Gender, Discourse, and Desire in Twentieth-Century Brazilian Women's Literature

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Appendix

English Translations

The following are English translations for the longer Portuguese quotations. They are keyed to the text by the number in brackets. All translations are mine unless a published translation/translator is given as a source.

Chapter One
Female Body, Male Desire

1 Vidinha was a mulatto girl some eighteen or twenty years old, of average height, with broad shoulders, salient breasts, a slim waist, and tiny feet. She had very black, dancing breasts, a thick, moist lips, and extremely white teeth. Her speech was a bit slow but sweet and melodic. Every sentence she uttered was punctuated with a long, sonorous giggle and a certain backward toss of her head. . . . (Almeida, Memoirs 110)

2 . . . the blazing light of midday; the fierce heat of the farm where he had toiled; the pungent scent of clover and vanilla that had made his head spin in the jungle; the palm tree, proud and virginal, unbending before its fellow plants. She was poison and sugar. She was the sapotilla fruit, sweeter than honey, and sumac, whose fiery juice burned through his skin. She was a green snake, a slithering lizard, a mosquito that for years had buzzed around his body, stirring his desires, . . . piercing his veins to rouse his blood with a spark of southern love. . . . (Azevedo, The Slum 61)

3 As the one who presides over the home and is its guardian, the woman will always be able to instill in the man the solid principles that are so dear and essential to our [the nation’s] character. A woman’s influence upon the shaping of our qualities, and all the Brasileira can contribute to the organization of national character. . . .
Maternal qualities will influence considerably the constitution of the moral profile of men, who need women in order to solidly build our national actions. (Austregésilo v–vi)

4 They held some kind of mysterious, active fluid, a force that dragged one in, like the undertow of a wave retreating from the shore on stormy days. So as not to be dragged in, I held on to anything around them . . . ; but as soon as I returned to the pupils of her eyes again, the wave emerging from them grew towards me, deep and dark, threatening to envelop me, draw me in and swallow me up. (Machado de Assis, Dom Casmurro, trans. Gledson 63)

Chapter Two
Brazilian Women Writers: The Search for an Erotic Discourse

5 Sensual

When, far from you, alone, I reflect on this pagan affection that, ashamed, I hide comes to my nostrils the exquisite perfume that your body emanates and your very countenance holds.

The fervent confession of this infinite affection for a long time, afraid, I have buried in my lips, for your lascivious stare fixed on me, firmly, is like an insult to my chastity.

If by chance you are far away, the colossal barrier of reproaches that formerly I made to myself from proud virtue, rises up haughtily.

But, if you are at my side, the barrier falls, and I feel the thick and cold slug of voluptuousness pollute my flesh with repugnant drool.

(G. Machado, “Sensual,” Cristais partidos)

6 Voluptuousness

I have you, stretched out in the veins of my blood at your sensation I detach myself from my surroundings; my verses are completely filled with your strong poison, invincible and flowing.

Because I bring you within me, I’ve acquired, taken, your subtle manner, your indolent gesture.
Because I bring you within me I adapted to your sinuous movements, my intimate, nervous and ruby serpent.

Your lethal poison makes my eyes dull, and my pure soul that repudiates you, in vain yearns to escape your ties.

Your lethal poison makes my body languid, in a long, slow, smooth flow, up and down, in the current of my blood.

(G. Machado, “Volúpia,” *Estados de alma*)

7 An Evocation to Sleep

Sleep! from your bronze and cold cup
give me so that I can exhaust the ether, the anesthesia . . .
Here I am: body and soul—whole, for your orgy.
I seek to forget my hypochondria in your drunkenness.
I want to feel your soft faint take hold of my being and drifting off, wavering, slowly go, slipping down, through the infinity of pleasure.

Come! —already a sensual shiver takes hold of me, my whole being lies in total abandonment . . .
Give me your cold kiss,
Sleep!
Let me stretch my slim body over your body that is, like soft feathers, smooth.

Here I am, languid and naked, for your lust.

Make your caress, like an oil, run down my skin;
your caress, moist and emollient that gives my body movements like a serpent and indolence like a worm.
(G. Machado, “Invocação ao sono,” fragments, *Cristais partidos*)

8 You dance . . . your gestures are gentle strokes your dance is a vague caress
it is touch itself tickling
the melodies of tenderness . . .

You dance, and I become, at times,
overwhelmed with singular joy;
and I dream that you caress me,
and I feel over all my body your gesture pass.
(G. Machado, “Impressões do gesto,” fragment, Mulher nua)

Your dance, your limbs you agitate again,
all your being seems to be taken
by convulsions of infinite pain . . .
and from that tragic crescendo
of gestures filling the silence with moans
you slow down,
descending,
as if from a spell,
captive of a mystical curse . . .
you dance and I imagine I see myself in you.

Your movements
are
full
of my desires;
your dance is the expression
of all that I feel:
my imagination
and my instinct
move in your dance alternately;
my lust, I see it twirl, in the air,
when your body, languid, indolent,
personifies the quiet in the ambient;
rising, diminishing
in the slithering of a serpent

. . . in your light limbs, almost ethereal,
I contemplate my inner gestures,
my pleasures, my tedium, my pains!

Your dance is everlasting,
I see myself in it, I hold it within me,
constantly thus!
(G. Machado, “Impressões do gesto,” stanzas 11–13, Mulher nua)

In the highest joy, in the deepest sorrow,
may I be active, even if I am languid,
I hold you in the madness of my blood 
for Good, for Evil, dancing, dancing! . . .
(G. Machado, "Impressões do gesto," stanza 14, Mulher nua)

11 The Phallus is a symbol of the patriarchal, capitalist power, insatiable in its desire for expansion and control over human beings, who are given certain characteristics within pornographic fantasy as a reflection of social relationships in reality; [these relationships are] seen only from the viewpoint of sexuality and sexual arousal: continuity of male domination of women . . ., enforcement of racism . . ., affirmation of unequal social relations . . . (Winckler 81)

12 I’m not well-behaved. 
A whore and a lesbian 
and whatever else comes to my mind, 
I’m like a crazy bird 
looking for scarecrows and traps, 
looking to expand like sleep 
over tired eyelids, 
to explode with violence 
within the conformists’ silence. 
A whore and a lesbian 
and whatever else comes to my mind 
I’m the sequence 
unfolding from that first gesture.
(Miccolis, “Na vida,” fragment, Mulheres da vida 44)

13 My mother used to repeat certain phrases. Rules for living. In the first place, her husband, second, her husband, third, her husband. After that, the children. Yes, she was quite happy. Sweet-smelling, she waited for my father to come home from work. She used to wait for him. Perfumes, silences, whisperings. (Cunha, Woman between Mirrors 12)

14 At the times when I am really home alone, I lock myself in my room, turn on the record player and start dancing. Sound pulsing through. I leap to the other shore, free of the knots and the rules. Moving with the heavy beat, my whole body comes together in a rhythm that goes in deep. I like to put on my forbidden dresses. . . . I smile, I’m in on this with myself. . . . Who is that sultry provocative woman in the mirror? (Cunha, Woman between Mirrors 25)

15 My hands stroke my body, from top to bottom. They stop at my neck and fluff out my hair to make it fall free, on my shoulders.
My hands, circling around my breasts, gently reach the erect tips, they've only known the fat sweaty hands of one man. I can feel the pleasure awaiting my lonely breasts. My hands run on down to my waist, to my buttocks, sink into my sex, ripe humid flesh cradled away from soarings and-divings.

I step out of the mirrors looking for the fur rug. I lie down on the floor and my pores come to know the bristly softness of the hairs. The wind from off the sea brings me the smell of ripe mangoes. I curl up, I stretch out, I roll. (Cunha, *Woman between Mirrors* 81–82)

16 . . . the sounds that came together in an aria that was ours, of him a man and me a woman traversing a night of rare honeyed moon. The man and I alighted in the mares' stable and went in. The man and I lay down on the hay where the mares lie down. It was on that hay that I loved a man under that rare night of honeyed moonlight. I felt that, with that man, I was sleeping with all the other acts I had slept with before with other men. I had come with all the acts and I felt that this act of mine would be almost perfect. (Felinto, *Women of Tijucopapo* 96)

17 The man touched me as if no part of my body were left untouched, I was entirely the man's, . . . I was being voided and invaded as only the salt water of the sea can sweep through me and invade me and exhaust me. I was being deep-plumbed and saturated. The man pressed me against the walls of the mares' stable and penetrated me with his member, . . . invading me, spraying me with spittle, submerging me and saturating me until I cried out in exhaustion and he cried out in exhaustion and we fell onto the edge of a sea of hay. (Felinto, *Women of Tijucopapo* 96)

Chapter Three

Representation of the Female Body and Desire:
The Gothic, the Fantastic, and the Grotesque

18 Mounting the demon, the smell of his own semen mixed with that of sweat and animal gases, he howled with pleasure and fear, hatred and victory. He expelled feces and urine, and finally fell into the embrace where he would be only Camilo, dissolved in beauty, liberated in a water without banks. . . . (Luft, *Island of the Dead* 92–93)

19 Maybe Clara knew about their invasions of Ella's room, but Renata lacked the courage to ask her. Her sister-in-law would look
at her, smiling, saying: what harm was there in it? It was only an invalid's room. Ella was not an animal. Or was she? Clara would ask with her eyes wide open, like a child, like an insane person, like a savant. (Luft, Island of the Dead 66)

20 . . . I didn't attain the fame of the poultice, I wasn't a minister, I wasn't a caliph, I didn't get to know marriage. The truth is that alongside these lacks the good fortune of not having to earn my bread by the sweat of my brow did befall me. . . . On arriving at this other side of the mystery I found myself with a small balance, which is the final negative in this chapter of negatives—I had no children, I haven't transmitted the legacy of our misery to any creature. (Machado de Assis, Brás Cubas, trans. Rabassa 203)

21 The only advantage an animal has over men is the unawareness of death, and of death I am very aware. It remains for me as consolation to know that I will die but will carry no luggage, I leave behind only a flea collar. Two bowls and a pillow. (Telles, As horas nuas 114)

22 Ananta heard the circular steps following their fatal round, still in awe. Still in calculated self-control, he awaited in preparation. When his breathing accelerated, there began the spasms, his body growing intensely with the music . . . exploding in snout, hooves, mane. . . . Breathing wet and furious through his teeth, swollen veins, his eyes. The throbbing intensifying, as flesh and skin struggled to settle and fit. . . . (Telles, As horas nuas 70)

Chapter Four
Sonia Coutinho's Short Fiction: Aging and the Female Body

23 Stopping at the corner of Bolívar Street, waiting for the traffic light to change, she noticed that the young man driving the big red car, stopped at the corner, was looking right at the blond young woman at her left side, and not at her. That's when, like a slap on her face, she realized that her golden dreams, the deep sorrows, and the great projects were all things from the past. (Coutinho, “Uma mulher” 121)

24 she had no lesson to teach, unlike what was believed, in the past, that the elders would be able to do. In the past, ah, in the past it was believed that the elders were sources of infinite knowledge and of magic powers. Now, everything changed too fast, Copacabana was like a whirlwind where today she felt like a precious,
useless and pathetic *avis rara,* . . . oh, God, she was getting old and didn’t know anything. (Coutinho, “Uma mulher” 125–26)

25 Naked before the mirror, brushing my hair, I observe—my soft, decaying flesh, like flesh that time has molded. I am not so young any longer, but this realization tastes like honey and red wine, on a warm morning in May, in Rio de Janeiro.

Tanned and fresh body burning inside, laughing at the mirror, sharp little teeth—a vampire. . . . I look at myself in the mirror and decide: you bitch, for that’s what you are. (Coutinho, “Uma mulher” 55–56)

26 the man’s leg naked over the woman’s naked leg, she saying you are like a black panther, a big and calm panther licking the big, black paws, the man turning to get a cigarette, a man’s naked back is very beautiful, his buttocks, solid, hard flesh, strong and curvi-linear at the same time, an ugly man with a feline’s face . . . (Coutinho, “Uma mulher” 42)

Chapter Five

Contemporary Brazilian Women’s Short Stories: Lesbian Desire

27 Seated at the head of the long table set up in the verandah at the rear of the house, looking benevolent and sovereign like a patriarch, the Husband presided over the meeting of Men in Dark Suits and women with styled hair and voluminous clothes embellished with too much lace and jewelry: dignified representatives of the Extinct Colonial Nobility, displaying an old luxury brought in the Portuguese caravels. (Coutinho, “Fatima e Jamila” 132)

28 The breeze coming from the sea, far away, spreads around the room the heavy scent of the fruit piled in baskets . . . *umbus* with an acidity that ends in sweetness as it dissolves in the mouth, pointy and bowed bananas like daggers, rosy mangoes that fit in a hand as an oval breast, their thick, yellow juice running down the chin, cashew fruit almost purple, and the sourness of the cherry *pitangas*. (Coutinho, “Fatima e Jamila” 131–32)

29 As if suddenly the flamenco singer broke, in the arrow’s poignant scream, the white/black silence of the bleached houses under the vertical midday sun—with a strange uneasiness, . . . the shivering of a presage going down her guts, perhaps the Understanding,
Fátima turned and saw Jamila’s face. (Coutinho, “Fátima e Jamila” 135)

30 Lila held me by my shoulders, and under my sleepiness and tiredness I noticed again that greasy stare of desire. Ok, I thought, I succumb, sweet Lila, but I’m used to finishing off what I begin. Let’s see how far you’ll go.

Lila, with affectation, leaned against the wall, making endless seductive gestures. . . . Then, calmly, I ordered her:

—Take your clothes off . . .
—Take it all off. If you want it, it’ll be for real, dear. Lila stopped smiling. (Denser, “Tigresa” 135–36)

31 A parenthesis: Proust waited for his mother to die before he could say some things. But mine is alive and she’ll have to put up with it. Be patient, Mom. I know you have neighbors, relatives and friends, but the truth is burning inside, it must be let out. Besides, it’s good to get used to it, during this decade the wolf will eat all prudes and it’ll lick its mouth, for me it’s clear as water. (Campello, “A mulher de ouro” 59)

32 an oceanic fever devoured me, a storm swallowed me, all the Hindu mythology visited my solitary, innermost recesses, while Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva ran through my exposed nerves, what was that, Lord, the eye of a storm pushing me to limits so distant I didn’t even know of their existence. . . . and it was not only the orgasms, ruffling through my body like a cathedral’s carillon, that led me to such a perplexity of pleasure, it was the perfect space her trail imprinted on my soul, an abnegation so great in plenitude that I saw myself at the edge of religious ecstasy. (Campello, “A mulher de ouro” 61–62)

Chapter Six
The Works of Márcia Denser and Marina Colasanti: Female Agency and Heterosexuality

33 He says: this motel used to be good, and I look at the bathroom, . . . the brown sheets with suspicious bouquets, somewhere between stains and traces of color, the three round mirrors framed in fake leather (one before the other, the bed in the middle, the third one on the ceiling above the bed), obviously so as to transform us into some kind of a crazy cocktail of baked crabs: legs, arms, raw flesh, flower bed of paws, antennae, moving hairs, peeping at another hydra in the mirror in front, behind, above, below,
we wide open, mixed, confounded, at $25 a night, because (and then I know why) all motels are always the same motel. (Denser, “O animal dos motéis” 47-48)

34 I was lying down, smoking, when his hard mass fell on me. I sought his lips, but he said no, I’ve got a cold. So, I waited. Do you like it this way? he asked, turning me over. He embraced me with freezing fingers and hands, pressing my rib bones, hurting instead of caressing them. It works only from the waist down, like an electric vibrator, but it’s good, I thought, letting myself be rigidly penetrated from behind, using, so to speak, only one part of my body, as if the rest were paralyzed, or dead, as if no one could bear a dramatic frontal relation, with kisses, . . . with a face, a name, a biography. (Denser, “Hell’s Angels” 76)

35 This is the season when the mango trees dress in red.
   Leaves of tawny silk
   shiny satin.
   Round like breasts
   or abdomens
   color of new flesh.
   And on the trunks,
   dense as blood,
   trickles down
   the cicadas’ song.
   (Colasanti, “Verão em Campo Grande,” Rota de colisão)

36 Over the silk fabric
   lying and curvilinear
   like a naked woman
   the blade of the sword.
   (Colasanti, “Em Tóquio, no museu,” Rota de colisão)

37 There is a tacit agreement among poets, certain words that should not be used “because they are not tacit,” certain themes that are considered to be in bad taste. Menstruation, pregnancy, giving birth, motherhood, female sexuality itself—all of this should be addressed, let’s say, in an elegant (cold or cerebral) way, or it risks being dismissed as “a woman’s thing.” Independently from the poem’s quality. In other words, everything is OK, as long as you write “from the outside,” like a man. (Roquette-Pinto, qtd. in “Vinte e duas poetas hoje” 210)

38 I am a woman
   who always thought it beautiful
   to menstruate.
Men pour out blood
for illness
bleeding
or a nailed dagger

In us
blood flows
like a fountain
in the concave body
scarlet spring
soaked satin
dripping
in a thread.

(Colasanti, “Eu sou uma mulher,” *Rota de colisão*)

39 Your sex

Your sex in my mouth
fills me
as if through my mouth
it penetrated my vagina.
Your sex in my mouth
impregnates me
makes me turgid
pregnant
honey sieved from my breasts
on the bed.

(Colasanti, “Teu sexo,” *Rota de colisão*)

40 Into the body

Your body is a canoe
in which I descend
down life
up death
looking to sink
letting the current take me.

Your body is a cocoon
of infinite silks
where I spin
sharpen myself and enter
an invader welcomed
with liqueurs.

Your body is an exact skin for mine
a herring’s feather
a pomegranate’s shine
aurora borealis
of a long winter.

(Colasanti, “Corpo adentro,” *Rota de colisão*)

41 I belong to the eternal lineage
of betrayed women
female who weaves and spins
while the male
between another woman’s thighs
sharpens deceit and pleasure.

(Colasanti, “Hematoma da infidelidade,” fragment,
*Rota de colisão*)

42 It’s always the same male
always the same path.
No one was faithful to me
to me, to my mother
my sisters.
And none of us
could find the way
that, staying in love
leads to indifference.

(Colasanti, “Hematoma da infidelidade,” fragment,
*Rota de colisão*)

43 I began to talk to women almost simultaneously to the beginning
of my journalistic career, and in fact I don’t recall any period . . .
during which I was not connected in the most direct way with the
female public. Talking to them soon became talking about them
and with them.

. . . I found out, in the infinite reflection of so very many
women, my female I. And so, moved, I have blossomed a feeling
of sisterhood that forever binds me to those of my own sex.
(Colasanti, *A nova mulher* 9; emphasis in original)

44 In line at the market
ahead of me
she holds the basket
and waits her turn.

Skinny woman
no breasts
almost flat.
Dark skin
no shine
almost black.
Hoof-like feet.

Written on the blouse
in embroidered letters
a single word
LUST
(Colasanti, "Rumo à caixa," Rota de colisão)

45 power relations manifest themselves primordially through gender
relations. Such fact is ... primeval, since it preceded, by much,
the emergence of societies centered on the private ownership of
means of production. ... It is primordial, also, because it totally
permeates all social relations, be they class or ethnic relations.
(Saffioti, “Rearticulando” 197)

46 Friday night
    men caress their wives’ clitoris
    with fingers wet from saliva.
The same gesture with which everyday
    they count money papers documents
    and skim through in magazines
    their idols’ lives

Friday night
    men penetrate their wives
    with tediousness and penis.
The same tediousness with which everyday
    they put the car in the garage
    the finger in their nose
    and dig into their pockets
    to scratch their balls.

Friday night
    men snore on their bellies
    while women in the dark
    face their destiny
    and dream of Prince Charming.
    (Colasanti, “Sexta-feira à noite,” Rota de colisão)