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Monument, Memory and Destruction: Voices from the Past and Cries in the Present

Abstract

Monuments, tombs, statues, artistic performances and digital images, driven by the issue of memory, through the movement of criticism and destruction, are the key concepts of this article, which was composed as a joint (two-author) essay. These concepts are intertwined with Walter Benjamin's thought and inferential examples, mostly connected to the politics of the past and its echoes in the present. The political issues quoted in the essay are related to colonial times as well as to the present, accentuating the racial mixture of the Brazilian people expressed through an allegorical type: the *caboclo/cabocla*.

Keywords

monument, tomb, memory, destruction, *Cabocla*

Introduction

In this article we explore Walter Benjamin's concepts on memory and monuments and argue that Benjamin's philosophy is woven through an intertwined relationship between monument and tomb, glory of the victors, and the history of those whose names are not remembered—and, often, those without a grave. Our aim is to answer the question of how one builds another historical transmission (in German: *Überlieferung*) under the so-called great tradition (glorious tradition) of the victor.

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In the first section, we look at the relation between the monument, the monumental, monumentality, as well as the relation between tomb, sign, and memory. The second section reflects on the notion of “destructive character” and its role in the conception of counter-monuments. Here, we take some monuments in Brazil—which allegorize the colonial age—as examples in order to show the creative mimesis of the racial mixture allegory of the *caboclo*¹ in defense of the past in the present.²

The empathy of historicism with the victors, as exposed in Thesis VII, is the key to understanding many aspects that will be highlighted in this article. A key, in view of all Benjamin’s discussion and interpretation on Brechtian epic theater, that points to the understanding that the effect of estrangement (*Verfremdungseffekt*) deals precisely with the interruption in the feeling of identification—via empathy—with the scene. The movement of “awakening” has the same effect as the epic theater and in the work of historical materialism proposed by Benjamin in the composition of a non-linear narrative of history. The epigraph of this thesis is rightly taken from Brecht’s *Threepenny Opera*.

Many monuments are, originally, allegories of “heroic” historical events. In this sense, and different from a personality displayed in a bust, a figure of a beautiful woman, e.g., one showing her breasts, would represent the “spirit” of revolution. We will take an example of a monument where the heroic value is allegorically expressed as the wish for freedom, a wish that belongs to a series of gestures connected to mimicry and critical destruction. This example comes from historical colonial struggles for emancipation, up to a post-colonial situation, through political and artistic interventions, evoking the allegory of the “cabocla.”

¹ *Caboclo* (masculine) or *cabocla* (feminine) from Brazilian Portuguese, perhaps ultimately from Tupi Guarani, “kaa’boc,” is related to a person who has a copper-coloured skin, mixed Indigenous Brazilian and European. It should be different from mixed Indigenous Brazilian and black ancestry, the name of which being “cafuzo.” But, as we will see, sometimes in the popular festivities the three races are mixed.

² The cult of the caboclo’s monument in Salvador, the original capital of Brazil, in the state of Bahia, represents, in an aggressive way, the struggle for independence from colonizers. The aggressive attitude (later moderated for July 2 celebration parades) depicted in the caboclo’s allegory, has been recaptured in recent art and political interventions against the real estate speculation in the old center of the city. The old center itself is a physical monument and displays the colonial memory through its buildings and thoroughfares, as well as being a representative model for Brazilian culture and colonial memory in literature and filmography. From a Benjaminian perspective, we understand that the aggressiveness contained in those images, allegorically conceived and unfolded, carries the effect of estrangement, resulting in a breach with the feeling of empathy for the winners.

This article was compiled in the form of a composed as a joint (two-author) essay. Its central theoretical axis was composed and directly inspired by the following Benjamin Writings: *Theses on the Concept of History* and *The Destructive Character*. Monuments, tombs, statues, artistic performances, and digital images stem from this axis driven by the issue of memory and through the movement of criticism and destruction, which is related to a mimetic-reflective construction. The radial force that stems from this axis is the social relations created between images and the narratives of historiographies, constructed from the perspective of the victors—to which a feeling of empathy corresponds—in contrast with the opposite image and the elevations of voices that echo the past in the present. The irradiation of the conceptual axis through evoked cases seeks the point of equilibrium in the axial relations that arise between them in order to create an adjusted movement of their parts.

Monument, *sèma*, *sôma*

When Hector, perhaps the Iliad hero closest to us, called upon an Achaean warrior to engage in a duel, thus putting an end to the slaughter between the two opposing armies, the demand for respect for the *Achaean* corpse (in Homeric Greek "*sôma*," a word that was only later to signify the living body) arose, along with the wish to sustain the memory and glory of dead heroes, accomplished through the erection of a tomb—in Greek, "*sèma*" (a word that only later came to mean sign). If he were defeated, he would request that his body (*sôma*, at the beginning of verse 79 of the 7th Chant of *Iliad*) be handed over to his own people, and committed himself, by the same gesture, to returning the body of his vanquished opponent to the Achaeans. In the latter case, the slain might be buried by the sea, in such a manner that his tomb (*sèma*, the beginning of verse 86 of the same Chant) be visible, from a distance to the sailors who would exclaim: "Look, it is the tomb of a hero of old/ a valiant man; slain by the splendid Hector."

The connection between *sôma* and *sèma* is strong: the dead must be remembered, the bodies must be identified and buried; the tomb is the primary monument, it is the sign of remembrance. Worthy of note is the fact that Hector—whose demand is inscribed in the setting of fame, of glory, of such essential *kleos* sung by the poets (*aedo*)—not only requested this for himself, but also for his enemy, so that he too might have a tomb. Of course, through this gesture, Hector's own glory would be remembered. Even so, it seems essential that even enemies are to be buried and remembered. This claim will also be made by Antigone, even if her dead brother is declared an enemy of the state. She will follow him to death.

The erection of the tomb, the primary human monument, implies simultaneously the remembrance of death and hope of future glory. This pairing remains alive to this day. In a critical article, the historian Antoine Prost draws attention to this dual function of funerary monuments, in particular monuments erected to the dead of the First World War in France.³ It is a matter of “weeping for and glorifying” the dead,⁴ no doubt, but this mourning is also a glorification of victory, in this case, the victory of France over Germany. Although each French village has its own monument to the dead of the 1914–1918 war, public monuments are almost nonexistent after the French defeat by Prussia in 1871. Would the defeated dead be less worthy of remembrance than those victorious? In his description, Antoine Prost establishes an interesting typification: there are monuments that remind us of the dead, but above all these monuments glorify the Motherland, usually an imposing allegorical woman. There are monuments that are heroic tombs emphasizing the pain of survivors and there are the more sober, or civic—as Prost says—mere stone with the names of the dead.

It seems that the aesthetic and critical reflection on monument, the monumental and monumentality is always stressed by this double origin: of whom, and of what, must sign, *Sêma*, memory be? Of the victorious and their victories, or the dead—even if anonymous? There are many monuments and many contemporary installations remembering the victims of the Shoah; but there are also monuments full of color and life such as the red sculpture by Tomie Othake, in São Paulo’s Guarulhos International Airport, which pays homage to its Japanese immigrants.

One can identify this ambiguity, which is inherent in the erection of so many monuments, namely, that it is not known whether the victors are celebrated (who, as we know, remain the winners to this day, Benjamin, Thesis VII) or the dead remembered. Not to mention that the great majority of monuments celebrates men, not women: in the city of São Paulo, there are some eight monuments that honor singular women as opposed to a total of one hundred and forty statues of “great men.” And often the defeated of today are crushed once again at the foot of the monument of the generals of yore (statue of Duque de Caxias). Viz the “dependents” of the so-called “cracolândia” at the foot of the equestrian statue of *Duque de Caxias*, in *Princesa Isabel Square*, in the center of São Paulo. The current mayor pursues the drug users, aiming to sanitize and clean the area—much coveted by

³ A. Prost, “Les monuments aux morts”, [in:] *Les lieux de mémoire*, organizado por Pierre Nora, Gallimard 1984, Vol. I.

⁴ Ibidem.

several large real-estate companies—washing the square twice daily with water jets, leaving its inhabitants in the mud. Even in verbiage, the mayor seems to mimic other “ethnic cleansing.” A newspaper photograph shows only the equestrian 48-meter high statue's pedestal, but the knight at the top is reminiscent of the mounted police, who dispersed the “crack zombies,” a new version of the concentration camp’s “Muslims:” killable without the killers needing to be punished, according to Giorgio Agamben.

The photograph of the inhabitants of “cracolândia” at the foot of the duke’s equestrian statue recalls Benjamin’s observation on the “Victory Column” in Berlin’s *Tiergarten* district. It was erected after Prussia's victory over France, sealed in the Sedan pact (1870): “What could possibly come after Sedan anyway? With the defeat of the French, world history seemed to be safely interred in its glorious grave, and this column was the funerary stele,”⁵ upon which this column served as a funeral stele and onto which the Victory Avenue opened. Because of its size, the child does not understand the majesty or meaning of the Column; however, he discovers closer figures in its pedestal in which the “vassals” of the sovereigns are portrayed. Vision fairer than any contemplation of victory or allegory of Victory: to allow the parade of triumph, the victors must march upon the dead and the vanquished, for a “great genius” to be able to produce a work of art; the “nameless corvette” of countless contemporaries. The pedestal of the Column rejoins this thesis VII *On the Concept of History* and the child’s suspicious gaze announces the “distant observer” of the materialist historian who cannot regard the past/present as “without horror.”

Counter-Monuments: the “Apollonian destruction”

As previously stated,

[...] once a monument is conceived by an artist and erected, it should remain in its actual space and in the imaginary culture as a document for eternity, as a support for “heroic” values, according to specific political circumstances. A revolution can demolish the material as though it were destroying ideas and ideals, historic and cultural values. It is hardly the task of artists „to brush history against the grain” when their task is an official State commission. However, an artist can incorporate some subliminal sign of dissent. Thinking of the colonial past of any country, for instance, and some art movements against the memory of the oppressive colonizer—whose identity is displayed in many national monuments as a result of the union of arts and politics—

⁵ W. Benjamin, “Berlin Childhood around 1900”, [in:] idem, *Selected Writings*, eds. M. P. Bullock, M. W. Jennings, Vol. 3, Cambridge–Massachusetts–London 2003, p. 3.

it is possible to see an explicit counter action on the verge of raging vandalism. There are those who adopt anti-monumental strategies which can run contrary to the principles of traditional monuments, or those who interfere with a specific existing monument and the values it represents.⁶

It is very plausible to say that the idea of destruction was not alien, either in Benjamin's writings, and less so in the German tradition since Goethe, and especially after Nietzsche and the bond between creation and destruction in *Zarathustra*. We can hear the echo of Nietzschean "creative destruction" in Benjamin's words, such as: "for destruction leads to such an Apollonian image of the destroyer. This is the great bond embracing and unifying all that exists. It is a sight that affords the destructive character a spectacle of deepest harmony."⁷ The idea of destruction in Benjamin seems to be well expressed in the paradoxical or dialectical composition of these extremes: "destruction/construction" and "Dionysian/Apollonian." The reference, however, goes beyond the tradition that Benjamin inherits from German thought, to reach a close dialogue with Brecht, whereby he breaks with the pretension of recomposing symbolic totality through creative destruction.

The Brechtian effect of strangeness (*Verfremdungseffekt*) can be identified in the rupture with the feeling of empathy; an effect reinforced by the idea of destruction, disruption in the temporal continuity expressed in historiography, as well as in narratives constructed in an uncritical way. From the rupture with the continuous temporality, the affirmative concepts of *Jetztzeit* and "dialectical image" arise, bound to the revolutionary act, expressed in the metaphor of "awakening" the historical consciousness. Memory is no longer related to clocks, but to special days in the calendar. These days do not follow a timeline, they jump from linear time, from a movement of destruction, of explosion from the continuum of history, creating a snapshot, as if paralyzing the movement so as not to lead to the reconstitution of paradisiacal utopia, but to catastrophe. Some constructive concepts also arise from destruction, such as the one of "constellation" and the one of "mosaic." The impossibility of recomposing the expression of totality makes allegory the legitimate expression in counterpart to the symbol.

Therefore, the "awakening" is a network of concepts that refers to the moment of destruction, which interrupts the continuum and creates a situa-

⁶ This quotation is taken from the first two paragraphs of Carla Damião and Natalia Anna Michna's introduction to the current issue of *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics*.

⁷ W. Benjamin, "The destructive Character", [in:] idem, *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1931–1934, eds. M. W. Jennings, G. Smith, H. Eiland, Cambridge–Massachusetts–London 2005, p. 541.

tion not only aporetic or of impasse, but of significance and transition; thus, the dialectical image at a standstill⁸ or zero-hour.⁹ To reach the dimension of the zero-hour implies to destroy the concept of time as homogenous and linear.¹⁰ In this sense destruction is the “destruction of some false or deceptive form of experience as the productive condition of the construction of a new relation to the object.”¹¹

Memory is also “an aggressive act” as Dag T. Andersson summarizes:

The saving aspect of destruction is the hallmark of memory. And memory can have the brutal mark of the destructive intervention when directed against the forgetfulness of the tradition. The story, says Benjamin, is ‘not just a science, but a form of memory.’ Memory gives the past a space in which it is not exposed to progress. Progress is the disaster as ‘the storm’ announced. Past suffering and oppression will not be forgotten for the sake of the future.¹²

The well-known last sentence of this quotation—“Only for the hopeless is the place given,” connects us to the roll of messianism as a fragile and mathematical force, as Peter Fenves, in his “The mathematical Messiah: Ben-

⁸ As we can read in the fragment titled “Awakening” in the *Arcades*: “It’s not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on the past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill (*zero-hour*). For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.—Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language.” W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. H. Eiland, K. MacLaughlin, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge–Massachusetts–London 1999, p. 262 [n2a, 3].

⁹ The American translator, Dennis Redmond, justifies his translation, saying: “*Stillstellung* was rendered as ‘zero-hour,’ rather than the misleading ‘standstill’; the verb ‘*stillstehen*’ means to come to a stop or standstill, but *Stillstellung* is Benjamin’s own unique invention, which connotes an objective interruption of a mechanical process, rather like the dramatic pause at the end of an action-adventure movie, when the audience is waiting to find out if the time-bomb/missile/terrorist device was defused or not.” Idem, “On the Concept of History, trans. D. Redmond, [online] <http://www.folk.uib.no/hlils/TBLR-B/Benjamin-History.pdf> [accessed: 13.08.2017].

¹⁰ The zero-hour (*Stillstand*) implies a sense of space, in conjunction with the moment as the *Jetztzeit*, related to that “here and now” or the *hic et nunc*, as Benjamin sometimes qualifies it, referring to the destruction of the aura.

¹¹ P. Osborne, A. E. Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin’s Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, Routledge, London–New York 1994.

¹² D. T. Andersson, *Benjamins Begriffe*, Vol. I, eds. M. Opitz, E. Wizisla, Frankfurt am Main 2000, p. 179.

jamin and Scholem in the Summer of 1916” considers Benjamin’s theory of experience, as well as the concept of interruption in Brechtian plays, and messianism as a profane model for understanding catastrophe in connection with destruction, ruins, and allegory. Thus, messianism is understood as the open and narrow door for redemption based on a fragile sense of hope. One could say that the interconnected concepts of destruction/construction, barbarism and catastrophe, lead us on to the discussion of memory and monuments, which is less related to the construction of monuments than to artistic and political interventionist cases, capable of re-evaluating their memory, in connection with its meaning. In this sense, the true content of those actions can reveal its artistic value in a material and historical perspective.

The monument of the *Caboclo* and its female allegory as an artistic and political act

The monument of the *caboclo* in a public square in the city of Salvador leads us to reflect on various aspects of postcolonial memory in contrasting aspects. The high column monument, erected in 1895, has at its peak the figure of the “hero” of one of the movements of colonial emancipation. It is not a historical figure, a military hero, winner of some battle, although the column model may resemble that of Admiral Horatio Nelson, located in Trafalgar Square in central London. It is a mixed-race figure, the “caboclo,” a Portuguese and indigenous amalgam. Its existence symbolizes the generation following the arrival of the Portuguese, in the formation of a unique widespread racial type. It also refers to a religious entity present in the syncretism that merged the Christian Catholic religion with the religious cults of African origin. Its representation is not peaceful, since he slays with his spear a dragon that lies beneath his feet.

At the foot of the allegory of the “caboclo,” there are figures representing the peaceful communion between Portuguese and Indians, notably in the figure of the native Paraguaçu. The representation of a beautiful Indian is common in the pacification legends concerning settlers and natives in various parts of the country. In the pacifying myth of the Indian Paraguaçu, who married the shipwrecked Portuguese Diogo Álvares Correia, baptized as “Caramuru” by the Tupinambás, not only does the woman play the role of unification of bodies and social domestication of the “savage” man in the process of colonization, but also the shipwreck had associated Correia with the Tupinambás, having married Paraguaçu, the daughter of the chief of the

tribe, who was offered to him by her father. She later adopted the name of a princess: Catarina. The statue of the *caboclo*, however, depicts an angry expression in the struggle with the dragon, which would represent—in the interpretation of historians—the Portuguese enemy to be defeated. In the figure of the *caboclo*, the confluence of the European and the native is an allegory that shows a rhetorical-religious inversion. The dragon does not represent the pagan or native; instead, it represents the colonizer to be exterminated with fury. This statue is modeled on another one showing a female version, the *cabocla*, on top of a fountain inaugurated in 1856, in honor of the same episode known as “Independence of Bahia” (July 2, 1823).

The date is celebrated with processions and popular festivities to this day. Taught in schools, preserving the memory of the so-called “Independence of Bahia,” it resembles a religious feast, despite its political significance. The image of the *caboclo* became softened in its composition with the Indian *Paraguaçu*, forming a pair of *caboclos* of a darker color, in the fusion of three races: the white colonizer, the indigenous native and the enslaved black. The cultivation of this remembrance—a remarkable date in the calendar of Bahian festivities—is clear in Bahian territory, where the colonial presence still manifests itself in monuments, buildings and the racial mixture that originated there. Conversely, in the rest of the country July 2nd has no significance. Independence from Portugal is celebrated on September 7th throughout Brazil, in accordance with the narrative of the episode known as the “Cry of Ipiranga”. According to legend—and a painting that ideally represents the scene¹³—Dom Pedro I, the Portuguese monarch, “proclaimed” Brazil’s independence with the cry: “Independence or death!” Hidden from the eye are numerous insurrections, victims of republicanism later “sanctified,” and a whole series of political interests and injustices that every history of struggle entails. The difference, highlighted by historians, is that Bahian independence from Portugal was not elitist and, from the outset, called for an end to slavery, a demand not made by other independence movements within the Portuguese colony.

In an actualized and politicized version, the belligerent *caboclo* is discarded and the original female *cabocla* warrior is reinstated, being used in the social struggle for the preservation of the historic center of Salvador, where several monuments (officially listed by historic patrimony) are located, such as colonial mansions and gold-laden churches. This historical

¹³ The painting (1888), by Pedro Américo, depicting Dom Pedro I in the center of the scene, sword aloft, being saluted by his army—the “Dragons of Independence”—on the banks of the Ipiranga river.

center is bounded by the regions Sé, Pilar, the quarter of Santo Antônio Além do Carmo and Gamboa de Baixo. *Pelourinho*, a name that originally meant the pillar at which slaves were flogged—a legalized procedure in colonial time—is the place most visited by tourists. The region is extremely rich in historical monuments dating from the seventeenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. Salvador, as previously mentioned, was the first colonial capital of Brazil, one of the oldest cities in the New World, founded in 1549 by the Portuguese. It was also one of the continent's first markets for slaves, forcibly transported on slave ships to work in the sugar plantations, and later in gold mining in the state of Minas Gerais.

Since the 1960s, the historic center has suffered from neglect and greed for space for property development, resulting in the eviction of the most needy residents. The historic center, with so many films set in its midst, as well as a rich literary canon, defends itself rigorously, unfolding the racial allegory of nineteenth-century monuments. The adversary is no longer the colonizer, but, rather, the speculator for public space. We will briefly mention the means of demonstration and protest based on the image of the armed *cabocla* spear that “haunts” the historic center. The composition of this allegory comes from the performance of the *cabocla* of July 2nd, created by the theater director, performer, set designer and cultural activist Ivana Chastinet, who died on August 8, 2017, a victim of breast cancer. In her artistical performances as the *cabocla* warrior in defense of the historical center of Salvador, Ivana displays her body following a mastectomy performed seven years before her death.

The *cabocla* allegory in the “digital and artistic performance era” became, in another intervention, a haunting of the center, under threat from real estate interests. The *cabocla* goes through the facades of the old city, circulating through social networks—instigating the revolt and the preservation of the center of Salvador as a historical, architectural, literary and cinematographic monument.¹⁴

The substitution of the male *caboclo* by the original monument of the female *cabocla* fighting the “colonizing dragon” acquires, in the performance of Ivana Chastinet, the meaning of other political struggles, namely, that of

¹⁴ Vignette realized in digital filming as summoning for political act of defense of the historical center through the social networks. Data-sheet: animation/mapping: Caetano Britto; KÆ. footage: Matheus Tanajura, Fabio Di Rocha; soundtrack: artista: Alahtac, song: “Nossa cultura é a macumba, não é a opera” (*Our culture is macumba, not opera*) soundcloud.com/alahtac; sponsored: Viviane Hermida, Ivana Chastinet, Alex Simoes, Diego Haase, Claudenice Almeida, Talitinha Andrade, Luiz Arthur Rocha, Pedro De Rosa Moraes, Jeovana Sena, [online] www.facebook.com/articulacaodocentroantigo/

women and the fight against breast cancer, while at the same time restoring the avenging role to indigenous women; a genuine enactment, as documented in the photograph of the 1st Meeting of Indigenous Nations of the Xingu, held in the heart of the Amazon, in the city of Altamira, state of Pará, on February 20, 1989, in protest against the construction of the *Cararaô* hydroelectric plant. The *Caiapó* Tuíra Indian threatened a senior management official with a machete, stating that her people were not interested in the “progress” promised by the state-owned company *Eletronorte*. Despite the protests, the tragedy of the indigenous peoples of the Xingu in relation to this project continued, as the construction of the plant went ahead, now under the name of Belo Monte.¹⁵

In this case it is not an artistic performance, a destructive-creative mimesis, but a gesture of political intervention, whose mixture of despair and threat does not offer any hope.

Conclusion

In the examples cited above, it is possible to identify a characteristic that evokes the Benjaminian reflections “erected” on European soil, written at the time of conflict and wars. The idea of destruction and wreckage was the present and the future reflected in the historian’s gaze, helpless before the rubble, as we read in the description of the angel of history. In this context, speaking of “constructive destruction,” in no man’s land, could sound politically bizarre. However, this is a critical gesture, aiming to destroy the image falsely constructed under mystifying values, masking barbaric behavior beneath a beautiful facade. To bring to the fore the hopeless situation of the indigenous peoples in Brazil, by showing the allegorical construction of the 19th century struggle against the colonizers, is to reveal the figuration of a struggle that has not been extinguished. It is a memory capable of resurfacing in the unfolding of the displaced image of the pedestal, which circulates in the center of the city of Salvador, projected on the closed facades, reachable in all networks throughout the world. It is a political call to fight those who insist on erasing the past.

As previously stated, the interconnected concepts of destruction/construction, barbarism and catastrophe could lead us on to the discussion of memory and (anti)monuments, less related to the construction of monu-

¹⁵ Concerning associations to defend indigenous people and the situation after the construction of Belo Monte, see: “The Human Rights Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Brazil”, [online] <http://www.conectas.org/arquivos/editor/files/2016> [accessed: 10.12.2017].

ments than to artistic and political interventionist cases, capable of re-evaluating their remembrance. In this sense, the true content of those actions could reveal its artistic value in a material and historical perspective. The discussed example should be seen as the expression of this premise, as well as a construction that created a new relationship to the cultural and revolutionary allegory of the *cabocla*.

As Ivana Chastinet was cremated, she will not have a tomb to be visited and bedecked, but she will be remembered in a different “monumentality.” As a fleeting image of an angry *cabocla*, encircling the center of Salvador and the one depicted in printed postcards, showing her on top of *Lacerda’s* elevator, intentionally composing a strange and impossible column.¹⁶ As Viviane Hermida¹⁷ one of those involved in the movement “Articulação” explains: “We created the image of the *cabocla* ‘occupying’¹⁸ the postcard (the touristic attraction *Elevador Lacerda*) as a synthesis of the idea that the city and the old center belong to the people and should not be considered as merely tourism projects, as happened in the 1970s and is happening again today.”¹⁹

This postcard of *Lacerda’s* elevator displays a graphic montage that mimics the 19th century Second of July monument, with the *cabocla* on top of the pedestal wielding her spear and summoning the people to protest against the threat to the historic center of Salvador, calling for a public demonstration on the same meaningful date: July 2nd. Above all, the collective political cry: “The old center belongs to the people.”

The examples used in this article, in the light of Walter Benjamin’s thought, were aimed at gathering his critique on the history of the winners, in contrast with the permanence of the struggle waged by the memory of the vanquished. The allegorical figure of the *cabocla* constituted an example in which stories unfolded, interrelated in a non-linear way, through interruptions and gaps. That is, at different times, this allegorical figure of the first

¹⁶ “Art deco Elevador Lacerda connects the Cidade Alta with Comércio via four elevators traveling 72m in 30 seconds. The Jesuits installed the first manual rope-and-pulley elevator around 1610 to transport goods and passengers from the port to the settlement. In 1868 an iron structure with clanking steam elevators was inaugurated, replaced by an electric system in 1928.” See: “Elevador Lacerda”, [online] www.lonelyplanet.com/brazil/salvador/attractions/elevador-lacerda/a/poi-ig/1179232/363210 [accessed: 13.12.2017].

¹⁷ We are most grateful to Viviane Hermida and Diego Haase for supplying us with information and photographic material.

¹⁸ Concerning the political meaning of “occupying” by social movements since 2013, see: *Street Politics in the Age of Austerity From the Indignados to Occupy*, eds. Amsterdam University Press, M. Ancelovici, P. Dufour, H. Nez, Amsterdam 2016.

¹⁹ Interview with Viviane Hermida.

generation of Brazilians, arising from the mixture of white and indigenous people, in its recent reconstitution, corresponds to a “monument”—not constructed in marble and great columns as in the past—but as deconstructed images of the two original monuments. They are digital and graphic deconstructed images, anti-monuments, adding a new layer to the allegory of the *cabocla*, resignifying it once more in the present. These images are unfolded from the performance created by the artist Chastinet, assuming the allegory as an emblem of the political resistance against the actual destruction of the architectural and cultural memory in the center of the city of Salvador. It is clear by now that the protest is not only aimed at the preservation of a collective and past memory, visible in all historic colonial buildings, old houses and churches, but also targets the political and economic powers that bent on banishing inhabitants from the area—in a gesture of “cleansing”—as these are seen as an abjection, flying in the face of their political plans of aesthetization and profit-making through the construction of new and commercial buildings; the same gesture that affects the inhabitants of “cracolândia” in the center of São Paulo.

Finally, as a constellation of the many allegories and monuments referred to in this article through Benjamin’s ideas, we might recall *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, and the perception of the child, who cannot fathom the significance of the towering Column of the Victory in Berlin, as its eyes cannot reach the top, gazing, therefore, on the “closer figures on its pedestal in which the ‘vassals’ of the sovereigns are portrayed.”²⁰ Similarly, we may infer that the performer and digital art producers can display their perception on the behalf of the people—the “nameless corvette”—upon whom the “victors” aim to march again as a re-enactment of the triumphal parade, erasing the collective memory pasted on the facades of those buildings, and expelling its inhabitants in one single violent gesture.

*Translated by Marta Nunes da Costa*²¹

²⁰ See p. 133.

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Fig. 1. The Japanese Immigration Centenary Monument by Tomie Ohtake.

Source: Instituto Tomie Ohtake, [online] <http://www.institutotomieohtake.org.br/tomie-othake/interna/aeroporto-internacional-de-guarulhos> [accessed: 12.12.2017].

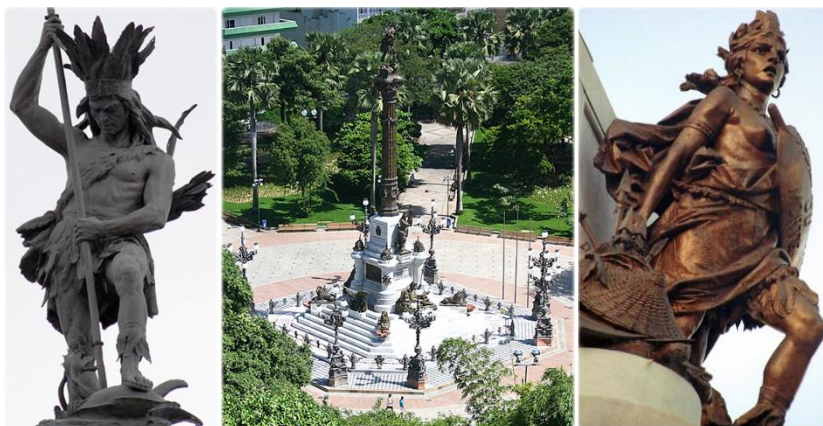


Fig. 2–4. Statue at the top of the column in celebration of 2nd July, located in Campo Grande, Salvador, Bahia. The Indian, Paraguaçu, is on the right at the base of the column.

Source: “Monumento ao Dois de Julho”, [online] <http://www.salvador-turismo.com/campo-grande/monumento.htm> [accessed: 10.12.2017].



Fig. 5. Ivana Chastinet in her *cabocla* performance in defence of the historic center, together with the black warrior Zumbi, played by Sr. Raimundo, a member of the *Bahia Homeless Movement*, who belongs also to social movement *Articulação de Movimentos e Comunidades do Centro Antigo de Salvador*, 2017.

Source: *Articulação de Movimentos e Comunidades do Centro Antigo de Salvador* Collection.



Fig. 6. On July 2nd, 2015, the image alludes to Ivana Chastinet performing a fight with a bulldozer, a gesture of resistance against demolitions ordered by the City Hall in May 2015 to “clear the area” for speculators. The image is the logo design of the *Articulação de Movimentos e Comunidades do Centro Antigo de Salvador*.

Source: *Articulação de Movimentos e Comunidades do Centro Antigo de Salvador* Collection.

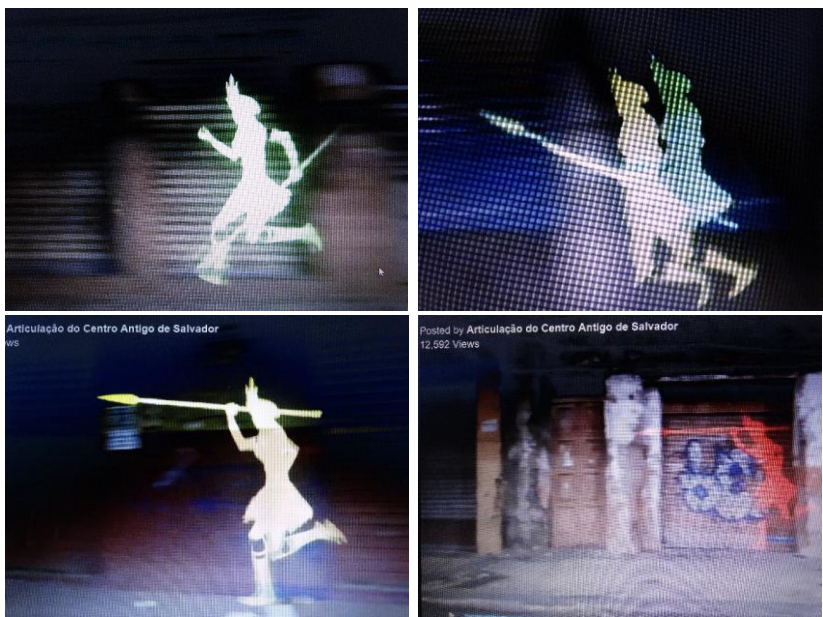


Fig. 7-10. The *cabobla* allegory.

Source: *Articulação de Movimentos e Comunidades do Centro Antigo de Salvador* Collection.



Fig. 11. *Caiapó Tuíra* Indian.

Source: "Povos do Xingu se encontram o pará", [online] <http://memorialdademocracia.com.br/card/povos-do-xingu-se-encontram-no-para> [accessed: 10.12.2017].



Fig. 12. Postcard of Lacerda's elevator.

Source: *Articulação de Movimentos e Comunidades do Centro Antigo de Salvador* Collection.