

Rui Zink, ed. *Até ao Oriente & outros contos para Wenceslau de Moraes*. Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2004.

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This anthology of short stories by eight contemporary lusophone writers was commissioned in the context of Wenceslau de Moraes's 150th anniversary (1854-2004) celebrations, an initiative that took place in Portugal and Japan throughout 2004 and included a number of exhibitions, concerts, conferences, and publications under the auspices of Instituto Camões. The reader might thus be led to expect the habitual panoply of encomia that we find in most works on Moraes. The commissioner of the celebrations, Pedro Barreiros, however, seems to disclaim such intent in his brief introduction to the anthology when he suggests that the commemoration aims to inaugurate a new cycle in the study of Moraes's life and works. And, indeed, when we look at the IC's official website (<http://www.instituto-camoes.pt/iniciativas/wenceslau.htm>), the emphasis is not so much on Moraes the chronicler of Japanese folk traditions as on Moraes the connoisseur of the "real" Japan—the great visionary whose thinking allegedly foresaw the huge changes that would take place throughout the twentieth century. Yet, despite its innovative ambitions, the ideological agenda falls back on the stuffy old narrative of Portuguese "universal humanism" when it consistently claims for Moraes the single role of promoter of mutual understanding between the two civilisational poles, East and West. As usual, little or no attention is paid to the thematic and political contradictions and rifts in the writings of Moraes, in favour of a sanitized image fit for all times and political regimes.

The reader may nevertheless find in *Até ao Oriente* a brief respite from such worn-out clichés. In fact, most of the short stories that comprise the collection—apart perhaps from Mário Cláudio's more conventional approach in "Os Leques"—have little to do with the Moraes of literary critics and their accolades or with Moraes *tout court*, for that matter. As Rui Zink points out in his introductory note, the only thread or *leitmotif* linking the eight stories together is the free exploration of "the spirit of Moraes" [o espírito de

Moraes], a concept that the editor very conveniently (for him)—and provocatively—leaves undefined. Hence, each story gives a different fictional shape to the various themes, obsessions, and contradictions of Orientalist discourse: exile and home, fact and fantasy, center and margin, identity and alienation, orientation and disorientation. Paraphrasing Zink's account, we might say that Luís Cardoso asks the question: "what does somebody do when away from home?"; Inês Pedrosa reformulates: "what does a woman do when away from home?"; Richard Zenith adds a different nuance: "what makes somebody leave home?"; Eduardo Brum focuses instead on the question: "what makes somebody become afraid of leaving home?"; and Marilene Felinto wonders: "how long do you have to endure till you find yourself at home?" Based on a Japanese experience of his own, Jacinto Lucas Pires gives us an intriguing film noir and detective story. Possidónio Cachapa picks up a "translation" of a Bashô *haiku* by Moraes and writes on two lovers transfixed in a moment of time. Mário Cláudio, in turn, interrogates himself: "what is it like to live and write in Japanese *ink*?"

The reader will most probably finish the book without an answer to any of the above questions. Yet, it is well worth following the editor's advice: take each story as a small fragment of that huge "Map of the Orient" called fiction and (dis)orientate yourself in the best possible way.

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