

The Moon¹

Murilo Rubião

“Lo, let that night be solitary,
let no joyful voice come therein.”
(Job, III, 7)

Neither light nor moonshine. The sky and the street remained dark, somewhat hindering my design. Steadfast, however, was my patience, and I did nothing but follow on Cris's steps. Every night after dinner I would wait for him, leaning against the wall of his residence, never worrying about hiding or taking any other precaution to flee from his sight, for he was never uneasy about what might be happening in his surroundings. The profound darkness which enveloped us and the speed with which he reached the footpath upon leaving the house never allowed me see his features. He walked along the pavement with firmness of purpose, as if having a sure place to go to. Little by little his movements grew slow and hesitant, belying his previous determination. I followed him only with difficulty. Sultry and treacherous shadows came towards me, forcing me to make irritating retreats. The invisible was held in my hands while Cris, serene and unabashed, moved easily. Were he not to stop repeatedly, my task would be impossible. Whenever I glimpsed his silhouette after losing sight of him for a few moments I would find him crouched, stuffing his inside pockets with things that could not be made out from a distance.

It was quite monotonous to follow him, always through the same paths. Mostly because I did not see him enter a building, speak to friends or to women. He would not even greet an acquaintance.

Upon his return in the small hours, Cris would produce from his jacket all the objects collected along the way, and then throw them away one by one. I had the impression he examined them with affection before getting rid of them.

Some months later, his walks still kept a constant regularity. Indeed, the route followed by Cris remained unchanged, in spite of his apparent lack of a destination. After leaving the house, he would go down the street for ten blocks, turning onto the second avenue in the itinerary. Then he walked a short stretch and immediately afterwards took a narrow, winding street. Fifteen minutes later he arrived at the suburban area of the city, where the buildings were dingy and sparse. He would only come to a halt upon reaching a haberdashery where, in the window lined with crepe paper, a wretched doll was permanently exhibited. It had blue eyes and a clay smile.

¹ English translation by Guilherme da Silva Braga. This English translation was originally published in the *Trinity Journal of Literary Translation*, Vol. I, April 2013.

On a certain night – I was already used to the dark of night – I noticed, with a hint of surprise, that his steps would not lead us through the previous route. (Something had not yet been ripe enough to undergo such an unexpected rupture.)

On this day, he followed straight ahead with a steady gait, avoiding the side streets, which he left behind without stopping. He crossed the city centre, leaving behind the avenue where the wholesale stores were located. He did not linger except for once – and only momentarily – in front of a movie theatre, where boys from long ago watched movie serials. He made as if he were going to buy a ticket, which rather alarmed me. However, his indecision did not last and he soon resumed the stroll. He wandered into the red-light street, stopping occasionally in front of the gates or peering through the windows, most of which were close to the ground.

In front of a low house, the only in the city to be lit, he balked. I had an intuition that that would be the precise moment, for if Cris retreated I would not have another opportunity. I ran to his side and, after drawing the dagger, thrust it into his back. Without a groan or the slightest quiver, he collapsed to the ground. From his meagre body the moon emerged. A courtesan who was passing by, perhaps moved by a reflex gesture, took him in her hands, as a silver drizzle sprayed the clothes of the deceased. The woman, seeing what she held in her fingers, burst into convulsive tears. Abandoning the moon, which cut across the space, she buried her face in my shoulder. I turned her away from me and, crouching down, beheld Cris's face. The childish face, the blue eyes. The clay smile.