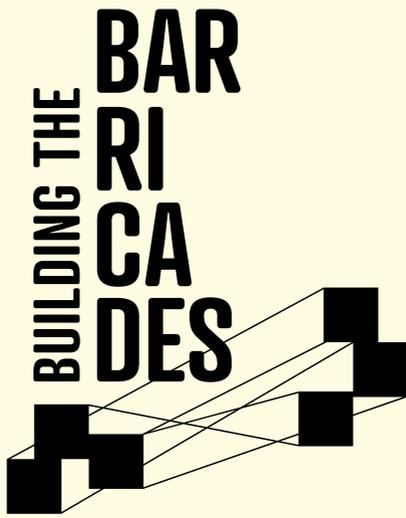


Luiz Eduardo Soares

BOOK 4

**MARÉ AND THE LONG
GESTATION OF THE
NEW WORLD**

**BUILDING THE
BAR
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COLLECTION

BUILDING THE BARRICADES

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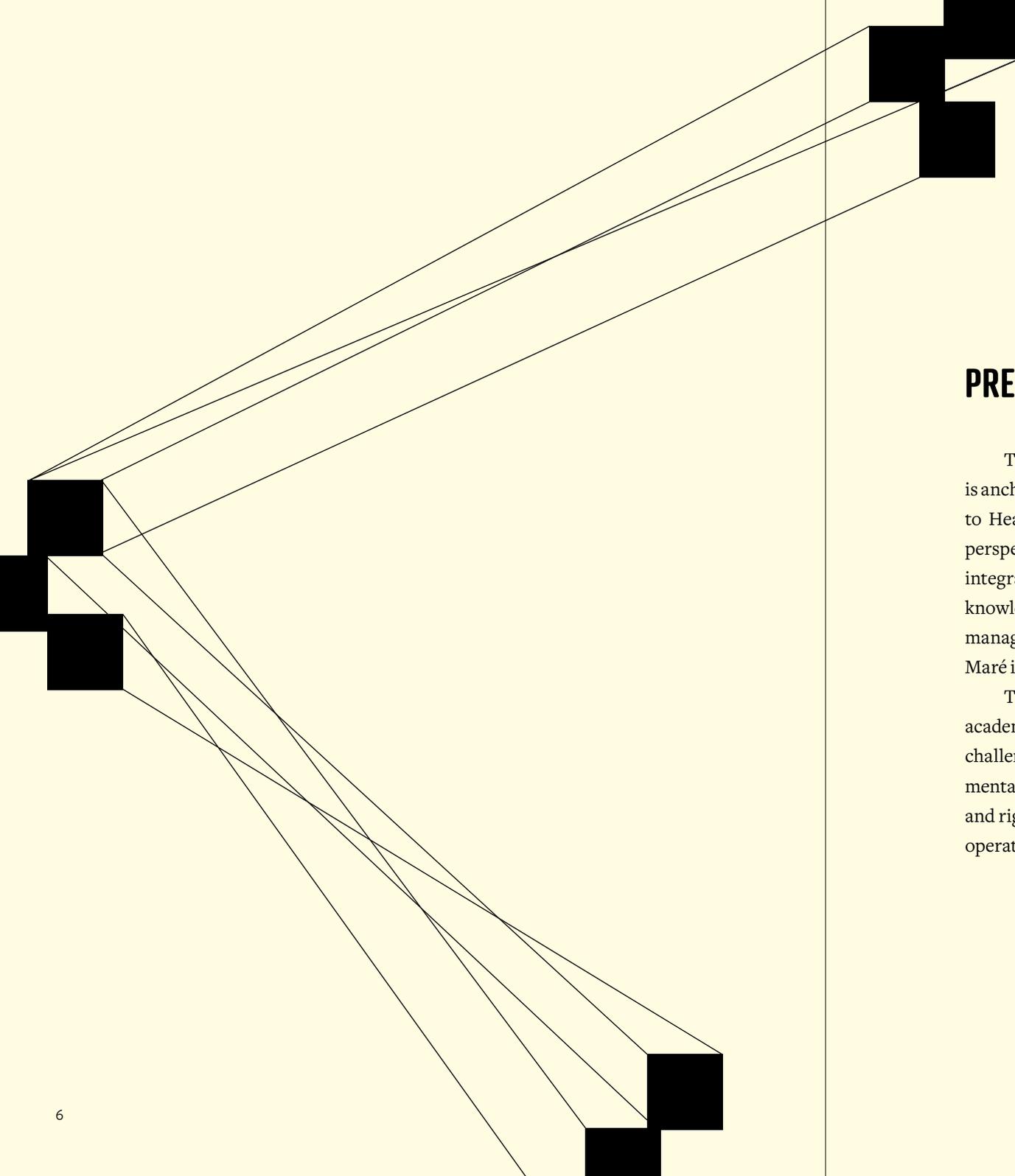
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This work is dedicated to all those people from favelas and the periphery whose mental health is often affected by the violence caused by a lack of public policies, especially with regard to the right to public security.



PRESENTATION

The project, **Building the Barricades**, has an analytical approach that is anchored in the Human Sciences, adopting investigative traditions related to Health, Social Sciences and artistic and cultural practices. From this perspective, the research that resulted in this publication seeks to explore integrated ways of producing, sharing and disseminating systematised knowledge among researchers, academics, public policy makers and managers, activists, representatives of community institutions, residents of Maré in Rio de Janeiro, and society in general.

The general objective was to carry out statistically relevant, and academically and artistically excellent research that could identify the challenges and resources for residents of the Maré favelas in coping with mental health problems, resulting, in part, from the context of violence and rights violations by the state, but also from the actions of armed groups operating in the region.

THE STUDIES CONDUCTED AIMED TO:

(i) investigate the impact of exposure to violence and other stressors on the mental health of residents in Maré's 16 favelas with the aim of developing strategies that may influence public policies in this field.

(ii) identify challenges for the mental health of those residents who abuse alcohol and psychoactive substances, in addition to verifying existing resources and ones that can be created to support the resilience and recovery of those who need it.

(iii) produce narratives about the impact of social, cultural and territorial factors on aspects of vulnerability and resilience, with regard to the well-being and mental health of Maré's residents.

This collection is, therefore, composed of four books which resulted from the interdisciplinary research **Building the Barricades***:

BOOK 1 - A STUDY WITH RESIDENTS OF MARÉ'S 16 FAVELAS

With an article by the journalist Flávia Oliveira, who spoke to the general coordinators of the research, Paul Heritage and Eliana Silva. It also includes methodological details and analyses of the household survey, as well as a text about the research field and the complete production credits for the project.

BOOK 2 - A STUDY WITH USERS OF THE DRUG SCENES IN MARÉ AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

With methodological and contextual details, in addition to analyses of data collection and information about users of the drug scenes in Maré and the surrounding area.

BOOK 3 - NARRATIVE STUDIES: POETRY, MUSIC AND PHOTOGRAPHY

With articles and interviews about narrative research projects based on artistic practices with artists and residents from Maré's favelas.

BOOK 4 - MARÉ AND THE LONG GESTATION OF THE NEW WORLD

Essay by Luiz Eduardo Soares.

* Three additional studies developed during the COVID-19 pandemic are available on the research website [<https://peoplespalaceprojects.org.uk/en/projects/building-the-barricades/>] as well as the literature reviews of each academic team participating in the project, namely: Social Sciences, Psychiatry and the Economy of Culture.

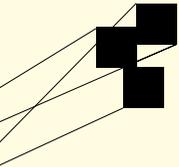
MARÉ AND THE LONG GESTATION OF THE NEW WORLD¹

—
Luiz Eduardo Soares

¹ Contribution to the *Construindo Pontes* (lit. "Building the Barricades") Research, coordinated by Paul Heritage and Eliana Sousa. My participation took place within the team of social scientists, directed by Miriam Krezinger, to whose final report I also contributed. I am grateful to Paul and Eliana for the invitation to participate in the research, to all my colleagues, for enriching my knowledge about poor communities, especially Natália Guindani, and, above all, to Miriam, for following my analyses step by step, and for her innumerable fundamental suggestions. I owe Miriam the better part of whatever is positive in my text – though I do not transfer to her the responsibility for my eventual mistakes. None of this would have been possible without the generous disponibility of the Maré residents who shared their reflections, perceptions, and feelings with us. I am also grateful to Paul Heritage for his sharp perusal of this text, from which very relevant corrections and developments ensued.

CONTENTS

I. UNTIL THE GALE REVEALS THE CONTOURS OF AN ARCHITECTURE	14
II. THE VIRTUES OF HESITATION	25
III. THE MASKS OF THE BIG OTHER AND THE ADDRESSING OF ABJECTION	38
IV. NEWS FROM THE FRONT	46
V. THE AGENDA OF INTIMACY	51
VI. TIRESIAS IN THE ALLEY, AMONG POETS	64
VII. RECONSTRUCTING EVERYDAY LIFE, AND ESCAPING THE SYSTEM'S LOGIC: THE REINVENTION OF TIME	69
VII.I. ANCESTRALITY AND THE (CONVERSE OR INSIDE-OUT) OF TIME	70
VIII. INFINITE LANDSCAPE: THE REINVENTION OF SPACE	74
IX. SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON THE NEW LEXICON OF MARÉ'S YOUNG POETS AND INTELLECTUALS (AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS)	84
IX.I. BODY	84
IX.II. POTENCY	98
X. REFLECTIONS ON THE PATH TAKEN	104



I. UNTIL THE GALE REVEALS THE CONTOURS OF AN ARCHITECTURE

It is a demanding task to embrace the testimonies of Maré residents about armed violence and its impacts, making them resonate beyond truisms, glosses, and the projective analyses of concepts previously formulated which often function as preconceptions. What is offered here is merely a movement towards such an embrace, which is not at all devoid of risks, since good intentions do not warrant fidelity to the commitments of conscience. As regards the first step, there can be no doubt: it is necessary to listen, time and again, improving the reception to what is said and what is silenced, taking into consideration the inter-locutionary and historical contexts, grasping the structural dynamisms within the performative mediation of language, allowing oneself to be interpellated in all possible registers by the manifestations compiled in interviews and accounts, in such a way that the passwords for decoding them originate from the very authors of the discourses collected. What is known for sure is that to analytically approach a creative community implies getting closer to an extraordinarily complex, changing, and contradictory constellation of perceptions, affections, and practices.

Besides the typical difficulties faced by the many diverse segments of subaltern classes in Brazilian society, overdetermined by the insidious and combined presence of racism and patriarchalism, we must add, in this case, armed conflict between civil groups, and bloody confrontations provoked

by police incursions. Over this tense set of factors will incide the pandemic and its economic impacts, intensifying chronic unemployment, general dismay, the precarization of labor, the expansion of informal work in critical conditions, and impoverishment. It is not by chance that the effects of Covid-19 are unequally distributed in detriment of the poor, especially women and the black population.

The team responsible for the survey within the scope of the *Construindo Pontes Research*, to which this text is intended as supplement, had the carefulness to divide the sample into three segments, since there are three areas in Maré in which, by hypothesis, residents would tend to answer distinctly to questions related to the exposition to armed violence: two areas where the presence of armed civil groups stands out, linked to two different drug-trafficking factions, and one where *milicianos*², whose connections to the police are well-known, are active, so that it experiences no police incursions. The results confirmed the hypothesis, revealing significant and consistent differences not between the two areas controlled by the drug-trafficking groups, but between these and the third area in which the influence exerted by the *milícia* effectively blocks police operations. It became evident that the decisive factor in the traumatic exposition to armed violence is police brutality. Confrontations between civil groups are relevant, they cause shootings, leave victims and significant damages behind, but the axis of central reference is the relationship with the State: the great watershed is the existence or not of police invasions.

The scope of the research focused on incidents and commotions brought about by guns and violent acts, which interrupt business hours, cancel all schedules, shut down commerce, prevent school classes, cancel health posts' patient care, empty the streets, interfere with people's circulation, wound, maim, kill, shock, terrorize, threaten, and inscribe dramatic incidents on the collective memory, the personal biographies, and the course of daily life.

² *Milicianos* are members of clandestine paramilitary groups in Brazil called *milícias* (lit. "militias"), often composed by police officers or former police officers who carry out both vigilante and organized crime activities.

The events traversed by tragedies are punctuations which inscribe this discontinuity with traumatic potential in the incessant flux of lived time. In a number of cases, the clocks stop, binding direct and indirect victims to their pain.

For this very reason, everyday life becomes an achievement and a construction.³ To be reconciled with daily routine means leading life without becoming fixed on fear and danger, not allowing unsafety to preclude serenity, sanity, and the fruition of pleasures and affections, opening space for a perspective of change. Reappropriating everyday existence is far from implying an impotent surrender to the intolerable or a denegation of reality. It does not mean getting used to the unacceptable, but reclaiming one's life for oneself, a life frequently at risk due to the confrontations between armed groups and police incursions. Women and men of all ages guard – before, and in a certain sense, above citizenship itself – the precious treasure of everyday life, which is to be occupied, reinvented, and enjoyed. To re seize daily life, to guard it, must be interpreted as a liberating achievement since it ruptures automatism, adaptive reactions, functional adjustments to the order of necessity, norms, and established expectations. Freedom is an applicable category because the everyday life to be re seized and guarded is not an edulcorated past to which one wants to return, or which must be restituted to the community. It is neither about an ideal good life nor a delineated political project, but about the possibility of a communal coexistence experienced in so many moments free of tension and fear, celebrated in a concentrated and intense fashion during religious rituals and parties, but also relished in

3 Michel De Certeau (1998, original from 1990) and Veena Das (2011, original from 2007), in exquisite studies which have reached the status of classics, have already demonstrated their strategic place in the subjective formation and contexture of social networks. Certeau, Michel De – **A Invenção do cotidiano; artes de fazer**. Vozes, 1998 [Translation: Ephraim Ferreira Alves] (L'Invention du quotidien; arts de faire. Gallimard, 1990). Das, Veena – “O ato de testemunhar: violência, gênero e subjetividade” In **Cadernos Pagu** (37), July-December de 2011:9-41. [Translation: Plínio Dentzien] (“The Act of Witnessing: Violence, Gender, and Subjectivity” In **Veena Das, Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary**. Published by the University of California Press, 2007).

prosaic gatherings on rooftops, in street corners, bars and alleys, Sunday lunches, games and entertainment, in the poet's quiet docility, in musical delight, in the redeeming omnipresence of music, in the frugality which is worth so much, in the beauty parlors' mirrors, in the peaceful dawn, in a night of love.

To identify, value, and guard the potentialities inscribed in daily practice may constitute stages of a collective work under construction, a rehearsal of an embryonic modality of utopian sensibility: after all, there is something else there beyond what is ostensibly seen and known. For this reason, the testimonies tend to interpolate us overloaded with worlds: the abundance emanates from meddling with ambiguities, contradictions, and gaps, advancing and retreating between what is said and what is not said, exploring by trial and error the limits of language, and exciting creative imagination. It is not easy to discern what lies in the breach between acts, walls, lines, and silences, much less to distinguish what reality excludes (by its incompatibility with any conditions of possibility) from that which it suppresses but carries within itself, as the fertile shadow of a denial that inscribes the dialectic movement in the field of history. It is not arbitrary that the word “potency” has come to figure with such assiduity in the popular lexicon, above all between the youths that integrate collectives. If it not easy to discern what lies in the breach, one deduces how demanding it would be to take possession of everyday life, insofar as such an appropriation would imply engagement in the effort to come to know the breaches and the fertile shadow of facts. To appropriate daily life, therefore, reveals itself as “a search and an investigation”, as Cavell says, cited by Veena Das, in a diverse, though comparable sense to our meaning (cf. Cavell, 1987, APUD Veena Das, op.cit.).⁴

4 Stanley Cavell's work cited by Veena Das is *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987. To cite Veena Das' appropriation of the controversial interpretation which Cavell proposes about Shakespeare's work is not to endorse his reading of the great playwright. Veena Das' theses stand for themselves..

The version of the Maré community which is sketched here is simply an edited sequence of snapshots of this work of liberation, or better yet, of this tireless endeavor to achieve it, from which the desire for art, though so important, is far from being its only evidence, and for which Sisyphus' tenacity may serve as a model.⁵

An inspiring passage by Veena Das establishes a direct dialogue with our themes, despite the geographical, historical, and cultural distance between India and Brazil, between the individual trajectory of Asha, the woman the author follows, and the intertwined trajectories in the Maré community; and between the war with Pakistan and the armed conflicts in Rio de Janeiro's slums:

Thus, the memory of the Partition cannot be understood in Asha's life as a direct possession of the past. It is constantly interposed and mediated by the manner in which the world is being presently inhabited. Even when it appears that some women were relatively lucky because they escaped direct bodily harm, the bodily memory of being-with-others makes that past encircle the present as atmosphere. This is what I mean by the importance of finding ways to speak about the experience of witnessing: that if one's way of being-with-others was brutally damaged, then the past enters the present not necessarily as traumatic memory but as poisonous knowledge. This knowledge can be engaged only through a knowing by suffering. As Martha Nussbaum puts it: "There is a kind of knowing that works by suffering because

5 In his aforementioned memorable essay, Veena Das provides us with full bearings, although he analyses a quite different reality: "This image of turning back evokes not so much the idea of a return, as a turning back to inhabit the same space now marked as a space of destruction, in which you must live again. Hence, the sense of the everyday in Wittgenstein as the sense of something recovered. How you make such a space of destruction your own not through an ascent into transcendence but through a descent into the everyday is what I shall describe through the life of one woman...". In Das, Veena. "The Act of Witnessing: Violence, Gender, and Subjectivity" in *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. University of California Press Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2007, p. 62.)

suffering is the appropriate acknowledgement of the way human life, in these cases, is. And in general: to grasp either a love or a tragedy by intellect is not sufficient for having real human knowledge of it" (Das 2007: 76).⁶

One of the intriguing aspects of this modality of knowledge – and Veena Das would not necessarily agree with us on this point since her thought is more faithful to Wittgenstein than to the development suggested here – could be defined as its irreducibility to words, situating it, in a certain measure, beyond and beneath intelligibility, in an uncertain zone between concepts, images, and affections, though not for this reason outside the sphere of what is communicable. On the contrary, this knowledge is almost entirely communication, even though it dispenses with mediations – and it is so, indeed, for dispensing with them. More than communication, whose schematic model is triangular (sender, receiver, and message), in suffering one is in common in the common (the message has no autonomy or objective itself which may allow its assessment by an agent external to the original duet: communication is the encounter). This is also why it is recognition: not because one reencounters the lived experience, but because it is communion, the (re)encounter with the Other. The mothers who have lost their sons and daughters to police violence, for instance, support one another, and do not need to say anything, for they know that the others know whatever must be known to commune in the unspeakable pain. The loss of a child does not fit into words and situates those who suffer in a materially unlocatable place, but which is well-known to those who share the experience. It is a double meeting point where the mother (or the father, or the brothers and sisters – Antigone is the victim's sister – the mother is usually the protagonist) finds herself and her unfortunate companions. Precisely because it involves an

6 Cf. Nussbaum, Martha - *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press, 1986.

encounter with herself and with the Other (and with herself as an Other – which precipitates change since it incites one to become an Other), the knowledge provided by suffering is also (re)cognition. A fold takes place because suffering incorporates a reflexive dimension: here, “the subject finds herself” does not mean the triumph of reason or conscience, nor the superimposition between her being and her “essence”, but the unarmed surrender to pain’s supremacy, a movement which might be liberating if it is a stage in the labor of mourning, a stage succeeded by an integrating symbolization, to whose success sharing is decisive. Therefore, mourning reveals itself as a comparable process, in its dramaturgic structure, to rituals of passage: one passes from painful loss to annihilation, and then, supported by her partners, to everyday routine, and back to life.

In reference to Asha’s losses, Venna Das writes: “It could be repaired only by allowing oneself a descent into the ordinary world but as if in mourning for it. Recovery did not lie in enacting a revenge against the world, but in inhabiting it in a gesture of mourning for it” (Veena Das, *op.cit.*, p. 77). Let us recall that inhabiting the world is to be with, and between, others. And the stability implicit in the permanence, which is one of the intrinsic meanings of the verb “to inhabit”, points to everyday life. This is the horizon of the collective construction of freedom, a minuscule, volatile, and endless work, produced by the modest and imperceptible heroism of the many who suffer, especially black women from poor Brazilian neighborhoods. Neither resignation nor immobility, and nothing to do with a lack of fiber or struggle, much less with alienation and conformism. Before us, during the course of days and nights, an invisible monument is being erected, as majestic as it is diaphanous, which says yes to life, and offers the fertility of the spirit and the intelligence of the body to history. The new world is in gestation. The key to its perception is in one’s disposition to experience empathy with the suffering of others, to keep one’s eyes wide open, refine one’s listening skills, admit one’s own ignorance, and start anew, once again, until the gale reveals

the contours of an architecture.⁷

Besides acknowledgement, recognition, and communion, suffering can be understood as the matrix of value, which helps to explain the meaning of this immaterial meeting point, elaborated in the previous paragraph. This encounter takes place in values, and as a value, mobilizes an ethic which transcends epistemologies, methods, and rationalities, an ethic which is a dwelling, a common place that shelters and understands (since it is a repository before being content and cognition):

Suffering constitutes the field of a human experience which, being radical and responsible for the inscription of a matrilineal difference between moments of the existential process or between forms of life, and

7 There is an extensive national and international bibliography on mourning, rites of reparation, and the struggle of mothers who have lost their sons to violence in the slums, especially those murdered by policemen or killed by the agents of dictatorships. See below a list of important references on the subject:

CATELA, L. S. *Situação-limite e memória: a reconstrução do mundo dos familiares de desaparecidos da Argentina*. São Paulo: Hucitec, Anpocs, 2001

CATELA, L. S. *Rituais para a dor. Política, religião e violência no rio de janeiro*. In: BIRMAN, P.; LEITE, M. P. (Orgs.). *Um mural para a dor: movimentos cívico-religiosos por justiça e paz*. Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, 2004.

JIMENO, M. *Emoções e política: a vítima e a construção de comunidades emocionais*. *Mana*, v. 16, n. 1, 2010. Available at: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0104-93132010000100005>. Retrieved on August 21, 2018.

LEITE, M. P. *As mães em movimento*. In: BIRMAN, P.; LEITE, M. P. (Orgs.). *Um mural para a dor: movimentos cívico-religiosos por justiça e paz*. Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, 2004.

LEITE, M. P.; BIRMAN, P. (Orgs.). *Um mural para a dor: movimentos cívico-religiosos por justiça e paz*. Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, 2004.

VIANNA, A.; FARIAS, J. *A guerra das mães: dor e política em situações de violência institucional*. *Cadernos Pagu*, n. 37, 2011. Available at: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S010483332011000200004&script=sci_abstract&tlng=pt>. Retrieved on: August 21, 2018.

Some researches focus on esthetic interventions in this same context, such as Natalia Guindani’s Masters dissertation:

GUINDANI, Natália. *Arte e rituais de luto em contextos de violência: os trabalhos de denúncia e homenagem produzidos pelo coletivo Magdalenas por el Cauca – Colômbia*. 2018. 144 p. Dissertation (Master in Social Science) – Social Sciences Institute, State University of Rio de Janeiro, 2018.

which, not being able to be thought or translated intersubjectively, is transformed into value, that is to say, into the differentiating qualification par excellence, independent from the specific content to which it is associated. Suffering, therefore, is the virtual reference of value (Soares, 1993: p. 98)⁸

If suffering is a type of (re)cognition, it might hold in check the level of fear felt by the older and more experienced residents – which would help to explain the survey’s surprising results: the older (say that they) have less fear. Nevertheless, we must proceed with caution (and not only because the older male generation was informed to cultivate a containment of feelings and their display): this paradoxical benefit of suffering and knowledge might plunge them into the toxic poison which knowledge brings. Let us follow the dialogue between Veena Das and Stanley Cavell:

At this point my analysis of what it is for Asha and her (first) husband’s sister to work to overcome this poisonous knowledge [refers to] the sense of being cursed or sickened by the fact of knowing itself – that is, of knowing more than his fellows about the conditions of knowing.

8 The citation continues: “I shall explain: value cannot be described; it operates, indeed, as the ordainer of relevance or as the indexer of hierarchies, instituting and circumscribing arenas or spaces of affective and imaginary investment (with cognitive, symbolic, expressive, and communicative dimensions) for conflicts between choices or between excluding alternatives of human memory figuration, which involve intense hesitations, and whose tension corresponds, according to my point of view, to the lived experience of the same morality. Defined as the most important differentiator for judgment, both moral and affective – that is to say, radicated existentially – value qualifies human life, differentiating it, endowing it with the function of ordaining processes of signification, and a double role, mnemonic and prospective. There are no teleologies devoid of value, or which are not born from value in some measure”. Soares, L.E. – “O lugar do sofrimento humano no pensamento político moderno” In *Os dois corpos do presidente. Relume Dumará*, 1993. (The first version of this article was presented when the book *Impacto da modernidade sobre a religião* [Editora Loyola] was launched at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro’s Science and Culture Forum, on September 2, 1992, during a roundtable in which featured Professors José Jorge de Carvalho and Maria Clara Binguemer [coordinator]. The present version was presented on October 22, 1992, within the context of the *Grupo de Trabalho Religião e Sociedade* [Religion and Society Work Group], coordinated by Professor Maria Helena Villas Bôas Concone, at the ANPOCS annual meeting, which took place in Caxambu, Minas Gerais. The article was republished in *Legalidade Libertária*. (Lumen-Juris, 2006.)

The context of this reflection [evokes the idea] of knowledge as infected, [and] speaks to the whole theme of the skeptic’s distrust in relations, his demands for more and more proof – and yet what would cure this condition is not more knowledge but acknowledgment that some doubts are normal and that the cure for suspicion cannot come from within suspicion (Das 2007: 77).

The author cites Stanley Cavell (1987:196-97), who would see

(...) this as the question of owning or disowning knowledge. However, just as Cavell repeatedly points to the condition of the modern subject within skepticism (signaled by the death of God within philosophy), showing that the issue is historically located, so it seems to me that the coming to doubt of relationships that the Partition [of India] amplified has a specificity of its own⁹. It could be repaired only by allowing oneself a descent into the ordinary world but as if in mourning for it. Recovery did not lie in enacting a revenge against the world, but in inhabiting it in a gesture of mourning for it (Das 2007: 77).

If the skepticism with which the Indian author deals concerns the specificity of the Partition, in Maré the corrosive incredulity – which prostrates, immobilizes, depoliticizes, and isolates the indirect victims of armed violence – detected in a number of cases, may allude to the iniquities cynically tolerated, preserved, and practiced by the State throughout the decades in which the biographies of its residents (immigrants or not) unfolded (cf. Soares, L.E. – *O Brasil e seu duplo. Todavia*, 2019). Evidently, psychic strength and solidarity do not always suffice for individuals to resist the devastating feeling of impotence for which there is no lack of reasons. When suffering breeds poisonous knowledge, hope disappears, and the aridity which replaces it is mortifying. In this sense, depression is a subproduct of violence, of its internalized extension. At the opposite pole

9 Just as the armed confrontations in the Maré community have their own particularities.

lie the modes of perception and the affective regimes developed by members of armed civil groups, who, exposed to extreme risks and the successive loss of their fellows – and thus to suffering – are apparently contaminated by the deleterious effects of poisonous knowledge, even though they metabolize the poison in an inverse manner to that conducive to depression. Instead of feeling downcast, some assimilate the poison as fuel for an imaginary, endless, and impossible vengeance. When this happens, they stop focusing on the smooth running of the drug business and act to reduce tensions in order to promote the fluidity of commerce. Driven by vengeance, their actions harm their own market, and elevate the risks to which they expose themselves, as those who have experienced this drama in the flesh tell us.¹⁰ This obsession for vengeance condemns the subject to life imprisonment. The indignation which surrounds the pain from the loss of their fellows killed in confrontations with the police is understandable because among them are partners in illicit businesses, denoting the hypocrisy of manichaeistic slogans.

¹⁰ In their testimonies to Miriam Krenzinger.

II. THE VIRTUES OF HESITATION

What words define the Maré community? The interviewee, a woman who was born and raised in the Maré slum complex, did not hesitate:

"Potency, resistance, joy, strength. Many good things to lift your spirits because, despite everything, there are a lot of good things. We can't focus on what is bad. It's a part of it, it's significant, but there's so much positive energy here, so much laughter, such good vibrations, that it gives me a feeling of resistance and intensity, strength, much more than it makes me think of pain, sadness, and violence. Change, that is what Maré is. Desire. Change and desire".¹¹

This first paragraph is just the opening, but it could be the conclusion. And it could very well suffice as such, because between "potency" and "desire" - the first and last words - what is decisive is present in a summarized manner. The suffering, the wounds, the violence, and the iniquities are neither underestimated nor denied; they are there, duly registered in the expressions "despite everything" and "what is bad". The whole interview demonstrates this, echoing so many other accounts in which there is no lack of references to innumerable dramatic problems, among which basic sanitation, healthcare, education, and access to rights, goods, and services.

Despite the perspicuity of this solar statement, replete with positive affections in its spirit, and so enlightening for further reflection, the dialogue includes somber moments and hesitations which attest to the interviewee's sensibility, analytic accuracy, and intelligence, which are stronger than the idealizations that, by their very nature, turn out to be unilateral and reductionist. Our interlocutor knows anxiety and depression, she has experienced their effects in her skin – and the skin, here, leads to

¹¹ Statement noted by by Natália Guindani during the semi-structured interviews for the research (see Book 1)

the problem of racism, as a profound structure which orders Brazilian society, and manifests itself in multiple instances. Inscribed in her skin are her traumatic experiences, whether due to widespread prejudice in the city or to police brutality, they do not hide their colour or class bias and are usually lethal.

In other words our interlocutor ponders over the following:

“There are those who perhaps are not afraid, and those who do not speak up so that they will not have to reply to questions which would follow the first answer. There are those who conceal their feelings and prefer not to think about them – the same happens in other spheres of life, where feelings are also silenced. In this case, what really remains is a difficulty in expressing feelings, which also blocks the expression of thoughts. Talking too much may be dangerous. Throughout my life in Maré, I’ve learned that: I have a mouth, and I do not speak; I have ears, and I do not hear; I have eyes, and I do not see. It is the reign of silence. The accusation of talking too much is a very grave one. There are those who have been expelled, and those who have died”.

Even though she emphasizes that the police are the main source of her fear, she relates scenes of violence carried out by members of armed groups, scenes which have never left her mind. During police operations, she is afraid of police aggression, especially for her relatives, but for also for all other residents; in particular, she mentions the fear of having her house invaded, laid to waste and robbed, since it is common for the self-proclaimed agents of the law to pillage residents’ houses in the course of duty: war booty. In her own words:

“During [police] incursions, I’m afraid that one of my relatives might be out in the street, that someone might get shot, ‘Oh god, so-and-so was going to work and got shot’, this is so common; I’m afraid that the police might invade my house, that they may do something cowardly to me, to my husband, who is black, to some relative. I’m afraid of finding my house ransacked, robbed”.

Our interviewee’s declarations call for a wider reflection about the relationship between words and things, language and phenomena, the categories which describe the experience and the experience of the description through categories, testimony and conscience, statement and critical speculation. Their reach extends beyond the foregoing themes. Here is an example: she recounts that she participates in a *bloco*¹² created in 2006 whose “purpose is to break with the imaginary frontiers – imaginary in quotes, it’s not very visible, it is and it isn’t”. The frontier to which she refers is the dividing line that separates the territories controlled by rival drug-trafficking factions. The following questions arise, among others: what is visible?, what is not visible?, and what, despite being visible, should not be recognized or named? What is not to be seen, heard, and talked about? What are the limits of perception or assigning meaning? What is intelligible, in reality, that is deserving of the name? What is the limit of transgression?

Everything gains in complexity when associated with the content of the passage which focuses on the delicate, difficult, and discouraging daily coexistence with the armed sources of fear, both internal and external to the community, whose presence indicates the imminent emergency of confrontations, that is to say, the disruptive potential which pulsates underneath the apparent order of the world, always at the brink of collapse. Besides the tense uncertainty of life, this passage is about living with the bloody engagements which leave behind, in the memory of each person, trails of violence and scars, if not open wounds that do not heal. Even though our interviewee approaches this scenario from an understandably dramatic prism, her testimony also evokes the community’s affective and ethical treasures, bringing to the fore episodes of solidarity among residents surprised by police incursions, and the generosity of providing shelter to those who, returning from work, find themselves unprotected in the midst of shootings. A stranger, on these occasions, instead of being an enemy,

¹² Carnival blocks or street blocks are informal street carnival groups.

is a brother, a sister, a partner in misfortune, and a source of support and confidence rather than fear.

As regards the daily coexistence with the sources of violence, and the imminence of the eruption which hurts and kills, our interlocutor's considerations are refined, and demand careful listening. People have to focus on other areas of life, she says. Music, for example, family, work.

"Not because people have banalized [the experience], or grown used to it, nobody gets used to seeing guns in front of them, but you can also go crazy if you think about it day and night. There's no changing it; it's what people think. How can you denounce it? It's extremely risky. It's not easy. It wouldn't do any good anyway".

Just as the dividing line between factions is an "imaginary frontier – imaginary in quotes, it's not very visible, it is and it isn't", so are the sources of fear. They are visible and real, and yet not: they are real when they precipitate a chain of violent events and cease to be real when they retreat to the field of non-actualized possibilities. These sources of fear are the object of: (1) transfiguration in memory, where they cannot simply be erased, but elaborated, disarmed, and cooled in order to reduce the risk of combustion (the insistence of a reality which cannot be symbolized condemns the subject to the recurrent return of the episode that irradiated the excruciating suffering); (2) sublimation, whereby (2.1) they are incorporated as an index of systemic instability, whose energy without purpose contaminates reality with the spectre of a ubiquitous disruptive negativity (the obverse of constant insecurity, the twin sister of fear, is the introduction of an eventually benign expectation of change – a correlative of desire, to some extent – in the principle of reality); and (2.2) re-signification and displacement, or transposition to the sphere of collective narratives and local mythology. If the established order is so precarious, and sits on the postponement of its collapse, there is another that infiltrates the apparently impermeable monolith of things as they are, an imponderable but perceptible shadow that shows itself as double

faced: what is may cease to be, and the captives of destiny may rid themselves of their bonds to become protagonists in another story.

A discursive, intersubjective pellicule connects and envelops speech and actions, which introduces itself subtly on what happens daily, and has happened for so long, imposing itself on perceptions whose effects admit no illusions, and on that which the community is ready to name – taking into consideration that naming is designating, describing, recognizing, but also evoking. Therefore, the refusal to name could imply the generation of the symbolic (that is, aesthetic) contexture which would work the spell of promoting the ontological attenuation of the undesired, and the gestation of change. This pellicule could be presented, metaphorically, as a (political, affective, and aesthetic) membrane which protects the social body whilst the organism, the collectivity, prepares to shed its skin: a metamorphosis that has the strength and range of a mutation.

What sounds ambiguous and imprecise in vacillating speech – "it is and it isn't" – may gain clarity and relevance if interpreted under this prism. It is worth underlining that in countless qualitative interviews during the research, the mention of drug trafficking arouses the same hesitation provoked by the subject in regards to the *divisa*¹³. To say unreservedly that something exists implies a commitment to this existence, which naming consecrates and, in a certain manner, authorizes politically. It is a pact between she who names and who is named – in this case, the sources of fear – a pact whose price is insensibility to the weakness of this demand on reality (a demand answered by the act of naming), an insensibility to the weakness of this will to exist, to have ambitions in the world. Whoever names with the readiness of certainty in the face of evidence evades the awareness of how feeble the future demand from each source of fear is, the intertwined machines of armed drug trafficking factions, *milicias*, and the police, which

¹³ Divisa is how Maré inhabitants call the dividing areas close to the boundaries between rival trafficking groups territories. These areas are instable, shootings and violent events are frequent

fuel each other. Indeed, since what “is” needs to continually “come into being”, to reiterate itself: a movement which carries the risk of deviation intrinsic to all reproduction. What appears under the mode of permanence is reiterated insistence. This dynamic may be read from an ontological perspective but can be more fully apprehended as the subject’s formation, configured between the limits and demands of psychic economy, and the vicissitudes of language.

Therefore, it is not by fear or incoherence that so many interviewees oscillate between admitting and abjuring fear, confirming or denying it; between talking about the *divisa* and the shootings, and keeping quiet; between pronouncing privation, and filling it with hopes, affections, virtues, achievements, and commitments. These commitments with archaic roots, idealized or not, with values, origins, and common histories are proofs of loyalty from men and women who have built their families, lines of descent, and community. And what sounds as an underestimation of the seriousness of violence may be an exercise in resistance. A resistance to accept what exists as a full accomplishment of what could be, as if the present version of society, so avaricious, iniquitous, and petty, has exhausted all possibilities inscribed in reality, excluding the non-actualized potential contained in what exists.

Hesitation may perhaps correspond to making the meanings of reality reverberate, with their implications and contradictions, beyond the delimitations, and even the censorship, which the powers at play attempt to impose. The discursive pellicule operates as a sunscreen which submits light to refractions, expanding its spectre of colour and tonality. It does not restrict vision, but amplifies the field of what is visible, introducing gradations and variations otherwise neutralized by the rays’ intensity. It is not a question of being more or less realistic, or adopting relativism as the main approach, thus reducing all enunciation to legitimate and equivalent choices. The question is to understand the aesthetics applied in these strategies for the composition of distinct layers of meaning, knowledge,

and affection amalgamated in the perceptions and experiences which the residents’ testimonies communicate and suppress. That may be the reason why so many young people value poetry, and slams are so popular. Slam contests may, perhaps, ritually circumscribe and exponentially express the work of language which collective creativity regularly undertakes in order to deal with physical and mental survival in the face of several obstacles, and not to get stuck in the paralyzing quicksand which many confuse with “reality” – a reality which, once consecrated in the rudimentary epistemology of capitulation, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It is worth diving into the details of a few examples: the Maré resident mentioned above remembers the barbaric scene which marked her all her life, a lynching perpetrated by members of an armed faction, but neither does she forget the presence of her husband beside her throughout, who escorts her home afterwards, and offers his company as practical support and symbolic mediation between two poles: on the one side, the unutterable, disturbing, and impossible to assimilate, and on the other, the meaningful materiality of her house, which, before naming and describing the object it represents, offers shelter, and serves as a guide and model for all assimilation – without which our psychic economy cannot prevent trauma. The house is intelligible and predictable, like the loving partnership and the history which sustains it, like family relationships and their reassuring prospective projections. The distance covered on her way home after witnessing the lynching did not efface the brutal event, nor did it anesthetize her indignation and repulsion. Her trip home took place in a double dimension, physical and symbolic, one negotiating with the other, each reinforced by the other. We have cowardly murder and love, the space for the irruption of derangement and the refuge that ties the past to the future, concretizing the present in the form of protection, delineating a pronounced ethical and affective separation from the abominable. We have the victim, who, unfortunately, was left to his destiny. Nothing could have been done to save him or mitigate his suffering, and for this reason it was necessary to prevent that violence also tearing the

witness and her spirit into pieces. One learns one's limits, even when on the side of justice, compassion, or mercy. Reality also includes that which resists our will, so that this opacity and impermeability, the amplification of this difference, is another component to be identified in cognitive practice. They are lessons in finitude which domesticate guilt, whose role here would be exclusively corrosive and self-destructive. Conflicts, despair, impotence, all of this is real. It hurts, and requires conscious and unconscious labour, assistance, and symbolic resources to be elaborated – which is not always the case, as widespread psychological suffering shows.

These ambiguities and hesitations – which can be, as we have seen, much more than subservient adaptations to police extortion or impositions (and veiled threats) by local powers – are a great embarrassment to ideology (the version of reality which simulates legitimacy and dissimulates contradictions) insofar as they open a hiatus through which the attrition between society's hegemonic discourse (leaving the distinctions between beliefs and values, which do not destabilize it, in the backdrop) and the conditions which confer it verisimilitude is perceived or intuited. The dominant discursive order, defined here as ideology, carries contents that justify capitalist relationships, excludes alternatives from the field of possibilities, and presupposes an indisputable agreement (definitively and irrevocably consecrated) in terms of the supposedly ontological and incontestable roots of the principle of reality, whose primordial implication is the mystifying belief in the transparency of language.

Hesitation displays and withdraws what names convey. Hesitation juxtaposes them to other words that deny what has been said. This feature is key because so is its subject matter. It decides between behaviours and orientates assessments. It constitutes reality on its axis or destabilizes and deposes it. Semantic instability suspends ideology's matrilineal supposition and its first implication: the indisputability of the agreement with the principle of reality, and the transparency of language. Saying that something is and is not displaces the reference to the world (naively taken as the repository of the

things that are) to the dance of real life permeable to action, to the dynamism intrinsic to history. Hesitation becomes the reference of enunciation. The performative use of language supersedes its constative use. Hesitating proposes to the affections and the imagination the hypothesis that reality is a container of possibilities, among which are those incompatible with the political armature consolidated by the conservative and authoritarian modernization of our peripheral capitalism. Here it is worthy, though redundant, to note that hesitating does not designate the indecision between saying and not saying, but the active movement which formulates a contradiction, attributing it to reality, and not to cognitive deficiencies. A thing "is and is not" not because whoever enunciates does not know if, effectively, the thing is or is not. This simultaneity of being and not being is what something is, because what it brings with itself, in this case, beyond positive evidence, an irreducible alterity, is the potentiality for action, which summons action, and inscribes change in the field of reality. When one talks of hope, it is this abundance of reality, it is of this same excess that one speaks. What is and, at the same, its negation, are both there, being that this second reality constitutes that which is not seen because it has not been affirmed as practice, though it is also present due to the mediation of its effects by anticipation or potencialization. If the enunciation were unilaterally negative, "the dividing line does not exist". It would be denialism, delirium or manipulation. If it were exclusively positive, "the dividing line exists" – "drug trafficking and fear exist" would be the corresponding enunciation in other testimonies – it would describe an existing phenomenon, albeit in a limited fashion, and under the risk of reifying it, as if the dividing line resulted from a necessity which would be unrealistic (irrational) to resist, and an imperious inevitability which would be impossible to transform. The double enunciation is acute because it refuses denial and reification. In this sense, an enunciation is a gesture, a small and living work of art which mobilizes knowledge and politics, speculation and action, contemplation and protagonism, epistemology and aesthetics.

We are now in a position to reflect about what the interviewee tells us concerning the category "naturalization", on which she comments either directly or through the analogous category of "banalization" – whose tacit dialogue with Hannah Arendt does not exhaust the meanings of its employment. Let us resume the aforementioned passage: people have neither naturalized nor banalized their experiences, they have not "grown used to it, nobody gets used to seeing guns in front of them, but you can also go crazy if you think about it day and night".

Naturalization has two meanings: (1) Reification, a process whereby automatisms reach such a great autonomy that they replace deliberations which imply responsibilities or displace them so that the empire of standardized and predictable effects is reproduced without subjective or intersubjective mediations, what can be verified insofar as objectivity (crystallized reality) annuls subjects, subordinating them to the order of things. (2) The irreflective and acritical attribution of a statute of inexorability to daily routine, that is to say, the resigned confirmation that certain dynamics which are unacceptable at first have a continuous course in society, and that even if they remain unacceptable, they begin to be considered inevitable, which implies a tacit authorization for their continuity, and creates a structure of reality in which one admits coexistence with what one does not accept. In practice, one begins to accept the unacceptable by the sheer force of an allegedly realistic accommodation to the supposed imperatives of necessity. One transfers experiences to the order of the inevitable, such as the death of a person, which is a human act, furthering – and justifying – its continuity. For this reason, this "getting used to" the abominable has devastating practical consequences. Ultimately, resignation reconducts us to reification. In other words, resignation is an affective-cognitive-psychological device which attests and legitimizes the logic of reification as a multifactorial mode of the production of reality. It is, therefore, reification coloured by guilt; it is surrender and pusillanimity

gaining traction. The psychoanalytic perspective would perhaps propose an analogy between the mechanism of naturalization and the compulsion for repetition, the former operating on collective life as the latter operates on individual experiences. Compulsion, recognized at least in its effects, and repelled in the plane of consciousness, is stronger than the individual will, so that it "replaces" the subject, takes over her protagonism, and is put into practice.

Our interlocutor denies that this complicit resignation exists in the community. And she goes further: she states that there is no chance for the existence of this space of "getting used to" when the social actors are involved as direct or indirect, potential or real victims. Without questioning the accuracy of what she says, which makes perfect sense and is corroborated by the data collected in this research, it would perhaps be pertinent to suggest that we modulate her observations, introducing a gradient whereby the different forms of "not getting used to" could be identified and analyzed. Let us take into consideration a few variations which find correspondence in empirical experience:

(A) There are those who are so intensely disturbed by becoming a victim or witnessing acts of violence that they lack the strength to submit the experience to the symbolic elaboration which integrates it. Without place and meaning, repressed, expelled from the orbit of the psychic economy, the brutality of reality remains misguided as an explosive meteor. At any moment, an accidental contact with the triggering element (whose presence and function are revealed only *a posteriori*) may set off the unbearable sequence of pain and fright, provoking panic, depressive prostration, the anemic asphyxia of anguish, the vertiginous restlessness of anxiety. There lies the trauma, a phenomenon of repetition which manifests itself as the chronicle of the distress which succeeds it, a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In this case, attitudes which seem to fit the expression "getting used to" the unacceptable, either because they convey indifference or express the

denial of its occurrence (ignoring facts or erasing them from memory), have nothing to do with resigned conformity.

(B) There are those who develop the capacity for letting themselves be impacted by brutal acts, and elaborate them, resisting their de-structuring effects, integrating and dislocating them to a manageable background within consciousness and memory, thanks to a psychic-affective equilibrium they have succeeded in cultivating, and to powerful narratives which include and valorize the subject's self-construction without ignoring her own finitude; they thus suffer from fear and unsafety, but do not become paralyzed. As our interviewee put it: "you can also go crazy if you think about it day and night". Some form of protection must be erected, a dose of anesthetic may be healthful. Nothing to do with "alienation" or a lack of empathy.

(C) Another typical hypothetical character is the person who does not renounce empathy or desensitize herself but adopts survival strategies which are also mental health resources, and which recommend the establishment of pragmatic relationships with local powers, whose decisions weigh on community life. It is neither bravery nor cowardice, nor moral judgment, but rational evaluations about the correlation of forces in the calculus of one's own trajectory, which prescribes words and gestures. If there is tyranny, it is necessary not to be destroyed by it, and to dare to reduce its destructive potential. The dictates of survival do not produce accommodation, but modalities of disputes for meaning and freedom which demand negotiations with limits – this delicate and tortuous process deserves to be termed resistance.

(D) And there are those who, like our interlocutor, sufficiently refine their sensitivity and intelligence to inscribe the abominable within a fold of reality in which the positive (factual) and the negative (potentialities of change which preclude the status of her own existence) are superimposed and indistinguishable, as if what happened (and happens) occupied the threshold between being and not being, as if it occurred and did not occur,

were intelligible and unintelligible, utterable and unutterable. We are not dealing with the logic of trauma, nor with the negotiation strategies to survive under the vetoes and threats from local powers which constrain residents to measure their words even inside their houses. Here, hesitation and ambiguity, as we have already attempted to demonstrate, inaugurate a critical epistemology (active in itself as a performative discourse) which engages in a dialogue (without giving in to idealizations or self-deception) with desire, ethics, and politics, in its broad and noble meaning: one bets that the future is inserted in the present (since potentiality is the infusion of time into being, or the best definition of being), and that the continuous reiteration of what is (what is must reiterate itself in order to be) can be intercepted, insofar as history (the avalanche of mutually functional or colliding interconnected actions in search of a morphology) is not destiny itself, and offers no ontological guarantees.

These are some of the modalities of relationships established between the subjects and their experiences of victimization, be they direct or indirect, actual or virtual. Not all types listed are mutually exclusive, and they may succeed each other in the biography of a single individual. On the other hand, the experience which provokes, frightens, shocks, and traumatizes is not always that of violence, understood as a physical act of aggression or serious threat. There are passing or prolonged situations, derived from class inequalities (such as unemployment), structural racism (as the stigma which blocks access to jobs), misogyny (which translates, at its extreme, in femicide, but also manifests itself in competitive iniquities with men both in the formal and informal job markets), and homophobia or transphobia (which kill but also contribute to unemployment), situations which oppress, humiliate, cause the corrosive feeling of impotence, and lead to destitution and despair.

III. THE MASKS OF THE BIG OTHER AND THE ADDRESSING OF ABJECTION

Karl Marx has shown, in his masterpiece, *Capital*, still in the nineteenth century, how the capitalist mode of production engenders alienation by universalizing commodification, generating what in his analysis is denominated reification. It does not function by deceiving whoever sells her labor power to the owner of the means of production, creating the appearance of an exchange market between equals, but by generating the reality which effectively objectifies the worker. A lot of water has passed under that bridge, both in the fields of philosophy and economy, just as some of its matrical qualities have resisted change. In any way, what matters here is the specificity of a process which, despite its organic connections with Brazilian authoritarian capitalism, has represented, in itself, a challenge for the reflection and growing consciousness of the actors involved: the police violence in Rio de Janeiro's slums, namely, that observed over the course of decades, and tirelessly denounced by Maré communities. It is not a matter of violence perpetrated by policemen in general, but the form of the exercise of State brutality employed in these slums (though the former might be the case in other instances), which are continually invaded and occupied as theatres of military operation.

Besides the military tactics executed on the ground, and the heavy weaponry involved, it is important to underscore the mobilization of two extreme resources: the armored vehicle (aptly nicknamed *caveirão* [big skull]) and the helicopter (used as a platform for gunfire).

In the words of another interviewee:

"We are very vulnerable in the territory, very vulnerable indeed, we need to ask for shelter in other people's houses and, sometimes, we have to come up with escape plans. In 2019, I was in the territory with

a few residents (...) and the police helicopter flew by raining bullets down on us. That was surreal to me. Surreal".

Further in the account, she offered more details:

"We hid inside the bathroom, because it was the only place with two roofs. There we had the bathroom's roof, plus the shed's roof, and concrete: walls made of concrete. There were two, three concrete walls".¹⁴

It is no coincidence that both appear as constant references in residents' accounts and in several of the 1.500 letters written by children, compiled by *Redes da Maré* (Maré Networks), and sent to senior judges at Rio de Janeiro's State Court. Passages from the letters were highlighted in an El País digital news report, in an article by Felipe Betim, published on August 9, 2019: "I don't like the helicopter because it shoots downwards and people die". Another excerpt from a different letter: "Lord Judges, when you order an operation in Maré, the police does not warn us. They come in with helicopters shooting overhead. It's like they don't respect the residents". Another letter: "When there's an operation, no resident remains in the streets because we know the police will kill. They think that we are criminals too". A resident wrote: "When the *big skull* comes here, it's to kill us. It doesn't show up for a simple intervention. The State kills dreams, kills lives, kills the future of people who could be one day in Your Honor's place".

When fear is mentioned in the accounts, the moments and images evoked are those of people hurt or killed, the blood and the screams of pain and lamentation, the bullet holes on the walls of houses and schools, the gun claps which sometimes sound as if they come from within the person herself, the machine-gun fire noise from the rotation of the helicopters' blades thrashing the air in low flybys, and the *big skull's* metallic clanking as it dents and cracks the sides of the residents' parked cars. The resulting

¹⁴ Interview conducted by Rodrigo Nascimento.

balance-sheet includes death, mutilations, houses pillaged by agents of the State, destruction. One might say utter chaos, to the astonishment of optimistic thinkers who would dismiss it as an "exaggeration".

In a previous essay, I looked at the captions which accompanied a picture posted on the social network of a Rio de Janeiro military police officer. In the photo there were three policemen at night, in a slum, heavily armed, and covered from head to toe with the black uniform of a commando of the the special forces: 'While they sleep, the demons patrol the streets, corners, and alleys (followed by the dagger and skull emoji): justice, chaos, and destruction (followed by the explosion, pistol, and lit bomb emoji)'. We perceive that the ambivalence persists, and seems to be intrinsic to the experience, which is torn between order and destruction, evoking chaos, but dwelling within parameters which preserve the imminence of death as a source of energy, desire and risk, excitement and fear. They will kill without hesitation. But they will not make death their mission, because it does not exhaust the mission, nor does it replace the adrenaline of sneaking towards the next victim. In the following picture, one of them strikes a warrior-like pose in front of the closed doors of a commercial establishment in the slum, upon which an affixed sign reads: 'Mourning. We will not open for a few days'. A 'laughing out loud emoji and a hand drawn red arrow links the merry figure to the funereal notice. In another picture, one of them proudly salutes the president. The same president who, inquired about the tens of thousands of deaths by Covid-19, replied: 'So what? Everybody has to die someday'. On another occasion, confronted with the tragedy's numbers, he snarled at the reporters: 'I'm not a grave-digger'. Bolsonaro's militants have staged mock wakes in the streets, mimicking weeping until the dead person leaps from the coffin, scoffing death and those who lament it. The pandemic ridiculed, death disdained, why not?¹⁵

¹⁵ (Soares, L.E. – *Dentro da noite feroz; o fascismo no Brasil*. Boitempo: 2020)

The descriptions of the experience from the residents' point of view do not designate police actions. They do not limit themselves to enumerating the damages and dangers suffered by those who are caught in the midst of a police operation focused on specific missions against subjects that must take place in the community's territory, and that would provoke armed reactions by the supposed targets of the operation. Far from it. The descriptions relate typical incursions by occupation troops, for whom civil fatalities would be casualties, bumps in the road, collateral effects of a bitter, though necessary medicine. As several Rio de Janeiro authorities have declared throughout the years: "One can't make an omelette without breaking eggs" – as long as the eggs are other people's children, their critics retort.

Who is this other who sees Maré residents as candidates for being the victims of her lethal discretion, regardless of who they are or what they have done, and despite what the Federal Constitution determines? In order to see them as casual targets, that is, as the accidental victims of a mistake which the institutions must condone, it is necessary not to see the victim as a subject, an individual, a citizen, a holder of rights, a member of a network of relationships, and part of a community of values, affections, and responsibilities. Those who put in gear this multiple effacement must have the eyes and the mind trained by a moral and political orthopedics for the task of equalizing the nature of objects which figure within their optical field, whether they be bodies or things. Ontological indistinction is key. It does not affect the necessary differentiation between what represents a risk for the troops, and what is innocuous, between what hinders access to priority targets, and what does not compromise the mission's accomplishment. Mistakes in the first case end up in the mass grave of tolerated civil casualties, just as obstacles in the second case will be removed or eliminated at any price. These are the principles, and this is the practical economy which governs the tactics and strategies of occupation troops or armed assaults.

The homogenization of bodies and things – more than mere de-personification – is equivalent to a moral and symbolic levelling which makes *tabula rasa* of the country's laws and of the most elementary established rights in the international declarations of human rights. Once again, before us, lies the problem of reification.

If everything and everyone are indistinguishable to the soldier at war advancing over the territory, with distinctions restricted to dichotomous signs – yes and no, risk/ obstacle or not, target or not, knowing that eventual superimpositions will be exculpated, as mentioned above – on the other hand, to the residents, the member of the police force offers himself as a de-personalized character, a cog in the machine, muscles and guns underneath a balaclava, the extension of an embodied leviathan who mobilizes terrestrial and aerial tentacles. Men, guns, and vehicles form a unity, all seen as the same source of violence, hostility, and fear. The components of this symbolic and practical unit are shielded because they are inaccessible, not only as targets for the suspects who react, but also as interlocutors: they have no names and no faces.

If on the one side we have the manifold, the human diversity of residents, crushed by the troops' actions and postures, on the other we have the performative affirmation of the impenetrable and indivisible unity of the State, as pure violence in its immediacy: "Shots, beatings and bombs", according to the colloquial version. After all, authority and force are reduced to brutality in the actions which equalize bodies and things: individuals are killed, objects, shattered. The troops act as a block, promoting in their interior the distribution of functions according to tactical definitions, and finding the symbolic expression of their identity in the caverirão and the helicopter. Both vehicles represent a hyperbole of the balaclava, a hyperbole of inaccessibility and impermeability. Without faces, by air and land, they actualize the big Other who intervenes to address the city's abjection to the focus of evil, symbolically and spatially circumscribing the niche which

would shelter "criminality", a circumscription whose limits are drawn by the police artillery's circle of fire. The community perceives the State as the Other, the active figure that detains the power to destroy.¹⁶

As the poet Thais Ayomide¹⁷ puts it: "I'm afraid of masked policemen, of counting the bodies on the ground, and seeing the red rain falling like a drizzle, but none of these fears come from inside Maré". However, this other establishes for the city as whole, through the mediatic spectacle of its operation, a degrading moral alterity which reiterates racism and class stigmatization: *Look, over there is the territory which is the seat of all evil.* Such is the content of the accusation which is subjacent to the pointed fingers (and pointed guns) at Maré (and other similar communities) during police incursions. *From such places comes the evil that perverts, threatens, and infects. From such places come drugs and crime.* This is the subtext of armed invasions. They do not promote safety, act in the name of justice, or protect the residents from the risks proceeding from the use of weaponry by either drug-trafficking factions or *milicianos*. Nothing like that. They provide the choreographic and performative promotion of a political and (im)moral gesture. They point to an armor-clad finger whose meaning is unequivocal: *There lies what deserves thy common abjection, thy fear, thy hatred, and thy contempt.*

For this reason, poet MC Martina¹⁸ lays down the following rhymes: "Genocide doesn't move anyone/ 111 or 80 shots don't move anyone/ our daily tragedy doesn't move anyone". The endless sequence of tragedies which wide social segments have naturalized is thus installed. Martina's beautiful

¹⁶ (cf. Soares, L.E. – *O Brasil e seu duplo*. Todavia, 2019).

¹⁷ Thais Ayomide is an artist from Maré. She participated of the research Building the Barricades as one of the Poets of the collaborative production Becos and contributed with the book 3 Narrative studies: poetry, music and photography.

¹⁸ MC Martina is an artist from Maré. She participated of the research Building the Barricades as one of the Poets of the collaborative production Becos and contributed with the book 3 Narrative studies: poetry, music and photography.

and hard poem resonates with the percussive rhythm of the bullets, beating out brutality's redundancy, and giving the tone of uncertainty and fear to routine:

"Dead. Alive. Dead. Alive.

Dead. Dead. Dead.

Thus I have lost most of my friends."

Beyond denouncing the continuous flux of losses, and lamenting the river of blood, the poet, in a brilliant sentence (in the sense of both phrase and judgement), summarizes the history which arises from the most remote depths of slavery:

"That on the back wasn't a bullet, but a whip".

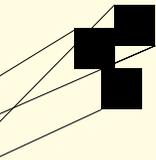
Martina's poetic verve takes its cue from Marcelo Yucca's song, which has become the antiracist anthem of the rock band *O Rappa*: "Every police van has something of a slave ship". It is common to hear the chorus rephrased by slum youths: "Every *caveirão* has something of a slave ship".

The helicopter, a sort of flying *caveirão* frequently employed during police operations in Maré as a platform for gunfire, shifts the problem to another level. A higher level of risk for residents, and for the authoritarian use of weapons, indifferent to the most elementary rights. A level which is also raised as a metaphor for the State's intemperate arrogance, whose reverberations are mythological. Thundering over houses, moving rapidly in unpredictable directions, firing according to a logic ignored by the perplexed and terrorized population on the ground, the aircraft inaugurates a superior symbolic vertex which materializes the vertical axis of the hierarchical scale. Even though the vertical disposition in space is nothing new, since it serves as the traditional model for the very idea of hierarchy, the aircraft's intervention as a shooting platform is original, and deepens the abyss

between State and community, infusing an unusual emotional charge into the confrontations. Low flybys amount to declarations of war. The aircraft's metallic roaring sounds like the strident yelp of an agonizing monster who announces death. The community's intimidation is expanded, indignation is extended, terror is intensified, and the feeling of impotence is generalized. Unsurprisingly, prostration and despondency are confused with the traces of blood in the inventory of destruction. What kind of positive perception regarding institutions, justice, and politics could survive it?

When shots are fired along the horizontal plane, one tries to identify their provenance in space by their sound and protect oneself in relation to the same coordinates where the threat was located. When sprays of bullets come from above, and machine-guns can literally fly, the disconcerting impression that ensues is one of extreme vulnerability, even for those inside their houses.

Helicopters and the *caveirão* reinforce the language adopted by the State, which homogenizes the communities' human diversity, and at the same time submits it to an equalization with the world of things. These warlike devices exponentially amplify the violence perpetrated by policemen in the territory and increase the distance between the community and the State, this hostile, faceless, steel-plated Other whose appearance foreshadows "chaos and destruction", as some policemen have posted on their social networks.



IV. NEWS FROM THE FRONT

Let us follow some stages of a life story which could very well be entitled “disquietude”, with the caveat that the characters’ names are fictitious.¹⁹

“Dora had never let herself be disheartened until she was 26 and the war began, the Maré war. Ever since she witnessed people being killed on her doorstep, something happened. The corpse’s image, the explosions, the gunshots, the desperate voices, the scene stuck to her retinas, and didn’t heal. It was as if she had been stabbed. Her heart broke into pieces. It wasn’t something rational that could be explained...”.

It is important to understand that the war starts when you enter into it, or it enters into you. When its effects are close enough, it neutralizes the separation between inside and outside, a separation which would supposedly be demarcated and guaranteed by the body. Therefore, let us exercise caution regarding objective dating and empirical delimitations which would prevail over the testimony, verbal or not, of those who directly or indirectly participated in the confrontations, and experienced their effects.

“It wasn’t like her mind was occupied by sad ideas. They were bad feelings, emotions that arose suddenly, without warning. For no reason at all, an internal trigger fired an icy jet of poison. The spiritual acid corroded her strength and paralyzed her...”.

¹⁹ The complete narrative, without its analysis, can be found in L.E. – *Educação para mudar o mundo: histórias de vida e o impacto do projeto “Educação de jovens e adultos na Maré”* (in press). The accounts were written down based on testimonies collected in Maré, in 2019, thanks to the support from *Redes da Maré* and the *Roberto Marinho Foundation*. The research team was coordinated by Miriam Krenzinger, with Natália Guindani’s assistance, and the collaboration of the interviewers Ilca Dias and Deise Pimenta.

When inside and outside cease to be opposite and solid poles, the subject risks losing herself, bleeding bloodlessly, as life flows out the body with the gushing blood. The subject’s agency and protagonism are diluted. Circumstance is converted into destiny, and inexorability imposes itself, leaving nothing to be done, not even resignation, since it is no longer up to the subject to recognize what is in front of her as overwhelming, and surrender, admitting the unbalance in the correlation of forces. The enemy has seized the house, and taken possession of the subject, so that it is not for the subject to resign herself anymore since there is no subject proper, but mere passivity.

“When we fear something, we hide and run away. But how can we hide when we’re frightened without being able to identify the cause? Where to run? If what we fear is inside us, there’s no way out. Wherever she went, fear and its cause accompanied her”.

There is neither cause and effect, nor the circumscription of scenes or situations, nor time. In the absence of subject and agency, one is actionless, helpless, the pawn of an arbitrary and unreasonable destiny, and the will to predict and prepare for crises in order to avoid, bypass, or dodge them is extinguished. There is now another enemy. It is inside the person, so to speak; it is myself, Dora would say, perhaps.

“It was startling, especially her first crisis, for which Dora didn’t even have a name...”.

As important as taming the beast which attacks and hurts is to know what is happening, that is to say, being able to give a name to the suffering. More than that, making evil intelligible is the first step towards healing, as Lévi-Strauss has taught us (2017).²⁰

²⁰ Lévi-Strauss, Claude – “O feiticeiro e sua magia” and “A eficácia simbólica” In *Antropologia Estrutural*, Ubu, 2017 (original, 1958).

"She'd never heard of panic disorder. What could it be? Her husband took her to the hospital. Trembling and fragile, the physician's words were like a punch to her stomach: there's nothing wrong with you; go home and have a steak with an egg on top".

Medical power may heal or, tyrannically, intensify the pain. If there is nothing wrong with her, how to deal with this nothing which destroys her? How to bear this double solitude? Without external support, without the recognition of her own pain, relinquished to the internal loneliness which derives from the impossibility of understanding and being in control, which proceeds from the dissolution of herself as a subject, what remains is the conversion of impotence into guilt. The denial of solidarity and medical authority in her favor, the denial of recognition as a subject whose words have value, whose internal life possesses reality, projects a corrosive shadow of devastating effects, because it promotes Dora's own mistrust of herself and her own experiences, dividing her between speech and experience, the subject and the Other. Her husband does support her, which is inestimable, but it is not enough.

"It was a long, complicated period. She couldn't work and was barely able to step out into the street..."

Isolation and aloofness, internal and external, are interpenetrating poles.

"Finally, they suggested a medicine that put an end to her crises. With this trustworthy medicine, she became more self-assured. Her confidence inhibited her source of fear, which perhaps was fear itself. That is to say, Dora was afraid of being afraid..."

Fear of fear corresponds to the subject's dissolution because an Other would take control, which tends to be the case with all of us, albeit in a more nuanced manner, producing manageable tensions with which we learn to cope. What is routine is here intensified, and escapes routinization. Instead

of expectations of reproduction, there emerges the expectation of the dreadful and the unexpected. It is as if the conviction that we are mortal and do not ultimately foresee or control destiny were hypertrophied takes over all pores of existence preventing oxygenation, which requires a certain dose of ignorance, amnesia, and irresponsibility. A magnified conscience, and an exacerbated sensibility are unbearable.

"And thus, she controlled the despair that condemned her to depression".

"When people talk about violence, they generally don't include in the package the indirect effects on the population's emotional equilibrium. Crimes are counted with numbers, but their consequences are innumerable, especially those that affect the victim internally, in her mind. One can lose an arm in the battle, and life goes on, and one can lose one's peace of mind, and life collapses. People's real histories require the use of a magnifying glass, not a telescope. Those who fly over the community in helicopters miss the nuances, the details, the individualities, and the differences. All they can see is an undifferentiated amorphous mass. From up there, it's easier to kill, and impossible to know".

What is inside and what is outside exchange positions. Pain is unutterable and can only be individual. At the same time, it is in transit, and amounts to a common currency; if it does not connect one person to another, transport one subjectivity to another, it circulates the experience which presents itself to consciousness as the inevitability of the ordinary. That is right, nameless suffering leads to the admission that everybody is together in the ordinary, in common, despite being different. One facet of depression is isolation and silence, a foretoken of death. The other facet is a baptism of fire for the community's communion, a dive into the most radical experience of belonging. Both sides are one and the same, that is, they exchange positions. How does the game in which life is played work? To formulate an

answer, it is indispensable to begin by understanding that resilience is not actualized, necessarily, through discourses, slogans, and heroic gestures. Eventually, it manifests itself in quotidian intertwining relationships, as Veena Das has shown us. The author, as we have seen, studied the less perceptible impacts of the bloody rupture between India and Pakistan. The great violence precipitated invisible waves which affected intersubjective networks, marked destinies, and were the object of creative metabolizations in the individual and familial spheres. In Maré, there was no great cataclysm whose reverberations propagated the disengaging energy which injects its venom into families. Nevertheless, armed conflicts became commonplace. The challenges are not negligible.

“Dora got better and went back to work at the neighborhood’s graphic shop, where she was employed before getting ill. The firm didn’t register women’s contracts on their work cards, only men’s. She worked a double shift, in addition to her domestic chores. Separated from her husband, living with her parents, she worked the day shift from nine to five, went home to help her mother, and returned for the night shift, from eight in the evening to two in the morning. She endured this wearisome beat for almost ten years until the graphic shop moved to another location and fired all the women. How much time lost, she thinks, calculating how little she will now get with the new social security legislation”.

The impossibility of writing about life in the slums without describing the specific forms whereby class exploitation is effected and through which means it is reproduced, becomes evident. The conjunction of sexist tyranny, an obscene picture of patriarchalism, and class domination is patent. The account is self-explanatory. One can see why the gender and class inequality rhetoric is insufficient and inadequate to qualify the phenomena described. Perhaps the meaning of the reconquest of daily life, and the approach we have adopted, can now be better understood.

V. THE AGENDA OF INTIMACY

A most revealing episode assists us in joining the dots that are still disconnected in the constellation of dilemmas which challenges the community’s residents. One day, a young resident left home with his earphones plugged into a device that played the music to which he had been listening since he woke up, and which cheered him up.²¹ He walked to *Avenida Brasil* under the morning sun to catch a bus which would take him to work, as an officiant who mechanically reproduces a liturgy, not thinking, and letting himself be carried by his body, which knew what to do, and governed his movements. His mind was far away, and the band’s rhythm competed with his legs’ cadence for the command of his arms, shoulders, and breathing. Little by little, our character realized that the street was emptier than usual, much emptier. In fact, it was entirely deserted, and that didn’t make any sense. A strange feeling opened a flank in his musical trance, and called his attention to someone who, from a half-open window, tried to tell him something. He lowered his earphones, placed them around his neck, and stalled for a moment. He barely had time to decipher the message, for the gunshots were already bursting against the walls. Fifty meters behind him, the dreaded contour of an armored vehicle was coming around the corner, jolting as it straightened its course, its steel front facing the intersection. The *caveirão* advanced, occupying the whole length of the street, screeching in the dust like a voracious predator. The music-loving young man’s heart raced, and his fright gave him the athletic agility he needed to save himself.

This is not merely a trivial story about a young man who was absent-minded, destined to join so many other anecdotes in the reliquary of Maré’s

²¹ This testimony was shared during a focal group coordinated by Miriam Krenzinger.

collective memory. It is the account of an episode which left marks on an individual's life story, and synthesizes the traumatic experience of several generations which have been raised and grown old in Rio de Janeiro's slums, confronting the State's merciless frown, the emblem of its arrogant and criminal indifference to the consequences of its actions. In addition, it amounts to a social drama which, far from exhausting itself, ties together a constellation of others, woven together with the same thematic thread: the construction of interiority and its limits, facing material and political conditions which close in on their private lives, and generate subjectivities under siege.

Those who follow the routine of the slums, and work in public administration know that one of the residents' recurrent complaints concerns noise pollution: the excess of noise in general produced by parties and Pentecostal churches, or cars equipped with potent audio systems parked in front of bars in order to enliven festive gatherings. The grievances are usually lodged as complaints regarding transgressions of specific norms or the municipal code of conduct. In the best of cases, they elicit the public authorities' attempt to promote negotiations between local actors, mediating the celebration of pacts of peaceful coexistence between diverse interests. Not unfrequently, the middle-class residents of buildings nearby communities are affected. When the middle classes react, the nuisance is converted into an object of attention for the media and mobilizes authorities who tend to intervene by way of new laws or police vigilance. The theme's complexity is rarely recognized, since it would imply the admission that serious phenomena and structural iniquities are at stake, mirroring class divisions. In these conflicts related to the rights to sound or silence, inequalities emerge which are translated in the differential access to housing and urban infrastructure, from basic sanitation to transportation. The problem can become insufferable, as the testimonies offered by our interlocutors from different areas in Maré attest. Underestimating

this problem is an unequivocal symptom of the elitist – intellectual and political – insensitivity to the vicissitudes of common people's lives. A form of underestimation manifests itself indirectly: one admits its importance for communal coexistence, but, precisely because the phenomenon's roots run deep, one dis-considers what transpires in the everyday under the justification that the priority must be structural transformation. As with other themes, this displacement towards the "causes" does not transform them in the end, nor does it set in motion the practical and immediate resolution process for the questions which mobilize residents. It is not widely understood that facing the problems posed by concrete experience is one of the most efficient methods to promote organization, and elevate a critical-reflexive consciousness, motivating more ambitious struggles. It is not widely understood what the reappropriation of everyday life can mean as a collective labour of freedom.

Let us detail further what the dilemmas of sound, and their meanings, express and muffle. Let us dive into some modalities of their capillary and contingent insertion. The following testimony comes from the focal group: "There's a lot of noise, motorcycles, gunshots, police". Here, noise and manifestations of violence appear side by side, bringing to the fore the nature of the problem: the disrespect for life and rights. Our interlocutor proceeds: the neighbor's TV set, his own house's TV set, the boisterousness of the family crammed into two rooms, the radio. One lacks silence to "sleep, work, or study", and even to read something or write poetry. "How can one do any of that without silence, and without feeling safe?". Once again, insecurity and the invasion of sound are equated together. Police incursions sound like the reverberations of the destitution of one's domicile, understood as a right and an experience of shelter, protection, and affirmation of citizenship.

The same young man who volunteered his testimony proceeded in his account to tell us that, before becoming a musician, he had the opportunity

to spend a few months abroad. In another country, "I benefitted from everything that was hard [to get] here". After his return, he perceived that the constant noise which disturbed him was a real problem, that his indignant anxiety was legitimate since it arose from collective issues, and that these were not just capricious, individualistic dissatisfactions. He concluded that his desire for peace, retreat, space, and quiet were not idiosyncratic fancies. He became convinced that there were alternative forms of life and ways of doing things in the face of both sound pollution, and the inexistence of privacy. His neighbour, a photographer, shared the same sentiment and perception.

Residences precariously separated, few public spaces for leisure, daily life submitted to unspoken norms under the regency of illegal powers – be they clandestine, as in the case of *milicias* and drug-trafficking factions, or official, such as the police, but all of them refractory to legal limitations – discipline deriving less from authority (though there are pastors, respected popular leaderships, acting family hierarchies) than from the constant menace of armed violence: therein lies an atmosphere which does not facilitate pacts founded on equality or the idea of common rights. The enunciation of this difficulty implies exalting the work of NGOs working in Maré, and not only there, for being capable and productive in the mediation of communitarian pacts.

One of the most important bourgeois constructions which have defined central aspects of capitalist modernity, and projected itself upon the most diverse spheres of existence is privacy. Materially encapsulated and culturally valued, privacy is a complementary counterpart to public space, which was rehearsed in small arenas before the French Revolution of 1789, when the exchange of information and opinions was exercised and amplified as liberalism associated itself to democracy under the pressure of peasant and proletarian struggles. Privacy is not a mere appendix to individuality, which received its decisive impulse in Europe through the

Lutheran reform, by means of its promotion of a direct relationship with the sacred object of faith, without institutional mediations, and the fetishes of idolatry. Once the Catholic Church's role as a mouthpiece for God was disestablished, it fell upon each individual to know the holy word, of which the Bible would be the only repository. The stimulus for reading increased literacy, intensified the potency of Gutenberg's invention, established a tacit dialogue with the lay arts, and contributed to a process – in which Shakespeare played a decisive role – of the gestation and dissemination of a renewed repertory to name affections and judgments. The affirmation of the typical character of these new times in the Western world, the individual, gifted with singular inner experience, conceived as the carrier of natural rights, and who would later be characterized as being born "free and equal", extended for a long historic period, whose most prominent features were the development of commerce, the genesis of nation-states, the colonial enterprises, the flourishing of science, the birth of new social functions, and the emergence of economic and political dynamics which would give place to the revolutionary instauration of capitalism, with its own modes of labour exploitation and colonial domination.

It is not the right place to delve more profoundly into these references. They were only mentioned here with the purpose of calling attention to the richness involved in the categories of individual and subjectivity, which result from the historical and cultural consideration of multiple factors, metabolized for a long time, continuously reappropriated by national, regional, and local discourses, and traversed by peculiar forms of class struggle, patriarchalism, and structural racism. From the above, one may deduce how poor any precipitate generalizations would be. Once complexity and interpretive caution are underlined, the stress to which the subjective experience of those who find narrow material limits for the fruition of intimacy deserves to be highlighted. Although privacy and individuality are not the same phenomenon, and one does not imply the

other, both explore in mutual dependence their potentialities in bourgeois society, as well as in democracy, and the public space. The private sphere has been the seat par excellence of "negative" freedom: the freedom not to engage and suffer regulatory and restrictive interventions by the State, or intrusions from society; the freedom from surveillance, freedom to keep the secrets which would symbolize an inexpugnable intimacy – such freedom does not involve relationships with others, such as conjugal partners, nor does it associate itself with the notion of private property. Complementarily, the public space has been the privileged "locus" for the exercise of "positive freedom", that which franchises to citizens the right to participate in collective decisions, express themselves, organize movements, and mobilize.

Even though it has been a product of bourgeois society, individuality and the images of freedom have ruptured the horizon of liberalism, and inscribed themselves in the most radical democratic ideals, occupying a strategic position in the agenda of postcapitalist utopias, in such a way that the banner of emancipation is no longer restricted to class and group, and includes the individual dimension.

Somehow, it is as if the experience of the young man who left Brazil and returned to Maré – having seen from the outside what had appeared to him as an inevitable destiny, thus making him understand that his indignation was legitimate, and that reality could be transformed – represented in a minute scale the historic effect of the experience of freedom, however partial and imperfect. It is impossible to accept a withdrawal from it after its fruition, and the intuition of its emancipating potentiality. In the same manner that he returned repudiating the naturalization of what now seems to him as unacceptable and with a disposition to fight for change, such a diffusion of conscience (which entertains alternatives, suggesting that it is senseless to conform to everything that causes suffering, and abates expectations) can be disruptive.

Our interlocutor shared with us the events of that unforgettable morning, when he travelled alone among others, making his way unawares, advancing with mechanical movements he had already automatized, enraptured by the music, lost in thought, with his earphones closing the solipsistic circuit. He told us how he hardly noticed that other people had disappeared from sight, how long it took for him to realize that the street was deserted, until a solitary signal brought him back to Earth, returning him to the "principle of reality", and saved him from being cornered by the armored car's predatory impetus. He had already declared that he suffered with the lack of silence and space to himself in order to enjoy his own things, music and books, writing and thinking. It is curious to observe that in the absence of solitude, peace, and silence – even if only to fill them with his own choice of music – our character left his house enveloped in a bubble, as an ambulant island, dragging his solitude with him, carrying along the private world he built with the assistance of his earphones and imagination. He had turned off the reality around him, disconnected from other people, even though he stepped on the same ground they did, and was as vulnerable as them to the unexpected, the outrages intrinsic to life in that community, and armed incursions. It is worthwhile to emphasize that it was not the eloquence of external signs – the empty street – that awakened him from his musical fantasy, but rather the active solidarity of a neighbor. Unable to find shelter in his own home for his private freedom, he plunged into the parallel reality he had created, and took his privacy for a walk, displacing intimacy to the outside, and artificially neutralizing the collective, which could have been fatal for him. Since the connection with the principle of reality is frequently mediated by its link with the collectivity, the armour he devised for his solitude – which seemed to him the only effective shield for privacy – was the very condition for his reverie. The call to life and safety, and the anchor which brought him back to reality came from a social bond. The return to reality began by his return

to the community. When safety began to sink, one resident threw another a lifebuoy.

Privacy and solitude out of place were not adequate responses to the privation of peace, space, and silence. If the "public space", hypostasized, overflowed and invaded his domestic intimacy, the solution would not certainly be the hypostasis of the private.

Here we encounter interiority as an idea, value, and experience. If, on the one hand, psychoanalysis dissolved the barriers between interior and exterior, collapsing the illusion of self-control, self-knowledge, the subject's identity according to herself, and the plenitude of consciousness, thus demonstrating the inscription of the social into the nucleus of individuality, on the other hand, precisely because it complexifies subjective formation, it valued – and denaturalized – the subjectivation processes which constitute subjects as always insubstantial and unstable, devoid of a center, but devoted to the reiteration threatened by time, reflexivity, and contingencies. In this sense, the subject is an unfinished and interminable project which projects itself against the windowpanes of self-illusions as a bird in search of a passage and a return to its original environment. The *sine qua non* illusion, that is to say, that which is indispensable to the subject's experience of herself (defective, truncated, mediated by the Other's materiality) is interiority. The (illusory, though necessary) dwelling of the subjective is the interior world, represented by what is called subjectivity. Just as the subject does not dispense with the romance of her interior life, individuality needs its space, a house or haven which could be anywhere, provisory of permanent, sedentary or nomadic, provided it is symbolically designated as the nest which shelters. The bourgeois residence is merely a variant of the grotto which replaces the uterus, and furnishes the materiality of a symbol which restores the unity lost by the rupture of birth. In other words, between the subject's self construction, and the bourgeois order there is no necessary relationship, and even interiority was a fugacious life

experience before receiving its name, and being valued. It so happens that history shapes things, opening some possibilities whilst cancelling others, revealing itself less as a gradual and cumulative linear evolution, and more as a succession of exclusions enabled by disruptive and adaptive mutations. Put differently, we may be fated to overcome bourgeois experience with rupture and invention, but it seems improbable that the door to retreats or regressive projects remains open. Consequently, the musician who teaches us, and makes us think with his failed experiment of taking his intimist fantasy into the streets, is not a dislocated bourgeois whose renunciation of the desire for privacy and silence must be demanded. He is a nonconformist individual with emancipatory aspirations, who intends to take to the last consequences the virtues intrinsic to the development of interior life, and its liberatory potentialities. He needs more space to experience this journey, which cannot be solipsistic, individualistic, or illusory. He needs a larger house and collective arrangements – new, just, dignified, and egalitarian – which can afford him peace to create, breathe, and listen to whatever he wants – and not what is imposed upon him.

As he isolated himself from other people and the exterior world in that temerarious morning walk, our character unconsciously delivered a performance which allows us to catch a glimpse of how decisive the problem of subjective experience is, how the question of interiority is absolutely central – and how essential are the studies in the field of mental health about psychic suffering. In transporting his imaginary bubble to the middle of the street, inflated with the privacy and solitude for which he craved, he produced a contrast and a strangeness whose aesthetic and cognitive effects, to himself and to others who followed his little ritual with sufficient sensibility, were illuminating. Displayed inside out, as excess (overflowing from its "natural" place), the absence of material, political, and social conditions for the fruition of silence and privacy was magnified, offering itself to sight and thought.

The imminence of being publicly run over by the State's brutality, in the theatre of operations where it undertakes its genocidal bloodshed, conferred upon the absence of individual space a dramatic tone which alludes to the philosophical and literary tradition of mental experiments – in this case, the methodology applied was, paradoxically, in the laboratory of real life. Insulated by his artificial bubble of privacy, our character exacerbated the separation which makes individuals what they are. Even though we know that social immersion is intrinsic to them, it is worth underlining here the other inescapable dimension of individuality: distinctive singularity. In extending to the utmost the elastic of individualization, and exposing it to the context of that contemporary slave ship, the *caveirão*, the young man placed, face-to-face, the individual and her maximum negation: the political mechanism which addresses the white elites' abjection (to put it in a summarized form) towards the slums, the poor, the country's much stigmatized Northeasterners, and the black population. This mechanism of domination does not allow for individualization in the subaltern classes, if the latter means the subject's self construction through and for critical reflexivity, and the diffusion of emancipatory experiences. Freedom – and there is no idealization here – must be looked for in the most remote niches with a magnifying glass, and crushed before it can actualize its potentialities. As paradoxical as it may seem, collective mobilization around critical issues is as dangerous for the stability of the dominant classes' power as a community resident in his room, enraptured in reverie, musing on his fantasies in silence, privately cultivating his space, fertilizing his imagination, offering a truce to the demands of productivity, making some time to take it slow. The noise which torments the young poet, and the continuous invasion of his space are analogous to the artillery that spreads fear, poisons human spirits, amplifies resentment, and blocks the individual's flourishing. There is nothing less individualistic than a free and creative individuality, conscious of its belonging. There is nothing more

risky for the despoiling powers than the respect for the privacy of a young man from the slums, or a young girl from a community, profiting from their own time, satiated with their quota of silence and peace.

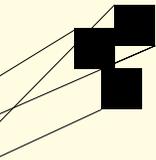
Therefore, the social order does not distribute unequally only wealth and power, but also space, peace, privacy, and silence. Would it be too much to demand egalitarian access to these benefits? Are such bourgeois privileges unfit for the slums, or are they in fact much more than privileges, and should be extended as rights, as they affect education and health? Are they the adornments of a superfluous and contemptible luxury, or constitutive parts of freedom and citizenship? There is no idealization of privacy here either. In the age of smartphones, social networks, internet, and panoptic surveillance, everything that was conceived one day as the inexpugnable and reserved nucleus of intimate life in the private sphere is at stake. Privacy exposed to view, however, does not correspond to a homogeneous reality. Edward Snowden's revelations, a hero of our time, do not mean that inequalities in the fruition of privacy have lost their relevance.

There are more rights and benefits (considered "natural" by members of the elite) of which the community's residents are robbed. This can be inferred from what we know about the intimacy of domestic life in Maré – even though it contains considerable variation and great heterogeneity. What happens when the city's climate reaches extremely high temperatures, a very frequent phenomenon in Rio de Janeiro, and there is no refrigeration equipment, be it due to deficiencies in the electric network to support air conditioners, be it due to the lack of resources to bear the electricity costs? The answers amount to variations on the same theme: The house becomes a brazier, and the fan "looks like a dragon snorting fire on my face"; "I lose my mind"; "I go insane"; "I can't do anything, not even think". "Just imagine when there's no water either", someone adds, underlining the importance of both temperature and basic sanitation.

Why are there no banners at protests demanding the right to space, and not only to housing; the right to silence, and not only to safety; the right to privacy, and not only to physical integrity; the right to the most elementary conditions for reading, and not only to schooling; the right to mental health, and not only to the body's well-being (given that the former and the latter are, in effect, inseparable); and the right to enjoy climatized environments when the technical means are available? There is much talk about drugs, abusive consumption, credit default, and school evasion; there are discussions on income and employment, but the themes which refer to the quality of subjective life, so to speak, are underrated as if they were dispensable comforts. It amounts to a taboo, to such a degree that it would seem preposterous, almost immoral, to confer political importance to this agenda of intimacy. Everything transpires as if including it in the political debate's agenda would undermine the legitimacy of central issues, and deauthorize the source of the demands. Perhaps this selective filter and censorship, which hints at an unconscious repression operated by profound cultural mechanisms, may assist in explaining what is frequently described as the popular masses' indifference, especially its youth, towards socialist ideals, and the traditional ideological movements of proletarian extraction. Perhaps this negligence towards the agenda of intimacy may help us understand the reasons whereby those who value it tend to adhere to individual projects of capitalist insertion via socioeconomic ascension, embracing the latter's ideological discourses, whether it be neoliberal meritocracy, presented in self-help packages, or individualistic entrepreneurship, under the rhetorical figures such as: "do it yourself", "you can do it", "you just need to want it enough", "think positive". The bourgeois way of life comprises ambitions concerning the agenda of intimacy. The system's voice seems to whisper in each and every year: 'Come and achieve a higher level of experience!'; 'Come and experience this agenda's benefits!'; 'Be a winner!'; 'Welcome to the world in which triumph is justice'. The

siren song proceeds: should you prefer to repeat your parents' trajectory (in the best case scenario) and stay where you are, or hoist the colours of rebellion. Otherwise, embark on the delights of capital: get your ticket, and bet all your chips on the destiny we offer you. Do not forget to leave your critical disposition at the doorstep, wrapped in the shreds of red flags.

It is obvious that it would not make any sense, from the residents' point of view, to deny the priority of basic sanitation, health services, education, and proper housing, in the terms these issues are usually put. Who could doubt that children playing in open sewages constitutes a more scandalous aberration, and demands a more urgent intervention by the State, than the scalding heat which hinders reflection, contemplation, reading, studying, and enjoying a poem? The former is a question of life and death. Nevertheless, recognizing this does not justify the repression of aspirations ironically disdained as "petty-bourgeois", displaced to the fringes of irrelevance, or to a position where the commonsense of social struggles is insulted, towards critical consciousness' alleged principle of reality. The lesson many young residents of Maré have taught those who are guided by the aforementioned principle of reality, and remain insensitive to the agenda of intimacy, is the sum of desire and criticism.



VI. TIRESIAS IN THE ALLEY, AMONG POETS

Let us listen to “Satélite” [Satellite], a remarkable album we owe to the talents of Rafael Rocha and his partners.²² Let us pay close attention to the first track, in which voices will be incorporated by the end of the song almost as a coda, an extension, therefore, that reiterates itself. If that is the case, what it says consists in what has already been said. How could it have been said without words? Herein lies the key to decode the partnership of sounds, rhythms, and words.

The transmutation of pain into mourning. To exact justice is to attribute meaning to other people’s lives too. What is arbitrary acquires motivation and meaning, imposing order on chaos. The makers of the world are makers of justice, both governed by meaning.

But this takes place in the body’s pulsation, and its material meanings, in the alternating rhythms, according to a carefully elaborated mix. From ancestral drums to electronic sounds, from gypsy lamentations to the *berimbau*, from the bass to the xylophone, from the piano’s dry strings to the fife. Are these syntheses devoid of dialectics? From the guitar to the streets’ concrete echoes; from the harmonic choir exposed to the rain to fluidify communication, to Maré’s dry metallic roughness, holding its own as the world crumbles. Maré tells us to dive and breathe underwater. Yet, not everything ends in funk, slams, rap, and *repente*.

²² “Satélite” is a freely created album with the inspirations, partnerships, and text fragments by the poets Jonathan Panta, Matheus de Araújo, Mc Martina, Rodrigo Maré, Thais Ayomidé, and Thainá Iná from the podcast “BECOS” [Alleys], and made during the 2020 pandemic. It was produced by Rafael Rocha, and recorded by Gustavo Mendes at the *Serrinha Studio*, and it also contains recordings from the BECOS Podcast, produced at the *MiniStereo Studio* by Rodrigo Campello. It was sponsored by People’s Palace Projects (QMUL) and Redes da Maré, as part of the *Construindo Pontes/Building the Barricades* project, which counted with the assistance of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF).

Jonathan Panta and Mc Martina write:

*“A poet at dawn, in a world where the walls speak, the doors speak, and I don’t. Already up, I see myself alone in the midst of this darkness. In the streets, silence, as others like myself make their way slowly towards Avenida Brasil. From the alleys we emerge, a multitude, the labor force which, when united, can fill any street, inundate any road, and occupy any empty space. Life passes by.”*²³

This beautiful and strong text is, in a certain way, didactic and transparent, as much as poetic texts can be without sacrificing their aesthetic quality. Nonetheless, turned inside out, it reveals itself as a challenging enigma: it goes from third-person to first-person singular (“a poet”, “and I don’t”). That which is inanimate receives a vital, anthropomorphic breath: walls and doors speak. This inspiration, however, does not enchant the cosmos, limitlessly, just as time takes on contours. It is “a world”, defined precisely for being that in which this personification of objects is realized. The personation of things will serve as a mirror (its reproduced image inverted) of capitalism’s own form of reification, as we shall see later. First, let us observe that a connective is employed, “and I don’t”, instead of the adversative conjunction “but” (the doors speak, *but* I don’t). A strangeness and tension is evoked, animating objects, and is soon neutralized because the personalization coexists with the subject’s muteness; the latter is not produced by the former, just as the former is not the result of the latter, and there is no contrast, nor can it be described as a zero-sum type equation (for the doors to speak, I must stay silent; they speak either because I am quiet, or for me to be quiet). This is important because it consists in a detail which designates, describes, proposes, or insinuates the world in question,

²³ *“Um poeta da madrugada, num mundo onde paredes falam, portas falam, e eu, não. Já de pé, me vejo só no meio dessa escuridão. Na rua, silêncio, com outros como eu saindo aos poucos na direção da Brasil. Dos becos, nós emergimos, uma multidão, a mão de obra que, quando unida, pode preencher qualquer rua, inundar qualquer via e ocupar qualquer vazio. A vida passa.”*

the nature of the world the poem evokes. Let us consider its unfolding, first withdrawing a little, and then jumping forward: "A poet", and not "the poet", because the dawn is wide and generous, an elastic, expansive, inclusive, sheltering repository which nourishes and harbors more than one poet. The story is not exhausted by an individual's singular experience, even though it is contemplated, recalled, sung, announced, and named through his perspective. Walls divide and separate, and so do doors, eventually, since they close; but they exist because they open and give access, introducing passages, porosity, and permeability in walls and barriers. In other words, they are walls, but not any walls, unsurmountable barriers. They amount to a separation, though partial and provisory. There is more: even though erected with human labour, walls endure, possess an immovable form, are edified to interrupt traffic and movement, and demarcate territories imposing form to what is continuous, homogeneous, and amorphous. Walls are fists of movement which appropriate land, and draw frontiers which repel and protect. On the other hand, doors are made to move and allow movement, to suspend the obstruction created by walls, and to negate them under certain conditions. In the absence of doors, walls can become prisons, and instead of protection, they may be designed to enclose and restrict life.

"Already up, I see myself alone in the midst of this darkness". This percussive verse with tonic monosyllables in the Portuguese original ("*já, pé, só*"), as well as the final diphthong ("*ão*"), stimulates the act of waking up, and the body's rhythm, a body which will soon be converted into a social body ready for labor, trained for its routine. The bilabial sonority which opens with "midst" ("*meio*"), kisses and sweetens the practical forcefulness of ("*já de pé, só*"). This inescapable vacillation in waking up is a mediation as descriptive as it is performative and expressive of the subjective dispositions involved. It is not a process of ascension to conscience, of spiritual animation, but the progressive setting in motion of corporeal impulses, since reason is merely a layer among many others in the stage of this delicate anatomy. In order to be up, it is necessary to wake up. "In the midst" places the subject (the poetic persona, if it were appropriate to employ this antiquated and fastidious term) in full activity, though still lost, fumbling, exploring limits,

edges, margins, the space he is given to occupy, that which is not accessible to him, and forbids his advance at the risk of harming him, because it is the body which is elevated in the opacity, engulfed in the night's thickness. Dawn is the final point, a bridge towards the day, another mediation ("door", "in the midst) preparing for what is to come, the trampling through which will transport the poet to the day's center. In the midst of darkness, in an eloquent world to which the subject's silence belongs, there goes the staggering poet, arising, standing up, ready to man his post.

"Already up, I see myself alone in the midst of this darkness". The paradox evoked echoes the former, the loquacity of things and the poet's mutism. It manifests itself here in the attrition between seeing and darkness. The attrition emits sparks which illuminate the scene, and the scene is attrition, a warming up for attrition, a general rehearsal for the conflict's combustible shock, since the crisis awaits in the horizon like the sun: the sun as an enigma, still indiscernible, but also as a promise. The poet sees in the dark, he sees beyond the nocturnal opacity because light emanates from his toils, because it is he who names, and words save things from indistinction. Maré's Tiresias. In this darkness forged to illuminate, the poet dares to bare on his chest the sign of the sun to enter triumphantly into the city, even if the grains of utopia must be sprinkled along the way, as crumbs for pigeons, in order to fertilize other worlds.

"In the streets, silence, as others like myself make their way slowly towards Avenida Brasil". From the alleys we emerge, a multitude, the labor force which, when united, can fill any street, inundate any road, and occupy any empty space. Life passes by". In the streets – a reference which retroactively indicates the previous scene was domestic – silence is alluded to as a sort of unfolding within the exterior space of darkness, which is far from arbitrary, since the lack of light fuses objects in the indistinct masses' homogeneity, whilst silence causes individuals to immerse in the multitude, all of them reduced to the same undifferentiated servile existence, all redefined according to their functionality in the machines of capital, no more than labour force, this metonymy of a body without a soul, although apt for work and art. Nevertheless, the differentiated units

of human singularities are subtracted from the dissolving amalgam not in the form of individualities, but in the form of a collectivity, indicated by the first-person plural: "we". The plural form is composed by others like me; they are, therefore, a collectivity that results not from the sum total which dilutes docile men and women, but from the union of individualities, from subjects, subjects such as the poet, a collectivity disgruntled and alive. This "we" is not spilled out into the streets, but emerges from the alleys, however much these alleys submerge its inhabitants. To emerge is more than to appear, to lend oneself to sight, it consists in reverting their immersion in the alleys of silence, where senses and affections are transferred to the inanimate. The reification of workers, reduced to manpower, infects the whole set of existential experience, silences subjects, delegates things to speech – and they cannot but reiterate, reproduce, and echo. The sound of silence in the isolated subject's brief night can only be the fossilized voice of what is: the life which became destiny, and the future as a melancholic prolongation of the present. On the other hand, we are the united workforce, and it comes down to the plural subject to fill the streets, inundate roads, occupy empty spaces – and not merely as life passes by, but making life pass through, giving it direction and meaning, making it a passageway, opening trails for a history that may be constructed in dissonance with vociferousness. Those who "make their way towards Brazil" are those who are disposed to rule the country.

One last statement – which lends density to music, rhythm, and poetry, transcends aesthetics and synthetizes the courage of those who fight with art – hardly disturbs the morning: "I want to grow up without running away, without shortcuts".²⁴

²⁴ Here I would like to pay tribute to the research and support for local initiatives carried out in Maré for at least two decades by teams connected to the Postgraduate Music Program at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro's (UFRJ) Ethnomusicology Laboratory. I would especially like to thank Professor Samuel Araújo, who has always emphasized the extraordinary musical richness which pulsates in Maré – and that music is more than sounds and rhythms. For further information, it is possible to watch, for instance, the following seminar at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XlhOEJutNZo>

VII. RECONSTRUCTING EVERYDAY LIFE, AND ESCAPING THE SYSTEM'S LOGIC: THE REINVENTION OF TIME

Let us recall that a traumatic relationship negates the painful reality and, at the same time, clings to it precisely to negate it, instead of elaborating it through mourning, and integrating it into the psychic economy, and the narratives which confer meaning to experience. Therefore, to reappropriate everyday life, escaping the trauma which despoils it, and the idealization which represses contradictions, constitutes an act of freedom because it provides space for the subject to resist both the past's spectral insistence, cancelling life's possibilities, and the economic and political system's siren songs, the matrix of domination and source of iniquities. These siren songs assume diverse forms, ranging from the meritocracy which justifies inequalities to the ideological disguises that attribute the latter to false reasons: circumstantial incidents, the corruption of public agents, government incompetence, the States' inexorable commitment to the elites, politics' irremediable malignant nature, and so forth.

For this reason, reclaiming everyday life – mourning for it, as Veena Das put it – involves an effort to dislocate oneself to the outside of the economic-political-ideological system, this web from which it is so hard to disentangle oneself, but from which evasion is not impossible, if one does not exile oneself in fantasy, nor alienates oneself from the responsibilities of family survival. Vengeance was not Asha's chosen path, whose trajectory was followed by the Indian author, nor was it the predominant choice of the Maré residents heard in the interviews. If this were the case, it might even represent a variant of the trauma, without the same effects and the same psychic genesis, but with comparable implications, inasmuch as it would

tend to imprison those who adopted the circuit of hate and resentment, blunting the faculty to create alternative worlds, and enjoy them.

There are many ways to put oneself outside the system and its logic, which instituted the following paradox for the subaltern classes: they were considered responsible for the inevitable, and summoned to an impossible protagonism. There are ways to dislocate oneself to the outside through the reinvention of time.

There are problems articulated here which transcend the Maré population, but which concern it, insofar as its political responsibility is also at stake: its blaming, and forms of resistance and evasion. The object of this section is to focus on aspects which have traversed the minutiose and tireless labour of reappropriating everyday life that is taking place in Maré - and, possibly, not only there - even if through unconscious means. The blaming mentioned above is not explicit, and may also be diffused in an unconscious manner. Young artists and activists engaged in social movements, feminists and antiracists, connected or not to Afro-Brazilian religious traditions, have countered this depotentializing narrative of blame with gallant pride and sensibility, building bridges not to tomorrow, but to the immemorial past, as we shall see next.

VII.I. ANCESTRALITY AND THE (CONVERSE OR INSIDE-OUT) OF TIME

Let us examine in detail the paradox, which manifests itself at distinct levels and in different languages, but is always the same. Two of its manifestations will be examined. The first manifestation results from the excessive amplitude of the scope of observation. From the longitudinal point of view, and the perspective of human history, as well as from the biological and geological viewpoint, the events which affect human life are irrelevant, if not simply nonexistent. The paradox's second manifestation derives from the adoption of a narrow point of view which highlights individual and collective experiences, and in its immediacy becomes

insensitive to important changes whose scale requires impracticable comparisons in the continuous flux of days, as well as to differences which demand approximations between distant realities, inaccessible to the naked eye. One example from the paradox's second manifestation would be the conclusion that, if oppression persists, then nothing relevant has occurred in Brazilian history, and not even distinctions between political regimes would have any significance; they would be nothing more than variations of the same state of things, different modes of establishing the same iniquities.

What does a biographical trajectory of 80 years represent in comparison with the course of millions of years? On the other hand, what does the alteration of natural processes measured in millennia mean to those who experience existence in eight decades? With the advent of the Anthropocene²⁵ and its conception, curves and itineraries cross each other, long duration meets the time of the social world, macro-structures are superimposed on micro-structures, the genealogical and ruinous dynamisms of both climate and life interpenetrate each other, affecting the subject and the collectivity to which she belongs, and conferring upon them an unusual protagonism by attributing them with an unsuspected responsibility and - here is the paradox - condemning them to impotence in relation to the whole process' magnitude. This paradox generates guilt and the feeling of failure, insofar as it underlines the human contribution to this disaster, and the disproportion between individual will and the dimensions

²⁵ Anthropocene is the name given to the only geological period in which humans are responsible for the alteration of the planet's natural fluxes. It is the period in which we find ourselves, and which has been characterized by the Industrial Revolution, urbanization, and the expansion of consumption. This already irreversible alteration is exerting its devastating impact on the climate, the environment, and biodiversity, making life on the planet much more difficult, especially for the poorer populations. The perspectives for the future, in the face of global warming, are somber still: a fiercer competition for water and food, the acceleration of migratory waves, the diffusion of epidemics and pandemics, and the scarcity of resources for protection against cataclysms.

of what is at stake. Two features accentuate this paradox: the diffusion of discourses and practices which allude to citizenship and democracy – and inscribe the power to generate transformations in the biographical scale (either intending or pretending to do so) – and the consolidation of the image that a disarrangement is in course with accelerated and unrestrainable rhythm, the approaching cataclysm that has been contracted by industrial society, the crowning and cradle of modernity, recognized as a kind of second nature, and refractory to control. It is worthy of note that the trap set by destiny for the human spirit is being experienced by those on Brazil's lowest social rungs as a simple extension of the slavocrat past, insofar as iniquities have been continuously reproduced as atavisms.

A bird's eye view from a high angle obfuscates the tensions experienced by the subjects, and when it mercifully contemplates and makes contact with this minuscule character, tells her, simultaneously, that the downfall is of her own making, that it has been so for generations, and that little is left to be done. "It is not of my making", the little men and women will reply, "I am, we are, victims of the colonial slavocrat system, we have been exploited and despoiled from primitive accumulation to neoliberalism; we have not been at the helm of any process, and thus the contentious environmental issue is not on us". The bird's eye view will pronounce its verdict in silence: in the scale in which I operate, and from which I reach the phenomena's intelligibility, these distinctions do not matter, and do not even make sense.

On this point, formal and informal workers, providers of the labour force, the economic victims of the iniquities which are accomplices – by their sheer existence – of the original sin represented by the Anthropocene – these men and women, especially black men and women, recover the vocabulary of ancestrality, resignifying it without dynastic inclinations. Their anchorage lies in the origin myth of a different common history as an alternative to the ambush set by the Anthropocene's discourse of original

sin for popular contemporary subjectivity. Ancestors are anchors which afford a projection outside of time, a time measured by the clocks of capital, colonialism, domination, and even "modernized" patriarchalism, but which is also measured in cosmic, geological, and biological scales. Whose projection? That from subjects summoned to assume responsibility for the costs of "civilization", and participate in their own funerals – remaining imaginarily, politically, and psychologically immobilized.

Thus have we closed the circuit, reiterating the thesis already proposed. There remains for this subject the neurotic denialism which represses, depotentializes, and anticipates trauma and depression, **or** the production of an alternative future through the reverse course of a renovated past: the narrative about ancestors, who harken back to a time in which the system did not yet exist, with its devouring, omnipotent, and ubiquitous inexorability. Reclaiming this everyday life which grieves for real losses and so many damages suffered (and which slips on the edges soon to fall outside the system), may be supported through this anchorage in archaic time before the origins of capitalism and, moreover, before time itself, as conceived and measured by the scales produced by the very system. It amounts to a mythic temporality, yes, undoubtedly, but is the history capitalism tells about itself not mythological too? Let us emphasize that whilst *arché* is situated "beneath", *telos* will place itself "beyond".

VIII. INFINITE LANDSCAPE: THE REINVENTION OF SPACE



Marcia Farias' picture

Marcia Farias' picture is indissociable from her testimony:²⁶

There are no windows. One of the particularities of favelas is the type of domestic constructions. In general, houses are built by the residents themselves, which are called irregular buildings. At Vila João, however, there's some consistency because the houses were built by the government to accommodate the populations that have been removed from so many other regions in Rio, and for people who still lived in stilt houses made of wood in the Guanabara Bay, which became the origin of Maré. Those dwellings were simple, usually with only a room and a bathroom; they were colourful, and there was space between them. In time, the residents modified them with the famous puxadinhos [precarious and irregular building enlargements], extending their houses to either side, where there was space between them, binding one house to the next, adding concrete roofs, and thus expanding their houses upwards so that they could rent, sell, or shelter some relative. As a result, the houses are glued [sic] to each other, which means that most of them lack windows and ventilation. This is my case. My house is surrounded by other houses on the sides, on the back, and even on the front, so that I have no windows besides the entrance door, made of steel or iron, with grills and two glass openings, very popular in Rio's communities. Since there's a house in front of mine, the sunlight, throughout the day, shines on the living room for about 10 minutes, between 2:20 and 2:30 in the afternoon, through the entrance door of the house above mine. It's a very confusing architecture to understand. This being so, the picture I decided to take doesn't represent what I see outside, since I can't see the street, just the stairs and what's inside my house. I wanted to register these ten minutes of sunlight when the beam enters my home. Something that I love to do, and that I've been missing during this

²⁶ Marcia Farias' picture and testimony feature in the virtual exposition "A Maré de Casa, imagens da quarentena" [Maré From Home, Images of the Quarentine], owing to a partnership between the *Redes da Maré* NGO, the Peoples Palace Projects organization, and the visual artist Tatiana Altberg. This initiative is part of the *Construindo Pontes* research project.

quarantine, is to be in contact with nature, to be in the middle of the woodland, to be more precise. I'm a universalist, and I participate in shamanic rituals that are practically carried out in the middle of the forest. It's a beautiful energy, and it pains me not to be able to feel it. Because the sunlight doesn't enter my house, I can never keep plants because they die very easily, and I can't feel close to nature here. Yesterday I had the idea of buying cactuses and succulents, which live longer without being exposed to the sun. I carefully place them during those 10 minutes in the adequate position for them to benefit from this natural gift, to which not even our family has access during this quarantine.

From 2:20 to 2:30 in the afternoon. In ten minutes, transformed into picture, a whole life may fit. Ten minutes can sustain resilient plants, and the imagination of the person who contemplates the image. In the cramped space, during a short space of time, the author's creative intervention takes place, delineating her biography, and the city's history to inscribe them in the picture and its synthesis. Marcia, a poet, photographer, aesthete, and thinker, converts brevity and scarcity into energy and sap, effecting the photosynthesis of which her art consists. She catches the sunlight in its brief visit to her house's interior, but, above all, in doing so, she emulates nature's movements, intervening in the community's architecture. Her view infiltrates affection and wisdom on the object she conceives and produces. In portraying the narrow space on the floor, with wooden trays, vases, and plants bathed by solar beams – in this cosmic blink of an eye, which contrasts with the sombre background, where a guitar and a photography book on the shelf can be seen – the author illuminates our receptive sensibility with the light beam, which, flowing and unfolding in affluents, will become the promise of either a scar or a Rio [literally in Portuguese: a river].

Cactuses and succulents in a row, arranged at the right angle, and the wall's aura of light in the background, a montage made according to the plane, waiting for the instant in which the sunlight beams infuse life and

completes the multiple figure, a vegetal constellation on wood and floor. The photographer has prepared the compact experience which will also be a compact narrative, and the juxtaposition of bright and dark, density and emptiness, for the gift of a glance as furtive as a sip: we are prowling animals, encircling the prey whose presence will be ephemeral. This instant and its objects present themselves as indiscernible for the realization of their common destiny, and contend with disappearance. The picture makes the act eternal, perennates the contingency, sublimates the finitude which is also our condition, projects singularity into universal networks of meaning, memory, archives, and exchanges. In this mutational leap, the photo carries with itself Maré's history, the multiplication of beings and things, the condensation of its population, the sheltering of migrants, the narrowing of the distance between houses, and the displacement of its residents' most daring itineraries to a mystical sphere.

Shamanism projects into the universe the immensity of nature in contrast with the domestic space's exiguity. Picture and narrative establish a dialogue about transcendence, the beauty of reductions, the cosmos in miniature, the solar transit upon a sheet of paper, day and night caught in a split second, a century of migrations accelerated within the ten minutes we are given to (re)live. Scarlet, red, ochre, the color spectrum contained in the optic reliquary, the museum of everything minuscule and minutious, the treasure of family history translated into a breath of the sun. The palette of nuances does not break silence or efface solitude, but highlights them, framing the most intangible intimacy. Even if overly close to neighbors, with houses upon houses, walls against walls, the human presence insinuates itself, sovereign within its domains, and conqueror of impermeable privacy. The picture reveals itself petal by petal, bud by bud, just as a secret, in whispers. And we feel close to this intuited presence, which makes privacy less the insulation of the one who shuns coexistence, and more the installation of an unsuspected possibility: the apparent disorder of cramped

edifications does not deplete individuality, nor does it exhaust the subject's place and time. Shamanism pulsates in the crevice in which life is condensed by the art of seeing.

Writing about Ursula Le Guin's work, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), Fredric Jameson (2005) identifies an especially fertile principle of aesthetic construction, to which the following two would be added – extrapolation and analogy – frequently mobilized in the type of literature commonly classified as "science fiction": the reduction of the world, and ontological attenuation.²⁷ Among other virtues, good novels of this genre have the merit of resuming an old project, rehearsed by some nineteenth century writers, and buried by modernist vanguards, of attributing cognitive value to the exercise of fiction, making recourse to alternative universes as opportunities for practicing with mental experiments. In a certain measure, political philosophy (let us recall Hobbes, Rousseau, and our contemporary, John Rawls, not to mention the utopists) has benefited from the freedom with which its authors imagined hypothetical realities, constructing them as artifices, almost laboratories, for the testing of their theses. It would even be pertinent to inquire whether the current incapacity to imagine the end of capitalism (to which authors such as Jameson and Mark Fisher refer)²⁸ would have no relationship with the (cultural, political, and academic) dislocation of political philosophy, and its progressive replacement by so-called political science, exclusively attentive to what (supposedly) is, aloof to speculations, and insensitive to the negative, and to dialectical criticism. Just as socialist realism domesticated aesthetic transgression, and capitalist realism sterilizes disruptive imagination, so does positivism conjure reflexive rebelliousness. Yet, political science, as a delimited area of knowledge, does not appear out of nothing, nor by chance. Its emergence accompanies the

27 Jameson, Fredric. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. London: Verso, 2005. Le Guin, Ursula. *The Left Hand of Darkness*. New York: Ace Books, 1969.

28 Fisher, Mark. *Capitalism Realism: Is There No Alternative?* London: Zero Books, 2009.

history of capitalism's development, which submits politics to institutional mechanisms articulated with the political order, and subordinated to economic power. Under real socialism, an analogous trajectory led to the generation of an official knowledge of politics emptying it, mummifying Marxism, and enthroning its spoils as a science of the State, the single party, and the working class – entities superimposed on each other. Evidently, none of this transpired without resistance and conflicts, neither has it remained static.

In a certain measure, if the defense of art's autonomy, on the one hand, reacted against the authoritarian interventions of States and parties, on the other, inadvertently, it adjusted a whole sphere of experience and creation to sociological structures required and produced by modernity, be it in its capitalist version, or in the sense of real socialism. The dissociation between the spheres of experience and signification is typically modern; these are the processes which Weber denominated autonomization and differentiation, key features in the dynamic of rationalization, without which there would be no industrialization, urbanization, and the Nation-State. Art's independence (which liberated imagination, up to a certain point, and in a certain sense, at the price of depotentializing and depoliticizing it) corresponded to the reduction of the world in the political imaginary, that is to say, it corresponded to the affirmation of politics in its specificity, to wit, in its autonomy: politics converts itself into a practice endowed with its own logic, specific rationality (split by a double ethic, of conviction and responsibility), and becomes an institutionalized activity (made normative and disciplined), even though always permeable to the actions of new protagonists in mass society, such as social movements, multitudes, and large scale means of communication – social media, for instance, nowadays. The new agents may ignore rules and limits, arenas and prescribed times, depending on the correlations of forces, but even so they are still subjected to bear the eventual onus of their rebelliousness.

Note that the idea of art's autonomy triumphed in the West, provided we disconsider the reification effected by the free market, both in popular commercialization, and the fetishization of art galleries. On the other hand, in the so-called consolidated democracies, politics' autonomy also flourished, as long as we ignore the lacks and left-overs, the excesses and the gaps: the repressive outbreaks, the mediatic control, the ideologization of the everyday – naturalizing a historically constructed reality – the exclusion of social actors, their participation deficit (as involvement and interest), and the colonial domination which exports dictatorships, and outsources genocides.

In literature, according to some critics and consumers, politics remained an impurity to be polished, a promiscuity which debases aesthetic quality, a contamination that damages discursive autonomy, this Other admissible only through dense mediations. In the sphere of politics (traditional social movements, professional, and party politics), the aesthetic remains the Other, the non-issue, the non-object, since form, language, imaginary, sensibility, affections, and narratives would consist in matter to be emanated (as if naturally) from the values and struggles for which there were already enough banners, for which the inherited symbology would suffice and speak for itself, because continuity would be the guarantee for identity, and the support of representativity. The fact that (almost) none of this works is merely a detail – not to everybody, of course. And if this topic figures here, it is because the theme is in the streets and networks, recuperated by several new social movements.

It is curious how the reduction of the world, or ontological attenuation, has been a principle (and even a method) of modernity, described in general as the age of progress (which is not wrong), as much as it has been of stories composed according to the models of the science fiction genre, an organizing principle of both reality and literature. To separate, circumscribe, delimit, contain, name, make it normative, and cause it to function under certain

conditions; to channel and nourish, with parsimony, and under supervision, the dynamics without which nothing can prosper, even though they never cease to be dangerous.

In the picture, everything seems to indicate the miniaturization, the minimalization, the narrow focus, the reduction of the world, and its limitation to what would only be a fragment of metonymic value. In it, Maré, the city, the exterior environment, daylight, everything is evoked by their absence. Through this angle, one would visualize how little light there is, a lack which would represent many others. How little of the world still remains, seems to be its message, at first glance. My hypothesis is different, and even the opposite of the above: in the selected and photographically constructed image, one does not encounter attenuation, but ontological expansion, since this thread of sunlight is not the last and only vestige of the day (of light, world, and horizon), but the sign, or the image, concept, and gesture of the world's amplification, the starting point of a movement which goes from the grain to the forest, from the luminous fringe to the cosmos, from the small and confined room to illumination and a decompressed cosmos. This is not a secret revealed by the camera, nor is it a scene captured for the *voyeur*, but a view offered as an object to a scene, a scene which sees and acts: it is the gaze which is caught by the picture; the scene, free and from the outside, ample and bounteous, consumes, devours, enjoys, and contemplates the gaze in a disquieting inversion. The picture conveys the minuteness of the place where we are – wherever we are – and the connection which binds us to all and everyone.

This operation is analogous to the childish game of turning the binoculars around, and looking through the larger lenses at the smallest fleeting object which seems to move away at the other end. The inversion occurs when the observer situates herself in the position where the observed object should be. In a certain manner, it is as if the observer became that which is observed. The diminutive image which reflows, potentially converts

itself into the subject who looks. What becomes diminished in our eyes is the place from which it is possible to see; from there, from the other end, one can see better than us; there, the images are augmented, the view can reach and travel farther; there, vision is endowed with an amplified power. Yet, we can only deduce and imagine, and only when we situate ourselves at the inverted end, surprising ourselves with the loss of place of the subject who contemplates. The picture throws us to the inverted end, and turns us inside out by making us look at the world's reduction from an unusual, and creatively critical perspective. Its enchantment lies in the peculiarity of its aesthetic operation: the reduction of the world which emulates the reduction of the world accomplished by the stacking of houses on top of each other, and the historical conditions of Maré's typical process of occupation in the context of Brazilian urbanization, riddled with class exploitation.

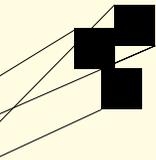
From whence does this inversion effect come, which makes the reduction of the world a vector for ontological expansion, inflating an empathetic and transforming imagination?

Pictures are, by definition, images and thus static figures. Portraits which fixate and make eternal that which still remains, as much as that which could have been only momentary and contingent. Once registered, the movement remains frozen in the record. Enhanced or encircled by the narrative which complements it, the brilliant artist Marcia Farias' extraordinary picture dares to do the opposite: it fluidifies crystallization, infuses life into what has been reified by Maré's history – which, in its turn, consists in a piece of Brazilian history. What we see in the image is time, time passing through the leaves, and licking the background with its inapprehensible light. It is not exactly the sun which crosses the open doors in ten minutes, but rather the ten minutes which cross our eyes and senses, displacing the presumption of shadows and darkness to the collective imagination of the hypothetical, and probable, community which contemplates the picture. The extreme exiguity (the extrapolation

of time's avariciousness), and those ten minutes compress the whole world – the seasons, climate variations, environmental mutations, the planet's biodiverse fertility, the rush of the cities inundated with light – in order for it to fit, poetically evoked, in our eye's brief transit through the picture. Only time's exiguity, this radical containment, would make it almost palpable and visible: an object *in* the picture, more than its condition, and more than its object and theme.

Marcia Farias' photographic intervention brings to the fore the aesthetic complicity between all of us, a complicity which is also a coresponsibilization. We are the secret, our smallness and our greatness, and the surprising leaps which promote inversions: from observers, we turn ourselves into objects, and from objects, to authors. This is the assumption of conscience, this is politics, this can be art, literature, and the inflection of the experience of meaning, or the meaning of experience. In a word, denaturalization: the act of finding the familiar strange.

If the category of ancestry harks back to a time refractory to capital's omnivorous history, opening a fringe for creative evasion, the enlightening beauty of Marcia Farias' picture, by conjugating so many disturbing and surprising crossroads, alludes to a space which, by analogy, could perhaps be said to also open gaps for a topology refractory to the savage, asphyxiating urbanization.



IX. SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON THE NEW LEXICON OF MARÉ'S YOUNG POETS AND INTELLECTUALS (AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS)

The movements with deep popular roots speak, nowadays, a language which has been created and negotiated along the last decades, and whose implications are still far from being fully grasped. This final section, divided into two parts, concentrates on thematizing this new discourse's two key categories: body and potency. It is not the intention here to detail a history of its usage, but to emphasize its importance, and bring to light some of its premises and possible developments. Maré's politically active groups are eloquent. Those who cannot understand the importance of those two words will hardly be in a condition to hear their voices, and value their ideas, beliefs, practices, and values.

IX.I. BODY

To thematize the use of the body as a political category, in a close dialogue with philosophy and the social sciences, including psychoanalysis, would require a long and difficult research, complex to the point of being almost inexhaustible. In any case, it would consist in a task much wider and ambitious than the scope of the present work would allow. Having said that, and with the narrow limits of the approach taken here duly recognized, we proceed to outline some general lines that will eventually be useful for future surveys which propose to be more comprehensive.

In order for the ponderations above not to sound excessively vague and rhetoric, it is worthwhile to illustrate the research's extension with a few,

more specific allusions. In ethnology, there is a universe of questions and analyses with a powerful theoretical impact. It is impossible to think about both the cosmologies and the rites, with their scarifications and adornment aesthetics, without taking into consideration the place of the body. The same goes for psychoanalysis, whose conceptual construction owes much to the scrutiny of the body, from sexuality to drives, from sublimated materiality to symbolization and its limits – in trauma, and in the insistence of the real – in the mediations between language and subject, and in the interfaces between culture and what was once called nature. Foucault studied the genesis of madness, and the birth of the clinic; not by chance, his trajectory led him to reflections on stoicism, the use of pleasures, the conceptions about sex and biopolitics, which have been recently revalued, even when creatively inverted, for instance, by Achille Mbembe's influential reflections on necropolitics.²⁹ The passage from public torment to incarceration, which accompanies the instauration of the bourgeois dominion, far from portraying the renouncement to let order prevail over the body, subtly inscribes it in more profound layers – a process which Kafka's writing deals with decisively, both in *The Metamorphosis* and *In the Penal Colony*.

In history, Kantorowski is only one great author among several others who have approached corporality as linked to power and symbol. Norbert Elias, too, has focused on corporeal habits in his interpretation of the civilizing process. Modern political philosophy (to narrow our scope), inaugurates liberalism in John Locke's work, associating body, freedom, and property with each other, and conferring upon work (the body in action) the conceptual role of being the source of private property's legitimacy as an extension of the body – before the appearance of currency (in this theoretical equation).

²⁹ Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. New York: Duke University Press, 2019.

The emergence of modern individuality, indissociable from the affirmation of capitalism, derives not only from Renaissance reappropriations of Christianized Hellenism, nor only from the reformed redefinition of faith, and the Hamletean amplification of the subjective sphere, but from the physical isolation of the body (didactically illustrated by Robinson Crusoe's island), and social insulation, which bourgeois privacy will provide, as Habermas shows us in his doctoral thesis.

The age of rights and narcissism will represent the hypertrophy of prior tendencies, although it is not devoid of originality – in fact, it is potentially perturbing for the very order that makes it possible. The body has been the object of slavocrat colonial brutalization, as Anibal Quijano demonstrates, especially regarding the black body, and particularly black women, as Lélia Gonzales and Rita Segato have demonstrated along with other feminist and antiracist authors.

Therefore, it is impossible to deal ingenuously with the category of the body, as an evident and naturalized datum. We find ourselves before a long, rough, sinuous, and contradictory historico-cultural construction, on the one side, and critical hermeneutics on the other, which is also and always politics. Western history, narrated by multiple voices, has been the history of the body, of the meanings with which it has been endowed, the experiences it has been permitted to undergo, the controls to which it is subjected, the functionalities to which it has been subordinated, the exploitation of which it is object – mercantiled and reified – but equally of the resistance and struggles, the devouring and anthropophagic critical reappropriations, the mystical incorporation of spiritual forces, as well as of sickness and mortification. This is not about just any bodies, indistinctly. There are no bodies in general. Classes, structural racism, coloniality, and phallogocentric patriarchalism hierarchize and inscribe them in social, economic, and juridical-political dynamics in diverse ways.

The employment of the word body in the referential vocabulary of social movements, and not only in the latter, opens language to the problematic

of violence – from the point of view of those who experience it – suffering, healing, and resistance, since it also indicates force, energy, will, and desire. This aspect will be relevant to any research which thematizes psychic suffering, and its relationship with armed violence. Pain, death, eroticism, becoming sick, depression, melancholy, surrender, resilience, ritual duplication and voluntary servitude, war and dancing are both agents and objects of the agency of bodies, radicating civilizations in life and nature, of which they are manifestations.

We finally reach the main point: just as the psychedelic experimentation of the 1960s and 1970s projected the utopian promise on the free body and the expanded conscience, the resumption of social movements after the regressive triumphalism of the Reagan-Thatcher period highlighted the place of the body. Since the 1990s, feminist and antiracist movements, soon accompanied by LGBTQIA movements, began to focus on the body, and its performative uses. They have done so in unusual ways, including, and especially, in the academic sphere, inside educational and research institutions. Academic and political discourses have fertilized each other, making it ever more difficult to differentiate between their areas of circulation, the sources of their legitimation, and their conceptual repertoires. They have not, however, become uniformized; because there have also been, and still are significant differentiations both inside the academic space, and the sphere of civil society's movements and entities, according to different moments, themes, tactics, strategies, interlocutions, and objectives. Why, then, would the body be converted into a key issue?

I shall cite a synthetic and didactic passage:

"With her celebrated accuracy, Hannah Arendt, an inexhaustible source for the students of our fin de siècle's great cultural and political challenges, struck a nerve in indicating that from Parmenides to Hegel (and to Rawls, I would add), the construction of an Archimedean point was sought, external to the world, and independent of its historicity, a *sub specie aeternitatis* point of view according to which it would

be possible to decide between values, criteria for the judgment of the power structures' legitimacy, and principles of justice. And thus she concluded: now, for us who have lost our innocence, living in the great ruptures represented by totalitarianism and genocides, and experiencing – I would adduce – the shock of the diasporas of values and reasons (promoted by Anthropology), the idealist dream no longer make sense: it is necessary to seek in the sublunary, in the empirical world of multiple reasons, and conflicting passions, the references for what justice is possible, what legitimacy is possible, and for the plausible project of a free and just society" (Soares, 1990, 1996).³⁰

The *sub specie aeternitatis* point of view is a foundation and expression of rationalist idealism, which would preside over the universalizing legitimacy of Power and State, indissociable in our history from patriarchal phallocentrism and colonialism. The axis' displacement to the sublunary corresponds to the recognition that there are embodied subjects: there are women, people of color, and points of view immersed in history endowed with interests, projects, beliefs, values, and desires. In other words, feminist political theories have sprung from bodies in society. Philosophy's commitment to antiracism would imply a dislocation of the spirit to the body, from abstract reason to practical and reflexive modulations of rationalities. Neither would decolonial thought be viable without the materiality of body-to-body historical experiences. In Christian tradition, and Western philosophy, the body became the predominant seat of sin and passions, which pollute virtue and reason. In order to overcome idealism, and make explicit its historical inscription with gender, colour, and class, it was therefore necessary to bring the body back to centre stage.

³⁰ Soares, L.E. "A crise do contratualismo e o colapso do sujeito universal" In *Anuário Antropológico* 90, Rio de Janeiro, Editora Tempo Brasileiro, 1993. This article has been republished In *Legalidade Libertária*, RJ, Editora Lumen-Juris, 2006.

Thence, it was just a step to the colloquial employment of the word "body" as a political category. Notwithstanding, the assimilation of this current vocabulary in Brazil by social movements and intellectuals does more than evoke its recent theoretico-political origins, and carries other implications. It alludes to our structurally racist history, to the genocide of societies originated from slavery, and hence the genocide of black and poor youths in the vulnerable territories, which is still underway, despite the promulgation of the democratic Constitution in 1988. It alludes to class exploitation and, in particular, the brutalization of women's bodies, especially black women. This slaughter stacks bodies on top of each other, annually, in the tens of thousands. The State governed by the rule of law does not reach all territories, nor is it valid for all members society. There are expendable subjects, and lethal police violence promoting extrajudicial executions, which represent the addressing of abjection, as we have seen above, because they project a depreciative stigma on the slums, peripheries, people of color, and the poor. Bodies, as corpses, remain on the ground. Everything is said without mincing words, shamelessly. *BOPE*³¹ soldiers parade themselves in the city's streets, intoning their already notorious war cry, which consists in a true death threat to a whole population: "Men in black, what's your mission? Invading slums and leaving bodies on the ground!".³² We know full well what colour these bodies are.

The colour of these bodies is well-known. This carnage is authorized by the complicit omission of the Public Attorney's Office and the Ministry of Justice when it is not caused by their direct interventions (despite the fact that so many people within these institutions swim against the tide, forming an admirable resistance). It is promoted by political elites and police institutions,

³¹ BOPE stands for *Batalhão de Operações Especiais*, literally, Special Operations Battlegroup. It consists of an elite tactical unit of Rio de Janeiro's military police, which has a coat of arms that figures the image of a skull (into which is thrust a knife) with two crossed revolvers in the background.

³² "Homens de preto, qual é sua missão? É entrar pela favela e deixar corpo no chão".

relying on the explicit acquiescence of numerous social segments. The word "body", in its depreciated form, is included in institutionalized racist discourse, and refers to those who fall, depersonalized, nameless, without biographies, without rights, reduced to targets, embodiments of the evil which must be eliminated. According to an ex-commander of Rio de Janeiro Military Police, the police exercises the function of a "social insecticide".

The body, in the discourse of social movements, and especially the black body, represents a denunciation of racism, iniquity, and State violence, simultaneously. It also operates a symbolic inversion insofar as it restitutes dignity (and, indirectly, voice and rights) to these bodies.

The body evoked in words is an announced, summoned, presence, occupying space politically in public life, and physically in the urban environment. The risk is to mirror the desubjectivization which subtracts from the name, and reifies individuality, but the ambiguity has been avoided thanks to the meaning indicated, exalted, and diffused by the context of the vocabulary. Hence the importance of people's pictures and names on protest signs, narratives which singularize the episodes.

The police's body count is simultaneously and paradoxically positive and negative. On the one side, the count is indispensable to make evident the magnitude of the lethal process in course. It remains absolutely necessary to give transparency to the information. In this sense, quantification is imperative for the causes of human rights and social struggles, and to make any awareness of the real dynamics possible. On the other side, all quantification homogenizes, and by doing so, depersonalizes individuals, annihilates singularities, and ignores biographies, ultimately contributing to the reaffirmation of blanket views and generalizations, some of which are perverse. Quantification neutralizes the gravity of the facts, and mitigates their impact, thereby eroding empathy. So much so that the numbers divulged, as absurd as they are, have failed to provoke significant reactions. The so-called public opinion, apparently benumbed, has naturalized this scandalous phenomenon. One specific case, however, departed from the

usual practice, revealing the compassionate and empathetic potential of wide sectors of society: Amarildo, an innocent bricklayer who was tortured and murdered by the police in 2013, and whose body remains undiscovered. Contrary to what usually happens, his name, information about his family, and images of his house circulated in conventional and digital media, giving a human face to the tragedy. He was no longer just another victim, another number to be recorded in a continuous, uniform, and interminable series, characterized by the interchangeability of the 'units' being counted. His face, name, and history humanized the victim, creating the conditions for an experience of identification with the suffering. The effects were different from usual, and empowered the professionals who, within the Civil Police, sought to expose the farce staged by the criminals. Finally, the investigators, and an earnest chief of police prevented both corporative protection and complicit negligence.

The individualization of the episode proved fundamental for the investigation's success. Popular reaction against police violence signaled changes which could have fueled a movement for the transformation of public security practices and organizational structures if there had been political disposition on the part of the government, and continued political support on the part of critical social movements. There have been analogous cases since, which have demonstrated the aggregating and critical potential of a less technocratic communication, on the one hand, and less manipulative and conservative on the other; less doctrinarian and rhetorical, on the one hand, and less obscurantist, on the other. In sum, the inclusion of the body as a category in the social movements' lexicon makes perfect sense, and is inserted in an important process which asserts values, conceptions, and new protagonisms. Notwithstanding, this insertion must not escape critical attention, under the risk of inadvertently reinforcing homogenizing perspectives, whose logic has served structural racism and State barbarism.

In order to verify the relevance of the body as a category for antiracist struggles, suffice it to open a large circulation newspaper on the day

following “Black Consciousness” celebrations, November 21, 2020. The *Folha de São Paulo* headline reads: “Black man dies after being lynched by *Carrefour* security guards in Rio Grande do Sul”. One of the articles, by Thiago Amparo, has the following caption under a picture which captured the aggression: “The black body lying on the ground has a name and a face, João Alberto”. Sensitive to the problematic complexity involved, and attentive to its risks, the author makes recourse to the body as category, avoiding the effects of neutralization by highlighting both face and name, thus individualizing the victim. In the same edition, page A13 is almost entirely dedicated to an interview with the public prosecutor Chiara Ramos, cofounder of the *Abayomi Juristas Negras* [Abayomi Black Jurists] collective, under the title: “Our body is a political weapon, it speaks before we open our mouths, says prosecutor”. Here, we find the body, politicized and eloquent. If racism makes reference to the body’s colour, antiracist struggles make the body and its colour their spearheads to leave the trenches, in order to engage in the necessary confrontation and the urgent deconstruction. By returning the body targeted by stigma, violence, and iniquities to the arena of conflict, by resignifying and transforming it – from passive victim to protagonist – the insurgence is balanced on a knife’s edge, between the subject’s reification or affirmation, under the sign of emancipation. The menace of reification, always lurking, would result from the hypothesis that the fight against objectification would be carried out through a simple inversion of signifieds whilst keeping the signifier intact, in an idealized inversion which could reduce the vilified image to an object of fetishistic idolatry, leaving the image-object one step from mercantile appropriation. Here is an example. No-one would doubt the extraordinarily positive and liberating role of historical twists: instead of humiliation, pride; instead of aesthetic underestimation, the exaltation of beauty; instead of demoralization, the proclamation of virtue. The axis, however, is the same, and so are the references: beauty, morality, and self-esteem, making *tabula rasa* of the sordid environment

found in the cities of capital. This common axis is a dialogue with racist discourse. A dialogue with usurpation is being established. Even if denied, racist voice and power are being recognized. Does this dialogue make sense? Should not the dialogue itself be radically entombed? Does the preservation of this dialogue, in these terms, not engender the perverse appropriation of enunciations in which only meanings are inverted? Politics demands mediations and links with the principle of reality, which is itself, in part, shaped by power. Therefore, there are no critical pretensions here, since they would be abstract and depoliticized under the appearance of radicality. There is only the sharing of reflections which might enjoy some pertinence in its own level of existence and circulation.

In the feminist movement, an important slogan is “My body, my rules”. A politically and culturally strategic double symbolic inversion operates here, as well as an impacting reappropriation of liberalism. It is a double inversion insofar as rules, a synonym for menstruation³³, designated two types of depreciation: (1) female inferiority, upheld by patriarchal hierarchy, subordinating women to nature – through their “rules” [periods] and, in their absence, human reproduction – which would make them impure, hybrid, and, in this sense, less human and more dangerous – as a source of moral conspurcation and mystical malignancy; (2) women’s subjection to an order, nature, over which they have no control or power, even though this immersion in the natural world provides them, paradoxically, with another obscure and threatening form of power: witchcraft. The absence of power implies a lack of protagonism, that is to say, the subject’s passivity.

When one states “My body, my rules”, female protagonism is affirmed and inscribed in the order of citizenship, as a subject possessing rights. If the traditional dichotomy were to be applied, one would say that women, in demanding self-government, declared independence from nature, and reinscribed the feminine in culture.

³³ Note from the translator: “Rules”, or “*regras*” in Portuguese, also means “period” in the menstrual cycle.

Liberalism's reappropriation takes place by way of a tacit dialogue with theses that lie in the matrix of liberalism itself. John Locke asserted that the possession of one's own body consisted, for human beings (men, according to him), in freedom, and justified, by extension, the natural right to property, understood as everything that the body produces through work. The feminist movement, defending the right to abortion, and the full exercise of women's freedom – in the fruition of sexuality, for instance – evokes self-ownership, a principle which confers legitimacy to capitalism under the liberal perspective, but is still denied to women.

It should be noted that in the proclamation "My body, my rules", despite what one may suppose, the focus is more on the body than on the rules. If a body belongs to a woman, her power over it derives from the relationship. What is at stake is women's power over their bodies, or, better yet, the struggle against the expropriation of the female body. The violations which victimize women – from rape to femicide – are consequences that ensue from the kidnapping of their own will and dominion over themselves, this subjugation or passiveness which is also desubjectivization, and thus objectification. Violence against women is a practical development inscribed in the prohibition of abortion's perverse logic. Prior forms of female infantilization and reification involved both the lack of voting rights, and qualified immunity for femicide when the murderer was the woman's husband.

Another process of enormous historical relevance consists in the hybridizations and transits which separate body-gender-sexuality, reject the imprisonment of fixed identities, and refuse to accept the grammar of gender classification which converts anatomy into destiny. This rebellious creativity has appropriated the body as matter so as to aestheticize itself, affirming singular experiences of individuation beyond individualism, and its connections with the free market and capitalism, in order to build new perspectives of solidary emancipation. The letters LGBTQIA+ are no

longer enough to order the libertarian dynamics, and have become a mere index of respect, a sign of the recognition of an irreducible multiplicity. In the midst of the insurgent storm which sweeps away taxonomies, the body imposes itself as a platform for launching projects which transform ways of life. Phallogocentrism is being subverted, and the wandering bodies stage its demolition. Here, once again, the body is emphasized, carrying new meanings, and producing new ethical, political, and cultural impacts – a body which has been at issue in Brazilian Art, for instance, in Helio Oiticica's performances and installations, and which has been (and is) emphasized in Afro-Brazilian religions and Amerindian cosmologies. I merely outline these ideas here because they would take us too far (cf. Soares, 2019), and I offer the following example as a brief, but eloquent illustration. In her victory speech, as an elected São Paulo councilwoman, in November, 2020, Erika Hilton declared: "We don't speak from a single place, because our body is in transit and transformation all the time (...) Long live the *transviarchy*, long live the struggle of black women".

It remains for us to examine the counterpoint to the body's centrality in this new lexicon, be it derived from the feminist movement, the antiracist movement, or libertarian experiences mentioned above: social networks.

In the Web, the body, in its material and sentient positivity, is absent because it is an image (evoking a missing presence), and only the *voyeur's* sensibility, automatisms, affections, and imagination remain. The body, in the Web's networks, operates as a fetish, an egotistical and/or self-deprecating mirror, a sign of idolatry, and a symbolic mechanism in the service of neurotic repetition, numbing addition, unrealizable sex, and duplicated violence.

The risk, in these networks, is corporeality's sterilizing transmutation into fragments – a corporeality which, in presence, constitutes an affirmation. The risk is the affirmative body's shattering in order to nourish fantasies and neutralizing appropriations.

In the same manner that the new social division of labor, promoted by neoliberalism on a global scale, fractionates the subaltern classes, and dissolves identities along the economic axis – engendering political fragmentation, and facilitating cooptation – the formation of niches and bubbles is stimulated in the virtual sphere, reinforcing imaginary antagonisms, employing corporeality's repertory in order to hinder broad consensuses – which might cross artificial boundaries – and haunting any consistent critical organization. What do the networks say, essentially? Here is my virtual body, the triumph of image in the sacrifice of presence, take and devour it to redeem your solitude, here is my body to demoralize your discourse, here is my body to deauthorize yours, here is my body opposed to yours, here is my body in my place, and my place in the name of truth (to witness it and testify), here is my body to coerce yours, to seduce your will, and block your pretensions, here is the vociferousness which silences, the prayer which mutes, meaning exhausted in a click.

The paradox is set: (1) The hyper-focalization of the body depletes representation in favour of presence, just as it displaces the truth of conceptual and analytic construction to witnessing and description. This process applies to epistemology and politics. Visual records, newspaper reports, ethnographies, and testimonies are valid and valued. Nobody is a laboratory rat, a source, an informant, or anyone's object. Intellectual differences are, exclusively, differences in power. Body, presence, testimony – here is the triptych. Its effects are: direct action, and collective decisions – no-one speaks for no-one. Aesthetics returns to Romantic expressiveness. There is no surprise if the poetic persona folds itself in melancholy. The alternatives are revamped naturalism or socialist realism. Knowledge is transmitted via the horizontal sharing of learning provided by experience. Ideology and the unconscious dissolve in smoke, as categories of an old world order, ruins of the ancient regime of theoretical enunciation. Learning, in its vertical form – one speaks, the other listens – tends to be suppressed. What counts is (co)participation: provocations, for instance, instead

of questions posed to the speaker in an academic seminar. (2) The hyper-focalization of the body in an environment dominated by virtual communication exponentially increases the displacements mentioned above, giving them contours, taking them to the point of paroxysm, and, in its extreme form, inverting them. The body is a representation displayed as a direct presentation, while technological mediation is relegated to the background, even though its effects are ubiquitous. There is a cell phone between the body and a *selfie*. The theses to be written are: Absence in the age of technical reproduction, and aura restored not to the work of art, but the *selfie*. The furtive exhibitionism on the screen separates and connects interlocutors, but what is the difference between them? The absent body made present generates instability in the regime of direct action and participation, just as technological virtues validate and shake both testimony and experience. Are we before a new update of the most archaic *Narodnik* populism?

The social networks are much more than this tangled bundle and yarn of contradictions, inasmuch as the emphasis on corporeality and presence translates and potentializes very important transformations. However, as it usually happens in history, victories hold challenges. We shall return to these questions in order to radicate them in the territory. On the other hand, it is prudent to relativize the distinction between the realms of presence and virtuality. After all, we know that in social life presence is mediated by symbols and masks, culture and language. And yet, are these mediations not precisely *sub judice*; are they not exactly the mediations which have been questioned, intellectually and ethico-politically, in the age of bodies? It is ironical, at least, that the valorization of the body (beneath and beyond individualistic narcissisms, as we have demonstrated), the return of a certain immanence, and the privilege of presence coincide with the erosion of the world's materiality, illustrated by both the climate change crisis and virtuality's technological avalanche.

IX.II. POTENCY

It is impossible to emphasize enough the intellectual and political importance of substituting potency for needfulness in the discourses regarding slums and poor peripheries. The discourses have changed in academia and social movements, and, however partially, so has the social imaginary (cf. Souza e Silva et alii, 2020; Sousa, 2014; Faustini, 2009; Alvito, 2001)³⁴. Since the implementation of Gilberto Gil and Juca Ferreira's creative and democratic policies in the Ministry of Culture during Lula's government, the new interpretive tendency (which also forms a new critical consciousness) amplified its sphere of influence, producing effects in the country's most diverse areas, and in the most different ways (Costa, 2011).³⁵ Hip hop and rap have marked the cultural scene so profoundly in the last decades that the center-periphery opposition has lost its meaning. They followed in the steps of the 1980s *baile funk* parties, and the Black Rio band's sound style, showing that there was much more to the slums and *favelas* than *samba*, to no detriment of the latter (cf. Vianna, Hermano, 1995, 2014).³⁶ Concurrently, this period marked the expansion of Neo-Pentecostal churches, whose conservatism counterbalanced the rebellious impetus of the artistic dynamics (cf. Soares, 2019).³⁷

Traditionally, *favelas* were seen as the locus of the lack of basic sanitation and public policies, the location of deficient schooling and

housing. The desolate picture painted with heavy colors by this negative discourse left out the positivity of what was indeed there, all that had been constructed and accumulated through the struggles of generations of migrants, the product of hard workers, popular creativity, solidarity, and resilience. Networks of mutual assistance were born, and the local economy dodged regional and national turbulences thanks to the residents' inventiveness, entrepreneurship, and capacity to engender collaborative bonds and alliances with external institutions and entities, despite class divisions, structural racism, and widespread prejudice. The replacement of the canonical and foundational image rooted in privation for the affirmation of potency paved the way for new outlooks on the favelas, in terms of their diversity, as well as new analytical perspectives. The territories benefitted from these more considerate perceptions, especially their residents, who could now be valued, and seen as protagonists. Evidently, all generalizations uniformize the manifold, and crush the richness of reality, which is necessarily characterized by heterogeneity and contradictions. Therefore, it is not the case of opposing needfulness to potency as indicators of two homogeneous and reciprocally exclusive conceptions. Contemporary discourse accentuates potency without concealing privation, it does not idealize life in these communities, or overlook the gravity of local problems, or cancel their complexity. On the other hand, the traditional discourse which underlined privation also recognized potentialities, protagonism, and achievements, from associativism to cultural creation. The change must be understood with its nuances, as a transition of focus and emphases; even so, its implications have turned out to be extremely significant, particularly insofar as it impacted the very self-images and representations of social actors, individuals, and collectives. The prose about potency leads us to questions about its sources. The answers have brought to the fore the brutality of slavery, the tenacity of *quilombola* resistance and its African origins, in a dialogue with old themes which have been revalued.

34 Souza e Silva, Jailson; Barbosa, Jorge Luiz; Pires Simão, Mário. *A Favela reinventa a cidade*. Eduniperiferias e Mórula editorial, 2020. Sousa, Eliana. *Testemunhos da Maré*. Mórula, 2014. Faustini, Marcus Vinicius. *Guia afetivo da periferia*. Aeroplano, 2009. Alvito, Marcos. *Cores de Acari*. Editora FGV, 2001. These books and authors have already said what is essential. I see my work as a footnote to what they have produced. When I highlight them, I do not ignore the great importance of the many fundamental researches and publications whose enumeration would require a separate article. I underscore their their contributions due to the specific scope demanded by my object.

35 Costa, Eliane. *Jangada digital*. Azougue editorial, 2011.

36 Vianna, Hermano. *O mistério do samba*. Zahar, 1995. Vianna, Hermano. *O mundo funk carioca*. Zahar, 2014.

37 Soares, Luiz Eduardo. *O Brasil e seu Duplo*. Todavia, 2019.

The new discourse returns to some traditional *tropoi*, lending them new meanings by inscribing them in new contexts: authenticity, ancestry, loyalty to one's roots, the cult of origins, and the engagement with history as a source of strength and value, which demands a permanent commitment.

Instead of the process described by the Marxist model, which portrays political development as the transition from alienation to consciousness, from class-in-itself to class-for-itself, the production of another kind of social identity is taking place in social groups which adopt the language of potency, aggregating residents from revalorized territories. Pride, the obverse of humiliating submission, acquires political significance. When the body, as a category, operates as a mediator, territory and history (the critical reading of the past as revived collective memory) intersect with antiracist struggles, eventually, in their feminist version. Here, the collective subject is not exactly a social class, inasmuch as subjects do not share the same position in the economic matrix, although there are common interests – and, above all, antagonisms – depending on the specific political construction. The plurality of beliefs and values does not always imply division, but it can favour specific options and projects, as well as generate distinct perceptions of reality, in each of its minor aspects, from the problem's genesis to its overcoming.

The factors which weigh on the modelling of the real, that is, the attribution of meaning to experience, are those highlighted in sociological researches: age, gender, income and economic activity, color or ethnicity, marital status, place of residence, family composition, trajectory (migrant, new resident, old resident), schooling, religion, and associative bonds.

The category "potency", much like "body", in the trail of the ideas which have focused on the process denominated "empowerment", has come to stay. Understanding all of its politico-cultural and intersubjective meanings exceeds the limits of this study, but the general sketch presented is enough for now to underline its importance. It remains for us, then, to

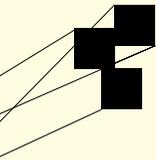
indicate such limits, since each new achievement brings, along with new perspectives, new problems which demand critical apprehension. The employment of the noun "potency", and its adjectival version "potent", in parallel with the aforementioned positive requalification of actors and territories which it produced, has at times served as an alibi for the oblivion or repression of a vast set of delicate questions which were not resolved, and have not disappeared, in spite of it. They were only displaced to an obscure area from which they can return, destabilizing associative life, and haunting political culture. Here are some examples. To a work of art, or an aesthetic intervention, corresponds a judgement – beautiful, for instance – which is formulated on the basis of certain criteria – judgement and criteria susceptible to argumentative interlocution – that could mobilize theses, concepts, hypotheses, and historical interpretations and reinterpretations. When one designates this work or intervention as "potent", even if the category itself does not hinder debates and questions, the focus on complex aesthetic problems (which includes their relationships with other spheres of human and social experience) is deviated to an area of vague attribution of moral or ethical value, as well as cultural and psychic, social and political value. A potent work of art (or an act, intervention, or performance) is endowed with a force or power which emanates from the author(s), the culture in which it is inscribed, and/or its intrinsic characteristics. What counts is authorship and context – authenticity is again at stake as a value and criterion (though a criterion that tends to tautology) – in such a way that if the reading attributes to the work intentions or properties which reinforce expectations, and produce convictions shared by those who observe and judge, it shall be considered potent. "Potent" is a commendation, that is to say, a valorization without commitment (that turns out to be the narcissistic – and solipsistic – exaltation of oneself, or the indulgent celebration of confirmed consent) to criteria which could be made explicit, and would be susceptible to problematizations – after all, criteria involve reflections

about premises, values, rationality, method, norms, concepts, and the relationships between subject and object. These reflections could orbit around non-Eurocentric points; the fact is that a critical dialogue would be stimulated. "Potent" has the same European roots as the themes of ethics, aesthetics, and argumentative rationality. It harkens back to Nietzsche and his repudiation of Christianity, seen as a factory of impotence and resentment. Adopting Nietzschean perspectives constitutes a perfectly pertinent option, but it contradicts the adoption of Christian values – such as solidarity – which figure in the same discourses that refer to potency. The contradiction above could be admitted and elaborated somehow, but it is not even recognized. It operates, therefore, against the actors' intentions, corroding the formulations' sustainability. For this reason, the meanings of "potency" must remain superficial and rhetorical; a more profound scrutiny would imply the risk of imploding an intellectual (and maybe political) unity which only exists formally, and, in this sense, is more fragile than it would appear at first sight. And, undoubtedly, the difficulties would not be restricted to aesthetics. "Potent" replaces ethical, moral, and political judgement. We no longer need the beautiful, the just, and the true. What a relief to be rid of two and a half millennia of Western metaphysics. And yet, this satisfaction might be, perhaps, too hasty. At what price do we bury tradition? Could it not be the case that we are mesmerized by the mirage of an artifice which merely replaces adjectives (beautiful, just, true, politically effective) with another (potent), whose advantage would be self-sufficiency, dispensing with criteria and arguments? Can the new adjective really do without presuppositions, or does it simply close the subject with the gift, or the tone, of authority?

As we can see, several challenges are posed, despite advancements and achievements, by the victories themselves. This is no surprise: it is indeed through moving contradictions, sinuosities, gradations, ambivalences, advances and retrogressions, continuities and ruptures, and continuity in

ruptures, that history is made and written. At the end of this essay's first section we detected the following irony: the valorization of the body, and the privilege of presence coincide with the erosion of the world's materiality, in the context of both the climate crisis, and virtuality's technological avalanche. Now, the second part's conclusion places us before another irony: the affirmation of potency, which intends to be a presage of change, reverts to us the task it was supposed to accomplish. Sisyphus returns to the scene, anew, as new. It is his burden to inherit this paradoxical legacy: his destiny is the past. This will not necessarily be the case provided that we are conscious of the plot in which we are entangled. Our efforts will not have been in vain if they contribute somehow to the problem's recognition.

One last observation may prove fruitful: whilst Maré residents signal that, in the midst of crises and the pandemic, almost imperceptibly, at the frontiers of our field of perception, they gestate a new world, reclaiming everyday life, and cultivating the obverse of what causes pain; in the gaps of the capitalist, monolithic principle of reality, the organic intellectuality of this process, if we may define it so, seeks to valorize and safeguard the precious experience in course. It remains important to recognize that it has been accomplishing this task with intelligence and passion, regardless of the new lexicon's qualities and limits. Hence, another pertinent question emerges in these last lines: does it make sense to talk about organic intellectuality, or does this category improperly transpose the orthodox lexicon to a context which demands original concepts? To the readers I offer an answer, or rather the maturation of a doubt.



X. REFLECTIONS ON THE PATH TAKEN

An alternative title would perhaps be more precise, but I have decided against it due to its tone, whose pretentiousness would border arrogance: "Discourse on the Method" (complemented by a synthesis of our itinerary). In fact, this is the issue at hand here. Nevertheless, let us recall that method is a pathway, and in the human sciences, in its interpretive fields, method constitutes a map which is elaborated almost *a posteriori*, and serves to rememorate the steps adopted, and justify choices made, but not to orientate future excursions since the terrain and its topography are unstable, and move according to each path taken. For sure, repetition works sometimes, and rememoration is useful to those who retrace steps. The hermeneutical game has rules, as any game does. What works and what does not work depends on retrospective evaluation, *a posteriori* judgement.

As I stated above in the opening, "what is known for sure is that to analytically approach a creative community implies getting closer to an extraordinarily complex, changing, and contradictory constellation of perceptions, affections, and practices". Subsequently, I have sought to qualify this constellation's dynamic character in Maré's specific case. The focus, the very object of analysis, insofar as it is elevated from the empirical to the interpretive level, leads to the pairing "potentially traumatizing events", which aggravates structural peculiarities, and "everyday life", as an active reappropriation full of implications.

I have mentioned the interpretive level. I understand it as the stratum of a study which has primary data and originary discursive productions as raw material for theoretically supported recontextualizations, decompositions, and recombinations, whose validation criterion reveals itself *a posteriori*, founded on the heuristic returns of the work undertaken, and the capacity

to circulate matrical signifieds and semantic reverberations. Such capacity does not affirm itself in absolute terms. It demonstrates its eventual virtues in comparison with other real or potential hermeneutic exercises.

I support the hypothesis that the reconciliation, the reappropriation of everyday life, in the terms I have proposed – drawn from Veena Das and, in part, De Certeau – involves the subjects' active intervention, that is, some degree of freedom: negative (relating to restrictions of every sort) and positive (promoting action and thought as a moment of active life). On the other side of liberation there is fear – insecurity – the name of all restrictions.

In this sense, the synthesis I have attempted can thus be enunciated: "The version of the Maré community which is sketched here is simply an edited sequence of snapshots of this work of liberation, or better yet, of this tireless endeavor to achieve it, from which the desire for art, though so important, is far from being its only evidence, and for which Sisyphus' tenacity may serve as a model".

Snapshots allude to moments, figures, expressions, excerpts, pieces, fragments, actions, words, and images of a multidimensional work of liberation in course (which must not be idealized or approached unilaterally). The chosen snapshots' editing sequence is key: it is what this essay intends to be. The former takes place according to some general principles and specific orientations, in a dialogue with eclectic theoretical references (ranging from pragmatism to structuralism, Marxism to phenomenology, philosophy of language to hermeneutics), while remaining mindful, I hope, of the minimal requirements of rigor and consistency.

It is typical in editing to extract parts from the original or "natural" "whole" in which they are inscribed (a radio soap opera, a podcast dramatization, an album, a poem, a circumstantial utterance in an alley, bar, house, street, or interview, a memorialist text, an actual or virtual chat, a testimony, et cetera). It is, therefore, an artificial proposition, a product of analytic work, which, in its turn, fulfills its own aesthetic strategy,

since it gives new body or form to the splinters taken from the original integral bodies, conferring them with a another body, so to speak. In this intervention, the hermeneutic exercise acts with an inevitable dose of violence, for it violates the cohesion between the parts, and their bond to the whole, to the context or to the original frame of reference parts which are regarded as such a posteriori, in and through editing, since before that they were indiscernible from the syntagmatic continuum, or the flux of existential processes. These "parts" will compose other constellations; they will be integrated in other configurations, and promote other cohesions. The "parts", that is, the separated units, will reveal themselves (by floating, autonomizing, and transferring themselves) to be signifieds endowed with surprising singularity and astounding sovereignty, when in transit from one grammar to another, from one code to another, from one system to another, from one constellation to another. This interpretive violence is only justified if, in the end, it has something to say, if it serves the potentialization of the links in the chains, transforming them into axes of new chains, gravitational centers which uphold new perspectives capable of illuminating new angles of experience and routinized, discolored, automatized, impoverished, exhausted, saturated language, which is unable to open new paths, or promote new points of departure for action: thinking, doing, constructing, exchanging, weaving.

The question which emerges is this: How to reconcile the idea of the *editing of snapshots* (which violates original sign systems and contexts), with the recommendation, which already figures on the first page, that the context must be duly considered, and with the suggestion that the passwords for decoding should come from the very authors of the discourses collected? As I have stated above: "As regards the first step, there can be no doubt: it is necessary to listen, time and again, improving the reception to what is said and what is silenced, taking into consideration the interlocutory and historical contexts...".

Despite the impression of incoherence, or even contradiction, in the postulations' comparison, there is coherence between them provided one takes into account the paragraph's opening sentence: "As regards the first step, there can be no doubt". Interpretation is a process because it consists in an elaboration which presupposes stages, the first of which is to access primary sources and, depending on the case, successive layers of secondary sources. More than that, incorporating, welcoming, and valorizing the passwords which derive from the authors themselves requires a demanding interpretive treatment, since the authors do not have conscious access to such passwords. It will be indispensable to violate the family bonds which conjugate the original elements and their systems of reference in order to analytically reconstruct the password. Besides, interpretation is a process, an open work in constant movement, frozen in each text (because that is the nature of texts), but susceptible to changes, corrections, postponements, etc. In sum: reediting. The product is either good or bad if, compared to previously accessible knowledge and/or alternative formulations, it reveals itself more comprehensive, that is, capable of accounting for that which other products possess, and of adding new elements, or, at least if it reveals itself apt to indicate previously ignored or neglected perspectives (or alternative analyses), thus illuminating (and, at the very most, redefining) the object's other angles. As one may deduce, this essay is a tributary of an argumentative epistemology. Neither relativism, nor ontological faith in the transparency of language, but a dialogical constructionism of results, if I am allowed to put it humorously.

We have finally arrived at the central axis of the interpretation proposed here, around which the other analyses orbit, and which I allow myself to reproduce synthetically: "What sounds ambiguous and imprecise in vacillating speech – 'it is and it isn't' – may gain clearness and relevance if interpreted under this prism (...) Whoever names with the readiness of certainty in the face of evidences evades the awareness of how feeble is

the future demand from each source of fear, the intertwined machines of armed drug trafficking factions, milícias, and the police, which fuel each other. Indeed, since what 'is' needs to continually 'come into being', to reiterate itself, a movement which carries the risk of deviation intrinsic to all reproduction. What appears under the mode of permanence is reiterated insistence (...) Hesitation may perhaps correspond to making the meanings of reality reverberate, with their implications and contradictions, beyond the delimitations, and even the censorship, which the powers at play attempt to impose. (...) Semantic instability suspends ideology's matrilineal supposition and its first implication: the indisputability of the agreement with the principle of reality, and the transparency of language. Saying that something is and is not displaces the reference to the world (naively taken as the repository of the things that are) to the dance of real life permeable to action, to the dynamism intrinsic to history. (...) Hesitating proposes to the affections and the imagination the hypothesis that reality is a container of possibilities, among which are those incompatible with the political armature consolidated by the conservative and authoritarian modernization of our peripheral capitalism. (...) A thing 'is and is not' not because whoever enunciates does not know if, effectively, the thing is or is not. This simultaneity of being and not being is what something is, because what it brings with itself, in this case, beyond positive evidences, an irreducible alterity, is the potentiality for action, which summons action, and inscribes change in the field of reality. When one talks of hope, it is of this abundance of reality, it is of this same excess that one speaks. What is and, at the same, its negation, are both there, being that this second reality constitutes that which is not seen because it has not been affirmed as practice, though it is also present due to the mediation of its effects by anticipation or potentialization. (...) In this sense, an enunciation is a gesture, a small and living work of art which mobilizes knowledge and politics, speculation and action, contemplation and protagonism, epistemology and aesthetics".

The other reflections are structured around this interpretation. The third section thematized police and State brutality, through a reading in line with the approach applied to that set of issues. Subsequently, this essay focused on the metabolization of challenges and tensions in the context of two individual trajectories (sections 4 and 5). The sixth section established a dialogue with aspects of poetic creation. Sections 7 and 8 were dedicated to the scrutiny of time and space reinventions, respectively, connected to this remarkable undertaking which consists in the reappropriation of everyday life, daily routine, and freedom, insofar as it is humanly and socially possible, breaking walls which block the future. The ninth section discussed some categories that compose the new lexicon of politicized popular culture.

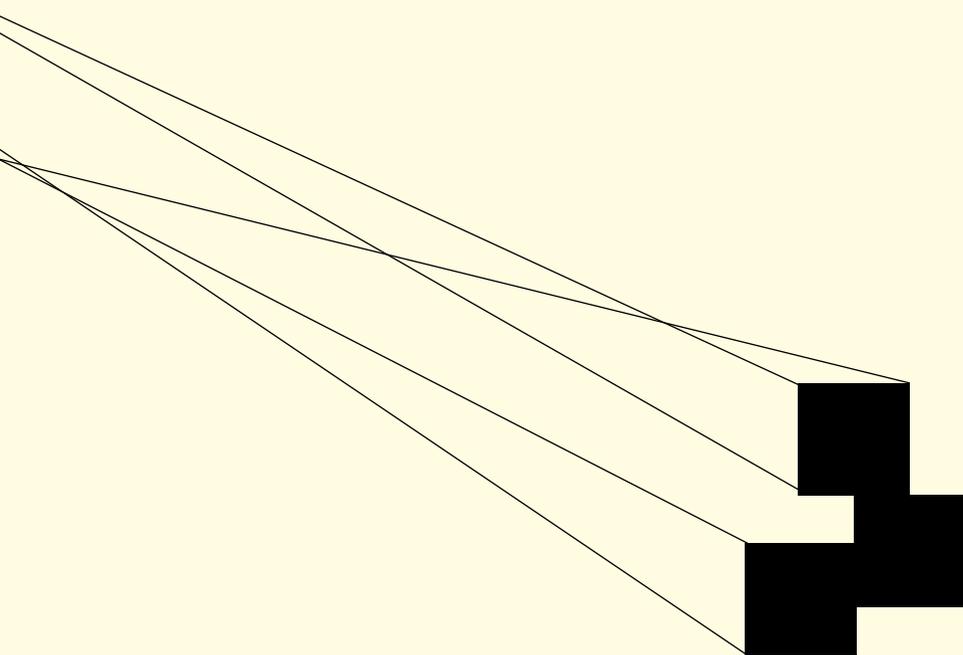
Despite everything, whether these already extensive considerations are consistent or not, what the author would have liked to say with fewer words, were he capable of it, would be something to be read as the recognition of human experience's extraordinary richness in the communities which comprise Maré.

And now, returning to the first-person singular pronoun, I revere its people.

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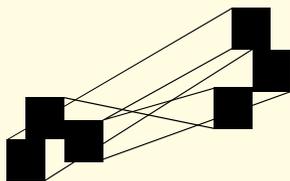
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