Counterpoint to "graffiti versus pichação" reductionism in São Paulo, capital

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Abstract

It is intended to problematize the propagated division between graffiti styles in São Paulo, capital, the largest Brazilian city, where there would be two different visual manifestations, with exclusive practitioners, with the graphite always colored, authorized by the owner of the support and positive for the landscape, while graffiti would have to pollute the city with black, cryptic and indecipherable letters, a criminalizable attitude. On the contrary, we intend to demonstrate the confluences of poetic modeling processes in "isolated images", "sequences" and "pictures" in all regions of the São Paulo capital. After the first ethnography in search of these images in different periods between 2011 and 2015, for doctoral research, we captured unpublished photographic records in September 2019, to which we will relate the semiotic and structural theoretical basis (Lotman, 1978; Todorov, 1969, 1971, 1980) and the reference of complex epistemology (Morin, 2013, 2008).

Contraponto ao reducionismo "grafite versus pichação" em São Paulo, capital

Resumo

Pretende-se problematizar a propalada divisão entre grafites e pichações em São Paulo, capital, maior cidade brasileira, onde existiriam duas manifestações visuais diferentes, com praticantes exclusivos, sendo o grafite sempre colorido, autorizado pelo dono do suporte e positivo para a paisagem, enquanto à pichação caberia poluir a cidade com letras pretas, crípticas e indecifráveis, atitude criminalizável. Pretendemos demonstrar, ao contrário, confluências de processos de modelização poética em "imagens isoladas", "sequências" e "quadros" de grafites e pichações em todas as regiões da capital paulista. Após uma primeira etnografia em busca dessas imagens em diferentes períodos entre 2011 e 2015, para a pesquisa de doutoramento, captamos registros fotográficos inéditos em setembro de 2019, aos quais relacionaremos a base teórica semiótica e estrutural (Lotman, 1978; Todorov, 1969, 1971, 1980) e o referencial da epistemologia complexa (Morin, 2013, 2008).

Integrative introduction

In the capital of the largest Brazilian state, São Paulo, the propagated division between "graffiti" and *pichação* also spelled with "x", that stigmatizes the records on walls, on top of buildings and overpasses as presumably indecipherable words, registered in just one color, especially black, forming clandestine and criminalized groups; on the other hand there would be graffiti, admirable for the colorful contribution to the gray of the city, the myriad of images authorized by owners of walls and other facades, tending at street level. [1]

This division, which seems natural (Casseano, Domenich & Rocha, 2001; Fideles, 2014; Gitahy, 1999; Malland, 2012, among others) precisely redraws the second Cartesian methodological proposal announced 380 years ago in *O discurso do método* [*Discourse on the method*]: the researcher should "divide each of the difficulties he examines into as many plots as possible and necessary to better solve them" (Descartes, 2001, p. 23). In a more complex approach, in line with Edgar Morin, we would be faced with the "simplification paradigm" that operates by destroying "sets and totalities" and isolating "all objects from what surrounds them" (Morin, 2008, p. 18).

Despite the representativeness of the visual production of the São Paulo capital, divided into two types of visual manifestations that would be not only different, but opposite, incomprehension predominates. Classificatory idiosyncrasies begin with the precious defense of the term graffiti (art), plural of *grafitto* in Italian (Gitahy, 1999). In the same line of orthographic order, the use of "x" in *pixação* is demanded, to accentuate the anti-normative posture.

Not separating what would be "the" graphite, generally figurative, from typological productions and other presumed styles, especially those called *pichação* yesterday and today, contrary to the São Paulo divisive consensus, it respects the historical trajectory of these visual records that, in São Paulo, were inspired by the production of the United States, considered as the birthplace of hip hop culture, of which images are part, or elements, including music (rap), the work of DJs and dance.

The historic documentary *Style Wars* (Silver, 1983), about graffiti in New York, shows that most young people painted letters and figures, with recurring inspiration in comics and superheroes. They were the writers, mostly authors of colored or monochromatic typologies, very similar to what we currently call *pichação* in São Paulo, where a separatist viewpoint shared by theorists, media and common sense prevails, despite the historical and empirical evidence to graffiti production, which never failed to include typological, figurative or mixed styles.

Treating the same context as the documentary mentioned above, in New York in the early 1970s, Baudrillard understands phrases and drawings indistinctly as graffiti, a "new type of intervention in the city" (1996, p. 100). The segregating metropolis acquired

other dimensions besides the predominance of economic activity, becoming primarily "the place of execution of the sign" (1996, p. 100), socializing images through the urban fabric.

Graffiti in New York was as unpopular as graffiti in São Paulo in the third millennium, but the differentiating split is a São Paulo preciousness that, due to the influence of the capital on the country, from the economy to culture, spread the reductionist paradigm. We agree with Baudrillard (1996) when he states that the images on the walls are not organized as advertising or political messages, easily identifiable and classifiable, normative and excluding. The city is a stage of semiosis, a chaotic "polygon of signs" for "violent visual insurrections" (Baudrillard, 1996, p. 101).

For the theorist, the images on trains, posts and other public supports "have a real symbolic load" (Baudrillard, 1996, p. 102), coding and recoding spaces, focusing mainly on architecture. Visual rebels demarcate their "true strategic terrain, the manipulation of codes and meanings" with images (Baudrillard, 1996, p. 104), shuffling traditional signs – the poetic function of images would be to create new models of visual perception.

Among the authors who view these records in an organic way, considering the overlap, and not the division between graffiti and *pichação*, we find theorists from France, England, United States, Colombia and, to a lesser extent, Brazilians. Despite different nationalities and objects of analysis, they tend to treat *pichação* as a synonym for graffiti or see graffiti as a set of visual manifestations, including *pichação*, sometimes even more valued (Art, Manco & Neelon, 2005; Boleta, 2006; Chastanet, 2007; Ferreira, 2006; Franco, 2009; Ganz, 2010; Lassala, 2010; Silva, 2014). In the public images of São Paulo, since the late 1970s, productions have incorporated drawings of letters and figures, which have become, therefore, exclusive heritage and territories, respectively, of graffiti and *pichação* (Fonseca, 1981).

We consider that affinities occur, especially when we start from "a fundamental point of reflection" that relates graffiti and *pichação*: the "underground communion that they have, both in the history of practices, as in the procedural interdependencies to interfere in the city" (Franco, 2009, p. 20). For another author, "graffiti artists, for the most part, consider *pichação* as one, if not the most authentic, form of graffiti, naming the *pichação* artists' letters as *tag reto*. Even in other countries, graffiti encompasses both forms of manifestation" (Ferreira, 2006, p. 37).

Taking São Paulo images in a semiotic sense, we will try to characterize three recurrent visual sets in São Paulo, considering the poetic structure, which distinguishes them, and the lyrical expressiveness, which is common to them. These sets - "isolated images", "sequences" and "pictures" - will be seen as "texts".

> The texts that serve as primary material for research, can be distinguished according to the substance of the signs that constitute them. In particular, they can work as written or oral speech, sequences of graphic, pictorial or plastic representations, architectural complexes, vocal or musical phrases, gestures, certain typical forms of human behavior (for example, the state of

sleep, hypnosis, ecstasy, etc.) and notably common forms of behavior (for example, eating), as well as everyday objects incorporated into the sphere of worship. As for the substance, a text can be homogeneous (for example, the written text of the Koran) or heterogeneous, that is, constituted by the combination of the indicated elements (for example, religious chant = oral speech + melody; mural painting of the temples = written speech + pictographic representations + elements of the architectural complex; the religious service, which in its most complete examples gathers almost all the elements listed above). (Ivanov, Toporóv & Zalizniak, 1979, p. 81)

Supported by this theoretical framework, when dealing with "images" we will be referring to isolated visual texts or to groups composed of what is normally distinguished as graffiti and *pichação*, that is, we propose a comprehensive approach to these visual texts structured from "modeling" (Lotman, 1978, p. 35).

Considering Lotman (1978), the "isolated images", "sequences" and "pictures" result from "secondary modeling" because they are based on other semiotic systems, such as colors and words, in figurative or psychedelic drawings, critical or witty writings, specific visual marks of groups and artists. The physical limits of these models are given by the spatiality of the supports, such as walls and facades. According to Baudrillard, although "wild, collective, anonymous, they respect their support and the pictorial language, even if to articulate a political act" (1996, p. 106).

The complexity of the modeling is proportional to the amount of information publicly conveyed by the images, considering that "the complexification of the character of the information inevitably drags the complexification of the semiotic system used to transmit it" (Lotman, 1978, p. 38). Because they occur in a social environment, the modeling mobilizes internal and external signs, without which "the work in general could not have any meaning" (Lotman, 1978, p. 101).

From our perspective, two opposing mechanisms work in the construction of São Paulo's visual culture: the intended positive predominance of graffiti tries to "submit all elements of the text to the system, and turn it into an automated grammar, without which the act of communication is impossible", while *pichação* would tend to "destroy this automation and make the structure itself the carrier of information" (Lotman, 1978, p. 137).

This constitutive game implies much more interdependence and correlation than differences, which is why we disagree with the current separation and we propose another delimitation, from the point of view of poetic structuring and lyrical intention, still supported by the semiotic notion of "border". It marks the limit of a certain structure, such as the painting, the stage, the time of the music or the end of a wall. Artistic paradigms generate borders, which can be personal, authorial, ideological and, obviously, physical, such as facades and posts. "The way the text is divided by its border is one of its essential characteristics" (Lotman, 1978, p. 373).

The notion of border is dynamic, allowing the understanding of diversity, individuality and the relationship between modeled and modeling cultural texts, acting as a mechanism of limitation and permeability. When dealing with the double aspect of borders, which presuppose demarcation and porosity, Edgar Morin states that

> although we tend to consider borders essentially as lines of exclusion, the word border here reveals the unity of dual identity, which is both distinction and belonging. The border is both opening and closing. It is at the border that distinction and connection with the environment occur. Every border, including the membrane of living beings, including the border of nations, is a barrier and, at the same time, the place of communication and exchange. It is the place of dissociation and association, separation and articulation. It is the filter that at the same time obstructs and lets through. It is through it that osmotic currents are established and it is that which prevents homogenization. (Morin, 2013, p. 252)

PROCEDURES

As for the methodology of this article, our integrating proposal results from the observation and recording of images called graffiti and *pichação* in all regions of the São Paulo capital, in different periods between 2011 and 2015, in addition to ethnography carried out in September 2019, to update the material field.

We went to parks, alleys, streets, avenues and highways. In order to reach them, mainly bicycles were used, in addition to São Paulo trains and subways, which on weekends, the preferred day for registering images, allow bicycles to be taken in the wagons. Most of the time, we arrive at central and peripheral places by public transport, so that we can explore specific regions by cycling.

The equipment used, camera and cell phone (this, exclusively in the 2019 update), produced photographs and short videos. In São Paulo, the choice of days and times on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays avoids the intense movement of cars and people in front of visual texts, with the advantage that it is possible to observe images on the folding metal facades, especially the doors of shops. In 12 ethnographic incursions between 2011 and 2015, we collected 3.556 photos and 287 videos, presented with the doctoral thesis. In 2019, we took 120 photos and 17 short videos for this article.

The limitations of photography, which in many cases do not encompass the dimension of the image to be recorded, converge to an important theoretical development: the difficulty in photographing larger sets, usually horizontal, forced to film them, and then we realized that the constructed chain rarely establishes logical links between the parts, as they are almost always random.

At first, we captured images on large roads, which would be preferred by the authors for their visibility. However, in order to see the situation in less busy places, we

carried out, in ethnographic work, specific mapping in the west area of the capital of São Paulo, in the surroundings of the University of São Paulo (USP), where we realized that the intensity and proportion of the images is practically the same, regardless of the size of the roads.

The most relevant result, as we are insisting, is the perception that the coexistence between so-called graffiti and *pichação* predominates in the structuring of visual texts: the supports chosen are the same; almost always the authors practice or practiced both trends; the records are all over the city; artists use similar materials and techniques, such as spray paint and latex spread with a roller; and it is not always possible to distinguish what would be graffiti or *pichação*, such as the mixture of styles and the overlapping of the records.

They constitute the empirical basis for proposing the following triad of visual texts, but such categorization, of course, does not exhaust the classificatory possibilities of the countless images found on walls, facades, walls, poles, doors, gates, telephone booths, columns, telephone boxes and buildings, abandoned or not, in São Paulo.

Poetic structuring of images

The "isolated images", "sequences" and "pictures" hardly correspond to the causal and temporal orders of the most common narratives. They tend to be timeless and to make "spatial relationships elements that constitute the organization" (Todorov, 1971, p. 61).

However, it is not possible to cancel the time stamp of any narrative, because even structured to seem to dispense with time, or when its importance really diminishes, the receiver will inevitably assign temporalities, starting with the period spent reading.

The trend towards timelessness in visual texts that include graffiti and *pichação* implies that chronological relationships do not link or trigger their constitution, and in most cases the causality between events does not determine correlations. Works organized in space are not "habitually" understood as narratives, recalls Todorov, for whom the units of these compositions will have "sort of regular disposition" and "graphic or phonic distributions assume a symbolic value in the spatial order" (1971, p 63).

To say that images tend to be timeless does not mean that it is null, but that the structuring is primarily spatial. There are complex questions about time that, because they are not the focus of the discussion, they are punctuated here, encompassing comments by the sharp commentator of this article: the narrative layers of graffiti and *pichação* images recorded in different time periods - while some are erased, others are new - impose transit between past and present, in addition to the compaction of the records, which incite, at the same time, briefness and permanence.

Anyway, if temporality is less decisive in structuring graffiti and *pichação*, and being able to assume a relevant role when images are exposed to the public, spatiality is decisive in São Paulo's visual texts, considering that there is a huge difference between

writing poetry to provoke mental images (Pound, 1990, p. 63) and use the spatial support as a structuring element of the poetics. Brazilian concretists defended procedures against prose and prosaism by betting on the "white of the page as an element of structure" (Pignatari, 1975, p. 63). For concretists and so-called graffiti artists and *pichação* artists, poetic production resizes the hierarchy that prioritizes words. Other constituent elements, such as images, colors and the support itself, have an equivalent relevance.

The awareness of the relationship with the support, decisive because it is a constituent, begins with the elaboration and exhaustive re-elaboration of drafts on sheets stored in folders or notebooks of the authors, the so-called piece books. In them, we seek the best composition that, being so practiced, facilitates adaptation to countless spaces and colors available:

> concrete poetry places the poem under the focus of a strictly organizing conscience, which acts on the material of poetry in the broadest and most consequent way possible: word, syllable, phoneme, sound, acoustic-verbal-visual physiognomy of the linguistic elements, field graph as a spatiotemporal structuring factor (organic rhythm), semantic constellations precipitated in chain and considered simply from the point of view of the material, on an equal footing with the resulting elements of composition. (Campos, 1975, p. 51)

It is important to retain the aforementioned "strictly organizing conscience" from the quotation, as it identifies the fundamental construction procedure for visual texts in the city of São Paulo, which begin with the drafts exhaustively remade in notebooks.

In rushed conditions of registration on the street, and even when they are doing "productions" (collective work of graffiti artists on authorized supports), artists must develop the ability to scratch the support with precision, weaving their brand adapted to the space and colors available, preferably in a single attempt. There is very little possibility to correct, even less to delete the image that did not come out satisfactorily. For each record, typologies and figurative drawings are adapted, related and hierarchized according to the support, authorized or not, and for that "strictly organizing conscience" is indispensable.

Isolated images

The images that appear alone on public supports in São Paulo are not capable of engendering actions and characters, they have no breath for minimal narrative developments in prosaic molds, they are loose figures on supports, like the rare (because temporary) isolated signatures on freshly painted walls, on poles, or small drawings on telephone boxes, as well as huge figures on the sides of buildings and columns of overpasses.

These atomized appearances are at the opposite pole of the stories whose "dominant" relationship (Jakobson, 1983, p. 485) between the parties is determined by causality

and "each unit finds its place in the narrative because there was or because there is such another unit" (Todorov, 1971, p. 52). In isolated images, the lack of narrative means prevents them from forming a plot and, even less, its inevitable result, intrigue, understood as the transition from one balance to another.

Take as an example the specific expression of graffiti artists and *pichação* artists, bombing, which names one of the recurring types of isolated image in São Paulo (Art, Manco & Neeloon, 2005, p. 33; Ganz, 2010, p. 390). Bombing literally means and proposes to bomb the supports, a word used both to refer to the inscriptions on trains in New York, in the 60s and 70s, and to those found in São Paulo, in 2019.

Poetic production structured on principles of atomization or impacting compaction is often inspired by oriental practices, such as haiku, of Japanese origin, a minimal composition full of meanings. In Brazil, in the last century, they practiced short and very short poems prior to the Modernism of São Paulo, later poets and outside this circuit, such as the Pernambuco João Cabral de Melo Neto and the so-called concretists (Aguilar, 2005), with whom we will discuss in this article, as well as the contemporary Paulo Leminski.

Productions of haiku have been recorded in Brazil for at least a century and, Leminski recalls, "in the 70s, finally, the kids of marginal or alternative poetry, grown up with newspaper headlines, 'out-door' phrases and graffiti in city walls that swelled, he started making 'haikais', even without meaning to" (2001, p. 113).

Using terms such as "niponization" and "miniaturization" to address "brief, synthetic, anti-discursive poetry", Leminski associates Japanese tradition with contemporary poetics, as "hai-kai is our time, baby. A compact time, a 'clip' time, a 'beep' time, a 'chips' time" (2001, p. 101).

Compacting presupposes meticulous work, as in pruning bonsai, tiny oriental trees whose creation is associated with poetic processes such as those that model São Paulo's visual texts. In front of public supports, authors must handle paint rollers, brushes and, especially, spray cans with precision, with which "you need compressed air and expression compression. It has to be brief, whether verbal or non-verbal, or including both" (Fonseca, 1981, p. 36).

Still on confluent synthetic poetic structures, a reference poet for Brazilian concretists, Erza Pound, defines the poetic procedure as "the most condensed form of verbal expression" (1990, p. 40) and identifies the compact compositional principle in the Chinese ideogram:

> the Egyptians ended up using abbreviated figures to represent sounds, but the Chinese still use abbreviated figures "as" figures, that is, the Chinese ideogram does not try to be the image of a sound or a written sign that resembles a sound, but it is still the drawing of one thing; a thing in a given position or relationship, or a combination of things. The ideogram means the thing, or the action or situation or quality, pertinent to the different things that it shapes. (Pound, 1990, p. 26).

The following two images tend to be identified as graffiti and *pichação*, but they are also atomized visual texts on supports in which there is room for future figures, not necessarily in the same style as the previous ones.

Figure 1: Estação Itaquera, east zone, September 14, 2019

Credits: Marcos Zibordi

Figure 2: Av. Radial Leste, September 14, 2019

Credits: Marcos Zibordi

In the next two examples, a *pichação* visual text occupies a small support, the trash can, an image commonly identified as *pichação*; however, as a single record, it results from modeling processes similar to the graffiti that occupies the entire side of the building.

Figure 3: Central region, September 14, 2019

Credits: Marcos Zibordi

Figure 4: Central region, September 14, 2019

Credits: Marcos Zibordi

From the point of view of poetic modeling in relation to the support, the presumed differences in styles make little difference, as we intend to have demonstrated in the two previous situations: the isolated images can occupy the entire available area or there is space for the emergence of new records.

When they appear, especially at the sides, the isolated image will become part of a sequence or a picture, performing, throughout its existence, the dual function of being initially atomized and then triggering accumulative processes that form sequences, predominant visual texts in São Paulo.

The sequences

They are formed by the so-called graffiti submitted to the inevitable horizontality of the walls, by the *pichação* lines on top of the buildings, in addition to vertical sequences on the sides of buildings, columns and posts, in three situations: graffiti sequences, *pichação* and those in which the two styles are mixed – the hybrid situation is epistemologically dear to us, as it problematizes the presumed purity of two groups of visual records that would be very different and separate in the capital of São Paulo, as opposed to our main argument.

The sequences are structured by figures or typologies, colored or not, with at least two elements that would have everything to constitute, at least, phrases, prayers and even periods, in the case of words, or Cartesian logical series of figurative drawings, as in the comics stories. However, despite the accumulation of images, narrative chains are practically non-existent.

The main reason for considering sets of images as "sequences" is the spatial organization that is necessarily horizontal, which occurs much more frequently, or vertical, directions always given by the conditions of the support. These sequences at least duplicate the sense of reading that most Westerners get used to, always from left to right. The possible double direction of production and visualization of the sequences enhances the possibilities of the prose continuity principle, restricted to a single direction, from beginning to end, in stages, while in these sequential visual texts, the beginning and the end are interchangeable. In addition to breaking the one-way linearity, the sequences appear duplicated when above, below or beside a vertical or horizontal line, another one appears, regardless of style.

Aristotle, when dealing with tragedy, establishes a fundamental assumption regarding the linking of parts of history: "it is very different to happen one thing because of another, or to happen merely after another" (1991, p. 14). The fundamental difference occurs between accumulation and sequential organic organization of the narrative elements.

This ancient theoretical point of view has reverberated in authors for whom the sequences, to be properly narrative, need to meet certain conditions. According to Bremond, the "elementary sequence" (2008, p. 115) fulfills three mandatory phases, a process that opens and closes cycles of events or actions. He is clear about the imperative relations between these parts in the narrative whole, because "where there is no integration in the unity of an action, there is no narrative, but only chronology, enunciation of a succession of uncoordinated facts" (Bremond, 2008, p 118).

This is precisely what happens in the sequences of visual texts woven with graffiti and *pichação*, in the capital of São Paulo: all of them accumulated at the same time or over the days, they are usually chained according to the principle of succession, less complex in terms of narrative transformation relations. Instead of cycles, the images are parts, side by side, and "the narrative is not satisfied with this, it requires the development of an action, that is, change, difference" (Todorov, 1980, p. 62).

In this sense, even the actions of characters, graffiti or *pichação*, would, at most, have "evocative power", which "by themselves, could hardly produce an autonomous

narrative sequence" (Todorov, 1980, p. 70). In general, the characters are chained, not fitted, and "fitting" is a basic process of prosaic narrative construction because

> the appearance of a new character unfailingly causes the interruption of the previous story, so that a new story, the one that explains the 'I am here now' of the new character, is told to us. A second story is included in the first; this process is called fitting. (Todorov, 1969, p. 123)

This explains the difference between the logic of achievement in the sequences of visual texts, based on the sum and autonomy of the parts in relation to the narrative whole, and the logic of the consequence, necessarily relating, implying, overlapping cycles of events, actions or characters, procedure of modeling hardly seen in São Paulo sequences.

Their little relational cumulative weaving, structured by the conditions and limits of spatiality, explains why they do not develop a single theme, that is, there is no central idea running through the parts, building the theme (Tomachevski, 1976). Despite the apparent similarity with prose narrative procedures, the sequences do not carry it out, as the accumulation tends to linear, horizontal and bidirectional movement, but it does not even weave the classic and obvious beginning, middle and end.

These accumulations are not prosaic, mainly because poetic structuring predominates in another aspect of the relationship between the parties, through rhythm. It reveals the poetics of sequential visual texts in the sense that the laws of the combination of parts, whether graffiti or *pichação*, are also the laws of rhythm (Brik, 1976).

This rhythm tends to be uniform due to the similar spaces occupied by each visual record in the sequence. When they result from "productions", in which artists come together to "make a wall", dividing it in equal parts in height and width, the rhythm is markedly regular. It also varies little when the previous and proportional intervals of supports whose similar parts exist, for example, are divided by the symmetrical columns of a wall or overpass.

In the sense attributed by Lotman, the sequences are "organizations by equivalence" and in the "poetic text" (1978, p. 188), structured horizontally or vertically in the streets of São Paulo, "the words are found to be equivalent solely because of the their isometrism" (Lotam, 1978, p. 205). Thus, "this repetition of the rhythmic segments creates the presumption of reciprocal equivalence of all elements of the text within given levels, which constitutes the foundation of the perception of the text as poetic" (Lotam, 1978, p. 207).

Sequences of public visual texts from São Paulo, without a unifying theme or plot, perform poetic weave due to the predominance of rhythm, with very rare sequences forming narratives, despite the accumulation and regularity of the records, as in the following two models, rare because they are composed only of *pichação* (the first), and graffiti (the second).

Figure 5: *Pichação* sequence in the north zone, Praça Orlando Silva, September 14, 2019

Credits: Marcos Zibordi

Figura 6: Radial Leste corner, east zone, rhythmic regularity graffitied, September 14, 2019

Credits: Marcos Zibordi

However, as we are insisting, in the ethnographies we find a stylistic mixture, as the next images will show. There are three sequences with different models: the wall of an overpass has graffiti on one side and *pichação* on the other; typologies of the two trends are regularly interspersed in a metal siding; commercial logos, letters and drawings of the two styles form the facade of a workshop.

Figure 7: Nearby Arena Corinthians, east zone September 14, 2019

Credits: Marcos Zibordi

Figure 8: Lower overpass near Avenida Consolação, downtown, September 14, 2019

Credits: Marcos Zibordi

Figure 9: Avenida Cidade Jardim, South zone, September 14, 2019
Credits: Marcos Zibordi

Figure 10: Elis Regina square, West zone, September 14, 2019
Credits: Marcos Zibordi

In the images, there is no causal connection between the parts, there are few narrative hitches between the visual records. If, for example, there is a dead man drawn, it is unlikely that someone will shoot the killer, just as the phrases do not tend to be completed, questioned, mocked, perverted.

Each visual text occupies its space, preferably similar and the authors do not give up self-centered authorship when registering their productions, their names, marks or figures on the walls. They are together, but not mixed to the extent that the parties' autonomy contributes or is diluted in the narrative whole – they remain identifiable, gravitating in the sequences.

The pictures

As for the third type of visual text composed of images that are identified as graffiti and *pichação* in São Paulo, the "pictures", as well as the isolated images and sequences, do little to properly narrative texture, but the rhythm changes decisively, because in the pictures, much more chaotic than the sequences, the formation of sets of images loses in regularity and gains in complexity. Different from linear accumulation in two directions, horizontal and vertical, typical of sequences, the frames generate multiple rhythms, such as diagonals. Pictures are not necessarily square, but they tend to be when they break the predominant horizontality of the sequences.

The structure of the pictures is the least logical of the three sets of images proposed and the closest to a certain poetic organization in the sense of "associative procedure, most of which is below the threshold of consciousness" and whose "most natural unity"

is "discontinuous unity" promoting "ambiguous connections, and memory connections very similar to those of sleep "(Frye, 1973, p. 267).

Pictures are huge walls studded with graffiti, *pichação* or both, and they force us to stretch our necks when viewing sideways, above, diagonals. We witness the adrenaline that permeates the registration process of some visual texts called *pichação*: on top of a building in the center of the city, someone holds their legs to another who, upside down, handles the paint roller that produces the new registration (it is worth more if it is the first), or one more in the support (it is worth less, unless it is higher) (Boleta, 2006).

Despite all the possible relationships that model the visual elements on the support, pictures are quite chaotic, or complex, and here is another differentiation in relation to the sequences: in these, the inevitable and structuring horizontality results in cumulative fabric, less woven, more added, linear and Cartesian, while pictures promote lines of visual force in different directions, unpredictable, making the fabric a more organic, intricate and non-linear process.

Thus, the irregular rhythm of the images in the pictures weaves a movement similar to that of the words in the "free verse", without rigid metrics, not admitting "union with the usual rhythms of regular verses and requiring an autonomous principle of construction" (Tomachevski, 1976, p. 153).

In the pictures, the visual elements are woven in a poetic modeling procedure such as that proposed by the Dada poet Tristan Tzara, who tried ways of questioning the logical order by cutting out words from the newspaper, shuffling them and throwing them on the table, considering the resulting construction poem. Such texture is not primarily generated by semantic or syntactic rational relations, still less by the rules of language, meaning, extension or sound of words. The "correspondence technique, fragmentary associations of ideas and unusual combinations" prevails (Richter, 1973, p. 60).

> In this way, we are forced to reach a conclusion: the relational structure is not a sum of material details, but a set of relationships that is first in the work of art and that constituted its foundation, its reality. But this set is constructed not as a hierarchy with several floors without internal intersections, but as a complex structure of substructures that intersect with numerous penetrations of a single and same element in different construction contexts. (Lotman, 1978, p. 145)

Next, we will see pictures modeled with typological variations painted on the wall, followed by a column with figurative graffiti and letters, and in the third composition, typologies of both styles.

Figure 11: Pictures in Vila Gomes (West), September 14, 2019

Credits: Marcos Zibordi

Figure 12: Pictures in Av. Cruzeiro do Sul (North), September 14, 2019

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Figure 13: Graffiti and *pichação* letters, Estação Vila Mariana subway (South), September 14, 2019

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Poetic modeling, no matter how cerebral, does not do without the lyrical. In the previous pictures, lyricism is in the grandiloquence of colors and shapes, as well as in the enormous dimensions.

Historically, the relationship between poetic and lyrical is less and less direct. Certain aspects, such as the concretist ones, intend to avoid the lyrical spill, exterminating "state-mystical poetry" (Campos, 1975, p. 52). Lyricism can spring from mere catharsis, even without poetic, literary or artistic intent. Among possible interactions, we are saying that in the three sets of visual texts that we described, the poetic structure is different, but all express lyricism.

In Jakobson's terms, "isolated" images, "sequences" and "frames" perform "emotive function", that one centered on the sender aiming "a direct expression of the speaker's attitude towards what he is talking about. It tends to elicit the impression of a certain emotion, true or simulated" (2007, pp. 122-123).

Lyric confluences

Expressing one's feelings is a perennial synonym for lyrical. We mentioned earlier Aristotle; his ideas, like those of Plato, were taken up and systematized by Hegel (Leite, 2005, p. 9). For the German philosopher, the lyric poet "uses the occasion only as an opportunity, in order to express himself, in general, his disposition, his joy, his sadness or way of thinking and point of view about life", centered on "autonomous vitality of his feelings and considerations" (Leite, 2005, p. 163).

In the triad of São Paulo visual texts, the demarcation of the expression of the self is evident in the indispensable and egocentric records of names or nicknames of authors and groups, both graffiti artists and *pichação* artists. It turns out that the "'internal' and 'external', 'subjective' and 'objective' are not absolutely diverse" (Staiger, 1972, p. 58).

In "isolated images", "sequences" and "pictures", indistinction reigns: drawings can tend to realism; there are psychedelics with figurative features; characters oscillate between media, such as cartoons, and authors, with a tendency for faces and male faces; there are witty, political phrases, names of groups and authors; and with regard to letters and words, they are the ones that most approximate what would be two different manifestations, unlike the common division that generically associates letters with *pichação* and drawings with graffiti – the typological interest is common.

The dreamlike dominance of images also promotes lyricism, catching the eyes of those that evoke the world of dreams and in which subjectivity is exacerbated by the profusion of colors - exuberance, spill and exaggeration set the tone in escapist records whose volatility builds lyrical texture yet due to deterioration of the substrates, removing the initial impact of the aberrant colors. In this sense, the walls function as palimpsests, a name given to erased scrolls for reuse.

The lyrically disposed subject "considers himself one with this landscape, with this smile, with this sound, therefore, not with the eternal, but precisely with the most transitory" (Staiger, 1972, p. 61). We read about an interview with the graffiti artist Tiago Batista

dos Santos, the "Calle", or "street" in Spanish. We asked if he used to count the amount of graffiti done. Here is his lyrical response based on the action of time on the images:

> whoever does this, does it, and I sort of understand why, but I don't have to keep saying that I did two thousand laterals. I don't know bro, I spent a few years of my life doing it, I can only say that, you know? I won't keep counting, there are several that I don't remember, there are several that I missed the photo, the good part is the detachment, you have to be natural, you have to be natural! That's why it's good to paint with latex, because latex erases, it loses life much faster, so graphite is erased faster than *pichação*, believe it or not. *Pichação* attacks, but it is the graffiti that is erased. That's why it's good for us to do it with latex because we see the time that the real graffiti has worn, you look at the wall, you see that it is worn out and it's only been four years. In the gringa the guys paint only with spray, so the deal is much more professional, it lasts a lot longer, and here, the deal is much more natural, it's latex, it's water-based paint, you know what I mean? And then you see the time passing on the street, like this: it's a message, an idea that was going through your head, that you made in your name, several people don't understand, but you wanted to send a message through your name, through a style, with colors, everything thought out. Four years and the thing is there, you stopped by with those ideas, you know? And that's what makes me love the deal. (Calle, personal interview, July 20, 2014)

The lyric, taken here in the occasional sense, is "art of the precarious, a kind of lyric-poetic headline" (Fonseca, 1981, p. 59). It does not refer only to the author expressing his feelings, but to the dominant aspect in the images themselves, impacting by the enormous dimensions, by the surprise with which they appear and disappear from the city, by the search for the most visible space for the record, to appear to the maximum of people and express monochromatic and multicolored passions and desires. The images want to reach us, kidnap by emotion, and when they are rationally indecipherable, we plunge into impressions because "the language of poetry is a difficult, obscure language, full of obstacles" (Chklovski, 1976, p. 55).

Hence the last lyrical aspect that we would like to highlight: the affront. Isolated images, sequences and pictures are intended to have a visual impact: "more often than any other genre, the lyric depends, in its main effect, on the surprising image or potion, a fact that often gives rise to the illusion that such use of images is radically new or unconventional" (Frye, 1973, p. 277).

What can be inferred

The distinction between graffiti and *pichação* is unproductive to characterize the visual poetic modeling in São Paulo, for us structured in correlation. Returning to the proposed triadic classification, we maintain that in isolated images the notion of identifiable

unity models the poetic; in the sequences, the summative linearity, horizontal and Cartesian, predominates, even if bidirectional; in the pictures, the chaotic organization promotes ambiguities, relational weave.

These images inspire "at the same time climate and language" (Staiger, 1972, p. 28). They inspire because, as we hope to have demonstrated, the exuberant emotionality sets the tone. And the impregnation in absolutely everywhere in the capital of São Paulo creates a "climate", or, in theoretical language, lyrical realities, models of sensitivity of extreme semantics.

To deny that styles converge in these visual texts means to contradict the empirical reality. The divisive point of view disregards the indisputable roots of the Brazilian hybrid cultural constitution, much to the taste of the authoritarian sectarianism that prevails in the country - no wonder, João Dória, former mayor of São Paulo, current governor and likely candidate for president, waged a war to the *pichação* artists in the capital in 2017, while extolling graffiti artists, or "muralists", as he preferred to distinguish.

Translation: Audrey Frischknecht

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