

THE CITIES OF NEED: CAPITALISM AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY METROPOLIS

AS CIDADES DA CARÊNCIA: O CAPITALISMO E A SUBJETIVIDADE NA METRÓPOLE CONTEMPORÂNEA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to reflect upon the articulations between subjectivity and capitalism, the focal analysis on social life in contemporary metropolises. Inspired by Walter Benjamin, among other researchers, the author presents the narrow connection between the urban projects of Western cities and the forms of sensibility and the construction of the feeling of alterity. The article, using current scenes of daily life, underscores the singular characteristics of the production of subjectivities through contemporary capitalism, such as the disposability of social relations, the search for pleasure that is never satiated, the indifference, and the singular individualism of present day cities that predominates in the profusion of images of consumption and velocity.

Keywords: city; subjectivity; urbanism; consumption; politics.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é refletir sobre as articulações entre subjetividade e capitalismo, tendo como foco a análise da vida social nas metrópoles contemporâneas. Inspirado por Walter Benjamin, entre outros pesquisadores, o autor apresenta a ligação estreita entre os projetos urbanos de cidades ocidentais e as formas de sensibilidade e a construção do sentimento de alteridade. O artigo, usando cenas atuais da vida diária, ressalta as características singulares da produção de subjetividades através capitalismo contemporâneo, como a descartabilidade das relações sociais, a busca do prazer que nunca é saciada, a indiferença e o individualismo singular de hoje nas cidades onde predominam a profusão de imagens de consumo e de velocidade.

Palavras-chave: cidade; subjetividade; urbanismo; consumo; política.

“Moreover, the neo-military syntax of contemporary architecture insinuates violence and conjures imaginary dangers. In many instances the semiotics of so-called ‘defensible space’ are just about as subtle as a swaggering white cop.” (Davis, 1993, p. 207)

Introduction

This paper aims to reflect upon the relationship between capitalism and subjectivity in the contemporary metropolis. It aspires to depict the city of Rio de Janeiro as a *locus* which poses problems for Social Psychology, especially regarding subjectivity and the contradictions of the capital.

Traditionally, Social Psychology dichotomizes the pairs: city-subjectivity and mobility-subject. The

principal effect of this dichotomization is that the city is regarded as an environment which intervenes or relates with the inner world, as if the urban materiality did not contain in its lines the singular forms of living the time, of giving sense to the body, to the alterity and to ourselves. But the objects and places of the city are far from being reduced to their necessary functions. The walls, the empty spaces, the habitations and grills recall the memories of fears, passages, borders, gestures which are seldom visible to the ones who utilize them. This paper proposes the characterization of the city as a *historically constituted human settlement*, where ways to give sense to human existence are formulated, reproduced or fully refused.

Walter Benjamin is the main interlocutor of this paper. In his unfinished book, *The Arcades Project* (2006, p. 502), he advises: “Method of this

work: literary montage. I have nothing to say, only to show". Concisely, it is possible to argue that Benjamin proposes to focus the researcher's attention on the minor, insignificant facts of the urban routine, since they often incite unexpected senses. In Benjamin's mode of research, the "speaking about the object" (*i.e.*, the attempt to include it within a theoretical outline) gives way to "showing the object". The effect of this change is an empirical impact on the direction of the investigation. Put differently, this process of "showing the object" suppresses final conclusions and blurs the subjects' sovereignty of knowledge as *the* interpreter of the world. Thus, changing the researcher's perspective, it transforms commonplace scenes into scenes that are witnessed for the first time, annihilating the "aura" of the naturalization.

Other authors also provided meaningful inspirations for the task of analyzing the city as a *locus* of production and insurgent creations, as a place of promises and failures of the Utopias of Reason, as a space for paradoxes and contradictions of the Capital. Despite their different methodological approaches, Michel de Certeau (1994), David Harvey (2000), Henri-Pierre Jeudy (2005), Milton Santos (2000), Michel Foucault (2008), Doreen Massey (2008), Giandomenico Amendola (1997), Manuel Delgado (2007), Henry Lefebvre (2001), Richard Sennett (1992) were all drawn upon to compose the background of the present paper.

Urban scenes of need

With a choked voice, the journalist declares in a television interview that what impressed him most about covering the Persian Gulf War was the smell. The young soldiers with pants wet from urine and feces impressed him. "War stinks," he said. Fear of death was not only written on the face but on the clothes as well. The smell disconcerted him, created tension, displaced his perception of the familiar, and crystallized the image of war. He also said that until today he has not forgotten the odor of those days; the odor that contrasted with the colorful and aseptic conflict transmitted by satellite, like a ludic and seductive video game. What do these impressions have to tell us about the invisible contemporary wars of the cities of Capital?

Flattened like a sheet of paper, the body of a run over woman is melting, little by little, by the velocity of the cars that pass at high speeds along the Avenue of the Americas in Barra da Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro. Extended for hours and hours on the asphalt, the body of the woman who is glued to the ground has differentiated

itself from the discrete pastel colors of the surrounding architecture of the condominium buildings. No one has seen the pieces of the run over woman. The imposing verticality of the buildings, and principally the velocity, have accelerated another vision. The solid body of the run over woman has melted into the air, but what they saw were only fragments; fragments of the urban, or maybe, inevitable contingencies of modern or postmodern cities.

In this same neighborhood, among the walls and bars of the modern and pallidly colored residences, security is heatedly discussed. The doormen and sophisticated security equipment were not able to prevent the kidnapping of a resident. Disturbed, denouncing the high price of paid taxes, the proprietors of this small city demand more vigilance, more services, and more comfort. This way of living seems to be impregnated with strange forces; in the likeness of the shopping malls, the avidity, and the protection of territorial limits that is never satiated; more services, more technology, more security, all taking place in solitary architectonic complexes between the highways and the sea. On Sundays and holidays, the workers who reside in this place, the majority of whom are *nordestinos*¹, have barbecues awash with much music and *cachaça* on the narrow sidewalks in front of the bars. Sitting on crude codfish boxes, they provoke the time and space of this neighborhood to have other odors and geographies. When the party heats up and someone tries to cross the highway, he/she is rarely able to arrive at the desired place alive. In this neighborhood of high velocity, there is no excuse for carelessness. One has to have the concentration and the quickness that is required in a video game; whoever is not skillful, loses, or rather, dies.

Quite far from this place, but in the same city, soldiers go up into the slums and occupy strategic points in the combat against drug trafficking and violence. Workers are put into the system, the unemployed are taken in for investigations, and children and the elderly are searched. In the disorderly constructed houses without bars, the privacy of the residents is invaded by military men in dry uniforms of which the only smell is that of sweat. Protected by judicial mandates, the soldiers of this war do not stink. Each alley, each small street of this sinuous place is also viewed as dangerous and complicit, but a foreseeable and familiar danger. Different from the aseptic and monumental straight stretches of the highways that shelter and activate the velocity, the dwellings and architectonic lines of the streets signalize disorder and chaos in the eyes of the jurists, the military, the civilians, etc. There, below on the asphalt, the population feels relieved. In this city

of low velocity, it is not necessary to have the skills of video game players. Here, the war is another one. The twisted and narrow streets do not shelter acceleration or fragmented images, but rather, the inevitable and foreseeable; in the eyes of the military and the civilians of the asphalt², in this place reside old destinies, eighteenth century degenerated natures, idleness, crimes, and fates. They are all the same.

Far from Rio de Janeiro, in a distant country, bus stop benches get another design. In the city of cinema built in the desert, the old benches, where Blacks, Latinos, the unemployed, and beggars slept, are replaced with uncomfortable barrels. In Los Angeles (Davis, 1993), it is prohibited to remain in one place for a long time; if one sleeps in a public space, one falls down on the ground. The velocity of the freeways penetrates the plazas and bus stops, making their old inhabitants circulate. The multitude is dangerous, the time and space of this city seem to say. Beyond the benches of dispersion, we encounter the programmed suspended sprinklers. In some plazas the sprinklers are randomly turned on during the night, disturbing the sleep of the homeless. High technology penetrates the spaces, soaking the innocent, turning cities invisible for these inhabitants. The invisibility of the velocity and dispersion solicits rapidity and astuteness. In the miserable neighborhoods of the periphery, when the police make themselves present to guard the expansion of the permitted territorial limits of the temporary dwellings, the cardboard houses are disassembled and stored in stolen shopping carts. There, even the homes hurriedly circulate.

In a country much farther away, in a city of millenary traditions, modern capitalism, and high quality technology, something is happening, carried by emotion. Solitary and needy old couples can overcome their unhappiness through an advanced and contemporary service. The weekend, sad and monotonous, can fulfill itself through an efficient and affective product. By using the computer or telephone, they can have the children that they have always wanted. In Tokyo, Japan, specialized companies offer children, daughters-in-law, nephews, or whatever the client wants. On weekends, trained young people, through information previously given by the client, represent with quality and efficacy whatever the customer misses. Unhappiness, need, and solitude are no longer problems in this city. At the end of the contracted time, the actors employed warmly bid each other farewell, anxious for another new client. The demand of need brings new profits to this city. Not only lonely old single people procure this service. Children and adolescents needy for affection can have

their emotions and anguish resolved. Grandparents, uncles, etc., increase the repertory of services of this contemporary urban production. The market penetrates hearts and homes, offering efficacy and quality for a needy and lucrative demand.

Amplifying the previously formulated question concerning the invisible war of the cities of Capital, what do these facts have to tell us about the connections between subjectivities and urbanism? What is the contemporary political question that crosses through these tense situations?

Regarding the connections between subjectivity and urbanism, I select the following observation by Benjamin (1991 cited by Matos, 1994, p. 195): “whoever knows better the human soul, knows the urban soul”. An apparently naive affirmation, psychologizing, in the sense that it understands the urban soul as the reproduction or projection of a human nature or a disembodied psyche, as if the urban were a replica of a universal idea. In light of his reflections concerning cities of modernity (Benjamin, 1987, 1991), regarding the fetishism of goods in Parisian galleries, accompanying the current clues in his theses about history, and fundamentally, the analyses regarding the occurring modifications in communication and the literary genres of capitalism, this apparent deduction would be an equivocation, a hurried interpretation. Aiming to clarify possible distortions, I reverse the phrases and pluralize them; or rather, whoever knows better the urban souls, knows the human souls. Understanding “souls” as different sensibilities, knowledge of self, historically produced constructions of alterities. For Benjamin, the individual experience (*Erlebnis*) is dichotomized from the collective experience (*Erfahrung*); this dichotomy, generator of the “solitary hero,” psychologizing, and present in the modern romance, is found in the rise of capitalism, understanding this mode of production not as restricted to the economy or as transcendent determination that would mechanically determine other levels of social life, but as present in the plots of cultures, in daily life, in the minuscule spaces of human action, like in gestures, articulations, and the senses of the eyes and hands in the act of work, in the uneasiness that produces dreams, utopias, and memory.

Reference to this author is also made with the possibility of reading the urban not as a *scenario* of a humanity absolute in meaning or as an inert *pedestal* on which the “solitary hero” would be erected; attentive to his thought, we can understand the urban as a political field of a weave of sensibilities where diverse confrontations of forces are able to show us the inventions and de-naturalization of the human. In

the production of “souls,” as much human as urban, we find the barbarism of silence, forgetfulness, reification, and the barbarism of creation that affirms the multiple possibilities and the inexhaustibility of human construction. Inspired by Benjamin, we can deduce that souls are laden with tension and matter, are finite and multiple. They don’t have peace.

Continuing with the reflection about the connections between subjectivities and urbanism, we find in Pechman (1991, p. 174) the following argument: “If in the Middle Ages the airs of the city liberated, in the first industrial cities they worked the miracle of ‘civilizing’”. Despite being pestilent and nauseating, the city airs inspired a new way of seeing the world in which the city played a crucial role in the equatability of the meaning of life. Until then, the world had been subordinate to theological representations, the only ones that established the borders between the real and the imaginary, true and false, good and bad.

It is evident that the topic ‘airs of the city’ has nothing to do with urban atmospheric conditions but rather with the formation of a new sensibility, inspired by the acute contradictions endured in the city which would produce profound transformations in the mentality of the new residents of the *urbe* (Pechman, 1991).

Pechman, utilizing the expression “airs of the cities,” comes near to the Benjaminian souls laden with tension, pointing in this way to the micro-political dimension, not always visible, of the political clashes of the subjectivities. Indicating the urbanistic discourse as intervention over the cities, referring them to the practices of power, he argues the following:

The eruption of the urban topic in the city can only be comprehended if it is viewed in a perspective that does not consider any continuity with respect to the history of the city. Or, said in another way, the history of the city is not the history of the urban ... The urban is, in synthesis, a rupture with the city, it is the producer and the product of an emptiness that does not fill itself, of a discourse without history, because it does not refer to the city as a materiality but as a new system of ideas, with articulations and entirely new concepts, ‘invented’ to name a new order that is self-gestating. (Pechman, 1991, p. 126)

Returning to the previously formulated question, in other words, the contemporary political question that crosses through the tense living situations in big cities – a war without smell, the invisible run over woman, the condominium of avidity, the small solitary city, the destiny and fate of low velocity, the benches that make people go around, the itinerant house, and the market of neediness. I propose that the reader come into contact with the following modes of subjectivization:

the cadaverous traveler and the paranoid alterity.

Prior to the cadaverous traveler (Virilio, 1989), we had in big cities the walking traveler. Despite the perplexity before the new world, where “all that is solid melts into the air” (Berman, 1986) and the seductions of the exhibited merchandise in the vitrines, the townsman of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century strolled through the center of his city having in his gait the look of a walker. The architecture of the buildings, the lines of the streets, the traffic, and the colors of the façades did not solicit haste from him; the small details exhibited in the portals, like flowers, dates, and names, convoked a slow gaze. Monuments, mansions, hospitals, factories, public housing, homes of the wretched, and brothels exhibited texts to be read while walking. In the solemn buildings, ministries, museums, and judicial offices, among others, we came across founding dates announcing not only the heroic events of great men but also the civilizatory character of the public space; a place where memory was exhibited for the reverence and learning of citizenship, a place of rules and the social contract fomenters of Order and Progress. In the discretely colored bourgeois homes, the feminine names written on the façade indicated the nooks of intimacy, coziness, and the formation of the future man. The traveler’s gaze, catching a glimpse of the text of these powerful nests, encountered in the “*Lar de Maria*” something besides the name of the resident; it perceived the importance of the family, the respect and dignity of that place where intimacy was protected from the impersonal and dangerous streets. It perceived, from the phrase written above, the principal entrance, that those who did not have a “home” or name stamped on their houses were possibly a deformed mass bearing potential dangers. The reader of these residences discovered in between the lines that the risk was accommodated in another place.

In the slums of glaring colors and peeling walls where the trash and disorder of the city resided, one did not have time for learning the citizenship of social contracts or the memory of reverence. The gaze of the walking traveler became bewildered and entered into unrest when seeing these residences. There, the silence and peace of the family and intimacy of the homes had no shelter. Confused, the traveler heard the dangerous noises of possible clashes. These houses with their glaring colors and bad smells of peeling walls did not solicit readings; they spoke, conspired, and murmured nervously of other cities.

Through architectonic traces, the urban of this passerby ostentated symbols, it seemed to demand to be interpreted and recognized as a text to be learned. Interpreting its symbols, the citizen of this time

became civilized; he knew his place and that of the other, discovered where the danger was, found the roots of fear and the benefits of obedience and respect for the construction of Order and the Future. The urban showed itself through its works as a text to be deciphered. Strolling among mysteries and symbols, the walking traveler went along finding the drive for his gaze in the representation.

The wars in the cities of this time were loaded with tension – killing, resisting, conspiring, inventing, and excluding. Having representation as their drive, these wars were completely visible.

Why was a woman melted into the asphalt and no one saw? Do the small solitary cities loaded with avidity and anxious for security sense the smell that was not transmitted by the war? Will the cardboard houses stuffed into the stolen shopping carts have privacy and urgency of protection? Do the elderly and children of Tokyo also go around the plazas, soaked to the skin, without knowing where to go? Of what substance are the eyes made that are not able to see the wrinkles of the old cities? Will they be of angels the emotions of demand and need and video game players? Are the *nordestinos* of the parties on the other side of the bars run over or murdered? Why are not the military and civilian uniforms afraid of the war of the streets of low velocity? Will it be angelical the solitude of the cities encircled by highways? What is happening in these cities where women, poor people, the elderly, the homeless, beggars, children, the landless, workers, the unemployed, among others, are run over and the urban eyes are not able to see?

These eyes do not see because they are impregnated with velocity and do not go beyond the same place. In the contemporary capitalism of border dissolutions and the cult of the market, the gaze has become a cadaverous traveler. Impregnated with rapid and disposable images, this passerby of the end of the twentieth century does not go beyond his (or her) place due to excess and avidity. The windows and doors are closed and the televisions inform him what is happening in his house, on the street, in his country, in the world, in himself, in the other, and in the wrinkles of his body, fixing his gaze on a single point, on a single reality producing factory. Closing the windows and doors of the old urban communications that signaled the different noises and smells of the street, all that is left is to wait for the next piece of information. Avid and soaked in rapid images that age in seconds announcing a new time, contact with an efficient emptiness makes itself present; an emptiness woven by lack, by a powerful need that turns it sedentary by making the tensions that move its gaze and make it go

beyond the same place escape through its fingers. The contemporary weapons that are faced in this invisible war of Capital impregnated with rapid, excessive, and disposable images escape through its fingers as well.

In the cities of the cadaverous traveler, the urban is not moved by representation. For the traveler of high velocity, the details of the buildings do not demand deciphering, nor do they civilize or exclude. Dissimulating, dissipating mysteries, citing a past considered dead and finished, the architecture presents us with a new gaze regarding the city. Concerning this contemporary production, Peixoto (1990, p. 474) states the following:

In the world of movement, buildings are made to be seen by whomever passes along the freeway at high speeds. Architecture here is communication. At the edge of the highways, rise motels and gasoline stations that are identifiable from far away through already known forms. A luncheonette that looks like a fairytale castle, a cinema that suggests a Chinese palace ... The architecture recaptures popular iconography: the buildings are only decorated façades with barren structures behind them. Similar to billboards. Each time smaller, augmenting the velocity of the streets, hidden behind parking lots while the size and height of the luminous letters increase. In the contemporary city, everything is a sign ... It is necessary to make the landscape speak, to introduce language where everything is silent.

In this current capitalism where the fetish of the urban merchandise expresses itself through fragmented images encircled by silence, something happens beyond consumption. The body of the run over woman, melted into pieces, has been murdered. Impregnated with images and encircled by silences, the cities of need produce solitude, invisibility, and inertia, or perhaps, murders of a multiple and intense reality. The *nordestina* woman, mulatto, 63 years old, retired, was not perceived because she was not real. This murder was not motivated by omission but by excess; an excess of images that turn the human condition into one that is disposable and unreal. The *nordestinos* have also been discarded by this city where everything is a sign and the merchandise speaks, encircled by silent and needy small cities.

Before this opacity of a multiple and intense reality that produces a world and sensibilities that come to us already ready, how does one transgress, escape this mode of subjectivization? How does one escape this efficient cadaverous indifference through the interpellation of differences?

In previous moments in history, we had in the forts of the palaces an architecture of defense. Bridges,

walls, and fences protected small cities and the king's residence from imminent invasive attacks. In this monumental architecture, the sovereign's power was expressed in the lines of his palace, equaling it to the sacred, as well as in the defense of his territory and sovereignty. The design of the small cities, as much as that of the palaces, signaled practices of power in a world that still "had not melted into the air." In this pre-capitalist moment, the fences announced that the danger was there on the outside, the threat was external.

In the homes of the walking travelers, the gardens and window curtains protected the residences from the intimacy of virtual threats. Different from the Brazilian colonial properties where the street and house did not have boundaries turning public space into the yard of the house, the home of the walker would demand a retreat, not only to differentiate and defend itself from what was there on the outside but also to protect itself from other dangers that virtually inhabited these homes. The human soul, fragile, disturbed, and delicate, materialized in the individualities of the residents, would need a box of jewels, a cozy and velvety home for its protection. Through the visibility of the urban design that found its drive in the representation, the walking traveler visualized the value of intimacy and threats to its fragility. The traveler perceived the danger of the degenerates that roamed through the streets with their natures subverting Order and dirtying the City; beings with predetermined destinies that did not have individualities and did not possess the humanity represented on their residences. In this moment in which "all that was solid melted into the air" the internal and the external, with their different dangers, were plainly visible.

Neighborhoods and streets closed by security equipment, public beaches converted into private ones, fenced condominiums constructed on the edge of highways, what does this geography have to tell us about alterity? What do the gazes of the angels of velocity have to tell us?

In these spaces of the cadaverous traveler, where the fragmentation, the disposability, and the velocity that does not shift itself from one point to another are their drives, the other transforms itself, when seen, into a frozen image, a cliché. In these small cities of contemporary capitalism, the limits of the external and internal have been diluted, making autonomous worlds, closed within themselves like nomads in transit, fragments in high velocity moved by avidity and the need produced by a planet that updates itself every minute. In this flow, any pause is dangerous, could staunch the advancement of modernity, reduce production or rather dilute it, thawing the contours of

the different identities. The fences that delimit this way of living do not protect their proprietors from external invasions or the contagion of the streets. These fences delimit homogeneous images edited or produced by the insecurity generated from the need; need woven by the velocity of a world loaded with information that ages quickly, by a consumption that is never satiated, by the necessities of competent and up-to-date management; velocity avid for new emotions, security, the future. They are protective fences of constant, inert, solitary deterritorializations.

In this aseptic insecurity, the other is mediated by the paranoid gaze; his separate world, his strange body and smells, and his foreign gaze could thaw or bring motion to these ways of living. And here lies the danger. The need is alimented by and demands inertia. For the cadaverous traveler, the opacity of multiple ways of life, the tensions that thaw identities, emotions, and the cities are his drive. Apart and protected from differences, this mode of subjectivization gets closer to the gaze of the angels.

The very fair skin contrasts with the black suit. Preoccupied, or maybe sad, they observe the ruins of the past that makes itself present in gray Berlin. They seem to carry, besides wings, the weight of the city. Although young and modern, they express in their gaze a time that has aged like the jacket that they wear. The presence of the pair on the terrace of a decadent building announces a mission, to know the city by the daily life of its inhabitants. Armed with a notebook of annotations, they flap their wings and penetrate places where mortals in silence make the thought speak. Invisible, observing in a mist of fascination and preoccupation, they attentively listen to the thought that noisily speaks in daily life. They are researcher angels of souls, trained to perceive how the finite beings live, feel, and anguish. They investigate bored families watching television in silence without knowing what they are seeing, solitary and mute libraries, old people that look like the ruins of the city complaining about the indifference to their stories that no one wants to hear anymore, and dissenting couples weighted like the furniture of their apartment. They observe and note with dexterity the details of the thought that speaks in a Berlin marked by war. The angelical gift permits them to capture everything, to accumulate countless amounts of information without being seen; they are even able to see the color of the city, unperceived by the eyes of the mortals, a gray Berlin, monochromatic, surrounded by ruins.

The sadness of these angels, rich with information, is also accompanied by envy. One day, these modern beings, after exhaustive observation, melancholically

comment amongst themselves about something that they lack. Despite their powerful powers, they cannot sense the taste of coffee; the morning newspaper is not able to leave marks, to dirty their angelic hands with ink; they do not sense the smell that comes from the kitchen, the street, and bedrooms where the used sheets exhale perfume and sweat. Sadly, they acknowledge that they are odorless, insipid, and gaseous. The sensations and smells of the wars of daily life did not leave marks on them. The wisdom of these angels did not have taste, and the differences that the mortals' life offers, through sensations and its histories, was not able to touch their skin. The wings of these beings did not take them anywhere. Modern and sad, they are images of velocity loaded with need.

To where do the characters in the Wim Wenders' film, "Wings of Desire", fly? Where can we encounter them with their powerful wings and heavy needs that make it impossible for them to move through the differences?

In the slums of sinuous streets that shelter disorder and degenerate natures, we encounter other characters of velocity; they are not angels but horses. In the cities of capitalism that arrange and disarrange, displace and replace at the same point, create questions and respond to them, produce need, fulfill and then empty, that melt, freeze, melt and petrify, deterritorializing, producing fear, the angels remain quite distant, far, observing the city of predetermined destinies. In this place of low velocity, the ones that fly are the horses. The police, civilians, and military, among others, the protectors of the avid and insecure inhabitants of the asphalt of the city of Rio de Janeiro are hired to kill and torture the urban trash found in the sinuous streets. Despite being of the same origin as the angels, or in other words, a velocity without movement, these beings dirty their hands with blood but do not listen to the thought speak. For this *carioca*³ exterminating group, the city needs fear. Amongst the needs and fears, the horses and angels crystallize the cities into postcards of a single landscape without the smell of war. Perhaps opening the doors and windows and letting out these angelic and sinister forms of gazing at the city is a possible strategy to make the horses run and affirm a life with intensity and taste.

Conclusion

As a final consideration, it would be worth remembering the words of the Brazilian poet Sebastião Uchoa Neto (1988). In his poem *Tempus Fugit n. 2*, he writes: "the city is a cold blade that cuts convenient suppositions" (p. 168). It is necessary to occupy the

city and be aware of the paradoxes of routine which intervene—as a *cold blade*—in researcher's comfortable suppositions about the logic that makes us move about the city. These suppositions are imbedded not only in the optimism of market's promises, but also in the arrogance of pessimistic analysis on contemporary Capitalism. Through the effects of these paradoxes, we would not have peace or final comfort. However, no truth would be eternally concluded.

In small and opaque places, where reason is unable to illuminate, the fresh air blows and the oxygen permits the researcher to confront the forces which annihilate the sense of transgression and creation of the human condition.

Notes

- ¹ The term *nordestinos* generally refers to the marginalized, poor, working class immigrants from the Northeast of Brazil.
- ² The expression "civilians of the asphalt" refers to the high-middle and upper class citizens who live in the urbanized areas of Rio de Janeiro. The poor lower class citizens live in hillside slums while those from the upper classes reside down below on the "asphalt."
- ³ A *carioca* is a person who is from the city of Rio de Janeiro.

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