Paulo de Tarso

By Victor Mota
Ending before beginning. This is how this story begins, the story of a Roman soldier who went mad and stopped being mad because he believed in Jesus Christ...

From madman he became wise, teaching in several universities, writing letters to small and intense Christian communities, where the inner fire of faith was spreading in the breast of Christianity now Roman, Roman now Christian.

An old book has been recovered, a flame has been rekindled, primitive weapons have been used again, still rusty, still dry, staining their lips with blood, filling their threads with infected flesh, tracing a bed of blood, illusions that have been fought in a more or less copious way, in a more or less disinterested, uninstalled way, returned to the heart of simple things like someone who gives a little bread to a poor person.

The sand gets in my eyes and in my private parts, I can't, I mustn't, I won't, I won't, so many prerequisites and I would have it here, in a little while, I would have a little bread and water, a little more desire would kill me, yet my Lord instills my body and trains my spirit; So I return to myself without taking anything away from myself, adding, adding, endowing anything with nothing that is spirit to the moment and to the squint of the proportions of reason, which I have recovered as if I had found a treasure, a beetle that sounds to my spirit, that calls my tired body and distracts it from the things of the world, which one must always see in the distance, otherwise Hell will hover over us in the form of a cloud, foretold that we are of the content of spiritual, sentimental, and other such things. I have learned that a good text, which is good for time, must first be a bad text. So it was with my epistle to the Romans. While Paul was trying to find himself, looking for hope in Christ, an inner light that he had already lit and was looking for wind to blow it in the right direction, other men and women were lost in a century of bewilderment and exzagery, still others were profiting from the sexual madness of some, who were writing a biography like me, one of the possible ones, of the torments of unreason that lead to the greatest challenge, which is reason, the reason for all things, that saves all and leads all, without judgment or trial, even if we go to prison, through the greatest of all hangings, even if we taste the gall of life, the life of others, even if nothing remains and something is invented, in the likeness of the good God.
After hearing Dulce Pontes, not Sofia Escobar, singing Ennio Morricone's "Once Upon a Time in the West," I realized that I had entered the realm of the banal once and for all, that my efforts had not been in vain, everything had been valued, even non-judged, in one way or another positively evaluated. This image pursued me through Lisbon, street after street, alley after alley, café after café, as this voice resounded throughout the world, knowing however, that I had an ostentatious burden to bear, not being a Christ nor an opportunist, I finally had a role to play, in homage to Morricone, in homage to the Portuguese burden that must be equally distributed throughout the world because it belongs to the world. So, thinking that the end was near, I had at least two years of work, a job like so many others, with risk taken, sometimes mixing negativism with positivism, being rigorous when necessary, fiery when necessary. Thus, I no longer needed to make an effort with Portuguese, nor did I need to waffle on, seducing with or without words, and playfully joking when things went wrong. I had discovered in that song the music that would take my parents to a different place, to a deserved heaven, without the need to be there, or to be here, it would simply be true to be, to stay, to belong, to be part of, that would be my prize and theirs, sooner or later. This image of the imperial Portuguese was not necessarily colonialist, but the result of a testament to something that the world had incubated the Portuguese soul to fulfill and that had, of course, already been partially fulfilled, the Brazilians played this role, supported by the Iberians, a role that Europe had to give, confer, lend, to the world, at least to the New World. It was late afternoon, the sun was still shining, I had left a lot of things to do, a lot of interesting things that the dark lenses let pass my eyes, my brain crackled with gift and knowledge, knowing that the city belonged to the World and, on that particular afternoon, an American, somewhere lost in the Amazon, smiled with contentment and slept in peace, not blessed or not, but tired of having the point of view that many, in one way or another like Paulo, have, from time to timex, because we acutely need madness to see better, to fulfill, to realize, to theorize, to establish territories, to open borders and conquer dominion over ourselves and others, when in the end we know that life is an art form and, knowing that art accepts dictators, so be the world a locus, a square stage for a war of words, whatever it may be.
If the most beautiful ode, said Drummond de Andrade, is the one made without a poet, the most beautiful work of literature is the one written by itself, in the absence of the author, because it allows him to live, because the most salutary part is its conception, in the mind, in the heart, not on paper that many mistreat, which I did for a long time. Still, it will take all my effort, thinking that I am alone, to get into Paul's spirit, tormented by desire, I swear he would do badly, like me, in this licentious Lisbon, where everything is allowed and little is punished. One would get along better in Thrace, or Cappadocia, or among the Romans, where there is a certain degree of prohibition that allows one to satisfy desire with a certain degree of risk, because it involves another component that is the absence or presence of punishment associated with risk and its taking into account, and from there, in the risk of act all judgment, judgment, will is lost, spreading the desire into diabolizing associated frustrations, being that someone needed to survive and stopped giving meaning in words to the sleeps that there were, having later found in the American that laughed, a meaning to continue. Something.
So, living in a city strange to my way of being, I got used to it, and it was known that luck
gives, confers, in any sense, activity or direction, a fairly good dose of effort, so that, for the time
being, I had blazed a trail in the faculty of Letters and if the right-wing government, be it a witch or
not, went down, my path would be easier. Or not, after all, I was mistaken for an agent of the
regime, not economically gaining anything from it, and some saw me as just another friar, a priest,
or a secular priest, as many philosophers are seen, but I had one thing going for me, I didn't pay
dues, and I was about to stop paying them to the third party to which I had belonged and which was,
after all, the pivot of the great change in Portugal in those decades, So I knew I had the ingredients
inside my spirit, as long as it wasn't upside down, to bring out a work that, after so much effort,
would be genial and masterful, let's say, that wouldn't be hollow, like many works of literature or
philosophy, such as those by Zizek, Quintais, or Sloterdjiyck, which clearly lacked honesty in the
light of day. What was noteworthy in that summer of 2015 was that most of the Portuguese
intellectual elite was out of the country, enjoying a vacation of work and days, and that same month,
in that month of August, when they all abandoned ship, those who stayed not only celebrated but
produced something universal that others heard far away and knew that from that day on, it could
no longer be the same way, things, life, would have to be taken in a different way and with a
different content, how shall I put it, work harder, things would have to be taken with more
commitment, only then the words, spoken and heard, the dreams, the things, the means, the
judgments and the techniques, could produce an effect, a finished, good effect, so that no longer
would a series of farcers nabuse the country and treat most people as people-without-hearing or
worse, without thought and feeling, people who could talk, joke, live and give life, transform the
visible world into something full of life, for the sake, I won't say, of something different, namely
art, which of all the sciences (or not) that I know, is the best finished and will undoubtedly be man's
only escape (forwards) if he wants to get out of the catastrophe he has got himself into with the
course of the days, the journeys, the tiredness and torments of work, daily or occasional, between
sidewalks and Fado music, between poppies when reason runs away and we want to give meaning
to everything, because it is good that there is no meaning, it is better to be mute and have meaning,
because the meaning, I knew it was that music by Morricone, that painting by Turner, thinking that
I was going too far in my considerations, I discovered that anthropology is more therapy than
philosophy and than therapy itself, and that I had lost this battle for lack of work, while I knew that
in the gray and fuzzy light of my conscience a painting and a
music to be at peace with myself. I spent several days in the desert, doing I don't know what, keeping myself fed by insects and ants and the flies that approach my almost putrefied body...

The hunger and the flame of thinking raged in my chest, I knew that I would let my thought thread lose in the things of the world, but, I am not sure why, this did not happen.

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