

# Grand Sertão: Veredas

João Guimarães Rosa

Translated from the Portuguese  
by Felipe W. Martinez  
Introduction by Nancy Fumero

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## Introduction by Nancy Fumero

What is a translation that stalls comprehension? That, when read, parsed, obfuscates comprehension through any language – English, Portuguese. It is inevitable that readers expect fidelity from translations. That language mirror with a sort of precision that enables the reader to become of another location, condition, to grasp in English in a similar vein as readers of Portuguese might from João Guimarães Rosa's GRANDE SERTÃO: VEREDAS. There is the expectation that translations enable mobility. That what was written in one language be accessible in another. And that a translator is to serve as a mediator, acting ultimately in service to ideas within the source text. To disperse them. However, this notion of translation is partly antithetical to the ideas in Rosa's work. Or, alternately, to convey the despair of terrain slipping beneath one's feet, and to encounter the heightened suspense of magic, the translation, as part of its strategy, cannot devotedly rely on its original language, not as its source text. The work undertaken by Felipe W. Martinez is a new form of translation that risks everything in order to encounter the same treacherous knowing Rosa had traversed. And it takes its risks by not taking risks: by being, almost word for word, a literal translation. This is an approach that reductively converts, as opposed to translates. The idiomatic differences between English and Portuguese are not accented. The syntax is not finessed.

Liberties are not assumed on account of improving readability. What stands, resoundingly amid such absences, is the awakened challenge of reading. The genuine peril of not knowing. That is, this translation, one that purports to know nothing, creates access into the guileful world Rosa had created in Portuguese. But not by translating. If anything, GRANDE SERTÃO: VEREDAS is speaking a cosmic language through a linguistic one. And W. Martinez does us the service of recognizing this, as what configures the shapes of words and sentences is not as simple as neologisms, portman-teaus, and digressions, but as terrifying as the path the fool traverses: all paths. As such, this translation doesn't speak English, just as the original does not speak Portuguese. It is the assemblage of paradox as a new logic that can be navigated, if only one could suspend the comfort of readability, of expectation. If one could descend a mountain in the pitch dark of night, each step shocking the body, unable to acclimate to the unlevelled heights. Without a doubt, the translation is incongruous to the Portuguese. Taking a small excerpt to compare:

*Eh, well, thereafter, the rest the Sir provide:  
comes the bread, comes the hand, comes  
the god, comes the dog.*

What is striking is the interplay between “god” and “dog”. To most English speakers, this anagram is a familiar one. But in Portuguese the words god (“deus”) and dog (“cão”) are not so closely linked. In fact, there is no direct mention of “deus” in Rosa’s text:

*Eh, pois, empós, o resto o senhor prove: vem o pão, vem a mão, vem o são, vem o cão.*

Both are fascinating. In Rosa’s excerpt, the rhythm is unmistakable and precise, despite, of course, the indices of hesitation: the commas, the *Eh*, the uncomfortable way of searching through prolongation and wait. This is the sort of paradox Rosa can engage within a sentence. W.Martinez’s does this as well, at a scale that reverberates beyond the sentence, and with one noticeable addition: *deus*. What may appear to be an overstep, to add such a weighted word that draws out word-play but is, nevertheless, not in the source text, is exemplary of risk. The translation buzzes because of it. This is because throughout the text we encounter dogs frequently, as some primal beast on par with humans. The dog is one that masters and can be mastered. A creature that is at times its face, and at others a mask. It is a powerful presence. For the translator to be attuned to the reverent undercurrent attributed to this animal, and create within the translation such charged play in English from what was only an implication in Portuguese, is in tribute to the grand beauty within dissonance. What aberrant modes of writing and translation can teach us most assuredly, is that things, words, are not in states of rightness or wrongness, but of oscillation. This isn’t so different from what Rosa says himself:

*The Sir look...see: the most important and beautiful, of the world, is this: that the people are not always same, still were not completed — but that they go always shifting. They tune or detune.*

We find this so readily in W.Martinez’s translation, this tuning and detuning.

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Nothing. Shots that the Sir heard were man brawling not, God be. Bleach white sights on the tree in the backyard, down in the river. By my right. I do this every day, I like; from the bad of boyhood. Thereof they came to call on me. Case of a calf: a white calf, errorful, eyes of to

not be—saw selves—;and with a mask of a dog! They told me; I didn’t want to catch a sight. Same that, by the defects of birth, upturned lips, looked to be a laughing man. Folkface, dogface: they determined—it was the devil. Bananas. Killed it. Do not know who owned it. They came to borrow my guns. I caved. I’ve no power to impose. Oh, sir, you laugh certain laughs...Look: when it’s a true shot, first the dogs begin to bark, instantly—after, then, you see who’s handed death. Sir, endure, this is the Sertão. Some want that it is not: that situated Sertão is in and out of those general fields, they say, end of the road, highlands, the other Uruçuaia. Toleima. For those of Cortino and of Curvelo, then, isn’t here said Sertão? Ah! That there’s more! To place the Sertão it’s told: it’s where the pastures lack latches; where one can tear off ten, fifteen leagues without running into a houseinhabitant; where criminalousness lives out its christ jesus. Sifted out from the tightening grip of the law. The Uruçuaia comes from the western mountains. But today, its banks, give all—farmlands of farms, pastures of meadows of good yield, low tides, cultures that go kill for kill, until these virgins there are. The general fields run round. These general fields are without size. Ultimately, whichever one one approves, the Sir knows: bread or breads, it’s a question of heads... the Sertão is everywhere.

Of the devi? No comment. Sir ask the dwellers. Falsely I fear they unspeak that name of his—only say: whatsitcalled. Volt! no... Whosoever over avoids it, lives with it. In the sentence of one Aristides—who exists in the first palm grove on the right hand side, called Vereda-of-Cow-Calm-of-Saint-Rita—everyone believes: he can’t pass in three designated places: then can be heard the tiny cry, behind, a little voice warning:— „Here I come! Here I come!... „— that is the Capirote, the whatsitcalled... And one Jise Simplicio—who anyone from here will swear he keeps an imp in house, a little satanite, imprisoned and obliged to help in all greedy deeds; reason that Simplicio emprises en route to complete riches. As such, for this they say too that his beast bristles and refuses, denying his banner, unyielding, when he wishes to mount... Superstition. Jise Simplicio and Aristides, continue getting fatter, thence unheard or heard. Still the Sir study: right now, in these days of time, you have people purporting that the devil proper stopped, mid-passage, in Andrequice. A boy out of there, to whom’d appeared, and there lauded that, to get here—normally, by horse, a day-n-half—he was capable of such with only some twenty minutes enough... by coasting the River of Chico by the headwaters! Or, too, who knows— sans offense—will not have been, for example, even yourself the Sir who announced such, when

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you passed by there, for fun run funny? Thereof, not my given crime, I know that wasn't. And evil I wanted not. Only that one question, in hours, at times, brightens peaceful reason. But, the Sir understand: if such a boy, there was, he wanted to dupe. Because, hey, that, to cut the river off by the springs, would be the same thing as one redoubling in the internals of this our state of ours, constant of a journey of some three months... Then? Whatsitcalled? Dodo. The fantastication. And, the respect of giving him such these names of delicacy, is what it is for one to want to invoke that he form of form, with his presence!

Not that is. I, personally, almost that have lost in him the creed, deserving to Deus; is the that to the Sir I say, to pure-secret. I know that it is well established, that it greases our Sainly-Gospels. On occasion, I conversed with a young seminarian, super suitable, conferring in the book of prayers and coated in vestments, with a stick of black-sage in hand—prosed that he went auxilitator to the father, to extract the Cujo, from the body living of an oldwoman, in Waterfalls-of-Bulls, he went with the vicar of Field-Round... I conceive. The Sir not is as I? I didn't believe a single thing. Compadre mine Quelemem describes that that which reveals effect are the low spirits meager, of third, adoin in the worst darkness and with anxieties of connecting selves with the livers—they give support. Compadre mine Quelemem is who much me consoles—Quelemem of Goias. But he has to live far from here, in Jijuja, Vereda of Buriti Dark... Ahrr, I leave myself there, that in enevilde-monment or with support—the Sir too must have had known diverse, men, women. As not yes? For me, umpteen I've seen, that I've learned. Ma-Neigh, Blood-o'Other, or Legion-Lips, or Tear-em-Down, Cold-Cutter, or Sissy-Goat, one Treciziano, or Verdigris... or Hermogenes... o'them, pileload. If I could forget so many names... I'm not a man for calming horses! And, same, whom of yes of to be jagunço self enters, yea is for some competence entrant of demonion. Will it not? Will it?

From first, I made and mixed, and to think not I thought. I didn't have the deadlines. I lived pulling difficult from difficult, fish alive on griddle: who lives asp'rously, no fantasies. But, now, fete of fate to me comes, and sans little disquietudes, I'm from creaky net. And myself invented in this like, of to speculate ideas. The devil exists and nonexists? I say the saying. Opennouncement. These melancholies. The Sir sees: exists waterfall; and since? But waterfall is gulch of ground, and water so pouring from it, retumbling; the Sir consume that water, or undo that bankment, remainder waterfall any? To live is negotiation much perilous.

I explain to the Sir: the devil vigors inside of human, the wrinkles of human— or is the human

ruin, or the human of adversess. I free, per se, citizen, is that not has devil notone. Notone!— is the that I say. The Sir approve? Me declares total, frank— is high merit that me make: and to beg might, increased. This case— by rashtravagance that me they see— is of mine certain importance. God grant not was... But, not say that the Sir, awised and instructed, that agrees in people of them?! Not? You I appreciate! Your high opinion composes my value. Yea I knew, waited for it— yea the field! Ah, a we, in oldness, we lack of to have plowing of rest. You I appreciate. Is devil notone. Nor esprit. Never I've seen. Someone ought to see, then was I myself, this your servant. Was I you to tell... Well, the devil regulate his state black, ins creatures, ins womens, ins humans. E'en: ins childrens— I declaim. Since not is said: „boy—trainee of the devil”? And ins thes uses, ins plants, ins waters, in terra, in wind... Manures. ...*The devil in the street, in the middle of the vortex...*

Hey? Hey? Ah. Figuration mine, of worse by back, the certain memories. Mal-make me! I suffer pain of to tell not...Meliorate, if chillingly: well, in a ground and with equal format of branches and leaves, not give to cassava-calm, that is eaten common, and the cassava-mad that kills? Now, the Sir yea saw a strangeness? A cassava-sweet can rapidly to turn agonizing— motives not I know, at times is said that is for replanted in the terrain always, with mutations then, of caules—go embittering, of s'much in s'much, of its self takes poisons. And, well look: the other, the cassava-mad, too is that at times can fix calm, the estimate, of is to eat sans notone mal. And what this is? Eh, the Sir yea saw, for to see, the ugliness of hate pleated, facetorqued, on the faces of one cobrarrattle-snake? Observed the porker fat, capita day more felicity brute, capable of, could, snort and engulf for its own dirty coziness the world total? And sparrowhawk, blackbird, some, the features of they yea represent the need of cleave for before, rend and shred by beak, appears a knife much fine for ruin I desire. Total. Has even twisted races of stone, horroous, venomous— that spoil mortal the aquas, if they are buried beneath of well; the devil inside of them sleeps: they are the devil. Is known? And the demon— that is only thus the significance of one mercury malign— have order of to follow the path of him, have license to brag?! Arr, he is variegated in all!

What the what wastes, goes spending the devil of inside of the people, by ittybits, is the reasonable to suffer. And the delight of love— compadre mine Quelemem says. Family. Really? Is, and not is. The Sir think and not think. Total is and not is... Almost all more grave criminous ferocity, always is much good husband, good son, good father, and is good-friend-of-your-friends! I know

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of those. Solo that have the afters— and Deus, joined. I spy many nimbi.

But, in veracity, son, too, softens. Look: one called Aleixo, resident a league from Step-of-Sour, in Of-Sand, was the man of major badness calm that yea you saw. Me agreed that near the house of his had a weir, amidst the palms, with traíras, for souls of enormous, desenormous, to the real, that received fame; the Aleixo gave of to eat to them, in hours just, they self accustomed to if assuch of lunacies, in order to gobble, seemed to be fishes instructed. One day, solo for grace rustic, he killed an oldman who by there passed, destitute begging alms. The Sir not doubt—have people, in this bored world, that kill solo in order to see someone make grimace... Eh, well, thereafter, the rest the Sir provide: comes the bread, comes the hand, comes the god, comes the dog. This Aleixo was man afamilied, had children small; they were the love of his, total, absurdity. Gave good, that not even a year there passed, of to killed the oldman poor, and the children of Aleixo there they asickened. Smallepidemic of measles, they said, but complex; they never heal. When, then, they healed. But the eyes of theirs vermilionized high in an inflame of spraining to rebellion; and nexthing— the that not I know is if they went of at once, or one later and later other and other— they remained blind. Blind, sans remission of one sweet of light of this Ours! The Sir imagine: stairset— three boys and one girl— all blind. Sans remediable. The Aleixo not lost the judgment, but he changed; ah, mutated complete— now lives of band of Deus, sweating to be good and charitous in all his hours of night and of day. Appears even that he fixed the felicity, that before not was. He himself says he was a man of luck, because Deus wanted to have pity of him, to transform for there the route of his soul. That I heard, and me it gave rage. Reason of the children. If being castigated, what culpa of the let-there-bes of Aleixo those little children had?!

Compadre mine Quelemem reproved my uncertainties. That, for certain, inother life returnaound, the children too had been the most wicked, of the mass and part of the father, demons of the same kettle of place. Sir the what thinks? And the oldman, assassinated? — I know the Sir goes to discuss. Well, too. In order that he had a sin of crime, in the body, by to pay. If the people— conforming compadre mine Quelemem is who says— if the people turn to to incarnate renovated, I contemplate even that enemy of death can come as son of the enemy. Look see: if to myself I say, has a subject Pedro Pindo, neighbor of here more six leagues, man of good for all in all, he and the woman of his, always been good, of goodness. They have a son of some ten years called

Valtei—name modern, is the that the population of here now appreciates, the Sir knows. Well this-little-thing, thislet, since that some understanding illuminated in him, deed demonstrated the that is: petition stepfather, acid burner, likeful of ruin of inside of the profundity of the species of its nature. In which that torments, to the slowly, of all beasts or raisinglings little that quarrel; one time he found a creole woman hooched foolish sleeping, he arranged a shard of bottle, lashed at three points on the stern of the legs of hers. The what this boy drooled seeing, is bleeding hen or to knife pig.— “I enjoy of to kill...” — one occasion he teeny me told. He opened in me a fright; because: birdy that self leans over— the flight yea is ready! Well the Sir oversee: the pa, Pedro Pindo, mode of to correct this, and the ma, they give in him, misery and mast—they cast the boy sans to eat, they tied to trees in the yard, he nude, unplumed, even in June cold, they tilled the bittybody of his with the trammel and with the goblet, after they cleansed the skin of the sanguine, with bottle gourd brine. The people know, spy, fix wasted. The boy yea relowered of thinness, the eyes entering, caress of bones, enskulled, and tuberculated, the time total hacking, coughness of the that draw parched pectorals. Arr, that now, visible, the Pindo and the woman self habituated of on him hit, of little bit in little they were creating in this a pleasure ugly of diversion

— as they regulate the canings in hours certain comfortable, until they call people to see the example good. I think that boy not endure, yea there is in the *ta-da*, not arrive for the lent to come... Ooee-ooee, then?! Not being as compadre mine Quelemem to want, that explication is that the Sir bestowed? That boy had to be a man. He should, in swing, terrible perversities. Soul of his was in the pitch. Demonstrated. And, now, paid. Ah, but, happens, when he's crying and paining, he suffers equal that as was as a boy good... Bird, I saw all, in this world! Yea I saw even horse with hiccups... —the that the thing most costous that is.

Good, but the Sir may say, should of: and in the start— for offenses and arts, the people— as for that was that s'much amended was started? Ey, ey, ey all collided. Compadre mine Quelemem, too. Am solo a sertanite, in these high ideas I navigate mal. Am much poor poor-thing. Envy my pedigree and of ones conform the Sir, with total reading and doctoration. Not is that I be illiterate. I spelt, years and middle, midly speller, memory and palmer. I had master, Master Lucas, in the Curralinho, he memorized grammar, the operations, rule-of-three, even geography and study patria. On leaves great of paper, with caprice I traced handsome maps. Ah, not is for to speak: but, since

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of the start, me they thought sophisticated of side. And that I merited of to go to course latin, in Lesson Waterlily—that too they said. Time nostalgic! Going today, I appreciate a good book, despaced. On the farm The Lilittlelemon, of one mine friend Vito Soziano, so sign of this almanac thick, of logoglyphs and conundrums and other divided matters, all year come. In s'much, I place primacy is in the reading advantageous, life of saints, virtues and examples— missionary astute engambling the Indians, or Saint Francis of Assis, Saint Anthony, Saint Gerald... I like much of moral. To ratiocinate, exhort the others for the good way, to acounsel to just. Mine woman, that the Sir knows, vigils for me: much prayer. She is a blessable. Compadre mine Quelemem always says that I may to aquiet my fears on conscience, that being well-attended, terrible good-esprits me protect. Eep! With like... As is of saint effect, I help with mine to want to accredit. But not even always can I. The Sir knew: I total the mine life I thought for me, lining, I am born different. I am and I same. I divert of total the world... I almost that nothing not I know. But I disconfide of many things. The Sir, conceding, I say: in order to think long, I am dog master—the Sir loose in mine front an idea ease and I research that by profundity of total the backwoods, amen! Look: the should of to have, was of so reunited-selves the wise, politicos, constitutions graded, closed the definitive the notion— to proclaim for one time, art assemblies, that not have devil notone, not exists, not possible. Valor of law! Solo assuch, they gave tranquility good to the people. Because the government not cares?!

Ah, I know that not is possible. Not me settled the Sir for philistine. One this is to place ideas arranged, other is to deal with country of people, of flesh and sanguine, of thousand-and-many miseries... S'many people—gives scare of to know—and notone so calms: All nascenting, crescendoing, so wedding, wanting collocation of employment, consumables, health, abundance, to be important, wanting rain and affairs good... Of luck that lacks of so to choose: or we t'weave of to live in the salacious common, or care solo of religion solo. I could to be: father clergyman, if not chief of jagunços; for other things not was I birthed. But mine oldness yea principaled I erred of total account. And the rheumatism... There as whom says: in the primers. Ahem.

Hey? Hey? The that more I think, I testify and explain: all-the-world is mad. The Sir, I, we, the people all. For this is that so lacks principally of religion: in order to desendodorize, to disdodoate. Pray is that heals of lunacy. In the general. This is that is the salvation-of-the-soul... Much religion your servant! I here, not I lose occasion of religion. I profit of all. I drink water of all rivers... One solo,

for me is little, maybe not me arrives. I pray christian, catholic, I burrow the certain; and I accept the prayers of compadre mine Quelemem, doctrine of he, of Kardec. But, when I can, I go in the Mindubim, where one Matias is believer, methodist: the people so accuse of sinner, reads high the bible, and why, singing hymns beautiful of his. Total me quiets, me suspends. Whatever small shade me refreshes. But is solo much provisory. I wanted to pray—the time total. Many people not me approve, they think that law of Deus is privileges, invariable. And !! Doof! I Detest! The what I am? —the what I do, that want, much curia. And in face of total I face, executed. I? —not I trammel.

Look: I have a black girl, Maria Leoncia, long from here not she lives, the prayers of her afame much virtue of power. Well to her I pay, every month— ordering of to pray for me one third, every saint day, and, on the Sundays, a rosary. Value, so values. Mine woman not sees mal in this. And I am, yea mandated word for an other, of the voyage-voyage, a IZINA Calanga, in order to come here, I heard of that prayer too with grand mermermerits, I go to effect with she treatment equal. I want handful of those, me defending in Deus, reunited of me in volta... Cuts of Christ!

To live is much perilous... To want the good with too much force, of incertain way, can yea to be being so wanting the mal, per to initiate. These humans! All they pull the world for itself, for the to concert amended. But capita one solo sees and understands the things of one his world. Amountain, the most supro, most serious was Mediero Vaz. That one man ancient... his Joaozy Ben-Ben, the most brave of all, no-one never can decipher how he by inside consisted. Joca Ramiro— grand man prince! — was politico. Zé Bebelo wanted to be politico, but had and not had luck: fox that lingered. So Candelario so demonized, by to think that was with illness mal. Titao Passos was the by the appreciation of friends: solo per via of them, of his same amities, were that such high so ajagunçoed. Antonio Do— severe bandit. But by half, grand majority half that be. Andalecio, in the profound, a good man-of-good, being raving in his total justice. Ricardao, same, wanted was to be rich in peace: for this he warred. Solo the Hermogenes was that born formed tiger, and assassinite. And the "Ofidios White"? Ah, not me speak. Ah this... joyless mischeivious, that was— that was a poor boy of the destiny...

So good, congruous. The Sir heard, I you told: the ruin with the ruin, they terminate by the spine-bushes so to crack— Deus awaits that spendance. Boy!: Deus is patience. The contrary, is the devil. So consumes. The Sir file knife on knife—and file— that so they scrape. Even the rocks of the profound, one of in the other, they go-so

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aroundabounding even, that the rivulet rolls. Per enquantity, that I think, total as hath, in this world, is because so merits and lacks. Afterly precise. Deus not so reports with rifle, not garrotes the regulation. For what? Quit: goof with goof—one day, some illumination and learn: smart. Solo that, at times, for most auxiliar, Deus begets, in the middle, a pinch of pepper...

Therebe? Well, for example: some time, I went of train, there in Seven-Lagoons, for parts of to consult a medical, of name me indicated. He went vested well, and in car of first, by via of the doubts, not me they shadowed for jagunço ancient. It goes and happens, that, close same of me, enfront, he took aseat, returning from the wild North, a mac Jazevedao, delegate professionelle. Came with a capanga of his, an undercover, and I well knew the two, of that s'much a was ruin, as the other ruin was. The veracity to say, first I had the strict of me to surpasss for one lonng, to mutate of my place. Judgement me told, me-liorate stay. Well, looking, I looked. And— you I tell: never I saw face of man furnished of brutez or malady more, of the them in that. As that was ogre, trussed of thickset, relustered of crude in the eyes small, and armed a chin of stone, tower-ingbrow; not of mid nor forehead. Not laughed, not so laughed not even one time; but, speaking or silent, the people appeared always to him some teeth, prey pointed of canids. Arr, and blustered, an ittybit. Solo growled curt, low, the mid-words grizzled. He came relooking, historicizing the documents— one by one the leaves with portraits and with the blacks of the digits of jagunços, lifters of horses and criminouses of death. That application of work, in one thing of those, generated the ire in the people. The undercover, busybodyguard, total close, seated joined, attending, excelling of to be dog. Me made a dread, but solo in the goof of the corpus, not in the intern of the courages. One hour, one of those reports fell— and I bent quickly, I knew there precisely by why, not I wanted, not I thought— even today I raise shame of this— I picked the paper of the ground, and delivered to him. Thereof, I say: I had more rage, because I did that; but there yea it was done. The man not even me looked, not even said notone thankfulment. Event he soles of the shoes of his— solo looking— that soles rough thick, bent of enormous, appearing iron bronzed. Because I knew: This Jazevedao, when he apprehended someone, the primary quiet thing that proceeded was that he came entering, sans to have to to say, feigning some hurry, and go stepping on the top of the feet of the poorthings. And that on these occasions he gave laughters, gave... Well, geck! I delivered to him the leaf of paper, and went leaving of there, by to have hand on me of not to destroy by shots

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that subject. Meat that much they weigh... And umbilicated beginning of belly pot bellied, that me created will... With my lightness, joyful that I'd kill. But, the barbarities that this delegate made and happened, the Sir not even has callus in heart to be able me to hear. He achieved of many men and women to cry blood, for the simple universolo ours here. Sertão. The Sir knows: sertão is where mandates who is strong, with the guile. And bullet is a tidbit of metal...

S'much, I say: Jazevedao— one assuch, should of to have, needed? Ah, need. Leather ruined is that calls goad of point. That there be that, after— business particular of he— in the life or in the other, each Jazevedao, accomplished the that he has, desclimbs in his time of pain, too, until to pay the that he gave— compadre mine Quelemem is there, in order to fiscalize. The Sir knows: the peril that is to live... But solo of the mode, of these, by ugly instrument, was that the jagunsaga so finished. Sir thinks that Antonio Do or Olivino Oliviano were going to fix goodies by pure spelling of itself, or by begging of the infelicitous, or by always to hear sermon of father? You I think! In the aims...

Of jagunço comported active in order so to repent in the middle of his jagunsagas, solo I lay of one: called Joe Cazuzo— was in smashing of one shotshow, for on the summit of the place Sierra New, district of river rusted, on the stream Traçadal. We made mal minority small, and they closed in order summit of us the personnel of one Coronel Adalvino, forted politico, with many soldiers uniformed in the center, commanding of the Lieutenant Epiphany Helm, that after fixed captain. We lasted hour more hour, and yea gave almost of encircled. There, of misslip, that Joe Cazuzo— man much valiant— so kneeled turned on the ground of the thick, lifted the arms that not even shoots of Jatoba dry, and solo yell, howl clear and howl deaf:— *"I saw the Virgin Ours, in the resplendor of the Heavens, with her children of angels!..."* He screamed not touched. — *"I saw the Virgin!..."* He ensouled? We desequaled. Bolt for my horse— that I thought— I leaped in mal seat, noteven I knew in which rupture-time I unfastened the halter, of tied up it foot of timber. I flew, arrived. Bullet come. The pasture roared. burro brute, giv-that, giv-that. Some two or three bullets so drovein the pad of the mine saddle, they perforated of to tear away almost much the kapok of the filling. Horse trembled in pro, in middle of gallop, I know: thinks in the owner. I not fit of to be more well shrunken. Bulleted came to the sack that I had on the back, with few mine things. And other, of fusil, in ricochet decreed, heated my thigh, sans me wound, the Sir see: bullet does the what to want—so pierced impressed, between in me and

the harness! Times crazy... Burumbum!: the horse so kneeled in the fall, dead perhaps, and I yea falling for front, embraced in foliage full, branched and linias, that me swayed and skewered, done I was pendulating in web of spider... Whither? I traversed that life total... Of fear of anxiety, I ruptured to read with mine corpus that forest, I know there — and me fell world below, rolled for the hollow of a grotto closed of shrubs, always me grasped— rolled same assuch: after: after, when I saw mine hands, total on they that not was withdrawn sanguine, was smeared green, on the digits, of leaves living that I pulled and mashed... I landed on the sedge of the profound— and a beast dark gave a releap, with a sneeze, too mad of fright: that was a papa-mel, that I descried; in order to flee, this is solely. Bigger being I, me doused mine overcoat; I spigotted total. And of one bit of thought: if that beast irara lying there then there not had cobra. I took the place of his. Existed cobra notone. I could me to lose. I was solo spineless, softness, but that not deadened, inside, the collisions of the heart. I gasped. I conceived that they came, me kill. Not even did mal, me mattered not. Assuch, some moments, at least I guarded the license of term in order me to rest. Conforming I thought in Diadorim. Solo I thought was in he. One João-congo sang. I wanted to die thinking in my friend Diadorim, hand-o-bro, who was on the Sierra of WoodO'Bow, almost on the border baiana, with our other half of the so-candelarios... With my friend Diadorim me embraced, sentiment my went-flew right for he... Ay, arr, but: that this mine mouth not has order notone. I am accounting outside, things divagated. In the Sir me confide? Til-that, til-that. Say the angel-of-the-guard... But, conforming I came: after so knew, that same the soldiers of the Lieutenant and the goats of Coronel Adalvino remitted of to respect the blast of that Joe Cazuzo. And that this ended being the man most pacificious of the world, fabricator of oil and sacristan, in the Saint Sundays White. Times!

For total, cleaned revelation, I fix thinking. I like. Meliorate, for the idea if well to open, is travelling in train-of-iron. Could, lived to top and to bottom, inside of it. Information that I ask: same in the Heavens, end of end, how is that the soul wins so to forget s'much sufferments and maladies, in the received and in the given? The how? The Sir knows: are things of hideous ofmuch, have. Pain of corpus and pain of idea mark forted, that forted as the total love and rage of hate. Goes, sea... Of luck that, then, the Firmiano, by appellationed Louse-of-Snake, so leoprosized with the leg disconformed, thickening, of that disease that not so cures; and not discern almost more, constant the branchials in the eyes, of the cataracts. Of

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before, years, had to of so disarray of the jagun-saga. Well, one occasion, some was on the ranch of his, on the High Jeuitai, after accounted—that, turns time, comes subject, he would say: "Me give yearning is of to seize a soldier, and such, for one good flay, with knife blind... But, first, to castrate..." The Sir conceive? Who has more dose of demon in self is Indian, any race of brusque. Folk see nation ofthese, for there profound of the generals of Goiás, theofwhere has vagarous grand rivers, of aquas always so clear pleasantly, running of down crystal rosed... Louse-of-Snake gave of sanguine of heathen. Sir me will say: but that he pronounced that out of mouth, manner of to represent that yet not was old decadent. Opus of to oppose, for fear of to be tame, and cause in order so to see respected. Total listened for such rule: palavered of ruins, for more so valued, because we to the environs is hard durability. The worst, but, is that they finish, through the same ford, given of one day to execute the declared, in the real. I saw s'much crudity! Pain not pays to account; if I go, I collide. And me dedrip, three that me sicken, this total. Me convokes that the personnel, today in day, is good of heart. This is, good in the trivial. Malices wildwants, and perversities, always have some, but scarcities. Generation mine, true, was not assuch. Ah, goes to turn a time, in which not is used more to kill people... I yea am old.

compadre mine Quelemem. That me responded: that, for close to heaven, we so amplified so, that total the uglies past so exhaled of not to be—fated sans-modus from time of youngster, mal-arts. As we not lack of to have remorse of the which divulged in the pulsation of his nightmares of one night. Assuch that: fleeced-so, flourished-so! Ahem. For this said, is that the journey to the Heavens is delayed. I confide with compadre mine Quelemem, the Sir knows: reason of creed same that has—that, for total the mal, that so does, one day so repays, the exact. Subject assuch rises three times, in ante of to want to facilitate in any minutia reprehensible... Compadre mine Quelemem never speaks vacant, not subtreats. Solo that this to he not I go to expose. We never should have to declare that accept entire the alien—that is what is the rule of the king!

The Sir look...see: the most important and beautiful, of the world, is this: that the people are not always same, still were not completed — but that they go always shifting. They tune or detune. Truth major. Is the that the life me taught. This that me animates, mound. And, other thing: the devil and the brutes; but Deus is treacherous! Ah, a beauty of treacherous— gives like! The force of his, when he wants— boy!— me gives the fear dread! Deus comes coming: no one not sees. He does in the law of gentle— assuch is the miracle.

And Deus attacks beautiful, so amusing, so economizes. The well: one day in a tannery, the little knife mine I had dropped inside of a tank, solo soup of bark of tan, stryphnodendron adstringens, angico, there I know. —“Tomorrow I try...” — I said, with myself. Because it was of night, light notone I not disputed. Ah, then, I found: on the other day, early, the knife, the iron of it, had been gnawed, almost by half, by that aqua dark, total quiet. I left, for more to see. Crack, fuse! Know the what was? Well, in that same of afternoon, there: of the little knife solo so found the handle... The handle, for not to be of cold metal, but of horn of deer. There is: Deus... Good, the Sir heard knows, the that knows me understands...

We sum, not think that religion fractures. Sir think the contrary. Visible that, those other times, I painted—belief that the neoglaziovia variegata lifts the flower. Ah, good my joy... Boyhood. But boyhood is task for more later so to deny. Too, I of that of to think in vague in s'much, lost mine hand-of-man for the management hot, in the middle of all. But, today, that I ratiocinated, and think the endeavor, not nor for this not I give for low my competence, in a fire-and-iron. The to see. Would approach would come here with war on me, with bad parts, with other laws, or with excessive looks, and I even draw to ignite this zone, ay, if, if! Is in the mouth of the blunderbuss: is in the rete-te-tem... And lonelyonly not I am, there-of-the. For not this, I was I placed encircle my mine people. Look the Sir: here, close, vereda below, the Paspe — cropper my — is mine. More league, if that, have the Herpetotheres, and have the compadre Ciril, him and three children, I know that they serve. Band of that hand, the Alaripe: knew the Sir the that is that so boasts, in rifleation and by the knife, one cearense did this! After more: the João Innatal, the Quipes, Lophiosilurus-of-claws. And the Fafafa— this gave fights high, all side with me, in the combat old of the Anteater-such: we cleaned the wind of whom not had order of to respirate, and ante these we desencompassed... The Fafafa has a mass of mares. He raises horses good. Even a little more distant, on the ped-of-sierra, of band mine was the Sesfred, Jesualdo, the Nelson, and João Concliz. Some others. The Triol... And not I go valuing? I leave terra with them, of theirs the what is mine is, we close that we not even brothers. For what I want to gather richness? They are there, of arms aireated. Enemy to come, we cross called, gathering: is hour of one good shotshowerment in peace, they exp'rimint to see. I say this to the Sir, of confidence. Too, not go to think in double. We want is to work, propose tranquility. Of me, person, I live for mine woman, that total mode-meliorate merits, and for the devotion. Well-to want of mine woman was that me assisted,

prayers of hers, graces. Love comes of love. I say. In Diadorim, I think too— but Diadorim is the mine nebulina...

Now, well: not I wanted to touch on this more— of the Tineaous; arrive. But has a nevertheless: I ask: the Sir believe, think trust of truth in that parlance, of with the demon so to able to deal with pact? No, no is no? I knew that not there. I spoke of favas. But I like of total good confirmation. To supremed, much more of the of inside, and is solo, of the that one if thought: ah, soul sheer! Decision of to vend soul is fearless moll, fantasied of moment, has not the obedience legal. Can I to vend those good terras, thereof of between the Veredas-Four— that are of one Mr. Admiral, who resides in the capital federal? Can I some? Then, if one boy boy is, and for this not so authorizes of to negotiate... And we, this I know, at times is solo fated boy. Mal that in mine life I prepared, I was in a certain infancy in dreams — total runs and arrives so swift —; will be that if hath flame of responsibilities? If dream; yea so did... I gave rapadura to the chump! Ahem. Well. If his soul, and has, it is of Deus established, not even that the person want or not want. Not is vendible. The Sir not thinks? Me declare, frank, I beg. Ah, you I appreciate. You so see that the Sir knows much, in idea firm, beyond of to have letter of doctor. You I appreciate, for much. Your company me gives high pleasures.

In terms, I liked that I would live here, or close, was a help. Here not so has conviviation that to instruct. Sertão. Knows the Sir: sertão is where the thought of the people so forms more fortified of the than power of the place. To live is much perilous...

Eh, that you so go? Yeayea? Is that not. Today, no. Tomorrow, no. Not I consense. The Sir me forgive, but in endeavor of mine friendship accept: the Sir stay. After fifth of-morning-early, the Sir wanting to go, then goes, same me leaves feeling your absence. But, today or tomorrow, no. Visit, here in house, with me, is for three days!

But, the Sir really intends to trespass the field this sea of territotires, for sortment of to confer the what exists? You have your motives. Now— I say for me — the Sir comes, came late, Times were, the customs mutate. Almost that, of legitimate loyal, little surplus, not even no excess more nothing. The bands good of valientoughs they reparted their end; many who were jagunço, by ouch pain, beg alms. Same as the herdsmen they doubt of to come in the commerce vested of clothes entire of leather, they think that garb of jerkin is ugly and boor. And even the herd in the shrubbed pasture goes waning less mad, more educated: casted of zebu, dissee with the rest of corralers and captiveborns. Always, in the generals

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is to the poverty, to the sadness. A sadness that even gladdens. But, then, for a crop reasonable of bizzarancies, I recounsel of the Sir to entest journey more dilated. Not were my desmight, by acids and rheumatism, there I went. I guided the Sir till total.



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### Original Text

NONADA. TIROS QUE O SENHOR ouviu foram de briga de homem não, Deus esteja. Alvejei mira em árvores no quintal, no baixo do córrego. Por meu acerto. Todo dia isso faço, gosto; desde mal em minha mocidade. Daí, vieram me chamar. Causa dumbezerro: um bezerro branco, erroso, os olhos de nem ser – se viu –; e com máscara decachorro. Me disseram; eu não quis avistar. Mesmo que, por defeito como nasceu, arrebicado de beijos, esse figurava rindo feito pessoa. Cara de gente, cara de cão: determinaram – era o demo. Povo prascóvio. Mataram. Dono dele nem sei quem for. Vieram emprestar minhas armas, cedi. Não tenho abusões. O senhor ri certas risadas... Olhe: quando é tiro de verdade, primeiro a cachorrada pega a latir, instantaneamente – depois, então, se vai ver se deu mortos. O senhor tolere, isto é o sertão. Uns querem quenão seja: que situado sertão é por os campos-gerais a fora a dentro, eles dizem, fim derumo, terras altas, demais do Urucuia. Toleima. Para os de Corinto e do Curvelo, então, o aqui não é dito sertão? Ah, que tem maior! Lugar sertão se divulga: é onde os pastoscarecem de fechos; onde um pode torar dez, quinze léguas, sem topar com casa demorador; e onde criminoso vive seu cristo-jesus, arredado do arrocho de autoridade. O Urucuia vem dos montões oestes. Mas, hoje, que na beira dele, tudo dá – fazendões defazendas, almargem de vargens de bom render, as vazantes; culturas que vão de mataem mata, madeiras de grossura, até ainda virgens dessas lá há. O gerais corre em volta. Esses gerais são sem tamanho. Enfim, cada um o que quer aprova, o senhor sabe: pão ou pães, é questão de opiniões... O sertão está em toda a parte.

Do demo? Não glosa. Senhor pergunte aos moradores. Em falso receio, desfalcam nonome dele – dizem só: o Que-Diga. Vote! não... Quem muito se evita, se convive. Sentença num Aristides – o que existe no buritizal primeiro desta minha mão direita, chamado a Vereda-da-Vaca-Mansa-de-Santa-Rita – todo o mundo crê: ele não pode passar em três lugares, designados: porque então

a gente escuta um chorinho, atrás, euma vizinha que avisando: – “Eu já vou! Eu já vou!...” – que é o capiroto, o que-diga... E um José Simplício – quem qualquer daqui jura ele tem um capeta em casa, miúdosatanazim, preso obrigado a ajudar em toda ganância que executa; razão que o Simplício se empresa em vias de completar de rico. Apre, por isso dizem também que abesta pra ele rupeia, nega de banda, não deixando, quando ele quer amontar... Superstição. José Simplício e Aristides, mesmo estão se engordando, de assim não ouviu ouvir. Ainda o senhor estude: agora mesmo, nestes dias de época, tem gente porfalando que o Diabo próprio parou, de passagem, no Andrequicé. Um Moço de fora, teria aparecido, e lá se louvou que, para aqui vir – normal, a cavalo, dum dia-e-meio – ele era capaz que só com uns vinte minutos bastava... porque costeava o Rio do Chicopelas cabeceiras! Ou, também, quem sabe – sem ofensas – não terá sido, por um exemplo, até mesmo o senhor quem se anunciou assim, quando passou por lá, por prazido divertimento engraçado? Há-de, não me dê crime, sei que não foi. E mal eu não quis. Só que uma pergunta, em hora, às vezes, clareia razão de paz. Mas, o senhor entenda: o tal moço, se há, quis mangar. Pois, hem, que, despontar o Rio pelas nascentes, será a mesma coisa que um se redobrar nos internos deste nosso Estadonosso, custante viagem de uns três meses... Então? Que-Diga? Doideira. A fantasiação. E, o respeito de dar a ele assim esses nomes de rebuço, é que é mesmo um querer invocar que ele forme forma, com as presenças!

Não seja. Eu, pessoalmente, quase que já perdi nele a crença, mercês a Deus; é o que ao senhor lhe digo, à pureza. Sei que é bem estabelecido, que grassa nos Santos-Evangelhos. Em ocasião, conversei com um rapaz seminarista, muito condizente, conferindo no livro de rezas e revestido de paramenta, com uma vara de maria-preta namão – proseou que ia adjutorar o padre, para extraírem o Cujo, do corpo vivo de umavelha, na Cachoeira-dos-Bois, ele ia com o vigário do Campo-Redondo... Me concebo. O senhor não é como eu? Não acreditei patavim. Compadre meu Quelemém descreve que o que revela efeito são os baixos espíritos descarnados, de terceira, fuzando naspiores trevas e com ânsias de se travarem com os viventes – dão encosto. Compadre meu Quelemém é quem muito me consola – Quelemém de Góis. Mas ele tem de morar longe daqui, na Jijujã, Vereda do Buriti Pardo... Arres, me deixe lá, que – em endemoninhamento ou com encosto – o senhor mesmo deverá de ter conhecido diversos, homens, mulheres. Pois não sim? Por mim, tantos vi, que aprendi. Rincha-Mãe, Sangued’Outro, o Muitos-Beijos, o Rasgaem-Baixo, Faca-Fria, o Fancho-Bode, um Treciziano,

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o Azinhavre... o Hermógenes... Deles, punhadão. Se eu pudesse esquecer tantos nomes... Não sou amansador de cavalos! E, mesmo, quem de si de serjagunço se entrete, já é por alguma competência entrante do demônio. Será não? Será?

De primeiro, eu fazia e mexia, e pensar não pensava. Não possuía os prazos. Vivipuxando difícil de difícil, peixe vivo no moquém: quem mói no asp'ro, não fantaseia. Mas, agora, feita a folga que me vem, e sem pequenos dessoros, estou de range rede. E me inventei neste gosto, de especular idéia. O diabo existe e não existe? Dou o dito. Abrenúncio. Essas melancolias. O senhor vê: existe cachoeira; e pois? Mas cachoeira é barranco de chão, e água se caindo por ele, retombando; o senhor consome essa água, ou desfaz o barranco, sobra cachoeira alguma? Viver é negócio muito perigoso...

Explico ao senhor: o diabo vive dentro do homem, os crespos do homem – ou é o homem arruinado, ou o homem dos avessos. Solto, por si, cidadão, é que não tem diabonenhum. Nenhum! – é o que digo. O senhor aprova? Me declare tudo, franco – é altamercê que me faz: e pedir posso, encarecido. Este caso – por estúrdio que me vejam – é de minha certa importância. Tomara não fosse... Mas, não diga que o senhor, assisado instruído, que acredita na pessoa dele?! Não? Lhe agradeço! Sua alta opinião compõe minha valia. Já sabia, esperava por ela – já o campo! Ah, a gente, na velhice, carece de tersua aragem de descanso. Lhe agradeço. Tem diabo nenhum. Nem espírito. Nunca vi. Alguém devia de ver, então era eu mesmo, este vosso servidor. Fosse lhe contar... Bem, o diabo regula seu estado preto, nas criaturas, nas mulheres, nos homens. Até: nascianças – eu digo. Pois não é ditado: “menino – trem do diabo”? E nos usos, nas plantas, nas águas, na terra, no vento... Estrumes. ... O diabo na rua, no meio doredemunho...

Hem? Hem? Ah. Figuração minha, de pior pra trás, as certas lembranças. Mal hajame!

Sofro pena de contar não... Melhor, se arpare: pois, num chão, e com igual formato de ramos e folhas, não dá a mandioca mansa, que se come comum, e amandioca-brava, que mata? Agora, o senhor já viu uma estranhez? A mandioca-doce pode de repente virar azangada – motivos não sei; às vezes se diz que é por replantado no terreno sempre, com mudas seguidas, de manaíbas – vai em amargando, de tanto em tanto, de si mesma toma peçonhas. E, ora veja: a outra, a mandiocabrava, também é que às vezes pode ficar mansa, a esmo, de se comer sem nenhum mal. E que isso é? Eh, o senhor já viu, por ver, a feiúra de ódio franzido, carantonho, nas faces dumacobracavel? Observou o porco gordo, cada dia mais feliz bruto, capaz de, pudesse, roncar e engolir por sua suja comodidade o mundo todo?

E gavião, corvo, alguns, as feições deles já representam a precisão de talhar para adiante, rasgar e estraçalhar a bico, parece uma quicé muito afiada por ruim desejo. Tudo. Tem até tortas raças de pedras, horrorosas, venenosas – que estragam mortal a água, se estão jazendo em fundo de poço; o diabo dentro delas dorme: são o demo. Se sabe? E o demo – que é só assim o significado dum azougue maligno – tem ordem de seguir o caminho dele, tem licença para campear?! Arre, ele está misturado em tudo.

Que o que gasta, vai gastando o diabo de dentro da gente, aos pouquinhos, é orazoável sofrer. E a alegria de amor – compadre meu Quelemém, diz. Família. Deveras? É, e não é. O senhor ache e não ache. Tudo é e não é... Quase todo mais grave criminoso feroz, sempre é muito bom marido, bom filho, bom pai, e é bom amigo-de-seus-amigos! Sei desses. Só que tem os depois – e Deus, junto. Vi muitas nuvens.

Mas, em verdade, filho, também, abranda. Olhe: um chamado Aleixo, residente aléguas do Passo do Pubo, no da-Areia, era o homem de maiores ruindades calmas que já se viu. Me agradou que perto da casa dele tinha um açudinho, entre as palmeiras, com traíras, pra-almas de enormes, desenormes, ao real, que receberam fama; o Aleixo davade comer a elas, em horas justas, elas se acostumaram a se assim das locas, para papar, semelhavam ser peixes ensinados. Um dia, só por graça rústica, ele matou um velhinho que por lá passou, desvalido rogando esmola. O senhor não duvide – tem gente, neste aborrecido mundo, que matam só para ver alguém fazer careta... Eh, pois, empós, o resto o senhor prove: vem o pão, vem a mão, vem o são, vem o cão. Esse Aleixo era homem afamado, tinha filhos pequenos; aqueles eram o amor dele, todo, despropósito. Dê bem, que não nem um ano estava passado, de se matar o velhinho pobre, e os meninos do Aleixo aí adoeceram. Andaço de sarapão, se disse, mas complicado; eles nunca saravam. Quando, então, sararam. Mas os olhos deles vermelhavam altos, numa inflama de sapiranga à rebelde; e susseguinte – o que não sei é se foram todos dumavez, ou um logo e logo outro e outro – eles restaram cegos. Cegos, sem remissão dum favinho de luz dessa nossa! O senhor imagine: uma escadinha – três meninos e uma menina – todos cegados. Sem remediável. O Aleixo não perdeu o juízo; mas mudou: ah, demudou completo – agora vive da banda de Deus, quando para ser bom e caridoso em todas suas horas da noite e do dia. Parece até que ficou o feliz, que antes não era. Ele mesmo diz que foi um homem de sorte, porque Deus quis ter pena dele, transformar para lá o rumo de sua alma. Isso eu ouvi, e me deuraiva. Razão das crianças. Se sendo castigo, que culpa das hajas do Aleixo aqueles menininhos tinham?!

Compadre meu Quelemém reprovou minhas incertezas. Que, por certo, noutra vidarevirada, os meninos também tinham sido os mais malvados, da massa e peça do pai, demônios do mesmo caldeirão de lugar. Senhor o que acha? E o velhinho assassinado? – eu sei que o senhor vai discutir. Pois, também. Em ordem que ele tinha um pecado decrime, no corpo, por pagar. Se a gente – conforme compadre meu Quelemém é quem diz – se a gente torna a encarnar renovado, eu cismo até que inimigo de morte pode vir como filho do inimigo. Mire veja: se me digo, tem um sujeito Pedro Pindó, vizinhodaqui mais seis léguas, homem de bem por tudo em tudo, ele e a mulher dele, sempre sidos bons, de bem. Eles têm um filho duns dez anos, chamado Valtei – nome moderno, é o que o povo daqui agora apreceia, o senhor sabe. Pois essezinho, essezim, desde que algum entendimento alumiou nele, feito mostrou o que é: pedido madraço, azedo queimador, gostoso de ruim de dentro do fundo das espécies de sua natureza. Em qualque judia, ao devagar, de todo bicho ou criaçãozinha pequena que pega; uma vez, encontrou uma crioula bentabêbada dormindo, arranjou um caco de garrafa, lanhou em três pontos a popa da perna dela. O que esse menino babeja vendo, é sangrarem galinha ou esfaquear porco. – “Eu gosto de matar...” – uma ocasião ele pequenino me disse. Abriu em mim um susto; porque: passarinho que se debruça – o vôo já está pronto! Pois, o senhor vigie: o pai, Pedro Pindó, modo de corrigir isso, e a mãe, dão nele, demiséria e mastro – botam o menino sem comer, amarram em árvores no terreiro, ele nunuelo, mesmo em junho frio, lavram o corpinho dele na peia e na taca, depois limpam a pele do sangue, com cuia de salmoura. A gente sabe, espia, fica gasturado. O menino járebaixou de magreza, os olhos entrando, carinha de ossos, encaveirada, e entisicou, o tempo todo tosse, tossura da que puxa secos peitos. Arre, que agora, visível, o Pindó e a mulher se habituaram de nele bater, de pouquinho em pouquinho foram criando nisso um prazer feio de diversão – como regulam as sovas em horas certas confortáveis, até chamam gente para ver o exemplo bom. Acho que esse menino não dura, já está noblimbilim, não chega para a quaresma que vem... Uê-uê, então?! Não sendo como compadre meu Quelemém quer, que explicação é que o senhor dava? Aquele meninotinha sido homem. Devia, em balanço, terríveis perversidades. Alma dele estava nobreu. Mostrava. E, agora, pagava. Ah, mas, acontece, quando está chorando e pensando, ele sofre igual que se fosse um menino bonzinho... Ave, vi de tudo, neste mundo! lá viaté cavalo com soluço... – o que é a coisa mais custosa que há.

Bem, mas o senhor dirá, deve de: e no começo – para pecados e artes, as pessoas – como

por que foi que tanto emendado se começou? Ei, ei, aí todos esbarram. Compadre meu Quelemém, também. Sou só um sertanejo, nessas altas idéias navego mal. Sou muito pobre coitado. Inveja minha pura é de uns conforme o senhor, com toda leitura esuma doutoração. Não é que eu esteja analfabeto. Soletrei, anos e meio, meante cartilha, memória e palmatória. Tive mestre, Mestre Lucas, no Curralinho, decorei gramática, as operações, regra-de-três, até geografia e estudo pátrio. Em folhas grandes de papel, com capricho tracei bonitos mapas. Ah, não é por falar: mas, desde o começo, me achavam sofismado de ladino. E que eu merecia de ir para cursar latim, em Aula Régia – que também diziam. Tempo saudoso! Inda hoje, apreceio um bom livro, despaçado. Nafazenda O Limãozinho, de um meu amigo Vito Soziano, se assina desse almanaque grosso, de logogrifos e charadas e outras divididas matérias, todo ano vem. Em tanto, ponho primazia é na leitura proveitosa, vida de santo, virtudes e exemplos – missionário esperto engambelando os índios, ou São Francisco de Assis, Santo Antônio, São Geraldo... Eu gosto muito de moral. Raciocinar, exortar os outros para o bom caminho, aconselhar a justo. Minha mulher, que o senhor sabe, zela por mim: muito reza. Ela é uma abençoável. Compadre meu Quelemém sempre diz que eu posso aqui-etar meutemer de consciência, que sendo bem-assistido, terríveis bons-espíritos me protegem. Ipe! Com gosto... Como é de são efeito, ajudo com meu querer acreditar. Mas nem sempre posso. O senhor saiba: eu toda a minha vida pensei por mim, forro, sou nascido diferente. Eu sou é eu mesmo. Diverjo de todo o mundo... Eu quase que nada não sei. Mas desconfio de muita coisa. O senhor concedendo, eu digo: para pensar longe, sou cão mestre – o senhor solte em minha frente uma idéia ligeira, e eu rastreio essa por fundo de todos os matos, amém! Olhe: o que devia de haver, era de se reunirem-se ossábios, políticos, constituições gradadas, fecharem o definitivo a noção – proclamar por uma vez, artes assembléias, que não tem diabo nenhum, não existe, não pode. Valor dele! Só assim, davam tranqüilidade boa à gente. Por que o Governo não cuida?!

Ah, eu sei que não é possível. Não me assente o senhor por beócio. Uma coisa é pôridéias arranjadas, outra é lidar com país de pessoas, de carne e sangue, de mil-e-tantasmisérias... Tanta gente – dá susto de saber – e nenhum se sossega: todos nascendo, crescendo, se casando, querendo colocação de emprego, comida, saúde, riqueza, ser importante, querendo chuva e negócios bons... De sorte que carece de se escolher: ou a gente se tece de viver no safado comum, ou cuida só de religião só. Eu podia ser: padresacerdote, se não chefe de jagunços; para outras coisas não fui

parido. Mas minhavehice já principiou, errei de toda conta. E o reumatismo... Lá como quem diz: nasescorvas. Ahã.

Hem? Hem? O que mais penso, testo e explico: todo-omundo é louco. O senhor, eu,nós, as pessoas todas. Por isso é que se carece principalmente de religião: para sedesendoidecer, desdoidar. Reza é que sara da loucura. No geral. Isso é que é a salvaçãoda-alma... Muita religião, seu moço! Eu cá, não perco ocasião de religião. Aproveito de todas. Bebo água de todo rio... Uma só, para mim é pouca, talvez não me chegue. Rezocristão, católico, embrenho a certo; e aceito as preces de compadre meu Quelemém,doutrina dele, de Cardéque. Mas, quando posso, vou no Mindubim, onde um Matias écrente, metodista: a gente se acusa de pecador, lê alto a Bíblia, e ora, cantando hinosbelos deles. Tudo me quieta, me suspende. Qualquer sombrinha me refresca. Mas é sómuito provisório. Eu queria rezar – o tempo todo. Muita gente não me aprova, achamque lei de Deus é privilégios, invariável. E eu! Bofe! Detesto! O que sou? – o que faço,que quero, muito curial. E em cara de todos faço, executado. Eu não tresmalho!

Olhe: tem uma preta, Maria Leôncia, longe daqui não mora, as rezas dela afamammuita virtude de poder. Pois a ela pago, todo mês – encomenda de rezar por mim um terço, todo santo dia, e, nos domingos, um rosário. Vale, se vale. Minha mulher não vêmal nisso. E estou, já mandei recado para uma outra, do Vau-Vau, uma Izina Calanga,para vir aqui, ouvi de que reza também com grandes meremerências, vou efetuar comela trato igual. Quero punhado dessas, me defendendo em Deus, reunidas de mim emvolta... Chagas de Cristo!

Viver é muito perigoso... Querer o bem com demais força, de incerto jeito, pode jáestar sendo se querendo o mal, por principiar. Esses homens! Todos puxavam o mundopara si, para o concertar consertado. Mas cada um só vê e entende as coisas dum seu modo. Montante, o mais supro, mais sério – foi Medeiro Vaz. Que um homem antigo... Seu Joãozinho Bem-Bem, o mais bravo de todos, ninguém nunca pôde decifrar comoele por dentro consistia. Joca Ramiro – grande homem príncipe! – era político. Zé-Bebelo quis ser político, mas teve e não teve sorte: raposa que demorou. Só Candelário se endiabrou, por pensar que estava com doença má. Titão Passos era o pelo preço deamigos: só por via deles, de suas mesmas amizades, foi que tão alto se ajagunçou. Antônio Dó – severo bandido. Mas por metade; grande maior metade que seja. Andalécio, no fundo, um bom homem-de-bem, estouvado raivoso em sua toda justiça. Ricardão, mesmo, queria era ser rico em paz: para isso guerreava. Só o Hermógenes foi que nasceu

formado tigre, e assassim. E o “Urutu-Branco”? Ah, não me fale. Ah, esse...tristonho levado, que foi – que era um pobre menino do destino...

Tão bem, conforme. O senhor ouvia, eu lhe dizia: o ruim com o ruim, terminam poras espinheiras se quebrar – Deus espera essa ganstança. Moço!: Deus é paciência. O contrário, é o diabo. Se gasteja. O senhor rela faca em faca – e afia – que se raspam. Atéas pedras do fundo, uma dá na outra, vão-se arredondinando lisas, que o riachinho rola. Por enquanto, que eu penso, tudo quanto há, neste mundo, é porque se merece e carece. Antesmente preciso. Deus não se comparece com refe, não arrocha o regulamento. Praquê? Deixa: bobo com bobo – um dia, algum estala e aprende: esperta. Só que, às vezes, por mais auxiliar, Deus espalha, no meio, um pingado de pimenta...

Haja? Pois, por um exemplo: faz tempo, fui, de trem, lá em Sete-Lagoas, para partesde consultar um médico, de nome me indicado. Fui vestido bem, e em carro de primeira, por via das dúvidas, não me sombrearem por jagunço antigo. Vai e acontece, que, pertomesmo de mim, defronte, tomou assento, voltando deste brabo Norte, um moçoJazevedão, delegado profissional. Vinha com um capanga dele, um secreta, e eu bemsabia os dois, de que tanto um era ruim, como o outro ruim era. A verdade que diga,primeiro tive o estrito de me desbancar para um longe dali, mudar de meu lugar. Juízome disse, melhor ficasse. Pois, ficando, olhei. E – lhe falo: nunca vi cara de homemfornecida de bruteza e maldade mais, do que nesse. Como que era urco, trouxe deatarracado, reluzia um cru nos olhos pequenos, e armava um queixo de pedra,sobrancelhonas; não demedia nem testa. Não ria, não se riu nem uma vez; mas, falandoou calado, a gente via sempre dele algum dente, presa pontuda de guará. Arre, e bufava,um poucadinho. Só rosneava curto, baixo, as meiaspalavras encrespadas. Vinhareolhando, historiando a papelada – uma a uma as folhas com retratos e com os pretosdos dedos de jagunços, ladrões de cavalos e criminosos de morte. Aquela aplicação detrabalho, numa coisa dessas, gerava a ira na gente. O secreta, xereta, todo perto, sentado-junto, atendendo, caprichando de ser cão. Me fez um receio, mas só no bobo do corpo,não no interno das coragens. Uma hora, uma daquelas laudas caiu – e eu me abaixei de depressa, sei lá mesmo por que, não quis, não pensei – até hoje crio vergonha disso –apanhei o papel do chão, e entreguei a ele. Daí, digo: eu tive mais raiva, porque fizaquilo; mas aí já estava feito. O homem nem me olhou, nem disse nenhumagradecimento. Até as solas dos sapatos dele – só vendo – que solas duras grossas,dobradas de enormes, parecendo ferro bronze. Porque eu sabia: esse Jazevedão, quandoprendia alguém, a primeira

quieta coisa que procedia era que vinha entrando, sem terque dizer, fingia umas pressas, e ia pisava em cima dos pés descalços dos coitados. Eque nessas ocasiões dava gargalhadas, dava... Pois, osga! Entreguei a ele a folha depapel, e fui saindo de lá, por ter mão em mim de não destruir a tiros aquele sujeito. Carnes que muito pesavam... E ele umbigava um princípio de barriga barriguda, que mecriou desejos... Com minha brandura, alegre que eu matava. Mas, as barbaridades queesse delegado fez e aconteceu, o senhor nem tem calo em coração para poder me escutar. Consegui de muito homem e mulher chorar sangue, por este simplesuniversozinho nosso aqui. Sertão. O senhor sabe: sertão é onde manda quem é forte, com as astúcias. Deus mesmo, quando vier, que venha armado! E bala é umpedacinhozinho de metal...

Tanto, digo: Jazevedão – um assim, devia de ter, precisava? Ah, precisa. Couro ruim é que chama ferrão de ponta. Haja que, depois – negócio particular dele – nesta vida ouna outra, cada Jazevedão, cumprido o que tinha, descamba em seu tempo de penar, também, até pagar o que deveu – compadre meu Quelemém está aí, para fiscalizar. O senhor sabe: o perigo que é viver... Mas só do modo, desses, por feio instrumento, foique a jagunçada se findou. Senhor pensa que Antônio Dó ou Olivino Oliviano iam ficar bonzinhos por pura soletração de si, ou por rogo dos infelizes, ou por sempre ouvirse mão de padre? Te acho! Nos visos...

De jagunço comportado ativo para se arrender no meio de suas jagunçadas, sódeponho de um: chamado Joé Cazuzo – foi em arraso de um tirotei', p'ra cima do lugar Serra-Nova, distrito de Rio-Pardo, no ribeirão Traçadal. A gente fazia má minoria pequena, e fechavam para riba de nós o pessoal dum Coronel Adalvino, forte político, com muitos soldados fardados no meio centro, comando do Tenente Reis Leme, que depois ficou capitão. Agüentamos hora mais hora, e já dávamos quase de cercados. Aí, de bote, aquele Joé Cazuzo – homem muito valente – se ajoelhou giro no chão docerrado, levantava os braços que nem esgalho de jatobá seco, e só gritava, urro claro eurro surdo: – “Eu vi a Virgem Nossa, no resplendor do Céu, com seus filhos de Anjos!...” Gritava não esbarrava. – “Eu vi a Virgem!...” Ele almou? Nós desigualamos. Trape por meu cavalo – que achei – pulei em meu assento, nem sei em que rompetempodesatei o cabresto, de amarrado em pé de pau. Voei, vindo. Bala vinha. O cerrado estrondava. No mato, o medo da gente se sai ao inteiro, um medo propositado. Eu podia escocicar, feito burro bruto, dá-que, dá-que. Um duas ou três balas se cravaram naborraina da minha sela, perfuraram de arrancar quase muita a paina do encheio. Cavalostremece em

pró, em meio de galope, sei: pensa no dono. Eu não cabia de estar mais bem encolhido. Baleado veio também o surrão que eu tinha nas costas, com poucasminhas coisas. E outra, de fuzil, em ricochete decerto, esquentou minha coxa, sem me ferir, o senhor veja: bala faz o que quer – se enfiou imprensada, entre em mim e a aba da-jereba! Tempos loucos... Burumbum!: o cavalo se ajoelhou em queda, morto quiçá, e eujá caindo para diante, abraçado em folhagens grossas, ramada e cipós, que mebalançaram e espetavam, feito eu estava pendurado em teião de aranha... Aonde? Atravessei aquilo, vida toda... De medo em ânsia, rompi por rasgar com meu corpoaquele mato, fui, sei lá – e me despenquei mundo abaixo, rolava para o oco de um grotão fechado de moitas, sempre me agarrava – rolava mesmo assim: depois – depois, quando olhei minhas mãos, tudo nelas que não era tirado sangue, era um amasso verde, nos dedos, de folhas vivas que puxei e masgalhei... Pousei no capim do fundo – e umbicho escuro deu um repulão, com um espirro, também doido de susto: que era um papa-mel, que eu vislumbrei; para fugir, esse está somente. Maior sendo eu, me molhou meu cansaço; espichei tudo. E um pedacinho de pensamento: se aquele bicho irara tinhajazido lá, então ali não tinha cobra. Tomei o lugar dele. Existia cobra nenhuma. Eu podia me largar. Eu era só mole, moleza, mas que não amortecia os trancos, dentro, docoração. Arfei. Concebi que vinham, me matavam. Nem fazia mal, me importei não. Assim, uns momentos, ao menos eu guardava a licença de prazo para me descansar. Conforme pensei em Diadorim. Só pensava era nele. Um João-de-barro cantou. Eu queria morrer pensando em meu amigo Diadorim, mano-oh-mão, que estava na Serra do Pau-d'Arco, quase na divisa baiana, com nossa outra metade dos sócandelários... Com meu amigo Diadorim me abraçava, sentimento meu iavoava reto para ele... Ai, arre, mas: que esta minha boca não tem ordem nenhuma. Estou contando fora, coisasdivagadas. No senhor me fio? Atéque, até-que. Diga o anjo-da-guarda... Mas, conformeeu vinha: depois se soube, que mesmo os soldados do Tenente e os cabras do Coronel Adalvino remitiram de respeitar o assopro daquele Joé Cazuzo. E que esse acabousendo o homem mais pacifício do mundo, fabricante de azeite e sacristão, no São Domingos Branco. Tempos!

Por tudo, réis-coado, fico pensando. Gosto. Melhor, para a idéia se bem abrir, éviajando em trem-de-ferro. Pudesse, vivia para cima e para baixo, dentro dele. Informação que pergunto: mesmo no Céu, fim de fim, como é que a alma vence seesquecer de tantos sofrimentos e maldades, no recebido e no dado? A como? O senhor sabe: há coisas de medonhas demais, tem. Dor do corpo e

dor da idéia marcam forte, tão forte como o todo amor e raiva de ódio. Vai, mar... De sorte que, então, olhe: o Firmiano, por apelidado Piolho-de-Cobra, se lazou com a perna desconforme engrossada, dessa doença que não se cura; e não enxergava quase mais, constante obranquiço nos olhos, das cataratas. De antes, anos, teve de se desarrear da jagunçagem. Pois, uma ocasião, algum esteve no rancho dele, no Alto Jequitai, depois contou – que, vira tempo, vem assunto, ele dissesse: – “Me dá saudade é de pegar um soldado, e tal, pra uma boa esfolo, com faca cega... Mas, primeiro, castrar...” O senhor concebe? Quem tem mais dose de demo em si é índio, qualquer raça de bugre. Gente vê nação desses, para lá fundo dos gerais de Goiás, adonde tem vagarosos grandes rios, de água sempretão clara aprazível, correndo em deita de cristal roseado... Piolho-de-Cobra se dava desangue de gentio. Senhor me dirá: mas que ele pronuncia aquilo fora boca, maneira derepresentar que ainda não estava velho decadente. Obra de opor, por medo de ser manso, e causa para se ver respeitado. Todos tratam por tal regra: proseiam de ruínas, para mais se valerem, porque a gente ao redor é duro dura. O pior, mas, é que acabam, pelo mesmo vau, tendo de um dia executar o declarado, no real. Vi tanta cruz! Penanão paga contar; se vou, não esbarro. E me desgosta, três que me enjoa, isso tudo. Me apraz é que o pessoal, hoje em dia, é bom de coração. Isto é, bom no trivial. Malícias maluqueiras, e perversidades, sempre tem alguma, mas escasseadas. Geração minha, verdadeira, ainda não eram assim. Ah, vai vir um tempo, em que não se usa mais matargente... Eu, já estou velho.

Bom, ia falando: questão, isso que me sovaca... Ah; formei aquela pergunta, para compadre meu Quelemém. Que me respondeu: que, por perto do Céu, a gente se alimpou tanto, que todos os feios passados se exalaram de não ser – feito sem-modez de tempo de criança, más-artes. Como a gente não carece de ter remorso do que divulgou latejo de seus pesadelos de uma noite. Assim que: tosou-se, floreceu-se! Ahã. Por issodito, é que a ida para o Céu é demorada. Eu confiro com compadre meu Quelemém, o senhor sabe: razão da crença mesma que tem – que, por todo o mal, que se faz, um dia se repaga, o exato. Sujeito assim madruga três vezes, em antes de querer facilitar em qualquer minudência repreensível... Compadre meu Quelemém nunca fala vazio, não subtrata. Só que isto a ele não vou expor. A gente nunca deve de declarar que aceitanteiro o alheio – essa é que é a regra do rei!

O senhor... Mire veja: o mais importante e bonito, do mundo, é isto: que as pessoas não estão sempre iguais, ainda não foram terminadas – mas que elas vão sempre mudando. Afinam ou

desafinam. Verdade maior. É o que a vida me ensinou. Isso que me alegra, montão. E, outra coisa: o diabo, é às brutas; mas Deus é traçoeiro! Ah, umabeleza de traçoeiro – dá gosto! A força dele, quando quer – moço! – me dá o medopavor! Deus vem vindo: ninguém não vê. Ele faz é na lei do mansinho – assim é omilagre. E Deus ataca bonito, se divertindo, se economiza. A pois: um dia, num curtume, a faquinha minha que eu tinha caíu dentro dum tanque, só caldo de casca decurtir, barbatimão, angico, lá sei. – “Amanhã eu tiro...” – falei, comigo. Porque era de noite, luz nenhuma eu não disputava. Ah, então, saiba: no outro dia, cedo, a faca, o ferro dela, estava sido roído, quase por metade, por aquela agüinha escura, toda quieta. Deixei, para mais ver. Estala, espoleta! Sabe o que foi? Pois, nessa mesma da tarde, aí: da faquinha só se achava o cabo... O cabo – por não ser de frio metal, mas de chifre degalheiro. Aí está: Deus... Bem, o senhor ouviu, o que ouviu sabe, o que sabe me entende...

Somenos, não ache que religião afraca. Senhor ache o contrário. Visível que, aqueles outros tempos, eu pintava – crê que o carolá levanta a flor. Eli, bom meu pasto... Mocidade. Mas mocidade é tarefa para mais tarde se desmentir. Também, eu desse depensar em vago em tanto, perdia minha mão-de-homem para o manejo quente, no meiode todos. Mas, hoje, que raciocinei, e penso a eito, não nem por isso não dou por baixaminha competência, num fogo-e-ferro. A ver. Chegassem viessem aqui com guerra em mim, com más partes, com outras leis, ou com sobejos olhares, e eu ainda sorteio de acender esta zona, aí, se, se! É na boca do trabuco: é no té-retêretém... E sozinhozinho não estou, há-de-o. Pra não isso, hei colocado redor meu minha gente. Olhe o senhor: aqui, pegado, vereda abaixo, o Paspé – meeiro meu – é meu. Mais légua, se tanto, tem o Acauã, e tem o Compadre Ciril, ele e três filhos, sei que servem. Banda desta mão, o Alaripe: soubesse o senhor o que é que se preza, em rifleio e à faca, um cearense feitoesse! Depois mais: o João Nonato, o Quipes, o Pacamã-de-Presas. E o Fafafa – este deulances altos, todo lado comigo, no combate velho do Tamanduá-tão: limpamos o ventode quem não tinha ordem de respirar, e antes esses desrodeamos... O Fafafa tem uma eaguada. Ele cria cavalos bons. Até um pouco mais longe, no pé-de-serra, de bando meu foram o Sefredo, Jesualdo, o Néelson e João Concliz. Uns outros. O Triol... E não vouvalendo? Deixo terra com eles, deles o que é meu é, fechamos que nem irmãos. Para que eu quero ajuntar riqueza? Estão aí, de armas areiadas. Inimigo vier, a gente cruzachamado, ajuntamos: é hora dum bom tiroteamento em paz, exp’rimem ver. Digo isto ao senhor, de fidúcia. Também, não vá pensar em

dobro. Queremos é trabalhar,propor sossego. De mim, pessoa, vivo para minha mulher, que tudo modo-melhormerece, e para a devoção. Bem-querer de minha mulher foi que me auxiliou, rezas dela,graças. Amor vem de amor. Digo. Em Diadorim, penso também – mas Diadorim é aminha neblina...

Agora, bem: não queria tocar nisso mais – de o Tinhoso; chega. Mas tem um porém: pergunto: o senhor acredita, acha fio de verdade nessa parlandia, de com o demônio sepoder tratar pacto? Não, não é não? Sei que não há. Falava das favas. Mas gosto de todaboa confirmação. Vender sua própria alma... invencionice falsa! E, alma, o que é? Almatem de ser coisa interna supremada, muito mais do de dentro, e é só, do que um se pensa: ah, alma absoluta! Decisão de vender alma é afoitez vadia, fantasiado demomento, não tem a obediência legal. Posso vender essas boas terras, daí de entre asVeredas-Quatro – que são dum senhor Almirante, que reside na capital federal? Possoalgum!? Então, se um menino menino é, e por isso não se autoriza de negociar... E agente, isso sei, às vezes é só feito menino. Mal que em minha vida aprontei, foi numacerta meninice em sonhos – tudo corre e chega tão ligeiro –; será que se há lume deresponsabilidades? Se sonha; já se fez... Dei rapadura ao jumento! Ahã. Pois. Se temalma, e tem, ela é de Deus estabelecida, nem que a pessoa queira ou não queira. Não éevdível. O senhor não acha? Me declare, franco, peço. Ah, lhe agradeço. Se vê que o senhor sabe muito, em idéia firme, além de ter carta de doutor. Lhe agradeço, por tanto.Sua companhia me dá altos prazeres.

Em termos, gostava que morasse aqui, ou perto, era uma ajuda. Aqui não se temconvívio que instruir. Sertão. Sabe o senhor: sertão é onde o pensamento da gente seforma mais forte do que o poder do lugar. Viver é muito perigoso...

Eh, que se vai? Jajá? É que não. Hoje, não. Amanhã, não. Não consinto. O senhorme desculpe, mas em empenho de minha amizade aceite: o senhor fica. Depois, quintademanhãcedo, o senhor querendo ir, então vai, mesmo me deixa sentindo sua falta.Mas, hoje ou amanhã, não. Visita, aqui em casa, comigo, é por três dias!

Mas, o senhor sério tenciona devassar a raso este mar de territórios, para sortimentode conferir o que existe? Tem seus motivos. Agora – digo por mim – o senhor vem, veiotarde. Tempos foram, os costumes demudaram. Quase que, de legitimo leal, pouco sobra, nem não sobra mais nada. Os bandos bons de valentões repartiram seu fim; muitoque foi jagunço, por aí pena, pede esmola. Mesmo que os vaqueiros duvidam de vir nocomércio vestidos de roupa inteira de couro, acham que traje de

gibão é feio e capiau. Eaté o gado no grameal vai minguando menos bravo, mais educado: casteado de zebu,desvém com o resto de curraleiro e de crioulo. Sempre, no gerais, é à pobreza, à tristeza. Uma tristeza que até alegre. Mas, então, para uma safra razoável de bizarrices,reconselho de o senhor entestar viagem mais dilatada. Não fosse meu despoder, por azias e reumatismo, aí eu ia. Eu guiava o senhor até tudo.

Interview: Felipe W.Martinez  
(Interviewed by Ben Segal)

### 1. How did you come to be interested in João Guimarães Rosa?

While I was studying Literature & Writing at UC San Diego, a friend produced and surprised me with a wonderful and mysterious xerox copy of *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*, the so-called failed, 1963 English translation of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. The book, as a book and not a translation, to me was outstanding, and struck me as magnificently as had other works I was encountering at the time, by writers like James Joyce, Juan Rulfo, Samuel Beckett, and William Faulkner, among others.

When I finished reading the *Devil to Pay in the Backlands*, I took to the business of seeking out more work from the author. It was then that I learned that Guimarães Rosa was not like the other authors I mentioned, insofar as no one I knew had read anything by him, and very few people (outside of University departments of Spanish & Portuguese) were talking about him. This led to the realization that none of his books were for sale, and hadn't been in decades.

### 2) Can you talk about the history of the book's reception in 1963 and its bizarre history of failed English translations?

In 1963 the North American publisher, Alfred A. Knopf--after rejecting publishing deals with many other soon-to-be rising stars of the Latin American Boom (including Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar)--decided to undertake what is today considered by many to be *the* most complex, Post-World War II novel in all of Latin America: João Guimarães Rosa's *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. The English translator, Harriet De Onís, was no match for Rosa's linguistic ingenuity and vast erudition. Her experience was in translation from Spanish, and while her willingness to undertake the task was commendable, it was flawed from the outset. She opted to *make* the text approach-

able to English readers, whereas it was nowhere near approachable for Brazilians in the original Portuguese. Imagine: *Finnegans Wake* translated into plain English for the general reader. Well, no one would like it, and so was the case with *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*. Brazilianist scholars called it a sham, a completely deficient simplification of a masterpiece. General readers were either unimpressed or not reached. Sales of the translation declined continuously after the initial launch, and after that, the text was never published again. Some amazingly qualified translators have tried to retranslate *Grande Sertão: Veredas* since 1963 to no avail. Subsequently, Knopf translated two more works by Guimarães Rosa, two collections of short stories. Neither was published beyond the initial run.

3) To a reader unfamiliar with GR's work, the original English translation appears much more fluid than your version. You've explained why that fluidity is in fact a problem in the HDO translation. Can you talk a little bit about how difficult this is even for readers of Portuguese and the ways in which this is a highly disrupted and jarring text.

The novel in the original Portuguese is so disjointed, fragmented and seemingly desultory, both on a narrative and linguistic level, that both practiced and unpracticed readers alike initially struggle to gain, and then are rarely able to maintain their footing on first read. In this sense the common analogy drawn between GS: V and *Ulysses* by James Joyce is justifiable: it's a masterpiece of its language, though relatively few native speakers are able to understand it. This is in large part due to the fact that Guimarães Rosa was not only extremely erudite, but he had travelled much, and, from as early as the age of six, studied languages. He spoke six and read in fourteen others. His work is artfully overrun by neologisms, portmanteaus, words colloquial and archaic, many altogether invented, rearranged syntaxes, digressions, meanderings, illusions, recollections, etc. Another novel one might think of is *Gravity's Rainbow* by Thomas Pynchon. On several planes, Pynchon is the closest thing to a North American Guimarães Rosa.

3b) Can you talk about some of the strategies you've employed in order to create awkwardness and difficulty, and how that difficulty might be different in the English version from in the original Portuguese?

Guimarães Rosa said of his work that he didn't wish to let the reader rely on clichés, that he wished to shock the reader at every moment, just like life. He considered this in every sense. No cliché

words, phrases, grammars, or plots. This was not to be difficult, but to create at every word and turn of phrase, something the reader had not read or experienced before, yet could comprehend or intuit. I tried to follow in this lead and before I began, I established these rules for myself:

- translate all neologisms into English (in the De Onís translation, neologisms were in many cases omitted; invented words replaced with standard words they signified)
- syntax remains faithful to the original (this in an attempt to see that the English language and its readers adapt to the Portuguese structures of signification rather than the other way around)
- punctuation remains unchanged when required, always make a decision. (For so long it has been the inability or unwillingness of translators to deal with Guimarães Rosa's words, to make a decision--which, in addition to intuition, is an integral part of translation and art--even if that decision was to make no decision at all, and let chance work. In order to ensure that this process resulted in a product, I designed the method to guarantee its completion.

I did this in order to ensure (as much as possible) that 1) I not permit cliché, and 2) I not consider the reader (that is: aim for *readability*, which was a primary approach in 1963), but instead allow the original Portuguese to traverse the language-divide towards English freely, myself serving only as the medium (I studied Portuguese for a year before I began), ultimately hoping to produce a closer translation of the original language of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. This new translation, I hope too, shakes the reader of a habitual reading practice. Like the original I think it should require the reader be aware of the mode of language by the word.

5) The book is full of neologisms, wordplay, and even linguistic constructions resembling concrete poetry. Can you give some favorite examples of those and of the translations choices that such wordplay implies?

We can start and stop at the first word, but I will give a few more examples after that. A single word is the first sentence in the original:

*Nonada.*

In translation: nothing; something of little or no value, a trifle; from the Latin *res non nata* ('thing not born). But the story *is* being born at that precise point. Is Guimarães Rosa trying to deceive us? Are the next several hundred pages



for naught? We may ask ourselves, but then, when we come to consider it a bit more closely: if the word were to break into parts, we see: *no + nada* --> "no-nothing". if one says "nonothing", it's the same as something. We also see "nono-thing", as in a thing that is a "nono", something taboo. Superstition is a major element in the novel, as well as people's wishes to disregard it--this connotation is also found in the first word of the novel, *Nonada*.

*...in order to desendodorize, to disdodoate.*

This is harder to explain, but I can certainly try: When I read the words for the first time in Portuguese ("...para se desendoidecer, desdoiar.") (I translated as I read the book for the first time so that the result might be something closer and more reflective of language instinct, intuition, surprise, etc), I saw a cloud of language, words in both English and Portuguese: *des-*: in English, an old equivalent of the prefix *-dis*, to undo, reverse the root word. The root word in Portuguese, *doido*, or "madman", "crazy"; in the novel, a devilish connotation, evil spirits, taboo (For this reason, too, *Dodo* is a euphemism for the devil at other times--something odd and other, mystical and unseen). The Portuguese endings: *-ecer* and *-ar*, signalling the infinitive verb. Translated plainly it might look like: "to rid oneself of the evil spirit of insanity", or "to dedemonize oneself", or better: "to deendemonize onself." There is another word like this in the text: "Enevildemonment." This isn't a complete explanation, but I think it describes a bit of what I was thinking.

Ma-Neigh, Blood-o'Other, Legion-Lips, Tear-em-Down, Cold-Cutter, Sissy-Goat, Treciziano, Verdigris, Hermogenes...

These are the names of the narrator's fellow jagunços. Jagunços are hired thugs of the Brazilian backlands, they ran in bands, hired by big landowners and politicians for protection, land enforcements, and warring during the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. The names here are translated faithfully. Names to Guimarães Rosa are as important as any other category of words. The name lives and transforms, and expresses the unique characteristics of its holder. So, like the neologisms, I committed to translating every name as far as I could. I think the tendency is to not translate names, thinking that leaving names in the original produces an effect of authenticity, and that's true to a certain extent, but I had to recognize that these were not names like João, which could be translated into John, but in that case, it wouldn't be necessary. But these names, the

names of Guimarães Rosa's stories, they're names altogether something else. The English reader deserves to experience that, and so I worked to bring through as much as I could.

4) Because this is such a difficult text, can you set the scene a little? Just give a sense of where the reader is entering and what the setting/story is?

The reader has happened upon a conversation (we don't know how or why), a dialogue between two men on a ranch. One, the owner of the ranch and narrator, is from the Sertão, the Northeastern backlands of Brazil; the other is a doctor from the city, passing through. Rather than being presented with the dialogue of these two men, the reader is only given what the narrator says; the interlocutor, the doctor, we presume he speaks, but textually he is silent. So the text takes the form of a sustained, 600-page monologue, no chapter breaks. The narrative concerns the Sertão and the sagas of the jagunços who war among its winding rivers and paths, across deserts, through jungles, who make pacts with the devil, and thus are concerned with laws. Like many modernist masterpieces of its time, its primary concerns are language and eternity.

7) Do you consider this to be a definitive translation? Can there be one?

This is a conceptual translation in that an idea and a process produced a material text to be considered where before there was none. It's also a conceptual translation inasmuch as any translation (whether deemed "definitive" or "deficient") is conceptual. In considering Guimarães Rosa in the English-speaking world, I'm not really considering the degree of success, or "definitiveness", as much as the degree of its presence to be read and considered. Every translation is a step towards the next translation, and in that, a step towards the original text. This is what I want for Guimarães Rosa's work. This isn't a definitive translation. Like any translation, it sets nothing in stone, it only hopes to put something in the air.

6) Where can interested parties go to read more GR in English and find out more about him?

The closest thing to a sure bet is a good university library. If you dig on the internet you can find some things. I've been researching, writing, and talking about Guimarães Rosa for three years now via my project *A Missing Book*, and it serves as a resource for English-speakers around the world wanting to know more about Guimarães Rosa. It's another kind of translation.

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João Guimarães Rosa  
Grand Sertão: Veredas