



UNDER THE PRISM OF ARCHITECTURE: AVANT-GARDE AND MODERNISM IN ROBERTO SCHWARZ

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ABSTRACT

Schwarz's essays on modernism are varied and cover several artistic fields. If studies and debates around essays on modernist literature and theater are more common in critical fortune, on architecture, in turn, they are more erratic. Furthermore, a comparison between Schwarz's readings on the three fields is even more difficult to find. In this sense, this work intends to contribute towards filling, even partially, the gap of a more systematic study of the readings that Schwarz had about modernism from the prism of architecture.

Keywords: modernism; Brazilian architecture; new architecture; vanguardism; architecture, Roberto Schwarz.

RESUMO

Os ensaios de Schwarz a respeito do modernismo são variados e cobrem diversas searas artísticas. Se os estudos e os debates em torno dos ensaios sobre literatura e teatro modernistas são mais comuns na fortuna crítica, sobre arquitetura, por sua vez, é mais errático. Além disso, uma comparação entre as leituras de Schwarz sobre os três campos é ainda mais difícil de ser encontrada. À vista desse quadro, este trabalho pretende contribuir no sentido de suprir, mesmo que parcialmente, a lacuna de um estudo mais sistemático das leituras que Schwarz tinha a respeito do modernismo a partir do prisma da arquitetura.

Palavras-chave: modernismo; arquitetura brasileira; arquitetura nova; vanguardismo; Roberto Schwarz.



INTRODUCTION

Schwarz's essays on modernism, in his earlier or later manifestations, are varied and involve diverse artistic fields. Literature, theater and architecture, however, are more systematic and cover a wide historical period. If studies and debates around essays on the first two domains are more common in critical fortune, on the third domain, they are more erratic – with the exception of the works of Otilia Arantes (2014), Marcelo Silva Souza (2009) and Camila Rossati (2010). Furthermore, a comparison between Schwarz's readings on the three fields is even more difficult to find.

In this sense, this work intends to contribute towards filling, even partially, the gap of a more systematic study of the readings that Schwarz had about modernism from the prism of architecture. However, why take this approach? For two reasons: i) the relatively prominent and controversial position that modern architecture had in the work of the materialist critic and ii) the fact that it provides a distinct perspective on modernism and its legacy in relation to literature and theater. To achieve our goals, we will make use of the following steps: a) a brief location of the importance of architecture in the author's work and the presentation of its initial differences with other artistic fields; b) a more detailed exposition of Schwarz's arguments about architecture and c) a resumption and deepening of the distinctions presented in the first parts of this work.

Before starting the text, it is necessary to warn the reader about two aspects. Firstly, the exposure of the essays will try to be chronological; however, for the purposes of exposure, we will use further essays freely. Secondly, the bibliographical references, when necessary, will be modified to better localize Schwarz's publications, so that, after the year of the work, we will put an abbreviation with the title of the book in question¹.

THE PLACE OF ARCHITECTURE

Souza (2009), in his master's thesis, pointed out that architecture, despite its relatively marginal presence, in relation to other artistic domains, is an important field for Schwarz's reflections on, for example, modernism, the avant-gardes (as well as their relations with politics), Brazilian modernization and the diverse national social process, but not alien to the rest of the world. Rosatti (2010), in her master's thesis, emphasizes that architecture was essential for Schwarz's critical reasoning. Something that Schwarz himself assumes by arguing that in architecture one can find the densest aesthetic discussion of his time (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 231, MVL).

For Schwarz, the literary modernism of Oswald and Mário de Andrade are integrated into the discourse of modernization, by default and from the movement's internal dispositions, and, triumphantly, to the Brazilian media and cultural industry (SCHWARZ, 2012, QHS; 1997, DM; 2012, MVL). This was because, among other things, such artistic works were formalized from a point of view of specific class. That of a cosmopolitan coffee-producing bourgeoisie, which, despite aesthetic innovations, provided a cheerful and conservative relativization of apparently antithetical terms, such as backwardness and modernity – as well as their violent conjunctions.

In relation to the modernist theatre, more specifically to the Brechtian theatre, the path would have been more sinuous. In *What time is it?*, the literary critic, in the introduction to the translation made of excerpts from *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*, points out the novelty and actuality of mature Brecht's theater – “which on a large scale associated aesthetic experimentation and political reflection” (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 88, QHS). It was big and this was because, among other things, at the time (late 1970s and 1980s), as argued, “*the workers' point of view*” had returned to “integrating

¹ The abbreviations are as follows: OPF for *Father of the Families and Other Studies*, originally from 1978; AVB for *To the Victor, the Potatoes*, originally from 1977; QHS for *What time is it?*, originally from 1987; DM for *Two Girls*, published in 1997; SB for *Brazilian Sequences*, originally from 1999; MVL for *Martinha versus Lucrecia*, published in 2012, and SCF for *Anyway*, 2019.

– and disturbing, by the nature of things – our *legal political spectrum*” (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 88, emphasis added, QHS). As evidenced by the presence, in the same volume, of the document "Politics and culture", presented as a subsidy for the cultural platform of the Workers' Party (PT) of 1982 and the concept of legal political spectrum, the workers' point of view was represented by the existence and agitation provided by the newly founded Workers Party.

Nevertheless, in the 1999 essay “The Relevance of Brecht: High Points and Low”, Schwarz wants to explain precisely “*the point of view according to which Brecht today is not up to date*” (SCHWARZ, 2014, p. 137, emphasis added, SB). This was because, with the collapse of socialism, the inexistence of an alternative to overcome capitalism in sight and with the upheavals of capital – which made reality explicitly cynical, with no chance for criticism through ideological unveiling – Brechtian procedures had become ideological and would have been absorbed by the cultural industry – notably in advertising and television.

In relation to architecture, from our point of view, the vision of the literary critic would have been different. One of the proofs of this is that, in a debate with Otilia Arantes, she asked whether Schwarz was a kind of “recalcitrant modernist” (ARANTES, 2014, p. 73). This was encouraged by the fact that, in the late 1990s and even later, Schwarz, despite recognizing a certain accommodation of architectural modernism to the dictates of capital, saw in it both critical residues, which would be important for criticism, and construction and abstraction solutions without, without which it would be difficult to think about modernity. As well as anti-capitalist solutions, and their large proportions.

ESSAYS AND FRAGMENTS ABOUT ARCHITECTURE, ARCHITECTS AND THEIR LEGACIES: FROM 1970 TO 2015

One of the first appearances of architecture in the critic's work was in his essay “*The ideas out of place*”, originally published in 1973 in the third issue of the journal *Estudos Cebrap* and, in 1977, as the first part of his book “*To the Victor, the Potatoes*”. In it, the materialist critic, to explain the skewed progress of advanced ideas in the capitalist periphery², considering that they orbit around the ideological nexus of favor and not money, talks about Brazilian architecture in the times of Machado de Assis. Based on the lessons of Nestor Goulart Reis Filho in his book *Residential Architecture in Brazil in the 19th Century*, Schwarz observes that, despite the illusion of a new environment in elite houses (created with decorative papers and paintings in the molds of industrializing countries), architectural transformation was superficial. The walls were made of earth and erected by the arms of slaves, Greco-Roman architectural motifs were painted, revealing a neoclassical ambition that was “not feasible with the techniques and materials available locally” (REIS FILHO *apud* SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 23, AVB), and windows were painted on the walls “with views of environments of Rio de Janeiro or Europe, suggesting a distant exterior, certainly different from the real one, with slave quarters, slaves and service yards” (Ibid.). Thus, the classes of slave owners sought to build for themselves artificial environments with European characteristics, in which everything was imported and from which the enslaved were removed.

Let us leave aside these architectural motifs from the time of Machado de Assis and approach the literary critic's essays in relation to modern architecture. In

² Skewed progress, but critically revealing about the effective progress of ideas, even in the capitalist center, their place of origin

“The progress in the past”, published in 1981, Schwarz comments on the number four of the publication *Art in a Magazine*, which brought together fifty years of writings on modernist architecture in Brazil, from Gregori Warchavchik to Sérgio Ferro. In view of this material, Schwarz talks about the ideological evolution of modernists in architecture in the light of the ideological cataclysms present in the 1980s. Namely: a) the capitalist order set aside attempts at justification and started the “no holds barred”; b) the Soviet Union, born to overcome the contradictions and limitations of capitalism, showed that if it had not totally renounced the libertarian discourse, it gave little credit to it; and c) the idea of progress, which has always served as a justification for the two fields (capitalism and communism), “has shown obviously irrational dimensions, and is no longer a guarantee of historical rationality”. Such developments “were translated by the *aging of the modernist idea*” (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 107, emphasis added, QHS). With this in mind, the Marxist critic identifies three distinct movements.

At first, in its period of innocence, represented by the text “About modern architecture” (1925), by Warchavchik, new architecture would be scandalous. It would be contrary to traditional prestige and formal and material irrationalism and would have the progressive bourgeoisie as one of its main allies. Beauty would be rational, its model would be the machine and taste would be guided by the principles of large industry, “which represents a deep break with cultural tradition, without prejudice to updating and reaffirming bourgeois hegemony” (Ibid., p. 108, QHS).

The second moment, in turn, is formalized by the essay “Reasons for the new architecture” (1930), by Lúcio Costa. While Warchavchik’s text did not question the industrialization processes with regard to the constitution of the working class, Costa places his text in the wake of the crisis of capitalism, with the presence of the USSR, and links the demands of rationalism in the new architecture to the interests of workers. Thus, for Lúcio Costa, there would be a new constructive technique, which, however, was waiting for a society (socialist or communist) to which it

would logically belong. This time, from the villain of traditions, the modernist spirit becomes an “efficient and self-appointed companion in the proletarian search for the forms of rational society, freed from the constraints of bourgeois property” (Ibid., p. 110, QHS). Here, according to Schwarz, identification with the political and social project of the USSR held an avant-garde position, which did not prevent Lúcio Costa himself from criticizing Russia when it, abandoning the principles of good architecture, sought inspiration in Roman fascist buildings.

In a third moment, the impasses arising from the supposed constitution of an architectural design more advanced than the narrow limits of bourgeois society and property, as well as its accommodation to these, would have governed not only architecture, but also other avant-garde arts. This can be identified in the other texts in the collection and in two distinct intellectual movements, which are seen: (i) in the disparity of position existing in two texts by Oscar Niemeyer and (ii) in Sérgio Ferro’s critique of the construction site, from 1970.

In “The Social Problem in Architecture” (1955), Niemeyer takes a realistic position, according to which “one of the reasons for the international success of modern Brazilian architecture is linked to the lack of a large industry and adequate social base, a lack that transforms several of our consecrated masterpieces into a ‘real insult’” (Ibid., p. 112, QHS). However, already in the Brasília construction period, the formulations of the architect from Rio de Janeiro, as seen in the essay “Form and function of architecture” (1959), put aside this content of contradiction and embarked on an explicit division between architecture and politics. A division in which architecture, with its unlimited plastic freedom, would allow its visitors to distance themselves from the hard problems of life. The politician, in turn, should have an attitude of coherent support to progressive movements. With this separation, the accommodation of architecture to capitalism is more accentuated, considering that, apart from leftist politics, it could more easily accommodate the constraints of capital.

In Sérgio Ferro's essay, entitled "Reflections for a politics in architecture" (1970), architectural thinking returns to wanting to be radical and the cycle of impasses in new architecture "seems to come to an end" (Ibid., p. 110, QHS). This is because Ferro – influenced by the failure of the experiences of socialist democracies, the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the European reception it had in 1968 – argues that the requirement of constructive rationality (applied to the product of architecture) taken further and applied to the actual work process on the construction site, showed that "the celebrated modern rationality reveals itself as an apex of irrationality" (Ibid., QHS). Therefore, the construction would be something obsolete and violent. Such questioning comes from a historical impasse different from that faced by Lúcio Costa in 1930. Given that, if in Costa the barrier to the expansion of architectural rationalism was in the class and property relations of capitalism, the impasse thinking by Ferro is another and more specific: if the revolutionary expropriation of the means of production took place, as far as the architects were concerned, the work process at the construction site would not be altered. Thus, revolutionizing the means of production was not enough, but the production process itself.

In view of Sérgio Ferro's position, Schwarz comments that the argument would convince a socialist listener "as a moral condemnation of modern construction" (Ibid., p. 113, emphasis added, QHS). If it is moral, according to Schwarz's lexicon, it would be neither political nor material. But why?

Firstly, "the problems in their historical and current scope, dictated by the need for large-scale work" were not faced with this (Ibid., QHS). This criticism only became clearer in 2000, when, in the argument of Pedro Arantes' graduation work, republished in *Martinha versus Lucrecia* (2012), Schwarz disagrees with Sérgio Ferro's criticism of the Project's

rationalization and its resulting division, in the field of architecture, between manual and intellectual work. For Schwarz, Ferro would have attributed the social divisions caused by Capital to the Project. What, ultimately, would lead to a position of denying the decisive achievements of architectural modernity, precisely because it does not emphatically distinguish the social division of labor and the division of society into classes, so that the struggle against the latter implied "[...] the struggle for the abolition of the former"³. All this being constituted, by Ferro, from "a violent moral aversion to the bourgeois order and the bourgeois that somewhat all of us carry with us", trying to reinvent the architect's profession to escape the barbarism of capitalism, "even if it was necessary to give up decisive achievements, such as the ability to design and abstract, without which it is difficult to imagine solutions for the modern world and its large numbers" (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 229, emphasis added, MVL). Furthermore, there is a complementarity between capitalism and big projects, which needs to be critically assessed.

Secondly, we can say that it is because nexuses "with decisive forms of practice" are no longer "at hand" (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 222, MVL), as he stated in his conference "Greetings to Sérgio Ferro" (published for the first time in 2005 and republished in 2012 in the book *Martinha versus Lucrecia*). Schwarz would also say in the essay "The progress in the past", that this position was "a characteristic position of the present" (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 113, QHS). Present that, at the time, corresponded to the beginning of the 1980s. But in which this temporal diagnosis would serve as an explanation for the notion of "moral condemnation"? We will try to explain this at some length.

In his essay "Culture and Politics in Brazil (1964-1969)" – originally published in 1970, in *Les Temps Modernes* journal –, Schwarz will make use of Ferro's diagnosis of the design and construction site;

³ Schwarz, in another writing, criticizes sectors of the left that would have abandoned the Project and Totality – terms understood there in an approximate way. Even because, according to the literary critic, the right would never have abandoned them and this would put them at an advantage (Schwarz *apud* Sarlo, 2001, p. 238).

however, he will expand it to the cultural process that was going beyond class and mercantile criteria. In this sense, here, Ferro's criticism would not be, therefore, a moral condemnation. In our opinion, this is due to the fact that, at that historical moment, there was a decisive form of practice, with which both Ferro and Schwarz had an important connection: popular and/or armed resistance to the dictatorship, from which culture and its advancement should get their hopes up. We will see three citations in this sense – the first two showing Schwarz's use of Ferro's diagnosis and the third bringing together and distancing culture and resistance:

One critic noted that, commenting on some houses built after 64, by advanced architects, were bad to live in because their material, which was very crude, especially exposed concrete. In addition, because the space was excessively shredded and rationalized, out of proportion to the purposes of a private home. In this disproportion, however, would be their cultural honesty, their historical testimony. During the developmental years, linked to Brasília and to the hopes of socialism, the awareness of the collectivist sense of architectural production had matured. For those who had thought about rational and cheap construction, on a large scale, within a movement of national democratization, for those who had thought about the labyrinth of economic-political implications between technology and imperialism, the design for a bourgeois house is inevitably an anti-climax. The political perspective of architecture had been cut, however, the intellectual formation it had given to the architects remained, who would torture the space, overloading the newly married friends with intentions and experiments [...]. Outside its proper context, taking place in a restricted sphere and in the form of a commodity, architectural rationalism becomes an ostentation of good taste – *incompatible with its profound direction* – or a moralistic and uncomfortable symbol of the revolution that did not take place. This scheme, in fact, with

a thousand variations, can be generalized for the period. The cultural process, which had been going beyond the boundaries of class and mercantile criteria, was discontinued in 64. *The formal solutions, frustrating the contact with the exploited, for which they were oriented, were used in situations and for an audience they were not intended for, changing their meaning. From revolutionary they became a salable symbol of revolution. They were triumphantly welcomed by students and the artistic public in general.* Political forms, its rough, funniest and didactic attitude, full of the obvious materialist that had previously been in bad tone, became the *moral* symbol of politics, and this was its strong content [...]. *Thus, an ambiguous trade was formed, which on the one hand sold affective-political indulgences to the middle class, and, on the other hand, consolidated the ideological [anti-capitalist] atmosphere that we spoke of at the beginning.* The endless repetition of arguments known to everyone – it was not redundant: it taught that people were still there and had not changed their minds, that, properly, quite a lot could be said, that it was possible to take a risk. In these spectacles, in which the shadow of a worker did not appear, intelligence identified itself with the oppressed and reaffirmed itself without debt to them, where their hope was seen (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 93-94, emphasis added, OPF).

Elements that, returning to Schwarz's argument, would have formed the picture of a generation that, despite belonging to the petty bourgeoisie and not the working classes, was strongly anti-capitalist and, in reasonable numbers, had joined the resistance, including armed, to the Brazilian military regime. In Schwarz's words:

Intellectuals are leftist, and the individuals they prepare [...] are not. It is leftist only the material that the group – numerous to the point of forming a good market – produces for its own consumption. This situation crystallized in 1964, when, *roughly speaking*, the socialist intelligentsia, ready for prison, unemployment and exile, was spared. Tortured and long imprisoned were

only those who had organized contact with workers, peasants, sailors and soldiers. On that occasion, the bridges between the cultural movement and the masses were cut, the Castelo Branco government did not impede the theoretical or artistic circulation of leftist ideology, which, although in a restricted area, flourished extraordinarily. *With ups and downs, this solution of skill lasted until 1968, when a new mass had emerged, capable of giving material strength to the ideology: the students, organized in semi-clandestinity.* During these years, while lamenting their confinement and their impotence, leftist intellectuals were studying, teaching, editing, filming, speaking, etc., and without noticing they contributed to the creation, within the petty bourgeoisie, *of a massively anti-capitalist generation. The social importance and the disposition to fight of this radical segment of the population are now revealed, among other ways, in the practice of the groups that initiated the armed propaganda of the revolution.* The regime responded, in December 68, with hardening (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 72, emphasis added, OPF).

That is, all that cultural mix, forged to feed the working classes and their revolutionary spirit, had, in fact, a great influence among intellectuals and students. This audience was not the audience they were intended for. As a salable sign of the revolution, these formal avant-garde solutions forged an ambiguous exchange: on the one hand, they served as an affective and political indulgence for the middle class, on the other, an overtly anti-capitalist ideological climate germinated in this same stratum. Building bridges for entry into the clandestine resistance to the military regime, which these middle-class cadres should transform, leaving elitism aside. This would be an important link with practical forms, which were at hand, at least during parts of the 1960s and 1970s. Without forcing what Schwarz had thought, we can think of the following formalization of his reasoning: radical formal solutions, without the expected contact with the exploited, due, among other things, to the military repression that severed

this relationship between intellectuals and the working class, changed direction. In other words, it became a kind of ideology, which unexpectedly gained *material strength* with the new mass of semi-clandestine students against the military dictatorship. Presenting itself as a natural ally of the revolution, culture should dampen the hopes from those who intended to overthrow the regime:

We talked at length about Brazilian culture. However, with regular amplitude, it will not reach 50,000 people in a country of 90 million. It is true that imperialism and class society cannot be blamed. However, being an exclusive language, it is also certain that, in this respect at least, it contributes to the consolidation of privilege. For historical reasons, which we have tried to outline, it came to reflect the situation of those it excludes and took its side. It became an abscess within the ruling classes. Of course, at the base of its audacity was its impunity. Nevertheless, there was audacity, which, converging with the populist movement at one time, and with popular resistance to the dictatorship at another, produced the crystallization of a new conception of the country. *Now, when the bourgeois state [...] cancels its own civil liberties, which are the vital element of its culture, it sees its hope in the forces that try to overthrow it. As a result, cultural production is subjected to the infra-red of class struggle, the result of which is not flattering. Culture is a natural ally of the revolution, but this will not be done for it, much less for intellectuals.* It is done primarily to expropriate the means of production and guarantee work and dignified survival for the millions and millions of men who live in poverty. *What interest will the revolution have in leftist intellectuals, who were much more elitist anti-capitalist than properly socialist? They must transform themselves, reformulate their reasons, which in the meantime had made them its allies.* History is not a benign old lady. In Quarup, the most ideologically representative novel for leftist intelligentsia recounts [...]: an intellectual, in

this case a priest, travels geographically and socially across the country, divests himself of his profession and social position, in search of the people, in whose struggle he will integrate – with literary wisdom – in a chapter after the last of the book (SCHWARZ, 2014, p. 109-111, emphasis added, OPF).

If we are correct in our interpretation, in these two essays, there would be two criteria – historically changeable – of truth by which one should analyze the critical actuality of modernist avant-garde: (a) the aging given internally by the artistic material in the midst of the upheavals of capitalism and (b) its possible use as an ideological ferment contrary to capitalism and the authoritarianism that was almost inherent to it. In addition, we could list two more interesting sieves, based on what we had exposed at the beginning of this section, in view of other works by Schwarz: (c) the use and meaning given to avant-garde by the Brazilian class structure, which may change its original purpose – something seen in an excerpt from “The ideas out of place” –, and (d) the fact that project and modern abstractions are essential for modernity projects and their large scales – an excerpt from Pedro Arantes’ argument.

In relation to term (c), however, it is worth clarifying. This biased use of architecture served to analyze neoclassical architecture in native lands, in which Enlightenment ideals served to cover and justify the arbitrary nature of relations of favor and local inequities. However, this was also an important issue for Schwarz to criticize the results of “Brazilian, leftist and modern architecture” (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 223, MVL), given that, as “it could not be otherwise, the Brazilian class structure imposed itself, redefining in its terms the avant-garde European aspirations” (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 224, MVL).⁴ That is, inequitable class relations in Brazil made architectural

functionalism not a form of rationalization of society, but a class ornament, an ostentation of good taste or a moralistic symbol of a revolution that did not take place. In any case, there is a difference between the two architectural moments: while the neoclassical only highlighted and justified local barbarisms – of global resonance –, the modernist, in turn, brought the uncomfortable reminiscence of a revolution that was missing from the meeting, but which could foster leftist criticisms and movements from certain classes.

In 1994, decades after the essays previously analyzed, Schwarz returned to the subject of modern architecture. This time, the argument of Otilia Arantes’ habilitation thesis, published under the title “Through the prism of architecture”. For our purposes, it is important to pay attention to the final parts of the essay, in which Schwarz takes a closer look at Arantes’ habilitation. It recapitulates decisive moments of modern architecture in the 20th century (as well as its doctrine and *ideology*) and its angle of observation has as its starting point the abandonment of the functionalist project and its replacement by the so-called simulated architecture. The USP philosopher’s exposition is guided by the systematic comparison between what the movement had promised and what it actually fulfilled. Therefore, confronting idea and result. Critical movement that would shape a history according to which, throughout the 20th century, the promises of redemption through modern architecture turned out to be the opposite, because in the place of that emancipatory substance, “*a set of functionality norms that proved to be functional above all for the social and material process of industrial production*” were left over. Something that can be seen, for example, in the modernizing and universalizing reforms brought to the discussion by the “Charter of Athens” (1933) and conducted by Le Corbusier. Conceived from “*a single model, which aspires to international validity and levels historical differences*”, so “*that these urban abstractions specify*

⁴ In a debate about a communication made by Beatriz Sarlo, Schwarz (SCHWARZ *apud* SARLO, 2001, p. 237) does not fail to point out that the modernist architecture was also functionalized by the ruling classes in Argentina and Paraguay. As he argues, this would happen because, especially in Latin America, if modernism is not linked to political radicalism, it tends to be associated with the rich and with the state.

in their own plane the abstractions operated by capitalism in the plane of social relations and production” (SCHWARZ, 2014, p. 249, emphasis added, SB)⁵.

With the exhaustion of the emancipatory promise, whose utopia covered the conditions of generalization demanded by capital, the simulacrum architecture emerged. Which is not omnipotent, but which itself becomes a media that contributes to the generalization of the “television effect”. That is, after being essential to the needs of industrialization, architecture would also invent essential solutions for the deepening of consumerism. Thus, whether functionalist or postmodern, architecture responds to the same social rationality.

After his exposition of Arantes’ ideas, Schwarz says that it is typical of dialectic prescription to confront idea and effective result, something she had done successfully. After this observation, the literary critic brings a reflection, taken from Adorno, precisely about ideology, namely: “ideologies are not liars because of their *aspiration*, but because of the assertion that it has been realized” (SCHWARZ, 2014, p. 250, SB, emphasis added). From this, the critic asks an important question: what “is the meaning, what advantage can art criticism take *from this space between aspiration and achievement, and above all between the individual and the general trend?*” (Ibid., emphasis added). After the critical questioning that Schwarz makes of Otilia Arantes’ thought, the literary critic asks a set of questions with similar meanings. What would these modernist experiences look like – he cites modern space, Brecht’s anti-illusionism, exposed pipes and Scandinavian furniture – which, for better or worse, constituted the notion of beauty “of *our generation and of the previous one, notions that could not be given up?*”. Would they have been “*absorbed by modernization, without leaving any critical residue?*” How is it possible to link such a “tangible difference between beautiful and ugly modernist houses” to the fate of architecture? In

what sense could Otilia Arantes’ explanations “affect our appreciation of masterpieces, for example, by Mies van der Rohe, or beauties such as the Palácio do Itamaraty”? And, last but not least, would the “*angle of analysis have to be another one?*” (Ibid., emphasis added). We will not answer these questions; however, they open up important paths for us to give more determination to what we had previously written.

From our point of view, Schwarz’s angle of analysis on modernism would not, in fact, totally negate Arantes’s. However, as was pointed out, in addition to the criticism of the process of accommodation of modernism to capitalism and its functionalization by it – a plan privileged by the philosopher –, Schwarz also analyzes the avant-gardes and their free forms from two more angles: (i) from the possible role of critical and even revolutionary formation that they could foster in certain layers of society or their role as an illustrated justification of iniquitous social relations and (ii), from another record, as an insoluble conquest for modernity. In this essay, the emphasis is on the constitution of a critical aesthetic sense and not on the composition of cadres for resistance and political practice. Nevertheless, it is possible to think that, for Schwarz, the presence of the *critical residue* of a modernism partially useful to the logic of the commodity was essential, in the 1960s and 1979, for the “creation, within the petty bourgeoisie, of a massively anti-capitalist generation”, whose disposition to struggle and social importance appeared at the beginning of the “armed propaganda of the revolution” (SCHWARZ, 2008, p. 72, OPF). As explained in “Culture and Politics [...]”. From this, it becomes even clearer the discomfort of the literary critic in relation to: (a) the possible abandonment of current notions developed in the midst of modernism, (b) the idea that there would be nothing more critical in the avant-garde legacy and (c), also, the possible abdication of modern architecture for the appreciation of the ugliness or beauty of modern houses, even

⁵ Schwarz, on another occasion, will also speak about the planning naivety, if compared to the complexity of the effective social world, of Le Corbusier and Acosta, in the Argentine context (SCHWARZ apud Sarlo, 2001).

because there would be more at stake than this. Thus, the side taken by Schwarz, so far, would be to consider the general trend of normalization and functionalization of the avant-garde arts by capitalism and their partial realization, with a mixed signal of their original emancipatory promises. However, beyond the critical residues of these modernist utopian promises, which could serve to boost an anti-bourgeois political practice and/or stimulate the critical appreciation of some generations and social strata, Schwarz points out that it would be difficult to imagine, without the modernist functionalist project and abstractions, solutions for the modern world and its enormous dimensions.

Still in relation to Otilia Arantes, it should be noted that she is careful not to generalize her criticism of architecture to other areas of art. This is because, according to her, architecture is essentially marked by a strongly utilitarian sense and a tactile collective use that distances it from works of art of distant contemplation (ARANTES, 2014, p. 78). A criterion of distinction that would make the distinction made by Schwarz between what was promised and what was done superfluous and would make the literary critic resort to “the abstraction of the aestheticizing gesture that isolates the works from the rationalization process in which they bet” (Ibid., p. 79). A differentiation that is sometimes not found, purposely or not, by Schwarz who, at various times, compares architectural formalization to gestures and to Brecht’s anti-illusionism, despite having different diagnoses about its legacies.

In view of the above, we disagree with Rossati (2010) about the homology that the sociologist draws between Schwarz’s critique of Candido, in “Assumptions, if am not mistaken, of Dialectics of Rascality” (2012, QHS), and the critique of Otilia Arantes to Schwarz. We disagree because Schwarz identifies in Candido’s analysis a culturalist moment in which history stops and gives way to the conformation of a Brazilian cultural model aimed at a democratic and open world. The same does not happen in Arantes’ critique of Schwarz, because there, in fact, two materialist ways of analyzing architecture are at stake, but with

different sieves: Arantes’s vision would be galvanized by Adorno’s thought about the aging of the modernist novelty from the limitations of the artistic material and its accommodation to capitalism; that of Schwarz, in turn, also partially relies on this assessment, but sees in architectural modernism a civilizational advance that is indispensable to modern solutions.

In “Greetings to Sérgio Ferro”, the literary critic, seeking to explain the trajectory of the radical architect and art critic, also reports on the trajectories of the generation of “bearers of the critical movement conceived around 1964” (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 221, MVL). However, before entering the two “lineages” of trajectories after the 1964 coup, Schwarz observes that numerous leftist figures, throughout the process of resistance and opening, qualified “for leadership on various plans, including the political plan” (Ibid.) – as well as himself, full professor of Literary Theory at the University of Campinas –, in a situation of “triumph within failure” created by the military coup and its legacy. All this without the country turning leftist, which had its price. In any case, two trajectories were forged there: i) those who, rising institutional and political positions, abandoned their previous political positions, without, however, leaving aside important lessons, of Marxism regarding the objectivity of economic laws and ii) those who, like Sérgio Ferro, went in the opposite direction and deepened the Marxist intellectual matrix, innovating criticism.

Despite the differences, both “lineages” paid a price. The first, leaving aside much of the issues and the rich historical experience in which they lived, entering the present according to the winning process. Remembering that it was precisely this experience that qualified this generational segment to participate in an “outstanding position in the normal course of contemporary society” (Ibid., emphasis by the author). The second lineage, in turn, despite insisting on the critical perspective, also had to pay a price for its defeat: the fact that links with decisive forms of practice were no longer at hand. This is what happened to Ferro, who, having made a radical criticism of the architectural design, turned to teaching and painting. Nevertheless, the literary critic points out

that “the negative view of the present had and has relevance and some obvious theoretical advantages”, considering that contemporary social aberrations have not ceased to exist, just because no one named them, and would only be explained by the criticism of capital. Despite this situation, Schwarz argues that new groups have returned to interest in the constitution of social fields relatively to the margins of capitalism – as were the class alliances, proposed by Sérgio Ferro, between designer architects and popular life –, given the power of its exclusion, which shows the need for criticism or, in other words, for the “social breakdown of realities of capital” (Ibid.).

An important character of these new groups referred to is Pedro Arantes, whose course completion board Schwarz was part of, as mentioned. Proof of this is that the literary critic argues that architects like Pedro Arantes had started from the same questions posed by Sérgio Ferro, namely, “the absolute impasse” he had reached when he insisted “on the abyss between the really existing working conditions and the postulations of functionalism” (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 227, MVL). In a story that would have an interest in itself, for the intelligence and audacity of the solutions tried “and, *for the time being*, for the size of the failure” (Ibid., p. 223, emphasis added). Nevertheless, what was an end for Ferro’s personal plan became a beginning for the new architects and movements. This was precisely because, on the objective plan, capital continued to gain victories, which was no different for those who critically thought about architecture. Here, perhaps, one can also see certain critical residues from previous generations refunctionalized by new segments, or, in the critic’s own words:

For the reader of my generation, it is naturally a tonic to see that the experience of that time, considered dead and over, finds life again and has something to say to the youngest. I suppose that it is also interesting for his generation to know that a problem that seems to have been born now, close to practice, has a long history, of suffering, prison and theoretical elaborations (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 227, MVL).

We must remember that Schwarz will also criticize the then young architect. The joint efforts combined housing movements and architects, redefining the conventional view of their profession and moving the relationship of the with important civilization advances and with science. The main tribulation would be the illusion that the split between labor and capital had ceased to exist, while in fact it had only changed place. This is because, despite no longer being present in the work process, it was evident in the distance of housing movements in relation to the set of technical means of contemporary civilization and general services still organized according to the dictates of private property. Such deprivation of access could not be idealized and would constitute, in Schwarz’s view, an important face of capitalist alienation in society. Another question made by the literary critic revolved around the relationship between architects and housing movements, because there was the impression that this relationship could open space for a self-regeneration of the most damaged layer in the class struggle, without, however, a more comprehensive change of society. Something that was also illusory and that demanded another point of view, in which the collaboration between architects and community participants would need to be seen as a “class alliance within the framework of global society and the modern technical and cultural standard, without which the political and cultural problematic does not become concrete” (SCHWARZ, 2012, p. 230, MVL).

If am not mistaken, close criticisms were also made to Sérgio Ferro and will reappear in a more attenuated and readjusted form in Schwarz’s review of the book *Fine Arts and Free Work*, by the critic and architect. The work in question came to light as a text read by the literary critic at the launch of Ferro’s book at the Maria Antonia University Center, in 2015, republished in the Piauí magazine, also in 2015 and collected, in 2019, in the book *Anyway*. In it, Schwarz argues that, in the wake of the political upheavals of the 1960s, Ferro and other radical architects rebelled against the national-developmentalism practiced by various leftist sectors, including among Marxists, and their

progressive stageism. So, while important sectors of progressive architects “postponed the solution to the problem of low-income housing, which could only come with incipient industrialization”, Ferro and his group “sided with the present urgency and refused to wait” (SCHWARZ, 2019, p. 400, SCF). So, instead of:

“[...] a remote large-scale industrialized architecture, he famous experiments in hollow form, cheap and simple, *modern in their own way*, compatible with low-income self-construction, were chosen. Leftist architects had an obligation to respond to the problem of the moment and invent solutions, even if the industry was not there. What mattered was serving poor people and democratizing the cruelly exploitative work process, *even if the solutions were far from the most advanced production processes*. The possibility of a *self-determined and inventive work that was more or less marginal to the development of modern productive forces* was postulated” (SCHWARZ, 2019, p. 400, emphasis added, SCF).

This was because, in this period, there was a search for the differentiation of the social condition of painters and sculptors in relation to the artisans of the craft corporations, whose objective was to transform the plastic arts into liberal arts – like poetry and music. That is, placing them in more prestigious and profitable positions. From this framework, Ferro studies three technical responses (Dürer’s virtuosity, Leonardo da Vinci’s smooth, and Michelangelo’s *sprezzatura* and *non finito*) functional to the challenge posed by social inequality, without, however, succumbing, as an art, to the initial impulse and sociological motivation. These three responses, linked to material work, formed a combination of aesthetic and social rebellion, which engendered, perhaps unknowingly, something that could be called free work, contrary to both the apparently free but heteronomous work engendered by capitalism, and to the varied social subjections.

In this preference of Ferro’s for the practice of artists to the detriment of their discourses and theological or metaphysical references of the Renaissance that tried to order those technical experiments, we can glimpse the art critic’s materialism. Strongly anti-illusionist and that produced an important “negative articulation [...] of the self-determined work of the plastic arts to the heteronomous work that was born and would be one of the central qualities of the entire capitalist period until today” (SCHWARZ, 2019, p. 399, SCF). Heteronomous work that was carried out on the construction site of modernist architectural work. Armed with this interpretive scheme, unlike other Marxist critics, Ferro, instead of a broad sociocultural panorama from which artistic productions should be measured or compared, “isolates the impulse that seems crucial to him and seeks to understand it as a polemical denial of the mainstay that supports the modern economic-social order” (Ibid.). Thus, thinking “in the wide range of materialisms that dispute the place today, *it would perhaps be the case to say that Sérgio’s criterion is based on the de-alienation of work (less than on the social appropriation of results and wealth in capitalist production)*” (Ibid., emphasis added). If Sérgio Ferro is based on the first criterion (of de-alienation), the second (of the social appropriation of wealth), as far as we have seen, is important in Schwarz’s assessment of modern architecture. This assessment is different, for several reasons, from the diagnoses of Otilia Arantes, Sérgio Ferro and Pedro Arantes.

This time, making a new recapitulation, we can say that, considering Schwarz’s selected essays and excerpts on modern architecture, the historical analyses used by this aesthetic production are: (a) the aging given internally by the artistic material in the midst of the upheavals of capitalism and (b) its possible use as an ideological ferment contrary to capitalism and the authoritarianism that was almost inherent to it; (c) its use and the meaning given to it by the Brazilian class structure, which may change its original intent and (d) the fact that project and modern abstractions are essential for modernity projects and their large scales.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In view of the above, we can notice a difference in the assessment of modernism in its manifestations in literature, in theater and architecture. If in the first two Schwarz points out the critical validity period more decisively, from internal dispositions and/or changes in the conformation of society by capital, the vision regarding architectural modernism would be different. This is because, for the literary critic, modern architecture should be seen through a broader perspective than that proposed by Otília Arantes. Thus, in addition to the aging of the artistic material in the midst of capital movements, Schwarz would bet on the existence, in the scope of architecture, of critical residues. Which could, depending on the historical period, instigate a critical theoretical and political practice in relation to capitalism and in the idea that it would be unreasonable to think of any project of modernity that did not rely on the projective and abstract solutions of modern architecture – under penalty of abandoning civilizational conquests and decisive productive forces.

As we can infer from the critic's own essays, this assessment would not be a testament to his recalcitrant modernism, as suggested by Arantes (2014). This is because, in addition to criticizing modernism, Schwarz uses a form of materialism that is different from Sérgio Ferro and Otília Arantes. This form of materialism leads him to work with other sieves that are not important to these critics, leading him to see outputs from a material analysis of architectural modernism and its legacy that makes it an extremely current subject of analysis. Thus, we can here recall a comment that Schwarz made after a communication by Beatriz Sarlo about architecture and literature in Buenos Aires which could, without hesitation, be applied to his reasoning about architecture:

There is a type of movement, where something that looks positive is not positive and has a negative follow-up, or something that is negative has a positive follow-up. Thus, this type of movement that appears all the time

in the exposition is very current and is on the verge of becoming a kind of interesting literary solution, in which a very contemporary and real intellectual and ideological situation is caught. One gets the impression that a more complex type of dialectic is in gestation, circulating in a less simple universe, which is not so directly divided between positive and negative (SCHWARZ apud SARLO, 2001, p. 236-237).

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