

METAMORPHOSES

FOREWORD

Translation is indisputably a collaborative process involving careful negotiation between one language and another, between the original text and the translated version, and between author and translator. In this compilation, interchange and collaboration have been magnified and expanded to include critics and scholars. In terms of this critical anthology of Brazilian fiction, the spirit of collaboration has been acute and steadfast, across many transnational borders.

The kernel of this project began in 2009 when Brazilian scholar Aileen El-Kadi and author Nelson de Oliveira came up with the idea to creatively combine English translations of contemporary Brazilian fiction with critical essays by international scholars. Although the advantages to this format are plentiful, this type of hybrid anthology was not easy to sell to editors and publishers who give preference to conventional configurations in the form of fiction anthologies in translation or scholarly edited volumes. The project was examined and taken into consideration by several academic publishers, without finding a permanent home, until the translation journal *Metamorphoses* came on the scene.

This anthology would not have come to light without the generosity and foresight of *Metamorphoses'* editor *extraordinaire* Thalia Pandiri who gave the green light for this project to exist in published form in this double issue of the journal. Initially I contributed the essay on Marcelino Freire, before I came on board as consulting editor in 2013, a role that came to require far more involvement than originally anticipated. Despite the masterful efforts of several professional and literary translators, Thalia and I grappled with the untidiness of language and meaning that often accompanies international undertakings dependent on the extreme goodwill of overcommitted academic participants, for whom translation is lamentably relegated to the realm of scholarly philanthropy. In keeping with this social-spiritedness, I took on the role of managing editor for the translations while Natalie Wisheart, Smith College undergraduate in English Languages and Literatures, assumed the role of editorial assistant and project manager, primarily for the critical essays. What a wizard she proved to be!

In 2014 Aileen El-Kadi informed us that she was unable to continue as the anthology's chief editor and organizer. To honor Aileen and the choices she made, I elected to maintain the anthology's original composition. As is the case with a publication grounded in academia, the production phase of this anthology has been prolonged and labori-

ous, in the hands of precious few, including Rebecca Lee, Isabella Levy, Joan Brunetta, and Elliott Farquhar. I thank the contributors for their supreme patience and perseverance. Over the course of countless months it has been a labor of love in every respect.

In the spirit of allowing these fictional pieces and critical essays to speak directly to the reader, here are just a few considerations to guide the reading of this anthology:

This anthology does not in any way present a comprehensive compilation of contemporary Brazilian literature. Rather, it represents one informed individual's selection. This is an important point to stress because the anthology mirrors Aileen's own connections and original conceptual formation. I emphasize this factor for two reasons: firstly, I wish to recognize Aileen's diligence and tenacity in constructing the structural backbone of this anthology and securing permissions from all the rights-holders. She deserves full credit for the compositional creation of this collection. Secondly, this point also explains the project's thematic trajectory. Its original theme based on urban violence—reflective of a preliminary title *Faces of Violence*—was intended to convey the broad spectrum of turbulence and tragedy present in contemporary Brazilian society. Yet I would suggest that instead of presenting a uniform subject, these selections represent the multiplicity of styles, tones and themes that readers may relish within contemporary Brazilian fiction as a whole, which is as varied and complex as the country itself. Within this anthology, these complexities come to the surface by way of a myriad of personal relationships and human interactions. To succinctly define the content of this assorted volume is as difficult as defining Brazil; instead, I would signal the various narrative forms and creative constructions that interpret a multitude of human associations. These connections are at once edgy and tender, sometimes absurd, hair-raising or intensely moving. Together they convey the current composition of a diverse country.

A couple of years after this anthology was conceived, *Granta* published its *The Best of Young Brazilian Novelists* in 2012, a compilation that served to put contemporary Brazilian fiction on the world map for English-speaking audiences. In contrast to *Granta's* precise juried process for inclusion in their volume (writers had to have been born between 1972 and 1991, for instance), this anthology combines fifteen writers with varying degrees of experience and exposure beyond Brazil's borders. Most authors included here loosely adhere to the period in Brazilian literature defined as "the 90s Generation," that is, writers whose craft came of age during the final decade of the 20th century and the start of the new

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millennium. Established authors such as Milton Hatoum, João Gilberto Noll and João Almino are featured side by side with writers who may be represented for the first time in English translation. Individuals such as Hatoum, Adriana Lisboa and Luiz Ruffato have become internationally recognized on a worldwide circuit, their works having been translated into multiple languages, including English. Many represented here have participated in international book festivals such as the Paris *Salon du Livre* (2015) or the Frankfurt Book Fair (2013), at which Brazil was the guest of honor. Such is the case of Cintia Moscovich, Marçal Aquino, Marcelino Freire, Nelson de Oliveira, and João Anzanello Carrascoza.

In addition to offering a range of authorial experiences this anthology also combines short stories and excerpts from novels. This variety denotes an expansive scope, and moreover, invites the reader to pursue further adventures in Brazilian fiction. Like the *Granta* volume, this anthology does not present a sunny, tropical Brazil. Sometimes raw and bleak, this is a Brazil beyond stereotypes, about citizens of endearing tenacity and irrefutable life force. The works represented in this volume reflect a continent-size country of deep-rooted complexities, inserted within a global landscape in which the human condition and its undercurrents are intricately explored.

I applaud Aileen El-Kadi's decision to combine translated fiction alongside critical essays, as it allows for this anthology to exist not only as a Brazil reader, but also as a reference tool and resource on Brazilian fiction in English translation. The critical essays serve to contextualize the writers' works beyond the fictional pieces selected through the process of close reading, often within diverse theoretical and critical frameworks, in order to spark the reader's interest and expand his/her knowledge. The inclusion of the essays also amplifies the international reach of the anthology by affirming the active existence of a transnational network of academically trained readers and critics whose primary field of expertise is Brazilian literature. As in the fictional pieces themselves, the essays are reflective of a range of styles and critical approaches.

The overall goal of this anthology is to reach and inform a general audience unfamiliar with contemporary Brazilian fiction. It is significant that the anthology is appearing in a journal of literary translation; as renowned translator Gregory Rabassa has underlined, a core factor in the craft of translation is that "there is precious little certainty about what we are doing," legitimizing doubt and imperfection as parallel guides in life. Furthermore, in Rabassa's intelligible wisdom, he equates translation with the very act of communication, a vital element of human exchange,

particularly on a global scale. A collaborative, multifaceted volume such as this one invites us to cross borders, to embrace and immerse ourselves in the profound messiness and vibrancy of life in a particular place—Brazil—captured by a selection of its finest contemporary writers and interpreted by a cadre of accomplished scholars. To the fundamental role this anthology owes to all the dedicated translators, I express my heartfelt gratitude and admiration.

On behalf of all the contributors to this volume who have shared their passions and perspectives, their deep affection and disquietude for Brazil, I invite the reader into this extraordinary space. Our expectation is that these contributions will captivate and illuminate an English-speaking audience, which, in turn, will demand additional anthologies of this sort in the near future.

Marguerite Itamar Harrison

Postscript: on a personal note, my beloved mother, Heline Cortez Harrison, passed away suddenly in the middle of my writing this foreword. In honor of my Mom's Brazilian heritage, her love of literature, and profound influence on my life and career path, I dedicate this anthology to my mother, *in memoriam*.

M. I. H.