

# CRÍTICA REVOLUCIONÁRIA

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### **“#O AMOR VENCEU” IN LULA’S 2022 VICTORY: FORGIVENESS, STRATEGY AND THE CAPITALIST STATE IN ANTHROPOLYTIC THOUGHT**

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## Abstract

This article has the objective of reflecting on the rituals of forgiveness as a political strategy of the capitalist State. We opted for a critical essay format to think about the topic, whose organization of the text was carried out in three sections. The first session reflects on forgiveness and its political effectiveness from a symbolic point of view. The second session presents the contemporary capitalist State and its “forgiveness policy” in particular cases, demonstrating that this political strategy is old and is currently being reconfigured. The third section deals with the Brazilian case of “# OAmorVenceu” in the victory of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2022 and how this “rhetoric of love” reformulates the process of forgiveness, to the point of no longer existing its necessity, subverting the logic of “forgiveness-oiling-reconciliation”. Finally, there are some brief final considerations in order to direct the reflections for new observations.

**Descriptors:** Forgiveness; State; Anthropology; Criticism; Marxism.

<p><b>«#O AMOR VENCEU» EN LA VICTORIA DE LULA EN 2022: PERDÓN, ESTRATÉGIA Y ESTADO CAPITALISTA EN EL PENSAMIENTO ANTROPOLÍTICO</b></p> <p><b>Resumo:</b> Este artigo tem como objetivo refletir sobre os rituais de perdão como estratégia política do Estado capitalista. Para isso, optamos por um formato de ensaio crítico para pensar o tema, cuja organização do texto foi realizada em três seções. A primeira seção reflete sobre o perdão e sua eficácia política desde o ponto de vista simbólico. A segunda trata do Estado capitalista contemporâneo e de sua “política de perdão” em casos particulares, demonstrando que essa estratégia política é antiga e está sendo reconfigurada atualmente. A terceira seção aborda o caso brasileiro de “# OAmorVenceu” na vitória de Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva em 2022 e como essa “retórica do amor” reformula o processo de perdão, a</p>	<p><b>«#O AMOR VENCEU» EN LA VICTORIA DE LULA EN 2022: PERDÓN, ESTRATÉGIA Y ESTADO CAPITALISTA EN EL PENSAMIENTO ANTROPOLÍTICO</b></p> <p><b>Resumen:</b> Este artículo visa reflexionar sobre los rituales del perdón como estrategia política del Estado capitalista. Para ello, optamos por un formato de ensayo crítico para pensar el tema, con el texto organizado en tres apartados. El primer apartado reflexiona sobre el perdón y su eficacia política desde un punto de vista simbólico. La segunda sección trata sobre el Estado capitalista contemporáneo y sus «políticas de perdón» en casos particulares, demostrando que esta estrategia política es antigua y actualmente se está reconfigurando. En la tercera sección, se aborda el caso brasileño de «# OAmorVenceu» en la victoria de Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva en 2022 y cómo esta «retórica del amor» reformula el proceso del perdón, hasta el punto de que ya no lo sea más necesario, subvirtiendo la</p>
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ponto de não mais existir mais a necessidade do mesmo, subvertendo a lógica do “pedido-aceitaçãoreconciliação”. Por fim, são feitas algumas breves considerações finais com o objetivo de direcionar as reflexões para novas observações.  <b>Descritores:</b> Perdão; Estado; Antropologia; Crítica; Marxismo.		lógica «pedido-aceptación-reconciliación». Finalmente, se tejen breves consideraciones finales con el fin de encaminar reflexiones hacia nuevas observaciones.  <b>Descriptoros:</b> Perdón; Estado; Antropología; Crítica; Marxismo.
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## INTRODUCTION

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, experiences of forgiveness as a way of appeasing tensions and renewing cohesion created by the capitalist State have been a very common political strategy. Although this is not necessarily new, given that the first experiences of institutionally formulated “apologies” at the international level were already present from the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is important to point out that it was only very recently, in the period of financialized ultra-neoliberal capitalism, that these requests have been multiplying.

We start from the hypothesis that **apology and forgiveness**, once ritualized, act much more effectively when used by governments as a way of eluding dissatisfaction, through the recognition of their mistakes, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, using the mechanisms of the State legal form to maintain and develop capitalist social relations. This political strategy, however much it may appear to be a genuine request for forgiveness, in essence only helps to perpetuate the capitalist mode of production by containing popular revolts and preventing the vision of a future beyond this sociability.

Thus, we understand that contemporary capitalist states have constituted true **policies of forgiveness** that, depending on the socio-historical case, or the circumstance of **regret**, or even the situation of maintaining governability, have made more complex their ways of using forgiveness as a strategy to “appease” feelings, to turn the class struggle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century into a boring tranquility. The meaning of this is clear: to give the impression of a **high degree of stability** of bourgeois institutions, sedimenting in social ideals the perception of immutability and, therefore, of perpetuity of these institutions.

The objective of this article is to reflect on the rituals of forgiveness as a political strategy of the capitalist State. To this end, we have opted for a critical essay format to address the subject,

with the text organized into three sections. The first section reflects on forgiveness and its political effectiveness from a symbolic point of view. The second section deals with the contemporary capitalist State and its policies of forgiveness in particular cases, demonstrating that this political strategy is an old one that is currently being reconfigured. The third section deals with the Brazilian case of “*#OAmorVenceu*” in the victory of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2022 and how this **rhetoric of love** reformulates the process of forgiveness, to the point that it is no longer necessary, subverting the “request-acceptance-reconciliation” logic. Finally, brief final considerations are woven together in order to direct reflections towards new observations.

## FORGIVENESS AND POLITICAL EFFECTIVENESS

In general terms, social psychology and cultural anthropology admit that the act of forgiving is related to recognizing that someone has wronged a person. However, the victim chooses to put aside the grudge against the person who betrayed them, who offended them or even insulted them.<sup>1</sup> In popular ideas, the act of forgiving is an act of decision by an individual regarding internal issues that disturb their inner peace.

There is also an understanding that forgiveness is important. In cultures with a strong Judeo-Christian influence, the role of forgiveness is closely associated with the narrative of purging the soul of harmful feelings (guilt), and/or the search for **spiritual evolution**, thus eradicating resentment, anger and, in particular, the architecture of possible revenge. When negative feelings like these dominate a human being, the worst of him is manifested, unleashing physical and psychological damage on himself and those around him.

Although **forgiving others** does not necessarily mean **forgetting**, but rather **remembering** what happened, learning from past mistakes and maturing one's choices through **individual** historical experience, it can serve as a very effective way for individuals to work on forgiveness. But this does not seem to be as effective when it comes to thinking about **social history**.

The difference between an individual's memory biases and social memory biases is that social memory depends on other artifices to keep it alive and is hostage to a much more complex **process of sustaining** that depends on the passage of generations that lived through the events to those generations that did not. Furthermore, it is necessary to cultivate the true versions of events. This **bias of social memory**, if we can call it that, is very different from the bias of individual memory and requires much more commitment from society to keep it alive and, even within the

interpretative limits that maintain understandings from the point of view of the specific vision of the working class (and not of the ruling class).

Thus, when it comes to the development of the power of social forgiveness, this can, depending on the circumstances, mean “forgetting” a tragic event, a brutal act of violence against workers or even blurring **controversial** facts by suggesting interpretations that mask the damage caused to the poorest classes. However, without bringing with it the feeling of social learning or being an input for better political options that favor the working class in the future.

It is in this sense that we agree with González Cruz *et al.*<sup>2</sup> when they point out that there is an increasing tendency for nation-States to ritualize the processes of forgiveness to guarantee the political effectiveness derived from this act. Its purpose is clear: to harmonize the moods of the class that lives from work and to alleviate the class struggle, allowing the process of constant violence (of capital over labor) to be kept at an optimum level, with the capitalist State as the solution to these conflicts.

The ritual is an important element in this process. Merely asking for forgiveness is not characterized as an act sufficient for the option of accepting it to be effective. The political effectiveness of the capitalist State's act of making its request for pardon accepted permeates the need to construct a “rite”. Hence the ritualized role of the act of pardon, publicized and maneuvered with caution and theatricality, is central. Appearing to be a **genuine sense** of compassion justifies repentance for the pain of peoples or populations decimated daily by the State itself.

Segalen<sup>3</sup> explains the complexity of the ritual that guarantees the necessary symbolic efficacy:

rituals should always be considered as a set of relatively codified individual or collective behaviors, with corporal support (verbal, gestural and postural), repetitive in nature and with a strong symbolic charge for actors and witnesses. Such behaviors are based on a mental adherence - of which the actor may not be aware - to values related to social choices considered important and whose expected effectiveness does not come from a purely empirical logic that would be exhausted in the technical instrumentality of the cause-effect connection.<sup>3(32, our translation)</sup>

The ritual of forgiveness, once performed under the right conditions, becomes effective when it is used correctly “in time” and “in the right way” as a means of resolution.<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that one way of perpetuating everyday violence is to opt for rituals of forgiveness with high symbolic effectiveness, especially in times of “great injustice”. The idea is that these rituals demonstrate that “forgiveness is necessary” and that the working class can believe in their altruism,

exercising, even if only symbolically, maturity and experience, which would be the same as believing that the injurious act will not be repeated.

For this reason, Lévi-Strauss<sup>5</sup> makes it clear that belief in the symbolic act is fundamental to its effectiveness. In the summary, Cichowicz<sup>6</sup> states that:

Understanding ritual efficacy as symbolic efficacy, the French anthropologist will argue that the efficacy of magic necessarily implies belief in it. This belief, in turn, would present itself in three complementary aspects: the belief of the witch doctor in his techniques, the belief of the patient in the power of the witch doctor and collective consensus.<sup>6(105, our translation)</sup>

Another important point about the symbolic effectiveness of rituals, specifically those of **pardon and forgiveness** provided by the capitalist state, is that these rituals aim, as Lévi-Strauss explains,<sup>5</sup> at the **healing of wounds**. In this case, belief in the ritualistic act allows for the feeling of **healing of the soul** in a similar way to the shamanic cure presented by the author. The role of the pardoner (indigenous peoples, social movements, political activist groups, *etc.*) to the pardoned (capitalist State) brings the feeling of healing of a lived historical-social injustice that, from this ritual, can be considered resolved. In the words of Cichowicz:<sup>6</sup>

[...] when analyzing shamanic healing processes, Lévi-Strauss observes that the explanation of healing as a psychological phenomenon would not make sense until the ways in which such representations are invoked in the fight against physiological disturbances are defined [...]. Thus, for *healing to occur through belief*, it would be necessary to organize the state of chaos experienced by the victim in order to make it intelligible [...].<sup>6(105, emphasis added, our translation)</sup>

It is at this point, the “possibility of healing” that the operation between myth and rite comes into play. In other words, the mythical figure of the “magical” solution to conflicts comes into play, as the symbolic embodiment of this **magic** of ritual. This culturally delimited operation demonstrates the symbolic efficacy of ritual in healing the wounds of the past without the need to rationalize the concrete relationship of cause and effect.

Thus, this **sacred role** of the attribution of (symbolic) value, subjectively constructed in myth and legitimized in ritual<sup>7</sup>, is capable of impregnating the capitalist State with the solution of problems as if they were **emanating from supernatural forces**, as dictated by the belief systems of which the subjugated peoples are part, without the State actually having to solve the problems.

This is the political strategy on which the contemporary capitalist State is betting. It has been developing ways of ritualizing forgiveness as a way of generating in the working class a feeling of the need to remain at peace with the state and with itself. By forgiving, it would be possible to free oneself from the feeling of bitterness that can imprison one in a negative memory,

even if it is a deep wound that has decimated hundreds of lives or brought tragedy to thousands of families.

## THE STATE AND THE POLITICS OF FORGIVENESS

In order to develop forgiveness, it is necessary that, even if the memory of the past act revisits one's thoughts, it does not affect the present or shake the usual peace. Without this, a person who does not forgive becomes stuck, unable to carry out a simple interaction due to a bad feeling.

This is the argument fundamentally used by the capitalist State to make the population **move forward** and **not backwards**.<sup>8</sup> The rituals of forgiveness adopted by the capitalist State have gradually translated their symbolic effectiveness to refer to another explanatory dimension: the effects of a certain type of violent action or tragic experience. In other words, it is no longer a question of merely **apologizing for bad deeds**, but of focusing on the moral, symbolic and psychic effects that those who forgive will experience if they do not accept the apology. Thus, issues such as the dichotomy between objective and subjective order, between the physical and the moral, between matter and symbol, between representationalism and pragmatism, are at stake in this difference between the two dimensions of **social healing**. A difference in which, in a way, the dichotomy between magic/science or between religion/science is re-established, or even, in more direct terms, between rite/technique.<sup>9</sup> But it is necessary to bear in mind that the rite not only re-establishes the dichotomy but guarantees the disjunction of the world between the sacred and the profane in order to maintain the symbolic-real order. The rite eliminates dangerous thresholds.

Therefore, the explanation presented by the rite of forgiveness becomes more convincing and justifies the facts because it would start from the **genuine sense** of repentance that already focuses on consequences. Thus, the **rational**, explanatory power of the phenomena begins to diminish. They are reduced in the face of political amnesties for the military, in the face of insignificant economic reparations or in the face of incomplete transitional justice<sup>a</sup>, for example.<sup>10</sup> Convictions delayed by long judicial processes and even arrests that are not carried out by privileged forums or legal criteria for the protection of high-ranking officials also help to ensure

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<sup>a</sup> Transitional justice refers to the set of actions, mechanisms, and studies developed to address periods of internal conflict, systematic human rights violations, and mass violence against social groups or individuals. The guiding objectives of transitional justice are: a) Prosecuting perpetrators of crimes and grave human rights violations; b) Establishing the truth about the events that occurred during the period; c) Recording, acknowledging, and giving visibility to memory as an essential construction of the country's history; d) Providing reparations to victims; e) Reforming institutions involved in the violations committed.

that the social reparation that should be made does not take place, opening cracks for the maintenance of the capitalist economy and its State violence.

Cases of States asking for forgiveness have been common in contemporary times, giving rise to what we might call **Forgiveness Policies**.

These (public) policies, which sometimes have the incisive action of civil society, have been laying the foundations for the collective forgiveness procedure. Many cases have been outlined around the world. For example, the most frequent has been about the request for forgiveness for the process of brutal and forced colonization.<sup>11</sup> Even knowing that the relations of domination derived from colonialism endure and the impacts caused by the errors of the past remain in their aftermath today, the State has called for the recognition of historical discrimination and trauma. Thus, forgiveness policies have been referring to a set of discourses and political devices that aim not only at the recognition of political actors who directly or indirectly suffered State violence, but also at a duty of justice, reparation, material restitution and **reconciliation**. As if it were possible to reconcile with a State that sustains the genetically destructive social relations of the mode of civilization of capital<sup>b, 12</sup>

The case of Canada and Australia became notorious because they decided to retract the aggressive and racist policies of acculturation and assimilation from the indigenous peoples. After the apologies, they began a process of reconciliation, although with different results: in Canada, reconciliation gave preference to negotiations and took the course of indigenous **self-government**, but, as is always the case, through a top-down policy, taking into account the demands of the First Nations and adapting them to the negotiations of “legal autonomy”, demonstrating that reconciliation is just another **business for white people**. In Australia, reconciliation presented a tortuous path between governments that ended in a **formal, legal and bureaucratic** reconciliation procedure. Resende<sup>11</sup> tends to agree with the experts on the subject that there are cultural differences and that many of the demands between colonizers and colonized are irreconcilable and, therefore, far from being a legitimate request for forgiveness, it only aims to **pass a draft** on the past and continue with State violence, for now, more sophisticated.

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<sup>b</sup> Ávalos<sup>12</sup>, drawing from Marx’s critique of political economy, highlights this author’s contribution in *Capital* to the existence of a theory of domination when analyzing and understanding the social relations among human beings—relations that constitute key moments in the concept of capital, which itself is a form of civilization. Ávalos argues that capital *is* domination among human beings—a domination that takes on different dimensions and forms depending on the procedural development of this relationship.



The central capitalist countries are gaining notoriety in forgiveness policies. A long-standing and well-known case was that of the United States, which apologized to the State of Guatemala for financing a study in the 1940's that involved hundreds of Guatemalans, who were infected with syphilis and gonorrhea without their consent, incurring serious bioethical implications. The study, carried out between 1946 and 1948 in Guatemala, was clearly a reprehensible ethical failure and the US government has offered to apologize publicly to all those affected by these disgusting practices. The then president of Guatemala, Álvaro Colom, described the experiments as a crime against humanity and did not rule out the possibility of bringing charges.<sup>13</sup>

Another apology from the United States was related to slavery and the ethnic-racial segregation of black people. The United States has expressed its regret for slavery in two separate resolutions: one in 2008, written by the House of Representatives; and another in 2009, by the Senate.<sup>14</sup>

Both chambers apologized to African Americans on behalf of the people of the United States for the damage caused to them and their ancestors during slavery and later, in the decades of segregation that followed. While there has been little opposition to the measures, the fact that both parts of Congress did not agree on a single resolution exposes one of the main problems when dealing with requests like these. The Senate apology included a disclaimer that it could not be used as a basis for claiming financial compensation for slavery or segregation against the United States. This was challenged by some black representatives in the House, who campaigned for reparations for the descendants of slaves. The then-President, Barack Obama, welcomed Congress's apologies but never addressed the issue of financial redress while in office.<sup>15</sup>

Another case from a core capitalist country relates to England's role in the Irish famine. Just over 150 years after a period of severe famine began in Ireland in 1845, the UK's Prime Minister Tony Blair had this to say: "Those who governed in London at the time failed their people."<sup>15(1)</sup> Around one million people died and two million emigrated when Ireland's potato crop suffered serious problems and the British parliament was slow to ease restrictions on food imports. The 1997 speech came at a time when relations between the UK and Ireland (which was part of the UK until 1922) were improving, and culminated in the Belfast Agreement,<sup>15</sup> which sought to resolve many of the bitter disagreements between the two countries over Northern Ireland. Critics complained that Blair's words were not a full and formal apology. Although no offer of

compensation has been made to Ireland for the famine, the UK has paid reparations to those governed by the British more recently but, when it comes to the processes of despoilment in the **Global South**, reparation has not been passed on in the demands for forgiveness and reparation from the Caribbean islands colonized by England, for example.<sup>15</sup>

It is also important not to forget the famous case of West Germany's historical compensation for the Holocaust. This could also be one of the precursors to the case of apologizing to humanity. Unlike previous cases, West Germany was quick to agree to pay reparations after the Second World War for the actions of its predecessor State, Nazi Germany. In 1951, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer said, "Atrocious crimes have been committed in the name of the German people, which demand moral and material compensation."<sup>15</sup> Payments to Israel and Holocaust survivors from 1953 totaled more than US\$70,000. Surprisingly, in this case it was some of the victims who demanded compensation. They believed that if Israel accepted money from West Germany, it would forgive the Nazis for their crimes. Meanwhile, some of the money helped support Israel in its early years of existence.<sup>15</sup>

The Vatican State is not exempt from carrying out **policies of forgiveness** either. Although the Catholic Church is seen worldwide as synonymous with improvements and pacification, Pope Francis publicly apologized for the damage caused to indigenous children by the Church. The Pope said he was ashamed of the boarding school system that had caused the deaths of at least 4,000 children from disease, malnutrition, neglect or abuse in the country.<sup>15</sup>

Forgiveness policies have become a global trend, even in countries with dependent capitalism, and also in so-called progressive governments. The most emblematic case has been that of the President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), who has been adopting a clear policy of forgiveness for various sociohistorical processes considered criminal. Recently, AMLO apologized to members of the Yaqui indigenous people, originally from the north of the country, for crimes of the State committed against them. According to the president: "We have come to reaffirm our commitment to bring justice to the Yaqui people. First of all, we want to apologize for the crimes of the state that were committed against your ancestors,"<sup>16(2)</sup> the president declared at a public event in Vím, the largest Yaqui community in the state of Sonora (north).<sup>16</sup>

Another historic and symbolic apology was also made to the Mayan people. AMLO considers that Spanish colonialism was to blame for the expropriations of the Mayan people of Yucatán and pointed to those he sees as victims, and spoke of reconciliation, but less of reparation.

An excuse more akin to political discourse and with little political effectiveness to heal a very deep wound. The apology to the Mayan peoples was announced in 2019, when it became known that López Obrador had demanded that King Felipe VI of Spain “apologize to the native peoples for the violations of what are now known as human rights”.<sup>16</sup> The Spanish government rejected the initiative (“Our brother nations have always been able to read our shared past without anger and with a constructive gaze”,<sup>(2, emphasis added)</sup> was part of the response), but the letter opened a rift between the two governments that has not yet healed. The president of Mexico did not repeat this message, but he does not hide the fact that his position was to demand an apology from the King of Spain. The European country's position is exhaustive: Juan Carlos I, father of the current monarch, already apologized in 1990 for the atrocities committed during the conquest.

This same request for forgiveness from López Obrador was even rejected by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, who saw more political opportunism in the president than a sincere demonstration. “Neither the Spanish State nor the Catholic Church has to apologize to us for anything,”<sup>16(1)</sup> they later wrote. “Enough of playing with the distant past to justify, with demagoguery and hypocrisy, current and ongoing crimes.”<sup>16(1)</sup>

In another case, the president of Mexico issued a formal apology for the massacre of 303 Chinese in the northern city of Torreón in 1911. “The Mexican State will never again allow racism, discrimination and xenophobia,”<sup>17(1)</sup> the president said during the ceremony in Torreón.<sup>17</sup> The massacre committed between May 13 and 15, 1911, took place in the midst of the Mexican Revolution, when rebels fighting under the command of Francisco I. Madero took control of the city.

In this sense, policies of forgiveness seem to invade the scenario of ultra-neoliberal<sup>c</sup> financialized capitalism in crisis as an attempt,<sup>18</sup> albeit subtle, of the capitalist State to act in a way that will amortize the weight of capitalist exploitation, to prepare the ground for a greater leap of neocolonial exploitation and to allow the working class, formalized or marginalized, to be at peace with itself and with the state. This project of advancing capitalism via a way out of an acute structural crisis, calls, contradictorily, from new types of frontal aggression - as in the

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<sup>c</sup> The term “ultra-neoliberal” is adopted by Boffo, Saad-Filho, and Fine<sup>18</sup> in reference to the historical period understood as the “authoritarian turn” of neoliberalism—a phase marked by intensified market-defense policies and stricter restrictions on public spending. According to these authors, neoliberalism requires radical conservatism and authoritarianism to become “ultra”, since its earlier phases of “installation” and “subjectivation” were insufficient to overcome the long-term capitalist crisis following the 2007–2008 crash.<sup>18</sup>

neo-fascisms experienced from the global north towards the south -<sup>19</sup> to the ways of maintaining the consensus of the capitalist policy of domination through rituals that recover the most pious of bourgeois morality in decline: forgiveness for continuing to violate.

### **“#O AMOR VENCEU”: REUNIFICATION, ANTI-REVENGE AND AMNESTY?**

There is a certain consensus that forgiveness is an opportunity to free oneself from the negative ties of the past and move forward. Therefore, to forgive is a “liberating action” that symbolizes intelligence and allows the person to mature. “Not forgiving”, on the other hand, would prevent the possibility of experiencing new possibilities and having more satisfaction in one's personal life. Some individuals remain resentful of others and hold a grudge for a long time, which is extremely harmful to both. After all, those who **do not forgive** limit their **possibilities of loving**.

It was under this rhetoric of the “possibility of love” that Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's campaign in Brazil in 2022 was waged against his neo-fascist opponent Jair Messias Bolsonaro, in an attempt to **restore unity** and **reunite** a nation fragmented by an intense process of polarization accompanied by a strong social fascistization. His campaign slogan was based on the idea that **love will overcome hate**.

This process, although electorally, was expressed in the narrow margin of votes that allowed Lula to win the Brazilian presidential elections in 2022 with a difference of only 1.8% of the valid votes.<sup>20</sup> The electoral confrontation with Bolsonarist neofascism took on a media rhetoric based on **Love** and its intrinsic potential for overcoming difficult situations and social suffering - as was the case in the Temer-Bolsonaro period (2016-2022) - in which Brazil suffered two successive events that left many social traumas in the Brazilian population: first, the 2016 *coup d'état* against the democratically elected president Dilma Rousseff, and second, the election of a clearly neo-fascist government of Jair Bolsonaro.<sup>21</sup>

After winning the 2022 elections, Lula quickly adopted the rhetoric of “Love Won” (“O Amor Venceu”) becoming the first president of Brazil to have a third term in an electorally valid manner and, even so, he was hailed as the “world leader who defeated 21<sup>st</sup> century fascism in Latin America”.<sup>20</sup>

Then, at the political moment of his inauguration into public office, Lula returned to the rhetoric of “Love Won”, proposing the reunification of the country, reiterating the discourse that

“there are not two ‘Brazil’s” (alluding to the polarized and explicit division in the elections) and that the social resentment of the defeated must be overcome so that the nation can **move forward**.

If, on the one hand, the **unifying forces** seemed to be directed only towards the fascist part of the Brazilian population, the opposite was quickly perceived. Then, the President of the Federal Senate, Rodrigo Pacheco, in his speech during the inauguration of the President, on behalf of the Brazilian State, asked for no revenge from the progressive group that had taken power (president: Lula and vice-president: Alckmin), in allusion to the continuous attacks that the Bolsonaro government carried out by the Brazilian State against the population, dismantling social rights - some historically established, such as the right to healthcare through the Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde – SUS), and also in the case of public universities in Brazil– during the pandemic and also with the neglect of deaths and the deliberate delay in access to the coronavirus vaccine.

In forceful words, Pacheco asserted that the country needed a pacification process. Lula, in his speech, backed Pacheco's position, saying that there would be no **spirit of revenge** in his government, but that the **terror and violence** received during his term would be answered with **the harshest consequences** of the law. Lula affirmed that

the mandate we have received, in the face of opponents inspired by fascism, will be defended with the powers that the Constitution confers on democracy. We will respond to hatred with love. To lies, with truth. To terror and violence, we will respond with laws and their harshest consequences.<sup>22(1, emphasis added, our translation)</sup>

This appeal to love as a way of smoothing the tense relations between the capitalist state and civil society finds shelter in this astute political strategy of reformulating the request for forgiveness, reversing it to the use of love as a way of confronting the adversary, but at the same time obscuring the State-form<sup>d</sup> in this process of accountability.<sup>23</sup> When the request for forgiveness does not have to happen, because forgiveness has already been granted in advance through the use of love as a way of solving political problems, forgiveness - which would imply a repentance that could perhaps serve to avoid the repetition of past mistakes - is no longer necessary. In this case, the request does not even need to be considered, opening the door for forgiveness not

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<sup>d</sup> The category "State-form" differs from the state apparatus. Here, we draw on the distinction presented by Holloway in his studies on the relationship between the State and Capital. For this author, the State-form “[...] refers to a non-autonomous way of developing capital relations—which does not mean the institution (the apparatus) does not exist. One can speak of a 'double dimension' of the State: as a capitalist domination-relation and as an apparatus. The form cannot exist in a disembodied way; it materializes through the institutional development of the State and the actions of its agents. Likewise, the institutional development of the apparatus can only be the expression of the historical development of social relations.”<sup>23(6)</sup>

to be a possibility and for love to be used as a weapon to dissolve power tensions, as if it could do so. This is a crack through which the processes of social memory of past mistakes can be forgotten more quickly and, of course, can still be committed, since the mistake was not even admitted.<sup>11</sup>

There is an expectation on the part of the Brazilian left that social reunification can be achieved through the exercise of **love**. As if that exercise were enough to overcome the social resentment caused by the defeat — electoral, at least — of Bolsonarismo. The exercise of love would act as compensation - for the “restoration” of the institutional rules of the bourgeois State - which could prevent the repetition of other despotic uprisings based solely on this false sense of democratic normality.

It seems interesting to see how a taxonomy is generated: left-love and right-hate as if **emotions could be labeled**. Identifying the left with love, at the same time, erases a very important element, **class hatred**. In such a way that the discourse of love erases the class struggle and the feeling of frustration with the capitalist totality. This means that, time and time again, the opportunity to channel efforts into the anti-capitalist struggle is missed and the expectations of the working class are, once again, co-opted by the condescension of the State-form.

Even so, continuing the events that resulted from Lula's inauguration in 2022, in contact with the public who attended the inauguration party held outside the National Congress, Lula resumed the agenda of reunifying the country and advanced his speech in the tone of **One Brazil**. The crowd that gathered in front of the stage quickly sang a chorus in unison of “No Amnesty!”, clearly aimed at the Brazilian State not forgiving Bolsonaro for the crimes committed in Brazil during his term of office, especially those related to the genocidal management of the pandemic experienced in the country.

The hashtag #SEMANISTIA (No-Amnesty) quickly appeared on social networks as one of the political messages rejecting the pardon that the State could grant Bolsonaro for his crimes. In response to the popular demand not to pardon Bolsonaro, a criminal investigation was opened, classifying five crimes during his term of office: (a) Dissemination of false news about the Covid-19 vaccine; (b) Creation of fake news and digital militias; (c) Interference in the Federal Police; (d) Leakage of confidential data about an attack on the Superior Electoral Court (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral – TSE) and even crimes committed before Bolsonaro was elected president, such as; (e) Incitement to rape and insult. Even with all this criminal record, the current expectation is that, at most, Bolsonaro will hardly become ineligible.<sup>24</sup>

Without a formal request for forgiveness, together with a process of influence peddling and the use of the legal form of the capitalist State in his favor, together with the use of Love as a form of inverse forgiveness and historical erasure, we tend to admit that the Brazil of 2023 will present a more polished version of the social forgiveness process. This process seems to be the most cunning of the social erasures of the New Republic, condemning the historical memory of Brazilians to the remains of a story told later, again, by their unaccountable executioners.

## **BRIEF FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This is one of the many difficulties inherent to forgiveness. These difficulties are due to the fact that each one of us, when thinking about the subject, resorts to our own experience, often intimate and which can affect our identity. Thus, we are faced with the proof that the experience of forgiveness is always personal and can never be institutional. Forgiveness can never be instrumentalized by official power, since it is a human matter, purely human.<sup>25</sup>

These reflections on the rituals of forgiveness demonstrate how viable our hypothesis on advances in forgiveness policies is. These rituals have been the political strategy of the capitalist State to face the most acute moments of the class struggle without the need for direct physical repression. The case of the use of **love** as an **anticipation of**, that is, as not even the need to ask for forgiveness, justifies how this ritualistic process is advancing and requires more analytical capacity from the working class to understand and not fall for this lure again.

In times of structural crisis of capitalism, it makes sense that rituals of forgiveness multiply in an attempt to face the capital-labor dispute by seeking new ways to tame this conflict. It is hoped that in the coming years, the ritualization of symbolic elements, as if the state were a subject, above classes, an autonomous and impartial arbiter, will remain in the social imagination and maintain the ideology of the State as a “counterpoint” to capital.

## **AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION**

All authors contributed equally to the writing of the article.

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