QUEM SOU EU (BODARRADA):
Luiz Gama in Trovas Burlescas de Getulino (1861)

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LUIZ GAMA, AND SOME CONTEXT FOR THE POEM QUEM SOU EU Luiz Gonzaga Pinto da Gama (1830-1882) is the author of the poem Lá Vai o Verso!, included in his collection of satirical poems Primeiras Trovas Burlescas de Getulino (1859). In the history of Afro-Brazilian literature, Luiz Gama is traditionally considered the first writer to have proudly positioned and presented himself as a black subject. In Gama’s time the word bode (goat) was a racial slur especially against dark skin mulattos. In Gama’s characteristic satirical and comical stance, he uses the slur to unmask social hypocrisy and reveal the ridiculous presentation and performance of status in Brazilian society, especially the social anxieties of mulattos.

1 Bodarada is a made-up word from bode (goat), meaning a party of goats. Goat was a racial slur against mixed race people, and Gama is playing with it.

2 Getulino is a poetic pseudonym for Luiz Gama (1830-1882). Gama is widely considered the first Black writer in Brazil to speak from the position of black subjectivity. He was born free but sold into slavery at age 10. He later became a voice for the abolitionist cause, and a legal representative working on behalf of Africans brought to Brazil illegally after the abolition of the slave trade in 1850.


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Quem sou Eu

I love the poor, ignore the rich,
I live like a Tico-tico\(^4\) finch;
I don’t get involved in any trouble,
I keep to myself in my little hovel:
Away from riches, and greatness
Like a poor monk in humble-ness.
Friends, I have very few,
But good old ones, not new
I run away from hypocrisy,
From foolishness, from nobility;
As to the barons and their forms?
God save me, I’d sooner suffer thunderstorms.

I make verses, I’m no poet
I speak a lot of nonsense, you know it, But I only pay obedience
To virtue and intelligence
Here he is Getulino,
Sadly plucking on his strings.
He is mad and he can show it

Whoever wants to be a poet;
In the century of enlightenment, Some can buy negroes and

entitlement,
Coat of arms, no, the Kalends,\(^5\) And with frauds and thefts They rise up with fast steps; And strike large deals,

\(^4\) Tico-tico is a bird like the sparrow and a colloquial term for a person of lowly station.

\(^5\) The reference is not clear. There is a colloquial and jocular expression: “on the Greek Calends,” which means ‘never’ (Michaelis Moderno Dicionario, São Paulo: Melhoramentos).
Alas, only by Vieira’s ‘Art’ and skills,  

With protection, and winking
They galop high up the rankings!
I keep my eye on all this mob
Poking fun on those who rob
Dealing and wheeling, good and bad,
With festival air, not sad,
I’m tough on the pedantic on the hill,
Those who make medicine and pill,
They boast art from the divine,
With sulphate and quinine,
Charlatans, peddlers of cough syrup,
And thousand other dealers,
Without a dash of shame or pudor,
He tells everyone he is a DOCTOR!
I can’t bear the magistrate,
With their zealous, uncaring mandate,
He sells the law, and betrays justice,
-- And harms one and all --
With rigor he oppresses the ignoble
And offers shelter to the noble,
He only sees crime, and transgression in the beggar, whom he trashes.
This type I mock twice as much.
Till his slyness loses its crutch.
From the merchant I verily run,

Gama seems to attribute the “Arte do Furto” (The Art of Theft) written in 1652 to the Jesuit Padre António Vieira (1608-1697), but the work is more widely believed to be by the Jesuit Padre Manuel da Costa (1601-1667). The ironic title is a social criticism against the corruption of the colonial and imperial system in the period called Restauration from the sixteen to the eighteenth centuries.
From the pious and the sacristan - Disguised crocodiles,
Donning honorable style
But as soon as they get trying
Are more savage than a lion,
I flee from the flattering blind,
like the branch of the willow kind, Bends and has no firm structure, Lives according to laws of nature; Following the way of the winds,
He turns a thousand turns by whims. What I am and how I think,
Here it goes with sense, succinct, For I see them getting mad
All those puffed-up fools, and bad, Throwing up maledictions,
Aimed against all my meditations.

I know well that I’m a lowlife, Inconvenient and quite ‘trife;’ And men with power and reach
Fearing my long speech
Will call me impertinent, idle fellow, A goat, a negro, Mongibelo,7
But I don’t fret about it soon,
I’ll go on playing this my tune

With impertinent flair,
Tricking people everywhere.
If I’m Black or if a goat
It matters little. What? Not most, There are goats of all castes,
For the species is mighty vast... There are grey, and striped ones,

7 Mongibelo is an antonomasia for the words mount and Gibel, or monte and bello and it refers to Mt. Aetna. The word, like the poem itself is a mixture, a hybrid.
brown, colored, and freckled ones, Black goats and white goats
And I'll be straight in these notes, Some plebeian, some noble, Wealthy goats, goats in trouble, Wise and important goats alike, And crooked ones all right...

In our good land here
Everyone horns, and bleats, you hear? Nobles, Counts, and Duchesses,
Rich ladies and Marquesses,
Deputies and senators,
Gentlemen and councilors;
Beauty queens, haughty dames, Strutting their noble manes,
Well-fed little princes,
Prideful lordling, how he minces, Friars, Bishops, Cardinals,
Imperial swaggers, braggarts all,
Poor folk, noble folk
I have relatives from both.

Among brave military
*Goatery* shines and tarry;
Guards, commanders, quartermasters, Brigadiers, colonels, officers,
Fearless, courageous marshals, Resplendent and bright generals, Sea-and-war captains,
-- Everyone one bleats, all lock horns --

In the supreme everlasting realms, Where Divinity dwells,
There too are holy goats,
Adored by all us folks.

Among the chorus of baby angels
There you also see goat cherubins The lover of Syrinx
was furry and still stinks;
The god Mendes, from the back, Shows a head with two-horn track; The god of Memphis, as they say Had horns sprouting up a way. Jove, when he was a boy,

Suckled caprine milk with joy, And according to the myth, Faun was also a kid misfit.

In the land of Pluto, not a man, But a goat guards the Koran, In lundus and melodies bodinhas are sung like ditties:

If everyone has caprine tails, Why so many capricious tales?
Let there be peace, joy let there be, Enjoy and play the goatery, Stop all morning song and dance, Because all is goatarance!

Quem Sou Eu? (A Bodarrada)

Quem sou eu?
que importa quem?

Sou um trovador proscrito, Que trago na fronte escrita Esta palavra – “Ninguém!”

Augusto Emílio Zaluar, “Dores e Flores”

Amo o pobre, deixo o rico, Vivo como o Tico-tico;
Não me envolvo em torvelinho,

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Vivo só no meu cantinho: Da grandeza sempre longe Como vive o pobre monge. Tenho mui poucos amigos, Porém bons, que são antigos, Fuijo sempre à hipocrisia,

À sandice, à fidalguia;
Das manadas de Barões?
Anjo Bento, antes trovões.
Faco versos, não sou vate,
Digo muito disparate,
Mas só rendo obediência
À virtude, à inteligência:
Eis aqui o Getulino
Que no plectro anda mofino.
Sei que é louco e que é pateta Quem se mete a ser poeta;
Que no século das luzes,
Os birbantes mais lapuzes, Compram negros e comendas, Têm brasões, não – das Calendas, E, com tretas e com furtos
Vão subindo a passos curtos; Fazem grossa pepineira,
Só pela arte do Vieira,
E com jeito e proteções,
Galgam altas posições!
Mas eu sempre vigiando
Nessa súcia vou malhando
De tratante, bem ou mal,
Com semblante festival.
Dou de rijo no pedante
De pílulas fabricante,
Que blasona arte divina,
Com sulfatos de quinina,
Trabuzanas, xaropadas, E mil outras patacoadas,

Que, sem pingo de rubor, Diz a todos, que é DOUTOR! Não tolero o magistrado,
Que do brio descuidado, Vende a lei, trai a justiça,
– Faz a todos injustiça –
Com rigor deprime o pobre Presta abrigo ao rico, ao nobre, E só acha horrendo crime
No mendigo, que deprime.

– Neste dou com dupla força. Té que a manha perca ou torça. Fujo às légua do lojista,
Do beato e do sacrista – Crocodilos disfarçados,

Que se fazem muito honrados Mas que, tendo ocasião,
São mais feros que o Leão. Fujo ao cego lisonjeiro,

Que, qual ramo de salgueiro, Maleável, sem firmeza,
Vive à lei da natureza;
Que, conforme sopra o vento, Dá mil voltas num momento. O que sou, e como penso, Aqui vai com todo o senso, Posto que já veja irados Muitos lorpas enfunados, Vomitando maldições,

Contra as minhas reflexões. Eu bem sei que sou qual Grilo,
De maçante e mau estilo;
E que os homens poderosos Desta arenga receosos
Hão de chamar-me tarel,
Bode, negro, Mongibelô;
Porém eu que não me abalo, Vou tangendo o meu badalo Com repique impertinente, Pondo a trote muita gente.
Se negro sou, ou sou bode Pouco importa. O que isto pode?

Bodes há de toda a casta, Pois que a espécie é muito vasta... Há cinzentos, há rajados,
Baios, pampas e malhados,

Bodes negros, bodes brancos, E, sejamos todos francos,
Uns plebeus, e outros nobres, Bodes ricos, bodes pobres,
Bodes sábios, importantes,
E também alguns tratantes...
Aqui, nesta boa terra,
Marram todos, tudo berra;
Nobres Condes e Duquesas,
Ricas Damas e Marquesas Deputados, senadores, Gentis-homens, veadores;
Belas Damas emproadas,
De nobreza empantufadas; Repimpados principotes, Orgulhosos fidalgotes,
Frades, Bispos, Cardeais, Fanfarrões imperiais,
Gentes pobres, nobres gentes
Em todos há meus parentes.
Entre a brava militança – Fulge e brilha alta bodança; Guardas, Cabos, Furriéis, Brigadeiros, Coronéis, Destemidos Marechais, Rutilantes Generais, Capitães-de-mar-e-guerra, – Tudo marra, tudo berra – Na suprema eternidade, Onde habita a Divindade, Bodes há santificados,

Que por nós são adorados. Entre o coro dos Anjinhos Também há muitos bodinhos. – O amante de Siringa

Tinha pelo e má catinga;
O deus Mendes, pelas costas, Na cabeça tinha pontas;
Jove quando foi menino, Chupitou leite caprino;
E, segundo o antigo mito, Também Fauno foi cabrito.

Nos domínios de Plutão, Guarda um bode o Alcorão; Nos lundus e nas modinhas São cantadas as bodinhas: Pois se todos têm rabicho, Para que tanto capricho? Haja paz, haja alegria, Folgue e brinque a bodaria; Cesse pois a matinada, Porque tudo é bodarrada! –

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