

Politics of memory in the works of Rosângela Rennó: body, trauma and anachronism

Ana Lúcia Mandelli de Marsillac
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)
Gerusa Morgana Bloss
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)
Lucas de Oliveira Alves
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6093/2532-6732/7469>

Abstract

This article establishes a discussion in the scope of memory policies based on two works of Rosângela Rennó: *Cicatriz* and *Imemorial*. The works are analyzed through a hybrid understanding of memory, articulating concepts from Sigmund Freud and Walter Benjamin, as well as from authors that allow us to relaunch issues related to the body, trauma and anachronism, such as Hannah Arendt, Didi-Huberman, Grada Kilomba and Márcio Seligmann-Silva. Through the artist's works, we revisit and articulate the bodies and the history traumas, both marked by exclusion, forgetfulness and silence. We also emphasize the need for narratives capable of harboring their marks and elaborating new possibilities of existence. In this way, we seek to expand the reverberations of the inexorable marks of bodies and times.

Keywords: Memory policies; Body; Trauma; Anachronism.

Memory transversalities: body and culture

The hell is not the others one, little Halla. They are the paradise, because a man alone is just an animal. The humanity begins in those ones around you, and not exactly in you. Being a person implies your mother, our people, a stranger person or your expectation. (Mãe 2017, p. 24)¹

Approaching memory and body theme through a critical and transversal perspective between different knowledges allows us to move between yourself and the other one, in an attempt to draw some borders, to point out differences and highlight continuities paradoxically, repetitions and times. In this sense, we place culture and subject under analysis in a certain temporal space contingency to reflect about memory and its policies. Inspired by the works of the Brazilian artist Rosângela Rennó: *Cicatriz* (1996) and *Imemorial* (1994), we search for what is inscribed, forgotten and dreamed of in the constitution of memories and its relationship with the social bond.

Cicatriz and *Imemorial* are photographic series, image records and narratives of people who tend to be disregarded in cultural texture. The works engender a work of memory

¹ The direct quotations present in the text were translated by the authors, once that they were taken from the works in Portuguese and, after, translated by the authors to English.

and resistance to policies of segregation and erasure that unfold them historically. The first work is composed by a series of 18 photographs revealed from negatives photo roll of the Museu Penitenciário Paulista, it shows scars and tattoos inmates' images. The second work presents a photographic series of people who worked on Brasília's construction, Brazilian capital, revealing faces and stories of people who died in the construction of the city.

Rosângela Rennó was born in Belo Horizonte, in 1962, and currently lives and works in Rio de Janeiro. She has Architecture and Plastic Arts degree and PhD in Arts from Universidade de São Paulo. Since the late 1980s the artist has presented productions that mix intimate and collective issues (Rennó, 2020). According to the art critic Paulo Herkenhoff (1996), in a world in which the abundance of images imposes themselves, Rosângela Rennó is known as the photographer who does not photograph: she works with frames that would be discarded, newspaper news, archives and others elements of culture, devoting themselves to the effects of the time and forgetfulness. As of collections and montages that she makes, the artist approaches memory and fiction, her works are part of important national and international museum's collection, she got several awards for her work.

Rennó composes a movement to reopen photography possibilities with artists such as Rochelle Costi, Carlos Fadon Vicente, Joaquim Paiva, Vik Muniz and Cássio Vasconcelos. These artists "rearticulate the aforementioned Brazilian tradition of experimental photography that emerged in the 1970s" (Herkenhoff, 1996, p. 5). This experimental photograph would have given way to photojournalism, in the context of the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in 1964, constituting itself as a form of complaint (Herkenhoff, 1996). Thus, Rennó's work collaborates with the reconfiguration of the place of photography in the arts, realizing a political poetics exemplarily.

Inspired by the memorialistic task that the works foster, we aim to discuss aspects that enlance memory to cultural, social and political issues of Brazilian conjuncture, analyzing how social memory, composed of plural images and narratives that can open gaps in totalizing ideals, mobilizing and expanding stories and experiences.

In this way, we intend to think deeply about interlocutions between body, memory and work of art from the series *Cicatriz*, in analogy to the body, thinking about how the work can inscribe memories, transmit experiences and establish narratives that highlight the singularities and break up exclusion structures. As well as on the relationship between memory and anachronism in the work *Imemorial*, reflecting on dynamic maturation that mark up the historical tessitura.

We present and discuss the concept of memory through epistemological interlocutions among psychoanalysis, philosophy and art, based primarily on the theories of Walter Benjamin and Sigmund Freud. We support a perspective of non-linear memory, articulated between image and narrative. It was added up to the discussion the contributions of the author Hannah Arendt and contemporary authors such as: Georges Didi-Huberman, who approaches theories of Benjamin and Freud, establishing interlocutions between memory and visual arts; Grada Kilomba, reflecting on memory and racial markers; and Márcio Seligmann Silva, discussing the relationship between memory and trauma.

Starting from a hybrid and complex memory conception and subjectivity, we maintain a critical position towards erasing differences in the social bond and seeking to give visibility to images and narratives that tend to stay on the margins, increasing inequality and suffering. We go through relationships between the body and the work, approaching the concept of the body to psychoanalysis in conjunction to the visual arts. In this critical and memorial movement, we seek to relaunch new analysis of cultural events and objects. The works of art are also anachronistic traits of culture because they question about records, naturalizations of “seeing and feeling”, thus they enable unique and political memory experiences to historical gaps.

InscReVer²: Body and memory in the *Cicatriz* work.

However, approaching things closer to themselves, or rather, to the masses, it represents both a passionate desire for the present and its tendency to overcome the unique existence of each situation through its reproduction (Benjamin, 1931/2013, p. 228).

Benjamin in his essay: “Little History of Photography” (1931/2013) points out the difference between looking through the eyes and through the camera. Although it is consciously explored by the human being, photography also transmits an unconscious dimension that inhabits itself and as images. By fixing the movement of life, the photographic record shows unconscious details that we relate to, presenting an unknown knowledge. Photographing, reproducing and archiving would involve the desire to remain, present, but also to transmit and to recreate reality.

The photography and archives are central elements in Rosângela Rennó works, producing a consistent dialogue with the themes of memory and politics. In 1996, she created the work: *Cicatriz*. In this series the artist exhibits photograph of inmates’ scars and tattoos. The 18 photographs were revealed from camera negative rolls filed at Museu Penitenciário Paulista.

The work links issues of the body, memory, dynamics of belonging and social exclusion which reveal themselves as ethical, political and aesthetic foundations of Rosângela Rennó’s art. The body marks evidenced by the tattoos and scars convene to decode their puzzles, bounding to what was marked up on the surface of the skin. The artist rescues and contours cultural traits, allowing it the articulation of culturally neglected memories to the context. The work contributes to a critical construction of history, composed of traits, traumas and narratives plural possibilities.

² We kept this word in Portuguese because translating it into English does not include its polysemy. “InscReVer” contains the verb “ver” in its spelling. In this way it plays with the relationships between marking up, recording and looking.



Image 1 - *Cicatriz* (1996) – no title (arms with hands). © Rennó (2020a)

Bodies and narratives are inseparable. Freud believes that the limits between the corporal and the psychic are permeable and articulated by language. In order to integrate us into a story, sharing meanings and ways to recognize, it is necessary to take care and to name our body. The human being, as an animal, is ineluctably each other dependent because both, its body and its possibility of historicization, in other words, narrating and being narrated, are linked to another one that precedes it - the mother's body, which supports and feeds; the social and linguistic structures which establish ways of behaving and communicating; the ideologies that direct and naturalize ways of seeing and reading the world (Freud, 1914/1996, 1915/2010; Lacan, 1985; Žižek, 1992).

Freud demonstrates that the body and the psyche, when properly articulated, respond to marks and external impressions, establishing exchanges dynamics where the boundaries between me and the other, internal and external, are mixed up. We are marked up by touch and the words that pass through us and mark up our subjective positioning. The bodies share inscriptions and meanings, but they also affect and express themselves in a unique language, characterizing their ethical, aesthetic and political dimensions. The marks

inscribed on the body make it possible to articulate individual and group stories (Freud, 1914/1996, 1915/2010; Lacan, 1955/1985). In this context, inscriptions such as scars, tattoos and piercings can both reveal characteristics of belonging, markers of some sociability and very particular elements of the one who carries them.

According to the psychoanalyst Ana Costa: “The singularity regards to a trait that can capture the eyes of other one. And what makes it collective is the place that this look can give as an identity” (2003, p. 19). In her book: "Tattoos and Body Marks: updates of the sacred" she develops an important analysis about the theme, rescuing historical aspects linked to cultural belonging, but also as a way of stigmatizing the ones who are considered as marginalized. As human condition does not involve naturalization of desire but rather its relationship with language and culture, such as tattoos and scars, while marks that mock are definitive, in principle, they confer borders, eroticize the body and demand deciphering.

The art critic and historian Didi-Huberman (2017) in his book “Cascas”, indicates that the surface does not necessarily denote superficiality. The author says: “What does the bark tell me about the tree. What does the tree tell me about the forest” (p. 69). In this associative and expansive movement, he situates the questioning potency of each of the parts, unfolding images and narrative possibilities - from the bark to the tree, from the tree to the forest - which elements are articulated, interpenetrating and expanding themselves? “We can think that the surface is what falls from things: which comes directly from them, what separates from themselves, therefore proceeding from them and what separates from them to come crawling up to us, to our view, like tree bark scraps” (Didi-Huberman, 2017, p. 70). We consider that the skin is metaphorically close to the shell, bearing marks of time, bringing memory inscriptions from its interior and exterior.

However, the body marks contemplate greater complexity than the peels, as they are related to the symbolic field that involves the human. Thus, they become even more enigmatic as the chosen photographs by Rosângela Rennó reveal to us; her work allows a testimony of narratives marked on the surface of the bodies that continues to reposition identifications and singularities from new readings. The marks on the skin convoke meanings and seek recognition from another one eyes. *Cicatriz* title of Rosângela Rennó work, incites us to this searching.

According to the Portuguese language dictionary, Michaelis (2020), scar refers to:

MEDICINE mark, sign or trace left by lesions or wounds due to the formation of fibrous tissue that replaces normal compromised tissues. 2. BOTANICS Signal left in certain organs due to the formation of new tissue, by the fall or cut of plant parts; eschar. 3. FIGURED Sign or trace of damage or destruction (war, natural disasters). 4.FIGURED Impression or undying feeling left by an offense, disgrace, a shock (moral, spiritual, psychological).

The author Grada Kilomba (2019) emphasizes that the term trauma has its origins on the same Greek word that refers to wound or injury. It concerns to “any damage in which the skin is broken as a result of external violence” (p. 213 - 214). Scars, in this sense, can be characterized as marks of trauma. Like tattoos, they are permanent inscriptions on the surface of a body, capable of telling a story, showing psychic impressions and wounds.

As well developed by Benjamin about modernity and its reproduction techniques (1933 / 1987a; 1982/2007), we live in a world bombarded with information, images and events, making hard to express our ability to elaborate, tending to diminish our experiences and narratives. Benjamin talks about a shock caused by the modern world, something that we can associate with trauma, psychic / bodily wound; an excess which makes it difficult to outline, to insert in a word and affection circuit. In this sense, the tattoo presents itself as a way to approaches, represents and reframes the traumatic, a way to stop the unrestrained and violent flow of stimuli that cannot integrate with the experiences, making it possible to tell a story. The scar, in an even more incisively way, shows the excess that falls down on the body because unlike the tattoo, it is not, as a rule, intentionally produced by the subject who opens up the door, but by an act of violence, accident or self-harm. The tattoo is inscribed itself in a path between the shock and the representation. The scar, in its turn, pure shock, a mark that may or may not be represented. “What is not expected is not registered, it is excessive” (Costa, 2003, p. 91).

The photographic record rescued makes the images of tattoos last beyond the time of the subject's pulsating body, allowing their permanence in culture to surpass the life of their creators/ authors. *Cicatriz*, in this sense, makes it possible to witness, in the present moment, stories that may never have been revisited. The relationship of corporeity expressed in the works convokes to the position taken by those who intend to observe it. According to Didi-Huberman (2006), the work of art can be thought as a body, with inputs, outputs, ways to convoke the gaze and to offer itself to the emptiness. While materiality, it endures and inscribes itself in different contexts, extrapolating the intention of the artist and the observer. The work shows and hides, it punctures and opens in a dynamic that allows an approaching to the body dynamics.

“This is how every work of art is an emptiness’ dressing” (Passeron, 2001, p.11); with this thought-provoking phrase the artist and poet: Renné Passeron, invites us to think about works of art in their articulation with the human condition. In face to the meaninglessness of life and violence, the work body comes to care for and to mark our open wounds, memorizing the excesses that cry out for multiple and shared meanings.

Singular, vivid, marked up and revisited bodies build up another body, the body of the work which is related to ours, based on the view, reflections and a repositioning of the enigmas that convoke the images: “In the images of Rosângela Rennó, the intimacy issues of others are intertwined with political and social issues. They are “open shapes” capable of blowing up the boundaries between the private and the public, fiction and the document” (Câmara, 2013, p. 32).

There is a very explicit political dimension in the work: *Cicatriz*, especially if we think about the conditions of visibility and invisibility in our society of the subjects and specifically of the prisoners who are subjected to penalties. According to the Human Rights and Minorities Commission, most of Brazilian population in jail is predominantly black (61.7% declare themselves black or brown) and poor (75% of prisoners have just completed primary education - one of the indicators of low income) (Calvi, 2018). Bringing up images of these bodies is a way to allow the inscriptions realized to cause some kind of rupture in the exclusion to which they are doubly subjected: in prison, when we do not see them; in speeches, by not questioning exclusion. It is necessary to “wake

up” the images and to produce narratives that link them to the story since: “As much they sleep more these photos are active as amnesia agents” (Herkenhoff, 1996, p. 29).

When we refer to a historically marginalized population by racism, as Kilomba (2019) points out: “it is revealed through global differences in sharing and accessing valued resources such as political representation, political actions, media, employment, education, housing, health, etc.” (p. 76), we can think about margin's subversive and creative potential: “(...) the margin should not be seen only as a peripheral space, a space of loss and deprivation, but as a space of resistance and possibility” (p. 68). The work *Cicatriz* makes the marks of the periphery visible which are centralized in the work. The artist performs a kind of “moebian twist” in which the boundary between periphery and center is no longer defined. In this way, when showing marks of bodies historically removed from the main cultural divisions, it provides us to look at images of resistance - resistance of the body to oppressions perpetrated by instances of power.

The tattoos point out a difference regarding others and also it manifests a group belonging, depending on their formats. They can be a way of making an edge, time marker - the time of imprisonment - in which the marks that remain are located in a certain period and denote a passage. At the same time that they remain inscribed on the bodies, also they circumscribe and outline an experience. As modifications in the bodies, they make it possible to make the bodies more visible, to convoke the gaze and to question the subject that expresses himself through them. Hannah Arendt analyzes:

For us, appearance – defined as what is seen and heard by others and by ourselves - constitutes reality. In comparison to the reality that results from being seen and heard, even the largest dimensions of intimate life (...) lead to a kind of uncertain and obscure existence, unless and until they are transformed, demystified and deindividualized, so they assume a suitable aspect for public appearance. The most common of these transformations occurs in storytelling and in the artistic transposition of individual studies, in general (Arendt, 1958/2014, p. 61).

The philosopher invites us to think about the action of sharing and the scope of visibility of images and narratives. In the work of Rosângela Rennó, de-privatizing is related to revealing something archived, which would be at the service of forgetting. After all, “Archiving is, paradoxically, a way of making it irrecoverable, making it invisible. When proposing a new order, Rennó's work presents itself as a confrontation and a subversion of this perverse logic” (Herkenhoff, 1996, p. 29). Starting from the dissemination of photographs and their constitution as works, the de-privatization of experiences allows the stories to be inscribed in a historical and critical narrative. Just like the peels that alter figure and background dynamics when positioned in another context, photographs allow us to focus on the marks. These unique marks concern social issues that need to be analyzed. In this way, we witness vestiges of oppression in our time as a request for the visibility of bodies erased by the system that oppresses them and denies their existence. What does this question us about the present? Which segregation practices are perpetuated in our society?

According to Hannah Arendt (2014) “The main characteristic of this specifically human life, whose appearance and disappearance constitutes mundane events is that it is full of events that in the end can be narrated as a story and to establish a biography” (p.

120). It is from this perspective that we emphasize the importance of a historical narrative that places the task of combining its traumatic aspects; it is about realizing in which points it is capable of transforming itself and enlacing biographies - linking different lives - in a common project of society.

The scar is what remains and what insists on appearing. In this context, Freud and, as complement, psychoanalysis, convokes for a practice that invites us to work with the remains, with what appears despite conscious intentionality and calls for a place. In the work: *Cicatriz* body marks are presented and they are also marks of the psyche, as well as social marks which reveal traumas and discursive possibilities. The body porosity which allows the relationship with other ones from the beginning of its constitution, it is also characteristic of the work. Thus, when we look at the works, we are also affected by them and we can reframe and produce effects from the encounter. Rosângela Rennó's works constitute themselves in a way of allowing memories which sometimes would have been discarded, gaining visibility, allowing a fruitful and reverberating articulation between the singular and the political. In this way, starting from the scars (of the subjects, of the social), we are directed to ways of looking, the ways of promoting a space of vision and listening to what we intend to inscribe and to elaborate. In contrast to the subjection of bodies, the policies of memory are policies of the subject and, therefore, policies of desire.

Starting from this perspective, we will work on the work: *Imemorial*, highlighting other aspects of memory and its enlance with culture. The criminological and labor archives presented in the works: *Imemorial* and *Cicatriz* required a great effort by Rosângela Rennó in order to gain access to public information (Herkenhoff, 1996). Expanding the discussions about her works, it allows the continuity of the ethical commitment that the artist mobilizes.

What is it possible to remember? Forgetfulness and anachronism in the work: *Imemorial*

As developed by Hannah Arendt (1958/2014), the work of art immortalizes human mortal life, enabling transcendence through the objects and speeches that they activate. In the work: *Imemorial* (1994), Rosângela Rennó presents a series composed of 50 portraits of people who worked in the construction of Brasília, the current capital of Brazil. The images were found out by the artist in the public archive of the Federal District, where the datas from employees of Novacap government company were stored. This company was responsible for building up the city. In addition to the photographs, the work also brings the story of dozens of workers and their families who died on the city's foundations, reporting episodes of negligence and violence from the company and the State. Dead workers were listed in the archives as “dismissed on grounds of death” (Rennó, 2020).



Image 2 - *Imemorial* (1994) - Installation for the exhibition “Revendo Brasília” © Rennó (2020b)

Brasília was built between the years 1957 and 1960 from an architectural and urban project named utopic, whose characteristics were the totalizing rationalization of public space aligned to modern architecture (Vasconcelos, 1992). Approaching the adjective “utopian”, we can think about the relationship of the work: *Imemorial* with the city of Brasília, regarding the distinction that Jacoby (2005) makes between totalizing utopias and iconoclastic utopias. The first category comprises projects with idealized images of the future, while the second, faithful to the etymology of the word "utopia" - non-place - professes dialectical projects in rupture with idealized images. In this perspective, *Imemorial* is opposed to the totalizing utopia of those who designed the city without, however, losing its utopian dimension. The work can destabilize the idealized history of Brasília, seeking the relegated memories to indifference, articulating themselves with the narrative. It is, therefore, an iconoclastic utopia, in which there are no ideal images, but, rather, the ideal of diversity and anachronism resignifying history.

The work raises reflections on projects and memories, ideals and their averse, inviting us to remember as a way to access new meanings and images. Freud (1914/1996, 1925/1996) believes that memory is not analogous to a file, where stored information remains unchanged. Associated with repression, it is a mechanism that makes it impossible for consciousness to access unconscious contents, the act of remembering brings up deformed mnemonic impressions. The memory is plastic and it involves a process of unconscious inscriptions that are erased, overlapped and re-inscribed in new images. Didi-Huberman (1992), in this context, analyzes that memory is not an instance that retains, but it loses and changes.

The memory linked to forgetfulness allows us to think about the inexorable inconstancy of the narrative. If we cannot accurately narrate our story, once that memory

has a fictional character, it recreates facts from the recomposition of images present in the psychic apparatus, how can we grant ourselves the right to narrate the official story (History) that covers events and plural agents? It is in the midst of this issue that *Immemorial* convoke us to peer into the plural stories of the construction of Brasília: in the basement - here we can make an analogy to the repressed in the unconscious - of the glorious narrative, reports about those who succumbed; as opposed to its utopian face, the face of those who had no place in the idealized utopia.

Benjamin (1982/2007) and Freud believe that memory is also marked up by forgetfulness. Therefore, it can never own the events of the past as they actually occurred. Memory, as a constant flow, an idea that he appropriates it from Proust, unfolds in multiple images. Gagnebin (2014) points out:

It is not, therefore, in Proust, a theory of memory and mnemonic image in the sense of a theory of recognition or conservation that maintains stability, but a theory of memory - involuntary - always arising from forgetfulness and crossed by it (p. 165).

Benjamin (1929 / 1987b) affirms that: “(...) a lively event is finite, or at least closed in the sphere of the lived, whereas the remembered event has no limits, because it is only a key to everything that came before and after” (p. 37). This dynamic of involuntary memory, where one memory always convokes for another, is associated with the dialectical image (1982/2007), a concept developed by Benjamin about the inevitable opening and anachronism of the image. In the dialectical image, what happens now finds itself generating a singular tessitura between different temporalities in images constellations.

Didi-Huberman (1992) analyzes that the image can only be thought beyond the usual principle of historicity. The art historian thinks that the dialectical image is anachronistic and critical. It unfolds it in past and the present images capable of criticizing themselves and different times, breaking up linear perspectives of this and a stable perspective of the image. The dialectical image is an image in crisis, ambiguous, it convokes the look to new searches without ensuring regularity. Its dialectical character does not reconcile in syntheses, but remains antithetical, directing its gaze to the contradictions of a period, to the incompatible views of history and to what is repeated in time.

Recovering the portraits of the workers against a narrative that is repeatedly guaranteed by the “winners of history” (Benjamin, 1940 / 1987c), it fosters an irreconcilable antithetical dimension. Facing the work, we are facing stories that remained repressed in the foundations of Brasília. By highlighting them, the artist puts on the scene a conflict between the hegemonic national memory and the erased memory of workers' lives and experiences. The series stages realities that are intended: the official story about a utopian city, totalizing and the marginal narratives of traumas and deaths, allowing us to unfold both the images that it presents - the faces of the workers - and the crystallized images of Brasília in the social imaginary. In this context, we convoke Benjamin (1940 / 1987c) again, when he says that “there was never a document of culture that was not also a document of barbarism” (p. 225).

Immemorial, as a work of art, immortalizes those lives that we sought to make them invisible. In a critical and anachronistic attitude, he warns about deletions produced by official history, which avoids exposing the traumatic, the inequalities, the struggles, the

perspectives of the most vulnerable ones, focusing on what unfolds it in a linear and dominant way. *Immemorial* presents images of the past to think about the present, it interrogates about tomorrow, but above all the deadly repetitions, making it possible to activate elaboration strategies. Its action is majority political and presents great potential, by giving visibility, putting words in forgotten stories and removing them from the pure violence inflicted by the covering-up.

Power is only effective where the word and the act are not divorced, where the words are not empty and the acts are not brutal, where the words are not used to hide intentions, but to reveal realities, and the acts are not used to violate and destroy, but to establish relationships and to create new realities (Arendt, 1958/2014, p. 248-249).

By directing our attention to what is immediately associated to the photographs, we are faced with untold stories of Novacap workers, literally: “dismissed for reasons of death”. However, unfolding its content, we can approach other images, stir up memories and criticize the present. The explanation about the dismissal reveals the omission of responsibilities, the objectification of bodies and the indifference to some lives, deletions that remain on official records.

The history of Brazil and those who “built it” up with their workforce is the history of slavery. First, the originary people were enslaved, and later, the African people were compulsorily brought up to work on coffee and sugar cane plantations. Kilomba (2019) highlights in his book: “Memories of the Plantation: episodes of daily racism”, such as inscriptions on the enslaved people's bodies and the mechanisms of production of silencing to which they were subjected. The imposed masks were: “pieces of metal placed inside the mouth of the black person, installed between the tongue and the jaw and fixed behind the head by two strings, one around the chin and the other around the nose and forehead” (p. 33) (Image 3). It was used to prevent slaves from eating sugar cane or cocoa in the plantations, but it also had the function of silencing, instilling a sense of muteness and fear.



Image 3 - Portrait of the enslaved Anastasia with the silencing mask © Kilomba (2019, p. 35)

Invisibility and silence, vestiges of the past and equally traits that are repeated in Brazilian culture. Cases like those ones of deaths caused by the negligence of power structures do not cease to be part of our history. It is worth remembering a recent episode of negligence and death, in 2019, in the city of Brumadinho (MG), where the tailings dam of a mining company broke up, leading to the death of approximately 270 people (Almeida & Freitas / G1 Minas, 2020). A trauma for many families who are still fighting in court for redressing (Image 4).



Image 4 - Sign at the entrance to Brumadinho reminds the victims of Vale and it asks for justice
© Almeida, F. & Freitas, R./G1 Minas (2020).

In Brumadinho case, as the image above demonstrates, the protest for justice is accompanied by a memorial, where the faces and names of dead people fill out the sign at the entrance of the city. Also, in the *Imemorial* images, there is a connection between memory and justice. It is necessary to have a regime of visibility and narratives associated to it to open space for reparation. To break up the sense of invisibility and silence it means allowing history to be opened, engendering new memories, dialoguing with experiences and, effectively, democratizing relationships. In Brazil, a work of memory is permanently urgent, once that violence and trauma continue to be repeated and denied, in addition to a wide range and profound situations of negligence that systematically mark up the culture. There is an increasing and alarming trivialization of violence, which is evident in speeches pronounced up by the highest political posts in the nation, honoring military dictatorship torturers (1964 - 1985) and denying the regime's crimes (Mazui, 2019).

The theorist Márcio Seligmann-Silva (2017) proposes to approach history not as an archive in the traditional way of historiography, but as trauma. In detriment of a chronological and schematic history, the author invites us to revisit the past as a witness of trauma. Rosângela Rennó, in this context, when researching the history of workers in the archives of Brasília, she exercises the function of historian-witness. Her job is precisely to unarchive it in order to give an opportunity to listen and witness persistent social traumas.

History as trauma is never just ours, but it takes place in dialogue with those other ones. It is about opening itself to the (traumatic and silent) history of other one. Considering the Brazilian case with its chronic inability to inscribe its long and terrible history of violence, from slavery to the last dictatorship (...). This silencing also condemns us to repeatedly repeat violence initiated by the colonial cycle (Seligmann-Silva, 2017, p 66).

The memory of silencing masks, the real and symbolic ones, shows up in art, political activism, in the individual and collective struggle for justice, or even in the three parameters in an interconnected way as a possibility of elaboration. Freud (1914/1996) states that it is necessary to remember, to repeat and to elaborate for getting success in clinical work. In the Brazilian reality, we repeat our barbarities and re-update our traumas because we have a very precarious memory work, preventing us from healing our social wounds. In this context, *Imemorial*'s work is powerful, as it opens up a space for listening and testimony, enabling us to provide meanings to traumas that hardly circulate in the narratives of our history. *Imemorial* makes it clear in its name already - in the Portuguese language, the "i" is a prefix of negation - that it is not possible to remember everything, but that some memories, when rising against the barriers of repression (psychic, discursive and institutional), it may establish small differences in our repetition circuits, gradually breaking up invisibilities and historical silences.

Healing Memories - Opening Gaps

[...] At the first time, the event is experienced as a contingent trauma, as an outbreak of the non-symbolized; it is only through repetition that it is recognized, here it can only mean it: realized in the symbolic (Žižek, 1991, p. 118).

Through Rosângela Rennó's works, we monitor the possibilities and strategies that aim to produce the marks on the social fabric. His art accomplishes in the symbolic context, language field, intelligibilities and shares that place us in the social bond: a scar. It marks a trace of memory on the political body, the poetic that seeks to treat the traumatic: the non-symbolized of death, violence, negligence, the erasing that insists and it repeats itself. The act of rescuing memories is an act of inscribing symbolic scars, assembling mosaics, rummaging and shaking history. In this act, the artist breaks established discourses that seek to embody a supposedly linear and homogeneous history, opening up meanings to what would remain submerged by repression forces.

Inhabiting and building up margins indicates an ethical position of criticism which is silenced and subjected. As Grada Kilomba (2019) rightly analyzes, it is not about romanticizing the margin and oppression, but talking about margin as a place of resistance, exposing one's own marginality, its radical and inventive openings. Rosângela's art seeks to address the traumatic dimension of the exclusions that operate on the social pact and tend to be denied, by giving visibility to the margins through archived images of prisoners and workers. Presenting infamous men and their faces, their inventive strategies for marking the body, inscribing singularities, identifications and differences, it means exposing their powers, their humanity. In that same gesture, she asks everyone: where do

we look? What do we seek not to see? What are the markers of social hierarchy that are inscribed on the skin and face?

In this regard, Rosângela Rennó's act touches on the memory materiality when it works with the body. It is the margin's body that is shown, they are prisoners, the workers. Their marks, their stories, their beliefs, their subordinations and strategies are revealed and they seek to activate the body of the one who looks at them. His art rescues the traumatic, opens up a new memory flank, fosters a critical look at the wounds that remain opened in his time and space of creation. The works *Cicatriz* and *Imemorial* complaint injustices, erasures and silences, resonating the banned images, the censored bodies.

The artist also plays with the place by exposing that the photograph and the archive go beyond the register. Her gesture and work as products of culture allow us to review a reality and its memories, underlining the fictionality that constitutes them. In the opposite act to the collector who would seek to suture the lack, Rennó's proposal approaches the allegorist's ethical, aesthetic and political dimension which highlights objects of culture, seeking to transmit a meaning, contemplating the unfinished and fragmentary dimension of memory. She collects in the buried archives by the rubble of time and the imposed history to the defeated, forgotten and unused images for the general public. Such images (highlighted in a world where photographs are produced and exposed in profusion) have the power to interrupt continuous and accelerated flow of images that anesthetize us, it causes sparks of reflection and dissension among ideal projects and authoritarian consensus.

The images of the work are read as dialectical images. They invite us to examine their different layers of meanings, taking a look at the themes that permeate them. In the Brazilian context, the work that aims to make room for the excluded ones is ineluctably marked by racial issues. Brazil has a history of slavery that persisted for more than three centuries. Today its marks are revealed in the predominance of black people imprisoned and murdered by agents of the State.

Furthermore, authoritarianism is at the root of our foundation, censoring and excluding five centuries ago everything and everyone who have raised against the gears of power with their bodies, voices and experiences.

At the core of authoritarian power, it is sought to institute through force: complete memories and narratives. The analyzed works mobilize us to reflect on the impossibility of suppressing our incomplete and finite condition. This condition is persistent and denying it through subordination and violence amplifies the traumatic dimension of culture. The policies of memory move forward to deal with the anachronistic and fictional aspect of remembrance, exposing diversity, denouncing violence and seeking to transmit shared meaningful strategies.

They contain iconoclastic utopias, utopian projects guided by ethics, otherness, respecting differences and refusing to erase the tragic and even perverse dimension of official history. The works presented do not lead us to ideal images and places, but they point out inequalities repeated throughout history and wide open in the present.

It is needed to revisit the past in order to walk into more dignified paths regard human condition, necessarily contemplating diversity and the incompleteness that crosses us. As it is not a place, utopia reinforces the relevance of the reflection process, a lot more than an ideal place to be reached. After all, it is on behalf of certain ideals that we subdue, exclude and deny differences.

By placing the traumatic under analysis, we enable psychic elaboration, expansion of connections and shared meanings. We qualify our principles of ethics and humanity. As the writer Valter Hugo Mãe implies, it involves our family laces, affectiveness, with an unknown person and even the assumption and abstraction of another one.

References

- Almeida, F. & Freitas, R./G1 Minas. (2020, 25 jan.). Um ano após tragédia da Vale, dor e luta por justiça unem famílias de 259 mortos e 11 desaparecidos. <https://g1.globo.com/mg/minas-gerais/noticia/2020/01/25/um-ano-apos-tragedia-da-vale-dor-e-luta-por-justica-unem-familias-de-259-mortos-e-11-desaparecidos.ghtml>
- Arendt, H. (1958/2014). *A condição humana* (11. ed.). Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária.
- Benjamin, W. (1933/1987a). *Experiência e pobreza*. In: W. Benjamin, *Magia e técnica, arte e política* (3. ed.). São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense.
- Benjamin, W. (1929/1987b). *A imagem de Proust*. In: W. Benjamin, *Magia e técnica: arte e política: Ensaios sobre literatura e história da cultura* (3.ed.). (pp. 36-49). São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense.
- Benjamin, W. (1940/1987c). *Sobre o conceito de história*. In: W. Benjamin, *Magia e técnica: arte e política: Ensaios sobre literatura e história da cultura* (3. ed.). (pp. 222-234). São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense.
- Benjamin, W. (1982/2007). *Passagens*. Belo Horizonte: UFMG Ed.
- Benjamin, W. (1931/2013). *Pequena história da fotografia*. In: Trachtenberg, Alan (Org.), *Ensaios sobre fotografia de Niépce a Krauss*. (pp. 219-238). Lisboa: Orfeu Negro.
- Calvi, P. (2018, 06 ago.). *Sistema carcerário brasileiro: negros e pobres na prisão*. <https://www2.camara.leg.br/atividade-legislativa/comissoes/comissoes-permanentes/cd-hm/noticias/sistema-carcerario-brasileiro-negros-e-pobres-na-prisao>.
- Câmara, I. (2013). *Rosângela Rennó e as virtudes dialéticas da imagem*. Dissertação de mestrado. Fortaleza: UFC.
- Cicatriz. In: *Dicionário Michaelis*. <https://michaelis.uol.com.br/moderno-portugues/busca/portugues-brasileiro/cicatriz>.
- Costa, A. (2003). *Tatuagem e marcas corporais: atualizações do sagrado*. São Paulo: Casa do Psicólogo.
- Didi-Huberman, G. (1992). *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Didi-Huberman, G. (2006). *Ante el Tiempo: Historia del arte y anacronismo de las imágenes*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Ed.

Didi-Huberman, G. (2017). *Cascas*. São Paulo: Ed. 34.

Freud, S. (1914/1996). Recordar, repetir e elaborar (Novas recomendações sobre a técnica da psicanálise II). In: Sigmund Freud, Edição Standard Brasileira das Obras Psicológicas Completas (Vol. 12, pp. 161-174). Rio de Janeiro: Imago.

Freud, S. (1915/2010). O instinto e seus destinos. In: Freud, S. Obras completas. (Vol. 12). São Paulo: Cia das Letras.

Freud, S. (1925/1996). Uma nota sobre o “bloco mágico”. In: Sigmund Freud, Edição Standard Brasileira das Obras Psicológicas Completas (Vol. 19, pp. 253-262). Rio de Janeiro: Imago.

Gagnebin, J. M. (2014). *Limiar, aura e rememoração*. São Paulo: Editora 34.

Herkenhoff, P. (1996). *Rennó ou a beleza e o dulçor do presente*. In: Rosângela Rennó. São Paulo: Edusp.

Jacoby, R. (2005). *Picture Imperfect – Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kilomba, G. (2019). *Memórias da plantação: Episódios de racismo cotidiano*. Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó Ed.

Lacan, J. (1955/1985). *O seminário, livro 2: o eu na teoria de Freud e na técnica da psicanálise*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Ed.

Mãe, V. H. (2017). *A desumanização (2. ed.)*. São Paulo: Biblioteca Azul.

Mazui, G./G1. (2019, 8 ago.). *Bolsonaro chama coronel Brilhante Ustra de ‘herói nacional’*.

<https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2019/08/08/bolsonaro-chama-coronel-ustra-de-heroi-nacional.ghtml>.

Passeron, R. (2001). *Por uma psicanálise*. In: Sousa, E., Tessler, E. e Slavutzky, A. *A invenção da vida: arte e psicanálise*. Porto Alegre: Artes e Ofícios.

Rennó, R. (2020a). *Série Cicatriz, 1996*.

<http://www.rosangelarenno.com.br/obras/exibir/57/4>.

Rennó, R. (2020b). *Série Imemorial, 1994*.

<http://www.rosangelarenno.com.br/obras/sobre/19>.

Seligmann-Silva, M. (2017). A era do trauma. In: T. Rivera; L.A.M. Celles & E.L.A. Sousa (Org.), *Psicanálise*. Rio de Janeiro: Funarte.

Vasconcelos, A. (1992). *A epopeia da construção de Brasília*. Brasília: Editora Brasília.

Žižek, S. (1992). *Eles não sabem o que fazem: o sublime objeto da ideologia*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Ed.

Žižek, S. (1991). *O mais sublime dos histéricos: Hegel com Lacan*, Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Ed.

About the authors

Ana Lúcia Mandelli de Marsillac is Post-Doctor, Professor and researcher at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC).

Gerusa Morgana Bloss is Master and PhD student at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC).

Lucas de Oliveira Alves is Master student at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC).