

ESPACIO CREACIÓN/CREATION SPACE

Binho: Poetry as Social Practice in the Periferia of São Paulo, Brazil

Eliseo Jacob
Howard University
eliseo.jacob@howard.edu

Presentation of the Brazilian poet and cultural promoter Binho (Robson Padial) with a selection of his poetry

Keywords: Binho, São Paulo, *saraus*, Brazilian poetry, urban periphery, literature from urban peripheries

Apresentação do poeta brasileiro e promotor cultural Binho (Robson Padial) com uma seleção de sua poesia

Palavras-chave: Binho, São Paulo, *saraus*, poesia brasileira, periferia, literatura periférica

Binho
São Paulo, Brazil



Image 1. Binho and his wife Suzi Soares

(Photo by Eliseo Jacob)

Binho (Robson Padial) is a poet and cultural producer from São Paulo, Brazil. Born in 1964 in Taboão da Serra, a city on the outskirts of São Paulo, Binho is part of a larger movement of writers, poets, and artists who emerged in the 1990s in the *periferia*—the urban periphery around São Paulo.

Scholars, the media, and the authors themselves have labeled the literature being produced in the urban periphery of São Paulo *Literatura Marginal* or *Literatura Periférica*, and the latter term is the more commonly used, as it designates the origins of the literary production in terms of geography and social class.

Binho is a member of the older generation of these writers, which includes Ferréz, Sérgio Vaz, and Alessandro Buzo. Many of the early writers were self-taught and did not attend the university. However, those from younger generations, such as Sacolinha, Rodrigo Ciríaco, and Allan da Rosa, completed university studies and, in some cases, graduate school.

Many writers self-publish or publish their works in small presses, several of which were founded by *periferia* writers.¹ A few authors achieved mainstream status in Brazil and internationally, including Ferréz and Sérgio Vaz.² Binho has chosen to remain a more independent writer and artist focused on doing cultural work in his own community.

Interest in writers from São Paulo's *periferia* has increased over the years, especially outside of Brazil. Anthologies have been published in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and France.³ Binho is included in two Spanish language anthologies compiled by Lucía Tennina, a professor at the University of Buenos Aires. The first, *SARAUS: Movimiento/Literatura/Periferia/São Paulo* (2014), was published in Argentina, and the second, *Brasil Periférica: Literatura Marginal de São Paulo* (2016), in Chile.

¹ Independent presses founded by writers from the *Literatura Periférica* movement include Selo Sarau do Binho, Edições Toró (publisher of Binho's second book, *Donde Miras*), Elo da Corrente Edições, and Edições UM por TODOS.

² Ferréz is probably the best-known writer from this movement. His novels have been produced by Brazil's largest publishing houses, and several have been translated into Spanish and French. One of Brazil's major publishers, Editora Global, created the *Literatura Periférica* series that includes books by Sérgio Vaz, Alessandro Buzo, Sacolinha, Allan da Rosa, and Dinha.

³ French publisher Éditions Anacaona organized two anthologies: *je suis favela* and *je suis toujours favela*. Brazil's Editora Nós did a Portuguese language version of *je suis favela* titled *Eu sou favela*.

For Binho, poetry and literature in general have functioned as a social practice, and he has created public projects that meld poetry, public commentary, art, and literacy. The impetus for his use of poetry as social praxis began with the establishment in the 1990s of a bar with his wife and longtime collaborator Suzi Soares (pictured in Image 1).⁴ The Bar do Binho became a space to initiate creative projects and host artistic performances.

One of the projects that emerged from the bar during this period was *Postesia*. Binho would take signs posted by local politicians and paint over them with his own poetry, then post them in public spaces throughout the city (see Images 2 and 3).



Image 2. "POSTESIA / SANGUE / Vermelho / ou / azul / Tanto faz / pros urubus / *Binho*" (Courtesy of Binho and Suzi)

The poems frequently offer commentary on pressing issues in Brazil, including social inequality, police brutality, and poverty. Signs with his poetry began to appear all over the *periferia*. Binho would also strategically place the signs by important

⁴ For more information on Suzi Soares's work as a cultural producer, see her February 2021 interview in *Revista Amazonas*: <https://www.revistaamazonas.com/2021/02/17/suzi-soares-a-professora-das-licoes-de-vida/> .

landmarks, for example, at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo or next to government buildings like police stations as a way to provoke discussions within the public sphere.



Image 3. "POSTESIA / Dia Demo / Polícia Mil. / Onde jaz ... / Civil? / Binho"
(Courtesy of Binho and Suzi)

The signs posted throughout São Paulo formed the basis for Binho's first book of poetry, *Postesia: poesia nos postes*, published in 1998. The independent press Sarau do Binho prepared a second edition in 2017 in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the original venture (Images 4 and 5). The project and book were foundational in establishing the poetry movement in the *periferia* as well as laying the groundwork for the development of future poets from the community.

In the early 2000s, the Bar do Binho began hosting *saraus*, or literary events similar to open mics, where poets recited their work, musicians performed, and writers read from books they recently published (Image 6). The regularly scheduled event became known as Sarau do Binho and was recognized as a cultural institution in São Paulo's *zona sul* (southern zone). I had the opportunity to visit Sarau do Binho several times in 2011, which I documented in a short video: <https://youtu.be/8JuYEPIusag>.



Images 4 & 5: Covers of the first (left) and second (right) editions of Binho's *Postesia*.



Image 6. Sarau do Binho. (Photo by Eliseo Jacob)

Binho hosted the weekly Sarau do Binho, which became an important space for *periferia* residents to develop their craft as poets and writers. There are *saraus* throughout the *periferia*, including Cooperifa, Sarau da Brasa, Sarau Elo do Corrente,

Sarau dos Mesquiteiros, Sarau Vila Fundão, and others. Many of them were begun and still are hosted in bars like Binho's. These spaces have been essential in developing writers in communities historically lacking in public libraries, adequate schools, and other infrastructure that promotes access to literacy and literature.

The closing of Bar do Binho in 2012 forced Binho and Suzi to devise creative solutions to promote literature and poetry.⁵ They continued to host the Sarau do Binho in other spaces throughout São Paulo and published two anthologies that included many Sarau do Binho participants and other writers from the *periferia* (Image 7). An independent publishing press with the same name as the *sarau* soon followed in 2017, Selo Sarau do Binho, with the intention of publishing books written by local writers. See information below on the poetry books written by Binho as well as the Sarau do Binho anthologies.

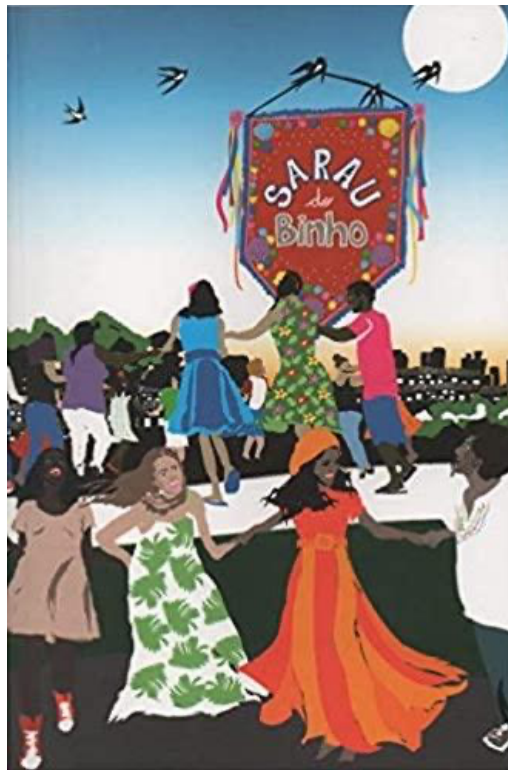


Image 7. Cover of second Sarau do Binho Anthology

Since 2015, Binho, Suzi, and other collaborators have organized an annual literary festival known as Feliz (Festa Literária da Zona Sul) that brings together writers,

⁵ Despite the bar being shut down in 2012, Binho and wife Suzi organized Sarau do Binho events in other places, including the stage area of the Grupo Clariô de Teatro, an important theater company in the *periferia*. See a news report on Sarau do Binho in the Grupo Clariô de Teatro's space: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTaiABDq1w4>

artists, and performers from the *periferia* and beyond.⁶ This festival has become an important event for promoting the diverse literary and cultural productions originating in the *periferia*. It also highlights Binho and Suzi's activism as key cultural producers for authors and artists from their community.

Poetry Books by Binho

- 1998 *Postesia: poesia nos postes*. São Paulo: Self-published.
- 2007 *Donde miras: dois poetas e um caminho*, coauthored with Serginho Poeta. São Paulo: Edições Toró.
- 2017 *Postesia: poesia nos postes*. 2nd ed. São Paulo: Sarau do Binho.

Anthologies of *Periferia* Poetry

- 2013 *Sarau do Binho*. São Paulo: Sarau do Binho.
- 2016 *Sarau do Binho 2*. São Paulo: Ciclo Contínuo Editorial.

Poetry by Binho

The following three poems are from Binho's *Postesia: poesia nos postes* (2nd ed., 2017). The first is one of his favorites because it symbolizes the impact a single person can have on others. An *andorinha* (swallow) is a small bird but can make a large impression by awakening others to take action. The poem and the image of swallows have become a part of the Sarau do Binho logo, both for the *sarau* and their independent publishing press.

Uma andorinha só
não faz verão
Mas pode acordar
o bando todo (Binho 2017, 18)

The next two poems use an economy of words to comment on relevant social issues, including Brazil's complex racial dynamics and the drug epidemic devastating youth in the *periferia*.

⁶ See Image 8. For more information on the Felizs Festival, see its website: <https://www.felizs.com.br> and a report by the TV Cultura Manos & Minas program at the 4th Felizs Festival in 2018 with interviews of Binho and other participants: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azLVhSKkOUs>

A TV em
cores
explode
pretos e brancos (Binho 2017, 20)

O menino de rua
que saiu da escola
podia ser um gênio
Fica na sua
pede uma coca
bate uma bola
Seu oxigênio
é coca
é cola (Binho 2017, 25)

The following two poems come from Binho's second book of poetry, *Donde miras: dois poetas e um caminho*, cowritten with Serginho Poeta, also from São Paulo's *periferia*. The first selection captures the rapid urbanization that Binho witnessed during his youth in Taboão da Serra and Campo Limpo, a district in the *zona sul* of São Paulo where he grew up and still resides.

Campo Limpo Taboão

Quando nasci, tinha seis anos.
No lugar em que nasci,
Sonhava que tudo era nosso.
Tinha os campinhos e os terrenos baldios.
Era meu território.
Já foi interior,
Hoje periferia com as casas cruas.
As vacas com tetas gruas
Não existem mais.
A cerca virou muro. Óbvio.
A cidade cresce,
O muro cresce.
Vieram os prédios, as delegacias, os puteiros
E as Casas Bahia.
Também cresci.
Fiquei grande.
Já não caibo dentro de mim
E de tão solitário

Sou meu próprio vizinho.
E de tão solitário
Sou meu próprio vizinho. (Binho 2007, 8)

This second poem reflects a cosmopolitan understanding of Latin America and its rich history and culture, creating a sense of a pan-Latin Americanism. The poem also reflects Binho's efforts to connect a group of artists from São Paulo's *periferia* with other regions of Latin America by taking expeditions to towns and municipalities throughout Brazil and South America. The project shared the same name with his second book of poetry, *Donde miras*.⁷

Ir Ir e Ir

Quero ver onde essa
América se desmorena
E se constrói
Onde se diz negra
Onde se desmestiga
E se demistifica
Onde se andina
E se desanda
Quero ver
Onde o samba é Gardel
Onde o tango é Noel
Onde a fala é o silêncio dos pampas
A Cordilheira, a Mantiqueira
Onde o ferro é o cobre
Onde Habira é Temuco
Onde Neruda é Drummond
Onde o guarani é oficial
Onde o Morumbi és Lá Bombonera
Onde o Chile é Allende
Onde nenhum salvador é Pinochet
Quero ver quero ver
Onde o Paraguay venceu
Onde Afonsina se entregou
Onde o Brasil se Argentina mais
Onde o Uruguai é mais Galeano

⁷ The project to take artists from São Paulo on an expedition to other regions of Latin America was known as Expedición Donde Miras: Caminhada Cultural pela América Latina. It was started the same year Binho's book, *Donde Miras*, was published (2007). See the project's website for more information: <https://expediciondondemiras.blogspot.com/>

E onde eu sou mais ou menos brasileiro
Quero ver quero ver (Binho 2007, 30–32)



Image 8. Binho reciting poetry at the 3rd Felizs Festival in 2017.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeEYmy1Li90>

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Eliseo Jacob has a PhD from the University of Texas at Austin with a background in contemporary Brazilian and Latin American literary and cultural productions. He is currently a faculty member in the Department of World Languages & Cultures at Howard University. His research focuses on cultural productions in Latin America's urban peripheries, including fiction, poetry, and hip hop. His current book project, *Masculinidades Marginales: Race, Masculinity, and the City in 21st-Century Latin American Literature*, is an examination of writers from Brazilian and Latin American urban peripheries, and how their literary representations of marginalized male youth raise urgent questions surrounding citizenship. He was recently awarded a Fulbright grant for the 2021–22 academic year to work with the nPeriferias interdisciplinary research group at the University of São Paulo to complete a research project on the *Literatura Periférica* movement.

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