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Drinking water in the Sahara

Laís Amaral

Drinking water in the Sahara
Agrippina R. Manhattan

How to soften when surviving demands stiffening strategies?

Laís Amaral presented this question to me at a workshop he ministered at Parque Lage in 2018 and since then I have been paying attention to remember to drink water. Since the Portuguese invaders arrived in our waters, we have been running towards exhaustion. In the modern-colonial world we live in, I realize that the mechanisms of desertification correspond to the whitening and annihilation of subjectivities. Encircling forests and bodies led us to arid daily life. We learned early on how forest thinking is needed so that we can deal with springs. When settlers killed the forests, the water went away. Monoculture systems also dry the land, so in white cisnormative regimes where diversity is grounded it is impossible to be anything other than dry.

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From the work that Laís has been developing, I understand in the reflections of our thirst the heritage of cultivating our aridity in order to export the resources that generate life. After all, we import water to you on land from the largest aquifer in the world. In the same way our subjective forests and spiritual springs have been dealing for years with invasions and threats of desertification. We live with the imminence of becoming a desert, but we have lived in the desert for years. And in the contradictions of the cysteme, how can we think of art in ways that drain us? How to flow in spaces that are dams for us? How to gush in institutions that dry us up?

If we are nascent, it flows from us, with power and glory¹, that vital energy that I learned from Laís how to allow me to penetrate the earth in the midst of desertification processes. I learned to be an oasis with oxum, the one that quenches the thirst of the thirsty. Finding solace in desert environments and satisfying in me the desire to be mud and not sand. But to think of the desert as a lifeless place is a lie. In extreme environments, resisting, fighting to survive is no less real in the sahara than in rio de janeiro. Oasis is where the night turns to gale.

In Drinking Water in the Sahara, Laís Amaral shows us forgotten routes to springs and water holes. we return to seek the oasis within us to turn to fresh water and drown in honey. In his plastic thinking, we take a bath of anointing and daring to keep flowing and overflowing colonial limitations in our lives. Drinking water in the Sahara quenches the thirst of the thirsty ones who wander in my arids to soak in abundance and wash away their weariness.

Allow to soften to drain and escape and never harden to the point of being sterile.

Oasis waterfall, anointing and daring

1 Ventura Profana and Alice Guel, Diluvio 2019. Trava Bizness, São Paulo.

