

Brasília amidst ruins: The sci-fi documentaries of Adirley Queirós and Ana Vaz Guilherme Carréra¹

The concept of the unviable nation (Ramos 2003) relating to the unlikeliness of Brazil becoming a stable and prosperous country has been widely explored by Brazilian filmmakers of Cinema da Retomada. In depicting the social, economic, political, and cultural turmoil of contemporary Brazil, these films usually resort to realism as a strategy to convey urgency and credibility to the audience. *Central Station* (Central do Brasil, 1998), *City of God* (Cidade de Deus, 2002), and *Elite Squad* (Tropa de Elite, 2007), three of the most internationally successful Brazilian films, have relied on that strategy to the fullest, frequently reaching into the non-fiction domain by use of non-professional actors and real locations. If one considers documentary production itself, *News from a Private War* (Notícias de uma Guerra Particular, 1999), *Bus 174* (Ônibus 174, 2002), and *The Prisoner of the Iron Bars* (O Prisioneiro da Grade de Ferro, 2003) also shed light on national issues through realistic lenses, especially in regards to the *favela* and prison environments. In present-day production, however, Angela Prysthon (2015) points out that this aesthetic recurrence may no longer take place.

If Brazilian cinema from the first decade of 2000 has been heavily marked by a belief in realism as the most appropriate means to portray and scrutinise national issues, Prysthon (ibid, 68) suggests that many present-day films are devoted to “realism under erasure”,² a cinematic language that plays with the very idea of realness by focusing on more ambiguous and thought-provoking narratives. By stating that, the author is not necessarily labelling the strategy as a new one but underlining it as a prominent characteristic of the ongoing approach to reality. Following that perspective, she focuses her attention on the “deliberate shock between realism and an excessive artifice that disarticulates and destabilises the effects of real” (ibid) in many films; that excessive artifice achieved through the revitalisation of film genres, such as horror or science-fiction, within the national production. The assumption that genres normally associated with mainstream cinema could be a powerful,

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² All translations from Portuguese to English are mine, unless stated otherwise.

critical means of addressing Brazilian reality then led Prysthon (ibid, 69) to coin the term “furious frivolity”. In other words, the sense of so-called “frivolity” attached to horror or science-fiction genres embraces “furious” as an adjective, for those films would also contain an inevitable fury in their storytelling due to the problematic reality they are actually attempting to emulate. Here, one could think of Marcelo Pedroso’s *Brasil S/A* (2014), André Antônio’s *The Cult* (A Seita, 2015), Anita Rocha da Silveira’s *Kill Me Please* (Mate-me, Por Favor, 2015), and Juliana Rojas and Marco Dutra’s *Good Manners* (As Boas Maneiras, 2017), to name but a few.

Considering the work of contemporary filmmakers Adirley Queirós³ and Ana Vaz,⁴ the idea of realism as the perfect solution for depicting the tangible world truly suffers a conceptual breakdown. Consequently, both artists have chosen to approach Brazilian history and society by resorting to science-fiction elements. In this sense, the documentary mode present in the building of their narratives turns out to be penetrated by unexpected artifices – an undertaking that rivals ordinary, non-fiction attempts to capture reality. Having thoroughly analysed the role of science-fiction in his seminal book *Archaeologies of the Future*, Fredric Jameson (2005) raises awareness of a key point that seems crucial for an understanding of the artistic choices of both Queirós and Vaz: science-fiction is about what is happening here and now. Surprisingly, it could therefore stand as a genre willing “not to give us ‘images’ of the future (...) but rather to defamiliarize and restructure our experience of our own *present*” (ibid: 286, italics in original). By creating a brand new ontological world, science-fiction can elaborate on the present by enriching the cityscape with imaginary futures. It is precisely this approach that characterises Queirós’ and Vaz’s output about their hometown, Brasília (although Queirós was born in Morro Agudo de Goiás, in the state of Goiás, which surrounds the federal district, he moved to the outskirts of the capital at the age of three).

With this approach in mind, Jameson (ibid, 304) wonders “what can be said or shown in the figural (SF) narrative that is impossible to encode in the psychological language of the realistic one?” In response, Queirós and Vaz invest in narratives aimed at experimenting to see how far they can defamiliarise themselves with their present and restructure it. Willing to create new imagery and critical storytelling, both artists seem to find the opportunity to subvert official history and its traditional form of representation in

³ Adirley Queirós (b. 1970) is considered one of the most provocative contemporary Brazilian filmmakers. He has directed two short, one medium, and three long-length documentary films, receiving awards at the Brasília, Mar del Plata, and Locarno film festivals, among others.

⁴ Ana Vaz (b. 1986) has directed eight short-films. Recent screenings of her work include the NYFF, TIFF, and Cinéma du Réel (Grand Prix). In 2015, she received the Kazuko Trust Award presented by the Film Society of Lincoln Center in recognition of artistic excellence and innovation in her moving-image work.

the science-fiction realm. Consequently, it is exactly that paired historical and representative subversion that the psychological language of realism is not able to deliver. Considering their sci-fi documentaries, Queirós and Vaz would perhaps agree with Jameson (*ibid*, 384) when he says that “the representational apparatus of Science Fiction (...) sends back more reliable information about the contemporary world than an exhausted realism”. On the other hand, they might also stand with Prysthon (2015, 74) when she affirms that this trend “would not have as its ultimate goal an emptying of the power of realism in cinema, but rather a more complex exploration of its possibilities”. Defending her view, she believes that “frivolity not necessarily means escapism; rather, it is a matter of conceiving the most interesting forms of escaping” (*ibid*) from a problematic reality in order to propose a fresh concept of one.

To a certain extent, this idea of somehow escaping from the system refers to an endeavour to unthink Eurocentrism, that is, to be able to rethink national history and society in light of genuine, autonomous artistic and intellectual efforts. This is a perspective famously suggested by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994, 25), bearing in mind the “colonized, neocolonized, or decolonized nations and ‘minorities’ whose structural disadvantages have been shaped by the colonial process and by the unequal division of international labor” – precisely the case of Brazil. By using the term “Third World” in order to delve into what has become known as the “Third World Cinema”, scholars do not express any empathy towards it. On the contrary, they believe the term “not only flattens heterogeneity, masks contradictions, and elides differences, it also obscures similarities” (*ibid*, 26). Obviously, that geopolitical division has as one of its countless consequences a cultural dependency that is, in fact, the very premise of Western capitalism – something that Brazilian cinema has been aware of since the Cinema Novo period.

As a matter of fact, the desire to overcome dependency helps bring the cinema of the 1960s and present-day closer together, as “they propose counter-truths and counter-narratives informed by an anticolonialist perspective, reclaiming and reaccentuating the events of the past in a vast project of remapping and renaming” (*ibid*, 249). This could indeed be a common feature within the general idea of a Third-World cinema, often aiming for historiographic revisionism and innovative language. Nevertheless, this assessment is contested in that not only are there generational differences between Cinema Novo and contemporary productions, but also differences among contemporary filmmakers themselves, as Queirós and Vaz’s film methodologies make clear. What particularly interests me in the combination of historiographic revisionism and innovative language is the cinematic will to challenging the narrative paradigm historically “enlisted to serve teleological notions of national progress and manifest destiny” (*ibid*, 118). After all, what sort of

national progress would that be? And to whom it would most appeal?

Of all Brazilian cities, Brasília stands out as the most enigmatic. The outcome of a conceptual paradox, the federal capital is a socialist-modernist yet national-developmental project. Conceived by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer during President Juscelino Kubitschek's mandate (1956-1961), the city has been widely seen as a landmark in terms of urban planning. At the same time, it has also been the target of much criticism regarding segregation and social control. Considered a symbol of progress, Brasília then inhabits an in-between place, provoking astonishment and oddity in equal proportion. In this paper, I will explore how the cinema of Adirley Queirós and Ana Vaz has visually addressed the advent of Brasília as well as discuss its consequences for society. Although resorting to different film methodologies, Queirós' *White Out, Black In* (Branco Sai, Preto Fica, 2014) and Vaz's *The Age of Stone* (A Idade da Pedra, 2013) both claim to be science-fiction documentaries, in their attempts to move far away from conventional documentary filmmaking. In doing so, both artists challenge traditional representations of reality and the official history that underpins that so-called reality.

In *White Out, Black In*, Queirós deliberately mixes fiction and non-fiction elements to address a police shooting that happened in Ceilândia in 1986. On that occasion, Marquim da Tropa and Shockito, friends with the director and non-professional actors in the film, were attending a party at the Quarentão⁵ ball, a famous nightclub at the time and a place known for its black music culture. The brutal event injured both friends, leaving Marquim in a wheelchair and Shockito in need of a prosthetic to replace one of his legs. Shouting, "white people can leave the place, but black people stay in!", the police act of violence not only left scars on them both but emphasised the racial and social apartheid still perceivable today. Instead of retelling the story through traditional documentary methods, Queirós decided, alongside Marquim and Shockito, to create an allegorical, sci-fi documentary feature that interestingly moves away from realism, but at the same time addresses it with fierceness and poignancy, as will be discussed.

In *The Age of Stone*, Ana Vaz follows a similar journey in terms of not giving in to realism as one knows it. Here, the director also plays with fiction and non-fiction elements while attempting to put on screen a different version of what Brasília might look like.

⁵ Quarentão was considered one of the birthplaces of Black music in the Federal District, playing an important role in the lives of *White Out, Black In*'s actors. In 2002, it was turned into a community restaurant. For details, see Oliveira (2015): <https://noticias.r7.com/distrito-federal/filme-branco-sai-preto-fica-mostra-historia-de-violenta-batida-policial-no-quarentao-berco-da-cultura-black-do-df-19042015>

Her short film invites the audience to discover a monumental structure placed in the heart of the Central Plateau, an allusion to Brasília itself. Shying away from a teleological narrative, Vaz invests in building up a spatiality through images and sounds, mobilising just a few characters, but more importantly, letting the camera roam through and extract meaning from that specific region. As a matter of fact, the film was not shot inside Brasília but in its surrounding areas, as will be discussed, which helped Vaz shape the capital in her own cinematic terms. In brief, the film is an investigation of the origins of the city. The monument seems to hypnotise both the characters and the spectators, confronted by the fact that any kind of certainty is not available here.

Collapsing narrative

Coming from quite distinct backgrounds, Adirley Queirós and Ana Vaz are drawn to discuss the advent of Brasília as the other side (or the underside) of so-called national progress. Located in the far west of Brazil, between the Amazon region and the backlands of the *sertão*, the Central Plateau in which Brasília⁶ was built in the late 1950s combines a range of factors that transformed that specific geography into a unique spatiality. As true artists, both filmmakers are conscious of the importance of investigating Brasília in terms of its construction and consequences: Why build a capital city from scratch? How did the capital city come to be populated? What kind of government policy shaped Brasília as it is today? What sort of imaginary was invented to cope with that construction? And so on. Queirós' cinematic gaze reflects upon those questions, being deeply rooted in Ceilândia, a low-income, working-class peripheral city located on the outskirts of Brasília, where the director lived since his arrival from Goiás and where he shot all his documentaries. Vaz, on the other hand, has been living abroad from an early age, initially in Australia, then in France, and at the moment in Portugal.

Although no longer a resident of Brasília, the relationship between Vaz and her hometown is particularly interesting. It dates back to 1986, the year in which *Brasiliários*, a short-film directed by Sérgio Bazi and Zuleica Porto, was released. Set in Brasília, it charts the visit of renowned Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector to the city, a sort of experimental adaptation based on the chronicles *Brasília* and *Five Days in Brasília* (originally, *Brasília: Esplendor*), which she herself had written on the two occasions she visited the capital in 1962 and 1974. Cláudia Pereira played Clarice on screen. Guilherme Vaz was responsible for the sound design and original soundtrack. The two met during the shooting – and Ana Vaz was born nine

⁶ The construction of Brasília is thoroughly investigated by scholar James Holston (1989). In *The Modernist City*, he takes account of the architectonic as well as social implications of Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer's project.

months later. As a matter of fact, her father is one of Brazil's most important composers, having played a major role in developing Brazilian concrete music and collaborated on many Cinema Novo soundtracks. Vaz, the daughter, then not only comes from a family of artists, but metaphorically from a film set in and based on Brasília itself – a story she is fond of telling.

At the age of seventeen, she decided to move from Brazil to Australia to study Cinema and Philosophy at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. A few years later, she could not have imagined that her very first documentary would rely on the imagery of *Brasiliários* as well as on found-footage and home-movie archives, interweaving her family's past, Brasília, and cinema all in one. These interrelated pasts are also enhanced by the fact that Guilherme Vaz specifically created an original soundtrack for the film, a symbolic collaboration between father and daughter. Named *Sacris Pulso* (2007), it was Vaz's first attempt to cinematically return to her hometown, albeit while based in Melbourne at the time. It is also an attempt to unravel her origins as a daughter of artists as well as an artist herself; and perhaps most importantly, it is an attempt to build a language of her own in order to access both the city and her inner self through the moving image. In a Skype interview on August 22, 2017, Vaz stated that she understands *Sacris Pulso* as an encounter with a ghost city, a city that never actually existed. It is rather an investigation of the Brasília of her parents as well as the Brasília of Clarice (the writer who played a decisive part in her personal formation and professional output). As a theme, Brasília resurfaced again in *The Age of Stone*, Vaz having a much more mature artistic voice, as if having mastered her own praxis.

In sum, Vaz defines her debut film as an imagined biography, challenging time, space, and image in the way Clarice's chronicles had already done. Her interest as an artist is clearly to make the teleological, Aristotelian narrative collapse, influenced as she is by the North American avant-garde feminist movement of the 1970s, highlighted by the experimental work of Abigail Child and Su Friedrich, and especially the pioneering art of Maya Deren back in the 1940s. Indeed, the constant overlapping of images and sounds, the fabrication of a cinematic world embedded in, yet detached from reality, and a collective sense of history coming from a very intimate story, brings *Sacris Pulso* closer to North American avant-garde films than to Cinema Novo's experiments, regardless of her father's influence. Also, *Sacris Pulso* led the way to a trilogy devoted to exploring the idea of utopia, as Brasília is depicted almost as an alternative reality to the audience.

Before going even deeper into the cinematic construction of Brasília as the sort of parallel universe in *The Age of Stone*, Vaz sharpened her approach to urban architecture in her second experimental documentary *Entre Temps* (2011). This short-film

focuses on the demolition of ZUP buildings in France. The initials ZUP stand for Zone à Urbaniser en Priorité (in literal English, Priority Zones for Development), a controversial project aimed at constructing public housing complexes between 1959 and 1967, some of which collapsed due to government policies in the subsequent decades. Initially, the film was conceived to be a documentary per se, but ended up as a poetic visual art piece about a Europe in turmoil, with photographic archival material, subtle camera movements, and a strong voice-over text as the background to be worked on. The blurring of boundaries is a common feature in Vaz's projects, as film categories have little to do with the fluidity of her cinema. Once again, the narrative is collapsed in favour of an original understanding of time, space, and image. Furthermore, *Entre Temps* marks the arrival of the filmmaker on the continent after years in Australia, hence the mix of contemplation and suspicion noticeable on screen.

According to Vaz, addressing the architectonic ruins of that specific French locality prompted her to start writing what would later be the script for *The Age of Stone*. Looking at the debris from ZUP implosions, she found herself thinking that “in the middle of that destruction camp, there would and *should* be a parallel universe in which things could be redefined in another way” (Skype interview, August 22, 2017). I suggest that “things” could be replaced by “time, space, and image”, the driving forces behind Vaz's willingness to challenge representations of the tangible world. In this sense, she is faithful to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's (2005) critical thinking in terms of breaking the chains of a dogmatic, dualist understanding of the world. By contrast, the rhizome philosophy proposed by both authors in *A Thousand Plateaus* is much more interested in multiple, non-hierarchical interpretations of reality, as “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be”, which “is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order” (ibid: 7). In other words, the image of the rhizome translates into the freedom to articulate potential connections within reality. And this would only work by means of taking language and “decentering it onto other dimensions and other registers” (ibid: 8). Moreover, it is a matter of defending a model “perpetually in construction or collapsing” (ibid: 20). This is a key concept to bear in mind, as Vaz's filmography, particularly *The Age of Stone*, constantly relates to it by challenging not only the traditional documentary mode, but human perception of the world.

Interestingly, her third film ends what she referred to as a Trilogy of Utopias by opening a fruitful dialogue with *Sacris Pulso* and *Entre Temps*. From the former, Vaz borrowed the aim to approach Brasília from a multiple, non-hierarchical perspective – citing Deleuze and Guattari's (ibid) guidelines – as *Sacris Pulso* plays

with the very representation of the capital. Therefore, she had no intention to situate Brasília in relation to a pre-given regime of historicity, but to truly develop another one. In terms of considering the power of architecture as a sign of history and the passage of time, something that *The Age of Stone* heavily draws upon, much is surely derived from the aesthetics crafted for *Entre Temps*. Even though the utopian impulse is a common element in these films, it could be said that *The Age of Stone* is far less utopic than uchronic. When Vaz started the project, she decided it was not an appropriate time to address Brasília through an iconoclastic gesture that could spoil the complexity of her approach to her hometown. An iconoclastic gesture towards Brasília might have resulted in the classic binary she has forever wanted to avoid, as if by destroying whoever/whatever the enemy is, one is actually reaffirming the supremacy of that enemy. Rather, she is fond of investing in an uchronic mode of addressing Brasília: what *if* history was told from a different perspective? That is to say, what *if* one could truly redefine time, space, and image?

In *The Age of Stone*, the viewer is clearly lost in time. There is no past, no present, no future; rather, all exist at the same time, as the Benjaminian, dialectic relation to time suggests. As a matter of fact, Vaz refers less to Walter Benjamin (2002) than she does to Clarice, when it comes to challenging temporal accuracy. In this regard, the legacy of *Brasiliários* again illustrates its power. The chronicles that inspired the film in 1986 made a comeback in *The Age of Stone*. Vaz fully relates to the fact that the writer defines Brasília as “a future that happened in the past” (Lispector 1999, 50), obstructing any attempt to locate the imaginary of the capital. In *The Age of Stone*, Vaz seems to make Clarice’s words her own: “I am so lost. But it is indeed like this one lives: lost in time and space” (ibid: 63). Quite naturally, Vaz remembered, she acknowledged how it was crucial for her to go back to those texts to complete her trilogy, as Clarice was not only the main source for *Brasiliários/Sacris Pulso*, but of the debate around temporality itself. “She reimagines the city as a ruin from a far-away future or a really old past” (Skype interview, August 22, 2017), Vaz states. That is the final link between *Entre Temps* and *The Age of Stone*: the ZUP buildings’ ruins found in France connect with the unearthing of ruins from a far-distant future or a really old past that are Brasília per se.

Scholar Rachel Schefer (2016) sees a double tension in Vaz’s cinema in that it is intrinsically imbricated. The author first emphasises “questions related to the multitemporality of the event (experience, recollection, multiple interpretations and multiplied perspectives)” (ibid: 2), issues that serve as a motto for Vaz’s body of work, as pointed out above. In addition, those issues appear to be “a demystification not only of the history of modernism, but also of its visual forms, essentially architectural and filmic (mainly New

Latin American Cinema and, in particular, Brazilian Cinema Novo)” (ibid). That is to say, by challenging time and space, Vaz would eventually achieve original imagery for framing a given place. In highlighting both work-defining characteristics, Schefer (ibid) believes that form and content are not and should not be taken as separate domains in Vaz’s cinema: “If the motives of Vaz’s cinema are the engine of its formal inventiveness, the latter gives rise to new perspectives on the present, history, and representative forms”.

From the outskirts

Likewise, the concern with aesthetics and discourse goes hand in hand with the cinema of Adirley Queirós. His cinematic elaboration of Brasília’s/Brazilian history and society gives form and content the same level of importance, although he complains that doing that is constantly questioned. “They want to relate the people of the periphery only to discursive matters. It is funny how when we deal with aesthetic and formal areas, this is ignored, as if we wouldn’t have the capacity to think about form in cinema”, said the director in an interview (Canal e Cultura YouTube channel, October 3, 2014). In that powerful statement, “they” could be interpreted as the mainstream, the industry, the system, whilst “we” means him and his crew from CEICINE,⁷ the Ceilândia-based film collective behind his documentaries. The periphery mentioned by Queirós is Ceilândia, home of both the director and the production company, 30 km from Brasília itself. Therefore, before challenging time, space, and image in the way Ana Vaz’s cinema also aims to do, he seems to need to deconstruct other fixed notions – this time not the on-screen issues but the off-screen, social ones.

The socioeconomic aspect of Queirós’ life is not constituted merely by biographical information; it deeply influences both his aesthetics and discursive choices as a filmmaker. Speaking from Ceilândia, he reads Brasília as a white and wealthy capital city created for politicians, bureaucrats, and businessmen. The segregation between Brasília and its satellite cities – cities purposefully built on the outskirts by and for manual workers – is indeed the power behind Queirós’ politically charged documentaries about the consequences of this historically institutionalised social fissure. *Is the City One Only?* (A Cidade É Uma Só?, 2011), his first feature documentary, shows how government strategy to control citizens via urban planning was not restricted to the late 1950s. The film focuses on the displacement of the vulnerable population, who helped build the capital city from the centre outwards in the 1970s. The government – a military-dictatorship at that time – managed to

⁷ CEICINE is the shortened version for Coletivo de Cinema de Ceilândia (literally, Ceilândia Film Collective). It was founded by Adirley Queirós alongside others interested in making and discussing films in the satellite city.

evict the occupants of the remaining *favelas* in the central region by creating the Campanha de Erradicação de Invasões, widely known as CEI, the literal English translation of which is Invasion Eradication Campaign.

The poor population was initially removed and relocated to the Vila do IAPI community and later to the then recently created Ceilândia (the name Ceilândia comes from CEI itself, referring to “CEI land” or “the land of CEI”). This traumatic displacement is precisely the plot of the documentary, the title of which refers to the lyrics of a political jingle promoted by the military government to convince the population that relocation was the best available strategy. “*Você que tem um bom lugar pra morar/Nos dê a mão/Ajude a construir nosso lar/Para que possamos dizer juntos/‘A cidade é uma só’*”, children used to sing without taking in the cynicism embedded in the lyrics. In English: “You who have a good place to live/Give us your hand/Help to build our home/So we can say together/‘The city is one only’”. According to Luiz Gouvêa (1995), between 1970 and 1976, approximately about 118,453 residents of *favelas* and communities located inside what is called the Pilot Plan of Brasília, its central, planned zone, were displaced. In the meantime, 43,985 new lots were developed in the satellite cities and surrounding areas.

Regarding Queirós’ documentary, it is important to consider that *Is the City One Only?* does not simply draw on remembering this traumatic event. Here, the film strategies that would be radicalised in *White Out, Black In*, his second feature documentary, are already clear. On the one hand, there is the impulse to produce a non-official memory from the perspective of those who were/are marginalised in society. In this case, Queirós makes use of archival material in order to reassign it. That is, while interviewing Nancy Araújo (who, back in the 1970s, was one of the children who participated in the recording of the infamous political jingle), the film is actually searching for a counter-discourse, questioning the official narrative and critically engaging with the archive through Araújo’s mediation.

On the other hand, the documentary starts from the memorialist tone to unexpectedly reach a fictional domain. The film blurs the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction through Dildu (Dilmar Durães), who happens to be Nancy’s nephew, Zé do Bigode (Wellington Abreu), and Marquim (Marquim da Tropa), fictional characters played by actors who live in Ceilândia. Those three characters are positioned to accomplish a sort of self-fictionalisation process, as if through fiction they can better relate to reality. As such, they wander around the city interacting with people and places, ironically in a much more vivid and spontaneous way than in Nancy’s more traditional cinematic environment, as scholar Cláudia Mesquita (2013) remarks. In this sense, his work is closer to Ana Vaz’s work, as they both attempt to create a novel methodology in order to (re)construct Brasília through moving images.

In *White Out, Black In*, there is no blurring because there are no proper boundaries. Apart from the production of a non-official memory and the fabrication of a fictional world (just as in *Is the City One Only?*), Queirós' mode of addressing Brasília invents a new city to be called Brasília – even if this new city is, after all, just the same. It is a new city because it is grounded in a different temporal-spatial structure, but it is still Brasília in all its misfortunes. Unlike Vaz's *The Age of Stone*, to which Brasília is more an incognito to be decrypted, *White Out, Black In* targets a new representation of Brasília as a clear enemy to be destroyed. Besides their distinct personal backgrounds, it is precisely that iconoclast gesture that sets Queirós and Vaz apart in the cinematic field. Whereas Vaz believes that defining the enemy so assuredly actually empowers it, Queirós seems to follow a more Marxist way of reading social relations, underlining historically established hierarchical positions in Brasília's society. In his fable-documentary, the oppressed characters plan to drop a musical atomic bomb on the white, wealthy Brasília, the political hub created by modernism. At first sight, a musical atomic bomb may sound too cryptic. By resorting to sci-fi elements, however, Queirós uses the idea of a metaphorical bomb to underline his endeavour to explode the federal capital – a metaphorical yet conceivable bomb, as characters Marquim (Marquim da Tropa) and Sartana (Shockito) do put the plan into action. Furthermore, it is no coincidence that the so-called bomb is a musical one, as the police crime happened at the Quarentão ball in clear opposition to the black music culture.

The constant interaction and division between Queirós and Vaz's film methodologies provides at least one certainty: there should be nothing like a fixed notion or pre-given reading of what Brasília is and could be. Their artistic aims and original schemes put the very meaning of the capital city into narrative dispute. That dispute implies a place of tension that houses creative initiatives aimed at destabilising the *status quo* instead of finding easy solutions. It is interesting that at the same time they challenge institutional cinema, or say, classical, traditional filmmaking, they are not exactly aiming to replace it: "If we become an institution, we no longer have any strength", says Queirós (Canal e Cultura YouTube channel, October 3, 2014). The director complains that "they" (once again, using "they" to refer to the mainstream, the industry, the system) expect documentaries to be "serious" and stress that it is important "to mess things up, which does not mean having no responsibility" (ibid). In Portuguese, he uses the word "*avacalhar*", which approximately translates into "mess up" or "screw up", unsettling or discomposing something, but it has a rougher and more popular sense in the original.

With the same intensity that Vaz opposes the canonical cinema, she goes against the understanding of critical thinking as an ideological, pre-established kind of genre waiting to be consumed.

“Categorising thought is moralism”, she affirms (Skype interview, August 22, 2017). In this sense, she mentions scholar Suely Rolnik’s intellectual mission for a permanent decolonisation of the unconscious and its creative irruptions. In conversation with art writer and curator Filipa Ramos, Vaz made it clear she does not believe in art as a fire exit for a political agenda; “Rather it is a space for calling upon that which has been taken away from us, what Suely Rolnik calls the body-that-knows, the body that has been domesticated, colonized, and needs to vibrate again” (2016: 256). Vaz sees the decolonising process precisely as a collateral effect. She believes in decolonisation as a continuum, never a political booklet verging on a doctrine to be followed. Instead of announcing a political agenda like Queirós, she focuses on things that can or at least should be *undone*: “This is a horizon, a project of a yet-to-come, always unfinished and incomplete, ongoing and never ending” (ibid).

Even though Queirós seems to be firm in his left-wing political stance, he openly welcomes contradiction as a quintessential element of his filmmaking. He says *White Out, Black In* is a contradictory film, or a film that works through contradiction; in the same way, the film crew, though cohesive and friendly, is immersed in contradiction themselves, disagreeing and coping with distinct subjectivities. He mentions that as he is a white director representing (though he dislikes that word) black-community demands, at the same time he feels he has the legitimacy to talk about territorial issues in Ceilândia as he has always lived there. He explains, “The only thing that makes us move is contradiction. It can advance with us or implode on us” (Canal e Cultura YouTube channel, October 3, 2014). In terms of themes, one could relate Queirós’ fondness for contradiction to Vaz’s Deleuzian intellectual porosity concerning critical thinking and filmmaking.

The ruinous monument

The idea propagated of Brasília being the city of the future has been appropriated by the cinema of both Adirley Queirós and Ana Vaz in a pretty unconventional way. In both cases, the artists seem to resort to the use of science-fiction elements to quite explicitly refer to that futuristic imaginary. Nevertheless, it is not the avant-garde meaning ascribed to the advent of Brasília that sci-fi addresses here. Rather, the genre could seem to be mobilised to question that utopic premise, adding layers of dystopia (Queirós’ *White Out, Black In*) and uchronia (Vaz’s *The Age of Stone*) to the cinematic representation of the other side of Brasília, hence touching the underside of progress. Although coming from different personal backgrounds and experimenting with different artistic approaches, the claiming of a sci-fi documentary genre inevitably brings them

once again close together. Through different film methodologies, their sci-fi documentaries not only alter the conventions of documentary (a tradition to which neither Queirós nor Vaz relate) but the very sense of futurism attached to the city.

“Brasília is science-fiction”, as Lispector (1999, 59) categorically affirmed. Her impressions of the country’s new capital are still today what best encapsulates the mix of astonishment and strangeness that arises in those who set eyes on Brasília. “Brasília is a strictly perfect and error-free joke. And what only saves me is the error” (ibid, 44). In other words, the perfection acquired by the architecture has forgotten to take account of the imperfections of reality. Errors not only save (or better, define) Lispector, but us all. “I never cried in Brasília. There was no place to” (ibid, 42), she confessed, referring to the lack of corners, streets, and squares the modernist city wanted to avoid constructing. Interestingly, the void of modernist architecture became, after all, the emptiness that had a decisive impact upon Lispector’s outlook: “If it is not populated, or rather overpopulated, it will be too late: there will be no place for people” (ibid). It is a hyperbole, but one that subtly points to the lack of human presence in the Pilot Plan. The sophisticated stream of consciousness dear to Lispector’s literature beautifully permeates the two chronicles she wrote about Brasília, as the abovementioned extracts demonstrate. Fascinated by the inaccuracy of time and space that only Brasília seems able to bear, Lispector felt like a “space traveller” (ibid, 52), who had “finally got off the flying saucer” (ibid, 53), and that was quite overwhelmed by “writing in the past, in the present and in the future” (ibid, 46).

In *The Age of Stone*, science-fiction is not straightforwardly a projection of the future. Rather, it is the conflation of Lispector’s past, present, and future. Like the Brasília of Lispector (ibid, 43), the Brasília of Vaz “is the place where space resembles time more”. In this sense, the 29 minutes of the film attempt to relate time and space far from a teleological perspective, as aforementioned. Simultaneously, Vaz cinematically constructs the space in which the action takes place by exploring the layers of time. The audience does not know where and when *The Age of Stone* situates itself, as the director pushes the audience out of the comfort zone of perception. Once adrift, the audience finds it hard to be sure where science-fiction ends and documentary starts, or vice-versa. Indeed, the overlap between artificiality and nature is at the very core of the film: is space real or unreal? Is time accurate or inaccurate? Is it fiction or non-fiction?

The Age of Stone could be said to be a journey into the far west of Brazil, an immersion into the forms and textures of geography, a voyage that leads the audience to encounter a phantasmatic monument in the middle of nowhere. Influenced by the monumentality of modernist Brasília and in dialogue with

Brazilian cinema tradition through Glauber Rocha's *The Age of the Earth*⁸ (A Idade da Terra, 1980), Vaz builds a narrative concerned with the potential friction that these influences and traditions may prompt. That is, she is less interested in the allusion than in deconstructing (or reconstructing alongside) the references. Even though Vaz acknowledges the undoubtable impact of Cinema Novo on Brazilian cinema trajectory, the movement does not quite resonate with her. In the 1960s, Third Cinema manifestos (including Glauber's referential *An Aesthetics of Hunger*) defended social revolution by following a specific political agenda. Apart from being sceptical of an art attached to pre-given and fixed notions, Vaz is also critical of the way Cinema Novo (mis)represented gender and race on screen.

That said, it comes as no surprise that *The Age of the Earth* is the film that gets closer to her own work. Glauber's final film is the visual translation of his *An Aesthetics of Dreams*, a manifesto that gives up on violence and puts delirium at the foreground. Indeed, it is delirium as a critical, cinematic tool that bridges Vaz and Glauber's works. Vaz (2017, 214) herself pays tribute to *The Age of the Earth* as "one of the most rebellious gestures of the Cinema Novo" in the *Tropicália and Beyond* catalogue, a Tate Modern film program curated by Stefan Solomon: "rebellious because it refuses the discipline of any militant agenda and situates its militancy elsewhere, in the shadows of a hallucination, in the body of its characters, in the breakdown of industrious narrative structures, in the delirious speculations of the encounters it upholds". In *The Age of Stone*, delirium is conducted by the uchronic mode the film bears, as this is "a cinema that seeks images of other possible worlds" (ibid: 223). Vaz pursues the friction between time and space; past and future; nature and artificiality; *The Age of the Earth* and *The Age of Stone*; science-fiction and documentary. Consequently, she achieves a sci-fi documentary, a science-fiction documentary, a science-fiction documentary.

Here, one could say that the main character is the monumental structure, although the audience only sees it in its entirety in the final third of the film. Until then, the camera just shows fragments of it, unveiling specific parts through carefully selected angles. The monument itself plays with uncertainty: we never know if it is a ruin from ancient times or a visionary image of the future. Sometimes, it is integrated into the massive rocks of the region; sometimes, it is clearly an architectonic outsider, so we wonder if it can be genuinely found in the Central Plateau or if it was artificially created by the film crew. None of these options are

⁸ Vaz commonly refers to *The Age of Stone* as her animist response to Glauber's *The Age of the Earth*. In November 2017, both films were screened together for the first time ever as a part of Tate Modern's exhibition *Tropicália and Beyond: Dialogues in Brazilian Film History*.

correct, as the monument is actually a CGI monument developed by French sculptress Anne-Charlotte Yver. In collaboration with Vaz, Yver's artwork is a structure above human scale, sprouting from the arid terrain yet falling from the blue sky. Simultaneously, workers unearth an archaeological find and erect a monumental memorial. It is therefore about to collapse and, at the same time, about to be established – “perpetually in construction or collapsing” (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 20), as mentioned. The monument is Brasília, full of dualities, like the actual city, is both the symbol of progress and the underside of it, accomplishment and abandonment - “The failure of the most spectacular success”, to mention one of Lispector's (1999, 46) definitions once more.



Image 1 - The monument-Brasília, in *The Age of the Stone*.

Before the monument makes its appearance, a sunrise opening sequence (a tribute to *The Age of the Earth's* sunrise opening sequence) is submerged into the game of duality. Apart from the image itself (the result of a zoom-in camera movement as an extension of the human body, the cyborg eye), the sound designed by Chico Bororo also intertwines nature with artificiality. Even though the soundtrack is diegetic, fully captured *in loco* by Bororo, while the camera zooms in and the sun rises above the Central Plateau, that diegetic sound (wind blowing, birds singing) is intensified to the extent it becomes fake, almost electronic, naturally artificial. From the singing of cicadas to the noise of a quarry, sound plays a narrative role in Vaz's filmography, which she claims was much influenced by her father's work. There is no coincidence the collaboration with Chico Bororo was also a bridge to *Brasiliários*, the experimental film in which Vaz's parents met. He was the director of photography in the short directed by Sérgio Bazi and Zuleica Porto, in 1986.



Image 2 - The sunrise in the opening sequence of *The Age of the Stone*.

The use of sound again marks the first turning point of *The Age of Stone*. For nine minutes, the landscape is of Chapada dos Veadeiros,⁹ in the north of Goiás state. The camera explores the fauna and flora, the geological site slowly unfolds, and an old *boiadeiro* (cowherder) rides his horse across the frame. At a given moment, we see part of the monument at relative distance, without further explanation. In a close-up shot, the *boiadeiro* gazes steadily at the horizon. The camera frames the mountains covered in green vegetation. As the camera zooms in, the sound in crescendo resumes its artificial effect. Cut. And what we then see is a quarry in Pirenópolis, Central Goiás. The sound becomes purely diegetic again. In the quarry, workers and stones share the same environment. Amidst them, fragments of the monument start to appear more regularly, albeit never entirely. Out of Brasília per se, those two landscapes are mobilised to reconstruct Brasília from Vaz's cinematic viewpoint. Chapada dos Veadeiros is situated 230 km north of the capital, whereas Pirenópolis is 150 km west of the capital. In proposing a new spatiality of Brasília actually outside it, Vaz suggests mystery instead of understanding.

⁹ In October 2017, a fire destroyed nearly a quarter of the protected area of Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park, a UNESCO Heritage site. Park director Fernando Tatagiba believes it was started deliberately. In a sense, *The Age of Stone*'s discussion on space and time has become even stronger, as much of the filmed landscape is now gone. For details see BBC News (2017): <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-41747575>



Image 3 – The old *boiadeiro* in *The Age of the Stone*.

What I call a second turning point in *The Age of Stone* is the appearance of Ivonete dos Santos Moraes, a young woman Vaz had met during her location research (as she met Chico Preto, who plays and actually is a *boiadeiro* in the region). In the director's words, Ivonete's figure is a sort of creole ghost, daughter of miscegenation, and offspring of that geography. Originally from that region, Vaz likes to play with the fragility and strength that Ivonete has within herself. Some might see her as a fragile teenager subjected to that arid atmosphere, but Vaz thinks of her as a strong force in constant interaction with nature. Indeed, in many of the close-ups Ivonete seems to be looking at the horizon, as the reverse angle shot shows the impressive landscape – and stays there for more than just a few seconds. Therefore, the audience has the impression that Ivonete is not only looking at the landscape, but the landscape is looking back at her. In tune with Deleuze and Guattari's (2005) exploration of the earth/Earth's limits, the Brasília of Vaz is the solid yet disoriented Central Plateau. Full of holes, recesses, and textures, the topography could be that of the moon or Mars – the earth/Earth is indeed another planet –, being the rhizomatic plateau, "a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end" (ibid: 21-22). If a rhizome is made of plateaus, as both authors claim, then Brasília, located in the Central Plateau, appropriately matches the concept.



Image 4 – Ivonete looking at the landscape, in *The Age of the Stone*.

In clear opposition to Glauber's verbiage in *The Age of the Earth*, silence is definitely part of the sound in *The Age of Stone*. Here, characters, from the *boiadeiro* to Ivonete and the workers, do not say much. In fact, only Ivonete speaks. She recites literary extracts from Machado de Assis, Hilda Hilst, and of course, Clarice Lispector, transforming them into a prosaic yet mythical speech. Interestingly, when Lispector's words are uttered, something quite special happens. "It was so artificial as the world must have been when it was created", says Ivonete looking at the camera/spectator. Lispector's famous sentence referring to Brasília's natural and artificial aspects is the same sentence used by Vaz to underline the natural and artificial in the cinema as well. It comes as no surprise that Ivonete breaks down the cinematic fourth wall precisely when pronouncing those words. More than characters or active agents, Ivonete, the *boiadeiro*, and the diggers are spectral figures, uchronic announcers of people who have once been there.

In that dreamlike scenario, the enormous size and power of the monument/Brasília strikes the audience when finally shown in its entirety. In a circular panoramic shot that lasts two minutes, we see the structure from a privileged point of view (the camera is positioned in the centre of the quarry), equally acknowledging its extension and oddness. In the frame, there is a man, one of the diggers, crossing the site, downsized in comparison with the monument. There is also a little house made of stones as small as his human stature. The nomadic thought (to make use of a Deleuzian term) of Vaz prevents us from fully decoding those elements. Once again, it is suspicion that arises. The friction provoked by the unknown, and the science-friction that the monument evokes indeed. Near the end, it vanishes away. The camera moves toward the blue sky and the monument is no longer there. If progress has not yet come, the ruins of progress have already disappeared:

“Brasília is a future that happened in the past. Eternal as a stone” (Lispector 1999, 50).

A bombed city

In Adirley Queirós’ *White Out, Black In*, science-fiction plays a more dystopic and messed up role – “*avacalhado*”, as the director himself might prefer. The story of Marquim da Tropa and Shockito, survivors of the police shooting in the Ceilândia of the 1980s, became the story of Marquim and Sartana in the science-fiction documentary. As discussed above, Queirós opted to work through fabulation after acknowledging how painful it would be to register the traumatic events in the documentary mode alone. Through constant interaction, all decisions were made collectively. For instance, Queirós says they would normally shoot according to the wishes of the actors on the day: “When they were not in the mood for filming, we would go out to have a drink. Which is better, isn’t it?” (3^o Cinema, Aesthetics, and Politics Colloquium at Fluminense Federal University’s debate posted on YouTube on June 2, 2014). Although open to collaboration and improvisation, the spatiality of the film turned out to be precise and well-crafted. Here, Brasília is present in relation to Ceilândia, which emphasises segregation and social control as crucial values in the (re)construction of that specific urban space, as Gouvêa (1995) affirms.

Hence, the meaning of a passport is a key element in how the film conveys the sense of apartheid intrinsic to the Ceilândia/Brasília equation. More than just an object in the *mise-en-scène*, the passport raises awareness of the boundaries that exist between the two localities. To access Brasília, one needs to have this document. “If you are listening to this track, it is because you are in the controlled area of the city of Brasília. Please have your passport with you”, advises the announcer when Marquim listens to the radio while driving. In another moment, the characters also listen to a curfew announcement through urban loudspeakers: “Citizen, the social welfare police are starting the night round. We urge everyone to remove children from the streets and return to their homes. Have your documents to hand. There are 103 days without a record of any attacks in our city. A better government is an alert government”. Both the need for a passport to enter the capital city and the control curfew define the kind of space the characters live in for the audience.

Interestingly, the spaces that compose the Brasília of *White Out, Black In* are actually spaces outside Brasília, as the spaces that compose *The Age of Stone* also are. Apparently, the actual Brasília has become inaccessible, hence unrepresentable. Experimenting with a “*laje* point of view”, as César Guimarães (2014, 198) has suggested, Queirós’ documentary sets its own perspective as quite

distant from the capital, although from a privileged viewpoint. Literally a “paving slab” in English, the word *laje* also has a social connotation in Portuguese. One can say that someone lives or parties in a *laje* and be directly referring to the open-to-the-air first floor of a poor house, or a *favela* shack. In this sense, the perspective of the film finds a correlation in the set design per se, as Marquim and Sartana have a sort of *laje* in their houses in Ceilândia. The Brasília of the film is actually absent, unreachable, not there. Rather, it gains meaning through the spatiality of Ceilândia, subjected to the capital’s tyrannical pomposity in both the film and reality.

As a matter of fact, the way the characters’ houses were designed (indeed, they were collectively constructed, especially for the shoot) also emphasises their personal relation to Ceilândia/Brasília. In the case of Marquim, there are two opposite yet oppressive scenarios. Marquim goes to the basement to work in his subversive radio station; a sort of bunker in which he plays songs and elaborates on his memories for potential listeners. Going up to the first floor, the bunker is exchanged for a balcony surrounded by iron bars. When he is up there, he seems to be set apart, isolated from the street, almost imprisoned; paradoxically, he also feels the city much closer, as he can gaze upon the urban horizon from his own *laje* viewpoint.

The urban space also invades the house of Sartana, a house that seems to have no walls. Many sequences take place in his *laje*, a mixture of inside and outside, as if the place was either under construction or being demolished. When he is not at home drawing or taking pictures, Sartana is framed in a sort of junkyard where he is surrounded by mechanical debris, including prosthetics like the one he himself wears. In the film, not only does the cinematic space reveal the materialisation of social apartheid, but also the characters’/peoples’ own fractured bodies, the intimate space they inhabit, bear the consequences of it. In fracturing their bodies, the police shooting also fractured their urban experience within the city.



Image 5 - Marquim in a wheelchair, in *White Out, Black In*.



Image 6 - Sartana in the junkyard, in *White Out, Black In*.

The traumatic event itself, the very core of the film project, is unveiled mainly through voice-over statements by Marquim and Sartana, scattered throughout the documentary. These passages are objective and descriptive, compared to the more loose and playful aspects of the narrative. In other words, there is a tension caused by the blurring of boundaries between documentary and science-fiction. At one point, the audience even sees talking-head interviews with Marquim and Sartana. Here, it seems as if the documentary mode has imposed itself. That may be true, until the moment when a reverse angle shot shows Dimas Cravalaças, the time-traveller agent, watching the interviews projected inside his spaceship. All of a sudden the audience is brought back into the science-fiction domain, which, in fact, it had never left. In addition to the commentary (via voice-over or talking-head interviews), the viewer also gets the chance to see archival photos that evoke the

atmosphere of the Quarentão ball, alluding to a more traditional documentary method of storytelling. It is precisely the use of photography that anchors the film in the documentary domain. Here, the indexicality of the photos (or the ontology of the image, to mention André Bazin's (1967) famous concept) prevents the film from moving away from realism completely. Even though it is a sci-fi documentary, *White Out, Black In* explores new possibilities of conceiving realism in film by adding sci-fi elements to real, empirical history. Nevertheless, when those images are on screen, Marquim is not giving any interview whatsoever. Rather, he recounts the event from his bunker/radio station while putting on records. Those are the precise moments when the audience understands that no matter how science-fictional this documentary seems, there is a pulse of reality in each of its frames. Here it is: the sci-fi documentary, the science-fiction documentary, the science-non-fiction documentary.

According to scholar Cláudia Mesquita (2015), *White Out, Black In* engenders its own regime of historicity, regardless of any institutional attempt to define temporal phases. Referring to Queirós' documentaries, she believes his "works evoke the past, but in relation to the present (and sometimes to the future)" (ibid, 3). Although the actual crime took place in 1986, *White Out, Black In* is quite vague about the year in which the action takes place. We know the time-traveller agent has come from a 2070's society and that for three years he has been searching for evidence of State-crimes in the "territory of the past". In the opening credits, a board informs the viewer that the story is set in "Old Ceilândia, Federal District", but gives no further information. Why Old Ceilândia and not just Ceilândia? The spatial-temporal inaccuracy is so that Dimas can receive a message from the future telling him that after three years away, he might be lost: "We do not know of your whereabouts and there is the suspicion that you have been disintegrated in time and space". The disintegration that the message refers to helps Queirós to purposely puzzle our perception. When Dimas wanders in the so-called "territory of the past", for instance, he strolls through vast, empty spaces that could be a sort of wasteland or ground ready to receive buildings.

In one of the shots, we see a condominium development in the background. Once more, a contradictory impression: it could be brand-new residential real estate about to be completed, or an abandoned, ruined architectonic project. Interestingly, this is a shot that appears in all of Queirós' films. At the beginning, it was a wasteland; later, advertisements announce the construction plan; then one finally sees the construction site with buildings. Queirós explains, "I always shoot in that same environment there to try to register how this city changes very fast and always to the side of capital" (3rd Cinema, Aesthetics, and Politics Colloquium at Fluminense Federal University's debate posted on YouTube on June

2, 2014). Here, capital means capitalism, although it could easily relate to the capital city as well.

The second half of the sci-fi documentary focuses on the bombing plan. As discussed, the characters aim to explode a sort of musical bomb over Brasília. The bomb is going to be launched into the future, the characters stress, calling attention to the division between the time-space of (Old) Ceilândia and Brasília. It is not by coincidence that the bomb heading into the future, as Brasília has forever been considered the city of the future. Instead of being an actual bomb, the very low-budget, scenographic structure is made out of a variety of sounds captured in Ceilândia: from street noises to popular songs. Marquim counts on help from friends to get the so-called bomb ready on time, as if they were working on a mixing sound project for an album. There is a sense of naivety in this vindictive plan, very much in tune with the fable tone of the story. Throughout, the audience also sees Sartana taking pictures of Brasília (from quite a distance, of course) and drawing (something the viewer will understand the meaning of at the end of the film). The audience does not know at that stage, but Sartana, just like Marquim, is co-operating with the final explosive sequence. As the sentence that wraps up the film says: “About our memory, we fabulate ourselves”. Indeed, revenge comes in the shape of art. Fulfilled by music and depicted through drawings (potentially made by Sartana), the closing sequence shows the collapse of the white, wealthy Brasília, the modernist design under attack, the capital in ruins. The use of drawings is particularly interesting as it emphasises the fabulation aspect of the narrative, a fantasy created by the drawer (and the director). Moreover, there seems to be an implicit analogy here: if the drawings are a science-fiction invention in the film, Brasília itself is a modernist invention in the real world.



Image 7 - The musical, atomic bomb, in *White Out, Black In*.



Image 8 - Brasília under attack, in *White Out, Black In*.

Queirós' allegory of ruins questions Brasília as an untouchable icon. As a UNESCO World Heritage site, the modernist Pilot Plan cannot allow urban interventions at all. "Brasília is a city that can't be touched. You can't change her physical structure. The surroundings can explode", Queirós has said (3rd Cinema, Aesthetics, and Politics Colloquium at Fluminense Federal University's debate posted on YouTube on June 2, 2014). Hence, the situation is reversed in *White Out, Black In*. The bomb will not only touch, but explode the modernist symbols of the Pilot Plan. Most of the drawings show the emblematic Three Powers Square being squashed, while furious, funk-music lyrics loudly play in the soundtrack ("Bomb explodes in the head/Ripping thief apart/I'm going for this war and I'm going to win it"). So-called progress is undone, though not as a regression. As one knows, ruins bear the ability to be the end of one cycle and at the same time the promising starting point of something else.

"From underdevelopment to the incongruously modern" – that is how James Holston (1989, 3) coherently defined the advent of Brasília. His comment says much, not only about the capital, but the country as a whole – a country in which space and status have gone hand in hand since its foundation, followed by three centuries of extractive colonialism. The aim to pass from an underdeveloped to a modern nation was more of a utopian dream than a feasible project – hence, the debacle. Caught between the promise of modernist ideology and the paradoxes that came out of it, the spatiality of Brasília does not facilitate the cinematic endeavour to depict it. "What possibilities are left for intellectual and artistic production

that wants to retain an image of a better or different world with which to point to an emergent future?," Holston wonders (ibid).

In this sense, perhaps the cinema of experimentation of Adirley Queirós and Ana Vaz sets out a new way to investigate the contradiction, precisely because both artists ascribe to contradiction as a driving force in their related, yet distinct artworks. In this sense, Eduardo de Jesus (2017) hinted that recent productions may seem to be interested in subverting rather than representing reality: "Contemporary Brazilian cinema seems to have noticed these forms of domination directed toward space and shows us other visions of the city, induced by more vigorous and libertarian representations (...)" (ibid, 42). As Angela Prysthon (2015) has pointed out, there might indeed be a sense of furious frivolity in the air, transforming cinematic representations of reality into a more unorthodox tapestry of visual information. Between fear and fascination, *Lispector* (1999) acknowledges the complexity of coping with Brasília, and therefore with its representation. "Brasília is broken glass on the street floor. Shards" (ibid: 56). How long will it take for the shattered pieces to be gathered? Amidst the ruins, Brasília is still breathing.

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