

**The Resistance of a Transurban Sexuality in Amara
Moirra and Atena Beauvoir**

*Ricardo Barberena
Ana Ferrão*

Translated by Carlos Eduardo Meneghetti Scholles

“Antes [de assumir a Amara], eu não
chamava atenção na rua. E de repente,
quando você se coloca como mulher e,
mais especificamente, como travesti, todos
os olhos se voltam a você para tentar te
entender.”

(Before [I came out], I did not stand out on
the street. And suddenly, when you present
yourself as a woman and, more specifically,
as a transvestite, all eyes turn to you, trying to
understand you.)

—Moirra qtd. in Viana. *Travesti doutoranda e
prostituta Amara Moirra narra sua vida em livro.*

The power to spin and weave the future was a mystery to the Greeks. Nowadays, every minute and every day, facing a global pandemic, we ask ourselves about the unfathomable dwellings of tomorrow. In Greek mythology, the Moirai were three dismal sisters (the personifications of destiny, they were also known as the three Fates) who manufactured, wove, and cut the thread of life of all beings. They used the wheel of fortune to define the periods of good and

bad luck for every individual. Facing the collapse of our contemporaneity, we might return to interpretations of the Moirai that command our living and dying.

Despite this territory of deaths, there are contemporary Moirai of both resistance and experience (and, especially, transgender experience). One is the transexual and feminist writer Amara Moira. Born and raised in Campinas, she defended her doctoral dissertation in literary theory, “The indeterminacy of meanings in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*,” at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), becoming the first transexual woman to obtain an academic title with her new name.¹ This is an extremely important achievement because the university environment is still quite conservative. In the words of Amara, “Unicamp insisted that I use the new name. Amara was my name in the whole process, and it is a message to society that this place [academia] is ours. There is a bureaucracy that prevents the recognition of our names, but they [Unicamp] did their part so that we could feel more comfortable” (qtd. in Ignacio). The curriculum lattes, a portal that represents a kind of academic identity card in Brazil, was a battle to be won due to the imposition of her birth name. However, she fought to have her name “Moira” written with her own ink. Over the course of her gender transition process, which she began during her PhD, she started professional sex work, which she documented on her blog, reporting on her experiences and those of her colleagues’ as well. With Hoo Press, she launched her book *E se eu fosse puta* (And If I Were a Whore), which was the result of the work published on her blog and which promoted the deconstruction of the values of the phallogentric and heteronormative canon. Paradoxically, ironically, subversively, and even delightfully, her stage name means “bitter fate,” and was inspired by Homer’s *Odyssey*, who describes how the Moirai foresaw a bitter fate for Ulysses. Amara Moira reverses the predefined scripts of a toxic male discourse. However, our dominant and sexist class desires a nefarious future for Brazilian transexuals, who have experienced record levels of violence and deaths in recent years. As much as she bothers the reign of macho men, with their small pistols in hand, Amara Moira also extends her brilliance to the diplomas of Joyce professors, to the power-knowledge of teaching, and to the books published in literary circles as part of her columns for *Mídia Ninja*, an important vehicle of Brazil’s alternative press.² In that sense, *E se eu fosse puta* is pure dynamite that transforms destinations.

The transvestite-writer-whore-feminist Amara Moira causes real damage in the “kingdom” of literature. Composed of forty-four texts, including causerie and poems, her book, which was written based on her experiences with prostitution and her transition process, is a proposal for the linguistic, literary, moral, social, and even religious (de)construction of our way of understanding the world. Write Franco and Soares of the book, “there is something of Jesus

Christ in every prostitute . . . It is a book about whys. It is a book about decisions, about beginnings, and ends” (431–32).

Throughout the book, the narrator describes her relationships with men and the abuses in the “dark alleys, far from the eyes of the world” (Franco and Soares 432). She draws, with a pulsating literary style, a cartography of the streets where she lives. Moira reflects on the anguish she feels while being stared at on the street: “And there are all kinds of looks: some more hostile, some more curious . . . This constant look is a reminder that you are considered an aberration” (Moira qtd. in “Se eu fosse puta”). It is a great fear not having a roof to call “mine” because, without the protection of the house, all life is exposed in the public walk—every skin is in contact with the look that predicts a trial of exclusion and abnormality:

Medo de quê? De tudo. Mas sobretudo de ter que do nada me prostituir, ter que ir da noite pro dia buscar cada centavo do meu sustento na prostituição. E não eram os corpos sem nome, vários, variados, via de regra fora do padrão, em diversos graus de higiene e saúde, o que me assustava. Com esses me dou bem, e até prefiro, anônimos, fora do padrão (como eu própria me sentia sempre, ainda mais agora). Sexo nunca foi foda . . . Meu medo era, antes, a violência da exclusão, me ver pária da noite pro dia, tratada feito lixo, perder família, amigos, círculo social, não ter um teto pra chamar de meu, o direito de continuar estudando, de poder buscar emprego que não fosse esse que não consideram emprego: puta. (Moira 30)

(Fear of what? Of everything. Above all, I have had to prostitute myself, out of the blue, to go overnight to get every cent of my living in prostitution. The bodies without a name, several, varied, non-standard as a rule, in varying degrees of hygiene and health were not what scared me. I get along with those, and I even prefer anonymous, non-standard, as I always felt myself, especially now. Sex was never bad . . . My fear was the violence of exclusion, seeing myself as a social outcast overnight, treated like garbage, losing family, friends, social circle, not having a roof to call my own, the right to continue studying, to be able to look for a job that was not the one considered a job: whore.)

Transsexual people often experience helplessness, due to the cisgender and heteronormative societal system, which reproduces intermittently “the historical way that transsexual people are treated in Brazilian society: they are seen in a stereotyped way, displacing the looks of their complex life stories” (Jesus 254). Transsexual people are never truly safe, especially in Brazil, a country with a high rate of transphobia:

A survey carried out by the international non-governmental organization Transgender Europe, which points to Brazil as the world champion in murders of transvestites and transsexuals, reveals another frightening finding: more than half of transsexual women murdered between 2008 and 2016 in Brazil were engaged in prostitution. According to the data from the National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals (Antra), 90% of the transsexual and transvestite women are engaged in prostitution. (Prada 60)

The exclusion of transgender individuals begins, mostly, at home. When they come out and change their gender, many end up prematurely losing their first community. Exiled from home, which is the primary space of safety and warmth, and from parental bonds that constitute the affective basis of every individual, the transsexual person is irremediably abandoned, physically and emotionally:

When transvestites “come out,” the family’s domestic space, as a rule, turns out to be unsustainable. It loses its atmosphere of welcome and protection, becoming threatening. The usual stories of older brothers who are hostile and physically attack the transvestites, when they are still “young faggots”; the father who throws his son and his belongings on the street; the mother who weeps desolately asking where she could have gone wrong, watching her son’s steps, trying to protect him from the father’s slaps and the laughter of the neighbors. Sometimes she uses physical force to “correct” what she considers her mistake. (Pelúcio 70)

In other words, the feeling of homelessness starts in the family and invades the transsexual’s existence in many aspects, including their most basic rights,

such as their own identification and dominion over their bodies. This is especially true for transexual women:

The situation is different when we refer to the transexual and transvestite women. Most families pushed them out of their homes at an early age, in addition to the rejection by the formal job market. Thus, among them, prostitution is usually compulsory, although some transvestites also recognize it as their primary space for building affections and recognizing identity. A space where, according to Amara Moira, “their bodies are accepted and there is no need for specific legislation to have their new name and gender respected.” (Prada 60)

The concern is not the sex work itself but rather suffering limitations due to a cisgender regime that puts transexual people in isolation and regulates their work activities, social relationships, and the spaces where they circulate. As Butler points out, “No one should be criminalized for his or her gender presentation, and no one should be threatened by a precarious life by virtue of the performative character of one’s gender presentation” (*Notes* 56). Thus, a palimpsest of deprivation and helplessness is imposed on transexual people:

In this way, precarity is, perhaps obviously, directly linked with gender norms, since we know that those who do not live their genders in intelligible ways are at heightened risk of harassment, pathologization, and violence. Gender norms have everything to do with how and in what way we can appear in public space, how and in what way the public and private are distinguished, and how that distinction is instrumentalized in the service of sexual politics. By asking who will be criminalized on the basis of their public appearance, I mean, who will be treated as a criminal, and produced as a criminal (which is not always the same as being named a criminal by a code of law that discriminated against manifestations of certain gender norms or certain sexual practices); who will fail to be protected by the law or, more specifically, the police, on the street, or on the job, or in the home—in legal codes or religious institutions? (35)

Moira emphasizes that the simple act of appearing in public is, in a way, condemnatory to transexuals, demonstrating how the city repels them: “andávamos de mãos dadas pela cidade, não importa aonde, e os olhares de incompreensão, de fúria, de zombaria iam nos seguindo, nos cercando, o tempo todo” (188) (we walked hand in hand in the city, no matter where, and the looks of incomprehension, of fury, of mockery kept following us, surrounding us, all the time). Different aspects point to the neglect towards transexual existence: in the denial of subjectivity and in the deprivation of their value as individuals. As Lanz explains, “to be a transgender person is to be a non-being. A non-being is someone who, institutionally speaking, is not. Someone who, despite having a material existence, does not constitute a socially recognized and legitimated identity, that is to say, properly inserted into the cultural matrix of intelligibility” (206). But, as Butler explains, transgender persons are also subject to the ridicule of their posture and the depreciation of their body, making them abject: “the ‘abject’ designates that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered ‘Other.’ This appears as an expulsion of alien elements, but the alien is effectively established through this expulsion” (*Gender* 169).

The discrepancy attributed to the bodies and minds of transgender individuals defines them as social outcasts and pushes them to the margins of the city. They become foreigners in their own homelands: “as a minority, transvestites experience a kind of exile and subordination, something quite recurrent either in the real world or in fiction” (Fernandes 157). In that sense, transexual people are subjected to exile in their own country and within their cities. This segregation is perpetuated through spaces where they are not accepted and where they are defined as *personae non gratae*, or targets of rejection: “se eu percebo o que se passa ao meu redor, a forma como me olham, o quanto a minha figura não faz sentido, aí é me trancar no quarto e chorar” (Moira 29) (if I realize what is happening around me, the way they look at me, how much my figure does not make sense, then I lock myself in my room and cry). According to Butler, “In Arendtian terms, we can say that to be precluded from the space of appearance, to be precluded from being part of the plurality that brings the space of appearance into being, is to be deprived of the right to have rights” (*Notes* 59).

In the pages of *E se eu fosse puta*, we do not find many places identified, even though cities are named. This partial silencing denotes the emptying of these places, where there are either no specific features or no established connections with those who pass through them. As explained by Gomes:

Nowadays, it is clear that the city does not need a full presence to be the setting of the narrative. Its absence, however, leaves all its marks: violence, loneliness, the absence of moral values, the exacerbation of sex, no trace of humanism . . . the features that could indicate a strong identity are eroded, features that become weak, rarefied. Moreover, if this city is any city, there is no longer a need to describe a scenario that locates identities.

Moira's novel takes us through parking lots, bushes, bus stations, hotels, motels, subways, and down streets that could exist in any city:

Não havia luz, só cheiro ali no mato, o matel, e as muitas, muitas camisinhas usadas pelo chão fazendo clep à medida que caminhávamos atrás dum cantinho vazio, eu de salto pisando a terra, ele empurrando a moto. Não havia luz, mas assim que ele abaixou a cueca houve cheiro, o de suor, de homem, me invadindo as narinas, dando água na boca. É ali que a gente trabalha, todas, todas, no escurinho onde der, atrás do abacateiro, ou dentro do carro do cliente quando há carro, ou no quarto do motel, pensão, se se dispõem a pagar mais. O mais das vezes não. (19)

(There was no light, just the smell in the bush, the motel in the bush, and the many, many used condoms on the ground making a squelch sound as we stepped on them, walking around looking for an empty corner; I, wearing high heels, he, pushing the motor bike. There was no light, but as soon as he pulled his underwear down, the smell of sweat, of a man invading my nostrils, made my mouth water. This is the place where we work, all of us, in the dark wherever it is, behind the avocado tree or inside the customer's car when there is a car, or in the motel room, boarding house, if they are willing to pay more. Most of the time, they are not.)

Transsexual people, especially those who are engaged in sex work, are relegated to the street. According to Prada, "while cisgender women can be engaged in sex work in houses and nightclubs, transvestites are normally on

the streets in precarious prostitution, which possibly contributes to increasing the risk of aggression and insecurity” (61). The transexual becomes a foreigner, even though she is in her native land, and seeks refuge in herself or in the spaces that allow her existence:

Gosto de andar por aí de cabeça baixa, sem ter que enfrentar olhares e imaginar o que estão pensando ao me ver. Se as pessoas riem, faço todo um esforço para acreditar que deve ser por piada ou coisa engraçada que lhes ocorreu. Me ponho num mundinho cor-de-rosa sempre, um que me proteja. Não olho, não retribuo olhares, passo alheia a tudo o que me envolve. E eu realmente consigo acreditar, na maioria das vezes, que essas irrupções de risos ou giros de cabeça não tem relação comigo: há sempre uma justificativa que me surja rápido, à qual me agarro sem nem precisar de esforço. Mas tem vezes que a sincronia da minha passagem com esse riso soa estranha demais, me deixa insegura, agride. (Moirá 29)

(I like to walk around with my head down, without having to face glances and imagine what they are thinking of me. If people laugh, I make an effort to believe that they have remembered a joke or a funny thing. I always put myself in a little pink world that protects me. I do not look, I do not return glances, and I am unaware of everything that involves me. I can really believe, most of the time, that these outbursts of laughter or head turns have nothing to do with me: an explanation always comes to my mind quickly, and I cling to it without any effort. However, there are times when the synchronization, when I am walking with that laugh, sounds too strange, makes me insecure, attacks me.)

In the novel, the narrator searches for invisibility and anonymity in these places of clandestine pleasure and sexuality. The lack of bonds and history among people resonates with the isolation of the space: “Não tem conversa, não tem carinho” (38) (there is no conversation, no affection). Retreating has a logistical element, a *modus operandi*, and the transexual person, unprotected as she is in the city, needs to take precautions and be prepared with strategies to feel protected from rejection and violence:

Todos que frequentam banheiro masculino sabem que homem não olha nos olhos de outro homem, não conversa, nem fala oi, a menos que esteja querendo coisa. Eu rapidinho entendi essa língua. Eu queria coisa . . . Demoro lavando a mão, buscando discretamente um olhar que insinuasse querer responder ao meu (todo cuidado é pouco, pois machão disposto a quebrar seus dentes, se se sentir desejado, é o que não falta); aí perceber que o cara está demais no mictório, que está meio me olhando de canto de olho, procurando o meu canto de olho, eu lá lavando as mãos . . . aí um dos dois toma a iniciativa e assume o olhar, os dois passando a se olhar diretamente e eu que estava lavando ou enxugando as mãos há horas, ou mexendo no cabelo, escovando os dentes, volto ao mictório “pra fazer xixi” bem do ladinho dele, apesar de tantos lugares vazios. Um olha o que o outro tem, toca, brinca rapidinho e se dirigem ao box, onde eu já me sento na privada e vou logo abrindo o zíper. (38)

(Everyone who goes to the men’s bathroom knows that a man does not look into another man’s eyes, does not talk, and not even say hi, unless he wants something. I quickly understood this language. I wanted something . . . It takes me a long time to wash my hands, discreetly looking for a look that implies the same need [all the care is not enough because there is a dime a dozen of macho men willing to break your teeth, if they desire to]. Then I realize that the guy, who is taking too long at the urinal, is kind of looking at me out of the corner of his eye, looking for my corner of the eye, and I was there washing my hands . . . then one of us takes the initiative and strikes the look, both start looking at each other directly and I, who had been washing or drying my hands for hours, or messing with my hair, brushing my teeth, go back to the urinal “to pee” right on his side, despite so many empty places. One looks at what the other has, touches, plays quickly and goes to the stall, where I have already sat down on the toilet and quickly open the zipper.)

In Moira’s narrative, the non-places of intimacy that we learn about are dark and public, like the vacant lots, the “banheirões e dark rooms da vida” (20) (large bathrooms and the dark rooms of life). The “large bathrooms” are nothing more than the bathrooms of public places, such as bus stations and parties, where individuals relate sexually at random. The dark room, on

the other hand, is a room as dark as pitch where the participants see no one and have sex with one another. Some places, although more reserved, have the same non-place configuration, such as sleazy hotels and drive-in motels.

Being safe is a utopia for the transexual person. Whether in psychological, emotional, or physical terms, the transexual person is under constant threat and the city does not protect her in any way, anywhere:

[A]quele momento em que você se dá conta de que estão metralhando de olhares, olhares de todos os feitios, hostis, curiosos, divertidos, zombeteiros, não você, mas a pessoa com quem você está de mãos dadas, a pessoa a quem você dedica afeto. Onde? Oras, onde você estiver, rua, metrô, ônibus, banheiro, cinema, shopping center. E não importa nem quem essa pessoa seja, homem, mulher, branca, negro, tudo tanto faz: ela será metralhada por igual, todos os olhares. E tanto faz porque a culpa dessa metralhadora de olhares é sua, porque não importa quem seja a outra pessoa, importa apenas que ela está com você, travesti. Retardei trocentas vezes a minha transição por amor, por medo do que a pessoa que eu amava pudesse sentir, viver a partir dali, por medo de vê-la alvo do ódio que a sociedade dirigia a mim. (187)

([T]hat moment when you realize that people are strafing glances, looks of all kinds, hostile, curious, amusing, mocking, not at you, but at the person you are holding hands with; to the person you dedicate affection. Where? For God's sake, wherever you are, that is, on the street, subway, bus, in the bathroom, cinema, and shopping center. It does not even matter whoever that person is, man, woman, white, black, nothing matters: he will be strafed equally, all looks. Besides, it is your fault for this machine gun of looks because it does not matter whoever the other person is, what really matters is that he is with you, a transvestite. I delayed my coming out a thousand times out of love, for fear of what the person I loved might feel, to live from that time on, for fear of seeing him the target of the hatred that society directed at me.)

The fear that curtails affections also attacks the circulation of the transexual person. Fear is, in many stages, corrosive. The fear of imposing degrading

situations on the other, the fear of being attacked, the fear of not being desired or loved—all these fears are inscribed in the spaces that the transexual transits, as she is forced to live in the city through the prism of dread, alarm, and vigilance:

Tou eu descendo a escada rolante indo pegar o metrô em São Paulo às 05h30 da madrugada, quando vejo o cidadão à minha frente levar um susto ao me perceber travesti. Com medo de violência, vai saber, já ligo o alerta, mas perco em seguida o infeliz de vista. Qual a surpresa ao percebê-lo logo atrás de mim, na porta, esperando o metrô chegar? Ele começa a dar chutinhos no meu pé então, de forma bem grosseira ainda que discreta, eu sem entender o motivo daquilo, medo de ele querer briga, quando de repente noto ele discretamente mostrando, no visor do celular, seu número de telefone. (179)

(I am going down the escalator to take the subway in São Paulo at 5:30 am, when I see the citizen in front of me startle when he realized I am a transvestite. Afraid of violence, I have already turned on the alert, but then I lose sight of the unfortunate man. Imagine my surprise when I noticed him right behind me, at the door, waiting for the subway to arrive. Then, he starts kicking my foot in a very crude yet discreet way; I do not understand the reason for that, fearing that he wants to pick a fight, when suddenly I notice him discreetly showing his phone number on the cell phone display.)

The condition of discouragement involves drastic and cruel transexual experiences. In her memoir *Coração andarilho*, Nélide Piñon writes, “Transito pelo mundo com o coração poroso” (199) (I transit around the world with a porous heart). Just like Amara Moira’s narrator, like other punctured transexual existences, Piñon also transits through cities: “Parto em debandada como o falso pássaro que sou” (211) (I leave like the fake bird that I am). Here, it is possible to find another point in common, about transexual people who are considered false and mere copies of the original, because “transvestites and transexuals are still understood as men, women who are ‘false,’ ‘misleading,’ ‘non-biological’ persons, etc. as opposed to people who would have their genders naturalized by the cisgender prism” (Bagagli 25).

However, describing the city and the spaces relegated to the transexual people is a rebellion, an act of resistance against those who want the city to repeat the scorn of their looks because “words did not just reflect social and political reality; they were instruments for transforming reality” (Hunt 17). It is true that Amara denounces the fear that lurks in the footsteps of transexuals; yet, she also gives a new meaning to these spaces and presents the street in its total plurality, as a place where she finds fear and freedom. In other words, Amara re-appropriates spaces. About Campinas, she writes, “estou indo pra minha cidade” (180) (I’m going to my city). In this sense, she accomplishes in her work what Gomes describes:

The written city is, then, the result of the reading, the construction of the subject who reads it, as a physical space and cultural myth, thinking of it as a symbolic and material condensation as well as a scenario of change, in the search of meaning. Therefore, to write the city is also an act of reading it, even if it proves to be unreadable at first sight; is to devise a form for this always mobile reality. Mapping their multiple senses and their multiple voices and spellings is a poetic operation that seeks to apprehend the writing of the city and the city as writing, in a game open to complexity (Gomes).

Although there is much to combat in the scope of Brazil’s oppressive and transphobic policies, transexual narratives emerge as a discourse of resistance that denounces the exile to which they have been subjected.

Atena Beauvoir was born on April 20, 1991, in Porto Alegre. She is a writer, a poet, a teacher, and a philosopher. In 2016, she received an honorable mention for her role in defending and promoting the dignity of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transvestite, and transexual people in the city of Canoas, Rio Grande do Sul. In 2018, she published *Contos transantropológicos*, which presents a mosaic of transexual characters and offers another look at social tensions and lusts: “seres humanos *trans* (referencio no termo *trans* as pessoas travestis, transexuais, transgêneras e não binárias) experienciam esses questionamentos diariamente em suas vidas. Ainda que apresentando-se no binarismo ou não binarismo, existe uma intensa pressão a respeito daquilo que denominamos *identidade*” (12) (transexual human beings [I refer to transvestite, transexual, transgender, and genderqueer people with the term *transexual*] experience these questions daily in their lives. Whether presenting as genderqueer or not, there is an intense pressure regarding what we call *identity*). According to Atena, many bodies of

transexual human beings are not understood as valid human units, which denies the legitimacy of transexual people, “que eu chamo de *segunda humanidade*” (12) (who I call *second humanity*). Even if there is this attempt to delegitimize transexual people, nothing—not even the dominance of cisgender norms—can control the future of transexual bodies because “não há destino para a espécie humana senão aquele que ela mesma constrói para si, querendo chamar de natural, comum ou normal” (12) (there is no destiny for the human species but the one that is built by the individuals themselves, trying to call it natural, common, or normal). Both Amara and Atena know that, and they command their moirai.

Talking about Atena’s writing demands a discussion of the loom of destiny that she proposes: “Nós, transgêneros, somos os criadores da nossa própria existência. Nós não temos destino senão aquele que somos. O nosso ser é autônomo, o de vocês, autômato. O vosso ser é preso. O nosso ser é livre” (168) (We, the transgender people, are the creators of our own existence. We have no destiny except who we are. Our being is autonomous, yours is an automaton. Your being is trapped. Our being is free). It is impossible not to address the themes of freedom and moira: “Nós, humanidade transgênera, rasgamos o roteiro” (169) (We, transgender humanity, tear up the script). The metaphor of the script is fundamental for understanding the reversibility of endings and new births. When she talks about her coming out, she says, “sangrei até esvaziar o conteúdo de uma existência. Agora gero meu próprio sangue para dar forma e força ao meu novo corpo existente” (169) (I bled until the content of an existence was emptied. Now I generate my own blood to give shape and strength to my new existing body).

In the preface to her book, Atena adverts, “aspiro teorizar sobre meu existir” (15) (I aspire to theorize about my existence). She desires to move beyond the traditional dictates: “Não quero destituir forças dos que pensam antropologicamente, ainda que aprisionados em postulados cisgêneros, dentro de um sistema que não gera existência humana, somente papéis, currículo lattes e perda de saúde mental” (15) (I do not want to remove the power of those who think anthropologically, even if imprisoned in cisgender postulates, within a system that does not generate human existence, only papers, curriculum lattes, and loss of mental health). Atena’s texts dismantle a long tradition of cataloging identity *deviations*, which are labeled as anomalies of a biological existence. Regarding the challenges of transexuals’ visibility, the author reflects:

O maior obstáculo é a transfobia estrutural. E isso não é simples. A visão social naturalista é de que há uma origem de ser homem ou mulher na natureza, a visão pseudo científica do conceito inexistente de homem e mulher—a comunidade científica internacional nunca publicou um estudo

a respeito—e a visão humanista de que ser homem e ser mulher é um fator inerente aos corpos. O fato de uma sociedade acreditar que só homens têm pênis e mulheres têm vagina, essa cisgeneridade, cria uma distância entre a leitura potencial de obras de autoria trans, principalmente no Brasil, um país ainda colônia de um machismo histórico que inferioriza o ser feminino, seja cisgênero ou transgênero. Nosso teto de vidro é não sermos quem sempre esteve no poder histórico da dita masculinidade. (Beauvoir, “O Brasil”)

(The major obstacle is structural transphobia. This is not simple. The naturalistic social view refers to the existence of an origin of being a man or woman in nature, the pseudo-scientific view of the non-existent concept of man, woman—the international scientific community has never published a study about it—and the humanist view that being a man, and being a woman is an inherent factor in bodies. The fact that a society believes that only men have a penis and women have a vagina, this cisgender idea creates a distance between the potential reading of transgender works, especially in Brazil, a country still a colony of historical machismo that diminishes female existence, whether cisgender or transgender. Our glass ceiling avoids being the one that has always been in the historical power of so-called masculinity.)

In the short story “Eles passarão, eu passarinha,” the city appears as a threatening and violent territory for the transvestite Rocheli. The title of the text is a reference to “Poeminho do Contra,” by Mario Quintana: “Todos esses que aí estão / Atravancando meu caminho, / Eles passarão . . . / Eu passarinho!” (All those who are there / Clogging my path, / They shall pass . . . / I will fly!).³ If, on the one hand, the poem refers to the archetypal figure of the walker and their paths in wandering through the city, on the other, it brings the representation of escapist flights of resistance. The stones that complicate walking are the oppressive marks of a transphobic city. As the city is a stone book, structural violence seeks to silence these stories of non-cisgender people. Rocheli’s mere presence arouses fury in the young men who have just left a party because, in their ignoble and abject mentality, the city is a space of white, bourgeois, masculine systems of similarity and standardization:

Ao irem em direção aos carros estacionados próximo ao local da festa, um deles agita no ar palavras de sátira, apontando para o outro lado da rua:

—Vai colocar uma cueca, veado, filha da puta!
 Outro induz com verbalidade violenta:
 —Traveção! Nunca vai ser mulher!
 O terceiro ainda incita:
 —Merece morrer, escrotice!
 E a sentença final é dita pelo último rapaz do grupo:
 —Isso é uma *coisa*, nem ser humano é! Ridículo! (Beauvoir, *Contos* 53)

(As they head towards the cars parked near the party, one of them throws satire words in the air, pointing to the other side of the street:
 “Put on underwear, faggot, motherfucker!”
 Another one with violent and fierce verbosity shouts:
 “Transgender! You will never be a woman!”
 The third provokes:
 “You deserve to die, dick!”
 Further, the last guy in the group says the final sentence:
 “That is a *thing*, not even a human being! Ridiculous!”)

In contemporary Brazil, it is typical to find this systematized revulsion, even among political leaders. The city is a threatening space for those who are not viewed as “good citizens.” Through these martial and degrading necropolitics, the trivialization of life is reinforced daily. Thus, the sentence “you deserve to die, dick!” exposes an eroticization of evil—the extermination of those who wear neither blue nor pink.⁴ The curses “faggot, motherfucker,” “transgender,” and “that’s a thing, not even a human being!” translate a violent verbosity that has been approved as the official language of the current national government. Faced with this institutionalized violence, Rocheli inhabits a clandestine city where it is not possible to partake in hospitality and welcoming rites:

A travesti Rocheli estava sentada na esquina da rua, cuidando de alguns carros. Moradora de rua, preferia ser vista como uma peregrina. E nessa definição, Rocheli conceituava toda a vida da humanidade trans. Peregrinos da existencialidade. Sempre em movimento. Sempre em transformação. Sempre em agitação existencial, como moléculas prestes a criarem ou desfazerem a matéria que se permite existir. (54)

(The transvestite Rocheli had sat at the corner of the street, guarding cars to get some money. Despite being a homeless person, she preferred to be

seen as a pilgrim. Considering this definition, Rocheli conceptualized the whole life of transgender humanity. Pilgrims of existentiality. Always in movement. Always changing. Always in existential agitation, like molecules about to create or undo the material that allows itself to exist.)

The feeling of crossing is quite significant because having a fixed address is a privilege for certain urban identities. After being humiliated by toxic machismo, Lilian, the girlfriend of one of the men, will defend Rocheli. In a twist in the story, the young woman, inside the car, exclaims to her boyfriend: “‘Eu jamais pensei que pudesse namorar um cara assim, como tu . . .’. E arremata: ‘Eu sou uma mulher transexual!’ (56) (‘I never thought I could date a guy like that, like you . . .’, and concludes: ‘I am a transexual woman!’). The macho man is disturbed by this revelation, but he still tries to reconcile with the girlfriend: “‘Amor, não importa que o que você foi ou é. O que importa é que a gente tá junto. Só não vamos comentar com ninguém isso. Ninguém precisa saber que tu era homem. Tu é linda” (56) (Honey, it does not matter what you were or are. What matters is that we are together. We just will not tell anyone about this. No one needs to know that you were a man. You are beautiful). The girlfriend listens to Rocheli because “‘aprendeu na vida que eles todos passarão . . . E ela, passarinha” (57) (she learned in life that they will all pass . . . And she, will fly). The transvestite is accustomed to the repulsion of the passersby, so she finds altruism in the speech of the transexual girlfriend who is also marked by exclusion and who “‘se sentiu na mesma esquina que Rocheli” (57) (felt herself on the same corner as Rocheli). When she looks at her ex-boyfriend, she remembers how “‘já sofreu na escola, no trabalho, na rua, nos hospitais . . . em todos os lugares. Não seria mais um ser que a faria se sentir inexistente em sua realidade trans” (57) (she has suffered at school, at work, on the street, in hospitals . . . everywhere. There would be no one else to make her feel nonexistent in her transexual reality). Thus, there is an alliance of subjectivity and complicity among female birds on shared routes of survival and resistance. Nothing will stop the freedom of that flight over the cages and chains that are fetishized by the status quo.

The short story “A voz da consciência” offers a strong reflection on the urban violence faced by the transexual community. The open-air city is a constant threat: “‘morei durante duas semanas numa praça. Dormia de dia para poder sobreviver à noite, pois se eu fechasse os olhos sob a luz do luar seria provável que não acordasse mais” (Beauvoir, *Contos* 106) (I had lived in a public square for two weeks. I slept during the day to be able to survive at night because if I closed my eyes in the moonlight, I would probably not wake up anymore). The narrator reports details of her domestic oppression and escape from home: “‘Mais uma vez machucada, mas dessa vez no coração, fugi

de um lar. E fui para as ruas” (106) (I was hurt, once again, but this time in my heart, I ran away from home. And I went to the streets). While the universe of the house represents a space of loneliness and aggression, the rites of the streets, which bring the continuous struggle to stay alive, are also painful. The narrator feels hunted in an enemy city, under the sign of helplessness and sacrifice. However, even if the city is a mined territory, there are rare moments of support and protection. The passage in which the narrator comes across a manifestation in favor of transexual life shows a new, loving, and affective territoriality:

Acordei outro dia num banco de praça pública. Não tinha mais as dores e eu estava tranquila. Um clima agradável, muitas pessoas na rua, mas elas não me olhavam. Eu já estava acostumada a ser ignorada. Percebi uma movimentação estranha em uma grande esquina. Ao me aproximar, identifiquei várias mulheres como eu, trans e travestis, alguns rapazes gays e meninas lésbicas. Muitas para prestar homenagem a pessoas trans mortas, e eu fiquei feliz que pudessem realizar um ato daquela maneira. Me aproximei de algumas meninas e ali fiquei. Uma senhora trans estava falando no microfone e eu me senti confortada pelas palavras dela. Uma deputada federal também falou e pensei em como era bom ter pessoas com poder político que não esqueciam de nós, pessoas que sofrem tanto na sociedade. Muitas fotos estavam no chão, junto de uma lista de nomes de garotas trans mortas nos últimos anos. (107)

(I woke up the other day on a bench in a public square. I had no more pains and I was calm. Pleasant weather, many people on the street, but they did not look at me. I was already used to being ignored. I noticed a strange movement around a big corner. As I approached, I identified several women like me, transexual and transvestites, some gay guys and lesbians. They were gathered to pay homage to dead transexual people, and I was glad that they could perform an act like that. I came up to and stayed near some women. A transexual woman was speaking into the microphone and her words comforted me. A federal representative also spoke and I thought it was good to have people with political power who remember us, people who suffer so much in society. Many pictures were on the floor, along with a list of names of transgender girls who had died in recent years.)

In that political act, the narrator takes part in her subordinate community of gay guys, lesbians, transvestites, and transexual women. The photos of the murdered transexual people scream in the asphalt, like ghosts that cannot be removed from the cement of the city. On the street pavement, images of a daily massacre stick to the gravestone sidewalks. It is an unusual situation of comfort, but the narrator sees her otherness mirrored in the transexual woman who spoke into the microphone, which is a rare moment of having a voice in the city. The transexual woman is used to social blindness (“many people on the street, but they did not look at me, I was used to being ignored”), and she finds a shield inside the public demonstration—a kind of city within the city. In that detached land, they remember other inhabitants in a language that is different from the dominator’s lexicon: “Todos gritavam *presente*, ao ouvirem, nome por nome, na grande esquina. Era triste ver as lágrimas da senhora trans ao ler e certamente conhecer muitas das meninas mortas” (108) (Everyone shouted *present* when they heard the names, one by one, on the big corner. It was sad to see the transexual woman’s tears when she read and certainly knew many of the dead women). The sound of “present” carries the power of rebirth and the presence of those who refuse to comply with the forgetfulness of the official history. Through an almost shamanic power, the scream of “present” becomes a melody of resilience and a transcendence of death. At the end of the story, there is the revelation that the narrator had already died but was not yet invisible. Death is not the extermination of presence. The executioners will not win because the city is already in the transexual’s body; their memories are already in the city:

Na tal esquina democrática, minha consciência repousava. Até hoje ali estou. Morta e atirada, no meio da esquina, chorando as lágrimas de uma existência inexistida. Quando você passar por ali, por favor, pare e lembre de mim. Eu certamente vou perceber que você está ali e vou parar de chorar e talvez sorrir. Não de esperança, pois ela só existe enquanto há vida. E eu estou morta. Morta na existência, mas viva na memória. Eu não quero sofrer mais essa violência: a de não ser lembrada. Por favor, ouça a voz da minha consciência, pois eu lembro de todas as violências que sofri. Ao passar por ali, pense: a travesti está aqui. (108)

(On that democratic corner, my conscience rested. I am still there now. Dead and thrown, in the middle of the corner, crying the tears of a non-existent existence. When you pass by, stop and remember me, please. I

will certainly realize that you are there, and I will stop crying and maybe I will smile. Not of hope, for it exists only as long as there is life. I am dead. Dead in existence, but alive in memory. I do not want to suffer this violence anymore: forgetfulness. Please, listen to the voice of my conscience, because I remember all the violence I suffered. When passing by, think that the transvestite is here.)

In the short story “Aurora,” the narrator walks through the city in search of refuge where she could be “acolhida num banco” (Beauvoir, *Contos* 102) (welcomed to a bench). The city, in its stone arms, seems to be “planejando algo para os próximos passos” (102) (planning something for the next steps) of the transvestite Aurora, as if it were a living organism with a mind. In the face of this human hunt, there is only the escape to the loneliness of the parks. Aurora hopes that nature can be a shield against the vulnerability of the sidewalk light:

Carros, pessoas, luz sutil e perene, como se tudo ao redor estivesse planejando algo para os próximos passos. Sentiu desconforto em sua testa. Outra enxaqueca. Outra dor de cabeça. Outra tontura. Respirou forte. Profundamente forte. O passeio faria bem a sua saúde. Aproximou-se da entrada da praça. Muitas árvores frondosas, vertiginosas e verdes, como se todas as folhas formassem uma bandeira só, como se quisessem mostrar a humanidade que ali era o domínio vegetal. Adentrou e se dirigiu ao caminho rotineiro, observando as pedrinhas do chão e o movimento da poeira que seus pés levantavam. Ao mesmo tempo que alterava a posição dos grãos terrenos era manchada pelo pó que se fixava em sua calça. Já distante do movimento, sentou-se próxima de um chafariz e calou-se. Era momento de ser só sua e de mais ninguém. Não havia ar, sol, pássaros ou sombras. (102)

(Cars, people, subtle and perennial light, as if everything around was planning something for the next steps. She felt a discomfort in her forehead. Another migraine. Another headache. Another dizzy spell. She took a deep breath. Deeply strong. The walk would be good for her health. She approached the entrance to the square. Many leafy trees, vertiginous and green, as if all the leaves formed a single flag, as if they wanted to show

humanity the plant domain. She entered and headed to the routine path, watching the pebbles on the floor and the movement of dust raised by her feet. While she changed the position of the earthly grains, the dust stained her pants. She sat down, already distant from the movement, next to a fountain, and she kept silent. It was time to be by herself and with no one else. There was no air, sun, birds, or shadows.)

After a moment of calm and introspection, Aurora observes that she is close to a bush from where shadows, sounds, and vibrations emanate. Quietly, she enters the bush in the twilight. In the middle of the trees, a tall shadow appears with a knife in his hand. Aurora will have to fight for her life. She is free in neither the bush nor in the city. The transvestite does not find peace, as there is always someone with the “impeto de a esfaquear” (103) (urge to stab her). Among the bushes, she hears a scream of an ogre in human skin, “Aurora, sua travesti filha da puta!” (103) (Aurora, you transvestite motherfucker!). Aurora’s auroras are tinted with blood. The chase is endless.

In the book *Velhice transviada* (2019), the male transexual João W. Nery interviews another transexual named Marta. Marta experienced a dramatic episode that still marked her in her sixties. With the hoarse voice of someone who has smoked for decades, Marta reports the details of how she was expelled from a shopping center in the city: “I was not even twenty years old. I had just freshened my lipstick, in the store mirror, when my boss called me, ‘Marta, you are our best seller, but we have a little problem. The women at the mall signed a petition asking for your expulsion’” (Nery 104). The public space, seen as public space of eroticization, becomes the site of a dangerous transphobic act.

This essay was being written when the documentary *Narciso em férias*, by Renato Terra and Ricardo Calil, premiered at the 77th Venice Film Festival and Globoplay. The beautiful film is a statement by Caetano Veloso about the two months he was imprisoned by the military dictatorship, at the turn of 1968 to 1969. Interrogations and classified documents, which were unavailable to the public for decades, were recently released and included in the film. Among the army’s pathetic accusations, one adjective in particular strikes one as laughable. According to the military report, Veloso is a “singer of protest music of a subversive and unmanly nature.” He laughs at it and, in front of the cameras, reads the official documents again. He says, “Subversive and unmanly is a combination that I agree with. I am that person. That’s right. However, ‘honors socialist systems,’ no! I never honored them.” As bizarre as the specifications are, they seem to still be in vogue in the governmental corridors of national politics. Among many, it would be enough to remember two recent

episodes. On December 20, 2019, when a reporter asked the Brazilian president about his son's involvement in a corruption scheme, he answered: "You look like a terrible homosexual, but I do not accuse you of being homosexual." During the election campaign, the then-presidential candidate, Jair Bolsonaro, speaking about the benefits of a family, explained his breeding skills: "I have five children. There were four men, then I faltered and, on the fifth, I had a girl." Faced with this fetishist scenario of machismo, how can one write Brazilian transgender literature? The only way out is through the struggle of writing your own moira. Above the structural will for extermination, there is the strength to stay alive and the courage to tell your story. Phobias and uniforms cannot overwhelm the non-submissive literatures of Amara Moira and Atena Beauvoir because they are the fruit of humanity.

Notes

1. We assume the definition of transexual as "people who claim to belong to a different gender from the one imposed on them" (Bento 12).
2. The hand gesture representing a gun symbolizes the political ideology and campaign of Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro.
3. This is a play on words in Portuguese: "passarinho" (little bird), "passarinha" (little female bird), and "passarão" (they shall pass).
4. Damares Alves, one of the heads of Bolsonaro's government and minister of the Woman's, Families' and Human Right's Ministry, said in a video that went viral on social media that "it is a new era in Brazil: boys dress in blue and girls dress in pink."

Works Cited

- Bagagli, Beatriz P. "Máquinas discursivas, ciborgues e transfeminismo." *Revista Género*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2013, pp. 11–27.
- Beauvoir, Atena. "O Brasil ainda é uma colônia de machismo que inferioriza o feminino", analisa filósofa." Interview with Liana Pithan. *GZH Livros*, 16 Nov. 2018, www.gauchazh.clicrbs.com. Accessed 17 July 2020.
- _____. *Contos transantropológicos*. Taverna, 2018.
- Bento, Berenice. *O que é transexualidade*. Brasiliense, 2008.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1999.
- _____. *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Harvard University Press, 2015.

- Fernandes, Carlos Eduardo A., and Liane Schneider. "Personagens travestis, exílio e bualternidade na literatura brasileira." *Revista Palimpsestos*, vol. 15, no. 22, 2016, pp. 156–71.
- Fortuna, C. "As cidades e as identidades—narrativas, patrimônios e memórias." *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, vol. 12, no. 33, 1997, pp.127–41.
- Franco, Adenize Aparecida, and Luiz Henrique Moreira Soares. "Amara Moira—*E se eu fosse puta*." *Estudos de Literatura Brasileira Contemporânea*, no. 53, 2018, pp. 431–36.
- Gomes, Renato C. "Cartografias urbanas: representações da cidade na literatura." *Revista Semear*, vol. 1, 1997.
- Hunt, Lynn. "Introduction: History, Culture, and Text." *A New Cultural History*, edited by Lynn Hunt, University of California Press, 1989, pp. 1–22. Translated by Jefferson Luís Camargo. Martins Fontes, 2001.
- Ignacio, Ana. "Ana Moira, a travesti com o poder da palavra que virou doutora." *Huffington Post Brasil*, 12 Mar. 2018, www.HuffPostBrasil.com. Accessed 17 July 2020.
- Jesus, Jaqueline G. "Gênero sem essencialismo: feminismo transgênero como crítica do sexo." *Revista Universitas Humanística*, vol. 78, no.78, 2014.
- Lanz, Letícia. "Ser uma pessoa transgênera é ser um não-ser." *Periódicus*, vol. 1, no. 5, 2016. pp. 205–20.
- Moira, Amara. *E se eu fosse puta*. Hoo Editora, 2016.
- Nery, João W. *Velhice transviada*. Objetiva, 2019.
- Pelúcio, Larissa. *Abjeção e desejo: Uma etnografia travesti sobre o modelo preventivo da AIDS*. Annablume, 2009.
- Piñon, Nélide. *Coração andarilho*. Record, 2013.
- Prada, Monique. *Putafeminista*. Veneta, 2018.
- Rezende, Beatriz. *Contemporâneos: Expressões da literatura brasileira no século XXI*. Casa da Palavra, 2008.
- "Se eu fosse puta." *Catraca Livre*, 21 July 2016, catracalivre.com.br. Accessed 1 Sept. 2020.

Barbenera, Ricardo and Ana Ferrão. "The Resistance of a Transurban Sexuality in Amara Moira and Atena Beauvoir." *Contemporary Brazilian Cities, Culture, and Resistance*. Ed. Sophia Beal and Gustavo Teixeira Prieto. *Hispanic Issues On Line 28* (2022): 226–247.
