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Da fundação casa de Jorge Amado
Pra ver do alto a fila de soldados, quase todos pretos
Dando porrada na nuca de malandros pretos
De ladrões mulatos e outros quase brancos
Tratados como pretos
Só pra mostrar aos outros quase pretos
(E são quase todos pretos)
E aos quase brancos pobres como pretos
Como é que pretos, pobres e mulatos
E quase brancos quase pretos de tão pobres são tratados
E não importa se os olhos do mundo inteiro
Possam estar por um momento voltados para o largo
Onde os escravos eram castigados
E hoje um batuque um batuque
Com a pureza de meninos uniformizados de escola secundária
Em dia de parada
E a grandeza épica de um povo em formação
Nos atraí, nos deslumbra e estimula
Não importa nada:
Nem o traço do sobrado
Nem a lente do fantástico,
Nem o disco de Paul Simon
Ninguém, ninguém é cidadão
Se você for a festa do pelô, e se você não for
Pense no Haiti, reze pelo Haiti
O Haiti é aqui
O Haiti não é aqui
E na TV se você vir um deputado em pânico mal dissimulado
Diante de qualquer, mas qualquer mesmo, qualquer, qualquer
Plano de educação que pareça fácil
Que pareça fácil e rápido
E vá representar uma ameaça de democratização
Do ensino do primeiro grau
E se esse mesmo deputado defender a adoção da pena capital
E o venerável cardeal disse que vê tanto espírito no feto
E nenhum no marginal
E se, ao furar o sinal, o velho sinal vermelho habitual
Notar um homem mijando na esquina da rua sobre um saco
Brilhante de lixo do Leblon
E quando ouvir o silêncio surdente de São Paulo
Diante da chacina
111 presos indefesos, mas presos são quase todos pretos
Ou quase pretos, ou quase brancos quase pretos de tão pobres
E pobres são como podres e todos sabem como se tratam os pretos
E quando você for dar uma volta no Caribe
E quando for trepar sem camisinha
E apresentar sua participação inteligente no bloqueio a Cuba
Several years back, if I made the statement, “We demand the right to opacity,” or argued in favor of this, whoever I was speaking to would exclaim indignantly: “Now it’s back to barbarism! How can you communicate with what you don’t understand?” But in 1989, and before very diverse audiences, when the same demand was formulated, it aroused new interest. Who knows?

Maybe, in the meanwhile, the topicality of the question of differences (the right to difference) had been exhausted. The theory of difference is invaluable. It has allowed us to struggle against the reductive thought produced, in genetics for example, by the presumption of racial excellence or superiority. Albert Jacquard (Éloge de la différence, Éditions du Seuil, 1978) dismantled the mechanisms of this barbaric notion and demonstrated how ridiculous it was to claim a “scientific” basis for them. (I call the reversal and exasperation of self barbaric and just as inconceivable as the cruel results of these mechanisms.)

This theory has also made it possible to take in, perhaps, not their existence but at least the rightful entitlement to recognition of the minorities swarming throughout the world and the defense of their status. (I call “rightful” the escape far from any legitimacy anchored silently or resolutely in possession and conquest.) But difference itself can still contrive to reduce things to the Transparent.

If we examine the process of “understanding” people and ideas from the perspective of Western thought, we discover that its basis is this requirement for transparency. In order to understand and thus accept you, I have to measure your solidity with the ideal scale providing me with grounds to make comparisons and, perhaps, judgments. I have to reduce.

Accepting differences does, of course, upset the hierarchy of this scale. I understand your difference, or in other words, without creating a hierarchy, I relate it to my norm. I admit you to existence, within my system. I create you afresh.

- But perhaps we need to bring an end to the very notion of a scale. Displace all reduction.

Agree not merely to the right to difference but, carrying this further, agree also to the right to opacity that is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but subsistence within an irreducible singularity. Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these truly one must
focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components. For the time being, perhaps, give up this old obsession with discovering what lies at the bottom of natures. There would be something great and noble about initiating such a movement, referring not to Humanity but to the exulant divergence of humanities. Thought of self and thought of other here become obsolete in their duality. Every Other is a citizen and no longer a barbarian. What is here is open, as much as this there. I would be incapable of projecting from one to the other. This—here is the weave, and it weaves no boundaries. The right to opacity would not establish autism; it would be the real foundation of Relation, in freedoms.

And now what they tell me is, “You calmly pack your poetics into these craters of opacity and daim to rise so serenely beyond the prodigiously elucidating work that the West has accomplished, but there you go talking nonstop about this West.” “And what would you rather I talk about at the beginning, if not this transparency whose aim was to reduce us? Because, if I don’t begin there, you will see me consumed with the sullen jabber of childish refusal, convulsive and powerless. This is where I start. As for my identity, I’ll take care of that myself.”

There has to be dialogue with the West, which, moreover is contradictory in itself (usually this is the argument raised when I talk about cultures of the One); the complementary discourse of whoever wants to give—on—and—with must be added to the West. And can you not see that we are implicated in its evolution?

(...) The opaque is not the obscure, though it is possible for it to be so and be accepted as such. It is that which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence. We are far from the opacities of Myth or Tragedy, whose obscurity was accompanied by exclusion and whose transparency aimed at “grasping.” In this version of understanding the verb to grasp contains the movement of hands that grab their surroundings and bring them back to themselves. A gesture of enclosure if not appropriation. Let our understanding prefer the gesture of giving—on—and—with that opens finally on totality. At this point I need to explain what I mean by this totality I have made so much noise about. It is the idea itself of totality, as expressed so superbly in Western thought, that is threatened with immobility. We have suggested that Relation is an open totality evolving upon itself. That means that, thought of in this manner, it is the principle of unity that we subtract from this idea. In Relation the whole is not the finality of its parts: for multiplicity in totality is totally diversity. Let us say this again, opaquely: the idea of totality alone is an obstacle to totality.

We have already articulated the poetic force. We see it as radiant—replacing the absorbing concept of unity; it is the opacity of the diverse animating the imagined transparency of Relation. The imaginary does not bear with it the coercive requirements of idea. It prefigures reality, without determining it a priori. The thought of opacity distracts me from absolute truths whose guardian I might believe myself to be. Far from cornering me within futility and inactivity, by making me sensitive to the limits of every method, it relativizes every possibility of every action within me. Whether this consists of spreading overarching general ideas or hanging on to the concrete, the law of facts, the precision of details, or sacrificing some apparently less important thing in the name of efficacy, the thought of opacity saves me from unequivocal courses and irreversible choices.

As far as my identity is concerned, I will take care of it myself. That is, I shall not allow it to become cornered in any essence; I shall also pay attention to not mixing it into any amalgam. Rather, it does not disturb me to accept that there are places where my identity is obscure to me, and the fact that it amazes me does not mean I relinquish it. Human PG...
COLORS AND CONTRASTS FROM THE BLACK SOUTH

“Female city linked to seawater and torrential rains, Candomblé cults, hundreds of churches and to the pagan rites of Carnival, Salvador de Bahia is the deepest essence of Brazil. More than São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, where the international dimension changed identity.

Coming here it seems to be in the middle of several contradictions, between fullness and emptiness, among which to prevail are the colors of blue and green.

Salvador is not a city for tourists and are not enough a few days to know it and to get used to the feeling of insecurity, the chaotic traffic and delays, rain and unexpected laughter, people’s natural beauty and natural coincidences of life.

Everything here is at the same time so simple and so complex, it takes little time to notice the contradictions, but it takes plenty of time to understand that everything here is feed from its opposite.

The black people here experiences life with the all-African elegance of their being, and it has allowed the city to exist, despite various problems that they have to face.

But in Salvador everything moves, even when it seems that not, and it is in the communities (comunidades), both in the core and in the suburb of the city, that you’ll find the vital energy, the axé of the city.”


I believe that simple and quick solutions to complex problems, rooted in urbanization and social issues, are illusions. But I also believe that a study such as the proposed could help in the search for possible solutions, leading us to embrace these issues, highlighting social and urban open wounds.

This work was motivated by the lack of urban studies about Salvador related to the contemporary race relations that contrasts with the huge amount of studies about black culture, especially if we talk about the Afro-Brazilian religious system, Candomble.

Brazil is the known ‘Land of Contradictions’ for several reasons, among which for example it was the ultimate country of the Western hemisphere to abolish slavery (1888) On the other hand the common position taken on the issue of race from the 30s shifted towards a utopian equity favored by the myth of Gilberto Freyre’s racial democracy, which gave rise to ‘whitening
ideology’ that was widely accepted in Brazil, as the solution to the “Negro problem”.
The Brazilian population is one of the most mixed in the world, the world example of misce-
genation, whose citizens are descended of Indigenous, Africans, and Europeans. This has led Brazil’s socio-racial relations to transform racial democracy into a value, a dream of a better, fairer and less discriminatory society in which “everyone is a people”.
The IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) national census uses five ethno-racial categories: ‘branco’ (white), ‘preto’ (black), ‘pardo’ (mixed race), ‘amarelo’ (Asians) and Indigenous, specific ethnic groups to which the people can declare themselves belonging to. Going deeper into the matter, it is clear how these categories reflect the distribution of wealth among the population, and as consequence the distribution of the population among the urban layers. Inside these categories are hidden social and urban issues, such as the exclusion and segregation of certain ethnic groups.
The link between color and class is obviously complex. If color and class have historically been closely connected, in the sense that the dark complexion and the African phenotype were associated with a lower class position, nowadays the relation between social mobility and black identity is commonly more complex than it is usually assume.
What I noticed in my experience in ‘Nordeste’ Region of Brazil is that the awareness of color and the image that people have of the black presence here do not go hand in hand and this is clearly noticeable with a meticulous overlook on the cities: a clear separation between the physical spaces occupied by dominators and dominated exists.

“The natural place of the dominant white group is large, spacious dwellings, situated in the most beautiful places of the city or in the countryside and duly protected by different types of policing: old factors, capitães do mato (captains of the bush), capangas (thugs), etc. From Casagrande (the big house) and sobrados (the townhouse), till the beautiful buildings and homes of today, the criterion has always been the same. On the other hand, the natural place of the black is the opposite, of course: from the Senzala (slave quarters) to favelas, tenements, basements, invasions, floods and housing complexes (whose models are the ghettos of underdeveloped countries), the criterion has also been symmetrically the same: the racial division of space.”
Lélia Gonzalez – Lugar de negro (Place of blacks)

Urban space in Brazil has been developed as a result of multiple dichotomies: Casagrande /
Senzala, whites / blacks, rich people / poor people, centers / peripheries, skyscrapers and closed condominiums / favelas and communities, whose effects on the quality of life of the black population of certain areas of the city are evident.

At the end, if you stop to think, who could be the first poor inhabitants of the Brazilian suburbs in a colonial society with its slave driver principles?

**SALVADOR, BAHIA, TERRITORIO AFRICANO**

The city of Salvador, the capital of Bahia State, is the most characteristic and the oldest city of Brazil. The European colonial expansion to Brazil and to all Latin America began with this city. Its harbor was the most agitated; here the agricultural productions of the Reconvavo’s region flowed and 1.5 million African slaves together with their own cultural heritages landed in the New World during the ‘African Diaspora’.

Today Salvador is the fourth metropolitan area by population of Brazil, and the first of the country and of the world with more blacks outside of Africa. The Negro’s influence is felt everywhere, not just in the physical aspect of the city but in its own life.

‘Africanidade’ is in the skin, in the colors, in flavors and decorations of every corner of Bahia, reinforcing ties and affirming a mixed identity:

“More than once I wrote that Africa is our navel. In terms of sensitivity, way of seeing life and the world, way of reacting to events, of living and living together, a way of thinking and acting, we are at least as African as the Iberians.

The contribution of blacks has been the key for the formation of our national culture. Despite the terrible conditions in which black culture found itself as it disembarked from the slave ships (...) The strength to live of blacks was stronger than the whip and holy water, managing to keep alive and constant its original side, despite the dire conditions of slavery.

With the flowing of time this cultural heritage has been blended with the other two matrices, rising in the hybrid culture of Brazil, unique in the world.”
Recently, in Salvador as well as the whole country has seen an increase in Afro cultural expressions and, hand in hand, the entertainment industry is now enhancing black culture more than ever. An example of this trend can be found in the use of new terms such as Brasilidade and Baianidade. Afro Brazilian cultural production, increasingly synonymous with their visual representation.

Especially, Bahiaturma (State Tourism Agency of Bahia) speaks about ‘baianidade’ as something intrinsically related to being black.

The postcard of Salvador, the one with which the city is sold to tourists from all over the world, to real estate speculation, to urban reforms and construction companies is that of Roma Negra (Black Rome), the Mecca of Negritude. But there is no effective action that reflects this exaltation/celebration in the daily life of the real owners of this culture, the black people of Bahia.

The peripheries of the large Brazilian cities are, as a rule, the place of residence of the low-income black population, where they can find their way of living which corresponds in contrast to with the ones lived in the residential neighborhoods of the richest white population.

**URBAN PRACTICES AS RESISTÊNCIA NEGRA**

These premises stimulated the awareness of the need to take a new stance on Salvador’s urban issues and on the ways to analyze the city itself, which stand opposite to the dominant urban production process, led by large construction companies, which encourage the cancellation of diversity for a unified and unifying fictional image.

Leaving the logic of space spectacularization and returning to the experience of daily life, the research will study the racial relations in the Capital of Bahia State, focusing on the curve around the sea that embraces the peninsula of Itapagipe, along the Linha Ferrea (railway) and in the Suburbio Ferroviario (peripheral neighborhoods) until Platforma.

This region has been identified as an area of resistance and of black identity between the popular neighborhoods of Salvador with some socio-cultural peculiarities that differ from other suburban areas of the city. As variables that induce the distinction between these areas and the other suburban communities for example, we can consider the proximity and the relation with the sea, as well as a stronger presence of Afro descendant history and culture, which express itself in the religious rituals and even in the legendary mysticism of the Parque Sao Bartolomeu,
which is located in large portion in this suburban area. In this sense is possible to affirm that the idea of “popular territory” is not confined only to negative features such as social impoverishment, precariousness of services, lack of public facilities, violence, informal settlements, etc.

In these territories is palpable that the daily lives and practices of people are more shared, as well as the neighborhood relations that are closer and marked by a common struggle for survival. The popular practices, mediated by economic dispositions and by the power of capital, build up the neighborhood (bairros) and the territories giving meaning to the physical form and the social contents.

After an in-depth analysis of the socio-urban issues, five punctual interventions will be developed, a kind of suburban acupuncture that will work as a rhizome: “devices that allow the creation of both defense and offensive structures; devices that create openings and links that cannot be constructed in the insulation. Are living devices, because incarnated in the social field itself, in relations of complementarity, shortening - finally, in rhizomatic relations”.

Each intervention was designed in close connection with the seaside and the popular area in which it is inserted; each operation aims to be urban, social and of the landscape at the same time and they are designed for the daily practice of black resistance that in this territory take place, from the collection of shellfish at low tide, to the creation of shaded areas, till the sacred plant garden.

The projects are based on the assumptions of a horizontal planning, with the participation of the inhabitants, as a counterpoint to vertical way of planning, executed by the city municipality. In this way may be possible to avoid the common phenomena of gentrification and elitism that has invaded Salvador in the last years, since as written above, the projects are designed and directed to the inhabitants of each territory and turned to resistance practices of the black identity as social and cultural heritage of the city.
Ilha de Itaparica
baia de Aratu
Oceano Atlântico
Ilha de Maré
península de Itapagipe
ensaída dos tainheiros
Baia de Todos os Santos
Ilha dos Frades
FALHA DE SALVADOR
Salvador
cidade alta
cidade baixa