

"Impedimento", by Daniela Castro

In his exhibition for the Centro Cultural São Paulo, Jaime Lauriano summons us to re-locate historical subjects who predicated two great objects of Brazil's memory: the military regime and the 1970's World Cup. 'Impedimento' is a project that holds the article as its Sisyphus stone. Jaime's incursion as an artist-historian through national files in São Paulo and in Rio de Janeiro wasn't observing 'A Brazil', but 'The Brazil' instead. The undetermined article would achieve a Brazil of many possibilities: a Brazil that is indeed able to emancipate; the one that appreciates the oral tradition from the quilombolas and the Indians; the one that wouldn't be satisfied with being an economic model receptor or a late capitalism laboratory; who is to say, an anthropophagic Brazil, and even – why not? – a revolutionary Brazil. The one that could hold a real PAC – Growth Acceleration Program, understood as a governance project that needs to be improved (of course, if that was true, the letter C, in PAC, would correspond to “Consciousness”).

However, The Brazil of Jaime's researches, is the same one that had its independence declared by a Portuguese king; the one in which its own enslaver class abolished the slavery; it's the Brazil of the amnesty law written by the military junta for “both sides”. The Brazil that understands that to stop being oppressed, one has to become the oppressor. Brazil's problems are elite problems: thought by the elite and made for the elite. Love it or leave it. It's the Brazil founded by PAC – Pedro Álvares Cabral - the gaunt and semiliterate hero, of a history eagerly kept by elementary teachers; the Brazil that as sketched and built by the dictatorship and its marketing campaign, it is the one that Goes Forward, Save the (soccer) Team!, built as an overly patriotic subject, filled with aspiration, angst and complexes.

'Impedimento' is about the artist-historian operating in the transversalities of the history production as an institution and from the subject's institution in the history. The parallelism in which Jaime's research proposes itself, achieves a Brazil draft where the subject doesn't predicate an object but predicates itself, in an everlasting return to the reactionary elite, to the monoculture economy, to the fear of someday seeing themselves walking in the Indians shoes instead of Hans'.

Mistaken is the one who understands that soccer has predominance in the parallelism with the military dictatorship traced in Jaime Lauriano's research. Soccer is inserted in 'Impedimento' as an instrument to create a myth of the Brazilian Family. And, to an overly-patriotic-subject-government, the family is the constitutive institution to which “It” must belong. In the words of the then president, Médici about Brazilian victory in the 1970's World Cup:

By the time the National Soccer Team definitely conquers the World Cup, after a memorable campaign, in which they tackled and won the most honourable adversaries, I want everyone to see in the President of the Republic, a Brazilian, just like any other [...] “Médici: I can relate to the joy and emotion on the streets”. O Globo (Newspaper) July 22nd, 1970 (1)

This is how the myth works: it exhausts the meaning of the sign, or anything it intends to mythicize (soccer); it deviates the literal meaning of the sign. At the same time, it fulfills the sign with mythicizing content (soccer as a moment of union and equality among all Brazilians), building up a new significance, the myth one (the Brazilian Family). The myth is seducing in its own etymologic foundation: seducere = to draw aside. The myth, therefore, is at the same time a monolithic and dynamic element. That is, it operates in a constant deflection movement, so the myth can replace the original sign. And, for this to happen, substantial information is used in order to prevent this deflection movement to stop.

In the memory of the soldiers, the unknown General Médici was chosen because of his good physique and his love for soccer. Veja, a Brazilian magazine, wrote

...In front of TV cameras, the newcomer Emílio Garrastazu Médici has shown some qualities. His voice is very impressive: it's strong, it's solemn, great for leading roles. His appearance is serious, quiet and erect, he has the right size and physique for that kind of role (the beauty, by the way,

wouldn't be indispensable: in similar performances, the world has already known some bizarre characters) (Veja, 15/10/1969) (2)

It falls back to this image the desire of "making everybody see in the President of the Republic, a Brazilian, just like every Brazilian", consolidating his figure as the Father of the Nation, who summons all his similars before him. For a while, a tabula rasa is enforced into the ethnic diversity and into the brutal social inequality and "everyone" starts a Brazilian Family, that shares the same values, the same color, that goes to the same bar to celebrate the love for the soccer/for the military regime. Soccer is a "national passion", a myth that hides the most relevant reasons found in the United States diplomacy reports, that justify the choice of the then unknown General:

Médici criticized Costa e Silva's patience before the anti-government protests and, in December 1968, he strongly supported the creation of the Institutional Act nº 5 (...) Even though Médici wasn't relating himself as part of the so called Army hard-line, his resistance, last year, to the restrictive political measures adoption indicates that he will possibly be less tolerant than Costa e Silva was with the radical opposition. (General Records.....)

Just as the myth, the predicating subject is paralyzed (monolithic) and paralyzing (dynamic). The nomination of one of the most bloodthirsty presidents of the military dictatorship period took place to benefit the politically strategic United States economic position. The International Monetary Fund, key figure financing the military dictatorships of Latin America, had as its director the unknown General Médici himself, from 1967 to 69. The soccer as an instrument of ideological construction of the Brazilian Family myth dissembles The Brazil as a prodigal son with poliomyelitis in a complicated relationship with a physically absent father, but psychologically pervasive and idolized. A hindered Brasil.

Notes

1 Wall text of Impedimento's Exhibition, by Jaime Lauriano, in the I Mostra do Programa de Exposições de 2014 at Centro Cultural São Paulo.

2 Janaina Martins Cordeiro, "The defeat after the victory: the military memory about Médici and the dictatorship". Electronic magazine Tempo Presente (accessed in June 18th, 2014)