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FERREIRA GULLAR
AN ORDINARY MAN



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Foreword to this Digital Edition

The Fundación Cisneros' Conversaciones/Conversations series is dedicated to preserving firsthand testimonies of leading artists and intellectuals from Latin America. We are proud to present this e-book version of *Ferreira Gullar in conversation with/en conversación con Ariel Jiménez*. The e-book format not only allows us to reach the widest audience possible, but also provides the opportunity to share a variety of primary source materials that enhance the conversations themselves.

For this electronic edition of *Ferreira Gullar in conversation with/en conversación con Ariel Jiménez*, we are honored to include *An Ordinary Man*, an anthology of poems written by Gullar, which has been compiled by translator Leland Guyer—a project that began more than twenty-five years ago.

The hardcover limited edition of Gullar's epic and long out-of-print "Poema sujo" [Dirty Poem], was originally published in English by Guyer in 1990. Until now, this work had remained relatively unknown in the United States, and we now have the unique opportunity to reissue it along with audio recordings of poems included in the anthology read by Leland Guyer in Portuguese. The e-book version of *An Ordinary Man* is also available for purchase in a separate digital edition.

In addition, reproductions of the Neoconcrete Manifesto and the essay "Diálogo sobre o não-objeto" [Dialogue on the Non-object] as they were first published in 1959 and 1960 respectively in the *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical* underline the importance of this publication in disseminating Gullar's works. Videos of Gullar reading his poetry, including "Meu Povo, meu poema" [My People, My Poem], provide

readers with an alternative way to engage with these works through the spoken word.

A tutorial guide that explains the navigation of the various exciting features of the e-book can be found [here](#) and also in the table of contents. We have chosen to launch the series on E-PUB 3 not only because it is the most universal of e-book platforms, but because it offers such practical features such as highlighting in different colors, writing notes which can always link you back to a specific passage, searching the book in lieu of an index, and a built-in dictionary.

We hope that the selection of resources available in this edition, accessible as you read and in a comprehensive [index of assets](#), will allow for a rich experience of this conversation between Ferreira Gullar and Ariel Jiménez.

INTRODUCTION

In this book, Ferreira Gullar describes finding poetry as an adolescent by chance; his accomplishments since that initial fortuitous encounter over six decades ago are nothing short of astonishing.

The fifth title in the *Conversaciones/Conversations* series published by the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros (CPPC), *Ferreira Gullar in Conversation with Ariel Jiménez* presents a vivid account of a poet whose contributions to Brazil's cultural climate have been as vital as they have been misunderstood or overlooked. Gullar's exchanges with Ariel Jiménez reveal a writer who has always been critically engaged in dialogue with other writers, but whose impact in the visual arts and cultural theory are legend.

An autodidact who is deeply learned, Gullar says that his "entire life is an improvisation." He has a remarkable capacity to respond to changing circumstances and to demonstrate an Emersonian resistance to "foolish consistency" in the face of evidence contradicting a previously cherished belief. Indeed, even at his most polemical, Gullar has demonstrated an intellectual honesty and flexibility that has prevented him from the fundamental mistake of attempting to adapt reality to theory.

At one point a central figure of the most cutting-edge avant-garde, and the creator of the Neoconcrete Manifesto in 1959, Gullar came to distance himself from the avant-garde, even positioning himself in opposition to it as he came to see its limitations. In a parallel process, his Marxist beliefs underwent modification after he studied not only the philosophy of the communist movement in the USSR, but its practice, and found its idealism admirable, but lacking. Subjected to political

upheaval, and often living the life of an exile, Gullar has consistently reinvented himself in thoughtful response to aesthetic, ideological and political circumstances. He has also always questioned his personal practice, creating and destroying in order to rebuild the means required by his art, and fearlessly crumbling barriers in the way. Consequently, Ferreira Gullar has remained a vibrant and vital figure, and one not alien to fierce controversy.

I am very grateful to Ferreira Gullar and Ariel Jiménez for their dedication in creating this volume, the most comprehensive account to date of Gullar's work and ideas throughout his long and productive life. Ariel Jiménez, the CPPC's former chief curator, is to be congratulated for following his instinct in tracking down Gullar and convincing him to participate in this project. I would also like to thank Donna Wingate and Ileen Kohn for their editorial oversight, and Marquand books for their production expertise.

As with all of the titles in the *Conversaciones/Conversations* series, translation is a critical part of the process, particularly when, as in this case, three languages are involved. We are grateful to our many translators and in particular, I wish to thank Leland Guyer and Ariel Jiménez for their translations of Gullar's poetry. All poetry is essentially untranslatable, but their deep reading of Gullar's poems have allowed unprecedented access through what might otherwise have remained a closed door.

Translation, as a process of understanding—of entering into a world of previously unfamiliar references and constructing a universe of meaning—provides an apt metaphor for the mission of the Fundación Cisneros. For decades this organization has brought to light the cultural patrimony—tangible and intangible—of Latin America to audiences across the globe. The dialogues that are inherent to art and culture are in

the DNA of the Cisneros family and Foundation, and this volume is another example of that deep commitment.

Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro

Director, Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros

A UNIVERSAL POETRY

Weydson B. Leal

If a poet is a thinker who uses words to reveal the most sensitive perceptions of human experience, Ferreira Gullar has established himself at the pinnacle of that tradition, which since Homer—by way of Dante, Shakespeare, Camões, and Whitman—has fathomed the human condition. In the canon of contemporary poetry, his position is unquestionable. With a biography beginning in 1930, in the small city of São Luís, the capital of the state of Maranhão in northern Brazil, Gullar has based the course of his life and work on the development of his unique talent and his firm, often contentious aesthetic, political, and ideological convictions, particularly after his move to Rio de Janeiro in the 1950s. His poetry, theater work, essays on art, and journalism are a powerful record of a man of his time, as well as a man who looks toward the future. For this reason, Ferreira Gullar can be considered not only one of the great poets of the Portuguese language, but also one of the great humanists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Great poetry is timeless and does not depend on the place where it was written. The language or age of the poet, the country or century in which they were born is of little importance. This kind of poetry transcends stylistic movements, historiography, trends, revolutions, and avant-gardes. This is because true poetic art, whether in Ancient Greece, in thirteenth-century Italy, or in the Americas in the nineteenth century, continues to transmit the thoughts and feelings of a people through the inherent power of the word across generations. The Brazilian poet and diplomat Vinicius de Moraes was not exaggerating when he wrote in a 1976 article that, thanks to the triad formed by

Carlos Drummond de Andrade, João Cabral de Melo Neto, and Ferreira Gullar, Brazilian poetry was ready for a global readership. Along with Manuel Bandeira and Vinicius himself, these authors have been responsible for the best poetry written in Brazil since the beginning of the last century. The vast array of criticism analyzing Ferreira Gullar's poetic work—university theses, essays, and articles published by critics, poets, scholars, and preeminent intellectuals like José Guilherme Merquior and Alfredo Bossi—support Moraes's argument. In his 1976 article, Vinicius de Moraes mentioned the creation of the “Poema sujo” [Dirty Poem]—a long poem written by Gullar while he was in exile in Buenos Aires during the military dictatorship in Brazil; he declared that it had been one of the most important and powerful poems he had read in all the languages he knew. Moraes also asserted that the “Poema sujo” was “definitely the richest, most generous (while at the same time rigorous), and most full of life in the history of Brazilian literature.”

As an art critic and thinker, Ferreira Gullar is among the most lucid and learned individuals active in the world today. As a columnist and contributor to magazines and newspapers in Brazil, his texts have the clarity and astuteness to point out new directions and criticize fallacies, whether they appear in political ideological discourse or in the halls of art biennials. As a defender of democratic freedoms that give all citizens the right to act and to express themselves, Gullar is not afraid to set boundaries or to blaze new paths: what's more he has never felt that fear, even when political persecution and ideological monitoring sent him into exile. The proof is that Gullar, who is also a visual artist, exhibits his work in books and shows, opening himself up to external criticism. His courage as a thinker breaks boundaries between art and literature, as he grapples with important social issues, and his magazine and newspaper columns regularly provoke debate. His articles and essays come with the guarantee of truth, courage, and conviction. In a recent case that stands

out in the history of journalism, he wrote a column in the *Folha de São Paulo* about the errors, mistakes, and contradictions in the treatment of schizophrenia in Brazil. Due to overwhelming public support, his face later appeared on the cover of a widely circulated national magazine, whose main report dealt with the problem he had discussed with his irrefutable line of argument. What motivated him was the fact that he himself had a schizophrenic son, who over the years suffered from the errors in treatment to which he called attention in his column. He's never been embarrassed about making personal or family problems public if they were situations that could affect anyone, and this perhaps is based on an incomparable sense of solidarity and the collective good. His humanism is also action.

Ferreira Gullar's poetry is the result of an erudite lyrical and social sensibility. Beyond the anxieties of contemporary man, his poetics are able to translate the fertile silences that feed his daily concerns, conflicts, and joys into a wealth of perceptions that bloom in brilliant synesthesia. The same sensibility which in "Poema sujo" is able to apprehend death ". . . spread over the street, / mingled with the courtyard trees / pervaded the kitchen of our house / reached the smell of the meat roasting in the pan / and glistened on the forks and knives / on the table / set for lunch" also envisions the perfume of a flower in "Jasmim" as ". . . a silence inventing itself in the / plants / arising from the dark earth / as stalks, stems, twigs / leaves / the aroma / that becomes a bush / —jasmine." As in all poetry that in its ebb and flow reaches the heart of the ordinary man, his work deals with fraternal solidarity and inconformity with social injustices, his indignation at the suffering of others, and lyrical delight. These characteristics place him alongside poets at the level of international literature, like Baudelaire, Rilke, Rimbaud, Whitman, T.S. Eliot, and Mayakovsky—these original and universal poets who have spanned the sublime and the human. This brings us to the linguistic

component of Ferreira Gullar's poetry. Writing in Portuguese, the same gateway to *latinidad* that marks him with the feelings of his people—who honor him with well-deserved recognition—also provides him with access, through innumerable translations, to readers of other nationalities, heralding him as a perfect example of a classic modern poet. His poetry has been translated and published in the United States, Venezuela, Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Italy, Mexico, Peru, Portugal, Canada, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Vietnam, among other countries. The reach of his poetry reminds us of something T. S. Eliot wrote in his speech to the Virgil Society in 1944: “We may come to the conclusion, then, that the perfect classic must be one in which the whole genius of a people will be latent, if not all revealed; and that it can only appear in a language such that its whole genius can be present at once. We must accordingly add, to our list of characteristics of the classic, that of *comprehensiveness*. The classic must, within its formal limitations, express the maximum possible of the whole range of feeling which represents the character of the people who speak that language. It will represent this at its best, and it will also have the widest appeal: among the people to which it belongs, it will find its response among all classes and conditions of men.”¹ It seems that Eliot's conclusion reflects Ferreira Gullar's place in the history of Brazilian literature and justifies his broad readership in so many parts of the world.

Beginning with his first book of poetry, *Um pouco acima do chão* [*A Bit Above the Ground*] in 1949—an early work the author doesn't include in his first anthologies—one can sense the creative strength of a poet who, although still searching for his own language, was already clearly demonstrating his inventiveness and power. Beginning with his second book, *A luta corporal* [*The Bodily Struggle*] in 1954, his poetry reaches the level of innovative greatness that left his first analysts without any parameters for judgment. From that point on, he would experiment and

innovate in each publication, in an impressive series of masterworks like: *Dentro da noite veloz* [*In the Swift Night*, 1975], *Poema sujo* [*Dirty Poem*, 1976], *Na vertigem do dia* [*In the Day's Vertigo*, 1980], *Barulhos* [*Dins*, 1987], *Muitas vozes* [*Many Voices*, 1999] and *Em alguma parte alguma* [*In Any Where Nowhere*, 2010]. This last title is an anthology of poems, which, once again, is one of the best books of contemporary Brazilian poetry. The works of Ferreira Gullar are as rich as they are multifaceted: besides books of poetry, articles, and essays on the visual arts, he also wrote plays for the theater, scripts for television, short stories, nonfiction chronicles, translations, an autobiography, and books of poetry for children and young people. He has received the most important Brazilian literary awards in a variety of categories. Recently, as an intellectual deeply involved in the sociocultural context of Brazil between 1992 and 1995, he led the IBAC (Brazilian Institute of Art and Culture), connected with the Brazilian Ministry of Culture, after being selected by then president of the republic Itamar Franco. In 2000, he was voted "Intellectual of the Year" in a national competition, after his exhibit *Ferreira Gullar, Seventy Years*, a large retrospective of his life and work, opened at the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro. In 2010, his wife, the poet Claudia Ahimsa, organized a second exhibit at the Museu Nacional de Belas Artes in Rio de Janeiro to commemorate eighty years. That same year, he was honored with the Premio Camões, the most important prize for writers in the Portuguese language, granted by the governments of Portugal and Brazil to authors who contribute to the enrichment of the cultural and literary patrimony of the language. Ferreira Gullar's 2002 nomination for the Nobel Prize in Literature was especially indicative of his importance in contemporary culture, as he received the support of various Brazilian and foreign intellectuals. Today, now that the first, well-deserved Nobel Prize for the Portuguese language has been awarded to the Portuguese novelist

José Saramago, it would not be a surprise if a second award for the language were granted to poetry and to Brazil, by way of Ferreira Gullar. On the eve of his 81st birthday, the vitality of this poet—whose work and biography are examples of intellectual and human dignity—gives us the sense that we are in the presence of a man who is continually recommencing his life's work: a poetry that unites all men within just one.

T. S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 69.

SELF-INVENTION

The Discovery of Poetry

As adults, we spend our entire lives compensating for our childhood. Completing it, yearning for it, fleeing from it as well. In any case, that moment—and that place—where we opened our eyes to the world, when we were still a jumble of feelings, without concepts and without words, defines a significant part of our psychic structure. What we later come to be, the way we respond to life's stimuli and obstacles, originates in large part from that childhood universe and from the few years that follow it, until the time our personal consciousness develops. All of us, without exception, knowingly or not, respond to that dictate. Nonetheless, it is through those people—like writers—whose work regularly centers on memory, that this primary contact with the real is made fruitful and enduring: it can be perceived in their works from start to finish. Hidden there, for those aware enough to observe it, is found if not the entirety of an author's works, then at least the initial impulse, that combination of problematics that a writer will attempt to address over the course of an entire lifetime.

*into you goes
all of this
and hushes.
Until suddenly
a fright
or gust of wind
(that the poem vents)
calls up
those fossils to the tongue.*

*My poem
is an uproar and a wail:
you just have to train the ear.¹*

FERREIRA GULLAR

I was born in São Luís do Maranhão on September 10, 1930, in a lower-middle-class family. I was baptized with the name José Ribamar Ferreira, but later on I decided to change my name. A (very mediocre) poet from the city, whose name was Ribamar Pereira, wrote a horrible poem that was published under my name. That irritated me so much that I decided to change my name forever. I used my paternal surname, Ferreira, and my mother's French surname, Goulart, which I transformed into the name Ferreira Gullar.² In São Luís, my father had a business, a greengrocer's shop— what we'd call a *quitanda*³ in Brazil—where he sold rice, beans, vegetables, fruits and that sort of thing. We had a very large family. There were ten of us, between my brothers and sisters and myself. Further, we didn't have very many books in our house, just the detective stories my father liked, which he read in a magazine called X-9. He had been a soccer player, and that was his world. When I was little, he would take me with him to the matches. Perhaps that's why I wanted to be a soccer player initially. I started out playing with my friends on dirt roads and finally joined the youth team in Sampaio Correia. My passion for sport, however, quickly waned, as soon as I received a kick in the behind that sent me flying about two meters in the air. When I fell to the ground, I thought the vertebrae in my spine had jolted into one another. I never played again.



Ferreira Gullar (center) with his mother and siblings in São Luís do Maranhão, c. 1936.

ARIEL JIMÉNEZ

For anyone who reads your poetry, it becomes immediately clear that the almost rural backdrop of your childhood plays a fundamental role in your adult work. It's the point of origin for astonishment, that odd sense of wonder in the face of the opacity of the world that characterizes your work.⁴

^{FG}

São Luís was a small city at that time, and, in general, families there lived in houses. Buildings and apartments practically didn't exist. We lived in one of those traditional houses, with a dirt patio full of hens, roosters, herbs, and a range of different plants— what we'd call a *quintal* here. That's where I spent a significant amount of time, playing with my brothers and sisters, among those animals and surrounded by a multitude of baby chicks. All of that formed part of our daily reality, and remained etched in my memory as an essential experience that often reappears in my poetry, because it's part of what I'm made of, what helped me to be what I am. At the end of the day, we're made of all those tiny details that slowly accumulate within us. My poem "O formigueiro" [The Anthill], for example, which is one of the

first Neoconcrete poems I wrote at the end of the fifties, originates in those childhood experiences on the patio at my house. In the town of Maranhão there's a popular legend that asserts that wherever there are ants, there is gold under the earth. One day we saw ants on the patio and we immediately started digging for gold. We'd made a fairly large hole when one of those enormous tropical downpours came and flooded it completely. Thus our adventure ended and we forgot all about the gold and the ants, though the episode involving them remained forever etched in my memory.

At the same time, there were important occurrences in the city and in the country that had a lasting effect on me, like World War II. I was nine when the war started and I have very clear memories of the enormous newspaper headlines that said "Poland Invaded!," and the guys selling the paper in the streets, yelling "War! War!"—and of course I didn't understand very well what that might mean, but the agitation and anxiety of people in the streets and in my own home were very scary for me. Everyone was talking about it, everywhere, in such a way that the war came to form part of our daily living. We listened to it on the radio, in the news, and my father remarked on it at home, with us, or with his friends. I remember that when he was listening to the news and some interference caused noise on the radio, my father would shout "Those are shots, they're shots!" Perhaps he imagined that the radio was transmitting from the battlefield and he thought those noises were bursts of machine gun fire. I listened, terrified, and of course I believed everything he said. In addition, since I had no idea where all this was taking place, if it was close to São Luís or far away, the war became, for me, something threatening that could be right there, just past the visual horizon of the city. I was afraid that the Gestapo would get to us or that the German planes would bomb our house. Later I began to understand where it was, but that first impression left an indelible mark on me.

The situation grew more tense as Brazilian ships began to be torpedoed by German submarines, which caused Brazil to declare war on Germany.⁵ Additionally, on those ships some people from São Luís died, and this fact created deep suspicion among inhabitants of the town. Among the episodes I recall from that tumultuous time is the story of the daughter of a black man who worked on the docks at the port. She had been one of the victims of the attacks, and since Italy was an ally of the Germans, her father, despondent over her death, came to the central square of the city where an Italian man was selling newspapers and stabbed him to death. Other similar situations occurred with German people or their descendents, like the boys who began to be harassed by their classmates at school. In short, all that was a shame.

On the other hand, for me personally there was another much happier consequence of the attacks against the Brazilian ships, because at that moment goods began to grow scarce, and my father thought he could make a lot of money bringing merchandise from other places. In this way, he became a traveling salesman. He didn't go very far—just as far as Teresina, the capital of the State of Piauí, while others traveled as far as Rio de Janeiro. The good news was that my father took me with him, perhaps because I was the youngest of his sons, and this wound up being an unforgettable experience. The train would leave at dawn and in my imagination I saw it as an immense metallic dragon that breathed, snorting smoke from its nostrils. I was a boy—I must have been ten or twelve—and the route from São Luís to Teresina in that mechanical monster was fascinating to me.



Ferreira Gullar at twelve years old, São Luís, 1942

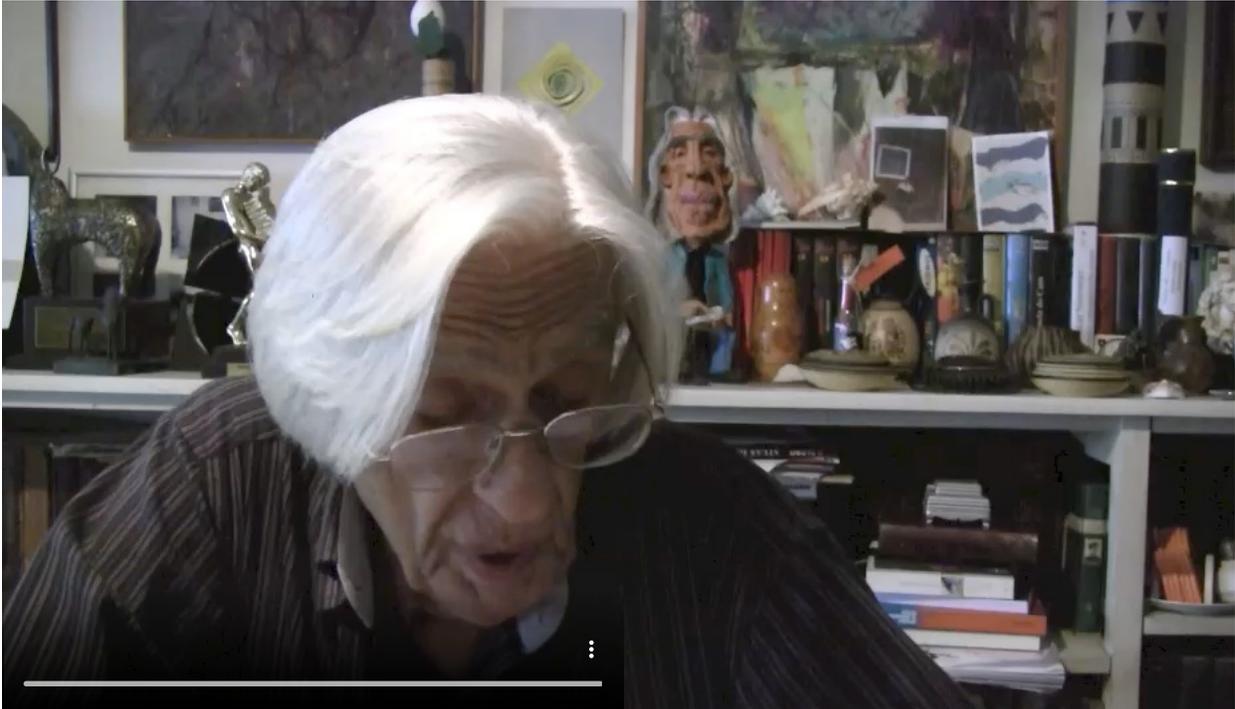
*And oh the world was large:
the train had rolled for hours
and never reached the end
of all that sky of all that land
of all those plains and mountains not to mention Piauí⁶*

We would leave the city and traverse a swampy region called *Campo das perdizes*, with enormous flooded areas, and thousands of birds flying and singing everywhere. And that vision of the birds atop the water, at dawn, was dazzling to me, so much so that when I first heard “O trenzinho do caipira”⁷ [The Little Peasant Train], Heitor Villa-Lobos’s *Bachiana brasileira N° 2*,⁸ I associated one with the other. I immediately recalled the trips I would make with my father, and even attempted to write lyrics for the music, but I wasn’t successful. Over 20 years, I made a number of different attempts, but couldn’t get it right. Afterwards, when I was in Buenos Aires, during my exile, while I was writing “Poema sujo,” an extended poem in which I evoke my childhood, precisely the opposite occurred. At first, when I heard Villa-Lobos’s *bachiana*, I recalled the travels of my childhood. Now, when I evoked in a poem the trips I took with my father, I recalled Villa-Lobos’s music, and at that instant, the lyrics I couldn’t write in twenty years of attempts came into being in barely twenty minutes.

*There goes the train with the boy
There goes life in a whirl
There go dance and destiny
City and night in a spin
There goes the aimless train
Searching for the morning*

*Speeding over land It passes through the mountains
It passes by the sea
Chanting through the moonlit mountains
Rumbling past the soaring stars
In the air, in the air, in the air.²*

Those lyrics were later recorded, and became very well-known in Brazil, which to some extent helped to popularize this *bachiana*. Today it's one of the *bachianas* played most often, not just because of my text, obviously, but because it's one of the most beautiful, and because the lyrics facilitate an audience's approach to the music.



Ferreira Gullar reading the lyrics for “Trenzinho Caipira” which is an excerpt from his poem “Poema sujo,” Rio de Janeiro, 2012

That's what my childhood in São Luís was like. Other than that, I was a kid who played in the street, living free in the city. I would make mischief along with two other friends my same age—fishing, trapping shrimp, playing pool, and even doing certain off-limits things, like stealing coconuts on the corner or taking hens from other people's houses. I even learned to read and write at home with private teachers, instead of in a formal school setting. Later I was able to study at the best private school in the city, Colégio São Luis Gonzaga. I was a good student—studious, hard-working—but a short time later my father began to face economic difficulties in his business and I had to go to public school, the

Technical School for Professional Training, which trained tailors, shoemakers, cabinetmakers, etc. Perhaps they were hoping I'd learn one of those trades, in case I didn't end up in a profession that would require university studies. It was there I discovered poetry, by chance, and devoted my life to it. I must have been about thirteen, and one day the teacher gave us a homework assignment to write a text about Labor Day. So I wrote a text arguing how peculiar it was that Labor Day was precisely a day when nobody worked, and as it happened, the teacher liked my text. She found it so interesting and well written that she read it in public for all my classmates. Despite this fact, she didn't give me a ten, the best possible grade, because I had made spelling errors. From that day forward, I told myself that perhaps I could become a writer, and that in order to do so, I needed to learn all the correct rules of language and grammar.

Like the butterfly effect in chaos theory, a small gesture—the teacher's friendly encouragement—defined an entire life, and a body of work, today enormous in scope. Without that gesture, the young Ferreira Gullar might equally have been oriented toward painting or—who knows—toward theater. The point is that of the multiple possibilities available to a talented young man, just one, in that precise moment, responded to his most intimate needs.

^{FG} I didn't know what to do with my life, and I had been having a lot of problems in the school where I was studying, so when I saw this teacher had liked my text, I imagined that perhaps I could be good at this. How could I know? At that age, a boy has innumerable possibilities, all wide open; he could become many things and must invent himself. Now, to be sure, in order to be a writer one must know grammar, so I spent two years reading grammar books, between 1943 and 1945. I did this alone, at my house, because in my family no one could help me, and because I left school that same year. As it turns out, one of those grammar books, Eduardo Carlos Pereira's *Expository Grammar*, included an anthology of Portuguese and Brazilian poets. There were poems by Portuguese writers like Luís de Camões¹⁰ and Bocage,¹¹ as well as Brazilians like Gonçalves Dias,¹² Castro Alves,¹³ and Olavo Bilac.¹⁴ It was there, in that book, that I discovered poetry. I remember them well. First I began to memorize the poems and very quickly I moved on to reading poetry by Gonçalves Dias and philosophy by Bocage and Camões. In brief, I began to be interested in that sort of literary production. It just seemed strange to me that all these poets would be dead. Poetry seemed to be the vocation of the dead, and even so I wanted to be a poet. Finally I discovered that poets existed and that there was one living very near my home. He was the father of Iracema, one of my sister's friends.

This man, wearing flip-flops and a T-shirt, didn't in any way fit the idealized image I'd developed of what poets were like, but he was a member of the Maranhão Literary Academy, and when he learned that I, too, wanted to become a poet, he lent me a book, the *Treatise on Verse Writing*. Later, he took me downtown, to Plaza João Lisboa, where there were many other poets, which was difficult for me to fathom. I lived in the context of hens and roosters all over the place on the patio of my house, and I didn't imagine the world to be larger than that. There, in the center of the city, I discovered living poets and realized that a literary life existed, with young people like myself who devoted their lives to that work. In this way, I began to spend time with them, to exchange ideas with the younger writers, as well as with the older ones—poets like Manuel Sobrinho, who was the person who took me there initially, and Corrêa de Araujo, who was a very funny, very picaresque poet. In short, my literary life began with them. Starting at that moment, I became a genuine expert in hendecasyllabic verse.



Ferreira Gullar (left) with Corrêa de Araujo (center) and Lago Burnett. São Luís, c. 1950

^{AJ} I imagine that for someone who had a restless nature like yours, school and the regimen of classes must have felt like a straitjacket.

^{FG} In fact, the greatest challenges I experienced at school were the blacksmithing workshops—with those enormous heavy hammers I couldn't lift—and the P.E. classes. In the workshops they made me hammer the white-hot iron on the anvils and the truth is I just wasn't strong enough to lift those tools. That's why I asked to be transferred into other workshops, like the shoemaking workshop, where the smells of the materials—the glue, the dyes, the wax and the leather—were very pleasing to me. I've always had a very strong relationship to the smells around me: the smell of flowers, fruits, materials, the earth. But what really made me leave the Technical School behind were the P.E. classes, and the teacher, who was an extremely unkind person and really didn't understand what he was doing. Asking a kid like me, who barely weighed seventy pounds, to carry a 175-pound guy was totally absurd. And I complained about it, because I just couldn't do it, but he wouldn't listen and completely ignored me. That's why I stopped going to P.E. class, and of course the teacher gave me a zero and failed me. The most absurd aspect of that situation is that I got perfect grades in Portuguese, in mathematics, in physics, and in my other subjects as well, but everything was so illogical at that middle school, that despite my good grades, and without even calling me in to try to figure out what had happened, they flunked me because of that zero. That's when I decided to leave school. My father didn't have the resources to pay for another school, and I simply didn't want to—I just couldn't—go back to the Technical School. From that moment forward, at thirteen, I became an autodidact and it's been through books, in a process of solitary reading, that I've found the answers that my intellectual curiosity demanded. I never went back to school, and didn't go to university either.

^{AJ} It's still truly admirable, the discipline with which you organized your studies. It is possible to learn on one's own, but to achieve such a coherent and profound education in any area, without any type of intellectual orientation, is exceedingly complex—it's almost improbable.

^{FG} I didn't organize anything and I never have. My entire life is an improvisation. I would simply get interested in a topic and I would set about studying it. I was attracted by literature, poetry, and

philosophy. I spent a great deal of time studying in the library, borrowing books, and investigating the problems that most intrigued me. I didn't follow any particular method, nor any specific orientation. At the beginning, it's true, I was interested only in literature from Maranhão. In the São Luís library there was a shelf dedicated to the literature from my state, and I only read the authors whose books were on this shelf. Later, of course, I heard people talking about other writers and I began to expand the reach of my interests. That initial decision was undoubtedly of great help to me, because I didn't have anyone at all to guide me, and the truth is that to find myself on my own in the face of world literature might have become an uncontrollable and frustrating situation. Thus, limiting myself to writers from my city and my state gave me discipline and helped me to find my own direction in that universe.

Among the first books I remember reading outside the confines of that shelf is a philosophy book. I don't even remember who the author was—perhaps an Italian. It was an old book with moldy pages. That's where my interest in philosophy originated, and I learned the essential elements of the lexicon, and of that kind of logical thought. I immediately bought another book in one of those secondhand bookstores. It was called *Lessons in Philosophy* and I set out to read it with no method and no system whatsoever. Later, around 1950, I became interested in modern art and poetry, and little by little my intellectual universe expanded. I especially remember a huge book by Maurice Denis, which sparked me—along with my studies of French poetry—to study the language. I wanted to read the books about art that I found in the library, but the majority were in French, so I decided to study the language and little by little I was able to read it. The most important thing is the desire to learn—the rest is just a question of time.

^{AJ} Without a doubt, though it's still true that learning any language, and learning it to the point where you are able to read something as complex as poetry, requires a discipline that is truly astonishing.

^{FG} Perhaps, but I did it out of necessity, because I wanted to read those books. First I tackled the book on painting and sculpture, and then I began to read poetry, which definitively and entirely captivated me. Among other texts, I found an anthology of French poetry that happened to be bilingual, in Portuguese and French, and this helped me considerably. In that book, I discovered Paul Valéry, Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud, and others. Little by little I grew familiar with the writers who are, in a manner of speaking, the historical source of modern poetry; my knowledge of painting and poetry continued to grow, gradually.

^{AJ} In the midst of that personal process of education you were not just reading and studying, but you were also writing your first attempts at poetry.

^{FG} Of course, in 1949 I published my first book of poems, *Um pouco acima do chão* [*A Bit Above the Ground*], which is a book that is not yet mature, and which I later set aside, though it's clear that my personal concerns, my most intimate investigations, were already present there. I was nineteen years old, I was very young, and I was not yet familiar with modern Brazilian poetry: Drummond de Andrade,¹⁵ Manuel Bandeira,¹⁶ Murilo Mendes.¹⁷ When I discovered them for the first time, in 1950, I received a tremendous shock. I was living immersed in Parnassian poetry, a rhyming and entirely constructed poetry. Half jokingly and half seriously, I've always said that during that period of my life I spoke in hendecasyllables. And it's true that from time to time, a phrase here and there would come out rhyming like the lines written by the Parnassian poets I read constantly. But when I discovered Drummond and modern poetry, I found myself in the presence of lines that seemed to me entirely absurd, and even ugly. There was the poem that read: "Ponho-me a escrever teu nome com letras de macarrão. No prato, a sopa

esfria, cheia de escamas”¹⁸ [I write your name with macaroni letters. On my plate the soup grows cold, full of scales]. That seemed to me in very poor taste. . . . Soup? Poetry can’t speak of soup, I told myself. It was a shock, because my vision of poetry was one of an idealized universe completely outside the everyday. Poetry was something else. To transform banal everyday reality into poetry is what it is to be modern, and I learned this when I discovered Drummond.

*I will not be the poet of a world past its prime
Nor will I sing the future world.*

*Time is my material, the present time, present men,
present life.¹⁹*

That was an unpleasant surprise for me, without a doubt; it impacted me so strongly that I wanted to understand it, and that’s why I set about reading those poets and undertaking my own literary exercises. I immediately realized that the poetry I had been making was pretty, but that it belonged to the past, to the dead poets. Thus I began to create poetry with a different, more current nature. I didn’t imitate Drummond, of course; rather, I began, on my own, to write something distinct. So much so that in the same year, 1950, a short while after I’d first come into contact with modern poetry, I won the Premio Nacional de Poesia [National Poetry Prize], awarded by the *Jornal de letras* [Literary Journal], which was the principal literary publication of the time in Rio de Janeiro, with national circulation. This prize was enormously encouraging to me, and became one of the deciding factors in my move to Rio.

^{AJ} The poem with which you won the prize turns on an interesting detail. It does, in fact, relate to a banal and everyday anecdote—not, however, to just any anecdote but rather to one that took place in your childhood, on the patio of your house.

^{FG} In this specific instance, that’s not the case. That first poem isn’t the same one that I published in my collection; it’s an earlier version that has never been published in book form. The first version was inspired by an ad for ENO brand antacids that was plastered all over the city. The ad depicted the black silhouette of a rooster, singing with its beak open, and a sun with its rays. The other poem, “Galo Galo” [Rooster Rooster], which I included in my collection, did talk about the animal from my childhood, the one I knew from the patio of my house, even though it had nothing to do with the first instance.

^{AJ} Regardless, the fact that you used a rooster from an advertising image as your point of departure would seem to me to be a more radically modern idea.

^{FG} I wouldn’t say it’s more radical. The first has a more polished form, but the other is much more profound. It goes deeper into life experience. It’s even more complex, because the rooster, full of gallantry, promenades around as if he were a medieval warrior—yet who is he defending himself from? Who is this warrior rooster fighting against? Those questions, which are central, don’t come up in the other poem, which is more descriptive and epidermal. Further, there is a tacit identification between the poet—that is, me—and the subject matter of the poem, which makes it much more dense.

*With horny beak and
spurs, and armed
for death,*

he struts.

He paces. He stops.

He tilts his crowned head

in the silence

“what shall I do in the meantime?

from what shall I defend myself?”

He marches

in the foyer.

And the cement forgets

his final step.²⁰

^{AJ} Your interests, however, are not limited to poetry. Visual art, and especially painting, would occupy a fundamental place in your thinking, and I imagine that you were in contact with the visual arts from very early on.

^{FG} From the time I was in São Luís, when I began to live among writers, I also developed relationships with artists working in design, painting, and drawing. Some young people had begun to create more modern paintings. With them, I began reading about visual art, and little by little my interest grew more passionate. There was even a time when I wanted to be a painter, but in São Luís there were no painting schools and I didn't know where or how to begin. Around that time, I discovered poetry and from then on my interest in visual art was limited to the theoretical plane. That was one of the reasons I chose to leave São Luís, since my curiosity about painting and art in general had not been satisfied by the cultural activities in the city. There weren't any exhibitions there, nor galleries, nor museums. All of that propelled me, in 1951, to move to Rio de Janeiro, which at that time was the capital of the country as well as its most important cultural center. In the sixties, I began a practice of painting and collage once again, though I have always considered these to be secondary activities, rooted in simple aesthetic pleasure. When I am painting or making a collage, I am happy; I forget about the world and about myself, but I can't say these activities are where I find responses to my central concerns.



Céu estrelado [Starry Sky], 2007 [More info](#)

Céu estrelado [Starry Sky], 2007

Acrylic and collage on paper

20.5 × 21 cm (8 × 8 1/4 inches)

^{AJ} It seems odd to me that so many modern intellectuals and artists should have provincial origins. In Venezuela, as well, many of them came from the provinces.

^{FG} I don't think there's any particular explanation for this phenomenon. Perhaps, simply, the fact that at that moment there were many more people outside the capital and because talent is born anywhere. Talent depends on context in order to be developed, but I think it's an innate gift. One is born with the disposition to be a poet or a painter, and if the context doesn't permit that, because it doesn't provide the necessary density, then that talent goes undeveloped, but if the context supports the talent, that gift is developed as such. It's not something that has a simple explanation, since it depends on a multitude of very complicated factors. However, I don't have the slightest doubt that people are born with the possibility of becoming painters, writers, etc. If one doesn't have this gift, one can study whatever and wherever one likes, but will never become a painter. That's how it is; if a person is born in the provinces and doesn't find the means to develop her or his talent, that person will seek out the capital, or any place where those means exist. And of course, along with the development of the country, many regional capitals came into existence as well. São Luís today is not what it was in my youth. Recife was already a city with cultural journals, literary supplements and greater cultural activity than that in São Luís. Porto

Alegre also had presses and magazines with national circulation, and therefore poets and writers emerged in those places. Even so, the activity in these regional centers couldn't compare with what was happening in Rio. That's why I decided to go there, where I could be sure of finding what I needed to satisfy my intellectual needs.

Ferreira Gullar, "Muitas vozes," in *Toda poesia* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 2000), 453–54. All translations of Ferreira Gullar's poetry into English are by Leland Guyer.

NB: All poems by Ferreira Gullar are excerpts of the originals, with the exception of the poem *Crime na flora*, 25, that is reproduced in its entirety.

Ferreira Gullar remarks, "My mother comes from a half-French, half-Indian family. The color of my skin and my straight hair come from the Indian branch of the family."

A *quitanda* is, in principle, a place where fruits and vegetables are sold. However, in smaller towns, these shops would regularly sell all kinds of food and merchandise for everyday use.

Here, when we utilize the concept of the "opacity of the world," we're specifically referring to that opposition—central to Ferreira Gullar's poetry—between language and the reality to which that language refers. A thing without a name, without any concept to which we might refer in order to address it, is opaque to human intelligence. To name it, to describe it, to determine its characteristics, its possible uses, is to make it transparent to our understanding. In large part, Gullar's poetry stems from the explicit will to approach that primary opacity of things in order to describe it in words which, if not new, are at least rejuvenated.

In August of 1942, after a number of Brazilian merchant marine ships were sunk, the government in Rio declared war on Germany and its allies, putting into effect the Treaty of Neutrality that had been signed in Havana in 1940. The treaty stipulated that any act of aggression against an American country would be considered an act of aggression against all the countries on the continent.

Ferreira Gullar, "Poema sujo," in *Toda poesia*, 233–91.

Depending on the circumstances, *caipira* can be translated as villager, peasant, folk, local; it can even have less positive meanings, such as hillbilly, commoner, or boor.

The *Bachianas brasileiras* consist of a series of nine suites by the composer Heitor Villa-Lobos. "O trenzinho do caipira" (1930) is the second in the series; its central characteristic is the fusion of airs from popular Brazilian music and the style of Johann Sebastian Bach. The theme of this second bachiana is the happy and rhythmic motion of a train in the Brazilian provinces.

Lyrics for *Trenzinho Caipira* by Ferreira Gullar, <http://letras.terra.com.br/heitor-villa-lobos/507893/>

Luís Vaz de Camões (c. 1524–80). Considered the greatest Portuguese poet, he authored fundamental works like *Os Lusíadas*, from 1572, and important poems like "Amor é fogo que arde sem se ver" and "Verdes são os campos," from 1595.

Manuel Maria de Barbosa l'Hedois du Bocage (1765–1805). One of the most important eighteenth-century Portuguese poets. His poetry is framed by a period of transition between Portuguese Classicism and Romanticism. Among his best-known works are his rhymed poems and maritime idylls.

Antônio Gonçalves Dias (1823–64). One of the principal nineteenth-century Brazilian poets writing in Romantic and Indigenist traditions. His best-known works include "Canção do exílio," "Meditação," "Seus olhos," and *Dicionário da Língua Tupi, chamada língua geral dos indígenas do Brasil*.

Antonio Frederico de Castro Alves (1847–71). Brazilian poet whose work is deeply influenced by the fight against slavery. He is thus known as the "Poet of the Slaves."

Olavo Bilac (1865–1918). Brazilian poet and literary journalist, founding member of the Academia Brasileira de Letras (Brazilian Academy of Letters; 1896). Among his literary works, one of the best known is the posthumous book *Tarde* (1919).

Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1902–87). One of the most important and influential modern Brazilian poets, always referenced with admiration by Ferreira Gullar. Among his works, some of the most outstanding are *Alguma poesia*, 1930; *Sentimento do mundo*, 1940; and *A rosa do povo*, 1945.

Manuel Carneiro de Sousa Bandeira Filho (1886–1968). A Brazilian poet and literary critic, one of the major figures of the Semana de Arte Moderna [Modern Art Week] in 1922.

Murilo Monteiro Mendes (1901–75). Modern Brazilian poet, author of books like *A poesia em pânico*, 1938; *O visionário*, 1941; and *As metamorfoses*, 1944.

Carlos Drummond de Andrade, “Sentimental,” in *Alguma poesia* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Record, 2010), 45. The translations of Drummond de Andrade are by Jen Hofer.

Carlos Drummond de Andrade, “Mãos dadas,” in *Antologia poética* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Record, 2009), 158.

Ferreira Gullar, “Galo Galo,” in *Toda poesia* 11.

A link to a performance of “O trenzinho do caipira” by Maria Bethânia can be found in the links page at the end of this book

BEYOND SÃO LUÍS: THE WORLD

A New Art, A New Poetry

^{FG} When I arrived in Rio, one Sunday in 1951, I found the city calm and empty. A poet who was close to my friend Lucy Texeira, who was from Maranhão, came to fetch me at the Santos Dumont airport and took me to a sort of student hostel. I settled in there that night and stayed there for some time afterwards. The next day I went out walking and what I found was really startling. São Luís was a small city, with hardly any vehicles and no traffic lights or street signs. In Rio, on the contrary, in order to reach the center of the city, where Plaza Paris was located, I had to cross several avenues with a huge number of vehicles and buses heading every which way. I just stood there, with no idea how to cross those avenues, because the cars weren't stopping. I thought they never would. Honestly, I felt panicked, wondering how I'd manage to live in this place without getting run over. At that moment a man who must have noticed my distress came up to me and said: "Young man, to cross the avenue you need to go to the corner, where there's a traffic light. That's where the vehicles stop." I didn't know what to do, and I'd never experienced a traffic light. Fortunately, little by little, with the help of some of my friends from Maranhão, I got used to the city and began to get to know other places in the city, including the Biblioteca Nacional [National Library].



Ferreira Gullar (right) with Antônio Luis Guimarães (left) and Lago Burnett (center). Rio de Janeiro, c. 1952

In addition, I very quickly developed a relationship with Mário Pedrosa.²¹ Lucy Texeira had brought his 1949 thesis to me in São Luís; it was titled “Da natureza afetiva da forma na obra de arte” [On the Affective Nature of Form in Works of Art], and I had read it with astonishment. Nonetheless, from the time of that first reading, I differed with him on one specific point. His thesis was based in Gestalt theory, according to which each form possesses a unique expression of its own, independently of what it represents. All forms, even abstract ones, express something. Mário Pedrosa based his work on that idea in order to defend the expressive capacities of Brazilian Concretism in the early 1950s. Further, he proposed a concept of the *Bela forma* [Beautiful form], which led to an idea of the existence of privileged forms—that is, that some forms were better than others. The circle, for example, as the form containing the maximum amount of material in the minimum amount of space, was the best. Hence he arrived at the conclusion that in a single painting there were some forms that might have greater expressivity than others. In my opinion, on the other hand, no form exists independent of its context, and no form has innate value in itself, one that might be determined a priori and autonomously. A circle might be more or less expressive, depending on its size, its color and texture, the forms around it, etc., such that an autonomous form, without past or context, is an abstraction that doesn’t exist. When I met Mário, through my friend Lucy, we argued this point a number of times, and in the end he finally agreed with me. Now, one thing’s for sure, and that is that our theoretical arguments never grew to a point where they

destabilized our relationship. We were friends until the end of his life. I was his disciple and his friend, and Mário was aware of the affection that bound me to him.



From left to right: Oliveira Bastos, Ferreira Gullar with his wife Thereza Ferrer, Berredo de Menezes, Mário Pedrosa, Lygia Clark, Vera Pedrosa (Mário Pedrosa's daughter), Abraham Palatnik (squatting on the right) with his wife Lea M. Palatnik, and Iván Serpa, c. 1952

Despite these and other differences, my reading of his thesis and the conversations we had together provided me an entry point into a territory of reflection I hadn't previously encountered. His theory had been an attempt to understand the new visual language that arose out of a total rupture with Brazilian Modernist tradition.

The Modernism of 1922²² was a movement toward modernization within arts and letters with a particular national character. It was different from European avant-gardes of the time (Cubism, Futurism, Dada), which were movements of a universal nature—that is, they proposed universal problematics, rather than regional or national ones. Brazilian Modernism, for its part, adopted certain characteristics from European movements, but above all was concerned with questions of national identity, unlike Concretism, which sought to be universal.

^{AJ} The Modernism of '22 and Concretism are radically distinct from one another, at least from this point of view, while other factors might signal a continuity of intention between them.

^{FG} No, absolutely not. I think what's important is an awareness of the rupture. Brazilian Modernism was regionalist and nationalist; it defended figurative art. Meanwhile, Concretism is abstract and universalist, introducing a total rupture, with no affinity whatsoever with the past.

^{AJ} Not even with the ideas expressed in Oswald de Andrade's²³ Cannibal Manifesto?

^{FG} No, there's no connection whatsoever. The Cannibal Manifesto is absolutely figurative and has nothing to do with Concretism. There's no possible conversation there. What occurs is a drastic rupture. Do you think there's any connection between the two?

^{AJ} Yes, I consider the Cannibal Manifesto to be one of the greatest texts not just from Brazil, but from Latin America generally. There

are sentences in that manifesto that announce the rupture that Concretism and Neoconcretism would later realize, or in any case, would make possible, achieving what Mário de Andrade²⁴ defined, in a 1942 text, as “that normalization of the spirit of aesthetic, anti-academic investigation. . . .”²⁵ I’m thinking, for example, of sentences like these:

*Against all the importers of canned consciousness.
The palpable existence of life.*

*Against memory as a source of custom.
Renewed personal experience.*²⁶

It seems to me that these are sentences that manifest a clear consciousness of the work any artist faces, beyond colonial dependence. In that sense, I think the Neoconcrete movement achieved the creative independence that was signaled or demanded in the Cannibal Manifesto. In any case, that sort of nationalization of thought was necessary in order to learn to think here, in Brazil, in a universal way, as any individual in any place in the world might. Additionally, on the other hand, among Concrete and Neoconcrete artists as well, we can find clear evidence that for them, at least at particular moments of their production, what they were doing was part of a process of national affirmation. It would be enough to cite the text written by Hélio Oiticica in 1968, about Tropicalia and its New Objectivity: “With the theory of New Objectivity, I wanted to institute and characterize an avant-garde state of Brazilian art, bringing it face to face with the great art movements worldwide (Op and Pop) and objectifying a Brazilian state of art. . . .”²⁷

^{FG} No, the Brazilian Modern movement isn't about that. It's surrealist, it's more closely connected to Surrealism than it is to Abstract Art. Tarsila do Amaral's²⁸ paintings from that era are surrealist, beginning with her *Abaporú*.

^{AJ} Yes, that's true, but her position in relation to European traditions is in this respect fairly close to what occurred with other Latin American movements, like Venezuelan Modernism, where artists sought to give universal value to the national. It's in this way that I understand the modern emphasis on the national. To create an autonomous art of our own, it was necessary to go through a phase of observing and studying the reality in which we were living—the reality of Brazil, of Venezuela—and that seems to me universally valid, and even unavoidable.

^{FG} I'm not very familiar with what happened in other Latin American countries. If the Modern movement in other countries possessed the characteristics you indicate, I don't know; in Brazil, however, that's not how it was. The cannibal movement didn't speak to aesthetic investigation. The meaning of that movement is the following: we're going to swallow Europe whole in order to transform it into something national, which doesn't exclude the purpose of achieving universality—but by way of the national. That's the meaning of cannibalism: I'm going to devour what is European and transform it into Brazil. It's the same problem the previous Modern movement had, just with a more Surrealist vision. The figures are deformed, and are more or less oneiric visions inspired by André Breton's Surrealist Manifesto of 1924. There is no close relationship whatsoever. In order to understand the Concrete movement, it's important to be aware that it was the

result of an aesthetic vision that rejected fantasy entirely; when it arrived in Brazil, through Max Bill,²⁹ it was an almost scientific investigation of vision. It had absolutely no poetic aspects, not a shred of subjectivity. Max Bill says that it explored the forces of the visual field. It sought to create works that might constitute reactions to visual energies, and did not intend to do anything poetic or expressive. So that movement introduced a total rupture even with the European Modern tradition, and was linked solely to Neoplasticism and the constructive tradition that originated with Mondrian. It had no relationship with Brazilian Modernism. There is not the slightest doubt about that. What I'm saying is that this movement, here in Brazil, ushered in a new time for art, which I encountered when I arrived in Rio, and I participated in this change together with a group of Concrete artists like Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, Amílcar de Castro, Franz Weissmann and others, who ended up giving the language of Concrete art a different orientation. In this way we created a new movement, Neoconcretism, which was the consequence of an attitude opposed to Max Bill's.

^{AJ} In any case, regardless of the vision we might construct today of those movements, Concretism and Neoconcretism represent a crucial juncture, a node of reflections that's impossible to avoid when we seek to consider art produced in Brazil during the second half of the twentieth century, and even afterwards. The problems posed, the way artists contemplated the relationship between their works and their particular historical references, the image they built of the future—all of that is present and active. For this reason, it seems to me essential for us to discuss the relationships that might exist between these two movements. If there is something that

seems to be of utmost importance for Concrete artists in Rio and a few paulistas [people from São Paulo] in the mid-fifties, it was precisely the route they followed in order to escape from that sort of academicization more orthodox Concretism seemed to be reaching, which was made quite obvious at the 1ª *Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta* [First National Exhibition of Concrete Art] in 1956.

PAGINA 10 — DIARIO DA NOITE O vespertino de maior circulação em São Paulo

INAUGUROU-SE ONTEM

Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta

"Poetas concretos", que querem eliminar a base formal do poema, participam da mostra — Movimento estético que pretende imprimir novo rumo às artes de vanguarda do país — Lançamento de livros

Inaugurou-se ontem, às 18 horas, no Museu de Arte Moderna, a Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta, que reúne, além de pintores e escultores, vários poetas. A mostra coletiva é o ponto de partida de um movimento estético que visa imprimir novo rumo às artes de vanguarda do país.

Segundo se informa, os expositores, nomes conhecidos pelos que acompanham a evolução de nossas artes, representam uma tendência de fundamentos já bem definidos e universalmente designados por "Concretismo".

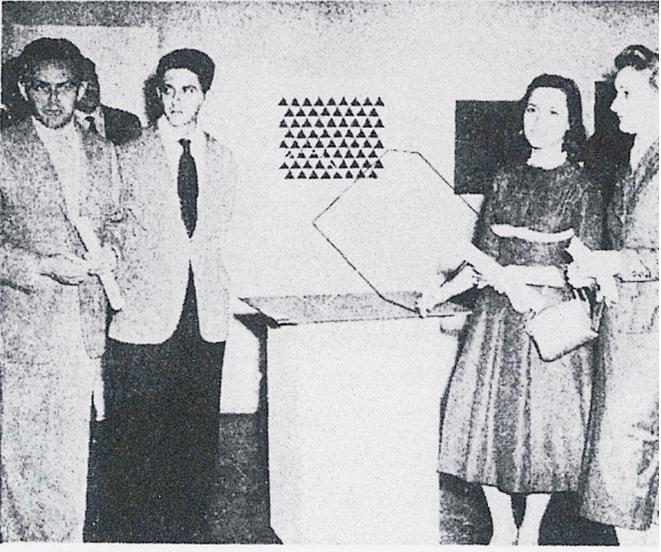
São os seguintes os artistas participantes da Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta: pintura: Geraldo de Barros, Aluisio Galvão, Lygia Clark, Waldemar Cordeiro, João José Costa, Hermelindo Fiaminghi, Judith Laan, Maurício Nogueira Lima, Rubem Mauro Ludolf, Luis Sacilotto, Decio Vieira Alexandre Wollner; Escultura: Amílcar de Castro, Casimiro Pejer Franz Joseph Weissmann; Desenho, Lóthar Charoux; Gravura: Lygia Pape; Fotografia: Germano Lorca e Ademair Manarini.

Homenagem especial está sendo prestada ao pintor Alfredo Volpi, que apresenta mais de um ponto de contato com os problemas concretistas. Volpi expõe duas de suas telas mais recentes.

A seção de poesia promete suscitar controvérsias. Tomando como pontos de referência as realizações de Mallarmé ("Coup de Dés"), Pound (ideograma), Joyce, Cummings — no setor de literatura; os concretistas, no setor das artes visuais: Webern, Boulez, Stockhausen — no setor musical, os "poetas concretos" tendem a eliminar, sempre num plano de estrita funcionalidade, a base formal do poema, tradicional ou moderno, ou seja, o "verso" (livre inclusive).

Como acontece no setor das artes visuais, apresentar-se-ão poetas do Rio e de São Paulo: Ronaldo Azevedo, Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos, Ferreira Gullar, Decio Pignatari, Wladimir Dias Pino. Identificado ao movimento, deve ainda ser lembrado o jovem crítico Oliveira Bastos.

Por ocasião da mostra serão lançados novos livros de poesia, entre os quais "A Ave", de Wladimir Dias Pino; "O Formigueiro", de Ferreira Gullar, e "Noigandre 3", que reúne poemas concretos de Decio Pignatari, Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos e Ronaldo Azevedo. Ao mesmo tempo, doze páginas da revista "Arquitetura e Decorações" serão dedicadas a esse movimento dando à publicação de manifestos, artigos críticos sobre o movimento, ilustrações, etc.



Pintoras e escultoras também aderiram à "Arte Concreta", movimento que visa a dar um novo rumo às artes de vanguarda no país.

Diário da Noite, 1ª Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta [First National Exhibition of Concrete Art] in São Paulo, 1956 More info

Diário da Noite, 1ª Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta [First National Exhibition of Concrete Art] in São Paulo, 1956

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FG

I'm not sure it's quite accurate to speak of academicism; it had more to do with an extreme rationalization that we found disagreeable,

because we did not find that to be a fruitful path for artistic creation. That was so much the case that they remained set in those perspectives, while our path opened new avenues, and created the Neoconcrete movement, which is today considered to be an autonomous manifestation. The documents of that movement—that is, the “Manifesto neoconcreto” [Neoconcrete manifesto] and the “Teoria do não-objeto” [Theory of the non-object]—which were written by me, are today considered to be contemporary art documents, because they were innovative and created a new movement. At the same time, the Concrete artists radicalized Max Bill’s positions, stances we might say were disconnected from the creative process. In my view, when he sought to explore the energy of the visual field he was locating himself outside the functions of art. Those resources might be used to create something, but to simply continue to explore energy, precipitating visual phenomena, is an error. It was an excess of rationalization, because art cannot be merely a rational activity. On the contrary, it is a phenomenon that requires creativity, intuition, fantasy. Without those elements, it has no meaning. That’s what happens with so-called realism. Velázquez would have been no help to us whatsoever if he had simply painted the head of a horse, just like one we might see in reality. . . . Why should that interest us? In that case, I’d prefer the horse. Right? Now, when he painted *Las Meninas*, and with that work created an entire play within space and time, between what is figured and the spectator’s reality, he transcended that clumsiness of realism. A purely realist painting would be truly impoverished.

^{AJ} It’s for precisely this reason that the first differences between the two groups surfaced at the 1^a *Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta*, and I think it’s important for us to discuss it in detail.

^{FG} The idea for that exhibition came from the paulistas Waldemar Cordeiro, Décio Pignatari, and Haroldo and Augusto de Campos. They decided to gather together Concrete poets and artists from São Paulo and Rio in a single exhibition. There was no specific mandate; they simply called all the artists they considered to be Concrete artists or allied with Concretism and invited them to participate in what they were doing. Later, each artist selected and sent the works they felt were most pertinent to their participation. For example, I was writing my poem titled “O formigueiro,” which I published much later, so I took five pages of that poem, which is much longer, and sent them. I participated with the work I was engaged in at that very moment.

^{AJ} “O formigueiro,” however, caused a negative reaction among the artists from São Paulo. They didn’t like your poem at all.

^{FG} It’s not that they didn’t like it, but that they didn’t consider it to be a truly Concrete poem. They were too theoretical and even sectarian in regard to definitions, and it was obvious—in this respect they were right—that my poem wasn’t limited to the rules for what they considered to be a Concrete poem. It’s true that it was a poem in which I attempted to valorize words through the modification of their visual form, on which point I coincided with them, breaking the linear form of writing in order to accentuate the physiognomic relationship of the word with the thing designated. The poem sought, as well, to valorize that interior silence of the word, its semantic material, what seemed to materialize in the blank space of the page. Despite the fact that I agreed with them on these typically Concrete elements, like the fact that the poem was constructed with one word on each page, my text contained a discourse a

reader might follow: “the ant excavates the earth,” etc. . . . This was in opposition to the poetry they defended. For the paulistas, Concrete poetry had to give absolute priority to the word above its syntax, to the word as object, and for that reason they denied its linear and successive linkage.

^{AJ} I suppose, at the same time, they were bothered by the fact that your work might have evident roots in your childhood experiences.

^{FG} No, because they didn’t know that. Their objection essentially centered on the linear nature of my poem. It was an excess of theoretical rigor and that’s why I wound up breaking with Concrete poetry, which seemed interesting to me, of course, but very impoverished. In the end, it wound up limiting itself to an essentially visual game while I wanted to reach an expression that would not be limited solely to the optical.

^{AJ} So it was through that exhibition, and in the arguments that took place around “O formigueiro,” that you began to become conscious of the profound differences among the Concrete groups in Rio and in São Paulo.

^{FG} No, it didn’t really happen that way, at that point there wasn’t even any argument. It was later, when the São Paulo exhibition came to Rio. At that point, Décio Pignatari gave an interview to the press and expressed his disagreement. The day after the opening, during a public debate organized at the União Nacional dos Estudantes [National Students’ Union] (UNE), there was likewise a fairly radical dispute. There we were—among others, Haroldo and Augusto de Campos, Oliveira Bastos, Reynaldo Jardim and myself.

During the presentations, other people from the audience wanted to express their opinions, and at times questioned the Concrete postulates, which caused intolerant and sectarian responses from the paulistas, and that truly irritated me. So I told them that if we had the right to show our work and share our ideas, the audience also had the right to object to what we were doing. That's where the real differences among us began, as a product of their intolerance and sectarianism. Later on came the theories seeking to impose a mathematical logic on poetry, which we—and I in particular—contested quite radically. However, it's important to signal that Neoconcretism didn't originate as a response to Concretism; it's not because we dissented at that moment that we decided to create a different kind of work. We continued to consider ourselves Concrete artists, though with fairly clear differences toward the predominant positions the paulistas were taking. Neoconcretism originated later, in 1959, when Lygia Clark had the idea of doing an exhibition with work produced by the group in Rio. Since the group chose me to write the introduction to the show, I set about looking at their works one by one. With their pieces in front of me, I realized that our work was very different from what the majority of the paulistas were doing. In that instant I became conscious that a new art had been born, another form of expression which, though it might originate in Concrete art, now had little to do with its postulates. That's how I proposed the term Neoconcrete.



Ferreira Gullar (left) with Lygia Pape, Theon Spanúdis, Lygia Clark and Reinaldo Jardim. Museu de Arte Moderna [Museum of Modern Art] in Rio de Janeiro, 1959

^{AJ} Here we find a particularly interesting situation because it's not a manifesto that prescribes a set of a priori rules, or that indicates which path to follow in the future; rather, it describes and theorizes what it has discovered in works already created. If we compare it, for example, with Marinetti's manifesto of Futurist poetry, the difference becomes quite clear. While Marinetti says "It is necessary to destroy syntax . . ." or "We must abolish the adjective," defining in an almost authoritarian manner what must be done, the Neoconcrete Manifesto puts forward a historical analysis of the visual movements that serve as its points of departure, and analyzes

the works they created, describing them. In this way it is a document that asserts historical linkages as well as a set of concepts, rather than prescribing a path to follow.

^{FG} Of course, and this is why I often say that the Neoconcrete Manifesto is different from avant-garde manifestos that seek to announce what will occur; my manifesto states what occurred, here and now, in the production of the artists being considered. Art of the future is invented by artists, not by theorists. What happens is that avant-garde manifestos come into being based on the model offered by the Communist Party Manifesto from 1848. It was then that artistic manifestos announcing the future began to be written—except art is not prophecy. Art is invented here and now by artists.

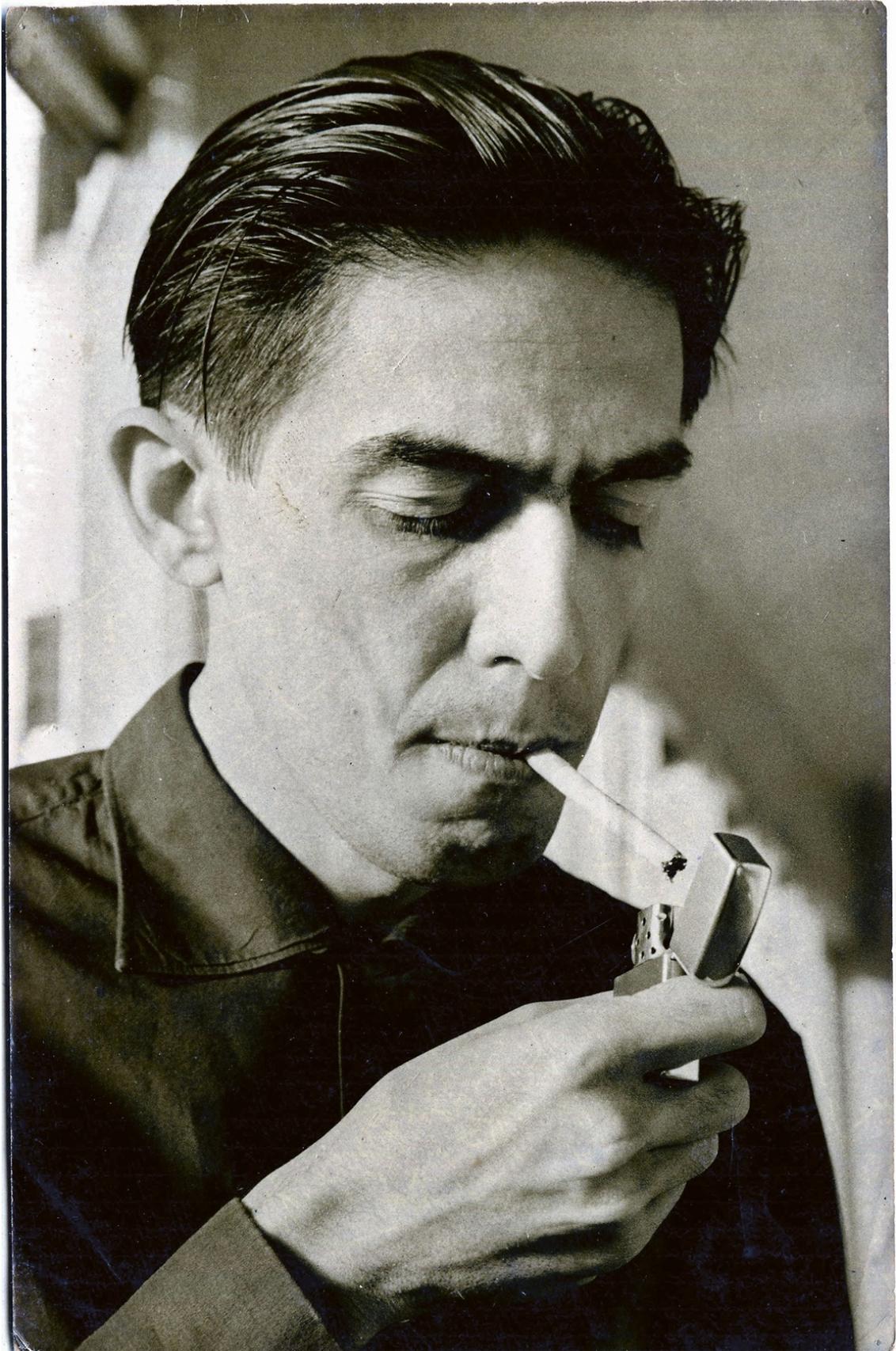
^{AJ} Undoubtedly, and that's why I'm convinced that this is how a rupture was produced—for Brazil specifically—with some of the modern ideas that are characteristic of the contemporary. Of course, there are modern problematics that continue to be active, even today, but new elements arose as well. It seems important to me that we discuss in detail what occurred at the exhibition and around the text you presented there, the Neoconcrete Manifesto.

^{FG} The idea originated during a meeting we had at Lygia Clark's house, which was very close to mine. She felt it would be a good motivation to bring together Concrete artists from Rio in an independent exhibition, and we decided to organize one. In truth, there wasn't really a selection; we didn't discuss who should be included and who shouldn't. Rather, everyone who was part of the group had a space in the show, just that simple. Some took an approach to Neoconcretism exactly as I conceived of it in that

moment, others less so, but they participated equally in the exhibition. No one was excluded.

^{AJ} That's an important point. That is, if the Neoconcrete Manifesto and the exhibition you organized were a confirmation of what had taken place, without prescribing any path that must be followed in the future, it's also true that the attempt to define what united you resulted in a certain heightening of consciousness among you, that would later channel your ideas and your respective artistic practices with greater clarity and in a more specific direction.

^{FG} That's true, without a doubt, although today I'd have to recognize that in that era I myself didn't even see clearly what was happening. Truly, those ideas have much more to do with my critical vision of Concretism than, for example, with the opinions that might be held by someone like Amílcar de Castro or Franz Weissman. They had fewer divergences with Concrete Art than those I might have had. On the other hand, it's clear that if Hélio and Lygia were in agreement with me, it's because they also did not accept the extreme and impoverishing rationalism of Concrete artists. So strictly speaking, the three people who propelled the movement were Hélio, Lygia, and myself. The first Neoconcrete exhibition made it possible to see our differences with Concretism clearly, yet Neoconcretism didn't spring forth entirely complete in this initial show, but rather continued to define itself over time, as each of us was developing our work. Its origin is not in theory, but rather in practice, though undoubtedly this was oriented toward and enriched by theory, and by the ideas that we had expressed in our manifesto.



Ferreira Gullar, 1958

^{AJ} What's important is to make it clear that even if theory aided and oriented artists, your work can't be reduced to the application of a series of theoretical principles defined a priori. Artistic practice is and always was—in your work, as in all art—the source for theory. Another aspect I'd like to discuss is the crucial place you afford Mondrian and Malevich in your manifesto.

^{FG} That is a response to the attempt to build a kind of analysis of what had occurred in visual art from the time of Cubism to Neoconcretism. Three tendencies arose out of Cubism. One was Mondrian's constructive attempt, which gave rise to Neoplasticism. Another was Malevich's, likewise a constructive tendency, though a more metaphysical one, if you want to put it that way. Hence, Suprematism. The other was the nihilist tendency of Dada, which destroyed everything and razed all principles. I cite Mondrian and Malevich in the manifesto because Concrete art comes out of an attempt to make a constructive art that takes its cues from them, from their works and their theoretical postulates, after Cubism had decomposed the language of painting. From my point of view, Mondrian and Malevich materialized the impasse at which painting had arrived—that same dead end at which Lygia Clark would arrive, and at which I would inevitably arrive. That reconsideration of constructive production after Cubism, including the Ulm School, allowed me to define what I understood of Neoconcrete art—that is, the rupture with paintings and the abandonment of painting on flat surfaces as the only way to move beyond the predicament at which art had arrived. Starting with Mondrian, or rather, the Ulm School, with Theo Van Doesburg and later the

paulista Concretists, we experience the near total elimination of subjectivity, substituting it—as I note in the manifesto—with an exterior objectivity, dictated by the fatality of the physical laws of vision. The problem originates in the definition Theo Van Doesburg offers of the work of art. For him, a black square on a white background was as real as a natural body, and hence he left behind the expressive dimension, the dimension of its signification. Neoconcretism sought to locate once again the signification of forms and their expressive value as a fundamental axis of the work.

^{AJ} As I understand it, this relates to a sentence from your manifesto in which you declare that “the work of art moves beyond the material mechanism on which it rests, creating for itself a tacit signification.”

^{FG} What I intend to say there is that the work is strictly what is seen. Take an Amílcar sculpture, for example—what can be said about it? How might it be explained? The work is what we are seeing, the formal and material structure that is there; its meaning is precisely its form. The work cannot be comprehended, and has no explanation: it is a direct phenomenological experience. What does a poem mean? What is said there . . . if I could write it in another way I wouldn't make a poem. That means that the work moves beyond its condition as an object, creating for itself its own way of existing, and above all opening a field of meaning, in some way. As I once said in one of my first texts about Neoconcretism, “unlike Concrete artists, who work with explicit elements deciphered—starting from a point of supposed knowledge of form and color, and of even the laws that govern them—Neoconcrete artists prefer to immerse themselves in the natural ambiguity of the world in order to discover, via direct experience, new meanings within that

world.” Thus the work might move beyond the material mechanism on which it rests—that is, its purely optical configuration, physical and formal.

^{AJ} There’s a phrase that intrigues me in the Neoconcrete Manifesto that would perhaps be an apt point of discussion: “By spatialization of the work we might understand the idea that the work is always in a process of making itself present, is always commencing anew the impulse that generated it and of which it was already the origin.”

^{FG} Artistic activity is not a rational thing as Concrete artists would have it. On the contrary, that rational dimension inhibits creation, and what we wanted, even in those early works, was for the creator’s intuition to play a more important role, one not limited by an excess of rationality nor by that mistrust of the human imagination that characterized Concretism. We believed that this was a response to a prejudice resulting from an overvaluing of reason and scientific thought. And that’s why I cite Merleau-Ponty in my text, because he represented a tendency within phenomenology that was opposed to that overvaluing of scientific thought. He recognized that science is just one form of knowledge, and that other forms of knowledge exist and have nothing to do with science, such as the knowledge that can be gained through the senses and through human thought, i.e., phenomenology.

^{AJ} He further recognized art as one of those forms of knowledge.

^{FG} Exactly, and that art is only possible thanks to that type of knowledge. That’s what I discovered in Merleau-Ponty. When I

read *The Phenomenology of Perception* [1945], *The Structure of Behavior* [1942] and *Eye and Mind* [1964], about Cézanne, I understood that I had encountered the correct path through which to understand artworks, because I was concerned about that tendency to accept scientific thought as the only way of thinking about reality. Along the way, art lost its autonomy and its creative capacity, in order to become an echo of science. Phenomenology recovers intuitive thought, which is aesthetic thought, and that's what I intend to say in my manifesto.

^{AJ} A thought, in the case of visual artists, that is not expressed verbally, but rather operates in the working of materials.

^{FG} Yes, working; that is to say, a range of different languages exists. Music is one language, and can only become music through its language. Painting is another, and it is through painting that new meanings are made. This is not achieved rationally, but rather thanks to a mixture of rationality, intuition, and poetic thought, thanks to human creativity. And that's why I talk about that impulse that forms the origin of the work, because the impulse that propels me to make work is an intuitive will, and I can't exactly explain why I do it in this or that way. I have the intuition of a form that wants to be born, and that initial impulse that propels me to make this form is renewed as I work, and in this way I continue to develop that form until it is exhausted.

^{AJ} It's also an attempt to awaken in the spectator the initial impulse which, in the artist, gave rise to the work. . . .

Yes, of course, but that's implicit. Spectators will discover it, and will do so through their personal experience, based on their intellectual and sensory history, and their reading won't necessarily be the same as that of the artist who produced the work. So the Neoconcrete proposition takes as its starting point an aesthetic experimentation born out of Cubism and is, to some extent, the final consequence of that process. The problem is that the experiences of Neoconcretism would later unleash the destruction of art. The things Lygia Clark was doing at the end of her life are perhaps a new form of therapy, as she said, but they don't have much to do with art. And what is Hélio Oiticica's much-celebrated *parangolé*? It's simply an element present in any samba school, which he took and imitated, without ever reaching any great expressive component, from the point of view of artistic creation. These examples represent the end of a process, and wind up being an exclusively sensory exercise. To give you an example, there's an experience of Hélio's that consists of opening a box and sensing the aroma of the coffee contained within it. That is, in the end, they are nothing more than a merely sensory occurrence, like any other in which spectators must listen to the noise of the water and feel it coming into contact with their feet. Nonetheless, it is the case that sensory feeling is anterior to language, and in contrast, art is a matter of language. The sensory arises from sensation, something we share with animals and is the same in dogs, elephants, alligators. But when human beings came into being, it was there that verbal, aesthetic, philosophical, scientific expression commenced. While an instance like those I've mentioned, limited solely to the sensory, doesn't move beyond what a macaque monkey might do. In those cases, there isn't the intellectual and expressive construction that

characterizes art. As a consequence, both Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark arrived at an impasse, a dead end.

^{AJ} And nonetheless, I think that's something that results from a range of different circumstances. First, a general evolution of the visual arts during the 1960s (or of a significant sector, at least) in their opening to space and their socio-political commitment. Then, it is something that can even be understood as a consequence of how we might read Mondrian and his work. Oiticica, in particular, notes the following: "Practically a year and two months ago, I encountered some words of Mondrian's that prophesied the mission of non-object-based artists. He said that non-object-based artists who seek an art that is genuinely non-naturalist should extend their efforts to their farthest consequences; he also said that the solution would not be murals, nor applied arts, but rather something expressive, that would be like 'the beauty of life,' something that he could not define because it did not yet exist."³⁰

^{FG} No, no, that's something else. Mondrian thought about the integration of art into architecture and consequently into social life. He was thinking of this, of the end of easel painting—that is, the idea that painting as an autonomous object would disappear once it became integrated into architecture. This was an illusion, because architecture, like painting, plays with a complete language that excludes the other arts. The great majority of architectural projects made by Le Corbusier and Theo Van Doesburg contain no visual arts elements, which is to say that this idea of integration of art into architecture was nothing but a dream. In the end, the only thing left from all that were the paintings they made.

^{AJ} A Venezuelan architect, Carlos Raúl Villanueva, did an experiment with integration at the Universidad Central de Venezuela [Central University of Venezuela].

^{FG} I'm not familiar with it.

^{AJ} At the beginning of the 1950s, at the Universidad Central de Venezuela, there was an attempt at a project integrating abstract artists, and in some cases, I believe, we can in fact speak of a successful integration of visual arts and architecture.



Alexander Calder's *Acoustic Clouds*, Aula Magna, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1953 [More info](#)

Alexander Calder's *Acoustic Clouds*, Aula Magna, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1953

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^{FG}

I don't know much about what happened there. In Mexico there was a very important movement that had the intention of making architecture a kind of scaffolding for painting, with José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, etc. Here as well, the building of the Paço Gustavo Capanema [Gustavo Capanema Palace], formerly the Ministry of Education and Health and the Ministry of Education

and Culture, the first of Le Corbusier's projects to be modified by Oscar Niemeyer, includes mural panels by Portinari³¹ and Burle Marx sculptures in the garden. You should understand that it's not that I'm against that sort of project; on the contrary, I think they are wonderful. What I want to say is that Mondrian's dream, of a form of painting that would be integrated into architecture in order to disappear as a form of individual expression, did not become a reality, did not happen, and even where it was attempted, pictorial expression continued to be an individual occurrence.

^{AJ} What was desired was a sort of ideal equilibrium between the resources painting offers and those of architecture, which is obviously difficult to achieve without one subordinating the other, or without their coexisting within an inextricable conflict. Despite that, I think that in the case of Venezuela, at least in certain particularly apt projects, that integration was achieved, even if only in the case of limited, exceptional experiences.

^{FG} I think the two collide because we're not talking about practices that arose by accident. Painting is an activity that's existed for more than twenty thousand years. What led those men to paint bison in a cave, and in caves that were so difficult to access, where the painter had to crawl with torches through a dark crack in the rock, or in a black cupola, infernally dark, because you couldn't see anything at all? In those activities, there was an aspect of the most profound aspirations of human beings, something in any case much more profound than the problematics of galleries or museums. It's a spark that flares at the very moment human beings began to exist, and therefore will never come to an end. My grandson was born drawing. When he was six years old, he was painting; no one

taught him how to do it, nor asked him to do it. Paleolithic man found a stone that looked to him like the head of a bison, and he took that, and arranged it to look more like the actual animal, and then sat back to admire that stone, because he found that it was a bison in another way, living in another form within that stone. It was a magical operation.

^{AJ} And in modern art, at least as someone like Picasso conceived it, an intention exists if not of a return, then of a connection with that “primitive” function of art.

^{FG} Yes, that’s exactly it. I’m convinced that a range of factors have brought us to our current situation in which we’re coming to the destruction of art. I’m referring, for example, to what is called conceptual art, which in my opinion is not art. It is, in every instance, an activity that does not share the fundamental characteristics of art, which are a dominance of language, and the development of a kind of nonrational, nonlogical symbology or thought process. Among conceptual artists, on the contrary, each idea is autonomous, and has nothing to do with the next idea that follows it. Even within the work of a single artist there is no continuity among his or her propositions and there is thus no possibility of deep inquiry. If you consider an artist like Picasso or like Matisse, you can perceive a complex process of profound inquiry into language, of changes and reinventions that continue throughout their work, to the end. Now, an individual who cuts up a shark and puts it inside a container filled with chloroform today, and tomorrow piles up pieces of a zebra and puts those in chloroform, what is that person doing? What continuity exists there? Of what sort of expression can we speak? Is it necessary to

know anything in order to do that? No, if it's not even the artist who is doing it. . . . In Brazil, there's an ad for *cachaça* that says "Caninha 51: a good idea." And I'd say that this art—conceptual art—is like Caninha 51: a good idea. Even if we were going to be accommodating, it's clear that not every good idea is related to the idea that follows it—a good idea doesn't move beyond itself. When we contemplate that art is twenty thousand years old or more, and attempt to imagine what will remain from all that in a couple of centuries, it can be said that very probably not even the slightest trace will remain. No one knows, obviously, but it's possible that it won't be conserved at all, because these are transitory works, without permanence.

The other element to consider is that these works don't possess any expression in and of themselves. A Marcel Duchamp urinal, for example, is art if it is in the Pompidou, and not if it remains in the store where it was purchased. So, is it the Centre Pompidou that transforms it into art? Is it the institution that transforms the avant-garde into art? As it happens, the avant-garde is not institutional—and what is an institutional avant-garde? It's a confusion; those people have no idea that art is a vital necessity for human beings.

^{AJ} Now, when we carefully study the works of Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark, we realize that we are in the presence of absolutely coherent processes. So much so that it's possible to say that these artists didn't abandon painting overnight in order to do something completely different, but rather, on the contrary, their painting opened little by little to an exterior space, to begin working outside painting—even if this was achieved through the use of techniques that are no longer pictorial. We might therefore say that when

painting is abandoned art does not end, nor does the thought process that operates in painting; rather, it is simply transformed.

^{FG} Yes, up to a point. I can't provide an analysis of these processes here because they are very complex situations and I've already written extensively about them. The fact is that both Hélio and Lygia abandoned painting in order to move beyond its limits. When Hélio makes a parangolé or Lygia makes her masks, it's clear that we're no longer in the realm of painting. It's something else.³²



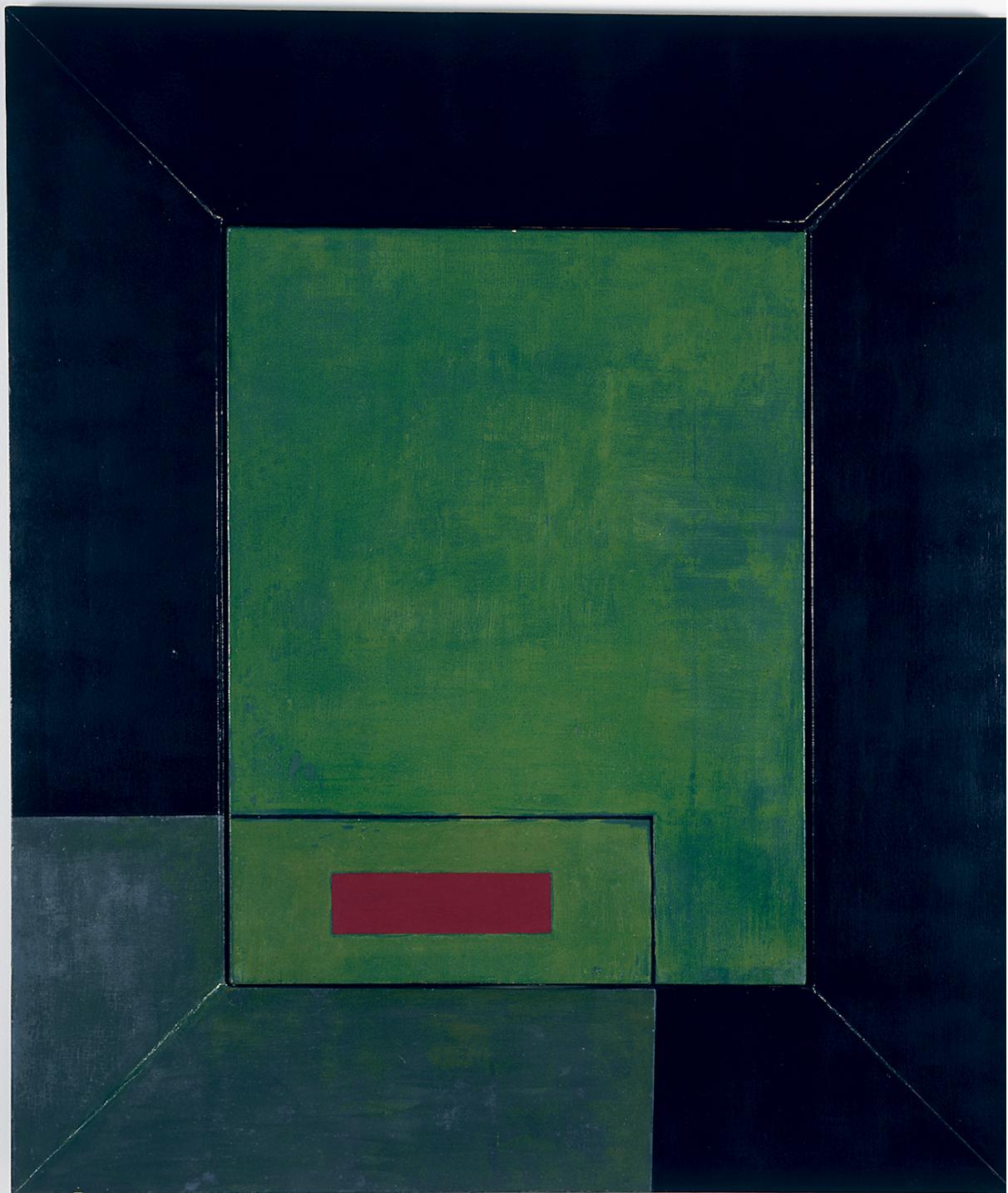
Lygia Clark, *Diálogo: Óculos* [*Dialogue: Goggles*], 1968 [More info](#)
Lygia Clark, *Diálogo: Óculos* [*Dialogue: Goggles*], 1968
© Associação Cultural “O Mundo de Lygia Clark”

AJ

And nonetheless, those masks made by Lygia Clark are mechanisms designed to create connections between the individual's subjective world and the exterior world, or to establish perceptual links between one individual and another. In this sense they don't merely originate in that pictorial dialogue between the frame and the canvas that was established in her early work, where the canvas wound up devouring the frame, but rather her operative modes remain the same and produce meaning.

FG

That is the process as I explained it, which no one—not even Lygia Clark—had discussed previously. In 1958, when she asked me to write an introduction to the exhibition she was thinking of doing in São Paulo, I wrote a text titled “Lygia Clark: A Radical Experience.”³³ So I asked her to show me her earlier work, and when I saw that in certain pieces the geometric composition that was on the canvas passed through the frame, I understood that she wanted to do away with the frame in order to reach real space. And that marks the beginning of the process I continued to expand upon in “Theory of the Non-Object,” illustrating how she moved progressively from painting to space to finally arrive at the *bichos* [animals].



Lygia Clark, *Composição No. 5* [*Composition No. 5*], 1954 [More info](#)
Lygia Clark, *Composição No. 5* [*Composition No. 5*], 1954
106.5 × 91 × 2 cm (41 15/16 × 35 13/16 × 13/16 inches)

Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros
© Associação Cultural “O Mundo de Lygia Clark”

^{AJ} Which are a sort of spatialized painting.

^{FG} I wouldn't say they entail a spatialized painting. She arrived at an impasse with the pictorial plane; the plane itself could not extend any further and there was no way beyond it. That whole moment in abstract painting is linked to problematics of figurative painting. In my texts about these problems I describe how Malevich's painting, negating the figure and later negating even the geometric figure, comes to white on white and encounters a situation in which the next step would have been the end of painting. And what did Malevich do when he arrived at white on white? He constructed in space, producing the *architectons*, his Suprematist constructions in space. And what did Lygia do when she arrived at a practically white canvas, with one black line? She turned toward space, and began to construct in space. She stopped conceiving of the canvas as a surface on which to paint and began to act upon the canvas with her hands, to create the spatial objects, the *bichos*, which were her exit from painting, just like what occurred with Malevich, who stopped painting. It was the end of painting. If I have a white canvas, I either return to painting or I stop painting and work with it. That's what Lygia Clark did; she worked with the canvas.

^{AJ} Even so, what draws me in, particularly in the case of Lygia Clark and Malevich, is that their objects are the product of pictorial thinking.

^{FG} Yes, though only in the sense I'm explaining to you, because they arrived at the end of painting. It's three-dimensional work that was born out of the impasse at which painting had arrived, but it is no longer painting: there is no canvas, nor pigment, nor color—it's not painting. Hélio continued to utilize color in his *bólides* [fireballs], yet it was no longer painting: it's an object that can be manipulated, you understand? That point marks the beginning of what was merely a sensory development that didn't have much to do with art. Hélio's and Lygia's installations and objects offered viewers the possibility of experiencing sensations, but the simple fact of sensing doesn't make you a creator—it's an illusion. What makes an artist a creator is the capacity to compose a toccata and fugue, to paint the *Guernica*, and that capacity—no matter what anyone might say—is not one that everyone in the world has. It's an expression, without a doubt, but an expression like any other, and not every expression constitutes art. If someone steps on my foot and I yell, I'm expressing myself, not making art. Art is the product of an intellectual construction; it possesses a language and should entail some process of making. When everything is equally worthwhile, art is finished.

^{AJ} So, from what I can see, for you Neoconcretism was the conclusion of a historical process.

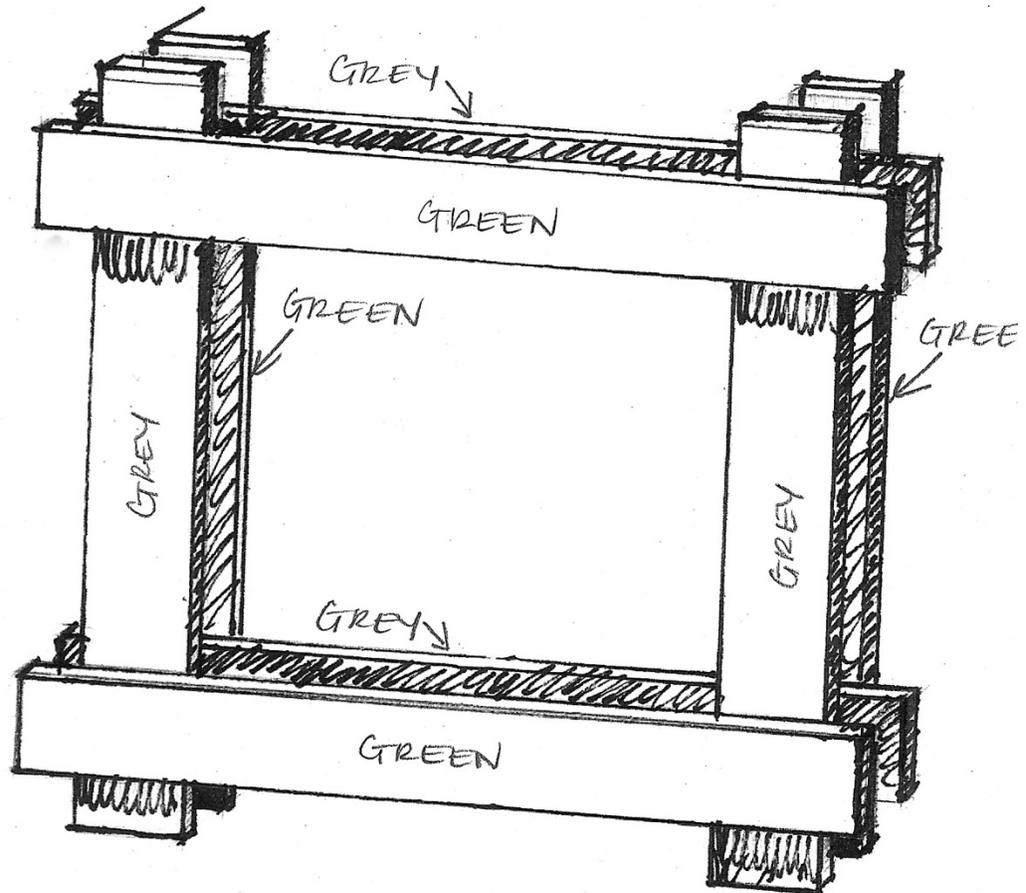
^{FG} No, not at all. That process continues today and remains particularly alive in the territory of visual work. It is perhaps the only field where it is ongoing. There was also, without a doubt, an avant-garde in the theater, in film, in poetry, and in the novel. In all those practices, however, that path was abandoned and there was a return to forms that once again took up the natural course of each

of those modes of artistic expression, however enriched they were by avant-garde experimentation. What happened is that no one dares to say this; they are afraid of being taken as reactionary.

^{AJ} The processes of Neoconcrete painting, as we've been discussing in the cases of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, thus led to an impasse in which artists found themselves compelled, so to speak, to work outside painting, in space. Except the result of that work generated a dilemma for you, in the sense that it wasn't possible to comprehend the pieces they were producing within the traditional categories of painting and sculpture. It was, to a certain extent, in order to explain the nature of this new object that you wrote "Theory of the Non-Object."

^{FG} That's a text that came into being after a visit to Lygia Clark's house. She had made an object she didn't know how to define, and invited some of her friends to dinner so she could show it to them. It was Mário Pedrosa, Amílcar de Castro and myself, among others. The object she had made was formed by a series of wooden planks crossed one on top of the others, a little like the bonfires people make here during festivals to celebrate São João. Some of the planks were grey in color, and others were a flat dark green, like the color of an avocado. This was a short while after the Neoconcrete Manifesto. During the get-together, she confessed that she didn't know what this work was, nor how to define it. It's a work no one has seen, perhaps because she didn't continue the process. She made it just as she was attempting to move into space, and it's likely that she abandoned that path and moved toward her *casulos* [cocoon]. Her aim was to work directly with the canvas, as a material object, and wood turned out to be too rigid; it didn't permit her to make

the folds she was able to achieve working with metal. What happened was that we got together to see that work, and to discuss it.



Sketch, based on Gullar's memory, of Lygia Clark's object that inspired the "Theory of the Non-Object"

"It's a work in relief," said Mário Pedrosa.

“No, it’s not a work in relief,” I responded. “A relief presupposes a plane or a background surface on which something in relief might appear and this object has no background surface.”

“That’s true, you’re right,” Mário said, without defining the object.

At that moment the housekeeper arrived to let us know that dinner was served and everyone else went off to eat. But I stayed there observing the thing and trying to comprehend it. All the evidence indicated that this was no longer a painting, nor was it a sculpture. Yes, it was an object, or a thing occupying space as objects do. However, it did not possess any practical utility or function, as a chair or a table does. I quickly went to the table and told them:

“I’ve just discovered the name of the object.”

And what’s that?” they asked me.

“It’s a non-object,” I responded, as some of them began laughing. Then Mário said:

“No, you can’t classify a thing as a non-object, because an object is knowable as an object and if it’s not an object it doesn’t exist.” To which I responded:

“Yes, but I’m not constructing a philosophy. If I call it a non-object it’s because without a doubt we’re talking about a thing, which is therefore an object, but with no utility or function whatsoever. It’s simply something that possesses meaning. No one has to accept the name I’m giving it, of course, though for me that’s its name: a non-object.”

The conversation stopped there and we all ate dinner together, laughing and talking as always. But I did keep thinking about what I had said, and when I got home I developed those ideas further. It was no longer only about Lygia’s work, but about that new

phenomenon we were observing among a few Neoconcrete artists—something that wasn't painting, and wasn't sculpture, but was something else—and that incident was the starting point for my development of the "Theory of the Non-Object".

AJ You use the term *non-object* or *special object* for an object which in the end achieves a synthesis of sensory and mental experiences. However, isn't that a characteristic of all works of art?

FG Yes, of course, though these had a special quality. Nothing was figured; the works weren't a statue or a portrait of a person, and they didn't fulfill any function. We were confronted with an abstract work, charged with meaning, that occupied a space. And that's why it was holistically perceptible without leaving any residue.

AJ And you believe that this object is effectively and totally transparent to human understanding?

FG This object has a meaning, but not one that can be translated verbally. It is, on the contrary, pure appearance—that is, a phenomenological experience.³⁴ The object is precisely as I perceive it to be, and is not connected to any other reality. It is like a musical melody which produces meaning, but cannot be translated into verbal language. We might talk about it, interpret it, etc.—but not translate it, because its meaning is strictly musical. These are complex problems and for that reason, in order to explain them as clearly as possible, I invented that fictional dialogue that appears at the end of "Theory of the Non-Object." Audiences want simple explanations and that's not always possible. When I am

asked what my “Poema sujo” means, for example, I tell people they should read it, because the poem means nothing other than what is contained within it. If I had been able to make it in another way it would not be the way it is. Now, of course, the idea that a thing might be perceived and transformed into pure meaning, without leaving any residue, is an aspiration more than a truth. It might be that at some moment I’ve felt that this occurred, that objects presented themselves to me as essentially transparent; what’s certain is that we’re addressing a reality—if we can call it that—a non-object should be able to achieve. In reality it was almost an anticipation of what would occur later on, in particular with Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica.

AJ Could a parangolé be considered a non-object?

FG In some sense yes, though it’s at that point that a critical vision of his work begins, for me. From my point of view, Oiticica’s bólides represent the limit of his Neoconcrete experience. Beyond that limit, his production abandons the parameters of art, at least in relation to the concerns that gave rise to Neoconcrete processes. The same thing happened with Lygia, whose limit was located in her bichos.

AJ And nonetheless, Oiticica’s penetrable installations began as if they were the same as a bólido that had grown and opened up to become penetrable, which would indicate a continuity of intention and language between the bólides and the *penetráveis* [penetrables] that would require us to shift that limit further—if it even exists.

^{FG} Perhaps the work can be viewed in this manner, though in any case we'd be talking about a dialectic within which the *Relevos Espaciais* [*Spatial Reliefs*] generated the bólides and these, in turn, produced the penetráveis without there having existed a genuine continuity of language. It's not that I want to appropriate everything that's been done in Brazil, but you can easily confirm that Oiticica didn't make penetráveis prior to the existence of my "Poema enterrado" [Buried Poem]. The difference is that my poem is constituted by a word inscribed within a cube, and that cube is inside another, and both are inside a third cube—that is, it's based in idealized, geometric forms, while Oiticica's bólides are filled with organic matter, and aren't even forms. They are works that integrate a dirtiness that doesn't originate with painting.

^{AJ} It's the world that dirties them, in any case.

^{FG} Without a doubt, it's a return to concrete reality.

^{AJ} And in that return to reality, from my point of view, Oiticica continues to maintain a tremendously significant dialogue with you and with his own artistic practice—a dialogue that is the origin of the bólides and later his penetráveis. I'm thinking, for instance, of the analysis you provided in "Vanguarda e subdesenvolvimento" [Avant-garde and underdevelopment], where you talk about Lygia's bichos and even of Oiticica's parangolés as the "path these artists located in order to return to reality, even without renouncing the metaphysical conception that compelled them. It's true that the action, in these cases, as in the case of Mallarmé, remains ritualistic and abstract—and in some instances liberating—

but it indicates a progressive approach to the concrete circumstances of life.”³⁵

^{FG} Yes, it’s true, because in a sense I was the ideologue of Neoconcretism. That is, it was my texts and the conversations they occasioned that set off the process that we would each continue later, using our own challenges as a starting point, and our own talents. Mário Pedrosa, who was like our older brother, was the theoretical backbone of Concretism and we all respected him and followed him, even as I created a new opening. My doing this, obviously, was based in my own personal preoccupations, and in his works as well. Later, when I became interested in political problems and Brazil’s social transformation, and began to privilege political action, Oiticica shifted and developed an interest in the problematic of the *favelas*.

^{AJ} By the same token, it would be important to note that these changes taking place in your work were propelled to some extent by the particular political circumstances Brazil was experiencing after the coup d’etat, as was occurring in many places in Latin America—that is, that it was this era, this history, that drew you and many others in the world to establish a closer and more vital connection with concrete reality. Up to now, we’ve been analyzing what was happening in the world of visual arts, specifically in relation to the movements of Concretism and Neoconcretism—a passionate and complex process I’d like to continue to discuss later on. However, before we continue this analysis, it seems important that we address your poetic work, especially the sequence you titled *A luta corporal [The Bodily Struggle]*,³⁶ where you gathered the poems you wrote between 1950 and 1953—that is, just before you

moved to Rio, and then once you were in Rio, during the early years of the Concrete movement.

^{FG} It's a book I began in 1950, when I was still in São Luís. But it's an experience that had nothing to do with Concrete Art. It originated in an attempt to move beyond a verbal process, the search for a congruence, as if language could be born together with the poem. That's the problem I proposed to resolve: to create a poetry in which language might be liberated from its past, in order to be born with the poem. I thought that language was old and that the experience it sought to communicate was new. Given that language would make the poem old, it became necessary to reinvent language in the poem. *A luta corporal* responds to that concern; it's an attempt I took to its farthest consequences and it ended with the implosion of language, because it was impossible to achieve what I was seeking.

^{AJ} Of course, because language preexists the poem.

^{FG} Right, of course, so what I did in order for language not to preexist the poem was to deform it in such a way that it might seem to be being born right there. The poem "Roçzeiral" [Rose Garden] marks the moment when that occurred, when I transformed language into another thing, which was no longer language, where syntax disintegrated and the words were deformed, producing a nearly incomprehensible poem. The poem came into being one day when I was walking through the Botafogo neighborhood in Rio, and I saw some empty window boxes. There were no plants—the flowers had disappeared and the soil was dry. Thinking about the possibility that the plants might come back to life and flower again,

the following line came into my mind: “Ao sopra da luz a tua pompa se renova numa órbita” [When the light gusts your pomp is renewed in an orbit]; as I didn’t want to continue writing with conventional syntax, I wanted to leave it like that, except that the line stayed in my mind, and a few days later, walking down the street, a line came to me that in reality was the deformation of the earlier line: “Au sôflu i luz ta pompa inova, orbita. . .”, [Whe thi light gousts yur pomp innovates, orbits . . .], and starting from that phrase I began to write the poem in a nearly delirious state. The important thing is that in that moment I felt liberated from formal language and I attempted to write as if the words were being born together with the poem. I sought also to make a rhythmic poem that would have a sonic impact on the reader. The result approached the near total disintegration of language, such that when I did this I considered my poetry to be finished and thought I’d never manage to write anything again. Finally, I wrote another poem, “O inferno” [The Inferno], which is the expression of that tragedy, of that defeat, and two other poems that were a sort of farewell. I published the book as if it were the last thing I’d do in my life.

ROÇZEIRAL

Au sôflu i luz ta pom-
pa inova'
orbita

FUROR
tô bicho
'scuro fo-
go
Rra

UILÁN
UILÁN,
lavram z'olhares, flamas!
CRESPITAM GÂNGLES RÔ MASUAF
Rhra

Rozal, ROÇAL
l'ancêndio Mino-
Mina TAURUS
MINÔS rhes chãns
sur ma parole —
ÇAR

ENFERNO
LUÍZNEM
E ÔS SÓES
LÔ CORPE
INFENSOS
Ra
CI VERDES
NASCI DO
CÔFO

“Roçzeiral” [Rose Garden], (excerpt) More info

“Roçzeiral” [Rose Garden].

Excerpt from *Toda poesia* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 2000), 55

^{AJ} As a reader who's not very knowledgeable about poetry, as a distant and accidental amateur, I can say that if one thing made an impression on me in this group of poems, it is the insistence with which you very often seem to oppose your personal consciousness to the opacity of the world. The rooster, the hen, that whole life that is alien and opaque for us, as well as inert things, the entire blind universe of things.

^{FG} That's precisely what I do. And at the same time it was an attempt to move beyond that opacity that led me to disintegrate language, because in truth I wanted to create a language that might be able to superimpose itself onto that opacity of the real, except that then it disintegrated. When I published the book, in 1954, the poets (who were not yet Concrete poets)—the brothers Augusto and Haroldo de Campos, and Décio Pignatari, who dreamed in São Paulo of creating poetry that would be distinct from what was being done in Brazil—contacted me saying that I had unleashed the process that would create a new poetry in Brazil. That my book didn't create that poetry, but when it destroyed the old poetry, it opened the way to create the new. In this way we began to exchange letters, to have a dialogue, and thus Concrete poetry in Brazil was born, out of those discussions in which each of us contributed his expertise and his most intimate problems. In fact, when Haroldo wrote an article saying that we needed to create a new line, I responded by telling him that it wasn't just a matter of a new line, but of creating a new syntax, since I had disintegrated not just the line but syntax

itself. It was necessary to create a different syntax, a new syntax, and the result was the visual syntax of Concrete poetry, in substitution for grammatical syntax.

^{AJ} *A luta corporal* is thus the book that opened the way toward Concrete poetry (at least for you) and then, of course, toward Neoconcrete experiences. That's why it seems to me crucial to discuss that border between Concrete and Neoconcrete poetry, at least as it manifested in the case of your work. You say that Concrete poetry reduced the word to merely a graphic element within the blank page, while Neoconcrete poetry conceives the poem as a temporal organism. In that case, we wouldn't be able to talk about Neoconcrete poetry except through the *livro-poema* [book-poem].

^{FG} Yes, but it's an evolutionary process. For example, when I created "O formigueiro," from 1955, we might say that it was already an instance of a *livro-poema*, because it's a poem that exists solely in that book. Each page contains one word, and that word has a structure that is not its usual graphic structure. The poem functioned in the following way: on the first page, the word *a formiga* [the ant] appeared, exploding and reorganized in another form. Then, when the page was turned, a new word appeared in boldface—*trabalha* [works]—arranged in a particular way such that the letters are placed in different spaces on the page, as if they had shifted position in order to meet up with the letters from the previous word in a fairly aleatory grouping, similar to what a grouping of ants might construct. The page is turned again, and to the previous letters a new grouping of boldface letters is added, in which the phrase *na treva* [in the darkness] can be read. On the next

page, the letters of the phrase *a terra* [the earth] appear, still following the principle that only the newly added letters appear highlighted in boldface. On the next page the word *terra* is repeated, and on the following pages once again *a formiga traça* [the ant traces], *o mapa* [the map], *d'ouro* [of gold], *maldita urbe* [damn city]. In this way, by the end, the text constitutes a map with the totality of the letters contained in the poem. From that point forward, when the page is turned new words appear, constructed from the already existing letters—some even located in the same place already assigned to them on the map. In this way the poem continues to grow, with words that remind us of ants and their activity. The beginning of each word is now indicated with a capital letter, since it's necessary to signal a reading order, as the letters appear dispersed throughout the space of the page. *A formiga come* [The ant eats], *bicho* [bug], *gente* [people], *morta* [dead], *milho* [corn], *farinha* [flour].

by one word on each page, whose reading demands the manipulation of this object that comes to be the livro-poema. The process, of course, is more radical in “Livro-poema No 1,” which begins with the words *Ossó*, *Nóssó*, because the words are written on the reverse side, and at the same time the pages, cut to various sizes, together form a uniquely different structure, specific to that book. That work already evidences the seeds of an order that is very distinct from the merely visual and mechanical organization the paulistas proposed: “novo no velho, ovo novelo, novo no velho” [new in the old, wound ovum skein, new in the old]—understand? . . . “Luxo, lixo” [splendor, litter] . . . theirs is a totally alliterative and automatic construction, but if the first phoneme doesn’t coincide with the next, or isn’t backed up by lived experience, the whole thing is reduced to a very limited game.

ovo
n o v e l o
novo no velho
o filho em folhos
na jaula dos joelhos
infante em fonte
feto feito
dentro do
centro

nu
des do nada
até o hum
ano mero nu
mero do zero
crua criança incru
stada no cerne da
carne viva en
fim nada

o
p o n t o
onde se esconde
lenda ainda antes
e n t r e v e n t r e s
quando queimando
os seios são
peitos nos
dedos

no
turna noite
em tórno em treva
turva sem contórno
morte negro nó cego
sono do morcego nu
ma sombra que o pren
dia preta letra que
se torna
sol

o
n o v e l o
o v o
o v o
e
l
o

Augusto de Campos, “Ovo novo” [Ovum Skein], 1955

IL PLEUT

Il pleut des voix de femmes comme si elles étaient mortes même dans le souvenir
c'est vous aussi qui pleut merveilleuses rencontres de ma vie à gouttelettes
et ces nnaages cabrés se prennent à hennir tout un univers de villes arculaires
éoute sil pleut tandis que le regret et le dédain pleurent une ancienne
éoute tombe les liens qui t'attachent en haut et en bas

“Il pleut” [It’s Raining] by Guillaume Apollinaire.

More info

^{AJ} And that mechanical passage of time from Concrete poetry to the way duration works in Neoconcrete poetry is achieved through the manipulation of the pages.

^{FG} Yes, though with an additional element. For example, I wrote poems that began with a single word inscribed along the edge of the page. Then there’s a silence between one word and another, such that the page starts to come alive like something semantic—it’s no longer just paper, it’s silence, an interior time that is precisely what was lacking in Concrete poetry, which functioned mechanically, following a form of thinking that originated in science, in technological development; in that type of poem the human being becomes an antiquated object.

^{AJ} It seems clear that in the earliest manifestations of Neoconcrete poetry, as you were practicing it, you frequently took recourse in the impression made by that first contact with the real, with your childhood experiences, as in the case of the ants on the patio of your house.

^{FG} It’s just as you say, even when I’m making spatial poems like “Lembra” [Remember] or like “Não” [Not]—it’s true that I’m attending to a memory from childhood. When I was a boy, my whole life was playing in the scrub near my house; one day when I was playing there I suddenly found a round stone on the ground. In the middle of that brush, in the branches and grasses, there was this stone, in the silence, and I was surprised as I looked at it and

asked myself, what does this mean? What is such a beautiful stone doing here in the middle of this brush? And at that moment I had the impression that if I lifted up that stone I would find its name, as if the stone were hiding it. This anecdote resurfaced later, when I wrote *Crime na flora* [*Crime in the Flora*]. “Há um nome, debaixo da pedra, na flora . . . na flora o nome, sob uma pedra na flora . . .” [There is a name, beneath the stone, in the flora . . . in the flora, the name, beneath a stone in the flora]. The images I use don’t come about by accident, but rather originate in a very personal poetic experience in relation to the world.

^{AJ} What you’re saying seems extremely important to me, because if there is one thing that often characterizes intellectual production in general, in countries like ours which have been colonies, it’s the sensation that everything has already been said, that everything is resolved and that for any and every concern, we’ll always be able to find a book to explain it. On the other hand, your poetic trajectory seems quite fabulous, exactly as you’re describing it, because it manifests a real will to escape what has already been formulated, immersing yourself as fully as possible in your sensory experience. And I understand that for that reason we are able to speak of creation in the case of Neoconcretism, because your works truly move beyond European models, taking on the process they encounter there and extending it using your own life experience as a starting point.³⁷

^{FG} It’s true, there’s no literature in which spatial poems are made; that doesn’t exist. A piece like “Poema enterrado,” with a street number and street name, with an address, doesn’t exist anywhere else. That’s why Neoconcrete documents are considered to be

contemporary documents and are included in publications together with the Surrealist Manifesto. The Neoconcrete Manifesto is a document that's been translated into many languages, because it is original, it's not a copy or a variation on other, earlier texts—that would be a manifestation, as you said, of colonial thinking.

^{AJ} Exactly, and that immersion in what is most intimate is what makes it possible for you to achieve an escape from already known and already invented forms— far from what we might define as a kind of colonial thinking.³⁸

^{FG} Certainly, on the contrary, it's easy to go on copying what we were taught, what was imposed upon us, and in this way not create anything at all. The Brazilian Modernist movement is important for us, but in truth it's nothing more than the repetition of what was done in Paris. It's an ingenuous repetition, we might say, of Cubism and other modern movements. And the same thing occurs with the ideas behind the Cannibal Movement, because in truth they are the expression of a European movement based on discovery of the primitive Latin Americans, while Neoconcretism is something that was born here, critical of what was produced there, given that we formed part of European civilization, but did not have to be limited to repeating it.

^{AJ} That's what seems so moving to me in a book of poems like *A luta corporal*, because I feel—and the analysis you make at the end of *Cultura posta em questão* [Culture in Dispute] seems to corroborate this—that many of those poems are an attempt to immerse yourself in the deepest spaces of yourself, almost as if you were attempting to do so in order to escape from language, exiting this sphere of

meaning defined by an inherited language. Later you realize it is impossible, of course, but out of that attempt something new arises—or begins to arise.

^{FG} That's correct. When I say that I was seeking a path through which to attain a language that would be born together with the poem—in “Roçzeiral,” for instance—it's true that it was born with all the challenges of being an impossible language, because a language that is understood by no one other than its author is a language without meaning. Even so, I made it, and I wasn't even quite sure how, and when I got some distance from it I realized that it wasn't viable. The last poem in *A luta corporal*, titled “Negror n'origens” [Obscurity of Origins],³⁹ is an attempt to write with that disintegrated language.

^{AJ} Even knowing by that point that no one would be able to understand it.

^{FG} Yes, yes, I made one last attempt... who knows? After I destroyed my language I was desperate, I had no path to follow. I was a poet and I had destroyed my tool of expression. That's why I attempted to write with that language one more time, as usual taking a lived experience as my point of departure, though in this case it might seem impossible. Here's what happened: when I arrived in Rio, in 1951, I discovered that I had tuberculosis, and I was put in a hospital in the interior of Rio State, in Correias. The hospital had a garden filled with plants called *crestas de gallo* [cockscorn]. One day when I was at the window in my room, looking at the garden, I thought I saw a rooster in the midst of those plants. So I was quite taken aback, really, and I told myself that it couldn't be, that I

wasn't seeing a rooster, that it was because the plant had that name that I believed I'd seen one. At that very instant, the rooster jumped out from among the plants and truly surprised me; I was marked by that animal-vegetable relationship. That last poem, "Negror n'origens," originated in the story I've just told you, out of that surprising mingling between the animal and the vegetable. If you read it after this explanation, you'll realize that the poem has unexpected references that are a response to a mixture of the animal and the vegetable, of something that emerged from the darkness of life, from nature, there where both forms of existence are forged. It's a crazy attempt and it was clear to me that I couldn't continue writing that way because no one would understand me. I've always wanted to communicate. I don't want to be a cursed genius—I'd never cut my ear off.

^{AJ} These are experiences at the limit, moments when an artist, in his need for self-expression, might move beyond the possibilities of language. Many of those literary experiments should be read as documents, as testimonies of an attempt whose results are perhaps not satisfactory, but which at that precise moment allow the artist to break the barriers that were impeding his progress. This might be what occurred with that odd text titled *Crime na flora* that you wrote more or less in this period.

^{FG} It's true, we're talking about a book I wrote immediately after *A luta corporal*, at the end of 1953 or beginning of 1954. I called it *Crime na flora* to make it more abstract. If I had called it *Crime nas flores* [Crime in the Flowers] it would have been significantly limited to one type of vegetation, but this way, "in the flora", the terms are more general, more abstract. It was an attempt—as in the

last two poems in *A luta corporal*—to overcome the impasse at which I found myself when I disintegrated my language. I thought I could no longer write, because I didn't want to return to the language I had been using before, but neither could I write in the disintegrated language of "Roçzeiral." There was no way out. Despite my anguish and the feeling of being blocked, I continued to make attempts. I took some sheets of paper, cut them and folded them to create a sort of notebook. I added some wrapping paper as a cover and wrote the word *Frente* [Front]. Not as a title—what I was going to write couldn't have a title—but rather as an indication of where the work began, simply to know where and how to open the notebook. In it I began to write—by hand, using very small lettering—a book without meaning. I didn't know what I was going to write, nor where the text might lead. I embarked on that book in this manner because it was the only way to continue.

^{AJ} In short, a kind of automatic writing.

^{FG} No—rather, it was an attempt to start out again from zero, with no fixed path. It was a response to my obsessive desire to create a poetry that might be more than a lecture. The book begins like this: "I atop the wall punished, solar illness in the gears of the earth, in silence I who speak through your mouth, where you work, verbose, you speak in my lips in the putrefaction putrefied, in the brilliance of the calm of the teeth the myth attests from behind the throat in the resplendent dust; metal hair."⁴⁰ I don't know what I'm writing there, it's true, but it wasn't automatic writing because it doesn't pursue those goals, nor does it correspond to Surrealist techniques. Automatic writing presupposes a will to trap the unconscious; it has a delirious side and certain techniques

prescribed in advance. When, for instance, it can be detected that the text being written might have been contaminated by the writer's conscious mind, Breton recommended taking any letter whatsoever and writing the first word that springs to mind with that letter as a jumping off point. That method was utilized to avoid having the conscious mind direct the text, which supposedly should be a sort of photograph or exact replica of the unconscious. Meanwhile, in my case, we're talking about something I was in the process of excavating without knowing where I was heading, because it was the only thing I could do, and I was writing somewhat blindly, though little by little a story began to form. Further into the story, the cadaver of a woman appeared. And that cadaver was found in the garden of an apartment complex, among the flowers. Later it's not a woman, but rather a man with an arrow in his anus. . . . It was insanity, and I was writing that work by hand for months. In this way, the invented language of "Roçzeiral" began to mix with the small story that was unfolding during the process of writing. Furthermore, it was there that my preoccupation with the spatial organization of words began; undoubtedly this consolidated and even anticipated some of what was happening in my Concrete poetry.

*pomo fumo gomo lumo numo
alfazema*

oportuno⁴¹

And that's how it developed, sometimes as a universe of alliterations with no meaning, of repetitions and lists of words interspersed between more or less narrative texts. Finally, I placed a machine gun behind some hydrangeas, which led to a war in the

garden. At the end of the book, all that insanity, which could have no ending because it progressed with no direction, stopped due to a completely arbitrary—though conscious—decision, intended to generate total chaos. I grabbed two pens, one blue and one red, and I wrote two parallel stories.

With the blue pen I wrote a story with no meaning, leaving significant space between each line. Then, between each line of blue, I wrote another story in red, also completely insane, and constructed so they would end on the same word. If you read the red lines, you had one story; if you read the blue, you had another, different story. That double reading at the end cannot be perceived except in the manuscript. In the printed book I eliminated the colors, which made it nearly impossible for a reader to become aware of what was happening. I did this on purpose, in order to achieve an illogical effect. In the end, when I finished it, in 1956, in the midst of many particularities of life experience, I set it aside for thirty years. It seemed to me so absurd that I never wanted to publish it. That's why I'm telling you that it's not automatic writing in the surrealist sense, because in some sections I was directing the story, and additionally, I made a series of decisions—like the one relating to the end of the book—which gave the text an objective form, contemplated outside the realm of the unconscious that the surrealists sought to trap. It was an absurd but necessary experiment, because starting with that text I began to write again.

In the midst of these attempts to reconstruct my language, I talked with Mário Pedrosa, and told him what was happening to me. I sought out his help because I didn't know what to do. So Mário suggested that I devote some time to reading philosophy, and even lent me a few books. "Begin," he told me, "at the beginning; read the pre-Socratics." That's when I began to read the

book he lent me and moving on to others I bought on my own. Of course I found no answer there to my problems, which were of another nature; even so, I might say I came out of that learning process enriched. I filled out my knowledge of Heraclitus, and of Parmenides; this helped me to think more clearly about my personal circumstances. Then I bought a French translation of Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*, and that's where I began to read and study in a much more systematic way, annotating the points that interested me, and even delving into recent philosophy.

^{AJ} I imagine it was at this time that you came into contact with Merleau-Ponty's thinking.

^{FG} No, I read Merleau-Ponty later, when I was writing Concrete poetry, around 1957–58. I read him, in any case, after the 1^a *Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta* in São Paulo. One day in a bookstore, I discovered his text about Cézanne—*Eye and Mind*—and I read it with great interest, because it seemed to me to be a very incisive book. I remember mentioning it to Mário Pedrosa and he told me he hadn't read that book, though he had read other works of his, like *The Structure of Behavior*, which he lent to me after that conversation. That's when I began to read his philosophy, and discovered the response to the problems I was confronting, in terms of the comprehension of modern art, particularly in relation to the scientificist vision that sought to explain everything mathematically, as was the case with Concrete artists. Merleau-Ponty's thinking served as a support for a reconsideration of my own understanding of the role that creative intuition played in visual art or in any other artistic undertaking. These readings

managed to quiet the voices inside me that reflected the scientificist pretensions of the Concrete artists, and coincided in some way with my own preoccupations. They provided me with arguments against the merely optical conception of art that expelled subjectivity almost entirely, an approach that had always left me unsatisfied in terms of the things being done in the Concrete art groups in Rio as well as in São Paulo. Nothing profound could result from these positions and in fact, what resulted from them was Op Art, which seeks to create visual effects, optical tricks through which not even the slightest depth can be achieved—at least, not in the way made possible by approaching artistic practice from a phenomenological perspective.

^{AJ} Meanwhile, this constant struggle against inherited language and specifically against its syntactical structure, intensified in concrete experiences, led you to an impasse around painting very much like the one we've already discussed in the cases of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica.

^{FG} Absolutely, so much so that my process was similar, in the sense that I took that experience into spatial practice with my *livro-poema*. This was a book constructed such that the text was written on the reverse side of the page; it is hence a spatial book. And that *livro-poema* inspired Lygia Clark's *bichos*. The idea of manipulation in Brazilian artwork originated with that book, because—like any book—it can be manipulated. It all started with the publication of a poem in the cultural supplement of the *Jornal do Brasil* in 1957, which read:

verde verde verde
verde verde verde
verde verde verde
verde verde verde erva

“Verde” poem published in *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical*,
November 3, 1957 [More info](#)

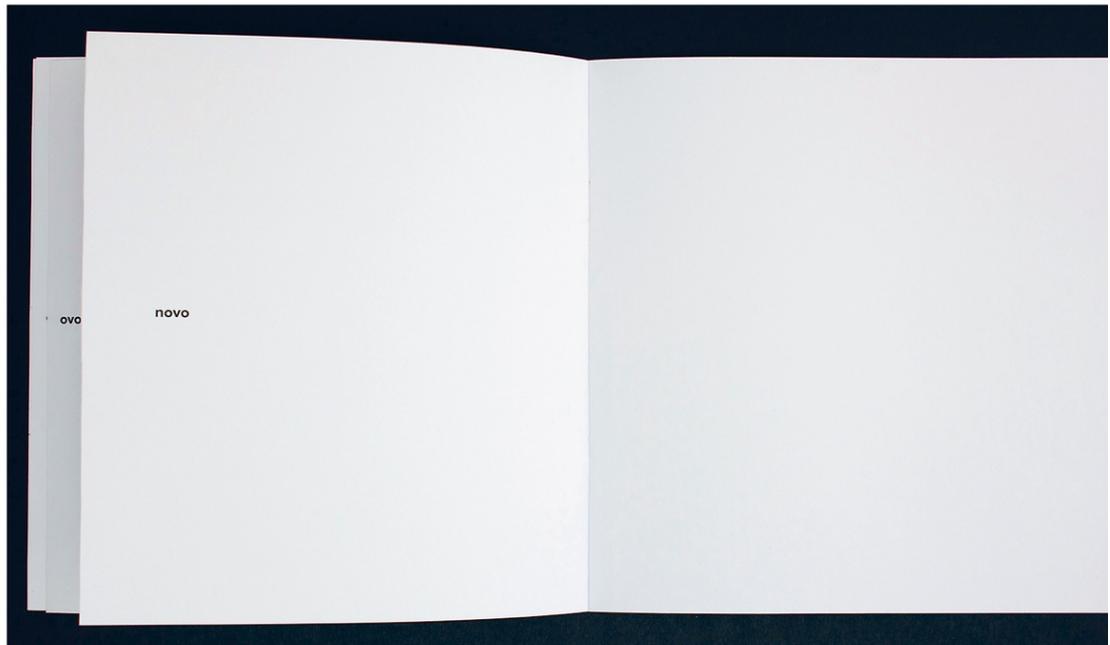
“Verde” poem published in *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical*,
November 3, 1957

© Jornal do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro

When the poem was published, a friend called me on the phone and said: “I saw your poem today in the *Jornal do Brasil*.” And I asked him: “Did you notice that the repetition of the word *verde* makes the word *erva* [grass] explode from within the green?” He responded “No, when I saw it just said *verde*, I didn’t read it. I saw it, but I didn’t read it.” To which I replied: “Well, then the poem failed!”

This occasioned another inquiry for me: how to create a poem that might end up constructing a visual form and would also oblige a word-by-word reading? How to achieve this? As a response to this inquiry, I created my first livro-poema. It’s a work that predates the Neoconcrete Manifesto, and the words are written on the back sides of the pages. The reader initially encounters an entirely blank page. When that page is turned, on the back, along the left edge, the first word appears: *osso* [bone], in a completely blank space, since that page and the next recto are empty. Immediately, as the next page is turned, the second word appears on the reverse side: *nosso* [our], written on a shorter page, in such a way that the previous word and this word now come together for the reader, as a past, and together construct the poem. Then the next page is turned, covering the two previous words, containing the word *ovo* [egg], and another page, with *novo* [new]—and once again *ovo* and *novo* can be read together, as something constructed out of the reading. In this way, successively, new words continue to appear

and add themselves into the reading experience, such that the poem and the book are constructed at the same time. I call this a livro-poema, because the book and the poem form a unit. A book like this one can't be published in a conventional way, nor can it be reproduced in the press, because the poem and this strange book form are an indivisible reality.



“Livro-poema N° 1” [Book-poem No. 1], 1957. Photographed by
Carlos Germán Rojas [More info](#)
“Livro-poema N° 1” [Book-poem No. 1], 1957
Offset print on paper

18.9 × 19 cm (7 2/5 × 7 1/2 inches)
Photographed by Carlos Germán Rojas

The second livro-poema I made began with the word *faina* [task], at the very top left corner of the page. On the second page, cut on the diagonal—so that the first word can still be seen—the word *faz* [does] appears, along the bottom left edge, and on the next page, a shorter page, the phrase *osso aço* [steel bone]. Then, on another page that’s even shorter, *almofariz* [mortar]. The next page, cut on the diagonal, contains the words *ouro* [gold] and *era* [era], at the top and bottom of the page respectively. The next page covers the three previous words—*almofariz*, *oro*, *era*—and allows the earlier words to be seen, to finally construct the following line: “*faina faz osso aço faço*” [task does bone steel do]. From that point forward, a new line is constructed, starting once again from a blank page that covers all the words from this first line, in order to begin anew with the words *faina* [task] and *fiz* [I did].



“Livro-poema N° 2” [Book-poem No. 2], 1957. Photographed by
Carlos Germán Rojas [More info](#)

“Livro-poema N° 2” [Book-poem No. 2], 1957

Offset print on paper

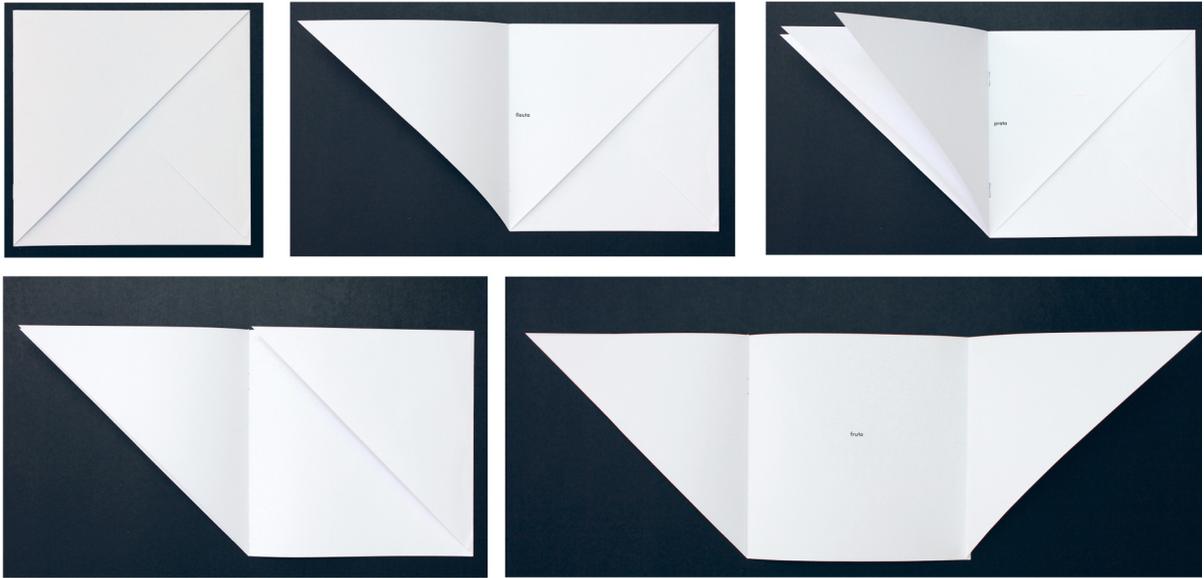
18.9 × 19 cm (7 2/5 × 7 1/2 inches)

Photographed by Carlos Germán Rojas

^{AJ} This is perhaps the most efficient way to achieve the effect that the poem is born together with the language it utilizes. If the words preexist the poem that is being constructed gradually, as the residue of an action, the particular syntactical organization that then comes into being doesn't actually exist prior to the configuration of the poem. At least, this is the case during a first reading and perhaps also, for the author, during the process of creation.

^{FG} Now, “Livro-poema N° 3” no longer has the characteristics that are specific to a book, and begins to become a peculiar sort of visual object, like Lygia Clark's *bichos*, which had their origin there. This livro-poema begins with blank space, and the first page, which is half the book diagonally, opens to uncover the word *flauta* [flute]. The next page, also on the diagonal, uncovers an entirely blank page and covers the earlier word *flauta*. Another diagonal page opens and the word *prata* [silver] can be seen. Everything else continues entirely blank. Next the reader must open a diagonal page toward the left, and then another along a diagonal toward the right, to reveal the word *fruta* [fruit]. That is, this book opens as if it were a fruit being peeled. I had wanted to materialize that sensation of opening fruit, through the use of an object. In some way I attempted to spatialize the sensation that gave rise to one of

the poems included in *A luta corporal*, the theme of which was precisely an apple cut open.



“Livro-poema Nº 3” [Book-poem No. 3], 1957. Photographed by
Carlos Germán Rojas

More info

“Livro-poema Nº 3” [Book-poem No. 3], 1957

Offset print on paper

18.9 × 19 cm (7 2/5 × 7 1/2 inches)

Photographed by Carlos Germán Rojas

AJ

This book is sufficiently complex in its configuration so that one begins to wonder how, exactly, you produced it. Whether it began with the association of the words *fruta-prata* or whether, on the contrary, you began with its material construction.

FG

My intention to make a poetic object, in some way, and not merely a book, was perfectly clear to me from the beginning. I began to

fabricate it from the back to the front. I took a square of paper and on it I wrote the word *fruta*, which was where I wanted to arrive—to that clear interior of the fruit—and then I set about imagining how the reader might open the book little by little until arriving finally at its interior. From that point forward, I continued adding pages cut along the diagonal, some opening toward the left and others toward the right, as if that fruit were being peeled from its shell. Then I explored which forms might be most interesting for the making of the book, so that the reader might discover the object layer after layer, with some completely empty and others containing words that for me recall the fruit itself. That's how I got to silver, because the flesh of an apple has a silvery clearness, almost as if it were a mineral substance. . . .

^{AJ} It seems very significant that in order to produce this book that would open before the reader like a fruit, you proceeded a bit like nature does—that is, producing it, fabricating it, from the inside.

^{FG} Yes, because the idea was precisely to produce a *livro-objeto* [book-object] that might open like a fruit, and finally arrive at a center. And Lygia, who was thinking of her work as a living organism and seeking a manner to open out into space, found in these books a solution that was perfectly adapted to her visual problematic. So she joined the manipulable aspect of the book to that organic metaphor to achieve the result that her objects could open into space, and thus created her first *bichos*.

^{AJ} Everything would seem to indicate that Lygia found in this work a technical solution that was perfectly congruent with the need for opening that was already manifesting in her *contra-relevos* [counter-

reliefs] and *casulos*, an opening that was based as well in solutions reached by Russian Constructivists like Pevsner and Gabo.

^{FG} I wasn't the first person to make spatial work, nor did I invent the participation of spectators in the work, or the manipulable book. The book is and was always that way. What happened was that when Lygia saw my first *livros-poema*, she found a way out of the quagmire that had begun to bog down her painting. That way out consisted of creating a manipulable object, outside of painting, as occurs in my book.

^{AJ} I had interpreted her opening out into space as originating in the stratified body of her *contra-relevos* and *casulos*, an extrapictorial manifestation of what was happening previously in the space proposed by painting. That is, just as painting proposed a space of superimposition of supposedly transparent planes toward the interior of the canvas, in the same way, it opened out toward the exterior via the unfolding of those planes, a bit like a flower opening petal by petal.

^{FG} Yes, her process can be interpreted in a range of ways, but the cause, the origin, is this. In short, after making these first *livros-poema*, and especially after the third one, which is more of an object than a book, I shifted to space and began to construct my first *poemas-objeto* [Poem-objects]. The first one I made was titled "Ara" [Altar]. It's a white plank with a triangle that functions as a lid. When you lift that lid, you can read the word *Ara*, and when you close the lid, it once again returns to how it looked initially, totally white, except that now the reader has the consciousness that a word is inscribed under the lid. The next *poema-objeto* was titled

“Lembra” [Remember]; it’s a white square with a blue cube on top of it. When the cube is lifted, the reader discovers the word *Lembra*, such that when the cube is once again set in place, the word beneath it remains, as if it were pulsing there.



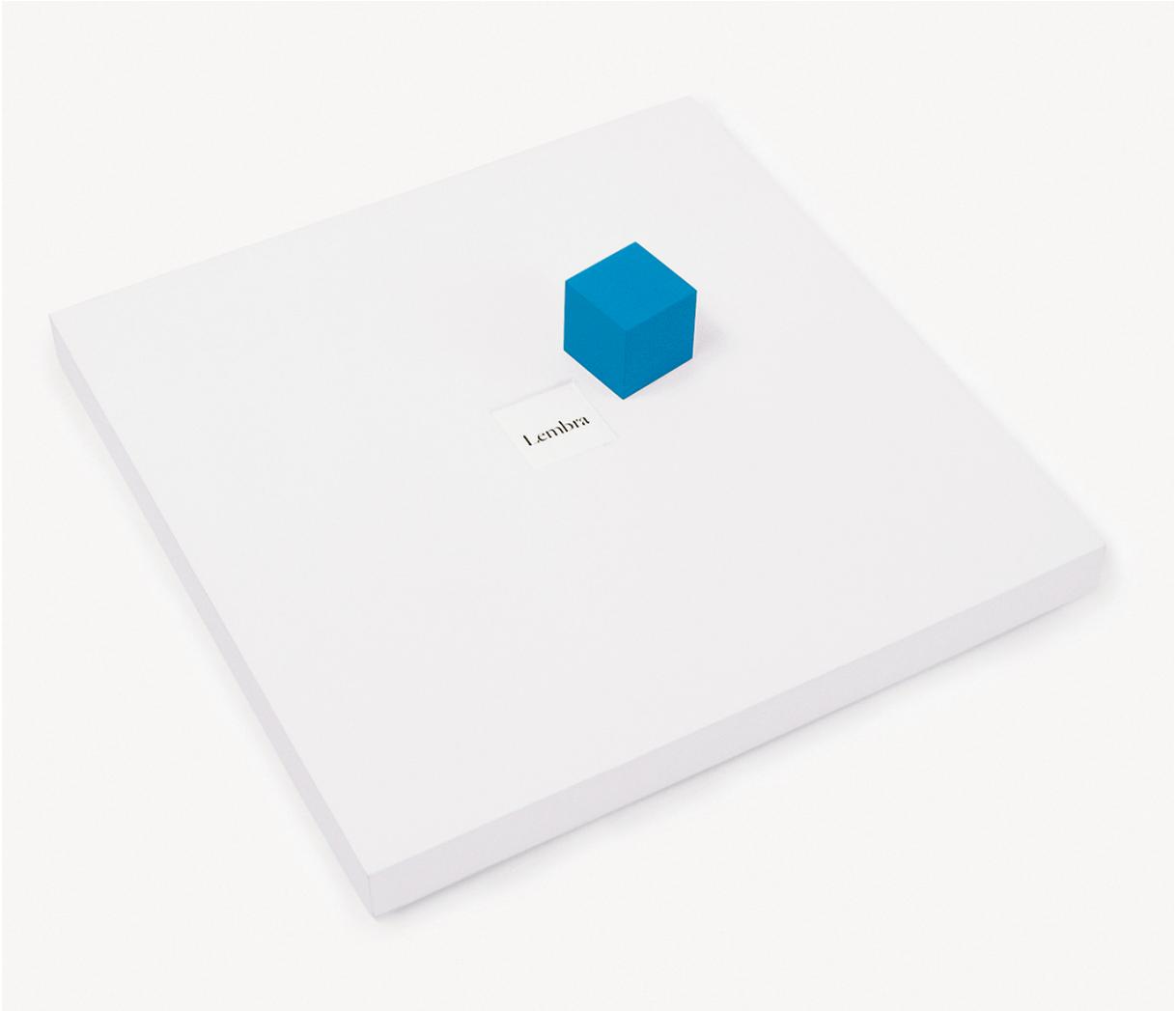
“Ara” [Altar]. Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 1959 (reconstruction, 2004)

[More info](#)

“Ara” [Altar]. Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 1959 (reconstruction, 2004)

Acrylic paint on wood and vinyl

30 × 30 × 4 cm (11 13/16 × 11 13/16 × 1 5/8 inches)
Acervo Paço Imperial—Centro Cultural do IPHAN/MinC



“Lembra” [Remember]. Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 1954
(reconstruction, 2004) [More info](#)

“Lembra” [Remember]. Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 1954
(reconstruction, 2004)

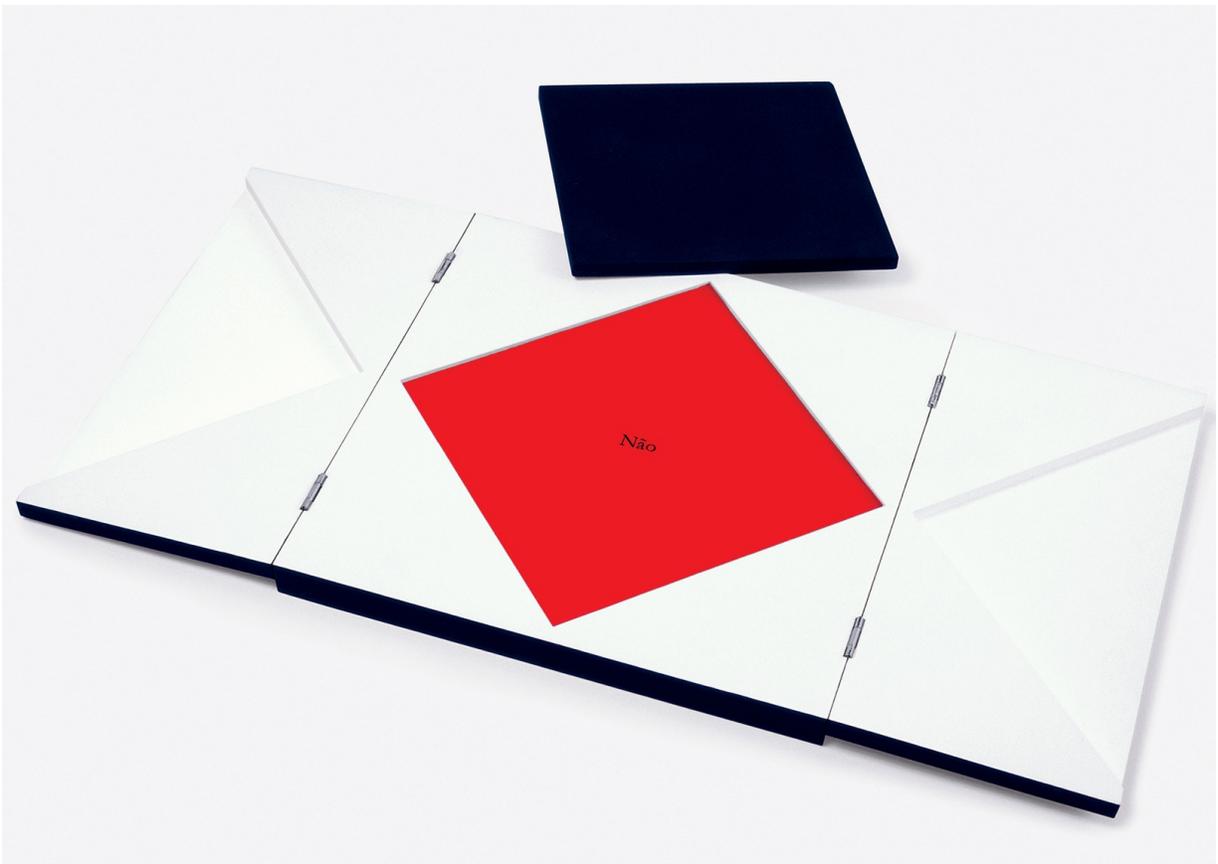
Acrylic paint on wood and vinyl

40 × 40 × 5 cm (15 11/16 × 15 11/16 × 2 inches)

Acervo Paço Imperial—Centro Cultural do IPHAN/MinC

^{AJ} Additionally, the word imprinted in our memory in this way asks us— quite precisely—to remember. This is a strategy that’s characteristic of Neoconcretism, to trap or introduce time as duration, as psychological tension.

^{FG} And that notion of time as something lived, as duration, is completely different from what occurred with Concrete artists, where time is manifested as a mechanical succession of acts. Consider, for example, this other livro-objeto, titled “Nãõ”. The title seems to be a word uttered by the object, not something imposed by the author. The first thing the reader observes is an impenetrable, closed black box. When the box is opened, the inside is white, as if the reader-participant had been able to penetrate something in the most intimate space of the object which then becomes partially transparent, with the exception of a black square inscribed on the diagonal at the center of the box. That black plane is not attached; it is a body in and of itself, and when it is removed, it reveals a red square where the word *Nãõ* is inscribed, as if it were the resistance of the other in the face of an attempt to penetrate his or her subconscious. That’s where the livro-poema ends, with that resistance, that refusal to say anything to us.



“Não” [No]. Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 1959 (reconstruction, 2004)
More info

“Não” [No]. Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 1959 (reconstruction, 2004)
30 × 30 × 4 cm (11 13/16 × 11 13/16 × 1 5/8 inches)
Acervo Paço Imperial—Centro Cultural do IPHAN/MinC

^{AJ} A bit like Lygia’s bichos, which create opposition via their weight or the complexity of their folds and movements.

^{FG} Exactly. After that I made this one, “O pássaro” [The Bird], which is a box with two white plates at the center. One of these, the upper one, is completely white and covers the second, which is inscribed with the *word pássaro*. Both plates are moveable and when they are

removed from the box it is as if the bird were escaping from its cage.



“O pássaro” [The Bird]. Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 1959
(reconstruction, 2004) [More info](#)

“O Pássaro” [The Bird], Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 1959
(reconstruction, 2004)

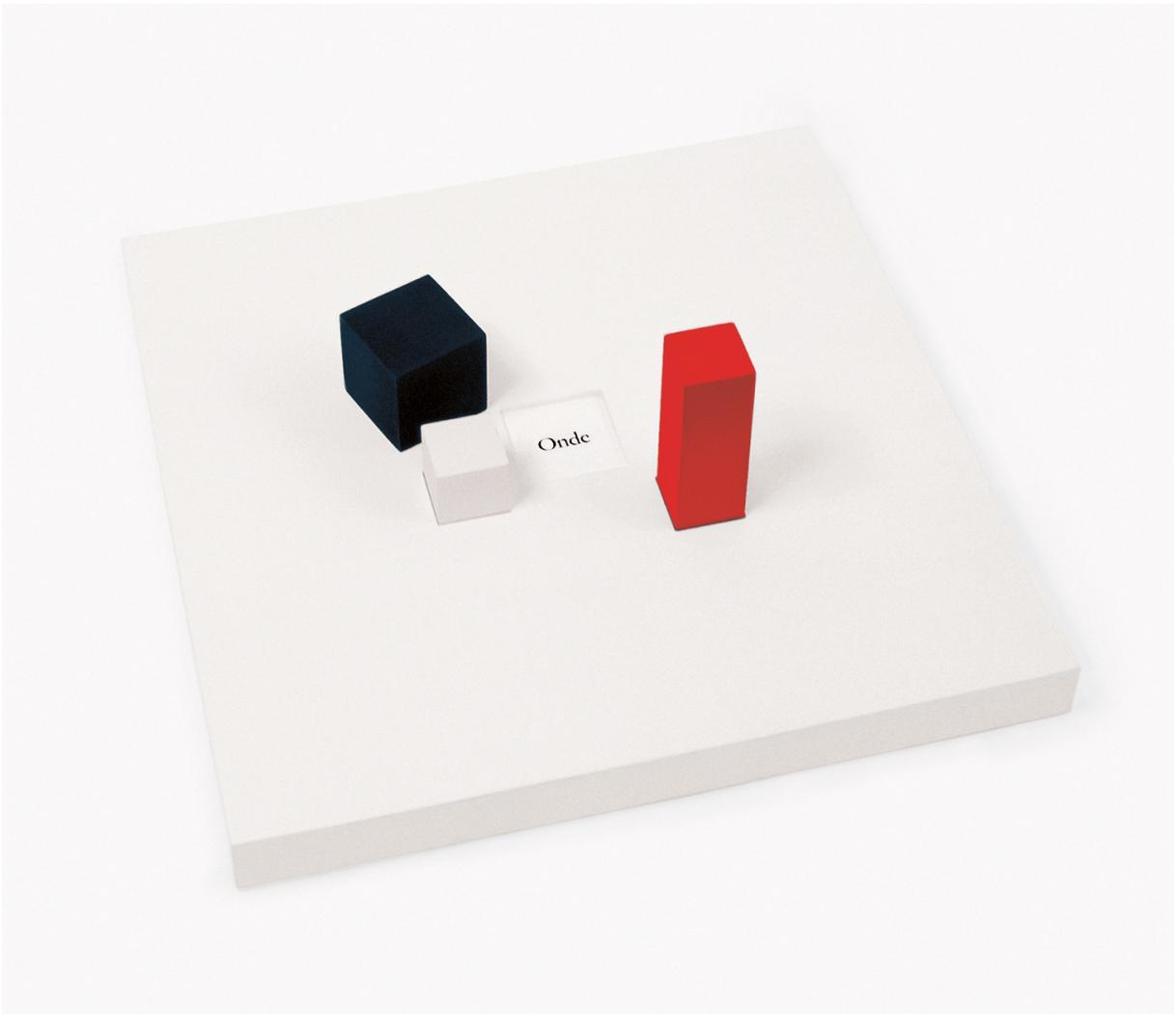
30 × 30 × 4 cm (11 13/16 × 11 13/16 × 1 5/8 inches)

Acervo Paço Imperial—Centro Cultural do IPHAN/MinC

^{AJ} And as if the word itself were being liberated.

^{FG} That’s true too. After that I continued exploring this interaction between the reader and the livro-objeto, and I made “Onde” [Where], in which instead of placing a single object, I placed three: one white, one black, and one red. In this specific instance only one of them is moveable, though the reader-participant doesn’t know which one can be moved. When the moveable cube is taken away,

after at least one, two, or three attempts, the word *Onde* can be read, and the place where it was hiding can be seen.



“Onde” [Where]. Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 1959 (reconstruction, 2004) [More info](#)

“Onde” [Where], Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 1959 (reconstruction, 2004)

40 × 40 × 10 cm (15 11/16 × 15 11/16 × 3 7/8 inches)

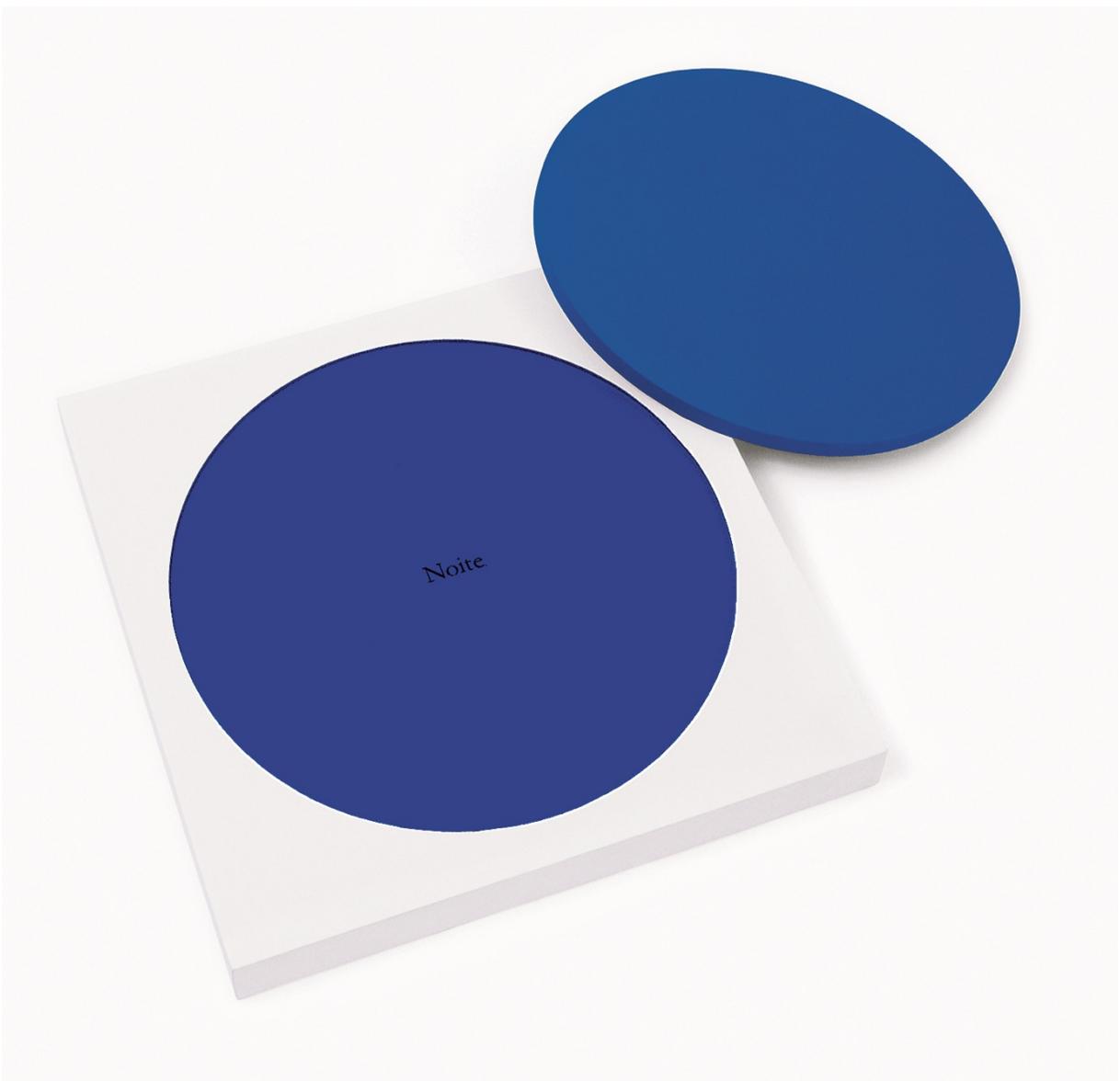
Acervo Paço Imperial—Centro Cultural do IPHAN/MinC

AJ

It's like an attempt to make the word and its meaning coincide. The word speaks of that which is found once the cube is removed, the space where the word is found. We might say it functions similarly to much of Modern art and Concrete art in particular, making the work into a nonrepresentative reality that nonetheless speaks to us of the world in which the work is inscribed, because it originates in a reflection about that world. Even the colors you use seem to have a direct connection to what is said.

FG

Sometimes, perhaps, as in the case of the poema-objeto I created next, "Noite" [Night], where the word's blue and black colors themselves might make us think of nocturnal darkness; in general, however, I work with my intuition as a guide. The colors don't have any explicit meaning. This was one of the last livros-objeto I made during that period. It's made of a blue circle on a white background. When the blue circle is removed, the reader finds another circle, of a slightly darker blue, at the center of which is written, in black, the word *Noite*. When these works were shown in an exhibit at the Paço Imperial [Imperial Palace] I wanted to make a new poema-objeto—more recently, that is—about five years ago. It's a white square with a small cube on it—also white—with lines that suggest a wrapping, as if what we had in front of us were a cube wrapped in white paper. In this case, when the cube is lifted, the word *Maravilha* [Wonder] appears underneath, and to one side of the cube that was placed on the white square, the same word would be written in Greek: *Paradoxon*. When I first learned that the Greek word for *wonder* was *paradoxon*, it made a huge impression on me and I wanted to make that into a poema-objeto, to gather that lovely paradox into that other paradox of the poem.⁴²



“Noite” [Night]. Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 1959 (reconstruction, 2004) [More info](#)

“Noite” [Night]. Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 1959 (reconstruction, 2004)

30 × 30 × 4 cm (11 13/16 × 11 13/16 × 1 5/8 inches)

Acervo Paço Imperial—Centro Cultural do IPHAN/MinC



“Paradoxon (maravilha)” [Paradox (Wonder)], Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 2004 [More info](#)

“Paradoxon (maravilha)” [Paradox (Wonder)], Poema-objeto [Poem-object], 2004

Acrylic paint on wood and vinyl

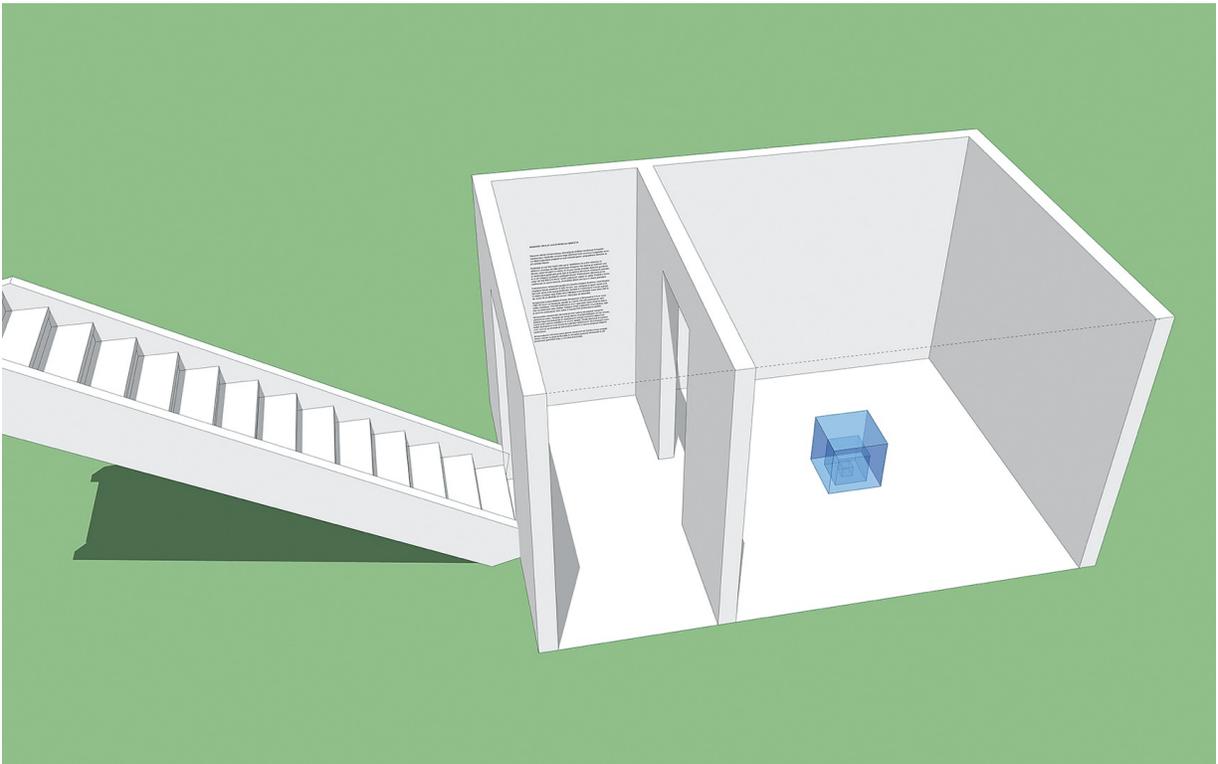
40 × 40 × 4 cm (15 11/16 × 15 11/16 × 1 5/8 inches)

Acervo Paço Imperial—Centro Cultural do IPHAN /MinC

^{AJ}

The process of passing into space that you describe in your poems, like the process that can be discerned in the works of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, is not a particularity that is exclusive to

Neoconcretism, but rather a characteristic shared by a wide range of artists over the course of the twentieth century. It was, we might say, one of the historical demands of Western art in its internal development. Now, it's clear that differences manifest in the ways each person responded to those demands—different textures, if you will, distinct from one another and distinctive. In your case, for instance, the work that concludes that historical process which then led to its final consequences was your “Poema enterrado,” one of the most important contributions Neoconcretism made to Western art, and also a defining experience.



Digital reconstruction of “Poema enterrado” [Buried Poem], 1959

^{FG}

This was a fundamental piece, because it represented the logical conclusion of my works in space, but also the end of that process of

experimentation. From that point forward, I considered my forays into that field concluded. The logical consequence of these experiences pointed to the genuine participation of the reader, beyond mere manipulation of the object. The idea was that the reader might enter the poem physically, in its center. To achieve this, I imagined a poem that could be a 3m x 3m room, and specifically that this room would be buried under the earth. Readers would access this room via a set of stairs, would open the door of the poem, and would enter into it. In the anteroom preceding the poem itself, the reader-visitor would find the instructions of what to do in order to activate the poem. Once inside the poem, reader-visitors would find a 50cm x 50cm red cube; once lifted, it would reveal a 30cm x 30cm green cube. Once the green cube was lifted, they would find a smaller, white cube that was 10cm x 10cm, and on the face of the cube that was touching the floor, the word *Rejuvenesça* [Rejuvenate]. Additionally, the reader-visitor would be asked to put the cubes back into place, and to spend a bit of extra time inside the poem. The aim was to activate time as duration, confronting the reader-visitor with the memory of that word that was now vibrating beneath the cubes.

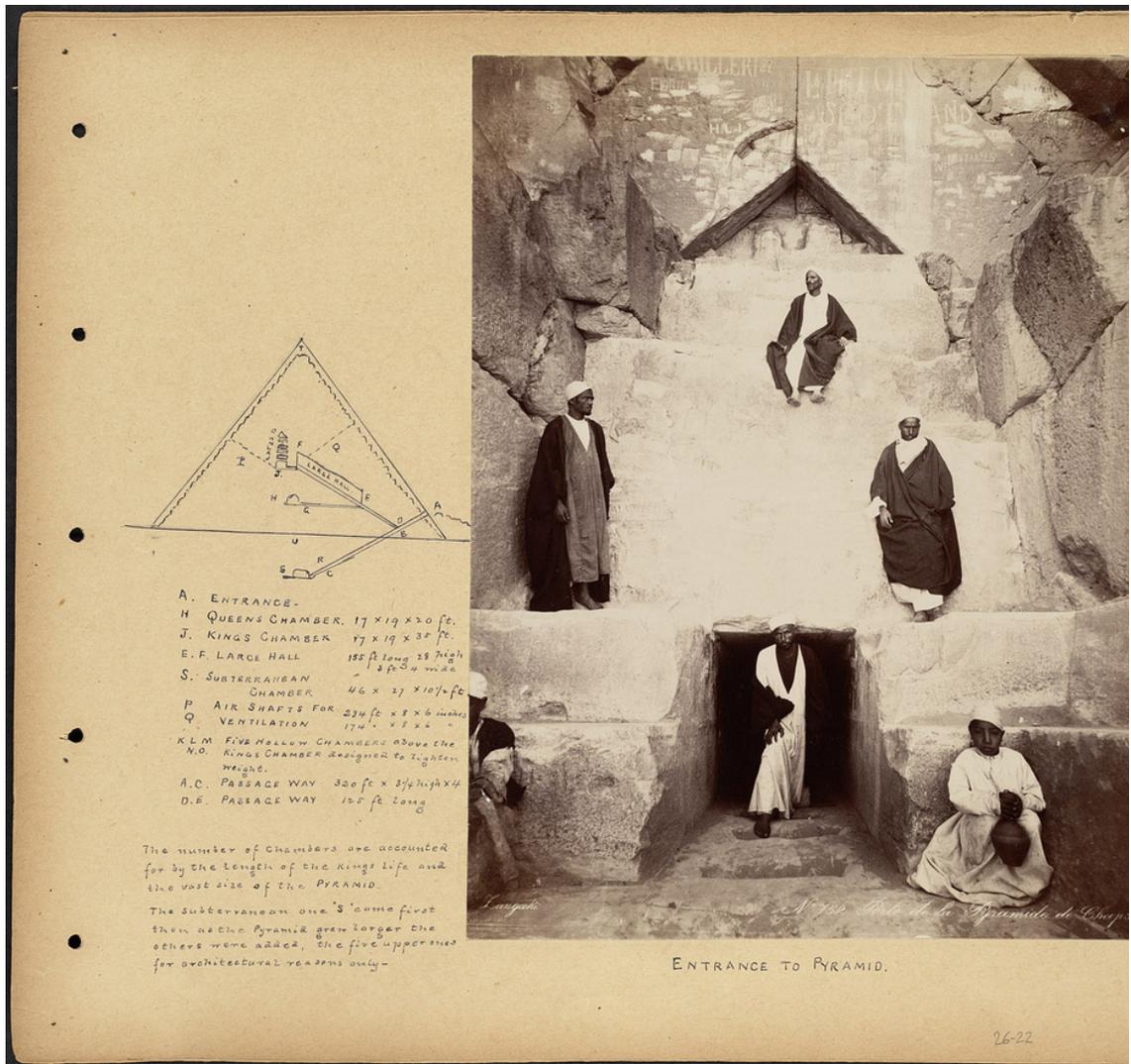
As it happened, toward the end of 1959, when I published my “Poema enterrado” project in the *Jornal do Brasil*, Hélio Oiticica’s father was building a house, very close to here, near the botanical garden. When Oiticica saw the project, he immediately called me and told me that he’d talk with his father so I could make the buried poem at the house he was building. And I told him it wouldn’t be possible, that his father would never accept, but he insisted. And it turned out that yes, he did speak with his father, who did indeed accept, and ended up building the “Poema enterrado” in a spot where he’d considered building a water tank. So one day, with the

poem already built at that very house which would later burn down,⁴³ I went to launch the project with all the major players of Neoconcretism. That day, in an unfortunate coincidence, it had rained for hours and when we got to the site, we found the poem had been completely flooded, the cubes floating in knee-deep water, and right there the event we'd planned—including the work itself—came to a halt.

^{AJ} I can't help seeing in that desire to sink into the earth a symbolic dimension that's characteristic of the modern. From John Ruskin's writings on Turner to the Neoimpressionists, and from there to Cubism and beyond, the concept of a return to the earliest stages of culture—to the childlike and the primitive—as a condition necessary in order to gain access to the new, is a recurring theme. It's not entirely insignificant that the last cube, the one where the word *Rejuvenesça* could be read, should be specifically the cube that was white—the color of purity.

^{FG} My initial intention was to have the reader-participant enter the poem physically—that was my starting point. It's true that I was also influenced by the memory of the Egyptian pyramids, with those tombs buried deep in an enormous mass of stone. They were funereal monuments, to be sure, but they were also a guarantee of resurrection for the pharaohs, a condition for their existence beyond death. It's something I owe to my conception of art and life, as well. I don't believe that art should constantly confront us with human disgrace, at least not without offering us a way out, a hope. That's why I detest Samuel Beckett's writing, because despite being a tremendously intelligent man, full of talent, he never leaves us an open door. His works offer only and exclusively the spectacle

of human misery, when art, for me, like any product of the intelligence, should help us to live, to face sickness, pain and death. Our biological evolution didn't provide us with intelligence to make us into enlightened beings, and much less to search out death, but rather to help us to resolve the problems we face, to survive. Hence my poetry, and all my work, collects evidence of pain—it's true—as something that forms part of life, but always offers a way out. It's not a foolish optimism, because everyone who experiences the adventure of being human is familiar with pain and death, and we suffer from them, but deep down we aspire to happiness.



Six men positioned around the entrance to the Cheops Pyramid in Egypt. The page also includes a labeled diagram showing the interior chambers and passageways of the pyramid, and their dimensions, ca. 1860-1890

[More info](#)

Reflections like these, applied as well to Brazil's political and social circumstances, led me to question the pertinence of the poetry I'd been creating. My "Poema enterrado" was in fact a defining experience in which I was working at the edges of

language, and at the same time was beginning to wonder if it made sense to continue, as a poet, along that path.

^{AJ} Because it would end up being a kind of dissolution of poetry.

^{FG} Exactly, my poem was a room buried in the ground, an architectural structure that included just a single word, and I was beginning to wonder if that was the path I should follow. Was I going to continue constructing architectural spaces and objects I didn't even have a place to store? In the end, I began to question the path I'd taken and I wound up moving away from all that. I had an intuition that such a path would end up getting in the way of my being the poet I was, that it would get in the way of continuing with my work, with what I wanted to say, and would turn me into a visual artist—something I didn't want to be.

All this produced a conflict within me and I began to question everything, so much so that I ended up proposing to Hélio—half in jest and half seriously—that we should carry out a terrorist act. The idea consisted of distributing our pieces throughout the city, in the wee hours, so that when people woke up they would find these strange objects scattered through the streets, in the parks and public spaces. Hélio thought that would be utterly crazy, that it wouldn't help us at all. Then, in the same spirit, I proposed that we should organize an exhibition that would open at 5 p.m. and close at 6 p.m. Each object would have a bomb underneath it and at 6 p.m. we would tell the audience that they should leave the room, and at that moment the bombs would explode, thus ending the show. We didn't do that, obviously, but the very fact that I had imagined the possibility demonstrated my state of mind and the vision I had of

those avant-garde experiments. In the end, I wound up distancing myself from everything— from my artist friends, and from art itself.

Mário Xavier de Andrade Pedrosa (1900–81). One of the most influential Brazilian critics during the second half of the twentieth century. As a theorist and defender of the Concrete movement, he had remarkable influence on visual artists of his time, as well as on Ferreira Gullar's intellectual development.

A Semana de Arte Moderna [The Modern Art Week] had a seminal influence on the development of modernist ideas in Brazil during the first half of the twentieth century. Visual artists, poets, critics and musicians organized a range of different cultural events on the thirteenth, fifteenth and seventeenth of February 1922. That week is regarded as the official launchpad of Brazilian Modernism. Ideas derived from German Expressionism, French Cubism and Surrealism, and Italian Futurism served as starting points for a broad movement that was nationalist in spirit.

José Oswald de Sousa Andrade Nogueira (1890–1954), known as Oswald de Andrade: Brazilian writer and essayist, one of the principal activists of *A Semana de Arte Moderna*. He wrote a number of texts that are fundamental to Brazilian Modern art, among them the “Manifesto da poesia Pau-Brasil” from 1924, and the highly influential “Manifesto antropófago” from 1928, undoubtedly one of the most important Latin American artistic manifestos.

Mário Raul de Moraes Andrade (1893–1945) was an important poet, novelist, and critic of Brazilian Modernism. He figured prominently among the main activists of the 1922 *Semana de Arte Moderna*. Among his most influential works are *Paulicéia desvairada*, 1922; *Losango cáqui*, 1926; *Macunaíma*, 1928; and *Lira paulistana*, 1945.

Mário de Andrade, “El movimiento modernista,” in *Arte y arquitectura del modernismo brasileño* (Caracas: Ed. Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1978), 197.

Oswald de Andrade, “Manifesto antropófago,” in *Obra escogida* (Caracas: Ed. Fundación Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1981), 68, 71.

Hélio Oiticica, “Tropicalia,” in *Hélio Oiticica* (Rotterdam: Hélio Oiticica Project, the National Gallery Jeu de Paume in Paris, and the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1992), 124.

Tarsila do Amaral (1886–1973) was a Brazilian painter and designer from the first phase of the Modern movement in Brazil. Her paintings, of a surrealist nature during the twenties, integrate Brazilian native and popular motifs. Her work titled *Abaporú* (“man who eats” in Tupi-Guaraní), from 1928, inspired Oswald de Andrade in his writing of the Cannibal Manifesto.

Max Bill (1908–94), a Swiss visual artist and industrial designer, had considerable influence on the origin and development of Concretism, as well as on the high profile of the Brazilian Advanced School of Industrial Design. In 1951, during the First São Paulo Biennial, he won the Sculpture Prize and became a central reference point for Concrete artists.

Oiticica, “Aspiro ao Grande Laberinto,” in *Hélio Oiticica*, 42.

Cândido Torquato Portinari (1903–62), Brazilian visual artist. His painting, often of a surrealist or oneiric bent, primarily addresses subject matter of a popular or nativist nature: workers, peasants, and inhabitants of marginal areas of the country.

See Ferreira Gullar, *Etapas da arte contemporânea. Do cubismo à arte neoconcreta* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed.Revan, 1999).

Ferreira Gullar, “Lygia Clark—Uma experiência radical,” in *Etapas da arte contemporânea*, 269–82.

Phenomenology insists precisely on the necessity of approaching the world in terms of its sense-based appearance—that is, in terms of things precisely as they present themselves to us through our senses. It is to this methodological demand of phenomenology that Ferreira Gullar refers.

Ferreira Gullar, “Vanguarda e subdesenvolvimento,” in *Cultura posta em questão. Vanguarda e subdesenvolvimento: ensaios sobre arte* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 2006), 216.

A selection of poems from this book would be the first of his books to be translated into another language. The edition was made in Caracas by FUNDARTE, with translations into Spanish by Santiago Keradloff, in 1977, under the title *La lucha corporal y otros incendios*.

To gain an idea of Ferreira Gullar’s poetic reference points and the position he takes regarding them, see Gullar, *Cultura posta em questão*. See the second chapter in particular: “Vanguarda e subdesenvolvimento,” 201–27.

By “a kind of colonial thinking” we might understand specifically the tendency to accept that there exists a response to all our concerns, and that it is solely via the knowledge manufactured by others, in another place and another time, that we might develop an approach to our own experience in relation to the world. It is the imagination that our perception of what is real has no validity unless it is legitimated by those faraway others.

As is common in many poems of this period, the title is a verbal invention that uses familiar words that have either been totally or partially transformed or their meanings have been broken open by the author.

Ferreira Gullar, *Crime na flora* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 1986), 3.

Gullar, *Crime na flora*, 25.

The first poemas-objeto were constructed by Ferreira Gullar himself in a rudimentary way, and according to their author, all of them disappeared. The only ones that exist currently are the ones constructed for the exhibition at the Paço Imperial, which now form part of the

permanent collection there, and an edition of five copies that was made and sold by a gallery in São Paulo.

On the night of October 16, 2009, a fire destroyed part of the archives and some of the works stored at the Oiticica family home. Ferreira Gullar notes what for him is an odd coincidence, that Oiticica's work should be incinerated in the same place where, years before, his "Poema enterrado" was destroyed by a flood.

A link to the full-text book can be found in the links page at the end of this book.

Taken from Guillaume Apollinaire's
Calligrammes: Poèmes de la paix et la guerre (1913-1916),
published in Paris, 1918
(Mercure de France)

Accessed from Internet Archive

<http://archive.org/details/calligrammespo00apol>

Apollinaire's calligrams are undoubtedly a reference for the concrete and neoconcrete poets in Brazil and Latin America. However, Ferreira Gullar's "O formigueiro" has clear differences from the work of his French predecessor. Each *Caligrama* is a work in itself, an autonomous poem-image, while in the case of Gullar the poem is written and drawn from one page to another. New letters are added on each successive page and highlighted in bold, creating the psychological tension from page to page that is among the main characteristics of neoconcrete poetry and of neoconcretism in general.

Tupper Scrapbooks Collection, Boston Public Library.

Under Flickr Creative Commons:

http://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/2468306447

Like the pharaonic tombs that Gullar cites as among his references, *Poema enterrado* is presented as a space for both memory and hope. However, the experience that is offered to the viewer is neither placed

in the future nor in an extraterrestrial space, but rather in the very present of the reader-participant. Upon entering this buried poem, the viewer encounters a single word—Rejuvenate!—and his own face reflected in the mirror. We are not invited to leave our destiny in the hands of the gods, but to renew our experience of the world here and now.

BRASILIA CHANGED MY MIND

Art in Service of the People

In 1959, “Poema enterrado” concluded a process of experimentation that was one of the richest contributions Neoconcretism made to Western art. Further, it achieved this in a particular way: its accidental destruction destined it to be a “definitively unfinished” work, however involuntarily, like Duchamp’s Large Glass—or in any case a work whose completion would remain postponed indefinitely. Additionally, following this project a profound and radical change took place within Ferreira Gullar, in terms of his conception of art and the work a Latin American intellectual should undertake. From that point forward, he gradually distanced himself from the movements he’d taken part in forming, until he became fervently opposed to the avant-garde movement.

^{FG} My distancing from avant-garde movements began a bit later, when I was invited to work in Brasilia. That was when things really changed for me. It all started in 1961, when the new president, Jânio da Silva Quadros,⁴⁴ took power on January 31, 1961. At that point I was invited to work as Director of the Fundação Cultural de Brasilia [Brasilia Cultural Foundation], and I accepted. Given the situation I was in at the time, I thought this might be an omen of something new. Additionally, on a personal level, I didn’t have a clear idea of what to do or where to go, because I had destroyed my language for a third time. First, when I discovered modern poetry, I broke with the Parnassian world in which my work had initially developed. Later, with Neoconcretism, I abandoned the modern universe. Now I had broken with Neoconcrete concerns, which in my understanding had arrived at an unsalvageable limit; I didn’t know what to do. In Brasilia, I experienced different situations: I was in the country’s new capital,⁴⁵ and I discovered the social problems that were part of people’s life experience there. I was close to power; I had a relationship with the mayor, the president of the Republic, and the Congress. The political reality became more important. It was in the midst of these circumstances that I began to reflect on my activities as an intellectual and as a poet.

^{AJ} It’s intriguing that each important change in your work is preceded or followed by a geographic displacement within Brazil.

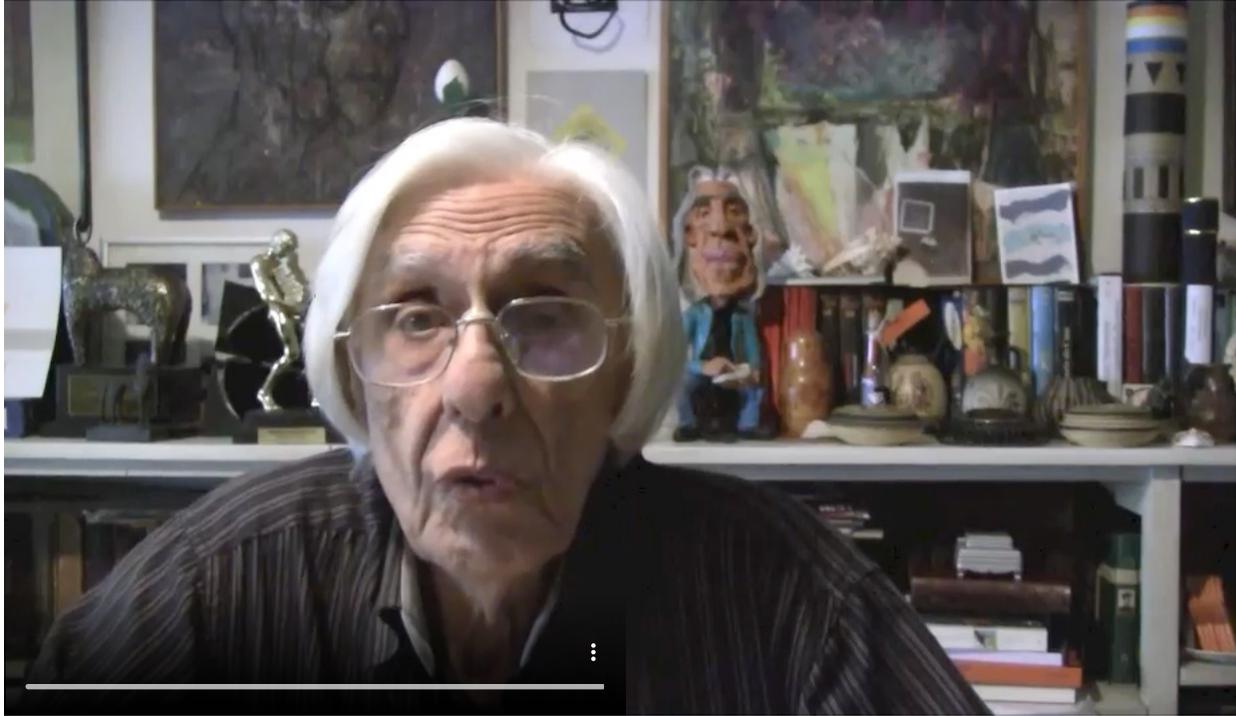
^{FG} Perhaps, though that’s not the determining factor. That radical upheaval coincided with my move to Brasilia, but it would have occurred in any case, because I had already been distancing myself from avant-garde movements. I had accepted that my experience in that territory had exhausted itself, and what occurred would have happened in Brasilia, in Rio de Janeiro or in any other place. The problem was internal. What happened, also, is that in Brasilia I read a book titled *The Thought of Karl Marx*, by a French Catholic priest, Jean-Yves Calvez. He wrote the book when the French Catholic Church was divided between the representatives of a traditional Catholic doctrine, and a new Church that wanted to participate in social struggles. The first part of the book was a genuine analysis of Marx’s thought, and the second part demonstrated the impossibility, for a Catholic, of converting to Marxism. Except that since I’m not religious, I read only the first part and became a Marxist. As odd as it might seem, that’s precisely how it happened: a book written in opposition to Marxism made me into a Marxist. In any case, from whichever angle one might observe the situation, there was no turning back from my distancing from Neoconcretism. Of that much I was clear, and any path I might have taken would have led me far from those avant-garde movements.

^{AJ} And Marxism, of course, gave you access to specific goals and tools for struggle, and also made your work part of an international movement that would have an enormous impact all over Latin America and in many places around the world.

^{FG} In reality, the only thing that book did was to expand my vision of the country. It led me to comprehend the necessity of a social transformation for Brazil. To see Brazilian society from the vantage point of an angle I had not perceived before. So I began to feel sympathetic toward the social struggles that were taking place, like agrarian reform, for instance. I wasn't suddenly transformed into a revolutionary who sets out to draw up action plans. I simply began to see my country from a different perspective. I realized that the social problems of the moment had much more significance than I had imagined. When I returned to Rio, in October of 1961, after President Quadros resigned, I went to work at the Centro Popular de Cultura [CPC; Popular Culture Center], part of the União Nacional dos Estudantes [UNE; National Students' Union], a recently created organization that addressed social problems and proposed to contribute to the struggle by raising consciousness among the people, and among workers in particular.

My People, My Poem

*My people and my poem grow as one
as the new tree
grows within the fruit
My poem is being born in people
the way sugar ripens green
in fields of cane
My poem is growing ripe in people
like the sun
in the throat of their future
My people in my poem
are mirrored
in the way the corn takes root in fertile ground
To my people I return their poem
less as one who sings
as one who plants.⁴⁶*



Ferreira Gullar reading his poem “Meu povo, meu poema,” Rio de Janeiro, 2012

^{AJ} And it's clear that you were dreaming of the possibility of starting a Cuban-style revolution in Brazil.

^{FG} Yes, but at first it was others who were dreaming of that. I joined the CPC after I understood that it was necessary to transform Brazilian society. Little by little, I became increasingly involved in socialist ideas and I also began to think that we should establish socialism in Brazil when the time came, though I still had not joined the Communist Party. In the CPC, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho,⁴⁷ or Vianinha, asked me to write a theater piece about agrarian reform. What he wanted, more or less, was for me to write a *poema de cordel*⁴⁸ as a thread that would join the various elements. That's how I wrote “João Boa-Morte,⁴⁹ cabra marcado pra morrer” [João Boa-Morte, A Guy Marked for Death]. In the end, the theater piece was never performed and my poem remained as an independent composition. Regardless, I had a very clear vision and understanding of literature, such that when I created that poem I was conscious that I was utilizing my literary knowledge in order to raise political consciousness of the people. I wasn't making literature, but rather it was politics.

*I'm going to recount for you
a tale that occurred
in Paraíba do Norte
with a man who was called
Pedro João Boa-morte,
a farm-worker from Chapadinha:
perhaps his death will be a good one
because his life was not.*

*It happened in Paraíba
but it's an everyday story*

*all over the Northeast.
It could have been in Sergipe,
Pernambuco or Maranhão,
because every cabra da peste⁵⁰
there is called João
Boa-morte, not good-life.⁵¹*

As often happens, reality didn't quite fit with what we had anticipated in theory. For example, when we would go to the unions to perform our political theater and we'd wind up alone, with just the communists, I realized something wasn't working right. Were we making a revolution just for communists? Were we preaching Communism to the choir? We wanted to make art for the people, but what if the people were turning away from our declarations? Something was wrong. If we were creating bad literature and rudimentary theater pieces in order to be closer to the people, and people were leaving, then what we were doing wasn't working. Even before the coup I had begun to question the methods we had been using. Perhaps I didn't have a very clear idea of what was happening, on a theoretical level, but I did observe that in real-world experience, in terms of my political practice, something was going wrong. I discussed it with my colleagues, especially with Vianinha, and I realized that they too had perceived the problem. Two years later, on March 31, 1964, the coup d'état occurred and did away with everything. It did away with the CPC and the left-wing organizations, so I was left on my own, without a space for struggle. That was when I joined the Communist Party, which was a fairly structured clandestine organization.

Immediately after the coup we met to organize the resistance to the dictatorship. We needed a structure that would allow us to provide our cause with a legal public presence, and this was precisely what Grupo Opinião [Opinion Group] offered us: a legitimate, lawful theater where we could express our ideas about the social realities of the country. The first show was performed in December of 1964, about a year after the coup. It was a musical show titled *Opinião* [Opinion]—the name of the group came from the show—with Zé Kéti,⁵² João do Vale⁵³ and Nara Leão,⁵⁴ directed by Augusto Boal.⁵⁵ The following year Millôr Fernandes⁵⁶ and Flávio Rangel⁵⁷ presented *Liberdade, Liberdade* [Freedom, Freedom], once again with great success with audiences. This was a piece that did not hide the critiques we were making of the dictatorship, and it immediately gave rise to uneasiness among the authorities. Their concern must have been very significant, since they even went so far as to organize an attack against us inside the theater. Their intention was not to murder anyone in the audience, of course, though the situation could have turned quite dangerous if we hadn't discovered it in time. When I was told that one single person had bought forty tickets, I surmised that this was an act planned by government agents in order to sabotage our performance. I immediately called Hélio Fernandes, director of the newspaper *Tribuna da imprensa*. He knew the vice-governor, who intervened and sent for reinforcements to increase the police presence on the premises of the theater. Even though the police were a branch of the government, it would have been unlikely for them to deny protection to the public. The day of the performance, while Paulo Autran was onstage, someone from the audience yelled: "Shut your mouth, you Communist!" and the atmosphere began to grow very strange. Other spectators told him to shut up or applauded by way of protest. A great hubbub ensued, which caused the police to intervene, in particular when we found a homemade bomb in the bathroom. It was a delicate situation for the government agents, as the police were obliged to detain them and disarm them, accusing them publicly. The agents of the regime were not discouraged and continued to exert pressure on us, through censorship, mutilating many of our texts and even banning some of them.

Meanwhile, in April 1966, we presented a piece that I wrote together with Vianinha: *Se correr o bicho pega, si ficar o bicho come* [If You Run the Beast Will Get You, If You Stay the Beast Will Eat You]. Paulo Pontes, a young *paraibano* who formed part of our group, suggested the title. When we were discussing the title we should give to the work, he suggested using that expression, which was very popular in the Brazilian northeast. It was a fairly broad text whose plot unfolded in the interior of the country and addressed the problems related to the large agricultural plantations and social divisions in Brazil. At root, it expressed what we were proposing before the coup—that is, the transformation of Brazilian society and in particular the end of the rural aristocracy, of the plantation system and of the retrograde power that dominated politics and had allied itself with the military.

^{AJ} At the same time, with these pieces, you wanted to achieve better literary quality.

^{FG} The change occurred even before, and continued later during my exile. It was approximately from 1964 on that my poetry began to take on a different dimension, particularly after I wrote the poem titled “Dentro da noite veloz” [In the Swift Night] which is a poem about Che Guevara, and was a considerably complex literary experience. Also “Por você por mim” [For You for Me], which was still a political poem, because it addressed the problem of Vietnam, but with a more involved elaboration in which I even engage certain experiences of vocabulary. This is where the reconstruction of my poetic language began, finally resulting in the book *Dentro da noite veloz*, in which I compiled the poems I’d created between 1962 and 1975, just before “Poema sujo,” the poem I wrote in Argentina in 1975, during my exile.

^{AJ} It was in the midst of these political diatribes that you wrote an essay that was undeniably polemical: *Cultura posta em questão* [*Culture in Dispute*],⁵⁸ in which you attempt to theorize precisely the use of art as a political tool.



Ferreira Gullar in João Lisboa Plaza in São Luís, reciting his text *Cultura posta em questão* [*Culture in Dispute*], March, 1964

^{FG} Yes, that's a book I wrote during a period of great personal doubt and enormous conflicts on the social level. It's important to remember that I wrote it just before the 1964 coup and parallel to those first exercises through which we were hoping to reach the people with fairly mediocre compositions. It's a text written in the heat of the moment, in which I attempt to theorize the personal factors that led me to break with the avant-garde and in which, on the other hand, I sought to explain the reasons that for me justified—and even demanded—the use of artistic tools in the service of ideological struggle. It is thus a book that is *engagé*, as they'd say in France, and even proselytizing. That commitment to political struggle leads to certain restrictions to which I no longer subscribe today. Nonetheless, I believe the book can be read as an important testimony of a moment and a political position. It was an extraordinary juncture in which artists attempted to conceive of the real Brazil. Additionally, the essay had considerable influence among theater people, poets, composers, and filmmakers.

Later, in 1969, after calmer reflection and as a result of our contact with audiences, I published a second book titled *Vanguarda e subdesenvolvimento*. Unlike the first publication, in which I condemned *en masse* any artistic manifestation that is not politically committed, in this second essay I recognized the need for a relative autonomy of aesthetic expression. Even so, I did not come to think that individual expression could be completely disconnected from one's concrete material reality, and in particular from social conflicts. I wrote from a revolutionary Marxist perspective, and addressed the problem of avant-gardes in their adaptation—or not—to the Brazilian context. Hence I sought to demonstrate that Brazil was being dominated by an international avant-garde that was alien to it. In my understanding, the problem was an imported avant-garde that was undermining autonomous aesthetic activity in the country. I defended the idea that if these avant-gardes had their *raison d'être* in Paris or New York, then the reasons they existed weren't necessarily the same as they would be in Brazil; I argued that the world would be more culturally enriched if each country were to develop its own aesthetic experience, instead of continuing to imitate what was occurring in the great Western capitals.

^{AJ} And nonetheless, Neoconcretism, as an avant-garde, was among the first autonomous manifestations in Brazil.

^{FG} Yes, without a doubt, Neoconcretism was avant-garde, but it was our own, created in Brazil; it was neither a copy nor an importation of aesthetic criteria imagined in another place to respond to needs that were different from ours. Today, of course, I have a different perspective on those events, and my political position is also very distinct from the one I held in those years.



Protest march against censorship in Brazil, 1968 More info
 Protest march against censorship in Brazil, 1968
 ©Arquivo Nacional, Ministerio da Justiça, RJ, Brasil

Jânio da Silva Quadros (1917–92), twenty-second president of Brazil, assumed the presidency of the country on January 31, 1961 and resigned from the job due to pressure from military leaders on August 25, 1961.

Construction began for the city of Brasília in October of 1956, initiated by President Juscelino Kubitschek and conceived by the urban planner Lucio Costa with significant participation from the architect Oscar Niemeyer, who designed the main buildings in the city, which was inaugurated on April 21, 1960.

Ferreira Gullar, “Meu Povo, Meu Poema,” in *Toda poesia*, 155.

Oduvaldo Vianna Filho (1936–74), also known as Vianinha, was a Brazilian playwright, actor, and theater director. His primary works, among others, included *A mão na louva*, *Allegro desbum* and *Rasga coração*.

Literatura de cordel [Cordel Literature or String/Cord Literature] is a type of popular poetry, originally an oral form, and later written on folded sheets of paper and sold hanging from cords or strings—hence the name. These works were very popular in Spain and Portugal from the time of the Middle Ages. They came to Brazil via Portugal during the nineteenth century. They were rhymed compositions, usually in 10-line or 6-line stanzas.

The last name *Boa-Morte* means Good-Death in Portuguese.

Cabra da peste is a popular expression in the northeast of Brazil; it might be translated as “evil guy.”

Ferreira Gullar, “João Boa-Morte. Cabra marcado pra morrer,” in *Toda poesia*, 111. (Translator’s note: This poem rhymes in Portuguese; I have not reproduced the rhyme in this translation.)

Performance pseudonym of José Flores de Jesús (1921–99), Brazilian samba singer and composer.

João Batista do Vale (1934–96) was a musician, singer, and composer originally from Maranhão, the state where Ferreira Gullar was born.

Nara Lofego Leão (1942–89) was a Brazilian bossa nova singer, and later a performer of political protest songs.

Augusto Boal (1931–2009) was a Brazilian director, playwright, and essayist. Founder of the Theater of the Oppressed, a method that attempts to popularize theater through games and exercises. Its principal idea was that the popular classes would be able to make use of the techniques and means of production used in theater.

Millôr Fernandes (1924) is a Brazilian draftsman, humorist, playwright, and writer.

Flávio Nogueira Rangel (1934–88) was an important Brazilian theater director, set designer, and journalist. He was director of the Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia [Brazilian Comedy Theater], one of the most prestigious companies in the country.

A significant portion of the first edition was burned by the Brazilian military at the offices of the UNE, after the coup d'état in 1964.

UTOPIA AND REALITY

The Paths of Exile

^{AJ} In the face of that predicament, in any case, you devoted yourself to political struggle and turned that conflict into the central axis of your literary activity— with greater or lesser literary quality. We've already seen what you and your colleagues at the CPC, and later at the Teatro Opinião [Opinion Theater], were doing. These were activities that were clearly of a political nature and they surely irritated the regime, though the repression hadn't become so strong that you felt obliged to go underground.

^{FG} It's clear that the coup mobilized many people in the cultural sectors. People working in theater, visual artists, writers, poets—they all openly demonstrated against the coup, such that the military regime became increasingly more aggressive. It took longer than in Chile or Argentina—some four years— but in the end it wound up being very aggressive as well. My activities and my political position were known publicly and the regime followed my every step as they surely did with a great number of people. The first time they personally attacked me, I was living in Ipanema. Soldiers from the army came into my house and began to search everything, even though my wife, Thereza, demanded that they show her an official document authorizing them to enter a private residence. They didn't pay any attention to her at all, as you might expect, and they did their work with no legal authorization. Though they didn't find anything compromising during the raid,

they did take the manuscript of a book that was about to be published, *Do Cubismo à Arte Neoconcreta* [*From Cubism to Neoconcrete Art*]. I tried to argue that this was a book about art, but the name seemed suspicious to them and they took it anyway. I'm sure they thought that Cubism undoubtedly had something to do with Cuba!

The dictatorship was in its early stages, but the incident was nonetheless a warning, a gesture intended to intimidate me. The second time was more serious, because it occurred the same day as Institutional Act N° 5 on December 13, 1968. That Institutional Act marked the beginning of a systematic and aggressive repression. They arrested hundreds of people and the dictatorship took the same repressive measures they always did. On that occasion they held me for three weeks, from December 13 until January 2. I hadn't yet gone underground; that occurred later, in 1970. I was obliged to do this on the recommendation of the Communist Party. I had been elected director of the Party on the state level, in Rio de Janeiro, and that radically changed my position in relation to the military regime. The Party position in itself wasn't a draw for me—it was completely alien to me, because I had never been a militant. A series of circumstances, however, led to my being elected. I was just an intellectual who had adopted Marxist ideas and who found the Party to be a good vehicle for resistance against the dictatorship. The Communist Party in Brazil was a fairly mature organization that had overcome the sectarianism of Stalinism, and had even supported Nikita Krushchev when he gave that speech that split the international communist movement in two.⁵⁹ The result was that the reformist movements distanced themselves from the Stalinists—among them the Partido Comunista do Brasil [Communist Party of Brazil], which stopped

using that name and instead was called the Partido Comunista Brasileiro [Brazilian Communist Party]. I was empathetic toward that opening of the Party, but I waited to join until immediately after the coup. Until that day I had avoided all militancy, because I was always very independent in my way of thinking, and I was afraid that this tendency would generate conflicts if I worked within a partisan structure. The circumstances imposed by the coup, however, forced me to do it. It just so happened that in that moment an idea arose in the Party to launch an armed struggle to confront the dictatorship, and that ignited many arguments. Carlos Marighella and Mário Alves, two Party leaders, had come to the conclusion that only armed combat would allow us to act efficiently against the military regime.



Photograph used for a clandestine passport, c. 1971

On a dark and rainy night, Mário Alves, who was a personal friend, invited me to a secret conversation at the Teatro Opinião. It was him, a female friend of his, and me. During this meeting, Mário gave me a document to read that defended the Cultural Revolution in China, armed struggle, and a whole range of irresponsibilities with which I did not agree. I gave him back the text and explained that I was in total disagreement with what they were attempting to do.

“Why?” he asked me.

“Because it’s simply foolish,” I responded, “to imagine that a group of unarmed individuals might challenge the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force together with more than twenty military police—with which arms? With how many combatants?” I remember I even joked with him, telling him that if I had to challenge a boxer, it wouldn’t be in the ring. I said that if the boxer were to try to argue poetry with me, he was the one who was making a mistake, and if I were the person to challenge a boxer, in that case I would be the one making the mistake. In the end, after my meeting with him, I informed the Party of our conversation, and since the difference in opinions was intensifying, they decided to invite me to join the state directorate as a way to strengthen the faction that was opposed to the use of arms. I told them that this type of position didn’t interest me, that I wasn’t good at it, to which they responded by arguing that we were only talking about an emergency situation, and I wound up accepting. The result of this whole affair is that when they arrested one of the leaders of the Party they tortured him barbarically, and he gave the names of a number of leaders, among them mine. In view of the delicate juncture at which I found myself, the Party recommended that I go underground. It was one thing to arrest a Leftist intellectual and

interrogate him, another to detain a leader of the Communist Party. If they managed to detain me, I would surely be tortured so they could obtain confidential information, and since in reality I didn't have any strategic information, I would be in serious danger. That is how we came to the conclusion that the best thing would be to disappear, to go underground. For the first eight months I was hidden inside a room, at a friend's house. I went out only once, to meet with my wife, in the very middle of the night; the rest of the time I was hidden in that room or inside the apartment.

^{AJ} It must have been terrible, almost like being in jail.

^{FG} In reality, I didn't experience it as traumatic because I could continue working. When Antonio Houaiss, a friend of mine, realized that I was underground, he immediately got in touch with my wife and sent me work to do for the encyclopedia he was making.⁶⁰ I spent months writing definitions for that encyclopedia, working on a range of different texts, and also drawing. Since I couldn't leave the place, I drew the room from every possible angle. First I drew the window seen from the right, from the left, from the center; then the door and the other wall. Since the friend who was hiding me in his apartment also had a good library, I read a lot, and so I was quite busy. The only disagreeable aspect was being shut in without knowing what might occur. After a short while, my friend became fairly seriously ill, and as he lived alone he had to call his family so they could take care of him. At that point he told me that his family didn't agree with my ideals at all, and that he was afraid they'd eventually say that someone was hiding in his house. At that point I moved into the apartment of another friend in Copacabana, but she received many visits from close friends and

family members, and very often children would ask what there was in that closed room, knock on the door, and ask for it to be opened. In the end the situation grew uncomfortable and I was obliged to call the Party leaders to tell them that I couldn't go on like this, and the best thing to do would be to leave the country.⁶¹

The solution they found was to send me to the Soviet Union on a student scholarship. That way I could go without needing to obtain work. I went to Moscow in 1971 to be trained as an officer in the Party, studying political theory and Marxist economics. It was an underground school run by the Marxist-Leninist Party. In that neighborhood in the city, no one knew who was studying there nor what we were doing. Courses were taught in every language and there were people from all over the world: from Vietnam, France, and Sweden, from the United States, Venezuela, and Mexico. We followed a very thorough training program that included, for example, detailed study of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. We studied how it had been written, the structure and dialectic of capital, ways of analyzing social and economic problems—all of which helped me to learn a tremendous amount about Marxist theory. The classes were led by a Spanish professor named Mansilla. He was excellent, and very knowledgeable about the subject matter. From the beginning, however, I began to notice early signs of what would later lead me to a serious critique of these economic theses.

^{AJ} An important member of the Brazilian avant-garde during the 1950s ends up becoming fervently opposed to avant-garde movements, in large part as a consequence and continuation of his activities as a poet and art critic. Later, a book written to fight against Marxism turns him into a communist, and now, fully in the

midst of the training process to become an officer of the Partido Comunista Brasileiro, he begins to develop the ideas that would lead him to discover within Marxist theories the very reasons for their impracticality. It's clear that we're not in the presence of an intellectual who assumed definitive positions, but rather one who was always alert, ready and willing to question the premises of his thinking. To my knowledge, it's only a few people who dare to take on the risk of pushing thought processes to their limit, and, if it comes to it, even questioning the very ideas they had passionately defended in other circumstances.

FG

It's true, I've never allowed any theory to take over my thinking to the point of blind faith, and each time I've felt it was necessary, I've had the courage to defend my ideas. In terms of Marxism specifically, while many intellectuals of my generation have preferred to cling blindly to the utopias offered by theory, even against all evidence that demonstrates the impossibility of achieving them, I've preferred to interrogate my own convictions. Starting during my time in the Soviet Union, I had begun to observe situations with which I could not agree. I even created some uncomfortable moments during the discussions we had with the Party leaders. I recall one time when the Brazilians and other Latin Americans who were studying together were invited to Leningrad, where we met with some of the local Party leaders. At a certain moment, they asked a Brazilian what the situation was with the Communist Party in our country and he began to sing its praises: that the Party was in a moment of victory, that it was growing vertiginously, and he went on to tell a series of lies that caused me to intervene as soon as he concluded his comments. The simple fact that someone had asked to speak without previous approval created

an undeniable tension. I asked to speak because I could not allow falsehoods like those to be uttered. I began by saying that this comrade did not live in the same country I did, because in the Brazil I knew the Communist Party didn't even remotely achieve the level of participation he had indicated. Who is the Communist governor who's been elected in Brazil? I asked him. How many seats do we have in Congress? If we have barely three federal representatives among a total of four hundred, then what constitutes our actual participation in the affairs of the country? Nothing; in reality that victorious Party presence didn't exist in Brazil. His remarks were scandalous; this individual sought only to give a positive image of our political processes. In truth, Marxism often functioned in this way, confusing theory with reality and using sleight of hand to couch facts in theoretical forecasts.

^{AJ} And this could be perceived dramatically in daily life. . . .

^{FG} Truthfully, I should say that there were good aspects of life there, circumstances we could have wanted for our countries. There were no beggars in the streets, health services were very good, everyone had access to hospitals and to public education—with the difficulty, of course, of the fact that there was no freedom for anyone. In that context, a phenomenon like Bill Gates, who created one of the largest companies on the planet, never could have come into existence, because each role was framed and controlled by the Party. Another time, for instance, we went to Ukraine and as always we met with regional Party leaders. In one of those meetings, one of the leaders told us that the economy of Ukraine only functioned thanks to the Party, and that it would be a catastrophe without the Party. So I went up to one of the friends

with whom I was traveling and remarked that if that was true, then Ukraine was finished. If the efficient functioning of its economy was subject to the decisions made by four individuals in an office, nothing could function. Under capitalism, on the contrary, the economy is dependent on private initiative, which the State should regulate, certainly: the economy is a tremendously complex reality that is dependent on ten thousand people all over the place and in every city, seeking a way to create businesses and produce wealth. That's why socialism will never successfully overcome its contradictions: if socialism was not successful in this regard even after possessing the second largest economic and military power in the world, how might it possibly achieve success in smaller and more fragile countries? No, the reality is that socialism provided its contribution, transformed the world, and changed it for the better, to the extent it was possible to do so.

^{AJ} In a sense, it was democratic societies—the most organized ones, of course—that managed to integrate the best contributions of socialism, and not communist regimes.

^{FG} Undoubtedly, when the Communist Party Manifesto was published, the capitalism of the mid-nineteenth century had reached its demise. That fierce, despicable capitalism, based in unlimited and inhuman exploitation, was dead. It was the consciousness of intellectuals—and of thinkers in general, who came out against an unacceptable situation—that supported workers as they organized and reclaimed their legitimate rights. There's no doubt whatsoever that Marx was correct in formulating a critique of capitalism, but he erred when he dreamt of a dictatorship of the proletariat, because he was starting from an erroneous position that

likened bourgeois societies to dictatorships, which was not what they were. As a response, and in order to take a stand against the supposed bourgeois dictatorship, he imagined a dictatorship of the proletariat. He was also mistaken in thinking that workers were the only creators of wealth. If businessmen did not exist, nor a whole series of professionals at a range of levels, the production of wealth would not exist either. In his manifesto, Marx condemned inheritance; at the same time that both he and his wife lived their entire lives thanks to the inheritance they received. It was all an enormous error, and one should have the courage to admit it.

Now, the problems didn't end there; the failure of socialism didn't make capitalism into a better system. No, not at all. Capitalism continues to be a system of maximum profit and if we leave it to its own devices it will go for its own mother's jugular. It's imperative that the State regulate its functioning, because capitalism is a force of nature—that's the truth—and didn't come about as the invention of a theorist. It came about through life itself, out of human history, and has the extraordinary vitality that only exists in that history. It is unjust and vital, and can destroy today what it created yesterday. In this sense it's like nature, which creates thousands of living beings and on the next day produces a flood that annihilates them. It destroys them completely and then creates anew.

^{AJ} And what nature does not do, society should—that is, to establish parameters, limits, rules that will not stifle the inventive force of the individual, our capacity to produce wealth and knowledge. And there's no doubt that it's democratic societies that have had the most success in this regard.

^{FG} Absolutely, and it's necessary to understand that there is no such thing as a perfect society. We must struggle continuously for a better society, even keeping in mind the reality that we will never attain an ideal society. Nature is unfair. It creates talented, intelligent people, and it also creates limited people, who do not think. It creates unequal beings and given that, it's impossible to create an absolutely egalitarian society.

^{AJ} And it destroys the worst and the best just the same.

^{FG} Indeed, indiscriminately. We can't let that guide us. We must work to achieve the most egalitarian society possible. Now, to imagine that we will one day attain a perfect society, a society of equals as Marx dreamt, is a utopia—and worse yet, it's unfair, because a dream of that nature can't be achieved unless it's at the lowest level, oppressing the entire society, which is part of what I experienced in the Soviet Union. This was perhaps less evident in daily life, but on the economic level the results were catastrophic. Of course, however, the functioning of the system was such that citizens only received information from Communist Bloc countries, so an American, French, or English film could never be seen. That was the case, obviously, only for ordinary citizens, because the Party leaders did have access to Western cinema and many other privileges. My Russian friend Helena's husband acquired and was able to watch films by Fellini and other European filmmakers. That is to say, from within the USSR I began to observe dysfunctional aspects that in my view were very serious, and even unacceptable.

What happened is that it's not possible to predict theoretically all the activity of an entire country; it's impossible to plan all of life. Marxist theorists thought, however, that it was enough to destroy

the bourgeoisie and be done with it and then immediately all human problems would be resolved, but that's not true at all.⁶² Once, we even argued this with Mansilla, our Spanish professor.

“Do you know,” he asked us, “how many centuries it took and how many different actions needed to occur at the same time so that in a city like Paris, for example, all the citizens could have café au lait in the morning, and have bread and croissants? Centuries,” he said, “it took centuries to create a network of production and distribution that would be capable of such a marvel—and you think we can construct a completely new system to replace that one overnight? Of course not,” he said.

^{AJ} The fact is that life is much, much broader than any theory or set of theories. The real overflows our concept of the world and any attempt to frame it within a theory ends up producing dictatorships.

^{FG} And this is why Stalin turned to violence in order to impose his agrarian reform, because he wanted the peasants to abandon their lands, the lands where they had worked their entire lives—both they and their ancestors—in order to construct those collective cooperatives in which no one was master of his own work. Lenin himself wrote about this, saying that small-scale farmers thought like the petite bourgeoisie. That was land the farmers didn't steal from anyone; they bought it with their own labor, and it's clear that they would not be willing to give it over to the State. So Stalin decided that things would be done as he wished, and whoever disagreed would simply be eliminated. Thus the only thing he achieved was the destruction of agriculture in the Soviet Union, and twenty years of hunger and miserable poverty.⁶³

^{AJ} The terrible thing is that this marks the beginning of the infamous difference between Marxist theory, considered to be good and just in its principles, and so-called real socialism—by nature imperfect, and always conjugated in the future tense. Thus the hope has been kept alive, that someday the perfect society Marx predicted might be achieved despite repeated failures.

^{FG} Yes, and it's been this way until today; few people have the courage to accept what we're discussing, that these failures did not come about by chance, but rather via a real deficiency of principle in the theoretical postulates of Marxism. Socialism, even when it's based in well-intentioned ideas—which it is, because it was invented in order to introduce ethics and solidarity into the brutal system of capitalism in the nineteenth century—didn't produce the results predicted in theory. In short, I learned a great deal in the USSR about Marxism, both on a theoretical level and in terms of its actual functioning.

My course of study lasted one year. I managed to stay for two, and would have liked to remain longer, though in the end there wasn't a way to extend my residence in the Soviet Union and I had to find an alternative. Carlos Prestes was in Moscow, and we considered a range of possibilities together. I would have liked to go to Argentina, because I loved Buenos Aires, but he suggested we go to Chile, where Salvador Allende's government would allow me to engage in political work and where, additionally, we'd be among other Brazilian comrades. On top of that, living in Chile didn't pose significant economic challenges. Inflation had reached such tremendous levels that the local currency was worth nothing. With two dollars it was possible to rent a three-bedroom apartment, so with very little you could live very well. My wife

sent me ten dollars a month, and with that money I could live like a rich man. I'm joking, of course, though it's true that ten dollars was enough to cover my daily expenses, including my rent, food, and books.



Salvador Allende, 1970 [More info](#)

Salvador Allende, 1970

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I arrived in Chile in May of 1973, five months before the coup. Since I was coming from abroad I was able to perceive a situation that was much worse than what the Brazilians already living in Santiago thought was occurring. For them, the stability of the

socialist government was a sure thing, but I observed contradictions that in my view could not be overcome. There was a transit strike that paralyzed the entire country. Imagine, if I could rent a three-bedroom apartment with just two dollars, with five dollars per person the United States could paralyze all the truck drivers in the country! I told them: comrades, this can't go on much longer. The Marxist government doesn't have an institution like the Armed Forces, and this is going to end badly. But they didn't want to admit it. When the coup took place, I was almost taken to the Estadio Nacional [National Stadium],⁶⁴ and I was saved thanks to luck and to an identity card from the Colegio de Periodistas de Chile [Chilean Association of Journalists]. When I needed to register with a journalists' association, there were two—one Marxist and the other right-wing—and I chose the right-wing one. My friends said I was crazy, and asked me why I'd chosen the right-wing school. I figured it might be useful to me in case there were serious problems and that was in fact the case. After the coup, soldiers came to my apartment and I got away from them because they didn't find my false passport, which was in my jacket pocket, and because I was registered with the right-wing journalists' association. I remember very well what one of the soldiers said to me:

“This is a false document!”

“False?” I said. “If you think it's false, call the school and you'll see.” So they called and got confirmation that it was true, that I was in fact a member of that journalists' association. That saved me. In the end the soldier told me:

“You're quite the expert!”

No one knew me in Chile, nor did anyone know that I was there as a political exile. What happened was that the apartment

where I was living had belonged to a Chilean leftist leader, and that's why they had gotten to me. They came back later; I showed them my documents, and told them that the military had already been there. During that second visit I took the opportunity to tell them that I was in Chile as a journalist, but that I no longer had the freedom I needed to work in the country and that I wanted to leave. "That's fine," they told me, "we'll give you a safe-conduct pass. Go to the Foreign Affairs Office, and we'll leave your name there so you can get your pass." I did that, and had the good fortune that they gave me the safe-conduct pass and I went to Peru. I wanted to go to Argentina, but my wife and children wanted to go to Peru, and since my political decisions had already caused them enough problems we met up in Lima. The only problem was that the city offered scant opportunities for work, and I quickly realized that I wasn't going to find the means to support my family. Perón was still alive, and some leftist friends offered me a post as visiting professor at the Universidad de Buenos Aires [University of Buenos Aires]. It was total coincidence that I arrived in Argentina the same day he died, July 1, 1974. Isabelita took power, and rumors of a coup immediately began. The *montoneros*⁶⁵ took the path of armed insurrection and Argentina entered into a crisis that ended in military dictatorship. My wife had to return to Rio, because she was a state official and feared she'd lose her job, so I found myself alone once again, in the midst of a military dictatorship.

In 1956, during the 20th Party Congress, Nikita Krushchev read an explosive speech in which he denounced the practices and policies of Stalinism, its crimes and its catastrophic economic errors. His speech began the process of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union, and divided the international communist movement in two.

Antônio Houaiss (1915–99) was a Brazilian philologist, writer, diplomat, and politician, of Lebanese origin. He directed the development of two important encyclopedias: *Delta Larousse* and *Mirador internacional*.

Even outside the country, Ferreira Gullar continued to contribute to *O Pasquim*, *Opinião* and other newspapers, under the pseudonym Federico Marques.

In this respect it's crucial to remember the observation André Breton made in describing Trotsky's violent reaction when, in 1938, he overheard Breton's conversation with Diego Rivera at his home in Mexico. Breton recalled how Trotsky: "exploded with rage one night when we were thinking out loud in front of him, saying that once a classless society was in place, new causes of bloody conflict—that is, non-economic causes—would surely arise." In André Breton, *Entretiens* (Paris: Ed. Gallimard, 1969), 189.

From 1931 to 1933, between 1.1 and 1.4 million inhabitants of Western Siberia died of hunger. Between autumn of 1932 and summer of 1933, more than 4 million people lost their lives in famines in Ukraine, the product of economic measures imposed by Stalin. The truth about these catastrophes was hidden by the regime until Mikhail Gorbachev's Perestroika.

In 1973, after the coup d'état against Salvador Allende, the premises of the Estadio Nacional were used by the dictatorship as a detention center and torture site. Nearly forty thousand political prisoners passed through its doors, many of whom were shot or "disappeared" by the regime.

The *Montoneros* was an Argentinean guerrilla organization that chose a path of armed insurrection between 1970 and 1979. Their ideological roots extended from orthodox Marxism to a Catholic nationalism. They supported and received support from Juan Domingo Perón from the time the organization developed until 1974. The term *montoneros* originates in the *montoneras*, which were armed groups of civilians,

arising spontaneously in Latin America during the struggles for independence. They were disorganized groups that launched attacks “*en montón*” [en masse] and hid in the *montes* [scrub]; hence the origin of the term.

TO RECOVER LIVED EXPERIENCE

“Poema Sujo:” A Line in the Sand

^{AJ} In the midst of that dictatorship, however, you created one of your best-known poems, “Poema sujo.” This was a key work in your literary production. In the first place, it’s a poem in which you sought to achieve the literary level that was lacking—purposefully—in your *Romances de cordel* [*String Ballads*]. You also pursued the autonomy that the poems gathered in the book *Dentro da noite veloz, 1962–1975* had not yet achieved, despite their evident quality. Further, it is a sort of personal reading of your life and your work that might function as a guide toward a general interpretation of your poetry.

The poem has a first phase—the longest—which is dedicated exclusively to your childhood and early youth in São Luís, and a second phase which is essentially marked by your encounter, in Rio de Janeiro, with the multiform and polytemporal body that is the metropolis. In both sections we feel a profound sense of introspection, as if with each paragraph you were attempting to capture the essential elements of your lived experience. In my opinion, therefore, “Poema sujo” might offer us an initial diagrammatic guide toward a study of your poetic development, and that diagram might have as its axis a notion of the body.

The structure we might deduce from this reading could begin with an initial moment in which your poetry—and in particular the work collected in the book titled *A luta corporal*—activates that conflict between your sensory experience and the limits of

language to express that experience, or to express what that pre-verbal contact with the world produced within you. But it's a struggle centered on the body that feels and does. Further, it is, as you yourself say, a confrontation that ends—with “Roçzeiral”—with a sort of verbal catastrophe, due to a failure of language that explodes in the face of the impossibility of overcoming the opacity of things.

Then there's a second phase, with “O vil metal” [Vile Metal], in which you seem to re-initiate the conflict, intensifying it in an attempt to create a verbal body that might be a presence in opposition to the opacity of things. For this reason it's a battle that ends, this time, with an actual body, now not exclusively verbal (your *livros-poema* and especially your *poemas-objeto*), where this new organism, half verbal and half sculptural, positions its own opacity as a cultural object in opposition to the world. Here, it's true, your poetic practice comes to occupy an extreme that you experienced as a definitive impasse. You resolved that conflict by undertaking another struggle—this time a political one— against the social body that materialized in the wretchedness of the people: economic and political power. The issue, definitively, was a struggle against that other opacity of the political. If it is perhaps a bit extreme to liken the social and political to a body, it's certainly provocative to consider that your poetry might be comprehended from the point of view of that body-to-body combat between the reality of language and the opacity of the world—in this case, in the face of the opacity of the political.

Finally, it seems to me that it's possible to detect a third phase, in which that contest of language against the real might gradually move toward your body—that is, toward the growing opacity of our organism in its inevitable process of aging. This is something

that can already be felt in *Na vertigem do dia* [*In the Day's Vertigo*], 1975–80, and can be seen even more clearly in *Barulhos* [*Dins*], 1980–87, and even more particularly in *Muitas vozes* [*Many Voices*] from 1999. At all these phases the body—in its body-to-body combat with the world—would be the central axis or one of the central axes of your poetics.

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eira Gullar

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~~Gullar de Buenos Aires~~
(Buenos Aires, 1976)

Ferreira Gullar, Buenos Aires, 1976

^{FG} What you're saying is largely true and is a pertinent reading. Perhaps it's not the only possible reading, but it's one that certainly has much to do with my work. Though at the same time, when I wrote *A luta corporal*, I was seeking a poem and a language that might be born together. In that search, I wound up creating a disintegrated language that was born together with the poem, as I had wanted, except that it was a language that was exclusive to me, that no one else understood.

^{AJ} That's what leads me to think that your poetry, in that struggle, ends up in opposition to the existence of its very opacity as a verbal object.

^{FG} Exactly. And it's true that the experience of Concrete and Neoconcrete poetry arose out of that problematic. It's as if by chance, due merely to accidents of history (such as having met up with the Paulista Concrete poets and having invented a new poetry with them), I had found a possible way to resolve that enigma. What is Concrete poetry, in reality? I even tend to joke, saying it shouldn't be called concrete, but rather abstract, because the concrete, as Hegel says, is "the concentration of many determinations." A cat is not concrete; it's abstract. The only thing that's concrete is this cat that's here in the living room. It's discourse that makes the poem concrete, and therefore Concrete poetry is abstract. It overcomes opacity, in order to exercise its expression, to do away with discourse, and ends up itself becoming opaque.

^{AJ} That's what I'm trying to say, that this poetry we call Concrete and Neoconcrete ends up constructing a human opacity. And that the radical difference between the work and the world against which it sets itself is a modern characteristic. The modern is precisely the development of the consciousness that art (and human knowledge in general) cannot be a copy or a kind of stamp of the real, but is rather a separate reality—artificial, and strictly human. And if there's one characteristic of the modern that continues to be alive still, it's precisely this.

^{FG} It's true, that's how it is. And seeing that this path wouldn't take me where I wanted to go, I realized that experience had come to an end; I had no further interest in continuing on, and I found myself once again in crisis. My move to Brasilia thus opened a whole new perspective for me, this time a political perspective, where verbal and poetic problematics would take second place. Those were no longer the fundamental problems; rather, it was society and specifically the transformation of the society in which we were living. After the *Romances de cordel*, I wrote poems in which there is undoubtedly a greater attention to form; those are the poems collected in the book titled *Dentro da noite veloz*, but my fundamental interest continued to be political. It was with "Poema sujo," from 1975, that everything changed. The prevailing concern was now no longer politics, but rather an investigation into existence itself. That poem, at heart, is a recovery of lived experience. Because we must start out from one essential principle, that the world in which we live is invented. I don't think that art reveals reality. On the contrary, it invents it, because reality is untranslatable.

^{AJ} It's based in the real, and starts from there to invent a separate reality, a parallel world.

^{FG} No, it's not a parallel world, it invents reality. Obviously, I'm not referring to the idea that it invents this tree, but rather that it invents the reality in which we are immersed: the reality of culture, of poetry, of painting, of science. We are the creators of the cultural sphere where we dwell. We don't live in nature: the alligator, the monkey, and the snow leopard live there.

^{AJ} And our own body.

^{FG} Yes, it's true, we too are nature, but we don't live in nature; we live in the city, which is a completely artificial thing. It's technology, pure invention. That lamp only exists here: how much human expertise, how much knowledge, makes it possible for it to be here, switched on?

^{AJ} Without a doubt, the human—the strictly human—is the artificial. Now, let's return, if it's all right with you, to an analysis of "Poema sujo." That work traces a process of introspection that moves a considerable distance away from political concerns. Those concerns continue to form part of your intellectual and social universe, though they no longer intersect with your activity as a poet. It's as if you wanted to take up your most intimate concerns again, and thus you turn back to childhood, to that preverbal contact with the world.

^{FG} And that's why "Poema sujo" draws a line in the sand, because in that work the problematic of the political, which remains present,

has moved to a secondary level.

^{AJ} It's really a return to an intimate contact with the body, such that it begins with the sensory experience of a child encountering the world.

^{FG} The poem begins with a noise because, in truth, when I dreamt of making it, lying in bed the night before, I imagined myself vomiting up my past, creating a meaningless magma out of which I would construct the poem. I would first vomit a universe of words with no order whatsoever, and little by little I would begin extracting the poem from that original magma. That was my initial idea. Later, when I decided to start writing, I realized that this vomiting was not possible. I can't vomit out the poem, I told myself: How am I going to write with no meaning? And that frustrated me a bit in the beginning. Just the same I told myself I'd write it in whatever way was possible, and I sat down to write it. That's why the poem begins with a sort of noise with no meaning. They are phrases that don't contain meaning in and of themselves; they don't mean anything specific.

^{AJ} I had interpreted it precisely as an attempt to express what is other, what is absolutely opaque. As if you might have imagined yourself in the midst of a universe of matter with no meaning, before the creative act, before the word, the verb.

^{FG} In other words, that beginning is like an experience prior to speech:

*muddy muddy
the muddy
hand of the wind
against the wall
dull
less less
less than dull
less than soft and solid less than a well and a wall: less
than a cavity
bleary
more than bleary
shiny
like water? like a plume? bright more than bright right:
nothing at all
and all
(or nearly all)
a creature conceived by the universe has been dreaming from
its belly
blue
the cat was
blue
the cock was
blue
the colt was
blue
your bum⁶⁶*

I titled it “Poema sujo” because, in the first place, it is stylistically dirty. It makes no commitment to what I had done previously, nor to any literary norms. Second, because it’s obscene.

It makes no commitment to any morality that might supposedly govern poetry. Third, because it speaks about Brazilian poverty.

*And after all
what does a name matter?
I cover you with flowers, sweetie, and I give you each and
every name;
I call you dawn
I call you water
I discover you in colored stones in movie stars
in the visions of my dreams
— And that woman coughing in the house!
As if the poverty, the dim lamp,
the cheap perfume, the meager love, the leaky winter roof
were not enough.
And the ants surging by the millions gushing black from
inside the wall (as though they were the essence of the
house)
And all were seeking
in a smile in a gesture
in corner conversations
in standing sex on the darkened Quartel promenade
in adultery
in robbery
the solution to the riddle

— What shall I do in the meantime?
— From what shall I defend myself?
Weeds and roses grew in a fisherman's basket on the black
dirt of the backyard*

*(how is it that perfume
can come from that?)
From the mud alongside cobbled streets, from the sewer
water grew
tomato plants⁶⁷*

It's a dirty poem for those three reasons: the poverty of my people, the dirtiness or pseudo-dirtiness of bourgeois morality, and because it does not conform to any stylistic norms whatsoever. Anything goes, everything is possible. Neither Concretism nor Neoconcretism: I can do whatever I want. From this point on, I told myself, I have no commitment to anything I was or anything I did. . . .

^{AJ} Actually, I didn't perceive that evocation of sex as dirty or immoral, but rather as precisely an attempt to express that opacity of the body, of our animal origin, clearly inscribed in that process that takes us from the unformed and meaningless to the world of words and meanings.

^{FG} Yes, but others see it as something immoral and dirty, because in that evocation of my childhood I also talk about my first sexual experiences with my girlfriends from São Luís. These left a profound imprint in my memory and for that reason reappear constantly in my poetry. It's as if I were beginning from nothing, from zero, moving through the most intense and revealing experiences of my existence. This is a constant in my work; I'm always beginning again from zero.

^{AJ} I imagine that this sort of recovery of lived experience has to do with your return to Brazil, which would, in fact, not take long to come about.

^{FG} No, the poem doesn't have to do with my return. It was written for other reasons. My poetry, in general, isn't a response to practical circumstances, nor do I myself know, often, why I begin to write it. I don't plan anything, and I never have. My poetry is an act that stems from specific situations, from what happens to me. I began it, indeed, out of necessity, reflecting on problematics that exist inside me, especially when I thought I was going to die. I wrote it in Argentina, a short while before the coup d'état, and additionally when I didn't have any valid travel documents, because my passport had expired.⁶⁸ With my I.D. I could only travel to Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay, or Paraguay, all of which were dictatorships, and to Brazil of course, but not to Europe or the United States. It was clear that I had no way out. Given the threat of a coup, which could already be felt, I thought they would kill me, that they would disappear me as they had disappeared other people without leaving any trace whatsoever. So I wrote that poem as if it were the last thing I might be able to do in my life. I'm going to write what I can, while I have time, I thought. That's how I created it, because I wanted to write what I still had left to write, before I was eliminated. It's a poem written *in extremis*, as if I were setting down the last text of my existence.

escuro ~~claro~~

mais que escuro:

claro

a? como pluma? claro mais que claro claro: coisa

e tudo

(ou quase):

o que o universo fabrica em vem sonhando desde q^{eu} ~~se~~

nas

azul

era o gato

azul

era o galo

azul

o cavalo

azul

Seu cu

engiva igual a tua bucatinha que parecia sorrir entre as
as de banana entre os cheiros de flor e bosta de porco aberta
uma boca de corno (nao como a tua boca de palavras) ~~nao~~ como
entrada para

eu nao sabia tu

nao sabias

fazer girar a vida

com seu montão de estrélas e oceanos

entrando-nos em ti

bela bela

^{que}
mais bela

mas como era o nome dela?

Nao era Helena nem Vera

nem Nara nem Gabriela

nem Tereza nem Maria:

Seu nome? seu nome ~~nao era~~
perdeu-se na carne fria

perdeu-se na confusão de tanta noite e tanto dia

Original manuscript of *Poema sujo* written in 1975, held by Ferreira Gullar, 2011. Photographed by Vicente de Mello

^{AJ} Your friends, however, used that poem in some way to guarantee your return to Brazil in 1977.

^{FG} Yes, when the poem got to Brazil it had such a strong impact that my friends and comrades—intellectuals, and even people who didn't know me—began to demand that the government allow me to return. Furthermore, I had published the book *Dentro da noite veloz*, and “Poema sujo” was circulating in recordings where I was reading it aloud. Later, two journalist friends went to speak with the head of the military staff, General Golbery do Couto e Silva, who was the second in command in the dictatorship, and they brought a copy of *Poema sujo* to him. He knew my name, because of the impact I'd had in the press. He read it and said: “Though this book seems to me very obscene, I'm not opposed to its author's return. If he wants to return, that's fine. I'll need to speak with General Figueiredo first.” He went to speak with him—he was the Director of the Serviço Nacional de Informação [National Information Service]—and he responded: “I don't want that Communist here!” His response offended me so much that I told myself: Well, I'm going to go back; he doesn't own Brazil, and he doesn't have the authority to say something like that.

It was clear, as well, that I wanted to return; I no longer had the energy to remain in exile, and at the same time I was suffering because of the problems experienced by my children, who were unprotected here with my wife, who was facing terrible difficulties. It was time to go back. I began to prepare my return immediately. I informed the Commander of the Segundo Exército [Second Army

Batallion], based in Rio, the President of the Associação Brasileira da Imprensa [Brazilian Printers' Association], the Ordem dos advogados do Brasil [The Order of Brazilian Attorneys], and the Ministério de Justiça [Ministry of Justice], letting them know I would be coming back. What I didn't want was to enter the country secretly and then be disappeared. This was a way to protect myself. Nonetheless, when I got off the plane, there was a poster on the airport wall and written on it was: Ferreira Gullar: arrest him. They didn't dare to arrest me when I arrived, because a large number of intellectuals were waiting for me; they did it the next day. They took me to the DOI-CODI,⁶⁹ to the torture chamber. Fortunately, they did not torture me, though they did hold me without letting me sleep, eat, or drink, interrogating me constantly for seventy-two hours. They couldn't do anything more, given that many people knew I was there. The next day an article was published in *Le Monde*, stating that I had been imprisoned. Another article came out in *La Nación*, and they were forced to let me go, and to make sure I did not show any physical signs of torture. In the end, the public renown of that poem, written as if it were going to be my last, wound up saving my life.

^{AJ} After your return to Rio, and as soon as you were freed from this nightmare, you returned to your work as an art critic and journalist. You also, of course, continued to write poetry.

^{FG} Yes, I returned to criticism and later started a job at *TV Globo*. There I worked as a script-writer for soap operas and other special programs. I was invited to work there by Dias Gomes, a friend of mine who was writing for them. He was the main television writer at *TV Globo*, and he asked me to work with him as part of his

writing team. To be honest, I didn't like that kind of work, but working alongside Dias, a person who created truly special and extremely creative stories, it seemed possible to do it.

^{AJ} Brazilian shows are known for being considerably better than other Latin American soap operas.

^{FG} Soap operas, in general, are a truly absurd form of playwriting. All films and theater pieces last between an hour and a half and two hours. There's no such thing as a film or theater piece with 180 chapters—it's impossible. Soap operas have a huge number of episodes, and that's why they don't move forward, and they contain three hundred parallel stories that evolve completely separate from one another, and from the central plot. These are mechanisms designed to make the story longer. There was no doubt that I was going to be horrified writing these things, but I needed to make a living, and with Dias it was possible to explore interesting ideas. Additionally, other than the soap operas there were mini-series that had limited runs. In that case it was a matter of writing ten episodes, which allowed us to think of a beginning, a middle, and an end. At any rate, we did work on productions of a much higher quality than the usual soap operas. We wrote one of the best mini-series produced in Brazil: *As noivas de Copacabana* [Copacabana Brides]. I later returned to the *Jornal do Estado de São Paulo* [State of São Paulo Newspaper], where I had worked previously.

^{AJ} Among the many activities you engaged in to make a living, there was also the translation of some of the classic texts of Western literature, such as *Don Quijote*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Thousand and One Nights* and Jean de La Fontaine's *Fables*.

^{FG} I didn't do that as a regular job; that is, I'm not a translator. I'm not one of those people who thrive on the fascination presented by the problems of translating great books, and who make this activity an important part of their intellectual work. The only book I translated voluntarily was Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, and I did it because I was so fascinated by the insanity of this text that I resolved to translate it. The other translations were assignments from close friends. I translated *Cyrano de Bergerac* in 1985 for Flávio Rangel,⁷⁰ a good friend, and for the actor Fagundes.⁷¹ They wanted to do a production here in Brazil and they asked me to translate it. When I began translating it, I became very interested in the work and tried to find the best strategy for doing it. I quickly realized that I would not be able to do a translation using alexandrines—the twelve-syllable lines that Edmond Rostand had used—because it would be quite unfeasible. Using that kind of line, ill suited to Portuguese, it would have been impossible to reconstruct the fluidity of the dialogue, so I decided to utilize decasyllables—a line that's much more suited to Portuguese. The second criterion I adopted was not to follow the rhyme structure exactly as it appeared in the original, which always used end-rhymes. I decided to work this way because I thought that when audience members heard the text, they would not be able to determine where the rhyme appeared. In a work for the theater like this one, lines sometimes begin with the speech of one actor and end with a phrase spoken by another, in such a way that the viewer would not be able to locate the placement of the rhyme. I decided to rhyme where it seemed to me most appropriate, in a way that would not impede the fluidity of the dialogue.

When an author is writing a work like *Cyrano*, he is the judge of what is going to happen. He places a rhyme here, where his

language permits, or perhaps in whichever moment seems possible, or whenever one comes to mind. The text responds to a dialectic of chance and necessity that comes into being in the same instant as the writing. Nothing is predetermined in writing, nor does it correspond to any law; very simply, it could have been otherwise. The author contends with his language, with its possibilities and limits, at the same time that he confronts unplanned factors that arise as he is writing. When I attempt to translate, on the other hand, I face a double difficulty. I have to reckon with the problems of my language, as the author does with his, and with the unplanned circumstances that govern the work of the writer, but at the same time I have to imitate him. What generally happens in these cases is that it often becomes unfeasible to simultaneously respect the rhyme scheme and the meaning of the lines, because it's impossible for two languages to fully coincide in all their possibilities. The version of *Cyrano* made in Brazil around 1906 is unbearable, precisely because the translator imposed a respect for the original as a kind of straightjacket on the translation. That work lacks even the least spontaneity; it feels forced and rigid.

So I set about doing something different, giving myself greater liberty with the meter, endeavoring to prioritize fluidity and the freshness of the lines, and not a perfect congruence with the original. The result was so satisfying in that sense that the work won the Molière Prize in translation, a prize created for that occasion, because it had previously only been awarded to theater directors, actors, and script-writers. And that form of recognition was created because everyone was so pleased with the results. The French ambassador and the actors were amazed, because my translation made it possible for them to rediscover Rostand's text without the straightjacket the earlier translation had imposed. For

my part, I took the greatest possible liberty, so much so that in some instances I invented completely different lines. There is one passage, for example, in which Cyrano speaks beneath a balcony, and I had to invent new lines, because the original text sounded completely false in Portuguese. There are words and phrases that simply could not be translated literally, but rather in spirit, and that demanded ample freedom on the part of the translator.

^{AJ} And I suppose that *Don Quijote*, for the simple reason that it is an older text, presented similar problems, or even greater ones.

^{FG} *Don Quijote* was a different situation. I wasn't asked for a translation, exactly, but rather for an adaptation of the original for teenage readers. A friend, who was the director of a press called Revan, asked me for it. In this case, after reading the original, I made a number of observations that would guide me in the work of translation and adaptation. *Don Quijote* was written as a sort of critique of the literature of the era, as if it might have been written to counter contemporary novels from our time. The hero is a sublime character driven mad by his love for a maiden, the most beautiful girl in the world. She was a peasant who lived off the land, harvesting corn and shredding coconut. At the same time that Cervantes did this work to demystify the literary novels of his era, he interspersed segments of that literature into his narrative, such that my first task consisted in identifying the segments that had nothing to do with the adventures of Quijote and Sancho Panza so I could eliminate them from my version. Those stories aren't part of *Don Quijote*—at least, they aren't part of its essence, which is located precisely in the adventures of those two zany characters, Don Quijote and Sancho Panza. The second important decision I made

consisted in summarizing the sections of dialogue that were too long—pages and pages about a single topic, as was a common characteristic of the era. I considered it more important to maintain the spirit and content of those dialogues, without the lengthy tirades that would scatter the attention of today’s adolescents.

The language of *Don Quijote* constituted another major problem, since Cervantes’ version wasn’t easily understood even in Spanish, such that being faithful to the original was impossible. Not even the Spanish publish the work today using its original language. For that reason, it seemed to me that I couldn’t translate it into seventeenth-century Portuguese, because the same thing would happen with our readers. I thus opted for a modern language, one that anyone could understand, with a few touches and flourishes of the era. In the process, I discovered another characteristic of *Quijote* that helped me to preserve the spirit of the original text, even beyond its form. This is a fundamental element: it’s not the specific episodes, the events, that are important in this book, but rather the dialogue. What really captivates readers isn’t that he was imprisoned in the windmill, but the dialogue that was produced during this episode: what one figure says to the other, the remarks they make. With this strategy I achieved a contemporary, summarized version that wouldn’t discourage readers, particularly adolescent readers. If I judge the results from the feedback I received, I can say that some of my friends, even adult friends, confessed to me that thanks to my version it became possible for them to read *Don Quijote*, because they had never been able to get through it in the original. This makes sense, as the book in question was written for readers who had ample time to read those stories, and found the details pleasing, even without considering the large number of references to situations and events from the era that

today would require a level of historical research of which only a specialist is capable. No normal reader would do everything needed in order to truly understand *Don Quijote* in the Castilian of its time. And I was of course aware that my work consisted of achieving a version that would be able to facilitate an approach to a major work, not to replace that work, a fact I made quite clear in the preface. The idea was that readers moved to do so would later engage the whole text. In the end, as I mentioned, these were assignments and not intellectual necessities for me that might be considered part of my work—or at least not part of my most intimate personal processes.

Ferreira Gullar, “Poema sujo,” in *Toda poesia*, 233–91.

Ferreira Gullar, “Poema sujo,” in *Toda poesia*, 236.

“Poema sujo” was written in Buenos Aires between May and October of 1975. The coup d’état against María Estela Martínez de Perón (Juan Perón’s widow), took place on March 24, 1976.

DOI-CODI: Destacamento de Operações de Informações / Centro de Operações de Defesa Interna [Operations and Information Detachment/Center of Internal Defense Operations] were the agencies in charge of investigating, interrogating, and torturing members of the political opposition during the Brazilian military dictatorship.

Flávio Nogueira Rangel (1934–88) was a Brazilian set designer, theater director, and journalist. He was the first Brazilian director of the Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia.

Antonio da Silva Fagundes Filho (1949) is a well-known Brazilian theater and television actor. He has worked at TV Tupi and Rede Globo, among other media venues.

A link to Ferreira Gullar reading an excerpt of “Poema sujo” can be found in the links page at the end of the book

THE NATURAL COURSE OF THE ARTS

Writing after the Avant-Gardes

^{AJ} Your experiences with the avant-garde had come to an end, and you were disillusioned, as well, given the failure of the enormous hopes awakened in your generation by the utopic vision of a Cuban-style revolution; your poetry began gradually to turn in the direction suggested by “Poema sujo”—a poetic investigation of existence. In other words, you returned to what you have called, without defining it, “the natural course of the arts”.

^{FG} What I intend by that phrase is the following: art, in all its forms, is a great human invention, because life is not enough. Now, it just so happens that Western art, in the course of its historical development, arrived at Realism, and at that moment the greatest artists—this is my interpretation, at least—felt limited, because the aim of art is not to copy reality, but rather to invent it. Some artists, as in the case of Velázquez, even attempted to violate those limits. *Las Meninas* is not a simple representation of reality, but rather consists of a whole mixture of different times and spaces that transcend the dull flatness of realism, creating an unusual relationship between the space represented and the space we, as observers, occupy.

That context of discomfort, in my opinion, would continue to expand throughout the Baroque and Romantic periods, until it reached a point when the representative language of painting began to disintegrate, in the work of figures like Cézanne. He said that without nature, certainly, there is no painting, but he also said that he transmutes water into wine, and nature into painting. Later, when the language of painting finally disintegrated, with Cubism, a radicalized process of destruction of the represented object was initiated, and concluded in Malevich’s *White on White*. Representative painting died there, at least in his case. With that process, various avant-gardes undertook extremely important experimental work (in painting and likewise in poetry, narrative, theater and music) that brought to the arts of our time indisputable flights and new expressive tools, thus enriching the arts enormously. At the same time, some artists produced exaggerations that frequently made these artistic expressions somewhat incomprehensible for non-specialized audiences. In all modes of artistic production, situations of this sort arose, but those modes returned to their natural course, enriched by avant-garde experiments—all except the visual arts.

^{AJ} In the work of some artists, at least, but not in everyone’s.

^{FG} Yes, of course, but what predominates in art salons and biennials is that sort of art, where anything goes, and in which what we are least likely to find is the elaboration of a language. That’s why I think that we’re talking about a phenomenon that requires an explanation. To give you an example, let’s consider Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, from 1939, a text that reaches a level of hermeticism that makes it practically illegible. There are huge discussions among scholars trying to understand what Joyce wanted to say on this or that point, and even around the meaning that should be assigned to a given word. Please understand me: it’s not that I consider that process to be negative. On the contrary, those experiences were tremendously important and enriched our expressive possibilities. It’s just that if that type of literature had prevailed until today, we wouldn’t have had a Jorge Luis Borges, and neither Hemingway nor João Guimarães Rosa nor Gabriel García Márquez would exist. On the other hand, in the visual arts,

what has prevailed and continues to prevail isn't even art, because it is not the result of that complex process through which a language is constructed. The majority of those supposed artists have turned to a new form of realism—the grossest that can exist—which consists almost exclusively in presenting the real. Recently I learned of an exhibition organized at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in which the artist's work consisted of presenting a series of naked couples in the rooms of the museum, with the goal of inhibiting viewers. Does this work involve any conceptual elaboration of the sensations that come to us through the world? No, not at all. The only thing that's achieved with this type of activity is to present the real, with no meaning or grandeur whatsoever. Another artist, here in Brazil, conceived of a complex set built of glass and lights, in order to present a microscope where viewers could see some fly larvae. This is a new kind of realism, clumsy and superficial, like the worst of all realisms.

^{AJ} It would be interesting, in fact, to discuss how you dealt with this return to the natural course of the arts in your own poetry.

^{FG} I, too, like many avant-garde artists, pushed those experiences to the limit. The last of them was “Poema enterrado.” And I did these experiments with pleasure, very sincerely, as I believe everyone did. It's just that I was also aware of their limitations, and aware that those activities felt small in relation to what I wanted to do, what I needed to say, and what in my view art should do and say. I couldn't continue making poems with one single word; it was impossible, and I couldn't continue down that path. Many interesting works were produced at that time, and earlier. However, even avant-garde artists as radical as Lygia Clark ended up saying: “We arrived at a singular situation of art without art,” and of art without artists, additionally, because people thought that anyone could create these pieces and thus have the possibility of being an artist—and for what reason? Because they might be capable of cutting a Moebius strip with a scissors in just a few minutes? No, please, art is a very special—and also very personal—conceptual and practical process that cannot be reduced to a rote exercise.

^{AJ} Without a doubt, during the sixties—and many people today continue naively to believe this—it was thought that only the barriers imposed by education prevented us all from being artists, and that everyone had the innate capacity to be creative. And the truth is that even if we all can and should develop our creative capacities to the fullest, and education should provide us with the tools and opportunities to do so, we don't all have the same capacities; we can't all be true artists, even if we devote ourselves entirely to the attempt. In Lygia's case, however, the action she called *Caminhando* [Walking], was in fact the sophisticated result of a technical and conceptual process that originated in her painting, and that was not reduced, for her, to a simple sensory exercise. The problem originates in the experience presented to the viewer, in which the viewer very often participates yet is totally ignorant of the processes that brought the artist to that point, and has not engaged in a prior process of reflection or interiorization that might be able to inform the activity of the piece. There, indeed, I do agree: that type of rote experience tends to be reduced, for the participating viewer, to an exercise without conceptual density, or to an extremely limited experience. In any case, what I'm interested in discussing here is the way that you were able to transcend that impasse at which you believed you had arrived. And you achieved this through political commitment, subordinating art to the necessity of a political transformation of society.

^{FG} Yes, at an initial phase, because as we've already discussed, I later became aware of the utopian nature of our hopes, and of the catastrophic results Marxist regimes would entail: in reality it was naive to think

that once we had done away with the bourgeoisie all humanity's problems would be over. And so you can see that the Marxist parties were congruent on one point, and that is that they didn't have genuine projects. The only thing they pursued, their exclusive proposition, was to destroy what exists, convinced that it was enough to take down the power of the bourgeoisie in order for everything to be resolved.

^{AJ} I'd like to discuss now how you went about making your poetry after you distanced yourself from the avant-garde—regardless of how interesting their practices might have been—and after abandoning revolutionary utopia.

^{FG} Well, I found myself once again at a dead end with no answers. It's a situation I described in a poem from the nineties, which as I see it might respond to your question. That's precisely its title: "Pergunta e resposta" [Question and Answer]:

*If it is true that
the entire mass of the solar
system (including that of Saturn and Mars
and Earth and Venus and Uranus and Mercury
and Pluto, plus
the satellites, plus
the asteroids, plus) equals
scarcely 2% of the total
mass of the Sun and
that the Sun is nothing more
than a minimal point
of light in the stunning vastness of
gas and dust of the Milky
Way and that the Milky
Way is merely one
among billions of galaxies
which at the speed of 186,000 miles per second
are exploding in flight
through the night*

*then I ask:
what is my poem
with its inaudible sound
doing there?*

*And I answer:
inaudible
to those who may be
in galaxy NGC 5128
or in the constellation
Virgo or even on
the moon of Ganymede
where happily you are not,*

Cláudia Ahimsa,⁷²
poet and muse of the planet Earth.⁷³



Ferreira Gullar reading his poem “Pergunta e resposta,” Rio de Janeiro, 2012

^{AJ} This world is nothing, perhaps, in relation to the universe, yet despite its insignificance in cosmic terms, it is everything to us. There’s a tone there that reminds me of Pascal.⁷⁴

^{FG} Yes, and even in this minuscule world of ours, the only thing that matters to me is my partner, and also my house, my cat, my friends, my intimate universe, here and now, in this small apartment in Copacabana. In addition, of course, to the actual world. The galaxies are too far away.

^{AJ} It’s in volumes of poetry like *Barulhos* and *Muitas vozes* that it’s possible to feel very strongly that growing interiorization, the clear will to contemplate a closer and more intimate present.

^{FG} Yes, after *Poema sujo*, which marked the beginning of this process, I wrote *Na vertigem do dia*, which addresses many of the themes of *Poema sujo*, but in a different tone. I often say that *Poema sujo* is something like a symphonic construction, while *Na vertigem do dia* is like chamber music. It’s a more intimate book of poems. That intimate quality is further accentuated in *Barulhos*, where I focus on internal matters. These problems are more existential than stylistic, strictly speaking. In my poetry, there has always been a concern for form, certainly, but the greater preoccupation is that investigation into existence that develops throughout my poems.

^{AJ} And this characteristic is accentuated in *Muitas vozes*. . .

^{FG} I wouldn't be so bold as to put it that way. *Muitas vozes* is a different volume entirely, and it changes because my mind changed.

In *Barulhos* I address everyday subject matter, aspects of daily life. One poem is about a young woman wearing a thong on the beach; another is a relaxation exercise. "Poema poroso" [Porous Poem] is even a song to the earth, to that place where my dead body will one day lie. Other instances are investigations into myself, into the interior of my body:

*Who am I within my mouth?
Who am I in my teeth
behind my teeth
on my tongue that moves
trapped at the back of my throat? what name do I have
in the darkness of my esophagus?⁷⁵*

^{AJ} That's why I said that if the major axis of your poetry in *A luta corporal* was the opacity of the world, of other bodies, in these more recent books of poetry that axis has shifted toward your own body.

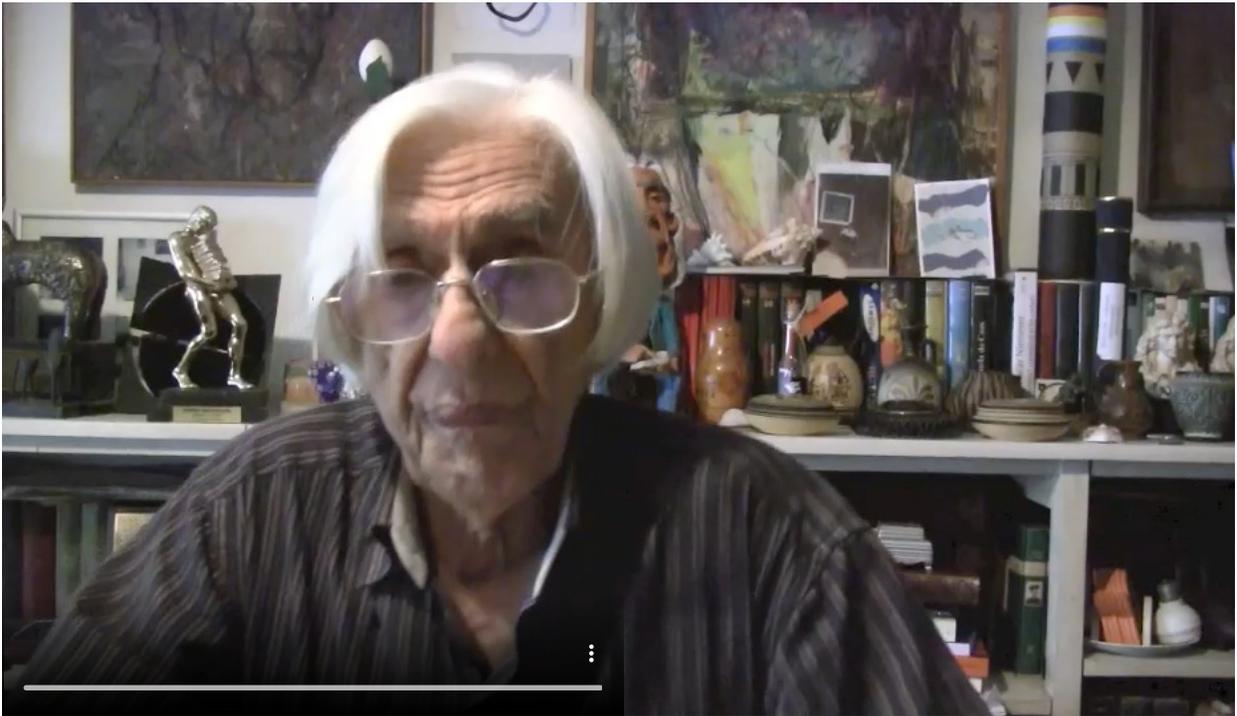
^{FG} It's true, though it's not exclusively limited to my body. There's also that poem written about the death of Mário Pedrosa, and there are even others where my political concerns persist, like the poems titled "Nós, Latino-americanos" [We, Latin Americans], and "Meu povo, meu abismo" [My People, My Abyss]—that is, we're talking about a book of poems in which aside from an investigation into my body, which is central, a range of different subject matter is addressed.

^{AJ} That opacity of your body would be one of the major axes of your poetry, at least.

^{FG} It is, in any case, a book that came into being out of everyday circumstances, circumstances of which my body is a part. "Nasce o poema" [The Poem is Born], is a reflection on poetry, and arises out of a conversation with a person who was asking me what I did to write my poems. I began to explain how I did it, and in the course of my explanation I realized that I was writing a poem. So I excused myself, stopped the conversation, and went back home to write the poem.

*some people think
they know
how the poem should be
I
scarcely know
what I'd like
it to be
because I change
the world changes
and poetry erupts
in the most unlikely places
sometimes
smelling of flowers
sometimes*

*detached in the smell
of rotting fruit
which loses itself in rot
(the closer it comes to night
the louder the scent
cries out)
sometimes
in the grinding
of silence
in a small shop in Estácio
in the afternoon⁷⁶*



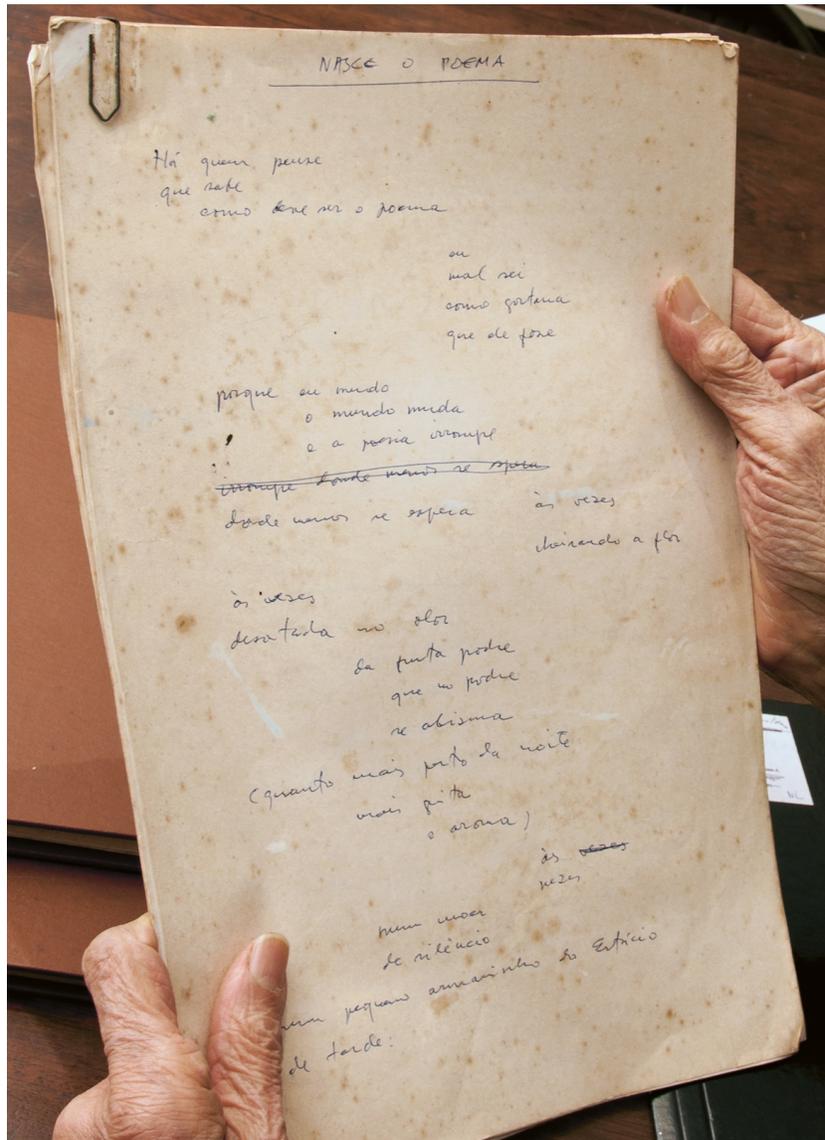
Ferreira Gullar reading an excerpt of his poem “Nasce o poema,” Rio de Janeiro, 2012

All this while remembering a day in 1955 in the Estácio neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro, where I was working. It was a hot day, with a lot of sun. Amílcar de Castro and I went out to catch the bus and go home. It was so hot that I went into a store, a small establishment selling dishes and porcelain objects. When I went inside, I not only found the shade I'd been seeking, but also the silence, and so I noticed those cups covered in dust, in the shade of the shop. That's where the poem started to appear, but of course could not fully be born in that moment because Amílcar was nervous and the bus was already coming.

*So I moved along
And the poem remained
unborn
a part of the shop's air*

a part like the dust
on my hair.⁷⁷

And I left, I traveled to the Soviet Union, to Chile, and to Argentina, and the poem continued waiting for its moment to be born, which arrived eleven years later. What happened, in part, is that I write very little, and my poems come into being based largely on chance; they aren't situations I can control, and for that reason, my poetry volumes are not books with a single subject matter.



Original manuscript *Nasce o poema* [*The Poem is Born*], photographed in 2011

Now, my last book, *Em alguma parte alguma* [*In Any Where Nowhere*], likewise addresses a wide variety of issues, but I wouldn't know how to define it so easily. The title makes use of a Portuguese expression which actually means *noplace*, as if I were trying to say that the poem is that place where the only thing that can be done is to signal what cannot be said, because it is impossible to express it wholly. There is one poem that speaks specifically about a corolla that buds in a *none*⁷⁸ part of life, which cannot

be located and cannot be spoken. At the same time, this is a volume of poems that came about with a peculiar characteristic, as if each poem were being born out of disorder. This has to do with the way I formulated the work. The form in which I came to make these poems over these last few years is very different from how I worked before. In general, my poems used to come out of a prior reflection, and when I sat down in front of the blank page to write, I had already reached a more or less clear notion of what I wanted to do.

The poem, obviously, is invented during the process of writing, but it starts from a basic idea of what I wanted to do. Then a very different relationship with poetry began to develop and now sometimes, when I begin writing, I start in the middle. I know that this is not the beginning, and I don't worry about it, and I even want it not to be. It's a disorderliness that originates in a reflection on certain occurrences, like what happened when I was leaving Cláudia's house, very late at night. When I opened the door of her building, in the garden that separates the front door from the street, there was a jasmine emitting its fragrance. I could almost say that I was attacked by that smell of jasmine. Since the jasmine plant was to one side of the door I yanked off a whole bouquet and began smelling it. And that's how I left, walking and breathing that fragrance in deeply. When I did that, I discovered that this fragrance was somewhat wild, unlike the scent floating on the air, which was sweeter and softer. This one, on the other hand, was such a strong sensation as I breathed it in that it burned the inside of my nose. I left, got in the car, and went back home, thinking of the poem. I wrote it the following day, and thus initiated a reflection about what a fragrance is or is not: fragrance as a given collection of molecules that is there, moving around in the air in no particular order, and to which my sense of smell gives meaning, an imposed order.

*this is because
the thing
(the being)
rests
outside of all
speech
or syntactic order*

*and the spoken (the
non-thing) is just
grammar*

*jasmine, for example,
is a system
like the spider
(different from the poem)
perfume
is a kind of disorder
that the sense of smell
orders
and sucks up
but what it says
surpasses the order
of speech and*

that
therefore
only
disordering
the written
perhaps one speaks
that perfunctory
unheard
order⁷⁹

That experience becomes, in turn, the very structure of the poem, as a sort of order that emerges from disorder. And from that poem, another poem emerges, and then another.

The first poem in the book, which is actually the most recent, and which bears the title “Fica o não dito por dito” [What Was Unsaid Will Be As If Said], speaks precisely of that being which the poem attempts to speak, but which it cannot exhaust, because the real exceeds the possibilities of speech. It’s a sort of play on a common expression in Portuguese: “*fica o dito por não dito*” [what was said will be as if unsaid]. I don’t know if it exists in Spanish; in Portuguese these days it’s a very common expression that means the following: I asserted something you didn’t like, and you don’t agree with me. So I thought about it and I said: that’s fine, *what was said will be as if unsaid*, that is, let’s say I didn’t say it. Well then, the title of my poem is precisely the opposite: *what was unsaid will be as if said*. What I have not expressed ends up being what I said, given that I can’t speak reality: the poem is what escapes language.

^{AJ} And the book begins with the last poem, perhaps seeking to generate a chronological disorder.

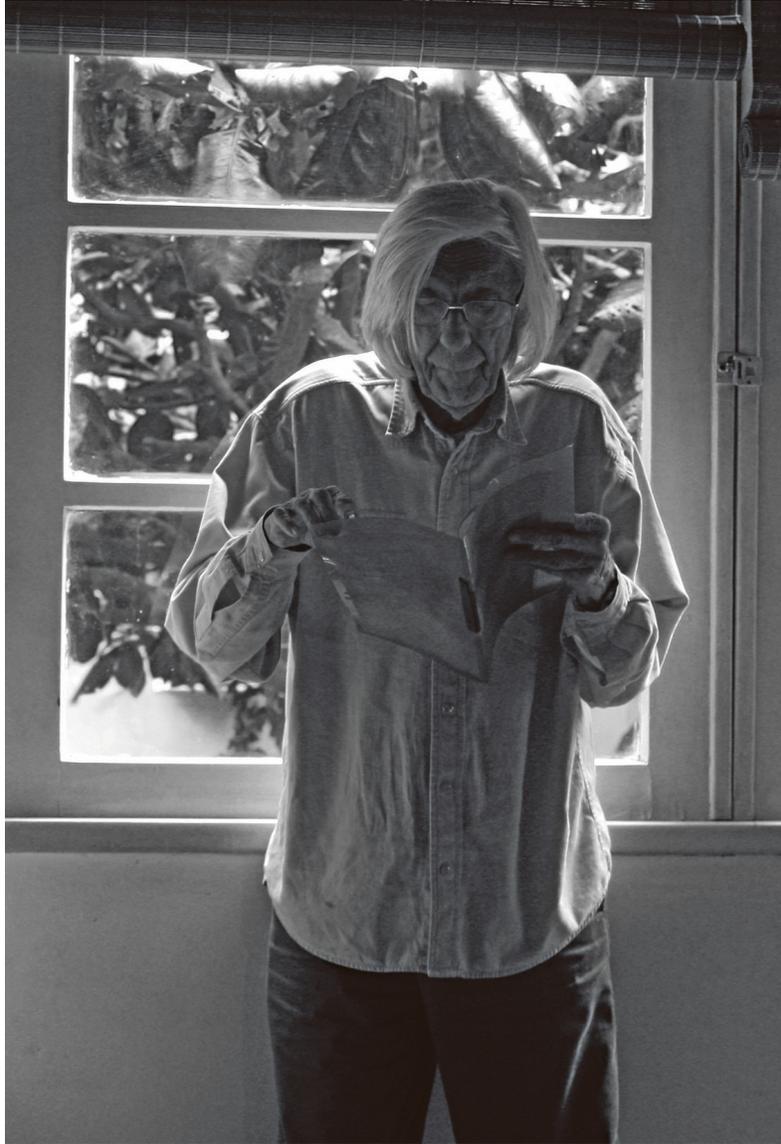
^{FG} No, that actually occurs for a very simple reason, which is that it seemed to me more interesting for the reader to be presented with my current poems. Remember that this is a book I’ve been writing for eleven years—that’s a very long time. That’s why I chose to begin the book with my most recent poems. If someone, someday, wants to study the chronological process of the writing of this book, it will always be possible to do that by using the dated originals as a resource, but when I published them I preferred to invert them and reproduce them without dates. The book is organized in the following way: the first poems talk about that disorder that becomes order, and also about an order that comes undone, as in death or the process of fruit growing rotten. A second chapter follows, dedicated to the cosmos, first with poems about the universe, and then about light, water, sound, space, time. Then there’s another, whose subject matter is basically works of art, and finally a last section made up of two long poems, one about my return to Chile, years after my exile, and another about the death of Rainer Maria Rilke.

^{AJ} Now, it seems to me worth our while to compare this nonchronological order with what happens, for example, in *A luta corporal*, where you follow a perfectly linear temporal order.

^{FG} Yes, because that’s a chronological book, which in some way charts the path I took from the beginning to the end. That is, from those first poems in rhyme and meter, to “Roçzeiral” and “Negror n’origens”, in which language disintegrated in the search for the essence of poetry. But I am no longer subject to those problems, or not in the same way. Nonetheless, what I find suggestive in this last book is that there’s a return to the central problematic of *A luta corporal*, especially when I confront the question of order and disorder, of what it is possible or not possible to say. It’s impossible to express what I felt smelling that jasmine. Language can’t do it. And that’s why I say that the poem doesn’t reveal reality, but rather

invents it. It's like a painter who wants to make a painting; he has the blank canvas, and what is going to emerge there is an invention; no one knows what's going to happen—van Gogh never did. *Starry Night* is a wish, and doesn't exist anywhere; it's pure artifice, like justice. Have you ever seen a plant called justice at your house? No, of course not, because it's a concept, a human creation. It is because we are unjust that we invent justice, because we want to be or aspire to be better than we are. It is the alligator and the snow leopard who live in a context without values; we live in an invented world.

^{AJ} If there's any characteristic that seems to me to represent our contemporary moment, it's that trait of intimacy that took root in your work after *Poema sujo*. Utopias—political or not—are dead, and with them the clear image we thought we had of our future. The fiercely experimental waters of a certain avant-garde are quieted (because their most profound engine—the deconstruction of the language inherited from the Renaissance—had already been consumed), and only the present is left for us. A present rich from an enormous inheritance, to put it that way, in the face of an uncertain future. And that's why I feel that many contemporary artists, you among them, take refuge in the everyday.



Ferreira Gullar in his apartment in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, 2010

[More info](#)

Ferreira Gullar in his apartment in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, 2010

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^{FG}

I agree, yes, and that's what allows for such a direct communication between my poetry and a great number of readers, so much so that very often I meet someone who thanks me for having written this or that poem, because that person identifies so fully with its content. It's like a man who recognized me one day on the street, and asked me:

“Are you the poet Ferreira Gullar?”

“Yes,” I told him, and he immediately pulled my poem “Filhos” [Children] out of his pocket and said: “Listen, I walk around all day with this poem in my pocket, and I read it constantly, and that's why I want to thank you for writing it, it's as if you had made it for me.”

And it's not that the subject matter is a game, a sort of candy to give to readers to seduce them. On the contrary, I'm not deceiving anyone, my subject matter is death, old age, the fragility of life—except that there exists a hope, I try always to give meaning to life, and I talk to my partner, to my friend, to the man who passes by on the corner. It's life, in the end, with all its contradictions—its pain, its absurdity, and also its beauty and its mystery—that I use to make my poetry, within the limits of the possible, of course.

^{AJ} It seems to me crucial to investigate more about your writing process, because that process contains another feature of what in my understanding characterizes contemporary artistic production: precisely that sort of technical nomadism that allows you to move from the most traditional forms—using rhyme and meter—to free verse, and even to the independent use of the word, just as a visual artist might move from painting to drawing, and from these to sculpture, photography, or video. That is, you're not tied to one specific method or technique, but rather you make use of any of these in the service of your expressive needs.

^{FG} Of course, because in my case, at least, it just so happens that what really defines the form a poem will take is the issue at hand, the moment, and not an a priori concept of what a poem is or should be. I decide how I'm going to make the poem by starting from the element that unleashes or provokes the poem. That is, at the start, what exists is the blank page, that space into which I will write. That space in and of itself contains all possibilities; it's a void that contains those possibilities as potential. When the first word is written, what happens is that this universe of possibilities is reduced, and the process of writing is that: the reduction of the initial possibilities, of what ceases to be chance in order to become necessity. And the poem emerges out of this process in which there is no a priori. It's clear that each poet likes certain forms more than others, and possesses a particular universe of words, a vocabulary, and it is within that universe that he creates—but he has absolute freedom to use any form, from the most irreverent and unexpected to the most classical and formal. And I find that this is an achievement of present-day art, despite the fact that the radicalism of the avant-garde has sought to impose a limited—and finally impoverishing—image of freedom on us.

^{AJ} What you're saying reminds me of a lovely phrase of Merleau-Ponty's, when he asserts, in *Eye and Mind*, the following:

The effort of modern painting has been directed not so much toward choosing between line and color, or even between figurative depiction and the creation of signs, as it has been toward multiplying the systems of equivalences, toward severing their adherence to the envelope of things. This effort may require the creation of new materials or new means of expression, but it may well be realized at times by the reexamination and reuse of those already at hand.⁸⁰

^{FG} That's exactly it, and that freedom is an achievement. Artists have the option to use all the available techniques. The problems they encounter are other challenges, like the demands of creation, of achieving an economy of means, the precise word, the one that can say it all—that is, these are the demands of artists themselves, not of external standards. And avant-garde movements, which achieved those freedoms, did not know how to contend with them, because they believed that the new freedoms would simply take the place of old forms, and thus they arrived at a limit, a dead end.

^{AJ} Now, I wonder, if art is a human invention, how can we speak of a “natural” course for the arts?

^{FG} What happens is that we’re not talking about a technical problem; it’s not that the natural course of the arts should be this or that form, or a specific technique in particular—no. The natural course of the arts isn’t painting, for example. It is simply the possibility of achieving true communication with an audience, the possibility of enriching our world. It’s not that there are standards for making a painting. When I say that art returned to its natural course, the idea is that it is once again in dialogue with people—as it always was—and isn’t exercising the will to constrain them, to confront them with an incomprehensible enigma. Art’s greatest task is not to torment people, but to fascinate them. And in order to do that, today, we have an entire millennial inheritance, from cave painting to the language of the avant-garde, and we have the possibility of using these in whichever ways seem best to us, to achieve the best communication, the greatest effect possible. The important thing is that when we use a medium, we know how to infuse it with our particular conception of life, because we no longer live in the time of the caves, nor that of the middle ages, nor that of the avant-gardes.

If I had to define the function of art, both in the present and in the past, I would say that its most important role is to help us to live, to create happiness. I start from this principle: if art exists it’s because life is not enough. Art should enrich our lives, and that has nothing to do with Cubism, with video, or with installations. I’m not interested in knowing which school or tendency a particular work represents; I only care about the power that work might have to enrich my existence, to make it more possible. Imagine two beggars talking in the street, like the ones I saw the other day here, in front of my house. One of those guys, dirty and poorly dressed, saying to the other: “Respect me!” And of course, beneath those dirty rags there’s a human being who wants to be respected, because it’s the other who gives us meaning: without the other we don’t exist. Jean-Paul Sartre said that hell is other people, but that’s not true: other people are our salvation; without them we are nothing.

Cláudia Ahimsa (1963) is a Brazilian poet born in Porto Alegre. Author of poetry collections like *Noite Sem Dormir* (2001) and *A vida agarrada* (2006) and current partner of Ferreira Gullar.

Ferreira Gullar, “Pergunta e Resposta,” in *Toda poesia*, 459.

This incommensurate difference between man and universe recalls the renowned phrase from *Thoughts*, in which Pascal recommended that man: “turn his vision from the low objects which surround him.” “Let man then contemplate the whole of nature in her full and grand majesty [. . .] Returning to himself, let man consider what he is in comparison with all existence; let him regard himself as lost in this remote corner of nature; and from the little cell in which he finds himself lodged, I mean the universe, let him estimate at their true value the earth, kingdoms, cities, and himself.” (Translator’s note: Translation of Pascal text taken from Blaise Pascal, *Thoughts*, trans. W. F. Trotter (Boston: P. F. Collier & Son Co., 1910), 25–26.

Ferreira Gullar, “Quem Sou Eu?,” in *Toda poesia*, 354.

Ferreira Gullar, “Nasce o Poema,” in *Toda poesia*, 397–403.

Ferreira Gullar, “Nasce o Poema,” in *Toda poesia*, 397–403.

Translator’s note: The word *ningún/ninguno/ninguna* means, literally, “not one” or “none.” In combination with *lugar* or *parte* (*ningún lugar* or *ninguna parte*) it means “nowhere” or “noplacé.” A “*parte ninguna de a vida*” would literally be a “none” part of life, where “none” (or “not one”) refers to the “not one” in “noplacé,” or “not one place.”

Ferreira Gullar, “Desordem,” in *Em alguma parte alguma* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 2010), 28–29.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L’œil et l’esprit*. Paris: Ed. Gallimard, 1964, 71–72. Translation into English from *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993, p. 142.

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Ferreira Gullar reading an excerpt of his poem “Nasce o poema,” Rio de Janeiro, 2012

Original manuscript *Nasce o poema* [*The Poem is Born*], photographed in 2011

Ferreira Gullar in his apartment in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, 2010

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Leland Guyer specializes in 20th century Portuguese and Brazilian literature. In 1990, he published the first full-length translation of Ferreira Gullar's "Poema Sujo" [Dirty Poem], generally regarded to be one of the most important works of poetry to have been written in Latin America in this century and has since been working on the Gullar anthology *An Ordinary Man*, published in this e-book. His current research and writing interests include the theory and practice of literary translation, a Spanish–English dictionary, the roles of technology in language learning, hypertext and hypermedia, and the travel literature of Iberia and Ibero-America. Guyer is Professor of Hispanic Studies at Macalester College in St. Paul, MN, where he has been teaching since 1983.

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Latin American Literary Review, Luso-Brazilian Review, Studies in Latin American Popular Culture, Women's Review of Books, and other publications. She is currently researching the work of Brazilian women filmmakers and visual artists.

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FERREIRA GULLAR

AN ORDINARY MAN



Collected Poems
Translated by Lisana Gray

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PRÓLOGO DE LA EDICIÓN DIGITAL

La serie Conversaciones/Conversations de la Fundación Cisneros es un esfuerzo por preservar los testimonios directos de destacados artistas e intelectuales latinoamericanos. Pero queríamos ir más lejos y por ello nos complace presentar esta versión electrónica del libro *Ferreira Gullar in conversation with/ en conversación con Ariel Jiménez*. El formato digital no solo permite llegar a un público más numeroso, sino además ofrece la oportunidad de compartir gran variedad de materiales de fuentes primarias que enriquecen estas conversaciones de manera considerable.

Es un honor para nosotros poder publicar *An Ordinary Man (Hombre común)*, en esta edición digital. Esta antología de poemas de Gullar ha sido recopilada y traducida al inglés por Leland Guyer a lo largo de veinticinco años.

Guyer publicó una traducción al inglés del poema épico “Poema sujo” [Poema sucio] en 1990. Esta obra era poco conocida en los Estados Unidos pero hoy, gracias a la tecnología digital, podemos publicar este poema así como grabaciones en portugués de varios poemas en la antología interpretados por Leland Guyer. La versión digital de esta antología también está disponible para su compra en una edición digital independiente.

También incorporamos reproducciones del Manifiesto Neoconcreto (1959) y el ensayo “Diálogo sôbre o não-objeto” (1960) tal como aparecieron originalmente en el *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical*, una importante publicación para la diseminación de las obras del poeta. Además, incluimos vídeos de Gullar leyendo sus poemas como “Meu povo, meu poema” [Mi pueblo, mi poema] que proporcionan al lector la opción de disfrutar estas obras de viva voz.

La guía introductoria explica cómo navegar las distintas aplicaciones que aporta esta versión electrónica [y se puede acceder aquí](#), así como en el índice. Hemos decidido publicar la serie en la plataforma EPUB 3 por ser el formato de digitalización de contenidos más universal en el mercado hoy en día y porque proporciona herramientas prácticas como los marcadores de colores, notas virtuales que redireccionan al lector a la sección del libro a la cual se refieren, un buscador que permite navegar más allá del índice tradicional y un diccionario dentro del texto.

Esperamos que la selección de recursos disponibles en esta edición brinde una experiencia nutritiva y dinámica, similar a la que se disfruta en la conversación entre Ferreira Gullar y Ariel Jiménez.

INTRODUCCIÓN

En este libro Ferreira Gullar relata su accidental encuentro adolescente con la poesía. Sus logros, a partir de ese encuentro fortuito hace más de seis décadas, no dejan de ser asombrosos.

El quinto título de la serie Conversaciones/Conversations publicado por la Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros (CPPC), *Ferreira Gullar en conversación con Ariel Jiménez*, presenta un relato vívido de un poeta cuyas contribuciones al clima cultural brasileño han sido tan vitales como malinterpretadas o pasadas por alto. Los intercambios entre Gullar y Ariel Jiménez revelan a un escritor que ha estado siempre críticamente involucrado en un diálogo con otros escritores, y cuyo impacto tanto en las artes visuales como en la teoría cultural son legendarios.

Gullar, un autodidacta profundamente erudito, dice que su “vida entera es una improvisación”. Posee una notable capacidad de adaptarse a circunstancias cambiantes y se resiste emersonianamente a “tontas coherencias” frente a evidencias que contradicen una creencia mantenida previamente. Incluso en sus momentos más polémicos, Gullar ha demostrado una honestidad intelectual y una flexibilidad que le han impedido caer en el error fundamental de intentar adaptar la realidad a la teoría.

Figura central de la vanguardia más avanzada y creador del Manifiesto Neoconcreto en 1959, Gullar termina distanciándose de la vanguardia colocándose incluso en su contra cuando finalmente reconoce sus limitaciones. De la misma manera, sus creencias marxistas sufrieron modificaciones después de estudiar no solo la filosofía del movimiento comunista en la URSS sino su práctica, y encontrar su idealismo admirable pero perfectible. Sujeto a revueltas políticas y

viviendo por lo general como un exiliado, Gullar se ha reinventado de manera consistente en meditada respuesta a circunstancias estéticas, ideológicas y políticas. Ha cuestionado además su práctica personal, creando y destruyendo, y derribando sin miedo barreras en su camino, para así reconstruir las bases necesarias para su obra artística. Consecuentemente, Ferreira Gullar se ha mantenido como una figura vibrante, vital, no ajena a controversias tenaces.

Les estoy muy agradecido a Ferreira Gullar y Ariel Jiménez por la dedicación dirigida a la creación de este volumen, que es el relato más extenso a la fecha, del trabajo e ideas de Gullar a lo largo de su productiva vida. Quiero felicitar a Ariel Jiménez, anterior curador en jefe de la CPPC, por haber seguido su instinto de localizar a Gullar y convencerlo de participar en este proyecto. También aprovecho esta oportunidad para agradecer a Donna Wingate y Ileen Kohn por su supervisión editorial y a Marquand Books por su pericia en materia de producción de libros .

Como con todos los títulos de la serie Conversaciones/Conversations, la traducción de textos es una parte crítica del proceso, especialmente en este caso, que involucra tres idiomas. Agradecemos a todos nuestros traductores, en particular a Leland Guyer y Ariel Jiménez por las traducciones realizadas de los poemas de Gullar. Toda poesía es esencialmente intraducible, pero la lectura profunda de los poemas de Gullar, ha permitido un acceso sin precedentes que de otra manera hubiese sido una puerta cerrada.

La traducción, como proceso de comprensión –de ingreso a un mundo de referencias desconocidas previamente y construcción de un universo de significados –nos brinda una metáfora apropiada para la misión de la Fundación Cisneros. Durante décadas, esta organización ha expuesto el patrimonio cultural –tangible e intangible– de América Latina al público del mundo entero. Los diálogos inherentes al arte y a la

cultura figuran en el ADN de la familia y la Fundación Cisneros, y este volúmen es otro ejemplo de ese profundo compromiso.

Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro

Director, Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros

UNA POESÍA UNIVERSAL

Weydson B. Leal

Si el poeta es un pensador que usa la palabra para revelar la más sensible percepción de la experiencia humana, Ferreira Gullar se inserta en la cúspide de una tradición que desde Homero –pasando por Dante, Shakespeare, Camões y Whitman– alcanza la condición humanística. Paradójicamente, en el canon de la poesía contemporánea, su posición es incontestable. Dueño de una biografía que inició en 1930, en la pequeña ciudad de São Luís, capital del estado de Maranhão, en el norte de Brasil, Ferreira Gullar ha construido su trayectoria de vida y obra a través del desarrollo de un talento único y de convicciones estéticas, políticas e ideológicas, firmes y combativas; principalmente a partir del momento en el cual pasó a vivir en Río de Janeiro, en la década de 1950. Su poesía, teatro, ensayos sobre arte y artículos periodísticos constituye el registro contundente de un hombre de su tiempo que también piensa el futuro. Por ello, Ferreira Gullar puede ser considerado, además de uno de los más grandes poetas de lengua portuguesa, uno de los grandes humanistas de los siglos XX y XXI.

La insigne poesía es intemporal, y trasciende el lugar donde fue escrita. No importa el idioma o la edad del poeta, el país o el siglo en que nació. Esa poesía está más allá de movimientos estilísticos, historiografías, modismos, revoluciones y vanguardias. Esto sucede porque el verdadero arte poético, ya sea en la Grecia Antigua, en la Italia del siglo XIII o en la América del siglo XIX, continúa transmitiendo el pensamiento y el sentimiento de un pueblo, al rebasar la inmanencia de la palabra y traspasar generaciones. Cuando el poeta y diplomático brasileño Vinicius de Moraes, en un artículo de 1976, escribió que, con

la tríada formada por Carlos Drummond de Andrade, João Cabral de Melo Neto y Ferreira Gullar, la poesía brasileña estaba preparada para presentarse ante cualquier lector del mundo, no exageraba. Al lado de Manuel Bandeira y del propio Vinicius, estos autores suscriben la mejor poesía escrita en Brasil desde el comienzo del siglo pasado. La vasta fortuna crítica en torno de la obra poética de Ferreira Gullar, reuniendo tesis universitarias, ensayos y artículos publicados por críticos, poetas, estudiosos e intelectuales de la talla de José Guilherme Merquior y Alfredo Bossi, ratifican las constataciones de Moraes. En ese artículo de 1976, en que revelaba a Brasil el nacimiento del “Poema sujo” [Poema sucio] –largo poema escrito por Gullar en su exilio en Buenos Aires, durante el periodo de la dictadura militar en Brasil–, Vinicius de Moraes manifestó que, hasta entonces, aquel había sido uno de los poemas más importantes e impactantes que había leído en todos los idiomas que conocía. Moraes también afirmaba que el “Poema sujo” era “seguramente el más rico, generoso (y al mismo tiempo riguroso), y pleno de vida de toda la literatura brasileña”.

Como crítico de arte y pensador, Ferreira Gullar está entre los más lúcidos y cultos autores hoy en el mundo. Como columnista o colaborador de periódicos y revistas de Brasil, sus textos tienen la claridad y la sagacidad de los que indican caminos y denuncian falacias, ya sea cuando se muestran en discursos político-ideológicos o en salones de bienales de arte. Como defensor de las libertades democráticas que le dan a todo ciudadano el derecho de actuar y expresarse, Gullar no tiene miedo de establecer límites o de renovar rumbos –es más, nunca los tuvo, incluso en los años en que la persecución política y la vigilancia ideológica lo llevaron al exilio–. Prueba de ello es el hecho de que él mismo, también un creador de artes plásticas, expone sus trabajos en libros y exposiciones, abriendo la ventana del artista a la crítica ajena. Su coraje como pensador traspasa las fronteras del arte y de la literatura,

alcanzando problemáticas sociales de enorme repercusión, lo cual lo transforma en uno de los columnistas que más correspondencia recibe en los medios en los que publica. Un artículo o ensayo suyo es siempre una garantía de veracidad, coraje y convicción. En un caso reciente que marcó la historia del periodismo, escribió en su columna en la *Folha de São Paulo* sobre los errores, equívocos y contradicciones en el tratamiento de la esquizofrenia en Brasil. Debido al avasallante apoyo de la opinión pública, días después apareció su rostro en la tapa de la revista de mayor circulación del país, cuyo reportaje principal era acerca del problema que él puso en discusión con incuestionable argumentación. Lo motivó el hecho de que él mismo tiene un hijo esquizofrénico – quien sufrió, a lo largo de los años, los errores de los tratamientos denunciados en su columna–. Sobre problemas personales o de su familia, nunca ha tenido vergüenza en hacerlos públicos si se trataba de situaciones que pudieran afectar a cualquiera, y esto tal vez resida en un rasgo incomparable de su solidaridad y sentido colectivo. Su humanismo también es acción.

La poesía de Ferreira Gullar es resultado de una sensibilidad erudita, lírica y social. Su poética es capaz en el “Poema sujo” de traducir, además de las angustias del hombre contemporáneo, los fértiles silencios que alimentan sus inquietudes, conflictos y alegrías cotidianas, en una riqueza de percepciones que florecen en luminosas sinestesias. La misma sensibilidad capaz en el “Poema sujo” de aprehender la muerte “que se propagó por toda la calle,/se mezcló con los árboles de la quinta, / penetró en la cocina de nuestra casa, /se impregnó del olor de la carne que se asaba en la olla/y quedó brillando en los cubiertos/dispuestos sobre el mantel/en la mesa del almuerzo”, también es visionaria en “Jasmim” del perfume de una flor como “un silencio a inventarse en las/plantas,/viniendo de la tierra oscura/como troncos, tallos, ramas, / hojas, /el aroma que se vuelve arbusto / –un jazminero”. Como en toda

poesía que al sumergirse y elevarse alcanza el corazón del hombre común, recorre su obra la solidaridad fraterna y el inconformismo con las injusticias sociales, su disgusto con el dolor ajeno y ese deleite lírico que, en el plano de la literatura internacional, lo coloca al lado de poetas como Baudelaire, Rilke, Rimbaud, Whitman, T. S. Eliot y Maiakovski, en lo que estos contienen de sublime y de humano, siendo originales y universales. Lo cual nos remite al componente lingüístico de la poesía de Ferreira Gullar. Al escribir en lengua portuguesa, las mismas puertas de la latinidad que lo identifican con los sentimientos de su pueblo –que lo reverencia con justo reconocimiento– también le dan acceso, con innumerables traducciones, a lectores de otras nacionalidades, anunciándolo ya como un perfecto caso de clásico moderno. Su poesía tiene traducciones y publicaciones en Estados Unidos, Venezuela, Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Italia, México, Perú, Portugal, Canadá, Suecia, Holanda y Vietnam, entre otros países. Este alcance de su poesía nos remite a lo que T. S. Eliot escribió, en su discurso para The Virgil Society, en 1944: “Entonces podemos concluir que el clásico ideal debe de ser aquel en el cual se encuentre latente, o completamente expuesto, el genio entero de un pueblo, y que solo se muestre en un lenguaje que permita que todo su genio esté presente a la vez. Por lo tanto debemos agregar a nuestra lista de las características de lo clásico, la exhaustividad. El clásico debe, dentro de sus limitaciones formales, expresar el máximo posible de la gama completa de sentimientos que representa el carácter del pueblo que habla ese idioma. De esta manera será su mejor representación y será apreciado ampliamente; y entre el pueblo, al cual pertenece, conseguirá respuesta entre personas de todas las clases y condiciones”¹. La conclusión de Eliot, creemos, traduce la posición de Ferreira Gullar en la historia de la literatura brasileña y justifica su amplio espectro de lectores en tantas partes del mundo.

Desde su primer libro de poemas, *Um pouco acima do chão* [*Un poco encima del suelo*], de 1949 –obra de la adolescencia, no incluida por el autor en sus primeras antologías–, se percibe el ímpetu creador de un poeta que, aunque aún buscaba un lenguaje propio, ya revelaba fuerza e inventiva. A partir de su segundo libro, *A luta corporal* [*La lucha corporal*], de 1954, su poesía encuentra la grandeza renovadora que dejó a sus primeros analistas sin parámetros de juicio. Desde entonces, va a experimentar y renovarse en cada publicación, en una impresionante secuencia de obras primas como: *Dentro da noite veloz* [*Dentro de la noche veloz*, 1975], *Poema sujo* [*Poema sucio*, 1976], *Na vertigem do dia* [*En el vértigo del día*, 1980], *Barulhos* [*Barullos*, 1987], *Muitas vozes* [*Muchas voces*, 1999] y *Em alguma parte alguma* [*En algún lugar ninguno*, 2010] –este último, una antología de poemas que, una vez más, está entre los mejores libros de poesía brasileña contemporánea–. La obra de Ferreira Gullar es tan rica como multifacética: además de libros de poesía, artículos y ensayos sobre artes plásticas, escribió obras de teatro, dramaturgia para televisión, cuentos, crónicas, traducciones, una autobiografía y libros de poesía infanto-juvenil. Ha recibido los más significativos premios de la literatura brasileña en diversas categorías. En los últimos tiempos, como intelectual de intensa participación en el contexto socio-cultural brasileño, entre 1992 y 1995 presidió el IBAC (Instituto Brasileño de Arte y Cultura), vinculado al Ministerio de Cultura de Brasil, por indicación del entonces presidente de la República Itamar Franco. En el 2000, fue escogido “Intelectual del Año” en un concurso nacional, cuando fue realizada la exposición *Ferreira Gullar, 70 años*, una gran retrospectiva de su vida y obra en el Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro. En 2010, su mujer, la poeta Claudia Ahimsa, organiza en el Museu Nacional de Belas Artes de Río de Janeiro, una segunda exposición, conmemorando sus 80 años. En ese mismo año, fue laureado con el Premio Camões, el premio más

importante para escritores de lengua portuguesa, otorgado por los gobiernos de Portugal y Brasil a autores que contribuyen al enriquecimiento del patrimonio literario y cultural del idioma. Un hecho especialmente revelador de la trascendencia de Ferreira Gullar para la cultura contemporánea fue haber sido propuesto, en 2002, para el Premio Nobel de Literatura, obteniendo el apoyo y la suscripción de varios intelectuales brasileños y extranjeros. Hoy, luego de que el primer Premio Nobel para la lengua portuguesa ha sido dado, con justo merecimiento, al novelista portugués José Saramago, no sería una sorpresa si una segunda premiación para ese idioma fuera concedida a la poesía y a Brasil a través de Ferreira Gullar. En vísperas de completar su 81º aniversario, la vitalidad de este poeta, cuya obra y biografía son ejemplos de dignidad intelectual y humana, nos da la sensación de morar cerca de un hombre que siempre está recomenzando su oficio: la poesía que reúne a todos los hombres en uno solo.

T. S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 69.

INVENTARSE A SÍ MISMO

El descubrimiento de la poesía

Como adultos, pasamos la vida entera compensando nuestra infancia. Completándola, añorándola, huyéndola también. Ese momento en todo caso –y ese lugar– en el cual abrimos los ojos al mundo, cuando somos todavía un amasijo de sentidos, sin conceptos, sin palabras, define gran parte de nuestra estructura psíquica. Lo que llegamos luego a ser, la manera cómo respondemos a los estímulos y escollos de la vida, proviene en gran medida de ese universo de la infancia y de los pocos años que le siguen, hasta el nacimiento de una conciencia personal. Todos, sin excepción, lo sepamos o no, respondemos a ese dictamen. Es sin embargo en las personas que trabajan con mayor constancia su memoria, como los escritores, donde ese contacto primero con lo real se hace fecundo y duradero como para ser percibido en sus obras de principio a fin. Allí, para quien sabe observar, se encuentra escondida si no toda la obra de un autor, sí el estímulo primero, ese conjunto de problemas a los cuales, su vida entera, tratará de responder.

*todo eso en ti
se deposita
y calla.
Hasta que de repente
un susto
o un ventarrón
(que el poema dispara)
llama
esos fósiles al habla.*

*Mi poema
es un tumulto, un alarido:
basta apurar el oído.¹*

FERREIRA GULLAR

Nací en São Luís do Maranhão el 10 de septiembre de 1930, en una familia de clase media baja. Me bautizaron con el nombre de José Ribamar Ferreira, pero luego decidí cambiarlo. Un poeta de la ciudad (muy mediocre) que se llamaba Ribamar Pereira, escribió un poema horrible que publicaron con mi nombre. Aquello me irritó de tal modo que decidí cambiar el mío para siempre. Utilicé mi apellido paterno, Ferreira, y el apellido francés de mi mamá, Goulart, que transformé para llamarme Ferreira Gullar.² En São Luís, mi padre tenía un negocio, una verdulería, lo que en Brasil llamamos una *quitanda*,³ donde vendía arroz, frijoles, verduras, frutas y todo ese tipo de productos. La nuestra era una familia muy grande. Éramos diez, entre mis hermanos y hermanas y yo. Además, no disponíamos de muchos libros en casa, apenas las historias policiales que le gustaban a mi papá y que leía en una revista llamada X-9. Él había sido futbolista, ese era su mundo, y siendo pequeño me llevaba con él a los juegos. Quizás por eso quise ser futbolista al principio. Me inicié jugando con mis compañeros en las calles de tierra, y por último entré al equipo juvenil de Sampaio Correia. La pasión sin embargo acabó rápido, tan pronto como recibí un trastazo que me levantó como a dos metros de altura. Cuando caí al suelo pensé que las vértebras de mi columna se habían metido unas dentro de otras. Nunca más volví a jugar.



Ferreira Gullar (centro) con su madre y hermanos en São Luís do Maranhão, c. 1936

ARIEL JIMÉNEZ

Para cualquiera que lea su poesía se hace de inmediato patente que ese escenario casi rural de su infancia juega un rol fundamental en su obra de adulto. De allí proviene ese asombro, esa extrañeza ante la opacidad² del mundo que la caracteriza.

São Luís era una ciudad pequeña en aquella época, y por lo general las familias vivían en casas. Los edificios y los apartamentos casi no existían. Nosotros vivíamos en una de esas casas tradicionales, con su patio de tierra lleno de gallinas, gallos, hierbas y plantas diversas, lo que aquí llamamos un quintal. Ahí pasé gran parte de mi tiempo jugando con mis hermanos y hermanas, entre aquellos animales rodeados por una multitud de polluelos. Todo eso formaba parte de nuestra cotidianidad y se quedó grabado en mi memoria como una experiencia esencial que resurge a menudo en mi poesía, porque es parte de lo que me constituye, de lo que me ayudó a ser lo que soy. Al fin y al cabo estamos hechos de esas ínfimas cosas acumuladas lentamente en nosotros. Mi poema “O formigueiro” [El hormiguero], por ejemplo, que es uno de los primeros poemas neoconcretos que hago a finales de los años cincuenta, proviene de esas

experiencias infantiles en el patio de mi casa. En el Maranhão existe una leyenda popular que asegura que donde hay hormigas hay oro enterrado. Un día vimos hormigas en el patio y nos pusimos de inmediato a cavar en busca del oro. Ya teníamos un hueco bastante grande cuando llegó uno de esos enormes aguaceros tropicales y lo inundó completamente. Así fue como acabó la aventura y nos olvidamos del oro y de las hormigas, aunque el episodio con ellas se quedó para siempre en mi memoria.

Hubo igualmente acontecimientos importantes en la ciudad y en el país que me marcaron durablemente, como la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Yo tenía nueve años cuando comenzó la guerra y recuerdo bien los titulares enormes de los periódicos que decían: “¡Invasión Polonia!”, y los tipos que vendían los periódicos por la calle gritando: “¡Guerra! ¡Guerra!”, y claro, no sabía muy bien lo que aquello podía significar, pero la agitación y la preocupación de la gente en las calles y en mi propia casa me asustaron mucho. Todos hablaban de eso, en todas partes, de manera que la guerra pasó a formar parte de nuestro cotidiano. Lo escuchábamos por la radio, en las noticias, y mi padre lo comentaba en casa, con nosotros o con sus amigos. Recuerdo que cuando escuchaba las noticias y alguna interferencia producía ruidos en la radio, mi papá gritaba: “¡Esos son tiros, son tiros!” Tal vez imaginaba que la radio transmitía desde el frente de batalla y creía que esos ruidos eran ráfagas de ametralladora. Yo lo escuchaba aterrado y por supuesto me creía todos sus comentarios. Como no tenía ni idea además de dónde estaba ocurriendo aquello, si era cerca o lejos de São Luís, la guerra se transformó para mí en una cosa amenazadora que podía estar ahí mismo, después del horizonte visual de la ciudad. Tenía miedo que la Gestapo llegara hasta nosotros, o que los aviones alemanes bombardearan nuestra casa. Luego comencé a comprender dónde era, pero esa primera impresión me marcó de manera contundente.

La situación se fue haciendo aún más tensa a medida que los navíos brasileños se hacían torpedear por los submarinos alemanes, lo que hizo que Brasil le declarara la guerra a Alemania.⁵ En esos barcos murieron además algunas personas de São Luís, y el hecho creó mucho recelo entre los habitantes. Entre los episodios que recuerdo de todo ese revuelo está el de la hija de un negro que trabajaba en los muelles del puerto. Ella había sido una de las víctimas de los ataques y como Italia era aliada de los alemanes, su padre, desesperado por su muerte, llegó hasta la plaza de la ciudad donde un italiano vendía periódicos, y lo asesinó a puñaladas. Otras situaciones similares se dieron con los alemanes o sus descendientes, como los muchachos que empezaron a ser hostigados por sus compañeros en las escuelas. En fin, aquello fue lamentable.

En cambio, otra consecuencia de los ataques contra los navíos brasileños tuvo resultados felices en mi caso, porque en ese momento las mercancías comenzaron a escasear, y mi padre pensó que podría ganar mucho dinero trayéndolas de otros lugares. Así se transformó en comerciante ambulante. No iba muy lejos, solo llegaba hasta Teresina, la capital del Estado de Piauí, mientras otros iban hasta Río de Janeiro. Lo cierto es que tal vez por ser el más pequeño de sus hijos mi papá me llevaba con él, lo cual resultó ser un suceso inolvidable. El tren salía de madrugada y en mi imaginación lo veía como un inmenso dragón metálico que respiraba echando humo por las narices. Yo era un niño, debía tener unos diez o doce años, y el trayecto de São Luís hasta Teresina en ese monstruo mecánico me resultaba fascinante.



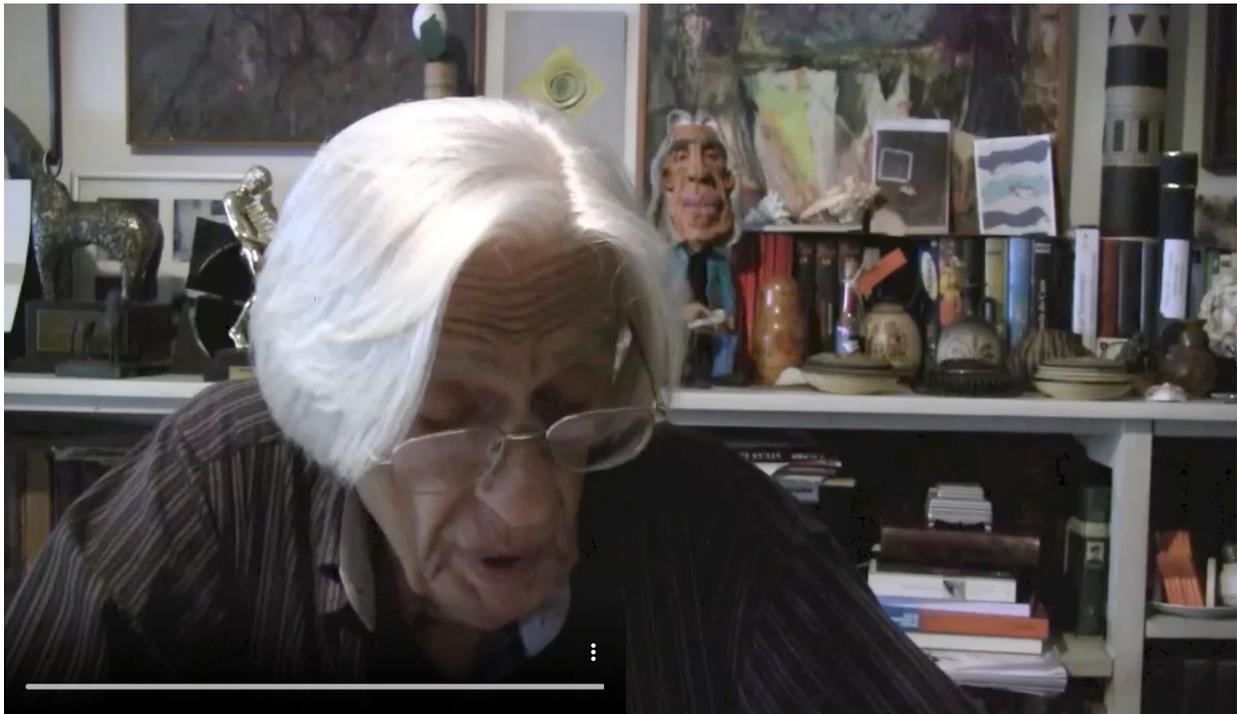
Ferreira Gullar a los doce años, São Luís, 1942

*Y cómo era grande el mundo:
hacia horas que el tren corría
sin jamás llegar al fin
de tanto cielo tanta tierra
de tantos campos y sierras
sin hablar del Piauí⁶*

Salíamos de la ciudad y atravesábamos una región pantanosa llamada *Campo das perdizes*, con inmensas zonas anegadas, con millares de aves volando y cantando por todas partes. Y esa visión de los pájaros sobre el agua, al amanecer, era para mí deslumbrante, tanto que cuando escuché por primera vez “O trezinho do caipira”⁷ [El trencillo del campesino], la *Bachiana brasileira N° 2* de Heitor Villa-Lobos,⁸ asocié una cosa con la otra. Inmediatamente recordé los viajes que hacía con mi padre e incluso intenté escribir una letra, pero no lo conseguí. Durante veinte años hice diversas tentativas, nunca lo logré. Después, cuando estaba en Buenos Aires, durante el exilio, y mientras escribía el “Poema sujo”, que es un poema amplísimo donde evoco mi infancia, sucede lo contrario. La primera vez, al escuchar la bachiana de Villa-Lobos, recordé los viajes de mi infancia. Ahora, al evocar en el poema los viajes que hacía con

mi padre, rememoré la música de Villa-Lobos, y en ese instante la letra que no pude escribir en veinte años de tentativas surgió en escasos veinte minutos.

*Ahí va el tren con el niño
Ahí va la vida a rodar
Ahí va corro y destino
Ciudad y noche a girar
Ahí va el tren sin destino
Para el día nuevo encontrar
Corriendo va por la tierra
Va por la sierra
Va por el mar
Cantando por la sierra lunar²
Corriendo entre las estrellas a volar
Volar, volar, volar¹⁰*



Ferreira Gullar leyendo la letra de “Trenzinho Caipira” la cual es un extracto de su poema “Poema sujo,” Rio de Janeiro, 2012

Esa letra fue grabada luego y es muy conocida en Brasil, lo que de alguna manera ayudó a popularizar esta bachiana. Hoy es una de las más tocadas, no solamente por mi texto, obviamente, sino porque es una de las más bellas, y porque la letra le facilita al público el acercamiento a la música.

Mi infancia fue así en São Luís. Fuera de allí, fui un niño de la calle, vivía libre en la ciudad. Con otros dos compañeros de mi edad andábamos haciendo travesuras: pescando, atrapando camarones, jugando billar y hasta haciendo cosas prohibidas, como robar cocos en la esquina o las gallinas en las casas de los otros. Mi alfabetización, incluso, no se hizo en una escuela formal, se hizo en casa, con profesores particulares. Después sí alcancé a estudiar en la mejor escuela privada de la ciudad, el Colégio São Luís

Gonzaga. Fui un buen alumno, estudioso, aplicado, pero al poco tiempo mi padre comenzó a experimentar dificultades económicas en sus negocios y tuve que ir a una escuela pública, la Escuela Técnica de Formación Profesional que preparaba sastres, zapateros, ebanistas. Esperaban quizás que aprendiera alguno de esos oficios, en caso de que no llegara a tener una profesión que exigiera estudios universitarios. Fue ahí, por casualidad, donde descubrí la poesía y me dediqué a ella. Yo debía tener unos trece años, y un día la profesora nos dio como tarea una redacción sobre el Día del Trabajo. Entonces escribí un texto argumentando esa peculiar situación, que el Día del Trabajo fuera precisamente uno donde nadie trabajara, y resulta que el texto le gustó a la profesora. Lo encontró tan interesante y bien escrito que lo leyó en público, ante mis compañeros de clase. Pese a ello, no me puso diez, la nota máxima, porque había cometido dos errores de ortografía. A partir de ese día me dije que quizás podía hacerme escritor, y para serlo debía conocer el idioma correctamente, conocer la gramática.

Como el efecto mariposa en la teoría del caos, un pequeño gesto, la observación amable y alentadora de la maestra, definió una vida entera, y una obra, hoy enorme. Sin ese gesto, el niño que era Ferreira Gullar igual hubiera podido orientarse hacia la pintura o, quien sabe, hacia el teatro. El caso es que de las múltiples posibilidades que se le ofrecían a un joven de talento, una sola, en ese preciso instante, respondió a sus necesidades más íntimas.

^{FG}

No sabía qué hacer de mi vida, y ya venía experimentando muchos inconvenientes en la escuela donde estudiaba, de manera que cuando vi que a la profesora le había gustado mi texto, imaginé que quizás podría servir para eso, ¿cómo saberlo? A esa edad un niño tiene innumerables posibilidades abiertas, puede ser muchas cosas, y debe inventarse a sí mismo. Ahora claro, para ser escritor debía conocer la gramática, entonces pasé dos años leyendo libros de gramática, entre 1943 y 1945. Lo hice solo, en mi casa, porque en mi familia nadie podía ayudarme, y porque ese mismo año dejé la escuela. Resulta que una de esas gramáticas, la Gramática expositiva de Eduardo Carlos Pereira, contenía una antología de poetas portugueses y brasileños. Ahí había poemas de escritores portugueses como Luís de Camões¹¹ y Bocage;¹² también brasileños como Gonçalves Dias,¹³ Castro Alves¹⁴ y Olavo Bilac.¹⁵ Fue ahí, en ese libro, donde descubrí la poesía. Los recuerdo bien, primero comencé a aprendérmelos de memoria y enseguida pasé a leer la poesía de Gonçalves Dias, los pensamientos de Bocage y de Camões. En fin, empecé a interesarme por ese tipo de producción literaria. Solo me extrañaba que todos los poetas estuvieran muertos. La poesía parecía un oficio de difuntos y aun así quería ser poeta. Finalmente descubrí que los poetas existían y que había uno muy cerca de mi casa. Era el padre de Iracema, una amiga de mi hermana.

Este señor, de cholas y camiseta, no respondía para nada a la imagen idealizada que me había hecho de los poetas, pero formaba parte de la Academia Maraense de Letras, y cuando supo que yo también quería ser poeta me prestó un libro, el *Tratado de versificación*. Luego me llevó al centro de la ciudad, a la Plaza João Lisboa, donde había muchos otros poetas, lo cual me costaba trabajo imaginar. Yo vivía rodeado de gallinas y gallos en el patio de mi casa y no imaginaba que el mundo fuera mayor. Ahí, en el centro de la ciudad, descubrí a los poetas vivos, supe que existía una vida literaria, con jóvenes como yo que se dedicaban a aquello. Así comencé a convivir con ellos y a intercambiar ideas con los jóvenes, y también con los viejos. Poetas como Manuel Sobrinho, que fue quien me llevó hasta allá, y Corrêa de Araujo, que era un poeta muy gracioso, muy pícaro. En fin, con ellos inicié mi vida literaria. A partir de ese momento me convertí en un verdadero técnico del verso endecasílabo.



Ferreira Gullar (izquierda) con Corrêa de Araujo (centro) y Lago Burnett. São Luís, c. 1950

^{AJ} Supongo que para un carácter inquieto como el suyo, la escuela y la regularidad de los cursos debieron ser como una camisa de fuerza.

^{FG} En realidad, la mayor dificultad que encontré en el colegio fueron los talleres de herrería, con aquellos enormes y pesados martillos que no podía levantar, y los cursos de educación física. En los talleres me ponían a golpear el hierro incandescente sobre los yunques y la verdad es que no tenía fuerza para levantar aquellas herramientas. Por eso pedí que me trasladaran a otros talleres como los de zapatería, donde el olor de los materiales como la cola, los tintes, la cera y el cuero me agradaban mucho. Siempre he mantenido una relación muy fuerte con los olores que me rodean: el de las flores, las frutas, los materiales, la tierra. Pero lo que realmente me hizo abandonar la Escuela Técnica fueron los cursos de educación física, y su profesor, una persona de muy poca sensibilidad que no comprendía lo que estaba haciendo. Exigirle a un muchacho como yo, de unos escasos treinta kilos, que cargara a un tipo de ochenta, era algo completamente absurdo. Y yo se lo reclamaba, porque no podía hacer aquello, pero él no me escuchaba, me ignoraba por completo. Por eso dejé de ir a las clases de física, y por supuesto el profesor me puso cero. Lo más absurdo de esa situación es que alcancé notas óptimas en Portugués, en Matemática, en Física y en las demás asignaturas también, pero todo era tan incoherente en ese colegio que a pesar de eso, y sin siquiera llamarme para saber lo que había sucedido, me reprobaron a causa de ese cero. En ese momento decidí dejar la escuela. Mi padre no tenía recursos para pagar otra y yo, sencillamente, no quería, no podía volver a la Escuela Técnica. A partir de ese momento, tenía trece años, me hice autodidacta y es a través de los libros, en lecturas solitarias, donde encuentro las respuestas que requería mi curiosidad intelectual. Nunca más volví a la escuela, ni fui a la universidad.

^{AJ} No deja de ser admirable la disciplina con la cual organizó sus estudios, porque es posible aprender solo, pero obtener una formación coherente y profunda en cualquier área, sin ningún tipo de orientación intelectual, es en extremo complejo, casi improbable.

^{FG} No organicé nada, nunca lo he hecho. Mi vida toda es una improvisación. Simplemente me interesaba por un tema y me ponía a estudiarlo. Me atraían la literatura, la poesía y la filosofía. Pasé mucho tiempo estudiando en la biblioteca, tomando libros prestados e indagando en los problemas que me intrigaban.

No seguía un método preciso, ni una orientación específica. Al comienzo, eso sí, me interesaba únicamente la literatura del Maranhão. En la biblioteca de São Luís había una estantería dedicada a la literatura de mi Estado y yo sólo leía los autores de esa estantería. Luego, por supuesto, escuché hablar de otros escritores y fui ampliando mi radio de intereses. Esa decisión inicial fue seguramente de gran ayuda, porque yo no tenía ninguna orientación, y la verdad es que colocarme solo ante la literatura universal hubiera podido convertirse en una circunstancia incontrolable y frustrante. De modo que limitarme a los autores de mi ciudad y de mi Estado me dio disciplina y me ayudó a orientarme en ese universo.

Entre los primeros libros que recuerdo haber leído fuera de esa estantería está uno de Filosofía. Ni siquiera recuerdo el autor, tal vez un italiano. Era un libro viejo, con las páginas mohosas. Ahí nació mi interés por la Filosofía y aprendí lo esencial del léxico y de ese tipo de pensamiento lógico. Enseguida compré otro tomo en una de esas librerías de segunda mano. Se llamaba *Lecciones de Filosofía*, y emprendí su lectura sin un método y sin ninguna sistematicidad. Más adelante, hacia 1950, me interesé por el arte y la poesía modernos y poco a poco fui ampliando mi universo intelectual. Recuerdo especialmente un libro inmenso de Maurice Denis, lo que me motivó, junto al estudio de la poesía francesa, a estudiar el idioma. Yo quería leer los libros sobre arte que encontraba en la biblioteca, pero la mayoría estaban en francés, así que me decidí a estudiarlo y poco a poco logré leerlo. Lo importante es querer aprender, lo demás es cuestión de tiempo.

^{AJ} Sin duda, aunque no deja de ser cierto que aprender un idioma cualquiera, y aprenderlo hasta el punto de llegar a leer algo tan complejo como la poesía, requiere de una disciplina realmente sorprendente.

^{FG} Quizás, pero lo hice por necesidad, porque quería leer esos libros. Primero abordé los libros sobre pintura y escultura y luego comencé a leer poesía, lo que definitivamente me cautivaba por completo. Entre otros textos encontré una antología de poesía francesa que tenía la particularidad de ser bilingüe, en portugués y francés, lo cual me ayudó considerablemente. En ese libro descubrí a Paul Valéry, Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud y otros. Poco a poco fui conociendo a los autores que son, por así decir, la fuente histórica de la poesía moderna y mi conocimiento de la pintura y la poesía se fue ampliando paulatinamente.

^{AJ} En medio de ese proceso personal de formación usted no solo lee y estudia, también hace sus primeros ensayos poéticos.

^{FG} Por supuesto, en 1949 publiqué mi primer poemario *Um pouco acima do chão* [*Un poco encima del suelo*], que es un libro todavía inmaduro y que luego puse de lado, aunque es evidente que mis preocupaciones personales, mis indagaciones más íntimas, ya estaban presentes. Tenía diecinueve años, era muy joven, y todavía no conocía la poesía moderna brasileña: Drummond de Andrade,¹⁶ Manuel Bandeira,¹⁷ Murilo Mendes.¹⁸ Cuando los descubrí, por primera vez, en 1950, recibí un choque tremendo. Yo vivía inmerso en la poesía parnasiana, una poesía rimada y muy construida. Medio en broma medio en serio siempre he dicho que en ese periodo de mi vida hablaba en endecasílabos. Y es cierto que, por momentos, alguna frase me salía rimada como los versos de los poetas parnasianos que leía constantemente. Pero cuando descubro a Drummond y a la poesía moderna, me encuentro con versos que me parecían completamente absurdos y hasta feos. Ahí estaba ese poema que dice: “Ponho-me a escrever teu nome com letras de macarrão. No prato, a sopa esfria, cheia de escamas”¹⁹ [Me pongo a escribir tu nombre con letras de macarrón. En el plato, la sopa enfría, llena de escamas]. Aquello me parecía de muy mal gusto. . . ¿Sopa? La poesía no puede hablar de sopa, me decía. Fue un choque, porque mi visión de la poesía era la de un

universo idealizado completamente ajeno a lo cotidiano. La poesía era otra cosa. Transformar en poesía la realidad banal y cotidiana, eso es lo moderno, y lo aprendo cuando descubro a Drummond.

*No seré el poeta de un mundo caduco.
Tampoco cantaré el mundo futuro.*

*El tiempo es mi materia, el tiempo presente, los hombres presentes,
la vida presente.²⁰*

Aquello me sorprendió desagradablemente, sin duda, pero me impactó de tal manera que quise comprender, y por eso me puse a leerlos y a hacer mis propios ejercicios literarios. Inmediatamente, no pasó mucho tiempo, percibí el camino que debía seguir. De pronto me di cuenta de que la poesía que había estado haciendo era bonita, pero pertenecía al pasado, a los poetas muertos. Ahí empecé a hacer una poesía con un carácter diferente, más actual. No imité a Drummond, es obvio, sino que comencé a escribir por mi cuenta algo distinto. Tanto así que ese mismo año [1950], poco después de haber conocido la poesía moderna, me había ganado el Premio Nacional de Poesía acordado por el *Jornal de Letras*, que era el principal órgano literario de la época en Río de Janeiro y tenía una circulación nacional. Este premio me estimuló muchísimo y constituyó una de las razones que decidieron mi traslado a Río.

^{AJ} El poema con el que gana el premio posee una particularidad interesante. Corresponde sí, a una anécdota cotidiana y banal, no cualquiera sin embargo, sino la que pudo tener en su infancia, en el patio de su casa.

^{FG} En ese caso específico no fue así. Ese primer poema no es el mismo que publiqué en mi antología, es una versión anterior que nunca ha sido publicada en libro. La primera versión se inspiraba en un anuncio de Sal de Fruta ENO que estaba regado por la ciudad. Era la silueta negra de un gallo cantando con el pico abierto y un sol con sus rayos. El otro poema “Galo Galo”, el que incluí en mi antología, sí habla del animal de mi infancia, ese que conocí en el patio de mi casa, aun cuando no tiene nada que ver con el primero.

^{AJ} No obstante, el hecho de partir del gallo reproducido en un anuncio publicitario me parecería una idea más radicalmente moderna.

^{FG} Yo no diría que es más radical. El primero tiene una forma más depurada, pero el otro es mucho más profundo. Va más hondo en la experiencia de vida. Es más complejo incluso, porque el gallo camina lleno de gallardía, como si fuera un guerrero medieval, mas ¿de quién se defiende?, ¿contra quién está peleando ese guerrero llamado gallo? Esas preguntas, que son centrales, no surgen en el otro poema, que es más descriptivo y epidérmico. Hay además una identificación tácita entre el poeta, es decir yo, y el tema del poema, que lo hace mucho más denso.

*De córneo pico y
espolones, armado
contra la muerte,
pasea.*

Mide sus pasos. Se detiene.

*Inclina la cabeza coronada
dentro del silencio
— ¿qué hago entre cosas?
— ¿de qué me defiendo?*

Anda

*en el zaguán.
El cemento olvida
su último paso.²¹*

^{AJ} Sus intereses, sin embargo, no se limitan a la poesía. Las artes plásticas, y en especial la pintura, ocuparían un lugar fundamental en su pensamiento, e imagino que desde temprano estuvo en contacto con los artistas plásticos.

^{FG} Desde São Luís, cuando comencé a convivir con los escritores, me relacioné también con diseñadores, pintores y dibujantes. Algunos jóvenes habían comenzado a hacer una pintura más moderna. Con ellos inicié mis lecturas sobre artes plásticas y mi interés fue intensificándose poco a poco. Hubo un tiempo incluso en el que quise ser pintor, solo que en São Luís no había escuelas de pintura y no sabía por dónde empezar. En eso descubrí la poesía y mi interés por las artes plásticas se limitó desde entonces al plano teórico. Esa fue una de las razones que me llevaron a salir de São Luís, puesto que mi curiosidad por la pintura y por el arte en general no encontraba satisfacción en la actividad cultural de la ciudad. Ahí no había exposiciones, ni galerías, ni museos. Todo eso me estimuló a mudarme para Río de Janeiro en 1951, que en esa época era la capital del país y el centro cultural más importante. En los años setenta retomé la práctica de la pintura y del collage, aunque siempre lo he asumido como una actividad secundaria, de simple placer estético. Cuando estoy pintando o haciendo un collage soy feliz, me olvido del mundo y de mí, pero no puedo decir que se trate de una actividad en la que encuentre respuestas para mis preocupaciones centrales.



Céu estrelado [Cielo estrellado], 2007 Más

Céu estrelado [Cielo estrellado], 2007

Acrílico y collage sobre papel

20.5 × 21 cm (8 × 8 1/4 inches)

^{AJ} Me parece curioso ese origen provincial de muchos intelectuales y artistas modernos. En Venezuela, también, muchos de ellos provienen de la provincia.

^{FG} No creo que haya una razón particular para explicarlo. Quizás, sencillamente, el hecho de que en ese momento había mucha más gente fuera de la capital y porque el talento nace en cualquier lugar. El talento, para desarrollarse, depende del medio, pero creo que es un don innato. Uno nace con la disposición para ser poeta o pintor, y si el medio no lo permite, porque no alcanza la densidad necesaria, no se desarrolla; pero si el medio ayuda, el don se desarrolla como tal. No es algo que tenga una explicación sencilla, ya que depende de una multitud de factores muy complejos. Sin embargo, no tengo la menor duda de que uno nace con la posibilidad de hacerse pintor, escritor, etc. Si no se tiene ese don, uno puede estudiar lo que quiera y donde quiera, que nunca será pintor. Es así, si una persona nace en la provincia y no encuentra los medios para desarrollar su talento, busca la capital, o el lugar donde esos medios existan. Y claro, con el desarrollo del país surgieron muchas capitales regionales. São Luís no es hoy lo que era en mi juventud. Recife ya era una ciudad con periódicos culturales, con suplementos literarios y con una actividad cultural mayor que la de São Luís. Porto Alegre también tenía editoriales y revistas de alcance nacional, y por consiguiente en esos lugares surgieron poetas y escritores. Aun así, la

actividad de estos centros regionales no podía compararse con lo que sucedía en Río. Por eso decidí irme para allá, donde estaba seguro de encontrar lo que necesitaba para satisfacer mis necesidades intelectuales.

Ferreira Gullar, “Muitas vozes”, en *Toda poesia* (Río de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 2000), 453–54. Todas las traducciones de los poemas y los textos de Ferreira Gullar al español son de Ariel Jiménez.

NB: Todo los poemas citados de Ferreira Gullar son extractos de los originales, a excepción del *Crime na flora*, 25, que está reproducido en su totalidad.

Ferreira Gullar dice, “Mi mamá viene de una familia medio francesa, medio india. El color de mi piel y mis cabellos lisos vienen de la rama india”.

La *quitanda* es en principio un negocio donde se venden frutas y legumbres; aunque, en los pueblos, se suele vender también todo tipo de alimentos y mercancías de uso cotidiano.

Cuando empleamos aquí el concepto de la “opacidad del mundo”, nos referimos específicamente a la oposición, central en la poesía de Ferreira Gullar, entre el lenguaje y la realidad a la que ese lenguaje se refiere. Una cosa sin nombre, sin concepto alguno al que podamos referirnos para abordarlo, es opaca para la inteligencia humana. Nombrarla, describirla, determinar sus características, sus usos posibles, es hacerla transparente al entendimiento. Gran parte de su poesía nace de la voluntad expresa de acercarse a esa opacidad primera de las cosas para describirla con palabras, si no nuevas, sí rejuvenecidas.

En agosto de 1942, tras el hundimiento de numerosos navíos mercantes brasileños, el Gobierno de Río le declara la guerra a Alemania y a sus aliados, haciendo efectivo el Tratado de neutralidad firmado en la Habana en 1940. Ese tratado estipulaba que todo acto de agresión a un país americano se consideraría un acto de agresión a los países del continente.

Ferreira Gullar, “Poema sujo,” en *Toda poesia*, 233–91.

Según las circunstancias, *caipira* puede ser traducido como pueblerino, campesino, popular, lugareño, e incluso en acepciones menos positivas como rural, aldeano o palurdo.

Las *Bachianas brasileiras* conforman una serie de nueve suites del compositor Heitor Villa-Lobos. “O trezinho do caipira” (1930) es la segunda de esta serie cuya característica central es la fusión entre aires de la música popular brasileña y el estilo de Johann Sebastian Bach. Esta segunda bachiana tiene como tema el andar alegre y acompasado de un tren en la provincia brasileña.

En portugués existe una palabra específica (*luar*) para designar la luz o el resplandor de la luna. En este caso hemos optado por utilizar el calificativo lunar, como la imagen más cercana posible, respetando la rima original.

Letra de *Trezinho Caipira* de Ferreira Gullar, <http://letras.terra.com.br/heitor-villa-lobos/507893/>. La letra original concluye con la frase *No ar* [en el aire], repetido tres veces, ya que en portugués rima con *voar* [volar]. Como esta rima no es posible en español, optamos por repetir la palabra *volar*, aunque lamentablemente se empobrece el efecto final de la letra.

Luís Vaz de Camões (c. 1524–80). Considerado el mayor poeta portugués, es autor de obras fundamentales como *Os Lusíadas*, de 1572, y de importantes poemas como “Amor é fogo que arde sem se ver” y “Verdes são os campos”, de 1595.

Manuel Maria de Barbosa l’Hedois du Bocage (1765–1805). Uno de los mayores poetas portugueses del siglo XVIII. Su poesía se enmarca en un periodo de transición entre el clasicismo y el romanticismo portugueses. Entre sus composiciones más conocidas figuran sus rimas y los idilios marítimos.

Antônio Gonçalves Dias (1823–64). Uno de los principales poetas románticos y del indianismo brasileños del siglo XIX. Entre sus obras más destacadas figuran *Canção do exílio*, *Meditação*, *Seus olhos* y *Dicionário da Língua Tupi, chamada língua geral dos indígenas do Brasil*.

Antonio Frederico de Castro Alves (1847–71). Poeta brasileño cuya obra está profundamente marcada por las luchas contra la esclavitud. Se le conoce por eso como el “Poeta de los esclavos”.

Olavo Bilac (1865–1918). Poeta y periodista literario brasileño, miembro fundador de la Academia Brasileña de Letras (1896). En su producción literaria destaca el libro póstumo *Tarde* (1919).

Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1902–87). Fue uno de los más importantes e influyentes poetas modernos de Brasil, referencia siempre admirada por Ferreira Gullar. Entre sus obras sobresalen *Alguma poesia*, 1930; *Sentimento do mundo*, 1940 y *A rosa do povo*, 1945.

Manuel Carneiro de Sousa Bandeira Filho (1886–1968). Fue un poeta y crítico literario brasileño, uno de los protagonistas de la Semana de Arte Moderna de 1922.

Murilo Monteiro Mendes (1901–75). Poeta moderno brasileño, autor de libros como *A poesia em pânico*, 1938; *O visionário*, 1941 y *As metamorfoses*, 1944.

Carlos Drummond de Andrade, “Sentimental”, en *Alguma poesia* (Río de Janeiro: Ed. Record, 2010), 45. Las traducciones de Drummond de Andrade son de Ariel Jiménez.

Carlos Drummond de Andrade, “Mãos dadas”, en *Antologia poética* (Río de Janeiro: Ed. Record, 2009), 158.

Ferreira Gullar, “Galo Galo”, en *Toda poesia*, 11.

Un enlace a una interpretación de “O trezinho do caipira” por Maria Bethânia se puede encontrar en la página de enlaces ubicada al final del libro

MÁS ALLÁ DE SÃO LUÍS, EL MUNDO

Un arte nuevo, una poesía nueva

^{FG} Cuando llegué a Río, un domingo de 1951, lo encontré tranquilo y vacío. Un poeta cercano de mi amiga marañense Lucy Texeira, fue a buscarme al aeropuerto Santos Dumont y me llevó a una especie de pensión estudiantil. Ahí me instalé esa noche y durante algún tiempo. Al día siguiente salí a caminar y me quedé realmente sorprendido. São Luís era una ciudad pequeña, con un número reducido de vehículos, sin semáforos ni señales de tránsito. En Río, por el contrario, para llegar al centro de la ciudad, hasta la Plaza París, debía atravesar varias avenidas con una multitud enorme de vehículos y autobuses circulando en varios sentidos. Ahí me quedé parado, sin saber cómo cruzar aquellas avenidas, porque los carros no se detenían. Pensé que nunca lo harían. En verdad sentí pánico, preguntándome cómo haría para vivir en ese lugar sin ser atropellado. En ese momento se me acercó un señor que debía haberse dado cuenta de mi angustia y me dijo: “Joven, para atravesar la avenida debe ir hasta la esquina, donde está el semáforo, ahí se detienen los vehículos”. No sabía cómo hacer, no conocía los semáforos. Afortunadamente, poco a poco, con la ayuda de algunos amigos marañenses, fui ambientándome y conociendo otros lugares de la ciudad, entre ellos la Biblioteca Nacional.



Ferreira Gullar (derecha) con Antônio Luís Guimarães (izquierda) y Lago Burnett (centro). Río de Janeiro, c. 1952

Muy pronto, también, me relacioné con Mário Pedrosa.²² Lucy Texeira me había llevado su tesis a São Luís, “Da natureza afetiva da forma na obra de arte” [De la naturaleza afectiva de la forma en la obra de arte, 1949], y la había leído con asombro. Sin embargo, desde esa primera lectura discrepé con él en un punto específico. Su tesis se basaba en la teoría de la Gestalt según la cual cada forma posee una expresión propia, independientemente de lo que represente. Cualquier forma, incluso abstracta, tiene expresión. En esa idea se basó Mário Pedrosa para defender la expresividad del Concretismo brasileño en los tempranos años cincuenta. En su propuesta había además el concepto de la *Bela forma* [Bella forma], lo que significaba que para ellos existían formas privilegiadas, esto es, que algunas eran mejores que otras. El círculo, por ejemplo, por ser la forma que contiene el máximo de materia en el mínimo espacio, era la mejor, con lo cual se llegaba a la conclusión de que en una misma pintura había formas que tendrían una mayor expresividad que otras. En mi opinión, en cambio, ninguna forma existe independientemente de su contexto, ninguna tiene un valor en sí que pueda ser determinado *a priori* de manera autónoma. Un círculo puede ser más o menos expresivo, dependiendo de su tamaño, de su color y textura, de las formas que le rodean, etc., de manera que la forma autónoma, sin pasado ni contexto, es una abstracción que no existe. Cuando conocí a Mário, a través de mi amiga Lucy, discutimos este punto varias veces, y al final él estuvo de acuerdo conmigo. Nunca, eso sí, nuestras discusiones teóricas llegaron a estremecer nuestra relación. Fuimos amigos hasta el final

de su vida. Fui su discípulo, su amigo, y Mário sabía del afecto que me unía a él.



De izquierda a derecha: Oliveira Bastos, Ferreira Gullar con su esposa Thereza Ferrer, Berredo de Menezes, Mário Pedrosa, Lygia Clark, Vera Pedrosa (hija de Mário Pedrosa), Abraham Palatnik (agachado a la derecha) con su esposa Lea M. Palatnik, e Iván Serpa, c. 1952.

Pese a estas y otras diferencias, la lectura de su tesis y las conversaciones con él me hicieron entrar en un terreno de reflexión que no había conocido antes. Su teoría había sido una tentativa por comprender ese nuevo lenguaje plástico que surgía como ruptura total con la tradición modernista brasileña. El Modernismo de 1922²³ fue un movimiento de modernización de las artes y de las

letras de cuño nacional. Era diferente de las vanguardias europeas en ese punto (el Cubismo, el Futurismo, Dadá), que eran movimientos de carácter universal, es decir, que plantearon problemáticas universales, no regionales o nacionales. El Modernismo brasileño por su parte adopta ciertas características de los movimientos europeos, pero se preocupa ante todo por cuestiones de identidad nacional, al contrario del Concretismo, que quería ser universal.

^{AJ} El Modernismo del 22 y el Concretismo se diferencian radicalmente, al menos desde ese punto de vista, otros factores indican una continuidad en sus intenciones.

^{FG} No, en lo absoluto, creo que lo importante es constatar la ruptura. El Modernismo brasileño era regionalista y nacionalista, defendía un arte figurativo, mientras el Concretismo es abstracto y universalista, introduce una ruptura completa, sin afinidad de ninguna especie con el pasado.

^{AJ} ¿Ni siquiera con las ideas expresadas en el Manifiesto antropófago de Oswald de Andrade?²⁴

^{FG} No, no existe ninguna conexión. El Manifiesto antropófago es absolutamente figurativo y no tiene nada que ver con el Concretismo. Ahí no existe discusión posible. Lo que se produce es una ruptura drástica. ¿Usted cree que existe alguna conexión entre ambos?

^{AJ} Sí, creo que el Manifiesto antropófago es uno de los textos mayores, no solamente del Brasil, sino de América Latina, y que hay allí

frases que anuncian esa ruptura que consiguen luego el Concretismo y el Neoconcretismo, o que en todo caso la hacen posible, alcanzando eso que Mário de Andrade²⁵ calificó, en un texto de 1942, como: “esa normalización del espíritu de investigación estética, antiacadémica. . .”²⁶ Pienso por ejemplo en frases como las siguientes:

*Contra todos los importadores de conciencia enlatada.
La existencia palpable de la vida.*

*Contra la memoria fuente de costumbre.
La experiencia personal renovada.*²⁷

Me parece que son frases donde se manifiesta una conciencia clara del trabajo que tiene por delante todo creador, más allá de una dependencia colonial. En ese sentido creo que el movimiento neoconcreto logra la independencia creativa que se anunciaba o se exigía en el Manifiesto antropófago. En todo caso, esa especie de nacionalización del pensamiento era necesaria para aprender a pensar aquí, en Brasil, de manera universal, como lo hace cualquier individuo en cualquier lugar del mundo. Por otra parte, además, también entre los concretos y neoconcretos podemos conseguir testimonios claros de que, para ellos, al menos en determinados momentos de su producción, lo que estaban haciendo formaba parte de un proceso de afirmación nacional. Bastaría con citar el texto escrito por Hélio Oiticica en 1968 a propósito de *Tropicalia* y su *Nueva objetividad*: “Con la teoría de la *Nueva objetividad* yo quería instituir y caracterizar un estado del arte brasileño de vanguardia, confrontándolo con los grandes movimientos del arte mundial (Op y Pop) y objetivando un estado brasileño del arte. . .”²⁸

^{FG} No, el movimiento moderno brasileño no habla de eso. Es surrealista, está más ligado al Surrealismo que al arte abstracto. Las pinturas de Tarsila do Amaral²⁹ en esa época son surrealistas, comenzando por el *Abaporú*.

^{AJ} Sí, cierto, pero su posición ante las tradiciones europeas es en eso bastante cercana a lo que pasó con otros movimientos latinoamericanos, como el Modernismo venezolano, donde se buscó darle valor universal a lo nacional. Es así como entiendo ese énfasis moderno en lo nacional. Crear un arte propio, autónomo, pasaba necesariamente por observar y estudiar la realidad en la que se vivía, la realidad del Brasil, la de Venezuela, y eso me parece universalmente válido, incluso ineludible.

^{FG} No conozco muy bien lo que pasó en otros países latinoamericanos. Si el movimiento moderno tuvo en otros países las características que señala no lo sé, en Brasil sin embargo no tuvo ese carácter. El movimiento antropófago no habla de investigación estética. El sentido de ese movimiento es el siguiente: Vamos a engullir a Europa para transformarla en un asunto nacional, lo que no excluye el propósito de alcanzar lo universal, pero a través de lo nacional. Ese es el sentido de la antropofagia: Voy a comerme al europeo para transformarlo en Brasil. Es el mismo problema del movimiento modernista anterior, solo que con una visión más surrealista; las figuras son deformadas, son visiones medio oníricas inspiradas en el Manifiesto surrealista de André Breton en 1924. No hay ninguna cercanía. Para entender el movimiento concreto debe saber que es el resultado de una visión estética que rechaza cualquier fantasía y que cuando llega a Brasil, a través de Max Bill,³⁰ es una investigación casi científica de la visión. No tiene nada de poético,

ni de subjetividad. Max Bill dice que explora las fuerzas del campo visual. Quiere crear obras que constituyan reacciones a energías visuales y no busca hacer algo poético o expresivo. Entonces ese movimiento introduce una ruptura total incluso con la tradición moderna europea, y no se conecta sino con el Neoplasticismo y con la tradición constructiva que viene de Mondrian. No se relaciona con el modernismo brasileño. Ahí no cabe la menor duda. Lo que estoy diciendo es que ese movimiento, aquí en Brasil, inaugura un tiempo nuevo para el arte que encontré al llegar a Río, y yo contribuí con ese cambio junto con un grupo de artistas concretos como Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, Amílcar de Castro, Franz Weissmann y otros, quienes terminamos dándole una orientación diferente al lenguaje del arte concreto. Así creamos un movimiento nuevo, el Neoconcretismo, que es la consecuencia de una actitud contraria a la de Max Bill.

^{AJ} De cualquier modo, sea cual sea la visión que hoy podamos hacernos de estos movimientos, el Concretismo y el Neoconcretismo representan una coyuntura crucial, un nudo de reflexiones imposible de eludir cuando se quiere considerar el arte producido en Brasil durante la segunda mitad del siglo XX, e incluso después. Los problemas que se plantearon, la manera como pensaron la relación entre sus obras y las referencias históricas que fueron las suyas, la imagen que se hicieron del futuro, todo eso está presente y activo. Debido a ello, me parece indispensable discutir con usted las relaciones que pudieron darse entre ambos movimientos. Si hay algo que parece crucial para los concretos de Río y algunos pocos paulistas a mediados de los años cincuenta, es justamente la vía que siguieron para escapar a esa especie de academización a la que parecía estar llegando el Concretismo más

ortodoxo, lo que se hizo patente a partir de la 1ª *Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta* [1ª *Exposición Nacional de Arte Concreto*] en 1956.

PAGINA 10 — DIARIO DA NOITE O vespertino de maior circulação em São Paulo

INAUGUROU-SE ONTEM

Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta

"Poetas concretos", que querem eliminar a base formal do poema, participam da mostra — Movimento estético que pretende imprimir novo rumo às artes de vanguarda do país — Lançamento de livros

Inaugurou-se ontem, às 18 horas, no Museu de Arte Moderna, a *Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta*, que reúne, além de pintores e escultores, vários poetas. A mostra coletiva é o ponto de partida de um movimento estético que visa imprimir novo rumo às artes de vanguarda do país.

Segundo se informa, os expositores, nomes conhecidos pelos que acompanham a evolução de nossas artes, representam uma tendência de fundamentos já bem definidos e universalmente designados por "Concretismo".

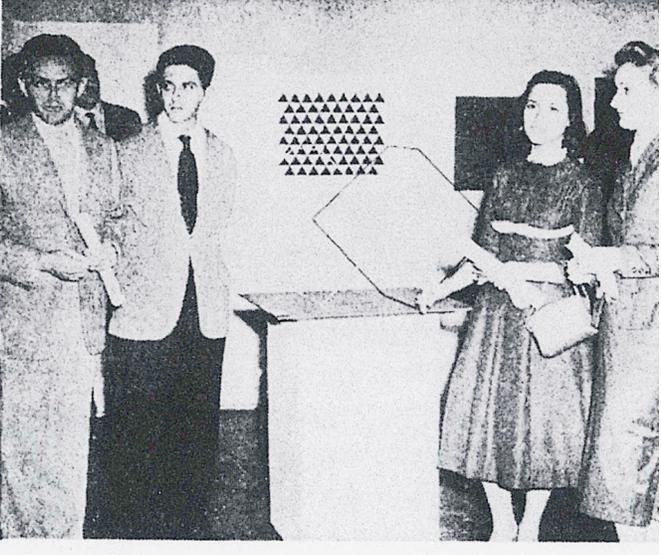
São os seguintes os artistas participantes da *Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta*: pintura, Geraldo de Barros, Auliso Galvão, Lygia Clark, Waldemar Cordeiro, João José Costa, Hermelindo Fiaminghi, Judith Lauan, Mauricio Nogueira Lima, Rubem Mauro Ludolf, Luis Sacilotto, Decio Vieira Alexandre Wollner; Escultura: Amílcar de Castro, Casimiro Pejer, Franz Joseph Weissmann; Desenho, Lótar Charoux; Gravura: Lygia Pape; Fotografia: Germano Lorca e Ademair Manarini.

Homenagem especial está sendo prestada ao pintor Alfredo Volpi, que apresentará mais de um ponto de contato com os problemas concretistas. Volpi expõe duas de suas telas mais recentes.

A seção de poesia promete suscitar controvérsias. Tomando como pontos de referência as realizações de Mallarmé ("Coup de Dés"), Pound (ideograma), Joyce, Cummings — no setor de literatura; os concretistas, no setor das artes visuais; Webern, Boulez, Stockhausen — no setor musical, os "poetas concretos" tendem a eliminar, sempre num plano de estrita funcionalidade, a base formal do poema, tradicional ou moderno, ou seja, o "verso" (livre inclusive).

Como acontece no setor das artes visuais, apresentar-se-ão poetas do Rio e de São Paulo: Ronaldo Azevedo, Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos, Ferreira Gullar, Decio Pignatari, Wladimir Dias Pino. Identificado ao movimento, deve ainda ser lembrado o jovem crítico Oliveira Bastos.

Por ocasião da mostra serão lançados novos livros de poesia, entre os quais "A Ave", de Wladimir Dias Pino; "O Formigueiro", de Ferreira Gullar, e "Noigandre 3", que reúne poemas concretos de Decio Pignatari, Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos e Ronaldo Azevedo. Ao mesmo tempo, doze páginas da revista "Arquitextura e Decorações" serão dedicadas a esse movimento dando à publicação de manifestos, artigos críticos sobre o movimento, ilustrações, etc.



Pintoras e escultoras também aderiram à "Arte Concreta", movimento que visa a dar um novo rumo às artes de vanguarda no país.

Diário da Noite, 1ª Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta, 1956 Más
Diário da Noite, 1ª Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta, 1956
 © D-A Press, Brasil

FG

No estoy seguro de que podamos hablar propiamente de un academicismo, se trataba más bien de una racionalización extrema que a nosotros nos desagradaba, porque hallábamos que aquello no era un camino fecundo para la creación artística. Fue tanto así que ellos se quedaron en aquellas posturas y nuestro camino abrió derroteros nuevos, creó el movimiento neoconcreto, que hoy es considerado como una manifestación autónoma. Los documentos de ese movimiento, es decir, el Manifiesto neoconcreto [Manifiesto

neoconcreto] y la Teoria do não-objeto [Teoría del no-objeto], que fueron escritos por mí, son considerados hoy como documentos del arte contemporáneo, porque fueron innovadores y crearon un movimiento nuevo, a la vez que los concretos radicalizaban las posiciones de Max Bill, que ya eran posturas, digamos así, desligadas del proceso creativo. A mi modo de ver, cuando él buscaba explorar la energía del campo visual se colocaba fuera de las funciones del arte. Se pueden utilizar esos recursos para crear alguna cosa, pero quedarse explorando la energía, precipitando fenómenos visuales, es un error. Era una racionalización excesiva porque el arte no puede ser una actividad meramente racional. Es por el contrario un fenómeno en el cual debe haber creatividad, intuición, fantasía. Sin esos elementos, no tiene sentido. Es lo que sucede con el llamado Realismo. En nada nos ayudaría Velázquez si se hubiera quedado pintando la cabeza de un caballo igual a la que podía ver en la realidad. . . ¿Para qué nos interesa? En ese caso prefiero el caballo ¿Cierto? Ahora, cuando él pinta *Las Meninas*, y cuando crea en ellas todo un juego de espacio y tiempo entre lo figurado y la realidad del espectador, se trasciende esa torpeza del realismo. Una pintura puramente realista sería algo muy pobre.

^{AJ} Es por eso mismo que en la *1ª Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta* se manifiestan las primeras diferencias entre ambos grupos, y me parece importante que la discutamos en detalle.

^{FG} La idea de esa exposición la tuvieron los paulistas Waldemar Cordeiro, Décio Pignatari, Haroldo y Augusto de Campos. Ellos decidieron reunir a los poetas y artistas concretos de São Paulo y de Río en una sola exposición. No hubo ninguna consigna especial,

sencillamente llamaron a todos los artistas que consideraron concretos o cercanos al Concretismo y los invitaron a participar con lo que estaban haciendo. Luego cada quien seleccionó y envió las obras con las que estimó pertinente participar. Yo, por ejemplo, estaba escribiendo mi poema titulado “O formigueiro”, que publiqué mucho más tarde, entonces tomé cinco páginas de ese poema, que es mucho mayor, y las envié. Participé con la obra que estaba haciendo justo en ese momento.

^{AJ} “O formigueiro” generó sin embargo una reacción negativa entre los paulistas. Su poema no les gustó para nada.

^{FG} No es que no les haya gustado, sino que no lo consideraban como un poema realmente concreto. Ellos eran demasiado teóricos e incluso sectarios en el respeto de las definiciones, y era evidente –en eso tenían razón– que mi poema no se limitaba a las reglas de lo que ellos consideraban un poema concreto. Se trataba, sí, de un poema donde intentaba valorizar la palabra por la modificación de su forma visual, en lo cual coincidía con ellos, rompiendo la forma lineal de la escritura para acentuar la relación fisonómica de la palabra con la cosa designada. Buscaba, también, valorizar ese silencio interior de la palabra, su materia semántica, lo que parecía materializarse en el blanco de la página. Pese a que concordaba con ellos en estos elementos típicamente concretos, como el hecho de ser un poema construido con una palabra en cada página, el mío tenía un discurso que el lector podía seguir. . . “la hormiga cava la tierra”, etc., lo cual era contrario a la poesía que ellos defendían. Para los paulistas, la poesía concreta debía darle prioridad absoluta a la palabra sobre la sintaxis, a la palabra como objeto, y por eso negaban su encadenamiento lineal y sucesivo.

^{AJ} Supongo que, a la vez, les molestaba el hecho de que la suya tuviera un arraigo evidente en sus vivencias infantiles.

^{FG} No, porque ellos no lo sabían. Su objeción se centraba esencialmente en el carácter lineal de mi poema. Era un exceso de rigor teórico y por eso terminé rompiendo con la poesía concreta, que me parecía interesante, claro, pero muy pobre. Al final terminaba limitándose a un juego esencialmente visual mientras yo quería conseguir una expresión que no se limitara a lo óptico.

^{AJ} De manera que es en esa exposición, y en la discusión que se dio en torno a “O formigueiro”, que usted comienza a tomar conciencia de las diferencias profundas entre los grupos concretos de Río y de São Paulo.

^{FG} No, no sucedió realmente así, ahí ni siquiera hubo discusión. Fue después, cuando la exposición de São Paulo vino para Río. Entonces Décio Pignatari dio una entrevista a la prensa y expuso su desacuerdo. Al día siguiente de la inauguración, durante un debate público organizado en la União Nacional dos Estudantes [UNE; Unión Nacional de Estudiantes], se dio igualmente una disputa bastante radical. Allí estábamos, entre otros, Haroldo y Augusto de Campos, Oliveira Bastos, Reynaldo Jardim y yo. Durante las intervenciones, otras personas del público quisieron opinar y a veces cuestionaron los postulados concretos, lo que generó respuestas intolerantes y sectarias por parte de los paulistas, y eso me irritó sinceramente. Entonces les dije que si nosotros teníamos el derecho de exponer nuestro trabajo y nuestras ideas, el público tenía también el derecho de objetar lo que estábamos haciendo. Ahí comenzaron las diferencias reales entre nosotros, producto de su

intolerancia y sectarismo. Luego vinieron las teorías que pretendían imponerle una lógica matemática a la poesía, lo que nosotros, y yo en especial, contestábamos radicalmente. Sin embargo, es importante señalar que lo neoconcreto no nace como respuesta a lo concreto, no es porque disentimos en ese momento que decidimos hacer una obra distinta. Nosotros seguimos considerándonos concretos, aunque con diferencias bastante claras ante las posiciones predominantes entre los paulistas. El Neoconcretismo nace más tarde, en 1959, cuando Lygia Clark tuvo la idea de hacer una exposición con los trabajos producidos por el grupo de Río. Como el grupo me escogió para que escribiera la presentación de la muestra, me dediqué a ver sus obras una por una. Ante sus trabajos, me di cuenta de que nuestra obra era muy diferente de lo que estaba haciendo la mayoría de los paulistas. En ese instante tomé conciencia de que había nacido un arte nuevo, otra forma de expresión que, aun cuando provenía de lo concreto, ya no tenía mucho que ver con sus postulados. Así fue cómo propuse el término neoconcreto.



Ferreira Gullar (izquierda) con Lygia Pape, Theon Spanúdis, Lygia Clark y Reinaldo Jardim. Museu de Arte Moderna de Río de Janeiro, 1959

^{AJ} Estamos ante un caso particularmente interesante porque no es un manifiesto que prescriba un conjunto de reglas *a priori*, o que señale el camino a seguir en el futuro, sino uno que describe y teoriza lo que descubre en las obras ya realizadas. Si lo comparamos por ejemplo con el manifiesto de la poesía futurista, de Marinetti, se hace evidente la diferencia. Mientras Marinetti dice: “Es necesario destruir la sintaxis. . .”, o “se debe abolir el adjetivo”, definiendo casi autoritariamente lo que debe hacerse, el Manifiesto neoconcreto hace un análisis histórico de los movimientos plásticos que le sirven de punto de partida y analiza las obras realizadas, describiéndolas. Es

por eso mismo un documento donde se afirma una vinculación histórica al igual que un conjunto de conceptos, no la prescripción de un camino a seguir.

^{FG} Por supuesto, y por eso acostumbro a decir que el Manifiesto neoconcreto es diferente a los manifiestos de vanguardia que pretenden anunciar lo que va a ocurrir, mientras el mío dice lo que sucedió, aquí y ahora, en la producción de los artistas considerados. Quienes inventan el arte del futuro son los artistas, no los teóricos. Lo que sucede es que los manifiestos de vanguardia nacen bajo el modelo que les proporciona el Manifiesto del Partido Comunista de 1848. Es a partir de allí que comienzan a redactarse manifiestos artísticos que anuncian el futuro, solo que el arte no es profecía, el arte se inventa aquí y ahora por los artistas.

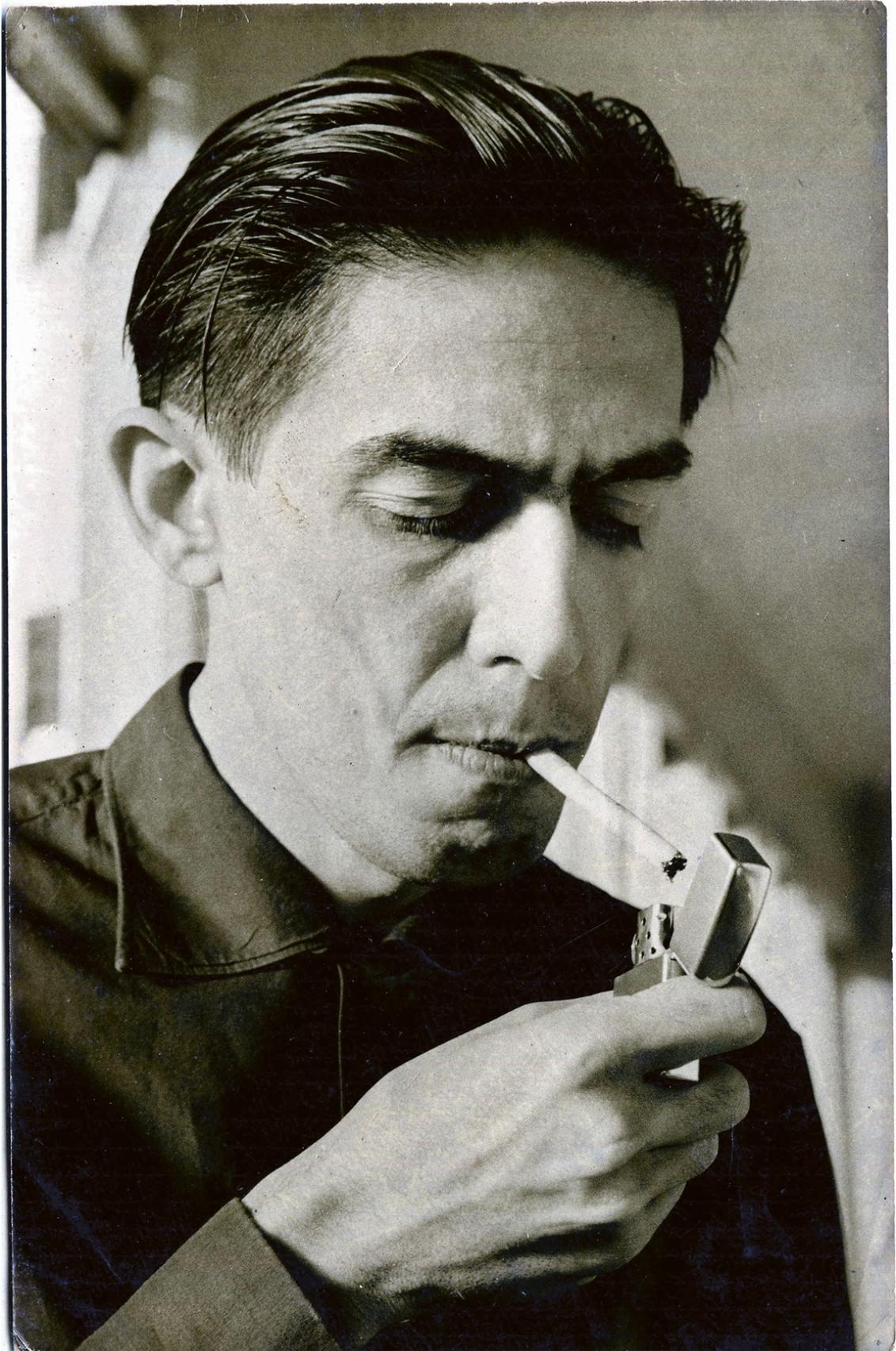
^{AJ} Sin duda, y por eso estoy convencido de que allí se produce, para Brasil, una ruptura con algunas de las ideas modernas que es característica de lo contemporáneo. Hay, por supuesto, problemáticas modernas que continúan activas, incluso hoy, pero surgen también elementos nuevos. Me parece importante que discutamos en detalle lo que sucede en la exposición y en el texto que la presenta, el Manifiesto neoconcreto.

^{FG} La idea nace durante una reunión que tuvimos en la casa de Lygia Clark, que quedaba muy cerca de la mía. Ella encontró que sería motivante reunir a los concretos de Río en una exposición independiente, y nos decidimos a organizarla. No hubo una selección en verdad, no nos pusimos a discutir quién debería entrar y quién no, todos los que formaban parte del grupo entraron en la muestra, así de sencillo. Unos se acercaban a lo neoconcreto tal y

como lo concibo en ese momento, otros menos, pero igual participaron en la exposición, ninguno quedó excluido.

^{AJ} Es importante ese punto. Es decir, si el Manifiesto neoconcreto y la exposición que organizan constatan lo acaecido, sin prescribir el camino que habrían de seguir en el futuro, es cierto que en el intento por definir lo que los une, se produce en ustedes una toma de conciencia que vendría luego a canalizar sus ideas y sus respectivas prácticas artísticas con mayor claridad y en una dirección más precisa.

^{FG} Es cierto, sin duda, aunque hoy me vería obligado a reconocer que en esa época ni yo mismo veía con claridad lo que estaba sucediendo. En verdad, aquellas ideas tienen mucho más que ver con mi visión crítica del Concretismo que, por ejemplo, con la opinión que podían tener un Amílcar de Castro o un Franz Weissman. Ellos tenían menos divergencias con el arte concreto de las que yo podía tener. Está claro, por otra parte, que si Hélio y Lygia concuerdan conmigo es porque tampoco aceptaban el racionalismo extremo y empobrecedor de los concretos. Entonces, en todo rigor, los tres que empujan el movimiento fuimos Hélio, Lygia y yo. La primera exposición neoconcreta deja ver diferencias claras con el Concretismo, pero el Neoconcretismo no nace ya hecho en esta muestra inicial, sino que fue definiéndose con el tiempo, a medida que cada uno de nosotros desarrollaba su obra. Su origen no está en la teoría, sino en la práctica, aunque sin duda orientada, enriquecida, por la teoría y por las ideas que habíamos expuesto en nuestro manifiesto.



Ferreira Gullar, 1958

^{AJ} Lo importante es constatar que incluso si la teoría ayuda y orienta al artista, su obra no se reduce a la aplicación de una serie de principios teóricos definidos *a priori*. La práctica artística es y fue siempre en ustedes, como en todo arte, la fuente de lo teórico. Otro aspecto que me interesa discutir es el lugar crucial que usted le acuerda a Mondrian y a Malévich en su manifiesto.

^{FG} Eso responde a la tentativa de hacer una especie de análisis de lo que había sucedido en las artes plásticas desde el Cubismo hasta el Neoconcretismo. Del Cubismo surgieron tres tendencias. Una fue la tentativa constructiva de Mondrian, que dio lugar al Neoplasticismo. Otra la de Malévich, que era igualmente una tendencia constructiva, aunque más metafísica, por decirlo de alguna manera. De allí surgió el Suprematismo. La otra fue la tendencia nihilista de Dadá, que destruyó todo y arrasó con los principios. Mondrian y Malévich son citados en el manifiesto porque el arte concreto nace de la tentativa de hacer un arte constructivo a partir de ellos, de sus obras y sus postulados teóricos, después de que el Cubismo desintegrara el lenguaje de la pintura. Desde mi punto de vista, Mondrian y Malévich materializaban el *impasse* al que había llegado la pintura, el mismo callejón sin salida al que llegaría Lygia Clark, y al que era inevitable que llegara. Esa reconsideración de la producción constructiva posterior al Cubismo, hasta la Escuela de Ulm, me permitió definir lo que entendía por arte neoconcreto; es decir, la ruptura con el cuadro y el abandono de la pintura en el plano como única vía para superar el atolladero al que se había llegado. A partir de Mondrian, pues, la Escuela de Ulm, Theo van Doesburg y más tarde los concretistas

paulistas, se llega a la eliminación casi total de la subjetividad, substituyéndola, como digo en el manifiesto, por una objetividad exterior, dictada por la fatalidad de las leyes físicas de la visión. El problema viene de la definición que Theo van Doesburg le da a la obra de arte. Para él, un cuadrado negro sobre un fondo blanco era tan real como un cuerpo natural, con lo cual dejaba de lado la dimensión expresiva, la de su significación. El Neoconcretismo quiso colocar de nuevo la significación de la forma y su valor expresivo como eje fundamental de la obra.

^{AJ} Esto se relaciona a mi entender con una frase de su manifiesto en la que se afirma que “la obra de arte supera el mecanismo material sobre el que reposa, creando para sí misma una significación tácita”.

^{FG}

^{AJ} De manera que es en esa exposición, y en la discusión que se dio en torno a “O formigueiro”, que usted comienza a tomar conciencia de las diferencias profundas entre los grupos concretos de Río y de São Paulo.

^{FG}

Lo que quiero decir con ello es que la obra es estrictamente lo que se ve. Usted toma una escultura de Amílcar, por ejemplo, y ¿qué puede decir sobre ella?, ¿cómo puede explicarla? Ella es lo que está viendo, la estructura formal y material que está ahí, su significación es su propia forma. La obra no se comprende, no tiene explicación, ella es una experiencia fenomenológica directa. ¿Qué es lo que quiere decir un poema? Lo que está dicho ahí. . . Si pudiera escribirlo de otra manera no haría un poema. Esto quiere decir que la obra supera su condición de objeto creando para ella una manera

propia de existir y sobre todo abriendo en cierta forma un campo de significado. Como lo dije una vez en uno de mis primeros textos sobre el Neoconcretismo, “Al contrario de los concretos, que trabajan con elementos explícitos descifrados –que parten de un supuesto conocimiento de lo que es la forma, el color e incluso las leyes que los rigen–, los artistas neoconcretos prefieren sumergirse en la natural ambigüedad del mundo para descubrir en él, por la experiencia directa, nuevas significaciones”. Es así como la obra puede superar el mecanismo material sobre el cual reposa, es decir, su configuración física y formal, puramente óptica.

^{AJ} Hay una frase que me intriga en el Manifiesto neoconcreto y que quizás convenga discutir. Dice así: “Entiéndase por espacialización de la obra el hecho de que ella está siempre haciéndose presente, está siempre recomenzando el impulso que la generó y del cual ella era ya el origen”.

^{FG} La actividad artística no es algo racional como lo pretendían los concretos. Por el contrario, esa dimensión racional es inhibidora de la creación y lo que nosotros queríamos, incluso en estos primeros trabajos, era que la intuición del creador tuviera un papel más importante, que no fuera limitada por el exceso de racionalidad y por esa desconfianza hacia la imaginación humana que caracterizaba al Concretismo. Pensábamos que respondía a un prejuicio producto de una sobrevaloración de la razón y del pensamiento científico. Y por eso cito a Merleau-Ponty en el texto, porque él representaba una tendencia de la fenomenología que se oponía a esa sobrevaloración del pensamiento científico. Él reconoce que la ciencia es una forma de conocimiento, no la única, y que existen otras formas de conocimiento que no tienen nada que

ver con la ciencia, como el conocimiento que puede obtenerse a través de los sentidos y del pensamiento humano, es decir de la fenomenología.

^{AJ} Reconoce además en el arte una de esas formas del conocimiento.

^{FG} Exacto, y que el arte solo es posible gracias a ese tipo de conocimiento. Eso es lo que descubro en Merleau-Ponty. Cuando leo *Fenomenología de la percepción* [1945], *La estructura del comportamiento* [1942] y *El ojo y la mente* [1964] sobre Cézanne, comprendí que se trataba del camino correcto para entender la obra, porque me preocupaba esa tendencia a aceptar el pensamiento científico como la única forma de pensar la realidad. Por esa vía el arte perdía su autonomía y su capacidad creadora para convertirse en un eco de la ciencia. La fenomenología rescata el pensamiento intuitivo, que es el pensamiento estético, y es lo que quiero decir en el manifiesto.

^{AJ} Un pensamiento, en el caso de los artistas plásticos, que no se expresa verbalmente, sino que opera trabajando la materia.

^{FG} Sí, trabajando; es decir, existen diversos lenguajes. La música es uno de ellos, y únicamente puede hacerse música a través de él. La pintura es otro, y es a través de ella que se crean nuevos significados. Eso no se hace racionalmente, sino gracias a una mezcla de racionalidad, de intuición y del pensamiento poético, de la creatividad humana. Y por eso hablo de ese impulso que le da origen a la obra, porque ese impulso que me lleva a hacerla es una voluntad intuitiva. Yo no puedo explicar exactamente por qué la hago de esta o de aquella manera. Tengo la intuición de una forma

que quiere nacer y ese impulso inicial que me lleva a hacerla se renueva a medida que trabajo, y así voy desarrollando aquella forma hasta agotarla.

^{AJ} Es también un intento por despertar en el espectador ese impulso inicial que, en el artista, dio origen a la obra.

^{FG} Sí, por supuesto, pero eso está implícito, el espectador va a descubrirlo, y lo hará a partir de su experiencia personal, de su historia intelectual y sensorial, y su lectura no tiene por qué ser igual a la del artista que la produjo. De modo que la propuesta neoconcreta parte de una experimentación estética que nace con el Cubismo y es, en cierta forma, consecuencia final de ese proceso. El problema es que las experiencias del Neoconcretismo desembocarían luego en la destrucción del arte. Las cosas que Lygia Clark hace al final de su vida son quizás una nueva forma de terapia, como ella dice, pero no tienen ya mucho que ver con el arte. ¿Y qué es el *parangolé* tan celebrado de Hélio Oiticica? Es sencillamente un elemento presente en las escuelas de samba que él saca de allí para imitarlo, sin llegar a alcanzar, desde el punto de vista de la creación, un gran componente expresivo. Son el fin de un proceso y terminan siendo un ejercicio exclusivamente sensorial. Existe, para darle un ejemplo, una experiencia de Hélio que consiste en abrir una caja y sentir el aroma del café que contiene dentro. Es decir, que al final no son más que un acontecimiento meramente sensorial, como otros donde el espectador debe escuchar el ruido del agua y sentir su contacto con los pies. Resulta, no obstante, que la sensorialidad es anterior al lenguaje, y el arte en cambio es un asunto de lenguaje. Surge de la sensación, algo que compartimos con los animales y es igual en el perro, en el elefante y el caimán.

Pero donde nace el ser humano, es cuando se llega a la expresión verbal, estética, filosófica, científica. Mientras que un evento como estos que señalo, que se limita a lo sensorial, no va más allá de lo que podría hacer un macaco. Allí no existe esa construcción intelectual, expresiva, que caracteriza al arte. Como consecuencia, tanto Hélio Oiticica como Lygia Clark llegaron a un *impasse*, a un callejón sin salida.

^{AJ} Y sin embargo, creo que es algo que se debe a circunstancias muy diversas. Primero, una evolución general de las artes plásticas durante los años sesenta (de una parte importante al menos) en su apertura al espacio y en su compromiso político-social. Es, luego, algo que puede ser incluso comprendido como consecuencia de la lectura que pudieron hacer de Mondrian y su obra. Hélio Oiticica, en especial, dice lo siguiente: “Hace un año y dos meses, prácticamente, encontré palabras de Mondrian que profetizaban la misión del artista no-objetivo. Decía él que el artista no-objetivo, que quisiera un arte verdaderamente no naturalista, debería llevar su intento hasta las últimas consecuencias; decía también que la solución no sería el mural, ni el arte aplicado, sino algo expresivo, que sería como ‘la belleza de la vida’, algo que no podía definir porque aún no existía”.³¹

^{FG} No, no, eso es otra cosa. Mondrian pensaba en la integración del arte a la arquitectura y consecuentemente en la vida social. Es en eso que pensaba, en el fin de la pintura de caballete; es decir, en que la pintura como objeto autónomo desaparecería al integrarse a la arquitectura, lo cual era una ilusión, porque esta disciplina, como la pintura, juega con un lenguaje completo que excluye las otras artes. La mayor parte de la obra de Le Corbusier y Theo van Doesburg

no tiene nada de artes plásticas, o sea que esa idea de integración del arte a la arquitectura no pasó de ser un sueño. Al final, lo único que quedó de todo eso fueron los cuadros que ellos pintaron.

^{AJ} Un arquitecto venezolano, Carlos Raúl Villanueva, hizo un experimento de integración en la Universidad Central de Venezuela.

^{FG} No lo conozco.

^{AJ} A principios de los años cincuenta, en la Universidad Central de Venezuela, se intentó un proyecto de integración con los artistas abstractos y, en algunos casos, creo, podríamos efectivamente hablar de una integración lograda entre las artes plásticas y la arquitectura.



Nubes acústicas de Alexander Calder, Aula Magna, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1953 Más

Nubes acústicas de Alexander Calder, Aula Magna, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1953

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^{FG}

No estoy muy seguro de que suceda así. En México hubo un movimiento muy importante destinado a hacer de la arquitectura una especie de soporte para la pintura, con José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, etc. Aquí también, el edificio del Palacio Gustavo Capanema, antes Ministerio de Educación y Salud y Ministerio de Educación y Cultura [1943], el primer proyecto de Le Corbusier

modificado por Oscar Niemeyer, incluye paneles murales de Portinari³² y esculturas de Burle Marx en el jardín. No es que esté contra ese tipo de proyectos, entiéndame bien, al contrario, los encuentro muy bien. Lo que quiero decir es que el sueño de Mondrian, el de una pintura que se integraría a la arquitectura para desaparecer como expresión individual no se hizo realidad, no se dio, e incluso donde fue intentado la expresión pictórica continuó siendo un hecho individual.

^{AJ} Se buscaba una especie de equilibrio ideal entre los recursos de la pintura y los de la arquitectura, lo cual evidentemente es difícil de alcanzar sin que una se supedite a la otra, o sin que coexistan en un conflicto delicado de resolver. Pese a ello, creo que en el caso venezolano, en algunos proyectos puntuales al menos, esa integración se dio, incluso si se trató de experiencias límite, excepcionales.

^{FG} Yo creo que chocan entre ellas porque no estamos hablando de prácticas que hayan nacido por casualidad. La pintura es una actividad que existe hace más de veinte mil años. ¿Qué llevó a esos hombres a pintar un bisonte en la caverna, y en cavernas de tan difícil acceso, donde el pintor debía arrastrarse con antorchas por una brecha oscura, o dentro de una cúpula negra, con una oscuridad infernal, porque no se veía nada? Había ahí algo de las aspiraciones más profundas del ser humano, algo en todo caso mucho más profundo que los problemas de la galería o del museo. Es una chispa que nace con el ser humano y que por lo tanto no acabará. Mi nieto nació dibujando. Con seis años de edad ya estaba pintando, nadie le enseñó cómo hacerlo, ni le pidió que lo hiciera. El hombre del paleolítico encontró una piedra que se le parecía a la

cabeza de un bisonte, y la tomó, y la arregló para que se pareciera más al animal real, y luego se puso a admirar esa piedra, porque encontraba que era un bisonte de otra manera, viviendo de otra forma en aquella piedra. Se trataba de una operación mágica.

^{AJ} Y en el arte moderno, al menos como lo piensa un Picasso, existe la intención si no de un regreso, sí de una conexión con esta función “primitiva” del arte.

^{FG} Sí, es exactamente eso. Estoy convencido de que una serie de factores nos han ido trayendo a la situación actual en la que estamos llegando a la destrucción del arte. Me refiero por ejemplo a lo que llaman Arte conceptual, y que en mi opinión no es arte. Es en todo caso una actividad que no tiene las características fundamentales del arte, que son del dominio del lenguaje, del desarrollo de un tipo de simbología o de pensamiento no racional, no lógico. Entre los conceptuales, por el contrario, cada idea es autónoma, no tiene nada que ver con la siguiente. Incluso en la obra de un mismo artista no existe continuidad entre sus planteamientos y por eso no tiene la posibilidad de profundizar. Si usted toma un creador como Picasso o como Matisse, puede percibir un proceso complejo de profundización del lenguaje, de cambios y de reinención hasta el final. Ahora, el individuo que hoy corta un tiburón y lo mete dentro de un contenedor de cloroformo, y mañana amontona pedazos de cebra y los mete en cloroformo, ¿qué es lo que hace?, ¿qué continuidad existe allí?, ¿de qué expresión estamos hablando?, ¿es necesario saber algo para hacerlo? No, si ni siquiera es él quien lo hace. . . En Brasil existe una propaganda de cachaza que dice así: “Caninha 51. Una buena idea”. Y yo digo que ese arte, el conceptual, es como la Caninha 51: una buena idea. Incluso siendo

complacientes, es evidente que cada buena idea no se relaciona con la siguiente, no va más allá. Cuando uno piensa que el arte tiene veinte mil años o más, e intenta imaginar qué quedará de todo esto en un par de siglos, se dice que muy probablemente no quede ni rastro. Nadie lo sabe, es obvio, pero es posible que no se conserven, porque estas son obras perecederas, sin permanencia.

El otro aspecto a considerar es que estas obras no contienen expresión en sí mismas. Un urinario de Marcel Duchamp, por ejemplo, es arte si está en el Pompidou, no si permanece en la tienda donde lo compró. ¿Entonces, es el Centro Pompidou el que lo transforma en arte?, ¿es la institución la que transforma la vanguardia en arte? Sucede que la vanguardia no es institucional, ¿y qué es una vanguardia institucional? Es una confusión, esas personas ignoran que el arte es una necesidad vital del ser humano.

^{AJ} Ahora, cuando se estudia con cuidado las obras de Hélio Oiticica y Lygia Clark, uno se da cuenta de que está ante procesos absolutamente coherentes. Tanto así que se hace posible decir que ellos no abandonan la pintura de golpe para hacer algo completamente distinto sino que, por el contrario, su pintura se abre paulatinamente al exterior para trabajar fuera de ella, incluso si lo hacen con técnicas que ya no son pictóricas. Podríamos por ello decir que con el abandono de la pintura no acaba el arte, o no acaba el pensamiento que operaba en ella, sino que se transforma, simplemente.

^{FG} Sí, hasta un cierto punto. Aquí no puedo hacer el análisis de estos procesos porque son situaciones muy complejas y ya escribí ampliamente sobre ellos. El hecho es que tanto Hélio como Lygia abandonan la pintura para superar sus límites y cuando Hélio hace

un parangolé o Lygia sus máscaras, está claro que ya no se trata de pintura, es otra cosa.³³



Lygia Clark, *Diálogo: Óculos*, 1968 Más

Lygia Clark, *Diálogo: Óculos*, 1968

© Associação Cultural “O Mundo de Lygia Clark”

^{AJ} Y sin embargo, esas máscaras de Lygia Clark son dispositivos destinados a interconectar el mundo subjetivo del individuo con el mundo exterior, o a establecer lazos sensibles entre un individuo y otro, y en ese sentido no solo provienen de ese diálogo pictórico entre el marco y la tela que se entabló en su obra temprana, y donde

la tela terminó engullendo el marco, sino que sus modos operativos siguen siendo los mismos y producen sentido.

^{FG} Ese es el proceso que expliqué y que nadie, ni siquiera Lygia Clark, había discutido antes. Cuando, en 1958, ella me pidió que hiciera la presentación de la exposición que pensaba hacer en São Paulo, escribí un texto titulado “Lygia Clark. Una experiencia radical”.³⁴ Entonces le pedí que me mostrara su trabajo anterior, y cuando vi que en ciertos cuadros la composición geométrica que estaba en la tela pasaba para el marco, comprendí que ella quería suprimir el marco para llegar al espacio real. Y ahí comenzaba el proceso que fui discutiendo en la Teoría del no-objeto, mostrando cómo ella pasó progresivamente de la pintura al espacio hasta llegar a los *bichos*.



Lygia Clark, *Composição Nº 5* [*Composición Nº 5*], 1954 Más

Lygia Clark, *Composição Nº 5* [*Composición Nº 5*], 1954

Óleo sobre tela y madera

106.5 × 91 × 2 cm (41 15/16 × 35 13/16 × 13/16 inches)

^{AJ} Que son una especie de pintura espacializada.

^{FG} Yo no diría que se trata de una pintura espacializada. Ella llegó a un *impasse* con el plano pictórico, que el plano en sí no podía ir más allá, que no tenía escapatoria. Todo ese momento de la pintura abstracta está ligado a problemáticas de la pintura figurativa. En mis textos sobre estos problemas describo cómo la pintura de Malévich, negando la figura y luego negando la propia figura geométrica, llega al blanco sobre blanco y se encuentra en una situación en la cual el paso siguiente hubiera sido el fin de la pintura. ¿Y qué hizo Malévich cuando llegó al blanco sobre blanco? Construyó en el espacio produciendo los *architectones*, sus construcciones suprematistas en el espacio. ¿Y qué hizo Lygia cuando llegó a la tela prácticamente blanca, con una línea negra? Se lanzó al espacio, empezó a construir en el espacio. Ella dejó de concebir la tela como una superficie sobre la cual se pinta para actuar con la mano sobre la tela, y creó los objetos espaciales, los bichos, que fueron su salida de la pintura, tal y como lo hizo Malévich, quien dejó de pintar. Era el fin de la pintura. Si tengo la tela en blanco, o vuelvo a pintar, o dejo de pintar y trabajo con ella. Es lo que hizo Lygia Clark, trabajar con la tela.

^{AJ} Aun así, lo que me seduce, particularmente en Lygia Clark y Malévich, es que sus objetos son producto de un pensamiento pictórico.

^{FG} Sí, aunque en el sentido que estoy explicándole, porque llegaron al fin de la pintura. Es una obra tridimensional que nació del *impasse* al cual había llegado la pintura, pero ya no es pintura: no tiene tela, ni pigmento, ni color, no es pintura. Hélio utiliza aún el color en sus *bólides* [bólidos], mas ya no hace pintura: es un objeto para ser manipulado, ¿entiende? A partir de allí comienza un desarrollo meramente sensorial sin mucho que ver con el arte. Las instalaciones y objetos de Hélio y de Lygia ofrecen al público la posibilidad de experimentar sensaciones, pero el simple hecho de sentir no lo hace creador, es una ilusión. Lo que hace a un artista creador es la capacidad para componer una tocata y fuga, o pintar el *Guernica*, y esa capacidad, digan lo que digan, no la tiene todo el mundo. Es expresión, sin duda, pero una expresión como cualquiera otra, y no todo lo que es expresión es arte. Si alguien pisa mi pie y grito, estoy expresándome, no haciendo arte. El arte es el producto de una construcción intelectual, posee un lenguaje, debe tener una elaboración. Cuando todo vale, el arte se acaba.

^{AJ} Entonces, por lo que veo, con el Neoconcretismo concluye para usted un proceso histórico.

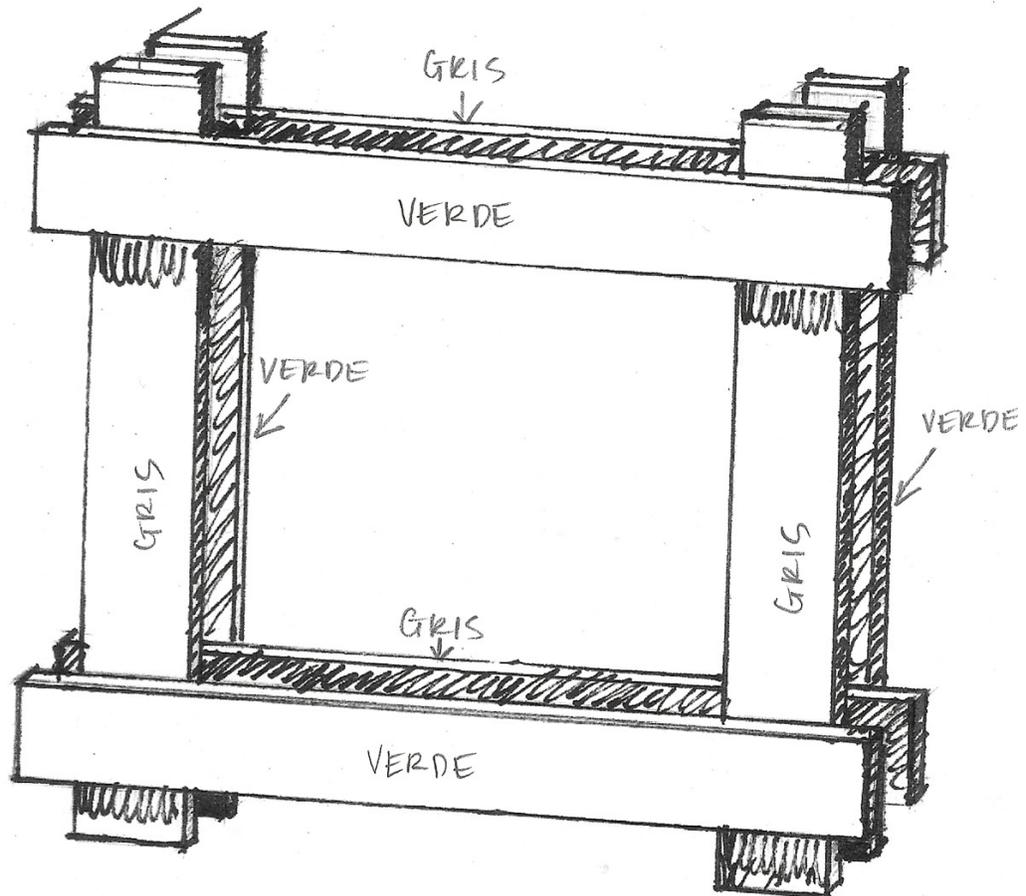
^{FG} No, para nada, ese proceso continúa todavía, y sigue particularmente vivo en el terreno de la plástica. Es quizás el único campo en el que sucede. También, sin duda, hubo vanguardia en el teatro, en el cine, en la poesía y en la novela, pero en todas estas prácticas se abandonó ese camino y se regresó a formas que, enriquecidas por los experimentos de vanguardia, retomaron el lecho natural de cada una de estas expresiones artísticas. Lo que pasa es que nadie se atreve a decirlo, tienen miedo de pasar por reaccionarios.

AJ

Los procesos de la pintura neoconcreta, tal y como hemos venido discutiendo en los casos de Lygia Clark y Hélio Oiticica, conducen pues a un *impasse* en el cual los artistas se ven por así decir obligados a trabajar fuera de ella, en el espacio. Solo que el resultado de ese trabajo genera para usted un dilema, en el sentido de que no es posible comprender las piezas que producen dentro de las categorías tradicionales de la pintura y la escultura. Es para explicar en cierta forma la naturaleza de este nuevo objeto que usted escribe la Teoría del no-objeto.

FG

Es un texto que nace tras una visita a la casa de Lygia Clark. Ella había hecho un objeto que no sabía cómo definir, e invitó a algunos de sus amigos a cenar para mostrárselos. Allí estábamos Mário Pedrosa, Amílcar de Castro y yo, entre otros. El objeto que había hecho estaba formado por una serie de planchas de madera cruzadas unas sobre otras, un poco como se hacen aquí las fogatas durante las fiestas de São João. Unas planchas eran de color gris, otras de un verde oscuro y mate, como el color del aguacate. Fue un poco después del Manifiesto neoconcreto. Durante la reunión ella nos confesó que no sabía lo que era eso, ni cómo definirlo. Es una obra que nadie conoce, quizás porque no le dio continuidad. La hace justo cuando intentaba pasar al espacio, y es probable que haya abandonado ese camino para pasar a los *casulos*. Su propósito era trabajar con la tela directamente, como objeto material, y la madera resultaba demasiado rígida, no le permitía los pliegues que consiguió con el metal. El hecho es que nos pusimos a ver aquella pieza y a discutirla.



Bosquejo basado en la memoria de Gullar, del objeto de Lygia Clark que inspiró la Teoría del no-objeto

—Es un relieve —dijo Mário Pedrosa.

—No, no es un relieve —respondí—. Un relieve presupone un plano o una superficie de fondo sobre el cual surge algo en relieve y este objeto no tiene ninguna superficie de fondo.

—Es verdad, tienes razón —dijo Mário, sin definirlo.

En ese momento llegó la señora de servicio indicándonos que la cena estaba servida y se fueron a cenar. Yo, en cambio, me quedé

observando aquello y tratando de comprenderlo. De toda evidencia ya no era una pintura, ni una escultura. Era, sí, un objeto, o una cosa que ocupaba el espacio como los objetos. No poseía, sin embargo, como la silla o la mesa, una utilidad práctica, una función. Enseguida me fui para la mesa y les dije:

—Acabo de descubrir el nombre de ese objeto.

—¿Y cuál es? —me preguntaron.

—Es un no-objeto —respondí, a lo que algunos comenzaron a reír. Entonces Mário me dijo:

—No, no puedes calificar una cosa de no-objeto, porque un objeto es objeto de conocimiento y si no es objeto no existe—. A lo que respondí:

—Sí, pero no estoy haciendo Filosofía, si lo llamo no-objeto es porque se trata sin duda de una cosa y por lo tanto un objeto, pero sin utilidad o función ninguna. Es simplemente algo que posee sentido. Nadie tiene por qué aceptar el nombre que le estoy dando, claro, aunque para mí ese es su nombre, un no-objeto.

Ahí se detuvo la conversación y cenamos todos juntos, riéndonos y discutiendo, como siempre. Yo me quedé, eso sí, pensando en lo que había dicho, y al volver a casa desarrollé mis ideas al respecto. No se trataba ya solamente del trabajo de Lygia, sino de ese fenómeno nuevo que estábamos observando en algunos artistas neoconcretos, una cosa que no era pintura, ni escultura, sino otra cosa, y es a partir de ese hecho que desarrollé la Teoría del no-objeto.

^{AJ} Usted lo llama *no-objeto* u *objeto especial*, un objeto en fin que logra la síntesis de las experiencias sensoriales y mentales. ¿Sin embargo, no es esa una característica de toda obra de arte?

^{FG} Sí, claro, aunque ésta tenía algo especial. No figuraba nada, no era una estatua ni el retrato de una persona, no cumplía ninguna función. Estábamos ante una obra abstracta, cargada de sentido, que ocupaba un espacio. Y por eso era integralmente perceptible, sin dejar resto.

^{AJ} ¿Y usted cree que ese objeto es efectiva y totalmente transparente al entendimiento humano?

^{FG} Ese objeto tiene un sentido, pero no uno que pueda ser traducido verbalmente. Él es por el contrario pura apariencia, es decir, una experiencia fenomenológica.³⁵ El objeto es tal y como yo lo percibo, no se vincula con ninguna otra realidad. Es como una melodía musical, que produce sentido, solo que no puede ser traducido al lenguaje verbal. Se puede hablar de ella, interpretarla, etc.; no traducirla, porque su sentido es estrictamente musical. Son problemas complejos y por eso mismo, para explicarlos con la mayor claridad posible, inventé ese diálogo ficticio con el que termina la Teoría del no-objeto. El público quiere explicaciones sencillas y no siempre es posible. Cuando me preguntan qué significa el “Poema sujo”, por ejemplo, les respondo que lo lean, porque él no significa otra cosa sino lo que está contenido en él. Si hubiera podido hacerlo de otra forma no sería como es. Ahora, claro, la idea de que una cosa pueda ser percibida y transformarse en puro significado, sin dejar resto, es una aspiración más que una verdad. Puede ser que en alguna oportunidad lo haya sentido así, que aquellos objetos se me presentaran como algo esencialmente transparente; lo cierto es que se trata, digámoslo así, de una realidad a la que debería poder llegar un no-objeto. En verdad fue casi una

anticipación de lo que acontecería en adelante, en particular en Lygia Clark y Hélio Oiticica.

^{AJ} ¿Un parangolé podría ser considerado como un no-objeto?

^{FG} En cierta forma sí, aunque ahí comienza en mi caso una visión crítica de su trabajo. Desde mi punto de vista, los bólides de Oiticica representan el límite de su experiencia neoconcreta. Tras ese límite, su producción escapa a los parámetros del arte, al menos dentro de las preocupaciones que dieron origen al proceso neoconcreto. Igual sucede con Lygia, cuyo límite se sitúa en los bichos.

^{AJ} Y sin embargo, las instalaciones penetrables de Oiticica comienzan como si se tratara de un bólido que ha crecido y se ha abierto hasta hacerse penetrable, lo que indicaría una continuidad de intención y de lenguaje entre los bólides y los *penetráveis* [penetrables] que nos obligaría a mover ese límite, en el caso de que exista, aun más allá.

^{FG} Quizás podría verse de esa manera, aunque se trataría en todo caso de una dialéctica en la que los *relevos espaciais* [relieves espaciales] generan los bólides y éstos a su vez producen los penetráveis sin que exista una verdadera continuidad de lenguaje. Y no es que quiera apropiarme de todo lo que se ha hecho en Brasil, pero usted puede constatar que Oiticica no hace penetráveis antes de mi “Poema enterrado”. Con la diferencia de que mi poema está constituido por una palabra que se inscribe dentro de un cubo, y ese cubo dentro de otro, y ambos dentro de un tercer cubo; es decir, que se basa en formas geométricas, ideales, mientras los bólides de Oiticica están

llenos de materia orgánica, no son siquiera formas. Son obras que integran una suciedad que no proviene de la pintura.

^{AJ} Se ensucian de mundo en todo caso.

^{FG} Sin duda, es un retorno a la realidad concreta.

^{AJ} Y en ese retorno a la realidad, desde mi modo de ver, Oiticica sigue manteniendo con usted y con su misma práctica artística –de donde provienen los bólides y luego sus penetráveis– un diálogo de lo más significativo. Pienso, por ejemplo, en el análisis que usted hace en “Vanguardia e subdesarrollo” [Vanguardia y subdesarrollo], donde habla de los bichos de Lygia e incluso de los parangolés de Oiticica, como del “camino que esos artistas encontraron para retornar a la realidad, incluso sin renunciar a la concepción metafísica que los mueve. Es cierto que la acción, en tales casos, como en Mallarmé, es aún ritualista y abstracta –y en algunos casos liberadora– pero indica una aproximación progresiva a los hechos concretos de la vida”.³⁶

^{FG} Sí, es verdad, porque en cierta forma yo fui el ideólogo del Neoconcretismo; es decir, fueron mis textos y las discusiones que tuvimos en torno a ellos, los que desencadenaron ese proceso que luego cada uno continuó a partir de sus problemas y con su propio talento. Mário Pedrosa, que era como nuestro hermano mayor, fue el sostén teórico del Concretismo y todos lo respetaban y lo seguían, mientras yo abrí una brecha nueva. Lo hice, obviamente, a partir de mis preocupaciones personales y a partir también de sus obras. Luego, cuando me interesé por los problemas políticos y por la transformación social del Brasil, privilegiando la acción política,

Oiticica cambió y comenzó a interesarse por la problemática de las favelas.

^{AJ} Habría que decir, igualmente, que estos cambios se dan en sus obras empujados en cierta forma por la particular circunstancia política que se vive entonces en Brasil tras el golpe de estado, como en gran parte de la América Latina, o sea que es la época, la historia, la que los lleva a ustedes y a muchos otros en el mundo a establecer un contacto más estrecho y vital con la realidad concreta. Hasta ahora, hemos venido analizando lo que pasaba en el ámbito de las artes plásticas, específicamente en torno a los movimientos del Concretismo y el Neoconcretismo, un proceso apasionante y complejo que me gustaría seguir discutiendo más adelante. Antes sin embargo de continuar este análisis, me parece importante abordar su obra poética, en especial el conjunto que tituló *A luta corporal* [La lucha corporal],³⁷ donde reúne los poemas escritos entre 1950 y 1953, es decir, justo antes de mudarse a Río y, una vez en Río, durante los primeros años del movimiento concreto.

^{FG} Es un libro que comienzo en 1950, cuando estaba todavía en São Luís. Pero es una experiencia que no tiene nada que ver con el arte concreto. Nació de una tentativa por superar un proceso verbal, buscando una coincidencia, como si el lenguaje pudiese nacer junto al poema. Ese es el problema que me propuse resolver: hacer una poesía en la que el lenguaje pudiera liberarse de su pasado para nacer con el poema. Pensaba que el lenguaje era viejo y la experiencia que quería comunicar nueva. Dado que el lenguaje envejecía al poema, se hacía necesario reinventarlo en él. *A luta corporal* responde a esa inquietud, es una tentativa que llevé hasta sus

últimas consecuencias y terminó con la implosión del lenguaje, porque era imposible lograr lo que buscaba.

^{AJ} Por supuesto, porque el lenguaje preexiste al poema.

^{FG} Sí, claro, entonces lo que hice, para que el lenguaje no preexistiera al poema, fue que lo deformé de manera tal que pareciera estar naciendo allí. El poema “Roçzeiral” [Rosaleda], marca el instante en que eso sucede, cuando transformo el lenguaje en una cosa otra, que ya no es él, y donde la sintaxis se desintegra y las palabras son deformadas, lo que produce un poema casi incomprensible. El poema surge un día cuando pasaba por el barrio de Botafogo en Río, y vi unas jardineras vacías. No había plantas, las flores habían desaparecido y la tierra estaba seca. Pensando en la posibilidad de que las matas renacieran y florecieran de nuevo, me vino a la mente el siguiente verso: “Ao sopro da luz a tua pompa se renova numa órbita” [Al soplo de la luz tu pompa se renueva en una órbita], pero como yo no quería seguir escribiendo con la sintaxis convencional, quise dejarlo así, solo que el verso se quedó en mi mente y, a los pocos días, caminando por la calle, me vino un verso que era en realidad la deformación del primero “Au sôflu i luz ta pompa inova, orbita. . .”, y a partir de esta frase empecé a escribir el poema en un estado casi delirante. Lo importante es que en ese momento me sentí liberado del lenguaje formal e intenté escribir como si las palabras estuvieran naciendo junto al poema. Busqué también un poema ritmado, que tuviera un impacto sonoro en el lector. El resultado se acercó a la casi total desintegración del lenguaje, tanto que cuando lo hice di mi poesía por terminada y pensé que no lograría escribir nunca más. Por último, escribí otro poema “O inferno” [El inferno], que es la expresión de esa tragedia, de esa

derrota, y dos otros poemas que eran como una despedida. Publiqué el libro como si fuera la última cosa que hacía en mi vida.

ROÇZEIRAL

Au sôflu i luz ta pom-
pa inova'
orbita

FUROR
tô bicho
'scuro fo-
go
Rra

UILÁN
UILÁN,
lavram z'olhares, flamas!
CRESPITAM GÂNGLES RÔ MASUAF
Rhra

Rozal, ROÇAL
l'ancêndio Mino-
Mina TAURUS
MINÔS rhes chãns
sur ma parole —
ÇAR

ENFERNO
LUÍZNEM
E ÔS SÓES
LÔ CORPE
INFENSOS
Ra
CI VERDES
NASCI DO
CÔFO

“Roçzeiral” [Rosaleda], (extracto)

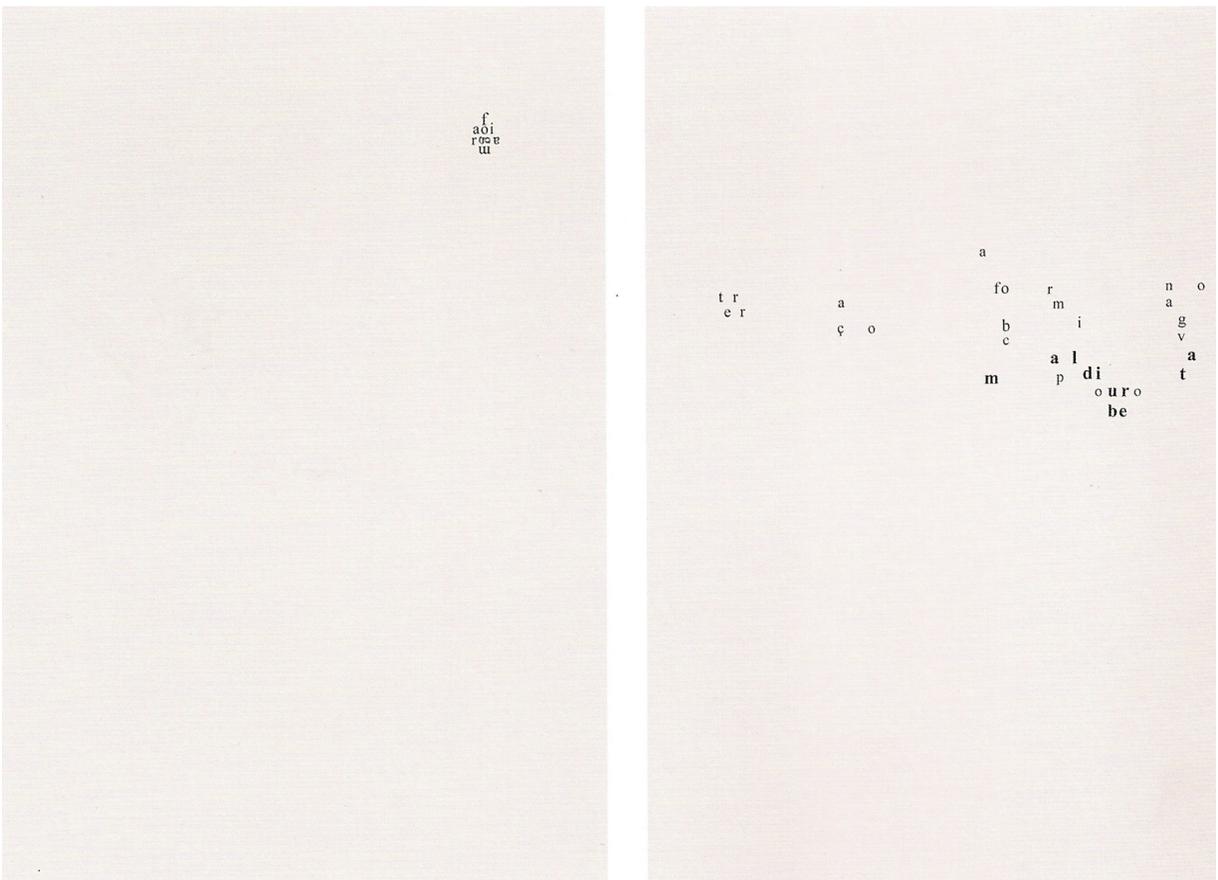
^{AJ} Como lector poco conocedor de la poesía, como amateur distante y eventual, puedo decir que si algo me impresionó en este conjunto de poemas, es la insistencia con la que a menudo usted parece oponer su conciencia personal a la opacidad del mundo. El gallo, la gallina, toda esa vida ajena y opaca para nosotros, las cosas inertes también, todo el universo ciego de las cosas.

^{FG} Es estrictamente lo que hago. Y es a la vez una tentativa de superar esa opacidad lo que me llevó a desintegrar el lenguaje, porque en verdad quería crear un lenguaje que pudiera sobreponerse a esa opacidad de lo real, solo que entonces se desintegró. Cuando publiqué el libro, en 1954, los poetas (que no eran todavía poetas concretos), los hermanos Augusto y Haroldo de Campos, y Décio Pignatari, quienes soñaban en São Paulo con hacer una poesía divergente de la que se hacía en Brasil, me contactaron diciéndome que yo había desencadenado el proceso para crear una nueva poesía en Brasil. Que mi libro no la creaba pero que, al destruir la vieja, abría el camino para crearla. Así comenzamos a intercambiar cartas, a dialogar, y de ahí nació la poesía concreta en Brasil, de esas discusiones en las que cada uno aportaba su experticia y sus problemas más íntimos. Incluso, cuando Haroldo escribió un artículo diciendo que necesitábamos crear un nuevo verso, le respondí diciéndole que no se trataba solamente de un nuevo verso, sino de crear una nueva sintaxis, puesto que yo había desintegrado el verso y la sintaxis misma. Había que crear una sintaxis diferente, nueva, y el resultado fue la sintaxis visual de la poesía concreta, en sustitución de la sintaxis gramatical.

^{AJ} *A luta corporal* es pues el libro que abre la vía hacia la poesía concreta (al menos para usted) y luego, por supuesto, hacia las experiencias neoconcretas. Por eso me parece crucial discutir esa frontera entre la poesía concreta y la neoconcreta, al menos tal y como ella se manifiesta en su caso. Usted dice que la poesía concreta reduce la palabra a un mero elemento gráfico dentro de la página en blanco, mientras la neoconcreta piensa el poema como un organismo temporal. En ese caso, no podríamos hablar de poesía neoconcreta sino a partir del *livro-poema* [libro-poema].

^{FG} Sí, pero es un proceso evolutivo. Por ejemplo, cuando hice “O formigueiro”, de 1955, podríamos decir que se trata ya de un libro-poema, porque es un poema que existe solamente en aquel libro. Cada página contiene una palabra, y esa palabra tiene una estructura que no es su estructura gráfica habitual. El poema funciona de la siguiente manera: en la primera página aparece la palabra *a formiga* [la hormiga], que explota y se reorganiza de otra forma. Después, al pasar la página, aparece en negritas una nueva palabra, *trabalha* [trabaja], con la particularidad de que sus letras están colocadas en diversos lugares de la página, como si se hubieran movido para reunirse a las letras de la palabra anterior en un conjunto bastante aleatorio, cercano al que constituiría un conjunto de hormigas. Se pasa de nuevo la página y a las letras anteriores se agrega un nuevo conjunto de letras en negritas donde puede leerse, *na treva* [en la tiniebla]. En la otra página aparecen las letras de *a terra* [la tierra], siempre siguiendo el principio de que las letras que se agregan son las únicas que aparecen resaltadas en negritas. En la siguiente se repite la palabra *terra*, y en las siguientes otra vez *a formiga*, *traça* [la hormiga, traza], *o mapa* [el mapa], *d'ouro* [del oro], *maldita urbe* [maldita urbe]. De esa forma queda

finalmente constituido el mapa con la totalidad de las letras contenidas en el poema. A partir de allí, en cada página que se pase, aparecen nuevas palabras construidas a partir de las letras ya existentes, incluso ubicadas en el mismo lugar que se les asignó en el mapa. Así va creciendo el poema, con palabras que nos remiten a las hormigas y su actividad. Solo que el inicio de cada palabra se indica ahora con una mayúscula, pues es necesario señalar un orden de lectura, ya que las letras aparecen dispersas en el espacio de la página. *A formiga come* [la hormiga come], *bicho* [bicho], *gente* [gente], *morta* [muerta], *milho* [maíz], *farinha* [harina].



“O formigueiro” [El hormiguero], 1955 (extracto) Màs
 “O formigueiro” [El hormiguero], 1955 (extracto),
O Formigueiro (Rio de Janeiro: Edição Europa, 1991).

IL PLEUT

Il pleut des voix de femmes comme si elles étaient mortes même dans le souvenir
c'est vous aussi qui pleut merveilleuses rencontres de ma vie à goutte à goutte
et ces nnaages cabrés se prennent à hennir tout un univers de villes auriculaires
éoute sil pleut tandis que le regret et le dédain pleurent une ancienne musique
éoute tombe les liens qui t'éloignent en haut et en bas

“Il pleut” [Está lloviendo] de Guillaume Apollinaire

Màs

^{AJ} Es como si estuviera describiendo las cosas que podía ver en el patio de su casa. . .

^{FG} No, no es por eso, es porque se describe lo que la hormiga hace. Ella carga hojas, granos, insectos muertos. Y el poema va introduciendo diversas palabras que remiten a la vida de las hormigas, a esa especie de urbe primitiva que construyen, para concluir con la palabra Ur, que es el nombre de la ciudad de los Caldeos, la más antigua que se conozca, y que en alemán quiere decir origen. “O formigueiro” es pues un poema constituido por una palabra en cada página, y cuya lectura exige la manipulación de ese objeto que comienzan a ser los libros-poema. El proceso, por supuesto, es más radical en el “Livro-poema N° 1”, el que inicia con las palabras *Ossó, Nossó*, porque las palabras están escritas en el reverso, a la vez que las hojas cortadas en varios tamaños van componiendo una estructura distinta, específica de ese libro. Ahí ya está el origen de un orden diferente a la organización meramente visual y mecánica que proponían los paulistas: “novo no velho, ovo novelo, novo no velho” [nuevo en lo viejo, huevo ovillo, nuevo en lo viejo]. ¿Comprende? . . . “Luxo, lixo” [lujo, basura]. . . La de ellos es una construcción totalmente aliterativa y automática, pero si el primer fonema no coincide con el siguiente, o no se sustenta en una experiencia de vida, aquello se reduce a un juego muy limitado.

ovo
n o v e l o
novo no velho
o filho em folhos
na jaula dos joelhos
infante em fonte
feto feito
dentro do
centro

nu
des do nada
até o hum
ano mero nu
mero do zero
crua criança incru
stada no cerne da
carne viva en
fim nada

o
p o n t o
onde se esconde
lenda ainda antes
e n t r e v e n t r e s
quando queimando
os seios são
peitos nos
dedos

no
turna noite
em tórno em treva
turva sem contórno
morte negro nó cego
sono do morcego nu
ma sombra que o pren
dia preta letra que
se torna
sol

o
n o v e l o
o v o
o v o
e
l
o

Augusto de Campos, “Ovo novelo” [Huevo madeja], 1955

^{AJ} Y ese pasaje del tiempo mecánico de la poesía concreta a la duración en la neoconcreta, se da con la manipulación de las páginas.

^{FG} Sí, aunque con un componente adicional. Por ejemplo, escribí poemas que comienzan con una sola palabra inscrita al borde de la página. Luego hay un silencio entre una palabra y otra, de manera que la página comienza a vivir como algo semántico, ya no es solo papel, es silencio, un tiempo interior que es precisamente lo que le faltaba a la poesía concreta, porque ella funcionaba mecánicamente, siguiendo una forma de pensar que provenía de la ciencia, del desarrollo tecnológico, y en ese tipo de poemas el ser humano se convierte en una cosa antigua.

^{AJ} Parece claro que en las primeras manifestaciones de la poesía neoconcreta, tal y como usted la practica, se recurre con frecuencia a la impronta de ese primer contacto con lo real, a sus experiencias infantiles, como en el caso de las hormigas en el patio de su casa.

^{FG} Es justo lo que dice, incluso cuando hago poemas espaciales como “Lembra” [Recuerda] o como “Não” [No], es cierto que estoy acudiendo a un recuerdo de la infancia. Cuando era niño vivía jugando en los matorrales que había cerca de mi casa y un día que estaba jugando dentro de ellos me encontré, de repente, con una piedra redonda en el suelo. En medio de ese monte, entre las ramas y las hierbas estaba la piedra, en el silencio, y me quedé sorprendido, viéndola y preguntándome ¿qué significa esto?, ¿qué hace en medio de estos montes una piedra tan bella? Y en ese

momento tuve la impresión de que si levantaba aquella piedra encontraría su nombre, como si ella lo ocultara. Es una anécdota que resurgió más adelante, cuando escribí *Crime na flora* [*Crimen en la flora*]. “Há um nome, debaixo da pedra, na flora. . . na flora o nome, sob uma pedra na flora. . . .” [Hay un nombre, debajo de la piedra, en la flora. . . en la flora, el nombre, bajo una piedra en la flora]. Las imágenes que empleo no nacen por casualidad, sino que provienen de una experiencia poética muy personal ante el mundo.

AJ

Me parece extremadamente importante lo que dice, porque si algo caracteriza a menudo la producción intelectual en general, en países como los nuestros, que han sido colonia, es la sensación de que ya todo ha sido dicho, que todo está resuelto y que para toda inquietud encontraremos siempre un libro que la explique. En cambio, me parece fabulosa su trayectoria poética tal y como viene describiéndola, porque ella evidencia una voluntad real de escapar a lo ya formulado, zambulléndose hasta lo más hondo en su experiencia sensible. Y por eso entiendo que podamos hablar de creación en el caso del Neoconcretismo, porque sus obras van realmente más allá de los modelos europeos, asumiendo el proceso que encuentran y continuándolo a partir de una vivencia propia.³⁸

FG

Es verdad, en ninguna literatura se hacen poemas espaciales, eso no existe. Una pieza como el “Poema enterrado”, con número y calle, con una dirección, no existe en otra parte. Por eso es que los documentos neoconcretos son considerados como documentos contemporáneos y son incluidos en publicaciones junto al Manifiesto surrealista. El Manifiesto neoconcreto es un documento traducido a muchos idiomas, porque es original, no es copia o

variación de otros textos anteriores, lo que sería manifestación, como usted lo dijo, de un pensamiento colonial.

^{AJ} Exacto, y ese hundirse en lo más íntimo es lo que hace que usted logre salir de las formas ya conocidas, inventadas, lejos de lo que podríamos definir como un pensamiento de tipo colonial.³⁹

^{FG} Claro, de lo contrario uno se queda copiando lo que le enseñaron, lo que le impusieron, y de esa manera no va a crear nada. El movimiento modernista brasileño es importante para nosotros, pero en verdad no es sino la repetición de lo que fue hecho en París. Es una repetición, digamos, ingenua del Cubismo y de los demás movimientos modernos. E igual sucede con las ideas del movimiento antropofágico, porque en verdad son expresión de un movimiento europeo de descubrimiento de los primitivos latinoamericanos, mientras el Neoconcretismo es algo que nació aquí, que critica lo que se dio allá, puesto que formamos parte de la civilización europea, pero que no se limitó a repetirlo.

^{AJ} Es lo que me parece conmovedor en un poemario como *A luta corporal*, porque siento –y el análisis que usted hace al final de *Cultura posta em questão* [*Cultura puesta en duda*] parece corroborarlo– que muchos de esos poemas son un intento por hundirse en lo más profundo de sí mismo, casi como si intentara hacerlo escapando al idioma, saliendo de ese ámbito de sentido definido por el lenguaje heredado. Luego se da cuenta de que es imposible, claro, pero de ese intento surge, o comienza a surgir, algo nuevo.

^{FG} Es correcto, cuando yo digo que buscaba una vía para conseguir que el lenguaje naciera junto al poema, en “Roçzeiral” por ejemplo, es cierto que nace, con la dificultad de que es un lenguaje imposible, porque un lenguaje que no lo comprende sino el autor en un sin sentido. Aun así, lo hice, y ni siquiera supe cómo, y cuando me separé de aquello me di cuenta de que no era viable. El último poema de *A luta corporal*, titulado “Negror n’origens” [Negror d’orígenes],⁴⁰ es un intento por escribir con ese lenguaje desintegrado.

^{AJ} Aun sabiendo que ya nadie podría entenderlo.

^{FG} Sí, sí, hice una última tentativa. . . ¿quién sabe? Cuando destruí mi lenguaje quedé desesperado, no tenía rumbo. Yo era poeta y había destruido mi instrumento de expresión. Por eso, una vez más, intenté escribir con ese lenguaje partiendo, como de costumbre, de una experiencia vivida, aunque en este caso parezca imposible. Pasa lo siguiente, cuando llegué a Río, en 1951, descubrí que estaba tuberculoso, y me internaron en un hospital en el interior del Estado de Río, en Correias. El hospital tenía un jardín lleno de plantas llamadas *crestas de gallo*. Un día que estaba en la ventana de mi cuarto, viendo el jardín, me pareció ver un gallo en medio de esas plantas. Entonces me asusté, de veras, y me dije que no podía ser, que no estaba viendo un gallo, que era porque la planta se llamaba así que creía haberlo visto. En ese instante el gallo salta fuera de las plantas y en verdad me sorprendió, y esa relación animal-vegetal me marcó. Ese último poema, “Negror n’origens”, nace de la historia que acabo de contarle, de esa mezcla sorprendente entre lo animal y lo vegetal. Si lo lee después de esta explicación, se dará cuenta de que el poema tiene referencias

inesperadas que responden a una mezcla de lo animal y lo vegetal, de algo que salió de lo oscuro de la vida, de la naturaleza, allí donde se funden ambas formas de existencia. Es una tentativa loca y estaba claro que no podía seguir escribiendo así porque nadie me entendería. Siempre he querido comunicar, no quiero ser un genio maldito, nunca me cortaré la oreja.

^{AJ} Son experiencias límite, momentos en los cuales un artista, en su necesidad de expresarse, rebasa quizás las posibilidades del lenguaje. Muchos de esos experimentos literarios deben leerse como documentos, como testimonios de un intento cuyos resultados no son tal vez satisfactorios, pero que en ese preciso instante le permiten romper las barreras que le impedían avanzar. Es, quizás, lo que sucede con ese curioso texto titulado *Crime na flora* que usted escribe más o menos en ese periodo.

^{FG} Es cierto, se trata de un libro que escribo inmediatamente después de *A luta corporal*, a finales de 1953 o principios de 1954. Lo llamé *Crime na flora* para hacerlo más abstracto. Si lo hubiera llamado *Crime nas flores* [Crimen en las flores] se hubiera limitado mucho a un tipo de vegetación, mientras así, “en la flora”, se hacía más general, más abstracto. Fue una tentativa, como lo fueron los dos últimos poemas de *A luta corporal*, por vencer el *impasse* en el cual me encontraba cuando desintegré mi lenguaje. Pensé que ya no podría escribir, porque ni quería volver al lenguaje que usaba antes, ni podía hacerlo en el lenguaje desintegrado de “Roçzeiral”. No tenía salida. Pese a la angustia y a la sensación de bloqueo, seguí haciendo intentos. Tomé unas hojas de papel, las corté y las doblé para formar una especie de cuaderno. Le puse un papel de embalaje como cubierta y escribí la palabra *Frente*. No como título –lo que

iba a escribir no podía tenerlo—, sino como una indicación de su comienzo, solo para saber por dónde debía abrir ese cuaderno, y ahí empecé a escribir a mano, en una letra menuda, un libro sin sentido. No sabía lo que iba a escribir, ni hacia dónde podría dirigirse el texto. Empecé ese libro de esa manera porque era la única forma de continuar.

^{AJ} Una especie de escritura automática, en suma.

^{FG} No, era más bien una tentativa por arrancar desde cero, sin rumbo. Respondía a mi obsesión por hacer una poesía que fuera más que un discurso. El libro comienza así: “Yo sobre el muro castigado, la dolencia solar en los engranajes de la tierra, yo que, en silencio, hablo por tu boca, donde trabajas, verboso, hablas en mis labios en la podredumbre podridos, en el brillo del sosiego de la dentadura que el mito firma desde atrás de la garganta en el polvo resplandeciente; cabellos de metal”.⁴¹ No sé lo que estoy escribiendo, cierto, pero no es una escritura automática porque no persigue sus objetivos ni responde a las técnicas surrealistas. La escritura automática presupone la voluntad de atrapar el inconsciente, tiene un lado delirante y unas técnicas prescritas de antemano. Cuando se detecta, por ejemplo, que el texto que se está escribiendo puede haber sido contaminado por la conciencia del escritor, Bretón recomienda tomar una letra cualquiera y escribir la primera palabra que nos venga a la mente a partir de ella. Ese método se emplea para evitar que la conciencia dirija el texto, que debe ser, supuestamente, una especie de fotografía o de calco del inconsciente. En tanto que, en mi caso, se trata de algo que voy cavando sin saber hacia dónde me dirijo, porque es lo único que puedo hacer, y que voy escribiendo como a ciegas, aunque poco a

poco comienza a construirse una historia. Más adelante aparece el cadáver de una mujer. Y ese cadáver es encontrado en el jardín de un conjunto residencial, entre las flores. Luego no es una mujer, sino un hombre con una flecha en el ano. . . Era una locura, y estuve escribiendo aquello a mano durante meses. Así se fue mezclando ese lenguaje inventado de “Roçzeiral” a la pequeña historia que iba surgiendo durante el proceso de escritura. Allí comienza, además, una preocupación por la organización espacial de las palabras, que sin duda recogía e incluso anticipaba parte de lo que estaba sucediendo en mi poesía concreta.

pomo fumo gomo lumo numo
alfazema
oportuno⁴²

Y así fue desarrollándose, a veces como un universo de aliteraciones sin sentido, de repeticiones y listas de palabras intercaladas a textos más o menos narrativos. Por último coloqué una ametralladora detrás de unas hortensias, lo cual generó una guerra en el jardín. Al final del libro toda esa locura, que no podía tener un fin porque avanzaba sin rumbo, se detuvo por una decisión completamente arbitraria, aunque consciente, pensada para generar el caos total. Tomé dos bolígrafos, uno azul y uno rojo, y escribí dos historias paralelas.

Con el bolígrafo azul escribí una historia sin sentido, dejando un buen espacio entre línea y línea. Luego, entre una y otra línea azul, escribí en rojo otra historia, también completamente loca, haciéndolas terminar en la misma palabra. Si leías las líneas rojas, tenías una historia; si leías las azules, la historia era otra. Esa doble lectura final no se percibe sino en el manuscrito. En el libro impreso

eliminé los colores, lo que hace casi imposible que un lector pueda darse cuenta de lo que sucede. Fue hecho a propósito, para conseguir un efecto ilógico. Al final, cuando lo terminé, en 1956, en plenas experiencias concretas, lo dejé de lado durante treinta años. Me pareció tan absurdo que nunca quise publicarlo. Por eso le digo que no es una escritura automática en el sentido surrealista, porque en algunos sectores fui dirigiendo la historia y además tomé una serie de decisiones, como ésta del final, que le daban una forma objetiva, pensada fuera de ese dominio del inconsciente que los surrealistas buscaban atrapar. Se trató de un experimento absurdo pero necesario, porque es a partir de allí que recomienzo a escribir.

En medio de esas tentativas por reconstruir mi lenguaje hablé con Mário Pedrosa, comentándole lo que me sucedía. Busqué su ayuda porque no sabía qué hacer. Entonces Mário me sugirió que me dedicara un tiempo a leer Filosofía, e incluso me prestó algunos libros. “Comienza, me dijo, por el principio, lee a los presocráticos”. Ahí comencé a leer el libro que me prestó y otros que compré por mi cuenta. Claro que ahí no había respuesta para mis problemas, que eran otros; aun así podría decir que salí enriquecido de ese proceso de aprendizaje. Completé el conocimiento que tenía de Heráclito, de Parménides, lo que me ayudó a pensar mejor mis circunstancias personales. Luego compré una traducción francesa de la *Historia de la Filosofía Occidental*, de Bertrand Russell, y ahí comencé a leer y a estudiar con mayor sistematicidad, anotando los puntos que me interesaban, incluso hasta la filosofía reciente.

AJ

Supongo que es en esa oportunidad cuando entra en contacto con el pensamiento de Merleau-Ponty.

FG

No, a Merleau-Ponty lo leo posteriormente, cuando estaba haciendo poesía concreta, hacia 1957–58. Lo leí, en todo caso, después de la *1ª Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta* en São Paulo. Un día descubrí en una librería su texto sobre Cézanne: *El ojo y la mente*, y lo leí con muchísimo interés, porque me parecía un libro muy penetrante. Recuerdo que se lo comenté a Mário Pedrosa y me dijo que no había leído ese libro, aunque sí otros libros suyos, como *La estructura del comportamiento*, que me prestó durante ese encuentro. Ahí comencé a leer su filosofía y descubrí la respuesta a los problemas que enfrentaba en lo que se refiere a la comprensión del arte moderno, en particular ante la visión científicista que quería explicarlo todo matemáticamente, como ocurría con los concretos. El pensamiento de Merleau-Ponty me sirvió de apoyo para pensar el rol que a mi entender debía tener la intuición creadora en las artes plásticas y en cualquier otra manifestación artística. Esas lecturas lograron acallar en mí las pretensiones científicistas de los concretos, coincidiendo de alguna forma con mis preocupaciones. Me dieron argumentos contra la concepción meramente óptica del arte que expulsa casi por completo la subjetividad, lo cual me dejaba siempre insatisfecho ante las cosas que venían haciéndose en los grupos concretos tanto en Río como en São Paulo. De esas posiciones no podía surgir nada profundo y de hecho lo que surge de allí es el Op Art, ese que busca efectos visuales, trucos ópticos con los que no se alcanza la más mínima profundidad, no al menos como se la consigue abordando la práctica artística desde una perspectiva fenomenológica.

AJ

Entre tanto, esa lucha constante contra el lenguaje heredado y específicamente contra su estructura sintáctica, agudizada en las experiencias concretas, lo condujeron a un *impasse* cercano al de la

pintura, tal y como lo hemos discutido en los casos de Lygia Clark y Hélio Oiticica.

^{FG} Absolutamente, tanto que mi proceso fue similar, en el sentido de que llevé esa experiencia hacia el espacio con el libro-poema. Se trata de un libro construido con el texto escrito en el reverso de la hoja, y que es, por ello, una obra espacial. Y ese libro-poema inspiró los bichos de Lygia Clark. La idea de la manipulación, en Brasil, nació de ese libro, porque éste, como cualquier libro, es manipulable. Todo comenzó con la publicación de un poema en el suplemento del *Jornal do Brasil* en 1957 que dice así:

verde verde verde

verde verde verde

verde verde verde

verde verde verde erva

VALORES DA LITERATURA BRASILEIRA

ADONIAS FILHO

O romance brasileiro é tão poderoso quanto o povo que o permitiu

Ruth Silver

Vivendo apenas da literatura, Adonias Filho é figura constante de seções e suplementos literários de vários jornais do Rio e São Paulo. Além de crítico do "Jornal de Letras", colabora no "Jornal do Comércio", "Tribuna da Imprensa", "Diário de Notícias" (onde mantém, também, uma seção diária "Estante") e "Folha da Manhã".

Como romancista, tem, também, atuação de destaque no cenário da literatura brasileira, tendo, já, escrito "Os Servos da Fúria" (1946) e "Memórias de Lezard" (1957). Publica, ainda, pelo Serviço de Documentação do Ministério da Educação e Cultura, "Jornal de um Escritor".

Adonias Filho conclui, atualmente, o ensaio "A Ficção do Brasil" e tem programado para a Editora O Cruzeiro o livro "Moderna Ficcionalista Brasileira" — estudos críticos sobre romancistas, contistas e teatrólogos.

Presla-nos, na entrevista de hoje, seu depoimento sobre o romance, a crítica literária, a ação dos Suplementos e o teatro, no Brasil. . . .

1 — Romance brasileiro: — Está claro que o romance brasileiro continua cumprindo o seu destino. Dispondo de continuidade surpreendente, a ponto de ser possível configurá-lo historicamente em quatro movimentos temáticos — indianismo, escravismo, urbanismo e sertanismo —, afirma-se como um monólito que prossegue se realizando em função do caráter nacional. Em livro que venho escrevendo, "A Ficção do Brasil", tento expor as causas que, do século XVI ao século XIX, o permitiram

circulo dos debates que vem realizando sobre a cultura brasileira, programou um precisamente em torno dos suplementos literários. Isso significa que o suplemento literário, apesar do aspecto jornalístico, não pode ser ignorado como instrumento supletivo em proveito da cultura de um país e de um povo. Não não transpore apenas a vida literária no sentido imediato, mas se reflete a "mensagem média" da inteligência na base de todas as suas preocupações. Apesar da margem concedida à literatura — sempre ampla e de área maior —, o suplemento reflete quase claramente aquelas preocupações em todos os setores artísticos: das artes plásticas à música, do cinema à música. Capta, por assim dizer, o processo artístico à proporção em que se transforma em vida. E isso, se de enorme significação, se de enorme importância social, se de enorme importância histórica e política. O suplemento literário insubstituível para o futuro.

2 — Teatro brasileiro: — É um detalhe que exigiria quase um ensaio se não estivesse falando para espaço exato de jornal. O teatro brasileiro, que acompanha a novelística (também tendo as causas comuns porque resultantes da fermentação cultural trabalhada pela realidade durante três séculos), não tem merecido o lugar justo nas histórias literárias. Inconspicuo e desprezado a que o submete o crítico literário. Agora mesmo — é tão somente para exemplificar — neste 57 editorial, o teatro aparece sempre no mesmo lugar — e não no alto das páginas — ou o pesquisador futuro, consultando o artigo que deseja citar, serve também de rosto para saber em que volume, número, páginas e data — nas margens das páginas a roscar, microfilm ou fotocópiar. E mais: com o advento da microfotografia, muitas bibliotecas estão se desafiando de suas coleções de periódicos e oferecendo aos leitores, em vez de pesados volumes, pequenos rolos ou simples fitas de microfilme, que podem ser lidos comodamente por meio de um aparelho amplificador ou reproduzidos no tamanho desejado. A legenda bibliográfica em cada página de revista e jornal economiza espaço, tempo, esforço e dinheiro empregados na microfilmagem das capas ou páginas-dorso de cada publicação. Assim a legenda bibliográfica, que passamos a adotar neste Suplemento, também importa em economia, um dos objetivos da normalização.

E sem esta não pode haver documentação eficiente. A Edison Nery da Fonseca o Suplemento Dominical deve a sugestão ora posta em prática.

3 — Suplemento literário: — É a história do movimento da nossa imprensa ainda antes que se fizesse a história da nossa sociedade, economicamente, socialmente, etologicamente e outras investigações das causas de nosso povo, em suas várias e suas diversas condições de vida. Mas a imprensa brasileira, que tem fornecido aos pesquisadores de suas várias e suas diversas condições de vida, remota e nem assim impedida. Tem, há muito, alguns estatísticos elementares no levantamento de algumas fontes para a história da nossa imprensa, há muito tempo, em seus estudos sistêmicos à primeira metade do século XIX, pouco mais avançando além dos dados de 1850 para cá, sendo informações vagas e fragmentárias. Compreendemos que não se tem, ainda, a história do movimento da nossa imprensa antes que se fizesse a história da nossa sociedade, economicamente, socialmente, etologicamente e outras investigações das causas de nosso povo, em suas várias e suas diversas condições de vida. Mas a imprensa brasileira, que tem fornecido aos pesquisadores de suas várias e suas diversas condições de vida, remota e nem assim impedida. Tem, há muito, alguns estatísticos elementares no levantamento de algumas fontes para a história da nossa imprensa, há muito tempo, em seus estudos sistêmicos à primeira metade do século XIX, pouco mais avançando além dos dados de 1850 para cá, sendo informações vagas e fragmentárias. Compreendemos que não se tem, ainda, a história do movimento da nossa imprensa antes que se fizesse a história da nossa sociedade, economicamente, socialmente, etologicamente e outras investigações das causas de nosso povo, em suas várias e suas diversas condições de vida.

História Literária da Imprensa

Luiz Santa Cruz

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Legenda Bibliográfica

A partir de hoje, o Suplemento Dominical se apresenta, do ponto de vista da documentação, mais aperfeiçoado. Referimo-nos à inclusão da legenda bibliográfica, cuja ausência, aliás, vinha sendo lamentada. Legenda bibliográfica — permite-se a explicação — é um conjunto de dados essenciais à identificação da revista ou jornal que se está consultando. Indica sempre no mesmo lugar — e não no alto das páginas — ou o pesquisador futuro, consultando o artigo que deseja citar, serve também de rosto para saber em que volume, número, páginas e data — nas margens das páginas a roscar, microfilm ou fotocópiar. E mais: com o advento da microfotografia, muitas bibliotecas estão se desafiando de suas coleções de periódicos e oferecendo aos leitores, em vez de pesados volumes, pequenos rolos ou simples fitas de microfilme, que podem ser lidos comodamente por meio de um aparelho amplificador ou reproduzidos no tamanho desejado. A legenda bibliográfica em cada página de revista e jornal economiza espaço, tempo, esforço e dinheiro empregados na microfilmagem das capas ou páginas-dorso de cada publicação. Assim a legenda bibliográfica, que passamos a adotar neste Suplemento, também importa em economia, um dos objetivos da normalização.

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publicações temporárias, que, aliás, inteiramente se trata, significando que parelhos com os seus valores para a sua conservação e nem para avaliação de estatísticas que parelhos com os seus valores.

Mas há outros catálogos completos, que registram as obras e sua existência, algum dia, quando o tempo, a política e a história não houverem ainda deparado fôdo à rica tarefa de pesquisar a nossa imprensa, que não se tem, ainda, a história do movimento da nossa imprensa antes que se fizesse a história da nossa sociedade, economicamente, socialmente, etologicamente e outras investigações das causas de nosso povo, em suas várias e suas diversas condições de vida.

O suplemento literário, como hoje o temos, — é um instrumento de trabalho literário e jornalístico, privilegiado por nomes consagrados e importantes da nossa imprensa literária e jornalística, de crítica literária, artística e outras áreas científicas, empenhados em trazer à luz e apresentar, e sua matéria documental ou bibliográfica, com o caráter científico que lhe é próprio. O suplemento literário teve origem bem mais recente e diferente que a crítica literária e a história da literatura no Brasil. O suplemento literário brasileiro vem da data relativamente recente de criação da nossa imprensa.

A colaboração literária, analisada ou não, cotidiana e esporádica, aparece desde o nascer da imprensa diária brasileira, e que remonta à primeira metade do século XIX. É uma atividade que não se trata de uma atividade jornalística propriamente dita, mas que se trata de uma atividade literária. O suplemento literário brasileiro teve origem bem mais recente e diferente que a crítica literária e a história da literatura no Brasil. O suplemento literário brasileiro vem da data relativamente recente de criação da nossa imprensa.

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La poema “Verde” publicada en *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical*, 3 de noviembre de 1957 Más

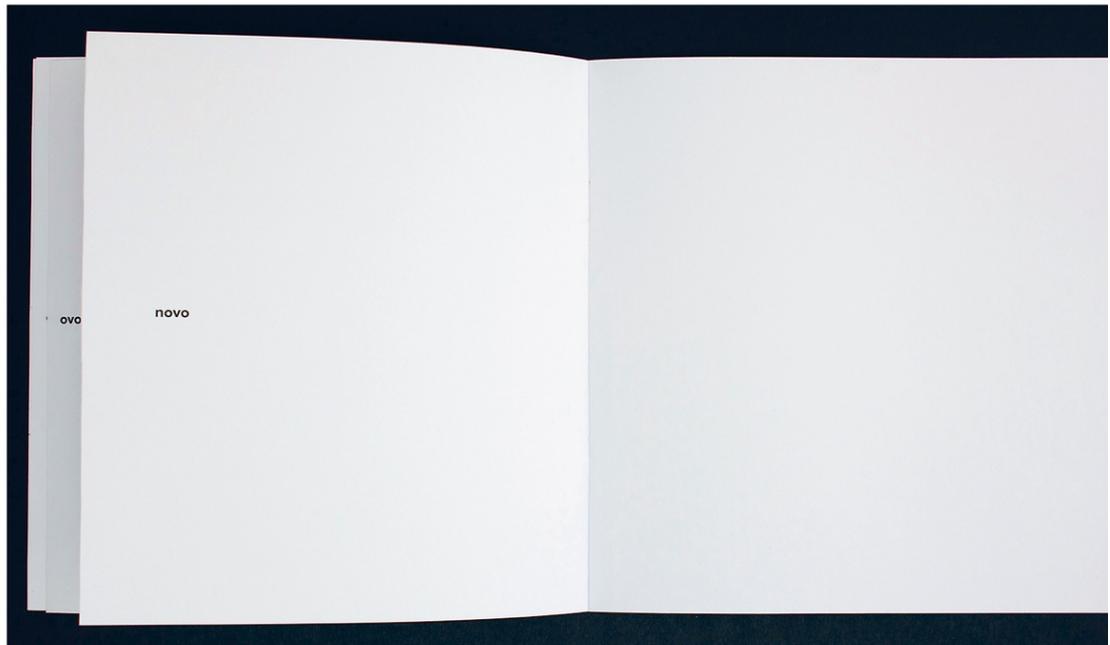
La poema “Verde” publicada en *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical*, 3 de noviembre de 1957

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Cuando salió publicado, un amigo me llamó por teléfono y me dijo: “Vi tu poema hoy, en el *Jornal do Brasil*”. Y le pregunté: ¿Observaste que la repetición de la palabra verde hace explotar la palabra *erva* [hierba] desde adentro del verde? Él me respondió: “No, cuando vi que era solo *verde*, no lo leí. Lo vi, pero no lo leí”. A lo que contesté: ¡Pues entonces fracasó el poema!

Aquí se me planteo otra interrogante: ¿cómo crear un poema que terminara construyendo una forma visual y que obligara a su lectura palabra por palabra?, ¿cómo hacerlo? Para responder a esa interrogante creé mi primer libro-poema. Es una obra anterior al Manifiesto neoconcreto, donde las palabras están escritas en la parte posterior de la hoja. El lector se encuentra primero con una página totalmente blanca. Al pasarla, aparece al dorso, en el borde izquierdo, la primera palabra: *osso* [hueso], en un espacio completamente blanco, pues esa página y la siguiente a la derecha, están vacías. Enseguida, al pasar la siguiente página, aparece al reverso la segunda palabra: *nosso* [nuestro], escrita en una página más corta, de manera que para el lector la palabra anterior y ésta se unen ahora como pasado y van construyendo el poema. Luego pasa una nueva página, que cubre las dos palabras anteriores, con la palabra *ovo* [huevo], y una página más, *ovo* [nuevo], y nuevamente *ovo* y *ovo* pueden ser leídas en conjunto, como algo que se construyó tras la lectura. Así, sucesivamente, van apareciendo nuevas palabras y van agregándose a la lectura, construyendo el

poema y el libro al mismo tiempo. Yo llamé a esto un libro-poema, porque el libro y el poema forman una unidad. Un libro como éste no puede ser publicado de modo convencional, ni puede ser reproducido en la prensa, porque el poema y esta peculiar forma de libro son una realidad indivisible.



“Livro-poema Nº 1” [Libro-poema Nº 1], 1957. Fotografado por
Carlos Germán Rojas Más

“Livro-poema Nº 1” [Libro-poema Nº 1], 1957
Impresión offset sobre papel

18.9 × 19 cm (7 2/5 × 7 1/2 inches)
Fotografiado por Carlos Germán Rojas

El segundo libro-poema que hago comienza con la palabra *faina* [faena], en el extremo superior izquierdo de la página. En una segunda página cortada en diagonal –de manera que siga viéndose la primera palabra– aparece *faz* [hace], en su borde inferior izquierdo, y en la siguiente página, más corta, *osso aço* [hueso acero]. Luego, en otra página aún más corta, *almofariz* [mortero]. La siguiente página, cortada en diagonal, contiene las palabras *ouro* [oro] y *era* [era], arriba y debajo de la hoja respectivamente. La página siguiente cubre las tres últimas palabras –*almofariz, ouro, era*– y deja ver las anteriores, para construir al fin un verso así: “*faina faz osso aço faço*” [faena hace hueso acero hago]. De ahí en adelante se construye otro verso, partiendo nuevamente de una página en blanco que tapa todas las palabras de este primer verso, para comenzar de nuevo con las palabras *faina* [faena] y *fiz* [hice].



“Livro-poema N° 2” [Libro-poema N° 2], 1957. Fotografiado por Carlos
Germán Rojas Más

“Livro-poema N° 2” [Libro-poema N° 2], 1957

Impresión offset sobre papel

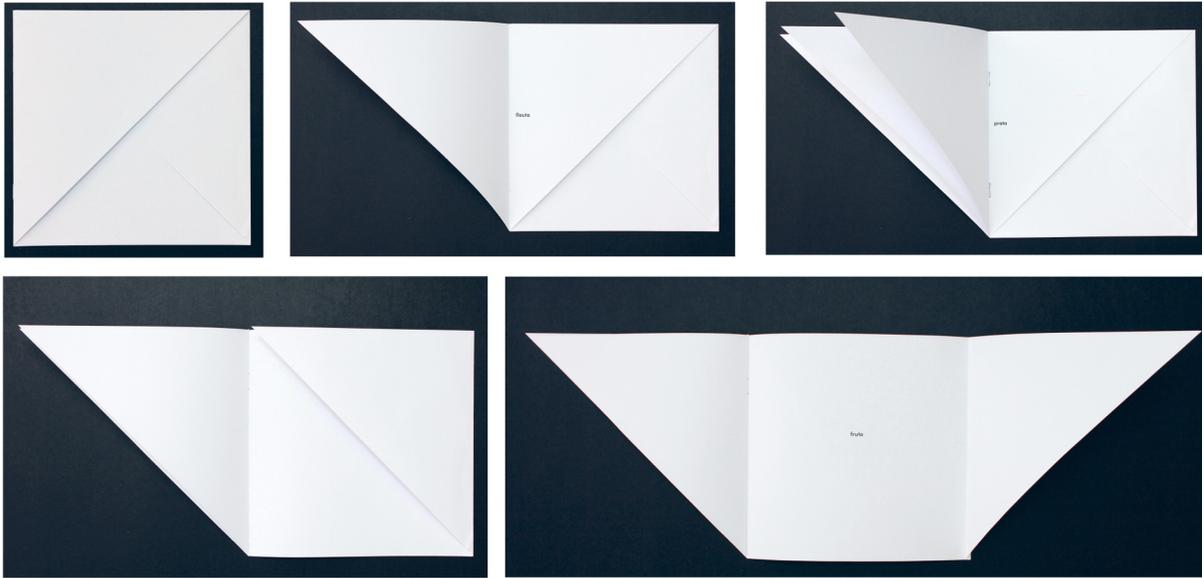
18.9 × 19 cm (7 2/5 × 7 1/2 inches)

Fotografiado por Carlos Germán Rojas

^{AJ} Ésta es quizás la forma más eficaz de lograr que el poema nazca junto al lenguaje que se utiliza. Si las palabras preexisten al poema que se construye paulatinamente, como residuo de una acción, la particular organización sintáctica que surge de allí no existía, es cierto, antes de su configuración. Esto, al menos, durante una primera lectura y quizás también, para su autor, durante el proceso de creación.

^{FG} Ahora, el “Livro-poema N° 3” no tiene ya las características propias de un libro, y comienza a convertirse en una especie peculiar de objeto plástico, como los bichos de Lygia Clark, que nacen de allí. Este livro-poema empieza en blanco, y la primera página, que es la mitad en diagonal del libro, se abre para descubrir la palabra *flauta* [flauta]. La próxima página, otra vez en diagonal, descubre un espacio completamente blanco y tapa la palabra anterior *flauta*. Otra página en diagonal se abre y deja ver la palabra *prata* [plata]. Todo lo demás sigue en blanco. Enseguida el lector debe abrir una página en diagonal hacia la izquierda, y luego otra en diagonal hacia la derecha, para develar la palabra fruta. O sea que este libro se abre como si fuera una fruta que se desconcha. Yo había querido materializar esa sensación de fruta abierta por medio de un objeto. De alguna manera intenté espacializar la sensación que dio origen a

uno de los poemas incluidos en *A luta corporal* y cuyo tema era justamente una manzana abierta.



“Livro-poema N° 3” [Libro-poema N° 3], 1957. Fotografiado por Carlos Germán Rojas

Más

“Livro-poema N° 3” [Libro-poema N° 3], 1957

Impresión offset sobre papel

18.9 × 19 cm (7 2/5 × 7 1/2 inches)

Fotografiado por Carlos Germán Rojas

^{AJ}

Es un libro suficientemente complejo en su configuración como para que uno se pregunte cómo, exactamente, lo produjo. Si comenzó por la asociación de las palabras *fruta-prata*, o si, al contrario, lo inició por su construcción material.

^{FG}

La intención de hacer un objeto poético, en cierta forma, y no un simple libro, estuvo para mí perfectamente clara desde el inicio.

Comencé a fabricarlo de atrás hacia adelante. Tomé un cuadrado de papel y escribí en él la palabra *fruta*, que era a dónde quería llegar, a ese interior claro de la fruta, y luego fui imaginando la manera cómo el lector iría abriendo poco a poco aquel libro hasta llegar al interior. A partir de este punto fui agregando páginas cortadas en diagonal, unas abriéndose a la izquierda y otras a la derecha, como si se estuviera descascarando aquella fruta. Luego fui buscando la forma más interesante de hacerlo, para que el lector descubriera ese objeto capa tras capa, unas completamente vacías, otras con palabras que para mí remitían a la fruta misma. De ahí la plata, porque la pulpa de una manzana tiene una claridad plateada, como si fuera, casi, algo mineral. . .

^{AJ} Me parece muy significativo que para producir ese libro que se abriría ante el lector como una fruta, usted haya procedido un poco como la naturaleza; es decir, produciéndola, fabricándola, desde adentro.

^{FG} Si, porque la idea era justamente producir un *livro-objeto* [libro-objeto] que se abriera como una fruta, hasta llegar a su centro. Y Lygia, que estaba pensando su obra como un organismo vivo y que buscaba la manera de abrirse al espacio, encontró en él una solución perfectamente adaptada a su problemática plástica. Entonces unió el aspecto manipulable del libro a esa metáfora orgánica para hacer que sus objetos se abrieran al espacio y creó sus primeros bichos.

^{AJ} Todo pareciera indicar que Lygia encuentra aquí una solución técnica perfectamente acorde con las necesidades de apertura que se manifestaban ya en sus *contra-relevos* [contra-relieves] y *casulos*

[capullos], una apertura que por lo demás se apoyaba en las soluciones de los constructivistas rusos como Pevsner y Gabo.

^{FG} No fui el primero en hacer una obra espacial, ni inventé la participación del espectador en la obra o el libro manipulable. El libro es y fue siempre así. Lo que sucede es que cuando Lygia vio mis primeros libros-poema, el atolladero al que había llegado en su pintura encontró una salida, y la salida consistió en crear un objeto manipulable, fuera de la pintura, como sucede en mi libro.

^{AJ} Yo había interpretado su apertura al espacio a partir de ese cuerpo estratificado de sus contra-relevos y *casulos*, como la manifestación extrapictórica de lo que antes sucedía en el espacio sugerido de la pintura. Es decir, que así como la pintura sugirió el espacio por la superposición de planos supuestamente transparentes hacia el interior de la tela, así mismo se abrió al exterior por el despliegue de esos planos, un poco como una flor que se abre pétalo a pétalo.

^{FG} Sí, su proceso puede ser interpretado de diversos modos, pero la razón, el origen, es éste. En fin, después de hacer estos primeros libros-poema, y en especial luego del tercero, que más que un libro es un objeto, pasé al espacio y comencé a construir los primeros *poemas-objeto*. El primero que hago es uno titulado “Ara” [Altar]. Es una plancha blanca con un triángulo que le sirve de tapa. Cuando uno levanta esa tapa puede leer la palabra *Ara*, y cuando la cierra queda de nuevo como al inicio, totalmente blanca, solo que ahora el lector queda con la conciencia de que allí adentro está inscrita una palabra. El siguiente poema-objeto se titula “Lembra” [Recuerda], que es un cuadrado blanco con un cubo azul encima. Cuando se levanta el cubo se descubre la palabra *Lembra*, de manera que al

colocar de nuevo el cubo en su lugar queda como pulsando la palabra debajo del cubo.



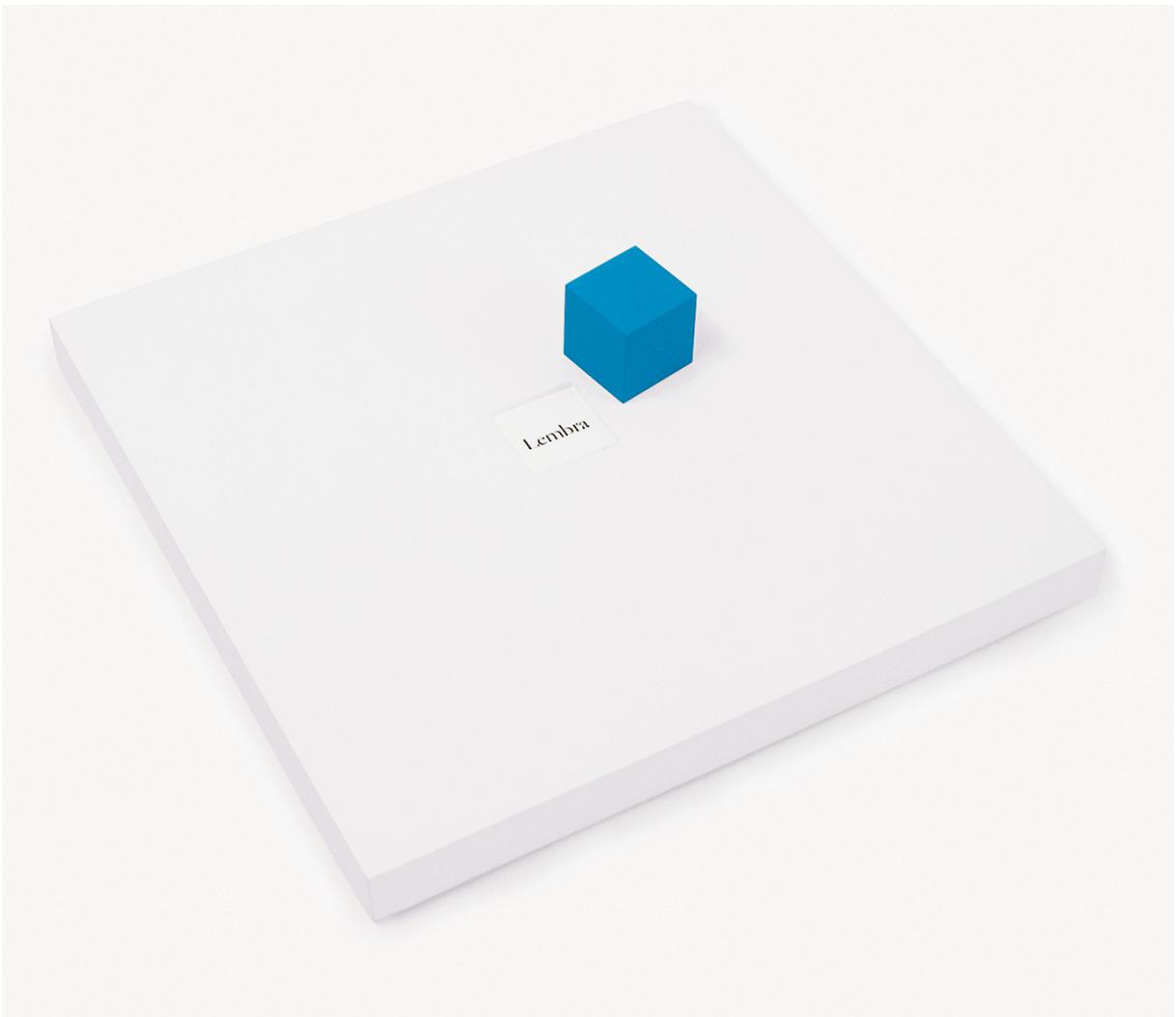
“Ara” [Altar], Poema-objeto, 1959 (reconstrucción, 2004) Más

“Ara” [Altar], Poema-objeto, 1959 (reconstrucción, 2004)

Acrílico sobre madera y vinil

30 × 30 × 4 cm (11 13/16 × 11 13/16 × 1 5/8 inches)

Acervo Paço Imperial—Centro Cultural do IPHAN/MinC



“Lembra” [Recuerde], Poema-objeto, 1959 (reconstrucción, 2004) Más

“Lembra” [Recuerde], Poema-objeto, 1959 (reconstrucción, 2004)

Acrílico sobre madera y vinil

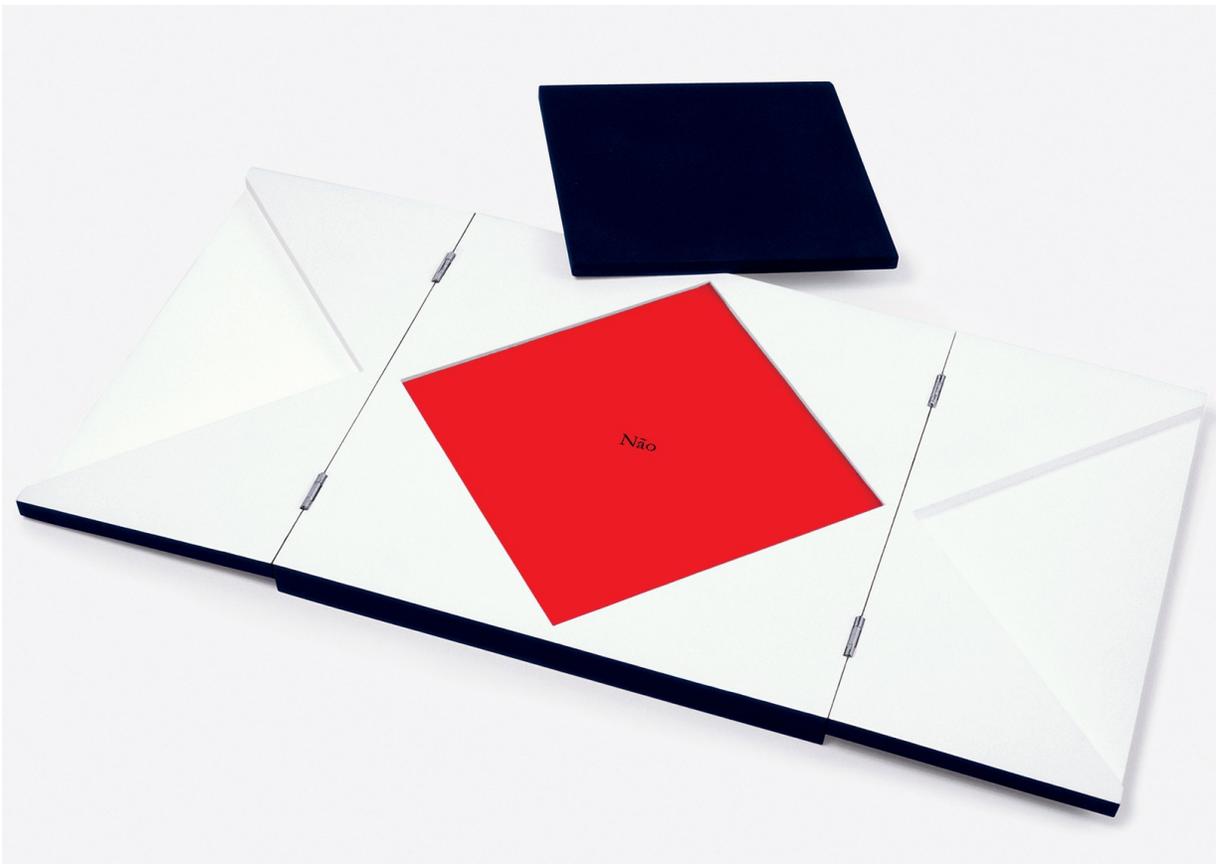
40 × 40 × 5 cm (15 11/16 × 15 11/16 × 2 inches)

Acervo Paço Imperial—Centro Cultural do IPHAN/MinC

^{AJ}

Además, la palabra que se imprime de ese modo en la memoria nos pide, justamente, que recordemos. Es una estrategia característica del Neoconcretismo para atrapar o introducir el tiempo como duración, como tensión psicológica.

Y esa noción del tiempo como algo vivido, como duración, es completamente diferente de lo que sucedía en los concretos, donde el tiempo se manifiesta como una sucesión mecánica de actos. Fíjese por ejemplo en este otro libro-objeto, titulado “Nã” [No]. Su título parece una palabra pronunciada por el objeto, no algo impuesto por el autor. Lo primero que el lector observa es una caja negra e impenetrable, cerrada. Al abrirla, el fondo es blanco, como si el lector-participante hubiera podido penetrar algo en la intimidad del objeto que se hace en parte transparente, a excepción de un cuadrado negro que se inscribe en diagonal en su centro. Esa plancha negra está suelta, es un cuerpo en sí mismo y, al retirarla, deja ver un cuadrado rojo donde está inscrita la palabra *Nã*, como si fuera la resistencia del “otro” ante la tentativa de entrar en su subconsciente. Ahí termina el livro-poema, en esa resistencia, en esa negativa a decirnos algo.



“Não” [No], Poema-objeto, 1959 (reconstrucción, 2004) Más
“Não” [No], Poema-objeto, 1959 (reconstrucción, 2004)
30 × 30 × 4 cm (11 13/16 × 11 13/16 × 1 5/8 inches)
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^{AJ} Un poco como los bichos de Lygia, que se nos oponen por su peso o por la complejidad de sus pliegues y movimientos.

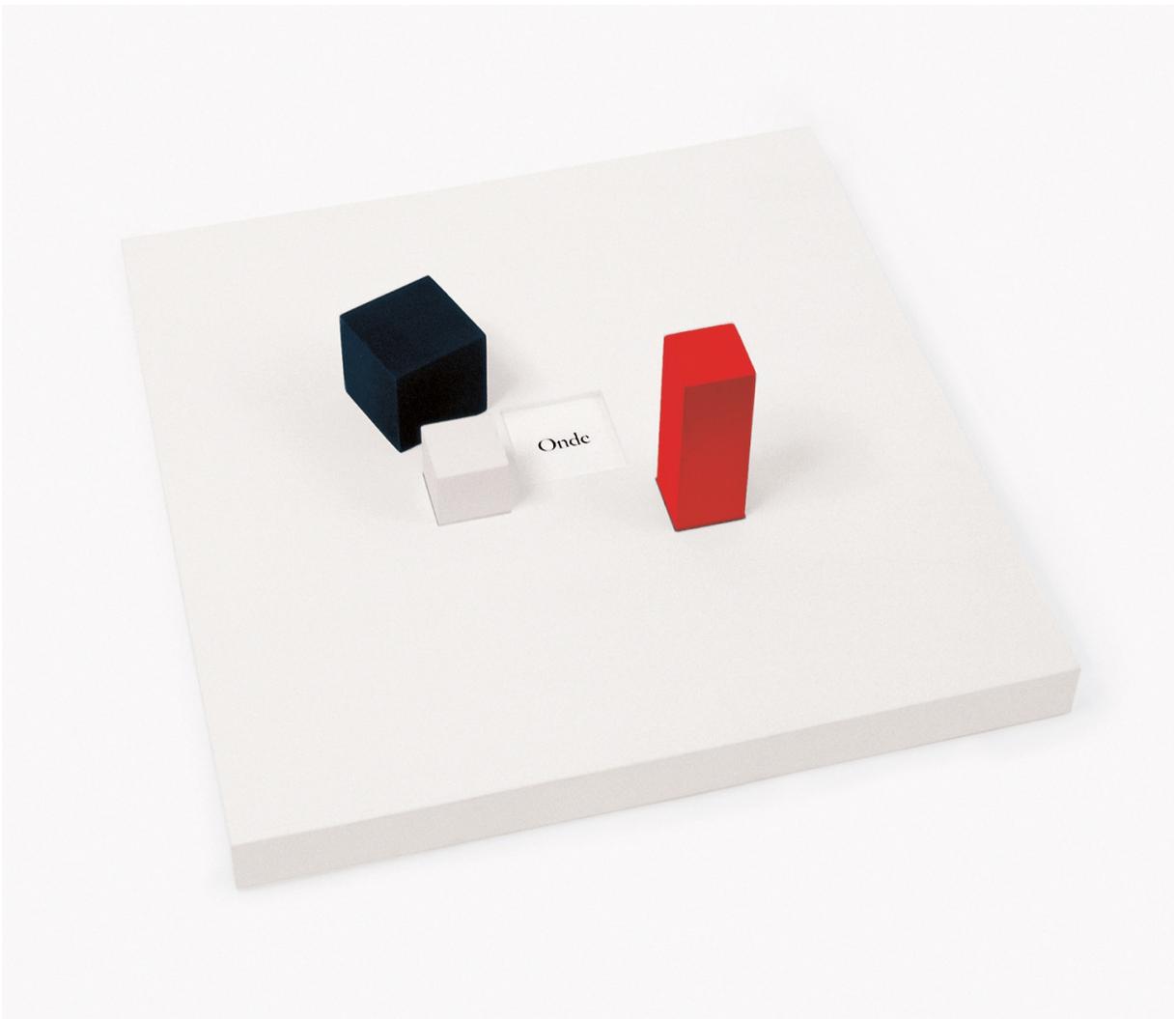
^{FG} Exactamente. Después hice éste, “O pássaro” [El pájaro], que es una caja con dos placas blancas en su centro. Una de ellas, la superior, es completamente blanca y cubre a la segunda, donde está inscrita la palabra *pássaro*. Ambas placas son móviles y al extraerlas de la caja es como si el pájaro se escapara de su jaula.



“O pássaro” [El pájaro], Poema-objeto, 1959 (reconstrucción, 2004) Más
“O Pássaro” [El pájaro], Poema-objeto, 1959 (reconstrucción, 2004)
30 × 30 × 4 cm (11 13/16 × 11 13/16 × 1 5/8 inches)
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^{AJ} Y como si la palabra en sí se liberara.

^{FG} También, es cierto. Enseguida sigo explorando esta interacción entre el lector y el libro-objeto, y hago “Onde” [Dónde], en el cual, en vez de colocar un solo objeto, coloco tres: uno blanco, uno negro y uno rojo. Con la particularidad de que solo uno de ellos es móvil, aunque el lector-participante no sabe cuál puede moverse. Al quitar el cubo móvil, tras haber hecho al menos uno, dos o tres intentos, puede leerse la palabra *Onde*, dejando ver el lugar donde se escondía.



“Onde” [Dónde], Poema-objeto, 1959 (reconstrucción, 2004) Más
“Onde” [Donde], Poema-objeto, 1959 (reconstrucción, 2004)
40 × 40 × 10 cm (15 11/16 × 15 11/16 × 3 7/8 inches)
Acervo Paço Imperial—Centro Cultural do IPHAN/MinC

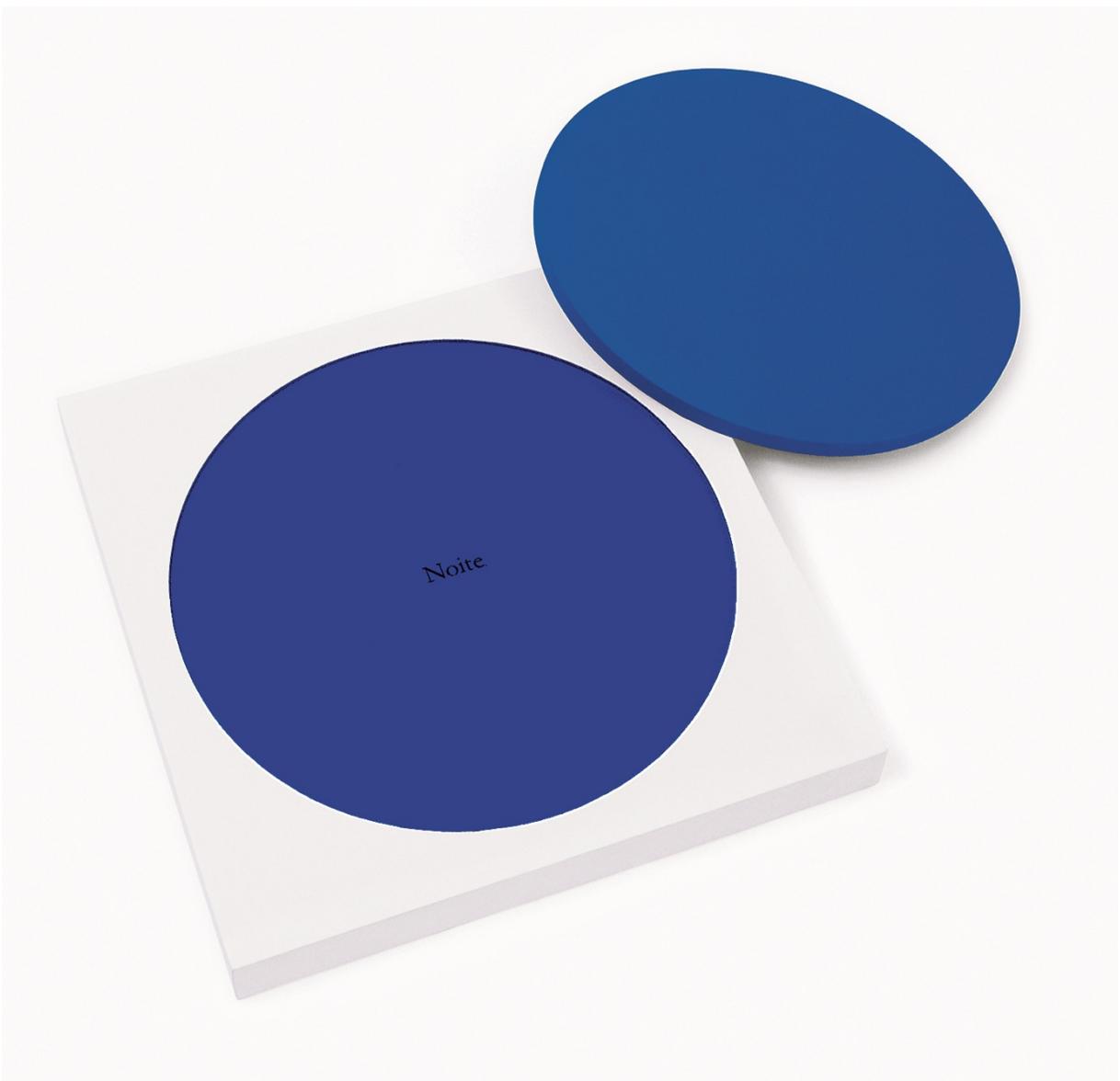
AJ

Es como una tentativa por hacer coincidir la palabra y su sentido. La palabra habla de aquello que se encuentra al quitar el cubo, el lugar donde ella se encuentra. Funciona, podríamos decir, como gran parte del arte moderno y del arte concreto en especial, haciendo de la obra una realidad no representativa que sin embargo nos habla de ese mundo en el cual se inscribe, porque nace de una

reflexión sobre él. Incluso los colores que emplea parecen tener una conexión directa con lo que se dice.

FG

A veces, quizás, como en el caso del poema-objeto que hago a continuación, “Noite” [Noche], donde el azul y el negro mismo de la palabra podrían hacer pensar en la oscuridad nocturna; pero en general trabajo guiado por mi intuición. Los colores no tienen ninguna significación expresa. Éste es uno de los últimos libros-objeto que hago en esta etapa. Está formado por un círculo azul sobre el fondo blanco. Cuando se retira el círculo azul se encuentra otro círculo, de un azul ligeramente más oscuro, en cuyo centro está escrita, en negro, la palabra *Noite*. Cuando estas piezas fueron mostradas en una exposición en el Paço Imperial [Palacio Imperial], tuve deseo de hacer un nuevo poema-objeto, ya recientemente, es decir, hace unos cinco años. Es un cuadrado blanco sobre el que se encuentra un pequeño cubo, también blanco, con líneas que sugieren un envoltorio, como si estuviéramos ante un cubo envuelto en papel blanco. En este caso, cuando se levanta el cubo, aparece la palabra *Maravilha* [Maravilla] al fondo, y del lado del cubo que reposaba sobre el cuadrado blanco, la misma palabra escrita en griego, *Paradoxon*. Cuando supe por primera vez que maravilla en griego se decía paradoxon, quedé impresionado y quise convertirla en un poema-objeto, recoger esa hermosa paradoja en esa otra paradoja del poema.⁴³



“Noite” [Noche], Poema-objeto, 1959 (reconstrucción, 2004) Más
“Noite” [Noche], Poema-objeto, 1959 (reconstrucción, 2004)
30 × 30 × 4 cm (11 13/16 × 11 13/16 × 1 5/8 inches)
Acervo Paço Imperial—Centro Cultural do IPHAN/MinC



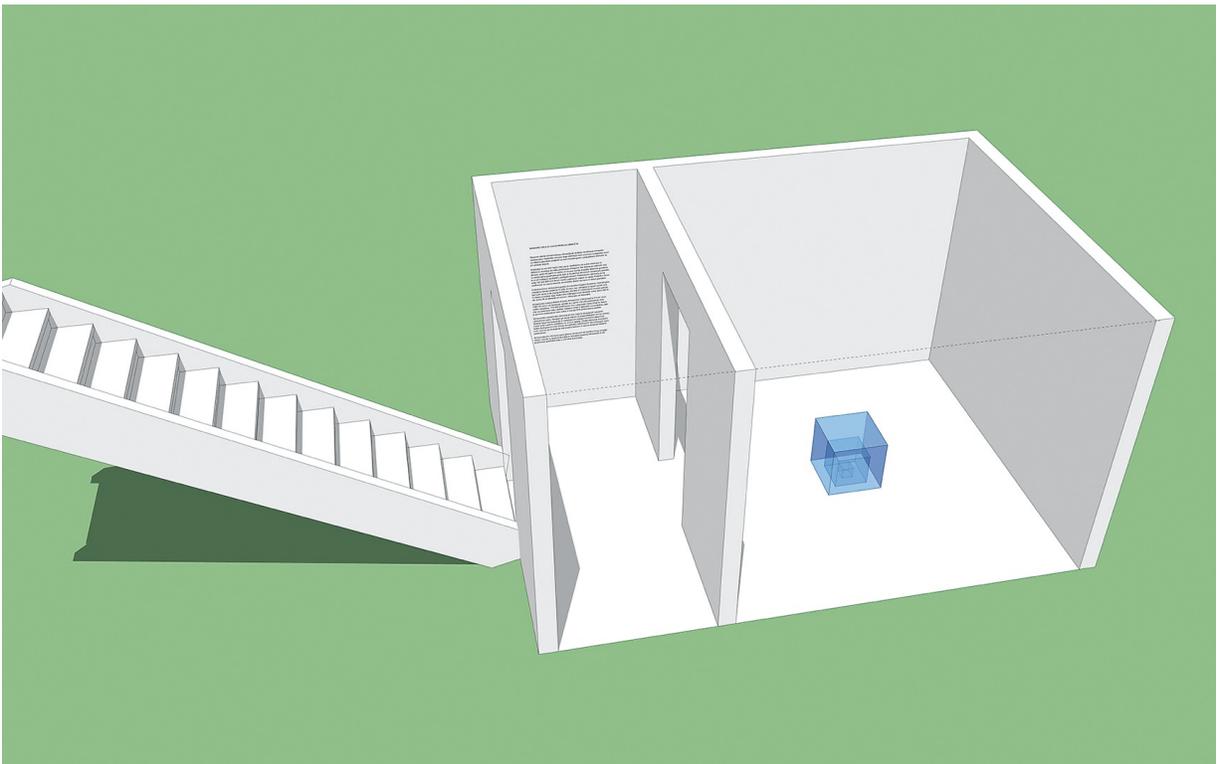
“Paradoxon (maravilha)” [Paradoxon (maravilla)], Poema-objeto, 2004
Más

“Paradoxon (maravilha)” [Paradoxon (maravilla)], Poema-objeto, 2004
Acrílico sobre madera y vinil
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AJ

El proceso de pasaje al espacio que describe en sus poemas, como el que se constata en la obra de Lygia Clark y Hélio Oiticica, no es una particularidad exclusiva del Neoconcretismo, sino una característica compartida por un amplio conjunto de artistas durante

el siglo XX. Fue, podríamos decir, una de las exigencias históricas del arte occidental en su desarrollo interno. Ahora, es evidente que en la manera como cada uno respondió a esas exigencias se manifiesta una diferencia, una textura por decirlo así, distinta y distintiva. En su caso, por ejemplo, la obra que concluye ese proceso histórico llevándolo a sus consecuencias últimas es el “Poema enterrado”, uno de los mayores aportes del Neoconcretismo al arte occidental y también una experiencia límite.



Reconstrucción digital del “Poema enterrado”, 1959

^{FG} Es una pieza fundamental, porque representa la conclusión lógica de mis trabajos en el espacio, pero también el fin de ese proceso de experimentación. A partir de allí doy por concluida mi incursión en

ese campo. La consecuencia lógica de estas experiencias apuntaba hacia la participación efectiva del lector más allá de la manipulación del objeto. La idea era que el lector entrara físicamente en el poema, en su centro. Para lograrlo imaginé un poema que sería una sala de tres por tres metros, con la particularidad de que estaba enterrada bajo la tierra. Se accedería a ella por una escalera, se abriría la puerta del poema y se entraría dentro de él. En la antesala que precedía al poema en sí, el lector-visitante encontraría las instrucciones de lo que debería hacer para activarlo. Ya dentro del poema se encontraría con un cubo rojo de cincuenta por cincuenta centímetros que, al ser levantado, dejaría ver un cubo verde de treinta por treinta centímetros. Al alzar ese cubo verde, se hallaría un cubo más pequeño, blanco, de diez por diez cm. Y al desplazar este último cubo podría verse, en el piso, un espejo de diez por diez cm, y, en la cara del cubo blanco que daba al piso, la palabra *Rejuvenesça* [Rejuvenezca]. Al lector-visitante se le pedía además que colocara de nuevo los cubos en su sitio y se quedara un tiempo suplementario dentro del poema. El objetivo era activar el tiempo como duración, enfrentándolo al recuerdo de aquella palabra que ahora vibraba bajo los cubos.

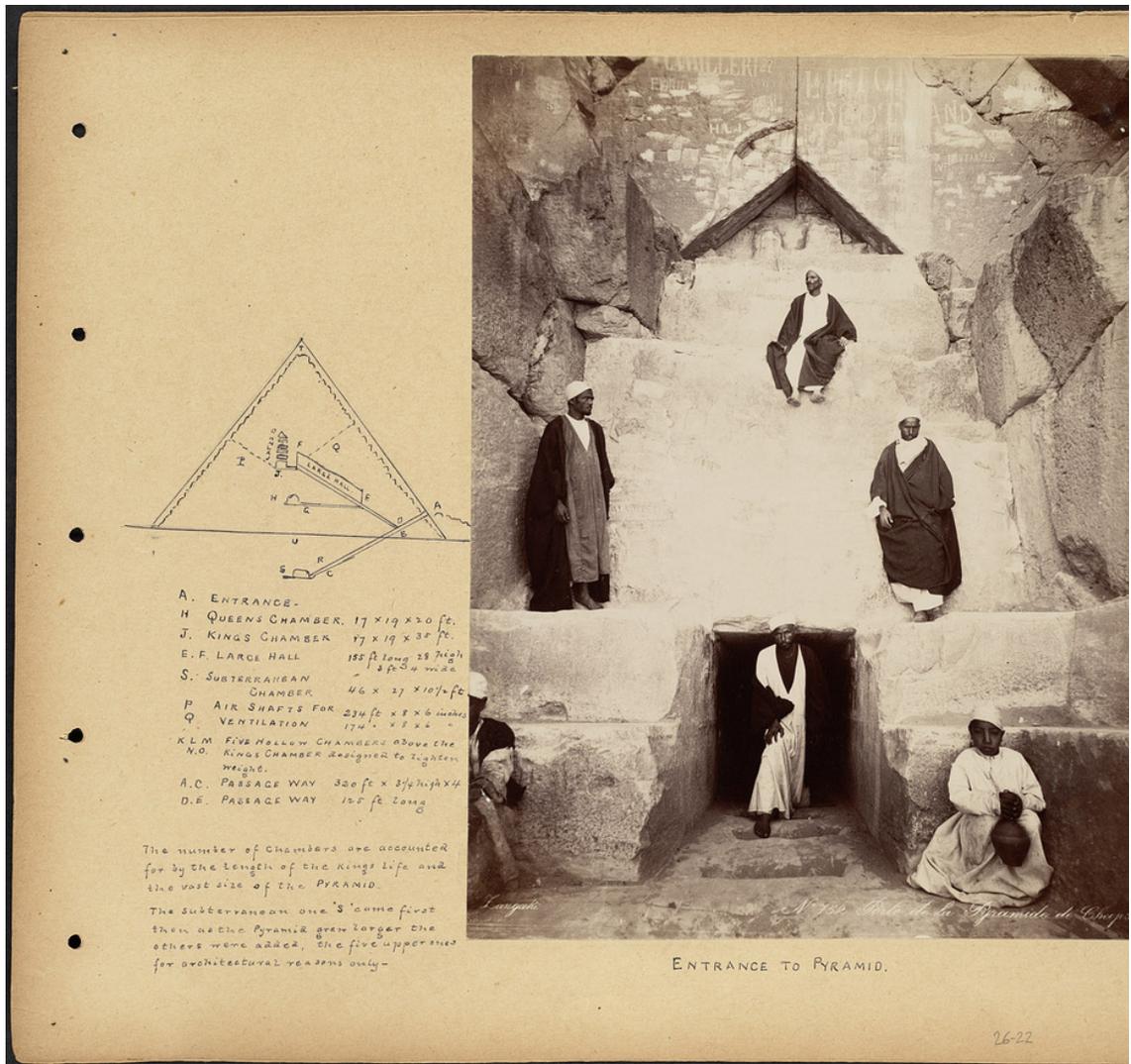
Se da la circunstancia de que para finales de 1959, cuando publiqué el proyecto de mi “Poema enterrado” en el *Jornal do Brasil*, el padre de Hélio Oiticica estaba construyendo una casa, aquí al lado, cerca del jardín botánico. Cuando Oiticica vio el proyecto, inmediatamente me llamó y me dijo que hablaría con su padre para que hiciera ese poema enterrado en la casa que estaba construyendo. Yo le dije que no sería posible, que su papá jamás aceptaría, pero él insistió. Y resulta que sí, que habló con su papá y él aceptó, y terminó construyendo el “Poema enterrado” en el lugar donde había pensado construir un tanque de agua. Entonces un día, con el

poema ya construido, en la misma casa que luego se quemó,⁴⁴ me fui a inaugurarlos con la plana mayor del neoconcretismo. Ese día, por una lamentable coincidencia, había llovido durante horas y cuando llegamos al sitio nos encontramos con el poema completamente inundado, con los cubos flotando en dos cuartas de agua, y ahí acabó el acto que habíamos planeado e incluso la obra.

^{AJ} No puedo dejar de ver en esa voluntad de hundirse en la tierra una dimensión simbólica característica de lo moderno. Desde los escritos de John Ruskin sobre Turner hasta los neoimpresionistas, y de estos al Cubismo y más allá, el concepto de un regreso a estadios primigenios de la cultura, a lo infantil y primitivo, como condición previa para acceder a lo nuevo, es una idea recurrente. No es del todo anodino que el último cubo, ese donde puede leerse la palabra *Rejuvenesça*, sea precisamente un cubo blanco, el color de la pureza.

^{FG} La intención inicial era la de hacer que el lector-participante entrara físicamente en el poema, ese fue el punto de partida. Es cierto que también me influenció el recuerdo de las pirámides egipcias, con aquellas tumbas enterradas en lo profundo de una enorme masa de piedra. Eran monumentos fúnebres, cierto, pero eran también una garantía de resurrección para los faraones, la condición de su existencia más allá de la muerte. Es algo que le debo además a mi concepto del arte y de la vida. No creo que el arte deba enfrentarnos constantemente a la desgracia humana, no al menos sin ofrecernos una salida, una esperanza. Por eso detesto la literatura de Samuel Beckett, porque a pesar de ser un hombre tremendamente inteligente, lleno de talento, nunca nos deja una puerta abierta. Sus textos nos ofrecen exclusivamente el espectáculo de la miseria humana, cuando el arte, para mí, como todo producto

de la inteligencia, debe ayudarnos a vivir, a enfrentar la enfermedad, el dolor y la muerte. Nuestra evolución biológica no nos dotó de inteligencia meramente para que fuéramos seres instruidos, y mucho menos para buscar la muerte, sino para ayudarnos a solventar los problemas que enfrentamos, a sobrevivir. De ahí que mi poesía, y toda mi obra, recoja el dolor, sí, como algo que forma parte de la vida, mas siempre ofrece una salida. No es un optimismo bobo, porque todos los que vivimos la aventura humana conocemos el dolor y la muerte, y lo sufrimos, pero en el fondo aspiramos a la felicidad.



Seis hombres alrededor de la entrada de la Pirámide Cheops en Egipto. La página incluye un esquema que muestra las cámaras interiores y pasillos de la pirámide con sus dimensiones, ca. 1860-1890.

Más

Reflexiones como éstas, aplicadas también a las circunstancias políticas y sociales de Brasil, me llevaron a cuestionar la pertinencia de la poesía que venía haciendo. El “Poema enterrado” fue efectivamente una experiencia límite donde yo estaba trabajando al

borde del lenguaje, y al mismo tiempo comenzaba a preguntarme si tenía sentido continuar, como poeta, por aquel camino.

^{AJ} Porque terminaría siendo una especie de disolución de la poesía.

^{FG} Exactamente, mi poema era una sala enterrada en el suelo, una estructura arquitectónica que incluía una sola palabra, y yo empezaba a preguntarme si esa era la senda que debía seguir. ¿Iba a seguir construyendo espacios arquitectónicos y objetos que ni siquiera tendría donde guardar? En fin, comencé a cuestionar el camino que había tomado y terminé alejándome de aquello. Tenía la intuición de que ese rumbo terminaría impidiéndome ser el poeta que era, que me impediría continuar con mi obra, con lo que quería decir, transformándome en un artista plástico, en algo que no quería ser.

Se produjo un conflicto dentro de mí en el cual empecé a cuestionarlo todo, tanto que llegué a proponerle a Hélio, medio en broma medio en serio, que hiciéramos un acto terrorista. La idea consistía en distribuir nuestras piezas por la ciudad, en la madrugada, para que la gente, al levantarse, se encontrara con aquellos objetos extraños repartidos por las calles, en los parques y espacios públicos. Hélio encontró que aquello sería una locura, que no nos ayudaría en nada. Luego, dentro del mismo espíritu, propuse que hiciéramos una exposición que abriría a las 17h y cerraría a las 18h. Cada objeto tendría una bomba debajo y a las 18h le diríamos al público que debía abandonar la sala, y a esa hora se detonaban las bombas acabando con la muestra. No lo hicimos, obviamente, pero el solo hecho de que haya imaginado su posibilidad demostraba mi estado de ánimo y la visión que tenía de aquellos experimentos de

vanguardia. Al final terminé alejándome de todo, de los amigos artistas, del arte mismo.

Mário Xavier de Andrade Pedrosa (1900–81). Uno de los más influyentes críticos de Brasil durante la segunda mitad del siglo XX. Teórico y defensor del movimiento concreto, tuvo una notable influencia en los artistas plásticos de su tiempo, como en la formación intelectual de Ferreira Gullar.

A Semana de Arte Moderna tuvo una influencia capital en el desarrollo de las ideas modernistas en Brasil durante la primera mitad del siglo XX. Artistas plásticos, poetas, críticos y músicos organizaron diversas manifestaciones culturales los días trece, quince y diecisiete de febrero de 1922. La semana es considerada como el comienzo oficial de la modernidad brasileña. Las ideas del Expresionismo alemán, el Cubismo y el Surrealismo franceses, así como el Futurismo italiano, sirvieron de punto de partida para un amplio movimiento de carácter nacionalista. José Oswald de Sousa Andrade Nogueira (1890–1954). Conocido como Oswald de Andrade, escritor y ensayista brasileño, uno de los principales activistas de *A Semana de Arte Moderna*. Es autor de textos fundamentales para el arte moderno de Brasil, entre ellos el “Manifiesto da poesia Pau-Brasil”, 1924, y el muy influyente Manifiesto antropófago, 1928, sin duda uno de los manifiestos artísticos más importantes de América Latina.

Mário Raul de Moraes Andrade (1893–1945). Importante poeta, novelista y crítico de la modernidad brasileña. Figuró entre los principales activistas de *A Semana de Arte Moderna* de 1922. Entre sus obras de mayor influencia figuran *Paulicéia desvairada*, 1922; *Losango cáqui*, 1926; *Macunaíma*, 1928; y *Lira paulistana*, 1945.

Mário de Andrade, “El movimiento modernista”, en *Arte y arquitectura del modernismo brasileño* (Caracas: Ed. Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1978), 197.

Oswald de Andrade, “Manifiesto antropófago”, en *Obra escogida* (Caracas: Ed. Fundación Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1981), 68, 71.

Hélio Oiticica, “Tropicalia”, en *Hélio Oiticica* (Rotterdam: Projeto Hélio Oiticica, la Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume de París y el Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1992), 124.

Tarsila do Amaral (1886–1973). Pintora y diseñadora brasileña de la primera fase del movimiento moderno brasileño. Su pintura, de corte surrealista durante los años veinte, integra motivos nativos y populares de Brasil. Su obra titulada *Abaporú* (“hombre que come” en tupi-guaraní), 1928, inspiró a Oswald de Andrade para la redacción del Manifiesto antropófago.

Max Bill (1908–94). Artista plástico y diseñador industrial suizo. Tuvo una considerable influencia en el nacimiento y desarrollo del Concretismo así como en el perfil asumido por la Escuela Superior de Diseño Industrial de Brasil. En 1951, durante la Primera Bienal de São Paulo, gana el Premio de escultura y se convierte en referencia central para los artistas concretos.

Oiticica, “Aspiro ao Grande Laberinto”, en *Hélio Oiticica*, 42.

Cândido Torquato Portinari (1903–62). Artista plástico brasileño. Su pintura, a menudo de corte surrealista u onírico, aborda prioritariamente temas de carácter popular y nativista: obreros, campesinos y habitantes de las zonas marginales del país.

Véase Ferreira Gullar, *Etapas da arte contemporânea. Do cubismo à arte neoconcreta* (Río de Janeiro: Ed. Revan, 1999).

Ferreira Gullar, “Lygia Clark—Uma experiência radical”, en *Etapas da arte contemporânea*, 269–282.

La fenomenología insiste justamente en la necesidad de abordar el mundo en su apariencia sensible, es decir, en las cosas tal y como ellas se nos hacen presentes a través de los sentidos. Es a esa exigencia metodológica de la fenomenología a la que se refiere Ferreira Gullar.

Ferreira Gullar, “Vanguarda e subdesenvolvimento”, en *Cultura posta em questão. Vanguarda e subdesenvolvimento: ensaios sobre arte* (Río de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 2006), 216.

Una selección de este poemario sería el primero de sus libros en ser traducido a otro idioma. La edición fue hecha en Caracas por FUNDARTE, con traducción de Santiago Keradloff, en 1977, bajo el título *La lucha corporal y otros incendios*.

Para tener una idea de las referencias poéticas de Ferreira Gullar y de la posición que toma ante ellas, véase Gullar, *Cultura posta em questão*. Ver en particular el segundo capítulo: “Vanguarda e subdesenvolvimento”, 201–27.

Por “pensamiento de tipo colonial” entendemos específicamente la tendencia a aceptar que para todas nuestras dudas existe una respuesta, y que es únicamente a partir de ese saber elaborado por otros, en otro lugar y otro tiempo, que podemos abordar nuestra propia experiencia ante el mundo. Es imaginar que nuestra percepción de lo real no tiene validez sino legitimada por ese allá.

El título, como en muchos poemas de este periodo, es una invención verbal que parte de palabras conocidas y que han sido total o parcialmente transformadas, o cuyo sentido ha forzado el autor.

Ferreira Gullar, *Crime na flora* (Río de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 1986), 3.

Ferreira Gullar, *Crime na flora*, 25.

Los primeros poemas-objeto fueron realizados por el propio Ferreira Gullar de una manera rudimentaria y, asegura el autor, desaparecieron todos. Los únicos que existen en la actualidad son los que se realizaron para la exposición del Paço Imperial y hoy forman parte de su colección permanente, y una edición de cinco ejemplares que fue realizada y comercializada por una galería de São Paulo.

En la noche del 16 de octubre de 2009, un incendio destruyó parte de los archivos y de las obras conservadas en la casa de la familia Oiticica. Ferreira Gullar constata esa para él, curiosa coincidencia, que la obra de Oiticica se quemara en ese mismo lugar donde, años antes, su “Poema enterrado” fuera destruido por una inundación.

Un enlace a *Vanguardia e subdesenvolvimento* [Vanguardia y subdesarrollo] se puede encontrar en la página de enlaces ubicada al final del libro

Un extracto de

Calligrammes: Poèmes de la paix et la guerre (1913-1916),

de Guillaume Apollinaire,

publicado en Paris en 1918

(Mercure de France)

Accesado desde Internet Archive:

<http://archive.org/details/calligrammespo00apol>

Los caligramas de Apollinaire son sin duda una referencia para los poetas concretos y neoconcretos en Brasil y en América latina. *O formigueiro*, de Ferreira Gullar, tiene sin embargo claras diferencias con la obra de su predecesor francés. Cada Caligrama es una obra en sí, un poema-imagen autónomo, mientras en el caso de Gullar el poema se escribe y se dibuja de una página a la otra. Nuevas letras se agregan en cada página, resaltadas en negritas, creando de página en página una tensión psicológica que cuenta entre las principales características de la poesía neoconcreta y del neoconcretismo en general

Tupper Scrapbooks Collection, Boston Public Library.

Accesado desde Flickr Creative Commons:

http://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/2468306447

Como las tumbas faraónicas cuyo ejemplo contó entre las referencias de Ferreira Gullar, el *Poema enterrado* se presenta como un espacio a la vez de memoria y de esperanza futura. La experiencia que se le ofrece allí al espectador no se ubica sin embargo en el futuro, ni en un

espacio extraterreno, sino en el presente mismo del lector-participante. Tras penetrar en ese poema enterrado, el espectador no se encuentra sino con una sola palabra: *Rejuvenezca!*, y con su propio rostro reflejado en el espejo. No se nos invita a dejar nuestro destino futuro en manos de los dioses, sino a renovar nuestra experiencia ante el mundo aquí y ahora

BRASILIA CAMBIÓ MI MENTE

El arte al servicio de la gente

En 1959, el “Poema enterrado” concluye un proceso de experimentación que cuenta entre los aportes más densos del Neoconcretismo al arte occidental. Lo hace, además, de una manera particular, puesto que su destrucción accidental la condena a ser, aunque involuntariamente, una obra “definitivamente inacabada”, como el Gran vidrio de Duchamp, una en todo caso cuya realización queda indefinidamente postergada. Tras ella, además, se produce un cambio profundo y radical en su concepción del arte y de la tarea que debía cumplir un intelectual latinoamericano. A partir de ese punto, Ferreira Gullar se aleja paulatinamente de los movimientos que había contribuido a formar, hasta convertirse en un ferviente opositor de las vanguardias.

^{FG} Mi alejamiento de las vanguardias comienza un poco después, cuando me invitan a trabajar en Brasilia. Es ahí cuando las cosas cambian realmente para mí. Todo comenzó en 1961 con la toma de posesión del nuevo presidente, Jânio da Silva Quadros,⁴⁵ el 31 de enero de 1961. Entonces me invitaron a trabajar como Director de la Fundación Cultural de Brasilia y acepté. En la situación en la que me encontraba pensé que podría ser el presagio de algo nuevo. Además, en el plano personal, no sabía muy bien lo que podía hacer ni a dónde ir, porque había destruido mi lenguaje por tercera vez. Primero, cuando descubro la poesía moderna, rompo con el mundo parnasiano en el que me había formado. Luego, con el Neoconcretismo, abandono el universo moderno. Ahora había roto con las preocupaciones neoconcretas que a mi entender habían llegado a un límite insalvable y no sabía qué hacer. En Brasilia, vivo situaciones diferentes: estoy en la nueva capital del país⁴⁶ y descubro los problemas sociales que se vivían allí. Estoy cerca del poder, relacionado con el Alcalde, el Presidente de la República, el Congreso, y la realidad política pasa a tener una mayor presencia. Es en medio de esas circunstancias que comienzo a reflexionar sobre mi actividad como intelectual y como poeta.

^{AJ} No deja de ser intrigante que cada cambio importante en su trabajo haya sido precedido o seguido por un desplazamiento geográfico dentro de Brasil.

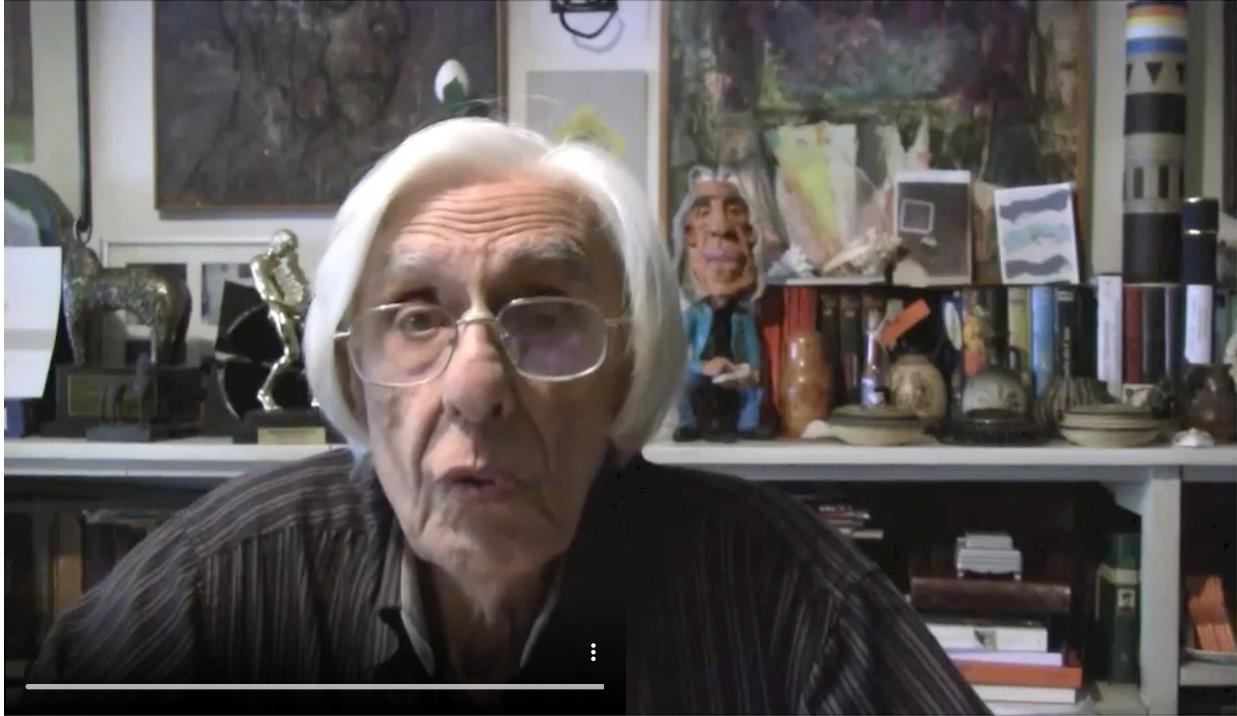
^{FG} Quizás, aunque no es lo determinante. Ese vuelco radical coincidió con mi mudanza a Brasilia, pero hubiera ocurrido de cualquier modo, porque ya venía alejándome de los movimientos de vanguardia. Había dado por agotada mi experiencia en ese terreno y lo que pasó hubiera sucedido en Brasilia, en Río de Janeiro o en cualquier otro lugar. El problema era interior. Lo que ocurre, también, es que en Brasilia leo un libro titulado *El pensamiento de Karl Marx*, de un padre católico francés, Jean-Yves Calvez. Él escribió ese libro cuando la iglesia católica francesa estaba dividida entre los representantes de una doctrina católica tradicional, y una iglesia nueva que quería participar en la contienda social. La primera parte del libro analizaba sinceramente el pensamiento de Marx, y en la segunda demostraba la imposibilidad, para un católico, de convertirse al marxismo. Solo que yo, que no soy religioso, leí únicamente la primera parte y me convertí al marxismo. Por curioso que parezca, fue precisamente así: un libro escrito contra el marxismo me hizo marxista. De todos modos, desde cualquier ángulo que pudiera vérselo, mi alejamiento del Neoconcretismo no tenía vuelta atrás. En eso estaba claro, y cualquiera que hubiera sido mi camino me hubiera llevado lejos de los movimientos de vanguardia.

^{AJ} Y el marxismo, por supuesto, le aportaba objetivos específicos e instrumentos de lucha, inscribiéndolo además en un movimiento internacional que tendría un enorme impacto en toda la América Latina y en gran parte del mundo.

^{FG} En realidad ese libro lo único que hizo fue ampliar mi visión del país. Me llevó a comprender la necesidad de una transformación social para Brasil. Era ver la sociedad brasileña a partir de un ángulo que no había percibido antes. Entonces comencé a tener simpatía por las luchas sociales que se estaban dando, como la reforma agraria, por ejemplo. No me transformé de repente en un revolucionario que se lanza a trazar estrategias. Solamente empecé a ver a mi país desde una perspectiva diferente. Me di cuenta de que los problemas sociales del momento tenían mucha más importancia de la que imaginaba. Cuando regresé a Río, en octubre de 1961, tras la renuncia del presidente Quadros, fui a trabajar al Centro Popular de Cultura (CPC) de la União Nacional dos Estudantes (UNE), una organización recién creada que lidiaba con los problemas sociales y se proponía contribuir con la concientización del pueblo, en particular de los trabajadores.

Mi Pueblo, Mi Poema

*Mi pueblo y mi poema crecen juntos
como crece en el fruto
el árbol nuevo
En el pueblo mi poema va naciendo
como en el cañaveral
nace verde el azúcar
En el pueblo mi poema está maduro
como el sol
en la garganta del futuro
Mi pueblo en mi poema
se refleja
como la espiga se funde en tierra fértil
Al pueblo su poema aquí devuelvo
menos como quien canta
como quien planta.⁴⁷*



Ferreira Gullar leyendo su poema “Meu povo, meu poema,” Rio de Janeiro, 2012

^{AJ} Y, es evidente, soñaba con la posibilidad de hacer en Brasil una revolución a la cubana.

^{FG} Sí, pero eso, al principio, lo soñaban los demás. Entré al CPC cuando entendí que era necesario transformar la sociedad brasileña. Poco a poco fui involucrándome con las ideas socialistas y comencé también a pensar que, llegado el momento, debíamos implantar el socialismo en Brasil, aunque sin inscribirme todavía en el Partido Comunista. En el CPC, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho,⁴⁸ o Vianinha, me pidió que escribiera una pieza de teatro sobre la reforma agraria. Lo que quería, en cierta forma, era que escribiera un poema de cordel⁴⁹ como hilo conductor. Así escribí “João Boa-morte,⁵⁰ cabra marcado pra morrer” [João Boa-morte, un tipo marcado para morir]. Al final no se hizo la pieza de teatro y mi poema quedó como una composición independiente. Sin embargo, tenía una visión muy clara de lo que entendía por literatura, de manera que cuando hago ese poema estaba consciente de que estaba utilizando mis conocimientos literarios para elevar la conciencia política del pueblo. No estaba haciendo literatura, sino política.

*Voy a contar para ustedes
un caso que sucedió
en Paraíba do Norte
con un hombre que se llamaba
Pedro João Boa-morte,
labrador de Chapadinha:
tal vez tenga buena muerte
porque vida no tenía.
Sucedió en Paraíba
pero es historia banal
en todo aquel Nordeste.*

*Podría ser en Sergipe,
Pernambuco o Maranhão,
que todo cabra da peste⁵¹
allí se llama João
Boa-morte, vida no.⁵²*

Como sucede a menudo, la realidad no se plegaba a lo que habíamos previsto en el plano teórico. Cuando íbamos a los sindicatos, por ejemplo, a hacer nuestros espectáculos políticos y terminábamos quedándonos solos, entre comunistas, me di cuenta de que algo no funcionaba bien. ¿Estábamos haciendo la revolución para los comunistas?, ¿estábamos pregonando el comunismo para los convencidos?, ¿queremos hacer arte para el pueblo y el pueblo huye de nuestras manifestaciones? Algo estaba equivocado. Si estábamos haciendo una literatura mala y un teatro rudimentario para acercarnos al pueblo, y la gente se iba, aquello no estaba funcionando. Incluso antes del golpe ya había comenzado a cuestionar los procedimientos que veníamos empleando. No tenía quizás una idea muy clara de lo que estaba pasando en lo teórico, pero sí observé que en la experiencia concreta, en mi práctica política, algo estaba errado. Lo discutí con mis compañeros, especialmente con Vianinha, y me di cuenta de que ellos también lo habían percibido. Dos años más tarde, el 31 de marzo de 1964, vino el golpe de estado y arrasó con todo. Acabó con el CPC y con las organizaciones de izquierda, de manera que me quedé solo, sin un espacio donde luchar. Fue entonces cuando ingresé al Partido Comunista, que era una organización clandestina bastante estructurada.

Inmediatamente después del golpe nos reunimos para organizar la resistencia a la dictadura. Necesitábamos una estructura que nos permitiera darle una presencia pública y legal a nuestra causa, y fue lo que nos ofreció el Grupo Opinião [Grupo Opinión]: un teatro con todas las exigencias de la ley desde donde podíamos exponer nuestras ideas sobre la realidad social del país. La primera obra se presenta en diciembre de 1964, a casi un año del golpe. Era un show musical titulado Opinião [Opinión], de dónde nació el nombre de la agrupación, con Zé Kéti,⁵³ João do Vale⁵⁴ y Nara Leão,⁵⁵ bajo la dirección de Augusto Boal.⁵⁶ Al año siguiente Millôr Fernandes⁵⁷ y Flávio Rangel⁵⁸ presentan *Liberdade, Liberdade* [Libertad, Libertad], también con mucho éxito de público. Era una pieza que no escondía las críticas que le hacíamos a la dictadura, por lo que inmediatamente despertó malestar entre las autoridades. Su preocupación debió ser muy grande, puesto que llegaron hasta el extremo de organizar un atentado dentro del teatro. Su intención no era asesinar al público, claro, aunque la situación pudo degenerar peligrosamente si no lo hubiéramos descubierto a tiempo. Cuando me informaron que una sola persona había comprado cuarenta entradas, supuse que se trataba de un acto preparado por los agentes del gobierno para sabotear la presentación. Inmediatamente llamé a Hélio Fernandes, director del periódico *Tribuna da imprensa*. Él conocía al vice-gobernador, quien intervino y mandó a reforzar la presencia policial en los locales del teatro. Aun cuando la policía dependía del gobierno, difícilmente hubiera podido negarse a proteger al público. El día de la presentación, mientras Paulo Autran estaba en el palco, alguien del público gritaba: “¡Cállate la boca comunista!”, y el ambiente comenzó a enrarecerse. Otros asistentes le pedían que se callara o aplaudían en son de protesta. Se creó una gran confusión que hizo intervenir a la policía, en especial cuando encontramos una bomba artesanal en los baños. Para los agentes del gobierno fue muy delicado, porque la policía se vio obligada a detenerlos y a desarmarlos, delatándolos públicamente. Los organismos del régimen no se desalentaron y siguieron ejerciendo presión a través de la censura, mutilando e incluso prohibiendo muchos de nuestros textos.

Entre tanto, en abril de 1966, presentamos una pieza que escribí junto a Vianinha: *Se correr o bicho pega, si ficar o bicho come* [Si corres el bicho te agarra, si te quedas el bicho te come]. El título lo sugiere Paulo Pontes, un joven paraibano que formaba parte del grupo. Cuando discutimos el título que

debíamos ponerle, él sugirió utilizar esa expresión muy popular en el Noreste brasileño. Era un texto bastante amplio cuya trama se desarrollaba en el interior y abordaba el problema del latifundio y de la división social en Brasil. En el fondo, exponía lo que proponíamos antes del golpe; es decir, la transformación de la sociedad brasileña y en especial el fin de la aristocracia rural, del latifundio y del poder atrasado que dominaba la política y que se había aliado con los militares.

^{AJ} A la vez, con estas piezas ustedes buscaban alcanzar una mayor calidad literaria.

^{FG} El cambio sucede incluso antes y continúa luego durante mi exilio. Es aproximadamente a partir de 1964 que mi poesía empieza a tomar una dimensión diferente, en particular tras el poema titulado “Dentro da noite veloz” [En la noche veloz], que es un poema sobre el Che Guevara, y una experiencia literaria considerablemente compleja. También “Por você por mim” [Por ti por mí], que sigue siendo un poema político, porque aborda el problema de Vietnam, pero con una mayor elaboración y donde hago incluso ciertas experiencias de vocabulario. Ahí se inicia la reconstrucción de mi lenguaje poético, lo que da como resultado el libro *Dentro da noite veloz*, donde recojo los poemas realizados entre 1962 y 1975, justo antes del “Poema sujo”, el poema que escribo en Argentina, durante mi exilio.

^{AJ} Es en medio de esas diatribas políticas que escribe un ensayo sin duda polémico, *Cultura posta em questão*,⁵⁹ donde intenta justamente teorizar la utilización del arte como herramienta política.



Ferreira Gullar en la Plaza João Lisboa de São Luís, recitando su texto *Cultura posta em questão* [*Cultura puesta en duda*], marzo 1964

^{FG} Sí, es un libro que hago en un periodo de grandes dudas personales y de conflictos enormes en el plano social. No hay que olvidar que lo redactó justo antes del golpe de estado de 1964 y en paralelo con esos primeros ejercicios en los que quisimos llegarle al pueblo con composiciones bastante mediocres. Es un texto escrito al calor de los acontecimientos, donde intento teorizar los factores personales que me llevaron a romper con la vanguardia y donde, por otra parte, busco explicar las razones que me parecían justificar –e incluso exigir– la utilización de las herramientas artísticas en favor de la lucha ideológica. Es,

por eso, un libro *engagé*, como se dice en Francia, e incluso proselitista. De ese compromiso con la lucha política se desprenden ciertas limitaciones que hoy no comparto. Sin embargo, estimo que puede leerse como testimonio importante de un momento y de una posición política. Fue una coyuntura especial en la cual los artistas intentamos pensar el Brasil real. El ensayo tuvo, por lo demás, una influencia considerable entre la gente de teatro, los poetas, compositores y cineastas.

Posteriormente, en 1969, tras una reflexión más calmada y a partir de nuestro contacto con los espectadores, publico un segundo libro titulado *Vanguardia e subdesenvolvimento*. Contrariamente a la primera publicación, donde condeno en bloque toda manifestación artística no comprometida políticamente, en este segundo ensayo reconozco la necesidad de una relativa autonomía para la expresión estética, sin llegar por ello a considerar que la expresión individual pueda existir completamente desvinculada de la realidad concreta donde se vive y en particular de los conflictos sociales. Lo hago desde una perspectiva marxista, revolucionaria, y abordo el problema de las vanguardias en su adecuación o no al escenario brasileño. Entonces procuro mostrar que Brasil estaba siendo dominado por una vanguardia internacional que le era ajena. Se trataba a mí entender de una vanguardia importada que estaba minando la actividad estética autónoma en el país. Defendí la idea de que si esas vanguardias tenían una razón de ser en París o Nueva York, las causas de su existencia no eran necesariamente las mismas en Brasil, y que el mundo sería culturalmente más rico si cada país desarrollaba su propia experiencia estética, en vez de continuar imitando lo que sucedía en las grandes capitales occidentales.

^{AJ} Y sin embargo el Neoconcretismo, como vanguardia, estuvo entre las primeras manifestaciones autónomas del Brasil.

^{FG} Sí, sin duda, el Neoconcretismo era vanguardia, pero era nuestro, fue creado en Brasil, no era una copia o una importación de criterios estéticos pensados en otro lugar para responder a necesidades distintas a las nuestras. Hoy, por supuesto, tengo una visión diferente de esos acontecimientos, y mi posición política dista también mucho de la que tuve en aquellos años.



Marcha en contra de la censura en Brasil, 1968 Más
Marcha en contra de la censura en Brasil, 1968
©Arquivo Nacional, Ministerio da Justiça, RJ, Brasil

Jânio da Silva Quadros (1917–92). Vigésimo segundo presidente de Brasil, asumió la presidencia del país el 31 de enero de 1961 y renunció a su cargo por presión de la cúpula militar el día 25 de agosto de 1961.

La ciudad de Brasilia, impulsada por el presidente Juscelino Kubitschek, concebida por el urbanista Lucio Costa con una importante participación del arquitecto Oscar Niemeyer para las principales edificaciones de la ciudad, comenzó a construirse en octubre de 1956 y se inauguró el 21 de abril de 1960.

Ferreira Gullar, “Meu Povo, Meu Poema”, en *Toda poesia*, 155.

Oduvaldo Vianna Filho (1936–74). También conocido como Vianinha, fue un dramaturgo, actor y director de teatro brasileño. Entre sus principales piezas figuran *A mão na louva*, *Allegro desbum* y *Rasga coração*.

La literatura de cordel es un tipo de poesía popular, originalmente oral, después escrita en pliegos y vendida en tenderos de cuerdas o cordeles, de allí su nombre. Fueron muy populares en España y Portugal desde la Edad Media. Llegaron a Brasil, vía Portugal, durante el siglo XIX. Eran composiciones rimadas, generalmente en estrofas de diez o seis versos.

El apellido Boa-morte significa Buena-muerte en portugués.

Cabra da peste es una expresión popular en el Noreste brasileño que puede ser traducida por “tipo perverso”.

Al traducir, se prefirió el término en portugués para respetar la rima del poema.

Ferreira Gullar, “João Boa-morte. Cabra marcado pra morrer”, en *Toda poesia*, 111.

Pseudónimo artístico de José Flores de Jesús (1921–99). Conocido cantante y compositor de samba brasileño.

João Batista do Vale (1934–96). Músico, cantante y compositor oriundo del Maranhão, estado natal de Ferreira Gullar.

Nara Lofego Leão (1942–89). Cantante brasileña de Bossa Nova, luego intérprete de composiciones de protesta política.

Augusto Boal (1931–2009). Director, dramaturgo y ensayista brasileño. Fundador del *Teatro del oprimido*, un método que intenta popularizar el teatro a través de juegos y ejercicios. La idea era que las clases populares pudieran apropiarse de las técnicas y medios de producción propios del teatro.

Millôr Fernandes (1924). Destacado dibujante, humorista, dramaturgo y escritor brasileño.

Flávio Nogueira Rangel (1934–88). Importante director de teatro, escenógrafo y periodista brasileño. Fue director del Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia, una de las más prestigiosas compañías del país. Gran parte de la primera edición fue quemada por los militares brasileños en la sede de la UNE, tras el golpe de estado de 1964.

UTOPIA Y REALIDAD

Los caminos del exilio

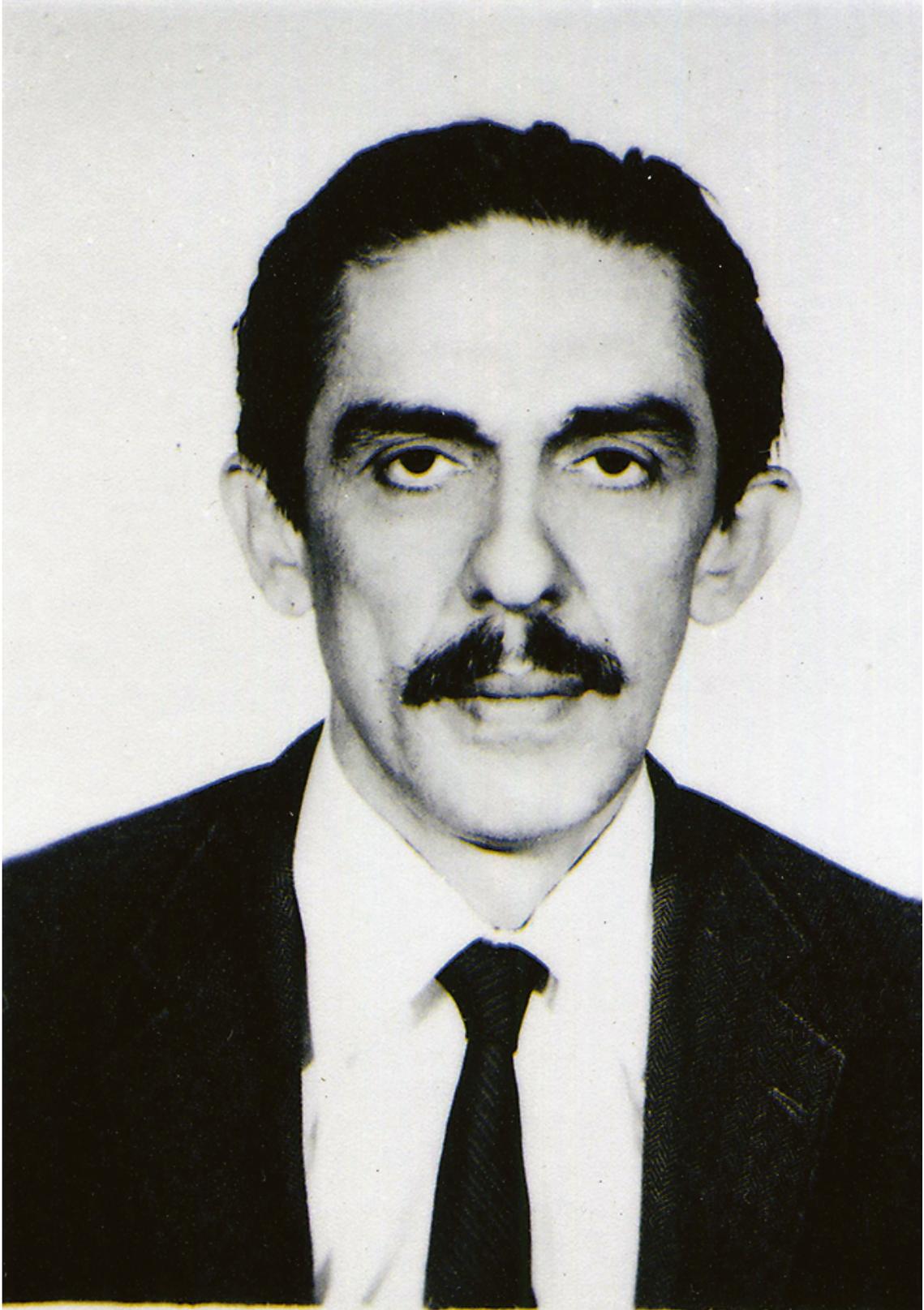
^{AJ} En todo caso, ante a ese atolladero usted se lanza a la lucha política y, con mayor o menor calidad literaria, convierte esa pugna en el eje central de su actividad literaria. Ya hemos visto lo que hace con sus compañeros del CPC y luego del Teatro Opinião. Eran actividades de claro corte político y con certeza molestaban al régimen, aunque la represión no había sido tan fuerte como para que usted se viera obligado a entrar en la clandestinidad.

^{FG} Es evidente que el golpe movilizó a gran parte de los sectores culturales. La gente de teatro, los artistas plásticos, los escritores, los poetas, se manifestaron abiertamente contra el golpe, tanto que el régimen militar fue haciéndose cada vez más agresivo. Demoró más tiempo que en Chile o en Argentina, porque tomó unos cuatro años, pero al final terminó siendo también muy agresivo. Mis actividades y mi posición política eran conocidas públicamente, y el régimen seguía mis pasos como seguramente lo hacía con una multitud de personas. La primera vez que me agredieron personalmente vivía en Ipanema. Los soldados del ejército entraron a mi casa y comenzaron a registrarlo todo pese a que mi mujer, Thereza, exigió que le mostraran el documento oficial que los autorizaba a entrar en una residencia privada. No le hicieron caso alguno, como era de esperarse, y siguieron con su trabajo sin autorización legal. Durante el operativo, aunque no encontraron nada comprometedor, se llevaron el manuscrito de un libro que

estaba por editar, *Do Cubismo à Arte Neoconcreta* [*Del Cubismo al arte neoconcreto*]. Quise argumentar que se trataba de un libro sobre arte, pero el nombre les pareció sospechoso e igual se lo llevaron. ¡Seguramente pensaron que el Cubismo estaba necesariamente relacionado con Cuba!

La dictadura estaba en sus inicios y la situación no pasó de ser un escarmiento, un gesto destinado a amedrentarme. La segunda vez fue más grave, porque se hizo el mismo día del Acto Institucional N° 5 del 13 de diciembre de 1968. Ese acto institucional dio inicio a una represión sistemática y agresiva. Detuvieron a centenares de personas y la dictadura cobró la dimensión represiva de siempre. En esa ocasión me detuvieron durante veinte días, del 13 de diciembre al 2 de enero. Todavía no entro en la clandestinidad, lo cual sucede más tarde, en 1970. Me vi obligado a hacerlo por recomendaciones del Partido Comunista. Había sido elegido director del partido a nivel estatal, en Río de Janeiro, y eso cambiaba radicalmente mi posición ante el régimen militar. La posición en sí no me atraía, me era completamente ajena, porque nunca fui un militante. Una serie de circunstancias hicieron sin embargo que fuera elegido. Solamente era un intelectual que había adoptado las ideas marxistas y que encontró en el partido un buen vehículo de resistencia contra la dictadura. El Partido Comunista en Brasil era una organización bastante madura, que había superado los sectarismos del estalinismo y que incluso tomó partido por Nikita Krushev cuando dio aquel discurso que escindió en dos el movimiento comunista internacional.⁶⁰ Eso dio como resultado que los movimientos reformistas se alejaran de los estalinistas, entre ellos el Partido Comunista do Brasil [Partido Comunista de Brasil], que dejó de llamarse así para denominarse Partido Comunista Brasileiro [Partido Comunista Brasileño]. Sentí

simpatía por esa apertura del partido, pero no me inscribí en él sino inmediatamente después del golpe. Hasta ese día había evitado toda militancia, porque siempre fui muy independiente en mi manera de pensar, y temía que ello generara conflictos dentro de una estructura partidista. Las circunstancias impuestas por el golpe me obligaron no obstante a hacerlo. Sucede que en ese momento surgió dentro del partido la idea de lanzar la lucha armada para hacerle frente la dictadura, y aquello encendió las discusiones. Carlos Marighella y Mário Alves, dos directivos del partido, habían llegado a la conclusión de que solo el combate armado nos permitiría actuar con eficacia contra el régimen militar.



Fotografía utilizada para un pasaporte clandestino, c. 1971

Durante una noche oscura y lluviosa, Mário Alves, que era mi amigo personal, me invitó a una conversación secreta en el Teatro Opinião. Estábamos él, una amiga suya y yo. Durante esa reunión Mário me dio a leer un documento que defendía la Revolución cultural china, la lucha armada y otra serie de irresponsabilidades con las cuales no estuve de acuerdo. Le entregué el texto y le expliqué que estaba en completo desacuerdo con lo que pretendían.

—¿Y por qué? —me preguntó.

—Porque es sencillamente insensato —le respondí—, imaginar que un grupo de individuos desarmados pueda retar al Ejército, la Marina y la Aeronáutica junto a más de veinte policías militares, ¿con qué armas, con cuántos combatientes? —. Recuerdo que incluso bromeé con él diciéndole que si debía enfrentarme a un boxeador no sería dentro del ring. Que si él pretendía discutir poesía conmigo, era él quien estaba errado, y si era yo quien lo invitaba a boxear, en ese caso el equivocado era yo. En fin, tras la reunión con él, le informé al partido de esta conversación, y como la diferencia de opiniones estaba agravándose, decidieron invitarme a integrar la dirección estatal como una forma de fortalecer la corriente que se oponía al uso de las armas. Les dije que ese tipo de posiciones no me interesaba, que no servía para eso, a lo que ellos argumentaron que se trataba solamente de una situación de emergencia, y terminé aceptando. El resultado de este asunto es que cuando detuvieron a un dirigente del partido y lo torturaron bárbaramente, él dio los nombres de varios dirigentes, y entre ellos estaba el mío. En vista de la delicada coyuntura en la que me encontraba, el partido me recomendó entrar en la clandestinidad. Una cosa era arrestar a un intelectual de izquierda e interrogarlo, otra detener a un directivo del Partido Comunista. Si llegaban a capturarme seguramente sería torturado para obtener datos de

carácter confidencial, y como en realidad no poseía ninguna información estratégica, correría mucho peligro. Así fue como llegamos a la conclusión de que lo mejor sería desaparecer, entrar en la clandestinidad. Durante los primeros ocho meses estuve escondido dentro de un cuarto, en la casa de un amigo. Apenas salí una vez para encontrarme con mi esposa, a altas horas de la noche, el resto del tiempo lo pasaba escondido en aquel cuarto o dentro del apartamento.

^{AJ} Debió ser terrible, casi como estar en la cárcel.

^{FG} En realidad no lo viví como algo traumático puesto que pude seguir trabajando. Cuando Antonio Houaiss, un amigo mío, supo que estaba en la clandestinidad, enseguida se puso en contacto con mi esposa y me envió trabajo para la enciclopedia que él estaba haciendo.⁶¹ Pasé meses escribiendo definiciones para esa enciclopedia, trabajando en diversos textos y también dibujando. Como no podía salir de allí, dibujé el cuarto desde todos los ángulos posibles. Primero dibujé la ventana vista de la derecha, de la izquierda, del centro; luego la puerta y el otro muro. Como el amigo que me escondió en su apartamento contaba además con una buena biblioteca, leí muchísimo, de manera que estuve muy ocupado. Lo único desagradable era estar encerrado sin saber lo que podría ocurrir. Al poco tiempo mi amigo contrajo una enfermedad de relativa gravedad, y como vivía solo tuvo que llamar a su familia para que cuidara de él. En ese punto me dijo que su familia no tenía nada que ver con mis ideales y que él temía que al final terminarían diciendo que alguien se escondía en su casa. Ahí me mudé al apartamento de otra amiga en Copacabana, pero la frecuentaban muchos allegados y familiares, y a menudo los niños preguntaban

qué era lo que había en esa habitación cerrada, tocaban la puerta y pedían que la abrieran. Al final se fue generando una situación incómoda y me vi obligado a llamar a los dirigentes del partido para decirles que no podía continuar así, que lo mejor sería salir del país.⁶²

La solución que encontraron fue enviarme a la Unión Soviética con una beca de estudios. Así podía irme sin necesidad de conseguir un trabajo. Me fui a Moscú en 1971 a prepararme como cuadro del partido, estudiando las teorías políticas y económicas del marxismo. Era una escuela clandestina del partido marxista leninista. En ese barrio de la ciudad nadie sabía quiénes estudiaban dentro ni lo que hacían. Se impartían cursos en todos los idiomas y había gente del mundo entero: de Vietnam, Francia y Suecia, de Estados Unidos, Venezuela y México. Seguíamos un programa de formación muy completo que incluía por ejemplo un estudio detallado de *El Capital* de Karl Marx. Estudiábamos cómo había sido escrito, cuál era la estructura y la dialéctica del capital, la forma de analizar los problemas sociales y económicos, con lo que aprendí muchísimo sobre las teorías marxistas. Las clases las impartía un profesor español llamado Mansilla. Era excelente y muy conocedor del tema. Desde el principio, sin embargo, empecé a detectar los signos que me llevarían a criticar severamente sus tesis económicas.

^{AJ} Un importante miembro de la vanguardia brasileña durante los años cincuenta termina convirtiéndose en un ferviente opositor de las vanguardias, en gran medida consecuencia y continuación de su acción como poeta y crítico de arte. Luego, un libro escrito para luchar contra el marxismo lo hace comunista, y ahora, en pleno proceso de formación como cuadro del Partido Comunista Brasileiro, comienza a desarrollar las tesis que lo llevarían a descubrir

en las teorías marxistas las razones de su inoperancia. Es evidente que no estamos ante un intelectual que asume posiciones definitivas, sino ante a un individuo que está siempre alerta, dispuesto a cuestionar las premisas de su pensamiento. Son pocas, en mi conocimiento, las personas que se atreven a asumir el riesgo de pensar hasta el extremo de cuestionar, llegado el caso, las ideas que en otras circunstancias defendió con pasión.

FG

Es cierto, nunca he dejado que la teoría me posea hasta el punto de cegarme, y cada vez que lo he creído necesario he tenido el coraje de defender mis ideas. En lo que se refiere al marxismo, específicamente, mientras muchos intelectuales de mi generación han preferido aferrarse ciegamente a las utopías de la teoría, incluso contra todas las evidencias que demuestran la imposibilidad de alcanzarlas, yo he preferido cuestionar mis propias convicciones. Desde la Unión Soviética había comenzado a observar situaciones con las que no podía comulgar. Incluso creé algunos inconvenientes durante las discusiones que teníamos con los dirigentes del partido. Recuerdo que una vez los brasileños y los demás latinoamericanos que estábamos estudiando fuimos invitados a Leningrado, donde nos reunimos con algunos dirigentes locales. En un momento dado le preguntan a un brasileño cuál era la situación del Partido Comunista en el país y él comenzó a decir maravillas: que el partido estaba en una fase victoriosa, que crecía vertiginosamente, y siguió diciendo una serie de mentiras que me hicieron intervenir tan pronto como concluyó su intervención. El simple hecho de que alguien pidiera la palabra sin que hubiera sido programado creó una clara tensión. Pedí la palabra porque no podía admitir que se dijeran falsedades como esas. Comencé diciendo que ese compañero no vivía en el mismo país, pues en el Brasil que yo

conocía el Partido Comunista no alcanzaba ni remotamente la participación que él señalaba. ¿Cuál es el gobernador comunista electo en Brasil?, le pregunté, ¿cuántas bancadas tenemos en el congreso?, acaso si tenemos tres diputados federales en un total de cuatrocientos, ¿entonces, cuál es nuestra participación real en los asuntos del país? Ninguna. En realidad esa presencia victoriosa del partido no existía en Brasil. Aquello fue un escándalo, porque esa persona únicamente buscaba dar una imagen positiva de los procesos políticos. En verdad, el marxismo funciona a menudo de esa manera, confundiendo la teoría con la realidad, escamoteando los hechos tras las previsiones teóricas.

^{AJ} Y eso se percibe dramáticamente en la vida cotidiana.

^{FG} En verdad debo decir que allá había cosas buenas, situaciones que podíamos desear para nuestros países. No se veían mendigos en las calles, existía un servicio de salud muy bueno, todos podían tener acceso a los hospitales y a la educación pública, con la dificultad, claro está, de que no existía libertad para nadie. De ahí nunca hubiera podido surgir un Bill Gates para crear una de las más grandes empresas del planeta, porque cada función estaba enmarcada y controlada por el partido. Otra vez, por ejemplo, fuimos a Ucrania y tuvimos como siempre un encuentro con dirigentes regionales. En una de esas reuniones, uno de los dirigentes nos dijo que la economía de Ucrania solo funcionaba gracias al partido, y que sería una catástrofe sin él. Entonces me acerqué a uno de los amigos que viajaba conmigo y le comenté que si aquello era cierto, Ucrania estaba acabada. Si la eficacia de su economía estaba sujeta a las decisiones que tomaran cuatro individuos en su oficina, nada podría funcionar. En el capitalismo,

en cambio, la economía depende de la iniciativa privada, que el Estado debe regular, cierto, porque la economía es una realidad tremendamente compleja que depende de diez mil personas que están por todas partes y en todas las ciudades buscando la forma de crear una empresa y de producir riqueza. Por eso el socialismo no logrará nunca superar sus contradicciones, porque si después de tener la segunda mayor potencia económica y militar del mundo no lo lograron, ¿cómo podrán conseguirlo en países más pequeños y frágiles? No, la realidad es que el socialismo dio su contribución, transformó el mundo, y lo modificó para bien, hasta donde era posible hacerlo.

^{AJ} En cierta forma, fueron las sociedades democráticas, las más organizadas por supuesto, las que lograron integrar los mejores aportes del socialismo, y no los regímenes comunistas.

^{FG} Sin duda, el capitalismo de mediados del siglo XIX, cuando fue publicado el Manifiesto del Partido Comunista, se acabó. Ese capitalismo feroz, indigno, de explotación sin límite e inhumano, feneció. Fue la sensibilidad de los intelectuales, y de los pensadores en general, quienes se rebelaron contra una situación inaceptable, lo cual ayudó a los trabajadores en su organización y en el reclamo de sus legítimos derechos. No hay duda alguna, Marx acierta cuando hace la crítica del capitalismo, pero yerra cuando sueña con la dictadura del proletariado, porque él partió del equívoco que asimilaba las sociedades burguesas a una dictadura, lo cual no era cierto. Como respuesta, y para oponerse a esa supuesta dictadura burguesa, imaginó la dictadura del proletariado. También se equivocó al pensar que el trabajador era el único creador de riqueza. Si no existieran los empresarios y toda una cadena de profesionales a

diversos niveles, tampoco existiría producción de riqueza. En el manifiesto, Marx condena la herencia, cuando él mismo y su mujer vivieron siempre gracias a una herencia recibida. Todo fue pues un equívoco muy grande, y uno debe tener el coraje de admitirlo.

Ahora, los problemas no acaban allí, el fracaso del socialismo no convierte al capitalismo en un sistema mejor. No, para nada, el capitalismo sigue siendo un sistema del lucro máximo y si lo dejamos libre le chupa la carótida a su madre. Es imperativo que el Estado regule su funcionamiento, porque el capitalismo tiene la fuerza de la naturaleza, es la verdad, no surgió como invención de un teórico. Nació de la vida misma, de la historia humana, y tiene la vitalidad extraordinaria que solo existe en ella. Es injusto y vital, y puede destruir hoy lo que creó ayer. En eso es como la naturaleza, que crea millares de seres vivos y al día siguiente produce una inundación que los aniquila. Los destruye por completo y luego crea de nuevo.

^{AJ} Y lo que no hace la naturaleza debe hacerlo la sociedad, esto es, establecer parámetros, límites, reglas que no ahoguen la fuerza inventiva del individuo, su capacidad para producir riqueza y conocimiento. Y eso, no hay duda, quienes mejor lo han logrado son las sociedades democráticas.

^{FG} Con toda certeza, y es necesario entender que no existe ninguna sociedad perfecta. Debemos luchar continuamente por una sociedad mejor, a conciencia claro está, de que nunca alcanzaremos una sociedad ideal. La naturaleza es injusta. Ella crea personas talentosas, inteligentes, y crea personas limitadas, que no piensan. Crea seres desiguales y a partir de allí es imposible crear una sociedad absolutamente igualitaria.

^{AJ} E igual destruye a los peores como a los mejores.

^{FG} Así es, indiscriminadamente. No podemos guiarnos por eso. Debemos trabajar por conseguir una sociedad tan igualitaria como sea posible. Ahora, imaginar que algún día lograremos una sociedad perfecta, de iguales, como lo soñó Marx, es una utopía y, peor aún, es injusto, porque algo así no podría conseguirse sino nivelando por debajo, oprimiendo a la sociedad entera, que es parte de lo que viví en la Unión Soviética. Esto era quizás menos evidente en lo cotidiano, pero a nivel económico los resultados eran catastróficos. Aunque claro, el funcionamiento del sistema hacía que los ciudadanos solo recibieran información de los países del bloque comunista, de manera que nunca podía verse una película americana, francesa o inglesa. Eso, obviamente, para el ciudadano común, porque los dirigentes del partido sí tenían acceso al cine occidental y a muchos otros privilegios. El marido de Helena, mi amiga rusa, conseguía y podía ver las películas de Fellini y de otros cineastas europeos. Es decir, que desde la URSS comencé a observar disfuncionamientos que eran a mí entender muy graves, incluso inaceptables.

Lo que sucede es que no se puede prever teóricamente toda la actividad de un país, es imposible planificar la vida entera. Los teóricos marxistas piensan no obstante que basta con destruir la burguesía y acabar con ella para que inmediatamente se resuelvan los problemas humanos y no es cierto, para nada.⁶³ Una vez, incluso, lo discutimos con Mansilla, el profesor español. –¿Ustedes saben –nos preguntó–, cuántos siglos fueron necesarios y cuántas actividades deben cumplirse en paralelo para que en una ciudad como París, por ejemplo, todos los ciudadanos puedan tomarse un café con leche en la mañana, tener pan y *croissants*? Siglos –dijo–,

siglos fueron necesarios para crear una red de producción y distribución capaz de un prodigio como ese, ¿y ustedes creen que de la noche a la mañana podemos construir un sistema completamente nuevo para suplantarlo? Por supuesto que no – decía.

^{AJ} Resulta que la vida es muchísimo más amplia que cualquier teoría o conjunto de teorías. Lo real desborda nuestro concepto del mundo y cualquier intento por enmarcarlo dentro de una teoría termina produciendo dictaduras.

^{FG} Y por eso Stalin recurrió a la violencia para imponer su reforma agraria, porque él quería que los campesinos abandonaran sus tierras, esas donde habían trabajado su vida entera, ellos y sus antepasados, para construir aquellas cooperativas colectivas en las que nadie era dueño de su trabajo. El mismo Lenin lo escribió, dijo que el pequeño agricultor pensaba como el pequeño burgués. Esa tierra él no se la robó a nadie, la compró con su trabajo, y es evidente que no estaría dispuesto a entregárselas al Estado. Entonces Stalin decidió que las cosas se harían como él quería, y quien que no estuviera de acuerdo sencillamente sería eliminado. Con ello, lo único que consiguió fue destruir la agricultura de la Unión Soviética y veinte años de hambre y de miseria.⁶⁴

^{AJ} Lo terrible es que a partir de allí nace esa célebre diferencia entre la teoría marxista, considerada buena y justa en sus principios, y el llamado socialismo real, por naturaleza imperfecto, siempre conjugado en futuro. Y eso ha mantenido viva la esperanza de alcanzar algún día la sociedad perfecta prevista por Marx, a pesar de los reiterados fracasos.

^{FG} Sí, y ha sido así hasta hoy, pocos tienen el coraje de admitir lo que estamos discutiendo, que esos fracasos no son producto del azar, sino de una deficiencia real, de principio, en los postulados teóricos del marxismo. El socialismo, incluso si parte de ideas bienintencionadas, lo cual es cierto, porque lo inventaron para introducir la ética y la solidaridad dentro de un sistema salvaje como lo fue el capitalismo del siglo XIX, no produce los resultados previstos por la teoría. En fin, en la URSS aprendí mucho sobre el marxismo, tanto en el plano teórico como en su funcionamiento real.

El curso duraba un año. Yo conseguí quedarme dos y hubiera deseado permanecer más tiempo, aunque al final no hubo manera de extender mi residencia en la Unión Soviética y tuve que buscar una alternativa. Carlos Prestes estaba en Moscú y juntos evaluamos diversas posibilidades. Me hubiera gustado ir a la Argentina, porque me encantaba Buenos Aires, pero él sugirió que fuera para Chile, donde el gobierno de Salvador Allende me permitiría emprender un trabajo político y donde estaban además otros compañeros brasileños. Por lo demás, vivir en Chile no representaba un problema económico considerable. La inflación había alcanzado niveles tan enormes que el dinero local no valía nada. Con dos dólares se podía alquilar un apartamento de tres habitaciones, de modo que con muy poco podía vivir correctamente. Mi esposa me mandaba diez dólares por mes, y con eso podía vivir como rico. Estoy bromeando, por supuesto, aunque es cierto que diez dólares eran suficientes para cubrir mis gastos cotidianos, incluyendo la habitación, la comida y los libros.



Salvador Allende, 1970 Más

Salvador Allende, 1970

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Llegué a Chile en mayo de 1973, cinco meses antes del golpe. Como venía de afuera percibí una situación mucho peor de lo que pensaban los brasileños instalados en Santiago. Para ellos, la estabilidad del gobierno socialista estaba asegurada, pero yo observé contradicciones que a mi entender no podrían ser superadas. Hubo una huelga de transportes que paralizó al país entero. Imagínese, si con dos dólares podía alquilar un apartamento de tres habitaciones, con cinco dólares por persona ¡los Estados Unidos podían paralizar a todos los camioneros del país! Yo les dije: Compañeros, esto no

podrá mantenerse por mucho tiempo, ante un gobierno marxista no existe la institucionalidad de las Fuerzas Armadas, esto va a terminar mal. Pero ellos no querían aceptarlo. Cuando se dio el golpe casi me llevaron para el Estadio Nacional⁶⁵ y me salvé gracias a la suerte y a un carnet del Colegio de Periodistas de Chile. Cuando tuve que inscribirme en el colegio de periodistas, había dos, uno marxista y uno de derecha, y yo escogí el de derecha. Mis amigos me decían que estaba loco, y me preguntaban que por qué había escogido el de derecha. Yo estimaba que podría serme de utilidad en caso de que hubiera problemas graves y así fue. Después del golpe, los militares llegaron a mi apartamento y me libré de ellos porque no encontraron mi pasaporte falso, que estaba en el bolsillo de mi chaqueta, y porque estaba inscrito en el colegio de periodistas de derecha. Recuerdo bien que uno de los militares me dijo:

—¡Este documento es falso!

—¿Falso? —le dije—, si cree que es falso, llame para allá y verá. Entonces llamaron y confirmaron que estaba en lo cierto, que efectivamente era miembro de ese colegio de periodistas. Eso me salvó. Al final el militar me dijo:

—¡Eres experto, eh!

Nadie me conocía en Chile, ni sabía que yo estaba ahí como exilado político, lo que pasa es que el apartamento donde estaba había pertenecido a un dirigente chileno de izquierda, y por eso habían llegado hasta mí. Más tarde volvieron, les mostré mis documentos y les dije que ya habían venido. Durante esa segunda visita aproveché para decirles que estaba en Chile como periodista, pero que ya no tenía la libertad necesaria para trabajar en el país y que quería irme. “Está bien, me dijeron, le vamos a dar un salvoconducto. Vaya a extranjería, que nosotros vamos a dejar su nombre allí para que se lo den”. Eso hice, con la buena suerte de

que me acordaron el salvoconducto y me fui al Perú. Yo quería ir para Argentina, mi esposa y mis hijos al Perú, y como ya les había causado suficientes problemas con mis decisiones políticas, nos encontramos en Lima. Lo único es que la ciudad ofrecía escasas posibilidades de trabajo y pronto me di cuenta de que no encontraría los medios para mantener a mi familia. Perón estaba todavía vivo y algunos amigos de izquierda me ofrecieron un puesto de profesor visitante en la Universidad de Buenos Aires. Da la casualidad de que llegué a Argentina el mismo día de su muerte, el 1 de julio de 1974. Isabelita asumió el poder y de inmediato comenzaron los rumores de golpe. Los montoneros⁶⁶ tomaron el camino de la insurrección armada y Argentina entró en una crisis que acabó en una dictadura militar. Mi esposa tuvo que regresar a Río, porque era funcionaria del Estado y temía perder su puesto, por lo cual me encontré de nuevo, solo, en medio de una dictadura militar.

En 1956, durante el XX Congreso de Partido, Nikita Krushev leyó un discurso explosivo en el que denunciaba las prácticas y políticas del estalinismo, sus crímenes y sus catastróficos errores económicos. Su discurso dio inicio a la desestalinización en la Unión Soviética y dividió en dos al movimiento comunista internacional.

Antônio Houaiss (1915–99). Filólogo, escritor, diplomático y político brasileño de origen libanés, dirigió la elaboración de dos importantes enciclopedias: *Delta Larousse* y *Mirador internacional*.

Incluso fuera del país, Ferreira Gullar siguió colaborando con *O Pasquim*, *Opinião* y otros periódicos bajo el seudónimo de Federico Marques.

A este respecto es crucial recordar la observación hecha por André Bretón cuando describe la violenta reacción de Trotsky, en 1938, al escuchar la conversación que sostenía con Diego Rivera en su casa de México. Bretón recuerda como Trotsky: “Explotó de rabia una noche en

la que nosotros pensábamos en voz alta delante de él, que una vez instaurada la sociedad sin clases, nuevas causas de conflictos sangrientos; es decir causas no económicas, no dejarían de surgir”. En André Breton, *Entretiens* (París: Ed. Gallimard, 1969), 189. Traducción de Ariel Jiménez.

Entre 1931 y 1933 murieron de hambre entre 1,1 y 1,4 millones de habitantes en Siberia occidental. Entre el otoño de 1932 y el verano de 1933, más de 4 millones de personas perdieron sus vidas en las hambrunas de Ucrania, producto de las medidas económicas impuestas por Stalin. La verdad sobre estas catástrofes fue escondida por el régimen hasta la *Perestroika* de Mijaíl Gorbachov.

En 1973, tras el golpe de estado contra Salvador Allende, los locales del Estadio Nacional fueron utilizados por la dictadura como centro de detención y tortura. Por él pasaron cerca de cuarenta mil prisioneros políticos, muchos de los cuales fueron fusilados o “desaparecidos” por el régimen.

Los Montoneros fue una organización guerrillera argentina que tomó el camino de la insurrección armada entre 1970 y 1979. Sus fuentes ideológicas iban desde el marxismo ortodoxo hasta un nacionalismo católico. Apoyó y tuvo el apoyo de Juan Domingo Perón desde sus inicios y hasta 1974. El término de montoneros proviene de las montoneras, agrupaciones armadas, civiles y espontáneas, que surgieron en América Latina durante las luchas de independencia. Eran grupos desorganizados que atacaban “en montón” y se escondían en los montes, lo que dio origen al término.

RESCATAR LO VIVIDO

“Poema sujo”, un divisor de aguas

^{AJ} En medio de esa dictadura surge sin embargo uno de sus poemas más conocidos, el “Poema sujo”. Se trata de una pieza clave en su producción literaria. Es, en primer lugar, un poema donde busca alcanzar ese nivel literario del que carecían, voluntariamente, sus *Romances de cordel*, y donde persigue incluso la autonomía que no alcanzan todavía, a pesar de tener una evidente calidad, los poemas reunidos en el libro titulado *Dentro da noite veloz*, 1962–1975. Es, además, una especie de lectura personal de su vida y de su obra que podría servir de guía para una interpretación general de su poesía.

El poema tiene una primera etapa –que es la mayor– exclusivamente dedicada a su infancia y primera juventud en São Luís, y una segunda, marcada esencialmente por su encuentro, en Río de Janeiro, con ese cuerpo multiforme y pluritemporal de la urbe. En ambas se siente una profunda introspección, como si en cada párrafo usted intentara atrapar lo esencial de su experiencia vital. De allí que, en mi opinión, “Poema sujo” podría ofrecernos una primera guía esquemática para el estudio de su desarrollo poético, y ese esquema tendría como eje la noción de cuerpo.

La estructura que podríamos deducir de esta lectura, comenzaría por un primer momento donde su poesía, en particular la que recoge en el poemario titulado *A luta corporal*, pondría en juego ese conflicto entre su experiencia sensorial y los límites del lenguaje para expresarla, o para expresar lo que ese contacto pre-verbal con el mundo produjo en usted. Pero es una lucha centrada

en ese cuerpo que siente y hace. Es, además, como usted mismo lo dice, una confrontación que termina –con “Roçzeiral”– en una especie de catástrofe verbal, por un fracaso del lenguaje que estalla ante la imposibilidad de vencer la opacidad de las cosas.

Luego vendría una segunda fase con “O vil metal” [El vil metal], donde parece recomenzar el conflicto, y lo agudiza, en un intento por crear un cuerpo verbal que vendría a oponerse a la opacidad de las cosas. Es por eso mismo una lucha que termina esta vez con un verdadero cuerpo, ya no exclusivamente verbal (los libros-poema y especialmente los poemas-objeto), donde ese nuevo organismo, medio verbal medio escultórico, le opone al mundo su propia opacidad de objeto cultural. Allí, es cierto, la práctica poética llega en su caso a un extremo que usted vive como un *impasse* definitivo. Ese conflicto lo resuelve entablando otra lucha, esta vez política, contra ese cuerpo social materializado en la miseria del pueblo, el poder económico y militar. Se trata, en definitiva, de una pugna contra esa otra opacidad de lo político. Si es quizás un tanto abusivo asimilar lo social y político a un cuerpo, no deja de ser estimulante el hecho de que su poesía pueda ser comprendida a partir de ese combate cuerpo a cuerpo entre la realidad del lenguaje y la opacidad del mundo, en este caso ante la opacidad de lo político.

Por último, me parece posible detectar una tercera etapa, una donde esa contienda del lenguaje ante lo real se desplazaría paulatinamente hacia su cuerpo, es decir, hacia la opacidad creciente de nuestro organismo en su inevitable proceso de envejecimiento. Es algo que se deja ya sentir en *Na vertigem do dia* [En el vértigo del día], 1975–80, y se manifiesta con mayor claridad en *Barulhos* [Barullos], 1980–87, y más particularmente en *Muitas vozes* [Muchas voces], de 1999. En todas esas etapas el cuerpo sería,

en su combate cuerpo a cuerpo con el mundo, el eje central o uno de los ejes centrales de su poética.

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~~Gullar de Buenos Aires~~
(Buenos Aires, 1976)

Ferreira Gullar, Buenos Aires, 1976

^{FG} Es en gran medida certero lo que dice, es una lectura pertinente. Puede no ser la única, pero es una lectura que ciertamente tiene que ver con mi trabajo. Aunque también, cuando escribí *A luta corporal*, buscaba que el poema y el lenguaje nacieran juntos. En esa búsqueda terminé creando un lenguaje desintegrado que nació junto al poema, como quería, solo que se trataba de uno que me era exclusivo, que nadie más entendía.

^{AJ} Es lo que me lleva a pensar que su poesía, en esa lucha, termina oponiéndole a lo que existe su propia opacidad de objeto verbal.

^{FG} Exactamente. Y es cierto que la experiencia de la poesía concreta y neoconcreta surge de esa problemática. Es como si yo, por azar, por las casualidades de la historia (como el haberme encontrado con los concretos paulistas y haber inventado con ellos una nueva poesía), hubiera hallado una posibilidad para resolver ese enigma. ¿Qué es en realidad la poesía concreta? Incluso, acostumbro bromear diciendo que no debería llamarse concreta, sino abstracta, porque lo concreto, como dice Hegel, es “la suma de las determinaciones”. El gato no es concreto, es abstracto. Lo único concreto es este gato que está aquí en la sala. Es el discurso lo que hace concreto al poema, y por eso la poesía concreta es abstracta. Ella vence la opacidad, para usar su expresión, para acabar con el discurso, y termina ella misma por hacerse opaca.

^{AJ} Es lo que intento decir, que esa poesía que llamamos concreta y neoconcreta termina construyendo una opacidad humana. Y que esa radical diferencia entre la obra y el mundo ante el cual se erige

es una característica moderna. Lo moderno es precisamente esa toma de conciencia de que el arte (y el conocimiento humano en general) no puede ser una copia o una especie de huella de lo real, sino una realidad aparte, artificial, estrictamente humana. Y si alguna de las características de lo moderno sigue aún viva es justamente esa.

^{FG} Es verdad, es así. Y viendo que ese camino no me llevaría a donde quería, di por terminada aquella experiencia, no tuve interés en continuarla y me encontré de nuevo en crisis. Mi mudanza para Brasilia abre entonces una nueva perspectiva para mí, esta vez política, donde la problemática verbal, poética, pasa a un segundo plano. Ya no es ese el problema fundamental, sino la sociedad y en específico la transformación de la sociedad en la que vivíamos. Después de los *romances de cordel* escribo poemas donde hay sin duda un mayor cuidado formal, que son los que recojo en el poemario titulado *Dentro da noite veloz*, pero el interés fundamental sigue siendo político. Es con “Poema sujo”, de 1975, que todo cambia. La política no es ahora lo preponderante, sino una indagación de la propia existencia. Ese poema, en el fondo, es un rescate de lo vivido. Porque hay que partir de un principio esencial, que el mundo en que vivimos es inventado. No creo que el arte revele la realidad, al contrario, la inventa, porque la realidad es intraducible.

^{AJ} Se basa en lo real, y a partir de allí inventa una realidad aparte, un mundo paralelo.

^{FG} No, no es un mundo paralelo, inventa la realidad. No me refiero, obviamente, a que invente este árbol, sino que inventa la realidad

donde estamos inmersos: la realidad de la cultura, de la poesía, de la pintura, de la ciencia. Somos los creadores del ámbito cultural donde moramos. No vivimos en la naturaleza: ahí viven el caimán, el mono y la onza.

^{AJ} Y nuestro propio cuerpo. . .

^{FG} Sí, es cierto, nosotros también somos naturaleza, pero no habitamos en ella, vivimos en la ciudad, que es algo completamente artificial. Es tecnología, invención pura. Esa lámpara solo existe aquí, ¿cuánto de la pericia humana, de conocimiento, hace posible que esté allí, encendida?

^{AJ} Lo humano, sin duda, lo estrictamente humano, es lo artificial. Volvamos ahora, si le parece, al análisis de “Poema sujo”. En él se dibuja efectivamente un proceso de introspección que se aleja considerablemente de las preocupaciones políticas. Ellas siguen formando parte de su universo intelectual y social, aunque ya no interceden en su actividad como poeta. Es como si quisiera reanudar con sus preocupaciones más íntimas y por ello se retrotrae hasta la infancia, hasta ese contacto pre-verbal con el mundo.

^{FG} Y por eso el “Poema sujo” es un divisor de aguas, porque en él la problemática política, que sigue presente, ha pasado a ser secundaria.

^{AJ} Es realmente volver a un contacto íntimo con el cuerpo, tanto que comienza con la experiencia sensorial del niño ante el mundo.

^{FG} El poema comienza con un ruido, porque, en verdad, cuando soñé hacerlo, echado en la cama la noche anterior, me imaginaba vomitando mi pasado, creando un magma sin sentido a partir del cual construiría el poema. Primero vomitaría un universo de palabras sin orden ninguno, y poco a poco iría extrayendo el poema de ese magma original. Esa fue la idea inicial. Luego, cuando me decidí a escribir, me di cuenta de que ese vómito no era posible. No puedo vomitar el poema y me dije: ¿Cómo voy a escribir sin sentido? Eso me frustró un poco al principio. Igual me dije que lo escribiría de cualquier manera, y me senté a escribirlo. Es por eso que el poema comienza como una especie de ruido sin sentido. Son frases que no poseen en sí mismas un sentido preciso, no significan nada concreto.

^{AJ} Yo lo había interpretado justamente como una tentativa por expresar lo otro, lo absolutamente opaco. Como si usted se hubiera imaginado ante un universo de materia sin sentido, antes del acto creador, antes de la palabra, del verbo.

^{FG} En otros términos, ese inicio es como una experiencia anterior al habla:

*turbio turbio
la turbia
mano del soplo
contra el muro
oscuro
menos menos
menos que oscuro
menos que blando y duro menos que foso y muro: menos*

que agujero
oscuro
más que oscuro:
claro
¿cómo agua? ¿cómo pluma? claro más que claro claro: cosa
ninguna
y todo
(o casi)
un bicho que el universo fabrica y viene soñando desde las
entrañas
azul
era el gato
azul
era el gallo
azul
el caballo
azul
tu culo⁶⁷

Lo titulé “Poema sujo” porque es, primero, estilísticamente sucio. No tenía compromiso con lo que había hecho, ni con ninguna norma literaria. Segundo porque es obsceno. No tiene ningún compromiso con la moralidad que podría supuestamente regir a la poesía. Tercero porque habla de la miseria brasileña.

Y después de todo
¿qué importa un nombre?
Te cubro de flor, pequeña, y te doy todos los nombres del
mundo:
te llamo aurora

*te llamo agua
te descubro en las piedras de colores en las artistas del cine
en las apariciones del sueño
—Y esa mujer que tosía dentro de la casa!
Como si no fuera suficiente el poco dinero, la luz endeble,
el perfume ordinario, el amor escaso, las goteras en invierno.
Y las hormigas brotando por millones negras como un
manantial de
adentro de las paredes (como si aquello fuese la esencia de
la casa)
Y todos buscaban
en una sonrisa en un gesto
en las conversaciones de la esquina
en el coito de pie en la calzada oscura del Cuartel
en el adulterio
(o casi)
en el robo
descifrar el enigma

—¿Qué hago entre cosas?
—¿De qué me defiendo?
En un cesto del patio en la tierra negra crecían plantas y
rosas
(¿cómo puede el perfume
nacer así?)
Del fango, al borde de las calzadas, del agua de las cloacas
crecían tomateros⁶⁸*

Es un poema sucio por esas tres razones: por la miseria de mi pueblo, por la suciedad o la pseudo suciedad de la moralidad

burguesa y porque no obedece a ninguna norma estilística. Cualquier cosa vale, todo puede ser hecho. Ni concretismo ni neoconcretismo, yo puedo hacer lo que quiera. A partir de aquí, me decía, no tengo compromiso con nada de lo que fui o hice. . .

^{AJ} En verdad, no percibí esa evocación del sexo como sucio o inmoral, sino precisamente como un intento por expresar esa opacidad del cuerpo, de nuestro origen animal, claramente inscrito en ese proceso que lleva de lo informe y sin sentido al mundo de la palabra y del sentido.

^{FG} Sí, pero otros lo ven como algo inmoral y sucio, porque en esa evocación de mi infancia hablo también de las primeras experiencias sexuales con mis novias de São Luís, lo cual dejó una huella profunda en mi memoria y por eso reaparece constantemente en mi poesía. Es como empezar de la nada, de cero, pasando por las vivencias más fuertes y reveladoras de mi existencia. Es una constante en mi obra, siempre estoy recomenzando de cero.

^{AJ} Imagino que ese rescate de lo vivido tiene que ver con su regreso a Brasil, lo que no tardaría efectivamente en darse.

^{FG} No, el poema no tiene que ver con mi regreso. Fue escrito por otras razones. Mi poesía, en general, no responde a razones prácticas, ni yo mismo sé a menudo por qué comienzo a escribirlos. No planeo nada, nunca lo hice. Mi poesía es un hacer a partir de situaciones específicas, de lo que me acontece. Lo inicié sí, por necesidad, reflexionando sobre problemáticas que estaban dentro de mí, sobre todo cuando pensé que moriría. Lo escribí en Argentina, poco antes del golpe de estado y, además, no contaba con ningún documento

de viaje válido, porque mi pasaporte estaba vencido.⁶⁹ Con mi cédula solo podía viajar a Chile, a Bolivia, Uruguay o Paraguay, que eran dictaduras, y a Brasil por supuesto, pero no así a Europa o a los Estados Unidos. Era evidente que no tenía escapatoria. Con la amenaza del golpe, que ya se sentía, pensé que me matarían, que me desaparecerían como habían desaparecido otras personas sin dejar rastro alguno. Entonces escribo ese poema como si fuera la última cosa que pudiera hacer en mi vida. Voy a escribir lo que pueda, mientras tenga tiempo, pensé. Fue hecho así, porque quería escribir lo que me faltaba antes de ser eliminado. Es un poema escrito *in extremis*, como si estuviera redactando el último texto de mi existencia.

escuro ~~claro~~

mais que escuro:

claro

a? como pluma? claro mais que claro claro: coisa

e tudo

(ou quase):

o que o universo fabrica em vem sonhando desde q^{eu} ~~se~~

nas

azul

era o gato

azul

era o galo

azul

o cavalo

azul

Seu cu

engiva igual a tua bucinha que parecia sorrir entre as
as de banana entre os cheiros de flor e bosta de porco aberta
uma boca de corno (nao como a tua boca de palavras) ~~nao~~ como
entrada para

eu nao sabia tu

nao sabias

fazer girar a vida

com seu montão de estrélas e oceanos

entrando-nos em ti

bela bela

^{que}
mais bela

mas como era o nome dela?

Nao era Helena nem Vera

nem Nara nem Gabriela

nem Tereza nem Maria:

Seu nome? seu nome ~~nao era~~
perdeu-se na carne fria

perdeu-se na confusão de tanta noite e tanto dia

Manuscrito original de *Poema sujo* escrito en 1975 en manos de Ferreira Gullar, 2011. Fotografiado por Vicente de Mello

^{AJ} Y sin embargo, sus amigos utilizaron ese poema para garantizar en cierta forma su regreso a Brasil, en 1977.

^{FG} Sí, cuando el poema llegó a Brasil tuvo una repercusión de tal orden que mis compañeros, los intelectuales, e incluso personas que no me conocían, comenzaron a reclamarle al gobierno que me dejara regresar. Además, había publicado el poemario *Dentro da noite veloz*, y “Poema sujo” circulaba en grabaciones donde yo lo leía. Luego, dos periodistas amigos fueron a hablar con el jefe de la Casa militar, el general Golbery do Couto e Silva, que era el segundo al mando dentro de la dictadura, y le llevaron *Poema sujo*. Él conocía mi nombre, por la repercusión que había tenido en la prensa. Lo leyó y dijo: “Aunque para mí ese libro es muy obsceno, no me opongo al regreso de su autor. Si él quiere regresar está bien. Primero debo hablar con el general Figueiredo”. Fue a hablar con él, quien era Director del Servicio Nacional de Informaciones y le respondió: “¡No quiero a ese comunista aquí!” Su respuesta me indignó tanto que me dije: Pues voy a volver, él no es dueño de Brasil y no tiene autoridad para decir algo así.

Está claro, también, que quería regresar, que ya no me alcanzaba el aliento para mantenerme en el exilio, a la vez que sufría el problema de mis hijos que estaban desamparados aquí con mi mujer, y ella estaba enfrentando dificultades terribles. Era hora de volver. De inmediato me puse a preparar mi retorno. Le avisé al Comandante del Segundo Ejército, basado en Río, al Presidente de la Asociación Brasileña de la Imprenta, a la Orden de los Abogados de Brasil y al Ministro de Justicia, diciéndoles que regresaría. Lo

que no quería era ingresar clandestinamente para que me desaparecieran. Fue una manera de protegerme. No obstante, cuando bajé del avión, había un papel en la pared del aeropuerto donde estaba escrito: “¡Ferreira Gullar, detenerlo!” No se atrevieron a detenerme a mi llegada, porque gran parte de la intelectualidad estaba esperándome, pero al día siguiente lo hicieron. Me llevaron al DOI-CODI⁷⁰ a la cámara de tortura. Felizmente no me torturaron, aunque sí me mantuvieron sin dormir, ni comer, ni beber, interrogándome constantemente durante setenta y dos horas. No pudieron hacer más, puesto que muchos sabían que estaba allí. Al día siguiente salió una nota en *Le Monde* indicando que me habían apresado. Salió otra nota en *La Nación*, y se vieron obligados a soltarme y a evitar cualquier signo físico de tortura. Al fin y al cabo, la notoriedad pública de ese poema que escribí como si fuera el último, terminó salvándome.

^{AJ} Tras su retorno a Río, y tan pronto como se vio liberado de esta pesadilla, regresó a su trabajo como crítico de arte y periodista. También, por supuesto, continuó su poesía.

^{FG} Sí, regresé a la crítica y luego comencé a trabajar en TV Globo. Ahí me desempeñé como guionista de telenovelas y de otros programas especiales. Fui invitado por Dias Gomes, un amigo mío que escribía para ellos. Era el principal teledramaturgo de TV Globo, y me pidió que lo acompañara en su equipo de redacción. A mí, para ser sincero, no me gustaba ese tipo de trabajo, pero junto a él, que hacía novelas en verdad especiales y muy creativas, se me hizo posible hacerlo.

^{AJ} Las novelas brasileñas son conocidas por tener un nivel considerablemente superior a otras telenovelas latinoamericanas.

^{FG} Las telenovelas, en general, son un verdadero absurdo dramaturgico. Toda película y toda pieza de teatro dura entre una hora y media y dos horas. No existe una película o pieza de teatro con 180 capítulos, es imposible. Las telenovelas tienen una multitud de episodios, y por eso no avanzan, y tienen trescientas historias paralelas que evolucionan desconectadas entre sí y de la trama principal. Son mecanismos pensados para alargar la historia. Era indudable que me horrorizaba escribir esas cosas, pero debía ganarme la vida, y con Dias hacíamos propuestas interesantes. Además, fuera de las telenovelas existían las miniseries con una longitud limitada. En ese caso se trataba de escribir diez episodios, lo que nos permitía pensar un principio, un centro y un desenlace. De todos modos, de ahí surgieron producciones de una calidad muy superior a las telenovelas habituales. Nosotros escribimos una de las mejores miniseries producidas en Brasil: *As noivas de Copacabana* [Las novias de Copacabana]. Después regresé al *Jornal do Estado de São Paulo*, donde había trabajado antes.

^{AJ} Entre la multitud de actividades que hizo para ganarse la vida, se encuentra la traducción de algunos textos clásicos de la literatura occidental como *Don Quijote*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Las mil y una noches* y las *Fábulas* de Jean de La Fontaine.

^{FG} No lo hice como un trabajo regular; es decir, no soy traductor, no soy de esas personas que viven fascinados por los problemas que le plantea la traducción de un libro mayor y que hacen de esa actividad una parte importante de su trabajo intelectual. El único

libro que traduje por mi cuenta fue *Ubu Roi*, de Alfred Jarry, y lo hice porque quedé tan fascinado con la locura de ese texto que resolví traducirlo. Las otras traducciones fueron encargos de amigos cercanos. *Cyrano de Bergerac* lo traduje en 1985 para Flávio Rangel,⁷¹ un buen amigo, y para el actor Fagundes.⁷² Ellos quisieron montar la pieza aquí en Brasil y me pidieron que se lo tradujera. Cuando comencé a traducirlo me interesó mucho y traté de buscar la mejor estrategia para hacerlo. Pronto me di cuenta de que no lo lograría en alejandrinos, los versos de doce sílabas que había empleado Edmond Rostand, porque se haría prácticamente inviable. Con ese tipo de versos, poco adaptados al portugués, hubiera sido imposible restituir la fluidez de los diálogos, por lo que decidí adoptar el decasílabo, que es un verso mucho más apropiado para el portugués. El segundo criterio que adopté fue el de no obedecer al rigor de las rimas, tal y como se daban en el original, rimando siempre al final del verso. Lo hice así porque pensé que el espectador, al escucharlos, no podría determinar dónde estaba la rima. En una pieza de teatro como ésta, el verso comienza a veces en la intervención de un actor y termina en la frase pronunciada por otro, de manera que el espectador no puede ubicar la posición de la rima. Decidí rimar donde me pareciera más apropiado para no perjudicar la fluidez de los diálogos.

Cuando un autor está escribiendo una pieza como la de *Cyrano*, él es árbitro de lo que va a suceder. Coloca aquí la rima que permite su lengua, o que acaso en ese momento se le posibilita, o la que le viene a la mente. El texto responde a una dialéctica de azar y de necesidad que nace en el mismo instante de la escritura. Nada es fatal, ni responde a una ley, y sencillamente podría haber sido de otro modo. El autor lidia con su idioma, con sus posibilidades y límites, a la vez que se enfrenta a factores casuales que surgen

mientras escribe. Cuando yo, en cambio, intento traducirlo, me enfrento a una doble dificultad. Tengo que vérmelas con los problemas de mi idioma, como él con el suyo, y con las circunstancias casuales que rigen el trabajo del escritor, pero a la vez tengo que imitarlo a él. Lo que sucede generalmente en estos casos es que a menudo se hace impracticable respetar a la vez la rima y el sentido del verso, porque es imposible que dos idiomas coincidan en sus posibilidades. La versión de *Cyrano* hecha en Brasil hacia 1906 es insoportable, precisamente porque el traductor se impuso como una camisa de fuerza respetar al original. Aquello no tiene la más mínima espontaneidad, es forzado y rígido.

Entonces me propuse hacer algo distinto, dándome una mayor libertad métrica, buscando que la prioridad estuviera en la fluidez y en la frescura de los versos y no en la coincidencia perfecta con el original. El resultado fue tan satisfactorio en ese sentido que la pieza ganó el Premio Molière en la modalidad de traducción, un premio creado en esa ocasión, porque solo se le entregaba a directores de teatro, actores y guionistas. Y se creó ese reconocimiento porque todos quedaron muy contentos con el resultado. El embajador francés y los actores estuvieron maravillados, y es que mi traducción les permitió redescubrir el texto de Rostand sin esa camisa de fuerza de la traducción anterior. Por mi parte, me tomé la mayor libertad posible, tanto que en algunos casos inventé versos diferentes. Hay un pasaje, por ejemplo, en el que Cyrano habla debajo de un balcón, y allí tuve que inventar versos nuevos, porque los originales sonaban completamente falsos en portugués. Hay palabras, frases, que sencillamente no pueden ser traducidas literalmente, sino en su espíritu, y eso exige una amplia libertad de parte del traductor.

^{AJ} Y supongo que *Don Quijote*, por el simple hecho de ser un texto más antiguo, le impuso problemas similares, incluso mayores.

^{FG} Con *Don Quijote* fue distinto, no me solicitaron exactamente una traducción, sino una adaptación del original para el público adolescente. Me lo pidió un amigo, el dueño de la editora Revan. En este caso, tras estudiar el original, hice una serie de observaciones que guiaron mi trabajo de traducción y adaptación. *El Quijote* se escribe como una especie de crítica a la literatura de la época, que es como si se hubiera hecho contra la novela de nuestros días. El héroe es un personaje sublime y la doncella, la más hermosa del mundo, lo enloquece de amor. Ella era una campesina que vivía cultivando la tierra, cosechando maíz y rayando coco. Al mismo tiempo que Cervantes hace ese trabajo de desmitificación de la literatura novelesca de su época, intercala en el relato segmentos de esa literatura, de modo que la primera tarea consistió en identificar los segmentos que no tenían nada que ver con las aventuras del Quijote y Sancho Panza para eliminarlos de mi versión. Esas historias no forman parte del *Quijote*, de su esencia al menos, que reside justamente en las aventuras de aquellos dos locos que son Don Quijote y Sancho Panza. La segunda decisión importante que tomé consistió en resumir los diálogos demasiado largos, páginas y páginas hablando de un solo tema, una característica común en la época. Consideré más importante mantener el espíritu y el contenido de los diálogos, sin aquellas largas tiradas que hoy dispersan la atención del adolescente.

La lengua del *Quijote* representó otro problema mayor, ya que ni siquiera en español podría entenderse fácilmente la versión de Cervantes, así que ser fiel al original era imposible. Ni los españoles lo publican hoy en la lengua originaria. Por eso me pareció que no

podía traducirlo al portugués del siglo XVII, porque pasaría lo mismo con nuestros lectores, de modo que opté por un lenguaje moderno, que cualquiera pudiera entender, con algunos toques y giros de la época. En ese proceso descubrí otra característica del *Quijote* que me ayudó a conservar el espíritu del texto original más allá de su forma. Es algo fundamental, y es que en el libro lo importante no son los episodios, los hechos, sino los diálogos. Lo que realmente cautiva al lector no es que él se quede preso en el molino, sino los diálogos que se producen durante ese episodio; lo que uno le dice al otro, los comentarios que hacen. Con esa estrategia conseguí una versión actual y resumida que no desanima a los lectores y en particular a los adolescentes. Si juzgo el resultado por los comentarios que recibí, puedo decir que algunos de mis amigos, incluso entre los adultos, me confesaron que gracias a mi versión les fue posible leer el *Quijote*, porque en el original nunca consiguieron hacerlo. Y es normal, se trata de un libro escrito para un público que disponía de mucho tiempo para leer aquellas historias, que se complacía en los detalles, todo esto sin contar con una cantidad de referencias a situaciones y hechos de la época que hoy nos obligarían a una investigación histórica que solo un especialista es capaz de hacer. Ningún lector normal haría lo necesario para entender de veras el *Quijote* en el castellano de su tiempo. Y, por supuesto, estaba consciente de que mi trabajo consistía en alcanzar una versión capaz de facilitar el acercamiento a una obra mayor, no a reemplazarla, lo que aclaré en el prefacio. La idea era que el lector motivado se acercara luego al texto integral. En fin, como le dije, se trataba de encargos y no de una necesidad intelectual que pueda ser considerada como parte de mi obra, no al menos de mis procesos personales más íntimos.

Ferreira Gullar, “Poema sujo”, en *Toda poesia*, 233–91.

Gullar, “Poema sujo” en *Toda poesia*, 236.

“Poema sujo” fue escrito en Buenos Aires entre mayo y octubre de 1975. El golpe de estado contra María Estela Martínez de Perón (viuda de Juan Perón), se produce el 24 de marzo de 1976.

DOI-CODI: Destacamento de Operações de Informações / Centro de Operações de Defesa Interna [Destacamento de Operaciones e Informaciones / Centro de Operaciones de Defensa Interna] fueron los organismos encargados de investigar, interrogar y torturar a los opositores políticos durante la dictadura militar brasileña.

Flávio Nogueira Rangel (1934–88). Escenógrafo, director de teatro y periodista brasileño. Fue el primer director brasileño del Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia.

Antonio da Silva Fagundes Filho (1949). Conocido actor de teatro y de televisión brasileño. Trabajó, entre otros medios, en la TV Tupi y en Rede Globo.

Un enlace a un vídeo de Ferreira Gullar leyendo un extracto de ‘Poema sujo’ se puede encontrar en la página de enlaces ubicada al final del libro

EL LECHO NATURAL DE LAS ARTES

Escribir después de las vanguardias

^{AJ} Concluidas las experiencias de vanguardia, desilusionado también ante el fracaso de las enormes esperanzas que despertó en su generación la utopía de una revolución a la cubana, su poesía se orienta paulatinamente en la dirección indicada por el “Poema sujo”, esa indagación poética de la existencia. En otras palabras, regresa a lo que usted ha llamado, sin definirlo, “el lecho natural de las artes”.

^{FG} Lo que quiero decir con ello es lo siguiente. El arte, en todas sus formas, es una gran invención humana, porque la vida no es suficiente. Ahora, sucede que las artes occidentales, en su desarrollo histórico, llegaron al realismo, y que en ese momento los más grandes artistas –esa es al menos mi interpretación– se sintieron limitados, porque el objetivo del arte no es copiar la realidad, sino inventarla. Algunos, incluso, como en el caso de Velázquez, intentaron violentar esos límites. *Las Meninas* no son la simple representación de la realidad, sino toda una mixtura de tiempos y espacios diferentes que trascienden la torpeza llana del realismo, creando una relación inusitada entre el espacio representado y el que nosotros, sus observadores, ocupamos.

Esa situación de incomodidad iría en mi opinión creciendo a través del Barroco y del Romanticismo, hasta llegar a un punto en el cual ese lenguaje representativo de la pintura comienza a desintegrarse con figuras como Cézanne. Él dice que sin la naturaleza no hay pintura, cierto, pero dice además que él transmuta el agua en vino, y la naturaleza en pintura. Luego, cuando el lenguaje de la pintura finalmente se desintegra en el Cubismo, se radicaliza un proceso de destrucción del objeto representado que concluye en el blanco sobre blanco de Malévich. La pintura representativa murió allí, al menos en su caso. Con ese proceso, las vanguardias realizaron (tanto en la pintura como en la poesía, en la narrativa, el teatro y la música) un importantísimo trabajo experimental que le aportó a las artes de nuestro tiempo un vuelo incontestable y nuevas herramientas expresivas, enriqueciéndolas enormemente. Al mismo tiempo, se llegó a exageraciones que muchas veces hicieron de esas expresiones algo incomprensible para el público no especializado. En todas las manifestaciones del arte se dieron situaciones de ese tipo, pero enseguida volvieron, enriquecidas por los experimentos de la vanguardia, a su lecho natural, salvo en las artes plásticas.

^{AJ} En la obra de algunos artistas al menos, no en todos.

^{FG} Si, claro, pero lo que predomina en los salones y en las bienales es ese tipo de arte, donde todo vale, y donde lo que menos se encuentra es la elaboración de un lenguaje. Por eso pienso que se trata de un fenómeno que requiere ser explicado. Para darle un ejemplo, consideremos el *Finnegans Wake* de Joyce, de 1939, un texto que llega a tal nivel de hermetismo que se hace prácticamente ilegible. Hay discusiones enormes entre los estudiosos para saber lo que Joyce quiso decir en este o aquel punto, incluso sobre el sentido que debe acordársele a determinada palabra. Entiéndame bien, por favor, no es que considere ese proceso como negativo; por el contrario, sus experiencias fueron tremendamente importantes y enriquecieron nuestras posibilidades expresivas, solo que si ese tipo de literatura hubiera predominado hasta hoy, no habríamos tenido a un Jorge Luis Borges, no existirían Hemingway, ni João Guimarães Rosa, ni Gabriel García Márquez. En cambio, en las artes plásticas, lo que ha predominado y sigue prevaleciendo no es ni siquiera arte, porque no es el resultado de ese complejo proceso por medio del

cual se construye un lenguaje. La mayoría de esos supuestos artistas recurren a una nueva forma de realismo, el más crudo que pueda existir, que consiste casi exclusivamente en presentar lo real. Hace poco supe de una exposición organizada en el Museum of Modern Art de Nueva York, una donde el trabajo del artista consistía en presentar una serie de parejas desnudas en las salas del museo con el objetivo de constreñir al público. ¿Hay allí alguna elaboración conceptual de las sensaciones que nos vienen del mundo? No, para nada, lo único que se hace en ese tipo de actividades es presentar lo real, sin sentido ni grandeza ninguna. Otro artista, aquí en Brasil, concibe un complejo escenario de vidrios y luces para presentar un microscopio donde el público puede ver unas larvas de mosca. Es una nueva especie de realismo, torpe y superficial, como el peor de los realismos.

^{AJ} Lo interesante sería discutir cómo, de hecho, enfrentó usted este regreso al lecho natural de las artes en su propia poesía.

^{FG} Yo también, como muchos artistas de vanguardia, fui hasta el límite de esas experiencias. La última de las ellas fue el “Poema enterrado”. Y las hice con placer, muy sinceramente, como creo que lo hicieron todos, solo que me daba cuenta de sus limitaciones, y de que aquello era demasiado poco para lo que quería hacer, para lo que necesitaba decir, y para lo que a mi entender debe hacer y decir el arte. No podía continuar haciendo poemas de una sola palabra, era imposible, por ese camino no podía continuar. Se produjeron muchas obras interesantes en ese entonces, y antes. Sin embargo, hasta vanguardistas tan radicales como Lygia Clark concluyeron diciendo: “Nosotros llegamos a una situación singular de arte sin arte” . . . Y de arte sin artista además, agregaría yo, porque se pensaba que cualquiera podría realizarlas y así tendría la posibilidad de ser un creador, ¿y por qué?, ¿porque era capaz de recortar una banda de Moebius con una tijera en pocos minutos? No, por favor, el arte es una elaboración conceptual y práctica muy especial, y muy personal, que no puede reducirse a un ejercicio puntual.

^{AJ} Durante los años sesenta, sin duda –y muchos siguen ingenuamente creyéndolo– se pensó que solo las barreras impuestas por la educación nos impedían ser creadores, cuando todos teníamos la capacidad innata para serlo. Y la verdad es que si todos podemos y debemos desarrollar al máximo nuestras capacidades creativas, y la educación debería proveernos de las herramientas y las oportunidades para hacerlo, no todos tenemos las mismas capacidades, no todos podremos ser verdaderos creadores, incluso si lo intentamos con absoluta entrega. En el caso de Lygia, no obstante, esa acción que denominó *Caminhando* [Caminando], sí era efectivamente el resultado sofisticado de una elaboración técnica y conceptual que provenía de su pintura, y que para ella no se reducía a un simple ejercicio sensorial. El problema proviene de la experiencia que se le propone al espectador, y en la que a menudo éste participa ignorante de los procesos que llevaron al artista hasta ese punto, y sin haber seguido un proceso previo de reflexión, de interiorización capaz de informar esa actividad. Allí sí, estoy de acuerdo, ese tipo de experiencias puntuales suelen reducirse, para el espectador participante, a un ejercicio sin densidad conceptual, o a una experiencia en extremo limitada. En todo caso, lo que me interesa discutir aquí es la manera cómo usted logró trascender ese *impasse* al que creía haber llegado. Y eso lo consigue comprometiéndose políticamente, subordinando el arte a la necesidad de una transformación política de la sociedad.

^{FG} Sí, en una primera fase, porque, como ya lo hemos hablado, luego me doy cuenta del carácter utópico de nuestra espera, y del resultado catastrófico al cual nos llevaban los regímenes marxistas, ya que en realidad era ingenuo pensar que terminando con la burguesía se acababa con todos los problemas de la humanidad. Y por eso usted ve que los partidos marxistas coinciden en un punto, y es que no tienen

verdaderos proyectos. Lo único que persiguen, su propuesta exclusiva, es destruir lo que existe, convencidos de que basta echar por tierra el poder de la burguesía para que todo quede resuelto.

^{AJ} Quisiera discutir ahora cómo asume usted su poesía tras alejarse de las vanguardias, por muy interesantes que hayan sido sus prácticas, y luego de abandonar la utopía revolucionaria.

^{FG} Pues me encuentro de nuevo ante un muro sin respuestas. Es una situación que describo en un poema de los años noventa, y que a mi entender podría responder a su pregunta. Su título, justamente, es “Pregunta e resposta” [Pregunta y respuesta]:

*Si es un hecho que
toda la masa del sistema
solar (sumando a Saturno y Marte
y La tierra y Venus y Urano y Mercurio
y Plutón, más
los asteroides, más) equivale
apenas al 2% de la masa
total del sol y
que el sol no es más
que un mínimo punto
de luz en la deslumbrante tesitura de
gas y polvo de la Vía
Láctea y que la Vía
Láctea es apenas una
entre billones de galaxias
que a la velocidad de 300 mil km por segundo
vuelan y explotan
en la noche
entonces pregunto:
¿qué hace allí
mi poema con su
inaudible ruido?*

*Y respondo:
Inaudible
para quien esté
en la galaxia NGC 5128
o en la constelación
de Virgo o incluso
en Gamínedes
donde felizmente no estás,
Cláudia Ahimsa,⁷³
poeta y musa del planeta tierra.⁷⁴*



Ferreira Gullar leyendo su poema “Pergunta e resposta,” Rio de Janeiro, 2012

^{AJ} Este mundo es nada, quizás, ante el universo, y a pesar de su insignificancia en términos cósmicos, lo es todo para nosotros. Hay allí un acento que recuerda a Pascal.⁷⁵

^{FG} Sí, e incluso en este mundo nuestro, minúsculo, lo único que me importa es ella, mi compañera, junto a mi casa, mi gato, mis amigos, mi universo íntimo, aquí y ahora, en este pequeño apartamento de Copacabana. Además, por supuesto, del mundo actual. Las galaxias están demasiado lejos.

^{AJ} Es en poemarios como *Barulhos y Muitas vozes* donde se deja sentir con fuerza esta creciente interiorización, la voluntad clara de pensar su presente más cercano e íntimo.

^{FG} Sí, después del *Poema sujo*, que marca el inicio de este proceso, escribo *Na vertigem do dia*, que aborda muchos de los temas de *Poema sujo*, en un tono diferente. Acostumbro decir que *Poema sujo* es algo así como una construcción sinfónica, mientras *Na vertigem do dia* es como una música de cámara. Es un poemario más íntimo. Ese carácter intimista sigue acentuándose con *Barulhos*, donde me concentro en asuntos interiores. Son problemas más existenciales que propiamente estilísticos. Siempre existe en mi poesía una inquietud por la forma, cierto, pero la preocupación mayor es esa indagación de la existencia que voy desarrollando en mis poemas.

^{AJ} Y es una característica que se acentúa en *Muitas vozes*. . .

^{FG} No me atrevería a decirlo así. *Muitas vozes* es ya un poemario diferente, y cambia porque mi mente cambió.

En *Barulhos* abordo temas de todos los días, de la vida cotidiana. Uno trata de una joven con su tanga en la playa, otro es un ejercicio de relax. “Poema poroso” es incluso un canto a la tierra, a esa

donde un día yacerá mi cuerpo muerto. Otras veces son indagaciones sobre mí mismo, al interior de mi cuerpo:

*¿Quién soy yo dentro de mi boca?
¿Quién soy yo en mis dientes
detrás de los dientes
en la lengua que se mueve
presa al fondo de la garganta? ¿qué nombre tengo
en la oscuridad del esófago?⁷⁶*

^{AJ} Por eso le decía que si en *A luta corporal*, el eje mayor de su poesía era la opacidad del mundo, de los otros cuerpos, en estos poemarios más recientes ese eje se desplaza hacia su propio cuerpo.

^{FG} Es verdad, aunque no se limita exclusivamente a mi cuerpo. Ahí está también ese poema sobre la muerte de Mário Pedrosa, e incluso otros donde persisten mis preocupaciones políticas, como el poema titulado “Nós, Latino-americanos” [Nosotros, latino-americanos], y “Meu povo, meu abismo” [Mi pueblo, mi abismo], o sea que se trata de un poemario donde aparte de esa indagación sobre mi cuerpo, que es central, se abordan temas muy diversos.

^{AJ} Esa opacidad de su cuerpo sería al menos uno de los ejes mayores de su poesía.

^{FG} Es, en todo caso, un libro que nace de las circunstancias cotidianas, circunstancias de las que forma parte mi cuerpo. Por ejemplo, el poema titulado “Nasce o poema” [Nace el poema] es una reflexión sobre la poesía, y surge de la conversación con una persona que me estaba preguntando cómo hacía para escribir mis poemas. Comencé a explicarle cómo lo hacía, y a medida que le explicaba me di cuenta de que estaba escribiendo un poema. Entonces le pedí disculpas, detuve la conversación y regresé a mi casa para escribirlo.

*hay quien piensa
que sabe
cómo debe ser el poema
yo
mal sé
cómo me gustaría
que fuera
porque yo cambio
el mundo cambia
y la poesía irrumpe
donde menos se espera
a veces
oliendo a flor
a veces
desatada en el olor
de la fruta podrida
que en lo podrido se abisma*

*(cuanto más se acerca a la noche
más grita
el aroma)
a veces
en un moler
de silencio
en una pequeña mercería de Estácio
por la tarde⁷⁷*



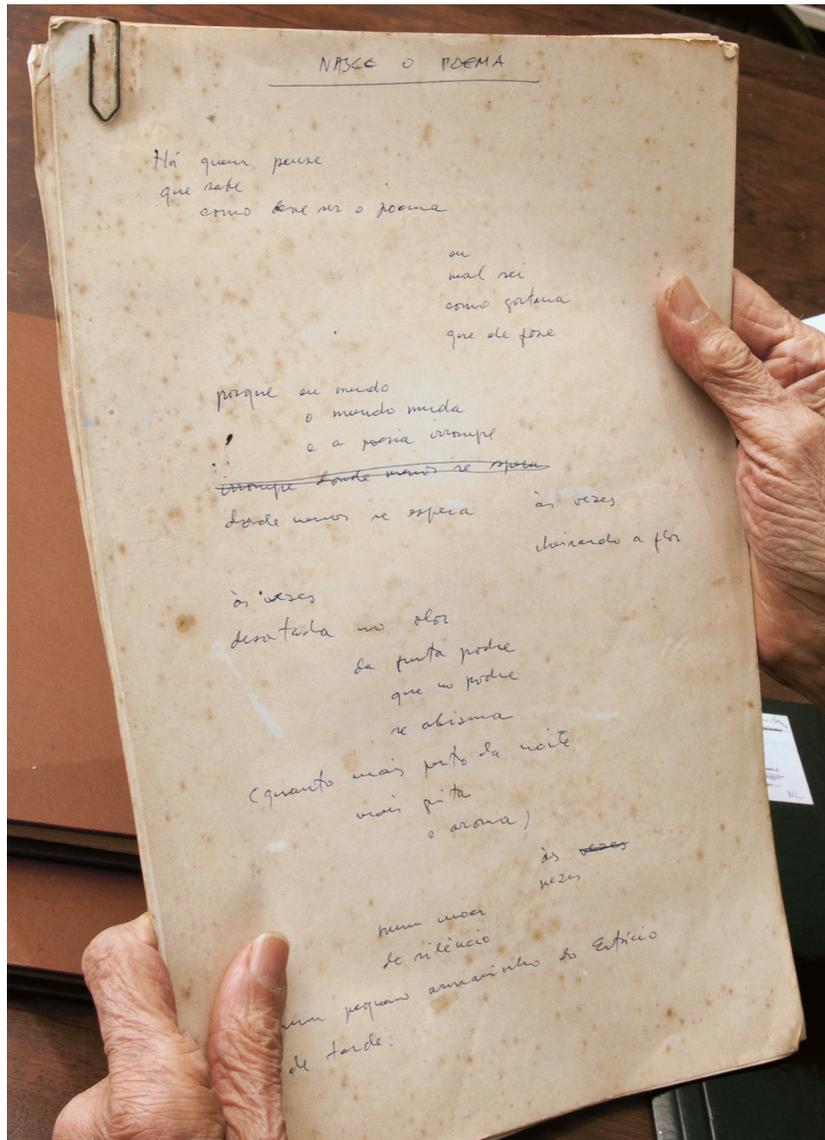
Ferreira Gullar leyendo un extracto de su poema "Nasce o poema," Rio de Janeiro, 2012

Todo eso recordando un día de 1955 en el barrio Estácio, de Río de Janeiro, donde trabajaba. Era un día caluroso, de mucho sol, Amílcar de Castro y yo salimos para tomar el autobús y regresar a casa. Había tanto calor que entré en una tienda, un pequeño comercio que vendía vajillas y objetos de loza. Cuando entré, no solo encontré la sombra que buscaba, sino el silencio, y entonces observé aquellas tazas cubiertas de polvo, en la sombra de ese local. Ahí comenzó a surgir el poema, que no pudo por supuesto nacer en ese instante porque Amílcar estaba nervioso y ya venía el autobús.

*Así me fui
y el poema se quedó
inaturro
en parte en el aire de la tienda
en parte como polvo
entre mis cabellos.⁷⁸*

Y me fui, viajé a la Unión Soviética, a Chile y Argentina, y el poema siguió esperando el momento de nacer, lo que llegó once años después. Lo que pasa, en parte, es que escribo muy poco, y que los

poemas van naciendo en función del azar, no son situaciones que pueda controlar, y, por eso mismo, mis poemarios no son libros con una temática única.



Manuscrito original de *Nasce o poema* [*Nace el poema*], fotografía 2011

Ahora, mi último libro *Em alguma parte alguma* [*En algún lugar ninguno*], aborda igualmente problemas muy variados, pero no sabría definirlo tan fácilmente. El título se sirve de una expresión portuguesa que en realidad significa en ningún lugar, como si quisiera decir que el poema es ese lugar donde lo único que puede hacerse es señalar lo que no puede decirse, porque es imposible expresarlo en su totalidad. Hay uno que habla justamente de una corola que brota en una parte ninguna de la vida, que no puede ubicarse, que no puede decirse. Es un poemario, al mismo tiempo, que surge con una característica peculiar, como si cada poema naciera del desorden. Eso tiene que ver con la manera de formularlo. La forma como he llegado a hacer los poemas en estos últimos años es muy diferente de como los hacía antes. En general, mis poemas nacían de una reflexión previa, y cuando me enfrentaba a la hoja de papel para escribir, ya había alcanzado una noción más o menos clara de lo que quería hacer.

El poema, obviamente, era inventado durante el proceso de escritura, pero partía de una idea básica de lo que quería hacer. Luego comenzó a surgir una relación distinta con la poesía y, ahora, a veces, cuando comienzo a escribir, lo hago por el medio. Yo sé que ese no es el principio, y no me preocupa, y hasta quiero que no lo sea. Es un desorden que nace de la reflexión sobre determinados acontecimientos, como lo que sucedió cuando salía de la casa de Cláudia, tarde en la noche. Al abrir la puerta del edificio, en el jardín que separa la puerta de la calle, había un jazmín que estaba exhalando su perfume. Casi podría decir que fui atacado por aquel olor a jazmín. Como el jazminero estaba al lado de la puerta arranqué un buqué completo y comencé a olerlo. Y me fui así, caminando y aspirando fuertemente aquel perfume. Al hacerlo descubrí que ese perfume era algo salvaje, al contrario del que flotaba en el aire, más dulce y suave. Aquello, en cambio, cuando lo aspiré, era una sensación tan fuerte que me quemó la nariz por dentro. Salí de ahí, me subí al carro y regresé a casa pensando en el poema. Lo escribí al día siguiente, y ahí comenzó a surgir una reflexión sobre lo que es o no es un perfume: el perfume como un conjunto dado de moléculas que está ahí, agitándose en el aire sin orden preciso, y al que mi olfato da sentido, le impone un orden.

*esto porque
la cosa
(el ser)
reposa
fuera de toda
habla
u orden sintáctico*

*y lo dicho (la
no cosa) es solo
gramática*

*el jazmín, por ejemplo,
es un sistema
como la araña
(diferente del poema)
el perfume
es un tipo de desorden
al que el olfato
pone orden
y sorbe
pero lo que él dice
excede al orden
del hablar
es por eso
que
solo
desordenando
la escritura
tal vez se diga
aquel perfunctorio*

orden
*inaudito*⁷⁹

Esa experiencia se convierte a la vez en la estructura misma del poema, como una especie de orden que surge del desorden. Y de él surgió un segundo poema, y luego otro.

El primer poema del libro, que es en realidad el más reciente y que lleva como título “Fica o não dito por dito” [Queda lo no dicho por dicho], habla precisamente de ese ser que el poema intenta decir, pero que no puede agotar, porque lo real excede las posibilidades del habla. Es una especie de juego con una expresión común en portugués que dice “fica o dito por não dito” [queda lo dicho por no dicho]. No sé si existe en español, en portugués es una expresión muy corriente que quiere decir lo siguiente: “Afirmé algo que no te gustó, y estás en desacuerdo conmigo”. Entonces reflexiono y digo: Está bien, queda lo dicho por no dicho, es decir, haz de cuenta que no lo he dicho. Pues bien, el título de mi poema dice exactamente lo contrario: “Queda lo no dicho por dicho”. Lo que no he expresado termina siendo lo que dije, puesto que no puedo decir la realidad, el poema es lo que escapa al lenguaje.

^{AJ} Y el libro comienza con el último poema, quizás buscando generar un desorden cronológico.

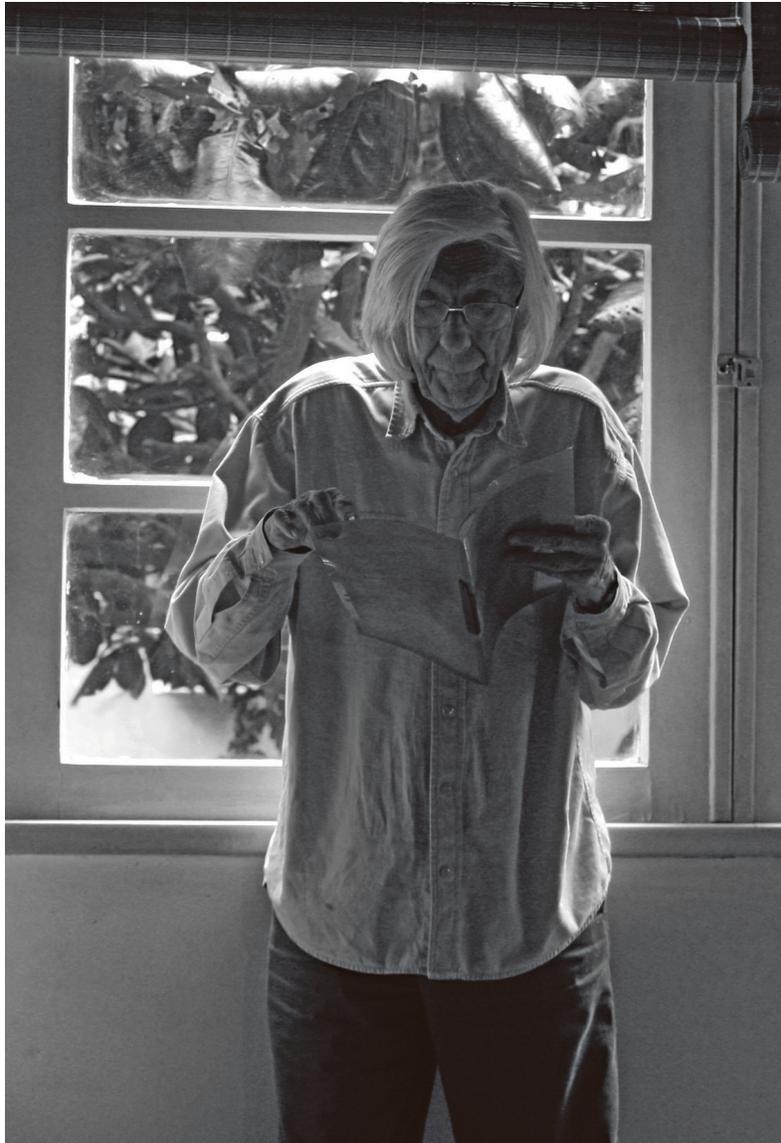
^{FG} No, eso responde en realidad a una razón muy sencilla, y es que me parece más interesante que el lector se enfrente a mis poemas actuales. Recuerde que es un libro que escribo durante once años, es muchísimo tiempo. Por eso opté por iniciar el libro con los últimos poemas. Si alguien, algún día, desea estudiar el proceso cronológico de su redacción, siempre será posible hacerlo recurriendo a los originales fechados, pero al publicarlos preferí invertirlos y reproducirlos sin fecha. El libro está organizado de la siguiente manera: los primeros poemas hablan de ese desorden que se hace orden, también de un orden que se deshace, como en la muerte o el proceso de putrefacción en las frutas. Le sigue un segundo capítulo dedicado al cosmos, con los primeros poemas sobre el universo, luego sobre la luz, el agua, el sonido, el espacio, el tiempo. En seguida, otro cuyos temas son esencialmente obras de arte, y finalmente, una última sección constituida por dos largos poemas, uno sobre mi regreso a Chile, años después del exilio, y otro sobre la muerte de Rainer María Rilke.

^{AJ} Ahora, me parece que vale la pena comparar este orden no cronológico con lo que sucede por ejemplo en *A luta corporal*, donde sí se sigue un orden temporal perfectamente lineal.

^{FG} Sí, porque ese es un libro cronológico, que recoge de algún modo el camino que recorrí desde el comienzo hasta el fin; es decir, desde aquellos primeros poemas rimados y medidos, hasta “Roçzeiral” y “Negror n’origens”, y donde, en busca de la esencia de la poesía, se desintegró el lenguaje. Pero ya no estoy sometido a esos problemas o no de la misma forma. Sin embargo, lo que encuentro sugestivo en este último libro es que en él se da un retorno a la problemática central de *A luta corporal*, especialmente cuando me enfrento a ese problema del orden y del desorden, de lo que es posible decir o no. Es imposible expresar lo que sentí oliendo aquel jazmín. El lenguaje no puede hacerlo. Y por eso digo que el poema no revela la realidad, sino que la inventa. Es como el pintor que quiere hacer un cuadro: tiene la tela en blanco, y lo que va a emerger en ella es una invención, nadie sabe lo que va a suceder, van Gogh nunca lo supo. *La noche estrellada* es una voluntad, no existe en ninguna parte, es un puro artificio, como la justicia. ¿Usted vio alguna vez una planta llamada justicia en su casa? No, claro que no, porque es un concepto, una creación humana. Es porque somos injustos que inventamos la justicia, porque queremos o aspiramos a ser mejor de lo que somos. Los que viven en un entorno sin valores son el caimán y la onza, nosotros vivimos en un mundo inventado.

AJ

Si alguna característica me parece representativa de lo contemporáneo, es ese carácter de intimidad que se afianza en usted después del “Poema sujo”. Muertas las utopías, políticas o no, y con ellas la imagen clara que pensábamos tener de nuestro futuro. Calmadas las aguas ferozmente experimentales de cierta vanguardia (porque su motor más profundo –la deconstrucción de aquel lenguaje heredado del Renacimiento– ya ha sido consumado), solo nos queda el presente. Un presente rico de una enorme herencia, plantado así, ante un futuro incierto. Y por eso siento que muchos artistas contemporáneos, entre ellos usted, se refugian en lo cotidiano.



Ferreira Gullar en su apartamento de Copacabana, Río de Janeiro, 2010 Más

Ferreira Gullar en su apartamento de Copacabana, Río de Janeiro, 2010

© Ariel Jiménez

^{FG} Estoy de acuerdo, sí, y es lo que permite que se establezca una comunicación directa entre mi poesía y una buena parte del público, tanto que a menudo me encuentro con alguien que me agradece haber escrito este o aquel poema, porque se identifica plenamente con su contenido. Es como un señor que me reconoce un día en la calle y me pregunta:

—¿Usted es el poeta Ferreira Gullar?

—Sí —le dije, y él entonces saca de su bolsillo mi poema “Filhos” [Hijos] y me dice:

—Oiga, yo ando con ese poema el día entero en mi bolsillo, y lo leo constantemente, y por eso quiero agradecerle que lo haya escrito, es como si lo hubiera hecho para mí.

Y no es que los temas sean un juego, una especie de caramelo que se da al lector para seducirlo, al contrario, no estoy engañando a nadie, los temas son la muerte, la vejez, la fragilidad de la vida, solo que existe una esperanza, trato siempre de darle un sentido a la vida, y le hablo a mi compañera, a mi amigo, al hombre que pasa por la esquina. Es de la vida, en fin, con todas sus contradicciones: su dolor, su absurdo, y también su belleza y su misterio, que hago mi poesía, dentro de lo posible, claro.

^{AJ} Me parece crucial indagar más sobre su proceso de escritura, porque hay en él otro rasgo de lo que a mi entender caracteriza la producción contemporánea, y es precisamente esa especie de nomadismo técnico que le permite ir de las formas más tradicionales, rimadas y medidas, hasta el verso libre, e incluso hasta el uso independiente de la palabra, así como un artista plástico pasa de la pintura al dibujo, y de ellos a la escultura, la fotografía o el video. Es decir, no está atado a un procedimiento o técnica específica, sino que se sirve de cualquiera de ellas en función de sus necesidades expresivas.

^{FG} Por supuesto, porque, al menos en mi caso, sucede que lo que realmente define la forma que tomará un poema es el asunto, el momento, y no un concepto *a priori* de lo que es o debería ser un poema. Es a partir de ese elemento que desata, que provoca el poema, que decido cómo lo voy a hacer. Es decir, al inicio, lo que existe es la página en blanco, ese espacio sobre el cual voy a escribir. Ella contiene en sí todas las posibilidades, es un vacío que las contiene en potencia. Cuando se escribe la primera palabra lo que se hace es reducir ese universo de posibilidades, y el proceso de escritura es eso, la reducción de las posibilidades iniciales, de lo que deja de ser azar para convertirse en necesidad. Y el poema surge de ese proceso en el que no existe ningún *a priori*. Está claro que a cada poeta le gustan ciertas formas más que otras, posee un determinado universo de palabras, un vocabulario, y es dentro de ese universo que crea, pero tiene la absoluta libertad de emplear cualquier forma, desde la más irreverente e inesperada, hasta la más clásica y formal. Y encuentro que esa es una conquista del arte actual, a pesar de que el radicalismo de la vanguardia haya querido imponernos una imagen limitada de la libertad, finalmente empobrecedora.

^{AJ} Lo que dice me recuerda una bella frase de Merleau-Ponty cuando afirmaba, en *El ojo y la mente*, lo siguiente:

El esfuerzo de la pintura moderna no ha consistido tanto en escoger entre la línea y el color, o incluso entre la figuración de las cosas y la creación de signos, como en multiplicar los sistemas de equivalencia, en romper su adherencia a la piel de las cosas, lo que puede exigir que se creen nuevos materiales o nuevos medios de expresión, pero se hace a veces por el reexamen y la revitalización de los que ya existen.⁸⁰

^{FG} Es exacto, y esa libertad es una conquista. El artista tiene la opción de usar todas las técnicas disponibles. Sus problemas son otros, como las exigencias del hacer, de conseguir la economía de los medios, la palabra precisa, aquella que puede decirlo todo; es decir, son exigencias del propio artista, no de normas externas. Y las vanguardias, que conquistaron esas libertades, no supieron lidiar con ellas, porque creyeron que ellas venían sencillamente a suplantar las formas viejas, y por eso llegaron a un límite, a un pasaje sin salida.

^{AJ} Ahora, me pregunto, si el arte es una invención humana, ¿cómo podríamos hablar de un lecho “natural” para las artes?

^{FG} Lo que pasa es que no se trata de un problema técnico, no es que el lecho natural de las artes sea esta o aquella forma, o esta técnica específica, no. La pintura no es el lecho natural de las artes visuales. El lecho natural de las artes es sencillamente la posibilidad de conseguir una comunicación real con el público, la posibilidad de enriquecer nuestro mundo. No es que existan normas para hacer una pintura. Cuando digo que el arte regresó a su lecho natural, es que volvió a dialogar con las personas, y siempre fue así, y no la voluntad de constreñirlas, de enfrentarlas a un enigma incomprensible. La preocupación mayor del arte no es atormentar a las personas, sino fascinarlas. Y para eso tenemos hoy toda la herencia milenaria, desde la pintura parietal hasta el lenguaje de las vanguardias, y tenemos la posibilidad de emplearlas como mejor nos parezca, para conseguir la mejor comunicación, el mayor efecto posible. Lo importante es que al emplear los medios sepamos insuflarle nuestra particular concepción de la vida, porque nuestro tiempo no es ya el de las cavernas, ni el de la edad media, ni el de las vanguardias.

Si tuviera que definir la función del arte, hoy como ayer, yo diría que su rol más importante es ayudarnos a vivir, a crear alegría. Parto de ese principio, si el arte existe es porque la vida no basta. El arte debe enriquecer nuestra vida, y eso no tiene que ver con el Cubismo, con el video o las instalaciones. No me interesa saber cuál es la escuela o la tendencia de una obra, solo me importa el poder que ella pueda tener para enriquecer mi existencia, para hacerla posible. Imagínese a dos mendigos discutiendo en la calle, como los vi el otro día aquí, al frente de mi casa. Uno de esos tipos, sucio y mal vestido, diciéndole al otro: “¡Respétame!”. Y claro, debajo de esos trapos sucios hay un ser humano que quiere ser respetado, porque el sentido nos lo da “el otro”, sin él no existimos. Jean-Paul Sartre decía que el infierno son los otros, pero no es cierto, los demás son nuestra salvación, sin ellos no somos nada.

Cláudia Ahimsa (1963). Poeta brasileña nacida en Porto Alegre. Autora de poemarios como *Noite sem dormir* (2001) y *A vida agarrada* (2006), actual compañera de Ferreira Gullar.

Ferreira Gullar, “Pergunta e Resposta”, en *Toda poesia*, 459.

Esta inconmensurable diferencia entre el hombre y el universo, recuerda la célebre frase de los *Pensamientos*, en la cual Pascal le recomendaba al hombre: “Que no se detenga a observar simplemente los objetos que lo rodean”. “Que contemple la naturaleza en su alta y plena majestad [. . .] y que luego, regresando a sí mismo, considere lo que él es, comparado a lo que es [el universo]. Que se mire como perdido en ese recodo alejado de la naturaleza. Y que de lo que le parezca ser esa pequeña guarida, donde se encuentra abrigado, es decir este mundo visible, aprenda a estimar la tierra, los reinos, las ciudades, y a sí mismo en su justa medida”. Blaise Pascal, *Pensamientos* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1940).

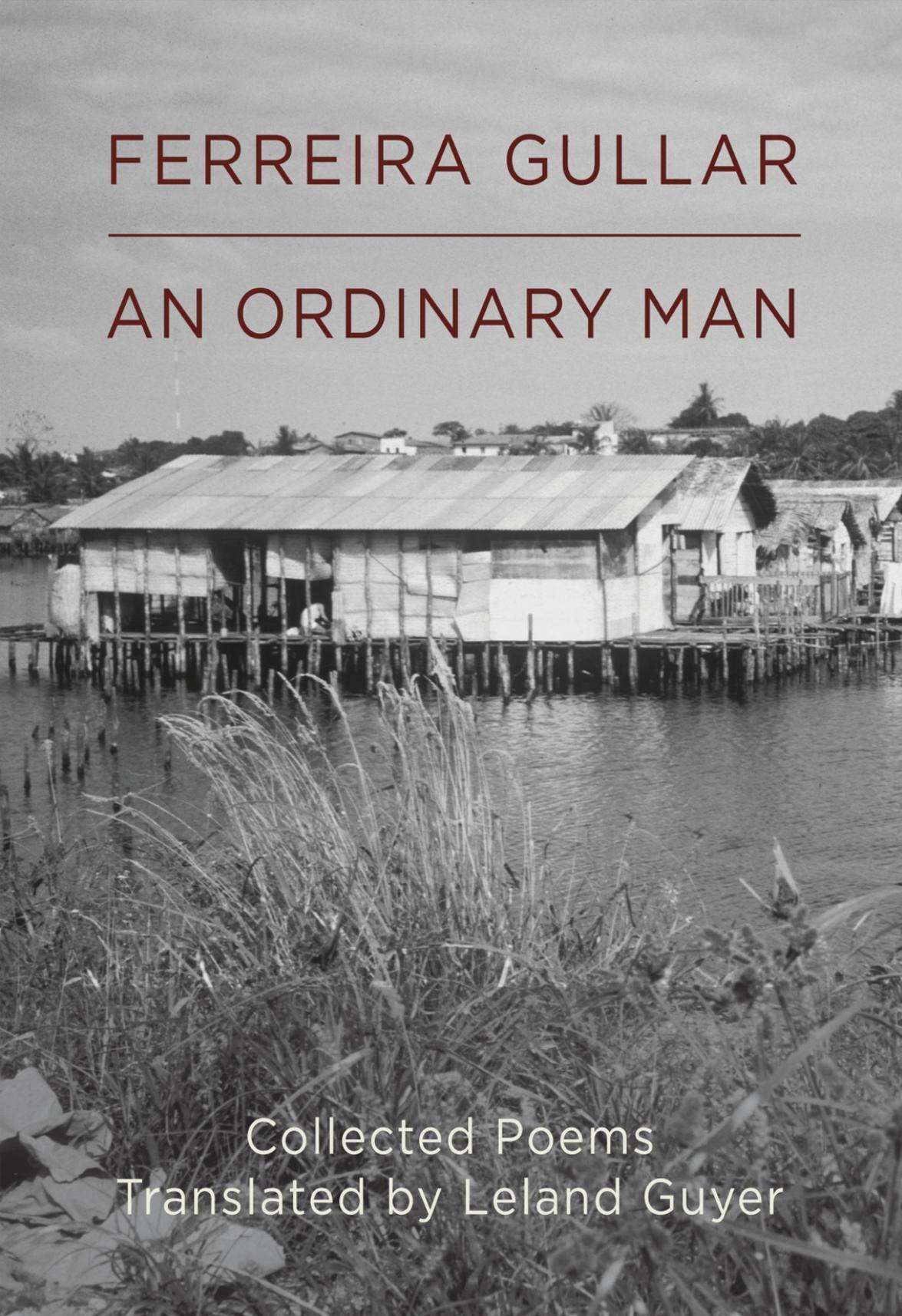
Ferreira Gullar, “Quem Sou Eu?”, en *Toda poesia*, 354.

Ferreira Gullar, “Nasce o Poema”, en *Toda poesia*, 397–403.

Ferreira Gullar, “Nasce o Poema”, en *Toda poesia*, 397–403.

Ferreira Gullar, “Desordem”, en *Em alguma parte alguma* (Río de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 2010), 28–9.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'œil et l'esprit* (París: Ed. Gallimard, 1964), 71–72. Traducción de Ariel Jiménez.



FERREIRA GULLAR

AN ORDINARY MAN

Collected Poems
Translated by Leland Guyer

Note to the reader

For this digital edition, we have taken every necessary step to ensure that the following anthology reflects the original format of Ferreira Gullar's poems and Leland Guyer's translations as closely as possible. However, to ensure that you view the poems in their intended format, we advise you to adjust the font to the smallest size possible on your device.

Nota para el lector

La siguiente antología de poemas de Ferreira Gullar está compilada y traducida por Leland Guyer por lo cual se presenta independientemente de *Ferreira Gullar in conversation with/en conversación con Ariel Jiménez*. Por esta razón, solo se incluyen las traducciones originales de Leland Guyer al inglés.

Para esta edición digital, hemos tomado las medidas necesarias para asegurar que la siguiente antología refleje el formato original de los poemas de Ferreira Gullar y las traducciones de Leland Guyer lo mejor posible. No obstante, para asegurarse de ver los poemas en el formato deseado, por favor fije el tamaño de la letra lo más pequeño posible.

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AN EXTRAORDINARY *ORDINARY* MAN: An Introduction to Ferreira Gullar

Marguerite Itamar Harrison

“Human history plays out not just on battlefields and in presidential suites. It also plays out in backyards, among the plants and chickens, in suburban streets, in gaming houses, in brothels, in schools, in ruins, in street corner romance. From this dark and unjust life I try to make my poetry, because music must not betray life, and unless our song embodies voiceless people and things we cannot justify our song.”¹

In the pages of this fine volume and by way of Leland Guyer’s splendid translations, Ferreira Gullar—pen name of José Ribamar Ferreira—emerges as one of Brazil’s greatest poets. Gullar was born in 1930 in the Northeast city of São Luís do Maranhão, and his contributions extend far beyond his role as distinguished bard. Essayist, art critic, painter, cultural trendsetter, journalist, playwright, television writer, translator, and sociopolitical activist, Ferreira Gullar is a living crusader for Brazilian culture.² He is a remarkable Brazilian writer, thinker and advocate for social justice whose full introduction to an English-speaking audience is long overdue. *An Ordinary Man*, Guyer’s lyrical tribute to Ferreira Gullar in this bilingual Portuguese-English edition is therefore most enthusiastically welcome. This volume also acknowledges Leland Guyer’s scholarly dedication to literary translation, twenty-two years after his English version of Gullar’s *Dirty Poem* was first published in 1990.

Despite Ferreira Gullar's professional versatility (my own encounter with his work came by way of his notable role as author and co-signer of the 1959 Neo-Concrete Art Manifesto, a declaration that countered the mechanical rationalism of non-figurative art with art forms that aimed to express complex human realities³), it is important to underscore and singularly recognize his contributions to poetry. The poems included in this volume correspond to seven distinct collections that span half a century: *A Luta Corporal / The Body's Struggle* (1950-1953), *O Vil Metal / Filthy Lucre* (1954-1960), *Dentro da Noite Veloz / Within the Speeding Night* (1962-1975), *Poema Sujo / Dirty Poem* (1975), *Na Vertigem do Dia / In the Dizziness of Daylight* (1975-1980), *Barulhos / Sounds* (1980-1987) and *Muitas Vozes / Many Voices* (1999). Each collection responds to and reflects upon a different timeframe in the poet's life, often mirroring key moments in Brazilian political and cultural history.

Poema Sujo — the entire text of which is presented here in *An Ordinary Man* — was written in six months, during Ferreira Gullar's six-year period of political exile (from 1971 to 1977), when he was officially regarded as an unwelcome opponent to Brazil's military dictatorship, which lasted from 1964 to 1985. After hearing Gullar recite *Poema Sujo* in Argentina, fellow poet Vinicius de Moraes clandestinely carried Gullar's recording of the poem back to Brazil in his briefcase, and subsequently campaigned for the government to allow Gullar back into the country. Like other works of world literature written in exile, *Dirty Poem* registers the thorny intersections between politics and poetry by expressing — albeit metaphorically — the outspoken fears and frustrations of an individual banished from his country during a repressive regime. In utter contrast to these emblematic manifestations of political outrage, *Dirty Poem* also records the poet's tender longings

for and nostalgic remembrances of his forbidden native homeland, particularly the equatorial state of Maranhão.

Prior to *Dirty Poem*, Ferreira Gullar's works from the 1950s and 60s, such as *The Body's Struggle* and *Filthy Lucre*, articulate his fascination with the innovative powers of language, yet simultaneously reflect his embrace of language's capacity to be rooted in popular culture and, moreover, to be a conduit for social transformation. Gullar has said: "the poem is where transformation takes place."⁴ Paralleling these tendencies, in 1962 Gullar joined one of the Centers for Popular Culture (CPCs) run by the national leftist student union and two years later became a member of the Brazilian Communist Party.

The Body's Struggle establishes Ferreira Gullar as a keen observer of life. His poems frame domestic scenes—often interiors or backyard settings—with precision and sensitivity. Examples of these homey vistas, and their thematic potential to ponder the ephemeral in life, are found in Gullar's poems "Rooster Rooster," "The Work of the Clouds, and "The Pears." In *Filthy Lucre* Gullar becomes more experimental, combining random words and inventive stream-of-consciousness phrases, a technique that reaches a crescendo in his word-collage portrait "Requiem for Gullar":

*Tropical perfume two fruits burned their scent on the stove ruby
throat hemoptysis wormseed herb sugar-ant buried money the
sealed indifferent earth is as if we were speaking centuries ago is
as if we were to speak
with the tongue of a
sun serpent (36)*

During this fertile period Ferreira Gullar also produced seminal essays of criticism on the visual arts, notably "A teoria do não-objeto" or

“Theory of the Non-Object” in 1959, his 1965 essay “Cultura posta em questão” or “Questioning Culture,” and “Vanguarda e Subdesenvolvimento” or “The Avant-Garde and Underdevelopment” of 1969, even as he continued delving into experimental explorations of language. These writing endeavors—as well as associations with Concrete poets Augusto and Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari—resulted in his visually rich concrete poems. Around the same time that Gullar was creating his concrete, verbal-visual poems, he also experimented with a radically different kind of verse form. Motivated by his belief in a socially engaged literature, Gullar composed rhyming narrative-poems, inspired by Northeastern Brazil’s *cordel* or popular chapbook tradition. For Ferreira Gullar, involvement in the Neo-Concrete art movement in Brazil⁵ had enabled a way to intertwine literature and life organically and self-reflectively. Moreover, in art and in literature he pressed for a socially committed dimension that would elicit the participation of the spectator or reader.

Ferreira Gullar’s allegiance to popular culture deepens in *Within the Speeding Night*, reinforced by his preoccupation with the plight of the common man. The verses in this volume appear to have been written by a poet in motion, plugged into the immediate world rush of current events and urban life. His poetic methodology consists of gathering images and thematic substance from walking the streets. Poetry itself is personified and carries on a daily routine in the city: in “Poetry” it literally goes to the corner newsstand to buy a paper (89); in “August 1964” it assumes fiscal responsibility by paying taxes:

*Beneath the weight of taxes, the word chokes,
poetry now answers to the inquiries of military police. (60)*

Social concerns rise to the surface: inadequate wages, job loss, rising prices, poor factory conditions and poverty are examples of the problems the poet, as a fellow “ordinary man,” bemoans:

*In gloomy factories
embittered men with
brutal lives
produced this sugar
pure and white
I use to make my coffee sweet this Ipanema morning. (“Sugar,”
52)*

Despite the vocal articulation of these social concerns, *Within the Speeding Night* maintains an upbeat pitch, empowered by the knowledge of a common struggle (58). There is a sense of collective solidarity in this volume, based on the poet’s banner call (60) to “fight together for a better world” (54). Toward the end of the collection the poems gradually acquire a graver edge: they question life suddenly disrupted by political change and passionately urge a call to poetry–revolution (93). These poems parallel Gullar’s own increasing perils, as he began living clandestinely, moving from hiding place to hiding place, before finally being forced into exile in 1971:

*But so many friends in prison!
so many in dark jails
where the afternoon stinks of urine and terror. (“May
1964,” 58)*

Within the Speeding Night and *In the Dizziness of Daylight* bestride *Dirty Poem* and complement each other like day (light) and night. All

three volumes, in fact, offer ongoing commentary in a sociopolitical vein, paralleling the most oppressive years of Brazil's military regime. If *Within the Speeding Night* focuses on a spirited, even hopeful, common struggle for socioeconomic justice, *In the Dizziness of Daylight*—following on the heels of the epic lament *Dirty Poem*—injects an undercurrent of decay, in reaction to the harsh weight of political repression. The symbolic gravity of rot, stench, murkiness and deterioration, in fact, reverberates in this collection that is interspersed with ordinary segments that nostalgically portray daily life and routine.

In the Dizziness of Daylight conveys an underlying tone of bitterness throughout the volume—yet never forfeiting an aesthetic beauty—as if the poet were finally able to unleash years of bottled-up emotion and grievance. In a fury Gullar strikes out against human misery, transforming his poems into physical punches (the “poema-murro” or “poem-punch” from “Poema Obsceno”) and outcries against injustice: “Justice is moral, injustice is not,” he states, in “Joy” (117). In the tone of these anti-establishment, anti-inequity poems the North-American reader might see a resemblance between Brazilian Ferreira Gullar and North-American Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Both poets not only practiced the populist activism of their poetic opinions, but produced significant works as painters, translators and art critics.⁶

Written in the 1980s and 90s, his collections *Sounds* and *Many Voices*, by contrast, acquire a more intimate, elegiac timbre. Less edgy and more streamlined, their verses communicate matters on a human scale: friendship and loss, landscape and belonging, words and meaning. These later poems offer painterly still-lives and contemplative musings on life and death from the point of view of a mature family man. Language is condensed, encapsulating gentler life moments and philosophical ruminations:

*In the cove of Botafogo the sea is gray
and the bluffs of Urca rise above it,
Sugarloaf.
And everything is firmly real.*

*But the dead,
 where are they?
Vinicius, for example,
and Hélio? Clarice?
I don't need an answer.
I'm just asking, I just
profoundly
 want
 to ask. ("Where are they?" 131)*

Especially from the perspective of these later, mature poems, it is a wonder José Ribamar Ferreira became a writer at all. He had been born into a humble household devoid of books, and only as a teenager attending a technical school did he begin to visit a public library regularly. His habitual act of reading extended naturally into the craft and practice of writing. At fifteen Gullar won the top award in a school writing contest, and from that point onward he was captivated. His lifelong vocation became enmeshed in the intricacies of words, a practice he continues to maintain today, as an octogenarian in an internet world.⁷

The main thread throughout all of Ferreira Gullar's poetry is its grounding in a tangible, worldly reality. Gullar's poems are replete with concrete references to the material world:

*There are those who aspire
to a poem of
marble
or crystal — as for me
I have preferred it be of peach
of pear
of banana decomposing on a plate
and if possible
on a veranda
where people work and talk
and where you can hear
the sounds of the street. (“Disaster,” 141)*

They are composed by a poet who is “of flesh and memory” (53): physically present, with his analytical skills in force, as well as all his senses ablaze. Gullar’s poems are rich in layers, representing a plethora of human registers. Gullar has stated in “Corpo a Corpo com a Linguagem” that his poetic intent is to capture the “complex pulsations of life.” His poems give meticulous attention to the daily life—often from the vantage point of his own particular tropical surroundings—while it simultaneously spans common facets of human experience. Inanimate objects acquire luster in Gullar’s poems, as if made of flesh and blood: consider the olfactory allure of a tangerine (145) or the textural decomposition of rotting bananas, one of his recurring themes:

*is about is about
these bananas
where the afternoon rots like a
vegetal carrion attracting bees
blow flies*

*it is about these people these men
who bear it in their bodies and even in their names
it is about these dark rooms
this furniture ravaged by poverty
these old walls with this meager
life which in the mouth
is laughter and in the belly
is hunger (“Rotting Bananas,” 127)*

The voiceless—even the sewer rats and roaches in the poem “Joy” (117)—are granted space.

Overall, Ferreira Gullar’s poems straddle the line between the public, geopolitical world and the private, eschatological and bodily-charged world of the mortal poet, with his active, pumping heart ever mindful of the volatility of life and the inescapability of death. His poetry is never abstract. Quite the contrary: it never strays from the sensorial, concrete world:

*I want you made of earth,
yet luminous
my poem. (“Porous Poem,” 137)*

Life and literature walk hand in hand in Ferreira Gullar’s poetic renderings. *An Ordinary Man* gives us an instrumental figure in Brazilian poetry—active and alive through Leland Guyer’s own lifework—a poet whose heart beats incessantly and stridently for all humankind.

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The original citation in Portuguese reads: “A história humana não se desenrola apenas nos campos de batalha e nos gabinetes presidenciais.

Ela se desenrola também nos quintais, entre plantas e galinhas; nas ruas de subúrbio, nas casas de jogo, nos prostíbulos, nos colégios, nas ruínas, nos namoros de esquina. Disso quis eu fazer a minha poesia, dessa vida obscura e injustiçada, porque o canto não pode ser uma traição à vida, e só é justo cantar se o nosso canto arrasta consigo as pessoas e as coisas que não têm voz.” It is taken from Ferreira Gullar’s 1999 essay entitled “Corpo a Corpo com a Linguagem, reproduced on the following site: http://literal.terra.com.br/ferreira_gullar/porelemesmo/corpo_a_corpo_com_a_linguagem.shtml?porelemesmo The English translation is by Leland Guyer

In 1998 the Instituto Moreira Salles published volume six in their series *Cadernos de Literatura Brasileira*, a monograph devoted to Ferreira Gullar. It is a particularly rich source which includes a detailed chronology, interview, photographs, drawings, essays on Gullar by fellow intellectuals, among other useful materials

The Neo-Concrete Art Manifesto was also signed by artists Lygia Clark, Amilcar de Castro, Frans Waissman, Lygia Pape, Reynaldo Jardim and Theon Spanúdis and was published in the Sunday Supplement of the *Jornal do Brasil* in March of 1959. The English translation of the Manifesto can be found online reprinted from Patrick Frank’s *Readings in Latin American Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 172-175, originally reproduced from Dawn Ades’ *Art in Latin America: The Modern Era, 1820-1980* (Yale University Press, 1989)

My translation of the original: “o poema é o lugar onde a transformação se dá.” Ferreira Gullar, “Corpo a Corpo com a Linguagem.” http://literal.terra.com.br/ferreira_gullar/porelemesmo/corpo_a_corpo_com_a_linguagem.shtml?porelemesmo

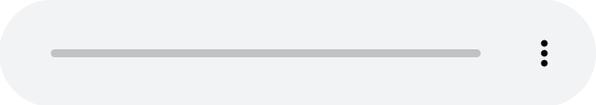
Among other innovations, the Neo-Concrete Movement called for a movement away from pure geometric abstraction toward organic art forms that would eventually solicit the participation of the spectator.

For my comparisons between Ferlinghetti and Ferreira Gullar I consulted the following: Michael Bibby, “‘Where is Vietnam?’: Antiwar Poetry and the Canon,” *College English* 55: 2 (February 1993), 158-178 and Angelo Lopez, “Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Dissident Poetry,” *Everyday Citizen* at www.everydaycitizen.com, December 6, 2008. Lopez highlights Ferlinghetti’s “Populist Manifesto” and “An Elegy to Dispel Gloom.”

Once again, Ferreira Gullar’s online site: http://literal.terra.com.br/ferreira_gullar gives ready access to his work in many forms, including the ability to listen to the poet read his poems or to view his current column entitled “Resmungos” or “Grumblings.”

A LUTA CORPORAL
THE BODY'S STRUGGLE
(1950-1953)

GALO GALO



O galo
no saguão quieto.

Galo galo
de alarmante crista, guerreiro,
medieval.

De córneo bico e
esporões, armado
contra a morte,
passeia.

Mede os passos. Pára.
Inclina a cabeça coroada
dentro do silêncio
— que faço entre coisas?
— de que me defendo?

Anda

no saguão.
O cimento esquece
o seu último passo.

Galo: as penas que
florescem da carne silenciosa
e o duro bico e as unhas e o olho

sem amor. Grave
solidez.
Em que se apóia
tal arquitetura?

Saberá que, no centro
de seu corpo, um grito
se elabora?

Como, porém, conter,
uma vez concluído,
o canto obrigatório?

Eis que bate as asas, vai
morrer, encurva o vertiginoso pescoço
donde o canto rubro escoá.

Mas a pedra, a tarde,
o próprio feroz galo
subsistem ao grito.

Vê-se: o canto é inútil.

O galo permanece — apesar
de todo o seu porte marcial —
só, desamparado,
num saguão do mundo.
Pobre ave guerreira!

Outro grito cresce

agora no sigilo
de seu corpo; grito
que, sem essas penas
e esporões e crista
e sobretudo sem esse olhar
de ódio,
 não seria tão rouco
e sangrento.

 Grito, fruto obscuro
e extremo dessa árvore: galo.
Mas que, fora dele,
é mero complemento de auroras.

ROOSTER ROOSTER

The rooster
in the quiet entry.

Rooster rooster
with fearsome coxcomb, medieval
warrior.

With horny beak and
spurs, and armed
for death,
he struts.

He paces. He stops.
He tilts his crowned head
in the silence
“what shall I do in the meantime?
from what shall I defend myself?”

He marches

in the entryway.
And the cement forgets
his final step.

Rooster: feathers
bloom from silent flesh
and his cruel beak and claws and eye
are loveless. Grave

solidity.

On what does such an architecture
rest?

Could he know that, from within
that body, a cry
is rising?

How could he, then, hold back,
once finished,
his compelling song?

See him beat his wings, he will
die, he arches his lofty neck
where his crimson song reverberates.

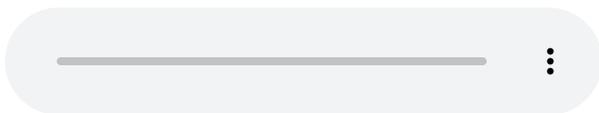
But the stone, the afternoon,
the brutal rooster too,
endure in his clamor.

Look: his song is in vain.

The rooster remains — despite
his martial air —
defenseless and alone,
in a courtyard somewhere in the world.
So sad, this warrior bird!

A new cry now grows
from within

A GALINHA



Morta
flutua no chão.
Galinha.

Não teve o mar nem
quis, nem compreendeu
aquele ciscar quase feroz. Cis-
cava. Olhava o muro,
aceitava-o, negro e absurdo.

Nada perdeu. O quintal
não tinha
qualquer beleza.

Agora

as penas são só o que o vento
roça, leves.

Apagou-se-lhe
toda a cintilação, o medo.
Morta. Evola-se do olho seco
o sono. Ela dorme.

Onde? onde?

THE HEN

Dead
she flutters in the dirt.
The hen.

She never had the sea nor
did she ever want it, nor did she ever understand
her frenzied scratching. She scratched. She stared at the wall,
accepted it, black and absurd.

She didn't lose a thing. The backyard
had no
beauty whatsoever.

Now
it's just her airy feathers ruffled by
the wind.
All her sparkle
blew out with her fear.
Dead. Sleep dims in
her dry eye. She's sleeping.
Where? where?

O MAR INTACTO

P.M.S.L.

Impossível é não odiar
estas manhãs sem teto
e as valsas
que banalizam a morte.

Tudo que fácil se
dá quer negar-nos. Teme
o ludíbrio das corolas.
Na orquídea busca a orquídea
que não é apenas o fátuo
cintilar das pétalas: busca a móvel
orquídea: ela caminha em si, é
contínuo negar-se no seu fogo, seu
arder é deslizar.

Vê o céu. Mais
que azul, ele é o nosso
sucessivo morrer. Ácido
céu.

Tudo se retrai, e a teu amor
oferta um disfarce de si. Tudo
odeia se dar. Conheces a água?
ou apenas o som do que ela
finge?

Não te aconselho o amor. O amor

é fácil e triste. Não se ama
no amor, senão
o seu próximo findar.
Eis o que somos: o nosso
tédio de ser.

Despreza o mar acessível
que nas praias se entrega, e
o das galeras de susto; despreza o mar
que amas, e só assim terás
o exato inviolável
mar autêntico!

O girassol
vê com assombro
que só a sua precariedade
floresce. Mas esse
assombro é que é ele, em verdade.

Saber-se
fonte única de si
alucina.

Sublime, pois, seria
suicidar-nos:
trairmos a nossa morte
para num sol que jamais somos
nos consumirmos.

THE SEA INTACT

SÃO LUÍS CITY HALL

You cannot help but hate
these homeless mornings
and the waltzes
that make death banal.

Everything that's easy
tries to annul us. Fear
the mockery of the corollas.
Among orchids seek the orchid
that is not the mere fatuous
brilliance of its petals: seek the mobile
orchid: it moves on its own, an
enduring self-denial in its fire, its
burning is its glide.

See the sky. More
than blue; it's our
impending death. Acid
sky.

Everything retreats, and to your love
it offers itself in disguise. Everything
hates to reveal itself. Do you know the water?
or just the sound that it
feigns?

I don't suggest you fall in love. Love

is easy and sad. One does not love
in love, except
its looming end.
That is who we are: our
tedium of being.

Scorn the accessible sea
that presents itself on shore, as well as
the sea of fearsome galleys; scorn the sea
you love, and only this way will you have
the exact inviolate
authentic sea!

The sunflower,
sees in awe
that only its precariousness
blooms. But, in fact,
that awe is its very self.

To see yourself
as your sole source
will drive you mad.

It would be sublime, therefore,
to kill ourselves:
betray our death
to consume ourselves
within a sun we never are.

O TRABALHO DAS NUVENS



Esta varanda fica
à margem
da tarde. Onde nuvens trabalham.
A cadeira não é tão seca
e lúcida, como
o coração.

Só à margem da tarde
é que se conhece
a tarde: que são as
folhas de verde e vento, e
o cacarejar da galinha e as
casas sob um céu: isso, diante
de olhos.

e os frutos?
e também os
frutos. Cujo crescer altera
a verdade e a cor
dos céus. Sim, os frutos
que não comeremos, também
fazem a tarde
(a vossa
tarde, de que estou à margem).

Há, porém, a tarde
do fruto. Essa

não roubaremos:

tarde

em que ele se propõe a glória de
não mais ser fruto, sendo-o
mais: de esplendor, não como astro, mas
como fruto que esplende.
E a tarde futura onde ele
arderá como um facho
efêmero!

Em verdade, é desconcertante para
os homens o
trabalho das nuvens.

Elas não trabalham
acima das cidades: quando
há nuvens não há
cidades: as nuvens ignoram
se deslizam por sobre
nossa cabeça: nós é que sabemos que
deslizamos sob elas: as
nuvens cintilam, mas não é para
o coração dos homens.

A tarde é
as folhas esperarem amarelecer
e nós o observarmos.

E o mais é o pássaro branco que
voa — e que só porque voa e o vemos,

voa para vermos. O pássaro que é
branco
não porque ele o queira nem
porque o necessitemos: o pás-
saro que é branco
porque é branco.

Que te resta, pois, senão
aceitar?

Por ti e pelo
pássaro pássaro.

an afternoon
in which the fruit declares the glory of
no longer being fruit, but
more: of glowing, not like a star, but
like a fruit that glows.
And the future afternoon where it
will burn like a torch
ephemeral!

In truth, for us
the work of clouds
is disconcerting.

They don't work
above the cities: when
there are clouds there are no
cities: the clouds ignore us
scudding by
our heads: it is we who know that
we scud beneath them: the
clouds shimmer, but not for the sake of
the heart of man.

The afternoon is
the leaves waiting to turn yellow
and our observing it.

And what's more is that the white bird
flies — and that only because he flies and we see him,
he flies so we may see him. The bird is

white
not because he wishes it nor
because we need it: the bird-
's white
because he's white.

What can you do, then, but
accept it?
For the sake of you and the
bird bird.

AS PÊRAS

As pêras, no prato,
apodrecem.
O relógio, sobre elas,
mede
a sua morte?

Paremos a pêndula. De-
teríamos, assim, a
morte das frutas?

Oh as pêras cansaram-se
de suas formas e de
sua doçura! As pêras,
concluídas, gastam-se no
fulgor de estarem prontas
para nada.

O relógio
não mede. Trabalha
no vazio: sua voz desliza
fora dos corpos.

Tudo é o cansaço
de si. As pêras se consomem
no seu doirado
sossego. As flores, no canteiro
diário, ardem,
ardem, em vermelhos e azuis. Tudo
desliza e está só.

O dia
comum, dia de todos, é a
distância entre as coisas.
Mas o dia do gato, o felino
e sem palavras
dia do gato que passa entre os móveis
é passar. Não entre os móveis. Pas-
sar como eu
passo: entre nada.
O dia das pêras
é o seu apodrecimento.

É tranqüilo o dia
das pêras? Elas
não gritam, como
o galo.

Gritar
para quê? se o canto
é apenas um arco
efêmero fora do
coração?

Era preciso que
o canto não cessasse
nunca. Não pelo
canto (canto que os
homens ouvem) mas
porque can-
tando o galo

é sem morte

THE PEARS

The pears, on the plate,
decompose.
Above them, does the clock
mark
their death?

Let's stop the pendulum. Could we stop
the death of fruit
this way?

Oh, the pears grew tired
of their forms and
their sweetness! The pears,
at their end, exhaust themselves in the
brilliance of being ready
for nothing.

The clock
marks nothing. It works
in a void: its voice drifts
apart from the bodies.

Everything is weariness
of self. The pears consume themselves
in their golden
calm. The flowers, in their unremarkable
beds, burn,
burn, in reds and blues. Everything
drifts and is alone.

The average

day, the day of us all, is the
distance between things.
But the day of the cat, the wordless
feline
day of the cat that passes amid the furniture
is passing. Not amid the furniture. Pass-
ing as I
pass: amid nothing.
The day of the pears
is its decay.

Is the day of the pears
serene? They
don't crow the way
the rooster does.

Crow?
for what? if his song
is just an ephemeral
arc outside the
heart?

It was vital that
the song never
cease. Not for the sake of
the song (the song a
human hears) but
because by sing-
ing the rooster

has no death.

○ VIL METAL
FILTHY LUCRE
(1954-1960)

BIOGRAFIA

Naquela época a obscenidade de teu sexo recendia por toda a casa

A meu lado na varanda num jarro de louça uma

[natureza contrária a minha energia

virente

Estávamos há quase dois séculos da Revolução Francesa

E aquela enorme flor amarela que nasceu no quintal junto ao banheiro

pólen corpo incêndio

BIOGRAPHY

Back then the obscenity of your sex suffused the house.

At my side on the veranda a nature the opposite of

[mine sprang from a china vase

exuberant.

We were nearly two centuries from the French Revolution

And that enormous yellow flower that sprouted in the backyard near the
bathroom

pollen body fire

FRUTAS

Sobre a mesa no domingo

(o mar atrás)

duas maçãs e oito bananas num prato de louça

São duas manchas vermelhas e uma faixa amarela

com pintas de verde selvagem:

uma fogueira sólida

acesa no centro do dia.

O fogo é escuro e não cabe hoje nas frutas:

chamas,

as chamas do que está pronto e alimenta

FRUIT

Sunday on the table

(the ocean in the background)

on a china plate two apples and eight bananas

Two red splotches and a yellow swath

with flecks of forest green:

a solid blaze

burning in the center of the day.

The fire is dark and the fruit today does not contain it:

flames,

the flames of what is ripe and feeds

UM HOMEM RI

Ele ria da cintura para cima. Abaixo
da cintura, atrás sua mão
furtiva
inspeccionava na roupa

Na frente e sobretudo no rosto, ele ria,
expelia um clarão, um sumo
servil
feito uma flor carnívora se esforça na beleza da corola
na doçura do mel
Atrás dessa auréola, saindo
dela feito um galho, descia o braço
com a mão e os dedos
e à altura das nádegas trabalhavam
no brim azul das calças

(como um animal no campo na primavera
visto de longe, mas
visto de perto, o focinho, sinistro,
de calor e osso, come o capim do chão)

O homem lançava o riso como o polvo lança a sua tinta e foge
Mas a mão buscava o cós da cueca
talvez desabotoada
um calombo que coçava
uma pulga sob a roupa
qualquer coisa que fazia a vida pior

A MAN LAUGHS

He was laughing from his belly to his brows. Below
his belly, behind, his furtive
hand
inspected his clothes

In his eyes but mostly in his face, he was laughing,
emitting a light, a servile
juice
in the way that a carnivorous flower exhausts itself in the beauty of its
corolla
in the sweetness of its honey
Behind that aureole, branching
like a limb, his arm descended
with its hand and fingers
and at the level of his buttocks they worked
at the blue denim of his jeans
 (like an animal in a field in springtime
 seen from afar, but
 seen up close, the muzzle, sinister,
 of warmth and bone, eats the grass of the earth)

The man burst into laughter like the octopus that expels its ink and
escapes
But his hand was looking for the waistband of his underwear
perhaps unbuttoned
an itchy bump
a flea on his skin
anything that made life worse

RECADO

Os dias, os canteiros,
deram agora para morrer como nos museus
em crepúsculos de convalescença e verniz
a ferrugem substituída ao pólen vivo.
São frutas de parafina
pintadas de amarelo e afinadas
na perspectiva de febre que mente a morte.

Ao responsável por isso,
quem quer que seja,
mando dizer que tenho um sexo
e um nome que é mais que um púcaro de fogo;
meu corpo multiplicado em fachos.
Às mortes que me preparam e me servem
na bandeja
sobrevivo,
que a minha eu mesmo a faço, sobre a carne da perna,
certo,
como abro as páginas de um livro
— e obrigo o tempo a ser vontade

MESSAGE

The days, the flowerbeds,
began dying, as happens in museums
in twilights of convalescence and varnish
rust replacing living pollen.
They are wax fruits
painted yellow and finished
with the fevered perspective that disassembles death.

To the one who is responsible for this,
whoever he is,
I send word that I have a sex
and a name, which is more than a mere flickering flame;
my body multiplied into torches.
To the deaths that prepare and serve me
on a platter
I will survive,
for I will prepare my own, upon the flesh of my legs,
steady,
as I open the pages of a book
— and compel that time be will

JARRO NA MESA

Sobre o centro da mesa há um jarro de flores
azuis brancas puídas
Dia 5 de março
 Há um jarro pintado
 cheio de flores

Há no quintal uma galinha velha se espojando
na terra velha
no esquecido deserto

Sob o jarro há uma toalha de brim
bordada de linha
como a sombra das flores à sombra das flores
e no quintal
o bicho que não é pintura
entregue a si mesmo
como está Saturno
 Há um jarro
uma palavra seca mas florida
na boca da terra
jarro pintado filho do homem

VASE ON THE TABLE

At the center of the table is a vase of flowers
blue white shriveled
The 5th of March
 There is a painted vase
 full of flowers

In the backyard an old hen flutters in the dust
in the old dirt
in the forgotten desert

Beneath the vase
is a crocheted doily
like a shadow of the flowers in the shadow of the flowers
and in the backyard
the creature which is not a portrait
absorbed in itself
like Saturn

 There is a vase
a dry but florid word
on the mouth of the earth
painted vase son of man

VIDA,

— :
a minha, a tua,
eu poderia dizê-la em duas
ou três palavras ou mesmo
numa

corpo

sem falar das amplas
horas iluminadas,
das exceções, das depressões
das missões,
dos canteiros destruídos feito a boca
que disse a esperança

fogo

sem adjetivar a pele
que rodeia a carne
os últimos verões que vivemos
a camisa de hidrogênio
com que a morte copula
(ou a ti, março, rasgado
no esqueleto dos santos)

Poderia escrever na pedra
meu nome

gullar

mas eu não sou uma data nem
uma trave no quadrante solar

Eu escrevo

facho

nos lábios da poeira

lepra

vertigem

cona

qualquer palavra que disfarça

e mostra o corpo esmerilado do tempo

câncer

vento

laranja

LIFE,

mine, yours,
I could say it in two
or three words or even
one

body

without talking about the ample
illuminated hours,
about the exceptions, the depressions
the missions,
the ruined flowerbeds much like my mouth
that has spoken of hope

fire

without adjectivizing the skin
that wraps my flesh
the last summers that we lived
the hydrogen shirt
that copulates with death
(or with you March, torn
into the skeletons of saints)

I could write on stone
my name

gullar

but I am not a date or
a rib in the solar quadrant
I write

torch

on my lips of dust

leprosy

vertigo

cunt

any word that disguises itself
and shows its burnished body of time

cancer

wind

orange grove

RÉQUIEM PARA GULLAR

Debrucei-me à janela o parapeito tinha uma consistência de sono. “Tenho dito que essas begônias danificam tudo.” Meu corpo se dobrou: um maço de folhas olhos coisas por falar engasgadas a pele serena os cabelos no braço de meu pai o relógio dourado. A terra. Há duas semanas exatamente havia uma galinha ciscando perto daquela pimenteira. Alface tomate feijão de corda. É preciso voltar à natureza. Água no tanque água no corpo água solta na pia. A grande viagem mar doce mar copo de flores porcos ao sol ortografia. Mar doce mar. Há certas lembranças que não nos oferecem nada, corpo na areia sol lagoa fria. Bichinhos delicados, o focinho da moça roçando a grama a treva do dia o calor. Hálito escuro o avesso das navalhas do fogo a grande ruína do crepúsculo. É preciso engraxar os sapatos. É preciso cortar os cabelos. É preciso telefonar oh é preciso telefonar. Cominho e farinha seca. Boca de fumo argolas africanas açaí bandeira lanterna. Vinte poucos anos ao lado do mar à direita à esquerda oh flâmula de sal guerreiros solo vivo. Automóvel e leite. Os domingos cruéis primeiro apeadouro segundo apeadouro aquele que acredita em mim mesmo depois de morto morrerá. Tardes tardas a lente o estojo de ebonite sumaúma pião-roxo tuberculose. A bola e o luto dia sem limite. Cravo-de-defunto. Estearina. Moscas no nariz a língua coagulada na saliva de vidro e açúcar. O esmalte do dente apodrecido já nada tem a ver com o amor a timidez a injustiça social o ensino precário. Amanhã é domingo pede cachimbo. Os barcos cheios de peixes o sol aberto mais um dia findando mas os dias são muitos são demais não lamentemos. Bilhar. Zezé Caveira. Pires cachorro muro carambola cajueiro. O sexo da menina aberto ao verão recendendo como os cajus o inigualável sol da indecência. Jaca verde bago duro guerra aviões camapum merda jarro Stalingrado rabo-torto baba boca cega sujo terra podre brilho umidade cheiro esterco oh jardim

negro vazio oh chão fecundo perdido sob as tábuas do assoalho (há sol e não há gente para o sol as estradas vazias as vidas vazias as palavras vazias as cidades mortas a grama crescendo na praça vazia como uma explosão verde num olho vivo) que flores horrorosas brotariam da areia negra cheia de piolhos de rato merda de barata o perfume contrário à nossa espécie diurna o fedor a água mais baixa mais baixa — mãe das usinas. Perfumação. Agulha. Corpo. Alguém cloroformiza alguém com jasmim esta tarde. Algodão. Rádio. Um pássaro rola paralelo ao mar, caindo para o horizonte como uma pedra. Aracati ata açúcar algodão língua branca. O perfume selvagem duas frutas arduam seu cheiro sobre o fogão rubi garganta hemoptise matruz formiga-de-açúcar dinheiro enterrado a terra fechada indiferente é como se faláramos há séculos é como se ainda fôssemos falar

língua

serpe de sol

sal pétala poeira pele urina fogo-fátuo rosto flor perfume ferrugem lume
velha coroa do ouro do ido

jardim seco arquivado boca sem carne beijo de todos (não o sexo onde fazer)

o beijo pronto

sem ciúme

para a boca

branca para a boca

preta para a boca

podre

para a matinal

boca do leproso

para a amarga boca

do delator

a boca do chefe do subchefe

do Kubitschek
a repentina boca distraída
a ferida (boca) dos traídos
beijo beijo de todos
trigal das traças
língua
letra e papel
sol de areia
luto
lótus
fruta
fogo branco que as duas Ursas sopram
sua língua
e na terra queimada pelo coração dos homens quando o
crepúsculo
se retira sobre o mar como uma árvore que se arranca
[um cetro enferrujado aflorando
ou planta que nascesse chegada a primavera
do ferro
o mar buzina
voz de ostra garganta dos séculos fósseis
corneta perdida
o que nos diz essa voz de cal?

Gustavo Antero Gumar escrivão de polícia meteorologista jardineiro
mar relógio peixe-sabão tijolo dominical sexo ardendo entre as goiabas
banho na chuva flores Shirley Temple tesoura raio verde campo moeda
de fogo acima das ervas fumo-de-corda o sexo aceso como uma lâmpada
no clarão diurno sezo acexo nos fumos-de-erva-temple

o vento

levanta o chão de pó em chamas

Beleza oh puta pura

o que te ofereço? o auriverde pendão da minha terra?

o fogo de meu corpo?

Na página amarelecida mão de múmia sol mortiço
fulve letras flores da defunta euforia ruínas do canto

rosto na relva

despedindo-se

sol que houve de manhã na praia quem o deteve aqui como um bicho
um pássaro numa gaiola?

o sol triste apodrecendo na página como um dente

Um operário para trabalhar essas velhas lâminas de metal agonizante
fazer com ele um copo uma faca uma bomba

Beleza o que desejas?

oh febre oh fel oh pus

oh encanecida saliva

mel podridão calendário lepra sermão olhar descendo a rampa

adeus corpo-fátuo

REQUIEM FOR GULLAR

I leaned out the window the sill had the consistency of sleep. "I've said that these begonias ruin everything." My body bent over: a pile of leaves eyes things I'm at a loss for words to utter serene skin hair on my father's arm the gold watch. The earth. Exactly two weeks ago there was a hen scratching around that pepper tree. Lettuce tomato string beans. We've got to get back to nature. Water in the cistern water in the body water unbound in the basin. The great journey sea sweet sea jar of flowers pigs in the sun orthography. Sea sweet sea. Some memories offer us nothing, body on the sand sun chilly lagoon. Delicate creatures, the girl's face nuzzling the grass the darkness of day the heat. Dark breath the spine of knives of fire the grand ruin of the twilight. We must shine our shoes. We must cut our hair. We must make a call, oh we must call. Cumin and dry manioc. Mouth of smoke African earrings açai flag lantern. Twenty some odd years at the edge of the sea on the right on the left oh salty pennant soldiers living soil. Milk and auto. The cruel Sundays first whistle stop second whistle stop that one over there who believes in me even after death will die. You're late by afternoons the lens the ebonite etui ceiba tree purple spinning top tuberculosis. Ball and mourning limitless day. Dead man's carnation. Stearin. Flies at my nose my tongue coated with sugar spit and glass. The enamel of my rotted tooth now has nothing to do with love timidity social injustice precarious schooling. Tomorrow's Sunday kick back and relax. The boats filled with fish full sun another day winding down but the days are many too many let's not complain. Billiards. Zezé Caveira. Saucer dog wall cue ball cashew tree. The girl's sex displayed to the summer redolent of cashews the unequalled sun of indecency. Green jack fruit hard berries war aircraft groundcherries shit vase Stalingrad scorpion slobber mouth blind dirty rotting earth shining damp odor dung oh

empty black garden oh rank earth lost beneath the floorboards (there is sun but no one to see it empty roads empty lives empty words dead cities grass growing in the empty plaza like a green explosion in a keen eye) that horrid flowers would spring from the black sand teeming with lice with rats with shit with roaches the inverse perfume of our daylight species the stench the water lower ever lower — mother of the factories. Fragrance. Needle. Body. Someone chloroforms someone with jasmine this afternoon. Cotton. Radio. A bird planes parallel to the sea, falling toward the horizon like a stone. The northeast wind joining sugar cotton white tongue fish. Savage perfume two fruits burned their scent on the stove ruby throat coughing up blood swinecess sugar-ant buried money the inscrutable indifferent earth is as if we were speaking centuries ago is as if we were still to speak

with the tongue of a

sun serpent

salt petal dust skin urine will-o'-the-wisp face flower perfume rust light

ancient crown of old gold

dry garden set aside fleshless mouth everyone's kiss (not the place for sex)

puckered lips

without envy

for the white

mouth for the black

mouth for the rotted

mouth

for the morning

mouth of the leper

for the bitter mouth

of the informer

the mouth of the boss of his minion

of Kubitschek
the quickly distracted mouth
the wounds (the mouths) of the betrayed
kiss everyone's kiss
wheat field taken by moths
tongue
typeface and paper
sun of sand
loss
lotus
fruit
white fire that the two Ursas blow
their tongue
and on the burned earth for the heart of man when the
twilight
withdraws over the sea as a tree that sprouts a rusted flowering scepter
or a plant that appeared at the iron
arrival of spring
the ocean bugles
voice of the oyster throat of fossilized centuries
lost cornet
what does this calcified voice tell us?
Gustavo Antero Gumar police scribe meteorologist gardener sea clock
soapfish red clay tile dominical sex burning among the guava trees
shower in the rain flowers Shirley Temple scissors green stripe field firey
coin atop the grasses tobacco twist sex afire like a lamp in the daytime
glare sef axire in the smoke of temple incense
the wind
whips up the dusty ground in flames
Beauty oh wholesome whore

what can I present to you? the green and yellow flag of my land?
the fire of my body?

On the yellowed page a mummy's hand the dying
sun

gilds letters flowers of defunct euphoria the ruins of the song
face in the grass

saying good-bye

morning sun on the beach who stopped it here like a creature
a bird in a cage?

the sad sun rotting on the page like a tooth
A machinist to work these old sheets of agonizing metal
to make with them a cup a knife a bomb

Beauty what do you desire?

oh fever oh bile oh pus

oh decrepit spittle

honey putrescence calendar leprosy sermon glance descending the ramp
good-bye fatuous-body

POEMAS CONCRETOS /
NEOCONCRETOS
CONCRETE / NEO-CONCRETE POEMS
(1957-1958)

mel

laranja

lâmina

mel

sol lâmina

laranja mel

sol

laranja

lâmina

sol

balm

burn

blade

balm

beam blade

burn balm

beam

burn

blade

beam

verde verde verde

verde verde verde

verde verde verde

verde verde verde erva

green green green

green green green

green green green

green green green grass

erva	verde verde	
	erva erva erva	verde
verde		
	verde verde	erva

	green	
grass	green	
	grass	green
	grass	
green	grass	
	green	grass
	green	

DENTRO DA NOITE VELOZ
WITHIN THE SPEEDING NIGHT
(1962-1975)

MEU POVO, MEU POEMA

Meu povo e meu poema crescem juntos
como cresce no fruto
a árvore nova

No povo meu poema vai nascendo
como no canavial
nasce verde o açúcar

No povo meu poema está maduro
como o sol
na garganta do futuro

Meu povo em meu poema
se reflete
como a espiga se funde em terra fértil

Ao povo seu poema aqui devolvo
menos como quem canta
do que planta

MY PEOPLE, MY POEM

My people and my poem grow as one
as the new tree
grows within the fruit

My poem is being born in people
the way sugar ripens green
in fields of cane

My poem is growing ripe in people
like the sun
in the throat of their future

My people in my poem
are mirrored
in the way the corn takes root in fertile ground

To my people I return their poem
less as one who sings
as one who plants

VOLTAS PARA CASA

Depois de um dia inteiro de trabalho
voltas para casa, cansado.

Já é noite em teu bairro e as mocinhas
de calças compridas desceram para a porta
após o jantar.

Os namorados vão ao cinema.

As empregadas surgem das entradas de serviço.
Caminhas na calçada escura.

Consumiste o dia numa sala fechada,
lidando com papéis e números.
Telefonaste, escreveste,
irritações e simpatias surgiram e desapareceram
no fluir dessas horas. E caminhas,
agora, vazio,
como se nada acontecera.

De fato, nada te acontece, exceto
talvez o estranho que te pisa o pé no elevador
e se desculpa.

Desde quando
tua vida parou? Falas dos desastres,
dos crimes, dos adultérios,
mas são leitura de jornal. Freme
ao pensar em certo filme que viste: a vida,
a vida é bela!

A vida é bela

mas não a tua. Não a de Pedro,
de Antônio, de Jorge, de Júlio,
de Lúcia, de Míriam, de Luísa...

Às vezes pensas
com nostalgia
nos anos de guerra,
o horizonte de pólvora,
o cabrito. Mas a guerra
agora é outra. Caminhas.

Tua casa está ali. A janela
acesa no terceiro andar. As crianças
ainda não dormiram
Terá o mundo de ser para elas
este logro? Não será
teu dever mudá-lo?

Apertas o botão da cigarra.
Amanhã ainda não será outro dia.

YOU COME HOME

You work all day
and come home, beat.
The neighborhood is dark and after dinner
girls in slacks meet
at the door downstairs.
Lovers go to movies.
Maids spill from the servants' doors.
You walk along a darkened street.

You spent your day indoors,
dealing with papers and numbers.
You phoned, you wrote,
you felt the ebb and flow of nuisance and kindness
as the hours passed. And now you walk,
depleted,
as if nothing had happened.

In fact, nothing ever happens, except
perhaps the odd man in the elevator who steps on your foot
and begs your pardon.

At what point
did your life stop? You speak of disasters,
of crimes, of adultery,
but these are only stories from the papers. You shudder as you
think about a film you saw: life,
life is beautiful!

Life is beautiful

but not yours. Not Pedro's,
Antônio's, Jorge's, Júlio's,
Lúcia's, Míriam's, Luísa's...

At times you think
nostalgically
about the war years,
the smoke of guns on the horizon,
the victory of Cabrito. But war
is now so different. You walk.

Your house is over there. The window
glowing three flights up. The children
still awake
Can this be the best their world
can offer? Is it not
your duty to change it?

Your finger rings the bell.
Tomorrow still won't be another day.

NÃO HÁ VAGAS

O preço do feijão
não cabe no poema. O preço
do arroz
não cabe no poema.
Não cabem no poema o gás
a luz o telefone
a sonegação
do leite
da carne
do açúcar
do pão

O funcionário público
não cabe no poema
com seu salário de fome
sua vida fechada
em arquivos.
Como não cabe no poema
o operário
que esmerila seu dia de aço
e carvão
nas oficinas escuras

— porque o poema, senhores,
está fechado:
“não há vagas”
Só cabe no poema
o homem sem estômago

a mulher de nuvens
a fruta sem preço

O poema, senhores,
não fede
nem cheira

NOT HIRING

The price of beans
does not belong in this poem. The price
of rice
does not belong in this poem.
Gas, and lights and telephone
the fraudulent sales
of milk
of meat
of sugar
of bread
do not belong in this poem

The civil servant
should not be in this poem
with his starvation wages
his life enclosed
in archives.
Just as the workman
who grinds his day of steel
and coal
in lightless shops
does not belong in this poem

— because the poem, gentlemen,
is closed:
“Not Hiring”
Just the man who has no stomach
the woman made of cloud

the fruit they give away
belong in this poem

The poem, gentlemen,
has neither stench
nor scent

O AÇÚCAR

O branco açúcar que adoçará meu café
nesta manhã de Ipanema
não foi produzido por mim
nem surgiu dentro do açucareiro por milagre.

Vejo-o puro
e afável ao paladar
como beijo de moça, água
na pele, flor
que se dissolve na boca. Mas este açúcar
não foi feito por mim.

Este açúcar veio
da mercearia da esquina e tampouco o fez o Oliveira,
dono da mercearia.

Este açúcar veio
de uma usina de açúcar em Pernambuco
ou no Estado do Rio
e tampouco o fez o dono da usina.

Este açúcar era cana
e veio dos canaviais extensos
que não nascem por acaso
no regaço do vale.

Em lugares distantes, onde não há hospital
nem escola,

homens que não sabem ler e morrem
aos vinte e sete anos
plantaram e colheram a cana
que viraria açúcar.

Em usinas escuras,
homens de vida amarga
e dura
produziram este açúcar
branco e puro
com que adoço meu café esta manhã em Ipanema.

SUGAR

I didn't make
the sugar so white that makes my coffee sweet
this Ipanema morning
nor did some miracle create it in the sugar bowl.

I behold its purity
its appeal on the tongue
like the kisses of a girl, water
on the skin, a flower
that melts in the mouth. But I did not create
this sugar.

This sugar came
from the corner store, but the owner Oliveira
did not make it either.
It came from a sugar plant in Pernambuco
or from the State of Rio
but the owner of the plant
did not make it either.

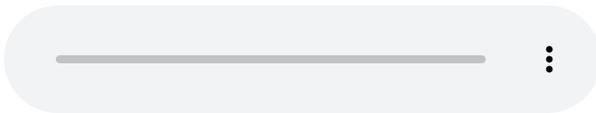
It came from the sugar cane
and started in the endless fields of cane
that in the valley's heart
do not grow by chance.

These places so remote
have neither hospital nor school,
and untaught men who plant and cut the cane

that becomes our sugar
will die before they reach
the age of twenty-seven.

In gloomy factories
men with bitter
brutal lives
produced this sugar
pure and white
I use to make my coffee sweet this Ipanema morning.

HOMEM COMUM



Sou um homem comum
de carne e de memória
de osso e esquecimento.
Ando a pé, de ônibus, de táxi, de avião
e a vida sopra dentro de mim
pânica
feito a chama de um maçarico
e pode
subitamente
cessar.

Sou como você
feito de coisas lembradas
e esquecidas
rostos e
mãos, o guarda-sol vermelho ao meio-dia
em Pastos-Bons,
defuntas alegrias flores passarinhos
facho de tarde luminosa
nomes que já nem sei
bocas bafos bacias
bandejas bandeiras bananeiras
tudo
misturado
essa lenha perfumada
que se acende
e me faz caminhar

Sou um homem comum
brasileiro, maior, casado, reservista,
e não vejo na vida, amigo,
nenhum sentido, senão
lutarmos juntos por um mundo melhor.

Poeta fui de rápido destino.

Mas a poesia é rara e não comove
nem move o pau-de-arara.

Quero, por isso, falar com você,
de homem para homem,
apoiar-me em você
oferecer-lhe o meu braço
que o tempo é pouco
e o latifúndio está aí, matando.

Que o tempo é pouco
e aí estão o Chase Bank,
a IT & T, a Bond and Share,
a Wilson, a Hanna, a Anderson Clayton,
e sabe-se lá quantos outros
braços do polvo a nos sugar a vida
e a bolsa

Homem comum, igual
a você,
cruzo a Avenida sob a pressão do imperialismo.
A sombra do latifúndio
mancha a paisagem,
turva as águas do mar

e a infância nos volta
à boca, amarga,
suja de lama e de fome.

Mas somos muitos milhões de homens
comuns
e podemos formar uma muralha
com nossos corpos de sonho e margaridas.

AN ORDINARY MAN

I am an ordinary man
of flesh and memory
of blood and oblivion.
I move on foot, by bus, by cab, by plane
and life breathes in me
as panicked as
the blowtorch flame
and can
suddenly
cease.

Like you, I am
made of things remembered
and forgotten
of faces
and hands, the red noon parasol
in Pastos-Bons,
joys defunct flowers birds
torch of the luminous afternoon
names I no longer know
brows breaths basins
baskets banners bananas
all
commingled
that perfumed kindling
that catches fire
and makes me walk

I am an ordinary man

Brazilian, middle-aged, married, reservist,
and, my friend, I see no meaning
in life, unless
we fight together for a better world.

I've been a poet from the start.

But poetry is delicate and neither moves
nor stirs the country bumpkin.

So I wish to speak to you,
man to man,
to lean on you
to offer you my arm
for time is running out
and the landed rich, our ruin, remain.

For time is running out
and here we have Chase Bank,
IT & T, Bond and Share,
Wilson, Hanna, Anderson Clayton,
and who knows how many other
octopus arms that bleed our lives
and pockets

An ordinary man, the same
as you,

I cross the Avenue beneath an imperial thumb.

The shadow of the landed rich
smears the landscape,
and muddies the sea
and infancy returns

now bitter in our mouths,
obscene with mud and hunger.

But we are many millions of ordinary
men

and we can form a wall
with bodies made of dream and daisies.

MAIO 1964

⋮

Na leitaria a tarde se reparte
em iogurtes, coalhadas, copos
de leite
e no espelho meu rosto. São
quatro horas da tarde, em maio.

Tenho 33 anos e uma gastrite. Amo
a vida

que é cheia de crianças, de flores
e mulheres, a vida,
esse direito de estar no mundo
ter dois pés e mãos, uma cara
e a fome de tudo, a esperança.
Esse direito de todos
que nenhum ato
institucional ou constitucional
pode cassar ou legar.

Mas quantos amigos presos!
quantos em cárceres escuros
onde a tarde fede a urina e terror.
Há muitas famílias sem rumo esta tarde
nos subúrbios de ferro e gás
onde brinca irremida a infância da classe operária.

Estou aqui. O espelho
não guardará a marca deste rosto,

se simplesmente saio do lugar
ou se morro
se me matam.

Estou aqui e não estarei, um dia,
em parte alguma.

Que importa, pois?
A luta comum me acende o sangue
e me bate no peito
como o coice de uma lembrança.

MAY 1964

In the dairy store the afternoon divides
 into yogurts, curdled milk, glasses
 of milk,
 and my face in the mirror. It's
four o'clock in the afternoon, in the month of May.

I'm 33 years old, and my stomach aches. I love
a life

 that's full of children, of flowers
 and women, life,
the right to be in the world
 to have two hands and feet, a face
 and a hunger for it all, hope.

The universal right
 that no law
 institutional or constitutional
 can revoke or grant.

But so many friends in prison!
 so many in dark cells
 where the afternoon stinks of urine and terror.
So many families adrift this afternoon
 in suburbs of gas and iron
where the unredeemed children of the working class play.

 I am here. The mirror
will not retain the image of this face,
 if I just move away

or if I die
or if they murder me.

I am here but someday
won't be anywhere.

What difference does it make?

Our common struggle ignites my blood
and beats within my chest,
another jab of memory.

AGOSTO 1964

⋮

Entre lojas de flores e de sapatos, bares,
mercados, butikues,
viajo
num ônibus Estrada de Ferro — Leblon.
Volto do trabalho, a noite em meio,
fatigado de mentiras.

O ônibus sacoleja. Adeus, Rimbaud,
relógio de lilases, concretismo,
neoconcretismo, ficções da juventude, adeus,
que a vida
eu a compro à vista aos donos do mundo.
Ao peso dos impostos, o verso sufoca,
a poesia agora responde a inquérito policial-militar.

Digo adeus à ilusão
mas não ao mundo. Mas não à vida,
meu reduto e meu reino.
Do salário injusto,
da punição injusta,
da humilhação, da tortura,
do terror,
retiramos algo e com ele construimos um artefato

um poema
uma bandeira

AUGUST 1964

Amid florists, shoe stores, bars
markets, boutiques,

I ride

on the Train Station — Leblon bus.

I return from work, in the middle of the night,
exhausted by the lies.

The bus lurches. Good-bye Rimbaud,
lilac clock, concretism,
neoconcretism, fictions of my youth, good-bye,
for life

I now pay cash to the owners of the earth.

The burden of taxes smothers the word,
and poetry answers to inquests of the military police.

I say good-bye to illusion
but not to the world. But not to life,
my redoubt is my kingdom.

From unjust wages
from unjust punishment
from humiliation, from torture
from terror,

we gain something and from it we create an artifact

a poem

a banner

COISAS DA TERRA

Todas as coisas de que falo estão na cidade
entre o céu e a terra.

São todas elas coisas perecíveis
e eternas como o teu riso
a palavra solidária
minha mão aberta

ou este esquecido cheiro de cabelo
que volta
e acende sua flama inesperada
no coração de maio.

Todas as coisas de que falo são de carne
como o verão e o salário.

Mortalmente inseridas no tempo,
estão dispersas como o ar
no mercado, nas oficinas,
nas ruas, nos hotéis de viagem.

São coisas, todas elas,
cotidianas, como bocas
e mãos, sonhos, greves,
denúncias,
acidentes do trabalho e do amor. Coisas,
de que falam os jornais
às vezes tão rudes
às vezes tão escuras
que mesmo a poesia as ilumina com dificuldade.

Mas é nelas que te vejo pulsando,
mundo novo,
ainda em estado de soluções e esperança.

THINGS OF THE EARTH

All the things I speak about are in the city
 between the earth and sky.

All of them are perishable things
 and eternal, like your smile
 the word of solidarity
 my open hand
or this forgotten scent of hair
 that returns
 and kindles its unexpected flame
in the heart of May.

All the things I speak about are made of flesh
 as are the summer and our salary.

Mortally thrust into time,
they are dispersed like air
in the market, in the factories,
in the streets, in the travelers' hotels.

 They are things, all of them,
 everyday things, like mouths
 and hands, dreams, strikes
 denunciations,
accidents at work and of love. Things,
 as in the newspapers
 sometimes so raw
 sometimes so dark
that even poetry must struggle to illuminate.

But it is in them that I see you beating,
new world,
still sobbing and hopeful.

PELA RUA

Sem qualquer esperança
detenho-me diante de uma vitrina de bolsas
na Avenida Nossa Senhora de Copacabana, domingo
enquanto o crepúsculo se desata sobre o bairro.

Sem qualquer esperança
te espero.
Na multidão que vai e vem
entra e sai dos bares e cinemas
surge teu rosto e some
num vislumbre
e o coração dispara.

Te vejo no restaurante
na fila do cinema, de azul
diriges um automóvel, a pé
cruzas a rua
miragem
que finalmente se desintegra com a tarde acima dos edifícios
e se esvai nas nuvens.

A cidade é grande
tem quatro milhões de habitantes e tu és uma só.
Em algum lugar estás a esta hora, parada ou andando,
talvez na rua ao lado, talvez na praia
talvez converses num bar distante
ou no terraço desse edifício em frente,
talvez estejas vindo ao meu encontro, sem o saberes,
misturada às pessoas que vejo ao longo da Avenida.

Mas que esperança! Tenho
uma chance em quatro milhões.
Ah, se ao menos fosses mil
disseminada pela cidade.

A noite se ergue commercial
nas constelações da Avenida.
Sem qualquer esperança
continuo
e meu coração vai repetindo teu nome
abafado pelo barulho dos motores
solto ao fumo da gasolina queimada.

ALONG THE STREET

With no hope
I pause before a shop display of purses
on Nossa Senhora de Copacabana Avenue, Sunday
as dusk settles on the neighborhood.

With no hope
I wait for you.
In crowds that come and go
that enter and depart the movies and the bars
your face appears and disappears
in a glimmer
 and my heart leaps.
I see you in the restaurant
in line to see a movie, in blue
you drive a car, on foot
you cross the street
 a mirage
that finally dissolves with the afternoon above the buildings
and disperses in the clouds.

The city is vast and
are only one among four million.
At this moment you are somewhere, paused or on your way,
perhaps the next street over, or maybe on the beach
perhaps in conversation in a distant bar
or on the terrace of that building straight ahead,
perhaps you're coming to meet me, unaware of it,
mingled with everyone I see on the avenue.

But what a dream!
One chance in four million.
If only you were a thousand or more
dispersed throughout the city.

The night then rears its business face
in the constellations of the avenue.
Stripped of hope
I carry on
and my heart still beats your name
muffled by the motors' roar
adrift in the smoke of burned gasoline.

A VIDA BATE

—
Não se trata do poema e sim do homem
e sua vida

— a mentida, a ferida, a consentida
vida já ganha e já perdida e ganha
outra vez.

Não se trata do poema e sim da fome
de vida,

o sôfrego pulsar entre constelações
e embrulhos, entre engulhos.

Alguns viajam, vão
a Nova York, a Santiago
do Chile. Outros ficam
mesmo na Rua da Alfândega, detrás
de balcões e de guichês.

Todos te buscam, facho
de vida, escuro e claro,

que é mais que a água na grama
que o banho no mar, que o beijo
na boca, mais
que a paixão na cama.

Todos te buscam e só alguns te acham. Alguns
te acham e te perdem.

Outros te acham e não te reconhecem
e há os que se perdem por te achar,

ó desatino
ó verdade, ó fome
de vida!

O amor é difícil
mas pode luzir em qualquer ponto da cidade.
E estamos na cidade
sob as nuvens e entre as águas azuis.

A cidade. Vista do alto
ela é fabril e imaginária, se entrega inteira
como se estivesse pronta.
Vista do alto,
com seus bairros e ruas e avenidas, a cidade
é o refúgio do homem, pertence a todos e a ninguém.
Mas vista
de perto,
revela o seu túrbido presente, sua
carnadura de pânico: as
pessoas que vão e vêm
que entram e saem, que passam
sem rir, sem falar, entre apitos e gases. Ah, o escuro
sangue urbano
movido a juro.

São pessoas que passam sem falar
e estão cheias de vozes
e ruínas. És Antônio?
És Francisco? És Mariana?
Onde escondeste o verde
clarão dos dias? Onde
escondeste a vida
que em teu olhar se apaga mal se acende?
E passamos

carregados de flores sufocadas.

Mas, dentro, no coração,
eu sei,

a vida bate. Subterraneamente,
a vida bate.

Em Caracas, no Harlem, em Nova Delhi,
sob as penas da lei,
em teu pulso,
a vida bate.

E é essa clandestina esperança
misturada ao sal do mar

que me sustenta
esta tarde

debruçado à janela de meu quarto em Ipanema
na América Latina.

LIFE BEATS

It's not about the poem but the man
and his life
— the tricked, the wounded, the capitulated
life first won, then lost and won
again.

It's not about the poem but the hunger
of life,

the avid pulsing amid constellations
and confusion, amid revulsion.

Some travel, go

to New York, to Santiago
de Chile. Others stay put
on Alfândega Street, behind
shop counters and tellers' windows.

Everyone seeks you, torch

of life, dark and light,

that is more than the dew on the grass
than swimming in the sea, than the kiss
on the mouth, more
than passion in bed.

Everybody looks for you but only some succeed. Some
will find you but then will lose you.

Others will find you but will not know you when they do,
and there are those who wander lost in quest,

oh foolishness

oh truth, oh hunger

of life!

Love is difficult

but it can shine in any corner of the city.

And we are in the city
beneath the clouds and between the blue waters.

The city. Seen from above she is
factory and illusory, she gives herself completely
as if she were prepared.

Seen from above,
with her neighborhoods and streets and avenues, the city
is the refuge of man, belongs to everyone and to no one.

But seen
close-up
she shows her murky present, her
panicked fleshiness: the
people who come and go,
who enter and depart, who pass by
and do not laugh, and do not speak, amid the gasses
[and the whistles. Oh, the dark

urban blood
sustained by usury.

They are people who pass and do not speak
and are full of voices
and ruins. Is that you Antônio?
Is that you Francisco? Is that you Mariana?
Where did you hide the bright
green of the days? Where
did you hide the life
extinguished in your sight the second that it flared?
And we pass by

burdened by asphyxiated flowers.

But, within, in my heart

I know,

life beats. Subterraneanly,

life beats.

In Caracas, in Harlem, in New Delhi,

under penalty of law,

in your pulse,

life beats.

And it is a clandestine hope

mingled with the salt of the sea

that sustains me

this afternoon

leaning on the sill of my room in Ipanema

in Latin America.

PRAIA DO CAJU

Escuta:

o que passou passou
e não há força
capaz de mudar isto.

Nesta tarde de férias, disponível, podes,
se quiseres, lembrar.
Mas nada acenderá de novo
o lume
que na carne das horas se perdeu.

Ah, se perdeu!
Nas águas da piscina se perdeu
sob as folhas da tarde
nas vozes conversando na varanda
no riso de Marília no vermelho
guarda-sol esquecido na calçada.

O que passou passou e, muito embora,
voltas às velhas ruas à procura.
Aqui estão as casas, a amarela,
a branca, a de azulejo, e o sol
que nelas bate é o mesmo
sol
que o Universo não mudou nestes vinte anos.

Caminhas no passado e no presente.
Aquela porta, o batente de pedra,

o cimento da calçada, até a falha do cimento. Não sabes já se lembras, se descobres.

E com surpresa vês o poste, o muro,
a esquina, o gato na janela,

em soluços quase te perguntas
onde está o menino
igual àquele que cruza a rua agora,
franzino assim, moreno assim.

Se tudo continua, a porta
a calçada, a platibanda,
onde está o menino que também
aqui esteve? aqui nesta calçada
se sentou?

E chegas à amurada. O sol é quente
como era, a esta hora. Lá embaixo
a lama fede igual, a poça de água negra
a mesma água o mesmo
urubu pousado ao lado a mesma
lata velha que enferruja.
Entre dois braços d'água
esplende a croa do Anil. E na intensa
claridade, como sombra,
surge o menino
correndo sobre a areia. É ele, sim,
gritas seu nome: “Zeca,
Zeca!”

Mas a distância é vasta
tão vasta que nenhuma voz alcança.
O que passou passou.
Jamais acenderás de novo

o lume
do tempo que apagou.

CASHEW BEACH

Listen:

What is past is past
and there is nothing
that can change this.

Idle, this holiday afternoon, you can,
if you wish, recall.
But nothing will ever light again
the lamp
that got lost in the flesh of hours.

Oh, it was lost!
It was lost in the swimming pool waters
under the afternoon leaves
in the voices on the veranda
in Marília's laughter in the red
parasol forgotten on the sidewalk.

What is past is past and, despite it all,
you return to the old streets in search.
Here are the houses, the yellow one,
the white one, the tiled one, and the sun
that beats on them is the same
sun
that the Universe has left unchanged across these twenty years.

You walk in the past and in the present.
That door, the stone doorjamb,

the sidewalk cement, or its voids. You don't know yet
if you recall, if you discover.

And with surprise you see the lamppost, the wall,
the corner, the cat in the window,

sobbing, you nearly ask yourself
where is the boy
just like the one crossing the street now,
just that thin, just that dark.

If everything perseveres, the door
the sidewalk the frieze,
where is the boy who was
also here? did he sit here
on this sidewalk?

And you come to the sea wall. The sun is hot
as it was, at this hour. Down there
the mud stinks in the same way, the well of black water
the same water the same
vulture hunching at its edge the same
old rusting tin can.

Between two arms of water
the crown of the river Anil sparkles in the sun. And in the
intense

brightness, like shadow,
the boy appears
running on the sand. It's him, yes,
you shout his name: "Zeca,
Zeca!"

But the distance is vast
so vast that no voice could span it.
What's past is past.

You'll never light again
the lamp
that time extinguished.

junto à noite da terra entre
formigas (minha
vida!) nos cabelos
do ventre e morno
do corpo por dentro na usina
da vida

em cada corpo em cada
habitante

dentro

de cada coisa

clamando em cada casa

a cidade

sob o calor da tarde

quando o avião passou

II

eu devo ter ouvido no meu quarto
um barulho cortar outros barulhos

no alarido da época
rolando

por cima do telhado

eu

devo ter ouvido
(sem ouvir)

o ronco do motor enquanto lia
e ouvia
a conversa da família na varanda
dentro daquela tarde
que era clara
e para sempre perdida
que era clara
e para sempre
em meu corpo
a clamar
(entre zunidos
de serras entre gritos
na rua
entre latidos
de cães
no balcão da quitanda
no açúcar já-noite das laranjas
no sol fechado

e podre

àquela hora

dos legumes que ficaram sem vender
no sistema de cheiros e negócios
do nosso Mercado Velho

— o ronco do avião)

III

eu devo ter ouvido

seu barulho atolou-se no tijuco

da Camboa na febre

do Alagado resvalou

nas platibandas sujas

nas paredes de louça

penetrou nos quartos entre redes

fedendo a gente

entre retratos

nos espelhos

onde a tarde dançava iluminada

Seu barulho

era também a tarde (um avião) que passava

ali

como eu

passava à margem do Bacanga

em São Luís do Maranhão

no norte

do Brasil

sob as nuvens

IV

eu devo ter ouvido
ou mesmo visto
o avião como um pássaro
branco
romper o céu
veloz voando sobre as cores da ilha
num relance passar
no ângulo da janela
como um fato qualquer
eu devo ter ouvido esse avião
que às três e dez de uma tarde
há trinta anos
fotografou nossa cidade

next to the night of the earth amid
ants (my
life!) in the belly's
hair and indifferent
to the body within the factory
of life

in each body in each
resident

within

each thing
clamoring in each house

the city
beneath the heat of the afternoon
as the airplane passed

II

I must have heard in the din of the times
a sound cutting through the other sounds

in my bedroom
rolling

above the tile roof

I

must have heard
(without hearing)

the drone of the motor as I read
and heard

the family conversation on the veranda

within that afternoon

which was clear

and lost forever

which was clear

and forever

clamoring

within my body

(amid the buzzing

of saws amid shouts

in the street

amid the barking

of dogs

at the grocery counter

in the now-night sugar of the oranges

in the rotting and extinguished

sun

at that hour

of the unsold vegetables
within the system of smells and business deals
of our Old Market
—the drone of the plane)

III

I must have heard

its sound bogged down in the mud
of the Camboa in the fever
of the Alagado it slipped by
on the dirty friezes

above the tiled walls

it penetrated the bedrooms among hammocks

smelling of people

among portraits

in the mirrors

where the afternoon danced in light

Its sounds

were also the afternoon (a plane) in flight

there

as I

walked on the banks of the Bacanga

in São Luís do Maranhão

in the north

of Brazil

beneath the clouds

IV

I must have heard
or for that matter seen
the bird-like plane

white
splitting the sky
flying fast above the colors of the island
in the wink of an eye passing by
in the corner of the window
as any other detail

I must have heard that plane
which at ten after three one afternoon
thirty years ago
took a picture of our city

NO CORPO

De que vale tentar reconstruir com palavras
o que o verão levou
entre nuvens e risos
junto com o jornal velho pelos ares?
O sonho na boca, o incêndio na cama,
o apelo na noite
agora são apenas esta
contração (este clarão)
de maxilar dentro do rosto.

A poesia é o presente.

IN THE BODY

Why bother trying to reconstruct with words
that which the summer has carried away
amid the clouds and laughter
together with the old newspaper in the air?
The dream in the mouth, the fire in bed,
the plea in the night
are now just this
clenching (this illumination)
of the jawbone in the face.

Poetry is the present.

POEM

for Leo Víctor

If I die
the universe will turn off as the things within this room
turn off

 if I turn off the lamp:
my Asian shoes, my shirts
and wars on the chair, my Andes
jacket,
 billions of quadrillions of beings
and suns
 will die with me.

Or not:

 the sun will return to touch
 this same spot on the floor
 where my foot was;
 from this room
you will hear the noise of buses in the street;
 a new city
 from this one will emerge
 as new trees come from trees.

It's just that no one will ever read again in the disintegration of these
clouds
the same story that moves me now as I read it.

A CASA



Debaixo do assoalho da casa
no talco preto da terra prisioneira,
quem fala?

naquela
noite menor sob os pés da família
naquele
território sem flor

debaixo das velhas tábuas
que pisamos pisamos pisamos
quando o sol ia alto

quando o sol já morria
quando o sol já morria
e eu morria
quem fala?
quem falou? quem falará?
na língua de fogo azul do país debaixo da casa?

Fala talvez
ali
a moeda que uma tarde rolou (a moeda uma tarde) rolou
e se apagou naquele solo lunar

Fala
talvez um rato
que nos ouvia de sob as tábuas
e conosco aprendeu a mentir
e amar
(no nosso desamparo de São Luís do Maranhão

na Camboa
dentro do sistema solar
entre constelações que da janela víamos
num relance)

Fala

talvez o rato morto fedendo até secar

E ninguém mais?

E o verão? e as chuvas

torrenciais? e a classe

operária? as poucas

festas de aniversário

não falam?

A rede suja, a bilha

na janela, o girassol

no saguão clamando contra o muro

as formigas

no cimento da cozinha

Bizuza

morta

Maria Lúcia, Adi, Papai

mortos

não falam.

Mas gira, planeta, gira

oceanos azuis da minha vida

sonhos, amores, meus

poemas de ferro,

minha luta comum,

gira,

planeta

E sobre as tábuas
a nossa vida, os nossos móveis,
a cadeira de embalo, a mesa de jantar,
o guarda-roupa
com seu espelho onde a tarde dançava rindo
feito uma menina
E as janelas abertas
por onde o espaço como um pássaro
fugia
sobrevoadava as casas e rumava
num sonho
para as cidades do sul

THE HOUSE

Beneath the floor of the house
in the black talc of the captive earth,
who is speaking?
in that
minor night beneath the family feet
in that
flowerless region
beneath the ancient floorboards
that we trod trod trod
when the sun rose high
when the sun was dying
when the sun was dying
and I was dying
who is speaking?
who spoke? who will speak?
in the tongue of blue fire of the nation beneath the house?

Perhaps
who is speaking there is
the coin that rolled one afternoon (the coin an afternoon) rolled
and expired out on that lunar soil
Perhaps a mouse
that heard us from beneath the floorboards
and with us learned to lie
and love
is speaking
(in our abandonment in São Luís do Maranhão
in Camboa

within the solar system
among the constellations which from the window we saw
in a glance)

Perhaps

the dead mouse stinking until it dries is speaking

And no one else?

And the summer? and the torrential

rains? and the working

class? aren't the infrequent

birthday parties

speaking?

The soiled hammock, the clay jug

in the window, the sunflower

in the entry clamoring against the wall

the ants

on the concrete kitchen floor

Bizuza

dead

Maria Lúcia, Adi, Pappa

dead

they do not speak.

But turn, planet, turn

blue oceans of my life

dreams, loves, my

poems of iron,

my ordinary struggle,

turn,

planet

And above the floorboards

our life, our furniture,
the rocking chair, the dining table,
the wardrobe
with its mirror where the afternoon danced and laughed
like a girl
And the open windows
through which space fled
like a bird
flew over the houses and headed
in a dream
toward the cities of the South

A POESIA

Onde está
a poesia? indaga-se
por toda parte. E a poesia
vai à esquina comprar jornal.

Cientistas esartejam Púchkin e Baudelaire.
Exegetas desmontam a máquina da linguagem.
A poesia ri.

Baixa-se uma portaria: é proibido
misturar o poema com Ipanema.
O poeta depõe no inquerito:
meu poema é puro, flor
sem haste, juro!
Não tem passado nem futuro.
Não sabe a fel nem sabe a mel:
é de papel.
Não é como a açucena
que efêmera
passa.
E não está sujeito a traça
pois tem a proteção do inseticida.
Creia,
o meu poema está infenso à vida.

Claro, a vida é suja, a vida é dura.
E sobretudo insegura:

“Suspeito de atividades subversivas foi detido ontem

que André vai chegar
É preciso preparar o jantar
É preciso ir buscar o menino no colégio
lavar a roupa limpar a vidraça

O amor

(era muito? era pouco?
era calmo? era louco?)

passa

A infância

passa

a ambulância

passa

Só não passa, Ingrácia,
a tua grácia!

E pensar que nunca mais a terei
real e efêmera (na penumbra da tarde)
como a primavera.

E pensar
que ela também vai se juntar
ao esqueleto das noites estreladas
e dos perfumes
que dentro de mim gravitam
feito pó

(e um dia, claro,
ao acender um cigarro
talvez se deflagre com o fogo do fósforo
seu sorriso
entre meus dedos. E só).

Poesia — deter a vida com palavras?
Não — libertá-la,
fazê-la voz e fogo em nossa voz. Po-
esia — falar
o dia

acendê-lo do pó
abri-lo
como carne em cada sílaba, de-
flagrá-lo
como bala em cada não
como arma em cada mão

E súbito da calçada sobe
e explode
junto ao meu rosto o pás-
saro? o pás-
?

Como chamá-lo? Pombo? Bomba? Prombo? Como?

Ele

bicava o chão há pouco
era um pombo mas
súbito explode
em ajas brulhos zules bulha zalas
e foge!
como chamá-lo? Pombo? Não:
poesia
paixão
revolução

POETRY

Where is
poetry? it pries into
everywhere. And poetry
goes to the corner to buy a paper.

Scientists draw and quarter Pushkin and Baudelaire.
Exegetes dismantle the machine of language.
Poetry laughs.

A court decision comes down: it is forbidden
to mix the poem with Ipanema.
The poet testifies at the hearing:
my poem is pure, a stemless
flower, I swear!
It has no past or future.
It tastes of neither choler nor sugar:
it is made of paper.
It is not like the Easter lily
that passes
ephemerally.
And insecticide protects it
from the silverfish.
Believe it,
my poem is hostile to life.

Of course, life is dirty, life is stingy.
And above all it is uncertain:

“The poet Casimiro de Abreu was arrested yesterday

on suspicion of subversive activities.”

“The Camboa Textiles Factory declared bankruptcy and laid off one hundred workers.”

“The adulteress Rosa Gonçalves, testifying in the Third Family Court,
shamelessly declared: ‘Yes, I betrayed him. One falls out of love, your honor.’”

The ring you gave to me
was made of glass and broke
the love you had for me
was not and ended only smoke

Was it so little? was it a lot?

It was blue hunger and a razor
a dizziness of hair teeth
odors that pass through metal
and still keep me from living

Was it so little? It was crazy,

a plunge
into the depth of your open silk flowering below

where I died

Green and white
green and white
white white white white

And now

lying on the living room divan
after all is said and done
poetry laughs at me

Agh, I have to clean the house
because André is coming over
I have to prepare dinner
I have to pick up my boy at school
do the laundry wash the windows

Love

(was it a balm? was it inane?
was it calm? was it insane?)

passes

Childhood

passes

the ambulance

passes

The only thing that does not pass, Ingrácia,
is your grace!

And to think that I'll never have her again
real and ephemeral (in the shadows of the afternoon)
like the springtime.

And to think
that she too will join
the skeleton of starry nights
and of perfumes
that gravitate like dust
within me

(and some day, of course,
while lighting up a cigarette
perhaps your smile
will flare like a match

between my fingers. And alone).

Poetry — suspend life with words?

No — free it,
make it voice and fire in our voice. Po-

etry — to speak
the day

to light it from the dust
to open it
like flesh in every syllable, in-
flame it

like a bullet in every no
like a weapon wherever we go

And suddenly from the sidewalk rises
and explodes
next to my face the bi-
rd? the bi-
?

What should I call it? Pigeon? Bomb? Pigeomb? What?

It

pecked the ground not long ago
it was a pigeon but
suddenly explodes
in wings brusts bloos rukus wingz

and flies!

what should I call it? Pigeon? No:
poetry
passion

revolution

AO NÍVEL DO FOGO



falo

e por muitos incêndios ao meu redor
no incêndio do mar às minhas costas
(ou a lembrança)
no alto incêndio das nuvens sobre as cidades
no incêndio das frutas na mesa de jantar

que por toda parte lavra
evidente e oculto
esse fogo
feito seda na carne da mulher
fome no coração do povo
branco no pão

e por dentro e por fora me trabalha
como um sistema de sóis vivos ou mortos
que irrompem feito relâmpagos
dos olores velhos
em cujas cinzas dormiam
ou risos que voltam a iluminar
a vida, entre bater de talheres e de pratos
passos na sala e o desamparo
do coração que é um ramo de flor
dentro de uma bolsa
a viajar pela cidade

Ao nível do fogo

e entre fogos (em Santiago
do Chile, em
Buenos Aires, em)

falo
à beira da morte
como os vegetais
com seu motor de água
como as aves
movidas a vento,
como a noite (ou a esperança)
com suas hélices
de hidrogênio

ON THE LEVEL OF FIRE

i declare
and on behalf of many fires surrounding me
in the fire of the sea at my back
(or my memory)
in the towering fire of clouds above cities
in the fire of fruits on the dining room table

that everywhere this fire
is working
open and unseen
like silk in the flesh of a woman
hunger in the heart of a people
the whiteness in bread

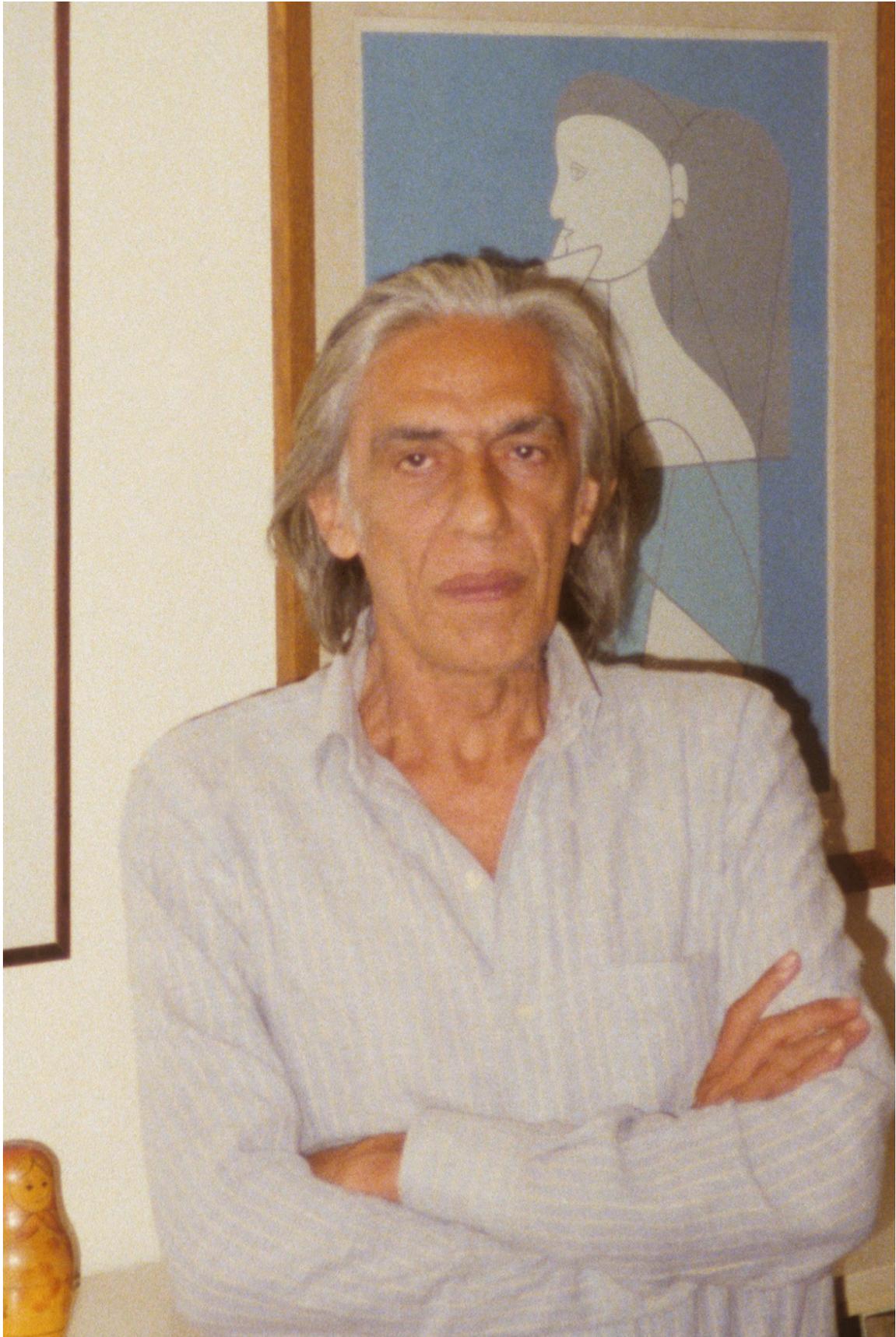
and inside and outside it works me
like a system of suns living or dead
that discharge like lightning
from the old smells
in whose ashes they were sleeping
or laughter that returns to illuminate
life, amid the clatter of the knives and forks and plates
steps in the living room and the helplessness
of the heart that is a branch of flowers
in a bag
traveling through the city

On the level of fire
and amid fires (in Santiago)

de Chile, in
Buenos Aires, in)

i declare
on the cusp of death
like vegetables
with their aqueous motor
like birds
moved by the wind,
like night (or hope)
with its spirals
of hydrogen

POEMA SUJO
DIRTY POEM (1975)



Ferreira Gullar in 1985

PORTUGUÊS
ENGLISH



turvo turvo
a turva
mão do sopro
contra o muro
escuro
menos menos
menos que escuro

menos que mole e duro menos que fosso e muro: menos que furo

escuro
mais que escuro:
claro

como água? como pluma? claro mais que claro claro: coisa alguma
e tudo
(ou quase)

um bicho que o universo fabrica e vem sonhando desde as entranhas
azul
era o gato
azul
era o galo
azul
o cavalo
azul
teu cu

tua gengiva igual a tua bocetinha que parecia sorrir entre as folhas de
banana entre os cheiros de flor e bosta de porco aberta como uma boca

do corpo (não como a tua boca de palavras) como uma entrada para
eu não sabia tu
não sabias
fazer girar a vida
com seu montão de estrelas e oceano
entrando-nos em ti

bela bela
mais que bela
mas como era o nome dela?
Não era Helena nem Vera
nem Nara nem Gabriela
nem Tereza nem Maria
Seu nome seu nome era...
Perdeu-se na carne fria

perdeu-se na confusão de tanta noite e tanto dia
perdeu-se na profusão das coisas acontecidas
constelações de alfabeto
noites escritas a giz
pastilhas de aniversário
domingos de futebol
enterros corsos comícios
roleta bilhar baralho

mudou de cara e cabelos mudou de olhos e risos mudou de casa
e de tempo: mas está comigo está
perdido comigo
teu nome
em alguma gaveta

Que importa um nome a esta hora do anoitecer em São Luís

do Maranhão à mesa do jantar sob uma luz de febre entre irmãos
e pais dentro de um enigma?

mas que importa um nome
debaixo deste teto de telhas encardidas vigas à mostra entre
cadeiras e mesa entre uma cristaleira e um armário diante de
garfos e facas e pratos de louça que se quebraram já
um prato de louça ordinária não dura tanto
e as facas se perdem e os garfos
se perdem pela vida caem
pelas falhas do assoalho e vão conviver com ratos
e baratas ou enferrujam no quintal esquecidos entre os pés de erva-
cidreira
e as grossas orelhas de hortelã
quanta coisa se perde
nesta vida
Como se perdeu o que eles falavam ali
mastigando
misturando feijão com farinha e nacos de carne assada
e diziam coisas tão reais como a toalha bordada
ou a tosse da tia no quarto
e o clarão do sol morrendo na platibanda em frente à nossa
janela

tão reais que
se apagaram para sempre

Ou não?

Não sei de que tecido é feita minha carne e essa vertigem
que me arrasta por avenidas e vaginas entre cheiros de gás
e mijo a me consumir como um facho-corpo sem chama,

ou dentro de um ônibus
ou no bojo de um Boeing 707 acima do Atlântico
acima do arco-íris
perfeitamente fora
do rigor cronológico
sonhando

Garfos enferrujados facas cegas cadeiras furadas mesas gastas
balcões de quitanda pedras da Rua da Alegria beirais de casas
cobertos de limo muros de musgos palavras ditas à mesa do
jantar,

voais comigo
sobre continentes e mares

E também rastejais comigo
pelos túneis das noites clandestinas
sob o céu estrelado do país
entre fulgor e lepra

debaixo de lençóis de lama e de terror
vos esgueirais comigo, mesas velhas,
armários obsoletos gavetas perfumadas de passado,
dobrais comigo as esquinas do susto
e esperais esperais

que o dia venha
E depois de tanto
que importa um nome?

Te cubro de flor, menina, e te dou todos os nomes do mundo:
te chamo aurora
te chamo água
te descubro nas pedras coloridas nas artistas de cinema
nas aparições do sonho

— E esta mulher a tossir dentro da casa!

Como se não bastasse o pouco dinheiro, a lâmpada fraca,
o perfume ordinário, o amor escasso, as goteiras no inverno.
E as formigas brotando aos milhões negras como golfadas de
dentro da parede (como se aquilo fosse a essência da casa)
E todos buscavam

num sorriso num gesto
nas conversas da esquina
no coito em pé na calçada escura do Quartel
no adultério
no roubo
a decifração do enigma

— Que faço entre coisas?
— De que me defendo?

Num cofo no quintal na terra preta cresciam plantas e rosas
(como pode o perfume
nascer assim?)

Da lama à beira das calçadas, da água dos esgotos cresciam
pés de tomate

Nos beirais das casas sobre as telhas cresciam capins
mais verdes que a esperança
(ou o fogo
de teus olhos)

Era a vida a explodir por todas as fendas da cidade
sob as sombras da guerra:

a gestapo a wehrmacht a raf a feb a blitzkrieg
catalinas torpedeamentos a quinta-coluna os fascistas os nazistas os
comunistas o repórter isso a discussão na quitanda o querosene o sabão

de andiroba o mercado negro o racionamento o blackout as montanhas
de metais velhos o italiano assassinado na Praça João Lisboa o cheiro de
pólvora os canhões alemães troando nas noites de tempestade por cima
da nossa casa. Stalingrado resiste.

Por meu pai que contrabandeava cigarros, por meu primo que passava
rifa, pelo tio que roubava estanho à Estrada de Ferro, por seu Neco que
fazia charutos ordinários, pelo sargento Gonzaga que tomava tiquira
com mel de abelha e trepava com a janela aberta,

 pelo meu carneiro manso

 por minha cidade azul

 pelo Brasil salve salve,

Stalingrado resiste.

A cada nova manhã

nas janelas nas esquinas na manchete dos jornais

Mas a poesia não existia ainda.

 Plantas. Bichos. Cheiros. Roupas.

 Olhos. Braços. Seios. Bocas.

 Vidraça verde, jasmim.

 Bicicleta no domingo.

 Papagaios de papel.

 Retreta na praça.

 Luto.

 Homem morto no mercado

 sangue humano nos legumes.

 Mundo sem voz, coisa opaca.

Nem Bilac nem Raimundo. Tuba de alto clangor, lira singela?

Nem tuba nem lira grega. Soube depois: fala humana, voz de
gente, barulho escuro do corpo, intercortado de relâmpagos

Do corpo. Mas que é o corpo?
Meu corpo feito de carne e de osso.
Esse osso que não vejo, maxilares, costelas,
flexível armação que me sustenta no espaço
que não me deixa desabar como um saco
vazio
que guarda as vísceras todas
funcionando
como retortas e tubos
fazendo o sangue que faz a carne e o pensamento
e as palavras
e as mentiras
e os carinhos mais doces mais sacanas
mais sentidos
para explodir como uma galáxia
de leite
no centro de tuas coxas no fundo
de tua noite ávida
cheiros de umbigo e de vagina
graves cheiros indecifráveis
como símbolos
do corpo
do teu corpo do meu corpo
corpo
que pode um sabre rasgar
um caco de vidro
uma navalha
meu corpo cheio de sangue
que o irriga como a um continente
ou um jardim

circulando por meus braços
por meus dedos
enquanto discuto caminho
lembro relembro
meu sangue feito de gases que aspiro
dos céus da cidade estrangeira
com a ajuda dos plátanos
e que pode — por um descuido — esvair-se por meu
pulso

aberto

Meu corpo
que deitado na cama vejo
como um objeto no espaço
que mede 1,70m
e que sou eu: essa coisa
deitada
barriga pernas pés
com cinco dedos cada um (por que
não seis?)
joelhos e tornozelos
para mover-se
sentar-se
levantar-se

meu corpo de 1,70m que é meu tamanho no mundo
meu corpo feito de água
e cinza
que me faz olhar Andrômeda, Sírius, Mercúrio
e me sentir misturado
a toda essa massa de hidrogênio e hélio

que se desintegra e reintegra
sem se saber pra quê

Corpo meu corpo corpo
que tem um nariz assim uma boca
dois olhos
e um certo jeito de sorrir
de falar
que minha mãe identifica como sendo de seu filho
que meu filho identifica
como sendo de seu pai
corpo que se pára de funcionar provoca
um grave acontecimento na família:
sem ele não há José Ribamar Ferreira
não há Ferreira Gullar
e muitas pequenas coisas acontecidas no planeta
estarão esquecidas para sempre

corpo-facho corpo-fátuo corpo-fato

atravessado de cheiros de galinheiros e rato
na quitanda ninho
de rato
cocô de gato
sal azinhavre sapato
brilhantina anel barato
língua no cu na boceta cavalo-de-crista chato
nos pentelhos
corpo meu corpo-falo
insondável incompreendido

meu cão doméstico meu dono
cheio de flor e de sono
meu corpo-galáxia aberto a tudo cheio
de tudo como um monturo
de trapos sujos latas velhas colchões usados sinfonias
sambas e frevos azuis
de Fra Angelico verdes de
Cézanne
matéria-sonho de Volpi

Mas sobretudo meu

corpo

nordestino

mais que isso

maranhense

mais que isso

sanluisense

mais que isso

ferreirense

newtoniense

alzirense

meu corpo nascido numa porta-e-janela da Rua dos Prazeres

ao lado de uma padaria

sob o signo de Virgo

sob as balas do 24º BC

na revolução de 30

e que desde então segue pulsando como um relógio

num tic tac que não se ouve

(senão quando se cola o ouvido à altura do meu coração)

tic tac tic tac

enquanto vou entre automóveis e ônibus
entre vitrinas de roupas
nas livrarias
nos bares
tic tac tic tac
pulsando há 45 anos
esse coração oculto
pulsando no meio da noite, da neve, da chuva
debaixo da capa, do paletó, da camisa
debaixo da pele, da carne,
combatente clandestino aliado da classe operária
meu coração de menino

claro claro
mais que claro

raro

o relâmpago clareia os continentes passados:

noite e jasmim
junto à casa

vozes perdidas na lama
domingos vazios

água sonhando na tina
pátria de mato e ferrugem

busca de cobre e alumínio
pelos terrenos baldios
economia de guerra?
pra mim

torresmo e cinema

Sozinho naquele
desaguadouro de rio

sob o sol duro do trópico
sozinho na tarde no planeta na história

arrastando camarão
com um cofo de palha

quê

que eu buscava ali?

Houvera a guerra de Tróia?

Homero Dante Boccaccio?

Já nascera a geometria?

Só tijuco e água salgada
só bagres e baiacus
areia sol vento e chuva
e as velas coloridas
dos barcos pela baía:

que perguntava eu ali

com aquele cofo nas mãos

sob o sol do Maranhão?

Não era o sol de Laplace

nem era a ilha geográfica:

era o sol

o sol apenas

com cheiro de lama podre

e o cheiro de peixe e gente

corvina serra cação

papista comendo merda

na saída do bueiro
pátria de sal e ferrugem
que é que eu buscava ali
caminhando pelos trilhos
à toa
saltando dormentes
vadeando pelo córrego
raso de limo sapos garrafas
cheias de lama canos
onde moravam peixes-sabão
andando
sem rumo entre vagões rodas
de trem eixos leprosos
caixas de rolamento
abandonadas cheias
de terra ferrugem graxa
capim coberto de óleo

Que me ensinavam essas aulas
de solidão
entre coisas da natureza
e do homem?

O alto galpão de zinco
clarões de solda

operários na penumbra
paredes negras de fumo
Não era uma casa: uma casa
tem cadeiras mesas poltronas

Um templo
seria? mas

sem nichos sem altar sem santos?

Que era aquilo-uma-usina?

onde a tarde se fazia
com faíscas de esmeril calor de forja
onde a tarde era outra
tarde
que nada tinha daquela
que eu via agora distante
para além da via férrea
além do cais
além das águas do Anil, lá
cega de sol por detrás das ruínas
do Forte da Ponta d'Areia
na entrada da baía

Quantas tardes numa tarde!
e era outra, fresca,
debaixo das árvores boas a tarde
na praia do Jenipapeiro
Ou do outro lado ainda
a tarde maior da cidade
amontoada de sobrados e mirantes
ladeiras quintais quitandas
hortas jiraus galinheiros
ou na cozinha (distante) onde Bizuza
prepara o jantar
e não canta

ah quantas só numa
tarde geral que cobre de nuvens a cidade
tecendo no alto e conosco
a história branca
da vida qualquer

ah ventos soprando verdes nas palmeiras dos Remédios
gramas crescendo obscuras sob meus pés
entre os trilhos
e dentro da tarde a tarde-
locomotiva
que vem como um paquiderme
de aço
tarda pesada
maxilares cerrados cabeça zinindo
uma catedral que se move
envolta em vapor
bufando pânico
prestes
a explodir

tchi tchi
trã trã trã
tarã TARÃ TARÃ
tchi tchi tchi tchi tchi
TARÃ TARÃ TARÃ TARÃ TARÃ TARÃ

*(Para ser cantada com a música da
Bachiana n.º 2, Tocata de Villa-Lobos)*

lá vai o trem com o menino
lá vai a vida a rodar
lá vai ciranda e destino
cidade e noite a girar
lá vai o trem sem destino
pro dia novo encontrar
correndo vai pela terra
vai pela serra
vai pelo mar
cantando pela serra do luar
correndo entre as estrelas a voar
no ar
piiuí! piuí piuí
no ar
piuí piuí piuí
adeus meu grupo escolar
adeus meu anzol de pescar
adeus menina que eu quis amar
que o trem me leva e nunca mais vai parar

VAARÃ VAARÃ VAARÃ VAARÃ
tuc tchuc tuc tchuc tuc tchuc

brisa branca brisa fria
cinzentura quase dia

IUI IUI IUI IUI IUI
tuc tchuc tuc tchuc tuc tchuc

lará lará larará

lará lará larará
lará lará larará
lará lará larará lará larará lará larará
lará lará lará
lará lará lará

IUI IUI IUI IUI IUI
iui iui iui iui iui iui iui

saímos de casa às quatro
com as luzes da rua acesas

meu pai levava a maleta
eu levava uma sacola

rumamos por Afogados
outras ladeiras e ruas

o que pra ele era rotina
para mim era aventura

quando chegamos à gare
o trem realmente estava

ali parado esperando
muito comprido e chiava

entramos no carro os dois
eu entre alegre e assustado

meu pai (que já não existe)
me fez sentar ao seu lado

talvez mais feliz que eu
por me levar na viagem

meu pai (que já não existe)
sorria, os olhos brilhando

VAARÃ VAARÃ VAARÃ VAARÃ

tchuc tchuc tchuc
tchuc tchuc tchuc

TRARÃ TRARÃ TRARÃ
TRARÃ TRARÃ TRARÃ

ultrapassamos a noite
quando cruzamos Perizes
era exatamente ali
que principiava o dia

VAARÃ VAARÃ VAARÃ
VAARÃ VAARÃ VAARÃ

e ver que a vida era muita
espalhada pelos campos
que aqueles bois e marrecos
existiam ali sem mim
e aquelas árvores todas

águas capins nuvens — como
era pequena a cidade!

E como era grande o mundo:
há horas que o trem corria
sem nunca chegar ao fim
de tanto céu tanta terra
de tantos campos e serras
sem contar o Piauí

Já passamos por Rosário
por Vale-Quem-Tem, Quelru.
Passamos por Pirapemas
e por Itapicuru:
mundo de bois, siriemas,
jaçanã, pato e nhambu

café com pão

bolacha não

café com pão

bolacha não

vale quem tem

vale quem tem

vale quem tem

vale quem tem

nada vale

quem não tem

nada não vale

nada vale

quem nada

tem
neste vale

nada
vale
nada
vale
quem
não
tem
nada
no
v
a
l
e

TCHIBUM!!!

Muitos
muitos dias há num dia só
porque as coisas mesmas
os compõem
com sua carne (ou ferro
que nome tenha essa
matéria-tempo
suja ou
não)
os compõem
nos silêncios aparentes ou grossos
como colchas de flanela

ou água vertiginosamente imóvel
como

na quinta dos Medeiros, no poço
da quinta

coberto pela sombra quase pânica
das árvores
de galhos que subiam mudos
como enigmas
tudo parado
feito uma noite verde ou vegetal
e de água

muito embora em cima das árvores

por cima
lá no alto

resvalando seu costado luminoso nas folhas
passasse o dia (o século
XX)

e era dia

como era dia aquele
dia

na sala de nossa casa

a mesa com a toalha as cadeiras o

assoalho muito usado

e o riso claro de Lucinha se embalando na rede
com a morte já misturada

na garganta

sem que ninguém soubesse

— e não importa —

que eu debruçado no parapeito do alpendre

via a terra preta do quintal
e a galinha ciscando e bicando
 uma barata entre plantas
e neste caso um dia-dois
 o de dentro e o de fora
da sala
um às minhas costas e outro
diante dos olhos
vazando um no outro
através de meu corpo
dias que se vazam agora ambos em pleno coração
de Buenos Aires
 às quatro horas desta tarde
 de 22 de maio de 1975
 trinta anos depois

 muitos
muitos são os dias num só dia
 fácil de entender
mas difícil de penetrar
no cerne de cada um desses muitos dias
porque são mais do que parecem
 pois
dias outros há
ou havia
naquele dia do poço
da quinta
também dentro e fora
porque não é possível estabelecer um limite
a cada um desses

dias de fronteiras impalpáveis
feitos de — por exemplo — frutas e folhas
frutas que em si mesmas são
um dia
de açúcar se fazendo na polpa
ou já se abrindo aos outros dias
que estão em volta
como um horizonte de trabalhos infinitos:

porque a poucos passos
do poço
acima da ladeira de terra
na rua sem árvores
donde vim há pouco
passa gente e carroça
ou alguém grita na janela
enquanto um pássaro cruza (possivel-
mente)

por sobre nós
um urubu talvez
deriva na direção da Camboa
leve sobre o vasto capinzal e para além da estrada de ferro
por cima das palhoças na lama
e lá detrás a fábrica
assentada numa plataforma fumegante de cinza e detritos
de algodão

um urubu
que é ele mesmo um dia preto farejando carniça
e na carniça

a sua sombra
debaixo das minhas unhas

como então sob as folhas com açúcar e luz
pingar de água
um pio
um sopro de brisa
sem pressa
e por todas as partes
se fabricava a noite
que nos envenenaria de jasmim

E a noite mais tarde pronta passaria aos trambolhões
com sua carruagem negra
batendo ferros
feito um trem
pela Costela do Diabo
com seu cortejo de morcegos
Era impossível distinguir
com a pouca luz que havia
como eram seus cavalos
seu condutor seu chicote
a cavalgar no meu sono
sem o testemunho dos irmãos

Numa noite há muitas noites
mas de modo diferente
de como há dias
no dia
(especialmente nos bairros

onde a luz é pouca)
porque de noite
todos os fatos são pardos
e a natureza fecha
os olhos coloridos
guarda seus bichos
entre as pernas, põe as aves dentro dos frutos
e imobiliza todas as águas
embora fique urinando
escondido
em vários pontos da quinta
tão suave que quase ninguém ouve sob as folhas de tajá

E assim as muitas noites
parecem uma só
ou no máximo duas:
sendo a outra
a noite de dentro de casa
iluminada a luz elétrica
A noite adormece as galinhas
e põe a funcionar os cinemas
aciona
os programas de rádio, provoca
discussões à mesa do jantar, excessos
entre jovens que se beijam e se esfregam
junto à cancela
no escuro
e quando o tesão é muito decidem casar
(menos, por exemplo,
Maria do Carmo

que entregava os peitos enormes
pros soldados chuparem
na Avenida Silva Maia
sob os oitizeiros
e deixava que eles esporrassem
entre suas coxas quentes — sem
meter —
mas voltava para casa
com ódio do pai
e malsatisfeita da vida)

De noite, como
a luz é pouca,
a gente tem a impressão
de que o tempo não passa

ou pelo menos não escorre

como escorre de dia:

como se desse uma interrupção
para o dr. Bacelar fazer uma palestra
no Grêmio Lítico-Recreativo Português
uma interrupção
para que os operários da fábrica Camboa
descansem um pouco
e se reproduzam nas redes
ou nas esteiras
se amando sem muito alarde
para não acordar os filhos que dormem no mesmo quarto

Como se o tempo
durante a noite

ali
o clarão contido sob a noite
não é
como na cidade
o punho fechado da água dentro dos canos:
é o punho
da vida
fechada dentro da lama

Já por aí se vê
que a noite não é a mesma
em todos os pontos da cidade;
a noite
não tem na Baixinha
a mesma imobilidade
porque a luz da lamparina
não hipnotiza as coisas
como a eletricidade
hipnotiza:
embora o tempo ali também não escorra,
não flua: bruxuleia
se debate
numa gaiola de sombras.

Mas o que mais distancia
essa noite da Baixinha
das outras
é o cheiro: melhor dizendo
o mau cheiro
que ela tem como certos animais

na sua carne de lodo

e daí poder dizer-se

que a noite na Baixinha

não passa, não

transcorre:

apodrece

Numa coisa que apodrece

— tomemos um exemplo velho:

uma pêra —

o tempo

não escorre nem grita,

antes

se afunda em seu próprio abismo,

se perde

em sua própria vertigem,

mas tão sem velocidade

que em lugar de virar luz vira

escuridão;

o apodrecer de uma coisa

de fato é a fabricação

de uma noite:

seja essa coisa

uma pêra num prato seja

um rio num bairro operário

Daí por que na Baixinha

há duas noites medidas uma na outra: a noite

sub-urbana (sem água

encanada) que se dissipa com o sol

e a noite sub-humana
da lama
que fica
ao longo do dia
estendida
como graxa
por quilômetros de mangue
a noite alta
do sono (quando
os operários sonham)
e a noite baixa
do lodo embaixo
da casa
uma noite metida na outra
como a língua na boca
eu diria
como uma gaveta de armário
metida no armário (mas
embaixo: o membro na vagina)
ou como roupas pretas
sem uso dentro da gaveta
ou como uma coisa suja
(uma culpa)
dentro de uma pessoa
enfim como
uma gaveta de lama
dentro de um armário de lama,

assim

talvez fosse a noite na Baixinha
princesa negra e coroada

(e não obstante
se amam)

Resta ainda acrescentar
— pra se entender essa noite
proletária —
que um rio não apodrece do mesmo modo
que uma pêra
não apenas porque um rio não apodrece num prato
mas porque nunhuma coisa apodrece
como outra
(nem por outra)
e mesmo

uma banana
não apodrece do mesmo modo
que muitas bananas
dentro de
uma tina
— no quarto de um sobrado
na Rua das Hortas, a mãe
passando roupa a ferro —
fazendo vinagre
— enquanto o bonde Gonçalves Dias
descia a Rua Rio Branco
rumo à Praça dos Remédios e outros
bondes desciam a Rua da Paz
rumo à Praça João Lisboa
e ainda outros rumavam
na direção da Fabril, Apeadouro,
Jordoa

(esse era o bonde do Anil
que nos levava
para o banho no Rio Azul)
e as bananas
fermentando
trabalhando para o dono — como disse Marx —
ao longo das horas mas num ritmo
diferente (muito mais
grosso) que o do relógio
fazendo vinagre
— naquele quarto onde dormia
toda a família e
se vendiam quiabo e jerimum —
fermentando
— enquanto Josias, o enfermeiro
posava de doutor na quitanda
de meu pai
e eu jogava bilhar
escondido
no botequim do Simplício
na Fonte do Ribeirão —
mas
um rio
não faz vinagre
mesmo que um
[quitandeiro o ponha para apodrecer
numa tina
um rio
não apodrece como as bananas

nem como, por exemplo,
uma perna de mulher
— (da mulher
que a gente não via
mas fedia durante toda a manhã
na casa ao lado de nossa escola,
na época
da guerra)

um rio não apodrece do mesmo modo que uma perna
— ainda que ambos fiquem
com a pele um tanto azulada —
nem do mesmo modo que um jardim
(pelo menos em nossa cidade
sob o demorado relâmpago do verão)

E como nenhum rio apodrece
do mesmo jeito que outro rio
assim o rio Anil
apodrecia a seu modo
naquela parte da ilha de São Luís.

Mesmo porque
para que outro rio
pudesse apodrecer como ele
era preciso que viesse
por esse mesmo caminho
passasse no Matadouro
e misturasse seu cheiro de rio ao cheiro
de carniça

e tivesse permanentemente a sobrevoá-lo
uma nuvem de urubus
como acontece com o Anil antes
de dobrar à esquerda
para perder-se no mar
(para de fato
afogar-se, convulso,
nas águas salgadas
da baía
que se intrometem por ele, por suas veias,
por sua carne doce de rio
que o empurra para trás
o desarruma
o envenena de sal
e o obriga a apodrecer
— já que não pode fluir —
debaixo das palafitas
onde moram os operários da Fábrica
de Fiação e Tecidos da Camboa)

Assim apodrece o Anil
ao leste de nossa cidade
que foi fundada pelos franceses em 1612
e que já o encontraram apodrecendo
embora com um cheiro
que nada tinha
do óleo dos navios que entram agora
quase diariamente no porto
nem das fezes que a cidade
vaza em seu corpo de peixes

nem da miséria dos homens
escravos de outros
que ali vivem agora
feito caranguejos.

Apenas os índios vinham banhar-se
na praia do Jenipapeiro, apenas eles
ouviam o vento nas árvores
e caminhavam por onde
hoje são avenidas e ruas,
sobrados cobertos de limo,
cheios de redes e lembranças
na obscuridade.

Mas desses índios timbiras
nada resta, senão coisas contadas em livros
e alguns poemas em que se tenta
evocar a sombra dos guerreiros
com seu arco
ocultos entre as folhas
(o que não impede que algum menino
tendo visto no palco da escola
Y Juca Pyrama
saía a buscar
pelos matos da Maioba ou da Jordoa
— o coração batendo forte —
vestígios daqueles homens,
mas não encontra mais
que o rumor do vento nas árvores)

Exceto se encontra
pousado
um pássaro azul e vermelho
— a brisa entortando-lhe as penas feito
um leque feito

o cocar de um guerreiro
que nele se transformara
para continuar habitando aqueles matos.

E mesmo que
não seja o pássaro o guerreiro
foi de certo visto por ele um dia
e por isso
estranhamente
está presente ali
vendo-o de novo
quem sabe agora mesmo atrás do menino atrás
dos ramos
quando
algo se mexe
e uma lagartixa foge sobre as folhas secas.

E tudo isso se passa
sob a copa das árvores
(longe
da estrada por onde trafegam bondes
e ônibus,
e mais longe ainda
das ruas da Praia Grande
atravancadas de caminhões
pracistas como João Coelho e estivadores

que descarregam babaçu)
tudo isso se passa
como parte da história dos matos e dos pássaros
E na história dos pássaros
os guerreiros continuam vivos.

E eu nunca pensara antes que havia
uma história dos pássaros
embora conhecesse tantos

desde

o canário-da-terra (na gaiola
de seu Neco), a rolinha fogo-pagô
(na cumeeira da casa)

até o bigode-pardo

(que se pegava com alçapão no capinzal)

o galo de campina
parecia um oficial
em uniforme de gala;
o anum era um empregado
da limpeza pública;
o urubu, um crioulo
de fraque; o bem-te-vi,
um polícia de quepe
e apito na boca
sempre atarefado

Para me dar conta
da história dos pássaros
foi preciso ver
o pássaro vermelho e azul
mal pousado no galho

grande demais para aqueles matos
como um fantasma
(a balançar no vento)
foi preciso vê-lo
dentro daquele silêncio
feito de pequenos barulhos vegetais
E ele — fazendo sua história — voou
sem se saber por quê
e foi pousar noutra árvore
já agora quase oculto
ora parecendo flor ora folha colorida
e assim sumiu
Já a história dos urubus
é praticamente a mesma história dos homens
que têm cães que morrem
atropelados
em frente à porta da casa
que têm papagaios que aprendem a falar
na cozinha
e curios
cantando
na gaiola da barbearia
(a filha do barbeiro
fugiu com o filho
do carteiro
um mulato
que trabalhava nos Correios.
As vizinhas cochichavam:
“se tivesse fugido
com um branco

ao menos ia poder casar”)

Enquanto isso
o dr. Gonçalves Moreira mantinha na sua sala
um casal de canários belgas numa gaiola de prata
(na Avenida Beira-Mar em frente à entrada da baía)
E trouxe uma caboclinha
de suas terras em Barra do Corda
para arrumar as gavetas (lençóis
de linho branco cheirando a alfazema)
e cuidar dos canários:
ela limpava a gaiola
e renovava a água e o alpiste
todas as manhãs
na janela do alpendre
(na época da guerra).
Lá embaixo no quintal
a lavadeira batia roupa
no tanque
e cantava junto com a água.
O mamoeiro rente ao muro
amadurecia um mamão para a sobremesa do doutor
(isso por volta de 1942, 43,
quando chegaram os americanos
para construir a base aérea do Tirirical:
compraram todas as frutas e legumes
do Mercado
pagaram um salário incrível pro Antônio José
e puseram o pé em cima da mesa
no Moto Bar)

E os canários, nem-seu-souza,
trinavam na gaiola de prata

Camélia caiu na vida
porque ainda não existia a pílula
Pagou caro aquele amor
feito com dificuldade
de trás do jirau de roupas
em pé junto à cerca
enquanto a família dormia
(o mesmo gosto de hortelã
das pastilhas de aniversário)
Seu pai, seu Cunha, o barbeiro,
quase morre de vergonha,
ele que fazia a barba
de todos os homens da rua
(e o curió na gaiola,
nem-seu-souza).

Por que vai um homem ter filhas,
meu Deus? E ele tinha três.
A mais velha, que era mais sonsa,
foi ao Josias tomar
uma injeção de Eucaliptina
e o enfermeiro aconselhou:
“Dói muito. É melhor num lugar
que tenha mais carne.”
E desde esse santo dia
era injeção toda tarde.
(e o curió,

nem-seu-souza)

A terceira ficou séria
e virou filha de Maria.

(e o curió,

nem-seu-souza)

Já o canário-da-terra
parou de cantar quando
numa manhã de domingo
seu Neco matou a mulher
que — dizem — lhe punha chifres:
a gaiola rolou no chão.
("Canivetada nas costas,
pegou bem aqui, lá nela.
Não saiu um pingo de sangue,
foi hemorragia interna.")

A morte se alastrou por toda a rua,
misturou-se às árvores da quinta,
penetrou na cozinha de nossa casa
ganhou o cheiro da carne que assava na panela
e ficou brilhando nos talheres
dispostos sobre a toalha
na mesa do almoço

Salve a mulher de amarelo

Põe a de verde no chinelo

Mas a mulher de estampado

Deixa o homem amarrado

Mas essa é a história de pássaros

já de há muito urmanizados
pois a história dos pássaros
pássaros
só os guerreiros conhecem
só eles a entendem quando o vento
(numa lembrança)
sopra-a nas árvores de São Luís.

Não seria correto dizer
que a vida de Newton Ferreira
escorria ou se gastava
entre cofos de camarões, sacas de arroz
e paneiros de farinha-d-água
naquela sua quitanda
na esquina da Rua dos Afogados
com a Rua da Alegria.

Não seria correto porque
se alguém chegasse lá
por volta das 3 da tarde (hora
de pouco movimento) — ele meio debruçado
no balcão lendo X-9 —
veria que tudo estava parado
na mesma imobilidade branca
do fubá dentro do depósito
e das prateleiras cheias de latas e garrafas
e do balcão com a balança Filizola
tudo
sobre o chão de mosaico verde e branco
como uma plataforma da tarde.
Parado e ao mesmo tempo inserido

num amplo sistema

que envolvia os armazéns
da Praia Grande, a Estrada-de-Ferro São Luís—Teresina,
fazendas em Coroatá, Codó, plantações de arroz
e fumo, homens que punham camarões para secar
ao sol em Guimarães. E as próprias famílias
da rua

que se sentariam mais tarde à mesa do jantar.

Por isso mesmo

ele podia mergulhar naquele mundo de gangsters americanos
sem ansiedade.

É verdade, porém, que uma esquina mais acima

(às suas costas)

na Avenida Gomes de Castro

a tarde passava ruidosamente

farfalhando nos oitizeiros como o vento por um relógio de folhas.

É que a tarde tem muitas velocidades

sendo mais lenta

por exemplo

no esgarçar de um touro de nuvem

que ela agora arrasta iluminada

na direção do Desterro

por cima da capital

(como uma aranha, poderia dizer?

que ata e puxa a presa para devorá-la?

como um abutre invisível a destripá-la

num *ballet*

e muito acima do telhado da quitanda

em pleno ar?)
E em meio a um outro sistema
este
de ventos
que avançavam escuros das bandas do Apeadouro
ou das cabeceiras do Bacanga,
úmidos às vezes,
num estampido que faz sacudir os aviões.

Não,
não cabe falar de aranha
se penso na cidade se desdobrando em seus
telhados e torres de igrejas
sob um sol duro
as famílias debaixo das telhas, retratos de mortos
com o rosto exageradamente colorido
dentro de molduras pintadas de dourado,
cômodas
antigas, pequenas caixas com botões e novelos de linha,
parentes tuberculosos em quartos escuros, tossindo
baixo para que o vizinho não ouça, crianças
que mal começam a andar
agarrando-se às pernas de pais que nada podem,
debaixo daqueles telhados encardidos
de nossa pequena cidade
a qual
alguém que venha de avião dos EUA
poderá ver
postada na desembocadura suja de dois rios
lá embaixo

e como se para sempre. Mas
e o quintal da Rua das Cajazeiras? O tanque
do Caga-Osso? a Fonte do Bispo? a quitanda
de Newton Ferreira?

Nada disso verá
de tão alto
aquele hipotético passageiro da Braniff.

Debruçado no balcão
Newton Ferreira lê
seu conto policial.
Nada sabe das conspiracies
meteorológicas que se tramam
em altas esferas acima do Atlântico.
Na quitanda
o tempo não flui
antes se amontoa
em barras de sabão Martins
mantas de carne-seca
toucinho mercadorias
todas com seus preços e
cheiros
ajustados ao varejo
(o olho sujo
do querosene
espiava na lata debaixo do balcão)
Mas nada disso se percebe
voando sobre a cidade a 900 quilômetros por hora.

Nem mesmo andando a pé
entre aquelas duas filas de porta-e-janela,
meias-moradas de sacada de ferro e platibandas
manchadas de caruncho
(no vermelho
entardecer)

Nem mesmo que a quitanda
exista ainda e que já sejam oito horas da noite
e se veja
pela única folha da porta entreaberta a luz acesa
como antigamente
e haja homens conversando lá dentro
entre lambadas de cachaça
e seja o mesmo balcão
e o cheiro das mercadorias
lá não encontrarás o Gonzaga, sargento músico do exército.
Já não se falará da guerra que a guerra acabou
faz muitos anos.

Descendo ou subindo a rua,
mesmo que vás a pé,
verás que as casas são praticamente as mesmas
mas nas janelas
surgem rostos desconhecidos
como num sonho mau.

Mudar de casa já era
um aprendizado da morte: aquele
meu quarto com sua úmida parede manchada

aquele quintal tomado de plantas verdes
sob a chuva
e a cozinha
e o fio da lâmpada coberto de moscas,
nossa casa
cheia de nossas vozes
tem agora outros moradores:
ainda estás vivo e vês, e vês
que não precisavas estar aqui para ver.
As casas, as cidades,
são apenas lugares por onde
passando
passamos

(ora sentado ora deitado
ora comendo na mesa
bebendo água do pote
ora debruçado
no peitoril da janela, o frango
pingando ensopado debaixo
do jirau de plantas)

Nem a pé, nem andando de rastros,
nem colando o ouvido no chão
voltarás a ouvir nada do que ali se falou.
Do querosene, sim,
podes outra vez sentir o mesmo cheiro de trapo
e do sabão talvez
se é que a fábrica ainda não faliu.
Mas de Newton Ferreira, ex-

center-forward da seleção maranhense,
que dez vezes faliu
e que era conhecido de todos na zona do comércio,
não há nenhum traço
naquela chão de mosaico verde e branco
(inutilmente o buscarás também
na sessão desta noite do poeira)

A cidade no entanto poderás vê-la do alto praticamente a mesma
com suas ruas e praças
por onde ele caminhava

Ah, minha cidade verde
minha úmida cidade
constantemente batida de muitos ventos
rumorejando teus dias à entrada do mar
minha cidade sonora
esferas de ventania
rolando loucas por cima dos mirantes
e dos campos de futebol
verdes verdes verdes verdes
ah sombra rumorejante
que arrasto por outras ruas

Desce profundo o relâmpago
de tuas águas em meu corpo,
desce tão fundo e tão amplo
e eu me pareço tão pouco
pra tantas mortes e vidas
que se desdobram
no escuro das claridades,

na minha nuca,
no meu cotovelo, na minha arcada dentária
no túmulo da minha boca
palco de ressurreições
inesperadas
(minha cidade
canora)
de trevas que já não sei
se são tuas se são minhas
mas nalgum ponto do corpo (do teu? do meu
corpo?)
lampeja
o jasmim
ainda que sujo da pouca alegria reinante
naquela rua vazia
cheia de sombras e folhas

Desabam as águas servidas
me arrastam por teus esgotos
de paletó e gravata
Me levanto em teus espelhos
me vejo em rostos antigos
te vejo em meus tantos rostos
tidos perdidos partidos
refletido
irrefletido
e as margaridas vermelhas
que sobre o tanque pendiam:
desce profundo
o relâmpago de tuas águas numa

vertigem de vozes brancas ecos de leite
de cuspo morno no membro
o corpo que busca o corpo

No capinzal escondido

naquele capim que era abrigo e afeto
feito cavalo sentindo

o cheiro da terra o cheiro
verde do mato o travo do cheiro novo
do mato novo da vida
vida das coisas
verdes vivendo

longe daquela mobília onde só vive o passado
longe do mundo da morte da doença da vergonha
da traição das cobranças à porta,

ali

bebendo a saúde da terra e das plantas,

buscando

em mim mesmo a fonte de uma alegria
ainda que suja e secreta
o cuspo morno a delícia
do próprio corpo no corpo
e num movimento terrestre
no meio do capim,
celeste o bicho que enfim alça vôo
e tomba

Ah, minha cidade suja
de muita dor em voz baixa
de vergonhas que a família abafa
em suas gavetas mais fundas

de vestidos desbotados
de camisas mal cerzidas
de tanta gente humilhada
comendo pouco
mais ainda assim bordando de flores
suas toalhas de mesa
suas toalhas de centro
de mesa com jarros
— na tarde
durante a tarde
durante a vida —

cheios de flores
de papel crepom
já empoeiradas

minha cidade doída

Me reflito em tuas águas
recolhidas:

no copo
d'água
no pote d'água
na tina d'água
no banho nu no banheiro
vestido com as roupas
de tuas águas
que logo me despem e descem
diligentes para o ralo
como se de antemão soubessem
para onde ir

Para onde

foram essas águas
de tantos banhos de tarde?
Rolamos com aquelas tardes
no ralo do esgoto
e rolo eu
agora
no abismo dos cheiros
que se desatam na minha
carne na tua, cidade
que me envenenas de ti,
que me arrastas pela treva
me atordoas de jasmim
que de saliva me molhas me atochas
num cu
rijo me fazes
delirar me sujas
de merda e explodo o meu sonho
em merda.

Sobre os jardins da cidade
urino pus. Me extravio
na Rua da Estrela, escorrego
no Beco do Precipício.
Me lavo no Ribeirão.
Mijo na Fonte do Bispo.
Na Rua do Sol me cego,
na Rua da Paz me revolto
na do Comércio me nego
mas na das Hortas floresço;
na dos Prazeres me soluço
na da Palma me conheço

na do Alecrim me perfume
na da Saúde adoeço
na do Desterro me encontro
na da Alegria me perco
Na Rua do Carmo berro
na Rua Direita erro
e na da Aurora adormeço

Acordo na zona. O dia ladra, navega
enfundado e azul

Vôo

com as toalhas brancas

Vou pousar no sorriso de Isabel

Tropeço num preconceito caio das nuvens
descubro Marília

me aconchego em suas pétalas como a pomba
do Divino entre rosas na bandeja

Mas vem junho e me apunhala

vem julho me dilacera

setembro expõe meus despojos

pelos postes da cidade

(me recomponho mais tarde,

costuro as partes, mas os intestinos

nunca mais funcionarão direito)

Prego a subversão da ordem

poética, me pagam. Prego

a subversão da ordem política,

me enforcam junto ao campo de tênis dos ingleses

na Avenida Beira-Mar

(e os canários,

para a cidade de tarde
(sob o rumor das árvores)

ali
no norte do Brasil
vestido de brim.

E por ser pouco
era muito,
que pouco muito era o verde
fogo da grama, o musgo do muro, o galo
que vai morrer,
a louça na cristaleira,
o doce na compoteira, a falta
de afeto, a busca
do amor nas coisas.

Não nas pessoas:
nas coisas, na muda carne
das coisas, na cona da flor, no oculto
falar das águas sozinhas:

que a vida
passava por sobre nós,
de avião.

Não tem a mesma velocidade o domingo
que a sexta-feira com seu azáfama de compras
fazendo aumentar o tráfego e o consumo
de caldo-de-cana gelado,
nem tem
a mesma velocidade
a açucena e a maré

com seu exército de borbulhas e ardentes caravelas
a penetrar soturnamente o rio
noutra lentidão que a do crepúsculo
que, no alto,
com sua grande engrenagem escangalhada
moía a luz.

Outra velocidade
tem Bizuza sentada no chão do quarto
a dobrar os lençóis lavados e passados
a ferro, arrumando-os na gaveta da cômoda, como
se a vida fosse eterna.

E era
naquele seu universo de almoços e temperos
de folhas de louro e de pimenta-do-reino
mastruz para tosse braba,
universo
de panelas e canseiras entre as paredes da cozinha
dentro de um surrado vestido de chita,
enfim,
onde batia o seu pequenino coração.

E se não era
eterna a vida, dentro e fora do armário,
o certo é que
tendo cada coisa uma velocidade

(a do melado
escura, clara
a da água
a derramar-se)

cada coisa se afastava
desigualmente

de sua possível eternidade.

Ou
e se quer
desigualmente
a tecia

na sua própria carne escura ou clara
num transcorrer mais profundo que o da semana.

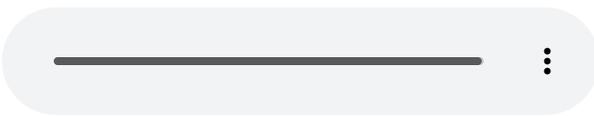
Por isso não é certo dizer
que é no domingo que melhor se vê
a cidade

— as fachadas de azulejo, a Rua do Sol vazia
as janelas trancadas no silêncio —
quando ela
parada
parece flutuar.

E que melhor se vê uma cidade
quando — como Alcântara —
todos os habitantes se foram
e nada resta deles (sequer
um espelho de aparador num daqueles
aposentos sem teto) — se não
entre as ruínas
a persistente certeza de que
naquele chão
onde agora crescem carrapichos
eles efetivamente dançaram
(e quase se ouvem vozes
e gargalhadas
que se acendem e apagam nas dobras da brisa)

Mas

se é espantoso pensar
como tanta coisa sumiu, tantos
guarda-roupas e camas e mucamas
tantas e tantas saias, anáguas,
sapatos dos mais variados modelos
arrastados pelo ar junto com as nuvens,
a isso
responde a manhã
que
com suas muitas e azuis velocidades
segue em frente
alegre e sem memória



É impossível dizer
em quantas velocidades diferentes
se move uma cidade
a cada instante
(sem falar nos mortos
que voam para trás)
ou mesmo uma casa
onde a velocidade da cozinha
não é igual à da sala (aparentemente imóvel
nos seus jarros e bibelôs de porcelana)
nem à do quintal
escancarado às ventanias da época

e que dizer das ruas
de tráfego intenso e da circulação do dinheiro
e das mercadorias
desigual segundo o bairro e a classe, e da
rotação do capital
mais lenta nos legumes
mais rápida no setor industrial, e
da rotação do sono
sob a pele,
do sonho
nos cabelos?

e as tantas situações da água nas vasilhas
(pronta a fugir)

a rotação

da mão que busca entre os pentelhos
o sonho molhado os muitos lábios
do corpo
que ao afago se abre em rosa, a mão
que ali se detém a sujar-se
de cheiros de mulher,

e a rotação

dos cheiros outros
que na quinta se fabricam
junto com a resina das árvores e o canto
dos passarinhos?
Que dizer da circulação
da luz solar
arrastando-se no pó debaixo do guarda-roupa
entre sapatos?

e da circulação
dos gatos pela casa
dos pombos pela brisa?
e cada um desses fatos numa velocidade própria
sem falar na própria velocidade
que em cada coisa há
como os muitos
sistemas de açúcar e álcool numa pêra
girando
todos em diferentes ritmos
(que quase
se podem ouvir)
e compondo a velocidade geral
que a pêra é

do mesmo modo que todas essas velocidades mencionadas
compõem
(nosso rosto refletido na água do tanque)
o dia
que passa
— ou passou —
na cidade de São Luís.

E do mesmo modo
que há muitas velocidades num
só dia
e nesse mesmo dia muitos dias
assim
não se pode também dizer que o dia
tem um único centro

(feito um carço
ou um sol)
porque na verdade um dia
tem inumeráveis centros
como, por exemplo, o pote de água
na sala de jantar
ou na cozinha
em torno do qual
desordenadamente giram os membros da família.

E se nesse caso
é a sede a força de gravitação
outras funções metabólicas
outros centros geram
como a sentina
a cama
ou a mesa de jantar
(sob uma luz encardida numa
porta-e-janela da Rua da Alegria
na época da guerra)
sem falar nos centros cívicos, nos centros
espíritas, no Centro Cultural
Gonçalves Dias ou nos mercados de peixe,
colégios, igrejas e prostíbulos,
outros tantos centros do sistema
em que o dia se move
(sempre em velocidades diferentes)
sem sair do lugar.

Porque
quando todos esses sóis se apagam
resta a cidade vazia
(como Alcântara)
no mesmo lugar.

Porque
diferentemente do sistema solar
a esses sistemas
não os sustém o sol e sim
os corpos
que em torno dele giram:
não os sustém a mesa
mas a fome
não os sustém a cama
e sim o sono
não os sustém o banco
e sim o trabalho não pago

E essa é a razão por que
quando as pessoas se vão
(como em Alcântara)
apagam-se os sóis (os
potes, os fogões)
que delas recebiam o calor

essa é a razão
por que em São Luís
donde as pessoas não se foram
ainda neste momento a cidade se move

em seus muitos sistemas
e velocidades
pois quando um pote se quebra
outro pote se faz
outra cama se faz
outra jarra se faz
outro homem
se faz
para que não se extinga
o fogo
na cozinha da casa

O que eles falavam na cozinha
ou no alpendre do sobrado
(na Rua do Sol)
saía pelas janelas

se ouvia nos quartos de baixo
na casa vizinha, nos fundos da Movelaria
(e vá alguém saber
quanta coisa se fala numa cidade
quantas vozes
resvalam por esse intrincado labirinto
de paredes e quartos e saguões,
de banheiros, de pátios, de quintais

VOZES

entre muros e plantas,
risos,
que duram um segundo e se apagam)

E são coisas vivas as palavras
e vibram da alegria do corpo que as gritou
têm mesmo o seu perfume, o gosto

da carne
que nunca se entrega realmente
nem na cama

senão a si mesma
à sua própria vertigem

ou assim
falando
ou rindo
no ambiente familiar

enquanto como um rato
tu podes ouvir e ver
de teu buraco
como essas vozes batem nas paredes do pátio vazio
na armação de ferro onde seca uma parreira
entre arames
de tarde

numa pequena cidade latino-americana.

E nelas há
uma iluminação mortal

que é da boca
em qualquer tempo

mas que ali
na nossa casa

entre móveis baratos
e nenhuma dignidade especial
minava a própria existência.

Ríamos, é certo,
em torno da mesa de aniversário coberta de pastilhas
de hortelã enroladas em papel de seda colorido,
ríamos, sim,
mas
era como se nenhum afeto valesse
como se não tivesse sentido rir
numa cidade tão pequena.

O homem está na cidade
como uma coisa está em outra
e a cidade está no homem
que está em outra cidade

mas variados são os modos
como uma coisa
está em outra coisa:
o homem, por exemplo, não está na cidade
como uma árvore está
em qualquer outra
nem como uma árvore
está em qualquer uma de suas folhas
(mesmo rolando longe dela)
O homem não está na cidade
como uma árvore está num livro
quando um vento ali a folheia

a cidade está no homem
mas não da mesma maneira
que um pássaro está numa árvore

muddy muddy
the muddy
hand of the wind
against the wall
dull
less less
less than dull
less than soft and solid less than a well and a wall: less than a hollow
dull
more than dull
bright
like water? like a plume? bright more than bright right: nothing at all
and all
(or nearly all)
a creature conceived by the universe has been dreaming from its belly
blue
the cat was
blue
the cock was
blue
the colt was
blue
your bum

your gums like your little pussy that seemed to smile among the banana
leaves amid the scents of flowers and shit of swine open like a body's
mouth (unlike your speaking mouth) like an opening to
I didn't know you

didn't know how
to make life spin
with its mass of stars and ocean
entering us in you

lovely lovely
more than lovely
but what was her name?
It wasn't Helena or Vera
or Nara or Gabriela
or Tereza or Maria
Her name her name was...

It vanished in her frigid flesh
it vanished in the confusion of so many nights and days
it vanished in the profusion of things and their ways

alphabet constellations
nights written in chalk
birthday candies
soccer Sundays
burials processions rallies
roulette billiards cards

she changed her face and hair changed her eyes and smiles changed her
home and time: but she is with me

your name is
lost within me
in some drawer

What does a name matter at this hour of the evening in São Luís
do Maranhão at the dining table beneath a fevered

[lamp among brothers and sisters

and parents within an enigma?

but what does a name matter

beneath this roof of grimy tiles open beams among
chairs and a table between a china cabinet and a cupboard among
knives and forks and broken plates

a plate of simple fired clay does not endure

and the knives are lost and the forks

are lost in their lifetime they fall

through the cracks between floorboards and mingle with the
rats

and roaches or rust in the backyard forgotten among the stalks of ginger
grass and the thick mint leaves

so many things are lost

in this life

Just like what they said was lost right there

chewing

mixing beans with manioc and chunks of roasted meat

and they said things just as real as the embroidered table cloth

or my aunt's cough in the bedroom

and the sunbeam dying on the frieze that faced our
our window

so real that

they were extinguished forever

Or were they?

I don't know the fabric of my flesh and this dizziness
that drags me through the avenues and vaginas among the smells of gas
and piss consuming me like a flameless torch-body,

or inside a bus

or in the belly of a Boeing 707 above the Atlantic
above the rainbow
perfectly beyond
chronological rigor
dreaming

Rusted forks dull knives holey chairs and worn-out tables
grocery counters Alegria Street paving stones eaves of houses
shrouded with mold mossy walls words said at the dining room
table,

you fly with me
over continents and seas

And you crawl with me too
through the tunnels of clandestine nights
beneath the nation's starry sky
among the splendor and the leprosy

between the sheets of mud and dread
you slip away with me, old tables,
antiquated cupboards perfumed drawers of the past,
you turn the corners of terror with me
and you wait you wait

for the day to come

And in the end
what does a name matter?

I cover you with flowers, sweetie, and I give you each and every name;

I call you dawn

I call you water

I discover you in colored stones in movie stars
in the visions of my dreams

— And that woman coughing in the house!
As if the poverty, the dim lamp, the cheap perfume,
the meager love, the leaky winter roof were not enough.
And the ants surging by the millions gushing black from
within the wall (as though they were the essence of the house)
And all were seeking
 in a smile in a gesture
 in corner conversations
 in standing sex on the darkened Quartel promenade
 in adultery
 in robbery
 the solution to the riddle

— What shall I do in the meantime?
— From what shall I defend myself?

Weeds and roses grew in a fisherman's basket on the black dirt of the
backyard

 (how is it that perfume
 can come from that?)

From the mud beside the sidewalks, from the sewer water grew
tomato plants

On the tiles of the eaves of the houses grew grass
 greener than hope
 (or the fire
 of your eyes)

It was life exploding through all the city's cracks
in the shadows of the war:

 the gestapo wehrmacht raf feb blitzkrieg
catalinas torpedoing the fifth column fascists nazis communists the esso

newsman on the radio quarrels in the grocery kerosene andiroba nut
soap the black market rationing the blackout mountains of scrap metal
the italian assassinated in João Lisboa Plaza the smell of gunpowder the
german cannons thundering in the stormy nights above our house.
Stalingrad resists.

For my father who smuggled cigarettes, for my cousin who sold lotto
tickets, for my uncle who stole tin from the Railroad, for Senhor Neco
who rolled cheap cigars, for Sergeant Gonzaga who drank manioc
brandy with honey and had sex with the window open,

for my docile lamb

for my blue city

for Brazil, hail hail,

Stalingrad resists.

To each new morning

in the windows on the corners in the headlines

But poetry didn't yet exist.

Flora. Fauna. Odors. Dresses.

Eyes. Biceps. Bosoms. Faces.

Green glass, jasmine.

Bikes on Sunday.

Kites of paper.

Bandstand concerts in the plaza.

Mourning.

Dead man in the market

human blood on vegetables.

Voiceless world, opaque thing.

Neither Bilac nor Raimundo. Blatant tuba, artless lyre?

Neither tuba nor Grecian lyre. I learned later: human speech, people's

voices, dark sounds of the body, bracketed by lightning
The body. But what is the body?
My body of flesh and blood.
Invisible bones, jawbones, ribs,
flexible framework that suspends me in space
that keeps me from collapsing like an empty
sack
that keeps all my organs
working
like tubes and retorts
making the blood that makes my flesh and thoughts
and words
and lies
and the sweetest horniest best feeling
caresses
so as to burst like a galaxy
of milk
between your thighs in the depths
of your avid night
the scents of navels and vaginas
grave indecipherable smells
like symbols
of the body
of your body of my body
body
that a sword can cut
a splinter of broken glass
a razor
my body brimming with blood
that waters it like a continent

or a garden
coursing through my arms
through my fingers
while I quarrel I walk
I remember I recall
my blood comprised of the gases of this foreign city air
that I breathe
with the help of the sycamores
and that can — with a bit of inattention — slip through my
opened

wrist

My body

I see stretched upon the bed
like an object in space
that measures five feet six
and it is I: that thing
stretched out
belly legs feet
each with five toes (why
not six?)
knees and ankles
for moving about
sitting down
getting up

my 5'6" body which is my size in this world
my body made of water
and ashes
that makes me gaze at Andromeda, Sirius, Mercury
and makes me feel a part of

all that mass of hydrogen and helium
disintegrating and reintegrating
with no one's knowing why

Body my body body
that has a nose and a mouth as well
two eyes
and a special way of smiling
of speaking
that my mother identifies as being of her son
that my son identifies
as being of his father
body which if it ceases to function provokes
a profound stir in the family:
without it José Ribamar Ferreira ceases to exist
Ferreira Gullar is no more
and many small events on earth
will forever be forgotten

body-flame body-fool body-fact

pierced by smells of chicken coops and rats
in the grocery nest
of rats
shit of cats
salt verdigris spats
cheap ring brilliantine
analingus cunnilingus genital warts
amid pubic hair
body my body-phallus

unfathomable uncomprehended
my domestic dog my owner
sated with dreams and flowers
my body-galaxy open to everything full
of everything like a trash heap
of filthy rags old cans used mattresses symphonies
sambas and frevos blues
by Fra Angelico greens
by Cézanne
dream-matter by Volpi

But above all my
northeastern
body
more than this
maranhanian
more than this
sanluisian
more than this
ferreirian
newtonian
alzirian
my body born in a one door and window house on Prazeres Street
neighbor to a bakery
under the sign of Virgo
under the shells of the 24th Cavalry
during the Revolution of 1930
and which since then keeps on running like a clock
with a tick tock you cannot hear
(unless you press your ear to my heart)

tick tock tick tock
while I stroll among buses and cars
past fashion windows
in the bookstores
in the bars
tick tock tick tock
beating now for 45 years
this hidden heart
beating in the middle of the night, in the snow, in the rain
under my cape, my jacket, my shirt,
under my skin, my flesh,
clandestine combatant on the side of the working class
my childish heart

bright bright
more than just bright
white
the lightning illuminates past continents:
night and jasmine
next to the house

voices lost in the mud
empty Sundays

water dreaming in the barrel
nation of brush and rust

scrabbling for copper and aluminum
in unplowed lands
wartime economy?

for me just
cracklings and movies

Alone at that
river estuary

beneath the hot tropical sun
alone in the afternoon on the planet in history
hauling around shrimp
in a straw basket

what was it

I was looking for there?

Was the Trojan War ever fought?

Homer Dante Boccaccio?

Was geometry ever discovered?

Just mud and salt water
just catfish and puffers
sand wind sun and rain
and the colored sails
of the boats on the bay:

what did I question there

with that basket in my hands
beneath the sun of Maranhão?
It was not the sun of Laplace,
it was an island, nothing more or less:

it was the sun
just the sun
smelling of the stinking mud
and the odor of fish and people
corvina bonito dogfish

catfish eating shit
at the outflow of the sewer

land of salt and rust
 what was I looking for there
walking along the rails
 aloof
 hopping from tie to tie
 wandering along the smooth mud
banks toads bottles
 filled with mud pipes
where the shoal fish lived
 walking
aimlessly among railway cars
 wheels leprous axels
 abandoned
bearing races full
 of dirt rust grease
 grass covered with oil

What did those classes in solitude
 teach me
 among the things of nature
and man?

 The tall zinc shed
shimmers of solder
 workers in the shade
walls blackened from smoke
It wasn't a house: a house
has chairs tables armchairs

and doesn't sing

oh how many rolled into one
inclusive afternoon that covers the city with clouds
weaving above us and with us
the blank history
of any small life

oh winds blowing green in the palms of Remédios Plaza
grass growing dark beneath my feet
between the rails
and within the afternoon the locomotive-
afternoon
that approaches like a steel
pachyderm
overdue and heavy
jaw clenched head hissing
a cathedral in motion
enveloped in steam
puffing panic
ready
to explode

chi chi

chu chu chu

choo CHOO CHOO

chi chi chi chi chi

CHOO CHOO CHOO CHOO CHOO CHOO

(To be sung to the music of the 2nd

Bachiana from Villa-Lobos' Tocata)

there goes the train with the boy
there goes life on its way
 there go dance and destiny
 city and night in a spin
there goes the aimless train
looking for the morning
speeding over land
 it passes through the mountains
 it passes by the sea
chanting through mountains of moonlight
rumbling past the stars
 wide and far
wheeee-ee! whee-ee whee-ee
 wide and far
whee-ee whee-ee whee-ee
good-bye classmates
good-bye hook and bait
good-bye girl I tried to mate
the train has me on board and will not hesitate

OO-OO OO-OO OO-OO OO-OO
 ca-chug ca-chug ca-chug

breezes clear and breezes keen
almost day this grayish scene

OO-EE OO-EE OO-EE OO-EE OO-EE
ca-chug ca-chug ca-chug

baboom baboom bababoom
baboom baboom bababoom
baboom baboom bababoom
baboom baboom bababoom baboom bababoom baboom
bababoom
baboom baboom baboom
baboom baboom baboom

OO-EE OO-EE OO-EE OO-EE OO-EE
oo-ee oo oo-ee oo-ee oo-ee oo-ee oo-ee

we left home at four
street lights still turned on

father had a small suitcase
I just had a bag

we headed for Afogados
up streets and other stairs

for him it was routine
for me it was adventure

when we got to the station
the train was really there

there at rest awaiting
very long and whistling

we got on board the car
I both glad and frightened

my father (dead and gone)
had me sit right at his side

perhaps more happy than I
for taking me along

my father (dead and gone)
smiled with shining eyes

OO-OO OO-OO OO-OO OO-OO

chug chug chug
chug chug chug

CA-CHOO CA-CHOO CA-CHOO
CA-CHOO CA-CHOO CA-CHOO

we overtook the night as
we passed through Perizes
it was precisely there
that the day began

OO-OO OO-OO OO-OO
OO-OO OO-OO OO-OO

and seeing all the life
spread out in all the fields

and that those ducks and oxen
lived unattached to me
and all those trees and all those
waters clouds and grasses — how
small the city was!

And oh the world was large:
the train had rolled for hours
and never reached the end
of all that sky of all that land
of all those fields and mountains
not counting Piauí

We passed through Rosário
through Vale-Quem-Tem, Quelru.
We passed through Pirapemas
and through Itapicuru:
world of oxen, crested cranes
titmice, ducks, nhambus

bread and coffee

teacake no

bread and coffee

teacake no

value makes the man

value makes the man

value makes the man

value makes the man

there's no value

in just the man

nothing is of value
there's no
value
in just the man
in this valley

there's no
value
there's no
value
for the man who
has
no
value
in the
v
a
l
l
e
y

HISSSSS!!!

Many
there are many days in one
because things themselves
comprise them
with their flesh (or iron or
whatever name
time-matter has

dirty or
not)

comprise them
in their explicit or heavy silences
like flannel quilts
or dizzily still waters

as
on the Medeiros' farm, in their
well

covered by the near panicked shadows
of the trees
of the branches that climbed silently
like enigmas
completely still
like a green or vegetal and watery
night

although up in the trees
on top
way up there
dripping down their luminous flanks in their leaves
the day passed (the 20th
century)
and it was day
as it was day that
day
in our living room
the table with its cloth the chairs the
wooden floor worn to a shine
and Lucinha's bright smile rocking in the hammock

with death already poised
at her throat
with no one's knowledge
— and it doesn't matter —
that I leaning on the porch sill
saw the dark earth of the backyard
and the chicken scratching and pecking at
a cockroach among the plants
and in this case a double-day
inside and outside
of the living room
one at my back the other
before my eyes
ebbing one into the other
through my body
days both now ebbing in the very heart
of Buenos Aires
at four in the afternoon
May 22nd, 1975
thirty years later

many
many are the days in just one
easy to understand
but difficult to penetrate
to the core of each of those many days
because they're more than they seem
since
there are other days
or there were

on that day of the well
at the farm
inside and outside too
because it is not possible to separate
one from the other
those days of impalpable edges
made of — say — fruits and leaves
fruits which in themselves are
a day
of sugar forming in the pulp
or opening onto other surrounding
days
like a horizon of endless works:

because a few steps
from the well
up from the earthen steps
on the treeless street
where I just came from
pass people and carts
or someone shouts from the window
while a bird flies (possibly)
over us
a vulture perhaps
soaring toward Camboa
leisurely over the vast pasture and beyond the railroad
above the thatched huts in the mud
and behind it the factory
built on a slab smoking with ashes and scraps

of cotton

a vulture

which is himself a black day sniffing rotting meat

and in the rotting meat

next to the Slaughterhouse

stinking

the day (a day) rots

surrounding the day

of the mud flat slum dwellers

and the day of the vulture

and the day of the Sol Levante olive oil can

which resting on three stones

on the thatched hut's beaten earth floor

where Esmagado lives

boils

bacon and rice

for his lunch

and all these days linked like smoke rings

encircling the weather vane

disintegrating in the clouds

and the clamor of the tanagers among the sapodilla trees

at six in the afternoon

or

in the bucket of shade and vertigo

of the water

of that well

of that farm

that the years have left behind

And they retrieve more and more
sounding an alarm in my flesh
the silence of that water
its shadow
being a glimmer
under my nails

as then beneath the leaves full of sugar and light
dripping with water
a chirp
a breath of wind
unhurried
and everywhere
the night would build itself and
poison us with jasmine

And later the night would swiftly tumble down
with its dark carriage
banging iron
like a train
through Costela do Diabo
with its parade of bats
It was impossible to discern
with so little light
the nature of its horses
its driver his whip
galloping through my dream
with no brothers to witness

next to the gate
in the dark
and when the tension becomes too great they decide to marry
(except, for example,
Maria do Carmo
who let the soldiers
suck her giant breasts
on Silva Maia Avenue
beneath the oitizeiro trees
and let them come
between her hot thighs — without
insertion —
but who returned home
hating her father
and dissatisfied with life)

At night, since
there's little light,
we get the impression
that time doesn't pass

or that at least it doesn't flow

as it flows by day:

as if there were an interruption
for Dr. Bacelar to make a speech
at the Portuguese Literary Recreation Society
an interruption
so that the workers of the Camboa factory
could rest a little
and procreate in their hammocks
or on their mats

making love quietly
to avoid waking the children asleep in the same room
As if time
during the night
had stopped along
with the darkness and the dust
beneath the furniture and
in the corners of the house
(even inside
the wardrobe,
time,
hung on hangers)

And this sensation
is even more vivid
when we wake up late
and everything is bright
and already running: birds
trees vegetable vendors

And also
when we wake up early and stay
in bed musing on
the early morning process:
the first steps in the street
the first
sounds in the kitchen
until from rooster to rooster
a rooster
right near us
explodes

Except, of course,
in the Baixinha mud flat slums, along
the railroad,
 where they have no running water:
 there
 the gleam contained beneath the night
 is not
 like in the city
 water's fist clenched within the pipes:
 it is life's
 fist
 clenched within the mud

From there it's clear
that night is not the same
 in every part of the city;
 in Baixinha
 night doesn't have
 the same stillness
because the lamplight
 doesn't mesmerize
 as electricity can
mesmerize:
 although time doesn't flow here either,
nor does it surge: it flickers
 it wavers
 in a cage of shadows.

But what distinguishes
this Baixinha night most

from the others
is the aroma: rather
the foul odor
that it shares with the muddy flesh
of certain animals

and for this reason you can say
that the Baixinha night
doesn't pass, it doesn't
flow:

it rots

In something that rots
— let's take an old example:

a pear —

time

doesn't flow or wail,

instead

it sinks into its own abyss,

it is lost

in its own vortex,

but so slowly

that instead of turning to light it turns to
darkness;

rotting is

in fact the fabrication

of a night:

whether

a pear on a plate or

a river in a working-class neighborhood

That's why in Baixinha
there are two nights one within the other: the suburban
night (with no running
water) that dissolves when exposed to the sun
and the subhuman night
of mud
that remains
throughout the day
spread
like grease
along kilometers of mangrove
the deep night
of sleep (when
the workers dream)
and the shallow night
of mud beneath
the house
a night within another
like the tongue in our mouth
I might say
like a dresser
drawer (lower
still: the penis in the vagina)
or like unused
black clothes inside the drawer
or some dirty thing
(a sense of guilt)
within a person
or even like
a drawer of mud

and still others would go
toward Fabril, Apeadouro,
Jordoa
(this one was the Anil streetcar
that took us
to swim in the Azul River)
and the bananas
fermenting
working for their owner — as Marx would say —
hour after hour but with a rhythm
different (much
thicker) from the clock
turning to vinegar
— in that room where all the family
slept and
sold pumpkins and okra —
fermenting
— while Josias, the nurse,
practiced medicine in my father's
grocery store
and I played pool
hiding
in Simplício's bar
by the Ribeirão Fountain —
but
a river
doesn't make vinegar
the way that food rots when the grocer
stores it in a barrel

a river
doesn't rot as bananas do
not even, for example, as
a woman's leg does
— (the woman

no one saw
but who stank throughout the morning
in the house next to our school,
during
the war)

a river doesn't rot as a leg does
— although they both end up
with somewhat bluish skin —
not even as a garden
(at least in our city
beneath the lingering summer lightning)

And as no river rots
as another river does
the Anil river
rotted in its own way
on that part of the island of São Luís.

Precisely because
for another river
to rot as this one does
it would have to come
by the same path
pass into the Slaughterhouse

and mix its own river smell with the smell
of rotting meat
and forever have hovering above it
a cloud of vultures
as happens with the Anil before
winding to the left
to become lost in the sea
(in fact
to be drowned, writhing
in the salty waters
of the bay
that mingle with it, through its veins,
through its sweet river flesh
that push it back
disintegrate it
poison it with salt
and make it rot
— now that it cannot flow —
beneath the mud flat slums
where the workers from the Camboa
Textiles Factory live)

That is the way the Anil rots
to the east of our city
which the French founded in 1612
and which they found already rotting
although with a smell
that had no relation
to the oil of the ships that now enter
the port almost daily

nor to the sewage that the city
empties into its body of fishes
nor to the misery of men
slaves to others
who now live there
like crabs.

Only the Indians came to bathe
at Jenipapeiro beach, only they
heard the wind in the trees
and walked where
today are streets and avenues,
mud-stained homes,
full of hammocks and memories
in the darkness.

But nothing remains of those
Timbira Indians, except stories told in books
and some poems that attempt
to evoke the shadows of the warriors
hidden among the leaves
with their bows
(which doesn't stop some child
having seen *Y Juca Pyrama*
in the school theater
from setting out to search
for vestiges of those men,
— his heart beating hard —
in the forests of Maioba or Jordoá
but he finds only

the sound of wind in the trees)

Unless he finds
a red and blue bird
perched
— the breeze spreading its feathers like
a fan like

the plume of a warrior
who became that bird
to continue living in those forests.

And even if
that bird is not the warrior
it was surely seen by him one day
and therefore
strangely
he is present there
watching him again
maybe now just behind the child just behind
the branches
when
something stirs
and a lizard darts across the dry leaves.

And all this happens
beneath the canopy of trees
(far
from the road that streetcars and buses
travel,
and farther still
from the streets of Praia Grande

clogged with trucks
street vendors like João Coelho and stevedores
unloading palm oil kernels)
all this happens
as part of the history of the forests and the birds
And in the history of the birds
the warriors live.

And I'd never thought before that there was
a history of birds
although I'd known so many
from
the yellow finch (in Senhor Neco's
cage), the dove
(on the rooftop)
even the finch
(that was snared in the pasture)
the campine rooster
looked like an officer
in full-dress;
the cuckoo was a worker
for public sanitation;
the vulture, a black man
in a morning coat; the tyrant flycatcher,
a policeman with a whistle in his mouth
and his kepi on his head
always hard at work
To know
the history of birds
I had to see

the red and blue bird
precariously perched on a branch
too large for those woods
 like a phantom
 (swaying in the breeze)
 you had to see him
 in that silence
made of small vegetal sounds
And he — creating his history — flew away
 not knowing why
 and perched on another tree
 first almost hidden
then resembling a flower or a colored leaf
 and thereby disappeared
 The vultures' history
 is practically the same as those
 whose dogs die
 run over
 at their front door
who have parrots that learn to talk
 in the kitchen
 and finches
 singing
 in the barbershop birdcage
 (the barber's daughter
 ran off with the mailman's
 son
 a mulatto seller of stamps was
 the one.
 Neighborhood ladies gossiped:

“if she’d run off
with a white man
she could at least have married”)

Through all this
Dr. Gonçalves Moreira had in his living room
a pair of Belgian canaries in a silver cage
(on Beira-Mar Avenue at the entrance to the bay)
And he brought an Indian girl
from her home in Barra do Corda
to clean his house (white
linen sheets smelling of lavender)
and to look after the canaries:
she cleaned out the cage
and changed the water and seed
every morning
at the porch window
(during the war).
Down in the back yard
the washerwoman scrubbed clothes
in the washtub
and sang along with the water.
The papaya tree next to the wall
ripened fruit for the doctor’s dessert
(this was around 1942, 43,
when the Americans came
to build the Tirirical Air Force Base:
they bought all the fruits and vegetables
in the Market
they paid Antônio José an incredible salary

and they put their feet up on the table
in the Moto Bar)

And the canaries, with a shrug of indifference,
would sing in their silver cage

Camélia became a whore
since the pill did not exist then
She paid dearly
for the uncomfortable love she
made behind the clothesline
leaning against the fence
while her family slept
(the same mint flavor
as birthday candies)
Her father, Senhor Cunha, the barber,
nearly shamed to death,
he who shaved the beards
of all the men on the street
(and in the cage the finch,
with a shrug of indifference).

Why does a man go and have daughters?
And he had three, for Christ's sake.
The oldest, who was the craftiest,
went to Josias to have
an injection of eucalyptus extract
and the male nurse warned her:
"It's very painful. It's better in a place
that has more flesh."
And since that holy day

it was an injection every afternoon.
(and the finch,
with a shrug of indifference)
The third one turned solemn
and took vows as a Daughter of Mary
(and the finch,
with a shrug of indifference)
The yellow finch
stopped singing when
one Sunday morning
Senhor Neco killed his wife
who — they say — put horns on him:
the cage rolled on the floor.
("He stabbed her in the back,
right here he knifed her, in the back.
She didn't lose a drop of blood,
the hemorrhage remained inside.")

Death spread over the street,
mingled with the orchard trees
pervaded the kitchen of our house
reached the smell of the meat roasting in the pan
and glistened on the dinnerware
upon the table
set for lunch

*Hooray for the woman in cream
Put the slipper on the one in green
But a woman in her calico
Will always keep her man in tow*

But this is the story of birds
urmanized from a long way back
and only warriors know
only they understand
the story of the birds
birds
when the wind blows it through the trees of São Luís
(in a recollection).

It wouldn't be right to say
that Newton Ferreira's life
slipped by or was spent
among baskets of shrimp, bags of rice
and bushels of manioc flour
in his market
on the corner of Afogados
and Alegria Street.

It wouldn't be right because
if you dropped by
around 3 in the afternoon (a
tranquil hour) — he half leaning over
the countertop reading X-9 comic books —
you would see that everything was fixed
in the same white stillness
of the corn in the bin
and the shelves stacked with cans and bottles
and the countertop with the Filizola scale
everything
on the green and white mosaic floor

like an invisible vulture eviscerating it
in a ballet
and high above the roof of the market
in mid air?)

And amid yet another system

this one made
of winds

that advanced darkly from the banks of the Apeadouro
or from the headwaters of the Bacanga,
humid at times,
with a turbulence that could make an airplane shudder.

No,

to speak of spiders isn't right
if I'm thinking of the city unfolding in its
tile roofs and church towers

beneath a searing sun

the families beneath roof tiles, photo portraits of the dead
with faces colored in too brightly,
set in gilded frames,

antique

chests of drawers, small boxes full of buttons and balls of linen
thread,

tubercular relatives in darkened rooms, coughing
softly so the neighbors will not hear, children

just beginning to walk

clinging to the legs of helpless parents,
beneath those dingy red tile roofs
of our small city

that

someone arriving from the USA by plane
can see
between the dirty mouths of two rivers
down below
looking like forever. But
the lot on Cajazeiras Street? The Shits Bones
cistern? the Bishop's Fountain? Newton Ferreira's
grocery store?

That hypothetical Braniff
passenger flying so high
cannot see a thing of this.

Leaning on the countertop
Newton Ferreira reads his
detective stories.
He knows nothing of the meteorological
conspiracies plotted
in the lofty spheres above the Atlantic.

In the grocery store
time doesn't flow
instead it piles up
in bars of Martins soap
slabs of dried beef
bacon all the
merchandise with its prices and
its smells
marked at retail

(kerosene's
dirty eye
was spying from the can beneath the countertop)

But one sees none of this
flying above the city at 600 miles per hour.

Not even by walking
between those two rows of one-door-and-a-window houses,
half-homes with iron balconies and friezes
mottled with dry rot
(in the red
afternoon)

Not even if the grocery store
is still there and it's now eight in the evening
and you might see
the light through the single half-opened door
like before
and there might be men conversing there inside
between swigs of sugar cane liquor
and though the countertop
and smell of the merchandise might be the same
you will not find Gonzaga, the army marching band sergeant.
They will no longer talk of the war since the war ended
years ago.

Going up or down the street,
even if on foot,
you will see that the houses are practically the same
but unfamiliar faces
will loom in the windows
as if from a nightmare.

Leaving home was already
an apprenticeship to death: my
room with its humid moldy wall
the back yard in the rain
overgrown with vegetation
and the kitchen
and the lamp cord covered with flies,
our home
full of our voices
now has other dwellers:
you're still alive and you see, and you see
that you didn't need to be here to see.
The houses, the cities,
are just places through which
in passing
we pass through

(either sitting or sleeping
or eating at the table
drinking water from the pot
or leaning
on the window sill, the moist
chicken dripping under
the trellised plants)

Not by standing, not by crawling,
not even by pressing your ear to the ground
will you ever hear again what was said there.
But the kerosene, yes,
you can still smell the same odor of rags

and soap perhaps
if the factory hasn't gone under.
But of Newton Ferreira, ex-
center-forward of the Maranhão team,
who went bust ten times
and everyone knew downtown,
there's now no trace
on that green and white mosaic floor
(you'll also search in vain
in tonight's B-movie feature)

Still, from up high you can see the city almost unchanged
with its streets and plazas
where he walked

Oh, my green city
my humid city
ever beaten by many winds
rustling your days at the entrance to the sea
my sonorous city
spheres of heavy winds
rolling crazily over the belvederes
and the soccer fields
green green green green
oh rustling shadows
that I drag through other streets

Lightning from your waters penetrates
my body deeply,
penetrates so deeply and completely
and it seems that I'm so small

for so many lives and deaths
that unfold
in the darkness of clarity
in the nape of my neck,
in my elbow, in the roof of my mouth
in the tomb of my mouth
stage of unexpected
resurrections
(my song-bird
city)
of darkness maybe yours maybe mine
I no longer know
but in some part of the body (of your body? of
mine?)
the jasmine
glitters
although dirty from the scarce surrounding joy
in that empty street
full of leaves and shadows

Waste water rushes down
funneling me in coat and tie
through your sewers
I rise up in your mirrors
I see myself in ancient faces
I see you in my many faces
possessed lost fractured
reflected
unreflected

and the red daisies
drooping over the cistern:
the lightning of your waters
penetrates deeply in a
vertigo of white voices milky echoes
of warm juice on my penis
body seeking body

In the pasture hidden
in the grass that was protection and affection
like a horse sniffing
the smell of the earth the green
smell of the forest the pungency of the new smell
of the forest new with life
life of green
things growing
far from that furniture where only the past is alive
far from the world of death of sickness of shame
of the outrage of bill collectors at the door,

there
drinking the health of the earth and of plants,

seeking

within me the source of some joy
however filthy and furtive
the warm juice the delight
of one's own body in his body
and in an earthy movement
amid the grass,
heavenly is the cock that finally rises in flight
and falls

Oh, my dirty city
suffers deeply and in silence
from the shame the family smothers
in its deepest drawers
of faded dresses
of tattered shirts
of legions of degraded people
barely eating
yet embroidering flowers on
their tablecloths on
their table centerpieces
with water jars
— in the afternoon
throughout the afternoon
throughout their life —
filled with
crepe paper flowers
now dusty

my aching city
I'm reflected in your
gathered waters:
in the glass
of water
in the bottle of water
in the barrel of water
in the bathtub naked in the bathroom
dressed in the clothes
of your waters
that undress me and descend
diligently toward the sewer grate

as if they knew beforehand
where to go

Where
did they go those waters of
so many afternoon baths?
We flow with those afternoons
into the sewer grate

and now
I flow
into the abyss of smells
that burst in my flesh
in yours, city
you poison me with you
you drag me through darkness
you stun me with jasmine
you cover me with juice and thrust me
into a tightened
asshole you make
me delirious you smear me
with shit and my dream blows up
in shit.

On the city gardens
I piss pus. I wander
on Estrela Street, I slide
down Precipício Lane.
In the Ribeirão Fountain I take a bath,
and in the Bishop's I take a piss.
I lose my sight on Sol Street,
and on Paz Street I revolt
I spurn myself on Comércio

but on Hortas I blossom;
on Prazeres I sob
and on Palma I meet myself
on Alecrim I smell good
on Saúde I feel sick
on Desterro I run into me
on Alegria I get lost
on Carmo Street I bellow
on Direita Street I stagger
and on Aurora I fall asleep

I wake up in the tenderloin. The day barks, it sails
puffed up and blue

I fly

with white towels

I light on Isabel's smile

I trip on a bias I fall from the clouds

I behold Marília

I snuggle in her petals like the Divine
dove among roses on a tray

But June arrives and stabs me

July arrives and tears me

September displays my mortal remains
on the city's posts

(I gather myself together later,

sew the pieces up, but my bowels

will never come together right again)

I preach subversion of poetic

order, and they pay me. I preach

subversion of political order,

in Castro's bar, in Maroca's
boarding house on Saturday nights, it meant little
to take a bath and walk down
to the city in the afternoon
(beneath the rustle of the trees)
there
in the north of Brazil
dressed in coarse cotton.

And being so little
it was a lot,
for a lot of inconsequence was the green
fire of the grass, the moss on the wall, the rooster
that will die one day,
the plates in the cabinet,
the preserves in the jars, the lack
of affection, the search
for love in things.

Not in people:
in things, in the mute flesh
of things, in the flower's cunt, in the occult
words of lonely waters:
for life
was passing over us,
riding in a jet.

Sunday doesn't have the same speed
as Friday's flurry of shopping
traffic jams and drinking the
icy juice of sugar cane,

nor is there
the same speed in
the lily and the tide
with its army of bubbles and burning caravels
sullenly invading the river
with a torpor unlike that of twilight
which milled
the light from above
with its vast scattered gears.

Seated on the floor of her room, Bizuza has
another speed
folding the laundered and ironed sheets,
arranging them with the linens, as
if life would never end.

And it was
in her universe of lunches and seasonings
of bay leaves and black pepper
wild mustard for a stubborn cough,
a universe
of pans and fatigue between the walls of the kitchen
wearing a threadbare cotton print dress,
where
her tiny heart beat.

And if life was not
eternal, inside and out of the cupboard,
it is certain that
everything having its own speed

(the dark speed
of molasses, the bright
speed of splashing

each thing withdrew
unequally
from its possible eternity.

water)

Or
if you wish
would weave it
unequally

in its own light flesh or dark
in a current more profound than the hours of the week
That's why it's not right to say
that you can see the city better

on Sunday

— the tile façades, Sol Street empty
the windows barred in silence —
when
perfectly still
it seems to waver.

Or that you can see a city better
when — as from Alcântara —
all its people left
and nothing remains of them (not even
a dresser mirror in one of those
roofless houses) — just
the persistent certainty
among the ruins that
on the ground
where brush now grows
they actually danced

(and you can almost hear voices
and bursts of laughter
that rise and fall in the folds of the wind)

But

if it's frightening to think
of how so much disappeared, so many
wardrobes, beds and servant girls
so many many skirts, slips,
shoes of every description
blown away by the wind, along with the clouds,
to this

the morning answers
that
with its many blue speeds
it moves right along

joyful and oblivious

It's impossible to say
at how many different speeds
a city moves

at each moment
(not counting the dead
who fly backward)
or even a house

where the kitchen's speed
differs from the living room's (apparently still
in its porcelain vases and knick-knacks)
or from the backyard
open wide to the seasonal gales

and what do you say about
traffic congestion and the circulation of money
and goods

unequal among classes and neighborhoods, and about the
circulation of capital
slower among the vegetables
quicker in industry, and
the circulation of sleep
under the skin,
of dreams
in the hair?

and the numerous states of water in vessels
(about to disappear)

the circulation
of the hand that searches in pubic hair
the wet dream the body's
many lips
that open like a rose when caressed, the hand
that remains there taking on
the scents of woman

and the circulation
of the other smells
produced on the farm
together with the resin of trees and the songs
of birds?
What do you say about the circulation
of solar light
dragging itself in the dust beneath the wardrobe
among the shoes?

or a sun)

for in truth
the center of a day is everywhere
like, say, in the water jug
in the dining room
or in the kitchen
around which the family
moves at random.

And if in this case
thirst is the force of gravity
other metabolic functions
create other centers
like the latrine and
the bed
or the dining room table
(beneath a sooty lamp in a
modest home on Alegria Street
during the war)
not to mention the civic centers, the spiritualist
centers, the Gonçalves Dias
Cultural Center or the fish markets,
schools, churches and brothels,
and the many other centers of the system
that the day moves about
(always with a different speed)
without ever leaving its spot.

Because
when all those suns go out

the empty city will remain
(like Alcântara)
in the same spot.

Because
unlike the solar system
 it is not the sun that sustains
 these systems but
the bodies
that revolve around them:
the table does not sustain them
as does hunger
the bed does not sustain them
as does fatigue
the bank does not sustain them
as does unpaid work

And this is why
when people leave
 (as from Alcântara)
the suns go out (the
 pots, the stoves),
 their source of warmth now gone

 this is the reason
 why in São Luís
which people did not leave
 the city still moves at this moment
 in its many systems
 and speeds

because when a jug breaks
another jug is made
another bed is made
another pitcher is made
another man
is made

so the fire

does not go out
in the home's kitchen

What they said in the kitchen
or on the porch of the house
(on Sol Street)
went out the windows

it was heard in the downstairs rooms
of the neighbors' house, in the back of the furniture store
(and who knows
how many things are said in a city
how many voices
slip through that intricate labyrinth
of walls rooms and courtyards,
of bathrooms, of patios, of backyards
voices

among walls and plants,
laughter,
that last a moment and then go out)

And words are living things
and tremble with the joy of the body that shouted them

they truly have their own perfume, the taste
of flesh
that is never really given
not even in bed
unless to oneself
to one's own vertigo
or likewise
talking
or laughing
within the family circle

while like a mouse
you can hear and see
from your hole
how those voices bounce against the walls of the empty patio
on the iron grating where a grapevine dries
on wires
in the afternoon
in a small Latin American city.

And in them there is
a mortal illumination
born in the mouth
in no particular time
but which there
in our house
amid cheap furniture
and no exceptional dignity
undermined our very existence.

We laughed, for sure,

around the birthday table covered with mint candies
wrapped in colored tissue paper,

sure, we laughed,

but

it was as if no affection were sufficient

as if it made no sense to laugh

in such a little city.

The man is in the city
as an object in another
and the city is in the man
who is in another city

but the ways are many
that an object
holds another:
the man, for instance, is not in the city
as a tree is
in any other
nor as a tree
is in any one of its leaves
(even fluttering far from it)
The man is not in the city
as a tree is in a book
when a gust of wind will turn its leaves

the city is in the man
but not in the way
a bird is in a tree
not in the way that a bird

(its image)

it is/was in the water

nor in the way

the bird's fear

is in the bird I write of

the city is in the man

almost as a tree flies

within the bird that leaves it

everything is in another

in its own

and different way

of being in itself

the city is not in the man

the same as in these

plazas streets and trees

Buenos Aires,

May / October, 1975

NA VERTIGEM DO DIA
IN THE DIZZINESS OF DAY
(1975-1980)

A ALEGRIA

O sofrimento não tem
nenhum valor.
Não acende um halo
em volta de tua cabeça, não
ilumina trecho algum
de tua carne escura
(nem mesmo o que iluminaria
a lembrança ou a ilusão
de uma alegria).

Sofres tu, sofre
um cachorro ferido, um inseto
que o inseticida envenena.
Será maior a tua dor
que a daquele gato que viste
a espinha quebrada a pau
arrastando-se a berrar pela sarjeta
sem ao menos poder morrer?

A justiça é moral, a injustiça
não. A dor
te iguala a ratos e baratas
que também de dentro dos esgotos
espiam o sol
e no seu corpo nojento
de entre fezes
querem estar contentes

JOY

Suffering has
no value.
It lights no halo
above your head, it
illuminates no portion
of your dark flesh
(not even that which
memory or the illusion of joy
could illuminate).

You suffer, as an injured dog
or an insect poisoned with insecticide
suffers.

Could your pain be greater than
that yowling cat you saw
his spine crushed by a club
dragging himself in the gutter
unable even to die?

Justice is moral, injustice
is not. Pain
puts you on the level of rats and roaches
which also spy the sun
from within their sewer
and within their loathsome bodies
among feces
they long to be content.

BANANAS PODRES

Como um relógio de ouro o podre
oculto nas frutas
sobre o balcão (ainda mel
dentro da casca
na carne que se faz água) era
ainda ouro
o turvo açúcar
vindo do chão

e agora

ali: bananas negras

como bolsas moles

onde pousa uma abelha

e gira

e gira ponteiro no universo dourado

(parte mínima da tarde)

em abril

enquanto vivemos

E detrás da cidade
(das pessoas na sala
ou costurando)
às costas das pessoas
à frente delas
à direita ou
(detrás das palmas dos coqueiros
alegres
e do vento)
feito um cinturão azul

e ardente
o mar
batendo o seu tambor

que
da quitanda
não se escuta
Que tem a ver o mar
com estas bananas
já manchadas de morte?

que ao nosso
lado viajam
para o caos
e azedando
e ardendo em água e ácidos
a caminho da noite
vertiginosamente devagar?

Que tem a ver o mar
com esse marulho
de águas sujas
ferendo nas bananas?
com estas vozes que falam de vizinhos,
de bundas, de cachaça?
Que tem a ver o mar com esse barulho?

Que tem a ver o mar com esse quintal?
Aqui, de azul,
apenas há um caco
de vidro de leite de magnésia

(osso de anjo)
que se perderá na terra fofa
conforme a ação giratória da noite
e dos perfumes nas folhas
da hortelã

Nenhum alarde
nenhum alarme
mesmo quando o verão passa gritando
sobre os nossos telhados

Pouco tem a ver o mar
com este banheiro de cimento
e zinco

onde o silêncio é água:
uma esmeralda
engastada no tanque
(e que
solta
se esvai pelos esgotos
por baixo da cidade)

Em tudo aqui há mais passado que futuro
mais morte do que festa:

neste
banheiro
de água salobra e sombra
muito mais que de mar
há de floresta

Muito mais que de mar

neste banheiro
há de bananas podres na quitanda
e nem tanto pela água
em que se puem (onde
um fogo ao revés
foge no açúcar)
do que pelo macio dessa vida
de fruta
inserida na vida da família:
um macio de banho às três da tarde

Um macio de casa no Nordeste
com seus quartos e sala
seu banheiro
que esta tarde atravessa para sempre

Um macio de luz ferindo a vida
no corpo das pessoas
lá no fundo
onde bananas podres mar azul
fome tanque floresta
são um mesmo estampido
um mesmo grito

E as pessoas conversam
na cozinha
ou na sala contam casos
e na fala que falam
(esse barulho)
tanto marulha o mar quanto a floresta

(angel bone)

that will disappear into the yielding earth
in harmony with the spinning motion of the night
and the perfumes on the leaves
of mint

 No ostentation
no consternation
even when the summer passes in a clamor
above our rooftops

The sea has little to do
with this bathroom of cement
and zinc

 where silence is water:
 an emerald
 inlaid in the tank
 (and when
 freed
 flushes through the sewers
 beneath the city)

In everything here there is more past than future
more death than cheer:

 in this
bathroom
of brackish water and shadow
 much more like the forest
 than the sea

This bathroom

is more like rotting bananas in the grocery
than the sea
and not so much for the water
in which they wear away (where
a fire turned backwards
flees in sugar)
but because of the softness of this life
of fruit
inserted into the family life:
a softness of a bath at three in the afternoon

A softness of home in the Northeast
with its bedrooms and living room
its bathroom
which this afternoon traverses for forever

A softness of light slashing the life
of peoples' bodies
deeply
where rotting bananas blue sea
hunger cistern forest
are the same report
the same roar

And people converse
in the kitchen
or tell stories in the living room
and in the way they speak
(that hubbub)
as much as the forest, swells the sea

as much as
the afternoon honey glows
— the rotting fire —
the aqueous emerald
that slipped away
gleams

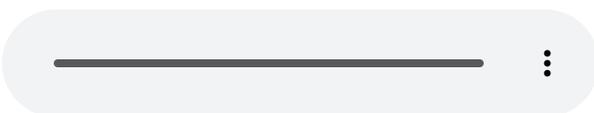
Is the sea but its swell
with its white hammers
its diurnal
lightning
that girds our waist?

The sea
the sea is but this bathroom
is but this green backyard is but this grocery
the sea
is but
this nocturnal
backyard earth
to which perfumes and futures gravitate
the sea the sea
with its blue pistons with its revelry
is about is about
these bananas
where the afternoon rots like a
vegetal carrion attracting bees
blow flies
it is about these people these men
who bear it in their bodies and even in their names

it is about these dark rooms
this furniture ravaged by poverty
these old walls with this meager
life which in the mouth
is laughter and in the belly
is hunger

In the rear of the grocery
in the shadows
seethe the wound and flies
of the afternoon;
surrounding this wound is the home
and its neighbors
the community
the avenues
the streets the yards other groceries
other homes with their china cabinets
other plazas hillside streets and belvederes
from which you see the sea
our horizon

ARTE POÉTICA



Não quero morrer não quero
apodrecer no poema
que o cadáver de minhas tardes
não venha feder em tua manhã feliz
e o lume
que na tua boca acenda acaso das palavras
— ainda que nascido da morte —
some-se
aos outros fogos do dia
aos barulhos da casa e da avenida
no presente veloz

Nada que se pareça
a pássaro empalhado múmia
de flor
dentro do livro
e o que da noite volte
volte em chamas
ou em chaga

vertiginosamente como o jasmim
que num lampejo só
ilumina a cidade inteira

POEMA OBSCENO

Façam a festa
cantem e dancem
que eu faço o poema duro

o poema-murro
sujo
como a miséria brasileira

Não se detenham:
façam a festa

Bethânia Martinho
Clementina

Estação Primeira de Mangueira Salgueiro
gente de Vila Isabel e Madureira

todos
façam

a nossa festa
enquanto eu soco este pilão

este surdo
poema

que não toca no radio
que o povo não cantará
(mas que nasce dele)

Não se prestará a análises estruturalistas
Não entrará nas antologias oficiais

Obsceno
como o salário de um trabalhador aposentado
o poema
terá o destino dos que habitam o lado escuro do país

— e espreitam.

OBSCENE POEM

Have the party
sing and dance
for I'm making the attack poem
the whack-poem
rotten
like Brazilian misery

Do not stop:
have the party
Bethânia Martinho
Clementina

Mangueira Salgueiro Samba School
people from Vila Isabel and Madureira
everybody let's
have

our party
while I pummel this pestle
this deaf
poem
that does not play on the radio
that no one will sing
(but will give it birth)
It won't lend itself to structural analyses
It won't be part of proper anthologies
Obscene
like the retiree's pay
the poem
will share the fate of those who inhabit the dark side of the country

— and watch.

BARULHOS
SOUNDS
(1980-1987)

ONDE ESTÃO

Na enseada de Botafogo o mar é cinza
e sobre ele se erguem os rochedos da Urca,
o Pão de Açúcar.

É tudo solidamente real.

Mas e os mortos,

onde estão?

O Vinicius, por exemplo,

e o Hélio? a Clarice?

Não quero que me respondam.

Pergunto apenas, quero

apenas

fundamente

perguntar.

Ia cruzando a sala de manhã quando
me disseram: a Clarice morreu.

E no banheiro, depois, lavando as mãos,
lavava eu as mãos já num mundo sem ela

e água e mãos eram um enigma

de sensações e lampejos

ali na pia.

É que a morte revela a vida aos vivos?

Quando Darwin morreu

fomos todos para o seu apartamento na rua Redentor.

Ele estava esticado num banco

enquanto eu via
pela janela sobre a praia
um helicóptero
a zumbir na atmosfera iluminada
longe.

Thereza, Guguta, Zuenir,
estavam todos ali e o bairro
funcionava, a cidade funcionava aquela manhã
como em todas as manhãs.

Não era realidade demais
para alguém deixar assim
para sempre?

A caminho do cemitério me lembro
havia uma casa espantosamente ocre
recém-pintada — e até hoje me pergunto
o que há de espantoso numa casa ocre
recém-pintada.

Não sei se devido à quantidade de automóveis
que há na cidade
o surdo barulho das ruas
e os aviões que cruzam o céu,
o certo é que
subitamente
me pergunto por eles.

Onde estão?
onde estou?
O mundo é real demais para alguém pensar

que se trata de um sonho.

WHERE ARE THEY?

In the cove of Botafogo the sea is gray
and the bluffs of Urca rise above it,
Sugarloaf.

And everything is resolutely real.

But the dead,

where are they?

Vinicius, for example,
and Hélio? Clarice?

I don't need an answer from them.

I'm just asking, I just
profoundly

want

to ask.

One morning in the living room
they told me: Clarice is dead.

And later in the bathroom, washing my hands,
I washed my hands in a world with her now gone
and there in the sink
the water and my hands were an enigma
of sensations and flashes.

Does death reveal life to the living?

When Darwin died

we all went to his apartment on Redentor Street.
They had laid him on a bench
and as I stared

through a window at the beach
a distant
helicopter
droned in the dazzling sky.

Thereza, Guguta, Zuenir,
were all there and the neighborhood
kept working, the city kept working that morning
as it did every morning.
Wasn't it just too real
for someone to leave like that
forever?

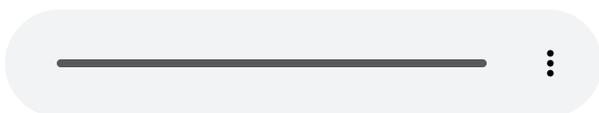
Riding to the cemetery I recall
a shockingly ochre house
newly painted — and even today I wonder
what was so shocking about an ochre house
just painted.

I don't know if it was the number of cars
there are in the city
the dull sounds of the streets
and planes crisscrossing the sky,
all I know is that
I suddenly
began to wonder about them.

Where are they?
where am I?
The world is too real for a person to think

that it is all a dream.

DESPEDIDA



Eu deixarei o mundo com fúria.
Não importa o que aparentemente aconteça,
se docemente me retiro.

De fato
nesse momento
estarão de mim se arrebatando
raízes tão fundas
quanto estes céus brasileiros.
Num alarido de gente e ventania
olhos que amei
rostos amigos tardes e verões vividos
estarão gritando a meus ouvidos
para que eu fique
para que eu fique

Não chorarei.
Não há solução maior que despedir-se da vida.

FAREWELL

I will leave the world with fury.
If I withdraw discreetly
it will not matter what seems to have happened.

Indeed
at that moment
my body will be sprouting
 roots as deep
as these Brazilian skies
Amid the gale and the hue and cry of people
eyes that I have loved
faces friends afternoons and summers I have lived
will be shouting in my ears
 that I should stay
 that I should stay

I will not cry.
There is no sob more wrenching than to say farewell to life.

POROUS POEM

I want you made of earth,
yet luminous
my poem.

Of earth,
the body grazed by eclipses,
porous
poem
of dust —
where suicides and perfumes
cry out.

This is how I want you
faceless
yet familiar
like the backyard dirt
(the shadow of all of us before
and after us
when the chicken clucks and scratches).

Of earth,
where forever the form of this hand
now ablaze
will go out.

MANCHA

Em que parte de mim ficou
aquela mancha azul?
ou melhor, esta
mancha
de um azul que nenhum céu teria
ou teve ou mar?
um azul
que a mão de Leonardo achou
ao acaso e inevitavelmente
e não só:
um azul
que há séculos
numa tarde talvez
feito um lampejo surgiu no mundo
essa cor
essa mancha
que a mim chegou
de detrás de dezenas de milhares de manhãs
e noites estreladas
como um puído
aceno humano.
Mancha azul
que carrego comigo como carrego meus cabelos
ou uma lesão
oculta onde ninguém sabe.

DESASTRE

Há quem pretenda
que seu poema seja
mármore
ou cristal — o meu
o queria pêssego
pêra
banana apodrecendo num prato
e se possível
numa varanda
onde pessoas trabalhem e falem
e donde se ouça
o barulho da rua.
Ah quem me dera
o poema podre!
a polpa fendida
exposto
o avesso da voz
minando
no prato
o licor a química
das sílabas
o desintegrando-se cadáver
das metáforas
um poema
como um desastre em curso.

DISASTER

There are those who intend
that their poem be
marble
or crystal — as for me
I have preferred it be a peach
a pear
a banana decomposing on a plate
and if possible
on a veranda
where people work and talk
and where you can hear
the sounds of the street.
My greatest hope is for
a putrid poem!
the pulp split
exposed
the backside of its voice
oozing
on the plate
the liqueur the chemistry
of the syllables
the disintegrating cadaver
of the metaphors
a poem
like a disaster unfolding.

DETRÁS DO ROSTO

Acho que mais me imagino
do que sou
ou o que sou não cabe
no que consigo ser
e apenas arde
de trás desta máscara morena
que já foi rosto de menino.

Conduzo
sob minha pele
uma fogueira de um metro e setenta de altura.

Não quero assustar ninguém.
Mas se todos se escondem no sorriso
na palavra medida
devo dizer
que o poeta gullar é uma criança
que não consegue morrer

e que pode
a qualquer momento
desintegrar-se em soluços.

Você vai rir se lhe disser
que estou cheio de flor e passarinho
que nada
do que amei na vida se acabou:
e mal consigo andar

tanto isso pesa.

Pode você calcular quantas toneladas de luz
comporta
um simples roçar de mãos?
ou o doce penetrar
na mulher amorosa?

Só disponho de meu corpo
para operar o milagre
esse milagre
que a vida traz
e zás
dissipa às gargalhadas.

BEHIND THE FACE

I think that I am more what I imagine
than who I am
or what I am just doesn't fit
in what I manage to be
and what was a boy's face once
now barely burns
behind this dark-skinned mask.

I tend
beneath my skin
a bonfire rising five feet six.

I don't wish to frighten anyone.
But if everybody hides behind their smile
behind their measured word

I must say
that gullar the poet is still a child
that cannot seem to die

and who might
at any given moment
dissolve into his tears.

You're bound to laugh if I tell you
that I brim with birds and flowers
that nothing
that I've loved in life has ever disappeared
and that the weight of it all

makes it hard to move about.

Can you calculate how many tons of light
equal
a simple brush of hands?
or the sweet communion
with the woman that you love?

I have only my body
to work the miracle
that miracle
that life brings
and bam!
dissolves in boisterous laughter.

O CHEIRO DA TANGERINA

Com raras exceções
os minerais não têm cheiro

quando cristais
nos ferem
quando azougue
nos fogem
e nada há em nós que a eles se pareça

exceto
os nossos ossos
os nossos
dentes
que são no entanto
porosos
e eles não: os minerais não respiram.

E a nada aspiram
(ao contrário
da trepadeira
que subiu até debruçar-se
no muro
em frente a nossa casa
em São Luís
para espiar a rua
e sorrir na brisa).

Rígidos em sua cor

os minerais são apenas
extensão e silêncio.
Nunca se acenderá neles
— em sua massa quase eterna —
um cheiro de tangerina.

Como esse que vaza
agora na sala
vindo de uma pequena esfera
de sumo e gomos
e não se decifra nela
inda que a dilacere
e me respingue
o rosto e me lambuze os dedos
feito uma fêmea.

E digo
— tangerina
e a palavra não diz o homem
envolto nessa
inesperada vertigem
que vivo agora
a domicílio
(de camisa branca
e chinelos
sentado numa poltrona) enquanto
a flora inteira
sonha à minha volta
porque nos vegetais
é que mora o delírio.

Já os minerais não sonham
exceto a água
velha e jovem)
que está no fundo do perfume.

Mineral
ela não tem no entanto forma
ou cor.
Invertebrada
ajusta-se a todo espaço.
Clara
busca as profundezas
da terra
e a tudo permeia
e dissolve
aos sais
aos sóis
traduz um reino no outro
liga
a morte e a vida
ah sintaxe do real
alegre e líquida!

Como o poema, a água
jamais é encontrada em estado puro
e pesa nas flores
como pesa em mim
(mais que meus documentos e roupas
mais que meus cabelos
minhas culpas)

e adquire
em meu corpo
esse cheiro de urina
como
na tangerina
adquire
seu cheiro de floresta.

Esse cheiro
que agora me embriaga
e me inverte a vida
num relance num
relâmpago
e me arrasta de braços
atropelado
pela cotação do dólar.

E não obstante
se digo — tangerina
não digo a sua fresca alvorada
que é todo um sistema
entranhado nas fibras
na seiva
em que destila
o carbono
e a luz da manhã
(durante séculos
no ponto do universo
onde chove
uma linha azul de vida abriu-se em folhas

e te gerou
tangerina
mandarina
laranja da China
para
esta tarde
exalares teu cheiro
em minha modesta residência)

jovem cheiro
que nada tem da noite do gás metano
ou da carne que apodrece
doce, nada
do azinhavre da morte
que certamente
também fascina
e nos arrasta
à sua festa escura

próxima ao coito
anal
ao minete
ao coma
alcoólico

coisas de bicho
não de plantas
(onde a morte não fede)

coisas
de homem
que mente
tortura

ou se joga do oitavo andar

não de plantas e frutas

não dessa

fruta

que dilacero

e que solta

na sala (no século)

seu cheiro

seu grito

sua

notícia matinal.

SCENT OF THE TANGERINE

With rare exceptions
do minerals not possess a scent

when crystals
injure us
when mercury
slips away
and there's nothing in us that seems like them

except
our bones
our
teeth
which are however
porous
although the minerals are not: they do not respire.

Nor do they aspire
(unlike
the vine
that climbed and sprawled
atop the wall
that faced our house
in São Luís
to monitor the street
and grin amid the breeze).

Inflexible in color

minerals are but
duration and repose.
Never will ignite in them
— in their all but everlasting mass —
a scent of tangerine.

Like the one that now
empties in the dining room
discharged from a small sphere
of juice and sections
and does not reveal itself
though it may come apart
and squirt me
in the face and wet my fingers
like a woman.

And I say
“tangerine”
and it's not the man who says the word
wrapped in this
unexpected vertigo
that I now live
at home
(in white shirt
and slippers
sitting in an easy chair) while
all the flora encircle me
in dream
because it is in vegetables
that delirium resides

Minerals do not now dream
except for water
(young and old)
which is at the heart of perfume.

Minerals
have no form
or hue.
Invertebrate
they conform to every space.
Bright
they seek the depths
of the earth
and permeate it all
and dissolve
into salts
into suns
translate one kingdom to another
link
death to life
oh, the joyful liquid
syntax of the real!

Like the poem, one
never finds water in a pure state
and it weighs upon the flowers
as it weighs upon me too
(more than my documents and clothes
more than my hair

my guilts)
and it acquires
that scent of urine
on my body

the way
the tangerine
acquires
its forest scent.

That scent
that first intoxicates
and inverts my life
in a glance in a
flash
and drags me face down
trampled
by the dollar's value

And yet
if I say "tangerine"
I don't say your fresh dawn
which is an entire system
deep-rooted in the fibers
in the sap
in which it distills
carbon
and the morning light
(for centuries
at the spot in the universe
where it is raining

a blue line of life opened up in leaves
and conceived you
tangerine
mandarin
Chinese orange
in order to
this afternoon
exhale your scent
in my modest home)

youthful scent
that has nothing to do with the night of methane gas
or with rotting meat
sweet, none
of the verdigris of death
which surely
also fascinates
and drags us
to its darkened carnival
near anal
sex
cunnilingus
alcoholic
coma
things of beasts
and not of plants
(whose death does not smell bad)
things
of man
who lies

and tortures
or jumps from the ninth floor window

not of plants and fruits

not of that

fruit

that I tear apart

and that releases

into the room (into the century)

its scent

its cry

its

morning news.

MANHÃ DE SOL

Vianinha, Paulinho, Armando Costa,
que dia lindo, não?

Estou passando de carro
ao lado do cemitério São João Batista
e quase escuto vocês aí dentro
falando e rindo
debaixo deste sol.

Deve ser bom estar assim entre amigos
livres das aporrinhações da vida
a olhar as nuvens
e os passarinhos
que por aí
passarinham.

Invisíveis,
de que falam vocês
recostados no túmulo de Vinicius de Moraes?
Do CPC? do Opinião? do futuro
da Nova República?
ou simplesmente flutuam
como os ramos
ao fluxo da brisa?

Paro no sinal da Rua Mena Barreto.

— E pode um marxista admitir
conversa entre defuntos?

Não é a morte o fim de tudo?

— É claro, digo a mim mesmo, é claro —

e sigo em frente.

Mas dentro da minha alegria
os três amigos continuam a conversar e rir
nesta manhã brasileira
que torna implausível a escura morte.

SUNNY MORNING

Vianinha, Paulinho, Armando Costa,
 isn't this a lovely day?

I'm driving
past the São João Batista cemetery
and almost hear voices from within
 talking and laughing
 beneath this sun.

It must be good to be among friends
 free from life's exasperations
to watch the clouds
 and the little birds
 that flock
 there.

Invisible,
 what do you talk about
stretched out on the tomb of Vinicius de Moraes?
About the Peoples' Culture Centers? Group Opinion? of the future
of the New Republic?
 or like the branches
 do you simply flutter
 in the currents of air?

I stop at the light at Mena Barreto Street.
— And can a Marxist admit that
 he talks to the dead?
 Isn't death the utter end?
— Of course, I tell myself, of course —

and I move on.

But within my joy
the three friends keep talking and laughing
on this Brazilian morning
that turns a somber death implausible.

MUITAS VOZES
MANY VOICES
(1999)

FILHOS

A meu filho Marcos



Daqui escutei
quando eles
chegaram rindo
e correndo
entraram
na sala
e logo
invadiram também
o escritório
(onde eu trabalhava)
num alvoroço
e rindo e correndo
se foram
com sua alegria

se foram

Só então
me perguntei
por que
não lhes dera
maior
atenção

se há tantos
e tantos
anos

não os via
crianças
já que
agora
estão os três
com mais
de trinta anos.

as children
and
now
the three
are more than
thirty years old.

MUITAS VOZES



Meu poema
é um tumulto:
a fala
que nele fala
outras vozes
arrasta em alarido.

(estamos todos nós
cheios de vozes
que o mais das vezes
mal cabem em nossa voz:

se dizes *pêra*,
acende-se um clarão
um rastilho
de tardes e açúcares
ou
se azul disseres,
pode ser que se agite
o Egeu
em tuas glândulas)

A água que ouviste
num soneto de Rilke
os ínfimos
rumores no capim
o sabor

do hortelã
(essa alegria)

a boca fria
da moça
o maruim
na poça
a hemorragia
da manhã

tudo isso em ti
se deposita
e cala.
Até que de repente
um susto
ou uma ventania
(que o poema dispara)
chama
esses fósseis à fala.

Meu poema
é um tumulto, um alarido:
basta apurar o ouvido.

MANY VOICES

My poem
is a tumult:
 the words
that other voices
speak in it
slog on in an uproar.

(all of us are
filled with voices
that as a rule our own voice
just contains:

if you say *pear*,
a light goes on
a gunpowder fuse
of afternoons and sugars

or

if you say *blue*,
perhaps the Aegean
 will quiver
in your glands)

The water that you heard
 in a Rilke sonnet
the infinitesimal
sounds in the grass
 the smell
 of mint

MORRER NO RIO DE JANEIRO

Se for março

quando o verão esmerila a grossa luz
nas montanhas do Rio

teu coração estará funcionando normalmente
entre tantas outras coisas que pulsam na manhã
ainda que possam de repente enguiçar.

Se for março e de manhã

as brisas cheirando a maresia

quando uma lancha deixa seu rastro de espumas
no dorso da baía

e as águas se agitam alegres por existirem
se for março

nenhum indício haverá

nas frutas sobre a mesa

nem nos móveis que estarão ali como agora
— e depois do desenlace — calados.

Tu de nada suspeitas

e te preparas para mais um dia no mundo.

Pode ser que de golpe

ao abrires a janela para a esplêndida manhã

te invada o temor:

“um dia não mais estarei presente à festa da vida.”

Mas que pode a morte em face do céu azul?

do escândalo do verão?

A cidade estará em pleno funcionamento
com suas avenidas ruidosas
e aciona este dia

que atravessa apartamentos e barracos
da Barra ao morro do Borel, na Glória
onde mendigos estendem roupas
sob uma passarela do Aterro
e é quando um passarinho
entra inadvertidamente em tua
varanda, pia saltita e se vai.
Uma saudação? um aviso?

Essas perguntas te assaltam misturadas
ao jorrar do chuveiro
persistem durante o café da manhã
com iogurte e geléia. Mas o dia
te convida a viver, quem sabe
um passeio a Santa Teresa para ver do alto
a cidade noutra tempo do agora.

Em cada recanto da metrópole desigual
nos tufos de capim no Lido
nos matos por trás dos edifícios da rua Toneleros
por toda a parte a cidade
minuciosamente vive o fim do século,
sua história de homens e de bichos,
de plantas e de larvas,
de lesmas e de levas
de formigas e outros minúsculos seres
transitando nos talos, nos pistilos, nos grelos que se abrem
como clitóris na floresta.

São sorrisos, são ânus, caramelos,
são carícias de línguas e de lábios
enquanto
terminado o café
passas o olho no jornal.

A morte se aproxima e não o sentes
nem presentes
não tens ouvido para o lento rumor que avança escuro
com as nuvens
sobre o morro Dois Irmãos
e dança nas ondas
derrama-se nas areias do Arpoador
sem que o suspeites a morte
desafina no cantarolar da vizinha na janela.

Teu coração
(que começou a bater quando nem teu corpo existia)
prossegue
suga e expele sangue
para manter-te vivo
e vivas
em tua carne
as tardes e ruas (do Catete,
da Lapa, de Ipanema)
— as lancinantes vertigens dos poemas
que *te mostraram a morte num punhado de pó*
o torso de Apolo
ardendo como pele de fera a boca da carranca
dizendo incessante a mesma água pura na noite

com seus abismos azuis —

Teu coração,
esse mínimo pulsar dentro da Via Láctea,
em meio a tempestades solares,
quando se deterá?

Não o sabes pois *a natureza ama se ocultar*.

E é melhor que não o saibas
para que seja por mais tempo doce em teu rosto
a brisa deste dia

e continues a executar
sem partitura
a sinfonia do verão como parte que és
dessa orquestra regida pelo sol.

TO DIE IN RIO DE JANEIRO

If it is March

When summer burnishes its harsh light
on the mountains of Rio

your heart will be performing normally
amid the so many other things that throb in the morning
though they may suddenly fail.

If it is March and in the morning

the breezes smelling of ocean air

when a motorboat leaves its foamy wake
on the back of the bay

and the waters ripple happy to exist
if it is March

there will be no trace

in the fruits on the table

nor in the chairs that will be there as now

— and after the event — all silent.

You will not suspect a thing

and you will get ready for another day in the world.

It could be a sudden dread

as you open the window to the splendid morning
that might invade you:

“one day I won’t come to the festival of life.”

But what power has death in the face of a blue sky?

in the scandal of summer?

The city will be in full swing

with its raucous avenues
and, now in motion, this day
that traverses apartments and shanties
from Barra to Borel hill, in Glória
where beggars hang their clothes
beneath a footbridge from Aterro
and it is when a bird
lands inadvertently on your
veranda, chirps hops and flies away.
A greeting? a sign?

These questions assault you, mixed
with the gush of the shower,
and last throughout your breakfast
of yoghurt and jam. But the day
invites you to live, who knows,
a drive up to Santa Teresa to see
the city in a time different from now.

In each corner of the inequitable metropolis
in the tufts of grass in Lido
in the brush behind buildings on Toneleros Street
in every part of the city
minutely lives the end of the century,
its history of humans and creatures,
of leaves and larvae
of slugs and bugs
of ants and other minute beings
crawling on stalks, on pistils, on shoots that open
like clitorises in the forest.
They are smiles, they are anuses, candies,

They are caresses of lips and tongues
while
 finishing your coffee
 you glance at the paper.

Death approaches and neither do you feel
 nor do you expect it
you have not listened for the slow murmur that advances darkly
 with the clouds
 over Dois Irmãos hill
 and dances in the waves
 spreads over the sands of Arpoador
without your suspecting death
 it hums out of tune in the neighbor at her window

Your heart
(which began to beat before your body even was)
endures
 pumps blood in and out
to keep you alive
and alive
in your flesh
the afternoons and streets (of Catete,
 of Lapa, of Ipanema)
— the piercing dizziness of the poems
that *showed you death in a handful of dust*
 the torso of Apollo
burning like the skin of a beast the mouth of a gargoyle
ceaselessly stating the same pure water in the night
with its blue depths —

Your heart,
that minimal throb within the Milky Way
amid solar storms,
when will it cease?

You won't know since *nature loves to hide*.

And it's better that you do not know
so today's breeze
can linger longer on your face
and you can continue to perform
without a musical score
the symphony of summer as you are a part
of that orchestra conducted by the sun.

TRANSLATOR'S AFTERWORD

My first encounter with Ferreira Gullar's poetry was in 1983 while I was browsing the displays in a bookshop in Rio de Janeiro. I came across an important looking book of his called *Toda Poesia* [All the Poetry] (1981) about which I knew nothing. As I turned the pages, it took but moments to realize that I had stumbled across a writer of towering substance. I found everywhere in his work a humane poetry charged with evocative sounds and rhythms, with recurring themes of loss and memory, right and wrong, love and death, and the power of the humble and the elemental. His work struck me as both muscular and delicate, bare and complex. I was soon hooked on Gullar's poetry and knew that I would attempt a translation.

I chose to work first with Gullar's astonishing and lengthy recollection of thought, awareness and experience, *Poema Sujo* (1975). To ease my efforts, he allowed me to interview him in his home, the result of which offered insights into his life and work that were otherwise unavailable at the time. This interview, which appeared in *Discurso Literario* (1987), helped introduce Gullar to a broader public in the United States and enabled me to attach a face and a voice and a story to the poems in print which in turn made easier my tasks as a translator. University Press of America published my first translation of *Dirty Poem / Poema Sujo* in 1990. By then many others had learned of Gullar's poetry as well and small portions of his work appeared sporadically in English translation in magazines and anthologies. However, given Gullar's decades of poetic commitment to his art and ideas, someone needed to produce a broader anthology of his work in English, and I began to do just that about twenty years ago.

For a variety of mundane reasons, the project stalled, however, and may never have found its current form without the kind encouragement of others, including Roberto Viana, Narlan Matos-Teixeira, Marguerite Itamar Harrison, Jack Schmitt, Frederick Williams, Charles Cutler, William Rogle, and M.S. Lourenço, to all of whom I give thanks. I would also like to express my appreciation to Ileen Kohn and Donna Wingate who brought their expertise and vision to the translation's production. Particular acknowledgement is due the Fundación Cisneros and the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, without whose support the work would not have appeared in its present form. But, most of all, I extend my deepest gratitude to Ferreira Gullar himself, not only for producing such a magnificent poetic testimony but also for having the courage and the patience to allow me to render his poetry into another language and culture.

Leland Guyer

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[Oliveira Bastos, Ferreira Gullar con su esposa Thereza Ferrer, Berredo de Menezes, Mário Pedrosa, Lygia Clark, Vera Pedrosa \(hija de Mário Pedrosa\), Abraham Palatnik con su esposa Lea M. Palatnik, e Iván Serpa, c. 1952](#)

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Guía de navegación

En cualquier momento durante la lectura, pulse brevemente sobre el centro de la pantalla para acceder al menú de funciones de este libro digital: Índice de contenidos, ajustes en tamaño y tipos de fuente, realizar búsquedas, tomar notas, y resaltar.

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SOBRE LOS AUTORES

Ariel Jiménez es historiador y curador independiente de arte moderno y contemporáneo. Estudió historia del arte y arqueología en la Universidad de la Sorbona (París), y ha sido curador de numerosas exposiciones en instituciones públicas y privadas a lo largo del continente americano. Fue curador de la Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros (Caracas) durante quince años (1997–2011) y director y curador jefe del Museo de Arte Moderno Jesús Soto de Ciudad Bolívar (2004–2006), director de la Sala Mendoza en Caracas (1989–1997), Investigador asistente en la Unidad de Arte del Instituto Internacional de Estudios Avanzados (IDEA) en Caracas (1986–1989) y director del Departamento de Educación y Medios Audiovisuales del Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas (1984–1986). Ha publicado, entre otros títulos: *La primacía del color* (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 1992); *He vivido por los ojos. Correspondencia Alejandro Otero/Alfredo Boulton. 1946–1974* (Caracas: Fundación Alberto Vollmer y Fundación Museo Alejandro Otero, 2001); *Conversaciones con Jesús Soto* (Caracas: Fundación Cisneros, 2001); *Soto* (Caracas: Fundación Jesús Soto y Fundación Banco de Venezuela, 2007); *Alfredo Boulton y sus contemporáneos. Diálogos críticos en el arte venezolano. 1912–1974* (Nueva York: The Museum of Modern Art y Fundación Cisneros, 2010); *Carlos Cruz-Diez in conversation with/ en conversación con Ariel Jiménez* (Nueva York: Fundación Cisneros, 2010) y *Jesús Soto in conversation with/en conversación con Ariel Jiménez* (Nueva York: Fundación Cisneros, 2011).

Weydson Barros Leal es un poeta y crítico de arte que vive en Río de Janeiro. Como poeta, Barros Leal ha recibido varios premios por sus

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Leland Guyer es especialista en literatura portuguesa y brasileña del siglo XX. En 1990, Guyer publicó la primera traducción al inglés del “Poema sujo” [Poema sucio], considerado uno de los poemas latinoamericanos más importantes de este siglo. Desde entonces ha estado trabajando en su antología de poemas de Gullar traducidos al inglés *An Ordinary Man* [Hombre común] que publicamos en este e-book. Sus intereses de investigación y escritura incluyen la teoría y práctica de la traducción literaria, un diccionario español-inglés, el rol de la tecnología en el aprendizaje de idiomas, el hipertexto y la hipermedia, y la literatura de viajes de la península Ibérica e Iberoamérica. Guyer es profesor de estudios hispánicos en Macalester College en St. Paul, Minnesota, donde ha enseñado desde 1983.

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Portrait: Ferreira Gullar in his apartment in [en su apartamento de]
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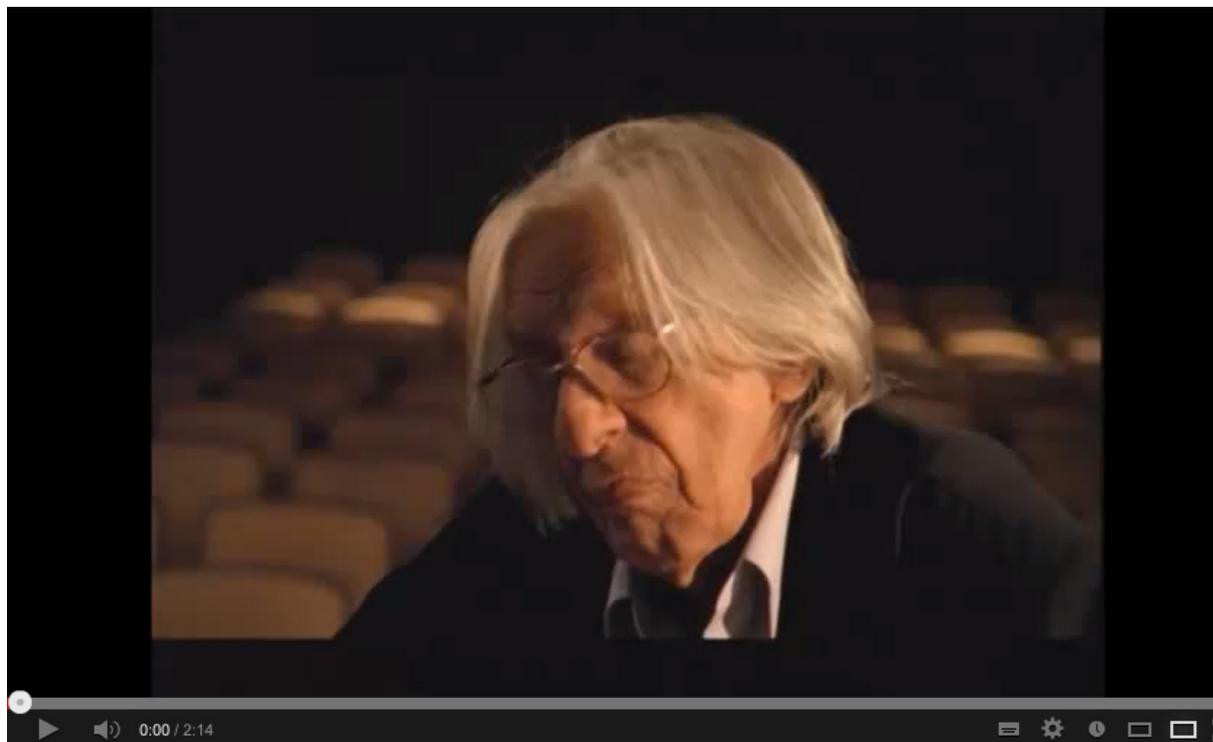
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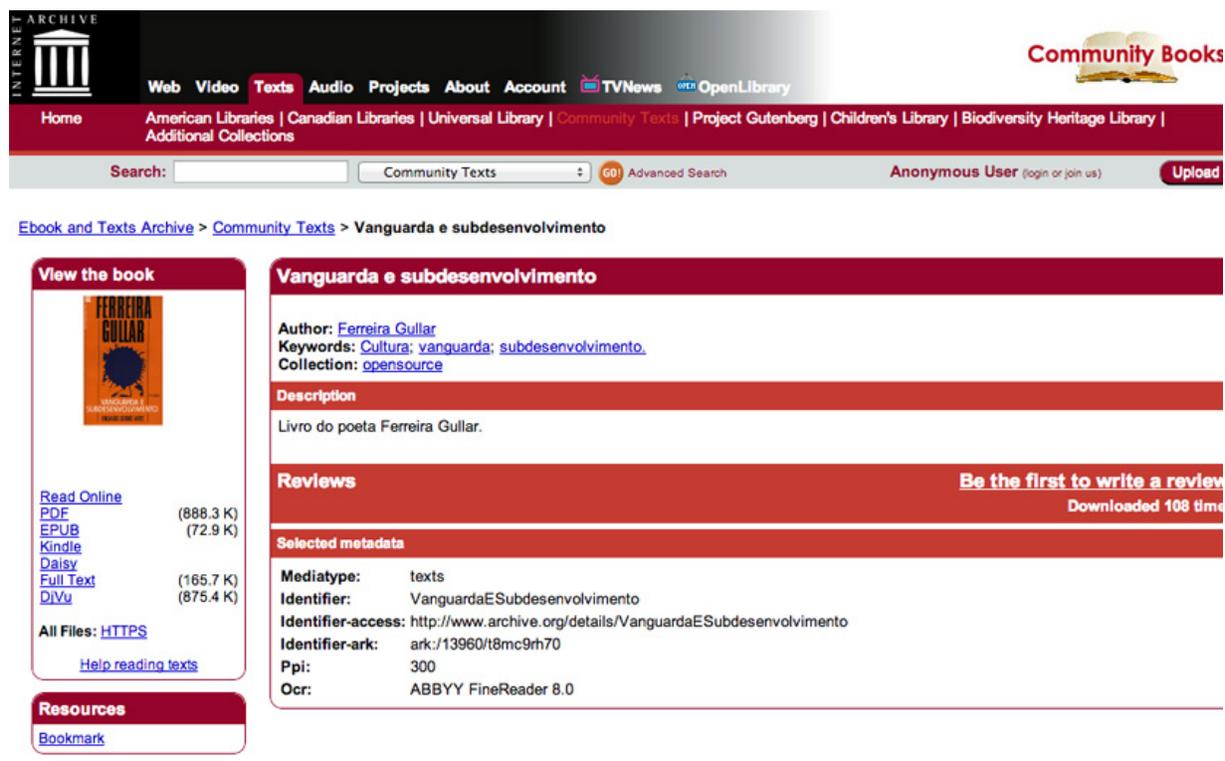
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Vídeo de Ferreira Gullar leyendo un extracto de su poema “Poema sujo”

Instituto Moreira Salles



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Una interpretación de “trenzinho do caipira”
por Maria Bethânia

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*CULTURA POSTA EM
QUESTÃO, 1964 (EXCERPT)*

I think it is apt, in order to clarify my beliefs, to establish a parallel between the rediscovery of Brazil in which we are engaged today and that which occurred among intellectuals of the 1922 Modernist revolution. In that era, as well, Brazil was being rediscovered. Poets spoke of “cultural independence,” a hundred years after political independence, as we speak of economic independence today. Additionally, the Modernists experienced an era of intense agitation in political life and considerable transformation in the economic life of the country, the consequence of which

would be the Revolution of 1930. But their era was still the era of cultural independence—that is, of rupture with the dominance Portugal continued to exercise over intellectual life, which was reflected in the work and activities of writers who meticulously worked within Portuguese syntax.

That will to think for oneself found inspiration in the same literary and artistic movements that arose in Europe after 1900, which shattered the academic principles still in vogue in the nineteenth century. It was time to turn our gaze toward our own country and attempt to capture its true image. And the Modernists, therefore, developed an anti-Portuguese image of Brazil, founded in what they knew of the *indios*, and of the country itself, in terms of its geographic, ethnic, and legendary realities.

“Let us descend into our prehistory. To take something from that immense, atavistic backdrop. To look through the totemic annals. To poke around in the roots of our race, through psychoanalytic thinking.”

“This whole geographical stew with sertão¹ dramas and inheritances of the evil eye is shaken up within its cannibal borders. The jungle, in all its brutality, generating magical worlds: trees that impregnate young people. Great Cobra is going to be married.”²

In this way a yellow-green Brazil emerges—without prejudices, barefoot, lazy, shameless—whose typical hero is Macunaíma, the “insolent hero.” An

optimistic and superficial Brazil, with no problems that a little cachaça, samba, and cafuné³ can't resolve. But it was, despite everything, one step ahead of Bilac's and Count Afonso Celso's "you won't see another country like this one." And those petulant intellectuals exhibited a genuine intention to re-encounter reality, which was no longer a dimension outside the world, in their view, but rather national reality itself, both geographic and ethnic: anthropological.

Forty years later, we rediscovered our country. We were no longer half a dozen young people from the urban centers who wanted to compete with a Europe that was burdened with traditions, stirring the silt of our *igarapés*⁴ and thinking about Paris. On the contrary, we were now twenty-five million people from the northeast who began to speak through the voices of

their leaders and to find out what there was behind the lace from Ceará⁵, the *candomblés*⁶ from Bahia; who the people were who traveled on the small lyrical rural trains and on the gaiola boats;⁷ what kind of life was lived by the man of the Amazon. The Brazil we rediscover today is not in the least picturesque. Our geography is marked by manganese and iron deposits that are exploited and exported by foreigners, while the States that are the natural owners of these mines have no money to build schools and hospitals. Our fables are now the history of the *campesino* whose hands were cut off because he refused to sell the beans he grew to the owners of the plantation. Our typical hero is Pedro Texeira, shot to death in Paraíba for fighting in favor of agrarian reform. The Brazil we rediscover is a dramatic country with a few rich people and millions in poverty, a

country that will no longer accept hunger, sickness, and social injustice as its fate.

The Brazil the Modernists discovered was a lyrical Brazil. The Brazil that reveals itself to us today is a political Brazil. Each moment has its own poetry.

Ferreira Gullar, *Cultura posta em questão* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 2006), 102–3.

1. From the Portuguese *sertão*, an extensive semi-desert region in the Northeast of Brazil that encompasses a significant part of the states of Pernambuco, Paraíba, Alagoas, Bahia, Rio Grande do Norte, Ceará, and Piauí.

2. Raul Bopp, *Vida e morte da antropofagia* [2nd.]. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 1931, 99–100.

3. *Cafuné*, a soft caress of the hair, using the tips of the fingers; generally used with children to help them to fall asleep.

4. *Igarapés* are water currents or river extensions, generally not very deep, which cross through forests. They are canals parallel to the Amazon River, used for navigation.

5. Ceará, one of Brazil's twenty-five states, located in Brazil's northeast with an extensive Atlantic coastline.

6. One of many different Afro-Brazilian religious sects (also practiced in other countries in Latin America, including in Venezuela) in which homage is paid to the Orishas, demigods or guardians of the elements of nature.

7. *Gaiola*, a typical boat from the Amazon, two or three stories high with covered roofs.

CULTURA POSTA EM QUESTÃO, 1964 (EXTRACTO)

Considero oportuno, para dejar más claro lo que afirmo, establecer un paralelo entre el redescubrimiento que hacemos hoy del Brasil y la que hicieron los intelectuales de la revolución modernista de 1922. En aquella época también se redescubría a Brasil. Los poetas hablaban de “independencia cultural”, cien años después de la independencia política, como hoy hablamos de independencia económica. Los modernistas vivieron, también, una época de intensa agitación en la vida política y de considerables transformaciones en la vida económica del país, cuya consecuencia sería la

revolución de 1930. Pero su etapa era, todavía, la de la independencia cultural, o sea, la ruptura con el dominio que Portugal seguía ejerciendo sobre la intelectualidad y que se refleja en la obra y en el comportamiento de los escritores que trabajaban meticulosamente la sintaxis lusitana.

Esa voluntad de pensar por cuenta propia encontraba incentivos en los mismos movimientos literarios y artísticos surgidos en Europa después de 1900 y que redujeron en pedazos los principios académicos todavía en boga en el siglo XIX. Era hora de volver la mirada hacia nuestro propio país e intentar captar su imagen verdadera. Y los modernistas, entonces, levantaron una imagen antilusitana de Brasil, fundada en lo que sabían del indio y del país en lo que se refiere a su realidad geográfica, étnica y legendaria.

“Descenderemos a nuestra prehistoria. Traer algo de ese fondo inmenso, atávico. Buscar los anales totémicos. Remover las raíces de la raza, con un pensamiento de psicoanálisis”.

“Todo ese cocido geográfico con dramas del sertón¹ y herencias de mal de ojo, se agita dentro de las fronteras antropofágicas. La selva, en su brutalidad, generando mundos mágicos: árboles que preñan jóvenes. Cobra Grande va a casarse”².

Así surgía un Brasil verde-amarillo, sin prejuicios, descalzo, perezoso, sinvergüenza, cuyo héroe típico es Macunaíma, el “héroe descarado”. Un Brasil optimista y superficial, sin problemas, que un poco de cachaza,

samba y *cafuné*³ no puedan resolver. Pero era, a pesar de todo, un paso adelante del “no verás ningún país como éste”, de Bilac y del conde de Afonso Celso. Y había, en aquellos intelectuales petulantes, el propósito sincero de reencontrarse con la realidad, que ya no era para ellos una dimensión fuera del mundo, sino la realidad nacional misma, geográfica y étnica: antropológica.

Cuarenta años después, redescubrimos el país. Ya no media docena de jóvenes de las metrópolis que querían rivalizar con la Europa cargada de tradiciones, removiendo nuestros *igarapés*⁴ y pensando en París. Por el contrario, son ahora 25 millones de nordestinos que comienzan a hablar por la voz de sus líderes y a revelarnos lo que hay por detrás de los encajes del Ceará⁵, de los *candomblés*⁶ de Bahía; qué gente viaja en los líricos trenecillos pueblerinos

y en los barcos *gaiola*;⁷ qué vida vive el hombre del Amazonas. Nada de pintoresco tiene el Brasil que hoy redescubrimos. Nuestra geografía está marcada por los yacimientos de manganeso y de hierro que el extranjero explota y exporta, mientras los Estados, propietarios naturales de esas minas, no tienen dinero para construir escuelas y hospitales. Nuestras fábulas son ahora la historia del campesino que tiene las manos cortadas porque se negó a vender al latifundio el frijol que sembró. Nuestro héroe típico es Pedro Texeira, muerto a tiros en Paraíba por luchar a favor de la reforma agraria. El Brasil que redescubrimos es un país dramático, de pocos ricos y millones de pobres, y que ya no acepta el hambre, la enfermedad, la injusticia social como una fatalidad.

El Brasil que los modernistas descubrieron era un Brasil lírico. El Brasil

que hoy se nos descubre es un Brasil político. Para cada momento, una poesía.

Ferreira Gullar, *Cultura posta em questão* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 2006), 102–3.

1. *Sertón* (del portugués *sertão*), amplia región semidesértica del Noreste brasileño que abarca una buena parte de los estados de Pernambuco, Paraíba, Alagoas, Bahía, Rio Grande do Norte, Ceará y Piauí.

2. Raul Bopp, *Vida e morte da antropofagia* [2nd.]. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 1931, 99–100.

3. *Cafuné*, caricia suave en los cabellos hecha con la punta de los dedos que se hace generalmente a los niños para ayudarlos a conciliar el sueño.

4. Los *igarapés* son corrientes de agua, o prolongaciones de los ríos, generalmente de poca profundidad, que atraviesan los

bosques. Canales paralelos al río Amazonas, destinados a la navegación.

5. Ceará, uno de los 27 estados de Brasil. Está situado en el Noreste brasileño con amplia costa sobre el Atlántico.

6. Es uno de los diversos cultos afrobrasileños (practicado también en otros países de América Latina, incluyendo a Venezuela) donde se le rinde culto a los Orixás, semidioses o guardianes de los elementos de la naturaleza.

7. *Gaiola*, típica embarcación del Amazonas. Son embarcaciones techadas con dos o tres pisos de altura.

NEOCONCRETE MANIFESTO, 1959 (EXCERPT)

The Neoconcrete, born out of a need to express the complex reality of modern man within the structural language of new visual work, rejects the validity of scientificist and positivist attitudes in art and reframes the problem of expression, incorporating new “verbal” dimensions created by nonfigurative constructive art. Rationalism strips art of all autonomy and substitutes the intransferrable qualities of the art work for notions of scientific objectivity: in this way, the concepts of form, space, time, and structure—which in the language of the arts are fused with an existential, emotive, and affective

signification—are confused with their theoretical applications in science. In truth, in the name of preconceived ideas denounced today by philosophy (M. Merleau-Ponty, E. Cassirer, S. Langer)—and which disintegrate in all fields, beginning with modern biology, which moves beyond the Pavlovian mechanism — Concreto-rationalists still see man as a machine among machines and seek to limit art to the expression of that theoretical reality.

We conceive of the work of art as neither “machine” nor “object,” but rather as a quasi-corpus—that is, a being whose reality is not utterly consumed by relationships that are external to its elements. Divisible in parts via analysis, it is a being that only offers itself fully to direct phenomenological encounter. We believe that the work of art surpasses the material mechanism on which it rests, not

because of any extraterritorial virtue: it surpasses it by transcending those mechanical relations (as Gestalt attempts to do) and by creating a tacit signification for itself (M. Ponty) which flourishes for the first time in the work. If we were obliged to locate something to which to compare the work of art, we would therefore not be able to find anything—not in the mechanical nor in things taken objectively; rather, like S. Langer and W. Wleidle, it could only be in living organisms. That comparison, however, would still not be sufficient to express the specific reality of the aesthetic organism.

It is because the work of art does not limit itself to occupying one site in objective space—but rather transcends that space while using it to lay the foundation for a new signification—that objective notions of time, space, form, structure, color, etc., are not sufficient to

understand the work of art, to fully explain its “reality.” The fact that no adequate terminology exists to express a world that does not bow down to preconceived notions led art critics to an indiscriminate use of words that betray the complexity of the work created. The influence of technology and science are made manifest here as well, to the extent that today, inverting the roles, certain artists obfuscated by that terminology attempt to make art that departs from these objective notions in order to apply them as a creative method. Inevitably, artists who act in this way merely illustrate a priori notions, as they are limited, in all instances, by a method that already indicates the result of their work, in advance and with precision. Moving away from intuitive creation, reducing themselves to an objective body in an objective space, rationalist Concrete

artists aspire in their paintings merely to a reaction of stimulation and reflection, both for themselves and for spectators: they speak to the eye as an instrument and not to the eye as a human mode of possessing the world and giving ourselves over to the world. They speak to the eye-as-machine rather than the eye-as-body.

This is because the work of art transcends mechanical space; in art the notions of cause and effect lose all validity, and notions of time, space, form, and color are integrated—by the very fact that they did not, as notions, preexist the work—in such a way that it would be impossible to speak of them as terms that might decompose. Neoconcrete art, asserting the absolute integration of those elements, works from the belief that the “geometric” vocabulary it employs can take on the expression of complex human realities, as is proved by many of the

works of Mondrian, Malevich, Pevsner, Gabo, Sofía Tauber-Arp, etc. If even these artists at times confused the concepts of mechanical form and expressive form, it is thus urgent to clarify that in the language of art, the forms that are called geometric lose the objective character of geometry in order to become a vehicle of imagination. Gestalt, even as a rationalist psychology, is also insufficient as a way to understand the phenomenon that dissolves space and form as realities that were originally determinable and presents them as time—as a spatialization of the work. By spatialization of the work we might understand the idea that the work is always in a process of making itself present, is always commencing anew the impulse that generated it and of which it was already the origin.

Ferreira Gullar, “Manifesto neoconcreto,” in *Etapas da arte contemporânea. Do cubismo à arte neoconcreta* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Revan, 1999), 285–87.

Translation by Jen Hofer.

MANIFESTO NEOCONCRETO, 1959 (EXTRACTO).

Lo neoconcreto, nacido de una necesidad de expresar la compleja realidad del hombre moderno dentro del lenguaje estructural de la nueva plástica, niega la validez de las actitudes científicas y positivistas en arte y repone el problema de la expresión, incorporando las nuevas dimensiones “verbales” creadas por el arte no-figurativo constructivo. El racionalismo despoja al arte de toda autonomía y substituye las cualidades intransferibles de la obra de arte por nociones de la objetividad científica: así, los conceptos de forma, espacio, tiempo y estructura –que en el lenguaje de las artes

están unidos a una significación existencial, emotiva y afectiva— son confundidos con la aplicación teórica que de ellos hace la ciencia. En verdad, en nombre de ideas preconcebidas que hoy denuncia la filosofía (M. Merleau-Ponty, E. Cassirer, S. Langer) —y que se derrumban en todos los campos, empezando por la biología moderna, que supera el mecanicismo pavloviano—, los concreto-racionalistas aún ven al hombre como una máquina entre máquinas y procuran limitar el arte a la expresión de esa realidad teórica.

No concebimos la obra de arte ni como “máquina” ni como “objeto”, sino como un quasi-corpus, esto es, un ser cuya realidad no se agota en las relaciones exteriores de sus elementos; un ser que, fraccionable en partes por el análisis, solo se entrega plenamente al abordaje directo, fenomenológico. Creemos que la obra de

arte supera el mecanismo material sobre el cual descansa, no debido a alguna virtud extraterrena: lo supera por trascender esas relaciones mecánicas (lo que intenta la Gestalt) y por crear para sí misma una significación tácita (M. Ponty) que aflora en ella por primera vez. Si tuviéramos que buscar un símil para la obra de arte no podríamos encontrarlo, por lo tanto, ni en la máquina ni en las cosas tomadas objetivamente, sino, como S. Langer y W. Wleidle, en los organismos vivos. Esa comparación, sin embargo, aún no sería suficiente para expresar la realidad específica del organismo estético.

Es porque la obra de arte no se limita a ocupar un lugar en el espacio objetivo – pero lo trasciende al fundamentar en él una significación nueva– las nociones objetivas de tiempo, espacio, forma, estructura, color, etc., no son suficientes

para comprender la obra de arte, para explicar cabalmente su “realidad”. La inexistencia de una terminología adecuada para expresar un mundo que no se rinde a las nociones llevó a la crítica de arte al uso indiscriminado de palabras que traicionan la complejidad de la obra creada. La influencia de la tecnología y de la ciencia se manifestó aquí también, hasta el punto de que hoy, invirtiéndose los roles, ciertos artistas ofuscados por esa terminología intentan hacer arte partiendo de esas nociones objetivas para aplicarlas como método creativo. Inevitablemente, los artistas que así actúan solo ilustran nociones *a priori*, toda vez que están limitados por un método que ya les indica con precisión, de antemano, el resultado del trabajo. Desviándose de la creación intuitiva, reduciéndose a un cuerpo objetivo en un espacio objetivo, el artista concreto

racionalista, con sus cuadros, solo aspira, de sí mismo y del espectador, una reacción de estímulo y reflejo: le habla al ojo como instrumento y no al ojo como un modo humano de tener el mundo y de darse a él; le habla al ojo-máquina y no al ojo-cuerpo.

Es porque la obra de arte trasciende el espacio mecánico, que en ella las nociones de causa y efecto pierden cualquier validez y las nociones de tiempo, espacio, forma y color están de tal modo integradas –por el mismo hecho de que no preexistían, como nociones, a la obra– que sería imposible hablar de ellas como términos que pudieran descomponerse. El arte neoconcreto, afirmando la integración absoluta de esos elementos, cree que el vocabulario “geométrico” que utiliza puede asumir la expresión de realidades humanas complejas, tal como lo prueban muchas

obras de Mondrian, Malévich, Pevsner, Gabo, Sofía Tauber-Arp, etc. Si incluso esos artistas confundían a veces los conceptos de forma mecánica con el de forma expresiva, urge aclarar que, en el lenguaje del arte, las formas llamadas geométricas pierden el carácter objetivo de la geometría para hacerse vehículo de la imaginación. La Gestalt, aun siendo una psicología racionalista, es también insuficiente para hacernos comprender ese fenómeno que disuelve el espacio y la forma como realidades originariamente determinables y las presenta como tiempo—como espacialización de la obra. Entiéndase por espacialización de la obra el hecho de que ella está siempre haciéndose presente, está siempre recomenzando el impulso que la generó y del cual ella era ya el origen.

Ferreira Gullar, “Manifiesto neoconcreto”, en *Etapas da arte*

*contemporânea. Do cubismo à arte
neoconcreta* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Revan,
1999), 285–287.

DIALOGUE ON THE NON-OBJECT

A—What is a non-object?

B—It's necessary, first, to know what I mean here by object. Here, I understand object to be a material thing as it presents itself to us, naturally, linked to everyday designations and uses: an eraser, a pencil, a pear, a shoe, etc. In that condition, the object is entirely consumed in the reference to its use and sense. On the contrary, we can establish an initial definition of the non-object: the non-object is not consumed in references to its use and meaning because it is not inscribed in the condition of the utilitarian and its verbal designation.

A—But objects aren't always consumed in those references either. Following the name *pear*, there is the pear with its material density as a thing.

B—Yes. When we withdraw to the cultural order of the world, we see objects without a name—and we confront their opacity as things. It might be said that, under these circumstances, the object comes close to what I'm calling a non-object, but it is precisely at this point that the fundamental difference between the two is manifested. Without a name, the object becomes an absurd and opaque presence our perception runs up against; without a name, the object is impenetrable, inaccessible, clearly and unbearably exterior to the subject. The non-object does not possess that opacity; hence its name: the non-object is transparent to perception, in the sense that it opens to perception. And the

difference between the two becomes more distinct: only through the connotations that name and usage establish between the object and the world of the subject can objects be comprehended and assimilated by subjects. The object, then, is a hybrid being composed of name and thing, like two layers superimposed, of which only one offers itself to man—the name. The non-object, on the contrary, is a single, complete, direct thing. The relationship it maintains with the subject excuses the subject from acting as intermediary. The subject possesses a meaning as well, but that meaning is immanent to its own form, which is pure signification.

A—In other words, you are saying that the non-object is a total, complete object?

B—The problem can be demonstrated in terms of existential

Sartrean philosophy. While the subject exists for himself, the object, the thing, exists in and of itself.

Setting aside the implications that philosophy extracts from that fundamental contradiction, we are left with the fact that this contradiction reaffirms the opacity of the thing that resides in itself and the perplexity of man, who feels exiled among things. A weave of meanings and intentions constitutes the human world, beneath which the opacity of the inhuman world persists, exterior to man. The experience of the object-with-no-name is the experience of exile. The battle to overcome the subject-object contradiction is at the center of all human knowledge, of all human experience, and particularly, of the creation of works of art. A painter who depicts a still life is doing nothing more than attempting to resolve that

contradiction. When an artist represents those everyday objects, he or she advances from the conceptual level where objects habitually reside to reach an aesthetic level where a new, non-conceptual meaning can emerge from them: the meaning that is immanent to form.

A—In that case a still life is also a non-object.

B—No. An object represented is an almost-object: it's as if it were an object: it is disattached from the condition of object, but does not achieve the condition of non-object: in relation to the actual object, it is a fictitious object. The non-object is not a representation, but a presentation. If the object is at one extreme of experience, the non-object is at the other, and the object represented is between the two, halfway along the way.

Ferreira Gullar, “Theory of the Non-Object,” in *Etapas da arte contemporânea. Do cubismo à arte neoconcreta* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Revan, 1999), 294–96.

Translation by Jen Hofer.

DIÁLOGO SOBRE EL NO- OBJETO

A— ¿Qué es el no-objeto?

B— Es preciso saber primero lo que entiendo aquí por objeto. Entiendo aquí por objeto la cosa material tal y como se nos da, naturalmente, vinculada a las designaciones y usos cotidianos: la goma, el lápiz, la pera, el zapato, etc. En esa condición, el objeto se agota en la referencia de uso y sentido. Por contradicción, podemos establecer una primera definición del no-objeto: el no-objeto no se agota en las referencias de uso y sentido porque no se inscribe en la condición de lo útil y de su designación verbal.

A— Pero los objetos tampoco se agotan siempre en esas referencias. Tras el nombre “pera”, está la pera con su densidad material de cosa.

B— Sí. Cuando nos substraemos al orden cultural del mundo, vemos los objetos sin nombre —y nos enfrentamos a su opacidad de cosa. Puede decirse que, en esas circunstancias, el objeto se acerca a lo que llamo un no-objeto, pero precisamente en este punto se manifiesta la diferencia fundamental entre los dos: sin nombre, el objeto se torna una presencia absurda, opaca, contra la que la percepción tropieza; sin nombre, el objeto es impenetrable, inabordable, clara e insoportablemente exterior al sujeto. El no-objeto no posee esa opacidad, de allí su nombre: el no-objeto es transparente a la percepción, en el sentido de que se abre a ella. Y la diferencia entre los dos se hace más precisa: solo por las connotaciones

que el nombre y el uso establecen entre el objeto y el mundo del sujeto, puede el objeto ser aprehendido y asimilado por el sujeto. Es, pues, el objeto, un ser híbrido, compuesto de nombre y cosa, como dos capas superpuestas de las cuales solo una se entrega al hombre —el nombre. El no-objeto, por el contrario, es uno, íntegro, franco. La relación que mantiene con el sujeto lo dispensa de intermediario. Él posee una significación también, pero esa significación es inmanente a su propia forma, que es pura significación.

A— En otras palabras, ¿usted dice que el no-objeto es un objeto total, integral?

B— Exponga el problema en términos de la filosofía existencial sartreana. Mientras el sujeto existe para sí mismo, el objeto, la cosa, existe en sí.

Dejando de lado las implicaciones que el filósofo extrae de esa contradicción

fundamental, quedémonos con el hecho de que ella reafirma la opacidad de la cosa que descansa en sí misma y la perplejidad del hombre que se siente exilado entre ellas. Un tejido de significaciones e intenciones constituye el mundo humano, bajo el cual persiste la opacidad del mundo inhumano, exterior al hombre. La experiencia del objeto-sin-nombre es la experiencia del exilio. La lucha por vencer la contradicción sujeto-objeto está en el centro de todo el conocimiento humano, de toda la experiencia humana y, particularmente, en la realización de la obra de arte. Un pintor que figura una naturaleza muerta no está haciendo más que intentar resolver esa contradicción. Al representar aquellos objetos cotidianos, el artista avanza del nivel conceptual, en el cual ellos habitualmente se encuentran, hacia el nivel estético, donde una nueva

significación, no-conceptual, emerge de ellos: la significación inmanente a la forma.

A— En ese caso una naturaleza muerta es también un no-objeto.

B— No. Un objeto representado es casi-objeto: es como si fuera un objeto: se desprende de la condición de objeto, pero no alcanza la de no-objeto: es, con relación al objeto real, un objeto ficticio. El no-objeto no es una representación sino una presentación. Si el objeto está a un extremo de la experiencia, el no-objeto está del otro, y el objeto representado está entre los dos, a medio camino.

Ferreira Gullar, “Teoria do não-objeto”, en *Etapas da arte contemporânea. Do cubismo à arte neoconcreta* (Río de Janeiro: Ed. Revan, 1999), 294–96.

AFTER THE GALE

There is much talk today about the crisis in the visual arts and there are facts available to demonstrate that this crisis does indeed exist. At least, it is inarguable that a crisis exists. One might wonder, however, which crisis we're talking about.

The indications of crisis can be seen everywhere and over many years. There was an era of euphoria, when international art biennials mobilized artists, critics, specialized magazines and even the so-called large-scale press. And new biennials were added to those that already existed. Works of art traveled from one end of the planet to the other,

as did art critics. There was great euphoria and intense debate. The public at large was even inspired to contemplate, with perplexity, the strange works that were presented to them as the last word in matters of art: blocks of compressed metal, masses of doughy material scattered on the floor at the biennials, rags, old suitcases filled with dirty dishcloths. Or kilometers of stains and inkblots framed and respectfully hung on the wall panels of vast art shows. And what will come next?, asked the skeptics.

Many things came. From Tachisme and Informalism, we moved on to Conceptual Art, Environmental Art, and Corporeal Art, interspersed with happenings of every sort. Doing away with paintings, doing away with artistic genres, techniques and materials, and naturally, as well, the entire *métier* of the painter, the sculptor, the print-maker was

left behind. Aesthetic concepts, for some time now weakened at their very foundation, were demoralized. The critical text was followed by the prophetic text—hermetic and apologetic—for initiates only. To make knots in a string became an act of surprising creative force. Likewise to throw dirt into a planter. And spirits grew heated: “I was the first person to make knots in a string”, “No, no way, I had already done that at the Museum of Modern Art. . . .” In another part of the world, “artists” brought blocks of stone to the very top of a building and flung them down onto their colleagues, who experienced a new aesthetic sensation: escaping from danger. Others moved out to desert regions of the United States where they dug (that is, they hired someone to dig) enormous craters which were later photographed and exhibited in New York galleries: land

art. And the prophecies grew in abundance: man is about to achieve total art, art that will encompass all the senses: sight, touch, sound and smell—yes, olfactory art. And there was great praise for an artist who exhibited cans of ground coffee: the can would be opened and the gallery would fill with the appetizing scent of rubiaceae. . . . And there were those who dared to cast doubt on the importance of such innovations. In this way, art was “democratized”—that is, the artist disappeared. Of course, if the creation of the work no longer depended on a mastery of any technique or language, anyone might call himself a creator of art. And this was precisely the idea theorists were defending: all people are capable of making art, and if they do not do so, it is because of the repressive norms that have always dominated artistic activity: all art up to now has been the

simple product of repression. Now, finally, freedom has arrived. It is the end of art. Yes, the end of that bourgeois activity, born from the same womb that engendered consumer culture! . . .

It is not possible to accept that this entire process has been the result of a mere error, that it does not have real causes and that all the problems it proposes are false problems. In truth, this process responds to a series of transformations Western civilization has undergone, and problems of great importance for the comprehension of aesthetic phenomena have blossomed in the course of those transformations. But we cannot fail to note the fact that in no other field of artistic activity have those transformations had such radical repercussions. If it is true that there were some radical symptoms in poetry as well as in fiction, in music as well as in film,

they did not become anything more than ephemeral and isolated instances; they did not manage to become the dominant tendency, as in the field of the visual arts. This leads us to affirm that the visual arts offered particular conditions that were especially apt to such radicalism.

I don't intend to linger here in an examination of those conditions. I simply wanted to mention the fact that isolation from the public, on the one hand, and the transformation of the work of art into an object of speculation and investment on the other, contributed significantly to the unruly "avant-garde" careerism that took possession of artists. The international system of art galleries, art magazines, and biennials involving a wide variety of interests inspired a kind of superficial dynamic within artistic activity that might be defined, to simplify, as "aesthetic-commercial competition." The

high level of commercialization achieved by works of art in the context of a narrow and controlled market intensified disputes over inflated prices and also over the opportunities for artists to insert themselves, as providers of art, into this system of buying and selling. This situation, on the one hand, propelled a stereotyping of forms and use of repetition among artists already integrated into the system; on the other hand, among the youngest, it engendered a search for novelty at any price and, later, a rebellion against the very system that commercialized art. This is a crisis of art, obviously, but it is above all a crisis of a particular system of promotion and commercialization for which the great international shows became the storefront. It is the arena of an exacerbated conflict.

With the exhaustion of international “avant-gardes,” calm will reign once again. It will bring with it a certain discouragement and a sensation of abandonment. We have come to the end of the time of great exaltation and spectacle, in which—on top of everything else—the great artists did not participate. The conditions are being created for artists to devote themselves more thoroughly to their work, to the complex problems of artistic creation.

Ferreira Gullar, “Depois do vendaval,” in *Sobre arte, sobre poesia (Uma luz do chão)* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 2006), 121–25.

DESPUÉS DEL VENDAVAL

Se habla mucho hoy de la crisis de las artes plásticas y los hechos están ahí para demostrar que esa crisis efectivamente existe. Al menos, es indiscutible que existe una crisis. Puede preguntarse, no obstante, de qué crisis se trata.

Los indicios de la crisis se encuentran por todas partes a lo largo de los años. Hubo una época de euforia, cuando las bienales internacionales de arte movilizaban artistas, críticos, revistas especializadas y hasta la llamada gran prensa. Y nuevas bienales se sumaban a las ya existentes. Las obras de arte transitaban de un extremo a otro del planeta, y los críticos también. La euforia

era grande y el debate intenso. Hasta el gran público era instigado a contemplar, con perplejidad, las extrañas obras que se le presentaban como la última palabra en materia de arte: bloques de metal prensado, cúmulos de materia pastosa regados por el piso en las bienales, trapos, maletas viejas repletas de harapos sucios. O kilómetros de manchas y borrones enmarcados y respetuosamente colgados a los paneles de amplias muestras de arte. ¿Y qué vendrá después de esto? – Preguntaban los más escépticos.

Vinieron muchas cosas. Del Tachismo, del Informalismo, se pasó al arte conceptual, al arte ambiental, al arte corporal, intercalados por *happenings* de todo tipo. Liquidando el cuadro, liquidando los géneros artísticos, las técnicas, los materiales, y naturalmente también todo el *métier* del pintor, del escultor, del grabador, fue puesto de lado.

Los conceptos estéticos –hace ya tiempo debilitados en sus cimientos– se desmoralizaron. Al texto crítico le sucedió el texto profético, hermético, apologético, para iniciados. Hacer nudos en una cuerda se convirtió en un acto de sorprendente fuerza creadora. Echar tierra dentro de una maceta también. Y los ánimos se caldeaban: “Quien primero hizo nudos en una cuerda fui yo”, “No, nada de eso, ya yo lo había hecho en el Museo de Arte Moderno. . .” En otra parte del mundo, “artistas” llevaban bloques de piedra hasta lo alto de un edificio y de ahí los tiraban sobre sus colegas que abajo experimentaban una nueva sensación estética: escapar del peligro. Otros se desplazaban a regiones desérticas de los Estados Unidos y allí cavaban (es decir, mandaban a cavar) enormes cráteres, que después eran fotografiados y exhibidos en las galerías

de Nueva York: *land art*. Y las profecías pululaban: el hombre está a punto de alcanzar el arte total, que engloba todos los sentidos: la visión, el tacto, el oído y el olfato, sí, el arte olfativo. Y se loaba a un artista que exponía latas de café en polvo: se abría la lata y la galería era inundada por el apetitoso aroma de la rubiácia. . . Y hay de quien se atreviese a poner en duda la importancia de tales innovaciones. El arte, así, “se democratizó”, esto es: desapareció el artista. Claro, si la realización de la obra no depende ya del dominio de ninguna técnica, de ningún lenguaje, cualquiera puede llamarse creador de arte. Y era exactamente eso lo que los teóricos defendían: todo hombre es capaz de hacer arte y, si no lo hace, es debido a las normas represivas que siempre dominaron la actividad artística: todo el arte hasta hoy fue el simple producto de la represión. Ahora, al fin,

llega la libertad. Es el fin del arte. Sí, el fin de esa actividad burguesa, hija del mismo vientre que engendró la sociedad de consumo! . . .

No es posible admitir que todo ese proceso haya sido fruto de un mero equívoco, que no posea causas reales y que todos los problemas que plantea sean falsos problemas. En verdad, ese proceso responde a una serie de transformaciones por las cuales viene pasando la civilización occidental, y durante su curso afloran problemas de suma importancia para la comprensión del fenómeno estético. Pero no podemos dejar escapar el hecho de que en ningún otro campo de la actividad artística repercutieron con igual radicalidad esas transformaciones. Si es cierto que hubo algunos síntomas radicales tanto en la poesía como en la ficción, en la música como en el cine, no pasaron de manifestaciones efímeras y

aisladas que no consiguieron, como en el campo de las artes plásticas, convertirse en la tendencia dominante. Eso nos lleva a admitir que las artes plásticas ofrecieron condiciones particulares propicias a tal radicalismo.

No pretendo detenerme aquí en el examen de esas condiciones. Apenas me gustaría mencionar el hecho de que el aislamiento del público, por un lado, y la transformación de la obra de arte en objeto de especulación y de inversión, contribuyeron ampliamente para la desordenada carrera “vanguardista” que se apoderó de los artistas. El esquema internacional de las galerías de arte, revistas de arte, bienales, involucrando los más variados intereses inspiró en la actividad artística una especie de dinámica de superficie que puede definirse, simplificando, como “competencia estético-comercial”. El alto

nivel de comercialización alcanzado por la obra de arte en el ámbito de un mercado estrecho y controlado exasperó la disputa por las altas cotizaciones e incluso por la oportunidad de insertarse, como proveedor, en ese sistema de compra y venta. Tal situación estimuló, por una parte, en los artistas ya integrados al sistema, una estereotipia de las formas, la repetición; y por otra parte, en los más jóvenes, la búsqueda de novedad a cualquier precio y, luego, la rebelión contra el propio sistema de comercialización del arte. La crisis es del arte, evidentemente, pero es sobre todo la crisis de un determinado esquema de promoción y comercialización del que se hicieron vitrina las grandes muestras internacionales. Es la arena de una disputa exacerbada.

Con el agotamiento de las “vanguardias” internacionales, vuelve a

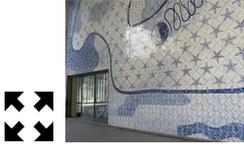
reinar la calma. Ella trae consigo cierto desánimo y una sensación de desamparo. Terminó el tiempo de la gran exaltación y del *show* del cual, es más, los grandes artistas no participaron. Se crean las condiciones para que el artista se adentre más detenidamente en su trabajo, en los complejos problemas de la creación artística.

Ferreira Gullar, “Depois do vendaval”, en *Sobre arte, sobre poesia (Uma luz do chão)* (Río de Janeiro: Ed. José Olympio, 2006), 121–25.

Integration of art and architecture in Brazil



Mural panels by Cândido Portinari, Paço Gustavo Capanema, Rio de Janeiro





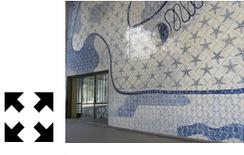
Jardin suspendu by Roberto Burle Marx, Ministry of Education and Public Health, Rio de Janeiro, 1938-44



Integración del arte y la arquitectura en Brasil



Paneles murales de Cândido Portinari, Paço Gustavo Capanema, Rio de Janeiro





Jardim suspendu de Roberto Burle Marx, Ministerio de Educación y Salud, Rio de Janeiro, 1938-44





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The construction of Brasilia



The National Congress of Brazil under construction, Brasília, ca. 1959.

Photographed by Marcel Gautherot





Area surrounding the university campus under construction, Brasília, ca. 1961.

Photographed by Marcel Gautherot





Workers on the construction site of the National Congress, Brasília, ca. 1959.

Photographed by Marcel Gautherot





Historic Museum of Brasília, ca. 1960.

Photographed by Marcel Gautherot



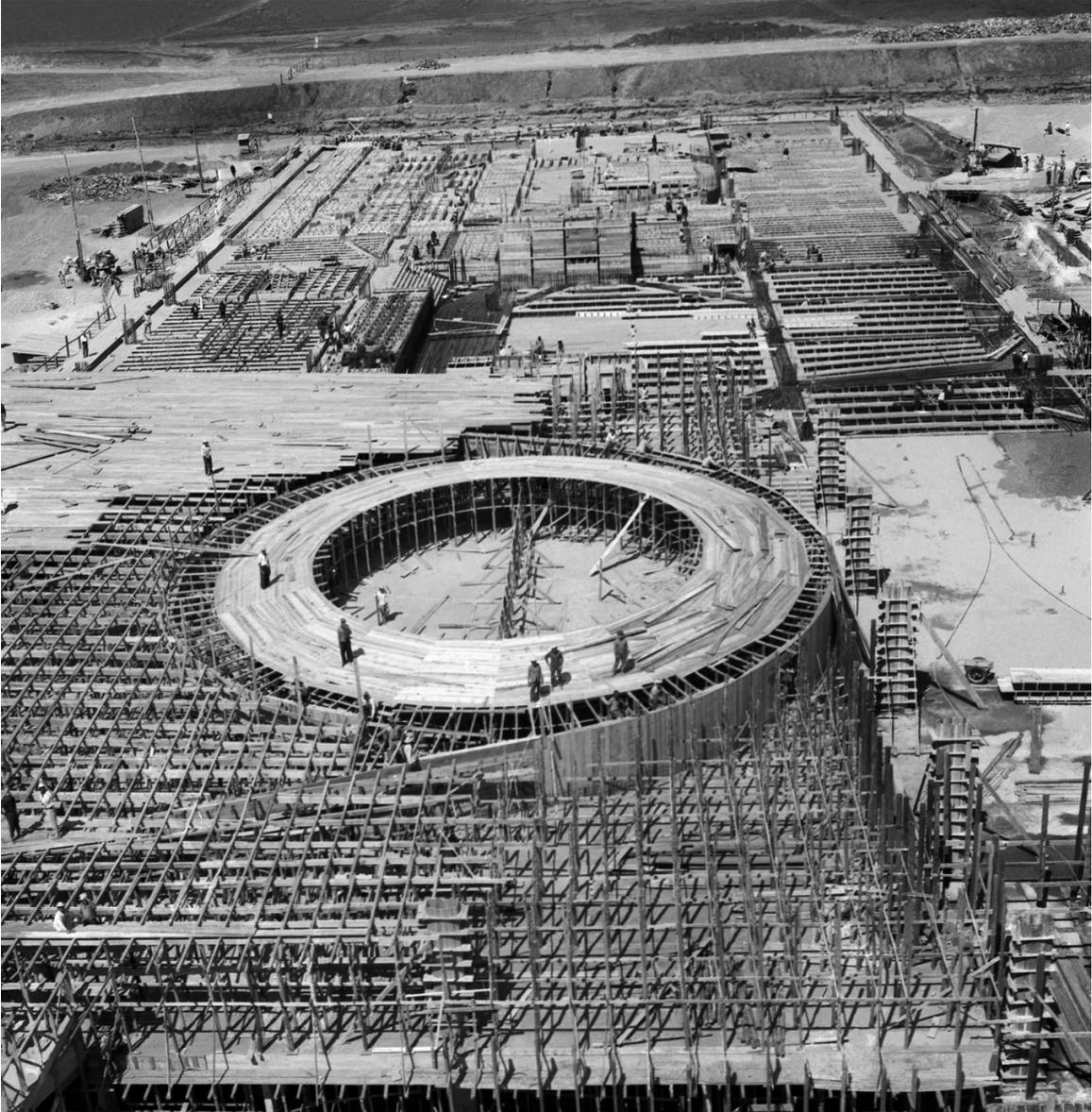


The Palácio da Alvorada, official residence of the President of Brazil, Brasília, ca. 1962.

Photographed by Marcel Gautherot



La construcción de Brasilia



Congreso Nacional en construcción, ca. 1959. Fotografada por Marcel



Gautherot





Ciudad Universitaria en construcción, ca. 1961. Fotografiada por Marcel

Gautherot





Trabajadores en la zona de construcción del Congreso Nacional, ca. 1959.

Fotografiada por Marcel Gautherot





El Museo Histórico de Brasília, ca. 1960. Fotografiada por Marcel Gautherot





El Palácio da Alvorada, la residencia oficial del presidente de Brasil, Brasília,

ca. 1962. Fotografiada por Marcel Gautherot





Courtesy of Instituto Moreira Salles, São Paulo



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“Diálogo sôbre o não objeto” published in *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical*, March 26, 1960

4 - Suplemento Dominical, Jornal do Brasil, São Paulo, 26/3/60

Não-objeto. Hélio Oiticica. Cór no espaço



Diálogo sôbre o não-objeto

Na primeira página do *SDJD* de 19 e 20 de dezembro de 1959, publicamos a Teoria do Não-Objeto, em que pela primeira vez se trazia a público esse problema. Tratava-se de uma descrição sumária, sob ângulo histórico, do processo que conduziu a arte contemporânea à eliminação total do objeto em sua linguagem e ao nascimento do não-objeto. Hoje pretendemos ter aprofundado o problema e torná-lo mais fácil a sua compreensão. Aquêl primeiro trabalho servirá como uma introdução geral ao assunto e tornará mais compreensíveis certos pontos do texto que publicamos aqui.

A — Que é o não-objeto?

B — É preciso primeiro saber o que entendo aqui por objeto. Entendo aqui por objeto a coisa material tal como se dá a nós, naturalmente, ligada às designações e usos cotidianos: a borracha, o lápis, a péra, o sapato etc. Nessa condição, o objeto se esgota na referência de uso e de sentido. Por contradição, podemos estabelecer uma primeira definição do não-objeto: o não-objeto não se esgota nas referências de uso e sentido porque não se insere na condição do útil e da designação verbal.

A — Mas os objetos tampouco esgotam sempre naquelas referências. Sob o nome péra, está a péra com a sua densidade material de coisa.

B — Sim. Quando nos subtraímos à ordem cultural do mundo, vemos os objetos sem nome — e nos defrontamos com a sua opacidade de coisa. Pode-se dizer que, nessas circunstâncias, o objeto torna-se próximo do que chamo de não-objeto, mas precisamente neste ponto manifesta-se a diferença fundamental entre os dois: sem nome, o objeto torna-se uma presença absurda, opaca, em que a percepção esbarra, sem nome, o objeto é impenetrável, inabordable, clara e insuportavelmente exterior ao sujeito. O não-objeto não possui essa opacidade, e daí o seu nome: o não-objeto é transparente à percepção, no sentido de que se franqueia a ela. E a diferença entre os dois torna-se mais precisa: só pelas conotações que o nome e o uso estabelecem entre o objeto e o mundo do sujeito, pode o objeto ser apreendido e assimilado pelo sujeito. E, pois, o objeto, um ser híbrido, composto de nome e coisa, como duas camadas superpostas das quais uma apenas se rende ao homem — o nome. O não-objeto, pelo contrário, é um inteiro, franco. A relação que mantém com o sujeito dispensa intermediário, ele possui uma significação também, mas essa significação é imanente à sua própria forma, que é pura significação.

A — Outras palavras, você diz que o não-objeto é um objeto total, integral?

B — Coloquemos o problema nos termos da filosofia existencial sartriana. Enquanto o sujeito existe para si, o objeto, a coisa, existe em si. Deixando de lado as implicações que o filósofo tira dessa contradição fundamental, fiquemos com o fato de que ela realimenta a opacidade da coisa que repousa em si mesma e a perplexidade do homem que se sente excluído entre elas. Um tecido de significações e intenções constitui o mundo humano, sob o qual persiste a opacidade do mundo inumano, exterior ao homem. A experiência do objeto-sem-nome é a experiência do exílio. A luta por vencer a contradição sujeito-objeto está no cerne de todo o conhecimento humano, de toda a experiência humana e, particularmente, na realização da obra de arte. Um pintor que figura uma natureza morta não está fazendo outra coisa senão tentando resolver essa contradição. Ao representar aqueles objetos cotidianos, o artista caminha do nível conceitual em que eles usualmente se encontram para o nível estético, onde uma nova significação, não-conceitual, emerge nétes: a significação imanente à forma.

A — Nesse caso, uma natureza morta é também um não-objeto.

B — Não. Um objeto representado é quase-objeto; é como se fosse um objeto, de se desprende da condição de objeto mas não atinge a de não-objeto; é, com referência ao objeto real, um objeto fictício. O não-objeto não é uma representação mas uma presença. Se o objeto está num extremo da experiência, o não-objeto está no outro, e o objeto representado, está entre os dois, a meio caminho.

A — Se é assim, que diferença existe entre a significação imanente à forma do quase-objeto e a significação imanente à forma do não-objeto?

B — A diferença reside no fato de que o quase-objeto é representação de um objeto real, enquanto o não-objeto não representa nada, mas apenas se apresenta. Ora, d'êse modo, a significação que se revela na forma de um e de outro não é da mesma natureza. Partindo do objeto real, o artista que o representa na tela consegue desligá-lo das relações conceituais — transfigurando-o na forma, na cór, na situação espacial — mas jamais logrará cortar definitivamente essas ligações que estão na fonte mesma de sua experiência: a significação que se dá no quase-objeto estava imanente no objeto. Isso não se verifica no caso do não-objeto que, por não se referir a nenhum objeto real, por ser o aparecimento primeiro de uma forma, funda em si mesmo sua significação.

A — Poder-se-ia dizer, então, que toda pintura não-figurativa é um não-objeto?

B — Também não. A diferença entre a pintura figurativa e a pintura dita abstrata é de grau mas não de natureza. A pintura não-figurativa, embora realize um grau maior de abstração, ainda se mantém presa ao problema da representação do objeto.

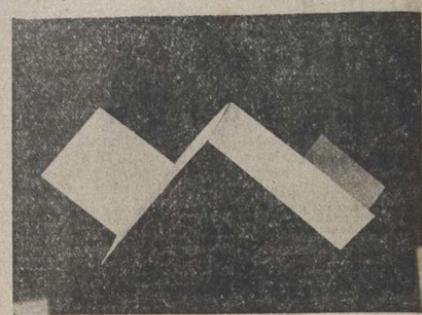
A — Mas como, se o objeto já não aparece nela?

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A — Pretende você dizer que o não-objeto resolve a contradição figura-fundo?

B — No plano da percepção essa contradição é insolúvel, uma vez que o fundo é condição mesma do perceber: tudo que se percebe, está

Não-objeto Amílcar de Castro. Sete fases de uma mesma obra



“Diálogo sôbre o não objeto” publicado em *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical*, 26 de marzo de 1960

4 - Suplemento Dominical, Jornal do Brasil, São Paulo, 26/3/60

Não-objeto. Hélio Oiticica. Cór no espaço



Diálogo sôbre o não-objeto

Na primeira página do *SDJD* de 19 e 20 de dezembro de 1959, publicamos a Teoria do Não-Objeto, em que pela primeira vez se trazia a público esse problema. Tratava-se de uma descrição sumária, sob ângulo histórico, do processo que conduziu a arte contemporânea à eliminação total do objeto em sua linguagem e ao nascimento do não-objeto. Hoje pretendemos ter aprofundado o problema e torná-lo mais fácil a sua compreensão. Aquêl primeiro trabalho servirá como uma introdução geral ao assunto e tornará mais compreensíveis certos pontos do texto que publicamos aqui.

A — Que é o não-objeto?

B — É preciso primeiro saber o que entendo aqui por objeto. Entendo aqui por objeto a coisa material tal como se dá a nós, naturalmente, ligada às designações e usos cotidianos: a borracha, o lápis, a péra, o sapato etc. Nessa condição, o objeto se esgota na referência de uso e de sentido. Por contradição, podemos estabelecer uma primeira definição do não-objeto: o não-objeto não se esgota nas referências de uso e sentido porque não se insere na condição do útil e da designação verbal.

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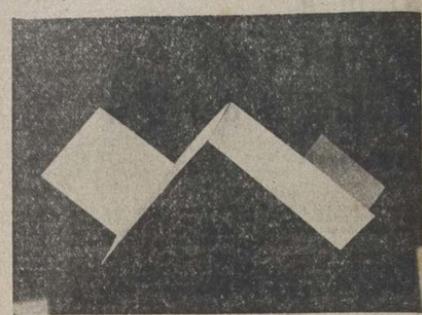
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“Neoconcrete Manifesto” published in *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical*, March 22, 1959



prevalência à obra sobre a teoria. Se pretendermos entender a pintura de Mondrian pelas suas teorias, seremos obrigados a escolher entre as duas. Ou bem a profecia de uma total integração da arte na vida cotidiana parece-nos possível — e vemos na obra de Mondrian os primeiros passos nesse sentido — ou essa integração nos parece cada vez mais remota e a sua obra se nos mostra frustrada. Ou bem a vertical e a horizontal são mesmo os ritmos fundamentais do universo e a obra de Mondrian é a aplicação desse princípio universal ou o princípio é falso e sua obra se revela fundada sobre uma ilusão. Mas a verdade é que a obra de Mondrian aí está, viva e fecunda, acima dessas contradições teóricas. De nada nos servirá ver em Mondrian o destrutor da superfície, do plano e da linha, se não atentamos para o novo espaço que essa destruição construiu.

m a n i f e s t o

O mesmo se pode dizer de Vantongerloo ou de Pevsner. Não importa que equações matemáticas estejam na raiz de uma escultura ou de um quadro de Vantongerloo, desde que só a experiência direta da percepção a obra entrega a

A expressão neoconcreta indica uma tomada de posição em face da arte não-figurativa "geométrica" (neoplasticismo, construtivismo, suprematismo, escola de Ulm) e particularmente em face da arte concreta levada a uma perigosa exacerbação racionalista. Trabalhando no campo da pintura, escultura, gravura e literatura, os artistas que participam desta I Exposição Neoconcreta encontraram-se, por força de suas experiências, na contingência de rever as posições teóricas adotadas até aqui em face da arte concreta, uma vez que nenhuma delas "compreende" satisfatoriamente as possibilidades expressivas abertas por estas experiências.

Nascida com o cubismo, de uma reação à dissolvença impressionista da linguagem pictórica, era natural que o arte dita geométrica se colocasse numa posição diametralmente oposta às facilidades técnicas e alusivas da pintura corrente. As novas conquistas da física e da mecânica, abrindo uma perspectiva ampla para o pensa-

mento objetivo, incentivariam, nos continuadores dessa revolução, a tendência à racionalização cada vez maior dos processos e dos propósitos da pintura. Uma noção mecanicista de construção invadiria a linguagem dos pintores e dos escultores, gerando, por sua vez, reações igualmente extremistas, de caráter retrógrado como o realismo mágico ou o irracionalista como Dada e o surrealismo. Não resta dúvida, entretanto, que, por trás de suas teorias que consagram a objetividade da ciência e a precisão da mecânica, os verdadeiros artistas — como é o caso, por exemplo, de Mondrian ou Pevsner — construíam sua obra e, no corpo-a-corpo com a expressão, superaram, muitas vezes, os limites impostos pela teoria. Mas a obra desses artistas tem sido até hoje interpretada na base dos princípios teóricos, que essa obra mesma negou. Propomos uma reinterpretação do neoplasticismo, do construtivismo e dos demais movimentos afins, na base de suas conquistas de expressão e dando

se opor, simultaneamente, ao figurativismo e à abstração mecanicista, tendo sido considerado até hoje, por certos teóricos racionalistas, como um ingênuo que não compreendia bem o verdadeiro sentido da nova plástica... Na verdade, Malevitch já exprimia, dentro da pintura "geométrica" uma insatisfação, uma vontade de transcendência do racional e do sensorial, que hoje se manifesta de maneira irreprimível. Mas, do ponto-de-vista estético, a obra começa a interessar precisamente pelo que nela há que transcende essas aproximações exteriores: pelo universo de significações existenciais que ela a um tempo funda e revela. Malevitch, por ter reconhecido o primado da "pura sensibilidade na arte", salvou as suas definições teóricas das limitações do racionalismo e do mecanicismo, dando à sua pintura uma dimensão transcendente que lhe garante hoje uma notável atualidade. Mas Malevitch pagou caro a coragem de

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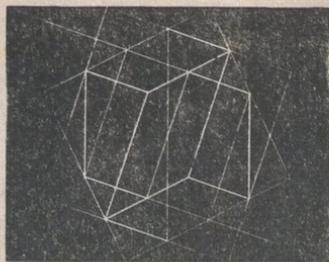
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PEVSNER



MAX BILL



ALBERS



MALEVITCH

“Manifiesto neoconcreto” publicado en *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical*, 22 de marzo de 1959



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O neoconcreto, nascido de uma necessidade de exprimir a complexa realidade do homem moderno dentro da linguagem estrutural da nova plástica, nega a validade das atitudes científicas e positivistas em arte e repõe o problema da expressão, incorporando as novas dimensões "verbais" criadas pela arte não-figurativa construtiva. O racionalismo rouba à arte toda a autonomia e substitui as qualidades intransferíveis do obra de arte por noções da objetividade científica: assim os conceitos de forma, espaço, tempo, estrutura —

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Não concebemos a obra de arte nem como "máquina" nem como "objeto", mas como um quasi-corpus, isto é, um ser cuja realidade não se esgota nas relações exteriores de seus elementos; um ser que, decomponível em partes pela análise, só se dá plenamente à abordagem direta, fenomenológica. Acreditamos que a obra de arte supera o mecanicismo material sobre o qual repousa, não por alguma virtude extraterrena: supera-o por transcender essas relações me-



PEVSNER



MAX BILL



ALBERS



MALEVITCH



© Jornal do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro



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São Luís do Maranhão



Ladeira, or steep street often ending in stairs





Church and Praça de Santo Antônio [Santo Antônio Plaza]





Railroad and palm trees





Praça João Lisboa [João Lisboa Plaza]



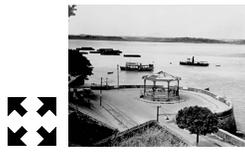


View of São Luís





Avenida Beira-Mar at the entrance to the bay





Praça Gonçalves Dias [Gonçalves Dias Plaza], a central gathering point in São Luís





Local businesses



São Luís do Maranhão



Calle empinada





Iglesia y Praça de Santo Antônio





Ferrocarril y palmeras





Praça João Lisboa



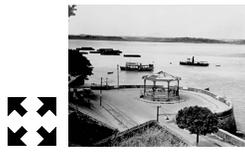


Vista de São Luís





Avenida Beira-Mar a la entrada de la bahía





Praça Gonçalves Dias, un central punto de reunión en São Luís





Comercios locales





Courtesy of Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, Rio de Janeiro



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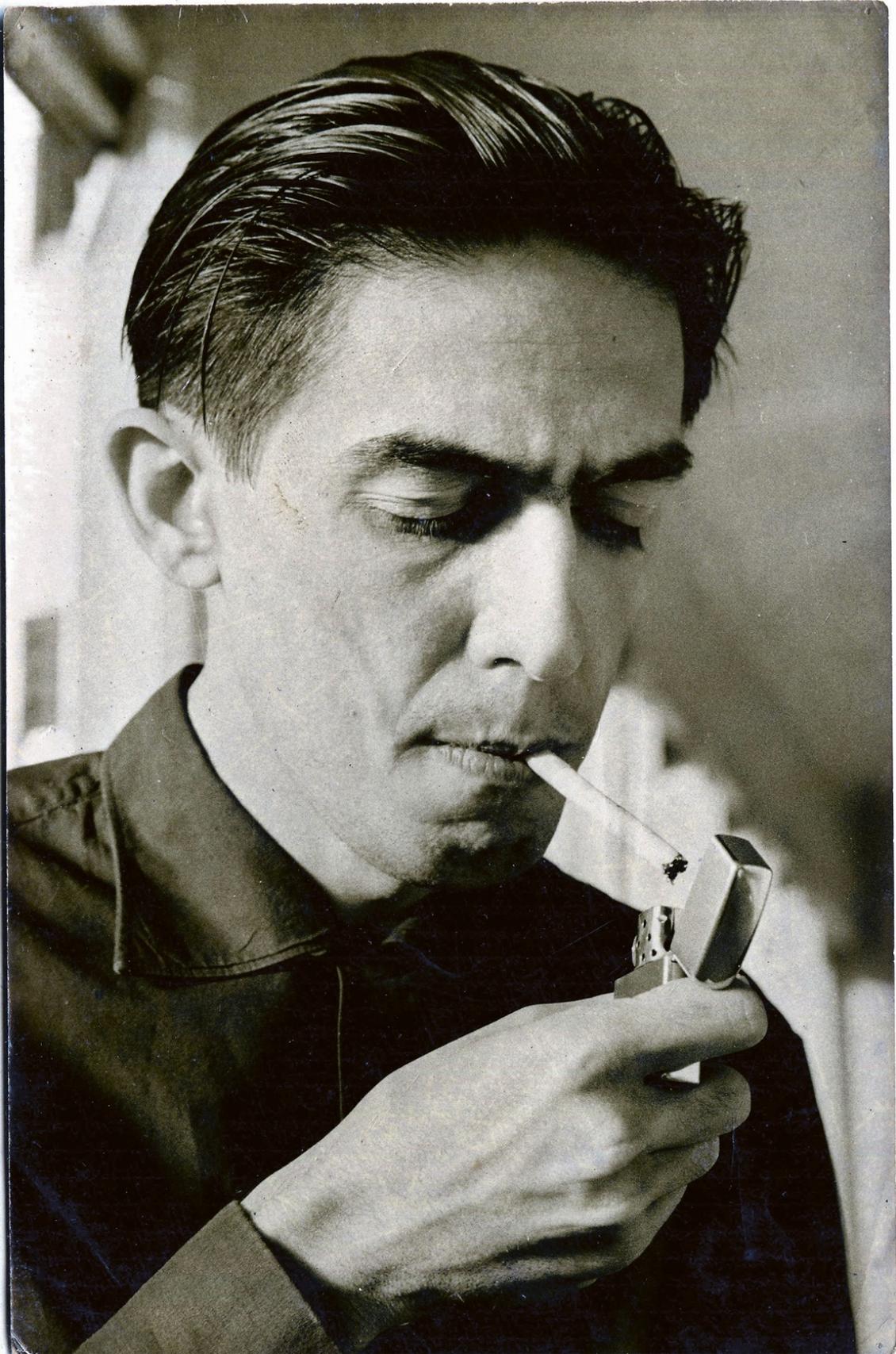


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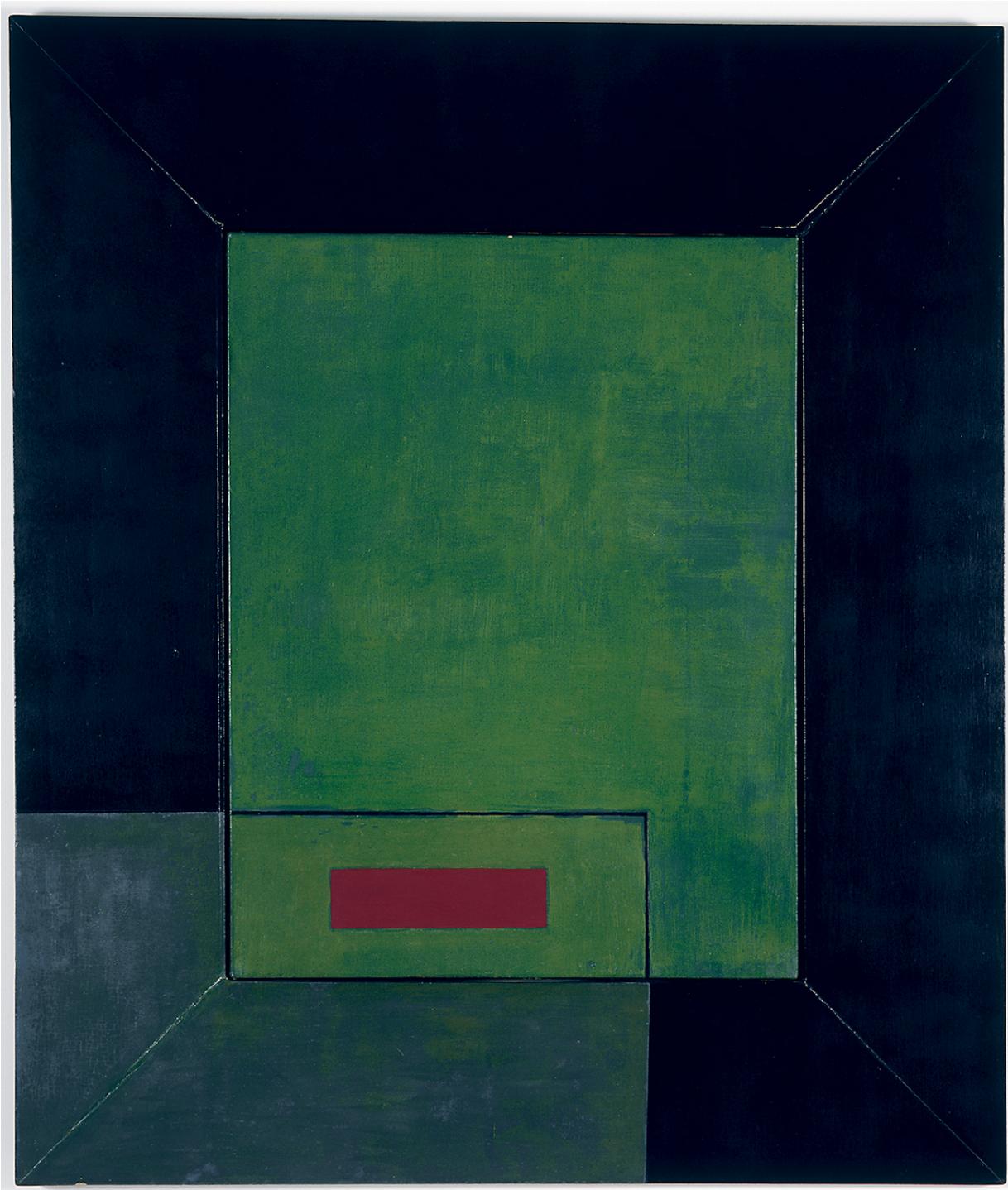
Cortesía de Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, Rio de Janeiro

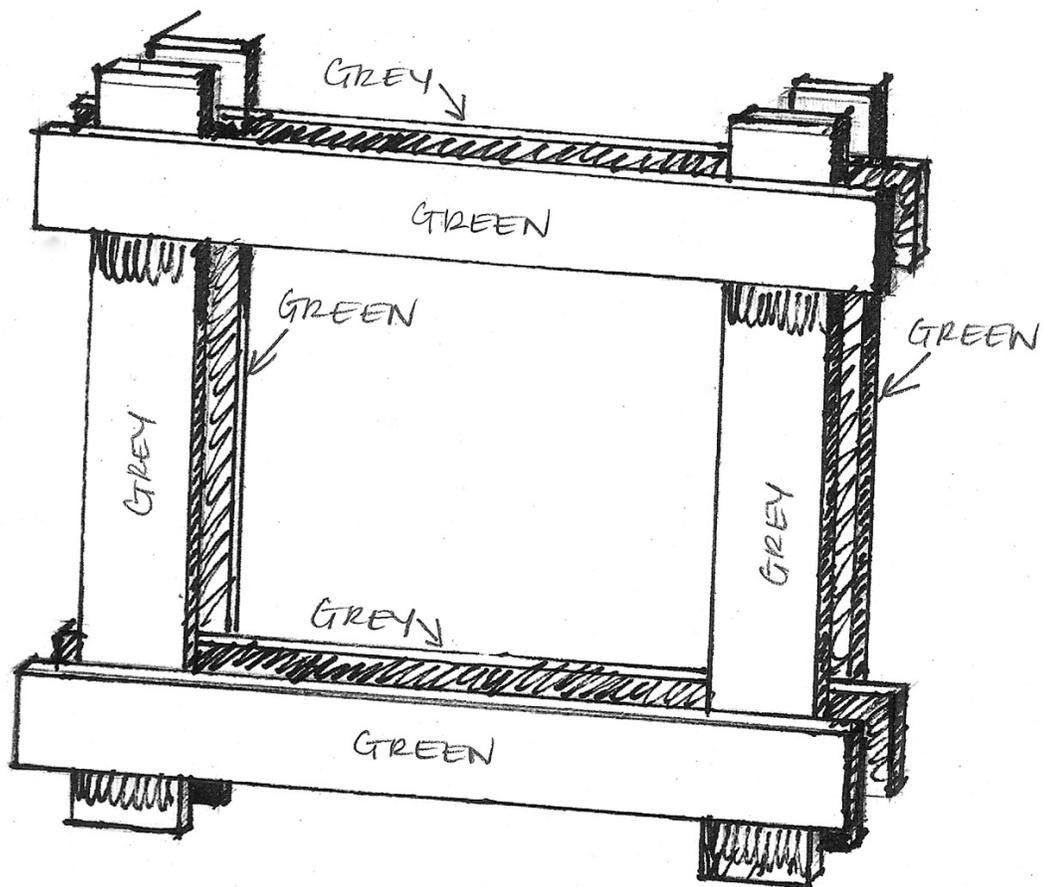


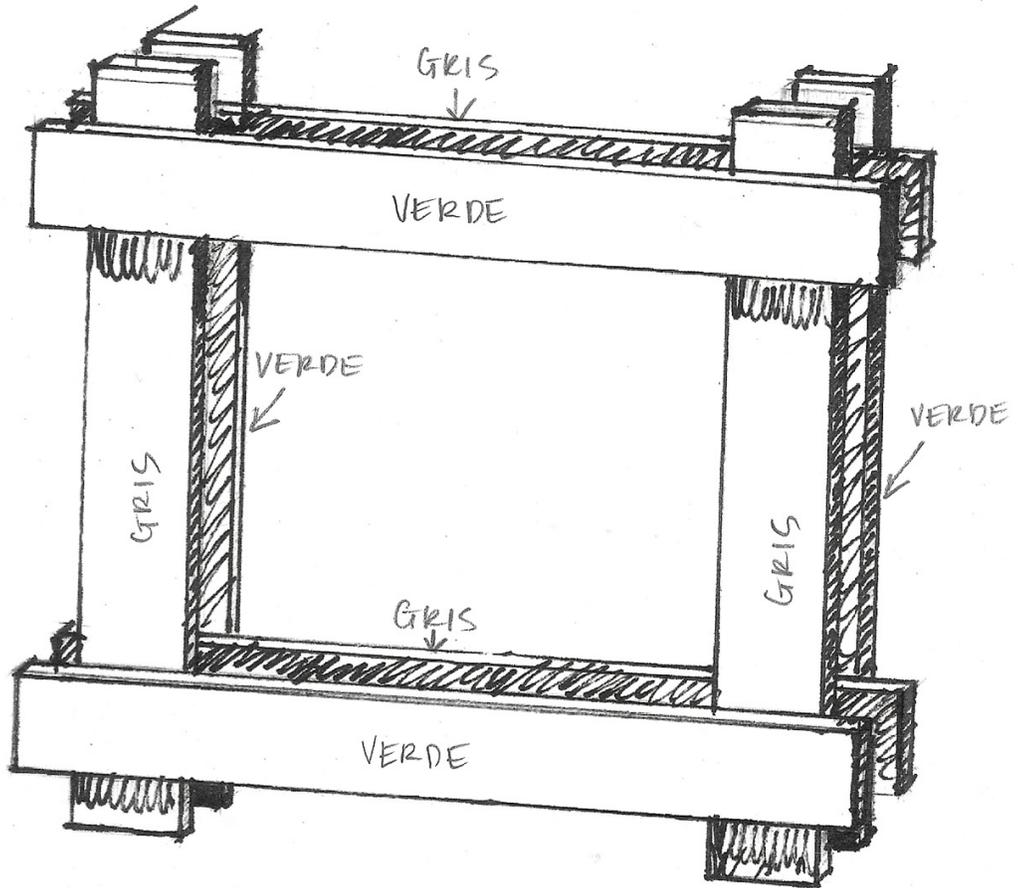












ROÇZEIRAL

Au sôflu i luz ta pom-
pa inova'
orbita

FUROR
tô bicho
'scuro fo-
go
Rra

UILÁN
UILÁN,
lavram z'olhares, flamas!
CRESPITAM GÂNGLES RÔ MASUAF
Rhra

Rozal, ROÇAL
l'ancêndio Mino-
Mina TAURUS
MINÔS rhes chãns
sur ma parole —
ÇAR

ENFERNO
LUÍZNEM
E ÔS SÓES
LÔ CORPE
INFENSOS
Ra
CI VERDES
NASCI DO
CÔFO

f
aol
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t r
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ç o

a
fo r m n o
m i a
b i g
c v a
m a l d i t
p o u r o
be

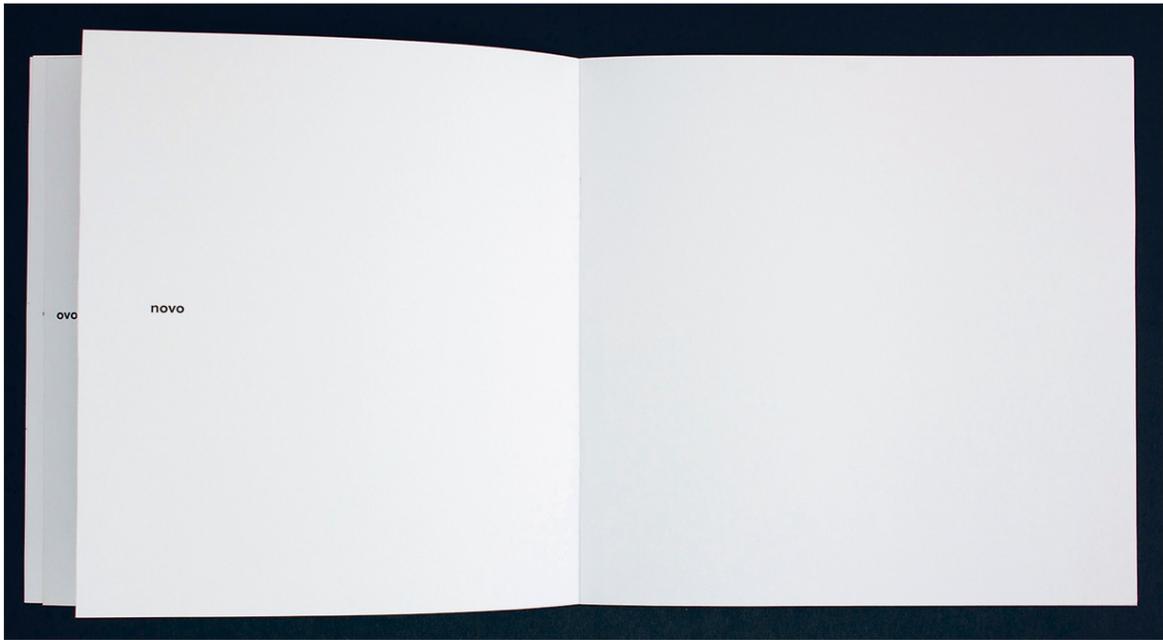
ovo
n o v e l o
novo no velho
o filho em folhos
na jaula dos joelhos
infante em fonte
feto feito
dentro do
centro

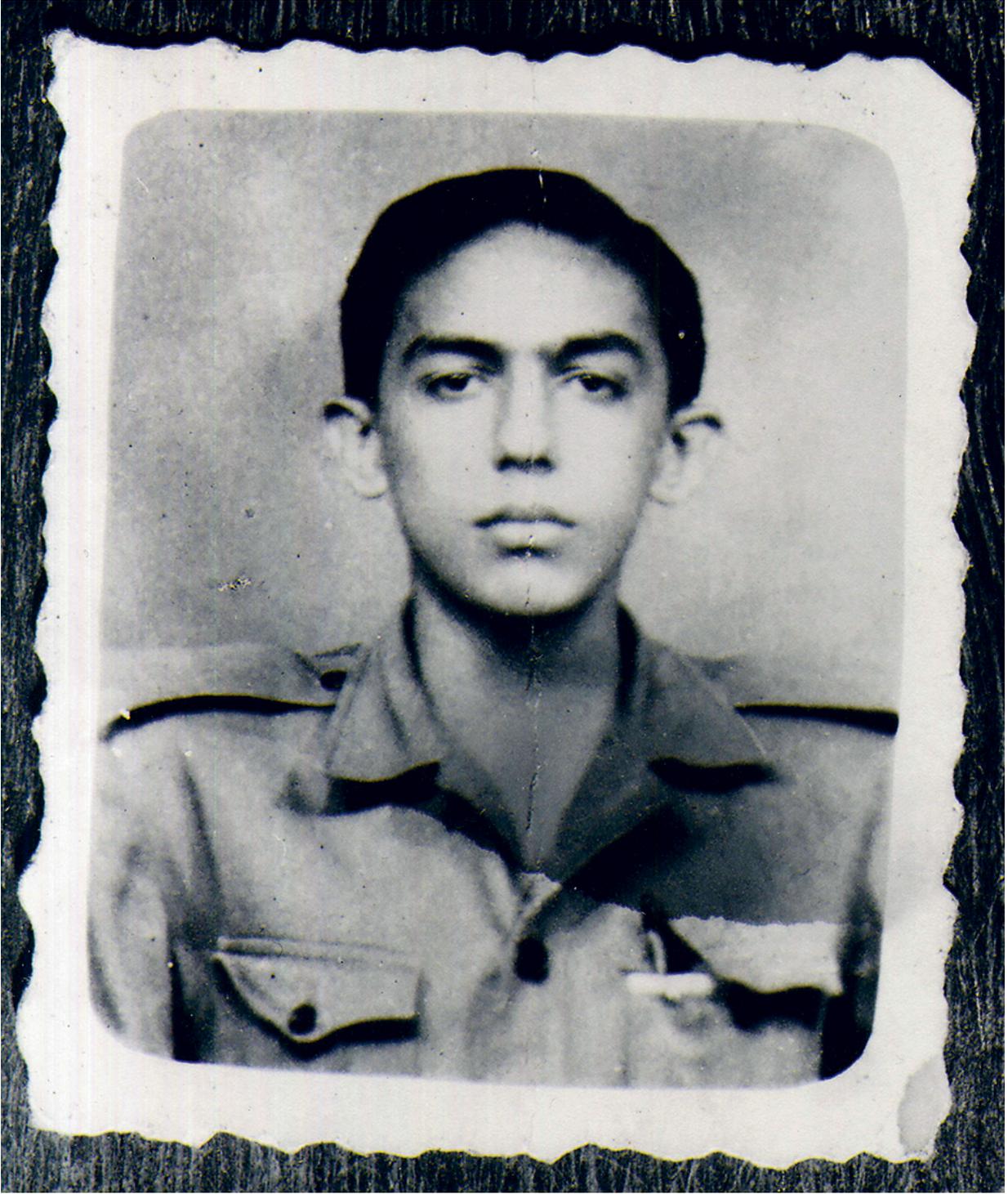
nu
des do nada
até o hum
ano mero nu
mero do zero
crua criança incru
stada no cerne da
carne viva en
fim nada

o
p o n t o
onde se esconde
lenda ainda antes
e n t r e v e n t r e s
quando queimando
os seios são
peitos nos
dedos

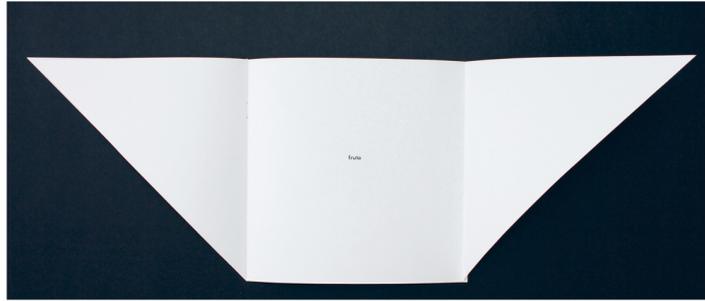
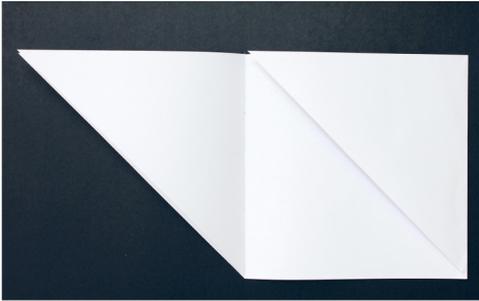
no
turna noite
em tórno em treva
turva sem contórno
morte negro nó cego
sono do morcego nu
ma sombra que o pren
dia preta letra que
se torna
sol

o
n o v e l o
o v o
o v o
e
l
o

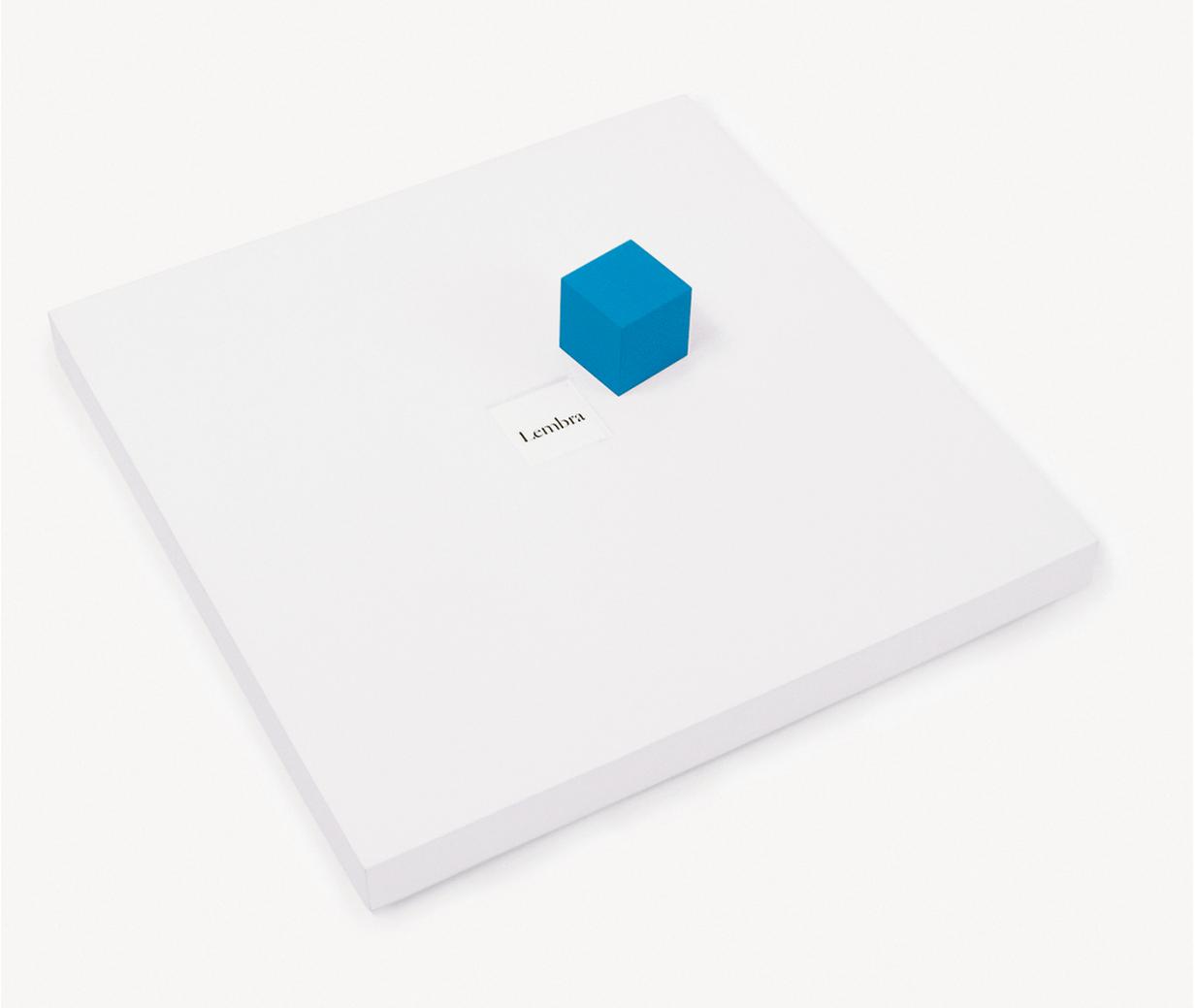






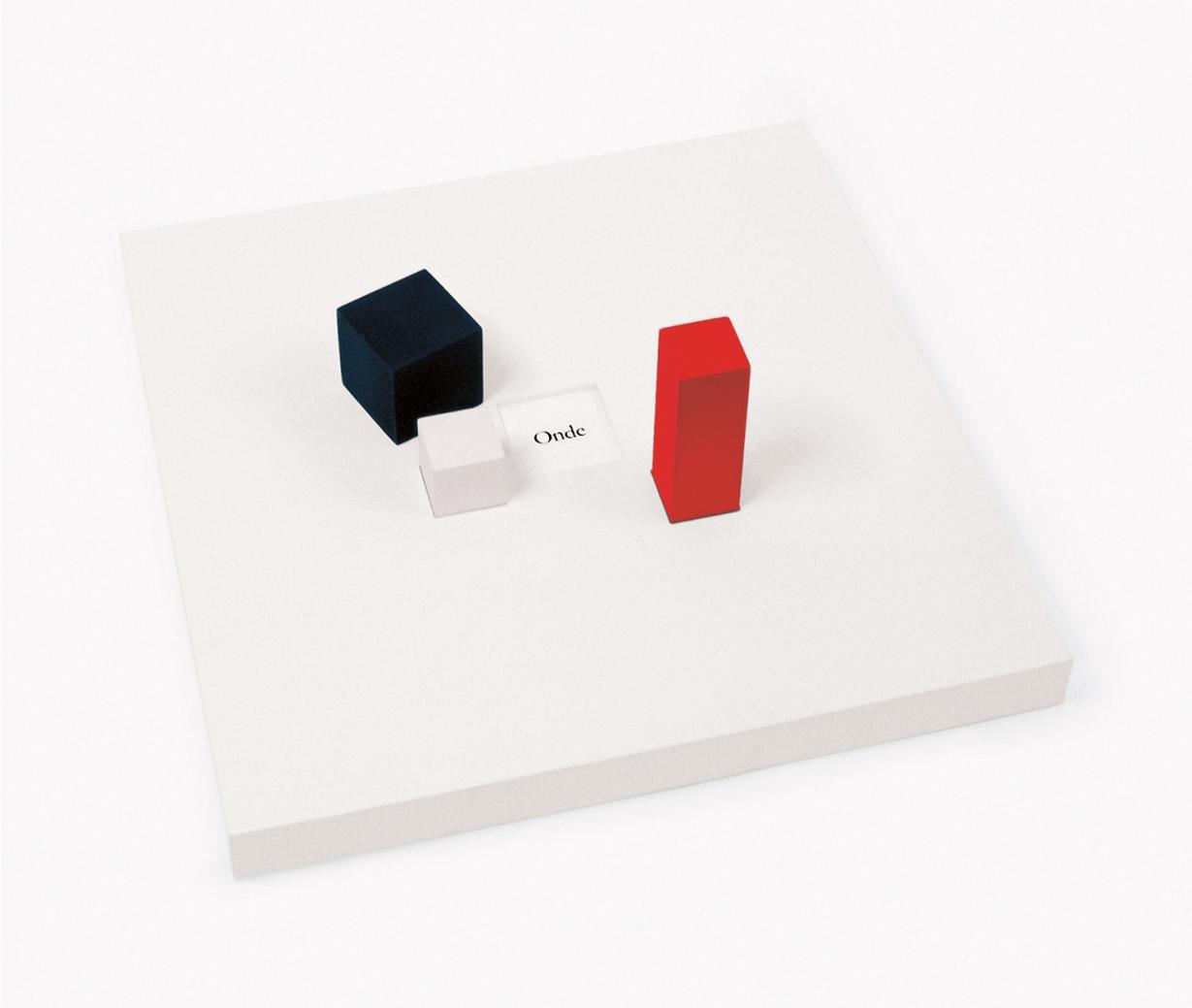


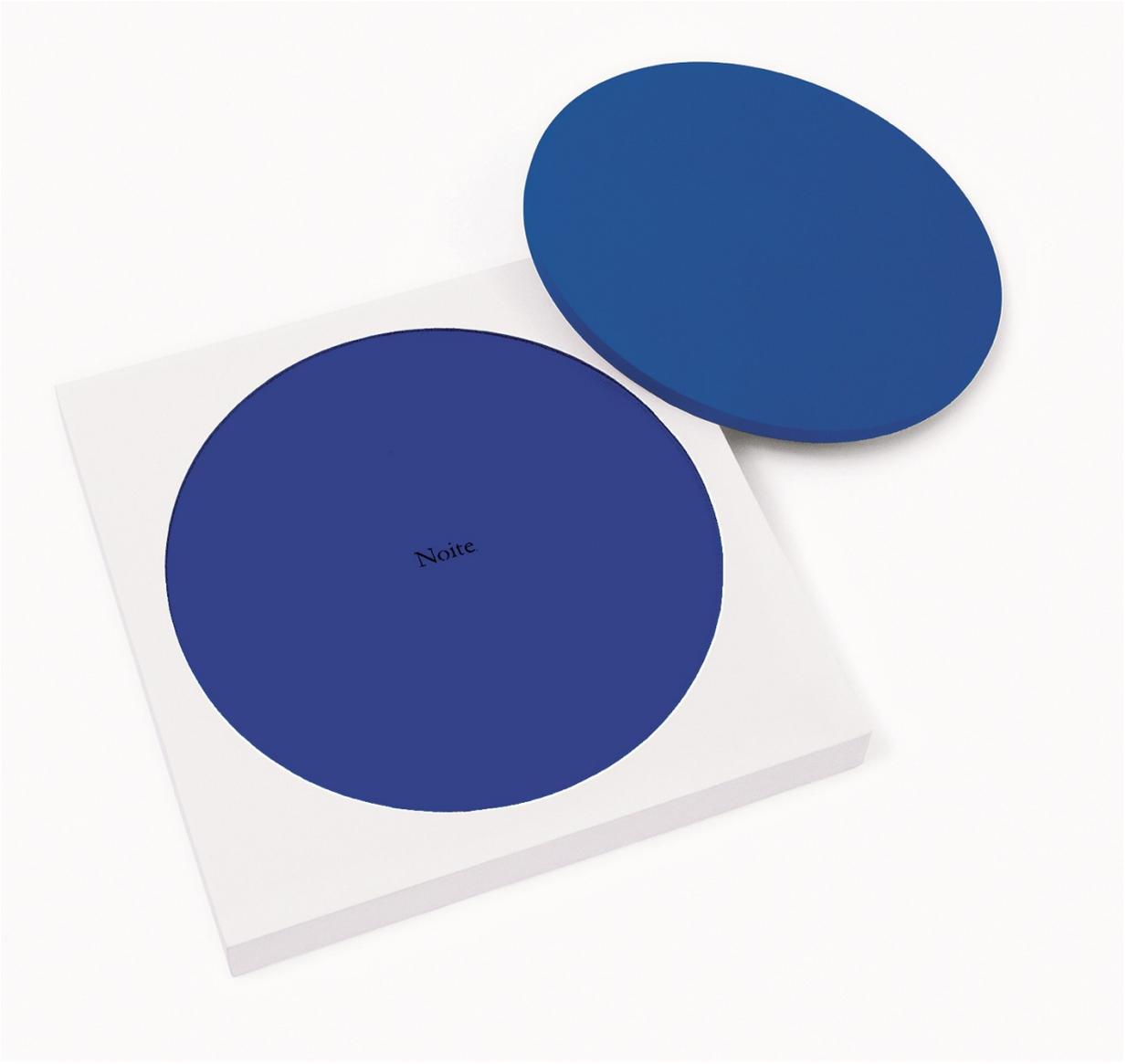




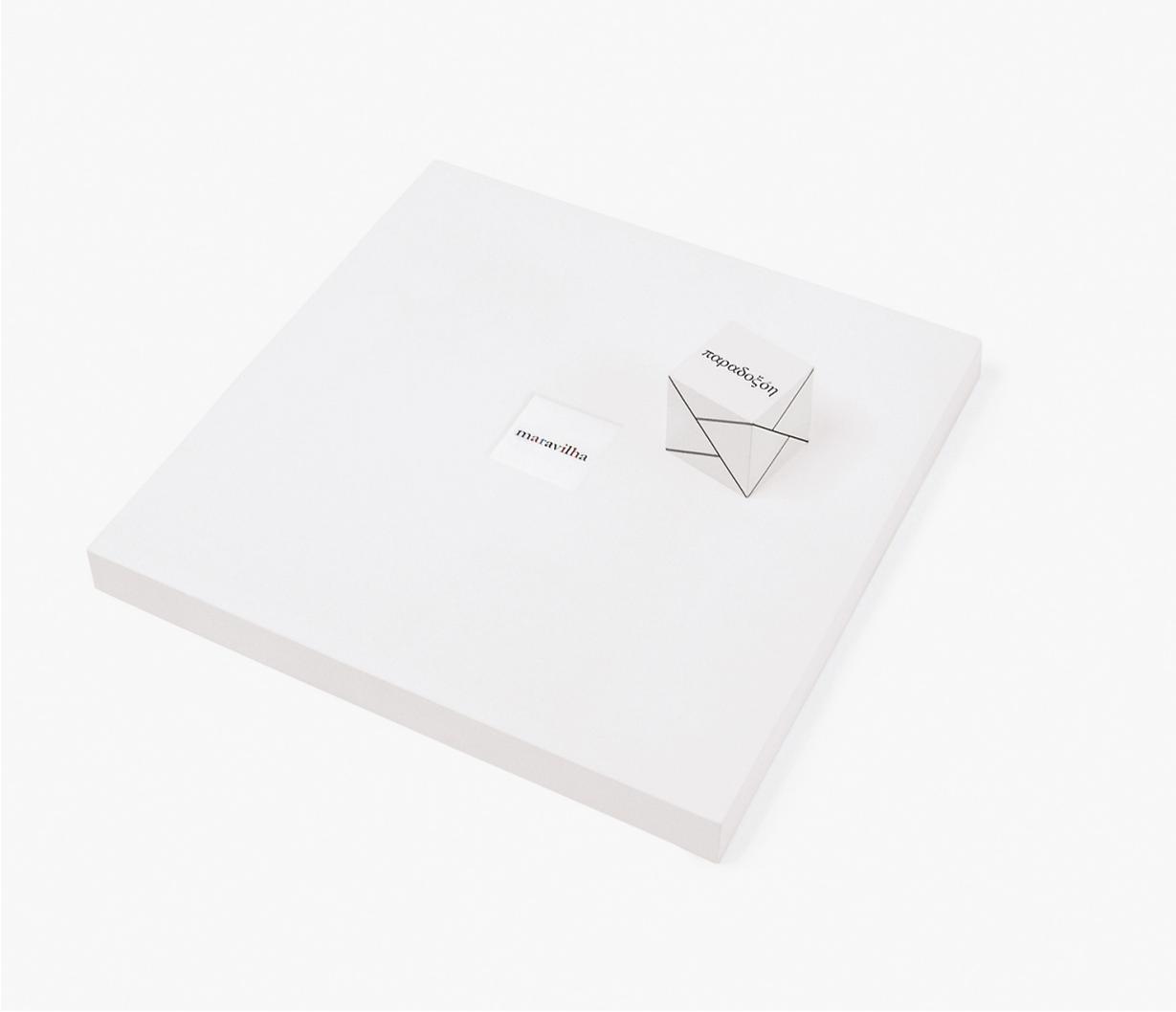


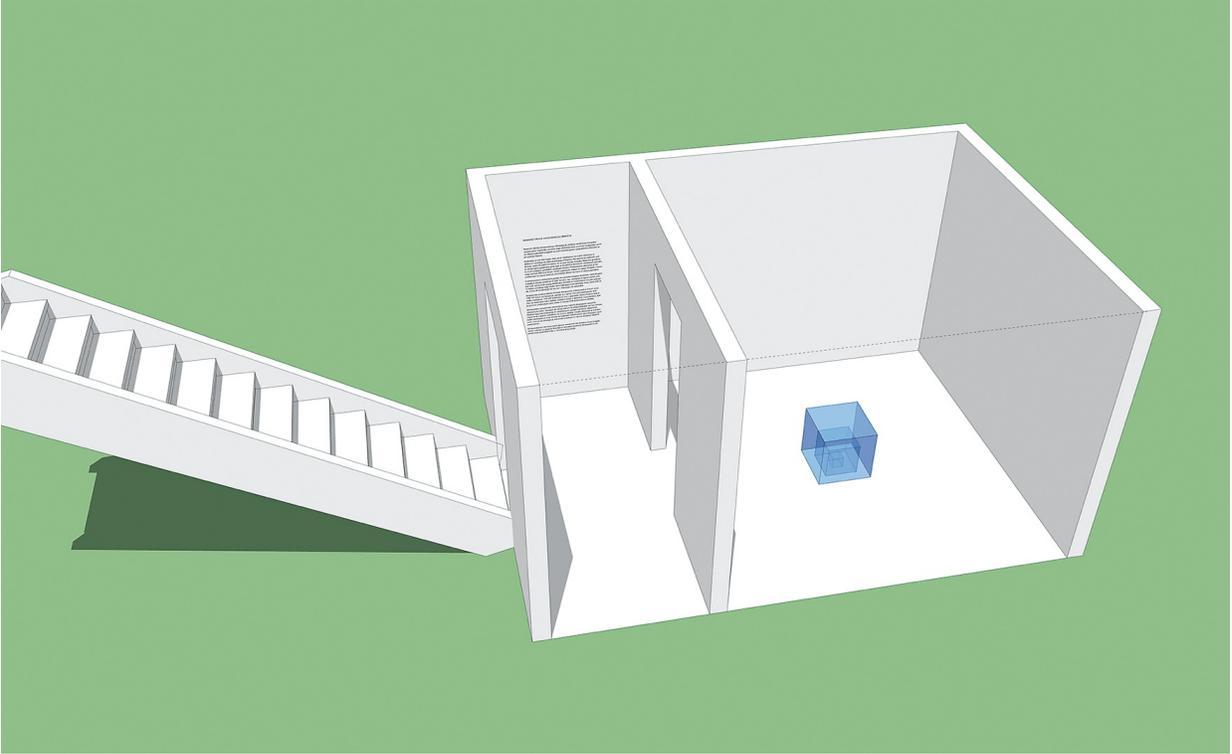


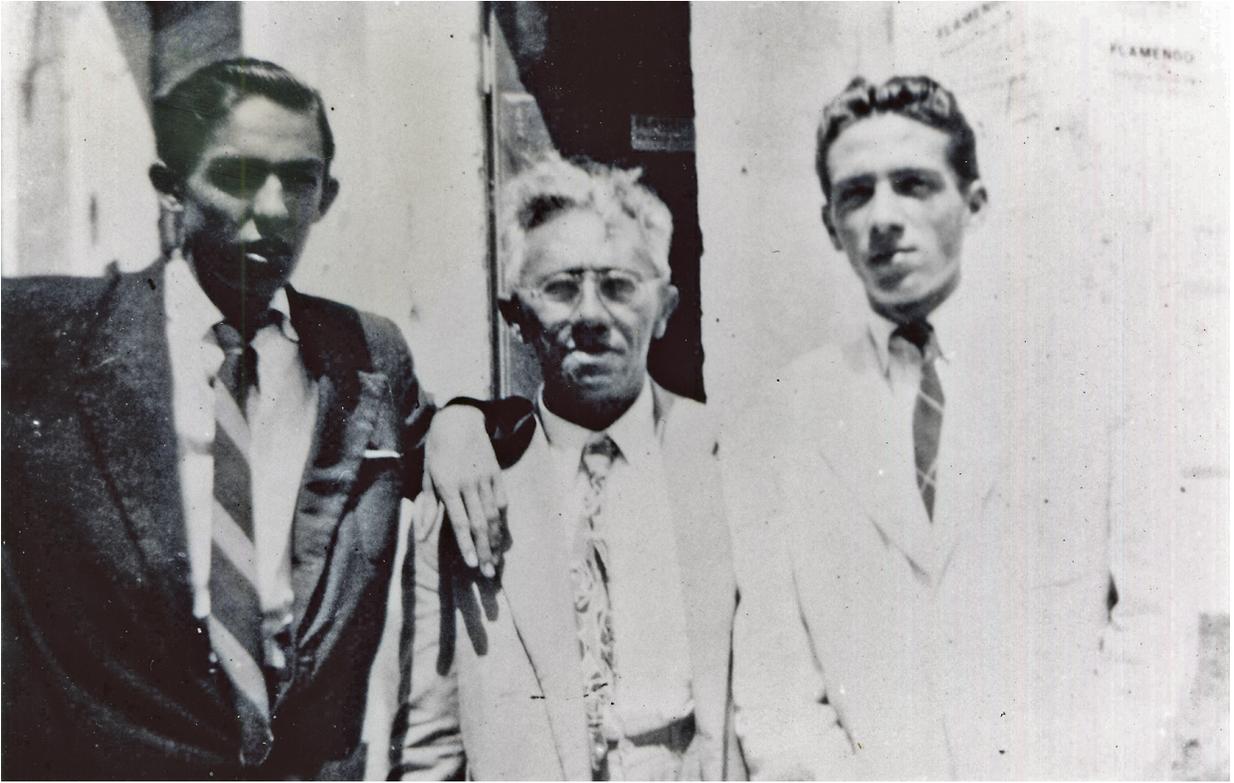




Noite

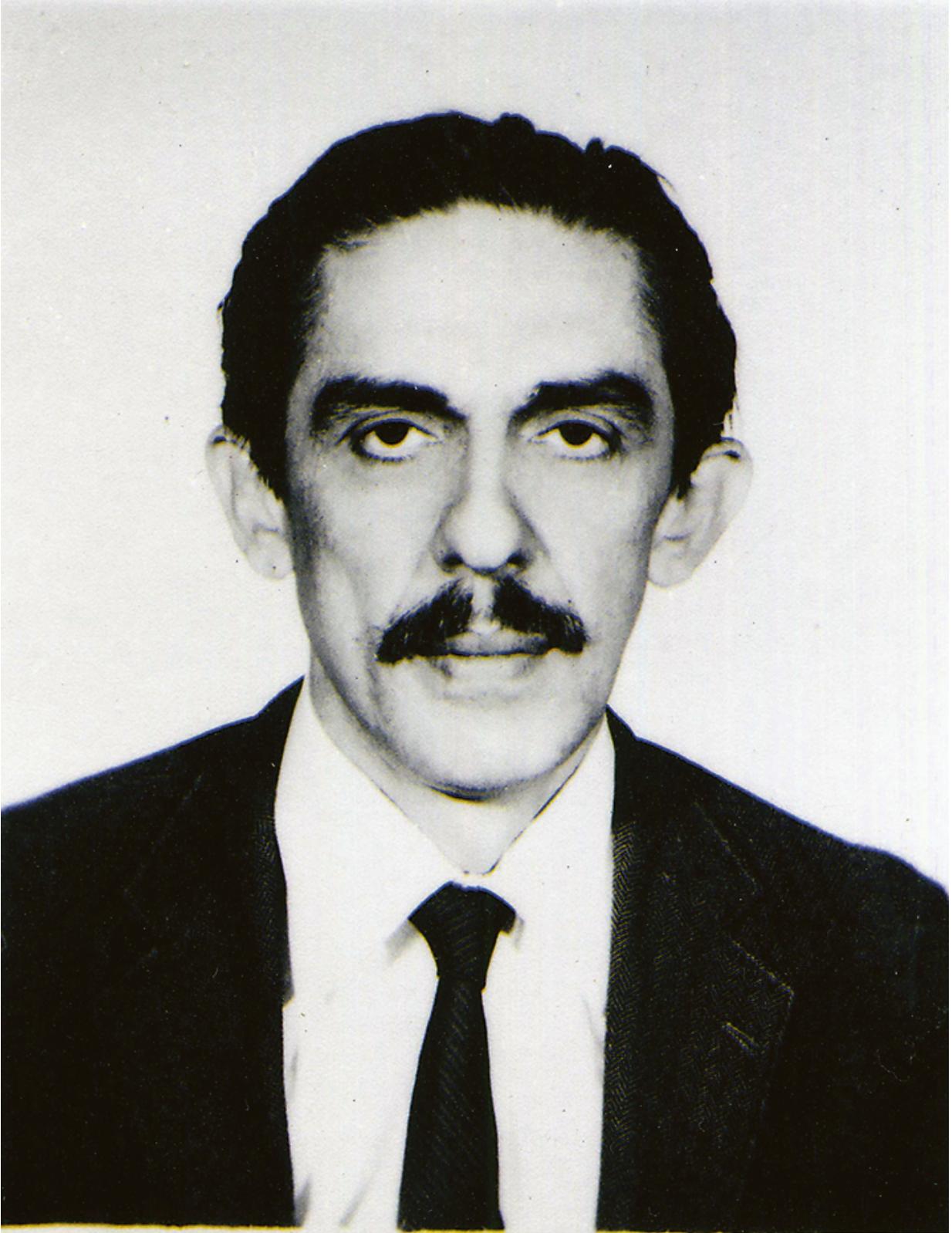














igem do dia",
eira Gullar

a
o
a —

ação

os e
a,

o

de

smo
mento
a

ento

e

ra



~~Gullar de Buenos Aires~~
(Buenos Aires, 1976)

escuro ~~escuro~~

mais que escuro:

claro

a? como pluma? claro mais que claro claro: coisa

e tudo

(ou quase):

que o universo fabrica e vem sonhando desde q^{eu}s

ra)

azul

era o gato

azul

era o galo

azul

o cavalo

azul

Seu cu

engiva igual a tua bucetinha que parecia sorrir entre as
as de banana entre os cheiros de flor e bosta de porco aberta
uma boca do corpo (nao como a tua boca de palavras) ~~nao~~ como
entrada para

eu nao sabia tu

nao sabias

fazer girar a vida

com seu montão de estrélas e oceanos

entrando-nos em ti

bela bela

mais ^{que} bela

mas como era o nome dela?

Nao era Helena nem Vera

nem Nara nem Gabriela

nem Tereza nem Maria:

Seu nome ^{seu nome} perdeu-se na carne fria ^{seu nome}

perdeu-se na confusão de tanta noite e tanto dia

NASCE O POEMA

Há quem pense
que sabe
como deve ser o poema

ou
mal sei
como gostaria
que ele fosse

porque ou mundo
o mundo muda
e a poesia irrompe

~~através de mãos se espera~~

de mãos se espera às vezes
chirando a flor

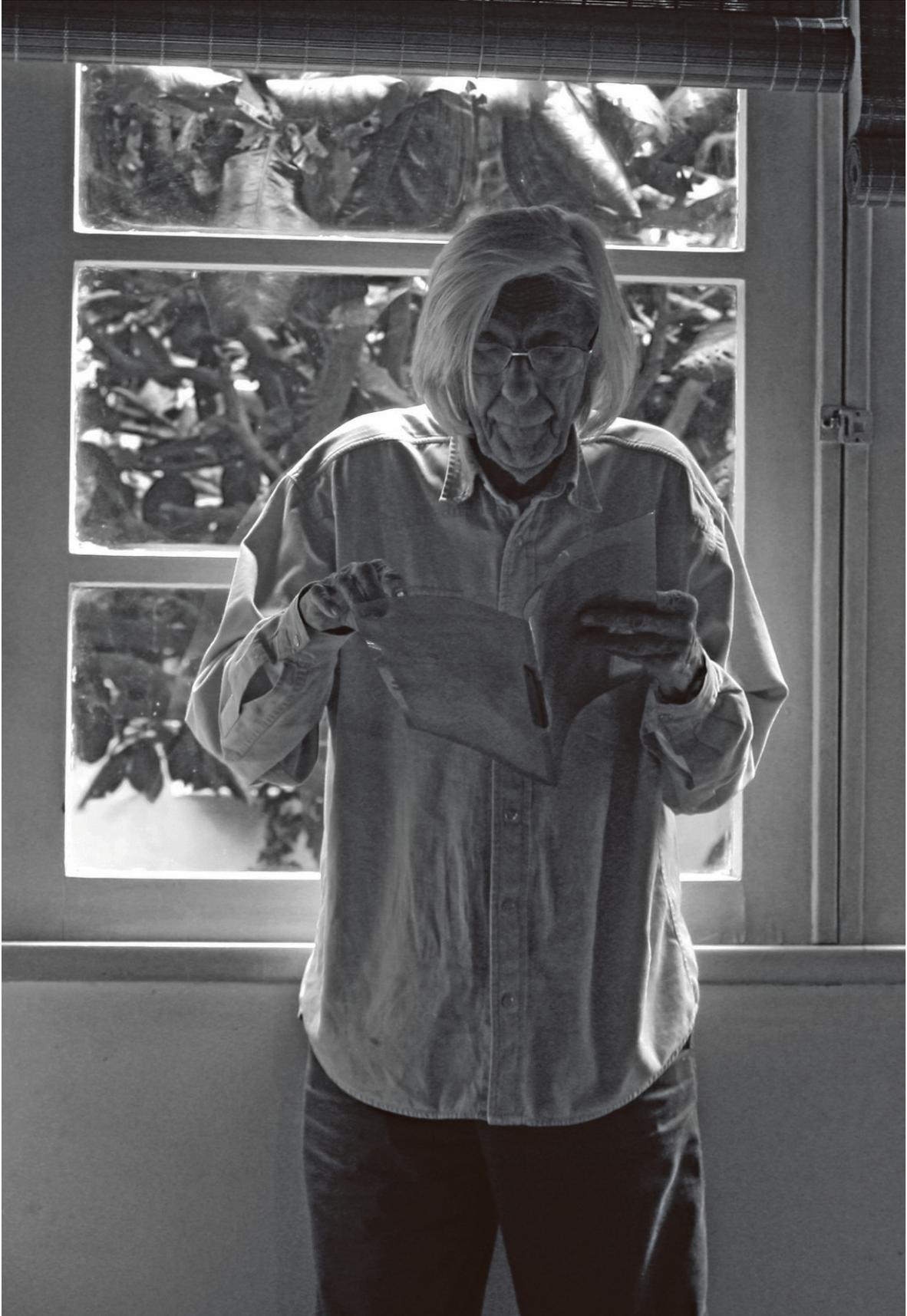
às vezes

desatada no dor
da fruta podre
que no podre
se abisma

(quanto mais perto da noite
mais pinta
o aranha)

às ~~vezes~~
vezes

num voo
de silêncio
num pequeno amanhecer do Estácio
de tarde:





Cen az Inleto

7507





INAUGUROU-SE ONTEM

Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta

"Poetas concretos", que querem eliminar a base formal do poema, participam da mostra — Movimento estético que pretende imprimir novo rumo às artes de vanguarda do país — Lançamento de livros

Inaugurou-se ontem, às 18 horas, no Museu de Arte Moderna, a Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta, que reúne, além de pintores e escultores, varios poetas. A mostra coletiva é o ponto de partida de um movimento estético que visa imprimir novo rumo às artes de vanguarda do país.

Segundo se informa, os expositores, nomes conhecidos pelos que acompanham a evolução de nossas artes, representam uma tendência de fundamentos já bem definidos e universalmente designados por "Concretismo".

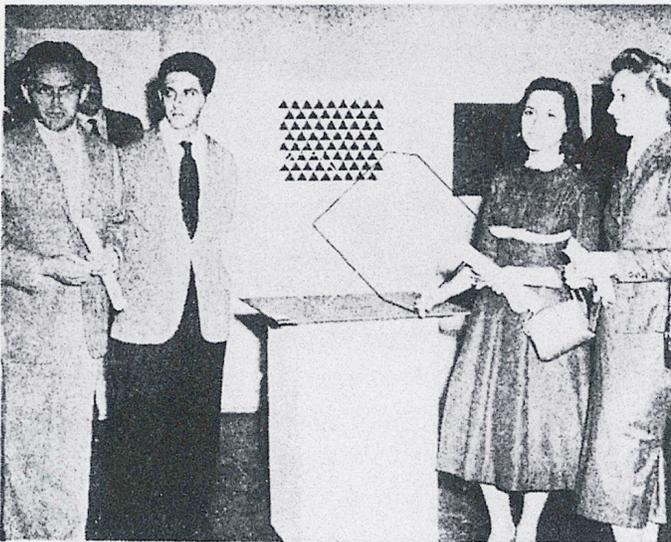
São os seguintes os artistas participantes da Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta: pintura: Geraldo de Barros, Aluisio Galvão, Lygia Clark, Waldemar Cordeiro, João José Costa, Hermelindo Fiaminghi, Judith Laun, Mauricio Nogueira Lima, Rubem Mauro Ludolf, Luis Sacilotto, Decio Vieira Alexandre Wollner; Escultura: Amílcar de Castro, Casimiro Fejer Franz Joseph Weissmann; Desenho, Lohar Charoux; Gravura: Lygia Pape; Fotografia: Germano Lorea e Ademar Manarini.

Homenagem especial está sendo prestada ao pintor Alfredo Volpi, que apresenta mais de um ponto de contacto com os problemas concretistas. Volpi expõe duas de suas telas mais recentes.

A secção de poesia promete suscitar controvérsias. Tomando como pontos de referencia as realizações de Mallarmé ("Coup de Dés"), Pound (ideogramas), Joyce, Cummings — no setor de literatura; os concretistas, no setor das artes visuais; Webern, Boulez, Stockhausen — no setor musical, os "poetas concretos" tendem a eliminar, sempre num plano de estrita funcionalidade, a base formal do poema, tradicional ou moderno, ou seja, o "verso" (livre inclusive).

Como acontece no setor das artes visuais, apresentar-se-ão poetas do Rio e de São Paulo: Ronaldo Azeredo, Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos, Ferreira Gullar, Decio Pignatari, Wladimir Dias Pino. Identificado ao movimento, deve ainda ser lembrado o jovem crítico Oliveira Bastos.

Por ocasião da mostra serão lançados novos livros de poesia, entre os quais "A Ave", de Wladimir Dias Pino; "O Formigueiro", de Ferreira Gullar, e "Noigandre 3", que reúne poemas concretos de Decio Pignatari, Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos e Ronaldo Azeredo. Ao mesmo tempo, doze paginas da revista "Arquitetura e Decorações" serão dedicadas a esse movimento dando à publicação de manifestos, artigos criticos sobre o movimento, ilustrações, etc.



Pintoras e escultoras também aderiram à "Arte Concreta", movimento que visa a dar um novo rumo às artes de vanguarda no país.



Ferreria Gullar in 1985
Courtesy of Leland Guyer

Rotting bananas, a theme that Gullar uses as an emblem of decay in many of his poems. Courtesy of Leland Guyer

The Ribeirão Fountain, São Luís
Courtesy of Leland Guyer

The Bishop's Fountain, São Luís
Courtesy of Leland Guyer

Modest homes whose façade consists of a single door and window, known as *porta-e-janela*, São Luís. Courtesy of Leland Guyer

Modest homes whose façade consists of a single door and window, known as *porta-e-janela*, São Luís. Courtesy of Leland Guyer

Windows barred in silence, São Luís
Courtesy of Leland Guyer

A home of two stories, or *sobrado*, in São Luís
Courtesy of Leland Guyer

Ladeiras, or steep streets often ending in stairs
Courtesy of Leland Guyer

Palafittes, or stilted homes, often built on water and, in this case, homes to the poorest residents of São Luís. Courtesy of Leland Guyer



Courtesy of Leland Guyer



Courtesy of Leland Guyer

Transport sailboats with colored sails on São Luís bay.
Courtesy of Leland Guyer

Boats in the bay, São Luís
Courtesy of Leland Guyer

Low Tide at São Luís



Workers at the water's edge



Workers at the water's edge

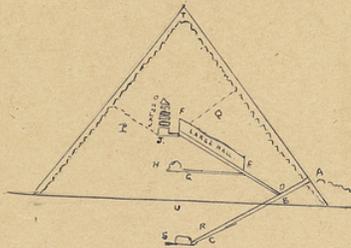






IL PLEUT

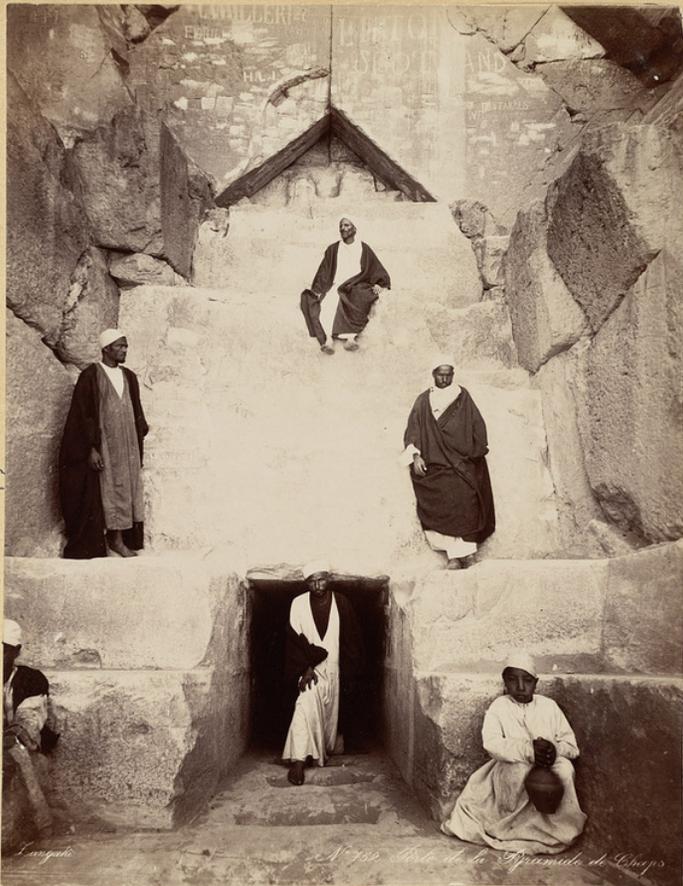
Il pleut des voix de femmes comme si elle étaient mortes même dans le souvenir
et ces nnaages cabrés se prennent à hennir tout un univers de villes agricoles
écoute sil pleut tandis que le regret et le dédain pleurent une ancienne musique
écoute tomber les liens qui te retiennent en haut et bas



- A. ENTRANCE.
- H. QUEENS CHAMBER. 17 x 19 x 20 ft.
- J. KINGS CHAMBER. 17 x 19 x 30 ft.
- E.F. LARGE HALL. 185 ft long 28 ft high
8 ft 3/4 wide
- S. SUBTERRANEAN CHAMBER. 46 x 27 x 10 1/2 ft.
- P. AIR SHAFTS FOR VENTILATION. 23 1/2 ft x 8 x 6 inches
17 1/2 ft x 8 x 6
- K.L.M. FIVE HOLLOW CHAMBERS ABOVE THE KINGS CHAMBER designed to lighten weight.
- A.C. PASSAGE WAY. 300 ft x 8 1/2 ft high x 4
- D.E. PASSAGE WAY. 100 ft long

The number of Chambers are accounted for by the length of the Kings life and the vast size of the PYRAMID.

The subterranean one 'S' came first then as the Pyramid grew larger the others were added, the five upper ones for architectural reasons only.



ENTRANCE TO PYRAMID.

Cover story featuring the Institutional Act No. 5 published in *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical*, December 14, 1968

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La noticia de primera plana sobre el “Acto Institucional No 5” publicada en *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical*, 14 de diciembre de 1968

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ROÇZEIRAL

Au sôflu i luz ta pom-
pa inova'
orbita

FUROR
tô bicho
'scuro fo-
go
Rra

UILÁN
UILÁN,
lavram z'olhares, flamas!
CRESPITAM GÂNGLES RÔ MASUAF
Rhra

Rozal, ROÇAL
l'ancêndio Mino-
Mina TAURUS
MINÔS rhes chãns
sur ma parole —
ÇAR

ENFERNO
LUÍZNEM
E ÔS SÓES
LÔ CORPE
INFENSOS
Ra
CI VERDES
NASCI DO
CÔFO

“Teoria do não-objeto” published in *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical*, December 19-20, 1959.

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“Teoria do não-objeto,” publicada em *Jornal do Brasil Suplemento Dominical*, 19-20 de diciembre de 1959.

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