


**AMAZONIAN NIHILISM: NIETZSCHE, FREUD AND DALCÍDIO JURANDIR**

**O NIILISMO AMAZÔNICO: NIETZSCHE, FREUD E DALCÍDIO JURANDIR**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article analyzes Dalcídio Jurandir's novel "Belém do Grão Pará," which narrates Alfredo's first experiences in the city, especially those that awaken a sense of wonder followed by a feeling of helplessness. This conflict of contradictory feelings is interpreted as a nihilistic experience. This type of nihilism, experienced by Jurandir's literary characters, is understood as a "symptom" of the denial of colonial values. According to the philosophical analysis of these characters, nihilism can be understood as an epidemic phenomenon of European origin, described by Nietzsche in his metaphor of the "death of God," but transmitted to the inhabitants of the Amazon during the decolonization process, which began at the turn of the 19th century. The epicenter of its development is the modern city of Belém do Pará.

**Keywords:** Nihilism. "Death of God". Amazon. Belém.

**RESUMO**

Propõe-se, neste artigo, analisar o romance Belém do Grão Pará, de Dalcídio Jurandir, em que são narradas as primeiras experiências de Alfredo na cidade, especialmente aquelas que despertam o deslumbramento seguido pelo sentimento de desamparo. Este conflito de sentimentos contraditórios é interpretado como uma experiência niilista. Entende-se este tipo de niilismo, vivenciado pelos personagens literários de Jurandir, como "sintoma" da negação dos valores coloniais. De acordo com a análise filosófica desses personagens, o niilismo pode ser compreendido como um fenômeno epidêmico de origem europeia, descrito por Nietzsche, na sua metáfora da "morte de Deus", mas foi transmitido aos habitantes da Amazônia, a partir do processo de descolonização, que se inicia na passagem do século XIX para o século XX. E, o epicentro de seu desenvolvimento é a moderna cidade de Belém do Pará.

**Palavras-chave:** Niilismo. "Morte de Deus". Amazônia. Belém.

**RESUMEN**

Este artículo analiza la novela "Belém do Grão Pará" de Dalcídio Jurandir, que narra las primeras experiencias de Alfredo en la ciudad, especialmente aquellas que despiertan una sensación de asombro seguida de una de impotencia. Este conflicto de sentimientos contradictorios se interpreta como una experiencia nihilista. Este tipo de nihilismo, experimentado por los personajes literarios de Jurandir, se entiende como un "síntoma" de la negación de los valores coloniales. Según el análisis filosófico de estos personajes, el nihilismo puede entenderse como un fenómeno epidémico de origen europeo, descrito por Nietzsche en su metáfora de la "muerte de Dios", pero transmitido a los habitantes de la

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Amazonia durante el proceso de descolonización, que comenzó a principios del siglo XIX. El epicentro de su desarrollo es la moderna ciudad de Belém do Pará.

**Palabras clave:** Nihilismo. "Muerte de Dios". Amazonia. Belém.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Alfredo's dazzle, in contact with Belém, occurs through the intense overlapping of static and moving images, such as architectural buildings and cinema, which adorn the urban environment and, due to the pleasure provided by the fascination, exert a visual submission. However, little by little, the boy becomes aware of these fascinating images as an ornament, which hides a Belém in ruins, both from the Christian moral perspective, resulting from the emptiness that came with the "death of God", and from the material perspective, with the decline of the rubber extractive cycle.

The process of recognizing the city, carried out by Alfredo, is accompanied by doses of discouragement, resulting from the feeling of helplessness, which manifests itself as a deep nostalgia for his childhood in contact with the forest and the rivers on Marajó Island. This helplessness can be interpreted as a nihilistic experience, as a loss of meaning in life. This feeling develops in the boy as he becomes aware of the effects produced by school education and the fascinating images of the city. From the moment he understands the school as a place for the development of the faculty of pretending and the structure of the city as only masks that hides an environment contaminated by poverty and submission, the boy loses his fascination with Belém and throws himself into the precipice of nihilism, in search of new meanings for his urban life.

In the company of the cabocla Libânia, Alfredo begins a journey that deepens his knowledge of the city, lengthening his walks and reaching the peripheries. This search for a new meaning for his life in the urban environment takes him to regions inhabited by Indians, blacks and caboclos, recently abolished from slavery. These inhabitants live in a state of nihilism and seek, in any case, a new meaning for their new way of life, sometimes as traditional workers, sometimes as factory workers, who settle in those localities. Social helplessness and the condition of extreme poverty feed this need for another meaning for their existence. The alternative to not succumbing to the nihilistic void is the preservation of their religious customs and rituals, as well as keeping alive the revolt of the cabanos, conceived as a form of annihilation of their rulers, the European settlers and their descendants.

## 2 THE METAPHOR OF GOD'S DEATH

The historical and psychological process known in modernity as nihilism is a phenomenon of European origin. Artists, scientists, philosophers and writers from various

countries of the continent developed, in their works, a diagnosis of modern Europe as living in a profound state of nihilism. In philosophy, the most impactful understanding of this phenomenon is that present in Nietzsche's ideas. Nihilism manifests itself in his perspectivist philosophy under several layers of signification. However, the main identification of this phenomenon is in the metaphor of God's death:

They have never heard of the madman who lit a lantern in broad daylight and started running through the public square shouting incessantly: "I am looking for God!". But as there were many of those who did not believe in God, his cry provoked great laughter. Was he lost like a child? Said one. Is it hidden? Will he be afraid of us? Has he boarded? Has he emigrated? So they all screamed and laughed at the same time. The madman jumped in the middle of them and pierced them with his gaze. "Where God has gone," he exclaimed, "that is what I am going to tell you. *We killed him*, .... You and me! It is we, all of us, who are his murderers! But how did we do it? How did we manage to empty the sea? Who gave us a sponge to erase the entire horizon? What did we do when we unhooked the chain that connected this earth to the sun? Where is she going now? Where are we going ourselves? Far from all the suns? Are we not incessantly falling? Forward, backward, sideways, everywhere? Will there still be one above, one below? Aren't we wandering through an infinite void? Will we not feel the breath of emptiness on our faces? Won't it be colder? Don't they always seem like nights, more and more nights? Won't it be necessary to turn on the lamps first thing in the morning? Have we not yet heard anything of the noise made by the gravediggers who buried God? We have not yet felt anything of the divine decomposition?... the gods also decompose! God died! God is still dead! And it was we who killed him! How can we console ourselves, we murderers among murderers! (NIETZSCHE, 2012, p. 145-146)".

From this metaphor it is possible to extract the following interpretation: "The death of God" is the great event in modern Europe, a type of criminal death. God was murdered. But not all murderers are aware of their crime. That is why they laugh proud of having eliminated in themselves the belief in God. Without understanding that such an attitude goes against their own nature, as imaginative beings. However, the madman, in whom the imagination circulates in an uninhibited way, not only knows that God is dead, but also lives the consequences of that death. He feels the darkness in broad daylight, just as he finds no meaning in everything that exists, as if he were immersed in a great emptiness. The other murderers, who do not yet feel the consequences of God's death, will begin to feel it when they are taken by the odor of his putrefaction. Something that may not happen in Europe, because the decomposing God embarked and emigrated to the European colonies, in a deep state of rebellion against his colonizer.

"The death of God" is a recent phenomenon, typical of European modernity. Therefore, its consequences are still difficult to define. However, it is possible to identify some symptoms of this nihilistic phenomenon, such as a disease that affects human bodies and manifests itself, according to Nietzsche (1998, p. 117) in a "disease of the *nervus sympathicus*, in an abnormal secretion of bile, in a poverty of sulfate and potassium phosphate in the blood, in states of tension of the lower abdomen that prevent the circulation of blood, or even in a degeneration of the ovaries, etc.". Nihilism, according to Nietzschean philosophy, would be the symptom of physiological degeneration, a disease that arises from a meaningless life, from a deep emptiness experienced by the modern European from the "death of God".

Nihilism, understood as a disease, contaminates the entire human organism, including its psychic configuration. With "the death of God", the modern European begins to attribute to himself all the meaning of his existence. But, to do so, he clings even more to the moral values of denial of life, which, in turn, increases his self-punishment. The consequences of this denial of oneself is the exacerbation of one's resentment, as an inhibited desire to destroy those who are different and supposedly superior to one. The death of God also means the inefficiency of ascetic ideas as a mechanism for purging resentment. It remains, then, to import these "barrels of gunpowder ready to explode" to the European colonies, where it is still possible to unload them against the rebellious settlers. This discharge of violence in distant territories not only ensured the accumulation of material wealth in a tiny part of the globe, but also made possible the pacification of the European continent in the modern period.

Nihilism can be understood as a cyclical process, marked by violent and annihilating barbarism. The nihilistic cycle begins, in a person or at a certain historical moment, with the destruction of the other, considered superior, who exercises the power of domination, and ends with the annihilation of oneself, when one becomes aware of an attempt to dominate oneself. In Europe, modern nihilism begins with the murder of God. Then, in the still more advanced condition of the disease, annihilation turns against the moral values impregnated in the inhabitants of the continent. But this moment of self-destruction is interrupted by the process of decolonization, when all the destructive force accumulated by Europeans is unloaded into distant territory, inhabited by colonized people in a state of rebellion.

The first nihilistic cycle in Europe is the one that founds Western culture, whose representative landmark is the murder of the father of the primitive hour, described by Freud in *Totem in Taboo*, an occasion in which he conceives the myth to identify the origin of religion,

understood as devotion to the murdered father, elevated to the category of God. In this sense, religious sentiment would feed on the illusion of the father's protection:

A violent and jealous father, who reserves all the females for himself and expels his children when they grow up, this is what is there [...]. One day, the expelled brothers got together, slaughtered and devoured their father, thus ending the primeval horde [...]. They hated their father, who was a strong obstacle to their need for power and their sexual claims, but they also loved and admired him. After they had eliminated it, satisfied its hatred, and realized the desire for identification with it, the affectionate impulses hitherto subdued had to impose itself. This occurred in the form of repentance, a consciousness of guilt arose, which there is equivalent to the repentance felt in common. The dead became stronger than the living had been; everything as we still see it today in human destinies" (FREUD, 2012, p. 216 to 218).

The myth of the primitive horde, based on ethnographic studies of prehistoric peoples, the aborigines, carried out by Freud, can be interpreted as the murder that began, in Europe, the period dominated by religion and its moral values. In this historical moment, religion appears not only as a proposal for the negation of the world, but also declares a paranoid revolt against it, to the point of proposing its annihilation. From then on, a new meaning for life is sought, based on the yearning for another world. Such an attitude is, for Freud (2017, p. 80), a collective delusion, something deeper than illusion, and may even "spare many human beings from individual neurosis", but being unable to lead them to happiness, serving only as a consolation in the face of this possibility.

According to Freud (2017, p. 83), religion's efforts to lead man to happiness, through his protection against suffering, are nothing more than frustrated attempts. And he demarcates some moments in this process, in which the most distant would be the "victory of Christianity over pagan religions". This moment represents the cultural absorption of the religious ideal of depreciation of life, which will, in the following centuries, ground and direct the "higher psychic activities" (2017, p. 96) of the European man.

The depreciation of life, arising from the feeling of guilt, which arises in children after the murder of the violent father, manifests itself as an inhibited desire to annihilate the other and oneself. Morality, justified by religion, would be the main inhibitor of this will. In Europe, the Christian religion, with its proposal of an omnipotent God, tried to inhibit the annihilating will by denying all kinds of instinctive manifestations of the body, using the same strategy as

the father of the primitive horde, the restriction of sexual and aggressive potency. And even more, Christianity, according to Nietzsche (1998, p. 123), proposed relief for the psychic suffering resulting from this denial. It is necessary to relieve the unbearable load of resentment that is always acquiring an even higher volume: "Relief consists in the fact that the interest of the sufferer is entirely diverted from suffering." The conscience would be dulled by continuous work, unconditional obedience and love of community life. Here we have the attempt of modern Christianity and its Jesuit version, according to Nietzschean genealogy, to cure the European of the nihilistic infection.

Christian Jesuitism is yet another attempt to interrupt the process of annihilation that is developing in Europe. But, instead of diminishing, it intensifies this process, to the extent that it promotes the physiological exhaustion and the overload of the conscience of the modern European, who begins to live according to moral duty, understood as the renunciation of everything that can harm life in community. The consequences of this attempt are exhaustion due to overwork, the loss of subjectivity and creativity, the fear of loneliness and suffering, and the unbridled search for pleasure provided by community living, which is supposed to take place in the comfort of material life.

The attempts of the Christian religion to break with the logic of nihilism in modern Europe have the opposite effect. By denying suffering, one also denies its meaning, leaving only emptiness, the absence of explanation for the cause of this suffering. With this, there is an increase in resentment and consequently in the will to annihilate, which needs to be discharged, otherwise it will come back against itself. There is no other way out than to find outlets in territories not yet dominated by Christian morality. The Jesuit yearning to reach the new world can be interpreted as this attempt to interrupt European nihilism, through a large amount of annihilating discharge against non-Christians, Indians, blacks and caboclos.

The passage from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century is the period of the great discharge, a moment in which the dying Christian God, with his modern architectural constructions and with his apparatus of destruction, establishes himself in the Amazon, at the beginning of the decolonization process. This period is also the period of greatest resistance of the colonists against the submission imposed by the Europeans. The coming of the dead God to this distant territory can be identified, in the Nietzschean metaphor, when the madman cannot find him, nor can his murderers smell the odor of his putrefaction. We then have the answer to the questions of the atheists of the metaphor: "Has he embarked? Has he emigrated?". God has gone where it is still possible to discharge the will to annihilate and

alleviate the suffering caused by the accumulation of resentment. All justified by the differentiation of races and the need for machine work, as a condition of pleasure in community life.

The murdered God arrives in the Amazon accompanied by an intense justification of the need to submit to the unknown forces of nature. The resistance of the beings of the forest is the necessary balm to reduce the putrefaction of the dying. The fundamental catechesis is the work, not only to soften the sexual and violent appetites of terrible beings, but also to build large buildings and thus create visual effects that awaken the idea of God materialized. The result of these buildings is the construction of a "little Europe" in the middle of the Amazon Forest, the Belém do Grão Pará.

After three centuries of intense sacrifices, the odor of the putrefaction of the murdered God, impregnated in the holds of slave ships, begins to spread through the city of Belém, to such an extent that the colonized can no longer bear the terrible discomfort. The massacre of the "clown brig" was an attempt to mask this putrid odor. But it only accelerated its recognition. And when it is understood that God is dead, the feeling of nothingness, of deep emptiness, tends to manifest itself. Just like the entire structure in which God materializes, in this case, the city of Belém do Pará, becomes a great labyrinth of decadence. Dalcídio Jurandir's novel, the object of this study, is a poetic description of this city in ruin.

### **3 ALFRED'S BETHLEHEM**

Alfredo's arrival in modern Belém was marked by a fleeting dazzle in front of the fascinating architectural constructions. But, on his first walk, still in the vicinity of the city's port, when his mother leaves him alone for a few minutes, discouragement arrives, preceded by astonishment, when he comes across a disturbing image of a corpse in the morgue:

Through the bars, on the last stone of the morgue, at the back, at the foot of the window over the river, a corpse, naked, the trunk flayed on which a layer of fat was spread. Alfredo could not see his arms or precisely his face, only the raw fat of the deceased was clear (JURANDIR, 2005, p. 84).

The dead and disfigured body, receiving interventions as something common and routine, can be interpreted as the loss of meaning in the act of dying. In the city, death has become something banal, its mystery has been unraveled. The corpse is just another trivial



event of existence. The mysterious effect of death, capable of invading people's imagination and feelings, has been extinguished:

And soon he felt obscurely that death in the city was stripped of that modesty, decency and mystery that he transmitted to everyone in Cachoeira. There it was "bad" to leave a dead person like that, the dead person was inviolable, he was touched to wash him, to dress him, to cross his hands, to put him in a net, given only to his death. Inside the body no hand would touch after the other, the inevitable one. It would never stay there on that stone without a name, candle or origin, like a fish on ice (JURANDIR, 2005, p. 85).

The "death of God" also represents the loss of meaning of death itself. From this great event of modernity, the lifeless body became a meaningless body. Therefore, killing also loses its meaning, it becomes a banal act, which does not need elaborate justification. And the city, the labyrinth of decadence, is also the center of unjustified deaths, murder for trivial reasons and people left to die. The devaluation of death would then be a type of nihilism, which is manifested by the legitimization of the right to kill those whose death has no effect on other people.

The new meanings that human phenomena acquire in the city, make Belém a place to be, above all, understood by the countryside Alfredo. Accepting it requires the understanding of contradictory ideas, which arise in the boy's consciousness when he comes across the urban landscape. The structure of the city of Belém seems to negate the Amazon rainforest. An artificial world contrasts with the impetuous nature of rivers and forests, as Jurandir (2005, p. 86) describes: "And as the river and the dock disappeared, Belém became darker, despite the sun, or for that very reason those mansions and those silences left him with a dark heart, his walk confused".

Alfredo's life in the city can be understood as a grandiose struggle between the search for new meanings and the abandonment of those naturally existing. There are several undertakings carried out to understand Belém and, little by little, adapt to it. One of them is the cultivation of the habit of walking through the streets. In the company of the cabocla Libânia, the boy follows Conselheiro Furtado and, when he comes across the Soledade Cemetery, he is afraid of the dead, buried there, victimized by smallpox and yellow fever, a past that is still present as a ghost. Then they walk to the ver-o-peso and, when being taken by Libânia to the Church of Santo Alexandre, in Largo do Palácio, Alfredo experiences a nihilistic feeling. The temple of the dead God, although with a prominent façade, is a space

empty of meaning, its interior is dark, like a cave. Alfredo's vision can be understood as the realization that authentic Christianity has vanished, leaving only its moral values.

Another mechanism responsible for attributing meaning to life in the city is the superimposition of artificial images, especially those in motion, which control the sense of sight, through the effect of pleasure and fascination they can provide. Cine Olímpia, mixing visual projection and music, develops the ability, through technique, to arouse the boy's imagination, which awakens his most natural feelings, those flourished when he lived in Marajó. However, its visual fascination and its free flow of imagination and memory are appetizers for the glimpse of another event. While inside the Church you can see only darkness, the center of the cinema is quite illuminated.

The artificial day, produced in the center of the cinema, aims to illuminate the "new gods", who must replace the dying God. The illuminated center of the cinema was so that the city's bigwigs could be better seen. These bigwigs can be interpreted as substitute gods for their ability to impose new meanings on life in the city, through submission, masked by fascination and guaranteed by mechanical activity and the appropriation of great architectural constructions. The "new gods" are the white European colonizers and their descendants, the bosses of the workers. The Olímpia de Belém, describes Jurandir (2005, p. 201), "belonged to the bosses of the shoemaker and the carpenter, of the people who had their names in the newspaper, names on the doors and windows of offices, on the signs of commerce, industry and in the residences of doctors in Nazaré and São Jerônimo".

The main undertaking undertaken by Alfredo to eliminate the contradictions of his experience in the city and thus give meaning to his life in the city is school education. The life of a student, more lasting and repetitive, could be the definitive way to eliminate the nostalgia for his true nature, hidden by living in a world that is still meaningless. However, as he achieves good results at school, Alfredo develops a kind of cynicism, manifested as a contempt for everything that the urban environment could provide. This feeling, however, is not one of denial of the city, but is configured as the need to be even more consumed by it, to know its depths, which would be beyond the disguises created by education. By becoming aware of this surface of the city disguised by education, the boy deepens his contradictory feelings even more:

Was that change of Gentil true? What fun did they make? Why? Would he also have to understand all those disguises as an education? This annoyed him greatly. He began to judge the Alcântaras with less

caution, in a secret mockery that made him calmer, more self-possessed, a little above them (JURANDIR, 2005, p. 312).

Alfredo's cynicism, manifested in the form of laughter, can be compared to the laughter of the non-believers of the Nietzschean metaphor, when questioned by the madman about where God could be. His laughter also resembles that of the men in the port of Bethlehem, in front of the corpse in the morgue. The cynical laughter, both of the European atheists and of the inhabitants of the city of Bethlehem, can be interpreted as a feeling proper to the human being who exercises his faculty of knowledge, to the point of becoming aware of the values then dominant as no longer having an effect on them. This cynicism is the indication of nihilism as a symptom of the devaluation of values.

Laughter manifests Alfredo's transformation, which does not begin in the city of Belém, but when he still lived in Cachoeira do Ararí, in Marajó. The origin of this change lies in the supposed desire for school education, to come to Belém to continue his studies. However, this yearning was just a disguise, a justification that hid his real motivation, the desire to travel and explore the world. In Belém, this disguise is consummated when he feels the need to understand the city, to accept it. The constant act of going to school and complying with educational rituals satisfies, to some extent, this need. But at the same time, he develops in the boy the awareness of this transformation, which deepens his nihilistic feeling.

Alfredo's first discouragement in the city of Belém, represented by the sight of the corpse in the morgue, reveals a nihilism impregnated in the streets, buildings and people of the city. This episode awakened in the boy a melancholic feeling, the longing for his natural life. However, little by little, such disturbances were overshadowed and led to oblivion by the fascination that the city can offer, with the impetuous architectural constructions, with the audiovisual spectacles and with the repetitive process of school education. Walking around the city, going to the Olímpia cinema and the school provide, for a moment, other meanings to Alfredo's life, who feels dominated by the city.

The nostalgia for Marajó is gradually extinguished, but Alfredo's disturbances continue. Its true nature emerges in the imaginations developed mainly at night, when everyone sleeps, because as Jurandir (2005, p. 181) reports: "Alfredo walked at night like a somnambulist. I had encounters with the owls. Did you know what cavilations you brought from Marajó?" The nocturnal disturbances increase as he becomes aware of the fascinating images of Bethlehem as mere disguises, which hide a city in ruins. The façade life of the Alcântara family, with whom the student lives in the city, his new residence about to collapse, the trips

to the movies, to school and to dances, camouflage the true reality of material poverty of this family and Alfredo.

When he becomes aware of the urban environment in which he lives, as a space of ruin and decadence, Alfredo loses his fascination with the European Belém. But his desire to explore the world leads him to walk to distant places, reaching the outskirts of the city. On a trip to the embroiderer, in the company of the caboclo Libânia, he goes beyond the area of fascinating facades and arrives at the neighborhoods where the workers recently abolished from slavery, blacks, Indians and caboclos, live, who alternate between the archaic work of the land and that of the factories installed in the peripheral regions, as described by Jurandir (2005, p. 206): "On the one hand, there was the Beer Factory with the chimney and the name on the white wall. On the other, the low, oxen, ditches, hovels, men who were mowing grass, half bogged down, with this and that sickle vagalunid".

#### **4 THE METAPHOR OF THE WOUNDED ROSE**

On the outskirts of Belém, Alfredo finds another city, which still has life, although it is sacrificed to serve the "new gods", the "big shots", who appropriate the labor force of these peripheral inhabitants, as a guarantee of the survival of the city and its disguises and as a way to keep them in a state of submission, in the face of constant subversive threats, fueled by the desire for these submissives to return to their natural life, in the Amazon rainforest and in Africa. At this point in the novel, Dalcídio constructs a metaphor, which represents this exhaustion of forces of a living being, when the natural purpose of his life is drastically subjugated and transformed into another purpose:

But, next to the embroiderer, climbing close to the window of a stall, Alfredo saw the rose. Wet from the recent drizzle, shivering in the wind, she had something of a bird on the point of shaking its petals like feathers, seeming to climb always on the higher and higher stem. Right in front of it was sun, attracted by the flower, as if he were going to receive from it the colors with which he would cover himself in a little while, when night came.

While Libânia forgot to return, talking more with the embroiderer, Alfredo approached the flower. What a shock when the lady's unforeseen hand, suddenly arriving at the window, picked up the rose!

He put it in his hair at the back, with the greatest naturalness, frowning with the sun in front of him. Very dark, mature, she was coming out of a bath, just powdering herself. In the woman's hair, the rose was like a wounded bird. The powdered face of the lady acquired from the flower a rosy tones and the light that is in the saints of the prints. Disturbed, Alfredo returned to the embroiderer's gate, called Libânia.

What unrest did Alfredo have? She wanted to walk, Libânia, her tongue dry from talking so much, she made the púcaro jingle in the pot again and the same exclamation: "oi que sede!"

Alfredo still felt the gesture that tore the flower from the stem, the rose bled in the woman's hair" (JURANDIR, 2005, p. 208).

The rose in the sun could be compared to human beings in a condition where there is no need to ask about the meaning of things. Meaning is the relationship itself. In this way, it is assumed that the contact of these workers from the outskirts of Belém, blacks, Indians and caboclos, with the Amazon forest, not yet invaded by nihilism, would have an immediate meaning, insofar as it is capable of reviving its real lost nature. Life in the forest would thus be a condition beyond European nihilism. But both Alfredo and the other peripheral inhabitants are no longer a rose in the sun, strutting by birds in search of their pollen. They are, on the contrary, bleeding roses, whose role is to ornament and embellish the space of disguise and submission.

The difference between the residents of the outskirts of Belém and Alfredo, a resident of the acclaimed Gentil Bitencourt Avenue, lies in the way they became inhabitants of the nihilistic territory. The boy is co-opted by the fascination of the city, and the expenditure of his vital energies occurs by the attempt to reach new meanings for his life in this urban environment. The others, possibly, are abolished slaves, who have been violently torn from their *natural habitat*, like the rose in the metaphor, whose overflowing force of life, ends up emptying itself in the search for survival in inhospitable conditions of material poverty and submission.

The advance of industry, responsible for the considerable growth of the city, further increases the distance between its inhabitants and the forest. The expansion of Belém represents the expansion of culture and, consequently, of nihilism, which gradually diminishes the possibility of listening to nature or oneself. There are then two alternatives left for these sufferers: to try to maintain, through memory and customs, their natural condition, in the midst of artificial life, or to seek the annihilation of their rulers. The first would be a form of resistance, the second, a transformative struggle.

The abolished slaves and their descendants, inhabitants of the outskirts of Belém, keep their natural life alive, through memory, by mixing with Western culture, which proliferates in the city, aspects of Amazonian culture, such as enchanted stories, forest medicines, indigenous cuisine, shamanism. The contact with black Africans enriches this form of resistance with umbanda, candomblé and other customs rooted in Brazilian culture.

These charms are very familiar to Alfredo and always arouse his curiosity and fascination, to the point of asking his aunt, a mother

Alfredo went to look for her in the kitchen. She wanted to know about the smells, where and how Ciana mother worked. She didn't like anyone to see her dosing her powdered aromas, which she wrapped in the tissue paper packets. It was his secret. He grated the scented sticks that he bought in the Market, received from Santarém, brought by the boats. He made the papers on Fridays and sold them to the right customers on Saturday. To arouse Alfredo's curiosity, Mãe Ciana summed up giving the name of some smells such as Pau-de-Angélica, Macacapuranga, Pau-Rosa, Pau-de-Angola, Patchouli do bem miudinho. He sold two pennies. Once in a while, he frequented the terreiros of d. Luís de França in Cremação, or there next to the Asylum of the Lazarus. He knew news of the shamans, he knew a lot by name of Maria Brasilina, from the Lower Amazon, who listened to the Caruanas and maintained her kingdom between Óbidos and Parintins. He also knew how to dose his bark and roots for medicines. Not always, but by order, he would get this and that lady a dolphin's eye, the bark of the acapura tree to heal the wound, the resin of the canauara frog (JURANDIR, 2005, p. 187).

The other way to keep alive the natural condition of the colonized in the city would be through the annihilation of the "new gods", "the big shots", as occurred with the cabano movement. A nihilistic form of transformation, inspired by the communist ideal of eliminating the inequalities that underlie social relations in culture. The remnants of the Cabanagem have dispersed to the outskirts of the city and still threaten to rise up with a new revolution. Among these, the so-called "Guamá rockers" stand out:

Libânia began to tell, with excitement, what she will hear from Guamá. The farmers covered the river and the paths of the forest against commerce.

- By the paths of the bush or by the river?

- By the river and the forest. They are there in the middle of the sheds like a view. And this fiancé of Antônio Barreto is one of them. Why did God give the famine? It was enough to give the sin...

Alfredo let his imagination run wild: canoes docking at the piers, farmers, with their machetes and their oars, invading the balconies. I "saw" the pieces of the farm rolling off the shelves. The boxes of goods dragged onto the vessels. Someone puts their hand in a bag, takes out a handful that they think is sugar and is pure salt (JURANDIR, 2005, p. 306-307)

## 5 CONCLUSION

The arguments developed in this text attempt to justify the assumption of the existence of an Amazonian nihilism, understood as an epidemic process, which begins in Europe and expands to its colonies in the process of decolonization. The main characteristic of this

nihilism is the loss of meaning in life, symbolized, in the European world, by the Nietzschean metaphor of the death of God. In the Amazon, this meaningless life contaminates the colonized, Indians, blacks and caboclos, recently abolished from slavery, who live between their real living condition, in deep social helplessness and submission, in the peripheries of Belém, and a possible life supported by values closer to their indigenous and African nature. This conflict can be identified in the Dalcidian metaphor of the rose.

Alfredo is infected by nihilism from his experience in the city of Belém. The dark and empty center of the churches reveal an urban life in ruins, resulting from the decomposition of the dominant moral values, imposed by Christianity. In view of this finding, that Belém lives in a state of disintegration, the need arises to impose new meanings on life in the city. The dying Christian God, in putrefaction, is gradually replaced by "new gods", the European settlers, who need, at all times, new justifications to exercise submission. These materialized gods manifest their power through urban images that, by arousing fascination in the workers, keep them in the condition of submissive, but without the need for chains.

The "new gods" who murdered the Christian God and took over his kingdom, the white Europeans or their descendants, inhabitants of the city, owners of the means of production and owners of the main architectural constructions, use the fascinating images that the urban structure can offer to ceremoniously justify themselves as superior beings, to whom obedience and work must be surrendered. However, the submissive workers, Indians, blacks and caboclos, feel this submission as a great burden, impossible to bear.

The need to justify submission awakens, in the submissive, the nihilistic feeling of annihilation of their dominators. The assassination of the dominator, through a transformative struggle, should initiate a new nihilistic cycle, in which submission is abolished and the new dominant values are created by a "down-to-earth aristocracy". Such values would be experienced from a natural living condition, which flourishes, in each member of this new aristocracy, through contact with the forest and the rivers of the Amazon. It is believed that this utopian presupposition is a philosophical idea, with political and anthropological consequences, which makes up the theoretical foundation of Dalcídio Jurandir's novels.

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