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The indigenous issue and the rewriting of History

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Abstract

Martírio is a documentary about land tenure conflicts in Mato Grosso do Sul, fought by agribusiness farmers and the Guarani-Kaiowá indigenous population. To understand this scenario, the documentary goes back in time and traces the origins of the conflict through an imagery-sound multiplicity: photographs, television reports, newsreels, voice over narration and testimonials, as well as the material produced for the film itself. The purpose of this article is to look at this arsenal to test the hypothesis that *Martírio* rewrites, allowing indigenous people to give voice to their feelings, and explain their traumas, which have become recurrent in their daily lives.

Keywords

Documentary; Trauma; History; Indigenous people.

Introduction: clashes of representativeness

Introduction

Gunmen on motorcycles shoot at an Indian camp. The camera that records the action tries to fix a composition, but it is trembling, making it difficult to frame the scene in the face of danger. Indians try to shoot back with bow and arrow. The soundtrack reveals that people are trying to protect themselves by warning each other. They shout that there are children among them. The one that is shooting the scene is someone who integrates the camp.

Martyrdom (Carelli, Brazil, 2016), a documentary about the impasse and conflicts between agribusiness farmers and the Guarani-Kaiowá people over land tenure in Mato Grosso do Sul, ends with the flagrant described above. As the film reveals later, these indigenous communities have not been successful in demarcating their lands, suffer from high levels of material deprivation and face the violence of representatives of industrial agriculture in the region.

Among the questions made by the director's narration during the final sequence, we hear: "Will the Brazilian state have the courage to take responsibility for this tragedy that perpetuates the suffering of these people or we will have to face even darker times?". In 2016, the year of the film's release, the situation seemed to have reached its limit. But then, in 2019, one of the first measures of the federal government was to transfer responsibility for the demarcation and protection of indigenous lands from the FUNAI (National Indian Foundation) to the Ministry of Agriculture. In September, the same government passed a bill allowing firearms to be held by residents of rural areas.

These two measures not only answer Carelli's question, but reveal the continuity of practices that have threatened several indigenous communities in the country for more than a hundred years, as exposed in the documentary. To understand this scenario of recurrent traumatic situations, such as the eviction of their lands or the murder of their leaders, *Martyrdom* goes back in time in order to locate the origin of these conflicts. To this end, the director approaches the Guarani-Kaiowá people and observes - through his narration - that in 40 years dedicated to indigenism, he had little footage of this indigenous community.

The film features images and testimonies of the Guarani-Kaiowá people, as well as dense research (with the help of the ethnologist Curt Nimuendajú) into museums' archives, the press and the Rondon Commission. What sews these two types of imagery materials is the narration of the director who - between the spheres of the private and the collective - informs, challenges and thrills.

Through the process of editing, the organization of these materials points to the hypothesis that *Martyrdom* rewrites history not to give the voice to the Indians, but to explain the traumas that have become recurrent in their daily lives. Thus, the film embraces the Benjaminian conception of a history from the perspective of the marginalized, calling the spectator to adhere to the indigenous cause. To make it easier the demonstration of this argument, the analysis focuses attention on two of its narrative layers: the problematic relationship between the indigenous peoples and the Brazilian state and the question of land specifically involving the Guarani-Kaiowá people. A third filmic instance is also observed: the presence of the director through his voice over narration. It is necessary to emphasize that the editing does not establish this separation. Carelli's voice, for example, is present all the time. Such separation is intended only to ease the conduction of the analysis.

A history of traumas

Before analyzing the film material, it is necessary to situate the theoretical bases that will sustain the discussion through a triangular relationship composed of trauma, history and documentary. From the studies of trauma, the text activates the perspective that thinks of it as a circumscribed socio-historical phenomenon. Benjamin's position (1994) on the need for a history from the point of view of the vanquished

composes the second angle of the triangle. In relation to the documentary, the discussion about evidence and reflexivity will serve as a foundation for thinking the film in focus.

Martyrdom talks about trauma. A history of traumas involving the Guarani-Kaiowá, marked by murders of their leaders, evictions, suicides, confinement within their own lands and persecutions. The documentary's editing organizes the audiovisual materials in order to ensure the interpretation of the traumatic experience as a projection of value based on the identification of the specific conditions of collective suffering. This leads the debate to an articulation between trauma and history, synthesized in the term *historical trauma*, whose central objective is to mark a critical and continuous analysis of the narrative and representational forms by which traumatic events are seen as mediated (Kaplan and Wang, 2004).

The historical dimension of the trauma shifts the focus from individual psychic effects to collective conditions. As some authors argue: "cultural traumas are not born, they are created as a product of history" (Smelser, 2004, p. 37) or "trauma is not something that exists in a natural way, it is built by society" (Alexander, 2004, p. 2). It is a useful perspective to think about the film here in focus, because, in this scenario, the traumatized subject happens to be seen as a victim and not as a crippled individual.

Established by a documentary, the approximation between history and trauma makes possible the debate on cultures mediated by images and languages of violence, as is the case of the Brazilian society. If a given event is established as a trauma, for which society has to take responsibility in some way, this condition triggers the understanding and assimilation of the past through interpretations that also consider the audiovisual dimension of the issue, considering that today the discussion on this subject passes, in great measure, for its visual evidences.

The traumatic events reported by *Martyrdom* have occurred since the 19th century. To understand the current situation of the Guarani-Kaiowá people, Vincent Carelli goes back in time in order to locate the origin of these conflicts. This allows the documentary to confront sources and recount history from the perspective of the marginalized - a movement that brings it closer to the discussion about history, addressed by Walter Benjamin (1994). Before developing this argument, however, it is important to point out what the author means by history.

For Walter Benjamin, history is catastrophe, shock, an aspect that would be rooted in culture: "there has never been a monument of culture that was not also a monument of barbarism. And just as culture is not exempt from barbarism, neither is the process of the transmission of culture" (Benjamin, 1994, p. 225). This makes Benjamin not see the historical process as a growing path towards freedom and development. The trajectory of the Guarani-Kaiowá people, as well as that of several indigenous groups, has been and continues to be traversed by violence that reveals a kind of fusion between history and trauma, thus corroborating the relevance of Benjaminian thinking to interpret the question.

In thesis 12 of *On the Concept of History*, the author argues about the need for a history that also looks at the vanquished, because the freedom of future generations must consider the vision of the enslaved ancestors, the importance of repairing injustices committed against the excluded and the contestation of oppressive structures. This articulation is opposed to a bourgeois history project, aimed at some individuals, in favor of collective subjects. Benjamin did not write about the Brazilian native communities, of course. But his argument does not cease to connect with that of an indigenous leader like Ailton Krenak¹, when he, debating the relationship between the colonizer and the native peoples, postulates that:

¹ An indigenous leader and environmentalist, he made one of the most forceful speeches in defense of indigenous rights in the National Constituent Assembly on September 4, 1987. While speaking, Krenak painted his face with a black paint extracted from the genipap fruit. Part of his speech is present in *Martyrdom*, as well as available on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWMHiwdbM_Q. Retrieved on December 03, 2019.

civilization called these people barbarians and imprinted an endless war against them, with the aim of transforming them into civilized people who could integrate the club of humanity. Many of these people are not individuals, but "collective persons", cells that can transmit through time their views on the world (Krenak, 2019, P. 28).

It can be seen, both in Benjamin and in Krenak, that the past is fundamental. The understanding of history for Benjamin takes place through a dialectical process in which the present does not deny the past, but establishes a correspondence between these two temporalities. To look back on the past allows us to understand what could have been but was not. At the junction of remembrance, reparation and redemption, one can find a way for justice to materialize in history. As can be seen, the philosophy of history as Benjamin understands it calls into question the concepts of time, of historical subject and of progress existing in his time. It is interested in the micro, the leftovers, the fragments. By putting a magnifying glass on these residues, it is possible to venture another perspective to make history. This requires the historian to take a stand, especially at times when the threat is hanging over the oppressed at the risk of another defeat.

In a text about the indigenous rights, written days before the first round of the 2018 presidential election, Manuela Carneiro da Cunha ends as follows: "the horizon is loaded, and the rights of the Indians are more threatened than ever" (Cunha, 2018, p. 441). The anti-indigenous governmental measures, pointed out in the introduction, only confirm the scenario described by Cunha: a scenario that was catastrophic even before 2018, as revealed by *Martyrdom*.

If Benjamin's thought distances itself from meta-narratives, without having totality as an end nor a clearly delimited theoretical framework, it opens the possibility to think about the making of history from cinema (from documentary cinema specifically). That is the hypothesis on which this text is based: to present another version of the official history by means of a documentary, or, to put it another way, *Martyrdom* rewrites history from the perspective of the indigenous peoples through a movement in which the action of giving voice turns to the demonstration of violence to which the indigenous peoples have been subjected constantly, thus confirming an intricate relationship between history and trauma.

In the Brazilian documentary tradition, the action of *giving the voice*, popularized from the 1990s, was initially seen as an empathic gesture by the documentary filmmaker in relation to socially excluded characters. A step back in time to the 1960s and 1970s, when the country was under the censorship of the military dictatorship, reveals that speaking on behalf of those who have no voice or speaking for each other was the keynote among many filmmakers (Teixeira, 2003). The consequence of this "monopoly of speech" (Teixeira, 2003, p. 164) are people being used to corroborate a previous point of view, often present in a voice over narration that created a hierarchy between the documentary filmmaker and his characters, thus instituting "the voice of knowledge"².

Going from *speaking on behalf of the other* to *giving the voice to the other* may therefore seem an advance towards a more horizontal relationship between director and character, but in practice it is not, because the one who gives the voice can also refuse it, or give it under infinite conditions. This means that the ownership of the speech, in both cases, still belongs to the documentarian. As identified by Teixeira (2003), this voice will always be "donated, allowed" by the filmmaker, in a way that it remains "his unaltered identity of the articulator of a speech authorized and agreed by him" (Teixeira, 2003, p. 165).

This documentary is readily aligned with the rights of the Guarani-Kaiowá and, for this, it uses evidence that confirms its position. Bill Nichols argues that evidence can be a "fact, object or situation,

² This notion derives from the analysis of Jean-Claude Bernardet (2003) on the documentary *Viramundo* (Geraldo Sarno, 1965). It is a film about the migration from the Northeast to the Southeast region of Brazil that explains, through a professional and solemn voice, the migratory phenomenon. Bernardet's diagnosis of Sarno's options identifies a clear gap of importance between the ostentatious sound of the voice over and the characters who testify to the film, which led the author to classify this voice as the voice of knowledge.

(...) something verifiable and concrete" (Nichols, 2008, p. 29). But the facts become evidence when they are converted into discourse and this discourse becomes credible when it links the evidence to an external domain. This idea allows the metaphor of fishing in documentary cinema, that is, the documentarian fishes the viewer with the evidence, but for this purpose, the documentary depends on the belief that the evidence is contiguous to the speech.

An example of this strategy would be the use of the narrator's voice to equate the evidence, as it also opens the possibility for the reflective dimension in the documentary. Such a strategy, through recurring rhetorical resources throughout the history of the documentary, raises questions about its uses and limitations. For Nichols (2016), reflexivity occurs when the documentary filmmaker is concerned with debating or questioning the process of making films. This can stimulate a sharper awareness in the viewer about "their relationship with the documentary and with what it represents" (Nichols, 2016, p. 204). Following Nichols, Da-Rin (2004) argues that the reflectivity in the documentary takes place when the director is not only satisfied with presenting an argument about the theme and its characters, but engages in a "metacomment" (Da-Rin, 2004, p. 170) on the choices that make up his argument.

According to Nichols, a rhetoric whose foundation is evidence, becomes a necessary strategy for successful documentaries, but it will depend on the recognition that evidence emerges as a reaction to issues that the cultural, political and historical context presents, namely, "with a different question, other evidence may arise from the same facts, objects and images" (Nichols, 2008, p. 36). In short, it sets the point of view of those who want to put their perspectives and interpretations in dialogue with others, becoming the core of a politically and socially engaged discourse, in addition to opening the possibility for the reflective dimension of the documentary.

I agree with Nichols' point of view, but it is necessary to broaden the notion of discourse to include its imagery-sound dimension, as well as its interpretative multiplicity, so that textualist approaches are avoided. In general, the textualist strand derives from the linguistics and semiotics of structuralist inspiration, with Christian Metz among the prominent names. For Stam, the metzian analysis understands the film as a string of codes composed of "image, dialogues, noises, music and written materials" (Stam, 2003, p. 210). Such codes, also called "texts", are what should be the focus of the discussions, generating a kind of preliminary roadmap for the analyses.

Later criticism of this model points out that "reducing film to its textual system" implies "mummifying it, killing it" (Bellour *apud* Aumont and Marie, 2010, p. 81). This type of analysis does not consider "elements such as character and performance" (Stam, p. 2003, p. 213), as well as a relationship with the viewer that requires a heterogeneity of interpretative cutouts, provided in a non-unilateral way - a claim present in the discussion on the reflexivity of the documentary previously pointed out.

The focus on narration can initially be seen as an echo of the textualist perspective. Seen in these terms, the revelation of partiality and the limits of Justice - which obstructs the exercise of the Indians' rights - is undoubtedly present in the narration of *Martyrdom*, but the evidence is built, to a large extent, by the archival images handled by the editing, as we will see next. Therefore, the careful examination of the rewriting of history implies, initially, going against the erasure of the history and the indigenous resistance and, for this matter, it is necessary to break down the narrative architecture of the documentary.

Without the intention of exhausting it, the analysis was organized in three stages: 1) the discussion on the relationship between the Brazilian State and the Indians through archival images and narration; 2) the delicate situation of the Guarani-Kaiowá from their images and statements of complaint and, finally, 3) Vincent Carelli as a character and his voice over that transits between criticism and emotion.

Archival images: indigenous peoples and the Brazilian state

Although *Martyrdom* focuses attention on the issues involving the Guarani-Kaiowá, there is also

- among the narrative layers already mentioned before - a path in history that reveals the traumas faced by other indigenous groups. The documentary shows how traumatic was the encounter of the indigenous with Jesuits and Andeirants, forcing the Guarani-Kaiowá to isolate themselves in the forests whilst the eighteenth century and stay there for almost a century. It is from the nineteenth century - with the victory of Brazil in the Paraguayan War (1864-1870) - that the issues around land tenure begin, intensifying with the March to the West (1940's) and extending to the present day.

This route goes chronologically through some moments of the country's history: the Empire, the Getúlio Vargas government, the military dictatorship, the re-democratization until the present day. These sequences reveal the dense research, carried out by the director in archives, reversed in a diversity of materials: excerpts from reports (TV and radio), maps, illustrations, printed newspapers, photographs (especially from the Rondon mission), videos posted on Youtube and also directed by Vincent Carelli himself. This plurality leads the debate to a question pointed out by Comolli (2017) about the excess of archival images: how to give attention to all of them? I depart from the idea that the way *Martyrdom* articulates such images allows us to understand the diversity of temporalities in history, which leads us to discover other historical possibilities. A process possible thanks to an editing work that brings a series of "document-images" (Morettin, 2015) again to the "course of history" (Leandro, 2012, p. 32), updating, therefore, the past.

For a more effective attention to the uses and unfoldings of these archival materials, it is valid to follow Gervaiseau's recommendation on how to deal with such images: "we must, then, beyond the consideration of the most evident visible information conveyed by the archive image, try to grasp *the visual event* that constitutes it, the spatial and temporal configuration that made it possible" (Gervaiseau, 2012, p. 212, highlighted by the author). Thus, I focus on two moments of the above-mentioned history: the Getúlio Vargas government and the period of the military regime. This choice is justified by revealing that different historical times approach a common denominator: undermining the rights of the Indians to land and to the maintenance of their traditions. An aspect that results from the articulation between image and narration undertaken by the editing.

The sequence about how the government of Getúlio Vargas related with the indigenous peoples is composed by images of the *Cinejornal Brasileiro*, whose central topic is the March to the West - a project launched in 1940 with developmental purposes. The president arrives by plane in the region of Dourados (located today in Mato Grosso do Sul) to formalize its implementation. He is greeted by local leaders and speaks to the people surrounded by an enthusiastic atmosphere. The original audio is suppressed to give way to the director's voice over and this option makes it inevitable the contrast with the archival images. The *visual event* gains another configuration when Carelli informs the real intentions of the government: to lease the lands of the Indians to third parties, ignoring their presence and contradicting "the last two constitutions that determined respect for the indigenous territories"³, a policy that intensified the conflicts in the region. At the end of the sequence, the director asks: "Was it a consolation prize the fact that Getúlio established 19 April as the Indian's National Day?"

In *Martyrdom*, the debate around archival images cannot neglect the role that narration plays in the documentary. The images are the starting point and the director's voice is used to fix a point of view that challenges a pre-existing reality and that of the subjects in focus. In this context, the discussion about the archival images is oxygenated when one considers, in addition to the importance of the editing, the way through which the director is made present: through a narration that informs and, at the same time, reveals his consternation. In short, it is also a question of performance. As Bruzzi (2013) believes, documentaries are the result of negotiations between the director and the issue he intends to address, and at the heart of this process is the performance. As an act that establishes observation and intervention,

³ Narration by Vincent Carelli.

it can be obtained not only by the characters, but also by the director in various ways, ranging from the interview to the narration.

The second selected sequence concerns the relationship between the military regime and the indigenous communities. The creation of the FUNAI (National Indian Foundation) in 1967, replacing the SPI (Indian Protection Service), is the gateway for the documentary to address the indigenous rural guard, created with the purpose of supposedly protecting their lands. The images show the graduation of the first guard class in Belo Horizonte, in 1970. Before the public and political leaders, the indigenous demonstrate techniques of approach, immobilization (image 1) and torture when staging a well known torture technique used during the military dictatorship in Brazil (image 2).

Image 1 – Fighting simulation



Source: Martyrdom

Image 2 – Simulation of a Torture Technique



Source: Martyrdom

It is important to observe that they are not private images, taken in a hidden or unauthorized way. This is something that happened in the public space - a parade - for those who wanted to see and without any embarrassment. Here, *the visual event* that the images provoke is the realization of how the Indians, through open demonstration of violence, were subjugated to forms of power guided by interests completely distanced from their reality.

The reinsertion of these images in the course of history is also accompanied by the director's narration, which places not only the context in which they were produced, but also questions them: "the parrot's perch, instrument of torture in the national imagination since then, inaugurates the participation of the indigenous peoples in the modernity of our leaden years".

Again, editing and performance are aligned to clarify the double violence that shapes the relationship between the indigenous and the Brazilian state: the erasure of their customs and traditions by militarization and the naturalization of torture. As the narration reports, three years later, due to negative consequences (arrests, beatings, rapes), the guard was extinguished. Today, it is only possible to observe the absurdity of the situation due to the new arrangements that such images provide. From a mere record

that would integrate, at most, a newsreel of the time, they turn to denunciation images that haunt us and question us - besides putting the story in another perspective -, since such archival materials are now in the service of the marginalized.

If, on the one hand, the excess of archival images drives Comolli's reflection in a complaining tone, discredited of its potential due to the fact that they are produced, to a large extent, by media conglomerates; on the other, he also recognizes that they can reinvigorate documentary production and, to this end, recommends that "it be necessary to rediscover, once again, at another moment in history, the same conjunction between needs, affections, desires - all, by definition, different from those that presided over the birth of the document, historically different" (Comolli, 2017, p. 10).

Thus, in response to the question raised earlier - how to handle so many archival images -, if the intention is to confront the history and then rewrite it, as seems to be the case of *Martyrdom*, what these sequences reveal is that the indigenous peoples have lived at their limit and at the threshold of history. These images herald that conflicts leave possible concealments to gain visibility and dramatic effectiveness in the daily lives of adults and children. One also sees the discomfort as an important resource for the rhetorical and, later, reflective elaboration that the documentary undertakes, an aspect that will be seen below.

The images of the Guarani-Kaiowá and the different meanings of resistance

The question of land ownership is central to *Martyrdom*. As the documentary shows, with the *March to the West* happening whilst the government of Getúlio Vargas, the situation is heading towards a perennial state of conflict. On the one hand, farmers who take possession of indigenous lands; on the other, Indians who, for at least 70 years, have been living with evictions, persecutions and murders. Although the legislation guarantees to the indigenous communities the right to land since the colonial period (Cunha, 2018), the alliance between farmers and the rural bench of the National Congress forces the Justice to hinder or disallow ownership for indigenous communities. The Guarani-Kaiowá are among the peoples directly affected by this impasse and it is to them that Vincent Carelli's camera turns.

In this passage, this research focuses on three moments of the documentary in which this issue is dealt with more directly: a pro-Guarani-Kaiowá sequence, another on their relationship with the land and a third on an auction organized by politicians and agribusiness entrepreneurs.

The first of the three sequences aforementioned address the visit of the prosecutor Aristides Junqueira to a camp of this indigenous group in 1994. The images show the jet that lands with the prosecutor and the armed escort of the federal police, and the reception of the Indians who sing and dance in his honor. After the visit, Junqueira declares: "Here, from what I see, a nelore cow is worth more than 20 children, more than 100 men. It makes me very sad, you know? The judges needed to come here and feel that, too. To see the reality of the things they judge".

According to the narration, although the Funai recognized the Indians as owners of these lands in 1991, they remained for three years confined to four hectares of this territory in frequent clashes with gunmen. At the end of this sequence, the general attorney completes:

It has taken everything from them [the indigenous people]. Somewhere they were born, some land they had, but it is not anywhere (...) because to whom we talk says that there has never been a native here. It seems that this pasture for cattle nelore has been there since the beginning of the century.

In the passage above, the contrast between natives and non-natives - on the one hand, dance; on

the other hand, the weapons - directs the debate on the rewriting of history to the fact that there seems to be no other possibility for indigenous societies than the confrontation and its respective traumas. It is worth remembering that, in this scenario, capital also depends on the ownership of the land to ensure its reproduction, in a dynamic that uses violence as a means to ascend on a large scale. A society in which animals are more important than people reflects a certain combination of unconnected historical times that obstructs the constitution of a common social unit. In other words, natives and non-natives live different historical temporalities in which instituting an Other is important not only to identify the adversary, but mainly to justify its elimination.

For decades dispossessed of their territory, the Guarani-Kaiowá have maintained their sense of belonging to the land not only because it provides the natural and mineral resources responsible for their subsistence, but also because of the bond with their ancestors. In many of the claimed territories it is found the *tekohas* - places where the shaman traditions of various indigenous communities were created and have been maintained. This means that their history is directly linked to the earth.

Faced with the deadlock over the possession of their lands, the Guarani-Kaiowá camp on the roadside in precarious conditions. This becomes clear when the documentary goes to Cacique Damiana's camp in the region of Dourados (MS). For 12 years in this situation, it has become a living proof of resistance, but also of the invisibility to which the Indians have been subjected throughout history. In this same sequence, a member of the camp crosses the highway with the team to show the nearby *tekoha* (images 3 and 4), thus becoming *the visible evidence* that disputes the speech of some farmers about the lack of Indians in the region⁴.

Image 3 – Tekoha



Source: Martyrdom

Image 4 – Tekoha



Source: Martyrdom

This type of audiovisual production expresses how resistance, on the one hand, reinforces the

⁴ At the moment when the prosecutor Aristides Junqueira visits the Guarani-Kaiowá camp, Vincent Carelli takes advantage of the police escort to interview some farmers. All deny the previous existence of indigenous communities in the region.

importance of maintaining the defense and autonomy of indigenous peoples and, on the other hand, shows itself as an active force opposed to the loss of their beliefs, their spirituality and their mystery. If today one can no longer refuse the potential of the image to recount history, a documentary like *Martyrdom* not only corroborates this perspective, but goes beyond it by confronting sources and speeches to attest clues, to grasp the limits and paradoxes of history - its reasons and shortcomings - and the disappointment with the results achieved. A movement arising from the link between documentary filmmaker and character based, first of all, on listening, materializes an approximation of voices (the vindication of the natives and the director's point of view on the facts) that walk together; that is, it is no longer a matter of *giving the voice*, but to build it together, making the director someone who allies himself with the indigenous' cause.

In his debate on the images of the Guarani-Kaiowá, César Guimarães questions the unequal relationship of forces between the natives and the farmers in Mato Grosso do Sul. This unevenness, according to the author, is present in several instances - among them the production of images - whose role would also be to produce relationships beyond violence and extermination. Guimarães argues that:

The image that survives launches an appeal to the constitution of other forms of common existence, because it questions and put in crisis the relationship between who looks and who is looked, who films and who is filmed, starting with the presence of the bodies mediated by the technical device (Guimarães, 2015, p. 43, my highlight).

Martyrdom becomes, therefore, adherent of this issue by aligning the production of images of the Guarani-Kaiowá to the denunciation purpose of the film. In his speech, Damiana reports the constant threats coming from the São Fernando Mill, which, bothered by the presence of the natives, uses sinister intimidation techniques, such as the criminal hit-and-runs. When approaching the Guarani-Kaiowá, the documentary highlights how the invisible condition of these indigenous communities allows abjection and repulsion to be poured on them. This becomes a vile spectacle in which the right to existence leaves the sphere of the elementary to become an act of resistance.

When the only advantage that the Other can present is their death, the bodies to which Guimarães refers then become disposable⁵. It is precisely because it is an indigenous body that it deposes them from humanity. Their Otherness is also a target. Thus, by taking the side of the victim - a richer and morally more righteous angle - *Martyrdom* conceives the Guarani-Kaiowá as producers of interactions between different cultural instances, historical and ideological circumstances in which the greed of the farmers allied to the omission of the State establishes the trauma as an inexorable condition to this community. Chief Damiana is not the only one and *Martyrdom* reveals that, like her and her group, there are other indigenous communities in the same condition.

The analysis of the narrative axis around the Guarani Kaiowá cannot disregard the sequence of *the resistance auction*. Although no native appears in its almost seven minutes long, it should be called to the debate because it targets the Guarani-Kaiowá themselves. The narration reports that the auction was initially designed to raise funds to hire private security to fight the Indians, but the court interpreted the event as militia formation and embargoed it. Its organizers proposed another purpose for the auction: to raise funds to fund lawsuits. It features farmers and politicians speaking to a white, mostly male audience. Senator Katia Abreu (PDT-TO) makes an inflammatory speech about the need for approval of PEC-215⁶. Ronaldo Caiado (DEM-GO) talks about resisting the indigenous threat and anthropologists who drink *santo daimé* and claim to have seen indigenous peoples in the region. It is a sequence that explains the endless

⁵ A condition that is not exclusive to the indigenous body, but to others who more clearly embody otherness, as the black body or the body of transsexuals and transvestites - subject to another text, no doubt.

⁶ Constitutional Amendment Proposal that foresees the transfer of the work related to the demarcation of indigenous territories to the National Congress.

greed associated with a high load of disinformation and prejudice, as seen in another speaker:

In the palace there is a minister of President Dilma, called Gilberto Carvalho, who lines up in his cabinet Indians, blacks, landless, gays, lesbians. Family does not exist in this gentleman's office. This is the government of President Dilma. Do not expect these people to solve our problem.

In its rhetorical strategy, the documentary makes use of the extended time of some sequences, which, taking into account the predominance of narratives with shorter plans, would be enough to cause discomfort to the viewer less accustomed to this narrative rhythm. But the question is not just the time of the sequence itself, but what it presents. The documentary opens space for the enemy, but in a key where his own speech proves to be demeaning. It is valid to note the reversal of roles that the auction suggests, starting with the very name of the event, which includes the word resistance.

As the point of view determines the object, the resistance can even change according to the angle. What the history recounted by *Martyrdom* presents is a resistance to the recognition of the original peoples' rights by whites, far from the resistance to which the indigenous peoples have exercised for many centuries. As Krenak points out, when the theme is resistance, the indigenous have much to teach, since they have been practicing it for at least 500 years. For him, "we [the Indians] resisted expanding our subjectivity, not accepting this idea that we are all equal" (Krenak, 2019, p. 31). If, as I will discuss below, Vincent Carelli can be seen as an ally, to show the face and voice of those who openly present themselves as anti-indigenous is also a strategy that composes the rewriting of history, in addition to confirming a certain vocation and pre-disposition of the documentary to deal with the abject.

Vincent Carelli as narrator

The third instance to be observed concerns the presence of Vincent Carelli. At the same time, he occupies the role of director, narrator and character and all of these different performances allows us to think about the autobiographical traits as an indication of reflexivity. As we have seen, Carelli is present, to a large extent, through his voice that is responsible for the film's narration, although his image also appears sometimes (mainly in the shots in which he drives on the road). In these sequences, you can see, through the car window, vast fields of soybeans and pasture for cattle.

After contextualizing and inquiring the archival material articulated by the editing, as well as positioning himself in relation to the interviews and testimonies, towards the end of the film, as a kind of conclusion, the director⁷ presents himself in a personal way:

In 40 years of indigenism, I have lived little with the Guarani-Kaiowá, but they marked me deeply for their courage and their spirituality. In one of the last scenes, in the 1990s, I recorded a christening of children, the *curumim pepú*. Before departure, a group leaves the house of prayer, chanting a song of heaven to bless our journey. I had to contain the emotion to steady the camera. But with a kilometer of road I couldn't take it. I stopped the car, went down and cried convulsively. I wept with emotion before the beauty of their mantras, their joy to live beyond the material scarcity in which they live, the contempt and hatred that surrounds them, the violence they suffer. From this day forward, every time I leave a village - and it is not a few - I am overcome by the same commotion.

It is a voice that shares horizontally an experience in which life and work are mixed. This speech is distanced, therefore, from the authoritarian didacticism typical of the voice of knowledge that we find in the thesis documentaries. There are autobiographical aspects in this enunciation, but what stands out is the reflexivity necessary to demarcate the role of the director as an *ally* rather than a mere announcer.

⁷ Vincent Carelli is an anthropologist, has worked at FUNAI and is at the head of the Video in the Villages Project, founded in 1986, which uses the video as a tool for the expression of indigenous identity.

This happens when Carelli ratifies the importance and legitimacy of the history, traditions and struggles of the indigenous, thus distancing himself from the exotization of these characters or his inclusion in the film as a mere illustration of a previous point of view. In *Martyrdom*, recognizing that the adverse condition in which the indigenous people live is the result of state negligence in relation to their basic rights is an important step for the passage of the documentarian as someone who *gives voice* to the one who becomes an *ally*.

The reflective and political character of the film is established in the way the voice over aforementioned targets the viewer, extending to him also - at least on the hypothetical plane - this condition. This allows for a deeper level of appropriation and sharing of the "historical world's problems" (Nichols, 2016). Since the indigenous populations do not produce written testimonies of their traumas, the reflectivity present in *Martyrdom* requires that those who watch it engage with the theme. In that sense, the documentary confirms the hypothesis that *giving the voice* - a gesture at first well-intentioned, but problematic for creating a hierarchy between director and character - gives way to the demonstration of the violence to which the indigenous peoples have been subjected for over a hundred years, in a movement of fusion between history and trauma. To achieve this effect of exposing the filmmaker to the theme and to the public, the over voice narration can approach the viewer who also feels uncertainties and vulnerabilities. This valuative shift invites those who watch the film to reflect on how the rearrangements of audiovisual materials can generate new positions from current social and historical contexts. A strategy that informs and, at the same time, brings closer, summoning those who watch to also connect with the indigenous hardships or, as the title summarizes, with their martyrdom.

The first-person comments potentialize the political and historical dimension of the issue from a narration that also does not give up its emotional character. When dealing with traumatic situations involving the indigenous peoples in Brazil - murders, evictions, persecutions -, the harshness of the theme might not leave room for an appreciation of emotional intensity, but that is not what occurs in *Martyrdom*.

If, over more than a hundred years ago, Hugo Munsterberg stated that "in cinema, [...] the characters are, above all, subjects of emotional experiences"⁸ (1983, p. 46), by distancing itself from the "sobriety discourse"⁹, the documentary may reinforce the argument that emotions are not restricted to the private sphere, as they also circulate in the public domain, where they are traversed by different meanings, types of media and technologies. In *Martyrdom*, the most direct way to access this component with a strong emotional charge is the director's narration, not only because of its autobiographical elements, but also because of its critical content: after all, indignation is also emotion.

By articulating several temporal extracts without losing sight of the emotional charge involved, Carelli transposes to the screen a way to conceive history that refers to the Benjaminian perspective, that is, the fragments in favor of the construction of events. After all, the past is not something remote, it is present in the historical remembrance that will now be told through images. In other words, rewriting history involves "fixing an image of the past" (Benjamin, 1994, p. 224), now attributing to it the perspective of the marginalized.

Benjamin stressed that the historiography as we know it is due to the historian's empathy for the winners. When present, the losers appear in distorted versions and with little recognition. It is not necessary to go into detail about how much the history of Brazil, especially that version found in textbooks, corroborates the Benjaminian diagnosis. However, the author draws attention to a new target, based on the following argument: "the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of exception' in which we live is actually the general rule" (Benjamin, 1994, p. 226). If barbarism is the norm, then it is necessary

⁸ The text Emotions is from 1916.

⁹ It refers to a type of discourse present in non-fiction that deals with "hard" topics such as science, economics, international politics, religion. More details, see Nichols (1991).

to highlight the despoliation to which various peoples have been and are subjected. It is in this sense that *Martyrdom* and Benjamin's argument approach each other, allowing other versions of the past, which, in contact with the demands of the present, cause other interpretations and recognitions to spring from the edges of history. The rewriting of history follows the fight against the erasure of the importance of indigenous peoples in the history of the country. Reordering the past - now with images and sounds - is also a way of reparation in the face of more than a century of daily violence, a path that also reveals a history constantly crossed by traumatic situations.

Final Consideration

Used to start this article, the final sequence of *Martyrdom* only became possible because, five days before the attack, Vincent Carelli's team left a camera with the natives. The disproportionate relationship of forces - weapons *versus* bow and arrow; gunmen on motorcycles *versus* indigenous on foot - is evidence of the curtailment suffered by indigenous populations and the indifference of the Brazilian State. At a certain point in this sequence, the director's narration asks: "It is in dealing with the Indians that Brazilian society reveals itself (...) How will these children grow living in the terror imposed on the recovery camps?"¹⁰

It is to the future that the film points, but a possible answer to this question requires the effort to look to the past, because knowing the origins of conflicts one can perceive the strategies of the State to integrate the natives to the rest of Brazilian society - an aspect which, in different historical times, has always proved itself disastrous. From this comes the importance of revisiting history to confront sources.

Against this unequal relationship, a documentary like *Martyrdom* becomes an important tool both for presenting the infamous and for building another version of the history in which the indigenous appear not only as dispossessed subjects, but also as being a resistance group. And more importantly: by naming those responsible for this plundering, the documentary proposes the revision of possible titles of heroes of history and the relativization of both the roles of civilized and savage. It also points to future investigations that discuss environmental racism, socio-environmental justice and the rights of ethnic groups boycotted by the state.

In *Martyrdom*, the subversion of certain narratives is largely by the handling of archival materials. The way they are manipulated by the editing - associated with the performance of the director's narration - builds a version of history traversed by trauma and deepens its reflective character by summoning the viewer to take a stance. At these moments when the official source is confronted, the documentary reveals the slowness and ineffectiveness of justice in relation to the rights of the natives, as well as the constant attacks - physical and psychological - that they suffer.

The effective participation of the director as an ally allows *Martyrdom* to move between the public and the private, between the personal and political spheres, making the film simultaneously an aesthetic and archival object. Thus, its rhetoric explains a method of investigation and realization that does not distance itself from Otherness, confirming the possibility of a history from the perspective of the vanquished, now written with images and sounds.

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¹⁰ Recovery Camps are settlements whose objective is to recover the lands that belong to the indigenous people. In them are the tekohas - a space for the exercise of their beliefs and traditions.

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