

COUP:  
ANTHOLOGY-MANIFESTO  
SELECTED EXCERPTS

*by* MARCIA TIBURI,  
ANNITA COSTA MALUFE,  
ANA RÜSCHE,  
& DENISE BOTTMANN

*Translated from the Portuguese by* GREICE HOLLERAN

PREFACE OF *COUP: ANTHOLOGY-MANIFESTO*

There is no post-coup poetry. There is no poetry in the wake of the coup. Poetry cannot confront the coup. Poetry cannot protect us from the coup.

Poetry doesn't get in line at the coup like it's paying overdue bank accounts, poetry doesn't carry the coffin of democracy in a coup-drawn hearse. Poetry is not a prayer for the coup. Poetry is not a procession, it's not like flowers at a wake to make death less ugly. It is not a spectacle, it is not weeping, it is not comfort, it is not the way out. And the coup is not death.

Because death is more dignified than the coup.

Poetry is not above the coup. Poetry is not below the coup. Poetry cannot explain the coup. It is not to endure the coup. Poetry is not a balm to soothe the coup's burnt feet atop democracy's extinguished embers.

There is no poetry that connects a citizen to the coup. There is no poetry that makes the coup conceivable. There is no poetry to dialogue with the coup. The coup is not measurable, the coup is not immeasurable. Poetry is not a gauge of the coup.

No poetic theory can account for the coup. There cannot be any theory to understand the coup. A political philosophy of the coup. An aesthetic of the coup. The coup cannot be explained by science, by medicine or botany, by anthropology or psychology, by geology or quantum physics, by cartography or palmistry for the coup's stricken or the ones who

struck them. Poetry is not an expression that survives the coup because science failed to prevent a heart attack by examining the coup's anatomy.

The thing is, poetry has nothing to do with the coup. The coup doesn't recognize poetry. The coup appears when poetry disappears.

The coup is where poetry isn't.

It is where there is no nakedness.

There is no poetry where there is the coup. Poetry doesn't converse with the coup, doesn't agree with it, doesn't succumb to it. Poetry doesn't get lost, doesn't surrender, doesn't interfere, doesn't do any work on behalf of the coup. It doesn't give the coup a friendly handshake. Poetry will not die for the coup, for however many coups the coup can produce. Poetry persists and lends us a hand in writing this text, a text that throws itself like a stone against the transparent glass the coup erects as it disrupts life to make room for specters.

There is no poetics of the coup. No elaboration on the coup is sufficient; we will never understand the coup, for as much as the coup is against everyone, it is against us, every single one of us. We sensed the coup without knowing where it happened, in which part of our body—the sloping stone wall, the ceiling—we felt that venomous sting, that kick, that stab, that shot, that knockout punch.

The coup is huge, and it could become gigantic. The coup is the size of the misery it causes. Even if the coup comes from outside, from below, from above, from behind,

the coup reaches all of us within. In our essence, where body and spirit are one and the same. Poetry can have only one relationship to the coup. It doesn't matter when, it doesn't matter how, the relationship that poetry has to the coup is always the same: poetry is against the coup.

There is no post-coup poetry. There is only anti-coup poetry. The coup surges, and poetry insurges. Anti-coup poetry is spittle, stoning, punching, kicking, flaming tires, blocked roads, general strike.

Poetry is more than text—it seeks to open the path to revolutionary life with the dangerous arms of the written word.

MARCIA TIBURI holds a degree in philosophy and arts, as well as a master and doctorate in philosophy (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, 1999). She is the author of numerous books on philosophy and the humanities, in addition to several novels. In 2015 she published *Como conversar com um fascista: reflexões sobre o cotidiano autoritário brasileiro* ("How to talk to a fascist: reflections on daily life in authoritarian Brazil") (Record, 2015). She is a columnist for *Cult* magazine.

my words beat on the walls  
 anyone home?  
 which are the greatest doubts facing a closed door  
 facing a wall we would just have to  
 ask how to tear it down how  
 to build it these fractured ruins of an old divide  
 today nothing is split down the middle nothing but  
 the same order the same history of everything  
 anyone home? someone to hear us when we scream  
 barefoot in the hallway with wet hair  
 anyone hear us?  
 my words beat on the hollow walls i hear  
 the echo of my words the coup in the void the  
 greatest doubts facing a wall the only thing to do  
 is tear it down but the words echo in the void they themselves  
 hollow  
 senseless coups  
 if making sense is what matters they miss the mark:  
 they lose what matters if they don't make sense  
 in a world turned lonely in a world that  
 contemplates ruins but something was there before  
 to tear down a wall to knock down the closed door  
 a world was waiting behind it  
 today the words beat on the walls  
 strike the coup in the void  
 and is there anyone  
 left to listen?

*Que peut-on contre un mur sinon l'abattre?*<sup>1</sup>

Edmond Jabès

1. From Jabès's *Le livre des questions* (1963), which was written in response to his exile from his native Egypt and the anti-semitism he was met with when he fled to Paris. It translates roughly to, "What can one do against a wall but tear it down?"

minhas palavras batem nas paredes  
 alguém em casa?  
 quais são as dúvidas maiores diante da porta fechada  
 diante de um muro só teríamos de  
 perguntar como abatê-lo como  
 fazê-lo esses cacos ruínas de uma velha divisão  
 hoje nada é partido ao meio nada além de  
 uma mesma ordem mesma história de todos  
 alguém em casa? alguém que nos ouça quando gritamos  
 descalços no corredor com os cabelos molhados  
 alguém nos ouvindo?  
 minhas palavras batem nas paredes vazias ouço  
 o eco das minhas palavras o golpe no vazio as  
 dúvidas maiores diante de um muro a única coisa a fazer  
 abatê-lo mas as palavras ecoam no vazio elas mesmas  
 vazias  
 golpes sem sentido  
 se o sentido é aquilo que importa elas perdem isto:  
 aquilo que importa perdem se perdem sem sentido  
 em um mundo tornado único em um mundo que  
 contempla ruínas mas alguma coisa havia antes  
 abater um muro arrombar a porta fechada  
 um mundo esperava por detrás  
 hoje as palavras batem nas paredes batem  
 golpeiam o oco das paredes  
 e alguém ainda  
 poderia ouvir?

*Que peut-on contre un mur sinon l'abattre?*

Edmond Jabès

*ANNITA COSTA MALUFE, poet and professor, was born in São Paulo in 1975. She fears silent dictatorships and microfascisms. Education, in her eyes, is the only way out.*

*ANNITA COSTA MALUFE, poeta e professora, nasceu em São Paulo em 1975. Tem medo das ditaduras silenciosas e dos microfascismos. Só vê aída na educação.*

**on the sky that now falls on our heads**

i tell you, a coup will not abolish chance  
will not abolish luck, bad fortune and flowers

here we are in the magic of the hoax  
of standing like a block of ice in the sun  
of shaking off the dust, of grasping water with a sieve

i tell you, this is no place for beginners  
if you can't take the heat, stay out  
don't mess with the anthill<sup>2</sup>

if the sky falls  
we stay

*ANA RÜSCHE tries to always be in the streets,  
listening. It doesn't always work. There are days  
so astonishing that she takes refuge in her head-  
phones. Sweet dreams also bring fear.*

2. From "Pisa Ligeiro," a popular chant in Brazilian protests. The full chant is, "Pisa Ligeiro, pisa ligeiro, quem não pode com formiga, não assanha/atiça o formigueiro," which translates roughly to: "Tread lightly, tread lightly, if you can't handle the ant, don't mess with the anthill." Typically, a protest leader will shout "if you can't handle the ant," and the rest of the crowd will reply "don't mess with the anthill!" The chant originated from protests for the protection of indigenous land, but has also become popularized with other causes.

**sobre o céu que agora cai em nossas cabeças**

te digo, um golpe não abolirá o acaso  
não abolirá a sorte, a má fortuna e as flores

tamo aqui na mágica do embuste  
de ficar em pé como pedra de gelo ao sol  
de sacudir a poeira, de segurar a água com a peneira

te digo, aqui não é lugar pra principiante  
se não guenta, não desce  
não assanha o formigueiro

se o céu cai  
a gente fica

*ANA RÜSCHE sempre tenta estar nas ruas escutando. Nem sempre dá certo. Tem dias em que o assombro é tanto que se refugia nos fones de ouvido. Sonhos bonitos também dão medo.*

Advanced course in political philosophy.

Today's theme: "Power and the masses."

- You deceived us, you deceived us!
- Me? You're the ones who deceived yourselves.
- No, we believed you!
- But I wasn't talking to you.

*DENISE BOTTMANN, who believes in the idea of good and tries to defend the good, today, is fighting against the coup in our country.*

Curso avançado de filosofia política.

Tema de hoje: “O poder e as massas.”

- Você nos enganou, você nos enganou!
- Eu? Vocês é que se enganaram.
- Não, nós acreditamos em você!
- Mas eu não estava falando com vocês.

*DENISE BOTTMANN, que acredita na ideia de bem e julga que defender o bem, hoje, é lutar contra o golpe em nosso país.*

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: In the summer of 2016, during the impeachment proceedings for Brazil's then-president Dilma Rousseff, I found a PDF of *GOLPE: Antologia-Manifesto* in an unassuming blog post, free to the public (the original editor was Punks Pôneis, and the book was published in print in 2017 by Nosotros Editorial). The collection includes the work of 137 Brazilian contributors, all protesting the unconstitutional removal of Rousseff from office, and was organized by Ana Rüsche, Carla Kinzo, Lilian Aquino, Lubi Prates, and Stefanni Marion. The selected excerpts include a translation of the preface, written by philosopher Marcia Tiburi, and poems by Rüsche, Annita Costa Malufe, and Denise Bottmann.

Although the 2016 Brazilian coup d'état was cloaked in political respectability, the removal of Rousseff, a member of the Brazilian Workers' Party, from office and her replacement with vice president Michel Temer, a member of the center-right Brazilian Democratic Movement Par-

ty, was a violent act intended to put the government back into the hands of conservatives.

"Our central aim was to coin the word 'coup,'" said Rüsche. "The reason is that many social actors began to construct a narrative, describing the whole absurd process simply as 'impeachment,' a narrative to normalize the debacle. There was an impeachment, yes, but the legal basis to this day remains weak," as evidenced by the much more egregious offenses of Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil's current president and a far-right populist, whose power has yet to be questioned by the Brazilian government.

*COUP* is a radical literary action stationed in opposition to this narrative, an effort to give a voice not only to the millions who benefited from the programs instituted by Rousseff and the Workers' Party, but also to the marginalized people who lost their power when Rousseff lost hers. The flap copy of the print version was written by Rousseff herself, and though some contributors, including

Rüsche, are critical of her policies, “this concession of words to a woman stripped of her power is very special.” This is especially poignant given what Tiburi called the coup’s misogynistic character.

Rüsche commented that while the organizers invited as many poets as possible, they also sought out media figures “because it was important for the anthology to have some weight” against Brazilian mainstream media. For example, Tiburi’s work appears frequently in newspapers and magazines, and other contributors included Gregorio Duvivier (whose HBO show “Greg News” Rüsche compared to John Oliver’s “Last Week Tonight”), Laerte, Brazil’s most prominent cartoonist, and singer-songwriter Letrux. Of the 137 contributors, sixty-three are women, including two trans women. The authors represent a large racial diversity and, although many of the contributors are from the Rio de Janeiro-São Paulo axis, Rüsche said, a geographical diversity as well.

The individual pieces that comprise the anthology are short, averaging 1-2 pages per contributor, and cover a wide breadth of formats and literary styles, including poetry, prose, *poesia concreta*, *crônicas*, comics, and visual art. Jéssica Balbino’s contribution, “33 x 1,” juxtaposes the abuse Rousseff faced under Brazil’s military dictatorship in 1970 with the injustices endured in modern-day Brazil. The title refers to a sixteen-year-old girl raped by thirty-three men in Rio de Janeiro in May 2016. The constant refrain: “It’s a coup.” Laerte’s contribution includes a cartoon figure riding a bicycle (hands-free) made from the word “GOLPE” saying, “Look, ma! No military!” The text fosters a voice of dissent that remains necessary in Brazil’s current political climate, a cry from the oppressed, a call to action.

The word *golpe* was particularly challenging to translate into English, as it encompasses any number of meanings approximating strike, blow, or hit, in addition to coup d’état.

English, on the other hand, borrows the French *coup* and uses it almost exclusively in a political sense, making the semantic ambiguity of the Portuguese difficult to render. Compounding this is the number of forms *golpe* can take, including the verb *golpear* and the noun *golpista* (literally “scammer,” or one responsible for the coup). Because of *COUP*’s explicitly political objectives, I chose to translate *golpe* as “coup” in all instances (with the exception of *golpista* and *golpeados* in the preface), adjusting where I could to imply the polysemy of the original while keeping the political overtones clear to the Anglophone reader.

“Everything was done in a hurry, with a good deal of urgency and emotion,” Rüsche said of *COUP*, and I felt the same urgency with these translations. The 2016 coup, like our current pandemic, suddenly and drastically revealed in stark relief the systemic abuse and oppression inherent to late capitalism that were there all along, making works like *COUP*

exceptionally relevant for any country, in any language.

I am deeply indebted to the authors for allowing me to translate their words and patiently clarifying some of the trickier passages. I want to specifically thank Ana for providing commentary on the project and context to some of the references in her poem; Marcia for her knowledge and resources; Lubi Prates for helping connect me with the authors; and the editorial collective at *Barricade* for working so tirelessly to make this work available under such dire circumstances.

GREICE HOLLERAN writes poetry and translates literature from Portuguese to English. She is a graduate student in the Department of Portuguese at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.