

WASTE DOESN'T HAVE SEX

MAURÍCIO WALDMAN ¹

It was a day of bright sunshine in the midst of one of the uncountable Western State of São Paulo State dumps when I asked a student, who, like me, is in love with garbage: "Have you noticed that there is no pornographic magazine in the trash?". "Yes, indeed" he agreed immediately. "But I had never noticed it before."

Somehow, me neither. For me, this fact only became clear when I read the book *Trash: The Archaeology of Garbage*, a masterful work of the American anthropologist William Rathje, which is only accessible in language of Shakespeare. Unfortunately, a work solemnly ignored in Brazil.

One must pay attention and check: the Rathje analysis totally denies a false paradigm that, despite being untrue, is assiduously repeated by the media, by academics and even by specialists in waste management. It refers to the axiom which expresses that the garbage is "a reflection of society."

Technically, set trash as a simple reflection of society requires prudence. It should be noted that a reflection implies the correspondence between what a surface reflects and what is put in front of it. Thus, despite the small distortions, affinities should prevail between the physical world and the images generated on a mirrored surface.

But this isn't exactly the case of the waste. Imagine someone with dark hair, perfect teeth, well-dressed and thin. Supposing this person were the trash, the image, though recognizable, would show white strands of hair, gaps in the smile, clothes scruffy and some extra pounds.

In fact, the waste is far more mysterious than most people think. Trash is not just something we reject or discharge. In the history of societies, is the cultural codification which defines what goods and objects should be thrown away or not. Thus, the concept that directly connects the consumer with the waste generation does not find a material proof in landfills or in trash cans.

The case of pornographic magazines is a good example of this observation. First, it is imperative that one should note that they possess unsuspected durability. They are secretly consulted for years and years. Hidden in attics, many are outrageously discovered only when the owner dies. However, if the widow in a rage throws the magazines in the trash can, there will always be inevitably someone to take them of anonymity.

William Rathje indicates other clues to explain the absence of the magazines in landfills. Many collectors, faced with the threat of being discovered, quickly carbonize the journals on cans, when the family is not at home. Or then, they donate the magazines to tire repair shops, barber shops and to closer gas stations. You must be sure of this: the collection is always well received.

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Another tactic is throwing them in dumpster debris far from home, an operation carried out quietly in the night. Cars park and the incriminating cargo is quickly thrown into the container.

But again the sex goddesses can be saved by the charitable gesture whether of a homeless man, someone in love with muses, or by a teenager who will, thus, have a happy end of the day. And hypothetically, if they survive and finally reach a landfill, who will say that, there will be no kind soul to welcome them?

As Rathje informs, such publications demonstrate remarkable perdurability. They will only disappear when the pages, due to have been seen and visited tirelessly, stand out of the staples, worn out by a ruthless manipulation. In other words it means: they are broken down by desires that are socially stigmatized, but they insist on operating underground.

Would it, then, be possible to adjust Rathje to some of Freud's assertions. The father of psychoanalysis understood that the denial of something or someone always permits two strategies. One of them is the disqualification. The other one is the omission of its existence.

Thus, Freud confirms Rathje: not everything in this world is presented with the option of becoming waste.

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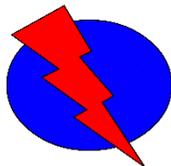
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