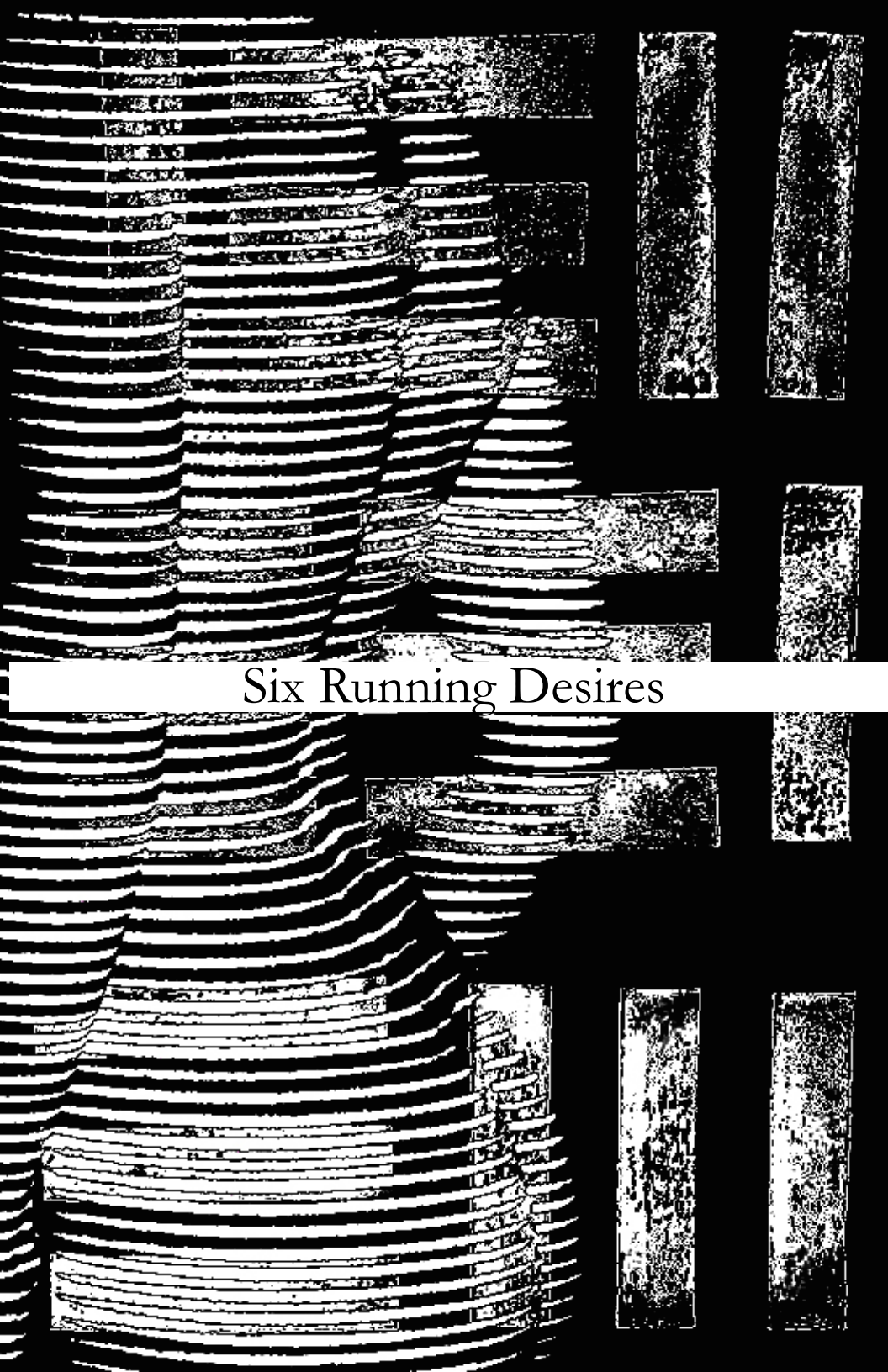


# SIX RUNNING DESIRES

floriano martins







Six Running Desires



Colección Libros  
Imposibles

**FLORIANO MARTINS**

*Six Running Desires*

POETRY

*Translated by*

ALLAN VIDIGAL

**BLACKTOWN HOSPITAL BED 23**

**MIRAGES**

**CHASM JEWELS**

**THE SUN BEHIND**

**A MAZE WITHIN OUR REACH**

**BONES OF THE SPIRIT**

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## BLACKTOWN HOSPITAL BED 23

*Like a drum, the woman's voice kept repeating the word nurse from the bed next to mine. The curtain between us long overcome by the insistence of her summons. Impossible for the nurse not to hear her. Her voice twisting the word so that it took on a shameless bloom of dark meanings and tones. The night multiplied into scenes and voices shattered the dimensions of the Sydney hospital. This is the poem written in the names of all of them.*

**FM**





1.

Dip your hand in the water.

My heart is deep,

And the bed sounds like a god's mallet.

I know the way to go.

The floor, disguised in leaden eyes.

The faraway radio coughing up climate disaster.

Do, please, dip your hand in the water.

Bring back the lakes.

I had no time to review every plan.

I know the way to go, but the maps won't recognize me.

Dip your hand in the fire.

I would sleep in the fire.

Please, cover my eyes with ashes.

Glow glow glow, my heavens would have your pipe.

I have a vast sore, yet my body drags sluggish.

I name the languages in which you speak to me.

My tiredness stirs whole.

My heart is returning.

Dip your hand in the water, the damn water.

I know the way.

I do.

2.

As the heavens fold into four skins,  
climb down the ornaments of repetitive pain:  
the song of exhaustion,  
the boundary of corrosive works,  
without ever having learned how to spell the world of reason.  
Climb down, adding a river with each contraction,  
a home for moans renamed by eagerness.  
I know how to uncast the spell.  
The stranger woman in the fire reading the book yet to be  
written.  
The out-of-control bed in the lips of the night.  
She in supplication: she in tears: she in me.  
I know how to set myself free.  
A dream scheduled at the foot of affliction.  
I would have my prayer beads of sand,  
weeds growing inside abandoned tricks.  
She in four skins unsealing conundrums.  
I kiss the parched land, the charred tree.  
My name is lost in its innards.  
The spell is written down somewhere.  
In its craft of folding me,  
pain won't wait spewing a rough miracle of chasms.

3.

She tells me names I am not supposed to hear,  
perhaps so I'll know where dying begins.  
And translates shredded delirium amid the endless pain.  
Chewing words that are perhaps just one.  
I don't know what to call her.  
The bed slides down a savannah of corpses.  
So many like us that we know not.  
A verb suspended leads others astray.  
A crowd repeats itself in fainting acoustics.  
My flesh comes apart in depth.  
I am the name that uses me to keep me from myself.  
Not for a moment she sleeps so I may pray in silence.  
I need an abyss with which to stifle the pain.  
I breathe scalding sands,  
soil inflamed by deadly chords,  
ribs piled together like knives.  
Meticulous cuts from one lung to the other.  
She tells me deeds I must decipher,  
the likely hour of fear's decline.  
I am not quite sure I understand.  
I don't hear her or know how many.  
The hospital and its corridors extending into me.  
My chest burning a few last trees.

4.

Another pain comes and blends with yours,  
amid the crumbs of darkness  
and tiny blows to the memory of my visions.  
You tirelessly rip apart the belly of the same mantra.  
A fish torn in its agony of sea and sand.  
The world where you make me, the same where you slay me.  
The ring that you gave me, the love that you felt.  
I describe the thirst so you won't return to this quadrant.  
The thorn of salt that runs through my voice:  
white it was, white, your unmistakable nakedness.  
Your nakedness of salt and the chimera's soaring shadows.  
God's plans in bloom from the clock on the wall.  
Only your moaning reflecting on them,  
and my pain deep in love with morphine.

5.

Night broken down into the unlikely version  
of your vascular accidents.

You will petrify if you sleep.

I collect your dissent in my being.

Omens against the words of affliction.

I smear my skin with your artifices.

I fall apart when you breathe.

I would not die in your arms.

Delirium-chewed eyes,

rivers of fever in rushing allegory.

Grunts carved into my face.

Tongue-fires, a single word

expands into a thousand sayings.

No respite in your endless mystery.

I give unto you the method of my despair.

I would not die, not for an instant.

In the privilege of your magnified flame,

The ceaseless sore of pain almighty.

Shadows stumble into moans.

I improve when you fade.

6.

I review your night-dipped shadows.  
Those that caress me from within in the dead hours.  
I know not the scalpel's plans, nor its adages,  
the wick left exposed so that the lurking will bleed out.  
In the name of the heavens, the outcast quarry.  
The land's water in the hungry eyes.  
A glimpse of the riddle of matches,  
the elementary art of shoes left under the bed.  
I look around and review every metaphor.  
I ignore the mosaics we never walked.  
I vomit feces, the blackness of dried-out veins,  
an heirloom of pain on the land.  
The nightmare of your agonizing voice persists,  
ruthless prayer, prayer from torn lips where you doubt  
that I am the one who is dead and a flight of angels  
embraces the devil inside you.  
Battered letter, indefinite reality,  
and you come from under the sheets  
to flood me in abandon and fatigue.  
Mystic atrociousness keeping sleep at bay,  
and shredding glimmers of hope.

7.

Your moans drag around my body.  
They would tell me something and it seems to pain them.  
Like the premonitory course of a dying river,  
bathe my hot land with your inevitable chant.  
The one obscuring your hostile thirst in the loss of your rites.  
Your moans project your flames onto my sex.  
We give it all up for a moment,  
and stand together before almost every delusion.  
I know you toy with me and suffer the parable's disorder.  
You burn my fearful desire's letters  
and trespass on the attributes of a joy that blends with the  
    pain  
skipping from one port to the next of my vigil.  
For a moment we appear alive.  
Your moans give my orgasm instructions.  
Memory is arduous and focuses on your mistakes.  
I catch a glimpse of your wilted flesh,  
and realize that I never knew your name.  
And yet, you make me blow like an incomplete invention.



8.

From across the bed you still listened.  
Who we are who speaks how many we once were.  
Little black angels disfigured by flotsam.  
Variations on a single accumulated agony.  
My life in your hands.  
I saw the first boatful of refugees land.  
Divinity maddened in its minutiae.  
The other face of morphine, the boundary of horror.  
Every word hurts like a flayed doctrine.  
Perplexed pain touches fire and burns your eyes.  
The bed anchored in heavens of afflicted ashes.  
Your plans unmade my letters reviewed.  
We enter each other's awe,  
with the guile of chaos, the malice of chance.  
Perhaps there is nowhere else to go,  
perhaps everything grows dire because we won't give in.

9.

Rivers of fire within the body.

Scripture of blood clawing at the memory.

I went in search of the forgotten chasm in your belly.

A world where everything fades and no balance can be found.

Legs like torches lighting up the crevices of desire.

I burn for you and you whip me like a papyrus of urgency.

The terrifying time for injections.

Tongue burning with unacceptable words.

God reduces me to a torrent of pain.

I lose myself wherever I search for you.

I search my sex for imprecise comfort.

Night dispersed like a soup of moans.

Someone get me out of here.

I will not I cannot die before myself.

10.

Night stretches as it travels my soul.  
In her eyes the inflamed sore,  
the sore if hours with which you riddle me.  
Some voices within, others well without, unspeakably absent.  
The dead speaking fire, pain covered in ashes.  
Sick ventriloquist that won't recognize himself,  
I drink the fable of morphine from your blood.  
This night was made up in the prudishness of your thighs,  
So that you will insist that I am mad and will never come  
back.  
Who in me will say, like an abridged portrait,  
How much I loved you as your repeated yourself?  
Your voice building up virtues.  
I declare myself a finished man without your telling me who  
I was.  
It cannot be, I know, and yet you hold me by a thread.  
Remind me at once so I will not suffer so.

11.

I'm leaving here.

With a thousand spinning flames

writing the fall of your breasts in my hands.

Before your sweet blasphemy can elude death.

I leave you the useless scalpel and the mask of sleeplessness.

Future devised like a harvest of irregular verbs.

Light on your body from every angle of pitch.

Your voices left behind like trees in a mirror.

Books that ask of the length of the life of the author.

I recall the disbelief of the shadows, the trembling flesh, the  
wiring of horrors.

I will stay no more.

I know where you will fit: the bottomless pocket of the spirit,

The blind flooring of this endless corridor.

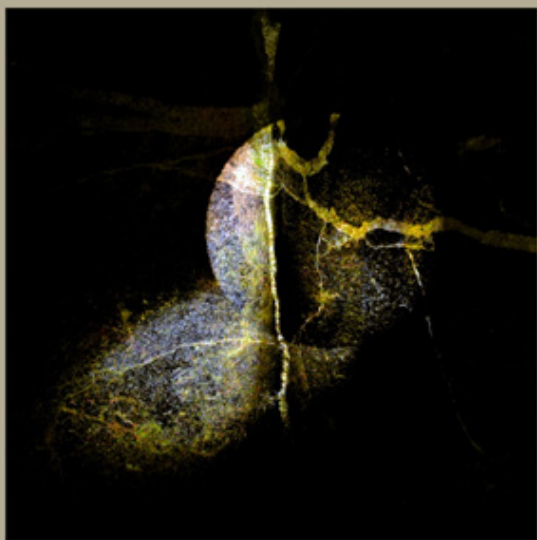
I bid farewell to your famished loneliness,

and to every virtue of delirium and its confiscated incanta-  
tions.

12.

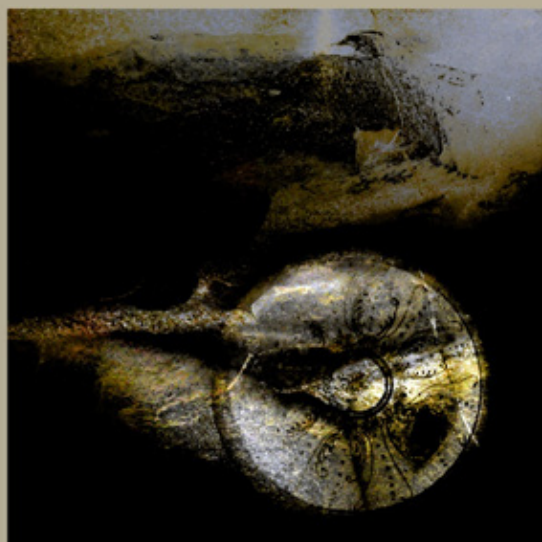
Perhaps this is your heresy's final disguise.  
Your voice feeds me and persists in me,  
like I could never conceive of the enigma of the night it its  
    echo  
or even figure out its ever-lurking versions  
as pain faded in my lung.  
God instructs his vices to give me no quarter.  
Hands wrecked in the dark in your pursuit.  
The hostile body and its consummate tumors.  
I know how much you plague me.  
The shadows moaning in the sky, the broken light in your  
    eyes,  
the tendrils of morphine in your holding pen of chasms.  
Like expired antidote, awe recognizes us not.  
I know the way.  
Water torn with its fishes of poison.  
The bloodstone [I know] tendrils left outside.  
In the name of the father you spell out the verb of scorched  
    earth.  
Your voice lets me conclude nothing.  
I know how you forecast what cannot end.  
The monstrous thirst, the door that will not open.  
We could never have gone so far,  
and we never knew for sure from where we were returning.

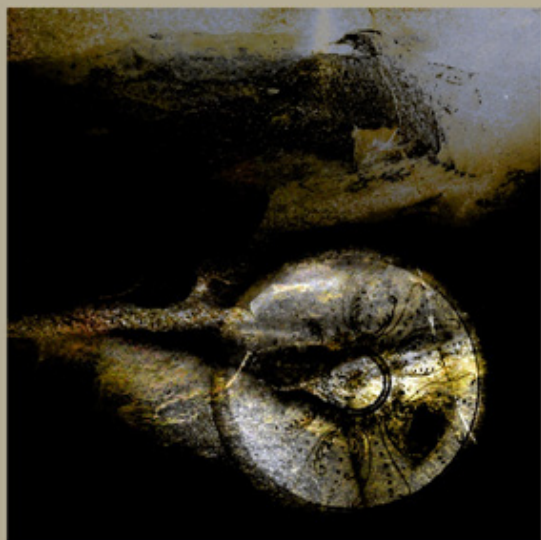
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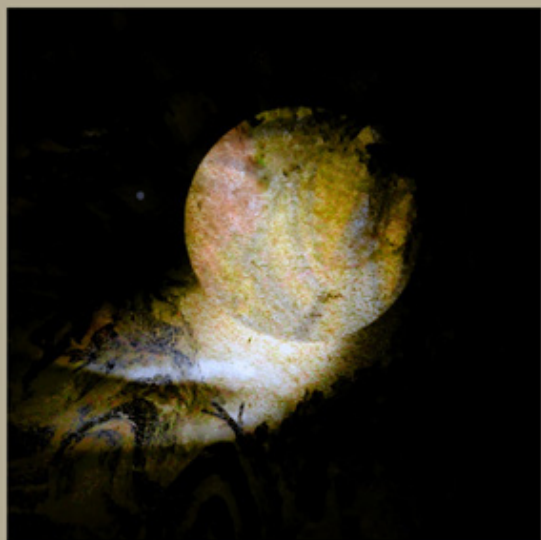


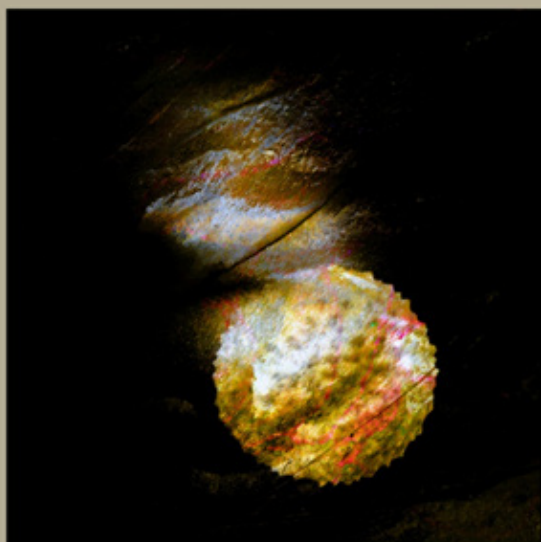


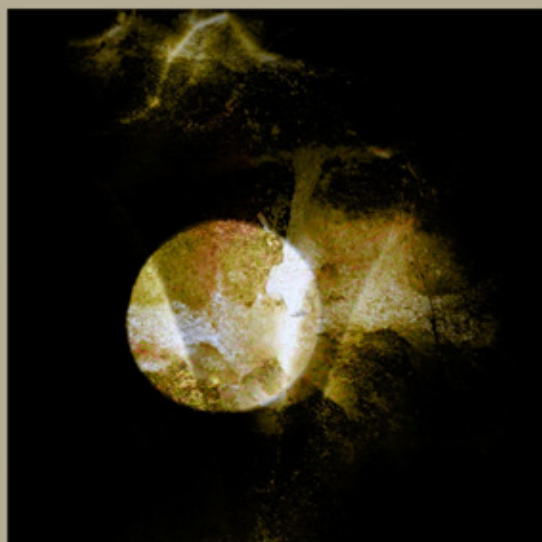












## CHASM JEWELS





I. EPILOGUE

Selma cracked open a luminous smile in the picture. One of those we swear to keep for life. Selma was the perfect woman to last a lifetime. Infinity knew her whims. I no longer recall where I found the picture, but know that the smile was there to stay. Pictures dwell in places sometimes beyond understanding, creep inside nooks of the house where we never lived. Selma knew the house best of all. We laughed at the times when I couldn't find her in our games. She stabbed the smile with her clothes. Embroidered a maze in her eyes. Spelled out the chasm's thorn bush in my face. Selma was an unusual delusion. The house would go nowhere without her.

II. THREE YEARS ON

The scenes once again repeated for an instant. Tiny rips in the bathtub blew the whistle on what was left of memory. Your nakedness in white stone no longer visible in full, a body read in fragments. A final kiss remained on my lips until a few days ago. Without a place to stay, recollections gradually go away. The unpredictable remakes the world of which we dream. And remakes it again before we can learn the name of each thing. It matters not the will of God, nor that I love you a little more. Nothing lingers in your stead. Even if I kill you. You won't remain with me, even in memory. There is nothing darker than time. [Within it our death whispers my name.] The final cuts of the bathtub were almost beyond description. Pain didn't know itself. Neither of us knew what we were doing. I gradually remade my forgetfulness. I no longer know who you are.

III. BEFORE IT WAS WRITTEN

My whole body told me not to stay at home. A sentence like this, picked up like a riddle twisting the morning, may, at least, saturate the day. My whole body hurt as it insisted in awe. Where would I go, anyway, without a reason to leave the house? I tripped on beads of the inexplicable as I felt a line up my spine. The taste of blood precedes the drama of the bloom. When I heard your screams, Eduardo had already disfigured part of my body. My despair doubted that I was even myself. An anguished word repeated, no other influence at play. One way or another, death always surprises. That mine was to be called Eduardo was something that I just could not understand. What the world is missing is not always what one assumes to be a need. I loved Eduardo even as I watched him ripping my flesh apart. Even in death. I don't know for sure if I stopped loving him. The game's on death for once.

IV. THE ILLUSIONIST

I bid human nature farewell. Body and soul blend together in their final throes. The blended roots of what we were and a whole impossible word. I am no longer there when you touch me. At a glimpse you escape my being. A surge of chasms laid bare in my nakedness. My skin's ordeal. A cliff of ecstasy magnified in distant places. So you will covet me where even memory cannot go. And so you will argue that I shaped you as a secret victim. Now you know how I was able to move from one end of your delusion to the other. The predicted view had always been there, like a vision deprived of all belief.

V. THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE

Time stumbles on its own routine. Eduardo retraces the path of his shadows. Tries in vain to return to what he once thought he was. Every new page of his yearning only repeats the lifeless body of Selma. He considers stealing it from memory. Sinking it in a lake that he would then hide from himself. As he looks for a way to get rid of the corpse, his plans are written on female skin. The body is covered in sentences that are like a secret book of last resources. A prescription pad of amazing tricks that resonate like a cesspool of incrimination. A hanging river that torments his every step. Pain multiplied and piling like the ruin of what he know not how to avoid. Eduardo goes from page of page in time begging for a chunk of instability. An element of surprise. A rain capable of mixing up the evidence. But no rain comes. Selma is irretrievably dead. And her body is now Eduardo's greatest fear.

VI. DEVOTION

Your body is made of lips. Wherever I kiss you, I am born again. A secret sowing of flowers, feathers, flights across seasons. A resting place for passwords, from head to the nape of the neck. What I know of you is what I find in every trek around your body. At night I admire your boundaries, how they sate me. I fall asleep amid floating lights, renaming the Arcana of fire on your skin. Thus I love you. The day learns how to read the migrations of your desire. Strange shapes changing looks as you feed them. I know how you make yourself so. How you settle on the horizon of my being, with everything that is left by the wayside. Without you calling me. Everything in me knows where to find you. My lips are your body's fable.

VII. I WAS NEVER READY

Pain does not answer by your name. I looked around the house for our shadow. The body lying there wrapped in a new dilemma. A pasture of shifting hours. I struggle from room to room, scatter utensils, tear up the floorboards. No trace of your shadow. Your death was a bad omen. I face my mistakes gathered around your body. A sense that the shadow will remain in hiding presses on me. I discard your clothes, habits, recollections. I uncouple the furniture from sight. I mute lampshades, faucets, windows. I get the entire house to look for her. I'm frightened that I don't know where to find her. I despair while changing affliction's names. I forget my own name and yet you show yourself not. I no longer see you where you are. I try not to breath to numb the pain, but breath won't let go of me, throbbing like a penalty. Infinite pain in the mortifying silence of your absent shadow. It matters not what I have learned. Pain no longer answers by any name I call it.



VIII. A FEW MINUTES BEFORE

What we subtract from time is our panic in the face of secrets. The fear of being right. When you insinuate yourself and attend my desire, I remove the mask of vigil and erase your trail. Don't listen to me. We're not supposed to be here. A mere brush of your nipples on my lips and the place seems somewhere else to us. Blades shooting out of images that want us each in their own way. Sweat spells out fancies. Saliva lurks over new mysteries. My body inscribed in yours, with your crevices, lures, guiles. A plaza of plots, enjoyment of your harmonies, your scandalous saliences. Memory avenged for every omission. To not touch me again with this unfettered wire. Empty out your being like a temporary wound, the ad-hoc chasm of your climax. Do not hold me back. If you miss a single syllable, spirit will faint. Perspire without complaint. I no longer know which one of us has the last word. A new mistake opens up inside of me.

IX. SCRAPS OF VOID

The house rustles in between the sewer and the chimney. Caught between tow enigmas, the afternoon twists and almost faints. Eduardo no longer finds Selma's name and starts calling her by a word that he forgets with every utterance. The clock does not miss time. Rain does not fall outside. The china in the kitchen does not crash. No noise out of place. The outline in the living-room armchair draws no attention. It watches Eduardo's lividity without malice. Without him realizing it, he wanders around the house exuding restlessness, as if in search of his own consumed image. Entering the living room, he confuses it with the motionless shape. Imagines himself the other without knowing any more. He is misguided before the ghost of his loss. In vain, he resorts to some hidden dexterity, an artifice that will return the bones of time, the mask, a pardon that will let him endure memory. The absence of mirrors in the room rouses him from dementia. And the same dementia is joined by an unburied argument, the legitimate and ruthless sound coming from the kitchen, the knife that mortified Selma diving from the table to the floor. Stunned by the utensil's boom, Eduardo finally understands that he will never be alone.

X. OUTLINE OF A SCENE

We had been arguing for a few moments, unjustifiable tension took us over. From one moment to the next, without holding back, I threw a mug, he ducked, as he screamed my name: Selma, Selma. I started as if from a trance, not upon hearing, but thanks to the sound of the shattering mug. It was a heavy china mug that had been given to me by a friend who had gone on a trip to Ecuador. What felt absurd was that, the following day, I found it in the cupboard, intact, as if nothing had happened to it. How could it have shattered and now be there, whole again? That same night, in the bedroom, getting ready to sleep, we heard a noise from the kitchen, a repetitive boom that sounded like the entire kitchen was collapsing, as if all of our china was breaking. We ran there together. Upon arriving, not a sound, and the intriguing order ruled over the kitchen. What could have happened? How many are we, after all, without even realizing it?

XI. SILENT VERSION

Selma's face was like a sphynx oblivious to its own riddle. As I suppress her life, the same life flutters before me violently. Blood bludgeons its delirious writing all over her flesh. Certain notes are like legerdemain, illegible to me. When I lay her in the bathtub, her legs as if multiply convulsively. Amid the chaos of her blood verbs, I release her from the open torn distressed dress like skin shredded into skittish pleas. The metal of the knife vibrates its stolid melody. It is the only sound there to be heard. Selma rages silently with every incision. Her body overflows startled, but her face retains a ghastly absence. I try to hit it with the blade. But don't manage even a tear in the eyes devoid of any reaction. Not even blood affects it. Selma's face keeps me from completing my testimonial to her death. In her madness put to trial, the face cannot die. Like harm, it will not die. I cannot kill her any more than this.

XII. THE CHASM'S DOORSTEP

Memory of what had happened appeared as unmade as Selma's body. The house departed from the neighborhood, submerged in thick weeds. Night ravaged its insides. No one would expect God to walk in alone. Eduardo fondling the scraps of his beloved's corpse. Absent to the horror that he himself had carved, he gazes into the void as if caught in some happy memory. He seemed to almost smile at a certain point. And, supported in a childlike visage, he touched the intimacy of Selma's remains. He wanted to hear her moaning, begging him not to stop. His hand, however, came up unsated from the blood-branded pelvis. Eduardo sobbed, forlorn. The house opening before his eyes like a canopied slide. The visible world of his damnation. From the bathtub he could see the shape still in the armchair, as if waiting for its cue. Where could Selma's voice be? Who had taken it away from her? Eduardo returned his gaze to the void, caressing a nipple all but ripped from the motionless body's breast.

XIII. EPIGRAPH

*If I see someone killing someone else, and really kill them, it is a terrible, dramatic gesture but one isolated in its own horror. On the other hand, we know full well that art must be exemplary, as a thing that will be another's signification.*

Eugène Ionesco (*Dialogues with Claude Bonnefoy*, 1970)

XIV. LAST WEEK

We pasted nicknames on each other's laughter. We ran around the house looking for different names, funny terms, some in plain whimsy. I called him by the name of every foolishness that settled in my mind. He imitated my voice, repeating enthused. Endless namings later, my tiredness made me sit. Eduardo smelled by bosom with childlike glee. He placed me one scale above in the disorder of his language. I did not pick and choose screams in their sharp delight. Everything in us was automatic, in its explosive landmine of mystery. Even when he opened me up too far, intrigued as if before a mirror, looking for something of himself inside of me. I asked him to avoid pain. He said he knew the way. He unbuttoned my every resistance. Sometimes he kept his fingers in me and changed excesses. It pained me then. Eduardo scratched my moans. His feckless eyes seemed to house no-one. I wanted him back, before the pain could spread. I let his name escape with a few teardrops and saw, then, how he returned to his eyes and unsuspected caresses. And went back to improvising nicknames on my face. Nothing in Eduardo made sense for long.

XV. CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR

The furniture wandered around the house. Some utensils searched the memory of corners, drawers, sewers. Ever move suggested close ties with the dire scene. As if the house was somehow an accessory to the crime. Something that sensed Eduardo's senselessness. Something that drained memory to the point that no sign remained of motive. A bunch of gestures now almost entirely disfigured. Selma reacted somewhat discouraged against the attacks. As if death was part of her struggle. Dying in Eduardo's hands without too much fuss. Floating with him into the core of alienation. But something was at odds with the plan's mechanics. The house appeared to house suspicious hesitation. The false opinion of the silverware, some dissent from the furniture, the worn out doctrine of pipes. The sudden appearance of an out-of-place principle. The house bleeding out like someone who has lost themselves. Selma and Eduardo like specters assimilated by the itinerary of debris. The house, ashen-faced before the mischarted route. A stain in the supply of signs. Clearly, something had gone awry.



XVI. SELMA AMID THE CLOUDS

I awoke, night scattered all over the bed. Next to me, Eduardo in the ever restless beat of his sleep. We always slept naked. His nakedness, however, was sea in turmoil. Mine was like a bath of clouds. So calm I was that I sometimes took leave from myself without realizing it. One night I saw myself still in bed as I came back from the kitchen. I saw myself lying there weeding out dreams. And I touched myself, leaning against the door, to see which of the two I was. Eduardo set his hand to slide across my belly. He sought a moisture lost in my sleep. How sweetly he found me where I no longer fully corresponded. As if taunting a swarm of tenderness, he spread my legs and set himself to penetrate me. I drew closer with all that I felt inside of me and nearby. The bedroom mirror did not reflect me above Eduardo's body. It became impossible to tell who we were. How many was I in the nights when I had no thirst? How many of me that I now see do not recognize me? Where am I, after all? I awaken Eduardo so he will tell me what he knows.

XVII. NO LETTER FOUND

A shape devotes itself to addressing the house's invisible arguments. Its disguise attracts shadows from every room. Mirrors communicate with one another like syllables of wind renaming windows through the night. Selma's body violates the guile of beauty. It confuses mazes as it describes their shards. Eduardo feeds on a shapeless pain that does not let him evade his burden. The key lies in circles and curves, in the rings that Selma scattered around the house, hidden like invisible evidence of what had transpired. She desired him with all of her innocence in the winding clues, in her moist desire-besieged piano. He wanted her for another illegitimate dwelling. The shape continued to render the scene's details. The house yearned to remake itself entire, but a corpse continues to keep it from its tricks. Selma's body and its shredded riddle. Or Eduardo's body, stumbling on its own curse. Both can no longer overcome.

XVIII. ONE MORE DAY

Memory takes it upon itself to make sure that we are still there. AS it grows dark I try to retain my name, at least until I find out how to dispose of Selma's remains. Darkness is too dirty and I'm not sure how to traverse it. I busy myself with its minute vertigoes, occasional disasters, noises tearing up the scene's eardrums. It cannot be that the night is so because of our carelessness alone. All of this filth that we carry inside. How to ruin this while making believe there is a little normalcy in our lives?

## THE SUN BEHIND





















## A MAZE WITHIN OUR REACH

*If history is alive, it will certainly seek out interpretation. It is  
the same with the interpretation of reality.*

JORGE LUÍS BORGES

*I believe in words that can create their own circumstances.*



I.

Upon setting fire to my body for the first time,  
a moon was summoned to contain its mishaps.

A moon far too big to fit in a single night.

A small vault of motives left its trail wherever it went.

An animal vault crawling amid the deaths springing from a  
burning body.

I bled fire for an entire month.

In the morning of my awakening nothing in my body remem-  
bered what had happened.

The bed was intact like unused fatigues.

My instincts began to orchestrate another fire.

No matter how many times they free me from myself.

I will return to eating my flesh and drinking my spirit.



II.

The shadows hear the footsteps of our yearnings.

None of them knows the way back home.

Wherever we look they will always be the same,

the husking of anticipated shapes,

the feeding of chance,

dilapidated aphorisms.

The shadows burn the tearful profiles of vision from within,

Trees posing where the bedroom emulates a jungle.

What do we assume of this decoy of horizons?

The shadows search underneath each body.

We never go beyond our clothesline of darkness.

We miswait for the light.

It is cold in the bones of the storm,

the starving shell of dreams.

The shadows admit to the nights that they lost.

It is almost day.

We let ourselves be touched by the spelling of the myth.

III.

One of them chewed its panic-stricken paradoxes.

It could no longer tell between skull and womb the secret  
house of its tremors.

The flayed day. The hemorrhaging night.

Disgraceful silence electrocuting its delirious tides.

Silent movie of anguished excavations.

One of them turned its bedsheets into a cabin and hid the  
miracle of discharges deep inside.

Still, the paradoxes reproduced with past injuries.

The body in disarray. The soul aflame.

Inarticulate evidence afraid of being waylaid.

Pitch at the heart of light.

Uncertain history of what only one of them would dare fore-  
tell.

The sealed door.

The useless rite.

IV.

We are a reserve of lives corrupted.

A shed of rust-fed instincts.

If one of us was once Cibele, no-one ever know.

Hermínia, Joana, Dalva — we all come hooded.

The blind nights trade in our desires like an eager jungle of  
milky branches and edges.

Wish isolation might correct any vertigo.

Idleness appeals to a court of precarious bones.

Everything hurts. The window and the dusty horizon. The  
orderly and his orgy-like hands. The dirty mortar that  
houses our hell. Everything.

Not a hunger. Not a thirst.

Just a river of wounded scars.

And an out-of-control syllable that no-one can hear anymore.

V.

A repetitive trespass.

A bunch of riddles.

Leafy greens of the deepest hid desire.

The other one glued her bed to the window as if reflecting the  
mirror of all she sees.

Reversal of anesthetized shapes.

An out-of-order teardrop.

We saw her always with her back to everyone, portraying the  
lies she told herself,

while watering dreams and savoring nausea.

She, fully unique amid her myths.

The birdsong of stigmas cleaving off nights.

A caravan of whippings that banished the window from the  
reach of her sight.

She then repeated herself like an implausible lie,

a farce of a look-alike,

a non-existing past.

VI.

Five beds. An illusion-tainted window.

The mockery of an invisible door through which came food  
and other forms of torture.

The austere prophecy of our barrenness.

The shearing of so many by the stubborn,  
nakedness sprinkled with fragile spasms.

Water spat out of a showerhead hanging from the mirror in  
the center of the room.

Displeasures of light. Frenzy of alienated shadows.

One of us spinning a muted scream.

We seemed to float in the most convincing void.

Submissive like a devout pendulum.

Spectral like a sudden implosion.

Reams of sweat printing faces onto threadbare towels.

The full signature of nothingness.

Our shipwrecked heritage and the suspicion of a blow that  
traverses us from one body to the next.

VII.

— *Evil imitates its victims,*

the older one seemed to repeat.

Her phrases roamed like vigilante sentences around the sprawling room.

The walls were deaf like the limp nurse that ran over the mechanics of the days.

Each of us imitated the injuries of the chasm into which we were cast.

The chasm and its separate routes translating the evil that obscures what we are.

Repeating its manifold sentence she barely separated one step from the next,

on her way to the center of the room where the pool of piss of the unyielding rite built up.

And in it she almost melted,

Except for the urgency of going on repeating the insatiable maxim.

— *Evil imitates its victims,*

no matter how many times we only believed in what exists.

VIII.

I, too, have no name.

Realizing this, I summoned the fire to bathe my body a second time.

My faults were inflamed,  
the ill-famed shape like a theater in ruins.

I no longer knew who to play.

My traits those of a perjured agony.

Nights laughed at days.

The teardrops reversed my ordeals.

I recall having dreamed of a name all my own.

But there, in the sarcophagus room, I could not tell a glimpse  
from fever,

skull shards from womb spasms.

I am the vigilante beast of paradox.

The rapids of misguided convulsions.

I have no name.

Not even fire recognizes me.

IX.

We are one.

But are we perchance all that we see in one another?

Perhaps we should review our involuntary gestures, but cannot foretell which of them will be repeated.

In how many does the enigma come to light?

Inquiring about the visage of the supper on its tray,  
into how many do we split like a harvest unpredictable?

We are an oracle's drum, like a simulated addiction to remission.

But what do we expect to see emerge at any price?

What do we rid ourselves of when we forget who we are?

A diet of sigils, capsules of silence, the womb-tomb of our confessions — who do we cease to be when one of us throws up a double page of her existence?

Our bodies spell out the hemorrhage of time.

Not even the shadows know how long we have been here.

Or if one day we will return to being stand-ins in our ravaged intimacy.

Until then, we reflect adrift like an impossible cause,

like husks unaware of seduction and hazard,

like a delirious whip at which we stick out our tongues before sleep.





## BONES OF THE SPIRIT



agonyfa

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calbina

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR





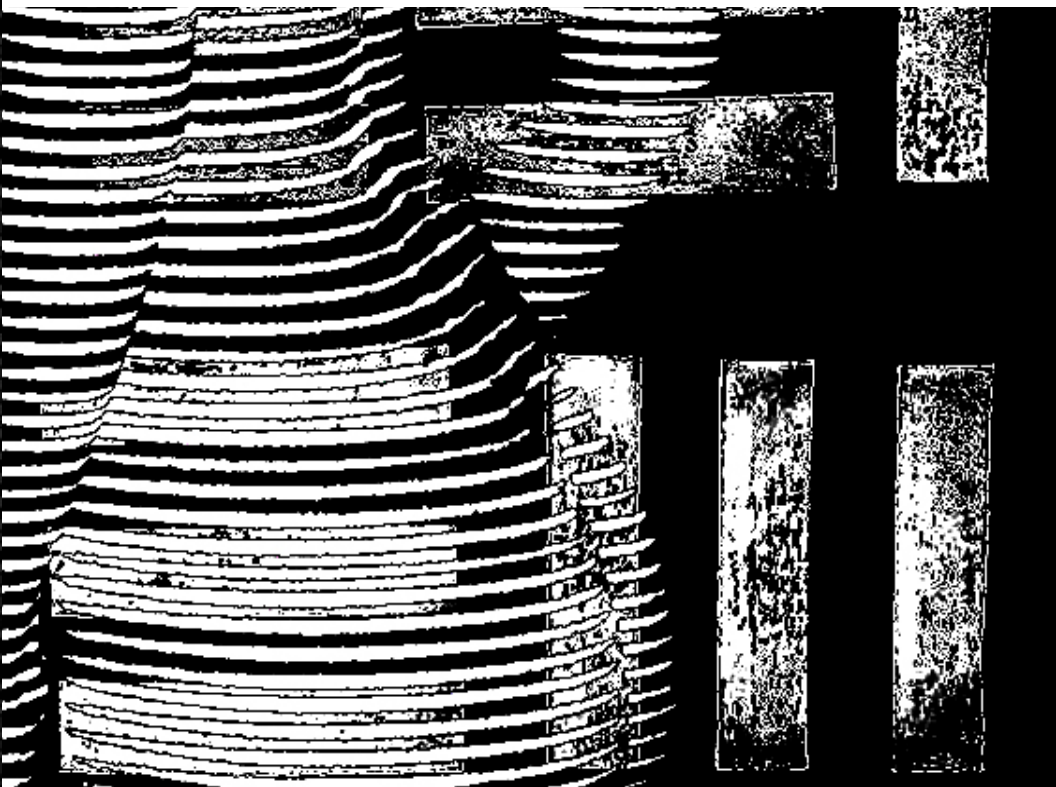


FLORIANO MARTINS (Brazil, 1957). Poet, publisher, essayist, visual artist and translator. Founded Web-based critical review *Agulha Revista de Cultura* in 1999. Coordinated (2005-2010) the “Ponte Velha” collection of Portuguese authors by publishers Escrituras Editora (São Paulo). Curator of the Ceará State International Book Biennial (Brazil, 2008) and jury member of the Casa das Américas Prize (Cuba, 2009), National Poetry Contest (Venezuela, 2010) and Annual Award of the National Library Foundation (Brazil, 2015). Guest lecturer of the University of Cincinnati (Ohio, United States, 2010). Translated works by Federico García Lorca, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Vicente Huidobro, Hans Arp, Alfonso Peña, Juan Calzadilla, Enrique Molina, Jorge Luis Borges, Aldo Pellegrini and Pablo Antonio Cuadra.

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