

Angra revisited
for Onésimo Almeida

Stuart Blazer

Everywhere a shimmer: sun diffused through cloud-sieve. Filtered shine.

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Yesterday's pigeon on a roof above a language-school, rolling its R's to practiced pidgin perfection.

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The city is a stage-set echoic with associations, buildings stacked like books on an open-air library shelf. Volumes and colored masses ignite a music played on a visual scale, a score composed with attentive whimsy.

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Joel Neto's bookstore, Bar Lar Doce Livro, a new center in the center of the city, a flower blossoming from stone.

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Shocked from sleep by early morning construction noise outside bedroom window: stones gargled in a giant's mouth.

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Recreio dos Artistas: proscenium as forehead extended into theatrical space. Red curtains against black walls. Robes of a king.

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Watching rehearsals of a play for which I wrote the text: paying attention in another language.

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A foreigner listening to Portuguese sounds: thought-water flowing over stones.

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Ana and Peter's tiny kittens running around the house, climbing legs, curling around my neck and resting on my shoulder. One whispers a bloody secret. Still have scratches a week later. They offer a new reading of a favorite Emanuel Felix poem: *As raparigatinhas lá de casa*.

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After a long good meal with my hosts I cleaned up as Ana came into the kitchen with a bottle, poured a small but just right splash of a brandy from 1978 that her father made in Biscoitos. What does the past taste like?

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Old-school Terceirense way to ask for a *cheirinho*, a taste of booze in the coffee: *com música*.

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Pigeons just outside my window repeat *ilhas, ilhas* as though I needed to be reminded of where I am. *Trocar coração*: break the heart to make change: paper currency refracted into its metals: brightness solidified into nickel, copper, silver, imaginary gold.

Light is different here: the day's bright yoke, yolk fed intravenously by moisture, fresh-squeezed each instant.

Azorean sun a sacred cow, milked daily. Whipped light the consistency of foam. Rain condenses the day into hydroponic skin. A conjugation.

Questions of identity: if weather is alive to ambient life why should personality be considered inorganic, more noun than verb?

Eye hooks sky, color of a fresh-caught fish.

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Found a good restaurant near the port. Fish soup a delight: the sea in a bowl for 3.50. *Prato do dia* menu hand-done on a board headlined *Sugestões*, which I read as *Sudigestões*, easily seduced by my own game.

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Man of the world. As opposed to what? Confined to family, country, religion, himself only? Here I'm a man of letters learning to spell, not yet a man of words. When I try to speak some Portuguese, aside from a few simple phrases, my tongue has suddenly become an ear, only able to listen.

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Sat to read on a bench in Praça Velha when a guy shambled over, sort of rough-looking. Thought he might ask for some coins. Instead, he said, *Eu lembro-me de ti, pá*, then asked after my daughter, my former partner, shared some memories of Ondas, my restaurant where we met. These past many years working construction until hurt. He tells me this in an English as broken as his leg and shuffles off with a smile. As we were talking, I recalled that back when I lived here I gave myself a heteronym: Alberto Fechado. And now this apt reversal: his name is Américo.

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Climate in Angra is such that fur can grow on clothes in your closet. Humidity is more constant than most friends. Met the woman this happened to in a cafe and we all shared a laugh: she was walking home and her feet began to feel funny. Coolish, light rain. Looked down, all seemed normal, laces tied. Now uncomfortably wet. Bent to examine closely: soles on both shoes gone.

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A favorite little cafe/grocery store I used to visit years ago now sells clothes; the restaurant I used to own is a boutique hotel; the small place I had my first and still best *mão de vaca* (lovely gelatinous dish of calf's-foot jelly with chick peas, celery and onions) has become a seafood restaurant run by a nice Ukrainian woman with a friendly staff and a terrible appetite-effacing interior.

Wandering after lunch up a steep narrow street (that I later learned was famous for its brothels) I passed a sign, in English: *This massage is so good you'll forget where you parked your car.* The official plaque read MASSATERAPEUTA, which lends its phonics to the street's origins: *Massateraputa*.

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for Ana Brum & Peter Cann

White building across from where I'm staying on Rua de Jesus, a fat 100 years old, stares out from sad windows with a bad case of teen-age acne. Many of these impressive facades have lost generations of heavily applied cosmetics. Must be something in the water.

Each street's rise and fall displays a thoughtful yet sudden move: the pawn's one-step; knight's waltz; bishop's diagonal. To the left this narrow road cobbled with countless small stones descends towards the city. Turning right, even with the eyes, an incline vanishes into...

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Ah Terceira. Angra.
Revisitation/*Revisitação*.
—livin *la vida maluco*—.

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