

POLITICAL APPEARANCES OF EXTRA ACTORS SUBJECTS IN PHOTOJOURNALISTIC IMAGES OF MASSACRES IN TWO FAVELAS OF RIO DE JANEIRO

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ABSTRACT

Based on theoretical-critical arguments from the field of communication and aesthetic experience, this text analyzes a set of journalistic photographs about two police operations in Rio de Janeiro, one at Complexo da Maré in 2014 and the other at Jacarezinho in 2021. In all the images, we noted that the residents appear as extras in the field of action of security agents in operations generally mediatized. The analysis exercise observed that apparitions of the extra end up destabilizing the biopolitical frameworks of photojournalism, which try to prevent the perception and apprehension of subjects and ways of life disregarded by hierarchical and asymmetric recognition conditions. Thus, we reflect on how the visibility conditions of the journalistic context can be altered by the presence and apparitions of ordinary people in photographic images, coming from the presence of bodies and people in their daily chores, through gestures and glances, and unpredicted reactions which, once registered, interfere in the images' enunciative regime. Finally, the text reveals how the political and aesthetic power of the appearances in the figurations can highlight the nuances between the visible and the readable, allowing the opening of a fracture in the devices activated to read a certain situation, corporealities, and gestures in the images.

KEYWORDS

photojournalism, extra actors, political appearance, police operation, Brazilian favelas

APARIÇÕES POLÍTICAS DE SUJEITOS FIGURANTES EM IMAGENS FOTOJORNALÍSTICAS DE CHACINAS EM DUAS FAVELAS DO RIO DE JANEIRO

RESUMO

A partir de argumentos teórico-críticos advindos do campo da comunicação e da experiência estética, este texto privilegia a análise de um conjunto de fotografias jornalísticas sobre duas operações policiais realizadas no Rio de Janeiro: uma, no Complexo da Maré, em 2014, e a outra, no Jacarezinho, em 2021. Em todas as imagens notamos que os moradores aparecem como figurantes que atravessam o campo de ação dos agentes de segurança em operações, em geral, midiaticizadas. O exercício de análise observa que as aparições dos figurantes acabam por desestabilizar os enquadramentos biopolíticos do fotojornalismo que tentam impedir a percepção e apreensão de sujeitos e formas de vida desconsideradas por condições de reconhecimento hierarquizantes e assimétricas. Assim, refletimos como as condições de visibilidade do contexto jornalístico podem ser alteradas pela presença e pelas aparições de pessoas comuns na imagem fotográfica, advindas pela própria presença dos corpos e das pessoas em seus afazeres cotidianos, pelos gestos e olhares, pelas reações não previstas e que, uma vez registradas, interferem no regime enunciativo das imagens. O texto revela, por fim, como a potência política e estética das aparições nas figurações pode ressaltar as nuances entre o visível e legível, permitindo a abertura de uma fratura nos dispositivos acionados para ler uma determinada situação, corporeidades e gestualidades nas imagens.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

fotojornalismo, figurantes, aparição política, operação policial, favelas brasileiras

1. INTRODUCTION

In this text, we dedicate ourselves to thinking about the condition of visibility and figuration of vulnerable lives in photojournalistic images that record police operations in Brazilian communities, specifically those followed by civilian deaths described as massacres, which we understand as part of media-covered conflicts with police involvement, which happened in peripheral urban areas. To this end, we observed the photojournalistic images produced in police operations in two favelas in Rio de Janeiro in 2014 and 2021.

The representation of vulnerable lives in these images leads us to understand that the core of the debate is not in the display of the image itself but in the media coverage of the conflicts which it reports (Hjarvard & Mortensen, 2015). This is because media coverage sets in motion new dynamics that are founded and updated, including those related to human fabulation. Technologies and apparatuses permeate and interfere in these procedural actions and in the possibility of exclusion from a narrative created. On the other hand, there are more voices, more room for counter-discourses, for subversions and attempts (Rosa, 2020).

In this text, the police operations carried out in communities of Rio de Janeiro were marked by images and instituted by media processes. Their dynamics were constituted by operations of a paradoxical nature of showing/erasing, valuing/excluding, circulating/

repeating, and fixing/restricting. Thus, it is no longer restricted to practical actions but to the plan of mass media coverage of a fantasy that is woven between a life that is not worth living and a life that is not worth being seen. We further argue that visibility conditions can also be altered by the presence and appearance of ordinary people in the photographic image. So these conditions are changed by the very presence of bodies and people in their daily activities, gestures and looks, and unanticipated reactions that, once recorded, interfere with the enunciative regime of images.

In our view, the appearance of extras in the images of police operations can act as a form of counter-agency, creating intervals and fractures in the necropolitical discourse¹ for the emergence of more reflective, slower, critical ways of looking. As viewers of this kind of imagery, we are urged to ask: who are these people? Are they not afraid of such exposure to violence? How do they survive in such conditions? That is because we observe that the extras have a concrete presence in the images they make up a scene itself: they oscillate between the scripting that drives their action and the capture of a given moment of their routine disturbed by police brutality. Thus, the choice of appearances with political power deserves to be highlighted in a work of analysis that puts these photographs in the foreground.

In the images, “seeing” the extras on the scene involves catching the gestural, bodily and gaze glimpses configured in a fraction of a second and recorded in the photos, often unintentionally. We assume that such appearances (*mises en scène*) allow different realities (lived and photographed) to collide, and they break certain frameworks of photojournalism, often of a biopolitical nature, which try to prevent the perception and apprehension of subjects and forms of life disregarded by hierarchical, asymmetric conditions of recognition. Lastly, such appearances “undermine normative schemes and challenge hegemonies” (Butler, 2009/2015, p. 167).

The political/aesthetic power of the extras lies in their different forms of appearance and the power of the figurations — and disfigurations — produced by traditional journalistic frames and their pre-established meanings. The political and aesthetic power of the appearances in the figurations can highlight the nuances between the visible and the readable, readability being linked to the devices activated to read a certain situation, bodies and gestures in the images.

Based on theoretical-critical arguments from the field of communication and aesthetic experience, the text focuses on the analysis of a set of journalistic photographs about two police operations in Rio de Janeiro: one in which police officers from the Coordination of Special Resources of the Civil Police act ostensibly in Complexo da Maré when the Pacifying Police Units were implemented in that area, in 2014. The other took place in the community of Jacarezinho, in Rio de Janeiro, in May 2021. The photographs were produced by professionals from major international news agencies, such as

¹ We understand “necropolitical discourse” as that which reveals a small place intended for life as opposed to death; that which ascribes a place of control to the human body, especially the violated, wounded, massacred and guarded body. As Achille Mbembe (2018, p. 11) pointed out, the relationship between politics and death reveals modes of destroying human life and the many deaths one human life can experience. Life, as opposed to death, builds on the necropolitical discourse from this opposition: from selecting those who must live and those who can and must die.

2. FIGURATION AND EXTRAS: FORMS OF RESISTANCE IN IMAGES

In the field of images, there is a vast literature that discusses photographic representation and how, generally, it offers, through its framing and classificatory schemes, an instruction provided by the works so that the viewer can experience indignation, astonishment, the confrontation of injustice, compassion or even horror (Picado, 2020; Schaeffer, 1987/1996; Tagg, 1988). Although it subscribes to a certain modern convention about the value of truth or verisimilitude of photographic practice that would restore to a context, such as the journalistic context, a certain documentary or informative *status*, the image itself often presents elements that seem to break with culturally regulated contextual norms. Although certain normative rules governed by communicational and media strategies attempt to demarcate the fields of reception of photographic images, it is often the photos themselves, in their material and concrete existence, that question and pervade the contexts in which they are placed by addressing the act of viewing as a potentialized experience.

The orders of experience that we obtain from the perception of photographs (informative, affective, plastic, narrative, among many) are not conferred by the mere physical event of printing the luminous world onto a sensitive surface: without the mediation of the conceptual and intentional structures that instantiate these same perceptual qualities in experience, there will be no human, logical or aesthetic sense from which we can say that we “see through” photographs what they contain. For those who have not understood it so far, photographic indexicality is, simply put, a phenomenon of significance and not a “natural” event. (Picado, 2020, p. 184)

According to Rancière (2003/2012), some images enable another way of apprehending reality and, therefore, questioning the gaze. For him, it is an operation of figuration, which can be thematized when the image becomes capable of interrupting the explanatory mechanism of representation that tends to a consensuality. While representation tends to immobilize and fix the subjects depicted in categories that define and submit them, figuration reveals how difficult (even impossible) it is to retain the subjects and the complexity of their experiences in an image or work.

In figuration, the subject has to escape our incessant attempt to categorize, evaluate, judge and submit everything to what is already familiar: they must remain alien, unfamiliar and, for this very reason, unsettling. Figuration escapes the assumption that there is a necessary cause-effect relationship between what the work shows and the viewer’s reception or that the artist’s intention will cause a sudden and profound change in the frames of meaning that guide the viewer’s perception of the world (Rancière, 2003/2012).

Figuration allows us to glimpse the operations that influence the interpretation of what we see, while representation hides the mechanisms that allow it to approximate one reality. A certain immediate continuity between the content linked by the work and the interpretation, previously determined by the receiver, is broken by figuration since

figuration disturbs the belief in a direct extension between the contents of a certain image and the forms of sensitive thought that are established in the reception as if there were a previously established script of reading, interpretation and positioning which we have become accustomed to following like a model.

This sequential and linear treatment of seeing, reading and interpreting images in a certain way replicates a pattern that reinforces a certain modern sensitivity still connected to the treatment of images in Westernized culture, as warned by Susan Sontag (2003/2003). She states that the profusion and circulation of photographs depicting certain subjects captured, injured, mutilated, shot or killed make up

this journalistic custom heir to the centuries-old practice of exhibiting exotic — that is, colonized — human beings: africans and denizens of remote Asian countries were displayed like zoo animals in ethnological exhibitions in London, Paris, and other European capitals from the 16th until the early 20th century. (Sontag, 2003/2003, p. 62)

What is at stake in the figuration is, on the contrary, breaking with this contextualized picture; it is the promotion of another way of structuring the “thinkable”, involving the alteration of a regime of perception, reading and listening through which diverse elements juxtapose and rub against each other to allow a displacement of position about the way we apprehend, perceive and respond to the demands of the other and the events of the world.

In this way, figuration is not confused with a copy or a reproduction of the real. Instead, it presents a way of understanding the image, the subject and the text that escapes the assumption that there is a necessary cause-effect relationship between what the image shows and the viewer’s reception or that the artist’s intention will cause a sudden and profound change in the frames of meaning that guide the perception of the spectator’s world (Rancière, 2008). Broadly speaking, it seems that Rancière (2019) is interested in how images can make us think about one repositioning of bodies, a displacement of very hasty evaluations and judgments based on prejudices: how to produce displacements, cracks and fissures in the naturalized modes of apprehension and explanation of events? A relevant question for this research is: can there be a way of analyzing images that goes beyond a quick apprehension guided by what has already been given or is commonly accepted as valid? “What kind of operation will change the distribution of the visible and the thinkable?” (Rancière, 2019, p. 50).

To dismantle the explanation machine of the visible and the thinkable, we need to slow down and shift the gaze, according to Rancière (2018). And this can happen when we fabulate with and from the image. Fabulation can be understood as the production of new utterances from activating another imaginary that challenges and questions a hegemonic imaginary, highlighting inconsistencies, excesses and injustices of hierarchical representations. Fabulation needs fiction to change how distinct temporalities are articulated, reverberating in how they are apprehended and recognized. One of the main gestures of fabulation is to question the images in a longer way, distrusting how representations tend to present, at the same time, conflicts and pacified solutions.

Figuration is central to Rancière's (2018) reflection on dismantling predictable explanations of the world. According to him, the invention that art promotes by displacing the usual ways of reading and understanding the world is the seed of the creation of another imaginary, of other keys to reading and understanding activated by the rejection of hierarchy and inequalities between times, spaces and existences. There is a fictional narrative laid out by the images that, by developing not as a chain of times but as a relationship and coexistence between places and their multiple possibilities of realization, produces a work without consensus that marks the creation of scenes of disruption.

Fictional fabulation produces figurations through a dialectization of the visibleness of images marked by interpretive conduction towards moral judgments and the reaffirmation of legitimized values. In Rancière's (2018, 2019) recent work, the operations that constitute the images are dedicated to exploring a tension between reality and "appearances", bearing in mind that appearance is not restricted to the surface but encompasses the ways of rendering readable and intelligible. By exploring this process, we can distinguish gaps and intervals that allow the reconfigurations and displacements necessary for the gaze and interpretation.

Thus, this interval operation of the images creates figurations that challenge the hierarchical mode of presentation of reality by shifting the gaze and rearranging the legibility of the utterance of the images. The tension between representative and aesthetic images is not a polarized relationship in which one must "eliminate" the other. It is not a question of eliminating representation as a work operation that gives shape to the visible, but instead of producing and maintaining a distance from the understanding of events as inert matter, waiting for something external to organize them.

An image is a compound of several heterogeneous elements which, when articulated, achieve resonance to configure other senses of the possible (Calderón, 2020). By shifting the gaze from the denotative meaning of the image, it becomes possible to look at the image and perceive the figuration of the subjects; their existence as human beings subjected to pain. Suffering and precariousness presuppose the establishment of imaginative possibilities, also achieved (although not exclusively) by colour and the presence of the human figure in the photos.

In Didi-Huberman's (2012) aesthetic approach to exposed peoples and their relationship with figuration, he discusses the opacities created by the constant location of these peoples in the play between appearance and disappearance. His reflection seeks to highlight how figuration connects with the emergence of the people as a political subject in images.

In a complementary sense to the discussion undertaken by Rancière (2018) concerning the appearance of the people, we associate Didi-Huberman's (2016a) considerations about the understanding of extras as a worthy political subject, revealing that an extra is not the only one which oscillates between overexposure and underexposure (blinding light and absence of light), nor one which deserves visibility and voice. As a political subject, an extra has the power to recreate the sensitive scene in which ways of being, seeing and saying are invented, promoting new forms of collective enunciation. It

changes the enunciative regime of the image because it appears through another lexicon, another language: the language of the self, what is lived, and experience itself.

Thus, the extra who emerges in the figuration promotes ambiguity and openness in the image. At the same time that extras are relegated or underappreciated by the narrative, they impose themselves as a plastic, performative presence, exposing one revealing corporeality of a certain context and experience, possessing, therefore, the power to destabilize the internal meaning that a certain framing previously tried to elaborate.

An extra emerges in a figuration that allows resistant appearances and critical powers in the confrontation with stereotypes and the identification/exposure of the unique characteristics and histories of the “peoples destined to disappear” (Didi-Huberman, 2012, p. 206). Therefore, it brings another lexicon of bodies, faces, gestures, grimaces, intimidating presences (figures, shadows, sick, marked, ghostly bodies), and changing languages and utterances.

In the first photograph (*Operação Policial que Matou 28 no Rio de Janeiro Desrespeitou Decisões do STF*, Consultor Jurídico, May 7, 2021)² we note that the appearance of the extras causes deviations: their presence subverts the status assigned to a people, diverts the narrative emphasis, and promotes another experience of seeing. The singularity of extras and their agency is closely linked to the body, face and unique mark of the experience of the subjects acting as extras. The sensitive apprehension of extras proposed by Didi-Huberman (2016a) considers not only the dialectics between appearing/disappearing but also seeks to see extras in their corporeality, plastic and performative presence, articulating their unique form in the image with the political power of their becoming.

Extras and their aesthetic and political agency strongly interfere in the expressive regime of the image and its power device because despite not being protagonists, they also produce agencies. It is possible to say that when ordinary people appear as extras, they often escape the script of the scene: though they are tied to the scenographic codes established by the action that unfolds situationally, they have a margin of escape, of projection of their individuality (Veras, 2017). We noted that when the caption emphasizes the action of police officers, they are the purported protagonists themselves because they perform the action and set in motion the key event emphasized by the informative context, though, in the image, they are portrayed in other static stances and expressions. On the contrary, the civilian extras (with their bodies and expressions) move the scene, arousing a certain commotion and shifting legibilities and possible interpretations of the episodes (“A Operação Policial no Rio de Janeiro e o Contexto do Tráfico de Drogas”, *The Eagle View*, May 8, 2021)³.

When thinking about the extras based on the way their faces and bodies are unique in the scene, either individually, as in the second photograph (“A Operação Policial no Rio de Janeiro e o Contexto do Tráfico de Drogas”, *The Eagle View*, May 8, 2021), or collectively, as in the first (*Operação Policial que Matou 28 no Rio de Janeiro Desrespeitou Decisões*

² See in <https://www.conjur.com.br/2021-mai-07/operacao-policial-matou-25-rio-desrespeitou-decisoes-stf>.

³ See in <https://www.theeagleview.com.br/2021/05/a-operacao-policial-no-rio-de-janeiro-e.html>.

do STF, Consultor Jurídico, May 7, 2021), we realize that an extra can be apprehended as the appearance of a body with disruptive political power that needs to be revealed and analyzed from different framings. However, one cannot understand the singularity of the appearance of extras without losing sight of the fact that the images are inserted in a narrative structure, in a different device of production and circulation. One cannot disregard the internal economy of the procedures for elaborating images, their political, aesthetic, and ethical project and gear. In this sense, each image and each news outlet will feature distinct appearances of extras, influencing how their notion is built. Thus, the appearance also follows criteria that guide the realization and ways of addressing the images.

In this context, it is important to emphasize how relevant it is to think about the mismatch between extras and the place that the image prepares for them. It is necessary to highlight the modalities of insertion of extras in fiction. This mismatch does not compromise the political power of the image since reality is always presented to us mal-adjusted, out of step with what the frames choose to show.

3. AVERT YOUR EYES, MAKE THEM SENSITIVE

We argue, with Didi-Huberman (2012), that the image can render sensible that is, it can make accessible a dimension of precarious life forms that are generally not disclosed on the surface of representative images. This proposal to “dialectify the visible”, as he calls it, aims to look at images “in another way, to introduce the division and movement associated with them, the emotion and thought conjugated. Rubbing the eyes, in short: rubbing, rubbing representation with affection, the ideal with the repressed, the sublimated with the symptomatic” (Didi-Huberman, 2016a, p. 405). Here, we are interested in this operation of dialectizing and displacing representation, asking questions to the images, lingering in their contemplation and producing, in this gesture, new framings and interpretive possibilities.

The gesture of “dialectizing the visible” highlights the “power of legibility of sensitive events” (Didi-Huberman, 2016b, p. 67) through images; the power of rendering readable the dialectics of a failure, of something that has been repressed, of a life that has been dehumanized and silenced. Such dialectics is configured because images can “make sensible and legible the flaws, places and moments by means of which peoples, when declaring their impotence, affirm at the same time what they lack and desire” (Didi-Huberman, 2016a, p. 422).

The author articulates and combines two important aesthetic-political gestures: dialectizing the visible and rendering it sensible. The latter means rendering accessible what the senses and intelligence cannot always “read” or make sense of, remaining as a trace or rest, which is generally disregarded by the eye. But to render sensible also means to begin to consider something that used to escape, especially something that was not “readable” about the life of the peoples and their history.

Thus, Rancière (2019) and Didi-Huberman (2016b, 2004/2020) share an interest in showing how images dialectically render sensible — accessible, readable and worthy

of consideration — the life and survival of the peoples while declaring the impotence of the oppressed in situations that expose them to violence, silencing and, therefore, demand forms of reception, consideration and hospitality.

Rendering sensible and dialectizing the visible are operations that the image can perform in a complementary way. Instead of discourses of causality and erasure of the subtleties and textures of experiences, these operations help find the elements of the image that allow figuration to be produced through an approximation, a more protracted approach of spectator and otherness. Images of approaching (engaging by looking directly at the lens, for example) awaken in the viewer new modes of perception of the image, of bodies and of the multiple spatialities and temporalities of the scene from which the faces that engage us appear and rise, dialectically and dissensually.

In this perspective, rendering sensible also means disarming the gaze and activating imaginative knowledge, potentiating the imagination before the “machinery of unimagination” (Didi-Huberman, 2004/2020, p. 34). The dialectization of the visible is, therefore, a process that requires a constant engagement of the viewer. It requires imagination, a contemplative gaze positioned against erasure.

According to Rancière (2003/2012, 2019), the image as an operation activates a knowledge that eludes prescription and representation until it reaches an imaginative dimension that redefines visibilities and legibilities. The fabulation of images is related to fiction and to the type of emancipated experience that emerges in the fictional narrative that mixes temporalities and spatialities in a non-hierarchical way.

As we have seen, “appearing” is an action, for Rancière (2018, 2019) and Didi-Huberman (2016a, 2016b), that has the sense of a moment of dissent, asymmetry, a shift that produces intervals and, from that, we can perceive the disparities, tensions and fractures that remained hidden under the mantle of the representative, causal and hierarchical record. If in the representative regime, efficacy was related to continuity, a narrative articulated by cause (and where the image was destined to intensify the power of this action), in the aesthetic regime, the work of the image is associated with the production of intervals, of discontinuities that make it impossible to script the experience of contact with the works (Rancière, 2003/2012). The indeterminacy, the impossibility of setting their destiny and meaning, prevents images from being the mere expression of a given situation or event (“A Ocupação da Maré”, *El País*, March 30, 2014)⁴.

To render sensible the existence of vulnerable peoples is, in our view, to represent their existence by going beyond representation aimed at giving dignity and hospitality. Representation makes extras emerge in their confrontation with death: it renders them sensible (visible, apprehensible and legible) while rendering us sensible to them, moving us from compassion to emotion. Didi-Huberman (2016a) invites us to cultivate dialectical perceptions about history and the way peoples are represented in documentary narratives. For him, the very absence of power in a people can be rendered sensible. That is, it can be thought critically through the affections that it mobilizes.

⁴ See in https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2014/03/30/album/1396205399_006677.html#foto_gal_10.

4. THE APPEARANCE OF THE FACE AS LISTENING TO THE PLEA FOR LIFE

The gaze of extras, their bodies, their faces and their presence render us sensible, affect us and, therefore, make us “responsible” for them, providing an answer to this question. We can mention the notion of face (ethical clamour, plea, voice) in Lévinas (1999) and Butler (2004, 2009/2015, 2015/2018). In Lévinas (1999), the face is not confused with the human face and is not reduced to it. Nor is it an explicit verbal dialogue, but a saying that binds us to otherness. For him, the face that gives access to the world of the other cannot be scrutinized, and it resists efforts to approach and appropriate. This author reveals the face as a power of contact with otherness. The face marks, in this perspective, a relationship of openness, a form of dialogue in which one does not possess the other nor recognizes oneself in him. Lévinas’ (1999) texts bring the face closer to the gesture of welcome, emphasizing the closeness and ethical openness to the interpellation addressed by the other.

According to Didi-Huberman’s (2016a) reading of Lévinas, the unconditional openness to the other defines the face as an encounter that exposes the difference, the impossibility of reducing the other to the same, of subjecting it to the desire to mean and name it. Quoting Lévinas, Didi-Huberman (2016a) asserts that the figuration of subjects and peoples gives them dignity and respect “from the dialectics between the ethical experience (always singular) that preserves the face; and the normative experience, of the law, which erases the plea made by the face to the moral responsibility of all” (p. 440).

Lévinas (1999) does not perceive the face as a representative image of the subject but wishes to show his “appearance”, so he asserts that the face has a visibility that is only apprehended by the gaze, in which the other who looks at me is the one who shows me. The gaze is an integral part of the manifestation and appearance of another. In this sense, the emergence of the face as a fixed image in photographs invites us to examine and look at the face and the body of the other, revealing the image as an important support to access to the other and their appearance, their coming into being.

The emergence of the face in the image shifts the viewer from a general position, from his inscribed place, to being the singular subject of this gaze. The gaze both challenges and offers itself in a different sensitivity from protocol photographs, so well inscribed in the tradition of photojournalism, to position itself as a small variation of perception in the face of what is strange or intolerable (Marques & Souza, 2018).

To the summons of this gaze, we respond and participate, albeit uncomfortably, in the movement it provokes. We share, even if briefly, the suffering that seems to afflict the subjects captured by the image. Through this look, we coexist the meantime in which an individual life faces universal precariousness. The appearance of the face in the image breaks with a certain structure that forms a kind of “expectation of seeing” linked to a visual repertoire used to present sufferers and their torments.

Rendering sensible is not restricted to visibility but implies changing forms of sensitivity that involve attention, classification and perception of the differences involved in intersubjective relationships. The appearance of the peoples involves constant negotiation around a collective imaginary, the production of a common ground, a semantics

that allows naming injustices and creating other designs for action. For Didi-Huberman (2016b), a people is defined by their agency, by the meanings we attribute to them, in such a way as to imply a collective endowed with value, normative, ethical and aesthetic worth (“A Ocupação da Maré”, *El País*, March 30, 2014)⁵.

A political subject appears through a process of dialectization, inquiry and agency that involves interfering in the political imaginaries that define common ground. The appearance of extras shows the symptoms and renders visible the Benjaminian flashes interrupting the *continuum* of a history in which the protagonists are the state powers. The flash produced by the presence of the extras in the images shows that the suffering is being erased in favour of the strategies and devices of management and control of bodies, acting against this erasure, shedding new light to render the pain of otherness sensible to the gaze. But the flashes also show resistance and responses to the violence of the image.

Civilians-extras are blurred, phantom-like, and fluid. This operation can both show the erasure of ghostly lives, devalued by the politics of death, and reaffirm the impossibility of capturing life forms: of such extras being named and imprisoned in ready-made formulas to manufacture life forms disciplined by governmental institutions. The appearance of ghosts and their constant presence in the political action of precarious peoples makes it difficult to forget, which helps fight immobilization in the spectacle of terror, prohibition and death. Thus, spectrality can be a form of consideration (“A Ocupação da Maré”, *El País*, March 30, 2014)⁶.

The people who live in the community, though their homes and territories are constantly occupied and/or invaded by the police forces, show that they are not reduced to passivity and acceptance. In the photograph featured in *ONU Se Diz ‘Perturbada’ com Chacina no Jacarezinho* (The United Nations ‘Troubled’ by Jacarezinho Massacre; Ansa Brasil, May 7, 2021)⁷, a woman in a protest turns to the camera, contrary to the direction of the sidewalk, and raises her middle finger, as shown in the photograph. While a group of residents follow the march of armed police officers, the woman turns to the photographer’s gaze and, aware of being seen, shows her dissatisfaction at the scene of the ongoing operation.

Here, we could think of the possibility that the photographed people take back their confiscated agency for a record of suffering that, according to Susa Sontag (2003/2003), tends to neutralize their sense of injustice and anger when looking back at us:

the exhibition of photographs of acts of cruelty inflicted on dark-skinned people in exotic countries continues to promote the same spectacle, oblivious of the considerations that prevent this exhibition when it comes to our own victims of violence because the other, even when they are not an enemy, is only seen as someone to be seen, and not as someone (like us) who also sees. (Sontag, 2003/2003, p. 63)

⁵ See in https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2014/03/30/album/1396205399_006677.html#foto_gal_15.

⁶ See in https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2014/03/30/album/1396205399_006677.html#foto_gal_16.

⁷ See in https://ansabrasil.com.br/brasil/noticias/americalatina/brasil/2021/05/07/onu-se-diz-perturbada-com-chacina-no-jacarezinho_849c5d83-3206-4b80-ao6f-992b62094abo.html.

The work of the image is, as Didi-Huberman (2012, 2016a) says, to represent what is repressed in traditional representations and that is not only related to invisibility but to the erasure of the symptom, the attempt to repress the flashes that reconfigure space and time, interfering with what can be seen, named and felt. According to Butler (2009/2015), “the photographic frame is not just a visual image awaiting its interpretation; it is itself interpreting, actively” (p. 110). The presence of the extras and their unscripted or unanticipated gestures interrupts the repetition of frames that confiscate utterances and enunciations from those who suffer (*ONU Se Diz ‘Perturbada’ com Chacina no Jacarezinho*, Ansa Brasil, May 7, 2021). The fabulation allowed by this deviation produces intervals from which the context of the record and the process of circulation address us regarding the game opened by the different regimes of visibility put in tension by the photograph.

5. FLASHES THAT DEPICT LIFE AND FLIRTATION WITH DEATH IN PICTURES

The flash of the extra takes its meaning from the decor of the landscape: although the body is retained under the shock of control, corporeality reverberates the gesture and sound of the lives that need to resist violence, barbarism and oblivion through the precarious construction of an embodied ethical memory. The figuration and appearance of an extra mess up probabilistic data and expectations, like an unexpected non-narrative: they can bring back the flash or even produce it. An extra can be “plucked” from historical causality between the silencing of disfigurement and the voice of the face.

This operation, which consists in pulling the extra out of the causal representation of the event, has a performativity that acts on normative imaginaries and interferes in their reconfiguration. The power of extras does something about the world legitimately perceived as ordinary and interferes with the matrix of meanings that makes some practices readable and accepted.

Portraying the extra subject and not erasing the symptom is what allows the flash to act on the definition of the intelligibility of history, of the appearances and apparitions of the peoples who declare their vulnerabilities while producing the sensitive exposure of their lives, of the failures, intervals and gaps where they cultivate possible survivals and emancipations. For this reason, even in the endless stream of lives erased by stigmatizing frameworks, it is possible to have some flashing moments in which precarious lives reach us, affect us, and move us to listen to their faces, breaking the media narrative of erasure and disfigurement.

Showing how the mechanics of readability can be discontinued and interrupted is the work of minority becoming: the invention of utterances that pierce the disfiguring narrative and images that bring back bodies from the rubble of oblivion. When we consider the political dimension of the appearance of extras, we think about how the singularity of his physical, carnal presence constitutes itself as a vector of dissonance. An extra is, above all, a minority body; he triggers a minor becoming. The syntax of the production of journalistic images imposed on the body of an extra is broken by his minority agency: a look, a gesture, a stumble, a wink, a smile, something unexpectedly said that disturbs the order of a scene.

The picture in the news article “Forças Iniciam Ocupação do Complexo da Maré no Domingo” (Forces Begin the Occupation of Complexo da Maré on Sunday, *Estado de Minas*, March 28, 2014)⁸ shows two civilians posing for the camera. A woman smiles and puts her hand on her chin, in a typical pose of celebrity selfies, where she emphasizes her face in a close-up shot. The man also looks directly at the camera and smiles. Both jokingly contrast with the serious bellicose expression of the agents who, in uniform and armed, march in a single line to perform the duty required of them. The act of posing for the camera allows us to consider how the appearance of the face in the image is related to an interpellation that calls the viewer to assume a listening gaze.

In the image, the face can precisely appear through the blurring and the trace that stands out from the scene. It is the expression of

precariousness that pervades the plasticity of the image to the point of showing that even before any decision or condition of the arrangements that allow including the other in the image, the face already disassembles the scene and distorts the image. (Ribeiro, 2019, p. 58)

The image is precisely the liminal event that actualizes the game, the ethical contact between the creator, the person depicted in the image, and the viewer. The unexpected pose of the extra, escaping the framing imagined by the photographer, produces fabulated presences of black bodies in the militarized space of the favelas, showing a kind of figuration that removes people from the oppressive violence of the police and punitive frame, producing deviations that guide an ideological elaboration that permanently constructs and reconstructs the meanings of images (Biondi & Marques, 2015).

We can establish a relationship between the extra as a minor body — in approximation to the notion of minor literature by Deleuze and Guattari (1975/2014). An extra as a minority body can be defined as an incorrect, deterritorialized syntax (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/2014, p. 40): a syntax to shout and to give shouting a syntax. Perhaps, a syntax that connects and disconnects the extra from the main story, which operates in full light, showing what can or cannot be said. A syntax that shows the collective value of the enunciation that unites extras and people (forging the means to put a fraternal and revolutionary sensibility into practice).

At the same time, the minority syntax can be elaborated from silence, immobility (which does not mean inactivity) and concealment. The deterritorialization promoted by minor art is supposedly intended to restore sound to the silencing of everyday life and offer silence to the range of sounds that pervade our routine.

In this aspect, the singularity of the scream, the look, the smile or the silence of extras is an important performance in fighting against the constant erasing, muting and stereotyping of the peoples (Veras, 2017). This singularity acts in opposition to the scripted syntax of image production (it adds a smaller gear next to the larger gear of the image production device).

⁸ See in https://www.em.com.br/app/noticia/nacional/2014/03/28/interna_nacional,512976/forcas-iniciam-ocupacao-do-complexo-da-mare-no-domingo.shtml.

In the photograph featured in “Efeitos da Violência de Estado” (The Effects of State Violence; *IstoÉ*, November 9, 2018)⁹, while the black bodies of the community residents are put up against the wall along the street to be searched by military troops, another resident walks in the opposite direction while facing the camera. On his shirt, one can read, in large letters, the words “peace, love, surf”, a message commonly associated with a quiet and harmonious lifestyle, the very opposite of police order. The disposition and direction of the residents’ bodies, approached in contrast to those of the military agents, widens the radical opposition between the subjects and their fields; military versus civilian, agent versus local resident, function versus subject, weapon versus word, order versus life.

Extras help create a becoming-minor by presenting a minor use of language because they bring the power of experience into the image, transforming and metamorphizing the narrative. The minority becoming an extra has to do with resisting the majority models of translation and accommodation of experience, of multiplicity in action. Their becoming also shows how surviving necropolitics is a constant struggle against weapons “deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of death-worlds, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead” (Mbembe, 2018, p. 71).

The singularity of extras and their gestures approaches the conditions of minority, the process of creating passages between the molar and the molecular, establishing conditions for the transformation and experimentation of the power relations that constitute them¹⁰.

Thus, another characteristic of the political dimension that defines extras is their production of molecular assemblages of multiplicity and singularity. An extra can produce an assemblage, a gear that acts both through the individual and through a group, which prove to be two-way articulations and tensions within the scope of the device between *established elements*: codes, standards, incorporated practices (*habitus*) — rules; and *tentative elements*: invention, trial-and-error, inferences, tentative practices (experimentation) — strategies. As we said before, new gear is built next to the previous one, but when inserted into the larger gear, it can cause tears, disruption, and intervals (“A Ocupação da Maré”, *El País*, March 30, 2014)¹¹.

We know, from Deleuze and Guattari (1975/2014), that assemblages are related to the production of new utterances: they transform the purpose of the utterance, change the purpose of existing utterances, and create short circuits in the majority of gears. The production of new utterances involves subjects who risk not only expressing what they really think and feel but also remaining where they should not be, making themselves seen when they should hide themselves. Their presence and action connect to the utterance

⁹ See in <https://istoe.com.br/efeitos-da-violencia-de-estado/>.

¹⁰ For Deleuze (1981/2007), “the transformation, the becoming, the mutation is made when we install the change in the ‘between’: between the molar and the molecular, drawing a line that prevents the molar from closing in majority models, and making the molecular the source of processes of creation and subjectification. The struggles underlie the different dimensions, but from the construction of a tension between the macro and the micro, the molar and the molecular that, by calling on them, by constructing them as a problem, create the conditions for the transformation and experimentation of the power relations that constitute them” (p. 211).

¹¹ See in https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2014/03/30/album/1396205399_006677.html#foto_gal_7.

and the enunciation to create effects on others and to affect the object of the enunciation by producing a spark, a flare in the image (as Didi-Huberman, 2016a, hints, based on Benjamin's dialectic).

The appearance of extras can, in this sense, generate biopotency: their inventive and fabulatory character is worthy of note, as it generates an experience that does not bind them to cliché — they gain existence in the image without being attached to the document of suffering, of misfortune, of victimization that would reduce him to bare life. Thus, an extra is also a “capital life”, as described by Peter Pál Pelbart (2003, p. 56). For him, precarious and extreme lives can be converted into “biopolitical capital that is increasingly at one's disposal to shape the unique way of living that is theirs to invent according to what is given to them” (Pelbart, 2003, p. 56).

It is as if extras also use their lives and bodies (consciously or not) to self-value what they have experienced, what they experience. An extra who appears in the image renders sensible “their unpleasant life stories, their style, their uniqueness, their perception, indignation, causticity, way of dressing, dwelling, gesturing, protesting and rebelling, in other words, their lives” (Pelbart, 2002, p. 29). As their capital is life, it allows reinventing the coordinates of enunciation and varying its forms. Thus, they produce assemblages, react to bare life, and question the image's viewer.

When an extra looks at the camera, they not only break the fourth wall but also hit the viewer hard. Their gaze, as Picado (2011)¹² says, crosses the screen as a vector of an implication that demands another type of attention from the viewer.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Appearing in and through photographic images involves a delicate operation of questioning the hierarchical and consensual framework, of questioning it in search of intervals that indicate that the framework cannot accurately determine what is seen, thought, recognized and apprehended. We have seen that the figuration of vulnerable people occurs in the encounter between the photographer's gesture, the scene framed in the image (in constant operation), the circulation and the viewer's involvement in the image. This process involves the act of making sensible an approximation between viewers and the otherness present in the image that is not reduced to a moralizing judgment. The sensitive operation of the images elicits in viewers new ways of perceiving the bodies and the multiple spatialities and temporalities of the scene, in which the faces that challenge us appear and emerge — dialectically and dissensually. Images can thus make the unexpected, what was not previously perceived, perceived and felt, appear: they produce and are produced by operations that disorganize, disturb and rearrange what is given defining other possibilities, that is, other ways of rendering times, spaces, objects, bodies and experiences readable and intelligible. Images can give rise to unique and fabulatory

¹² The face, according to the author, presents a “genuine pragmatics of visual significance” (Picado, 2011, p. 63). The face, in order to exist, depends on affective and interactional experiences – the gaze of the photographed face “is directed out of the image (and, more acutely, toward this other gaze that holds it)” (Picado, 2011, p. 63).

scenes by playing the role of “small machines that refuse the already given explanation” (Rancière, 2019, p. 57).

Butler (2009/2015) states, in dialogue with Didi-Huberman (2016b), her argument about the overexposure of the peoples, whose excess of media coverage used to create stereotypical representations does not allow us to welcome the other face, its demand, and its appeal. For her, in much of the media representations, “we cannot hear the face through the face, because it masks the sounds of human suffering and the proximity that we could have with the precariousness of life” (Butler, 2009/2015, p. 27). It speaks of the possibility of Lévinas’s face operating and being represented as a face from the moment in which such a representation can vocalize or be understood as the result of a voice that expresses a lament, a sign of the precariousness of life.

We understand that the loss of the face of which Butler (2004) speaks to us is configured by the process of institutional and media framing that makes it difficult to listen to the plea of the other and, by extension, compromises the production of ethical responsibility over this fragile and vulnerable other. In our view, the appearance of extras, as seen in the images, allows us to find portions of humanity that place us in front of the face.

Through these images, the face could appear through (de)formation, blurring and trace: it would be the expression of precariousness that underlies the plasticity of the image to the point of dismantling the scene and distorting the image. Certainly, an image is not elaborated without the body, nor is its significance given outside the corporeality of the world. However, we understand that the image is the liminal event that updates the game, the sensitive contact and the ethical contract between the maker, the figure in the image and the viewer.

Thus, we note that the greatest work in these images was to open up dimensions of connections and disconnections, approximations and distinctions, fractures and recompositions that do not fulfil expectations of readability, bringing to the viewer’s gaze undecidability that renders them sensitive to aspects that would not previously be the object of contemplation or consideration. As we saw in Rancière (2019), the image produces “a type of operation that will change the distribution of the visible and the thinkable” (p. 50) since political power is both in the images, in their materiality as signs, and in the relations and operations that define them.

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