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# Literature and Ethics in Contemporary Brazil

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**Nicola Gavioli dedicates this collection to Thomas C. Shepard and Stefania Salami, with gratitude and hope.**

**Vinicius Mariano de Carvalho dedicates this book to all his past and present students in gratitude for everything he has learned with them.**

## 14 Nicolas Behr's Futuristic *braxília* and the Critical Reinvention of *Brasiliensidade* (*brasília-em-cidade*)

Steven F. Butterman

dedico este  
canteiro de obras  
(jardim-operário)  
  
aos esquecidos de  
deus que construíram  
esta cidade de *brasília*  
e que, um dia,  
construirão comigo,  
em sonho e sem dor,  
a cidade de *braxília*  
(pronuncia-se  
brakslha, canalha)<sup>1</sup>

—Nicolas Behr, *Porque construí braxília*, 1993

The poet and environmentalist Nicolas Behr was born in Cuiabá in 1958 and resides in Brasília, which he has made his home since 1974. A prolific poet, Behr has produced dozens of books, both mimeographed and published by mainstream presses throughout Brazil. The title of this essay is meant to both pay tribute to and interrogate the poet's critical invention of the neologistic *braxília*, which pervades much of Behr's work. I offer my own neologism of "brasiliensidade" to refer to both the "brasilidade" factor of what constitutes Brasília's character, as a capital, as a planned city, as a peculiar and particular urban space (hence, the quasi-homophonic *brasília-em-cidade*), while simultaneously alluding to the *densidade*, or the thickness or complexity, involved in the poet's project of reinvention.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, I argue, the poet constructs an alternate universe in which his ludic verses are meant to reinscribe the city of Brasília with a new ethical imperative by which political corruption and social injustice are transformed to a euphemistic (if not ufanistic) imaginary based on future potentialities rather than present-day realities. While this enlightened space may only exist in the activist verses of the poet, it is also here where he identifies and takes to task the alienation

of the masses excluded from the *Plano Piloto* as the primary factor that distinguishes contemporary Brasília from its potential *braxília*, which allegorically represents the hope if not the concrete possibility of building a more just and fair society, where the majority of Brazilian citizens are no longer displaced and marginalized from the center of the policies and activities of the capital.

As Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda has argued in her seminal study *26 Poetas Hoje*, "poesia marginal" is defined, in large part, by the proximity between poetry and life experiences as well as the abundance of colloquialism and the unpretentious language of the people, including the use of slang and *palavrões* (swear words) to offer accessible, popular language that would reach an audience otherwise not privy to a literary genre that has historically been conceived in Brazilian literary history as formulaic or obsessed with form prior to the advent of *modernismo* in the late 1920s and early 1930s. An additional characteristic of *poesia marginal*, according to Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda, is the rather obsessive use of "metáforas de grande abstração" (*26 poetas* 13) which, in the case of Behr's poetry, I will examine with analysis of the construction of an allegorical imagined space called *braxília*.

My interest in the vast corpus of Behr's poetic production began many years ago, with an abundant feast or a Brazilian-style breakfast, reading the hilariously satiric pages of the 1977 bestseller *Iogurte com Farinha*, which while produced only in *mimeógrafo* form, sold more than 8,000 copies from hand to hand (or, as it were, hand to word to mouth). Behr has sustained this sometimes ludic, often poignant, and always parodic banquet over the course of more than 30 volumes, arriving at a nutritious and equally abundant dessert filled with citric and acidic *brasili-dade*: *Laranja seleta: Poesia escolhida* (1977–2007) and *O Bagaço da Laranja: pra ler com os dentes e mastigar bem* (1977–2007), both published in 2009.

Having studied and published extensively on the (rather paradoxically) now canonical work of "poetas marginais", especially Glauco Mattoso, Leila Mícolis and Roberto Piva,<sup>3</sup> I am adding a Behr to our p(a)late of poetry. My intention in this analysis is not simply to show how "poesia marginal" in Brazil has managed to subvert "mainstream" "poesia culta" far beyond the "era" of the 1960s and 1970s generally designated as the decades of marginal production, as Almeida Pinto designates the term in his 2002 study *Poesia de Brasília: duas tendências*, but also as an attempt to incorporate within the canon poets paradoxically marginalized even from "poesia marginal" by the excellent but highly Rio-centric criticism of Hollanda and Carlos Alberto Mes-seder Pereira, both writing in the early 1980s, just a few years before democracy returned to Brazil. My specific interest in Nicolas Behr is fueled by both an aesthetic and a socio-political preoccupation of a number of irreconcilable (and I would argue deliberately sustained)

contradictions abundant in the poet's verses, one that the poet himself has designated as "poesília de braxília."

If, as the sparse criticism of Behr's work suggests, there is an overwhelming utilization of intertextuality in Behr's verses, what makes his poetic universe unique, or at the risk of invoking well-known debates in postmodern theory, even "original" contributions? Nominated for the prestigious *Prêmio Jabuti* and *Portugal Telecom*, Behr's poetry makes frequent ambivalent allusions to Carlos Drummond de Andrade, but the careful reader will also find traces of the work (importantly, actual words and phrases or rather intertextuality above and beyond poetic influences or inspirations) of Castro Alves, Caetano Veloso, Torquato Neto, Mário de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, Glauco Mattoso and Adélia Prado, among many others, as Wilberth Salgueiro points out. In fact, Behr's *paulistano* colleague Glauco Mattoso, an important contemporary cultural activist and one of the entire world's most prolific producers of sonnets, numbering in the thousands, furnishes us with a way to begin to answer this question in his conceptualization of "plágio inteligente," in one of a series of brilliant manifestos, *The Manifesto Vanguardado or the IV Manifesto de Vanguarda*. In this work, Mattoso asserts that the poet reserves the right (and, in fact, shoulders the responsibility) of first digesting and then, in a rather ludic, *brincalhão* spirit that today might be called "tough love," critically reflect on influences within the canon of Brazilian literature, even and perhaps especially if this canon finds itself in a cannon ready to spit transgressive fire onto the "poesia culta," with which it constantly contends and attempts to subvert. To summarize Mattoso's conception of "plágio inteligente," we witness the poetic voice using and abusing pastiche, parody and bricolage to engage with his poetic antecedents. This process, while named by Mattoso, is certainly not unique to Glauco Mattoso, of course, or even to Brazilian poetry since modernism. For example, Gregório de Mattos was known to have "plagiarized" Baroque poets like Quevedo but with perhaps the noblest of intentions, that is, to pay tribute to his verses. The adjective *inteligente* comes into play when we observe the poet reworking the original contributions with what I would like to call a "creative mimicry" process, in which imitation is never a copy of the original text but rather a postmodern reworking of the verses the poet borrows, subverts and ultimately transports into a postmodern context, reinventing, satirizing and often deliberately transgressing the original authorial intent of the poetry in question. Put another way, perhaps now in existential terms, how does the reader cope with the fact that, in Behr, we are witnessing the production of a poet who reaches new depths of despair and consequent indignation when he returns to Drummond's "pedra no meio do caminho"?<sup>4</sup> Behr's encounter with the stone in the middle of the way is an acknowledgment of a serious obstacle on his poetic journey. In the case of his beloved Brasília,

the precarious pebble on the path, that very *pedrinha drummondiana* capable of disrupting the monotony of a routinized life, has concretely (or, to allude to one of Brazil's great modernist poets and thinkers Mário de Andrade, perhaps even "macunaimically")<sup>5</sup> transformed itself into a *super-quadra* alongside a "caminho" filled with obsessively identical *prédios*. This essay will explore the techniques Behr uses to convincingly and effectively *poetar* (without necessarily lapsing back into *concretismo* or its variants that would otherwise argue for the abolition of the subject-pronoun *eu*) about the shapes, the signs, the streets, the sights of an impersonal, exclusive, dry, excessively and obsessively ordered city whose *super-quadras* are essentially alike, contradicting the "normally" crazy cityscapes of an urban space like São Paulo, with its epic and endless neighborhoods, its disorganized chaos and unruly crowds. This "pedra transformada em quadra," this *caminho* rendered virtually unidentifiable by the buildings that adorn it, is the "*grande abstração*" that represents, in my view, the 1990s poetry of Nicolas Behr dedicated to the invention of his new *braxília*.

How are we to interpret the neologism *braxília*? What apparently emerged as a typographical error has poetically transformed into a rich, highly textured and ambiguous neologism. As Sophia Beal writes, "In various poems, interviews, and essays, Behr returns to this conception of braxília as the *não-capital* and *não-poder*. While he came across braxília accidentally—initially it was merely a typo—the oneiric counterpart of the capital has become a major theme throughout his Brasília poems" (Beal, "The Art of Brasília" 58). I would add two observations to this interesting mis-take. Whether the conceptualization began as a typo (since, in fact, the letter s is a neighbor to the x on the keyboard), I would like to theorize that this "erro de português" may in fact be reconsidered as an unconscious—if not altogether deliberate—transformation of the official discourse of Brasília's history; that is, the privileged and idealistic history of the *Plano Piloto*. I contend that Behr's work is engaged in a neologistic re-envisioning of a "Brasília" with a capital B (double entendre intended) transformed into a parallel universe baptized as *braxília*, in which the appearance of the lower case b is just as telling as the use of the consonant x to substitute for the s. There is a notable poetic juxtaposition and conflict that results when braxília is born to reflect the dystopic reality of today's alienation, exposing a plan that did not pan out to promote egalitarian public spaces as Lúcio Costa would have imagined, and ironically serving to disenfranchise the majority of the region's communities excluded from the position of power and access to decisions that only a pilot's direction has the power to determine. I would argue further that the transplanted x flies in the face of the plurality of s, marking and contesting a fixed, static representation that distances itself from the democratization of public spaces that the original *Plano Piloto* had intended to achieve. In fact, the alleged "error" of the x mirrors quite

effectively the stark contrast between the celebration of Brasília's modernist greatness, itself rendered as an error in Behr's verses, or perhaps even a delusion of grandeur, when faced with the juxtaposition between the alleged centrality of Brasília (geographically, legislatively, financially and even culturally) and the sobering reality of marginalization of the majority whose access from the axis is undeniable.

As such, the new imaginary space that the poet creates maintains the x that symbolizes the original cross over which the crossing of the two axes was projected.<sup>6</sup> This gesture preserves the permanence of the urban space known as Brasília but hopes to rebuild upon it, recreating a new metaphysical reality that would denounce the many injustices that currently plague the capital and the country it represents. Indeed, we may also say that x marks the spot. Brasília is Ground Zero for the massive incidence of political corruption in recent years, but it is also the point of departure for the construction of a new utopian imaginary, which would consist of a truly communitarian space where there is no separation between the citizens who inhabit its space. This idealistic social democratization of a common space to be fully occupied by all is the primary dream on which the new *braxília* with a lower-case b is founded. The transformation of the cross to the x may also be a reference to subversion of religious hegemony of Christianity, much like Cacá Diegues' *Quilombo*, where the transformation of the cross to the x becomes an open act of resistance to hegemonic oppression of any kind, turning (read, inverting) the cross to denounce its oppression of non-Christian (or, by extension, non-conforming) Brazilians.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the x in Behr is highly symbolic of much more than the crossing of the axes of the *Plano Piloto*. Paradoxically, the utopian dream of Brasília was to construct a communal identity whereby the capital city (and by extension, the nation) would develop or at least nurture a more humanistic (and perhaps humanitarian) center. Nevertheless, the same concrete that supplanted life in the gardens of Burle Marx did not even allow the construction of sidewalks to permit circulation on foot. The image of the "pessoas que não se encontram" in Behr's *braxília revisitada-Volume I*, discussed below, reflects the social alienation and disillusionment of the Brazilians who populated the *Distrito Federal* who may have exiled themselves from other Brazilian cities, with dreams and hopes of attaining a better quality of life for themselves and their families. Faced with the fact that these individuals and families would meet a different kind of "x-isle" in the dry, barren capital where they would find desert conditions bespeaks new lives of isolation, socioeconomically imposed by marginalization from the capital and its benefits. For Behr, this exclusion is literally manifested in streets where pedestrian access was discouraged and circulation around the city was met with a lack of mobility, privileging automobiles or other vehicles to transport dreams of abundance into dusty delusions.

This ambiguous x may also represent the confluence of exile, of *escassez*, for those *candangos* who came to Brasília to construct their utopian futures but ultimately inhabited a sort of "Fantasy Island" in which communal living actually dissolves in reality to attaining selfish benefits that might favor corruption in order to arrive at their objectives. In vain, then, they may have found themselves excluded ("x-cluded"?) both socially and materially from the abundant prosperity of *bonança*, upon quickly learning that these riches were not available to them. The x may also mark the x of corruption, the superfluous fattening "cheese" of excess (or x-cess), the extra luxury that enriches the quality of life, representing the rich abundance of resources available only to the elite few. If the x is seen as the gold or the precious discovery in a treasure hunt, then this x clearly marks the spot, though this marked spot, in Behr, has been transformed to a space of disillusionment. In contemporary Brazilian Portuguese, it is also common for one to use the x metaphorically as the "x do problema," indicating that the x may be Ground Zero for *bonança* but that it is also the principal location of the problematic exclusion of the majority of the population from attaining social equality and, therefore, social justice. As Holston has argued, the conceptualization of the original *Plano Piloto* was one designed to bring together diverse social classes, sharing and socializing in public spaces such as parks, restaurants and playground areas for children, all within walking distance of their respective apartments (20–22). But, as Beal points out, "The utopian goal of having residential life diminish class hierarchies came to naught as all but the wealthiest were priced out of the *superquadras* in the *Plano Piloto* ...everyone else mostly lives ten to twenty miles away in neighboring cities, which arose during or after the construction of Brasília" (42).

Ferreira Gullar's reinscription of the subjectivity of the "eu" in what literary critics would come to call *neo-concretismo* parallels Behr's own aesthetic process.<sup>8</sup> As Gilda Furiati writes: "Ao tratar de maneira informal os espaços 'monumentais' os versos abrem lugar para a reinclusão (no plano de poesia) do sujeito ao projeto urbanístico da cidade de Brasília" (21). This renovated imaginary space represents a fertile literary workshop where the creative process becomes the flourishing flora and fauna of artistic expression. However, it also decries the construction of a new Brasília that never truly existed in reality yet lived in theory inside the books and the plans and the blueprints of Juscelino Kubitschek, Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer.<sup>9</sup> In other words, I see *braxília* as the ludic yet socio-politically charged utopian dream of a dream that never came to be. This alternative space emerges from a poetically re(constructed) underground city that, much like the anti-traditional tradition of Brazilian literature of transgression since colonial times, projects utopian *ufanismo* with equal doses of irreverent socio-political critique and denunciation. The creative process of Behr's

poetry is fueled by an obsessive investment in undoing the *Plano Piloto* (rendered in Behr's most biting poetry as *Plano Pilatos*) and reinscribing the urban landscapes with subversive potential for social change. Hope for the future, however, becomes increasingly lost in disillusionment about the present urban reality that excludes the *brasiliense* or *candango* who is not a "funcionário público" from access to the "public" sector and promotes further socio-economic stratification and alienation of its citizens. A concrete example of this exclusionary process is Behr's poem published in the *Grande circular*, one of Behr's mimeographed short books, clearly named after the bus that still circulates in the capital today, passing from L2 to W3. The poem reads as follows:

para entrar na cidade  
apresente na portaria  
2 fotos 3X4, além de  
sua carteira de identidade  
e atestado de bons antecedentes.<sup>10</sup>

The parallel imaginary universe of *braxilia* Behr invents appropriates and anthropologizes JK's *Porque Construí Brasília* (Behr's *Porque Construí Brasília*, in lower-case b). Similarly, *braxília revisitada* is meant to satirize Lúcio Costa's *Brasília revisitada*, which he published upon his return to the city in 1985.

Furiati correctly divides Behr's poetry into three distinct phases: The first phase includes 19 mimeographed books, produced from 1977, three years after Behr moved to the D.F. from Cuiabá, until 1980, which Furiati designates as the "imagem projetada do espaço de Brasília," a phase where the poetic voice sings lyrically of his love and enchantment for Brasília while still critiquing in the *poema-piada* fashion of Oswald de Andrade, whose famously short and often sophomoric "joke poems" ushered in a newly renovated ludic phase to the modernist aesthetic project, the dehumanization brought about by the implementation of Lúcio Costa's *Plano Piloto de Brasília*. The second phase of Behr's poetic production, and the phase that interests me most in this essay, begins 13 years later with the 1993 publication of *Porque construí braxília*, a collection of 31 poems, 13 of which are dedicated to the D.F. This phase, which Furiati identifies as "Tempo social, história e utopia da cidade" is a five-year trajectory invested in transforming the cement of urban reality into the creation of a utopian dream to compensate for the disjuncture between official discourse of the intentions of the planned city and the depth of alienation and corruption that constitutes reality after its implementation. Behr produced five books during this period. Furiati rightly designates the third phase as "Crítica e desconstrução do discurso mítico," extending from 2001 to 2004 (but, I would amend, to the present day with Behr's two recently published volumes, to which

I alluded earlier). In this most recent phase of disillusionment, Behr's work is influenced by the bleak visions of sociologists and anthropologists like Luiz Sérgio Duarte da Silva and Brasilmar Ferreira Nunes and even the observations made by Clarice Lispector about Brasília, published in her "Crônicas de Brasília, 1925-1977" in *Para Não Esquecer*. In this work, one of Clarice's most notable and memorable observations is the following:

Brasília é construída na linha do horizonte. Brasília é artificial. Tão artificial como devia ter sido o mundo quando foi criado. [...] Brasília é uma cidade abstrata. E não há como concretizá-la. É uma cidade redonda e sem esquinas. Também não tem botequim para a gente tomar um cafezinho. É verdade, juro que não vi esquinas. Em Brasília não existe cotidiano. [...] Essa beleza assustadora, esta cidade, traçada no ar. [...] Brasília é mal-assombrada. É quase mediúnic. (43)<sup>11</sup>

Behr's poetic universe effectively echoes Clarice Lispector's notions of a capital city that is artificial in nature, when not superficial, lamenting an ironically decentered imaginary geographically existing in the center of the country but metaphysically very far from center. Further, Clarice laments Brasília's flighty dissociations from daily reality. Behr's verses reverberate Clarice's description of Brasília as more abstract than concrete in its (de)constructions. For Behr, Brasília occupies a distant and impersonal space to the point of being antisocial and somewhat eerily if not painfully disconnected from everyday life in Brazil, paradoxically cementing a "de-concretized" existence.

Behr composes, then, an appropriation and satirization of Lúcio Costa's work on "Revisiting Brasília." Particularly the famous line: "Nasceu do gesto primário de quem assinala um lugar ou dele toma posse: dois eixos cruzando-se em ângulo reto, ou seja, o próprio sinal da Cruz," which was published in the work *braxília Revisitada, Vol. I*, illustrating the poet's disillusionment:

brasília nasceu  
de um gesto primário  
dois eixos se cruzando,  
ou seja, o próprio sinal da cruz  
como quem pede bênção  
ou perdão  
eixos que se cruzam  
pessoas que não se encontram<sup>12</sup>

Furiati traces the evolution of the poet's disillusionment quite well, when she points out that the sensual verses attributed to a city once loved



represented by a “suzana eixosa” to a city “sem seios / sem desejos” in the latter part of Behr’s trajectory, when the embittered and alienated poetic voice asks a number of not-so-rhetorical questions, always in lower-case letters:

quando será inaugurada em mim esta cidade?  
 as mudanças no plano piloto  
 as mudanças em mim?  
 bicos de seios  
 apontam a direção  
 do monumento na  
 cidade plana  
 sem seios  
 sem desejos<sup>13</sup>

The indignant verses of a disillusioned poetic voice confronted with the impersonal (if not inhumane) reality of a utopian city gone awry, differs markedly from an earlier poetic voice that reveled ludically but not uncritically in the curves of a “suzana eixosa”:

naquela noite  
 suzana estava  
 mais W3  
 do que nunca  
 toda eixosa  
 cheia de L2  
 suzana,  
 vai ser superquadra  
 assim lá na minha cama.<sup>14</sup>

Returning now to the question of balancing intertextuality with original poetic production, I find it quite fascinating that literary critics to date have attempted to squeeze Behr’s work into a framework that not only finds its roots—but rather the entirety of its identity—in the work of Brazilian modernist poets. Early in his article, “As cidades de Nicolas Behr,” Francisco Kaq writes: “Antes, é claro, havia Oswald. Se o retorno ao coloquial e à dessolenização do poético praticados pela primeira geração modernista era uma bandeira (no pun intended) hasteada por vários poetas marginais ... parece-nos que Nicolas foi o mais efetivamente oswaldiano” (106). The specific characteristics of shared affinities between Oswald and Nicolas would include colloquial, synthetic verses, the notion of “ready-made” poetry (à la Décio Pignatari), the use of parody, the abuse of appropriation, and how Kac interestingly defines the mechanism of intertextuality in Behr’s poetry: “A recontextualização e transformação de lugares comuns e de outros textos” (109). At a

later point in Kaq’s brief but contradictory analysis, the critic states that “Nicolas cita e se apropria mais de Drummond que de Oswald—sua trajetória se inicia em algum ponto entre esses dois campos de força.” And what of Mário de Andrade’s *Pauliceia Desvairada*, which is nowhere to be found in Kaq’s essay? Kaq ultimately concedes the unique qualities of Behr’s poetic universe, failing to completely conceive this corpus as *drummondiano* or *oswaldiano* whether in derivation or by inspiration, writing: “A singularidade poética de Nicolas Behr reside, enfim, em seu modo de expor e explorar o esvaziamento subjetivo, em uma situação inédita.” Wilberth Salgueiro asks the unanswered question, “Por que tantos poemas de Drummond (exatamente ele, Drummond) são tomados, vampirizados por Nicolas Behr?” Quadros e quadras.

As Furiati points out, the “brand,” if you will, of intertextuality that appears in Behr’s works is one that does not acknowledge his own anthropophagy since it does not pause to give credit to works cited or subverted that appear in his pages. This technique, also reminiscent of Glauco Mattoso’s “plágio inteligente,” may be the only avenue to contest authoritative (and authoritarian) discourses about the city of Brasília, for the “procedimento de empréstimo do texto alheio,” as Furiati conceives it (16), is, in Behr, a veritable banquet of ecological recycling, mixing spoken words with written texts that Behr has researched to uncover official discourses of the imaginary of “Brasília” as it was theoretically conceived by its founders. Furiati quite convincingly writes: “No caso de Nicolas Behr, a suposição é de que o uso de paródias, transcrições e paráfrases de outros textos funciona como uma espécie de bricolagem cujo objetivo é a desconstrução de textos que se tornaram inquestionáveis e serviram para criar um ideário mítico da cidade. No caso [do poeta], a marca da apropriação serve como uma reinvenção poética do cotidiano” (17). Ultimately, then, *braxília* subverts the artificiality of the official discourse of the city and hopes to uncover, recover and finally rediscover “o cotidiano perdido no projeto monumental” (17). Monuments, then, are treated with humor and informality so that the subject can “ficar à vontade” to return to enjoy the space from where he has been excluded. The lack of pedestrian space and the division of the city into two entities, as if they were two poles or, one may even say, a contained bipolarity—the *Plano Piloto* (with its *tecnocracia*) and the *cidades satélites* (the periphery) becomes the primary spatial target of Behr’s denunciation.

Ironically and quite effectively, then, loaded terms of Brazilian bureaucracy and even *legalês* and *juridiquês* return in Behr’s poetry as colloquial expressions of everyday existence. Some of the most common (and deliberately redundant) words in his most recent works include *protocolo*, *carimbo*, *monumento*, *palácio*, *agenda* and *crachá*, characterizing the loss of a quotidian existence for the sake of a project that is both literally and figuratively of monumental proportions. But much like Glauco Mattoso has used and abused the classical *culto* Camonian

sonnet form and structure as an edifice to house transgressive themes of homoeroticism, fetishism and sadomasochism, Behr has managed to subvert bureaucratic processes by disempowering the terms and reducing them to the (quite unfortunate) everyday reach of the *brasiliense* and by extension, the Brazilian citizen, thus symbolically subverting and repositioning power from the palace to the people.

## Notes

- 1 Please note that all translations are by the author of this article, who assumes full responsibility for their accuracy. "I dedicate this / construction site [alternatively, flowerbed of works], (garden-worker)/ to those forgotten by / god who built / this city of Brasilia / and that, one day, / they will build with me / in dream and without pain, / the city of *braxília* / pronounced / *brakslha*, scumbag."
- 2 According to the *IGBE* (the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), Brasília, referring to the entire Federal District (DF) was ranked the fourth most populous city in the nation in 2010. The *Plano Piloto* refers specifically to the center of political and economic power within the DF. Furthermore, as a UNESCO designated World Heritage Site, one cannot overemphasize the cultural importance (and power) of the *Plano Piloto*.
- 3 Glauco Mattoso, a play on words of *glaucomatoso* (the adjective for one who has or is a carrier of glaucoma) is the pseudonym for Pedro José Ferreira da Silva, born in São Paulo in 1951. The pen name is also an allusion to the poet's condition of glaucoma, which he adopted as integral to his poetic identity and ultimately led to his blindness in 1995. Like Leila Míccolis and Roberto Piva, Mattoso's work bears the mark of the generation of "*poetas malditos*" writing poetry in the 1960s and 1970s under the banner of *poesia marginal* to protest censorship during the Brazilian military dictatorship of 1964–1985 and homophobic (and other forms of) discrimination today. As a result of its resistance to hegemonic norms and forms of power, the work of these poets, much like Behr's today, generally had limited circulation and distribution. Mattoso's work is the subject of Steven Butterman's *Perversions on Parade: Brazilian Literature of Transgression and Postmodern Anti-Aesthetics in Glauco Mattoso* (San Diego: San Diego State UP, 2005).
- 4 This allusion refers to one of the most famous and oft-cited Brazilian poems in contemporary Brazilian poetry: Carlos Drummond de Andrade's (1902–1987) "No meio do caminho," which was published in 1930 in *Alguma poesia*. It appeared for the first time in the 1928 publication of the *Revista da antropofagia*, where critics considered the micro-poem, much in the tradition of Oswald de Andrade's "*poema-piada*" ("joke-poem") to be a "poema-escândalo," criticizing pre-Modernist poetry for its erudite sophistication while adhering to the apparent "architextual" simplicity of the concrete image of a rock in the middle of the road, which becomes the focus of the poetic voice's existential anguish, representing also the futility of the inability to move through the path of life when faced with a blockage that is literally concretized in stone in / as rocky.
- 5 I use *macunaimically* as an Anglicized homage to Mário de Andrade's (1893–1945) groundbreaking modernist novel, which the author actually labels as a "*livro-rapsódia*" appearing in 1928, and *Macunaíma* is considered a hallmark and iconic product of the aesthetics of the "heroic phase" of Brazilian modernism. In the highly allegoric text, the main character of Macunaíma, "the hero with no character," receives a magical amulet (a carved green frog-shaped stone of Tupi origin believed to possess supernatural powers) from Ci, his belated lover who, upon her death, is transformed into a star. Contrary to Drummond's dilemma of the rock in the middle of the road, our "anti-hero" loses this amulet imbued with magical powers of transformation, leading him to a journey to São Paulo, where he unsuccessfully attempts to recover the amulet from a Peruvian industrialist named Venceslau Pietro Pietra, "o gigante Piaimã, comedor de gente."
- 6 According to the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC), the association responsible for designating the Brazilian capital as a world heritage site in 1987: "The plan of Brasilia ... is based on a rational organization of urban activities. The ensemble, which is organized around two intersecting axes, is in the form of an airplane or a giant bird flying towards the southeast. The principal axis, 6 km. long and 350 m. wide, is reserved for administrative activities; commercial and residential quarters, in quadrants around a church and a school, developed along the length of the 20 km. long transversal axis. At the intersection of the two axes, the routes are superimposed to ensure efficient management of traffic" (<http://www.ovpm.org/en/brazil/brasilia>).
- 7 *Quilombo*, directed by Carlos Diegues in 1984, is a quasi-historical retelling of the community of Palmares, a seventeenth-century settlement of escaped slaves in northeastern Brazil.
- 8 Ferreira Gullar (1930–2016) is the pseudonym of José Ribamar Ferreira, the Brazilian poet known as the father of the movement of neoconcretism. This literary current critiques ideals of mathematical precision in art, embracing phenomenological manifestations of existentialism. In his 1959 *Manifesto on Neo-Concrete Art*, the poet writes: "Os artistas neoconcretos preferem mergulhar na natural ambigüidade do mundo para descobrir, nele, pela experiência direta, novas significações." (Ferreira Gullar 246): "Neoconcrete artists choose to dive in to the natural ambiguity of the world so that they may discover new meanings through their direct experience in it" (Translation mine).
- 9 To many critics, these figures are considered the three founding fathers of Brasília. In 1956, President Juscelino Kubitschek ordered the construction of a new capital to be built in the geographic center of the nation. His hope was to attract settlers looking for better opportunities and the desire to connect disparate regions, such as Ceilândia, today Brasília's most populous administrative region with approximately 400,000 inhabitants, with new highway infrastructure spanning out from the new capital. The famous architect Lúcio Costa was awarded the top prize in a design competition, in which he made a blueprint of the capital that would be shaped as an airplane. As Sophia Beal writes, this symbolic design "elicited hope, advancement, and Brazil's growing airplane manufacturing industry" (Beal, "Making Space in Brasília," 57) all at once. Oscar Niemeyer was renowned for creating palaces with an eye for functionality and simplicity rather than elegance and adornment. For example, the use of prefabricated materials was a practical way to speed up construction while not sacrificing a modernist aesthetic celebrated for its curvaceous lines and uniqueness of architectural design even today.
- 10 in order to enter the city / please present at the door / two 3x4 photographs, in addition to / your identity card / and a certificate of good background records."
- 11 "Brasilia is built on the skyline of the city. Brasilia is artificial. As artificial as the world must have been when it was first created ... Brasilia is an abstract



- city. And there is no way to concretize it. It is a rounded city without corners. There is also not even a café for people to have a cup of coffee. It's true; I swear that I did not see corners. In Brasília, there is no such thing as the quotidian ... That frightening beauty, this city, traced in the air ... Brasília is haunted. It is almost psychic."
- 12 "Brasília was born / of a primary gesture / two axes crossing one another / or rather, the very sign of the cross / like he who asks for a blessing / or for forgiveness / axes that cross / people who do not find each other."
- 13 "when will this city be inaugurated within me? / The changes of the master plan / the changes in me? / nipples / point toward the direction / of the monument in the / planned city / without breasts / without desires."
- 14 "during that night / suzana was / more W3 / than ever / all *lily* [literally, *axised*] / full of L2 / suzana / come get blocky / like that over in my bed."

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