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FLÂNERIE AND INVASION IN THE MONSTROUS CITY: SÃO PAULO IN RECENT CINEMA

Changes in the physical space of São Paulo are the focus of three films released early in the 21st century: O Príncipe (2002; The Prince), by Ugo Giorgetti; Urbânia (2001), by Flávio Frederico; and O Invasor (2002; The Trespasser), by Beto Brant. All three films convey a sense of deep division in the urban space by focusing on the “invasion” of certain parts of São Paulo by people who supposedly do not belong there: homeless, squatters, inhabitants of periferia. But they do so in different ways. The first two films play with the identification between viewers and the gaze of their flâneur-protagonists, creating, as a result, a shared feeling of nostalgia for a city that no longer exists. O Invasor, by contrast, uses camera work to de-stabilize the viewers’ gaze, much complicating our attempts to identify with its protagonists and their ways of looking at the city. This paper will examine how gaze (camera gaze, characters’ gaze, implied viewers’ gaze) relates to issues of class difference and spatial division in the three films, paying most attention to O Invasor. By comparing this film to O Príncipe and Urbânia, it will re-assess the meanings of the invasion suggested in its title.

In the last 30 years São Paulo has become one of four largest cities in the world. It has also gone through economic changes common to other Western cities in the same period: a decrease in industrial activity and an increase in the financial and service sectors. Unemployment and under-employment soared in the 1980s and 1990s, and with them came a corresponding rise in crime and violence. Underground sources of jobs and leisure, such as the drug traffic, became ever more attractive options, particularly for uneducated male youth. These economic and social changes have had an effect on the spatial configuration of the city, with processes of gentrification and the creation of fortified villages and secured condominiums on the one hand, and the exponential growth of unregulated building in the outskirts (*periferia*) of the city, on the other.¹ Land speculation, which had already moved much of São Paulo’s financial activity from the city centre to the glossy tall buildings of Avenida Paulista in the 1970s and 1980s, created new hubs for financial activity on Avenidas Luis Carlos Berrini and Marginal Pinheiros on the south side (in the 1990s). In the last years of the twentieth century, the centre of the city became a place for cheap commerce and services provided by migrants from the poorer northeastern regions of the country, as well as Korean and South-American immigrants, who have occupied the traditional Jewish and Lebanese neighbourhoods known in the city for the manufacturing and commerce of clothing.

These changes in the physical space of São Paulo are the focus of three films released early in the twenty-first century: *O Príncipe* (2002; *The Prince*), by Ugo Giorgetti; *Urbânia* (2001), by Flávio Frederico; and *O Invasor* (2002; *The Trespasser*), by Beto Brant. All three films convey a sense of deep division in the urban space by focusing on the 'invasion' of certain parts of São Paulo by people who supposedly do not belong there: homeless, squatters, inhabitants of *periferia*. But they do so in different ways. The first two films play with the identification between viewers and the gaze of their *flâneur*-protagonists, creating, as a result, a shared feeling of nostalgia for a city that no longer exists. *O Invasor*, by contrast, uses camera work to de-stabilize the viewers' gaze, complicating our attempts to identify with its protagonists and their ways of looking at the city. This paper will examine how gaze (camera gaze, characters' gaze, implied viewers' gaze) relates to issues of class difference and spatial division in the three films, paying most attention to *O Invasor*. By comparing this film to *O Príncipe* and *Urbânia*, I hope to re-assess the meanings of the invasion suggested in its title. The disturbing gaze that looks back at the viewers in *O Invasor* can be better understood when contrasted with the self-important *flâneur* gaze of the first two films.

In *The Country and the City* Raymond Williams observes that the 'perception of the qualities of the modern city had been associated, from the beginning, with a man walking, as if alone, in its streets' (156). Indeed, most studies on *flânerie* agree that the solitary wanderer, or the *flâneur*, has come to embody urban modernity as perhaps no other inhabitant of the city. Yet, the *flâneur* is, at the same time, a rather vague figure: is he really always detached from the crowd or can he sometimes get involved, even politically involved, as Baudelaire did in the 1848 Revolution?² Is he a consumer or alien to consumerism? Is he a collector? A detective? What attracts me to the *flâneur* is precisely his theoretical flexibility, as it were, the vagueness which is often associated with the vague and tentative processes of trying to account for the fragmentary urban experience typified in the São Paulo of these films.

Most commentators on the *flâneur* will agree that he is a detached, uninvolved observer, who can gaze at the crowd without being necessarily affected by it, and above all, without being noticed. This kind of gaze and possibility of gaze have always involved a degree of power – a power that is embodied, in the first place, in the gender of the *flâneur*. Janet Wolff has famously called the woman wanderer, or *flâneuse*, an impossibility (154), and Susan Buck-Morss strongly agrees: 'I mean this: the *flâneur* was simply the name of a man who loitered; but all the women who loitered risked being seen as whores, as the term street walker or tramp applied to women makes it clear' (119).³

The ability to wander and gaze without being noticed or feared also belongs to certain social classes more than others. In Baudelaire's prose poem 'Eyes of the Poor,' the poet disapproves of his lover's contempt and impatience for the poor that gaze, in admiration, as the wealthy (including the poet and his lover) enjoy themselves at the opening night of a new café. The gaze of the poor makes the poet feel guilty, and he cannot avoid a certain sympathy and solidarity for 'the family of eyes.' She, however, feels that her space is being invaded, and such is her discomfort that she wants them to be removed. In the Paris of Baudelaire, the relationship between gaze, power, and social class was already apparent. Even more so in contemporary São Paulo, where unemployment, social disparity and pressure for consumption has populated the city with eyes that not only look in admiration at how the rich amuse themselves in restaurants and cafés: they also make the upper classes feel threatened and paranoid

with fear. At the same time, the eyes of the rich continue to threaten the poor with expulsion, exclusion and abuse, as Baudelaire's lover wanted to do. City planners have built shopping malls throughout Latin American cities where the middle classes and the wealthy can loiter without being watched by the eyes of the poor; without feeling that their space is being invaded by those who do not belong.⁴

If the exchange of gaze between social classes has become a heightened, sometimes even dangerous process of negotiation in cities like São Paulo, is there space for *flânerie*? For Buck-Morss, in our current world 'The *flâneur* thus becomes extinct only by exploding into a myriad forms, the phenomenological characteristic of which, no matter how new they may appear, continue to bear its traces, as *Urform*' (105). In other words, *flânerie* nowadays can take the form of listening to the radio, watching film and television, web-browsing, etc. Focusing particularly on cinema, Bruno agrees that

As perceptual modes, *flânerie* and cinema share the montage of images, the spatio-temporal juxtaposition, the obscuring of the mode of production, and the visio-omic impact - the spectatorial reading of bodily signs. The dream web of film reception, with its geographical implantation, embodies *flânerie*'s mode of watching and its public dimension. (48)

But how is power transacted in these new forms of *flânerie*, film particularly, if observer and observed are not expected to share the same physical space or have, as far as the great majority of viewers are concerned, any direct contact? Laura Mulvey's influential article 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' used Freudian and Lacanian theory to identify how power is at play in the pleasure of watching films. Focused particularly on the phenomenon that Freud described as scopophilia, her article discussed power exclusively in connection to gender.⁵ Yet, although it would be difficult to extend most of her analyses and conclusions into class issues, Mulvey's basic premise that it is 'the place of the look that defines cinema, the possibility of varying it and exposing it' has broader consequences that go beyond gender relations. The 'place of look,' i.e. the gaze, plays a definitive role in the class assumptions that we, as viewers, are invited to make when watching these three films about São Paulo.

Faced with these new forms of *flânerie*, does the act of strolling through the city – traditional *flânerie* – survive? To judge by *O Príncipe* and *Urbânia*, *flânerie* in São Paulo now takes the form of a nostalgic, even resentful gaze at the city. It is true that nostalgia has always been part of the *flâneur*'s experience. In Baudelaire we find a mixed celebration of the crowd and the experience of modernity along with a certain nostalgia for what they were displacing, for earlier modes of personal exchange and other rhythms of life. Yet, the *flâneur*'s job is not to be nostalgic. As Muñoz Milanes has pointed out, for the *flâneur* the city is a palimpsest where older forms co-exist with new (2). The *flâneur* is a modern allegorist for whom the fragments, the residues, the rejects of the past acquire new meanings and significances:⁶ they are not frozen into an idealized form.

This is not the case with Giorgetti's *O Príncipe*. Giorgetti has been accused of being 'an excessively paulista' director (Eduardo). Yet, filming in the open spaces of São Paulo was a new experience for him. His previous works were all theatrically conceived within enclosed spaces: *Jogo Duro* (1985), *Festa* (1989), *Sábado* (1995), and *Boleiros* (1998). *O Príncipe* brought together big screen names such as Eduardo Tornaghi and Bruna Lombardi, the latter causing particular interest at the time because she had

been mostly absent from the screens after having once been one of Brazil's most desired sex symbols of the 1980s.⁷ At the beginning of the film, Gustavo (Tornaghi) is returning to Brazil after living 20 years in Paris. We don't know why he went nor what he did in Paris. We first see him flying over the city on his return flight, and then arriving by taxi in the bohemian Mourato Coelho Street in Vila Madalena, where his mother lives. In the early 1980s, when he left São Paulo, Vila Madalena was already a bohemian neighbourhood, but only for university students and artists. In the 1990s the region became a mainstream leisure destination for the middle classes. Gustavo reacts with disbelief as he gazes at the street now full of sidewalk bars and loud music, asking the driver if they indeed are in the right place. His reason for returning is the fact that his nephew (Ricardo Blat) had recently been sent to a mental institution. In his eventually suicidal delusions he believes that the lights of the city are dimming, and will eventually go out completely. 'Apagão,' darkness, is in fact a serious threat to the city not only for those living in a mental asylum. The film also plays on the metaphorical relationship between light/enlightenment and darkness/barbarism.

Throughout the film, the camera emphasizes the subjective gaze of Gustavo, often focusing on his enigmatic face. For if the plot tells us very little about Gustavo, his face does not tell us much more: he invariably smiles when people tell him what has been happening to the city, regardless of whether it is good or bad. He is myopic but often fails to wear glasses, so that he has to focus more sharply when trying to see. That is, the act of seeing, Gustavo's gaze, is made visible, noticeable, by the way his face is filmed. This is reinforced by his pale blue eyes. And as the camera often pans or cuts from his enigmatic face to what he is gazing at, we are given his views of the city, and rarely the city without his intermediation: it is his gaze that shows us São Paulo. His gaze, and therefore ours, is also informed by what he hears from the old friends he meets. First, Marino Esteves (Ewerton de Castro), once a leftist intellectual like Gustavo. He now works as cultural producer for a large private corporation. Marino is friends with famous politicians and arts people, appears constantly in the social pages of the newspapers, and insists that Gustavo should come to live in Brazil because intellectuals can now find highly paid jobs in private companies as organizers or producers of cultural events. At the opposite end we have Renato (Otávio Augusto), an alcoholic journalist who lost his legs in an accident when the taxi he was in fell into a large pothole in the centre of the city. He has a bitter and cynical view of the role of intellectuals in the city and of what has become of the city as a whole. Renato is what is left of the old-style *flâneur* in São Paulo: a journalist who used to live the city in its intensity, he was left handicapped by the dangers of the city, by the physical precariousness of its infra-structure. He is a *flâneur* who can no longer walk and his current views of São Paulo are a kind of phantasmagoria created by his drinking and his constant memories of how the city used to be. The third friend is Aron (Elias Andreatto), a son of Jewish immigrants, who still lives in the once Jewish neighbourhood of Bom Retiro, now the home to Koreans. He works as a volunteer in a shelter for the homeless, and lives poorly in what used to be his father's factory.

Gustavo's apparently uninvolved observation of the city is that of a *flâneur*: his main occupation in the film is to gaze at the city and its inhabitants; his re-encounter with São Paulo is the theme of the film. Yet the film presents us with no scenes of traditional *flânerie*, that is, of Gustavo as a solitary man immersed in the diverse crowd in the centre of the city. We see him, instead, observing in disbelief the places where some of

his intellectual friends now hang out: the glossy buildings in the new business centre near Avenida Marginal; an upper-class gym; and a pre-concert reception organized by a corporation. He goes to these places in order to see (but not necessarily talk to) his former lover, the still beautiful Maria Cristina (Bruna Lombardi), now one of the intellectuals who has made a career in the corporate world. Gustavo's interested gaze could perhaps classify him as a stalker rather than a *flâneur*, but the act of stalking in *O Príncipe* is quite distinct from what it would be if the film were a thriller, or a conventional love story. On the one hand, it emphasizes his deliberate, *flâneur*-like detachment, i.e., his lack of desire to get involved with his former lover, with his old friends, and ultimately with the city and the nation where he is only a temporary visitor (his sole involvement being with his nephew). At the same time, the act of stalking allows Gustavo, and therefore the viewer, to gaze, like a *flâneur*, at a 'new' (from Gustavo's perspective) São Paulo, a city where money seems to have become the only value, even for former leftist intellectuals like his friends. Indeed, each of the scenes in question emphasizes context and *mise-en-scène*, showing Maria Cristina as part of a group. Thus, the camera/Gustavo, and the viewers, can gaze at a crowd of intellectual and powerful *paulistas* as they move about, talk to each other, and occupy spaces in the city. In these new, privatized spaces of São Paulo, *flânerie* (of sorts) is an occupation for those who can appear to be there with a purpose, or who have been invited. On the opposite end of the social scale, we also see Gustavo staring at a disproportionate number of muggings, armed chases, beggars, and homeless; or walking amidst unrealistic amounts of rubbish in central streets. The contrast between these two types of spaces – the glamorous private space of corporations and the decaying public space of city streets – is what *O Príncipe* is about.

In this context, the most interesting scene of *flânerie* in the film is a nocturnal one in which Gustavo pushes Renato's wheelchair into the centre of the city, after both men, drunk, leave an expensive restaurant on the once iconic Avenida São Luis. At first we see them from the window of the restaurant, as the waiter rings a taxi observing the street filmed in dark blue light. We then see a drunk Gustavo celebrating Galeria Alvorada – an arcade that used to be an encounter for intellectual activities in the 1960s and 1970s. The scene is a masterpiece in nostalgia: both men call out names that can no longer be found there, and celebrate the lights of the long vanished arcades; Renato even pretends to sit in a sidewalk table of a restaurant that no longer exists. And we know that they are not there not because they say so, but because the camera reveals their absence to us. In other words, the scene plays with an apparent disjunction between the characters' gaze, i.e., what they pretend to see, the city of their memories, and the viewers' gaze, which is guided by what the camera actually shows. And what the camera shows, illuminated by a constant blue light, is the reverse of the glamorous modernity of Galeria Alvorada: it moves around the square focusing on the homeless, each group or family lighting their fire in an abandoned oil drum. Next to the place where they used to sit in the café, there is now a man sleeping, actually being awakened by the two noisy *flâneurs*. Instead of the cafe mentioned by the characters, we now see the protective metal grilles of what looks like a condominium. Everywhere the camera moves we see not the public domain of central city streets invoked by the two men, but the abject 'private' life of homeless people, poverty, and rubbish. Gustavo and Renato do not feel threatened: rather the scene is filmed as a phantasmagoria in which the two characters, although immersed and walking in what is clearly supposed

to be a horrid urban scene, seem detached, unaffected by it. Just before Renato enters the taxi that will take him home, leaving Gustavo alone to have a last wander in the *praça*, the camera focuses on a statue of Dante Alighieri, and Renato then starts to recite lines from the *Inferno*, in Italian – not surprisingly those that describe Dante's Florence as the *città partita* which, the poet complained, had become the *trista selva*. In other words, civilization and modernity (represented by the neoclassical architecture of the city and by its ties with Italian and European immigration) have been replaced in São Paulo by barbarism. The centre of the city, once inhabited by leftist enlightened intellectuals like Gustavo, Renato, and his friends, has now been invaded by beggars, by the homeless and the poor. Put like this, the argument is basically reactionary, at odds therefore with what one imagines to be the beliefs of the leftist protagonist, and with the general ideology of the film in its critique of intellectuals selling out to the big corporations. The only way this scene can avoid being no more than a reactionary attack on the poor invading the centre of the city is by focusing not on the city itself, but on the sentimental gaze of the protagonist.

That is, although apparently playing on the disjunction between the city we see and the city in the characters' memories, *O Príncipe* actually drives us to identify with the protagonist's gaze, making us see the current city through the city invoked by his memories. Most of us would never have been to Paribar, would not have been part of the extremely select intellectual group that met in Galeria Alvorada, which included famous musicians like Chico Buarque de Holanda and Paulo Vanzolin. Certainly most people in São Paulo were not, especially the people who are shown in the film sleeping on the streets – or their parents. Has the city become worse for them? How inclusive was São Paulo's modernity for the majority of its population, particularly those that immigrated to it attracted by job opportunities in the 1960s and 1970s? I do not wish to make an apology of the current economic conditions, nor downplay the decay of the centre, especially in the late 1990s. Yet, the nostalgia the film involves us with, by making us identify with the way Gustavo gazes at the city, plays *selvageria* sentimentally against a modernity that was always much less enlightened than it wants to suggest. The economic disparity the film shows us was already there in the 1970s and 1980s, and it is only Gustavo's nostalgia that can make us think otherwise. In other words, by identifying with Gustavo's gaze, we are also identifying with his prejudices as upper-class intellectual: as the film's (implied) viewers, we are expected to share his social class.

Refining Mulvey's Lacanian analysis of the cinematic gaze, Slavoj Žižek defines nostalgia in film as a concentration on the gaze *per se*. His point of departure is Lacan's antinomy between gaze and eye: 'the eye viewing the object is on the side of the subject, while the gaze is on the side of the object. When I look at an object, the object is already gazing at me, and from a point at which I cannot see it' (Žižek, 1991: 109).

In other words, the 'gaze qua object functions like a blot that blurs the transparency of the viewed image. I can never see properly, can never include in the totality of my field of vision, the point of the other from which it gazes back at me' (114). Nostalgic films make the gaze qua object appear as such. What fascinates the viewer is not what the character sees, but the gaze of the observer:

the function of the nostalgic object is precisely to conceal an antinomy between eye and gaze – i.e. the traumatic impact of the gaze qua object – by means of its power of fascination. In nostalgia, the gaze of the other is in a way domesticated,

gentrified; instead of the gaze erupting like a traumatic, disharmonious blot, we have the illusion of seeing ourselves seeing, of seeing the gaze itself.

Thus, what fascinates us and draws our attention in *O Príncipe* is not necessarily the shots of a decayed São Paulo, but the way Gustavo gazes nostalgically at it. This becomes even clearer in *Urbânia*, the first feature film by Flávio Frederico, who had won several prizes for his shorts.⁸ It deals with exactly the same theme as *O príncipe*, that is, the decay of the centre of the city and its invasion by the poor. Like *O príncipe*, it focuses on the subjective gaze of a male protagonist, senhor Edmundo (Adriano Stuart), a *flâneur* who remembers the city of yesteryear. But this time, the *flâneur* is blind. In a framing that is intentionally exaggerated and, to a certain degree, farcical, we have a road movie, a *flânerie* exercise, by someone who is observing the city but who actually cannot see it. The blind spot in the observers's gaze (to repeat Zizek's use of the Lacanian terms) is now made literal. The gaze sees only what it is in the memory of the eye, as it were, and fragments of this memory are given to us through images of old films about São Paulo.⁹

Urbânia is extraordinarily sad because the blind man realizes all the time that the city of his memory does not correspond to the current city. He knows that through other senses: smells, sounds, tactile sensations. He knows it because his driver/friend José Carlos (Turíbio Ruiz) sometimes says so, but above all it is we, the viewers who 'tell' him, as it were, what the city is like. The camera shows us, not him, the present city, and we provide him with the gaze that he does not have. At the same time, our gaze is informed by his nostalgic gaze. We become sad for him, that is, we establish a sentimental connection with his memory. There is a clear relationship of power – we, viewers, have power over him to the extent that we know things he does not know. But this power is being manipulated, of course, by the director, who, in making us believe we are providing the poor blind man with scenes he does not want to see, also makes us believe in the city of his memory, makes us see the city as we imagine he would see it if he could.

The blind man and his driver form a fictional framing for the film, which also includes documentary interviews with people whom the blind man and his driver actually meet: street children, prostitutes, squatters. This experimental form plays one genre against the other: the over-the-top, non-realist plot of the old man who has left the city decades ago and has now returned to search for his beloved Teresa makes the few documentary interviews stand out. The interviews, on the other hand, open the film for the voice of the poor, allowing them to speak for themselves. Visually, *Urbânia* is quite striking, particularly in the experimental, less realistic shots of the city. Yet, the film seems to be dominated by an intensely nostalgic, extremely sad tone, which relies on our pity for the protagonist, and on our sense of loss of a city that many of us actually never knew. Thanks to this overpowering feeling of nostalgia, the voices of the poor which constitute the documentary part of the film become muffled, hazed.

A good example comes in the most nostalgic of the scenes in the film, when the old man goes to an old mansion, trying to find Teresa. The mansion is barely there, its fine architectural features have been mostly destroyed, and it is now inhabited by squatters. At the end of the interview with one of the women squatters, we learn that the government will be building three apartment blocks for the poor inhabitants of the 'cortiço' (slum), and the two old houses will be converted into schools. But this piece

of positive news seems to affect us less than the general sadness of the loss of identity of the house, shown as the camera focuses on the tactile attempts by the blind man to feel it. We also learn that some of the people who invaded the house got rid of its most beautiful architectural details because they supposedly did not understand their aesthetic or historic value. Once again, as in *O Príncipe*, the people who have invaded the centre of the city are presented as barbaric, so uneducated that they cannot appreciate how civilized the city they came to inhabit once was. The argument is, as before, rather reactionary, at odds with the film's otherwise sympathetic presentation of some of the poor inhabitants of the city. The only way that such an argument can be sustained in the film is by focusing, as Žižek put it, on the gaze per se of the nostalgic (and blind) protagonist.

I want now to compare these nostalgic views of São Paulo with a film that does not appeal at all to nostalgia: Beto Brant's *O Invasor*. Although *O Invasor* does not deal specifically with the changes in the city centre, its theme, like that of the previous two films, is the invasion of (wealthy) parts of the city by those who are not supposed to belong there, i.e., the inhabitants of the poor and dangerous *periferia* (outskirts) of the city. But unlike what happens in the other films, the idea of invasion, announced by the film's title and supposedly followed by the plot, is actually questioned and undermined by the film as a whole. Rather than making us identify with the gaze per se of the protagonist, *O Invasor* plays with and questions the assumptions of our gaze as implied middle-class viewers.

In the opening scene, we see two men come out of a car that has just been parked by the curb. They are being filmed from behind the bars of a window or door, and look apprehensive. Their clothes, attitudes, and the car they drive indicate their upper-middle-class status. The camera follows them as they move towards the entrance and come into the place from which they are being filmed. As viewers we do not know this yet, but the camera performs the same movement of the eyes, as it were, of the person sitting at the table, the contract killer Anísio (Paulo Miklos), whose services they have come to hire. We become aware of this when the two people being observed, Ivan (Marco Ricca) and Gilberto or Giba (Alexandre Borges), look straight into the camera and speak to it, making it clear that the point of view from which they are being observed is inhabited, belongs to someone. It is a disturbing scene because as viewers we tend to identify with the camera gaze, so that when the visibly scared characters look at the camera, they seem to be looking at us. Are they scared of us? Is there something behind us that we cannot see and they can? In conventional point-of-view shots the camera focuses on the face of a character who gazes at something/someone, and then follows (or cuts to, through reverse shot) the lead of the gaze, showing what the person is looking at. Here, we have the gaze but we do not know who is looking. Thus, on the one hand, when Ivan and Gilberto look in our direction we fear being identified with this faceless gaze, we fear being misidentified with the camera. On the other hand, as viewers, our tendency is also to identify with the characters, that is, with Gilberto and Ivan and their fearful look towards the camera. Thus, like them, we also fear what they are looking at, but differently from them, we do not know yet what it is. What we fear, in other words, is the gaze whose identity we don't know and that can ultimately be our own. When Anísio speaks and his faceless voice is identified with the camera, his gaze becomes extremely powerful, terrifying, and because we see things as the camera is seeing, we are partly identified with it, and partly with the terrified eyes

of the characters who gaze back. With our identity confused, we become involved in a paranoid relationship with the gaze. Later, we will discover that this paranoia mimics the fearful, often paranoid relationship between social classes in São Paulo: Anísio, the paid killer and owner of the voice, belongs to a different part of the city from the two protagonists. The themes of invasion, trespassing, of two worlds that observe and invade each other operate in the film at the levels of the plot and camera work.

On the one side we have the comfortable upper-middle-class world of the three engineers, partners in a building firm. On the other, the *periferia* world where Anísio, the hired killer, comes from. The upper middle class is represented above all by Giba and Ivan, who are often shown in their comfortable and well-decorated flats, each with their middle-class dilemmas and stories. Giba has a beautiful wife and a daughter whom he wants to protect from the evils of the world, even her bad dreams. He is shown in his role at home as a caring, loving father. Ivan is a man in crisis, his wife is a successful professional and the two seem not to be able to communicate any more. We hardly see the third partner while he is alive but we get to know his house after he is dead – a spectacular modern house with a swimming pool and plenty of original art. A brief flash-back informs us that Ivan met a former colleague from the university who offered his building firm a financial deal that would make them millionaires. We never learn what the deal is exactly but we know it has something to do with the government. The deal is illegal and the senior partner does not agree with it. Desperate to become millionaires they decide to hire a paid killer to eliminate the unwilling partner. Thus, the apparently honest, wealthy middle class is made to enter the world of its own paranoia: the world of violent death that in the everyday news is associated with the dangerous *periferia* around the city. Their decision to kill the partner and hire Anísio takes them, then, to a place of the city they don't know and where they don't belong; it makes them trespass the spatial boundaries of that world.

Although *O Invasor* is not strictly filmed using subjective camera (i.e., from Ivan's point of view) we come to know about many events in the plot at the same time as Ivan. A good example is his lover Cláudia (Malu Mader), who is being paid by Giba to spy on him: we only discover this when Ivan invades her flat and hears Giba's message on her answering machine. It is therefore through Ivan's gaze that we see much of the plot unravel, and to a certain extent we are made to identify with his gaze. At the same time, his gaze often faces the camera, confronting the viewer in a deranged, interrogative manner. Lúcia Nagib described it as the gaze of the 'pure expressionist man, who "does not look, but sees", in Kasimir Edschmidt's famous definition . . . As in the old expressionist films, in which big wide-open eyes obsessively occupy the center of the screen, Ivan's deep eyes seem to reach beyond the object they are looking at, producing a metaphysical vision which is the exteriorization of his inner world' (24).

It is therefore by following Ivan's perspective that we slowly find out that the two worlds mentioned above (of the wealthy middle classes and of the crime-ridden *periferia*) are already well connected. The person who suggested Anísio for the killing job was Norberto, a policeman, who is also Giba's partner in the ownership of a high-class brothel, a new line of business that Giba had started only a few months before. Ivan is shocked and fascinated to find out about Giba's links to the underworld. Giba and Ivan drive to and from the brothel in passageways that cut the city from underneath. In other words, the underground, nightly world that Ivan is now discovering through Giba is emphasized visually through night images of tunnels.¹⁰

Moreover, the central plot of the film – the assassination of the business partner and its consequences for the naive Ivan – is completely imbedded in the space of the city, or, to use Lefebvre's terminology, in the production of urban space in São Paulo. It is not by chance that the partners work for a construction firm. We often see Giba and Ivan in building sites of high-rise flats which are not only changing the space of the city, but are also reproducing the partners' own way of life. In other words, the corruption, the dirty deal, the decision to make money fast and kill the partner, are all directly connected and have an effect on the production of space in the city; they underpin what is usually described as the regulated space of the richer neighborhoods of São Paulo.

We first see Giba and Ivan on a construction site when the repenting Ivan tries to convince Giba to cancel the deal with Anísio. The neighbourhood is shown first from a relatively high position and then from the street level, allowing us to recognize it almost certainly as Vila Madalena (the same neighbourhood where Gustavo's mother, in *O Príncipe*, lives). The old simple houses are being replaced by luxurious apartment buildings like the one Giba and Ivan are building. The second construction site, higher than the first, emphasizes the contrast between the growing high-rise of once again luxurious apartment buildings and the leafy, rich neighbourhood of Jardins. The third time, when Ivan has become aware that his own life is under threat, we see the city from an even higher position, actually a rare panoramic shot from a high building being built in a high part of the city. This visual move from the underground to the high rise of apartment building sites corresponds to the two economies being described in the film: the supposedly regulated and honest business of construction and the underground economy of paid killings and prostitution.

The middle-class characters are counter-posed in the film by Anísio, the paid killer. After hearing his voice in the first scene, we see Anísio for the first time when he goes to the construction company, some twenty minutes later in the film. A sound bridge links this scene to the one before, the funeral of the assassinated partner and his wife. The funeral scene is brilliantly filmed with a hand-held camera to the loud music of the paulista rock group Tolerância Zero singing the refrain 'welcome to the nightmare of reality.' The same song takes us into the next scene, also filmed with a hand-held camera and using the same technique of the first scene in the film. The camera moves quickly into the company's headquarter, going upstairs towards Ivan's office. The looks on the faces of the people working in the offices indicate that whoever it is they are looking at, that person should not be there. They are being observed, invaded by an intruder, a trespasser who appears to be behind the camera. Once again, our identity as viewers is confused: on the one hand, we are positioned 'behind the camera,' as it were, so that when the characters look surprised and startled to see the camera, they seem surprised to see 'us'. On the other hand, we also tend to identify with the look of the startled characters, and we fear whatever it is they are looking at. In a reproduction of the effect of the first scene, we are confusedly involved in a paranoid fear of a gaze we cannot identify and that can ultimately be our own. When the camera reaches Ivan's office we are given the first sight of Anísio, and are finally able to identify him as the reason for the other characters' fears.

Anísio is bringing the jewels and documents that belonged to the assassinated partner and his wife to Giba and Ivan, and from then on he comes repeatedly to the firm to blackmail them. As Lúcia Nagib observes, most office buildings in São Paulo

have security barriers that make this aspect of the plot most improbable. Moreover, Anísio had been recommended to Giba by his partner, a high-ranking policeman – a fact that in ‘real life’ would most certainly dissuade him from any attempt at blackmail. In one of his visits to the office, Anísio meets the daughter of the deceased partner, the now orphan Marina (Mariana Ximenes), and ingratiates himself with her. They become a couple and Anísio moves to her spectacularly rich house. Ivan, in the meantime, becomes edgier and more uncomfortable with his own guilt and starts to fear that he will be killed, as well, by Anísio and Giba. He loses control, stops going to work, buys a gun and ends up lost in Anísio’s neighbourhood, in Zona Sul (South Side), running with the gun in his hand. At the end of the film he gives himself up to the police, who in turn take him back to Giba and Anísio. This neat plot of double invasion – on the one hand Anísio invades the world of the wealthy, and on the other Ivan invades the criminal world of the *periferia* – belongs less to realism than to medieval moral drama, or farce. But *O Invasor* is neither of those things. It appeals in many ways to realism,¹¹ and even uses documentary style mixed with video clip techniques in the long sequence when Anísio takes Marina to his *bairro*, in Zona Sul – a section that breaks visually and narratively with the rest of the film.¹² If this otherwise apparently realist film uses elements from medieval drama or farce, as refracted through expressionist cinema, it is, in my view, to foreground the enormous distance that separates the poor from the rich in Brazil, a distance so vast that only farce, as it were, can bridge. In other words, the history of fast social ascension on the part of Anísio and of social descent on the part of Ivan is so rare that it is best represented fictionally as farce.

The improbability of the plot also helps us read Ivan and Anísio as opposite poles in a moral allegory, that is, a contemporary moral allegory in which the opposing forces are constantly inverted, and confused. Ivan’s deranged gaze derives, then, from his middle-class paranoid fear that, as Giba says in the beginning of the film, ‘these people [the poor] want your car, your clothes, they want to fuck your wife.’ This paranoia is fed by Ivan’s own naiveté, i.e., by the fact that he does not seem to know what Giba, the police and Anísio know: that the underground crime world that Anísio represents, the crime world of *favelas* and *periferia*, is fed by and linked economically and logically to the very fabric of the city. To put it in yet another way, as a naive middle-class character Ivan is driven, thanks to his own ambition, to commit crime and establish an alliance with the criminal sectors of the *periferia*. Those are the sectors of society that he, as a middle-class man, otherwise fears, so he cannot help but imagine that they will take control of his life; that they will take his job, his clothes, and not his but another rich person’s woman – Marina. Anísio, in other words, can be read as the projection of the paranoia of the upper and middle classes: the fear that the poor, driven to crime by the upper classes’ own greed, will come from the *periferia* and invade their part of the city. Hence our split identity (as implied middle/upper-class viewers) with regard to the camera gaze in the beginning of the film: the violence we fear may be ultimately caused by ourselves.

It is thus interesting to examine in more detail Anísio’s relationship with Marina, the rich young daughter of the deceased partner. Described as ‘lost’ by Lúcia Nagib, Marina would be a completely unlikely partner for Anísio were it not for the obvious element that links her world to his: drugs. Anísio first manages to communicate with Marina by helping her not to be afraid of a killer dog and then taking her a puppy as a gift. In this first visit, he offers her marijuana and under the effect of the drug they can

dialogue and understand each other. Even more so when he takes her into his *bairro* and the two snort cocaine together and have sex for the first time. Later, Marina introduces him to her upper-class world of ecstasy, and the macho Anísio even learns to accept Marina's lesbian sex. If the *periferia* and the upper-middle-class neighbourhoods of São Paulo are shown to be worlds apart in the film, they are nevertheless linked by the powerful economics of drugs – which belongs, as we know, not only to poor criminals or to young 'lost' girls like Marina, but also to large functioning sectors of society, like Giba and Ivan. Drugs are part of the fabric of city in *O Invasor*. There are numerous scenes in which the camera mimics being under the effect or intoxicated: the slow, sleepy, light-filled encounter between Marina and Anísio in her house under the effect of marijuana, just mentioned; their look over the *periferia* and energetic sex under the influence of cocaine; the blue, ecstasy-like scene filmed with a hand-held camera in the nightclub and so on. Not to mention alcohol, which guides the camera movement that tracks Ivan in many scenes.

This way of filming further destabilizes what Laura Mulvey calls the 'place of look' in *O Invasor*. As we have seen, the film apparently ascribes the place of look to a middle-class male, but also to his counterpoint, the violent *periferia* criminal. In both cases, however, the gaze looks back at the viewers, and through an inversion of point of view, the 'viewers' gaze' (i.e., the other side of the camera) is also exposed. In other words, the camera work of *O Invasor* includes the viewer in a gazing process that is shifting, unreliable, even paranoid, and which is made more so by the illusion of being affected by drugs. This shifting and paranoid gazing process is similar to the gaze daily exchanged between different social classes in São Paulo. In *O Príncipe* and *Urbânia*, by contrast, the 'place of look' is ascribed to middle-aged, middle-class male *flâneurs*, and, as viewers, we are expected to identify with their nostalgic view of the city, and, hence, with their class. Thus, the *flâneur* – the man alone walking in the city – becomes, in both those films, a reactionary, nostalgic figure, associated with a sense of modernity that is perceived as lost because the city has been invaded by those who do not belong to it, the poor. This theme of invasion is also announced by the title of *O Invasor*, but it is undermined by the film itself, which suggests that the two worlds that are supposedly invading each other are already connected by the roots and are, already, interdependent.

Notes

- 1 For excellent analyses of these processes see Teresa Caldeira's *City of Walls*, and Ermínia Maricato's *Metrópole na Periferia do Capitalismo*. See also Sá's *Life in the Megalopolis*.
- 2 Later, Baudelaire dismissed his own participation in the barricades of the 1848 Revolution as unimportant. For excellent analyses of Baudelaire's politics and of his participation in the 1858 Revolution see T. J. Clark's *The Absolute Bourgeois* and F. W. J. Hemming's *Culture and Society in France, 1848-1898*.
- 3 Some feminist critics disagree. See, for instance, Wilson.
- 4 In a certain way this was also, in part, the function of nineteenth-century Parisian arcades. See Buck-Morss. For malling in contemporary Latin America see Draper.
- 5 Her theory generated ample debates in the decades that followed. See, for instance: Kaplan; Neale; and Bruno. For a good history of this debate see Manlove.

- 6 For allegory and flânerie, particularly in Baudelaire, see Walter Benjamin's *Trauerspiel* and 'One Way Street'. See also Bolle, 134.
- 7 Nevertheless the film was a box office failure.
- 8 The film was produced in part with money from a German foundation and in part by the International festival in Rotterdam, and received public funds as well from the city of São Paulo.
- 9 Including Luis Sérgio Person's *São Paulo S/A*; Walter Hugo Khouri's *Noite Vazia*; and Humberto Mauro's *Ganga Bruta*.
- 10 Ismail Xavier: talk at the Department of Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American Studies, University of Manchester, 2008.
- 11 For an excellent discussion of realism in *O Invasor*, see Nagib. Against many critics that see *O Invasor* as a realist representation of contemporary Brazil, she reads it as an expressionist film, pointing to many stylistic features (including acting and lighting) that emphasize its departure from realist aesthetics.
- 12 This long sequence mentioned also helps to destabilize the position of the gaze in the film. It is reminiscent of video-clips partly because it is filmed to the rhythm of rapper Sabotage's song 'Zona Sul.' In other words, the words of the song (an insider's view of the *bairro*) appear to have narrative predominance over the camera gaze. The importance of the soundtracks in *O Invasor* deserves closer attention.

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