



ANA PAULA INÁCIO

(Portugal, 1966)

[Friday 31 March 2006]

Ana Paula Inácio was born in Oporto and currently lives on the island of Terceira, in the Azores, where she teaches philosophy. She has thus far published two books of poetry, both in the year 2000, as well as a book of short stories. Other poems have appeared in magazines and anthologies. On first reading her poetry appears to be an inexpressive account of banal, everyday events in mostly rural settings. The account tends to be elliptical, however (e.g. in ‘tomorrow i’ll buy some red trousers’), creating a poetic tension that lures the reader to participate, though this discreet poet does not actively reach out to her readers.

The rural atmosphere is earthy but also spare, even a little ghostly. We feel like we’re in an ancient or primordial space, and that certain of the objects inhabiting that space have symbolic import. In ‘i look around’, the tree and the crowing cock and the narrator’s father all read like symbols, while her triple bath in the river is clearly a ritual, whose meaning is not so clear. But whatever it means, if it means anything, the ritual of bathing is doubtless more important than the bather’s psychology. In this poetry places and things take precedence over people. People come and go, while the world and how it runs remain the same. But no, I’ve misstated the case. People are of the essence, but it is the relationships between them (as in ‘i’d like you to go with me’ or ‘Acrobatics’, an atypical poem) or between them and the land, between them and things, that matter. It is our “imperfect presence” in the world (from the poem ‘what do you have to say’) that this poetry celebrates, not in a congratulatory way but as a not too solemn rite of human affirmation.

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POEMS

ACROBATICS

I LOOK AROUND

I'D LIKE YOU TO GO WITH ME

LET TIME DO THE REST

MIRACLES HAPPEN

TOMORROW I'LL BUY SOME RED TROUSERS

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY

ACROBATICS

sitting in Trafalgar Square
during a break with friends
and with time on our hands
we practiced our English
on a survey in a magazine
with Francis Bacon on the cover
which asked:
which of your limbs
– upper or lower –
would you rather lose?
(the language's foreignness anesthetized
the amputation, making it almost painless)
you answered: the arms
you'd keep your legs
to have the freedom to walk
i answered: the legs
i'd hate to be
unable to hug.
And so, combining our
losses,
i hug you
and ask you: walk, show me the world
and when we get tired
you can hug me with your legs
and with my arms
i'll walk.

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Acrobacias

sentados em Trafalgar Square
no intervalo de amigos
com o tempo entre as mãos
treinávamos o nosso inglês
num inquérito de revista
com Francis Bacon na capa
que perguntava:
qual dos membros
– superiores ou inferiores –
preferíamos perder
(esta ablação em língua estrangeira
tornava-se indolor, quase anestesiada)
respondeste: os braços
as pernas conservá-las-ias
como a liberdade de poder andar
respondi: as pernas
não queria ver-me
impedida de abraçar.
Assim juntando as nossas
perdas eu abraço-me a ti
e peço-te anda, mostra-me o mundo
e quando nos cansarmos
abraçar-me-ás, então, com as pernas
e eu
andarei com os braços.

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From: *Telhados de Vidro 3*
Publisher: Averno, Lisbon

i look around

i look around
with darting eyes in search
of that exceptional thief who stole
from me the book you invented
to spare my heart
the sorrow of the living
but i know it's useless
i have within range only
my usual tools
for working the land
the land i've chosen
and i know it's useless because evil has wings
and only the wind saves us
and transports us
to the place of the tree
next to the river where i'll bathe three times
until the cock crows
and i remember my father
waiting for his supper and clean laundry

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olho à volta
em flecha sobre as coisas
à procura desse ladrão excepcional
que me roubou o livro inventado
pra me poupares o coração
à mágoa dos vivos
mas sei que é inútil
trago em alvo
apenas alfaias domésticas
com que trabalho a terra
aquela que escolhi
e sei que é inútil porque o mal tem asas
e só o vento nos salva
e nos transporta
ao lugar da árvore
junto ao rio onde me banharei três vezes
até que o galo cante
e me lembre do pai
a quem devo ceia e roupa branca

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From: *As Vinhas de Meu Pai*

Publisher: Quasi Edições, Vila Nova de Famalicão

i'd like you to go with me

i'd like you to go with me
through life
like a sail
that would discover for me the world
but i'm on the uncertain side
where the wind pounds
and i can only teach you
the names of trees
whose fruit will be plucked in another season
where the trains scatter
anguished whistles

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queria que me acompanhasses
vida fora
como uma vela
que me descobrisse o mundo
mas situo-me no lado incerto
onde bate o vento
e só te posso ensinar
nomes de árvores
cujo fruto se colhe numa próxima estação
por onde as comboios estendem
silvos aflitos

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From: *Vago Presentimento Azul por Cima*

Publisher: Ilhas, Oporto

let time do the rest

let time do the rest
shutting the windows
steadying the boats
gathering up provisions
sowing fortune
lighting the fire
waiting for supper

open the doors: read the light,
the shade, the art of the bird-catcher

with three boards
you can make a canoe,
with four you have a verse,
let time do the rest.

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deixa o tempo fazer o resto
fechar janelas
aplacar os barcos
recolher os víveres
semear a sorte
acender o fogo
esperar a ceia

abre as portas: lê a luz
a sombra, a arte do passarinho

com três paus
fazes uma canoa
com quatro tens um verso,
deixa o tempo fazer o resto.

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From: *Vago Presentimento Azul por Cima*

Publisher: Ilhas, Oporto

Miracles happen

Miracles happen
at odd hours
and I'm never at home
when the postman comes by.
Today the first flower blossomed
and I said it's a sign.
I look around: I'm alone
I carry this shadow.

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Os milagres acontecem
a horas incertas
e nunca estou em casa
quando o carteiro passa.
Hoje, abriu a primeira flor
e eu disse é um sinal.
Olho em volta: estou só
trago esta sombra comigo.

© 2000, Ana Paula Inácio
From: *Vago Pressentimento Azul por Cima*
Publisher: Ilhas, Oporto

tomorrow i'll buy some red trousers

tomorrow i'll buy some red trousers
since i have absolutely nothing to lose:
i counted, one by one, all the stairs,
i know how many times i turned the key,
i underlined the important phrases,
i pruned the cedars,
i shut all my writing inside a code.

Tomorrow i'll buy some red trousers
i'll set up the farming schedule
i'll sharpen the knives
i'll rehearse an act
i'll open the book to the same page
i'll discover a clue.

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amanhã vou comprar umas calças vermelhas
porque não tenho rigorosamente nada a perder:
contei, um a um, todos os degraus
sei quantas voltas dei à chave,
sublinhei as frases importantes,
aparei os cedros,
fechei em código toda a escrita.

Amanhã comprarei calças vermelhas
fixarei o calendário agrícola
afiarei as facas
ensaiarei um número
abrirei o livro na mesma página
descobrirei alguma pista.

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From: *Vago Pressentimento Azul por Cima*
Publisher: Ilhas, Oporto

what do you have to say

what do you have to say
besides your imperfect presence,
your face of sand,
did you cross through Seneca on foot?

what you say is recorded
on the table you have a glass, you have wine.

what can you say
that won't turn to dust?

Throw stones instead,
marl, basalt, schist.

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o que tens para dizer
senão a tua presença imperfeita,
o teu rosto de areia,
atravessaste Séneca a pé?

o que dizes está gravado
sobre a mesa tens copo, tens vinho.

o que poderás dizer
que não se dissolva em pó?

Atira antes pedras
margas, basalto, xisto.

© 2000, Ana Paula Inácio

From: *Vago Pressentimento Azul por Cima*

Publisher: Ilhas, Oporto

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