



UNEB ANÃNSI

UNIVERSIDADE DO ESTADO DA BAHIA
REVISTA DE FILOSOFIA,
SALVADOR, ISSN: 2675-8385

<Productions of the Bahian Meeting of Philosophy,
Image and Cinema / Transcription>

The aesthetics of writing and the image of its time ¹

*A estética da escrita
e a imagem de seu tempo*

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Introductory question

Prof. Esp. Flávio Rocha de Deus (UFBA)

The EBAFIC sought the intersection with writing due to the capacity of literary works to offer us snapshots of our time, to illustrate the *zeitgeist*.

Although the correlation between philosophy and literature, using the latter as a resource for materializing the structures of speculation, is more evident in contemporaneity – Camus told us, "If you want to be a philosopher, write novels" – we can find literary productions with layers of theoretical intertexts practically in every historical period. Saint Augustine, for example, inaugurates the genre of autobiographies. In light of this, the possibility of a dialogue with Bahian writers, allowing them to communicate the images and memories that underpin their

literature and guide their narratives, proves to be an invaluable contribution. Therefore, we thank Miss Luciany and Mr. Hamilton for accepting the invitation and for their promptness in our communications.

We begin our conversation by delimiting our path. I also request that you speak in the manner that suits you best. Here, we will seek to explore three questions: your respective views on your literary work, the perception you have of your writing as a capture of the spirit of the time, and your journeys to self-discovery as writers. This directs our generative question: what inspires you to write, and what do you see in your writings as a capture of the image of our time?

¹ Translation by Prof. Dr. Otávio Souza and Rocha Dias Maciel. (University of the Federal District/Brazil).



Luciany Aparecida I

The now, writing and stories

Good afternoon, to everyone present. Faced with the now, I will speak from that place, *the now*. At first, I initially thank Flávio, always with so many words. I confess that I think there is something that is characteristic of us, writers, and that is the passion for words. And the many words, those of people, yours, those of the environment, those of hissing noises, the listening, everything here interests us deeply. The emotion we just went through. The idea of thinking about a human body on the ground, falling, all of this concerns the writing process and the now. All of this moves me. It takes me to writing. The smell, the choice to stop on the way to buy these [basil] leaves for my food. There are many phenomena that interfere with me now.

And I don't think I would know, thinking about a distended, non-linear time, I can say that I constitute myself as a writer in the now, and in the now, and in the now, and in the *now*.

Constituting myself as a writer is about survival, about a place of life, about being alive. I am alive and I need to say this because society commonly wants my place in death. I come from a rural community, in the interior of Bahia, I was raised by my grandparents and that already says my survival. I am in this statistic, which is almost 60% of the Brazilian population who are raised by their grandparents. When I bring this up, it is to highlight a very intimate and at the same time very subtle

ANĂNSI

ISSN: 2675-8385 – Salvador, Bahia, Brasil.
Anãnsi: Revista de Filosofia, v. 4, n. 2, 2023, p. 264

reflection about my existence and how I constitute myself as an author. I became an author in the Jequiçá River Valley, watching a river flowing, watching the bushes growing, seeing how we had chickens in the backyard, raised for consumption, and my grandfather didn't eat at home these days because he thought it was absurd to raise an animal for then eat it. And I'm talking about people who worked in the fields, tilling the soil. All of this creates a field of existence that places me as a writer, and on this matter, the university comes as a shock. And here I bring the university because Flávio, when introducing me, starts with the titles – and I am here speaking as a writer, as a person who is setting herself up for falling into now, making myself available for my survival also in the now. And that means that here, before you, I speak as a writer, not as an academic researcher.

I come to this meeting (EBAFIC) to speak as a writer, not as a researcher. But I come happy because much of my writing relates to history. What I have communicated here briefly about my life is history. I am orally narrating a story that concerns the history of Brazil and my story, Luciany. When I choose to write thinking about the history of Brazil, I'm thinking about myself and I'm thinking about Brazil, thinking about myself is thinking about the country's history in some way. In this I am doing oral history work when I write with these stories in mind. When I wrote *Contos Ordinários de Melancolia* [*Ordinary Tales of*

Melancholia], it was based on a dialogue, an audition with women between 67 and 92 years old from the rural community where I lived and grew up until I was 20 years old, and I asked these women what bothered them most – and what bothered them most was machismo. Sexual oppression, abuse and sexual violence. I also researched children who were sexually assaulted by men. And, we can see, statistics show that it is parents, uncles, godparents, people close to the family who tend to be the main abusers. I also carried out a survey and began to study criminal cases, from 19th century cases of free and enslaved women. Which crimes did these women denounce? What were the courts to talk about? Through these questions I wrote *Joanna Mina*. The book was created based on studies of these legal acts and have helped me to understand which demands were being requested by women, white and black, at the time. From this point on, I started to think: what are the outlines and complexities for thinking about black families and white families in the 19th century? Which racial tensions were there at the time? How was machismo modulated in those moments?

This research was also present in the construction of *Macala*, which is a book that was constructed through research into historical documents. During this research I came into contact with Marc Ferrez's

photographs² when he came to capture images of enslaved women in Bahia. I was studying issues in the Ronga language³ which took me to the word *macala* to think about what 19th century photography says and what it can tell us about today. And once again we find literature combined with history to think about the process of whitening Brazil as a political project, a public project, a nation project.

My being in the world says a lot about these places. And from these places I found myself as a writer, founding myself as a writer through the dialogue of words and history. The first movement, when we are children, we don't know what history is, only the immediate perceptions we have of life. And my first perception of discomfort with existence was leaving the rural area to study in the city. It was a trauma, it was terrible. [Laughter]. And reacting to that was my encounter with words. I cried a lot, I hated it, I didn't want to be in the city.

My grandmother, my mother, was a primary school teacher and received a lot of bread from the community. In the rural community, in the early 1980s, bread was an object of luxury. My grandmother received a lot of bread packed in paper wrappings and she put all these wrappings

together. One day, when the truck was passing by to take me to the city – it to pick me up and then bring me back from school; and I went and came back crying. In order to console me, she told me: “you won't cry anymore because from now on you will have a sketchbook for each and every time you come home from school.” And there was this sketchbook, which she made with the bread wrappings she saved.

That gave me a very refined understanding of the aesthetics of paper. That right there told me that the paper was a place that I had the authority to operate, it told me that I could alter the paper, it told me that I could make it a book. The first book I published I did myself at home: I printed the pages, sewed them together and started selling them. This training process says a lot. My training process says a lot about elderly spectators, from a rural community in the interior of Bahia, who thought of the world from a very refined perspective. And the University tells me that that is not aesthetics, that that is not literature.

We are at the University in a place of resistance. Yesterday there was an award ceremony and one of the people who was involved in the ceremony said: “It was boring reading the texts because there

² Brazilian photographer of French origin. He worked during the Brazilian Empire and the first decades of the Republic, more precisely between the years 1860 and 1922, having built one of the most important visual legacies about Brazil during this period.

³ Also referred to as XiRonga, Chironga, ShiRonga or GiRonga, it is one of the languages originating in the province and city of Maputo, in Mozambique. It is part of the Tsua-Ronga branch of the Bantu languages. It has around 650 thousand speakers in Mozambique and 90 thousand in South Africa.

were a lot of identity books, gender issues, the LGBT thing and the race things that you people talk about a lot. Because before it was talking about *dry lives* and now, they're talking a lot about the Northeast (of Brazil) [...]”, said that person. This has a lot to say about the way in which the university and the elites of the Brazilian literary scene think of this nature as being without aesthetics.

That's why, Flávio, when you wrote me that invitation by email, full of words, I was scared by the formality, but at the same time I felt comfortable because one of the things I want most is for people to be formal with me – because people are less likely to be formal with a woman's body. People are not formal or do not choose a writer's body

to read from an aesthetic perspective. People read men from an aesthetic perspective, not women. The first thing a woman has to do on the literary scene is say she can write. And when I say woman, I'm referring to anyone who performs *femininity*, they have to constantly shout that they can produce art, that they can produce aesthetics, that they can produce literature.

These are the nuances of this complexity that we will be discussing. I believe I always dialogue in literature from the *fall*. It's the aesthetics of fall. I may be crying in pain at a moment and I will have to rework it with something – sometimes I can, sometimes I cannot.



Hamilton Borges I

That girl's love, and my grandmother's song

First, I want to say that it was great to hear from you, Luciany. After all the things we've been through here, it was a good choice for us to keep the conversation going. I would like to dedicate my speech to Amanda, the girl who works here at the Central Library, who was catering for us, bringing us water and taking care of us. She was there like an invisible person, no one even noticed Amanda. They only noticed when she fell and when we went to help her. This is the premise of my speech: our absence as presence. Black people... We are the most hated people on the planet. That's the first thing I want to say. And we are the most hated people on the planet despite being the people who lit up the planet. We brought illumination to the planet more than three, five, ten thousand years before Schopenhauer, but the one who is remembered is Schopenhauer. They didn't inaugurate anything! Absolutely nothing!

Saint Augustine, despite being African, and he is African: something that must be remembered. He is the son of Saint Monica, who is also an African woman. Western philosophy is extremely pompous, it positions itself as the center of the world, as rationality, as the principle of everything. It is a philosophy of white people. And white people place themselves in the world as

humans, and place other people, especially black people, as non-humans. Our humanity is a humanity that is missing something all the time. It doesn't matter, there's no point in demanding, creating spaces for occupation, etc. etc. We will not be considered human. Our presence is an absence. That's the truth. Why do I need to say this? It is necessary to say this because this constitutes my experience as a writer, my aesthetic experience is completely based on this.

I was also raised with a grandmother. A grandmother and an aunt. I was raised under women's skirts while men disappeared, were gone, were not there. They disappeared for various reasons. We always saw a shadow of the man, the shadow of my father, the shadow of my uncles – my older brothers were growing up and traveling – the shadow of my brothers. Soon you become an adult and realize that you have had several dramatic situations that are still repeated in our communities today. I say this because it is what comes closer to what I was called here to talk about: the aesthetic image, the aesthetics of writing, the image of time.

My writing and my literature are completely made up of images and colors too. I put color where you would probably remember black and white, at most black and red. My literature would have in some aspects, a horror movie in which you see the blood appearing, the gloom, the alleys, the gaps through which you can breathe.

I was raised by my grandmother, and this image I have of my childhood: the smell of basil⁴, the smell of coffee, my grandmother's whistling Lupicínio Rodrigues'⁵ *Remorse may be the cause of my despair*". And I became this person who has in art, music, melody and writing something fundamental because my grandmother brought that to me. I was raised in a family of women. If my brothers – the majority of whom are evangelical – read what I'm about to say now, they'll kill me, but my great-grandmother, Guiomar, was a woman who loved another woman for fifty years – Dona Vanju. It is to her to whom I dedicated this latest book *Bantu Machine*. I begin by dedicating it to her and Dona Vanju, who was her wife and they were married for fifty years. And she threw festivals and parties for her wife. And the whole family hated my great-grandmother, simply for loving another woman. And my great-grandmother chose to raise everyone, I have people who are my brothers and my aunts' cousins and who my great-grandmother raised, and my grandmother inherited this. I don't even know exactly if I'm the son of the person they say I am, I'm my grandmother's son.

I had great difficulty reading and writing. I asked experts and people if I had that thing where I couldn't learn to read and write. I thought I had dyslexia, and if I had dyslexia, I still have it today because I hadn't learnt

⁴ Miss. Luciany, the guest author who was also on the table, was present with a bunch of fresh basil, which was extremely fragrant.

how to read. To this day I can't see numbers: if you send me something with numbers, I can't understand it very well. But I loved books, because my grandmother bought encyclopedias and put them on the shelf. – Curuzu⁶ was a rural area in my childhood and adolescence, which was the 1960s and 1970s. It was a rural area with cows, with a vegetable garden, in Estada da Rainha [*Queen's Road*], which up until the 90's there was a vegetable garden there. So... My grandmother bought the encyclopedia and placed it in front of the house. It would be today's equivalent to a LED TV, which people place very visibly in their homes to show that they are important people. Before, being important was having a Barsa [Encyclopedia].

My grandmother bought a collection, and there was also Aluísio de Azevedo. Was he the one who wrote *A pata da gazela*? [Luciany: No, it was José Alencar]. Ah! I read *A pata da gazela* because I fell in love with a girl and she dumped me. I dated her for a week and spent four years in love with her, writing poetry and copying the letters that the character sent in the book. It may seem like it has nothing to do with it, but this made me a writer. The love for this girl, being dumped by her, my grandmother's encyclopedia, my grandmother's singing, the entire structure that was there. The fact [was] that I didn't know how to read until

⁵ Brazilian singer and composer, born in Porto Alegre. He passed away in 1974 at the age of 59.

⁶ Neighborhood of the City of Salvador.

then, and suddenly I learned how to read because I wanted to send her letters.

At fourteen/fifteen years old I was already walking around the city. And I saw the poets in the square, I saw them and started reciting poetry. Around the age of sixteen I wrote a poem with which I think I could win a Jabuti Prize, if I competed for the Jabuti Prize. The truth is that I'm not going to compete for an award where people look down on black people, who look down on black literature. I don't believe we have to keep asking to be accepted in places where they hate us. I am against asking, as a favor, for a person who knows that we are the majority who supported him, to nominate a black minister for the Supreme Court. That won't happen. Likewise, if you ask the police to stop killing you, they won't stop. They'll be screaming, screaming, screaming and it won't stop. Ten people died last week in the Auto das Pombas and society remained silent. My question is: what did the academy say? What does philosophy have to say about this? If it has nothing to say about ten people who die in confrontations with the police, then she has nothing to say to me, and I have nothing to say to her. So, I end up wasting my time here. There are people here that I can talk to, dialogue with, but my invitation is for us to break away from these things. My invitation is that we create other power alternatives. Other alternatives of feminine power, black power, child power. Because the appropriation of that power is no longer ours.

I'm obviously speaking as a black man; I'm not speaking to everyone. I speak as a black man who knows where he comes from, who has roots deep in the place where my great-grandmother was buried, who has a name, who has a trajectory that comes from Africa. And I discovered over the years that Africa is not dependent on the knowledges that come from Europe; on the contrary, if it weren't for Africans, Europeans would still be relieving themselves on the ground because they were unable to create a mere sewage system. The existence I speak of is hundreds of years before the possibility of emergence of the Europeans as a people. If we take the sacred texts of the Yoruba, or the Odus or the Ifá... This is our writing. How do we keep saying that so-and-so did this, so-and-so invented that when in fact it was us, with our ingenuity and full humanity, who did this? We need to stop thinking that our humanity has a flaw.

I only managed to write a book when I was fifty years old. This means I've been writing for six years. And I decided that I'm going to write one book per year. There is a certain flair in Bahia, right Luciany? There is a flair, a pose, a crossing of the legs, a search for treating the space of literature as if it were something sacred. There are people who don't have clothes to go to certain launches, that's absurd! They want to launch books in places where we are not well regarded. If you pay me ten thousand Reais to go there and speak, I'll go. But I'm going because I need money, because I have a role within the city, within our communities, which

also involves literature. During the pandemic, we opened a bookstore during the pandemic. Why? Because bookstores don't accept our bodies. Black boys are reading manga too, it's not just the white boys from Caminho das Árvores. Black boys want to read manga, but when they go to these bookstores to browse books, just like the white boys in Caminho das Árvores do, the security guards go after them. My son is black, I put him under surveillance. I say "come on, go ahead, we're watching you, stay cool", when a security guard pulls over and I'll be there paying attention. After all, there have been cases of boys being killed in that shopping center just because those boys were walking there. That's what I'm talking about!

Aesthetics, poetics, the art of literature, in all of this, my literature is not to contemplate the world, my literature is to say that the world is sour and hates us. The first book I published I published saying that I was an amateur poet. It was Andreia Beatriz and Luis Carlos Alencar who took my texts published on the internet, organized them, and sent them to the printer. The day they were creating the cover, they asked me what the title would be and I said: *The general theory of failure*. Well, a man like me, known to several writers, doing several things, people didn't even remember that I wrote. I went to launch this book in São Paulo in an audience with more than three hundred people, and two hundred bought my book, and they only bought two hundred because

I only took two hundred. People didn't know I was writing a book of poetry, they thought I was writing a revolutionary treatise on how to take up arms, etc. But it was a book of poetry. Then I stopped myself and decided that every year I would publish a book.

An intervention

Prof. Filipe Emmanuel Soares Silva (UFBA)

First, Luciany, I want to congratulate you on your speeches, your inspirations are strong and touching. You spoke about the body of a non-exclusionary academic text, is it really possible to think of a non-exclusionary academic text, given that it already appears in an exclusionary place, which is the academy itself. It is a select, selecting place, in which people of a certain practice, of a certain interest, are there to mobilize that interest and that language, those concepts, for an area that is not socially common. Given this, is it really possible not to exclude in this space that is par excellence exclusionary?

I bring this other question to both of you: I have been following certain literary movements that have been emerging, including in philosophy, which is an area more familiar to me, which is the growth of black male and female authors. In

philosophy we see Fanon, Thomas Sankara, who are very popular. Mbembe too, despite the controversies. In other words, we can observe the emergence of certain philosophies and literature focused on sensitive and powerful themes that must be guided. On the other hand, I also see an appeal for certain segments of society around these issues. For example: we see Globo talking about black, feminist, LGBTQIAP+ works and addressing these themes. We can already see certain fragments of the media, of society, occupied by the bourgeoisie and whiteness taking hold of these ideas and endorsing these ideas and providing spaces for these speeches. What do both of you observe about these spaces granted to writers in marginalized conditions?

Luciany Aparecida II

My Grandparents' Heritage and the *Literary Scene*

I'll start at the end because I think the second question Hamilton will intervene more appropriately. So, I will summarize my answer to the sale: we sell. A lot! And it's obvious that these big companies want to follow the trend that makes money. Our bodies matter because our bodies sell. Look at Hamilton's report: he sold two hundred books because he took two hundred, if he had taken more, he would have sold more. But this also does not mean that these same spaces understand or accept this as a



complete aesthetic as it is. Sometimes you accept it just to win in the media. And profit is associated with this. And this reflects on our bodies, what they say, how they show themselves, how they echo in places of desire and this is closely linked to capitalism itself.

Regarding the first question, the possibility of non-exclusionary academic texts, I return to my initial statement: my training as a writer and intellectual woman in society concerns the fall. I cried because I didn't want to go to school, climb on a truck, and then spend the day being excluded because I came from the countryside. In that cry I fell, it was my downfall, school didn't suit me. What I had left, and what I held on to, was the writing that my grandmother offered to me. Through that notebook made of bread wrapping paper, I had my refinement for literature, and why not say: for life and philosophy.

When my grandfather passed away it was a big shock, I'm going to tell you this story to address this issue. So... It was a big shock, it was horrible, we all felt it, he was a very loved man in the community where we lived. And we lived in a house that was inside of a large farm. When he passed away, my grandmother's biggest fear was: they're going to throw us out because they're going to ask for the land documents and we won't have it. And we were scared because our house was on the boundary between the rural community where we lived and this large farm. So, all of us inside the house – nine women – were looking for

the documents for that house. There was a moment when my grandmother said “I know, it must be under the mattress”, because there was a leather suitcase under the mattress that my grandfather kept tied with rope. We all think: if it has to be somewhere, it can only be there. It was the most valuable object he kept; it could only be there. She told me “Take it, Luciany”. I went to my grandparents' room, took this suitcase and brought this bag tied with rope and put it on the table and we opened it. What was there? A poem, drawn and illustrated. There was not a single land document. My grandmother then said “See? Poetry is useless. I told you, what's good is a novel.” And then they said “leave it to Luciany”, and that was it: it was the *great* inheritance. My grandmother's desire for literary narrative and a novel remained with me, and my grandfather's desire for poetry remained with me. He would arrive tired from the fields, from reaping cassava, and would sit at the door of the house, asking me to come and see the shape of the clouds. These memories are of absurd refinement, and I remember that when I arrived at school and saw a poem, I would remember my grandfather. But still, I always fell at school, just like I fell at university.

I'm a writer today and I'm here telling you why I didn't manage to be approved in any public exam to become a university professor. What I want, within a capitalist society, is to pay my monthly rent and my grocery shopping. And what I really want is

to have a piece of land in the rural area where I can plant crops, and maybe teach, and maybe university, or maybe university professor... I finished my doctorate and I became a room maid in a hotel here in Campo Grande – in other words: I'm doing the hustle! In this sense, the university organizes itself for me as a mere place for earning money. When I was young, I came to Salvador to live at an aunt's house, and I failed at several jobs. I went back to the countryside and there I met a friend's mother who encouraged me to take the Vestibular⁷. In other words, the university was an accident.

Then I was admitted at a university in Feira de Santana, and a woman who had people owning her favors in Feira said that I would be living in a boarding house there, which I would be able to pay for. From the first to the second semester, I got a scholarship to work at the city museum, and in the fourth semester I got a scientific initiation scholarship. And then I discovered that studying at university paid off. And I lived off my undergraduate, master's and doctorate scholarships. And I was *falling* the whole time, escaping. It is possible to be escaping anywhere.

I wrote a thesis about the poet Ricardo Aleixo writing a dialogue with poetry. I didn't write *about* Ricardo Aleixo, I wrote *with* Ricardo Aleixo. In other words, I have already proposed, within the academy, a literary theory thesis bringing the poet's

aesthetic body closer to the Orisha Exú, also writing with fiction. In the thesis there are several excerpts that are literary creations, in the acknowledgments I thanked writers who do not exist, who are names that I invented. And at that moment I created three signatures, one of them is Ruth Ducaso – some of my books don't have my name on the cover, they have hers – which, by the way, helps to question this place Hamilton also pointed out: there is a *literary scene*, and the scene is one of the greatest compositional desires of a character who is the author. And I invented this character that doesn't exist, which is the writer Ruth Ducaso. But it's not a lie, it's a recomposition of names, influenced by bell hooks herself, who created her name in reference to her maternal grandmother – I created the name Ruth in reference to my grandmother, who is thus named. She is a black woman with dark skin who, at the beginning of the 20th century, was adopted by another family after being abandoned because she was born with dark skin. And this, a story so near of us, shows the complexities of what Brazil is, the being Brazil.

When I told the publisher I was going to publish under that name they said: "that's nonsense, it won't work, if people [these days] don't want to read, imagine reading someone who doesn't exist". And I needed to point out that I wasn't making this choice to hide myself, quite the contrary: I was creating her to put myself in place. I created

⁷ Admittance exam for many Brazilian universities.

this character so that this name existed, so that this scribble, this erasure of the literary scene itself could be felt. Thus, in my doctoral thesis, I thank these existences. I thank Ruth Ducaso, I thank the illustrator who doesn't exist, I illustrated it myself, since one of my signatures is called Antônio Peixoto, and he illustrates his creations. I created this character based on images of men who worked their entire lives on farms, and it is obviously a direct reference to my grandfather. That's why I say that these names reveal much more than they hide.

So, to finalize the answer to your question... I don't think that there will ever be a complete acceptance in academia, but that doesn't mean there's no confrontation. Being at university is important even for our survival. Since an ideal society does not exist now and we need to survive, let us survive by occupying all these possible positions, including academia.

Hamilton Borges II

REAJA. quilombo doesn't negotiate

Well, Filipe – one thing stood out in my mind when you talked about Fanon, Thomas Sankara... Look, for us, these names are not strange, nor are they new. I

belonged to an organization called Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU), at the time it was a radical organization. A grassroots organization, which prepared people from different parts of the cities – and we were all over Brazil – so that these people could produce themselves intellectually. Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday we were in the classroom, learning. I read and made projects on the General History of Africa. I studied the topic exhaustively. The big problem for certain intellectuals in anthropology is that indigenous people, homosexuals, black people, women, when they do research in this field, are talking about themselves, whereas these people are not. And they do not get this.

The negotiation field has always existed and will exist. Throughout our process as black people in this territory, there have always been groups that needed to negotiate, and there has been groups that needed to destroy everything, like the *quilombos*: the *quilombo* doesn't negotiate.⁸ Anyone who calls themselves a *quilombist*, *quilombola*, *quilombamento* and then goes to beg something from the government, who demands something from the university – they are not a *quilombist*. *Quilombo* breaks everything! Set fire to the farm, cut off the master's head, that's what *quilombo* is: War. The peace of the *quilombo* is only between us. Now, there were also

⁸ They were communities formed in Brazil during the colonial period by enslaved Africans and/or

their descendants. Quilombos are understood as spaces of resistance for Africans, as they were comprised of escaped slaves.



people inside the Casa Grande⁹ who negotiated, who were as important as the *quilombolas*. The point is not to rank one against the other, saying this one is important and that one is not, that one is doing good and the other is doing harm. Many people who, over time, stayed within the institutions, negotiating spaces, opening paths, taking small steps etc., have allowed us, the radicals, to be able to open our mouths today without being shot or arrested. In other words, everyone has their own value.

Now, this Mbembe that you mention, he is a remote control from Europe. Nobody needs him, he provides a service. He is there, in

South Africa, traveling all over the world, but he is like Appiah: they are the type of African people who, whilst the movements for demands and the situation of things say that we need to radicalize the process, that we need to take an effective step in our presences of humanity, they say radicals drive people away. In the end, what they want is to educate white people. I have a lot of respect for white people, but I don't want to educate any white people. White people have already educated themselves a lot on my back. They wrote marks on my back that are deeper than the sankofa symbols. These are deep marks. I feel pain. I feel from the pain. Those pains of people who were

⁹ The term "Casa Grande" during slavery in Brazil refers to the main residence of the plantation owner. It was a symbol of power and status, representing the center of economic and social control.

Symbolically, it also describes the unequal hierarchy of slave society, where the "Casa Grande" represented the dominant power in contrast to the *senzalas*, the dwellings of the enslaved.

beaten and humiliated, I feel that pain. No one can claim that I should be loving like that intellectual from Rio de Janeiro who talks about Ubuntu, about love. Ubuntu for me is a panacea of kisses and hugs.

I live something that Mano Brawn has already gotten rid of, right? Mano Brawn said about ten years ago that he lived as a hostage to the character he created. I live as this character's hostage because I can't help but say the things I want to say. That's why we chose autonomy. Our books do not have a government seal, government support, anything like that. We have support from international organizations, from Africa and from the United States, but from here we don't give a damn about them.

Here we have a gigantic publishing company owned by two white women, a mother and daughter, that has existed since the 80's. One black guy or another would be published there. Lélia Gonzales was there screaming and they never published it. Sueli Carneiro was there screaming and they never published it. Luiza Bairros, an excellence, was there and they never published it. Then suddenly, at this moment when you have an entire international logic of anti-racism, in which the market, as Luciany said, realizes that our aesthetics and our life bring profits, we start to appear. Look, everything people wear is black, what people eat is black – if you go to Bahia and remove the black, Bahia falls, there is nothing left. And I'm not just talking about the services we provide; I'm talking about aesthetics and ethics. Jorge Amado

won the whole world because he spoke of things that Bernadinho could have said, that Martiniano could have written. Martiniano wrote, spoke French, was better than Jorge Amado in everything. Why did he become a source? These are things that must be declared! And we omit them! "See, you can't talk about Jorge Amado like that". Who is Jorge Amado? For me he is Nothing.

We at REAJA, in 2006, brought the presence of Assata Shakur here, Us. Because the São Paulo government did something called Black August. Some black Americans saw it, came to Salvador, met us, because we made connections. We took them into Jail. They were the children of the Black Panthers who had never touched their parents, because their parents were in prison and so they only saw them through a glass. And when they entered the jail and played with the prisoners, they said they felt like they were playing ball with their parents: there are photos of them hugging the prisoners and crying.

At the time we ran a national campaign "Free Assata Shakur". Nobody knew Assata Shakur. Nobody even spoke her name. We wrote a book "Writings by Assata Shakur", we wrote it with her authorization, with the letter written by her, with the mediation of João Vargas, Angela Davis – it wasn't just a little story, it was us. After we released this book, some boys started to write excerpts from Assata Shakur's autobiography on the internet. They asked us: "Hey there, Hamilton. Hey there, REAJA; can we do it?" Yeah! Of course! We answered: your effort



is not ours, you do it and publish it, we will help. But Publisher X bought the rights to the work and threatened the boys with prosecution and jail if they published the writings. They threatened them with jail! I immediately said: arrest us. If you put me in jail, I'll write three books and become a national hero. We published the book. Did they come to arrest us? They know that from an ethical point of view they are in the wrong. Because they cannot use their capital, their power, their enormity, against harmless people.

What are they going to say about me? What are they going to say about the people from REAJA? Will they say we don't publish? That we don't release our works? We release our books from jail, we release books in the hoods. Didn't you see me arriving with the suitcase and throwing the books in your laps? I'm a street vendor, damn it! We are literature's maloqueiros. The pain I feel – You know, Luciany – it's just that our brothers here, who know the

pain we have, isolate us so that we don't say certain things to those who pay. See? Then you are invited to FLIC in Rio, SESC São Paulo, events and more events abroad, then the brothers do things here, and then don't remember that there is literature that is made with quality, because we don't do mimeograph literature, we respect the reader.

This text is a transcription of the speeches given at the table "Aesthetics of Writing and the Image of its time" at the Bahian Meeting of Philosophy, Image and Cinema, which took place on September 14, 2023. The event was formally supported by Anãnsi, a periodical of philosophy from UNEB, the Pedro Calmon Foundation and the Bahia Cultural Foundation, both submitted to the Secretariat of Culture of the State of Bahia.

ANÃNSI

ISSN: 2675-8385 – Salvador, Bahia, Brasil.
Anãnsi: Revista de Filosofia, v. 4, n. 2, 2023, p. 278