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Kuírlombo Epistemologies
CRGS Special Issue
Genders and Sexualities in Brazil

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Editorial

Peer Reviewed Essays

Gender Dialogues

[1] T.N.: a non-feminine lesbian [lésbica não-feminilizada] is a lesbian that rejects/does not comply with femininity ideals and performativities. Despite rejecting femininity, it is important to point out that, even though some of them might, these lesbians do not necessarily identify with masculinity.

Biographies

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Introduction to the CRGS Special Issue Genders and Sexualities in Brazil

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Introduction

The title for this Special Issue was inspired by the work of poet, literary scholar and writer Tatiana Nascimento, and the poet formiga (both of whom have work featured in this Special Issue). The word *kuírlombo* is a play on the words *quilombo* and *cuir*. The word *quilombo* is the word maroon, palenque and cumbe in English, Spanish and Portuguese respectively. The word cimarrón (Spanish), marron (French), quilombola (Portuguese) refers to the people who liberated themselves from enslavement. Quilombo comes from the word Kilombo, which is from the Kimbundu language of the Ngola nation of the Congo.

In Eurocentric historical texts written about the Americas, these communities are referred to as runaway slave communities. In fact, they were societies of people, many of whom liberated themselves from enslavement, and were (what we would call today) multiracial and multi-ethnic societies given the type of democratic (for lack of a better word) societies that they created. As a result of the democratic social and religious structures that emerged in these communities, they were often implicitly/explicitly anti-capitalist. Members of these communities were living another vision of social order in the face of the oppressive societies established by various forms of European colonialism in the Americas.

Abdias do Nascimento, one of the key figures in the founding of contemporary Brazilian Black Studies, defined Kilombismo as a competing vision of social organization that emerged from the political and economic engagement of Africans in the Americas. It is an Afrocentric perspective that Nascimento argued is reflected in movements such as the Haitian Revolution, Garveyism and the Pan-African movement. Kilombismo is a form of African resistance centred on building free communities rooted in economic, political, social and cultural structures that are rooted in African cultural legacies. Tatiana Nascimento

appropriates the term in her essay entitled: *literary cuírlombism: black lgbtqi poetry exorbitating the paradigm of pain*. Tatiana Nascimento writes:

> …i forge from my sexual-dissident afrodiasporic place the concept of literary *cuírlombism*... reacting to pain is also re-telling stories. speaking up our pain allows us to search for healing (if this is our project. and, for many of us, i think that it is). to feel the colonial wound, to think: how can we heal this intimate, collective, old, persistent wide wound? even if denouncing the cisheterosexist racism is a constant need of affirmation for black lgbtqi+ existences, we have more than denouncements to make. especially through our poetry, for it connects us to a black-sexual-dissident epistemic project pervaded by narrative disputes (p.10)…. our existence informs not only about what happened after the kidnapping/trafficking/ enslavement, a historical crime that exacted y still exacts several strategies of resistance from us, but not only: reconstruction strategies too. literature is one of those forms of art through which we can invent (im) possible, utopic, dystopian new worlds: we found place in the telling. we create *kuírlombos*, not only of resistance but also of dream, affection, seeds. (p. 16)

In the notes section of formiga's poem, "Afro-Latina," the translators write "komposing with "k" is a reference to the anarcho-punk movement, that writes like this sometimes to bespeak the subversion of language." The usage of "k" in *Kuírlombo* is also very much about cuir Afro-diasporic populations in the Americas having agency, in the usage of the various colonial languages that we occupy, to do whatever we want to do with them as we bend, twist, break, enhance and reorganize them to fit, to reflect and to represent the realities, affects, histories and non-European epistemologies that we have inherited and embody. The idea for this special issue developed a few years ago in thinking about how we as Afro-diasporic subjects (at least culturally speaking), communicate with each other across and through our colonial languages.

In thinking about how, for the African Diaspora in the Americas, language and geographies function as a marker of specificity and difference, thereby delegitimizing any recognition of what connects us culturally, historically,

politically, affectively and economically, the discreteness of language and national boundaries as being the marker of difference undermines what could emerge if we (re)engaged our collective consciousness. While capitalism is understood as global, "Europe" and Eurocentric visions of whiteness are understood as unmarked and universal, a Black Brazilian, Cuban, U.S. African American from the Mississippi Gulf Coast and a Jamaican are understood as historically constituted subjects with no relation. Thus, for us, the publication of this Special Issue is an act of solidarity, an act of resistance that began with our African ancestors, an act of remembering and (re)constructing across our shared histories and points of origin as Afro-Diasporic peoples in the Americas.

This Special Issue is a result of conversations with Brazilian colleagues about theorizing Brazil as a Caribbean nation. In many ways Black Brazilian feminists have already started to engaging this conversation, or at the very least, exploring this connection. For example, Black Brazilian feminists, after the end of the dictatorship in 1985, began networking through international caucuses to exchange ideas with feminists globally and regionally. Before traveling to Beijing in 1995, they travelled to the Afro-Latin American Women's Network event in the Dominican Republic in 1992, later to the meeting of Black Women's Network in Costa Rica in 2002, the Fifth International Women's Conference in Cuba in 2003, and were organizers for the Tenth Latin American and Caribbean Feminist encounter held in Brazil in 2005[1]. In this special issue, we decided that we wanted to think about this question within the field of Gender and Sexuality Studies. Then the political assassination of City of Rio de Janeiro councilwoman Marielle Franco occurred.

Marielle Franco's assassination, in which she was targeted for both the intersectional nature of her identities and her expedient rise to political prominence, had ripple effects globally. The world's shock and grief impressed upon us the need to take a much-needed step forward with this project: we wanted to continue the work of Black Brazilian scholars and activists, to

strengthen the historical connections that we share in this Hemisphere, all of which are rooted in the emergence of the Caribbean.

Marielle Franco was a tremendously popular congresswoman in the City of Rio de Janeiro. She was raised in Maré, one of the slums targeted by Rio de Janeiro's "pacification" policies. The "pacification" policies have resulted in masked, militarized elite police forces entering into the neighbourhoods of slums and shooting indiscriminately for hours, usually during the day. The police are also often accompanied by police snipers, all of whom are known to primarily murder Black youth like Ágatha Félix and João Pedro. At night, these communities also have to deal with extrajudicial killings from militarized vigilantes who are current and former police officers.

In this context, Marielle emerged as a beloved activist and councilwoman who used her political power to directly challenge the impunity of both police and vigilantes and the militaristic policing in Rio de Janeiro. She was seen as the manifestation of the aspirations of the Black social movements, Black Feminist social movements and the larger political left in Brazil. However, the same reason that she was seen as the success of decades of political struggles is the same reason that she was targeted for murder: she was an openly lesbian Black woman from the slums who worked her way through Brazil's elite universities and landed a powerful position in government. Marielle was targeted because she was an individual whose subjectivity was constructed at the intersections of multiple identities, all of which she always held present. As a result, she was the face of multiple social movements on Brazil's political left. Her assassination sent a message to millions of people who were a part of and supported by various movements for human rights and dignity.

Briefly, in Brazil, during the initial fallout of her assassination which propelled her into international martyrdom, there were debates about why she was targeted. Initially it seemed that her assassination was going to be picked up by the left, in which the rationale would settle on the fact that she was openly lesbian and

fought for lesbian rights. Marielle herself publically identified as both a lesbian and bisexual. This is all the more reason why this Special Issue is entitled *Kuírlombo Epistemologies*, how Marielle self-identified and moved across communities reflects the tenuous relationship that Black cuir people have with hegemonic sex/gender classifications that are imbued with coloniality; hegemonic classifications which are also dependent on the fungibility of the Black female body. However, when it became immediately obvious just how many people grieved the assassination, and when people learned that she was one of the most popular city council members in any city government across Brazil, it became obvious that her murder should be understood on a much more profound and nuanced level. She was targeted because of her political success in challenging the emergent military state in Rio de Janeiro, her murder was strategically symbolic though the assassins probably never even imagined that her death would be grieved and protested globally since she was poor, black, female *and* lesbian.

The profoundly political nature of Marielle's assignation goes to the root of an intense process that is happening in the wake of the profound social changes resulting from the successful political, social and economic policies undertaken during the Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff administrations, all aimed at enfranchising all Brazilians as a part of a comprehensive national development strategy. The result was the massive mobility of scores of Black Brazilian citizens from poverty. The country is now in the midst of a profound struggle: after a century of failed whitening policies, Brazil is a majority Black/non-white Afro-descendant nation. Is the profoundly racist neo-colonial elite ready to give up a claim to citizenship, material and economic benefits that are rooted in white supremacy? For example, will this racialised elite be able to deal with newly empowered domestic workers who refuse to work on weekends? How were they going to deal with the sudden appearance of Black families in previously white-only spaces such as airports and shopping malls? The intensity of these questions, beyond understanding the resistance of Brazil's white elite and middle class as simply racism, can best be explained through understanding Brazil's social contract.

Brazil's social contract is not based on republican citizenship ideals rooted in social and political rights, but one rooted in a sexual contract upon which the modernization and development of the national project depends. This sexual contract is one in which colonial domination continues within the realms of intimacy, desire, and the erotic. Brazil's decolonial project is going to need to be a sexual one; it will need to be a process centred on decolonizing desire and intimacy. Given this overall context, this Special Issue will take an intersectional approach to understand the relationship between race, gender, sexuality, and decolonization: this issue will focus primarily on the lesbian question in Brazil via centring Brazilian activist and intellectual engagement with Caribbean theorists, and vice versa.

Contextualizing Race, Gender and Brazilian Sexual Citizenship

Brazil is one of the few countries in the region that gained its independence before the twentieth century, that has no unifying national story of collective struggle, or vision of national unity, resulting from a national war for independence. Most countries in the Americas that gained their independence before 1900 had, at some point, a national struggle for independence and/or a civil war for enslaved and/or indigenous liberation. These wars addressed the social and psychological legacies of chattel slavery for both the formerly enslaved and their enslavers (as in the case of countries such as the U.S., Cuba, Mexico, Haiti etc.). Brazil is the only country in the hemisphere where the colonial crown moved to the colony thereby making the colony the seat of the colonial empire. Thus, the independence of Brazil and the end to chattel slavery nearly sixty years later was more about the vision of a united royal and slaveocratic elite who, at the time, wanted to create a modern empire-state.[2]

Thus, there is no national myth of the state emerging organically from "the people," as a result of a collective national struggle where scores of people died for the nation – Brazil is not a republican nation in the sense of the kind of republicanism represented by the hemispheric American (regionally speaking)

republican revolutionary spirit of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where all aggrieved groups in the nation could lay claim (even if it is not respected), to have fought to bring their modern western nation into existence. That is, there is no claim to equal citizenship rooted in the myth of a popular origin of the nation through collective struggle. Brazil's national origin myth, however, is rooted in what Richard G. Parker (2009) calls the ideology of the erotic, which centres on the process of *embranquecimento* (whitening).[3]

Race and racialization are central to the contemporary origin myth of the Brazilian nation, which is iconized in Gilberto Freyre's *Casa-Grande e Senzala* (*Masters and Slaves*). While Gilberto Freyre's work is foundational to the imaginary of the Brazilian nation as a *racial democracy,* also central to his highly eroticized text is that the *work* that is done in the manifestation of the Brazilian "racial democracy" is largely sexual. It is sex, the sexual desire, and the erotic that form, reproduce, and could even liberate the Brazilian nation. It is not an armed nationalist struggle, but a successful whitening of the family and thereby the nation. Also intertwined into how Freyre' myth of national origin is experienced today are the coloniality of affect and the coloniality of the erotic.[4]

Freyre's book is a colonial contract, one in which racial and cultural domination and subordination are mapped onto sexual relations in which the active and passive roles in sexual relations are racialised and gendered. The coloniality of affect "evinces how desire and affect may be informed by colonial histories and imaginaries.[5] In Brazil, as in much of the Americas, social groups are, as Juana María Rodríguez (2015, 21) argues, "bonded through blood, sex, tears, and scholarly theorizations to other realized bodies of abjection, bound together through relations of power filtered through colonialism, slavery, conquest, subjugation, migration, exile, and the insidious architectures of power that permeate heteropatriarchy across cultural sites."[6]

Because the most intimate aspects of our social lives are imbued with coloniality, these spaces also become sites from which to launch resistance to coloniality, specifically as they pertain to love, affect and desire for oneself and other subjugated groups is a central concern of Black queer artivists and activists[7]. While several scholars have focused on this question as it pertains to gender and sexuality, through a focus on Brazilian lesbian studies in particular, we can understand these dynamics as it pertains to the political nature of *affect,* desire, and the performativity of intimacy, desire and resistance, which is the primary focus of the essays in this Special Issue.

In returning the focus to Brazil's national origin myth, the sacrifice necessary for the emergence of a modern Brazilian nation is one in which whites engage in transgressive sexual acts for the benefit of whitening the nation. Meanwhile, Black, and non-white Afro-descendant Brazilians should play a passive role in the production of the white nation by producing light-skinned/white offspring. Additionally, Black and non-white Afro-descendant Brazilians should be ready to pay the ultimate sacrifice: physical, economic, socio-cultural, and political death. Blacks are expected to reproduce and simply disappear into Brazil's distant pass as it moves forward in achieving its goal of "order and progress." In a context where national unity is largely a sexual one geared towards creating whites while speeding up the Black genocide, a context where Indigenous populations are imagined to no longer exist, the policing of gender norms is particularly rigid. At the same time, there is the implicit sanctioning of transgressive sexual acts, which is necessary to sanction miscegenation while affirming white supremacy and Eurocentrism. Therefore in a context where the idea of nation and national unity depends on sexual relations and the reproduction of whitened citizens with an abject body and that must be killed, this also allows the possibility for various types of transgressive sexual and gender identities to emerge.[8]

In an overwhelmingly non-white country that is fixated on producing a nation through whitening, the non-white body is contemptuously tolerated; it is

rendered invisible. The Black body, specifically Black femininity, can both be contemptuously tolerated and serve as an object of disgust. Here I say the Black feminine body because in Brazil, given how the intensity of the sexual transgression increases sexual tension within Brazilian erotic ideology, gender does not map onto sexual orientation in the same way it does in other contexts. If we use the analytical lens of scholars such as Hortense Spillers and C. Riley Snorton, Black women's bodies (symbolically/ontologically) do not have a gender, Black women are not women within a Eurocentric western ontology, but are gendered within the realm of femininity. If we also consider that the Black women's bodies are fungible, then that means that Black femininity is not necessarily rooted to Black women's body - it is not rooted in a specific (imagined as stable) gender classification. In a country that has inherited an imperial national identity, that sees itself as (regionally) American only in relation to the United States, a fellow empire-state, and as a nation that is majority non-white Afro-descendant (that is Black), Brazil's ideology of the erotic has profound implications for how gender and sexuality are organized and understood in Brazil and throughout the Diaspora. We will return to this point again shortly.

In returning to Brazil's ideology of the erotic, the ideology openly encourages exploration of any kind of sexual proclivities rooted transgressions, outside of public purview, that can be read publically as disgusting or repulsive. That is, the repulsion that the person feels in a sexually charged moment actually increases the sexual tension of the person if they are also experiencing repulsion. In this way, one can hold a tension where one can experience both the desire to dominate and to kill (through whitening) the object of that desire. Here we return to Gilberto Freyre's erotic narrative of racial domination and elimination through sexual conquest. In a highly sexualized society, where sexual citizenship takes on an entirely different meaning, actions at the level of everyday interactions, or *gestures*, becomes particularly important in understanding the (re)production of racial identities within multiracial families, and in larger society. As Juana María Rodríguez (2015) writes, "gesture functions as a socially legible and highly codified form of kinetic communication, and as a cultural practice

that is differentially manifested through particular forms of embodiment." In the Brazilian context, we have to remember to consider how the performance of gender and sexual desire do and do not map onto how gender identity and sexual orientation are understood or are even related, in non-Brazilian contexts.

In the essay following this introduction, entitled: "Black *Sapatão* Translation Practices: Healing Ourselves a Word Choice at a Time," the translators for this Special Issue, Bruna Barros and Jess Oliveira, offer context and definitions for some of the sex/gender identities that exist in Brazil. By taking an intersectional approach to Brazil's sex/gender system, echoing our understanding of Brazilian genders and sexualities, the translators argue that Brazilian sex/gender terms are very much racialised. For example, in the case of "female homosexuality," *sapatão* is often referred to as a butch/dyke or even lesbian, but it is also a racialised term that is not exactly any of those sexual identities. Like the *bixa* (feminine identified gay men), *bixa preta* (Black feminine identified gay men) and *travesti* (a third gender identity that is feminine and pertains to those born with penises/assigned male at birth), the *sapatão* falls into a third gender category that is associated with women and femininity, but not exactly a woman, nor, like the *bixa* and *travesti,* transgender. These genders that exist on a spectrum of femininities challenge the western biologic binary and Eurocentric narratives of *how* one comes to identify with a gender.

What emerged was the articulation of a localized identity: the *sapatão* [roughly translated to giant shoe]. *Sapatão* is neither female (but kind of), nor lesbian (but often misidentified as one because lesbians are women who only desire women). However, in Brazil, homosexuality is not simply defined as sexual intercourse with those of the same gender or feeling affect for someone of the same gender, but it based primarily on where someone falls on the extremes of masculine and feminine, specifically as being a macho and woman, active and passive.[9] The *bicha* is always treated as being a little woman while *sapatões* are read as incorrigible machos. The *bicha*, like the machão, has an image associated with the penis. However, this relationship principally focuses on a

lucid dimension of sex centred on the fantastic. Through sexual practices that are considered unconventional and transgressive, sexual experiences with *bichas,* especially with *bichas pretas,* both excite desire and repulsion.[10]

Returning to the previous arguments where we consider the fungiblity of Black women's bodies, the Brazilian ideology of the erotic and the sexual social contract, one could easily argue that Marielle Franco was assassinated because she was a powerful and visible Black *sapatão,* and for this reason, she was an intense political threat. She literally threatened the viability of the Brazilian nation rooted in imperialist, Eurocentric, white supremist colonial legacies; a vision of a nation whose manifestation depended on a Black genocide through transgressive sex with passive, feminine bodies, especially bodies whose racial classification also rendered those as feminine (passive/acted on) bodies, and any desire for those bodies, as abject desire.

Thus the transgressive nature of *bixas pretas* racially, sexually and in terms of gender, makes *bixas pretas* both intensely desirable and repulsive for machos, while the *sapatão,* especially the Black *sapatão's,* rejection of the passive sexual role assigned to her in order to whiten the nation, is understood as extremely dangerous. It is for this reason that, in light of Marielle's assassination, we curated a Special Issue that centred on introducing scholarship on Brazilian lesbian studies (one that addresses *sapatões* as an intensely politicised sex/ gender category), to a larger international audience. We do this while placing Brazilian scholars and artivists in conversation with scholars writing from other Caribbean (re-defined) contexts. We thought it important to highlight the experiences of Afro-descendant women whose lives are under-theorized in Gender and Sexuality Studies throughout the Americas. That is, this issue is not solely focused on lesbian studies, as much as it is about contextualizing *sapatão* as a racialised gender identity that undermines the Brazilian erotic social contract and, therefore, undermines elite efforts at modernizing Brazil through whitening and Black social, political, affective and political death.

In addition to under-representation, there are even fewer conversations about these topics occurring across the regions and languages of people whose histories and lived experiences converge in significant ways, and diverge in ways that can be tremendously productive in decentring a Eurocentric perspective on Gender and Sexuality. This Special Issue contributes to the work already underway in this area by scholars and artivists such as M. Jacqui Alexander, Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, Ochy Curiel, Yuderkys Espinsa, Mignon Moore, Rinaldo Walcott, C. Riley Snorton, Sandra Alvarez, Yolanda Pizzaro Arroyo, Osmundo Pinho, Alan Costa, Malayka SN, Ani Ganzaga, Jota Mombaça, Michelle Mattiuzzi, Yesenia Selier, Titolindodelmar, SomosMuchoMas, Roberto Strongman, Gloria Wekker, Krudxs CUBENSI and many others who are rethinking Black genders and sexualities by centring localized genders and sexualities. These scholars also undertake important genealogies of how sex/gender identities and practices come into existence (or fail to according to a heteronormative model), epistemologically, ontologically, and cosmologically, as they pertain to the Afro-Indigenous foundations of Caribbean cultures and religious practices. This work is important in order to produce a theory that reflects our cultures and realities through a comparative lens, and to offer us the possibility to think about what constitutes decolonization. The articles in this Special Issue highlight these productive tensions in ways that we did not initially expect.

Considering the current political context, the present edition of the Caribbean Review of Gender Studies was designed to recognize the serious political, social and cultural context that has been developing in Brazil, where lesbian existences have been impacted by profound setbacks in the movements for gender and sexual equality. These setbacks have intensified in the wake of the political, media-supported, legislative coup, which culminated in the deposition of President Dilma Rousseff, and greatly reinforced the invisibility of the experiences of women and their narratives. Lesbian women in particular, faced intense invisibility in research, and have also faced sharp increases of targeted physical violence and murder. There has been a marked increase in the murders of Black women in Brazil, with a significant portion of them being Black lesbians.

To this, we say: Yes! *Sapatão*! As a call, using a word that initially was a pejorative slur attributed to lesbians in Brazil. For those of us who identify as *sapatão,* we take it for ourselves; we re-signify the term and transform it into a term of subversive power. It is an erasure of the norm in an uprising that echoes the affirmation of the voices of *sapatões*.

In the context of Brazil, this Special Issue is extremely important as the publication of this work in an international academic journal also does the work of giving visibility and a platform to the trans, lesbian and gender non-conforming women producing this academic work, and undertaking this activism in Brazil. It is an opportunity for agency and transformation, for the possibility of visibility and the building of collective resistance. In this way, this Special Issue takes a step further in order to produce a Brazilian *sapatão* epistemology that, given Brazil's politicized context as it pertains to race, class and gender identity politics, seeks to break with the narratives dominated by a white, cis-gendered gay male perspective; narratives which continue to almost exclusively dominate academic production in gender and sexuality in Brazil. The dominant perspective has, historically, homogenized sexual dissidences and makes the specificities of lesbians and *sapatonas* invisible, which has very specific implications considering the specific ways in which gender, gender identity and sexuality are constructed and experienced in Brazil.

We aim with this production to develop a decolonizing perspective on the knowledge and existences of the geopolitical Global South. We aim to challenge the erasure of the discursive construction of the lesbian/sapatão existence, and to contribute to the interruption of the silencing that structures the life of these women, especially the Black women. Furthermore, with this edition of the Journal, we imagined not only to contribute to the visibility of subordinate experiences, but also to mirror their multiple, intersectional resistances in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, social class, generation, region and aesthetics, which can also be markers power when they are openly discussed and problematized. They cease to be secrets and start to be told,

because, as Kilomba (2019, 41) states, the "truths that have been denied, repressed and kept quiet, as secrets" cease to be kept at a distance and quiet when they leave the margin.

For example, an unprecedented study carried out in Brazil regarding the murder of lesbians in the country between the years 2014 and 2017 and called "Lesbocide - the stories that nobody tells," identifies that there is a significant growth in the murders of lesbians in Brazil in the studied period and that such crimes are motivated by prejudice against lesbian women; therefore, they are configured as hate crimes. These murders occur not only because of the woman's lesbian condition, but are also very much intertwined with misogyny, racism, and other markers of oppression that intersect and feed these crimes. According to the dossier (2018) produced from that study, from 2014 to 2017 there was a 237% increase in cases of lesbocide, from 2000-2017 a 2700% increase and since 2013 this increase has been constant, with an increase of 80% in crimes from 2016 to 2017.

Over the last approximately six years, the contemporary Brazilian social and political context has experienced an intensification of far right-wing conservative thinking that has been reverberating politically, culturally and economically. Fascist, xenophobic, racist, LGBTI-phobic and misogynistic ideas structure, not only the narratives which have a moralistic and discriminatory tone, but also public policies. It is revealing an unequal and rights-violating State, which through its institutions promotes genocidal policies for certain segments of society. In this case, the state of exception is exercised as a state right and not a suspension of the rule of law. As Mbembe (2016) argues, the necropolitics of state violence is constituted intersectionally and, therefore, categories such as race, class, gender, sexuality and urban space, for example, will define what lives are to be victimized by this homicidal violence, through which the state operates its sovereign power.[11] Therefore, in this process, there is a classification that hierarchises the population and some urban locations with the discretionary distribution of policies that promote death and that are

structurally racialised. This management of the geographical space and the control of the population, which has a despotic character, distribute death in a dissimilar way, forming the state necropolitics.

It is necessary to consider, however, that the fascist character of this State cannot be sustained without the participation of the population. Despite the fascist tendencies present in power relations and in public policy, it is also in the subjectivity of individuals, in the way they perceive, understand and act on phenomena. Therefore, the fascist discourse now produced by the state reverberates in the subjectivities and the consequent violent actions that we see being committed daily against all lives considered abject. Today we are experiencing within Brazilian society, an extreme conservatism that is combined with a process of centralization of State power across all sectors of society including civil society, this being driven by the expansion of the political power of the evangelical sectors and through the rigging of the State's electoral processes. As a result, there is increased reproduction socially, on a large scale, of macho discourses, sexists, misogynists, LGBT-phobics and racism.

The reactionary segments of the right-wing State have focused specific actions on issues of gender and diversity in the country. One example is the Escola sem Partido [Schools without Party] movement, which was created in 2004 and had its peak in 2016. The movement formulated and subsidized conservative and authoritarian public education policies based on Christian fundamentalism, some of them were converted into bills, that were presented to the National Congress by politicians aligned with the conservative agenda. These political actors aimed to restrict freedom of expression in schools and to prevent critical learning skills, rooted in science, from being taught in schools. Instead, they worked towards promoting a Christian moral education that threatens not only the emancipatory education project but also the secular state, generally speaking.

These right-wing actors are working with right-wing Christian fundamentalists in the United States who, having nearly lost the culture wars in the United States, are working to undermine the Brazilian and Latin American left challenges to social inequality. The paradigms that underpinned this conservative educational project also had as one of its main concerns, the prevention of discussions about gender and sexuality in educational institutions, including sexual and reproductive health, sexual and domestic violence. Understood as threatening to the formation of children and young people, initiatives that seek to discuss issues of gender and sexual orientation in schools, in order to combat related discrimination, were called "gender ideology." Thus, legitimized by the state's ultra-conservative discourse and by the religious fundamentalism which infiltrated state discourse and policy, actions of violence, often lethal, now directly target lives that are dehumanized by these discourses and policies, because they carry the mark of difference, whether in bodies or in ideas.

Initiatives like this affected not only schools, but have also enabled the rise of an ultra-conservative political project at the highest level of political representation. In 2019, Brazil's President-elect Jair Bolsonaro, in his inaugural speech affirmed that his government's priority is to "combat gender ideology" while conserving traditional and Christian family values and thus making "Brazil free from ideological bonds." Bolsonaro's speech reverberates in political strategies aligned with other actors and governments throughout the region. One of his first actions as president was to reformulate the Ministry of Human Rights, suppressing all programmes and actions related to gender and diversity. Headed by an evangelical pastor who, in her inauguration ceremony, publicly declared that this "is the beginning of an era in which girls wear pink and boys wear blue," the ministry became the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights."

In the *Atlas da Violencia's* (the Atlas of Violence) 2019 research, carried out by the Institute of Research and Applied Statistics (IPEA) and the Brazilian Forum on Public Security (FBSP), it is possible to identify data directly related to the

increase of violence in Brazil. The 2019 edition is extremely important because it is the first edition that considers violence against the LGBTI+ population. The data presented were collected from two different bases: from the complaints registered in "Dial 100," from the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights, and from the administrative records of the Notifiable Diseases Information System (Sinan) from the Ministry of Health. This edition of the Atlas of Violence indicates that there was an increase in female homicides in Brazil in 2017, with about 13 murders per day. In all, 4,936 women were killed, the highest number registered since 2007. In relation to the LGBTQ population throughout Brazil, the number of homicides reported to "Dial 100" rose from 5 in 2011 to 193 in 2017. On the other hand, bodily injuries increased from 318 in 2016 to 423 in 2017, the rate had drastically dropped from its peak of 783 cases in 2012, as a result of more inclusive social policies. Now that those policies have been directly attacked and reversed, we are now seeing a rapid increase.

These data are particularly important to analyse because the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights, despite claiming on its official website[12] that "LGBT-phobia kills, now supports anti-LGBT policies. Brazil is considered one of the most violent countries in the world, including for the LGBT population. Its public institutions are no longer making available the reports containing this data used by the Atlas of Violence. As pointed out by some of the articles presented in this Special Issue, the most recent data are those of 2017 and little official information is available for 2018 or 2019, making the research and reflections presented here central to understanding the importance of this issue.

In this introduction to this Special Issue, we will first offer some additional important context in order for the reader to situate the profoundly political nature of this Special Issue. We will then discuss how this work of translation, of connecting across and through colonial languages, is a political act. We will include a discussion of how this Special Issue was initially going to be published with another journal in the area of gender and sexuality studies. We will discuss why we, as the co-editors for this Special Issue, decided to leave that journal,

and why, in thinking seriously about our commitment to decolonialising intellectual production and dissemination, we feel that CRGS is the best home for this Special Issue.

The Social and Economic Contexts of Black Brazilian Youth and Black Women

In order to understand the situation of Black women and youth in Brazil, it is important to understand that we take a Federal State-centred approach to the various themes that involve thinking, and acting, to overcome the intersectional challenges created by gender, race and generation in Brazilian society. Thus, it is important to understand that for us, much of it is first and foremost guided from the perspective of State sanctioned human rights: human rights are a duty of the Brazilian State. Considering the guarantee of the right to life, the right to equality and non-discrimination, which are enshrined in the Federal Constitution in the text of two articles: Article 5, which states: "Everyone is equal before the law, without distinction of any nature, guaranteeing Brazilians and foreigners residing in the country the invaluable right to life, freedom, equality, security (...)" and article 227 which states that: "It is the duty of the family, society and the State to ensure children, adolescents and young people, with the absolute priority to, the right to life, health, food, education, leisure, professionalization, culture, dignity, respect, freedom and family and community coexistence, in addition to guarding them from all forms of neglect, discrimination, exploitation, violence, cruelty and oppression."

In the beginning of the 21st century, Brazil, and the larger global community, increasingly expanded their consensus concerning the recognition, and the development of, mechanisms capable of facing and overcoming the racial, gender, socioeconomic inequalities that confer to different groups and individuals different degrees of vulnerability and possibilities for realizing their rights. Over the last several decades, there were advances resulting from the grassroots mobilization of sectors of the Black social movements and Black women's movements. These advances resulted in the development of

affirmative action programs, the creation of the Secretariat for Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality - SEPPIR / PR, of the Secretariat for Policies for Women (SPM) and the National Youth Secretariat (SNJ). Their actions represented an opportunity to face the barriers to equal rights, because the effects of inequality and ethnic-racial segregation continue to be reflected in various economic and social models. It is important to highlight the arduous political struggle of Black women's movements that, since the 1970s, have been gradually demarcating the needs and urgencies of the Black Brazilian population.

Among the set of vulnerabilities experienced by Black women of different age groups and geographic locations, is the intersection of racism and sexism. The existence of racism produces disparities that are reflected in access to rights and in the quality of services provided, as well as, mainly, it produces more intense morbidity and mortality in the Black population, when compared to the situation of white women. Brazil has the second largest black population in the world, being composed mainly of Black women and Black people generally, representing 52.9% of the Brazilian population (IPEA, 2013). Of this amount, 59.4 million are black women, corresponding to 51.8% of the female population and 27.7% of the total Brazilian population (IPEA, 2013). Available in all regions of the country, the North and Northeast Regions have the highest proportion of Black women in their female population, equivalent to 75.2% and 70.7% respectively; the Western Region has 57%, the Southeast Region, 43.9%. The South Region has the lowest proportion, with 21.3% of Black women in the female population. In all regions, Black women reside mainly in urban areas, especially in the peripheries and more precarious regions of cities. Several publications such as the Dossier "The Human Rights Situation of Black Women in Brazil: Violence and Violations" (2016), [1] Dossier "Black Women: portrait of the living conditions of black women in Brazil" (2013), "Portrait of inequalities in gender and race" (2011), present several unfavourable scenarios for Black women in Brazil.

The murders of Black women increased by 54.2% in 10 years (2002-2013). In the same period, there was a 9.3% reduction in murders of white women. Between the years 2011-2013, 16 women were murdered per day, 488 per month, 5,860

per year. Of these, 45% were young women (10 to 29 years old). Of the 56,000 people who were murdered in Brazil in 2012, 30,000 were young people between 15 and 29 years old, and of this total, 77% are black. The majority of homicides are committed by firearms, and less than 8% of cases are even brought to trial. In addition to lethal violence, there is non-lethal violence that ends up affecting thousands of Black women, mostly mothers of murdered girls and boys. Such violence is generally expressed in isolation and loneliness, albeit with intense efforts to protect and try to preserve the lives of young people. Also after their death, there are efforts to recover the dignity of the murdered youth, to recover and bury their bodies, to seek redress and justice.

The curtailing of Black youth lives has directly impacted the structural development of the entire Black population, which is affected and conditioned to live in a constant state of mourning. They are mothers, sisters, wives, grandparents, girlfriends, cousins, aunts, friends, neighbours who have suffered directly from the dismantling of families and the immensity of pain due to losses. They are young men and black women murdered and interrupted directly and indirectly as a result of the loss of their youth. When young women and Black women overcome the barriers imposed on their lives, for example in unemployment, they begin to experience the sexual division of labour, domestic violence, sexual harassment, etc. Young women and Black women are even more discriminated against, and have lived with historical disrespect for their bodies, which are still violated and marginalized, fuelling more and more the rates of assaults, rapes and murders. According to the Applied Research Institute - IPEA, Black women are 62% of the victims of femicide. They live in the service sector, under conditions of underemployment, to guarantee the family's livelihood, even with more school education and study opportunities, and account for most of the heads of household.

According to information published by the Articulação de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras-AMNB (2012), Brazil has 8 million domestic workers, mostly young women and Black women who, in the category of domestic workers, do not

have the same regulations as the others urban workers, despite the advancement of Brazilian legislation, is the result of the category's classification in public policy. In the formal job market, they support a 19% difference in remuneration in relation to non-Black women and, compared to non-Black men, this difference rises to 46%, according to data from DIEESE. This time it is correct to say that black women remain at the base of the social pyramid, and at this moment, with the worsening financial difficulties experienced by Brazil, this chasm is widening. This situation determines for young Black women a condition determined by their experience and total insertion in a context of inequality and exclusion.

Public health indicators show that Black women still fall short of the care that should be directed to the Brazilian population as a whole. Black women are the main victims of neglect - both in primary care and in specialized care. An emblematic case of negligence in the health field is that of Alyne Pimentel, the first complaint about maternal mortality received by the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The Alyne case has particular aspects that give it the quality of a paradigmatic case, because Alyne was a Black woman, pregnant, young, of low income and, as a result of the lack of adequate medical assistance, she died, for a cause extremely preventable. The case exemplifies the situation elucidated in the SUS Panel of Indicators Magazine nº 10 - Thematic Health of the Black Population (2016) which records that according to the data notification by the Mortality Information System, which for the year 2012 of the total of 1,583 maternal deaths, 60% were Black women and 34% white women.

More than 10 years after the episode, CEDAW forwarded a series of recommendations to the Brazilian government to adopt measures to reduce maternal mortality rates for the country. It is worth mentioning that it was the 5th objective of the Millennium Goals, which proposed to improve the health of pregnant women, which Brazil did not achieve, it did not reach the goal of

reducing the maternal mortality ratio by ¾, between 1990 and 2015. It is important to emphasize that what promotes the high rate for the country are the data on the maternal death of Black women.

The situation of abortion in Brazil, for as far back the evidence dates, is a serious public health problem that mostly affects Black women, especially young women. Research carried out in Brazil shows that the country's social and racial inequalities, that have existed since colonial times, have also marked the practice of abortion. "The most common characteristics of women who have their first abortion are age up to 19 years, are Black and have children." This is described in an unprecedented scientific article that the anthropologist Débora Diniz, from the University of Brasília (UnB) and the Institute of Bioethics, Human Rights and Gender (Anis) and sociologist Marcelo Medeiros, also from UnB and the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Ipea) published. According to the authors, socio racial differentiation is perceived even in the follow-up during the medical procedure. "Black women report less the presence of partners than white women," write the researchers. Ten women reported having miscarried alone and without assistance, almost all of them were Black, with low education [elementary school]. "The study also reveals that, among women Black women, the rate of induced abortion (3.5% of women) is twice that of white women (1.7% of women).

The document "The epidemic of Zika and Black Women" by Jurema Werneck shows that Black women are more exposed to Zika and other diseases transmitted by the Aedes aegypti mosquito, due to living in areas where basic sanitation is lacking and there is a need to store water drinking water, regular water supply and no adequate garbage collection, creating an environment conducive to development in the mosquito, and consequently the diseases transmitted by it. Werneck shows that "Unofficial information indicates that 70% of babies with microcephaly are children of Black women." In addition to the contamination, the impact of the epidemic also brings with it the problem of

abandonment by the children's parents, mainly affecting young women, with unstable relationships and who have had an unwanted pregnancy.

In the field of violence, preliminary studies by the Institute for Applied Economic Research - IPEA, estimate that, between 2009 and 2011, Black women, young people and the poor are the biggest victims of domestic violence. In Brazil, 61% of deaths are of black women, the main victims in all regions of the country, with the exception of the South. The high proportion of deaths of Black women and young people in the Northeast (87%), North (83 %) and Midwest (68%). 2012 data also point out that 63% of women in prison are Black women.

Violence against young Black women continues to target those who have multiple sexual orientations, and for that reason, they suffer from specific violence directed at lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people. In the scenario presented to young Black lesbians, the "corrective rape," which is the type of violence that punishes women for not corresponding to a compulsory heterosexuality in force in society, is used as a punishment for what is believed to be the woman's denial of the masculinity of man. It is a cruel face of 'cure' through forced sex.

The characteristic of this type of practice is the preaching of the aggressor when violating the victim: oftentimes these "corrective" rapes are undertaken by Church congregations. The victims are mostly young people between 16 and 23 years old, lesbian or bisexual. Some aggressors even encourage "corrective penetration" in groups on social networks and websites. During the 9th edition of the National Seminar on Lesbians and Bisexual Women (Senalesbi), held in Teresina in Piauí state, as well as during the 2nd National Seminar on Black and Bisexual Lesbians, held in the city of Curitiba in Parana state, in a meeting of Black women, young women presented the need for intergenerational dialogue so that the demands of young Black women are presented and that they are in intense dialogue with the agenda of lesbians and bisexuals.

Between 2014 and 2017, 126 women were killed in Brazil for being lesbians. Among these figures, the case of Luana Barbosa, a young Black and non-

feminized lesbian, living in a suburb in the interior of São Paulo, stood out in the Brazilian media. Luana was a victim of police violence when she refused to be searched by a male police officer, demanding a female police officer. According to the Lesbocídio Dossier - Stories nobody tells (2017), 55% of murder cases happen to non-feminized lesbians. And in 83% of cases, lesbians are murdered by men. This terrifying data confirms the adverse effects of heterosexual and racist politics ingrained in Brazilian society, which has been making invisible victims until today. Lesbian invisibility makes it difficult to develop other mappings, to collect data and to compile statistics that can support debates and put pressure on the public authorities to guarantee basic rights for this segment of the population that is constantly segregated from society.

There is still a debate about the inclusion of young black women living in rural areas, especially those from the traditional quilombola community. The various complaints point to sexual crimes carried out against Black adolescents and young people living in quilombola communities. In addition to the case of abused girls, there is also the case of sexual exploitation, as well as the threats and reprisals suffered by the families that carry out the denunciations that take place in these and other quilombola communities, rural blacks in the interior of the state. Brazil.

Although affirmative policies have guaranteed access for Black populations, and consequently for young Black women, to rights such as access to higher education, the comparison between different colour and sex groups between the years 2003 and 2009 shows the persistence of inequalities in university space. Despite the increase in schooling rates, the presence of white women and men is still much higher than that of Black women and men, according to the "Black Women Dossier: portrait of the living conditions of Black women in Brazil" (IPEA, 2013).

In the Prison System, the female prison population increased by 567% in 15 years, rising from 5,601 to 37,380 inmates between 2000 and 2014 (INFOPEN MULHERES, 2016). Most cases are due to drug trafficking, which accounts for 68% of arrests. This data is even more relevant when it emerges that the majority of women in prison in the country (68%) are Black, while 31% are white and 1% are classified as "yellow" (INFOPEN MULHERES, 2016). Regarding the age group, about 50% of incarcerated women are between 18 and 29 years old; 18%, between 30 and 34 years; 21%, between 35 and 45 years; 10% are in the age group between 46 and 60%; and 1%, are between 61 and 70 years old, and until June 2014 there were no prisoners aged over 70 years.

In this sense, the great background is in fact an immense patchwork, sewing different identity categories with different actions to confront human rights violations. In the end, all of these statistics were only possible thanks to the collective effort of countless black women's organizations, black movement and other white organizations and people who joined the cause for a more just, dignified and free Brazil of all kinds of oppression. We are far from experiencing an equitable society, however, the country is experiencing its peak in terms of the solidification of black identity, celebrating all African and indigenous ancestry, improving ancestral technologies to combat racism and all oppression. "Our steps come from afar."

Situating this Special Issue within the Field Lesbian & Sapatão Studies in Brazil

Despite some efforts at theorizing lesbian existences in the 1980s and 1990s, it was only after the 2000s that we begin to see increasing publications about the lesbian existence in Brazil. As in the current Special issue, the production of knowledge about lesbians has been carried out, mainly, by academic and/or activists who speak from their positionality. They promote not only political and theoretical visibility of the lesbian issue, but how, in an intersectional manner, erasures and resistance to normative and oppressive power systems are also constituted. Oppressive systems of power like compulsory heterosexuality (Rich

2010; Curiel 2017), racism and patriarchy, which were structured in Brazil as a constituent part of the colonial epistemological project, has its centrality in the hegemonic figure of the heterosexual white, bourgeois and Christian man (Saunders 2017).

The production of a Brazilian lesbian epistemology, or a *sapatão* epistemology (Saunders, 2017), reveals the construction of critical and emancipatory thinking because it constitutes a transgression of the heteronormative system and compulsory heterosexuality which is racist and imbued with coloniality. Saunders (2017) argues for the production of Black lesbian epistemologies at the intersections in suggesting that the construction of a Black lesbian epistemology is one of many possibilities of praxis that can contribute to processes of decolonization. This approach constitutes an anti-colonial strategy to face racism and lesbophobia.

In this context, lesbian theoretical production has been generated in Brazil, primarily in the last decade. MH/Sam Bouncier and Judith Butler, Tanya Saunders, Jules Falquet Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde and Cheryl Clarke are theorists who have greatly influenced the lesbian epistemology that is being built in Brazil. Especially influential are the theoretical contributions of Caribbean decolonial feminists Ochy Curiel, Yuderkis Espinosa and Mayan writer Dorotéa Gomez Grijalva (2012). Writing from a decolonial perspective; they have brought the understanding of the lesbian body as a political territory, endowed with memory and knowledge, which becomes an instrument of patriarchal decolonization.

In Brazil, Cassandra Rios, considered the first Brazilian lesbian writer to address love and sexuality among women through fictional novels in the 1940s to 1990s, was censored and her work confiscated during the military dictatorship in Brazil. However, her work sought to build a positive representation of lesbians and played an important role in structuring a narrative to confront the heteronormative discourse of the time that strongly reinforced the conservative

gender role for women as being destined for marriage and motherhood. Leila Míccolis, also a Brazilian writer and poet in the 1970s and 1980s, wrote poems about the lesbian universe and published in 1983, in co-authorship with Herbert Daniel, one of the first books to deal theoretically with lesbianity: "Jacarés e Lobisomens - two essays on homosexuality." She also contributed to literature in this area, since the 1970s, with articles for the extinct newspaper "Lampião de Esquina," an independent production of the homosexual movement in Rio de Janeiro. The newspaper had distribution throughout Brazil and was read not only by intellectual writers from different states in the country, but also abroad.

The "Lampião de Esquina" newspaper, which was part of the first wave of publications by the homosexual movement in Brazil (Facchini, 2010), was an important tool for building the autonomy of the lesbian movement in the country and therefore for the structuring of a Brazilian lesbian epistemology. Her collaborators were not only members of the lesbian movement, but also of the feminist movement, among them Maria Luiza Heilborn and world renown Black feminist Lélia Gonzales, who contributed a lot with their reflections in the fields of sexuality and race, respectively.

Denise Portinari, an intellectual from Rio de Janeiro, also collaborated in the production of lesbian thought in Brazil, through the publication of her book, in 1989, "The Discourse of Female Homosexuality," in which she performed an analysis of the various discourses on lesbianity, whether in music and in institutional documents among other sources. Nowadays, Conceição Evaristo, a world renowned Black writer and formative figure in contemporary Brazilian literature, has used this methodology to produce visibility for the experiences of Black women, including lesbians, in what she calls *scribes*: a writing of their own experiences or ways of survival which have become powerful for confronting women's intersectional oppressions. Still in the field of literature, Ryane Leão, writer and Black lesbian poet, has also produced reflections for the construction of a lesbian thought through poetry. Additionally, there are also formative

contemporary poets and literary figures such as Cidinha da Silva, Louise Queiroz, Luciene Aparecida, Márcia Aires, Angélica Freitas, Natália Polesso.

Finally, it is crucial to recognize the work of Tatiana Nascimento, who has become a reference in the production of Brazilian Black lesbian theory, not only for her writing-resistance that erases the literary norm, but for her role as editor and founder of an editorial enterprise that has been publishing works by Black women and/or lesbians and other race/gender/sexual dissidents. Here work: *cuirlombismo literário* has been translated for this special issue.

In the last five years, there are some very specific productions about lesbianities that have been made in Brazil, contributing in an effective and significant way to the construction of contemporary lesbian epistemology in Brazil. In chronological order, in 2015, Tânia Pinafi published the book "History of the Lesbian Movement in Brazil: Lesbians Against Invisibility and Prejudice," an important historical record of the struggle of lesbian women who sought to guarantee rights, to confront prejudice and wove the autonomy of the lesbian movement. In the Dossier "Sapatão é revolution! Lesbian Existences and Resistances at Subordinate Crossroads," launched in 2017, through the Revista Periódicus (NUCUS / UFBA), lesbian researchers Simone Brandão Souza, Ana Cristina C. Santos and Thais Faria organized this publication, which they sought to focus on the articles of women, mostly lesbians, that centred on reflections of their existence and lesbian resistance based on the intersecting differences experienced by them.

In the following year, researchers Ana Carla da Silva Lemos and Nathalia Christina Cordeiro organized, through the magazine Cadernos de Gênero e Diversidade (Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), the Dossier "Feminist Lesbian Thoughts and Resistances, Dialoguing with Classical, Contemporary Theorists and Lesbian Movements," which brings lesbian resistance as a central theme, and is the result of the 1st Day on Lesbian Thought and product of the 1st Extension Course on Contemporary Lesbian Thought, organized by the

Lesbibahia Collective, Maria Quitéria Studies and Research Center and the Feminist Studies Group in Politics and Education (GIRA) at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA).

The course, held in 2017, was coordinated by Bárbara Alves (LesbiBahia Collective), Valéria Noronha (Maria Quitéria / UFBA) and Felipe Bruno Martins Fernandes (GIRA / UFBA) and aimed to discuss the thoughts of lesbian authors from all over the world, since the 1970s, until contemporary times, still articulating UFBA with the lesbian social movements in Bahia.

Also in 2018, the books "Plural Lesbianities, sneaky approaches and epistemologies" were launched - and "Plural Lesbianities, other productions of knowledge and affections"–, both organized by lesbian researchers Simone Brandão Souza, Mayana Rocha Soares and Thais Faria. The two volumes sought to create a space of theoretical and political visibility for Brazilian lesbian productions, in order to produce new knowledge about the lesbian universe in the country. All these initiatives and products, coupled with the growing increase in the completion of courses, dissertations and theses produced on the existence of lesbians, show the structuring of a powerful and ongoing lesbian epistemology in Brazil.

We have noticed until now that the construction of the Brazilian lesbian epistemology, although embodied in different theoretical perspectives of lesbians already recognized worldwide, has also been based on the narratives produced from the experiences lived by a plurality of lesbian women in Brazil. We consider it important, however, that this Brazilian lesbian theory is also constructed by women who are on the sidelines, like transgender women who are lesbians and Black lesbian women in incarceration who also resist the power of erasure. Each resist based on their narratives and actions, in struggle for daily survival in medical and criminal justice systems and institutions; women who are directly dealing with disciplinary power mechanisms that uses authoritarian practices anchored in male, white, heterosexual and Christocentric culture to

guarantee the obedience of all women, non-binary people, feminine subjects and sexual and gender dissidents more broadly.

Summary of Articles in the Special Issue and Concluding Thoughts

In the essay, "Black *Sapatão* Translation Practices: Healing Ourselves a Word Choice at a Time," Bruna Barros and Jess Oliveira discuss the epistemology of translating lesbian and *sapatão* texts from Brazilian Portuguese into English. They theorise about, what they call, the black *sapatão* translation strategies they applied while translating, proofreading and copyediting the texts – articles, essays and a poem – for the Caribbean Review of Gender Studies' Special Issue on gender and sexuality in contemporary Brazil. They point out the huge gap between the amount – and the production conditions (when, how and by whom) – of texts that are produced in Brazil by LGBTQI+ and/or black authors and the amount that actually gets translated into English.

The essay, "literary cuírlombism: black lgbtqi poetry exorbitating the paradigm of pain," tatiana nascimento asks the following questions: why does the intelligibility of the literature produced by black and/or lgbtqi people seem to be related to the thematic presence of the pain/resistance/denouncement triad? in which ways does this triped approach meet the expectations of the white*ist* colonial cisheteronormative gaze's typical sadism? is it possible, really possible, to reconjure a concept founded on two brazilian contemporary black thought pillars – beatriz nascimento and abdias nascimento, in their respective propositions on *quilombos* [maroon societies] and *quilombismo* –, that still engage with a heterocentered perspective on blackness, to create a basis for the notion of ~~*queerlombism*~~ *cuírlombism* as one in which the notions of black diaspora and sexual dissidence are settled in the same ancestral ground?

In their essay entitled "Towards a Transnational Black Feminist Theory of The Political Life of Marielle Franco" S. Tay Glover and Flavia Meireles undertake a study of Franco's life, in which they theorise the stakes, successes, and the limits

of visibility and invisibility of a Black lesbian woman *favelada* mobilising an intersectional Black lesbian coalitional politics within Brazil's established necropolitical infrastructure during a distinct conservative political turn. They consider Franco's agenda and theory-in-praxis – as she did – within a genealogy of diasporic Black (lesbian) intersectional struggles against (neo) colonialism, and look to Franco's case to illuminate survival strategies, and limitations, of Black lesbian existence, in an environment of annihilation, for questions about our futures.

Cuban psychologist Norma Rita Guillard Limonta, in her essay "The Social Representation of Afro-Descendant Lesbians in Cuba: Lesbian Resistances," draws from Brazilian, Cuban and Caribbean Black Feminist scholars, activists and artivists to theorize about how Black lesbian and gender non-conforming people thoughout the African Diaspora offers us a framework in which to theorize decoloniality and liberation. Norma's essay was a surprise for us to receive: we sent out the call for paper to our networks in Brazil, and we received a scholarly article from a widely respected Cuban Afro-Feminist, who placed Black feminist scholarship produced in Cuba, Brazil, the U.S. and the larger Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora in conversation with each other. In many ways, for us, this particular essay reflects the type of work we are attempting to undertake with this Special Issue in which we speak to each other through our colonial languages, and across the geographical and geopolitical boundaries imposed on us.

In the poem "afro-latina," formiga writes about her diasporic experience and existence as a kuir afro-latina. In "Existence Narratives and the Small Everyday Deaths: Notes of a Black *Sapatão* in Santa Catarina" Aline Dias dos Santos reflects on the lesbophobia aimed at the bodies of *sapatonas* in academia, and how these aggressions occur similarly in different hierarchical spaces. It also discusses the bathroom paradigm as a gender barrier, as a part of the white gaze regime which operates as a locus of structural advantage, imprisoning and eliminating bodies considered unsuitable for the male-female, white-black

binary. She focuses on the experiences of black sapatonas, from the south of Brazil, in order to destabilize the official narrative that popularises the south of Brazil as a legitimate European colony, i.e. white and heterosexual, while the North and North East are racialised as Indigenous and Black.

The essay entitled, "*Ocupação Sapatão* in Salvador: A Decolonial Counter-Narrative on the Geographic Urban Space and its Restrictions of the Right to the City" by Aline P. do Nascimento and Sheyla dos S. Trindade analyses the socio-spatial invisibilities of Black *sapatonas* in the cultural dimension of the centre of Salvador. It seeks to provoke and debate the occupation of urban spaces from the perspective of entertainment not only for Black *sapatonas*, but also for bisexual and trans women (LBT), who have their existence erased due to institutional racism and LGBTphobia.

In this sense, *Ocupação Sapatão Bahia* is a cultural activity in response to the hegemonic and cisheteronormative spaces of public and private entertainment. By boosting the presence of Black and female bodies in Salvador's centre, the event seeks to promote the visibility of the Black LBT women's community. This essay is followed by the work of the featured visual artist Ani Ganzala who is an independent watercolour and graffiti artist based in Salvador, Bahia. Ani started her artistic training in the streets of Salvador as a graffiti artist, and after experimenting with other mediums, she was struck by how paper absorbs the colours of watercolour paint, and moved to watercolour as her primary medium although she still is a very active graffiti artist. She has exhibited her work throughout the Americas, Europe and Africa.

In "Lesbocide in the Brazilian Context," Suane Felippe Soares presents a partial overview of the book "*Dossiê sobre lesbocídio no Brasil: entre 2014 e 2017*" [Dossier on the Killing of Lesbians in Brazil: from 2014 to 2017], launched by Milena Cristina Carneiro Peres, Suane Felippe Soares (the article's author) and Maria Clara Marques Dias, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on March 7th, 2018. The *Dossiê* was a groundbreaking document and had tremendous repercussion

among academic, activist and civil groups even though the primary focus was on the lesbian public.

The Dossier drew widespread national and international attention and sparked much national debate. The main goal of the paper is to analyse the possible impacts of studying lesbocide on the transformation of paradigms concerning violence against lesbians. In the following article, "Main Questions from Brazilian Family Physicians on Lesbians and Bisexual Women's Healthcare," Renata Carneiro Vieira and Rita Helena Borret show how, in Brazil, being a lesbian or a bisexual woman represents an important social determinant of health. An important aspect of the health-sickness process is the non-recognition by lesbians and bisexual women of the healthcare system as a possible safe environment. This is due both to the LGBTphobia they face in health units and to the lack of knowledge and training skills by health professionals on the specificities of this population. The article aims to systematise the main doubts and questions of family physicians, medical residents and students from Brazil, concerning the care of LGBT people in the Primary Healthcare level. The goal is to promote and guide training activities with this theme both in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, as well as in continuing education courses for health professionals.

In "The Siriricando Block and the Lesbians and Bisexual Women at São Paulo's Carnival" Barbara Falcão and Milena Fonseca Fontes share their experiences as a part of a carnival block of lesbian and bisexual women who that have been out on the streets of downtown São Paulo, Brazil, making noise and challenging patriarchy since 2016. Founded by a group of lesbians and bisexual women, Siriricando seeks to promote spaces for socializing and strengthening of lesbian and bisexual identities and sexual freedom. The work to increase awareness of the reproduction of prejudices existing in the sexist, and patriarchal, Brazilian society.

The essay "Deborah Learned How to Play Sword with the "*Cabras*": Lesbianess and Artivism in the *Guerreiro,* a Brazilian Popular Cultural Event" by Ribamar José de Oliveira Junior and Lore Fortes, presents a study on the artivism of sexual and gender dissidents, in Brazilian popular culture, through a focus on the performative production of the *Guerreiro* tradition in the city of Juazeiro do Norte, in the countryside of Ceará, Brazil. The Northeastern part of Brazil is considered to be among the most traditional, impoverished rural areas of the country. By taking analysing the subversive performative politics of a sole lesbian performer, Deborah Bomfins, who is a member of the group "Guerreiras de Joana D'arc," coordinated by Mestra Margarida Guerreira, the authors consider the way in which sexuality permeates the artivism of the Northeastern regional traditions. This is done by distorting the "*cabra macho*" [macho man] ideal in popular culture, and even more intensely so in local Northeastern culture, through visibility and resistance in a scenic dance performance.[13] The author argues that the *Guerreiro* tradition arises as a way of life for Deborah's lesbian existence, mainly because, as a *brincante* [player], she faces prejudices by standing between her lesbian identity and heteronormativity.

In the final article, entitled, "The Colonization of Non-feminine Lesbian Experiences as a Mechanism for Controlling Bodies and Compulsory Reproduction of Masculinity" Dayana Brunetto and Léo Ribas argue that while there is an investment of some groups in proposing, whenever possible, the inclusion of non-feminine lesbians into various definitions of transmasculinities, this actually runs the risk of (re)producing deterministic regulations on the bodies and practices of non-feminine lesbians. One example of this is when the gaze on a body identifies it as "a '*transmacho',* but an inadequate one, because it has boobs."[3] Considering the empirical data, it is reasonable to ask what are the historical conditions of possibilities that have contributed to this move to frame the body with this level of determinism.

The call to compose the special issue received more than one hundred articles and it took several stages of reading, dialogue between the editors and re-

reading to finally reach the selected texts. We consider this an important fact in how we curated this Special Issue, with the hope of highlighting how diverse these experiences are and how there is increasing need for more academic production in this area. In this way, what we have presented here was an effort to cover as widely as possible the diverse experiences of being and perspectives, while producing and thinking the epistemology of *sapatāo* in Brazil as we present this field to an international audience who may be unfamiliar with the intellectual production happening in Brazil in this area. For example, as co-editors we seek to present the theory about the experience of a single lesbian and her agency in the local culture in Cariri in the extremely rural northeast of the country, as well as the experience of an entire carnival block in the largest city in Latin America, Sāo Paulo.

As we attested earlier, this special issue has a political commitment to decolonization and to the epistemology *sapatāo* and in this sense, we purposely chose to leave the "flow of writing" present in the translation from Portuguese to English by respecting the form as representative of the political choices of each author. Additionally, through these translation politics in this special issue, we seek to defy colonial languages. For English-speaking readers, sometimes the text may seem a bit far-fetched or even grammatically incorrect, such as the choice of using "k" instead of "c" or "y" instead of "and" or the use of "i" in lowercase instead of "I." Those political choices and strategies are theorized and presented in the article "Black *Sapatão* Translation Practices: Healing Ourselves a Word Choice at a Time," and as the authors, we believe this also creates an epistemology *sapatāo*.

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[1] https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/black-feminism-brazil#B Last Accessed on Saturday, May 16th at 8:23 pm.

[2] The first stage of Brazil's independence was a move by Pedro I, the prince of Portugal, to create the Empire of Brazil in which he presided over as a monarch. Thus, Brazilian independence occurred after the crown returned to Portugal leaving some of the royal family and establishment behind. Brazil was the last country in the hemisphere to abolish enslavement and did so by decree without a war

[3] Parker, Richard G. *Bodies, Pleasures, and Passions: Sexual Culture in Contemporary Brazil, Second Edition*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009. muse.jhu.edu/book/10355.; Parker, R.G. 1989. "Bodies and Pleasures: On the Construction of Erotic Meanings in Contemporary Brazil." *Anthropology and Humanism Quarterly*, 14: 58-64. doi:10.1525/anhu.1989.14.2.58

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[5] Rodríguez, Juana María. *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings*. New York: New York University Press, 2015.

[6] (Merla-Watson 195)

[7] (Merla-Watson 196)

[8] (Parker 151)

[9] (Green 1999, Detsi de Andrade Santos 2004, Parker 2009)

[10] Detsi de Andrade Santos 168.

[11] That is, the process by which the State allows the rule of law to be dismissed for a specific cause.

[12] Ministério da Mulher, da Família e dos Direitos Humanos https://www.gov.br/mdh/pt-br/navegue-por-temas/lgbt/biblioteca/relatorios-de-violencia-lgbtfobica

[13] The term "*cabra*" [goat] is used to name men who are legitimized by male virility in north eastern Brazil; see more about *Guerreiro* at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCACdFV6lB8&gt=;

http://sta.uwi.edu/crgs/index.asp

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Black *Sapatão* Translation Practices: Healing Ourselves a Word Choice at a Time

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Abstract

In the following, we briefly discuss the epistemology of translating lesbian and sapatão texts from Brazilian Portuguese into English. In this article, we bring out and theorise about some of the black sapatão translation strategies we applied while translating, proofreading, and copyediting the texts – articles, essays and a poem – for the Caribbean Review of Gender Studies Special Issue on Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Brazil. Furthermore, we point out the huge gap between the amount – and the production conditions (when, how and by whom) – of texts that are produced in Brazil by LGBTQI+ and/or black authors and the amount that actually gets translated into English. After examining some examples of word choices and translation strategies adopted by us, we intend to demonstrate how working with particular texts, particular themes, and especially with black lesbian and sapatão authors, is part of and produces a black sapatão epistemology. In addition, we intend to contextualise our knowledge production within the politics discussed and practiced by our research group Traduzindo no Atlântico Negro [Translating in the Black Atlantic], coordinated by Professor Denise Carrascosa at the Federal University of Bahia.

Keywords: translation; black sapatão translation; epistemology; internationalism.

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"this one is for black folks esse aqui é pro povo preto
this one is for the snap divas
this one is for the muxoxos, the clickers, the hmmm mms
this one is for the dykes, the greatest tongue masters
(shoutout to the multilingual sapatonas)
this one is for our ancestors who spoke in tongues"
(Barros and Oliveira 2020)

For Paulette Nardal and Jane Nardal

Translating the articles and essays for this special issue of *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* arouses some key topics that pervade our political and intellectual practice. How does theory, and more importantly, how does black lesbian/*sapatão* theory come in and out of Brazil? What is the importance of translating Brazilian lesbian/*sapatão* thought into English? How do our choices influence the way the readers receive the texts, that is, how will the translation make the authors' voices more audible/readable while still keeping them visible, respecting their differences regarding the target/receptor language and context?

It is worth noting that a significant part of the international literature used as reference in the articles in this issue is translated material. In addition to that, the fact that, generally, the authors of the articles do not cite the translators' names in the references implies that they usually ignore or are not aware of this stage, of the crossing these ideas have to go through in order to arrive in their hands.

Therefore, the feeling they have is that they are reading the exact words written by the authors they have as references. However, we, as black *sapatonas* translators, know that we make so many choices throughout the translation process. These choices are more than semantic ones – they involve responsibility, an ethics with the subjects who wrote the texts, the themes, and the messages within the texts.

By adding the translators' names in the references, we noticed that the translations of lesbians such as Monique Wittig and Adrienne Rich, were done by men. And this might begin to answer how theory arrives in Brazil, be it lesbian, black, and/or black LGBTQI+ theory. Black/feminist theory (Fanon 1967; hooks 1992; Morrison 1992, etc.) has largely and deeply demonstrated how the white, heterosexual and male gaze(s) shape(s) visual production, psychiatry and the arts; that is to say, how it/they interfere(s) in the ways society and Black and/or LGBTQI+ people see ourselves. How would it/they disappear in translation – especially when translating lesbians/*sapatonas*?

Concerning the framework permeating our translation work and its specificities, Carrascosa (2017) states:

> Translation, thus, emerges in the Black Atlantic as political labour in the Spivakian sense of strong work with language as an identity and subalternity producing agent and, at the same time, in its rhetoric dimension, as a potential generating factor of subversive dissemination. (...) [The translator's] exercise does not imply only an instrumental communicative work to broaden the accessibility and the dialogue between writing and reading in this other imagined time-space; but, additionally, it produces a performativity in language that is capable of displacing, decentring, and rearticulating possibilities of senses that reverse ethnocidal forces.

In this context, our black translation practice is one of healing our transnational community from the isolation colonial languages imposed on us. This practice springs from our Afrodiasporic theoretical roots, guiding, for in our collective

translation work, performing a rupture with the idea of intellectual solitude and the translator's invisibility. As black *sapatão* translators, our work seeks to displace, misplace, rearrange, push, and pull the words and their meanings in order to refabulate history. Sometimes, it is a matter of tending to our scars, for instance: recurrently, we come upon the word "slave," both in old and new works, by black and white authors. This term, as well as the ideologies behind it, were brutally imposed on us. By adding three letters – "*en*slave*d*" – and then another word to it – "*en*slave*d person*" –, we turn a dehumanising term into one that acknowledges the process of dehumanisation some groups of people were forced through.

Another aspect in terms of how we navigate translation politics – now into Brazilian Portuguese – is how we deal with grammatical genders. In Brazilian Portuguese, there are masculine, feminine nouns/pronouns, neuter nouns, and no neuter pronouns. According to this language's grammar and writing conventions, masculine nouns/pronouns should be used to express neutrality. Therefore, regardless of the ratio, when referring to a group composed of men, women and gender non-conforming/dissident/non-binary people, the plurals, for example, should be masculine. In Brazilian academic writing, some intellectuals (notably gender non-conforming/dissident/non-binary people and feminist women, black and otherwise) have been using alternatives to this issue, hacking grammar, messing with words, decomposing old concepts. In the Brazilian Portuguese version of this essay, for example, in an attempt to provide easily comprehensible neutral plural options in a language that only has masculine/feminine ones, we simply used "*pessoas*" before the plurals. "*Pessoas*" is a feminine noun, so the plural form used with it is also feminine, but it stands for "people," which includes gender non-conforming/dissident/non-binary people, women and men. Besides being easy to understand, this alternative is also accessible, because it can be effortlessly read by reading software – unlike other options developed earlier, when neutral language was more of a novelty in Brazil. Through our translation practices, we defy the colonial language by proposing other pronoun guidelines.

Throughout the translation process of the articles, we came across some important terms concerning the Brazilian LGBTQI+ community, e.g.: "*sapatão/ sapatona,*" "*travesti*" and "*bicha.*" Each and every one of these terms is deeply related to Brazilian culture and to the LGBTQI+ struggle in this country.

"*Sapatão*" (or *sapatona*) is often translated as lesbian – and sometimes butch or dyke. Both terms – *sapatão* and lesbian – do indeed stand for the same demographic when one considers solely the sexuality aspect. However, when it comes to race, gender and gender expression, there are some specificities about "*sapatão/sapatona*" that the term "lesbian" does not seem to encompass, i.e.: 1) some black *sapatonas* do not use "lesbian" due to its Greek – white – origin, and would rather use a Brazilian term to describe themselves; 2) some *sapatonas* do not feel comfortable being labelled as women and use *sapatão* not only to describe their sexualities but the way they carry themselves in relation to and/or in terms of gender expression; 3) "*sapatão/sapatona*" is usually preferred and more frequently used by those who consider themselves non-feminine; 4) some *sapatonas* do not mind being addressed to with masculine pronouns or even prefer them. Furthermore, "*sapatão/sapatona*" used to be a slur, but the Brazilian *sapatão* community reclaimed it as a symbol of pride and self-love. There is power in our self-naming and a long history of struggle behind how we chose to affectionately call ourselves and each other.

The meaning of "*Bicha*" is somewhat close to faggot, considering that both words are former slurs used to refer to gay men which are now used as pride statement by some of them. In the Brazilian gay community, "*bicha*" – also spelled *bixa* – was formerly and frequently used to refer to highly feminine individuals, who were – and are – deeply persecuted and especially targeted by homophobic violence. Nowadays, besides being used as a self-defining term by some gay men, it also stands for an identity itself, used both by people who identify within the non-binary identities and people who do not engage in the binary/non-binary discussion at all. A *bicha* is a *bicha.*

"*Travesti*" is also very specific for the Brazilian LGBTQI+ culture. Sometimes the term is translated as "trans woman," because there are a lot of shared experiences between these two categories – which very frequently intertwine, as some people might identify as being both. In fact, in Brazil, the T in LGBTQI+ stands for *travesti* and transgender/transsexual. However, some *travestis* do not wish to be compared to trans women, because there were – and they were – *travestis* until the term "*mulher trans*" [trans woman] came into usage in Brazil. Also, some *travestis* argue that "*mulher trans*" implies the reaffirmation of binary ideas of gender, and, for this reason, place themselves apart from the latter, in a specific category, despite sharing the T in the community. In spite of the common etymology of "*travesti*" and the English word "transvestite," the latter can never be used as translation to the former. "Transvestite" is frequently offensive when used to refer to trans people, while "*travesti*" is a pride statement for those who identify as such.

Furthermore, sometimes the *bicha* and the *travesti* identities intertwine and meet each other, as there are some individuals that identify as "*bicha travesty,*" an identity that plays and messes even more with square and monolithic ideas of gender. In 2019, the film "Bixa Travesty" (2019), directed by Kiko Goifman and Claudia Priscilla, came out in Brazil, starring Linn da Quebrada, an artist that places herself in this category. In her song of the same name, "Bixa Travesty," Linn da Quebrada (2017) sings: "*Bixa travesty de um peito só / O cabelo arrastando no chão / E, na mão, sangrando um coração*" [*Bixa travesty* with only one boob / Dragging her hair across the floor / With a heart bleeding on her hand].

Translating means dealing with the historical contexts of words in more than one language, culture, time and space. Each word used to describe black and/or LGBTQI+ people and our life experiences is a crossroad – being able to choose how to define ourselves and those in our communities is powerful; through this act, we call ourselves by our names with our own voices, on our own terms. That is why we kept the Brazilian terms (discussed above) in the English version.

With this gesture, we try to preserve different identities, gender expressions, mixtures and twists of languages – we prevent the history of gender non-conforming/dissident/non-binary and racial identities from being whitewashed into a universal LGBTQI+ liberal identity, since language is a means of expressing cultural differences. Therefore, answering the third question, we believe that, by keeping the source terms, our translation can endorse the recognition and acknowledgment of these identities in different contexts. Once we can see each other and know how we define ourselves in different cultures, times and spaces, we can then recognize similarities and differences, act aware of what brings us together and sets us apart as well as how we survived different, but hostile environments. We can learn and exercise freedom strategies.

Spivak (2000) argues that "translation is the most intimate act of reading." We, following this reasoning, look at translating black and/or lesbian/*sapatonas* texts as a source of pleasure, knowledge and power. So when translating subjects who were and still are silenced in certain spaces, who are most of the time invisible or not seen as knowledge producers, who are constantly defined by others, we are aware of what is at stake in our task, mainly because we can relate to the authors and/or to the themes and contexts.

We understand that our academic production is not separate from our poetical creation. Regarding our work as a translation collective, Translating in the Black Atlantic means, among other principles, taking into account the artistic aspects of our theory and the theoretical aspects of our poetry, for both come into being concomitantly, as Carrascosa frequently asserts. Moving forward, to translate a text – be it an article, an essay or a poem – is to write a (new) text, it is the result of our relation with the author and their work, their po-ethics and ours. As black *sapatão* translators who "stand in identity avenues" – or crossroads – (Akotirene 2019), our challenge is to connect the dimensions through which we navigate as we live and as we translate – ourselves and each other –, posing our questions and considerations many times in the details of the translated text, as if ripples through black translation – through black *sapatão* translation.

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Towards a Transnational Black Feminist Theory of The Political Life of Marielle Franco

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Abstract

This paper examines the brief, remarkable presence of leftist Brazilian lesbian politician Marielle Franco, who was executed 14 March 2018 in what is a still unresolved case. Memorialising and examining Franco's case, this co-authored piece is a form of transnational Black lesbian feminist scholar-activism that both investigates her intersectional agendas of race, class, geography, gender, sexuality, and her institutionalised political struggles during her term as a minority force in Rio de Janeiro parliament. From this study of Franco's life, we theorise the stakes, successes, and the limits of visibility and invisibility of a Black lesbian woman *favelada* mobilising an intersectional Black lesbian coalitional politics within Brazil's established necropolitical infrastructure during a distinctly conservative political turn. With the support of an assembled archive of decolonial transnational feminism, we also consider Franco's agenda and theory-in-praxis – as she did – within a genealogy of diasporic Black (lesbian) intersectional struggles against (neo) colonialism. Speaking across languages and global Southern geographies, we situate our respective research and positional experiences of witnessing challenges and erasures of Black lesbians in genealogies of transnational feminism and mainstream politics in Brazil. We consider Franco's embodiment a premier site of transnational Black feminist theoretical possibility for delineating the diasporic, transnational phenomenon of Black lesbian symbolic annihilation, and look to Franco's case to illuminate survival strategies and limitations of Black lesbian existence in an environment of annihilation for questions about our futures.

Keywords: black lesbian, transnational feminism, black geographies, annihilation, Marielle Franco.

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Introductions and Invocations

This collaboration emerged from presenting as co-panellists at the annual "2019 Lesbian Lives Conference" in Brighton (UK). We were the only voices at the conference centering Black lesbian feminist invisibility and the global South. Our panel took place on the first anniversary of Marielle Franco's death. The successive presentations flowed like a dialogic invocation. They were an urgent call to uplift the embodied political life of Marielle Franco – a leftist Brazilian lesbian politician brutally executed on 14 March 2018 – and to consider its significance to Brazilian anticolonial resistance and transnational feminism.[1] Interfacing across Southern geographies, we learned that we both have witnessed the challenges and erasures of Black lesbians (as well as trans and gender non-conforming folks), and the ongoing historical record of their intellectual-sociopolitical contributions to politics in Brazil.

For instance, Marielle Franco was a Human Rights defender for ten years before her campaign in 2018. In her brief term as a politician, she cultivated various coalitions via her inhabitation of different worlds and epistemologies – institutional, communitarian, marginal. She translated these embodied, communitarian knowledges into concrete public policies (Meireles 2020). Though Marielle Franco's passing provoked transnational attention and memorialisation in activist networks, it was the first time many US-based activists became aware of Franco's work, and the work of Indigenous, Afro-Brazilian, lesbian, queer, trans comrades who were bravely fighting the vestiges of slavery in Brazil. Although #BlackLivesMatter was a movement resisting the erasure of Black lesbian, queer women, trans* and gender non-conforming (GNC) people's radical political-intellectual labour and death with its increasing global solidarity, there were largely no efforts to truly connect with the urgent protracted plight of Afro-Brazilian folks, or to issue a call to action to protect Black lesbian lives. Shortly after Marielle Franco's passing, the annual Decolonial Transnational Black Feminism Institute in Cachoeira (Brazil) convened. It offered an opportunity to centre the history of racial politics and social justice from the Brazilian Black feminist perspectives of professors, students, community activists, scholar artists, spiritualists – all holding different relationships to privilege and

oppression within Brazil's (neo) colonial racial systems.[2] But remarkably, even in the aftermath of Franco's execution, with an overwhelming majority of Black lesbian and queer women from Brazil and the diaspora in attendance, to many's disappointment, Black lesbian and queer sociopolitical-intellectual histories and issues were an afterthought (Glover 2018).

This co-authored paper is a form of transnational lesbian feminist scholar-activism that examines the embodied political life, unresolved case and transnational legacy of Marielle Franco as a premiere case study of the diasporic, transnational phenomenon of Black lesbian symbolic annihilation – a Black lesbian feminist concept that describes the critical functions of (in)visibility, asymmetrical solidarity, and memorialisation to Black lesbians' past-in-present relationship to death.[3] This co-authored piece both investigates Franco's intersectional agendas of race, class, geography, gender, sexuality, and her institutionalised political struggles during her term as a minority force in the Rio de Janeiro parliament.[4] From this study of Franco's political life and annihilation, we theorise the stakes, successes, and the limits of visibility and invisibility of a Black lesbian woman favelada (poor from the shanty towns) that mobilised an intersectional Black lesbian coalitional politics within Brazil's established necropolitical infrastructure[5] during a distinctly conservative political turn.

The significance of Franco's political life and execution to Brazilian anticolonial resistance and transnational feminism is also a primary site for heuristic delineation of Black lesbian symbolic annihilation, which considers how their sociopolitical and intellectual labour and memorialisation is folded into necropolitical projects. Thus, we consider Franco's agenda and theory-in-praxis as she did: within a genealogy of Black diasporic lesbian intersectional struggles against (neo) colonialism, while engaging an archive of decolonial transnational feminism. This is an attempt to reterritorialise Black lesbian diasporic contributions and dialectically extend theoretical conversations concerning queer necropolitics, lesbian geographies, and decolonial feminisms to situate the diasporic, transnational phenomenon of Black lesbian symbolic annihilation.[6]

Witnessing invisibility's function in Black lesbians' relationships to mainstream Brazilian politics, coalitions, and intellectual histories, we look to Franco's case to teach us survival strategies for, and the limitations of, Black lesbian existence in an environment centered on the annihilation of our futures.

"Our steps come from far away"

Brazil was the destination of the largest cargoes of enslaved Black people from across "The Black Atlantic," and was the last country in the world to abolish slavery (1888).[7] Marielle is a symbol of a long political struggle, as she used to say, recalling Jurema Werneck's saying: "our steps come from far away."[8] After abolition, the civil-military dictatorships (1964-1985) and the subsequent democracy were built on pigmentocracy. The amnesty process after the dictatorships pardoned those who tortured and killed many, such as Carlos Brilhante Ustra, one of the country's biggest torturers. He is known for torturing former president Dilma Rousseff, who was elected from the Workers' Party (PT) in 2011 as Brazil's first female president, during the dictatorship period. During her impeachment process (2016), Jair Bolsonaro praised Carlos Brilhante Ustra on the floor of Congress. In 2019, Bolsonaro rose to the presidency. This is the national political context of Marielle's case and her intersectional political struggles.[9]

During Marielle's campaign, she adopted the famous phrase: "I am because we are" as her slogan. She often referred to the African philosophy *Ubuntu*, which stands for the interdependency between all living beings - the phrase and philosophy Nelson Mandela mobilised to incite South African liberation.[10] Franco employed such concepts to signal Afro-Brazilian diasporic sociopolitical identity, transnational Black Solidarity and the continued relevance of African Philosophy to African diasporic and feminist liberation struggles and cosmologies. According to Fátima Lima (2018): "a genesis of intersectional studies can be found in theorists understood and self-understood as Black women and women of colour, trying to create not only a concept, but also

analyses that would account for the multiple oppressions that traverse different experiences" and we add different cosmologies.[11] Governing bodies have always ignored the inherent coloniality and trans nationality of its governed geographies that are a result of colonial occupation, slavery and forced diasporic migration. Similarly, law, institutionalised academic disciplines, valuations of knowledge, social justice coalitions and feminisms have historically suppressed and truncated Black women and women of colour's intersectional, diasporic, transnational, decolonial feminist archives of knowledge and social justice efforts, that speak to/across the colonial roots and geographies of oppression, for liberation. The existence of a Decolonial Transnational Black Feminism Institute in Brazil and our archival assemblage continues a legacy of speaking back to these unproductive conventions.

For instance, like Chandra Mohanty (1988), decolonial feminists such as Yurdekis Espinosa Miñoso (2017) analyse how discursive colonisation by occidental Northern feminism must be deconstructed and superceded to highlight struggles and concepts from Latin American feminisms, avoiding what Miñoso calls "epistemic privilege." This effort should be to build a decolonial transnational feminism that emancipates the Latin American subaltern, where Spivak (2003) elucidates that the paroxysm of the subaltern is "a black poor woman of the Third World" (Spivak 2003). Scholars like Hortense Spillers (1987; 2003), an African American feminist whose work reminds one of the tendency to displace domestic colonialism of the US empire, along with Black lesbian feminist Evelyn Hammonds (1994), Aníbal Quijano (2000), Breny Mendonza (2004), and María Lugones (2010) have intervened to decolonise white feminist analyses of gender and sexuality, delineating how the imposition of racialised gender and racialised sexuality have been colonial tools of power and inhumane violence with persistent effects.

Though transnational feminism is type-cast as a present-day corrective, antiracist, anti-colonialist, decolonial feminism (Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Nagar and Swarr 2012), when fashioning feminist genealogies and praxes in and

outside of the academy, continual reminders to examine interpersonal and structural power dynamics at play are necessary. Black lesbian symbolic annihilation s signals the neoliberal necropolitical tensions of Black lesbian women's historical and contemporary incorporation into feminist and queer sociopolitical and intellectual projects and genealogies. These genealogies have yet to show an in-depth understanding, or a call to action, to alleviate Black lesbian's particular polyvalent relationship to death and dispossession (Glover 2017, 2019).

Though interrogating the violence of androcentric, cis-heteronormative and homonormative social justice and academic projects, Black lesbian and lesbian women of colour feminists' contributions have historically been formative anticolonial theoretical-political advancements that *bridge,* and radically push, transdisciplinary scholarship and social politics toward intersectional transnational feminist theories and decolonial praxes.[12] Most notably, the Combahee River Collective (1977), a group made up of Black lesbians, and Audre Lorde's (1984) poetics about power, sameness, and difference, foregrounded theories and social justice politics conceptualised around intersectionality in diaspora from a Black lesbian feminist epistemology.

The work of Lorde and Jacqui Alexander (2006) in particular exemplified heuristic convergence of a Black lesbian onto-epistemology, Afro-diasporic Black lesbian feminist critique, and Third World feminism turned transnational feminism coalitional politics. Chandra Mohanty and Jacqui Alexander's 1997 edited volume, *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures,* is cited as the monumental feminist text defining transnational feminism as a type of feminism with particular theoretical and methodological tenets. Mohanty and Alexander dedicate *Feminist Genealogies* to Audre Lorde because her lifework taught them "accountability in envisioning, forming, and maintaining community;" and to devise nuanced analytic tools for understanding the world for liberatory knowledge and revolution (ix). Lorde and Alexander were key influencers of "transnational feminism," which centred geopolitics, spatiality,

history, and embodied theory in feminist analysis to advocate for reflexive praxis regarding unequal, complex levels of oppression and privilege between people in places to understand and connect global processes of [re]colonisation which undergird capitalism, life chances, and the various constructions of self, identity and culture. As Caribbean Black lesbian feminist immigrants, their analyses and critiques converged with Third World turned Transnational feminism's turn back to the Global South as urgent places to examine Black bio-necropolitical suffering and resistance. It has intersected with and influenced scholarship at the intersection of black feminism, queer-of-colour and trans-of-colour critique concerned with queer diaspora's particular vulnerabilities to poverty, marginalisation, exploitation, violence, and annihilation along lines of difference produced by the colonial legacy of cis-heteropatriarchal slavery, and antiblack ideologies about space, gender, and sexuality (Glover 2014, 2018).

In political terms, the City Council of Rio de Janeiro reproduces institutionalised antiblack and antifeminist cis-heteropatriarchal norms to maintain a *status quo* of the annihilation of Black lesbian feminists' presence and their decolonial political campaigns. After Rousseff's impeachment (2016), a rise of right-wing politicians and overt hate speeches became a common part of public political discourses. Franco had to develop strategies to maintain her coalitional political work in an explicitly oppressive, precarious environment and hostile parliament. Nevertheless, as we learn from Lugones (2010) "in our colonised, racially gendered, oppressed existences we are also other than what the hegemon makes us be" (Lugones 2010, 746). In Council, Franco exposed and denounced state violence against vulnerable groups. Franco also valued the ways the *favela* could resist inequalities and bring creative and unexpected solutions, while valorising their social wealth. Franco operationalised Black people's *corpus* of knowledge, mobilising Black lesbian feminist strategies to "survive" in the House (Meireles 2020).

Marielle Franco "in the house" as a councilwoman

Elected in 2017, Franco's presence in politics highlighted what Black lesbian feminist Lima (2018) describes as "fictional racism à la Brazilian mode," which is the specific manifestation of embedded racism in Brazilian society. Despite being already criticised, the myth of racial democracy makes people believe that economic inequality is the single tenet of discrimination against Black people. To that end, Congolese anthropologist Munanga (2017) states that "it is by the geography of the bodies that we are seen and perceived before discovering our social classes." The mixed-raced discourse (*miscigenação*) of homogeneity with no racial differentiation is fallacious when recalling Brazil's historical formation and nineteenth-century genocidal projects of white-washing the population through historical governmental policies.[13]

Although LGBT activism in Brazil dates to the 1970s, given Brazil's conservative parliament, public support from politicians or self-representative lesbian politicians is a recent phenomenon that began in 2000.[14] Even in the most democratic periods, such as the years of a leftist government (2003-2016), there were some LGBT rights policies raised, but these were not made law. Franco's coalitional strategy included capitalising on the momentum of the women's struggle in Rio de Janeiro – known as the Spring Women's Movement (2015) -, and taking to the Council progressive debates and an accumulation of intersectional community worldviews and issues heard on the streets in social movements and from her lived experience pertaining to race, gender, sexuality, and poverty.[15] Franco is remarkable in that of all the policies she advocated, only one – The Lesbian Visibility Day – was not made law.[16] Franco was a part of the committee who awarded the 2017 Chiquinha Gonzaga honour to Jaqueline Gomes de Jesus – first organiser of a transfeminist book in Portuguese and one of the few Black transwomen to hold a PhD in Brazil – thus bringing attention to transfeminism while showing symbolic valuation in an honour traditionally dedicated to cis-women.[17] Franco advocated for the diversity of families by drafting specific policies for single mothers instead of focusing only on nuclear families. Overtly standing for Black poor women's rights, Franco made long-term policy demands for mothers such as free evening child care. Additionally, she

defended a campaign against sexual harassment in public transportation, and The Day of Thereza de Benguela to honour important Black women, all which were passed into law.[18] She also defended new measures granting young prisoners access to education. To get anything done in general, Franco used feminist strategies in the Council, such as denouncing mansplaining from other Council members and refusing to be interrupted in her speech. One of her most well-known statements was: "We won't be interrupted."

During and after the 2017 municipal elections, Franco's identity politics were a point of political negotiation of coalitional organising strategies and the stakes of her visibility. This maps onto a history of Black lesbian women's social justice organising being diffuse and politically contingent. This mobilisation of oppositional consciousness was due to navigating varying degrees of heteronormativity, white homonormativity, and asymmetrical solidarity, while remaining tethered to a broad investment in intersectionality.[19] For example, her candidacy was not viewed as a lesbian campaign, but as a Black woman *favelada* campaign. Franco's lesbian identity only became publicly politicised after her election.[20] While lesbian issues were not a campaign point for her as a candidate, they were not hidden issues as she was deeply involved in lesbian activism, though not a part of any specific lesbian/bisexual group nor of the women's movements. Once elected, she was able to assemble and mobilise several lesbian movements around the municipality voting for a Lesbian Visibility Day into law. Franco renewed a dynamic in politics, one that considered the collective of people to be an on-going construction, with multiple layers, contexts and complexities. Her identity politics also illustrated how laborious and precarious (in)visibility can be when navigating politics with a Black lesbian intersectional coalitional agenda.

Franco called on autonomous lesbian movements/groups to strategise ways to pass legalisation for the Lesbian Visibility Day in Council. The movements understood the need to undertake a pedagogical strategy due to anticipating resistance from Conservative parties. Their first strategy was a seminar on Labour

and Rights while other strategies focused on the power plays amongst political parties. Lastly, they organised an event called *Ocupa Sapatão*, a cultural activity held to celebrate and to promote the visibility of lesbians, bisexual and trans women, to be held on 29 August. The draft law was defeated by two votes and Franco declared: "This theme is not new; we are already on the streets. You have to respect our rights, this population's existence matters."[21]

Towards a Transnational Black Feminist Theory of Black Lesbian Symbolic Annihilation

Franco was last seen on 14 March 2018 at *Casa das Pretas* (Black Women's House), a place for gathering and knowledge production, run by Black lesbian feminists in downtown Rio de Janeiro. The event entitled "Young Women Moving Structures," brought four young women activists together to share organising strategies and their experiences to inspire hope. Marielle Franco was a speaker and moderator of the discussion. The event was part of a wider campaign, called "21 Days of Activism Against Racism!" where a series of events occurred from 1-21 March in remembrance of the "Sharpeville Massacre" and the United Nations' consecration of 21 March as the International Day to Fight for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.[22] Ironically, but without coincidence, this would be Marielle's last day communing with Black lesbian feminists. En route from the event, Marielle's car was shot at 13 times, reportedly by two men in a vehicle that was following them to carry out this professionally-targeted shooting. She and her driver Anderson Pedro Gomes were killed. Marielle suffered four shots to her head. Much has been published about how necropolitics affects various oppressed groups from a transnational perspective, with the objective of exhuming the particular kinds of deadly conditions that affect their quality of life and increase their vulnerability to death. This work appraises both the value of oppressed groups in society and incites a call to action to protect their lives. However, there is a paucity of theorising concerning the relationship between necropolitics and Black lesbian life.[23]

Jacqui Alexander's definition of neocolonialism, using a Black lesbian epistemology, contextualises power as operationalised through imperial or neo-imperial recolonisation. She argues that new forms of imperialist recolonisation occur through the alliance of corporate and state power, cultural imperialism and militarism, in the age of global capitalism, in accordance with imperial powers' interests. Alexander foregrounds "the shared violence of heterosexualisation so as to provide the connective web within and among colonial, neo-colonial, and neo-imperial social formations" (2006, 181-194). Ultimately, the reported motive for Franco's execution was her Black lesbian feminist political success *and* exposure, and her denouncement of neo-colonial necropower in the forms aforementioned, but particularly as it manifested in militaristic police occupation, brutality and corruption in *favelas* like her own with impunity. Following Fátima Lima (2018):

> Depending on the places we occupy and the absence of social and individual rights that end up becoming privileges, some lives become an investment space for a policy of death. In order for us to combat and minimise the statistics and the different violence involving the experiences [of Black lesbian/bisexual women], we must, first of all, remove Black lesbians and bisexuals from invisibility. Our lives matter (Lima 2018, 78).

Invisibility and Annihilation

Marielle was born and raised in Maré – a *favela* enclosed by an opaque plastic fence, with a history of army occupation beginning in 2015, where houses and schools are filled with bullet holes. In Maré there are police barracks and young men openly carry pistols, machine guns and radios. This is reflective of "the violence inflicted by Rio's police on the community as they fight – and occasionally collude – with the drug gangs and another force active on the streets: the unofficial militias whose members include serving and former police officers."[24] Franco lived a precarious life-in-death situation whether she was "highly visible [and advocated her truth], or rendered invisible through the

depersonalisation [and annihilation] of racism" (Lorde 1994, 42). She denounced the violence inflicted by Rio's police and its recent federal militarisation.

Philips (2018) reports that unnamed police officers and prosecutors have confessed they believe her murder to be linked to her political success and her denouncement of police abuses. Interviewed community members share this sentiment. She exemplified how Black lesbian existence "actually identifies an ethic and a set of social relations that point to the instability of white supremacist cis-heteropatriarchy and to a possible critical emergence within that instability" that could upset the order of things, thus needing to be annihilated (Ferguson 2004). Franco's annihilation dilemma – of high Black lesbian visibility and execution in contrast with the required erasure and invisibilised vulnerability to necropolitical death of people like her– maps on to the historical precedent of Black lesbian feminist leaders and populations who continue to be invisibilised, quietly annihilated, and/or restored to life only *in-death*. They are then posthumously exploited in memorialisation, in service of futures except for those like their own. To quote Franco's last twitter post on 13 March, the day before she was executed, the urgent question is: "How many more have to die for this war to end?" Can we acknowledge Franco's symbolic annihilation as symbolic of Black lesbians' structural relation to death? Is her death a sacrificial bridge to freedom and an intellectual and sociopolitical ingenuity where one only receives transnational solidarity as the "living dead?"

Legacy

Franco's execution gained local and international attention and a call to action to solve her criminal case and refute efforts to criminalise *her* after death.[25] Monica Benício, Franco's widow, has been an important figure in supporting lesbian visibility policies – from giving talks, to taking part in Mangueira Samba School's 2019 parade with a section honouring Franco –, and as a character witness in Franco's ongoing case to hold her murderers accountable. Benício denounces the slow resolution of the case and the State's established

corruption.[26] Moreover, there are suspicions of spurious alliances between police officers and the suspects, with evidence of connections between the suspects and paramilitary groups in Rio, and even with President Bolsonaro's family.[27]

As Franco's legacy, four Black women deputies who carry on her intersectional political work were elected to public office: Talíria Petrone, Mônica Francisco, Dani Monteiro and Renata Souza, all from the leftist PSOL party. Importantly, Erica Malunguinho, a Black trans woman, was elected to the State Congress in São Paulo. They were all inspired by Marielle Franco's work. Paradoxically, Black queer women politicians (and, generally, Black lesbians) continue to answer the calls to action to protect Black lives. However, as heard from Mônica Francisco, elected state deputy in Rio, there is still concern about her safety, since not much can be or is being done to diminish her vulnerability in the parliament. Therefore, continuing Franco's legacy means still facing the same dangers Franco did. Franco's lingering unresolved case with revealed connections of paramilitary groups and state authority helps maintain the vulnerability of the elected deputies.

Additionally, Anielle Franco, her sister, created the Marielle Franco Institution to defend her memory and promote access to education and legal counsel for Black and poor people. Regarding the specific agendas for lesbians/bisexuals, Franco's efforts have stimulated an increase of events that promote different levels of sociability and safe spaces through a web of support amongst lesbian movements/groups. One example is the 2019 extension of the Lesbian Visibility Day into a Month, particularly centring Black lesbians' presence and discourses, with several events happening inside the *favelas*. Internationally, we have seen movements and conferences happening in *remembrance* of her. A street in Lisbon and a suspended garden in Paris have been approved to carry her name.[28] Similar to Audre Lorde's legacy, Franco inspired transnational Black lesbian feminist *memorialisation* across the globe.[29]

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[1] Transnational feminist scholarship is considered: 1) an extension of women of colour feminism and activism in that it is a mode of critique of whiteness and US centrism within dominant feminist scholarship and activism; 2) a theoretical and methodological approach to feminist analysis that emphasises historical context, politics of location or standpoint, geopolitics, and intersections of oppressions on behalf of patriarchy, empire, colonialism and globalised capitalism; and 3) a form of feminist praxis in research, writing, and activism that centres collaboration across difference (Glover 2014).

[2] Cachoeira is recognised as a Black city, historical home to Ameri-Indigenous populations, ports for slave-trading, the war of Independence of Bahia, the sugarcane production, and past-in-present site of Candomblé houses, the oldest Catholic sisterhood of Black women in the world, and Samba; The Decolonial Black Feminism Institute is an educational institute organised to bring diasporic, Black, decolonial, and transnational feminist schools of thought together in a curriculum to discuss social justice issues plaguing Black women. For more, see: http://www.dialogoglobal.com/bahia/

[3] Glover, Tay. 2018. "Grammars of Blackness: Dialogics of Black Female Flesh, Black Lesbian Symbolic Annihilation, and Mutable Gender." Paper presented at 'TRANS(form)ing Queer,' the Eleventh Annual DC Queer Studies Symposium. University of Maryland, College Park; "Exploring Black Lesbian Symbolic Annihilation." Paper presented at Lesbian Lives Conference 2019. University of Brighton, England.

[4] Meireles, Flavia. 2019. "The Political Life of Marielle Franco." Paper presented at Lesbian Lives Conference 2019, Brighton, UK, at Transnational Queerness 2019, at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, and at UDELAR University of Montevideo 2019, Uruguay.

[5] "Late-modern colonial occupation that differs in many ways from early-modern occupation, particularly in its' combining of the disciplinary, the biopolitical, and the necropolitical" (Mbembe, 27). In this digital age and neo-colonial world order of global white supremacy and antiblack domination, necropower is an analytical expansion of biopower- the Foucauldian term for the use of sociopolitical power to control people's right to life and qualities of life. Necropolitics describes colonialists' right to kill, and create necropolitical power structures that determine one's relationship to death and what Achille Mbembe terms "death worlds" – new and unique forms of social existence in which populations are subjected to conditions of life like particular forms of physical, social and civic death, enslavement that make them the living dead, thus experiencing life-in-death.

[6] Glover, Tay. 2018 *Decolonizing Demonic Grounds: Black Queer Lesbian and Femme Unbelonging in Diaspora.* PhD diss., Evanston, IL: Northwestern University.
[7] Gilroy, Paul. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[7] Gilroy, Paul. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[8] Jurema Pinto Werneck is a Black feminist, physician, writer who holds a PhD in Communication and Culture at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Activist in the Brazilian Black women's movement and in Human Rights, she assumed the Executive Board of Amnesty International Brazil in February 2017. In 2006, she published the book "Black Women's Health: Our Steps Come From Far Away." https://anistia.org.br/noticias/anistia-internacional-brasil-anuncia-nova-diretora-executiva/

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[10] Reference: *Revista IHU On-Line do Instituto Humanitas Unisinos – IHU – Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos – Unisinos*. https://pt.scribd.com/doc/217871719/UBUNTU-EU-SOU-PORQUE-NOS-SOMOS.

[11] In the original: "*uma gênese dos estudos interseccionais pode ser encontrada em teóricas entendidas e autocompreendidas como mulheres negras e mulheres de cor, tentando criar não apenas um conceito, mas análises que dessem conta das múltiplas opressões que atravessam diferentes experiências*" (Lima 2018).

[12] Moraga, C. and G. Anzaldúa. eds. 1981. *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. London: Persephone Press.

[13] Known as white-washing projects (*embranquecimento*), governmental policies throughout the nineteenth-century were executed in order to erase Black and indigenous people, genealogies and land. One of the measures was the *Land Law* (*Lei de Terras* 1850) that facilitated immigrant occupation of indigenous lands through marriage to indigenous people. Another measure was facilitating the immigration of European people to work in rural and urban areas. Referring specifically to Black people, there were no state measures to absorb this population after abolition.

[14] For one recent effort in documenting the LGBT movements in Brazil see Green, James L., Márcio Caetano, Marisa Fernandes and Renan Quinalha. eds. 2018. *História do Movimento LGBT no Brasil*. São Paulo: Editora Alameda.

[15] Meireles, Flavia. 2019. *Contemporary Feminisms in Brazil*. Paper presented at the venue called *Study Night* group at *Sense Labs*, at Lünenburg University, Germany, under organisation of Prof. Dr. Christoph Brunner.

[16] Meireles, Flavia. 2019. *The Political Life of Marielle Franco*. Paper presented at Lesbian Lives Conference 2019 (Brighton, UK), at Transnational Queerness 2019" at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, and at UDELAR University of Montevideo 2019, Uruguay.

[17] Honour Chiquinha Gonzaga is a title given by the Council City to distinguished women on democratic, humanitarian, artistic and cultural fields in all levels (municipality, state, federal instances). Fonte: http://www.camara.rj.gov.br/homenagens.php?m1=homenagens; E.N.: Composer, instrumentalist, conductor, abolitionist from Rio de Janeiro, (1847 - 1935). Greatest black female personality in the history of Brazilian popular music and one of the greatest expressions of the struggle for freedom in the country, promoter of musical nationalization, first conductor, author of the first carnival song, first choro pianist, presenter of popular music in the elegant halls, founder of the first copyright protection society.

[18] E.N.: 25 July is officially the Day of Thereza de Benguela and Black Women's Day in Brazil. Tereza de Banguela was a leader of Quilombo de Quariterê [Quariterê maroon society] in the state of Mato Grosso. Quilombo de Quariterê existed from 1730 to 1795, and Benguela's leadership was in force until 1770, when she was arrested and killed by the State.

[19] Glover, S. Tay. 2017. "Black Lesbians—Who Will Fight for Our Lives but Us?": Navigating Power, Belonging, Labor, Resistance, and Graduate Student Survival in the Ivory Tower. *Feminist Teacher* 27 (2-3): 157-175.

[20] E.N.: *favelada* could be translated to: from a slum or from the hood.

[21] Can be seen at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzNM2IAiEOU.

[22] On March 21st 1960, South African police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, against the apartheid laws, a kind of internal passport that regulated circulation in the country. The city of Sharpeville was selected by President Nelson Mandela for signing the constitution of South Africa, in 1996.

[23] See: Haritaworn, J., A. Kuntsman and S. Posocco. eds. 2014. *Queer Necropolitics*. Routledge; Riley, Snorton C., Jin Haritaworn, Aren Aizura and Susan Stryker. 2013. "Trans Necropolitics: A Transnational Reflection on Violence, Death, and the Trans of Color Afterlife." *Transgender Studies Reader*: 66-76; Smith, C. A. 2016. "Facing the Dragon: Black Mothering, Sequelae, and Gendered Necropolitics in the Americas." *Transforming Anthropology* 24 (1): 31-48.

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[25] Article "Judge Turns Defendant under Slandant against Marielle." https://oglobo.globo.com/rio/desembargadora-do-rio-vira-re-por-calunia-contra-marielle-23861252.

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[27] https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2020-02-09/suspeito-de-envolvimento-no-assassinato-de-marielle-e-morto-em-operacao-policial.html.

[28] https://oglobo.globo.com/rio/marielle-franco-sera-homenageada-com-nome-de-rua-em-lisboa-23835848 and https://g1.globo.com/mundo/noticia/2019/04/21/marielle-franco-vai-virar-nome-de-jardim-em-paris.ghtml.

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Lesbian Resistances: Social Representations of Afro-descendent Lesbian Women in Cuba

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Abstract

This study is an approach to the subject of Afro-descendant lesbians who have had to rescue history and to reinvent themselves within the potentialities that characterize the group such as resistance to difficulties. For this they have resorted to, among other strengths, arming themselves with the energies inherited from their grandmothers, ancestors who never let themselves be overcome, no matter how difficult the period. They always found a strategy to resist their harsh and historical realities, slavery being a principal example. The stereotyped thinking, internal and external, still imposed on many of these women, causes them to suffer multiple discriminations - as women, as lesbians, as Black and, in some cases, as transgender, and inhibits the practical expression of the true sorority which characterizes them. The advantage of this resistance, as noted by Michel Foucault, is that it is as inventive, it is as mobile and productive as power. It seeks ways of organizing to resist the effects of power, to not let oneself be dominated, going to the forefront at any cost, expanding and sharing creative ideas, leaving behind that domain of erased subjects and establishing dialogues of understanding with the alter ego. Using their voice with or without music.

Keywords: Resistance, Representation, Intersectionality, Afro-feminism.

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"Knowing yourself as black is living the experience of having been massacred in your identity, confused in your expectations, subjected to demands, compelled to alienated expectations. But it is also, and above all, the experience of committing yourself to rescuing your history and recreating your potential."

Neusa Santos Souza[1]

Introduction

Leafing through the pages of Alice Walker's book *Searching for the Gardens of Our Mothers* (1974) in which she makes a beautiful reflection on Black women in the southern United States, including her mother, evoked my own memories of the stories of my two grandmothers.

Both were matriarchs, my paternal grandmother with 11 children and nine for my maternal grandmother. They were single mothers, seeing how much they have in common in their gardens, having known how to resist in the harsh reality of their time as well as each having developed experiences with their ancestors for many years. Both were spiritualists and showed that internal strength where the basic example of resistance could be put into practice, facing the experiences of colonial power along with what the patriarchy carries.

Alice W. (1974), in her book, establishes a conversation inspired by the words of Zora Neale Hurston, noting that Black women are called "the mule of the world," explaining that "we have been handed the burdens that everyone else - everyone else - refused to carry. They have called us 'Matriarchs,' 'Superwomen,' and 'Bad and Evil Bitches,' not to mention

'Castraters' and 'Sapphire's Mama'." (1974) The qualifiers have been many, and in reality represent the sacrifices made and disqualifications suffered for confronting patriarchy.

Later, reading the article by Jurema Werneck "Our steps come from far away" (2000) regarding the political strategies employed against sexism and racism developed within Black women's movements, we find the need to go even beyond that garden of our grandmothers, our ancestors. Thinking is guided towards the need for an intersectional analysis, as a result of being a woman, a Black woman and poor.

Jurema W. (2000) suggests that we go back to traditions, to the sacred myths of the African diaspora, where we can find female figures who "throughout history acted and continue to act as role models, as guides of identity's possibilities for the creation and recreation of different forms of black femininity"… traditions that in the 70s returned as organizing ideas-forces of the different factions of the anti-racist movement and mainly, the feminist anti-racism of Black women and their organizations.

In both references, these renowned Black feminists call upon us to review our history, to achieve representation or symbols, models that give us guidance and strength, that promote visibility and the image of recognition Black women need to expose the historical memory of slavery and colonization. As such, we must continue working intensively on recovering the memories of Black women who have remained invisible in our history for so long, and in this way, helping and guiding new generations, particularly in the case of Black women, who with that knowledge can revolutionize and liberate their representation in the social imaginary from the colonial mentality that has historically and incessantly humiliated us.

If recognizing our Black women as a mission of identity has been difficult, and even more so when they are Black as well as lesbians or free thinkers in their behaviour, how are the visibilised in this globalized world? As more stories of Black women in our history are unveiled, we will be better able to reveal the history of repression that lesbian women have endured.

In approaching the lesbian theme, Afro-descendants have had to rescue their relationship with the concrete historical events of colonization and slavery and seek to recreate it in the potentialities that they characterize as the resistances to difficulties. Their participation in the independence struggles and in the constitution of Cuban nationality must be rescued from our history.

As another lesbian Afro-feminist, Ochy Curiel (2011), often highlights: it is not only about decolonization of knowledge, but of the experience itself in the face of power and domination. [1]

There is still more work to be done on the subjectivity of women, lesbian or not, to show that we have been intransigent in addressing the issues of exclusion, something which inhibits the practical expression of true and necessary sorority that should characterize us, since the subjectivity of many of us has been impacted by the reinforcement of slavery and the psychological complexes of mental colonialism, which have both been built from power and culture, subsequently leading to stereotypical thinking, for white and Black folks both, in which white is seen as superior. As a consequence, we suffer from various forms of discrimination: as women, as Black and as lesbian.

Additionally, when some lesbians desire to present as butch or masculine, it adds another form of oppression and discrimination because they are typically rejected by men and/or other lesbian women.

The advantage is that resistance implies creativity; it is so inventive, so mobile and productive as power, that it seeks ways of organizing to resist the effects of power and not letting itself be dominated by coming out in front with different ways of self-representations. That being said, one can, on occasion, fall into violence as a defence.

In this work, we can see some examples of the realities faced in the growing globalization of this world, to get out of the domain of being erased subjects and establish dialogues of understanding with the alter ego.

The representation of Black Cuban lesbians in a globalized world

In addressing the subject of Black women, it brings with it the presence of Black Feminism in Cuba and carries within it the acknowledgment of successes from long struggles. One of these is a story written by Leyda Oquendo Barrios; this work focuses on Mariana Grajales, recognized today in Cuba as the Mother of the Country, a title well deserved. Barrios makes sure Mariana is known on her own terms and not just an identity in relation to her sons, who were fighters in the War of Independence in Cuba. Thus, Black women are already given visibility and an example, which helps with empowerment and cultivates identity pride.[2]

Likewise, it is worth acknowledging the efforts of the writer and historian Inés María Martiatu Terry who, despite her illness, also continued the battle to make visible and recognize the history of resistance of Cuban Black women.[3]

It is a pity that neither Leyda nor Lalita could see the transformation of their struggle into its current achievements. However, their presence is still evident in different events along with the work of Daysi Rubiera Castillo

that continued the "Afrocubanas Project." Georgina Herrera Cárdenas' work also continues to be a presence and influenced the new Black generations, as does her poetry book *Oriki for Georgina* (2017).[4]

The book *Emerging from Silence. Black Women in History,* recently compiled by Oilda Hevia Lanier and Daisy Rubiera Castillo (2016), is yet another example providing representation of hidden stories of women who owned enslaved people in Colonial Havana. It shows how prostitution was a strategy of freedom in the nineteenth century, the difficulty of accessing education as a woman, stories of Black women used as intermediaries in the colonial economy, their actual role in the war of independence and making visible the history of the first Black delegate in the republic. This is a feminine discourse of vindication from the years before the Cuban revolution, which allows new generations and those who still lack that necessary conscience to understand and feel pride in their identities.

These materials and the now more frequent debates in various spaces are already encouraging the necessary shifts within the Black population interested in these issues. It also of course includes Afro-descendant lesbian women, despite that on this topic there is still not much bibliography.

This makes clear the need to resort to examples showing how another form of representation is beginning: moving us from unauthorized subjects, populations erased from the popular imaginary to the search for recognition and respect with all the diverse practices human beings express.

Three sources of representation

Las Krudas, Logbona y Oremi.

Taking advantage of the words of the experienced feminist Marcela Lagarde (1990) who states that "being human" means having as a possibility a diversity of experiences and the inclusion of women as subjects in a new humanity and as protagonists of our own lives … In conditions of equity [2] … thus enriching life, here we will see experiences of protagonists.

The emergence of the lesbian and Afro-feminist Cuban rappers called "Las Krudas Cubensi" shows how the use of a cultural manifestation, such as rap, can break the historical subordination of women by patriarchy. They shift the social imaginary, breaking the position of subaltern identity and building respect for difference through their lyrics.[5]

They faced and named social inequalities through hip-hop, full of strength to fight for the rights of their racial identities. Their work was not easy for many people to digest, not even for other lesbians. They suffered bullying and rejection, but they persisted, resisted, and are succeeding. Their ideas were too emancipatory for conservative thought. They recognize that they come out of that rebellion of the Cuban people, but are interested in a wider liberation.

It was an intense battle they had to fight; because of the lack of women in the rap industry, machismo and patriarchy prevail. In addition to this, their discourse and music were fresh and critical, and the fact that they were lesbians and Afro-descendants complicated the battle they had to face as they looked for ways to interrupt mental colonization.

Starting in 1996, Krudes Cubensi sought the blessings of their ancestral generations in order to defend their work. Their unusual lyrics got out into the streets, thrilled critical and conscious minds and set an important precedent. Despite not living in Cuba anymore, they are a frequent and evident presence. In their lyrics, they continue to name the experiences of fighting against discrimination as Afro-Cuban immigrants and its consequences.

Looking at the history of their work, it is evident that this resistance towards mental colonialism is inherited from their Afro-descendant women ancestors. Their themes touch on lessons, which emerged without fear. They communicate in direct, open, and hard language, which summons the growth and self-esteem of Black women. It touches both the psychological and the emotional and cultivates racial pride. They show that it is possible to decolonize your mind and contribute to the construction of representation through songs for Black and non-Black women. (Table 1)

From the beginning, their songs addressed topics such as the meaning of menstruation in women as a form of resistance, exercising their power. In this way, they called for the raising of self-esteem of women and in turn confronting the macho texts used by male hip-hop groups at that stage. To show that women also have their strength and power, Krudas Cubensi called them ebony warriors and urged them to recognize themselves as beautiful even with their bembas and their black skin. Knowing that the fight against patriarchal culture was difficult, they called upon women to unite to face without fear, a collective fight that also involved the defence of their racial and sexual identity.

In search of better development and resources for their art, they began a journey from Russia to Mexico, finally settling in El Paso, Mexico.

Facing difficult realities in their life as emigrants, they continued to create lyrics full of strength and added other resistant forces of the globalized world. Knowing that resistance is inventive, mobile, and productive like power, they exercise it. It is the force that, contrary to dominance, arises from its daily exercise and is linked to the breadth of all their musical experience and knowledge, uniting it to the power of that internal force to achieve their dream (Foucault 1993).

In their trajectory, they also faced other experiences of discrimination as migrants. This is how they came to write protest songs that reflect their way of not letting themselves be defeated, writing and singing songs about the racism they suffered in Spain and the changes and adjustments that the migrant identity implies.

They have never stopped singing songs that address the beauty of Black people and their physique. It has been part of their constant activism to raise the self-esteem of women, teaching about the importance of self-recognition and self-worth without being influenced by what others think.

They address issues such as not allowing themselves to continue colonizing with the idealization of western beauty. They try to be very specific with goals for their songs, and break into themes that many people find shocking. However, they remain unconcerned and they keep looking for modifications, changes in ideas, for growth. Their struggle does not stop, and although some people evaluate it as countercurrent and irreverent, they really reach deep every day, finding followers who use their experiences and grow with their support.

Their messages

The lesbian Black woman recognizes how much there has been to face and resist to reach a position that implies transformation. Every time that Krudas Cubensi make their presentations here in Cuba they have a more understanding and welcoming audience, they are now able to gather a wider audience as winners in the fight against social inequality and discrimination, minds are more open to their truth. As if that were not enough, they have opened paths for others both inside and outside the country while maintaining their Cuban identity within the panorama of that style of music nationally and internationally. Their albums have won awards in national and international competitions in music festivals such as Cuba Disco, among others. They have shown that with elements of resistance you can achieve transformation.

Indicating subjectivities with new forms of social representations.

In conversation with the Cuban historian, then identified in his process of religious recognition with the Yoruba name, Logbona Olokunee, later changing when his trans identity brought him to the name Tito Mitjans Alayón, shows another kind of self-making, and self-representation regarding to normative gender system.

In moments of proximity and collaboration with "Oremi," a space opened for lesbian and bisexual women, promoted by the National Centre for Sexual Education (CENESEX), Tito showed through his focus as an Afro-descendant feminist lesbian, as he identified at the time, where it was possible to debate the few advances the space was making as well as its official status. He referred to the discomfort of his non-normative experiences, recognizing himself then as a masculine woman made him feel that he did not fit in that space, the discomforts of the lack of understanding of diversity within diversity, the rejection he sometimes breathed, comments with which we agreed - those were topics that were

not debated there. From there, ideas of practice emerged in spontaneous, independent actions with friends that made Tito feel more related to.

From his role as a university professor, he continued to delve into the contradictions of the disputed approach to gender, those theories that reinforce binarism where he still did not feel recognized and began to better understand ideas of intersectionality, thus contrasting the difference between affective-sexual and heterosexual relationships with being a woman, Black, of poor origin, from a marginal neighbourhood and not heterosexual. His ties to the hip-hop movement and in particular to representations of Las Krudas deepened and directed his Black feminism.

Adding to his interests were new approaches to Queer theory (Cuir), which came closer and closer to the search for what he needed to represent - a theme that has possibilities to defend in different spaces, including in the colloquium held at the Christian Centre for Reflection and Dialogue in Cárdenas where we presented together. A space that makes it possible to meet different specialists, straight or not, for a more open-minded and understanding debate.

Although he still did not feel full understanding there in that auditorium, the fact that the topic could be placed on the discussion table was compensation.

Undoubtedly, his new self-representation played an important role in spaces like the hip-hop community in the addressing of queer identities. In addition to the songs, the open, direct messages, and messages of resistance of the Krudas energy and disposition to fight played an essential role, the experiences of that space promoted critical debates on

raciality, and the vindication of the beauty of Afro-descendant women, trans and queer people.

One of the lessons that Tito shared was that resistance is an expression of survival, and along with Black feminist theory he reclaimed more alternative daily political strategies such as the creation of shared spaces that promote debate, generate Black queer politics and joy. This was how "Proyecto Motivito" was with Eduardo Digen and Afibola Sifunola. It fostered debates on a variety of topics in the LGBTIQ community on a queer Afro-feminist wavelength. Numerous alliances were made with other autonomous collectives and projects and they took advantage of the few institutional spaces that were generating actions against gender violence such as the national week to "Fight violence against women" on November 25 and thus introduced intersectional approaches that involve radicalised queer and trans identities.

Another way of putting auto-representation into practice was the creation and circulation of the *Boletín TUTUTUTU*. Made with a small team, it created a space for the works of other Afro-feminists, making sure to promote and visibilise their work, their stories, histories, and those of other queer, trans, and non-binary friends.[6] It made these identities visible and additionally reported on the work and cultural activities of Afro-descendant entrepreneurs in other countries, resulting in beautiful alliances, especially among women. After years of being involved with anti-racist activism, Tito faced other expressions of the structurally racist system in Mexico among other new discriminations. It is not easy emotionally but his resistance helps him work towards his dream.

A Third length of representation

Oremi was a meeting space for lesbian and bisexual women created on 23 December 2005. Many women attended at the beginning but due to a lack of prior organizing experience or clear goals, it was not able to achieve stability.

In the beginning, Black people were in the minority. One could argue that it was stratified based on class as well. Despite its inclusive politics, inclusivity was not achieved at its first stage. Participation of Black lesbians was difficult to maintain since there was not a focus on fighting our own racism or internalized homophobia, never mind centring Black feminism.

As with the first meeting space, there were many ups and downs due to lack of experience, knowledge, and exclusion. There were many attempts to shift the space, especially after waiting many years for the creation of space for debate and the development of lesbian activism, but there were still stigmas and myths, misunderstanding and discrimination within the group. People with experience of activism were consulted, but their contributions were not received well.

Regardless, it prompted many of the group to investigate different paths in order to defend their truth and create their own representation and self-representation. Compared with other countries, there were similar dynamics and similar battles. The feminist approach was incipient, sometimes radical, and the motivations and expectations of the members were very diverse though they also wanted to put these into practice. A network of lesbian groups within Cuba did not exist at that time except for one group in Santiago de Cuba, one of the eastern provinces of the country.

After ten years, one can find that the group has achieved stronger cohesion. Connecting across differences within the group allows us to

centre respect and recognition of the diversity that characterizes women and their sexuality. The rights that were not obtained in the past have now been attained.

OREMI is located within CENESEX in Havana. As part of a national network of women, today 90% of its members are Afro-descendant. They worked together with Las Isabelas, the space in Santiago de Cuba where they were already leading eight groups from the rest of the country.[7] They carry out friendly exchanges and meetings and have national and international workshops, which switch between different provinces. Although the groups of Las Isabelas were the first ones to seek their representation through joint mobilization with the Cuban Women's Federation, those from Havana broke canons creating their representation and popular activism with the work of acting with a drag king show.

That performance of drag had always been in the hands of travestis, trans women and gay men characterized by femininity and brilliance, which in its role of gender construction is defined as female. In the OREMI group, as part of its activities, a peña called "Entre Amigas" or in English, "Between Friends" was created; this took place in a city cinema in the neighbourhood of Nuevo Vedado with the support of various cultural institutions.

In this space, they developed a project where Afro-descendant lesbians challenged patriarchal power by performing drag, which up until this point had been an uncommon cultural performance.

Starting and claiming this work of societal acceptance represented by Afro-descendant lesbian women had seemed impossible to achieve, but constant work, strength and resistance has been breaking down stigmas,

demystifying thoughts and opening consciousness, as many of the people who attend are straight.

With so many experiences exchanged through the aforementioned emerging diverse spaces, an awareness was created which allowed the inclusion of the transformism-diversity project, such as cultural centres in historically heterosexual spaces with the actions created by Argelia Fellove, "Afrodiverso: Mujeres Afrofeministas" or in English "Afro-diverse: Afro-feminist Women,"" a cultural project in Mantilla, forming one the most important spaces for the black queer drag king culture.[8]

There are already several cultural and musical centres that enjoy drag performances of masculinity with respect and without horror. The creation of each performance space has helped to build understanding, support and nurture similar work in other locations. It was not an easy job to start, but it was very powerful and created resistance in the face of difficulties.

Conclusions

As Sueli Carneiro (2001) stated, the examples presented in this text show how Afro-descendant women have managed in their own ways to represent a Black feminism based on their experiences and realities. Although at times it could be interpreted as rebellion, seeking to break out of the historical norms established by a patriarchal culture, its position of resistance and defence has paved the way.

It can be seen how the discourses that we are historically accustomed to receiving are from a heterosexual mentality and therefore become a form of oppression and domination. Faced with this, it was sought to achieve a discourse that created its own category, involving the need to understand diversity and thus touch the subjectivity of the hetero mind,

which sometimes can be difficult to recognize, name and process. When in a song Las Krudas says, "I am singing for my different people" it is particularized, it is taken into account that there are other women, with other realities. Thus, the contract of the domain of heterosexuality is broken, showing other representations.

The messages of Las Krudas make evident the liberation that comes with mental decolonization, when power is confronted, and when Black women have a close relationship with their histories and ancestries. All of this can serve as a path towards the representation of the Black and lesbian Cuban woman.

Despite the long history of the Afro-descendant movement and political activism in Cuba, perspectives with intersectional understanding which articulate issues of gender, race, heterosexism and social vulnerability are more contemporary.

Examples like the book *Afrocubanas* (2011) shows that the intimate relationship and connection with their female ancestors: "searching in the gardens of the grandmothers" creates representation by trying to touch and break the subjectivity of colonial thought. Also the cultural project "The Club of the Espendrú"[9] summons so many young people of different identities to train and debate and continues today to play a great role in the transformation of new subjectivities among others, especially youth.[9]

The different representations made possible by the different groups allow an understanding and awareness of the existence of other realities that Black women live by modifying the narrative of how we were built.

The achievements obtained in the changes of subjectivities with the topic of lesbian Afro-feminism have not been the result of an articulated

political or scientific proposal, but is due to daily resistance paving the way.

Although different spaces defend this issue, it is still necessary to work on this and other issues in alliance, achieve comprehension and synergy with the different groups, spaces and projects that work towards a Black feminist approach and which work to get the support of social centres.

The consciousness-raising role of hip-hop and drag is recognised as a strategy to mark subjectivities that are influencing other groups and demonstrate continuity.

Although two of the three representative sources are not affiliated with official organizations, they also do not have issues with each other or with the named institutions.

In each source evaluated, strategies and paths have been observed to understand their purposes. Las Krudas no longer live in Cuba and that is a challenge. Tito Mitjans has also left Cuba and now lives in Chiapas, Mexico. Negotiating immigration has a cost, but what they learn they always share with their country in one way or another.

The three sources have in common the implementation of not having any fear of facing new and difficult situations since they have that inherited ancestral strength which allows them to be resistant to all oppression.

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Annex:

Table 1

Excerpts of Krudas Cubensi first artistic period. [3]

In their beginnings, Krudas Cubensi talked about the awareness and recognition of what menstruation means for each woman in their songs, totally contested for that time, 1995. One of the most significant says "120 red hours each month… blood from within…Krudas Revolution manifestation…girls raise your self-esteem" (Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Cubensi Hip Hop) (2003, 120 Horas Rojas)

- "No being an object of valorisation… You are beautiful as you are; ebony in bloom…intelligence is your virtue" (Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)
- "Ebony's warriors the time to break the chains has come" (Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)
- "I am my hair, I am religion, I am the proud of my mouth, black kruda" (Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)
- "Our fight is collective…we are more than a movement"(Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)
- "I am still here with feminist point of view.. Ifà is our right"(Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)
- "Hip Hop will be our protector and elf…we are 100 female horses for your intellect" (Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)
- "It is our identity that we are fighting for…"(Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)

Table 2.

Fragments of Krudas Cubensi songs in their new artistic phase (Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes: "No me dejaron entrar", CD Krudas Compilación, Austin 2009.)

- "They don't let me enter Spain….they said that Cuba is a bad trick"
- "Travel is a challenge of change…they have the right to migrate"
- "Loving everyone you like will never be illegal"
- "We don't need you Machismo…liberation for all"
- "Women in resistance… Krudas are here now to change your life"

Table 3.

Fragments of songs with self-esteem thematic autoestima (Odaymar Cuesta, "Gorda", 2008, Quilombo Radio: Progreso Rythms 1)

- "I got a lot of flesh…more than 40 on my waist, …the fat woman is here…"
- "why consume colonized bodies"
- "I am resisting as fat, as black, as warrior"
- "Crazy because the lyrics express without concern what people talk about"
- "Crazy…Loose and single women"
- I am singing for my different people
- I am the only queen and my crown is to change ideas
- Here we are…maybe in solitude we are wasting ourselves
- And our words are going away or maybe just on some and other memories remain
- And some other attitude has been showing and here we are breathing

[1] Neusa Santos Souza: *Tornar-se Negro*. Río de Janeiro. Ediciones Graal, 1983, p. 23.

[2] Dr. Leyda Oquendo Barrios. Cuban anthropologist, journalist, historian and Africanist. (June 25, 1941-2008) She dedicated great efforts to visibilise the role of the Maceo Grajales family and in particular to Major General Antonio Maceo Grajales and his mother Mariana Grajales Coello. Oquendo Barrios spread the history and development of African countries, above all focusing on the work on the African presence in Cuba and particularly in the processes of slave resistance and Maroon, thus showing the research in history and ancestors and their resistance models.

[3] Inés María Martiatu, (Lalita) Cuban Theatrer Researcher, Writer, and Narrator. Initiator of Cuban Afro-feminism. (1942 -2013) With Daisy Rubiera she produced the anthology *Afrocubanas: History,Thoughts, and Cultural Practices*. She has published a number works always addressing the need to make feminine and Afro-descendant issues visible. In these publications there is always reference to the need for work that will enrich the pride of the Afro-descendant people, and for this, it uses anecdotes as well as leading to a history of resistance.

[4] Daysi Rubiera Castillo. Cuban writer, historian, and researcher. Author of the testimonies of Black women. Her best-known book: *Reyita, Sencillamente*, referring to the story of her mother Maria de los Reyes Castillo, is the testimony of a nonagenarian Black woman. Another important work is the compilation *Afrocubanas*. Also coordinates debate space also called Afrocubanas. 15 June 1939. Looking for exemplary stories to show the different conflicts and difficulties experienced by a group that is not very visible or recognized by racial discrimination, it is based on the sad experiences of her nonagenarian mother and her own, which she completes in the uprisings of women's stories alike. Also taking up the resources of power and strength to confront and resist them; Georgina Herrera Cárdenas. Afro-cuban poet. Writer of radio novels and short stories, including dramas and scripts for radio, theatre and television. Her poetry focuses on Afro-cuban culture. She has published more than six books. Outstanding poet of the Cuban twentieth century. Born on April 23, 1936 of humble origin, she leaves a province to resist the onslaught of a hard life alone in Havana and becomes the poet of today where in all her work you can see how much she had to face to resist and even overcome today. Tearing his skin opens his heart and you learn in his works the strength that his ancestors have inspired him.

[5] Krudas Cubensi, also known as Las Krudas, is an Afro-feminist vegan hip-hop group. With their music and activism they confront normative heterosexuality with the tools of Black feminism. They are a symbol of the Cuban LGBTIQ community, defenders of those rights and social causes that dignify women, queer, and trans people. They recognize themselves as queer feminists and advocates of vegan, healthy, Krudas food. See more information: Saunders, T. L. (2015). *Cuban Underground Hip-hop: Black Thoughts, Black Revolution, Black Modernity*. University of Texas.

[6] *Boletin TUTUTUTU* was a Afro-feminist queer fanzine. Organized by Afibola Sifunola and Tito Mitjans from 2015 to 2016. Despite it short life, this zine centred the work, poetry, and ideas of black trans and cis women and the Afro-cuban queer community. More information: https://www.facebook.com/boletintutututu/

[7] National Centre for Sex Education (CENESEX) is a governmental centre with programmes on the defence of sexual rights. It has the support of a group of specialists that make up the Cuban Multidisciplinary Society for the Study of Sexuality (SOCUMES) and from this the Sexual Diversity Section is born with a network that groups all the spaces that defend the rights of the LGBTQI community in the country.

[8] "Argelia Fellove es una dura."
https://www.tremendanota.com/argelia-fellove-activista-transformista-es-una-dura/

[9] Club del Espendrú is a socio-cultural project created by the rappers and activists Magia Lopez and Alexey Rodriguez in 2008. From 2016 they acquired more overseas participation from other activists and intellectuals such as Roberto Surbano and Aracely Rodriguez. This project has a deeply positive impact on the Afro-Cuban communities of Havana. More information:

https://www.facebook.com/elclubdelespendru/posts/591434018142956?__tn__=K-R,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0w_MJOll1E

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Existence Narratives and the Small Everyday Deaths: Notes of a Black *Sapatão* in Santa Catarina[1]

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Abstract

This article presents reflections on the lesbophobia aimed at the bodies of sapatonas in academia, and how these aggressions occur similarly in different hierarchical spaces. It also discusses the bathroom paradigm as a gender barrier, as the white gaze regime which operates as a locus of structural advantage, imprisoning and eliminating bodies considered unsuitable for the male-female, white-black binary scheme. I aim to insert trajectories of black *sapatonas* from the south of Brazil in the field of discussions in order to destabilize the official narrative that popularises this territory as a legitimate European colony: white and heterosexual.

Keywords: *sapatão,* black lesbians, coloniality, sexuality, whiteness.

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I write this paper to speak out about scenes that have happened to a black body. A woman's body that produces narratives even before the historical negation of its existence and freedom of being. Black *sapatonas* exist in knowledge spaces and have their traces/trajectories constantly erased from those places. This text is a manifesto about the place reserved to black *sapatonas* in bodies and in alliance processes that have been trying to rise in Brazil.[2] To make alliances possible, it is necessary to name the bodies abandoned to precarity, the ones that need support. Thus, supporting black lesbians within social and political genocidal contexts must be a priority in the realm of social struggles.[3]

Body

Political body

Colonial body

Due to the implementation of affirmative actions in public universities, Brazil has been introduced to a new group of undergraduate and graduate students: black students became an expressive number in the student body and yet, facing the lack of public policies, they have been occupying and building academic spaces while still facing structural and epistemic racism.[4] I stand among the results of those affirmative actions and part of the less than 15% of black women in graduate programmes in the country.[5] The academy is the place where I spend an important part of my time and I claim this space as mine in the process of thinking a new world.

It was the beginning of the semester, I picked a nice striped polo shirt, a pair of jeans and a pair of sneakers. I went to the barber shop to have my sidelines shaved and to reduce the volume of my afro. On my cell phone, my girlfriend calmed me: "don't worry, my love. Everything will work out fine. This place is yours." I prepared my body, I was tense! In addition to being an academic black woman, I am a visible lesbian, here I am called *apatão*. At the university, I

look from side to side and hardly see other visible black *sapatão* women. This fact gives me the impression that we do not exist.[6]

Invisibility increases the sensation of unsuitability, making it evident that there is a "wrong way of existing," leading non-feminine women into permanent anxiety, since we have to search for strategies to exist outside femininity patterns while trying to escape violence in case we are mistaken for and treated as men.[7] At the same time, we struggle internally with the idea that there is a right way of existing. That is to say, black *sapatonas*, must deal daily with the aches and pains caused by racism and sexism. We need to take a deep breath and tell ourselves that our way of existing is not wrong.

During the students' introduction on the first semester meeting, I screamed the markers of difference between my body and the other bodies in the classroom, compelling my colleagues to think: "Black, *sapatão*, admitted under affirmative action's criteria and a PhD student, what kind of body is that? I breathed peacefully when my gaze met and connected with Jefferson, Jorge and Flávia's looks. They were other sexual dissident black people in the classroom. Jefferson identified himself as a black gay man, Jorge as a *bicha afeminada* and Flavia was coming out as *sapatão* or bisexual – I am not sure which, announcing the breach with the heteronormative contract that forces lesbian and gay bodies to hide under a universalist performance.[8]

Generally, gender and race in Brazil are structural axes of inequality and patterns of social exclusion. Specifically, the State of Santa Catarina is one of the places in the country known for not having black people. The truth is that, in these lands, there is a legend forged by colonialism, validated by historiography, and massified by the media. According to this legend, it is believed that southern Brazil is some kind of Brazilian Europe, a colonized region thought by and structured only by European descendants. In this colonial fairy tale, indigenous and black people are the intruders. People who believe in this colonial legend make southern Brazil an especially difficult region for black

people to live in.[9] We are here, but daily we are expelled. They expel us in a symbolic way, through local TV advertisements with only white characters, exalting the cities with greater influences of German and Italian cultures, and they exclude us directly, by denying us service in their establishments, for instance. I could keep going on and on in detailing all the forms of exclusion used by the "Brazilian Europe" to exterminate black people from their past and present history.

Here, the constitutive parts of my being – black *sapatão* woman – as well as my status as a PhD student, are seen as stigmas by this society and subjected to different forms of domination and discrimination.[10] The common stereotype associated with black women is that we are aggressive. *Sapatonas*, in general, carry the stigma of being violent. Within this colonial imaginary, as black *sapatonas*, even when we stay silent, we are already wrong. In this sense, the silencing endured by a black body occupying a white prestige's space is huge. At the university, they see us as a threat, and not as historical subjects who need to gaze critically upon the narratives that are being constructed and discussed. Almost always, silencing leads to political demobilization. Usually, in academic spaces, black experiences are only possible from a white heterosexual perspective which silences and whitewashes us so they can use our black and *sapatão* bodies as symbols of inclusion. So, when it is no longer interesting for their purposes, they put us back in that place of silence and loneliness. Whiteness organizes itself by maintaining these and other violent stereotypes to ensure a systematic practice of silencing.

Separating bodies – Part I

Scene 1: I, a fat, black *sapatão*, together with two colleagues: a straight, cis, thin woman and Jorge, a self-identified *bicha afeminada,* decided to go to the toilet before our class began. We were happy because we had just started our graduate courses. On the floor where we were, there was just a male toilet. To be quick, we decided to use this male toilet. After all, almost nobody has access

to this floor. I stood in front of the door, while my colleagues used the toilet. The seconds they were coming out of the bathroom were enough to separate our bodies and mark them as unsuitable. I looked in the direction of the stairs in front of the bathroom and I noticed a young woman coming down. She was white and fit the hegemonic standards, which means she was thin and dressed according to what Brazil's hegemonic culture understands a woman should wear. Her look showed despair as she stared at my white colleague coming out of the bathroom. When the latter returned the look, the woman from the stairs approached me, as I was by the door. She looked at me from top to bottom, with disdain in her eyes. Soon after, she also noticed Jorge. Then, she looked at my white colleague and said with a hurried voice, as if offering help: "Girl, this is the men's restroom," to which we all answered simultaneously: "we know."

When she heard my thin and soft voice, she looked directly at my breasts. At that moment, I believe, she realized that I am a woman. What makes me think this way is that, when she noticed my breasts, she put her hand over her mouth, showing she was even more scared. At that moment, the white woman coming from the stairs also realized that neither I nor my other black friend offered any danger to the white woman whom she seemed to be willing to defend. After some seconds, my colleagues and I looked at each other and started laughing. The woman left with her hand over her mouth, whispering: "but it's the male toilet…" We didn't comment on the episode, we just exchanged glances and went to our class.

Historically, discourses on the body were crucial to establishing racism, as well as to the construction of femininity. Both created a gaze regime and projected a series of classificatory elements (in)to the body.[11] It was through black bodies, mainly female black bodies, that the colonialist project legitimized its objectification practices. Lélia Gonzalez in the 1980's denounces that, within the world project designed by white people, black women exist to fit in three existence possibilities: the *mulata*, the *doméstica*, and the *mãe preta*.[12] All of which correspond to colonial matrices built on heterosexuality that, if not real,

have to appear real through a heterosexual performance, translated through decorative elements for the body and through the colonial power given to white men.

In the realm of this gaze regime, whiteness constitutes a place of structural advantage, a place from where the white subject sees others and themself (Ware 2004), using their very own place of enunciation to act as gender police and as a racializating subject. Through these gestures they elaborate a whole imprisonment and elimination scheme for bodies they consider unsuitable in the female-male, white-black binary scheme. The white girl's frightened look is the materialization of this racializating gender police, for in the hegemonic colonial matrix, a non-feminine black woman does not exist, nor does a black *bicha afeminada*. If we don't exist, she must have seen two ghosts. That would explain her shock.

Separating bodies – Part II

In the week after the violent situation I described above, I looked for the female toilet on the second floor in the Department of Anthropology building because it is even more isolated. I was happy I found it empty, so I entered the sanitary cabin. When I was leaving, a white young woman looked at me in panic and shouted: "AHHH! Jeeez, there is a man in my bathroom!" I could not react to that, I just stood there. The white woman gave me a second look, targeting my breasts and proceeded to say, angrily: "I thought you were a man in the women's bathroom." Nope. No apologies. She just gave me a dirty look and said that. So I asked her with my thin and soft voice – apparently not matching my body –, "Why did you think I was a man?" The white woman just walked towards the toilet as she answered, "I do not have the obligation to know what you are. This is the women's restroom."

After I left that restroom, I went on with the day's schedule without talking to anyone about that violent experience. It was not new to me, but I noticed that

it had been happening more frequently. I attended the classes, got in touch with different theories and different world projects; yet, there I stood, feeling unspeakable colonial pains. There is no theory capable of dealing with what coloniality does to us. When people perceive my black body passing through places unauthorized to me by codes of whiteness and heteronormativity, they stare at me. Fixed looks and staring are not new to me, and neither is my reaction to them: I swallow the bitter pill, collect their perceptions and keep walking. We find ourselves in a colonizer world`s project, the colonized body has no autonomy. It does not have the same freedom of construction or deconstruction that the white body possesses.

Brazilian universities, where just recently it became possible to exist as a black person, but only within what racial and gender colonizers understand and legitimize, have a very small black academic body. Countless university norms, mainly the symbolic ones, are used to deny and invalidate the knowledge produced by bodies that do not fit in a universalizing project. The academic journey requires alliances, visibility and recognition, because it is designed to legitimize ideas, thoughts, projects and people. In this journey, however, university classifies as unproductive any expression that modifies the space and reconfigures its environment. Therefore, for black people, university means an everyday construction of the self as part of a minority – when it comes to the access to rights – that is constantly negotiating with very white and very heterosexual colonial spaces. In this sense, black women's existences are always processes in negotiation, but there is no negotiation with non-feminine black women, since the few ways of existing within the colonial project involve negotiating with heterosexuality.

Once Black *sapatonas* become visible in prestigious spaces, we dismantle the heterosexual black woman body ideal planned for them by whiteness, for their bodies and subjectivities are inconceivable as free, i.e. beyond the binary matrix and heterosexual aesthetics in white eyes. The white racializating subject needs to express their discontent through various types of violence, including shouting

that they are not obliged to know "what I am." What am I? The possible answer to this question posed by whiteness is that I am a body divided into parts, that is why there are several of me, forced to exist in alignment, to reinvent "themselves" strategically in order to occupy spaces that they say are not mine. I have learned to be many in one with other *sapatonas*, who were forced to feminize themselves to work. They suffered and cried but they put that make-up on. And on their days off, in secret, with the chosen woman, then, yes, they had the looks they wanted. We, black *sapatonas*, are what they try to kill, annihilate. We are prevented from being, from existing, because we challenge the project whiteness created for us. But, to the same extent, we are also the reality that will contribute to destroying the fiction they invented.

In the same week that my body was sliced for the second time, I heard that, almost a year ago, Thais de Paula, a cleaning employee at a supermarket chain, was forced to use the men's bathroom due to her non-feminine appearance.[13] Evidence of a similar reality for *sapatonas* in different spaces. I am interested in thinking why Thais, I and others like us should split our subjectivities into two parts: one consisting of "how we really are" and the other consisting of "how whiteness sees us." Why is it only inside our heads that a *sapatona* is a whole person? The feeling of inadequacy to the world is part of the colonial political project in which race, sex and sexuality work together to produce a specific type of "non-human." Therefore, the farther from the heterosexual matrix we are, the more inadequate, strange and animalized the colonial structure considers black *sapatonas*.

Consequently, through the absence of specific public policies combined with psychological, aesthetic, physical and economic violence, two options are systematically and subjectively given to us: either we live at the margins until we face total elimination or we must compulsorily approach heterosexuality. Taking part in the heterosexual game directly means reinforcing institutional tools that discredit women's freedom, because this world's project survives through speeches that reinforce the idea women are men's emotional and sexual

properties and that women's full autonomy threatens social institutions dominated mostly by white men, such as family, state and religion (Saunders 2017). For non-heterosexual black people, freedom is a constant struggle, as well as for other subalternized groups.

Colonial silence denies our existence and pushes us to a non-place. We become then more vulnerable to prejudices, harassment, aggression, depression and suicide. Given these circumstances, this narrative has subjective and collective value to debate coloniality issues, for we, black *sapatonas*, produce knowledge in our everyday life. The knowledge that has been historically orally produced and reproduced by black people has been historically hidden and classified as irrelevant by the colonial matrix. This matrix classifies this kind of knowledge as worthless, unfit to be taken into consideration in the upbringing of new world perspectives forged in spaces of power, such as the universities themselves. Such narratives are left aside because they carry within the power of black women's liberation from colonial ties. Black *sapatonas* narratives about our lives contribute epistemologically, methodologically and centrally in the perspective of shaking the colonial proposal and shaking historiography, so that the movements of our bodies "change the places of enunciation" (Preciado 2014, 27) that, today, are guided by violence.

Historicizing black *sapatão* experiences in southern Brazil, demonstrating the hostility of some spaces, is a way of destabilizing the historical memory that has been built about the racial and identity landscape of Santa Catarina. In addition, I aimed to call attention to the importance of localized history and to the micro histories produced by a population that does not even exist in the official history. The dismantling strategies of the colonial configuration must also come from the ignored, muted and erased historical characters. Lesbian/dyke/ *sapatão* resistance is in the very act of being and existing in the world as one desires, facing the structures, and becoming visible in search of liberation, as a collective struggle to confront colonial systems. Recognizing these experiences means gazing upon beauty, wisdom and real opportunities to exist in freedom,

dream up our fictions, refound what we deem possible in these violent spaces, and devise knowledge in a structured way without having our horizons being shaped by and defined within a colonial white and heterosexual project.

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Annex:

Table 1

Excerpts of Krudas Cubensi first artistic period. [3]

In their beginnings, Krudas Cubensi talked about the awareness and recognition of what menstruation means for each woman in their songs, totally contested for that time, 1995. One of the most significant says "120 red hours each month… blood from within…Krudas Revolution manifestation…girls raise your self-esteem" (Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Cubensi Hip Hop) (2003, 120 Horas Rojas)

- "No being an object of valorisation… You are beautiful as you are; ebony in bloom…intelligence is your virtue" (Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)

- "Ebony's warriors the time to break the chains has come" (Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)
- "I am my hair, I am religion, I am the proud of my mouth, black kruda" (Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)
- "Our fight is collective…we are more than a movement"(Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)
- "I am still here with feminist point of view.. Ifà is our right"(Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)
- "Hip Hop will be our protector and elf…we are 100 female horses for your intellect" (Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)
- "It is our identity that we are fighting for…"(Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes, Eres Bella, CD: Cubensi Hip Hop, 2003)

Table 2.

Fragments of Krudas Cubensi songs in their new artistic phase (Odaymar Cuesta y Olivie Prendes: "No me dejaron entrar", CD Krudas Compilación, Austin 2009.)

- "They don't let me enter Spain….they said that Cuba is a bad trick"
- "Travel is a challenge of change…they have the right to migrate"
- "Loving everyone you like will never be illegal"
- "We don't need you Machismo…liberation for all"
- "Women in resistance… Krudas are here now to change your life"

Table 3.

Fragments of songs with self-esteem thematic autoestima (Odaymar Cuesta, "Gorda", 2008, Quilombo Radio: Progreso Rythms 1)

- "I got a lot of flesh…more than 40 on my waist, …the fat woman is here…"
- "why consume colonized bodies"
- "I am resisting as fat, as black, as warrior"

- "Crazy because the lyrics express without concern what people talk about"
- "Crazy…Loose and single women"
- I am singing for my different people
- I am the only queen and my crown is to change ideas
- Here we are…maybe in solitude we are wasting ourselves
- And our words are going away or maybe just on some and other memories remain
- And some other attitude has been showing and here we are breathing

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[1] T.N.: *Sapatão/sapatona* is preferably used in this article rather than "lesbian" in order to differentiate the lesbian experiences in Brazil from those in other national contexts. As with "dyke," *sapatão/sapatona* used to be a derogatory term to refer to lesbians; however, it has gone through a resignification in the Brazilian lesbian community and is now used as a term of pride and self-definition.

[2] The contemporary Brazilian political context has highlighted the need for alliance politics that protect subalternized bodies, which are exploited and killed by the necropolitical structures that are being institutionally expanded in the country. The utterance of the phrase "Ninguém solta a mão de ninguém [no one lets go of anyone's hand]," a historical reference that recalls survival strategies applied by politically persecuted people during the official dictatorship that began in 1964, has strongly brought up the idea that only through the formation of alliances can these precarious lives be preserved in the critical situation that the black Brazilian people find themselves. Obviously, the more hyphens are marked in the existence of black bodies, the greater the social damage and the imminence of death. And, as a body in danger of extinction: a black-*sapatão*-woman, I trigger this reflection.

[3] In the book *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly (2018)* Judith Butler presents the concept of "bodies in alliance" as a survival strategy to bring together bodies that are at greater risk of violence. The theorist states that the movements fighting for the rights of sexual and gender minorities must ally themselves with the population subjected to "a shared condition of precarity that situates our political lives." (Butler 2018, 77), however difficult it may be.

[4] The creation of the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (Seppir), the approval of the law 10.639/2003 and the approval of affirmative actions, including the guarantee of racial quotas, happened in 2003, with the goal of promoting the access of groups that are or may become victims of racial discrimination. These are a few legislative examples created to modify the curricula, the universities and Brazilian education, in general.

[5] The number of black students in graduate programmes more than doubled from 2001 to 2013, according to data from the National Household Sample Survey (Pad). Although black people represent the majority of the population (52.9%), black students represent only 28.9% of the total graduate students. From this total of black graduate students, 15% are black women.

[6] Leaving the university walls and looking for underpaid jobs, mainly in the telemarketing field, we are there, a diversity of black *sapatonas.*

[7] I emphasize that being "treated as a man" here refers only to the field of violence, not to the privileges that masculinity produces and maintains. The privileges of masculinity are reserved only for white and heterosexual cis men and their most real simulacra. When masculine lesbians hear such a phrase, we know that we are being exposed to physical violence, in Brazil, possibly to a threat of murder. See "Liana Barbosa's case," a black *sapatão* murdered by the police moments after hearing the phrase "Do you want to be a man? then, you will be treated like a man." In Brazil, to be treated as a black man is to enter into genocide statistics.

[8] T.N.: *bicha afeminada:* feminine identified *bicha (faggot)*.

[9] Although the south of the country is famous for being extremely racist among Brazilians, there are just a few published studies dealing with specific racism in southern Brazil. The popular website "Pragmatismo Político," published data from a research led by the anthropologist Adriana Dias. Her survey data show that Brazil's South is the region in the country where Nazi content is downloaded the most from the internet. The state of Santa Catarina is the champion of interest in accessing these contents, allowing us to draw an overview of the region. See: https://www.pragmatismopolitico.com.br/2018/09/sul-conteudo-neonazista-internet.html

[10] Black intellectual women and feminists from the Americas, in an attempt to express the embodied experiences of race and gender, questioned and expanded the discussions about body and belonging, creating space to reflect upon the subjectivity of black women and their wisdoms from their own experiences. See: Bairros 1995; Carneiro 2005; Crenshaw 2002; Curiel 2007; González 1988.

[11] I understand femininity as an essentially violent project, organized in hierarchies in which white women are the models. In this project, the role of simulacrum is reserved for black women, so their femininities are developed within walls, with boundaries of assisted and restricted liberties.

[12] T.N.: The *mulata* is a hyper-sexualized black woman, it is a racial stereotype; *doméstica:* a domestic worker. In Brazil, this term refers to what could be considered a contemporary Mammy; *mãe preta:* Mammy. Note that a translation of Lélia Gonzalez' essay (Translated by Bruna Barros, Feva Omo Iyanu, Jess Oliveira and Luciana Reis, all members of the Research Group Translating in the Black Atlantic at Federal University of Bahia) is forthcoming in a special issue on *Solidão and Black Women's Affect* that Tanya L. Saunders, Sarah Olhmer and Luciane Ramos are guest editing.

[13] "I was working when a new employee said she was embarrassed to see a 'man' cleaning the restroom. I had already left work that day, but my supervisor asked me to go back to the supermarket and told me to start using the men's restroom, adding that I really looked like a boy. At first, I was afraid to use it. I run the risk of being raped, and it is embarrassing. I put the uniform over my clothes. A young man asked the chief to stop treating me differently and heard that, regardless of what was said, as I do look like a man, I would remain in the men's bathroom. So I was in a situation where I either accepted, or would be sent away," said Thais in an interview published in newspaper *Jornal Extra.* Available online at: https://extra.globo.com/noticias/economia/funcionaria-lesbica-entra-na-justica-apos-ser-proibida-de-usar-banheiro-feminino-23482406.html.

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Ocupação Sapatão in Salvador: A Decolonial Counter-Narrative on the Geographic Urban Space and its Restrictions of the Right to the City[1]

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Translation from Brazilian Portuguese by Ayala Tude and Alanne Maria de Jesus. Source for Images: Ocupação *Sapatão*'s organization archive.

Abstract

This work aims to analyse the socio-spatial invisibilities of Black *sapatonas* in the cultural dimension of the centre of Salvador. It seeks to provoke and debate the occupation of urban spaces from the perspective of entertainment not only for Black *sapatonas*, but also for bisexual and trans women (LBT), who have their existence erased due to institutional racism and LGBT-phobia. In this sense, *Ocupação Sapatão Bahia* is a cultural activity in response to the hegemonic and cis-heteronormative spaces of public and private entertainment. By boosting the presence of Black and female bodies in Salvador's centre, the event seeks to promote the visibility of the Black LBT women's community. The main goal of the party is to claim the right to the city by materially and symbolically subverting the spatial delimitations imposed to these women, taking into consideration that the geographical space produced/reproduced under the norms of the colonizing and capitalist processes impose the dehumanization of Black and female bodies. *Ocupação Sapatão* is constituted by seven Black women, *sapatonas* and bisexual, residents of the outskirts of Salvador. The actions developed in the last three editions of the event gathered a significant number of women from different neighbourhoods in the city, especially the peripheral ones.[2] The women occupied a bar owned by the Black *sapatonas* couple Ray and Lucy. In the following we discuss the results of these events, highlighting the potential of Black women who have their existence denied every day when it comes to access to urban spaces.

Keywords: Black; *Sapatão;* Salvador; women; territory

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Introduction

The night was about to start when three – out of a group of seven – young Black *sapatonas*, holding two cans of spray paint and a piece of white fabric, got together on Dois de Julho Square, in a historical neighbourhood in Salvador. Among laughter caused by jokes and high expectations, they were painting the banners that would be used in the first lesbian and bisexual meeting for visibility named "*Ocupação Sapatão*" (Occupy *Sapatão*). The meeting, which gathered approximately a hundred women, took place at a bar owned by two Black *sapatonas,* Champagne Bar, also known as Ray and Lucy's rooftop. The banners would represent, until the end of that night, a strong existential and territorial delimitation of this political minority group and its existential specificities which directly collide with the imposing hegemonic culture, based on the racist, cis-hetero, sexist, misogynistic and capitalist supremacies. Cheryl Clarke (1998) reflects that no matter how the *sapatão* lives out her lesbian-ness, she has rebelled against her female heterosexual and male-dependent condition, and this rebellion is dangerous business in patriarchy.

The public and private spaces within a patriarchal society constitute a real war arena for all dissident identities that will be constantly restrained and erased in their most basic rights, such as entertainment for example. In this regard, *Ocupação Sapatão,* with all its gender, race and sex specificities, has been thought to be, in its essence, a cultural activity promoted, organised, built and managed by and for Black women, *sapatonas* who have been building a counter-narrative of existence in the cis-heteronormative entertainment field of Salvador.

According to the demographic data from the 2010 census released by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* – IBGE), about 80% of Salvador's population is Black (*pardos* + *pretos*).[3] Considering this ratio, one can say that Salvador is a Black city. In absolute numbers, Bahia's capital has approximately three million inhabitants – out of which two million four hundred thousand are Black, this population being

mostly agglomerated in the outskirts of the city and having no access to the urban apparatus of leisure and entertainment.

Territorializing an Ancestral Decoloniality

The feminist geographer Doreen Massey (2000) stresses that it is not only capitalism that determines our understanding and experience of the space; relations of gender and race are also present and determinant for our perceptions. The denial of these social identities' existence in urban spaces is a reality that reassembles the socio-historical construction of Brazil. Salvador-Bahia is the first and therefore the founding capital of Brazil. Having been founded in the sixteenth century, the city's pillars are intertwined at the intersections of gender, class, race and space.

Historically, as the urban environment in Salvador developed, the spatial complexity and intersectional bundles of oppressions that affect Black men and women – kidnapped from Africa or born in Brazil – become more evident. One of the highlights of these intersectional bundles is the interrelationship among women, race and urban spaces. This relation begins in the end of the eighteenth and in the beginning of the nineteenth centuries with the *ganhadeiras,* enslaved women who worked in the '*sistema de ganho*', a system in which Black people, mostly women (enslaved or liberated), were forced to trade small products – such as vegetables, homemade typical foods, meat, fruit, fabric, small goods and many other things – in urban areas and bring back the money they made for the enslaving masters. These women were usually around Salvador's urban centre carrying baskets, trays or troughs on their heads. They occupied the streets and squares which were designated to the public and free markets. Soares points out:

> The activities performed by the *ganhadeiras*, although important to the distribution of essential goods to urban life, concerned the authorities. Their work was itinerant or settled in strategic spots of the

> city, serving as integrational elements among a population considered dangerous by the elite. This political factor, added to the state's effort to organise and control urban life in the 19th century, would lead to many struggles between the *ganhadeiras* and the military authorities (Soares 1996, 65).

These Black women occupied and experienced the city not only as personifications of the profit in the enslavement system, but also as elements who challenged the Western colonizing system. They reaffirmed the existence of their Black female bodies in the urban space by affecting the usual flow of European colonisation, territorialising their practices and experiences. The connection and intersection made between Black women *ganhadeiras* from the nineteenth century and Black *sapatonas* from the *Ocupação Sapatão* have nothing to do with their sexuality, but rather to the way these two groups, although chronologically separated by more than one hundred years, were able to spatially share the particularities of Salvador tracing out occupying strategies and narratives.

Through their bodies, the *ganhadeiras* taught us the importance of territorialising, occupying and experiencing the urban environment by performing different economic, religious and cultural activities in order to guarantee not only their own subsistence and survival, but also their communities' survival. With their black bodies, they were able to turn their claim for the right to the city into "flesh and blood."

Considering that *ganhadeiras* were a dissident group in the colonial past, *Ocupação Sapatão*, in the twenty-first century, exercises its dissidence by claiming their right to the city by seeking to re-exist in an urban geographic space that is not produced/reproduced for Black *sapatonas* who do not fit in heteropatriarchal standards.

In this regard, the space chosen to hold *Ocupação Sapatão* was 'Champagne Bar', located on Carlos Gomes street, in the upper part of the city. The bar is a meeting point among the older *sapatonas* from the city, being a space of resistance for them. Its owners are a couple of *sapatonas* who had always been employees in entertainment clubs around Carlos Gomes street. After working for some years in the field, they decided to open their own establishment, which was the only one owned and managed by two Black *sapatonas* in that place at that time – which was unprecedented, since the field had been dominated by white, straight and cisgender men until then.

Carlos Gomes Street has approximately 14 entertainment clubs that cater to the cis-hetero people, and two that cater to the LGBTQI+ community.[4] Flávia Nascimento, a former member of *Ocupação Sapatão*'s organization, helps us to reflect upon what we will call here local/territory:

> "Ray and Lucy's bar is extremely relevant for us to think about lesbians and *sapatonas* in Salvador […]. The cultural scene and the lesbian activism in Salvador over the years tell us a lot about Ray and Lucy's bar, for it has once been a meeting point for activists who were interested in cultural empowerment, political mobilization and *sapatão* love. But which was rendered invisible in the cultural centre of Salvador until the time *Ocupação Sapatão* was being built. The fact that their bar was one of the few ones managed by two women who identified as *sapatonas* says a lot about this process." (Flavia Nascimento)

The celebration of the lesbian and bisexual visibility month in 2017 was one of the main reasons for holding the first *Ocupação Sapatão* party, exclusively for LBT women, on Carlos Gomes street. It was a way of promoting the presence of LBT women in that public space as customers, as well as creating, even if temporarily, a territory of welcoming and belonging. The second edition, in 2018,

took place in an outdoor space in the Rio Vermelho neighbourhood on February 2nd, when a traditional party happens in the city.[5]

Ocupação Sapatão in Salvador is an invitation to territorialise experiences and specificities when it comes to the entertainment of LBT women, especially Black *sapatonas*. During the whole process of building *Ocupação Sapatão*, black women's autonomy was exercised. The lesbian continuum is a concept coined by Adrienne Rich (1980) and refers to a sociability in which all women experiences, practices, affections and ways of living are for women and by women. It could be observed and experienced on every stage of the event's production. The actions carried out brought, at their core, a discussion about LBT women and the limits that the patriarchal urban environment promotes in terms of black *sapatonas* access to entertainment, considering that compulsory heterosexuality selects which bodies will access certain spaces, as well as what kind of access certain bodies will and will not have to certain geographic areas. This process produces/reproduces the geographic space.

The Black *Sapatão*'s Spatial Counter-Narrative

When a group of Black women, composed of *sapatonas* and bisexuals, having fat or thin bodies, belonging to religions of African matrices or with no defined religion – all of them part of historically silenced groups in a society that builds itself and moves forward through gender, race and class oppression – decide to organise a party named "*Ocupação Sapatão*" exclusive for women like them in a bar owned by two Black *sapatonas*, a counter-narrative of existence and experience is written. This counter-narrative does not fit the colonial/modern standards imposed on the urban space, for they are a group of Black women with diverse sexualities freely experiencing the urban space among themselves, without the need for the authorization or the presence of men.

Thus, there is a fight against the restriction of the right to the city, and it started since its colonial foundation. Being in the streets and urban spaces as female

and Black is not only an invitation to share experiences, but also a way of living in resistance and re-existence. Once the violence that comes from several LGBT-phobic situations coerces the presence of LBT women, specially the *sapatonas* who do not perform femininity, they are exposed to a lot of psychological and physical violence that arises from the attempt to erase the lesbian existence.

The more than one hundred black women who took part in the event were moved by the desire of living moments of happiness, pleasure and belonging among their peers. The happiness and feeling of belonging among women who have relationships with other women are considered dangerous for the maintenance of a society based on heteropatriarchy. In this sense, Monique Wittig states:

> For what makes a woman is a specific social relation to a man, a relation that we have previously called servitude, a relation which implies personal and physical obligation as well as economic obligation… a relation which lesbians escape by refusing to become or to stay heterosexual…[our survival] can be only accomplished by the destruction of heterosexuality as a social system which is based on the oppression of women by men and which produces the doctrine of the difference between sexes only to justify oppression (Wittig 1993, 108 quoted in Saunders 2017, 107).

In a way that, by collectively reuniting – mostly – Black *sapatonas* singers, poets, DJs, masters of ceremony, artists, organisers, among other activities/attractions, *Ocupação Sapatão* challenged not only the cis-heteronormativity of the public space in which the party took place – since the quantitative presence of these women attracted curious bystanders who were trying to grasp what was happening in that place – but also the masculinity and the privileges of white and black gay men, who resented or accused the organisers and participants of being segregationists once they learned that men – regardless of their place in the sexuality spectrum – were not allowed there. All of that puts in evidence

how the colonial mind can turn political allies into *atrasalados*[6] or enemies in the women's fight for the right to public space.

Pictures of the first edition of Ocupação Sapatão at Ray and Lucy's bar.

Source: Ocupação *Sapatão*'s organization archive.

Source: Ocupação *Sapatão*'s organization archive.

Source: Ocupação *Sapatão*'s organization archive.

Source: Ocupação *Sapatão*'s organization archive.

Final Thoughts

The building process of *Ocupação Sapatão* happened through the community of LBT women. So, for us, the authors of this article, it makes no sense to have a final conclusion defined only by us. We will consider the voices of some Black *sapatonas* who were part of the process, either participating in the activities, or sharing the event on their social networks and contributing to the positive energy to make that territory of LBT- belonging happen.

> "As a Black *sapatona*, I felt very comfortable in the event and I think it is very important that this one, as well as other events I hope will come up in the future – keep happening, because it is a political space for resistance where we can relate to and identify with each other. In the current moment, more than ever, we need meetings like these." (Crislane Rosa)

> "*Ocupação Sapatão* comes to revitalise the memory, to remind this city that erases us that we can be art, culture, that we can build a historic process – even if it is denied to us. But, mainly, to remind us that, when we are among ourselves, we are a celebration. Our existence is the most political act that we can perform, and yes, together we discuss political reforms, but we also empower ourselves by caring for each other, in *rebuceteio* and in *sapatão* love.[7] Every place becomes political when *sapatonas* occupy them." (Flavia Nascimento)

> "*Ocupação Sapatão* has an itinerant characteristic which makes it able to shape itself to the space it occupies. We occupied Yemanja's festivities on the 2nd of February, in Rio Vermelho, having as the main objective to welcome, exchange affection and celebrate the life of Black *sapatonas* in the city of Salvador. (Ani Ganzala).

> "The space was very welcoming and at the same time intimidating, because the actions were profound and intimate and they made me reflect on the need to talk about our sexuality. *Ocupação Sapatão* made me realise this need that was erased by a sexist, racist and homophobic society. At the same time, it was a space to put out our anguishes, pain and silenced feelings, that is, it was also a space for healing. (Lidia Duque)

During the construction of *Ocupação Sapatão*, one of the biggest concerns was the well-being of the women taking part in the event. The organisers wanted to make sure every guest would be welcomed and feel they were part of an alive community that recognised them as powerful and capable for keeping and caring for their love relationships with other women despite society's violent reaction against them. That is why seeing happy faces, smiles and kind hugs during the party as well as listening to the testimonies of some of the interviewees, as presented above, made us realise that the party has succeeded in reaching its main goals: to create, even for a short period of time, a space of counter-narrative productions, fostering thus a feeling of belonging and political tensioning of the institutionalised invisibility imposed on LBT women in the public space.

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[1] T. N.: *Sapatão/sapatona* is preferably used in this article rather than 'lesbian' or 'dyke' in order to differentiate the lesbian experiences in Brazil from those in other national contexts. Similar to 'dyke', *sapatão/sapatona* used to be a derogatory term to refer to lesbians; however, it has gone through a historical resignification in the lesbian community and is now used as a term of pride and self-definition.

[2] T.N.: In Salvador – as well as in other Brazilian cities – there is a social-spatial relationship that pushes the poor to the peripheral areas of the city. That is why "periphery" is usually used to refer to disadvantaged neighbourhoods

[3] T.N.: According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IGBE), the Black population (população negra) in Brazil is formed by people who self-define themselves as *preta/o* (literally "black," usually used by those who are dark-skinned) or as *parda/o*. The term *pardo* is used by IBGE to refer to mixed-race people. Historically, the idea of *pardo* as an ethnic group emerged in Brazil during the colonial period.

[4] The acronym LGBTQ+ (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, queer, + other identities) is used as one of the diverse possibilities of the sexuality spectrum.

[5] T.N.: On February 2nd, Yemanja's party is traditionally celebrated in Salvador. It is a religious festivity that happens annually in the neighbourhood of Rio Vermelho. People deliver presents such as flowers and perfume to the Orisha known as "the queen of the sea."

[6] Linguistic expression of Salvador's vernacular vocabulary commonly used to define a person who tries to bother or hinder someone's success.

[7] T.N.: *Rebuceteio* is the act of engaging in relationships with different women from the same social circle. It is popularly known in the lesbian and *sapatona* communities in Brazil.

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Lesbocide in the Brazilian Context

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Abstract

This article presents a partial overview of my perceptions – so far – on the reception of the book "*Dossiê sobre lesbocídio no Brasil: entre 2014 e 2017*" [Dossier on the Killing of Lesbians in Brazil: from 2014 to 2017], launched by Milena Cristina Carneiro Peres, Suane Felippe Soares (author of this article) and Maria Clara Marques Dias, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 7 March 2018, in collaboration with the research and extension groups in which we take part as members as well as coordinators at Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). The perspective on the receptions analysed here will be that of direct contact with society, specifically the public presentations of the *Dossiê*. The *Dossiê* had great repercussion among academic, activist and civil groups with a focus on the lesbian public; it was also presented internationally. The main goal of this paper is to analyse the possible impacts of studying lesbocide on the transformation of violence paradigms against lesbians.

Keywords: Lesbocide; Lesbophobia; Lesbian mobilisation; Lesbian visibility.

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This paper presents a reading in the first person of the repercussion of the studies about lesbocide in Brazil and it is based on the recent research performed by Milena Cristina Carneiro Peres, Suane Felippe Soares, and Maria Clara Marques Dias. The research began in 2017 with the collaboration of the laboratories, research groups and extension groups in which we participate as members as well as coordinators at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Based on this research, in 2018 we released the *Dossiê sobre lesbocídio no Brasil: entre 2014 e* 2017.[1]

The reactions to the *Dossiê* varied. The population in general was shocked by the data presented, while, in spaces dedicated to the promotion of Human Rights (HR), there was a surge of worry about the issue. There were also expressions of rejection and mockery (Soihet 2005, 592), explicit in the attempts to discredit the research by conservative branches of society, in consonance with a great wave of attacks on social movements and scientific initiatives dedicated to promoting social justice and the overcoming of structures of domination. Finally, there was great support and commotion, a feeling of closeness and the strengthening of a network formed by various groups of lesbians of all ages and races, from Brazil and from other countries, engaged in lesbian activism, inside and outside the academy. Hereafter, I will discuss some considerations on these positions in a fluid way, in order to present arguments that may contribute to the consolidating of lesbian studies as a part of the struggle for lesbian rights.

With the research *Lesbocídio: as histórias que ninguém conta* [Lesbocide: the stories that no one tells] and the publishing of the *Dossiê*, we could present 126 cases of lesbian deaths (suicides and murders) that took place between 2014 and 2017 in Brazil. Since the country does not have a national system for cataloguing these deaths, and since we did not raise funds specifically for this research, we had to use data available online, in newspapers, magazines, obituaries, social media and other similar sources. This limited us to information

that was heavily marked by the ideological bias of the knowingly racist, lesbophobic, misogynistic, transphobic, elitist, sensationalist hegemonic media.

Due to this limitation, the numbers we found on deaths of indigenous lesbians were sparse. We found far less data on the deaths of black lesbians than the data in government documents regarding the deaths of black women, in general. Those data were also harder to find than the data on the death of white lesbians. The more common data to find, provided by the government, were about general female mortality in the country. It is important to highlight that we did not find data on those particular deaths of lesbians in many states and cities. There were many other relevant issues; for instance, it was not possible to recognise any openly homosexual trans woman among the victims during this period of time; besides, in some of the murders there were gaps, such as the impossibility to identify if some cases were brought to court or not. Also due to these limitations, we consider the inferences we made based on this study to be unfinished, and the research to still have an experimental character. After this brief introduction to our work, which can be more thoroughly scrutinised through the *Dossiê* itself, I will move on to discuss the publication itself, as well as its repercussions.

Between March 2018 and August 2019, there were over 30 presentations of the *Dossiê*, among which four took place abroad. Almost all of these activities took place after invitations from lesbian academic groups, lesbian social movements, and government agencies and entities, such as professional councils and labour unions with lesbian representatives in their staff. With an average of four presentations per month, the *Dossiê* was in four of Brazil's regions: the North, the Northeast, the Southeast, and the South. The Central-West was the only region that did not have any in-person activities.

Each activity was unique, each new place brought surprises and new exchanges. We are very grateful for all the visibility and recognition, but, above all, we worry a lot about the reaction we could get from the activities. There is a

great lack of research on this topic. Besides the invitations to present our work, we were also gifted with academic texts, essays, photographs, installations, performances, pieces of visual art, songs, rhymes and posters in protests about lesbocide.

There is nothing unfounded about fearing death and worrying about building lesbian resistance strategies against the patriarchy, lesbophobia, transphobia, racism, classism and other oppressions working against lesbian survival. An interesting academic consequence of the *Dossiê* was that many lesbians told us that our work helped them justify to their professors the validity and urgency of papers on this and other themes in the broad area of Lesbian Studies. Some of them reported that, before our data were presented, some groups in the academy were reticent about accepting a study on lesbians. They claimed that lesbians were not violated, harassed, killed and victimised by hate crimes, for lesbophobia occurred, fundamentally, in the realm of domestic intra-familiar violence, thus being a minor form of violence, subjective and practically irrelevant. Our study stands as a counterpoint to these ideas.

Most of the reactions to the lectures, conferences and courses offered by the "*Lesbocídio: as histórias que ninguém conta*" project team were of surprise and pain; there was also sharing of experiences among different groups of people, but especially among lesbians – many of whom were unaware of the data, the numbers and the characteristics of hate crimes we identified in the cases. On the one hand, the increase in the denunciation of old and new cases was also a decisive factor associated with our presence in lesbian spaces.

On the other hand, almost all lesbians in those spaces knew the most important information we had to offer: there was a lack of data. Being conscious of this lack is more complex than merely understanding its effects and its ways of perpetuating itself as a lesbocidal tool, as a State policy and as one of the foundations of the *Heterosexual Nation* paradigm (Curiel 2013). One of the fundamental effects of the lack of information is the distancing of lesbians who

would be very close both ideologically and physically were the circumstances different. Separated by discrimination and fear of exposure while confined to their routines, they walk the paths of erased existence, shy and inexpressive. On our sleeves, we do not wear our lesbian pride nor the fearless feeling of self-validating unity with other lesbians to build safe spaces for sharing. Instead, we wear fear, guilt, and rejection that restrict us to silent existences. Lesbian invisibility comes with a silence about ourselves that makes us a fragmented category in essence.

As stated by Wittig (2013, 99), lesbians are not women. Despite our due criticism to the author's work, it is necessary to understand that, in fact, *we are patriarchy's mistake* (Soares, Peres and Dias 2019, 243) in the class of women (Curiel and Falquet 2005, 10). I will not delve further into this debate, as it has already been discussed in other occasions (Soares 2017), but I mention it to point out that it is impossible to build common ground with the patriarchal society (Elias and Scotson 2000) to legitimate our existence, as we do not find support among established patriarchy, in favour of aberrations, failed projects, or, in other words, in favour of women who are not quite women, who escape being women, who are not identifiable as women or who do not comply with the system. Thus, what cannot be legitimate, must be exterminated. Maybe, in the future, it will be possible to diagnose the condition of the patriarchal mistake as a motivation for lesbian extermination policies, i.e. the lesbocidal violence cycle and the types of lesbocide per se (Peres, Soares and Dias 2018, 88).

Analysing the motives for the murders (and the suicides, to a certain extent) made us notice a complex network of material dangers that lurks around lesbian lives. We could observe that, even when a lesbian perishes under these dangers, these deaths are not widely reported, not even within lesbian media and spaces. As a result, future victims are continually exposed and left without any investment in their protection nor in tackling the focus of the problem. Lack of information has many and deep aspects and one of its consequences is the general ignorance about cycles of violence imposed on lesbians.

Generally speaking, the advent of the concept of lesbocide in the Brazilian lesbian context, although still not widespread, already represents a conceptual field for lesbian rights. In particular, the right to life. Once we know the number, or specificities, of death we are capable of doing a more complex and complete lesbophobia characterisation as well as a more accurate mapping of the problems faced daily by lesbians in different contexts.

We can affirm, for instance, that studies on lesbocide were conducted by university female students in their respective fields of work, with subsequent presentations of their research on the theme intersecting many fields of knowledge, such as Law, Psychology, Literature and Linguistics, History, Marketing, and others. They create solid foundations to identify how lethal aspects of lesbophobia permeate different spheres of our lives and are being shaped due to their work. It also alerts us to the fact that we need specific and conscious approaches to be able to identify and fight these problems.

Throughout our contact with lesbians during these presentations, we could verify the importance of creating a space focused on the investigation of our pain and on ourselves in a place of power such as the academy. The research project *Lesbocídio: as histórias que ninguém conta* [Lesbocide: The Histories that No One Tells] ensures support for lesbians, especially for the youngest ones. It affirms that they must report aggressions, that we are a vulnerable group, that a lesbian's lifespan is most probably very low, that once we know the main factors generating lesbocide, we, as well as the people around us, can comprehend the daily struggle for our lives and its articulation as a real issue, a material and serious one.

Over and above the academic impact of the research, we also encountered social and artistic repercussions. An important element is increasing the visibility of lesbian deaths, and the promotion of the struggle for lesbian memory in relation to the names and life trajectories of those who were killed. Protagonists' acknowledgment in this process is a fundamental element in the construction of

this struggle. Names like Luana Barbosa, Anne Mickaelly, Mayara Cordeiro, Rithynha Julia, Clarice Viana, Arianne Cardoso, Eliane Possari, Camila Santos, just to name a few, were written on the streets in honour of the deceased. Many mobilisations emerged in the neighbourhoods and regions where those lesbocides occurred. Often, when we arrived in a city to present the research, local lesbians already knew the story of local victims and brought us details about the cases, reporting ongoing mobilisations in the search for justice for those lesbians.

With this research, we could highlight several ways in which lesbians' rights are systematically undermined. Two ways that most interest us now are: (1) the erasure of our deaths within the law and through decisions regarding lesbocide; (2) the generalisation of lesbian deaths, as if they were caused by the same processes that gay and trans[2] deaths are caused. Each category has its own specificities. Not identifying them precludes lesbian exclusive and/or specific public policies (PPs) of being implemented. As long as PPs keep considering the lesbian condition (Soares 2017, 94) to be trivial and ignoring our specific demands, they will never be able to fully meet them.

Lesbian rights need to be guaranteed equitably, taking into account what is particular about lesbian lives and about the intersections within our lives and challenges that we need to face in society, as being feminine or not; being different races; different ages; religions; belonging to different social classes; different geographical regions; undergoing, or not, a process of physical and/or mental illness, etc.

Regarding these aspects specifically, it is crucial to recognise the consubstantiality of invisibilities. It is not possible to think and theorise about lesbocide without comprehending that this phenomenon happens the way it does only because it is a contemporary symptom of the historical construction of systems of oppression in Brazil. That is to say, it occurs in association with patriarchy. Some other recurrent manifestations of this system of oppression are the marginalisation of black and indigenous peoples, and of the people living in

disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and the propagation of eugenic ideologies, among other issues regarding derogatory stereotypes about poverty and African and indigenous religious traditions; these issues directly affect lesbians who belong to these categories.

Brazil has been going through a strong resurgence of conservative waves that deeply affect lesbian lives. This can be noticed not only through the complex subjectivities permeating spaces where lesbians transit (schools, workplaces, family, neighbourhoods, public transportation and so on), but also through public and explicit speeches from symbolic figures, such as Brazil's current president, some of his government officials and their civilian supporters, for instance. This conservative wave did not start with the seizure of power by the far-right wing back in 2019, but it reached its peak at this moment due to the escalation and institutionalisation of lesbophobic policies. It is worth noting that Brazil's current president has declared, throughout his career in politics and during his presidential campaign, including in a recent interview to the media, that he is proud of being homophobic (Aranda 2018; Barbosa Neto 2011; Brasil 2011; Longo 2019).

This type of ideology that preaches prejudice as something morally acceptable brings about devastating consequences to lesbian's lives. At a personal level, they may cause mental illnesses or the worsening of such ailments, since social disapproval (Brasil 2013, 21; Carvalho 2015, 35) is a determining element of these conditions. At the collective and structural level, they compromise lesbian lives by restricting our public, political, and social representation (Pains 2019; Revista Veja 2019).

Due to this historical moment, the fight against lesbocide becomes more urgent and gains a much more complex facet, one that not only consists of the increased obstacles for institutional and governmental gains, such as PPs and other initiatives, or the efforts to maintain a few acquired rights. It includes the fight against a conservative agenda that continuously engenders the

destruction of the rights we fought to gain, as well as engendering the marginalisation of representative minorities.[3] The inherent feeling is that the pathways leading to lesbocide are being shortened and that our probabilities of death are increasing. We are talking about a reconfiguration and strengthening of lesbophobic violence cycles that affect, to a greater degree and more rapidly, the most vulnerable lesbians. At the micro-level, we can identify the impact of emergent conservative ideologies through lesbophobic attacks against research on the broader theme of lesbian rights. For all these reasons, in the face of the politicisation of the real effects of a lack of data, the reactions of most lesbians with whom we were able to meet and talk to, in the last months of the project, made us realise that we still have a long way to go to deconstruct lesbophobic ideas about our deaths. Lesbocide is nothing more than a patriarchal political ideology, and we must claim urgency for a qualified fight against our extermination.

In this article, I sought to present some considerations on the current state of research about lesbocide in Brazil, starting from the analysis of this study's reception by social movements, governmental agencies, the third sector, the working class, the academy, and conservative wings of society. Additionally, I made an effort to contribute the main considerations I was able to bring to aid in building resistance and confrontation. It is fundamental to emphasise the fact that black, indigenous, and poor peoples have been suffering the immediate and worsening effects of new governmental policies. This government, in addition to being neoliberal, is also strikingly lesbophobic and misogynistic. This scenario worsens the situation of all lesbians and points to the urgency of the national and international construction of new tools to guarantee the lives of all lesbians in Brazil, but especially of those most affected by such policies. It is also urgent to propagate ideas of valorisation and visibility of non-feminine, black, indigenous, and feminist lesbians; for instance, to prevent the institutional reinforcement of a reactionary moral paradigm that is aimed at perverting a human-rights based moral agenda, and eliminating equity and universal rights values.

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[1] E.N.: See https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/en/direitos-humanos/noticia/2018-08/lesbians-still-made-invisible-and-plagued-violence-brazil

[2] Currently, the records on the murders of trans people usually mention only the fact that they were trans people. Their sexual orientations, for example, remain unknown. There are remarkable differences regarding the types of oppression that each category suffers when it comes to death processes; this is also influenced by the fact that the same person can be in more than one of the groups of the LGBTQI + acronym.

[3] E.N: "Representative minorities" are groups of people that, despite being large in number and, sometimes, the majority of a country's population, are social minorities – and have few representatives – in political spaces of power. In the Brazilian context, representative minorities would be, for example: Black people, indigenous people, women, LGBTQI+ people and so on. As of Lula administration, from the Worker's Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*), some federal initiatives to increase the political representation of such groups were created, but most were dismantled by the following administrations. Currently, there are initiatives of this kind in many states, cities and towns in Brazil, maybe because of the debates that arose because of Lula's initiatives and the struggles of the Workers' Movement, the Black Movement, the Indigenous Movement, the Women's Movement and the LGBTQI+ Movement – which pushed former president Lula to act in the first place.

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Main Questions from Brazilian Family Physicians on Lesbians and Bisexual Women's Healthcare

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Abstract

In Brazil, being a lesbian or a bisexual woman represents an important social determinant of health. An important aspect of the health-sickness process is the non-recognition by lesbians and bisexual women of the healthcare system as a possible safe environment. This is due both to the LGBT-phobia they face in health units and to the lack of knowledge and training skills by health professionals on the specificities of this population. It is important to acknowledge that this community is in the intersection of at least two different social oppressions: sexism and heteronormativity. This article aims to systematise the main doubts and questions of family physicians, medical residents, and students from Brazil concerning the care of LGBT people at the primary healthcare level, in order to stimulate and guide training activities with this theme both in undergraduate and postgraduate courses as well as in continuing education for health professionals.

Keywords: Lesbians; Primary health care; Medical education.

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Introduction

In the elaboration of this paper, the authors have decided to use the acronym LGBT when referring to all the diversity of gender identity and sexual orientation present in our society. This decision is in accordance with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender's (LGBT) National Health Policy, launched by the Brazilian Ministry of Health in 2011 (Brasil 2011b).

Primary Health Care (PHC) is the first level of contact for individuals, families and the community with the healthcare system. It is responsible for the health care network's coordination and the provision of longitudinal and integral care. In addition to these essential attributions, PHC also proposes family approach, community orientation, and cultural competence as its derived attributions. It dedicates its services to individuals, families, and communities, having as obligation the approaches of social determinants of health (Stewart et al. 2010).

Family Medicine (FM) is the medical specialty that, within the scope of Primary Health Care, proposes an integral approach to the person, considering all aspects that interfere in the health-sickness process, including familiar, community and social contexts (McWhinney and Freemann 2010). Therefore, FM is the most appropriate medical specialty to handle and coordinate the healthcare of lesbians and bisexual women considering its complexity.

The healthcare of lesbians and bisexual women is an unusual topic through medical schools curricula (Negreiros et al. 2019), even though the National Curriculum Guidelines (NCG) for medical education, published in 2014 (Brasil 2014), state that:

> The student will be trained to always consider the dimensions of biological, subjective, ethnic-racial, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic, political, environmental, cultural, ethical diversity, and other aspects composing the spectrum of human diversity that uniquely characterises each person and each social group (Brasil 2014, 8).

In the Brazilian competency-based curriculum (Lermen 2015) for Family and Community physicians, LGBT healthcare and sexuality both appear as essential assignments:

> To manage in a timely manner the demands related to human sexuality, sexual identity, homosexuality, transsexuality, sexuality in special situations (physically rehabilitated, people with mental illnesses or disabilities; pregnancy and postpartum; seropositive; advanced clinical diseases) and sexual prejudice situations (homophobia, heterosexism) (Lermen 2015, 60).

Even though these aforesaid excerpts represent important progress, they are still very limited. In order to truly address these subjects entirely, it is essential to acknowledge and recognise LGBT-phobia as a social determinant of health (Brasil 2011b) and to take into account the specificities of each group within this community.

Family Medicine applies the patient-centred clinical method as a tool to improve the doctor-patient interaction. This method consists of six components (Stewart et al. 2010): (1) Exploring illness and disease (personal experiences with the sickness process), (2) Understanding the person in its individual, familiar and community context, (3) Developing a shared plan of care for the problems identified, (4) Incorporating health prevention and health promotion, (5) Intensifying the relationship between patient and physician, (6) Being realistic.

This method allows an improved comprehension of the suffering and illness processes. However, the method on its own is unable to meet the demands of the LGBT community, because, first and foremost, it is necessary to understand gender identity and sexual orientation as social determinants of health, recognizing aspects related to the causes of sickness of this community in a cis-heteronormative society. Furthermore, it is necessary to acknowledge the

cultural and scientific lack of information about this community in order to offer it comprehensive health care.

Aware of this situation, since 2017 we have been offering not only family physicians but also FM residents and medical students several training activities concerning lesbians' and bisexual women's health. The major purpose of this training is to present the specificities of these communities. These activities have not been focused on sexual behaviours and practices only; they also address networks support, mental health, reproductive health, and preventive disease screening.

The Workshop

The Brazilian National Society of Family Medicine (SBMFC) is a scientific institution that brings together family physicians throughout the country as well as general physicians that work in various Primary Health Care scenarios. The institution arranges the National Conference of Family Medicine every other year. In the organization of this event, the numerous Working Groups (WG) - groups of family physicians and SBMFC's collaborators - participate in the elaboration of the scientific programme. The WG's purposes are to improve the quality of healthcare assistance, to promote professional development and to develop scientific criticism and research on specific topics of interest.

At the 14th Brazilian Conference of Family Medicine in Curitiba, the ´Gender, Sexuality, Diversity and Rights WG organised a workshop entitled "*Homem com homem, mulher com mulher: o que você precisa saber e outras conversas sobre pessoas homossexuais*" [Man with man, woman with woman: what you need to know and other conversations about homosexual people]. The aim was to discuss issues related to specificities in the health-sickness process and health demands of the homosexual community with family physicians, medical students and other health professionals. Although initially designed to specifically address issues related to homosexuality and bisexuality, several topics related to

gender identity and the LGBT community in general ended up arising and were also included in the activity.

During the workshop, participants were given blank tags and encouraged to anonymously write any questions concerning the health of women who have sex with women and men who have sex with men. This method has been chosen in order to make it easier for the public to talk about sex and sexuality, since it is still a taboo. This way, people could genuinely ask what they do not know. The WG then tried to raise and clarify the main questions the audience had made on the subject.

The WG members who had organised the activity answered the questions throughout the activity. Together with the audience, they had a debate on scientific literature on the theme in which the participants were enabled to share their personal and professional experiences. Due to the great demand, this activity was offered several times at different national and regional conferences and seminars throughout the country.

Objective

In order to help the development of teaching and training activities to a more comprehensive and equitable care for lesbians and bisexual women in the primary healthcare system, this paper organises and acknowledges the main doubts and questions raised among family physicians during workshops carried out between 2017 and 2019. We have chosen to analyse questions on lesbian and bisexual women. This choice was made in acknowledgment of the invisibility they suffer. We do realise that this phenomenon occurs due to the intersection of social oppressions suffered while being women and non-heterosexual. In addition to that, other intersections can interact in the health-sickness process such as race, social class, age, capability and so on.

Methods

This paper is a retrospective study that aims to analyse questions raised in two different editions of the same workshop. The questions can be understood as a convenience sample. The questions were formulated and gathered during two national editions of the workshop. One in Curitiba (2017) and another in Cuiabá (2019). We have decided to organise the questions to understand which are the main doubts of family physicians and medical students concerning the healthcare assistance for lesbians and bisexual women. We selected the questions asked at these events because of their wider range and heterogeneous audiences. In total, 349 people attended both workshop editions. Family physicians, medical students and other primary healthcare professionals were able to present their doubts and difficulties regarding the approach, care, and clinical management of the non-heterosexual community.

The questions related exclusively to gay and/or bisexual men or specifically related to gender identity were not used in this systematization. Of the 221 readable questions received, 56 (25.33%) were excluded and the other 172 were used as the basis of this study. The questions were initially split between two different categories: (1) Lesbians and Bisexual Women Specificities and (2) General LGBT Population Specificities. After this first subdivision, the questions were analysed and combined by repetition and/or affinity of the covered subjects. In each subgroup, the questions were grouped in five different subcategories, each of which represents specific aspects of healthcare.

Results

The CBMFC workshop in 2017 had a total audience of 250 people, while the workshop in 2019 had 99 participants. In the sum of the two editions, women's participation (220) was 99% higher than that of men (111), as shown in Table 1. If we analyse gender and sexual orientation combined, the group that sought the most from the workshop was heterosexual women (156), followed by

homosexual men (66) and bisexual women (41). Of the 172 questions analysed, 93 of them (54.06%) concerned the health specificities of lesbians and bisexuals; 79 (45.93%) posed broader questions related to the entire LGBT population.

	Homosexual	Bisexual	Heterosexual	Total
Fenale	23	41	156	220
Male	66	11	34	111

Table 1: Gender Distribution and Sexual Orientation of CBMFC Participants in 2017 and 2019

After a thematic analysis, both general and specific questions on lesbians and bisexual women were divided into five categories: (1) Non-heteronormative Approach, (2) LGBT-phobia as a Social Determinant of Health, (3) Conduct against LGBT-phobia, (4) Approach to Sexuality and (5) Sexual practices, STIs and Barrier Methods. The category "Sexual practices, STIs and Barrier Methods" corresponds to 54.65% of the questions, followed by "Approach to Sexuality," with 17.44%, and "Non-heteronormative Approach," with 11.62% of the questions.

Among the questions addressed to the whole LGBT population, 31.64% of them cover "Approach to Sexuality" and 16.45% cover "Conduct against LGBT-phobia." The "Non-heteronormative Approach" category includes questions on the approach of the healthcare professional as well as the staff and other members of the health unit. In the Conduct against LGBT-phobia category, most questions dealt with difficulties to address the LGBT person's family of origin. Among the questions on "Approach to Sexuality," in addition to general doubts and difficulties on how to perform this approach in the ambulatory setting, there were also questions on the sexuality of children, adolescents and the elderly. Furthermore, there were questions related to the healthcare professional's sexuality and how it can interfere in the relationship established with patients.

Finally, among the questions on "Sexual Practice," many HIV related questions appeared.

Concerning questions that specifically relate to lesbians and bisexual women, the largest number belong to the category "Sexual practices, STIs, and Barrier Methods," summing 90.32% of the questions. Among the questions on "Approach to Sexuality," there are general questions about bisexuality, and again, about the healthcare professional's own sexuality. Most of the questions about "Sexual Practices, Barrier Methods, and STIs" were about sexually transmitted infections and possible barrier methods in sex between women. These included doubts about specific barrier methods for oral sex as well as queries related to the cytopathological screening programme for lesbian and bisexual women, and questions about sexual practices.

Discussion

The great number of people interested in the workshops shows how much this subject has been neglected in medical education but also how much of it is already identified by healthcare professionals as relevant for their practice. The plurality of topics covered in the questions draws special attention since they went from the discussion on the sexuality of the child, the adolescent and the elderly, through the process of development and disclosure of sexual identity and the familiar and community dynamics related to these processes, to issues related to family planning, STI prevention and care to the health impacts of LGBT-phobia throughout life, etc. This diversity shows how fundamental it is for lesbians' and bisexual women's integral healthcare to be given in the Primary Healthcare level by a family physician as part of a multi-professional team.

The intense difficulty in addressing sexuality in general is noteworthy. Addressing sexuality seems to be a big taboo in clinical meetings, either because of embarrassment, lack of practice and/or knowledge or by fear of how this approach might be perceived by the person-seeking healthcare. This fact

reflects the lack of spaces for discussion about this essential aspect of medical training and postgraduate education and practice.

There were many questions regarding the sexuality of health professionals themselves, about the process of building up their sexual identity and how it interferes in the patient-physician relationship. These questions refer to another aspect of medical education: the lack of safe environments to discuss self-knowledge, self-perception, the subjectivities of health professionals, and their impacts on patient-physician relationships. Providing healthcare is not an aseptic duty. Recognizing it means understanding the need to make room for the physicians' subjectivities.

There were many doubts concerning sexual intercourse between women. This fact points once again to the lack of knowledge and unfamiliarity with these sexual practices and, consequently, with aspects related to the transmission of STIs, including the use of barrier methods. Understanding that non-penetrative sexual practices exist, both men can pursue realising the variety of possibilities for sexual pleasure without penises, and accepting that anal pleasure, and women seem to be major challenges for physicians in training and those already graduated. The medical fraternity's non-recognition of sexual practices among women has stimulated the discourse over the years that there is no risk of STI transmission among them (Saúde 2006). This untrue statement has stimulated risky behaviour among women who have sex with women. Moreover, very little progress has been made towards thinking about specific barrier methods for lesbian sexual practices.

The number of questions regarding the relationship of LGBT people with their families of origin suggests how important it is to address this issue within LGBT's medical care. The family, often seen as a safe environment provider and people's main support network, can also present itself as a source of suffering and illness, further weakening the LGBT person (Saúde 2006). Still regarding family relationships, we have realised that, among the medical community,

there is little knowledge about legislation, reproductive rights and family planning for LGBT people.

Another important aspect in the set of specific questions is the apparent conflict in recognizing and understanding bisexuality. All questions about bisexuality were on whether it is a stage of confusion and/or transition between heterosexuality and homosexuality or whether the person can be considered more or less bisexual accordingly to the frequency with which they change partners. This difficulty is a source of great suffering for the entire bisexual population and for rejection of this group by homosexuals and heterosexuals. It also shows how much society is still held hostage to binary thinking and unable to dialogue with the fluid and complex dynamics that characterise us as individuals and permeate our affective/sexual/romantic relationships.

One last question worth thinking about is why there is a greater visibility of gay men within the LGBT movement and how lesbian and bisexual agendas tend to be silenced. Recognizing the intersectionality of oppressions is an important factor in approaching diversity with equity. That is why it is noteworthy that, although gender oppression and sexual orientation were approached in the questions, no question addressed oppressions such as race or class, which act directly on the health and illness process of the Brazilian population.

Conclusion

The National Policy for Integral Health of the LGBT Population (Brasil 2011b), launched in 2013 because of the great struggle of social movements, has been facing great difficulties in being implemented in the health services around the country, either due to the lack of knowledge about the Policy or the lack of institutional incentive to do so. It is noticeable that there is a large gap between the health needs of lesbians and bisexual women and the technical-scientific capacity of health professionals, especially family physicians, to respond to this demand. This hiatus is fuelled by the still strong presence of sexism and cis-heteronormativity which hinder the development of medical knowledge. The great demand for specific training activities on the LGBT community demonstrates that this knowledge gap is increasingly being noticed. It points out the need for expansion and diffusion of existing information, as well as for further research on the subject, mainly for the specificities of the Brazilian lesbian and bisexual population.

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The Siriricando Block and the Lesbians and Bisexual Women at São Paulo's Carnival

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Abstract

The Siriricando Block is a carnival block of lesbian and bisexual protagonism that has been out on the streets of downtown São Paulo, Brazil, since 2016. Founded by a group of lesbians and bisexual women, Siriricando seeks to promote spaces for socializing and strengthening of the lesbian and bisexual identities, sexual freedom, and awareness of the reproduction of prejudices existing in Brazil's sexist and patriarchal society. Welcoming to the entire LGBTQIA+ community, it is based on lesbian and feminist protagonism and visibility. We reframe the lyrics of well-known Brazilian carnival songs in a creative and funny way. Siriricando also promotes the coalition and collaboration of artists from different areas, since it is organized in a network through collaborative work. It also seeks forms of social intervention through awareness and creative economy in the events it holds. Since 2016, it seeks to act politically and socially beyond carnival in the Brazilian context (which has been experiencing an authoritarian setback).

Keywords: Lesbians; Feminism; Carnival; Street Carnival; Siriricando Block

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> "The connections between and among women are the most fearful, the most problematic and the most potentially transformative force on the planet."
>
> Adrienne Rich 1993

1 The Birth of the Sirericando Block

The Sirericando Block is a carnival group that has been participating in the street carnival of São Paulo, Brazil, for four years.[1] The Block is also a way of lesbian and bisexual women's resistance, as well as a movement for visibility that welcomes LGBTQIA+ communities. Our group seeks to create safe and comfortable spaces in which everybody is able to express their identities and sexual freedom through joy, fun, and art, as long as they understand and respect the fact that lesbians and bisexual women are the protagonists in the Block. The Sirericando carnival Block was founded in May 2016, in São Paulo, Brazil, by a small group of lesbians and bisexual women from the most diverse backgrounds. This self-organized and independent group decided to start a carnival block that would promote alterity and, at the same time, be a space for fun and sociability. We understand the block as a political act of visibility and resistance based on three pillars: lesbian and feminist protagonism and visibility through alliances, collaboration of artists from different areas, and the promotion of social intervention through awareness and creative economy.

2 Lesbian Protagonism and Visibility

For the Sirericando Block, it is important to create spaces that promote the lesbian and bisexual identities and coexistence to prevent the reproduction of prejudices by emphasizing the pride of being what we are and empowering female sexual freedom within a sexist and patriarchal society (Delphy 2009). These identities and this freedom are celebrated and emphasized in various

ways in the performance of Siriricando. Starting with its name: Siriricando was chosen from a survey done on the Block's Facebook fan page, in which several names were suggested. After a few weeks of voting, the name Siriricando was chosen. In Brazilian Portuguese, it is slang for female masturbation and represents women's freedom, especially women's sexual freedom. This initiative of an open vote to choose the Block's name meets the ideals of horizontality, collaboration and collective participation that guided our actions from the very beginning. The name is also a parody of a well-known Brazilian carnival song called "Sassaricando."[2]

The parodies created and played by the group in the parade and other events comprehend another dimension in which we exercise this visibility and freedom, re-signifying famous carnival songs. Through humorous lyrics related to the experience of lesbians and bisexual women, the *marchinhas* express our feminist, political and libertarian thinking.[3] One of the parodies named "Women aren't objects" illustrates this approach.

"Você pensa que mulher é coisa?
Mulher não é coisa não!
Coisa você domina
No meu corpo cê não manda não!
Eu sou a dona da minha vida
Amo quem eu quiser [...]
Não preciso de marido
Disso eu até acho graça
Só não quero que me falte
As amigas e as sapatas"

Siriricando

"Do you think women are objects?
Women are not objects!
Objects can be dominated
You don't rule my body!
I own my life
love whomever I want [...]
I don't need a husband
I even find the idea funny
I just don't want to be missing
My friends and the *sapatas*"[4]

Siriricando

These lyrics describe the need for autonomy over our bodies in a context in which we defend our agendas, fighting for decriminalization of abortion and against rape culture. Another recent parody composed by the group refers to the conservative wave that is growing strongly in Brazil as we resist and call for unity and struggle in the affirmation of our identity:

Mesmo que haja ditadura
Na minha vida ninguém manda não
Vivendo feliz com meus gatos
Tendo orgulho de ser sapatão
Apesar da lesbifobia
Vamos gritar e vamos ser ouvidas
Sozinha ou com as amigas
Vamos resistindo

Even if there is a dictatorship
Nobody but me is in charge of my life
Living happily with my cats
Taking pride in being a *sapatão*
Despite lesbiphobia[5]
We will shout and we will be heard
Alone or with our friends
We resist

They also include topics like female sexual freedom and pleasure, with a funny approach that describes the pride of being a woman while still facing the fear and repression imposed on us by the sexist patriarchal culture:

As mina bi quer chupar xoxota
As hétera quer ver como é que é
Tudo já se lambeu, estão todas se esfregando
E a sapatão sou eu
É muito bom ser mulher

The bisexual chicks want to eat pussy
The straight ones want to see what it is like
They all licked each other already and are now rubbing themselves
And I am the *sapatão* one here
It's great to be a woman

Female sexual freedom is also depicted in the Block's logo that displays the group's name around a winged vulva. This symbol is an important metaphor for

the group's libertarian and political attitude, through fun and pleasure, as explained in our fan page description, which we also consider as our manifesto:

> [...] just like masturbation, the group is free and accessible to any woman who has a/and/or likes pussy. Nothing else matters besides your desire to have fun and to enjoy yourself in a free and safe space, secured by the strength and power of all the "chicks" that come together to enjoy carnival and have it as pleasurable as a *siririca*.[6] That is why our symbol could not be different – a pussy with wings – representing the freedom that we want all women (lesbian, bisexual, trans, cis, nonbinary, straight) to feel, not only at the party, but anywhere they feel like landing and resting their wings. May the wings take the pussies away from harassment, prejudice, and fear, and, rather, take it to places of unique pleasure where all pussies can love and pamper themselves with the wonderful joy that carnival provides: a moment that only women decide and command the limit of their own pleasure (Bloco Siriricando's Official Facebook Page 2020).

Image 1. Logo

A graphic designer named Natê Miranda created this logo and its concept, as well as the entire visual identity of the Block. The participation of several people is what makes our existence possible, we are a self-organized group, which means we rely on our volunteers to make it happen.

3 Organizational and Artistic Collaboration

Siriricando has already paraded in four carnivals (2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020) in São Paulo's downtown. In addition to the organizational work, we raise funds for expenses such as logistics, food and for renting a sound-equipped truck for the parade. Since we have neither public nor private sponsorship, our parade has only been possible so far thanks to the militant work of the Block's members, in addition to the support of the people who believe in the Siriricando's concept. 2017 was our debut year at the carnival and we paraded with a moving truck powered by a generator we borrowed from a partner theatre. To raise funds, we made and sold T-shirts with the Block's logo. We also held fundraising parties at the lesbian bar *Cantinho Rosa*, in downtown São Paulo, which unfortunately went bankrupt in 2018.

Image 2 . 2017 Parade. Source: Facebook.

Although we have collaborated with artists from the lesbian music scene in São Paulo, such as the rap singer Luana Hansen and the Obirin Trio band, we were unable to form a percussion group in the first two parades. This happened

mainly due to the lack of instruments, which prevented the participation of many people who were interested in becoming part of the Block. Therefore, for the first two years, we sang our *marchinhas* accompanied by an electronic background song we downloaded from the internet.

In the second year, we were able to rent a sound-equipped truck with funds obtained from the sale of drinks and food at parties which were held in a house provided by a union entity where one of our members used to work. This is the moment when we saw our audience starting to grow.

Image 3. 2018 Parade. Source: Facebook

In the third year, one of our members organised, collected and fixed instruments donated by a school. This is how we started our percussion group and added musicians, in a gradual construction promoted by mutual strengthening generated by both music and the unity of people in the collective.

Image 4. 2019 Parade. Source: Facebook

To raise funds in 2019, in addition to the parties, we also carried out a crowdfunding, offering rewards such as mugs, T-shirts, and soaps with the Siriricando's logo, as well as other services and products. Lesbian and bisexual collaborators, who maintain the network that supports Siriricando that allows us to have a social impact, provided them all.

4 Awareness and Creative Economy

Through the participation, partnership and love in our collective, the Siriricando Block has been growing gradually and gaining more visibility. We are, therefore, able to take other actions and organize more events within our collective. At our events, in addition to the presentation of our percussion group, we offer space and establish partnerships with other artists from São Paulo's scene, such as *samba* and *forró* bands with musicians who identify as women. We also hold small fairs so women who produce some kind of art or product are able to offer those items to the public.

In both 2019 and 2020's crowdfunding, we offered products and services made exclusively by lesbians and bisexual women. Thus, in addition to resources for the Block, we contribute to the creative economy network by seeking to increase the income of our partners, either through sales at our events, or through the visibility of their brands within our community.

Another initiative is the series of talks and workshops held at our events. We have already dealt with issues such as harm reduction and lesbians' and bisexual women's sexual health. We have also promoted self-defence workshops for women and we are always looking for new partnerships, as well as offering space to those who want to share their expertise with us.

We have established partnerships with collectives such as *Meu Clitóris, Minhas Regras* [My Clitoris, My Rules], *Coletivo Louva Deusas* [Praising the Goddesses], *Pelvika* [Pelvik], *Espaço Esponja* [Sponge Space] and other LGBTQIA+ blocks.[7] Another carnival block that also promotes lesbian and bisexual visibility and started in the same year as Siriricando, the *Siga Bem Caminhoneira* [Have a Good Journey, Truckwoman] block, achieved greater visibility due to sponsorship and a percussion group composed only by women.[8] They hold exclusive events for women and their audience is younger, unlike Siriricando which has an audience made up of women over 25 and holds events open for all. Despite these differences, the two blocks help each other in the

dissemination of events and participate together in protests and official events within the lesbian community, such as the Lesbian Walk, which takes place the day before the LGBTIA+ Pride Parade, or the Day of Lesbian Visibility, on 28 August.

It is our understanding that, through unity, mutual support and collaboration between different women and women's collectives, we increase our power of representation, enabling our message of freedom and welcoming spirit to reach more people who identify with us and would like to unite their voices against sexism, oppression, harassment, violence, racism, lesbophobia and biphobia.

5 Final Considerations

Brazil is a country with high rates of violence against women and the LGBTIA+ community. It maintains a culture based on patriarchal and racist values that place women, especially lesbians, bisexuals, Afro-Indigenous and non-feminine women, in positions of inferiority and vulnerability. This conservative discourse gained even more strength in 2019, with the election of a president who openly expresses homophobic, sexist and racist opinions. Due to this whole context, which has only gotten worse since the time of the Block's creation, we also aim to act politically, through our libertarian discourse, defying these reactionary values, in addition to assuring, with the strength and unity of our collective, security against violence and harassment in our events.

Through dialogue, we try to solve any problems that may come up during the parade, including *marchinhas* that alert potential harassers and, if this does not work, the idea is that each one will protect the other and everyone will protect us all, and collectively we can guarantee our safety. Especially on parade days, we advise the Block's members and the public to be aware and remain aware of their friends as well as to report any problem to the staff. Fortunately, dialogue and communication have worked in every event up to this date, because in the events and on street carnival, the public is mostly formed by lesbians and bisexual women, and the small portion of men who are present listen to the

messages given on the microphone about the presence and protagonism of these women in that space.

Therefore, we believe that being a feminist, promoting lesbian identity and singing openly about sexuality is a political act. Going out in the streets and defending this discourse is a form of resistance (Buitoni and Lopes 2018). Art, pleasure, humour, and the celebration of sexual freedom and love in its various forms are our ways of fighting against all the oppression to which we are still subject. Resistance with music, dance and joy is our way of showing that we are alive and that we will keep on fighting and occupying the streets with our dissident voices and bodies, for being free is having no fear, as Nina Simone said.

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[1] T.N.: *Siriricando* is a combination of a slang for female masturbation, "finger-fucking," and a carnival song, "Sassaricando." The straightforward translation would be Finger-fucking Carnival Block. However, we will continue using the word Siriricando throughout the article due to its essence and playful combination of words.

[2] Parody of the song "Sassaricando" to which the Block was named after. *Sassaricar* is an archaic slang for dancing and having fun. All lyrics and audio can be found on the social networks of Bloco Siriricando. "Sassaricando." Composed by Luiz Antonio / Oldemar Magalhães / Zé Mario. See: https://www.letras.mus.br/marchinhas-de-carnaval/473888/.

[3] T.N.: *marchinhas* are traditional Brazilian carnival songs; "libertarian" in the sense of honouring collective free will.

[4] T.N.: variation of *sapatão*.

[5] T.N.: made-up word that means both lesbophobia and biphobia.

[6] T.N.: *siririca* is a slang for vaginal masturbation.

[7] E.N.: *Coletivo Louva Deusas* is a play with words. In Portuguese, the praying mantis is called "louva-a-deus," literally "prays to god." Thus, *Louva Deusas* means, literally, "prays to goddesses."

[8] E.N.: *Siga Bem Caminhoneiro* [Have a Good Journey, Truckman] was a Brazilian TV show dedicated to truckers and their life on the road. Among many other terms, *sapatonas* are also called – and refer to themselves as – *caminhoneiras* [truckwoman, trucker] among their peers. There are some reasons behind this association. For example, the similarity between the stereotypes about *sapatonas'* and truckers' way of dressing (flannel shirts, caps, boots) and the aptitude for living on the road (since *sapatonas* are known for frequently having long distance relationships). All of this made the old TV show's name become a joke in the lesbian/*sapatona* community. Hence the block's name, *Siga Bem Caminhoneira* [Have a Good Journey, Truckwoman]. Additionally, "*Siga Bem Caminhoneira*" can also be interpreted as "keep on being very *caminhoneira*."

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CARIBBEAN REVIEW OF GENDER STUDIES
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The Colonisation of Non-feminine Lesbian Experiences as a Mechanism for Controlling Bodies and Compulsory Reproduction of Masculinity[1]

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Abstract

This article is a discussion of the results of field research about the collective experiences of different LGBT movements. That is, currently there is an investment of some groups in proposing, whenever possible, the inclusion of non-feminine lesbians into various definitions of transmasculinities.[2] This produces deterministic regulations on the bodies and practices of non-feminine lesbians, like when the gaze on that body identifies it as "a '*transmacho,*' but an inadequate one, because it has boobs."[3] Considering the empirical data, it is reasonable to ask what are the historical conditions of possibilities that have contributed to this move to frame the body with this level of determinism. Beyond this, it also raises a political-epistemological issue. It is a political matter because it shows a hierarchy of transgressive gender experiences, in which transmasculinity is more valued than the non-feminine lesbian experience. Epistemological, on the other side, because it demonstrates a "will to truth" and the production of narratives about bodies and practices, in order to move the non-feminine lesbians body from the scene, by transforming it into more of the same. That is, a masculine body that is closer to the heteronormative ideal. In this sense, it is possible to question if this move is related to historical sexism and lesbophobia which have, for a long time, produced a non-place for non-feminine lesbian bodies and practices.

Keywords: non-feminine lesbian bodies and practices; the regime of truth; sexism; lesbophobia; gender and sexualities transgression.

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> "Are you sure that you're just a lesbian? Don't you feel like getting rid of the intruders? You still don't realise it yet, but you are a trans man. That's okay, you're going to realise it. It's so empowering when we realise it! You really should give it a try. We really need men like you in the trans movement. Besides that, it's kinda weird this manly attitude in someone with boobs, right?! Straight girls probably don't like it..." (João Paulo 2018).[4]

This quote from João's was said during an event that brought together the leadership of trans social movements in Curitiba, Paraná in 2018. It consists of a set of common narratives that reveal, empirically, the attempt to colonise "non-feminine" lesbian bodies and experiences (Milena Cristina Carneiro Peres, Suane Felippe Soares and Maria Clara Dias 2008, 28).[5] These narratives may also be found in the article "Lésbica feminista masculinizada ou homem trans: o governo dos outros sobre o corpo e o agenciamento política identitário" (Masculine feminist lesbian or trans man: the governing of the body by others and the political identity agency), in which Léo Ribas (2016, 167-168) presents four scenes produced in different times and spaces of the LGBT social movements in Brazil.[6] Furthermore, according to Rosalinda, an activist from the lesbian feminist movement, "The *sapatãos* are in danger of extinction. Soon there won't be a story to tell. They're all transitioning!" (Rosalinda, Lesbian Feminist Movement Event, Curitiba, 2019).[7]

In the face of these scenes, this article aims to construct a post-structuralist analysis of a current issue. The methodology used in this study is the dialogical quantitative interview (Arfuch 1995). A discussion group with four participants, including the interviewee João Paulo and the interviewers, took place in a trans people's social movement event in Curitiba, on 25 June 2018. Another interview,

in which Rosalinda was interviewed, had a total of six participants and took place during the national lesbian feminist meeting, on 5 October 2019, also in Curitiba. According to Leonor Arfuch (1995, 152) the interviews are understood as a dialogical relation, in which power relations and performativities uncover/ emerge from memories. The duly authorised narratives were compiled and then included in a compilation that makes up the corpus of this research.

This study is part of a broader research that has been developed since 2016 and that highlights the existence of incursions of power in the field of the transmasculinities social movement in Brazil to produce *truths* about non-feminine lesbian bodies and experiences that might result in the colonization of those bodies and experiences. Such power incursions seem to intend to co-opt these bodies and experiences to produce a regulation aiming the construction of transmasculinities.

These power dynamics relations have become possible contemporarily due to specific possibilities created by historical conditions. The sexuality *dispositif* [device or apparatus], as Michel Foucault has shown, produced a discursivity and a variety of strategies of knowledge-power that have made sex its target. These strategies in turn, produced discourses about body-gender-desire that fixes and associates the presence of a vulva with the existence of a certain femininity (Gayle Rubin 2017) and compulsory heterosexuality, designated by the identification of the genitalia at birth (Adrienne Rich 2012), promoting, therefore, a system that imposes an alleged coherence and normative complementarity among sex-gender-desire.

Thus, the discourse materialises what it names through an operation called citationality (Derrida 1988), which consists of the exhaustive repetition of discursive networks by different institutions for the reiteration of regulatory norms and the production of heterosexual bodies and experiences. In this perspective, the concept of hetero-cisnormativity refers to the gender and sexuality norms in force in the West by which the instituted norm is the non-trans body and the

heterosexual sexual practices. That is, the body is manufactured in a coherent relationship between sex and gender that meets the heterosexual imperative as the only way to experience sexuality (Judith Butler 2008).

The concept works as a union of heteronormativity (Letícia Lanz 2016, 89) and cisnormativity (Beatriz Bagagli 2016, 89; Lanz 2014, 296). Hetero-cisnormativity consists of a conceptual tool that promotes an understanding of the narratives elicited here, considering that they aim to establish a coherence between the body and the experience towards masculinity – in this case displaced from the genitalia and focused on the adequacy of the gender identity (Lanz 2014), the production of transmasculinity and an apparently cisgender *performance*. That means that when these narratives are deployed, they produce a materiality that, reflecting what Judith Butler addressed in the *performativity* theory (1988; 2000; 2008), produces the effect of power and control over bodies to make them intelligible to an assemblage of patterns fixed in binary bodies and heterosexual practices.

However, the analyses can shift, for when a trans man finds similarities with himself in a non-feminine lesbian body, other potential targets are at stake. It is on the gender identity and experiences of non-feminine lesbians that power focuses its incursions and strikes. That is, the trap of the normative gender system works even in non-hegemonic spaces of masculinity production.

In this sense, the discourses that support and operate the regulatory norms of body, gender and sexuality establish yet another ideal of masculinity through the citationality and the reiteration of the regimes of *truth*. However, non-feminine lesbian bodies and experiences affront, disturb and "cause" perplexity, defying such norms. What is at stake are the effects of *truth* that this manifestation of discourses produces. That is, through the repetition of such discourses, the goal is to institute them as the *truth*. For Michel Foucault:

> The important thing, I believe, is that the truth does not exist outside of power or without power (...). Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault 2010, 12-13).

Considering this, it is possible to understand that narratives like the ones brought in this essay demonstrate the production of another form of regulation of bodies and practices. This regulation takes place amidst a web of power and establishes a *truth* about body-gender-desire that moves non-feminine lesbian bodies and experiences closer to bodies and practices that also escape the regulatory ideal produced by the binary and complementary body-gender-desire system, as long as they fit. For Judith Butler, gender and sexuality norms produce cis-heterosexual bodies and practices as well as trans and non-heterosexual bodies and practices, since if the norm were efficient, it would not need to be reiterated all the time (Butler 2001; 2008).

In the perspective of Foucauldian studies, the discourse analysis that presents narratives, such as João Paulo's, distances itself from a specific interest in the origin of those discourses, since they possess historicity – that is to say, since they are contingent, located, dated and produced through specific conditions in the functioning of power relations. According to the author:

> We must be ready to receive every moment of discourse in its sudden irruption; in that punctuality in which it appears, and in that temporal dispersion that enables it to be repeated, known, forgotten, transformed, utterly erased, and hidden, far from all view, in the dust of

> books. Discourse must not be referred to the distant presence of the origin, but treated as and when it occurs. These pre-existing forms of continuity, all these syntheses that are accepted without question, must remain in suspense. (Foucault 2017, 31).

Thus, we suspect that the non-feminine lesbian subjectification processes constitute themselves as a target of a collusion between sexism – that, throughout history, has been placing women and their femininities in the position of inferior subjects – and lesbophobia – that consists in a violent device of several attacks against lesbian bodies and experiences. In the case of non-feminine lesbian bodies and experiences, lesbophobia intersects with different effects of power. These effects produce bodies and experiences marked by abjection for performatively materialising bodies that do not fit in what is expected of femininities (Butler 2001; 2008). Besides that, these bodies also affront the statute built around a hegemonic masculinity, which is projected for bodies and experiences that performatively materialise the coherence between sex-gender-desire – that is, bodies with penises, which produce themselves as male with hetero-cissexual practices.

Perhaps it would be possible to consider the existence of a moral panic – established by the non-feminine lesbian experience – affecting not only the intelligibility of norms, but also those who escape from them. Stanley Cohen has created the concept of *moral panics* to reflect how societies react to the breaking of established normative ideals through the media, public opinion and through agents of social control. As the author points out, moral panic refers to:

> A condition, episode or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or developed to. Then, the

> condition disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes, the object of the panic is new, and at other times it is something that has existed long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes, the panic passes and it is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even the way the society conceives itself (Cohen 1972, 9).

Besides bothering hetero-cisnormative bodies, non-feminine lesbian practices and experiences also affect bodies that distance themselves from current gender norms. Do non-feminine lesbian bodies and experiences represent a "threat" to hetero-cisnormativity and to transmasculinity ideals? In conceiving a critical ontology of ourselves (Foucault 1988), what is at stake when it comes to analysing both the limits and social imperatives created historically, and the possibilities of escaping from these connections? This means a change of attitude and posture in the world, in the presence of yourself and others. As Margareth Rago (2002, 15) suggests, and as we consider it productive to: "problematize a relationship established with the world, the other and oneself seems, thus, a fundamental condition to open new, more positive and healthier paths that would promote the exercise of freedom and the invention of life."

Before this issue, the main point was to bring the non-feminine lesbian body's experiences and practices into the debate as political elements through which it becomes possible to analyse a regime of *truth* being produced in the present. In that sense, as Foucault has demonstrated, the exercise of power and control of conduct also produces resistances, subversions, escapes, and counter-conducts (Foucault 2008). Then, the bodies, experiences and practices of non-feminine lesbians that dare to resist and to potentialise the discussions about the body, gender and sexualities are means of experimentation and self-invention themselves. This perspective of self-experimentation can move thought towards

an analysis of the potentials of the ethical and aesthetic experience of narrated existence.

Also, elaborating critical analyses on the epistemological and historical construction of the invention of the body-sex-gender system seems to be imperative in understanding the ways that the fields constructing non-feminine lesbian experiences are delimited in contemporary times. With the intention of building an intense critique of this system perhaps we can think, through feminist and queer theorizations, what it would mean to break drastically with the thinking that produces and makes functional the body-sex-gender system, founded on binarism and centred on the conjugation of the normal/abnormal binomial (César 2004, 54; Foucault 1988; Foucault 2001; 121-122; Rubin 2003).

Thus, the reason for these analyses lies in promoting self-reflection and self-invention before the possibility of glimpsing other visibilities and utterabilities (Albuquerque Júnior and Filho 2008, 10). Perhaps it can even change the way of perceiving the world and life, making it as close as possible to the expression of a personal and political project of a work of art (Foucault 1984, 2). Besides, these studies and analyses also intend to be strategies to confront and counterpoint the recent attacks against democracy, vulnerable demographic groups, public universities and the production of academic analyses and research in the area of Human Sciences in Brazil (Penna 2018).[8]

The reflections proposed here do not intend to close the discussion. Rather, our experiences and perceptions from the field of social movements and the academy will keep feeding our analyses. We will keep on doing meaningful exercises by connecting activism and the academy, never forgetting our double subjectivity.

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[1] T.N.: a non-feminine lesbian [lésbica não-feminilizada] is a lesbian that rejects/does not comply with femininity ideals and performativities. Despite rejecting femininity, it is important to point out that, even though some of them might, these lesbians do not necessarily identify with masculinity.

[2] T.N.: Transmasculinity is not one – or single – type of masculinity. It is more aptly described as a context: masculinity as enacted by people with transgender identities. Transmasculine is an umbrella term referring to individuals who were assigned to a female gender role at birth and at some point come to self-identify as men, or with some other masculine identity, rather than seeing themselves as women. Trans man (sometimes trans-man or transman) is a man who was assigned female at birth. "Transmacho" can refer to a transmasculine person who embodies patriarchal and sexist attitudes or to a transmasculine person.

[3] T.N.: deterministic regulations refer to biological interference on how the lesbian body is read, where the life/body of a "butch" does not fit in the female/male binary. By being a "butch" (lésbica não feminilizada, as they use) a "butch" cannot be a "woman." Therefore, she would be seen as a (trans) man.; the quote can also be read as: "[this person is not a lesbian, it is] a transmacho, but an inadequate one, because it has boobs [and a transmacho, a trans man, should not have boobs]; "*transmacho*" here might simply mean" "trans man," since Brazilian feminist women and lesbians/*sapatonas* colloquially refer to men as "machos" (whether they are explicitly sexist and have macho attitudes or not)."

[4] The names João Paulo and Rosalinda are fictitious and were used to preserve the identities of the subjects who provided the narratives for this study. The narratives were collected, and authorised in dialogical and punctual interviews, in a dialogue between all individuals of the process, including a lesbian feminist activist and other researchers, in two moments of different events: an event from the trans movement and one from the lesbian and bisexual feminist movement, at Curitiba. Those narratives are part of a larger collection and constitute the corpus of this research, which has been produced since 2016.

[5] We chose to quote the authors' first name in the first citation or reference to make visible the female authorship that has historically been erased from the spaces of knowledge production and that remain invisible by the rules of current bibliographic citations. This is a political and epistemological decision for feminist writing.

[6] Although we do not ignore the recent political organization of intersex people in Brazil, here we refer to organised social movements using the LGBT acronym produced democratically at the 1st National LGBT Conference, that took place in 2008, in Brasília – Distrito Federal. For more information, read: Santos, Dayana Brunetto Carlin dos. 2010. "Cartographies of Transsexuality: a School Experience and Other Plots." Master's thesis. Federal University of Paraná – UFPR.

[7] T.N.: See "*sapatão*" in Barros, Bruna and Jess Oliveira. 2020. "Black *Sapatão* Translation Practices: Healing Ourselves a Word Choice at a Time." Also in this issue.

[8] For further information, please check: https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2019/05/11/politica/1557603454_146732.html and https://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/especial/noticias/associacoes-de-ciencias-humanas-rebatem-argumentos-de-bolsonaro-para-cortar-investimentos/.

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Deborah Learned How to Play Sword with the "*Cabras*": Lesbianess and Artivism in the *Guerreiro,* a Brazilian Popular Culture's Manifestation

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Translation from Brazilian Portuguese by Bruna Barros and Jess Oliveira

Abstract

The main objective of this research is to present a study on the artivism of sexual and gender dissidents in Brazilian popular culture, through a focus on the performative production of the *Guerreiro* tradition in the city of Juazeiro do Norte in the countryside of Ceará, Brazil. By taking into account the mode of subjectivation and the performative politics of Deborah Bomfins, a member of the group "Guerreiras de Joana D'arc," coordinated by Mestra Margarida Guerreira, we seek to understand the way in which sexuality permeates the artivism of the Northeastern regional tradition, by distorting the "*cabra macho*" [macho man] ideal in popular culture through visibility and resistance in the scenic dance performance.[1] We argue that the *Guerreiro* tradition arises as a way of life for Deborah's lesbian existence, mainly because, as a *brincante*[2] [player], she faces prejudices by standing between her lesbian identity and heteronormativity.[3]

Keywords: Guerreiro; Theatre; Popular Culture; Lesbianess; Gender and Sexuality.

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This paper seeks to present some thoughts on Brazilian lesbian experiences through Deborah Bomfins's participation in the popular cultural tradition of groups in Juazeiro, in the Cariri region of Ceará, in Brazil's Northeast. We apply the methodology of sentimental cartography, proposed by Rolnik (1989), in order to follow the production of subjectivity and the movement of the player's desire within the *Guerreiro's* cultural production, characterised by the Christmas festivities that take place during the "*Ciclo de Reis*" [Three Kings' Cycle], a period that corresponds to the second half of November and the first half of January on the municipal calendar. The popular celebration ends on *Dia de Reis* [Three Kings' Day], January 6th.

The analysis takes place in the João Cabral neighbourhood, in the city of Juazeiro do Norte, where the most popular Christmas parties, the *Reisado* and the *Guerreiro* are celebrated. According to data from the *Carroça de Mamulengos* Collective, in 2019 the district counts 250 participants, while the municipality has 778 participants in the popular culture's events. This research focuses on the *Guerreiro* tradition and relates it to the *Reisado* insofar as the tradition's learning process branches into Deborah's discourse [from the *Guerreiro*] between the two cultural events. Brandão (2003) highlights the *Guerreiro* as a variant of cultural practices originated in the states of Alagoas and Pernambuco and defines this tradition as a modernized appearance of the *Reisados*. The *Guerreiros's* narrative is danced and sung through a sequence of performative acts, characterised by "songs danced by a group of dancers dressed in multi-coloured costumes, the emulation of the colony's old noble costumes, adapted to the taste and economic possibility of the people" (Brandão 2003, 76).

One of the key concepts for the development of the research is the "theatre as enchantment," elaborated through the cartography of Barroso (2013) on *Reisados do Ceará*. For the author, the scenic performance of tradition takes place through enchantment, a moment when the players are enchanted and enchanting through the embodiment of fantastic and legendary characters'

majesties, as well as through disenchantment, when the players leave the popular scenario and return to ordinary life. It is interesting to note the contrast between the cultural production of tradition and social issues, because, generally, the players are simple and humble people who live in poor and peripheral neighbourhoods of urban centres.

As Barroso (2013, 44) explains about the *Reisado* tradition, "the vast majority of players are men, although the participation of women has increased in recent times, it apparently has always existed in many places." According to the author, women would be linked to secondary functions in the festivity, such as production roles both in the making of costumes and ornaments, as well as in arranging presentations. Thus, we consider Deborah's playful body to be powerful on the scene, especially because of its ability to deconstruct the patriarchal nature of relationships (Navarro Swain 2010) through artivism of sexual and gender dissidence, as Colling (2018) points out.

How can the *Guerreiro* game provide a lesbian resistance's coalition (Butler 2018) beyond heterosexual contracts (Wittig 1978) within popular culture's tradition? If tradition allows for a condition of survival through the theatre of Reis' art, we can assert that, for Deborah, the learning of swordplay appears to the extent that her "lesbian existence," expressed also by artistic practices, can "undo the power that men perform over women" (Rich 2010, 43). Therefore, we highlight the way in which artivism is crossed by corporeality in the *Guerreiro* play, as well as by lesbian sexuality in the practice of Brazilian Northeastern culture.

Lesbianess as artivism: gender performativity in the theatre of Kings

The first time Deborah Bomfins Pinheiro, 26, played the *Guerreiro* was outdoors, at the Carlos Cruz Square in the João Cabral neighbourhood, in Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará state, Brazil. It was 2003 and she was ten years old. The artist collective *Carroça de Mamulengos*[4] had arrived in Juazeiro do Norte and all

the children were impressed with people on wooden legs, clown games and popular cultures' dances. "My first contact with art was at the circus," explains Deborah who is today one of the six *Guerreiras* of Mestra Margarida's group. According to the player, the novelty of an artist collective made children start liking street art.

The theatre company kept going back and forth to the city, always bringing games to the neighbourhood. One day, the collective decided to stay and set up an artistic headquarters in the neighbourhood. According to Deborah, this was due to the richness observed by the artists in the popular cultures that emerged in the João Cabral neighbourhood. The *União dos Artistas da Terra da Mãe de Deus* [The Union of Artists from God's Mother's Land] opens its doors and, in a short time, the children begin attending theatre, painting and drawing classes besides playing instruments, singing and even harvesting in the square. "Everything was already there and the company brought us what we could learn," Deborah says.

Then, the artists group had the idea of assembling a group that would play the *Guerreiro* cultural tradition. The artists managed to bring Mestra Margarida Guerreira, one of the first women in the city to lead such a group, to dance with the children in João Cabral. Margarida Guerreira lived in a neighbourhood called Mutirão and, according to Deborah, this meeting with the company allowed a greater care of her basic needs as an elderly player. "The group started taking good care of her, so she could give back in music and teach us," Deborah says. At first, the group members were all women. Four of Deborah's six sisters danced in the group. However, there was a family barrier placed by their father's permission that, at the time, would not allow the girls to play the *Guerreiro*. "My daughter will not go out in the middle of the street running with a sword in her hand, this is not for her," recalls the player about this sad childhood episode.

The general parents' prohibition to take part in the group's activities made the actress Maria Gomide, a member of *Carroça de Mamulengos*, visit each house in the neighbourhood to explain what exactly the children's encounters with art consisted of. The process was slow and, according to Deborah, difficult, but it worked out. Today her father has all of her videos of sword playing and taking part in popular culture events. This is how the tradition began to take place in João Cabral due to the trust gained by and placed in Maria Gomide; due to her efforts, the *Guerreiro* group came into being between 2003 and 2004.

"Our differential was that, after we set up the *Guerreiro*, I will not say that we were the first, but we had a very strong history inside this tradition, and, after that, other groups started to pop up," explains Deborah about the emergence of other women-only *Guerreiro* groups. Although the news of the group's performances was widespread in the neighbourhood, Deborah believes that the fact that Maria sat with the children, picked up the guitar and sang all the handwritten notes until everyone learned them, touched the children's sensibility. "She sang lyric by lyric until she learned them all."

In 2003, Mestra Margarida Guerreira no longer played swords, although she knew how to do it very well. She was well known as the mother of Masters in the Cariri region. Since she learned it from men, Deborah considers that the performative reproduction of the acts might have made her acquire the reiterated character of the male gender in dance. "We learned from men, so when I play I look like a man playing! Antonio, Maria's brother, said: "Deborah, come here, do it, put your hand on your hips, show us some lightness…" and I said: "But I learned it from the guys, man, I'm going to play this way!"

Over time, she explains that the group has sort of "personalized" the way of playing swords, so they play it in a softer and more delicate way, "a more feminine touch, so to speak," adds Deborah. The player points out that there is a thought, along the lines of tradition, that the *Guerreiro* is for women, while the *Reisado* is for men. This norm was learned during the first rehearsals, although

"both [plays] have female and male characters, for example the *Guerreiro* has the character Mateu, who is a male. The *Reisado* has a character who is the Queen." Deborah also says that *Guerreiro* is more melodic. "Men use more strength to sing and women sing softer. With men, it's kind of a war, a fight... " she says.

Both the *Guerreiro* and the *Reisado* are groups that need to be commanded by a whistle. Generally, the object is always in the Master's mouth. In the case of Mestra Margarida's *Guerreiras de Joana d'Arc* group, when the whistle blows, two rows of women need to get in formation. When the Mestra speaks, each character is "taken away," that is, enacted during the presentation. In a short time, Deborah started to lead lines; she went from the sides to the centre and got the title of Reis. If someone older were missing to interpret a character, she would cover the role. Altogether, she has approximately 15 years in this tradition, "I consider myself a player, even though they keep calling me Mestra Deborah," she confesses. Deborah did what she calls "creating her space" between the *Guerreiro* and the *Reisado*, an action that can be seen as powerful considering the domination`s point of view and the political meanings of heterosexuality, as shown by Curiel (2013).

In 2017, Deborah's *Guerreiras* group announced its return, but a question remained in the air. Deborah had had a child, and her sisters had started families. How would it be possible for them to follow the rehearsals and perform with their lap children? The idea of taking their children to the *Guerreiro's* and *Reisado's* rehearsals appears to have solved the problem. Why would the Guerreiras not take their children to dance? Deborah wonders. "So we did rehearsals with mothers from the first formation, who played with their children on their laps. My child was in the middle of the *Reisado*," she remembers. In the performance about six *Guerreiras* danced, the scene is composed by 15 players, apart from the people involved in the organization and behind the scenes logistics.

"As I played since 2003 and came out as a lesbian in 2017, people were surprised, but I had no barriers, "Deborah? She has a baby!" "but she used to date that guy." people used to say it couldn't be possible, but it is," says the player about the acceptance of obstacles by her popular culture partners. Today, Deborah says she notices more LGBTQ + people on her side. "Of course, we, gay people, still suffer a lot... the gay who is a *travesti*, the gay who is a trans person, they are putting themselves on the line. Me, as a lesbian... I don't have that thing: "oh, she is a lesbian, I'm going to mess with her"... So whether it is a trans or a *travesti*, they are the ones to take it, they are there in the front line defending homosexuality," reflects Deborah about constructed categories like the "macho" lesbian and the more "effeminate" gay. The player considers herself a strong woman due to the presence of social markers in her body as a mother, as a black person and as a lesbian. The participation in Mestra Margarida Guerreira's group has empowered her. Deborah says she does not want to be rich, she wants empowerment: "I want to play for the rest of my life. If I can, I will plant this seed. I want to teach, because this is my life and I want to multiply it, I want to pass it on." It is worth noting that Deborah's lesbian experience changes this cultural event, for it breaks the traditional heritage passed on historically by the male figure of the Master, that is, from father to son.

Conclusions

Although Deborah deviates from labels, she argues that there is no way to get rid of them. Sometimes the *Guerreira* says she looks at herself in the mirror and thinks, "Am I a lesbian? Am I a *sapatão*? I am a woman!" She adds that sometimes we see ourselves through other people's eyes, by believing them when they tell us who we are, which often differs from the way we recognize ourselves. "I look at myself and I see a woman who likes another woman, but the label's strength is very strong..." According to her, the lesbian woman has a strength that makes her fight for her space, while saying that being part of a minority in João Cabral can generate allied spaces, "when everyone comes together to address the issue, the space is created."

If the *Guerreiro* tradition enables survival through popular theatre, we highlight Deborah's, corporality and artvism as powerful tools to resist lesbophobic violence with art.

In performance, physical acts perceived as "masculine" end up being evidenced by the public through the way Deborah learned them. However, it is worth noting that the very performative acts point to the gender norm's very failure and, before the lesbian existence within the tradition, challenge through the "Lesbian continuum," as described by Rich (2010), the expected ideal of "*cabra macho*" who are expected to play the sword in the *Guerreiro* tradition

When Deborah declares that the struggle for spaces is related to her condition as a lesbian woman, she is talking about happiness. According to the player, a relationship with another woman is good for her. "It makes me feel more beautiful, I feel good." Thus, it is possible to notice what she says not only through the story she tells, but also through the way she evokes Margarida's memory while throwing the swords out of the norm, that is, out of the ways a woman who dances the *Guerreiro* is supposed to play. Deborah seems to be right; the sword is a way of life.

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[1] T.N.: *mestra*: (f) master in Portuguese.

[2] T.N.: a *brincante* is a person who takes part in a popular *brincadeira* [child's play]. In some Brazilian popular cultures, *brincadeira* stands for a type of traditional cultural play and/or practice. *Brincadeiras* are deeply ingrained with the local culture and history of those who take part in them.

[3] The term "*cabra*" [goat] is used to name men who are legitimized by male virility in northeastern Brazil; see more about *Guerreiro* at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCACdFV6lB8&gt=; work carried out with the support of CAPES during the Master's course in Social Sciences at UFRN.

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afro latina

formiga
aka formigão
aka Aline do Nascimento Aguiar
Poet, Kapoeira y *Sapatão*

Translation from Brazilian Portuguese
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& Jess Oliveira

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Translation from Brazilian Portuguese by Bruna Barros and Jess Oliveira

Abstract

This article is a discussion of the results of field research about the collective experiences of different LGBT movements. That is, currently there is an investment of some groups in proposing, whenever possible, the inclusion of non-feminine lesbians into various definitions of transmasculinities.[1] This produces deterministic regulations on the bodies and practices of non-feminine lesbians, like when the gaze on that body identifies it as "a '*transmacho,*' but an inadequate one, because it has boobs."[2] Considering the empirical data, it is reasonable to ask what are the historical conditions of possibilities that have contributed to this move to frame the body with this level of determinism. Beyond this, it also raises a political-epistemological issue. It is a political matter because it shows a hierarchy of transgressive gender experiences, in which transmasculinity is more valued than the non-feminine lesbian experience. Epistemological, on the other side, because it demonstrates a "will to truth" and the production of narratives about bodies and practices, in order to move the non-feminine lesbians body from the scene, by transforming it into more of the same. That is, a masculine body that is closer to the heteronormative ideal. In this sense, it is possible to question if this move is related to historical sexism and lesbophobia which have, for a long time, produced a non-place for non-feminine lesbian bodies and practices.

Keywords: non-feminine lesbian bodies and practices; the regime of truth; sexism; lesbophobia; gender and sexualities transgression.

How to cite

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afro latina

guarda afetos de Áfrika

kom teto y raiz em abya yala

afrolatinidades amefrikanidades

A Kor Púrpura é

eskura

força motriz

teve eskuta ativa

da minha poesia

polítika-emotiva

depois da travessia

fez um retrato meu

vejo eu

até no meu korte de kabelo

desenhado pelos seus traços no papel

desejo Pretumel

seu lampejo em Olhos d´Água

é impressionante komunika fráguas

raridade alguém me kerer

surpresa do anoitecer

minha karência gera uma kerência

aí eu deixo me levar

pra onde vc me guiar

kuando entrei no seu kuarto

keria morar

na sua biblioteka

e no seu abraço

dekorar poema e karregar

um pedaço de você em mim

tipo assim

igual a literatura ke noiz gosta

revigora kura

vem enkosta

tua pele na minha pele

potência

preta konsciência

na sua postura

na sua bravura

suave é a chave

suave também

é seus beijo

doce igual você

é kente

é kente

igual seu abraço

ke de repente me envolveu

e akeceu meu presente

eu

gosto de ouvir sobre seu passado

komo tem passado

pra chegar até aki

o jeito ke vc sorri

me lembra

komo a gente é gente

não kanso de te perguntar

se tá tudo bem

se eu tô te machukando

meu bem

só pra me certifikar

ke o konsentimento tá rolando

responsa e sentimento

negrícia em nudez

enchem meus olhos

delícia

sua tepidez y maciez

beijos kausa em mim desejos

passeio por tua negrura

grande ventura

tenho pressa

vou nessa

simples e direta

pausa para trocar de mão

risos então

Águas da Kabaça

ressoam no movimento da vida

minha kerida

pediu pra parar

ela não gozou

ela não me tokou

não teve magia

não teve sintonia

dividimos o banho

pra sua doçura me arreganho

eu tão na sua

e você na sua

tua gentileza

me enkanta tanta beleza

tua introspecção me espanta

te mando poesias ke versa meu afã

kontinuamos a konversa

da sua esperteza sou fã

markamos de se ver

minha ansiedade todo mundo vê

apesar das difikuldade

ir fundo

eu keria

sempre achei ke essas koisas ke faltam

se konstruía

mas ela não tava mais

a fim

de mim

ela fugiu

ela partiu

sem dizer nada

fikei angustiada

inventando mil DRs Imaginárias

percebi ke keria todo amor ke

sempre faltou

isso é um fardo

pra uma preta

mankada minha

gera treta

e fiko sempre sozinha

entendi ki na moral

nenhuma mulher preta tem ke kuidar do meu

emocional

isso é atroz

ki afeto entre Noiz

amar

num é kompletar

é di kompartilhar

as koisas boas

na boa

não teve Pretextos de Mulheres Negras

só silêncio mesmo

acho ke vc segue as regras

da sua intuição

pra ke fechar Kom essa sapatão

se pá não kompensa

me ignorando ela me dispensa

o meu Espírito da Intimidade foi maltratado

e sequestrado

se jogou no mar

pra não ser eskravo

eskrevo pra diluir e afogar

gosto de sal e cheiro de kravo

no incenso odor intenso

dizem por aí ke Intimidade Não é Luxo

pra mim é luxo sim

intimidade pra minha pessoa

só nas viagem da minha kabeça ke ressoa

aki num é Vivendo de Amor

pelo kontrário aki indiferença e rankor

vivendo de ilusão

intimidade me intimida jão

mas sempre tô korrendo atrás delas

e as minas sempre korrendo de mim

enfim

acho ke o máximo de amor ke

eu konsigo ter na vida

é o amor próprio

eu sou minha amante

eu sou minha amiga

errante

ninguém liga

kansei mesmo de reivindikar

ke a koletividade

seke minhas feridas

a raiva da solitude arde

antes ke seja tarde

preciso desatar

necessidade de ser par

ki ela

não mais me mova

Antes Ke Chova

Um Dia Bonito Pra Chover

me ensina ke sou inteira sem você

teoria feminista difundida pela lésbika

bate na tekla

solidão komo arma política

rumo a autonomia

ekonômika mental emocional

antipatriarkal

hoje sonhei kom você

sonhei ke você me dava um perdido no rolê

sexto sentido

avisando não deveria ter me iludido

relembrando

komo meu koração foi partido

afro latina

keeping Afrika's affektions[1]

roof y roots in abya yala[2]

afrolatinidades amefrikanidades[3]

The Kolour Purple is

dark

moving force

aktive listening

from my politikal-emotional

poesia

after the travessia

(you) painted a pikture of me

i see me

even in my hairkut

that you drew on paper line by line

Pretumel desire

your shimmer in *Olhos d'Água*

it's enthralling, breaking agonies on the shore

rarely anybody wants me at all

surprise by the nightfall

lacking love, i yearn for you

so i let you take me

to where you want to guide me

when i walked into your bedroom

i wanted to live

in your library

and in your hug

memorise poems and karry

a piece of you in/with me

just like

the literature we like

it refreshes it kures

kome kloser

your skin near mine

power

black konsciousness

in your attitude

in your bravery

smooth is the key

so are

your kisses

sweet like you

it's true

it's lustful

like your hug

that suddenly got me involved

heating my present up

i

like listening about your past

how you have been

until you got here

the way u smile

reminds me

that we're people

i never get tired of asking you

if everything is fine

if i am hurting you

my love,

it's just to make sure

we got a Konsent

accountability and feeling

blacklicious in its nakedness

it fills my eyes

delight

your drowsiness y smoothness

your kisses kause me desires

i wander in your blackness

such a great bliss

i rush

and go with your flow

simple and assertive

a pause to switch hands

then we laugh then

Águas de Kabaça

resonating in life's movements

ma baby

asked me to stop

she didn't kome

she didn't touch me

there was no magik

there was no synchrony

then we shared a bath

i open myself to you just like that

i'm so into you

you're so indifferent

your kind ways

i look at this beauty with praise

your introspektion scares me

i send you poems with lines of yearning

we keep our konversation going

you amaze me with your cunning

we're going on a date

i'm anxious and everyone can see it

despite all the trouble and difficulties

i wanted

to go deeper

i always thought we kould build whatever

was lacking

but then she wasn't that much

into

me

she ran

she left

without a single word

i was going krazy

making up a thousand DTRs in my head

i realised i wanted all the love

i never had

that's a burden

for a *preta*

my fuck-ups

turn into *treta*

and i'm always alone

for real, i get it now

no *preta* has to take kare of

what i feel and how

it's so kruel

affektion between Us

to love

is not to komplete

it is to share

the good things

damn right

there were no *Pretextos de Mulheres Negras*

just silence

i guess you follow the rules

of your intuition

why ride with dis dyke

maybe it ain't worth it

by ignoring me, she dumps me

my Spirit of Intimacy was wounded

and kidnapped

throwed itself into the sea

not to be enslaved

i write to water down and drown

the taste of salt the smell of clove

a scent so strong in the incense

they go around saying *Intimacy No Luxury*

it is to me

i only get intimacy

when i'm tripping in my head that ekhoes

ain't no *Living to Love*

on the kontrary it's indifference and rankor

living to daydream

intimacy intimidates me

but i'm always running after them

and them ladies running away from me

i mean

i think the greatest love

i can have in this life

is self-love

i am my lover

i am my friend

a wanderer

nobody cares

i'm sick and tired of asking

for kollektivity

to lick my wounds

the rage of loneliness akhes

before it's too late

i need to tear apart

the need to be a part

may she

no longer move me

Antes Ke Chova

Um Dia Bonito Pra Chover

teach me i'm whole without you

lesbian feminist theory

spreads the word around

solitude as a politikal weapon

towards autonomy

ekonomikally mentally emotionally

anti-patriarchally

i dreamt with you today

i dreamt you ditched me while we hanged

sixth sense

telling me i shouldn't have dreamt

reminding me

how my heart was broken and bent

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[1] T.N.: Transmasculinity is not one – or single – type of masculinity. It is more aptly described as a context: masculinity as enacted by people with transgender identities. Transmasculine is an umbrella term referring to individuals who were assigned to a female gender role at birth and at some point come to self-identify as men, or with some other masculine identity, rather than seeing themselves as women. Trans man (sometimes trans-man or transman) is a man who was assigned female at birth. "Transmacho" can refer to a transmasculine person who embodies patriarchal and sexist attitudes or to a transmasculine person.

[2] T.N.: deterministic regulations refer to biological interference on how the lesbian body is read, where the life/body of a "butch" does not fit in the female/male binary. By being a "butch" (lésbica não feminilizada, as they use) a "butch" cannot be a "woman." Therefore, she would be seen as a (trans) man.; the quote can also be read as: "[this person is not a lesbian, it is] a transmacho, but an inadequate one, because it has boobs [and a transmacho, a trans man, should not have boobs]; "*transmacho*" here might simply mean" "trans man," since Brazilian feminist women and lesbians/*sapatonas* colloquially refer to men as "machos" (whether they are explicitly sexist and have macho attitudes or not)."

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literary cuírlombism: black lgbtqi poetry exorbitating the paradigm of pain

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Abstract

this essay that is being continuously rewritten by tatiana nascimento, an artist, and researcher from brasília, since 2016, asks the following main assumptions:

why does the intelligibility of the literature produced by black and/or lgbtqi people seem to be related to the thematic presence of the pain/ resistance/denouncement triad?

in which ways does this triped approach meet the expectations of the white*ist* colonial cis-hetnormative gaze's typical sadism?

does "exorbitating the paradigm of pain." acknowledging the literary complexity of/among the researched poets, create the risk of overlapping layers of unintelligibility to the texts?

can fostering this risk be a bet on the future? meaning: is this literature afrofuturistic? y: could it make sense in a present so deeply marked by the genocism/epistemicide promoted by the cis-hetnormative whitist supremacy's coloniality?[1]

the absurd, the daydream, the weightlessness, the refusal, the impreciseness, the crossing-out – how do they arise as power in this literature, turning the risk into fertile material for new criticism gazes, theory, literary diffusion? or would they be mere fugitive points from the harsh reality, escapism, tangencies, and useless lyricisms?

is it possible, really possible, to reconjure a concept founded on two brazilian contemporary black thought pillars – beatriz nascimento and abdias nascimento, in their respective propositions on *quilombos* [maroon societies] and *quilombismo* –, that still engage with a heterocentered perspective on blackness, to put on a base to the notion of ~~*queerlombism*~~ *cuíerlombism* as one in which the notions of black diaspora and sexual dissidence are settled in the same ancestral ground?

Keywords: *cuírlombism*; *queerlombism*; complexity; sexual dissidence in the black diaspora.

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"e eu sorrindo digo: suave"
[and smiling i say: chill]
(kati souto)

roots

rereading Oxum and Oyá's affair, Otim's transexuality, Ọssanha's and Oxossi's sissyness, i propose the re-telling/creation of ancient black stories as a way out of the cisnormative heterossexualisation that the dominator/coloniser's "authorised" discourses dictate to the diaspora.[2] the resemblance between **queer** and ***quilombo*** suggests something urging to be celebrated y took up/ regained to our struggles and existences, since the stiffer and oldest pillars of colonial racism are the silencing of and the sexual expectations on black bodies.[3]

lgtbqi+ blackness faces stereotypes that cast homosexualities/sexual dissidence as a "white plague" contaminating the virile black "african" peoples (the Africa/Wakanda monolith) through colonisation. consequently, sexual orientations, gender identities, sexual/affection practices that are, effectively, blackly ancestral and documented in foundational myths (such as *itans*), for example, are deemed as whitening/colonisation.

in the stereotypical and homogenizing perspective about which sex is fit to a black body, one is perceived as proper, correct: straight, available, exploitable, reproductive, cisgendered. the maintenance of these expectations obeys the ideological, political, economic and affective cistem that controls black bodies and sexualities: persecution, mockery, symbolical, physical and existential deletion (of black trans bodies, especially), condemnations to whoever dares to

escape the racist colonial imagery that builds "the black woman" (that can be *mulata* or black, each one with their specific stereotypes) and "the black man" (that can be the guy with a big dick, the rapist, the emotionally irresponsible).[4]

this imagery takes root in the non-recognition of black lgbtqi+ sexual self-determination. this situation repeats itself in the diaspora, in the continent and in the monolithic nostalgia that longs for an "Africa" full of polygamous virile men who tame simultaneously submissive and strong women who are highly motherly-fertile (just as the so called "mother-continent," a heavily straight and reproductivist metaphor). the media feeds it back, from the colonial fantasies about our dark bodies to the HIV/AIDS terror not only as a "gay plague" but as a "black plague."[5]

when it comes to the cuir/queer *itans*, essential to the sexually dissident mark of black ancestry, "Oxum seduces Oyá" tells that Oxum, satisfied after another one of her conquests, straight up avoids the lady of passions, winds, lightning, *egun*.[6] little did she know Oyá loves herself some trouble, she would get pissed for being dumped and would chase after Oxum to punish her. Oxum, then, hides in a river to never leave again. in this *itan*, the core of Oxum's relationship with the river arises from her sexual involvement with Oyá, that is to say, one of her most important symbolic domains, her belonging to the fresh waters that simultaneously belong to her, comes from the fact that she had sex with Oyá. Oxum Is the river, the fresh waters; part of the ceremonies dedicated to her happen in the water, it is not only a locus where people deliver gifts and food, where people make requests and say thanks for their blessings, but also an entity to whom they make offerings, request, thank.

itans are complex, conflicting even. to each Orisha, many tell a story with a similar ending but different plots. as a black sapatão intellectual, it is essential to me to tell this story like this, an obviously and indisputably lesbian explanation of the sacred nature of one of the most beloved and important Orisha in the

diaspora, whose name is so associated with the diffusion of a female rivalry myth (the dispute between Oxum and Obá is way better well-known than the sex between Oxum and Oyá). i underline that it is a lesbian myth, they are not lesbian Orisha: considering the many sexual exchanges between all of them, one can attest their reining constitutive bisexuality.

the narrative multiplicity also applies to Otim. not much worshipped in the brazilian diaspora, she is generally treated as a huntress Orisha, Oxossi's partner (depending on the story, partner in work or in sex or both). there is an *itan* that tells that Otim is a much-loved daughter of a father that guards her secret: she has four boobs. when her secret is revealed, Otim runs, turning into a river that is embraced/welcomed by Yemanjá, "the mother of fish children," "mother of all heads," the Orisha that is the sea it/herself. even her father's love that turns into a mountain to try to contain her goes to waste. the story has sex, but is homo-affective and gender-dissident, since Yemanjá embraces, takes in, cares for, welcomes Otim, whose nature was transformed/overflowed by the persecution of her corporeity, that was misunderstood, ridiculed, exposed.

but my favorite *itan* about Otim tells that he, a beautiful prince living in an abundant kingdom, gets tired of his life, runs to the forest, and decides to stay there. not knowing how to survive by himself, he gets hungry, scared and falls asleep. in his dream, he hears: give up on everything you have, offer it in a faith sacrifice and you will be helped. Otim wakes up, undresses, and makes his offering. he is found and rescued by a famous hunter, the most well-known in the Odé family: Oxossi, the provider, who dresses Otim with new clothes and teaches him the craft of hunting. besides, he keeps Otim's secret: having boobs and a cunt (or, according to the sex-biologising version, he had "a woman's body").

in another *itan*, Oxossi, Yemanjá's beloved son, asks her permission to know the earths' world, where he meets a stunning lad who knows all about leaf magic, "the forest's spirit," Ossanha. he falls in love with Odé, casting him an herbal love

spell; however, when the spell is broken, Oxossi still chooses to live with Ossanha, letting go of his mother's wide, oceanic, watery queendom, becoming the lord of the forest.[7]

if, in the continent, each god/dess was worshipped monotheistically, the diaspora's *gira* calls them to dance together in the *xirê*, but not only that: to (un)make sex(es) as well.[8] the myth in which a trans Otim is welcomed/cared for/embraced as friend, brother and pupil of Oxossi – a symbol of the providing, hegemonic (i still have not said "toxic") masculinity – whispers a remedy against transphobic, toxic black masculinities. but why is it that the stories which have been shared the most during their journey of heavily oral transmission are the most sex-gender-corporeity-normative ones? why is Otim's transexuality forgotten? and why insist on telling only and so much the *itans* in which turned female Orisha dispute against each other or are dominated by Orisha represented as "men," reduced to being merely their wives?

this prevailingly cis-hetnormative diffusion goes on because the history of colonisation is one of cis-heterosexualisation. therefore it is crucial to retell, re-create – or requeerise, in the words of the black *bicha* poet pedro ivo – in a transformative, anti-colonial way, so this sexual and/or gender dissidence ancestry's premise's nourishing roots do not die; so that we have historical ballast in the black diaspora; so that we can get rid of the heterosexualising gaze imposed to our pre-atlantical trajectories/existences/symbologies by coloniality. these are attempts of flattening, shallowing and more easily dominating the narratives, sexualities, practices and existences of much more complex subjects and peoples, that is, of those who escape the white catholic male/female binary that is taken as a sexuality parameter. this binary founds the colonial enterprise, as seen in the rape farms during enslavement, used to breed more black bodies to be enslaved by the cultural, political, economic, and social system that built white wealth in the americas.

colonisation, in its many stages over five centuries, took much of the lgbtqi-phobias, as we know them, to the african continent. the colonial effort by the white supremacist hetsexist capitalist cisgenderness is still to be found in the diffusion, throughout the diaspora, of binary/dichotomous patterns of polarised sexuality, based reproductively via discourses often disguised as "the african model of life." as if there were only one african way of life; as if Africa were one country.

colonisation, not a historical fissure that stops (in) a moment in time, was and is an ethnic-racial civilizing project that excludes other civilisations and their traditional (and thus, susceptible to time and change) practices/knowledges/ ways of life, a project that maintains the economic, cultural and political supremacy of a white, eurocentric, heteronormative, cisgender matrix. disregarding expressions, experiences, and sexualities that diverge from this model, summing up a group of millenary peoples as a singular group with a singular thought and a singular sexual practice with only two, "opposite-complementary," gender expressions, is colonial racism.

when, in black communities, we counter the reproductivist binary-centric cis-heteronormative white matrix with an equally nuclear-familist binary cishet "afrocentric" truth, using this "afrocentrism" to offend dissident expressions, practices, emotions, bodies, genders and sexes by calling them "whitening" and "coloniality," we invalidate the sexual soberany of black lgbtqi+ peoples/bodies whose source of references is also their diaspora ancestry, in all its multiplicities.[9] we reproduce, perversely, the us against us, the cis-heterosexualising colonial racism that erases our complexity, that dehumanises, explores, enslaves, kills, rapes, fetishises, exotifies us – preventing us from calling our own names.

roads

reading black lesbians i realised the urgency of creating our own words, remembering ancestors. audre lorde refounds "zami" as a synonym for black lesbianess in the diaspora; cheryl clark writes myth-archeological lesbian poems; barbara smith's literary criticism finds sexual dissident (mainly lesbians and gays) authors, characters, plots.[10] so, translating them into portuguese was the way i searched for references for my own black lesbianess: *aquilombar* myself in the word learned from other *zami*. clarke says: poetry has been the "the great teacher of consciousness, of history, of self-love" (clarke 2006, 140) to black peoples – therefore, it is so for black lesbians too.

settling our poetics in ~~aqueerlombamento~~ *acuírlombamento* was another journey: comprehending the self-reassembling/re-creating through words as a mythical-political act, a reinvention that is there not only despite the cis-hetsexualizing colonial silencing but against it y (more importantly, to me) coming from our own ancestral narratives, unburied from the memory kept by stories badly told; to blossom them in the pungency of our bodies and desires.[11] from Erzulie Dantor to Vera Verão, y beyond: reorganizing our own history, narrative, and subjectivity upon the sexual-dissident diasporic ancestry's assumption.[12]

the comprehension of *quilombo* as resistance and organisation originates from the writings by the atlantic beatriz nascimento, when she refuses the shallow definition ("grouping of fugitive slaves"), redefining it: "plentiful forms of resistance [through which] black people kept or embodied the hard fight for the maintenance of their personal and historical identity." the *quilombo* "[...] represented a milestone in our people's history concerning our capacity of resistance and organisation" (nascimento 1985, 117).

ever since their origin in the continent's Kilombos to the post-atlantic *quilombos*, from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth century's final years/twentieth century's initial years, they have changed from an institution to a rhetoric, a

symbol of freedom: "precisely for having been for three centuries a free institution parallel to the dominant system, its mystique will feed national conscience's yearnings for freedom," "[...] desire for an utopia" (nascimento 1985, 123).

and connect abdias nascimento's *quilombista* project to beatriz nascimento's definition, unfolding ourselves into *cuíerlombismo* to plough lgbtqi+ black resistance as an exercise of freedom, an expansion of "resistance"'s traditional meaning.[13] to refound the notion of black literature, seen only as combative, as a tool to denounce racism, idealised in binary-cishet-centric ideals of "black man" and "black woman." to question this way of doing, reading, and comprehending black literature in which pain, suffering, heroism, revolt, cishet-centrism would be dominant themes. for "dissing is not enough"

> our historical being has a mythical origin. this is a lesson from our art that, in contrast to art found in the so-called west, has, to us, the sense of a natural and creative life experience. nourishment and expression of our egalitarian beliefs and values, we take on the power of talent and imagination as the most powerful instrument in our social communication and in our dialogue with our deepest spiritual and historical roots. [...] nor european rationalism, nor north-american mechanics; art is that other eye, Ifá's eye, that inspires, organises, signifies and infuses signification to our journey in the historical and spiritual world (nascimento 1980/2002, 106).

denounce as diagnosis, deconstruction, calls for the next step: announcement, (re-)creation. throughout their reconfiguration, *quilombos* became complex organisational systems with cultural production, interracial convivence, knowledge exchanges, and diverse decision-making systems. to flight y resist was only the beginning of the whole thing. all of the rest was for the maintenance of the second form of free, relatively horizontal societies' daily life

in a country of hierarchical, racialised formation.[14] more than "groups of fugitive slaves," they were experimentations of freedom:

> it is in the end of the 19th century that the *quilombo* receives the meaning of an ideological instrument against oppression forms. its mystique will nourish the dream of freedom of thousands of enslaved people [...] as an ideological categorisation, the *quilombo* inaugurates the 20th century. when the old regime ended, it took the establishment as resistance to enslavement with it. but precisely for having being, for three centuries, a free institution, parallel to the dominant system, its mystique will feed national conscience's yearnings for freedom (nascimento 1985, 222-223).

connecting nascimento b.'s pioneer conceptualisation to nascimento a.'s project, i forge from my sexual-dissident afrodiasporic place the concept of literary *cuírlombism* (nascimento t.). reacting to pain is also re-telling stories. speaking up our pain allows us to search for healing (if this is our project. and, for many of us, i think that it is). to feel the colonial wound, to think: how can we heal this intimate, collective, old, persistent wide wound? even if denouncing the cishetsexist racism is a constant need of affirmation for black lgbtqi+ existences, we have more than denouncements to make. especially through our poetry, for it connects us to a black-sexual-dissident epistemic project pervaded by narrative disputes.

racism has been trying, secularly, to shut us up by professing "authorised" discourse about us. it steals our right to full, complex, diverse existence. but we are complex beings. not only machines of resistance and denouncing. refusing the resistance stereotype is also resisting, and more: existing fully, in the fullness that, from the continent, we learned to build as a fundamental basis of life and good living. the notion of misery, scarcity, poverty, and suffering as components of blackness was invented by the colonial enterprise of kidnapping/trafficking/ exploration. that is why such rhetoric/ideas are essential to maintaining racism: who invents us as enslaved are the enslavers. we have always been more and

before; we have not even come to the americas through trafficking – Luzia walked here with her own feet.

our textual production, one of the most important bridges we have in the retelling and reinventing so much of erased stories (as we can see in the literary works of fiction by alice walker, ana maria gonçalves, cidinha da silva, conceição evaristo, dionne brand, jackie kay, míriam alves, toni morrison, among others), is also a tool to project ourselves into the future – that belongs to us and needs to be brilliantly black. dazzlingly dissident. as artists, we have been getting used to the duty of denouncing (that grants us immediate intelligibility, legitimacy, recognition) and, at times, forgetting our – human – right to daydream – artistic calling. we belittle its power of projecting new worlds. we starve the mouth of our dreams' future, with which it grows and fits us.

more than 10 years after i began my first translations due to the lack of national references, it is exciting to see more and more black lesbian, transexual, *travesti*, gay, *cuíer* literature being produced y published here. this literature creates new worlds, builds re-mythologies/neo-mythologies. it writes resistance – and it does not. it is as much theoretical episteme as it is fictional, imagery nourishing. i have been reading poems and key-lines, taking as my responsibility y challenge the fathoming and diffusion of our sexual-dissident diaspora's literary production not only as a tool of deconstructing/disassembling the hipercishetsexualisation and silencing backbones, but as re-doing, re-making. y beyond [our] reaction that is still responsive to the colonial cis-heteronormative racist cistem y still takes this cistem as reference, what is our making? what are our steps in self-determined, self-founded action?

routes

the poem "atire a." [throw the.] by kika sena – black art educator, trans woman, and *travesti* – unveils the importance of turning points. with the lines "soon / they could not contain me" (sena 2017, 66), she fractures the expectation of a cause-effect relationship, stating that, as a result of all the destruction attempts against her, she ended up becoming incoercible. in the final stanza, she claims knowing how to react, not only how to resist, to pain. having stood for such a long time as a discursive duty to which we could not turn our backs – under penalty of the "not black enough/truly black" accusation –, the pain paradigm has been being transformed by the affirmation of our right to daydream, the organisation of the resistance to turn black lgbtqi+ literature into literacure – to the colonial wound. our poems can be read as obvious resistance (the "manifesto-poetry" in the words of daisy serena: reactive, pro/vocative), but, as sena herself says, "y there's more."

[...]

tacaram fogo nim mim
tacaram fogo no meu cabelo
tacaram fogo na minha pele
tacaram fogo nos meus olhos
tacaram fogo na minha respiração
tacaram fogo na minha voz

logo
não puderam me conter
poluí seus ares com meu grito

queimei suas casas caras brancas
com meu choro

queimei suas esperanças brancas
tingi tudo de preto

sou brasa forte
tição pós-apocalíptico
pior que deuses ditadores

não mexe
não mexe
não mexe
não mexe comigo não…

que à dor
à dor
à dor
à dor
eu sei reagir.

[...]

they set fire to me
they set fire to my hair
they set fire to my skin
they set fire to my eyes
they set fire to my breath
they set fire to my voice

soon
they could not contain me
i fouled their air with my scream

i burned their fancy white houses
with my cry

i burned their white hopes
i painted everything black

i am a tenacious ember
post-apocalyptic cinder
i am worse than dictator gods

don't mess
don't mess
don't mess
don't you dare mess with me…

because to pain
to pain
to pain
i know how to react.

the stereotype of constant resistance that freezes us in the denunciation frame is essential to racism's supporting structure, which **is** a machine of death, dehumanisation, silencing, interruption of access, etc. we are dealing with a whole organizing set in the space-time of physical/psychological/epistemic/ religious/cultural extermination policies; that is to say, necropolitics, which is the source of some social groups' wealthiness at the expense of other social groups' impoverishment. we need to have a lot of strength to resist and survive physical genocides, symbolic epistemicides, mental, physical, and environmental sickness. we have developed many forms of resistance before, we do it today, y we still will develop them as response/reaction. i imagine that this (more obvious) racism-denouncing poetry is nearly 70% of contemporary black poetry's content. it is proliferated in spoken word events, in battles (rhyme battles and poetry slams), self-published books, and books published by independent publishing houses, poetry blogs, social media (text, photo, and video) and in zines.

because "first we were born in egypt and then we were born here," as little malik – black *sapatão* raio gomes' child – said, our existence informs not only about what happened after the kidnapping/trafficking/enslavement, a historical crime that exacted y still exacts several strategies of resistance from us, but not only: reconstruction strategies too. literature is one of those forms of art through which we can invent (im)possible, utopic, dystopian new worlds: we found place in the telling. we create *kuírlombos*, not only of resistance but also of dream, affection, and seeds.

with "poetry is not a luxury" i feed my thoughts on black lgbtqi+ literature as an experimentation space, a space of creativity, of the unique/unexpected. a visionary, (afro)futurist space that "[...] is a vital necessity of our existence. it [poetry] forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action" (lorde 1984, 37). and up from this movement (language > idea > action) i plant my reading in "o poder de ver a beleza no

que um dia pensei ser maldito" [the power of seeing beauty in what once i thought was wretched], by kati souto (2018, 19), a non-binary black *sapatão* from brasília:

> e eles dizem que eu já não posso ser o que sou e o que me tornei
> e na verdade nunca havia sido tão bela
> tão cor
> e eles temiam: maldita! perversa! indigna!
> e eu sorrindo digo: suave.
> enquanto danço por mim mesma vejo a beleza do que eles dizem maldição
> um giro. um eu esquecido. parte não de mim. um pulo
> correntes longas caem de minha cabeça e das minhas mãos e dos meus pés
> leve. uma pirueta. suave. doce. lábios macios. um olhar que me
> perfura. um não erro
> de se amar mulher
> de ser mulher
> um poder
> não uma maldição
> de se ter capacidade de ler tantas linhas de decifrar enigmas
> da mais bela poesia
> autora: vida
> e sorrindo eu digo: é suave

> and they say i can no longer be who i am and what i've become
> and to tell the truth i had never been so beautiful
> so colourful

> and they feared: evil! perverse! unworthy!
> and smiling i say: chill.
> while i dance for myself i see the beauty in what they curse
> a spin. a forgotten i. a part not of myself. a hop
> long chains fall from my head and from my hands and feet
> weightless. a pirouette. smooth. sweet. tender lips. a look that
> pierces me, a non mistake
> loving a woman
> being a woman
> power
> not a curse
> being able to read so many lines and deciphering enigmas
> of the most beautiful poem
> author: life
> and smiling i say: it's chill

the lyrical i frees themself from shackles, shakes, breaking chains, expectations, they become themself: "and to tell the truth i had never been so beautiful / so colourful." and they levitate! more than the dream of the laughter in fanon, the woke, smooth smile, unlikely response to the race, sex, gender constraints that no longer curse them. the poem's kinetic profusion of images relate to the anti-colonial dreamlike-frenetic in *the wretched of the earth:*

> a world compartmentalized, manichaean and petrified, a world of statues. [...] that is the colonial world. the colonial subject is a man penned in; apartheid is but one method of compartmentalizing the colonial world. the first thing the colonial subject learns is to remain in his place and not overstep its limits. hence the dreams of the colonial subject are muscular dreams, dreams of action, dreams of aggressive vitality. i

> dream i am jumping, swimming, running and climbing. i dream i burst out laughing, i am leaping across a river and chased by a pack of cars that never catches up with me. during colonization the colonized subject frees himself night after night between nine in the evening and six in the morning (fanon 2004, 15).

the poem echoes, earthly adobe, smooth y organic. with it i build walls full of windows of a literary *cuíerlombism* made into affective, hormonal, poetical, cultural, sexual, revolutionary politics, conjuring sharp words to cut not only the veils of the established history, but the ties of a future where we cannot exist, not even create fiction, let alone dance, smile, have fun, take it easy. this poethics, heiress – and disruptive – of a more than thirty-year-old pain-centred black brazilian literary tradition, disengages us from a world project that, along with wanting us dead, does not want us to dream.

reacting to pain can even cure it. but refusing the cishetsexualising colonial project refounds our black *cuíer* practices/experiences/subjectivities in the paradigms we wish, not the imposed one, not only pain. more than react and denounce, liberate, in the name of the refusal to keep this literature exclusively as a response to white-colonial shackles/stereotypes/models that try to erase *queerasporas*, to impose their own sadic gaze to define us, that gaze that loves seeing us suffer and mask their sense of taste with "how important/ transformative/moving it is to see your pain" rhetoric.

however, the more our poethics bleeds us, the more it feeds the sadist appetite the white cis-heteronormative gaze calls "compassion," "gratitude," "learning." after 300 years of sadist enslavement, of whipping treated as popular entertainment at public squares, of justice mistaken for lynching, how much is there of learning/commotion and how much of it is historical and social sadist pleasure visually built on the exhibition of black bodies' suffering? the update of this gaze through racist journalism associates the "good citizen's security and

well-being" to the exposure of young black bodies, of black men murdered by the police as the main dish on tv shows during lunchtime: they indeed gobble our suffering. they feed from the midiatic exhibition of our dead.

as a poet, i pay attention to the public's racial distribution when selecting my repertoire, so i will not risk exhibiting my guts to those who just want to devour me. i do not think it is a coincidence that our production is commonly called "visceral": this compliment reminds me almost instantly of vulturism (i hope this reference to non-human people do not fall into the specist and derogatory conceptions usually associated with vultures, it could be any other being who lives from carrion).

i have been searching for and building black-oriented ways, especially in my poetry/songs, to poetically express myself, instead of white-responsive/white-instigator ways. the contrast between the receptions of my poems "*cuíer A.P.*" [cuíer A.P.] y "*diz/faço qualquer trabalho (y m/eu amor de volta tododia)*´ [i un/do any spell (y m/y love back everyday)] stresses the internalisation of that gaze – and racism is, after all, one of the first relational pedagogies we learn.[15] the first poem, to/about "them" went viral. the second one, to/about "us," about how we not only survive but live, fly, not only go against expectations and statistics but also honour the broad history of our skins, sexes, affections y our passage that has a previous to colonisation y afrofuturist existence point: our *axé*.

the apocalyptic, accusative poem is poor in images and expressive phonetic artifice, it is formally average (despite its content's power). the second one is mythical, metaphorical, explores sonorities, wanders among profuse references, it has an epic narrative elaboration: it is, in its content and form, stunning. to me, it is a kind of love, cure, vitality *ebó* that i wish to offer to those who enjoy my poetry. this one is however less diffused; why? y by whom? how do we get rid of the white gaze's introjection that expects/inspects us seeking for a pain that, when it is not there, makes us ex-o(p)tic(s) (outside their optics)?

our poethics announces worlds, subjectivities, epistemes that we had already built, that we are building right now y that we will keep building based on ancestral, sexual-dissident, diasporic blacknesses claimed by the loose word: *devaneigros.*[16] we are a re-creationist big-bang. we make our flight routes while we cuddle. as an educator-researcher i insist in the diffusion of these opposing-glasses, other readings' keys: it is our responsibility to resist the constraint of the black y/or lgbtqi+ poetry we look for, read, diffuse and research, in the rigid frames of colonial paradigms. i wind up this essay with the sidereal sensation of the poem "cosmos," by a black *sapatão* from são paulo, laila oliveira:

elementos distraídos
pelo espaço
repara,
os campos de forças se chamam
em um segundo em anos luz
as galáxias se fundem
e do nosso pó de estrelas
é feito o futuro

absent-minded elements
all over the space
observe,
force fields attract each other
in a second in light-years
the galaxies merge
and out of our stardust
the future is made

for literary *cuírlombism* is this distraction, a deep y light drift, exorbitant y purposeful, the moment we feel that black lgbtqi+ poetry does not have to be only pow pow pow: it is about dust – of stars, forging our future in the galaxy's friction. y this lesson, just like the black sexual dissidence in the diaspora, is afrofuturist ancestral technology.

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[1] in 2009 i started using "y" [and], a spanish conjunction, instead of "e," its brazilian portuguese correspondent, as a double exercise: to search for more informality in written expression (for the spanish conjunction's phonation is similar to how the "e" sounds in brazilian spoken language) y to politically/ geographically insert a distinctly *latina* mark in my production (something questioning brazilian continental sub-imperialism y its refusal to *latinidad*). first in poetry y then in academic prose, i think it is important to point out that i was the first author to use this mark that is now broadly used by marginal poetry writers and counterhegemonic researchers.

[2] T.N.: Oxum, Oyá, Otim and Ossanha are Orisha, part of *Candomblé*, and part of African diasporic religious traditions that have their origins in Ifá. We maintained the Brazilian Portuguese spelling of the Orisha's names.

[3] T.N.: from the Kimbundu word *kilombo*, means "war field," "village," "warrior association." In Brazil, since the XIX century, *quilombos* were communities built by fugitive former enslaved people. The author develops its multiple meanings and resignifications along the text.

[4] T.N.: *mulata* is the Portuguese spelling for mulatta; author's note: the black rapist myth (a rapist that targets especially white women) is foundational to the invention of "lynching," the word, the practice, the racialisation of this practice, and the association of black male sexuality with panic; The word "cistem" spelled with the C is a denunciation of a trans-excluding cisgender societal system.

[5] in 2014, uganda's president sanctioned the law criminalizing homosexuality, stating it was "a struggle against western social imperialism:" western meaning white.

[6] T.N.: *egun* is a Yoruba term that refers to deceased ancestors, it is related to religious practices of African matrices.

[7] T.N.: Odé is one of Oxossi's names.

[8] T.N.: *gira* is an *Umbanda*'s religious practice; *xirê* is a *Candomblé's* religious practice.

[9] and even it reflects the colonial ambiguity: (what) if non-cis-hetnormative sexual practices/gender identity expressions are only blackly *ancestral, re-incident, dissident* when compared to the sex/gender/ affective model of the colonial civilisatory process itself.

[10] [zami is] "a carriacou name for women who work together as friends and lovers" (lorde 1982, 255). in grenadian patois, the expression transmutes the french expression "les amies."

[11] T.N.: in Brazilian Portuguese the author uses the verb "*assentar*" [to settle] in reference to the *assentamentos* [settlements] of Brazilian *Candomblé*.

[12] [Erzulie Dantor and Vera Verão] respectively: a haitian goddess, lesbian patroness, and the first black drag queen i ever saw (on brazilian tv) when i was still a child (in the 1980's), impersonated by the black *bicha* actor jorge lafond.

[13] abdias nascimento was an intellectual known not only by his intellectual and political brilliancy, but also by his sexism. his programme defines *quilombismo* as "[...] a brazilian black political movement, with the goal of establishing a *Quilombista* National State, inspired by the República dos Palmares' [Palmares Republic] model" with the basic purpose of "promoting happiness to the human being" (nascimento 1980/2002, 369).

[14] the first form being, to this day, indigenous peoples.

[15] "*cuíer A.P.*" better known as "apocalipse queer" [queer apocalypse]: http://bit.ly/cuierAP; "*diz/faço qualquer trabalho (y m/eu amor de volta tododia)*": http://bit.ly/diz-faço

[16] author's note: as i re-make in *lundu* (2016); T.N.: *devaneigros* is a wordplay with the words *devaneio* (daydreams; fantasy; rave) and *negros* (black).

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CARIBBEAN REVIEW OF GENDER STUDIES
A Journal of Caribbean Perspectives on Gender and Feminism

ani ganzala

Watercolour and Graffiti Artist

Salvador, Bahia, Brazil

ani ganzala

I develop techniques in watercolour because I do like the element water mixed with fluid colours, lines, marks and strokes of expression which overflow from me to the skin paper whose pores absorb those fluids as earth absorbs rain. I use my overflowing angst and anxiety, utopias and desires as ink to delineate spaces and translate ideas on the skin-paper, so these feelings and ideas don't end up within myself, but hit your eyes.

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Odoya

"O que tem no meio do oceano que une Brasil e África, ainda é um grande cemitério."

"What lies in the middle of the ocean and connects Africa and Brazil, still is a huge cemetery."

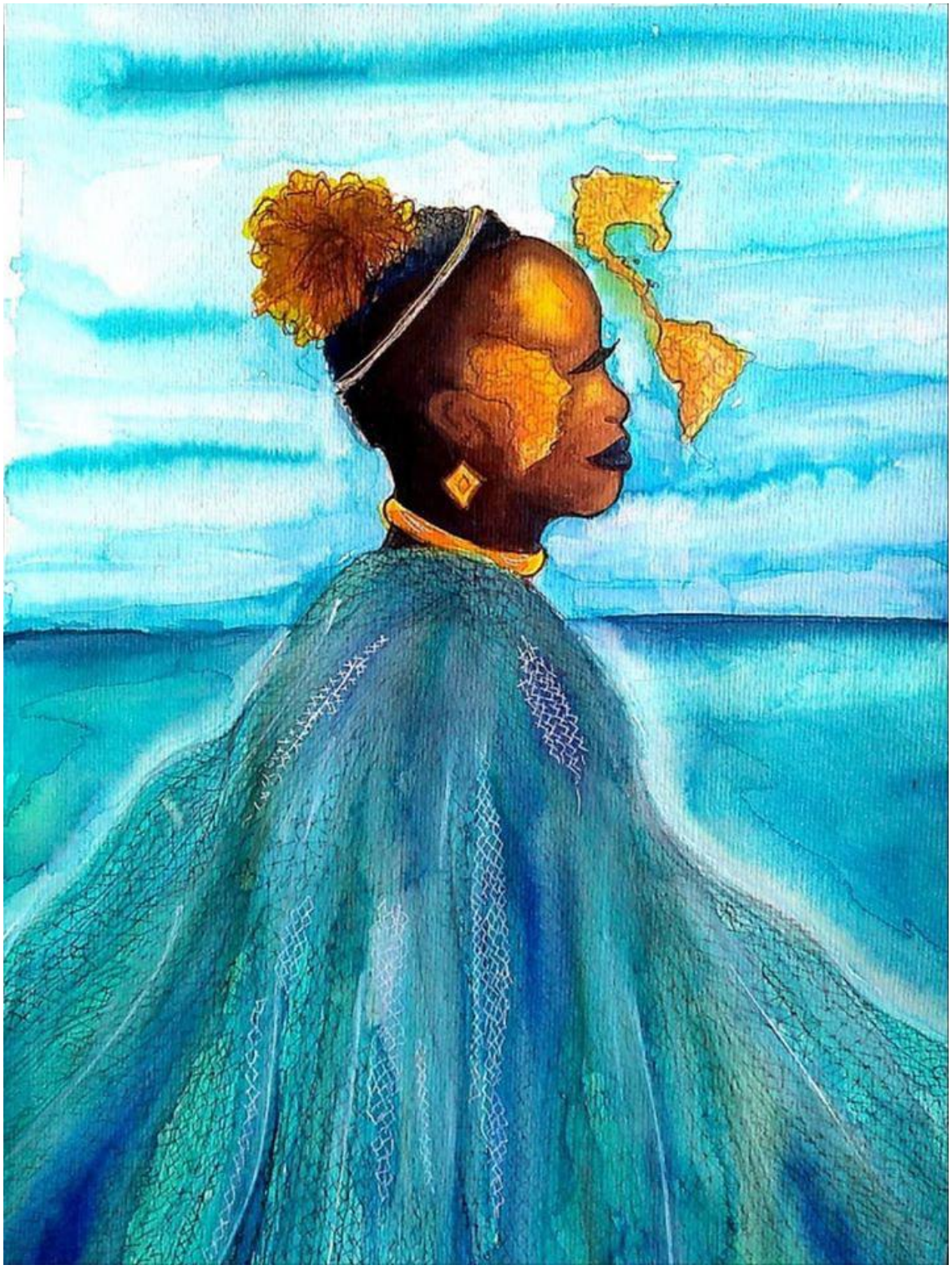
Vilma Reis

E muitos outros mistérios…

And many other mysteries…

Confirmação para Ekede

Confirmation as Ekede



Musa Mattiuzzi

Incenso

Incense

Como a Colônia nos Vestiu:
negras em Abya Yala no periodo colonial

How the Colony Dressed us:
Black women in Abya Yala during the colonial period

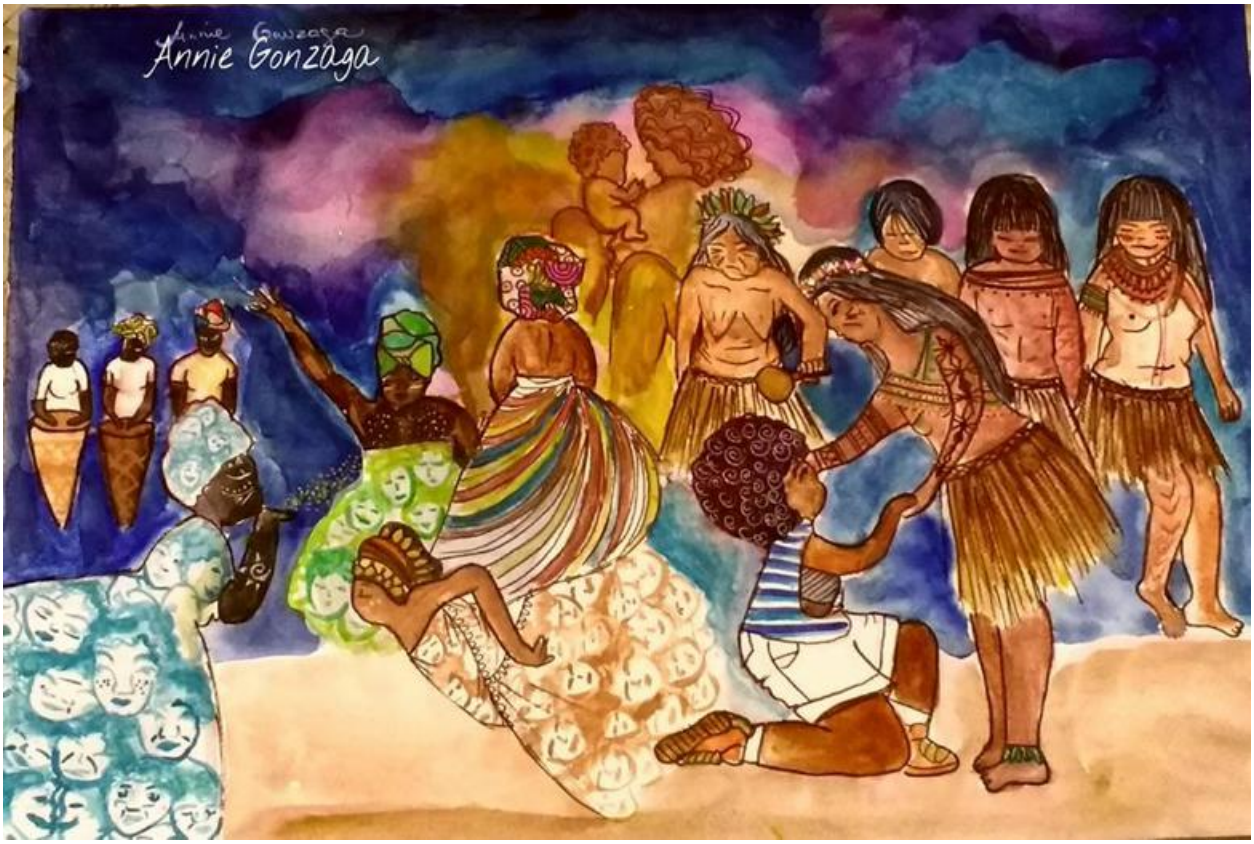
Salvador e Caribe

Salvador and the Caribbean

"Nos robaron de nuestrxs cuerpos y ahora nos estamos retomando"

“We were stolen from our bodies, but now we are taking ourselves back.”

Qwo-Li Driskill

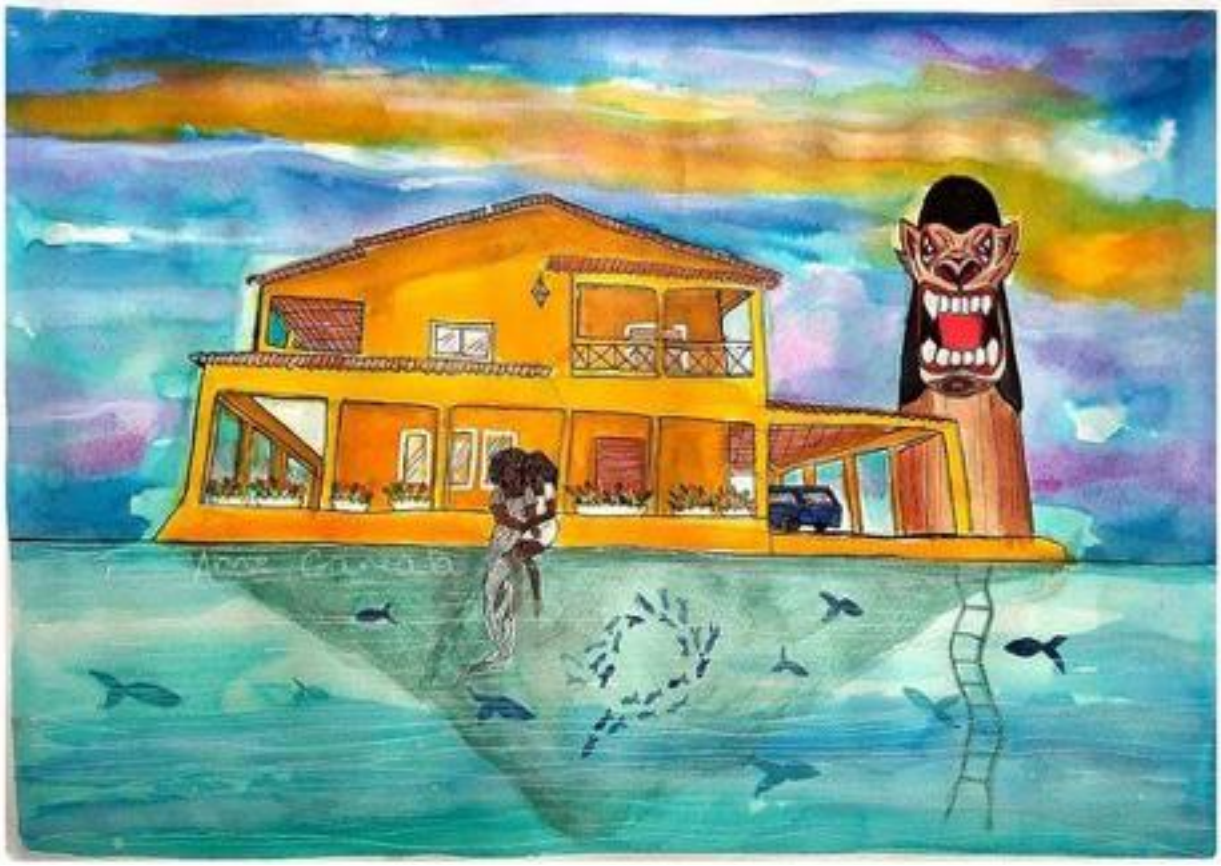


Sonhos ancestrais afroindígenas

Afroindigenous Ancestral Dreams

Embondeiro Baobá

Baobab Tree



Casa amarela

Yellow house

Guardiã, adupé!

Guardian, adupé!

A guardiã: inspirado na leitura de Sobonfu Somé

The guardian: inspired by my readings of Sobonfu Somé

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CRGS CARIBBEAN REVIEW OF GENDER STUDIES
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ISSUE 14

Kuírlombo Epistemologies

CRGS Special Issue
Genders and Sexualities in Brazil

Editors: Tanya L. Saunders, Jessica Ipólito, Mariana Meriqui Rodrigues, Simone Brandão Souza, Jess Oliveira and Bruna Barros

Editors Biographies

Dr. Tanya L. Saunders is an associate professor at the Center for Latin American Studies at University of Florida. As a sociologist interested in the ways in which the African Diaspora throughout the Americas uses the arts as a tool for social change. As a 2011-2012 Fulbright scholar to Brazil, Dr. Saunders began work on their current project about Black Queer Artivism in Brazil. This is a continuation of their research on race, gender, sexuality, and arts-based social movements in Cuba. In 2016 they, and their colleagues at the State University of Santa Caterina (UDESC) and the Pontifical Catholic University in São Paulo (PUC-SP), were awarded the Abdias do Nascimento Award for Academic Development, funded by CAPES, Brazil. The grant-funded faculty member, organised research and student exchanges and collaborations between the University of Florida, UDESC, and PUC-SP from 2017-2019. They were also the UF LGBTQ Affairs Faculty Fellow for the 2018-2019 academic year.

Dr. Saunders holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and a Master of International Development Policy from the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.

Jész Ipólito is a fat and black sapatão, Sagittarius, almost 30 years old, born in the interior of São Paulo. She is part of a black family that has undergone a strong whitening process over time, the rule is "cleaning the family". Today, Jész is the first of her family to go to a public university. She is also the last black person in her family.

She is the creator and writer of the Gorda & Sapatão blog, covering themes concerning blackness, black feminism, lesbianism, fatphobia, and the fat body. In the academic field, she has already studied Journalism, Public Policy Management, and Museology, but never graduated in any of them. At last, she found her path in university in Gender and Diversity at the Federal University of Bahia. She began her path in politics in the Unified Black Movement MNU in 2011, still in São Paulo, where she developed activities concerning black youth, black feminism, and sexuality. In 2014, she was one of the organizers of the I Intersectional Feminism Camp in São Paulo, bringing together 150 young people, most of them black and indigenous, in 3 days of political training. Currently, she is part of the National Articulation of Black Young Feminists – ANJF, an organization that brings together young black women from 15 to 31 years of age in all regions of Brazil in the fight against racism, sexism, LGBTphobia and other forms of oppression. In 2017, she was part of the executive committee that organized the II National Meeting of Black Young Feminists, bringing together 400 young black women from every region of the country, an occasion that resulted in the official creation of the ANJF. She also works with black women movements in Bahia and in Brazil's Northeast region.

She is an intern at the Public Defender's Office of the State of Bahia - DPE-BA, in the group of Population in Street Situation - POPRUA, working directly with vulnerable populations, promoting access to justice in the different fields of work of DPE-BA. She is an autonomous consultant for social projects, focusing on small black women's, youth and LGBTQ + organizations and collectives. facilitating

fundraising and management processes through popular education, fostering the autonomy and self-management of these groups in dialogues with major funders.

She is a great enthusiast and student of social media, internet, images, and speech. She works as a media coordinator at Revista Afirmativa, a black press vehicle that produces online content and a press magazine.

Mariana Meriqui Rodrigues is a Sapatão and feminist activist who has been working with teacher training of public education network and public security agents for gender, sexuality, and ethnic-racial diversity in Brazil since 2009. From 2014 to 2016 she worked on a project of mapping the political participation of feminist lesbians in social movements in Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay, and Brazil. She is part of Liga Brasileira de Lésbicas and is currently finishing her master's degree in Latin American Studies at the University of Florida. She holds a Master's degree in Education from the Federal University of Tocantins, Brazil (2016). Specialist in Gender and Sexuality by the Latin American Center for Sexuality and Human Rights - CLAM / State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2011) and in Management of Non-Governmental Organizations by Presbyterian University Mackenzie, São Paulo, Brazil (2007). She holds a bachelor's degree in International Relations from the Ibero-American University Center (2006). She was a member of the Advisory Group on Civil Society of the UN Women Brazil (2015-2017). And she is also part of the LGBT Coalition that operates within the Organization of American States (OAS). She is interested in and works with Feminism, International Relations, Social Movements, Gender, Sexuality, Latin American Studies, Human Rights, Sexual and Reproductive Rights, Public Security, Public Policies, and Education.

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Master's degree in Population Studies and Social Research from ENCE / IBGE and a Social Worker from the Federal Fluminense University - UFF. She is leader of the LES group - Laboratory of Studies and Research in Lesbianities, Gender, Race and Sexualities at UFRB and researcher in the line Lesbianity, Intersectionals and Feminisms at NUCUS - Research and Extension Center in Cultures, Genders and Sexualities at UFBA. She is a militant lesbian, a member of the Rede Lesbi Brasil (Lesbian Brazil Network).

Jess Oliveira is a Black *sapatão* translator, poet and editor. Visiting professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Colorado College. Ph.D. student in Literature and Culture at Federal University of Bahia (UFBA). She holds a Master's degree in Translation Studies from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) and a B.A. degree in German and Portuguese from the University of São Paulo (USP). Jess works mainly with poetry and performance across the Black Diaspora, focusing on the Black German and Black Brazilian productions in a comparative perspective. She is also an Associate Researcher of the Group *Traduzindo no Atlântico Negro* – [Translating in the Black Atlantic] at UFBA.

Bruna Barros is a Black *sapatão* artist, translator, filmmaker, writer, poet and editor. Undergraduate Major in English at Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) and Associate Researcher of the Research Group *Traduzindo no Atlântico Negro* [Translating in the Black Atlantic] (UFBA). Literature, poetry, cinema, translation and adaptation are among their main interests, both in life and in their work as a researcher. Bruna is also interested in the study of Black English – or African American Vernacular English. Concerning their work as a filmmaker, they wrote and directed the short film "Amor de Ori" (2017) and co-wrote and co-directed the short documentary "à beira do planeta mainha soprou a gente" (2020), both of which portray Black *sapatão* love.

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(2012 - 2015), *eu-lésbika* (2014) by edições herétika, *seis sentidos* (2016). i work with independent zines by edições formigueiro since 2017. i kreate the non-periodikal komic book *lesbo ódio* since 2018. *afro latina* (2018) is my poem book published by padê editorial, it is in its sekond edition (2020) with a brand new foreword.

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S. Tay Glover is founder of The Witch Goddess Wellness and thewitchgoddess.com her holistic spiritual wellness lifestyle brand and media platform that houses her modern mystic creative content, and consulting-healing services. She is a medium and shamanic artist; certified Reiki Master Teacher, Tantric Psychosomatic Touch Practitioner, and Intimacy Coach. She holds an M.A. and doctoral candidacy in African American Studies from Northwestern University, an M.A. in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and a B.A. in Women's Studies and Political Science

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CRGS Issue 14
Kuírlombo Epistemologies
CRGS Special Issue Genders and Sexualities in Brazil

About

The title for this Special Issue was inspired by the work of poet, literary scholar and writer Tatiana Nascimento, and the poet formiga (both of whom have work featured in this Special Issue). The word kuírlombo is a play on the words quilombo and cuir. The word quilombo is the word maroon, palenque and cumbe in English, Spanish and Portuguese respectively. The word cimarrón (Spanish), marron (French), quilombola (Portuguese) refers to the people who liberated themselves from enslavement. Quilombo comes from the word Kilombo, which is from the Kimbundu language of the Ngola nation of the Congo.

In Eurocentric historical texts written about the Americas, these communities are referred to as runaway slave communities. In fact, they were societies of people, many of whom liberated themselves from enslavement, and were (what we would call today) multiracial and multi-ethnic societies given the type of democratic (for lack of a better word) societies that they created. As a result of the democratic social and religious structures that emerged in these communities, they were often implicitly/explicitly anti-capitalist. Members of these communities were living another vision of social order in the face of the oppressive societies established by various forms of European colonialism in the Americas.

Abdias do Nascimento, one of the key figures in the founding of contemporary Brazilian Black Studies, defined Kilombismo as a competing vision of social organization that emerged from the political and economic engagement of Africans in the Americas. It is an Afrocentric perspective that Nascimento argued is reflected in movements such as the Haitian Revolution, Garveyism and the Pan-African movement. Kilombismo is a form of African resistance centred on building free communities rooted in economic, political, social and cultural structures that are rooted in African cultural legacies.

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