

NEWTON MORENO

*Translated by Elizabeth Jackson*

## THE MEAL

*Dramatic Essays on Cannibalism*

### CHARACTERS

*1st Movement*

YOUNG WOMAN

YOUNG MAN

*Scene One: In the Jungle . . .*

MAN

BEGGAR

*Scene Two: . . . of the Cities*

PORU, AN OLD ARAWETÉ INDIAN

MAN, A YOUNG ANTHROPOLOGIST

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## THE MEAL

## 1ST MOVEMENT

*Hospital room.*

YOUNG WOMAN *alone. She seems nervous.*

*Her left hand is bandaged all the way up to her wrist.*

*She looks at everything with astonishment and surprise.*

YOUNG MAN *walks in.* YOUNG WOMAN *moves away from him, trying to avoid contact.*

*She sits further away.*

YOUNG MAN Calm down. I'm not going to come any closer.

YOUNG WOMAN Sit over there. *(She points to a chair on the other side of the room.)*

YOUNG MAN *takes a seat.* YOUNG WOMAN *gradually calms down.*

YOUNG WOMAN *(Without making eye contact)* Did you get any sleep?

YOUNG MAN No.

YOUNG WOMAN Me neither. The button.

YOUNG MAN What?

YOUNG WOMAN Your shirt. You buttoned it wrong.

YOUNG MAN Oh!

*Pause. Fixes his shirt.*

YOUNG MAN I asked if I could . . .

YOUNG WOMAN And I said yes. *(Pause)* But I never thought you actually would.

YOUNG MAN I didn't think that I actually would, either. I've always wanted to. I dreamed about it once . . .

YOUNG WOMAN You dreamed it? You never told me that. You'd already left some marks on me before.

YOUNG MAN Never so deep.

YOUNG WOMAN Never. *(Suddenly, looking at him)* Why?

YOUNG MAN Did they ask you anything?

YOUNG WOMAN "Why?"

YOUNG MAN And you did what . . . ?

YOUNG WOMAN I told the truth. Nobody believed my story. They think a dog bit me, that I made everything up because you cheated on me, that it was all out of jealousy . . . I've already said everything I had to say. I asked them to ask you. They asked if I would stick to my statement. I said that you didn't hurt me anywhere else. You didn't beat me, didn't use any weapon, nothing. Just this. *(Shows her bandaged hand.)*

YOUNG MAN They'll send you to the coroner.<sup>1</sup>

YOUNG WOMAN I know.

YOUNG MAN And they'll call the police. They asked me if there was any sexual activity or abuse.

YOUNG WOMAN We were in bed.

YOUNG MAN . . . we were . . .

YOUNG WOMAN But you're my husband.

YOUNG MAN Even so. They want to test for traces, liquids, fluids in you and then in my mouth.

YOUNG WOMAN They asked me . . . what did you do with the other part?

YOUNG MAN And you said . . . ?

YOUNG WOMAN I said, "It's with him."

YOUNG MAN With him?

YOUNG WOMAN "With" you.

YOUNG MAN With me.

YOUNG WOMAN I met with someone else last night.

YOUNG MAN Me too. They put me through hell with questions. (*Acting out the dialogue*) “Does that lady live with you?” “Yes, she’s my wife.”

YOUNG WOMAN (*Playing along*) For six years, three months, and four days.

YOUNG MAN “I brought you here to confirm this information before proceeding. Well, she claims that you . . .”

YOUNG WOMAN I was nervous.

YOUNG MAN “. . . she says . . . how would someone ask this?”

YOUNG WOMAN I had no idea what I was saying, doctor.

YOUNG MAN “I ate it.” (*Points to her hand. She raises her bandaged hand.*) “It was me. I ate . . .”

YOUNG WOMAN Why?

*She stares at* YOUNG MAN, *waiting for an answer.*

YOUNG MAN (*Mimicking the doctor*) “Didn’t it cross your mind that you were committing an act of violence?” No.

YOUNG WOMAN (*Interrupting him and coming closer*) We could decide not to press charges.

YOUNG MAN (*Surprised*) And say what?

YOUNG WOMAN It was just shock.

YOUNG MAN Are you sure you don’t want to press charges?

YOUNG WOMAN Yes. (*Pauses*) And what if you wanted more? There are certain things that I do . . . that may hurt you, but . . .

YOUNG MAN I didn’t mean to hurt you. (*Pauses*) You look at me differently.

YOUNG WOMAN I didn’t know that you felt . . . that urge . . .

YOUNG MAN I met another person last night.

YOUNG WOMAN Me too.



YOUNG MAN I got scared.

YOUNG WOMAN Did you like it? (*Pauses*) Did you like me? (*Pointing to her bandaged hand*)

YOUNG MAN Very much.

YOUNG WOMAN What do I taste like?

YOUNG MAN I put the finger, about two-thirds of it, in my mouth. I bit lightly to mark where to cut and then let my jaw weigh down, heavily enough to break the skin. Little by little, a liquid flooded my palate.

I began to taste an almost sweet flavor. I kept closing my bite until I was through the pillow of your flesh and my teeth moved to meet each other. Until the bone demanded more force and I finally cut off the loose flesh and brought it to me. I remember the flavor, I remember the texture, the softness, the

Newton Moreno’s  
*The Meal*, Teatro  
Abasto, Buenos  
Aires, 2012.  
Photo: Luana Vianna

## THE MEAL

smoothness, the delicate way in which everything dissolved. Afterward, I remember your gaze lost in me, curious, sharing the same urge. And you only saw the blood on your hand after I did. You hadn't noticed it. Until I . . . *(Pause)* Did you like it?

YOUNG WOMAN I don't remember the pain. Only the shock. I was there and saw when you took me inside you. I remember when you said: "Can I bite you? Can I tear off a piece of you?" *(Pause)*

YOUNG WOMAN "Can I bite you? Can I tear off a piece of you?"

YOUNG MAN *slowly cedes a finger to* YOUNG WOMAN. *When his finger is in front of her mouth, she bites it. Soft music accompanies the gesture. The lights fade slowly.*

SCENE ONE: IN THE JUNGLE . . .

*The gutter. Night.*

*A well-dressed* MAN *in a starched suit and tie, put-together, looking for someone, a bouquet of flowers in hand. He hears moans from under garbage piles. He finds a drunk* BEGGAR *in rags, dirty, with filthy hair and beard. The* MAN *sits him up and tidies his clothes. He places the flowers on the* BEGGAR's *lap.*

MAN You changed corners.

*(Romantically juvenile)* You didn't even tell me.

*(Tidying him up)*

They haven't been here? Did you know that they sell photos of you? They better not come take pictures of you today.

I want no buttons, no flash, and no Disneyland here.

Nobody treating you like a tourist attraction.

*(Sits beside him)*

Now it's just us. And the moon, plunged in the rivers and rivers of sewage. Just us.

What longing I feel. *(Runs his hand through* BEGGAR's *hair)*

You have a strong smell: it takes two days for my flesh to lose your perfume.

I masturbate to it.

I spend a whole day masturbating.

Why would I take my hand off my cock and take my hands off of you? They'll arrest me for vagrancy, for feeling pleasure for a whole day, for wanting to be happy for at least a whole day.

Cumming almost every minute. They wouldn't be able to stand the smile of someone who's cumming every minute. A whole day in honor of you. I keep remembering the pools of my milk spread across your chest. I look for my own image reflected on the thick surface of my pleasure. On the milky crust, I draw a heart with my finger and it evaporates.

I always explode cum on your chest, I always draw a heart. Always the same. And it evaporates.

Always the same and it evaporates. But your unwashed skin keeps the perfume of my cum.

The immaculate perfume of my heart that . . . always evaporates.

*(Laughing)*

I feel that some place between my heart and my cock I love you. A lot.

*(Steals a kiss)*

Before you, everything was dull. They never let me get too close to a mud puddle or to the laundry room. Or the maid's bedroom. For years, I drank detergent and had soup made of laundry soap at the table with my parents to please them.

But I had rich sweet-smelling friends. Friends who loved to drive around the city at night and hunt animals like you. Our adolescence was not deflowered by whores,



chicken, or goats. We would compete for their miserable asses. We would take the bum in the middle of the street. The beggar had to be really drunk, one of those who's forgotten his own language, his own name, has even forgotten he's alive. We would draw straws to see who would go first. We would plunge his head into a bucket of *pinga* and fuck his poor ass.<sup>2</sup> One after the other. That's how I lost my virginity. My pleasure was born in the asshole of a trash can, just like yours.

Later, of course, I had a blonde woman with a dark brown pussy. I just couldn't stand the French perfume she used to put on that pussy. She drowned her own pussy. She drowned herself. She drowned me. To this day I can still smell the perfume between my legs.

I wake up at night, scared by nightmares, and my sweat has the French smell of that pussy.

One night, I looked at her in the middle of a fuck and I begged as I smothered her:

"What I wanted to ask you was if you'd kill someone and make love to me right afterwards.

I'd want your blood, moving fast

because you killed a person, galloping to the cave of my cock.

Inflating it like a balloon with a murderous blood. Could you give me that blood?

And to howl ravenously into the night's ear?"

She went silent. I pulled her blonde hair until the dark roots showed. And she left.

After her, I went back to what interested me. So the closest I came to the trash was the ass of a Bolivian guy. He offered me his ass in exchange for a hot dog. I made it a point to fuck him while he devoured the sandwich. He was so hungry that he didn't yell, didn't moan, didn't feel. I liked his smell. The smell of months without a shower. Of a beard embroidered with crumbs, of hair dirty with everything. I would grab that hair and out would come pieces of paper, gum, all kinds of garbage in my hands. The cleanest thing that body ever knew was my semen. I cleaned him and engraved the dirt on my cock.

My circumcised cock, cleaned three times daily.

My cock of symmetrically trimmed pubes.

*The Meal*, Buenos Aires, 2012. Photo: Luana Vianna

## THE MEAL

My display case cock, my aseptic cock.

The other one was a hick from the Northeast I met in the bathrooms in the Tiete bus station. He said that he was selling his asshole to get together the cash for his ticket back home. That he wasn't budging from the station until he went back. That this way, he felt less in Saumpalo, that the bus station is a no-man's land, that there it was still Pernambuco.<sup>3</sup>

I would fuck his ass and tell him to talk about the drought, the famine, talk with an accent, talk about the misery, talk about his children who died one by one and whom he buried next to dried-up manioc plants, talk about Graciliano Ramos, fucking shit! I fucked him until I sent him back to the drylands.<sup>4</sup> The only civilized thing he took with him was my semen swimming inside his dry tail. (*Softly*)

But as for falling in love, only with you, of course.

(*Looks deeply into the BEGGAR's eyes*)

I brought food.

MAN *takes a dog food bowl and pours liquor into it. BEGGAR leans over and drinks. MAN caresses his hair.*

MAN I hold on to the exact image of you from the first time we met: punching the wall of a building. A tall office building, right downtown. You were hitting it hard, yelling swear words, scratching the paint, throwing at it anything you could find on the ground, for hours, until you collapsed from exhaustion. And the tall building stood firm, it seemed even bigger after that. And you shone in the dark plastic of the garbage bags, in the shadow of my father's giant office building, with your hair wet from the thick stream flowing out of the drains. With your hands bleeding black. I came over and said:

"Let me kiss your feet, use my tongue to clean your body."

(*Kisses his foot*)

I loved you the first time you asked me for change. Right after you approached the bank's armored truck and asked for some cash to buy bread. And the driver said that he didn't have change.

(*Kisses his other foot*)

You asked me for some change and I gave it to you. May I ask you for something now?

(*Pauses*)

My greatest desire . . . I think I know you well enough to ask.

(*Takes his hand*)

A piece of you. A piece. Just a piece.

You can pick which one.

You have to choose, or else it wouldn't be love.

But I would like a really dirty piece.

Your feet. Your legs. The flesh of your chest. Your breast. Your eyes! Give me your eyes, made filthy by the world.

(*On his knees*)

That's how I imagined it: you divide yourself into parts and prepare meals each day we're together. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Little by little, you offer me halves and small particles. Fatty meat and cartilage. Crushed bones, oils from your glands, broths of pleasure.

Please! (*Silence*)

You know who comes at night to take care of you. To nourish you. Who has fertilized you all this time.

To eat a chunk of your rotten human flesh.

(*Staring deeply into BEGGAR's eyes*)

You still are human flesh.

I think that's the only way for me to quiet the tremors of my body.

If I bite your flesh.

My hunger is so intense that I almost go mad.

It rumbles my stomach and echoes everywhere.  
 I don't sleep on the inside.  
 The piece of you is missing. This kiss is definitive.  
 This fuck is definitive.  
 Every kiss I gave you was a rehearsal for this bite.  
 I mapped my hunger onto your skin.  
 The first meal.

(BEGGAR offers MAN his finger)

Your pinky!  
 Trust me. (MAN prepares to take the bite)  
 The mouth of night chews in silence the world's leftovers.

MAN bites BEGGAR's finger. BEGGAR moans in pain. MAN, with bloodied mouth, chews. In ecstasy.

BEGGAR (No one understands what he says. Drunk with pain and liquor. Babbles the words. Incomprehensible)

I don't want to sleep in a trench full of your vomit anymore.

What would I do with my part if you vomit it up?

If I'm food, then devour me.

Devour me quickly before I begin to feel something, before I begin to feel like a person, before I begin to feel alive.

MAN throws himself on BEGGAR like a beast catching its prey. Blackout as MAN jumps.

*"The Tarairius were cannibals, but they practiced their cannibalism in a symbolic manner. They only ate their relatives because they believed that this would keep them closer to their loved ones. To them, it was a demonstration of respect to bury their parents within themselves and not under the earth. The Dutch had the sensitivity to understand this ritual, which justified that barbaric practice: cannibalism."*—Ronald Raminelli

SCENE TWO: . . . OF THE CITIES

*Jungle.*

*Trees with barcodes.*

*A dying Araweté<sup>5</sup> Indian, PORU, lies in a hammock.*

*He sings a song in his language with great difficulty, as if he were trying to remember it.*

*A white MAN walks in, breathless, holding a tape recorder in his hand.*

*He is nervous. He puts his hand on the Indian's head to check his temperature.*

*The MAN starts switching the batteries, rewinding the tapes, preparing his recorder.*

PORU Did you bring the water?

MAN (Always with recorder in hand)

Of course. Here it is.

PORU drinks

MAN Are you better?

PORU Yes. (Smiling) I die today.

MAN Please, let me call for help. All it will take is a call from across the river . . .

PORU You should not.

MAN How can I allow you to die like this in front of me? Sir, you're asking me for absurd things.

PORU *Sy . . . Māi . . . Aí . . .* I begin to remember the dusty words of *curumim*.<sup>6</sup> (MAN is interested anew) Things said when I did not yet have knowledge of the white people. Someone from my people comes to whisper my tongue, to delicately turn the old seed.

MAN Do you remember any other one?

PORU Later. (Laughing) Why keep the remains of a ghost? The memories of an ancient child.

## THE MEAL

MAN You are the only one who speaks this dialect.

PORU The last phrases of an already dead Amerindian.

MAN These tapes are the only record of a descendant of your tribe. For the last time. Every sound that you leave with me keeps the memory of your people. I need your words.

PORU (*After a silence*) Nobody needs my words. Who would I talk to? If I were supposed to talk to someone, nature would leave me other people.

Of what use could the language of the dead serve me?

(*Ironically*) To speak to shadows? But, stay calm, I will speak them, I will continue to speak them.

Many, many words.

Do you have enough tapes now?

MAN Yes.

PORU (*Holding MAN's band tightly*) Do you remember our agreement?

You made a promise to an Araweté Indian.

We have a pact.

MAN (*Turns the recorder off*) I'm a scientist. I've explained that to you earlier. I study your culture, but how . . . ? (*Hesitates*) How?

(*Pauses*) And what if I'm not able to . . .

PORU You want the trophy for the hunt and I want to return to the jungle. You will do it. You are going to do it. (*Whispering*) It's as close as we can be to each other.

Am I not going to throw my words into your machine? That is what I will do.

Me, in the middle of the jungle, buried in a tomb of iron.

You will see me die, but for this, this object of yours will house my last breath.

And, tomorrow, it will be this machine of yours that resurrects me. Press "play," "rec,"

"stop," and you will have the Araweté right before you. (*Letting go of his band*)

"Play!"

MAN With you dies your lineage.

PORU Turn on the machine. Are you not going to ask questions? I am about to leave, you don't have much time.

MAN (*Turning on the recorder*) Why did you come back?

PORU I returned to meet my people and all I have left is my memory. Thus, I obey my memory. I follow each shortcut that it offers me. Each syllable. To return. I give you my words, but you will help me in this return and give me the honor of dying like an Araweté.

PORU *starts singing in his tongue.*

PORU The first time I saw a white man, I thought he was ugly

I had never touched a sunless skin

The eyes had no bottom

You couldn't see where the soul started

I was little

And the white man put me on his lap

and I jumped

Back onto my mother's lap

I thought the man would take my color away and take

My soul out through his eyes

I found the first white man ugly and big

I was afraid when he opened his mouth

He shot lightning and thunder out of

his mouth

He would speak like a threat

The sounds announced catastrophe

At that moment, the air turned itself inside out

It was the sound of the end

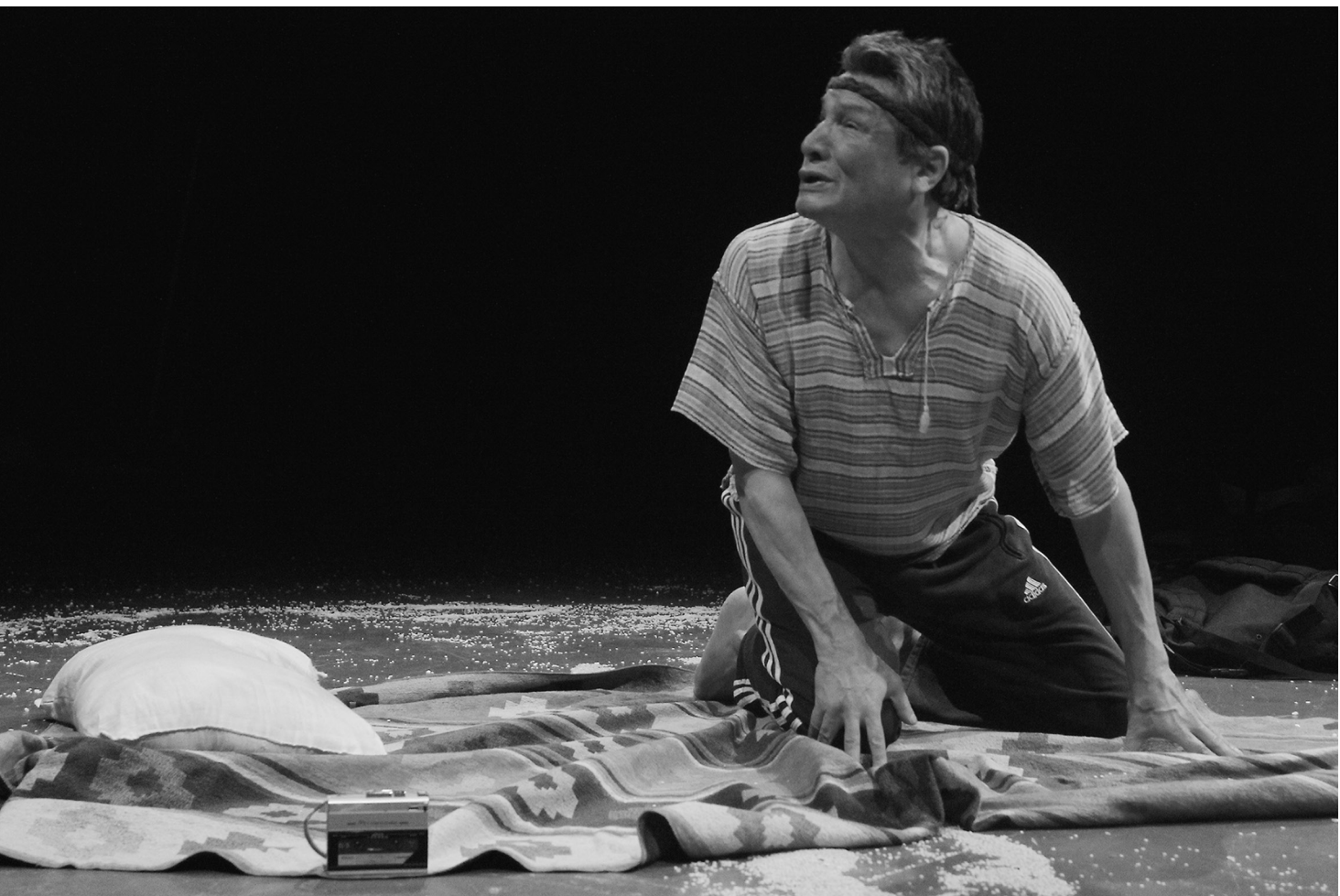
MAN Do you remember this first word?

PORU (*After thinking a little*) "Friend."

PORU (*MAN pauses the recorder. Pause*)

Some words are a flood.





(MAN releases the pause button)

Like the word that is the owner of my death.

This disease.  
This disease that eats us from the inside.  
It didn't exist in my tribe.  
Because there was no name for it.

(Whispering)

For the bad things to disappear, all you need to do is take away their names.

There's no way to invoke them.

MAN Sir, speak a little louder?

PORU Speak louder?

MAN The recorder . . .

PORU (Comes close to the recorder and coughs hard.) I will try. (Pauses)

I lost my mother when I stopped hearing her.

I could no longer comprehend what she was saying.

I didn't understand when she told me: "son, I am going to die."

I lost my mother  
Because I learned how to talk through the mouth of your people.

She must have screamed in pain and I did not help her.

My mother dissolves in the silence of my past

Alfred Urquiza in  
*The Meal*, Buenos  
Aires, 2012.  
Photo: Luana Vianna

## THE MEAL

Alfredo Urquiza in  
*The Meal*, Buenos  
 Aires, 2012.  
 Photo: Luana  
 Vianna



she died from a disease that did not exist  
 in our vocabulary.  
 One day, I found myself orphaned and  
 I couldn't understand what  
 people were telling me.  
 My aunts and uncles, brothers and sis-  
 ters, wives.  
 My blood talked to me and I did not  
 understand.  
 That is when I crossed the river  
 And became another Brazilian with  
 working papers and unemployed.  
 No gig, no vine.  
 Gig is a word that you understand,  
 isn't it?  
*Gig. Maratecó. (Very close to the recorder)*  
*Maratecó.*  
 Nobody believes a man of this color.  
 My place is the jungle.  
 My destiny is extinction.  
 It was no use running

I crossed the river and returned to the  
 page of the History book.

Little by little, I undressed again  
 And naked, I cried, dressed in the  
 truth of things.

*(He laughs)*

The end started when the crosses  
 arrived over here.

Seducing with other voices and teach-  
 ing new fears.

Now, upon my return, the evangelicals  
 come to catechize me without crosses,

But they ask me for money and God  
 with crocodile skin Bibles and rosewood  
 pages.

*He coughs hard*

MAN Let me take you to the hospital.

PORU *(Holds onto the hammock while MAN tries  
 to take him into his arms)* For what? I die today.

You are the one who no longer knows your tongue.

I die today.

I D-I-E T-O-D-A-Y.

With my end, these words are yours.

The last grunts of an Araweté specimen.

If you save me, I will tear them from your memory

and tear away your glory.

Remember: your blood carries a commitment to me.

Your promise sleeps quiet in my veins

and it is because of it that I can rest.

You do not have that much strength.

Calm down and help me die with dignity.

(MAN gives up trying to take PORU from the hammock)

Your love for my tribe is pure. Only you can inherit my death.

PORU touches MAN's face

MAN (Standing up abruptly) You've been agonizing for three weeks, I'm going to take you from here. I want to call off our agreement.

PORU Calm down. Calm down. Why the rush?

There is no hurry here.

MAN I have to be quick.

Do you not understand?

Cry over your death quickly, record your voice quickly, write my article quickly.

A silent urgency that carries me speedily toward my death.

I do not even notice the human landscape that falls apart around me.

I have lost my interest in the hours

And in their millimetric drawings on skins and molecules.

Nowadays everything is faster.

Destruction is in a hurry, the worms are hungrier.

I need to call off our agreement . . .

PORU (Stands up. Starts dancing with difficulty and slowness. Mixes in fragments from his mother tongue) When a brave one dies,

a man of great deeds

we do not throw his remains in the mud.

We dance his death from one sun to the next.

We dress our faces with the bluish black

of genipap.

I come from a distant time, where those who stay

Cook the dead one, preparing him

And eat the parts

Over the course of a night and day.

Until we bury him in our blood.

That is how it was with my great grandfather.

He was put in the ground within his people.

That was how you honored a man.

I remember his taste.

His worth.

I want you to honor me

Piece by piece.

I gave you my words

I will give my last words to you.

Precious words that should die with me

But this is our agreement

You will resurrect my tribe with your hunger

(Pause)

*quyriri ndi yby*

*ejara amó potyra quiriri xe*

*xé nda acobé ymuã*

*jejurupecá pytera xe apecu aé suusuú*

MAN What does it mean? What did you say?

PORU An entire nation

In my grave fit millions of men

and women of my color.

Silence me with earth,

Leave me the silence and some flowers.

## THE MEAL

I have not existed for a long time.  
Open my mouth, kiss my tongue  
and chew it.

MAN (*Nervous*) Repeat that, please, let me  
record it again.

PORU Record? Capture? Cage?

MAN Use whichever word you would like

PORU I cannot use the word I want. No more.  
It has to be the right word. I had beautiful  
words hanging from each branch in the  
jungle. Where are they? *Ybá . . . guyrá . . .*  
*caaeté . . .* where are they?

MAN The tongue cannot die with you.

PORU (*Weaker*) It was dead already. You want  
to resurrect it.

I vomited the remains of my brain.  
(*He is tired. Sits down in the hammock.*)

(*Pauses*) The time is here.

I have helped you, now it is time for  
you to help me.

I will scream, try to hold the echo with  
your hands.

MAN I cannot. I am unable to.

PORU I imagine that it took longer for a  
language to disappear, no? It almost  
seems as if this

were the first language to die.  
Every day a word dies. Now, somewhere,  
a word is dying.  
Let us have a minute of silence.

(*The tape runs out, MAN turns it over*)

Stop messing with these useless tapes.

MAN (*Exploding*) They are not useless!  
They are not useless!  
They are not useless!

*Pause.* PORU *settles down in the hammock*

PORU (*Lying down, hidden in the hammock*) My  
question, sir: why are you here?

MAN The first time I saw an Indian.

I never imagined his end.

I thought he was eternal.

Trapped in the page of the book, in the  
jungle.

Trapped in the forest, in the jaguar's  
mouth, in the spear,  
in the river, in the green, in the Amer-  
indian woman's lap, in the toucan.

Trapped at the same age, with no white  
hairs or wrinkles.

Trapped on the roof of *mãe d'água's*  
mouth.<sup>7</sup>

I trained to be the doctor who would  
deliver angels,

And instead, I scalpel rotting and ran-  
cid mummies.

I grew up to work with mummies  
Mummies that I embalm and archive.

I was raised to be white  
and white men crossbred different

disappearing indigenous tribes to secure their  
species.

(*Running out of air*)

Trees fall down, crushing what is mov-  
ing in search of life in the jungle.

The horror of seeing everyone run from  
falling trees.

Sitting in the nucleus of the country, I  
see the end.

I touch my death in the cell being  
devoured

by cancer

And think that my time will come

When one day I stop understanding

what my

mother tells me . . .

*He realizes that PORU has died.*

MAN Sir, I have to stop you from dying. (*Holds*  
*the old Amerindian. Cries*)

Sir, you can't. You can't!

You are dead in my arms.

You will not fit within me.  
I do not have your stature, your dimensions, I don't.

I do not deserve this honor. You will not fit within me.

Poru? (MAN *rewinds the tape*)

PORU *"quyriri ndi yby  
ejara amó potyra quiriri xe  
xé nda acobé ymuã  
jejurupecá pytera xe apecu aé suusuú"*

MAN What does that mean? What did you say?

PORU "An entire nation  
In my grave fit millions of men  
and women of my color.  
Silence me with earth,  
Leave me the silence and some flowers.  
I have not existed for a long time.  
Open my mouth, kiss my tongue  
and chew it."

MAN *turns off the recorder. He heats up the fire and starts undressing PORU. He prepares himself for the final act. He lays PORU on his lap.*

MAN I honor your memory and our shared blood  
I consecrate the fraternal flesh  
I feed our shared story.  
On the day of my death,  
The one who will devour me is the weak memory of the worms.

But today  
I will eat your parts in praise.  
Like the brave, like the last,  
To sustain so many ghosts.  
Today a tribe dies,  
Without sailing ships or fever, or flu, or slavery  
A man's history dies with me

MAN *kisses PORU's dead mouth.*

*He screams as he chews on the tongue or as he prepares to cut off the tongue.*

THE END<sup>8</sup>

*A tree collapses. The sound of trees falling, joined by indigenous chanting. The chants grow stronger, and as they become deafening, the light fades.*

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1. Although a coroner generally investigates cases of suspicious or violent death, the author uses this designation.
2. *Pinga* is cheap Brazilian hard liquor made from fermented and distilled sugar cane juice.
3. *Saumpalo* is the informal pronunciation of São Paulo by northeastern migrant workers.
4. Graciliano Ramos (1892–1953) is a Brazilian author whose novels and stories, particularly *Barren Lives*, dramatize social and existential problems of the Brazilian Northeast.
5. The Araweté believed in cannibal gods. Poru's language is fictional, created with Tupi words extracted from the book *Pequeno Vocabulário Português-Tupi*, by Father A. Lemos Barbosa (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria São José, 1970). According to this dictionary, *poru* means "to eat human flesh."
6. *Curumim* means "child" or "boy" in Tupi-Guarani.
7. *Mãe d'água* literally means "water mother" and is the water spirit that inhabits rivers in indigenous folklore.
8. From the author: "This line appears in English in the original, as a reference to Hollywood movies as well as to the presence of international timber companies in the Amazon."