



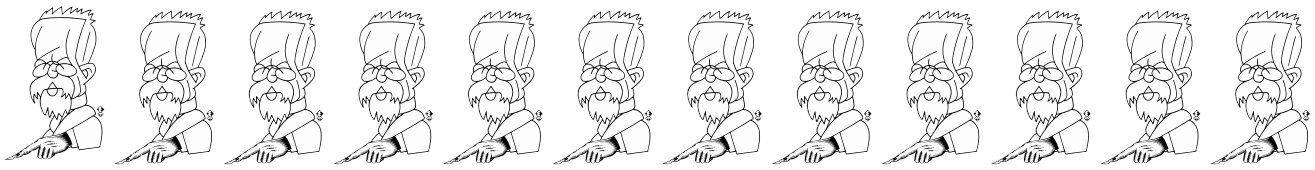
# MACHADO DE ASSIS MAGAZINE

BRAZILIAN **LITERATURE** IN TRANSLATION

**#4**



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**BRAZILIAN LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION  
LITERATURA BRASILEÑA EN TRADUCCIÓN**

**#4**

SÃO PAULO  
2013



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**REVISTA MACHADO DE ASSIS - LITERATURA BRASILEÑA TRADUCIDA Año 1 – Número 4**

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# THE VIGOR OF TRANSLATION

**W**ith the release of this fourth issue, *Machado de Assis Magazine – Brazilian Literature in Translation* offers a broad panorama of contemporary output from some of Brazil's finest writers. The publication showcases excerpts from important books by both emerging and established writers, selected by its editorial committee, and, beginning with this issue, also includes works of non-fiction.

All issues – with texts in English, Spanish and occasionally other languages – can be freely accessed through the magazine's portal. With this, over the course of its first year the magazine has worked continuously to increase the visibility of a literary tradition marked by a diversity of genre, style and subject matter.

The magazine, however, not only promotes the work of Brazilian writers, but also of everyone involved in taking Brazilian books to the world, especially translators and literary agents. It is often the suggestions and encouragement of these professionals, who know the international publishing industry well, that result in our literature becoming available in translation.

This new issue presents 18 writers, four of them in Spanish. Like in previous issues, the texts deal with a range of subject matters. Some pose psychological and philosophical dilemmas, while others delve into difficult historical subjects, such as Brazil's last military dictatorship (1964-1985). But above all, it shows a literature that is unshackled, unafraid to invent its own worlds, connected to life in Brazil or not, demonstrating its creative, cosmopolitan vigor.

**Renato Lessa**

President of the National Library Foundation

# EL VIGOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN

**C**on el lanzamiento del cuarto número de la *Revista Machado de Assis - Literatura Brasileña en Traducción*, la publicación, en la suma de sus ediciones, ofrece amplio panorama de la producción contemporánea de algunos de los principales autores del país. La revista trae a público trechos de libros representativos tanto de la nueva como de la consagrada literatura brasileña, seleccionados por su Consejo Editorial, con la inclusión, a partir de este número, de obras de no ficción.

Los textos de todos los números - en inglés, español y eventualmente en otras lenguas - están disponibles en internet, en la página de la publicación, de libre acceso. Así, la Revista, en este primer año, contribuye de modo continuo para la visibilidad de una literatura marcada por la diversidad de géneros, estilos y temáticas.

Sin embargo, la publicación promueve no tan solo el trabajo de los autores, sino de todos los involucrados en la difusión internacional del libro brasileño, en particular de los traductores y los agentes literarios. Parten muchas veces de esos profesionales, conocedores de la edición internacional, sugerencias e incentivos para que el escritor brasileño tenga confianza en la traducción de sus libros.

En esta nueva edición, participan dieciocho autores, cuatro de ellos con trechos en español. Como en los números anteriores, se trata de un conjunto de textos con universos distintos. Algunos presentan dilemas de fondo psicológico y filosófico; otros avanzan en temas históricos difíciles, como el de la dictadura militar (1964-1985). Pero, sobre todo, se trata de una literatura libre, que no se intimida en inventar sus propios mundos, conectados o no a la vida brasileña, demostrando un creativo vigor cosmopolita.

**Renato Lessa**

Presidente de la Fundación Biblioteca Nacional



# ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

**M***achado de Assis Magazine – Brazilian Literature in Translation* is an initiative of Brazil's National Library Foundation (FBN), in conjunction with Itaú Cultural, Ministry of External Relations and São Paulo State Press. The rules and conditions of the publication are set forth in the new public notice regarding the institution's co-editions, published in May 2012.

Our objective is to provide the international publishing industry with access to translated texts by Brazilian writers in an effort to boost their visibility abroad and foster the sale of foreign rights to their work. Periodically, the FBN posts calls in its portal for Brazilian authors to submit excerpts of works of Brazilian fiction and poetry, with the condition that they have already been published in book form in Brazil. Each edition presents twenty new translations, chosen by the magazine's editorial board, which is nominated by the president of the FBN.

*Machado de Assis Magazine – Brazilian Literature in Translation* also hopes to offer a panorama of Brazil's most recent literary production, by both experienced and up-and-coming writers. Authors, editors, scouts and literary agents may download texts from the online edition, along with information about the different writers and right holders.

The online edition will be issued quarterly, and there will be two print editions a year. To meet the needs of specific sectors of the industry, some of these editions will be organized around themes, showcasing Brazilian literature in genres such as children's literature, young adult fiction and poetry.

The links to press reviews and personal webpages were provided by, and are the responsibility of, the authors or their agents.

# SOBRE LA REVISTA

**M**achado de Assis Magazine - Literatura Brasileña en Traducción es una iniciativa de la Fundación Biblioteca Nacional, con la coedición de Itaú Cultural, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Brasil y Prensa Oficial del Estado de São Paulo. La publicación se realiza con base en nuevo bando de coediciones de la institución, lanzado en mayo de 2012.

El objetivo de la revista es divulgar en el mercado editorial internacional textos traducidos de autores brasileños. Periodicamente se hacen convocatorias en el portal de FBN para que autores brasileños inscriban trozos de obras de ficción brasileña o de poesía, desde que esos textos ya tengan sido publicados en libro en el Brasil. Cada edición presenta veinte nuevas traducciones seleccionados por el Consejo editorial de la revista, indicado por el presidente de FBN. De esta forma, la revista se suma a otras iniciativas de la Fundación Biblioteca Nacional de apoyo a la difusión de la literatura brasileña, como el programa de becas de traducción, el programa de residencia en Brasil para traductores y el apoyo a las publicaciones hechas en los países de habla portuguesa.

Es también objetivo de la *Machado de Assis Magazine - Literatura Brasileira em Traducción* ofrecer un panorama de las más recientes creaciones literarias de autores brasileños, tanto de autores con mayor experiencia cuanto de integrantes de las nuevas generaciones. Su edición online permite que autores, editores, scouts y agentes internacionales hagan el download de cada texto, con las respectivas informaciones sobre los autores y detenedores de derechos.

La periodicidad de la publicación es trimestral en sus ediciones online, y habrá dos ediciones impresas por año. Para atender a las necesidades de segmentos específicos del mercado editorial, algunas ediciones serán temáticas, mostrando al mercado internacional la producción brasileña en géneros como la literatura para niños y jóvenes, y poesía.

Los links para reseñas y las páginas web personales fueron enviados por los autores o sus agentes y son de entera responsabilidad.

# A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

**M***achado de Assis Magazine - Brazilian Literature in Translation* has arrived at its fourth issue. This is an important landmark for the publication - an initiative of the Brazilian National Library Foundation and the Itaú Cultural Institute, partnering with the Ministry of External Relations and with the São Paulo State Press in its printed editions - for two reasons.

Firstly, because this fourth issue marks our first year of existence.

Secondly, because we are publishing non-fiction for the first time. The showcasing of works that interpret Brazil's reality and deserve to be within reach of international readers is fully justified in a magazine of literature in translation.

The kind of essay presented in this issue is aimed at the trade sector of the publishing industry. Brazil's increasing participation in international affairs has also piqued interest in this type of publication.

*Machado de Assis Magazine* has had a positive first year, helping boost the visibility of Brazilian writers internationally. Writers, agents and editors have received requests for further information regarding authors whose work has been excerpted here and have begun negotiating the rights to publish their work abroad.

Every issue of *Machado de Assis Magazine* is available online in PDF and can be downloaded in its entirety or on a text-by-text basis.

# EDITORIAL

**M***achado de Assis Magazine - Literatura Brasileña en Traducción* llega a su cuarto número. Es un hito importante para la publicación, una edición conjunta entre Fundación Biblioteca Nacional y el Instituto Itaú Cultural, en asociación con el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y con la Prensa Oficial del Estado de S. Paulo en las ediciones impresas, por dos motivos.

El primero es que, con el número cuatro, cumple su primer año de vida.

El segundo que, por primera vez, *Machado de Assis Magazine* publica textos de no-ficción. La inclusión de ese tipo de textos en la revista de literatura en traducción se justifica ampliamente por la posibilidad de presentar al mercado internacional algunos trabajos de interpretación de la realidad brasileña que merecen estar al alcance de los lectores internacionales.

El segmento trade del mercado editorial internacional abriga el tipo de ensayo que ofrecemos en este número. La creciente participación brasileña en los asuntos internacionales provoca también el aumento del interés por esas publicaciones.

La experiencia del primer año de vida da *Machado de Assis Magazine* viene demostrando su contribución para que los autores brasileños tengan mayor presencia en el escenario internacional. Autores, agentes y editores han recibido pedidos de información, e iniciado negociaciones para edición en el exterior de autores que tuvieron sus textos aquí publicados.

Como siempre, los interesados podrán hacer el download, en PDF, tanto del contenido completo de todos los números de *Machado de Assis Magazine*, como de los textos e informaciones sobre cada uno de los autores presentes.

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# ENGLISH

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Eliane Brum

Elvira Vigna

Ivone Benedetti

José Luiz Passos

Julio Ludemir

Lourenço Mutarelli

Luiz Eduardo Soares

Marcelo Mirisola

Sandra Reimão

Santiago Nazarian

Sérgio Rodrigues

Wesley Peres

# ON THE ART OF TRAPS

ANA MARTINS MARQUES

Translated by Julia Sanches

## Chair

I.

Daily  
you repeat  
the gestures  
of the first man  
who sat here  
on a warm afternoon  
watching the savannah

II.

Perch  
for gigantic weary  
birds.

## Hutch

It stores  
and displays  
the white  
nudity  
of dishes  
the uneven  
burning  
of crystals.

## **Sprinkler**

Forgotten  
in a corner of the garden  
ready, erect, the sprinkler  
points at the sun

tangled on the inside  
flowers, fast or slow,  
flower  
and finish.

## **Cliffs**

Today was  
a clear day  
we walked and ate  
in silence

we searched for the highest point  
of the city and talked  
about the house  
that will never be built

we talked about that house  
rooted in the cliffs  
yawning towards  
the screaming sea

we talked  
about that house,  
less likely everyday,  
where neither of us will be

we walked back in silence  
and I thought of those creatures  
that only mate  
with great difficulty.

## The discovery of the world

I try to reach you  
with words  
with words  
to know you

like one  
who with a lamp and a map  
hopes to undertake  
the discovery of the world

I get up  
I am alone in the dark  
with both feet  
on the cold cement

(where are you  
in what I wrote?)

## Photograph

I framed  
a photo of you  
here in this living room:  
sitting in the red  
armchair  
you look up from your book  
as if caught unaware

At that time of day  
when the light slants  
and the colors  
fall into themselves  
you look  
like yourself.



## **Cinema**

On the street we found  
a row of chairs  
from an old cinema  
we took them home  
set them on the porch  
and spent all afternoon  
drinking and smoking  
watching just another day go by

## **Shipwreck**

From inside the night  
the city  
ejects automobiles  
sirens restless dogs  
precocious roosters

in the distance  
full of plants that are stones  
that are flowers that are bugs  
the sea batters  
the shore

around the bed  
as around a ship split in two  
our clothes our cigarettes  
our books drown  
themselves in air

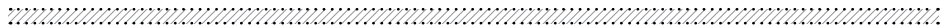
## To a passerby

You are  
what goes  
by  
and leaves  
a trace  
the place  
magnetized  
by the fact  
that you  
were  
in it.

## Us

And here  
we are  
me  
pronoun  
you  
pronoun  
instead  
of us

(burning  
I search for your body  
but find only words:  
these)



## THE BOOK



### On the art of traps

Ana Martins Marques

- **Original title:** Da arte das armadilhas
- **ISBN:** 9788535919646
- **Year of Publication:** 2011
- **Original Publisher:** Companhia das Letras
- **Number of pages:** 88
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 2.000 copies

### SYNOPSIS

Second anthology of poetry by the Belo Horizonte-born writer Ana Martins Marques.

### AWARDS

Prêmio Alphonsus de Guimaraens

### PRESS REVIEWS

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrada/1001408-leia-entrevista-com-poeta-ana-martins-marques-que-lanca-2-livro.shtml>

<http://bravonline.abril.com.br/materia/ana-martins-marques-nossa-aposta>

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## THE AUTHOR



FOTO RODRIGO VALENTE

### Ana Martins Marques

- **Pen name:** Ana Martins Marques
- **Other books:**

### Poetry

A Vida Submarina, Belo Horizonte, Scriptum, 2009.

## THE TRANSLATOR

### Julia Sanches

Julia Sanches is Brazilian by birth. She has lived in New York, Mexico City, Lausanne, Edinburgh, and Barcelona. She obtained her undergraduate degree in Philosophy and English Literature from the University of Edinburgh and a master in Comparative Literature and Literary Translation from Universitat Pompeu Fabra. She was runner-up in MPT's poetry translation competition, winner of the SAND translation competition, and has translated work from the Spanish that has been published in Suelta. She works as a freelance translator, a private teacher of English and Portuguese, and a reader for Random House Mondadori as well as being assistant editor at Asymptote. She is currently learning her sixth language and living in her sixth country.

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# IN EUFRASIA'S WORD

CLAUDIA LAGE

Translated by Alison Entrekin

I

It's funny how life brings people together. Or people's stories. I wasn't paying the slightest attention to the conversation. You know when someone starts talking in front of you and you sit there thinking about other things, watching their mouth opening and closing, opening and closing, without taking in a word, a sentence? That's the state I was in. They started talking about death. And whenever people talk about death around me, that's what happens. I go into a stupor, a kind of lethargy. I just don't want to hear it. I risked it once, and opening my ears to death was like raising my face before looking to see what was coming. I could get an enormous slap square across my cheek. Or maybe I'd get my cheek square across a slap? Who knows what's in store for us when we don't know what's in store. They say it's the reminder that life is mortal that's terrifying. That must be it. It must be an unconscious reaction or something. I'm not sure. All I know is that an alarm sounds in my mind, and off it goes. Where to, not even I can predict. But I get an odd, almost urgent need to occupy myself with living things. My eyes seek everything that breathes. People, flowers, animals. Especially flowers and animals, which live in a spontaneous, almost unconscious state. It gives them a vibration without thought. A throbbing of existence. When there are only people around me, like then, I look around expectantly for gazes, colors, movements that contain in themselves a flower's opening, an animal's hunger. How enchanted I am by this state, almost pure. A purity made of blood and earth, which for me is the purest. Yes, the sort that isn't clean. It's what connects me like a paw full of claws to the consistency of everything that vibrates. I become impregnated. As the mouth opened and closed saying this and that about death, coffin, cemetery, wow, I breathed in the air and aroma of every perfume. What's more, I tried to go beyond the balsam to get to the raw smell of people. I imagined their bodies without clothes on. And it wasn't sex, but the absence of modesty that interested me. As the mouth closed and opened: coffin, wake, cemetery — I touched my skin, which was warm. I felt my hairs, goose bumps. The sharp blades of my fingernails. Life tugged at me with a feline-like elasticity. It wrapped me in its concrete wings. Yes, life is concrete. That's the thought I always want to carry, like a hope. I want to think living things, no matter how small. The sensation of the skin, the pores. Someone next to me was drinking juice and I imagined the taste of the fruit. Liquid mixing with tongue. I drifted further and further away from what was being said. Everyday things started invading my mind. I've always harbored the suspicion that the most vivid of things are the ones that occupy us daily. That was when I thought about the ants. It's almost pathetic



to allow myself to get caught up in something so tiny. But lately they've been a constant presence in my days. It started with one or two that I absent-mindedly noticed in the kitchen sink. I watched their miniscule scurrying as they noticed my gigantic presence. But I'm incapable of brutality. I let them multiply. One or two became a hundred, five hundred, a thousand. They're everywhere. I often find them on my body. Even so, I've never lifted a finger in violence. I have too much respect for delicate things. But visitors make remarks. People think it's strange. The truth is simple: I like animals. Big, small, it doesn't matter, I like them. Sometimes more than people. That's what I was thinking when out of the blue I heard the word ant, of all words, and realized it hadn't come from inside my head, but outside. It was as if something had clicked in me, forcing me to listen to the conversation. I looked at the people as if I was seeing them for the first time. Suddenly the mouth wasn't talking about death anymore. Now it was telling a story that had to do with ants. I thought the coincidence was amazing. The person was talking about the little critters exactly as I was thinking about them. This simultaneity was, for me, an open window to infinity. Coincidences have always terrified me. And terror has always fascinated me. Maybe for that reason, or some other obscure impulse, it struck me that there must be something in the story that I needed to know. I started listening, absorbed. Just as death had taken me far away, the ants had brought me back. It's funny, really, very funny how life brings people together.

## II

**S**he was a woman of eighty, or almost. She lived alone in a huge house. One of those 19th-century type buildings. Just thinking about it gives me goose bumps. Living in a house bur-dened with so many years. If it were today, it'd be two centuries, but the ants episode took place in the early 20th century. There were, thus, one hundred years of solid memory in the walls. Of voices and silences that had traversed each chamber, each room. Like I said, she was about eighty, give or take a few years. And it was at this age that she moved through the house, taking with her every one of those years. The lighter ones, the heavier ones. The entirety of her life marked on every piece of furniture, every wall, as it was on every part of her body, every furrow of her skin.

One day she was going down the long corridor that led to the kitchen. She must have been lost in thought, her gaze more inward, or focused on other times, because she was walking along without seeing things, without really looking where she was going. She was more focused on her own line of thought, which hovered there, like a ghost. Then, suddenly, something in her surroundings caught her eye. She turned, slowly, and found her father's firm, tender gaze. The impression was so strong that she steadied herself on the wall so she wouldn't fall. Her father, before her, looked much younger than she did herself, his own daughter. While she was mulling over eight decades, he was a man of few wrinkles.

And he was staring at her deeply, as he always had. She felt as if she could reach out and touch him. Her fingers moved slightly, tenderly. She saw herself as a young woman, her father in front of her, talking about business, books. The image was so real that it took her a while to understand that it wasn't really him she was seeing, but his portrait. By the time she understood it was already too late. At her ripe old age, she felt like a little girl waiting for her father's embrace. She gazed at the picture on the wall. But it wasn't the picture that she saw: it was the person.

That day the servants had thoroughly cleaned the drawing room, a part of the house she rarely visited, and had taken down all of the pictures to clean the walls. It had completely slipped her mind. And coming across him like that, without warning, brought a strange feeling: her memories no longer came from the past but surged through her as if they belonged to the present.

Yes, it really was her father calling her, at the other end of the corridor, and she was going to him. It was he who was complimenting her on her dress and stroking her face. She closed her eyes. Her skin, smooth again, received his caress. He asked about everything she had wished for and achieved in life, his voice deep and solid. And she, young as the day she had buried him, opened and closed her lips, yearning to reveal and omit everything she had done since his death, over fifty years earlier. Yes, it had been more than fifty years since she'd seen him. An eternity. Her mother too, since they had died very close to one another, in the space of a year. Two eternities, then. She opened her eyes, almost as if she wasn't really opening them. And she saw, her vision limpid, the wall, not as it was, completely white, but as it had been, with decorative paint and wallpaper imported from France. She then heard the slave women chattering in the kitchen, peeling vegetables, stirring pots. Sounds from another era, another time, but which reached her unfalteringly, as everything that is real reaches us. She also heard her mother's voice, checking to see how the food was coming along, if dessert was done. She felt an urge to run to her, brimming with tenderness. Her body even tilted forward in space, her mouth a whisper, mother. But she found herself before the white wall once again. And so much whiteness disoriented her, as it also does with reality.

It was only then that she realized that her mother's portrait wasn't next to her father's, as always. She looked for it, unable to understand how they weren't together. But suddenly, she heard her soft, almost singsong voice again in the kitchen. And the aroma of the food washed over her. And once more the French wallpaper. The tiniest details of the painting. The bright, vivid colors. Then, without blinking, she saw her father alone again. The missing portrait. And the abruptly white wall. She ran her hand over its pallid surface, feeling the texture of the paint. She stared into the empty space, thinking that perhaps the image was there. Perhaps the exact vision of what she really saw or felt was there. She travelled the length of the corridor, turning here and there, in a fluster. And it was exactly at that instant, searching for the portrait as one might a person, that she saw the ants.

If there had just been one or two maybe they wouldn't even have caught her eye. But she had come across an enormous trail on the white background, silently

and quickly, towards the kitchen. For a few moments she just stared at them. Suspended, as if her mind had been sucked from one sphere and thrown brutally into another. Her feet suddenly firmly entrenched in the earth, while the rest of her body was still struggling to catch its balance. While her eyes pierced the wall like fingers digging into the cement. She gazed at the ants and there was no doubt about it: they were ants. There are realities that, at times, are not deceptive. Yes, there it was, concreteness. She slowly walked back to see where the Indian file ended. And she realized that it didn't end. It ran down the corridors, from the library to the study, from one room to another. She followed them, amazed. And suddenly so devoid of past. No future, no nothing. Just that moment. That great silence of ants marching across the wall. Her body, made of so many years, suddenly bore a single instant. That one. And an instant like that one was light, with the minimal density of an ant.

When she got to the back yard she found the point at which they converged, forming their trail. They gathered there, coming from different places, in small groups. A short distance away, a tall negro, her employee of many years, was tending the garden and came over when he saw her staring at the ground. In turn, the sight of the man's large, heavy feet terrified her. Careful, Ramiro, she said, not to step on the ants. He looked down at his own feet, smiling. Come now, there are so many that if I were to watch my every step there'd be no ground left to walk on. She smiled too, but stayed alert. She asked if he knew where the ant nest was. He said he did, and that it wasn't just one, but several, scattered throughout the yard. And he quickly added that he had the poison to put an end to them once and for all; that he'd already tried alcohol, kerosene, but nothing had made any difference. They were strong little critters. A shiver ran down her spine. No, Ramiro, I don't want you to kill the ants. He didn't understand. But, ma'am, they're everywhere already, the yard's not enough for them. They're in the kitchen, the rooms, even the ballroom, I saw them the other day, they're very cheeky, they are. She looked at the ground. There they were, scurrying back and forth, tiny, like an instant. No, Ramiro, she repeated. What harm can they do? she argued. She answered herself, none at all. Ah, that's where you're mistaken, ma'am. They take dirt into the house, they walk on the food, clothes, leave their mess. She shrugged. That's an exaggeration. I've always heard that ants are clean. She argued knowing there was little she could say. The most sensible thing was to exterminate the nests for once and for all. But she didn't want to. She loved watching the way they marched over the earth, with so much tenacity and delicacy. Ramiro scratched his shiny face, looking from his employer to the ants, from the ants to his employer. Let them live, she said finally, in a definitive tone of voice. Yes, ma'am, he stammered and went back to the garden, perplexed.

She turned and went into the house, taking her own perplexity with her. She returned to the ant trail, observing their patience, their organization. They weren't afraid, nor did they interrupt their routine because of her enormous, silent presence. Nothing made them stray from their determined path. Focused only on what they were doing, one thing at a time. One instant at each instant. It must be a life without memory, she thought. And she hurried to the kitchen, where she crumbled a piece

of bread, making little piles here and there, as if they had fallen there by accident. She didn't want them to suspect she had left them there on purpose. They might not appreciate finding so easily what they had been looking for with such calculated, precise effort. As she crumbled the bread, she did only that. And she found herself light. Her mind occupied with her hands and fingers. A whole, solitary instant, without the burden of any other instant, no other decade inside it.

She waited anxiously for the first ants to arrive. She tried to act natural, as if she'd gone there to drink a glass of water, or to get something, a jar, a cup, a plate. She finally decided to just wait. She could barely contain herself when she saw them approaching. She thought that her enormous, unmoving presence must look like a frightened statue. They split into groups, climbing the table leg. Some headed for the sugar bowl, while others crossed the distance to the little piles of crumbs. She kept her eyes wide open so she wouldn't make the mistake of blinking and miss a movement. This is what she saw: first the ants split up, undoing their organization, each going its own way, from one crumb to the next. Then each chose its favorite, hoisted it onto its back and headed off in single file to meet the others. Along the way, they met up with the group from the sugar bowl, reorganized their line and began their trip back.

Sitting firm and erect on a chair in the kitchen, or in the living room or back yard, she spent hours, her curious and admiring gaze following the miniscule movement of each ant, and the enormity of them all. The servants avoided bringing it up in front of her, but looked on in dismay as the house transformed, little by little, into an enormous ant nest. The walls, immense white canvases, were painted with dark images that formed and drifted apart before they could divine, as they did with the clouds in the sky, whether they had the shape of an animal, object or person. There were also times that, instead of following them all around, she'd just stay in one room of the house. She seemed so calm, reading a book, listening to music, engrossed in little things, while all around her the legion of ants also occupied themselves so calmly with their tiny chores. An incomprehensible sight for the servants and rare visitors, but perfectly fine by she who had always thought, ever since she had crawled on those very same floors of that very same house, that nothing living should die for any other reason but the death of itself, because it had run out of life.

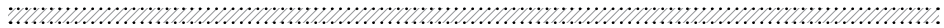
Ramiro found it hard to accept, but his employer's tone had been definitive. Let them live, she had said. And he did, but it wasn't easy. They multiplied, because there were always some crumbs of this or that in the kitchen and at the back door, every morning and every afternoon. And the little devils showed up at exactly the right time, as if they had wristwatches and appointments.

Worse, however, was when she decided to wait for them in the back yard. She'd get all anxious, as if it was a very important matter. Her eyes sparkled — and he hadn't seen his employer's eyes light up like that for a long time — but for such a silly reason, he thought. When the crafty little things finally arrived, she'd follow them through the house.

On a few occasions he could swear he'd seen her, a woman who'd spent her life reading, travelling and doing business, I kid you not, chatting with the ants. He'd

already seen her talking to dogs and cats as one might speak to people. But to those teensy creatures, he thought it really strange. One day, not only was she talking, but she also seemed to be explaining why she left the crumbs so far away, in the kitchen, instead of just leaving them in the yard, much closer to the ants' nest. It was so they wouldn't lose their hard-working nature, she said; they'd have too much time on their hands if they had nothing to do, and that wasn't good. At other times, Ramiro saw her in the backyard, going to see the ants smiling and full of cheer, as if she was going to meet friends. Before, in spite of her elegant, slender body, she had appeared to be carrying an enormous weight. And before, in spite of the good weather, she had almost never left the house, as if she was still in mid-winter in Europe, where she had lived for many years. After the ants, she became intimate once again with the ground, the yard and the good weather of her land. She'd just dally there, between the trees and flowers, nattering with the ants and turning her face up to catch the sunlight better.

It was as if she had regained the distance laid down by the years. As if all the fight and repose in her had finally struck a balance and she could finally breathe, without a Europe weighing on her chest, without a Brazil curving her shoulders. A Brazil that wasn't that of her childhood or youth, but the distant country of her decades abroad, known only in her absence. Now, it was as if time was going back in time, until it became no time. Just the earth under her feet. Just her feet recognizing the earth. Just the ants and that tiny instant, free of all of life.



## THE BOOK



### In Eufrásia's world

Claudia Lage

- **Original title:** Mundos de Eufrásia
- **ISBN:** 978-85-01-08335-7
- **Year of Publication:** 2009
- **Original Publisher:** Editora Record
- **Number of pages:** 418
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 8.140 copies

### SYNOPSIS

The novel In Eufrásia's Worlds is about the lives and love story of two great Brazilians, the idealistic abolitionist Joaquim Nabuco and the millionaire businesswoman Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, against the backdrop of Brazil's late-19th and early-20th-century cultural and socio-economic transformations. Eufrásia Teixeira Leite was a woman ahead of her time. Unlike most girls at nineteenth century, she was brought up by her father to be the heir and manager of his immense fortune. After his death, she takes over the family business and surprises everyone with her talent to both administrate and multiply her fortune, guaranteeing her economical independence when Brazil was still under imperial regime. However, her sister never allowed her to forget the promise she made to her father on his deathbed - she promised him she would never marry. This was a high price

Eufrásia had to pay, which condemned her love story with Joaquim Nabuco. Even so, Eufrásia wanted them to marry and sign an antenuptial agreement setting out the terms of possession of their assets, as in Brazil at that time women's assets were automatically transferred to their husbands once they married. But Nabuco felt extremely offended by this suggestion and never accepted it. Their romance lasted 15 years, nonetheless. They never married, and after their final break-up Eufrásia led a lonely and reserved life. She passed away in 1928, leaving all her fortune to her hometown, Vassouras, recommending that hospitals and schools were built with the money.

### AWARDS

Prize finalist Prêmio São Paulo literatura 2010 - Best novel - Newcomer author

### PRESS REVIEWS

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[http://canastradecontos.blogspot.com.br/2009/09/pilulas-dos-cadernos-literarios-5\\_13.html](http://canastradecontos.blogspot.com.br/2009/09/pilulas-dos-cadernos-literarios-5_13.html)

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• **Pen name:** Claudia Lage

• **Other books:**

- 1) A pequena morte e outras naturezas [The Little Death and Other States of Nature], Record, 2000. - 3.000 copies
- 2) Labirinto da palavra, [labyrinth of word] Record, 2013. -5.000 copies

#### **Short stories**

**Feito tatuagem**, in Recontando Machado. Rio de Janeiro. Ed. Record. 2008

**Uma Alegria**, em 25 Mulheres que estão fazendo a nova literatura, Rio de Janeiro. Ed. Record. 2004.

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**Estilhaços**, em Todos os sentidos . Rio de Janeiro. Cl. edições Autorais. 2003.

• **Awards:**

Rio Arte Stanislaw Ponte Preta short story competition. 1996. Best Shortstory A hora do galo. 1996. Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil.

Radio França Internacional Guimarães Rosa short story award. 2001.

Best Shortstory Uma alegria. 2001. Paris. França.

Prize finalist São Paulo literatura award - Best novel - Newcomer author. 2010. Mundos de Eufrásia. 2009. São Paulo. SP. Brasil.

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# ONE TWO

ELIANE BRUM

Translated by Alison Entrekin

## 01

**M**y arm's laughter. Blood oozing through my arm's mouth. How many times have I cut myself? And my mother's voice on the other side of the door. Laura. I slash another mouth. My blood sprinkles on the bedroom floor together with her voice. Laura. My mother has always been like this. She always knows what I'm doing.

I start writing this book while my mother tries to break down the door with her old-woman's nails. Because it's too much reality for reality. I need a chance. I want a chance. So does she.

When I write the first word there is still blood on the teeth of my arm's mouth. All of my arm's mouths. After the first word I don't cut myself anymore. Now I am fiction. I can exist as fiction.

This is the story. And this is what happened. At least for me.

## 02

**I** think these metaphors of yours are rubbish! Her boss yells at her, outraged by the metaphor resting on the sheet of paper. She looks at him with eyes wide with hurt. She notices that he has a blue tail. Blue and phosphorescent. And it isn't a metaphor. It really is a tail, reptilian. Slimy and slippery. There, three adjectives in a row for the boss's lack of substantive. At the very second in which revulsion rises in her throat she hears the siren. Insistent. They've discovered the boss is a blue lizard. She feels pleasure in the form of sweet vomit. The siren gets louder and louder. She wakes up.

On the bedside table inherited from the grandmother she never met, the phone rings. What time is it? Light is coming through the holes in the Persian blinds of the bedroom. The lock says 8.43 in the morning. She answers. The voice on the other end is a woman's. Who is it? She hates it when people call asking her to identify herself. The cheek. Who do you want to speak to? she says. The voice, or the voice's breathing, huffs and puffs. Is that Maria Lúcia's daughter? That's not the credential she usually uses to introduce herself. But it's her. You need to come to your mother's flat now. Who is this crazy woman waking her up with orders over the phone? I'm sorry, could you repeat that? Your mother isn't well, we can't open the door. Who's speaking? It's Alzira, from the spiritualist centre. Are you in my mother's flat? I came here because Maria Lúcia hasn't shown up for a long time and we got worried, but I can't get in. Your mother won't open the door. She can't.



The condominium manager has called fire and rescue, but if you have the key it'll be quicker. And we think you should be here anyway. You're her only daughter. Her mind still insists on retaining the blue image of her lizard boss, but reality shakes her with a greater insanity. She can understand a boss with a tail, but not that phone call. I'm on my way, she says. And she lets the phone slide from her hands. It dangles there like a hanged man. A woman. She'd like to hang Alzira-from-the-spiritualist-centre, perturbing her with her unavoidable reality. Why can't it be the opposite? Her lizard boss real and her mother locked in her flat a nightmare from which she can always be woken up by light coming through the holes in the Persian blinds? Damn life, damn mother, damn woman-from-the-spiritualist-centre. Damn people who meddle in other people's lives. What's this Alzira doing at her mother's door anyway? And how did she get her phone number? Where's the damn dratted key to her mother's flat? She's had the key stashed away for so long without ever having needed it because she always rings the doorbell to get into her mother's flat. She doesn't want any surprises when she goes in there. She still remembers her mother handing her the key to have in the event of an emergency or if she needed to spend a few days there. And her telling her mother that she doesn't want the key, she doesn't want any key that takes her inside her mother. And finally, indifferently stuffing the key in her pocket, ignoring her mother's made up hurt, and then tossing it in some deep corner, where? She tips out the contents of the bedside table drawer on the bed. Condoms, probably past their use-by date, a red lipstick, really red, but broken, so that's where that silver earring she thought she'd lost got to, a ticket to a play that made an impression on her, a man on the parapet of a bridge, a woman, a soggy chocolate bonbon, rubbish rubbish rubbish. The key is nowhere to be seen. She wants to tell busy-body-Alzira-from-the-spiritualist-centre that she doesn't have a key, to figure out for herself the problem of the door that her mother doesn't want to or can't open, that she has to be somewhere, that she needs to work and take care of herself instead of worrying about the crazy ideas of that mother who insists on hanging around when she doesn't want her anymore, that mother who pretends it's not too late for them. But that dratted-busy-body-Alzira-from-the-spiritualist-centre didn't leave her phone number, and she refused the telephone operator's caller ID service because she thinks it's an outrage that they want to charge her for something that should be free.

She doesn't shower. She pulls on last night's clothes smelling of cigarettes and applies lip-coloured lipstick without brushing her teeth. She catches a taxi on the corner and gives the driver her mother's address. Now that the blue-tailed boss is only the memory of another life, she feels a tightening in her intestine, which is anger toward her mother and apprehension for her mother. That mother who insists on continuing to exist as a reality for her. Even more alive because she hates and loves that mother with the same intensity, although she only tries to hate her. What is her mother up to now? What's all this about not opening the door? If she's playing the victim she won't stop by to see her even at Christmas. She wants to hurt her mother with her nails until she sees her bleed, she wants to break a nail on her

mother's bone. Then she feels remorse, the dratted remorse that always comes like an uncomfortable feeling in her stomach. Her gastritis has a name, surname and was once called womb.

The driver has forgotten to turn on the taximeter. The old trick. She throws a 20-real note at him and doesn't wait for the change. It's close, after all, her mother's place. Too close, too far. She gets a fright. What's all that commotion out front there? The filming of a sensationalist TV program? Fire and rescue, military police, an ambulance. Where's the helicopter? If her mother isn't dead she is going to kill her for exposing her like that, she who slinks through the corners of her tiny world, of her tiny organized world that she has managed to build in spite of her mother. The old doorman is already waiting at the gate, worried. They're all there, they're going to break down the door. She takes the stairs to the sixth floor, running. Her heart gets out of tune from exhaustion, from the effort and the feelings she doesn't want. She needs to start back at the gym if she wants to keep taking the stairs after 40. There's a crowd in the entry hall that her mother shares with a neighbour. What's going on, she asks. Everyone looks at her. I'm her daughter. And she doesn't like the confession or the witness-for-the-prosecution stares. What do they know about her, after all, deceived by that smooth-as-arsenic old lady?

When was the last time you saw her?

What kind of question is that? I think I spoke to my mother on the phone three or four weeks ago, maybe more. You think? They don't pay her any more attention after a look of mutual understanding. She hates looks of mutual understanding. Now she is the ungrateful daughter. They've already judged her and found her guilty, and now they ignore her. Maria Lúcia, yells the one who must be the now accusing-busy-body-Alzira-from-the-spiritualist-centre, with her mouth almost glued to the door. She hears the panting on the other side almost like a silence. And the voice that can't be her mother's, that she doesn't recognise as her mother's, but is. Laura, is that you? Dratted mother, exposing her like that, revealing her to all those dratted people who don't know how much trouble that mother has caused her. And the noise of the door giving way under the strength of the biceps and triceps of the young fireman who would never consider shagging her because he's disgusted by her because she's a bitch for not wanting to know how her mother is for she doesn't even know how long. How can he know that she isn't a bitch at all, that she doesn't want to be a daughter and that that mother doesn't want to be a mother and why does she care what the clichéd fireman thinks anyway? Why is it that all firemen are clichés of firemen? Are they already clichés before they become firemen or do they become clichés in order to become firemen? The noise is an explosion now, and she feels her bones stick to the peeling grey wall, the mould cramming itself through her nostrils and embracing her lungs with claws she knows she can't escape.

The door is open. She is slow to understand that the door is open. Where is her mother? She can't see. Something brushes her right shin almost imperceptibly. Her mother. The mound of flesh on the ground is her mother. When the recognition reaches her brain like one of those bullets that splinter into millions of shards on

impact, she screams. And for an instant she is at the bottom of the pool screaming in the silence as the water fills her lungs and takes her somewhere without suffering. And her mother pulling her to the surface by her hair because she will never let her leave. The pain stinging in her lungs now and the salt of her tears mixing with the chlorine streaming from her eyes. And she is there again, at the surface, breathing in spasms in the most complete silence because words have always been so insufficient for her pain that she doesn't even bother looking for them. This time, however, it is her voice that screams at the sight of the mound of flesh at her feet. The scream trapped there is finally released. And she thinks that the scream will never end, that the scream is forever, a scream for all of life and beyond life. Because now she has arrived at horror in its entirety. And screams are things that don't become words, words that cannot be said. There is no escaping her mother's flesh. The womb is forever.

### 03

**T**hat's not what I dreamed of writing. Books have always been the window through which I escaped this mother who now, as I write with my blood dripping, lies in wait for me behind the door. I've been like this since I was a child; when I open a book I am no longer here. It's not a metaphor for me. Maybe my lizard-tailed boss is right. I don't know how to create metaphors because I don't understand metaphors. I take everything literally. Like my arms embroidered with scars from all my attempts to separate myself from my mother's body. For me there has never been an umbilical cord that could be cut. Just the pain of being mixed up with my mother's body, being my mother's flesh. This ritual that now drips from me like a failure. One more. I cut and I cut and I still don't know I exist. I still don't have a body. And she's out there, afraid I'll leave, pretending she doesn't know that I can't leave. I've never been able to. Because I drag her body around with me; her body that engulfs and swallows me.

But I diverge.

I've always been afraid to write. Of the moment of making my blood a symbol of blood. I was afraid because of the unknown pain which might come, which I could almost touch as a certainty. Even though I bleed with blood, this ritual I know. It makes of me the little I have of me. It's a constitution. I constitute myself through the cuts in myself. Not words. What will they make of me?

Will words kill me? The question that envelops me like a blanket of fear as my mother keeps watch over me from behind the door is if there is life after words. Or life without blood. I'm betting all my chips on it now. I write in the hope that words may free me from blood. From my mother's body. But what if there is no me beyond this mixture of flesh of mother and daughter? I feel myself slide into the black hole of her body, where I am blind and my knife is poised in the air.

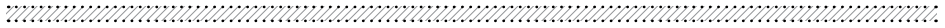
I hear her laboured breathing behind the door. I know she wants me to hear her. I wonder if she knows that I'm killing her? Not like the other times, but once and for all? A death beyond death?

But I diverge.

What perturbs me now is less dense. I don't write as I'd like to. The sentences that come out of me have no quality. Do they contain at least one truth? If I am nothing but this tortured body that isn't even possession, but extension, what do I have to say that is mine? The words that slither out of me like fat blood worms make me suspect that there isn't a subject who speaks, there isn't a self. So, who speaks? Whose are the words that make me uncomfortable?

I hear the breathing that scratches at the door. And I fear.

But I continue.



## THE BOOK



### One two

Eliane Brum

- **Original title:** Uma duas
- **ISBN:** 9788580441239
- **Year of publication:** 2011
- **Original publishing house:** LeYa Brasil
- **Number of pages:** 176
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 7500 copies

### SYNOPSIS

In her debut novel, Eliane Brum delves into a mother-daughter relationship. It is a psychological thriller that begins with the mother's near-death and charges on towards the final page at a breath-taking pace. Laura, a forty-something journalist with a fertile imagination tries to escape her mother's influence and shuns all contact with her. She receives a call one morning from a spiritual centre that her mother had regularly frequented. She had not called in for days. As Laura enters her mother's apartment she finds her lying on the floor, completely famished. In hospital she is diagnosed with a fatal cancer. With great reluctance Laura is now forced to take care of her mother. In order to distance herself Laura had begun to write down her personal story, thereby reinventing her own persona. The boundaries between the real and fictive Laura, between

reality and fiction become blurred. The mother too is given the opportunity to voice her own version. Everyday life is depicted with a dreamlike focus. Reality is punctured by fantastic elements and leaves behind a nightmarish aftertaste. With great insight and dark humour Laura reveals the dishonesty of her fellow people as well as the abysses in a seemingly ideal world.

### AWARDS

The book short listed in two important literary prizes: "Portugal Telecom" and "São Paulo de Literatura"

### PRESS REVIEWS

"Não é sempre que surge uma escritora como Eliane, para quem a ficção é um ato de superação – uma travessia existencial e não um exercício virtuoso. O mundo é excessivo, há realidade demais – repórteres conhecem a experiência desse excesso. Realidade devastadora, se não a fígamos com a isca da língua e a desdobramos em ficção, ela nos mata". O Globo, RJ, Seção Prosa e Verso, Colunista José Castello, 11/06/2011, pág. 4.

"Na trama, uma jornalista, Laura, precisa aprender a superar a distância em relação à mãe, Maria Lúcia, quando esta passa por um sério problema de saúde". O Estado de São Paulo, SP, Seção Sabático, 02/07/2011, pág. 57.

"O livro é também sobre a palavra escrita, sobre o que é dito e não dito entre mãe e filha. De como é possível transformar a vida com a palavra". Revista Marie Claire, Seção Livros, 01/07/2011, pág. 104.

“A obra tem frescor e injeta uma proposta original dentro do cenário da nova literatura que está se produzindo no país”. Folha de São Paulo, SP, Seção Ilustrada, 16/07/2011, pág.15.

“A beleza da edição, a orquestração cuidadosa de tantos detalhes, a qualidade do texto não conseguem evitar que o leitor mergulhe de uma forma desconcertante na intimidade da relação entre as duas protagonistas, nem que ele se nauseie com a situação de degradação psicológica que elas vivem. Nem é esse o objetivo, muito pelo contrário. Se Eliane Brum queria de fato escrever com sangue, escolheu as palavras certas e produziu uma obra com envergadura suficiente para colocá-la junto aos melhores da literatura brasileira da atualidade”. Jornal Rascunho, Luiz Paulo Faccioli, setembro/2011.

“Para escrever uma matéria, a gente se esvazia para se preencher com a história dos outros. Ficção é o contrário. A gente se deixa possuir pela voz subterrânea que há na gente”. Correio da Bahia, Salvador, 06/07/2011, pág.20, Seção Vida.

## THE AUTHOR

**Eliane Cristina Brum**

- **Pen name:** Eliane Brum
- **Other books:**

Coluna Prestes – O Aveso da Lenda, 1994, Artes & Ofícios, Porto Alegre – reportagem.

A Vida que ninguém vê (A Life Nobody Sees) Arquipélago, Porto Alegre, 2007, 40.000 exemplares – reportagem.

O Olho da rua (The Eye of the Road)



Globo, São Paulo, 2008, reportagem  
**Uma duas (One two)** LeYa Brasil, São Paulo, 2011, 7000 exemplares (tiragem total), ficção

**A menina quebrada (The broken girl)** Arquipélago, Porto Alegre, 2013, 4.000 exemplares (tiragem inicial), reportagem

**Dignidade (Dignity)**

In this book, published in Italy (2011, Feltrinelli) and Brazil (2012, Leya), 10 writers wrote about different projects from the humanitarian organization MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières - Doctors Without Borders). Eliane Brum wrote about Chagas Disease, in Bolivia – “The vampires of reality just kill poor people”.

### • Awards:

Prêmio Açorianos de Autora Revelação, 1994, “Coluna Prestes – o avesso da lenda” Porto Alegre/RS/Brazil

Prêmio Jabuti de melhor livro de reportagem, 2007, “A Vida Que Ninguém Vê – São Paulo/SP/Brazil.

## THE TRANSLATOR

**Alison Entrekin**

Alison is a freelance literary translator specializing in Brazilian Portuguese, with a background in creative writing. She has translated numerous works

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### **PUBLICATION RIGHTS**

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# I LEFT, AND HE STAYED THERE

ELVIRA VIGNA

Translated by David Lehmann

“**M**eire is standing in front of me. Her face is the only thing that is changing in a world where nothing has happened for quite some time. So I follow every muscle. She tries to do this thing, with her cheek, on the little apron. Ridiculous, the little apron with the frills. But we already know that. So she stops.

She looks at my flat breasts. Ridiculous, the little boobies.

I almost hear her say: and when are you going to get this little implant increased, which is crooked by the way?

But she told me that not long ago. She caught me naked, coming out of the shower. So she doesn't repeat it.

I remember everything. I relive it. In the end, nothing had or has any importance. It is just a story. There must be many like this one, where no one will learn what happened, nor care. I will, and among other reasons because I like stories. But there are other reasons.

We stayed a little while like that, me and Meire. She standing in front of my table, the restaurant empty. I remember the ambient music. It was there all the time, still is. It is part of a general softening of everything. Too bad it doesn't work, didn't. There was nothing soft about it, there isn't.

Eventually she asks:

“What are you doing here?”

Now, here is something hard to answer. Anyplace and anywhere.

So far she hadn't looked once to my backpack all sprawled over the chair. She has that, Meire, a iron-clad force of will. She doesn't want to look, so she won't.

“Dinner”.

She is taken aback. She seems offended. Maybe I did offend her. She steps away, grabs a menu. Comes back.

“Jorge Amado Week. Grouper a la gabriella. The Turk's shrimp.”

That's a little too much and we laugh. Then we cry. But then, at that moment, you could still say that the tears were from laughter. I'm not hungry, the grouper is to be part of the show line. But I haven't eaten anything for god knows how much time.

So grouper it is.

“Expensive as hell”.

“Screw it”.

It comes with pepper, the grouper, and late. Empty restaurant, turned-off oven. Everything was like that at the time, then it took a turn for the worse. Dark streets, unlit store windows, cars only once in a while and me with that roll of cash tucked



into the bra. The only money in town, other than in the banks, scratching my skin every time I turned my back.

Meire sits. In a corner of the chair, she's on duty. She looks at the grouper, so do I. A brown rectangle. I sprinkle the pepper. More. Now we have a brown rectangle with details in green. The green is shining. Olive oil. Pepper always comes in olive oil. It wouldn't appear to be edible if it weren't for the smell, nauseating, that says, yes, it is edible.

At the same time I shove the fork inside my mouth Meire speaks. It's on purpose, I can't answer with my mouth full. All that's left to find out is who did it on purpose, if it's her speaking at the time I fill my mouth or if it's me filling my mouth when I sense she's about to speak.

"So you're really going".

I nod with my head. Then I add a mime to say very hot, lot of pepper, lot of spine, epilepsy attack, anything that would justify my tearful eyes and my delay, a long one, until the answer.

I end up swallowing. And I still don't speak, I just shake my head, without the sound that I wouldn't be able to hear.

She gets up, heads to the chicken.

This is one of the moments in which I'm alone at the restaurant. Or at least I thought I was. That night I was alone a few times, and I used it to look around carefully, where's the map, any map, a sign, where is the north. Even when I got there I wasn't feeling too good.

Then I noticed the middle-aged guy in a table in the corner. He's drinking. Looks at me. Drinks some more. He must have been there doing the same thing last week, last month.

I'm at the table that is closest to the door. As usual. It can be anywhere and I'll be staying close to the door. My back against the wall. It never protected me from anything. But I still do it.

The middle-aged guy wasn't very close. An excuse for not having seen him before. I have others. I've said it already: I wasn't feeling too well. And even when I am feeling well. I pay attention to some things and others not. I usually pick the ones that are useless.

So I have to know that now. I am starting to tell something that has holes, gaps. It's worse than that: I'm going to fill them up.

Somehow.

Meire returns. She had gone to the kitchen not because she had something to do there but because she didn't want to stay there with me. She went, she watched the cook smoke, pick his nose, pick his teeth, clean his ear with the tip of a fork, read the newspaper, scratch his three-day beard, the balls with different sizes, kill himself with the meat knife, bet on horses, whatever. And then, what else can you do, she returns.

"I was there today", I say.

She stares at me.

"That thing I was going to see, from that guy".

She keeps staring. I know she remembers, she doesn't want to talk, she wants to force me to say the whole thing, so silly.

"The guy from the movie audition".

"Ahh. So?"

"Dead end."

She sang it before, don't go, it's a dead end.

"Ahh. A dead end? That's too bad..."

Then:

"There are some people like that, filming crew, you know, staying at the hotel. Overnight. They don't tip at all. Anyone. The women are all foxy and blond.

"Blond? Maybe it's the same crew."

"They are always blondes, or haven't you noticed?"

What I had noticed is that the fish didn't go down well. That forkful, the one and lonely, had stopped midway and was threatening a triumphant return. I ask for water.

"Water?"

"Water".

Meire laughs.

"With lots of ice and lemon?"

"Could be."

She laughs some more.

"Nuh-uhn".

Says that if the manager walks in and sees me drinking the vodka I brought from home, she's fired. Meire has no doubt that inside my backpack there is the vodka. That I, on the last day, walking by the closet for the last time, had filched the vodka and anything else that was there. I say no. Meire always thought I was a jerk. So did I. She confirms it, we confirm it.

"I doubt it."

She opens my backpack.

"Crap, you really are a jerk".

And she leaves, searching for the water with ice and lemon.

Maybe because the guy on the other table is paying attention, or maybe because I think sometimes that eating disguises jerkiness, which only proves how much of a jerk I am, or maybe because if there's a fish in front of a person it means that one will eat the other, the thing is that at this moment I put the second forkful in my mouth.

And of course, it doesn't get past the throat. I have to throw it out. There's more stuff to throw out. My unhappy childhood, the unfairness of the world, why I wasn't born a blonde. The right thing to do is make a list, line them up, organize the vomit. Or maybe start acting, solve the world starting by the fish. The problem is that Meire, just for kicks, gave me the full service, bread, gray pâté, pink pâté, yellow pâté, pickles and a serviette. The guy on the other table looks at me without curiosity. I think he knows that I have a list of things to throw out, starting with the fish, and that I'm not enough of a pig to spit food on a serviette.

I spit on little paper napkins. It came wrapping the tableware, très chic. The guy

observes. This was our first relationship, this was what stuck and branded all the rest: I spit fish, he looks at me as if he expected nothing else.

Meire left my backpack open. I close it. Inside I don't have vodka but I do have the key to my former room. Plan B. If anything goes wrong, I come back. I'm not sure if she saw it, I'd rather she didn't. She's already returning with the water. When I drink it, I drink it fully aware that I'm not supposed to, that it will only make things worse. And it does. And it is even worse because I remember all the things I've done in life knowing that it would only make things worse, and I did them anyway. Or rather, I do. I still do.

On the way to the bathroom I pass by the guy that is still expecting nothing less or more than seeing me running in front of him towards the bathroom.

I vomited for any reason back then. I think I got better. Actually, I'm not so sure. Writing this is not making me feel so well."



## THE BOOK



### I left, and he stayed there

Elvira Vigna

- **Original title:** Deixei ele lá e vim
- **ISBN:** 9788535909036
- **Year of Publication:** 2006
- **Original Publisher:** Companhia das Letras
- **Number of pages:** 152
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 2.500 copies

### SYNOPSIS

In *I left, and he stayed there*, not even the protagonist's name is real. Her address is different from the one given, and her affair with Bubi is no reason to think that Bubi is really Bubi, or Bibu or any other similar sounding name. What we do know is that after a night at the beach with Meire and Dô (short for Dorothy or Maria das Dores depending on the circumstances), Shirley Marlene has to invent some kind of story, any story, which will encompass both the undeniable facts as well as those she prefers not to admit — to herself above all — that she remembers.

What she can't deny is her complete lack of ability to hold down a job, eat regular meals, or keep up any predetermined social or sexual role. What she would prefer not to remember is what exactly happened between the time she retraced her

steps to say goodbye to Dô at the beach, and the time she went up the steps to the five-star hotel opposite. A dog brings a sand-covered sandal, someone finds the stump of a cigar, and the only area of colour on Bibi's leaden face is the strawberry jam in the corner of his mouth. Shirley answers a call on a mobile phone that isn't hers, and the swimming pool security guard gets a little closer than she would like. It's time to go, but she no longer has the key to her ex-room in the Vidigal slum, and the coach to São Paulo is becoming an increasingly remote possibility. The only certainties are the origin of the large amount of money on an unmade bed, and the existence of another large amount of money, this one floating on the ocean waves. There is one other certainty: the one that, when the book is over, its story will continue to entice readers and suggest new, though never definitive, solutions.

### PRESS REVIEWS

<http://vigna.com.br/livdeixeicri/>

### THE AUTHOR



FOTO RENATO PARADA

### Elvira Vigna

- **Pen name:** Elvira Vigna
- **Other books**  
**Novels**

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O assassinato de Bebê Martê,  
Companhia das Letras, 1997 -  
2.500 cópias

Às seis em ponto, Companhia das  
Letras, 1998 - 2.000 cópias

Coisas que homens não entendem,  
Companhia das Letras, 2002 -  
2.000 cópias

A um passo, Lamparina, 2004

Nada a dizer, Companhia das Letras,  
2010 - 2.000 cópias

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• **Author's webpage:**  
<http://vigna.com.br/>

• **Translations:**

### **Portuguese**

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### **Swedish**

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#### • **Awards:**

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Prêmio Ficção da Academia Brasileira de Letras (Nada a dizer, 2010)

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David Lehmann, born in 12/29/1979, graduated in Economic Science at UFRJ and has a masters in International Relations from PUC-Rio. He has worked in a small family-owned translation company called Estado da Arte for approximately 15 years, with customers such as IBM, Beiersdorf, Burson-Marsteller, Caterpillar, Intel, Kingston and Electrolux.

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# IMMACULADA

IVONE BENEDETTI

Translated by Jethro Soutar

**A**t two o'clock in the afternoon the following day, Annunziata was on the veranda with Immaculada, leafing through a book of embroidery patterns, when she noticed a man approaching. Though distant and small, she could see the figure was hunched up and walked disjointedly, feet splayed, with the ungainliness of a man who had, since birth, worn his humility physically. Annunziata recognised her father. The figure got nearer, and nearer, and as it neared and gained shape, her sense of terror grew, a terror that had stirred inside her since the previous day... She could see drops of sweat pouring down her father's face in the mid-afternoon heat, like a rash running off his bald pate, bronzed by the tropical sun...

When he was practically at the foot of the lower staircase, Fattori caught sight of his daughter. He came to a halt, looked up and smiled happily: there'd be no need to call someone to announce his arrival! His simple expression, seen from on high, emanated with the honest and unassailable innocence of a man totally oblivious to something that was almost second nature to most, something they acquired in the cradle, along with nappies: class. Old Fattori didn't understand the concept: he hadn't understood it in Italy, had gone on not understanding it in Brazil and would die never having understood it. And so there he stood, lacking the courage to set foot on the steps that led to the Dantas' veranda, but smiling all the same, waiting to be invited in. Annunziata stood up and went down the steps. She talked to him for a moment - Immaculada watching them from above - then returned. She told Immaculada it was her father and that he had come to give Dona Helena a present. Immaculada went down to meet him. Fattori found the girl enchanting. It briefly crossed his mind that it would be a blessing to have such a girl as a daughter-in-law. She invited him in. As they went into the house, he made no attempt to hide his amazement at the beauty and luxury, the like of which he'd perhaps never seen before in his life. He stared at everything, stopping here and there, nodding with his head, producing an upturned U with his lips and thus articulating the words he inferred but did not speak. Immaculada asked him to sit down and said she would call her mother. She asked if he would like a drink of some sort. No, thank you, just some water.

Helena appeared five minutes later. The glass of water was by then empty. As soon as she came in, Annunziata explained that the man was her father and that he had come to give her, Dona Helena, a present, something he'd made. At the same time, Fattori stood up and, with a certain reverence, held out a package. Then he said: "Good day, Dona Helena. It's a small and modest thing, but made with heart."

He paused for a moment, as he tried to think of a polite way to finish in

Portuguese, and said:

“Don’t feel the need to...”

Helena said nothing. She didn’t return the old man’s greeting, didn’t ask him to sit down. She opened the package, and her lips stretched into a sort of smile, teeth hidden. Satisfied, Fattori smiled back, showing all of his. Helena relaxed her smile, looked at the shoes, then at the Italian man’s face, and finally said:

“Thank you. Please be seated. Immá, order a coffee or drink of some sort for Mr...”

“Giacomo Fattori.”

“Make yourself at home.”

And she left, carrying the package.

Fattori remained where he was, half hunched over, watching, if no longer smiling at, the woman as she left through one of the doors, perhaps expecting her to come back with the shoes on her feet, praising his workmanship. The drink soon arrived and went down his throat with the same three gulps as had done for the water. It was an absentminded May, a May that had forgotten to be cool and that had only May’s dryness. He mopped his brow, commenting on the weather, while Annunziata, eyes fixed on the glass, recalled all the unhelpful ways her father had tried to help out his offspring over the years. He was a father-mother, always acting with exaggerated affection, overcompensating for what their mother refused them due to her narrow-mindedness, simplicity and, to some extent, stupidity. Fifteen minutes went by. Immaculada made conversation, asking about the different ways of making a shoe, and he explained them as best he could in that bastard tongue, comprised of morsels picked up travelling; the tongue of immigrants, of the restless, the nomadic, the erratic.

Having given up hope of Helena returning, Fattori got up and bid them farewell. Annunziata left with him. They walked together a little way from the house, stopped and talked, exchanged kisses, and he left. Immaculada watched them. Annunziata came back, entered head bowed, sat down in the same chair she’d been in before, picked up the magazine and opened it at the same page. The girl sat down next to her. Everything began again as if it had never stopped.

Dantas got back on Friday, laden down with chocolate bonbons and pent-up affection. Dantas never just got back: it was always a getting back, excited and prolonged like a dance. The house never regained its sense of sobriety until the next day. And even then, with traces of a hangover. By late morning on the Saturday, Helena was still breakfasting with her husband. Immaculada read on the veranda while Annunziata impatiently awaited the end of breakfast (Helena had to give her some instructions before she could go out and do the shopping). To kill time she took a seat in the parlour between the pantry and dining room and went back to reading her book, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, which she’d started a few days earlier and had found hard to put down. Dantès was in the thick of discussion with Abbé Faria when the magical words of the text were drowned out by a word from the other room:

“Clodhopper!”

said Dantas. It wasn’t a word to be aired and soon fade away, like most words



heard over the course of a day; weightless words that underpinned the walls of our ideas, like unidentified foundations. This word, which Annunziata had never heard before, reverberated in the atmosphere, resounded in the brain, resonated with questionable feeling. After a few moments of reaction and reflection, Annunziata got up and went to the door, to listen to the conversation.

“Where did you pluck that word from?” Dantas laughed.

“Don’t you know it? My grandfather used it all the time. He had a worker who wore shoes with steel toecaps and heels, treading heavy and hard, like a horse. If he went into the house to speak to my grandfather, the whole farmyard knew about it. Grandfather would say: “Here comes Joe Clodhopper.”

Dantas laughed.

Annunziata was returning to her seat, when she heard:

“Well anyway, he came here, hobbling along, hunched over against the sun, a pathetic-looking figure, you should have seen him. And he’d come just to give me these clodhoppers. I don’t know what got into the wop’s head to make him think he should give me a present.” (She lowered her voice.) “It can only have been the daughter’s idea. They must think I can be bought off with a pair of shoes.”

“A pair of clodhoppers!” Dantas corrected her, laughing.

“I’ll show you them later. You know the sort you see in 18th century paintings? Just like them.”

Dantas guffawed.

Annunziata, standing there, unnoticed, felt a pain inside her, a pain known only to children, or those able to recall childhood: the pain of hearing your father spoken of badly. A deep and profound pain that, on spreading out and diverging into the atmosphere, converges back upon the heart in a strangling revolution. Only two things can heal such pain: tears and revenge.

[...]

From then on, Immaculada’s dreams wove everything together and always ended with the same image: Virgin semi-nude, exchanging chaste kisses in the light of the moon. But the weight of truth really lay in the next line: And you are Juliet. Because all the ingredients were there for a rerun of the classic drama: she, Juliette; he, Romeo; Annunziata, the nurse; Dantas and Helena, the parents concerned with their social standing; Francisco, the betrothed husband. All that was missing was the friar. A friar to marry them. But one able to plot avoiding misunderstandings, to make sure the classic drama didn’t end in tragedy again.

A few days later, Immaculada told Annunziata that she would be prepared to leave the house in order to meet Paolo somewhere. Annunziata thought it impossible: he worked all day, right there, and his absence would be noticed. As would Immaculada’s. But the following Friday, just after breakfast, Annunziata told the girl:

“I’ve thought of a way for you to meet.”

She spoke while tidying towels away in the drawer of a large dresser, where they kept the finished fruits of their embroidery projects. She spoke and then went

quiet, meaning Immaculada had to ask:

“How?”

“He goes up to your room. It’s the only way.”

Annunziata closed the drawer and leaned against the dresser. She folded her arms and waited for the girl’s reaction. Immaculada, who was sitting on the bed, stood up with both hands held to her face, not knowing whether to thank the ‘nurse’ for daring to make her dreams come true, or to get angry at the indecency of the suggestion.

The downside to Annunziata’s proposal was that it put all three of them in a very risky position, but with the (sufficient and requisite) upside of totally disgracing Immaculada. On particular, well-chosen days, once his work was done, Paolo would say goodbye to everyone and pretend to go down to the stables (everyone knew he liked horses and he’d even been talking about buying one). He would stay there until, upon Annunziata’s signal, he could double back to the house, enter the laundry room and hide in one of the big built-in wardrobes (the one with fabrics in the bottom drawer, to which only Annunziata and Immaculada had keys). There he would remain until everyone had gone to bed. Then, in the middle of the night, Annunziata would come down, open the back door and lead her brother through the recesses of the house, between the laundry room and the sewing room and up the back staircase. The stairway began in a hall between the kitchen and the pantry, and came out in a corridor that led to all the rooms that opened on to the back of the house. Helena and Dantas’ room was on a different corridor, which connected to that one some twenty feet beyond the top of the staircase. And how would he leave? Via the same route – Annunziata explained. He’d go back to the wardrobe and stay there until just before daybreak: she had it all planned out.

Immaculada said she’d have to think about it. She spent Friday and Saturday locked in her room, refusing to eat. Her mother went to see her but found Immaculada withdrawn and elusive. Helena thought her daughter must be missing her father: such inconsolable bouts of sadness were not unknown when Dantas was travelling. Helena was on her way out when Immaculada asked:

“The wedding... Have there been any developments?”

“No. I haven’t managed to dissuade your father. Is that what’s making you sad?”

“No,” said Immaculada. Then she went quiet again, leaving her mother standing holding the door knob, halfway between the door and the threshold, not knowing whether to come in or go out. Eventually she went out, deciding her daughter was not about to open up to her. Helena was growing accustomed to this new Immaculada.

Immaculada had to hold her mouth shut to prevent the storm brewing inside her from exploding forth. The storm brewing inside her over her father’s betrayal. Helena didn’t know it, but her words - “I haven’t managed to dissuade your father” - became Immaculada’s alibi. Such stubbornness from a father who had always previously been kind, justified her powerful, guilty desire to give herself over to the forbidden man. To the unknown man, the voiceless man who spoke to her in unfamiliar written words. Her father’s obstinacy would be the cause of an act that was to be committed as soon as possible. If Paolo loved her as much as his poets

said he did, the two of them might elope. They had Annunziata, who would help with everything, and if they eloped, the only way to avoid dishonour would be for the parents to consent to marriage. Many couples had resolved complicated love affairs this way. But... What if Dantas wouldn't bend and disowned his daughter, disinherited her? And what if Paolo abandoned her? Poverty and prostitution, it was said, was what became of rebellious, fallen women. But she wouldn't prostitute herself. She had her art, she would just have to become a great painter. A good many women already lived freely, even in this backward country! Laura was one example. And thus, flitting between reasoning and terrifying herself, did Immaculada spend the next two days, one moment a fearless Minerva, the next a damned Danaide. Paolo was Alexander the great one moment, Don Juan the seducer the next. (After all, hadn't he omitted to send her the third verse of *Três Amores*?) As ever, desire won out. Immaculada concluded that her dreams were fast approaching reality, and that the only one who could embrace them was herself.

She told Annunziata her decision on the Saturday. Annunziata was getting ready to go out when she heard Immaculada offer her consent: yes, let him come up. But just this once. After that they'd have to arrange a different way of meeting. Immaculada didn't mention eloping, nor would she for the time being. She thought it premature. Such a proposition was liable to frighten a man. Especially a voiceless man. And so Immaculada showed her understanding of the human soul, a soul she mistrusted because, though she didn't know it for sure, she sensed that a person's voice echoed a person's ego.

The door opened slowly, without a squeak, Annunziata having gone to the trouble of oiling the hinges to avoid any creaking. Paolo entered in almost total darkness. Followed by his sister. Only then did Immaculada turn on the oil lamp that usually shone day and night upon an image of Our Lady of Lourdes on top of the dresser. Leaning against the chest of drawers, she saw the young man at the other end of the room, framed by the dark doorway. His gaze ran quickly round the room before settling on Immaculada who, standing beside the dresser, was experiencing the strange sensation of having fire in her entrails and ice in her limbs. Paolo turned to his sister and asked her, in Neopolitan, to leave him and Immaculada alone. His voice, at long last. A deep voice. A strong voice, that started off low, but lifted on certain syllables, rebelling against the enforced silence. Annunziata left the room. He came over to Immaculada and took hold of her hands. The icy touch of someone who had come in from the cold winter night sent a shiver through her that fluctuated between hot and cold as it passed through her heart and her stomach. There were no words. He pulled her towards him. The kiss. Immaculada had anticipated it. But it wasn't a kiss that lasted seconds, like in her dreams. It was an entanglement of lips and tongues, a sloppy gluing together, impatient and never-ending, and driven along by increasingly aggressive groping, a general delirium that brought back memories of an insufferable cousin one Sunday afternoon, after a suckling pig roast. Immaculada realised then that a kiss was never an odourless act. Paolo's breath smelled of cigarettes and fog. And yet it wasn't altogether unpleasant. The contrast

between his romantic declarations and the reality of his launching himself upon her was striking, the sharp leap from poetic allusion to prosaic statement. And in this way, without preamble, the whole thing became rather intimidating. Immaculada felt she wasn't just being dominated: she was being possessed. In her mouth, a strange tongue; over her body, hands searching for points of entry without asking permission. She pushed the lad away from her.

He stood there motionless for a moment, then looked down, arms dangling, and said remorsefully:

"I'm sorry. It's just that I'm very innamored... It was stronger than I..."

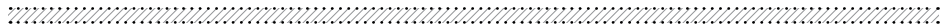
His Italian accent produced a certain unease in Immaculada. He spoke like his sister! Here was a man who would be loathed by her family, and there she was throwing herself at him!

But his voice was nice, and it would be stupid to imagine he ought to arrive speaking Portuguese like the poets he copied. Besides, the rather quirky innamored sounded enough like enamoured for Immaculada to be able to translate the emotion, and this was sufficient for her to take hold of his hands again, rest her head on his chest and ask:

"Are you really so fond of me?"

"I am very, very fond of you," came the reply.

From then on he was more reserved and gentle. Immaculada finally recognised the physical contact of her dreams. And Paolo learned that the journey would be a longer one than expected.



## THE BOOK



### Immaculada

Ivone C. Benedetti

- **Original title:** Immaculada
- **ISBN:** 978 85 7827 139 8
- **Year of Publication:** 2009
- **Original Publisher:** WSM Martins Fontes
- **Number of pages:** 379
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 3000 copies

### SYNOPSIS

Immaculada tells the personal and political story of a coffee grower from the late 1920s through 1964. After marital betrayal and the death of his former wife, he left the plantation on the eve of the 1929 crisis. His plan was to practice as a lawyer in a city where eventually he made the acquaintance of a wealthy and powerful family, whose youngest heir is the ten-year old Immaculada. For a series of economic and political reasons, arrangements were made for him to marry the girl five years later. When the time came, however, Immaculada had been swayed by a romance with the younger brother of the family's Italian housemaid, who had contrived this affair for revenge. Largely unscathed by the 1929 crisis, the young lawyer nurtured great political ambitions that, however, were repeatedly thwarted by

the ever-changing rules of the game in the troubled scenario of the 1930s. Having built up a considerable fortune, he was now a leading figure in terms of ambiguous relations with government, but had yet to become one of the real power brokers. Meanwhile, his increasingly complicated personal life and marriage made for a plot ridden with tension as psychological aspects were interwoven with economic and political motivations involving social actors on various levels, particularly Italian immigrants.

As the protagonist, Immaculada was both synthesis of and allegory for a sentimental romanticism that stubbornly refused to die, but eventually did so when World War II broke out in 1939. From there onwards, the last part of the story describes the denouement from 1939 to 1964, as Francisco finally became a political player but did not live long enough to enjoy the probable glory of life at the epicenter of power.

These "background" themes are posed side by side with the novel's formal aspects. The language used to narrate actions shuns naturalism without lapsing into hermeticism, striving to avoid prosaicism without falling into a poeticism that would be ill suited to report facts or events, neither surrendering to facile objectivism nor resorting to a subjectivism more suited to arousing vague sensations than feelings or ideas. This was the great difficulty posed for the novel's composition. However, its guiding ambition is energized by a great stimulus: building empathetic contact with readers and holding their interest,

page by page, to create a novel able to satisfy the yearning for a “good story” that everybody feels nowadays.

### **AWARDS**

Shorlisted for the São Paulo Literary Awar, 2010

### **PRESS REVIEWS**

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/ilustrad/fq0310200914.htm>

Review by Manuel Costa Pinto following new book release - Folha de S. Paulo daily, 3 October 2010

<http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/impresso,breves-e-pletos-relatos,748826,0.htm>

Review of Tenho um cavalo alfaraz (short stories) and Immaculada by Vinícius Jatobá

<http://sibila.com.br/novos-e-criticos/um-sabor-a-fel/3738>

Review by Rodrigo Gurgel published in Sibila magazine, 11 June 2010

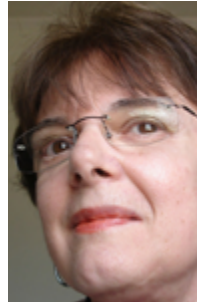
<http://diariodonordeste.globo.com/materia.asp?codigo=666944>

Interview about Immaculada published in Diário do Nordeste daily, 1 Sept 2009

### **THE AUTHOR**

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- **Pen name:** Ivone Benedetti
- **Other books:**



**Tenho um cavalo alfaraz** – short stories – WMF Martins Fontes – 2011

**Dicionário Italiano-português** – WMF Martins Fontes - 2003

#### • **Author’s webpage:**

[www.ivonecbenedetti.com.br](http://www.ivonecbenedetti.com.br)

<http://ivonecbenedetti.wordpress.com/>

### **THE TRANSLATOR**

#### **Jethro Soutar**

Jethro Soutar’s Brazilian translations include works by Vinicius Jatobá and Javier Arancibia Contreras for Granta’s “The Best of Young Brazilian Novelists”, short stories by João Paulo Cuenca for “Words Without Borders “ and “Litro”, and a graphic novel by André Diniz for “SelfMadeHero”. He has been nominated for an International Dagger as a translator and is the author of two non-fiction books (“Ronaldinho: Football’s Flamboyant Maestro” and “Gael García Bernal and the Latin American New Wave”). He now lives in Lisbon having formerly lived in Florianópolis and São Paulo.

### **PUBLICATION RIGHTS**

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# THE AMATEUR SLEEPWALKER

JOSÉ LUIZ PASSOS

Translated by Karen Sherwood Sotelino

## Pernambuco, Brazil 40 years ago

### Chapter One: November

**W**hen the rain stops, sometimes I turn off the air-conditioner and stand there, looking out the open window. I spend over a half hour watching the goings on in front of the building. Down on the street, trucks head for the weigh station and, once in a while, a yellow harvester passes by, its tracks leaving long trails of mud behind the shovel held by mechanical arms. At the curve in the river, where it widens, and where there used to be two rows of sweet olive trees, now there's scrap metal. I haven't been out that way for a long time. I'm always fascinated by the overturned wagons, a dead locomotive, the kind with an open top, and the tractors, once so colorful, now falling apart and gradually covered with a layer of brittle, brown rust. From a distance, anyone seeing that pile of scrap metal might even mistake it for a crack in the earth, the place where the clay is darkest, or else for hay, or rubble, or even sugarcane bagasse. But in fact, it's only retired machinery.

Since Big Green was built facing away from the river, you can't see the bridge or the banks at Velha rock, which is a very pleasant place to have lunch when I feel like eating outside. The enormous building isn't pretty, like the clinic, with its thirteen arches on the façade, as if it had a long veranda. Nor is it as spacious as the cotton mill sheds with their sixty-foot high ceilings, ladders, and iron walkways around the drum carders, the steel bobbins feeding thousands of needles. But Big Green is where the company's most important decisions were made.

It's true it looks like a domino, balancing on one side, abandoned, larger on the bottom, with a strip running along the side made of hollow, diamond shaped bricks that show the stairwell and let the dust inside the building. From way on top four gutters stick out, and when there's a lot of water, it accumulates and cascades. In rainy season there's a particular smell, the rain drains down directly, hits the earth, digging puddles and sounding like brutish urine because the earth is soft and Big Green, far too tall. Since there are so few gutters for the wide rooftop, huge quantities of water run together and splash into them, spraying a thick shower into the air.

From a great distance, almost all the way downtown, you can still see the old name of the factory at the top of the building. On the way home, sometimes I stop and look back, pondering its decay, the paint peeling off the building and the marquis

ridden with holes. I think about what Marco Moreno used to tell me, how he would criticize the building his own grandfather had constructed. That's when I bend over to light a cigarette or untie my shoelace, only to tie it again, one foot resting on a low wall or anywhere else. When I remember what the textile mill once was, and what's left of it now, I feel my chest cave in deeper. And that metal sign alone, painted in large letters covered in sun-parched moss, is enough to make that happen.

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I don't know where you all work, or used to work, but here the siren goes off at 1:45 p.m., calling the workers back from lunch. It's for the workers in the cafeteria and also for the workers that go out to eat. And there's no way to avoid the reminder since you can hear the whistling from downtown. It also sounds at 6:00 p.m., the end of the workday.

Sho, sho, shoooo, it's always two short whistles, then a long one.

But it's true, I'm terrible at imitations.

What I mean to say is that during these breaks, I normally stay by myself on the fourth floor. It's been a long time since I've gone out for lunch and, when I do, I like to go to Neco's bar, because sometimes they serve rabbit there.

My coworkers wander back in, and one or another of them always looks at me, all cheerful, trying to joke around, telling me some funny story about what went on at lunch. They think I'm dying of boredom locked up here in the office, or else that I'm mad at someone. In fact, that's not the case. I like to stay in the office organizing folders, writing letters, or taking care of official correspondence I may need to send later on that day, or the following day. Sometimes I make a private phone call or answer calls from anyone that might try during off hours. I also read part of the newspaper and listen to whatever radio station I feel like. Because of the arrangement I made, since I don't take a lunch hour, I get to leave a little earlier. I take advantage that it's still light out.

When I walk, I take forty-five minutes to get home from Big Green. On my bike, at a leisurely pace, it's under twenty. Along the way I sometimes stop to smoke a cigarette, run an errand, or watch people in the plaza discussing politics and soccer, or playing dominos, which I myself don't do since I don't like it. So the days go by without much variation.

But that week, on the afternoon I decided to go to the capital to deal with the case of the burned boy, I ended up going over to talk to a worker who was sitting with two others around a deck of cards, on a bench in the plaza.

Jurandir, are you really going or not? You've given up, he said.

Since I was walking, I couldn't just go right by and ignore the comment. It's none of your business, I answered, looking at him. You're sure not going instead of me. Or are you? That got no answer.

The dealer started laughing so loud and made so much fun of the nosey guy, cutting the guy's throat with a card, that I decided to have a seat. I'm not much



on gambling, but they needed a fourth. I found out the talk at lunchtime had been about Minnie, who'd dumped half a bottle of ketchup onto a paper napkin, folding the edges to make a funnel, and swallowed the whole thing in one gulp. She got a case of beer out of it, since she'd done it on a dare. I ignored everyone acting like it was such a big deal, they just didn't have enough to keep them busy. Nor was I about to start arguing with Minnie, who'd apparently let on I'd done the same thing for half a case or less, that I'd always been cheaper than she was.

When I found out Minnie had referred to me as someone who'd get involved in a stupid competition like that, I thought the following. Although we'd spent the previous years together, at Big Green, walking from there back home, going out to eat sometimes, in fact, we knew very little about each other. Minnie herself, when she'd first gotten here, right after the cotton mill had been sold to the current group, told me I was a hero for staying on because, with the coming of the new owners, the work was bound to change a lot and no one knew exactly how. I remember one time I ended up telling her a few stories about the start of the company, about my adventures with Marco Moreno, his affair with a married girl, a decent girl. I told her, then immediately regretted it, since the truth is at the time Minnie and I weren't that close at all.

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**W**earing shorts and a cropped top, her legs crossed, sometimes she looks at me strangely while I'm sitting there talking, like the day when, for no reason at all, she dumped a glass of Coke on my lap.

We were in the living room and I was telling her about what had happened with Marco when he and I were young. I was telling her more or less the same story I'd told her before.

The sky was clearing up, or I think it already had. We were silent, walking along the route from the road to the bridge. When the olive trees bloomed, we would set the bird trap along the banks of the river where it makes a curve around the big rock, the place Marco used to call Velha rock. When I started taking my own lunch to Big Green, a couple of times I ate sitting on that rock, watching the river wander along near the railroad switch, which isn't used anymore since nowadays everything is transported by truck. With all the rain, the distance from one side of the river to the other used to measure eighty feet, but now it's under forty. At that stretch of the river, the banks were steep and full of green cane with a lot of pickerelweed. The bridge, built before the cotton mill, had originally been designed with two lanes and a wood rail. Now the stone paving is underneath the asphalt and the guardrail is made of metal. Back then, we felt like building a ramp and jumping from one bank to the other in our go-carts which, of course, we never did.

Walking around there that day, we were staring at the yellowed, churned up river, watching the current drag tufts of weeds and sometimes a plank of wood, a paper bag or a twisted branch. Somewhat bored by all that, my friend stood up and went over to the riverbank. The road had no sidewalk, so there were a lot of puddles

because the earth was soaked from all the rain. The puddles were like a mirror of the slowly swirling clouds, which were actually easier to see in those mud puddles.

Without warning, Marco threw a rock at the birds on the other side of the river. Let's ride the go-cart, Jurandir? You can drive today, he said, and headed toward the city hall promenade, with me following him.

At the time, I was surprised since we always used to argue over who got to drive. Now that I think about it, it seems to me Marco let me because he knew I was feeling down, and he thought it might cheer me up.

City Hall is about three blocks up from the bridge. Along the way we must have run into people coming back from the Saturday market, which is even bigger now, but the truth is I don't remember seeing anyone at all. I walked along, distracted, pulling the go-cart by a string I'd wrapped around the front axis so I wouldn't have to carry it. As we approached the new promenade, I turned to the slope and pointed the cart toward Imaculada Conceição. The wall of the convent school was low and at that time of day the nuns were sweeping the patio. On the weekends, when the school was closed, the street was quiet. Marco, seeing me just standing there, waved to indicate I should take the driver's seat, which I did.

Even now, when Minnie hears me talking about this, or other things from that time, she strikes an interested pose, taking sips from her cup of Coke and looking at me with an increasingly vague expression on her face. I give her more and more details, details I haven't included before. So, I tell her stories and Minnie pays me back with ever-growing disbelief, trying to get me to keep talking.

The truth is, I told her, with a mere push, or not even that, I would be racing down the hill at a very high speed. But what happened was, that day my friend ran even faster in the push-off. I saw I wasn't going to make the curve without a spinout and I yelled to warn him. Marco, it's okay, let go now, I said. But the steel wheels, scraping the cement and rocks, made a loud noise, it was nearly impossible to hear anything. I don't know if he heard me or not, because the push-off continued for a while longer. I yelled again and that time he must have noticed because I was already pulling the handles left and right, making the go-cart curve its way down. At the time, scared of how much my speed had picked up, I had given up the idea of going to the end of the promenade and had decided to abort our regular route. I made a sharp turn to the right to get onto the street and the cart turned sideways. I thought it was going to flip, but it didn't. I put one foot on the promenade, trying to slow it down and, with my leg sticking out, stiff because of the speed, without realizing it, my body also stiffened. I clenched the handles and kept the soles of my sandals about ten inches in front of the wheels. When I crossed the main street, jumping from the promenade to the dirt road, the dust came up and I thought I was in luck. The sand would slow me down and, before reaching the other side, I'd end up stopping. But since I was still going so fast, I crossed the street sideways at full speed and realized I was going to crash into the divider head-on. I must have closed my eyes. I remember I twisted my body off the go-cart and it flipped. I slid the rest of the way onto the ground and kept moving without the cart, just my body, all the way until I hit the sidewalk below.

Then, with one leg out, my foot hit the edge of the new cobblestone promenade. The impact was huge, but it could have been worse. I crashed on my side and sensed the terrible taste of dirt in my mouth. I opened my eyes and saw my sandals on the ground, next to the go-cart, which had gone flying and crashed into the wall of a house. It was totaled. I say it could have been worse because, way behind me, my friend was in shock. He'd gone mute with fright. I think he was watching and taking in what he'd just seen. It was only when I moved and started to touch my leg that he called out how cool the ride had been. But as he approached and saw what had happened to me, he started talking differently. He said to stay calm, everything was going to be alright. Then my friend got up and cupped his hands to his mouth. He started screaming as loud as he possibly could to the passersby, for the love of God, someone please come quickly.

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On the weekends I like to visit the small towns along the coast. Whenever I see one of those beautiful baby blue Simca Chambords on the highway or pulled over at the side of the road, with the purring V8 engine, fishtail hubcaps, white synthetic leather upholstery and mother-of-pearl steering wheel, a picture of my friend forms in my mind. I stare at the car, to make sure it's the same model, and when I see someone behind the wheel who is fair skinned, posing with one hand on the wheel and the other hand out the window, I can't help thinking, it can only be him. This time it's really him, Marco Moreno Prado, he just can't stand it anymore and he's come back. But as I approach, or hop off my bike, I see once again that it wasn't.

The truth is, sometimes I'm overtaken by the desire to talk about memories of my friend to Minnie or things about my childhood to other people, and it's an odd feeling, typical of conversations we have when we're on a break and one of us, having had a few drinks, ends up saying things they shouldn't. I started thinking about this again as I was taking notes for the meeting with the lawyers in Recife.

I spent the entire afternoon gathering documents for the case of the boy with the burn injuries, since it had dragged on too long and now it had to be settled in court. Following the advice from someone around here, his mother called me the other day, sobbing. I tried to calm the woman down, but she would not stop until I promised I could get a favorable verdict, downplaying the carelessness of her son who, for not knowing how to operate the new compressor, had gotten steam burns on his hands and face. Just today, I caught myself pondering the merits of the case. And also, thinking about his mother's concern for her son's future.

I remember having gone through a similar experience, when my son was born sickly and I asked Marco to be his godfather. I kept reliving that moment and the excuse my friend had given me, that it would be better for both of us if he declined. Then an even worse memory came back, more vividly, the two of us walking on the roads surrounding Big Green, avoiding the puddles, kicking stuff on the road while we talked about how our lives were going to change. Or I might be confusing

that specific occasion when we talked about the baptism with another time because, in the weirdest moment of the conversation, I remember we were at a table in a bar or restaurant and, when Marco finally said, why mix friendship with family, the image that comes to mind is of a table covered with a colorful cloth and, sitting on top of it, a stack of clean paper napkins rolled up inside a glass or maybe a jam jar that I kept revolving between my hands as I waited for my friend's answer. I'd more or less imagined what it would be. That it was better to keep things separate.

---

**W**hen I finished gathering the paperwork on the burned boy, Minnie came by my office desk and looked at me for a while. Then she started that pestering of hers.

Jurandir, I didn't mean to be rude to you. It was just talk, she said.

You said it though. What was it again? That I'd lost my courage.

I said you used to be nicer. You'd go out with us. That's all.

Oh sure, Minnie. What's the problem? Do you think I'm like your friends, getting a kick out of any old thing? You're really something.

What do you mean Jurandir?

Sometimes you don't care about anything. That's so easy, I said.

We then kept quiet.

Before long, she brought it up again. My offer still holds, take the car. Stop being so stubborn Jurandir, come on.

You really don't listen, do you, girl? Sometimes you act like you're deaf.

Take it. I'm telling you. You can take it and, while saying that, she got closer to me. She rested her hands on the table, leaned all the way over, almost into my files, and repeated herself, tapping her purse, rattling her keychain.

I've already told you, Minnie. I'd rather take the bus. I really like it better, I said. I wanted to put an end to the conversation. Since we'd raised our voices, a few people turned around to see what was going on. Then I gestured so she would notice that people were reacting. She didn't say anything. I straightened the pile of folders and moved the calculator and telephone to one side. I kept looking at Minnie, planted there in front of me.

Jurandir, it was a joke. Please.

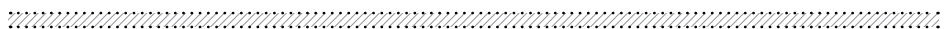
What joke? I'm the one who knows what people have told me. What I heard.

She stayed silent. Then she turned around as if to leave.

I'm going, see?

Go. You can go, I said.

And it was only then that Minnie finally left the office.



## THE BOOK



### The Amateur Sleepwalker

Luiz Passos

- **Original title:** O sonâmbulo amador
- **ISBN:** 9788579621635
- **Publication year:** 2012
- **Original publishing house:** Editora Objetiva / Alfabeta
- **Number of pages:** 272
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 3000

### SYNOPSIS

A few days before retiring, Jurandir—a worker in a textile company—travels from the interior to a state capital in Brazil in order to settle a labor dispute in court. He is eventually committed to a psychiatric asylum. At his doctor's request, he reports on his memories, dreams, and daily life. Jurandir observes the transformation in the relationships between the nurses and the patients, between the clinic and the city, and between life during the day and at night. Followed by the old nurse Ramires, Madame Góes, and memories of a former boss and childhood friend, Jurandir discovers the possibility of putting into practice talents already rehearsed in his dreams. His recalling of amorous game playing with Minnie, a young female coworker, echoes his youth. His fixation on heroics leads to a role reversal precisely when the clinic gets caught

up in the political activities of the late 1960s. Jurandir seeks a new self: one that is free from his inauspicious past. In this reluctant hero's new persona, the cloak and dagger destiny and the disasters in his love life are framed by a melancholy search for justice and better company. The Amateur Sleepwalker chronicles the adventures of a disenchanting, humble protagonist whose life oscillates between forceful demands in friendship and politics.

### PRESS REVIEWS

"A great writer is born: José Luiz Passos. The Amateur Sleepwalker leaves no doubt. This is the kind of writing that engages its readers and challenge them" José Castello, O Globo (<http://www.gazetadopovo.com.br/colunistas/conteudo.phtml?id=1331577&tit=O-espelho-cego>)

"The Amateur Sleepwalker is one of the most well-crafted Brazilian novels to appear in recent years. The narrative voice is unique and original in its 'sleepwalking' moves. I would dare to say it is a masterpiece" Alfredo Monte, Folha de São Paulo (<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrada/1216919-critica-autor-mescla-com-maestria-sonhos-e-existencia-em-livro.shtml>)

"José Luiz Passos's sophisticated, unique style enables him to achieve an extremely elaborate, enviable aesthetics" Rodrigo Casarin, Rascunho (<http://rascunho.gazetadopovo.com.br/lucidez-profissional/>)

"These are strong words, but without any excess. The story telling in The

Amateur Sleepwalker is harmonious and beautiful” Raimundo Carrero, Suplemento Pernambuco (<http://www.suplementopernambuco.com.br/index.php/component/content/article/16-raimundo-carrero/787-um-homem-de-magoas-mas-nao-de-queixas.html>)

“A mature novel and, at the same time, refined, bold, ironic, seductive, which is capable of engaging its reader in a meticulously crafted world. The Amateur Sleepwalker is a special moment in Brazilian literature at the start of the 21th century” Gonçalo Junior, Valor Econômico (<http://www.valor.com.br/cultura/2957200/literatura-com-estilo-de-jose-luiz-passos>)

“A superb novel” Bruno Zeni, Guia Folha

#### THE AUTHOR



FOTO TABACH

#### José Luiz Passos

- **Pen name:** José Luiz Passos
- **Other books:**

#### Novels

O sonâmbulo amador. Rio de Janeiro: Alfaguara, 2012. (3000 copies) 272pp.

Nosso grão mais fino. Rio de Janeiro: Alfaguara, 2009. (2000 copies) 160pp.

#### Non-Fiction

Machado de Assis, o romance com pessoas. São Paulo: Edusp, 2007. (1500 copies) 296pp.

Ruínas de linhas puras: quatro ensaios em torno a Macunaíma. São Paulo: Annablume Editora, 1998. (1000 copies) 134pp.

#### • **Author’s webpage:**

[www.jlpassos.com](http://www.jlpassos.com)  
<http://www.spanport.ucla.edu/people/314-passos.html>

#### THE TRANSLATOR

#### Karen Sherwood Sotelino

Karen Sherwood Sotelino was born in San Francisco, California. She has translated novels, short stories, and technical texts from Portuguese into English. She received her B.A. from Stanford University, studied and taught translation at Associação Alumni (São Paulo, Brazil), and received her M.A. and Ph.D. in Literature from the University of California at Santa Cruz. Recently, she has taught Portuguese language and translation studies at Stanford University, where she is Visiting Scholar in the Department of Iberian and Latin American Cultures.



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# EXPORT ZONE

JULIO LUDEMIR

Translated by Alex Forman

## Chapter 1

### Is it a crime?

**A**s head of one of Recife's civil police units, responsible for investigating crimes committed within her district, Delegada Beatriz Gibson had just closed a case that at first glance read like an apocryphal tale — Transsexual Raíssa Abravanel Commands Unlikely Death Squad. Under the protection of members of the military police, Raíssa controlled Recife's better hotspots for homosexual prostitution. Anyone who did not pay her stipulated tax was excommunicated. Or, killed.

Despite her familiarity with seemingly implausible cases, Delegada Beatriz Gibson didn't see any harm in the question posed by a couple who often frequented the Neighborhood Policing Project. She'd helped institute NPP meetings in the suburban neighborhood of Ipsep where she was later to head up the precinct, thereby taking on the dual role. Ipsep is a calm neighborhood when viewed in context of the statewide statistics on violence in Pernambuco.

— Is selling kidneys a crime, Delegada? — asked the couple after a meeting between the directors of the NPP and the residents of Ipsep and surrounding areas.

Until then, the interim Police Chief had neatly categorized human organ trafficking as urban legend, in the same class as *Papa-figo*, *Perna Cabeluda*, and *Mão Branca*<sup>1</sup>. In Olinda, where she was raised, ghost stories like these haunted children. Mothers created the scare tactic to keep their children close. They told innumerable stories of kidnappings and eviscerations. Beatriz's mother was no exception.

—Yes, it is a crime, she said. —Why?

—No reason. —the couple changed the subject and soon after left the room. If there were any basis for this sort of crime, wouldn't the Chief of Police know of at least one case that had been solved through the system? But, until that night in March 2003, she was only aware of unfounded reports, not a single one ever proven. Delegada Beatriz Gibson had all but forgotten about the matter when the same couple broached it again.

—Is selling a kidney a crime, Delegada? — again the couple.

The first time they asked the question, she responded with certain indifference.

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1. Translator's note: *Papa-figo*, was a leper who fed on the livers of lying children, the legend originated in Bahia; *Perna Cabeluda* was a supernatural, person-less hairy leg that appeared floating in the river in an unsolved murder, and haunted the streets of Recife in the 70s; *Mão Branca* was a vigilante linked to death squads in the Baixada Fluminense of Rio de Janeiro, in the 80s, who left a white glove on his cadavers.



She was, after all, a lawyer who graduated in 1988 with a degree from the Law Faculty in Recife. But their insistence intrigued her.

—What do you know about organ trafficking? — she asked.

They shut the door to the room.

—We are going to tell you a secret, Ma'am — they said. —But on one condition.

—What condition?

—That you don't ask anyone, anywhere to confirm our claim.

Trust in the community, especially between authorities and residents, was one of the Neighborhood Policing Project's hard earned trump cards. Delegada Beatriz Gibson wasn't about to put such a delicate matter at risk.

—If we learn that you have repeated this story to anyone, be it military police, civil police, we'll deny it — they added, reinforcing the threat.

The informants then began to tell an incredible tale.

According to them, some kind of kidney chain had sprouted in the neighborhood contiguous to Ipsep: Jardim São Paulo. Someone who had already sold a kidney had to personally recommend anyone who would subsequently join the list. Once on this list, it was impossible to get off it. Only by submitting to transplant surgery in Durban, or by death.

—Are you certain about what you are telling me? — asked the Police Chief, perplexed.

Beatriz Gibson was reminded of Glacy, a transsexual who had become the laughing stock of the precincts when she reported death threats by Raissa Abravanel. That is, until Delegada Beatriz decided to protect her. Glacy didn't die that day because something told Delegada Beatriz that her story was true and she intervened. When they raided Raissa's home, they found a calendar that had Glacy's assassination marked on it.

—Don't you know someone who's done the operation? — the Police Chief asked, already thinking about how to obtain solid proof to incriminate the squad.

The couple's fear was visible. But they revealed two names: Gerson Luiz Ribeiro de Oliveira, otherwise known as Telinho, and Marcondes Lacerda de Araújo or, Marconi. They were the first from the neighborhood to travel to Durban, South Africa, according to her informants. And furthermore, following the couple's account, the two became recruiters upon their return to Brazil.

You can go to *Barro*, Miss, on Rua Padre Diogo Rodrigues — said the informants. — There you'll find the liquor store Marconi purchased with transplant money.

The following Saturday, to see it for herself, the Chief of Police took a drive in search of the poor man who went abroad and returned overnight with money to open his own business. She wouldn't be able to confirm the source of his income, but she imagined that a scar from an operation of that scale had to be unmistakable. In the torrid heat of the Recife suburbs, the uncivilized habit of going shirtless had always annoyed her; but, under the circumstances, it might be the determining factor for whether the investigation would continue.

—I saw the scar — said the Police Chief when she saw the informants again. — It

begins below the lower rib on his left side and runs across the center of his back. Then she asked, —Why are you reporting this now?

—I'm really scared, Delegada. Confessed the husband.

The reason for his fear was simple: tempted by all the money that was changing lives in the neighborhood, he had placed his name on the donors list. But as the departure date neared, he began to fear reprisals to his family if the operation wasn't a success. According to the couple, retaliations were becoming more and more common.

—They are killing them, Detective.

There were two types of victim: the potential donors who travelled to South Africa and, once there, decide not to undergo the transplant, and relatives of donors complaining about post-operative problems. When these relatives sought the agents for help with hemorrhage cases resulting from these precariously performed surgeries, they were only harassed. The agents would tell them to turn themselves right around, or take a bullet.

—I want out — admitted the informant. —But I'm afraid they'll kill me because I know too much about the scheme. From the start, the Police Chief knew she was dealing with a federal crime. She would be taken off the case, even though it occurred in her precinct's jurisdiction. The international reach of the squad barred her from acting. For everything indicated that where the surgeries occurred, in Durban, was the site of the crime.

As she'd gleaned from the Police Academy, where she'd studied after receiving her BA in Law, the methods were textbook Mafioso. Believing it to be her civic duty to pursue the investigation, even if informally, she concluded that a solid report would make opening an inquiry inevitable.

She appealed to another Neighborhood Policing Project regular: a cop she knew who worked security at *Barro* on his day off. The Police Chief never revealed his name, not even to the Feds. He had made many friends in the neighborhood. One of them was the dark and short mechanic-motorist Rubens Farias dos Santos Filho, or Rubinho, Telinho's ex brother-in-law. Rubinho was the most important conquest of the entire investigation. Neither local nor federal police would have gotten anywhere if not for the information he'd initially passed over a bar table, which was later corroborated.

The Police Chief's intuition was spot on. In a few days, she had the name of the lab that provided tests to potentials, and those whose results checked out okay were guaranteed admission to the Donor's Club: it was the Gilson Cidrim Clinic, in Derby. Rubinho also had the monies amounts and wherewithal exchanged in this international butchery: a commercial operation yielding US \$150K to traffickers when the kidney donor traveled to South Africa for transplant surgery; the kidneys were earmarked primarily for the Israelis. According to Rubinho, the donors received US \$15 K for an organ.

The informants' descriptions of the kidney trafficking made the Police Chief think of Raissa Abravanel's death squad. In addition to both being similarly highly

improbable cases, their modus operandi had many common points. Raíssa's recently disbanded gang had international connections that brought homosexuals to European whorehouses. And the band functioned under the protection of a so-called "rotten bunch" of police.

—The squad commander is the wife of one Captain Ivan — said the informants.  
— The woman is the sister of a Federal Officer.

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Delegada Beatriz Gibson considered that the majority of crimes end in a pizza party of impunity, because of just this kind of patronage. No wonder so few killers, responsible for the more than 20,000 murders during the eight-year term of Governor Jarbas Vasconcelos, were ever brought to justice. Extermination squads took cover in the Military Police.

They imposed their law on all quarters of greater Recife without challenge from those actually responsible for State public security.

In addition to her acute sensibility as a cop, inherited from her father, also a chief of police, Delegada Beatriz Gibson carried the burden of having a child with only one kidney. Credit for disbanding the band is ultimately due to him. The crime affected her family directly, as much as it did society. Sooner or later, her son would need a kidney. And she couldn't cough up \$150K to buy one on the black market. She harbored doubts until Easter week. Then she took the trip to her mother's house in Gravatá, a city in rural Pernambuco that had been had been a winter retreat for the upper middle class since the 70s.

There she met with her cousin, the psychologist Anália Belisa Ribeiro who was the Brazilian coordinator for the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking. This program is linked to the National Secretariat of Justice, which was directed by Rio de Janeiro's renown criminologist, Elizabeth Sussekind, for much of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's Presidential term. It was Elizabeth Sussekind who took the project to Brasilia.

Tapped phone lines can undermine investigations involving cops, since the police have access there is a greater risk of information leaking to the target of the investigation, but this wasn't Beatriz's primary concern in avoiding calling her cousin. In truth, everything seemed strange. The Police Chief felt like she was a protagonist in a horror flic. Not because of the macabre drama. Scary stories only become real in the unusual alignment of circumstances. What a coincidence that the first organ trafficking squad was operating in her cousin's jurisdiction when her cousin was of one of the few specialist criminologists in the country!

—We need to talk — said the Police Chief to her cousin when they met at the family's country house.

The psychologist Anália Belisa Ribeiro was catalyzed by the discovery of the kidney connection. At once, she perceived this case could remove organ trafficking from the uncomfortable realm of urban legend, in which it seemed entrenched. It would also contribute to general understanding of human trafficking, a broad

category of crime that included slave labor, sexual exploitation, and organ trafficking. The large Mafioso organizations of the world were all migrating to this type of crime.

—We need a strategy —the Delegada considered.

They reviewed the obstacles that might compromise an investigation together. Perhaps the most important of these was the fact that the squad counted on the protection of a captain and a federal officer. And this brought to mind the old rivalry between former Pernambuco Police Commissioner Fernando Gibson, Beatriz Gibson's father, and the current Chief of Police, Officer Aníbal Moura. This quarrel had already brought Beatriz some setbacks in her career. She remained Delegada in title only, and had not been permanently granted the position of Chief of Police.

—We'll report it to the Public Prosecutor — suggested Anália.

The psychologist knew what she was taking about. She had learned to take advantage of the moral patrimony of the Republic's prosecutors in 1977 when, under the protection of the Attorney General's Office, she implemented and oversaw the Witness Protection Program at the Ministry of Justice, a real *armata brancaleone*.

Under this protection, she and three others were able to monitor police action and bolster the judiciary, even in complicated, notorious cases such as Colonel Hildebrando and his chainsaws, in Acre.

—We're dealing with the Prosecution, a decisive institution, for which an action like this needs a beginning, middle, and an end —she added. —With the Attorney General's Office involved, no other institution will be able to stop the investigation.

The first step was to take the report to Brasilia for review by the same team that had honorably encountered Colonel Hildebrand's chainsaws. Attorney Ricardo Lins was a member of the *armata brancaleone*. Subsequently, Ricardo Lins would take command of a similar program in the Pernambuco State Government. In Recife, Jarbas Vasconcelos was the only governor in the country to add the fight against human trafficking to his public security policy.

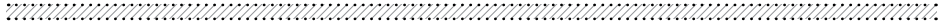
Another measure that the psychologist considered important was to take Rubinhos' testimony, though his name would remain secreted. It was the first testimony Rubinho gave in an official capacity. Rubinho is a contradictory figure, and according to several sources worked for the neighborhood kidney recruitment network. But he became the key witness in dismantling the Recife-Israel-Durban trafficking connection.

Rubinho felt intimidated when he gave his testimony. His performance in no way resembled the day he called the Police Chief to the bar where the criminals were finalizing details on sending a new levy of kidney donors to Durban. Even so, his testimony was enough for psychologist Anália Belisa Ribeiro to send out letter no. 065-TSH/PE to the Federal Prosecutors on June 9, 2003. This letter, written in her own hand, contained all the information her Chief of Police cousin had uncovered.

Theoretically, Beatriz Gibson should have walked away from the case then. But as chance would have it, typical of provincial towns like Recife, she was kept at the center of events for a little while longer. The then public prosecutor for the Attorney General's Office in Pernambuco was none other than her childhood friend and

college classmate, Dr. Antonio Carlos Barreto Campello. The Prosecutor accepted the report when he learned who was behind it. A word from a friend of Carnavals-past was all Attorney General Antonio Carlos Barreto Campello needed to believe in this urban legend. He referred the case to Attorney Samuel Miranda Arruda on June 12, and promptly went on vacation. On July 12, Samuel Miranda Arruda sent a letter to the coordinator of the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking informing her that the report brought to his office had given rise to a police investigation by the Federal Police Department's Regional Superintendence.

Analia's strategy had worked.



## THE BOOK



### Export Zone

Julio Ludemir

- **Original title:** RIM POR RIM
- **ISBN:** 9788501078209
- **Year of publication:** 2008
- **Original publisher:** ROCCO
- **Number of pages:** 308p.
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 3.000 copies

### SYNOPSIS

What for many seems no more than urban legend, in truth is a cruel reality. International organ trafficking is a crime that requires the complicit participation of doctors, technicians, airline companies and government authorities officials.

Seduced by easy money and unaware of the health problems that extraction can cause, Brazilians sell their organs to a worldwide mafia ring. A lucrative business – a kidney can bring upwards of 15 thousand reais to the “donator” and be sold for ten times that on the black market.

This book-length reportage written by Julio Ludemir, journalist, researcher and author on themes of urban violence, follows the trajectory of this unconscionable crime from Brazil, through South Africa to Israel, where the commercialization of organs is tolerated.

## PRESS REVIEWS

“Ludemir tells the story like it is, in vivid and graphic prose. It is a page-turner, hard to put down”. Nancy Scheper-Hughes – Professor of Medical Anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley and Director of Organs Watch

“Come to know the trajectory of this brutal crime against humanity in the nonfiction narrative by journalist Julio Ludemir, researcher and author of books about urban violence”.

Folha de São Paulo

## THE AUTHOR



### Julio Bernardo Ludemir

- **Pen name:** Julio Ludemir
- **Other books:**

**Só por hoje** (novel Rocco, 2012) – 3.000 ex

**Psico**, (novel Faces, 2012) – 2.000 ex

**O bandido da chacrete** (novel: Record 2007) – 3.000 ex

**Lembrancinha do Adeus** (novel: Planeta, 2004) – 3.000 ex

**Sorria, você está na Rocinha** (novel: Record, 2004) – 3.000 ex

**No coração do Comando** (novel: Record, 2002) – 3.000 ex

## **THE TRANSLATOR**

### **Alex Forman**

Alex Forman is an author and translator specializing in literature. Born in a University town in the United States, she is also a Brazilian national. She graduated in Comparative

Literature and Portuguese & Brazilian Studies from Brown University, and did her graduate work in Fine Art at Yale University, where she also focused on literature. Alex has published translations for Editora Casa da Palavra, Editora Aeroplano and Astro Press, among others.

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# DRAINED

LOURENÇO MUTARELLI

Translated by Alison Entrekin

## 1. Everything the World Has to Offer

**S**oran was an anagram. That was what he said. He also said he'd paid a very high price for it. He took an old solid gold pocket watch out of his coat pocket.

I noted that it had once had a cover, a protective cover. He swore it had belonged to Professor Soran.

I asked who the hell Soran was.

He told me Soran was an anagram. He took the timepiece back and returned it to the inside pocket of his coat.

So, how much are you going to give me for it?

A strong smell of sewage was wafting up from the drain hole and invading my nose. It was invading the whole room.

Smells like shit. It's the drain, I said.

I think I was ashamed he might think the smell was coming from me.

He said Soran was a wise man, a visionary. My back itched and I realized that when I'd looked at the watch I hadn't even taken the opportunity to see what time it was.

I was in a hurry, but it would've been awkward to glance at my wrist.

Can I see just one more thing on that fine pocket watch that belonged to Sólon?

Soran, he corrected me. Two thirty. I didn't know if the old ticker could be trusted.

Did it still work? Almost instinctively I held it to my ear. It used to play a beautiful melody. That was what he said. Confirming that it had once had a cover and had played music when you opened it.

He said it used to play the song that the gas delivery trucks play nowadays.

I couldn't help myself and glanced at the knock-off strapped to my wrist. Fifteen to one.

He told me he'd come into possession of the watch through an archaeologist. I told him I had no idea it was that old.

He didn't get the joke. He said that the archaeologist, whose name escapes me now, worked as a spy. I knew I was about to hear one of those stories that I didn't feel like listening to.

He told me Soran was an anagram.

At the end of it all he concluded that in spite of the inestimable value of the watch he could do me a special deal.

I told him I wasn't interested.



If it at least had its cover, I added.  
He scowled.  
He looked at it again.  
He said I didn't understand the opportunity that was before me. He said luck opens its doors to everyone at least once in a lifetime, but if the opportunity is wasted, luck shuts its doors.  
He left, slamming it as hard as he could.

The girl really was slow.  
Her face was melancholic. Almost inexpressive.  
The sandwich she served me was equally as dull.  
I remembered the joke we used to make in the cafeteria on my first job. 007. That was our name for the steak.  
Because it was cold, hard and had nerves of steel.  
As I ate, I devoured the book I had open on the counter.  
American Tabloid. James Ellroy. It was a good book. Ellroy wrote at the pace of my thoughts. Astonishing. Vertiginous. A twister. A twisted soul.  
I left my food half-eaten.  
The soft drink was in a can.  
I started thinking at James Ellroy's pace.  
Suddenly I found myself contemplating an enormous arse.  
Bulging. Almost deformed.  
It was the girl's. Underneath it all she was good, I thought.  
I smiled. She looked back at me with her melancholic face.  
I asked her name.  
I couldn't pronounce it.  
Underneath she was good.  
I asked how long she'd been working at the lunch bar.  
One week.  
With that face, I thought, she'd be out of a job in the same amount of time.  
She turned and bent over to pick up an order that had slipped out of her pocket.  
She could retire in that job. She could be promoted to manager. She asked what I was reading. I showed her the cover. James what? Ellroy, I said.  
She told me I looked like the guy from that TV commercial.  
I tried to remember his face.  
I smiled at her.  
Didn't you like your sandwich?  
I'm not hungry.  
I ordered another soft drink.  
She turned around to get it.  
I thought I could spend a week just looking at her rump.  
I went to the cash register, paid and bought cigarettes.  
I was given a sweet as change.

Raspberry.

I went to the counter and gave the girl the sweet. What's your name again? I asked.

I'll never be able to pronounce it. She didn't smile.

She put the sweet in her pocket.

I wanted to ask her to turn around again.

I went back to work. I wanted to want to stop smoking.

He came in holding a cutlery set in a case.

It's silver.

I made my offer. He told me life was tough.

I explained that the smell was coming from the drain.

He accepted the offer shaking his head.

This cutlery set has lots of stories.

I swore I believed him. I took the key out of my pocket and opened the drawer.

I placed the money on the desk.

He didn't even count it. He thanked me with his head.

He went to the door.

He came back.

He looked at the cutlery set with dull eyes. He ran his hand over the top of the case as if stroking it affectionately.

He said life was tough. He left.

My mouth was starting to taste bitter.

Suddenly I was looking at a shoe. It was mine.

He came in. It was a strange animal he was carrying. Chinese porcelain. Such-and-such dynasty. I don't know if it was a dragon or a cat. He worked out for himself that I wasn't interested. I lit a cigarette.

When I tuned in, she was asking me what I thought about it. That's the way things are, I said. So you think it's right for a family man to do something like that? What? Gamble everything away. Of course not.

She asked if I didn't want my salad. I said I wasn't hungry. She told me they were already at the printer's. The invitations. She said she loved me. She said that with me she'd be happy.

I said that only the naïve believed in happiness.

She covered her face trying to cry. You insensitive boor!

That's what you are. Insensitive.

She got up from the table. I filled my wine glass.

Sorry. She said.

Sorry for what? I got upset. I don't want to ruin the evening. It's just that sometimes you pretend to be so insensitive. There's just one month to go.

I told her I didn't want to get married.

She made a funny face.

She slapped me across the face.

No one slaps a man in the face. My dad used to say.  
Are you crazy?  
Course not. And to prove it I'm going to put an end to all this bullshit.  
You said our relationship's bullshit.  
She slapped me across the face again.  
I got up.  
She pushed me so hard that I sat down again.  
I don't like you. I never have. I've never liked anybody.  
She was kneeling on the ground. The way she was crying was funny.  
I laughed. Get out of here! You're crazy! Now I'm the one who doesn't want to get married to a madman. Have a bunch of crazy kids. Get out! And don't come back here ever again! You madman.  
What are people going to think, with the invitations at the printer's?  
That's what I heard as I shut the door.

I'm staring at a white pigeon. More grey than white. It has more missing toes than toes on its feet. Kites? Here in the centre of town it's unlikely... It flaps away as it takes a crap. The shit, whiter than the pigeon itself, splatters on a bald head.  
Someone knocks at the door. I go back to my desk. Come in. He comes in carrying a flute.  
My mouth tastes bitter. If I only had a sweet. Raspberry. This flute has lots of stories to tell. He plays a few notes. I can't help myself. I laugh. I laugh, unable to contain myself. I laugh at everything and everyone. He stops. The flute goes quiet. I make my offer.  
He laughs.  
Life's tough. I say.

She comes in crying.  
She begs my forgiveness.  
She says she loves me.  
She says she's not going to let me go that easily.  
She hugs me. I just stand there. I tell her she has nothing to offer me.  
She slaps me across the face.  
She says I'm not going to get away that easily.  
She says I'm going to grovel at her feet.  
I've never liked her.  
I've never liked anybody.  
She leaves.  
The smell of shit infests my nose.

Paul Auster confuses me. He writes at the pace I think. Vertiginous. All those Mr. Whites, Mr. Greens. Like in the board game.  
Mr. White, with a knife in the library.

*Hand to mouth.*

She hands me my sandwich. She almost smiles.

She turns around to get my soft drink.

I could spend a week just watching her turn around.

Is that already a different book?

I show her the cover.

Paul what?

She says she likes reading. Just magazines. Stars Magazine. TV stars. I'd pay just to look at that arse.

I order a coffee.

Lost your appetite again?

Yeah.

Her name is a mixture of at least another three.

Her father's, her mother's and some TV star's.

She asks what mine is.

I tell her.

She repeats it out loud.

I bet she moves her lips when she reads.

I bet she moves her lips even when she sees photos of TV stars.

I bet she moves her lips as she remembers their names. Roberto Carlos.

I find myself staring at a jug of juice I made myself.

I close the fridge.

I turn on the TV.

I imagine a series of things. Mixed with what the TV says.

Three people are going at it on 80, in the old choreography of porn flicks.

On Discovery, a frightened beast.

The American series comes with pre-recorded laughter.

On Cartoon Network a cartoon I used to watch as a kid.

On the ceiling an unscrewed light bulb.

On the sofa the clothes I wore yesterday.

On the bookshelves there are still books to read.

The news program repeats the assault of a world I made myself.

He comes in carrying a cage with a canary in it. Stuffed.

This has stories.

I make my bid.

He laughs with his eyes closed.

I get the tiny key and open the drawer.

He counts the money, note by note.

Three times.

He counts the money moving his lips.

He tries to shake my hand, like someone closing a big deal.

I pretend not to see his hand. I don't even bother to justify the smell.  
He leaves. He thinks he's happy.

She comes in.  
She's shaking.  
She doesn't look me in the eyes.  
Eyes that don't even seem to move.  
She's holding a jewellery box. In it, a bracelet, a pair of earrings, a tie pin, an Agnus Dei pendant.  
All gold.  
I complain about the smell as if I've never noticed it before.  
It's from the drain.  
I ask where she got it, just for the sake of haggling.  
She says she inherited it.  
I lowball her.  
She accepts my offer straight up.  
She's shaking.  
I know she'll stop shaking soon.

He comes in.  
I catch myself gazing at the sky.  
He says: It's going to rain.  
The gramophone is heavy.  
He rests it on my desk.  
Does it work?  
No, but it makes a nice decoration.  
I say I'm not interested.  
He asks if I know where he's come from.  
I don't even answer.  
And by bus.  
And you're going back, I say.  
This gramophone has stories.  
The smell's from the drain.  
Life's tough.  
Tough my arse. He curses me.

Even with no appetite and feeling queasy, I sit in the same spot.  
Ah! The book's the same as yesterday.  
Paul Auster's hard.  
If the food here were any good, this'd be paradise.  
I say it without realizing it.  
She laughs.  
I laugh back.

She brings me my sandwich. I yearn for my soft drink.  
She does it.  
She bends over.  
Her arse.  
Her arse, immense and deformed, smiles at me.  
I break into a cold sweat.  
Why did you say that?  
I like it here. It's always empty, I always get the same spot at the counter. You know, these things are important.  
Well, the time of day you come, the workers have all gone.  
She must be their queen. The lot of them.  
She must inspire their dreams.  
Not mine, unfortunately.  
I never dream.

He comes in.  
He places the violin on my desk. He doesn't say a thing. Not even good afternoon.  
I stay quiet. After all, he's the one looking to sell. Then he says, how much? I make my bid. He scratches his beard. This violin must have stories, I say. He looks at me. His look bothers me. He picks up the violin and leaves.  
But before shutting the door, he says:  
It smells like shit in here.  
It's the drain.  
No. No it isn't.  
Of course it is. The smell's coming from the drain.  
He comes back in and shuts the door.  
The smell's from you.  
Look. I get up and go over to the toilet.  
Look, the smell's coming from the drain.  
He laughs scratching his beard.  
Who uses that toilet?  
Me.  
Who else?  
Just me.  
With a smile still on his face, he says:  
So, where does the smell come from?

When I tune in, I'm staring at a jug. Empty.  
I turn on the TV.  
I open Paul Auster. A series of thoughts mixes in with everything.  
I put out my cigarette. I'm quiet. I don't move.  
I only twig when the water falls on my head.  
I lather up over and over.

The food at the lunch bar doesn't agree with me. Soggy. Stinky.  
Worse than the smell from the drain.  
It's my smell and I don't have to explain anything to anyone.  
Not here.  
Not here in my own home.  
I should have taken a crap before getting in the shower.  
The telephone won't stop ringing. It must be her. It is her. You're not going to get rid of me that easily. I'm going to talk to your mother. I'm going to tell her that you want to call off the wedding with less than a month to go. While you're at it, give her my regards. I don't like calling her. I don't like her. I don't like you. I don't like anyone.  
You show me what you've got, I say if I'm interested and how much it's worth.  
Life's tough. And fuck you.  
If she were here, she'd slap me across the face.  
She doesn't like me swearing. I think something's about to change.  
I don't give a damn about anyone.  
I just don't want people to think the smell from the drain is mine.  
I'm going to bed.  
I'm not going to dream.  
Today's Saturday.  
And that's why no one enters and no one leaves.  
I smoke staring at the ceiling.  
I know it's six. I always wake up at six. I remember the pocket watch.  
What was that professor's name?  
I want to get up. But I know breakfast isn't ready.  
I feel lazy.  
To hell with it!  
Today's Saturday.  
I think about the rump. Rosebud. If I were to die now like Welles, no one would find my Rosebud. If that rump were here with me now, I'd play with it so much. I'd play with it like a kid plays with his Rosebud.  
They say a piece of arse can drive a man crazy.  
I believe it.  
Look what this arse has done to me.  
I put the grounds in. I turn on the coffeemaker.  
I leaf through the newspapers.  
I get aroused by the classifieds.  
Saturday's a long day.  
Sunday's worse.  
No one enters, no one leaves.  
I'm staring at a giant toenail.  
I cut it. It flies and disappears in the carpet. I cut another one.  
I remember the pigeon. I remember the bald guy. I finish Auster. I open Ferréz.

“Peace to those who deserve it.” That’s what Ferréz said.

I get a slice of bread. I don’t spread butter on it.

Today’s Saturday... “and there’s a great build-up of syphilis”. “Because today’s Saturday.” I don’t like going downtown on the weekends, otherwise I’d get in the car and go eat at the lunch bar.

Because today’s Saturday, I’d be capable of telling her that I’d pay just to look at her arse. I read to the end.

I defrost something in the microwave. I try to eat. I can’t taste anything.

I watch TV. The back-and-forth in close up reminds me of gears.

I fall asleep.

Sunday.

I wake up in the living room. The gears are still working. Cable TV, round-the-clock entertainment. I make breakfast. I eat a slice of bread. I don’t spread butter on it. I turn on the radio. Chico Buarque is singing the way I think. I put on a CD. Philip Glass, Music in twelve parts. It’s not piece of music, it’s an organism. I appreciate the work as if I were observing an alien creature. A living being. I feel its breathing, the beating of its heart, its movements.

Life seeks to live.

Art imitates life.

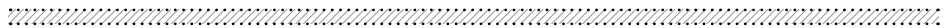
Life imitates life.

Art imitates art.

“Solomon Grundy; born on a Sunday; baptized on Monday; courted on Tuesday; married on Wednesday; took ill on Thursday; worse on Friday; died on Saturday; buried on Sunday; and that was the end of Solomon Grundy.”

If the god damn arse were mine.

[...]





## THE BOOK



### Drained

Lourenço Mutarelli

- **Original title:** O cheiro do ralo
- **ISBN:** 9788535919189
- **Publication year:** 2011
- **Original publishing house:** Companhia das Letras
- **Number of pages:** 184
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 4.000 copies

### SYNOPSIS

Buying cheap to sell at a profit can be an addictive mental process. A junk shop owner takes it to an extreme, subjecting his clientele to the most cynical materialism. Engaged to be married, he coldly breaks up with his fiancée and falls for a waitress's backside. He reads detective novels and his mind starts to gallop at breakneck speed. However, a plumbing problem in the back of his shop poses the following question: does the bad smell come from the drain or the protagonist? Lourenço Mutarelli's surprising literary debut, *Drained* explores some of the author's favourite themes, such as progressive dehumanization, the absurd and cruelty, with the skillful use of language he developed in his career in comics. The film adaptation, directed by Heitor Dhalia, resulted in a memorable performance by Selton Mello and has

taken its place in the recent history of Brazilian cinema.

### PRESS REVIEWS

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/livrariadafolha/959810-o-cheiro-do-ralo-ganha-edicao-da-cia-das-lettras-leia-trecho.shtml>

### THE AUTHOR

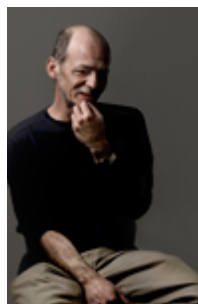


FOTO PIO FIGUEIROA

### Lourenço Mutarelli

- **Pen name:** Lourenço Mutarelli
- **Other books:**

#### Novels

*Jesus Kid*, Devir Editora, 2004  
*A Arte de Produzir Efeito Sem Causa*, Companhia das Letras, 2008 - 5.500 copies  
*O Natimorto*, Companhia das Letras, 2009 - 4.500 copies  
*Miguel e os Demônios*, Companhia das Letras, 2009 - 4.500 copies  
*Nada me Faltar*, Companhia das Letras, 2010 - 3.000 copies  
*Quando meu pai se encontrou com o ET fazia um dia quente*, Companhia das Letras, 2011 - 6.000 copies  
*Diomedes*, Companhia das Letras, 2012 - 5.000 copies

#### Graphic novels

*Quando meu pai se encontrou com o ET fazia um dia quente*, Companhia das Letras (2011)

Diomedes, Companhia das Letras (2012)

**Plays**

O Teatro de Sombras - Coletânea de 5 peças de teatro, Devir Editora (2007)

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Alison is a freelance literary translator specializing in Brazilian Portuguese, with a background in creative writing. She has translated numerous works by Brazilian writers, including CITY OF GOD, by Paulo Lins; THE ETERNAL SON, by Cristovão Tezza, which was shortlisted for the IMPAC Dublin Literary Prize; NEAR TO THE WILD HEART, by Clarice Lispector; and BUDAPEST, by Chico Buarque, which was voted one of the 10 best books published in the UK in 2004.

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# ELITE SQUAD

LUIZ EDUARDO SOARES, ANDRÉ BATISTA,  
RODRIGO PIMENTEL

Translated by Clifford E. Landers

## WAR DIARY

### Friendly Fire

**T**he news about Amâncio took me by surprise. Maybe that's a dumb thing to say, of course it was a surprise. Who could have been prepared to find out, from one minute to the next, that one of his best friends had taken a bullet in the back and was hanging between life and death in the Intensive Care Unit of a military hospital? It was more than a surprise: it was almost like catching a bullet myself. He was a policeman too, a former BOPE sergeant. He'd left the force when his first child was born. His wife asked him to, and he felt her concern made sense. Funny. When you're in the BOPE you practically never think about danger. But danger is our constant companion. So much so that you should never be surprised by the news that some colleague was wounded and is hovering between life and death in the ICU.

Maybe Amâncio's case was so shocking precisely because he had already left the BOPE, and because of the reasons that had led him to get out. It was fucking ironic that he had survived dozens of BOPE incursions into the most dangerous favelas<sup>1</sup> to end up shot like that, on a Sunday afternoon, as he was getting ready to go home after a 24-hour shift, probably anxious to see his wife and kid. He was part of the 2nd Battalion P2, the section responsible for intelligence. By law, P2 should limit itself exclusively to investigating improper conduct among fellow officers of the Battalion. But that's not what happens. Since the Civil Police, with rare exceptions, doesn't investigate shit, it's P2 that campaigns\* at the entrances to favelas, taps traffickers phones, and tails suspects around the city. That's why P2 cops drive civilian cars with standard license plates.

There are several advantages to being a policeman. One of them is that you know everybody at the military hospital. In urban warfare there's always something going on there. People come by carrying people, visiting, telephoning to get the news. So you can understand how it wasn't hard to get into the ICU, violating medical regulations. I sat down beside Amâncio, who was hooked up to all kinds of apparatus, and took his hand. He opened his eyes, forced a half-smile, closed his eyes and whispered, It wasn't in the goddamn back. It was in the stomach. Shot in the stomach. I felt the tremor tantrums through my body when I'm about to explode. Putting it that way, it sounds like I'm some kind of weapon. What explodes is a grenade. But there are situations when I feel like a weapon. More specifically, a grenade. In this case, the metaphor is

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1. Favelas are shantytowns, usually found on hillsides, in Rio de Janeiro. [Translators note]

very appropriate. Amâncio squeezed my hand and joked, Remember the grenade? Shit yes, of course I do, how could anyone forget? I said. The lives of the entire team were in your hand. Literally.

## **A CLEARING IN THE SERRA DO MAR RANGE, WINTER, 3 A.M., SOME YEARS EARLIER**

**S**o you don't lose the thread of the story, it's important to know about the tale of the grenade. But to do that, we have to leave the hospital for a moment and go back in time, to the qualifying tests for the BOPE.

After riding a horse bareback for sixty miles without resting, dying of hunger and thirst, totally devastated from physical exhaustion, our thighs and asses chafed raw, we had the option of sitting in a basin of brine. The experience showed that it was worth it to sit, despite the shooting pain. Some of us fainted from it. Even so, it was better. Whoever spared himself was unable to even move the next day: inflamed sores, covered with pus; swollen thighs, balls, and ass. The result: immobilized, they were washed out. And the worst part was the ritual of humiliation that went with their dismissal: they had to dig a grave and simulate their own death by lying in the bottom of the hole.

Let's skip the brine, because what comes later is better or worse, depending on your point of view. While some of the horses dropped dead from fatigue, I'm not exaggerating, they actually died the meal was served. But if you're thinking of a bountiful and tasty meal on a tray, you're mistaken. The food was thrown onto a canvas spread on the ground remember that we're out in the open and it's a winter night. We have two minutes to eat. I did say two minutes. With our hands. Eat what you can, however you can, that's the motto. Anything goes. At times like this you see that, reduced to our lowest common physiological denominator, all of us humans are alike and resemble the lower mammals. The fight for survival is ugly to see and even worse to experience.

But after the storm comes the calm, just as after extreme physical challenge comes contemplation, abstraction, and intellectual instruction. Now, try to imagine this: a band of dirty mud-caked guys, stinking of horses and with their balls rubbed raw, their asses and thighs burning, drained of their last drop of energy, still famished and thirsty, their fingernails black from vestiges of food, their hands greasy, forced to listen to a long and boring lecture about the theory of antiguerrilla tactics in which there's no reference to action, just the fundamental concepts.

Add to it the following ingredient: the lecture was read, in a deliberately hypnotic monotone. We were a bunch of sick, sleepwalking specters. We forced our eyes wide open, knowing that dozing would cost very dearly.

Amâncio couldn't resist and began to nod, overcome by sleep. The instructor rose slowly and addressed him. He ordered him to squat over a tree trunk, took a grenade from his belt, pulled the pin, and placed it in the wayward student's hand. One slipup would mean the end of that fine and brave pack. From then on, no one took his

eyes off Amâncio watching our colleagues watchfulness. Fear kept us awake better than the best hot, bitter coffee could have done.

## **BACK IN THE ICU**

**Y**ou held us all in your hand, I repeated. Amâncio still maintained his half smile, taut as a tent in the troop's camp. Now the combat was his alone, just his. He was by himself, with the grenade tied to his hand. I squeezed his hand so he'd know I was still at his side. You know what happened? What really happened? he asked in a faint voice.

I told him it was better not to talk, he needed all his strength to win that battle. I didn't mean to be all dramatic and talk like that, with fight-for-life images and stuff that looks pretty in a book but does a godawful lot of damage when spoken at the deathbed of somebody who knows there is no fucking battle, just a pitiless massacre.

But he insisted. That's how I learned what had happened that Sunday afternoon.

## **SANTA TERESA, SUNDAY, FOUR P.M.**

**T**his is the faithful account of what Amâncio told me: Me and my partner were heading back to the 2nd Battalion in the plain-wrapper Volkswagen that we used for certain missions. We were on Rua Almirante Alexandrino, in Santa Teresa, because we'd been following a guy who was the link between the traffickers in the Santa Marta favela and the lowlifes of Tabajara. But we lost him and, since we'd already been on duty for over 24 hours, we decided to go back. Up there, near the Balé favela, there's a fork in the road. We wanted to head down to Cosme Velho and Laranjeiras, but my partner, who was driving, took the wrong road. When we realized it, we were on a very steep incline that was taking us straight to the heart of the favela. There wasn't any way to back up, or to put on the brakes, get out of the car, and run away on foot. We were practically sliding right into the middle of the favela. Our car was like a neon sign. Shit, two men in a Volkswagen like that, we had to be either outlaws or cops. Either way, we were gonna get shot at. The car moved ahead slowly, down the slope, and I could already see the traffickers were gathered in the middle of the street. They were handing out the guns and ammo. It hit me that we had only one way out: accelerating.

I shouted: Step on it, push it to the floor and keep your head down. It was like bowling a strike. The car shot forward down the hill and we got three or four of them. It was a shitstorm; guys were thrown everywhere; the car rolled over several times. I managed to escape, in a hail of bullets. I ran, firing and looking for cover. I don't know what happened to Amílcar. I couldn't look back. All I could do was run down alleyways in the direction opposite the entrance. You must remember the favela. It's in a valley, between the incline coming down from Santa Teresa and the steps that go up, at the other end. I ran up the steps. They didn't follow me. They must've been seeing to the wounded.

Probably their leader was one of those we ran over. I gave it all I had and took

the steps three at a time. When I was about halfway up, some guys from the 1st Battalion showed up at the head of the steps. I signaled to them and thought I was saved by the bell.

Suddenly they pointed a rifle at me from up there and all I felt was that kick in the stomach. Everything went black. I woke up here, after surgery. It was friendly fire, amigo. Friendly fire. What I wanna know is why? Sure, I'm black and I was armed and out of uniform, but fuck, why shoot at me before identifying a fellow officer?

Amâncio didn't live beyond that day. At the funeral, when they fired the salute, I felt like telling them to stop that farce, that charade. But I thought about his widow, his son, pondered it a bit and decided the best thing would be to put a rock over the affair. Better to have a father who was a hero, killed by enemies, than the victim of a misunderstanding. I say misunderstanding in order to maintain a certain level of moderation, out of respect for the memory of a dear friend, a courageous man. What I really felt was like crying and vomiting out the truth about all that shit.

## A Thousand and One Nights

**T**he Special Operations Battalion, BOPE to insiders, arrives at the war grounds. We've got a real hard-on to invade the favela, fucking A. Excuse me for talking like that, but am I supposed to tell the truth or not? Soon you're going to discover that I'm a well educated guy, with schooling that few in Brazil have. You may even be surprised to learn that I'm a student at the Catholic University, speak English, and have read Foucault. But that comes later. I'm going to take the liberty of speaking with total frankness, and, you know it is, when you're sincere and speak freely, your words aren't always the most sober and elegant.

If you're expecting a nice, polite testimony, forget it. Better put the book away right now. Sorry, but I get irritated at people who want the truth and a refined account at the same time. Truth has to be coaxed out, and it only descends upon the foulmouthed type who refuses to filter the voice coming from his heart. Therefore, the truth follows rough street language rather than the bowing and scraping of court. This testimony is as if it were my house. It's going to be beautiful, sublime, and horrendous, just like me, just the way my life has been. And the way yours probably is too. Come on in, make yourself at home. The place is yours. At first you'll find a few things strange, but you'll soon get used to it. I also found them odd in the beginning. When I joined the force, I found a lot of things odd. But I soon got used to them. People adapt. Therefore, my dear friend may I call you that? Fasten your seat belt and let's go on.

The first story takes place in the Jacaré favela.

It was more or less this way. We were arriving at Jacaré overflowing with love to give if you understand me and with a shitload of willingness. As soon as we got out of the wagon, two junkies came toward us because we had stopped just beyond the curve of the main incline. I was a lieutenant at the time and commanded the patrol. They didn't even have time to pretend or try to flee. I grabbed the taller one by the arm and shook him, for the son of a bitch to wake up and understand he'd been caught in

the rattrap. He wasn't armed but had some envelopes of coke in his pocket.

So the cocksuckers here to score some blow, eh? I'll bet you this fag also gets a kick out of marching all dressed in white and demonstrating for peace, huh? Say something, asshole.

No, sir.

No, sir what, you piece of shit? You didn't buy powder or you don't like parading for peace?

I don't deal, sir. I just came to get some for my own use.

Ah! Just for your personal use, so that's it.

I grabbed a fire extinguisher from one of our wagons and discharged it in the guy's nostrils. He looked like a meringue pie.

You want powder? You want white? Then have some white, you animal. Well, at that point I must admit that I got hot under the collar and lost it. But I just knocked him around a little, because I had a brilliant idea. I ordered Rocha to stop beating on the other junkie.

Come here, you two. Stand up and look at me. That's right, at my cell phone.

You've got three options: phoning your daddy and asking him to come get you, that's the first; eating a dozen boiled eggs, each of you, without water, that's the second; getting the shit beat out of you is the third. Your call.

They both chose the eggs. I knew they would. The last thing a junkie wants is for his father to find out. What they didn't know was that the eggs had been in the transport since the night before because of an occupation the BOPE was executing. In that delicious summer heat in Rio, the eggs were equivalent to a good working over. God writes straight with crooked lines. Free will was honored. Even so, the divine plan was carried out. Careful, don't think I'm a born-again. That's purely a preconception on your part. Not every cop or crook who mentions God is a born-again. So, you see? Its not just cops who are prejudiced, after all. Speaking of prejudice, write down in your notebook that I'm black. Black in the politically correct sense of the word, because from the merely physical point of view I'm mulatto, dark-skinned, in reality. But let me make it clear - no pun intended -that I'm black and prefer you to think of me as black, okay?

The problem was that there was only a dozen eggs, which forced me to improvise. But, all modesty aside, I'm quite creative. The solution I found was ingenious. While the shorter junkie was swallowing the eggs, to the rollicking applause of my men, the other was burying himself up to the neck in a dumpster. Be honest don't you find it an interesting punishment? If at this moment you recoil in horror and evoke human rights, maybe you'd better close this book right now, man, because you're risking a heart attack in a little while.

Well, actually I don't want you to close the book, and I wouldn't like you to get a bad impression of me. Don't take what I say all that seriously. Sometimes I say whatever comes into my head and end up conveying a wrong image of myself, as if I were inhuman, perverse, that kind of thing. But it's not like that at all. When you get to know me better you'll see it's not like that at all. I just wanted to tell this story because

it has a very funny ending. Here s how it happened: I was coming down from the favela worn out; it had been a rough night. Over three hours of chasing junkies, without result. Two soldiers from my unit were already waiting in the vehicle. I could hear their laughter from a long way off. When I approached, they pointed the searchlight at the dumpster, from which the junkie s head was sticking out, buried in that shit up to his neck.

What re you doing there, man? I asked.

You told me to stay here.

You can go now, dickhead.

I swear to God that I'd forgotten. If it wasn't for the sound of the rats, the boys wouldn't have seen him. And if they hadn't seen him, he might even be there till now.

\*In police vocabulary, to campaign means to keep a watch on, to observe without being seen. [Author's note]

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## THE BOOK



### Elite Squad

Luiz Eduardo Soares/ **Co-author:**  
André Batista e Rodrigo Pimentel

- **Original title:** Elite da Tropa
- **ISBN:** 85-7302-773-8
- **Year of publication:** 2006
- **Original publishing house:** Objetiva
- **Number of pages:** 312
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 159.046 copies (trade)/ 5.872 copies (pocket)

### SYNOPSIS

Elite Squad looks at violence from a totally original point of view — the eyes of the Police. For the first time, we observe the routine of police officers, listen to their own voices, follow their footsteps, their daily drama — men who receive disproportionately small salaries in relation to the threats they face every day. And who have to practice brutality, because they don't feel ruled by the laws of the Constitution, but by the imperative of war. The book is a fictional work based on the actual experiences of the authors. Places, facts, and characters have been modified, recombined and names have been changed. Written by anthropologist and public safety expert Luiz Eduardo Soares, Military Police Major André Batista, and former BOPE Commander Rodrigo Pimentel,

Elite Squad exposes the explosive underside of a divided city.

### TRANSLATIONS

- Argentina:** Tropa de Elite - 2009, Marea Editorial  
**Espanha:** Tropa de Élite - 2010, Lince  
**EUA:** Elite Squad - 2008, Weinstein  
**Itália:** Tropa de Elite -2008, Bompiani  
**Polônia:** Elitarni - 2009, Wydawnictwo Książkowe Twój Styl  
**Portugal:** Tropa de Elite - 2008, Presença

### PRESS REVIEWS

<http://www.presenca.pt/editorial/tropa-de-elite-todas-as-maos-sujas-de-sangue/>

[http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0103-40142006000300028&script=sci\\_arttext](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0103-40142006000300028&script=sci_arttext)

**FOLHA DE S. PAULO (article):** O que pode a linguagem? Diretor de “Tropa de Elite” e autor de “Elite da tropa” discutem a realidade da tortura e sua representação, um dos aspectos questionados por críticos do filme. José Eduardo Padilha e Luiz Eduardo Soares. Seção Ilustrada, p. E 8. 29/09/2007

**TRIBUNA DA IMPRENSA (review):** Elite da Tropa também causou muita polêmica: “(...) lendo-se suas páginas e crendo que haja nelas muito de verdade, compreende-se afinal por que a criminalidade se tornou, mais do que problema a ser solucionado, parte integrante do próprio tecido social (...)”. Seção: Tribuna Bis, p. 2. 05/10/2007.

## THE AUTHOR



FOTO BRUNO VEIGA

### Luiz Eduardo Soares

- **Pen name:** Luiz Eduardo Soares
- **Other books**

#### Fiction based on actual events

**Elite da Tropa** / co-autores: André Batista e Rodrigo Pimentel (312 págs.) - 2006, Objetiva

**Espírito Santo** / co-autores: Carlos Eduardo Ribeiro Lemos e Rodney Rocha Miranda (240 págs.) - 2009, Objetiva

**Elite da Tropa 2** (304 págs.) / co-autores: André Batista, Rodrigo Pimentel e Cláudio Armando Ferraz - 2010, Nova Fronteira

**Tudo ou Nada** - 2012, Nova Fronteira

#### Novel

**O Experimento de Avelar** (158 págs.) - 1997, Relume Dumará.

#### Nonfiction

**Campesinato: ideologia e política** - 1981, Zahar

**Os Dois Corpos do Presidente** (216 págs.) - 1993, Relume Dumará

**O Rigor da Indisciplina** (271 págs.) - 1994, Relume Dumará

**Violência e Política no Rio de Janeiro** (309 págs.) - 1996, Relume Dumará

**A Invenção do Sujeito Universal** (314 págs.) - 1995, UNICAMP

**Meu Casaco de General: 500 dias no front de Segurança Pública do Estado**

**do Rio de Janeiro** (480 págs.) - 2000, Companhia das Letras

**Cabeça de Porco** / co-autores: MV Bill e Celso Athayde (296 págs.) - 2005, Objetiva

**Legalidade Libertária** (646 págs.) - 2006, Lumen-Juris

**Segurança tem Saída** (160 págs.) - 2006, Sextante

- **Author's webpage:**

<http://www.luizeduardosoares.com/>

## THE TRANSLATOR

### Cliff E. Landers

Translator of books by Rubem Fonseca, Jorge Amado, João Ubaldo Ribeiro, Nélida Piñon, Patrícia Melo, José de Alencar, Ignácio Loyola Brandão, Chico Buarque, Jô Soares, Marcos Rey, José Murilo de Carvalho, Roberto DaMatta and other Brazilian authors. Ph.D. in political science; retired university professor. Awarded Mario Ferreira Prize and fellowships from Fulbright Commission and Fundação Biblioteca Nacional. Author of *Literary Translation: A Practical Guide*, published by Multilingual Matters.



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# THE BITTERSWEET SYLLABLE

MARCELO MIRISOLA

Translated by Fabia Vitelo de Azevedo Cardoso

**Y**esterday, after one more “little recommendation” of Frank’s, I was introduced to Sol, my new bungalow neighbour. Sol is Thais’s friend, comes from Sao Paulo and is involved in the project “Mongoloids in Greenhouses”. She has Princess Sapphire<sup>1</sup> tattooed on her shoulder, and wants to fuck my ass.

“Is that all?” I asked.

No, of course not. There is more. She told me that cold cucumbers can help avoid baggy eyes, gave me a vase with white violets, and I went to my own funeral without being invited. That was nothing. So, in spite of the little holocausts that appear here and there, I have found myself a new way to get hand jobs and a new source of irritation? Or else: was my distance simple pretence, while her dick was for real?

Sol is bony and has wide hips. A matron from the future, distracted and detached, who – who’d think? – wears plastic dicks strapped to her waist, “in several shapes and for many purposes”, as I had deduced and as she’d told me herself, giving the dildos a name: “They’re my dickies”. There is no contradiction in that. Now, what I can’t say... and maybe she doesn’t know, is this: is it, on her part, a consummation or an improvised calamity? Anyway, I don’t believe, although the never subtle appearances mix plastic dicks and distractions, that the two things go together. I don’t think so. The fact is that Sol seduces as an amateur female, and makes use of a sincere, focused affection whose danger could be misunderstood (or shared, my God!) as a close, friendly, fun cynicism. She is aware, in spite of all the pretences (mine included) and all the schemes she invents to fool herself, to win the asses of the unsuspecting, and to make distances dangerously shorter. Sol told me in confidence: “I would like to be a transvestite”, and then she said she was in love with me... but I (sincerely...) didn’t listen.

Her genitalia are fat and I have no ice cube in the place of my heart. Much the opposite – I need this damned affection to fool myself (or let myself be fooled). Sol’s situation, by the way, is identical.

“I will give you my ass, Sol.”

I also made some threats. The way things were going, I could only make threats and count with myself. It’s always been like this.

“Here it is.”

---

1. Ah, Sapphire! Japanese cartoon from the mid-80s. Prince Sapphire fought against his enemies with the same weapons that the guys from the 5th grade (myself included) used to fight against the guys of the 7th and 8th grades. But at night, Sapphire dressed as a Princess and became a woman. The little faggot (who was actually a girl) used to throw our minds into a twist. We, the 5th graders, who did not know where to put our desires or what exactly to do with all that pent-up tension. From that time until now, the confusion just got worse. That was a low blow from Sol.

Well, I have always used a lot of excuses to justify the unjustifiable. To fix the irreparable, like a less full-of-himself Caio F. Abreu.

"Sometimes, I make magic!"

Sol left very, very clear that she didn't fuck faggots.

But what about the day after? What would I say to Frank, when he asked me to "do him a little favour"? Oh, well. I just wanted to see where (apart from my own ass, of course) that desperate (?) woman would stick her lying dick. I just wanted to see her breaking down in tears and laugh at the endless rubber thing strapped to her waist. She, with a hard-on. Me, in total madness.

"So you feel something there? The ridicule, is that it?"

My erect dick.

---

But she incorporated priapism for real. I took up my ass the infernal contradiction (hers?) and brought her soul – which was the bug rubber dick – much closer to me (more than I would have wished and that she could have imagined); and now, instead of giving her love in return (look at that... I got fucked anyways), I crapped on her dick – for real: actual crap. After that, Sol made the distance between us even shorter and the dimension or equivalence of her own horror was projected on that crap-covered dick. We could not pretend.

"I'm gonna suck that lollipop, Sol", I said, finding myself obliged.

The intention was doing some cleaning. In the beginning, she was disgusted, but soon (after I had sucked all that chocolate), she kissed me on the mouth. I didn't understand. Maybe she wanted to thank me? I don't know. The question I was asking myself was; why was she sucking on crap and tears, copiously, and I – as I had arranged with the little man – couldn't even get some compassion out of that embarrassing situation?

## january 12

**T**he demons of solitude threw a big party here at the bungalow. There were cashew sweets and guarana. I kept myself to myself, and it was not due to ingenuity that I didn't plan an ode and a twisted curse: war and victory – on the contrary (and then things would get tough), I would have to answer to myself. In other words: I held my head up. I ignored the visits, watched little boats go by. Until I couldn't do it anymore. So that all crossroads and all lights from the darkness – there wasn't any wind, the lagoon was totally still – disappeared on their own. Solitude, however, made me forecast disasters, and I – in a counterpart, let's say – once I had given it all up, but was unaware of that, could see the calm of the lagoon as if somehow I could give it back distributing cashew sweets and all the horrors spinning around me with whisky and guarana. It is worth saying: counting only with my discredit (the least, the least), I tried to give back to the lagoon all the ignominies and presages that

came from nowhere. The demons, sons of bitches, put on a CD and started playing the blues. But I couldn't. Simply because I chose not to believe.

"Oh, God! Give what back, and to whom?"

Well, among so many disagreements with nothingness, I couldn't – as if I had had a chance – get rid of the night and of the misadventure of being with myself. The night was very hot.

I didn't know fuck about the night. I saw little boats, I waited... but I could do nothing. Ever.

The lagoon kept still.

God damned melancholic blues. Sometimes I think that we have to "watch the boats by negligence". Or else – I'm not sure if it's about severity or prudence – give the nightmares back in the same measure. Maybe this is better than suicide. Somehow, I mixed up whisky and guarana, betrayed my fake diamond and, after Aldir Blanc and Joao Antonio (come on...) I learned, among other tricks, to embrace my resentment and suffocate it. In short: I was really fucked up. The difference (on my favour, why, God?) is the sophistication of this suffocation. I suppose that, much beyond the little boats, my resentment has the exact measure of sadness, and the sterility that I have always wanted; embracing it and using it, however, does not free me (in spite of the air that I lack, almost by enchantment) from the weight of this fucking soul that suffers. Negligence, in this case, is only the overloaded work of someone (this "someone" is me) that will not refuse suffering and walks willingly to his sacrifice.

## ANOTHER NIGHT

**M**ay God's will be done... or any son of a bitch's will. I prefer the first alternative, in spite of it all. This, however, is just a detail, since I give myself the right to "have my own will" and choose whoever chooses me. I mean, since one or the other will end up fucking me up, and I have no different option, the best thing is to "support" these guys and pretend – in the measure of verisimilitude – that I chose to be the chosen one.

... when all wishes are answered... isn't that it?

And there's more. I run away to chase things that don't belong to me, except by the fucking date. So, it's silly to talk about comings and goings, if I can't avoid escaping. If I did so, I wouldn't do it right by myself even in suicide. The desolated landscape is embarrassing. I'm against it. So I generally go – I mean, I always go – nowhere.

I have learned how to die here.

If I'm unhappy – as I've already said – it's because God exists and I cannot do anything but invoke Him and go ahead, committing the wait, the normal assassinations, and the abortions that made me be like this, so grateful and compassionate in my defamations and injuries; a nice guy, in spite of the non-negotiated exchanges and the losses that are given to me as miracles. Everything's under control.

The nightmares, little boats and sunsets I submit myself to – or would I be submitted to? – force me to hate as one who loves, and vice-versa. Or, at least, to react

(!) and fight back – and offer my ass in the same measure. I cannot look for hope and faith when oblivion is nothing but an artifice and forgiveness is only a faraway untold desire – and it is worth saying: uselessly –disguised as distance and isolation.

There are two images I associate to faith and hope, and that also – at a similar degree – can be associated to forgiveness and oblivion. The first one, evidently, is the sacred heart: closer to the appeal, to official languidness and to precariousness. The other one is Sol's dickie: also asking for something impracticable, which wasn't worth her abandonment or even the rent she left me to pay (because she fucked my ass and left). The quails are next: they are responsible for what I call "the great intercession". A diagonal cut – deep and two-sided – to the effective and necessary realization of miracles.

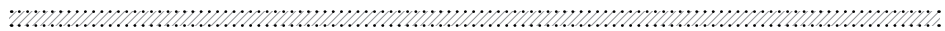
Even so, there is no defence. Or any kind of reaction. Inequality is patent on my favour! So I discard the alarms, and in my last analysis (that is, if there is any resistance...), I resist as if I was a giant, but with all the merits and diligence of a worm. Which is a curiosity. In short: an infernal little man like me, having shame – as if having "desires" wasn't enough – and hell served on a tray.

Tomorrow will be the same. What can be done? The first thing to do is to tell the shop assistant that I have given up the game: "how much is it, miss"? Next, I will make things right to the pizza place girl, and then I have to face Joana's fake sweetness (or would it be a consecrated Cris...?) What else? Oh, yes. The inexcusable ideograms tattooed on Janaina's pubis. "How much is it, miss?" Look, I'll pay for it. Let the curses and damnations come, and together with them, if possible, a little love story and a beautiful sunny day, and may my life be changed into a margarine commercial, with all the comforts and happiness of this calamity that is to wake up to yourself and live for the others, before and after the nightmares. Something that, by the way, I claim as part of my "legitimate discredit"; any small things. I want to watch the blue sea, the earth down there, and the ruins. Ah, girl... a shotgun.

How much is it, miss? Ah, girl... for all that you were promised, and for God's sake, "how much is it, miss?" I will confess you something. Before the fall, I wanted to write for entertainment, like Paulo Coelho and Shakespeare. To embrace Heidegger's isolation and grumpy anguish, and to read the author of "Being and Time" and uncle Freud together – but that was before the fall, and it was the same as reading your horoscope before entering the gas chamber. Ah, girl. Before it all, I wanted to make a big mess of everything. Now, girl, I am satisfied with changing my star sign according to my needs, and would never "be loved" or "love" without a warning, or exchange fear, an unfolded, sensual feeling, for any suffocation method similar to hope or anything that brought up puzzle games, Legos or other lies that would fatally cause an increase in taxes and a mandatory political party television time. Ah, girl. I just wanted to write a five-hundred page book in one single paragraph, and kill mother, father and brother, and leave all my money to the Jews in the last line. Or to write a love letter to a talentless suicidal friend and, before my own suicide, to make adjustments and rewind some stupid archetypes and bedtime stories. I don't know, girl, I wanted to kiss women's thighs and apologize like Fausto Wolff's

acrobat (who could be me) and then fall... naturally, in vain; but you know, girl, I haven't drunk enough yet... so... I would like to know: "How much is it, miss?" and if my sweet, consecrated Cris.....

....., I mean, called me? I would call her "My lady Macbeth"... and then, I mean, after the silk scarf she wears around her neck and together with her "elegant views" - which I have decided to call "our pre-established lies" - I would, girl, just because of the enchantment, invite her to fornicate with me and convince her to wait for me so we could repeat an early afternoon like we had the other day, when I held her hand and kissed her mouth. Well, she wouldn't take me seriously. But what matters is that I would convince myself, and consider myself invited. Me and her, suspended like that. You know, girl, Cris is a strange person, and I suspect she's the only woman who accepts my strangeness. A sadness that is no sadness. I wanted to have her beside me, and never ask: "What's wrong with you?" Her silence, her weirdness, the suspicion that has something melancholic to it, nothing of this, almost nothing, not even the everyday pettiness and a self-service Indian restaurant where she likes to eat, nothing, almost nothing would make any difference between us, and our little affair would be merry and insufficient. Until a day came when Cris would throw glasses at the walls and cry in the balcony, imitating something that, perhaps because of our unmeasured love and my scepticism, she would never ("in practical terms, baby") would be able to or have a reason to give back to me: "it's all my fault, I'm the crazy one!"... I would agree, of course: "That's right, you're crazy". Maybe to make things better - something useless... or maybe because I had no way of persuading her, I would also say: "I don't understand what happened, either - and I will never love you (I would never use the phrase "take care of you") as I should". Well, that would cause me a lot of trouble - it would be hard work to explain to her what "I should" was doing in the place as "love you". All this so that she, Cris, and I, the one who got fucked in the ass, could meet again, suspended like the first time. Why doesn't she call me? Her almond-shaped eyes, sweeter and sadder than ever. Eyes of someone - like me - who doesn't know what to do to love, and loves, lost in herself, much more than she should, beyond love itself.





## THE BOOK



### Bungalow

Marcelo Mirisola

- **Original title:** Bangalô
- **ISBN:** 85-7326-282-6
- **Publication year:** 2003
- **Original publishing house:** Editora 34
- **Number of pages:** 125
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 2000 copies

### SYNOPSIS

The book is a monological record – and it's at the same time lyrical, comic, tragic and pornographic – about a lonely and troubled person, and his anger at the consumerist society.

### PRESS REVIEWS

“An unbearable and absolutely necessary author”(FabricioCarpinejar)  
<http://www.editora34.com.br/>

“Disgusting, but magnificent”  
(José Castello, Bravo)  
<http://www.editora34.com.br/>

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## THE AUTHOR

**Marcelo Rizzo Mirisola**

- **Pen name:** Marcelo Mirisola
- **Other books:**

O Azul do Filho Morto (novel, editora 34, 5000 copies, 2002)

Joana a Contragosto (novel, ed. Record, 3000 copies, 2005)

O Herói Devolvido (short stories, editora 34, 5000 copies, 2000)

Fátima Fez Os Pés Para Mostar na Choperia (ed. Estação Liberdade, short stories, 3000 copies, 1998)

## THE TRANSLATOR

**Fal Azevedo**

Fal Azevedo is a writer and translator. She has written four books (ed. Komedí, ed. Rocco) and writes a column for Jornal Cruzeiro do Sul -

# REPRESSION AND RESISTANCE

SANDRA REIMÃO

Translated by Juliet Attwater

## Two censored books: Feliz ano novo [Happy New Year] and Zero

On Friday 17 December 1976, an order by the Justice Minister Armando Falcão was printed in the Diário Oficial da União:

*“Proc MJ-74.310-76 – Under the terms of paragraph 8 of article 158 of the Federal Constitution and article 3 of Decree no. 1077 of 26 January 1970, I hereby ban the publication and circulation throughout national territory of the book “Feliz ano novo” by Rubem Fonseca, published by Editora Artenova S.A., Rio de Janeiro and hereby declare that all copies for sale are to be seized due to its amoral and anti-social material. Report to the DPF. Published. Brasília, 15 November 1976.”*

The censorship of Feliz Ano Novo came just a month after the censorship of Ignácio de Loyola Brandão’s Zero. Feliz Ano Novo and Zero were two of several books published in 1975 and 1976 that became references for the period.

Due to a number of factors in the 1970s, one of which was the fact that a literary book was less reliant on state investment and could remain under the radar of censorship, literature was a focal point and was involved “significantly in the cultural debate of the times”.<sup>1</sup>

In this sense the artistic cultural field in the Brazil of the 1970s was articulated very differently from the 1960s, which had previously been the most representative decade for cultural production, when according to Roberto Schwarz in his article “Cultura e política – 1964-1969”,<sup>2</sup> it was the “public performances, theatre, posters, popular music, film and journalism, that transformed the climate into a festive rally, while literature took a back seat”. However, in the 1970s, this trend changed and literature began “through language to express (...) the meaningful symptoms of a lively debate within the cultural field”.<sup>3</sup>

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1. H. B. de Hollanda & M. A. Gonçalves. “Política e literatura: a ficção da realidade brasileira”. In Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda, Marcos Augusto Gonçalves & Filho Armando Freitas. Anos 70. Vol. 2-literatura, p. 98 (see also p.113). The new edition of this book was published in 2005, by Editora Aeroplano and Senac Rio.

2. Roberto Schwarz. “Cultura e política 1964-1969” in Pai de Família e outros estudos, p. 80.

3. Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda & Marcos Augusto Gonçalves. Op. cit.,10.

The group of literary texts published in the mid 70s was the decade's second wave of narrative fiction. Érico Veríssimo's *Acidente em Antares*, and Antonio Callado's *Bar Dom Juan* both from 1971, were the front-runners of the first wave which followed on the heels of Institutional Act no. 5. This first wave had clear connections with the stirrings of possible social revolution in Brazil.

## Feliz Ano Novo

**F**eliz Ano Novo was published in 1975 by Editora Artenova, a Rio de Janeiro publishing house founded by Álvaro Pacheco in 1963. By the mid 1970s Artenova was publishing around 15 new titles a month and by the end of 1976 *Feliz Ano Novo* had sold 12,000 copies and was the 5th bestselling novel in Brazil that year.

Brazilian literature had a strong presence in the mid 70s; the best seller of 1975 was Chico Buarque de Holanda's *Fazenda Modelo*, and in partnership with Paulo Pontes, Chico was also the author of the bestselling book of 1976 – *Gota d'água* – the script of the play that was being staged at the time. According to the cover blurb on the first edition of *Fazenda Modelo*, Chico Buarque used humour and irony to “give us an allegorical farming novel, a book that amuses, irritates, inspires and consoles”; and in their introduction to the first edition of *Gota d'água*, the authors describe “the capitalist experience that is taking root here (...) the brutal concentration of wealth”.

The national literature of the 1970s, and particularly of the middle of the decade, was a product of the times and played a central role in the resistance. As the writer Júlio Martins said of the period: “The function of cultural production and in particular literature at the time was mainly to protect our creative integrity and our dignity that was under threat”.<sup>4</sup>

*Feliz ano novo* was Rubem Fonseca's 5th publication. Since his first book, *Os Prisioneiros*, published by Codecri in 1963, the theme of violence had been central to his literary production. Similarly to his other books, *Feliz Ano Novo* was a collection of 15 relatively short stories which totalled 144 pages. The graphic design was basic – a simple cover, no foreword and a conventional layout. Rubem Fonseca was a law graduate and had worked for the police at the start of his career, and his literature depicts the violence and barbarism of the city of Rio de Janeiro. The fact Fonseca had been a police officer meant he was more qualified than most to note the surge of violence in the city centres.

The eponymous story of the volume “*Feliz Ano Novo*”, portrays three social pariahs, three misfits, watching the end of year celebrations on television, and “waiting for the dawn so they can eat the macumba food offerings” in a tenement in Rio de Janeiro's Zona Sul. Almost as a second thought, they end up armed, and invading a New Year's Eve party being held in an upper-class house – “we heard the sound of carnival music, but not many folks singing. We put our stockings over our heads; I cut the eye holes out with some scissors. We went in through the front door”. The extreme violence they use when they shoot four of the guests shows a chilling disregard for their victims and for life.

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4. Heloisa Buarque de Holanda & Marcos Augusto Gonçalves. *Op. cit.*, pp. 68 e 70.

According to José Antonio Pasta<sup>5</sup>, in Rubem Fonseca's work "the perspective is a confrontation with a way of life that has no revolution in sight, no radical transformation in sight; it is a collision with a new kind of Brazilian reality".

In Fonseca's work, this new Brazilian reality is, according to Pasta, found alongside a transformation in the perceptions of the Brazilian people: "Fonseca's work, and in particular *Feliz Ano Novo*, marks an historical moment in the Brazilian people's view of the world. The Brazilians who appear in his literature, from humble backgrounds, are shown as ignominious and ignoble. The writer looks at how petty criminality is transformed into serious crime; where crime is committed for crime's sake, and delight is taken in pay-back and social revenge; he looks at what is now more commonly referred to as the disintegration of society".

Another element of *Feliz Ano Novo* that Pasta draws attention to is that in the collection as a whole there is also an "ignobility of the elite, although it does not take up most of the book it is still a strong presence (...) there are three stories that are examples of this: "Nau Catrineta" and "Passeio Noturno I & II" ". "Nau Catrineta" begins with the declamation of an extract from the poem of same name by the Portuguese writer Almeida Garret. Almeida Garrett based his poem on a popular tale that describes how an angel saved a captain in a boat that was adrift. In the short story this tale is transformed into an act of cannibalism: so that the sailors did not starve, some were killed to be eaten by those who remained. Rubem Fonseca's story centres on the twenty-first birthday of José, the heir of a wealthy family. On this day, in order to be able to take his place in "society" he must eat human flesh. This will make him the new leader of the family, a family whose members, so goes the story, were proud of being "responsible and conscientious carnivores. Both in Portugal as well as in Brazil".

With the same level of violence, disregard for life, and gratuitous acts, the stories "Passeio Noturno I & II" describe how a Jaguar driving executive uses the act of running over (and killing) as a form of relaxation.

In the story "Feliz Ano Novo" itself, in parallel with the gratuitous and crazed violence of the thugs and their ring-leader Pereba, the assaulted and murdered bourgeois - the pretentious and petulant guests of the New Year's party - also behave irresponsibly and senselessly.

On the subject of violence in Rubem Fonseca's work, Alfredo Bosi says:

"Rubem Fonseca's brutalist narrative is the image of the chaos and agony of values that technology gives rise to in a third-world country (...). The language in this world is fast, sometimes compulsive; impure, if not obscene; straight to the point, guttural; dissonant, verging on a din".<sup>6</sup>

## Zero

**V**iolence is also a central theme of Ignácio de Loyola Brandão's novel *Zero*, subtitled a 'prehistoric romance'. The first edition of *Zero* in Brazil was published by Editora Brasilia/Rio on 31 July 1975, but prior to this, it had been published in Italy

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5. In interview with Sandra Reimão and Helena Bonito C. Pereira on 11/07/2006.

6. Alfredo Bosi (org.). *O conto brasileiro contemporâneo*, p. 18.

in 1974 by Editora Feltrinelli. Editora Brasília/Rio was a small publishing firm from Rio de Janeiro owned by Lygia Jobim. The book's success led to a second edition from the same publisher.

Recalling the episode, Ignácio de Loyola Brandão says:

“Zero had been published in Italy by Feltrinelli and this had repercussions in Brazil because *Veja* did a big article on it written by Silvio Lanceloti who talked about a Brazilian book that had been published there: a first edition in Italian was unusual for the times. (...) When the book came out and attracted a certain amount of attention I was visited by Lygia Jobim. I didn't know her or have the faintest idea who it was that was asking me if I was interested in publishing the book here, but I said yes of course, I had written the book to be published here.”<sup>7</sup>

Zero is made up of a collection of small stories and fragments, and its graphic presentation is also fragmentary. Loyola Brandão comments on the origin of many of these fragments: “Zero was also born of censorship. I was secretary at the newspaper (...) and I threw the first banned things I wrote into the drawer (...) everything in it is real and is Brazil, and then I reckoned I could make it into a novel”.

Analysing the fragmentary nature of the novel's narrative, Heloíse Buarque de Hollanda and Marcos Augusto Gonçalves comment:

“From the outset, Zero is an allegory of the violated and shattered state of a country still awaiting its history (...) the use of fragments and the approach to the graphic space of the book, which here and there is set out like a newspaper, ruptures one's naturalist perspective of a newspaper. (...) Thus the fragmentary technique here translates the disintegration produced by the climate of oppression that courses through Loyola's narrative at all times”.<sup>8</sup>

## The censorship acts

In November and December 1976 respectively, *Zero* and *Feliz Ano Novo* were censored by the Justice Department.

In order to understand how the seizure of published works in circulation in bookshops throughout the country took place, one should understand that in the majority of cases the censorship was a reaction to a complaint.

*Zero* and *Feliz Ano Novo* were both censored because of this kind of action. In the case of *Zero*, there was no intermediary hearing, just a direct order. Loyola Brandão recalls:

“I have some vague ideas; one is that it seems that in an article on something else, the newspaper *Opinião* suggested that *Zero* was a book that depicted the dictatorship and the military. This was then read by the wife of a general who

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7. Interviews with Sandra Reimão and Helena Bonito C.Pereira in September 2006 and May 2007.

8. Hollanda, Heloísa Buarque de & Gonçalves, Marcos Augusto. *Op. cit.*, p.61.

(...) then commented 'look, there's a book here that on top of everything else is pornographic', and told a woman who was friends with the wife of Armando Falcão, who then complained to her husband."

Loyola goes on:

"One November afternoon Mino Carta called me from Brasília and said (...) Zero is on top of Armando Falcão's desk. Zero is going to be banned. There's no other reason for Zero being on top of Falcão's desk. The next day it was censored. So I went off to find the censor. He asked me what the book was and said 'I'll go and check. (...) If it's moral censorship you don't need to worry. Don't print any more, and keep your mouth shut. Keep a low profile'. The next day he called me (...) the case against Zero is moral, and so I asked 'what do I do now?' 'Keep your head down and don't do anything'. 'But is the book going to be seized?' 'If they tried to seize everything they wouldn't have a chance, they don't have enough people for that. The books will stay in the bookshops."

Loyola explains that the censorship was always allegedly for moral reasons so as to be able to justify the censorship act Decree 1077 that prohibited the publication and permitted seizure of works considered "amoral and anti-social".

The same thing happened with *Feliz Ano Novo*, through a series of coincidences. In his book *Bastidores da Censura*, Deonísio da Silva cites Lygia Fagundes Telles in the *Jornal do Brasil* (19/01/1977), where she describes an imaginary scene in which the father of a student reading a book by Rubem Fonseca takes the book and idly flicks through a few pages. However, it happens that the father in question,

"is a close friend of a minister. Notified by the father, the minister tells a member of staff to read said book. The staff member and the minister are horrified and the book is banned. But *Feliz Ano Novo* is not simply one more book banned by the minister. And Rubem Fonseca is a well-respected writer and a director of *Light*<sup>9</sup>. Brought to his attention again, the minister decides to read the book himself. He receives it with passages highlighted in red. He is scandalised yet again, and can now justify the prohibition".

According to Deonísio da Silva, Lygia Fagundes Telles ended the tale by confirming the existence of a small group that boasted of its power to "ban the books it dislikes without considering their artistic qualities"<sup>10</sup>.

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Feliz Ano Novo and Zero, and their censorship, are prime examples of the state of the world of books and literary fiction in Brazil in the mid 1970s.

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9. At the time *Light* was the state-owned electricity supplier.

10. Deonísio da Silva. *Nos bastidores da censura*, pp. 37 & 38

Firstly, the comparisons of the narrative forms and literary propositions of these two books exemplify the diversity of literary models produced in the period.

Secondly, the sales' figures for both books (in under a year *Feliz Ano Novo* sold 30,000 copies and *Zero* had two editions and sold around 6,000 copies<sup>11</sup>) may also be seen as signs of the strength and influence of Brazilian fiction writers at the time.

Finally, just as the literature of the time and later studies posited<sup>12</sup>, it is clear that the processes that resulted in the censorship of *Feliz Ano Novo* and *Zero* came about through chance denunciations by people who felt they had the right to ban books they did not like – and that this was common-place.

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In the second half of the 1970s, writers, publishers, intellectuals, artists, scientists, teachers, and society in general began to mobilize themselves to resist and protest against the petty demands and impositions of the authoritarian regime.

This resistance from society to the Government's authoritarian acts culminated in several demonstrations and public stands against authoritarianism. Of particular note among the manifestations for cultural freedom was the Manifesto by 1046 intellectuals against censorship, delivered on 25 January 1977 to the Minister of Justice in Brasília, by a commission composed of Helio Silva, Lygia Fagundes Telles, Nélida Pinõn and Jefferson Ribeiro de Andrade.

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In 1979, after the AI-5 had finally been revoked, a third edition of *Zero* was published by Editora Codecri.

Rubem Fonseca took the Department of Justice to court for the censorship of *Feliz Ano Novo* and the ban on his book was only lifted much later, at the end of the trial (this trial is the central theme of Deonísio da Silva's book, *Nos bastidores da censura. Sexualidade, literatura e repressão pós-64*).

*Zero* has now had over 10 editions in Portuguese, and at present (2013) is published by Editora Global. It has been translated into German, Korean, Spanish, Hungarian and English. *Feliz Ano Novo* is currently in its 10<sup>th</sup> edition, published by Companhia das Letras, and new editions are being planned by Editora Agir.

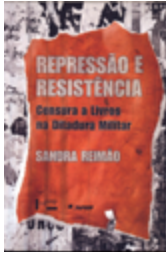
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11. Information for *Feliz Ano Novo* taken from Hallewell, *Op. cit.*, p. 591 and information for *Zero* was provided by the author in interviews given to Sandra Reimão and Helena Bonito C. Pereira in September 2006 and May 2007.

12. Deonísio da Silva. *Nos bastidores da censura. Sexualidade, literatura e repressão pós-64*, and Carlos Fico, “‘Prezada Censura’: cartas ao regime militar”.

## THE BOOK



### **Repression and Resistance: Censorship of Books during the Military Dictatorship**

Sandra Reimão

- **Original title:** Repressão e resistência: censura a livros na ditadura militar
- **ISBN:** 9788531413087
- **Year of publication:** 2011
- **Original publisher:** EDUSP
- **Number of pages:** 182
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 1000 copies

### **SYNOPSIS**

During Brazil's last military dictatorship (1964-1985) over 140 books underwent national censorship. Based on the study of the censorship action reports from the Department of Censorship and Public Diversions (DCDP), Sandra Reimão has produced a list of the censored fictional works for the first time. The study also identifies and analyzes the censorship mechanisms used in some cases. The researcher specifically analyzed the cases of *Feliz Ano Novo*, by Rubem Fonseca, *Zero*, by Ignácio de Loyola Brandão, *Dez histórias imorais*, by Aguinaldo Silva, *Em câmara lenta*, by Renato Tapajós, the *Mister Curitiba* stories by Dalton Trevisan, and *O cobrador* by Rubem Fonseca. It also encompasses so-called pornographic literature, as that by

Adelaide Carraro and Cassandra Rios. Non-fiction books of high social impact are also taken into consideration: *A Revolução Brasileira*, by Caio Prado Jr., and *História Militar do Brasil*, by Nelson Werneck Sodré. Using the existing bibliography, the researcher worked with the file of DCPC reports and tracked the documentation on the works in the National Archives. The graphic illustrations, intended to dialogue with the text, are one of the highlights of the publication. By rediscovering concrete episodes, the author reveals the mechanisms, motivations and goals of the censorship movement, not always the same that the government purportedly professed.

### **AWARD**

Prêmio Jabuti -2º. Lugar -  
Categoria Comunicação - 2012

### **PRESS REVIEWS**

Revista FAPESP 14.09.2012 -  
<http://revistapesquisa.fapesp.br/2012/09/14/as-paginas-proibidas/>



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- **Other books**

Books and television:

correlations, Cotia: Atelie, 2004, 197p.

Brazilian crime fiction, Rio de Janeiro:

Ed. Zahar, 2005, 66p.

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# DEATH WITHOUT A NAME

SANTIAGO NAZARIAN

Translated by Lidia Luther

## p.16 - 18

**W**hen I looked in the mirror, thirty five years had gone by. In the corner of an eye, behind the smile, reflected in the mirror, a sadness that must be hidden. Between the teeth, indentations of my own bites. My life oozing out of my hair. I combed it, one strand at a time. I brushed one tooth at a time. I put on make-up, one eye at a time, and looked again in the mirror .

I was still there, behind myself, between the tiles, dripping down the drain, everything I could not hide. Mould in the cracks, hairs in the sink, blood in the toilet, laughing at me. I kept on scrubbing, my mind a blank. And the more I scrubbed, the worse the blood spread. And from the drops I made a puddle. From the puddles I made a lake. From the lake I made an ocean, where I could drown.

I sat in the living room and smoked. A cigarette. Between my fingers. Between my nicotine stained teeth. Burning with my insecurity. Disappearing like smoke. Ashes on the floor, between the seams. I picked up a broom, but order, order kept escaping me.

My footsteps followed me wherever I went. I could not escape. My fingerprints stained all that I touched. They became ashes, dust and mould. My hands, my lips, my neck, my heart. I needed to be swept, scrubbed away, brushed, no shower could ever do it. My footsteps followed me wherever I went and my fingerprints were always on my fingers.

On the dirty plates. On the fork and knife. In the kitchen, my fresh blood slowly draining down the sink. Detergent, washing powder. I washed the dishes and the cutlery. A thousand broken pieces on the floor. All over the kitchen. My fingerprints on each of them. My fingerprints on the drain. My fingerprints on the knife. My fingerprints cutting the line around my neck.

Into the garbage. I was thrown away in small pieces. I turned my eyes from all that I could not face. Orange juice. Chicken bones. A heart beating. Hoping it would not leak through the house. Hoping the trash bag could hold my weight.

In the bedroom, I made up my bed. I changed the sheets and shook my orgasms through the window. Pubic hairs blowing in the wind. Blood on the mattress. Rumpled pillowcase. Every fresh sheet put another wrinkle on my face. On the pillow. I looked in the mirror, and I was not there anymore. A mess. I changed my clothes. I put away the smile. I closed every bottom, one by one, each in its own hole. And I, in mine, trying to close it. One pound more, one pound less. Cheese pastry to be filled. Toilet to vomit it all down. Tits too small to breastfeed.

Who is asking? Who is looking? Between the legs, between the teeth. Bites on my breasts. Hairs in the pubis. Retained blood. Open zipper. Belly sucked in. Legs shown off. Broken nail. Lack of care. I looked in the mirror to see if there was still any hope.

You turned out to be a beautiful woman! Pride beating my face up, leaving bruises. I looked behind my ears, under the wardrobe. I looked for my tights, put on my shoes. One at a time. One step at a time, I can go on. My footsteps still follow me, but at least I am wearing high heels.

I looked at the watch. It was late. But still there was all the time in the world. Life was not waiting for me. Outside, let the time go by. Outside, let the sun go down. Outside, let the world end. I had time to end my own. I would close the windows, I would shut the doors. I would turn off the radio, and the gas. And the fridge. I would drink the last drops of water. I would take one last look in the mirror. I would sit on a chair, and I would wait. I would wait for whatever time, whatever time for my death to arrive.

## **p. 84 - 87**

█ sought the tallest tree, the one where bees make their hive. I climbed it as I always did to enjoy life. And took the rope with me to hang myself.

About time, right? Fourteen years gone, so many imagined deaths, and I had forgotten about the gibbet. A good strong rope, new and thick and long, soft around my neck. Caressing me like a warm embrace, a new lover, a woolen scarf, a snake. I spotted a good, strong branch to hold my weight and tied the rope.

One of the ends posed no problems. If I did not know how to tie one strong knot, I would make several to be sure. The end around my neck was a little trickier. The knot could not be undone, could not be jammed, could not be too loose lest to reach the floor. I needed to be cool, needed to master the technique, needed some planning. And you thought that only desperate people commit suicide! Look at me! I only thought about that when I was up there. There was no point dying this way. I needed a man.

I climbed back down and decided to look for Jeremiah. My cousin was skilful and indifferent enough to help me. Dying to get there, I walked calmly, feeling that the more I sped things up, the less I would feel the pleasure of the moment. A long preparation, from the knot well done to my heated up neck. I sat on the grass and let Death come in the early evening. I lit a cigarette.

"Mother will not like when she finds out that you are smoking," said my little Seraphim. Seriously? the smoke disdainfully snaking from my nose. My poor cousin still thinks somebody would care. He thought about telling on me to his mother, my aunt, but gave up before leaving me. I threw him the rope.

Know how to make a knot?

"I know a few"

I only need one. The hangman's.

"I know the sailor's hitch. Do you want to see it?"

No, my child. I want to see you make the hangman's, very pretty, well done, tight. Otherwise, I will ask your brother.

Seraphim picked up the rope and silently started to make a serious knot. It took longer than I thought it should. Nine years old, small hands, fooling me. He could not satisfy me. I took the rope from his hands and thanked him, throwing away my cigarette butt.

"I know how to do it! Let me finish it!"

You missed your chance. I got up from the grass and went on my way, Seraphim's protests following behind me. "Please, let me finish it. I know how to do it." If I knew it, the rope would be around your neck. We found Jeremiah before that happened. He was tightening a screw or something.

"Give me the rope" shouted Seraphim.

"What are you up to?" Jeremiah wanted to know.

The kid wants to hang me with this rope. But I know you can do better than that.

I threw him the rope. Jeremiah was tall and skilful, late in his teens. A stub of hair on his chin. Blond, unkempt hair. Slim and full of pimples. Thin hands working for me.

He threw me back the rope, the hangman's ready, without saying a word. He went back to his loose screw. Seraphim went away indignant. I thanked him with a long kiss on his cheek. He turned. And kept on looking as I walked to the gallows.

I wondered if I should wear a gossamer dress, long and thin, to float while my limp body swings in the air. So everybody would think I was a virgin, young and romantic. It would be beautiful. But I had no dresses, no time, no money, no virginity. So it had to be my old tee, my jeans shorts. I climbed the tree, tied the rope, seven knots around the branch.

Below I saw my cousin Valentim, the one in the middle, my age, pimples and bad hair from the older; stubbornness and calories from the younger. I thought how funny it would be to fall right on top of him with the rope around my neck. But he would freak out and let me loose. Hey, Valentim, want to push me?

"What are you doing up there?" The sunlight behind me made him squint.

I am getting ready to jump on top of you with all my teenage weight. I would suggest you push me back, to be free of the burden. I promise I will not tell your parents, nor your brothers. It will be our secret.

Valentim did not understand. For him poetry was drunkenness. But he was a teenager. Would refuse nothing to a girl.

"OK," he said.

And I flew like a bird in the sky, like fish in the sea, like the chicken stuck in my throat, choking, strangling.

**p. 142 - 144**

**M**ako was eating sardines in a downtown bar. Fan on the ceiling. Playing shadows. And cockroaches hiding in each of them., and each one crawling with a thousand stories. Crawling over Mako's body, with his shirt open, over his scars, the smell of fish and of something gone. Me. Traces still under his armpits. Between his pubic hairs. Something not yet washed away, scrubbed away, set free.

Cockroaches can feel.

Thousands of stories crawling in a downtown bar. And Mako chews his food, oily fingers, oily counter, oily trousers over a body that is lean and hard. A good meal to satisfy any woman. Knife to cut, teeth to bite. And chew.

Mako thought of me, when I no longer thought of it. My hands on the knife, cutting at the fish. My hands over his face, moving his hair away from his forehead. My hand wiping away his sweat, opening his trousers. My hands pulling at his trousers, holding his feet. My hands in the mouth of the dragon, crawling with a thousand stories.

And another hand, heavy, masculine, tapping his shoulder. He turned.

"You know this girl?"

My identity in the hands of examiners. Leticia no. Lorena. Beer to swallow. The mouth full to deny the truth. "No," never met her, never met me.

Eye to eye. Examiners around him. Checking. A reflex of Lorena in his retina? No. But my smell was still there. Behind the fish and the sweat. Between cockroaches and armpits. In the cracks, in the gaps, in the shadows, I had been his woman. My oriental lover, with knife in his hands, having lunch.

And the way he cut through the sardines. The way he chews with pleasure. The way he found excuses for the dirt and the fat. I was in his belly, my death digesting inside. Drops of blood, gallons of oil. No one would feel it. Only the examiners. That is why they were there.

"How you hold that knife with gusto, young man? We could even say you are a professional."

And he was. Cutting fish, cleaning the scales, selling it in the public market. Everybody knew and could buy it. There was no secret. "Is that why you came to interrogate me?"

Better be careful. My death caused a great mess in a cheap hotel room. Nobody wanted to clean it up. The examiners would use the mop on the first one who crawled near it. Case closed. Just another woman, in just another afternoon, just another death, to justify their salaries. My dears, I justify your salaries.

So, I take the knife and slide it into Mako's back. I open myself, I throw myself, he has to clean it all up. He goes away, as if nothing happened. Work to do, new women to meet. But I stay, longer than he can forget. Fingerprints, DNA, drops and hairs, in his hairs. Strands of hair, between his teeth. Lipstick smears in his collar. A woman like me cannot be killed that easy.

They will examine every inch of you to find traces of me. They will try a little of your taste and take a sample of your kisses. They will rub your skin and shave your hair. They will take down your trousers and spread open your legs. They will mark your back and kill your dragon. Until everything that went through me is spread out on the floor. A huge sacrifice for someone who never loved me. Then again for someone who never loved me, you made a huge mess.

But before all that, the examiners leave. They leave everything behind. They leave Mako to his last meal. He is already condemned. I grab on to his legs. He is not going too far. Let the cockroaches keep him company. Let the cockroaches be his witnesses.

## **p.149 - 153**

**V**alentim opens my grave with his own hands. Idiot. Soil under his nails. Worms in my stomach. Let them inside me. Leave them with me. He opens the coffin and the light stings my eyes, in my memory, in my imagination.

“And that Lorena stays always in our hearts,” like a parasite. Forget me, kill me. I will not give you palpitations. Seal the coffin. Seal the coffin.

He does not forget. He opens me, he closes me. He asks me and answers me, the dead cousin he never had. He wants to know who I was, wants to know where I come from. How my body was and where it was found. Wants to know why, wants to see me closer. “It is enough now, Valentim. Leave your cousin alone.”

We never had time together, right, my little one? Closer to my age, but much less, much smaller. I was a full woman, or dozens of little pieces of her spread out. You were just a growing boy. We did not help each other, did not enjoy. We threw it away. Now it is too late. Lorena is gone. And suddenly she seems more interesting, more mysterious, more attractive to Valentim.

Death does strange things. Certifies you as a noblewoman. Turns you into a Saint or a Queen. A killer. Or crazy. Something I must be. One woman less, I could not. One woman more, yes. Queen. Crazy. The Crazy Queen in the farm, Valentim.

Nobody wants to talk about this. Forget it. I die in the arms of Seraphim, I kill in the arms of Jeremiah. I live in the lips of Valentim. “Shut up.” If the guilt makes them clench their teeth, they chew on a slice of bread. And day after day they swallow my death in silence, at breakfast.

Not Valentim. He spits, vomits, regurgitates. He becomes more like me, while I become less. Heredity. After all, we are family. Did you notice the shape of our nose? Did you not see the colour of my hairs...? pubic, that is. Have you paid attention to the curve of my waist, deflecting the guided missiles?

He pokes me with a stick. He sticks me at the sharp end of a pencil. A drawing. A journal. A torn page. Pictures, dresses and hidden hairs. Treasures. The secret of my death in traces of my life. Take care of it all, Valentim. This scarf can strangle. This mirror can crack. My hair still grows, among yours, in your hands.

Time goes by, for me and for him. He goes up, I go down. A going-up to go

away and a come-down to come back. Boy, boy, boy. Fight against the violence of time that takes over your body and steals mine. The same that punish the hairs in your body makes the hair in your head grow. The same that slips through the fingers, makes you bite your nails.

Nobody wants to talk about this. Valentim keeps me in silence. He gathers my ideas and swallows them. A woman inside of him, less of a boy, because to occupy that space, I need to push something out.

He vomits, bleeds, menstruates, gets sick, becomes a teenager. He becomes more of me, while I become less. Heredity. After all, we are family. Did you not notice the shape of our nose? The curve of our waist? The colour of our lips... smeared?

He prods me with a piece of cotton. He sees me in the prick of the pencil. A woman. Make-up. A torn boy. Pictures, dresses, long hairs. Treasures. The secret of my death in traces of a new life. Take care, Valentim. This scarf can strangle. This mirror can crack. My hairs still grow, between his, between his legs.

Time goes by, for me and for you. You go up, I go down. A going-up to go away, a come-down to come back, in a single jump. Boy, boy, boy. Be careful not to fall. Fight against the violence of time that takes over your body and steals mine. With razors, he punishes all the hairs but leaves the head intact. The same that slips through the fingers, let the nails grow, mine. And yours.

Nobody wants to talk about this, but they notice my stare in his smeared eyes. Black. Red. Tears or make-up? Valentim keeps me in silence. Takes my sins and swallows them. A woman inside him and less of a boy. A boy inside him and a woman put on the outside.

He vomits, bleeds, feels guilty, gets sick and becomes hard. He becomes more of me, while I become less. Heredity. After all, we are family. Have you not notice in Jeremiah's eyes looking at you? Have you not seen Seraphim's lips? Have you not notice how much he has grown, since I was last in his arms?

He jabs me with tweezers. He asks me in front of the mirror. A woman, how does she do? Less of a boy. Pictures, dresses, magazines and long hairs. Treasures. The secret of my life on his way to death. Be careful, Valentim. This scarf can strangle. This mirror can crack. Those tweezers can gouge your eyes that earth will devour.

Time goes by for him, no more for me. He goes down, he goes down. Woman, woman, voman. Be careful not to fall too fast. Fight against the violence on the streets that steals your body and spits it back. With razors he punishes the hairs, the veins and the fat in his body, inside him, in his bed. The same one who pays for his lipsticks, his dresses, my memories.

Nobody wants to talk about this. Nobody answers his calls. So Valentim gives me away in the streets. A woman lost in the world. A man inside him. And a boy, very, very far away.

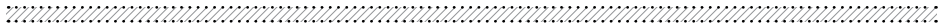
He vomits, bleeds, feels guilty, gets sick and dies. He becomes more of me, while I become less. Heredity. After all, we are family. Have you not noticed the worms in the drain? Have you not noticed the speed of the cars? Have you not heard the alarm in the streets, in the buses, in the seedy rooms? Have you not noticed how

much the city grew since you left home?

He touches me with his fingers. He asks me in the puddle, in the gutter. Less of a woman. Good try. Pictures, hairs and dresses. Ripped apart. Discarded treasures. The secret of my death in his. Now you understand. Valentim, this scarf strangles. This mirror cracks. Those tweezers gouge your eyes that the earth will devour.

Time goes by, but we hardly notice here below. I will keep you company, if that is what you need. But be careful not go further down than myself. Six feet is enough. Fight against the violence of worms that take away your body and devour it whole. Chewing on hairs and veins and the fat that covers his body, inside him, in his coffin. The same ones that wipe out his lipstick, his dresses, our memories.

No one else wants to talk about this anymore. No one would have looked after you in the emergency room. So, Valentim, find me in the streets. A woman thrown in the gutter.





## THE BOOK



### Nameless Death

Santiago Nazarian

- **Original title:** A Morte Sem Nome
- **ISBN:** 8589885-14-3
- **Publication year:** 2004
- **Original publishing house:** Editora Planeta
- **Number of pages:** 206
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 3000 copies

### SYNOPSIS

Each chapter of this unsettling book, *A morte sem nome* (“Nameless Death”), ends with a suicide attempt by the first-person narrator, Lorena. And each new chapter begins with her obsessive longing to put an end to her life. Like in a delirium, words continually seep out of her like the blood from her veins. I too trickle, slip, overflow, spill everywhere. I need wine-glasses and table-napkins to meet my desires. I require a floor cloth to wipe my life clean. Like a moth, I am drawn to the flame. Not all the suicide attempts are real; fantasy and reality interweave. The same images recur, images of an unhappy, hopeless young woman in her mid-thirties in search of love and recognition. Aimless and disgusted by the world, cynical and reckless, she roams the streets of the hectic metropolis smoking and drinking

to excess. Her lovers are the 14-year-old Davi, the trader Mako and the waiter Miguel. Occasional meetings with her father, a mattress salesman, repeatedly disappoint her. The book’s clipped sentences are linked associatively. Everything seems to blend. Snatches of memories return telling us about her childhood in the country in her uncle’s family where she is tolerated but scarcely given any notice *A morte sem nome* is a radically unsentimental novel. Santiago Nazarian’s dense poetic language succeeds in combining merciless realism and nightmarish exaggeration.

### TRANSLATIONS

Editora Palavra, 2006, Portugal.

### PRESS REVIEWS

Nazarian writes too well, he knows how to create characters and has a fascinating and daring style all his own. Marcelo Rubens Paiva, FOLHA DE S. PAULO  
<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/ilustrad/fq2905200411.htm>

If literature is experience, Santiago demonstrates to the highest degree, what the experience of a written text can be. The second book from this 27-year-old author is another great surprise, and will further confirm his considerable talent. Suênio Campos de Lucena, RASCUNHO

“One of the best surprises of 2004”  
Schneider Carpegiani/  
JORNAL DO COMÉRCIO.

## THE AUTHOR



FOTO SANTIAGO NAZARIAN

### Santiago Nazarian de Faria

- **Pen name:** Santiago Nazarian

- **Other books:**

Olívio, Editora Talento, 2003

Feriado de Mim Mesmo, Editora

Planeta, 2005, 3320 copies

Mastigando Humanos, Nova Fronteira,

2006; Editora Record, 2013, 3000

copies

O Prédio, o Tédio e o Menino Cego,

Editora Record, 2009, 3000 copies

Pornofantasma, Editora Record, 2011,

3000 copies

Garotos Malditos, Editora Record

(Galera), 2012, 4000 copies

- **Author's webpage:**

[www.santiagonazarian.blogspot.com](http://www.santiagonazarian.blogspot.com)

- **Translations:**

#### **Portugal**

- A Morte Sem Nome, Editora Palavra,

Portugal, 2005.

#### **Spain**

- Masticando Humanos, Editora

Ambulantes, Espanha, 2013 (Translated

by Victor Lopez and Aline Pereira da

Encarnação.)

- **Participation in anthologies:**

#### **Italy**

In Lusofônica. La nuova narrativa in

lingua portoghese: Seis dedos para

contar, Rome: La Nuova Frontiera

2006

#### **Bolivia**

Bogotá 39, Bogotá:Ediciones B 2007,

413 p.

#### **Argentina**

In El futuro no es nuestro: Espinazo de

pez, Buenos Aires: Eterna Cadencia

2009, 272 p.

Selection and foreword by Diego

Trelles Paz

Bolivia: La Hoguera

Brazil: Melhoramentos

Panama: Fuga

USA: Open Letter Books

#### **Germany**

In Popcorn Unterm Zuckerhut – Junge

brasilianische literature, WAT 707,

Germany, 2013

- **Awards:**

“Olívio”: Prêmio Fundação Conrado

Wessel de Literatura, 2003, São Paulo,

Brazil.

**Bogotá 39:** 39 Best Young Latin

American Writers, Hai Festival, Bogotá,

Colômbia, 2007.

“Garotos Malditos”: Programa

Petrobras Cultural, Rio de Janeiro,

Brasil, 2010.

## THE TRANSLATOR

### Lidia Cavalcante Luther

Lidia Cavalcante Luther was born in São

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Translation in English and Portuguese

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Paulo in 1985. In 1986 she completed a

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institution. In the same year, she moved

to Europe and lived in England and

Germany for over 10 years, going to

the United States in 1986. She works as

a scout and foreign rights negotiator

for Geração Editorial, as well as an interpreter and translator. In 2012 she worked as a curator for the 1. BienalBrasil do Livro e da Leitura de Brasília, bringing over 20 authors from every continent to participate in the Bienal.

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# ELZA THE GIRL

SÉRGIO RODRIGUES

Translated by Sérgio Rodrigues

**K**ing Kong was playing in Cinelandia, the old man said, a late Saturday afternoon session. I went to see it by myself, as I often did. I was crazy about movies. I had already seen that one, it was a rerun, but I wasn't doing anything and thought it a good idea to watch it again and once more try to decipher the prodigious optical tricks that, at the time, we still hadn't been taught to call special effects. The old man gave yet another grimace, this time accompanied by a hoarse chuckle. Can you imagine, son, he said, a time when *King Kong*, the first one, starring Fay Wray and that grotesque puppet filmed in stop-motion, stopping more often than motioning, can you imagine a time when *King Kong* was a technological wonder, a chimera that mesmerized crowds in the dark auditorium? If you can't, if you do not have such capacity for abstract thinking, I'm afraid you won't understand much of my story.

Well of course, Molina began to say. But it must have been a rhetorical question, for Xerxes stopped him short, not at all interested in his answer.

To understand, or rather to feel the blast of novelty that little RKO film represented for us, as though you had actually been there, is an intellectual exercise comparable to breathing the air that we breathed in those days – and now, I wonder if you have noticed, I am talking politics again. It is hard to explain this to a person of the twenty-first century, these people who are always ready to kill or die over a traffic quarrel, but never for their ideas. Oh no. No belief, unless you are a Muslim terrorist perhaps, justifies the loss of anything, let alone life. The passion for a hooliganesque pack of football fans, oh yes! In the name of that, sure, one kills, one disembowels, one dies every Sunday and sometimes even midweek. But ideology, political beliefs, world view? Bah! You are funny, aren't you? It is hard to explain that world to you – my world – but I'll give it a try.

(...)

Elza didn't know anything. Nothing at all. Or rather, yes, she knew how to make soap out of ashes, was impeccable at pressing clothes with heavy irons overflowing with coals, not letting the fabric burn or be soiled by the black smoke. She knew a lot of those things that working-class women had to know in her time. She was the daughter of a Light Co. worker, one of eight children, so she told me, and came from a town that used to be called the Manchester Paulista, with a proletarian concentration larger than most big cities': Sorocaba. But she had no polish, no political culture and little experience of the petty-bourgeois luxuries that, by then, radio and especially cinema had started to implant in everyone's minds, rich and poor – Gessy Lever, the soap of the stars and all that crap. It was the beginning of

the avalanche of products that has now run over everything, and Elza looked at it with curiosity, but without quite getting what was going on. The minimum data was lacking. To begin with, she was illiterate. She loved going to the movies, found Greta Garbo the most beautiful woman on Earth, but confessed to me with the utmost candor that she didn't understand a word of what was said on the screen. The captions made as much sense to her as newspaper headlines or restaurant menus – and, unfortunately, she wouldn't live to see the dubbing age. The movies were a petty-bourgeois pleasure anyway, she said, quoting Bangu, a close friend of Miranda's: a product of the imperialism of the United States of America. But Elza didn't really care for that kind of stuff, or the fact that she didn't understand a thing. For months on end, her dreams would include certain scenes and details: Garbo looking in the mirror, a Claudette Colbert hairdo that she believed was similar to her own. Sometimes she even preferred not to understand what people were saying on the screen, so she could imagine only beautiful things.

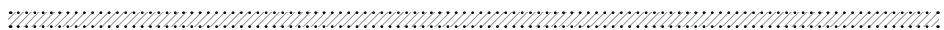
Elza was telling me all this as we walked aimlessly through the center of Rio that Saturday evening, after we left the Cavé ice-cream parlor. It was she who took the initiative of entwining her right arm around my left one, a gesture of intimacy that I hadn't dared to invite, but received as a blessing. I wasn't afraid any longer. The anticipated rain had not materialized after all, and at one point the leaden cover of the clouds was torn open magically, silently, from top to bottom, right at the position where a nearly perfect full moon was shining on the grey sky. Elza snuggled closer to me, rested her head on my arm and asked me if I could teach her how to read and write, 'cause Miranda, see, was trying to do that with the greatest patience, for she was a hard-headed moron, but Miranda had left her now, and she had no idea what would become of her life. We had got to the Public Promenade and, amidst the murmur of the waves breaking against the rocks, I heard Elza sniffing. I stroked her bush of unruly hair with my free hand and led her to the nearest seat. Tears running down her face, she smiled sheepishly, saying, I am so silly, don't you pay heed. Then my heart swelled and when I came to my senses I was drinking Elza's tears, a young girl's tears, but no longer Miranda's girlfriend's tears. The happiness I felt at that moment told me the future was good, how extremely good the future was. And amid the most memorable kisses of my life, I promised her everything: teaching, loving, and never never never letting anything bad happen to her ever.

Molina said: But it is a love story then!

There was no sarcasm in those words, at least not of the intentional kind. It was a spontaneous remark, driven by surprise and even by a sort of awe. By relief, too: if the old man's interest in Elza was purely sentimental, he reckoned, his concerns about the political implications of that story could safely be put aside.

Xerxes seemed to come back from a deep trance. He blinked several times and looked at Molina like an entomologist examining a common butterfly, only to confirm his initial impression of dealing with a specimen that was devoid of scientific or aesthetic value.

A love story, he echoed Molina's words. They all are, son.



## THE BOOK



### Elza the Girl

Sérgio Rodrigues

- **Original title:** Elza, a garota
- **ISBN:** 978-85-209-2284-2
- **Year of Publication:** 2008
- **Original publishing house:** Nova Fronteira
- **Number of pages:** 240
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 9,000 copies

### SYNOPSIS

Xerxes, a 90-something survivor of the extinct Brazilian Communist Party, hires an unemployed journalist to write his life story. The old man's tale is centered on his 1935 tragic love affair with comrade Elza Fernandes, code-named The Girl, an obscure real character in Brazilian history: a beautiful 16-year old who fell under suspicion of betraying the Party, and although the charge could not be proved, was sentenced to death by Luiz Carlos Prestes himself. Prestes, the most eminent Latin American communist leader in the romantic era prior to the Cuban revolution, had arrived undercover in Rio from Moscow with a big mission (already failed when Elza was murdered): overthrowing the Vargas government. Dark political farce, whodunnit, family secret novel, tragic love story, Elza the Girl is all that.

It also reads as an investigation on the soundness of historical narratives, as well as a Third World mirror for the ups and downs of the 20th century left – from the dawn of the Soviet utopia to the disillusion of Stalinist terror and the free-for-all war against the right-wing military dictatorship in Brazil.

A strikingly contemporary, post-utopian narrative, Elza blends the pace of a thriller and the insightfulness and thorough research of a good historical novel, introducing the reader to a world in which emotional, political, and even artistic truths must be reappraised in order to fit our shifting present.

### PRESS REVIEWS

Veja magazine: “A vítima esquecida do PCB” [http://veja.abril.com.br/180309/p\\_157.shtml](http://veja.abril.com.br/180309/p_157.shtml)

Rascunho newspaper: “Quando o imaginário emoldura o real” <http://rascunho.gazetadopovo.com.br/quando-o-imaginario-emoldura-o-real/>

Público (Portuguese paper): “Melancolia por tudo o que o Brasil poderia ter sido” <http://ipsilon.publico.pt/livros/texto.aspx?id=271165>

## THE AUTHOR



FOTO MARIA MENDES

### Sérgio Ferreira Rodrigues Pereira

- **Pen name:** Sérgio Rodrigues
- **Other books**

#### Novels

As sementes de Flowerville, Objetiva, 2006

O dribble, Companhia das Letras, 2013 (scheduled)

#### Short stories

O homem que matou o escritor, Objetiva, 2000

Sobrescritos, Arquipélago, 2010

#### Abroad

In Portugal:

Elza, a garota, Quetzal, 2010

- **Author's webpage:**

[www.todoprosa.com.br](http://www.todoprosa.com.br)

- **Awards**

Prêmio Cultura do Estado do Rio de Janeiro for Literature, 2011, Granted in Rio de Janeiro (RJ) by the Rio state government.

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# THE LITTLE DEATHS

WESLEY PERES

Translated by Ana Fletcher

**W**hat to do about these white corpuscles, rendered useless when they happen upon a body of stars disarticulating the flesh. Nearly twenty years later, it's difficult for people to admit that that which doesn't happen, does happen. They will always think that a plague is something foreign, that sickles cannot be blue. To those that please Him, God grants wisdom, guarantees the book He guarantees, while that book is, in itself, a guarantee: God grants wisdom, and the killing machine keeps turning, making a repetitive art of pulverizing what is beneath and, perhaps, what is above the sun. Were the inhabitants of Goiânia great and perverse sinners before the Lord? The fact was there had been a cancer in that arse-end-of-nowhere city, a blue cancer, no less. Blue; when it happened, a thick darkness covered the whole city. People couldn't see one another, they could only see the dead, and all anybody wanted was to kill the dead. A small immense holocaust, a sacrifice consumed by fire, a smell that pleased the Lord. We are all part of a sacrifice to Him, to the unnameable scratch in the glass of our eyes. We, the inhabitants of that city, were anointed, anointed with the delicate fragrance of the rough voice of God. And with a blue cancer that inhabits the scenery of my sweetest dreams.

[me]

Since learning about the accident with the cesium I am permeated by those images of Leide and dolls and flowers and death. Ever since then I've been sure I will die of cancer. And this has something to do with my becoming a composer.

Goiânia. 1987, I, Felipe Werle, am 12 years old and certain I have cancer. An endless sequence of sounds. 1987 produced, in me, a continuous grinding of the teeth of the decomposing flesh. Since the age of 12, then, I live with the permanent certainty that cancer has a hold on my body. The disturbances of the body disturb the soul, which is no more than the part of the body aware of itself, or not – the part of the body that prefers ignorance.

The father of Daniel Paul Schreber, a celebrated doctor and pedagogue in nineteenth-century Germany, believed in the correction of the soul through the orthopaedic correction of the body. For this, he invented machines to re-educate the body that would, simultaneously, promote the re-education, the straightening out of the soul. Blessed be Schreber-senior, who made of Schreber-junior the most famous paranoiac in history.

Cesium-137. Amen. Which made a paranoiac out of me. Being paranoid is the



best way to live in this world. Last week, in a bookshop in Goiânia, I opened a book by Llosa and I read the following sentence: 'Even paranoiacs have enemies'. Let's get one more use out of that: even paranoiacs have cancer. Why the hell do they talk about me, to me, as if it were impossible for me to have cancer, as if being paranoid (I'll admit, I'm paranoid) protects anyone from cancer. Being a shark guarantees you won't get cancer; being paranoid does not. A vaccine that turns people into sharks, and not into Paul Schreber, would immunise people against cancer. If paranoia protected people from cancer, Thomas Pynchon would be immortal; after all, any death that can be put down to natural causes has cancerous origins.

I was a hyper-centred child, a euphemism for paranoia. I can come up with others. For example: an excess of self-awareness resulting in difficulty feeling affection towards anything other than myself. Even when I was affected by somebody (when I was young women made me feel things with no name, now I find it quite clear), the other person was phagocytised by fantasies that sprang from the thing-I. Such a concentration of the thing-I led me, very early on, to a preoccupation with death. The more self-centred I am, the more me there is to die.

Self-centredness doesn't rule out dispersion, or nuclei that move of their own accord, or the establishment of certain configurations of memory, while others come undone. Writing might be akin to taking photographs of moments of memory. It constantly occurs to me that life is a difficult book, for me, because affections and reason select, in my case, the most barbed blocks of memory. It also occurs to me that cancer can affect your memory.

Not that memory is constructed in the way that we talk about constructing buildings, or ant farms, or strange relationships. Memory is constructed in the way that a ghost is formed from some place in the body, under the effect of something endogenous or exogenous, generally in the stomach. Once formed, the ghost haunts the dark corners of cells and turns them into cancer, which will come to know us in a sense beyond the biblical.

Since childhood then, the feeling of being somebody who is unviable - more than that, the certainty of being unviable, and there's no way of expressing that or, better said, there's no way of showing that, of making it present, because this right here isn't an epic.

I had the childhood of a normal person. Normal. Normal is a good thing, I understand, it's a weapon to deal with the world, so that the world, which will always be much stronger than you, uses some of that strength in your favour - 'your' in this case being 'my', it's me we're talking about.

Now, I'm 33 years old, I must have taken every test that, hypothetically, can diagnose a certain type of cancer, about forty times. Just yesterday I had a reverse endoscopy, if you know what I mean. I spend my every spare minute talking to Google, finding out what new tests are on the market. I even think, I'm convinced, that what they call death by natural causes is, in fact, cancer. Cancer is what most closely comes to defining the thing-man. The origin of the body, the origin of your my steps and of what we think we are is accidental, contingent.

Recently, I've dedicated my time to three things, alongside my yet-to-be-confirmed cancer: women, hating my father, music. I'm a composer. I won the Contemporary Music Biennial, last year, which allowed me to fuck more and more attractive women, as well as to hate my father with more intensity. I'll come back to that. The better things go for me in life, the more I am controlled by the dregs of remorse for hating my father.

Music short-circuits the path that words need to affect the body. This book then, is for just that: to create escapes from said short-circuit, naming things that cause my cranium to contract.

My father is an unpleasant man. He has some virtues. His hypochondria, for example. That's where we intersect. Our shared affective semantic territory. We also talk about football. That's it. I, also, am an unpleasant man. But I know how to pretend, I know how to handle barbed hooks, especially when it comes to getting women into bed.

Always penniless, because women. Women demand money. I'm a disappointment to myself when I fall in love, which doubles my intercranial noises. And which makes me hate my father even more. I've inherited from him the repugnant nucleus that mixes up a particular emotion with a particular cunt and the one with the other, and the one with the other. I must really be an aberration, I identify the particularities of the smell of cunts. My dad is a metonymic man, and he passed that down to me, lumped on to his perception of the body as permanently rotting.

I don't think I have liver problems. Unfortunately. I don't drink enough for that. Much more bookish that I care to admit. Much less bookish than I care to admit. Unpleasant, but, like I said, I can play the fool enough to make a woman smile. There's no need to fear men like me. It's the incorruptible ones you should fear; after all, as everyone knows, theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Arses and breasts and the space between women's legs are enough for men like me. I could talk to God and to the Devil, but that doesn't interest me any more.

I've got a way with women. That makes me distrust what I compose. I dream about women's electroacoustics; the wet darkness and the sounds that I don't remember afterwards, that wake me up, with or without ejaculation, and that I don't remember afterwards.

The last piece I composed is called Forest of bones. I might still compose another, which will be called Five fractures for Ana. *Angels are women who chose the night* is the piece with which I won the Rio de Janeiro Biennale of Contemporary Music, in 2006. I'd very much like to know what the hell that means: *Angels are women who chose the night*. I read it in a poem and thought it was beautiful. I generally find things I don't understand beautiful.

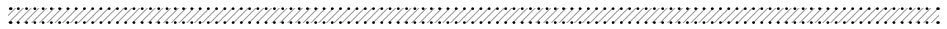
Women, for example. I've got a way with them, but I don't understand them. But I have a gift, they say. As do I – if I didn't think as much, I wouldn't waste my damn time with music and women – even if my gift for the latter makes me hesitant about believing in my gift for the former.

I love women. I hate music. My favourite quip. And I'm fighting against the

terrible habit of composing independent clauses, of punctuating every phrase.

The worst thing about getting so many tests done: the bodily intrusion. I'm terrified of machines churning away inside my body, snooping around my entrails, not finding the traces of the cancer that is there, unleashed by the cesium, but written into my carnal contract - I am human, after all. And asking for a cure is a prayer I won't pray. I'm an unpleasant man, which doesn't mean I don't have my principles.

I don't know if, at first glance, that business with the cesium had any effects on me. It didn't. It was inscribed in traces, in microtraces, in nanotraces that, bit by bit, would break, break the functional system of cells in the body and soul. The soul is an effect of the body, of its flattened out folds, of its biochemical, electrical, sonorous interruptions. Electroacoustics.



## THE BOOK



### The little deaths

Wesley Peres

- **Original title:** As Pequenas Mortes
- **ISBN:** 9788532528292
- **Publication year:** 2013
- **Original publishing house:** ROCCO
- **Number of pages:** 120
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 3.000 copies

### SYNOPSIS

In *The Little Deaths*, sex and cancer are getting to prospective writer Felipe Werle. A native of Goiânia, he is obsessed with the idea that cancer has spread through the population after the 1987 Cesium-137 disaster. The tragedy was 'a small immense holocaust, a sacrifice consumed by fire'. Felipe leads an anxious life, riddled with desires, most of which are prohibited or prohibitive. Tired of his life as a musician, he decides to exorcise his pleasures and obsessions in a book – and the reader is invited to keep him company along the way.

### PRESS REVIEWS

"Wesley makes a radical assertion about the power of writing – now just an immaterial but effective tool, used to stitch together the failures of the flesh." Jose Castello – O Globo

At "The Little Deaths" Wesley Peres takes the Cesium 137 accident in Goiânia, as a metaphor of our times – Heitor Ferraz Mello, *Revista Cult*.

"Life and death embrace and find one another on every page of Wesley Peres book." André Batista Mendes – O Estado de Minas

## THE AUTHOR



FOTO DENNIS MELO

### Wesley Godoi Peres

- **Pen name:** Wesley Peres
- **Other books:**
  - Água Anônima (Governo do Estado de Goiás, 2001)
  - Rio Revoando (USP/COM-ARTE, 2003)
  - Palimpsestos (Editora UFG, 2007)
  - Casa entre Vértebras (Record, 2007)
- **Author's webpage:**  
[www.wesleyperes.com](http://www.wesleyperes.com)
- **Awards:**
  - Água Anônima (Governo do Estado de Goiás, 2001) - Prêmio Cora Coralina, poetry
  - Casa entre Vértebras (Record, 2007), novel - Prêmio Nacional Sesc de Literatura, short listed of Prêmio São Paulo de Literatura 2008, nominated for the Prêmio Portugal Telecom de Literatura 2008.

## THE TRANSLATOR

### Ana Fletcher

Ana Fletcher is a translator and editor based in Rio de Janeiro. She has a BA in English from the University of York and an MA in Comparative Literature from University College London. Ana

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# DÍA DE MUERTOS

ALESSANDRO GARCIA

Traducido por Mara Lopes

**M**amá nos pedía que rezáramos por papá. Nosotros no sabíamos adónde se había ido papá, pero rezábamos, mamá nos pedía y nosotros rezábamos. En los días en que teníamos que acompañarla hasta el cementerio, era peor. Comprábamos las flores, la ayudábamos a limpiar su sepultura, siempre tan llena de hierbas, y nos poníamos graves, tan serios como sería raro ser a la edad que teníamos. Los años de falta de papá ya habían pasado. En los primeros tiempos, dolía tanto que llegábamos a pasar mal. Marina estuvo días sin ir al colegio, lloraba noche y día, lloraba tanto que yo creía que ella iba a morir también. Como yo era el único hombre de la familia, debía mantenerme más duro, al mismo tiempo intentar parecer más serio, aunque me doliera hasta los huesos fingir rectitud delante de mamá y de mi hermana y de noche llorar como un condenado la falta de papá. Lo bueno es que éramos pequeños lo suficiente en aquella época, si fuera hoy, tal vez fuera más dolorido, si papá desapareciera así no más, y mamá llegara y nos dijera que él se había muerto. Como no vimos el cuerpo, no lloramos al difunto, era aún más difícil darse cuenta de que papá realmente se había muerto. Para mamá, no sé bien como fue toda la función de probar que papá se murió, éramos tan pequeños y ella tan sola, corriendo de un lado al otro, toda la burocracia y los papeles para mostrar que sí, su marido se había muerto; aunque no hubiera un cuerpo para enterrar, ella quería una ceremonia religiosa y cura y toda la gente llorando alrededor de un ataúd que no tenía difunto dentro. Sus ropas, solamente. Creo que habían unas ropas suyas que mamá colocó allá dentro, y decía que eran parte de papá y que debíamos llorar también porque papá se había muerto y debíamos sentir su ausencia y ahora yo era el hombre de la casa.

Después, incluso con toda la catequesis y la confirmación y la comunión y todo aquello de que mamá insistía, porque se aferraba demasiado a Dios y decía que era devota de la Virgen María, ni Marina ni yo lo hacíamos de corazón. No deseábamos aburrirla a mamá, entonces no había cabida que nos colocáramos como uno de esos niños mimados que había en el colegio, que recibían todo con mucha facilidad y encima se quejaban para la madre si ella no les daba la zapatilla de la marca que le habían pedido. Yo siquiera conocía las marcas de zapatillas. Vestía lo que mamá podía comprarme. Así también era Marina. Y, hoy, pensándolo bien, hasta me sorprende de que fuéramos tan buenos chicos, así lo éramos. Solo cuando crecí un poco más y empecé a trabajar y pude comprar las cosas para la casa y seguir pagando el alquiler de la sepultura, que era cara como joya, allá en el cementerio del Centro, es que pude también comprarle unos regalos a Marina, pobre Marina, siempre con sus vestiditos remendados que heredaba de mamá, y unas cosas para mí, y entonces compré unas de esas zapatillas bonitas

porque les gustaban a las chicas en los bailes, pero no importa, porque, al fin de las cuentas, tampoco me miraban a mí. Decían que yo era hijo del difunto que no había.

Difunto que no había, pues no había cuerpo, todos de la ciudad sabían que enterramos papá en espíritu, que era como decía mamá. Un entierro digno como buen cristiano que era para tener un lugar en el cielo, y donde estuviera su cuerpo, estaría en la paz de Nuestro Señor. Mamá decía paz de Nuestro Señor, y me acuerdo de Marina y yo repitiendo, arrodillados a su lado, en sus largas oraciones, especialmente en el Día de Muertos. No tengo ni idea porque inventaron un día para los muertos, esos muertos que siempre hace falta calmarlos, parece que siempre quieren un regalo, que recen por ellos, si no se ponen aburridos y terminan por atezar la paciencia de los vivos aquí, pero si hay el Día de los Muertos, que sea, que hagamos lo que sea necesario hacer, entonces, porque no discuto mucho esas cosas de convención que las personas inventan, y si las inventaron tenemos antes que respetar y cumplir. ¿Y qué mal hay en un día solo rezar por ellos si ellos se ponen más calmos de esa manera? Después, no costaba nada, aun siendo ya mayor, aunque no quisiera salir de casa y juntarme a Dora (mamá ya estaba viejita y quería estar y cuidarla antes de que se fuera para junto de papá). Podía ayudarla a ir hasta el cementerio, limpiar las hierbas con ella y dejar la sepultura de papá tan bonita, lustrar el vidrio de su foto, ya tan empañada, y cambiar las flores con mamá, cosa que más le gustaba hacer. Y aunque ya fuera adulto, ahora sí que no me creía más en esas cosas de la iglesia y que las almas van para un lugar tan bueno, creo que cuando nos morimos se acaba y punto, hacía lo que mamá quería para que ella se sintiera feliz, y si ella decía que papá estaba mirándonos, estaba en un lugar mejor y se ponía más contento porque limpiábamos su sepultura, yo lo hacía, ¿qué es lo que no hacía para dejarla a mamá feliz?

Cuando mamá estaba cerca de la muerte, se llenó de gente, ya que mamá era buena y todos que estaban en su entorno la querían, aunque hablasen por las espaldas que era la viuda del difunto que no había. Pero las gentes son todas así, las personas hablan realmente, ¿y qué se puede hacer, si después, cuando la necesitan a mamá le piden ayuda y hacen de cuenta que no dijeron nada? Como mamá era muy buena, hacía de cuenta que no oía, por eso ella siquiera gritó con nadie cuando se pusieron a su alrededor rezando por ella, ni el turco que le cobraba un ojo de la cara por cualquier tejido que ella necesitaba para sus costuras, hasta él estaba allí, rezando, ni imagino de qué religión son los turcos, y se ellos creen en Dios, o si él solo estaba allí para disimular. Y, en ese momento, eran todos amigos, pero solo yo y Marina que sujetábamos la mano de mamá como ella lo deseaba, era solo eso que ella precisaba para morir en paz. Y ella dijo qué bueno sería si nuestro padre estuviera esperándola para recibirla para que se quedaran juntos para siempre. Por eso es que yo no sé (no sé, pues después él se fue), si ella hablaba de papá que iba a recibirla allá en el cielo o si empezó a devanear cuando vio el hombre que entró en casa, a quien ni yo ni Marina conocíamos, pero que mamá empezó a llamarlo por el nombre de nuestro padre, y como mamá ya estaba delirando, ni pusimos atención, ni nosotros ni el hombre tampoco, debía de ser un amigo lejano, ya viejito como mamá, aunque a todo el mundo le pareció muy raro, y a mí también, en verdad, que él se pareciera tanto a mí.





## EL LIBRO



### Día de Muertos

Alessandro Garcia

- **Título original:** Cuento: Finados, del libro A Sordidez das Pequenas Coisas. (La Sordidez de Las Cosas Pequeñas)
- **Año de publicación:** 2010
- **Editora de la publicación original:** Não Editora
- **Número de páginas:** 176
- **Tirada total en Brasil:** 1000 ejemplares.

### SINOPSIS

Los personajes de La Sordidez de Las Cosas Pequeñas son personas comunes que, a través de la meticulosa prosa de Alessandro García, enseñan sus legados de logros y dolor, y terminan convirtiéndose singulares en sus trayectorias y "micromundos". El autor hace florecer la humanidad, aunque rodeada de miseria y desencanto, en 20 cuentos que pueden desde retomar el misterio de los cuadros de niños llorando del italiano Giovanni Bragolin hasta construir simulacros de Cortázar y las ironías metaliterarias emulando David Foster Wallace

### PRÉMIOS

Finalista en la categoría de cuentos en el Premio Jabuti 2011.

Logró el segundo lugar en el Premio Clarice Lispector, Premio Fundação Biblioteca Nacional 2011.

### RESEÑAS

Revista Amálgama: <http://bit.ly/11HDaM8> - Revista Digestivo Cultural: <http://bit.ly/11HDbzD>

### EL AUTOR



### Alessandro de Severo Garcia

- **Nombre de pluma:** Alessandro Garcia
- **Otros libros:** Assim você me mata (Por lo que me mata), São Paulo, SP, Editora Terracota, Año: 2012 - Cuento: Hotel São Jorge (Hotel San Jorge) É Assim que o mundo acaba (Así es como termina el mundo), Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Editora 8 e meio, Año: 2012 Cuento: Depois do que aconteceu (Después de lo sucedido)
- **Página web:** [www.alessandrogarcia.com](http://www.alessandrogarcia.com)

### LA TRADUCTORA

#### Mara Ferreira Lopes

Licenciada en Letras en 2004, lecionó Español en escuelas de idiomas para los más distintos niveles de aprendizaje y las más distintas edades; hoy es

profesora en una escuela pública, donde participa de un programa de Escuela de Período Integral. Es posgraduada en Traducción Español - Portugués - Español por la Universidad Gama Filho (São Paulo), y ya ha sido colaboradora de las agencias QVP (São Paulo) y Farma Traduções (São Paulo).

Hoy día es traductora y coordinadora del proyecto sin fines lucrativos CBA (Cuentos Brasileños de la Actualidad) en el cual traduce al Español cuentos menos conocidos del público con la intención de llevar un poco de la Literatura Brasileña a los países hispanohablantes.

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# INMÓVIL

JAVIER ARANCIBIA CONTRERAS

Traducido por Julia Maciel

**N**unca se me cruzó por la cabeza, ni siquiera una vez en la vida, que algún día terminaría con un arma en las manos. Sin embargo, a esta quisiera guardarla por un tiempo más. Es pequeña, reluciente, niquelada. En teoría, no es un arma respetable. Mucho menos una pistola de esas automáticas que se ven en las películas policiales, pero sí un revólver. Un treinta y dos. Parece algo menor, menos importante, como un cigarrillo en relación con un habano. De cualquier modo, debe hacer un agujero enorme. Analizando más de cerca, creo incluso que el revólver da más temor que sus semejantes, pues cuando se acciona un martillo es una señal evidente de que la cosa no se trata de un juego y que se necesita mucho menos que un desvío de la mirada o un movimiento inoportuno en algún músculo del cuerpo para que el gatillo haga click y, ¡zas! provoque un tremendo estrago.

Pero eso no podría suceder ahora, ya que acabo de gatillar apuntando hacia mi imagen deformada y gris en la televisión apagada y nada, ningún estampido. El arma está sin balas, claro, yo mismo las saqué del tambor. Tuve miedo de que el viejo quisiera matarme o que él se pegara un balazo en la cabeza.

Ya no sé hace cuánto tiempo sucedió aquello. Recuerdo que fue en la misma época que estaba completamente hastiado de mi trabajo. No podía soportar más completar informes, sellar, firmar papeles. Me sentía un poco desanimado y entonces en ese momento, tirado en la cama, no sé por qué, confundido, fue de repente que decidí descubrir lo que realmente estaba pasando conmigo.

## el verano

**D**e pie, podía sentir el día ardiendo a través de la ventana del apartamento mientras observaba los primeros movimientos que aparecían sobre la calle caliente. El viento revolvía el cabello de las jóvenes que pasaban con sus cuerpos curtidos de sol, los automóviles silbaban sus motores en dirección a las playas, los comercios subían las puertas de acero. Levantando la vista, parte del mar aparecía entre los pequeños edificios dispuestos en hileras como piezas de dominó, que circundaban el golfo y envolvían a la ciudad.

Era todavía un niño cuando llegué a Navisur. Después de la muerte prematura de mamá me obligaron a vivir con los parientes más cercanos a la Capital, mi ciudad natal. La casa en la que pasé a vivir quedaba en el cuadrilátero sur del lugar, a algunas cuadras de la playa que nunca había visto y a poco más de cien kilómetros de donde vivía antes. Era una casa de madera y cemento, grande, espaciosa. Pero

poco acogedora para mí. Quizás era ese olor a viejo que sentí al llegar y que la verdad nunca me pude explicar de dónde venía. Pero también podría ser por mi referencia del cuarto y sala donde vivía apretujado con mamá en comparación con las habitaciones amplias de unos casi cuatro metros de altura. De todas formas, parecía haber puesto los pies en un lugar irreal, como si solo pudiera verlo en algún punto en el fondo de la imaginación. Pensé en eso muchas veces acostado en la cama ubicada en el centro del cuarto que me dieron, mirando aquel techo inalcanzable y tratando de entender por qué, de un momento a otro, alguien había sentenciado que tendría que mudarme de casa y ciudad.

En aquellos tiempos en Navisur se tardaba aproximadamente tres horas para llegar a la ciudad. Navisur, sin embargo, a excepción de las casas antiguas y sus intocables edificaciones de pocos pisos, con el pasar de los años entró en un proceso de metamorfosis acelerado. El clima provinciano de la ciudad, distribuida en decenas de pueblos periféricos, había perdido sus características al galope, usurpado por los más variados tipos de emprendimientos inmobiliarios como enormes hoteles que tomaban manzanas enteras y grandes centros de compras. Esto sucedió porque los antes tortuosos y difíciles caminos de acceso habían sido facilitados al extremo por la construcción de una carretera, lo que permitió que la gran masa de vacacionistas pudiera invadirla. En cierta forma, para muchas personas quizás haya sido mejor así. Durante las estaciones más frías Navisur se volvía un lugar demasiado sombrío y solitario. Desde pequeño creía que eso era propio de ciudades que miman a sus habitantes solo una época al año.

Terminé de beber el resto del agua tibia que se balanceaba en la botella de plástico, cerré la cortina para no dejar entrar al sol y me acosté nuevamente sobre la cama. Hacía tanto calor que apenas se podía respirar. Había dormido poco aquella noche y los sueños que me habían envuelto en el corto intervalo me hicieron despertar con la cabeza y el cuerpo cansados.

Hacía tiempo que me había habituado a soñar varios sueños que no terminaban. En verdad, apenas comenzaban, eran solo fragmentos, no tenían ni historia ni argumento. No es que yo creyera que los sueños debían tener algún sentido, pero los míos no querían decir absolutamente nada. En todos ellos yo solo caminaba sin parar y cuando me daba cuenta, en un instante ya caía en otro. Ni sé cómo sabía que era otro, creo que cambiaba el ambiente. Solo podía ser eso porque no había otros personajes, no veía a nadie que hubiese visto alguna vez o incluso alguien imaginario. Solo caminaba de allá para acá, a veces fumaba, me quedaba pensando en la vida, pero en verdad no tenía idea sobre lo que estaba pasando. Algunas veces, sin embargo, la caminata tranquila era sustituida por una corrida insensata que no me llevaba a ningún lugar. Sentía cierto frenesí, pero no huía ni iba al encuentro de nadie, pues nadie aparecía de repente provocándome algún tipo de reacción. No había ni mujeres deseables para entretenerme ni nadie para conversar. No eran tristes, felices, buenos o malos, simplemente no querían decir nada. A pesar del marasmo, todo eso me cansaba mucho al despertar. Creo que eran las andanzas y las corridas y los pensamientos que no se definían en la cabeza.

Todavía era relativamente temprano cuando oí que golpeaban a la puerta. Mi ojo se abrió despacio, sin nitidez, parecía haber una membrana por delante, la cabeza pesada, la cara arrugada hundida en la almohada, dificultando mi visión derecha. A pesar de que la cama estaba exactamente enfrente a aquella forma rectangular y de color indefinible, no podía levantarme. Pensé en decir algo como “espere un poco”, pero las fuerzas me dieron solo para soltar un gruñido ahogado. Antes de intentar erguirme, sin embargo, la persona al otro lado aparentemente había desistido sin mucha insistencia.

Lentamente, sin estirar los huesos, me recosté en el armazón de hierro de la cabecera, traje el brazo izquierdo muy cerca de los ojos y vi la hora en el reloj pulsera. Eran las siete y cuarenta. Fueron solo dos golpes secos, toc toc, sin nada en particular, sin identidad para mí. Estaba absolutamente seguro de que era alguien que no conocía, pues era nuevo en el edificio y, hasta donde recordaba, solo le había dado mi dirección a dos personas. Sin embargo, si hubiera sido algo realmente importante, el intruso habría golpeado de nuevo la puerta o habría bajado las escaleras y dejado un mensaje al celador, pensé. Calculé que, por la ausencia de los golpes, así podría haber sucedido. El celador, que durante la temporada turística se quedaba desde las siete y media de la mañana hasta el final de la tarde en la portería a disposición de quien quisiera conocer los apartamentos de veraneo, podría haberle informado que yo estaría seguramente en el mío. Por eso le habría permitido subir. Pero todavía era muy temprano para un sábado. Aun despierto, no abriría la puerta si no tuviera la seguridad de quién sería, yo no reconocía el golpe, y quizás la hora había avergonzado al visitante como para seguir golpeando a la puerta como un cretino.

Entonces me quedé sentado, algo febril, somnoliento, los ojos cansados, entre sábanas sin propósito debido al calor, y me di cuenta de que, a pesar de apenas comenzar, la temperatura del día ya debía estar alrededor de los treinta grados. La culpa era mía, es verdad, ese es el principio básico de mi trabajo, pero estaba con la cabeza un tanto desamparada y no me había dado cuenta, cuando decidí comprar el apartamento pocas semanas antes, que el sol fuerte nacía exactamente de ese lado del edificio, lo que reforzaba todavía más el bochorno que invadía el interior de la habitación.

En mi piso, el tercero y último, vivía solo yo. Los otros apartamentos no tenían habitantes hacía un tiempo, como me habían informado en algún momento. Justo abajo, sin embargo, una mujer vieja vivía en compañía de una verdadera plaga de gatos de estirpe popular, revoltosos y ariscos. El cuerpo truculento y curvado metido en vestidos siempre negros le daban un aspecto incierto, casi religioso, lo que me hacía sentir molesto cada vez que la veía.

El celador era el tercer habitante del edificio. Hombre pálido y bajito, tenía las facciones duras, casi estáticas, sin reacción aparente. Sus movimientos eran mecánicos. No parecía un rostro humano. Tenía los trazos de una marioneta bien acabada, como si la cara hubiera sido tallada. Llevaba siempre una vestimenta particular, casi un uniforme, pantalones de vestir pinzados y camisa de botones blanca, ambos metidos en el tronco corto. El celador hacía de todo, pero lo que

realmente le gustaba era permanecer sentado al cabo de buena parte del día atrás de un pequeño mostrador de madera reservado como portería en el hall de entrada del edificio. Desde allí parecía tener el control total de lo que sucedía en el lugar, además de expandir su universo, mirando, alguna que otra vez, la calle ardiente. Así como la vieja y yo, también vivía solo en uno de los pisos, el primero, que en verdad era la planta baja. Los demás apartamentos permanecían desocupados, con sus carteles de “se alquila para el verano” colgados en las ventanas.

Miré nuevamente la hora. Las ocho. Era el segundo sábado del mes de enero. Me había acostumbrado a levantarme temprano todos los días debido al trabajo en la inmobiliaria, pero, a pesar del cansancio que sentía, los fines de semana muchas veces me fastidiaban. Es verdad que no me gustaba cuando tenía que hacer guardia los sábados y domingos; sin embargo, para mí el trabajo era una manera falaz de pasar los días, que parecían seguir más lentamente que lo normal en esta ciudad.

Me recosté de nuevo y apoyé lentamente la espalda sobre el colchón. A través de las hendiduras que se formaban en el balanceo de la cortina, el cielo parecía blanco de tanto sol, lo que era casi insoportable. Permanecí inmóvil, con las piernas saliendo hacia fuera y los brazos hacia atrás, estirados. Cerré los ojos pero no lograba dormirme: el tictac del reloj casi dentro del oído, la oscuridad blanquecina incluso con los párpados apretados. No debía haber pasado mucho tiempo, pero vencí al cansancio y me deslicé por la cama, despacio. Tomé las gafas de la mesita de luz, me puse los pantalones, los zapatos, una camiseta y decidí bajar. La puerta estaba abierta. Nunca tuve la costumbre de cerrarla con traba cuando llegaba de la calle. Un mal hábito, es verdad, como lo pude constatar más tarde.

En los pasillos los vitrales proyectados bien al fondo no eran suficientes y la claridad del lugar dependía casi exclusivamente de las bombillas que aquella mañana parpadeaban sin parar y con cierta precisión. Bajé las escaleras, lentamente, tanteando las paredes en algunos momentos. Divisé al celador. Parecía concentrado en la lectura de una de esas revistas de variedades que siempre tienen una mujer bonita en la tapa, y no se tomó el trabajo de desviar los ojos. Solo para iniciar una conversación le pregunté lo que había pasado con las luces, imaginando ya la respuesta que me daría.

“Ah, sí... Estamos con pequeños cortes de energía. Pero el problema está siendo resuelto”, dijo levantando la vista por primera vez.

“Los turistas están llegando cada vez más rápido...”, le comenté sin ganas.

“Apenas se instalan en la ciudad ya comienzan los problemas. Pero así y todo los necesitamos, usted sabe...”.

“Claro”, le dije para no prolongar la conversación.

Luego de un momento el extraño hombre sostuvo la mirada y se mordió el labio inferior casi con placer. Parecía ansioso.

“Hoy es sábado. Usted no suele levantarse tan temprano los fines de semana...”.

No entendí bien la afirmación que salió de aquella boca estática. Yo estaba allí hacía tres semanas y quizás, a fin de cuentas, él no sabría que yo solía estar de guardia los fines de semana de manera alternada. El último había sido en Año

Nuevo y tampoco trabajé. De todas formas, no me gustó esa invasión y le respondí inmediatamente.

“Me despertaron. Alguien me golpeó la puerta.”

La respuesta lo tomó de sorpresa. Casi lo hizo tartamudear.

“¿Está seguro? Quiero decir, digo porque estoy aquí hace algún tiempo y no vi a nadie entrar ni salir del edificio”, dijo con un aire de ofensa.

“Quién sabe, quizás estaba en el baño, o distraído”, retruqué desviando los ojos hacia la revista que estaba en sus manos.

El celador esbozó una mueca en su rostro prognato. Me observó de arriba abajo.

“Quizás. Bien, si pasó por aquí, no dejó ningún mensaje. Pero usted sabe, todavía es temprano. A veces, el cansancio hace que las personas oigan muchas cosas...” y dio una carcajada fina, casi velada, simulando un intento de contemporizar la situación.

Respondí a la arrogancia del celador con un sonido impreciso y subí las escaleras. Cauteloso debido a la intermitencia de las luces, llegué a patear sin fuerza la barriga de uno de los gatos de la vieja del segundo piso, que probablemente había escapado y dormía perezoso en uno de los escalones. Entré.

Al sentarme al borde de la cama, mientras me sacaba los zapatos, vi el sobre amarillo por primera vez. Estaba en el piso, cerca de la puerta, casi camuflado por algunas cajas de cartón de la mudanza que había hecho días antes. No tenía nada escrito por fuera, nombre, dirección o sello de correo. Lo abrí fácilmente, pues no estaba lacrado, y leí el pedazo de papel que decía: “A las 7. Subiendo la colina, al lado de la vieja cabina del ferrocarril. Urgente.” Escrito a mano y sin firma. Encima, la fecha de aquel día.

Inmediatamente traté de recordar a algún conocido que podría haber escrito la nota, pero las personas que se me pasaban por la mente no encajaban. La verdad, no podía recordar a nadie, mi cabeza estaba desanimada, mareada, y creía que quizás yo no fuera el hombre correcto, la persona que buscaban, la destinataria de la nota. A fin de cuentas, mi nombre no aparecía. Podrían estar buscando al antiguo inquilino, pero, hasta donde sabía, el apartamento había estado desocupado desde el último verano. Dejé a un lado estas cuestiones y pasé entonces a pensar exclusivamente en la letra, bien delineada y demasiado formal para estar en un pedazo ordinario de papel.

No tenía recuerdos recientes de una letra como esa. Entonces, sin que pudiera impedirlo, me vinieron a la mente las letras de las profesoras que había tenido cuando era estudiante. Eran bonitas, quizás demasiado infantiles y llenas de curvas. De hecho, curvas que nunca conseguí hacer. Mi ineptitud me obligó a buscar, todavía niño, formatos diferentes de letras, aun siendo casi reprobado en la escuela. Sin embargo, todo eso se volvió algo indiferente para mí. Ya adulto, la mayor parte de mi trabajo se resumía en apretar algunas teclas de la computadora y después sellar y garabatear sobre algunos papeles mi firma, un gancho horrible que nadie tenía por qué entender. Solo debía ser igual, y yo había entrenado mucho para eso. Pasaba horas entrenando con tanta dedicación que mi tía cierta vez me dijo que si yo hubiera hecho el mismo esfuerzo con la letra, habría conseguido mejorarla. Ella insistía en esas cosas desde que era niño y me vine a vivir con ella.

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## EL LIBRO



### Inmóvil

Javier Arancibia Contreras

- **Título original:** Imóvil
- **ISBN:** 9788575775493
- **Año de publicación:** 2008
- **Editorial de la publicación original:** 7 Letras
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- **Tirada total en Brasil:** 2.000 ejemplares

### SINOPSIS

En Navisur, una ciudad latinoamericana que atraviesa una opresiva ola de calor, un hombre despierta de otra noche intranquila, causa de su constante degradación física, con las manos llenas de sangre y sosteniendo un pequeño revólver. Sin entender, absorto en una crisis de amnesia temporaria, es perseguido por un policía solitario, pero sobre todo por las dudas y culpas que tiene de su pasado y presente. Inmóvil es una historia sobre la incomunicabilidad y sobre cómo el martirio de la duda acerca de una decisión puede afectar toda una vida.

### PRÉMIOS

Finalista do Prêmio São Paulo de Literatura 2008

## RESEÑAS

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/ilustrada/ult90u574439.shtml>

<http://www.granta.com/New-Writing/Andres-Barba-on-Javier-Arancibia-Contreras>

## EL AUTOR



### Javier Humberto Arancibia Contreras

- **Nombre de pluma:** Javier Arancibia Contreras
- **Otros libros:**
  - Granta – os melhores jovens escritores brasileiros, antologia com o conto inédito “A Febre do Rato” (Alfaguara, 2012)
  - O dia em que eu deveria ter morrido, romance (Terceiro Nome, 2010)
  - Plínio Marcos - A crônica dos que não têm voz, livro-reportagem (Boitempo Editorial, 2002)
- **Traducciones:**
  - Granta 121: The Best of Young Brazilian Novelists (Granta, 2012)



## LA TRADUCTORA

### Julia Tomasini Maciel

Cursó la carrera de Letras en la Universidad de Buenos Aires, y una maestría y doctorado en Literatura Latinoamericana en la Universidad de Maryland.

Es traductora independiente del

portugués al español, y creó la página web [www.brasilpapelessueltos.com](http://www.brasilpapelessueltos.com), en la que publica traducciones de autores contemporáneos brasileños.

Actualmente vive en Brasilia, donde trabaja en la traducción de cuentos y novelas al español y en su tesis sobre literatura brasileña y prácticas de traducción.

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# DUELO

## MAURÍCIO DE ALMEIDA

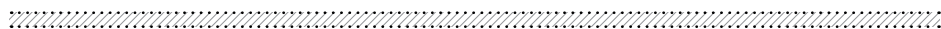
Traducido por Sebastian Rodriguez

**(A** punto un arma hacia él) No consigo imaginar que más quieres de mí, me asusta hasta tu comportamiento demente, aun silencioso y distante, pero no me impide ni me impedirá cuestionarme, ¿por qué esperas tanto si sabes que no puedo dar?, si sabes que, ¿aunque pudiera, no daría? Hace mucho intento entender lo que pasa, me esfuerzo hasta casi deshacerme, dejando de lado lo que me incomoda, desapareciendo debajo de la cobardía de no decir cualquier cosa que le hiera, (arrimo con fuerza mi arma en su barriga), de no hacer cualquier cosa que le lastime. ¿Entonces? ¿Para que sirvió tanto cuidado? ¿De qué valió tanta evitación? ¿Tanto, tacto? Es ridículo evitar cualquier disparo, ridículo como intentas ignorar lo que te digo o fingir que no ves el arma que meto en tu estómago (siento su arma hundirme el estómago y me asusto) y que todo está trémulo en la punta de mi dedo que lame con lascivia el gatillo. Vamos, destruye esa arma de porquería tira por los rincones mis pedazos que ensuciarán tus manos, tapa de una vez el caño que arrastras de un lado a otro en mi pecho (afirmo la voz y él baja la cabeza), no huyas de lo que te es inevitable: destruye lo que no puedes tener, acaba con la angustia de ver y no tocar jamás, revienta en un grito repleto de pólvora el constante pavor de arder en silencio bajo de la certeza de que nada tendrás de mí a no ser la

**(A** punto un arma hacia él) ¿Podrías imaginarte qué dolor es este? ¿Puedes bajar del confort de tus altos zuecos y sentir que nunca estoy a flor de piel, pero antes con espinas fincadas por todo el cuerpo? No puedes ni quieres. ¿Y en lo que a mí se refiere? ¿Qué hago cuando todo me es imposible y por eso mismo penetro en brazos torcidos, desperejados y llenos de manchas, agarrando algunas migas que la fortuna me tira? ¿Voy a alimentarme del desdén? Pues es lo que me sobra. ¿Qué hago cuando me arde el estómago, este mismo en el cual hundes el arma? ¿Qué hago cuando todo arde en mí y no tengo nada además del refugio oscuro y esfumado de cuerpos dispersos, tan escondidos y disimulados como el mío? No tenerte y tenerte tan cerca es el infierno, pues preciso satisfacerme con lo que me es suficiente (meto con toda la fuerza el arma en su estómago). Soy consciente de los límites de mis dedos sobre tus brazos o de nuestras manos enlazadas en un aprieto rápido y cordial - y justamente por la conciencia de saber lo que me es interdicho prefiero el silencio de una negligencia tan forjada como dolorida. ¿Crees que no sufro? (Miró hacia sus pies) ¿Crees que tengo algún placer de buscar de todas las maneras odiarte? Cuento los diez dedos de tus pies, aprecio el contorno circular de cada uno de ellos, inspiro el hábito rosado de cada uña y aguanto - como aguantaría una

negligencia y quien sabe un poco de atención, expone al menos esta vez lo que te corroe y escupe sobre el hueco que se me abrirá en el tórax, pues cualquier cosa es mejor que ese martirio silencioso por el cuál, al torturarte, me torturas también. ¿Qué hay de equivocado? ¿Una vez más te vas a esconder detrás de alguna excusa? (Siento su arma temblar en mi pecho) ¿va a forjar otro brote, otra fuga, otro miedo para justificar la debilidad de no poder apuntarme el arma? Vamos, vamos (él arrima con firmeza el arma en mi estómago), termina de una vez este sufrimiento que también es mío, pues, aunque me reconozca inocente, no soporto la culpa de no saciarte. Extirpa mi angustia de ser amado y odiado, el peso insoportable de ser dos, antagónicos e imposibles, siempre bajo la mira implacable de tu revólver trémulo, amenazado por la furia que te aplaca en las noches apretadas o en los pelos confusos de otros pechos (sus dedos son inseguros en el gatillo), más jadeantes y decididos que el mío. Ahoga mi esquizofrenia de estar dividido al medio, aunque me sienta sólido y responsable, acaba con el gusto amargo que me retuerce la boca al tragar tu silencio casi agresivo cuando, la verdad, conozco el sonido noctívago de tus hipos y la angustia de tus dedos desgastando la piel de tu cuerpo (él llora, pero entierra el arma en mi ombligo), conozco muy bien tu suspiro de torpor al apretarme las manos intentando vaciarte de cualquier deseo, e incluso el ruido lleno de horror que se te escapa de la boca al sonreír con insistencia a mi silencio, mucho más violento que el tuyo, mucho más potente e irónico, mucho más (él dispara y, en una explosión, me quedo sin aire) dolorido de lo que podrías imaginarte.

paliza - las ganas de besarlos. Soporto la incomprensible voluntad de lamerlos y lamer aun el piso bajo el cual ellos se desparraman, ora firmemente retraídos, ora descuidados como el resto de los pies. ¿Cómo lo podría evitar? ¿Es posible saber el momento exacto en el cual un par de pies te encenderá el sexo? (Procuró sitiar el arma entre sus costillas) Es el deseo: ¿qué más piensas que sujeto entre los dientes cuando contraigo el mentón en una sonrisa forzada? ¿Por qué crees que fingía sorpresa cuando me decías, siempre exageradamente jovial, que yo te enseñé tantas cosas? (Él se asusta y empuja su arma en mi barriga) Entiende: como estoy acostumbrado a hacer, preferiría yo mismo apuntarme el arma y deshacerme en una sobra amontonada de nada. En definitiva, ¿qué me sobra a no ser la convivencia forzada con el cadáver pudriéndose que siento? No imaginas el olor pesado que me ahoga el sueño a la hora más distante de la noche. (Sus dedos firmes en el gatillo) Con que pavor miro tu estómago cuando mi voluntad era tomarlo en un sólo golpe, amarrarlo con las sábanas saladas por el sudor de noches de luna caliente hasta el momento en que te confesarías apasionado por mí. ¿No ves el deseo instalado en cada bala de este revólver? ¿No percibes que cada tiro explotará también por la culata? (Él tiembla, pero, pero hunde el arma en mi ombligo) Tú siempre has sido ingenuo. Y yo, egoísta. ¿Como destruir así algo que amo por la imposibilidad de tenerlo? ¿Cuán egoísta puedo ser al meter con tanto placer el dedo en este gatillo que puede acabar en un pestañeo con algo tan bello? Tal vez yo sí sea suficientemente egoísta (él dispara y, en una explosión, me quedo sin aire), por saber que en mí algo también está muerto.



## EL LIBRO



### Besando dientes

Maurício de Almeida

- **Título original:** Beijando dentes
- **ISBN:** 978-85-01-08256-5
- **Año de publicación:** 2008
- **Editorial de la publicación original:** Editora Record
- **Número de páginas:** 111
- **Tirada total em Brasil:** 3.010 ejemplares

## SINOPSIS

El libro de Maurício de Almeida alcanza una combinación fuera de lo común entre el lenguaje inventivo y la fluencia narrativa. Se utiliza de varios recursos técnicos sin tornarse fastidioso u oscuro, pues su razón de ser se encuentra en la propia historia que cuenta. En “A las cuatro y media de la mañana”, por ejemplo, el ritmo traduce la respiración presa del narrador a la espera insomne por su amada. A partir de escenas y hablas banales del cotidiano, el autor hace un examen de las tensiones en las relaciones humanas, por género y generación. Las voces de los personajes son creíbles y hay bellos aciertos verbales. (Daniel Piza)

## PREMIO

Premio Sesc de Literatura 2007

## RESEÑAS

“Un libro que, sin duda, me entusiasmó. Um libro sin floreos, sin soberbia, escrito con fuerza, libro de quien sabe lo que desea y lo que busca. Um libro de escritor. (José Castello, en el periódico Jornal Rascunho, agosto de 2008)

## EL AUTOR



### Maurício Fiorito de Almeida

- **Nombre de pluma:** Maurício de Almeida
- **Otros Libros:** I am the walrus (cuento, in Libro Blanco. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Record, 2012) Sagrado Corazón (cuento, in Como si no hubiera mañana. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Record, 2010)
- **Página web del autor:** [www.mauriciodealmeida.blogspot.com](http://www.mauriciodealmeida.blogspot.com)

## EL TRADUCTOR

### Sebastian Rodriguez

Sebastian Rodriguez nació en Buenos Aires, Argentina. Vive en Brasil desde el año 2001, dedicándose a la enseñanza de la lengua española. Ha trabajado en diferentes escuelas de lenguas y colegios. Además, se ha especializado en traducciones y revisiones del portugués para el español.



## **DERECHOS DE PUBLICACIÓN**

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# LA MARCA

## RONALDO CAGIANO

Traducido por Ronaldo Cagiano Barbosa

*Después queda la marca. Después queda el miedo.  
Y después queda la vida con sus dedos quebrados  
tanteando un mapa en la tentativa de olvidar.*

*Álvaro Alves de Faria*

*"El tribunal"*

**R**ecordó un sábado oscuro y malvado en el que la vida le había preparado una triste recepción.

En ese día había recibido un telegrama: "Tu padre ha muerto a la madrugada. Vení enseguida. Entierro mañana, a las cuatro."

Corto y denso, el mensaje de su madre no tenía el menor signo de dolor, como si cumplierse con un deber social como cualquier otro. La viudez parecía un premio.

El camino entre la capital y Santa Rita no superaba los trescientos kilómetros, pero la agonía lo prolongaba en un desierto interminable y polvoriento. El trayecto delineaba una paranoia: W parecía no ver terminada la película de la vida que rodaba su cabeza. Su rostro vagaba e invadía el horizonte con mirada perpleja.

A cada recuerdo le seguía el sobresalto por el descubrimiento del hijo que podría haber sido y no fue: la vida en sí misma, denunciando su lado improbable, lo que dejó de ser y que ahora era irrecuperable. "Es preciso amar a las personas como si no hubiese la mañana". La canción de Renato Russo guttilhotinaba su consciencia. El trayecto se multiplicaba al influjo de los restos de remordimientos interiores.

La inmensa sala de la casa de altos (¿estaría llena de gente velando el cuerpo de Don Onofre?) ya no tendría las tardes de crochet y conversaciones en que su madre hablaba sola y su padre, siempre ausente y impenetrable, con su silencio y sus fadigas psicológicas, hacía oídos sordos. Los pocos recuerdos del viejo lo llevan a la zapatería, donde veía una biblia siempre cerrada en la estantería de los calzados reparados y su padre dando órdenes, y ningún cariño. Sólo abría la boca para quejarse de W, y nunca una gratificación o un apretón de manos (cuanto mucho, una sonrisa comercial); nunca un abrazo rodeándole los hombros o un beso en la haz. Siempre una distancia y una mirada difusa, en la que su padre parecía gravitar en otro mundo.

La única compañía durante años en aquella infancia insulsa era la del papagayo de Eusébio, el verdulero, que huía del patio vecino al naranjo cerca del estanque de

los fondos. Allí W conversaba por horas con la pequeña criatura, enseñando ciertas melodías que el loro repetía después en tono fuerte y claro. *Ese papagayo parece una cotorra, saque eso de aquí, chico, déjeme en paz.*

Su alegría estaba fuera de casa, lejos de la madre apagada, del padre omiso. De Corina, la empleada autoritaria, que aún de mal humor, le prestaba alguna atención. De la tía enferma de la cabeza, que sólo tenía a su padre para cuidar. Lejos de su hermano, que nunca quiso saber nada, ni de nadie, y vivía por los rincones, hecho un autista. De la mayor, que se casó y se fue a vivir en San Pablo con un argentino de Catamarca que, decían, era hijo de un nazi fugitivo que vino después de la guerra para Sudamérica.

El patio de la casa de la tía Honoria, del otro lado de la ciudad, que iba hasta la vera del río, desde donde contemplaba las canoas de los areneros, parecía darle lecciones de despedida. Le gustaba quedarse allí, en las raras ocasiones en que su madre iba a visitar a su tía Leonor en el pueblito de Sinimbu. Partir estaba dentro suyo. Muchas veces, el corazón partido, el cuerpo solitario, sintió ganas de sumergirse en el Pomba, río asesino que tragó tanta gente, pensando también dejar que las aguas lo llevando rumbo al Atlántico, contra las piedras de las cascatas, río abajo: Aracaty, Vista Alegre, Laranjal, Santo António de Pádua, São Fidélis... La inmensidad lo atraía y prefería perderse en la soledad oceánica que vivir enclaustrado y ocioso en las murallas de su casa. Era la oportunidad de hacer lo que quisiera, como en aquella mañana de 17 de diciembre de 1977, adolescente ya, y lector compulsivo, cuando soñó con ir al Père Lachaise para visitar la tumba de Baudelaire, pero tuvo que contentarse con acompañar a un amigo depresivo al cementerio de Leopoldina, donde sentaron en la lápida de Augusto dos Anjos y declamaron versos del poeta. París es demasiado como el amor que nunca tuvo. Pero si hoy se zambullese en aquellas aguas al final del patio sin las moreras de entonces (ah, ni el patio era el mismo: sin el chiquero, la casita del perrito Rex, las sogas em que Zenaide, todas las tardes, colgaba la ropa para blanquear al sol, el cantero de cebollines donde orinaba por pereza de ir hasta al baño, los trozos de neumáticos viejos donde su madre plantaba pequeñas rosas, el musgo y las hierbas cubriendo los muros...), todavía estaría a tiempo, podría por lo menos batirse a duelo con su destino impuesto y salir a las brazadas contra esa corriente.

El cortejo ya estaba cerca del Puente Vieja cuando W bajó del ómnibus cerca del Club de Remo. La valija con pocas pertenencias parecía vacilar en sus manos trémulas, clavado allí, mirando como un extraño y sin ser visto, el séquito pasando silencioso, aquellas cabezas bajo solemnes paraguas protegiéndose del sol de la tarde tórrida de enero. El sonido de los pasos entreverados de los acompañantes parecía imprimirle una sorda melodía. La sensación de impotencia camina con él en el breve y angustiante trayecto entre la vereda y el centro de la calle, donde el ataúd avanza en marcha fúnebre, conducido por gente desconocida. (W tenía aversión a funebreros, necrológicas, panegíricos, responsos, misas de réquiem, oraciones al pie de la tumba). Todavía no lo habían notado. Su madre, enlutada en una ropa oscura, apretaba el pañuelo contra la nariz, se limpiaba de los ojos que se empapaban

debajo del velo. Tomada del brazo de quien hacía tres décadas era su empleada y fiel escudera, contemplaba el carrito de la funeraria con sus neumáticos banzando sobre los adoquines. No había visto a su hijo, oculto como su rostro por la barba espesa. Ciertamente, en sus pensamientos, ocurría el niño que había sido un día, así también pasaba su posible ausencia. Mientras tanto, se arremolinaban escenas en la cabeza de su hijo, él que procuraba alcanzar, sobre las otras cabezas, un punto de fuga. Recuerdo las pocas veces en las que él y su padre habían ido junto al matiné del Cine Machado para asistir a las incontables reposiciones de Peter Pan, Mazaroppi y películas de western, sus primeras e inolvidables emociones. Después el carrito de la pipoca en una de las puntas de la plaza, la vuelta a casa, bajando por la calle de la estación de ferrocarriles hasta la vieja fábrica de tejidos, subiendo por la calle de la escuela Senai hasta el final y en mitad de camino jugar billar con Nelinho en los hondos de la Peluquería Fla-Flu. No se acuerda de nada más ameno, porque sacando eso, estaban las quejas de doña Aurora, los reclamos de su padre, la prohibición de jugar con el vecino (*hijo de Leninha, la separada*). Se cansó de escuchar *Cuidado, que la mamá de él no es buena gente, ¿qué van a decir de nosotros?*. No, no quería estar mortificándose, aquel era un pasado lleno de prejuicios, hoy él era un hombre de otro mundo, viviendo en la Capital, pero los recuerdos venían, inevitablemente, los recuerdos venían, resistentes, a pesar de todo, como si algo hubiese detonado los archivos secretos de tantas cosas pulverizándose de forma desagradable en un momento como aquel.

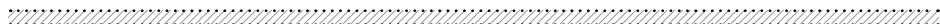
Cuando el cortejo estaba subiendo la cuesta de la Cia. Industrial, fue notada la presencia de W, entre frialdad y distancia. Primero la incredulidad, la palidez, el mudo intercambio de miradas entre parientes y otros presentes. Tristes y desérticas, las personas decían palabras convencionales. Pero el farmacéutico Mobarak, dueño de la Droguería Persa y su padrino de crisma, fue lo único en reconocerlo, dándole un abrazo mudo y conmovido. Más allá de eso, el abrazo en sollozos de su madre, bajo las miradas desconfiadas de los más próximos. No se dijeron nada, apenas los mutuos brazos inermes que se envolvían, en el último adiós a quien llegó a su hora, sin que despertaran en él otras sensaciones, más que la tristeza obvia de la partida, de la pérdida, y ninguna otra conmoción. Deber cristiano, era eso lo que sentían madre, hijo, empleada, y el hermano, siempre ajeno y todavía sin esbozar la más mínima crispación en su semblante.

Frente a la vía estrecha que divide la extensa explanada de sepulcros, un cuadro de soledades geométricas. Sus ojos se abisman por esa realidad que nos espera un día, más allá de las frivolidades del alma, de las luchas insondables del espíritu. El llanto no llega, la angustia embargada, el movimiento lento de su cabeza recorre el contorno de la tumba, donde dos sepultureros entrelazan las correas para bajar el féretro, entre movimientos de las manos para espantar las moscas y el olor de las caléndulas. Hora postrera. De crepúsculo salvaje. De soledad e inercia de la carne muerta y ahora envasada en una caja fría y numérica. De preguntas no respondidas. De nudos no desatados. Del perdón que nunca se construyó. La vida nada diferente de sí misma, pensó.



Alguien fuma un cigarillo, mientras el cajón baja chocando en los lados, y pequeños terrones van ensuciando la tapa que no fue abierta para los últimos adioses bajo el sonido de la última súplica del sacerdote Solindo. Al ver el humo circunnavegar por sobre las cabezas paralizadas y absortas en esse último acto, él se imagina la vida, disipándose, sin dejar rastros. Poco a poco, las paladas de tierra y cal se van mezclando con las flores medio marchitas arrojadas a la fosa. Recuerda la única vez en la vida en que su padre lo abrazó: cuando su hermano menor fue enterrado en aquella misma sepultura, después de haber sido aplastado por el camión de arena de Agenor – que se adentró en el portón de la obra de su casa – mientras jugaba, entre los vallados, perfiles y restos de concreto, a ser ingeniero, y construía una cordillera con tapitas de gaseosa, cuando todavía vivían cerca de la placita del Rosário, en una casa cuya construcción se interrumpió para siempre, esqueleto solitario en plaza difusa como recordatorio de un día que nadie olvida.

Hasta hoy la mancha de sangre en el cemento es una marca que no se ha diluído. Le duele, con una angustia creciente, redundante, inscribiéndose una culpa irremediable. Él fue quien mandó a Serginho a jugar al fondo, para que no incomodara a su madre, que preparaba el almuerzo para los peones.



## EL LIBRO



### La marca

Ronaldo Cagiano

- **Título original:** A marca
- **ISBN:** 85-60160-00-0.
- **Año de publicación:** 2006
- **Editora de la publicación original:** Língua Geral (Rio de Janeiro)
- **Número de páginas:** 136
- **Tirada total en Brasil:** 3.000 ejemplares

### SINOPSIS

“Los 14 cuentos que componen el libro recorren una realidad urbana, social y humana que son dramas actuales y conflictos existenciales muy presentes en la época contemporánea. La voz de los personajes, los dilemas individuales y colectivos son tratados con dureza, sin embargo se encuentra en un lenguaje poético que a menudo corriente de la conciencia revela una profunda inmersión en la experiencia del narrador y el autor. El paso del tiempo, la muerte, la soledad y el aislamiento del hombre moderno se asignan por el autor, lo que refleja la indignación y la sorpresa de un mundo tan poblado de ambigüedad “.

### RESEÑAS

[http://www.germinaliteratura.com.br/2008/livros\\_abismos\\_por\\_jabahia.htm](http://www.germinaliteratura.com.br/2008/livros_abismos_por_jabahia.htm)

[http://www.verdestrigos.org/sitenovo/site/cronica\\_ver.asp?id=1210](http://www.verdestrigos.org/sitenovo/site/cronica_ver.asp?id=1210)

[http://www.verbo21.com.br/2007/072007/ensaio072007\\_05.html](http://www.verbo21.com.br/2007/072007/ensaio072007_05.html)

## EL AUTOR



### Ronaldo Cagiano Barbosa

- **Nombre de pluma:** Ronaldo Cagiano
- **Otros libros:**

#### Cuento

**Diciembre indigesta** ( 2001 - Ganador del Premio Beca Brasilia Producción Literaria 2001) - Edición de la Secretaría de Cultura del Distrito Federal - 1.000 ejemplares.

**Concierto para rascacielos** (LGE Editora, Brasilia, 2005) - 1.000 ejemplares.

**Diccionario de pequeñas soledades** (cuentos, Ed. Língua Geral, Río, 2006) - 1.000 ejemplares.

#### Novela

**Espejo, espejo mío** - co-autor con Joilson Portocalvo (narrativa juvenil, Thesaurus , Brasilia, 2000) - 1.000 ejemplares

**Molino de silencios** - co-autor con Whisner Fraga (narrativa juvenil, Dobra Editorial, SP, 2012) - 1.500 ejemplares - Libro inédito clasificado por el Programa de Acción Cultural - ProAc,

la Secretaría de Cultura del Estado de São Paulo en 2012.

### **Poesía**

**Palabra comprometida**, Scortecci, SP, 1989) - 500 ejemplares.

**Cosecha Amarga & Otras Angustias** (Scortecci, SP, 1990) - 500 ejemplares.

**Exilio** (Scortecci, SP, 1990) - 500 ejemplares.

**Palavracesa** (Thesaurus, Brasilia, 1994) - 1.000 ejemplares.

**Canción dentro de la noche** (Thesaurus, Brasilia, 1999) - 1000 ejemplares.

**El sol en las heridas** (. Dobra Ideias, SP, 2011) - 500 ejemplares.

### **Crónica**

**Prismas - Literatura y Otros Temas** (Thesaurus / Fundación Ormeo J. Botelho, Brasilia, 1997) - 1.000 ejemplares.

### **• Premios:**

Premio Brasilia de Producción Literaria, 2001 / 1er lugar de la obra inédita Libro: Diciembre indigesta (cuentos) Publicación: 2001 - Secretaría de Cultura del Distrito Federal. Concurso Nacional de cuentos Ignacio de Loyola Brandão 1998 - de la ciudad de Araraquara - SP, 1er lugar con el cuento "Spectrun disonante".

### **EL TRADUCTOR**

#### **Ronaldo Cagiano Barbosa**

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01

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02

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03

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04

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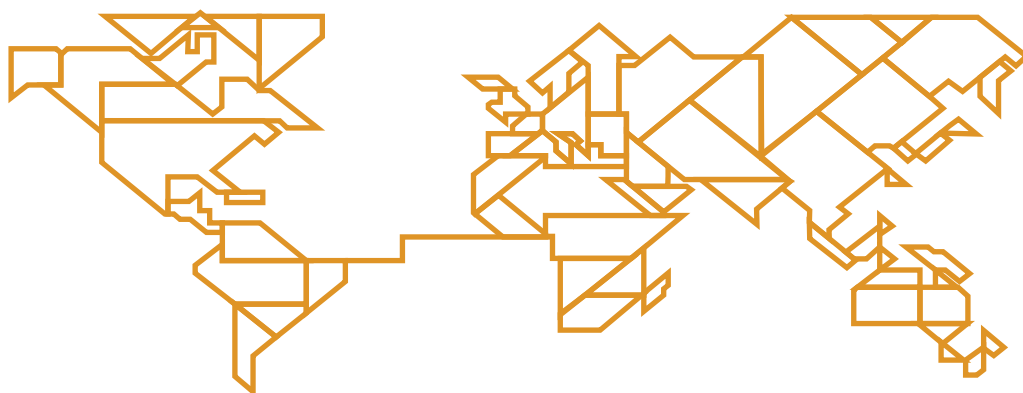
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