Tobias, Luís

(1954)



From an early age, Luís Tobias was driven by a gaze fronted by an inner becoming. He was born in Alentejo, which he calls “Mátria” [“Motherland”], in Évora, where he studied. He lived in Lisbon from 1972 to 1974. He took up residency in Porto in 1975, where he founded his riding school – *Dressage* (classical dressage). He travelled across Europe, America, the Maghreb and India. In 1989, he earned the title of Reiter Meister – Dressur from the Egon von Neindorf Reiter Institut RFA (Master of Classical Dressage), an activity which he undertook in Portugal and abroad and from which he has since retired, dedicating himself exclusively to artistic photography and writing, both practices he never abandoned.

In 1972, he participated in “Liberdade Sensitiva de Demonstração” – Évora/Amsterdam.

He was a founding member of the Fundição Veia Assanhada artistic movement and of the Caixa Geral de Despojos poetry collective, both starting in Porto, in the 1990s and 2010s. He collaborates regularly with magazines and other literary/artistic periodicals, he is an author and director of photography in different kinds of films, such as *Janela com Vistas largas* (1996), *Carta com Janela ao fundo* (1999), *Óculos de Sol* (2005), *A Perdição já não é o que era* (2005), *Feedback* (2006). He creates photography for the stage and recitals, which works as a vanishing point on the literary terrain with which it dialogues. Such is the case of performances led by the Caixa Geral de Despojos collective, such as *Desapontaste-me em Punta Cana* (2003), *Nenhum de nós conheceu a Branca de Neve* (2004), *Delírios orais* (2006), *Vemo-nos no Limbo* (2007), *Bife Picado* (2008), among many others.

With light as a “pigmento primário” [“primary pigment”] for his creative production, he reveals something already present in his installations mixing video, text, and photography: “Alguém disse que eu fotografo poesia e escrevo fotografia” [“Someone said I photograph poetry and write photography”]. He has published several books which have intermediality as

a solid ground, and from which multidimensional journeys are activated. In *As Quatro Casas* (1997), partially written in Paris, in line with photography, João Gesta's preface makes use of satire, dialoguing in Spanish with the distant serenity of the poetry in Portuguese which follows: "Este Prefácio há superado los controles mas rigurosos realizados en laboratórios indepiendentes. Si no queda totalmente satisfecho, le reintegraremos su importe" ["This preface has undergone the most rigorous inspections performed by independent laboratories. If you are not completely satisfied, we will refund you"]. In *Espelho do começo dos nossos dias* (2001), there is cooperation between science, photoart and poetry in a journey to the origin of the universe, about which Maria do Carmo Serén states: "Luis Tobias […] faz intercâmbio com as imagens oníricas que a ciência nos dedica como modelos de estabilidade e sugere-nos aquelas simulações com que nos destruímos nos poemas dos tempos diferentes" ["Luis Tobias (…) undergoes an exchange with the oneiric images science presents us as models of stability, and suggests to us those simulations with which we destroy ourselves in the poems of different times"]. *Pública Forma sem Notário* (2004) begins an inquiring trip into death's universe: "[…] concordámos navegar rotas / que já pressentíamos / duvidamos ainda hoje que / o norte seja o norte / e em silêncio respiramos uma palavra – a única" ["(…) we agreed to sail on routes / which he had sensed before / we doubt even now that / north is north / and in silence we breathe a word – the only one"]. It is silence that the author attempts to bring into language, through words or image, having as structuring presences, in the search for the creative and existential essence, figures such as Prem Rawat, Albano Martins and Álvaro Lapa.

From a work sojourn in Germany, in the 1990s, resulted the bilingual publication of *Defronte um olhar esquecido / Gegenübereinvergessener Blick* (2000), translated into German by Katharina Rzepka. In the book's preface, valter hugo mãe refers to what underlies the essence of the perceptive register which Luís Tobias expresses through words and images treading shared paths by the Rhine: "*Defronte um olhar esquecido* é a memória de uma viagem que Luís Tobias usou para arte. De passagem por Germersheim, o autor enceta um percurso estético pelas suas impressões de forasteiro. Quer com a fotografia, quer com a poesia, descortina o que é isso de se viajar levando na bagagem uma sensibilidade criativa"

["*Defronte um olhar esquecido* is the memoir of a journey Luís Tobias used for art. Passing by Germersheim, the author begins an aesthetic route through his foreigner's impressions. Either through photography or through poetry, he unveils what it means to travel with creative sensibility in one's baggage"]. Ramiro Teixeira, another scholar of this poet and photographer, refers to the "visões de duplo efeito" ["double effect visions"], which he considers "bem pouco portuguesas" ["not quite Portuguese"] and which point to a Europe resembling a "casa inicial" ["initial house"] which widens and in which roots are created (cf. Teixeira, 2001).

The journey as a paradigm of the search for an aesthetic answer to ontological questions is recurring in this author's oeuvre. Regarding *Feito por Medida*, a narrative shot on film – negative – between 2002 and 2005, in New York, London, and Madrid, with the collaboration of dancer Diana Melo Rego and writer and poet Daniel Jonas, Luís Tobias clarified on *Primeiro de Janeiro* (12 May 2008) that "aqui se inscreve a frustração de uma civilização, que se arroga como tal, apesar da sua incapacidade de gerar soluções para mitigar a incomensurável e obsessiva sede de satisfação dos indivíduos que lhe dão corpo" ["here is inscribed the frustration of a civilization which thus names itself, despite its inability to create solutions to mitigate the immeasurable and obsessive thirst for satisfaction of the individuals which make it up"].

Travels

Portugal, Amsterdam, India, London, Madrid, the Maghreb, New York, Paris.

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Quotations

a house on Inselstrasse
a shelter from the time which fades away slow-brief ruthless

the open doors
the flight of swans
a rare sight for my sailing eyes
again the night
the kitchen
kerosene coffee tobacco
we talked until all was over
an old sturdy floor separates us from the flat above
two Spanish women frown exuberantly
Turks and Russians
all the friends and enemies
of Old Spain
succumb to the warlike ardours
of Castilian aphrodisia

(*Defronte um olhar esquecido*, 2000) (translated)

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Manuela Veloso (2011/11/14)