



# MIGUEL-MANSO

(Portugal, 1979)

**After an aborted degree in communication design and dropping out of a graphic arts program, Miguel-Manso (Portugal, 1979) started writing poetry, fascinated by the work of the Portuguese poet João Miguel Fernandes Jorge. In 2008, he debuted with the self-published *Contra a manhã burra* (~~Against the dumb morning~~). The few critics who managed to get their hands on it wrote enthusiastic reviews, and that very same year a small press published a second collection, which was equally rapturously received. For his next three collections, however, Manso decided again to self-publish. The most recent of these, *Um lugar a menos* (One less place, 2012), contained not poems, but aphoristic prose. His next collections each appeared with different publishers.**

From the start, the poetry of Miguel-Manso – the hyphen between first and last name distinguishes him from the Portuguese photographer of the same name – has consistently surprised with its extraordinary images and idiosyncratic use of language, full of rhythmic and sonic effects, wordplay, ambiguities and archaic words and spellings. His poems also often contain references to other poets. The final stanza of his ‘MCMLXXXVI’, for instance, quotes from and alludes to António Ramos Rosa’s poem ‘Adágio’, and the fifth stanza of ‘Antiworld’ quotes ‘25 de Abril’ by Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen. This dialogue with other poets, thinkers, artists and artworks is foregrounded more in his later work, such as [Annemarie Schwarzenbach] and [Neil Young].

Although ‘Stage’ states that “the poem is above all else / a stage for simple gestures”, this poetry does not stick to simple gestures alone. Manso aims for the sublime and believes in the power and beauty of poetry and language. Even though it is deceptive, he remains “to voice what leans into the infinite” and “to secretly observe the access each thing allows through the fissure of miracle” (‘Antiworld’). This way, Manso can compare the birth of a poem with the Big Bang and have a balloon rise from a rubbish bin in the same verse. The ironic contrast between cosmic immensity and everyday coincidence may relativize the role of the poet, but it definitely results in splendid poetry.

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## POEMS

ANTIWORLD  
MCMLXXXVI  
SO LITTLE DEPENDS  
STAGE  
THE FALL  
[ANNEMARIE SCHWARZENBACH]  
[NEIL YOUNG]

### Antiworld

the big bang's nimble plagiarism  
the poem's matter expands, cools  
it lingers so oddly then stays put  
similar to the Universe

the poem is a mirror image of the body  
with no reflection: hollow

asymmetrical, vestiges of that origin  
positioned in a dubious place, nearly always  
apart  
from the black hole they call literature

it might be imagined that few are the poets  
capable of accelerating particles  
as a way of seeing not only the distance the  
light has covered  
but the central region of nihility, the furious  
patio of power

and in this place of substances, of objects  
the words are figures of waste, things  
left over from the inaugural detonation of this  
first clean  
whole day that climaxed in the minus-one  
ground of this brief logarithmic  
text, purposeless and without any application

it's the poet's ruse:  
to voice what leans into the infinite  
to secretly observe the access each thing allows

### Antimundo

plágio manhoso do big-bang  
a matéria do poema expande, arrefece  
tão estranhamente se demora e permanece  
semelhando o Universo

o poema é a imagem-espelho de um corpo  
sem reflexo: a poesia

oco assimétrico, residual desse princípio  
colocada em lugar dubitativo, separada quase  
sempre  
do buraco negro a que chamam literatura

poder-se-á supor que poucos são os poetas  
capazes de acelerar partículas  
de modo a ver-se não só o que a luz já percorreu  
mas a região mais central do nada, o pátio  
furioso da potência

e neste lugar de substâncias, de objectos  
as palavras são figuras do imundo, coisas que  
sobraram do estampido inaugural desse dia  
inicial inteiro  
e limpo que culminou no lugar a menos deste  
texto  
breve logaritmo sem aplicação ou saída

resta ao poeta o embuste  
de afirmar o que propende para o infindo  
espionar o acesso que cada coisa consente pela  
fissura do milagre

through the fissure of miracle  
and which goes by the name of chance, or  
accident

the child in the street opening the trash can  
where someone without realizing threw out the  
marvel  
of a white helium balloon still full  
that bounced up and rose in the guise of the  
moon in the late afternoon  
right in front of the house

at first the child was astonished, then sad  
and later remembered: you have to write a  
poem about the balloon  
which flew out of the rubbish and how we  
didn't grab it

a poem is the saddest thing there is  
and I wrote

## MCMLXXXVI

half solar the other half  
plunged in night that divides and fraternally  
shares two  
scraps of the same idea:  
round flattened at the poles insecure in its fall  
out of darkness

the pendular head sunk between shoulders  
shadows  
the orbit of the absurd fulfilling its incumbent  
curvature  
wandering distorting the silent  
clarity of hemispheres

festooned in eyes of beryl, orifices, surrounded  
by visibilities  
panoramas breaking off that linger  
long afterwards, coiling

a game of veiling and unveiling on the rooftop  
terrace  
of events  
where a tongue licks particles, proffers phrases  
or the muteness of fireflies

e dá pelo nome de imprevisto, ou acidente

a criança na rua abrindo o caixote do lixo  
onde alguém sem saber depositou o assombro  
de um  
balão de hélio branco ainda cheio  
que se soltou e subiu à laia de lua ao fim da  
tarde  
ao pé de casa

a criança pasmou, entristeceu depois  
mais tarde lembrou-se: tens de escrever um  
poema sobre o balão  
que voou do lixo e não agarrámos

um poema é a coisa mais triste que há  
e escrevi

From: *Tojo: poemas escolhidos*  
Publisher: Relógio D'Água, Lisboa

## MCMLXXXVI

metade solar outra metade  
adentrada na noite que divide e reparte  
irmãmente os dois  
pedaços da mesma ideia:  
redonda achatada nos polos insegura no seu  
tombo  
escuridão afora

a cabeça pendular metida entre ombros  
sombras  
na órbita do absurdo a cumprir a curvatura que  
lhe cabe  
errando distorcendo a silenciosa  
nitidez dos hemisférios

enfeitada de gázeos, orifícios, rodeada  
de visíveis  
desprendem-se dela panoramas que flutuam até  
muito depois, tortuosos

brincando de se mostrar de se encobrir na  
açoteia  
dos eventos  
onde uma língua lambe partículas, intenta  
locuções

but everything scatters from everything else  
even though we thrust an arm into the void  
out from the center, it's thwarted

and everything crashes, velocious  
mobile rewinding, an utter retroversion, and we  
can see  
the camel of reason  
pass through the eye of a needle

and it snows in this geometry  
such  
resplendence really as though a flame were  
handed to us  
to fill the darkness

*this is how we are upon the the face of the earth*  
burning the weeds  
burying the signs  
tipping the sphere of thinking into the water

each year we go down a series of narrow paths  
ever dimmer  
inundated, sleep is submerged under nocturnal  
weight  
the body shudders with anonymity

it's in the calm of a room humming with death  
that our sphere falls into its crowd of ghosts  
the ceiling opens on the celestial fire  
on a different, a singular clarity

and in this emptiness, this opening, in this  
high burgeoning snowflake a magnolia blooms  
and blooms

the immense sequoia of the world retires  
to its dominion  
while dimensions of fear and crap cool in their  
own venue  
the naked bulb in the middle of the ceiling

the orphan waves of the circuit breaker are  
hushed  
in hidden complexities  
attend to fable-like vibrations beyond evidence  
fade

and the adagio that demolished the light  
erupted in the heavy breath of alveoli

ou a mudez dos vaga-lumes

mas tudo de tudo se afasta  
por mais que um braço nosso se retese para o  
nada  
partindo do centro, desalcançando

e o todo se despenhe, móbil  
veloz rebobinado, o retroverso inteiro, e  
vejamos passar  
pelo buraco de uma agulha o camelo  
do raciocínio

e neva nesta geometria  
tanto  
resplandece muito como se às mãos um lume  
viesse entreter as trevas

*estamos assim sobre o rosto da terra*  
queimando as ervas  
enterrando os sinais  
inclinando a esfera do pensamento para a água

seguimos por pequenas pistas ano a ano  
menos nítidas  
o sono alaga submerge com um peso nocturno  
o corpo treme de anonimato

é no sossego de um quarto extinto rumoroso  
que a nossa esfera abate na mole dos seus  
fantasmas  
o tecto abre ao incêndio celeste  
a outra e à única claridade

e nesse vácuo ou abertura nesse  
flocos de neve ampliado uma magnólia floresce  
e floresce

a sequóia imensa do mundo recolhe  
à potestade  
enquanto o lugar das medidas dos medos e das  
merdas  
arrefece na lâmpada do tecto

aquietam-se em ocultas complexidades as ondas  
órfãs do disjuntor  
frequentam vibrações fabulares exteriores à  
evidência  
declinam

*as a fragile star lit up in the blue*  
for a Percival with closed eyes

### **SO LITTLE DEPENDS**

you prefer the corner, the hidden place  
the foliage, the shadow, the room, this  
sack of wheat: textual gold  
spread out on the old secretaire of the real

outside the blaze of the wood  
the quick glazing of the fields  
here inside, less leeway – another

panorama: simply the presence  
uninhabited by a person, mystery without  
attribute or function

always the undoing of a heart  
the industrial cultivation of figures  
and leftover sadness and days for the body that  
writes  
in the calaboose of a vast morning

radiant with drops of honey  
as the cats lick Saturday  
and sitting, like a gold frog, you let yourself add  
to the world  
(but why) another poem

### **Stage**

the poem is above all else  
a stage for simple gestures  
I water the June flowers

e o adágio em que demoliu a luz  
acendeu na respiração profunda dos alvéolos  
*enquanto uma frágil estrela se acende no azul*  
para um Percival de olhos fechados

### **NEM TANTA COISA DEPENDE**

preferes o canto, o lugar oculto  
a folhagem, a sombra, o quarto, este  
saco de trigo: ouro de um texto  
sobre a velha escrivainha do real

lá fora o clarão do arvoredo  
atalhos para a tingidura da paisagem  
cá dentro menos caminho, outro

panorama: a presença tão-só  
desabitada de uma pessoa, mistério sem  
atributo ou função

sempre a desfeita de um coração  
o cultivo intensivo das figuras  
e sobram tristeza e dias ao corpo que escreve  
no calabouço de uma manhã muito larga

reluzente de gotas de mel  
enquanto os gatos lambem o sábado  
e sentado, sapo de ouro, permites-te pôr no  
mundo  
(mas porquê) outro poema

From: *Tojo: poemas escolhidos*  
Publisher: Relógio D'Água, Lisboa

### **Palco**

o poema é antes de tudo  
um palco para gestos simples  
eu rego as flores de Junho

From: *Tojo: poemas escolhidos*  
Publisher: Relógio D'Água, Lisboa

## The fall

what's left of August is this photograph  
all lit up

where everything is still in place:  
the mouth with its trickery of tastes  
the slowness of sugars  
sweaty hands releasing inner  
swamps  
white legs, dress glued to the climate  
of those legs  
the heated estrus of our sun, above  
below – some sandals

at the first hints of autumn  
the esplanades disappeared

## [ANNEMARIE SCHWARZENBACH]

i'm watching her:  
sweet the alp in the angle of her jaw  
when she wakes

the canvas soaked at dawn  
the grass outside darkens just as the sun rising  
dilutes sleep  
the mules feed off the fleeting  
boreal pastures

before us a way opens up  
luminously  
glued to keeping quiet  
to moving

but a breeze already inflames  
making us want for a lake, placing  
a range on the horizon  
a less uncrossable elevation  
than the lowlands of lived life

we say goodbye to the humid moss  
fingered between thighs

## A queda

resta, de Agosto, esta fotografia  
iluminada

onde tudo permanece ainda no lugar:  
a boca no artifício dos sabores  
a lentidão dos açúcares  
mãos suadas dissipando pântanos  
interiores  
pernas brancas, vestido colado ao clima  
dessas pernas  
o cio vibrante do Astro, por cima  
por baixo, umas sandálias

às primeiras evidências outonais  
levantaram as esplanadas

From: *Tojo: poemas escolhidos*  
Publisher: Relógio D'Água, Lisboa

## [ANNEMARIE SCHWARZENBACH]

olho-a:  
doce o vértice no ângulo da maxila  
quando acorda

a lona ensopou na aurora  
fora a erva tinge tanto quanto o astro sobalça  
diluí o sono  
as mulas nutrem-se das fátuas  
pastagens boreais

à nossa frente um caminho articula  
iluminante  
colado ao calar-se  
ao mover-se

mas já um sopro inflama  
devolve-nos o desejo de um lago, põe  
no horizonte a cordilheira  
elevação menos intransponível  
que a planície do vivido

despedimo-nos do musgo úvido  
digitado entre coxas

stir the last pleasure out of the little  
campfire that crackled  
at the shelter's opening through the long cold  
hours

we stuff rucksacks  
leather and straps tested  
we fixed our hair  
munch a bit of flour  
shredded bits of jerky  
swigs of steaming coffee

we, the soldiers of Alexander  
whom nights of whiskey never fell  
whose boots don't weigh a thing  
nor shame the fevers

the rectangle left by the tent  
will remain for a while marking the plot of  
grass  
stones ringing what had been  
a scintillating flame later gone dark  
now pasture to the scent of the timid  
animals that will wander in  
sounding out this sullied bit of the scene

at this very moment our scent  
sails through narrow ravines  
mixed with the dust and the clamor of hoofs  
that brings us  
straying close on the edge of precipices

our own echoing  
will embarrass us  
but within – more silence even than the gorse  
on the cliff sides –

and hardened, soaked with mist, atypical  
arching over our maps  
opening compasses  
jotting quick notes about the way  
and the error

more goat than us more mountainous: life  
this leather hard to tan

sacudimos o que sobrou do gozo  
o pequeno lumaréu que à boca do abrigo  
longas frias horas crepitou

atufamos mochilas  
testados couros e ataduras  
aprumados os cabelos  
levamos aos dentes um pouco de farinha  
fiapos de carne seca  
tragos de café fumegante

nós, soldadas de Alexandre  
a quem o whiskey dos serões jamais tombou  
e as botas não pesam  
nem vexam as febres

o rectângulo onde a tenda demorou  
ficará por um tempo assinalado no gazão  
com as pedras a rodear o que foi  
a labareda cintilante que depois negrejou  
e é pasto para o faro da medrosa  
fauna que virá  
sondar esta parte sujada do lugar

por essa altura o nosso odor  
planará por ravinas desfiladeiros  
misturado com o pó e o estrepito dos cascos  
com que  
erramos à beira dos abismos

produziremos ecos de que o nosso pudor  
se acanhará  
mas por dentro – tácitas mais que a estorga  
dos penhascos –

e duras, róridas, raras  
abaulando a vista sobre os mapas  
destapando bússolas  
tirando pequenas notas sobre o rumo  
e o engano

mais cabra que nós mais montês: a vida  
essa camurça difícil de curtir

[NEIL YOUNG]

that moment when I was really falling apart  
and the sun lingered over the lawn, and the  
palms  
billowed above the turbid lake

faraway the promised beetle  
reduced those palms to a stump  
until they seemed like a pineapple which these  
days  
rots in the gardens

the fountain blandly animated the swamp  
of the young  
the balconies on fire  
the summer beginning at its end

overtime hours those  
in which the birds delayed their naps because  
of the next shift of insects  
hallucinating self-absorbed clamorous

at that hour no one else like me setting their  
bicycle  
down on the dearth  
sitting on the grass holding back tears  
covering their face with their hands, face  
between their knees and a  
wheel behind still spinning

there was no convenient pocket screen  
facing up to *that which can't be fixed and never  
will be*  
*was inevitable*

it was on that day the eloquent moment  
a harmonica crackled in my headphones  
mortally wounding the afternoon's bull  
that solitary buffalo that steers clear of the herd  
to die

the high lamps lit up

a newly painted wall  
already marked with a small town's graffito  
a dog went past lifting its snout to the  
scent of dinners  
which came from where  
the televisions' color-blend rose in the air

[NEIL YOUNG]

na hora em que eu mais ruía  
o sol aplainava o relvado, palmeiras  
ondulavam num lago turvo

longe o escaravelho porvindoiro  
que as reduziu a um coto  
assemelhando-as a um ananás que degrada hoje  
pelos jardins

o repuxo animava sem triunfo o pântano  
da juventude  
as varandas em fogo  
o Verão começando pelo fim

horas extraordinárias aquelas  
em que as aves adiavam o repouso por causa  
dos insectos do turno sequente  
ourados absortos estrepitantes

a hora em que mais ninguém deitava como eu  
a bicicleta sobre a falta  
e se sentava na relva prendendo as lágrimas  
as mãos tapando o rosto o rosto entre os geolhos  
e uma  
roda atrás a girar

não havia o ecrã de bolso oportuno  
era inevitável encarar *o que não tem conserto  
nem nunca terá*

era do dia o instante altíloquo  
uma harmónica crepitava nos auscultadores  
feria de morte o touro da tarde  
esse búfalo ermo que se aparta da manada  
para ficar-se

os subidos candeeiros acendiam

havia um muro recém pintado  
sujo já por um grafito de província  
um cão passava ao largo levantava o focinho ao  
perfume dos jantares  
que chegava de onde  
se entevia o espalha-cor dos televisores

havia o farrapo de lua  
como flanela posta sobre a ganga das alturas  
agraudava os dós arrumados



there was the shred of moon  
like flannel sewn onto the denim of the heights  
it nurtured hoarded hurt  
in the box of the future

the ivy of extensions twined through that hour  
an idea furrowed the celestial fen  
the mountaineer heart inside the volumes  
rarefied

the world was already a glebe of lamentation  
and overabundance – beautiful disastrous fierce  
– locus of forces  
and ruin

I fingered with my eyes closed  
pure intrinsic  
searched out an urban granary where I could  
keep  
the semen-gold ready to detonate

the extreme dragonfly the first cricket  
the swallow who got up its nest in a cumulus  
of mud and dried weeds who smooths  
the surfaces feeding itself in the air

at my back the exiguous cooling  
of the public library  
at that hour a cavern of nebulous soldiers  
resting from their war of resistance

*hasta la derrota, siempre!*

they inflicted little damage on a rough  
but reluctant enemy  
only those as sullen as I  
walked into ambushes

so many figure eights still visible on the ground  
forcefully hoed up from repeatedly going round  
in the same place  
I had dared to go past the gate of the infinite  
always ending up bent over dinner

na caixa do futuro

a hédéra das extensões percorria aquela hora  
uma ideia sulcava a charneca celeste  
o coração alpinista no avesso dos volumes  
rarefeito

o mundo era já uma seara de nojo  
e fartura – belo desastroso feroz – lugar de  
forças  
e destruições

eu tateava de olhos fechados  
puro intrínseco  
procurava um celeiro urbano onde guardar  
o ouro-sémen pronto a detonar

a libélula extrema o grilo inicial  
a andorinha cujo ninho resulta de um cúmulo  
de lama e ervas secas e rasoira  
as superfícies alimentando-se no ar

nas minhas costas o exíguo refrigério  
da biblioteca pública  
àquela hora antro de nebulosos soldados  
repousando da luta de guerrilha

*hasta la derrota, siempre!*

infligiam estragos mínimos a um inimigo  
bronco mas relutante  
apenas tombavam nas emboscadas aqueles  
como eu mais sorumbáticos

tanto oito visível ainda sobre o chão  
lavrado à força de rodar no mesmo sítio  
ousara trespassar o pórtico do infinito  
finava sempre inclinado sobre o jantar

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