

**POETICAL LETTERS: POTENTIALITIES OF TRANS AUTHORITY WRITING**

***CARTAS POÉTICAS: POTENCIALIDADES DA ESCRITA DE AUTORIA TRANS***

***CARTAS POÉTICAS: POTENCIALIDADES DE LA ESCRITURA DE AUTORIDAD  
TRANS***



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**ABSTRACT:** The literary field has been demarcated by writings available to (de)construct narratives through other lenses, repositioning experiences considered subaltern. Understood not only as an artistic expression, but also as a language permeated by ideological values and discourses, writing creates fiction and produces memory. Based on this principle, the present work aims to analyze literary narratives from the exchange of correspondence between the authors of this research and transmasculine poets. With reference to the studies produced by Anzaldúa (1980) and Mombaça (2021), we will discuss the potential present in the literary encounter between letters and poetry, presenting other forms of writing production, thus confronting one of the pillars of literary canons: cisnormativity, in addition to strengthened the policy of alliances and agencies around experiences and knowledge linked to transmasculinities.

**KEYWORDS:** Letter. Literature. Memory. Transmasculinities.

**RESUMO:** *O campo literário tem sido demarcado por escritas dispostas a (des) construir narrativas por intermédio de outras lentes, reposicionando experiências consideradas subalternas. Compreendida não apenas como expressão artística, mas também como linguagem atravessada por valores e discursos de cunho ideológico, a escrita cria ficção e produz memória. Partindo deste princípio, o presente trabalho tem por objetivo analisar narrativas literárias a partir da troca de correspondências entre os/as autores/as desta pesquisa e poetas transmasculinos. Com referência nos estudos produzidos por Anzaldúa (1980) e Mombaça (2021), discutiremos o potencial presente no encontro literário entre cartas e poesias, apresentando outras formas de produção de escrita, confrontando assim um dos pilares dos cânones literários: a cisheteronormatividade, além de fortalecer a política de alianças e agenciamentos em torno das experiências e saberes vinculados a transmasculinidades.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Carta. Literatura. Memória. Transmasculinidades.

**RESUMEN:** *El campo literario ha sido delimitado por escritos dispuestos a (de)construir narrativas a través de otros lentes, reposicionando experiencias consideradas subalternas. Entendida no solo como una expresión artística, sino también como un lenguaje permeado por valores y discursos ideológicos, la escritura crea ficción y produce memoria. Con base en este principio, el presente trabajo tiene como objetivo analizar las narrativas literarias a partir del intercambio de correspondencia entre los autores de esta investigación y los poetas transmasculinos. Con referencia a los estudios producidos por Anzaldúa (1980) y Mombaça (2021), discutiremos el potencial presente en el encuentro literario entre letras y poesía, presentando otras formas de producción de escritura, confrontando así uno de los pilares de los cánones literarios: la cisheteronormatividad., además de fortalecer la política de alianzas y agencias en torno a experiencias y conocimientos vinculados a las transmasculinidades.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Carta. Literatura. Memoria. Transmasculinidades.

## Introduction

*Correspondence*. feminine noun. Act or effect of corresponding, of relating to something else; reciprocity.

### Dear reader audience,

The words contained in this text were produced from the margins, from the edges. It is a writing that finds in the politics of alliances a possibility of recognizing the potentialities of what we commonly call transmasculine poetics. A collective writing that departs from different places, knowledge and experiences towards the crossroads, a territory where literary production is bewitched through risks and erasures.

When writing a letter addressed to women in the third world, Anzaldúa (1980) concerns us by questioning the delegitimization of her writing for not being situated within the parameters granted by traditional approaches, that is, unequal power relations denied her rights as writing, memories, references and affections. Thus, when producing first-person narratives, the author recognizes the act of writing as synonymous with resistance, another strategy for surviving.

In “Letters as they live and vibrate despite Brazil”, Mombaça refers her words to bodies that produce against movements, thus challenging the norms imposed by the logic of whiteness and cisgender fundamentalism. Recognizing the contradictions that are present in this game, the author invites us to recognize the potentiality through the paths of ancestry, “where our impossible lives manifest themselves in each other and manifest with their dissonance, dimensions and modalities of the world that we refuse to surrender to the power” (MOMBAÇA, 2021, p. 14, our translation).

The action of writing a letter allows a better understanding of its meanings, usually accompanied by emotions and feelings recorded indefinitely. In this sense, the present work seeks to contribute to the construction of a dialogue mediated by writing in its most varied forms of expression through events produced by lived experiences (BATTISTELLI, 2017).

Starting from the letters published by Anzaldúa (1980) and Mombaça (2021) and the methodological force present in this literary format, the proposal of each author of this work arises to direct a correspondence to a dissident poet. The criteria for choosing the addressees, as well as the contribution of each one of them to the composition of what can be understood as poetry of transmasculine authorship, are described in the letters as we will see below, as well

as the responses obtained through the three addresses (with the exception of the targeted text *in memorian*).

## Addressing I

### Sometimes only an affection of ours can break some silences.

Alagoinhas, 10/12/2022

Dear Esteban,

All good? Hope you're well. I write you this letter euphoric and radiant with the possibility that these words will reach you. (I think I'm already on the fifth draft in the midst of attempts) I would like this letter to be handwritten, as was done in the old days, but I was forced to use the Times font. I also need to tell you that I'm not much for writing letters, the few times I ventured out I was inspired by the passions that moved me.

Oh man, I need to apologize for my lack of formality, I should have introduced myself! I'm Thomas, at that time I recognize myself as a trans man, I'm from Alagoinhas, it's about 120km from Salvador, do you know? I met you when I saw you at the event "Transmasculine Poetic Insurgencies" in 2021 together with the speech of Bruno Santana (a dear friend!) and Jomaka, transmasculine poets whom I have deep admiration for, just like you! Which reminded me of the direction of this letter, I write to you because of the enchantment I have for your writings and all that they mean. When reading "Sal a Gosto" (RODRIGUES, 2018) your poems sharpen my senses, I could feel the sweet love in your verses, hear the noise of the sea and pain corroding my chest.

#### **I accidentally make plans**

the day you were late for almost half an hour I listed 13 things that I like to notice you: your eyes, your mouth, your open ear, your smile, your hands, your bent arm, your breasts, the scar on your leg, the way your hair falls over your forehead, your ass, your tattoo, her collarbone, her outfit combinations; I remembered the day we went out together and I was black and white and you were all stamped and it's like an eclipse in the middle of nature. I like people (RODRIGUES, 2018, p. 47, our translation).

**The sea swallowed my reflection in the mirror,**  
My dowries, my cradle, my laughter and my crying  
The sea swallowed my certificate, my sea air, my fear  
The papers I wrote  
The poems in which I died, I revived, without you, meaningless  
(RODRIGUES, 2018, p. 9, our translation).

And what about the work “With hands tied like someone stepping on eggs” (RODRIGUES, 2021)? It is possible to experience each moment described by you, the effervescence of your experiences overflowing the real. The coolest thing is that you get away from formalities, explore love, ephemeral happiness and the pain that seems to be in common with mine. This poetry that dialogues with Kika Sena's writings is by far my favorite.

**[hard] re-experiencing what screams kika sena**

...

a knot  
one  
at the  
and my tongue became just an organ  
I no longer had a nationality

house, corner bed  
I was stoned  
in the eyes, in the mouth, in the arms in the flesh  
I was burned  
on the back, on the bone, next to what pulsates like a hand full of  
blood  
I've been shut up, flogged down  
I was humiliated  
they put me in a tank  
with sharks for days without eating anything  
they put me in a tank  
with sharks for days without eating  
they put me in a tank  
with sharks  
they put me in a tank  
and locked out  
(RODRIGUES, 2021, p. 42, our translation).

Its literature results in many concerns, discomforts and sometimes I feel approaches in confrontations, mainly due to the search for self-recognition. I have used these feelings to compose my master's dissertation, it has not been easy, but, together with some other transmasculine writings, I have seen the work flourish. One of the writings is his poetry “Meninos que Choram” which is in the work “Black Transmasculinities – Plural Narratives in First Person” (SANTANA; PEÇANHA, 2021).

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when Demetrius left

it was like the end of an era  
for us who carry  
your face body back  
and we cry alone

but  
following in your footsteps  
whenever you can  
we stop to dance

and love I know  
when it hurts to breathe  
(RODRIGUES, 2021, p. 61-63, our translation).

This poetry hurts deeply, it even hurts physically, but beyond that this poetry is a breath of hope, a strong breath! Because I believe in the power of life that his personal and literary (re)existence represents. It's so wonderful to see you, producing, writing, the space you occupy is inspiring. I managed to see a transmasculine person showing his art, breaking with the logic of silencing and erasing our existences makes us believe in other possible futures, futures where we will remain ALIVE!

because they want to stay alive  
because they want to stay alive  
because they want to stay alive  
because they want to stay alive

May, 2021. *In memoriam*: Demétrio Campos  
(RODRIGUES, 2021, p. 63, our translation).

So, I need to thank you for sharing your art with us and empowering us with every move you make. Thanks! Your words arrive, mess up and remain. I will continue to accompany you from here, reading, sharing and proud to see a trans man doing so much. I really hope that one day we can meet, have a beer and chat about life. A big hug!

Thomas Cardoso.

### **I don't know how to be a reference, when I want to be affection**

Salvador, 03/10/2022

Thomas,

I write to you with the happiness that only we know when we find one of our own around the world. I will never know how to define the taste of our encounters and our affections. When I received your letter of invitation, I felt my hands tingling with anticipation. Not that it was anything out of the ordinary, but there are so many people who lean on our productions without



really feeling what we feel, that when I received your words, I felt you sitting beside me inviting me to create new worlds. That's always how I feel when I meet people like us. I thank you for the care with my poetics, for the sensitivity with which you found me and made yourself present in my days. It's important when we know we've reached the other. This has been one of my challenges, from the moment they turned to me and said "you are a reference". I don't know how to be a reference, when I want to be affection.

I like the idea of the hug between ours, the demonstration of affection, the permissiveness of touch and closeness, because we also deserve it, and that's why I talk about us in every new poetry. Because it's important to be a fight, but even more is to be affection. Hence the tingling when you reached me. That's why the happiness of having found you in the middle of these wanderings. Good thing I messed up a few things in there. I like that restless feeling that only poetry provokes. I am interested in knowing your senses, your wishes, how words affect you and how much you see yourself in what I write. May we meet for other wanderings. May our affection reverberate and find other transmasculines like us. May they see us, one day, with our eyes.

With *dengo*,  
Esteban R.

## Addressing II

### Written for How to See, How to Touch and How to Move

Aracaju, November 26, 2022

Dear Caio Jade,

I write this letter with words located below the equator. Here, where our lives add up in the hope of reframing narratives and rebuilding a country devastated by hatred and intolerance, I hope to find you more and more alive and undisciplined. I confess that I still feel the heat of the democratic hangover and restlessly follow the blockade of highways and barracks across the country. I've been sleeping little and dreaming a lot. Last night, I traded the comfort of the pillow for the dissidence of your verses, *Ode(o) à Masculinidade* (JADE, 2020), a poem written at the height of your 25 years, invited me to pull other forms of writing out of paralysis and confusion, even though literary and academic spaces are configured as unauthorized places for our letters, verbs, pronouns, dialects, experiences, smells and intentions.

As Mombaça (2021, p. 28) warns us, “Yes, they will tear us to pieces, because they don't know that, once broken, we will scatter. Not as a people, but as a plague: in the very heart of the world, and against it”. If institutions attribute different meanings to our body, your poetry never tires of mocking this infamous truth-producing apparatus that boils down to what we have “between our legs”. “They say dysphoria, disorder, syndrome, incongruity, deficiency, handicap; we say bodily dissent [...] They say power, we say potency” (PRECIADO, 2020, p. 389).

Accompanying your movements across so many frontiers leads me to other forms of know-how, recognizing the importance of the word as an element of healing. Antidote or Poison? I do not know for sure. If “the body itself is a battlefield”, wouldn't literature be a weapon forged in the ancestry of those who allowed us to be this composition made of “steel and dream spinning webs of rarely imagined meanings”? Your writing is made up of doses of daring that shuffle normative grammar, conjugating verbs as complex and contradictory as the wounds of the present time.

If we are territorially distant, by exploring new routes, healing open wounds, satisfying the collective hunger to tell stories from other lenses, I end up bumping into you against the grain of a discursive coloniality willing to tell us “A story of tortured voices, broken languages, imposed languages, prevented speeches and the many places we could not enter, nor remain to speak with our voices” (KILOMBA, 2019, p. 27, our translation).

Thus, I receive your words as someone who risks steps and turns the tremor into a counter-dance based on movements that will never be unveiled in full, on the contrary, they are demarcated by a sway that allows dotting tears of memories by challenging the predictability of the unique story that strategically connects us. was placed as a sentence. Thank you for disturbing so many people's sleeps. Gratitude for cherishing so many sleeping dreams.

Dayanna Louise.



## We Are Worth So Much More

Campinas, April 18, 2023

Dear Day,

It is curious to revisit the verses of “Ode(o) à masculinidade” (JADE, 2020), a poem written in 2016, and realize how its meanings continue to circulate. They don't close.

I have been thinking of trans voices as open codes, permeable to transmutations, dancing. I remember the character of Octavia Butler who created a cult, *A Semente da Terra*, whose greatest teaching was: God is change.

I have been investigating the sacredness in us, the one that the world tries to steal from us. A poetic sacredness, unstable, chaotic, plural. For the colonialist West, identity is fixity, absence of change, permanence. As for many and diverse cultures on the Planet, who we are moves along with life. Everything is transforming, moving, and that doesn't mean that things stop being themselves.

What is a contradiction for some, for others is the air that one breathes, the water that runs, the fire that transmutes, the earth that fertilizes and the ore that is remade. Raw and sweet. Unstable and everlasting. In addition to norms.

Reducing our lives to boxes that suffocate us, narrow spaces that kill us, is a trap. It's not worth it. We are worth so much more.

It is in this appreciation that we try to establish an address. Recover what was and is taken from us daily. Self-love, self-healing. As you recalled, between the medicine and the poison there is the scale and the hand that chooses the dose.

That we know how to dose.

Thank you for all the exchanges we have made and I hope we follow these movements. May the dance never cease.

Fondly,

Caio Jade.

### Addressing III

#### From a transmasculine to a man ahead of his time

São Cristóvão, November 14, 2022.

To Anderson Herzer the Mustache

Hi Herzer, I confess that writing a letter to you is not a very easy task. I write as if I were someone very close to me, in fact, this is how I feel reading your autobiography “*A Queda Para o Alto*” (HERZER, 1982), the same one that you did not see published and applauded by several people, including us, transmasculine. Life also took that away from him...

I caught myself in many moments thinking why should I write a letter addressed to you, precisely you. I think that the reasons that led me to write this, beyond identifying with your story, is to make your poetry and story reach other people, who know and feel you, just as I felt... Beyond pain, violence and loneliness on the journey. I want you to know the poet Herzer, the one who writes letters and love letters, the one who gives himself entirely and moves mountains to reach his goals. I want you to be remembered, after all, as you poetically said: “A man never dies as long as his existence is remembered” (HERZER, 1982, p. 161).

Herzer, I write from a place of privilege, although my (our) experience is threatened at all times by the (cis)theme, I have the freedom to rant about who I am and how I feel. The attempt to fit into patterns we don't belong to ends up killing us and taking our lives little by little, my fear is that this has happened to you. Even though I am speaking from another place in history, this attempt at standardization remains present. And, despite never mentioning in your autobiography that you were transmasculine, you affirmed yourself as a man, felt and behaved this way. I think I looked in his writing for strategies and reasons to also follow my journey. Our recognition continues to be hard work to this day.

It makes me very happy to see between the lines of your verses your satisfaction at being treated like a man, watching your loves and how they represented the best you could experience:

Love is found in every corner  
Under the moonlight of the night  
Under the light of day,  
Love is present in every heart, love is struggle, pain that does not bleed, love is... poetry (HERZER, 1982, p.190, our translation).

That love that moved you and pushed you to face everything that was imposed on you, that made you see the small pleasures of life where it was practically impossible, is what also motivates me to follow.

Herzer, you paved the way. I am immensely happy to know that many people looked at you with affection and saw you beyond what was set, they had the opportunity to glimpse the great poet and writer that you are. I will use your life story to talk about us, our affections and daily challenges. I want your poetry, just as it inspired me, to inspire others as well. I know you won't answer this letter in your own hand, but I am also sure of your presence in every transmasculine writing that rebels against the pillars of canonical literature.

Thank you, Herzer.

Pedro Fontes.

### Notes for the reader...

Dear readership,

Initially, we would like to warn you that this letter is not about farewell. Nor was it written with the intention of bringing immediate answers to questions that are reconfigured over time. On the contrary. Our effort is marked by the desire to produce traces and clues in a field of investigation that, in such arid times, is proving to be increasingly fertile and thought-provoking.

Reflecting on a transmasculine literary writing based on the methodology of letters requires an effort to understand the contradictions present in this category. If such a framework erases the pluralities present in the constitution of subjects, considering that we are a mobile celebration made up of fragments of different “selves” being incapable of being unified into a coherent amalgam (HALL, 2011), the label/adjective after the term “authorship” refers to the agency strategy: “naming is how I make my presence known, how I affirm who and what I am and how I want to be known. Naming myself is a survival tactic” (ANZALDÚA, 2009, p. 164, our translation).

In this sense, the letters addressed to Caio Jade and Esteban Rodrigues reached their destination. Possibly, the answers given provoke new reflections, a movement where the borders present in the relationship between subject and object are questioned, erased, blurred, feeding back a gear that allows the Brazilian social imaginary to recognize the potentiality present in the writing carried out by dissident bodies. Perhaps, this cherished dream is the return

of the letter addressed to Anderson Herzer who, through his writings and experiences, made possible the existence of this and many other productions.

Strengthening the chorus of discontent composed by Anzaldúa and many other authors who did not accept to reproduce the colonial tone present in literary productions, Herzer forged his existence and self-nomination through letters, verbs and masculine pronouns. The erasure of his name on the cover of the posthumously published book was not able to make him invisible. His writing remains alive, pulsating and provocative, making a significant contribution to the transmasculine literary field.

If it is in the collectivity that we forge possibilities of care and political emancipation (SANTANA; PEÇANHA; GONÇALVES, 2021), the circulation of these correspondences causes epistemological cracks by repositioning trans bodies both in the production of academic and literary knowledge. Thus, the transmasculine poetics presented/discussed in the letters published in this work can be an instrument for carrying out daily political micro-actions, disputing the social imaginary by proposing values and attitudes based on a critical and emancipatory vision, in addition to instigating much needed resistance in times of advance of neoconservatism and hate speech.

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