

Understanding Brazil through Literature and Music

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English/Language Arts

Project designed for Secondary Grade Level (7–10)

Time Frame—2 to 4 weeks (teacher can limit or extend the time)

Brief Overview of Project: Students will explore literature and music to gain an awareness and understanding of the history, people, and culture of Brazil. Teacher will provide example texts by Brazilian writers and others for students to read and respond to in writing and discussion. Teacher will offer students opportunities to listen to various types of Brazilian music and guide students in making connections to the cultural and historical significance. Students will also research other sources as they seek a deeper cultural understanding of Brazil. Each student will present a final project that creatively brings together what they have experienced and learned.

Final Project Assessment: Students will have received an entry document mentioning “literatura de cordel” (literature on a cord or string) with a request for them to design and plan their own small pamphlet dealing with aspects of the culture of Brazil. Expectations will be given for what to include in the pages (narrative, poems, lyrics, visuals, information, reflections, etc.), and they will also be required to create a cover in the woodblock printing tradition of José Francisco Borges.

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Goals:

- *To open to students the culture of Brazil through a sampling of texts and music.
- *For students to gain knowledge of the “words” and “sounds” of Brazil.
- *For students to gain understanding about Brazil’s history and culture and desire to know more.

Essential Questions:

- *What can literature and music teach us about the country, people, and culture of Brazil?
- *Which aspects of Brazilian culture are unique and which are universal?

Understandings:

- *Students will realize that literature gives us knowledge about another culture and connects us to not only a place but to people—their history, beliefs and values, joys and sorrows, and daily concerns and hopes.
- *Students will understand that music in Brazil is as diverse as its people—and yet music has always resided deep in the heart and soul of the country and is a strong force in culture.

General Skills:

- ~Students will read and understand a variety of literary and informational texts.
- ~Students will listen and respond to the ideas of others while contributing their own thoughts.
- ~Students will write in response to texts and organize information in a clear way.
- ~Students will use research skills to evaluate, synthesize, and present ideas and information.

Assessment:

Performance Task—Students will research and design a pamphlet in the tradition of “Literatura de Cordel” which will include information on aspects of Brazil and Brazilian culture.

Other Evidence—Annotation of texts, writing responses, group work, and discussions.

Learning Plan:

Introduction

It is important for students to become more aware of the global context in which we all live. Through focusing on writings connected to Brazil, listening to a variety of Brazilian music, and giving students an opportunity to do independent research for a project, this unit will give students an opportunity to explore a country they may know little about (most probably have a vague awareness of Carnaval, the tourist beaches, and the importance of soccer). Students will gain information and deepen their understanding and appreciation of a culture rich in tradition that is becoming more and more central on the world stage. Brazil is a rising economic power, and it will be host to the soccer World Cup in 2014 and the Summer Olympics in 2016. Brazil, the fifth largest nation in the world, is a vast country with regions that are extremely unique in geography and traditions. [Note: “Brazil’s Rising Star,” *60 Minutes*, CBS, 12/12/2010 has a good general look at Brazil emerging.]

If a student with little familiarity of the regions and culture of the United States were to engage in a brief unit of study, it would be very difficult to limit the scope and still gain a sense of the entire country. Hopefully, the selected texts and music for this unit on Brazil will perk student interest to go deeper and “tour” this country with their own curiosity leading them to research aspects of Brazil in which they are most interested. The teacher will serve as the guide for the project and give students direction as they study and explore. Students will initially receive an “Entry Document” that presents the expectations for the project in a general way. As they have ongoing opportunities to do research for the completion of their project, the teacher will scaffold their learning about Brazil with the various texts and music listening opportunities.

Initial Lesson: Entry Document

***Materials:** Copies of Entry Document for each student, paper, pencils. Teacher will need chart paper and markers.

***Procedures:**

Each student receives a copy of the Entry Document (letter on following page). Have students read it independently, and then read it once again as a whole class. After reading, ask each student to draw a T-chart (using another sheet of paper) with the labels *Know* and *Need to Know*, and then list ten or more items under each label regarding the expectations for the project. Creating the list will have them reread the text in a closer way and direct them to focus on what the project is specifically asking them to do. [They may need help getting started. Under *Know* they might list that *Brazil is a country*; or that *they'll be completing a pamphlet*; or that *they'll be required to do research*. Under *Need to Know* they might list more of the questions that they have about content and the nuts and bolts of the project—*Where and how big is Brazil? What language do they speak? How many pages does the pamphlet have to be? When is it due? Why Brazil?*]

When each student has completed the chart, do a whole-class debrief and teacher writes student responses on a master list viewable for the entire class. Writing this master list on chart paper will offer the ability to post list in the classroom and keep in front of students for the duration of the project, marking off as questions are answered or adding more questions or wonderings. In guiding them through the Entry Document in this way, teacher is not “telling” the students what they need to know and do—students are finding out and wondering for themselves. [Be sure, however, that after compiling the master T-chart that teacher gives answers to questions such as due dates and the framework for the pamphlet.]

***Pamphlet (“literatura de cordel”—literature on a cord or string) guidelines:**

Although the authentic “literatura de cordel” would be on one topic or theme and use a poetic form, students will use the framework of the traditional pamphlet as they bring together their own learning from class and their research.

- must be a minimum of 12 pages (plain copy paper folded in booklet form)
- include a page with a map of Brazil with major regions and cities listed
- include a page with at least 10 facts about Brazil
- include information on a minimum of 4 aspects of Brazilian culture or tradition (4 pages)
- include information on a minimum of 4 interesting people (past or present) of Brazil (4 pages)
- include information on at least 2 places or locations—include drawing or photo (2 pages)
- design a cover in the tradition of José Francisco Borges (use a separate sheet for this)
- go beyond what is required—try to create a poem expressing all you’ve learned!

Dear Students,

It would be absolutely wonderful if we were able to plan and take a class tour this year to the amazing country of Brazil. Since that doesn't seem possible for us in the immediate future, let's learn as much as we can about the culture and people of this country now. If we have a solid foundation of background information, we will be in the knowledgeable position to really enjoy an actual visit to Brazil when that happens—maybe we can even learn some Portuguese!

I am asking each of you to become familiar with Brazil and then create a “literatura de cordel” pamphlet—your cover design will follow the artistic tradition of José Francisco Borges. You will have time to do independent research, and we will also explore Brazilian literature and listen to a sampling of music together in class. I will serve as your tour guide as we learn about Brazil, but I am hoping that your curiosity will lead you to become experts on various aspects of Brazilian life and culture—remember, experts share their knowledge!

Please enjoy this time of exploring a country rich in history, culture, and interesting places and people. When the opportunity comes your way to be a global traveler, you will definitely be ready for the magic of Brazil.

With you in the adventure...



RUBRIC for Pamphlet Project on Brazil [Review for an understanding of how you will be assessed.]

Criteria	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Organization, Development of Ideas, & Mechanics/ Usage (25 points)	Organization of information and development of ideas lacking. Writing is not clearly understood or not in own words of writer (i.e., plagiarism). There is little or no evidence in the work that the writer can correctly apply the conventions of the English language.	Organization of information and development of ideas is present in writing. Writing is clearly understood and information is meaningfully presented. Demonstrates a good command of conventions with minor errors.	Organization of information and development of ideas enhance and deepen awareness of the topic. Writing is clearly understood, and research is presented in an interesting and unique way. Demonstrates command of conventions in writing.
	0-----50-----69	70-----85-----89	90-----95-----100
Content and Design (25 points)	The pamphlet pages do not address relevant topics, or not all pages requested are included. Information in the pages needs to be more accurate and easy to understand. The project would also need to improve if there is more emphasis on graphics rather than text.	The pamphlet pages address relevant topics. Appropriate information addressed in their respective pages. Cover is interesting and well-designed. Information presented in the pamphlet is accurate. There is a good balance in the use of text and graphics.	The pamphlet is creatively designed and formatted in an interesting and intentional manner. Cover is done artfully and in cultural tradition. All information is up-to-date and accurate and shows depth of understanding. Exceeds expectations.
	0-----50-----69	70-----85-----89	90-----95-----100
Work Ethic / Involvement (25 points)	Student infrequently uses work time appropriately and often requires redirection from teacher. Student infrequently asks pertinent questions.	Student often uses work time appropriately. If student requires occasional redirection from teacher, student makes necessary adjustments. Student curious and often asks pertinent questions.	Student focused on work and learning with rare exceptions of redirection needed from teacher. Student highly engaged and almost always asks pertinent questions.
	0-----50-----69	70-----85-----89	90-----95-----100
Global and Community Engagement (25 points)	Student has little awareness of their own perspective as it relates to a different culture (e.g., values, traditions, issues). Student is unable to articulate the perspectives of other people and traditions as it relates to another culture.	Student recognizes and articulates the perspectives of other people as it relates to a different culture (e.g., values, traditions, issues). Student recognizes similarities and differences in the behaviors, attitudes, and values of people from a different culture.	Student analyzes similarities and differences in the traditions, attitudes, and beliefs of people from different cultures to develop an understanding of multiple cultural perspectives. Student seeks deeper understanding (e.g., by reading widely, researching cultural issues, initiating topical dialogue) about traditions, beliefs, issues by synthesizing information, interpretations, and implications from varied cultural perspectives.
	0-----50-----69	70-----85-----89	90-----95-----100

Comments:

Sequencing and Scaffolding of the Lessons:

The sequencing and scaffolding of the lessons should be left up to the teacher and teacher's particular knowledge of students. The Entry Document and the Know/Need to Know lists should be completed on the first day of the unit and also posted and revised as the unit progresses. Next, teacher needs to review the criteria for the pamphlet and read/review the project rubric (students need to have clear expectations regarding how they will be evaluated—in addition to the final overall grade for the project, teacher may decide to take daily grades for discussion, written responses to texts, research notes, etc.). This should be followed up with a reading of the articles on “literatura de cordel” and José Francisco Borges (see below) Again, teacher has choice as to the flow of the materials that follow (supporting resources are listed). Depending on the length of class and availability of technology, a good plan would be to schedule research time after a direct-teach or have the days of research planned for several specific days during the week (in addition to students doing research as homework).

Articles to read for more background information on “literatura de cordel” and José Francisco Borges (attached):

- * “The Troubadours of Brazil’s Backlands,” by Larry Rohter, New York Times, June 14, 2005.
 - * “Brazil’s Printmaker-Poet: Folk artist with growing international reputation to have show, reception in Austin,” by Joel Weinstein, Austin American-Statesman, July 23, 1997.
 - * “From Brazil’s Backlands, a Master of a Folk Tradition,” by Larry Rohter, The New York Times, Wednesday, March 27, 2002.
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A word about block-printing the cover design: There are many how-to demonstrations on youtube, but one that is very helpful to view is a 9-minute video DIY block-printing by Urban Outfitters: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNsTQpVlmw4>. Teacher should view this ahead of time, practice block-printing, and find the best method that will work for the classroom. Plan for the securing of paper, paints/ink, and other materials ahead of time. Be sure students have planned a sample design before the actual day for printing is scheduled.

Lesson 1. Read Folktale—“The Creation of the Amazon River” (attached)

From Brazilian Folktales by Livia de Almeida and Ana Portella, World Folklore Series, Libraries Unlimited, Westport, Connecticut, 2006.

This is a wonderful collection brought together from the oral tradition of storytelling. The introduction is very informative and gives history and context to the folklore, fables, and myths in Brazil. The customs and beliefs of the indigenous people figure prominently—especially stories in the Tupi language. According to the editors of this book, they state that “historians believe that around 1500, the year in which the Portuguese first arrived in Brazil, there were one to three million indigenous people living in the country. After five centuries, the indigenous population has been reduced to 270,000, or 2 percent of the Brazilian population.” Even though the population has decreased, the influence of the stories remains. The African storytelling tradition is also deeply embedded in Brazilian culture. Many of these were wisdom tales, stories that included lively animals, and those stories connected to the *orixás* (oh-REE-shahs; gods). The Portuguese brought the traditional European stories with them when they settled.

Any selection in the book would work well with students, but “The Creation of the Amazon River” is an important story to begin with in learning about the large country of Brazil (the Amazon is only second in size to the Nile).

Another story that would be a great one to have students become familiar with is the “The Story of Guarana.” Guarana is a native plant and has berries that look like human eyes; with this feature a myth was waiting to be created. People used it for “a ritual beverage that is believed to renew life forces and heal diseases.” People today use powdered guarana because of the energy boost it gives and other health benefits. Guarana also serves as the name of a tasty carbonated beverage, basically the home-grown Coca-Cola.

The Music of Heitor Villa-Lobos

Early on in this unit it would be good for students to become familiar with the works of the marvelous Brazilian classical composer, Heitor Villa-Lobos (<http://www.villalobos.ca/> for more background information and resources). His music embodies the multitude of characteristics of the regions and people of Brazil. “I study the history, the country, the speech, the customs, the background of the people. I have always done this, and it is from these sources, spiritual as well as practical, that I have drawn my art.” (p. 176 in Peppercorn, Lisa M., The World of Villa-Lobos in Pictures and Documents, Scholar Press, England, 1996). Each one of his compositions has a distinctive Brazilian sound—be it the grand movements of *Bachiana Brasileira* or the simple and melodic guitar playing on *Choro No. 1 in E minor*. For this first lesson dealing with a story of the Amazon, the song *Uirapura* (a legendary bird of the Amazon forest) would be a good musical connection. Also, on the days that students are doing research, having a selection of his works playing would create a great atmosphere.

Additional Information:

The following can be used to enrich the lesson or as a short starter to begin the class for the day (especially if the class time for the day will be devoted to students doing independent research).

~Two very simple picture books are fun and might really help any struggling readers in your class. So Say the Little Monkeys by Nancy Van Laan (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, New York, 1998) tells the story of tiny monkeys that live along the Amazon. It is based on an Indian tale. The book Amazon Boy by Ted Lewin (Macmillan Publishing, New York, 1993) tells the story of a young boy who lives with his family in the Amazon jungle and receives the gift of a trip with his father “to Belem, the great city near the mouth of the Amazon River.” Levin also has done the illustrations for the book, and they are lovely and true to life. Readers learn that his family fishes and plants manioc (cassava), gain a strong sense of the work and life connected to the river, and view baskets filled with *acaí* (the fruit of a palm tree).

~Keeper is a novel by Mal Peet (Candlewick Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2005) that explores the career of a famous soccer player. It’s not the typical sports action book, but more of a character study and a mystery. The main character, El Gato, is a goalkeeper and comes from a poor logging town; the author creates a strong sense of place and mystique surrounding the events of the story. A great book for any student (even those who don’t know who Pelé is or follow soccer).

~The Web site of the Museum of Language in São Paulo has some more information on folktales and also the origins and influences on Brazilian language:

<http://www.museudalinguaportuguesa.org.br/>

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## **Lesson 2: Read Poem—“Castro Alves From Brazil” (attached)**

by Pablo Neruda (1904–1973), Chilean poet (find poem on <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/castro-alves-from-brazil/>)

## **Background Information:**

Castro Alves (1847–1871) was a very important figure as a poet and as a voice against slavery in Brazil. The poem, *Tragedy at Sea: The Slave Ship* by Alves is a long poem with several sections. *O Navio Negreiro: Tragedia no Mar* (attached) has a powerful translation. Teacher can choose to read this translation (via an overhead copy or project on screen via technology resources) to students after the reading of the Neruda poem.

Note: Teacher could also project on the screen an image of slavery in Brazil (to prompt discussion) or simply project a “Did you know?...that over four million Africans were slaves in Brazil—higher than the number in the United States—and that slavery didn’t end in Brazil until 1888.” This may be the first time that students are made aware of the topic of slavery in Brazil.

Here is another opportunity for students to go deeper in their research for the final pamphlet. If students have questions, ask for volunteers to research as homework and report back to the class.

**Read the poem “Castro Alves From Brazil” using the following process—a wonderful strategy for interaction and for really hearing the words and rhythm of the poem before any discussion or analysis:**

- Have students read the poem silently.
- The poem is read a second time by the teacher, and students underline any words or phrases that stand out to them.
- The poem is read a third time by the teacher but with the addition of the students giving voice to the words and phrases that they underlined in the poem. [Teacher will need to make sure all students understand the instructions for this group reading of the poem—students only read aloud what they have underlined and join in with the teacher’s voice and pacing as the poem is read. It will probably take a few attempts to begin, but it is powerful to hear either a chorus of voices read what they have underlined or a solo voice of a student as to what they felt was important in the poem. This third reading now opens up the door to discuss why certain words or phrases were selected.]
- Continue the study of the poem with the numbering of the stanzas.
- Teacher leads a class annotation of the poem—start by asking about what students noticed in the poem (model the annotation on a copy that all students can view). Prompt students to look for poetic elements: repetition, rhyme, alliteration, simile, etc. Who is the speaker? What voices are in the poem? How does the speaker feel about Castro Alves? How do you know? What feeling do you have or what do you know after reading this poem?
- Finally, read poem one more time (either as a whole class or a student volunteer).



**Lesson 3: Read Poem—“Cachoeira” (attached)**

by Marilyn Nelson, American poet

**Introduction for students to the poem “Cachoeira”**

Marilyn Nelson makes her trip to the small village of Cachoeira in Northeastern Brazil come to life by including interesting details and vivid descriptions that make the reader a fellow traveler with her. She may be a U.S. poet, but she experiences strong personal connections as she visits this area of a foreign country—and as she observes and learns, her world is deepened and broadened.

Read the poem “Cachoeira” (found on <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/16916>). Have students notice what they as a reader observe and learn. Direct them to take notes as to what they may have questions about or what they want to learn more about in their research.

Note: Students may read this independently or in a Pair/Share—with partners reading the poem together and then sharing and discussing it together for a better understanding. After giving ample time for the reading and discussing, gather and record the “observations” and “learnings” from all students in the class. Again, topics and ideas may surface that they may want to include in their pamphlet. It would be a good idea to have a running topic/idea list posted in the classroom for all students to see and be reminded of as they conduct their research. Some topics that may be included to the list from this poem: Salvador, Bahia, Orixás, Yemanjá, Candomblé, “Sisterhood of the Good Death,” various foods, etc.

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Lesson 4: Novel excerpt—Excerpts from novel *The War of the Saints* (attached)

by Jorge Amado, translated by Gregory Rabassa, Bantam Books, New York, NY, 1993.

Text excerpt from “Manela’s Procession” and “The Flight of the Swallow” (chapters toward the beginning of the book).

Note: The writings of Jorge Amado are superb, but they are definitely for mature readers (his novels are taught in college and not usually secondary classes). Please read the book prior to teaching to provide context and guide student understanding of this excerpt. This vivid passage offers a glimpse into Bahia and insight into the craft of Amado’s writing.

First readings of the text:

- ~Give copies of the text to each student, and have them read the passage independently (homework or in class).
- ~As a whole class, do a second reading of the passage aloud (teacher reads or strong student reader to keep the sense of the text and the flow of the language).
- ~At the conclusion of the second reading, ask each student to do a “quick-write” for 7–10 minutes of what images they saw in the passage. Instruct them to also include any sensory details (what they heard, colors, scents, etc.).
- ~Have students share in a class-debrief some of the images that stood out to them. Discuss as a whole class.

Working with the text to go deeper:

~Divide class into groups of 3 to 4 students (or pairs). Assign each group a category and tell them that they will look for examples in the text to include in their specific category. These categories will contribute to an awareness of aspects of Brazilian culture, particularly as it relates to the region of Bahia (e.g., foods, dress, religion, music, cultural traditions). When completed, these lists will be shared and posted around the classroom. Each group will have an opportunity to move around the room to read and add to the lists (groups move clock-wise and stop for 3 minutes at each listed category; students carry their copy of the text and a marker to make additions). There will be many “unknowns” on the lists, but that’s what will be a springboard for

exploring and doing more research (help students wonder about the passage and why certain things are done the way they are or how they came to be). Use these student-created lists to perk their interest for what they may research and include in the pamphlet they are each designing. [Be sure to have markers ready and large sheets of paper already titled with the categories that you will be assigning to the students.]

Additional Information:

The following can be used to enrich the lesson or as a short starter to begin the lesson for the day (and as a hook to keep students engaged in the learning process).

--*Balé Folclórico da Bahia* (<http://www.balefolcloricodabahia.com.br/>) is an exceptional dance company that performs many traditional dances illustrating the history and folklore of this region of Brazil (dances of the *orixás*, *samba de roda*, capoeira, etc.). Preview the site to be sure any videos you use in class are appropriate for the age of your students.

--David Byrne has filmed a video dealing with the religion of candomblé—"Ilê Aiyê" (The House of Life) Preview the video to see what segment you might use and to be sure any videos you use in class are appropriate for the age of your students.

--The tradition of drumming in this area is quite wonderful. Singer Paul Simon thought so and included the group Olodum in a recording, and Michael Jackson also had the group in a video. Didá is an all-female drumming group—and there is a music video of the group on stage with the Brazilian singer Daniela Mercury that is quite energetic and entertaining (see youtube).

Lesson 5: Three Poems to Read with Students—Modern Poetry

From *Brazilian Poetry (1950–1980)*, edited, with an introduction by Emanuel Brasil and William Jay Smith, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 1983. The introduction in this book and the background information on the authors included in the anthology is very informative. Selection of three poems from this book: *Dionysus in Brazil*, *Oswald Dead*, and *On Hope* (attached)

These three poems not only give a strong sense of free-verse poetry, but the content is important in how it addresses specific topics important to the culture of Brazil and her writers.

Dionysus in Brazil. Jorge Mautner (b.1941), born in São Paulo, is described as being “a poet, musician, singer, composer, and showman” (and that description applies to so many of the poet-musicians of Brazil). Have students read his poem and write a paragraph stating what the poet is saying about Brazil. [A short clip from the film *Black Orpheus*, to explain the imagery of Orpheus and Dionysus, might be a good lead into this poem—either a scene from Carnival or the last scene of the film with the children playing music high on a hill overlooking the sea.]

Oswald Dead. Ferreira Gullar (b.1930) pays tribute in the poem “*Oswald Morto*” to Oswald de Andrade (1890–1953) who was a key player in the group of writers and other artists involved in the “Modern Art Week” in São Paulo. This was a landmark event in Brazilian culture, as this group envisioned a new way of looking at and doing art, music, and literature beyond just being avant-garde—a truly Brazilian way (known as “antropofagia”). Andrade caused a stir when he published his poem “*Last Ride of a Tubercular through the City by Streetcar*”—a poem “without rhyme or meter.” [Information from the Introduction of Brazilian Poetry 1950–1980.]

On Hope by Lindolf Bell. In Brazil, poetry seems to be and is everywhere. Lindolf Bell (b.1938) believed this so much that he took his poetry to the everyday places where people were: the streets, factories, and stadiums. In the early 1970s he even “printed poems on T-shirts and called them “Corpoemas (Body Poems).” [Information from the Introduction of Brazilian Poetry 1950–1980.] Read “*On Hope*” and see what he considers the “stuff” of poetry. Discuss as a class.

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**Lesson 6: Paired Poem and Song—“*In the Middle of the Road*” and “*Waters of March*” (attached)**

“*In the Middle of the Road*” by Carlos Drummond de Andrade translated by Elizabeth Bishop (from The Complete Poems: 1927–1979, translated by Elizabeth Bishop, The Noonday Press, New York, NY, 1983) and “*Waters of March*” (“*Aguas de Março*”), a song by Tom Jobim.

Carlos Drummond de Andrade should be more known outside of his native Brazil as he was one of the most influential of Brazilian writers. He was born in Itabira (1902) in the region of Minas Gerais, the mining area of the country, and then later moved to Rio de Janeiro. He also was a part of the Brazilian Modernist movement, and the poem *In the Middle of the Road* was published in his first volume of poetry. It is a short poem and repeats variations of the phrase “in the middle of the road there was a stone.” The symbolic nature of the poem seems as if it would be evident, but it is not—it is rather an enigmatic poem. One translation made the following connection between the poem and the name of his birthplace, Itabira, implying that it may be a native Brazilian word for his hometown meaning rock or metal: “The Itabira of Carlos Drummond is the prototypical place of the mixed or metamorphic rock, part quartz, part iron” (The Minus Sign by Carlos Drummond de Andrade, translated by Virginia de Araujo, Black Swan Books, Redding Ridge, CT, 1980).

No matter what the deeper meaning, the repetition in the poem offers a sense of play with words that students will enjoy. It would be an easy poem to memorize after several readings aloud. It is also a wonderful poem to pair with the famous song *Waters of March*, written by Tom Jobim. This song is a play with words while at the same time having another level of meaning. Jobim (1927–1994) rewrote the lyrics for the English version, and he is probably one of the most well-known Brazilian musicians in the United States. After reading the words of the song aloud, listen as a class to the recorded version sung by Elis Regina (see youtube).

## **Lesson 7. Paired Passages—“*The Burglar of Babylon*” by Elizabeth Bishop and an article from the New York Times (attached)**

Students will be comparing and contrasting the poem “The Burglar of Babylon” (*The Complete Poems: 1927–1979*, Elizabeth Bishop, The Noonday Press, New York, 1983) and a recent article in the international section of the New York Times (“Brazil Military Says It Cornered Rio Drug Gangs,” New York Times, Saturday, November 27, 2010).

Have students read the texts either independently or with a partner, and then complete a Venn diagram for similarities and differences in the content, imagery, etc. of the two texts (debrief as a class). As students read and annotate the texts, have them pay particular attention to what they learn of the people and community “on the fair green hills of Rio” in contrast to the “rich people in apartments.” Even though the poem is from an earlier time period, it reflects many of the same circumstances of contemporary Rio. If possible, while the poem is being read, have a photo on a screen showing the favelas on the hills of Rio. [Note: Elizabeth Bishop was an American writer who lived in Brazil for an extended period of time. She translated the works of many Brazilian authors and brought their work to the attention of a wider world audience. Also, the rhyme, rhythm, and format of “The Burglar of Babylon” is very like the traditional narratives contained in the “literatura de cordel.”]

After comparing and contrasting the two texts, introduce information about the Rio group AfroReggae and the work that they are doing in the *favelas* (see <http://www.afroreggae.org.br/>) Review the film *Favela Rising* (DVD, 2005) and select a segment(s) from the film that would be appropriate for the age of your students—particularly focus on the change in their *favela* and the importance of the work arising from people in the community. After viewing, teacher leads class in a discussion. The new community center AfroReggae has built is named after the poet and activist, Waly Salome, who was a strong encourager of AfroReggae (he was also appointed Minister of the Book while Gilberto Gil, a musician, was Minister of Culture). A short excerpt from one of his poems follows (from an interview with Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda in “Journal de Poesia”)—the words are a drumbeat all their own. Perhaps have these words written on the board or on a screen and read several times aloud with the class as a closure to the lesson to stress the music and words connection.

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From “**Today**” by Waly Salome—

Today I just want to beat.  
Rhythm in spoken and written.  
Rhythm-central mine shaft.  
Rhythm backbone of body and mind.  
Rhythm in the spiral of speech and poem.

### **Additional Information:**

There was a memoir of a woman living in the *favelas* that detailed the realities of the struggles and hardships of her existence in São Paulo, Brazil (Child of the Dark: The Diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, Penguin Putnam, Inc. New York, NY, 2010). The book brought the economic disparities of life in the *favelas* to the broader attention of the country and world. It's a raw portrait, but may be appropriate to read an excerpt to the class or recommend for a student wanting to understand these realities in the life of one person. [Note: Be sure to read the book prior to recommending to an individual student to anticipate any questions they might have or guide them in their reading.]

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Lesson 8: Three Poems by Adelia Prado—“Praise for Color,” “Purple,” and “Denouement” (attached)

From The Alphabet in the Park: Selected Poems of Adelia Prado, translated by Ellen Dore Watson, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 1990.

Background Information:

In the introduction to her translation of Prado's poetry, Watson offers a statement made by Carlos Drummond de Andrade, the great Brazilian poet, regarding Prado and her poetry: “Adelia is lyrical, biblical, existential; she makes poetry as naturally as nature makes weather.” There is an ordinariness and an earthiness to her poetry. She is from the state of Minas Gerais and seems very connected to the land in this region, yet there is an expansiveness that embraces all of Brazil and even goes beyond the country's boundaries and to the region of the heart and soul. In a way, she captures in her writing a quality that seems present in the musical compositions of Villa-Lobos: totally Brazilian while resonating with a deep spirit of humanity. Watson offers a glimpse into Prado's philosophy on writing poetry: “Who am I to organize the flight of a poem?” (xii).

Give students copies of the three poems and have them read independently and annotate for figurative language and sensory imagery. Share and discuss the poems as a whole class. If time permits, use the poems “Praise for Color” and “Purple” as model poems, and give students the assignment to create a poem on a *color* of their choice. The poem that they write may be used in their final pamphlet. Discuss “Denouement,” and guide students as they make connections to the strong voice of Brazilian identity in the poem. Referencing the meaning of the title word “denouement” leads to a nice closure for the project just prior to the final research being done for the student pamphlets.

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## **Music Ideas for the Unit**

In addition to the music of Heitor Villa-Lobos, the following songs would be important—and fun!—to play at the beginning of a class and then talk about together to share responses and feelings. Listening to the music and then doing a “quick-write” would also be a good way to enter into the music. The most important thing is for students to *enjoy* the music and want to hear and explore more on their own.

*Tico Tico no Fuba*—sung by Carmen Miranda or played as 2-handed classical guitar (youtube)

*Girl from Ipanema (Garota de Ipanema)*—Astrid Gilberto with Stan Getz, 1964 (youtube)

*Batucada*—Luiz Bonfá playing classical guitar on Mike Douglas Show (youtube)

*Corcovado (Quiet Nights)*—Tom Jobim and Vinícius de Moraes (youtube)

*Black Orpheus (Orfeu Negro)*—film has scenes of music giving the viewer a sense of Carnival

## **A Few Other Topics of Interest Connected to Music (for specific student research):**

Samba; Samba Schools; Bossa Nova; Tropicália; MPB (Musica Popular Brasileira) Axé; Choro; Sertanejo; Carnival; Capoeira; Frevo; Forró; Musical Instruments (including the berimbau, accordion, percussion and rhythm instruments)

## **Musical Artists (for specific student research):**

AfroReggae; Luiz Bonfá (guitar); Chico Buarque; Didá (female drumming); Gal Costa; Dolores Duran; Gilbert Gil; Astrid Gilberto; João Gilberto; Luiz Gonzaga (accordion); Tom Jobim; Luisa Maita; Daniela Mercury; Pedro Moraes; Vinícius de Moraes; Olodum (drums); Pixinguinha; Elis Regina; Gabriel Santiago (guitar); Caetano Veloso; Heitor Villa-Lobos.

## **Other Music to Play during Research Days:**

\*anything by Villa-Lobos—there are many good recordings, esp. by the São Paulo Symphony.

\*the Putumayo World Music folks have the CD, *Brasileiro*, with a variety of artists, 1999.

\*Yo-Yo Ma, although not Brazilian, plays all Brazilian music on his CD, *Obrigado*, 2003.



### **A few other resources to explore:**

Appleby, David P., The Music of Brazil, University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, 1983.

Appleby, David P., Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887–1959), Scarecrow Press, Inc., Lanham, Maryland, 2002.

Bishop, Elizabeth, The Complete Poems (1927–1979), Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, New York, 1979.

Bishop, Elizabeth and Brasil, Emanuel, An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Brazilian Poetry, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 1972.

Brasil, Emanuel and Smith, William Jay, Brazilian Poetry, (1950–1980), Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, 1983.

Coelho, Paulo, The Alchemist, Harper Collins, New York, New York, English version, 1993.

A good book of fiction for middle school or high school students to read by a best-selling Brazilian author.

Eakin, Marshall C., Brazil: The Once and Future Country, St. Martin's Press, New York, New York, 1997.

For background information and Brazilian history.

Eyewitness Travel Guide, Brazil, DK, London, 2007.

A really good guidebook to have in the classroom with easily understood information and excellent photographs and visuals.

McGowan, Chris and Pessanha, Ricardo, The Brazilian Sound: Samba, Bossa Nova, and the Popular Music of Brazil, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2009.

An excellent reference book.

Nist, John (translated and edited), Modern Brazilian Poetry: An Anthology, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1962.

Peppercorn, Lisa M., The World of Villa-Lobos in Pictures and Documents, Scholar Press, England, 1996.

Skidmore, Thomas E., Brazil: Five Centuries of Change, Oxford University Press, Inc., Oxford, England, 1999.

For background information and Brazilian history.

# ATTACHMENTS

# The Troubadours of Brazil's Backlands

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/14/books/14bard.html?pagewanted=all>

By LARRY ROHTER

Published: June 14, 2005



The New York Times  
Cordel, a form of folk poetry, continues to thrive in Caruaru, Brazil.



Photographs by John Maier for The New York Times

José Francisco Borges, above, who dropped out of school at the age of 12, is perhaps the most celebrated master of the art. Left, a carving by Mr. Borges.



CARUARU, Brazil - They are the bards of the backlands, traveling with their poems from town to town and market to market. Practitioners of an art form that originated in medieval Europe and is now mostly obsolete elsewhere, they nonetheless continue to thrive here.

“Cordel” is the name given to their craft, which developed in this arid outback of northeast Brazil, in isolated peasant communities that valued the spoken or sung word over the written. As befits a do-it-yourself, indigenous art form, the same balladeers who create the poems, inspired by current events or ancient legends, are usually the ones who print, illustrate and hawk them.

“Like so many other folk forms, cordel transforms an old vocabulary to fit new situations,” said Candace Slater, author of “Stories on a String” and professor of humanities at the University of California, Berkeley. “What has not changed is that cordel poets are still writing for the group, and that what they write continues to touch a nerve in the people of northeast Brazil, no matter where they happen to be living.”

“Cordel” literally means string or twine, a reference to the way the cheap paper booklets containing the poems, with up to 32 pages, are hung at markets or newsstands. Verses typically have six lines, and though a variety of rhyme schemes are permitted, the most common is probably a-b-c-b-d-b.

Originally, cordel was an extension of the European troubadour tradition. Cordel poets and singers would roam the vast interior of northeast Brazil, an area larger than Alaska and home today to 50 million people, showing up at markets such as the one held here every Saturday, or at fairs, saints' day commemorations and other public events, to recite their ballads, bringing both news and entertainment to peasants who were often illiterate.

“Popular literature in verse form developed here in Brazil as in no other place in the world,” said Audálio Dantas, a collector of cordel and curator of “A Century of Cordel,” an exhibition that was held in São Paulo in 2001. “The cordel pamphlet was for decades practically the only vehicle of information that the people of the backlands could count on.”

But with the rise of radio, then television and now of the Internet, the main focus of cordel gradually shifted to amusing the reader or listener. Nevertheless, when a lion devoured a young child at a circus near here not long ago, the incident quickly became the subject of a cordel, and within days of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, cordel pamphlets interpreting the event were circulating in the hinterland.

“We are minstrel poets because what we write is in rhyme and comes from our imagination,” said José João dos Santos, who under the pen name Azulão, or Big Blue, has written and published more than 300 cordel titles. “But I’m a journalist too, bringing the news to the poor and the unlettered in a form that they understand and trust more than newspapers or television.”

Most of the poets come from the same background as their audience. For instance, José Francisco Borges, who dropped out of school at the age of 12 and is today perhaps the most celebrated master of the art, has worked as a bricklayer, herb seller, farmhand, carpenter and potter.

Whatever they lack in schooling, cordel poets are creative and quick-witted. When Abraao Batista was asked what made him become a poet, he replied: “Well, I went to the moon, found St. George and the saints conversing, and they gave me their benediction. Ever since then, I’ve been jumping about in time and space.”

As indicated by pamphlets like “The Girl Who Beat Her Mother and Was Turned Into a Dog” and “The Girl Who Married 14 Times and Continued Virgin,” cordel often imparts a moral, with

clearly defined heroes and villains. Other titles, such as “The Woman Who Put the Devil in a Bottle” or “The Man Who Married a Donkey,” are meant to be fanciful or comical.

Another favorite topic is the adventures of Lampião, a Robin Hood-like bandit who eluded police for more than a decade before he was hunted down and killed near here in 1938.

Cordel poets say, though, that the best-selling title ever is “The Romance of the Mysterious Peacock.” Set in the distant Mediterranean, it tells the story of a young man who, frustrated that his beloved is being held captive by her father, obtains a mechanical peacock that enables him to rescue her. The two elope, and his father-in-law dies and the couple become his heirs.

“Some of the most popular stories can be traced back to European legends, to Charlemagne in the 10th century, but most originated in Iberia in the late 16th and 17th centuries,” said Mark Curran, a professor at Arizona State University who has written several books on cordel. “Yet the genius of these stories is that even the ones that come from the Orient have been totally adapted and recreated to suit the circumstances of the Brazilian northeast.”

José Ferreira da Silva, a poet here who writes under the name Dila, said: “Certain subjects just never go out of style in cordel and will always sell. I’ve written so many pamphlets about Lampião that I’ve lost count, at least 200.”

Educated Brazilians originally looked down on cordel and the rough woodcut covers associated with it as something vulgar and *déclassé*, a symbol of the country’s backwardness. But today, intellectuals in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are collectors or admirers of the pamphlets, and the aesthetics of cordel can be detected in nearly every corner of Brazilian popular culture.

“The cordel poets will all say that the interest in their work has grown mostly because of foreigners,” Dr. Curran said. “But I think Brazil has reached a time of change in which there is more of an awareness of and hunger for seeking the country’s cultural roots, and cordel is a major part of Brazilian culture in the 20th century.”

In pop music, for instance, cutting-edge composers much admired outside Brazil have drawn on cordel in songs like Tom Zé’s “The Arrival of Raul Seixas and Lampião at the I.M.F.” and Chico Science’s “Isaac Asimov and Santos Dumont’s Meeting in Heaven.” In literature, Jorge Amado’s novel “Tereza Batista: Home from the Wars” and Ariano Suassuna’s play “The History of the Headless King Who Wandered the Wilds of the Backlands” are heavily influenced by cordel in subject and form.

With titles such as “The Cordel of Sexually Transmitted Diseases” and “Agrarian Reform Has to Be the Right of Every Brazilian,” the federal and state governments also have been using the form to promote health, traffic safety, political awareness, AIDS avoidance and other official campaigns. And politicians and businessmen in small towns in the northeast often turn to cordel to promote their candidacies or their products.

“Not long ago, a lawyer whose daughter was about to get married even came to me and asked me to write the invitations in cordel verse,” said José Severino Cristóvão, a poet here.

As for the woodcuts that adorn the covers of cordel pamphlets, they have evolved into a full-fledged art form. Mr. Borges's work has been shown at the Louvre and the Smithsonian. But at his market stand here, he also sells T-shirts and ceramic tiles stamped with images from the woodcuts.

“People have been saying cordel is doomed since the 1920's,” Dr. Slater said. “But the creative energy is still there today; it's just being channeled in different ways. Cordel has always been a hybrid form, able to incorporate new influences. Its ability to become different things may disappoint people who want it to be what it was back in the 1940's or 1970's, but that adaptability is exactly where its creative survival resides.”

Reprinted from the Austin American-Statesman  
ENTERTAINMENT Wednesday, July 23, 1997

## Brazil's printmaker-poet

Folk artist with growing international reputation  
to have show, reception in Austin



José Francisco Borges depicts country life in Brazil with a lyrical simplicity.



José Francisco Borges still carves all his own blocks and refuses to limit his editions. Playful barnyard animals are one of the artist's favorite subjects.

**BY JOEL WEINSTEIN**

Special to the American-Statesman

The rustic tableaux of Brazilian print maker José Francisco Borges—lively scenes of religious processions, lovers' quarrels, frolicsome barnyard animals—place him solidly among the most expressive narrative artists of the Americas.

Think of the mytho-tabloid outpourings of 19th-century Mexican master José Guadalupe Posada or the sweeping, raceconscious sagas of North American lithographer and painter Jacob Lawrence. Posada was more the historian, and Lawrence is a greater colorist, but Borges depicts country life in his homeland with a lyrical simplicity that makes for a nearly perfect vernacular.

Borges is 62, and he has spent his entire life in his impoverished, rural home province of Permanbuco in northeastern Brazil. As a boy and young man he was a laborer-farmworker, brickmaker and factory hand, but in his 20s he became enamored of a form of poetic folk narrative known as folheto or cordel. These small, cheaply produced booklets of verse have been an immensely popular source for news, religious instruction, folk legends and fabulous knowledge of all kinds since the last century. It is by way of this tradition that Borges came to printmaking.

Literatura de cordel (literature on a string) is so-called because the pamphlets are displayed at fairs hanging from a string. Like the lurid dime novels of the 1940s and '50s in the United States, the covers bear graphic, exaggerated depictions of the contents. In the mid 1960s, Borges set up a press to publish his own poetry and the works of his friends, making illustrations for the covers himself, and his little enterprise became hugely successful.

In the early 1970s his cordel illustrations were noticed by prominent Brazilian visual artists, and Borges was hailed as one of the region's best engravers by an important cultural figure of the time, writer and playwright Ariano Suassana.

Borges' artistic range has expanded with the scope of his work. From tiny, simple one-color images to fit the 6-by-9 inch folheto covers, he now routinely makes bold woodcuts as large as 18-by-36 inches, sometimes of several colors. His themes still center on the real and imaginary vicissitudes of rural poverty but the larger format allows him the luxury of political commentary. Labels and other explanatory texts appear in the compositions, and he has undertaken far-flung projects such as posters and book illustrations.

His collaboration with Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano on the writer's recent book "Walking Words" has given the artist a wider international audience because of Galeano's stature.

Borges has also acquired an eye for more universal, decidedly urban foibles. He has produced a series of distinctly Borgesian zodiac symbols that are as much New-Age as peasant poor. Several of his latest prints depict individuals in psychoanalysis, with images of death, betrayal, impotence and demonic possession floating above the



couchbound patient, while the bearded psicanalista ponders the constellation of troubles.

However, it is the formal richness of the figures—as neatly faceted and solid as the flagstones Borges once made as a laborer— as well as hints of modernity and urbanity in Borges’ thinking that make the large prints so appealing. A frog under the dome of its umbrella, cane-cutters in a field, a large family fleeing from drought—these are deeply lyrical odes made of simple shapes and the gesture of black ink on white paper, consummately modest, yet powerful.

Borges will be in Austin Friday evening for a reception and an informal discussion of his work at Tesoros Trading Company, and the following day he will show 100 of his most recent prints at the store. According to Jonathan Williams, Tesoros’ owner and a friend and sponsor of Borges, the printmaker-poet maintains the outlook of a folk artist from the Brazilian outback, in spite of his growing international reputation. He still carves all of his own blocks, and he refuses to number his prints or limit his editions, saying he will make as many prints as people want.

Williams is gratified that success has not spoiled Borges, but notes that adherence to the old ways has its problems. Williams has seen the woeful state of the prints that Posada made more than a century ago, and he worries about Borges’ own production on less than archival-quality paper.

“The paper he uses is what he can get,” Williams says, “and it’s glorified butcher paper.”

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2002

## From Brazil's Backlands, a Master of a Folk Tradition

Larry Rohter

BEZERROS, Brazil—For an artist whose work has been exhibited in the Louvre and the Smithsonian Institution, José Francisco Borges labors in humble surroundings. His studio occupies a corner of a drafty adobe warehouse that has crumbling walls, smells of printer's ink and lies just off a dusty highway here in the arid interior of northeast Brazil.

Then again, nothing about Mr. Borges's background is conventional. After dropping out of school at 12, he was an herb seller, a bricklayer, a farmhand, a carpenter and a potter before discovering woodblock prints, the medium that has made him one of Latin America's most celebrated folk artists and his simple workshop a magnet for collectors and curators.

Working with just a knife and a chunk of wood, Mr. Borges proves that "low-level technology often yields very powerful, moving and sophisticated results," said Marion Oettinger, director of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Latin American Art at the San Antonio Museum of Art. "Thanks to Borges and others like him, the popular graphics tradition is alive and well in Brazil in a way that you don't see in other countries."

From Dürer and other European artists of the Renaissance to Hokusai and Hiroshige in Japan, woodblock printing has an honored place in the history of art. Early in the 20th century, Picasso, Munch and others helped revive and extend the form.

The woodblock prints of northeast Brazil began as an offshoot of a folk art known as *literatura de cordel*, or string literature. Since the 19th century, unlettered folk poets have roamed the remote backlands of this region, which is larger than Alaska and home to 50 million people. They recite elaborately rhymed verses about real and imaginary events and characters, like the Mysterious Peacock of folklore, and sell the same poems, transcribed, to an attentive peasant audience.

"That's how I started, hawking my poems at markets and fairs," Mr. Borges said in his workshop, which is dominated by an old-fashioned handpulled press and whose walls are decorated with the hand-carved woodblocks he uses to make his prints. "No one ever taught me how to do that, but I've got more than 200 cordel titles to my name, and I'm still writing them."

Originally the prints illustrating the poems were small and used only as covers for the poets' chapbooks, which vendors hung from lines of rope. But in the 1960's Mr. Borges and others realized that a market was developing and that by enlarging their black-and-white prints to folio size or larger, they could have a freestanding art form.

At first, sophisticated Brazilians in cities like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo regarded the regional prints, called xilogravuras in Portuguese, with disdain. Now, though, such works are increasingly valued, both in Brazil and abroad.

"Whether dealing with sacred material, local politics, culture heroes or folklore in general, the perspective these artists offer is something really special and wonderful," Dr. Oettinger said. "These are vibrant artists who work confidently and purely and remain true to their subject matter."

More than a score of woodblock artists, most of them concentrated in the northeastern states of Pernambuco and Ceará, practice the form. But Mr. Borges, 65, "seems to be the star who has risen above the rest," said Barbara Mauldin, curator of the Latin American collection at the Museum of International Folk Art, a branch of the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe.

"His sense of composition is superb, and his imagery is bold, with such a strong and informative narrative message, one that is very humorous and lively," she added. "My whole house is full of his prints. He is just fabulous, a genius really."

Mr. Borges's appeal is evident just from the whimsical titles that he often gives his bold, naïve prints, which sell for less than \$20 at his studio here but can fetch hundreds of dollars at galleries in the United States, Europe and Japan. His subjects range from slices of local color, like "The Hillbilly's Honeymoon" and "The Goat Herder," to fanciful images like "The Woman Who Put the Devil in a Bottle" and "The Monster of the Backlands."

"I carve what I see, not just legends and imaginary things that come to my mind, but also scenes from daily life or working in the fields, things that are linked to religion or society," Mr. Borges said.

As befits a folk art, woodblock printing often attracts entire families. Mr. Borges's brother Amaro and cousin Joel are also highly regarded masters of the form, as is his adopted son, José Miguel da Silva.

"I always wanted to learn," Mr. da Silva, 39, said of the art. "It seemed so beautiful to me, and now that I do this for a living, I love it even more. But I still consider myself my father's pupil."

Mr. Borges speaks especially highly of an eccentric, retiring poet and artist named José Ferreira da Silva. (He is not related to Mr. Borges's son.) Using the name Dila, he consistently turns out brilliant and disturbingly apocalyptic prints. Seeming oblivious to worldly concerns, he barely ekes out a living by running a small print shop in Caruaru, a market town 25 miles west of here.

"Dila is unique in many ways, considered by traditional collectors to be someone very, very special," said Candace Slater, author of "Stories on a String" (University of California Press) and a professor of humanities at the University of California at Berkeley. "He is a dreamer whose imaginative life is totally caught up in a vision of the Northeast that is populated with heroes and outlaws. He is like van Gogh when he gets on a sunflower kick, and you can't get him off it."

Mr. Ferreira da Silva, 64, admits that he is obsessed with Lampião, a Robin Hood type of bandit who was hunted down and killed by police in 1938, and Padre Cicero Romão, a priest who lived around the same time and is now regarded as a saint.

"My work is full of strange and frightening things, but I am a religious man, and so I believe in dreams and signs," he said. "That's how the ideas come to me. The themes are always the same because that is what people want to buy."

As its popularity grows, the woodblock print art form continues to evolve, sometimes to the discomfort of collectors. Mr. Borges now makes multicolored prints and has recently begun working with marble. He also does illustrations for books and is stamping his designs on T-shirts.

The medium also continues to serve practical purposes. A recent exhibition of northeastern woodblock prints at a museum in São Paulo included record album covers, newspaper advertisements, logos for businesses, political campaign posters, labels for beer and soft drinks and fliers for restaurants and taverns.

Much of the innovation in the form is coming from a younger generation of artists, including Stênio Diniz, Francisco Correia Lima, Hamurabi Batista and Erivaldo Ferreira da Silva (who is not related to the other da Silvas mentioned). To the experts, these artists' activity suggests that the woodblock print tradition is likely to remain fresh and vital.

"The younger artists live in a hybrid world, and their work reflects an amalgam of styles," Dr. Slater said. "They have taken art courses, and they are in no way ignorant of who Picasso is, but at the same time they are drawn to traditional themes like the Mysterious Peacock and Lampião. I take a long view: their work remains immediate and deeply felt because the creative force and energy is still very much there."

From **Brazilian Folktales** by Livia de Almeida and Ana Portella, World Folklore Series, Libraries Unlimited, Westport, Connecticut, 2006.

## ***“The Creation of the Amazon River”***

*A long, long time ago, Jaci (jah-cee), the silver moon, happened to meet the golden Sun, while wandering by the Amazon forest. The sun was a strong, fiery warrior. As he set his eyes on Jaci, the Sun realized that he had never beheld anything so beautiful. They fell in love immediately and decided to wed.*

*Suddenly the Sun realized that their passion could never be consummated. It would mean the end of the world. The Sun’s intense love would scorch all plants and burn all life on Earth. The tears of happiness shed by the Moon would flood the universe. Reluctantly they agreed to part and never meet each other again, for the good of all the world’s creatures.*

*Jaci the moon and Sun never did meet again. Whenever one comes by, the other immediately retreats.*

*But Jaci was so unhappy that she couldn’t help but cry night and day. Her tears fell on the forest and filled the valleys. They rolled on down to the sea. In this way the Great River came to be.*

## “Castro Alves From Brazil” – Pablo Neruda (Chile, 1904–1973)

Source: <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/castro-alves-from-brazil/>

Castro Alves from Brazil, for whom did you sing?  
Did you sing for the flower? For the water  
whose beauty whispered words to the stones?  
Did you sing to the eyes, to the torn profile  
of the woman you once loved? For the spring?

Yes, but those petals were not dewed,  
those black waters had no words,  
those eyes were those who saw death,  
still burning the tortures behind love,  
Spring was splashed with blood.

I sang for the slaves, aboard the ships  
as a dark branch of wrath.  
They travelled, and bled from the ships  
leaving us the weight of a stolen blood.

I sang in those days against the inferno,  
against the sharp languages of greed,  
against the gold drenched in the torment,  
against the hand that rose the whip,  
against the maestros of darkness.

Each rose had one dead man in their roots.  
The light, the night, the sky were covered in tears,  
the eyes separated from wounded hands  
and it was my voice the only one to fill the silence.

I wanted that from the man we could be rescued,  
I believed that the route passed through the man,  
and from there destiny would be made.  
I sang for those who had no voice.  
My voice hit doors that until then were closed  
so that, fighting, Freedom could be let in.

Castro Alves from Brazil, now that your pure book  
is reborn to a free land,  
let me, poet of our America,  
to crown your head with the laurels of the people.  
Your voice joined the eternal and loud voice of the men.  
You sang well. You sang how it must be sung.

# **O Navio Negreiro: Tragedia no Mar / The Slave Ship: Tragedy at Sea – Antonio Castro Alves**

Translated by David Barnhart.

Source: <http://www.revista.agulha.nom.br/calves01b.html>

----  
We are on the high seas... Mad in space  
The moonlight plays — golden butterfly;  
And the waves run after it. . . tire  
Like a band of troubled infants.

We are on the high seas... From the firmament  
The stars leap like spray of gold. . .  
The sea in turn lights phosphorescence,  
— Constellations of liquid treasure...

We are on the high seas... Two infinities  
Strain there in a mad embrace  
Blue, golden, placid, sublime..  
Which of the two is ocean? Which sky?...

We are on the high seas.. . Opening the sails,  
To the warm breath of the marine breezes,  
Sailed brig runs on the crests of the seas,  
As the swallows brush in the wave...

Whence do you come? Wither do you go? Of the erring ships  
Who knows the course if the space is so great?  
On this Sahara the coursers raise dust,  
Gallop, soar, but leave no trace.

Happy he who can, there, at this hour,  
Feel this panel's majesty!.. .  
Below — the sea... above — the firmament! ...  
And in the sea and in the sky — the immensity!

Oh! what sweet harmony the breeze brings me!  
What soft music sounds far off!  
My God! how sublime an ardent song is  
Floating at random on the endless waves!

Men of the sea! Oh rude mariners,  
Toasted by the sun of the four worlds!  
Children whom the tempests warmed  
In the cradle of these profound abysses!

Wait! ... wait! ... let me drink  
This savage, free poetry.. .  
Orchestra — is the sea, which roars by the prow  
And the wind, which whistles in the ropes.

Why do you flee thus, swift boat?  
Why do you flee the fearless poet?  
Would that I could accompany the furrow  
You sow in the sea — mad comet!

Albatross! Albatross! Eagle of the ocean,  
You who sleep in the gauze of the clouds,  
Shake your feathers, leviathan of space  
Albatross! Albatross! give me those wings.



# Cachoeira

By Marilyn Nelson

Source: <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/16916>

We slept, woke, breakfasted, and met the man  
we'd hired as a tour guide, with a van  
and driver, for the day. We were to drive  
to Cachoeira, where the sisters live:  
the famous Sisterhood of the Good Death,  
founded by former slaves in the nineteenth  
century. "Negroes of the Higher Ground,"  
they called themselves, the governesses who found-  
ed the Sisterhood as a way to serve the poor.  
Their motto, "*Aiye Orun*," names the door  
between this world and the other, kept ajar.  
They teach that death is relative: We rise  
to dance again. Locally canonized,  
they lead quiet, celibate, nunnish lives,  
joining after they've been mothers and wives,  
at between fifty and seventy years of age:  
a sisterhood of sages in matronage.

We drove on Salvador's four-lane boulevards,  
past unpainted cement houses, and billboards,  
and pedestrians wearing plastic shoes,  
and little shops, and streets, and avenues,  
a park, a mall . . . Our guide was excellent:  
fluent in English, and intelligent,  
willing to answer questions patiently  
and to wait out our jokes. The history  
of Salvador flew past. At Tororo  
we slowed as much as the traffic would allow,  
to see the Orixas dancing on the lake  
in their bright skirts. The road we took  
sped past high-rise apartment neighborhoods,  
then scattered shacks, then nothing but deep woods  
of trees I didn't recognize and lands  
that seemed to be untouched by human hands.  
We stopped in a village, where it was market day.  
We walked among the crowds, taller than they  
and kilos heavier, tasting jackfruit  
and boiled peanuts, embraced by absolute,  
respectful welcome, like visiting gods  
whose very presence is good news. Our guide  
suggested a rest stop. We were sipping Coke

when a man came into the shop and quietly spoke  
to our guide, who translated his request:  
Would we come to his nightclub, be his guests?  
We didn't understand, but shrugged and went  
a few doors down the street. "What does he want?"  
we asked. The club hadn't been opened yet;  
by inviting us in, the owner hoped to get  
our blessings for it. Which we humbly gave:  
visiting rich American descendants of slaves.

For hours we drove through a deep wilderness,  
laughing like children on a field-trip bus.  
We made a side trip to the family home  
of Bahia's favorite daughter and son,  
the Velosos, Bethania and Caetano,  
in the small town of Santo Amaro.  
The greenery flew by until the descent  
into a river valley. There we went  
to a nice little restaurant to dine  
on octopus stew, rice, manioc, and wine.  
Then we crossed a rickety bridge behind a dray  
drawn by a donkey, and wended our way,  
at last, to Cachoeira, an old town  
of colonial buildings, universally tan  
and shuttered, darkly lining narrow streets.  
A tethered rooster pecked around our feet  
in the souvenir shop. At the convent  
I wondered what the statues really meant:  
Was it Mary, or was it Yemanjá  
in the chapel, blue-robed, over the altar?  
Was it Mary on the glass-enclosed bier,  
her blue robe gold-embroidered, pearls in her hair,  
or was it the Orixa of the sea?  
There were no Sisters around for us to see;  
they were in solitude, preparing for the Feast  
of the Assumption, when the Virgin passed  
painlessly from this world into the next,  
*Aiye to Orun*. Posters showed them decked  
out for their big Assumption Day parade,  
big, handsome mamas wearing Orixa beads,  
white turbans and blouses, red shawls, black skirts.  
The man in their gift shop was an expert  
on the Sisters' long struggle to find a way  
to serve the Christian Church and Candomblé.  
The eldest Sister is called "the Perpetual Judge";  
every seventh year, she becomes the bridge

on which the Virgin Mary crosses back,  
sorrowing love incarnate in a black  
ninety-odd-year-old woman facing death  
and saying *Magnificat* with every breath.  
We drove out of the valley looking back  
on lightbulbs which intensified the thick,  
incomprehensible, mysterious  
darkness of the unknown. Grown serious  
and silent in our air-conditioned van,  
we rode back into the quotidian.

## Novel excerpt

Excerpts from novel The War of the Saints by Jorge Amado, translated by Gregory Rabassa, Bantam Books, New York, NY, 1993.

From *Manela's Procession*

Our Manela did not come from Seville; nor did she participate in any Procession of the Dead of the Lord on Good Fridays. No, her procession was that of Bomfim Thursday or if you will, the washing festival, the waters of Oxala, the most important festival in Bahia, unique in all the world. Nor did our Manela wrap herself in atonement and penitence, cover herself with a black mantilla, or recite the litany to the sinister sound of rattles: "Mea culpa! Mea culpa!" Her aunt Adalgisa so repented, pounding her chest. But Manela came wrapped in joy and merriment, dressed in the dazzling traditional white dress of a Baiana, a Bahian woman. On her head, balanced over her torso, she carried the jug of scented water for washing the Church of Bomfim, and she went along dancing and singing Carnival songs to the irresistible sounds of the music truck.

That year, for the first time, Manela took her place among the Baianas on Bonfim Thursday. In order to walk in the procession—unbeknownst to her aunt, needless to say—she had played hookey from her English class in the intersession program at the Americans' institute. She played hookey in a proper fashion, however, because the day before the procession the class had unanimously informed Bob Burnet, the teacher, of their decision not to attend that day in order to take part in the washing festival. Curious about Bahian customs, young Bob not only went along with the idea but proposed that he keep them company, and he did so with his well-known thoroughness: he samaba-ed ceaselessly under the burning January sun, bloating himself with beer. He was what you'd call a nice guy...

On Bomfim Thursday, Manela had arrived at the steps of the Church of the Conceição da Praia, the dwelling of Yemanjá, to begin the revelry. She'd come early in the morning in the company of Aunt Gildete, Marieta, and Cousin Violeta, and they mingled with dozens of Baianas as they waited for the procession to form. What do we mean, dozens? Actually, there were hundreds of Baianas gathered on the steps of the church, all in the elegance of their ritualistic white costume: the wide skirt, the starched petticoat, the smock of lace and embroidery, the low-heeled sandals. On their arms and necks they displayed silver balanganda bracelets and necklaces, jewelry and armbands in the colors of their saints. The pot, jug, or jar on the turban atop their heads carried scented water for their obligation. Mães de santo and filhas de santo of all Afro-Bahian nations were there—Nago, Jeje, Ijexa, Angola, Congo—and copper-colored beauties of the mulatto nations, full of coquetry and merriment. Manela, perhaps the prettiest of all, was blooming with excitement. Up on the trucks the atabaque drums were throbbing, calling the people together. Suddenly music exploded from a Carnival truck, and the dancing began.

The procession wound all the way from the Church of the Conceição da Praia, along the Lacerda Elevator, up to the Church of Bomfim on Sacred Hill, for a distance of six miles, more or less, depending on the quantity of devotion and cane liquor consumed by the participants. Thousands of people—the procession was a sea of people—it stretched out of sight. Cars, trucks, carriages,

and donkeys festooned with flowers and sprigs, carrying full barrels on their backs; all ensured there would be no lack of scented water for the ceremony. In the trucks were lively groups, whole families, samba clubs, and afoxes. Musicians clutched their instruments: guitars, accordions, ukuleles, tambourines, capoeira berimbaus. Popular singers and composers were there, like Tião the Chauffeur, River Man, Chocolate, and Paulino Camefeu. The voices of Jeronimo, of Moraes Moreira were heard. In riding breeches, white jacket, dandified, kinky cotton hair, Batatinha, “Small Potatoes,” smiled while crossing the street. People shook his hand, shouted his name, “Batatinha!” embraced him. A blond—American, Italian, from São Paulo?—ran over and kissed him on his black and beautiful face.

Rich and poor mingled, rubbing elbows. In the mixed-blood city of Bahia, all shades of color exist in the flesh of its inhabitants, ranging from a black so dark it’s blue, to milky white, the color of snow, and in between the infinite gamut of mulattos. Who wasn’t a devotee of Our Lord of Bomfim, with his countless miracles; who doesn’t cling to Oxala bearing the unfailing ebos?

Also present were the commanding general of the region, the admiral of the naval base, the brigadier of the air force, the president of the Assembly, the presiding judge of the Superior Court, the president of the Honorable Chamber of Aldermen, bankers, cacao barons, entrepreneurs, executives, senators, and deputies. Some paraded in black limousines. Others, however—the governor, the mayor, and the head of the tobacco industry, Mario Portugal—followed on foot along with the people. There followed a mob of demagogues—that is, candidates in the upcoming elections—canvassing every mile, butting in, distributing fliers and embraces, kisses, smiles, and pats on the back to potential voters.

The procession swayed to the music from the trucks: religious hymns, folk songs, Carnival sambas, and frevos. The accompaniment swelled along the way, the multitude expanded; people clambered down the hillsides, the São Joaquim market emptied out, latecomers disembarked from the ferryboats and launches or arrived in sloops. When the front of the procession reached the foot of Sacred Hill, a voice well known and loved rose from the music truck and Dodo and Osmar—a hush descended over everyone, the procession halted, and Caetano Veloso intoned the hymn to Our Lord of Bomfim.

Then the march up the hillside resumed to the beating of the drums, to the singing of the afoxes about the waters of Oxala. The mass of people headed for the Church of Bomfim, which had been closed by a decision of the Curia. In years past, the procession would wash the whole church and honor Oxala on the altar of Jesus. Someday it will go back to being that way. Today the Baianas occupied the steps to the entrance to the church; the washing began, and the obligation of the candomblé is fulfilled: “Exe-e-baba!”

Our Lord of Bomfim arrived in Bahia from Portugal during colonial times riding on the mournful Catholic vow of a shipwrecked Portuguese sailor; Oxala arrived from the coast of Africa, during the time of the traffic in blacks, riding on the bloody back of a slave. Today they hovered over the procession, Our Lord and Oxala, fused in the breasts of the Baianas, plunged into the scented water, and mingled. Together they are a single uniquely Brazilian divinity.

**[Several short chapters later, Manela continues her involvement with the event. “Manela was busy on the steps of the church, scattering scented water over the delirious crowd—*filhas de santo* in trance were receiving orixas...”]**

From *The Flight of the Swallow*

Overwhelmed by a feeling of relief, of well-being, the all consuming urgent desire to live, an insidious euphoria, a sweet sadness, the liberated swallow flapped her wings, ready to take flight and discover the world. Manela laughed wildly.

On the square around the basilica and on the streets at the foot of the Sacred hill, the people had started Carnival: A month and a half of frolicking and merrymaking would follow, of endless celebration because no one should have to tolerate the harshness of life uninterrupted for a whole year. The gift of celebrating festivities even under calamitous conditions belongs exclusively to our people as a favor from Our Lord of Bomfim and Oxala: The two together add up to one, the God of Brazilians, Bahia born.

Samba groups and afoxes paraded by, the Children of Gandhi gave their first performance of the year, and the melodies from music trucks echoed across the horizon of houses on stilts barely raised above the water and mud in the swamp of Alagados. The urchins called captains-of-the-sands went through the crowd peddling Bomfim ribbons, medals and scapulars, colored figures of saints, clenched-fist figas and leather-bag patuas. Crowds of tourists came and went, all bubbly and excited.

Arranged on aromatic trays were acarajes, abard, fried fish, crabs, moqueca of aratu, crabs wrapped in banana leaves, and corn cakes. At the jammed noisy lunch stands, meals of coconut and dende oil were served: minced herb caruru, vatapa, efo, diverse fried dishes, and different moquecas—so many of them!—spiced chicken stew with shrimp and pumpkin, hauca rice. Ice-cold beer, batidas, and jackhammer soup, an incomparable aphrodisiac. Sumptuous baskets of fruit: manga-espada, carlota, custard apple, and itiuba, manga-rosa, sapotes, sapodillas, hog plums. Malay apples, cashew fruit, Surinam cherries, jambos, Chinese gooseberries, eleven types of banana, and slices of pineapple and watermelon. Everything was sky-high in price, but even so, the stands couldn't hold the vast and voracious clientele—it was a gut-stuffing spree.

In several of the houses set aside for pilgrims or rented to summer visitors who were there for the festivities, small orchestras—guitar, accordion, flute, tambourine, ukulele—livened up family groups. Among the embracing couples there was no lack of those getting up in years, old-timers joining in with the young, remembering the good old days. The great majority of people, however, danced in the open air, on the street, to the electronic sound of the music trucks: frevos and sambas, Carnival marchas: “The only ones who don't follow the music trucks are those already dead,” the minstrel says. A dance without limits, with no quitting time, perennial and boundless, it can only be seen to be believed.

They didn't stop their frolicking when a happy band of merry makers gave off the inaugural Carnival shout on Bomfim Thursday to sisters, cousins, lovers, hangers-on, friends, and strangers. Manela was the heart of the group, and no one outdid her in liveliness. Having been

mortally ill, with the miracle of her recuperated health she wanted to enjoy everything she had a right to enjoy. On the pavement she danced the Brazilian dance of the people, .... She danced the samba, foxtrot, rock, bolero, rhumba, and twist, she even did some steps of an Argentine tango....Such, indeed, was living.

## Three Poems to Read with Students—Modern Poetry

From *Brazilian Poetry (1950–1980)*, edited, with an introduction by Emanuel Brasil and William Jay Smith, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 1983.

*Dionysus in Brazil* by Jorge Mautner

Translated by Romney Meyran

The future is a bird that arrives already tired from being an airplane. It is humanity crystallized in an immortal pill. It is the future of Brazil, so talked of and so certain. It is the sensation that Brazil provokes of a constant going to be, going to happen, a mental vertigo, a drunkenness, an abyss of delights.

What Europe can possess this? What Asia? Not even Africa with the weight of its darkness and its pharaohs behind it. We are the innocent children of old assassins and our childish murmur is the samba.

Carnival is our earthquake.

Dionysus was packed up in Greece and shipped here, where he married an Indian and turned into one. Dionysus had a little daughter with whom he used to stroll under the shadows of the gigantic trees of Amazonia. Collected orchids for her and sang sad songs.

— • —

*Oswald Dead* by Ferreira Gullar

Translated by Richard Zenith

Yesterday in São Paulo they buried  
an anthropophagic angel  
with wings made of banana leaves  
(one more name to encroach on our tropical vegetation)

The schools and mills of São Paulo  
didn't take time  
to look at the body of the poet who prophesied the leisure of civilization



The faster you go the idler you get  
The handkerchief with which for the last time  
he wiped his nose  
was a national flag

NOTE:

*It was a sunny day in Ipanema  
Oswald de Andrade helped the sun set  
today Sunday, October 24, 1954*

— • —

***On Hope (Da Esperança)*** by Lindolf Bell  
Translated by William Jay Smith

That poem  
(that flower of struggle most perfect lotus)  
grows  
where in general nothing else will.  
It needs neither money  
nor honors.  
It awaits neither promotion in official standing  
nor a plaque unveiled to thunderous applause.

The poem grows  
at the back of the house  
where the louvered bathroom window opens.  
Where the picket fence is falling to pieces.  
rotting from neglect and poverty.  
It grows in a place far removed  
from general admiration,  
far from literary movements  
and passing fashions.

The poem grows  
without fertilizers of manifestoes.  
Complete in its own celebration.  
Without the perfected techniques of plot construction  
or the latest cybernetic findings.

Nor has it the least kinship  
with framed diplomas  
from Brazilian universities  
or from foreign interplanetary, or regional ones.

Since its destiny is to grow  
It grows from the daily ashes  
and from the filth of humanity  
It is the cud chewed in stables  
and living rooms.  
It spits furtively  
on the head of pompous behavior.

The poem rises above  
the wealth denied it  
to lack of cunning and deception  
in dealing with alien souls  
And green is its season  
where it will forever  
be futile to protect itself.

The poem grows from certain miracles:  
from meal to meal.  
From reconciliation to reconciliation.  
From love lost to love found.  
From God closing all doors  
but leaving a crack  
open for man's hope  
And from words, all these words  
and their metamorphoses  
that cross at the back of the house and of the world  
and all the circumstances  
by which I am crossed.

## **Paired Poem and Song**

### ***In the Middle of the Road***

by Carlos Drummond de Andrade

Translated by Elizabeth Bishop

From The Complete Poems: 1927–1979 by Elizabeth Bishop, The Noonday Press, New York, NY, 1983.

In the middle of the road there was a stone  
there was a stone in the middle of the road  
there was a stone  
in the middle of the road there was a stone.

Never should I forget this event  
in the life of my fatigued retinas.  
Never should I forget that in the middle of the road  
there was a stone  
there was a stone in the middle of the road  
in the middle of the road there was a stone.

## *Waters of March* by Tom Jobim

A stick, a stone,  
It's the end of the road,  
It's the rest of a stump,  
It's a little alone

It's a sliver of glass,  
It is life, it's the sun,  
It is night, it is death,  
It's a trap, it's a gun

The oak when it blooms,  
A fox in the brush,  
A knot in the wood,  
The song of a thrush

The wood of the wind,  
A cliff, a fall,  
A scratch, a lump,  
It is nothing at all

It's the wind blowing free,  
It's the end of the slope,  
It's a beam, it's a void,  
It's a hunch, it's a hope

And the river bank talks  
of the waters of March,  
It's the end of the strain,  
The joy in your heart

The foot, the ground,  
The flesh and the bone,  
The beat of the road,  
A slingshot's stone

A fish, a flash,  
A silvery glow,  
A fight, a bet,  
The range of a bow

The bed of the well,  
The end of the line,  
The dismay in the face,  
It's a loss, it's a find

A spear, a spike,  
A point, a nail,  
A drip, a drop,  
The end of the tale

A truckload of bricks  
in the soft morning light,  
The shot of a gun  
in the dead of the night

A mile, a must,  
A thrust, a bump,  
It's a girl, it's a rhyme,  
It's a cold, it's the mumps

The plan of the house,  
The body in bed,  
And the car that got stuck,  
It's the mud, it's the mud

Afloat, adrift,  
A flight, a wing,  
A hawk, a quail,  
The promise of spring

And the riverbank talks  
of the waters of March,  
It's the promise of life  
It's the joy in your heart

A stick, a stone,  
It's the end of the road  
It's the rest of a stump,  
It's a little alone

A snake, a stick,  
It is John, it is Joe,  
It's a thorn in your hand  
and a cut in your toe

A point, a grain,  
A bee, a bite,  
A blink, a buzzard,  
A sudden stroke of night

A pin, a needle,  
A sting, a pain,  
A snail, a riddle,  
A wasp, a stain

A pass in the mountains,  
A horse and a mule,  
In the distance the shelves  
rode three shadows of blue

And the riverbank talks  
of the waters of March,  
It's the promise of life  
in your heart, in your heart

A stick, a stone,  
The end of the road,  
The rest of a stump,  
A lonesome road

A sliver of glass,  
A life, the sun,  
A knife, a death,  
The end of the run

And the riverbank talks  
of the waters of March,  
It's the end of all strain,  
It's the joy in your heart.

## The Burglar of Babylon

By Elizabeth Bishop

Source: The Complete Poems: 1927–1979,  
Elizabeth Bishop, The Noonday Press, New York, 1983.

On the fair green hills of Rio  
There grows a fearful stain:  
The poor who come to Rio  
And can't go home again.

On the hills a million people,  
A million sparrows, nest,  
Like a confused migration  
That's had to light and rest,

Building its nests, or houses,  
Out of nothing at all, or air.  
You'd think a breath would end them,  
They perch so lightly there.

But they cling and spread like lichen,  
And people come and come.  
There's one hill called the Chicken,  
And one called Catacomb;

There's the hill of Kerosene,  
And the hill of Skeleton,  
The hill of Astonishment,  
And the hill of Babylon.

Micuçu was a burglar and killer,  
An enemy of society.  
He had escaped three times  
From the worst penitentiary.

They don't know how many he murdered  
(Though they say he never raped),  
And he wounded two policemen  
This last time he escaped.

They said, "He'll go to his auntie,  
Who raised him like a son.  
She has a little drink shop  
On the hill of Babylon."

He did go straight to his auntie,  
And he drank a final beer.  
He told her, "The soldiers are coming,  
And I've got to disappear."

"Ninety years they gave me.  
Who wants to live that long?  
I'll settle for ninety hours,  
On the hill of Babylon.

"Don't tell anyone you saw me.  
I'll run as long as I can.  
You were good to me, and I love you,  
But I'm a doomed man."

Going out, he met a mulata  
Carrying water on her head.  
"If you say you saw me, daughter,  
You're as good as dead."

There are caves up there, and hideouts,  
And an old fort, falling down.  
They used to watch for Frenchmen  
From the hill of Babylon.

Below him was the ocean.  
It reached far up the sky,  
Flat as a wall, and on it  
Were freighters passing by,

Or climbing the wall, and climbing  
Till each looked like a fly,  
And then fell over and vanished;  
And he knew he was going to die.

He could hear the goats baa-baa-ing.  
He could hear the babies cry;  
Fluttering kites strained upward;  
And he knew he was going to die.

A buzzard flapped so near him  
He could see its naked neck.  
He waved his arms and shouted,  
“Not yet, my son, not yet!”

An Army helicopter  
Came nosing around and in.  
He could see two men inside it,  
but they never spotted him.

The soldiers were all over,  
On all sides of the hill,  
And right against the skyline  
A row of them, small and still.

Children peeked out of windows,  
And men in the drink shop swore,  
And spat a little cachaça  
At the light cracks in the floor.

But the soldiers were nervous, even  
with tommy guns in hand,  
And one of them, in a panic,  
Shot the officer in command.

He hit him in three places;  
The other shots went wild.  
The soldier had hysterics  
And sobbed like a little child.

The dying man said, “Finish  
The job we came here for.”  
he committed his soul to God  
And his sons to the Governor.

They ran and got a priest,  
And he died in hope of Heaven  
—A man from Pernambuco,  
The youngest of eleven.

They wanted to stop the search,  
but the Army said, “No, go on,”  
So the soldiers swarmed again  
Up the hill of Babylon.

Rich people in apartments  
Watched through binoculars  
As long as the daylight lasted.  
And all night, under the stars,

Micuçu hid in the grasses  
Or sat in a little tree,  
Listening for sounds, and staring  
At the lighthouse out at sea.

And the lighthouse stared back at him,  
til finally it was dawn.  
He was soaked with dew, and hungry,  
On the hill of Babylon.

The yellow sun was ugly,  
Like a raw egg on a plate—  
Slick from the sea. He cursed it,  
For he knew it sealed his fate.

He saw the long white beaches  
And people going to swim,  
With towels and beach umbrellas,  
But the soldiers were after him.

Far, far below, the people  
Were little colored spots,  
And the heads of those in swimming  
Were floating coconuts.

He heard the peanut vendor  
Go peep-peep on his whistle,  
And the man that sells umbrellas  
Swinging his watchman’s rattle.

Women with market baskets  
Stood on the corners and talked,  
Then went on their way to market,  
Gazing up as they walked.

The rich with their binoculars  
Were back again, and many  
Were standing on the rooftops,  
Among TV antennae.

It was early, eight or eight-thirty.  
He saw a soldier climb,  
Looking right at him. He fired,  
And missed for the last time.

He could hear the soldier panting,  
Though he never got very near.  
Micuçu dashed for shelter.  
But he got it, behind the ear.

He heard the babies crying  
Far, far away in his head,  
And the mongrels barking and barking.  
Then Micuçu was dead.

He had a Taurus revolver,  
And just the clothes he had on,  
With two contos in the pockets,  
On the hill of Babylon.

The police and the populace  
Heaved a sigh of relief,  
But behind the counter his auntie  
Wiped her eyes in grief.

“We have always been respected.  
My shop is honest and clean.  
I loved him, but from a baby  
Micuçu was mean.

“We have always been respected.  
His sister has a job.  
Both of us gave him money.  
Why did he have to rob?

“I raised him to be honest,  
Even here, in Babylon slum.”  
The customers had another,  
Looking serious and glum.

But one of them said to another,  
When he got outside the door,  
“He wasn't much of a burglar,  
He got caught six times—or more.”

This morning the little soldiers  
are on Babylon hill again;  
Their gun barrels and helmets  
Shine in a gentle rain.

Micuçu is buried already.  
They're after another two,  
But they say they aren't as dangerous  
As the poor Micuçu.

On the green hills of Rio  
There grows a fearful stain:  
The poor who come to Rio  
And can't go home again.

There's the hill of Kerosene,  
And the hill of the Skeleton,  
The hill of Astonishment,  
And the hill of Babylon.

*Note: Micuçu is the folks name of a deadly snake, in the north.*

# Brazil Military Says It Cornered Rio Drug Gangs



Evaristo Sa/Agence France-  
Presse — Getty Images

While a child played, members of Brazil's military patrolled a street in Vila Cruzeiro slum of Rio de Janeiro. Forces entered the slum on Thursday.

**By MYRNA DOMIT**

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/27/world/americas/27brazil.html?pagewanted=all>

RIO DE JANEIRO — Police and Brazilian Army soldiers, struggling to take control of a second huge slum complex here, were fired on by drug gangs on Friday, but by nightfall they had managed to trap the traffickers inside, a military spokesman said.

People in the city fled as gun battles broke out between the gangs and the Brazilian Army and police forces.

Friday's activity, at the Alemão complex of shantytowns, which is home to about 400,000 residents and considered by many to be the most violent of the city's slums, is a response to the latest eruption of gang violence, which began Sunday, as well as an effort by the Brazilian authorities to show that they can secure the city well in advance of the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games.

Rio's secretary of public security, José Mariano Beltrame, told Brazilian news media that the latest violence was "retaliation" by gang members against an ambitious government program to control violence and "pacify" 13 of the more violent slums by invading, rooting out drug traffickers and installing a special community police force.

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil sent 800 army soldiers to the Alemão complex early Friday after police outposts in the city had come under fire from drug gang members. The death toll from the violence climbed to 41 on Friday, the police said, with nearly 100 cars and buses burned on major roadways, their passengers robbed and sometimes shot.

The deployment of soldiers indicated the government's concern about the latest violence, analysts said, as well as its determination that Rio's notorious gangs would not be allowed to prevail.



“It is not humanly possible that 99 percent continue to suffer in the hands of criminals,” Mr. da Silva said Friday at a news conference during a visit to Guiana. “Rio can be sure that the government will give all the help necessary.”

On Thursday, armored vehicles carrying police officers with assault rifles rolled over burning tires during an operation at Vila Cruzeiro, another gang-infested slum in the northern part of Rio. On Friday, the police declared they had “dominated” Vila Cruzeiro, although there were widespread reports that more than 100 gang members had escaped from the slum, prompting the deployment of the army troops.

Vila Cruzeiro residents were left in the dark after electrical wires were destroyed during Thursday’s police activity, and many, fearing future violence, refused to go home. Bullet holes scarred walls and homes, and Special Police Operations Battalion officers searched cars and pedestrians at entrances and exits.

“I have never seen an operation like this one before and I am scared and am going to leave this community with my mom and sister,” said Henrique Gonçalves, 18. “I can’t continue living like this.” A hospital near Vila Cruzeiro resembled a war zone clinic mobilized to treat victims wounded during the police operation. Among the victims was a 2-year-old girl shot in the arm by a stray bullet.

But panic has also affected residents throughout the city, and 132 schools have shut down, according to the city’s secretary of education. At the Alemão complex, residents said they feared “bloodshed” from an expected invasion by the police and soldiers in the coming days, but remained hopeful that living conditions would improve as a result.

“This is the largest operation I have seen in Complexo do Alemão,” said Rosineide Rodrigues de Lima, 39, a telephone operator. “I fear for my life and my daughter, who is in there right now, but this is the price we have to pay to have a better life in the long term.”

Rio’s governor, Sérgio Cabral, said during a news conference on Friday that the police and soldiers were in position to invade but were waiting for a “strategic moment to act.”

*Roberta Napolis contributed reporting.*

From The Alphabet in the Park: Selected Poems of Adelia Prado, translated by Ellen Dore Watson, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 1990.

## **Praise for a Color**

By Adelia Prado

Yellow infers from itself papayas and their pulp,  
penetrable yellow.  
At noon: bees, sweet stinger and honey  
Whole eggs and their nucleus, the ovum.  
That interior thing, miniscule.  
From the blackness of the blind viscera  
hot and yellow, the miniscule speck,  
the luminous grain.  
Yellow spreads and smoothes, a downpour  
of the pure light of its name,  
tropicordial.  
Yellow turns on, turns up the heat,  
a charmed flute,  
an oboe in Bach.  
Yellow engenders.

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## **Purple**

By Adelia Prado

Purple puts on the squeeze.  
Purple is tart and narrow.  
Tyrant purple goes straight for the heart,  
crazy for dawn.  
Jesus's passion is purple and white,  
very close to joy.  
Purple is tart; it will ripen.  
Purple is handsome and I like him.  
Yellow likes him.  
The sky purples morning and evening,  
a red rose growing older.  
I gallup after purple,  
a sad memory, a four o'clock flower.  
I round up love to turn me purple with passion.  
I choose and am chosen.

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