

Selected poems by
Nicolas Behr

***IT WILL NEVER
RAIN AGAIN***

Translated by Michael J. Hill



Khandangus Books

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(cover photo, author unknown)

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INTRODUCTION BY ABHAY K.

Nicolas Behr was born in Cuiabá, Mato Grosso, in 1958, he arrived in Brasilia in 1974 when he was a young man of sixteen full of energy, full of dreams and since then he has been singing his beloved city, his utopia and dystopia, Brasilia, and continues to do so till today as he turns 60 this year. A lifetime of poetry devoted to a city is admirable, a city which was inaugurated as Brazil's brand new capital in 1960, two years after Nicolas was born faraway in the state of Mato Grosso which hosts Pantanal, one of the world's most well-known wetlands teeming with wildlife diversity. I wonder what made a young Nicolas to leave his beautiful Mato Grosso and head for Brasilia which was just over a decade old in 1974. But the poet never forgot his childhood spent in Diamantino and later in Cuiaba. The first poem of this collection in fact begins with saudade (deep nostalgia) for his childhood days.

eternal childhood
without beginning or end

childhood that crosses
the river, crosses diamantino city,
pasture, life

and till today this deep nostalgia for his birthplace informs his poetry and his passion for plants (he owns a nursery named Pau-Brasilia and earns his living from it). What is striking about his poetry is the simplicity of language which is accessible to the common people, to one and all. It is worth noting that primarily Nicolas is people's poet. His first poetry collection *logurte com Farinha* (Yogurt with Flour) was a mimeographed book which he distributed by hand to people in the street. He continues to do so even today, singing the joys and sorrows of the *Brasilienses*, the inhabitants of Brasilia. This is his greatest strength. Brasilia has been lucky to find a poet who was born almost at the same time as the city and arrived here to sing the new born city and its residents, its birth pangs, adolescence, maturity as Brasilia heads towards sixty.

A large number of poems (at least one third) in this collection are reminiscences of Nicolas' childhood and reliving of it through his son

Klaus. The first poem on Brasilia comes much later in the collection and it expresses keen desire of the poet to remould the city in his own terms, Braxilia, not Brasilia and he also tells us how to pronounce it.

i dedicate this construction site
to those forgotten by god
who built the city of brasilia
and who, one day,
will build with me, in dream
and without pain, the city of braxilia
(it's pronounced brakslya, scumbag)

A number of delirious poems follow it in which the poet sings, celebrates, curses and condemns Brasilia. He even raises doubts about the patron saint of the city.

is the patron saint of this city
dom bosco or padre cicero?

The book is full of such poems and is a treat by all means. There is not a single dull poem, one flows into another, keeping the reader at the edge. The poet's childhood holds strong till the very end of the book where he is already thinking of death at the age of sixty and his last wish is to return home, to return to Diamantino to become a child once again and disappear in thin air, into the vast void of cosmos where he had come from in the first place.

the last thing
that i want to do in brasilia
is to die

I strongly recommend everyone to read this book of love and loss, hope and despair, pain and pleasure, the opposite poles that make living life worthwhile.

Abhay K. is the author of two memoirs and eight poetry collections including *The Prophecy of Brasilia*. He received the SAAARC Literary Award 2013. Since 2016 he serves as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Indian Embassy in Brasília.

GLOSSARY

ADÉLIA PRADO – A prominent Brazilian poet. Born in 1934.

AMOLAR – A farm where the author spent his childhood.

ASA NORTE – North wing of Brasilia’s metropolitan area.

ASA SUL – South wing of Brasilia’s metropolitan area.

BOCAIUVA – Common native palm species, its fruit is edible.

CANDANGOS – Workers who built Brasilia, mainly from the North-east of Brazil.

CANUDOS – Community in northeastern Brazil that rebelled against the Republican Government in 1897, which resulted in the total destruction of the village and its inhabitants. This is the deadliest internal conflict in Brazil’s history.”

CASIMIRO DE ABREU – Romantic Brazilian poet. Died in 1860.

CAXIAS (Duke of) – Army officer of the Brazilian Empire. Died in 1880.

CERRADO – Ecosystem in Central Brazil, a tropical savanna.

CERRATENSE – Inhabitants of the Cerrado region.

DIAMANTINO – A little town in the state of Mato Grosso, where the author studied in his childhood.

DOM BOSCO – The Italian saint whose dream in 1883 led to the foundation of Brasília.

DOM PEDRO – The first emperor of Brazil. Proclaimed Brazil’s independence from Portugal in 1822.

DOM SEBASTIÃO – Portuguese king who disappeared in the Battle of Alcácer Quibir, Marroco, in 1578.

DRUMMOND – The most important Brazilian poet. Died in 1987.

EIXÃO – The long axis of Brasilia, crossing the city from north to south.

FLAMBOYANT – A large ornamental tree with red flowers, native to Madagascar.

IPÊ – A native tree, common in Brasilia, known for its colorful flowers.

JENIPAPO – A native fruit tree, used by indigenous Brazilians to make dye to paint their bodies during festivities.

JK – Juscelino Kubitschek - Charismatic Brazilian President, the founder of Brasilia (1902-1976)

L2 – One of the major avenues of Brasilia.

LAMBARI – A small fish, the most common in Brazilian rivers.

LAR DO MENOR – A place in Diamantino where the author spent his childhood while attending school.

PADRE CICERO – A priest from Northeastern Brazil, considered by many to be a saint. Died in 1934.

PEQUI – A fruit native to the Cerrado, commonly used in preparing regional dishes.

PILOTIS – The columns on which the apartment buildings in the superquadras are erected.

PLANO PILOTO – Brasilia's metropolitan area, which resembles an airplane.

SAUDADE – A prolonged longing, homesickness or deep nostalgia.

SERIEMA – Native bird, endemic to the Cerrado ecosystem.

SERTANEJO – An inhabitant of the hinterland.

SUPERQUADRA – Grouping of blocks where people live in the Plano Piloto.

TIRADENTES – A leading member of the Brazilian independence movement. Publicly hanged in 1792.

W3 – One of the most important avenues of Brasilia.

ZUMBI – An important warrior figure in Brazilian history as a pioneer of resistance against slavery. Died in 1695.

Nicolas Behr (Nikolaus von Behr) was born in Cuiabá, Mato Grosso, in 1958. He attended a Jesuit primary school in Diamantino and moved to Cuiabá at the age of ten. He wanted to be a geologist. He began living in Brasília in 1974 and three years later released his first mimeographed book, *logurte com Farinha*, the first of many. In 1978 he was imprisoned by the DOPS (Department of Political and Social Order) for carrying pornographic material (his books!) and was found not guilty the following year. In 1980 he began to work as a copywriter for advertising agencies. During this time, he became involved in the environmental movement. In 1986 he began working with FUNATURA — The Pro-Nature Foundation — where he stayed until 1990. Since then he has dedicated himself to his one-time hobby, cultivation of plant species native to the Brazilian Cerrado, at Pau-Brasilia Eco.Store and Nursery, which still functions today. He began publishing again in 1993, with *Porque Construí Brasília*. In the 2004 book *Nicolas Behr – Eu Engoli Brasília* — volume I of the Brasilienses Collection — the journalist Carlos Marcelo wrote his biographical profile. In 2008 his book *Laranja Seleta*— edited by Língua Geral — was a finalist for the Portugal Telecom Prize for Literature. The 2010 short film *Braxília* (17 minutes) by cinematographer Danyella Proença, a presentation on the poet’s relationship with his city, won various awards in cinema festivals. His works have been the subject of various master’s theses throughout the country. In 2013 he participated as an invitee in FLIP - the Paraty International Literary Festival, the International Book Fair of Frankfurt, and the Latinale — Latin American Poetry Festival, in Berlin. In 2015 the University of Brasilia’s Institute of Letters established the “Nicolas Behr Prize for Literature”. The craft beer “Nicolas Bier” was launched in 2015 by a group of friends who are brewers. He loves Brasilia.

Photo by Carsten Menteldorf
(Berlin Wall, 2013)



Poetry is what gets lost in translation.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

eternal childhood
without beginning or end

childhood that crosses
the river, crosses diamantino city,
pasture, life

childhood that climbs the hill
to admire, from the top,
the most fantastic of childhoods

not this one

LAR DO MENOR
(The House for the Young)

where today stands edith's house,
where they sell fabric,
was the lar do menor

lar do menor was demolished
everything was demolished

everything
everything
everything
everything
everything
everything

they even demolished our
football field

ADVENTURE

did you like the adventure, klaus?
what adventure?!
our car didn't even blow up!

* * *

putting drawings
under his pillow
to dream
of batman and boats

that's my son erik

what's left to feel?
what's left to say?

here i am: house in ruins
 gnawed fingernails
 buried school
 unhappy nun
 dirty river, fallen bridge

here i am: burned church
 extinct cerrado
 uncertain future

here i am: coral snake
 dead teacher
 spent memory
 empty soul

here i am: skittish lambari
inácio my friend
unflattered boy

here i am: offering
the other cheek

here i am: non-existent poem
interminable mass
closed cinema

here i am: exposed, deposed
almost naked
healed wound
(do you want me to open it, really?)

here i am: unfinished childhood

IT'S A GOOD THING THAT TIME PASSES

for alcina

do you remember?

it was in this room at your parents' house
that we fell in love listening to joni mitchell
and egberto gismonti

you were one of the ladies of the canyon
and i was your clown

today we are sleeping in this room again
with our three children
our family

god protect our family

and yours

A WARRIOR'S GARB

sandals,
old shoes,
bare shins, shorts,
he didn't have a belt (or underwear)
a white shirt, threadbare,
a folder with notebooks
inside: pencil, pen, eraser,
sharpener and ruler

and off we would go
this poem and i
to conquer the world

fifty years
and not a single poem
about childhood,
that time without memory

fifty poems
and not one about
skinned knees, cut-up hands,
bleeding heads, bug-eyes

fifty books
and not one about anything

fifty baby
lambaris swallowed alive
to learn how to swim

fifty poems
to make a canoe
and still sink

COMET POETRY

it was a night in july 1967

mother woke us up in the early morning
to see the comet ikeya-seki

she knew that we would never forget

the comet followed its course
we went back to bed

traveling salesman in the sky
the comet appears and disappears

the comet comes back
childhood doesn't

the boy i was
exists where i am not

the boy that i was i am not
it's another boy, older
who came before me

the boy i was
no poet can imagine
no word can recreate

the boy i was never was

i went by the ranch
but didn't stop
(i didn't even look back)

childhood
that is yet to come

* * *

i pushed i tried
i called a tractor
do i use explosives?

the ranch house
doesn't fall

do you want me
to knock it down, really?
asked time

the father yells and the son grows horns

the mother grazes at the plaza garden
the father prefers the neighbor's grass

on the breasts of the oldest daughter
nipples blossom

but in spite of it all
nothing happened

and united, the bovine family
enters the corral

* * *

NOBEL PRIZE

who was castro alves?
he was a great poet!
just like you, right dad?!

saudade is, by nature,
a gritty feeling
rolled by time
in the form of tiny memories
that gather at the bottom
of memory like sand
that sinks to the bed of a river

* * *

the homework
was about buildings,
scaffolding, walls...

after explaining it all
alcina asked:
max, what is the most
important thing
in a house?

it's the mother!

i divided the ranch
in various childhoods

the fences were clouds

suspended pastures

mountains cut in half

roving rivers

disorienting maps

* * *

childhood is a non-place

childhood is an archeological site,
it's useless to search for it

childhood is loss,
remorse

unrecoverable mango

diamantino is indian
diamantino is white
diamantino is black

rainbow of races

lambari
of all colors

mixed-up veins
in this blood river

* * *

here on the banks
of the amolar creek
everything is strong

except the current

* * *

childhood
is the fertile layer
of life

FROM ERIK TO ME

today i'm the bad guy
and you're the good guy
and this time
the bad guy wins

and i kill you, dad
but only in the movie

* * *

HOMEWORK

if every 30 minutes
a mango falls
from the avocado tree
how many jackfruits
explode per hour
inside the jenipapo?

from the veranda
at dona nilde's house
i contemplate diamantino

i look at the green
i see the church
the town mango trees

life plays
hide-and-peek
on sunny neurons

it's sunday morning

just from the veranda
at dona nilde's house
i am absolutely sure
that i am alive

the boy dictates
i write

i want to drink
powdered water

bottle clouds

climb a watermelon tree

jump from the top
of a pumpkin tree

spit sparks
inside a rock

CUNNING BOY

choose a clean place

look for a leaf that's wide,
fresh, smooth
and soft within arm's reach

without a hornet below
or bird poop from above

there never was
a better way
to clean your butt

who cares about looking
for bocaiuvas if the stock market
in chicago is showing that the price
of soya is falling?

who cares about fishing
lambaris if the slaughterhouse
is only paying forty reais
for a side of cattle?

who cares about writing
poems if that poem
doesn't turn a profit
for buying a tractor, fertilizer
and seed?

who cares about me
in-the-city-that-only-exists-
in-my-imagination?

i worked up the courage
and didn't enter
the ranch house

i stayed at the door
waiting
for the courage to pass

* * *

put the bait on the hook
like this

put the poem into words
like this

throw the hook in the water
like this

throw the poem on the page
like this

we found gold, lots of gold
and diamonds

we enslaved indians
brought blacks from africa

dug holes
rerouted rivers

thatched roofs
built houses

the gold ran out
the diamond ran out
the indians died
the blacks ran away

we didn't even cover the holes

we left

two streets
two roads

the road of life
the road of death

one going south
the other north

north and death don't rhyme

life is aimless

* * *

a boy intrigued by the church
with the thick walls
and no windows

how will god hear
our prayers?
why don't we just pray
outside?

GOLD CREEK

crossing the creek
jumping on the rocks is easy

what's hard is
pulling them up

living is moving the rocks out of place

remembering is trying to put them back

* * *

lambari is a kind
of aquatic bird
that lives on the earth
but dreams of flying
like a fish

look at me look at me
develop the photograph

the boy with his hand on the bull's horn
swallows anacondas
pinches scorpions
the boy that bites piranhas
kicks horses
steps on snakes
the boy that chases jaguars

climbs the highest
of trees and jumps
back flips
into the canopy

to write
a poem
one must have
courage

the wounded child rebels
against the stinging indifferences

separating shards of shingles
from shards of glass

the wounded child won't face
its enemy
because there is no enemy
greater than his own pain

when a wounded child
says that it's hurting,
believe him, blow on it, bandage it

wounded child,
mutilated sentiments

a collision with reality
leaves a wounded child,
says the reporter on tv

the wounded child
still has not said all:
he wants to embrace this poem,
care for it,
be the mother
and father of the poem,
put it to bed because,
maybe, that way,
the pain of the poem
will pass

has it passed?

the paca is gone
the cotia is gone
the tapir is gone
the jaguar is gone
the wolf is gone
the caititu is gone

and the lambari?

not a trace is left
of the lambari

the lambari erases
its tracks with water

* * *

POEM OF THE FROG

the child looks at the frog
the child gets close to the frog

the frog sits still
the frog doesn't jump

the frog is made of plastic

A LESSON IN FRIENDSHIP

inácio was an indian and my best friend

rejected by other whites

inácio swam with me, fished with me

we did our homework together

did we learn our lessons?

i never forgot inácio

inácio i'm sure

never forgot me

where is he now?

where am i?

the mother grazes over the pains
that the father gathers in the corral

and the boy, outcast calf
waits for the white night
to spill from the udder of heaven
and drinks the milky way

* * *

it's late at night
and my little fish sleeps

in a little while he'll wake
to ask for water
"cold water in a glass cup"

he asks in a hurry
but what's the surprise?
– leave it there, i'll drink it later!

my little fish wakes early
grabs a towel
decorated with a drawing by angela leite
and dries himself inside the aquarium

i draw a river

the joy of drawing
a river nearly drains me,
i wish i were a river mouth

i draw a boy fishing
i draw the lambari
that i caught

isn't my drawing beautiful,
teacher?
unflattered boy, unpraised,
but proud
with the lambari in his hand

living watercolor
of childhood

lifeless nature

erik returns from the park
with leucena seeds in his hand
and asks: are these the seeds
you put in my mother?

* * *

THIS IS MY LIFE

my little son, klaus,
asked for a pacifier and said
– in his own way – (and i understood)
that he was going to sleep

he grabbed his pink pillow
in the living room and his white blanket
from the floor
– bubu – and curled up on the bed

one day, a little grown up, he asked me:
what is the biggest, most biggest thing
in the world? i talked about buildings,
whales, sequoias...

and he said: you're wrong!
it's love!

the boy swallowed
his milk tooth

i swallowed it!

wasn't it
made of milk?

* * *

i took all
the nails
from the old bridge
over the amolar creek
as if there were one missing in me

finally i crossed myself

from infinity to diamantino city
is a great distance
said the talking cricket

yeah right, from the front door
of my house to diamantino
is one hand-width and a half
retorted the mute snail

going great lengths
without leaving your spot
the farther you get
the closer you are

refuse rides, avoid detours,
dynamite bridges,
blow tires, melt motors,
rip maps, destroy licenses,
wrong turns, try to return

from brasilia to diamantino city
barefoot
on hot asphalt

from the plane you can see
a little dot on the highway
– it's him! it's him!
and the stewardess asks me:
– just where do you think
you're going?

a drifter with a destination:
diamantino city

here, around
the pillory,
is sacred ground

depressed mountains
quiet sidewalks
humbled histories
sad rivers

gold
that doesn't glitter

a diamond
that isn't forever

lashes for those
who no longer
feel pain

nabor
estivado
sete lagoas
levanta-saia
caixa furada
fazenda amolar
ribeirão frei manoel
piraputanga
chora
café-sem-troco
chapadão do deus-me-livre
acaba-vida
buriti alegre
gurixa
tira-sentido
quebra-canela
arrosesal
morro do mil-réis
lençol queimado
serra do tombador
caramba

say
one of these names
and you will be happy

the flamboyant
at the ranch house
rooted in me

cellulose and flesh
tangled together

that's why
we scratched
shed bark

flowered

* * *

what do they carry,
those trucks?

they carry my
childhood

soy

i went looking for my treasure
but didn't find it

if i had made a sign
on the rock, left a mark
on the river bank, a fishing rod
stuck in the ground

my childhood
is buried
in me

* * *

lidia or lideya?
the cowboy's wife
or the tractor man's wife?

a wet nurse i never met
(only felt)

black milk
white milk
good milk

is it true that inside every adult
there is a child? how did it get in there?
through where? will it come out one day
or will it stay there forever?
does it take a while to grow up?
why does childhood happen
while we are young?
why can't the child be selfish too?
why do i always have to say yes?
if the child doesn't cry,
does that mean it's sick?
what comes before childhood?
if childhood doesn't happen, then what does?
does someone tell you
when childhood is over?
why do kids have to grow?
is growing a punishment?
could i have a different one?
why do they always tell us not to cry?

if the child doesn't have a memory,
is it because it was born complete?

is it true that everyone has a childhood
except rocks, ducks and poets?

this old childhood
that i carry

i beat my chest
and ask:
is there anyone there?

how many
lambari drown
inside me?

* * *

poems are made
with a notebook,
pencil and eraser

the notebook
for writing

the eraser
for erasing

the pencil
for forgetting

IS MY PICTURE PRETTY, TEACHER?

the dead teachers
buried behind the blackboard
– walled in

chalk-soiled, mummified
pointing to the door: do me the favor
of leaving the classroom! no!

the ugly face finally avenged

ashamed the numbers drop
the ripped report card of dirty, worthless grades
and no one to praise my drawing
the erased memories of the spent notebook
the dead geography of a non-existent country
time stopped dead below the ground

the heroes all dead (of course!)
tiradentes floundering on the road
who dug up zumbi? who?
caxias was a crazy butcher
meh, here comes dom pedro with history

and no one to praise my drawing

the book is a riverbank

use your imagination to bait
the hook of your memory
the line has no sinker
but yearnings have weight
time is what holds the pole
and this poem is the fish

the river is life itself

write in its waters

(translated by David Silberstein)

light falls on diamantino and little by little
the sun sets and everyone goes to bed
and dreams that they are dreaming the dream
of the diamantino river

they dream that the gold creek
stopped flowing and that the rocks
work to climb the mountain

they dream that the waters
of the diamantino river froze
and that pacas and cotias skate
on the frozen surface

they dream that the
nurses on call also sleep
and dream of babies
who haven't learned to cry

the rare thieves retire
the drunk don't drink
and speak softly
inside the bottles
the owls don't hoot
the frogs don't croak

the lights of the street are turned off
(the city is illuminated)

in the dreams of those who dream
that they sleep in diamantino the wind
stops blowing, the earth doesn't
turn, the stars don't even twinkle,
the leaves don't chatter

they who dream that they sleep
in diamantino have deep
insomnia and nightmares
that scare no one

the roosters, distracted,
stretch out the morning
dogs don't bark, motors
don't work, it rarely rains
and, if it rains, drizzles, that
disappears before it touches the roof

he who dreams of sleeping
in diamantino
knows that the night in diamantino
also dreams that it sleeps

without flowers
it will color us

without leaves
it will give us shade

without bark
it will protect us

without a trunk
it will sustain us

the old flamboyant tree
at the door
of the ranch house
that although dead will live

DONA NILDE IN HEAVEN

before sitting
among the blessed
saint peter approaches
dona nilde and says:
“this is heaven, dona nilde,
allow us to serve
ourselves and then,
from tomorrow onward,
your smile will be our
nourishment”

and so it was done

brasilia is the incapacity
of affectionate contact
between the slab
and the concrete

* * *

he came
to the last step
of his career

and from up there
he jumped

* * *

needy, lonely
on sunday afternoons
he would go to the esplanade
by the ministries
just to give information to tourists

i dedicate this construction site
to those forgotten by god
who built the city of brasilia
and who, one day,
will build with me, in dream
and without pain, the city of braxilia
(it's pronounced brakslya, scumbag)

* * *

a frozen glance
a lost glance
a useless telephone list
in front of me

it's the early morning

and the early morning in brasilia
is cold, making it impossible
to raise giant-sweet-water-
shrimp-from-malaysia
in this region

here the values of a society
are celebrated

here the spirit of a nation
is honored

blah-blah-blah-blasilia

* * *

this is how we want to live,
we said

this is how we want
you to live,
said the architect

* * *

when will this city be inaugurated
in me?

is brasilia
an authoritarian city?

it is
wanna see?

to go up and speak
to the minister
you need a suit and tie

to come down
just naked

* * *

as with all mythical cities
the origin of brasilia
is lost in the darkness of time

darkness that the lights of the eixão
try to illuminate

jk built brasilia
the candangos just watched

* * *

brasilia was born
out of a primary gesture

two crossed axes
or in other words:
the sign of the cross itself

as one who asks for a blessing
or forgiveness

* * *

ok, sir, you have shown us
the blocks, the squares,
the axes, the palaces...

do you think you could
show us the actual city?

LITERARY POLICY

with your permission, carlos

the poet from asa norte
argues with the poet
from asa sul
to see which of them
can hit
the poet
from the plano piloto

in the midst of all that
a poet from a satellite city
takes the mud
from his shoe

* * *

map in hand
eyes on the map
hand on the eyes

let's try to find the city

it happened on 103

the doorman from block i
of 103 south caught the daughter
of the superintendent from
block o from 413 north
with the guy from 302
of block d of 209 south
in the watchman's car
from block f of
314 north

* * *

when i arrived
they had already demolished
the ministries and the cathedral
the bus station razed to the ground,
it's sad
so much wasted cement

that was all they destroyed
because the rest didn't exist yet

BRASILIA

origin: darkness

creator: unknown

founder: unregistered

administrative political center: none

planned city: maybe

population: extinct

sex: hermaphrodite city

economic activity: not identified

imperial capital: where? when?

submerged: yes

area: unspecified

are there poets? what are poets?

location: undefined

legendary city: certainly

observations: none

there wasn't anything here
just a great emptiness
a desert

then they inaugurated a capital
and the cerrado came soon after

* * *

art
for the architect to see

poem
for the illiterate to read

* * *

brasilia arrived
well before utopia

but utopia said that it would still come

for years it's been stuck
in an enormous traffic jam

a strong storm brought the light
a part of what could have been
the ministries, beginning excavations
that also allowed the identification of
living structures that were quite
complex, with people apparently
living inside great boxes
of concrete

* * *

brasilia is the ruins of machu picchu
inverted, cuzco reconstructed, tiahuanaco
unfinished, pyramid of teotihuacán
on the contrary, the palace of the altiplano

atlantic cerratenses:
lost city of the candangos

the sphynx fixes its mirror: jk

the lines of the monumental axis
are a continuation of the nazca lines

my poem
is what i am
seeing now:

a man
crossing
the superquadra

* * *

in the entrance
a speed bump
and a newspaper stand

blocks blocks blocks
blocks blocks blocks
blocks blocks blocks

i can't seem
to find my way out of these words:
southern commercial sector

which bank do i pay
to get out of
southern commercial sector?

how many payments will it take
to get out of
southern commercial sector?

you want 30%
of my salary
for me to be rid of
southern commercial sector?

two liters of my blood
every day to take me out of
southern commercial sector?

to get out of
southern commercial sector
i'll do what it takes

i just won't sell my soul

they heralded utopia
but it was brasilia
that appeared

* * *

our lady of the cerrado,
protector of pedestrians
that cross the eixão
at 6 pm, help me to arrive
safe and sound
at noelia's house

* * *

VOICES OF THE CERRADO

brasilia! brasilia!
where are you
that you don't respond?

what block
what superquadra
are you hiding in?

daddy,
what monument is that?
that is the monument
to the unknown monument

* * *

SQS415F303
SQN303F415
NQS403F315
QQQ313F405
SSS305F413

might this be a poem
about brasilia?

is it a poem?
is it brasilia?

L2 is too little
W3 is too much

when i am very sad
i take the ring route bus
and go about
holding hands
with the seat

* * *

i open the door to the room
you call the others
he indicates the window

we jump from the fifth floor
you all are on the block below

they don't know what to do
with the bodies

bury my heart
in the sand of the park
on 415 south

and leave my body
floating in the paranoia lake

* * *

in the southern poetic sector
i go through the emergency exit

in the northern lethal sector
i escape through the valve

in the southern radioactive sector
i press the alarm button

i'm going into some
to get away from this one
and not fall into another

i ascend to heaven
on the escalators
of brasilia's bus station

here the body of christ
isn't bread,
it's a meat pastry

here the blood of christ
isn't wine,
it's cane juice

is the patron saint of this city
dom bosco or padre cicero?

* * *

not braxilia
braxilia is a dream

braxília was constructed
with a tongue

2354 tongues polishing
the stairs of the palace

i swallowed brasilia

at peace with the city
my vw beetle moves
along those axes,
circles and blocks,
bureaucratically,
stamping the asphalt

and sending memoranda of esteem
and consideration to you, mr. director

* * *

brasilia is exactly
what you are seeing
even if you
aren't seeing anything

ENIGMATIC BRASILIA

brasilgia, there are exactly 3232 days left
until we balance the books

you owe me a poem
i owe you a tender look

on the shores of the paranoa lake
i grab a piece of wood
between an old tire and a dead fish
(an egret is my witness)

you don't recognize me
i don't recognize you

* * *

how to decipher
your handwriting
of posts and winds?

melancholy blocks
superquadras without superego
axis writhing
monuments in agony
depressed lawns
suicide lines

close your wings over them
close them!

that's it!
that's it!

now squeeze tight

* * *

a superquadra is nothing more
than solitude
divided in blocks

brasilia is for the invited

no entry without credentials
no entry without a stamp
no entry without blowing your nose
no entry without this poem

* * *

paperclip promoted
to a stapler

dreaming of being
a stamp one day

* * *

i salute your excluded,
here included

how to get there: you don't get there
for you never leave

where to stay: you don't stay
suspended city

what to see: there's nothing to see
because brasilia
(immaterial object)
only exists in theory

how to leave: the city has no exit
it's a labyrinth

* * *

from this cerratense plateau,
from this solitude, from this palace
that will soon be in ruins, i cast my tired gaze
once more over the debris of my country
and foresee a dawn that will never come
with furious anger and enormous distrust
in the eternal country of the future

during the excavations they also
found pre-historic paperclips,
staplers made of chipped
rock, credentials in gold plaques,
petrified stamps,
embalmed ministers
and written memorandums
yet undeciphered

* * *

in brasilia the winners lose

discriminated, the candangos
were obligated to live
outside the fortified city

but the bureaucrats migrated to the capital
soon afterward, finding the city ready

even after brasilia
will we continue to
want to live in society?

while the candangos slept
the city rose, impulsed
by the enthusiasm
of the dream of building

that's why, according to legend,
they say that in brasilia
the buildings and the monuments
appeared as if by magic,
spontaneous,
blossoming from the ground

* * *

what
fascinates you most
about brasilia?

the city or the power?

the sky

that's how
they sang
the first and the last
candango bards

everything was pure dirt
(a fine dust
in the pores)

everything was pure mud
(pure water
that we happily drank)

it was all a dream
it was all an illusion

* * *

if brasilia
is a cold city
i am not

we arrived exhausted
at the legendary
modern abandoned city,
at the edge of what appears
to have once been a lake

five days
traveling through
an enormous sand storm

the museum exhibits
a perfect reconstruction
of palaces, superquadras
and ministries

but it doesn't mention
who built them

and god created the world
(brasilgia)
man (jk)
and woman (sarah)
in six days
between 1956 and 1961 a.d.

(in biblical times
a year was equal to a day)

on the seventh day
a sunday
god rested

in rio de janeiro

who were the ancestors
of the candangos?

why did they migrate
to the cerratense empire?

why, when they arrived
here, did they accept
enslavement?

where did they find the strength
to do their work of construction
of the new capital
in just three years?

why did the city,
after inauguration,
begin to be destroyed?

why hasn't a single poet
until today tried
to decipher this city
etched in the air?

before brasilia
there were infinite others

sacred and cursed

profaned, buried
and reconstituted
on these seven:

sodom
gomorrah
herculaneum
pompeii
hiroshima
nagasaki

canudos

don't try to like
brasilgia so quickly

real blocks
fly over imaginary
superquadras

superquadras
in search of
a city

* * *

there will not be
stamp upon stamp

and stamp upon stamp
we will reconstruct the city

without stamps

i was the first to arrive
in 1957, said the candango

i been here
for two hunned years,
said the sertanejo

i'm the indian
i beat them all

no you didn't
i am the rock

* * *

i have twenty brasiliass
in the dead file

what do i do?

throw them all out
but before
you do make twenty copies

and archive them

why is nothing known
about the millennial brasilia
before the 21st of april 1960?

all the records
about the ancient city
were destroyed
by order of jk

so that this way
the story of brasilia
started with him

* * *

all the errors of brasilia
(all the errors are mine)

to tolerate other brasilias
and explode only the model
where the magic word is taboo

abracadabrasilia

we, candangos,
bastard children
of the lost tribe of israel pinheiro,
our father, maker and benefactor

we, candangos, the people chosen
to construct in a thousand days,
the first capital
of the last of the empires

the golden head of jk
the agate eyes of jk
the concrete neck of jk
the iron chest of jk
the bronze arms of jk
the silver penis of jk
the steel legs of jk
the clay feet of jk

welcome dom sebastião,
the covered
of santo antonio of the uncovered

the throne is yours
the wait is ours
the line enormous

we, candangos,
subjects archived
in the imperial closet
of magic stamps

humble servants archived
by melancholy paperclips

we, candangos,
happy slaves
of the sadistic staplers

from babylonia to brasilia
nebuchadnezzar dreams
of winged lions
chasing seriemas,
armadillos and anteaters

your secret passwords
your access codes
your armored gates
your shining agendas

what's in it for me?
where's my cut?
yours is here!

you official pickpockets
you cabinet rats

you sniffers
of stamp ink

* * *

the candangos
grabbed life
without gloves

life is an electrical wire
uncovered and fallen on the road
on a rainy night

pssss

silence
upon entering
the superquadra

before being
construction material
these pilotis that you touch
were dreams

touch them carefully
so you don't wake
lucio costa

the architect's sketch
is a surface

skin, post, poem and paper
are surfaces

the cathedral's basement
the buried block
are surfaces

the solitude
of the superquadra:
surface

where the roots grow
brasilias skies
are surfaces too

lake paranoa
even dry
is a surface

brasilias my skin
inside out

deep surface

the rough tongue of the block
rubs the dry lips
of the pilotis

the paranoa lake salivates

wings are thighs
that blossom

erect asphalts
desire
grassy pubes

phallic axes
deflower
humid paranoas

monumental glans
penetrate
marble vulvas

brasilian sheds its skin
(burnt grass)

brasilian sheds its poet
(fire in the library)

brasilian sheds its prophet
(utopian blazes)

brasilian sheds its architect
(carbonized lines)

brasilian sheds its sky
(rebellious clouds)

brasilian sheds its sunset
(atomic explosion on the horizon)

brasilian sheds its city
(cerrado in flames)

brasilian sheds its founder
(jk reinvented)

apaches, philistines, incas, russians, trojans,
colombians, kurds, albanians, jews, toltecs, mayans,
spartans, zulus, arabs, helveticans, xavantes,
filipinos, syrians, gauls, mayans, english, quechuas,
spartans, daudis, danish, bantus, hebrews, americans,
tupis, polish, austrians, ionians, brazilians, aqueus,
scots, eskimos, carthageneans, indo-europeans,
nambikwaras, goitacazes, czechs, phonecians, koreans,
spanish, hindus, austrians, ottomans, olmecs, hittites,
pharisees, ostrogoths, hunns, catalans, kurds, swiss,
tuaregs, suebis, swedes, tabajaras, flemish, chechens,
walloons, sardinians, yorubas, yanomamis, frisians,
montenegrans, hiranches, ashantis, welsh, sami,
hausas, ukrainians, marajoaras, afghans, jejes, marians,
germans, aztecs, bulgarians, russians, italians

they all tried to construct brasilia
but only the candangos did it

yes, that's the statue of theseus
the great cerratense hero
(yes, son, greater than jk)

he freed brasilia from the oppression
of the bureaucrat, a being half man
half stamp that lived in the labyrinths
of the ministries slowly
devouring whatsoever line
that formed in front of him

* * *

this bronze head
is of jk
or one of his descendants

jk is not the hero
cerratense civilizer

jk is the myth

and who is the hero?
the hero is us!

i prostrate myself
i prostitute myself
i eat your grass
i drink your mud
i swim in your sewage
i cut myself inside
i crucify myself on your posts

so that you do not deserve me, brasilia!

* * *

jk didn't leave any descendants

the second cerratense empire
was therefore divided in
small kingdoms
miniscule feudal states
microscopic castles
invisible bureaucrats

in official solemnity
celebrating the efficiency
of the state machine
321 bronze staplers
234 silver paperclips and
185 golden stamps
were sacrificed

* * *

this book is a compliment
for brasilia
or a critique
of bureaucracy

when in doubt, stamp here
the capital is once again
rio de janeiro

we have the most modern ruins
in the world, where ipês graze,
cattle flourish, poets dig
and armadillos hang themselves

* * *

no, the poet can't go up

no, you can't speak
with the superintendent
on the phone
or even stay under the block

can the poet kill himself?
sure, go ahead

but don't make a mess
on the floor or the pilotis

three a.m. on the eixão
nowhere to go
nowhere to run
screaming won't help
dying won't do any good

* * *

dear tourists,
i would like to point out
once more
that even normal people
live in these apartment blocks

* * *

whatever i didn't say
about brasilia
time will say it for me

DRUMMOND BRASILIENSIS

brasil, what now?

now that there's a plane on the runway
there aren't any flights
you want to drown yourself
in the paranoia but the lake dried up
you want to speak to the president,
but he is traveling
you want to hide in the cerrado
the cerrado is gone
you want to go to goias
goias isn't there anymore

brasil, what now?

LET'S CALL IT A DEAL

i pretend that i write poems
you pretend to read them

i pretend that i please you
you pretend to praise me

i pretend that i am an easy-going poet
you pretend that you
make an effort to understand me

i pretend that i'm a pretender

you pretend that
its your own pain

THAT'S WHAT THE MADRINHA RESTAURANT WAS LIKE IN COCALZINHO DE GOIAS

at the madrinha restaurant in
cocalzinho de goias,
the best table to have lunch
was the first one to the left
for those that entered from the road
it was the biggest and close to the window,
where you could see life,
or the one on the right corner
close to the wood fire
for those that entered from the back,
where there was
an old papaya plant that grew
from the foundation of the wall

at the madrinha restaurant in
cocalzinho de goias,
there was a gate at the door,
where, every friday,
she would put a branch of rue to call in
the clients, to scare off the bad spirits
and the flies

no grand gestures
no flowers
or impassionate verses

but to go to the bakery
every morning
to buy hot bread
for you

even if it's just
in my imagination

* * *

inside me
there lives a tree

internal tree
that keeps me upright

a tree that is nearly body
nearly trunk
nearly bark

nearly nothing

the pequi flower
is sometimes used
in the confection
of poems

like this one

* * *

the tree grows
over the earthen page

words stay on the ground

trees and words:
both rooted in me

* * *

HEADLINE 2060

unidentified
flying objects
flew over the city

(it was a pair of butterflies)

raise cattle among capybaras
and manage
this literary ranch
where poetry grazes
and i ruminate on my pain

avoid awards and fame
and pass calmly
among the gentle cattle

* * *

i love you
24 hours
per second

for noelia

A POEM FOR THOSE WHO LIKE POETRY

emotion is the raw material of poetry
just as limestone is the raw material
of cement

to become poetry, emotion
goes through a process of anabolic
pre-grinding, it is centrifuged in the vacuum
of the lungs of the brain and afterward washed in the
blast furnaces of the larynx

in the second phase, emotion, if it resists
this mechanical grinding, is manually
chosen by the poet, all chopped up

that's why emotion comes to you
like this in the form of letters
that together form words
that together form sentences
that together form emotion
that we need so much,
the raw material of life

it is we who should
bow in reverence
be hard enough to protect you
it is we who should
write poetry for you
be the green in your chlorophyll
breathe for you
be your left lung
it is we who should
give you shade
be the tree of your dreams
it is we who should
plant ourselves at your feet
be your soil, your promised land
it is we who should
cut ourselves down in sacrifice
burn ourselves inside
to warm you
it is we who should
beautify your forests

it is we who should be for you
the tree of life

ants dig inside me
tunnels of uncertainty

perforate galleries
to get to the dark side
of the mind
and build sand pilasters

* * *

in the depths of the forests
of words
live the poets
disguised as diphthong trees

they feed on nothingness
and everything
that the imagination decomposes

THE STORY OF QUINZINHO

quinzinho was a crazy guy
that traveled between
montes claros and janauba,
in the north of minas gerais

to enliven his walks
he constructed a truck
made of wood, carrying
different wares
all from his farms, he would say

cattle, rice, charcoal, pequi and,
more recently, soy
all nicely set up
in his toy truck

quinzinho was killed, run over,
close to capitão enéas
while he changed the tire
of his truck
on the side of the road

my blood - sap
my sap - saliva
my skin - bark
my fruit - eyes
my eyes - wet them
my trunk - body
my body - stalk
my bones - pith
my pith - flesh
my lungs - heart
my wood - penis
my head - canopy
my hair - pollen
my pollen - sperm
my teeth - branches
my branches - arms
my spines - fingernails
my fingers - leaves
my feet - roots
my roots - poems

poems without flowers

let me be cut down
and not sprout again

i'm going to water
the desert
with blood

and weep sand

* * *

i blaspheme
and ask that the hand of god
write atheistic poems

oh god, come, run, make me clean
from these thoughts

call adélia prado to save me

cut off my hand already
set fire to this book
dump a shovelful of lime on me

crucify me

make me weep for the rest of my life

until i dry out

next year i'll get married
next year i'll buy a vw beetle
next year i'll finish school

next year i'll change my life
and live on the upper floor

* * *

cut down that tree!

it's blocking my view
of the desert!

* * *

the desert-makers
are coming
and the cerrado bids farewell
to the brazilian landscape

a thick bark
encases my heart

SELF-ESTEEM

i don't need
you to like me

is that self-esteem?

* * *

i invoked thy name personally
(without intermediaries, just the poem)
without these people that kill
in thy name (i believe that god is
love, not a bumper sticker)

my church is me
and my heart isn't a muscle
my heart is a cathedral

and i pray:
it is so hard to speak of god
with my heart under construction

NEUROTIC FATIGUE

my future memory
has vague memories
of your emotional plague

– i'll never touch you again

jesus loves you
not me

* * *

dirty hands intrigue me
dirt that not even gasoline gets off

cleaning
just destroying
the top layers
of skin

ah, just leave it dirty then

DEATH IS A DIRTY OLD HAG

forgive me you poets
of long verses
but the human drama
is summed up in this:
we are here to live and die

living is ok

but what do you do
with that dirty old hag
that one day, fatally,
will come for you
and take you to a place
you don't know?

leave you dirty hag
go away wretch

forget me

i'm beginning to lose
the fear i have of people

i'm already holding hands
with my girlfriend

* * *

last week
i forgot my mouth
in the closet

that day
i didn't bite anyone

* * *

by day i run with my fears
at night i hang out with my dreams

to those that feel worthless and useless
to those that want to kill themselves

“almost 50 years and i didn’t build anything
nothing that i have is mine
and i don’t have anything to offer”

he cried on the front seat
of my car
and with a gesture said no

he was going to watch her house
but she didn’t want him to

“now that i’ve found someone
that i really like”

he was a man of almost 50 years
and cried on the front seat of my car
like a child

his nose running

the breast as part of the mouth
touch as part of the gaze
breath as part of air
dancer as part of the dance
tongue as part of the teeth
desire as part of joy
vagina as part of the penis
poem as part of everything

and your fright
as part of fear

* * *

where do the
fingernail pieces
go?

to the emotional
trash can

this wall is always inside me
the internal divisions of a carnal office
who will charge me for that failure? who?
i delude myself and say that in my past
there lives a happy boy (boy without praise)
time and this erosion, this coarse wind
it is always this poem that looks
at me in the dark
these exposed fractures, these rotten meats
in all, the living presence
of the poems of drummond
this enormous will is always inside me
to walk among the people and find people
ah, this scorn, this envy
this cowardly delight
inside me, outside me,
armor of steel shields, breastplate,
museum of touch
the promise of one more line,
conclusive, final

the tension that signifies life
that permanent illness
the suffering: mine and others'
the furrowed brows, the cut-off arms
the open heart, covered in flies
the sandpaper-poem polishing the eyes
a flowering ipê far away,
in the middle of the forest

is always inside me
that recycling of tears

that emptiness

BLOOMING FOR LUCILA

the eternal pain
of the flower as it blossoms

the eternal pain
of the flower as it flowers

the eternal pain
of the eternal flower you are

for lucía saad batista (1965-2003)

* * *

the eye drops
they put
in my eyes
were acid

nicolas,
(i heard a voice
say softly)
welcome to the world
of humans
that have fingernails

why fingernails
if i have words
on the tip of
my tongue?

* * *

time exists
so that everything
doesn't happen
all at the same time

what are
fingernails good for?

he who asks
doesn't know
what it means
to scratch
his own soul

* * *

touching flowers
as one touches breasts:

with the eyes

* * *

in the end it was necessary to know
how much cement would be used
for a bridge which no one
would cross holding hands

PUNK LOVE

the kiss on the mouth
that you gave me
last week
still hurts

* * *

THE PRICE OF BREAD

grabbing those coins
with your fingernails
at the bakery's cashier
is priceless

why does life
always give you change
in coins?

WE WHO ARE FREE

we who have treated water at home
we who do not know what it is to be hungry
we who will die around the year 2032
we who are manipulated by the media
we who will not be saved
in the final judgement
we who have not yet gone crazy
we who are destroying the planet
we who resist the american invasion
we who lampoon the drunk
we who are proud and for that
we do not want to die
we, the indifferent,
parasites of the state machine
we who consider ourselves sapiens
we who talk too much about ourselves
and little about things

we who prostrate ourselves before god
we who have money to buy books
we who are good in bed and unhappy in love
we who sometimes plant trees
we of the imported car fetish,
the cell phone fetish, the name brand fetish
we who go to mass, but torture
we who treat children like imbeciles
we who are weak,
and for that we join together
we who have hope in human beings
we who suffer from neurotic fatigue
we the saviors of the fatherland,
ah that country...
we that are ashamed to be honest
we who were almost enslaved by hitler

we who understand neither
the bricks nor the ants

A POEM FOR THE MOUTH

(it's useless to call it by another name,
this will always be a poem for the mouth)

the sketch of desire
scrawls the unfinished mouth

the tongue, trembling, dreams
of another tongue, impossible

and your mouth close to mine, available

ah, inaccessible mouth
impregnable lips
impassible teeth
solid salivas

(such a little mouth for so much desire)

desire, humbled, doesn't give up

anxious lips delimit the announced carnage:
initial opening, orifice without date, superior cavity,
cape of torments, smooth slope, isthmus of panama,

winds of elysium, land of fire, humid crevasse, road to
the indies, elevated peaks, strait of gibraltar, inward
fountain, useless flesh, furious shadow, erotic furrow,
labial secretions, ruby crater, river without banks,
linguistic excavation, level passage, volcano of vapors,
cosmic crack, pit of macaws, magical cavern, contrary
peninsula, impassible glacier, talkative remedy, cloud of
flesh, colossal abyss, point of light, carnivorous plant,
hurricane, drenched valley, humid trail, geographic fault
in the mountain range of the face, false cliff, fleshy petal,
highest vulva

forbidden mouth, slick face
undressed poem, down ramp

i want to drown myself
in that swamp of spit

your mouth owes me a kiss

the mouth smiles, rascal
the mouth smiles, naughty

(the poem of the mouth closes on itself)

RECIPE

ingredients

two generational conflicts
four lost hopes
three liters of boiled blood
five erotic dreams
two beatles songs

directions

dissolve the erotic dreams
in the three liters of boiled blood
and allow it to chill your heart

heat up the mixture
adding two generational conflicts
to the lost hopes

cut everything into pieces
and repeat the process
used with the erotic dreams
with the beatles songs
but this time
let it boil a little more
and stir until it dissolves

some of the blood
may be substituted
with currant juice
but the results
will not be the same

serve the poem simply
or with illusions

when i leave my impossible love
at the bus station in the evening
my long eyes follow her until they lose her
in the whirlwind of people

i imagine my impossible love
in line for the bus, haughty,
proud of herself and of another day's work

the looks in the direction
of my impossible love
are many – covetous looks like mine
(the look of the famished)

someone offers my impossible love
a pastry, some cane juice or a chocolate
not today, another day
(my impossible love is very well-mannered)
my impossible love gets on the bus,
passes through the turnstile
– the coin collector pretends
to count change,
but looks at the breasts
of my impossible love, sideways, just like i do

my impossible love sits on the bench, opens a book
while the bus stays put (someone sits next to her, indif-
ferent, not even dreaming that there next to him
is my impossible love)

distracted, she looks disinterestedly
at the same nocturnal landscape,
monotonous

how many stops until home?
my impossible love
counts and says there are twenty eight
(she is always very precise)

my impossible love arrives at the bus stop, gets off

walks a little further to her house, invariably
finds some acquaintance along the way,
says hello, a quick chat

when my impossible love enters the room
what a surprise?

this poem to welcome her home

HOTEL HELOGIO

provisional failure
in a foreign home

pilgrim, stranger
guest of humiliation

luggage strewn all over
the battlefields
of the soul

* * *

someone is poking at the ceiling
and making noise

i don't know if he wants to speak to me
in some sort of code

i'll bet he doesn't even know
that someone lives here

and maybe he's just
trying to kill some cockroaches
running across the ceiling

i know that i screwed up
but i promise
never again
to use the right word

* * *

the fake ghost
climbs the stairs
without a sound

life, stronger,
resists

the fake ghost
lays his heavy hand
on my shoulder

life, stronger,
resists

the fake ghost
shits himself out of fear

i am an animal
with seven heads

one for thinking
another for seeing
a third for smelling
another for eating
one more for thinking
another for listening

and the seventh is to watch over
the other six

* * *

i play with words
the way i play
with a child
who hasn't learned to speak

forest the poem
so the verse can rest
in the shade of delight

reforest the desert
with trees of sand

plant trees of wind
with seeds of air

clean your hands with earth
and dry them with water

don't trust
in the memory of the bark

rewrite everything

they say that my pain
is not yet a poem

haven't i pretended enough?

does it have to hurt for real
to be a poem?

does it have to hurt so much?
why wound?

i like it more
when you are soft

i like it more
when you embrace me

don't find
a word
in the poem
to hold onto

the poem is smooth, made of glass
diphthongs in growing cranes
hiatus with opposing claws

turbulent river
of flowing words

the poem does not save the drowned

* * *

the poem is a public space
invaded by imagination

the poet suffers for us
— the poet is christ himself —
the poet is unhappy so that we all
may be happy (we, not, y'all)
the poet is denied pleasure
— except the pleasure of suffering —
the poet is denied his own life
death always comes as a prize:
posthumous editions, tributes, street names
the poet is the disconnected
antenna of an extinct race
poets are allowed to masturbate
in the public square (ah, at least that!)
if you see a happy poet somewhere,
stone him
— impostor! poser! coward! sellout!
the poet always seeks out the longest road
— the road of pain —
the poet is a man with public feelings
the poet is indifferent to self-pity
the poet transforms the banal
— his life — into art
the poet is easy prey to psychoanalysts
the poet is at the extremes
and holds onto the ends

the poet is chronically dependent on praise:
three times per day
the poet sees everything
through a magnifying glass
this size: he sees the microbes
of the human soul
“he’s a poet” ugh, then he’s a fag, sick,
unbalanced, pothead, he probably stutters
the poet disqualifies himself for real
the poet wants to speak for all of us
let him speak!
the poet lives in a permanent state of shock
let the hemorrhage bleed,
tourniquet on the verbiage
the poet is the rabid dog
who you can’t stop kicking
the poet is a disintegrator
of atoms and prejudice
the poet exists so that national unity
doesn’t come undone
the poet exists so that the language can speak
(the poet teaches the poem how to speak)
poet, son-of-a-bitch,
why did you write this poem?
the poet carries the burden of living so that

you can drink beer at the bar
with your friends
the poets are like gods,
for they create worlds
the poet gnaws at his fingernails so that yours
are always well-trimmed
the poet cannot have children
if he does, he will be unable to love them
the poet is dramatic and takes
everything to the limit
of its consequences so that you can have
this worthless life
the poet is the termite
in the garden of the bourgeois
the poet doesn't know how to live,
can't know how to live
the poet exposes himself at the window
of the mall's bookstore
the poet is expelled from home, from paradise
the place of the poet
is in the trash, between the beggars,
below the bridge
the poet and the aesthetic of repetition
(this difficult poem)
the poet, that fucker,
he's better off killing himself

poetry is a portal, refuge
poetry is a dark room

poetry is the secret
hiding place
of the soul

poetry is a dragonfly
distracted heron
skittish cloud
a rock in the way
an aimless drifter
(poetry is all that
you're feeling now)

poetry is comfort, caress
solid embrace
a kiss from a friend

poetry is for you to stop
grab a paper
write something
feel better
and keep moving forward

poetry depressurizes

hooray for the poetry that liberates!

hooray for the poetry that pays
the bills at the end of the month!

hooray for the poetry that doesn't exist!

* * *

when my
poetic vein burst
it turned to me
and said:
ah, let it bleed

* * *

the word blood
feels like there is someone
behind the word blood
with a knife

i prefer the kind of poetry
that delivers pizza at home

i prefer the kind of poetry
that gets in line at the bank
and complains
about this fucked up life

i prefer the poem we understand
without effort

i prefer the non-poetry poetry

i prefer live poetry, wounded,
that lets it bleed, that sends
the poets of tasteless verse to hell,
inodorous, insipid, colorless,
innocuous and inconsequential

i am more my delivery van and me

the guard of the cars
at the parking lot
of the jumbo supermarket
is my friend

(is that a poem?
asks some member of the
academy...)

all i know is that his smile
is poetry. his kindness
is poetry. his suffering
is poetry

yours is not

the encyclopedias listing numbers of deaths
the judges condemning the dead
the cars running over the dead
the butchers cutting up the dead
the newspapers announcing the dead
the supermarkets feeding the dead
the hospitals saving the dead
the dead killing the dead

and i am here
unwrapping the dead
and showing them off to visitors

all this time, this poem
that doesn't believe in death
cuts itself among words

(he) (who) (wants) (to) (kill) (himself) (wants)
(vengeance) (don't) (let) (him)
(take) (vengeance) (on) (himself)
(do) (not) (allow) (it)

(not) (all) (suicides) (are) (acts)
(of) (untimely) (repentance)

life is much better without parentheses

* * *

THE ITINERARY OF A BANDAGE

at first blood will come out, a lot of blood
at first it will hurt
later it will not hurt anymore
at first you will suffer
well, what are you here for anyway?
at first you will lose hope
later you won't lose hope anymore

at first you will want to die
later you will not want to die anymore

madness is welcome

may it take care of me
like a hot bath

may it electrify my body
and make me understand everything

just don't throw me in the gutter
just don't separate me from my family
just don't push me to the highways
with the drifters

'cause i don't deserve that kind of madness

* * *

bite the poem
until another comes out

the poem that came out
is this one

LIFESAVER POEM

you are the grounding wire
that saves me from a short circuit

i think of you when i write
not of the poem

when i fall apart
it is with the grounding wire
that i sew up my cluttered soul

when life hangs on a thread,
on many threads, on a rope,
on a bullet or on a window,
i think of you

it is you i think of
in my somber hours — somber —
what a horrible word!

no, i don't want to punish anyone
i don't want anyone to suffer
— unconfessable intentions
of soulless suicides —

but in the end there ought to be
something that i know how to do well

i've got it!: i know how to kill myself

i kill myself so perfectly
every day that i find myself still living

come, it befits us, gentlemen
to kill oneself and not die
to kill ourselves and continue living
it is an art for the few!

every poem is a piece of me
that leaves
— take it. you don't want it?

i too prefer casimiro de abreu

THE HORROR, THE HORROR

how, after reading in the newspapers
the news about the death of the boy
who was tortured with hot oil
to reveal the whereabouts of his father,
can i write a poem?

how can i look at myself in the mirror?
how can i share with all of you
the air that we breathe?
how can i be indifferent and go
on to the next page?
how can i go out in the street
and wish good day
to those i pass?

how can i continue living?

the most beautiful verses
the sharpest knives
strong ropes
perfect shots
high buildings

what kills more?

the lack or excess
of poetry?

* * *

RAYBAN PHILOSOPHY

at 57 years old
i started to notice
that old age
starts
around the eyes

RAZOR GRASS

i, unrecoverably i
disgracefully i
i, irresponsibly i

i, guardian of foreign herds
i, that could not write
poems in straight lines
i, the crooked angel
i, your adélia prado

you have my little ego in our hands
not that mass of cellulose and paint

may these sharp razors
cut your tongue like razor-sharp grass
and free you always
from the vice of words

the man who will kill me
a few years from now
is inside a car
in the center of são paulo

he is armed and hateful

* * *

if i killed myself
i would be killing
the wrong person

* * *

the last thing
that i want
to do in brasilia
is to die

a blank page
the last page
the unpublishable poem

incestuous
euthanistic
suicidal
oedipal

a thousand taboos surround this poem

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