



# Hélio Oiticica

## Secret Poetics

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translated by Rebecca Kosick  
essays by Rebecca Kosick and Pedro Erber

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July 21, 1964

Here and today, I begin what I will call “secret poetics,” or, those things I will express verbally, poetically. The true lyric is immediate, that is, immediacy that becomes eternal in lyrical poetic expression, exactly the polar opposite of my plastic work, which is all oriented toward expression that excludes fleeting, inconsequential accidents, despite embracing them. It is, nevertheless, “above” them, on an ideal level. That doesn’t happen in the lyric, in poetry, for what might be inconsequential, day-to-day, becomes experience and is eternalized in the poem (it may be that the lyric also orients itself toward the ideal, but the “fleeting” is what constitutes the core of its material). “Secret” is what I want because I am not a poet, although an urgent necessity leads me to verbal expression. When I find myself here in everyday experiences, which I try to construct ideally in my artwork (the experience of the work transforming everyday experiences), here those experiences construct ideal thought, and orient it toward new perspectives, toward another view, disconcerting for sure, especially now, for me. The experience of what we conventionally call “life” here presses its finger on ideal aspirations, on free will. It shows certain paths, certain intuitions begin to bud, the flowering of the everyday. The poems that will emerge here

tend to synthesize those experiences—they'll flow, I hope, in the linear space of these pages, continuously.

Just,  
that it wasn't just,  
in time

Bird,  
O beauty!,  
that's already a memory.

Beautiful,  
the beautiful,  
conceptless.

I once read in Krishnamurti something about the memory of lived events, simply “memory.” He said that memory, a recollection, was an incomplete experience, a moment not fully lived: that the remembering would be a path to its own completion. I thought then that this would be “dead time,” that memories would be gaps in life, unlived events. But I see that I had misinterpreted what Krishnamurti meant; if a recollection, a memory, is there to complete experience, there isn’t an intermediary “dead time” that constitutes the memory, but a true “experience of the transformability of time.” The time of memory, the present-past, possesses its own tense experience: what is wanted, what happened and remains in memory, comes to be completed within itself: pain brings pain, lost pleasure brings new pleasure, what we call “*saudade*” isn’t pain, but pleasure that replenishes itself in the transformability of memory. A moment of pleasure can be made eternal by memory—the need for it to repeat indefinitely, and the interminability of this repetition, makes it incomplete, transforming it, like all incomplete experiences, into memory.

AD.1



UNIVERSIDADE DO BRASIL

4- agosto - 64

*Alleg. Tavares*

O cheiro,  
tato novo,  
recomeçar dos sentidos,  
absorção,  
lembraça,

oh!

virá o que,  
far-se-á,  
virá a sen,  
será  
provado de futuro,

apreciação.

August 4, 1964

The smell,  
new touch,  
restarting of the senses,  
    absorption,  
    memory,  
oh!,  
    come what may,  
    what shall be,  
    will become,  
    will be  
fistful of future,  
    apprehension.

O .fiar,  
fazer-se (desfazer-se),  
a implicação da memória,  
lembraça,  
o esquecimento ou o não-esquecer,  
persistência do passado,  
futuro,  
a vivência do agora,  
sempre ser , oh!  
o que? ,  
o sempre,  
o nada,  
o fogo.

The spinning,  
becoming (unbecoming),  
the implication of memory,  
remembering,  
the forgetting or the unforgetting,  
persistence of the past,  
future,  
the experience of the now,  
always being,  
                                  oh!  
oh what?,  
                                  the always,  
the nothing,  
                                  the fire.

September 1, 1964



AD 1

Côsto amargo do que é doce,  
seuti,  
siuto,  
o chicote que fere,  
acaricia;

dôr,  
amargor da carícia,  
côpo que queima —  
dentro;

tembrança do prazer,  
lazer do amor,  
o que é,  
o que será, oh — o querer

impossível deixar de querer,  
fazer ou desfazer,  
ser;

o amor,  
espada que fere,  
açúcar que adoça — ;

fel.

HO 30-3-60

Bitter taste of what's sweet,  
I felt,  
I feel,  
the whip that wounds,  
caresses;

pain,  
bitterness of the caress,  
body that burns —  
inside;

memory of pleasure,  
leisure of love,  
what is,  
what will be,

oh —

the want

impossible to stop wanting,  
making or unmaking,  
being;

love  
sword that wounds,  
sugar that sweetens — ;

bile.

March 30, 1966

Figure 5. *Nildo da Mangueira vestindo P15 Parangolé capa 11 “Incorporo a revolta”* (Nildo of Mangueira wearing P15 Parangolé cape 11 “I embody the revolt”), 1967.

Courtesy Projeto Hélio Oiticica.

This well-known work by Oiticica is part of his series of wearable capelike *Parangolés*. This *Parangolé* is worn here by Nildo, a collaborator from the Mangueira favela and samba school in Rio de Janeiro with which Oiticica worked closely, particularly for this series. The embodiment and dance that this work invites relate to the images of dance and rhythm evoked in poems written in 1964. Here, the political resonance is increased by comparison with the poems, which fits into the timeline of the Brazilian dictatorship. It began in 1964, and increased in severity over the years, with 1968 marking the introduction of new, more punitive restrictions and increased state violence.

