

Selected scenes from
*O imponderável Bento contra
o crioulo voador* (1988)
by Joaquim Pedro de
Andrade

Translated by James Langan

Translator's Preface

Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, a leading figure of Brazil's 20th-century Cinema Novo movement, wrote the screenplay *O imponderável Bento contra o crioulo voador* (The imponderous Bento versus the Flying *Crioulo*) between 1986 and 1988. Cinema Novo grew in Brazil out of the Italian neorealist movement and the French New Wave. The director Glauber Rocha, one of the movement's forefathers and Andrade's contemporary, crafted the mantra "a camera in hand and an idea in mind" to emphasize the desire for a national cinematic tradition that could reflect the material reality of life in Latin America through low-budget, independent productions with amateur actors. Rocha would famously term the stripped-down nature of Cinema Novo films an "aesthetics of hunger"—scarcity of capital and the peripheral position created by such deprivation become their own kind of semiotic and aesthetic property.

The motifs of hunger and the desire to consume foreign modes of cultural production took center stage in the nascent Brazilian modernist movement of the 1920s. Poet Osvaldo de Andrade's oft-cited 1928 "Cannibalist Manifesto" puts it quite bluntly: "Cannibalism alone unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically." Cannibalization became a potent metaphor for writers and filmmakers in 20th-century Brazil, and the "metabolizing" tendencies—the push to digest and repurpose the scraps of Indigenous, African, and European influences in Brazilian culture—of the *modernistas* gave way to the *cinemanovistas*' strategy of engaging filmic production as a form of social criticism.¹ Critics of Andrade have noted that in comparison to other Cinema Novo figures, Andrade was particularly drawn to this first wave of anthropophagic *modernismo*; he counted the poems of Manuel Bandeira and the prose of Mário de Andrade among his greatest influences.

¹ Kenneth David Jackson's monograph *Cannibal Angels* (Peter Lang, 2021) is one recent examination of how the concept of anthropophagy remains essential to understanding how Brazilian (and Latin American) modernism and subsequent movements figured themselves within a tradition of digestion, hybridity, and transgression.

Bento, in many ways, picks up where Andrade's notable past works leave off, dialoguing with and expanding upon *cinemano-vista* preoccupations with authoritarianism, the aesthetic legacies of Brazilian *modernismo*, and the issue of depicting Brazil as a harmonious racial and sexual democracy. The entirety of the text must first be understood as a focused critique of the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil from 1964 through the 1980s. Despite his upper-middle-class standing, the protagonist of the text, Bento, is identified early on by Larroque, a highly ranked commander in the Brazilian armed forces, as an enemy of the sitting military dictatorship. His love interest throughout the story is Taís, a social-climbing journalist at the dictatorship-friendly *Correio de Brasília*. The majority of the screenplay takes place in Brasília; the ubiquity of military and police personnel in the capital's streets imbue the text's landscape with a latent paranoia.

At the beginning of the text, Bento miraculously survives a plane crash in the Chapada dos Guimarães, a formation of cliffs in the tropical savanna of Mato Grosso, and subsequently joins a cast of mythical hermits in the forest. Bento's hallucinatory experiences in the forest—which culminate in his first experience of flying—carry with them traces of Andrade's most famous work, the 1969 adaptation of Mário de Andrade's 1928 modernist epic *Macunaíma*. Halfway through the screenplay, Bento develops the mystifying ability to fly, attracting attention from ogling women in Brasília and, less fortunately, the repressive government. A team of journalists at the *Correio* hatch a plan to topple Bento that includes plucking a *crioulo*, or Afro-Brazilian man, off the street, dressing him in a Superman costume, and staging a sighting of him flying above a marsh outside the city limits. The ridiculous premise of this "Flying *Crioulo*," to be sure, follows a long legacy in Brazilian 20th-century cinema of *chanchada*, a satirical, burlesque genre of films.

The *crioulo* in question, a working-class man named Tição, does not say much throughout the text and remains on the periphery. He's treated with disdain by the *Correio* journalists who depend on him for their sensationalist story. Even Bento, in the final scene of the screenplay, refers to him by the word "neguinho," an antiquated diminutive term to refer to an Afro-Brazilian individual.

Those who have viewed Andrade's *Guerra conjugal* (1974) or *Os inconfidentes* (1972) may be able to identify how the body continues to be represented here as a site of blasphemous and erotic potential. In a 1988 interview with the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, Andrade explained that while writing *Bento* he was drawn to thinking about how his own thoughts on Brazil's Catholic cultural heritage influenced his screenwriting strategy: "Excessive sin puts the individual in touch with holiness. This last film I made was about holiness and flesh, things that I find funny. Because chastity is a delusional invention of the spirit to deny one's own body."² Though we may overlook it due to its widespread popularity as a given name for men in the Portuguese-speaking world, the word "bento," it should be noted, means sacred or blessed. Indeed, Bento's unusual flying abilities instantly earn him a sort of "saintly" status among the upper class in Brasília. Some characters interpret his levitating abilities as an escape from the greed and violence that pervade the streets of Brasília under a dictatorship. Others perceive Bento to be a sort of heretical figure, who dares to fly into the sacred skies against the wishes of God. What is particularly striking here is an aesthetic hierarchization akin perhaps to Pasolini's "heretical" aesthetics: High-brow cannibalizes low-brow; the profane contaminates the sacred.

The sky in *Bento* predictably features not only as a site of potential flight from problems on land but also as further proof of the ubiquity of a repressive regime and its sophisticated structures of surveillance. The impossibility of escape is perhaps most explicitly alluded to by the *Comandante* Larroque, who declares in the antepenultimate scene: "What happens in the air here in Brasília is under my jurisdiction!"³ The press, Andrade insists, is essential in reinforcing the discursive and physical domination of the authoritarian regime. Taís' job as a journalist complicates her relationship with the increasingly iconoclast Bento. In one conversation with Larroque, for example, she explains: "Larroque, newspapers need to sell,

² From an interview with Ute Hermanns, conducted in 1988, and published by *Folha* on April 21, 1990 (my translation).

³ Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, *O imponderável Bento contra o crioulo voador* (Editora Todavia, 2018), 78.

and a lot, if you want to make up people's minds. Isn't that what you guys want? To make every poor person an anticommunist?"⁴

In lieu of technical jargon and didactic references to camera movement, Andrade takes an unconventionally literary approach to this screenplay, dedicating large sections of the text to realist descriptions of natural landscapes and tender scenes between characters. Carlos Augusto Calil offers in his note at the end of the 2018 edition of *Bento* that Andrade took great inspiration from the Swiss poet Blaise Cendrars' fascination with Brazilian skies and Brazilian modernism's general metabolizing tendencies in his development of the script. Moreover, in the late 1980s, Andrade was simultaneously working on a never-completed film adaptation of Gilberto Freyre's seminal text, *Casa-Grande e Senzala* (*The Masters and the Slaves*, 1933), which certainly lent itself to the screenplay's commentary on the socioeconomic and racial divisions that define Brazilian social relations.

In 1988, Andrade passed away from lung cancer in his home in Rio de Janeiro. *Bento*, having been completed just months before, would never see the silver screen. The script was published by Marco Zero, a small press in São Paulo, in 1990; 28 years later, *Todavia* would issue a second edition. In that sense, any translation of *Bento* must take this very unfinishedness to heart. My translation begins immediately after the plane crash that leaves Bento stranded in the Chapada das Guimaraes, some 1,000 kilometers from his home in Brasília. The collection of ensuing scenes that I have translated will touch upon several of the thematic and aesthetic concerns described above, such as the role of the press in preserving the dictatorship's power, contact with a "mythical" forest and its inhabitants, the racial divisions essential to the founding of modern Brazil, and a particular depiction of sexual licentiousness and libidinal excess for which Andrade was well known.

Though Andrade's *Bento* was never realized into a feature-length film, the haunting memory of dictatorship-era repression that it interrogates continues to loom over Brazil today. In this text, then, readers should take note of how Andrade, for whom Brazil's eclectic literary tradition served as a central inspiration, asserts a poetics of hallucination and haunting that presents new opportunities to reshape understandings of the post-dictatorship fallout in Brazil.

⁴ Andrade, *O imponderável Bento*, 72.

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24. The search commences.

A military helicopter prepares to take off. Unrest at the Air Base. Soldiers in field uniforms from the search-and-rescue service hastily hop on board. Commander Larroque appears, wearing Ray-Ban glasses and off-duty sportswear. Tense and extremely irritated, he boards and takes a seat at the front next to the pilot. He harshly gives out orders. The door closes and the helicopter takes off with Larroque still fastening his seat belt.

25. Bento climbs the face of the rock.

Reaching the end of the road, Bento comes across an immense rock face. He stops for a moment and looks up without any expression. He then begins to obstinately climb the steep slope. He clings to the vegetation and to tumbling rocks. He soils and scratches himself up, but he never stops climbing.

26. Plane located.

The rescue helicopter approaches the damaged plane reduced to wreckage scattered around a burned, still smoking crater. The helicopter begins to descend, flying in circles. Inside the aircraft, Larroque scans the ground beneath him. He mutters to himself and then to the pilot.

LARROQUE: Son of a bitch. Alright. Let's descend.

The helicopter lands. The specialized personnel jump out with their equipment and begin to move frantically amid the wreckage. Larroque remains at a distance. He looks for a while, then turns his back on the scene and lights a cigarette. The chief officer of the rescue team approaches him.

LARROQUE: So. . . ?

OFFICER: We've only found one body, commander. Major Mauro's. Captain Bento must have jumped out with a parachute.

LARROQUE: This Bento-was-in-the-plane business. . . is it true?

OFFICER: Yes, sir. They boarded together and both spoke with the control tower.

LARROQUE: Go give another look and scan the area.

27. Bento arrives at the Chapada dos Guimarães.

Torn up, dirty, covered in scratches, and with blood stains on his overalls, Bento, having just climbed the wall, happens across a fantastic landscape dominated by surprisingly and capriciously eroded formations. Towers, columns, arches, totems, shapes that resemble pre-Columbian sculptures erect themselves from the ground up. The scrubby, almost desert-like vegetation of the *cer-rado* is softened here and there by a few rare, flowering yellow ipe trees. Pulled in by the sound of running water, Bento sets out walking.

28. Bento's bath.

Bordering a swampy land proliferated by insects, Bento arrives at the purest of waters. A crystal-clear stream, a waterfall, and a natural well lined with pebbles invite the chance to swim. Just as he is, dressed in his flight suit and already equipped for survival in the jungle, Bento dunks his head in the frigid water. He washes himself and quenches his thirst at once. Finally satiated, he sheds his wet clothes and equipment and abandons them on a rock. Completely naked, he sets out walking once again.

29. Meeting with Macário.

Continuing through the fantastic landscape of the Chapada dos Guimarães, Bento encounters the hirsute, peculiar figure of Macário, who stands absolutely still. Bento observes him. Macário has, in fact, been standing there, without moving, for several days. He doesn't seem to be aware of Bento's presence or any other outside element. Suddenly, Macário slaps himself violently on the shoulder. Horrified by this mechanical gesture, and foreseeing the tragedy, Macário examines the bloody mosquito that he has crushed with the palm of his hand. With a loud scream, he flees towards the swamp where the insects proliferate.

30. *Macário resigns himself to the mosquitoes.*

Arriving at the swamp, Macário, in a great hurry and with much distress, seeks to make amends for the cruel act he committed and slides into the mud until the stagnant water reaches his neck. Motionless once again, with tears streaming from his blocked eyes, he lets the mosquitoes, in a cloud that surrounds his head like a halo, help themselves to his blood.

31. *Isidoro's supper.*

Dusk in the Chapada dos Guimarães.

Bento remains where he was when Macário left. Near Bento, a large stone slithers across the ground. From the hole that the stone had covered emerges Isidoro. Without realizing Bento's presence, Isidoro prepares to have dinner. He places a *buriti* leaf on the stone to serve as a plate. On it, his meal: half a dozen seeds, two small dried and withered fruits, a root. On the floor, next to the stone serving as a table, Isidoro places a small clay jug with a crushed tin mug on top.

He remains kneeling for some time, contemplating the set table. Commotion sets over his face until he bursts into convulsive tears. Isidoro covers his face with his hands, as if concentrated there, before him and for him, were the very goodness of the Lord.

As quickly as he has started, he has now stopped crying. He takes the first grain without wiping his tears away. In a premonition, he feels the presence of Bento. He turns his face and stares at him fixedly for a while, making up his mind. He takes the food and water and approaches Bento, placing everything on the floor in front of him and carefully separating the meal in half. After a slight hesitation, he places the root in Bento's portion. He thinks better of it and leaves everything to Bento. He enters the hole and covers himself with the stone.

Bento squats and takes a sip of water. He lies down with his head on a rock. Night falls. Bento starts to doze off; soon, he opens his eyes back up. A distant little song reaches his ears. Distant voices mix with it, too, like the conversation of two radio amateurs. Propping himself up on his elbow, Bento looks around and sees nothing. The sounds disappear, replaced by childish giggles. A small group of half-naked children watches him from afar. Bento goes back to bed.

The giggles are menacing; we can hear a stampede of people running after each other. Screaming, whipping noises. Suddenly, the children run away. . .

Bento is exhausted. He shuts his eyes and finally falls asleep.

32. *Bento is captured.*

Day breaks in the Chapada.

Bento is still sleeping, but the hermits are already busy at work. One of them passes by, dragging a long bundle of *buriti* leaves. Others concentrate on solitary and silent prayers, kneeling on stones or prostrating with their faces facing the ground. Two others pass by on a donkey, which they ride together, bareback. They head towards the waters, each carrying an empty clay pitcher. Some hermits sit in isolation, braiding baskets of straw or *buriti* fiber. One moves with his back bent under the weight of a large stone he carries on his shoulder. Atop a tall, thin needle rock, a stylite hermit gazes motionlessly at the horizon. The noise of an approaching helicopter grows—the same military helicopter that recovered Mauro's body the day before. The helicopter is soon directly above them and flies at a low altitude. It is packed with soldiers in uniform, but this time, Larroque is not among them.

Awakening to the noise and to the wind, Bento makes a desperate escape. The helicopter lands amid clouds of dust. Several soldiers give chase after Bento. They run around swearing, knocking things down every which way. Bewildered, the hermits do not move.

Amid the commotion, an officer fires shots into the air. One of the bullets whistles past the hermit, who remains unperturbed. Another bullet knocks him down.

Penetrating into the swamp where Macário is, Bento is finally caught in front of the holy man who remains impassive, his face swollen and completely deformed by various insect bites. Overpowered and now handcuffed, Bento fiercely resists but is dragged away by his captors.

35. *Taís searches for Bento in the hospital.*

Taís, standing in the entryway to the hospital, sees Bento appear. She walks towards him. Bento is in everyday clothing, with nothing in his

hands. He tenses up even more upon seeing Taís approach him. Taís kisses his cheek, grabs him by the arm, and drags him to Mauro’s car (which she has been borrowing). Taís opens the door; Bento takes a seat without saying a word. Taís grabs the steering wheel and sets off. They remain in silence for quite some time as they pull away from the hospital.

TAÍS: Did they mistreat you?

Bento doesn’t respond.

TAÍS: I know they tortured you. Larroque told me.

Bento stays silent, staring straight ahead.

TAÍS: Bento, are you no longer fond of me?

Bento continues to not speak. A beat—he looks at Taís. It takes him a second to make sense of what he’s feeling. He redirects his gaze straight ahead on the road.

BENTO: Where are you going?

TAÍS: I don’t know. I wanted to stay with you for a bit. May I?

BENTO: Take me home.

Taís, her face tensed up, changes direction.

TAÍS: You don’t want to speak to me?

Bento doesn’t respond.

TAÍS: Bento, my life has changed. The paper is being completely redesigned. They’ll give me the social column, and they’ll pay me better. I’m leaving that apartment. I haven’t gone back. I’m living in a hotel, Bento, but I want to live with you. I love you. I want to be with you, Bento, I can’t bear not seeing you. These days have been such an ordeal. My only defense was thinking of you. The only thing I’ve truly done is wait for you. I waited for you so much that I couldn’t think of anything else! I don’t want to think about anything else but you. If you want, I’ll leave the paper, I’ll drop everything. The only thing I want is to be with you. We can get out of here and go to a place where I can take care of you, spend the whole day and night with you. Let’s go? I can turn the car around and we can go now, just like that, without taking anything. Stay together for a week, away from everything. Let’s go?

BENTO: No. I want to be alone. Leave me at home.

[. . .]

36. *Bento returns to the Chapada.*

Dressed in the same clothes he left the hospital in, but already filthy, Bento finds himself at the hermits' settlement. He goes to Isidoro's hole, only recognizable by the stone that serves as its covering. Bento hesitates. He knocks on the stone with his fingers. He looks around. He takes a small stone and gently hits Isidoro's covering with it. Since nothing happens, he strikes it again, with more force. The rock slides over laterally, pushed over by the holy man who emerges from the hole in a terrible mood. Standing in the hole, Isidoro is only visible from the chest up.

BENTO: Can I stay with you all?

Isidoro looks at Bento without responding. He eventually climbs out of the hole, refusing the help that Bento offers him. He begins walking with decided, determined steps. Bento remains where he has been, all the more perplexed. At a certain distance, Isidoro stops walking. He turns to Bento and, realizing that he has not been following him, gestures with his head for him to follow. Isidoro resumes walking with determination, now followed by Bento at a respectful distance. Bento is full of hope. On the way, the two come across the donkey, tied to a tree, this time without riders on its back.

41. *Taís' new office party.*

There is great unrest in Taís' new office, which is set to be inaugurated. [. . .]

The party is an event of mundanity. Overdressed women are excited by the champagne, and soon they are fighting over machines and typists in a festive uproar. . . OB, the editor-in-chief of the *Correio*, watches everything with a certain irritation.

In a bathroom full of beautiful women and a handful of gay men, someone lays out several rows of blow that are immediately consumed, while another fills champagne glasses with a giant bottle. Taís enters the bathroom and, despite her worries about the proximity of the authorities present, still snorts her line. The conversation, now very excited, turns to Bento. They all think that he's cute; they make fun of Taís' qualms about getting close to him.

Taís explains that she learned from the commander that Bento returned to the company of some crazy hermits and now lives in isolation with them, far from Brasília. The women perk up; they want to know everything. A young lady—a particularly dreamy one—recalls that “holy” men have an amazing erotic capacity when they are unable to resist the temptation of the flesh.

The idea, therefore, is to go there. To try these men, to test them.

48. *Sinners in the sky.*

Incubi and *succubi*, delicious and beautiful women among whom are Taís and her new friends, young homosexual boys, all dressed either in clothes as elegant as they are provocative or completely naked, descend from a luxurious tourist bus parked in the desert of the *cerrado*.

Chatting animatedly—and laughing a good deal—the group braves the red, arid land on foot, heading towards the stronghold of the saints. Between makeup checks, glances in pocket mirrors and beauty bags, they exchange comments about the saints they intend to seduce.

Macarius, Serapião, Isidoro, Bento himself, Malaquias, the horny old man—all are objects of greed and dispute in which their most desirable attributes are extolled.

49. *Invasion of the sky.*

Everyone prepares themselves: Isidoro retreats into his hole, Macário dives into his swamp, and so on. Bento trembles with fear. He takes a whip and begins to flagellate himself.

Outside: noises, shouting, running.

Suddenly, Bento has a terrible vision. On the floor of his tiny cell is the torso of a naked body with stupendously white flesh. The torso has no head and only the very beginning of arms or legs. But even so, she can open her legs and her pussy, showing her rose-colored insides.

TALKING PUSSY: Bento, women like affection. Bring your mouth closer to me, Bento. . . Come.

Horrified, Bento lets out a great scream. He opens the barricaded door of his cell, takes the female torso and sweeps it away. In his right hand, a little bit of goo. Bento leaves in a panic, searching for a place to wash his hands.

A naked woman zooms by, running a 200-meter hurdle race.

Another woman pisses on a row of wildflowers and laughs madly.

Another pedals by on a bicycle in pursuit of a saint fleeing in panic. Close-up shot of her pussy on the seat of the bicycle.

A guillotined head rolls across the floor, cursing.

HEAD: I was such a fool! I stopped fucking when I was 45!

An unnamed character flashes their ass to the camera.

A woman drags a holy monk by his cock as he wails.

MONK: No, for the love of Christ, no!

Various women crowd over a monk, tearing apart his clothes and pulling out his beard.

A naked woman blows air with a bellows on a saint's ass. Another woman sneaks a look under a monk's habit.

A saint runs past with a naked woman on his back.

Another saint hides under a bridge where women and devils run past.

55. *First levitation.*

Bento now takes the opposite route to the one that first took him to the Chapada dos Guimarães.

Successive shots of Bento strolling through various places on his way to Brasília, with the light also changing as this day of travel progresses.

At dusk, still approaching the distinct cityscape of Brasília, Bento abandons his staff, climbs three invisible steps into the air, and begins to move in a uniform rectilinear translation, half a meter above the ground and at a moderate speed. The camera follows him laterally.

56. *Bento in Taís' apartment building.*

Still levitating, Bento takes Taís' business card from his pocket, confirms the address, and climbs the steps that lead to her apartment building. He levitates up the stairs, keeping the distance of his feet

constant in relation to a line that passes through the tops of the steps.

The doorman, perplexed, sees Bento levitating past him and entering the elevator. The door starts to close. The camera, inside the elevator, focuses on Bento's feet that remain unsupported in the air. We witness the door finish closing; the elevator rises, reaches Bento's feet, and transports him in a state of non-levitation.

64. *In search of the crioulo.*

OB, Armandão, and Grisalha from the *Correio* roam around Gama, Ceilândia, or some other satellite city of Brasília in a dilapidated car driven by Armandão. He drives with complete disregard for the safety of pedestrians. Grisalha sits in the back, the other two in front.

ARMANDÃO: I don't know where this *crioulo* went! He's always here. I think he's perfect for what you want.

OB: Hmm, we'll see. He's gotta be a real man of the people. The opposite of that Bento, a cocky, bourgeois, scumbag elitist. A saint who only levitates in private and won't even give interviews. The public needs a miracle and this guy's locked up in an apartment. With a woman, no less! With a good *crioulo* I can solve this.

GRISALHA: But will the *crioulo* even fly, boss?

OB: Grisalha, how many times a month do you brush those teeth of yours? Jesus, man, your breath stinks. Do you have a toothbrush on you?

GRISALHA: It fell in the toilet earlier.

OB (*pulling out cash from his pocket*): Here. Buy a toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, whatever. One more thing: stay back. The minimum distance for you to talk to me is now one meter. And of course the *crioulo* won't fly. We'll throw him in the air or throw him out the window and photograph him. The whole idea is making it *look* like he's flying. Armandão had the idea.

ARMANDÃO: Leave it to me, boss. This *crioulo* will start flying just by seeing our money. (*Still looking around*) What a joke. He's always here. Take this sugarcane there, to Pereba's bar. We'll take a look.

OB: Hold on, take it easy. No witnesses. Everything with the utmost secrecy. If this thing gets out, we're all fucked.

ARMANDÃO: Come on, boss. . . I'm a professional. I wouldn't bring you into anything that wasn't a clean operation. Fuck! He's not there either. Where did this rascal go?

GRISALHA: Oh, there he is. With a tailless donkey.

ARMANDÃO: Great. He's in good shape. Let's go, Grisalha.

OB: Hey, there will be no chitchat in the bar. Go in there and explain the deal, but don't give anything away, got it? He doesn't need to know for what reason or for whom he's doing it. Only that he'll earn money to do what you say and keep quiet. I'll get him out of here. If it doesn't work, I'll send you a notice and you're fired.

ARMANDÃO: Yep. Take it easy, boss. The *crioulo* may be a dud, but he's trustworthy. I always give him dirty work and I've never had a bad time.

Armandão and Grisalha hop out of the car and set after the *crioulo*. OB puts on sunglasses. The *crioulo* drags a tailless donkey carrying anything that is sellable: old newspaper, cardboard, empty bottles, a broken chair. Walking briskly towards him and with Grisalha at his side, Armandão calls out.

ARMANDÃO: Hey! Tição!

The *crioulo* stops. OB observes him. He's a perfect fit.

69. *Double levitation.*

Taís arrives home devastated, with a black eye and torn dress that has dried onto her body.

Bento assumes his usual position, his erect body leaning backwards forming an angle of about 45 degrees with the floor, without any support. He reads and meditates contrary to the laws of gravity.

Taís crouches in fetal despair.

A noise, almost imperceptible, catches Bento's attention, who immediately stands upright, gets down, and comes to her. He holds her hands, lifts her face. A tear flows from the black eye. Bento crouches down next to Taís, takes her by the shoulders, stands up with her, and leads her with an embrace to a kneeler where the two kneel, facing each other.

TAÍS: It's no use, Bento. They'll pursue us until the very end. You have to leave. They'll torture you again, they'll kill both of us, Bento.

I'm ashamed, so ashamed. . . don't look at me! Just go, for the love of God. . .

BENTO: Taís, sometimes the night illuminates me. A storm breaks out inside me and rays of darkness blacker than the night fall on me. They are revelations, Taís, secrets that illuminate so much that just one of them makes up for everything bad you've known in life! It's a real discovery, Taís, you get so excited that you want to suffer more, much more, and then, on the flipside, you begin not to suffer at all. An immense happiness, an eagerness, an inflammation of love. Taís, I want to set fire to your heart, I want to remove all fear from you, I want you to go through the night, the dawn, and beyond with me. . .

As Bento speaks in an intense euphoria that infects and illuminates the woman, he begins to levitate, bringing Taís up with him, holding hands and now kneeling in the air in front of one another.

BENTO: . . . we'll arrive at the highest, best hidden caves in the mountains, Taís. We'll step into the darkness, we'll fly higher than the angels, climb beyond the cherubs—soar. On the wings of the wind, Taís. . .

In his enthusiasm, Bento drops Taís' hands and widens his arms to glide across the room. Taís plummets to the ground.

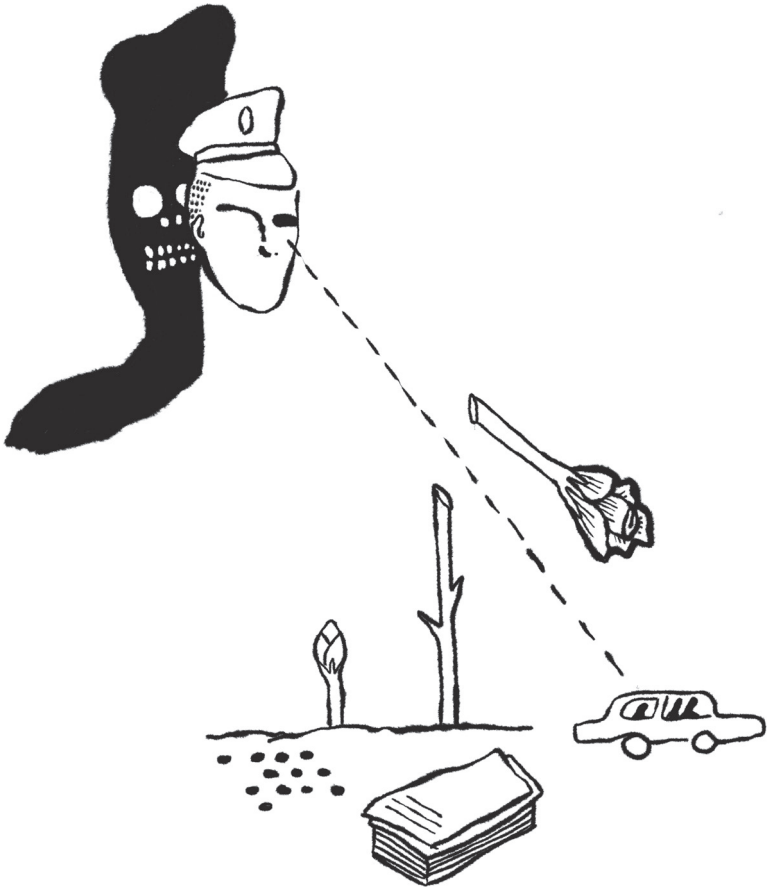
70. *The crioulo flies.*

Grisalha's car, looking increasingly battered, followed by a shinier one, arrives at a deserted marsh on the shore of Lake Paranoá.

Grisalha gets out first with his worn photographer's bag. Then Armandão, an effeminate gay man, and finally a Black man, Tição, dressed in character, that is, as the Flying *Crioulo*, a model inspired by Superman, concocted by Armandão's imagination, and executed by an apprentice seamstress from Ceilândia, a friend of Grisalha. Tição, donning a cape, boots, everything, stands there, uncomfortably stepping in the mud.

Armandão opens the trunk of Grisalha's car and takes out a small folding seat, which he places under the light of the headlights of OB's fancy car, which is accompanied by two stocky, rough-looking, stone-faced dog handlers.

ARMANDÃO (*to the gay man*): Hey, Mirandinha, put some makeup on the *crioulo*.



MIRANDINHA: You want to take the picture *here*, in this swamp?

ARMANDÃO: Where else would you want Tição to fall? On the ground? There's water here, a little hill to jump off of, and no one can spot us.

MIRANDINHA: All of this, without the mud and mosquitoes, can be found in the penthouse of Terezinha Pecô or any mansion on the Península dos Ministros. Instead of this filthy lake, we'd have a clean pool and a trampoline, not some tiny hill.

ARMANDÃO: Here you go with that fresh snobbery. Do you not get the spirit of this whole thing? The Flying *Crioulo* is a proletarian, a hero of the people—got it? The deal is: a hill, mud, and making sure he doesn't get covered in it, dammit. Now would you please put some makeup on this guy?

MIRANDINHA: How should I do his makeup? I only know how to do white guys. If he just puts the mask on, he'll be ready to jump.

ARMANDÃO: Go on, then, Tição. Put the mask on and jump.

TIÇÃO (*putting on a cat-like mask made of cyclamen glitter*): But I don't know how to swim!

GRISALHA (*panicking*): Tição, jump and don't make a fuss about it. It should be shallow there and if it's not, you'll just have to deal with it. Especially for the amount of money you're getting.

ARMANDÃO: I got it. (*Grabbing Tição and taking him by the arm up the hill*) Tição, jump, there's no problem, just fall into the water and we'll catch you right away. What's this about, man? You're trying to make me feel bad? A bunch of Black kids out there would go crazy for an opportunity like this. I recommended you for this and now you want to shit all over it? Go on, then. Do you remember the position? (*Armandão imitates the position of Superman flying; Tição follows him*) So, Grisalha, are you ready? Don't mess up the focus.

GRISALHA: Have you ever seen me mess up the focus, asshole?

ARMANDÃO: Yeah, I have. So this time, don't screw it up. Let's go. One, two. . .

71. Rotatives.

Newspaper rotary presses print the first page of the *Correio de Brasília*, on which is displayed a photograph taken in Taís' apartment

of Bento flying. Next to him, in equal dimensions, is a photograph of the Flying *Crioulo*.

The photographs are surmounted by a scandalous headline: “Saint Snob against Flying *Crioulo*—War in the Skies!”

72. *Paper sells.*

At a busy street corner in Brasília, the *Correio* sells like water.

78. *The crioulo provokes.*

Taís arrives home in a rage. She throws the newspaper down wherever, goes to the phone, and begins dialing.

[. . .]

As Taís speaks, Bento turns red as he scans the photos and reads the newspaper article.

At that moment, something unusual happens. From a window in the room appears the Flying *Crioulo* from above. Knocking on the glass from the outside and making signals, he beckons Bento to fight. The *crioulo* hangs from a rope held ineptly by some people above; he’s visibly torn between panic and acting out the role with which he has been entrusted.

Bento, possessed by anger, rushes to the window, but Taís, realizing the situation in time, manages to interpose herself between Bento and the window as the *crioulo*, with desperate pleas, is hoisted up, still dangling and kicking.

TAÍS (*throwing herself in front of the window with arms apart*): No, Bento. Don’t accept his provocations!

83. *The hummingbird.*

Taís, beaming and content, is set to unveil the new decoration of her apartment, in a neomonastic style, and welcomes a few of her girlfriends for a baby shower. Taís is especially stunning, though her dress, designed by herself for the occasion, is extremely modest: long with a high collar, with two zippers, one longitudinal from the neck to the pubis, and the other horizontal at the height of the breast, forming the design of a crucifix. At the scheduled time, her friends appear, voluptuous and provocative as always, yet wearing dresses inspired by religious habits.

The women all bring gifts of domestic use in some way appropriate to the monastic environment in which they are to be used.

Bento, wearing a new and elegant cloak created by Taís, looks singularly seductive. The devastating effect he causes is reflected in the looks and disturbance of the women when they are greeted by him. Whether sitting at the table, sipping on a conventual tea, or simply standing around the room, everyone is amazed at Bento's manners, who appears surprisingly conversational and captivating.

A few small animals of an appearance unknown to nature occasionally pass by and create a certain uneasiness in the women, who follow the example of Taís and Bento and pretend not to see them. When the animals inch closer, however, Bento caresses them discreetly.

Once the tea has finished and the excitement has increased greatly, the women insist that Bento perform a small levitation demonstration. The small animals, almost contaminated by this growing tension, hide and change places in little circles to better observe the scene. Some of them even appear to whisper to each other.

Despite Taís' increasing concern, Bento's eyes get bigger and brighter and he complies with the requests. He asks the women to kneel in a circle around him. He concentrates and gradually takes off, vibrating intensely, up to about half a meter high. Stabilizing himself at this altitude, still vibrating, he begins to rotate on his vertical axis, successively facing each of the women, devouring them with his shining eyes, until in one sudden movement, accompanied by a joyous roar, his back to the camera, he lifts his cloak to show the beaming women his virile member with a formidable erection and then turns to show himself off to everyone else.

The entire group erupts into shouts. Bento moves up and down on the women like a hummingbird does with flowers, penetrating them briefly though successively with indiscriminate gluttony.

The women go crazy and try to keep him in their arms' reach, but Bento keeps turning back around, "serving" them all and increasing each time the frequency and speed of his "ups" and "downs."

At that moment, Taís, who has remained immobile and distant from the group, unzips the cross of zippers on her tunic in a movement of irresistible pride and emerges wonderfully naked from the cloth that now falls at her feet.

Bento, in mid-flight, catches sight of this splendid vision that paralyzes him for a moment. He then throws himself at Taís in a blistering nosedive. Amid the commotion that ensues, with the half-naked ladies trying to force him back from Taís' arms, the apartment is invaded by hooded and heavily armed men who grab Bento and violently sequester him.

84. *End.*

Military transport plane on a nighttime flight. The middle door to the plane is open. Bento and the Flying *Crioulo* are lying face down on the metal floor, their hands handcuffed behind their backs. Strong men in paratrooper uniforms, unpleasant-looking and armed, watch over the prisoners and amuse themselves with silly games.

One of them steps on Bento's skull and presses his face against the floor.

Commander Larroque emerges from the pilots' cabin in casual sportswear.

LARROQUE: Throw these pieces of shit out. Now we'll see if they fly.

The soldiers take off Bento and the *crioulo's* handcuffs. The commander grabs them by the neck and throws them out the door of the flying plane. The *crioulo* goes first; Bento follows.

LARROQUE: Fly, you son of a bitch!

The camera fixates on Bento who, once out of the plane, finds himself in his element. He calmly opens his arms and positions himself to glide. He then realizes, horrified, that he is not gliding at all, but rather in free fall.

That is when, miraculously, the *crioulo* welcomes him into his arms mid-air. The ability to fly has inexplicably transferred itself from Bento to the *crioulo*.

CRIOULO: Hey, white boy, can't fly anymore?

BENTO (*clutching completely onto the crioulo*): *Neguinho!* And to think that I wanted to destroy you. . .

Their faces glued together, cheek to cheek, they smile at each other as they float, indifferent to the artillery above trying to reach them. A beautiful companionship has followed the rivalry between these two men.

Fin.