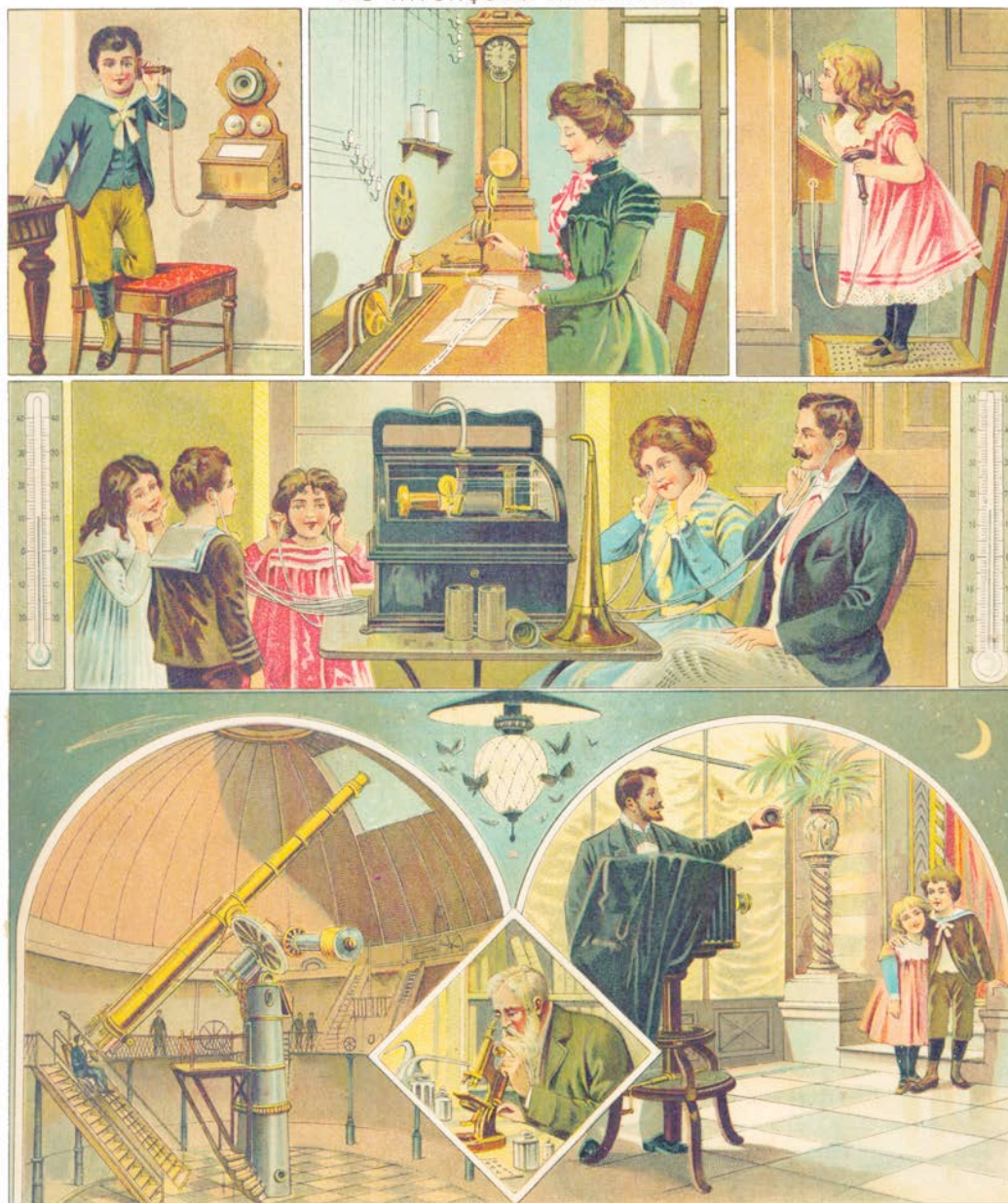


1

As invenções modernas



Que está a fazer aquêle menino com o *auscultador* nos ouvidos? Que é que êle ouve? O que é o *telefone*? Êle está a falar com aquela menina. E a senhora que está no meio dos dois, que está fazendo? Está a transmitir *notas telegráficas*. Para que serve o *telégrafo*? Já viste um *fonógrafo*? Aquela família está ouvindo a música dum *fonógrafo*. Mostra-me um *termómetro*. Para que serve o *termómetro*? Já ouviste falar em electricidade? O que é a luz eléctrica? Mostra-me uma *lâmpada eléctrica*. Vês a *luneta astronómica*? Com que aparelho se estudam os astros? Qual é o aparelho que nos serve para vermos as coisas muito pequeninas? Conheces o *microscópio*? Que está fazendo o *fotógrafo*. Queres

(image Title: Modern Invention)

Some illustrated books marked my childhood and influenced not only my decision to become an illustrator but also the building of my worldview.

The first book was an old large one, with a hard cover, thick and full of colorful drawings, printed in Portugal around the late 19th century. It did not have a title, the author's name, a publisher, the printing date, nothing at all. No bibliographic references. Its pages were printed on one side only, the other remaining blank. No doubt, these were isolated gravures once used as school material, something from my grandparents' time. My father had them bound, and used a generic title on the spine: *Book of Gravures*.

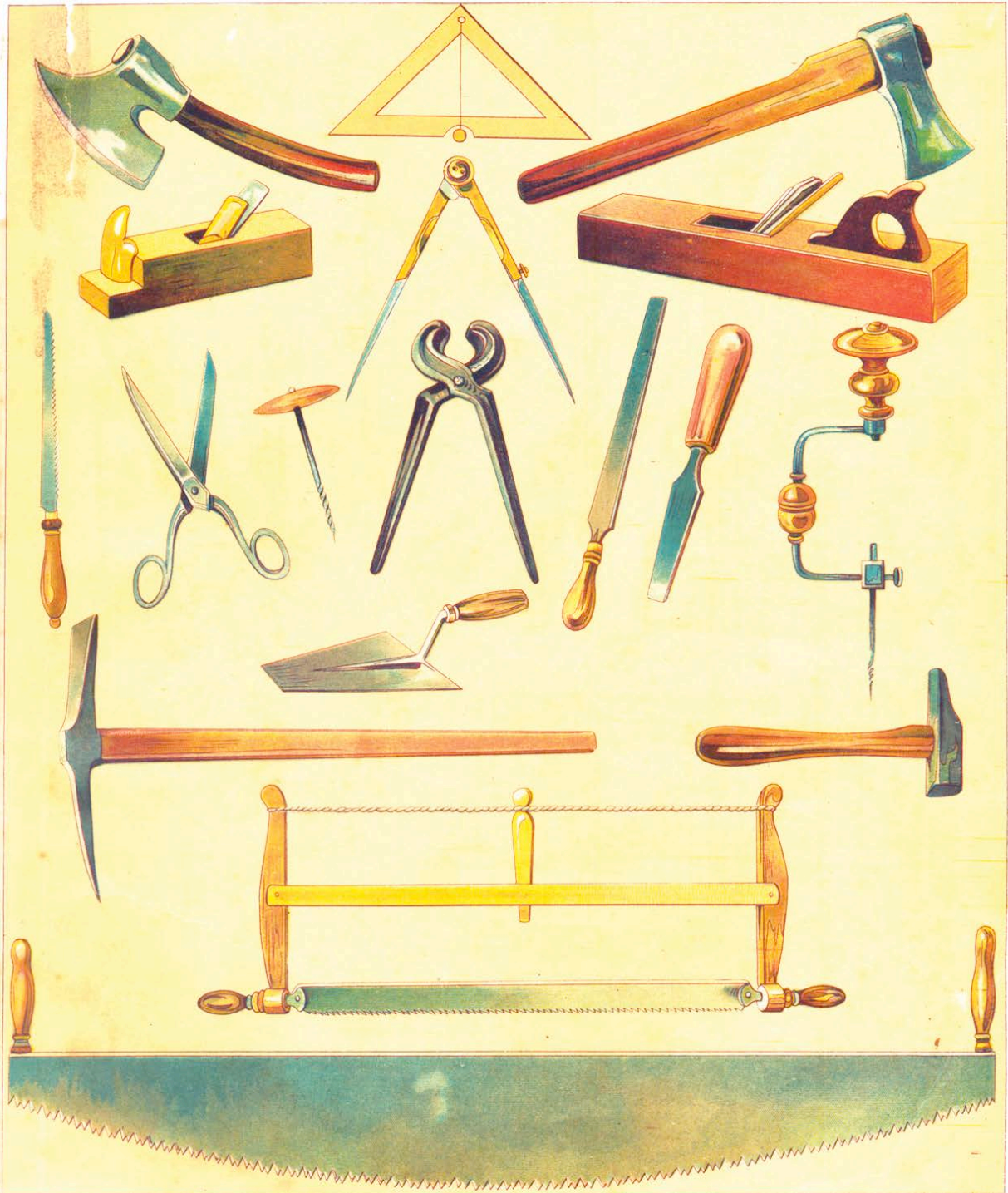
I could not read yet when I found that book. I remember flicking through its pages, not skipping one, charmed by the drawings. Each plate dealt with a different subject and the set of images formed some sort of inventory: our furniture, our tableware, farming instruments, musical instruments, tools, various objects, family people, domestic and wild animals, trees, plants, flowers, fruits, villages, houses, the seasons, modern inventions, atmospheric phenomena, the sea, old and modern weapons, the media, child games, human races, and so on. This old book was a true treasure for me. For years, when I had nothing else to do, I would sit down in the living room, open the large tome, and look and look at it. As I grew up, and learned things, the images gained new meanings. I never tired of examining those fruits, flowers, animals and objects. I thought, "How many things there are in the world! How is it possible for someone to draw them this well? My small life of a little child found a meaning through so many images. It was as if the book revealed to me that all things – me included – were part of a huge and very rich narrative. Everything in the world seemed to be linked, and that feeling appeased and fascinated me.

I realize today that through the *Book of Gravures* I came to be aware of the size of the world, and of how many things exist and deserve to be seen. I also got from it a first perception of Time and History – after all, the images showed in detail the daily life of another era.

I have to say that each page had, at the bottom, short little texts in very small font size. I only read them much later. In any case, the true and marvelous texts of the *Book of Gravures* were its images.

ferramentas

IV quadro



Quais são as ferramentas que se empregam para fazer êsses instrumentos? Conheces o machado, o nível de pedreiro, a serra, o serrote, a torquez, a verruma, a tezoura, o furador, o desandador, o martelo, a plaina, o compasso, o barbequim, o formão, etc? Para que serve cada uma destas peças de ferramenta? Mostra-me neste quadro cada uma dessas peças e dize-me se são aguçadas, polidas, dentadas, cortantes. Quem aplaina as tábuas? Quem lamina o ferro? Quem levanta uma parede? Quem faz a argamassa? A madeira, as pedras, o saibro e a cal são materiais de construção? Edificam-se as igrejas, as casas, os palácios, as torres. Construem-se pontes, caminhos de ferro, canais, estradas. Quem traça o plano ou a planta dessas construções ou dessas edificações? Querias ser engenheiro?

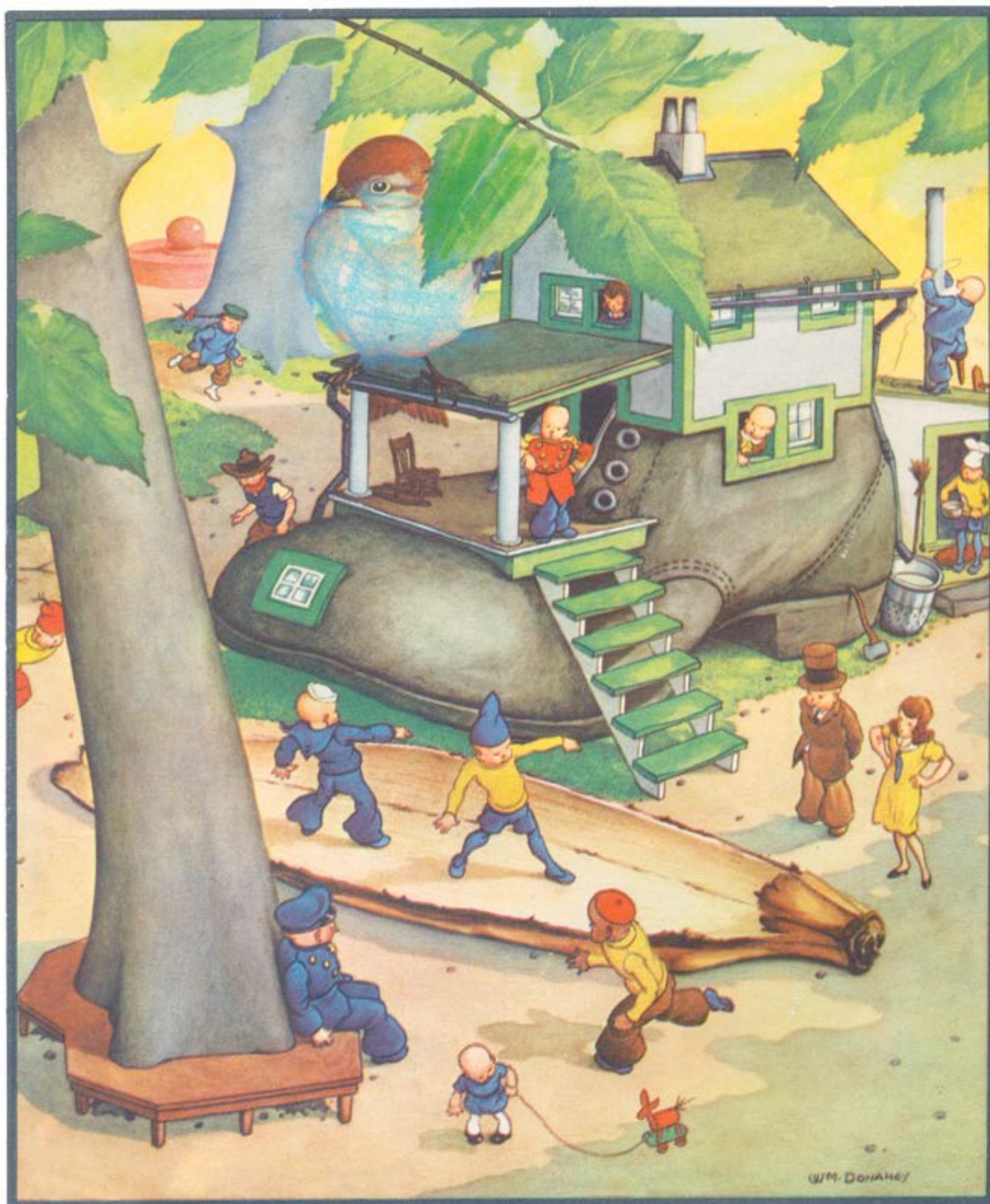
(Image Title: Tools)

Instrumentos músicos



Eis aqui alguns instrumentos que tu conheces. O piano, o violão, o tambôr, a rabeca, o cornetim, os pratos, clarinete, a trompa, a caixa de música e a harpa. Os instrumentos de música de que são feitos? Quais são os instrumentos construídos de madeira? Quais são os instrumentos metálicos? Com que é que se toca no tambôr? Quais são os instrumentos de sôpro? Quais são os instrumentos de corda? Conheces as notas de música? Já fizeste um assobio numa gaita? De que são feitos? Gostas de música? Queres ser músico?

(Image Title: Musical Instruments)



Uma casca de banana é bom lugar para os anões patinarem.

(William Donahey, *A Cidade dos Anõezinhos*, p. 8)

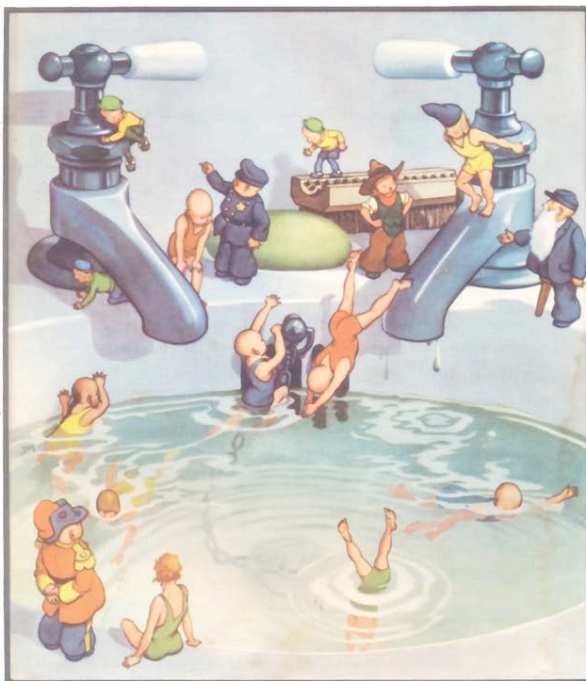
Another unforgettable book: *The Teenie Weenies*, by William Donahey, in its Brazilian edition by Melhoramentos, no date.

I loved it and its yellow cover, not so much for the text. That fellow Donahey wrote and draw, but the drawings stood out. His full colored illustrations were very beautiful and generous.

Imagine if, without we knowing it, there were a minuscule group of little dwarfs secretly living in and enjoying our daily space. The author departed from this idea to do his work.

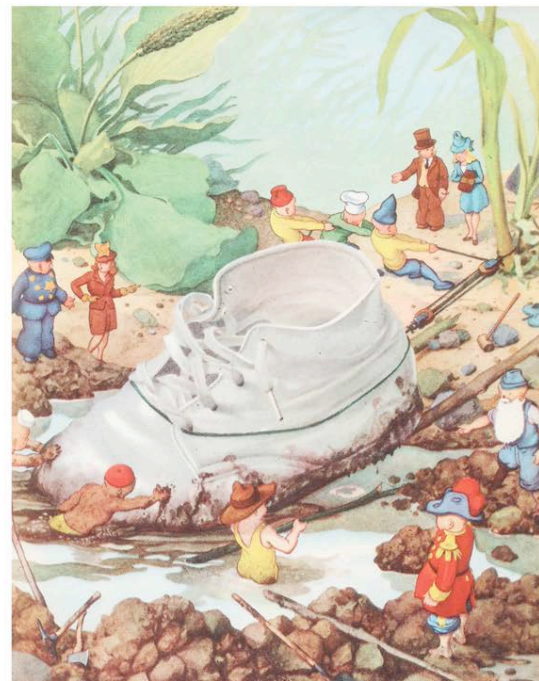
The little dwarfs lived in an empty lot inside a boot. They skated on banana peels. They used pencils as poles for the clothesline. They climbed flowers as if they were trees. Confronted dogs, birds, bees, and beetles. Used thimbles as pots and pans. When people went out, they toured the house and used the bathroom sink as a swimming pool, or stole strawberries from the kitchen table.

The book's images realistically showed such spaces and objects in a way that made them likely, at least for me. My boy's head traveled. I looked and looked those drawings. I thought they were incredibly well done – and they truly were. I remember asking myself many times how could someone draw so well.



*Os pequeninos nadadores tentaram muitas vezes
tocar o fundo da pia.*

(William Donahey, *A Cidade dos Anõezinhos*, p. 36)



Aquilo dava um trabalho!

(William Donahey, *Os Anõezinhos*, p. 24)



I have to talk about yet another illustrated book.

I was around seven or eight years old, and was digging into my father's library, when I found this tiny little book hidden among others on a very high shelf.

It was a photographic document about the Nazi concentration camps, titled *We Will Never Forget*. No publisher's name or date of publication. I had never seen or imagined anything like it. The black and white photos showed squalid people, mutilated people, piles of corpses on the floor, dead children, torture chambers, all of it very bad. I asked my father what it was. He first scolded me for finding the book. Then, he told me all about the war, the prison camps, and the Jews. He told me to put the book back. It was not something for children.

I am quite sure it was neither for children nor adults. Irrelevant of age bracket, it was impossible not to be marked by such images. I believe it was my first contact with the other side of life and men. If it were a text on the same subject, as a boy I would have slept before finishing the first paragraph. But the photos were implacable. They

did not respect my age, my education level, my innocence, nothing. They entered me as some sort of light.

Later on, I watched movies, read novels, made contact with reporting and documentaries about the II World War. But, to this day, when the subject comes up, the first images that come to my mind are the black and white photos of a tiny book hidden on a high shelf.





Quem é esta criança que passa
entre os mortos de Belsen?

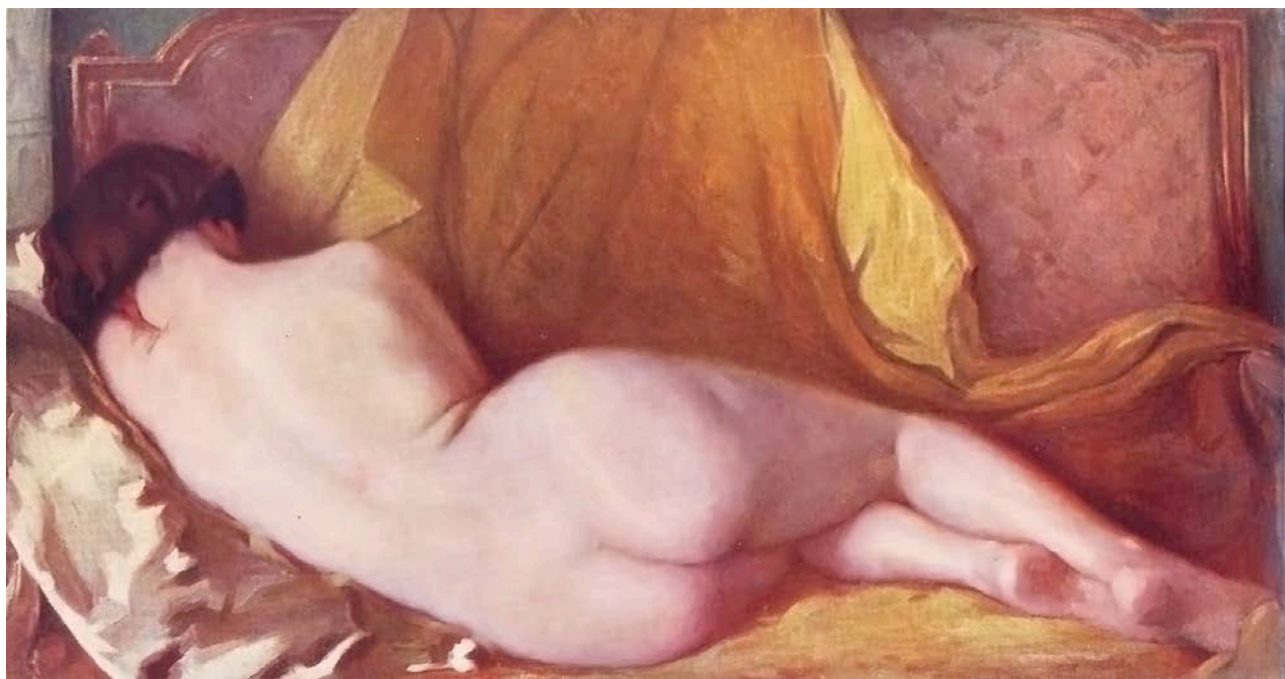


(“Descanso do Modelo” by Almeida Júnior, 0,98 x 1,30 m)

Now comes a book in two volumes, *Os primores da pintura no Brasil* (Painting Masterpieces in Brazil), a retrospective of our paintings, organized by F. Acquarone and A. de Queiroz Vieira, published in 1942. It was a luxury book, with hard cover, elegant vignettes by Belmonte, and first class reproductions, individually glued on pages. There was no reference to the publishing house.

I often consulted those volumes throughout my childhood. The paintings, from Franz Post to the young Portinari and Almeida Júnior, dealt with every kind of subject: historic episodes along with heroic and patriotic scenes; Biblical images, landscapes, still natures, rural and urban scenes. Some works were very beautiful, but the *Primores* that pleased me most were the paintings with naked women. I was astonished to be allowed to take those books, peek at all those women, and hear no peep from an adult. Those were the first naked women I saw in my life. Most of them were in a distracted pose, as if they did not know they were being portrayed.

They were always lying on a bed, lazily, reading books and letters with their breasts uncovered, bathing in cascades or playing the piano in all ease. I looked, and looked, and looked, and I thought to myself, “It must be very nice to know and be able to draw all that!”



(“Nu” by Regina Veiga, 1,30 x 0,75 m)

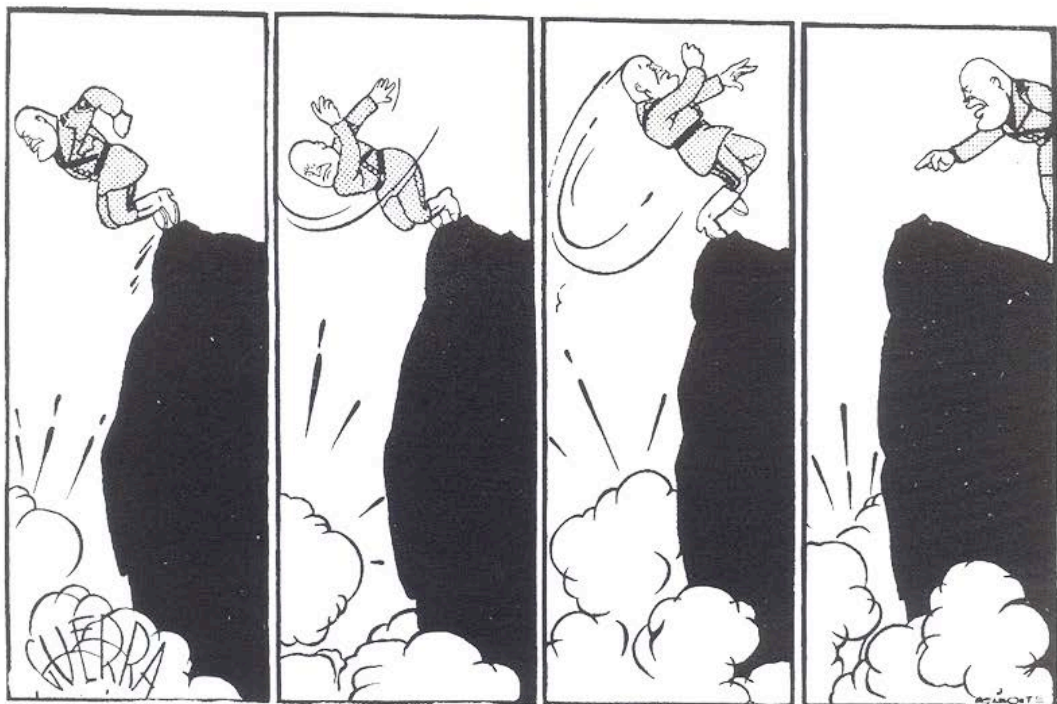


(*Música Maestro!*, *Caricaturas Políticas* de Belmonte Publicadas na Folha da Manhã e Folha da Noite, 1940)

I will take the opportunity to talk about Belmonte's work (Benedito Carneiro Bastos, 1896-1947).

The daily *Folha da Manhã* published, probably between 1939 and 1942, a few booklets of caricatures and cartoons by the great illustrator, who was also a writer, most of them about the war. All were previously published in the paper. At the time, someone in the family had the booklets bound, and years later the material came into my hands. I still have it. I loved those booklets. The subjects and the characters – Stalin, Hitler, Getúlio, Chamberlain, Churchill, Selassié, Franco etc. – were practically unknown and of no interest to me, still under ten years of age. The images, though, had an extraordinary force. Belmonte's drawing manages to be elegant, simple and expressive at the same time. What drove me to those books were the magic and creativity of the drawings, awakening in me an unexpected interest in such complicated international political subjects. I admired the trace, the textures, the movement, the humor, and the creative scenes. Caricatures appeared to be alive. I am sure that Belmonte is among the greatest Brazilian artists, and among the best in the world in his specific area of work. It is a pity that very few people still remember him.

O SR. MUSSOLINI VAI ENTRAR NA GUERRA!



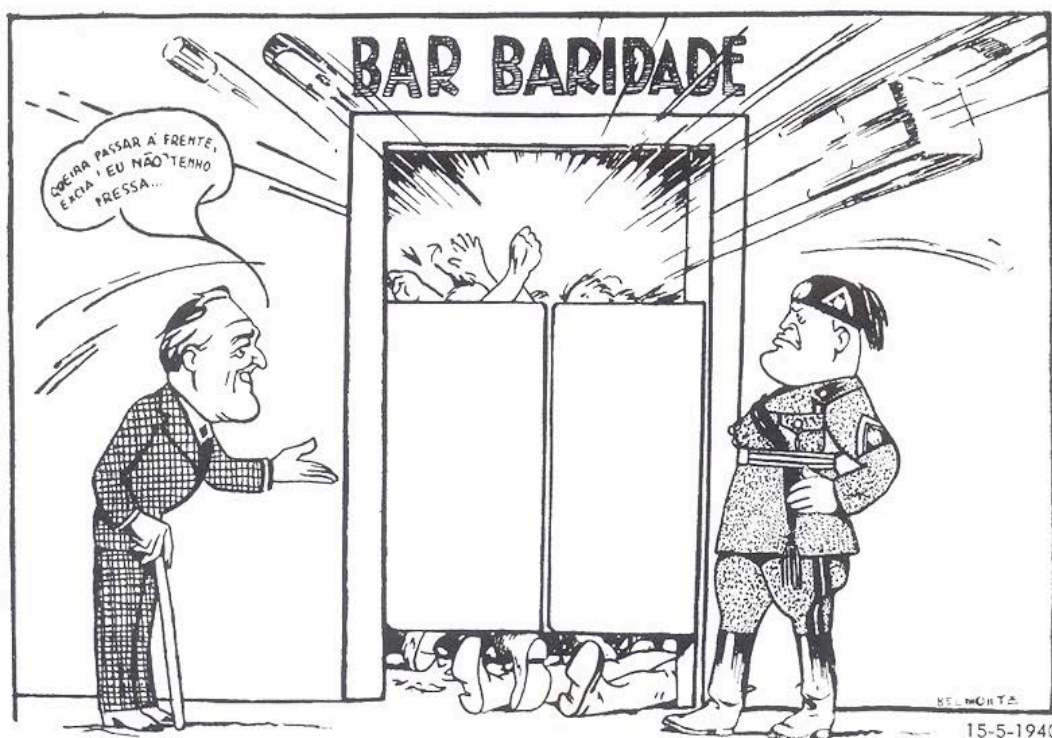
Entraremos, sim!

Mas no momento

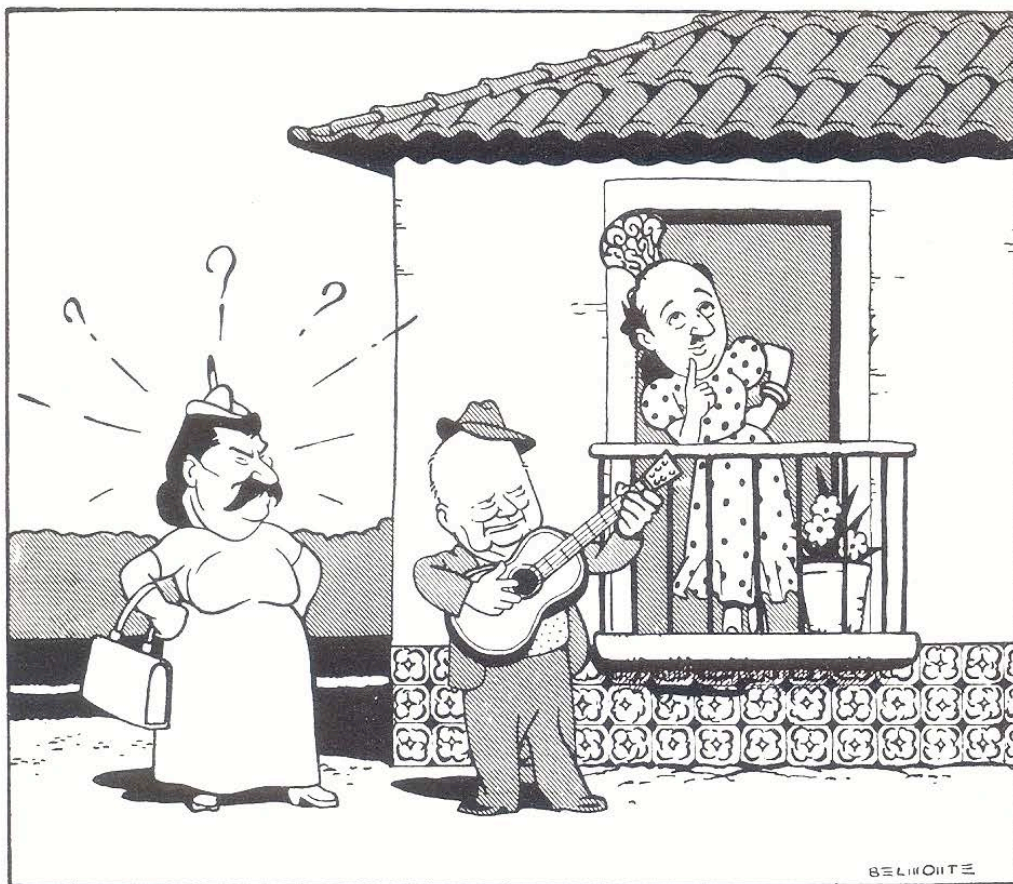
mais oportuno!

Porque estamos preparados!

12-5-1940

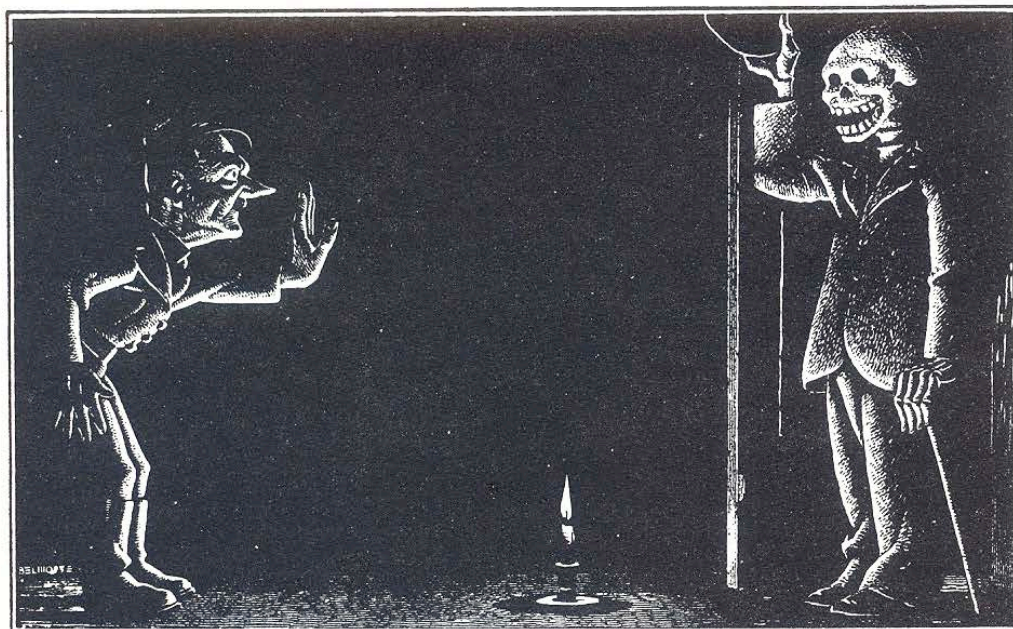


15-5-1940



SERENATA

30-5-1944

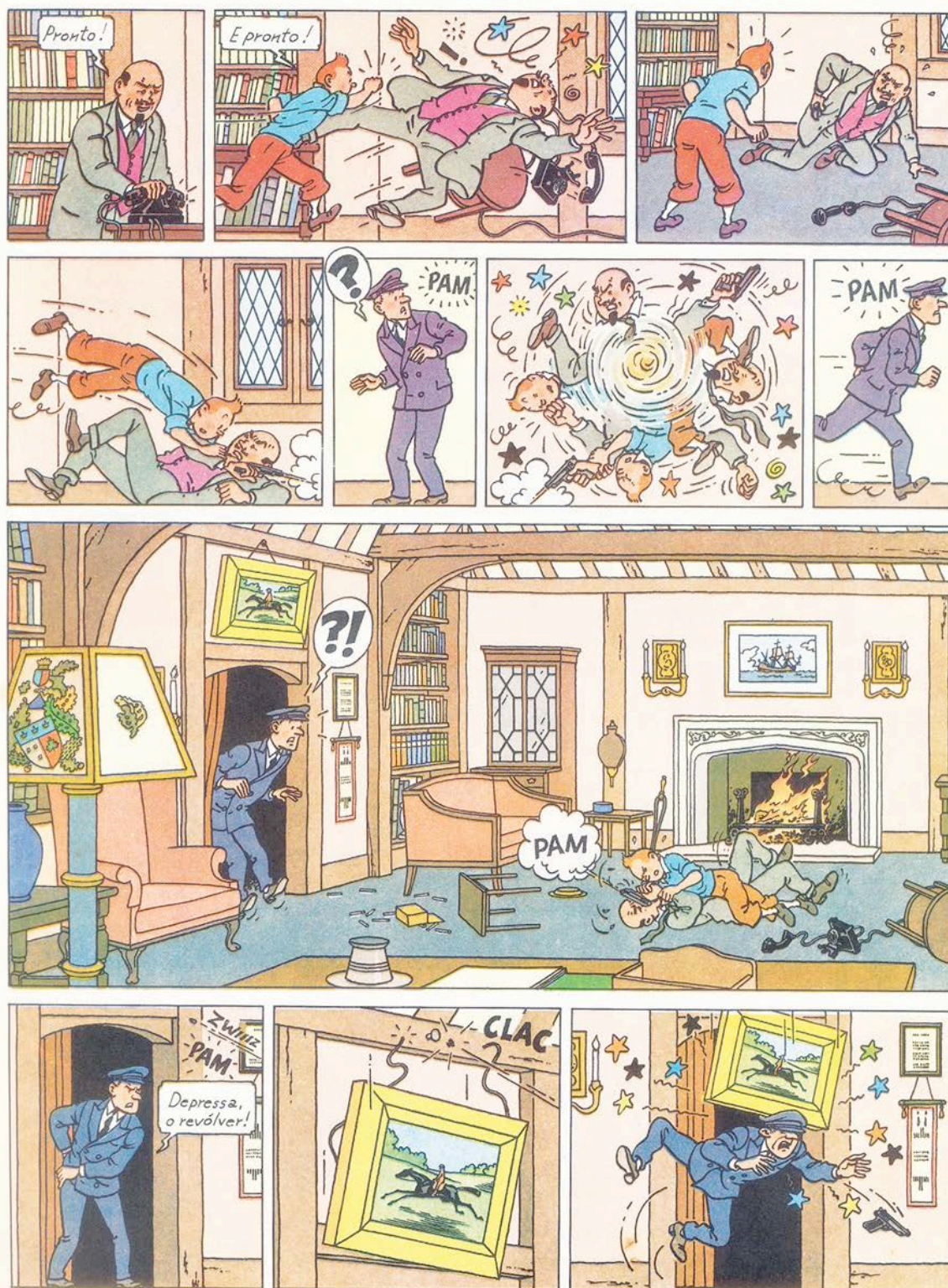


A ÚLTIMA VISITA

20-10-1944

— 97 —

(Belmonte, *Caricaturas dos Tempos*, Edições Melhoramentos, 1948, p. 97)

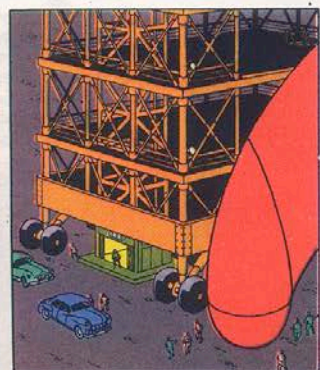
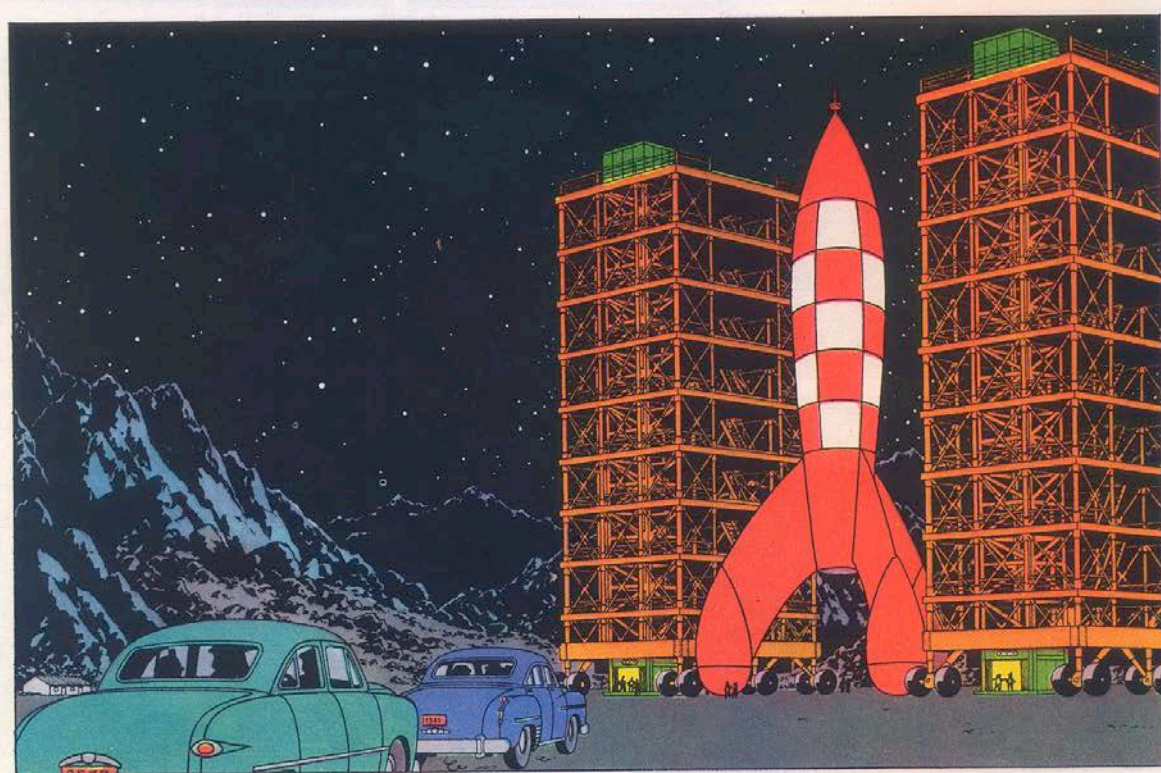
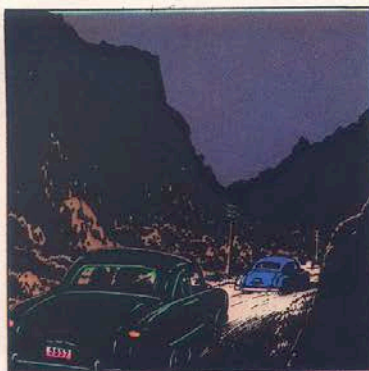


I also read lots of comics in my childhood. The *Black Rider* and his alter ego, Doc Masters, *Straight Arrow*, *Bronc Piler*, *Green Arrow*, *Captain Marvel* (who remembers Dr. Silvana?), *Texas Kid*, *Alley Oop*, *L'il Abner* and *Little Lulu*, among others. I liked very much the drawings in *The Phantom* and *Mandrake the Magician*, more so than the stories. I was never, though, a fanatic for comics, except in the case of *The Adventures of Tintin*, by Hergé (Georges Prosper Remi, 1907-1983).

I got my first Tintin when I was nine or ten years old. It was in English, and I could not understand a word: *The Crab with the Golden Claws*, hard cover, Ed. Methuen, 1958.

The drawings fascinated me so much that the book became one of my favorites, even though I could not read the text. I flicked through the album, looking at those images, and trying to decipher the story. It was the first time in my life that I felt an urgent need to learn another language. Later on, I got a second album, this time in Spanish: *Aterrizaje en la luna*, also a hard cover, Ed. Juventud, 1959. It was a wonder. Reading was difficult, but I eventually understood everything. I admired even more the drawings – especially well finished in that volume – and laughed hard with Captain Haddock, ever since my favorite character, and the incompetence of Thomson and Thompson. Then I found out that a Portuguese edition of Hergé complete works, published by Flamboyant, was on sale in Brazil. Years later, Tintin's adventures were published by Record. Slowly, I ended up buying the entire collection and plunged into the wonderful universe created by Hergé. Characters such as Captain Haddock and Professor Calculus are simply fantastic. What about the others? General Alcazar, Rastapopoulos, Castafiore, Dr. Müller, the terrible Abdullah... How many times did I find myself admiring an album, its architecture, its stories, and its delicate humor? How many times did I stop reading to admire the drawings?





7

Theoretically, some books he read should mark the work of a writer, and the work of an illustrator should be marked by some images he saw. In practice, though, I do not believe things work this way. It is possible that a writer be influenced, for instance, by the visual concepts of some painter, by a few movies or by theater. It is also perfectly possible that a painter be marked by the text of some books.

I believe the difference between what we absorb through texts, and what we absorb through images, should be better studied.

To stay on just one example: most schools completely ignore to this day the importance, the peculiarities, and the possibilities of knowledge offered by images.

In this small essay, I intended to point out the powerful force of images, often forgotten, as irreplaceable channels of knowledge, and amplifiers of our conscience; their importance in the ethical and intellectual education of people; of their immense and difficult-to-measure influence in building a “worldview” for each of us.