o Orelha ia continuar com a voz fininha e todo mundo riu eu também e ela ficou puta e falou mais ainda dessa vez pulando que nem um pastor tirando o diabo de fiel.

Então depois imaginei que a repórter deve ter pensado em algo tipo a professora Edna. Como a gente deixar de ser quem a gente é pra ser como aquela gente com grana que vai estudar na Rural. Mas essas ideias são até engraçadas de tão nada a ver.

E ontem de noite em casa a gente tava jantando galinha todo mundo feliz e eu aproveitei pra falar da reportagem e do que a professora Edna tinha dito na escola de a gente estudar pra melhorar de vida. Achei até que tava falando bonito porque estavam me escutando até que o meu pai deu uma gargalhada alta e eu ri também até que ele deu um porradão na mesa. Sério, meu ombro até encolheu de medo porque logo depois ele falou pra caralho também tipo

Porque eu dava sorte de estar estudando coisa que ele nem a minha mãe tiveram essa sorte mas não era pra ficar com essa mania de grandeza rei na barriga sonhando com vida de gente rica. Porque ele tava com a mão calejada de trabalhar na roça pra botar aquela comida ali dentro de casa e apontou pro meu prato. Que em mais algum tempo eu já teria que parar de estudar e dar a sorte do Índio me conseguir um trabalho por ali e que se foda se quem tá de fora diz que o Índio é miliciano e bandido e só gerencia terra de gente rica que nem vive por ali. Que essas duas mulheres a professora e a repórter tavam plantando ideia errada na minha cabeça porque eram mulheres e não sabem o que é ser um homem. E ficou falando mais umas coisas que não me lembro agora porque comecei a chorar.

Today, early before class I was too embarrassed to talk to Diguinho and Big Ear and Surubinha about what went down at home because I don't know if they would understand. Maybe Big Ear might understand because I know his dad drinks a lot and is always beating him and his mum but he doesn't talk about that and I think that's where his squeaky voice comes from. His large ear is natural, though, so I disagree with Diguinho there because when he grows up it'll be the right size. So you see not everything needs to be like we keep on repeating over and over.

Hoje cedo antes da aula fiquei com vergonha de falar pro Diguinho e pro Orelha e pro Surubinha o que tinha rolado lá em casa mas não sei se eles iam entender. Talvez o Orelha entendesse porque eu sei que o pai enche a cara e vive dando porrada nele e na mãe mas ele não fala sobre isso e acho que essa é a origem da voz fina dele. A orelha grande é da natureza mesmo mas nisso eu discordo do Diguinho pois vai que ele cresce e ela fica certa. Vai que nem tudo precisa ser como a gente vive repetindo.

(Rodrigues, Henrique. 'Verbos à flor da pele'. In *Contos para depois do ódio: Inspirados em canções de Marcelo Yuka*, edited by Ecio Salles and Julio Ludemir, 24–27. Rio de Janeiro: Mórula Editorial, Flup, 2020.)

The Coldness of the Scythe Explains a Mother's Cry, by Verônica de Souza Santos, translated by Andrew McDougall

I buried my son and, with him, my freedom, my dreams, his dreams. Dizziness. Again, the numerous questions that scramble my mind. It's not hunger. At least not hunger for food. I know the dizziness of hunger well, I experienced it in my childhood, and in exile, too. That's what my daughter calls the hellhole where I spent twelve years of my life. If that had been exile, like the exile of Gilberto Gil and others, I would doubtless be in a different situation now. But no. I survived every day. I endured pain, trauma is embedded in my soul. But nothing. Absolutely nothing makes me regret the reason that took me there. That judge who sentenced me will never understand that greater than the cruelty with which I did away with that man's life was the cruelty with which he ripped away my life's greatest possession. But it's impossible for her to understand. Complicity is in her skin. Stamped on her face.

Colder than that look as she read every word of the sentence was the coldness with which that man killed my son. A boy full of life who, in the face of every hardship, dreamed. Not my tears, on the only occasion I was beaten by his father. Nor the little food he managed to score at the back of the market and had to share with his siblings. Nor my noes stopping him from playing for half an hour on the favela streets. None of this stopped him from dreaming. He was always saying to me, 'our life is going to get better, *mãe*.'

He was happy, he had found a job at Mr Carlos' grocery store. When he wasn't drinking, the old dog was a good man. He brought my boy in to help him there. He was going to earn a little something which, with what I had, would make things a bit better.

He was excited. Every day after school, he came home, had lunch and ran off to the grocery. He stayed there until the end of the day.

A frieza da foice explica o choro de uma mãe, de Verônica de Souza Santos

Enterrei meu filho e junto com ele, minha liberdade, os meus sonhos, os seus sonhos. Tonturas. Novamente as múltiplas questões que embaralham a minha cabeça. Não é fome. Ao menos não a fome de comida. Sei bem como é a tontura da fome, vivi-a na infância e também no exílio. E assim que minha filha chama aquele fim de mundo onde passei doze anos de minha vida. Se aquilo lá fosse exílio, tal como o exílio de Gil e outros, eu teria sem dúvida alguma uma outra realidade hoje. Mas não! Sobrevivi cada dia. Amarguei dores, traumas estão cravados na minha alma. Mas nada. Absolutamente nada faz eu me arrepender do motivo que me levou para lá. Aquela juíza que me sentenciou jamais entendera que maior do que a crueldade com que eu dei cabo da vida daquele homem foi a crueldade com que ele arrancou da minha vida meu maior bem. Mas impossível ela entender. Está na pele dela a cumplicidade. Está estampada na cara dela.

Mais frio do que aquele olhar quando lia cada palavra da sentença foi a frieza com que aquele homem matou meu filho. Um garoto cheio de vida que, diante de todas as privações, sonhava. Nem o meu choro, na única vez em que fui agredida por seu pai. Nem a pouca comida que ele conseguia nos fundos da feira e que tinha que dividir com os irmãos. Nem os meus não impedindo-o de brincar meia hora no beco com as crianças da favela. Nada disso o impedia de sonhar. Ele me dizia o tempo inteiro: ‘Nossa vida vai melhorar, mãe.’

Ele estava feliz, tinha conseguido um trabalho na mercearia de seu Carlos. Quando não bebia, o veio era um bom homem. Chamou meu menino pra ajudar ele lá. Ia ganhar um troco que junto com o meu ia dar uma melhorada nas coisas.

Ele estava animado. Todos os dias após o colégio, vinha em casa, almoçava e ia correndo pra mercearia. Lá ficava até o fim do dia.

Around eight, when I got out the van, at the foot of the hill, he'd be waiting there to head up together. That day it was different, the favela was odd. The police were looking for a kid who was stealing in the surrounding areas. I called the grocery, I asked him to come home earlier. Mr Carlos was a step ahead. He had already closed the shop and was on his way up the road home. I got out the van. I put my foot on the ground, felt a pain in my chest. I needed air. I held onto the vehicle. My view darkened. My son. Something had happened to him. I felt a pang in my head. Stumbling, I went up the slope. I didn't have the strength. I tried to take a shortcut and that decision led me to the saddest scene of my life. I was in time to see him dragging my boy. By the feet. My voice failed me. It was dark, but I knew it was him. I didn't think. When he pushed my child's body down the slope, I saw the scythe. That bastard turned around and we were facing. We looked each other in the eyes and he threatened, 'you didn't see anything. It was an animal in distress and I dealt with it!' He was so startled, he forgot the scythe. The blow synchronised with the step he took past me. I shouted a variation on his phrase, scything his head, neck and chest, 'you didn't see anything. It was an animal who killed my son and I dealt with it!'

His blood sprayed. I went to look for my son. Two police officers brought the offender in handcuffs. My son was covered in blood. Neck severed, face disfigured. I only knew it was him because I'd witnessed it. But it served for nothing. My son's innocent life was worth less than that of the uniformed killer. I knew if he was alive, he would be absolved by the protection of the State. And so it was. I buried my son and, with him, my freedom, my dreams, his dreams.

Perto das oito, quando eu descia da van, na subida do morro, lá estava ele me esperando para subirmos juntos. Naquele dia foi diferente, a favela estava estranha. A polícia procurava um moleque que estava roubando nas redondezas. Liguei para a mercearia, pedi a ele que fosse pra casa mais cedo. Seu Carlos já tinha se antecipado. Ele fechou o negócio e subia já a rua de casa. Eu descia da van. Botei o pé no chão, uma dor no peito. Faltou ar. Segurei no carro. A vista escureceu. Meu filho. Alguma coisa tinha acontecido a ele. Senti uma pontada na cabeça. Cambaleando, subi a ladeira. Faltava força. Tentei encurtar o caminho e aquela decisão me levou para a cena mais triste da minha vida. Ainda tive tempo de vê-lo arrastar meu menino. Pelos pés. Faltou voz. Estava escuro, mas sabia que era ele. Não pensei. Quando ele empurrou o corpo da minha criança no barranco, eu vi a foice. Aquele canalha se virou e demos de cara. Olhamos nos olhos e ele ameaçou: 'Você não viu nada. Foi um animal agonizando e eu dei cabo!' Tão surpreso, esqueceu a foice. O golpe sincronizou o passo que ele deu além de mim. Vociferei de outra maneira a frase dele, foçando sua cabeça, pescoço e peito: 'Você não viu nada. Foi um animal que matou o meu filho e eu dei cabo!'

O sangue dele espirrou. Fui buscar o meu filho. Dois policiais traziam o contraventor algemado. Meu filho estava todo ensanguentado. Nuca perfurada, o rosto desfigurado. Só vi que era ele porque testemunhei. De nada adiantou. A vida inocente de meu filho valia menos que a do assassino de farda. Eu sabia que se ele ficasse vivo seria absolvido pela proteção do Estado. E assim foi. Enterrei meu filho e junto com ele, minha liberdade, os meus sonhos, os seus sonhos.

(Santos, Verônica de Souza. 'A frieza da foice explica o choro de uma mãe'. In *Carolinas: A nova geração de escritoras negras brasileiras*, edited by Julio Ludemir, 468–469. Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo, Flup, 2021.)

Cândido Abdellah Jr., by Cristiane Sobral, translated by Susana Fuentes

I was born in São Paulo, from father and mother unknown, was adopted at the age of three by a family that nourished me with material love and controversial kindness. ‘We took in your tiny body’, my parents used to say, and so I arrived at a spiritual home with four brothers, a mum and dad where they would drag out the Gospel and then argue until falling asleep.

Mondays were holy, days of prayers on autopilot, without any emotion. Praying over and over, they believed, would diminish the torment of our life together, and if we could just bear with one another, and hold on tight to each other until the end, our next lives would be better.

I can hardly remember moments of tenderness. I couldn’t really grasp what love was. The carers who helped to bring me up worked for money, and so did the other house employees, and teachers. I didn’t have a big family, and the few relatives I knew were actually not very nice, although they always had the right phrases.

Little by little I began to understand that love was not a text, a gift, a photo, but this alone was not enough to help me understand what it was. The so-called charity they talked about, this I understood well, but never managed to find in it any liberating truths.

But a word of caution, dear readers. No rush. We’re not going to choose religion as the protagonist yet, fundamentalism isn’t the issue here, but even so, please, I ask you not to leave this story before taking time to reflect on automatism, fear, and the load of guilt.

My family had wealth, no signs of financial distress at all. They had never had to struggle with that, not even close. Pantry and fridge essentials didn’t reflect the pleasure of eating, there was luxury without

Cândido Abdellah Jr., de Cristiane Sobral

Nasci em São Paulo, de pai e mãe desconhecidos, fui adotado aos três anos por uma família que amava com bens materiais e discutível bondade. Os meu pais costumavam dizer que acolheram meu corpo miúdo, cheguei em um lar com quatro irmãos, pai e mãe espíritas que faziam o evangelho e depois discutiam até dormir.

As segundas eram sagradas, dias de rezas automáticas, sem emoção. Eles faziam preces com a certeza de que diminuiriam o suplício da nossa vida juntos, acreditavam que teríamos outras vidas melhores se conseguíssemos suportar uns aos outros e ficar juntos até o fim.

Difícil lembrar de momentos de carinho, não entendia bem o que era o amor. As cuidadoras que ajudaram a me criar, trabalhavam por dinheiro, os demais funcionários da casa, os professores também. Eu não tinha uma família grande, e os poucos parentes que conheci não foram muito simpáticos, de fato, embora tivessem sempre as frases perfeitas.

Aos poucos fui entendendo que o amor não era um texto, um presente, uma foto, mas isso também não foi suficiente para me ajudar a entender o que era. A tal da caridade conhecida por meio deles, eu entendi bem, mas não consegui encontrar nela verdades libertadoras.

Mas atenção, queridos leitores. Sem precipitação. Não vamos escolher ainda como protagonista a religião, o fundamentalismo aqui não é o caso, mas ainda assim, por favor, eu peço que não saiam dessa história sem refletir sobre o automatismo, o medo e a culpa carregada.

A minha família tinha bens, nada de dificuldades financeiras. Nunca enfrentaram isso nem de longe. Geladeira e despensa composta por alimentos necessários sem o prazer de comer, havia luxo sem

enjoyment, a certain heartless benevolence. But they weren't really mean people, goodwill gestures did abound: convenient yet never internalised.

Little by little I realised that my parents should have had some preparation for adopting a black child, in order to know how to deal with racial matters. They do not consider me a black person, it was as if I was raised as the 'white child who is dark', a mere detail, because according to them we were all equal, we were all children of God. The family group did not even accept the existence of racism, they advocated above all the primacy of the Christian principle of equality.

When I experienced the first episodes of discrimination at school, at commercial establishments, and even at spiritualist meetings, nobody was prepared to help me deal with these conflicts, and the 'let it go' kind of thinking was never a solution to me. But what to expect from them, since they didn't even take the issue into account – most of the time they said I was too sensitive, that I had low self-esteem, maybe adoption trauma, because adopted children are likelier to be problem children, as common sense indicates. In the end, for them, I was always playing the victim and giving importance to situations that just didn't exist.

'It's all in your head!' Dad used to say. 'Just get over it, this feeling of rejection. We don't have weak people in this family, so it's really too bad, this inferiority complex of yours. We give you the best of everything, but it seems like, no matter what we do, it's never enough. Pray, pray to God, ask Him to forgive you. You know what this is? Ingratitude.'

My father was always agitated, but when he drank, he would have fits of rage and scold me with some unforgettable phrases:

'Today you are going to get a beating to learn how to be white. I'll beat you until you get rid of this black blood that is no good. A total blood transfusion, that's what you deserve.'

The first time I got beaten like that, dad came into my room without warning, I must have been 13, 14 years old, the whole thing was about a painting a friend gave me. I remember that I came home very happy and stuck the art piece on the wall, right next to my bed, a painting of Bob Marley! My father immediately suspected that I was smoking weed. I still tried to argue:

'Dad, do you know who Bob Marley was?'

He replied with hatred:

'You calling me ignorant? You stupid black-head!'

More beating.

gozo, certa benevolência sem coração. Também não era questão de maldade, abundavam sim, os gestos de uma boa vontade conveniente e não interiorizada.

Aos poucos fui percebendo que os meus pais deveriam ter sido preparados para adotar uma criança negra, de forma a saber lidar com as questões raciais. Eles não me consideraram uma pessoa negra, na minha vida, foi como se eu tivesse sido criado como ‘o filho branco que é escuro’, por apenas um detalhe, porque segundo eles todos éramos iguais, filhos de Deus. O grupo familiar nem ao menos aceitava a existência do racismo, defendiam acima de tudo a supremacia do princípio cristão da igualdade.

Quando vivi os primeiros episódios de discriminação na escola, nos estabelecimentos comerciais e até nas reuniões espíritas, ninguém estava preparado para me ajudar a lidar com esses confrontos, o tal deixa pra lá nunca foi solução pra mim. Mas o que esperar deles, já que nem consideravam a questão, na maioria das vezes diziam que eu era sensível demais, que tinha baixa autoestima, talvez trauma da adoção, porque filhos adotivos costumam ser problemáticos segundo o senso comum. No fim, pra eles eu estava sempre me vitimizando e dando importância a situações que pra eles não existiam.

O pai costumava dizer:

‘Isso não seria coisa da sua cabeça? Supere esse sentimento de rejeição, nossa família nunca teve gente fraca, esse seu complexo de inferioridade é péssimo, nós aqui damos tudo do bom e do melhor pra você, mas sempre tenho a sensação de que você nunca está satisfeito, por melhor que façamos. Reze, peça perdão a Deus. Sabe o que isso? É ingratidão.’

Meu pai sempre foi nervoso mas quando bebia tinha ataques de fúria e me repreendia com algumas frases inesquecíveis:

‘Hoje você vai apanhar pra aprender a ser branco. Vou bater até você botar pra fora esse sangue negro que não presta. Você merecia era uma transfusão total.’

A primeira vez que apanhei assim, o meu pai entrou no meu quarto sem avisar, eu devia ter uns 13, 14 anos, a questão toda foi por causa de um quadro que ganhei de uma amiga. Lembro que cheguei todo feliz e coleei na parede a obra, bem perto da minha cama, uma pintura de Bob Marley! Meu pai logo suspeitou que eu estivesse fumando maconha. Eu ainda tentei argumentar:

‘Pai, você sabe quem foi Bob Marley?’

Ele respondendo com ódio:

‘Tá querendo me chamar de ignorante, preto boçal?’

Mais surra.

Being smacked hurt, but so did the coldness and lack of physical contact. My father was the kind of person who would rarely touch me, on my birthdays I would get a few pats on the back, a dry, rocking hug seemed an inconvenience to the family, that's how they were with everyone. When I walked along the street and saw fathers and sons holding hands, or mothers and sons, I would rush to some hidden place, suffocated, heart pounding.

Without understanding why and feeling guilty, I would cry. I was already a grown-up man, but since I was a child I have cried a lot and in secret. Sometimes it was a weird, angry cry, because I didn't understand the reasons for my suffering, and I nor did I have anyone I could talk to and get it off my chest.

My mother was that kind: a shallow, rich, functional mother, who fed me and supplied my basic needs, but didn't seem to sincerely enjoy motherhood, and in my case, the black child, it seemed that my presence made her feel uncomfortable. Never was she affectionate.

I tried to talk to a priest once, at confession, but as soon as I started to speak the priest interrupted me:

'Be thankful for the opportunity of having a family, do you know how many people in this world wish that?'

Then I would feel terrible, guilt would wash over me and I'd hurry out of there devastated, feeling worse than before. But let's skip this part. I want to share a rather difficult moment in my life.

This is how it happened. One day, I entered the big house where I grew up through the front door: if the locks had been changed, I would just break in. I had the house keys since I had left to study medicine. I became a renowned neurosurgeon and was living on another continent, with the excuse of leading an independent life and facing the challenge of progress in different lands.

The truth is that I always felt suffocated in there. My parents were older now, two of their children still lived at home, I made sure that my nephews wouldn't be there, nor would my brothers and sisters-in-law. Earlier that same day, I called to see if everyone was fine, sent kisses and once again thanked them for everything they had given me, which was a standard phrase for a well-trained son to trot out on the right occasions and give their family such pride.

You already know I am black, but on that day, I dressed in deep black tones, on purpose. I had my hair braided, I loved to wear braids stuck to my head, in rows, something my parents had always criticised. It was time to kill my pain, burning and unbearable over the years, maybe I would even overcome my anxiety disorder, for I had always dealt with panic attacks, they were awful.

Apanhar doía, mas a frieza e a falta de contato físico também. O meu pai era do tipo que quase não me tocava, nos aniversários eu ganhava uns tapinhas nas costas, um abraço seco e balançado parecia ser um incômodo para família, era assim com todo mundo. Quando eu andava na rua e encontrava pai e filho de mãos dadas, ou mãe e filho, corria para algum lugar escondido, sufocado, o coração acelerava muito.

Sem perceber a razão e me sentindo culpado, chorava. Eu já era um homem, mas desde criança chorava muito e escondido. Às vezes era um pranto esquisito, raivoso, porque eu não entendia os porquês do meu sofrimento e também não tinha com quem desabafar.

Minha mãe era daquele tipo, mãe fútil, rica e funcional, me alimentava, supria as minhas necessidades básicas, mas não parecia sinceramente gostar da maternidade e no meu caso, o filho preto, parecia que a minha presença causava nela um certo incômodo. Nunca foi carinhosa.

Tentei falar com um padre uma época, indo ao confessionário, mas mal comecei a falar o padre interrompeu:

‘Agradeça pela oportunidade de ter uma família, sabe quantas pessoas nesse mundo desejariam isso?’

Aí eu ficava me sentindo péssimo, chegava a culpa e pronto, saía de lá arrasado, pior do que antes. Mas vamos pular essa parte. Quero compartilhar um momento bem complicado da minha vida.

Foi assim. Um dia, entrei na casa grande onde cresci pela porta da frente, se a fechadura tivesse mudado, arrombaria. Tinha a chave desde que parti para estudar medicina, me tornei um neurocirurgião renomado e vivia em outro continente, com a desculpa de uma vida independente e o desafio do progresso em outras terras.

A verdade é que ali dentro sempre me senti asfixiado. Meus pais já estavam mais velhos, dois filhos ainda viviam em casa, me assegurei de que meus sobrinhos não estariam, os irmãos e as cunhadas também não. Nesse mesmo dia, mais cedo, liguei para saber se todos estavam bem, mandei beijos e mais uma vez agradei por tudo o que me ofereceram, essa era uma frase padrão de um filho adestrado dizer nas ocasiões certas e dar o tal do orgulho para a família.

Vocês já sabem que eu sou negro, mas eu me vesti em tons negríssimos, propositalmente. Estava com o cabelo trançado, amava usar tranças grudadas na cabeça, corridas, coisa que meus pais sempre criticaram. Era chegada a hora de matar a minha dor, ardente, insuportável ao longo dos anos, talvez até melhorasse do transtorno de ansiedade, porque convivía sempre com crises de pânico, eram terríveis.

I never knew who I really was, the search was insatiable, it was then that I decided that perhaps if I committed a crime everything would become easier to understand. Already inside the house, I trembled as I went into that environment I knew so well. I immediately heard the phrases of a lifetime, many of them reinforced by my nannies, mainly by Dora, a black lady for whom I always had a lot of affection and who supported me in everything. Some other times I heard them as I listened behind closed doors. Anyway, the sentences came like small, well-aimed arrows, forcefully piercing my ears:

‘Do you want to take care of this boy, Dona Ruth? He’s only three years old. He was found wandering around the shopping street. He looks healthy. My God, just look at his little face, he looks like a little monkey, look at his arms, how long they are. When I took him home and washed him, I saw that his balls are dark, I had never seen that, even the palms of his hands are black, just imagine that! He’s gonna be a big boy, but make sure you want him, these black folks are often inclined towards the world of drugs and crime. But it always means a bonus with God, right?’

The mother-to-be didn’t hesitate.

‘Mine are already grown-up, so I need a new mission. For that very reason, we will make this child an example of how a life in the world of white folk can change a destiny.’

She talked to her husband, and they agreed: they would raise the boy in order to show that living among whites was the cure for the degradation of Blackness. Her patriarch, a doctor, was sheer ambition, and soon imagined himself getting to the top of his career, defending the thesis of interracial adoption in his Conferences, among other physicians, his colleagues, and friends.

On his list of hurtful thoughts, Cândido had some memorable lines. One of the hardest days was when his neighbour burst into the house with me, still a 12-or-13-year-old boy, fainted in his arms:

‘I’m sorry, Mr and Mrs Abdallah, forgive me, I apologise, from the bottom of my heart! A tragedy almost happened, this boy came into my yard all of a sudden – he was calling my son out to play with him, but as I didn’t recognise him straight away, I almost shot him, ‘but for the grace of God!’

At that time, nobody did anything. That was it. I even got a scolding.

Nunca soube quem eu realmente era, essa busca era insaciável, foi aí que decidi que talvez ao cometer um crime tudo pudesse ficar mais fácil de entender. Já dentro da casa, tremi só de entrar naquele ambiente tão conhecido. Imediatamente as frases de uma vida, muitas reforçadas pelas minhas babás, principalmente pela Dora, uma senhora negra por quem sempre tive muita afeição e que me apoiava em tudo. Outras vezes ouvi escutando atrás das portas. De qualquer jeito as frases chegavam como pequenas flechas certeiras, furavam com força os meus ouvidos:

‘Quer ficar com esse menino, Dona Ruth? Tem só três anos. Foi achado aí em frente ao comércio, perambulando. Parece saudável. Meu Deus, olha a carinha dele, parece um macaquinho, veja os braços como são compridos. Quando levei ele pra casa e dei banho, vi que tem o saco escuro, nunca tinha visto isso, até as palmas das mãos são negras, imagine! Vai dar um rapagão, mas veja bem se quer, esse povo preto tem tendências ao mundo do crime e drogas. Mas é sempre um bônus com Deus, né?’

A futura mãe não titubeou.

‘Os meus já estão crescidos, preciso de uma nova missão. Por isso mesmo, faremos dessa criança um exemplo de que uma vida no mundo dos brancos pode mudar um destino.’

Conversou com o esposo e concordaram: criariam o menino com o objetivo de mostrar que a convivência entre os brancos era a cura para a degradação da negritude. Seu patriarca, médico, era ambição pura, logo se imaginou alçando o topo da carreira, defendendo a tese da adoção inter-racial nos seus Congressos, entre os médicos, amigos de profissão.

Na lista de pensamentos doídos Cândido tinha frases memoráveis. Um dos dias mais duros foi quando o vizinho entrou comigo, ainda menino, 12, 13 anos, desmaiado nos braços:

‘Desculpem Sr. e Sra. Abdellah, me perdoem, de coração! Quase aconteceu uma tragédia, esse menino também entrou no meu quintal de repente, veio chamar o meu filho pra brincar, mas eu não reconheci direito e quase dei um tiro, foi Deus!’

Na ocasião, ninguém fez nada. Ficou por isso mesmo. Eu ainda levei bronca.

To be back into the house meant opening the memory box. I left the living room and went straight to my bedroom. The house seemed haunted, the only place where I could find peace used to be this room of my own, but at the same time that was the very spot where my father would beat me most often. I looked for traces of my blood on the walls, but, obviously, there weren't any. Of course, the room was intact: my parents liked to flaunt the room where they raised their black son who was successful in life, and who even became a neurosurgeon abroad. I noticed that something was missing: my Bob Marley picture. Inescapably, that was the trigger for my hatred to flare up.

My picture, where would it be? That was the only item that had been removed. In those surroundings Bob was my greatest reference, my black mirror, and something many people never knew, but that I learned between the lines of my medical studies: he was a virologist, at the core of his philosophy he believed he could heal hate and racism through music. If I had done no wrong before, it was because the person my parents hated the most saved me. Lying there on my bed, I thought about all of this, but I also had an insight:

Why had I accepted for myself this projection of a black man designed to live, to please and succeed in a society in which whites ruled over everything? Reading Malcolm X, the fierce defender of African American rights, Luiz Gama, the abolitionist, journalist and writer, Lélia Gonzalez, philosopher, professor, intellectual and anthropologist, among so many remarkable people, changed my life. And there I was, all prepared, after so long, for the moment of justice and reparation. Those who had shed blood would also bleed.

I was so tired and mentally exhausted by all those memories, that I quickly fell asleep, as I used to when I was on duty, it was a quick, almost instant sleep. Suddenly I found myself upright, with one of my golf sticks in my hand. For years I had played golf, to please my father and his friends, I had won many tournaments, I stuck to the script, to the desires and plans everyone had for a black guy.

I myself don't know how I got there so fast, but I soon found myself in my parents' bedroom, and I began to hit them furiously, gripping the golf club. That unexpected gesture brought me pleasure, an erection, and an immense joy that I had never felt in my life. I hit more and more, feeling neither tired nor wanting to stop. They slept in deep sleep, they remained as silent as I was supposed to be, every time I was beaten. Under those circumstances I no longer recognised my parents, only the scattered flesh and the spurting blood, as in the surgeries I was used to lead.

Estar novamente dentro da casa, era abrir essa caixa de lembranças. Saí da sala e fui direto para o meu quarto. A casa parecia mal-assombrada, o único lugar de paz costumava ser o meu quarto, mas também foi ali o lugar onde mais apanhei do meu pai. Procurei vestígios do meu sangue nas paredes, não havia, claro. O quarto estava intacto, lógico, os pais gostavam de ostentar o quarto onde criaram o filho negro que venceu na vida e virou até neurocirurgião no estrangeiro. Observei que algo não estava ali: o quadro do Bob Marley. Inevitavelmente aquele foi o gatilho para o meu ódio.

Onde estaria o meu quadro? Foi a única peça retirada. Bob era naquele ambiente a minha maior referência, o meu espelho negro, muitas pessoas nunca souberam e eu aprendi nas entrelinhas dos meus estudos médicos, ele era um virologista, com sua filosofia acreditava que poderia curar o ódio e o racismo com a música. Se eu não fiz nada de errado antes, aquele que meus pais mais odiavam me salvou. Ali deitado na minha cama, eu pensava em tudo isso, mas também atinei:

Por que me aceitei ser esse preto projetado para viver, agradar e vencer em uma sociedade onde os brancos dominavam tudo? Ler o aguerrido defensor dos direitos dos afro-americanos Malcolm X, o abolicionista, jornalista e escritor Luiz Gama, Lélia Gonzalez, filósofa, professora, intelectual e antropóloga, entre tantos notáveis, mudou a minha vida. Eu estava ali bem preparado, depois de tanto tempo, para a hora da justiça e da reparação. Quem fez sangrar também iria sangrar.

Estava tão cansado e exausto mentalmente com todas essas lembranças, que cochilei rapidamente, como fazia nos plantões, era um dormir rápido, quase instantâneo. De repente me vi de pé, com um dos meus tacos de golfe na mão. Durante anos pratiquei o esporte, para agradar o meu pai e os seus amigos, venci muitos torneios, cumpri direitinho a cartilha do preto desejado e planejado por todos.

Nem eu sei como cheguei tão rápido, mas logo me vi no quarto dos meus pais, quando comecei a bater neles com fúria segurando o taco de golfe. Aquele gesto inesperado me trouxe prazer, uma ereção e uma imensa alegria que eu nunca havia experimentado na vida. Bati mais, não senti cansaço algum nem desejo de parar. Eles dormiam em sono profundo, estavam em silêncio como eu tive que ficar todas vezes que apanhei. Diante da situação eu já não reconhecia meus pais, apenas a carne espalhada e o sangue jorrando, como nas cirurgias que eu fazia.

I thought: 'I'm going to make a pile of rotten meat out of them, like that meat at the butcher's.' I remembered there was one in the neighbourhood, I walked in once, and since that day I stopped eating corpses. Damned thought. I took a deep breath to reenergise and hit more, and more, I was breaking free and in deep ecstasy. I realised that by killing my parents, I was finally touching and being touched, I was reborn in an unexpected way. I liked detective movies, but I could never understand where the criminals' stood in relation to their crimes. Who were the murderers really trying to kill? I always thought that the difference between a psychopath and a person with a mental disorder and a functional life was, perhaps, love, because hatred and violence bore terrible fruit.

The next day, at home, the sun already on my face, I woke up late and rushed to the therapy session:

'Good afternoon, Dr Cândido, everything all right?'

'All right, Dr Gabriela, and you?'

'I noticed you were late today, that's rare. Is something wrong?'

'I'm sorry, it's because I woke up scared, oh my, I had a terrible nightmare, I don't know, kind of a vision, can we talk about it?'

'Yes, you can talk, you know the rules here, you can talk about anything you want.'

'You know Doctor, something very strange happened. All of a sudden, I woke up and I was home, and I felt free, as never before. I found myself in my parents' bedroom, but there was a scene there that would terrify anyone. There was a lot of blood and scattered pieces of bodies. I woke up feeling my heart tight, I was sweating a lot, I could hardly breathe. I even threw up.'

'What happened?'

'I don't know how I did it, but in that nightmare, I killed my parents and the worst thing is that I felt great pleasure in it, it's even difficult for me to talk about it.'

'May I interrupt you for a moment? First of all, I want to say it's fine, it's all right. You can breathe easy. I'm very proud of you, by the way, for a while now I've been conscious of the progress we're making here. Expressing anger, rage, and hatred, considering all you've been through, even in a bad dream, is a sign that you're getting closer to your inner self every day. I've never seen you like this!'

The session was over, I went home. Therapy happened every Tuesday at eight in the morning and it hadn't been easy for me to easily accept the contact with the therapist from the beginning, I found it odd to talk to her, a stranger, but ever since I was in my teens my family had insisted that I attended sessions for genetic reprogramming, and also as a way to avoid karmic failures from my black ancestors.

Pensei: vou fazer deles um monte de carne podre, como aquelas carnes dos açougues. Eu lembro que tinha um no bairro, uma vez entrei, desde aquele dia parei de comer cadáveres. Droga de pensamento. Respirei fundo pra tomar fôlego e bati mais, mais, eu estava me libertando e em profundo êxtase. Percebi que ao matar os meus pais, eu finalmente tocava e era tocado, renascia de um jeito inesperado. Eu gostava de filmes investigativos, mas nunca consegui entender o lugar dos criminosos em relação aos seus crimes. A quem os assassinos realmente tentavam matar? Sempre pensei que a diferença entre um psicopata e uma pessoa com doença mental e vida funcional talvez fosse o amor, porque o ódio e a violência geravam péssimos frutos.

Dia seguinte, na minha casa, sol já na cara, acordei atrasado e corri para a sessão de terapia:

‘Boa tarde, Dr. Cândido, tudo bem?’

‘Tudo bem, Dra. Gabriela, e com a senhora?’

‘Percebi que você atrasou hoje, isso é raro. Aconteceu alguma coisa?’

‘Desculpa é que eu acordei assustado, nossa, tive um pesadelo terrível, sei lá, uma visão, podemos falar sobre isso?’

‘Sim, você pode falar, sabe as regras daqui, pode falar sobre o que quiser.’

‘Sabe Dra., aconteceu uma situação muito estranha. De repente, eu acordei na minha casa e me senti livre, como nunca. Eu me vi no quarto dos meus pais, mas ali havia um cenário de aterrorizar qualquer um. Havia muito sangue e pedaços de corpos espalhados. Eu despertei com um aperto no coração, suave muito, quase não conseguia respirar. Cheguei a vomitar.’

‘O que aconteceu?’

‘Eu não sei como, mas nesse pesadelo matei meus pais e o pior é que senti muito prazer com isso, é até difícil falar.’

‘Posso te interromper um pouco? Primeiro quero dizer que está tudo bem, tá tudo certo. Pode respirar aliviado. Estou muito orgulhosa de você, aliás, faz tempo que estou percebendo como estamos avançando aqui. Expressar raiva, fúria e ódio, considerando tudo o que você passou, mesmo em um sonho ruim, é sinal de que você está cada dia mais perto de si mesmo. Eu nunca vi você assim!’

A sessão terminou, fui para casa. A terapia era sempre às terças às 8h, eu não aceitei com facilidade o contato com a terapeuta desde o início, achava estranho falar com um desconhecido, mas desde a adolescência a família fez questão de que eu frequentasse os atendimentos para reprogramação genética e também visando evitar fracassos cármicos dos meus antepassados pretos.

I must confess, in the beginning I was angry, how could she, a white therapist, understand my reality? As time went by, I even felt hate, the same self-hate that fed my daily actions. It took me a long time to realise how that was a sacred space and there I remained, because there everything was confidential and I could talk about any subject: I could feel anger, say whatever I wanted about anyone, even name racism and learn how to deal with its inevitable consequences, I could shout, laugh, weep, actions that I don't usually do in public and face the unthinkable: my own humanity.

Eu confesso, no início sentia raiva, como assim uma terapeuta branca iria entender a minha realidade? Com o tempo cheguei a sentir o ódio, o mesmo auto ódio que alimentava as minhas ações cotidianas. Demorei muito para perceber como aquele espaço era sagrado e continuei, porque ali havia sigilo e podia falar sobre qualquer assunto: podia sentir raiva, falar mal de quem quisesse, inclusive nomear o racismo e aprender como lidar com as suas consequências inevitáveis, eu podia gritar, rir, chorar, ações que não costuma fazer em público e enfrentar o impensado: a minha humanidade.

(Sobral, Cristiane. 'Cândido Abdellah Jr.'. In *Amar antes que amanheça: Contos*, 97–105. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Malê, 2021.)

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Biographies

Almiro Andrade is a Black queer Latinx actor, director, playwright, dramatist and theatre translator with a PhD on the translation of Brazilian contemporary drama from King's College London. Recent works include the first English translation of *Namibia, Não!* by Aldri Anuniação, a gender-bending adaptation of *The Blind One and The Mad One* by Cláudia Barral produced by Foreign Affairs Theatre and published by Inti Press in partnership with the Out of the Wings Collective. He translated three plays by Brazilian playwright Nelson Rodrigues, published in *Nelson Rodrigues's Selected Plays* (2019).

Sylvia Arcuri is a writer and Portuguese teacher for the Rio de Janeiro state school system. She has an MA and PhD in Hispano-American literature from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. In 2011, she completed the specialisation course in Ethnoracial Relations and Education at the Federal Center for Technological Education of Rio de Janeiro, with a monograph titled 'Agora também resta uma foto que o retratista deixou: mulheres negras sob o olhar, a lente e o foco de Ierê Ferreira'. Her short story 'Cortejo milenar' was published in *Contos para depois do ódio* (2020).

Márcio Barbosa was born and lives in São Paulo. He is one of the co-ordinators of Quilombhoje and co-organiser of the *Cadernos Negros* series. Márcio provided the interviews and texts for the book *Frente negra brasileira* (2020), in addition to conceiving of and being partly responsible for the documentary and book *Bailes – Soul, Samba-Rock, Hip Hop e Identidade em São Paulo* (2007). His short stories and poems have been published in *Cadernos Negros* and in several anthologies in Brazil and abroad. A contributor to *Raça* magazine, he was one of the editors of the books *The Afro-Brazilian Mind: Contemporary Afro-Brazilian Literary and Cultural Criticism* (2007) and *Cadernos Negros/Black Notebooks: the Contemporary Afro-Brazilian Literary Movement* (2008). He also edited the book *Jovem afro – antologia literária* (2017).

Christina Baum is a literary translator, teacher and writer. She has translated over 20 books, including *Pulse* by Julian Barnes, *Beasts of*

No Nation by Uzodinma Iweala and *We Should All Be Feminists* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. She has nine years' experience in running international literary festivals. A Faber Academy alumnus, she holds a BA and an MFA in creative writing from Birkbeck, University of London, where she is studying for a PhD. She has just finished her non-fiction book *English and I: A Life Translated* – a memoir driven by and through language. She lives in London.

Juliana Berlim was born in Rio de Janeiro and has a BA in Portuguese and German from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and a BA in Portuguese and French from the State University of Rio de Janeiro. She has an MA in Literature from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ, 2006) and is a member of the teaching staff at Colégio Dom Pedro. She is the coordinator of the project for young researchers titled *Neuromancers*, which won the Paulo Freire Award in 2019. She has published her short stories and poems in several anthologies, including *Contos para depois do ódio* (2020) and *Poetas negras brasileiras* (2021).

Faed Breno is an actor and a playwright. He was born and raised in Jacarezinho, a favela in Rio de Janeiro. He graduated from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro in Performing Arts and, together with three other friends from university, founded the production house Café Na Sala Produções. In 2020, he published *Crônicas sobre ela* (2020), which is his first dramatic work.

Evandro Luiz da Conceição is a journalist, writer, screenwriter and MA student in communication and cultural studies at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. As a writer, he has participated in several workshops at Flup and has published his short stories in many short fiction anthologies. He participated in the 2017 and 2018 editions of the Black Narratives Laboratory for the Audiovisual Arts, a joint initiative by Flup, the Ford Foundation and TV Globo.

Eliana Alves Cruz is a writer and journalist with an MA in Business Communication. She is an audiovisual content researcher for TV Globo and a columnist for the University of London's website. She is the author of three award-winning novels and a children's book, and her short stories and poems have featured in 14 anthologies. Her debut novel *Água de barrela* won the 2015 Oliveira Silveira Award. Her second novel *O crime do cais do Valongo* was selected by *O Globo* as one of the

best novels published in 2018 and was shortlisted in the 2019 Oceanos Award. She published her first children's book, *A copa frondosa da árvore*, in 2019.

Cuti (the pseudonym of Luiz Silva) is a writer with an MA and PhD in Brazilian literature from the University of Campinas. He was one of the founding members of Quilombhoje (from 1983 to 1984) and one of the creators of the journal *Cadernos Negros*, contributing poems and short stories to 41 of its 42 issues from 1978 to 2019. He has published 22 books of short stories, poetry, essays and plays. He has also co-authored five books and one CD of poems, in addition to other works published in various anthologies in Brazil and abroad. His website is www.cuti.com.br.

Augusto Dias is a Brazilian poet and short-story writer. He was born in São Gonçalo and lives in the Rio de Janeiro suburb of Méier. He holds an MA in Brazilian Literature from Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro. His books include *A última noite* (2006) and *Anotações para depois do temporal* (2015). His works have featured in the Flup anthologies *Seis temas à procura de um poema* (2017) and *Contos para depois do ódio* (2020).

Paulo Dutra, a *Don Quijote* aficionado, is a side effect of a self-legitimised system of privileged cultural representation that drove him to become a non-traditional university student, short story addict, poet and teacher/scholar in order to escape making a living that could easily be accomplished by machines. He is a professor at the University of New Mexico and the author of the short story collection *Aversão oficial: resumida* (2018), the poetry collection *abliterações* (2019), which was a semi-finalist for the *Prêmio Oceanos* in 2020, and contributed poems to two editions of *Cadernos Negros*.

Conceição Evaristo is the author of seven books, among which is winner of the 2015 Jabuti prize for best short story anthology *Olhos d'água*. She also won the Government of Minas Gerais Award for her complete works, the Nicolás Guillén Prize for Literature awarded by the Caribbean Philosophical Association and the Master of the Peripheries Award awarded by Instituto Maria e João Aleixo. Her works have been translated into English, French, Spanish and Arabic. She was the guest of honour in several Brazilian and international literary fairs. Her books are widely read in Brazilian state schools, thanks to the federal government's National School Book Programme.

Susana Fuentes is a researcher, writer, translator and performer. She has an MA in Brazilian literature and a PhD in comparative literature from the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). She is a member of the Centre for Intercultural Studies of Escritório Modelo de Tradução Ana Cristina César at UERJ and a postdoctoral fellow there. Her publications include the peer-reviewed article 'Pushkin and Machado, Being Black, Ways of Listening to the Other' (2020) and the novel *Luzia* (2011, Prêmio São Paulo de Literatura finalist). Her translations into English include poems by Wolf Hogenkamp, Hazel Brugger, Zak'Olili and D'de Kabal for the Rio Poetry Slam (2014).

Laura Garmeson is a writer and translator from Portuguese and French. Her work has appeared in the *Financial Times*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, *Asymptote* and *The Economist*, among other publications. Her co-translation of the novel *Out of Earth* by Sheyla Smanioto was shortlisted for the Republic of Consciousness Prize 2024.

Geni Guimarães, teacher, poet and fictionist, was born in the municipality of São Manoel, São Paulo, on 8 September 1947. In 1979, she published her first book of poetry, *Terceiro filho*. In 1981, she published two short stories in *Cadernos Negros*, issue 4, as well as her second book of poetry. In 1988, she participated in the Nestlé Biennial Award for Brazilian Literature, dedicated to the centenary of the abolition of slavery. The same year, the Nestlé Foundation published her short story collection *Leite do peito*.

Denise Homem is a journalist from Rio de Janeiro and a supporter of the football team Flamengo and the Salgueiro samba school. A voracious and compulsive reader, she has always dreamed of becoming a professional writer, despite the barriers imposed by her poor background and the Brazilian publishing market. Despite this long struggle, she never gave up until Flup opened its doors for her.

Emyr Humphreys is a freelance translator from Portuguese and into Welsh. After graduating from the University of Liverpool with a degree in Latin American studies, he spent three years living and working in Porto Alegre, Brazil. He returned to the United Kingdom to study for an MA in Translation Studies at UCL, researching contemporary Brazilian literature in translation and graduating with a distinction. His most recent published translations include a chapter by Portuguese author Rui Zink for the *Bode Inspiratório/Escape Goat* project and a translation of

Nara Vidal's short story 'Letícia's Marriage' for the journal *Latin American Literature Today*. He lives and works in mid-Wales.

Márcio Januário is a multimedia artist born in Morro do Alto da Serra, Petrópolis, in 1964. He has participated in a number of theatre, dance, musical, commercial, cinema and television shows. In 2006, he founded the theatre company Cia Completa Mente Solta, of which he is the director to date. In 2006, he was awarded the fifth Petrópolis Theatre Exhibition prize with the essay 'Tratado do Vão Combate'. In 2012, he was selected to participate in the book *Flupp Pensa, 43 Novos Autores*. Since then, he has actively participated in all Flup activities and editions. He has been performing the monologue *Canções de Amor de Uma Bicha Velha* since 2020.

Ana Paula Lisboa is the eldest of four siblings to Black parents. She was born and grew up in a favela in Rio de Janeiro and currently lives between Rio de Janeiro and Luanda, where she directs the Aláfia and Casa Rede Arts centres. She started writing when she was 14 and has published short stories and poetry in Brazil and abroad. She defines herself as a textual artist, using the written and spoken word on different platforms to promote Black narratives and language throughout the world. She contributes regularly to *Cabeça de Sardinha*, a supplement to the *O Globo* newspaper.

Elisa Lucinda is a poet, actress, singer, journalist and teacher. She has published 19 books, including the poetry books *O semelhante* (1995), *Eu te amo e suas estreias* (1999) and *A fúria da beleza* (2006) as well as the novel *Fernando Pessoa, o cavaleiro de nada* (2014), which was shortlisted in the São Paulo Literature Award in 2015. She is also the author of several children's books and is responsible for projects that aim to popularise poetry among young people.

Julio Ludemir is a writer, journalist and cultural producer. He has had 10 books published, including *No coração do comando* (2002), *Sorria, você está na Rocinha* (2004), *Rim por rim* (2008, a finalist in the Jabuti Prize) and *Mais um pai* (2019). He is the director of Flup, a literary festival based in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, which won the London Book Fair's Excellence Awards in 2016. He has edited several Flup book anthologies with Ecio Salles, including *Eu me chamo Rio* (2015), *Conta forte, conta alto* (2018) and *Contos para depois do ódio* (2020).

Geovani Martins was born in Bangu, a neighbourhood in the west of Rio de Janeiro. Debuting at Flup in 2013, his first book *O sol na cabeça* was published by Companhia das Letras in 2018. The anthology of short stories won the Rio Literature Award and was shortlisted for the Jabuti Award in 2019. The book has been translated into several languages, with film and television rights having been sold.

Andrew McDougall was born in Glasgow and studied Portuguese and English literature at the University of Edinburgh. He has also lived in Sussex, Lisbon, Coimbra, Logroño, Vitoria-Gasteiz and Norwich, where he completed an MA in Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia. His work has included co-translating a book by José Eduardo Agualusa and translating a chapter by Ana Cristina Silva as part of the Escape Goat project, on which he also collaborated as an editor. Other published translations include short fiction by Clodie Vasli, Decio Zylbersztajn and Gabriela Ruivo Trindade. He translates from Portuguese, Spanish and Catalan.

Victor Meadowcroft grew up at the foot of the Sintra Mountains in Portugal and translates from Portuguese and Spanish. His translations have appeared in journals such as *Latin American Literature Today*, *Manoa: A Pacific Journal of International Writing* and *Qorpus*. He is currently working with Anne McLean on a translation of Colombian author Evelio Rosero's novella *Señor que no conoce la luna*. He is one of the 2021 PEN Translates award-winners, with a translation of Ecuadorian Natalia Garcia Freire's debut novel *Nuestra piel muerta* for Oneworld Publications.

Isabel Moura Mendes is a multilingual Portuguese-Cape Verdean creative and cultural manager specialising in the cross between the performing arts and film. Her professional activities have centred around arts, cultural project management and the promotion of artistic exchange, as well as film curation with a focus on Lusophone and African cinema. With a background in journalism and media studies, Isabel has collaborated with various multidisciplinary art forms, film training and international arts partnership programmes across the United States, Brazil, Europe and the African continent. After working with the Edinburgh Festivals and British Council for the past decade, in early 2021 Isabel took on the role of Centre Director Dance Base, Scotland.

Natara Ney is the director of Arrudeia Filmes, Rio de Janeiro. She has a BA in journalism from the Catholic University of Pernambuco and has completed many screenwriting and filmmaking courses. She wrote and directed the award-winning short film *Um Outro Ensaio* (2010) and produced scripts for many documentaries, such as *O Mistério do Samba* (2008) and *A Última Abolição* (2018). In 2020, she participated in the Flup Lab *Narrativas Curtas*, having had her short story ‘Cabresto’ published in the anthology *Carolinas: A nova geração de escritoras negras brasileiras* (2021). She debuted her feature-length film *Espero que Esta te Encontre e que Estejas Bem* in 2020.

Patrícia Alves Santos Oliveira was born in Guiratinga, in the interior of Mato Grosso, in 1986. Her first contact with literature was through the oral narratives told by her Bahia-born grandmother. Facing the forms of oppression she went through as a poor, Black, rural woman, she graduated in English in 2007 and completed her MA in Education in 2020 at the Federal University of Mato Grosso, which enabled her to qualify as a teacher for the Mato Grosso state educational system. She has published her short stories in many anthologies, including *Carolinas: A nova geração de escritoras negras brasileiras* (2021).

Esmeralda Ribeiro is from São Paulo. She is a writer, a researcher in Black literature and a retired journalist. She takes part in the Quilombhoje Literatura collective and Flores de Baobá (Black writers), and is responsible for editing the *Cadernos Negros* series. Throughout her career, she has encouraged the participation of Black women in literature. She is the author of the short story collection *Malungos e milongas* (1988) and the children’s book *Orukomi – Meu Nome* (2007) both published by Quilombhoje. In addition to *Cadernos Negros*, her works have featured in anthologies in Brazil and abroad, including *Mulherio das Letras*, *Coleção de mão em mão* and *Olhos de azeviche* (short stories).

Felipe Fanuel Xavier Rodrigues is Assistant Professor of English at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). He teaches literature, translation and languages. He holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). He was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Dartmouth College (2014–2015). He was the 2016–2017 FAPERJ Nota 10 Postdoctoral Fellow in Literature at UERJ. His work focuses on the intersections of race, gender and religion in African and Afro-diasporic literatures. He has translated creative and

academic texts from Portuguese into English, including poems for Flup, scientific books for FAPERJ and Niyi Afolabi's *Carnaval é política: o Ilê Aiyê e a reinvenção da África* (2020).

Henrique Rodrigues was born in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, in 1975. He has a BA in Literature and a post-graduate diploma in Cultural Journalism, both from the State University of Rio de Janeiro, and an MA and a PhD in Literature from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio). He works as the coordinator of projects to develop reading and promote the circulation of literature in Brazil. He has worked as pedagogical coordinator of the project Oi Kabum! School of Art and Technology, pedagogical superintendent of the Rio de Janeiro State Department of Education, researcher for the UNESCO Chair in Reading at PUC-Rio, literature tutor, video rental store salesperson and café attendant. He is the author of 17 books, including poetry, short stories, novels, children's books and books for young readers.

Natalie Russo is a first-generation graduate of BA Spanish and Portuguese (UCL, 2020) with a year abroad in Mexico and Brazil. She loves all artistic expression and has the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro Performing Arts course to thank for that. Her first work included translating the poems of artist 2z for the 2020 slam competition at Flup and Juliana Diniz's short story *Perpétua* (2021). She participated in the Bristol Translates Literary Translation Summer School as a 2021 scholarship recipient.

Maria Aparecida Andrade Salgueiro is a Full Professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). She completed her post-doctoral studies at UCL in 2008 and was a Visiting International Scholar at the African and African American Studies Program, Dartmouth College (winter terms 2010–2015) and Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the University of Houston (spring term 2020), in the United States. She is the general coordinator of Escritório Modelo de Tradução Ana Cristina César, UERJ. She has published widely on contemporary African American, Afro-Brazilian women writers, comparative literature and intercultural translation. Her publications include *Escritoras negras contemporâneas: estudo de narrativas – Estados Unidos e Brasil* (2004) and *Estudos da Tradução em foco* (2021).

Verônica de Souza Santos is the mother of João Victor and Flor de Maria. A Black woman, and Candomblé follower from Salvador, Bahia,

she is an activist for the Black and social movements, member of the Universal Zulu Nation hip hop school and member of the Porto Seguro Academy of Letters. She works in social movements and has been a teacher for over ten years. Her fictional work has featured in *Carolinas: A nova geração de escritoras negras brasileiras* (2021).

Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva is Associate Professor in Brazilian Studies at UCL. She has a degree in Portuguese (1995) from the University of Campinas and a DPhil in Brazilian literature (2007) from the University of Oxford. Her publications include the books *Machado de Assis' Philosopher or Dog: From Serial to Book Form* (2010; published in Portuguese as *Machado de Assis: Do folhetim ao livro*, 2015) and *Comparative Perspectives on the Rise of Brazilian Novel* (2020, with Sandra Vasconcelos). She leads the CNPq Universal research project Women in the Brazilian Press (with Tania Regina de Luca) and is the coordinator of the SELCS Brazilian Translation Club.

Ricardo Silveira is an English teacher, translator and interpreter with more than 40 years of experience. He holds a BA in architecture and urbanism from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (1980) and has been teaching English to Brazilian students since 1981. He has translated over 200 literary and scientific books, articles and commercial materials. He officially started working as an interpreter during the RIO-92 Conference, as chief interpreter for the Future Forum, and has since provided his professional services to many corporations as well as governmental and non-governmental organisations, including congresses and a very broad range of meetings.

Cristiane Sobral is a multidisciplinary artist who writes fiction, performs and teaches theatre. She holds a BA in theatre and an MA in the arts from the University of Brasília. She has published ten books including *Amar antes que amanheça* (2021). In 2020, she founded the publishing house Aldeia de Palavras alongside a creative writing and literature course, which resulted in the publication of the anthology of short stories *Águas D'Ilê*, and the bilingual Portuguese-Creole anthology of poems by Sao Tomean authors entitled *Ilha de Palavras*. In 2019, she gave lectures on literature in nine American universities. In 2020, Sobral was a judge for the Jabuti Literature Award in the short story category.

Elton Uliana is a Brazilian writer, literary critic and translator living in London. He has a BA (Honours) degree in English Literature from Birkbeck

College, University of London and master's degree in Translation Studies from University College London (UCL). His published work includes stories by Conceição Evaristo, Carolina Maria de Jesus, Alê Motta and Carla Bessa (*Daughters of Latin America: An International Anthology of Words and Writing by Daughters of Latin America*) and essays by Manuel Querino, Mário Barata and Odorico Tavares (*Art in Translation*), as well as stories by Mário Araújo (*Asymptote*), Ana Maria Machado (*Alchemy*), Jacques Fux (*128 Lit, The Fern Review, Tablet*), Carla Bessa (*Your Impossible Voice, Asymptote, Oxford Anthology of Translation*), Sergio Tavares (*Qorpus*) and Alê Motta (*Latin American Literature Today*).

Literature and Translation

'*Contemporary Afro-Brazilian Short Fiction* highlights generational voices spanning from the Quilombhoje literary movement to newly published authors. This bilingual anthology promises to be an asset to the ever-growing Afro-Brazilian literary canon. The gift to scholars and enthusiasts of Afro-Diaspora literature is the access to brilliantly rich creative works.'

Antonio D. Tillis, Rutgers University-Camden

'This collection showcases the most compelling Black prose penned in contemporary Brazil bringing together a remarkable convergence of generations in a bilingual anthology. Each story is imbued with Black consciousness, transformed into the art of words, offering a powerful portrayal of both present-day and historical Brazil.'

Eduardo de Assis Duarte, Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG)


Although Brazil is the largest Afro-descendant country outside of Africa, the literature produced by Black Brazilians is mostly unknown both in Brazil and abroad. There is a growing worldwide demand for Afro-descendant literature and a demand for decolonial practices and content, especially within Lusophone literature and literature across the Americas.

Contemporary Afro-Brazilian Short Fiction emerges from a UCL-sponsored collaborative translation project, bridging Afro-Brazilian literature with a global audience to respond to the worldwide call for Afro-diasporic narratives. This unique compilation of 21 short stories includes both established and emerging Afro-Brazilian voices. The anthology is bilingual, fostering cross-cultural understanding and affirming the legitimacy of *português* as a literary language. The texts are presented with three insightful contributions by Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva (UCL), Julio Ludemir (Flup) and Maria Aparecida Andrade Salgueiro (UERJ). The introductions not only contextualise the short stories, but also engage in theoretical debates, shedding light on the role of literary translation in language teaching and the impact of the Literary Festival of the Peripheries (Flup) in forming a new generation of Black Brazilian writers.

Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva is Associate Professor of Brazilian Studies, at University College London (UCL).

Julio Ludemir is a published author, journalist and the CEO of the Literary Festival of the Peripheries (Flup).

Maria Aparecida Andrade Salgueiro is Full Professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) and researcher 1D at CNPq and FAPERJ.

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