

*A mulher tem mistérios maiores que o mar
Tem paixões e desgraças no fundo do olhar*
(A mulher e o mar, Danilo Caymmi)

I remember the sun, the dazzling light over the sea. And the people, gentle figures moving slowly across the sand. It was so far away from what I had become used to in England. And yet I was born here, in Rio de Janeiro, and Rio was my city.

Going to the beach as a little girl was different then; we weren't allowed in the sun. To my British mother the sun was alien, unsafe, harmful even. It would burn our light skin. But I could look. And take in that light and feel the lightheaded dizziness of the sea and the people, the elegant people of Ipanema, swaying with grace as if they were dancing at the tempo of bossa nova.

I remember the music. And that song, *Samba do avião*, playing when we were landing, the plane circling over the Bay of Guanabara, tears in the eyes of my fellow passengers, in that explosion of feelings so typical of Brazilians when they can't hold back their saudades.

Maybe this is what I still see when I photograph in Rio. Maybe this is what I am looking for on the beach and in the people, those people so different from the ones I remember, cariocas now coming to Ipanema from all over Rio on public transport. Those crowds and their energy. I can join them now, thanks to my camera.

It is hard to see clearly in the memories and in our minds. It is hard to tell what the eye sees. Someone said we are all mysteries to ourselves. But what better mystery than a woman and the sea?