



# CASARÃO DO VERBO

2013/2014





A big house welcoming readers and writers



# CASARÃO DO VERBO

The idea to establish a publishing house in a small town in the Brazilian northeastern state of Bahia first arose when one of our two founders was living in Montreal, Canada. The idea began with very little capital, just the idea, an email account, and a lot of ambition. The first title launched by Casarão do Verbo was *Singular Crossings: fathers and sons* (2008), a short story collection including some of the great names of Brazilian literature, which came about largely based on a wish to create a high caliber small press outside the region of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, and to begin with an excellent and significant collection of Brazilian literature.

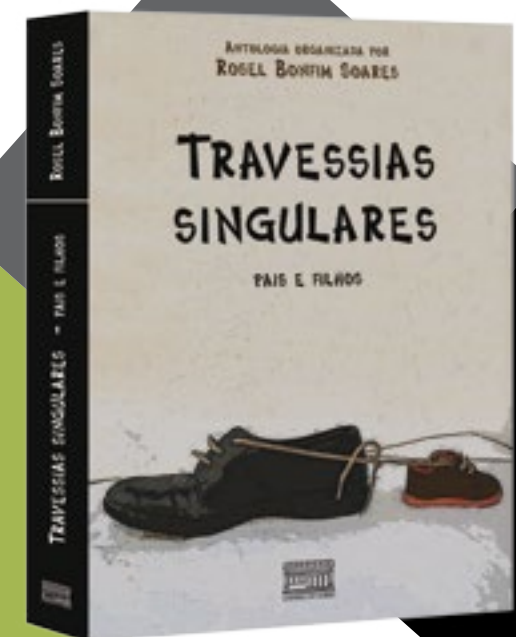
Casarão do Verbo has already demonstrated its strong international vocation. And despite being a young company, this publishing house has already gained respect and admiration from readers, writers, and critics in Brazil. Two Casarão de Verbo novels — *Useless Obscene Moons* and *Don Solidon*, both by veteran Brazilian writer Hélio Pólvora — were short-listed for Brazil's biggest literary prizes in 2011 and 2012.

But Casarão do Verbo is about more than just sales of books and rights. A significant part of our mission is also to develop programs to encourage reading and to contribute to the creation, development and strengthening of a real publishing market in the Brazilian Northeast region.

Our name, Casarão do Verbo, literally means 'The big house of the verb'. Although a fledgling independent company, we consider ourselves to be a big house where there is room for excellent writers and discerning readers.

Renata Bonfim Soares | director  
Rosel Bonfim Soares | publisher

Anajé, Bahia, Brazil. October, 2013







“This is Hélio Pólvara: a strong theme and a unique situation in every story.”

## BEGUILING ADVENTURE IN EVERY STORY

With a literary career spanning over fifty years, Hélio Pólvara has published around 120 short stories, his writing on a par with the world's best storytellers. One of our main goals here at Casarão do Verbo press is to introduce these stories in a series of five books, covering Pólvara's key phase and representing the very best of this Brazilian writer.

The books, in order of writing and publication, are: *Estranhos e Assustados* (Strange and Afraid), *Noites Vivas* (Living Nights), *Massacre no km 13* (Slaughter at Kilometer 13), *O Grito da perdiz* (The Cry of the Partridge) e *Mar de Azov* (Sea of Azov). These collections were first published between 1966 and 1986, and three of them have won the most prestigious literary awards in Brazil.

According to one critic, Pólvara's stories are born of “strong themes and strong loves”, with “Brazilian inspiration and craft”. Jorge Amado admired Hélio Pólvara as “a writer of the old school, concerned with form and the richness of language”. Universal in their essence, Pólvara's stories also always maintain touches of

“  
...a return to classic  
storytelling...  
”

local colour, revealing the author's fascination for the wild, the forest, the rural, as well as the jungles in cities, and conflicts between humans and animals.

Pólvara's short story *O Grito da perdiz* (The Cry of the Partridge) has been compared to the best of Hemingway, and many consider it to be a universal masterpiece. Another one, *Mar de Azov* (Sea of Azov) is narrated by the same voice in three different periods of life — childhood, youth, and middle age —, in a remarkable demonstration of non-temporal storytelling, with a pungency characteristic of writers such as Anton Chekov. The story *Ninfas, ou A Idade da água* (Nymphs, or the Age of Water) captures and captivates the reader with its “rich verbal web”.

Inspired by both the rural and the urban, and with an irony and humour often inflected by tenderness and lyricism, the stories in these five books reveal empathy for human and animal characters and the world in which they live.

Imagine a man, alone in the depths of a forest, trapped by a jaguar, fighting for his life... This is Hélio Pólvara: a strong theme and a unique situation in every story. Every story is different, with

its own form and narrative style. This is a writer capable of emphasizing the story itself as much as the way of telling it.

This connection is one of the most interesting features of Pólvara's writing. Not in terms of a desire to show solidarity, in a model of ideological caused fiction, but simply in the sense of embedding a reflection of himself in his work, as both narrator and character, protagonist and creator (or re-creator); characters who narrate whilst being narrated. The reader sometimes stops to ask, who is the narrator here? This question is particularly pertinent in the story *Além do Mundo Azul* (Beyond the Blue World), in which the narrative levels seem to engulf each other.

Discovering Hélio Pólvara is an adventure. His work is a throwback to the pleasure of the short story that really does tell a story, with a clear setting, character, conflict, and always-masterful language. Hélio Pólvara's stories are a return to classic storytelling, with beginnings, middles, and endings, plus a touch and dash of the modern.





“...comparable to Edgar Allan Poe and Maupassant.”

Ok. Fine. If they were then to question me, the Deaf Man, they would most likely ask: What can you hear? There's a gnashing of teeth, buzzing, and bangs that fill the horizon with acrid smoke. And I would say, calmly: I can't hear anything. But what I would most like to hear is Shakespeare's poetry”.

In the novel *Don Solidon*, the narrator writes random letters, imitating Saul Bellow's Herzog. He talks to the ghost of Hamlet's father on the top floor of a castle, and, when he walks, feels the breath of a dog at his heels. His father offers an hour with his wife as a bet in a card game, and the winner sets out to claim his winnings.

With these strong dramas, Hélió Pólvara represents new Brazilian fiction. He is the author of twelve collections of short stories (Five published by Casarão do Verbo) and is, according to André Seffrin, one of the most important literary critics in Brazil, comparable to Edgar Allan Poe and Maupassant.



The internationally recognised writer Jorge Amado considered Pólvara to be “a writer of the old school, concerned with form and the richness of language”. Naturally, Pólvara likes being praised, but he prefers above all else, to be read.

In fifty years of writing, including literary criticism and translations, what Hélió Pólvara really stands out for is his short stories and novels. With an incessant search for new forms of narration, density of text and refined style, his stories are on a par with those of Machado de Assis and João Guimarães Rosa, Pólvara is an unsettling, demanding author, always striving for improvement and renovation, and constantly surprising his readers. Recently, at the age of 82, Pólvara has shown astounding skills as a novelist, with the recent two books: *Inúteis Luas Obscenas* and *Don Solidon*, **both published by Casarão do Verbo, and both shortlisted for the City of São Paulo Literature Prize, the biggest award of its kind in Brazil.**

If Rulfo and Amado were alive today, they would doubtless have delighted in the Deaf Man, a character in Pólvara's novel *Inúteis Luas Obscenas* who, at one point, muses:

“I need to find a mute friend. One of those people who you can open up to, say anything to without risk that they'll answer back. I hate controversy. When I say the moon is square and that the Earth spins round it, they'll have to believe me. Maybe the mute man would have the answers to my deepest questions — with the good manners not to tell me what the answers are. I'm also looking for a blind friend. Someone who can't see and can't moan, either. That would bring me tranquillity: the Deaf Man and the Mute Man. He would tell us that we're over anxious, that this is the best of possible worlds, just like wise old Pangloss said. If I were to ask the Blind Man, at the height of my anguish: What can you see? He would say: I can see darkness. And I would answer back: Can't you see yourself? And he would say: No. My darkness is diluted in a greater darkness.

## Unsettling novels by an important Brazilian writer

When visiting Brazil in 1972, the great Mexican novelist Juan Rulfo, author of the classic *Pedro Páramo*, placed Hélió Pólvara among the most important Brazilian writers of the time, alongside Clarice Lispector and Graciliano Ramos.

HÉLIO PÓLVORA



## THE AFFECTIONATE DICTIONARY SERIES

*The Affectionate Dictionary* series, published by Casarão do Verbo, is, in essence, a literary occupation of major Brazilian cities by different writers, describing various aspects of the urban landscape. From the margins to the centres, from the general to the specific, from the unknown to the famous, urban areas to parklands are experienced and explored with sharp wit and versatility. In their respective cities, these writers are as much an integral part of the place as they are objective – but always affectionate –, onlookers.

*The Affectionate Dictionary* is an alternative look at the largest cities in Brazil, a look at not only the obvious, but also at the secret and the unexplored. The adjective affectionate covers a huge range of possibilities, with enormous potential for different interpretations. The A to Z entries hold a great mix of feelings, places, situations, people, and much much more.

Rather than dates, opening times, and other

commercial information, readers get a real feel for the place, whether sociology disguised as anecdotes, intrigue resembling philosophy, a short story that is in fact psychology, or a smell that is indeed just a smell; in every case, we see a city stripped bare, revealed, its masks removed. As a whole, the series delves into the Brazilian psyche from various angles, and with legends losing out to reality.

A walk around each city by writers who know the place inside out: São Paulo streets, Rio de Janeiro avenues, the Salvador waterfront, the people of Recife, the beaches of Fortaleza, dialect in Belo Horizonte, sunshine in Natal, locals in Curitiba, houses in Cuiabá, poetry in Manaus, a quayside in Porto Alegre, and the plains of Brasília. These are writers who see their cities with realistic tenderness, and the ability to clearly and wholly depict the buzz.

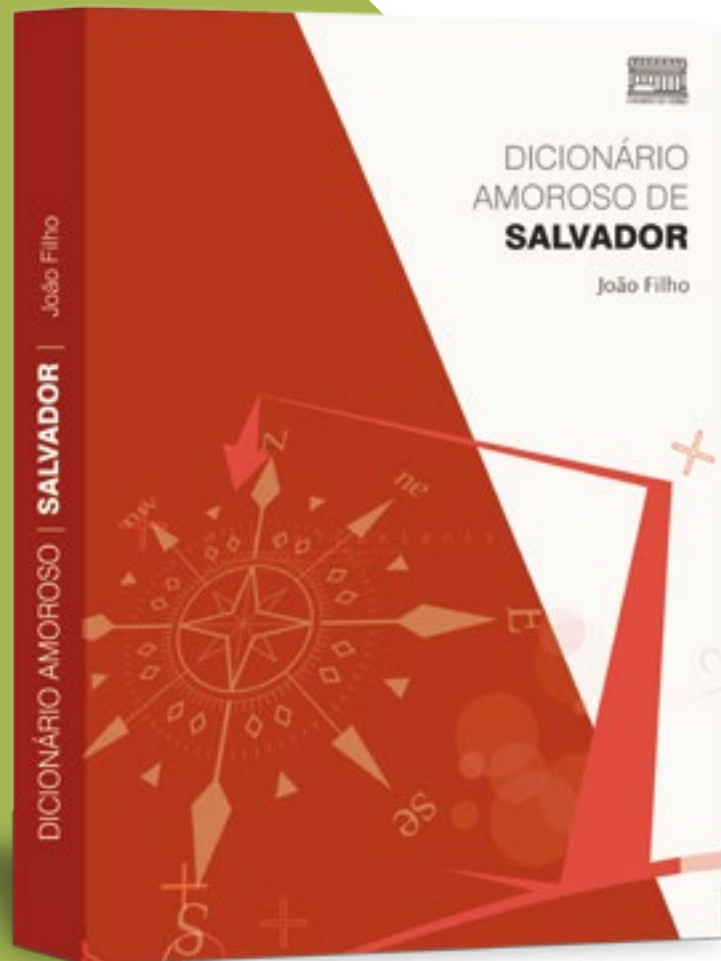
With these walks, the reader will see each of these cities in a new way. An affectionate cartography of the cities of Brazil is in essence and above all, literature.







Author: João Filho  
Genre: Short story  
Pages: 168  
Format: 15x23cm



## The Affectionate Dictionary of Salvador

There is no way to sum up Salvador. It's a city impossible to chain down. Always seducing, never seduced. Attempts to classify Salvador in any kind of fixed terms are fruitless. Not that it's an indefinable place; just that it's alive and kicking. And there's no alternative but to accept the seduction and simply live it. In this vein, writer and poet João Filho lets himself to be seduced not only by mermaid songs, but also by the drums, berimbaus, dialogue, streets, beaches, churches, people, and traditions of this city. A universe impossible to summarize, but one that can be seen, and — like any good Bahian —, felt.

On a walk round Salvador from the beginning to the end of the alphabet, writer and poet João Filho — originally from the Bahian interior town Bom Jesus da Lapa—, seeks to show hints of both the fleeting and the concrete

of the city, and in doing so, also reveals something of himself between the lines. On this two way road, Filho's perceptions of the metropolis and his views of himself cross paths in moments of mutual understanding, their contradictions contributing to how they live together. For good examples of this, see the entries on Preguiça (Laziness) and Carnaval (Carnival) in *The Affectionate Dictionary of Salvador*.

Salvador is not a place for beginners. The first capital of Brazil must be allowed to maintain its secrets, and the city insists on hanging on to certain liberties, which would indeed be impossible to let go of. Wandering and ignoring the straight lines is the only way of getting anywhere near the intimate nature of Salvador. One of many examples: If you want good service in a restaurant or bar, you have to be friends with the waiters. There is no point in thinking otherwise. If not, your beer and snack will take forever to prepare, and when you finally get served, the temperatures are back to front: warm beer with a cold snack.

“...learn the meaning of the phrase “é niûa”; find out what Bahia and Japan have in common...”

Although immersed in the soul of the city, João Filho is also a distanced observer, deftly distinguishing the typical from the odd. With a shrewd grasp of nuance, he explains that a Bahian's idea of superhero vision is the evil eye, and that if the city's ever-intense Bahia-Vitoria football rivalry is an epic saga, then the local beach kickabouts are dramas in miniature. He also reveals a Salvador far from the Carnival clichés and from the city's legendary 365 churches, and shows that for Dorival Caymmi, tempo was a matter not only of music, but also of life.

Salvador is not for beginners, which is why *The Affectionate Dictionary of Salvador* is essential reading: readers will grasp something of the Bahian essence, learn the meaning of the phrase “é niûa”, find out what Bahia and Japan have in common, understand that the old houses in the historical centre are silent witnesses, willing to reveal all their secrets, understand that walking up Salvador's hills demands a specific rhythm, that the line traced around the city is a single long beach, and what dominates everything is the sea.

If the city has tangled the writer into its plot, then the writer has indeed learned well the story of this mesh. And, although captured, he has also skilfully grasped those eccentricities and simpler elements of this urban mass, so often unseen or ignored. According to João Filho, the initial exuberance of the obvious side of Salvador is what makes it so easy to overlook the purple hibiscus in the gardens, the age-old trees, and the black children sleeping under viaducts.

The interaction between the two — city and writer—, is, as with all couples, a balance between attraction and repulsion, harshness and tenderness. It's the antitheses present in any true relationship. Fascination is not blindness, and João Filho does not omit the misfortunes of Salvador, and does not hide his view that the spirit driving the city is also a spirit of obsessions and weak points. He reveals the city's acid irony, its sun that warms you up but can also burn you. Rather than attempting the impossible task of clarifying Salvador, *The Affectionate Dictionary of Salvador*, with each letter, with each entry, hopes, together with the city itself, to seduce the reader.



## BRASILIA, MON AMOUR

Brazil's capital through the eyes of the city's greatest poet, Nicolas Behr, author of "A literary guide to Brasilia".

The presence of yes and no, that's what best defines Brasília, I guess. No to straight lines, no to the authoritarian layout of the city, the ready-made city, no to power, no to bureaucracy. Yes to public sector jobs, yes to the dream of working for the government, yes to long-term financial stability in civil service, yes to a good retirement salary.

I'm sure the best place to inspire my writing is The Superquadra 308 south, next to Nossa Senhora de Fatima Church. Because it's peaceful, calm, and very green, in the middle of this incredible concept of the superquadra residential block.

Famous people who could only have been born in Brasília? Difficult question... hmm... I'd say Renato Russo, the singer... although he was born in Rio, he went to school here.

The city's hostility makes people have interior revolutions.

Brasília's sky and sunsets are wonderful to see, unmissable... Paranoá lake, and the *cerrado* surrounding it all...

Books I recommend everyone to read about the city:

Lúcio Costa's "Pilot plan" (Yes, it's a work of fiction). And "Free city". By João Almino.







## INTERVIEW

### What do you think most defines the character of people from Porto Alegre?

People from Porto Alegre are generally against things. They were against the Farroupilha Revolution, and today the whole city stops to commemorate the act of having challenged the Empire. It was here that Brizola organized the 1961 Campanha da Legalidade [Campaign for Legality] and tried to support Jango in a counter attack on the military coup, a coup that many say had its origins in the city's military school. And as far as I know, this is the Brazilian state with the lowest number of fans for Rio and São Paulo teams. All these factors contribute to the odd nature of people from Porto Alegre. They're essentially aloof, with an air of self-sufficiency. On top of this is the inclination for parochialism: in the Olympics, they'll look out for someone local, in a tragedy, they'll check to see if someone local died. They drink locally made beer, bought in the local supermarket,

next to the local pharmacy. Some say that if we spoke Spanish, we'd be Argentinean. I don't believe that; we're against them, too.

### Is there a place in the city that inspires your writing, and why?

Porto Alegre is not an especially inspiring city. It's the state capital, and a largely bureaucratic city, attracting people more for work than anything else. We rarely see tourists here. This is an issue for the shaping of literature from here. (Maybe this is actually an explanation for the proliferation of so many writers from Porto Alegre). The city does indeed appear to have a vocation for literature, considering that text, the kind to be read in silence, fits well with the typical local, someone who keeps himself to himself, walks his dog in the park, or walks arm in arm with someone who passes him a chimarrão. The best way to read Porto Alegre is to

## THE AFFECTIONATE DICTIONARY OF PORTO ALEGRE *Altair Martins*

read the city's streets themselves, with their human movement. As well observed by Mario Quintana, the streets are the arteries of our people.

### In your opinion, what famous people could only have been born in Porto Alegre, and why?

Elis Regina had typical characteristics of someone from Porto Alegre. She was, arguably, the most talented singer in the history of Brazil. Her success could be said to be essentially due to her regional character, if we consider her position of being against various issues. She was strong intellectually; she spoke out, she acted on her words, she sang. She wasn't ashamed of anything. She was a singer of the world and didn't feel the need to reinforce traditions of where she was from. She couldn't have been born in Rio, where she was happy to live, nor in São Paulo, where she found her place in the world, and where she died. No. Elis Regina was born in Porto Alegre in order to escape from Porto Alegre. Nothing could be more typical of this city.

### If you had to write a short story or novel that had to have the name of the city in its title, what would you call it?

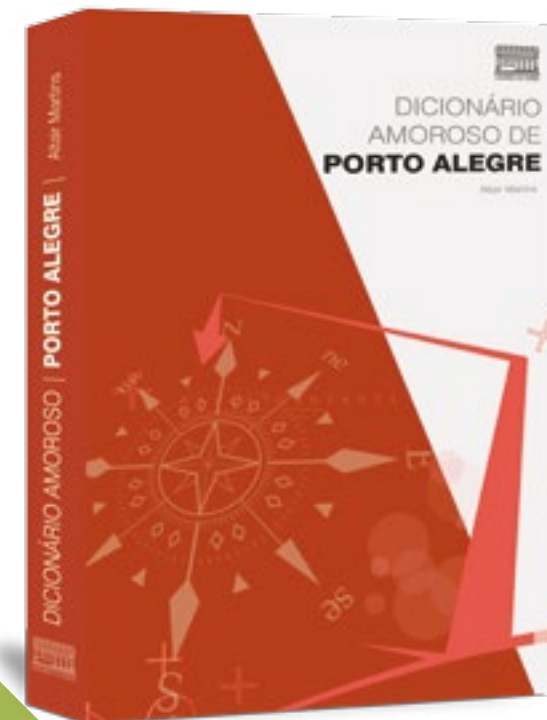
If it hadn't already been written, I'd write Dyonélio Machado's novel *The rats*. I'd write Mario Quintana's *A Rua dos Cataventos* [Pinwheel Street] if I knew how to write poetry like him. I'd write *Underneath Porto Alegre* to understand the city we hide behind our escape, behind our wish to be something else, behind the temptation to appear bigger than we are, to challenge those who are bigger. The text would be about the discovery of a city underneath the city, a previous empire, against which we had risen in rebellion.

### What would you say is the most predominant natural element in the landscape of Porto Alegre?

Porto Alegre is a city marked by cold and wind, but also by its river and hills. We have everything here except the sea. But what really marks the city are the trees, with their spring blossom, in particular the Jacaranda and Ipê trees. This is what gives the city's landscape its elegant purple and yellow, like a fine suit. There would be no way to really feel Porto Alegre without its trees.

### Can you recommend any books set in the city of Porto Alegre?

There is a strong presence of Porto Alegre in all Mario Quintana's books, as well as in the writing of Luiz de Miranda, Luiz Coronel and Armino Trevisan. We read Porto Alegre in the narrative of *The rats*, by Dyonélio Machado, in *Clarissa*, by Erico Verissimo, in *Camilo Mortágua*, by Josué Guimarães. We get a feel for the Porto Alegre of times gone by in the many novels of Luiz Antonio de Assis Brasil. We can hear Porto Alegre in the work of Lupicínio Rodrigues and Sérgio Napp. And we can see Porto Alegre in the prints of Juarez Fonseca, the painting of Iberê Camargo and the sculpture of Xico Stockinger and Vasco Prado.





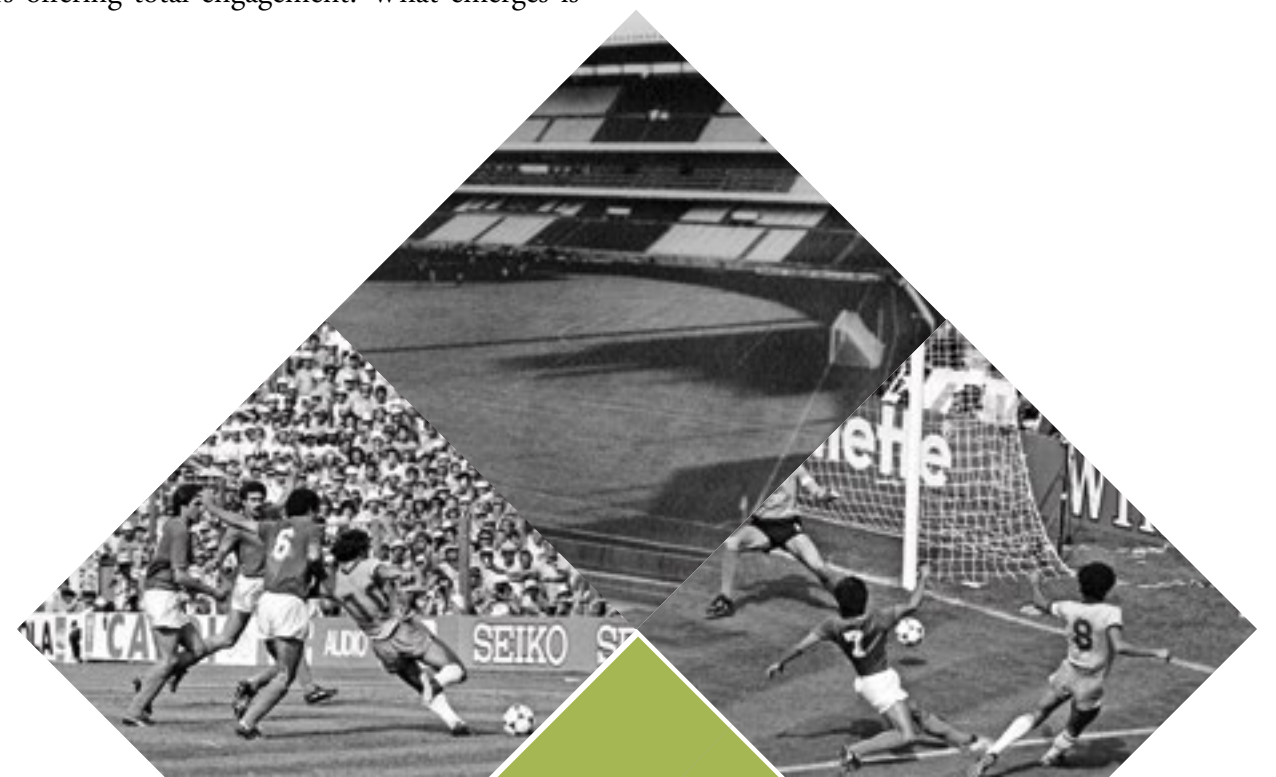
“  
A game not to be  
missed! ”

“...comparable  
to the 1950  
World Cup  
final...”

The 1982 World Cup was the last one in which Brazil truly captured the public's imagination, with several of the best players Brazil has ever produced peaking at the same time, principally Falcão, Zico and Socrates. Yet they didn't win a thing, not a single international trophy of any relevance. It was the World Cup in which one player, Italy's Paolo Rossi, tore apart one of the greatest ever Brazil sides, a 3-2 defeat etched on every Brazilian's memory, from man in the street to writer at the desk. In fifteen short stories, fifteen Brazilian authors present their visions of that fateful day, our Sarrião, comparable to the 1950 World Cup final defeat, the Maracanazo. There are many different points of view, many styles and intentions — some of them figurative, others abstract — as well as many different focuses, some distancing themselves from the game, others offering total engagement. What emerges is

evidence that, no matter how singular an event — in this case that terrible and totally unexpected defeat — it will always effect different people in different ways. The range of memories and consequences is reflected here, in literary terms, in all their richness and colour, by writers such as the much celebrated Sidney Rocha, Luiz Pimentel, while the collection is introduced by the star of ball and word, Tostão.

A game not to be missed!

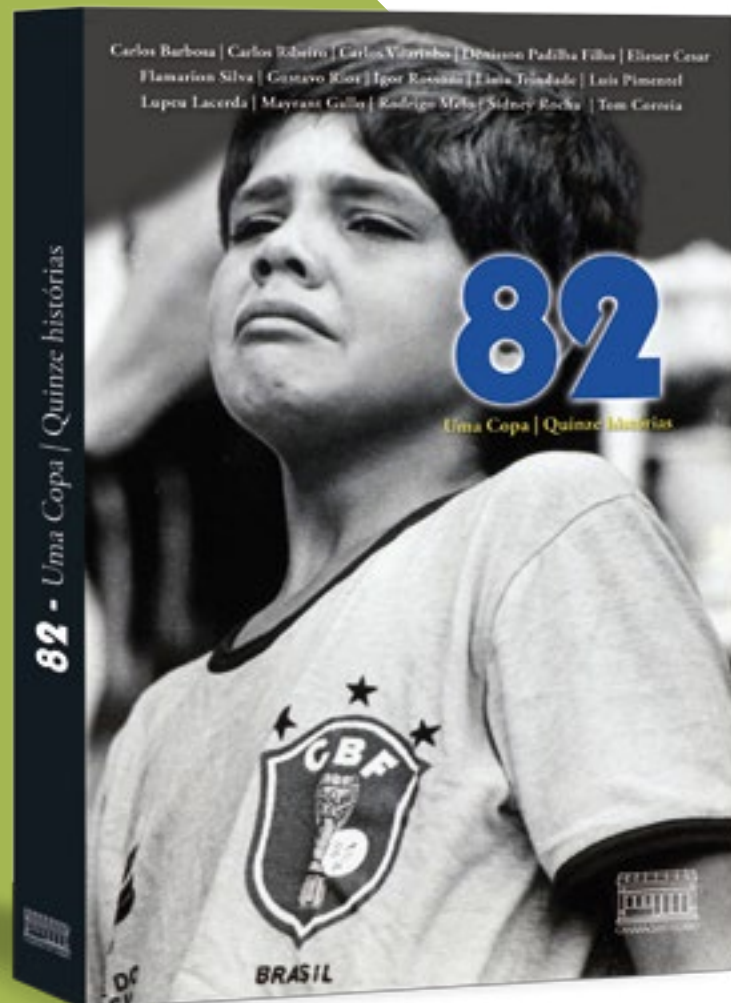


Author: various  
Genre: short story  
Pages: 160  
Format: 15x23cm

82

The Magnificent Game

*82: one cup, fifteen stories* is a collection of short stories relating to the 1982 World Cup and a particular match, Brazil's 3-2 defeat to Italy. Surely one of the most beautiful and dramatic soccer games ever.



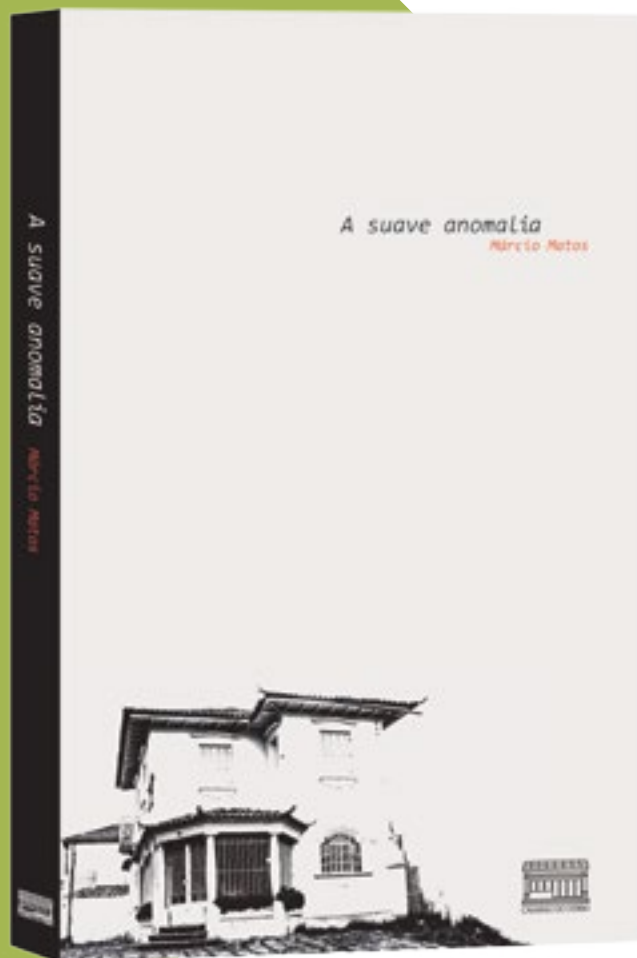




Author: Márcio Matos  
Genre: Novel  
Pages: 232  
Format: 15x23cm

19

“  
...a book to be  
read slowly...  
”



## THE SWEET ANOMALY

On literature  
and the dissection  
of molluscs

*The Sweet Anomaly* — the debut novel by young Bahian writer Márcio de Matos — tells the story of a painful awakening. The death of a patriarch causes a whole family to realise that none of them have ever been truly alive, or at least not totally awake. The place where they live inhabits them; emotions are hidden between the walls, emotions too ashamed even to air themselves in the sun.

It's not by chance that the first character to be revealed to the reader is the house itself, with a captivating call to its visitors. As we go in, we edge surreptitiously along the corridor, lightly pushing on an half open door into an old room, and can almost hear the feigned throat clearing of the grandfather, a character soon shown to be as powerful as the walls around him.

The old man's death, his agonizing

passing, brings fragility to this small fortress of a family, a cephalopod mollusc, with tentacles spread wide, to include daughters, sons-in-law, and a host of other people with links to the family. To understand such a complex sea monster as this, an appreciation is needed of its many legs, each with its own nature and mode of being.

But understanding of what makes up a body is not enough to free us of the traps of the soul. This is what the grandfather sees, with his moral collapse. The gentle anomaly of the title shatters into a thousand pieces and becomes a kaleidoscope. Some of the characters can make out images inside that cardboard tube, but some of them deny being able to see anything at all.

Marina is a character who carries her childhood home on her shoulders, with its ghosts and pleasures, and it is her who carries us through the plot. Between Marina and her grandfather there is an abyss of proximity. Her doom-filled presence traces out a game with no winners and one that is impossible to leave. By her nature and essence, she will always be in opposition. To something, to someone, to life.

[by Kátia Borges]

18



“Tom Correia’s characters hover between doubt, downfall, and emptiness.”

— around Brazil; a bored clerk adds his own opinions to official statements; a poor writer hopes to pay off debts by writing the mediocre biography of a rich man; a company crushes its employees in a slave regime; a boy taking a corner kick in the local football game loses his big chance to score a legendary goal; an amateur boxer questions his sexuality; a thief gets into a permanent battle with a dog; a modest office worker is forced to satisfy the sexual desires of three sisters for whom he feels no physical attraction; a boy is drawn to a life a crime.

Tom Correia’s characters hover between doubt, downfall, and emptiness. People in the worst of situations; people destined to take wrong turns in life, people condemned to failure and without chance of redemption; the downtrodden and the aggrieved in a society focussed on success, a society in which the majority is excluded from consumerism. These are the lives depicted in *Under a deep grey sky*, the second book of short stories by Tom Correia, award-winning author of *Memorial to the Mediocre* (winner of the Braskem Literature Prize, 2002).

Tom Correia writes in a concise, lean, sure style, like a helmsman sailing calmly along the coast, in contrast to the open ocean route a novelist might take. There are passages rich with colloquialisms, evoking the brashness of Bukowski, such as in this excerpt in the short story “Clinch”, (the title referring to the boxing term of when one fighter holds the other in order to avoid a punch or to get a breather in order to get back into the fight):

*“What are you doing here?”*

*“I didn’t have anything else to do right now. I came to*

*exercise. Aren’t you going to eat anything?”*

*“I’m not hungry. It’s been a while since I saw you”.*

*“I’ve been seeing Cris”.*

*“What the hell do you see in her?”*

*“She may not look so great, but you should see what she can do... What about Vilma, have you seen her?”.*

*“She called me the other day”.*

*“And?”*

*“She wants to see me again. She said she’s in love with me”.*

*“Didn’t I tell you? Bring it on, you stud”.*

In “Ruins”, the first story in the book, following “almost eighteen years without sick leave, without taking a single day off work, without a set time for lunch, and never any lateness”, a man is fired from his job. In order to survive, he takes on a job researching an episode in the story of a famous woman’s trip to Bahia. He meets a friend of the woman, an aged homosexual with a powerful personality, with whom the protagonist becomes involved in an unusual battle of wits as the story progresses.

In the story “Raybans”, a young man is invited to write the autobiography of a rich man. He sees the job as a possibility to pay off his debts, and waits to be contacted to close the deal. The sad condition as a ghost-writer seems to him to be the only way out of his financial problems:

*I’ve got a thing for biographies, even the really boring ones. I should become a biographer of empty lives, now there’s an unexplored niche. I read once that the majority of old wealthy men want to get their life story published before they die, but I thought that only happened in big*



Co-publication with Editora Lingua Solta

## UNDER A DEEP GREY SKY

Tom Correia

The perpetual odyssey of the downtrodden and the aggrieved

An ambitious professional finds himself unemployed and takes on a job interviewing a rich man to find out about the travels of a certain Simone – understood to be Simone de Beauvoir

Author: Tom Correia  
Genre: short story  
Pages: 104  
Format 15x23cm



*cities, not in places like this, where books are treated like landfill. In most cases people with money don't know how to write. And the ones that do know don't manage to earn money with it. With some types of art, getting paid is simply a lottery.*

With irony and melancholy, the poor writer comes to the conclusion, that money earned from a book is not enough to buy a pair of Raybans, his object of desire.

"Pay check" is a science fiction story about a dystopia, a mechanized world of slavery. The setting is a factory with three hundred people on its front line, who don't know what they are actually manufacturing. With shades of Orwell, this is a prophecy of a future where man is worthless. In the factory, the only contact allowed amongst workers is a brief handshake. There is no conversation, and requests to leave are ignored. Missing work for the burial of a loved one is forbidden. Breaks to drink water are timed. Cell phones are not allowed. On Sundays there is three times more work to do.

Few people in the factory manage to get time off, and when they do it is in order to "research projects for ergonomic solutions". There is a Stalinist hierarchy, with high-level employees watching over the lower level, with the superiors, in turn, being monitored by an even more powerful level. Nobody escapes being monitored, and nothing goes unnoticed. At the lowest level are the workers. Then the S-1, who are short and white. Next, the green-eyed S-2. Next, the S-3, who have Asian features. Above them, there is the S-4, also green-eyed. Higher still are the Super and the Master Supervisors, who monitor everyone below them and who are monitored by the Idol-Managers, the G-1, who have been brought in from the outside. Nobody knows anyone else's name. Everyone is identified by a number, which is changed every two days. The final, hanging phrase of this story is a treat, and proof that it is impossible to escape from the Kafkaesque web.

The story "Harpies", also deals with a suffocating workspace, but this time it's slightly more pleasant, with more chance of a way out for

the main character. The story is set in an accounting firm, owned by three sisters, each one more ugly, greedy and grotesque than the other. All they think about is reducing costs. The bathroom is cleaned just once a week, coffee is prohibited, plastic cups are rationed, and lunch vouchers and advance payments suspended. The story follows the company's strange schemes to increase profits and diminish employment taxes.

The last of the thirteen stories in the book, "Under a deep grey sky", is about a young man who gets involved in crime and ends up in prison, where he begins to see that although the sun can be a deep grey, it continues to rise.

[ by Elieser Cesar ]

“Tom Correia writes in a concise, lean, sure style, like a helmsman sailing calmly along the coast, in contrast to the open ocean route a novelist might take.”

UNDER A DEEP GREY SKY





“...events and precedents of the past five hundred years of Brazil...”

from the time of the early Portuguese and Tupi civilizations — before the two groups converged and multiplied in unprecedented abundance —, up to the present day, the author Aurélio Schommer has found self-deprecation to be a constant notion in the story of Brazil. From the very first book written in the country, by the Jesuit Manuel da Nóbrega, to some of the most recent writings, such as by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, there is repeated bemoaning about living amongst a lacklustre people, lacking in qualities and dignity, and, ‘eternally laid on a splendid cradle’ as in the line from the Brazilian National Anthem, an ode both to the riches of the earth and to the poverty of the people on it.

Brazil’s few recognized heroes are, in fact, “typical” Brazilians: questionable, corrupt, scornful characters. National holidays mark gloryless dates, with independence and declaration of the republic having been brought about via a series of unplanned events, with leaders who, in essence, did not even want these changes, as indeed the people did not, with a dominant sense of aversion to self-leadership and collective ambition.

Racist and self-racist, the Brazilian public of the time deplored free immigration from Africa and Asia, whilst welcoming, as racial saviours, poor German criminals and illiterate Italians, later rebuking the former for refusing to mix with nationals. With high esteem for erudition, the Portuguese-Tupi identified this concept only amongst foreigners and a small portion of its own elite, considering the mass public to be ignorant and congenitally incapable of being educated, and it was not considered worthwhile to try to change this situation.

Impurity was identified with the black population, and being able to live with this fact served only to increase self-deprecation among the

white and mulatto population, united in an identity of opposition to those of African origin. Within the indigenous population, in particular the Tapuia, there was inconsistency, indolence, and ignorance.

And among the Portuguese population, there was corruption and aversion to continuous and methodical effort. All these factors have been blamed both for the backwardness of the present, and for a past of inglorious deeds, alluded to in the Brazilian Anthem of the Republic. These factors have also been blamed for the sins of the flesh, having begotten generations of sinners, all responsible for forming an inter-ethnic, and notably homogenous nation, without internal conflicts, and with fortune interpreted as misfortune within the self-deprecating tendency.

When foreigners question them, Brazilian diplomats of the past and present tend to reply with an air of insolence: “That’s just how it is in Brazil”, justifying everything with complacency, self-deprecation serving to dismiss the human potential of the population.

In *The Story of Mongrel Brazil* — a stock take of the ethnic and intellectual make-up of the slow, ambition-lacking giant of South America —, Aurélio Schommer shows how an unshakable five-hundred year old faith in redemption through natural resources has also helped to shape the national spirit, to forge a people who do not act, or act complacently and carelessly, and are waiting, always waiting.

*The Story of Mongrel Brazil* is a story of events and precedents of the past five hundred years of Brazil. It’s the story of the most predominant ideas during this long period; ideas that have been at once persistent, hopeless, false — and at the same time plausible — justifications for the failure of the big brother of the south, the place where the West did not work.

## THE STORY OF MONGREL BRAZIL

*Aurélio Schommer*

Self-deprecation is the most common excuse for complacency, but, in the case of Brazil, it may also serve as justification for conditioning, and for the fact that the giant of South America — despite having started off with the best possible conditions — has become an inverted image of the giant of North America.

Brazil is a failure, a fiasco, as stated by generations of thinkers, historians, leaders, and also ordinary Brazilians. The failure is attributed to a chronic lack of national characteristics and self-racism in a people that berates itself for numerous sins, such as a sense of inhabiting an unjustly usurped territory.

The worst of Africa, the worst of the American indigenous people, and the worst of Europe, mixed together without moral restraint, and beyond the most extreme Roman erotic fantasies of lewdness; this is how Brazilians have viewed themselves and still view themselves. Believers in divine mercy as they present themselves to the Creator as the most despicable amongst His flock. With so many sins, however, there is a distinct lack of pride, both regional and local, in the majority of circumstances and places.

In his rigorous and extensive research,



Author: Aurélio Schommer  
Genre: essay  
Pages: 288  
Format: 15x23cm



“ Among the finalists for the Brazilian National Library’s Machado de Assis Prize... ”

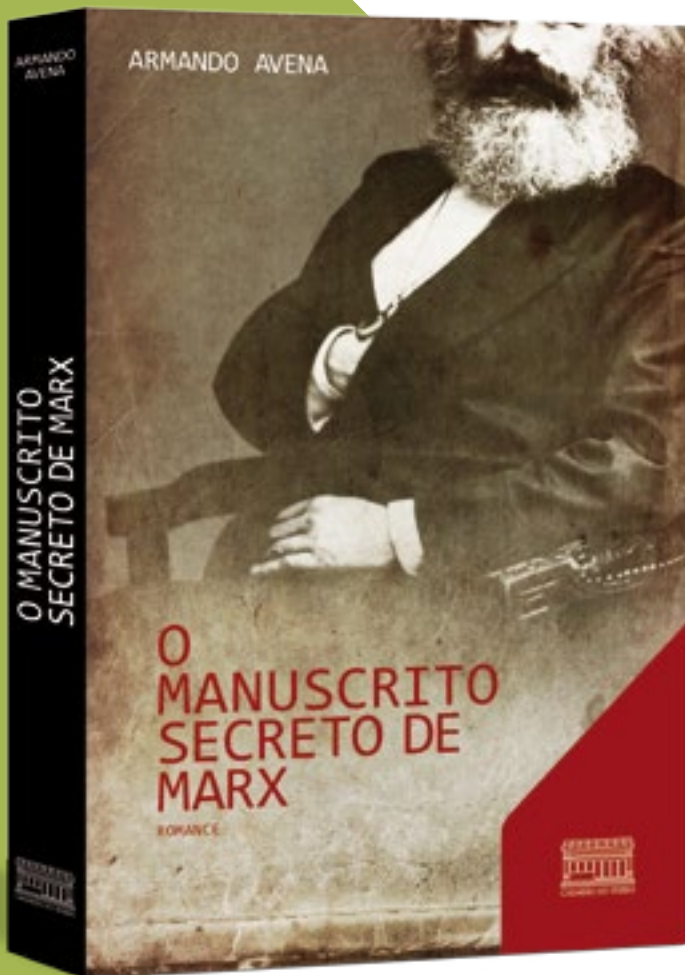
also an idea-rich novel. The story begins when, just before his death, Marx goes to the library at the British Museum and hides his final manuscript inside a book. In the manuscript are Marx’s final and surprising thoughts on the future of socialism, the cause to which he had dedicated his entire life.

What were the dramatic and startling ideas in this revelation that Marx was driven to hide from his contemporaries? Why did he want to speak about his personal life, his love for Jenny and their children, the many other women he had loved, or

about Helené, the governess and lover with whom he had a son hidden from the world so as not to stain the reputation of the father of socialism?

**These are the questions raised at the start of this revealing book, inciting great curiosity about the legacy Marx wanted to leave, and an absorbing read from the start.** There are clues to unravel, steps to follow, and evidence to find. While looking for the clues to find the manuscript, the reader also realizes that Marx may indeed have been assassinated. And all this whilst also learning about political economics and the incredible life story of Marx, the communist philosopher.

Among the finalists for the Brazilian National Library’s Machado de Assis Prize, Marx’s secret manuscript has been well received in Brazil by public and critics alike. The author was born in Bahia, home of great writers such as Jorge Amado and João Ubaldo Ribeiro, who are among the influences for his clear style and excellent pacing. Marx’s secret manuscript is a truly unputdownable read.



## MARX’S SECRET MANUSCRIPT

*Armando Avena*

What if Karl Marx, the father of socialism, had been assassinated? Taking this idea as a starting point, Brazilian writer Armando Avena launches readers into a gripping story from the very first page, in an exciting book that is both a thriller and

Author: Armando Avena  
Genre: Novel  
Pages: 296  
Format: 15X23cm



“Winner of a Petrobras Cultural writing grant.”

the attacker or the victim?); the perversely democratic nature of sexual violence, which can occur in any country, to women from any social background, ethnicity or religion; and a desire for revenge, confessed by the majority of the women interviewed as an initial reaction to the aggression they had suffered.

As the interviews progressed, Leilla realized that this desire for revenge became weaker with time, being replaced with positive attitudes, alternative therapies, religion, and other survival methods used to overcome the trauma of sexual violence. Straightaway she had the idea: what if one of these women did not lose that initial desire for revenge.

#### What if she went through with it?

From this idea came the character Luísa, an educated, successful advertising professional with an interest in fine wines, literature, music, and cinema,

who has her motorbike stolen and is raped by two young men in the city of Salvador. Determined to take revenge on her attackers, the character does not simply want to kill them, but to completely slaughter them, bringing us one of the most brutal scenes in Brazilian literature. Parallel to the story of revenge and overcoming trauma, the novel also tells of Luísa's attempts to survive the loss of her partner, Michel, who she feels is her true love and who has left her to live with a man. Reflecting these intertwined stories, the language of the novel takes two different paths, with short, objective paragraphs interspersed with dense, lyrical prose. The development of a complex story of love and friendship between the main character and Michel (photographer, ex-husband, bisexual, and accomplice) is expressed in captivating, cyclic dialogue, with references to literature, music, and film, commentaries on cities and human behaviour, and discourse on intricate themes such as love, possession, desire, sexuality, loyalty, death, and existentialism.

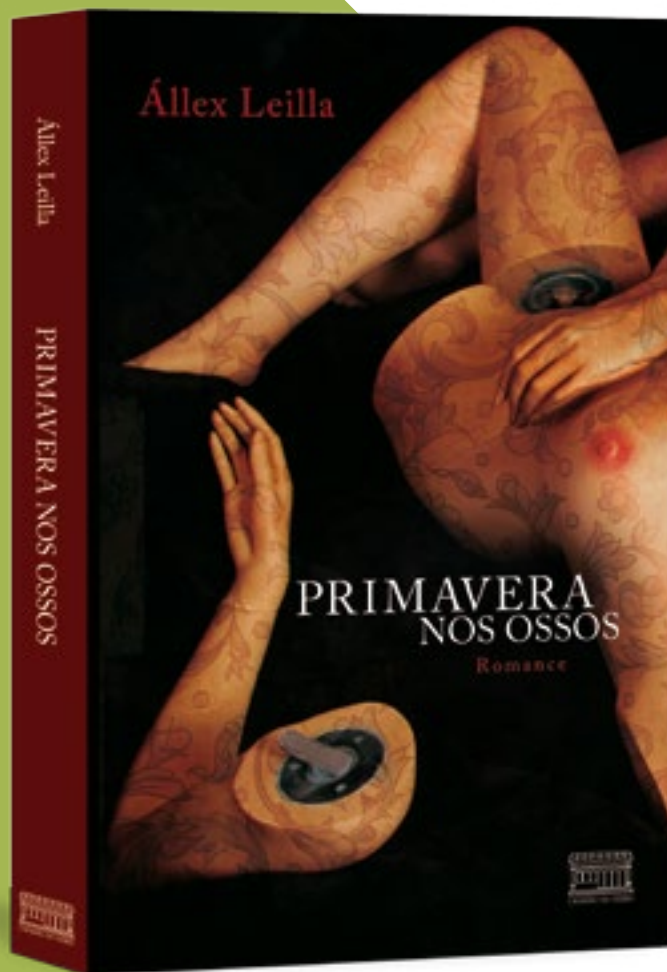
**As an individual, Luísa needs to gain strength in order to survive her two pains: attack and abandonment, which have caused wounds as deep as the bones in our bodies.** Like the spring, able to die and come alive again every year, Luísa becomes increasingly aware, throughout the course of the novel, of the precarious nature of the balance possible in our world today. Winner of a Petrobras Cultural writing grant, *Springtime in the Bones* has already been the theme of a Master's thesis (State University of Paraíba — UEPB) and is currently being adapted for the stage.

Author: Álex Leilla  
Genre: Novel  
Pages: 280  
Format: 15x23cm

## SPRINGTIME IN THE BONES

*Álex Leilla*

About seven years ago, writer Álex Leilla saw a tv documentary about rape victims. As she listened to women being interviewed and describing the brutalities they had experienced, speaking with covered faces, three issues seemed clear to Leilla: the level of discomfort in expressing the experience (who is more ashamed:





# “No entry for ugly words.”

The sentence was stuck to the glass door at the entrance to the children's section of the library”

The floor of the children's library was filled with colour, and the shelves even more so, because of all the different books. Some of the book spines stuck out from the shelves, showing a bit of their covers. This was caused by children pulling out a book and not putting it back in its place, something I could perfectly understand, as I also don't go into a book just from an interesting title, I also have to look at the cover, the colour, the design, the style, and only then do I decide whether or not to stay.

So, I walked around the huge room, to see where I might best fit in. It was then that I saw it. A thick book with a thick spine and a very interesting title: *Reinações de Narizinho*. And on the cover were the words: Monteiro Lobato. “Lobato... that name rings a bell”, I thought. “I think I have crossed paths with his pen somewhere before.” Without being pushy, I climbed up the shelves and made my way through all the books, politely:

“Excuse me, Mr. Grimm, could you move your *Sleeping Beauty* a little to the right, just so I can get past?” I always say ‘excuse me’ to authors and their books, because as a well brought-up word, I have great respect for all mortal and immortal beings.

I carried on in the same way until I was face to face with it, the book with the thick spine and colourful cover. “Oh yes, now I'm safe. The world out there won't bother me anymore. I won't be crushed anymore by empty notebooks or by the soles of human shoes in the street. I won't be hungry anymore, because I will have an author to feed me.” Slowly, I opened the cover and tried to get my right foot inside.

But just then...bam! The book slammed itself shut right in front of me, completely, like a compact block. It was impossible to tell the difference between the cover and the pages. It seemed to have all become one, and there was no way for me to get in.

“But what kind of manners are those?”, I protested, “Is that the way to treat a well brought-up word like me?”

The word *Narizinho*, on the cover, was the one who replied:

“We're really sorry, dear friend, but we cannot allow any more words to enter this book.”

“Is it that you think I am ugly?”

“It's not that, dear friend. You seem to be... let me see... quite different, but all the words in this book have already been written, and there are none missing. None have escaped, none have gone to have coffee or travel the world. All the words put here by the author are still here. So, there isn't any space for another word, not even one like you, dear friend, who is neither large nor small, neither fat nor thin. We really are sorry. And to prove that it's nothing personal, ask any word from any other book in this library. You'll see that most of them think the same as we do. I mean, it would be disrespectful to the author if we allowed strange words to come into this book”.

The preposition of, which was next to the word *Narizinho*, added, “That's right, my Dad doesn't let me talk to strange words. And you are really strange, in every sense!”

I didn't like his tone when he said this, but I understood. They were right. I was being disrespectful by wanting to go in without having been written by the author. So I said, “Please forgive me, I won't try to get into any more books without being invited. I'll look somewhere else for a place to fit in.”

I climbed down in a hurry, without taking care, and ended up falling from a few shelves up. I hurt myself all over, but I didn't want to stay there. I hobbled out of the library.

## A WORD THAT HASN'T BEEN WRITTEN YET

*Lilian Lovisi*

**A funny and amazing book where the protagonist and narrator of the story is... a word! A word going through an identity crisis that wanders through the city trying to find its place, entering a library, visiting the newsroom of a newspaper, meeting young children, though all without ever being seen. Is that an invisible word!? How come? Why can't this word be seen? Readers will be amazed to find out the answer.**

Chapter one - In the library

The sentence was stuck to the glass door at the entrance to the children's section of the library:

NO ENTRY FOR UGLY WORDS.

I hesitated for a moment and looked at my reflection in the glass. I wasn't ugly. To tell the truth, my rounded shape gave me quite a healthy air. I did a princess pose and stepped through the door, convinced that I was super beautiful.

“Wow...I think I've found a place where I fit in”, was my first thought.

Author: Lilian Lovisi  
Genre: children's book  
Pages: 48  
Format: 20x22cm





“The tone of Gallo’s prose ranges from impressionistic to expressionist...”

Author: Mayrant Gallo  
Genre: short story  
Pages: 112  
Format: 15x23cm

## Three Childhoods

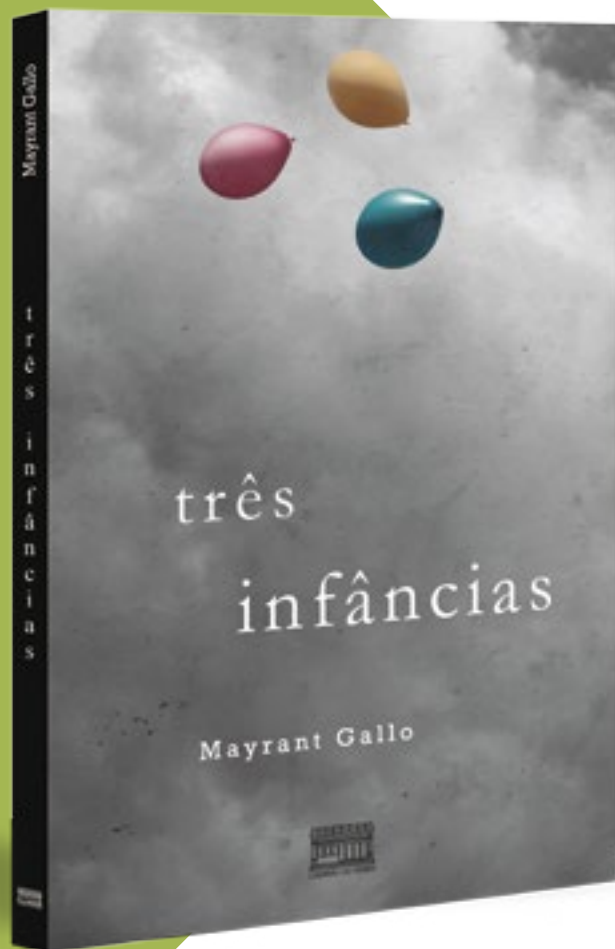
Mayrant Gallo is adept at transforming reality whilst also constantly questioning it. The three stories in his book *Three Childhoods* take the reader on a fascinating journey. The tone of Gallo’s prose ranges from impressionistic to expressionist, travelling from highlands to plains, revealing layers of meaning at every turn.

Aware that behind facts, situations, and experiences, and in a sense fuelling them, there is a multitude of pressing questions, Bahian writer Mayrant Gallo is intent on seeking out and reporting these inquiries. His stories are punctuated by bringing moments to light, with sharp but straightforward phrasing. His writing is quiet, but challenging.

This is a writer who takes it upon himself to

open trash cans, uncovering what Camilo Castelo Branco called “the stools of the heart”. He also filters tenderness as in a short madrigal. The childhoods of the characters portrayed here are at once enchanting and painful, brutal and magic, such as in the story “The ritual in the garden”. They are also sometimes hapless, such as in “Boyhood days”. The truth tends to be ambivalent: nourished by misconception or progression towards it. Good writers know this.

“Windmills”, the first story in the book, is the powerful tale of a boy helping his vulnerable father chase up money owed to him by a hard-to-find engineer. The boy and his father live alone in poverty, and need money to buy food. With an acute conscience, causing him to suffer more, the boy deeply sympathises with his father’s situation, and the more he support he gives, the more love and pride he develops. “... I went with my father, through the streets and through life, slowly”, he says. Together, the father and son embroil themselves in a search as foolish as that of Kafka’s land-surveyor in search of the dreamed of castle. The story is shaped by sparkling metaphors and hints of a gothic twilight.





“ *Consternation* presents itself as a book staking a claim: with a territory, open and accessible for readers, determined to overcome all restrictions. ”

Author: Jádson Barros Neves  
Genre: short story  
Pages: 176  
Format: 15x23cm



## CONSTERNATION

Jádson Barros Neves

Over the years, Jádson Barros Neves has won some of the most important short story awards in Brazil. Despite this success, however, until recently his books were not widely read. The publication of *Consternation* appears

to have changed the situation, with its great appeal for a wide audience. The stories in this book feel like they have been through a decanting process: worked, re-worked, settled, and matured over time. The result is undoubtedly one of the best short story collections published in recent years in Brazil.

This collection is an excellent introduction to an author who expertly controls the light in his narratives. From the opening story, The dog and the hounds, the first of these bouncing, varied texts, in which nuances of the world sneak through the gaps of the story, Neves demonstrates that literature can enable the creation of a certain art of visibility, in which synchronicity, rather than being impossible, appears as accessory to the substance that the characters are unable to translate in their speech and gestures. Added to this style is rhythm, with snapshots, angles, trails to follow, and text to relish.

The setting for the short stories of Jádson Barros Neves is a place rarely visited in Brazilian fiction: the North of Brazil, a place of ruthless tycoons, a place where rivers have been drained due to mining, a place with a sense of uprooting in a universe as new to us as readers as the state of Tocantins itself. Perhaps the greatest violence in these stories is in an episode where a gun fails to shoot, and, in a virtually empty city, a man waits for something he will not be able to understand. Constant in these stories is a skilful style, with a rigor and precision evoking Faulkner or Rulfo.

*Consternation* presents itself as a book staking a claim: with a territory, open and accessible for readers, determined to overcome all restrictions.





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