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BRAZILIAN **LITERATURE** IN TRANSLATION #5



## **A SKETCH OF ANA**

TONY MONTÍ

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TONY MONTI

Translated by Catherine Howard

**T**he glass fell onto the pillows, just like I planned. When I got back from the airport, I closed the door behind me and felt a kind of solitude that was different from what I would feel whenever Ana would decide to go back home after spending several days at my apartment. At those times, I would breathe deeply, aware of the rhythm of my muscles contracting and relaxing, while I went through the rooms picking up from our time spent together, until everything was tidy. Then I would make the bed, lie down, and open a book. Or I might sit down in front of the television. But yesterday, besides being aware of my breathing, I felt like kicking the door of the refrigerator, punching the mirrors and windows, and shouting. Break everything, bring the whole place down.

I thought about the glass cups; I wanted to throw them against the kitchen wall. I was in a hurry. I remembered that the only thing I'd ever broken by throwing it against a wall was a telephone, after I'd been trying for hours to reach Ana and she didn't answer. Then I remembered how, during the months we were together, I would tease Ana about the number of glasses she had broken at my place. I would say I was keeping a file on the statistics: 1.4 glasses per month, 1.6, 0.9—the numbers would change if she broke more than usual or if she went a while without breaking any. These two images of Ana enveloped my anger before I even picked up the first glass.

I wanted to throw the glasses as hard as I could, but I was afraid the broken pieces might cut me as they ricocheted. I didn't care if my arms or back got cut, but I wanted to protect my eyes and, if possible, my whole face. Maybe I could stand at the door and throw them against the back of the kitchen, then hide behind the hall wall. I thought about how much I'd enjoy seeing the pieces of glass fly through the air without the risk of getting cut. I don't know whether Ana liked or disliked moments such as these, when I organized my anger by imagining what I might do, but yesterday it seemed ridiculous trying to deal with the degree of anger I felt. It was much more intense than usual for me. I felt the need to give form to my urgency, to follow its rhythm, to objectify the sense that everything was a matter of life and death. I don't know either whether Ana's contrasting manner of doing everything in a distracted, unplanned way attracted or repelled me more. Now separated by an ocean, I miss the steady noise that arose when she was nearby. Silence is the opposite of Ana.

I thought of protecting myself with a plastic bag over my head so I could see the glass when it shattered all over the kitchen, forgetting that the pieces could cut

the plastic. But I got worried I'd suffocate and be found dead, without leaving a letter that would explain that I'd simply wanted to protect myself from the broken glass. I thought about throwing plates and pots, knocking down the cupboards and bookshelf. I thought about taking off the glass top of the coffee table in the living room and using it as a shield. I thought about throwing glasses out the apartment window. I thought about throwing myself out the window. I thought about breaking the glasses in the living room, where there would be fewer places for the broken pieces to get lost, making it easier to clean up.

I wanted to make sure that no glass was left on the floor the next day because, even if it might be somewhat pleasant to get cut a little bit as the anger pulsed through my muscles, consistent with my desire to destroy something, it would be nasty getting my foot cut later on, when my grief had subsided. I remembered sometimes shouting, supposedly out of despair, with a pillow over my mouth so the neighbors wouldn't hear me. I remembered having more than once drawn my hand toward the buttocks of some unknown woman, without touching her, without her noticing. I didn't say anything to her, not even in the slow, halting voice people use when searching for common ground, nor did I risk the thrill of grabbing her ass and accepting her rebuke or fleeing into the crowd.

I was getting distracted, losing myself in thought as a way of avoiding getting cut. I remembered how lightly Ana went from one idea to another, how she could not tell a story straight through because she would stitch on others and forget to finish the first. How she would be late for appointments because she found things to do along the way. Maybe it was not merely by accident that she broke glasses, either because she was thinking about some book, about work, or about me, but just because she liked breaking glasses all the time. That's what she did, maybe because not wanting to break glasses would somehow mean she didn't like herself. I enjoyed how similar to her I had become. My situational despair, because she had left and would not be coming back, resembled her permanent state of distracted urgency.

My scheme began to take shape when I saw two heavy towels on the clothesline, one mine, the other hers. If I threw the glasses against the hanging laundry, their speed would be broken and they would fall right there. The pieces of glass would not scatter too far, which had both advantages and disadvantages: I wouldn't get cut, but neither would I get to see the moment they smashed. Everything would break on the floor, so I could collect the pieces later on with less work. The operation seemed to work well enough, but the end result was strange, with the glasses simply cracked, as if they had fallen from my hand. So I collected pillows from the sofa and bed to create a protective padding under the towels. I threw the first glass with all my strength. Like my would-be shouts muffled by a pillow, the glass got wrapped in the towel and almost stopped mid-air before it unwrapped and fell onto a pillow. I thought again about Ana before fetching a few more glasses to throw at the laundry. If Ana were with me and got excited over the idea of throwing glasses without breaking them, she probably would have hurled one and missed the towel, breaking it against the wall. Her excessive manner makes me want to break things rather than

find a way to act without destroying things. The degree of her destructive potential makes my thoughts tremble. And I like it.

I threw nine more glasses, each with increasing strength until the sixth one, when the novelty wore off and I just wanted to finish up the task I'd started. I left the glasses right where they lay and went to bed, sleeping without any pillows. This morning, I picked up everything, just like I used to when Ana would leave for a while, except that those times, she would be coming back.



## THE BOOK



### A Sketch of Ana

Tony Monti

- **Original title:** Esboço de Ana
- **ISBN:** 8560160728 [This is the ISBN of the book “Geração Zero Zero”, where the short story was first published. This book is an anthology of Brazilian writers, edited by Nelson de Oliveira]
- **Publication year:** 2011
- **Original publishing house:** Língua Geral
- **Number of pages:** 408
- **Total printing in Brazil:** 5000 copies

### SYNOPSIS

The book is a selection of 21 Brazilian authors. According to the editor Nelson de Oliveira, they are the most significant fiction writers who were first published during the 21st Century. Despite having published three books before this anthology, Tony Monti wrote two new stories specially for the book. His stories are about the life and the loneliness in the enormous city of São Paulo.

### THE AUTHOR

Tony Monti

- **Pen name:** Tony Monti
- **Other books:**



eXato acidente, ISBN 8577150305, ed. Hedra, short stories, 1500 copies.  
o menino da rosa, ISBN 8577150763, ed. Hedra, short stories, 1500 copies.  
O mentiroso, ISBN 8575770500, ed. 7Letras, short stories, 1000 copies.  
Três coisas que eu gosto, ISBN 9788541803120, ed. SM, children’s book, 3000 copies.

- **Author’s webpage:** <http://www.tonymonti.wordpress.com/>
- **Awards:** Projeto Nascente, 2002. Awarded book: O Mentiroso (2003). São Paulo, SP, Brasil. PAC (Grant to publish the book), 2007. eXato acidente (2008). São Paulo, SP, Brasil.

### THE TRANSLATOR

#### Catherine Howard

Catherine Howard is a Portuguese-to-English translator specializing in environmental research, social sciences, and humanities. She has lived in Brazil for a total of 7 years, beginning in the 1980s when she conducted cultural anthropology research among indigenous peoples in the Amazon. After teaching anthropology for 15 years in U.S. universities, she returned to Brazil

for several years to conduct further research and translate for indigenous rights organizations. Back in the U.S., she is a freelance translator and owner of TranslationCraft Services.

### **PUBLICATION RIGHTS**

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