

Time for dreaming

Ricardo Sardenberg

When I woke up from a deep sleep this morning, I had had a mundane dream of which I remember little. I do recall that some incidents from the day before appeared recurrently like balance points, guides between sleeping and awaking. Smell gradually pervaded the ambience of my dream and my body, which ages prodigiously, stretched out on the bed gained weight, tiredness, slightly awake but also slightly wanting to get back to sleep. I'm not sure if I wanted to continue dreaming, since little by little my awareness heightened and I became split between controlling my imagination or going back to deep sleep. With eyes closed, listening to the animals in the garden, the children downstairs, a wooden creak or a door closing, everything resembled the soundtrack of the reality. When it dawned on me I was already up.

*Waking and sleeping, time that passes inexorably, the sensuality of bodies in bed, the reality onto which we must distribute our attentions; in this limbo before waking up, the words *Cama para sonhar* perhaps came to me in a dream, perhaps consciously. They came from a very distant place, but instead of guiding me to the unconscious I so longed for, these words brought me back to myself. They seemed like a proposal. The first image of this book. *Cama para sonhar* is a photograph, a poetic proposition, since every bed is made for sleeping and thus for dreaming but this one is "the" bed for dreaming. It's a warning, a reminder that when we lie down in a bed and close our eyes we leave reality. The idea that with eyes closed we can see beyond, and nonetheless it's another world very much like ours. The opposite is also true, when we open our eyes widely to mundane existence, everyday snippets, reality becomes dreamlike, and it is transformed into a dream close to deep sleep.*

Thus it is that we stand in front of a photograph that alludes to the two sides of the work of artist, filmmaker and writer, Cao Guimarães. At first his work seems to be intuitive and emotional as opposed to systematic. Yet, his production process, whether individual or in affective collaboration with close friends, sets up a system which allows for formal and conceptual rigour within his still craft-like approach. The works do not only speak of the mundane but are also conceived in a mundane manner.

Childhood has a significant thematic and normative pertinence in the work. One can trace a "childish" rigour in the use of improvisation as a way of finding poetry in things, demystifying concepts and opening, from a formal point of view, "kitchen" solutions: a kitchen cinema, as the artist defines it. Something close to the tradition of great modernist painters who sought to unlearn painting in order to paint with a child's hand. The making and thinking of our childhood is in the origin of our dreams, our unconscious and our desires. An immensely powerful means of production in the last century with the Surrealists and many others who were influenced by them.

*However, there are no heroisms, no pretensions or great discoveries. We are not talking about an artist who is larger than life or who tries to transcend it. It suffices to point the camera outside the bedroom window and start shooting *Da janela do meu quarto*, or to find the affinity between objects and click the shutter *Paquerinhas*, or to propose a kidnapping to friends and then click, film and write *Histórias do não ver*. More than just finding what to record, it is also important to find what to conceal, erase, ultimately, what to edit due to an excess of possibilities.*

The Gambiarras, a photographic series that stands out in the artist's oeuvre, inherently possesses that quality of arbitrary and secretive poetry [a poetic quality which also permeates most of his films]. Found by chance, or not, they simulate sculptures which have as their backdrop a pragmatic function. Primarily they are objects which have an a priori practical utility for their creators, such as ashtrays, barriers, eyewear bands, meat dryers, etc., etc... But with the artist's action of recording them, these same objects take on a fine irony vis-à-vis artistic traditions, especially in relation to design. They therefore comment on the observation and reproduction of reality – quite an ambitious feat for the artist once such a gesture will bring with it literary meanings, not only with regard to traditions but also in terms of the inner memory of his project; it also bestows his work with moral qualities. Which such qualities? I think that a certain appreciation for the simplification of memory; a certain denial of intellectualisation and, above all, for the stimulus of the senses. This is certainly a risky interpretation from my part.

*Senses serve to shake into doubt the subject's relationship with the world. *Histórias do não ver* space is subtracted through a proposition made by the artist himself, in which he denies his vision during the kidnapping. Sight is then suggested as a possible reminiscence by means of writing, and principally with the aid of crafty images, as if they had been taken by a camera hidden inside his coat. In *Rua de mão dupla*, space is fragmented by time, where two actions occur simultaneously as if they were two bodies occupying the same place – place, in this case, being time. It still occurs to me that *Rua de mão dupla* is a thesis about blindness, and in this aspect of the subtraction of vision it dialogues with *Histórias do não ver*. In *Andarilho*, space seems larger than time, which in itself is a paradox since the former is but a part of the latter. Where there is sound design in his films, sound appears to have, metaphorically, the role of space, in the broad sense of the word, that is, not the space of the image, but that of memory, which is what is worth saying of time.*

Cao Guimarães positions his work in the search for a formal conception of reality. Sleeping, dreaming, waking. It is worth remembering that when we dream we also see with our eyes shut. His style impregnates not only his way of filmmaking – with long tracking shots, his photography of the mundane and of chance, but also his propositions – of covering eyes, describing absence, a style which uses time at its side to get closer to the senses through blindness.

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