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### Forms of disbelonging in contemporary Latin American aesthetics

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# Florencia Garramuño

## FORMS OF DISBELONGING IN CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN AESTHETICS

*Literary explorations that juxtapose fiction and photography, images, memories, autobiographies, blogs, chats and email texts, as well as essay and documentary texts that bear witness to a new testimonial condition, are now everywhere, as works as diverse as those by W.G. Sebald, Bernardo de Carvalho, John Berger, João Gilberto Noll, Fernando Vallejo or Nuno Ramos evince. Along with this expansion of literature, in Latin America many of these new literary explorations establish connections among different fields of aesthetics, like the crossover of installation art and literature or language shows in the cases of Nuno Ramos and Mario Bellatin, or the archival impulse that uses images and language in the art of Rosângela Rennó, Antonio José Ponte and Jorge Macchi.*

In what sense do these transgressions and expansiveness propose new ways of dwelling in the world? ¿How does this porosity of boundaries propitiate modes of dis-belonging that offer images of expanded and hospitable communities? To what extent have fundamental notions of aesthetics been substituted in contemporary art by the production and circulation of affects? How does this questioning of belonging redefine the ways of understanding Latin America and its productions?

My intention in this article is to discuss Fruto Estranho, an installation by Brazilian artist and writer Nuno Ramos, as an example of this fruitful crossover among different disciplines. At the end of my article, I will make some connections with other Latin American works that evince similar problems, trying to elaborate on the consequences for contemporary aesthetics that we can take from these crossovers and transgressions.

Contemporary aesthetics' transformations propitiate modes of organization of the sensible that puts into crisis ideas of belongingness, specificity and autonomy. Following Jacques Rancière, in the new aesthetic landscape,

all artistic competences step out of their own field and exchange their places and powers with all others. We have theatre plays without words and dance with words; installations and performances instead of 'plastic' works; videoprojections turned into cycles of frescoes; photographs turned into living pictures or history paintings; sculpture which becomes hypermediatic show, etc., etc.<sup>1</sup>

In the field of visual arts, this landscape has been insistently analyzed in a theoretical reflection that was propelled by the powerful impact that conceptual and installation art brought to art's territory.<sup>2</sup>

Arguably, the field of literature has undergone a similar expansion of its means of expression. Literary explorations that juxtapose fiction and photography, images, memories, autobiographies, blogs, chats and email texts, as well as essay and documentary texts that bear witness to a new testimonial condition, are now everywhere, as works as diverse as those by W.G. Sebald, Bernardo de Carvalho, John Berger, João Gilberto Noll, Fernando Vallejo or Nuno Ramos evince. Along with this expansion of literature, in Latin America many of these new literary explorations establish connections among different fields of aesthetics, like the crossover of installation art and literature or language shows in the cases of Nuno Ramos and Mario Bellatin, or the archival impulse that uses images and language in the art of Rosângela Rennó, Antonio José Ponte and Jorge Macchi.

In what sense do these transgressions and expansiveness propose new ways of dwelling in the world? How does this porosity of boundaries propitiate modes of dis-belonging that offer images of expanded and hospitable communities?<sup>3</sup> To what extent have fundamental notions of aesthetics been substituted in contemporary art by the production and circulation of affects? How does this questioning of belonging redefine the ways of understanding Latin America and its productions? Although not all of these questions can be answered in the space of this article, they guide me in the project of understanding the proliferation of these forms of *disbelonging* in Latin American Aesthetics.

### Some examples

Carvalho's *Nine Nights*, a novel published in 2002 and based on the story of Buell Quain, an American anthropologist that committed suicide in 1939 while doing field work on the Kraho Indians in the Amazonian forest, is a good example of this

Na carta para a diretora do Museu Nacional, Quain tratava de questões práticas, de seu registro junto à polícia de São Luís, de remessas de dinheiro e dos gastos com os presentes para os índios. A Maria Júlia Pourchet, ele descrevia, com medidas, as primeiras impressões de Carolina.



Eu não soube da existência dessa carta até me aconselharem a procurar uma professora de antropologia da Universidade de São Paulo cuja tia, também antropóloga e falecida, teria visitado a mãe de Quain, nos Estados Unidos, em 1940, pouco depois da morte do etnólogo. Consegui o

**FIGURE 1** Pictures on page of *Nove Noites*.

intermingling of discourses and disciplines. Besides the confusion among autobiography, biography and fiction – and thus, the exploration of the limit between reality and fiction – the book prominently uses pictures that attest to the real events on which it is based, but since not all the pictures fit into a documentary thrust, they further complicate both the notion of fiction and document. Carvalho uses no caption for the pictures and situates them in a place of the text whose relationship to the story is not immediately clear. The only picture that does have a caption is on the back cover of the book, and it shows a boy holding the hand of an indigenous man. The photograph's caption reads: 'The author, six years old, in the Xingu.'<sup>4</sup> Inside the book but outside the story, belonging is even more disrupted.

But even not paying particular attention to the way the pictures intersect in the story, the discursive story is itself also built by an intermingling of different narrators and discourses that do not seem to collaborate in the construction of a single line of meaning but, instead, produce 'zones of indefinición' that create a sort of threshold between literature and historical facts, autobiography and biography, even history and fiction. The peculiar quality of a use of language that consciously avoids literary figures and ornamentation contributes to a blurring of boundaries to which the novel, with the proliferation of nomadism, travel figures, errant characters and narrators, adds a sort of transnational quality. As in *Mongólia* or in *O Filho da Mãe*, it is precisely this disbelonging that shows the power of fiction to explore history or actual facts, other than just interpreting or giving meaning to those facts.<sup>5</sup>

Another example is *Aranha* (1991), by Nuno Ramos. A spider made of resin, oil-based paint, cotton and gauze, the work is set on a written text that, as if it were the spider's web, is the base, or the pedestal of the 'sculpture', although it is written also over the 'sculpture' itself and on the wall behind it. The text is written with the same material that the sculpture is made of, resin and oil painting, and – to complicate belonging even further – it was published in a book by Nuno Ramos, *Cujo*, and also used in another installation, *III*, inspired by the 1992 massacre in the Brazilian prison Carandiru.<sup>6</sup> The book, a series of short pieces published in 1993, has been described as 'prose poetry', 'or atelier prose', or essay, all concepts that betray the uncomfortable belonging of the text to one strictly defined literary genre. For an image of *Aranha*, please go to: [http://www.nunoramos.com.br/portu/comercio.asp?flg\\_Lingua=1&cod\\_Artista=91&cod\\_Serie=11](http://www.nunoramos.com.br/portu/comercio.asp?flg_Lingua=1&cod_Artista=91&cod_Serie=11).

These examples, among many others, attest to a crisis in medium specificity that has been consistently undermined in Contemporary Art History at least since the end of the Modernist attempt to reduce art to the specificity of their materials. Rosalind Krauss, in *A Voyage on the North Sea*, has revealed three different narratives to explain the progression of the 'mixed media installation art' that is conspicuous in contemporary aesthetics.<sup>7</sup> Although the works we are describing could be placed into Krauss's description, I think that there are other important features in them, besides this use of different supports in a single work. The crisis of medium specificity that interests me is connected with an exploration of sensibility in which notions of belonging, specificity and individuality are continually jettisoned. In many contemporary art practices, literature and art free themselves from a series of constraints and distinctions, from those distinguishing literature from the languages of criticism and theory, or literature from information or documentation. If the specificity of mediums must be understood 'as differential, self-differing, and thus as the layering

of conventions never simply collapsed into the physicality of their supports',<sup>8</sup> it is evident that this expansion is more than a mixing of mediums and supports. After describing the paradoxical outcome that the insistence on medium specificity had for painting, Rosalind Krauss points out that:

For if modernism was probing painting for its essence – for what made it specific as a medium – that logic taken to its extreme had turned painting inside out and had emptied it into the generic category of Art: art at large, or *art in general*.<sup>9</sup>

It is this idea of art in general, which I would rather call inspecific art, that I would like to explore as a powerful figure of disbelonging.

My intention in this article is to discuss *Fruto Estranho*, an installation by Brazilian artist and writer Nuno Ramos, as an example of this fruitful crossover among different disciplines. At the end of my article, I will make some connections with other Latin American works that evince similar problems, trying to elaborate on the consequences for contemporary aesthetics that we can take from these crossovers and transgressions.

*Fruto Estranho* (*Strange Fruit*) was exhibited at the Museu de Arte Moderna de Rio de Janeiro from September to November 2010, and it is one of the three works that the artist presented at the time.<sup>10</sup> The installation was designed for the Espaço Monumental of the museum, a huge hall in the second floor that leads to the exhibition rooms, at the time showing a Walmécio Caldas retrospective. A kind of site specific work, *Fruto Estranho* finds its home in a space that, although it belongs to the museum, was not conceived as an exhibition room. For an image of *Fruto Estranho* please go to: [http://www.nunoramos.com.br/portu/comercio.asp?flg\\_Lingua=1&cod\\_Artista=110&cod\\_Serie=101](http://www.nunoramos.com.br/portu/comercio.asp?flg_Lingua=1&cod_Artista=110&cod_Serie=101).

The place had been used as the location for some performances and installations, one of the most famous of which was the exhibition of the *parangolés* by Hélio Oiticica during the exhibition *Opinião 65*, a collective exhibition that was one of the watersheds for Brazilian Contemporary Art. As is well known, Oiticica's *parangolés* transformed hard-edged geometric planes into folds of wearable materials made specifically to be danced with. Inspired conceptually by the Mangueira Samba School, according to Oiticica, *parangolés* were 'proposals for behavior' and 'sensuality tests'.<sup>11</sup>

For the inauguration of the *Opinião 65* exhibition, members of the Escola de Samba da Mangueira, from the favela Mangueira, entered the museum using the capes, but were expelled by the authorities out of fear that the dancing might endanger the artworks exhibited in the rooms. The event marked in Brazilian Art history a moment both for the expansion of art and for Oiticica's career in the development of what he was later to call *arte ambiental* (ambient art), designed to dwell in the city or public spaces, and not in the museum. The institutional critique of art that develops from these *arte ambiental*, and other forms of art directed toward the critique of art as an institution during the sixties and seventies, is well known.<sup>12</sup> If *parangolés* marked the opening for a new meaning of art in 1965, *Fruto Estranho*, with its huge and unmistakable presence, actively stresses the tension between space and artwork. Outside the exhibition rooms but inside the museum, *Fruto Estranho* negotiates the significance of art's critical intervention.

The work is composed of two flamboyant trees 6 meters tall, with two small planes crashed into the branches of the trees, all covered with white soap that lends luminosity to the otherwise dark installation, with its references to catastrophe, accident, and

violence. From the trees, caustic soda drips onto the lavish double basses placed underneath them.

Besides the trees with their references to nature and, specifically, to tropical nature, and the crashed planes (bringing technology into the work), according to Ramos, the dripping of the caustic soda was inspired by literature, a short story by Pushkin in which a tree drips poison.<sup>13</sup> These three different orders (nature, literature, technology) are further complicated in the installation by a TV monitor showing a loop from a scene in Ingmar Bergman's 1960 movie, *The Virgin's Spring*. In the scene, the father of the virgin, in preparing to avenge the rape of his daughter, and following tradition, tears a birch sapling out of the earth. The scene shows the father first approaching the birch with an ax, only to finally tear the tree out with his whole body in a moving confrontation between man and tree.

Adding to the heterogeneous combination of nature, technology, and film, a song is played in the room as part of the installation: it's *Strange Fruit*, Abel Meropool's 1936 song on the lynching of African Americans, performed in Billie Holiday's famous 1939 recording.<sup>14</sup>

Just to see the enormous trees inside the building makes a profound impact; to follow the group they make with all the others elements is even more bewildering. What do all these *strange fruits* share, if they share anything at all? How do they fit – if they do – together? If art, for Ramos, 'digs a black hole in the world', bringing 'ambiguity into a world that has become directional and monotonous', and serves 'to raise universal questions despite people's overwhelming interest in 'sharp little particularities',<sup>15</sup> it is certain that there are no easy answers we can give to these questions. In any case, it seems evident that the crossover between popular music, video, literature, and the sensorial presence of the trees and heterogeneous objects that inhabit the space of the installation reverberates with the mixing of different orders to which these objects refer (nature, technology, racism, violence), different countries and regions of the world (Brazil, Sweden, United States), and different moments in history. It is not, then, just the heterogeneities of the different media used for the installation that are present in the space, but also the different worlds of references they introduce into the installation. All these different orders and objects and media work together to substitute the preoccupation with specificity for the construction of a space inhabited by heterogeneities and differences.

Maybe Abel Meropool's song's privileged place in the installation (it gives the work its title, and it is the only of all the media that you can listen to all the time while walking from one point to the other of the space) speaks of the strange political strength of the work by Ramos. While the song has been considered one of the first protest songs in the history of American music, Ramos's work might not have a clear or unambiguous political message, but the intermingling of media brings into the work references to events and problems that clearly have pertinence outside the realm of art.

Although cross-fertilization among arts have been present at least since the sixties, when the radical transformation that took place in the arts reached a crescendo, in Ramos's installation the crossover among literature, visual arts, popular culture and technology – to name only a few of the multiple orders that Ramos' installation engages in – radicalizes the tendency.<sup>16</sup> Whereas the previous works were intended as an expansion of the disciplines, in Ramos's work an idea of art as an

ontological artifact whose specificity needs to be secured is seriously put into question. *Fruto Estranho* forces us to transform our habits of viewing and reading, and in forcing us to think about art in other spaces than the exhibition room, it forces us to think about art questions and consequences outside art's frontier, outside the 'white cube' of the exhibition room. Bringing aesthetics to bear upon the effects that a sensory space can have upon the spectator, Ramos tears away from purely formal concerns bringing up what we might call, following Didi-Huberman, 'anthropological' concerns.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that the work itself is dispersed throughout a space that needs to be traversed in order to fully experience the installation adds to this questioning of habits. Not a *penetrável* – the small and claustrophobic labyrinths that we can see in Oiticica or Bruce Nauman's later works – there is no indication in *Fruto Estranho* on where or how to organize the itinerary, nor barriers or limits that prohibit or favor one itinerary over another. The disorienting effect that this arrangement provokes in the spectator tends to transform the itinerary into the search for a way to inhabit a space full of differences and heterogeneities. In *Ensaio Geral*, Nuno Ramos questions Oiticica's *penetráveis*, pointing to the continuous reiteration of interiority he sees in them. It is possible to think the difference between Oiticica and Ramos in terms of the historical difference between the movement of expansion of art towards experience – in Oiticica – and a movement that opens up political spaces inside art, in Nuno Ramos.<sup>18</sup> The disposition of materials and mediums in the space brings the spectator to consider the effects and bewilderment this arrangement produces, instead of concentrating on analyzing one particular aesthetic form. From one object to another, from song to film to planes, an idea of that which does not belong connects them, traversing the space in which the spectator himself is included. In drawing art away from form and close to the sensorial effects it produces, the consideration of affects and relations acquire more importance in this type of art practice's reception. In the words of curator Vanda Klabin,

Nuno Ramos's works do not offer an immediate intelligibility. They exhibit an intense material dimension in which nothing is comfortable. His aesthetic operations adhere decidedly to contradiction and ambiguity. Already by their disorderly appearance, they confront us, they propose dilemmas. (...) Nuno Ramos's works open to unsettling, disordered, interrogative experiences, and always present **poetic and existential** questions. And they presuppose a resistance of being against the real world, mapping a cultural arena where finally **our aesthetic conflicts and our social conflicts** end up on exhibit.<sup>19</sup>

Trees, planes, film, screen, sound, music, all the different objects in the installation build up a sensorial space-time in which differences and heterogeneities find a place to be together. Precisely because it divorces art from medium specific concerns, the use of different supports and media shows the power that contemplation can have to reflect or intervene in the thinking of social spaces. For Nuno art does not (just) question the institution; it poses questions to society and culture at large, providing grounds to rethink our relationship to the world.

In 2008, Nuno Ramos published *Ó*. Like the installation – or even better: as if the book were itself an installation – the book has a series of 'chapters' or loosely

connected elements, in which the idea of these texts belonging to the same book is as troubling as the different pieces that compose *Fruto Estranho*.<sup>20</sup> Clearly, the book does not belong completely to any of the literary genres that tradition has lent to us: novel, short, poetry, and essay. This does not mean to say that *Ó* shows a hybridization of genres, something in which Brazilian literary history, for all that matter, is very rich (think, for instance, of books like Euclides da Cunha's *Os sertões*). On the back cover of the book, José Paulo Pasta points out:

Indeed, looking well, the texts that compose (the book) in its unity, as strict as loose, are neither short stories, nor prose poems, nor chronicles, nor autobiography, etc., being, nevertheless, all of this plus something else, something uncertain and unknown that the reader will name.<sup>21</sup>

Although the notion of hybridism has been used to refer to Ramos's texts and installations, the notion has a long history in the definition of a Latin American identity that does not seem to correspond well to a metamorphous and mutant form that questions the coalescence of an identity to favor process of mutation and transformation. What matters in *Ó* is its ability to put together a series of very heterogeneous texts, with different and very opposite voices, locating the text in an area of language where all the different waves of genres meet only to then lose their specificity.<sup>22</sup> Even the narrative voice misses the identity with itself, as if the category of narrator would name only a sort of open space into which different voices can coexist. In an interview, Nuno Ramos spoke about this hospitable and mutant quality of narrative voice and text in the following terms:

It is as if there was a false essay, which sometimes becomes an essay, sometimes fakes a little, then it develops into poetry, and some other things. But it certainly has something of the author, a little ungoverned 'I', where sometimes another voice enters, or goes out. It is as if author and narrator keep swapping places but always with the narrator dominating.<sup>23</sup>

Neither narrative nor poetry, the texts in *Ó* give voice to that which cannot be expressed by language. A cry or an interjection, not even a word, *Ó* as in the title, is writing that makes language into a corporeal materiality that would not reproduce or duplicate the world: it would, instead, *be* part of the world.

Let me quote a fragment from chapter or section 4 of *Ó*, titled, itself, *Ó*:

(...) então alguma coisa como canto sai de alguma coisa como boca, alguma coisa como um á, um ó, um ó enorme, que toma primeiro os ouvidos e depois se estende pelas costas, a penugem do ventre, feito um escombros bonito, um naufrágio no seco, um punhado de arroz atirado para o alto, é em nossa voz o chamado longínquo de um sino, canto e me espanto com isso, demoro a má notícia, esqueço o medo imerecido, esqueço que sou triste e grito e bato os dois címbalos como se minhas amídalas abrissem caminho ao inimigo em meu tímpano, cachimbo coletivo que traga e queima o contorno do morro, a sombra da nuvem, a linha da espuma, o samba nos juncos mais alto que o som das notícias rasgando as revistas, a pancada de chuva, um único ó que seja mas contínuo, não



um mantra mas um zumbido de vespa, um zangão na avenida, nas cinzas do último dia, atrás do vidro natural que me separa de tudo, da lâmina de luz, como um dia (como um dia) onde o corpo bate e zumbe, zumbe um ó, uma lâmina metálica, constante, um hino ríspido, zurro, o que será isto, no meio da avenida.<sup>24</sup>

Like the sound of a living being – *um zumbido de vespa, o zangão na avenida* – Ó wrests language from humanity and puts into question the idea of language as a medium specific to literature, constantly disengaging literature and language from its formal constraints and categories. Closer to the spirit of notation that Roland Barthes saw in some texts (short forms, yes, but not only), this type of writing finds in its resistance to a totalizing narrative or the construction of an organic whole what Barthes has called a *moral* resistance to the novel: the resistance to mingle truth and falsehood that is needed in the novel as a form, the resistance, we might say, to cohere, or, if you want, to coherence.<sup>25</sup> Or, to put it in Ramos's words, the resistance to the literary genres will be, for him, to write 'numa linguagem calcinada, (...) feita com pedaços e destroços' (a burnt language made with pieces and debris). Part, then, of the world.

A similar exploration of the limits and frontiers of literature is visible in a number of contemporary writers that explore a permeability of frontiers. *Eles eram muitos cavalos*, a book by Luiz Ruffato, is composed of fragments that are all very different, with different formats and characters, a mosaic of stories and feelings and affects that, although they happen on the same day in the same city (São Paulo) and at the same moment, do not find a way to coalesce in a novel. In the confessed minimally edited testimony that elaborates in fiction the contemporary experience of working migrants in Portugal (*Estive em Lisboa e lembrei de você*), Ruffato again refrains from the reassuring voice of an identifiable novelistic narrator. Poetry books that include references to films and installation, or that in an almost obscene movement elaborate the personal pain of a familiar death, are other recent examples of an exploration of limits and frontiers in recent literature that propitiate modes of organization of the sensible that put ideas of belonging, specificity and autonomy into crisis. As in the cases explored here, something more than a formal hybridity is implied in these texts. In bringing to the foreground heterogeneous worlds of reference and in questioning art's specificity, they allow the powers of contemplation and reading to intervene in the thinking and consideration of culture and society at large.<sup>26</sup>

In many senses, the permeability of boundaries these works exhibit propitiates modes of dis-belonging that offer images of expanded communities in which being together is not based on a shared essential or ontological identity. They imply a voiding of property into its negative that implies an invention of the common of community, which as Roberto Esposito has explained,

is not characterized by what is proper but by what is improper, or even more drastically, by the other; by a voiding [*svuotamento*], be it partial or whole, of property into its negative; by removing what is properly one's own [*depropriadzwe*] that invests and decenters the proprietary subject, forcing him to take leave [*uscire*] of himself, to alter himself.<sup>27</sup>

Exploring the different ways in which Roni Horn displaced Clarice Lispector's sentences from *Água Viva* in her installation *Rings of Lispector*, Hélène Cixous says that Horn showed 'toutes les façons possibles de fuir un cadre, un enfermement, une arrestation donc une Maison, un cage, une institution, une frontière, un tout. La désappartenance.'<sup>28</sup> It is in this sense of *désappartenance* or *disbelonging* (in the translato by Beverly Lee Brahic) that I would like to propose that the practices analyzed in this article deconstruct an idea of specificity that implies an idea of the common as improper.

In any case, if the political power of art is not located in its message, but rather, to use Jacques Rancière's words, in the partition of the sensible they propose, we might think of these contemporary art practices as particularly propitious for the accomplishment of a new partition based on disbelonging and the questioning of specificity.<sup>29</sup> It might be then more interesting and important for art and literary criticism to explore this partition, to take the roads not taken that they show to us, than concentrating exclusively on the formal – specific – features of the works.

## Notes

- 1 Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (translated by Gregory Elliott, Verso, London and New York: 2009), p. 27. See also Néstor García Canclini, *La sociedad sin relato*. Buenos Aires: Katz, 2010.
- 2 Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea. Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), p. 20; Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*. London: Routledge: 2005.
- 3 Analyzing the installation *Rings of Lispector*, made by artist Roni Horn inspired by Clarice's Lispector novel *Água Viva*, Hélène Cixous uses the word 'désappartenance' – translated by 'disbelonging' in the English translation of the text – to refer to the way Horn's installation exhibits 'toutes les façons possibles de fuir um cadre, um enfermement, une arrestation donc une Maison, un cage, une institution, une frontière, un tout. La désappartenance.' See Hélène Cixous, 'See the neverbeforeseen', in Roni Horn, *Rings of Lispector*. London: Hauser & Wirth; Göttingen: Steidl, c2005. I expand on the notion of disbelonging and community for this new aesthetic landscape in 'Especie, Especificidad, pertenencia', forthcoming in *e-misférica*, winter 2013.
- 4 Cf. Sophia Beal, 'Becoming a Character': 'When I asked Carvalho about the photograph, he cryptically replied, 'Esse livro joga o tempo todo com a ambigüidade entre realidade e ficção. Faz parte do romance. Quanto menos eu esclarecer as pistas, melhor. No caso da foto, pode não ser eu, pode ser uma montagem. Fica a seu critério'. Cf. *Becoming a Character: An Analysis of Bernardo Carvalho's Nove noites. Luso-Brazilian Review* 42 (2): 2005; 134–149, p. 138.
- 5 Karl Erik Schøllhammer has referred to this indistinction as a tension 'between the dense complexity that the stories gained and a truth that the diferent realist versions can never achieve. Not offering a final meaning to fiction, the novel keeps open the possibilities to explore meaning effects around a mystery that is never elucidated (...). It is in this sense that we can see a metafictional base in the work of Carvalho: reality is read as if it were literature, and literature is taken into account as if it were reality'. Schøllhammer, 2009, p. 128.

- 6 On Friday, October 2, 1992, a prison revolt was violently repressed by the police, killing 111 inmates. The massacre inspired many reactions and art work protesting racial discrimination and social inequality, among them the song 'Haiti' by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, 'Diário de um Detento', another song by the Brazilian rap group 'Racionais' and '19 Rebellions' by the British group Asian Dub Foundation. Drauzio Varella published in 1999 *Carandiru*, which inspired the film *Estação Carandiru* by Hector Babenco.
- 7 Krauss, Rosalind. *A Voyage on the North Sea. Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000.
- 8 Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea*, p. 53.
- 9 Rosalind Krauss, op. cit., p. 10. See also on this question Thierry De Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*, especialmente 'The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas'. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.
- 10 The other two are *Verme* and *Monólogo para um cachorro morto*, presented before in the CCBB Brasília, in 2008.
- 11 See Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao grande labirinto* (Introduction: Luciano Figueiredo, Mário Pedrosa; edited by Luciano Figueiredo, Lygia Pape and Wally Salomão. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), p. 104.
- 12 The exhibition marks an important turning point in Brazilian Art History, both for Oiticica himself and for Brazilian art in general. See Celso Favaretto, *A invenção de Hélio Oiticica*, São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1992, pp. 133–137. See also Alvarado, Daisy Valle Machado Peccinini de. *Figurações Brasil anos 60: neofigurações fantásticas e neo-surrealismo, novo realismo e nova objetividade brasileira* (São Paulo: Edusp: Itáu Cultural, 1999), and Duarte, Paulo Sérgio. *Anos 60: transformações da arte no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Lech, 1998). On the parangolés expelled from the museum, see Hermano Vianna, 'Não quero que a Vida me Faça Otário! – Hélio Oiticica como Mediador cultural entre o Asfalto e o Morro. In *Mediação, Cultura e Política*. Ed. Gilberto Velho and Karina Kuschnir. Rio de Janeiro: Aeroplano, 2001.
- 13 Flamboyant trees are typical of tropical weather, although in the installation they are deprived of their most characteristic foliage, the lustrous green leaves with their unmistakably red flowers.
- 14 On the history of the song, see David Margolick, *Strange Fruit. The Biography of a Song*, Philadelphia: Running Press, 2000.
- 15 Nuno Ramos, 'Ballad of a culture vulture. A Brazilian artist and poet with a taste for obstinate materials and ideas', *The Economist*, February 11th, 2011.
- 16 On the cross-fertilization of the sixties, see, among others, Jonathan Walley, 'Identity Crisis. Experimental Film and Artistic Expansion'. *October*, 2011, No. 137, pp. 23–50.
- 17 Didi Huberman, 'Pour une anthropologie des singularités formelles. Remarque sur l'invention warburgienne'. *Genèses*, 1996, vol. 24 (1), pp. 145–163.
- 18 See Nuno Ramos, *Ensaio geral*, São Paulo: Globo, 2007. For the preoccupation of intimacy in Oiticica, see also Rodrigo Naves, *O vento e o moinho* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2007), p. 87.
- 19 Vanda Klabin, folder for the exhibition of Nuno Ramos, MAM Rio de Janeiro, September 2010.
- 20 In fact, Nuno Ramos talks in *Entrelinhas* about the fact that the book was originally a much longer book that included the text that one year later *Iluminuras* would published as *O mau vidraceiro*, and that he finally separated the two books for editorial

concerns. See Entrelinhas, Nuno Ramos, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X\\_G0LsZ9XxU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_G0LsZ9XxU). For the idea of text as installation, see Wander Melo Miranda, 'Formas mutantes', in Florencia Garramuño and Ana Paula Kiffer, *Expansões contemporâneas. Literatura e Outras Formas*, Belo Horizonte, UFMG, no prelo.

- 21 José Paulo Pasta, en Nuno Ramos, *Ó*, op. cit., contratapa.
- 22 José Antonio Pasta describes this in the following terms: 'It is not a question of a classificatory preoccupation, but of verifying that, in this *Ó*, by locating itself in that area where all the frames of the old literary genres and modalities of discourse flow, Nuno brings strongly to literature the experience of art's losing of meaning, that plastic arts radicalized to a point that, because of its very nature, verbal language and literature as institution still resist' (In Nuno Ramos, *Ó*, São Paulo, Iluminuras, 2008), back cover.
- 23 Caio Garrido, 'Nuno Ramos – A Literatura e sua plasticidade. Entrevista com Nuno Ramos', <http://nucleotavola.com.br/literatura/2012/04/nuno-ramos-a-literatura-e-sua-plasticidade/>.
- 24 Nuno Ramos, *Ó*, São Paulo, Iluminuras, 2008, pp. 59–61. 'Then something like a singing comes out from something like a mouth, something like an a, and o, an enormous o, that first reaches the hearing and then extends through the spine, on the belly's hair, as if it were a beautiful debris, a wreckage in dry land, a fistful of rice thrown to the air, and in our voice the distant calling of a bell, I sing and I wonder, I delayed the bad news, forget the unjustified fear, forget that I am sad and I cry and thwack the two cymbals as if my tonsils would open the road to the enemy in my eardrum, a collective cigar that swallows and burns the limit of the mountain, the shadows of the cloud, the foam's line, samba from the reeds' / higher than the sound of the news tearing apart the magazines, the rain's whack, a solitary o that would be more continuous, not a mantra but like a bee's buzz, a droning on the avenue, in the day's last ashes, behind the natural glass that separated me from everything, behind the light's sheet like a day (like a day), where the body beats and buzzes, buzzes an o, a metallic sheet, constantly, a rough hymn, braying, what is this, in the middle of the avenue.' (my translation)
- 25 Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 109. Barthes thus proposes to create a mode of criticism 'that is based from the moments of pathos of the work (bearing in mind the link with the Tragic) – Pathetic criticism: rather than logical units (structural analysis) would start out from affective elements (...)'. Op. cit., p. 108.
- 26 The belief in the powers of art is present in Nuno Ramos's comments on his works. See for instance the following fragment of an interview with Rodrigo Naves: 'Uma das coisas que mais me atraem no seu trabalho, Nuno, é uma certa força, uma espécie de crença nos poderes da arte que se pode identificar tanto na forma de cada uma de suas obras – ao mesmo tempo grandiosas e precárias, determinadas e indecisas – quanto na diversidade entre elas. Isso é uma questão que de fato se coloca para você?

Acho que essa crença – a palavra é exatamente essa – nos poderes da arte é a contribuição mais original que não apenas o meu trabalho mas toda a arte brasileira tem hoje para dar. Talvez isso venha do amadorismo radical que cerca a produção artística aqui no Brasil. Gosto de pensar no amadorismo como uma forma de desmesura: o sujeito não sabe quanto vale o seu produto, a proporção entre o seu trabalho e o trabalho dos outros está sempre em questão. Apesar de ter uma face social bastante violenta, pois os direitos e deveres das pessoas nunca ficam bem claros, acho

- que essa situação é libertária para a produção artística. Você consegue escapar àquela falta de ambição, àquela pasmaceira institucional meio claustrofóbica de grande parte do que se faz lá fora. Talvez o meu trabalho tenha tentado interiorizar esta questão: pensar se é possível transformar a violência e a desmesura em liberdade.’ In ‘Transformar a desmesura em liberdade’, [http://www.nunoramos.com.br/portu/depo2.asp?flg\\_Lingua=1&cod\\_Depoimento=3628/11/2011](http://www.nunoramos.com.br/portu/depo2.asp?flg_Lingua=1&cod_Depoimento=3628/11/2011).
- 27 Roberto Esposito, *Communitas*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2012, p. 7.
- 28 Cf. Hélène Cixous, ‘See the neverbeforeseen’, in Roni Horn, *Rings of Lispector*. London: Hauser & Wirth; Göttingen: Steidl, c2005. See this description of Horn’s work with language: ‘An important factor in Horn’s conceptual and aesthetic sensibility is her exploration of the possibilities of language as a sculptural form. Inspired by literary sources, she combines linguistic construction with the dimensions of physical experience. Works such as *How Dickinson Stayed Home* (1992–93), *Kafka’s Palindrome* (1991–94) and *Key and Cues* (1994) use fragments of text transformed through Horn’s sculptural practice. In doing so, she plays with our ability to discern and register difference. Photographic works address notions of duality and ambiguity; the work charged with an almost subliminal reading of the difference between object, image and identity. This is evidenced in works such as *Dead Owl* (1997), where her ‘pairing’ of images expresses Horn’s desire to emphasise the space ‘in-between’: a recognition of uniqueness through an understanding of similarity.’ Cf. <http://www.hauserwirth.com/exhibitions/57/roni-horn-rings-of-lispector-agua-viva/view/>.
- 29 See Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*. London and New York: Continuum, 2004.

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