

THE ISLAND CITY

Milton Hatoum

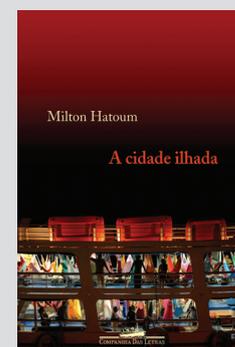
The short story, as the Argentine writer Julio Cortázar once said, is a small, perfect sphere made of words, which carries within it a single seed, just on the point of bursting open. This seed can be anything – a face, a place, an event – so long as the skilled hands of the good story-teller make it the centre from which the narrative sphere irradiates. The stories collected by Milton Hatoum in *The Island City* are exactly that: glimpses of lived experience, conveyed in tiny plots, succinctly told, in which everything takes on the greatest clarity – and the greatest power to illuminate.

The seeds of these stories could hardly be more diverse: the first visit to a brothel in 'Eve's Veranda'; a passage from Euclides da Cunha in 'A Letter from Bancroft'; the life of exiles in 'Barbara in Winter' or 'Meetings in the Peninsula'; the platonic love for an English girl in 'A Foreigner in our Street'. Discreetly, with all the experience at his command, Hatoum works on these fragments of memory until they acquire another character – how or when we will never know; products of chance and of the writer's life, they turn out to be perfect images of the course of our own desires and failures.

All of them, moreover, take us to the underground network that ties the stories of *The Island City* together. If desire – in the form of love, literature or travel – makes the characters expand their field of action and cross the barriers of childhood and morality, class and local origins, these same barriers never admit defeat, and only await the right moment to ambush the hero with a power deriving from history or from sexual desire, which brings them back to an unchanging centre: "Wherever I go, Manaus comes after me". Perfect spheres or dizzying spirals? Short as they are, Milton Hatoum's stories have the same expansive, explosive power already familiar to the reader of *Tale of a Certain Orient*, *The Brothers* and *Ashes of the Amazon*.

Born in Manaus in 1952, MILTON HATOUM studied architecture. He taught Brazilian literature at the University of Amazonas and at the University of California, Berkeley, before publishing his first novel, *Tale of a Certain Orient* (1989); it was awarded the Jabuti Prize for the best novel of the year. *The Brothers* (2000) also won the Jabuti and has been translated into eleven languages. With *Ashes of the Amazon* (2005), Hatoum again won the Jabuti, and the Bravo!, APCA and Portugal Telecom Prizes. In 2008 he published his first novella, *Orphans of Eldorado*. *The Island City* is his first collection of stories and was also published by Cotovia in Portugal.

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128 pages

14 x 21 cm

(5.6 x 8.3 in)

On *The Island City*

“The title of the anthology, *The Island City*, and the setting of almost all the stories, take us to Manaus, but the watery landscape of Amazonia's capital city, just as in Hatoum's novels, is a fictional space in which realistic description takes on a metaphorical dimension, full of individual, historical and literary tensions.”

Folha de S. Paulo

“Memory has become the foundation on which Milton Hatoum's writing is built; he stands out as one of the most important contemporary writers precisely for this reason – he transforms memories, his own or those of others, into a powerful compendium of human stories.”

O Estado de São Paulo

“They are like small stitches, somewhat frayed, in a torn tapestry; in the end, they invite the reader to a longer journey in the universe of Hatoum's other books. Also, they bring him even closer to the Latin American tradition of authors like Onetti, Borges, Piglia etc. – whose books are always split: divided between the historical truth of the world they live in and the fictional truth – emotionally constructed – of their literary universe.”

O Estado de São Paulo

“There are many names for a city, even if they share the same name – Manaus.”

O Globo, Prosa e Verso

On *Ashes of the Amazon*

“With *Ashes of the Amazon*, Milton Hatoum, though he has published relatively little, definitively establishes himself as a central figure in contemporary Brazilian literature.”

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

“Everything is connected; nobody is truly free. Those who try to escape are felled like trees... This is a powerful piece of writing.”

The Telegraph

On *The Brothers*

“*The Brothers*, translated from the Portuguese in 2002, confirmed Hatoum as one of South America's leading contemporary novelists.”

The Guardian