



One thousand and one nights in the industrial town: realism in Araby

*Mil e uma noites na
cidade industrial:
o realismo em Arábia*



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Introduction

*A god can do it. But tell me how / a man is to follow him /
through the narrow lyre?*

Rainer Maria Rilke

In the film *Sullivan's travel* (1941), produced during World War II, the American director Preston Sturges tells the story of John L. Sullivan (played by Joel McCrea), a famous filmmaker specialized in comedy. Desolated by human world's misery and evil, he decides to venture into the realm of social realism, an artistic tendency that was very present in the interwar period (see BODNAR, 2003, p. 46). His dream is to make, based on the cinematographic adaptation of a politically conscious novel, a work capable of portraying the lives of people who live on the margins of society. Not wishing to renounce the guaranteed success of Sullivan's comedies, the producers question the feasibility of the new project, claiming that the director, due to his belonging class, could not know the real social suffering, a factor that would prevent a reliable representation. However, the plan backfired: in response to the businessmen's provocation, Sullivan decides to disguise himself as a pauper and go out into the world in search of the experience he lacks.

Bazin (1975, p. 52-53), who considered the comedy "the most serious genre in Hollywood – in the sense that it reflected, through the comic mode the deepest moral and social beliefs of American life," attributed to Sturges the feat of having renewed this film category. It is not surprising, therefore, that he saw in *Sullivan's travel* a refined case of social satire elaborated with the cinema's own resources. In the film, Sturges rips the genre apart, without mocking, however, its aesthetic assumptions. Assuming a strongly realistic verve, in tune with the protagonist's trajectory, he hits the laws of comedy retrospectively, causing them to explode from the inside. "If he [Sturges] justifies them in the end, it is only after admitting their untruth and because this untruth is in the end a lesser evil" (BAZIN, 1975, p. 55). Once transformed subjectively by the experience of the wretched people that he sought to show objectively, Sullivan is convinced that it is better to bet on joy, even if it lasts only the ninety minutes of the session.

Apparently remote in time and space, Sturges' film poses a fundamental question for every film production that proposes to make, within reality, social conscience incursions. This issue resonates, with its due displacement, with a recent

Brazilian film, made in Ouro Preto's landscapes. *Araby* (2017), by Affonso Uchoa and João Dumans, presents a peculiar attempt to establish contact with the complex reality of the Brazilian worker. In the film, we observe the "nomad" worker Cristiano's life being outlined on his continuous journey on the road.

When elaborating this fictional life, *Araby* gives it a poetic impulse, while preserving something from the experience of the subject filmed. Endowed with a high potential for otherness, both for his social position and for a kind of spectral, ghostly persistence, Cristiano accumulates images from other times, establishing a gap in history – of the world and the cinema. He paradoxically subsists through a work of **fairytales** at the heart of disappearance. In this sense, we have in mind not only the national scope, with particular cinema and history, but also the broader modernity that crosses the cinema, in a history that continues to mix with the injustices of progress and with the capitalism tyrannies silent about the subjects' lives.

Realism

*Realism does not consist in reproducing reality,
but in showing how things really are.*

Bertolt Brecht

The worker's singular trajectory in *Araby* offers a specific discursive construction, capable of intervening, as a work of art, in the flow of images, messages and codes that constitute the symbolic terrain of Brazilian society. At a first level, the film leads to a reflection on the country's reality by taking art as a specific tool to think and see the world, endowed with its own intelligence. It is cinema as an epistemic machine, as some of its inventors wanted, from Eisenstein and Vertov to Jean-Luc Godard. A machine of vision, images and mobile sounds, capable of creating original forms to represent or reveal reality. In this regard, instead of imposing an external condition or a thesis on the figure of the worker, the proposal of *Araby* is to try to mix with it, look closely at the common man with his colossal effort for survival. Thus, it allows the viewer to submerge in a different life through a unique sensitivity, quite different from the prevailing forms in newspapers, television programs and commercial films in general.

In a sense, this path consists of a return to the worker's experience, to his lived and dreamed reality, disputed with the strength of his body and soul. But how can we

restore this experience of the real as cinematographic images when the mass media daily erect armor layers, incessantly bombarding our perception? How to overcome, to some extent, the barrier of a manipulated – and manipulative – visuality, when every image, word or power of life seems to be quickly absorbed by the borders of the media? The response of the film, at first, is to assume the inexhaustible opacity of the narrative, highlighting the difficulties of the worker's existence with his dose of melancholy, loss, incompleteness. It is also to assume the subject's yearning for a free life, devoid of capitalist exploitation and forged, if desired, in an insurgent moment of interruption.

It is true that each particular film, from each different time, should find its own realism, its unique way of dealing with the world in its living, chaotic, brutal state. Even because “what counts as ‘realistic’, what seems possible at any point in the social field, is defined by a series of political determinations” (FISHER, 2009, p. 16). *Araby* realism, attentive to the current Brazilian sociopolitical situation, is made in the unavoidable dialogue with national films, such as Leon Hirszman's, but also in the diffuse contact with other traditions, formed by filmmakers who knew how to position themselves, in due time, through fictional elaboration, disputing the meanings of the *real* and the *human*. This is the case, for example, of John Ford, John Huston, Preston Sturges, Chantal Akerman, Straub-Huillet, and Pedro Costa, among others.

We can define realism, provisionally, as a living engagement with the world, which cannot be reduced to the level of narrative or representation. In neorealism films, for example, the story told matters less than the type of contact established with the spaces and concrete subjects, in order to receive within the narrative significant elements of the reality observed. Tag Gallagher (1988, p. 70), in his book on John Ford, proposes the categorization of two general types of realism: a social realism, aimed at promoting changes in the filmed world, and an aesthetic realism, whose focus would be the *experience elaborated in a fictional way*. In the social field, we would have directors like Fritz Lang, Sergei Eisenstein, Alfred Hitchcock, and Vittorio De Sica, while in the aesthetic field we would have, in addition to Ford himself, names like F. W. Murnau, Joseph von Sternberg, and Roberto Rossellini.

The ghost of the worker

*If it – learning to live – remains to be done, it can
happen only between life and death.*

Derrida

Araby contains traits linked to both categories of Gallagher (1988, p. 70), being more strongly embedded in the tradition of aesthetic realism, marked by proximity to the individuals represented. There is a focus on building the characters, endowed with unique trajectories and particular actions. Although the tone of social realism subtly subsists throughout the film, especially with regard to theatrical artifice and symbolic investment, it is aesthetic realism, as described by Gallagher, which manifests itself most intensely in *Araby*. It happens considering, for example, the travelogue format, the rigor of the characterization, the passionate dimension of the drama (characters presenting dilemma awareness), the gestures valuation, the construction of the scenes in depth (of field), the investment in realistic tonality (in contrast to excessive stylization), and the organicity of the assembly.

As directors of aesthetic realism, Dumans and Uchoa manage to restore human dignity and narrative autonomy to figures relegated to social marginality. John Ford, in particular, a filmmaker par excellence of Christian isolation, stoic wandering and individual sacrifice, seems to find strong resonance in the figure of Cristiano, with his nomadic and marginal trajectory. But *Araby* presents more general reflections of Ford's cinema, if we take as a basis, for example, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) and *How Green Was My Valley* (1941). There are affinities in at least three aspects: the more documental character of realism, present in the choice of locations and in the way of filming with an emphasis on bodies and gestures, in addition to the recurrent use of sequence shots; humorous vignettes (like the joke about cement – and the dialogue with the truck loader) common in Ford films and always balanced with elements of a more tragic tone; and the intense poetic stylization of reality, something that *Araby* presents due to, above all, the flow of the voice-over narration that refers to a double inner experience of the subject who narrates and acts at the same time.

We are not talking about a faithful copy of Ford's work, about the direct reproduction of a sensitive substrate, even because each film results from different encounters and vibrations. At the same time, it would be impoverishing to disregard that images can actively cross space-time or produce, among themselves, unforeseen interference, acquiring corresponding behaviors. By the way, modern physics formulates this scientifically with the impressive phenomenon of quantum entanglement, for example, which Albert Einstein defined as “spooky action at a distance” (BORN, 1971, p. 158-159). It is from a distance, therefore, that we observe important traces of Ford's cinema in the *Araby* imaginary, as if something from

the American director's affective or visual sphere reappeared in a transformed way, reflecting an intense engagement with the tradition bases, the appropriation pace and the possibilities loss to architect, in this case, cinematographic images.

Indeed, *Araby* establishes its own relations with sensitive elements of art and history, approaching figures present in Ford's cinema, such as rural workers. Almost the entire narrative of *Araby* is marked by the ghostly presence of the peasant leader Barreto, a figure related, if desired, to the rebel priest of *The Grapes of Wrath*. One's death echoes the other's resistance: "There were shots down there, by the river, but the people didn't tear themselves away." The first time Cristiano meets him, Barreto is standing in a hovel on the side of the road, to the sound of the Brazilian ten-string guitar by musician Pedro Flores (the song is *Céu azul* [Blue Sky]). Later, in the tangerine plantation – which relates to the orange groves of *The Grapes of Wrath*, reinforcing the poetic perspectives and similar sensitive landscapes –, he learns of Barreto's story, which refers to a whole lost imaginary of struggle and organization of workers in the field, with the subsequent trip to São Bernardo, the hunger strike, the connection with Lula ("He said he knew Lula, do you believe it?"). And he also discovers that the land liked him, because "it was after Barreto that the tangerine changed the taste, it got sweeter."

Therefore, the ghost of the peasant struggle, the struggle for land, for rural property, starts to prowl the film and peek, from outside the field, the images we see, something that is intertwined with the ghostly factor of *The Grapes of Wrath*. They are figures that can only be tensioned as fantasies, fleeting images; the dreams in common (and the common dreams) that are projected between one cinema and another, one imaginary and another, from John Ford to *Araby*. Dreams of freedom, dreams of dignity, ordinary people's dreams. In addition, both *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Araby* follow a similar format to the road trip, a genre marked by wandering, drifting, displacement, until at a certain point in the journey both dialectically overflow all accumulated along the way, that which was trapped in darkness.

This overflow point, in the case of *The Grapes of Wrath*, is Tom Joad's final speech. Undoubtedly, he goes far beyond what would be his usual dramaturgy function for the standards of classic narrative cinema, a recurring shift in Ford's films. He often introduces, in the chain of action, a moment of suspension in which the characters seem to embody a thought or idea – a ghost – that was not predictable in the tone of the record. These are moments of beauty and splendor, highlighted

by the way of building the plans, positioning of the camera, distributing light in the frame. There is transmission of values or figures that are usually linked to texts from the Christian tradition, even if slightly inflected in favor of a primary democratic perspective of freedom, equality, and fraternity. It is the case of, for instance, *The Sun Shines Bright* (1953) or *3 Godfathers* (1948).

However, In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the procedure brings a renewed element: Henry Fonda's words constitute one of the most direct speeches of communist inspiration ever placed in the mouth of a character from commercial cinema. After the family's misfortunes in migrating from Oklahoma to California, after closely confronting death, misery, injustice, expropriation, the energetic Tom Joad, pursued by the police, needs to flee the agricultural field in which they are. Then, as he says goodbye to her mother in front of the fire, he states: "I'll be all around in the dark – I'll be everywhere. Wherever you can look – wherever there's a fight, so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever there's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there. I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad. I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry and they know supper's ready, and when the people are eatin' the stuff they raise and livin' in the houses they build – I'll be there, too." And he disappears into the darkness, to become a ghost, an invisible idea, an imaginary entity, capable of haunting the wrong world with his thirst for justice and freedom. Tom Joad crosses the border of the screen to transform into immaterial, spectral energy, as in the song immortalized by Bruce Springsteen, one of the greatest popular singers in American music, "The Ghost of Tom Joad."

In *Araby*, on the other hand, there is a moment analogous to this, in which the narrative of a whole life, of a whole journey, is as if suspended so that Cristiano can express his definitive words. This time, they come as thoughts, an inner voice (voice-over), but bring content in line with that of Ford's film, since they point to the critical awareness of social structure and work, outlining the dream of a fairer life for him and his factory colleagues. In the furnace, he will say:

Since Cascão was fired, I didn't feel like going to work. But here I felt different. My ears started to feel clogged and I got a little bit deaf for a few seconds. At that moment, a very strange thing happened: the noise of the factory disappeared and I heard my own heart. And, for the first time, I stopped to look at the factory and got sad for being there. And I realized that, in fact, I didn't know anyone, that all that meant nothing to me. It was like waking up from a nightmare.
I feel like an old, tired horse, my eyes hurt, my head hurts, I don't

have the strength to work. I breathe quickly. My heart is a blood pump. I wanted to grab my colleagues' arms and tell them that I woke up, that they fooled us all our lives. I'm tired, I want to go home. I wish everyone could go home. I would like us to leave everything behind, leave the machines burning, the oil spilling, the pieces of iron abandoned, the conveyor belt switched off, the hot lava pouring and flooding everything. Burning the machines, the soil, the gravel ... And the smoke rising. Dark like night. Covering the sky and throwing money away.

And we would be at home, drinking water, sleeping in the afternoon. We would cough up the black smoke, we would spit out the pieces of iron within our lungs, our blood would stop being a river of ore, bauxite, aluminum and it would be red again, the same when we are young. And that's why I would like to call everyone. To call furnace operators, electricians, welders and supervisors, men and women, and say in each ear: "Let's go home. We are just a bunch of old horses." But I know that nobody would listen to me, because nobody likes to hear these things. But I would like to say in each ear: "Our life is a mistake, and we will always be that. All that we have is this strong arm and the will to wake up early."

Then, like Tom Joad, he disappears into the darkness, vanishing into the gloomy background of the crackling fire. He also takes with him the refractory strength of a ghost, capable of overcoming the thick barriers erected around things and people by the veiled agreement of oppressive realism, by the imperceptible pact of capitalist reality. Finally, he becomes the specter of the worker he dreamed of, perhaps for the last time – in fact, once more – with the unrealizable liberation of his class, of the marginalized people of which he is part. When commenting on a text by the "plebeian philosopher" Gabriel Gauny, which describes the day of a carpenter working at a wealthy person's home, Rancièr (2011, p. 10) states

The dissociation between the worker's manual activity, determined by social constraints, and the activity of his look, which self-emancipates, even appropriating the form of power inherent in the perspective look [...] contradicts the police distribution of the ways of feel considered appropriate to the worker's place, function and identity.

We can draw a parallel between this moment of suspension and the scene of Cristiano in the furnace, as both cases present a positioning of the worker in a space saturated by the logic "of hard work and property" (RANCIÈRE, 2011, p. 10).

The dynamics of industrial-capitalist power is challenged through a sensitivity gap (“for the first time, I stopped to look at the factory”). The “normal” sensitivity, instituted by the repressive dynamics of modernity, is shifted to a “suspended” sensitivity, in which the figure of the worker acquires greater autonomy and can affirm, even if provisionally, an existence not submitted to the hegemonic circuit of power.

In other words, the interruption of a capitalist flow of time, governed by the logic of efficiency and achievement, is inseparable from the invention of another time, which values the possibility of an inefficient life. This attitude of looking, reflected also in other moments of the film, in the conversations of friendship, in the pauses, in Cristiano’s affective encounters, ends up unfolding in the invention of “a new body, a body destined for something other than exploitation” (RANCIÈRE, 2011, p. 11). It is something of this aspect of invention, of a new destination for the voice, for the arm, for the body, which the researcher Fábio Andrade (2019) captures in his text about the film, when he affirms that “the dying isn’t dead,” and that the possibility of new strength awakening lies in this borderline, ghostly situation between life and death.

The dead

Man lives and dies by his images.

L. Daudet

Cristiano’s final speech can also be brought closer to a very atypical film by John Huston. In *The Dead* (1987), an adaptation of an eponymous tale by Joyce,² Huston shows the events of an Epiphany dinner, in an upper-middle class environment in the city of Dublin. This Irish microcosm receives in the cinematographic version a detailed representation, guided by the plunge into human affection, by the valorization of ties, bonds and habits and, above all, by the construction of living characters, endowed with their own dramaturgy strength, with a spirit manifest in the images. In addition, behind the appearance of banality, the usual order of dinner, repeated every year with the same guests, there is a feeling of a hidden secret or, at least, a sensation of estrangement. At the end of the narrative, filled with stories, dialogues and songs, we discover that the space of the film was inhabited, at all times,

² It should be remembered that the original project of *Araby* consisted of adapting the short story “Araby,” also by Joyce.

by the ghost of an unreachable passion, an element that destabilizes, retrospectively, the supposed stability that had been shown until then.

Back home, Gabriel and Gretta Conroy, a couple of bourgeois from the Irish family that we accompany at dinner, seem to suffer from an unusual distance. Despite the man's efforts to get closer, they talk using empty words, without meeting at a deeper level. The woman soon reveals the reason for the distance: a song that played at dinner reminded her of her first lover, a figure that is now shining in her memory, and that death has made eternal with the unsurpassed beauty of youth. She throws herself on the bed, while the man goes to the window to contemplate the landscape (inside and outside), until we start to hear, through voice-over, his inner voice. A penetrating flow of reflections on life and time takes shape, mixing with images of snow over the city, the cemetery and the face of the man himself in the foreground.

There are two important similarities between the interior monologues at the end of *Araby* and *The Dead*, which complement, in our view, the path presented in *The Grapes of Wrath*. The first concerns editing operations that, as in Ford's film, suddenly suspend a condensed flow of thought in relation to the normal course of the narrative. In *The Dead*, this is done by using voice-over, because it was not used until that moment, and it creates a moment of sharp contrast to the speech in the film. But it is also done with the poetic condensation of the edition, in the powerful combination of Gabriel's thoughts with the precise images chosen by Huston, visual fragments of colder colors, under the silent background, and the snow falling on Ireland. Everything results in a truly epiphany sequence, to rhyme with the Christmas dinner, not in line with the frontal hue of *The Grapes of Wrath*;

Snow, in fact, also present in the original tale, is a kind of figure of dissolution throughout the story, both at the level of history and at the level of emotion (BRILL, 1997). In the cold layer that accumulates over the world, we glimpse, with a certain melancholy, the traces of the time that passes, making the cycles of life and death, of isolation and coexistence, of remembrance and forgetfulness. In a way, to echo in the worker's reflections in *Araby*, we can understand the snow as an area bordering on belonging and loneliness. After all, how many dead people are hidden there, under that white ground, who appeal to us, who touch our faces through the wind? How many ghosts finally arise in memory, if we think of the living and dead generations? How many echoes, in the voices we hear, of voices that fell silent (BENJAMIN, 1994)?

Araby also uses a poetic figuration, although distinct from the snow of *The Dead*, to mark the meanings of Cristiano's transformative trajectory. Fire symbolizes the enlightenment of the spirit, but also regeneration or rebirth (CHEVALIER; GHEERBRANT, 1988). Thus, the final speech comes to light along with a sequence of fiery images captured in the factory furnace. It is a brief moment of awareness that mixes the political frontal aspect of Tom Joad's farewell speech with the poetic perfection of Joyce's words filmed by Huston. These furnace images are also guided by a certain degree of compositional stylization, producing a visual energy that combines powerfully with the expressiveness of words. As we listen to Cristiano reflecting, telling about his dreams, talking about his factory colleagues, we see the sparks triggered by the work, when the luminous fire begins to spread.

Furthermore, *Araby* shares with *The Dead* the ghostly character of the narrative, as if, from the beginning, it was haunted by an inaccessible figure, a breath from the past. In Huston's film, this figure is the woman's youth lover, Michael Furey, whose intensity of unapproachable emotion, relived in Gretta's memory, calls into question the entire bourgeois universe observed until then, whose dead people multiply under the ground. In this case, the evidence of this ghost is inscribed in the mise en scène of the work, with its shadow aspect, at least in two distinct moments. First, when the clerk takes Gabriel and Gretta to the hotel room. The camera stops on the stairs, several seconds after they have disappeared from view, and then we see three shadows walking on the empty staircase, like the spirits of the dead roaming the spaces of yore. Then, inside the room, Michael Furey's shadow is clearly present when Gretta reveals her love and death story. And yet, when we hear Aunt Julia's engagement music, the movement of the camera, which makes an autonomous drift before returning to the singer, looks like that of a ghost crossing the world, as if an invisible observer witnessed the scene unfolding. Indeed, "this intensely lyrical moment creates subtle tension and gives visual clues to the dominant theme: the enduring influence of the dead on the living" (MEYERS, 2011, p. 405).

In *Araby*, this ghost is represented by the peasant leader, by the worker, by the figures that point, at the same time, to individual liberation and collective union, that is, to the anticapitalist struggle in a broader sense. Furthermore, albeit in a more ambiguous way, we can understand that there is a dose of spectral existence in the figure of Cristiano as well. After all, it is only in his final speech that he manages to break, for a few moments, the boundaries between belonging and loneliness, between

presence and absence. It is only in this inner monologue, kept within him for a lifetime – and a whole narrative – that he crosses the limits of reality once and for all, operating the imaginary summons of co-workers for leisure, for the interruption of machines, for strike. This ghost, if desired, is the ghost of revolution, this long-forgotten spectrum, whose name is so distant that we hardly know how to pronounce it. Then, we shall relearn.

The Brazilian worker

I don't believe in any technique.

Murilo Mendes

In the film essay *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* (Workers leaving the factory, 1995), Harun Farocki reflects on how difficult it is for cinema to access the veiled space of the factory. According to him, even in the field of fiction most films start when the working hours are over. In that closed world where the characters are isolated for half the day, surrounded by walls and watchmen, the camera has difficulty entering. And, if it succeeds, it will be difficult to understand the nature of a work whose activities have been covered up by technological tangles, leaving an abyssal discrepancy between appearance and function, as suggested by Farocki in *Industrie und fotografie* (Industry and Photography, 1979), another film essay. Farocki's reflection refers, above all, to the growing structuring of these spaces, under the tutelage of capitalist power, as a type of private prison in which the gestures of men, coupled to machines, are constantly policed by video cameras or private security forces, without being destined for public visibility.

In addition, the idea of public visibility brings problems, since everything in the capitalist world – urban architecture, vision machines, industrial paraphernalia – works to hide or naturalize exploitation. As Brecht (2000, p. 165) said, “reality as such has slipped into the domain of the functional. The reification of human relations, the factory, for example, no longer discloses those relations.” In such a context, *Araby* made an important foray into the universe of the factory, trying to show, among other things, what can no longer be seen, a task that also demands new ways of showing. The film resumes, under the key of fictitious representation, the possibility of insurrection within a concrete space whose truth has been denied for society. In this case, there is no realistic representation of the work, which occurs in a more Marxist

verve fiction like *La classe operaia va in paradiso* (The working class goes to Heaven, 1971), by Elio Petri. First of all, *Araby* assumes the impossibility of access, starting to fairytale the worker's life and to produce, as we said, an imaginary engagement with the universe of work.

In this sense, Farocki's reflection has a deeper meaning. In his film, which takes the form of a general inventory of work throughout history, starting with the first camera pointed at a factory by the Lumière brothers, he notes the disappearance of the working class in the face of intensified control techniques and mechanized activities. This disappearance, or this phantasmagoria, becomes evident in Brazilian cinema, which remained for several years without presenting important films to deal with the worker.

Araby seems to find a unique way to deal with a certain state of the world from a worker's journey, especially if we take the specific landscape of Brazilian society. The figure of Cristiano, as it is constructed, presents a fundamental elaboration of his position in the world and in history. His attributes do not appear as a fixed, typified scheme, but in the constant movement of a life that brings together significant elements of the country's history and reality. In addition, as we said, the journey of this character refers to different representations of the working class in art and cinema, converging with certain keys of aesthetic apprehension and sensitive inscription of the worker in the narrative record. These two elements, however, the construction of a cinema figure and its inscription in a broader sphere, must be understood in a crisscross manner, with the ability to flex and dynamically resonate with each other.

If we focus on modern Brazilian cinema, established predominantly from the 1960s, we can observe a series of variations in the way the worker is represented. In *Cinema Novo*, the approaches favor the political and class awareness, which is reflected in films such as *Pedreira de São Diogo* (1962), by Leon Hirszman, and *Esse mundo é meu* (1964), by Sergio Ricardo. In 1970, with the audiovisual production censored by the authoritarian restrictions of the Military Dictatorship, the main production is *A queda* (1976), by Ruy Guerra. In the movie, we clearly see the isolation of the worker, with his collapse within the repressive conditions of the dictatorial regime. We also see the need for rescuing a political project for the benefit of the people and workers. In 1980, a time of openness and strikes, films which register the working class multiply, with emphasis on those that relate to the workers'

movements in a more direct way, as it is the case of the ABC Region. Finally, from the 1990s onwards, the figure of the worker loses the strength of previous decades, appearing diluted in other issues of aesthetic or thematic order.

Roughly speaking, we move from films that strongly mark a utopia of belonging, with the need for connecting the worker with a broader social and political nucleus, to films that abandon the bonds built around work, perhaps because they can no longer find them, and which put into practice, primarily, subjective trajectories of another nature, usually more individualized or transitory. The previously existing tension, between a personal life and the subjects who go through it, loses prominence to give rise to films marked by looser, less evident political ties.

A first point that deserves mention, in this sense, is the relationship that *Araby* establishes with Leon Hirszman's cinema, connection that Affonso Uchoa highlights in his public statements (see ABC DA GREVE – DEBATE..., 2018). In *São Bernardo* (1972), the unceasing search for capital is precisely what causes the spiritual collapse of the boss, doomed, in the end, to the most complete loneliness. *ABC da greve* (1990), in turn, tries to investigate a political body that orbits, almost organically, around the figure of Lula. At a certain point, the unionist recognizes the failure of the movement to obtain all the workers' demands, but this failure does not constitute an effective defeat, since the great victory, the irrevocable conquest of the struggle, is the fact that the bodies are united in the same common belonging. In *Eles não usam black-tie* (1981), a kind of fictional counterpart of *ABC*, the failure of the strike and the family breakdown, in the end, can only be overcome by joint action at the most elementary level: the father and mother collect, side by side, the beans they are going to cook.

The shape of loneliness

This is the animal that never was.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Araby ambiguously resumes the heritage of class belonging explored by Hirszman, Tapajós and others. Its narrative inflection is quite distinct, given that the horizon of political and economic emancipation developed by previous filmmakers has been lost. The worker now responds to events of a different order, different from *Cinema Novo* and the openness films. No longer the atrocious authoritarianism

of the Military Dictatorship, with its neoliberal ideology, its explicit violence, but the fleeting euphoria of development and work, also with its neoliberal essence, followed by the overwhelming dismantling of economic guarantees, as well as the brutal colonization of the social fabric for money. In this context, identity ties become scarcer, while the subjects' commitment to work, money, and the capitalist way of life, triggers transformations in their perceptions of the world, their solitary or collective experiences, and their ways of political engagement. It is the era of individual entrepreneurs, startups, weakening of unions, human isolation, and disarticulation of anticapitalism agendas.

The worker, a fundamental figure in the historical struggles of the past, seems to vanish or, rather, to be suppressed by a more perverse dynamic. In an interview with Peppe Salvà, Agamben (2012) affirms, always in line with Walter Benjamin: "God is not dead. He became Money." This is, in fact, the entity that organizes an uninterrupted cult of work and money, in the most ferocious, relentless and irrational religion that has never existed, as it knows neither redemption nor truce. It is the religion of capitalism, whose veiled cult imposes itself in almost all spaces of circulation of contemporary life, concrete or symbolic: mass media, corporate environments, places of consumption, democratic institutions, urban avenues, art galleries, family houses, etc. Thus, a nefarious realistic pact is established, a "pervasive *atmosphere*, conditioning not only the production of culture but also the regulation of work and education, and acting as a kind of invisible barrier constraining thought and action" (FISHER, 2009, p. 16).

In such a context of continuous standardization, of uninterrupted conditioning of the body and spirit, the figure of the worker is no longer able to dissociate work and life. "Capital follows you when you dream. Time [...] becomes chaotic, broken down into punctiform divisions" (FISHER, 2009, p. 34). However, it is not only the subjects or vassals who have become entities shattered under late capitalism. There is a wide process of mitigation of the social and political group, so that even when the worker appears he brings with him an inevitable factor of alienation from himself and the world. The urgency that was, before, in concrete and symbolic spaces such as the factory, the street, the periphery, the newspaper, is as if dissipated by the highly technological media-corporate curtain that increasingly appropriates the possible meanings of reality.

If in the face of this sensitive homogenization of capitalist life, of this erasure of certain political figures from the social fabric and from history, directly resuming the tradition of Hirszman and other filmmakers of his time has become almost unrealizable, it is possible, at least, to poetically refund a concrete engagement of cinema with the present, in order to pull out a specific shape for the reality of ordinary lives. It is essential, at this point, the aesthetic connection, conscious or not, with the expressive forms of Ford or Joyce, artists who knew in several of their works, erected on the borders of realism and lyricism, to fracture the hegemonic circuits of visibility to confer a (film, sensitive, literary) dignity to marginalized people figures. *Araby* does not lose sight of the residues of a certain melancholy, of the disappearance of a determined sensitive reality, but prefers to respond to this scenario actively, with a clear desire for fairytaling, for subjective resistance against oppression (GUIMARÃES, 2017).

One of the fundamental aspects of the construction of *Araby*, therefore, is its unique ability to organize the worker's life in order to give, in a new way, something of his sensitive experience, also showing the side of exploitation and marginality usually masked by capitalist media dynamics. Solitude, in this context, is always accompanied by a counterpart of belonging, albeit precarious, to the pace of encounters and experiences that, at least, reconfigure the symbolic position of the worker throughout the journey. Although, politically speaking, the utopian dimension of the encounter does not actually take place; there remains an imperishable will to search, to transform, a dynamic that mobilizes a whole series of actions and words, a whole cinematographic drama and a rhythm of invention.

All in all, Hirszman's inheritance, which is clearly socialist in nature, finds other specificities in Uchoa and Dumans' cinema, in order to favor a less hard fictional format, so to speak, less rigid. Thus, we accompany a protagonist who does not identify himself with any political group, who is not directly summoned to awareness, but who will achieve, in a very peculiar way, a provisional enlightenment about his condition. Unlike films of a more utilitarian or pamphleteering verve, the enunciation of subjective existence and the construction of personal identity find their main ways of manifestation in the molecular vibrations of the body, the voice, the look. Disconnected, but not isolated from the surroundings – as was the case with *A queda* –, Cristiano is able to articulate provisional ties with the places and people he meets, generating powerful images in the encounters along the journey. It is precisely

in this movement of updating imagery that *Araby* undertakes her fundamental gesture of resistance and artistic renewal: the poetic and corporeal affirmation, real and imaginary, of the existence of a ghost.

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