ENSAIO ESSAY

MAPAS NO FUNDO/ NÃO SÃO O MUNDO: THE "CARTOGRAPHIES" OF ANA MARTINS MARQUES

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Resumo: Partindo de uma tradução da série de poemas intitulada "Cartografias" de *O livro das semelhanças*, obra mais recente de Ana Martins Marques, o texto procura contextualizar essa sequência de poemas dentro da obra de Martins Marques, propõe uma interpretação narrativa do conjunto, e reflete sobre a interação entre mapa e mundo, realidade e representação nestes e em outros poemas da autora.
Palavras-chave: Tradução; Poemas em série; Cartografias; Mapas; Representação.

Abstract: Starting from a translation of the series of poems entitled "Cartographies," from *O livro das semelhanças*, the most recent book by Ana Martins Marques, the text seeks to contextualize the sequence of poems within Martins Marques' work, suggests a narrative interpretation of the whole, and reflects on the interaction between map and world, reality and representation in this and other poems by the author.
Keywords: Translation; Poems in sequence; Cartographies; Maps; Representation.

Tradução	*Translation*
Este poema	This poem
em outra língua	in another language
seria outro poema	would be another poem
um relógio atrasado	a slow clock
que marca a hora certa	showing the right time
de algum outro lugar	for some other place
uma criança que inventa	a child who invents
uma língua só para falar	a language just to talk
com outra criança	with another child
uma casa de montanha	a mountain house
reconstruída sobre a praia	rebuilt on the beach
corroída pouco a pouco pela presença do mar	corroded bit by bit by the presence of the sea
o importante é que	the important thing is that
num determinado ponto	at a certain point
os poemas fiquem emparelhados	the poems balance out
como em certos problemas de física	like in certain physics problems
de velhos livros escolares	from old schoolbooks

In a poem from *O livro das semelhanças* (The Book of Similarities), extracted from the book-within-a-book that comprises the first sequence of poems in this latest collection from Ana Martins Marques, we find a reflection on translation. With the reader's permission, I would like to leave the poem here as a formal and poetic recognition of the precariousness and difference produced by the act of translation. This allows us to skip the commonplaces of Frost or Plato and the traitor's mea culpa, all while wielding the oblique synthesis of Martins Marques.

First, I would like to give a broad sense of the works and style of Martins Marques, now having published this, her third book and having staked out an ever-larger space for herself – albeit with only a sprinkling of poems translated into English as of yet by Julia

Sanches, Alison Entrekin, and Elisa Wouk Almino, among others. I will then address some of the issues that informed this specific translation, a sequence which follows, and then dive into the conceptual realm that the poems suggest.

Born in Belo Horizonte in 1977, Martins Marques first came to prominence in her native city, winning in the poetry category of the national Prêmio da Cidade in 2007 and 2008. Her first book, *A Vida Submarina* (Submarine Life) would be put out the following year by local publisher Scriptum, and was received so favorably that her next two, the 2011 *Da Arte das Armadilhas* (On the Art of Traps) and 2015's *O Livro das Semelhanças* (The Book of Similarities) were published by the Companhia das Letras. The list of laurels is not a short one, and includes the Biblioteca Nacional's prize for poetry, awarded in 2012 for *Da Arte das Armadilhas*.

Martins Marques' poetry is deceptively simple; in a 2013 interview with *Ciência Hoje*, she described it unassumingly as "my way of paying attention to things" (Carvalho). It is difficult to describe this gaze, the way it works on objects and on the reader. The best observation I have seen – or rather, the one that most resonated with my experience as a reader – came from fellow poet Armando Freitas Filho. On the book jacket of *Da Arte das Armadilhas*, he notes in a tone of pleasant bafflement that the poet obliged him to read differently. Normally he'd hopscotch from poem to poem: here, he found himself drawn inexorably through the whole of the book. This narrative tug makes sense when we consider that all of the poet's books so far are divided into sequences, and sub-sequences. In this case, *Da Arte das Armadilhas* has the sub-sections "Interiores" (Interiors) and "Da arte das armadilhas" (On the Art of Traps); and within the Traps, for example, we find the poem "Três postais" (Three Postcards), which is itself three short poems, one of which ("Belo Horizonte") is divided neatly into two.

Perhaps "sequence" isn't the right word, since no clear narrative strings the poems together – the metaphor that comes to mind is one of an ecosystem, the products of which stand on their own, but which beg to be understood in the slightly wider context, of the

larger organism. Images, phrases, objects, references reappear in different contexts and with different faces throughout these nesting-doll books. The poems are short and sweet, or short and bittersweet, each bringing out a facet of an object (or several) in a way that suggests both inexhaustible novelty and an underlying connectedness. There's Penelope, seen seven different ways across two books; or the "Arquitetura de interiores" (Interior Architecture) that spills over into the "Interiores"; are the cupped hands in "Mãos" (Hands) straining towards the concave mouths that close "i like my body," Martins Marques' homage to e.e. cummings? To extract a poem from the rest is an act of violence, but under certain circumstances it can be as necessary as picking a fruit. With this in mind, I've selected a section from *O Livro das Semelhanças*, the ten poems collectively entitled "Cartografias" (Cartographies).

As a start, I would propose that this sequence may be less resistant to translation than others from Martins Marques. Though it would be an exaggeration to declare that sense prevails over sound, the poems in question do not seem to dialogue so deeply with the twists, turns, and particularities of the Portuguese language, preferring to play with notions of mapping, itineraries, and journeys. (An example at the other end of the spectrum would be the "Visitas ao lugar-comum" [Visits to the Commonplace] from the same book, built around the deconstruction of clichés, some of the central metaphors of which are not found in English.)

The unwavering simplicity of the diction here, as always with Martins Marques, is both a blessing and a curse for the translator, obliged to give up on countless archaizing or erudite synonyms ("hitherto" for "até então," say) that might work by virtue of their conciseness or at least go relatively unnoticed in another context, but which stand out glaringly here. Some syntactical considerations were also fundamental. In many cases, the fragmented concision that structures the poems makes the original word sequence dramatically or aesthetically crucial. Hence, the syntax of the English translation thus often bows to a sequencing that is more Romantic than Anglo-Saxon. In the same vein, and as is also typical of the poet's style, the only "commas" are to be found in the line breaks: this

may pose a challenge for the transition to English, especially when it results in complex daisy-chains of clauses. Stylistic coherence, however, won the day, and so the decision was to preserve the comma ban.

In order to understand the "Cartographies" in and of themselves, it may help to consider the broader context of cartography in general in Martins Marques' work. Her interest in maps (fusions of images, texts, and guides) is certainly not passing. After all, her 2013 PhD dissertation was dedicated to an examination of photography in contemporary novels, looking at the works of W.G. Sebald, Bernardo Carvalho, Alan Pauls, and Orhan Pamuk. Given the scale and depth of such a study, it would seem impossible for the topic not to find its way into her poetry somehow. Indeed, the dialogue between text and image in the formation of meaning is an evident preoccupation throughout her three books, made manifest in several poem-sequences – the "Caderno de caligrafia" (Calligraphy Notebook), from *A Vida Submarina*, which investigates the materiality of writing (as in the sequence-within-a-sequence "Papéis" [Papers]) and plays with the interaction between word and image (as in the "Dez desenhos escritos" [Ten Written Drawings]), as well as individual poems such as "Papel de Seda" ("Tissue Paper," where a translation of the title leads to a regretful swapping of silk for crêpe). Back to the dissertation: at a certain point, apropos of a practical categorical division of the various sorts of photographs in Sebald's works, Martins Marques wonders aloud if maps ought to be considered objects or places (85). While the issue isn't elaborated on in her study, it is an interesting jumping-off point for the discussion of this sequence of poems. To what extent can maps be considered places unto themselves? In what vessel shall we undertake their navigation?

CARTOGRAFIAS/CARTOGRAPHIES

(1)	(1)
E então você chegou	And then you arrived

como quem deixa cair
sobre um mapa
esquecido aberto sobre a mesa
um pouco de café uma gota de mel
cinzas de cigarro
preenchendo
por descuido
um qualquer lugar até então
deserto

(2)

Você fez questão
de dobrar o mapa
de modo que nossas cidades
distantes uma da outra
exatos 1720 km
fizessem subitamente
fronteira

(3)

Você assinala no mapa
o lugar prometido do encontro
para o qual no dia seguinte me dirijo
com apenas café preto o bilhete só de ida do
metrô a pressa feroz do desejo

like someone who drops
a bit of coffee a blob of honey
cigarette ashes
on a map
left open on the table
filling in
carelessly
an anyplace that'd just been
desert

(2)

You insisted
on folding the map
so that our cities
with exactly 1720 km
between one and the other
suddenly shared
a border

(3)

You point out on the map
the promised meeting-place
towards which on the following day I head
with only black coffee a one-way metro pass
the fierce haste of desire

deixando no entanto esquecido sobre a mesa a
mapa que me levaria
onde?

(4)

Combinamos por fim de nos encontrar
na esquina de nossas ruas
que não se cruzam

(5)

Rasguei um pedaço do mapa
de modo que o Grand Canyon continua
na minha mesa de trabalho
onde o mapa repousa

desde então minha mesa de trabalho
termina subitamente num abismo

(6)

Sempre acabo tomando o caminho errado
que falta me faz um mapa
que me levasse pela mão

(7)

leaving however forgotten on the table the
map that would take me
where?

(4)

We arranged in the end to meet
at the corner of our streets
which don't cross

(5)

I tore off a piece of the map
so that the Grand Canyon remains
on my writing-desk
where the map reposes

since then my writing-desk
ends abruptly in an abyss

(6)

I always end up taking the wrong path
how I long for a map
to lead me by the hand

(7)

Não sei viajar não tenho disposição não tenho coragem
mas posso esquecer uma laranja sobre o México
desenhar um veleiro sobre a Índia

pintar as ilhas de Cabo Verde uma a uma
como se fossem unhas
duplicar a África com um espelho
criar sobre o Atlântico um círculo de água
pousando sobre ele meu copo de cerveja
circunscrever a Islândia com meu anel de noivado
ou ocultar o Sri Lanka depositando sobre ele
uma moeda média
visitar os nomes das cidades
levar o mundo a passeio
por ruas conhecidas
abrir o mapa numa esquina, como se o consultasse
apenas para que tome
algum sol

(8)

Viajo olhando pela janela do ônibus
em busca das linhas vermelhas das fronteiras
ou dos nomes luminosos das cidades
pairando sobre elas

I can't travel I'm not up for it I don't dare

but I can forget an orange over Mexico

draw a sailboat on India

paint the islands of Cape Verde one by one
as if they were nails
duplicate Africa with a mirror
create a circle of water over the Atlantic
by letting my beer glass rest there
circumscribe Iceland with my engagement ring
or hide Sri Lanka by depositing over it
an average coin
visit the names of cities
take the world out for a stroll
down familiar streets
open the map on a corner, as if to consult it

just so it could take in
a bit of sun

(8)

I travel looking out the window of the bus
in search of the red lines of the borders
or the luminous names of the cities
hovering over them

como nos mapas
neles não ventava nem chovia
e nunca era noite
e eu passava horas estudando
todos os caminhos que me levariam até você
mas nos mapas eu nunca te encontrava
chego em duas ou três horas
o coração no peito como um pão
ainda quente na mochila
talvez você me espere na rodoviária
talvez eu te veja ainda antes de descer do ônibus
assim que descer vou entregar nas suas mãos
emboladas num novelo
as linhas desfeitas das fronteiras e
como as contas luminosas de um colar
cada um dos nomes das cidades

(9)

Abro o mapa na chuva
para ver
pouco a pouco
diluírem-se as fronteiras
as cidades borradas
diminuem de distância
as cores confundidas
nem parecem mais aleatórias
perderam aquele modo abrupto

like on the maps
there was no wind or rain there
and it was never night
and I spent hours studying
all the paths that would lead me to you
but on the maps I never could find you
I'll be there in two or three hours
heart in my chest like a loaf
of still-warm bread in my backpack
maybe you'll wait for me at the station
maybe I'll see you even before I get off the bus
as soon as I get off I'll hand over to you
all rolled into a ball
the undone border lines and
like the luminous beads of a necklace
each of the names of the cities

(9)

I open the map in the rain
to see
bit by bit
the borders being diluted
the blurred cities
diminish in distance
the confused colors
don't seem random anymore
they've lost that abrupt way

com que as cores mudam nos mapas
agora há um grande lago
onde antes havia uma cordilheira
o mar não é mais molhado
do que o deserto logo ao lado

Deixo depois o mapa
para secar ao sol
sobre a grama do jardim
mais rápidas do que aviões
as formigas atravessam
de um continente a outro
uma lagarta riscada
apossou-se das Coreias
agora unificadas
um tapete de folhas
cobre o mar Egeu
e o rastro de uma lesma umedeceu
o Atacama
uma formiga enamorou-se
de um vulcão
exatamente do seu tamanho
um dos polos
ficou à sombra
e resfriou-se mais que o outro
de longe não sei se são moscas
ou os nomes das cidades

Penso que se deixasse o mapa aí

that colors change on maps
now there's a wide lake
where there was once a mountain range
the sea is no more wet
than the desert by its side

Later I leave the map
to dry in the sun
on the grass in the garden
faster than airplanes
marching ants cross
from one continent to another
a striped caterpillar
has seized the Koreas
now unified
a carpet of leaves
covers the Aegean Sea
and a slug's trail has moistened
the Atacama
an ant has fallen in love
with a volcano
exactly the same size as it
one of the poles
was left in the shade
and caught more of a cold than the other
from far away I can't tell flies
from the names of cities

I think that if I left the map there

tempo o bastante
em algum momento surgiria

quem sabe
um pequeno inseto novo
com esse dom que têm os bichos
e as pedras e as flores e as folhas
de imitarem-se
uns aos outros
um pequeno inseto novo eu dizia
um novo besouro talvez
que trouxesse desenhado nas costas
o arquipélago de Cabo Verde
ou as finas linhas das fronteiras
entre a Argélia e a Tunísia

(10)

Quando enfim
fechássemos o mapa
o mundo se dobraria sobre si mesmo
e o meio-dia
recostado sobre a meia-noite
iluminaria os lugares
mais secretos

for long enough
at some point
who knows
there might appear
a small new insect
with that gift that animals
and rocks and flowers and leaves
have for imitating
one another
a small new insect I was saying
a new beetle maybe
with there drawn on its back
the archipelago of Cape Verde
or the fine lines of the boundaries
between Algeria and Tunisia

(10)

When we'd finally
close the map
the world would fold over on itself
and midday
resting against midnight
would illuminate
even the most secret places

As with other subdivisions in Martins Marques' books, the poems of the "Cartographies" emerge as variations on a theme. We are given several approaches to the map as object and concept, possible uses for and relationships with it. Where in the supremely concise poems of the "Interiores" ("Interiors," from *Da Arte das Armadilhas*) the poet

introduces a larger dimension into the landscape of daily life (a dripping tap suddenly becomes a channel to an endless sea), here maps are presented as a way to span unimaginable distances. Continents and nations are shrunken to handspans, subject to domination by ants or caterpillars. Though a narrative progression does not present itself forcefully – the poems can easily be read out of sequence – there is a seesawing dynamic that seems to unite the series. (I ought to note that although the poems have neither independent titles nor numbers, I numbered my transcriptions as a shorthand by which to refer to each text.)

We begin in medias res – "And then you arrived" – with the introduction of an Other. This "you" is announced with the metaphor of an alteration made to a map; and in the second poem, the "you" concretely alters the reality of a map (perhaps the same one), signaling a desire to reduce the distance between the two interlocutors. The third and fourth poem deal with similar versions of a single gesture: a map is used as a guide and to determine the place of a rendezvous between "me" and "you." This echoes a metaphor also present in the poem "O encontro" (The Meeting), from the same book, in which two figures arrange to meet in a number of intangible places – between the words in a newspaper, or in a book, or between the folds of a map. Both poems, however, leave their conclusions hanging. The open-ended "where?" of the third seems to find a negative answer in the fourth, in which it seems that the meeting-place is nonexistent and/or unreachable.

These ill-fated encounters are followed by a tear and an abyss in the fifth poem – the violation of the physical integrity of the map is mirrored in the void of the Grand Canyon, an unimaginable crater resting casually on the desk of the writer – and then comes a sense of disorientation and loss, brought on by the concise sixth poem. The seventh poem moves away from a physical journey in order to reconnoiter the comfortingly limited territory of the map itself. With that said, the search for the other returns with renewed force in the eighth poem, in which the knowledge derived from the study of the map simultaneously informs and is belied by the movement of the "I," as it travels through a landscape radically divergent from the representational language employed by cartography. We are still at a point prior to the encounter, which fails to materialize in either the eighth or the ninth poem: the latter

introduces the possibility of the simultaneous transformation of map and surrounding world, with the organic contaminating the inorganic, representation seeping into represented, and vice-versa.

The last poem in the sequence offers a closing gesture in a conditional tense (subjunctive, in the original) that places it back in the realm of the imagined or the desired: "When we'd finally/ close the map." We do not witness any encounter, nor the end of the journey undertaken by the poetic voice. The moment at which "we" would act together is put off for some other time. But the map-book-document-text, even when closed and folded over on itself, gives off a hidden, hushed light, contenting itself with its own revelations.

The frontiers (to borrow a word often used here) between the map and that which it represents are highly porous. In the first poem, we find the convergence of the arrival of an interlocutor, a metaphorical alteration to a map ("like someone who drops/ a bit of coffee a blob of honey") and the suggestion of an effect on the world represented by that map: a place once desert is transformed into something else. That is to say, a concrete action triggers a metaphor, which alters a world that only exists as representation. The route is not an easy one to navigate.

In these "Cartographies," just as an alteration to a map can change that which the document seeks to represent, the document can also infect the world with its logic – perhaps in the promise of a new insect born with geopolitical frontiers tattooed on its carapace, or in the danger inherent in the fact of having a canyon resting on one's desk. The poems' investigation into the limits and consequences of representation gives rise to a sort of vertigo. In looking to represent geographical realities in a language of their own (a sort of translation, of course), maps wind up producing a different reality, one analogous to but irrevocably different from the original – be it because of matters of scale or the marks left by translation. In this sense, we understand the disorientation of the traveler who looks out the bus window, searching in vain for "the luminous names of the cities/ hovering over them/ like on the maps."

As I translated, I recalled a Jorge Luis Borges story that investigates the limits of the distinction between representation and object. In "Del rigor en la ciencia," a narrative of a single paragraph supposedly quoted from the book *Viajes de Varones Prudentes*, we read about an empire where cartographers perfect their art to such an extent that they produce a life-size map, eventually blanketing the entire empire with its likeness. Subsequent generations, however, seeing the folly of the enterprise, abandon the paper to the elements ("no sin Impiedad"), where dogs and beggars take shelter under it. In this case, the map becomes a parallel reality in and of itself and must be abandoned at the point at which the representation's outsize ambition overspills the function of the document. It becomes another physical landscape, ironically, a territory that might be mapped in turn (perhaps on a more practical scale). Where Borges is epic and archaizing, Martins Marques leans over the delicate, sodden paper to see the ants and caterpillars making it into their new home.

At multiple points, the map provides for a journey through itself, in what seems to be a variation on the idea of the ability of the text to "transport" the reader. The most concrete expression of this idea is seen in the seventh poem, in which the poetic voice's not being "up for" or daring to travel leads to the substitution of a journey around the world by the circumnavigation of a paper reality. This fits into several trends in the poet's work. Journeys in Ana Martins Marques' poetry tend to be of the domestic sort – there are more verses in her oeuvre dedicated to the "odyssey of waiting" undertaken by Penelope than the far-flung exploits of Odysseus. Moreover, the predominance of signifier over signified is explored in a number of other poems ("Aqueles que só conhecem o mar..." [Those who only know the sea...]; "Pintores que pintam apenas títulos de quadros" [Painters who only paint the titles of paintings]) from the same book.

Maps guide; they are itineraries; they give direction; and yet they also deceive and frustrate. Over the course of this sequence, they alternate between being documents with the power to change the world and representations that reveal themselves to be arbitrary and impoverished (their artificial colors, the absence of a climate, the absence of the "you" sought for in the eighth poem). Their precise measure may be found in the second poem, in which

the actor is the second person, the "you" who "insist[s]" on folding the map. The movement, here, does not change anything in the world outside the map; but the folded page comes to represent a desire, and at the same time, the impossibility of its being fulfilled. A subjectivity is affirmed in the use of the map, in the attempt to alter the meanings apparently dictated by it, and the fold remains as the mark of that desire. And so, for that matter, does the poem.

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