António Gedeão

POEMAS / POEMS
António Gedeão

POEMAS / POEMS

Uma Antologia Bilingue

A Bilingual Anthology

Traduções por
Translations by
Christopher Damien Auretta and Marva Berry

Introdução, Revisão e Novas Traduções por
Introduction, Revision and New Translations by
Christopher Damien Auretta
An Introduction to the Poetry of António Gedeão

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An Introduction to the Poetry of
António Gedeão

It would be nonsensical, although not entirely without import, to say that the Portuguese poet António Gedeão never existed. Indeed, this pseudonym, adopted by the teacher and historian of physical and chemical sciences Rómulo de Carvalho (Lisbon, 1906–Lisbon, 1997), led a private though rich, parallel existence to the flesh-and-bone pedagogue’s prolific writings in the history of science, Enlightenment culture and education. Private and prolific: Gedeão, i.e., the shadow named Gedeão who orphically descends into underworlds of thought and feeling inaccessible to Rómulo de Carvalho, published his first volume of poetry, Perpetual Movement, in 1956, when Rómulo de Carvalho was already fifty years old. Publishing six volumes during his lifetime, his final collection, New Posthumous Poems, appeared in 1990, when the historian was well into his eighth decade and his pseudonym was close to completing forty years of poetic activity. True to his nature as shadowy counterpart to the historian and teacher, who in 1987 was awarded the Medal of Highest Merit of the Order of Public Education by the Portuguese government, Gedeão is a master of self-elision and deceptive transparencies of expression. It is this self-distancing, imbued with a highly nuanced awareness of the sources and evolution of modern beliefs, which gives critical momentum and emotive depth to his poetry.

Gedeão has often been categorized by literary specialists—misleadingly, as so often happens when one attempts to categorize the elusive contours of a creative personality—as a kind of out-of-sync pre-modernist. It should not be forgotten that Gedeão began publishing many years after the great Modernist and vanguardist experimentation and creation of radically new poetic idioms which, in Portugal, must necessarily be linked with, at the very least, the names of Fernando Pessoa and Mário de Sá–Carneiro. However, his poetry is in fact the offspring of a spirit of great modernity. Moreover, his
Together they create in the poems a disquieting opacity of factuality and fatality. In Gedeão’s poetry, the universes of science and the poetic imagination, each with their attendant (and divergent) visions of the world, are thus apposite and therefore never entirely cognate. The poems ultimately house these visions within a fertile dissonance. It is in this dissonance that the blood-borne notions of dignity, freedom, community, communion, anguish and death are disclosed. Perhaps the poem most illustrative of this apposition of science and poetry can be read in the three strophes comprising “a lecture on water” in which a tone of objective fluency is created from the start: “This liquid is called water / When pure / it is odorless, tasteless and colorless.” Yet vis-à-vis the rational luminosity of these affirmations, written as they are in the wake of scientific truth, the poet casts an oblique and pregnant gaze. The final strophe is a portent of doom: “It was in this liquid one hot night of summer, / under a viscous, white-camelia moon, / that appeared the floating cadaver of Ophelia / a lily in one hand.” Thus, the hegemony of rationally-infused truth is subverted by the poet’s awareness of our species-specific and concurrent drivenness into the night of our heart’s dark wood.

The poem cited above is exemplary of what we are discussing here, for we must ask ourselves what new constellations of thought and sensibility emerge from this apposition of science and poetry? Do they coexist as pacifically as the scientist and the poet have been able to coexist in the duality known as AntónioGedeão/Rómulo de Carvalho? Yes and no. Yes, because Gedeão has gone far to create a mature, private poetics which nonetheless speaks to our collective psyche. No, since the poet compresses into the taut lines of his poems the divergent claims of science and the poetic imagination. Consequently, each poem embodies a temporal-spiritual shift recording the uncommon modulation of the thought and feeling of a man who hopes as a scientist and grieves as a poet.

What is the fate—in the poetry—of these competing, sometimes complementary, energies of science and poetry? The former is an intrinsically public, quantifiable activity of the mind, the latter, an opaque energy whose origins are elusive of rational contours. As in
“A lecture on water,” much of Gedeão’s poetry moves from a core of transparency of intention (reflective, perhaps, of the future-claiming optimism of scientists in general, who profess to have invented the future for mankind) to a metaphysical darkening as if to suggest that poetic thought must finally mature in dream rather than in the meridional clarity of scientific scrutiny. The destiny of a complex cognitive act is thus taking place. What results, is a poetry of ellipse: the locus of time and space (forever interrupted and colored by the darker maps of memory) shifts. The cognitive act as cognition darkens; the final release from the poem is experienced by the reader as simultaneously cathartic and disconcerting. One must infer that we are close to the way the poet experiences the world, a world of understated catastrophe, fragmented certainty and instances where calm is arrested and lost forever. If science is philosophically and operationally grounded on the disavowal of the passion, corporeal and instinctual character of the human animal (thereby exercising death from its speculations), the poet’s voice—the orphic voice—can make no such move toward existential neutrality. The poet experiences death as the insoluble horizon of lived time as well as feels every desire tinged with the foreboding of loss. “Poem of farewell,” “Poem of the alchemist” and “Poem of memory” are each in their way responses to this insolubility. We are standing, then, before a poetry in which vision and fact, dream and equation, the archaic sources of the imagination and the methodological faith of science continually confront and question one another. And we may well ask: Between the scientist’s thwarted attempt to abolish the humanly imperfect and unpredictable historical past on the one hand, and poetry’s confession of humanity’s ontological unfinishedness on the other, what new economies of hope and despair, of optimism and fatality, can arise?

Here we are at the crux of the problem. If Gedeão has made of poetry the privileged mouthpiece for our dual genesis in the invented future and the lived past, what is the final scope of these texts? The poet’s response to this problem entails and presupposes an act of tremendous moral concentration, for, after all, the choice of words and image in poetry is a moral as well as aesthetic one. Poetry is “gnosis,” a moral knowledge. What moral questions does the poet address? We spoke above of the twentieth-century’s belief in the existence of a perfective history. Yet we are nothing if not the orphans of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, which are ultimately unexorcisable historical events. In the struggle for history, then, we must ask, as Gedeão seems to: What are our responsibilities to ourselves and to one another? What can be spoken and, in being spoken, be understood? How can words be made into a communicative instrument that does not simply deepen the rift between knowledge and being, a rift which the parallel and divergent discourses of science and poetry so effectively reveal? We may glimpse an answer to these questions if we focus upon the brilliant metaphor of posthumousness, which comprises the organizing metaphor of Gedeão’s final two volumes of poetry. No longer are we standing before the problematic apposition of science and the poetic imagination housed dissonantly and tellingly in the same poem. The posthumousness of which Gedeão writes is in fact the metaphorical corridor leading to a final unifying vision of experience. It is the paradoxical expression of the poet’s heightened awareness that he is witness to the cosmos, which is in turn informed by the absolute contingency of his body, his desires and his mortality. Poetry has this unique task of communicating the rhythms of life and death as they are experienced throughout a finite existence.

Ultimately, Gedeão’s poetry develops a complex epistemological irony, which is particularly visible in those poems where he brings into disjunctive proximity the language of verification characterizing the empirical sciences and the finely modulated language of meaning as embodied in the intensity of metaphorical transport. He thereby reveals an underlying though not entirely neutral unity of mimetic mission operating throughout the real in all its forms of symbolic manifestation and representation despite the ostensibly divergent nature of truth-values attained by scientific experimentation on the one hand and literary experience on the other. Such discovery of cognitive intimacy shared by apparently disparate spheres of truth inquiry, i.e., the perception of continuity within discontinuity, certainly represents an essential aspect of the modern imagination. Nonetheless, this ironic re-enactment of disparate truth-gathering methodologies should be seen, we suggest, by
the even more ironic and posthumous light of the highly informed historical consciousness guiding and generating this poetry. It is Gedeão’s ironic reading of Enlightenment ideals, both to criticize the rashness of its optimism as well as to preserve those elements worth developing of pedagogical hope and utopian faith in humanity’s unfolding into greater freedom, that is the wellspring of his poetry. And it was done in Portuguese, a European language endowed with a rich poetic tradition and deeply speculative capacity. We have only to recall two other twentieth-century Portuguese poets, Jorge de Sena and Fernando Pessoa (both of whom have been extensively translated into many languages), to appreciate the significant contribution made by these three poets to modernity’s ongoing task of critical self-reflection and understanding.

The final poem in this anthology, “Poem of going round in circles,” with its recurrent strophes ending with the laconic “etc.,” embodies the poet’s (self-)summation: “And thus the days pass, as tranquil / as those of embroideresses’, bent / over their needles. / With colored threads they etch harmonious / figures, innocent adornments, / serious and absorbed, / as if all life were balanced there — / past, present and future — / on the point of a needle.” Balanced, indeed: the three embroideresses, like the three Fates of Greek myth, toil tirelessly and calmly (since, after all, their judgments are without appeal and therefore forever uncontested), both ravelling and unravelling lives. Gedeão has wrested from the imaginative sources of myth an equilibrium of fate and knowledge. It is, ultimately, his laconic yet fully conscious acceptance of necessity which bestows dignity on, as well as defines, the nature of human freedom. If, then, it is a poetic truth to say that António Gedeão never existed except as the pseudonym of the public scientist Rómulo de Carvalho, it can also be said that Gedeão exists neither more nor less than all witnesses to the truth whose loyalty to the task of elucidating the nature of the objective world does not obscure from our collective and private view the full logic and intensity of fateful human existence.

Finally, it is our hope that this bilingual anthology of Gedeão’s poetry will deepen our understanding of the mythic and ideological sources of the present historical situation as well as intensify readers’ awareness of the symbolic wealth of poetic understanding ever ready to come to our collective and personal rescue. Indeed, poetry has never ceased inviting us to grow into our history, to grow into being, to grow into a world. Such a world, were it deprived of a fundamental poetic quickening of consciousness, could neither illuminate nor rescue. Poetry at its best has always sought explicitly or implicitly to place us on our essential paths: it gives thought an impetus, freedom and sense of urgency that together act as a significant counter-pressure exerted upon established patterns of historical experience.

We feel, then, empowered to say along with Gedeão:

In the Natural History of feeling
all has changed.
Love will have other dictions.
hope other disguises,
anger other grimaces.
Exposed and discovered, extended over the page,
(curious specimen of a superated world),
this is all that remains,
all that is left,
of a being who, among other beings,
wandered the earth.

This anthology includes sixteen newly translated poems indicated by an asterisk placed after their title in English. They are the sole responsibility of the author of this introduction to whom all imprecision of sense, stylistic infelicity, or coarseness of voice should be attributed.

Christopher Damien Auretta
Lisbon, Portugal
Movimento Perpétuo (1956)

Perpetual Movement (1956)
Useless to define this afflicted animal. No words, no chisels, no chords, no brushes are adequate throats for its howl. A universe in expansion. A brushstroke of vermilion from plus to minus infinity.
I have suffered poetry
as one who travels the sea.
As a nausea.
An agony.
A taste of salt.
A tidal stench.
A concave glass that floats.

This vibrant cord aches.
The cord securing the boat
to a cold dock ring.
If a wave tautens it,
another follows to distend it.
It is a restiveness that never breaks.

Tenho sofrido poesia
como quem anda no mar.
Um enjoo.
Uma agonia.
Sabor a sal.
Maresia.
Vidro côncavo a boiar.

Dói esta corda vibrante.
A corda que o barco prende
à fria argola do cais.
Se vem onda que a levante
vem logo outra que a distende.
Não tem descanso jamais.
My eyes are these eyes.
And it is with these eyes
that I see the world’s dangerous reefs
while others, with different eyes,
see nothing but tranquil beach.

Take these reefs, or take these flowers in bloom:
the same rule applies in each case.
Where some see weeping and doom
others discover a place
of delicate hue and color.

On every street, on every corner
where people throng and pass,
some see trodden stone,
while others elves and gnomes
beneath resplendent crowns.

It’s useless to seek advice,
to want to come after or to get here before.
We’re each one of us our paths taken.
Where Sancho sees windmills
Don Quixote sees giants.

Do you see windmills? Then they’re windmills.
Do you see giants? They’re giants.

Os meus olhos são uns olhos.
E é com esses olhos uns
que eu vejo no mundo escolhos
onde outros, com outros olhos,
ão vêem escolhos nenhuns.

Quem diz escolhos diz flores.
De tudo o mesmo se diz.
Onde uns vêem luto e dores
uns outros descobrem cores
do mais formoso matiz.

Nas ruas ou nas estradas
onde passa tanta gente,
uns vêem pedras pisadas,
mas outros, gnomos e fadas
num halo resplandecente.

Inútil seguir vizinhos,
querer ser depois ou ser antes.
Cada um é seus caminhos.
Onde Sancho vê moinhos
D. Quixote vê gigantes.

Vê moinhos? São moinhos.
Vê gigantes? São gigantes.
Aconchego-me nos andrajos. Procuro (inútil) não tiritar de frio. A vida é longa e fria. Um longo e frio muro a marginar, ao longo, um longo e frio rio.


I cover myself with rags. I (uselessly) try not to shiver. Life is long and life is cold. A long, cold wall runs along a long, cold river.

I cover myself with rags. I pull them up over me. I pull and tug again. I open my eyes wide and cry charity. Nearby, in sated syllogisms of luxury, lie the capitalists of Verity.
Night train

The wheel of the sun sank
among flint-edged cedars,
split into rose-blue light
and litmus tints.

Solemnly, now,
like a body being interred,
to the sound of a plaintive bell,
night descends over earth.

Suffocating bell jar.
Terror-filled arteries.
Stars hum in hives
in a distant, alien sky.

In the sleep of the grave
suspended in the moon’s milky light,
life is renewed,
war goes on.

In tides of protoplasm
it flows and rolls, perennial, firm,
estalking death’s advance
pursuing it like a phantom.

Blind, deaf, impenetrable,
it heaves in the thick dark,
it — the inevitable,
life.
It's fated I'll die innocent, exactly as when I was born. Never having discovered what is false and what is true in all that I have seen.

Between all Evidence and me hovers a grey nebulosity. A kind of innocence that oppresses me.

More than oppresses: paralyses like a knife stood vertically. Or a rancor at such disparity.

Forma de inocência

Hei-de morrer inocente exactamente como nasci. Sem nunca ter descoberto o que há de falso ou de certo no que vi.

Entre mim e a Evidência paira uma névoa cinzenta. Uma forma de inocência, que apoquenta.

Mais que apoquenta: enregela como um gume vertical. É uma espécie de ciúme de não poder ser igual.
Forbidden melody

A minuscule feeling comes to me from beyond.
Penetrates through the curtain going round the world from here.

It arrives breathless and smiling dripping of dewy mist.
Its rags of shame are all it has.

The sun spies it suddenly.
It swells instantly into a cry.
Flower of a strident silence, a continent of infinity.

An iota of sound, orchestrating threads of sun, sparks convulsions of iridescent light like the tinkling of fools’ bells.

Flame of living spirit keeping vigil over a man in mourning is the wave I listen to when I smile for no reason.
Espelho de duas faces, plana e curva:
es, e não és.
Imagem dupla, ora límpida, ora turva,
numa te afirmas, noutra te negas, em ambas te crês.

Queria sentir-te em outros sentidos.
Queria ver-te sem olhos e ouvir-te sem ouvidos.
E queria as tuas mãos numa aleluia fraterna.
Essas mãos que ainda ontem, de manhã, aturdidas,
com duas varas secas e folhas ressequidas
arrepiaram de luz as sombras da caverna.

Espelho de duas faces
Help me to forget your faults
and your crimes
in order to love you better.
Give me the fever of your rage
and what your eyes express
when you are speechless.

Two-faced mirror, flat and curvilinear:
you are, and you are not.
Double image, now limpid, now turbid,
in one self-asserting, in the other self-denying, in both self-believing.

I would like to feel you with other senses.
I would like to see you without these eyes and hear you without
these ears.
And I would like to see you without these eyes and hear you without
these ears.
And I would like your hands in a fraternal alleluia.
Bewildered hands which even yesterday morning
held two dried branches with brittle leaves,
and terrified with light the cave's shadows.
A drop of water*

When I mourn
it isn’t I that mourns.
What mourns in me is
what humanity has always borne.
These tears are mine alone,
but this sadness is not my own.

Eu, quando choro,
 não choro eu.
Chora aquilo que os homens
 em todo tempo sofreu.
As lágrimas são as minhas
 mas o choro não é meu.

*Gota de água
Giants and fatheads

Your certainties rise like cranes
cutting angles above my head.
Rigid, metallic, astringent and cold,
how did you find them?

If I had to respect you because of your pleasant smile,
for having brown eyes or walking in a certain manner,
than I’d also admire your certainties’ spires,
and climb them to hang there my own modest banner.

Your certainties pain me as if you’d suffered a fall,
as if sprawled on a bed, unable even to crawl.
In your wheelchair of certainty you’re solemnly led,
while worlds pass beside you and you beside them, your eyes hooded [in lead.

Shrouded in certainties, your face turned towards the wall,
you smile as you sleep while life exultantly calls:
a catapult, a trajectory of tears, a drenching parabola,
a deep well that bursts never quenching our thirst.

Cabeçudos e gigantones

Tua certeza eleva-se e recorta-se
no céu como um guindaste.
Hírta, metálica, adstringente e fria,
como a encontraste?

Se eu devesses guardar-te respeito por teres um sorriso amável,
por serem castanhos os teus olhos ou por pisares o chão de certa [maneira,
então respeitaria também a tua certeza inabalável
e dela te pediria um farrapo para o arvorar em minha bandeira.

Faz-me pena a tua certeza como se tivesses sofrido um acidente,
como se te visse estendido num leito, impossibilitado de te mexeres.
Em tua certeza, cadeira de rodas, fazes-te conduzir piedosamente,
e os caminhos passam por ti sem tu passares por eles, e sem os veres.

Embrulhado na tua certeza, de rosto voltado para a parede,
Adormeces sorrindo enquanto a vida, aos borbotões, exulta.
Foguete de lágrimas, meandros sem rectas, catapulta,
veio de água que afoga e nunca mata a sede.
Abri o livro na altura
em que o Anjo me sorria
e em vez de mel prometia
amor, descanso e ternura.

Falava como que a sós.
E as palavras flutuavam.
Eram pombas que poisavam
no fio da sua voz.

Escutei-o de olhos no chão
como se fosse o culpado,
como se o mundo enredado
estivesse na minha mão.

Abri o peito e mostrei-lhe
a areia, a pedra britada,
os planos da grande estrada
onde o Anjo se ajoelhe.

Ele fitou-me, de frente,
de olhos frios como brasas.
E abrindo e fechando as asas
rasgou o céu, lentamente.

Sobre a folha imaculada
por longo tempo nevou.
Sentei-me à beira da estrada
mas o Anjo não voltou.

I opened the book at the moment
the Angel smiled down at me.
No promise of honey made he,
but love, calm and contentment.

He spoke as if to himself,
his words floating on air.
His words wore the feathers of doves
perched on an unfurling prayer.

I listened with eyes to the ground
as if I were the bearer of guilt,
as if this tumultuous world
in my hands alone could be found.

I shared with him then our great plans,
the blocks of granite, the grains of sand,
the grandiose project at hand
before which the Angel would kneel.

He looked at me unflinchingly so
with eyes like smoldering ice.
And opening and closing his wings
he slowly took to the skies.

It snowed unabated for ages
upon an immaculate page.
But the Angel never returned
though I sat by the road and waited.

---

Anjo incolor

Untainted Angel*
Chamei o meu ser que pensa
para ralhar com o que sente.
Sempre que os ponho em presença
sorrio, piedosamente.

Sorriso, quem te perderá!
Renda que aos lábios assoma.
Raminhos de flores de cera
coberto por uma redoma.

I told my thinking self
to scold what in me feels,
then placed them face to face
and moved by pity smiled.

If only I’d erased that smile!
Lace that graces lips.
Bouquets of wax flowers
inside a glass case.
Rain on sand

Tu es–da, 
quar–ta–es–ta, 
quint–a, 
sext–a, 
tanto faz. 
Ou des–ta ou dou–tra man–eira, 
dom–in–go ou se–gun–da–es–ta, 
nen–huma es–pe–ran–ça me traz.

Que eu nem sei bem pelo que espero. 
Se aprender o que não sei, 
se esquecer o que aprendi, 
se impor meu sou e meu quero, 
se, num ti que eu inventei, 
nenúfares boiar em ti.

Que esta coisa que se espera 
é no dobrar de uma esquina. 
Um clarão que dilacera, 
a explosão de uma cratera, 
vida, ou morte, repentina.

Tuesday, 
Wednesday, 
Thursday, 
Friday, 
it is all the same to me. 
Whether this or that way, 
Sunday or Monday, 
no day augurs hope.

I do not even know what I hope for: 
to learn what I do not know, 
to forget what I have learned, 
to impose on others who I am and what I want, 
or, even, within an invented «you», 
a water–lily, floating.

For this hoped–for thing 
lies at the turn of a comer: 
a clarion light that lacerates, 
the explosion of a crater, 
sudden life or death.
Fecho os olhos por instantes.
Abro os olhos novamente.
Neste abrir e fechar de olhos já todo o mundo é diferente.

Já outro ar me rodeia;
outros lábios o respiram;
outros alêns se tingiram
de outro Sol que os incendeia.

Outras árvores se floriram;
outro vento as despenteia;
outras ondas invadiram
outros recantos de areia.

Momento, tempo esgotado,
fluídez sem transparência.
Presença, espectro da ausência,
cadáver desenterrado.

Combustão perene e fria.
Corpo que a arder arrefece.
Incandescência sombria.
Tudo é foi. Nada acontece.

I close my eyes for a moment.
I open them again.
In this opening and closing the whole world is different.

A different air envelops me,
different lungs inhale it,
different colored beyonds
are singed by different suns.

Different trees have blossomed,
different winds uncomb,
different waves pour in
different shoals of sand.

A moment, exhausted time,
opaque fluidity,
presence, specter of absence,
exhumed mortality.

Combustion, perennial, frozen.
A body burning cold.
Darkening incandescence.
Tomorrow was and nothing happens.
I invoke, in beyonds, my impossible presence.

Beyonds are permanent.

There where beauty lives, deliquescent blues, suns and moons are an intangible permanence.

There.

To be even an atom within that mist, only a sketch, an unfinished design.

To be there present as I am here: a kind of absent
distance between being here and being there.

To go there, up ascending ground.
Picturing myself in that ascent from here.

To wonder «what is that there?»:
imperceptible reflex.

Eucalyptus, houses, mountains, waters, stones, horizons, things finite in themselves.

Knolls, valleys, paths, hedges, crags, mills...
Everything in the world. And me over here.

---

Invoco, nos longes, a minha presença impossível.
Os longes são permanentes.
Lá, onde a beleza reside, deliquescentes azuis, sóis e luares, são permanência intangível.

Lá.
Ser incluso pormenor naquela bruma, esboçado apenas como um desenho por acabar.
Ser lá, presente como aqui: uma como nenhuma
distância entre o meu ser aqui e o meu estar lá.

Ir-me além, naquele cerro a ascender-se.
Ver-me daqui a subi-lo.
Perguntar–se «o que é aquilo?», imperceptível mexer–se.

Eucaliptos, casas, montes, águas, pedras, horizontes, coisas finitas em si.
Outeiros, vales, caminhos, sebes, rochedos, moinhos...
Tudo no mundo. E eu daqui.
Your eyes, birds that you cast
above the earth’s bitterness,
which drink the essence of things
as if these things were limitless;
your eyes, opened wings,
begot flight in the cloister of my face,
and questioned the shadows, the vigilant shadows
of my supposed sleep.

Go, now. Do not question me, for I have nothing to say.
This, that, and that over there, are neither that, nor that over there,
nor this.
They are nothing.
Or maybe not nothing.
Maybe simply this:
a dawn’s panic,
a malaise called «I exist.»

(An alternative translation for the title: Concentration Camp)
Instead of a parched chrysalis inside a tight cocoon,
I’d rather be the watering bed on a humid, late afternoon.

In a profound serenity of being, bathed in pools of water.
I bear an immense thirst since the world’s beginning.

\[\text{Thirst for water}\]

---

Em vez de morna crisálida num casulo apoquentado,
antes ser canteiro regado ao fim de uma tarde cálida.

Num sereno estar profundo, empapado em poças de água.
Que esta sede imensa trago-a desde o princípio do mundo.

\[\text{Sede de água}\]
Deflated balloon

I wore out my arms
hanging stars in the sky.
The fate of all tired destinies.
Everything ends up tired:
arms
and stars
and me.

Life rolls (it seems) like unravelling spools of thread,
like a fan opening silently,
while, in the egg, a low sound curls,
curls and uncurls,
until, suddenly,
it shoots, incandescent.
as in a dance of swords.

Oh, delirious feelings,
the obsession with questioning,
the frenzy of never attaining!
The fever to embark
in the wake of insatiable longing.

My haunches smell of humus,
of dark, transparent earth,
a bacterial playground.
My worn-out arms weaken.
Everything ends up tired:
terra
and arms
and me.

Stars, swamps, abysses,
all landings from the same ladder,
fingers of the same ring.
Everything dies in tedium and in nothing.
Everything bores.
Everything vexes.
Everything wearies.
Everything oppresses.
I can receive no one today:
I’m sick for Humanity.
Not for you.
Not even for you.
No, not even for you.
I’m sick for no one
but rather for someone.
Someone who’s no one
but Humanity’s sum.

Hoje não posso ver ninguém:
sofro pela Humanidade.
Não é por ti.
Nem por ti.
Nem por ninguém.
É por alguém.
Alguém que não é ninguém
mas que é toda a Humanidade.
Teatro do Mundo (1958)

Theater of the World (1958)
The words chosen

I don't know, I don't know, no, I do not know,
I don't know, nor does anyone know,
why this duty has befallen me,
this duty or fulfillment, I do not know.
Others, who will come after me,
will know and comprehend
what none of us knows.
Others will tell the reason
why I express myself this way,
why I struggle, why I live
so outside myself.

Why this shared martyrdom
and this crimeless penance
impose themselves and oppress us
each in our private prisons.
Why, impelled, I surrender myself
to the choosing of words,
seeds evolving
fulfilling a blind fate.
Everything will be easy then. Everything.
and everyone will comprehend.
Every drop of this mute torrent
will flow in the same river-bed.

Then we’ll know that the poet’s voice,
and the horn’s metal, anthracene dyes,
the engine whistle’s splitting of space,
the shock of neutrons in secret experiments,
and this way of feeling and laughing, of wanting and loving,
are all a sign and symbol of a heart made different.

And then they’ll say:
Obviously! Of course!

As palavras escolhidas

Não sei, não sei, não, não sei,
não sei, nem ninguém o sabe,
por que este dever me cabe,
dever ou devir, não sei.
Outros, que um dia virão,
saberão e entenderão
o que nenhum de nós sabe.
Outros dirão o motivo
por que é que me exprimo assim,
por que luto e por que vivo
tão alheado de mim.

Por que se impõe, por que oprime
este martírio comum,
esta expiação sem crime
na cela de cada um.
Por que, sem escolha, me entrego
nas palavras escolhidas,
sementes evoluidas
cumprindo um destino cego.
Tudo então será fácil. Tudo.
E todos o entenderão.
Todas as gotas deste caudal mudo
no mesmo longo leito correrão.

Então se entenderá que a voz do poeta,
que o metal da trompete e as tintas do antraceno,
que o silvo do motor rasgando o espaço pleno,
que o choque do neutrão da experiência secreta,
que o modo de sentir, de rir, de querer, de amar,
tudo é sinal e símbolo de um coração diferente.

E então todos dirão:
Claro! Evidentemente!
Poem of the man alone

Sós,
irremediavelmente sós,
como um astro perdido que arrefece.
Todos passam por nós
e ninguém nos conhece.

Os que passam e os que ficam.
Todos se desconhecem.
Os astros não se explicam:
arrefecem.

Nesta envolvente solidão compacta,
quer se grite ou não se grite,
nenhum dar-se de dentro se refracta,
nenhum ser nós se transmite.

Quem sente o meu sentimento
sou eu só, e mais ninguém.
Quem sofre o meu sofrimento
sou eu só, e mais ninguém.
Quem estremece este meu estremecimento
sou eu só, e mais ninguém.

Dão-se os lábios, dão-se os braços,
dão-se os olhos, dão-se os dedos,
bocetas de mil segredos
dão-se em pasmados compassos;
dão-se as noites, dão-se os dias,
dão-se aflitivas esmolas,
abrem-se e dão-se as corolas
breves das carnes macias;

Alone,
irremediably alone,
like a lost star that cools.
Everyone passes by us,
no one knows us.

Some pass by, others remain.
No one knows anyone.
(Stars are not explained:
they simply turn to stone.)

In this dense, enveloping solitude,
whether one shouts or does not shout,
no self-surrender from within is refracted,
no one’s “I” can be transmitted.

He who is feeling now what I am feeling
is me, me alone.
Who suffers what I suffer
is me alone, and no one else.
Who is stirred with what stirs me
is me, alone, and no one else.

Lips are offered, arms are offered,
eyes are offered, fingers are offered,
boxes holding a thousand secrets
are offered in astonished rhythms;
nights are offered, days are offered,
anguished alms are offered,
the ephemeral corollas of tender bodies
are opened and offered;
nerves are offered, life is offered,

Poema do homem só
Poem of the man alone

blood is offered, drop by drop,
like a broken embrace
everything is offered, and nothing remains.

But this intimate secret
I enclose in silence,
this self-offering from within
in a state of pure exhaustion,
this being oneself without disguise,
virginal faced with good and evil,
this self-surrender, this self-rendering,
this self-disclosing, this self-ravishing,
all of that is our own, and no one else's.

Poema do homem só

dão-se os nervos, dá-se a vida,
dá-se o sangue gota a gota,
como uma braçada rota
dá-se tudo e nada fica.

Mas este íntimo secreto
que no silêncio concentro,
este oferecer-se de dentro
num esgotamento completo,
este ser-se sem disfarce,
virgem de mal e de bem,
este dar-se, este entregar-se,
descobrir-se e desflorar-se,
é nosso, de mais ninguém.
Contredanse*

What speech is this
that brushes my ear,
this meaningless pitch,
this un-tempered clavier?

Vague, whispering sounds,
sphinx-like in gender,
here voices judging, there mouths revealing,
though no meaning is found.

We gesture on stages
glances exchanging in ritual dances,
concealing our rage;
our “best regards” grates,
handshakes prevaricate,
we’re lovers embraced
who never articulate
in true face-to-face.
Better to perish alone
with one’s fate wrapped in stone.

Desencontro

Que língua estrangeira é esta
que me roça à flor do ouvido,
um vozear sem sentido
que nenhum sentido empresta?

Sussurro de vago tom,
reminiscência de esfinge,
voz que se julga, ou se finge
sentido, e é apenas som.

Contracenamos por gestos,
por sorrisos, por olhares,
rodeios protocolares,
cumprimentos indigestos,
firmes apertos de mão,
passeios de braço dado,
mas por som articulado,
por palavras, isso não.
Antes morrer atolado
na mais negra solidão.
Large and small pustules of hate
in endless space,
preserve, like leaves of collodium, the vapors of the heart.

Sordid gangue of living ore,
of precious metal,
of luminous atom, with radioactive core, hot and silent.

Lying prone above the infected pool of existence, nails broken from digging permanent graves, I drink these dark waters and await my own absence.

Pequenas e grandes pústulas de ódio,
um espaço sem dimensões, 
preservem, como películas de colódio, a evaporação dos nossos corações.

Sórdida ganga do minério vivo, 
do metal precioso, 
do átomo que luz na escuridão, radioactivo, quente e silencioso.

Horizontal de bruços, sobre o infecto charco da existência, quebrando as unhas neste cavar de permanentes sepulturas, bebo as águas escuras e aguardo a minha ausência.
Transcendent (he who transcends). (?)
Super-human (beyond human). (?)
Happy those who comprehend,
who seek and find
points, planes and lines!

A simple man unknowingly,
his feet glued firmly to the ground,
looking up to the sky, viewing all that surrounds,
is able to see all things clearly.

Bless you, my friend.
May God grant you all you pretend.
May you feel, see and hear
your dream always near.

All that’s clear is dark in me.
I’m without wings or tail.
Neither angel nor devil be.
I’m me ambiguously.
Máquina de Fogo (1961)

Fire Machine (1961)
I know that my despair interests no one.
Each of us has his own, private and intransmissible.
With it, each spends his life
and, next to another’s despair, considers himself untouchable.

I know that humanity outnumbers me.
I know that the world is larger than the neighborhood I call home,
and that the breathing of one person, even my own,
does not outweigh the Whole that tends towards infinity.

I know the unpitying dimensions of Life
ignore and dissolve us all, yet—
in this insignificance, both vulnerable and gratuitous,
I am a universe, with nebulae and all.
How does it feel to be contented?
To cast one’s eyes about,
mild and complacent,
and treat everyone
with neither sadness nor revulsion?
To feel like a happy man
satisfied with what he feels,
with what he thinks and says?
How does it feel to be contented?

There must be some mechanism,
some tight spring
which springs, unravelling
at precisely the right moment,
so that a man of flesh (and bone),
with eyes drilled into his face
can look about and laugh with gusto
without questioning the sound of his laughter.

Within my aged gears
of rusted iron scraps,
there is a tin spring
which imperfectly distends,
some weakened glandula
or nerve which fails to hinge,
something that will not
ignite that gyre
of timbres that laughter rings.

Not to have laughter, nor a home,
nor money, nor health,
is not a virtue,
for wretchedness is a branding iron.
How does it feel to be contented?

But to have a home and money,
to have health, but not have laughter,
to flagellate oneself all day
as if shedding one’s own blood
were a necessary torment,
to keep this torment always firm and vigorous,
alert at every second,
that, indeed, would be reason
to be contented.
The universe is essentially made out of nothing. Intervals, distances, holes, an ethereal lace. In short, empty space. The rest is matter.

Thus, this shudder, this calling it and holding it, this lifting it and facing it, this vein of nothing opening into the void must be an interval.


Daí, que este arrepio, este chamá-lo e tê-lo, erguê-lo e defrontá-lo, esta fresta de nada aberta no vazio, deve ser um intervalo.

Máquina do mundo

World machine
Anti-Anne Frank

Esta criança esquálida,
de riso obsceno e olhares alucinados,
nunca apertou nas mãos a fria face pálida,
nunca sentiu, na escada, as botas dos soldados,
nunca enxugou as lágrimas que aniquilam e esgotam,
nunca empalideceu com o metralhar de um tanque,
nem rastejou num sótão,
nem se chama Anne Frank.

Nunca escreveu diário nem nunca foi à escola,
nem despertou o amor dos editores piedosos.
Nunca estendeu as mãos em transes dolorosos
a não ser nos primores da técnica da esmola.

Batem-lhe, pisam-na, insultam-na, sem que ninguém se importe.
E ela, raivosa e pálida,
morde, estrebucha, cospe, odeia até à morte.

Pobre criança esquálida!
Até no sofrimento é preciso ter sorte.

This squalid child,
with obscene smile and crazed looks,
never held in her hands the cold, pale face,
never heard soldiers’ boots on the stairs,
never dried tears that exhaust and extinguish,
never grew pale before the tank’s gunning staccato,
nor crawled along an attic floor,
and never was called Anne Frank.

Never wrote a diary nor attended school,
nor inspired the love of pious editors.
Never outstretched her hands in anguished pain
if not for the delicate art of begging.

They strike her, step on her, insult her, and no one cares.
And she, enraged and pale,
bites, kicks, spits, and hates unto death.

Wretched, squalid child!
Even in suffering, luck is required!
Declaration of Love

Your presence excites me, oh Tree—oh Trees!
I desire you (desire you all) as if you were Flesh, and I, Desire.
As if I were the wind which presides at your wedding feast,
whispers about you, fecunds you in a seductive kiss.

I gaze upon you, bemused to imagine I am two hands,
hands which encircle your trunk and shake you convulsively.
You shudder with pleasure, and your fine, entangled hair
lash the air like whips with all the force my love consents to.

Oh Tree, my fair one, joy of my ecstatic eyes!
Oh filter of the sun's light, quencher of thirsts!
Distill on my lips the sap of your aromatic resins,
anoint my skin with your delicate ointments.

Bare your intimate depths, Tree. Tell me what secrets you conceive
for to unfurl then in flowers and fruits in a cyclical extravagance,
why everything around you dies and you don't die,
and why you always invite Love with renewed urgency.

Initiate me into your mysteries, green-haired bewitcher.
Teach me to transform into succulent fleshiness,
in subtle perfumes that you perpetually release, a simple ray of sun
extending your being into the air that embraces you.

Through you, Tree, I celebrate my betrothal to Nature.
Through you I drink from fresh cloud and bite into the incandescent [earth.
From you I receive the laws of Love and Beauty.
I love thee, Tree, passionately!

Declaração de Amor

Excita-me a tua presença, ó Árvore — ó Árvores todas!
Desejo-te (desejo-vos) como se fosses Carne, e eu Desejo.
Como se eu fosse o vento que preside às tuas bodas,
tecia em redor, e te fecunda num aliciante beijo.

Ponho os olhos em ti e entretenho-me a pensar que sou mãos,
todo mãos que te envolvem o tronco e te sacodem convulsivamente.
Requebras-te com volúpia, e os teus emaranhados cabelos loucões
fustigam o ar como látegos com toda a força que este amor me
[consente.

Ó Árvore minha débil! Ó prazer dos meus olhos extáticos!
Ó filtro da luz do Sol! Ó refresco dos sedentos!
Destila nos meus lábios as gotas dos teus ésteres aromáticos,
unge a minha epiderme com teus macios ungüentos.

Desnuda-me a tua intimidade, ó Árvore. Diz-me a que segredos
[recorres
para te desenrolares em flores e em frutos num cíclico desvario,
porque é que tudo morre à tua volta e tu não morres,
e aceitas sempre o Amor com renovado cío.

Inicia-me nos teus mistérios, ó feiticeira dos cabelos verdes.
Ensina-me a transformar um raio de sol em suculenta carnadura,
e nesses perfumes subtis que a toda a hora perdes
prolongando o teu ser no ar que te emoldura.

É através de ti, ó Árvore, que celebro os esponsais entre mim
[e a Natureza.
É através de ti que bebo a nuvem fresca e mordo a terra ardente.
É de ti que recebo as leis do Amor e da Beleza.
Amo-te, ó Árvore, apaixonadamente!
Glass chisel

I am here constructing the new day
with an expression so gentle and at ease
that one might say
I am doing nothing.
And yet I am here constructing the new day.

This, because the day is constructed, not waited for.
Nor is it a sun which burns in an impulse of light.
It is a choir of unheard voices, a straining of naked torsos,
a raising, as if with one voice, of galley oars.

Thrhumming
an arid refrain
I open ardent threads
with a glass chisel.
I open ardent threads
with untrembling hand,
with a glass chisel
of the highest precision.

Escopro de vidro

Estou aqui construindo o novo dia
com uma expressão tão branda e descuidada
que dir-se-ia
não estar fazendo nada.
E, contudo, estou aqui construindo o novo dia.

Porque o dia constrói-se; não se espera.
Não é sol que deflagre num improviso de luz.
É um orfeão de vozes surdas, um arfar de troncos nus,
o erguer, a uma só voz, dos remos da galera.

Cantando entre os dentes
um refrão anidro
abro linhas quentes
com um escopro de vidro.
Abro linhas quentes
sem tremer a mão.
com um escopro de vidro
de alta precisão.
Doubtless real reality differs tautly from thought reality. Man never hopes for anything. I do, and that is the problem.

I augment the world’s pain whenever I imagine it. I color my distracted eyes with blood and fever. I construct a bitter voice, full of implications, crushing, pounding and sundering.

The world is a body. A formless, limitless body. And like a body, there are within it some who are the flesh, others the skin, others the stomach, full of appetites, others the sex, the mouth or the retina, still others taut muscle and brute strength. Each one a self-determined system. Each one performing a function.

But if a man burns in the water where I burn, the wretch can only serve as raw nerve.
I think about being a poet and being dispersed through the voice of the voiceless.
I think about how little of me is in each verse, how much of everything and of no one.

A blind man is playing La Violeteria, and seeing him I too go blind.
A wretched woman scrubs and waxes, and seeing her, I too am wretched scrubber.

What distant affliction and near joy, what minimal, fragile, ephemeral nothingness, does this combusting dredger hoist up from below, ripping, digging and paving this subterranean street?

Postulates and laws, lemmata and theorems, all that affirms, announces and admits, theories, doctrines and systems, all this eludes the author of these lines. Both him and me.
Linhas de Força (1967)

Lines of Force (1967)
The cathedral at Burgos is thirty meters high and the pupils of my eyes two millimeters wide.

Look at the Burgos cathedral thirty meters high!

The cathedral at Burgos is thirty meters high and the pupils of my eyes two millimeters wide.

Look at the Burgos cathedral thirty meters high!
Poem of the placid night

The furious multitude
walks placidly along the city streets
placid-mindedly
with placid mind
while the men who placidly orient
the furious multitude
that placidly walks along the city streets
furiously seek
placid solutions
that will orient the furious multitude
that placidly walks along the city streets
placid-mindedly
with placid mind
and the wise men furiously search for
placid formulas
that will placidly
solve the hardships of the furious multitude
that walks along the city streets
placid-mindedly
with placid mind
and everyone in short everyone
placidly
furiously seeks
in every placid manner
to pacify the furious worries and the placid wishes
of the furious multitude
that placidly walks along the city streets
and placidly sits on the avenues’ placid benches
drinking in the placid night air
and placidly waiting for
placid solutions
to its placid wishes and furious worries.

Poema da noite plácida

A multidão em fúria
passeia placidamente nas ruas da cidade,
de mente plácida,
plácida mente,
enquanto os homens que orientam placidamente
a multidão em fúria
que placidamente passeia nas ruas da cidade,
procuram furiosamente
as soluções plácidas
que orientarão a multidão em fúria
que, placidamente, passeia nas ruas da cidade,
de mente plácida,
plácida mente,
e os sábios buscam furiosamente
as fórmulas plácidas
que, placidamente,
resolvem as dificuldades da multidão em fúria
que passeia nas ruas da cidade
de mente plácida,
plácida mente,
e todos, todos em suma,
placidamente,
procuram furiosamente,
de todas as formas plácidas,
atender às inquietações e aos anseios plácidos
da multidão em fúria
que, placidamente, passeia nas ruas da cidade,
e placidamente se assenta nos plácidos bancos das avenidas,
bebendo o ar plácido da noite,
e esperando, placidamente,
as soluções plácidas
para os seus anseios e inquietações furiosas.

Poema da noite plácida

A multidão em fúria
passeia placidamente nas ruas da cidade,
de mente plácida,
plácida mente,
enquanto os homens que orientam placidamente
a multidão em fúria
que placidamente passeia nas ruas da cidade,
procuram furiosamente
as soluções plácidas
que orientarão a multidão em fúria
que, placidamente, passeia nas ruas da cidade,
de mente plácida,
plácida mente,
e os sábios buscam furiosamente
as fórmulas plácidas
que, placidamente,
resolvem as dificuldades da multidão em fúria
que passeia nas ruas da cidade
de mente plácida,
plácida mente,
e todos, todos em suma,
placidamente,
procuram furiosamente,
de todas as formas plácidas,
atender às inquietações e aos anseios plácidos
da multidão em fúria
que, placidamente, passeia nas ruas da cidade,
e placidamente se assenta nos plácidos bancos das avenidas,
bebendo o ar plácido da noite,
e esperando, placidamente,
as soluções plácidas
para os seus anseios e inquietações furiosas.
This liquid is called water.
When pure
it is odorless, tasteless and colorless.
Reduced to steam,
under tension and high temperature,
it fires the pistons of engines, thus
the term, steam-driven.

This liquid is a potent solvent.
With some exceptions, but generally,
it dissolves with equal efficiency acids, bases and salts.
It freezes at zero centigrade
and boils at 100, under normal pressure.

It was in this liquid one hot night of summer,
under a viscous, white-camelia moon,
that appeared the floating cadaver of Ophelia
a lily in one hand.
Prodigious, functional, efficient
like an anatomical model stripped of embellishment,
the adolescent girl walks down the street
smelling of milky youth.

She walks sovereignly, emphatically, like Egyptian birds
concealing in her gait the lava that has begun to burn.
Haughtily she passes by, boasting twin promontories,
while for the rest, just stirring, she can only guess at its purpose.

Lips tauten in an insolent thirst,
a hard, vigilant stare promising violence,
nostrils tremble like the gills of a fish caught in a net.

Such is the first flower of adolescence.
I'm looking at your portrait, my old Pisan friend,
that portrait of yours that everyone knows,
the one where your beautiful head emerges and flourishes
above a modest, cloth collar.
That portrait at the Uffizi Gallery in your ancient Florence.
(No, no, Galileo! I didn't say Holy Office.
I said Uffizi.)*
That portrait of the Uffizi in elegant Florence.
Remember? The Ponte Vecchio, the Loggia, the Piazza della Signoria...
I know... I know...
those lovely banks of the Arno at the dusk hours of melancholy.
aye, such a long time ago, Galileo Galilei!

Hey. You know what? There in Florence
they've kept a finger of your right hand in a reliquary.
Palavra de honra que está!
How the world has come full circle!
If there are even people who think
you've entered the official calendar.

I'd like to thank you, Galileo,
for the intelligibility of things you've given me.
I,
like so many millions of men like me
you've enlightened,
was ready to swear—what foolishness, Galileo
—and I would have sworn on my knees and bet my own head on this
without the slightest hesitation—
that bodies fall at a velocity
in proportion to their weight.

* In Portuguese, Uffizi is designated Ofícios, thereby rendering the references
to the Uffizi Gallery and the Inquisition [*Santo Ofício*; first strophe, v. 6] a
pungent play on words, unfortunately untranslatable.
Well, isn’t it obvious, Galileo?
Who could believe that a rock falls
with the same velocity as a button of a shirt or a sand pebble?

Such is the intelligence that God gave us.

I was just recalling, Galileo,
that scene where you are seated on a stool
and in front of you there sits
a row of learned, stiff–backed men wearing togas and cowls,
severely eyeing you.
They are all admonishing you,
saying that it is impermissible that a man of your age
and standing,
should turn into a menace
to Humanity
and to Civilization.
You, confused and compromised, bite your lip in silence,
and piously examine
the impenetrable faces in that wise row of men.

Your eyes, used to observing moons and stars,
descended from those heights
and, like stunned birds—it actually feels like I’m seeing them now—perched on the grave expressions of those most venerable creatures.
And you kept saying yes to everything, «yes, sir,» everything was
indeed
just the way their eminencies wished it to be,
and, yes, you would say that the sun was square and the moon
pentagonal
and that the stars danced and intoned
hymns at midnight to universal harmony.

Pois não é evidente, Galileo?
Quem acredita que um penedo caia
com a mesma rapidez que um botão de camisa ou que um seixo
[da praia?

Esta era a inteligência que Deus nos deu.

Estava agora a lembrar–me, Galileo,
daquela cena em que tu estavas sentado num escabelo
e tinhas à tua frente
um friso de homens doutos, hirtos, de toga e de capelo
a olharem–te severamente.
Estavam todos a ralhar contigo,
que parecia impossível que um homem da tua idade
e da tua condição,
se estivesse tornando num perigo
para a Humanidade
e para a Civilização.
Tu, embaraçado e comprometido, em silêncio mordiscavas os lábios,
e percorrias, cheio de piedade,
os rostos impenetráveis daquela fila de sábios.

Teus olhos habituados à observação dos satélites e das estrelas,
desceram lá das suas alturas
e poisaram, como aves aturdidas — parece–me que estou a vê–los —,
as faces grávidas daquelas reverendíssimas criaturas.
E tu foste dizendo a tudo que sim, que sim senhor, que era tudo tal
[qual
conforme suas eminências desejavam,
e dirias que o Sol era quadrado e a Lua pentagonal
e que os astros bailavam e entoavam
à meia–noite louvores à harmonia universal.
And you swore never to repeat,
not even to yourself, not even in the calm and free intimacy of your [thoughts,]
those abominable heresies
that you had taught and written,
bringing eternal damnation to your soul.
Aye, Galileo!
Your so wise judges, grand lords of this small world, failed to see,
nonetheless, that seated upright in their high, straight-backed chairs,
they were racing and rolling through space
at a rate of thirty kilometers per second.
You knew it though, Galileo Galilei.
That is why your eyes were merciful,
why your heart was pitying,
pitying all men who are not made to suffer, happy men
whom God has dispensated from seeking the truth.
That is why you endured
stoically, benevolently, every torture,
every anguish and every obstacle,
while they, from the inaccessible height of their heights,
were falling,
falling,
falling,
always falling,
and ever after,
uninterruptedly,
in direct proportion to time squared.

E juraste que nunca mais repetirias
nem a ti mesmo, na própria intimidade do teu pensamento, livre e [calma,]
aquelas abomináveis heresias
que ensinavas e escrevias
para eterna perdição da tua alma.
Ai, Galileo!
Mal sabiam os teus doutos juízes, grandes senhores deste pequeno [mundo,]
que assim mesmo, empertigados nos seus cadeirões de braços,
andavam a correr e a rolar pelos espaços
à razão de trinta quilómetros por segundo.
Tu é que sabias, Galileo Galilei.
Por isso eram teus olhos misericordiosos,
piedade pelos homens que não precisam de sofrer, homens ditosos
a quem Deus dispensou de buscar a verdade.
Por isso estoicamente, mansamente,
resististe a todas as torturas,
a todas as angústias, a todos os contratempos,
enquanto eles, do alto inacessível das suas alturas,
foram caindo,
caindo,
caindo,
caindo sempre,
e sempre,
ininterruptamente,
a razão directa dos quadrados dos tempos.
A throng of pedestrians walks by uninterruptedly. 
Some that way. 
Others this way. 
Some this way. 
Others that way. 
However, each passer-by 
must first take care on the corner 
lest he collide with the couple that there embraces. 
Their eyes closed, lips insatiably joined, 
they seek to quench an unquenchable thirst. 
Visible through their bodies’ transparency 
the following is legible on the corner façade:

DANS CETTE PLACE A ÉTÉ TUÉ
MAURICE DUPRÉ
HEROS DE LA RÉSISTANCE.
VIVE LA FRANCE.*

* ON THIS SITE WAS KILLED
MAURICE DUPRÉ
HERO OF THE RESISTANCE.
LONG LIVE FRANCE.
A man walks bristly and armoured
like a porcupine.
He’s the poet come out of his lair
blazing new trails.
Blazing new trails in an untroubled stride
and wielding a mace in his hand,
for nights are long and days too short
on earth.

Beneath his feet he crushes lily, carnation and phlox,
and cuts the songbird’s melodious throat.
The moment has come
to light funeral wax,
to see nymphs to their slender tombs,
to still the high flights of words,
to give astronauts the keys to the moon,
and distil the red rose’s sweet perfume.

Um homem progride, blindado e hirsuto
como um porco-espinho.
É o poeta no seu reduto
abrindo caminho.
Abrindo caminho com passos serenos
e clava na mão,
que as noites são grandes e os dias pequenos
nesta criação.

Esmagando as boninas, os cravos e os lírios,
cortando as carótidas às aves canoras.
Chegaram as horas
de acender os círios,
de velar as ninfas no estreito caixão,
de enterrar as frases e as vozes incautas,
de oferecer a Lua para os astronautas
e as rosas fragrantes à destilação.
The workers arrived and placed an iron post at the edge of the sidewalk, then left to return some other day. The post had newly been painted green, and when the sun shone the post glowed like a dragon’s scales. On the sidewalk, right next to the post, stood a tree with yellow flowers, and the wind would blow those yellow flowers onto that green iron post. People walking by would stop and cry: “What a nuisance this post is,” but the poet would simply smile at the flowers.

Poem of the iron post with yellow flowers

Vieram os operários, puseram o poste de ferro na berma do passeio e foram-se para voltar noutro dia. O poste tinha sido pintado há pouco de verde e quando lhe batia o sol rutilava como as escamas dos dragões. Mesmo junto do poste, no passeio, havia uma árvore que dava flores amarelas, e o vento fez cair algumas flores amarelas sobre o poste verde. As pessoas que por ali passavam diziam “que chatice de poste”, mas o poeta sorria para as flores amarelas.

Poema do poste com flores amarelas
Poem of the apparent death

In the days when what is happening now was happening then, and men were shocked that it could still happen in their time, life seemed corrupt and vile and the men then longed to be alive in our time, now. They died longing and protesting. And now, when their graves are opened, sometimes the teeth which they gritted are found, as white as when they were new.

Poema da morte aparente

Nos tempos em que acontecia o que está acontecendo agora, e os homens pasmavam de isso ainda acontecer no tempo deles, parecia-lhes a vida podre e reles e suspiravam por viver agora. A suspirar e a protestar morreram. E agora, quando se abrem as covas, encontram-se às vezes os dentes com que rangeram, tão brancos como se as dentaduras fossem novas.
The H-hour

Spring smells of oranges.

(There are certain kinds of hand grenade that are small and round, called oranges.)

The smell of oranges fills the moonlit night with mysteries.

(It is said that moonlit nights are the best for aerial bombings.)
Poem for being named António

Today, at dawn, very early,
I heard the cock crow in the barnyard
when I was six and spent Christmas
with my godmother.

In the makeshift bed in the hallway
I artfully pretended that I slept
all wrapped up in a blanket,
while in a honeyed, almost cold, light
the world artfully
pretended it was being born.

And then I too felt like being born,
born by my own doing, by my express will,
without father or mother,
without love's preliminaries,
without anyone's kisses or tenderness,
alone, alone and alone by my own free will.

Doubled over into a circle inside my blanket's womb,
wrinkled like a fetus waiting for its liberty
(long live liberty!)
I opened and closed my eyelids, artfully,
as if I hadn't moved them,
as if I neither felt nor noticed them,
opening them in a dissimulated, narrow slit,
insensitive to everyday things,
but artful before that pure and able-bodied dawn
flooding my blood through my eyelashes.
My eyelids quivered, powdering the light with butterfly dust,
an explosion of iridescent beads,
white and black lace.

Each time more fetus, more round, more wood-louse,
more balloon, more planet, dough
ready for the oven,
more «eternal return»,
more without end or beginning, without point or edge,
a scarab's excrement exposed in a crevice.
It was then that the cock crowed.
Faaaar away...
Very faaaaaar away...
in the neighbor’s barnyard,
there at the end of the world, right next to my godmother’s house.

It was a round, fragile, inexperienced voice,
flickering like a flame
that is in fact about to extinguish and, suddenly reviving,
dies again, then reilluminates.
A surreptitious, assuaging, irresponsible voice,
fleeting and suggestive,
a song without borders, aerial and imponderable.
All of this and much, much more, but, above all, distant.

It was thus that the cock’s crowing in the yard
of the neighbor woman’s barnyard
who had planted a medlar tree in the middle of her yard
right next to my godmother’s house,
penetrated the soft womb of my coverlet.

It was a wave-front, compact and enveloping,
already purified in the throat and now more than pure,
filtered
and distilled
in the avid pores of my coverlet.

It arrived and its lightning struck my indigent being,
exposed and needy,
in that gentle, distracted gesture
of God omnipotent
on the Sistine Chapel ceiling,
when He raises his terrible hand and strikes
the heart
of Adam.

So, then. I am born. All hunger and thirst.

António is my name.
Poemas Póstumos (1983)

Posthumous Poems (1983)
New laws demand that my eyes be not glad
when trees greet me with their leaves,
when sunning lizards’ erotic necks,
erect and screening
like radar,
transform gentle undulations
into lascivious strainings.
No more murmuring waters nor perfumed pines
that ancient ears harvested
and nostrils thirstily breathed
like fans,
no longer open and close my eyes
beneath the light’s tongue, warmly licking
the convexed eyelids,
no more the body’s silent levitation,
nor the ferret’s awkward gait before the imminence
of what never happens.

May my eyes, upon closing,
bear the last image
of the world’s poetic scent.
May my face be caressed by the final breath
of magical, invented transparencies.
May the last of birds brush up against it,
with wings extended in benevolence
that in constructed skies once redeemed us
from our fragile, human existence.
May the final messages
from clandestine, pirate wires,
in chrystalline depths,
in the flower’s pistil,
in the fishes’ scales,
reach my ears.

May the earth be light above me.
A dog on the beach ran swiftly.
Swiftly ran the dog on the deserted beach.

It was late-afternoon and the dog ran swiftly on the deserted beach.

It ran in a straight line, swiftly, swiftly, along the ocean’s edge.
Along the ocean’s edge, in a straight line, the dog swiftly ran.

It was late-afternoon.
On the beach the waters, spewed into the ocean’s anguish, lapped with spume the automatic legs of the dog that swiftly, swiftly ran in a straight line along the ocean’s edge.

Without beginning or end, in a straight line, along the ocean’s edge.

It was late-afternoon, at the thickened hour, sticky and humid, when the remains of light in its last agony moan in all things and impaste like glue.
In the diluted, hazy and greying space the dog ran swiftly on the deserted beach. Ran in a straight line, swiftly, swiftly, defining a volatile form that pierced the mist and pursued the ocean’s edge, in a straight line, muzzle lifted and eyes fixed, fixing the brief point where, beyond all beyonds, converge the straight lines called parallels.
Its pairs of legs moved in cadences,
in rhythmic cadences of swift movement,
leaving its trace on the beach
swiftly, swiftly.

As if beckoned by desire, the dog ran swiftly
on the deserted beach.
Ever–unchanging rhythm, tongue protruding,
eyes like drills, piercing the distance.

In its final spasm, the light entwined
dog, ocean, sky, near and far.
It was an imaginary dog running swiftly, swiftly,
along an imagined beach, really deserted,
along a straight line more imagined
than beach and ocean.
But swiftly, swiftly, always swiftly, swiftly,
the dog ran and ran on the deserted beach.

Alternavam–se as patas na cadência,
na cadência ritmada do movimento presto,
deixando no areal as marcas do contacto.
Presto, presto.

Como se um desejo o chamasse, corria presto o cão
no areal deserto.
O ritmo sempre igual, a língua pendurada,
os olhos como brocas, furadores de distâncias.

Em seu último espasmo a luz enrodilhou
o cão, o mar, o céu, o próximo e o distante.
Era um suposto cão correndo presto, presto,
um suposto areal, realmente deserto,
por uma linha recta mais suposta
que o areal e o mar.
Mas presto, presto, sempre presto, presto,
ia correndo o cão no areal deserto.

Poema do cão ao entardecer

Poem of the dog in late afternoon
Poem of Chagall's bride

My eyes are brimming with good fortune.
Simply because
I have a garden pond before me,
stone benches about me
and a few unpretentious shrubs.
How easy good fortune is when everything
is measured by misfortune!

Everything conjoins in this delicate picture
to give a moment's felicity,
and what is missing in it, which is everything,
I imagine.
The hidden sun bursts into luminous streams,
burning the skin and flushing the face;
the flowers of denuded shrubs waft aromas,
and from the pond's stagnant waters
transparent liquid issues forth
and falls onto the barren surface in parabolas.

A dove descends slowly from above
and alights on the pond's rim, observing.
I pretend I am made of stone, and the dove observes me.
The dove pretends he is made of stone and I observe him,
and thus we both remain,
until we are each convinced
that only in mutual love can we live in peace.

A brushing of wings descends.
It is the she-dove, the number missing
from this festive program of my eyes.
Next to him she alights, and so closely
that his feathers shudder within me.

Poema da noiva de Chagall

Tenho os olhos repletos de ventura.
E isto simplesmente
por ver na minha frente um tanque de água,
bancos de pedra à volta
e uns modestos arbustos sem grandeza.
Como a ventura é fácil quando tudo
se mede em desventura!

Tudo se junta neste quadro ameno
para dar felicidade momentânea;
e o que falta, que é tudo, isso, imagino.
A luz do Sol escondido a jorros brota,
caustica a pele e afogueia o rosto;
nos arbustos despidos as flores rescendem;
e no tanque parado, de águas sujas,
o transporte líquido se eleva
e em parábolas cai na morta superfície.

Desce um pombo do alto em vôo lento
e na borda do tanque poisa, e olha.
Finjo que sou de pedra; e o pombo olha-me.
Finge-se ele de pedra enquanto o olho,
e assim nos demoramos, um e outro,
áté nos convencermos
que só de mútuo amor se vive em paz.

Um roçar de asas vem do alto e desce.
É ela, a pomba, o número que faltava
no programa das festas dos meus olhos.
Ao lado dele poisa, e tão chegada
que as penas dele em mim se sobressaltam.
It was then that a low sound, as imperceptible as the unfolding of petals, brushed against the leafy shrubs.
Chagall's bride, violet micro-wave, whitening spume, floating at the mercy of an imagined breeze, swift and joyous, voluptuous and brief, wrapped me in lace spirals.

With a broom of reeds, the man in the garden gathered prosaic leaves, and as he gathered them, he sent a murmur into the silence of the afternoon while thinking other things.
Poem of the vibrio cholerae

A thread of olive oil,
versatile steel thread suspended from a crane
that in the wind bends and curls
and in curling moans,
the comma poised between words.
Watery furrows like an abdomen rippled with laughter,
where the ship’s mast, erect and triumphant,
quivers and cedes like a helpless worm.
Sinuous alembic serpentine
where oils drip
and every lit color cheerfully
expires.
Fluted flex of fiber, coil-shaped spring
that life holds in constant vibration.
A fish in the fisherman’s hand, still warm from its cold waters,
spiralling galaxy,
throat,
vortex,
coiling love-swoon:
woman.

Poema do vibrião colérico

Um fio de azeite;
espia de aço versátil suspensa do guindaste
que o vento curva e encurva
e ao encurvar-se geme;
a vírgula entre as palavras;
ruga de água como um ventre agitado pelo riso,
onde o mastro do barco, erecto e triunfante,
se adoça e bóia como um verme inútil;
sinuosa serpentina do alambique
onde os óleos gotejam
e toda a cor acesa, alegremente,
apagada se torna;
fibra estriada e elástica; mola em hélice
que a vida traz suspensa em vibração constante;
peixe na mão do pescador, ainda quente do frio da água;
galáxia espiralada;
goela;
vórtice;
vibrião da doença do amor;
mulher.
I love space and place and things that do not speak.
Their being there and being so,
their knowing what, and where, and how they are, their waiting without rushing and their serving us in the prescribed way.

Serene in themselves, always equal to themselves, things wait for despair to seek them out.

We open the door and the air itself speaks to us.
Mesh curtains, exactly those, the chair where memory sits, the table, glass, cup, clock, the piece against which someone leans volumeless and timeless, ourselves when indignant eyes hide behind eyelids.

A stone is placed in our hand, a heavy stone, that joins its weight to ours, forming an extension of us. The hand closes and takes on the stone’s form, knows the stone, understands its shape, feels it smooth or rough, and knows its surfaces. The hand opens, and the stone has grown.

If this were men’s love for each other, when the hand opened, no stone would be there.
Poem of the foreigner

The foreigner points with a gleeful finger

towards the edge of the beach

where the quotidian sands drink ancient waters.

The foreigner walks along contented.

With the back of his hand to shield his eyes from the sun
he investigates all that lies about him.

Investigates the far and the near, the high and the low, the still and [the turbulent,

and laughs, laughs heartily,

and nods approvingly at the movement of the water.

The foreigner is happy
to see what has long been seen:

the sand, the boat and the seagull, the fluttering awning,
the sun that turns white-skinned cheeks vermilion,
the child fleeing the water which follows him.

And the foreigner laughs, laughs heartily
because the foreigner’s happiness is in not being
where he would be if he were not here watching the seagull,
and the sand, the boat and all that has long been seen, while the water evaporates in the evaporation of every day.

Poema do estrangeiro

Aponta o estrangeiro com o dedo risonho

as orlas da praia

onde as areias do quotidiano bebem as velhas águas.

Vai alegre, o estrangeiro.

Com o alpendre da mão encobre o Sol dos olhos

e indaga à sua volta.

Indaga o longe e o perto, o alto e o baixo, o quieto e o turbulento

e ri-se, ri-se muito de contente,

e aprova com a cabeça o movimento das águas.

Alegra-se o estrangeiro

de ver o mais que visto.

É a areia, é o barco, é a gaivota,

é o pano do toldo que esvoaça,

é o Sol que avermelha a face branca,

é a criança em fuga das águas que a persegue.

E ri-se, ri-se muito de contente

porque a alegria do estrangeiro é o não estar

onde estaria se não estivesse ali vendo a gaivota,

e a areia, e o barco, e tudo o mais que visto,

enquanto a água se evapora na evaporação de todos os dias.
Poem of the girl in the hygroscope

When the old man of the hygroscope disappears inside his wooden
cabin and the girl with the basket appears at the small door beside his,
I will go walking with you through the meadow.

While we walk, I shall place my arm on your shoulder
and with amorous fingers I will pinch
the soft lobe of your ear.

When the girl with the basket appears at the hygroscope's small door
dow bows in her hair,
a large, hoop skirt of Prussian-blue,
with three red hems,
and her basket overflowing with fruits and flowers,
I will go walking with you through the meadow.

Hidden in the forest, the hygroscope's florid cabin,
has a sharp-angled roof
causing the snow to fall off,
and a wreath of yellow marigolds bordering the eaves.
As long as the wire does not pull the old man inside the cabin
and the cricket wings of his black cape with him,
I'll warm myself by stomping my feet on the ground, and I'll wait
for the girl with the basket to appear at the small side door.
As soon as she appears, startled and surprised,
drunk from the sun, dizzy from the smell of flowers,
I will go walking with you through the meadow.

We will take the short paths,
and I will lie above you on the earth.
Resting against your body
I will hear the bees hovering over flowers like helicopters
and I will hear the anthers' splitting
and the soundless dripping of pollen grains
in search of the ovule,
declaring eternal spring.

When the girl with the basket appears at the hygroscope's small door
and the porcelain birds peck at her clogs,
oh! how good that will be!
Even if you never come or don't exist,
I will go walking with you through the meadow.

Poema da menina do higroscópio

Quando o velho do higroscópio desaparece no fundo da casota
[de madeira]
e a menina do cesto assomar à portinha do lado,
hei-de ir contigo passear ao campo.
Andando, poisarei o meu braço no teu ombro
e com dedos de amor beliscarei
o lábio macio da tua orelha.

Quando a menina do cesto assomar à portinha do higroscópio
de laçarotes nas tranças,
a grande saia rodada, azul da Prússia,
com três barras vermelhas,
e o cesto a transbordar de flores e frutos,
hei-de ir contigo passear ao campo.

Oculto na floresta, a casota florida do higroscópio,
tem o telhado erguido em ângulo agudo
para que a neve escorra,
e uma grinalda de malmequeres amarelos a bordar o beiral.
Enquanto a corda de tripa não puxar o velho para dentro da casota
e com ele as asas de grilo da sua labita preta,
baterei com os pés no chão para aquecer, e esperarei
que a menina do cesto assome na portinha do lado.
Assim que ela assomar, estremunhada e surpresa,
êbria do Sol, tonta do cheiro das flores,
hei-de ir contigo passear ao campo.

Iremos pelos atalhos
e sobre ti me deitarei na terra.
Encostado ao teu corpo
ouvirei as abelhas pairando sobre as flores como helicópteros
e ouvirei o estalar das anteras
e o surdo escorrer dos grãos de pólen
buscando o óvulo, deflagrando nele
a primavera eterna.

Quando a menina do cesto assomar à portinha do higroscópio
e os pássaros de gesso debicarem as pontas dos seus tamancos,
ôh! como vai ser bom!
mesmo que tu não venhas nem existas,
hei-de ir contigo passear ao campo.
In the narrow cubicle where the child sleeps in the man as an unwelcome guest, the walls are double-thick, and in the child’s mouth, a sweet wine-grape, and with it a steel muzzle. Sleep, child, sleep. Don’t disappoint those who believe in the myth of innocence. Sleep, and wait for men to kill each other while you sleep. Content yourself with imagining how flowers might be, and insects, stones and stars, and all that is beautiful and reflected in a child’s eyes. Imagine moonlight that swells and warms and makes your skin a china flower, a white orchid that heat does not scorch. Imagine, imagine. But, above all, sleep.

Poema do ser inóspito

No cubículo estreito onde a criança dorme no homem como um ser inóspito, duplas são as paredes e, na boca, uva de moscatel, açaíme de aço. Dorme, criança, dorme. Não deixes ficar mal os que acreditam no mito da inocência. Dorme, e espera que os homens se aniquilem enquanto dormes. Reduz-te a imaginar como serão as flores, os insetos, as pedras, as estrelas, e tudo quanto é belo e se reflecte nos olhos das crianças. Imagina um luar que cresce e aquece e faz da tua carne flor de loiça, orquídea branca que o calor não cresta. Imagina, imagina. Mas, sobretudo, dorme.
Poem of the eyes gazing at the stream

For ten minutes I have gazed at this stream’s water.

In its stillness the leaves of the bending willow are reflected with so much clarity that the two realities merge. But the reality of the image contains a greater core of dreams and is, therefore, more real.

With such stillness it would be comforting and calming if the eyes of my body were only these with which I gaze.

The gentle water, enveloping every round and polished pebble, ripples a smile. A leaf loosened from the willow’s warmth falls through space, whirling and descending in a tight spiral, and settles gently on the lazy, liquid surface. I feel the physical pleasure of that contact in the circular shiver of the water’s skin.

The image of a cloud embitters the sweetness of the liquid. Is it the cloud that is mirrored in the stream’s waters or is it the stream that is mirrored in the cloud’s surface? I close my corporeal eyes to escape the clouding of the evidence.

Poema dos olhos na ribeira

Há dez minutos que tenho os olhos postos nas águas desta ribeira.

Na sua quietude as folhas do salgueiro debruçado reflectem-se como tanta nitidez que as duas realidades se confundem. Mas a realidade da imagem tem maior conteúdo de sonho: é mais real, portanto.

Como esta quietude seria reconfortante e apaziguadora se todos os olhos de meu corpo fossem apenas estes com que olho.

A água macia ao rodear cada seixo, redondo e polido, enruga-se num sorriso. Uma folha desprendida do aconchego do salgueiro cai, ao longo do espaço, rodopiando e descendo em espiral apertada, e vem tocar, de manso, na preguiçosa superfície líquida. Sinto o prazer físico daquele contacto no arrepio circular da pele de água.

A imagem de uma nuvem vem amargar a doçura do líquido. Será a nuvem que se espelha nas águas da ribeira ou a ribeira que se espelha nos flocos da nuvem? Fecho os olhos da cara para fugir à mistificação da evidência.

Poema dos olhos na ribeira

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A imagem de uma nuvem vem amargar a doçura do líquido. Será a nuvem que se espelha nas águas da ribeira ou a ribeira que se espelha nos flocos da nuvem? Fecho os olhos da cara para fugir à mistificação da evidência.
The stream that fluctuates in the sky,
the cloud that glides over the pebbles,
the pebbles meeting the water’s smile,
the willows where green tears hang suspended and fall,
all these are moments of moments,
fragments of moments,
particles of moments.
The green willow,
the one I see with the elemental eyes of this face,
owes its existence to me,
to me, and only to me, for I too am a fragment of a moment.
And yet,
for ten long minutes I have gazed
at the waters of this stream.
Ten long minutes that I have thought and rethought
about things thought and rethought before me
and that others will think and rethink after me.
A thick, short man walks in the half-light.
His thick lips tightened into a gash,
his pupils scan every angle
in a barrage of fire.
Cautiously he searches for the best stones
on which to rest his bare feet,
misshapen feet, roughened and gnarled,
scorched by many suns,
and cracked by the sands they have tread on.

He stops and takes a breath.

It is dusk, almost night,
clouds hang low, turgid and dark,
stumble in rolls and spread out
in rags on the horizon,
leap, lunge, charge, caper
like bulls of smoke, buffaloes of soot.

Wherever his eyes invade the ash-colored air,
in front and behind there are nothing but stones, stones,
stones and stones,
rolling pebbles on which his feet adapt
gropingly to feel their form.

The heavy body loses its equilibrium;
with belly sticking out, he vainly flails his arms,
striking the air like an afflicted animal
which strives neither to drown nor to surrender.

He stops, and takes a breath,
because the chest is generous and the air miserly.
In the quasi-night waxes the white spume
of waves that reach him,
washing his feet and covering for an instant
the immense reef of rolling pebbles.

The feet feel the water and understand it.
In the joy of this meeting, the body exults
and, in a frenetic pleasure,
challenges and confronts the blasting of waves
which, crashing down on the rocks, drench him.

What a bother!
He is tired but laughs, and he would even sing
if in this half-light some tense cord
were to resonate in him.

But the sounds which reach him are somber,
hoarse and raspy, muffled and hollow.

Only the spume of the waves is graceful,
restless and agile. The spume foams
and penetrates between the stones.

What vast immensity! What a theatrical spectacle!
Hysterical, capricious and fleet lightning,
blind signatures carelessly etched,
fundem o escuro céu e em golpes o estilhaçam.

Relâmpagos histéricos, caprichosos e rápidos,
cestas assinaturas rabiscadas à pressa,
entre as pedras
acaricia a pedra e se insinua.

Mas não! São panos mesmo! Brocados e cetins,
dalmáticas e véus, paramentos e estolas,
tudo perdida a cor na pavidez dos raios.
The rocks stand in single file as far as the eye can see, singular crags like hirsute prows. But, no! They really are prows! Remains of galleons, ship-shrouds, bowsprits, mainsails, foresheets, masts, helms, ropes, backstays, handmasts. All bowed wood the water’s impetus has eternally preserved, buoyed by memory.

What a screw-up!

The waves come and go in the bloody cadence that succours the heart, and echo wildly like ancient voices, (shouts, imprecations, walled-in mutterings) which, prolonged in spasms, accentuate their source. They are syllabicated voices, words that circulate among the ruins, and corrode them more than the water does.

King of Portugal and the Algarves, here and across the sea in Africa, Lord of Guinea, the conquest, navigation and commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India.

Round, bronzed voice, rolling frictionless in the vacuum’s suspension. A ball of sound touching the pilasters of the vaulted roof, descends grazing the flagstones, then returns on high.

He wants to walk again but the echoes and bolts are spasms in his ears and a burning in his eyes. He feels cold, and the words shiver in his mouth.

Enfileiram-se as rochas na lonjura da vista, penedos singulares como proas hirsutas. Mas não! São proas mesmo! Restos de galeões, enxárcias, gurupés, papafígos, traquetes, mastros, lenes, escotás, brandais e mastaréus. Tudo madeira gasta que a impulsão das águas conserva eternamente a boiar na memória.

Que lixarada, pá!

As vagas vão e vêm na cadência do sangue que ao coração acorre, e ecoam bravamente como vozes antigas, brados, imprecações, emparedadas vozes, que em espasmos se prolongam acentuando a origem. São vozes silabadas, palavras que circulam entre os destroços, e os roem mais que a água.

De Portugal e dos Algarves, daquém e dalém mar em África, Senhor da Guiné, da conquista, navegação e comércio da Etiópia, Arábia, Pérsia e Índia.

Redonda voz de bronze, rolando sem atrito na suspensão do vácuo. Bola de som tangente às nervuras da abóbada, desce a roçar as lajes e às alturas regressa.

Quer caminhar de novo mas os ecos e os raios espasmam-lhe os ouvidos e incendeiam-lhe os olhos. Tem frio, e as palavras tiritam-lhe na boca.

Poema do fim do mundo

Poem of the end of the world
Arms, and illustrious barons, bah.
A meteor bursts, engulfs the concave world in flames, illumines the ruins, while in the sky appear what to him could be two figures, who, with gesticulating hands, are discussing something, a bristly beard falling to his chest, undulating tresses caressing her shoulders.
The fat guy is Jupiter, and the gal is Venus.

His belly ripples when he guffaws, and he licks his lips with a churlish satisfaction. His body hurls forward, thrusting as he searches for the best stones on which to rest his gnarled feet.

Oh, the glory of commanding! Oh, vain avarice!

Stones upon stones, sight alone can reach them, where the might of the swollen sea assails. The sea, always the sea, The fish–bearing sea, navigated highway, stone–given bread, bread as hard as stone.
The words came out of his mouth
high and leafy like trees,
and the wind blew and took the words with it
and let them fall on the fertile ground
where they multiplied and grew.
Those were sonorous words,
heavy and succulent like choice oranges,
and in them virtues were compared to flowers,
vice to leprosy,
and life itself to the torrential river
that flows, narrow and ephemeral,
tripping over mire and stones.

I withdrew to my room with his words burning in my ears,
and there I spent time weighing them,
one by one,
on a little scale I have there.
I weighed them, and arranged them on my shelves.
Here, the mouth; there, the leafy trees.
On one side, virtue; on the other, flowers.
Here, vice; further away, leprosy.
Here, the ephemeral river; there, life.
And since the night was really pleasant,
I went out and took a stroll around the neighborhood.

Poem of the stroll around the neighborhood
Clouds hover over the summit of Olympus like beaten eggwhite, billowy and wrinkled. Olympus is a mountain, the clouds, water which low temperatures condensed into star-shaped crystal.

There, behind the clouds, the gods settled into their inlaid thrones (since if the potentates of the earth had thrones, then all the more should the gods have them). There, behind the clouds, they mapped my future, without knowing that clouds are water.

They were, in fact, water, and like water they fell to the earth. First in brief threads, voluptuous as tepid showers on the eyelids; then in thicker threads, in strings, in cords, in columns, celestial waterfalls that the sky itself unleashed in dense torrents.

In the precipitation of the waters thundering down, the gods were engulfed in cataracts, gods and thrones, and with them, my future.
By the flames of your eyes
I began to heat this mixture of snow and rising sun,
like the alchemist of Dusseldorf
who placed on the fire the long-necked, sandstone beaker
and there heated dragon blood (2 ounces),
tartar emetic (5 drachmas),
snake fat (12 to 15 drops),
butter of antimony,
a stag’s horn,
burning spirits of Saturn (a half ounce each),
there remaining forgotten, absorbed in the solitude of his lair,
his face lit up by the furnace.

Outside, Brueghel’s men,
their plump behinds turned towards the viewer,
red breeches stretched to the breaking point,
were harvesting the wheat from green fields.

The alchemist of Dusseldorf
sought the stone’s secret, hidden within the earth’s bowels,
the alcaest, the universal dissolvent,
the elixir of lost vitality,
so that his life would know no end,
nor his eyelids ever turn purple,
nor his lips grow pale.

The alchemist of Dusseldorf
procured the arcana, the tinctures, the quintessence of things,
the seven steps of the sacred opus,
that the agile legs ascending them in an agitation of nerves.
Poor alchemist of Dusseldorf!
He wanted it all, the old man be damned!
He wanted to light the furnace with the embers of his face,
and transmute the sandstone beaker into a triumphant sex,
and the tarnished fur of his cap into billowy, curled down.

Poem of the alchemist
Isis! Oh Isis!
Oh, Lotus flower!
Oh, slender, myrrh-inflamed Heron!
Look upon me well, Isis, my ebony vase.
Inflame me with your rubied eyes.
Burn me with your tongue’s flames.
Look upon my modesty, oh, Isis.
I am not the alchemist of Dusseldorf.
I do not want everything.
I only want
to transmute this worldly fatigue into flowers.

Ísis! Ó Ísis!
Ó Flor do lotus!
Ó Garçã esbelta rescedendo a mirra!
Olha bem para mim, Ísis, meu vaso de ébano.
Incendeia-me com os teus olhos de carbúnculo.
Queima-me com a labareda da tua língua.
Atenta na minha modéstia, ó Ísis.
Eu não sou o alquimista de Dusseldorf.
Eu não quero tudo.
Eu quero apenas,
apenas transmutar esta chatice em flores.
Beyond the curtains, early morning.
Men are asleep. Nature is dead.

Somewhere in the yard a dog is heard barking,
and another dog, farther away, barks back.
Both fall asleep, and in sleep dissolve.
The dog's voice is the soul of silence,
the victory of sound over gray plasma.

A wooden frame creaks, and the sleeping body
stirs without hearing it, stilling once again,
quickly reconstructing the gentility of sleep.

Inhaling (slowly). Exhaling (slowly).
Inhaling (slowly). Exhaling (slowly).
Everyone is asleep.
Without a single wrinkle disturbing their faces.
Their eyelids serenely confine their eyes.
Serene lips, serene nostrils,
serene oscillation of the breathing chest.
Everyone sleeps, and while they sleep, they maintain
in their faces, the virtues of one who sleeps.

Lying on one side,
the right hand close to the face,
the left farther away,
they sleep,
sleep serenely,
while the onrushing blood circulates
and the unconscious heart impells it.
Serene body. Serene face. Serene everything.

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Para lá das cortinas boceja a madrugada.
Os homens estão dormindo. A Natureza é morta.

Algures num quintal ouve-se um cão latir
e outro cão mais distante lhe responde.
Ambos entram no sono e nele se dissolvem.
A voz do cão é a alma do silêncio,
a vitória do som sobre o plasma cinzento.

Estala um móvel, e o corpo adormecido
sem o ouvir estremece, mas de novo sossega,
reconstruindo breve a mansidão do sono.

Inpira (docemente). Expira (docemente).
Inpira (docemente). Expira (docemente).
Dormem.
Sem uma ruga só que lhes perturbe o rosto.
Serenas são as pálpebras que lhes vedam os olhos,
serenos são os lábios, serenas as narinas,
serena a oscilação do peito que respira.
Todos dormem, e enquanto dormem guardam
nos rostos as virtudes de quem dorme.

Deitados sobre o lado,
a mão direita próxima do rosto,
a esquerda mais distante,
dormem.
Dormem serenamente
enquanto o sangue impávido circula
e o coração, sem consciência, o impele.
Sereno o corpo. Sereno o rosto. Tudo sereno.

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Poema do homem duplo

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Poem of the double man
The morning bleaching white penetrates the curtain, shyly polishing furniture and walls.
The light opens hesitantly, like flowers.
Bodies move.
Eyelids open and close again.
The light screeches.
The resolute man bolts out of bed, energetically shakes himself, washes, eats, gets dressed, clatters down the stairs, opens the front door and looks, takes a look around, looks with thin lips and deeply furrowed brows.
Behold the beast at the forest’s edge.

Os alvores da manhã penetram nas cortinas, timidamente aclaram os móveis e as paredes.
Abre-se a luz, aos poucos, como as flores.
Movem-se os corpos.
As pálpebras descerram-se e de novo se fecham.

Grita a luz.
Salta da cama o homem resoluto.
Enérgico, espreguiça-se, lava-se, come, veste-se, desce a escada, ruidoso, abre a porta da rua e olha, olha em redor, olha com os lábios presos e um vinco aberto fundo entre os sobrolhos.

Eis a fera que assoma à orla da floresta.
I’ll give you a word and you’ll play with it, and you’ll bet on it determinedly.

Take the word «scoundrel».

Perhaps you’ll think it’s a basket, a raffia basket, filled with fruits and flowers.

Perhaps a pillow laid on a lap where agile hands working the threads weave complicated lace.

Perhaps an insect with metallic wing-screens emerging from a rain-soaked earth.

Perhaps a playful game, a small spherical glass, thrown against another.

But, no.

Scoundrel means a vile, crude, vulgar man.

Words are like that.
In my time there was a river called the Tagus, which extended sunward at the horizon’s edge. It went from point to point, and to its eyes it perfectly resembled a mirror because, as far as it knew, only a mirror could look like that.

Kneeling on a bench, my torso rigid, I only had eyes for the distant river, eyes of an embalmed animal, but alive, in the glassy fixedness of those penetrating eyes. The river would say that in its time there was a squared form, far away, at the horizon’s edge, where two eyes wide open, wide and avid, fixed and gaping, stared at it untiringly, without cease. Two eyes wide open, eyes of a watchful creature which waits, simply out of love for waiting.

And why not bound over the roofs, the red roofs of the low houses with green verandas, green verandas with geraniums? Ah, if only it were the one from that story who flew with a great flapping of wings, alighting wherever it would, peering through the window panes of the low houses with green geraniums! How good that would be! Not peering, which is impolite, but travelling far and wide to touch the watchful creature, and in its eyes see its own eyes reflected, great and aqueous, voracious and innocent. How good that would be!

My eyelids lower and, with that movement, (simply that) there are no eyes, no river, no verandas, no nothing.
On this hot night, I am delightfully stretched out on the grass, eyes staring at the sky, and I notice, joyously, that the dimensions of the infinite do not perturb me. (The infinite! This incommensurable distance, a half-meter in length, stretching from my brain to these fingers that write!)

What perturbs me is that the whole can fit into its parts, that the tridimensional fits into the dimensionless, and does not exceed it.

What perturbs me is that the whole fits inside of me, me, infinitesimal me, a part of the whole. And it would continue to fit inside of me even if they cut off my arms and legs, because I am neither arm nor leg.

If I had a stone’s memory that, when released, immediately falls freely through space without ever forgetting to fall; if I had the light’s memory that immediately propagates away from its source without ever forgetting to propagate; my eyes would relive the dinosaurs that walked the earth, my ears would remember the roar of oceans that engulfed continents, my skin would remember the temperature of glaciers that traversed the earth.
Mas não esqueci tudo.
Guardei a memória da treva, do medo espavorido
do homem da caverna
que me fazia gritar quando era menino e me apagavam a luz;
guarei a memória da fome,
da fome do todos os bichos de todas as eras,
que me fez estender os lábios sófregos para mamar quando cheguei
[ao mundo;]
guarei a memória do amor,
dessa segunda fome de todos os bichos de todas as eras,
que me fez desejar a mulher do próximo e do distante;
guarei a memória do infinito,
daquele tempo sem tempo, origem de todos os tempos,
em que assisti, disperso, fragmentado, pulverizado,
à formação do Universo.

Tudo se passou defronte de partes de mim.
E aqui estou eu feito carne para o demonstrar,
porque os átomos da minha carne não foram fabricados de propósito
[para mim.]
Já cá estavam.
Estão.
E estarão.

But I have not forgotten everything.
I've kept the memory of the darkness, of the terrified fear
of the cave-man
which made me scream, as a child, when they turned out the light;
I've kept the memory of hunger,
the hunger of every animal of every era,
that made me stretch my voracious lips to suck with when I entered
[the world;]
I've kept the memory of love,
that second hunger of every animal of every era,
that made me desire the wives of both neighbor and stranger;
I've kept the memory of the infinite,
of that timeless time, origin of all times,
where I watched, dispersed, fragmented, pulverized,
the forming of the universe.

All of this took place before these fragments of me.
And here I am made flesh to prove it,
because the atoms of my flesh were not made expressly for me.
They were already here.
They are here.
And they will be here.
The leaves of the platane tree descend and launch into the adventure [of space, and the eyes of a guileless creature, moved, follow them. The leaves of the platane tree are beautiful when they fall November afternoons, against the infinity of a dishevelled, bloody sky. They undulate like the lazy arms of an indolent yawn. Rise and fall, wag and repose, trace i’s and s’s, cycloids and volutes, write in space with their tiny stems, in an elegant calligraphy, any name one fancies, and they oscillate, punctuating, in somnolent scores, a late-afternoon’s autumnal theme. The leaves of the platane are lovely, scattered on the ground, green and smooth in the apogee of their chlorophyll youth. But now, in their autumn, their aged cytoplasm, scorched and rent by the sun, has been eaten away by corrosive acids. The green chlorophyll, its magnesium lost, is russet-dressed, a shade that is colorless, (which we do not know what to call, outside its proper name: dry platane leaf). The sun’s furnace has cracked the leaf, a dense darkening accentuates its veins, and this real and guileless creature, seeing the ground covered with autumn leaves, ponders the ruin of things about it. They owe their hue to magnesium’s absence, to those eyes, their beauty.

Poem of the platane’s dry leaves
Consciously I write, and consciously
I meditate my destiny.

In time’s descent, the years roll,
trip like water, until one day
a potential reader reaches for a book
and reads,
carelessly reads,
as it happens, without knowing why.
Reads, and smiles.
Smiles at the construction of the verse that sticks out
to his different ear;
smiles at the terms the poet used
where the fungi of time left a smell of mold;
and smiles, almost laughs, at the intimate sense,
at the ancient pulsing
of the motionless body, exhumed
from the poem’s burial ground.

In the Natural History of feeling
todo se transformou.
O amor tem outras falas,
a dor outras arestas,
a esperança outros disfarces,
a raiva outros esgares.

Poem of the future

Conscientemente escrevo e, consciente,
medito o meu destino.

No declive do tempo os anos correm,
deslizam como a água, até que um dia
um possível leitor pega num livro
e lê,
lê displicentemente,
por mero acaso, sem saber porquê.
Lê, e sorri.
Sorri da construção do verso que destoa
no seu diferente ouvido;
sorri dos termos que o poeta usou
onde os fungos do tempo deixaram cheiro a mofo;
e sorri, quase ri, do íntimo sentido,
do latejar antigo
daquele corpo imóvel, exumado
da vala do poema.

Na História Natural dos sentimentos
todo se transformou.
O amor tem outras falas,
a dor outras arestas,
a esperança outros disfarces,
a raiva outros esgares.

Exposed and disclosed, extended over the page,
(curious specimen of a superated world),
this is all that remains,
all that is left
of a being who, among other beings,
wandered the earth.

Poema do futuro
Novos Poemas Póstumos (1990)

New Posthumous Poems (1990)
As árvores crescem sós. E a sós florescem.

Começam por ser nada. Pouco a pouco se levantam do chão, se alteiam palmo a palmo.

Crescendo deitam ramos, e os ramos outros ramos, e deles nascem folhas, e as folhas multiplicam–se.

Depois, por entre as folhas, vão–se esboçando as flores, e então crescem as flores, e as flores produzem frutos, e os frutos dão sementes, e as sementes preparam novas árvores.


Os animais são outra coisa. Contactam–se, penetram–se, trespassam–se, fazem amor e ódio, e vão à vida como se nada fosse.

As árvores, não. Solitárias, as árvores, exauram terra e sol silenciosamente. Não pensam, não suspiram, não se queixam. Estendem os braços como se implorassem; com o vento soltam ais como se suspirassem; e gemem, mas a queixa não é sua.

Sós, sempre sós. Nas planícies, nos montes, nas florestas, a crescer e a florir sem consciência.

Virtude vegetal viver a sós e entretanto dar flores.

Trees grow by themselves. And by themselves they blossom.

They begin as nothing. Little by little they rise from the ground and inch by inch they grow tall.

As they grow, they sprout branches, and these branches sprout other branches, and, from these, leaves are born, and these leaves multiply.

Then, amongst the leaves, flowers are outlined, and then these flowers grow and the flowers produce fruits, and the fruits yield seeds, and the seeds prepare new trees.

And all of this by themselves, by themselves, with themselves. Without seeing, without hearing, without speaking. Alone. Day and night. Always alone.

Animals are another story. They touch each other, they penetrate each other, and they injure each other, they make love and hate, and they go on with their lives as if nothing had happened.

Not trees. Solitary, trees silently exhaust the earth and the sun. They do not think, they do not sigh, they do not complain. They extend their arms as if imploring; with the wind they waft ‘ahs’ as if sighing; and they moan, but this complaint is not theirs.

Alone, always by themselves. On plains, on mountains, in forests, growing and flowering unconsciously.

A vegetal virtue, this living by themselves, and flowering none the less.
Flowers grow according to biological decree,
and the colors they naturally present
can only be these and not others.
Yellow, red, the color of fire,
crimson, lilac, violet and blue,
exactly this way and no other,
the whole in accord with its nature.

Their leaves can be rough or smooth, jagged
or not, everything in accordance;
they grow skyward
or creep, are delicate or laden,
the whole in accord
with its nature.

It’s the same with animals.
Naturally, in each case,
each fulfils its decree:
eats, sleeps, defecates,
mates at a pre-ordained hour,
hunts, fights, strikes,
warbles, hisses, growls at the moon,
hides, stalks, flees, prowls in packs,
crouches, dances, molts, seeks camouflage,
the whole in accord with its nature.

Accordingly I think, and love, and suffer, and come and go.
The whole in accord with my nature.

---

Crescem as flores no seu dever biológico,
e as cores que patenteiam, por sua natureza,
só podem ser aquelas, e não outras.
Vermelhas, amarelas, cor de fogo,
lilases, carmesins, azuis, violetas,
assim, e só assim,
tudo conforme a sua natureza.
Ásperas são as folhas, macias, recortadas
ou não, tudo conforme:
e o aprumo como tal,
orasteiras, ou leves, ou pesadas,
tudo no seu dever,
por sua natureza.

É como os animais.
Em cada qual, por sua natureza,
todo o dever se cumpre.
Comem, dejectam, dormem,
fazem amor nas horas competentes,
lutam, caçam, agrídem,
rosnam à Lua, trinam, assobiam,
escondem-se, espreitam, fogem, amarinham,
dançam, mudam de pele, agacham-se, disfarçam-se,
tudo conforme a sua natureza.

Assim eu penso, e amo, e sofro, e vou andando.
Tudo conforme a minha natureza.

---

Poema da minha natureza

Poem of my nature

*
Who will open the door for my cat when I am dead?

Whenever he can he runs for the street, sniffs at the sidewalk and backtracks, but when he comes up against the closed door (poor cat!) he meows in a desperate rage.

I let him suffer because suffering has its rewards, and this he knows well.

When I open the door, he runs towards me like a woman into the arms of her lover. I pick him up by the neck and pet him with a slow gesture, languidly, from the top of the head to the tip of his tail. He stares at me and smiles, with erotic whiskers, eyes half-closed in ecstasy, purring.

I continue petting him, languidly, from the top of his head to the tip of his tail. He clenches his jaw, shuts his eyes, flares his nostrils, snarls, snarls swooningly, nuzzles me and goes to sleep.

I do not have a cat, but if I did, who would open the door for him when I died?

Poem of the cat

Quem há-de abrir a porta ao gato quando eu morrer?

Sempre que pode foge pra rua, cheira o passeio e volta pra trás, mas ao defrontar-se com a porta fechada (pobre do gato!) mia com raiva desesperada.

Deixo-o sofrer que o sofrimento tem sua paga, e ele bem sabe.

Quando abro a porta corre pra mim como acorre a mulher aos braços do amante. Pego-lhe ao colo e acaricio-o num gesto lento vagarosamente, do alto da cabeça até ao fim da cauda. Ele olha-me e sorri, com os bigodes eróticos, olhos semi-cerrados, em êxtase, ronronando.

Repito a festa, vagarosamente, do alto da cabeça até ao fim da cauda. Ele aperta as maxilas, cerra os olhos, abre as narinas, e rosna, rosna, deliquescente, abraça-me e adormece.

Eu não tenho gato, mas se o tivesse quem lhe abriria a porta quando eu morresse?

Poema do gato
Propositadamente pus a mão
nas grades da enxovia.
Queria sentir o frio, aquele mesmo frio
que outras mãos, já defuntas, sentiriam.

Imaginei-lhe os dedos descarnados,
aduncos como os pés das aves de rapina
agarrados às rochas,
angulosos, esquálidos, ossudos,
eriçada de frio a enarbolhada pele.

Com as unhas coriáceas
arrancaria a ferrugem das grades,
e as unhas enegrecer-se-iam de poeiras
que sabiam a sal, e eram frias.

Estou a pensar em ti ao sentir o meu frio.
Choro-te, e choro-me.

Se ao teu cérebro frio fosse dado pensar,
pensarias no Sol,
no Sol que te aqueceu quando andavas no mundo,
nesses dragões magníficos
que nos atrai e obriga
a andar em seu redor sem repouso possível.

Presos sem grades somos
e assim presos
vogamos pelo espaço à mercê de um braseiro,
roendo as unhas limpas, sem ferrugem.

---

Poema das mãos frias

---

Poem of the cold hands

---
Yesterday you grew cold, today others have,
tomorrow there will be still others;
and it will continue like this through time
until,
it, too, that magnificent dragon,
the indispensable center
of the celestial carousel on which we pine,
will, like you, like me, like everyone of us,
turn cold.
What heats up must cool.

Inexorable time, blind, deaf and mute
will pulverize the sun
in a great soundless roar.

Meanwhile,
while that isn’t happening
(having nothing to do with me),
I stick my hands in my pockets and warm them.

Ontem eras tu frio; hoje são outros;
amanhã outros outros;
e assim pelo tempo fora
até que,
também ele, o tal dragão magnífico,
o indispensável centro
do carrocel celeste em que penamos,
como tu, como eu, como um qualquer de nós,
acabará em frio.
O que aquece, arrefece.

O inexorável tempo que é cego, surdo e mudo
pulverizá-lo-á
num formidável estrondo
sem ruído.

Entretanto,
enquanto isso não vem
(nem é comigo)
enfio as mãos nos bolsos e aconchego-as.

Poem of the cold hands

Poema das mãos frias
There is an intrinsic, inscrutable inevitability, inherent and embedded in all things. An inevitability that won't be cheated, not defied or demeaned, not moved to pity or pleased, not deceived or impeded, an inevitability so inevitably inevitable, that it could only be inevitably avoided by becoming inevitable in some equally inevitable manner.

I know I can choose between good and evil. I know that I can inevitably choose between good and evil. And I know I choose the good between evil and good. I know I inevitably choose the good. Because to choose the good is to choose inevitably the good, like choosing evil is choosing inevitably evil. My free will leads me inevitably to this inevitable choice.

---

Poema do livre arbítrio

Há uma fatalidade intrínseca, insofismável, inerente a todas as coisas e nelas incrustada. Uma fatalidade que não se pode ludibriar, nem peitar, nem desvirtuar, nem entreter, nem comover, nem iludir, nem impedir. Uma fatalidade fatalmente fatal, uma fatalidade que só poderia deixar de o ser para ser fatalidade de outra maneira qualquer, igualmente fatal.

Eu sei que posso escolher entre o bem e o mal. Eu sei que posso fatalmente escolher entre o bem e o mal.

E já sei que escolho o bem entre o mal e o bem. Já sei que escolho fatalmente o bem. Porque escolher o bem é escolher fatalmente o bem, como escolher o mal é escolher fatalmente o mal. O meu livre arbítrio conduz-me fatalmente a uma escolha fatal.

---

Poem of the free will*

There is an intrinsic, inscrutable inevitability, inherent and embedded in all things. An inevitability that won't be cheated, not defied or demeaned, not moved to pity or pleased, not deceived or impeded, an inevitability so inevitably inevitable, that it could only be inevitably avoided by becoming inevitable in some equally inevitable manner.

I know I can choose between good and evil. I know that I can inevitably choose between good and evil. And I know I choose the good between evil and good. I know I inevitably choose the good. Because to choose the good is to choose inevitably the good, like choosing evil is choosing inevitably evil. My free will leads me inevitably to this inevitable choice.

---

Poema do livre arbítrio

Há uma fatalidade intrínseca, insofismável, inerente a todas as coisas e nelas incrustada. Uma fatalidade que não se pode ludibriar, nem peitar, nem desvirtuar, nem entreter, nem comover, nem iludir, nem impedir. Uma fatalidade fatalmente fatal, uma fatalidade que só poderia deixar de o ser para ser fatalidade de outra maneira qualquer, igualmente fatal.

Eu sei que posso escolher entre o bem e o mal. Eu sei que posso fatalmente escolher entre o bem e o mal.

E já sei que escolho o bem entre o mal e o bem. Já sei que escolho fatalmente o bem. Porque escolher o bem é escolher fatalmente o bem, como escolher o mal é escolher fatalmente o mal. O meu livre arbítrio conduz-me fatalmente a uma escolha fatal.

---

Poem of the free will*

There is an intrinsic, inscrutable inevitability, inherent and embedded in all things. An inevitability that won't be cheated, not defied or demeaned, not moved to pity or pleased, not deceived or impeded, an inevitability so inevitably inevitable, that it could only be inevitably avoided by becoming inevitable in some equally inevitable manner.

I know I can choose between good and evil. I know that I can inevitably choose between good and evil. And I know I choose the good between evil and good. I know I inevitably choose the good. Because to choose the good is to choose inevitably the good, like choosing evil is choosing inevitably evil. My free will leads me inevitably to this inevitable choice.

---
Se não houvesse mais nada
(mesmo mais nada)
se a mesma causa desse sempre o mesmo efeito,
e para cada efeito houvesse sempre a mesma causa,
então o meu salgueiro
havia um dia de ressuscitar.

Se não houvesse mais nada
(mesmo mais nada)
se não átomos,
eu príprio,
da efeméride eternamente repetida
deste momento de agora,
tornaria a rever o meu salgueiro.

Se não houvesse mais nada
(mesmo mais nada)
se não átomos,
os milhões de milhões de milhões de átomos
que compõem os milhões de milhões de milhões de galáxias
dispostos de milhões de milhões de milhões de maneiras diferentes,
teriam forçosamente de repetir,
daqui a milhões de milhões de milhões de séculos,
exactíssimamente a mesma disposição que agora têm.

If there were nothing else
(absolutely nothing else)
but atoms,
if the same cause always led to the same effect
and for every effect there was always but one cause,
then someday I’d once again see
my willow alive and well.

If there were nothing else
(absolutely nothing else)
but atoms,
I, too,
on the eternally repeated date
of this moment’s now,
would once again see my willow.

If there were nothing else
(absolutely nothing else)
but atoms,
the millions upon millions upon millions of atoms
that make up the millions upon millions upon millions of galaxies
arrayed in millions upon millions upon millions of ways,
would necessarily repeat,
in a few million upon millions upon millions of centuries,
the exact same array they’re in today.

Poema do eterno retorno
Poem of the eternal return*
E então,
nessa dia infinitamente longínquo mas finitamente próximo,
eu, Fulano de Tal,
filho legítimo de Fulano de tal e de Dona Fulana de Tal,
nascido e baptizado na freguesia de Tal,
a tanto de Tal,
eto paterno de Fulanos de Tal,
e materno de Tal e Tal,
se não houvesse mais nada
(meismo mais nada)
se não houvesse mais nada
(meismo mais nada)
 encontrar-me-ia no mesmo ponto do mesmo Universo
a olhar parvamente para o meu salgueiro.

Isto, é claro,
if there were nothing else
(assolutely nothing else)
but atoms,
then someday I’d find myself exactly here in the Universe
staring like an idiot at my willow.

And so,
on that infinitely remote but finitely close day,
I, So and So,
son of Mr and Mrs So and So,
born and baptized in such and such a parish,
at such and such an hour,
paternal grandson of So and So,
maternal grandson of So and So,
and so on and so forth,

Of course, all this would be so,
if there were nothing else
(assolutely nothing else)
but atoms.
And it really could not be any other way.

Like moon-drawn waves that come and go, other waves swell, drawn by other moons, the visage’s satellites. While the former covet the beaches with love, penetrating them with spume, the latter do not love, do not drench, do not self-consume. They simply change color. They come from within and rise in a conflict without relenting or weakening, leaving the visage crumbled and dry like wind-blown deserts. Running its hand languidly through its beard, like one who passes time without care, the roaring of the fierce waves disguises itself, while the moons, brute stones, lifeless and without remorse, coldly fulfill their orbits as if conscious of doing so.

And thus the days pass, as tranquil as those of embroideresses’, bent over their needles. With colored threads they etch harmonious figures, innocent adornments, serious and absorbed, as if all life were balanced there — past, present and future — on the point of a needle. Exemplary beings, these embroideresses: when they prick themselves they lightly lick the welling droplet, mix it with saliva, swallow it and proceed, both distracted and attentive.

And it really could not be any other way.
Like moon-drawn waves
that come and go.
other waves swell, drawn
by other moons, the visage’s satellites.
While the former covet the sands with love
penetrating them with spume,
the latter do not love, do not drench, do not self-consume.
They simply change color.
They come from within and rise in a conflict
without relenting or weakening,
leaving the visage crumbled and dry
like wind-blown deserts.
Running its hand languidly through its beard,
like one who passes time without care,
disfarça-se o rugir da onda brava
enquanto as luas,
pedras brutas sem vida nem remorso,
frailmente percorrem suas órbitas
como se disso fossem conscientes.

E assim correm os dias, tão pacatos
como os das bordadeiras, debruçadas
sobre os seus bastidores.
Com as linhas de cor fazem figuras
harmoniosas, ornamentos inocentes,
tão sérias e absorvadas
como se a vida toda ali estivesse,
o passado, o presente e o futuro,
nas pontas de umas agulhas.
São seres exemplares, as bordadeiras.
Quando se picam
chupam de leve a gota que desponta,
ensalivam-na, engolem-na e prosseguem,
distraciadas e atentas.

E nem podia ser de outra maneira.

Como as ondas do mar que vão e vêm
pela atração da Lua,

etc...