

Yesterday's Future, Tomorrow's Past: Reorienting a politics of transformation in the peripheries of the modern world

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Fecha de recepción: 11/08/2016

Fecha de aceptación: 10/11/2016

Resumen

América Latina ha sido vista, una vez y otra también, como hogar de semi-civilizados. O esa es la impresión que arrojan los imaginarios (post) coloniales y sus narrativas 'del desarrollo' sobre un Nuevo Mundo que todavía no ha despegado. Ni primitivos (a la manera del "continente oscuro") ni avanzados (estatus garantizado para el "primer mundo"), los gigantes de América Latina están, en el mejor de los casos, crónicamente emergiendo de su condición de subdesarrollo. Esta posición intermedia es ejemplificada por el dilema brasileño de una inacabada e interminable modernización a la que se le responsabiliza de curar todos los males. Con ese espíritu, muchos problemas políticos son desplazados hacia el terreno del "desarrollo", desarticulando así los clivajes de clase, raza, género y sexualidad, entre otras cuestiones de poder que se ven negadas por las macro-estructuras que privilegian el orden (¿orden de quién?) y el progreso (¿a dónde y a qué costo?). En respuesta, aquí doy cuenta de dinámicas cotidianas en Río de Janeiro, a modo de reorientar dichas grandes narrativas del desarrollo trunco, la corrupción y otros problemas "de tercer mundo". Más que ofrecer una teoría acabada o una solución, ofrezco una voz que puede empezar a re-articular cómo pensamos los límites y las posibilidades de una política periférica de la transformación.

Palabras clave: desarrollo, Brasil, política urbana, política post colonial, narrativas

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Abstract

Latin America has been envisioned, time and again, as home to the semi-civilized. Or so (post)colonial imaginaries continue to impress upon us in developmental renderings of a New World that has yet to take off. Neither backward (in the ways of a 'dark continent') nor advanced (as guaranteed by the status of a 'first world'), its giants are, at best, chronically emerging. This in-between position is acutely exemplified by the Brazilian dilemma of an interminable modernization, responsabilized for curing all of our ills. Within this spirit, problems of politics are recurringly displaced onto 'development', disarticulating class, race, gender, sexuality, among other political conjunctures negated in macrostructures that privilege order (whose order?) and progress (to where through what costs?). In response, I here recount everyday dynamics in Brazil's aspiring world-city of Rio de Janeiro as a way to reorient such grand narratives of arrested development, corruption, and other 'third world' problems. More than offering a final theory or solution, I offer a voice in which we may begin to rearticulate how we think about the limits and possibilities of a peripheral politics of transformation.

Keywords: development, Brazil, urban politics, postcolonial politics, narratives

Prologue: Reimagining 'third world' problems

If you ask a *gringo* on tour to classify Brazil as a 'first world' or 'third world' country, you are likely to get some confused responses into the nature of Latin America's 'emerging giant'. As it happens, even we Brazilians are apt to offer up some confused responses amongst ourselves when called to take a step back and assess our land of many contrasts.

Latin America has been envisioned, time and again, as home to the semi-civilized. Or so (post)colonial imaginaries continue to impress upon us in developmental renderings of a New World that has yet to take off. Neither backward (in the ways of a 'dark continent') nor advanced (as guaranteed by the status of 'developed' conjugated in the past tense), its so-called promising leaders (think BRICS) are, at best, chronically emerging.

This in-between position is acutely exemplified by the Brazilian dilemmas of an interminable modernization, responsabilized for curing all of our ills. Rather than render *contemporary* a politics of transformation in the peripheries of an international system, the developmental imperative that has here colonized our socio-political imaginations urges a subsumption into *modern* idealizations of what it means to live well (to properly organize society, government, the market, etc.), measured against the incorruptible standards of a modernity believed to have been realized somewhere 'lá fora' (out there). As we hear day in and day out, on the

news, in our classrooms, and at the corner-street bar, when we 'get it right', it is 'para inglês ver' (for the English to see), and not for the Brazilians to judge.

Expressive of as much shame as its flip side, pride, the Brazils that we live, desire, fear, and project are attuned to the hauntings of a modernity never to have been realized. We are a country defined comparatively by lack, whose national social sciences authored complexes of inferiority that since processes of decolonization has secured the position of our European(ized) governing elite as self-appointed translators of modern ways of living.¹ Struggling with and against standards of measure imposed, inherited, and imagined of places believed to have made it 'out there', seldom do we ask: how much of our apparent virtues and vices do we actually want to give up, for what, and at what cost? In whose name are the limits and possibilities of 'development' being drafted?

For far too long 'underdeveloped' and 'developing' regions have been treated as homogenous territories of poverty and chaos, erasing internal systems of class, cultures of inequality, and, as it is of any society, conflict, dispute, and contestation. Ironically, these inevitable dimensions of politics are similarly erased of the 'first world' standard imagined and imported by development experts against which we are to measure ourselves. Yet, it is 'third world problems' that are displaced as a problem of politics and translated into a problem of development. In turn, our past, present, and projected futures are narrated in terms that are neither of here nor there, unresponsive to the lived realities of Brazilians variously positioned.

As a country whose history is celebrated and lamented through the lens of pacification (i.e. a mode of occupation characterized by claims to cordiality, conciliation, hospitality, hybridity, creativity, among other mythical standards of a social and racial democracy), the logic of war vs. peace does not tend to prevail (at least, ostensibly) as the dominant mode of our struggles. And yet, fear of chaos and disorder prevails as one of the most powerful weapons for enforcing the good, the bad, and the ugly of our contemporary realities. Not by chance does the caption embroidered in the centre of our national flag read 'ordem e progresso' (order and progress). Either we do dictatorship and order, or populism and progress. Or so we are told of our failed political democracies: someone has to take charge in a land of incompetents, which is what we learn of inferiority complexes internationally oriented that strategically benefit our national elite. More than our streets, what is ultimately being policed in attempts at a third world take-off are our dreams for what is possible, viable, and desirable. At stake is who decides what our problems are, and, in turn, their solutions.

¹ For a symptomatic elaboration on Brazil's 'complexo de vira-lata' (complex of the mixed-breed or mutt), see Aurélio Schommer's *História do Brasil Vira-Lata: As Razões Históricas da Tradição Autodepreciativa Brasileira* (History of Brazil Mutt: The Historical Reasons for the Brazilian Self-deprecating Tradition).

In the legendary lands of the semi-civilized, in a Latin/America condemned to the timeless and interminable status of 'emerging', the relentlessly menacing force is not of anarchy, but corruption. Within these frustrated (post)colonial imaginaries, what distinguishes the 'delayed' ways of a Latin America in construction (e.g. 'o atraso brasileiro') from the 'backward' ways of peripheries otherwise located (epitomized by myths of a racialized darkness projected onto 'scrambles for Africa' and the subsequent resignations of 'lost causes') is that here, in the land of Europe's exiles, escapes, and settlements, we are presumed to be going in the right direction. Or so we hear from development experts and political analysts, here and abroad, who invest in the possibility of Brazil's take-off, decade in, decade out. Against imperial projections of an absolute otherness and exclusion of the likes of the 'dark continent' (reiterated at length long after the decolonization of the African continent), the visions of paradise projected onto the land of the emerging since its 'discovery' usher in specific and singular challenges regarding which Brazils we are to overcome, and how, given the insidious *potential* for our (dis)qualification into the modern world. Otherwise put, to mobilize development theories crafted for those who are not in the game of being qualified or disqualified as potential partners in an international system (e.g. places judged, by modern standards, of absolute 'misery' and an 'anarchic' state of never-ending wars), misses out on the violences and negotiations specific to each of these co-constitutive positions, that of the abandoned and that of the emerging.

Compared to our continental counterpart to the north (Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and Republican in inspiration), we of Latin, Catholic, and Patrimonial breed, so the story goes, have deviated from the idealized developmental pathways to a modern society, government, and marketplace. Otherwise we could have become, by now, the United States of America to the south, given our analogous patterns and scope of settlement, colonization, and migration of enslaved and upwardly mobile subjects whose trails have chronicled the last half-millennium of (inter)national transformations. And here we find the lament of so many of our intellectuals and governors in our failure to become a truly modern civil society (American-style!), which is consequently internalized as self-shame whose cure is more often put as its reversal, pride of our unbounded creativity, rather than a changing of the terms of the game.² In this sense, Brazil has been predominantly defined in both popular and official discourses as the land of the future, of those corrupted along the way, who will never 'get there', an idealized modernity of Anglo-Saxon inspiration.³ "We had everything to get it right!", we hear of our

² For crafting our national myths based on a sense of pride in a creative and miscegenated society, see Gilberto Freyre, in conversation with the laments of a cordial (rather than civil) civilization as envisioned by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. For further reference on how they set up the pillars of contemporary Brazilian social and political thought, see João Marcelo Maia's and Jessé Souza's political overviews.

³ See Stefan Zweig's *Brazil, Land of the Future* for one of the first and most influential formulations of this term.

abundant land and resources. It is our people, our ways, that are the impediment. Stuck, in-between, we are neither here nor there, and this not knowing of our place conceals as much as it reveals.

The city that is seen and sees itself as emblematic of this ‘Brazilian Brazil’, as we say, ‘meu Brasil brasileiro’, full of (im)possibilities, remains to this day, Rio de Janeiro. The once capital of the Iberian Empire, today it guarantees itself as a sort of laboratory for what a Brazilian development could look like. Here you may find encrusted layers of Portuguese, French, British, German, and yes, eventually American remodellings of a burgeoning civilization, but you will not find China Towns or Little Italys; not even our Argentinean neighbours have been able to carve out a piece of home away from home in the ‘Marvellous City’. The more one becomes *Carioca*, of this place, the more Rio captures our imaginings of the anchors of the good life. Where it is beautiful, it is exuberantly beautiful; where it is ugly, it is horrifyingly so. It is not against a fixed or monolithic reality that we gauge a politics of transformation. Our political imaginations are thus recurrently realigning themselves to our senses of reality, to visions of Rios, Brazils, Americas, and worlds here and beyond that guide us to where we do and do not want to be.

In sum, how we account for our everyday realities, in centres and peripheries continuously redefined, usher in different pathways for what we have come to know as ‘development’. In place, the pasts, presents, and futures of a third world development manifest themselves as orientations for the here and now. As follows, I rehearse varied histories of the present that reflect such self-images and their deceptions, so as to reorient the grand narratives of arrested development, corruption, and other so-called third world problems. More than offering a final theory or solution, I here offer a voice in which we may begin to rearticulate how we think about the limits and possibilities of a peripheral politics of transformation.

Urban Odysseys

— “All aboard!”

The brass notes of an expedition march fill the platform, trains to each side chugging away from their central station to suburbs folded into freeways, clogged beyond reach...

We sit, blindfolded. The troops guiding the voyage otherwise ordinary invite us to listen to the sounds of our everyday routes. Listen. Vulnerable, we would be, if it were not Sunday, a Sunday afternoon of theatre, of a planned unplanned urban odyssey.⁴ Passengers destined for home, stare. We can’t see or know where we are

⁴ How do we navigate, occupy, host, and resist within the spaces of our everyday lives? How to describe a city? This question inspires the guided voyages to come, and, is inspired by one particularly staged voyage in the Rio winter of 2013. As urban intervention, the performance-arts group from the Maré favela complex invited passers-by to embark on their everyday routes on the urban trains, in a new light. And this vignette here follows such a journey... For further

heading, but at our first stop, we are invited to remove our blindfolds and bear witness to our surroundings.

– “Will you accept a machine devised to glimpse the future?”

Time-travel? Promptly, we are presented with individuated machines meant to protect us in moving forward, while we take in what is left behind. Our anachronistic guides, one by one in unmatched costumes, place adapted blue construction helmets on our heads: in place of eyes, mirrors. Awkwardly, we walk forward, and yet, can only see back.

– “What do you see?”

– “I see a hill, out in the distance.” The favela stares back. *Complexo do Alemão*. The German Complex, pacified, occupied, urbanized since 2011. Or so the stories go. Envisioned metamorphosing from ‘slum’ to ‘neighbourhood’, it stands before us, behind us, in front of us, as one of the most violent of the city’s territories. Number 126, it is iconic, with its claim to Rio’s lowest ranked in the metropolitan indices of human development.⁵ A site representative of a civil war gone by, laying dormant, it has never been a place of anarchy, but of opposition of competing orders: one recognizably statist, and the other, if measured by the former’s terms, of organized crime. Captured and recaptured, in excess, today it is starved of leadership.⁶ Urbanizing, with widening streets the official governors of the land open passageways for policing, mapping, cataloguing, higienizing, curing, charging, selling. Forests and thickets of escape, continue to thin. Unequal topographies remain. Here we find the plots of the ‘German’ who once made claim to the productive suburbs that were to service a city emerging into the promises of the twentieth century. He was actually Polish, but to the Portuguese ear... Later home to migrant workers of industrializing trades, the extensive lands, bought off and named after the Polish, err, ‘German’, investor, was occupied in the hope of national Brazilian development.⁷ And now, through the contours of the favela, it reins as a symbol of its despair. Extensive, no doubt, even though not the most

contextualization of their projects and accounts of life in the peripheries, productions based on the direction of Joana Levi and Isabel Paoni, see *Cia Marginal do Complexo da Maré* (2013)

⁵ According to the 2010 census of the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), the Complexo do Alemão ranked 126th, Rio’s worst ranked municipal district, with a human development index of 0,711 (Instituto Perreira Passos).

⁶ One of the most common accounts related by residents of occupied territories in Rio (of the UPP experience, 2010 onward) is that in the dispute over authority between “the state” and the “traffickers”, residents have been living in abandonment. Many accounts describe that the forms of governing prior to the occupations made more sense (“they treated us better”) because traffickers and company, having grown up in the favelas, “they know how to talk to us, they know where we are coming from”. See archives of Museu da Maré for more accounts (*Cia Marginal do Complexo da Maré* 2013).

⁷ Refer to the UPP archives for more histories of the transformation of this land from an agricultural zone, of the Polish farmer and proprietor, Leonard Kaczmarkiewicz, in the 1920s, to its accelerated industrialization from the 1950s onward, when it began to be populated by workers of nearby factories (Instituto Perreira Passos 2010).

populous of the city's zoned off areas, gated and militarized, some 60,555 of Rio's 6.5 million inventoried inhabitants live amidst its widening streets and thinning forests. Look up! The lift glides along cables, from the train platform beneath our feet to the single station towering at large over the subdivisions of the German's Complex sprawling below. Will it prove itself as the latest attraction of the Marvellous City's⁸ amusement park, charted off terrains ready for consumption... For the poor, of the poor? Perhaps, if, of course, all of this is first baptized by the foreigner. Make way for hungry locals, our devouring elites. I see a flag cresting that final peak, out in the distance. Do you see it, can you make out its colour?

— "I see transport stations of all sorts integrated into one massive and exclusive passageway through the city." Look left, we make out more platforms being built and rebuilt. *Bilhete Único*, a single fare, a sort of credit card of access, is celebrated for giving us right of entry, to travel across the city, by any formalized means, the latest campaign of our benevolent governor. Trains, subways, busses, vans, ferries, cable-cars, motor-taxis and more: "A one-way voyage, whatever it takes, all for the low, low price of R\$250.50", announces one of our guides. Do we laugh? Uprisings in 2013 over the 20-cent fare increase from \$2.75 to \$2.95 elicited, no doubt, a varied response. For one hot and stuffy month, in the congested centres of Brazil's major cities, everyday immobility was made visible by protests, rather than by the ordinary and invisibilized blockades of social and racial segregation. Millions across the country took to the streets in what became known as the 'Journeys of June' leading up to the test trial that was the Confederation Cup for upcoming mega-events in the aspiring world-city (World Cup 2014, Olympics 2016, and what next?). We passed the test, apparently, and yet 2013 quickly became a new benchmark for what kind of mass mobilization is possible in the country so often referred to as the 'Sleeping Giant'. Premonitions, are they, intuitions of a past or future to come? Laughter irrupts when all else is repressed, let free. Freedom? The city, with interconnected transport routes, now dreamt to function, at its best, as a shopping centre, a public private space. Choice would abound, colonizing our options. Corridors connecting platforms of a marketplace for one and...?

— "I see the stadium, in formation of a flying saucer." *Maracanã*, our public patrimony of modernist imposition, stands below. Ready for take-off! To showcase the future of a new nation to come, venues are reassembled to raise up our champions. This is where we win. This is where the beautiful game is not measured in goals, alone. The Olympic city re-envisioned, with stages set to prove our worth to locals and foreigners alike. Where competition can be imagined among equals, where we learn of democracy in the land where rules are laws. Rituals to honour

⁸ For more of a sense for how Rio gained its nickname of 'cidade maravilhosa' (marvellous city), refer to accounts of its urbanization processes in the midst of 'natural' exuberance, in the edited collection *A Cidade e as Formas de Vivier* (The City and Forms of Living, Castro et al 2005).

and remind ourselves of who we want to be and how we want to play. To host the world in our stands, so that they can gaze upon us, evaluate and judge us, cheer and jeer for us. We belong. Who do you see, within and beyond those spaceship walls?

— “I see scaffolds of a city, in construction.” Frameworks, suspended. Cranes, swinging. Platforms, elevated. Yet what is being constructed, for whom, and how, lies beyond the horizon of the naked eye. Or does it? Disengage the machine of the future. Without the mirrors, now: Look, what do you see? Listen, what do you hear? Touch, what do you feel? Smell, what do you take in? Taste...wait, maybe not...

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At our next stop, we huddle. Enclosed within makeshift structures of waiting, waiting, a-waiting the unknown intervals of our coming train, we listen to stories of odysseys, mythologized.

— “Arriving strangers may be dangerous or harmless: residents are wise to be prepared for trouble.”

These cautionary words I hear, crouched on the hot concrete platform of a station legendary for its assaults. *Estação Triagem*, the screening station. As the voice of our guide softens, this Homeric line is re-remembered in a hospitable gesture:

— “Stay, I will eat you last”.

Waiting, it strikes me. Ahh, now I finally get what is at stake in hospitality. How it is that we, cordial figures of a tropical oasis overcoming itself, in search of order and progress toward a future of promises, can be so trusting and distrusting at the same time, in the same place. They are two sides of the same coin, after all. In the land where to cheat is to betray, ‘trair’ (cheating) lies beyond winning. How it is that every time that I get into these trains, in my everyday, the fortunate ones who claim a seat hold our bags and heavy belongings, for us. How every time that I get into these trains, our senses are alert and ready for battle, against us. Offenses of every kind. How it is that contradictions are possible, to the point of being functionally un-contradictory. The conditioning of the unconditioned, is where the lessons of the out of place reside.

Hence the recourse to epic formulations of banal voyages, so as to reveal to us what we would otherwise fail to see? Perhaps it is in this sense that hospitality is intended as a condition for peace, for the peaceable?⁹ A giving that short-circuits

⁹ Whether in the meditations of epic Greek poems attributed to Homer in origin stories of Western modernity, or in their more philosophical formulations refined through its Enlightenment gestation such as through the classic references of Kantian inspiration, journeys to unknown lands have defined our sense of place and identity. The Homeric inspiration of this particular voyage may be perceptively grasped in meditations of the sorts of a Derridean engagement with the Kantian premise of conditioned and unconditional hospitality, of a relative and absolute ethic that informs our navigations with others, with the other. A good starting place here may be Kant’s essay on

cycles of exchange, as species of counterfeit money?¹⁰ Wherein debt is annulled, or at least, deferred or transferred? Money, after all, has a lot more to do with credit and debt than it does value. To assume or forge the form of giving, once given, must we repay? What other forms could it take? If the conditioned is indeed constitutive of the unconditioned, and vice versa, then what we are left with is the need to respond. Hospitality: the disposition within which a stranger is not to be treated as an enemy. To receive: hold, bear, contain. The embrace of worldly citizens? Refuge for the exiled, for figures cast out or caught in between? In the problem of hospitality we find the problem of how to incorporate others in ourselves, ourselves in one another. How to live with... Neither public nor private, both public and private, we face the practical, the unfounded: what must, and cannot, be responded to. Stay, I will eat you last.

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In transit, we in-corporate the skin that must be as sensitive as it is anesthetized, to guard, to guide.¹¹ Our train chugs along, now veering in the direction of home. From my open window, I hear the soundtrack of naturalized fictions, of our collective transportation. The obligation to come and go, the myth resounds. On track, places made to traverse. Non-spaces, or at best, in-between. Listen. Here we sit, with the (extra)ordinary capacity to read the city in silence and hear the thoughts of others. Caught in habit, congested, a Sunday afternoon of theatre transforms our time in waiting into time of senses. Opportunity, lost.

On this, our voyage, we travel accompanied by guides: actors of a third world periphery, who help us to create the necessary distance to look anew, for a new look. With actors who live the city, through scenes of our everyday, we receive stories of people and places as fiction, staged, revealing the bearable and unbearable of that reality. In transit, we recreate experiences of a laboratory, exploring contours, central and peripheral, and their relations with the preconstructed images. Cities of desire, of fear, of memories. Here, with good fortune, our voyage is literal, and not an estranged metaphor of the interiority of the

Perpetual Peace, and its elaboration of the conditions of a universal hospitality, and Derrida's readings in *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (1994).

¹⁰ In particular, Derrida's exploration of the paradox of the gift in *Given Time*, serves as a good starting point to reconsider notions of giving and helping, central to problematizations of development, poverty, justice, and so on, that mark centre/periphery relations, variously scaled. He gets us to ask, is it possible to give in ways that do not work through circles of exchange that turns the gift into a debt to be returned? His response, for the gift to be received as a gift, it must not manifest as such, since its mere appearance as gift puts it in the circle of repayment and debt. If, or where, the paradox is normalized, in traversing multiple orders not easily reducible to quantifiable standards, the political economy of development takes different turns.

¹¹ Gloria Anzaldúa's "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers" elaborates this tension in provocative ways, in the edited collection *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (2002).

spectator.¹² We are the actors, the audience. There is no script awaiting our interpretation, no stand-alone background to be expressed or reflected off... There are only times in transit.

In places of passage, all travellers are invited to undertake a Homeric odyssey, and so our guide cautions us. Between the timeless and the debased, between truth and falsity, between the legendary and the authentic, in the myth of all voyages, in odysseys of places real and imagined: "He saw the cities and came to know the thoughts of many men"¹³. In turn, we too embark on odysseys, whose mark is both travel and wandering, as well as its narration – of adventures, encounters, and events, un/fore/seeable. Investigation, redefined.

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At our final stop, weary passengers disperse across platforms that designate destinations, known and unknown. From across the interspace, we face opposing stations.

– "Speak into the microphone: what do you see?"

Observations, amplified. Passengers in waiting, passengers on automatic, speak *to* each other from across the platforms, describing the images that they receive, give, consume. Scenes are staged and restaged, in playback.

– "I see...an old man, furrowed brow, resting his chin on the palm of his withered left hand, tired of the world around him...most certainly homeward bound...or, maybe, banished, unable to return...return to..."

– "I see...a couple, burying themselves in one another's shoulder creases, avoiding my glances...disguising through distance something that..."

– "I see...a child in uniform, backpack in one hand and skateboard in the other...ready for action...dreaming of..."

I see. You see. We see. The oracular voyage comes to an end, passing the turnstile we return to the foreseeable routes that take us home.

Home

Here, we have two patrons, two patron saints.

One officialized through the corridors of sacred and official assemblages, via churches and governments of a land in discovery: since January 20th of 1565, *São*

¹² For lived accounts of this voyage, see the reflections that the performance-arts group produced before, during, and after our shared explorations (Cia Marginal do Complexo da Maré 2013). Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (2014) and *Why Read the Classics* (2014) become important references in this context of grappling with the forms and desires that constitute our experiences of the centres and peripheries of cities, ours and theirs.

¹³ These Homeric words are reconstructed, *In Trânsito*, and elaborated in the original and interpretive texts, most notably in Calvino's *Why Read the Classics* that poses the question to us: what cities? what thoughts? (17).

Sebastião.¹⁴ In imperial ambition, defending itself against undesired invasion and insurrection, the City of the Rivers of January of Saint Sebastian was founded, abbreviated as Rio de Janeiro. Protected against hunger, plague, and war, the port city was fortified amidst apparitions of our guardian on the battlefields of a Portuguese triumph over French forces, the final securing of an Iberian Empire.

And our second patron saint, of the undesired and undesirable, broke into officialdoms, centuries later, galloping steadily on his white horse, entangled by the tentacles of a dragon: *São Jorge*. Not the Saint George¹⁵ brought by the Portuguese as advocate of their own nation and that of other ‘civilized’ neighbours (with the stewardship of the English being the example of excellence), but the martyr of dubious records later demoted by the Catholic Church to optional tribute, to be revindicated as a pillar of faith by those seeking alternate routes and reliefs. A faith, in this sense, not of the order of religion, but in the sense of what we need to believe in so as to live how we want to live.

The Rios of (dis)enchanted natives is home to authorities and authorizations of myriad kinds. Overlapping. Between the sacred and profane, it is extravagant. Its ways transgress mere formalities. It boasts, after all, of the protection of not one, but two, guiding and tutelary spirits. Built to be the imperial capital of a romance civilization, a new world of the (in)authentic, it now secures itself as a mirror for what a Brazilian Brazil could look like. After all, the soap operas that stop the country every night at nine (except Sundays) are almost always based in the ‘Marvellous City’, as it has come to be homaged over the years in song and prose. No longer the envisioned *economic* heart of a growing Empire, the coastal city clings to redeeming identifications as the *cultural* heart of a modern nation.¹⁶ Not the biggest or wealthiest (although it prides itself as the richest), the city’s awe-inspiring coastlines offer perspective into ways of living that escape from the repertoire of good and bad of metropolitan centres, near and far. In this sense, it centres around itself, consumed with reproductions of a modern alternative to a civil society: a creative society. It is Brazil’s signature city. Or so Cariocas like to say, and hear.

Rios’ doubled patronage demands peace between its formalities and informalities. War is occupation. Resistance is invasion. Violence is not a function of

¹⁴ See the City of Rio’s “Um Olhar no Tempo: 1565-2011” (A Look in Time) for official accounts of the founding of the city, and its wide-ranging interpretations (Prefeitura do Rio de Janeiro, 2011).

¹⁵ For a detailed elucidation of the official and non-official sagas of the figure of Saint George, within the Brazilian context that takes into account his 1969 demotion to a non-obligatory honouring status, due to lack of ‘historical’ (as opposed to ‘traditional’) registering of his role in the Church, see Marília Lamas’ *São Jorge: A Saga do Santo Guerreiro* (2014) (Saint George: The Saga of the Warrior-Saint).

¹⁶ For further elaboration of the urban history and distinguishing mark of Rio de Janeiro, notably in contrast to archetypal cities of a Brazilian modernity, like São Paulo, see the edited collection, *A Cidade e as Formas de Viver* (The City and Forms of Living, Castro et al 2005), which thinks the Brazilian nation in and through its former imperial capital, today.

evil, but a mode of engaging the world. Hence why pacification is the cordial way of making room for what would otherwise be called violent. Instead of norm and exception, we face excess, everyday. Because with multiple orders always at play, whose norm? whose exception? Pacification is our ultimate mode of politics. Protection, confounded with security. Patronage, not sponsorship but investment. Far from parallel worlds, formal and informal modalities make up a contradictory whole. Such as in the ways that the city absorbed two patron saints in the place of one.

Allegories of a city in construction abound. Like the paradoxes of chosen family, São Jorge is related to us by way of (un)conventional means, by pressures from within as much as from without. Against the figure that gave us our name and birthright in battle on that fateful day in January some 450 years ago, the warrior of the white horse is rogue, having been adopted indirectly into circles of recognition. Unoriginal, our chosen patron is nonetheless derived from the same source. Extra-official, perhaps, but far from non-institutional. The same channels that gave São Sebastião currency, have circulated, inflated, and deflated São Jorge's beloved patronage over us, that is, over our faith in ourselves, in who we want to be and how we want to live. To each their place, the unofficial patron conquered, at long last, official entitlement as our second patron saint by decree of the city government at the turn of the new millennium.

On the 20th of January, we pay tribute to the original founder (to our original colonial foundation) in processions of a fortified city. On the 23rd of April, since the municipal government's sanction in 2002, Rios' streets are filled with the formal and not so formal processions of our other(ed) patron of postcolonial times. Hundreds of thousands of people fill the streets in a celebration that could only be confused with one other ritual moment of public (dis)order: carnival. But instead of being a moment of escape from everyday realities, in an ostensible carnivalesque spirit, on the day that honours São Jorge, people reflect on exactly what it is that needs to be channelled in their everyday and connect with forces beyond themselves. On both days, in January and April, at the beginning and ending of summer, respectively – and during unprompted everyday invocations to the spheres of influence that each patron represents – Rios explodes in fireworks. Literally.

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As the legends go, both martyrs defied good and evil in the name of faith. That is, their actions, even once evaluated by the Church, could not be classified in either of these moral camps, and so what gives meaning to their actions is a certain faith in what is and should be. As such, beyond good and evil, they help guide and inspire. Sentenced to arrows and beheadings, in the chronicles of the Roman Army, it becomes manifest that the judgements of this world are as fickle as the laws that come and go to represent its momentary rights and wrongs. As fickle as the laws

that once sanctioned slavery as the political, economic, and social system that founded this country not that long ago.

Over and above the founding role of patrons charged with guarding the city that we want and summon, a martyr testifies. And this is what São Sebastião and São Jorge do for us. They testify to the city that we want, and fear threatened. Canonized, as founding myths of a city to be built up, our martyrs epitomize the channelling of protective and civilizing forces against the corruptions of nature and society, of demons and adversaries at large. Beware, enemies of the urbe.

These representatives of the people suffered torments and death in sustaining faith, until the end, in turn revealing their inner and outer worlds, belief and cynicism, trust and betrayal, us and them. Modelling life's journeys in all of their (un)certainties, they give form to identifications of ourselves and our place in this world. One of ours, so the stories go, was martyred in crucifixion with arrows to the chest, and the other by torture and beheading, both suspected of undermining the ruling authority. One hailed from Italy, and the other from what we now know as Turkey. And how they became representative here, and of what, that is, how they become ours, is significant. One was sanctified by the colonial decree of the Portuguese Crown as our legitimate patron, and the other by the twenty-first century orders of municipal government through pressures by syncretic Afro-Brazilian spiritual followers who saw in the marginalized and demoted saint a warrior spirit of the oppressed. One has assumed the forms of a contemporary elite, and the other of popular mobilization, as well. One tends to be celebrated in and around the centre of today's city, and the other in direction of the abandoned suburbs of the city's lower classes.

In this sense, the city of São Sebastião, in its original manifestation of patron of the imperial capital, is a material and spiritual conquest, against barbarians. It evolved as a politico-theological construction of the Company of Jesus against infidels of all sorts, through Catholic idealizations of a city home to universal precepts and definite pathways (gateways?) for life, today, yesterday, and tomorrow. When invoking the qualities of São Sebastião, to emerge victorious in battle, any battle, we enter the realm of universals, of right and wrong, of the victorious and the defeated. So why the need for another patron?

São Jorge represents to us an endless battle, and it is this quality that the majority of Cariocas need reflected back. He is neither a winner nor a loser, but perpetually at war, fighting and struggling with his demons. The recent decree to officialize the patron saint of the people not only incorporates the guardian of the oppressed, São Jorge of the downtrodden, but also, of the oppressor, its oppositional force. São Jorge's warrior spirit belongs as much to the oppressed (circulating, after all, through circuits of the repressed and syncretic, displayed in places of rest, such as atop every bar), as it belongs to the oppressor (or more precisely, the enforcers of those in power, decorating the emblems of the military and its policing institutions in Rio and Brazil, at large). In structural opposition, he teaches us to live in tension.

Syncretized through Afro-Brazilian traditions as guardian of the hunters, São Sebastião reigns over cultivations of varied kinds (following in the spirit forms of Oxóssi). São Jorge, syncretized as warrior whose means, often supernatural and prophetic, can turn against that which it is to serve, is sought after to help people fight for what responds to one's needs, opening possibilities for the constructive as well as the destructive (following in the spirit forms of Ogum).¹⁷ Both forces, taken up through masculinized syntaxes of power, however variously staged, emerge from and respond to a shared scenario, on the terms inherited. They are different forms of going to battle, whose spirits often cross, and whose syncretizations and symbolizations vary, in fact, and depending on context, may even become interchangeable.

These are struggles to develop the kind of city that we want, which can defend itself against the undesirable. Both, on balance, are of a hunting spirit, following in the Afro-Brazilian languages of our syncretized faith. For order, in the land of multiple and overlapping authorities, is about capturing and recapturing. Our two patrons dramatize for us conflicts over values and orientations of living – one of domination and production, São Sebastião who gave the city its name, and the other, of empowerment and disempowerment – metonymic rather than metaphoric. Both focal points of citywide holidays, they are celebrated as processions other than ordinary, yet not at all extraordinary. In these processions, the everyday is suspended (e.g. no work) and made conscious (e.g. in rite). They give another name to the confrontations of our day to day: one occupies and the other invades. They represent distinct, neither contradictory nor complementary, modalities. Not a function of literality or estrangement, these symbols of a particular kind of faith in our city need not transfer or carry over that which it renames. It all depends on the invocation, and from what position it is made. Hence it is necessary to think politically.

As limit points of (in)formality, appeals to our guarding spirits are neither strictly ceremonial (i.e. the secular rendering of the ritual), nor do they compose festivities of disorder or spontaneous eruptions. These moments of reverence express the same raw material of the mundane world and its rites, perhaps with even more vigour or coherence. Self-consciously, in these re-enactments of our faith, we face modes that stress aspects of daily life – whether by reinforcing, neutralizing, or inverting. Differences in degree rather than quality?

“The message is not the code”, we have heard more than once in trying to make sense of our everyday in postcolonial contexts.¹⁸ That is, we cannot take

¹⁷ For further contextualization regarding how Oxóssi and Ogum have been incorporated and interpreted as ancestral forces within Afro-Brazilian spiritual practices and cultures, see Nei Lopes' *Enciclopédia Brasileira da Diáspora Africana* (2004) (Brazilian Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora).

¹⁸ For a localized elaboration of these modes of approaching the guiding myths and rituals of a modern nation, refer to Carioca anthropologist, Roberto DaMatta's *Carnavais, Malandros, e Heróis: Para uma Sociologia do Dilema Brasileiro* (1997) (Carnivals, Malandros, and Heroes: For a Sociology of

phenomena of any nature by their constitutive elements. It is necessary to de-ritualize rites of our everyday, so as to make out what they are doing for us, here and now. What the pacified co-existence of our two patrons reminds us is that, between the cosmic and the historical, between authority and the masses, between ritual and routine, between the planned and the spontaneous, between order and disorder, between the official and the non-official, and ultimately, between the formal and the informal of our (extra)ordinary processions, we can narrate our worlds with a tighter grasp – precision, redefined. At times one needs to invoke victory or defeat, but mostly we live at battle. Especially those of us whose existence and bodily integrity is threatened every day by racial hatred, sexual violence, and political and economic greed. And so the need for São Jorge. At stake is in whose territory we find ourselves. In whose body.

What are we home to? Who is welcome, on what grounds? A place, lived and perceived and conceived, need not be coherent to exhibit coherence.¹⁹ The reproductions of inhabited space, whereby the past is brought into the present, is not reducible to form, in-form-alisms – to a form imposed upon things, people, and (im)materialities variously grasped. Neither transparent nor opaque, spaces are overlaid in the imagining and construction of a place, of particular locations and qualities, and the patrons who guide us to their different yet interacting worlds. The worlds of law and the worlds of rules, the worlds of the powerful and the worlds of the oppressed, the worlds of authority and the worlds of resistance. Far from a closed or logical system, codings and decodings signal to the interaction between subjects and their surroundings, wherein objects similarly in-form how we are guided through places of our inhabitancy.

When asked to identify ourselves in such contested interactions between worlds, the common legitimating plea that we hear day in and day out is, “Você sabe com quem está falando?” (Do you know with whom you are speaking?).²⁰ The sons and daughters, wives and associates, of the powerful? Our place, defined, always in relation to theirs, so as to measure the diverse authorizations at work. The most unexpected response that I have heard on the streets of Rio, by a young black boy’s ironic subversion of the authorizing game, is, “A citizen!” Evoking laughter, scorn, or at best, surprise, pleas to an abstract category have little weight in the land of doubled patronage, especially when they come from bodies whose colour of skin is marked, through a colonial slavocratic history, by sub-citizenship, independent of class, gender, and like orders of classification.

the Brazilian Dilemma) – notably the first chapter on social processes and meaning-making in urban context.

¹⁹ For a conceptual elaboration of urban forms of analysis capable of grasping such coherence, refer to Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1992). Also helpful are the contemporary renditions of Actor Network Theory, of the likes of Bruno Latour’s “Paris-Ville Invisible” (1998), which integrate inter-subjective and inter-objective relations in a coherent analysis of the urban experience.

²⁰ See DaMatta’s (1997) *Carnavais, Malandros e Heróis* for an anthropological study into these Brazilian modes and relations of power.

Considering our inheritance, what matters is how we play, where we are positioned, and to where we advance. The abstractions of individuality is but a recourse of whiteness, inscribed onto the bodies of those who do not see themselves as racialized, as constitutive and representative of a collective and historical whole, and as such convince themselves that they are subjects of law, of laws under which we are all deemed equal and responsible, for ourselves and only for ourselves, in isolation. Imploding the myths of whiteness as the non-racialized norm and its privilege of individuality, the preconditions for how we are positioned and treated reveal the rules of the game.

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Our patrons' battles, indeed, may be fought on different terrains. The battle of officialdom is one over people's bodies and souls – pandemics of the healthy and the sick, over which São Sebastião reigns. Here the logic of pacification, of maintaining a population in place. São Jorge's battle is against the Dragon. Dragons conjure as much threat as they do vigour, worshipped and feared as they are. Supernatural battles of that which, and those whom, we exclude and marginalize, become symbols of everyday realities. Realities whose weight must be transposed to another world in order to be bearable. Intelligible through other means. When meritocratic discourses attempt to explain that things are the way they are, São Sebastião emerges victorious but São Jorge stands by vigilantly.

Traversing the city, any and all of its residents is called to be 'na batalha' (at battle), with an attentive walk. Invoking São Jorge we are concurrently invoking the Dragon, which ultimately is an invocation to overcome the battles of everyday life, never foreseeable in a city of multiple and overlapping authorizations. The street vendor, for instance, whose informal market is produced by and sustains the formal market, needs to know when to negotiate with the police and associated authorities and when to run. Likewise on the streets of Rio, your server, at the bar or at the market, is summoned as 'amigo' (friend), so try to imagine unionism. The domestic worker in middle-class homes – bequest of a slavocratic society, eugenic and genocidal processes of whitening disguised as miscegenation, and accompanying myths of racial democracy and social pacification – is considered 'quase da família' (almost of the family). And now, #SomosTodosHumanos #WeAreAllHuman. How to resist? How to position oneself and respond? Where's the politics?

So unforeseeable and ever-shifting are Rios' everyday battles that the logic of friend and enemy is seldom of help here. There is a lived and urgent sense that, at any moment, anyone can be your friend. So too, at any point, anyone can line up along enemy lines. Or almost anyone. So we face constant conquest and seduction. And somehow, the final victory seems predetermined. Because when everyone is at war, no one is. It is negotiation all the way down. But the terms are set.

What Cariocas want to be comes about in this context, not from an innate sense of self, but from identities constructed and reconstructed in battle: those who

see themselves as deserving and those whose identifications are never recognized on their own terms (here, unlike in many analyses, white and black terms may help). This is not a one-time battle, hence why the Dragon is never depicted dead within effigies and illustrations portraying its intertwined struggle with São Jorge. It is always very much alive. Integrated, never negated or eliminated, the Dragon puts us in our place, vigilantly. It is, after all, of the order of the supernatural. The place where we want to be (and yet may not ever be). The other half of our reality, of our selves, finds a sort of harmony, not in an absence of conflict, but in its dynamic equilibrium – a learning to live with what would otherwise be deemed ‘contradictions’. Hence why occupation is the available means of warring.

And in this open confrontation, of the Dragon with São Jorge, of São Jorge with the Dragon, we find the idealized codes of conduct and self-fashionings in a city like Rio constantly at war. Rios. Perhaps, one of the principal reasons why so many Brazilians, especially those whose city compelled the beloved patron into official non-official status, hold such respect for São Jorge, comes from this necessity for a warrior-saint who is a winner (*vencedor*), alongside São Sebastião, our warrior-saint, full of arrows and ornamenting his wounds, who won (*vencido*). A faith in perseverance can be more useful than one in victory in a land where the end results are rigged, inheritances of a colonial and slavocratic society that defined a class of people in racial terms, disguising it all as ‘social’ issues and pacifying politics as problems of development.

In cities of (in)formalities elsewhere inconceivable, the Dragons of this world and beyond, of battles won and lost and being fought, call us to navigate, occupy, invade, and resist multiple (in)visible orders in (extra)ordinary ways. And São Jorge’s official non-official stewardship prevails in showing us the way, when the obvious is anything but natural...

*Eu estou vestido com as roupas e as armas de Jorge
Para que meus inimigos tenham mãos
E não me toquem
Para que meus inimigos tenham pés
E não me alcancem
Para que meus inimigos tenham olhos
E não me vejam
E nem mesmo pensamento eles possam ter
Para me fazerem mal²¹*

I am clad with the clothing and arms of Jorge
So that my enemies have hands

²¹ See Lamas’ study on *São Jorge: A Saga do Santo Guerreiro* (2014) for further contextualization of this guiding prayer, which has served as inspiration for many popular symbols, music, and expressions in contemporary Brazil.

And do not touch me
 So that my enemies have feet
 And do not reach me
 So that my enemies have eyes
 And do not see me
 And not even thoughts they may possess
 That do me wrong

Cities of Desire

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away... There was a city, a peculiarly happy city, happy not in the sense of without sadness, but happy in the sense that its sadness was integral to the whole, the means and end and ultimate enabler of its happiness. Here the father of pleasure, is the son of pain.²² Messengers and travellers afar have told stories of such cities – of discoveries, marvels, and yearnings for the footings of the good life. One, Marco Polo, brought forth myriad living accounts of cities visible and invisible to our mind's eye...

No one remembers what need or command or desire drove Zenobia's founders to give their city this form, and so there is no telling whether it was satisfied by the city as we see it today, which has perhaps grown through successive superimpositions from the first, now undecipherable plan. But what is certain is that if you ask an inhabitant of Zenobia to describe his vision of a happy life, it is always a city like Zenobia that he imagines, with its pilings and its suspended stairways, a Zenobia perhaps quite different, a-flutter with banners and ribbons, but always derived by combining elements of that first model.

That said, it is pointless trying to decide whether Zenobia is to be classified among happy cities or among the unhappy. It makes no sense to divide cities into these two species, but rather into these two: *those that through the years and the changes continue to give their form to desires, and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it* (italics mine, follow through below).²³

Like Zenobias, real and imagined, Rios is, in legend, a happy city. Or at the very least, the city reflects to its inhabitants, and especially to those on tour, visions of what a happy life could be, was, is. Normalized as syntax (rather than mood), this disposition makes of us self-styled cordial subjects, (in)famous masters in the art of lightness. So happy is Rios, that its sadness can be nothing other than tragic. Doomed, by fate's interceptions.

²² "O pai do prazer, O filho da dor" (The father of pleasure, The son of pain) is what we learn of a Brazilian way of life, from Caetano's Velosos' exemplary samba-song, "Desde que o Samba é Samba" (Since Samba is Samba, 1993).

²³ In Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (2014), we hear of paradigmatic accounts of a dying empire, from a traveller to its ruler, in which cities are re-membered, desired, and designed, such as through this description of Zenobia in "Thin Cities" (35).

Only here are the poor called 'humble'. Only here are the ordinary considered 'criminal'. Brazilianly unBrazilian, these cordial praises and insults bind, blind. And so at the heart of this happiness is an incredible tolerance for contradiction, that is, the capacity to navigate multiple orders, values, and so forth. To recognize oneself as black in a racist society, as a woman in misogynist society, and so on with the logics of violence and oppression, is a process of recognition and resignification that cannot escape contradiction for the very terms for one's own recognition are set within these dominant racist, misogynist languages. So how to live with?

Inversion, a turning in upon itself, gives the city's form to desire. In moments of carnivalesque escape, every year, in boundless Februaries, the ritual that fills the streets and actualizes democracy as an apparent flattening of society's rules, positions, and norms, gives the city's form over to desire. It renders the street the self-conscious stage of everyday interactions. During carnival, and only during carnival, men transform into women, the poor into nobilities, the rich into the humbled: at large, what lies suppressed or degraded becomes the raw material for fantasies of all sorts.²⁴ Far from exceptional, it amplifies.

Desires, projected outward, othered or overturned, erase the city or are erased by it. In the carnivalesque reorientations, we also find festivities of order, of reinforcement and neutralization that generate desires that belie the city's forms in masqueraded processions of inverted flights (and captures) from the norm. If the desire is communion, it highlights the divisions traversed. If the desire is escape, it leaves us in abandon, hung-over. We find ourselves in landfills of things lost and forgotten that we wish we could remember, and things committed to memory that we wish we could forget. If the desire is freedom, it exhausts us in self-negation. Erasing its own desires, the desires that brought into being this very realization, the city remains fortified as an open stage of self-surveillance.

If you ask a Brazilian about freedom, you are likely going to hear something about carnival. Across classes, we bear witness to dreams of escape, epitomized by the myths of carnival. For the middle-upper classes, a freedom from the uncertainties and threats to the place that they occupy, their privileges and Europeanized ways of living, a problem otherwise called 'insecurity' (at every election time we hear of resignations to move to Miami). For the lower classes, a freedom from the everyday battle to survive and the obligation to occupy certain positions for certain interactions at any given time, otherwise known as 'staying in your place'. Whether in the classrooms or at the corner-street bar, *order* – that dream, or nightmare, of the land of the semi-civilized, of the giant in waiting of a new world chronically poised for take-off – defines itself in carnivalesque terms. Carnival is inversion...but inversion of what?

²⁴ See DaMatta's (1997) ethnographic accounts of the carnivalesque form in Brazilian context, for a symptomatic depiction of the role of these moments of order and disorder in contemporary Brazil (*Carnavais, Malandros e Heróis*).

What we envision as democracy is captured by the carnivalesque, by the possibility of ‘harmoniously’ (without insecurities, discomforts, or unpredictabilities) standing side by side with racialized and classed others. An experience only simulated on the stands of a football game or the sands of our urban beaches, other mythic symbols of our so-called racial democracy. Yet as the shopping mall has recently beaten out these last two venues as Rios’ spaces of leisure, our myths of democracy are being revealed as strategies of pacification, but carnival still holds tight to its liberatory potential. Even social movements have increasingly come to occupy these spaces (#OcupaCarnaval). In turn, freedom can only be an escape. And in a society formed through colonial and slavocratic institutions and cultures, this escape reproduces, by way of abandonment, relations of power and inequality as we know them. So what do the masks of carnival reveal, and conceal, of these socio-political conjunctures?

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In order to keep up with the actors on the stage, it is not a matter of detecting the visible and invisible (places, people, or things), but a question of perceiving (*dis*)guise, assumed appearance and conduct – not a masking of, but a fashioning of. Processes nothing (un)intentional, neither individual nor social, our interpreters go nowhere if their critical spirit is one of unmasking, of unveiling structures or truths otherwise configured. The guise is not necessarily the obstacle to, but the revelation of. It is about giving audience. Giving audience to actors and interpreters, always already im-part-ial.

When our myths and accompanying politics are operationalized in the spirit of pacification, which constantly blurs what lies in-between the warring sides, a grand revealing of the structures of domination, of the sorts of a Marxian gesture, can only go so far. Because our dominant discourses are not always hegemonic, typical of the postcolonial condition.²⁵ Without recognizing that the same modes used to oppress are daily used to empower, not much will be revealed. Because of our tolerance for contradiction, we need to respond to orders of (*dis*)guise as much as, if not more, than what lies behind them. Hence, the myth of racial democracy, for instance, is not only an evasion of racism *à brasileira*, but the very articulation of our national racial imaginary on whose field racism is (de)constructed.

Within or beyond festivities and commemorations of (*dis*)order, like carnival, we need not discover, uncover, recover cities of desire, or desired cities, as all-encompassing structures of a good life, of a happy and well-disposed society. The will to recreate the world in our image, a modern disposition to engineer harmony and functionality for our everyday almost always ends in a hygienist

²⁵ For a postcolonial reading on the logic of hegemony, see Partha Chatterjee’s *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (2004) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1998).

politics. Everything/one in its place, becomes the desire of control. Navigating the city, we encounter worlds in which inconsistency is the rule, and the rule is the exception. Even more, we encounter excess. Sciences of the city that reproduce knowledges and practices of rational-ized modellings of a place, may or may not pass through totalizing structures of a society, state, or the inter-institutional imaginings of coherence, of a coherent place.²⁶

Against conventional conceptions of totalizing units, society and such, here in the city we can trace what orders and locates, what brings together and pushes apart, that is, what gives rhythm and pace to the everyday.²⁷ Our eye to the surface of things need not be superficial. What we see does not totalize what is seen, takes are always retaken. Layers can be thin. The many actors on the city's stages are not all on board the same project, with or without intention. To ally ourselves exclusively with what and whom is honest (transparent in intention?), is to perpetuate the problem of corruption by assuming a total order legitimated by law under which subjects are presumed equal. Corruption, in this sense, is not the cause but the consequence, if it is to make sense within a land of multiple authorities. The problem is in whose order do we trust. In whose order do we trust?

We must learn to receive what is given, at its surface. We must learn to play with the terms of the game, rather than escape into worlds otherwise defined. This is not an argument against politics, but against a political purism that only at the level of motivations and intentions can position itself. A political purism that is only, in practice, available to those privileged enough to be recognized on their own terms without the mediation of racism, sexism, homophobia, and other violences that alienate the majority of people from an autonomous sense of self.²⁸ Preconditions not of this world! In a place of multiple and overlapping authorities, playing with and against the terms of the game can shift structures in ways that subversion may not be able to.

Even in the most seemingly democratic of spaces (i.e. carnival, beaches, football fields, and other festive sites dreamt liberatory, or at least transcendent of everyday divisions) access may be less restricted, but the management of these spaces of democratic interchange is far from free and open. There is a moralized management over spaces juridically democratic, yet that in practice bring about a

²⁶ For historical accounts of these attempts at urban management and analysis, see José Cláudio Sooma Silva's study of turn of the century Rio in "Cidade Maravilhosa: Encontros e Desencontros nos Projetos de Remodelação Urbana da Capital entre 1902 e 1927" (2011) (Marvellous City: Encounters and Misencounters in Urban Remodelling Projects in the Capital between 1902 and 1927).

²⁷ For further development of the methodological implications of an urban point of departure, neither individualistic or social in bent, see Latour's "Paris: Ville Invisible" (1998) project, alongside local attempts to think inter-subjectivities and inter-objectivities of city life in the "asymmetrical" contexts of Rio's divided and unequal centres and peripheries, in *A Cidade e as Formas de Viver* (Castro et al 2005).

²⁸ For one of the most profound articulations of the dynamics of (dis)alienation, see Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008).

certain kind of appropriation of the city. Our myths of democracy as open to all, exemplified and trained for in moments of carnivalesque escape and other commemorations of order, propagate a dangerous mystification of spaces of social harmony. Social cleansing (read: racial cleansing) becomes the response to preempted threats to such imagined orders – threats to the proper ways to be ‘modern’, exacerbated by inferiority complexes that make us never modern enough, never educated or disciplined enough, and make even the whitest of Brazilians never quite white enough in the image of an imagined Europe.

In effect, the Pacifying Police Unit (UPP) has become the standard of politics in today’s Rios, occupying the spaces of favelas nearest to middle-class areas and containing potential threats in a genocidal politics that kills one black youth every 23 minutes.²⁹ And alongside the body that represents such ‘threat’ to order and progress, entire cultures, ways of knowing, and identities are whitened to the point of a cultural genocide that aims to obstruct the reproduction of a people. In these discourses and practices of recapturing a city, of containing and eliminating excess, the (dis)guises of modernization are revealed. Being modern is about determining the kind of future that we want, and who belongs where.

What’s at stake? When we respond to threat (the preoccupation of an order-based politics and its escapes), our responses are based on self-protection, from the apparent need for certainty, closure, consistency, familiarity, and other comforting semblances of order. A threat-oriented politics, intolerant of uncertainty, may be easier to satisfy, to contend with, yet its conservatism impedes a fuller comprehension that goes beyond the problem of averse stimuli. Think about the difference between insecurity and discomfort, such as that provoked by the body of the black youth exterminated every day in this country. The modern obsession with order and progress, its Brazilian translation, blocks rather than frees up a politics of transformation.

To train ourselves to do politics otherwise, it is necessary to face politics as not primarily a problem of the argumentation of ideas (of the likes of the for/against debates that seek to eliminate contradictions and establish truths or principles for action), but as a function of perception and sensibility. The operation of politics – and its deliberations in media, networks, and classrooms – remains largely premised on if and how minds can be changed, by the best facts and arguments. More often than not, the result is gridlock. Yet what if it is a matter of different ways of perceiving the world? In any case, the violences of this world (think racism, sexism, homophobia – yes, problems not only of the ‘third world’), which so often come out of a place of hatred, even when passing through rationalizations of myriad sorts, call for responses that come out of a similarly emotive place. Affect – how we are moved. If the problem is fear, for instance, it is fear that must be confronted.

²⁹ See 2016 Amnesty report based on the Brazilian government findings for more details.

Orders are not invoked as complete totalizations, and disorders and resistances as a break to the whole. Such rationalizations of society, built for the generic citizen (and we all know that the measure of this good citizen has been constructed in the image of its authors, the white man), instates peripheries as states of exception, of partial totalizations and breakdowns of order – unruly, illegal, informal, and asymmetrical. Semi-civilized. The problem of the third world is then conceived through such projected (a)symmetries, of orders not quite attained, of corruption. In fear, conditions of insecurity are applied to re-establish an idealized order, whose counterpart is hospitality in a hostile and dangerous world, in function of peace. Whose peace? In these ways, we tend to prefer to face violence as an act of exception, as a deviation from the civilizing process, when, in practice, much of the violence made manifest (whether through wars or policing of varied sorts) is in the name of civilization and the preservation of its humanistic values. If we think of violence as a function of evil, and disorder as malady or escape, we are simply unable to grasp how these moments work, especially in postcolonial conditions. How it is that excess is contained, pacified. Yet orders are, in fact, guides to a governmental logic of (dis)trust. They are a matter of in whose authority we place our trust, when, where, and to what effects.

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Another way to put it is that the chief difference between uniforms (think of the governmental processions of our official patron, São Sebastião) and costumes (think carnival) – in processions of (dis)orders variously imagined, for discipline or escape – are their staging. What breaks out of the ordinary does not necessarily enter into the extraordinary. And it is the politics of the (extra)ordinary that polices our desires and expectations, the stuff of politics.

To put desire to form, we thus need to ask... In which Rios do we live? How are they inhabited, constructed, contested, and fabulated? Pacification, 'social' cleansing, and myths of racial democracy may be how modernity was translated here, through the governing logic of order and progress, but translations can be reworked. And if we let go of the preoccupations of such modernization, we may begin to catch glimpses of the here and now, which is what can substantively orient us. What kind of urban politics do we stage, toward recreating what kind of city? Ultimately, what can these Rios do?

Poder: the Portuguese word whose noun signifies power and whose verb designates to do, the capacity or possession of what is necessary to make things happen. This is the problem of power.³⁰ Not necessarily one of status, legitimation, or authorization, but a relational practice of positioning and self-positioning.

³⁰ To follow these pathways in the Rio-context, see the groundbreaking edited collection series, *A Cidade e as Formas de Viver* (Castro et al 2005).

The (dis)illusions of the carnivalesque are not, in effect, about an escaping from reality into fantasy, an unreality, about normalized and disciplined (generic!) citizens enacting their repressed personalities or imprisonment within hierarchical positions and relations (i.e. men dressed up as women, the poor dressed up as rich). What we see, more often than not, is an internal inversion, a play with different positionalities, on the same stage, not a different one. That is, the terms of the game do not change. There is no anarchy or escape, but a momentary trying on of another's costume that cathartically gives us the sense that mobility is possible. And myths of racial democracy and such. But what makes this sort of cross-dressing, across class, race, gender, etc., enjoyable for the masses that take part, is that it does not define one's position in day to day interactions. How, then, to reimagine a politics of transformation beginning where we are at?

To tease apart layers of (super)impositions, of cities of desire, of desired cities, we need maps not in space, but that trace orientations and disorientations of the a/e-effects of what a good life could be, for whom, where, and how. In this way, we can affirm how we want to live, rather than how we should live under the weight of modern codes of conduct and values. No modern science can do this work for us. No truth has ever been able to beat out racism or sexism on its own terms, neither has it stopped a war or intervened on oppressions. To engage with their (dis)guises, we need to politicize our sensibilities. The challenge is not finding the right answers, but asking the right questions.

Epilogue: Reorienting 'third world' solutions

— “How much time until we get there?”, she asked, voice trembling more from the nerves than from the accent. The *gringa* takes a few more hesitant steps into the bus, headed across the bay.

The driver resists, fails, and cracks open a smile. Crooked, the smile hid a silence unusual on the crowded inter-municipal route.

— “Within an hour?”, she urges a response.

— “We will get there with your hour,” he pauses, “if the bridge does not fall.” *Se a ponte não cair*.³¹

The space of the (not) fallen bridge is neither magical nor realistic, and, it is. Depending on our response, like that of the bus driver, how we narrate our stories takes us to different places, in different times. In this 'gap' that is neither magical nor real, in the space of the (not) fallen bridge, we will face the (im)possibilities of a third world development.

³¹ On one of my routine trips on the 7500 bus line in Rio, I bore witness to this exchange, which academic convention has difficulty in registering through its citational regimes of truth-telling. Here is my factual account of an unplanned and undocumented everyday encounter in my wanderings throughout the city in the last month of 2014.

For development is first and foremost about *ways of living*. What we face, amidst the challenges of third worlds variously situated, is a crisis of narratibility. Instead of asking, “are we there yet?”, we can ask, “where are we and where do we want to be?”

In turn, we must let go of the false comforts of orders and see them for what they do, who they serve, and to what effects. The convictions of a first world, and its self-appointed translators in the peripheries of the modern world, our governing elite, are founded on exclusion and violence. Precarity is not the problem if fixed orders are not the solution. Fixed to the privileging of whom?

Far from entanglements in processes of maturation, mapped in time, we need to politicize development, in place. And here, our prized GDPs, HDIs, and like indices of progress, do not take centre stage. In the age of Google and the hyper-production of information, knowledge is not the key. It will not decide for us how it is best to live together, here and now. What is capable of orienting us, of telling us what questions to ask, when, where, and with whom, is a politically attentive sensibility. More than an inventory of solutions, what we need, in fact, is to cultivate our ability to respond to the worlds that we inherited, each in their place. For this, narratives and counter-narratives are the keys to broadening our political imaginations. What we need is response-ability.

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