2. “Performance may be theorized about, but theory of the performance is imbedded in the performance itself, “flaws” and all. The provocative question is not “What theory created this performance?” but “What theory is revealed through this performance?” (Jones, 1997, p. 55).

3. “The performance that interests me is not a literal ‘illustration’ of a theoretical proposition, but I find that much performance theory and criticism suggests it is or ought to be, and often the degree to which the performance disrupts the elegance of the theory is the degree to which it is said to be ‘flawed’” (Phelan, 1995, p. 186, quoted from Jones, 1997, p. 55).

4. “...an act of seeing the self see the self through and as other” (Alexander, 2005, p. 423).

5. “Soy un amasamiento, I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that ... has produced [not only]. . . a creature of darkness and a creature of light but also a creature that question the definitions of light and dark and give them new meanings” (1999, p. 103).

6. I can represent only glimpses, vignettes, fragments. My fragments. And through my fragments, I can show others' too. Just fragments, because it is by them that I lived in my surreal postmodern “reality.” This has been one of my struggles in academia. My fragmented surreal postmodern life is not neat enough to fit in a more traditional or complete understandable theory/method. If my own life is not neat enough, how can I assume that the others are? I cannot and do not. I do not have this imperialistic arrogance. That’s why I was easy prey for performance autoethnography.

7. When my white male body performs my relationship with Justino’s black body, it not only disrupts abstract notions of race/class/gender, but it also physically breaks them. The white body, which is unsuccessfully trying to negate its own whiteness and exposing the racial construction in a western patriarchal society, fights for social justice.

8. This question was inspired by Jones (1997), “Sista docta: Performance as critique of the academy,” and also by Paulo Freire’s question, during his visit to the University of Illinois: “where are the workers?”
Chapter 4

BETWEENNESS IN CLASS

STORY 5

WITH GRACE

“What do you think should be done about the street kids hanging around the downtown area?”

“I don’t know,” said a man in his late 30s, in a low voice, without slowing down.

“Do you have any suggestions on how to help the street kids living in the downtown area?”

But the elderly couple didn’t answer her, looking more concerned with changing pace and trajectory.

“We are not getting much cooperation with this important matter,” she shouted looking for another passerby. “Here, a nice looking man, let’s hear what he has to say about the situation of street kids in downtown,” she said approaching a business-looking man who was walking fast across the Cathedral Square.

He gave her a coin without saying anything or slowing down.

“Oh, money! Maybe that’s the solution to the problem,” she shouted again as she turned swiftly on her heels, fixed the video camera made of cardboard on her shoulder, and started to walk toward two women walking past and carrying shopping bags.

“Good evening!” she said, sounding like the 7 o’clock news anchor, standing in the path of the two ladies, who discreetly grabbed each other’s free hands and changed direction slightly, as if to avoid the camera-girl without being obvious about it.
“Why do you fine ladies think that people won’t talk to street kids here in downtown?” she said standing in their path again.

The two women then made a 90-degree turn and began walking faster.

“Oh look, they are holding their purses,” she said out loud and turned to look in our direction. “Do not worry, fine ladies! I’m working now... but I sure hope to see you again when I’m not!” she said, stressing the word not, to the two ladies already a few yards away.

She then continued to walk around the Square in front of the cathedral, video camera on her left shoulder, interviewing passersby. Regi, one of her friends who had been watching everything from a distance with Tate and me, got a cardboard mic from a table dressed with signs announcing AIDS AWARENESS DAY, and joined Grace. Before leaving us, Regi said she was going to find a cute guy to interview.

“How should the mayor help the street kids of our beloved downtown?” Regi asked a young man who stopped to talk to them.

“I think he should buy them ice creams,” the young man said smiling.

They laughed, and then Grace asked for his phone number. They laughed some more, and the young man walked away waving them goodbye.

Then Grace spotted two young women walking together a few yards away and began to approach them. The two young women saw her and started to run. Grace, looking through the fake lenses all the way, started to run after them shouting, “Why are you running away from us? Are you scared of us? Do we smell that bad?”

Tate, a 16- or 19-year-old boy, and I continued to be entertained by the girls until a woman who seemed to be one of the coordinators of the AIDS AWARENESS gathering asked Grace and Regi for the camera and mic.

“You would be a good reporter,” the woman told Grace.

“I’d like to do that with a real camera.”

“I’ll bring you a real one someday, and we’ll get some real interviews,” the woman said.

“When?” Grace asked before the woman finished her sentence.

“Uh, I don’t know, one of these days.”

“But when?”

“I’ll come here to find you when I arrange things.”

“Where are you gonna find me?”

“Here?”

“Can I keep the camera till you come back?” asked Grace.

“Sure,” said the woman smiling and walking away.

Grace and Regi came over to where Tate and I were, and I asked her, Grace, what the best way of handling the street kids’ situation in downtown was.

“Well, running away and holding your purse tight seems to be the most popular choice,” she said grinning. “But I personally prefer the ice cream.
solution.” We all cracked up, and getting the hint, I took them to an ice cream place a few blocks from the Cathedral Square.

“What do you call a person who interviews people on the streets?” Grace asked me with her mouth full of chocolate chip ice cream.

“A journalist?”

“I wanna be a journalist.”

“You’ll get a chance to taste it when that woman comes with a real camera and mic,” I said.

Grace looked at me gravely, her face revealing her thoughts, and went back to licking her ice cream cone.

ACT 2

MY BAD ENGLISH: A LETTER TO NORMAN DENZIN

Before everything else, there are some things I need to say. I wrote this piece in a stressful moment of my life. I was in the middle of answering my prelim question for Professor Dan Cook. Those were days with long hours, not seeing enough of my family. Life can be tough sometimes. I was mad.

However, what I really want to say here is that in the following pages I criticize one statement made by Professor D. Soyini Madison, trying to engage in a dialogue with her. My intent was not, back then, and it still is not now, to dismiss, or to attack Professor Madison. Professor Madison’s work is beautiful and powerful. It has heavily influenced me, not only as scholar but also as human being.

Madison’s (1998) “Performance, Personal Narratives, and the Politics of Possibility” is one of the most powerful pieces I ever read. It touched me deeply. Madison’s influence is presented in my whole work. Even the idea to write a letter to Norman Denzin came from Madison’s letter to Fanon.

I am also aware now, not back then, of Madison’s (2006) “The Dialogical Performative in Critical Ethnography.”

With that being said, I would like to apologize in advance to Professors D. Soyini Madison and Norman Denzin and reader 679. No offense was/is intended.

I was mad then
I am not mad now
Cláudio.

I: Dear Norman Denzin,

I learned from you that “writing creates the worlds we inhabit” (Denzin, 2003, p. xii), and these performative written pages started as a letter for...
you, and then they transformed themselves in many other things, such as a kind of manifest or a rupture in my answers to my prelim questions. You were out of town, and I was pretty mad at some of the comments from your letter (and the ones made by Reader 679) about my paper, “Fragments.” What I need to make clear to you is that I love you, but I was mad.

II: Rupture

I need to make a rupture in my answer right now. I am mad, really angry. Norm is out of town and I have just this space to express my feelings. I've been trying to avoid it but if I don't say what I want to say, I will not be able to finish my question. Instead of working I am thinking all the time about this letter. It is Wednesday afternoon. This morning I went to the ICR office to tell Andrea and Bonnie that I am going to take one of my exams tomorrow. Andrea, the secretary, wasn't there so I went to check my mailbox. There was only one letter sitting there. It was from Qi signed by you, Norman Denzin. The letter says that my paper “Fragments” went under another revision and is conditionally accepted by the journal. This paper went under review before, and Stacey Holman Jones asked to include, fleshed out, my theoretical/epistemological position. Being in conversation with you, I developed the “New Section.” She also asked me to move my poem to the beginning of the text, so I did. This new reviewer, “Reader 679,” however, asked me to take out all the theory I wrote and have it as footnotes and move the paragraph about “theoretical body of knowledge” to the beginning of the text. But that is not what I am mad about. It is frustrating, but that is it.

What I am fuming about are two comments in the first page, signed by you, that according to you “are not in any way intended to be critical”:

4—Sage does not publish profanity
5—I don’t think your written English needs to be impeccable—but it should not call attention to itself.

Sage is saying that it does not publish profanity. Thus, it does not publish the spoken word of the uneducated Other. I do not swear in my everyday life as today . . . and yes, I understand the big picture . . . I do not want my daughter Analua saying “bad” words. However, the questions that stay are these: Whose voices are not going to be published by Sage? How is the Other going to be represented? Is the Other wearing Fanon’s “white mask”?

Concerning the second comment, Reader 679 adds:
“Remove grammatical errors. Consider a peer review before sending a formal journal submission. For example, change Foucaultian” to Foucaultian.
(p. 2).” The emphasis is mine, and, yes, Reader 679 wrote the same word twice. My guess is that the apostrophe is what is wrong.

Where does my bad English come from? I wrote a paper that I liked and am proud of. I’ve been reading a lot of published written performances, and my piece is good. I performed this piece as an effort to decolonize inquiry/academy. I ask for inclusion and . . .

I got in this country in August of 1999 without any English, not written or spoken. In my first day at the Intensive English Institute here at the U of I, having a friend as translator, I told my teachers about my plans. All of them said to me that my plans were impossible. One, named Dan, came forward and said that I have no chance of getting the scores I need to be accepted as a grad student in the university. I’m glad I didn’t believe them.

It is all about gatekeepers.

Again, where does my bad English come from?

I have two friends I’ve been asking to look over my papers, Desiree and Aaron. Both of them are grad students, extremely kind and loving persons, and busy. Does Reader 679 know how hard is to get to ask someone to read your papers? I also have been writing a lot. I am embarrassed to ask my friends for help. However, both of them looked over “Fragments.”

It is all about positioning the “Other.”

Again, from where does my bad English come from?

It is no coincidence that my written (and spoken) English is probably the worst among other Brazilians grad students here at the University of Illinois. From the other Brazilians students I personally met, I know this for sure.

It is no coincidence that I probably have the poorest socio-economic background among other Brazilians grad students here in Champaign-Urbana. From the other Brazilians students I personally met, I know this for sure.

It is no coincidence that I have very few Brazilian friends here in town. There is not much to talk about. Plus, I am known in the Brazilian community here as the “one who trashes the country.”

It is also no coincidence that the few Brazilians I call friends are, for the most part, neither grad students nor professors.

It is also no coincidence the Brazilian who used to frequent my house is a woman who is barely formally educated and was extremely poor in Brazil. My friend is from the Northeast. Dani, my wife, and I met this friend here in Champaign five years ago, in a barbecue to celebrate Brazilian Independence Day. Nobody in the party went to talk to her.

All the Brazilians
Who have good English
And were at the party
Tried very hard to ignore her presence
she is not one of us
All of them, but Dani
Again, where does my bad English come from?

My former two officemates had a proofreader. They paid $14/hour for the guy. Just yesterday, my friend Aaron told me at my home that he was proofreading a paper for a Brazilian Professor in Engineering. He charged $30/hour. He helps me for free.

Mary Weems (2003) in her beautiful book, *I Speak from the Wound in My Mouth*, tells me that

Racism is so personal
I am telling you that
Classism, illiteracy, is also so personal
For the most part I do not assume I fit/belong in the system. Can I?
Another example would be how my work is relegated or how I can position my self in the academic world.

D. Soyini Madison is a famous name in the field of performance studies. I read many of her pieces. She graduated from NWU and is a professor at the University of North Carolina. I am going to use her work with audience as an example of her positioning of the Other, and in doing so, of how she dismisses my work.

Madison’s work in question is a book called *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance* (2005). It is a very good book. However, in the 245 pages of the book, she talks about autoethnography once, and only to belittle it:

“We understand that our subjectivity is an inherent part of research, but in critical ethnography it is not my exclusive experience—that is autobiography, travel writing, or memoir (or what some people call autoethnography).” (2005, p. 9)

Madison does not even mention who “some people” refers to. She goes on, saying:

“I contend that critical ethnography is always a meeting of multiple sides in a encounter with and among the Other(s) . . . . A more detailed explication of the relationship and dialogue with the Other is further elaborated in the corpus of work by Dwight Conquergood . . . (1991, 1998).” (2005, p. 9)

In “Rethinking Ethnography” (1991) Conquergood comments on/critiques some aspects of the “old” more traditional approach in ethnography:

“the obligatory rite-of-passage for all ethnographers—doing fieldwork— . . . participatory nature of fieldwork is celebrated by ethnographers. . . . Ethnographic rigor, disciplinary authority, and
professional reputation are established by the length of time, depth of commitment, and risks (bodily, physical, emotional) letters of recommendation often refer approvingly to bodily hardships by the dedicated ethnographer-malarial fevers, scarcity of food, long periods of isolation, material discomforts, and so forth, endured in the field.” (pp. 352–353)

Are those ethnographers trying to be the Other? A black friend and former student, and also a football player, once told me: “These white kids wanna be like us but not us.”

In the introduction to her book, Madison tells us how angry she was after watching a documentary related to women’s right in Ghana, West Africa:

“My blood was boiling. It was a gross and dangerous misrepresentation of Ghana and her people.” (2005, p. 3)

Madison knows what she is talking about because she:

“... lived there for almost three years conducting field research with local activists on human rights violations against women and girls.” (2005, p. 2)

I read some of Madison’s work about people in Ghana. It is beautiful, important, and powerful.

However, let’s come back to “what some people call autoethnography” and the question who is the Other?

Who are the Others?

Where are the Others?
The different
Using Madison’s own words
The subaltern and subversive body

III: Fictionary Tale

Let’s suppose that Madison’s next topic of studies is children’s labor, and yes, it is going to take place in Brazil. As a good professor she gets grants and goes to that country, not only as a black woman, but as an American professor from a famous university. Let’s also imagine that she is going to conduct her research in a fast-growing town named Uberlandia in 1979/1980. In Uberlandia, she gets access to a factory that sells, among other thing, Walmer’s tractors and parts, named Trimag.

In the factory, Madison sees this white kid whose hands are hurt. Next time, she comes back and notices that the kid’s hands have newer
wounds over the old ones. Madison approaches the kid. She is quickly able to establish rapport with the kid. The professor knows what she is doing. 

"To think of ethnography as critical theory in action is an interesting and productive description" (2005, p. 13). In teaching how to do ethnography in her methods class/book she calls the first step "Who Am I? Starting Where You Are" (p. 19). She talks to the kid. She goes to his hood. She does her fieldwork.

Back in the U.S., she works on the data. She is careful. She "learned from Stuart Hall . . . that how people are represented is how they are treated" (2005, p. 4). She re-presents the kid's voice and by voice, she does

"... not simply mean the representation of an utterance, but the presentation of a historical self, a full presence that is in and of a particular world." (2005, p. 173)

The professor goes on. She takes the stage carrying plough blades that cut the kid's hands. There is blood in the "kid's hands" or in her performance of those hands. Her goal is

"... to present and represent subjects as made by and makers of meaning, symbol, and history in their full sensory and social dimensions." (2005, p. 173)

She goes on with the performance. Presenting and re-presenting whatever she thinks is appropriate about what she saw, about what the kid told her, and, more important, about what she and kid constructed together in a dialogical relationship.

Is the professor going to perform the fact that the kid could have only a tiny sandwich for the whole day? That after he eats it, all he can do is just to think about food? I do not know. Ask her.

The performance goes on. The professor believes or creates an audience that

"Whether one (her audience) likes or not the performance, one cannot completely undo or un-know the image and imprint of that voice—inside history—upon their own consciousness once they have been exposed to it through performance. Performing subversive and subaltern voices proclaim existence, within particular locales and discourses, that are being witnessed-entered into one's own experience—and this witnessing cannot be denied." (2005, p. 172)

The professor also believes/imagines that the subject, the Other, in this fictional case, the kid, can benefit by her performance, because the creation of this space—in the moment—of the performance.
“. . . gives evidence not only that ‘I am here in the world among you,’ but more importantly that ‘I am in the world under particular conditions that are constructed and thereby open to greater possibility.’” (2005, p. 173)

And I am not questioning the fact that the professor’s performance benefits the subject, the kid. I, too, believe in it.

My questions Who are the Others?
Where are the Others?
The different
The subaltern and subversive body

The professor can re-present the kid because she did the field work.
And, it is not her exclusive experience.
The professor did the field work and I . . . just lived my life?
The professor has field notes and I have memories,
Can I re-present, perform that kid’s hands?
Sure. But it would be what some people call autoethnography.
Whose hands were wounded?
Was my experience as a laboring child alone in the world?
Wasn’t I interacting with others?
Wasn’t I interacting with other people who touched my life?
Who, besides me, has more right to interpret my experiences in a specific historical moment in relationship to the others who touch my life?

Professor, can’t I perform my experience as a 10-year-old white boy illegally working for Trimag?

Yes, but then I would see my work being minimized to what “some people call autoethnography,” in a book titled Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance.

Where are the Others?
The kid grew up
He is living the “experience-of-becoming” (Conquergood, 1986)
A scholar
It is all about audience
For the most part I do not assume I fit/belong in the system. Can I?
I am an angry man
And my hands are hurting

It is very difficult for me to use this metaphor, because I remember my own pain. I remember the blood in my hands. 

As an ethnographer, I more easily use the metaphor “My hands are hurting now.” For a poor child, the same metaphor is impossible, because there is no metaphor. When re-presenting the hands, the author/writer/
performer have the luxury, the privilege, the power to use a metaphor. How may I use this metaphor? I am not the poor kid in the factory, or am I?

Professor, can’t I say that

“whether one (MY AUDIENCE) likes or not the (AUTOETHNOGRAPHY) performance, one cannot completely undo or un-know the image and imprint of that voice—inside history (MY VOICE, MY BODY)—upon their own consciousness once they have been exposed to it through performance. Performing (MY) subversive and subaltern voices (VOICE) proclaim existence, within particular locales (AND TIME) and discourse, that are being witnessed—entered into one’s own experience—and this witnessing cannot be denied.” (Madison, 2005, p. 172)

Who is performing the kid? The black woman/colonized or the American professor/colonizer? Both? Neither?

In Performance, Personal Narratives, and the Politics of Possibility (1998), Madison quotes Anzaldúa. But she does not quote “La Prieta” (1981). In “La Prieta,” Anzaldúa shows how it is impossible to separate the private and the public; the personal and the political; the writing and the body who does it. She shows us that in changing ourselves we do change the world. I have been reading a lot of Anzaldúa’s writings. Anzaldúa does not name her work “autoethnography.” However, she always goes from her personal life story/experience in a borderland to address her political agenda.

“I can’t discount the fact of the thousands that go to bed hungry every night. The thousands that get beaten and killed everyday. The millions of women who have been burned at the stake, the millions who have been raped. Where is justice to this?” (1991, p. 208)

Always positioning and re-positioning herself and Other and self as Other. And not ashamed to say that she is not sure, that she does not know.

“I cannot reconcile the sight of a battered child with the belief that we choose what happens to us, that we create our own word. I cannot resolve this in myself. I don’t know. I can only speculate, try to integrate the experiences that I’ve had or have been witness to and try to make sense of why we do violence to each other. In short, I’m trying to create a religion not out there somewhere, but
in my gut. I am trying to make peace between what had happened to me, what the world is, and what it should be.” (1981, p. 209)

Always performing for her concrete/imaginary/co-performers/community.

“Third world women, lesbians, feminists, and feminist-oriented men of all colors are banding and bonding together . . . only together can we be a force. I see us as a network of kindred spirits, a kind of family.” (1981, p. 209)

It is never about Anzaldúa’s exclusive experience. It is “the pull between what is and what should be,” that changing ourselves we change the world.

That

“traveling El Mundo Zurdo path is the path of a two-way movement—a going deep into the self and expanding out into the world, a simultaneous recreation of the self and a reconstruction of society” and more, “I am confused as to how to accomplish this.” (1981, p. 208)

That is


Who are the Others?

Where are the Others?

The different

The subaltern and subversive body

“Soy un amasamiento, I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that . . . has produced . . . [not only] a creature of darkness and a creature of light but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and give them new meanings.” (1999, p. 103)

Positioning and re-positioning her body as self and other as self as other (Alexander, 2005).

“The mixture of bloods and affinities, rather than confusing or unbalancing me, has forced me to achieve a kind of equilibrium. Both cultures deny me a place in their universe. Between them and among others, I built my own universe, El Mundo Zurdo. I belong to myself and not to one people.” (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 209)
Hers, mine oppositional/differential consciousness (Sandoval, 2000) that can be possible only under Anzaldúa's idea of "between and among" that unifies women/people who do not share the same culture, race, sexual orientation, religion, or even the same ideology. In Anzaldúa's concept "differences do not become opposed to each other" (1981, p. 209).

"We are the queer groups, the people that don't belong anywhere, not in dominant world nor completely within our own respective cultures. Combined we cover so many oppressions. But the overwhelming oppression is the collective fact we do not fit, and because we do not fit we are a threat. Not all of us have the same oppressions, but we emphasize and identify with each other's oppressions. We do not have the same ideology, nor do we derive similar solutions. Some of us are leftists, some of us practitioners of magic. Some of us are both. But these different affinities are not opposed to each other. In El Mundo Zurdo I with my own affinities and my people with theirs can live together and transform the planet." (p. 209)

This is how I see my person in the world, embodied written performing community. This is how I live life as human being, father, and husband. This is how I play scholar. This is how I share, negotiate, and disrupt the power dynamics between my co-performers and me.

I am an angry man
But I'm feeling better now
Not really . . .

When I am doing my embodied/written performance autoethnography from the borders, I cross to the places I live and labor, I am performing community. I speak the truth "to the people about the reality of our lives" (Collins, 1998, p.198), equip me/us "with the tools we need to resist oppression, and move me/us to struggle, to search for justice" (pp. 198–199).

My piece, "Fragments," is not published. However, I already performed it four times. My brown woman Puerto Rican friend, Mariolga, a former U of I grad student and now a professor, was a co-performer in one of my presentations. She brought "Fragments" with her to the International Conference of Community Psychology. There, she gave it to a black male from South Africa, who is a grad student in Australia.

"Fragments" has been re-performed. I have been re-performed. Performed through them. "Fragments" is out there in the world, being performed, re-performed, and co-performed.
My bad English is out there, with its improper grammar, spelling, and refusal to hide experience behind euphemisms that protect the oppression imposed by the status quo!

My agency—sharing, creating, shifting, negotiating power in the same and different ways that it does with “Reader 679,” I addressed his comments and re-submitted “Fragments.” However, as you see, I am writing this performance.

My moving fingers
As a gentle knife

Similar to Denzin (2003), I see performance as sensuous and contingent, where there is a tension between performativity—doing—and performance—done. Where the

“‘I’ neither express an interior truth nor am I constructed in discourse. ‘I’ am ‘I’ insofar as I speak [my bad English], but insofar as I speak [my bad English] I engage multiple others in the negotiation of [co]performed meanings.” (Pollock, 1998, 43)

I try to create embodied/written performances that are evocative, powerful, and vulnerable.

I expose my body.
I take risks
Audre Lorde’s words speak into my heart,

“Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society’s definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the cubicles of difference; those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are black, who are older, know that survival is not an academic skill.” (1984 p. 112)

My performance autoethnography inhabits the between space of what Foucault coined as

“‘subjugated knowledges’ to include all the local, regional vernacular, naïve knowledges at the bottom of the hierarchy—the low Other science.” . . . “These are nonserious ways of knowing that the dominant culture neglects, excludes, represses, or simply fails to recognize.” (Conquergood, 2002, italics added)

My betweenness is physically expressed, among other things, in my written and spoken English

Between and among

Others
I take risks. I am not protected by a codename—Reader 679.
When I am writing/doing/presenting my work I imagine . . .
“Setting a scene, telling a story, carefully constructing the connections between life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation . . . and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives.” (Holman Jones, 2005a, p. 765)

With my bad English
“I Speak from the Wound in My Mouth,”
And sometimes
From the other hole . . .
Now, I feel much better
Cláudio
End of the Letter

ACT 3

BATHROOM

The year is 2001. It is around midnight. I am on the first floor bathroom in Gregory Hall. The bathroom is a mess. School papers are all over the floor. The smell of urine, as always, is strong. But the worst comes from the third toilet on my left. I open the door:

“Shit.” I say aloud.
Yes, this is what it is. Shit. Someone did not flush.

“Shit.”

It probably has been sitting in there for the whole day. This is a bathroom rule. One opens the door, sees the shit in the bowl. She/He then, closes the door very fast, and looks for another toilet if she/he can. One never flushes . . .

I look around. I want a cigarette. Cannot close the door and run. Have to clean this shit. Why?

I am the janitor. I already cleaned the bathrooms on the third and second floors.

Wait a minute. I am a grad student. I am writing a master thesis.

Got news from you my boy: You might be whatever you want or think you are, but you are, for real, a janitor first!

Yes, this is from where the money comes.
I think about Dani, probably sleeping at home.
I look again at the toilet bowl. Somehow, a front page of Daily Illini got stuck in there.

I put my gloves on and throw my hands in there . . .

In the shit.
The smell kicks strong in my nostrils.  
But, it is not so bad. I am used to it. I've been smelling shit since I was a kid.  
And,  
I hang in there no matter what!  
I take the paper out of the shit and then . . .  
I flush.

"We survive war and conquest; we survive colonization, acculturation, assimilation; we survive beating, rape, starvation, mutilation, sterilization, abandonment, neglect, death of our children, our loved ones, destruction of our land, our homes, our past and future. We survive, and we do more than just survive. We bond, we care, we fight, we teach, we nurse, we bear, we feed, we earn, we laugh, we love, we hang in there, no matter what." (Paula Gunn Allen, 2001)

The year is 2004. I am standing in front of a professor's desk in Gregory Hall waiting. My thoughts are not really here. I am thinking about Dani and her big belly. She's seven months pregnant with our second child. Our first, Analua is 14 months old. I am thinking about my son living in Dani's womb. He's been diagnosed with Down Syndrome.

The professor comes in.
"Sorry I am late."
"That's okay." I replied.
"I asked you here because I cannot accept your final paper."
"But you told me that I could do whatever is important to my project.
Autoethnography is what I do."

"You probably misunderstood my words. What I meant was that you could do an initial interview, analyze it, and then do a follow-up. Or you could choose an event, place and observe and describe it or even a research paper on the theoretical/methodological topics we studied in our class. I gave you and the other students many options. We did not cover autoethnography in our qualitative methods class."

"But I thought . . . I mean autoethnography is part of qualitative research . . . are you negating it?"
"That is not what I'm saying, and I'm not negating it . . ."
At this moment I stop listening. I just don't care anymore. Whatever . . .
I leave the professor's office.
I am sad and mad . . .
I stop at the bathroom in Gregory Hall. As always, I walk over and flush all toilets and stuff. Then I choose one to pee in.
A whisper:
You know what, professor; I cleaned after your shit and piss. I cleaned after all people who shit and piss in Gregory Hall, my supposedly academic house, and other buildings at U of I.
And,
I'm not going anywhere.
I hang there no matter what!
And then
I flush and go on to wash my hands.
A conversation
“Cláudio, in the last half hour or so, you've been talking about your work in a much more articulated way. You even used Foucault! Bring this to your project. Do a more traditional ethnography. Be marketable.”
“You don't get it . . . that's not me. This is not who I politically choose to be. Not what I wannabe either. Here, in ICR, there are other students that not only are more qualified than me, but also more willing to do this kind of work. Me? I want to write about bathroom and shit.”

**STORY 6**

**NEWSPAPER PICTURE**

I heard Tate calling out my name from far away, his country-boy accent rising above the comfortable murmur typical of afternoons in the Square. I lifted my eyes from the newspaper without finishing the sentence. I could see every corner of the Square from where I was sitting but couldn't see Tate. I heard Tate's voice again. I saw people walking in all directions, people gathered around benches and food stands, a bunch of young school kids surrounding the popcorn man, an old woman calmly throwing grains to pigeons in the middle of the Square.

“Here, tio Marcelo, here by the newsstand,” Tate shouted from the other side of the Square. I followed the sound of his voice and saw his hands waving in the air.

“Come here, I want to show you somethin’,” he shouted again.
His large smile greeted me as I got closer, his finger pointing to a picture in the front page of a local newspaper.
“Look, look! My picture is in the paper! In the front page! Ain’t I lookin’ good?” he said holding the paper with both hands in front of him.

I saw the newsstand clerk coming toward us. I reached into my pocket and gave the clerk a coin for the paper. He took the coin without looking at me, and staring at Tate he mumbled something I couldn’t make out.
“I saw some photographers here yesterday and thought I had left before they could take any pictures of me. But I guess this one was too fast for me!” Tate said laughing and looking at his picture.

“How do you know it’s you?” I asked looking at the grey, low-definition picture.

“Are you that blind, tio? Look, it’s my hair, I’m the only kid around here with this haircut. And this is my nose, look at my nose, can’t you recognize it? This is my mouth, see it? I wish they hadn’t covered my eyes with this black strip, though. My eyes is what makes me good-lookin’, and they covered them!”

“You know they have to cover the eyes of kids under 18, to prevent people from recognizing you.”

“Yeah, right! Like this black strip will do that! Everybody knows it’s me. It was the popcorn man who told me my picture was in the paper!”

“It’s the law. Newspapers are required to do that,” I said.

“Sometimes I wonder about you, tio! That’s not true. Look at these pictures,” Tate said opening the paper on page 6. “See? These kids are much younger than me, and they have no black strips coverin’ their eyes.”

The pictures Tate was showing were at the top of an article about Mother’s Day, and they showed young kids laughing in a new playground the city had just built near a high-class neighborhood.

“That’s because they’re talking about these kids in a nice way,” I said unconvincing my own explanation.

“What are they sayin’ about me then?” Tate said looking at me.

I read the headline: CRACK STILL A PROBLEM IN DOWNTOWN.

“It’s not really about you, Tate. It’s about the crack situation in downtown.”

“But I wasn’t smokin’ crack yesterday! I haven’t smoked in more than a week!” he said turning to his picture again. “I’m just walkin’. Look, anyone can see I’m smokin’ no crack!”

“I know…”

“Maybe that’s why the street educators keep tellin’ us to stay away from photographers and reporters,” Tate said in my pause.

“I think you’re right, Tate.”

He looked at his picture again and shook his head.

“I was not even smokin’…”

I read a few lines of the article over his shoulders. It said that the street kids were keeping the demand of crack high in downtown and that...

“But I’ll keep this picture anyways!” Tate said grinning. “It’s not everyday I appear in the front page of a paper. I’ll give it to my mom next time I visit her up north.”

“You’d better cut off the article,” I said smiling at him.

“I wish they’d taken a profile shot… that’s my best angle,” Tate said looking at the picture with examining eyes.
NOTES

1. I do not know exactly why, but I will avoid using Madison’s name. I really like her and it just doesn’t sound right.


3. Although our son was born without Down Syndrome, we kept receiving informational mail from the doctor’s office for several months after his birth.
Chapter 5

BETWEENNESS IN RACE

ACT 4

WORDS

Ah! Homens de pensamento,
Não sabercis nunca o quanto
Aquele humilde operário (menino)
soube naquele momento! (Vinicius De Moraes, “O Operário em Construção”)

Racism,
Black, white, red, yellow,
Is it about color?
Smoking another cigarette,
Is racism about skin color?
Roni didn’t know
Neither did I.

Remembrances of things that I try to understand
In a world full of deaths . . .
Coffee, cigarettes, and memories
“Ah! Men of knowledge
You will never know
As much as that operário (kid)
Knew at that moment.”¹

¹
Roni and I didn’t know
We never heard the word
Racism, racism, racism!
But we wanted chocolate
We desired it,
We stole it.
The brown kid wearing just a pair of shorts went first
The white boy went after
Security was following the black? Brown? kid
Hell, the white one stole the candies!!!!

Drinking coffee, smoking . . .
I cannot remember being told about the big word
Racism, racism, racism!!!
But, the boys knew . . .
That they were different
They were in the same shit
But the black? Brown child stinks more.
But, the weekend before last I have in my house, in my own home
A Brazilian man of knowledge
A white Brazilian man who is going to be a professor next fall
A Brazilian man who owns a gorgeous apartment in one of the most beautiful beaches . . .

In Brazil
Saying that Brazil is a country free of racism!!!
What the fuck is that?
I don’t need this shit! Not in my own home.
But you know what
It is natural
Whites are better than Blacks, Yellows, Reds, or Browns
And that is not racism, it is life
But deep in my soul I looked inside that white Brazilian man and
We do not come from the same country (there are so many Brazils)
We cannot be made of the same stuff
He is not one of my own
He did not have a friend called Roni!

“Ah! Men of knowledge
You will never know
As much as that operário (kid)
Knew at that moment.”
Poetry is knowledge
Is salvation
And for god’s sake
Is revolutionary.
It goes with dreams
It goes with desire
It not just about needs
And needs are all that the oppressed people dare to ask for
It is a tool for liberation, freedom, and democracy
But the boys (Roni and I), we didn’t know it either.

Marx somewhere explained
The alienation of the workers
And how they would discover the power that they have,
Or at least, it seems to be
Roni and I didn’t know the words
But fuck, we knew a lot!
We had dreams
He wants to be a truck driver!
Later, we were stealing pieces of cars
Three cops came in our way
Roni was brown or ebony
It really didn’t matter, or it probably did
Two cops went after him
Just one after the white kid
Roni got caught by the cops, by the system,
Trapped in the world of men
And I tell you now, he was done for life!!!

“Ah! Men of knowledge
You will never know
As much as that operário (kid)
Knew at that moment.”
And they were men!
Men who made the knowledge!
White men!
Men of power!
White men in a poor country!
White men somewhere!
Even those kids were the oppressors
In their own small world!
Please, please, please hooks:
Never let me forget the pain.
Please, please, please June Jordan:
Never let me forget your words:
“I am struggling to make absolutely manifest
A principled commitment
To the principles of freedom
And equality” (1998, p. 179)

Next time I saw Roni
Rape, abuse, and beating were all over his face
There was no need for words . . .
We still did not know them . . .
But fuck, we did not cry
And I am not going to cry again, not now, not for those fucking men of
Cultural studies, hegemony, post colonialism, interpretative research, femi-
nism,
Help me now! Do let me cry!
Let me fight!
Let me be revolutionary!
Let me be poetry!

STORY 7

TOO BLOND, TOO WHITE

“I know who you are,” said a soft young voice.
“Hi,” I said looking up from my notepad.
“You’re tio Marcelo, and you take care of the street kids,” she said
sitting down in front of me.
I looked at her for a moment, trying to imagine how this well-dressed,
Nike-shoes-wearing blonde girl, who spoke like an educated person, knew
the same kids I knew.
“How do you know my name?” I asked her.
“The kids told me. The tio with blue eyes and long hair,” she said
smiling.
“Who do you know?” I asked, growing more and more curious about
how this middle-class-looking girl knew the kids and me.
“She’s my sister!” Celi said, showing up from nowhere and sitting
down next to Tara with a plate of rice, beans, and grilled chicken in her
hands. “Isn’t it true, Tara?”
“Of course it’s true,” Tara told Celi and then, looking at me, shook her
head no as soon as Celi turned her attention to the plate of food.
They talked for a while. Tara wanted to know what Celi had been
doing, if she needed anything, acting like an older sister. Celi didn’t say
much and kept her eyes down at the plate on her lap the whole time. But
there was something different in the way Celi was responding to Tara, a
sweetness, a respect that I’d never seen come from Celi before.

Tara asked if Celi would like to go home with her. And Celi said
yes! It was the first time I heard Celi respond so kindly to a person offer-
ing her a place to stay—but then I’d never heard anyone offer their own
place.

“But you’d have to promise not to take anything from home. Do you
think you can do that? I know how hard it is when you’re in a craving
mood,” Tara said gently.

I frowned as I waited for Celi to explode and get mad at Tara.

“I promise,” Celi said without looking up, just as gently.

“You can’t stay on the streets anymore, Celi. Look at you, so pretty
but so dirty. Look at your feet, Celi, all black and scarred. You defi-
nitely need a shower! We are going to do something about that, right?” Tara
said, lifting Celi’s chin softly with the tip of her fingers.

“Right,” Celi replied, lowering her head again.

“And finish your food!” Tara said smiling at Celi.

Tara got to her feet and, excusing herself, crossed the Square to talk to
two young men, who were drug dealers according to Celi. I was baffled at
how docile Celi had been with Tara. Celi left shortly after that, but I stuck
around the Square a little longer hoping to get a chance to talk more to
Tara.

“So, how do you know Celi?” I asked Tara when she came back to
where I was sitting.

“From here. The streets. I lived here for a couple of months last year.”
She paused. “I was adopted by a couple when I was 10, five years ago.
They are nice. They live in a nice house in a nice neighborhood. But they
are older and didn’t let me do anything. I wanted to go out after school,
or at night, but they wouldn’t let me go. But then I started to come here,
to downtown, and started to hang out with Celi and the other kids. One
day we had a fight and I left home. I hung out with Celi and the others for
almost three months. It was fun, but also hard, you know? The street has
good things: you are free to do whatever you want, you don’t have to go to
school, you can sleep whenever you want, you smoke drugs and have lots
of fun with the guys and girls, you can date whoever you want,” she said
suddenly laughing.

“But there are also many bad things: you get beat up by the police,
security guards, and other adults, you get harassed by drug dealers because
you don’t have the money to pay the debts. Sometimes you don’t even want
to be in a situation where you owe money to the dealers, but they come
all friendly, give you the drug and say it’s a gift, it’s free. Then next time
they see you, they say you owe them money for it. They say they don’t
remember giving it to you for free, that you are trying to rip them off, and
blah blah blah. It’s screwed up!
“Then you are always dirty and sick, and there are no places for a shower anymore, to wash your clothes, or to see a nurse. There is no real freedom on the streets, you just think you are free but you are not! How can you get into places like a nightclub when you are so dirty. When my adoptive parents found out I was here, they came and asked me to go back home. I did. I was ready to leave the streets. I wanted to be able to pee in peace, without worrying someone was seeing me.”

“Did things get better at home after that?” I asked, already impressed with her.

“It did get better! They are letting me go out and date this boy, who is black. They didn’t want me to date him before, and that was one of the reasons I left home in the first place. I like him. I really do.

“Now I just got a part-time job, in the afternoons, here in downtown. I want to do well at school, too. I want to be responsible now so I can have a good future.”

“Good for you,” I said with a large smile.

“Are you going to help Celi?” she asked after a while.

“We’re trying to get a place for her in that recovery place in Rio, you know?”

“Yeah. She says she’s my sister, but it’s not true. I let her say that because it’s a sign of friendship and I like it. I’ve tried to get her out of the streets, too, but she’s so difficult and restless. I bring her clothes sometimes, but she always exchanges them for crack! I gave her a brand new Nike pair for Christmas and a few days later she was shoeless again,” she said shaking her head.

“I even thought about bringing her home with me, but my parents think it’s dangerous. They are afraid she will get crazy without crack and will steal things from the house. It’s possible, you know? I’ve seen her get desperate, because she doesn’t have a stone with her. She’ll do anything!”

“You two still talking?” Celi said coming over licking a popsicle.

“Tara is telling me how she got out of the streets,” I said quickly.

“She’s lucky to have rich parents,” Celi said, perhaps figuring out I already knew they were not blood-related sisters.

Right then we all spotted Dalva on the other side of the Square, walking toward us. Tara seemed very nervous all of a sudden and said she had to go.

“No worries, Tara, you with me. Dalva won’t do anything to you,” Celi said and Tara moved a little closer to her.

I didn’t know why Tara was afraid of Dalva. I’m still not sure, though I got a clue after I saw many of the girls interacting with Tara during my time in downtown Campinas.

“That one just lost her watch,” Celi said cracking up, pointing to a woman who was being shadowed by Dalva.
Dalva came to where we were sitting with a watch in her hand. She showed it to us and put it in her pocket. I looked away. She said hi.

“You look like a rich bitch, Tara,” Dalva said showing her disgust in seeing Tara.

Tara winced and didn’t say anything. Dalva stared at Tara then started to talk to Celi and Lucio, who had just arrived. Tara left after a few minutes, when Dalva was distracted making plans with Lucio to go and buy crack with the money she’d get from the watch.

I saw Tara again three days later near the Spiritist news stand, on a corner of Rosario Square. I’d been talking to Grace and another street educator. Grace’d broken up with her boyfriend—gigolo?—and was on the streets again. She’d been beat up by a security guard and her left ear was full of pus, and Marga, the other street educator, was trying to convince Grace that she needed to see a doctor.

“Sorry I didn’t say hi to you earlier, Grace, but I was busy running errands for the Spiritist stand,” Tara said approaching us timidly.

“Get lost Tara, I don’t wanna see your white ass here,” Grace snapped.

“I’m really sorry, Grace! I was running late and didn’t greet anybody.”

“Sorry my ass! You think you can go around snubbing the rest of us just because now you wear clean clothes and smell good?” Grace said measuring Tara from head to toe with her eyes.

“Hey, be nice Grace, she’s apologizing,” Marga said.

“Bitch,” Grace said looking at Tara with contempt.

“Grace!” Marga said like a mother scolding a disobedient child.

“I didn’t mean to snub you . . .,” Tara began to say.

Get the fuck outta here ‘fore I kick your ass!” Grace yelled.

“Sorry . . .,” Tara said walking away with a sad face.

“Why were you so mean to her?” Marga asked.

“She thinks she’s better than us . . . next time I see her I’ll steal her Nikes and beat the shit out of her.”

I didn’t say anything the whole time, but I felt bad for Tara. It was her first day at work.

A week passed without things getting any better for Tara. Indeed, they got worse.

“I’m very worried about Tara,” Nancy, the woman who took care of the Spiritist newsstand, told me.

“Are the other girls still giving her a hard time?” I asked.

“To put it mildly,” she said shaking her head yes. “Tara’s job is to carry things from here to the banks and our main office. She has to walk all around downtown. And she’s always running into one of her old friends, if you can call them that, and they invariably harass her, calling her names that make my eyes want to pop out. Then sometimes, when Tara is helping
me here, Grace or Dalva will come by and call her names. I don’t know what to do... But the worst thing happened today!” Nancy said, sitting down next to a man who owns the newspaper stand next to Nancy’s and who was visiting her.

“A woman carrying a baby came here today looking for Tara. She looked like a drug dealer, if you ask me. She threatened Tara, saying something I didn’t quite understand, and hit her really hard in the head. All of this right here inside my business! The woman then said she won’t let Tara work here and left without even looking at me. I’m very scared...,” Nancy said looking at nothing.

“The only way out of this mess is to kill all these kids,” the man said without betraying any emotion.

I stared down at him.

“You see, they don’t want to be helped. There are a bunch of institutions and shelters in town trying to help them, but they are here on the streets, terrorizing old ladies and scaring our clients away,” he said calmly, rubbing his beard.

“And how is killing the kids going to help?” I asked trying to keep my cool.

“Look at Tara’s case, for example. She’s a good girl who wants to make her life better, but she will have to quit this job ‘cause those little rascals keep pestering her. The old folks will be able to come to the Square in peace and read the paper without having to worry nonstop about their watches and wallets. The corners of the Square wouldn’t smell like pee and the ground wouldn’t be covered with crumbs of food they throw everywhere.”

“Killing is not right,” Nancy said.

“It’s the only solution though... these kids were born bad and there is nothing you can do to help them. Look at all the shelters that close down, because they don’t have enough kids. In the meantime downtown is full of them. I grew up very poor and knew a lot of kids like that. I worked hard and got out of the slums. But kids like them don’t want to work, don’t want to change their lives... they like to be bad!” The man’s voice was calm throughout.

“I wonder if Tara owes that woman money,” I said to Nancy trying to change the conversation.

“I don’t know... the woman said something about Tara being a bad example for the other kids,” Nancy said.

“I wonder what we can do to protect Tara,” I said.

“Killing all the kids is the only solution, I tell you,” the man said looking at me, smiling.

“People like you are the ones who should be killed!” I said completely losing it.

“No, no, my friend, not me... them!” he said emphasizing the word them, still smiling.
I said goodbye to Nancy and left, my legs weak with anger, already feeling bad for having lost my temper with someone I knew nothing about.

More than a month later, I heard from another street educator that Tara was at the city’s homeless shelter, a place where only adults are allowed to stay. She had been scared away from downtown by the drug dealer after a few days on her job and had to quit. She’d left home again shortly after that. I had to take Lara to the homeless shelter that night, and knew I was going to see Tara there.

“Hi tío Marcelo!” Tara said hugging me tight.

“I heard you were here,” I said pulling her gently away.

“Yeah, things didn’t work out well,” she said unsmiling. “But I’ll be taken to another family. She was my teacher a few years ago. She likes me very much. I think my mom, my adoptive mother, somehow got in touch with my teacher and told her about me leaving home again. My teacher called the Juvenile Court and asked if she could take me home with her. I’m gonna see her tomorrow, then she’s gonna take me with her. I think I’m gonna get along better with her than with my adoptive parents, you know. They’re old and don’t know how to handle an adolescent these days. They’re too strict. My teacher is young, and she’s used to being around kids. I hope she’ll let me go out,” she said smiling again.

I told her I was happy that she was not going to the streets again.

“No kidding! The kids were being really mean to me. I don’t know why . . . I never did anything to them,” she said biting her nails.

“Maybe they were jealous ‘cause you had a job and you’re going straight,” I risked.

“Maybe . . . but they never said anything about my job . . . all of a sudden they started to say things about my white skin and blond hair . . . they called me albino and other worse things.”

“It’s good that you will soon have a place to live.”

“Yeah, I’m afraid of staying here,” she said looking around us. “There are a bunch of men here and they keep looking at me in a funny way, sometimes whistling when I walk by them.”

“I brought Lara here tonight, so you will be safe hanging out with her,” I said.

“I’m worried about that too, tío,” she said looking at me with anxious eyes.

“Why? Was she calling you names too?” I asked, not very surprised.

“No, but I heard that she wanted to beat me up. She thinks I was telling the kids that she’s hustling to get money. But I never said anything! Even if I knew anything I wouldn’t say that to anybody. I think they were just saying it to make me look bad. They know Lara would want to beat me up for that. It’s a lie! But I’m afraid Lara will not believe me,” Tara said.

“I’ll talk to her before I leave,” I said.
I said goodbye to Tara and started looking for Lara around the old building. I found her sitting in the dining room. I told her that Tara was in the shelter and I was counting on her, Lara, to take care of Tara.

“Don’t worry, tio, I won’t beat her up. I was mad at her because Grace and Dalva said Tara was saying I was going out with men for money. But I know they were lying just to get me mad at Tara. I’ll take care of her, tio. I’m afraid of being alone here too,” Lara said smiling.

It turned out that the teacher’s family gave up on adopting Tara, because they were afraid the drug dealers were going to find her there and do something bad to the family. I asked Tara one more time why the dealers were so angry with her, to the point that the family was afraid of retaliation. She was evasive in her answer, and I learned nothing new. She said that at least Lara was treating her well and they were helping each other.

Lara told me, separately, that Tara was hitting on all the men in the shelter, teasing them, and was afraid they were going to get Tara by force. Lara also told me that Tara was getting drunk and high almost every night. I asked Lara to keep taking care of her.

The next time I saw Tara, a few days later in the homeless shelter, she was so affectionate that I felt embarrassed. She kept on hugging and kissing me, talking non-stop and seeming not to listen to a word I said.

“Why don’t you adopt me, tio. I will be really good to you,” she said in a mischievous way.

I told her I couldn’t adopt her, trying to free myself politely from her embrace. Leaving the shelter was quite a task that day.

I contacted her adoptive mother. I asked her if she would take Tara back, saying that I would look for psychiatric treatment for Tara. She agreed to receive Tara back in her home, and I got an appointment with a psychiatrist friend of mine, for free. But Tara left home again before she could ever see the psychiatrist. She moved in with a young man, who was a drug-dealer-pimp according to Grace.

“The whitey will get in some trouble soon if she doesn’t stop hitting on other people’s boyfriends,” Grace said.

I just looked at Grace, waiting for her to tell me more about Tara.

“She hit on my boyfriend,” she said looking at me. “Why do you think that woman, the dealer, wanted to get a piece of her?”

ACT 5

THE TALES OF CONDE, ZEZAO, MASTER CLAUDIO, AND CLAUDIO

“‘There was no confrontation, as had been said by the media. What happened was a massacre. Conde was walking from his house and then he was surrounded by fifteen Sao Paulo’s fans. They fractured...
Conde’s head in seven different places,’ said Marcio Rosa, member of soccer fan club Torcida Jovem Amor Maior.” (10/17/05, Agencia Futebol Interior, www.futebolinterior.com.br)

I feel empowered by this “new writing,” this new method. Therefore, I am rejecting my old—not so old—formal academic training. I dare to write/perform in a different manner. I am performing my entire body, which is fragmented/ing represented, in my surreal postmodern “reality,” to uncover the apparatus of culture and power that operate as structures of oppression. And yes, I am inviting you to dare, too. “If you are looking for a complete story, you are not going to find it here. If your ‘trained mind’ is looking for the whole thing, that is not here either.” (Moreira, 2008a, p. 677)

Characters/Voices

ZEZAO: This is how I named Conde in my master’s thesis, when I was concerned about keeping Conde’s anonymity.

CONDE: For my doctoral dissertation, I returned to his real nickname, Conde. Conde’s official name is Anderson Tomas Ferreira, and he was a Ponte Preta Soccer fan who had helped me in my fieldwork in Brazil.

MASTER CLAUDIO: This is a representation of me when I was a Master’s student in the Department of Leisure Studies at the University of Illinois.

CLAUDIO: This representation reflects where I was later on—a doctoral student at the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois.

I: First Words

Conde is dead.
Conde was beaten to death.
He was 26 years old.
He was a soccer fan.
Conde is dead, but Zezao is alive.
When I first wrote about Conde, I named him Zezao.
Yes,
I changed his name.
I was/am the powerful researcher.
And Conde?
He was just the subject.

It is the end of year.
I am at my office at the U of I.
Looking at my computer screen  
With my moving fingers  
Why write about Conde?  
Why write about this soccer fan?  
He is dead ... 
Conde is fucking dead, and I want to yell it across my locked window!  
And I am struggling to get the window open.

Zezao I

Sunday at noon. It is an important time for Brazilian soccer. Millions of Brazilians are in front of their TVs. They are cooking out in their houses with their families and friends or in the bar with their buddies or in the swimming pool of their clubs. Even those who are working have small radios near their ears to listen to the sports shows. There is only one topic of conversation: their beloved soccer teams. It seems like everyone knows about the history of his/her team or players. They know the standings of the team, the problems with the stars or managers, the scandals, how much money the players make, and so on. Discussions or arguments about which is the best team or if a player deserves all the money that he makes never end. The atmosphere is different from other days. Soccer is in the air. If the national team were playing that day you could walk naked in the streets and no one would notice.

The whole country stops to watch the games. But the poor working-class people go and live the game. The word “watch” cannot describe their actions. They really “live” it, become part of it. Soccer is in their “blood,” one might say. Many say that it is the reason for their lives, that through soccer they can feel alive. They breathe soccer.

Jose, or better Zezao, is one of these people. This Sunday, he is going to meet his pals at the bar; he woke up a couple of hours earlier with a huge hangover. “Better start drinking again, so this fucking headache goes away,” he thought. Walking to the bar, he gets excited about the game. His beloved Ponte Preta is going to play this afternoon. Walking in the streets of his neighborhood, he keeps thinking about the game. The streets do not have any kind of pavement, and Zezao is not paying attention to the kids who are playing close to the sewer lines that run free in the landscape.

In the bar, which is just a room with some tables, his friends are waiting for him. All of them belong to the fan club of the Ponte Preta soccer team Torcida Jovem—Amor Maior, which means “Youth Fans—The Biggest Love.” There, in the bar, they drink pinga (a popular Brazilian cheap liquor made with sugar cane) and a few beers. “Just warming up for the game,” one of them says.

From the bar they go to the bus stop. They are dressed with the team’s T-shirt, and Zezao has his fan club T-shirt under this. Only a few fan clubs are considered outlaws, but none of them are allowed to have their
members wearing their clothes and flags in the stadium. Zezao’s plan is to go unnoticed by the cops and, once in the stadium, show off his shirt (and, of course, his courage).

Conde I

“The next moment in qualitative inquiry will be one at which the practices of qualitative research finally move, without hesitation or encumbrance, from the personal to the political.” (Denzin, 2000, p. 261)

I am lying down, having my left arm tattooed by Drigo. Conde introduced him to me few days ago. Drigo plays the drum during the games. His sister used to be Conde’s girlfriend. Conde is sitting near us, very excited by yesterday’s fight. Early, we have been recollecting the last day’s adventure. Now he is bringing back other stories:

“Remember that day Drigo? Your sister and I had that big fight. I got stoned really bad. Then, you came to pick me up for the game. Man, I was bad that day. Virado na encrenca. At halftime we went to piss. Remember Drigo?”

“Yep, I do. We were peeing when that sonofabitch got in to the bathroom saying shit about Ponte Preta. You jumped on him so fast that he had no fucking idea of what was happening.” Drigo starts laughing.

“I beat him gooooooood.”

Looking at me, Drigo says: “Gringo,” then pointing to Conde. “This guy was so high, that he didn’t even put his dick back in his pants. One minute he was peeing. The next, he was beating the shit out of the mother-fucker,” laughing even harder. “Conde was beating the guy with his dick swinging all over.”

“Hey, I forgot, okay?” said Conde, also laughing. “You know, Gringo, I was just looking for something and then, that guy show up. I just realize that my dick was of my pants after the guy passed out in the floor. Then I saw his Santos hat with blood all over and took it. The hat was my prize. Later, when I walked to Drigo’s crib, I left the hat over the fence for his sister Tania. She would know that I’ve been thinking about her. . . . One day we’re gonna get together again.”

Zezao II

When Zezao and his friends enter the bus, it is already full of fans singing and dancing. Regular people, or povao (how the fans call them), do not take the buses that go to the stadium. They know better. After three stops, the bus is so full that the driver skips the next stop even after seeing that there is a group of four or five fans waiting. The fans in the bus get irate.

“Go back and pick them up, you asshole,” screams one.
Others begin to break some seats. Zezao goes straight to the driver.

"Look here, motherfucker. You gonna stop the bus and wait for my bros. And you gonna stop for every Ponte Preta’s fan till we arrived in the stadium. Do that! Otherwise, I gonna beat you so bad, that even your slut mom will not recognized your sorry ass!"

After that, things get “squared way.” The fans “own” the bus. At the traffic light a “careless” woman stops her car near the bus. The fans go to the windows screaming all kinds of things to her, from “you are the daughter-in-law of my mom’s dreams” to “hot girl I wanna your pussy.” She quickly closes the window and moves the car, even if the light is still red.

MASTER Cláudio I

Soccer has a strong role in Brazilian society. In the 1970s, while the military Brazilian government was killing the “communist enemies of the country,” the fans were in the streets celebrating the victory of the national soccer team. The fans were proud of being Brazilian; “We are the only country in the world that has won three world championship trophies,” they would boast.

Soccer is an important thing to large majority of Brazilians, but it is much more important for the working-class. As Piracicaba (a Ponte Preta fan that you are going to meet) says:

“Gringo, July is the worst month of the year, and you know why? There is no soccer. Every July, I get lost. Soccer is everything to us. Tell this to your boss. I’ve seen people sell their shoes in order to get tickets for a Ponte Preta game. I have a girlfriend. Do you know why we’re still together? She knows better. She never would question my love for my team and for my fan club? If you don’t believe me ask around. . . .” This passion for soccer has race, social class, and gender aspects. It is black or mixed of race; it is poor; it is male, where the female supports her partner.

Zezao III

Zezao is having a good time. He can barely remember the headache. He is looking into the streets, seeing the regular fans get excited. He gets off the bus and together with his buddies walks in the direction of the fan clubhouse. The house is in front of the stadium, less than a block from its main entrance. More than one hundred people are singing, dancing, drinking, whatever. This is a *festa* (“party”). There are fireworks, announcing that the fan club is ready. Zezao has two wishes: first, that Ponte Preta wins; second, that he finds some fans from the other team or better, that he finds a fan from Guarani and beats the shit out of him.
As they enter in the stadium, Zezao puts his fan Club shirt inside his pants, under his underwear. The police are watching everything carefully. Some cops are on horseback, controlling the streets. Thousands of people are doing what they like most: attending their team’s game. The fans get in line, and the cops pat them down. There is a lot of pushing, and Zezao passes through the inspection without a problem.

In a part of the stadium that is informally reserved for the fan club, Zezao shows off his trophy (his fan club uniform) and the fans go crazy. Another fan, Cobra (snake) takes a shirt from the rival Guarani and sets it on fire causing another ovation from the fans. Cobra was a street kid and has spent some time in jail, and the other fans respect him a lot. They respect his wisdom, since he had survived in jail. But fan club members respect Cobra more for his role in the games. Cobra does not watch the game. During the game, he faces the fan club crowd so people can see what song he is singing and follow it. His job is not easy. The goal here is not only to get the fan club involved but also to get everybody else to cheer for Ponte Preta. Cobra does it. Usually all the fans sing the song that he chooses.

MASTER CLÁUDIO II

Brazilian fans show these festa characteristics everywhere, turning any event in a carnival. As Robert L. Rinchart observed at the Olympic Games:

“Brazilian fans bring their own creation of carnival atmosphere. They fill the metro cars, chanting and singing, laughing and dancing into the night while the train runs. One 6-feet-4-inch woman jokingly banter at the Coca-Cola Pin Trading Center with a pin trader about having the AIDS virus; otherwise she would gladly have Sex with him. During the first day’s swimming prelims, a large group of uniformed Brazilians (wearing bright yellow shirts with ‘Brasilia’ imprinted on the back in green) play music, sing, and cheer for their (and some other Latin American) competitors. At the spectacle, they are themselves a spectacle. In a sense, they provide role reversal: swimmers (now tennis players too—a Brazilian named Gustavo Kuerten is the number one—so Brazilians have invaded the tennis courts), unused to anything but applause and an occasional plastic horn, look up to find a seven-piece orchestra playing merengue (samba) music during the most important meet of their lives. The Brazilians seem to take the whole area; they have no qualms about bringing a Mardi Gras atmosphere to the Olympics.” (1998, p. 132)

Brazilian fans bring this carnival atmosphere everywhere they go; it is part of being Brazilian. To watch a soccer game with around 100,000
people dancing and singing for their team is not only beautiful, it is also spectacle.

**Zezaô IV**

During the game, the fan club does not sit or stop singing. Often a fan club member gets beaten, because he stops cheering. For the fan club members there are always two competitions. What is the best team, and who has the best fan club? Provocative songs are being sung on both sides as each fan club tries to out do the other in demonstrating loyalty. The fans love it.

Ponte Preta wins this game. Fans are really proud of their team. Then the inevitable happens. Outside the stadium the fan clubs from Ponte Preta and Guarani meet each other. Both teams have won, both fans are happy, and, ironically, both are looking for a fight. Zezaô and his friends run straight into the Guarani fans. The fight begins. Regular fans are running away trying to find a safe place. The police take action using horses and throwing tear gas bombs. Fans throw rocks, bricks, and so on. Cobra received a rock in his face. Bleeding through his nose and mouth, he continues to fight.

Suddenly, someone starts shooting. The confusion is immense. People are screaming like they are in hell. The police are beating everybody. Zezaô finds his way out. Members of both fan clubs know that it’s time to run. If they stay they will go to jail. However, it does not end the fights. The fans are going to fight all the way back home. They are going to break everything that they find in their way: buses, cars, and a park bench.

“Let’s go the bus station. Those motherfuckers need to go home. We still can kick more asses,” says Zezaô.

“Who did the shooting?” asked someone.

“João was the one who shot.” The cops caught him. Let’s go, baby. We are still in business now!” says Zezaô to his pals. Then they move toward the bus station.

**II: Master Cláudio and Conde—The Scholar and the Fan**

Campinas: “Conde’s burial, carried through in the cemetery of Amarais, in Campinas, was followed by approximately 400 people, the majority belonging to the soccer Fan Club named *Toreida Jovem Amor Maior*. The Fans had not wanted to speak of the subject, but they leave in the air the possibility of revenge.” (10/18/05, *Journal Estado de São Paulo*, www.estadao.com.br)

São Paulo, 10/20/05: “It is not possible to coexist with human beings (they for sure do not act as one) that instead of lamenting a death, cry out that they go to kill and to avenge. That was the case in the burial of Anderson Tomas Ferreira, a.k.a. Conde, . . . The
laws are very weak, the legislators do not disclose their opinion or actions, and when they do, they make it in a demagogic form, the police civil, but we know of its limitations. ... The Ministry of Sport created a group of studies aiming to evaluate and to present suggestions for the violence that surrounds soccer. But the work is very slow and we have the necessity of acting with urgency. The Organized Soccer Fan Clubs are the great villains of the problem. By the way, it has been some time that they have been forbidden to act officially. However, in stadiums these fans were in the same places and sang the same hymns of war ... and the authorities saw to that and they did not do anything.” (Márcio Bernardes is anchor of the Net Transamérica de Rádio, commentator of the TV Culture and university professor—www.marciobernardes.com.br)

MASTER CLÁUDIO III

As I said before, my argument in this study is that the stories of the fans who belong to organized soccer fan clubs are not part of the dominant discourse in Brazilian society. Then, what people know about these fans (received knowledge) is a part of an over-simplified, hegemonic, and oppressive representation.

You, dear reader, might have thought after reading the introduction that these fans are really bloodthirsty. You might still think that it is right. We hope that you might change your opinion when you finish reading this work.

The fans often are seen by the tales of their lived experiences expressed in the dominant narratives such as fights, drug consumption, criminal infractions, sexual promiscuity, and so on. This is also how they perceive themselves, how they try to make sense of their lives.

CONDE II

You know Gringo, the thing that I hate most is people’s faces. That look you know. That look that an old lady used to give to me when I was a kid. Like she feels sorry for me ... “Oh, look this poor cute little robber!” ... That’s what the look says. Or the look that a well dressed men used to give, like I was a piece of shit, that I was ready to rob him, that I have a very contagious illness and I am not allowed to get close to “the good people.” There were times that I robbed people just because of the look in their faces. But it doesn’t happen anymore. Not anymore. Now people are scared. I can see the fear in their faces, and to tell the truth Gringo, it is much better! I mean, much better. Other day, I took the bus wearing my fan club uniform. I sat in front of an old lady and kept looking at her. It was funny. It seemed that she had ants in her pants. She couldn’t stop moving. Less than 5 minutes later she moved to another seat.
MASTER ClÁUDIO IV

Conde does not see the hegemony in Brazilian society. He also does not see the dominant discourses and narratives. What he sees and interacts with are everyday values and beliefs. Since these values and beliefs are hegemonic, they are perceived as natural, as “God’s will.” Conde also constructs his social identities through the looks that he receives by the “good people.” Conde knows that he is “bad,” because he is not able to fit in the available stories. School, jobs, good life, and family are things that are not for him. Not only is Conde not able to get them, but also he thinks (to a certain extent) that he does not deserve them. Conde knows that he is “bad,” because he does “bad” things. Let’s take sexual behavior as an example. Once he told me that after he was expelled from the Brazilian Army, he had not been able to find a decent job. When someone is expelled from the Brazilian army, he has a code number in his ID saying it, so it is hard to find a regular job. Conde’s captain in the army found out that he was having sex with a man. That man was giving money to him. Then, Conde spent some time in a military jail and afterward was expelled from the Brazilian Army. In Brazilian homophobic society, especially in the Army, Conde’s actions are unacceptable. Paradoxically, Conde shows the same hatred toward homosexuality when he tells me his story. Let’s hear the Brazilian macho.

CONDE III

Gringo, when my little brother and sisters were sick, it was that money that I used for buying medicine, you know. I like women. I am “macho.” I am not a fucking faggot! I don’t know how many times during sex, I had to imagine the happy face of my mom, brothers, and sisters when I bring some meat to them. I had to think about it otherwise my dick wouldn’t do the job. Me and my family had some good Sunday lunches thanks to that fucking money, you know? My captain gave me a big lecture, full of bullshit. At the end I asked him if he would give some money if one of my brothers gets sick. I asked him, if he would give some cheap meat so my family could have a decent meal. His answer was about school, jobs opportunities, and shit like that. That’s bullshit, you know Gringo! Bullshit! What can school do for a guy like me? No one cares, no one ever did!

MASTER ClÁUDIO V

Since Conde feels that he does not fit in society, he resists it. He fights. He sells his body. He sells drugs. He struggles for survival. He looks for other ways to achieve respect and a better life. He “gives the finger” to values, beliefs, and looks that he receives. But he knows that he is “bad.” And “knowing that he is bad,” he (even without noticing it) supports all the hegemonic values and beliefs in our society. Conde has Freire’s notion of “being” or “nothingness.” Since Conde cannot be “something human,” he
must be “nothing.” For changes to take place, we must all realize that there is more than just “being” or “nothingness,” that there is the possibility of “being more human” negating the “nothingness.” Hopefully, my stories might help to transform this scenario.

Cláudio I

Can you tell? Conde sold his body! And I? Why am I still telling instead of showing!

III: Master Cláudio—Discovered by Autoethnography

Lately, I have opened my performances with the same two statements: “I have not chosen performance autoethnography as a method, it has chosen me” and “Do not expect this performance to make sense to you. My life does not make sense. Other lives I have loved and interacted with do not make sense either. Why in hell does life have to make sense so it can fit in academia?

Remember, life is fragments . . .

I was “discovered” by autoethnography while writing my Master’s thesis. Suddenly, memories that were supposed to be buried came to life, haunting me in my everyday existence. Without noticing, those memories, represented in my thesis, provoked comments such as: “There is too much of your own narratives in this thesis. I do not want to know about your life, I want to know about the other lives that you studied. This is not a good social science.”

However, those comments did not make sense at all; the only way I could write about “the Other” was through my own lived experience.

Hence, I started to look for a scholarship that would allow me to write about myself . . .

Then, I heard about Norman Denzin . . .

Then, my love affair with performance autoethnography started . . .

Here again I look to Holman Jones for help. How can I write about performance autoethnography, without performing one? She says I cannot. Hence, where is the performance?” (Moreira, 2008a, p. 668)

Except from “Fragments”

Master Cláudio VI

As you may have noticed, there is a lot of my own story in this project. I have been criticized for it. Hearing such things as, “Okay, I know about you but how about the fans?” has happened very often. The point is that I do not see myself as only the researcher in this project. I am also a “subject” of it. Through my own lived experience I make sense of my life and
then make sense of the fans' lived experiences that I am interacting with. The result of this interaction is this work, especially the stories that I am telling. Even in the stories, I am a character in them. I am in action. I am not just telling facts.

Planning this study, I was looking for a form of writing my research that could allow me to go beyond the constraints of traditional research. As I said before, I was trying to decrease the distance between the “real” and “academic” worlds. I was looking for a more personal relationship with the people that I study. I wanted my work to contain life, emotions, and smells. I was looking for a work that contained “humanity.” Also, during all my life, I have been concerned with the stories that we can tell and the ones that we cannot, and furthermore, how we can tell a story and how we cannot tell one.

I found out that many stories from my childhood were not good enough to be told. It seems that there is a pact—if someone does “well” in life, he/she is supposed to forget his/her personal stories. However, if he/she really wants to tell them, it must be done in an appropriate way. Then, I was not surprised by the fact that I could not find stories similar to mine. I remember telling someone at a party, that when I was a kid and wanted a candy, I just went to a grocery store and stole it. No big deal, right? Wrong. I could tell from people’s reactions that I was not supposed to say that. I embarrassed people. It would be all right if I had said that I was poor, so I needed to work, and if I wanted to eat a candy, I would buy it using my own money. I worked when I was a kid. I received half of the Brazilian minimum wage. It was not enough money for buying candy. I stole candy.

My life’s story, lived experience, background, is part of my motivation to starting looking for forms of writing, for ways of telling my stories, and also some kind of scholarly support. I am fond of the work of Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner, because I could match my desires regarding writing style with their detours through theory. I am impressed by their statement:

“In personal narrative texts, authors become ‘I,’ readers become ‘you,’ subjects become ‘us.’ [. . .] Readers, too, take a more active role as they are invited to the author’s world, evoked to a feeling level about the events being described, and stimulated to use what they learn there to reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives. The goal is to write meaningfully and evocatively about topics that matter and may make a difference, to include sensory and emotional experience . . ., and to write from an ethic of care and concern . . .” (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 742)

Consequently, one must take a look at what they call narrative inquiry, or a “story that creates an effect of reality, showing characters embedded
in the complexities of lived moments of struggle, resisting the intrusions of chaos, disconnection, fragmentation, marginalization, and incoherence, trying to preserve or restore the continuity and coherence of life’s unity in the face of unexpected blows of fate that call one’s meanings and values into question.” (p. 744). My stories of the fans’ lived experiences—interwoven with my own—reflect this concept. I believe that my stories create reality that exposes hegemonies, conflicts, struggles for survival, and so on. These stories carry life and show the dynamism of society. They are not static.

I hope that my stories might help the fans make better sense of their lives. However, I know for sure that my stories (about myself and the fans) are helping me to make sense of my own life, both as a person and as a graduate student.7 The stories are helping me to justify my presence here in the U.S.A., so far away from home; because through them I am trying to improve people’s lives in Brazil. They help me to say to myself that I am not here just for my own sake. That I am giving—or at least trying to give—more justice to more people. My own personal stories constantly remind me of my origins, and about my goals in life. In this way, I can understand my own struggle for survival, my own dreams, and my own work. Thus, making better sense of my own life supports me to have a better understanding of someone else’s life.

Returning to Ellis and Bochner (2000):

“Why should we be ashamed if our work has therapeutic or personal value? Besides, haven’t our personal stories always been embedded in our research monographs? The question is whether we should express our vulnerability and subjectivity openly in the text or hide them behind ‘social analysis?’” (p. 747)

I am neither ashamed nor hidden behind “social analysis.” I am trying to show the importance of my own personal stories in this project. I am letting you know who I am. I am showing to you my vulnerabilities as a person and as a scholar. I am exposing others and myself, and this is not an easy task. While writing this project, there have been days that I get so depressed that I could not talk even with my wife. Forgotten memories from my childhood that should have been buried in my past suddenly become part of my life again. And it is not just about my life. I expose the fans, hoping that this work might be a small step in order to improve their lives. In exposing myself, I also expose the ones who love me such as my wife, Dani, and my children, Analua and Francisco. By saying that I was a poor kid, I expose the economic failure of my parents and relatives. Some Brazilians do not like my work, because by exposing myself, I am also exposing my country. Doing and negotiating these things are not easy.
I state here that through my personal stories the reader can understand better the stories of the fans. I feel the need to explicitly explain how it occurs. What is this strong connection between my own personal stories and the stories of the fans? The connection of my stories with the fans’ resides in the fact that both groups have been silenced. Both types of stories are not included in the dominant discourse of the Brazilian upper-middle-class. Both discourses—the fans’ and mine—are being told through my fieldwork and my life history, discourses that help to deepen the understanding of the reality of gendered, racial, and social class oppression in Brazil. That is how my own experience becomes “data,” a word I cannot stand.

I am exposing all these lives because I struggle for a more democratic world. Because I believe that in order for this project to achieve its goals, it must reveal/embodied lives. Nothing is more frustrating for me than a social text in which I cannot see the people’s faces. Therefore, in this project there are a lot of lives—including mine—inviting you, the reader, to glimpse “our” stories.

IV: Purple Conde

“This is a personal social science, a moral ethnography that reads repression and pain biographically, existentially. It knows that behind every act of institutional repression lurks a flesh-and-blood human being who can be held accountable, at a deep level, for his or her actions. The new writing asks only that we all conduct our own ground-level criticism aimed at the repressive structures in our everyday lives.” (Denzin, 2003, p. 142)
A reflexive man
A fighting one who had been beaten before
A tooth lost in an ugly fight
A touching tongue looking for the missing tooth
A body full of guilt

I lost a tooth
Conde lost his life
Do I dare to compare?
Not in a lifetime that I do have and he don’t.
Yes, he don’t. Put the grammar away.
A white grad student in the U.S.
A black poor soccer fan in Brazil
I got a Master’s thesis
Conde got beaten to death
I got a degree
Conde got a place in heaven?

Sec, I’m not so sure
And
And
As a matter of fact
I’m
I’m still using purple Conde
Fucking!

For God’s sake I wanna help Conde
Got some news for you.
Too fucking late, white boy
White boy
Fairy tale ending
Just the white boy standing

V: Cláudio

“... a kind of writing where the body and the spoken word, performance practice and theory, the personal and the scholarly, come together.” (Miller and Pelias, 2001, p. xii)

“Writing about the loss of my father really helped. I did not think I was going to make it. But no, I will not start to write autoethnography. I mean, I might do a little bit on the side, but this is not my thing. I have my research and all that.” (A professor, in a
conversation with me at the 2nd International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, May 2005)

I have heard that autoethnography is self-indulgent, easy, and so on. I am writing this paper, right here in my office, and it is not easy. Not easy at all. Writing this performance is anything but easy. Words do not come easy; they are ripped from my soul, kicking and screaming. I am writing from the heart. I am searching for a methodology of the heart:

"I feel the lack in those critical arguments tied tighter than a syllogism, those pronouncements given with such assurance, those judgments that name everything but what matters. I know there is more than making a case, more than establishing criteria and authority, more than what is typically offered up. That more has to do with the heart, the body, the spirit." (Pelias, 2004, p. 1)

After looking at Pelias’s words, how can this writing be easy? I cannot give you that. If a person uses performance autoethnography as a one-time deal after a loss or for a class, it might be easy. Or if someone uses this writing as a "side dish from time to time," I would say, well, maybe. However, my experience with this method/theory as a "full time job" says it's not easy, but rather extremely complex. I do performance autoethnography. That's it. This is my thing. I am continuously doing it—interrogating methodology, theories, and experiences from the intersection of apparatus of oppression, trying to promote social justice.

When I am writing, I am trying to represent my body—not only my mind, ideas or thoughts, with all my feelings, emotions, lived experiences, beliefs, values (in that moment or shifting moments) in the paper. I am not daring to represent Conde. I am not giving him voice. He has his own. I am performing my own experience of my relationship with him grounded in my commitment with social justice—rounded in my own progressive political agenda then and now. My agenda, not Conde’s.

Adding to this, my writing is not who I am—it is not my feelings, nor my body. My own representation of my own body is incomplete. Hence, while rereading my performance, I am not looking for my whole body, but for fragments of it, for pieces that I can be at least satisfied with. But also, and more important, a writing piece that not does not just express my fragmented, surreal reality but something that is open enough for the audience to take over and transform into whatever they like (but only if they want to). In the moment it is performed, my piece is not mine anymore. Ownership is gone. I let it go. It belongs, as fragments, to whoever wants it.
Fragments, Anzaldúa (2000) reminds us, come from “betweenness”:

“It’s actually the white Anglo dominant culture that privileges the white in us, that tries to erase, to hide the fact that we have African blood the fact that we have Indian blood, and only a very small percentage of Spanish blood.” (p. 181)

I am a betweener! I live life in-betweenness (Anzaldúa, 1999).
I grow up and live life as “white.” As a poor child . . . a border child from a fucked up family identified with the colonizers in my own country. The border man—a “gringo” among my people and an alien here in America.

There are so many Brasils.
So many Brasilian borders.

My body is both: the poor kid in Brasil and the grad student in the U.S.
It is also the better way for me to have a dialogue with my people. And Conde is one of my bunch.

Yes, I am claiming Conde as one of my own. And he is claiming me as one of his. Conde holds my place there for me, while I hold his here. He and I invented our shared roots . . . becoming a different “we.”

It is also the main reason of why I am writing: this way is the only way that I accept to live and labor in academia

Ambiguity?
Or
How this feeling of fragments (living and seeing life as such) comes from people born in this “in between space”

Having to deal with the “diasporic” body, losses of home (land)

Internal/external colonization
Slavery/past/present
Race/gender/religion
You name it . . . no wait, I named it
Provoking destabilization
De-center identities
Oppositional . . .
Like people born out of multiple and violent fragmentations.

When I write performance autoethnography, I write from an interior space at the center of the self. It takes courage to stay there; to perform from that space; to perform from this space right now. And, this space constantly changes. I am never done writing from this space. I can only write from there. Myself/Experiences as a vehicle, commenting, speaking from and to, on/in the historical universal singularity, in which my body is immersed.
I am We are
A moral agent carrying messages
Speaking truth of power
Accountable self
Accountable others
Truth speaks to power
Agents for transformation
Agents for power
Writing from memory
Re constructed
Moving
Ongoing experience
Truth of memory?
Memory as moral discourse
Bringing the bite!

All sciences—social, hard, and otherwise—are always already political and moral. The difference is that performance autoethnographers place themselves in their texts. In this way, I am damn explicitly clear in my commitments to live by a feminist communitarian ethic that craves to empower people in an ideology of love, hope, care, and commitment to justice.

VI: Final Words

Decolonizing Inquiry
Decolonizing Academia
Resisting the colonizing impulse
Resisting the straight white male
Being critical and political
Transformation
Moments and forms
Movements
Global movements
Free in a post colonial space
Free in a non naive utopia
Take control and erase the apparatus of oppression
No! No! No! Not a hierarchical shift
Afro Centric Feminist Ethic site
Performance
Love
Hope and care
NO MORE SOCCER

Paradise hadn't changed much since the last time I was there, in the winter of 1994. The landscape was still dominated by shacks made of cardboard and pieces of wood, unfinished unpainted brick houses, and dirt streets running parallel to open sewage ditches. The only apparent differences now in 1996 were the surprisingly high number of imported cars on the streets and the few fancy houses towering over their neighbors—a sign of prosperity?

Paradise is as poor as many other neighborhoods surrounding Campinas, and besides the fact that it's the closest to downtown, I never understood why most of the kids I knew came from there. Some of the kids living in downtown still maintained some contact with their families in Paradise.

I'd gone there that Wednesday afternoon looking for T's mom, to tell her that he'd been taken to a juvenile reformatory in Sao Paulo. I didn't find T's mom, but ran into Pelé.

"Say, fella, you want to play some soccer?" asked a stranger's voice behind me.

Still walking, I half turned my head to see if someone was talking to me. I saw a young man looking and smiling at me, walking as close to me as a shadow. I looked ahead again, feeling my heart bouncing all over my body, trying to spot a bar or a store, any place full of people. As I was beginning to think about running to a fruit stand on the other side of the street, I felt the stranger's hand on my shoulder.

"You don't recognize me, do you, Marcelo?" the stranger said and opened a large white smile. "I mean, tío Marcelo," he said pretending he was correcting himself.

Only the street kids call me tío Marcelo.

"Pele!" I finally said recognizing him.

"It's me," he said starting to pull me toward him.

I was getting ready to hug him too but he suddenly put one hand on my chest and stepped back, looking around us without moving his head much.

"I didn't recognize you at first, I must admit," I said quickly shaking his hand instead.

He seemed happy to see me again. "I know! I saw the scared look in your face," he said enjoying himself.

I smiled. "I thought I was about to lose my backpack."

"Nobody would steal this old backpack," he said and we laughed.

Then I thought I may not have recognized him in those smart clothes. He must have noticed my eyes checking him out.
“Yeah, you see, I don’t wear those ragged clothes no more,” he said fixing his red shirt tucked into his beige trousers.  
“You’re looking sharp. Did you win the lottery or something?”  
“I guess you could say that,” he said with a sly smile.  
“I haven’t seen you in downtown since I started working again with the kids,” I said wanting to change subject.  
“I’ve been doing some business here in Paradise for a while now. I was getting too old to live on the streets, if you know what I mean. Nobody was giving me money or food no more. Then one of the juvenile officers found out I had turned 18 and said that he was just waiting to catch me doing something wrong to send me to jail. So I moved back here and started to work for some guys I knew. Now I have my own business.”  
“Have you been playing a lot of soccer?” I asked trying to go back to familiar grounds. “You used to love it. You used to play all the time in those days.”  
“No, I don’t have much time for that no more. We used to have a lot fun back then, huh?! Do you still play on the street with the kids?”  
“Nope, they seem to have lost interest in that. Too busy after crack, you know.”  
“Yeah. Remember that night you spent with us, in that abandoned house we used to live in? We barbecued some bad meat at 4 in the morning, drank some cheap wine, then chatted till dawn.”  
“Yes, I remember,” I said noticing a young man lurking around us. Pelé saw the guy too. “I can’t talk right now,” he said to the guy. “I really need to talk to you, Pelé, just for a minute,” the young man said approaching us.  
“Not now!” Pelé said firmly. He looked at me uneasily.  
“I really need to buy a stone, now, please,” the young man said grabbing Pelé’s arm.  
“I need to get going,” I said offering my hand to Pelé. “We’ll catch up later.”  
“Okay,” he said pushing the young man away from him and shaking my hand.  
I could hear Pelé scolding the young man as I walked away hurriedly. The next thing I heard about Pelé, at the end of that year, 1996, is that he’d been shot dead over a territorial dispute in Paradise.

Notes

1. Translation of Vinicius de Moraes’s poem.
2. My master’s thesis (2002), “The fans’ greatest love: Torcida jovem amor maior,” was a critical ethnographic project, where I worked...
with soccer-fan members of the fan club Torcida Jovem, in Campinas, Brazil.

3. This is a slang expression for “looking for trouble.”

4. Ponte Preta’s biggest rival, whose stadium is just a couple of blocks away.

5. On this day, Guarani and Ponte Preta were playing different teams at the same time. The fans met in their way out of those games.

6. “Near Guarani’s stadium, the Ponte Preta fan, João Fernandes, fired four shots toward Guarani’s fans. The shots reached Wagner Lopes (23) and Luis Gouveia (24). Wagner had surgery and is doing well. Luis is already at home and is well too. João, who was imprisoned by the police, said that he was just defending himself (Lancenet: O campeão da rede, Brazilian newspaper, 09/11/01. http://lancenet.ig.com.br/).

7. Ellis and Bochner (2000) go on to state: “a personal narrative, the project of telling a life, is a response to the human problem of authorship, the desire to make sense and preserve coherence over the course of our lives. Our personal identities seem largely contingent on how well we bridge the remembered past with the anticipated future to provide what Stephen Crites (1971) calls ‘a continuity of experience over time’” (p. 746).

8. According to Russell (2002), purple leisure activities are those that participants enjoy but are harmful to society.

9. In short, a feminist communitarian ethic, according to Denzin (1997, p. 277), is a model that “seeks to produce narratives that ennable human experience while facilitating civic transformations in the public (and private) spheres. This ethic promotes universal human solidarity. It ratifies the dignity of the self and the value of human life. It is committed to human justice and the empowerment of interacting individuals. It works to build covenant rather than contractual bonds within the local community.”
Chapter 6

BETWEENNESS IN SEXUALITY

STORY 9

A Place for Recovery

Wednesday, February 14th, 1996. Marga and I had just crossed Rosario Square and were walking down Barão Street looking for Katia when we ran into Jaca. It was the end of the afternoon, and this narrow street in the middle of downtown was crowded with cars and pedestrians, people leaving their jobs, people going to shops and bakeries, some heading for the many bars and cafes with tables outdoors, and who knows what else. Marga introduced me to Jaca as a fellow street educator and then told me they had known each other since he started sleeping in the streets of downtown. “When we were still happy with glue,” he said with a sly smile.

“And we thought that was bad,” Marga said.

“Yeah... sometimes I wonder what’s gonna come after crack,” Jaca said affecting an air of preoccupation.

“Don’t even joke about that,” she said gently punching him in the arm, and they laughed.

Marga wanted to know where Jaca had been for the last few months. She had heard he had gone to a Catholic recovery center in the south of Brazil. As we stood between two cars parked along the sidewalk, Jaca, a young man almost leaving his teen years behind, told Marga it was impossible for him to quit smoking crack without leaving town, where most of the people he knew...
were somehow involved with drugs. “The streets crack you down,” he said with a smile, rubbing his shirtless thin chest.

He went on telling us in his streetwise vernacular how he had found this place in the south, in a rural area, away from urban centers, through the local Catholic organization. He said he’d gotten clean and stayed that way for over 3 months, that he was happier and wanted to settle down in that area to start a new life. But he got the news that his girlfriend, who had stayed in the streets of downtown when he left, was pregnant with his child, and so he came back to be with her.

“And things are getting worse now,” Jaca said.

“Yeah, I heard it’s getting cheaper,” I said timidly.

“And it’s easier to find it,” added Marga.

“That, too,” said Jaca looking at Marga.

“Crack makes the kids more desperate to get money,” said Marga.

“That, too,” Jaca said.

“So they get into more trouble,” said Marga.

“That, too.”

“What are you smiling about?” Marga, looking a little surprised, asked Jaca.

“Nothing,” he said, laughing some more.

Marga crossed her arms in front of her chest, tilted her head to the side, placed her big brown eyes on Jaca’s, and smiled with one corner of her mouth.

“It’s nothing really, Marga,” Jaca said, “it’s just that I heard Celi got into some real trouble with some dealers the other day.”

“What kind of trouble?” Marga’s face tightened up suddenly. I think my face took a similar expression. We had just been talking about the dangers of getting too involved with crack dealers, how the kids would be entering yet another universe where all sorts of abuse went uncared for by public eyes. Most of the kids we knew, if not all of them, were already constantly harassed by the police and private security guards downtown, even when they, the kids, were not breaking the law. To make things worse, the kids’ apparent preference for language normally considered foul, and the increasing number of elderly people losing their wallets and purses to kids’ quick hands, didn’t exactly gain any sympathy from downtown residents and workers. And now they were beginning to owe considerable amounts to drug dealers. Unlike the police’s and security guards’, we didn’t know the dealers’ methods of retaliation; and not knowing had made us fill our minds with terrifying images. Now Jaca was about to fill our hearts with some of the same images.

“Celi was gang-raped by a bunch of dealers down in the Old Quarter,” Jaca said now unsmiling. “She went there after crack, and they did her right there, in front of some guys I know. That’s how I heard ‘bout it. Some
of my buddies saw the dealers raping her, one after the other. And they said they’re gonna do it again if she don’t pay ‘em."

Marga and I stood there in silence, looking down. I glanced at Marga out of the corner of my eyes and saw a tear coming down her cheek. Jaca made a sound and we looked at him.

“You know how she is, Marga. She’s got a big mouth, disses everybody with her tough-guy attitude. She started pulling that shit again with the dealers, and they decided to teach her a lesson or something like that. If I is Celi, I’d be very careful out here on the streets these days, you know, till those dealers get some bigger problems and forget ‘bout her, that she owes them money and got a big mouth. Jaca patted his bare brown chest again. “Well, I gotta go now.”

“When did that happen?” Marga asked.

“I don’t know. It coulda been this past Sunday, or Saturday, maybe Friday.”

“Stay away from the damn stone, you hear me?!” Marga said to him firmly, but more like a friend than a parent would.

“No worries, Marga, I’m taking it easy now,” he said lifting his chin a little.

“At least keep it away from your girlfriend. You know what crack can do to pregnant women and their babies?”

“No worries, Marga, we’re keeping it clean.” Then he shook hands with me, kissed Marga goodbye, and left with a smile, his front teeth brownish like teeth in a mouth that smokes a lot of crack. Marga and I stood there watching Jaca look smaller by the step.

“Celi . . .” Marga covered her mouth with her hands. “The bastards!” she said looking at nothing, her eyes moist again.

I put a hand on her shoulder and we slowly started to walk to nowhere. I put my hand back in my pocket and we walked like this for a while. “Do you think this is why Celi suddenly seems to want to go to that recovery place?” I asked after a long silence.

“Maybe . . . she looked scared last time I talked to her. Poor girl. . . .” Marga’s face was twitching all over, sometimes her eyes, sometimes the corners of her mouth, other times the jaw muscles.

Marga and I had been trying to get Celi into some sort of recovery program for a few weeks then, but always without success. At first Celi looked for Marga and asked her to find a place. Marga was excited, saying that it was the first time that Celi had asked for help of that kind, and I joined her in trying to find a place in town. The options weren’t many, especially because Celi had already spent time in the two religious shelters for children and adolescent drug addicts in Campinas. And neither Celi nor the folks working in the religious shelters wanted to spend time together again.

Marga had heard about a recovery place near Rio de Janeiro, the SN Center, where another girl she knew—Marta was her name—had spent
time and gotten clean. Marga had tried to talk Celi into going to that place a few times. In the beginning Celi had said a firm no, that she didn’t want to go anywhere out of town, that she wanted to be around her friends. Marga persisted and Celi then said she would go. Celi wanted to know what kind of place this SN Center was. When Marga told her that it was in Rio de Janeiro (I noticed that Marga didn’t specify if it was the city or the state), Celi opened a big smile and said she would go. Celi continued to drill Marga with questions about the place, but when she heard it was not in Rio de Janeiro City but state, and that it was on a farm, with cows, chicken, sugar cane, and miles of orchards and vegetable gardens for the patients to care for as part of recovery, Celi angrily told us off. Neither Marga nor I saw her for days after that. Marga called the SN Center anyway but was told that nothing could be done until Celi decided to approach them, that the first step was to go to an interview at the Center’s office in town.

Before I realized it, during our aimless walk Marga and I had arrived at the cathedral, in the heart of downtown. We sat down near the top of its many front steps next to some old ladies and men, a young couple exchanging silence and looks, and some homeless men lying down in the shade at the bottom of the steps. I saw some young kids running after a half-filled party balloon, their feet shoeless, and Celi came to my mind again. I’d run into her the day before, Tuesday, in front of the Brazil Bank a block east of the cathedral, and I’d thought it a little strange when she told me she wanted to go to the Center, with cows, vegetables, and everything else. I forced myself to take it seriously, but it didn’t work. She asked me what she had to do to go there. I told her without details.

“We need to get her out of here,” Marga said breaking the silence, getting up and starting to walk fast again. I followed her. We went straight to the small house she and her husband use to run their Reading Club business—and where the street educators of the National Movement for Street Kids meet every now and then. Marga started to make phone calls to people at the SN Recovery Center, to friends working for the City Hall’s Children’s Council, and to anybody who she thought could help get a spot at the SN Center for Celi, and fast.

In less than two days, Celi and I were on the bus to Rio de Janeiro, with a change of busses in Sao Paulo City. We got on the bus in Sao Paulo at midnight. Celi slept the whole 6-hour ride from Sao Paulo to Rio. I had to stay awake the whole time for fear of not waking up in time to get off some 50 miles before Rio de Janeiro City. To keep myself awake in the hot and stiff air of the full sleeping bus, I started to think about the hassles of the last two days . . .

The day after Marga and I talked to Jaca, I went downtown early in the afternoon trying to find Celi. I wanted to talk to her right after she woke up, when she was usually slow and uncracked. At 1 p.m., I arrived
at Rosario Square, one of the areas where she had been sleeping lately. I looked for her in the usual places: under the metal trailer that served as a newsstand for a local Spiritist publisher, behind the popcorn cart, on top of the marquee that went around the Square in the shape of a U, behind the wooden benches where retired folks sit down to talk, play cards, or share silence. Not finding her or any of the other kids, I thought of walking to Marga’s apartment building. I had heard that some of the girls were sleeping on a hidden corner in front of the building sometimes. Marga’s place was six blocks from Rosario Square, in a quiet narrow street on the outskirts of the downtown area, and I headed that way.

When I got there, I saw two bodies lying next to each other on the corner and recognized Kleo and Regi. I was surprised to see Regi there. She had been living with her older sister for over 2 months, coming downtown only to go to her job, as a maid for a Baptist family, and to see the team of therapists working with young recovering drug addicts down at the municipal Children’s Health Center. I called her name softly at first, then louder and even louder, but she didn’t move. Her thick curly hair was neatly pulled back in a ponytail, her clothes were clean and looking new, and she still had some red nail polish on her fingernails. The black skin of her face and arms looked smooth and cared for, and I figured that must have been her first night back on the streets. I bought a plate of rice, beans, and sundried meat to-go in a self-service restaurant across the street, walked back to where they were sleeping, and set the plate down between their heads. It didn’t take long for them to open their eyes, look at the plate of steaming food, and smile at me.

“Good morn . . . afternoon beauties,” I said returning their smiles.

“Hi tio Marcelo,” Kleo and Regi said almost at the same time.

“It must be late, I’m so hungry!” Kleo said sitting up. She picked up one of the plastic forks I’d stuck in the pile of rice and started to eat.

I looked at Regi as she sat up rubbing her face and eyes. She caught my eyes staring at her and turned away, smiling. “Hey Regi, why don’t you get a bite? I bet you haven’t eaten since you left your sister’s house,” I said still staring at her, with a smile as wide as I could manage.

“I’m still living there, tio, don’t look at me like that,” Regi said putting her hands to the sides of her hips. “I hooked up with some of the girls last night on my way home from work, you know, I haven’t seen them in a long time and I wanted to have a good time with them, and . . . here I am,” she said shrugging. “But I’m going home today, it’s true! I’ll go home tonight, I promise you,” she said now pursing her lips and looking at me out of the corner of her eyes.

“I’m not saying anything, Regi, eat something.” But she was right, I was reproaching her behind my smile. I didn’t want to, but couldn’t help it. She was the one, out of all the kids, I thought could find a dignified life, get out of the streets of downtown. Looking back, I guess I was upset because
she showed me how much more complex the business of getting out of
the street really is.

“Have you guys seen Celi?” I asked after a while.

“Yep. She got picked up by the Juvenile officers this morning, just
before we came here to sleep,” Kleo said eating, without looking at me.

“You didn’t sleep the whole night?”

“No, Celi was too scared of the dealers to fall asleep in the dark, you
know, so we kept on the move the whole night, trying to have fun here
and there. When the day came and the streets were getting crowded with
people, we started to head this way. That’s when the officers saw us from
their van, they stopped, and started to chase us. There were two of them.
We ran fast but they caught Celi. She’s probably at the Juvenile Court
now.” Kleo stopped chewing and looked at me. “Are you gonna get her
out, tio?”

“I’ll try. Do you know why they were after her?”

“Who knows . . . maybe somebody called them saying that we were
disturbing the peace, who knows, it’s always something or the other,” said
Kleo.

“We’re trying to take her to that place in Rio, you know the one on a
farm?” I said.

“Yeah, where Marta was,” said Regi licking the meat sauce off her
fingers.

“That’s right,” I said.

“Can you take me there too, tio?” asked Kleo.

“You want to go now?” I asked.

“No, not now. Next week maybe?”

The three of us looked at each other for a brief moment and then
laughed. They always had some business to finish in the streets before they
could go straight, it seemed to me. We talked a little longer until they were
done eating, and I left for the Juvenile Court.

When I got there, I saw Celi sitting across the desk from an officer who
was typing some kind of report, making something up, I thought. I asked
to see one of the social workers, saying it was about Celi. While I waited,
I walked over to where Celi was, greeted the officer, and asked her if she
still wanted to go.

“Of course, tio Marcelo. I was trying to tell them that and they took
me here anyways. . . . I’m starving,” she said affecting an intensity I had
only seen when she was asking pedestrians for money, rapping her spiel
about a little brother or sister starving. I stroked her hair and looked at the
officer sitting in front of us.

“She told me she was going to a recovery place this week, but I didn’t
believe her, you know, she’s said that before and the next day we see her
causing trouble around downtown,” said the officer inserting an empty
form in the typewriter.
“This time is for real, isn’t it Celi?” I said looking down at her.
She moved her head up and down several times looking at the officer.
“[I came here to get authorization from the judge and talk to the social
workers],” I said. The officer looked up at me from the typewriter, then
looked at Celi and went back to his typing without saying a word.
Just then the clerk at the front desk came over and told me that I could
go in. I asked Celi to come with me, she looked at the officer, and he nodded
yes. After I had given a rather long explanation to the social worker about
the situation, she said she was glad I was doing something for Celi.
“We don’t know what else to do for her. We have tried everything
we could, but she always lets us down,” the social worker said looking at
Celi, who sat there quietly, staring at the floor. “I will send a request for
an authorization up to the judge. You can wait upstairs by his chamber,”
she said getting up.
After more than an hour of waiting for the authorization, Celi was
growing impatient, threatening to leave every 5 minutes or so. I was getting
impatient with her impatience, wanting to remind her that it was for her
own benefit and that controlling the drive for immediate gratification was
one of the first steps to recovery. Instead, I went outside to get her a hot
dog and a soda, and kept repeating to myself that this was the most difficult
stage, that if I could keep her on my side until we arrived at the recovery
place in Rio, she would be on her way to recovery from crack addiction.
And perhaps be free from the street, and real nightmares.
After I got the authorization allowing me to take Celi to another state,
and after Celi heard everyone in the building say to her that this was her
last chance to change her life before she turned 18 and was sent to jail, we
walked out of the Court and took a bus to the Reading Club, where Marga
was waiting for us with the news that she had gotten an appointment for
an interview with the SN people the following morning. The rest of the
afternoon Celi stayed there with Marga. We wanted to keep her away from
the streets, lest she change her mind and disappear again. In the meantime I
went around from office to office in the City Hall gathering signatures and
documents assuring that the Children’s Council would pay for Celi’s stay
at the center.
That night Celi slept at Marga’s apartment, breaking an unwritten but
highly respected law that prevented street educators from giving shelter to
street kids under any circumstances. Needless to say, this later caused a lot
of jealousy and hard feelings from some of the other kids toward Marga
and her husband when the word got around, through Celi herself.
The following day, Friday, early in the morning, another street educa-
tor and I took Celi to the interview at the SN office in Campinas. There was
more waiting and lots of impatience, and I kept buying popsicles for Celi.
But by noon, we were leaving the SN office with a spot guaranteed for Celi
at the recovery place in Rio, as soon as we could get her there. Marga and
I spent the afternoon calling or going to several charity institutions around downtown, asking for clothes, shoes, and other stuff Celi was going to need in this new phase of her life, like having her own toothbrush.

Except for the few times she complained about waiting for appointments, Celi was very agreeable during those unusual two days. She seemed calm, and was definitely quieter than her usual self out in the streets. Marga thought it was a sign that Celi really wanted to get clean this time. I agreed with Marga then, but now, as I try to keep myself awake inside this quiet and stuffy bus, I look at Celi sleeping in the seat next to mine and wonder whether she will ever get used to a farming life, whether she’s even mature enough to follow the 12-step program we found for her. But it’s 5 A.M. and time to stop wondering and get off the bus, almost 50 miles from Rio de Janeiro City.

Celi and I took another bus, on the other side of the road, which left the main highway and started onto dirt roads cutting the green fields of cattle and sugar-cane farms. We got off the bus near the recovery center but still had to walk for several minutes before reaching the farm’s entrance. Celi and I stood there, looking around the hills and the vast plantation.

“Is this the place, tio?” Celi asked me frowning.

“Yes! Isn’t this a beauty?” I said looking at the sun rising in the horizon, thinking that I would like to spend some time surrounded by all that nature.

“I don’t like this . . . where is the town?” she asked looking around without smiling.

“The nearest town is several miles from here.” I looked at her seriously. “Staying away from cities, urban life, you know, changing the scenario is important for the beginning of recovery.”

She looked at me and said she wasn’t staying there. “I think we’ll have to wake them up,” I said unlatching the wooden gate, grabbing her bags, and heading for a little white house 50 yards uphill. Celi followed me; I didn’t look back and kept hoping she wouldn’t stall on the way. I woke up a man who turned out to be the manager of the place. He was friendly, said he was expecting us early in the morning, and made us coffee. He must have seen the hesitation in Celi’s face and in less than 10 minutes he had a sponsor for Celi and was already escorting me out of the farm, toward the way I had just come from.

Back in Campinas, some people seemed happy, others just relieved, that Celi had stayed in Rio. I was asked by the kids to re-tell the stories of our trip to Rio several times, and Dalva, Grace, and Kleo asked me to take them there, too. But in less than 10 days, Marga got a call from the manager of the recovery place saying that we needed to go pick Celi up. He said she was not adjusting, that she was actually causing trouble there, getting into fights with the other “guests” and not doing her tasks around...
the farm. When Marga tried to reason with him, arguing that she had no other place to go other than the streets, he said that Celi had already tried to run away, and that she would be in even more trouble if she went to Rio de Janeiro, the nearest big city around. I left for Rio before the end of the day.

“Hey tio Marcelo! I knew you would come to get me,” Celi said hugging me tight.

“What happened, Celi?” I asked unhugging her.

“I don’t want to stay here anymore, I’m feeling fine already, haven’t smoked crack for almost a month.”

“Ten days,” I said keeping a straight face.

“I feel like I don’t need recovery anymore. I reached serenity already!” she said smiling large.

I smiled back at her, shaking my head. Then I saw the manager coming toward us with two large bags in his hands.

“Perhaps she isn’t ready for this yet,” he said shaking my hand and setting the bags by Celi. “She is welcome to come back when she feels she is ready.”

“I’m okay, tio, I swear. I won’t go back to the streets. I’ll go straight to my aunt’s house. I don’t want to smoke crack no more. I will get a job and go back to school. And I’ll just go downtown to visit Dalva and the other kids.” Then she grabbed her bags and started to walk toward the dirt road.

At the beginning of our trip back to Campinas, Celi told me only good things about the farm, her sponsor, and the activities. Then she started asking about the girls and boys in the streets, saying that they should do like her and get clean before it’s too late. I told her that things had gotten worse, more violent, since she’d left, and I wasn’t lying. Celi didn’t say much after that other than complaining that the way back was much longer than the way from Campinas to Rio. I drew her a map to show that the distance was the same, that the roads run parallel all the way, but she didn’t buy it. I then told her that if she fell asleep, we would get there faster, and that seemed to make more sense to her.

We arrived in Campinas at 10 p.m., more than 24 hours after I had left for Rio. I woke her up and asked where we were going to take the bus to her aunt’s house.

“You don’t need to come with me, tio, you have done enough for me,” she said looking concerned.

“I insist. It’s late and your aunt may not let you in the house. I want to explain to her what’s happening.”

“No need for that, really,” Celi said and started to walk toward downtown.

“Where are you going?” I asked, grabbing one of the bags and running to catch up with her.
“I just want to say Hi to Dalva before I go to my aunt’s.”

“Celi . . .”

“Don’t worry, tio, I just want to say Hi,” she said without looking at me.

We walked in silence to the municipal bus terminal, where many of the kids hang around at night, and where Casa Abará used to be. She stopped in front of the former Open House and asked me to go inside to talk to someone about leaving her bags full of clothes there for a while. I did what she asked and when I came back out Celi was gone, only her two bags were still there. Marcio, the resident assistant in the center, who had come back out with me to talk to Celi, shook his head and chuckled, “That’s the Celi I know. I’ll keep her bags here, she’ll come for them tomorrow.” I walked home slowly.

The next day Marga told me Celi didn’t have an aunt in town. Two days later I saw Celi walking down Rosario Square with Dalva and Kleo. She was wearing the same clothes she had on the last time I’d seen her, only they were dirtier and her new tennis shoes gone. The same day I learned from other kids how happy they were with the stuff Celi had exchanged for her two bags of clothes.

ACT 6

MADE FOR SEX

Mister Miguel

I was less than 1 year old when my family moved to this new neighborhood. It was a city project for low-income families to achieve the dream of their own house. The neighborhood was in the boarder of the city, surrounded by farms on the west and by old poor houses (where the real poor ones lived) by east and south. My parents bought one house, and my grandmother also bought one a block north from ours. After a year, my dad could not pay our mortgage so we lost the house and went to live with my grandma, my dad’s mother. After another year or so, my mom could not get along well with my grandma, and then we move to another part of town, paying rent, of course. I was 3 maybe 4.

I have only two memories of this time. First I remember the day, when my dad brought a TV home. It was a black and white one and it stayed 1 month with us, until we had to sell it to pay the bills. The other memory that I had is about the day that Mister Miguel’s wife passed way. I can recall the image of walking in the sidewalk and seeing Baby Rejane crying through the small window. Mister Miguel lived three houses east from us. His family was the only black one in the new houses. I remember my
grandma explaining to me that Rosa, Miguel’s wife was called by Jesus, and so she was going to live in the heaven. “But, who is going to take care of Rejane? I asked. “Life” said my grandma. I did not get her answer, but I did not dare to ask for more.

Later in life, my parents got divorced, and my sister and I came back to that neighborhood to live with my grandma. It was a strange place. There were two set of not so new houses. Not for people aspiring middle-class status but for people who used to have that status. Those houses were surrounded by old smaller ones, the kinds that were put together without any kind of order. They weren’t painted, and one could see the variety of material had been used in their construction. Roni’s (you and I are going to meet him) house was a good example. He had nine brothers and sisters, and so his house was always in a construction stage. When I moved back, his family was adding a new room in the back, which was half cement and half pressed wood. I was 7 or 8, do not know for sure. In my first morning there, I went out to make new friends. I met Roni, one of my buddies in the next years. We began to talk, measuring ourselves the way kids do when they meet a new possible friend, when a group of old kids (12/13 years old) headed by a huge one, passed running in front of Roni and me.

Celita

“Who are they?”

“The big one is Juca Baleia (baleia means “whale” in Portuguese), the others are kids from around here.” Told me Roni.

“What are they doing?”

“Come and see.” And Roni begins to run toward the kids.

I could see Baleia and the others arriving at Mister Miguel’s house. The house, as well the people who lived in it (Miguel’s family), were pretty much beaten up, life had not been easy on them both. They kicked the door and entered the house with Roni and me following them with a “safe distance.” Mister Miguel had four children, Rosa 15 (named after her mom), Little Miguel 14, Celita 13, and Baby Rejane, who was 4.

When we got inside the living room two or three kids were beating little Miguel.

“Stop crying your fucking negão, or I am gonna put my dick in your mouth, motherfucker!” Said one of the kids to Little Miguel.

Baby Rejane, she was not a baby anymore, was crying in one corner. The others were all over Rosa and Celita. Some were masturbating, and others were undressing the girls. Celita’s breasts were outside her bra. It was the first time that I was seeing a woman/girl breast. I had my eyes fixed on them. And I was hearing things like:

“Come on; give me your little pussy. You gonna be a whore. It’s a matter of time. Why don’t begin with me. I gonna be nice with you.”

The girls keep fighting and the kids are getting mad.