

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARD 2020

AUTHOR NOMINATION ▶ BRAZIL

Marina Colasanti



Fundação Nacional do Livro Infantil
e Juvenil – FNLIJ

Brazilian section of International Board
on Books for Young People – IBBY



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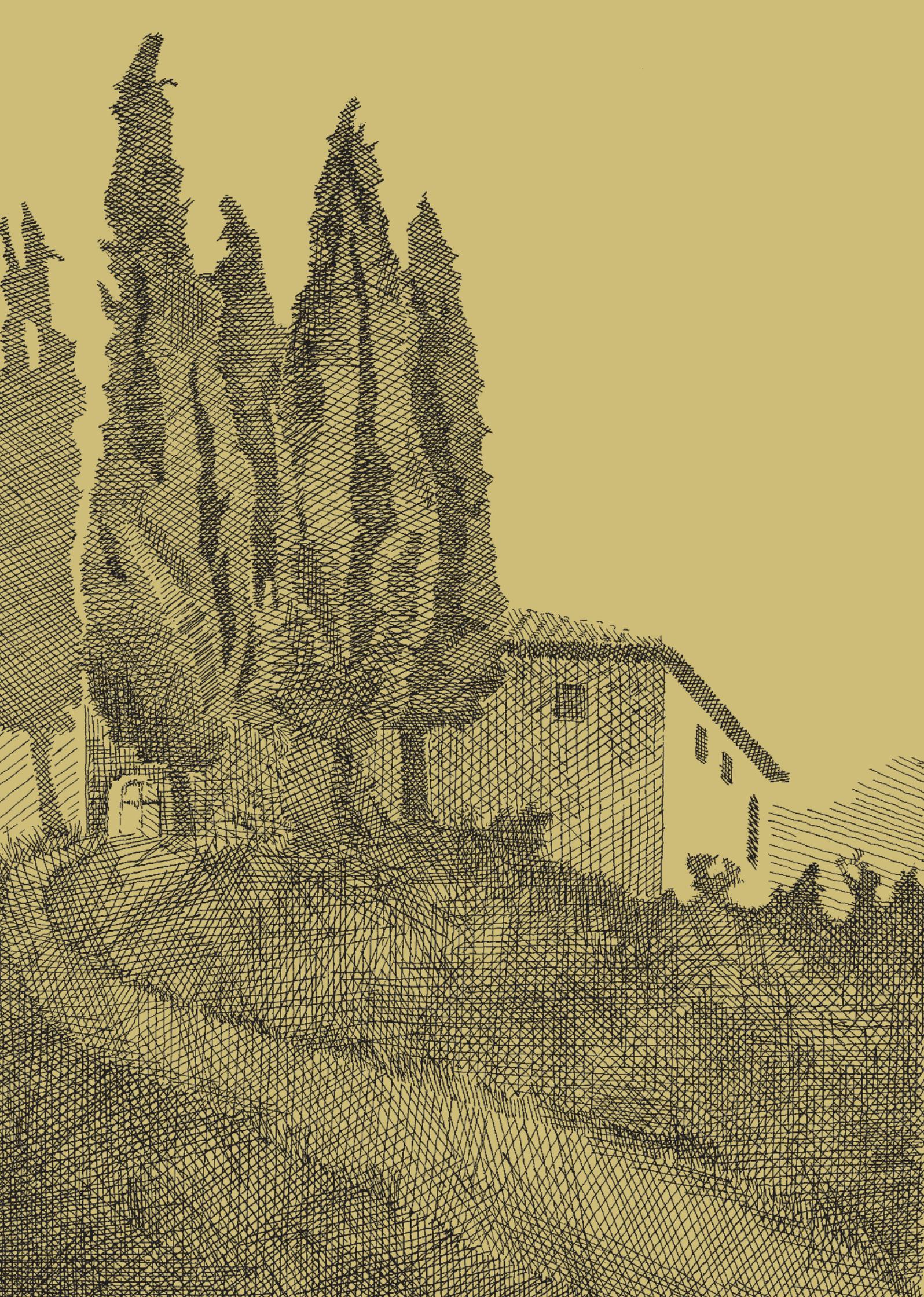
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PART

1

On Marina Colasanti

Biographical Information on the Candidate

A Portrait Photograph of the Candidate

**Statement on the Candidate's Contribution
to Literature for Children and Young People**



On Marina Colasanti

Elizabeth D'Ángelo Serra

General Secretary of FNLIJ – Brazilian section of IBBY

Marina Colasanti prints in her path the brand of diversity and intertextuality. Among tales, poetry, short stories, essays, prose productions, her work has more than 60 publications in Brazil and abroad, having many books translated into Spanish. With a multifaceted talent, she is the responsible for the illustrations of most of her work.

Marina Colasanti is fond of detail, tireless observer of the little, which when viewed from near looms large. In the little, the author does not seek the small, and does the large inside it. With short texts, Marina arrives with extreme economy of words to maximum results of meanings “My pursuit is to reach, with conciseness, to the heart of things.”

In the 80's, the writer immerses and enshrines in the incredible world of fairy tales. Thus, is born a long and innovative relationship with children and young people.

The author settles her gaze on common themes to all and makes visible all the shades, the rawness and the beauty that we usually do not see. With condensed and poetic language, Marina provides the reader a dialogue that goes far beyond reason.

Marina Colasanti has always been available for her readers not only through her works, but also going to meet them, are teachers, students, researchers, reading mediators and readers from all group ages. The author is a continued presence in the *Salão FNLIJ do Livro para Crianças e Jovens*, always establishing a dialogue with her reading audience. Marina is also well known in Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Cuba, among others, and has always remained open to invitations to conferences in these countries, visiting them often.

Marina also contributes to Brazilian children and young people to have access to important classical texts, by means of her several translations as “The adventures of Pinocchio” and “Don Quixote”. As an essayist, she is focused on aspects of education and reading, she is outstanding for “Cruisers for a far-away country”, where offers the question of teaching and reading a refreshing look.

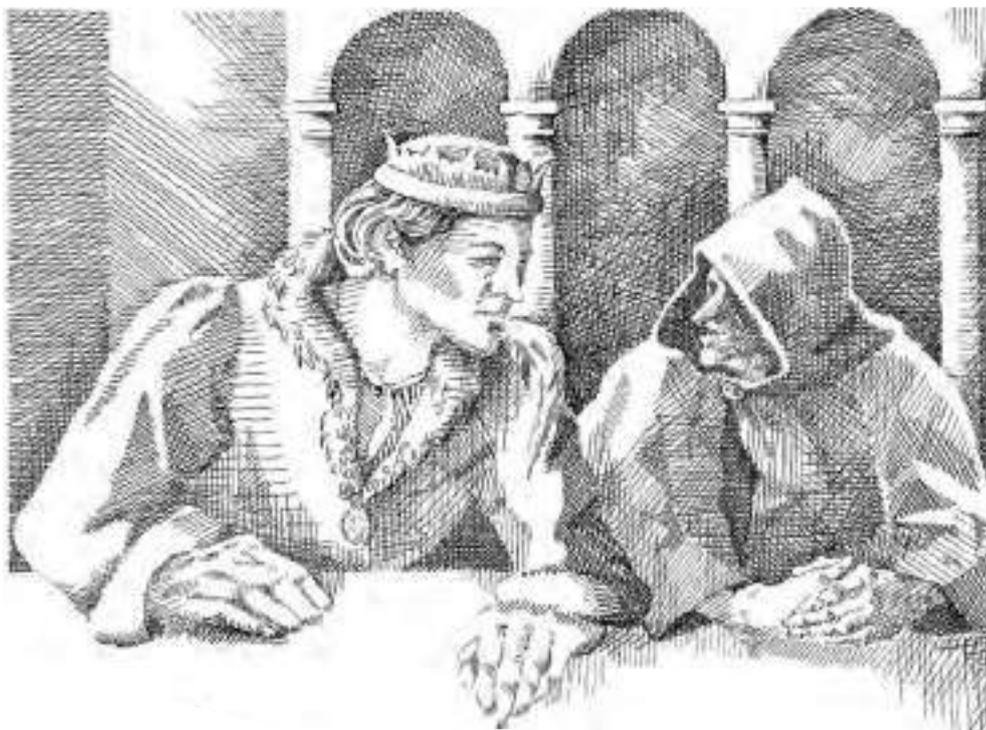
Winner, in 1979 of the FNLIJ Award – Orígenes Lessa – what stands for the best for young people, with “The blue idea”, Marina went on to win this award also in 1993, with the book “The sword and the rose”, in 1994, with the book “Ana Z., where are you going?” From 2001, with the book “Penélope sends regards”, for already have won three times in the same award category, she becomes Hors-Concours. The author was also graced by FNLIJ Award with distinction Hors-Concours in 2002, 2008 and 2010. And in 2014, won the FNLIJ – Ofélia Fontes – award for the best for children, with the book a “Brief story about a little love”. Even more, FNLIJ – Brazilian section of IBBY, awarded some works by Marina Colasanti, and she also have received the seal of “Highly recommended” in the years 1983, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1998, 2010, 2013 and 2014.



Marina was also granted in 1994, the Jabuti award, by the Brazilian Book Chamber, for “Ana Z., where are you going?”. Then again, in 2014, with “Brief story about a little love”. The author has many other awards granted along her noteworthy professional journey: the one from the Brazilian Arts Critics Association, the Latin American Contest of Short Stories for Children, promoted by FUNCEC/UNICEF, and the Latin American Prize Norma-Fundaleitura. In 2010 she received the honorable news about the inclusion of one her books, by the *Banco do Livro da Venezuela*, for “Ana Z., where are you going?” in the list of 10 books worthwhile reading for the Ibero-American audience and a Honorable Mentioning to the Ibero-American SM prize for children and young people literature.

In her works Marina Colasanti aims: art, beauty and reflection. According to the author beauty is harmony. And it is in the harmony that she approaches the communion with the whole. “I want to give this beauty, so that readers feel in my books as I felt in the beautiful books I have read.” Marina, through her work, raises a reflection on matters of human life and of its relationships. From everyday facts, very skillfully she exposes the love, art, pain, desire, denial, social problems, the tradition, the rupture, and many other points. One author who sees the world with a double look: a look like that she belongs and at the same time a look like the oblivion.

For these reasons, Marina Colasanti is one of the most important Brazilian writers that contributes significantly to children and young people literature worldwide. And also to the reflection about literature as a research subject, therefore so many academic thesis on her work.



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Biographical Information on the Candidate

Internationally recognized for her original and innovative work in fairy tales, or marvelous stories, Marina Colasanti was born in 1937, in Asmara, now the capital of Eritrea. She lived in Tripoli, Libya. And, with the beginning of World War II, she moved to Italy.

In the constant displacements dictated by the progress of the war, literature arrived to overwhelm the little reader, leaving an indelible mark on her.

Marina Colasanti was little more than six years old, had read some fairy tales and also Pinocchio (which she would translate so many years later), when her parents, to mitigate the absence of friends and toys, gave her, as a gift, a collection of classic literature adapted for young people. The Trojan Horse entered her life ridden by Quixote and accompanied by Sancho Panza, carrying in its belly three musketeers and a mysterious island, a minotaur, mermaids, a round table and its knights, a voyager named Ulysses, another one called Marco Polo, and demons, and giants, and cloaks, and swords. The company of so many characters was a relief, for the girl, from the burden of the last two years of war. And, in 1948, the family moved to Rio de Janeiro.

There, already lived her great-aunt Gabriella Besanzoni (international opera singer who sang with Caruso), her grandfather's sister. He was an art historian and the General Director of Fine Arts in Italy. When the time for college came, Marina Colasanti, who had been studying painting since childhood, chose the National School of Fine Arts, specializing in etching. She would become the illustrator of her own books for children.

Her career as an artist was beginning to take shape when it was interrupted by her ingress in journalism. She quickly became a reporter, and soon a writer and chronicler of the cultural section of *Jornal do Brasil* (the most influential newspaper in Brazil at that time). She then wrote her first book, "Me alone", with a bold structure and autobiographical content. At the same time, she contributed with numerous magazines, edited the cultural supplement of a sports newspaper, worked in advertising agencies, was an interviewer and TV host. Editing the children's supplement of *Jornal do Brasil* took her to the universe of children's literature and would result in her first fairy tales book.

Working in many languages, she has translated fundamental authors like Jerzy Kosinski, Giovanni Papini, Alberto Moravia, Yasunari Kawabata, Roland Barthes, Tommasi di Lampedusa, and finally getting to children's literature, with Collodi.

After 11 years working in the daily press, and having already published two books, a new step would make her Editor of Behavior of a women's magazine of high circulation. During the dictatorship and conservatism in Brazil, gender issues seemed to have no space. Feminist ideas were revolutionizing the world, but Brazil was frozen in time. For twenty years, Marina Colasanti's main effort was to help sketching the new female profile and raise awareness of



Brazilian women. This work yielded three journalistic awards from *Abril*, and four books, making her name respected all around the country.

Around that time, in 1982, came the invitation from the American State Department to go on a wide tour through the main Women Studies Centers of the United States.

The same year, in Cuba, she was on the panel of jurors of the *Casa de Las Americas* award.

In 1985, she was appointed for a term of four years in the National Women's Rights Council, that had just been created and that would have a decisive role in the Constituent Assembly, defending not only women's rights, but also those of children.

She resumed her work on television, being, for three years, the anchor and host on a show about cinema. A few years later, she would play the same role, running the cultural TV show of the Italian Institute of Culture.

She was once again a chronicler in *Jornal do Brasil* and was in Moscow accompanying her husband at a congress when, in August, 1991, there was the attempted coup d'état against Gorbachev. For three days, Marina Colasanti joined the resistance at the barricades, sending the coverage to the newspaper for which she worked. The sum of this material with the stories written by her husband, also an author and a journalist, would result in the book "August 91, we were in Moscow".

In 1993, having already published more than 20 books, most of which for children, she wrote her first poetry book, for which she received the most important Brazilian award, the Jabuti. The following year she goes on a reading tour of texts for children through the invitation of the government of Germany. Three years later, at the University of Illinois, she participates, with four other writers, of the seminar *Entre resistir e identificar-se*, on female Brazilian narrative. And she is invited, by the Hopkins Society, in Ireland, to make a presentation on the International Summer School of poetry.

On the summer of 1998, she attends, as a children's author, the *Internationales Literaturfestival*, in Berlin. And, in the fall, she works as Resident Writer in Austin, at the University of Texas. Around that time, she gives lectures at UCLA, Berkeley, and Chapel Hill.

Also in 1998, in Paris, she takes part in a roundtable with Professor Helene Cixius, talking about Brazilian author Clarice Lispector.

She lectures in the XIV Symposium on Children's and Adult Literature, from the Cervante's Institute, in New York, in 2005. The same year, she is part of the international group of poets that go to North and South Korea with the program "Reaching out for peace, poetry for world peace". Also in 2005, she receives from the Italian government the *Ordine della stella della solidarietà italiana*, for her contribution to that country's culture.

She has attended international meetings as storyteller of her own work twice: at the *IX Festival Internacional del Cuento* (Los Silos, Tenerife), and at the *Palavras Andarilhas* (Beja, Portugal).

She has taught a course on Pinocchio in 2010, at the *Programa de lectura* of the 3º Master *en libros y literatura para niños y jóvenes*, of the Universidad Aberta de Barcelona. In 2012, the book *Con su voz de mujer*, with her fairy tales, was distributed at the subway in Medellin, Colombia, in the governmental program *Palabras rodantes*. In 2013, in Guatemala, she attended a cycle of lectures about reading, as part of the program *Leamos juntos*, of the Department of Education.

She was the Brazilian candidate for the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 1994, 2016 and 2018.

By her own biography, Marina Colasanti was never hindered by frontiers, nor the center of her interest is a single culture or a single country. What she aims, from the very beginning, through the diversity of her making, is the most sensitive spot of the human being, whether we call it the core, self, or soul. To reach it, or to just get near it, she looked for a language that was symbolic, poetic, deprived of excess, a language opened to multiple readings and, still, essential. Maybe that is why her stories are often used in therapy or in motivational gatherings, and travel around the world through so many mouths, told as folklore is told, talking to everybody and addressing, lovingly, each one.



► Candidate Concise Biography

Marina Colasanti was born in 1937, in Asmara, what was then Abyssinia (nowadays Eritrea). She lived in Tripoli, Libya, until the beginning of World War II, when her family returned to Italy. Only in 1948 she would settle in Brazil. This nomadic childhood is described in her recent memoir, “My foreign war”, awarded in Brazil, edited in Colombia and in Germany.

From a family of artists, already as a teenager she began to study painting, and later attended the National School of Fine Arts, specializing in etching. She began to work as a journalist. As a writer and chronicler of a major newspaper of Rio de Janeiro, she had already published two books of fiction and was editor of the children’s section, when she published her first book for children and young people “The blue idea”. These amazing and innovative fairy tales, illustrated by her, were awarded the most important prizes in the area. They became best-sellers, having been published in France, Spain, and several countries of Latin America. They still remain being broadly adopted at schools.

Today, there are more than 50 books (poetry, fiction, essays) for adults and children, recognized by critics, worthy of many awards and analyzed in numerous academic theses.

Feminist, she has worked for more than 20 years with gender issues, producing four books that were acknowledgedly important for Brazilian women’s awareness.

The depth in content and rich poetic language are a recognized trademark of her literary production for children and young people, and, of her more than 100 fairy tales, many appear not only in books, but also in the selection of stories of several storytellers in many continents.

Marina Colasanti

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⋮ A Portrait Photograph of the Candidate

I am the result of the books I read. Since the age where memory begins, they have always hosted and fed me. And, along the childhood at war and so many changes – countries, language, and culture – they represented the thread of endurance that kept united the journey. Today, when an adult tells me that read me when a child, I thank life for having allowed me doing for others what so many have done for me.

⋮ *Marina Colasanti*

⋮ In *Literature and child*. Rio de Janeiro: ISER, 1989



Statement on the Candidate's Contribution to Literature for Children and Young People

► Marina Colasanti: her tales, her essays, her art

Silvia Castrillón

Specialist in reading and writing public policies, former of the Colombian Association of reading and writing (Asolectura), consultant for: UNESCO, Organization of American States, Organization of Ibero-American Estates, Cerlac and United Nations.

The work by Marina Colasanti is universal, timeless, and free from the market ratings, compulsory reading to any group age; economical in resources, direct, no superfluous encircling. It is possible that this consistency is due to the integration, in her life, of all the arts. Her poetry and her painting, as well as the texts directly addressed to adults and essays, these beautiful pieces of literature, they foresee the textile, a plot in which weaves, including her own history.

Her tales, full of princesses and knights, castles and magic woods, monks and wise men, are directed to believe that she writes fairy tales for children, and the truth is that, using these classical features, her work is addressed to the human soul, soul that remains unchanged in time, whatever the season or the geography in which these tales are narrated or read. Write more than one hundred narratives about these themes, each one with a particular development and ending, always surprising the reader, is a display of her mastery. The same mastery she exerts while repeating several times the beginning of a particular story, to develop it in different ways and get the reader to a distinguished ending, which presents the passion with which, word by word, she crafts her own world.

Like a portrait that has been made, Marina also draws essays; in simple language and natural way, undoing the excesses, little by little she unveils a world before our eyes. Her reflection is a way of sharing her way of reading her memories. And this activity involving her life, which gathers at the same moment her experiences, her readings, her thoughts, constitutes her strength and coherence.

Marina is a complete artist, is part of some way of being in the world of a generation for which the art is essential to life. One global woman, who expresses herself through her interest in worlds different from those she is part. One woman who represents a passion for life, a way of living that is at risk of extinction.

Enrich the readings available for children and young people with theses quality books, which does not cling to market demands, uncompromising and directing to the little ones as intelligent and creative readers, is an essential task for the construction of a future generation of readers.

PART 2

Awards and Other Distinctions

**Complete Bibliography of the Books
for Children and Young People by the Candidate**

**Five of the Most Important Titles
and Books Sent to the Jurors**





Awards and Other Distinctions

► Awards

Orígenes Lessa Award – The Best Fiction for Young People, FNLIJ, 1979

Great Award from Critics Book/Author. APCA, 1979

Uma ideia toda azul

Highly Recommended for Young People, FNLIJ, 1983

Doze reis e a moça no labirinto do vento

Highly Recommended for Children, FNLIJ, 1989

O menino que achou uma estrela

Highly Recommended for Children, FNLIJ, 1990

Ofélia, a ovelha

Highly Recommended for Children, FNLIJ, 1991

A mão na massa

The Best Fiction for Young People, FNLIJ, 1993

Jabuti Award, Best Children's Book, Brazilian Book Chamber, 1993

Entre a espada e a rosa

The Best Fiction for Young People, FNLIJ, 1994

Jabuti Award, Best Young People's Book, Brazilian Book Chamber, 1994

Jabuti Award, Best Book of the Year, Brazilian Book Chamber, 1994

Ana Z., aonde vai você?

Latin American Contest of Short Stories for Children – FUNCEC/UNICEF, Costa Rica 1994

La muerte y el Rei

Norma-Fundaleitura Award, Colombia, 1996

Lejos como mi querer

Highly Recommended for Young People, FNLIJ, 1998

Longe como o meu querer

Orígenes Lessa Award – The Best Fiction for Young People, FNLIJ, 2001

Penélope manda lembranças

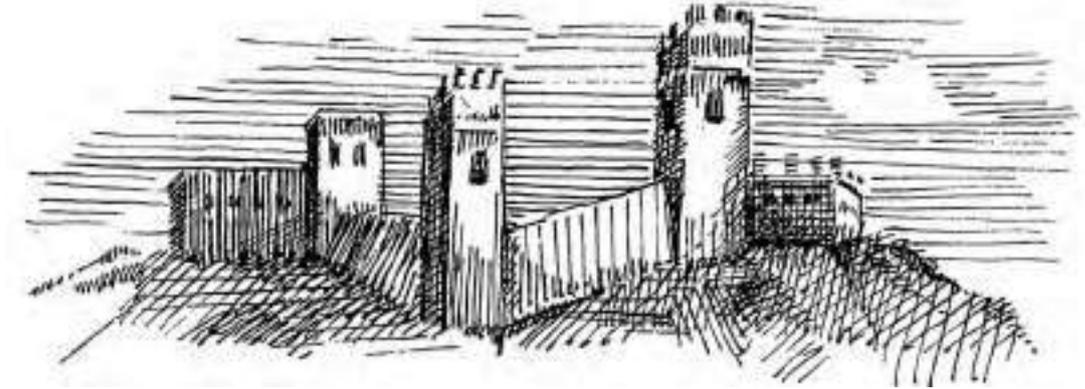
Monteiro Lobato Award – Best Translation for Children, FNLIJ, 2002

IBBY Honour List- Translation, 2004

As aventuras de Pinóquio

Orígenes Lessa Award – The Best Fiction for Young People, FNLIJ, 2003

A casa das palavras



Highly Recommended for Children, FNLIJ, 2004

A moça tecelã

Translation for Young People – FNLIJ, 2004

Bicos quebrados

Odylo Costa Filho Award – The Best Poetry Book, FNLIJ, 2008

Minha ilha maravilha

White Ravens Exhibition, 2009

Poesia em 4 tempos

Best ones of the Year, Banco del Libro, Venezuela, 2010

En el labirinto del viento

Origenes Lessa Award – The Best Fiction for Young People, FNLIJ, 2010

Com certeza tenho amor

Honorable mentioning of the Ibero-American Prize SM for literature for children and young people, for the whole set of works, 2010

Jabuti Award – Brazilian Book Chamber, The Best Fiction for Young People, 2011

Antes de virar gigante

Highly Recommended for Children, FNLIJ, 2013

O nome da manhã

Highly Recommended, translation, FNLIJ, 2013

A menina, o coração e a casa

Highly Recommended FNLIJ, Theoretical, 2013

Como se fizesse um cavalo

Highly Recommended, translation, FNLIJ, 2014

Meu bicho de estimação

Ofélia Fontes Award – The Best Fiction for Children, FNLIJ, 2014

Jabuti Award – Brazilian Book Chamber, Best Book for Children, 2014

Breve história de um pequeno amor

Orígenes Lessa Award – The Best Fiction for Young People, FNLIJ, 2015

Como uma carta de amor

IBBY Honour List – Translation, 2015

Monteiro Lobato Award – The Best Translation for Young People, FNLIJ, 2015

Stefano

Highly Recommended, Translation, FNLIJ, 2015

Pequena Alice no País das Maravilhas

Fundación Cuatrogatos Award – Para los que despegaron como lectores, 2016

Breve história de um pequeno amor

Seal of distinction – Translation, Cátedra Unesco de Leitura PUC-Rio, 2016

O país de João

Monteiro Lobato Award – The Best Translation for Young People, FNLIJ, 2017

O anel encantado

O país de João

Orígenes Lessa Award – The Best Fiction for Young People, FNLIJ, 2017

Melhores crônicas

SM Ibero-American Award for Literature for Children and Young People, SM, 2017

Hors Concours Award, Cátedra Unesco de Leitura PUC-Rio, 2017

White Ravens List, IYL, 2018

Um amigo para sempre

► Other Distinctions

Abril Award of Journalism, 1978

Abril Award of Journalism, 1980

Abril Award of Journalism, 1982

Jabuti Award – Brazilian Book Chamber, poetry, 1994

Rota de colisão

Jabuti Award – Brazilian Book Chamber, chronicle, 1997

Eu sei mas não devia

Ordine Della Stella Della Solidarietà Italiana, 2005

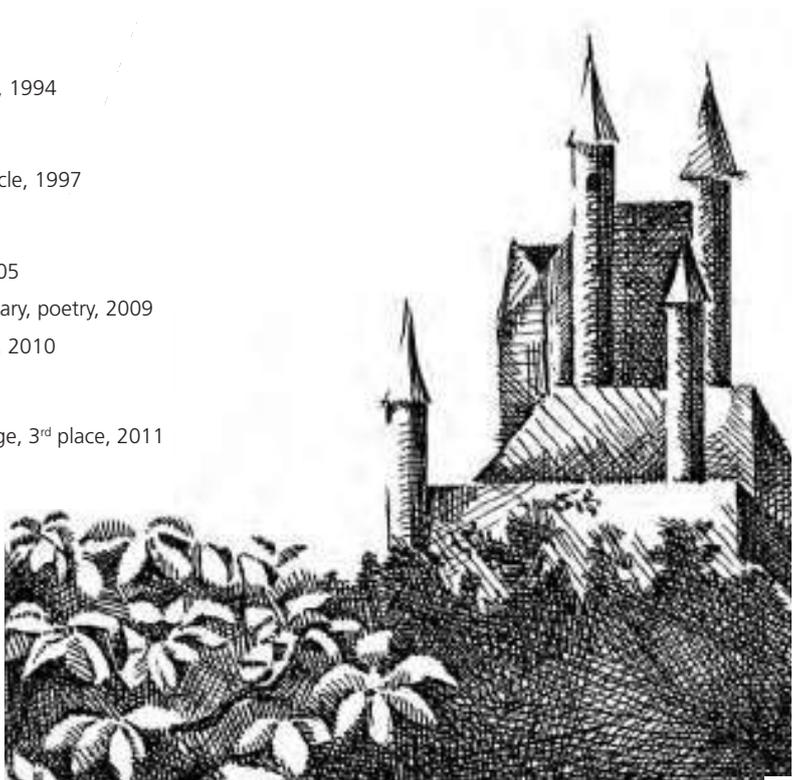
Alphonsus de Guimarães Award – National Library, poetry, 2009

Jabuti Award – Brazilian Book Chamber, poetry, 2010

Passageira em trânsito

Portugal Telecom Award in Portuguese Language, 3rd place, 2011

Minha guerra alheia



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(The dates and publishing houses correspond to the first editions)

- Uma ideia toda azul* (A True Blue Idea). Rio: Nórdica, 1979.
- Doze reis e a moça no labirinto do vento* (Twelve Kings and the Young Lady in the Wind Maze). Rio: Nórdica, 1982.
- A menina arco-íris* (The Rainbow Girl). Rio: Rocco, 1989.
- O lobo e o carneiro no sonho da menina* (The Wolf and the Lamb in the Girl's Dream). São Paulo: Cultrix, 1985.
- Uma estrada junto ao rio* (One Road Along the River). São Paulo: Cultrix, 1985.
- O verde brilha no poço* (The Green Glow in the Well). São Paulo: Melhoramentos, 1986.
- O menino que achou uma estrela* (The Boy Who Found a Star). São Paulo: Melhoramentos, 1988.
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- Será que tem asas?* (Maybe, Are There Wings?). São Paulo: Quinteto, 1989.
- Ofélia, a ovelha* (Ofélia, the Sheep). São Paulo: Melhoramentos, 1989.
- A mão na massa* (The Hand that Works the Dough). Rio: Salamandra, 1990.
- Entre a espada e a rosa* (Between the Sword and the Rose). Rio: Salamandra, 1992.
- Ana Z., aonde vai você?* (Ana Z., Where Are You Going?). São Paulo: Ática, 1993.
- Um amor sem palavras* (One Wordless Love). São Paulo: Melhoramentos, 1995.
- O homem que não parava de crescer* (The Man Who Could Not Stop Growing Up). Rio: Ediouro, 1995.
- Longe como o meu querer* (Far Like My Dear One). São Paulo: Ática, 1997.
- Um espinho de marfim e outras histórias* (One Thorn of Ivory and Other Stories). Porto Alegre: L&PM, 1999.
- Penélope manda lembranças* (Penélope Sends Regards). São Paulo: Ática, 2001.
- A casa das palavras* (The House of Words). São Paulo: Ática, 2002.
- A amizade abana o rabo* (Friendship Fans its Tale). São Paulo: Moderna, 2002.
- A moça tecelã* (The Girl Weaver). São Paulo: Global, 2004.
- 23 histórias de um viajante* (23 Traveler Stories). São Paulo: Global, 2005.
- Minha tia me contou* (My Aunt Told Me). São Paulo: Melhoramentos, 2007.
- Com certeza tenho amor* (For Sure There Is Love). São Paulo: Global, 2009.
- Do seu coração partido* (From his Broken Heart). São Paulo: Global, 2009.

- Antes de virar gigante* (Before Becoming Giant). São Paulo: Ática, 2010.
- Crônicas para jovens* (Chronicles for Young People). São Paulo: Global, 2012.
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- Minha ilha maravilhosa* (My Wonderful Island). São Paulo: Ática, 2007.
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- Twelve Kings and the Young Lady in the Wind Maze* (En el laberinto del viento). Madrid, Espasa Calpe, 1988 (Spanish)
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The Green Glow in the Well (Un verde brilla en el pozo). São Paulo, Global, 2004 (Spanish).

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The Man Who Could Not Stop Growing Up (El hombre que no paraba de crecer). Bogotá, Norma, 2005 (Spanish).

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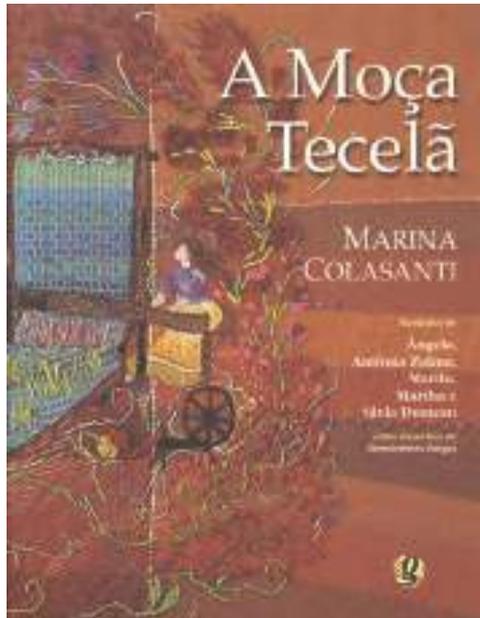
Penelope Sends Regards (Penelope manda saludos). Bogotá, Panamericana Editorial, 2016 (Spanish).

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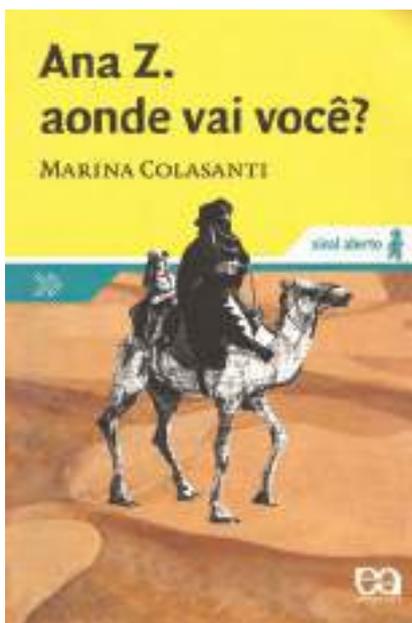
Five of the Most Important Titles and Books Sent to the Jurors



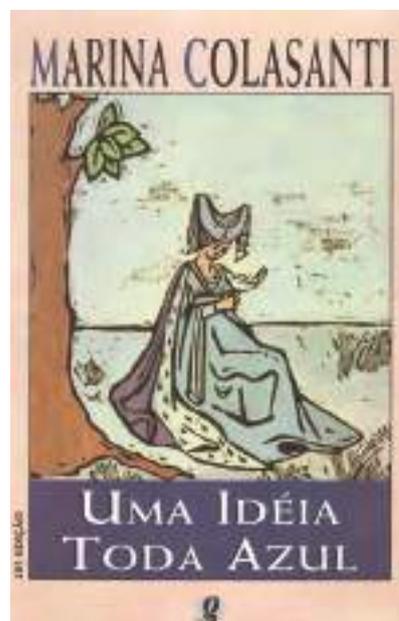
The girl weaver
SÃO PAULO: GLOBAL, 2004



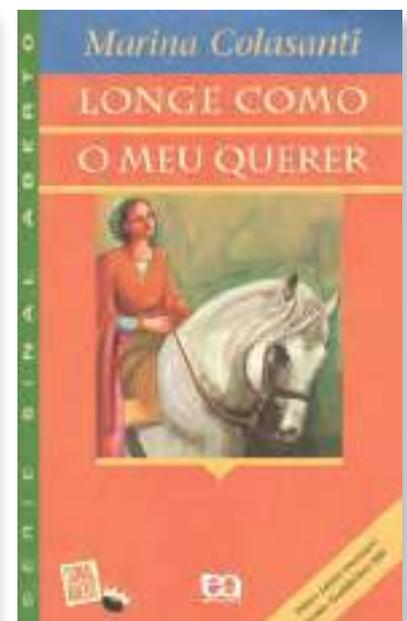
Brief story about a little love
SÃO PAULO: FTD, 2013



Ana Z., where are you going?
SÃO PAULO: ÁTICA, 1993



The blue idea
RIO: NÓRDICA, 1979



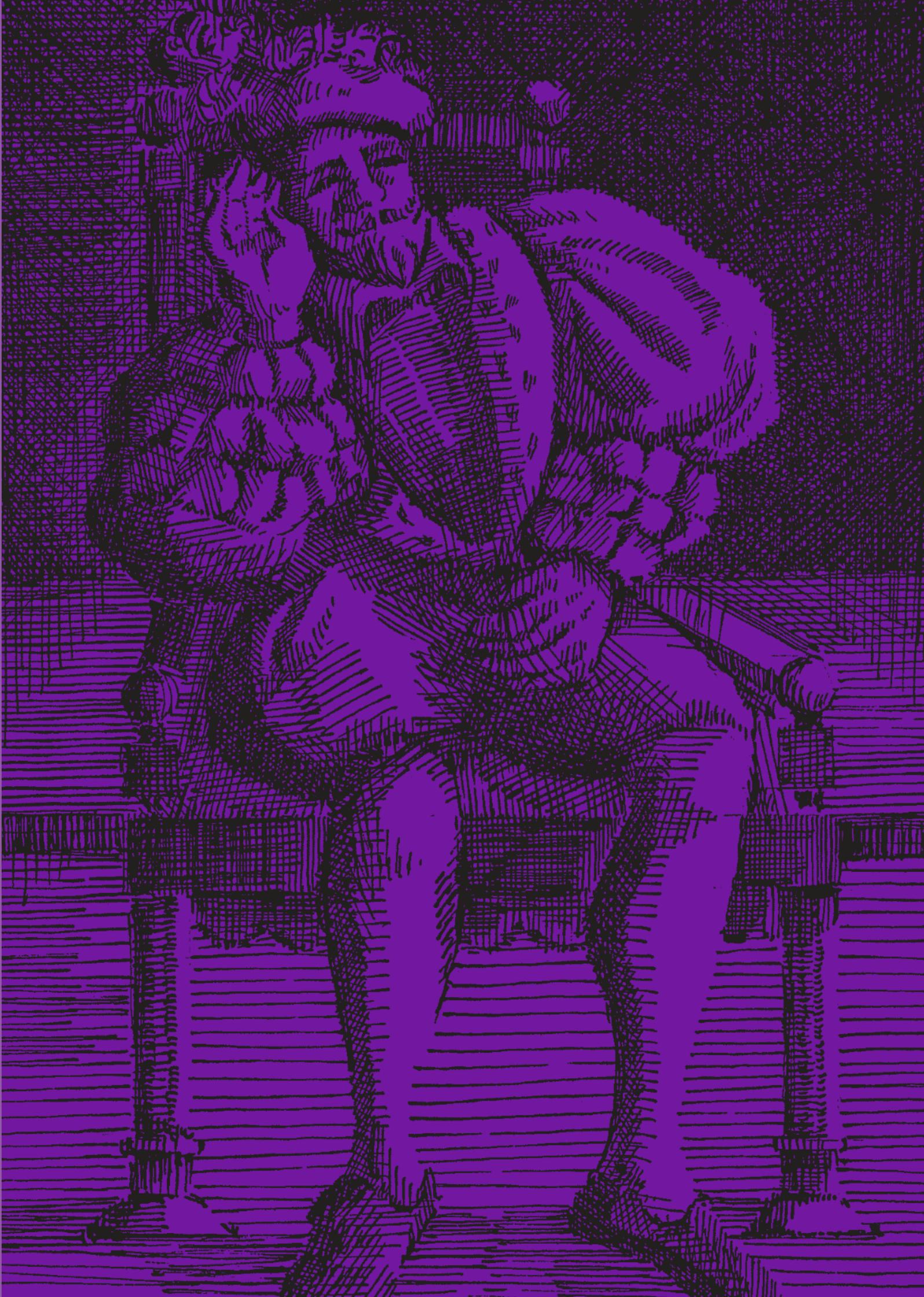
Far like my dear one.
SÃO PAULO: ÁTICA, 1997

PART

A large, stylized purple number '3' with a decorative, calligraphic font. The top loop is on the left, and the bottom loop is on the right. The number is positioned to the right of the word 'PART'.

Appreciative Essays, Interviews, Articles

Reviews of the Books Submitted to the Jury





Appreciative Essays, Interviews, Articles

► Between the sword and the rose

Marcela Carranza

Imaginaria, online magazine, Argentina

And so it was that, little by little, the fairy tales withdrew those salons where provide intellectual pleasure to men and women gathered; withdrew more modest rooms even where who today tells stories for men and women gathered is the television. And those narratives, often having their wings clipped, were transferred to the classrooms, where women have become teachers, and for children's rooms, where women and their children, free for a moment of social disdain, can travel hands by infinite kingdom of wonder.

Marina Colasanti

To think of the fairy tale, in its evolution over the centuries and today, is a challenge impossible to undertake in this review. However, reflecting on the book by Colasanti invites us to resume, although in a few rows, this evolution. The fairy tale origins date back, as Vladimir Propp highlights, since the prehistoric communities. Connected to the rites these narratives emerged and circulated orally for centuries and that with the rise of the press were taken to writing and disseminated through popular editions. Also men of letters interested in those tales from peasants: Giovanni Francesco Straparola, Giambattista Basile, in Italy; Charles Perrault, in France; Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, in Germany; Alexander Pushkin, Alexander N. Afanasiev and Leon Tolstoi, in Russia, among others. Romanticism regained the fairy tale and authors like E.T.A Hoffmann and Hans Christian Andersen performed a kind of writing genre, in assonance with the concerns of their socio-historical realities. *The ugly duckling*, *The steadfast tin soldier*, *The nutcracker* along with the novel by Carlo Collodi: *The adventures of Pinocchio*, form part, today, of this corpus of narratives that we call traditional tales, fairy tales, classical or wonderful tales, without giving too much attention to differences.

Fairy tales had historically, at least since the concept of childhood has in the 18th century, their enemies. They were censored because they are considered cruel, overly unrealistic and immoral. It would be fair to expect the end of this resistance today, however the traditional tales continue to be victims of busy selection criteria filtering the narratives whose contents can contradict the dominant ideas about what fits best the child addressee. Meanwhile, it is promoted adaptations of the best-known tales, most of them obedient official prejudices.

Paradoxically, writers and readers never abandoned the genre. Compilations and rewritings gave rise to much of the most widespread literature of the 20th century. The work by Italo Calvino and the sagas by J.R.R Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Ursula K. Le Guin and J.K. Rowling, not to mention some of the most famous writers, drank in this tradition that seems inexhaustible.

Marina Colasanti is an example of the “faithful” appropriation of the genre from the maintenance of many of the characteristics that define the world of wonder and its language. The discussion is about the fairy tales with princesses and kings, castles and knights, situated in an uncertain and remote past, in a world where there are horses that feed on gold and castles made of air. But also, a selection of short stories written in the 20th century by a woman poet and journalist in love with female issue. The great fairy tales storytellers were always women, says Marina Colasanti. The wonderful tale, she assures, is a genre crossed by femininity. According to her, women, children and short stories share a minority place in a world ruled by men. Like in all her work, also in *Between the sword and the rose* the woman occupies the leading role on stage. Thus, in the tale which gives its name to the book, a princess whom her father intends to marry her to a man she does not love suffer the metamorphoses into a brave bearded warrior. In another of her short stories: “One voice among the bushes”, a shrewd young woman achieves to seduce the king through a fake silence, but outside of marriage, both, the king and the maiden, find out love through words.

The wonderful genre has been often accused by the passivity of its female characters. However, not all traditional tales correspond to women’s submissive and passive model. In many folk tales is the woman who carries on her shoulders the solution of conflicts, and even comes to liberate the male characters. See the examples: *The seven ravens*, *The six swans* and *The twelve brothers* collected by the Brothers Grimm, *The enchanted pig*, a Romanian tale, and *The frog Princess* collected by Afanásiev. We can therefore say that the wonderful tale revived in Colasanti, through the female component originally present in these narratives.

Once transferred to the classrooms the tales had their wings clipped, tells us Colasanti. Submitted to the didactic use suffered and continue to suffer all sorts of mutilations intended to exclude any foreign element to current representations about what is “suitable” for children. The tales by Colasanti seem to choose the opposite way, choosing these disturbing elements as material for her stories. In *The kingdom for a horse*, the black humor and scatological are present in a horse that eats the gold coffers of the kingdom and who, having been literally turned inside out, the horse begins to feed on dung and defecate the gold before swallowed.

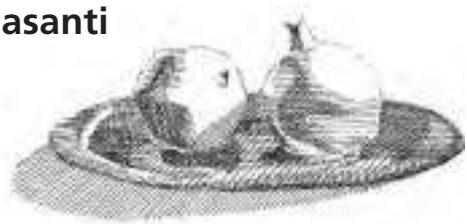
The endings of these tales deviate from the law of the happy ending. One detailed description with poetic images, the murder of the protagonist concludes the tale *Like a necklace*, and also in metaphoric terms the union with the possible love, the death of the young helmsman concludes the tale *On the course of the Star*. Two possible endings for the same story, *Five cypresses, two times*, highlight the fictional nature of the tale. “But a tale is just a tale, which I tell, retell, and transform in other tale”, says the text that separates the two endings.

If the ambiguities are defined in favor of an alleged greater clarity for the child reader, is another of the rules imposed on conventionally tale, the narratives of Colasanti make the poetic ambiguity, the absence of any unnecessary explanation, and the economics of language is the foundation upon which she build her unique way of narrating. Originality that leads to the renewal of a genre whose roots gets confused with the birth of mankind.

► A tropical utopia? The Brazilian fairy tales of Marina Colasanti

Peggy Sharpe-Valadares

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Luso-Brazilian and Spanish American Literatures



For centuries storytellers have enticed audiences to question the *status quo* by spinning fantastic tales of political desire. However, as the new millenium approaches, Warner notes that there is “a strongly marked shift towards fantasy as a mode of understanding, as an ingredient in survival, as a lever against the worst aspects of the status quo and the direction it is taking”¹. Moreover, as the editors of this volume reflect on fin-de-si`e cle literature, they note its nostalgic reflection, prophetic vision, and glimpses of chaos alongside utopian dreams.

As a literary mode, the fantastic has not been concerned with inventing a non-human world; rather it “invents elements of this world, re-combines its constitutive features in new relations to produce something strange, unfamiliar and apparently ‘new’, absolutely ‘other’ and different”². Literary critics, Jackson included, generally cite fairy tales alongside science fiction as developments of romance literature of the ‘marvellous’ (p. 8). Attempts to trace the fairy tale meandering have proven somewhat unreliable given their transgressive nature. In fact, these fantastic stories ignore the boundaries of culture, language, race, age, and geography. As a result, it should come as no surprise that the kings, castles, maidens, knights, and unicorns of centuries past have found their way onto the pages of Marina Colasanti’s tales. In the following commentary, the author adds a creative twist to the multi-cultural nature of the fantastic:

Do you want to know something truly delightful? My stories tell of castles, snow, kings and princesses, unicorns and lions. They seem to take place far away from Brazil. However, a teacher and specialist in cultural activities who does priceless work in the Amazon jungle reading to native peoples told me that the Indigenous children love my stories. When I heard this, it was as if someone had given me a prize. For here was support of my firm belief that a king wearing a crown in a castle and a native chief wearing a headdress in a hut, and even a president in a White House, are, symbolically, one and the same thing; just as a unicorn is no different from the many mythological animals that inhabit the imaginary worlds of all peoples.³

The general popularity of Colasanti’s skillfully illustrated tales, together with the numerous literary prizes bestowed upon her work over the past decade, certainly supports the critical claim that fantasy combines entertainment with social critique to express utopian visions of political desire.

While tales such as *Uma ideia toda azul* (The blue idea) (1979), *Doze reis e a moça no labirinto do vento* (Twelve kings and a maiden in the labyrinth of the wind) (1982), *A mão na massa* (Hand in the dough) (1990), *Entre a espada e a rosa* (Between the Sword and the Rose) (1992), *Ana Z.*

aonde vai você? (Ana Z., where are you going?) (1993), e *Longe como o meu querer* (Far away like my love) (1997) are being consumed by children, young people, and adults throughout Brasil today, Colasanti's reading public rapidly extends beyond Brazilian borders as Spanish, French, and English translations of her work appear. Aside from the entertainment value of this portion of her work, what lurks behind the fantasies of these newly spun tales from the tropics? In the following discussion, I will consider Colasanti's fairy tales as part of a project of fin-de-siècle feminist utopian fiction.

Colasanti published her first volume of fairy tales in 1979, the year ended more than a decade of strict control over Brazil's cultural production. Considering the long-standing association between protest and fairy tales, the author's initial voice of fantasy as a literary mode in the 1970s merits further consideration. However, her attraction to the realm of the unconscious even long after Brazil's transition from military to civilian rule indicates that the fairy tales still serves as an ideal discourse of subversion for Colasanti's larger cultural project. Warner explains that

because utopian ambitions beat strongly in the heart of fairy tale, many writers have hidden and hide under its guileless and apparently childish façade, have wrapped its cloak of unreality around them; adopting its traditional formal simplicities they have attempted to challenge received ideas and raise questions in the minds of their audience... (p. 411)

Likewise, the association between fantasy and utopian world views has been acknowledged by feminist literary critics. Jean Pfaelzer, for example, characterizes utopian fiction as a register of

our fantasies of the future [that...] embody our relationship to the realities of the present. The utopian impulse begins in the radical inadequacy of the present; it deconstructs our assumptions about social inevitability through representations that provoke a cognitive dissonance between the present as lived and the potentialities hidden within it. Utopia tempts us as an evocation of political desire.⁴

Although Colasanti maintains that political correctness is not part of her message, her fairy tales contain an irrefutable didactic quality that resides in the questioning of the relationship between the individual and society. More importantly, the tension generated from this imbalance constitutes the underlying characteristic of feminist utopian fiction. However, it is important to remember that although the fairy tale addresses this tension, its characters exist outside of human culture, seeking harmony, unlike ordinary people, on a mystical cosmic level (Jackson, p. 154). Furthermore, as narrative forms, fairy tales are "neutral, impersonalized, set apart from the reader. {...} Things 'happen', are done to protagonists, told to the reader, from a position of omniscience and authority"(Jackson, p. 154). Although seemingly paradoxical, it is this boundlessness of the tale- the notion that anything can happen – that suggests the need for new boundaries in an alternate societal order (Warner, p. XX).

I have suggested elsewhere that separating the various parts of Colasanti's artistic project would constitute an act of violence for, as the author confirms, "I live and conceive as a whole."⁵ While the author's work ranges from journalism, the personal essay, children's

literature, short fiction, and poetry to the plastic arts, it demonstrates a consistent concern not only with the status of contemporary Brazilian women but also with the social, ethical, and moral justifications that have, for centuries, grounded their oppression. Yet her fairy tales add new texture to Colasanti's work by effecting a wider aperture, allowing her eye to focus on the history of women in culture, as well as their contemporary status in Brazilian culture. To this end, the author employs fantasy and its concern with the unconscious to create an *outopia* – a place outside of time and space – from which an alternate past can be reconstructed. As a form of desire, the alternate version of the unreal narrows the gap between women's historical experience and their contemporary realities, the vehicle being a process of metamorphosis by which the female characters move beyond their existence as static objects toward a more dynamic subjectivity. As subjects-in-formation, they are then reinserted into the mythical zone of the narrative as reconstituted signs of cultural formation.

This process of metamorphosis – as Warner reminds us – is, more than anything else, the defining characteristic of fairy tales.⁶ However, it also allows Colasanti to bestow subjectivity, agency, and initiative upon her female characters. In response to an urgent need for self-discovery, these fragmented maidens, princesses, and confectioners seek adventure not through heroic quests but through their interaction with the others of their cosmic world. As they move in the direction of reconstitution of self, they map on-going and boundless struggles – like the tradition of stoytellers who end with the closing: “This is my story, I've told it, and in your hands I leave it.” (Warner. p. XXV). Finally this process of reverse cultural formation constitutes a new mythos – a tropical utopia? – that serves as an alternate ideological model for a contemporary Brazilian reading public-in-formation.



Traditional literary critics have often placed Colasanti's fairy tales in the same category as her children literature. Although the author insists upon the aesthetic and ideological distinction of the two genres, she concedes that they both seek to liberate emotion, which facilitates movements between the universe of the fantastic and the unconscious.⁷ Colasanti discusses this classification in the following commentary:



When y say fairy tales, I am not referring to children 's stories nor even to stories about fairies. I am talking about a specific literary genre characterized by its mythic content, a genre that can be placed in the category of fantastic literature. It is, of course, needless for me to remind you of the importance that fairy tales played on Freud, Jung, and Bettlheim. Very well, I write fairy tales. I nowadays children are the main consumers of fairy tales, in older times these stories were not written for them, nor should they be today. True fairy tales – their content rich in meanings and multiple levels of interpretation – are meant for any age. And any person. (Public lecture, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, March 26, 1996)

Although the task of writing for the young presents a unique challenge, Colasanti has acknowledged on numerous occasions that it is just as difficult as any other kind of writing. However, fairy tales, "...ah! fairy tales are so difficult. They are the most difficult and the most demanding, in form as well as in content. A well-written fairy tale is a rare literary jewel."⁸

In comparison to the monological consciousness of more traditional genres, this jewel is cut from a different stone. Jackson observes that the fantastic introduces confusion and alternatives to the unitary design of the novel: "Between the marvellous and the mimetic, borrowing the extravagance of none and the ordinary of the other, the fantastic belongs to neither and is without their assumptions of confidence or presentations of authoritative's truths" (p. 35). In like fashion, Colasanti's tales sustain open-ended dialogues with the reader as her characters probe the unexplored territory of the unconscious. In contrast to the epic narrator who recounts – even embellishes – the noble feats of the masculine hero, Colasanti, as storyteller, selects specific images from the absurd, the cruel, the dis-ordered realities of women, cultural history, inverts or re-combines these images, reinserting them in unexpected ways, at unanticipated places in the narrative. The deliberate selection and subsequent focus on a single image requires a metonymic process of creation, which encourages the reader to consider it from a different perspective. What if young women experienced a process of identity-formation like Delicia's in *A mão na massa*? How would the experiences of Ana in *Ana Z* alter women's way of confronting their present day boundaries?

The answers to these questions depend upon the elevation of the existence of the real to the plane of fantasy. Yet, fantasy and reality are not opposites; in fact, fantasy transforms and elucidates reality. Joanna Russ explains how fantasy operates as an inversion, a negative subjunctivity: "[t]he actual world is constantly present in fantasy, by negation [...] fantasy is what *could not have* happened; i.e. what *cannot* happen, what *cannot* exist.[...] the *cannot* or *could not*, constitutes in fact the chief pleasure of fantasy (Russ cited in Jackson, p. 22)." Through fantasy, the supernatural, or the marvellous, what was not becomes what might have been. The reader, who is transported

into a new cosmic order that enables these inversion to occur, will recognize what Warner calls *shape-shifting*: “Hands are cut off, found and reattached, babies’s throats are slit, but they are later restored to life, a rusty lamp turns into an all powerful talisman...” (p. xix). In *A mão na massa* poor Delícia laments her banal existence as she works in the kitchen making sweets. Without her noticing it, her hand slips off into the dough, is baked with the bread, and appears at the royal palace on the plate of the king. Delícia’s endless search for her hand – her former and less desirable identity – yields only frustration and disappointment while, at the palace, her adventurous hand is enjoying its new identity. Soon, however, the king’s two other hands become jealous of their competition and, after considerable soul searching, Delícia’s hand decides to return home to its rightful owner. Her metamorphosis is now complete and, as a reconstituted dynamic subject, she is taken to the palace, much like Cinderella, to accept the king’s marriage proposal and sit beside him on the throne.

Colasanti employs the metonymical image of the hand as a rhetorical device to signify women’s lack of specificity in Brazilian culture. The curious preference for metonymy in the work of Latin American women writers, especially in the essay, has recently been noted by Rojas and Sternbach:

In many Latin American women’s essays the readers were presented with the metonymy of the individual female citizen as a compendium [...] of society. This perspective on Latin American society dramatized the importance of the concrete (each individual woman) in relation to the abstract (the entity called society), thus forcing the readers of those essays to establish the necessary connections between the particular situation of women and that of Latin American society as a whole.⁹

Colasanti’s preference for metonymy is also perceptible in her painting, where the interplay between lightness and darkness suggests the world of the real and the alternate sphere of the unconscious. On the canvas she uses color as a way of searching for light and shadows to establish volume and create weight: “As on the movie screen, or the television screen, my eyes search for the close-up, in an effort to approach and better understand my subject. My pictures are constructed in this fashion: they don’t want to describe, but to question.”¹⁰ The close-up inevitably questions the binary patterns surrounding women’s identity-formation: male/female, traditional/ contemporary, rational/emotional, reality /utopia.

Warner observes that fairy-tales plots “represent struggles to distinguish enemies from friends, the normal from the monstrous, and the slant they take is by no means always enlightened” (Warner, p. 410). Colasanti’s fairy tales engage with issues of light and darkness to simulate these struggles. As storyteller, she uses words as she does color when she paints to create volume and weight: “In my writing, I rid my text of unnecessary words and focus on scenes that I visualize in my head [...] It is as if I wanted a close-up of life, to synthesize it in its detail [“As pinturas” p. 3]”. Thus, in *Um espinho de marfim* (An Ivory Horn) we are presented with three visual icons in the form of black and white lithographs. The prancing unicorn, delicate princess, and graceful spring of lilies complement the medieval elements of the narrative. This is the story of a young princess who has promised to bring her father the unicorn he has been unsuccessful in capturing. For three consecutive nights she braids her

golden hair and, on the fourth day, throws it out as a net to reign in the unicorn. Oblivious to time, the princess and the unicorn walk through the forest, delighting in each other's company. On the eve of the fourth day, the king reminds his daughter of her promise. She is distraught by her destiny and rather than separate from the one she loves and submit to the king's authority, the princess pierces her heart with the unicorn horn. In place of the two lovers, the king finds only a bloody rose and a spring of white lilies.

The shadowy darkness of women's experiences in culture are seen in the king's authority, his effort to capture and dominate the unicorn, the daughter's despair, and the dark red blood of death. The elements of the unreal are reflected through light: the daughter's golden hair, her spiritual union with the white unicorn, the white lilies the animal eats, his ability to take the form of lilies when the king searches the daughter's room for the unicorn. The metonymical displacement that occurs in these images as the darkness gives way to light suggests progressive movement in the direction of greater balance, from dis-order to utopia, from alienation of self to reconstitution of self.

This consistent pattern of reversal for the subject's cultural formation in the fairy tales suggests an intentional ideological design. However, Colasanti speaks of her approach not as ideological intent but as an expression of the unconscious:

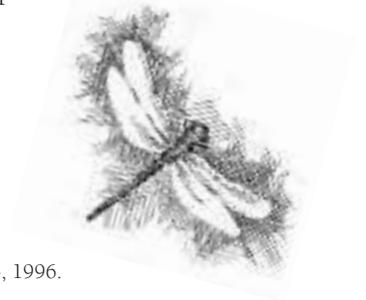
I don't worry about them [women] any more than I do about men. I don't need to worry about them, inasmuch as they are inside me. I simply look at them, my way.[...] This way of looking has been more extensively analyzed in the case of my fairy tales. My stories have female characters, protagonists. According to some academic studies, the behavior of these characters differs markedly from that of their counterparts in traditional fairy tales. This pleases me, without a doubt. But I want to make it clear that it is not my feminist posture that produces and guides my characters. Quite the opposite: it was the essence of my characters – this is, my own essence – that propelled me. [...] I read the analyses of my stories and I accept them all – someone else's interpretation does not belong to me. But I myself do not analyze them. I don't seek out hidden meanings. (Public lecture, University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign, March 26, 1996)

Rather than ideological design, perhaps these stories posit the existence of a female collective unconscious that, if liberated, would direct us to what Jessica Benjamin calls an "intersubjective reality" – the space where the subject meets the subject, the political space where "the self and others, the self and society [...recognize] that integrity and individuality stimulate community; dependence rather than autonomy nurtures personal integrity".¹¹ The definition of this space, of women's desire, seeks "freedom to be both with and distinct from the other".¹² Thus, Delicia's willingness to sit beside the king in *A mão na massa*; the princess who recognizes the impossibility of happiness without the unicorn in *Um espinho de marfim*, as well as countless other examples in Colasanti's tales.

Karen Rowe believes that fairy tales preserve rather than challenge the patriarchy.¹³ Warner, however, contends that the storytelles sets out to motivate the audience to participate in the creation of the new culture: "We the audience, you, the reader, are part of the story's future

as well, its patterns are rising under the pressure of your palm, our fingers, too” (p. 411). The tensions between Colasanti’s female characters and their relationship with society suggest that hers is a call for balance. She reveals a dialectic in which Brazilian women sift through the unworkable elements of their past to accommodate the changing mores of contemporary society, and prepare for a more equitable future. With their newly gained knowledge and critical consciousness, Colasanti views Brazilian women as subjects in formation.

Motivated, at the end of the millennium, by what appear to some as insurmountable antagonisms, the women of Colasanti’s universe are moving in the direction of class, race, and age that continue to separate them. Although she does not imply the possibility of a conclusive cultural-historical model of female desire, the plurality of modes that this storyteller generates is as varied as the subject positions she re-creates. As a result, Colasanti’s tales of fantasy open up multiple possibilities for an on-going dialogue regarding Brazilian women’s hope for a golden age of their own during the next millennium.



NOTES

- 1 Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994), p. 415.
- 2 Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 8
- 3 Marina Colasanti . Public lecture delivered at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on March 26, 1996.
- 4 Jean Pfaelzer, “What Happened to History” in *Feminism, Utopia and Narrative*, ed. Libby Falk Jones and Sarah Webster Goodwin (Knoxville: Tennessee Up, 1990), pp. 191-200, here p.199.
- 5 “As pinturas de Marina Colasanti”, *O Globo*, 19 Agosto 1980.
- 6 According to Warner, “More so than the presence of fairies, the moral function, the imagined antiquity and oral anonymity of the ultimate source, and the happy ending (though all these factors help towards a definition of the genre), metamorphosis defines the fairy tale” (pp. xix-xx).
- 7 In light of the focus on fairy tales in this discussion, I will not address the following works classified as children’s literature: *A menina arco-íris* (1984), *O verde brilha no poço* (1986), *O lobo e o carneiro no sonho da menina* (1985), *Uma estrada junto ao rio* (1985), *O menino que achou uma estrela* (1988), *Um amigo para sempre* (1988), *Será que tem asas?* (1989), *Ofélia a ovelha* (1989), *O homem que não parava de crescer* (1995), and *Um amor sem palavras* (1995).
- 8 Antonio Carlos Olivieri, “Os símbolos estão em toda parte”, in *Ana Z. aonde vai você?* (São Paulo: Ática, 1993), pp. 83-7, here p. 86.
- 9 Lourdes Rojas and Nancy Saporta Sternback, Latin American Women Essayists: “Intruders and Usurpers” in Joeres, Ruth-Ellen Boetcher and Elizabeth Mittman, ed., *The Politics of the Essay* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993) pp. 172-95, here p. 170.
- 10 Marina Colasanti, *Convite para o Coquetel de Inauguração da Mostra de Pinturas de Marina Colasanti*, Rio de Janeiro, Divulgação BAL Rede de Criações, 1987.
- 11 Jean Pfaelzer, “Subjectivity as Feminist Utopia” in *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women: Worlds of Difference*, ed. Jane L. Donawerth and Carol A. Kolmerten (Syracuse UP, 1994), pp. 93-106, here pp. 98-9.
- 12 Jessica Benjamin, “A desire of One’s Own” in *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986), pp. 78-101, here p. 99.
- 13 Karen E. Rowe, “Feminism and Fairy Tales”, *Signs* 6:3 (1979), pp. 237-57, here p. 253.

Reviews of the Books Submitted to the Jury

► The blue idea (*Uma ideia toda azul*)

Text and illustrations by Marina Colasanti. Global, 2001. 61 p.

The blue idea (and bright)

It would have been maybe more convenient and easy to elaborate narratives capable of seducing by its modernity or wonder for its everyday realism. The fairies, I know, many are accused of alienated and alienating, too away from the 20th century. "But I also know that pumpkins never turned into carriages, even at a time when the cars were the fastest vehicle.

This excerpt was taken from the presentation of the book *The blue idea* by Marina Colasanti, presentation given by the author. And, actually, she did not chose either the easiest or the "latest trend" to construct the ten short stories part of her premiere work in the field of literature for children and young people, published by Nórdica. Adding very good reason, the book has just been chosen best of 1979, by critics from São Paulo.

When she herself speaks of fairy stories, the author means that her subject is linked to fantasy. Only on two short stories ("Thread after thread" and "Seven years and more seven") the fairies are present. Her tales are populated by kings, princes and princesses, gnomes, unicorns and hinds. In only one short story there is no reference to "renowned" characters: "Beyond the backstage", one of her most beautiful narratives, has as its characters are about a girl and her sister, presented vaguely. And over all, the wonderful narratives (in the Todorov sense, naturally).

The environments, only suggested in brief details of the narratives are traditional spaces, (palaces, forests, etc.), where her characters can move.

But the traditional environments and characters are just the irradiation point of cases with no trace of conventionality, of stereotypes, both in the conception as in the expression. The traditional all times "renewed" creating texts of high unpredictability.

Another important feature of the work is based on fantasy; the author brings to the reader a very modern personal or social reality. At that point, values and behaviors are questioned. The king, for instance, one of the most frequent figures in her work, is always the one who does not know anything:

Kublai Khan had never left his fortress, did not know the world. He heard the words from the wind and learned.

His Majesty seldom has an idea:

One day the King had an idea. It was the first of a lifetime, and so amazed he kept that blue idea, that he did not want to tell the ministers.

In “Beyond the backstage” it is revealed the ways to dam the fantasy and freedom of the people. In several others are outlined the misunderstandings of affections and the temptation to change what we love. This misleading sense of power over others is well marked in the numerous hunters that appear in narratives and that are generally frustrated. And her characters are so much as examples only, that except Kublai Khan, no other has a name.

That is, as a matter of fact, one of the greatest differences between the traditional and the tales by Marina Colasanti. Another feature would be the no interest by the author in describing physical aspects, whether of environments or characters. What matters in the narrative of “The blue idea” is to create an atmosphere, to create an emotional bond with the reader. Hence the inhibition and the suggestion appear as marked elements in the work.

Another point to highlight how far and once again the traditional tale book’s *dénouement* created for the narratives: always unpredictable, there are never “happy endings”, according to the traditional concept. There is even, in “Seven years and more seven” the “deal” end of fairy tales: the prince and the princess, separated by order of the king, believed in dreams of a life in common.

Till the day he dreamed it was time to marry, and dreamed a marriage full of celebration and music and dance. And dreamed that they had many children and lived very happily ever after.

This reference to the traditional fairytale averse is made often at work, sometimes with a hint of humor:

Once upon a time there was a king who had one daughter. He had no two, had one, and as just had this one, he liked her more than any other.

Yet there is much more than humor, what characterizes the work is the highly elaborated language, very close to poetry.

Illustrations in black and white, made by the author’s own, open and close each narrative. The text is so good that I personally was not impressed by the illustration.

In all respects recommended.

Maria Antonieta Antunes Cunha
(Estado de Minas, newspaper)



Timeless

The blue idea, the book that Marina Colasanti launches now by Nórdica, reflects the author's interest for a genre of literature that some experts, especially those of literature for children and young people, insist on considering old fashioned – the fairy tales.

No commitments in any order, without pretense or show off of formal uses, *The blue idea* by Marina is expressed by some fairy tales, literarily adults towards author's maturity, and directed unbiased to people of any group age, able to live the dream on advanced technological society of our time.

Poetry blossoms amidst a free path of suppositions. Nothing in the narrative is conditioned to the effects that perhaps the author could wish for on her reader. Free, like only poetry is free, fairies, princes, princesses and kings are part of the scenario for that blue idea, explained like something fundamental to beyond what is simply apparent in the text.

Working at the level of symbolic constructions, the fairy tales in this book, express a reality that despite not being in the current society, assumes, however, frustrations, anxieties and needs essential in the great era of computers, interplanetary trip and mainly the solitude of men among the modern mass. This is why the characters in *The blue idea* are looking for love, perfection, freedom and each own individuality in poetic passages full of content in which the loner is crafted like a main factor. The tale *The blue idea*, which named after the book, is what expresses more over all this loneliness poetics in others. While the dreamlike crafts processed on the human psyche, also presented throughout the work, were established in a full and deep way in the tale "Seven years and more seven".

The beauty of the literary crafting beside the simplicity with which the author has the stylistic feature that all literature until today available, make this book more than a work of quality, a legitimate evidence of literature, whatever it may be, has no age nor gender defined.

The illustrations, also by Marina Colasanti, seem that there is some purpose in their shapes, since they create a climate similar to traditional fairy tales in children's books. All in all, the book is simple and meaningful, representing to the current literature of a writer's own boldness, and confidence about her work.



Eliane Gamen

(Jornal do Brasil, newspaper)

► The girl weaver (*A moça tecelã*)

Marina Colasanti. Illustrations by the Dumond. Global, 2004

Weaving feelings

When I read *The girl weaver* by Marina Colasanti, with the purpose of preparing a new story for my job of storytelling in schools, charities, kindergartens, hospitals, elderly homes, educators and other people who work with education, I did not imagine it would touch me so much.



The book tells the story of a lonely weaver weaving, day after day, her own life and history, living and weaving on the loom their joys and sorrows, anguishes and hopes.

She was simple, quiet and beautiful, had all the basic needs met, but with the passage of time, the girl felt alone. She wished a companion who was, above all, a friend to give her children.

The companion and husband appeared, first as a prince who cherished her dreams, but gradually was becoming an executioner who arrested her and exploited her, so that his dreams of becoming rich would come true.

The girl was grieved, because she worked on a daily basis weaving on her husband's orders. She no longer lived, nor could she see the weather outside; the Sun, the snow, the wind, no longer existed for her. Without rest, she wove the vagaries of the husband and no longer existed as an independent lady, but someone who orders, without a mind of her own.

Suddenly, she thought it would be better to live alone. She started a fight with herself to end the exploitation and subjugation of the husband. She needed to look for the strength within herself in her soul, to be able to win and return to the simple life that always had and that was very pleasing.

The text by Marina Colasanti presents a craftsmanship of language, the daintiness and precision into the cloth of words. And ancient and modern way of dealing with the fears and fantasies that live in all of us, using characters such as fairies, princes, unicorns, embroiderers, kings and the time.

But why these stories still arouse so much interest in children, young people and adults? Because, in literature, the interest turns to that timeless thing called unconscious.

Stories told by Marina Colasanti touch and please children and young people. Adults also read them with pleasure.

The illustrations in the book were all hand embroidered by the embroiderers' sisters Dumond: Ângela, Martha, Marilu and S via and the mother Ant nia Zulma, from drawings by Dem sthenes Vargas.

Nietzsche stated that the main task of education “is to teach to observe”, soon, teach thinking. I believe that, with this book, we can teach people to learn a little of everything: love, patience, perseverance and, above all, to pursue dreams and fight to be carrying out.

When we tell stories, we are encouraging the habit of reading, a love for reading, the joy of learning, the pleasure of knowing things, and to dream and pursue our own dreams.

Duxtei Vinhas Itavo

(*Folha da Região*, newspaper)

► **Brief story about a little love** (*Breve história de um pequeno amor*)

Marina Colasanti. Illustrations by Rebeca Luciani. Global, 2007



The freedom flight

This was a very difficult review to write. I have no emotional detachment when talking about this book, what the veterans’ journalists taught me so necessary. Marina Colasanti and Affonso Romano de Sant’Anna enriched my way when crossing them at the time of the magazine *Next Brasil*, which I produced and edited for a short period, alongside people who are dear to me. As if that could not be enough, *Brief story about a little love* tells the rescue of a baby pigeon. The animal rescue is a habit so familiar very close to that I distinguish whether mine or another. The rescue of birdies, specifically, is a recurring adventure which eventually transform into book, “the little tip in the end, of so much charm, loves one little coffee spoon”, by Elvira Vigna, who has in common with me a lot more than the last name. And, as if all this were not enough, Rebeca Luciani made choices that I would do as an illustrator.

Colasanti narrates the story in first person. The text goes through treating the reader with respect. I have special affection for children’s books that does not discredit the reader, which does not treat you as unfit or not capable. *Brief story about a little love* is one of these. When not underestimating the reader, the book accomplishes its function in the formation of the young reader.

Other strong point in “Brief story”... is the narrator. Colasanti puts herself like she is, a mature woman, married, who has some leaking in her office. And she fails, she is human. Life like it is. The passage where the narrator is jealous of pigeon Tom’s partner is hilarious. “I tried to be fair, but anyone could see that she was not good enough for my Tom (...)”. There is also, something very affectionate in a couple who tries to teach a pigeon, or the reader – to fly.

The story is written and supposed to be real, little of this matters if it is a fact or the wholesome. When the author not intentionally writes filling the text what someone assumes

the reader desires/needs, the book is free from commercial ties (precisely false, since it is from the absurd assumption that is possible to know what or how the other wants what is so ever) and becomes genuine, so. The genuine could be – and often is – fictional or fictionalized. Then, the “genuine” in the text is not biographical or factual, nonetheless her opposition to the commercial. Colasanti and Luciani make non comercial options.

You see, I am not saying that the final result cannot or should not be commercialized. On the contrary. What I say is that, when not aiming this, the final product (yes, it is a product) is real enough to be close to the reader/consumer and, finally, available to commercialize. The proximity with the reader is never possible when treating them like an idiot or to force some similarity.

The decision taken by Colasanti in narrating the story like a mature woman, married, who has an office with leaks, etc... is fairly right because tells the young reader that they are being treated equally, even if, they are not so. There is the dialogue. What remains, after all, is the respect for the non concessions.

The decision taken by Luciani in presenting details, pointing out parts, is also fortunate. They do not compete with the text and, at the same time, make space to the reader. She places in the illustration only what is essential, what is not possible to set apart. If there is only there what is essential, there is what is genuine and, therefore so, truthful.

At last, considering the maturity of the work of both, we can understand how “Brief story about a little love” won the Jabuti Award for fiction book of the year. Not that I think that the Jabuti assign value to a work that it has not yet. Not so. Neither the friendly tortoise, nor any other. The value of the work is measured by the reader, and this book deserves reading.

Carolina Vigna

(*Rascunho*, magazine)

► **Far like my dear one** (*Longe como o meu querer*)

Text and illustrations by Marina Colasanti. Ática, 2008

Fairy tales approaching the prose to poem
Marina Colasanti, one début author



Awarded for her book *Far like my dear one* the Ethiopian author Marina Colasanti, settled in Brazil for many years, fascinates by the beauty of the writing of her roots' ancestors.

In the shadowy gloominess of the third millennium, under the rule of fragmentation, of emptiness and loss of great ideals, the work of Marina Colasanti (Ethiopian writer settled for many years in Brazil) stands out for her recovery of a specific genre: the fairy tale. The well-earned award of the First Latin American Prize of literature for children and young people,



granted by the Publisher Norma and Fundalectura (Colombia), her book *Far like my dear one* brings together 24 brief narratives, one more beautiful than the other. Among palaces, kings, princes and princesses emerge the major themes of universal literature: adventure, love, dreams, desire, fear and loneliness, associated to images of the sea, of the fields and the Moon, that seem extracted from ancient illustrations.



To talk about Colasanti's prose is necessary to resort to the inexorably concept of beauty. Her unique features are fundamentally regarded to two aspects. On the first place, relating to the short stories stands out the humanist theme. In statements to El Refugio de la Cultura, due to the V Congreso Internacional de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil de Córdoba, Colasanti declared: "I write magic tales, fantastic literature, where the impossible does not exist and where fundamental human emotions prevail on the scene. What interests me is not to tell a story, is to use this story to work with love and hate, fear, envy, desire, the human greatness, their smallness, and their death".

Like the tradition that is previously set, Colasanti fairy tales have both a dimension of wonder as a touch of cruelty: "During a time – said Colasanti in her speech presented at V Congreso – adults were surprised, telling me that my stories were too dramatic for children. It is when, with all its strength, the existential tragedy is settled itself in us. When we are children we eagerly fast forward for life, which will bring us, yes, joys, yet it will cause much suffering and inevitably will result in death. It is in childhood that we must follow a path of questions with no answers".

On second place, the pure language is highlighted, metaphoric, that transforms each tale into some kind of allegory, the boundary between a narrative poem in prose, and a poetic narrative. This style refers to inevitably *Far like my dear one* the modernist tale, in the manner of Rubén Darío. These two characteristics result in a highly symbolic literature, with certain ancestors "wisdom", addressed to a deeper and unchangeable human being, and open to multiple readings and interpretations. Colasanti sustains that "socioeconomic situations interfere little when we direct to the deepest point of the reader. Beyond the circumstantial teachings, the function of children's literature is to help the reader to establish with the unconscious a structuring dialogue."

In addition to the texts, Colasanti is the author of the illustrations that accompany it, inspired by the same motivation. The tales "The sea princess to see", "Underneath the skin, Moon", "There were three, and a cliff", "No wings, yet", "Far like my dear one" and "Great daintiness, scented flowers" are placed like the most beautiful tales of Latin American literature.

Nora Lía Sormani

(*El Cronista*, Buenos Aires, newspaper)

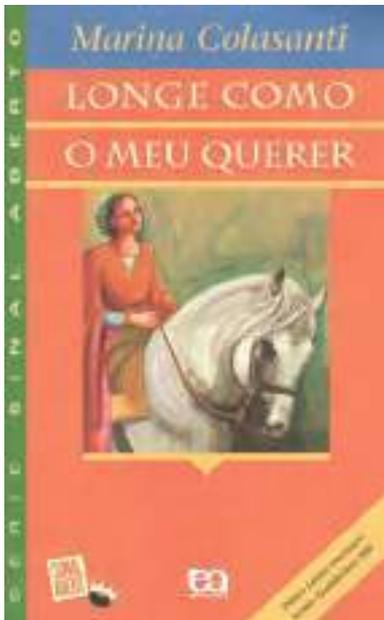
PART 4

Translations





Translations



As far as my love goes (First three chapters)

Translated from the Portuguese by Fabiana Colasanti

THE PRINCESS AND THE SEA

Three daughters had the King. And the three of them he wanted to marry.

For years he had been waiting patiently that they would grow, day by day measuring their height and weighting their tresses. For years he had been thinking about the sons-in-law they would bring, to him, who, having no sons, needed swords.

At last, his eyes told him that the first daughter was ready. And the patience was not necessary anymore.

Immediately, he sent for the oldest, most loyal of his ambassadors and, before the assembled court, gave him the order he intended to repeat twice more: to commission a portrait of the princess and take it to the kingdoms in search of the one that would make her queen.

Soon, The Great Painter of the Kingdom presented himself with his long brushes, his pots of paint and his small beard. The princess, dressed in rich clothes, sat down to pose. However, after days gone by and being the portrait ready, the members of the court, disappointed, shook their heads. The painting was beautiful, but the princess, oh!, the princess was much more beautiful than the painting.

Beheaded, without delay, the one who had dared to uglify the King's daughter, a new Great Painter was nominated, to inherit colors and task. Once more the princess posed, and rich were her clothes. But once again the members of the court shook their heads before the result. This time, with a frown. The beauty of the young lady had become even more distant.

To the third Great Painter it sufficed to look at the princess to conclude that he wasn't as great as it was expected from him. By his own volition, he turned himself in to the executioner.

And, behold, there were no more painters in the kingdom, neither Great nor small. Or, if there were, they were hiding.

— This shall not prevent me from fulfilling the order — said the Ambassador to the King, who was already getting restless. — I will take another kind of portrait.

He selected from the royal treasure the most beautiful pearl, put it in a small chest, and drove away in his carriage towards the distant borders of the North.

Long, the journey. When at last he arrived at the castle of that monarch, with him arrived winter.

— What else do you bring me, besides the snow, Sir? — asked him the lord of the castle from high up on the throne.

The Ambassador then told him about the King's daughter. That she was ready to marry. And, when the monarch asked to see her portrait, he approached, opened the little chest and, on the velvet bottom, showed the pearl.

— Thus is she — he said, out loud, so that everyone could hear. And, raising the pearl, he added: — Beautiful, rare, pale. And precious.

On the next day, away went the Ambassador to give the good news to the King. The first of his daughters would be Queen of the Northern Lands.

Before long, already the King ordered the Ambassador to commission the portrait of the second daughter and take it to the southern kingdom.

— It is not possible to paint it, no painter — replied the Ambassador. And added: — The portrait I will take will be of another kind.

Refusing the key to the treasure that the King offered him, he went down to the gardens, approached the most beautiful rosebush, cut with his dagger the most perfect bud, which he protected under his cloak. Then, he climbed the carriage and drove off.

Lengthy, the journey. When at last he arrived at the castle of that monarch, with him arrived summer.

— What else do you bring me, Sir, besides the sun? — asked him the lord of the castle from high up on the throne.

The Ambassador then told him how the King had sent him because the second of his daughters was ready to be married. And, when the keeper of the castle asked to see her portrait, he took from under the cloak the bud that had blossomed, and showed to the court the most beautiful of roses.

— Thus is she — he said, very loud, so that everyone could hear. — Delicate, soft, rosy. The noblest amongst all.

He made a pause, searched with a smile the eyes of the monarch, and added: — And she has her thorns.

The suitor hesitated. But the threat was small before such a beautiful flower.

Already the next day, off went the Ambassador to take the good news to the King. The second daughter would be Queen of the Southern Lands.

He had barely arrived and the King ordered him to take the portrait of his youngest daughter to the kingdom to the West. "And what will this portrait be?", the King wondered, curious.

Neither treasure. Nor garden. The Ambassador looked at the princess that he knew since she was a little girl, looked at the young woman she had become. Then, taking a glass vial, went to fill it in the sea.

He protected the vial in a soft leather pouch. He climbed into the carriage. And away he went for the third time.

Steep, the journey. And slow, towards the rangy borders. When at last he arrived at the castle on the top of the highest mountain on that kingdom, the storm arrived with him.

— Sir — asked the lord of the castle on his throne —, besides the squall, what else did you bring me?



— I brought you the news that the third daughter of my King is ready to get married — answered the Ambassador, also telling how he knew her since she was little, how he had seen her grow.

And when the monarch asked what she looked like, he stepped forward, opened the soft pouch, took out the vial raising it high, for all to see.

— She is like the ocean — he said slowly. — Deep and mysterious. Full of hidden riches. Her movements obey the Moon.

The monarch, that had never seen the ocean, looked at the bottle and didn't see anything that matched the words of the Ambassador. Before the court there was only a vial full of clear water, without secrets of fish or stars, without seashells, without waves. Water, only, contained by glass. Not even blue. A wife like this, why would he want?

The next morning, upon leaving, the Ambassador took with him the monarch. Down and down they went through the rocky paths, until they reached the sea. And, having arrived at the sea, they both dismounted, walked around in the sand. The foam reached their boots without the monarch deciding to go back. There it was, the portrait from which he could not avert his eyes. But at last, subdued, he muttered:

— She is too big for me.

For the first time the Ambassador came back bringing bad news for his King. The third daughter wouldn't be Queen of the Western Mountains.

Time doesn't stop because the daughter of a King doesn't have a husband. Thus, her sisters got married, embroidered little trousseaus, their children were born. And they were beginning to crawl when news arrived at the castle that on the eastern horizon, where there were no borders because the Kingdom ended at the sea, a sail had appeared.



Fast horsemen delivered at the castle the information that a big ship bringing the Monarch of the Sailing Men had just berthed. And that he was coming with his warriors.

The defense was prepared. When the foreigners arrived, hundreds of hidden eyes peeked from behind the arrow slits. But the warriors had their swords sheathed, their shields tied to the harnesses.

— What bring you, Sir, besides the good winds? — asked the King from high up on his throne when the Sailing Monarch finally arrived before him.

Then the visitor told him how he had heard that the youngest of the princesses was ready to get married. How, without seeing her, he had known her forever. How, having known her, he wanted to marry her.

And because the King didn't seem to understand, he stepped forward, opened up his shirt. Then he turned for all to see. And all saw. Tattooed on his chest, fish and seashells intertwined with the waves, starfish allowed themselves to be carried by the foam.

— Here is your portrait — he said, loud, for all to hear — imprinted on my heart.

The King's third daughter also heard. She looked at those eyes, blue from contemplating the water so much. And she knew, with so much joy she knew, that her husband had arrived.

A PALACE, INTO THE NIGHT

Without having ever wished for a house before, that man was caught by surprise wishing for a palace. And the wish that had begun small quickly grew, occupying all his want with domes and towers, moats and cellars, and huge staircases with steps that would be lost in the shadows, or in the sky.

But how do you build a palace when you are just a man without possessions?

— It would be good if I could build a palace made of water, fresh and melodic — thought the man walking along the riverbank.

Kneeling down, he put his hands into the stream. But the water went on its course, the fingers not being enough to hold it. And the man got up and kept walking.

— It would be good if I could build a palace of fire, luminous and dancing — later thought the man, in front of the fire that he had lightened to keep warm.

But when he stretched his hand to touch the flame, he burned his fingers. And he realized that, even if he were able to build it, he would never be able to live inside it.

Maybe because the fire was hot like the sun, he seemed to see himself again as a boy, by the sea. And, with the memory, came the beautiful sandcastles that he used to build. Now the sea was far away. But the man got up and walked, walked, walked. Until he reached the desert. Where he plunged his hands into the sand and, with his sweat, began to turn it into mash.

This time, thick walls were erected, golden as bread. And a staircase that led to the top, and a terrace that crowned the stairs, and columns that supported the terrace. But in the afternoon the wind woke up and, with its soft tongue, began to lick the construction. It took away the walls, undid the terrace, crumbled the columns that the men hadn't even finished.

— Indeed — thought the man patiently —, something more durable is needed to build a palace.

He left the desert, crossed the plain, climbed a mountain. On the top, he sat down. And, out loud, he began to describe the palace he saw in his imagination.

Having gotten out of his mouth, the words piled up like bricks. Ball rooms, courtyards, galleries emerged on the top of the mountain, surrounded by the garden of sentences. But there was no one to hear him. And when the man, tired, went quiet, the rich architecture seemed to quiver, to fade. In the silence, it gradually was undone.

It was still day. Even though all resources had been exhausted, still the wish wouldn't run out. So the man lied down, covered himself up with the coat, tied over his eyes the handkerchief he had on his neck. And began to dream.

He dreamed that architects showed him projects on rolls of parchment. He dreamed of studying the projects. Then he dreamed the masons that chiseled rocks in the quarries, the lumberjacks that cut down trees in the forests, the potters that put bricks to dry. He dreamed the fatigue and the singing of all those men. And he dreamed the women that baked them bread.

Then he dreamed the foundations being planted in the earth. And the palace emerging from the ground like a tree, growing, filling the space of the dream with its domes, its minarets, its hundreds and hundreds of steps. Dreaming, he also saw the shadow of his palace draw another palace over the rocks. Only then did he wake up.

He looked at the moon above, not knowing that it already had had time to rise and fall more than once. He looked around. He was still alone, on the top of the windy mountain, unsheltered. He didn't dwell in the palace. But the palace, grand and imposing like no other palace, dwelled in him, forever. And maybe it sailed silently, into the night, towards the dream of another man.

ON THE TIP OF THE TOES

Pointy nose, sharp eyes, velvet gesture. Thus said, the Royal Shoemaker is described. Not of the King, for that kingdom didn't have any. But of the Queen, owner of the scepter and the crown.

And not only hers, because the talent of the Shoemaker overflowed for only one person. Also of the ladies-in-waiting and, sometimes, of the rare noblewoman, and even more rare nobleman chosen by the royal finger.



One day, the Great General came to be included among those noblemen, thus called less because of his stature, that was average, than by the countless victories on the battlefields. Wanting to reward him for the last one and, as the kingdom didn't have any more medals that could be pinned to his chest, nor there was any more space on the chest where medals could be pinned, it seemed to the Queen that a dignified tribute would be to order that a fine pair of boots be made for him by the Royal Shoemaker.

Little did she know that, albeit being an unparalleled professional, he knew little or nothing about boots. His skillful fingers were more used to delicate little shoes, babuches, little things made of velvet and satin adorned with bows and perched on the tips of the heels. Even the male footwear to which he so rarely caught himself committed to was intended for the court, and was almost as gracious as those of the ladies. Boots had never emerged from his hands.

Even so, he applied himself. For days he worked the heavy leather, the thick soles, the hard heels. Everything was foreign to him. His brow would furrow, his fingers would be hurt. But the little hammer hammered, the needles went up and down. And finally, when the boots were finished, he slapped a shiny pair of silver buckles on them, and opened up in a smile.

Anxious to use them for the first time and without any opportunity available, the General went and created one. At the first provocation of a neighboring enemy, he declared the battle to be inevitable. And there he went, with the tall, shiny boots and the feathered hat, guiding his soldiers. The field that would soon be red was green, the enemy raised the muskets on one side, the officers unsheathed the swords on the other. The General gave the sign. The trumpeters sounded the attack. Forward launched the soldiers.

But, instead of feeling himself being carried towards the adversary by heroic courage, the General felt that his feet retreated, taking him hopelessly to the opposite direction. The troop, gaping, saw their leader run away, backwards. And, although they didn't understand the unusual military maneuver, they followed his example. Some fell for lack of ability, others stumbled, while the majority receded like a bunch of scorpions, fleeing the battlefield under the laughter of the enemy.

Short of breath, short of glory, and short of feathered hat, the General sat at last on the floor. He took off the boots and his feet moved freely, confirming his suspicions. They were accountable, they that, with their silver buckles and their deceptive shine, had conducted his steps towards degradation.

The Shoemaker's head did not roll just because the royal feet liked it. And because, contrite, he apologized, confessing that for lack of habit he had been mistaken with the thick soles, sewing them — and with such diligence! — backwards. This would never happen again, he assured.

And the Queen, to show that she had forgiven him, and to appease the General, ordered that another pair of footwear be made for him. Not boots, though, that the kingdom couldn't be at such risk. It would be shoes, like those used in the court.

This time, the Shoemaker didn't have to furrow his brow or hurt his fingers. Courtesan shoes were all he knew how to make. And he knew how to make them better than anyone. Soon they were finished.

And soon the General put them on. And with them on his feet went to stand with his troops on that same battlefield that had seen their dishonor. On one side, the enemy aligned, raising their muskets. On the other, swords were unsheathed. The General raised his arm, giving the order. The trumpeters blew into their instruments. The first notes of the attack order were launched into the air. The troops launched forward.

But at the sound of the notes, the shoes, made for the court and prepared for balls, began to dance. The General swirled, alternating his feet in little hops. The troop, dumbfounded, but trained to be obedient, once again followed his steps. Officers and soldiers waltzed, alone and in pairs, dancers with weapons in their hands stomping with nimble feet the field full of poppies, while in the distance, farther and farther away, the laughter of the foes echoed.

This time, not even the Queen's kindness was enough to prevent the Shoemaker from being locked up in the highest tower in the kingdom, waiting for the scaffold.

And now there he was, sitting on the cold stone, looking up high, way up high, through the only window of the tower and, beyond it, the blue sky.

During the whole afternoon he watched, letting that blue that might be his last fade.

And that blue that slowly faded turned violet. And the increasingly darker violet was cut by a black silhouette, then another, and another. Bats plunged into the night. In an outburst of tenderness, the Shoemaker thought of his shop, of the little shoes all hanging from the ceiling above his head, side by side, pair by pair, standing guard to his making, dangling like bats sleeping during the day.

Way up high he saw another tearing shadow. Then he took off his shoes. Very carefully he tied them by the strings. Then, putting his hand inside one of them and his thumb inside the other, he held them really close, really tight, raising them above the ground.

As if awakened by his touch, the shoes quivered. Slowly they began to move, flapped like two black wings. Two wings that, flapping slowly at first and then faster and faster, rose taking the Shoemaker. And in the darkness that was already invading the tower like water in a well, they took him to the window, crossing with him the violet sky.



Ana Z, where are you going? (First three chapters)

1 ANA Z.

This story begins with Ana leaning over the edge of a well. I think she got there by accident, but I cannot swear by it. I don't even know if the well is on a field or a garden. The truth is that I don't know anything about Ana's life before this moment. I know her last name begins with the letter Z, but I ignore the other letters. I don't know anything else about her. I meet her like you do, for the first time, a girl at the edge of a well, over which she now leans.

Ana wants to see the water at the bottom. It is probable that she even wants to see her reflection. But she doesn't. As hard as she looks, she can only see a round and long darkness, like a vertical tunnel. And not a glimmer down there. So she spits, to hear the sound of the spit hitting the water.

It is maybe to hear better that she tilts her head a little to one side and stretches her neck. But this movement... ploft! The necklace of white beads, beads that I saw way before she tilted her head, and that are made of ivory, each one carved in the shape of a rose, gets caught on the button of her blouse and snaps. In an instant, one after the other, like girls in line or drops of tear, the beads fall into the darkness of the well. And Ana, with no time to react, sees each one turn into a white spot, then little white spot, white speck, little speck, no white at all.

Down bellow, nothing moves. Nor Ana hears any sound of water.

"My necklace!", she thinks hard, almost as if she could fish it with the strength of her will. She half-cries, half looks around searching for a solution. Because, for such a dear necklace, there must be a solution.

She is about to rub her eyes to get rid of the sting with the tear, when they see the steps and don't want to be rubbed anymore. They are not real steps, like the ones of the stairs at Ana's house. They are iron steps, dark with rust, embedded like handles in the walls of the well. They don't look very inviting, nor very sturdy. But it is through them that Ana can go retrieve the beads of her necklace.

Let's go down with Ana. Slowly. Throw one leg over the edge of the well, testing the step with the foot, the body still half in, half out. Now the other leg. Careful. The edge of the well is slippery, the walls are full of slime. Ana doesn't know if her hands are sweating or if it is the humidity on the rungs, but she holds tight. Her feet feel around. Her heart is going way faster than her. One step. Another. One more.



— After all — Anna says softly, trying to belittle the descend —, a well is just a backwards chimney.

After the first five steps, she feels more confident. Not regarding to the well, but regarding to the steps. She already knows that they can bear the weight, she can go down. She just doesn't know what awaits her down there.

Going down, while making sure that the fear stays quiet at the bottom of her stomach, Ana loses count of the steps. She knows they are many. She looks up, trying to estimate the distance. She sees, at the sides, the darkness of the well, its mouth way up high, round, bright. And, as she goes down and down, the darkness seems to grow, the mouth begins to get smaller. Until it is a small little circle, a kind of a pale moon in a black sky. Ana is just looking at it when the foot, already used to the steps, is startled. All of a sudden, it touched the ground.

2 STARTING FROM THE BOTTOM

With both feet on the ground and her hands still on the steps, so she can run away fast if needed be, Ana tries to see something around her. Everything is so black that, at first, she can't even see her feet. However, little by little, her eyes adjust. And, as if the moon up above had come out from behind some cloud, Ana begins to catch a glimpse of someone sitting.

— Hello — says the person, with the gentleness of someone who thinks it is perfectly normal to see a girl get to the bottom of her own well.

— Hi — answers Ana, who now can see clearly an old lady with white hair.

From over her knitting, the old lady smiles. She wields two red needles, big ones, and the yarn comes from a bucket. Ana finds it weird. Why the bucket? But the question Ana brought from above cannot wait and jumps ahead, before any other.

— Have you, by any chance, seen the beads from my necklace falling down here? — she asks with her most polite voice.

— Ohhh? Were they beads? — disappointed, the old lady drops her knitting on her lap. She looks up, as if surveying that distant patch of sky. And says to herself: — What a shame... — then to Ana. — I thought it was hail. I was so happy!... We certainly need a little hail — she sighs, pensive. — It hasn't rained for so long.

And soon, smiling again:

— But if they were beads... they must be around on the ground, they must have rolled away. Look for it, girl, look and you will find it.

First squatting, then getting on her hands and knees — who cares about the dirt on her knees —, Ana brushes her hand on the floor, looking for paler spots, collecting, one by one, the ivory roses. She already has so many on her left palm that she can't even close her fingers. And there are no more white spots shining in the darkness. She then sits and, aligning the beads, tries to recast the necklace.

But, as much as she puts it in order, as much as she counts and recounts, there is no doubt, one is missing. And just the most beautiful, the biggest, the one that was right in the middle, the one she liked to rub with her finger so much.



— One is missing! — she exclaims, almost thinking out loud.

The old lady, who had already resumed her knitting, stops once again, noticing Ana's disappointment. Who asks:

— Haven't you seen...

— No, child, I have not, I was knitting... but if it isn't there, it could only have been one of the fish... it thought it was beautiful, swallowed it.

— Fish??? Fish where, if there is no water?

And Ana looks around, in that dried well, almost wanting to prove what she had just said.

— That's the thing! — exclaims the old lady, glad to be able to finally get it off her chest. — I said so, you didn't pay attention... it hasn't rained here for a long time, a very long time. And my fish, the poor things, don't have the means to live. I'm knitting this last trickle of water that I've stored in the bucket for them, but...

— Knitting water?

— Of course, girl. You have no idea how many things one can do with a trickle of water. It seems like a little, but it is not. It's enough for a good blanket, fresh, clean... There's nothing better. Especially for fish. And it doesn't tear, you know?

— But where are the fish? — asks Ana, more interested in her bead than in the value of a water blanket.

— That's it, they didn't want to wait until I finished... They went that way, through that little bit of water at the bottom — and the old lady points behind her.

Ana looks at the floor. It couldn't be called, exactly, a little bit of water. It was a little less than a trickle, a little more than dampness. But, for smart fish, perhaps... Ana follows that wetness with her foot, takes a few steps with her eyes pinned to the floor, so she doesn't lose that little bit of water or steps on some tardy fish. And then, behold, when I was already afraid that she would bump into the wall of the well, we both find an opening in the shape of an arc, which we hadn't noticed before because of the darkness. It's the entrance to a kind of a long hallway, from where a cold breeze blows like an autumn.

3

ALMOST BLIND, ALMOST MUTE MOLE

Ahead, it looks even darker than the rest. But Ana now can see like a cat. And, if she is afraid, her desire to go forward is much stronger. Stretching her face, almost sniffing the unknown, she bends down a little, goes through the opening, and begins to progress.



It's different here. The walls, at certain points, look like they were etched in the stone, are rough, dusty. The ground is full of rocks, of holes, totally irregular. She needs to walk carefully. And, all around, wooden beams supporting the ceiling and the walls force Ana to bend down, to slide.

— It's better this way — she thinks, wanting to blow at the embers of her courage, that threaten to lose their fire. — If it is supported, at least it won't fall on my head.

She had just thought that, ploft! A clump of dirt falls right by her foot. Startled, Ana jumps backwards. At the exact height of her eyes, a hole appeared in the wall. A small hole, with bulging edges, that seems to move, vomiting a residue of mud and gravel. And from where first a small paw appears, then, suddenly and fast, a mole's snout. It's just a second, she soon retracts. But Ana saw the fur, the muddy nose.

— Where is she going? — Ana asks herself, imagining the ongoing work of those little paws, the snout straining in the dark, narrow space.

— Maybe she is in a hurry to get somewhere? — Ana asked herself again. — Maybe to her hole or her baby moles. Or perhaps she is single and only digs, quickly, because she is a mole and the only thing she knows is digging?

Ana would really like to be in one of those stories in which animals talk, full of wisdom. She could then have a good enlightening talk, learn everything about life and the feelings of the moles. But she isn't, the mole is already gone. And she herself has more to do ahead.

Only then she realizes that she hadn't said good-bye to the old lady. She looks back, tempted. It would be a good excuse to go back, to give up the search.

Ahead, the tunnel snakes, seductive. At the end, a brightness shines weakly.

— Nonsense — thinks Ana, feeling the desire to explore grow. — She was so interested in knitting, she haven't even noticed I'm gone. Anyway, I will have to come back through here. It won't be long, I'll talk to her later.

And forward she goes.

Soon, she realizes that the light isn't coming from the other end — the end may be far. It comes from a corner.

Tac, tac, a strange noise also comes from the corner. Ana swallows hard, as if she is thirsty. "Water", she thinks, "is really needed down here. And not only by the fish". She walks, getting closer at each step. Tac, tac, the noise gets louder and rougher. Ana is almost there. She raises one leg, taking longer than necessary, to go over a beam. Then, slowly, very slowly, the slowest possible, she turns the corner.

And almost bumps into a miner.

Little story of a tiny love (Full version)

Translated from the Portuguese by Fabiana Colasanti

AND THE STORY BEGINS UNDER THE SHINGLES

Water seeping through the ceiling of my office. Many things can start with water seeping through the ceiling of an office:

books and papers flooded
a computer short-circuited
a confusion of colors on the drawing board
the complaint of the downstairs neighbor
when the water begins to leak in his house

But none of this happened. Simply, without me even knowing it, that water damage pushed me towards a tiny love.



— We'll have to take out the shingles — said, full of knowledge, the professional that I'd called to solve the situation. — Without removing the shingles, we cannot waterproof the slab.

It made sense. And, before the swelled bubble in the plaster burst, we removed some of the shingles.

It was like opening a secret chest. In that low space, still full of shadows and the smell of stored sun, there was a nest, inside the nest there was a pigeon, and under the pigeon chirped two little baby pigeons.

A startle, a flapping of wings, a small plume flying and she, menaced by the invasion, escaped, almost bumping into the man. The babies remained.

Newborn baby pigeons are the ugliest things. The dark skin, loose, is baggy around the body, like pajamas from an older brother. Not even a hint of feathers. The little wings, the fat tummy, the ribs showing, the veins, or whatever runs blue underneath the skin, everything seems still unfinished. But the worst is the head. Too big for the body — I think it would match the skin if the entire frame was bigger — unbalanced over the skinny neck, with a long, thin beak, and two huge eyes, two bulging eyes arriving to life before all the rest, anxious and half-blind.

They were both like this. I loved them immediately.

Not so immediately, because there was all the operation to collect and bring the nest down, of which I didn't take part because I was already on the ground. But I loved them as soon as they were within my reach.

— The mother won't come back — declared the contractor, who not only knew all about leaks, but seemed to know a lot about pigeons. — We've touched them, the human smell sticks, she won't come back, won't touch them again.

His tone was final. But, sometimes, a final tone clashes with an even more final one.

— If she doesn't come back, they will both die — said my husband categorically after a pause that left the three of us paralyzed before the possibility of a tragedy. — Let's put the nest up high, who knows, maybe far from us she'll get around.

It wasn't an easy thing. The nest was put in a box. The box was tied with strings. The husband climbed the ladder to fix the strings. The strings were tied to the eaves of his office. At last, questionably balanced, the box swung up high.

Perched elsewhere, the anxious mother looked and hooted, probably not understanding why we had put her offspring in such a risky situation. Good intentions may be hard to understand.

She didn't come close, nor did she move away during that whole day. And she spent the night where she was.

In the morning, seeing that none of it had been solved, I decreed:

— The babies have to eat — and ordered that the nest should be brought down. No one argues with a mother who wants to feed babies, even if the babies aren't hers.

The box was brought down.

But, faced with those four hungry eyes, the fundamental question hit me like a rock: what do baby pigeons eat?

There is always a friend who knows how to feed a pigeon or bathe a toucan. My friend was a writer, and knew so much about birds that he was called "the thrush of chronicle". I called him.

— Rubem, help me, I need help with a problem with wings.

Disappointment. Rubem didn't have a clue about feeding baby pigeons, had never been faced with a similar situation. But he passed along an important knowledge.

— You have to put the food, on a matchstick, way down their throats. They don't know how to feed themselves yet — pause. And then, an emphatic recommendation: — A matchstick. Toothpicks don't work, they pierce the little creature.

After I thanked him, he added still:

— Water, don't forget to give them water. A drop at a time, in the beak. Birds are very thirsty. Now I only had half a problem. I still had to find out what to put on the matchstick.

Birds don't eat bread, I thought (but some do). Birds don't eat meat (but some do). Birds eat grains (all of them do). Grinded grain should do. Corn, for sure.

I sent someone to buy a very fine corn flour, and made a mush with water. I grabbed one of the babies.

Such a fragile thing! Such a small thing! Such a live thing! Me, afraid to squeeze too much and suffocate him, not to squeeze hard enough and let him fall. And the beak, that disproportional beak, gaping wide like a funnel leading down his throat, a dark pipe going straight into the body.



Terrified, I remembered when, still a teenager, I had unwittingly suffocated, by an excess of zeal and milk, the baby mouse I had just saved from death by broom in a department store, and tried to feed. I couldn't allow myself to make the same mistake.

I put a bit of corn mush on the matchstick and, being very careful with that creature that trusted me, began.

Baby pigeons, when they are very young, have to be fed every two hours. And there were two of them chirping. Suddenly, my time had shrunk like a rubber band.

But, although I have tried so hard, taking care of both with equal dedication, the smaller one soon died. Friends were quick to tell me that it was part of evolution, it almost always happens to birds, in hatches of two, only the strongest survives. And I made a point of believing it, because if that death was in favor of a better strain for the pigeons, I could face it without guilt.

The stronger brother, on the other hand, accepted it with no hesitation. Eagerly, he engaged in eating the ration now unowned. And, eating twice as much, he began to grow twice as fast. I inferred that this also followed the rules of nature.

From one day to the next, he seemed already changed. Little by little, he began to look less ugly, he became just averagely ugly.

And the time to give him a name was almost over. They say that something, anything, only really exists after being named. The giraffe or the tea cup, for example, only became giraffe and tea cup after those names, "giraffe" and "tea cup" were put upon them. I'm not sure what they were before, but surely they were the most similar things there was to a giraffe and a tea cup. Ultimately, everything has to have a name. And the baby didn't have one yet.

Talking about this in the family was enough to make the matter unpostponable. Standing before him, my husband and I watched, trying to figure out the name that was probably waiting by, hidden in that strange little body, in those bulging eyes.

— What does he look like? — we would ask each other, searching for the right answer.

He remained quiet, not helping.

Amidst so many names, which one?

— Tom! — exclaimed, triumphantly, my husband. And both of us smiled because it seemed immediately right.



— Why Tom? — I asked, though, to make sure, as if a name needed instructions.

— Because he is also a castaway — and, seeing that I hesitated, not grasping it. — Like Tom Hanks.

Just around that time, we'd seen the movie *Cast Away*, with Tom Hanks, a kind of a modern version of Robinson Crusoe's adventures, in which the main character, who works for a big American company, ends up cast away in a deserted island, and struggles to survive. Our pigeon, reasoned my husband, had just been cast away from his nest, next to his mother, and was also struggling for life.

The name was short, gracious, sonant, it fit him like custom-made clothing. And immediately we began to look at him differently, not as you look at some ordinary baby, but as you look at someone named Tom.

— Tom Tom Tom, — I called as if I was beating on a tiny drum, letting him know that he had been baptized.

And he shook his featherless little wings. It was hunger, but I preferred to believe it was contentment. And, to celebrate, I went to get some corn mush.

Now, when I woke up in the mornings, my first step was to go meet the baby of the house.

— Tom Tom Tom — I would call like someone who says good morning. And he would rise from his nest, stretch his neck, beak wide open, chirping in response.

We had decided to leave him in the nest. It didn't look very clean, but it was his original crib, the one with which he was familiar. And the fact that it was contained in the box made it look more spruced up. The box, we'd put on the floor — so that the little creature wouldn't fall — near the glass door to the terrace, so that he would be visible in case his mother showed up.

Well cared for, well fed, Tom grew fast. The skin didn't look like someone else's pajamas anymore, it became tight over the flesh that now lined the bones well. The wings also fattened, if we can say such a thing about wings, and some thick, white tips announced the blossoming of the feathers, while he began to be covered with a light-colored fluff. Only the eyes remained the same size, but they seemed smaller now that the head grew around them.

Not only he was not ugly anymore, he was preparing himself to be the most beautiful pigeon in the world — at least it was what I said to him everyday.

He didn't eat every two hours anymore.



BECAUSE HE WAS NEITHER A DUCK, NOR A CHICKEN

Daily life goes on its course even when you are raising a baby pigeon. And, with a holiday around the corner, a friend invited us to spend the long weekend at her farm.

— Only if I can take Tom with me! — I declared immediately.

— Who's Tom? — she asked, thinking it might be another guest. And, after being answered, inquired as a good hostess: — What does he eat?

We drove to the farm, my lap covered with a cloth, another one making a kind of a nest for Tom, his box on the backseat.

Everything was anticipated, even my friend's dogs.

We stopped at a bar on the way. I got out with Tom in my arms while my husband went to get something to drink.

A lady walked by me, looked at Tom, and asked tenderly:

— Poor little thing, is he sick?

— Sick?! — my offended pride showed its teeth. — No way! He is young, healthy. And he is very happy.

We arrived, the dogs barked as predicted, my friend thought Tom was “so cute”, as predicted, I settled the box in the bathroom of our suite, prepared corn mush, fed Tom as my friend watched. And the weekend began.

But, on the second day, when I was already thinking that everything would go smoothly, one of our friends, watching the feeding scene, declared:

— You're going to have a problem! — he seemed more content with his foreknowledge capabilities than compassionate for my future. He paused, increasing my expectation, and

completed: — You were the first person who took care of him, practically from birth. We can say that you were the first person that he saw. He believes that you are his mother — another pause to magnify the effect of the statement. — When he grows up, he will follow you everywhere.

I almost took offense. What did he mean, “He believes”?! I am the one who takes care of him, I thought. I am the one who gives him food, I am the one who loves him. I AM his mother! I thought, but I didn’t say it.

And how would that go, him following me everywhere?

I thought about him going with me to book signings, perched by my side on the table while I signed, or walking along my footsteps in book fairs, following me at lectures and airports. And I imagined myself at my seat in the airplane, looking out the window and seeing Tom flying along outside — birds don’t cross the air on their owner’s lap.

No, it was not going to work.

Taken by a sense of uneasiness, I ruminated this possibility through the rest of the weekend. But before Monday morning, I put a stop to the fantasy. Tom was already settled in my affection, and I was going to finish raising him. I would solve problems in the future, as they arose.

Indeed. Now covered in fluff, Tom was losing little by little the defenseless air, becoming almost perky. Without the passing of time leading him to show any intention of following me.

Soon, he would be eating by himself.

— Of course! — I thought one day, in a sudden epiphany — Tom is not a duck, much less a chicken.

I had just realized, relieved, that I’d never seen, on a field, square, or garden, a mother pigeon followed by her babies, the way it happens with other winged species. Baby pigeons don’t follow their mother.

Luckily, those who know a lot, like my friend at the farm, can also be mistaken.

OF HOW EACH ONE STUCK TO THEIR ROLE, AND IT WORKED

And we would have, me and Tom, continued to grow in complete peacefulness, if it wasn’t for another eerie prediction falling on us.

— He won’t learn how to fly — assured me another acquaintance. — Birds learn through the example of their mother. And you cannot give him this example.

It seemed like a witch’s curse in a fairytale, and it was a hard blow on my maternal feelings. But it made sense. Some years before, on a beach at the South, I’d spent a long time watching in rapture the wise and patient lesson with which some seagulls taught little seagulls the reason for wings. The grown-ups flied for a little while, then landed. The kids tried, and it was flying and falling on their beaks, flying and falling on their chests, and again flying and falling, many times, until just flying.

The lesson, however, promised to be a lot more complicated for a wingless mother.

I decided to apply myself to overcome this detail, and give Tom a full education.

I began by using the means at my disposal, instead of those employed by the seagulls. And my means were the words. And the gestures.

— Tom — I would say to him, after putting him on my bed, on top of a duvet. — You are a pigeon. And pigeons fly.

I didn't intend for him to understand the words; I hoped that he would pick up, as a special message between us, the thought they expressed.

— Tom, look closely, it's like this — and I would bend my arms, my hands on my chest, elbows high, flapping them as if I intended to fly. I wasn't too hopeful that he would assimilate the movements, but I had some hope, because I also open my mouth when I ask my dog to open hers when it's time to brush her teeth, and she does.

Having gone through the merely explanatory part, I would begin the practical one.

— Let's fly, Tom — I would tell him in a persuasive tone.

Taking him gently with both hands cupped, I would throw him up a little, just a little, to awaken his flying instincts. And, like the little seagulls, he would fall on his chest, the useless wings tight against his body. The duvet, though, was softer than the sand.

I could have given up and I didn't. My role as a mother wouldn't allow it.

We had, and still have, a house on the mountains, nested amidst the green. We had already taken Tom there more than once, in his infancy, when he still wasn't interested in nature, busy as he was with his eagerness to live. Now, with him already feathered and growing, able to eat his grains on his own, we drove up the mountains again.

Indeed, his relationship with the garden had changed. He walked around the lawn, pecked some stem or other, scratched the ground a bit. My husband, excited with these demonstrations, decided to help me. Who knows, maybe under that big sky, seeing the bluebirds and the hummingbirds that flew through the trees and the bushes, Tom would realize who he was.

And it was my husband's turn, gently but not so much, to throw Tom into the air. This time he opened his wings, more because of the scare, maybe, than trying to fly. They'd opened, but, not having mastered the movements, it wasn't enough. His efforts reminded me of the time when my daughters had first tried to crawl and then to walk, falling so many times before managing to keep their balance, and I thought that learning to fly is, after all, very similar to learning to walk. Nevertheless I worried, because the lawn wasn't as soft as the duvet.

However, was it the vision of the parrots that flew by in a flock with their shrill and collective calling as a chorus, or because of the exercise, Tom soon manifested that he had received the message. We were drinking coffee in the garden after lunch when we saw him stretch up on his little feet, stuff his chest, extend his neck, and flap desperately his wings. The speed was excessive and badly directed, it lacked rhythm. Maybe because of that, the experience didn't have any aerial result.

Tom could have given up, and he didn't. His nature as a pigeon wouldn't allow it.

Many times during that day, he repeated his fly attempts. Until, finally, success! His little feet left the lawn. For an instant, a decisive and inaugural instant, he was able to rise an inch above ground.



Applause! Cheers! Congratulations! The emotion lighted the smile of the family. And, with it, a certainty: Tom didn't need my example to learn how to fly.

That weekend was over. There was another one after that. A week made a big difference in Tom's development. And when we went back to the mountains with him, a lot of things had changed.

On Saturday morning, we needed to go grocery shopping to stock the house. It was impossible to take Tom to the supermarket. I decided that the safest place to put him in was the bathroom, with no furniture to hide himself in or to hurt him, without dangers. I closed the window and the toilet lid. I checked the gas heater.

But when I got back and opened the door looking for him and announcing food, where was Tom?! He wasn't there.

How come he wasn't there??!!

I opened the shower stall, combed every inch of the floor, knelt down to investigate behind the bidet. And, just as I was getting upright, after looking on every corner, I bumped into him. Triumphant, as if he had his little wings on his waist, Tom looked at me from the top of the sink. I had been looking only downwards, not thinking about what was now being revealed to me: my beautiful pigeon had learned how to fly.



WHEN EACH CHANGE BEGAN TO ANNOUNCE ANOTHER

There was a moment where it was suggested to me to cut the tips of his wings so he couldn't run away. I didn't even take offense, that advice wasn't for us, didn't concern us.

Tom expanded his little flights. He would fly away, come back, land on my stretched hand or on my shoulder, gently peck my neck. He walked with another stance, the chest becoming ample, the head going forward at each step, as if inspecting the world to assure the safety of the rest of the body. If I, by any chance, was tardy with his food, he would come flippantly into the living room, flying or walking without haste, to collect what was owed to him.

He found out that the backrest of the terrace's chair was an excellent perch. And turned it into his favorite spot. He spent much of the day there. At sundown, I would call him to eat, he'd come in taking little steps towards his bowl of grains, I would close the glass doors. And the domestic protection for the night was declared.

Thus, during a number of days. Until it came the day when I called, called again, but, as much as I hit the bowl on the floor, Tom wouldn't come. He was still on his perch, as if waiting for the night. I took the bowl and left it on the table in front of him. I didn't close the door.

Many times, before going to sleep, I looked outside. Now in the dark, Tom's silhouette was still unmoving on the backrest. How could I know if he was all right?

— You look like a distressed mother when her child spends the first night elsewhere — said my husband, smiling.

I was a distressed mother. The night can be very cold on the 15th floor, where I live. What if the southwest wind, that is strong and icy, began to blow, would he come in? The world is a place full of dangers, and I haven't prepared Tom to face them.

But, on the next morning, TomTomTom, I called announcing that the day was already on its course. And, as always, he swung from one side to the other on his little feet, greeting me. And flew to my hand. Everything was fine.

Fine, and on its way to news, as are the days. Soon, I would realize that the backrest and some nights outdoors were just the first step to a broader course. Or was it the edge of the sink the first step?

I went to sleep one night, and his silhouette was still there. I woke up and, even before calling TomTomTom, I came across the empty backrest. I called anyway, but in a different tone, the scare set in my stomach, while I searched with my eyes. And he answered me the way he knew how, swaying and stretching his neck forward, way up on the roof, to plunge, soon after, chest first, open wings, to where I was standing.

The change of perch was not incidental. Nor it limited itself to that night. Having forgotten the backrest of the chair, the roof became his new dwelling, Tom expanded his boundaries. Now he lived up high, as birds should do, and from above he answered me when I called him. Little by little, turning away from the house and looking for the open air, he accepted his nature.

From above he watched the world, or came down to eat in the living room, or walked around the terrace with the carelessness of an owner.

There he wasn't, though, the only one of his species. Drawn, in the past, by the birdseed that fell from the parakeet's coop donated to my daughters by a godmother, pigeons had gotten used to visiting me. It had been a long time since the coop, or the parakeets, or the birdseed, or even the daughters, that had moved, each to their own house. But my terrace was still a safe place to my former feathered guests or their offspring, that often landed on the shingles and on the floor.

I feared Tom mingling with those strangers. After all, he had been raised as an only pigeon, he could be unable to recognize himself on the others, or to be recognized by them.

It was a mistaken fear. Tom was totally meant to be a pigeon, and had found his mirror. I didn't see any hesitation the first few times he approached the little flock, that sometimes came, sometimes was absent. He seemed perfectly at ease. So at ease that, within a few days he made his choice, and began to always walk around with the same partner.

I sincerely say, I didn't like her at all. She was small, skinny, mat, with weird little white specks, the feathers ruffled and sparse. I tried to be fair, but anyone could see that wasn't a worthy girlfriend for my Tom, who had become a beautiful gray pigeon, with a full chest highlighted by vivid purple glimmer.

— You are jealous — laughed my husband.

It could be so, but, jealousy or no jealousy, he deserved better.

BUT LIFE HAS ITS OWN WAY OF WRITING STORIES

Tom began to invite her to eat. This, I confess, bothered me from the first time. That he liked her wasn't my problem, or it wasn't supposed to be. But to bring her to eat at my house seemed too much to me. I didn't even know if she was clean.

I changed the place of the bowl. I didn't put it on the table at the terrace anymore, but in the living room, by the door. I would call Tom, he would come from way up high, enter, and, before she could join him, I would close the door. She could look for food in another restaurant.

She wouldn't. She stayed there, on the other side of the glass panel, watching him eat. Just watching, quietly, waiting for him to come out. And, who knows, maybe she was hungry, too. I would have endured it better if she pecked the glass, or showed annoyance. But that patient meekness hurt me. I stayed strong twice, on the third time I opened the door, apologizing. And I began to put a double portion in the bowl.

They both slept on top of the roof. TomTomTom, in the morning. And he would come in a ruffle of feathers. She would also come, without being called, because I haven't named her — to me, she looked too old to be baptized, or she still lacked intimacy with the family. I believe I would have given her a name, if we just had had the time to do it. I would smile joyfully, put the bowl on the floor, sometimes stretched my hand out so he would land.

But one day, TomTomTom, I called, and my pigeon with his beautiful gray wings didn't sway up high, didn't get ready to fly to the ground. The couple had not spent the night on the roof.

The life of the urban pigeon is so hard, I thought. Little water, tight food, and children that run after them, and bicycles, and cars. The world is a space full of threats.



It took Tom two days before he came back with her to eat. If they slept on the roof that night, I don't know. In the morning, they were already gone.

My heart said it didn't make any sense, him going away, when with me he had safety and food, tenderness and freedom. My mind knew that what made sense to me maybe didn't make sense to him, and that everything that I gave him perhaps was not what he needed. Tom had his own longings.

It went on like this for a while, they would come, vanish, come back. A couple living their life. I even thought it was going to be like this forever, that maybe they would build a nest underneath the shingles, like the one Tom was born in. And it seemed fine. But it wasn't what happened. From a disappearance that I considered like the previous ones, until I realized that it went on indefinitely, Tom never showed up at my terrace again, nor did I see his little companion.

For a while, I waited for him. Then I realized that I wouldn't see him again, or would just see him in my memory, when watching some gray pigeon with a neck of amethyst.

Made-up stories don't usually end suddenly, they have a well-thought end, in which everything seems to fit just right. But life writes its stories differently. It gives the impression that it ends without explanation, when in fact it is ending only for some of its characters, while it takes the story on for the others.

It was like this that it has written the story of Tom and our endearment. I was left missing him a bit, with a bit of worry for all that awaited him, and a bit of pride. But the world was the space of my beautiful pigeon, the space for which I had raised him. And he went to take it. To continue his own story, although far away from me.

THE BLUE IDEA (Full version)

A TRUE BLUE IDEA

Translated from the Portuguese by Adria Frizzi

THE BOOK

This is a book of fairy tales, with swans, unicorns, and princesses. And before anyone is scared away by the subject matter, in a world of advanced space technology, I think it's important to make clear that my interests and explorations gravitate toward that timeless thing called the unconscious.

There is no single age or story for emotions. Nor did I wish to address people of one particular size or another as I attempted to put these emotions on paper. I only concerned myself with erecting these symbolic constructions, certain that the material I was dealing with was timeless and would resonate in others.

Perhaps it would have been more convenient and easier to create narratives apt to seduce with their modernity or impress with their everyday realism. Fairies, I know, are dismissed by many as both alienated and alienating because they are too removed from the twentieth century. But I also know that pumpkins never turned into carriages, not even in the times when carriages were the fastest means of conveyance. External reality changes. But our internal reality, comprised of fears and fantasies, remains the same. And it is with the latter that fairies establish a dialogue by interacting symbolically, at any age, and at all times.

Marina Colasanti



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**For
Fabiana and Alessandra,
my fairies.**

THE LAST KING

Every day Kubla Khan, the last king of the Mogul dynasty, climbed to the highest walls of his fortress to meet with the wind.

The wind came from far away and had the whole world to talk about.

Kubla Khan had never left his fortress, he knew nothing of the world. He listened to the words of the wind and learned.

“The earth is smooth and round,” said the wind. “I move ever forward, yet always return to the place where I began. I’ve traveled around the Earth so many times that it’s wound up in my breath.”

Kubla Khan thought it must be nice to come and go without ever getting lost.

One day the wind came colder, on its way back from the mountains.

“I went to comb the snow,” the wind whispered icily in the king’s ear. “Snow is soft and heavy. Beneath its silence the seeds prepare themselves for spring. Only white flowers pierce snow. Only white tracks mark snow. In snow dwells the King of Sleep.”

Kubla Khan longed for snow. So he fastened silver threads to the Moon and raised it against the wind. From up above the Moon, mirror of the cold, brought snow to Kubla Khan. And a peaceful sleep.

Every day, atop the walls of the fortress, the wind talked about its travels.

Every day the King’s long hair played in the wind and gathered its sounds like a harp.

The wind talked about the desert.

“The desert,” it said with fiery tongue, “is languid like the wheat field. And like the wheat field it obeys me. It, too, bows beneath my hand. But its grain isn’t as sweet as wheat. And you don’t make loaves out of sand. The desert’s drops are called dates.”

Kubla Khan longed to sweat with the sweetness of dates. So he fastened threads of gold to the rays of the Sun and raised it against the wind. From up above, the heat poured over Kubla Khan’s kingdom, ripening fruit everywhere. And the King drank the juice from his cupped hands.

From atop the walls of the fortress, worn from the wind’s endless battering, the entire world lay at the king’s feet.

Finally the day came when the wind placed a salty kiss on Kubla Khan’s lips, bringing to him the sea.

“The sea is greater than the desert and deeper than snow,” sang the wind. “The sea is green like the meadows, but its grass grows in its depths and no one sees the cattle that graze on it. The sea calls out to men and sings. Its voice is called siren.”

Did Kubla Khan hear the call of the siren in the wind’s voice?

No one knows.

The shepherds of the plains say they saw him fastening flaxen strings to the corners of the great silk kite. Then he raised the kite against the wind and, his feet lifting from the highest wall of his fortress, he let the white string carry him, the last Mogul king, far up into the sky, where it turns the color of the sea.

THROUGH THE HOOP

She began with a green thread. She did not know what to embroider, but she was sure about the green—bright green.

Grass. That's what appeared after the first few stitches. Tall grass, its tips bent as if it were looking at something.

It's looking at the flowers, she thought. And chose a red skein.

Thus, little by little, without an outline, a garden began to appear on the embroidery hoop. It obeyed her hands, it obeyed her fancy, and it grew as if the night dew made it sprout.

Every morning the girl ran to the hoop, looked at it, smiled, and added another bird, a bee, a cricket hidden behind a stem.

The sun shone on the girl's embroidery.

And the garden was so beautiful that she began to like it more than anything else.

It was on the day of the tree. The tree was finished, nothing seemed to be missing. But the girl knew it was time to add the fruit. She embroidered a shiny, purple fruit, like nothing she had ever seen before. And then another, and another, until the tree was drooping, until the tree was bountiful, and her mouth filled with desire for that fruit never tasted before.

The girl did not know how it happened. When she looked again, she was sitting astride the highest branch of the tree, picking fruit and wiping juice from her mouth.

It must have been through the thread, she thought when it was time to return home. She looked around, the last fruit was not ready yet, she touched the final stitch in the thread. And there she was, back home.

Now that she knew the way, the girl went down into the embroidery every day. First she chose what she would like to see—a butterfly, a praying mantis. She embroidered with care, then she followed the thread down onto the back of the insect, and flew with it, and came to rest on the flowers, and laughed and played and lay in the grass.

The embroidery was almost done. Hardly any cloth showed through the brightly colored thread. Soon it would be finished.

It needs a heron, she thought. And she chose a white skein with pink hues. She embroidered her stitches with care, knowing, as she inserted the needle, how soft the feathers would be, how gentle the beak. Then she went down to meet her new friend.

It was like that, standing next to the heron, caressing its neck, that her older sister saw her when she leaned over the hoop. She was the only thing that hadn't been embroidered. And the design was so pretty that her sister picked up the needle, the basket of thread, and began to embroider.

She embroidered her hair, and the wind stopped blowing in it. She embroidered her skirt, and the pleats ceased to move. She embroidered her hands, forever frozen on the heron's neck. She wanted to embroider her feet, but they were hidden in the grass. She wanted to embroider her face, but it was hidden in the shadows. Then she embroidered the ribbon in her hair, ended the stitch, and very carefully cut the thread.

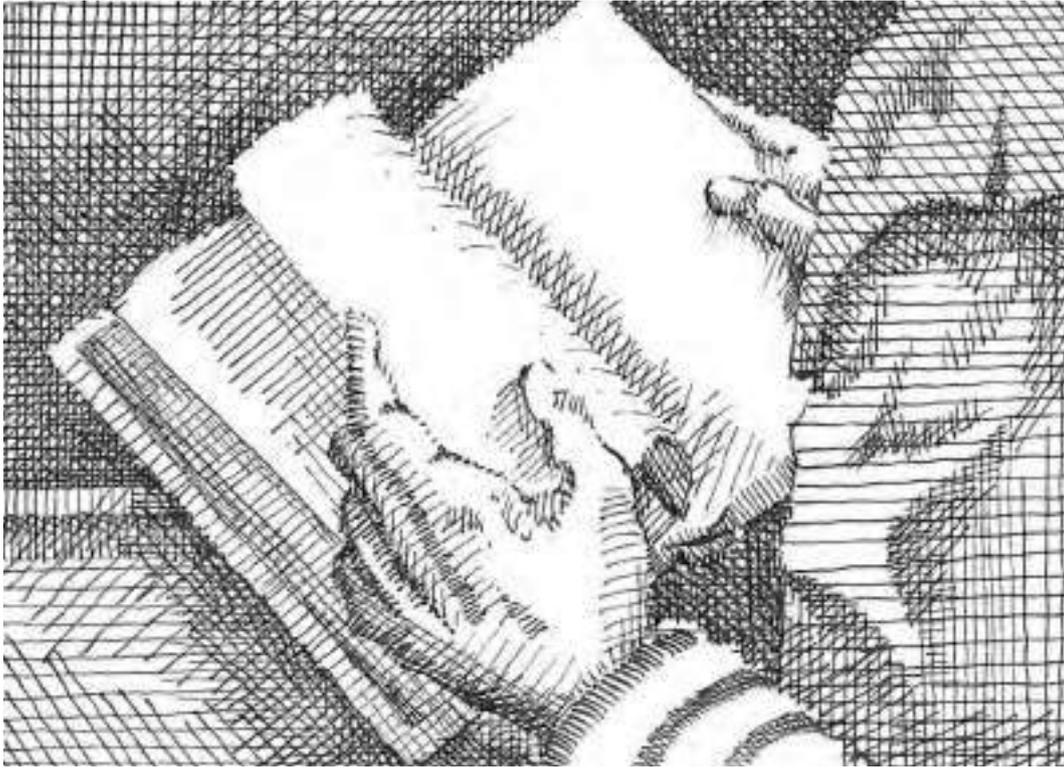


FOR A PAIR OF VELVET WINGS

The princess took the net, the glass jar, and the box of pins, and went hunting. Ever in search of butterflies, she wasn't content with the ones she already had, glass case upon glass case in every room of the palace. She wanted others. She wanted more. She wanted them all.

There was no point in looking in the gardens. After so much hunting, so many pins stuck in their backs, the butterflies knew that was no place for them, and even the caterpillars dragged their lazy undulations away in search of a safer spot to turn into butterflies. Perhaps in the fields, when the harvest was ready. But it was Fall. Perhaps in the woods.

And to the woods the princess did go. She searched all morning. She saw two colored wings fluttering among the leaves, threw the net, but only caught a flower stirring in the wind. She thought she had found a dark butterfly resting on a tree trunk—it was a leaf carried by an ant. Then nothing else. Birds, bees, salamanders went about their business undisturbed, flitting around in the sun. But butterflies—none. As if, warned by her presence, they had been waiting, hidden at the edge of darkness.



It was almost night when she saw it, a huge black moth fluttering across the dimming blue. She ran, trying to keep up with it. She stumbled on a rock, lost herself in the underbrush. The sky was clear—where was the moth? She thought she'd seen it going one way. She went there. But everything was quiet, just the water rippling on the surface of the lake.

At night, back at the palace, she talked about nothing else. She wanted the moth. If she could have it, she vowed, she'd give up hunting forever. She chose the best spot in her room for it: over the bed, its wings spread over the headboard.

She dreamed about the moth. She was traveling, reclining on its back, and the velvet wings caressed her as they beat.

At daybreak she armed herself with bow and arrows and went to the woods. She lay on the ground, immobile, waiting, in the same place as the day before. The morning passed. The night blew in its wind. And with the night wind came the black moth.

This time she wasn't going to lose it. Without taking her eyes off it, without making a false move, the princess crept forward through the trees, to the edge of the lake. And she saw it descend, spreading its large wings, and with a final effort alight without breaking the surface of the water, not moth, but swan, a noble black swan.

The water quavers. The princess sets an arrow in her bow, draws back the string, shoots the golden shaft into the swan's breast.

But it is from her own breast that the blood spills. And trickles, and gushes, soaking her clothes, dissolving the silk everywhere it flows, transforming her body into feathers, black velvet feathers.

The day sinks into sleep. On the lake two black swans glide side by side. The golden bow gleams, forgotten.

A THORN OF IVORY

The sun rose, and there was the unicorn, grazing in the princess's garden. From among the flowers it gazed up at the window of the room where she came to greet the day. It waited until it saw her at the balcony, and when her delicate foot touched the first step of the stairs leading down to the garden the unicorn fled into the darkness of the forest.

One day, going to visit his daughter in her chambers early in the morning, the king saw the unicorn in the lily patch.

I must have that animal. And he immediately ordered the hunt.

Day after day the king and his knights hunted the unicorn through the fields and forests. The horses galloped, the hounds ran, and, just when they were all sure they had surrounded it, they lost its scent, got off the wrong track.

Night after night the king and his knights camped around the fire, listening to the unicorn's crystal-clear whinny in the darkness.

Then, one day, it was gone. Not a track, not a sign of its presence. And silence at night.

Disappointed, the king gave orders to return to the castle.

And as soon as he arrived he went to his daughter's room to tell her what had happened. The princess, saddened by her father's failure, promised that in three moons she would present him with the unicorn.

For the next three nights she wove a golden net out of her hair. Each morning she watched the lily patch in the garden. And on the fourth day, at dawn, when the first light of the sun filled the white blossoms, she threw her net and trapped the unicorn.

Caught in the golden mesh, the unicorn looked upon the one it loved the most, now its mistress, who knew nothing of it.

The princess drew closer. What animal was this, with eyes so meek, held by the artifice of her tresses? Velvet hide, lacquered hooves, and, sprouting in the center of its brow, the single horn pointing to the sky.

A gentle unicorn tongue licked the hand that held it. The princess shuddered, loosened the net, the unicorn rose up on its slender legs.

How long did it take the princess to get to know the unicorn? How many days before she came to love it?

In the tide of hours they bathed in dew, ran with butterflies, galloped in an embrace. Or just spoke silently of love, she sitting in the grass, it lying at her feet, oblivious to the deadline approaching.

But the three moons were running out. The night before the appointed day the king went to his daughter's room to remind her of her promise. He glanced in the corners suspiciously, sniffed the air. But the unicorn, which only ate lilies, smelled like a flower, and, hidden among the princess's gowns, blended in with the velvets, blended in with the scents.

Tomorrow is the day. I expect you to keep your word—said the king—I shall come for the unicorn at sunset.

After the king left, the princess's tears rolled down the unicorn's hide. She must obey her father, she must keep her word. Her love she must save.

Not knowing what to do, the princess picked up the lute and sang her sadness all night long. The moon grew dim. Once again the sun filled the blossoms with light. And, as on the first day they met, the princess drew close to the unicorn. And, as on the second day, she searched the depths of its eyes. And, as on the third day, she held its head in her hands. And on the final day she drew its head to her breast, with gentle strength, with the strength of love, pushing, driving the ivory thorn into her heart, blooming at last.

When the king came to claim what had been promised, this is what the dying sun delivered to him, the rose of blood and a spray of lilies.

A TRUE BLUE IDEA

One day the King had an idea.

It was the first in his entire life, and he was so taken with this true blue idea, that he didn't even consider telling the ministers about it. He went down to the gardens with it, ran through the grass with it, played hide and seek among his other thoughts with it, always returning to it with the same joy, his beautiful true blue idea.

They played together until the King fell asleep against a tree.

He woke groping for his crown and searching for the idea, and only then did he realize the danger. Alone while he slept, so fair and unfettered, the idea might draw someone's attention. All this someone had to do was grab it and make off with it. It's so easy to steal an idea. Who would ever know it already belonged to somebody else?

With the idea concealed beneath his cloak, the King returned to the castle. He waited until night. When all eyes were closed, he left his chambers, crossed ballrooms, descended stairs, and climbed steps, until he reached the Gallery of the Halls of Time.

Closed doors, and silence.

Which room should he choose?

The King stopped in front of each door, pondered a moment, then went on. Until he came to the Hall of Sleep.

He opened the door. In the padded room the King's feet sank up to his ankles, his gaze became entangled in gauzes, curtains and veils that hung like webs. A dimly lit room, always the same. The King laid his sleeping idea on the ivory bed, lowered the curtains, locked the door, and left.

The key, he put on a thick chain around his neck. And never touched it again.

The years ran their course. The King had no more ideas, nor did he miss them, so busy was he reigning. He had grown old without realizing it before the polite royal mirrors which lied to the truth. He only felt sadder and lonelier, but he never had any desire to play in the gardens again.

Only the ministers saw the King aging. When his head grew all white, they told him he could rest now, and relieved him of his mantle.

After placing the crown on the cushion, the King immediately raised his hand to the chain.

"Nobody cares what I do anymore," he said, crossing ballrooms and descending stairs on his way to the Halls of Time. "Nobody is watching me any more. Now I can go find my beautiful idea and keep it for myself alone."

He opened he door, lifted the curtains.

On the ivory bed, the idea slept, as true blue as that first day.

And as that first day, young, so young, a baby idea. And lovely. But the King was no longer the same King as that day. Between him and the idea lay all the time that had passed in the world out there, all the time that stood still in the Hall of Sleep. His eyes didn't see the same charm in the idea. He neither wanted to play nor laugh. What should he do with it? They could never be together as they were that day.

Sitting on the edge of the bed the King cried his last two tears, the ones he had saved for the greatest sadness.

Then he lowered the curtains, and letting the idea sleep, closed the door forever.

AMONG THE LEAVES SO GREEN, OH



*The first doe he shot at,
He missed.
And the second doe he hit.
And kissed.
And the third fled into
A young man's heart.
She is among the leaves
So green, oh.*

Medieval folk song

The prince woke up happy. It was hunting day. The hounds bayed in the castle courtyard. He donned his leather vest and put on his boots. Beneath his window, the horses pawed the ground with their hooves. He took his gloves and went downstairs.

In the courtyard below it looked like a holiday. The harness and the animals' hides gleamed in the sun. And gleam did the teeth bared in laughter, the weapons, the horns signaling the departure.

The horns and the clamor were heard in the forest too. Everyone knew they were coming. And each hid as best as it could.

Only the girl did not hide. She woke to the sound of the horns and was bent over the stream when the huntsmen arrived.

That was how the prince saw her. Half woman, half doe, drinking from the stream. The woman so beautiful. The doe so lithe. The woman he wanted to love, the doe he wanted to kill. If he came closer would she run away? He disturbed a branch, she raised her head, listening. Then the prince put an arrow in his bow, drew back the string, and shot at her right leg. And when the doe-woman's knees as she tried to pull out the arrow, he ran and seized her, calling out to men and hounds.



They took the doe to the castle. The doctor came, they tended to the wound. They placed the doe in a locked room.

Every day the prince went to visit her. Only he had the key. And each time he fell more in love. But the doe-woman only spoke the language of the forest, and the prince only knew the language of the palace.

So they spent hours gazing at each other in silence, with so many things to say.

He wanted to tell her that he loved her so much, that he wanted to marry her and keep her in the castle forever, that he would lavish clothes and jewels upon her, that he would send for the greatest wizard in the kingdom to turn her into a real woman.

She wanted to tell him that she loved him so much, that she wanted to marry him and take him to the forest, that she would teach him to like birds and flowers and that she would ask the Queen of Does to give him four lithe legs and a beautiful chestnut coat.

But the prince had the key to the door. And she did not possess the secret of words.

Every day they met. Now they were holding hands. And the day the first tear rolled down her cheek, the prince thought he understood and sent for the wizard.

When the doe woke, she was no longer a doe. Two legs only, long ones, and a white body. She tried to stand, but couldn't. The prince gave her his hand. The seamstresses came and heaped clothes upon her. The jewelers came and heaped jewels upon her. The dance masters came to teach her how to walk. All she lacked was the gift of speech. And the desire to be a woman.

It took her seven days to learn seven steps. And on the morning of the eighth day, when she awoke and saw the door open, she put together those seven steps and seven more, slipped along the hall, went down the stairs, crossed the courtyard and ran into the forest to find her Queen.

The sun was still shining when the doe came out of the forest, doe only, no longer woman. And she began to graze beneath the windows of the palace.

THREAD BY THREAD

Every afternoon, in the highest tower of the glass castle, Nemesia and Gloxinia worked at their embroidery.

Long was the white silk cloak the two fairies covered with blossoms and which only one of them would wear.

But Gloxinia, never satisfied with her work, undid what she had done at the end of each day and began anew the next.

Nemesia, sure of hand, gave form to the foliage and flowers of a garden in which all the petals were sisters, and each day she ended her last stitch farther along.

Gloxinia's fingers were raw with so much undoing. The cloth became soiled. Beneath Nemesia's calm fingers the white cloak blossomed with flowers.

With so much doing and undoing, the thread was running out in Gloxinia's basket. And picking up the final skein, the fairy realized she had not even advanced by a single twig. Her



sister would finish first and claim the cloak, while she would have nothing to show for her efforts.

There was no point in seeking perfection now. Forsaking for a moment her attempts at petals, Gloxinia used the last thread to embroider the silk, letter by letter, with the magic word. Nemesia barely had the time to complete her stitch and set free one more rose. Then she turned into a spider.

Now Gloxinia would have all the thread she needed.

Patiently, Nemesia spun the first strand. Which in Gloxinia's needle turned out perfect, making her so sure-handed in her embroidery she had no need to resort to scissors. For the first time Gloxinia went on without undoing her work.

She became enthralled with her needlework. She no longer slept. She would pick a strand from the closest web and immediately plunge the needle into the cloth, singing in cadence to the obedient stitches. Thread by thread, she forgot about her sister. There was plenty of floss, the embroidery was growing even richer, and Gloxinia worked away happily as the years passed.

Finally, the day for the last stitch came. Gloxinia completed a petal, put the finishing touches on a thorn, and realized with a smile that there was nothing left to embroider: spring had bloomed in the cloak and the silk had disappeared beneath the floral pattern.

Gloxinia put away the needle and rose to her feet. She would wear the cloak, at long last she would dazzle the court. She tied the long ribbons around her neck, arranged the train and turned to the door.

But where was the door?

All around Gloxinia, Nemesia's webs. Web upon web, which Gloxinia tore at without getting anywhere, only more and more webs.

Where was the court?

All over the court, over the halls, over the castle and the gardens, patient Nemesis went on spinning and weaving, oblivious to the court, oblivious to her sister forever a prisoner of her silver cocoon.

THE ONE AND ONLY

She was beautiful, she was the daughter, she was the one and only. The king's daughter. But what good was being a princess if she had no one to play with?

Alone in the palace, she cried and cried. She didn't want dolls, she didn't want toys. All she wanted was a friend.

At night the king heard his daughter's sobs. What good is a crown if you daughter cries at night? He decided to put an end to all that sadness. So he called the glazier and he called the frame maker. And secretly he had them make the largest mirror in the kingdom. And quietly he had them place it at the foot of his daughter's bed while she slept.

When the princess awoke, she was no longer alone. A beautiful girl, one and only, looked back at her in surprise, her hair still tousled from sleep. Quickly they both jumped out of bed. Quickly they approached each other. One smiled and said hello. The other said hello, smiling.

"Funny," one thought, "the other is left-handed."

And they both laughed.

They laughed a lot after that. Happy together, happy the same. One's play was the other's game. One's leap was the other's bounce. And when one was tired, the other slept.

The king, delighted with such cheer, had new toys made, which he gave his daughter in a basket. Animals, dolls, little houses, and a golden ball. The ball at the bottom of the basket. But so shiny it was the first toy they chose.

They rolled on the carpet with it, they flung it on the bed, they tossed it in the air. But when the princess decided to throw it into her friend's hands, the ball shattered game and friendship.

An empty frame, shards of mirror on the floor.

Sadness weighed in the eyes of the king's only daughter. She hung her head and began to cry. A tear welled up, was about to roll down, when the princess saw the face she loved so much. Not just the face of one friend, but many faces of many friends. Not in the tear now rolling down, but in all the shards that covered the floor.

"Funny, they're all left-handed," she thought.

And they laughed.

They laughed a good bit after that. It was different to play with so many friends. Now she could choose. One day she chose one, and then tired of her. The next day she preferred another, but quickly forgot about her. Then another and another yet, until she realized they were all still too few. Then she took one, threw her against the wall, and made two. She grew tired of both, stepped on them with her shoe and made four. No longer amused by the four, she smashed them with a hammer and made eight. Annoyed with the eight, she shattered them with a rock and made twelve.

But two were smaller than one, four smaller than two, eight smaller than four, twelve smaller than eight.

Smaller, each time smaller.

So much smaller that they no longer fit her, pieces of friends with whom she could no longer play. An eye, a smile, the side of a nose. Then not even that, just the glittery dust of friends scattered on the floor.

Alone again, the king's daughter.

Was she crying? I don't know.

She didn't want the dolls, she didn't want the toys.

She left the palace and ran through the garden to wear out her sadness.

She ran and ran, but the sadness was still with her. She ran through the forest, she ran through the meadow. Then she stopped at the edge of the lake.

In the water's reflection, her friend awaited her.

But the princess no longer wanted only one friend, she wanted many, she wanted them all, those she had had and the new ones she would find. She blew on the water. The friend quavered but remained one. She threw a rock at her. The friend opened up in circles, but remained one.

Then the king beautiful daughter threw herself into the water with her arms wide open, shattering the mirror into many shards, many friends that began to sink with her, disappearing beneath the ripples with which the lake rearranged its surface.

SEVEN YEARS AND SEVEN MORE

Once upon a time there was a king who had a daughter. He didn't have two, he had one, and since he only had this one, he loved her more than anything else.

The princess also loved her father very much, more than anything else, until the day the prince arrived. Then she loved the prince more than anything else.

The father, who didn't have anyone else to love, immediately decided he prince was no good. He had the matter investigated and found that the boy hadn't finished his studies, had no position, and his kingdom was poor. He was a nice kid, they agreed, but when all was said and done, he simply was not the ideal husband for a daughter whose father loved her more than anything else.

So the king sent for the fairy, the princess's godmother. They thought and thought, and finally came to the conclusion that the best thing to do was to put the girl to sleep. Who knows, in her sleep she might dream of someone else and forget about the prince.

No sooner said than done, they gave the girl a magic potion and she fell asleep on the spot without even saying goodnight.

They lay the girl down on a huge bed, in a huge room, inside another huge room, at the end of a huge hall. Seven huge doors concealed the small entrance to the huge hall. They dug seven moats around the castle. They planted seven creeping vines in the seven corners of the castle. And there they put seven guards.

The prince, when he found out that his sweetheart lay sleeping under a magic spell, and that they thought that this would keep her from him, did not hesitate. He had a castle built with seven



moats and seven vines. He lay down on a huge bed, in a huge room, at the end of a huge hall concealed by seven huge doors, and went to sleep.

Seven years passed, and seven more. The vines grew over everything. The guards disappeared beneath the vines. Spiders wove silver curtains over the beds, in the huge rooms, in the huge halls. And the prince and princess slept in their cocoons.

But the princess dreamt of no one but the prince. In the morning, she dreamt that she saw him under her window playing the lute. In the afternoon she dreamt that they sat on the veranda and he played with the dogs and the falcon while she sat at the hoop embroidering. And at night she dreamt that the Moon was high in the sky and the spiders were weaving over her sleep.

And the prince dreamt of no one but the princess. In the morning he dreamt that he saw her hair in the window, and he played the lute for her. In the afternoon he dreamt that they sat on the veranda, and she embroidered while he played with the dogs and the falcon. And at night he dreamt that the Moon was high in the sky and the spiders were weaving their webs.

Until the day they both dreamt the time to get married had come, and they dreamt of a wedding filled with celebration and music and dancing. And they dreamt that they had lots of children and lived happily ever after.

NEWS AND HONEY

One day the king went deaf. Not as a doorpost, more like a double-casement window. He could hear everything on the left side; on the right he heard nothing.

The situation was awkward. He only paid attention to the ministers who sat on one side of the throne. As for the others, he did not even answer them. And in the morning, if the rooster crowed on the wrong side, His Majesty did not wake up and spent the entire day sleeping.

That was when he sent for the gnome of the forest, and the gnome, obedient, showed up at the court. He came flying with his little wings, and he was so tiny that, even though everyone had been informed of his arrival, they nearly mistook him for some kind of insect.

When he arrived, he immediately hit it off with the king, and a deal was made. He would live in the king's right ear and repeat to him, loud and clear, everything he heard outside. Since he had wings, he could, if he so desired, take advantage of his kinship to bees to make a little wax and some honey in the royal ear.

The deal worked like a charm. Whatever the gnome heard he repeated loud and clear into the caverns of the ear, and together the gnome's voice and its echo reached the king, who began to hear as well as he used to, on both sides.

Time passed. King and gnome, so close to one another, became more and more intimate. By now each knew everything about the other, and it was with pleasure that the gnome shouted, and it was with pleasure that the king heard the soft buzzing of the wings making wax and honey. A certain sweetness began to spread from the royal ear to the royal head, and little by little the king became more kind-hearted. A certain benevolence began to spread from the royal cavern to the gnome, and little by little he became more kind-hearted.

That was how the first lie came about.

The prime minister gave bad news in the left ear, and the gnome, not wishing to sadden the king, passed on good news in the right ear.

That was the first time the king heard two pieces of news at the same time.

That was the first time the king chose the better piece of news.

More followed.

Every time something bad was said to the king, the gnome turned it into something good. And every time the king heard two pieces of news, he chose the better one.

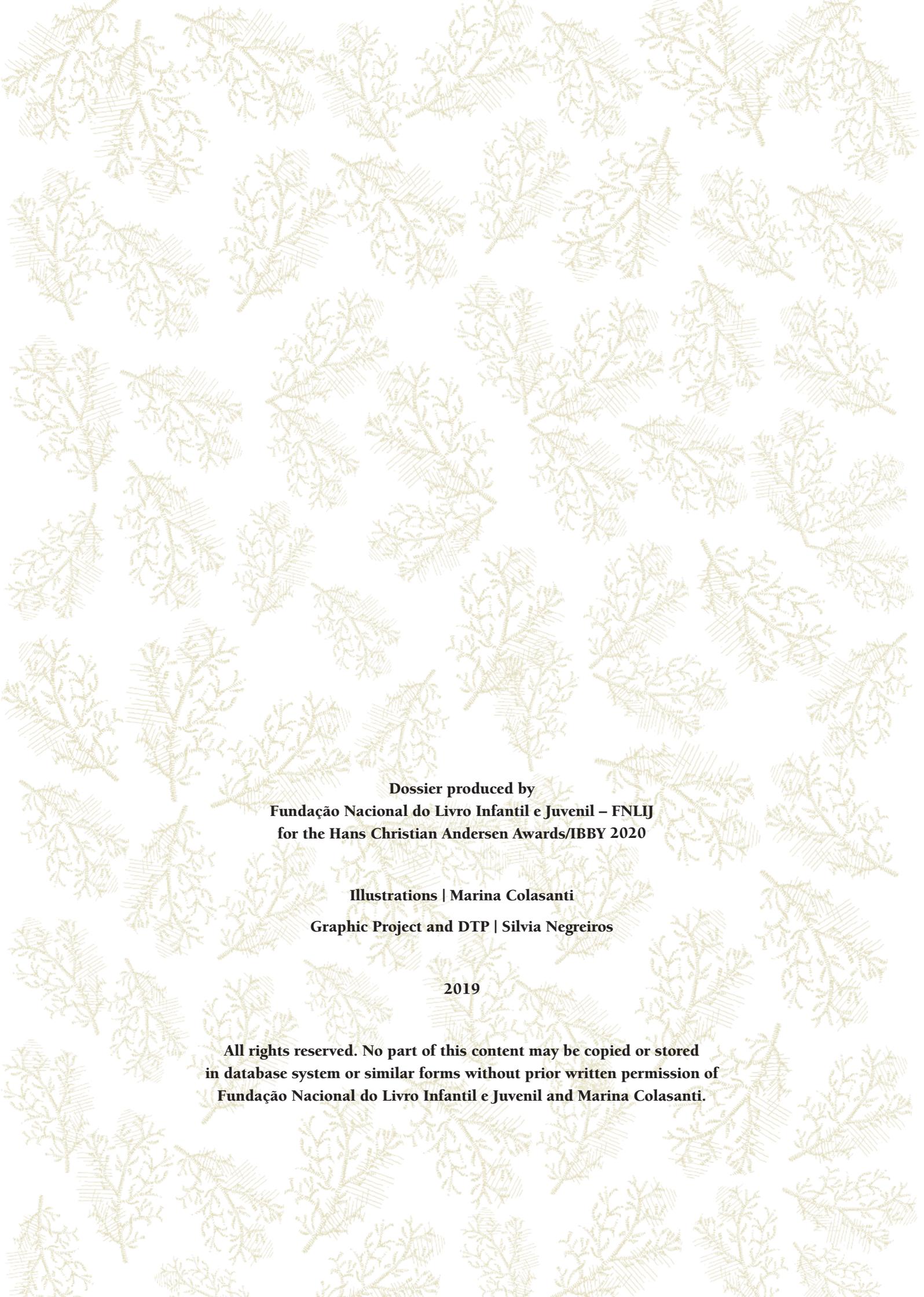
Gradually the king stopped paying attention to what he heard on the left side.

And even in the morning, if the rooster crowed on that side and the gnome did not repeat the rooster's crow, His Majesty forgot to hear and continued to sleep peacefully until he was awakened by his friend's call.

On one side the honey flowed. On the other came worries and sadness, and all the bad winds seemed to blow to the left of his head.

But the king had tasted the honey, and sweetness was now more important than any news. He turned crown and throne over to the Prime Minister. Then he called the gnome close to his mouth and softly whispered his orders to him.

Obedient as ever, the gnome flew around to the left side and, taking advantage of his kinship to bees, made a little honey and plenty of wax, with which he stopped up the king's ear forever.



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