

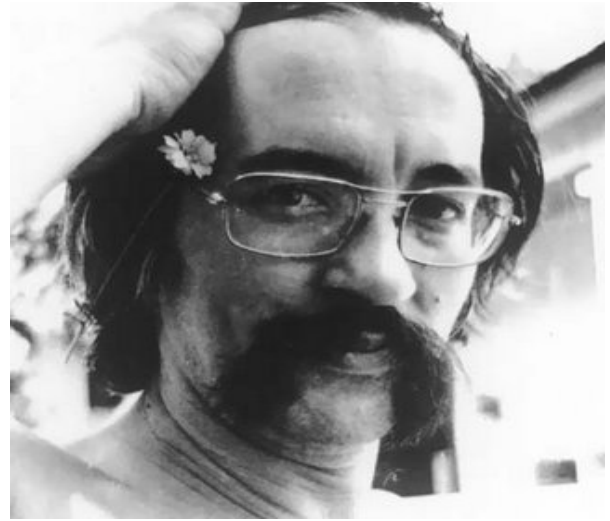
PAULO LEMINSKI

BRAZIL (1944–1989)

LANGUAGE: PORTUGUESE

DISTANCIAS MÍNIMAS

um texto morcego
se guía por ecos
um texto texto cego
um eco anti anti antigo
um grito na parede rede rede
volta verde verde verde
com mim com com consigo
ouvir e ver se se se se se



Paulo Leminski was born in Curitiba, Brazil, and was proud of his mixed African and Polish heritage. As an adult he enjoyed being thought of as controversial. He became well known for his experimental writings, lyrical poems, and extravagant mustache. His style of poetry has been compared to American poet e. e. cummings. Leminski spoke Japanese, English, and French in addition to Portuguese, and he translated works by Samuel Beckett, John Lennon, and James Joyce. He also wrote a biography of the famous haiku poet Matsuo Bashō. A man of many talents, he occasionally wrote songs, produced record albums, and was also a judo instructor.

TRANSLATOR'S GLOSSARY		
WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
anti (adj.)	opposed to or against	against, anti, in opposition to, counter, contrary
antigo (adj.)	belonging to the very distant past and no longer in existence	ancient, old, aged, antiquated, elderly, senior
cego (adj.)	unable to see	blind, sightless, unseeing
com (prep.)	accompanied by another person or thing	with, accompanied by
consigo (pron.)	reflecting back on somebody or something	with itself
distancias (n.)	measurements of space between two things or people	distances, lengths, radii
e (conj.)	used to connect words that are to be taken jointly	and, as well as, in addition to
eco(s) (n.)	a sound or series of sounds caused by the reflection of sound waves from a surface back to the listener	echo/echoes, reverberation/reverberations
grito (n.)	a loud call or cry, typically as an expression of a strong emotion	shout, yell, cry, scream
mim (pron.)	used by a speaker to refer to him/herself	me
mínimas (adj.)	a minimum amount, quantity, or degree; negligible	minimal, smallest, miniscule, nonessential, immaterial
morcego (n.)	a mainly nocturnal mammal capable of sustained flight, with membranous wings that extend between the fingers and connect the forelimbs to the body and hind limbs to the tail	bat
na (prep.)	a word that indicates location in relation to another object or person	in, on, at, upon, toward, from, onto
ouvir (v.)	perceive with the ear the sound made by someone or something	hear, listen, attend, hark, give ears, apprehend
parede (n.)	flat side of a building or room	wall, partition, barrier
por (prep.)	indicating the means of achieving something	by

WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
rede (n.)	open-meshed material often made of twine, cord, or rope—typically used for catching fish or other animals	net, web, netting, grid, lattice
se (prep./refl. pron.)	introducing a possibility; referring to one's self	if, whether, so, itself, himself, herself, oneself, themselves
se guía (v.)	shown or indicated the way to someone or to something	is guided, is directed, is shepherded
texto (n.)	a piece of written material regarded as conveying the authentic or primary form of a particular work	text
um (art.)	one single; any	a, an
ver (v.)	perceive with eyes, discern visually	see, observe, notice, detect
verde (adj.)	color made by mixing yellow and blue	green
volta (v.)	go back to	return, restore, replace

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

PHRASE BY PHRASE

DISTANCIAS MÍNIMAS _____

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REFLECTING AND FINDING MEANING

Group Member Names:

Date: _____

Pick a scribe for the group, and work together to answer the questions.

What are the best parts of this translation, and why do you think they are good?

What elements of the original poem did you lose in the translation? What did you manage to keep?

Did you achieve something new with your translation, and if so, does it make sense in the poem or not?

BACKGROUND NOTES

I. About Brazil

- Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world, both in terms of its size and population. It is the largest country in Latin America, as well as the largest Portuguese-speaking country in the world.
- Brazil is home to the Amazon River, the world's largest river system, and a majority of the Amazon rain forest, a large tropical forest containing diverse wildlife, a variety of ecological systems, and extensive natural resources spanning across numerous protected habitats.
- When the Portuguese arrived about five hundred years ago, Brazil was inhabited by many tribal nations. The indigenous population before colonization is estimated at over three million. Today it is at two hundred thousand. When the Portuguese tried to enslave the Indians, they either fled or were killed by disease. So the Portuguese brought African slaves to the colony instead.
- Despite its history of linguistic diversity, Brazil has only one official language: Portuguese. It is the only language used in newspapers, on radio and television, and for business and administrative purposes. There are 180 Amerindian languages spoken in remote pockets throughout the country.
- From 1964 to 1985 Brazil was ruled by a series of five repressive military dictators.
- Today there is a huge gap between Brazil's wealthy and poor, with a very small middle class.

II. About the Portuguese Language

- Portuguese is a Romance language spoken by over 210 million people in Portugal, Brazil, and other Portuguese colonies, including Mozambique, Angola, and Cape Verde. Of those 210 million speakers, 184 million of them live in Brazil. Portuguese is the sixth most commonly spoken language in the world.
- Despite their very noticeable differences in sounds, grammar, and vocabulary, Portuguese is often mutually intelligible with Spanish.
- While Portuguese developed primarily from Latin, it has also incorporated words from Arabic, French, Italian, and indigenous languages from South America and Africa.

III. About Paulo Leminski

- Paulo Leminski was known for his eclectic personality and identity as an edgy, provocative poet, futuristic samurai, and Zen disciple of Bashō.
- He was proud of his ancestry, a mixture of Polish on his father's side and African on his mother's side.

- Partially educated at a Benedictine monastery, he was drawn to language, becoming fluent in Greek, Latin, French, and English. Later in life he learned Japanese and Russian as well.
- He had many professions over the course of his life. He was a high school history teacher, an advertising copywriter, a judo instructor, a music composer, a translator of books by James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, and John Lennon and, of course, a poet.
- His poetry demonstrates his love of language, and he often played with sound, repetition, and bizarre syntax in order to convey meaning. He was particularly influenced by Japanese haiku, Brazilian concrete poetry, and American Beat poetry.
- He wrote biographies of a wide array of figures, including Jesus Christ, Leon Trotsky, Brazilian poet João da Cruz e Sousa, and the haiku master Matsuo Bashō.

IV. About Onomatopoeia

- *Onomatopoeia* is a word that phonetically resembles or suggests the source of the sound that it mimics. Examples include animal noises (*oink, moo, chirp*, etc.) but also other sounds like *hiccup, thud, splash*, and *growl*.
- Onomatopoeias change depending on the language. For example, the sound of a clock may be *tick tock* in English, *đī đā* in Mandarin, or *katchin katchin* in Japanese.

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