Daniel Maurício Santos de Jesus

ARCHITECTURE AS AN EXTENSION OF THE DOMAIN OF STRUGGLE
An Idea of Europe revisited in view of three successive concepts: Technocracy, Thanatopolitics, and Thanatopraxia.

Architecture as an Expression of Violence; Ideology; Class Struggle; Resistance

/Abstract

A few years after the original edition of Michel Houellebecq's book *Extension of the Domain of Struggle*, in the aftermath of the civil war and the subsequent balkanization of Yugoslavia, Lebbeus Woods subtitles a dystopian proposal for the "reconstruction" of the ruined city with the statement: "Architecture and war are not incompatible. Architecture is war. War is architecture."

The destruction and violence apparent in his *forensic interpretation* of Sarajevo (cf. Eyal Weizman; *Forensic Architecture Agency*), places Woods's competition proposal in the fight against an authority made explicit through materialized forms. By understanding the conception and production of the architectural device as an activity for transforming the habitable material support; and by recognizing how it thrives within the inescapable framework of the relations of production in the neoliberal capitalist system.

Instrumental for the confiscation and accumulation of private property – constructing, deconstructing or reconstructing – space production becomes an indispensable resource in perpetuating asymmetrical power relations that elementary political awareness distinguishes as socially and environmentally ruinous.

Hence, a hypothesis arises: the more conceptual autonomy is claimed for architectural project, the more defended is the circumscription of its practice in its own disciplinary fiefdom – under a technical and methodological determinant – the more it becomes vulnerable to plutocratic confiscation of financial, material, and technological resources in each era.

Discarding the presumed ideological neutrality in favor of a concrete mediation, using documentary and fictional films, and then some literary writings that inscribe architecture from the outside in, we begin to extract ideological, political, economic and social meaning from "a collision between the characters and the physical support that shelters them". All intertwined, as a renewed compound for summoning collective resistance.

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Since 1999 at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Lisbon, teaches in the department of Architectural Project and develops research in the context of the CIAUD - Center for Research in Architecture, Urbanism and Design, which intersects with the coordination of SUSTENTA - Laboratory for Sustainable Project (https://sustenta-fa.wixsite.com/sustenta-pt). Regularly participates as a lecturer and co-organizer in seminars and international meetings, has articles in journals and book chapters published, as an extension of his work in teaching and research.
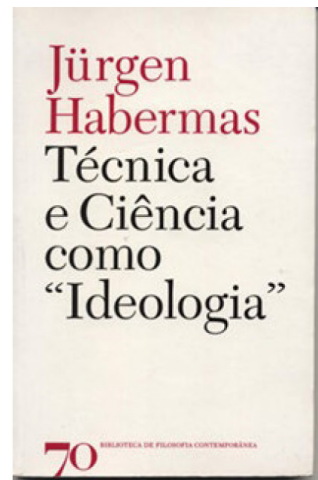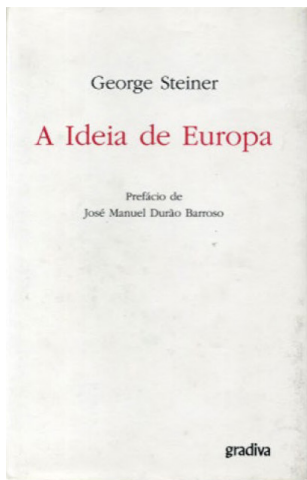
Preliminaries

I've never read Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Worse still, I've never read Liev Tolstoy. Dostoyevsky was my favorite of the 19th century Russians, and later I came across Gogol and Turgueniev: the latter was important because he coined the original meaning of the word nihilism, instrumental to survival in a world devoid of meaning (Le magazine littéraire, 2006). But before the hostilities begin, it's worth pointing out how difficult it is to read all the classics in a post-historical context (satire), with our attention held hostage by *here and now* headlines. However, "when we think about European history in the first half of the 20th century, we know that we can interpret it with the help of a dozen great modernist writers: Joyce, Kafka, T.S.Elliot, Beckett, Pound, Pessoa, Céline, Proust, Woolf, Mann, Musil, Ibsen, Pirandello, Genet, D.H.Lawrence, Hemingway... and Orwell (...), and Camus, all these writers who will have shaped the «Western canon» (Harold Bloom) and without whom there will be no way of understanding and explaining modernity.[1]"

Under this esteemed literary lineage, I reflected on an imaginary as synonymous with *a certain European paradigm*, indistinguishable from the very *emancipatory idea of modernity*. In fact, a European re-foundation took place in the 18th century in the light of the French and Industrial Revolutions: the first corresponding to the emergence of an assumed popular power to dismantle social stratification based on the ingredients of liberty, equality, and fraternity; the second was based on an agenda of technological and scientific growth that also defined it.

The institution of the secular modern university was established accordingly in the 18th century: under the umbrella of Reason and with the development of science as instrumental, inspired by the brothers Alexander and Wilhelm von

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1   "(...) quando pensamos na História da Europa na primeira metade do século XX, sabemos que podemos interpretá-la com a ajuda de uma dúzia de grandes escritores modernistas: Joyce, Kafka, T.S.Elliot, Beckett, Pound, Pessoa, Céline, Proust, Woolf, Mann, Musil, Ibsen, Pirandello, Genet, D.H.Lawrence, Hemingway... e Orwell (...), e Camus, todos esses escritores que terão modelado o 'Cânone Ocidental' (Harold Bloom) e sem os quais não haverá forma de compreender e explicar a modernidade." Clara Alves Ferreira, "A Morte da Cultura Literária", *Revista Expresso* (2013). Our translation.

Fig.1

The Idea of Europe (George Steiner, 2004, Portuguese edition); photograph by the author; *Technology and Science as "Ideology"* (Jurgën Habermas, 1968, Portuguese edition).

Humboldt, who understood emancipation and the constitution of the subject's character - *bildung - good in itself*.[2]

Despite previous meritorious affiliations, such as *liberty, equality,* and *fraternity*, the constituent factors of the conceptual triad, which germinated in the French Revolution and are believed to be the foundation of George Steiner's (2005) *Idea of Europe* [Fig.1], are in conflict with each other. Their borders and reciprocal influence require ongoing political negotiation, as these principles clash with the material practices of each unequal ideology and regime, which are based on a theory of borders and a theory of property (Piketty, 2020). As it happens, the possibility of conceptually organizing and reconfiguring these boundaries ends up colliding with the specialized technical forces of the capitalist economy, whose powers are growing at the same time and show up as *efforts of separation*.

Curiously, according to the founding mythology, we find Europa (in Greek: *Εὐρώπη*), daughter of Agenor, the king of Phenicia, sister of Cadmus, kidnapped by Zeus [Fig.2], who disguises himself as a bull so that his jealous wife, Hera, doesn't realize his purpose.[3] Is it a fair assessment to find that Europe's egalitarian and anti-clerical humanistic matrix still captive to mythological cupidity, based on the fact that a political system based on the predominance of technology prevails as a guideline for determining social and economic processes? Where present Zeus takes shape as a Technocracy, once again constraining candid Europe?

Regarding this state of affairs, Michel Houellebecq (1994) distinguishes an apparent and inescapable "technocratic domination" in a fiction which equates economic liberalism with an *Extension of the Domain of Struggle*, and whose extension stretches to all ages of life and all classes of society. And what kind of struggle is this, or, in other words, what domain is it referring to? No different from

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2   Bill Readings, *A Universidade em Ruínas.* (Joana Frazão, Trad.). Coimbra: Editora Angelus Novus, 2003. For recollection, that was before higher education became metrics-obsessed, featuring "commercialization, mental illness and self-harm, the rise of managerialism, students as consumers and evaluators, and the competitive individualism", all of which casting "a dark sheen of alienation over departments" (Peter Fleming, *How Universities Die* (London: Pluto Press, 2021).
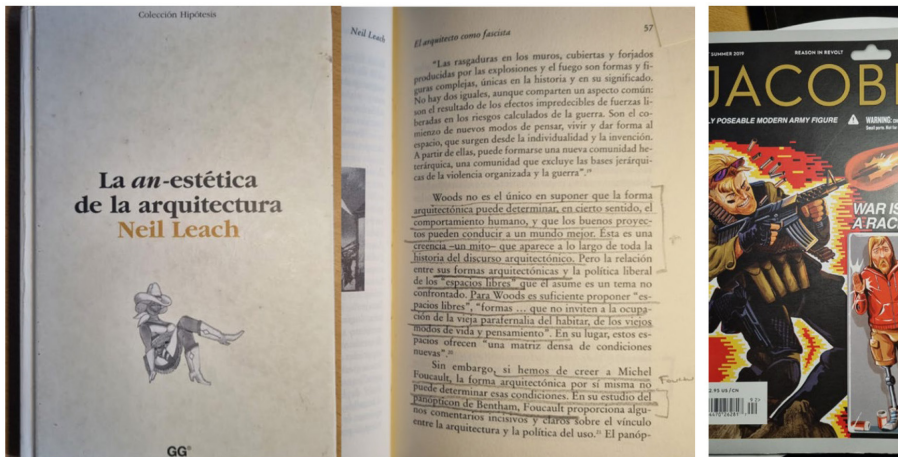
3   He took Europa to the island of Crete, which led Cadmus to look for her and, on the journey, to found the city of Thebes. Some things eventually come to good.

Fig.2

The Rape of Europa (Peter Paul Rubens, 1628-1629, Prado Museum; Madrid); *Charging Bull* (Arturo di Modica, 1989, bronze sculpture in Bowling Green, Manhattan's financial district).

what it has been, a historical, life-or-death fight for territory and its resources is ideologically unfolding, depending on the position of power held, in the age-old class struggle (Steven, 2023). Such a proposition is supported by a "Marxist who hasn't read Marx in his entirety", which is the interpretative predisposition that complements and clashes with the nihilism previously declared! But since Terry Eagleton (2011) asserts that Marx was right, I will adopt some of his critical tools [Fig.3]. In fairness, I've also looked at Lefebvre, Harvey, Marcuse, Habermas, among others, who don't seem to disagree on the essentials.

The Struggle, properly written

A few years after the original edition of Michel Houellebecq's book, in the aftermath of the civil war and the subsequent balkanization of Yugoslavia, Lebbeus Woods (1993) accompanies a dystopian proposal for the "reconstruction" of the ruined city with the following statement: "Architecture

Fig.3

Le nihilism, la tentation du néant: cover photograph of *Magazine Littéraire* (Hors-Série, Octobre-Novembre 2006); cover photograph of *A Extensão do Domínio da Luta*, Michel Houellebecq (1994); cover photograph of Why Marx Was Right, Terry Eagleton (2011).

Fig.4

Cover and underlined text from chapter "El arquitecto como fascista", in *La an-estética de la arquitectura*, Neil Leach (2001); cover photograph from *Jacobin* (nº34, Summer 2019) entitled "War Is a Racket".
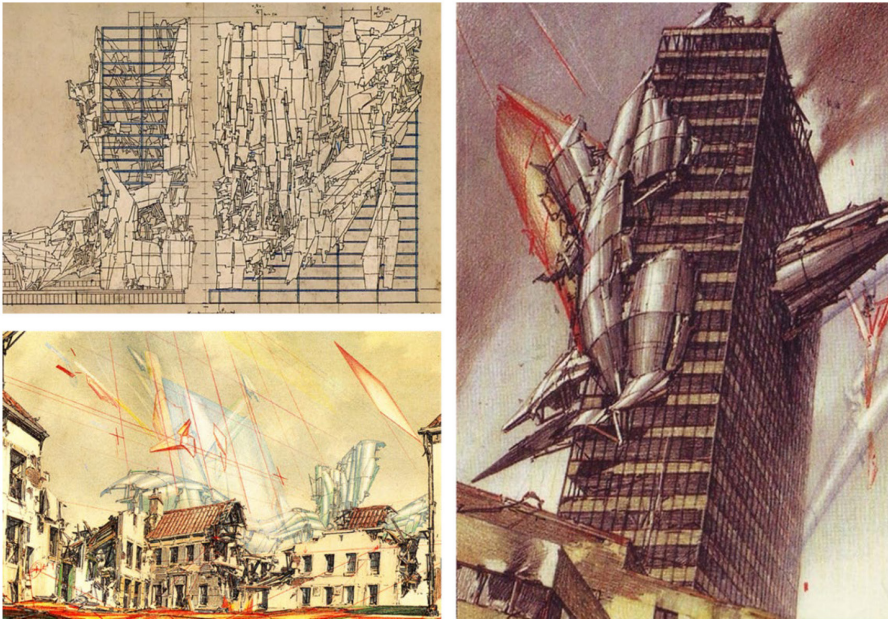
and war are not incompatible. Architecture is war. War is architecture. I am at war with my time, with history, with all authority that resides in fixed and frightened forms."

Neil Leach (1991) didn't give Woods' proposal enough scope cataloguing it in *The Anaesthetics of Architecture* as a mere exercise in the aestheticization of violence and including it in a chapter of his work that he subtitled [Fig.4] "the architect as fascist". This is, I wonder, a dry conclusion that is usually credited to typologies afflicted with *The Fountainhead*'s "indomitable will" (Vidor, 1949). In other words, the by-products of incensed visionaries capable of distinguishing clarity in dark times, which I don't think is the case… In view of the destruction and violence apparent in (his) *forensic interpretation*[4] of Sarajevo, Lebbeus Woods explains the competition proposal by placing it in the fight against the authority made explicit through materialized forms. [Fig. 5] In other words, understanding the conception and production of the architectural device as an activity that mediates the transformation of the habitable material support. And recognizing how it thrives within the inescapable framework of the relations of production in the neoliberal capitalist system.

Hostage to the material purpose of building, instrumental for the confiscation and accumulation of private property, deconstructing or reconstructing, space production becomes an indispensable resource in perpetuating asymmetrical power relations – of a kind that an elementary political awareness distinguishes as socially and environmentally ruinous.

Hence, a hypothesis arises from this alignment of propositions: the more conceptual autonomy is claimed for the architectural project, the more the circumscription of its practice in its own disciplinary fiefdom is defended – under

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4   The term forensic analysis refers to the work of Eyal Weizman's, founder of the *Forensic Architecture Agency*, which uses material transformations in architecture as material evidence for further judicial investigation and to bring actions in favor of human rights.

Fig.5
Compilation of drawings from Lebbeus Woods (retrieved online from his competition entry for the reconstruction of Sarajevo, 1993–1996).

a technical and methodological determinant – the more it becomes vulnerable to plutocratic confiscation of financial, material, and technological resources in each era. It is in these terms that we can deduce, by extension, that architecture is an extension of the domain of struggle.

Discarding the supposed ideological neutrality in favor of a concrete mediation, the narrative now points towards extreme forms of material struggle: not having followed the adventures of Napoleon's Russian campaign to the east through Tolstoy's writing, I learned early on as a child - through avid reading of Pierre Dupuis (1977) collection of comics focusing on the key events of the Second World War **[Fig.6]** - that "General Winter" does not condescend to reckless campaigns. Hitler's expansionist aspirations, in the footsteps of Napoleon, would also end up collapsing in the face of the impossible stretching of the supply lines. The steppe was infinite, and the advance would end up yielding to the severity of the winter: fuel and lubrication froze in the panzer pipes, delaying the triumphant mechanical progress of the Blitzkrieg until its definitive liquidation in the spring thaw mud.

A "technological refinement" of the First one, the Second World War would be the logical but expressive corollary for the use of the most advanced instruments in the service of the worst of purposes, the organization of technical thought as a killing industry: Rotterdam, London, Dresden, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, appear at the head of a long list.

In *Empire of the Sun* (Spielberg, 1987), Jim Graham [Ballard], son of a wealthy English businessman based in Shanghai, is lost from his family in the turmoil generated by the exodus that precedes the Japanese invasion of China in 1937,

Fig.6
As Grandes Batalhas (Pierre Dupuis, drawings and text, 1977-1979): books from Portuguese ed. Livraria Bertrand. Original title: *La Seconde Guerre Mondiale* (France) Éditions Hachette, Abril de 1974.

in the prolegomena to what would become the Second World War [Fig.7]. Captive in a Japanese concentration camp where he survives until the end of the war, weakened by scarcity and successive ill-treatment, we see him euphorically celebrating the attack by American fighter-bombers on the concentration camp: "P-51! Cadillac of the sky!"– shouts Jim euphorically, indifferent to the bombs and destruction going off all around him.

Like Ballard in his childhood, but thirty years of peace later, I developed an unbridled curiosity for the aircraft that competed for dominance in the skies in the 1940s, in successive combat scenarios: the evolutions and declinations of the Hurricane, Spitfire, Messerschmitt, Focke-Wulf, Typhoon, Corsair, Mitsubishi (Zero), Sturmovic, and the P-51 Mustang, "celebrated as the Cadillac of the skies", the fastest single-engine propeller-driven fighter of the war. But unlike Jim, without experiencing the traumas of loss or survival in captivity implied by the war.

Extraordinary is later discovering the protagonist of Spielberg's film inspired by the true story of a future science fiction writer, none other than James Graham Ballard, author of novels such as *Crash*, *The Atrocity Exhibition*, *Concrete Island*, or *High-Rise*, among many others. The repeated ability to (de)construct a mythology of the future through literary and fictional means would lead to the adjective *Ballardian* becoming synonymous with a dystopian and apocalyptic modernity, where modern architecture and urbanism would find their share of the limelight—once again, distinguishable as an (extension of the) extension of the domain of struggle. As in some film examples from the 1960s, he uses the modern urban landscape as a spatial support to develop dark dramaturgies in the science fiction genre: such as Godard's (1965) *Alphaville* or Truffaut's (1968) *Fahrenheit 451*. J.G. Ballard also pays special attention to the materialization of architecture and urbanism as a disciplining device that conditions human experience [Fig.8].

The 1975 novel *High-Rise* (Ballard, 2012) stands out as a satirical missive of appreciation aimed to modern planners and architects, and their complicity in paving a social freeway towards Neoliberalism (Spencer, 2016). But it seems

Fig.7
Movie poster of Empire of the Sun (Steven Spielberg, 1987); collection of his own WWII aircraft models, photographed by the author.
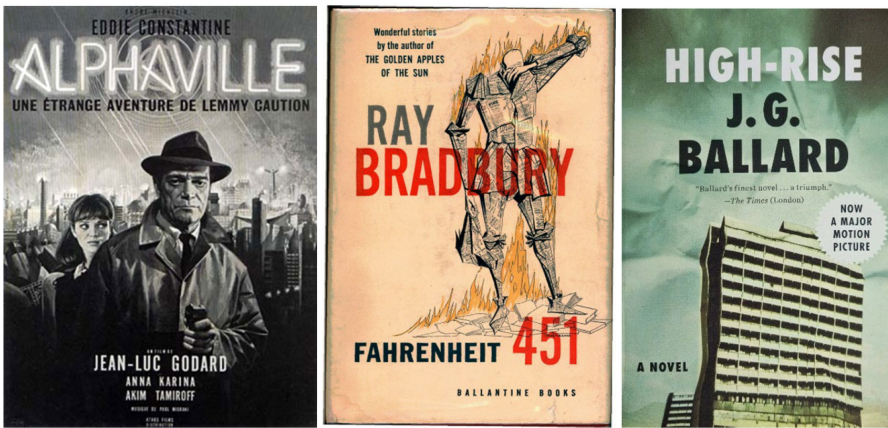
foremost to be addressed to Mr. Le Corbusier and his revered seminal ingenuity designing the *Unité d'Habitation* (Curtis, 1996), as one of the chapters is even entitled "Danger in the Streets of the Sky". The narrative explores a progressive aggravation of potential human conflict in the skyscraper, as residents realize that the modern device has little socially emancipatory value. Contrary to the political premise of the Modern Movement in architecture (Montaner, 2011), "the old social subdivisions, based on power, capital and self-interest, had reasserted themselves here as anywhere else." [5]

> All the evidence accumulated over several decades cast a critical light on the high-rise as a viable social structure, but cost-efectiveness in the area of public housing and high profitability in the private sector kept pushing these vertical townships into the sky against the real needs of their occupants.[6]

Henri Lefebvre (1991) or David Harvey (2010), as social scientists, couldn't have written it more clearly.

But let's relapse to WWII as a laboratory for the gestation and perfecting of *Technology and Science as 'Ideology'*, borrowing from Habermas's essay (1968): the competition between belligerents in the development of technical devices, in order to gain an advantage in the theater of operations, became self-sufficient in those years, overriding any ethical or philosophical consideration in terms of

Fig.8
Movie poster of *Alphaville* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1965); 1st edition book cover of *Fahrenheit 451* (Ray Bradbury, 1953); book cover of *High-Rise* (J.G.Ballard, 1975, depicted edition: 2012)

Fig.9
Portuguese edition (DVD) of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959) came with the extra disc of the documentary film *Nuit et Bruillard* (1955).

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5   James Graham Ballard, *High-Rise* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2012), 66.

6   Ballard, *High-Rise*, 65, 66.

their serviceability. The dropping of the hydrogen and plutonium bombs on two inhabited cities epitomizes this assumption: the disregard of potential military objectives in favor of a terrorist demonstration of power against imagined opponents within the framework of international geopolitics. Thus, scientific and technological knowledge at the service of destruction is demonstrated in Hiroshima and reiterated in Nagasaki with radical indifference to the lives of civilians, present and future: The typology of atomic destruction includes, as a deferred effect over time, the release of radiation to corrode the organic matter that has been exposed to it.

To top off a previous documentary curiosity about the nuclear episode, a subsequent cinematic attraction would lead me to *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, by Alain Resnais (1959), based on the eponymous novel by Margueritte Duras, to meet two other characters whose redemption from the war trauma is perceived to be compromised in the post-apocalyptic scenario: the material annihilation of architecture does nothing but reinforce the inevitability of their errancy. Coincidentally, during a time when access to cult films relied on their physical media (a so-called DVD), I discovered an extra in the edition of *Nuit et Brouillard*, a 1955 documentary by the same filmmaker Resnais, shot ten years after the end of World War II from the then-abandoned infrastructure of the Auschwitz extermination camp [Fig. 9].
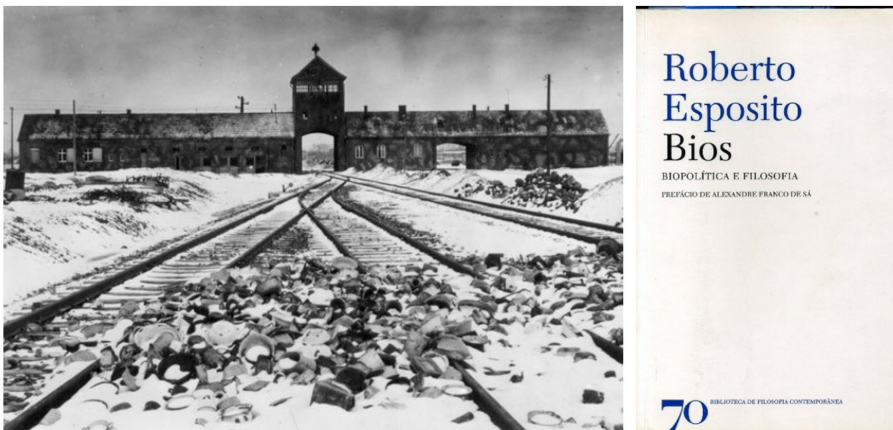

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Auschwitz, as we know, is the symbolic reminder of an industry of death that branches out into other subsidiaries, such as Dachau, Treblinka, Buchenwald, Bergen Belsen, etc., and as such, could not fail to be included in the list of technological atrocities perfected during WWII. Nevertheless, this ultimate agency deserves its own designation, distinguishable from mere technocracy since the organization of its precepts has the laconic aim of genocide. Indeed, the Holocaust represents a manifestation of Thanatopolitics, a political ideology that posits the defense and development of life solely through the progressive expansion of the circle of death [Fig. 10].

According to Esposito (2010), Michel Foucault was the first to offer a biopolitical interpretation of Nazism as a decline in governmentality. He chose the Holocaust project as the starting point, assuming that politics establishes

Fig.10

Railway entrance to Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp, run by Nazi Germany in Poland from 1940 to 1945. Foto (1945): Wikimedia Commons (German Federal Archive); Book cover of Portuguese edition of *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Roberto Esposito, 2004).
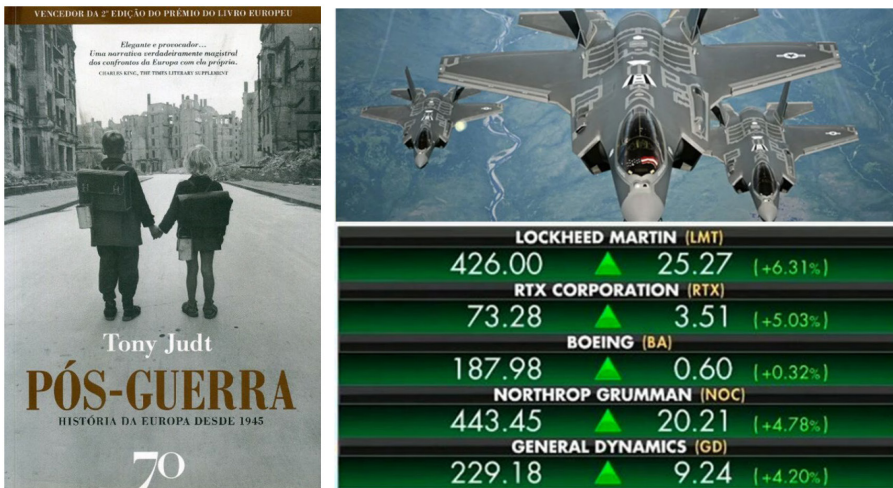
the division within the biological continuum between those who must survive and those who, on the other hand, face death (Foucault, 2010). In *Nuit et Bruillard*, panoramas of the abandoned field, already invaded by the surrounding vegetation, can be distinguished almost poetically as ruins. Once devoid and alienated from its former use value, the contrast with the awareness of its previous occupation is striking. And yet, a sequence unraveling the architecture supporting the genocide includes images of its projects: the devices built in the camp—dorms, watchtowers, crematoria—are depicted without any emotion (by Michel Bouquet):

> A concentration camp is built like a stadium, or a large hotel (…) There is no defined style, it's left to imagination: Alpine style, workshop style, Japanese style, no style. The architects calmly designed these portals to be crossed only once (…) Leaving the production aspects to his technicians, Himmler concentrated on annihilation. Plans were studied, models made, and the prisoners themselves took part in the work. From the outside, a crematorium might look like a postcard. Later, today, tourists take pictures.[7]

An exemplary manifestation of architecture as (extension of the) extension of the domain of struggle, the "Lager" (Field) reifies the association of a Technocracy with a Thanatopolitics, as a compound whose effect would come to be firmly repudiated in Europe and the so-called "West": "Never Again!" becoming a catch phrase to distinguish the unspeakable. However, a specific process of expiation - materialized in the staging of guilt and punishment promoted by the "allies" at Nuremberg, which can be reviewed, among others, in *The Memory of Justice* (Marcel Ophuls, 1976) - would not inhibit many Nazi leaders and facilitators

Fig.11

Portuguese cover of *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (Tony Judt, 2006); Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II fighter-jets, Cadillac of the skyes renewed; percentage increase in shares of companies in the American military industrial complex, immediately after the start of the so-called (by the Western media) "Israel-Hamas War". A coefficient that hasn't stopped rising since the beginning of the "unprovoked" (still, according to Western media) Russian Special Military Operation in Ukraine.

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7   Michel Bouquet narration from *Nuit et Brouillard*: "Un camp de concentration est construit comme un stade, ou un grand hôtel (…) Il n'y a pas de style défini, tout est laissé à l'imagination: Style alpin, style atelier, style japonais, pas de style. Les architectes ont calmement conçu ces portails pour qu'ils ne soient franchis qu'une seule fois (…) Laissant les aspects de production à ses techniciens, Himmler se concentre sur l'anéantissement. Des plans sont étudiés, des maquettes réalisées, les prisonniers eux-mêmes participent aux travaux. De l'extérieur, un crématorium peut ressembler à une carte postale. Plus tard, aujourd'hui, les touristes prennent des photos." Our translation.

from later integrating post-war rebuilt institutions of governance, on a national, but also on an international scale (Judt, 2007).

Fast forward to architecture teaching, present day: seeking guidance for an academic project, a student sensitized by recent humanitarian catastrophes – effect of wars that proliferate, "oddly enough", eighty years after the end of the Second World War – set out to create a "war-proof" housing shelter, a building that could resist destructive forces summoned from the opposite direction.

It may have been nihilistic decline, but I refused to support the attempt; and then explained the refusal based on two instrumental invariants to be considered in architectural practice, according to a question of purpose and a problem of scale.

If one can read this essay as a libel against technocratic proficiency, listing cases in which instrumental production disconnected from exegesis becomes an attack on human life (or any dignified condition of survival), how could its author consider a purpose that opposes it—the imagination of a defensive device—ethically reprehensible? Well, (apart from the fact that it's not really a novelty, recalling the Maginot Line, the Fortress of the Atlantic, the submersible base at La Rochelle, just to keep framing it in WWII), is the idea of producing a bomb-proof architecture any different from perfecting the armor of an assault car? That is, a "war-proof architecture" would be added to the arsenal of devices that promote war itself, as an additional typology of history of technical provisions that underline and feed on its inevitability.

A consideration about Scale should be also added to the subject of Purpose, given the asymmetry of power between the parties convened for such academic simulacrum: an idle Google search distinguishes an industry dedicated to "Defense" with sales of arms and military services of the 100 largest companies in the sector in the order of 592 billion dollars in 2021. More billion, less billion [Fig.11]. The unit cost of a cruise missile is around 2 million dollars and the successors to Jim Ballard's "Cadillac of the Skies" (F-35) can now cost up to 115 million dollars a unit, plus the petty change needed to keep them flying.

The military program based on the aircraft's development, construction and maintenance will have cost around 400 billion dollars. By comparison, one and a half billion dollars would have been "enough" to design the most expensive skyscraper built to date - the Burj-Khalifa in Dubai - in which case the imagination of skilled architects, engineers and a myriad of other technicians would not have looked at the cost to divert such an achievement from a Ballardian fate. In other words, a billion and a half dollars later, at an architectural scale, one can only hope for the best. But at "military industrial complex scale", however, one and a half billion presents itself as a ridiculous commitment (266 times less) compared to a 400 billion project in favor of deconstruction…, or as it is diplomatic to present the nature of these expenses, in favor of defense: if *war is a racket* (2019), it's a very good one.

Provisional corollary: the student in question disregarded an "asymmetry of

power as a possibility", as fictionally proposed by the writer Gonçalo M. Tavares (2010), in a book that depicts a researcher called Theodor Busbeck, publishing the investigation that has occupied him for many decades:

> (...) the first four volumes were made up of an impressive accumulation of figures and factual information about the victims of massacres throughout history (the definition of which appeared in the very first volume (...) 'I was not interested in the confrontation of two forces, however unequal they were, I was only interested in Strength when confronted with weakness; Busbeck defined Strength as 'matter with energy to endanger other matter' and weakness as 'matter with empty energy', in other words: 'without the possibility of endangering nearby matter'.

> (...) these two concepts were relative to neighboring matter: a strong matter was strong in relation to the matter located immediately next to it. A weak people, i.e. 'unable to endanger a particular 'invading army' should not be considered (...) 'a kind people' because the facts were not a question of goodness on one side - the victims - and evil on the other: the executioners or those who carried out the terror. It was simply a question of possibility and not of will or desire. A people that was weak in relation to another could quickly - in other words, historically speaking, in less than a century - become a strong people, either because it had become stronger in the meantime or simply because it had become closer to an even weaker people.[8]

The idea of a once weak people that becomes strong in less than a century; indifferent to its own history; which sees its advantageous position in the field of struggle as a sufficient condition to legitimize the use of violence against a weaker adversary; all set in a novel entitled (wait for it) ... *Jerusalém* [Fig.12]. A cumulative of implausible scenarios, I know, would never be tolerated in the light of righteously self-proclaimed European values.

Certainly, solid "war-proof" constructions aimed at redemption of the Past itself, the same kind of architecture by which the student seeks to legitimize his project, presenting itself to the rest of the world as a haven for conscience, are they really barbarism-proof? Cemented by endless and illustrious debates in cafés and literary gatherings, the secular and modern Europe of the sciences

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8   Gonçalo M. Tavares, *Jerusalém* (Alfragide: Editorial Caminho, 2010), 260. (...) os quatro primeiros volumes eram constituídos por uma impressionante acumulação de números e de informações factuais sobre as vítimas dos massacres ao longo da história (cuja definição surgia logo no primeiro volume (...) 'não me interessou o confronto de duas forças, por mais desiguais que fossem, interessou-me apenas a Força quando se confronta com a fraqueza; definindo Busbeck a Força como 'matéria com energia para pôr em perigo uma outra matéria' e a fraqueza como 'matéria com energia vazia', ou seja: 'sem possibilidade de colocar em perigo uma matéria próxima'.
(...) estes dois conceitos eram relativos à matéria vizinha: uma matéria forte era forte em relação à matéria situada imediatamente ao lado. Um povo fraco, isto é, 'sem possibilidades de colocar em situação de perigo um determinado 'exército invasor' não deveria ser considerado (...) 'um povo bondoso' pois os factos não se deviam a uma questão de bondade de um lado – as vítimas –e de maldade do outro: os carrascos ou os que executavam o terror. Tratava-se simplesmente de uma questão de possibilidade e não de vontade ou desejo. Um povo fraco relativamente a outro, poderia rapidamente – isto é, a nível histórico, em menos de um século – passar a: povo forte, por entretanto se ter fortalecido ou, simplesmente, por se ter aproximado de um povo ainda mais fraco. Our translation.
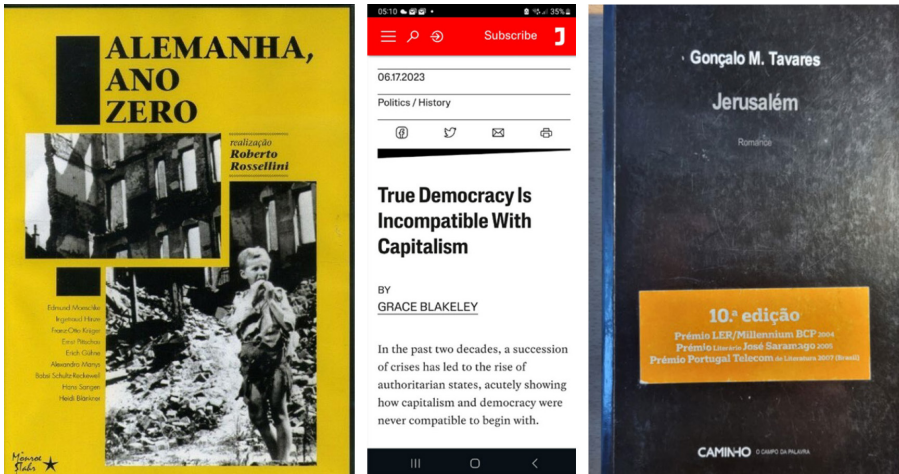
and arts, built on the esteemed heritage of classical culture (Steiner, 2005), some will agree that there is some subliminal purpose remaining in the monumental edifice of the "Western Civilization".

At its core, a sense of justice will always prevail, tempered by liberty, equality, and fraternity. After all, we turn on the televisions, and the world seems rational, with eyes and ears on behalf of selected incumbents, managers of human misery, who appeal for a balanced opinion on the latest geopolitical issues. If anything, akin to Rome's decline, we perceive the building as vulnerable to periodic attacks and demonization by predatory barbarism at its gates. For those of you gullible enough, let's leave it at that.

Nevertheless, on behalf of a lingering nihilist, please excuse me as I share one final allegory by filmmaker (and screenwriter, and artist, and...) Peter Greenaway (1989) *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, & Her Lover*. Initially perceived by film critics as a libel against the initial period of implementation of neoliberal policies (under Reagan, overseas, and Thatcher, in "old" Europe), the dramaturgy contains successive subtleties, which translates into alternative possibilities of interpretation: the barbarians at the gate - the Thief (Mr. Spica, gangster, drug dealer, it doesn't really matter) - have now accumulated enough capital to buy luxury restaurants and spend time with exquisite artists (French Chef Richard Boarst, here present), thus gaining access to the refined strongholds of high culture. In other words, literally and figuratively, they can now "buy a place at the table" [Fig.13].

This is the general plot. At first glance, it seems like a typical example of how barbarism uses its weapons—merged from capital—to upset the peace of ancient privilege (Perelman, 2000), being rude, annoying, and gross. There is nothing new to see here, hardly distinguishable among the protagonists of *The Night Watch* in the painting by Rembrandt van Rijn (1642), from the baddies dressed to have a lustful dinner at the high-end restaurant [Fig.14].

The argument gets complicated when the thief's wife claims a carnal interaction with an assiduous diner as dissert, one whose solitary tasting of food was invariably accompanied by the abstracted reading of a book. In view of this

Fig.12

Cover of Portuguese disc edition of Germania Anno Zero (Roberto Rossellini, 1948); "True Democracy Is Incompatible With Capitalism", in *Jacobin online* (Grace Blakeley, 17.06.2023). Retrieved January 19, 2024, from https://jacobin.com/2023/06/democracy-retreat-capitalism-authoritarianism-crisis; Romance cover Jerusalém (Gonçalo M.Tavares, 2005).

particularity, one might even consider seeing the plot as a complex polyamorous relationship between culture and money, supported on the "Western canon" of writers referred to by Harold Bloom (Alves, 2013). After some close calls to spice up the reckless relationship, the lovers are eventually discovered by the spiteful husband.

Determined to serve his revenge cold, Mr. Spica plans the strategic moment to set out on a vengeful night tour to his unwitting rival's whereabouts, accompanied by his praetorian guard: in the house-library, he finds books piled up on the shelves that have provided a haven of passion for his Wife, among others that are scattered unruly on the floor, convenient for the thoughtless casualness of love. And since revenge, as well as benefiting from the low temperature, also demands a dose of poetic justice, the method chosen by the murderer would involve the inflicted ingestion of the pages torn from the repository of the victim's own library. An ending that is contextual but not bad. "But could it be also a Ballardian one?" I was afraid you wouldn't ask!

Epilogue

Spica's wife mourns her lover's tragic end, and, disgruntled, decides to undertake symmetrical revenge, with the help of the talented Chef Boarst. Naturally, once she's committed to tasting it, her *vendetta* variant will be served hot. Thus, after managing to overcome the gastronomic artist's resistance and repudiation, the corpse of the unfortunate lover-cultivated-reader begins by being cooked for gustatory purposes. Then, luring the husband or thief on the pretext of a meal, where she makes him believe that he will win back his favors—which is why he presents himself unaccompanied by the usual court of collaborators—she forces him, at gunpoint, to chew up the lover. More than a deferred threesome, it's a gasp of horror and cannibalism. Elias Canetti (2014)

Fig.13

The Banquet of the Officers of the St George Civil Guard, painting by Frans Hals (1616); restaurant scene from The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover, Peter Greenaway (1989).

Fig.14

The Night Watch, painting by Rembrandt van Rijn (1642); kitchen scene from *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover,* Peter Greenaway (1989).

explains in *Mass and Power* how tribal societies ate their enemies for a variety of reasons: they were nutritious, easy to taste, but most importantly, they served a magical and ritualistic purpose, summoning the stamina of the subjected enemy through the consumption of his flesh.

The terrifying image that closes our narrative ellipsis isn't far from other exercises in autophagy that we often engage in, devouring ourselves by eating the Other: the act of cannibalism representing the very capacity to devour what constitutes us, being sufficient or convenient the stimulus to do so.

Despite the books we can write and read, the films and documentaries we can shoot and watch, and the music we can compose and listen to, the primal nature of violence continues to lurk, unrepentant. Architecture, materially produced to organize and symbolize a humanitarian matrix, also falls short of this goal under capitalism – borrowing from Tafuri (1985). And that being the case, how can a translation of Europe through an Idea – updating Steiner's (2005) attempt, based on here rehearsed interpretation of some of its political, economic, and social determinants – be any different than a technique for preserving corpses, in order to slow down a biological process of decomposition? Europe as *Thanatopraxia* revamped as a final analogy – then. Whose institutions of power and control under capitalism periodically reaffirm an undemocratic pact (Blakeley, 2023) with Thanatos, the demon who personified death in Greek mythology? Hard to precise, at least as hard to deny that the production of architecture serves them as an invariable extension and support.

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