

# A *Terreiro* That's “Too Young, Too gay”: Technologies of Persistence and growth in the W/world

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## Abstract

In this manuscript I present how in the city of Tabatinga (AM) -- on the triple border between Brazil, Peru, and Colombia -- the *Father Jairo and His Children Network* are engaged in a process of persistence, care, and growth in order to traverse a World that presents itself as a threat to their lives and their worlds. This process involves the consolidation of a technology of housing in the World, empowered by the grammar of *Umbanda/Macumba*, connected with youth, gender, and (homo)sexuality. Its material “ground” is the process of construction of the group's *terreiro*. Based on 10 years of ethnography and in dialogue with theoretical discussions regarding cosmopolitics, materialities, and W/world(s) in de/anti/contracolonial perspectives, I argue that through this process, the network has built a world-for-them/us ( $wf\#$ ) that enables it to cross the World-as-Threat ( $WfT$ ) and to recall the World-as-struggle ( $W/s$ ):  $WfT \gg wf\# \ll W/s$ .

**Key words:** gender, borders, the Amazon, cosmopolitics, sexuality, care.

# Um terreiro “muito jovem e muito gay”: tecnologias de persistência e crescimento no M/mundo

## Resumo

Nesse artigo apresento como, na cidade de Tabatinga (AM), na tríplice fronteira entre Brasil, Peru e Colômbia, o Pai Jairo e seus filhos engajaram-se num processo de persistência, cuidado e crescimento através de um Mundo que se lhes apresenta enquanto ameaça para suas vidas e seus mundos. Este processo envolve a consolidação de uma tecnologia de habitação do Mundo, alimentada na gramática da *Umbanda/Macumba* e conectada com operadores de juventude, gênero e (homo)sexualidade. Sua base material, seu “chão”, é o processo de construção de um *terreiro*. Baseado em 10 anos de etnografia e em diálogo com discussões teóricas sobre cosmopolíticas, materialidades e M/mundos em perspectivas de/anti/contracoloniais, argumento que através deste processo, esta rede constrói um mundo-para-si (mf#) que em sua prática habilita a atravessar o Mundo-come-Ameaça (MfA) em termos de uma relação de embate (Mundo-come-embate: M/e) virtualmente simetrizante: MfA>>wf#<<M/e.

**Palavras chave:** gênero, fronteiras, Amazônia, cosmopolítica, sexualidade, cuidado.

# A *Terreiro* That's “Too Young, Too gay”: Technologies of Persistence and growth in the W/world

José Miguel Nieto Olivar

In this manuscript, I present how, in the city of Tabatinga (AM), on the triple border between Brazil, Peru, and Colombia, the *Father* (of saint)<sup>1</sup> *Jairo and His Children Network* are engaged in a process of persistence, care, and growth in order to traverse a World that presents itself as a threat to their lives and their worlds. This process involves the consolidation of a technology of growth and housing in the World, empowered by the practice and the grammar of *Umbanda* (an Afro-Brazilian religion), connected with youth, gender, and (homo)sexuality. Its material “ground” is the process of construction of the network's *terreiro*<sup>2</sup>.

My use of the term “worlds” derives from the intersection of the ethnographic experience with theoretical discussions on cosmopolitics, materialities, and W/world(s) and their ends (Stengers, 2015; Dela Cadena & Blaser, 2018) in de/anti/counter-colonial perspectives (Anzaldúa, 1987; Santos, 2015; Silva, 2017, 2019; Mombaça, 2021). This approach is inspired by the ethnographic work of Nóbrega (2019), to which I will return later. A *cosmopolitical* (Stengers, 2018) and *pluriversal* (Dela Cadena & Blaser, 2018) approach allows me to communicate and enact experiences of creativity, sociality, relative autonomy and participation in the World: all things I learned within this network<sup>3</sup>.

I will argue that throughout this process, this network has built a world-for-us/them ( $wf\#$ ) that enables it to cross the World-as-Threat ( $WfT$ ) to create the World-as-struggle ( $W/s$ ):  $WfT \gg wf\# \ll W/s$ . In this construction, “growing up”, an emic category, is a central theme that has a strongly material dimension and is anchored in relationships of mutual implication between bodies, network, family, *terreiro*, and entities.

This work derives from ethnographical research begun in 2010<sup>4</sup>, originally focused on understanding the transborder mobilities associated with sexual markets along and across the Brazil-Colombia border (Olivar, 2015, 2016, 2017; Olivar and Melo, 2018; Melo and Olivar, 2019; Olivar, Melo and Tobón, 2021). Since 2011, I have followed the *Father Jairo and His Children Network*. In 2011, 2012, and 2015, I lived four months each year in Tabatinga. In 2013 I lived for four months in Leticia, the Colombian portion of this transborder city. In 2016, 2018, and 2020 I conducted annual visits to this region of about two weeks each. From the beginning,

1 TN: To be of *saint* is to be follower of Afro-Brazilian religions; father or mother as a leadership, with him/her children (sons and daughters) and other religious kinship positions.

2 TN: *Terreiro* is the space or temple.

3 For this “housing the World”, “to build a world”, construction and “making a world”, I follow Latour (2008), Haraway (2016) and Tsing (2015). Follow, for example, the Note 6 in pg 44 from Latour (2008), or the concept of “worlding” in Haraway (2016).

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this network, mainly in terms of its “gay”, “girl” and “*transvesti*”<sup>5</sup> lines, was one of my main sources of knowledge and relationships. The 2018 and 2020 visits were carried out within the framework of the realization of a film project called *Babado*, under the direction of Camila Freitas and João Viera Torres<sup>6</sup>.

It is important to mention that the present article is not situated in the field of religious studies. Future developments may be made in this direction comparison with other analogous ethnographic accounts and in collaborative work. Additionally, the review of, comparisons with, and the “transformative perspective” of studies (Banaggia, 2014) on Afro-Brazilian religions in intersection with youth, geopolitical location, gender variability, and sexual dissidence may offer further ethnographic and analytical insights that enrich interpretations of this article and the fields of studies it touches upon<sup>7</sup>. This paper is an ethnographic and anthropological narrative/fable of a situated experience observing how a *terreiro* that was too young and too gay came to existence, that deals with the theoretical problem of the combative persistence of lives and worlds that, under different totalizing and conflicting power regimes, would not be possible or desirable.

## W/worlds

Márcia Nóbrega (2019) studies the ways in which “the people” of an island in the São Francisco River (northeast Brazilian *sertão*) – a black, afro-indigenous, rural *people* – mobilize the composition of the world, its land and water, among living humans, dead, souls, and *caboclos*<sup>8</sup>, in recomposing the W/world after (in temporal and fluvial terms) the construction of the Sobradinho Hydroelectric Power Plant disrupted it. Among others, Nóbrega (2019) draws on the work of Peruvian anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena (2010, 2018). In *A World of Many Worlds*, De la Cadena & Blaser (2018) organize and hybridize seeds from the Zapatista movement, Peruvian indigenous cosmologies, the ethnographic work and *cosmopolitics* of Isabelle Stengers (2018), creating a source for the political discussion of worlds that are not (ontologically) exhausted in the World (and therefore creating the distinction between the uppercase and lowercase use of this term, and others, that I employ here)<sup>9</sup>. This study of W/worlds and their relationships (“human” worlds, worlds of entities, worlds of the spirits and the dead, animal and plant worlds, and “Modern” worlds of “whites”), Nóbrega included, details disasters, catastrophes, environmental crimes, colonization, and technological and extractive imperative of capitalism: certain(ly) Endings of Worlds<sup>10</sup>.

5 I use these three terms emically. “Gay” is a sometimes encompassing category of diverse homosexualities, mainly male, at a junction of gender and sexuality, producing, in many local explanations of gender, “men”, “women” and “gays”. It is also used specifically for “male” homosexual experiences, involving in many cases travestis, trans women or “girls”. Often a “girl” might be labeled, in the intimacy of the group, as “gay” and use her masculine name without creating discomfort. Yet, Samara, one of the “girls”, in 2021 classified the Network’s sons and daughters like this: Men, Women, Gays and Trans..

6 Currently, *Babado* is heading to post-production and its first cut at Duas Mariola Produções. For a teaser, see: <https://vimeo.com/448164053>

7 It is important to comment that gender and sexuality matters are not new in studies on religions of Afro-Brazilian matrix (Birman, 2005)(see Strongman, 2002; Santos, 2009; Pereira, 2012; Rosario and Gonçalves, 2022 for revision focused on homosexuality), but they are still a minority. Discussions about *terreiro* trans people and trans youth, either from the key of religion or from the key of generational studies, are even scarcer (see Pereira, 2017, 2018; Souza et al, 2014). We still know little about how in places like Tabatinga, young gay, trans, lesbian girls, who go through heavy contexts of violence and abjection, produce their possibilities to grow and flourish through *terreiros* and *macumbas*.

8 TN: Mixed indigenous-white-black people not formally part of an indigenous group and also an important group of entities in afro-indigenous Brazilian religions.

9 I am using the notion of *cosmopolitics* as a disruptive and connective intervention enabling the multiple/simultaneous, current *and* virtual, to cross and compose [un]common worlds, against, through and despite the unifying effort of the World in its technical and sequentialist layers, policies, colonization, and civilization (Stengers, 2018). In this sense, the use of the lowercase w (wf#) seeks to retain the mark of minorization (being a *minor*, being “minor”) (Deleuze, 2005) while mobilizing the power of a multiplicity without Unity expressed by the formula  $n-1$  (Deleuze & Guattari, 2008). The 1 that is subtracted in order to enable the multiplicity of the lower-case minor is precisely the Capitalized form of unity with and of affection for the colonial Norm. The asymmetry and the interweaving of worlds/World are thus understood here as a given.

10 Authors such as Danowsky & Viveiros de Castro (2014); Kopenawa and Albert (2015), Stengers (2015), Haraway (2016), De la Cadena & Blaser (2018), Tsing (2015), Tsing et al (2017), Krenak (2019), Latour (2014, 2017) among others, have been thinking about contemporary planetary-local crises in the relationship between technological intensification and the exploitation of natural resources, persistence of devastating human necropolitics, crises in global scientific-political fields, and climate change. Black anti-racist radical authors as Denise Ferreira da Silva (2019) and Jota Mombaça (2021), following the long way of authors as Fanon, Cesaire, Spillers, and so, have built another position in the End-of-the-World conversation: how to act toward the end

It was hard to “see” the End of the World in the sexual, urban and cosmopolitical capillarity of Pai Jairo and His Children in the city of Tabatinga and the Border that crosses it<sup>11</sup>. What one saw was the exuberance of carefully cultivated youth and gender (beautiful) embodiments, the fertility of socialities and libidinal economies in the “beginning of Brazil” [Brazil Army announcement in Tabatinga] or in the “asshole of the World” [as many foreigners say], in the multidimensional voluptuousness of the Amazon forest-over-there, with its localized effect of superabundance. Nothing seems to be ruins and no latest sky appears to fall down over them. Not even during the health and political crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic in Amazon did the anguish of the End of the World reach the *terreiro* and its members.

However, abundance and exuberance co-exist with forms of precariousness and violence that coincide with descriptions of contemporary forms of racism, colonialism, capitalism, heteropatriarchy, etc. It is not maybe the End of the World, but a *reverse of The Nation* (Serje, 2005), and the social-pedagogical latency of *abjection* and killability (Butler, 2020 [1993]; 1993; Silva, 2019). It is also the consistent threat of the end of certain bodies and worlds.

All of Pai Jairo’s gay and trans- sons and daughters of saint come from poor families, from Amazonian *cabocla* groups in the terms of the colonial genealogies of Amazonian history (Melo & Olivar, 2019; Melo, 2020). Many were born in riverside communities and arrived in the city of Tabatinga and the “border” in childhood. Many have experiences of abandonment and uprootedness. The members of this network have very vivid and repeated experiences of murder, rape, beatings, and humiliation by military, police, or religious (Christian, Pentecostal) agents. All of them remember – and some closely observed – the death, rape and torture of acquaintances. Several went through intense situations of violence, sometimes related to their experiences of gender and sexuality; sometimes at the hands of relatives; sometimes related to their religious activities; sometimes related to the cross-border dynamics of drug trafficking (Paiva, 2016, 2019; Freitas and Olivar, 2022; Olivar, 2022). Many of them, especially the trans- (transwomen and *travestis*) members of the group, have left school and experience constant situations of unemployment. Occasionally, they find that housing and food are difficult to come by.

This network is also marked by the historical moment locally known as “the death of the macumbeiros”: an almost complete local disappearance of macumba<sup>12</sup> (a specific threat of the end of a world) (Silva, 2015). This event involved the murder of Pai Luiz (Pai Jairo’s first mentor) and Pai Betinho in the mid-1990s. According to Silva (2015: 116-119), these murders spread an immobilizing sense of fear among Father Luiz Macumbeiro’s more than 30 children of saints, many of whom were also threatened<sup>13</sup>. In the network of Pai Jairo and His Children, the idea of the *end* is not associated with the World, but with the permanent feeling that macumba (a world) can disappear, and also as an effect of the processes of Amazonian frontiers (Silva, 2015: 119). This is the “land of sin” for the afro-indigenous entities (Silva, 2015: 62, 111), in a perspective in which the World also exists as a threat to/within the spiritual world.

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of the World (as we know it)? And how to not be killed today?

11 There is no place in this article for a “contextualization” of the city and the border. For more information and other descriptions, see: Zárata (2008); Aponte-Motta 2017); Victorino (2012); Paiva (2016, 2019); Olivar (2014, 2015, 2017, 2019a); Melo and Olivar (2019). Regarding this triple border in terms of gender and homosexualities, see Moreno Rangel (2020) and Nascimento (2018, 2019).

12 The names “batuque” and “macumba” are part of the popular repertoire for these religions and spiritualities. Cardoso Zikán (2007), explains how the term “macumba” is politically and academically discredited and may be understood as a pejorative or accusatory term. It still maintains positive connotations in many Afro-Brazilian religious environments, however.

13 The story of the murders of the Pais de Santo was (almost) renewed in 2018, when a powerful Mãe de Santo, well-known and a relative of Pai Jairo’s saint, suffered an attack in which a young transgender woman who was accompanying her ended up dead, abandoned on the street, and institutionally treated as indigent. In 2016, for example, there were 4 terreiros, according to information collected via WhatsApp with Samara. By contrast, in July 2021 only the terreiro of Pai Jairo was still operating in the city.

As the entity Mr. Zé Malandro explained to researcher Reginaldo Silva:

... [A]t that time they didn't say *macumbeiro* or anything. They talked about healers and as there also were the Indians, both the Ticuna and the people from Peru. They prayed with leaves and things and people started to believe in it. When more civilization arrived -- the doctors, the white people's businesses -- then the people started trusting those things more and left it aside. It was like the people -- Catholicism itself -- were already judging "They are sorcerers; those things there are demons". Society was closed to that, so they had to unite to be able to found their own religion that today has both Umbanda and Mina. (Silva, 2015: 119)

When enacted by the forces of drug trafficking, police, and armies, or churches of Christ as an effect of *Amazon Border processes* (Grimson, 2003) and "Development", Tabatinga and the Border would become compositions of the World-as-Threat (WfT).

On the other hand, the *border*, in its lower-case form, is also a space built by many as a space for sexual and gender "freedoms" and new arrangements (Olivar, 2022). A territory of escape and of multiple forms of care (Olivar, 2019a, 2019b). And the State is also an externality, an always recent mistrust and the attractive state of the desirable bodies (in the sense made famous by Tom of Finland) in the police and military corps (federal, in special), with the "money" necessary for "honey", or for a wedding, making kinship and populate the nation; the bodies of children, guardianship council members, and friendly teachers (Olivar, 2014, 2016). It is gender and the State (and sexuality) making up one another (Vianna & Lowenkron, 2017), the region, the w/World(s), and its ends.

Following the lives, politics, and poetics of *travestis*, in Afro-Brazilian matrix religions is very important (Pereira, 2017). Pereira (2018) affirms that they "construct sophisticated forms of agency to deal with their exclusion from the power that establishes categories of what can and cannot enter into the world of the possible, and that designates their bodies and their subjectivities as unthinkable". Thus, Pereira (2018) follows, "Perhaps the path forward is to enchant ourselves with the multiplicity of agents and their inaudible forms of agency, with the creativity of their poetics". Pushing towards this sophisticated agency and enchantment, I am interested in showing the emergence of a *world for us* (wf#) illuminated by the *blacklight* (Silva, 2019) of Umbanda entities' closed or whitened eyes, by the laboriously produced beauty, multiplicity and solidity of bodies, relationships and the *terreiro* itself.

### **Macumba, Batuque, Umbanda, religion**

In my fieldnotes for the night of September 7th, 2011, I noted that Emilly, a girl who was "underage", a "Mermaid" and "a whore on the avenue", born and raised as a riverside boy, only spoke to me about two things: Religion ("Batuque") and "Malas" ("packages". Aka penises).

*When we talk about cocks, she happily talks about sizes, experiences... of liking "big packages"... of fucking those who have them for free... of how one has to pretend when the cock's small and how a small package, misused, can hurt more than a large one... of how she'll give a blowjob without a condom when the package looks good and smells nice and such... Clinging to her cell phone all the time, looking, searching, listening to music or checking to see if someone had called... [WhatsApp and smartphones had still not made it to Tabatinga, and the internet was not widely available] . Suddenly someone called: that night there would be work at the terreiro.... Emilly is a member of the Batuque and in Tabatinga there are 3 terreiros... she attends one of them. "There I dress as a man." And then the conversation, which included Wallder and Geni, strayed off without me being able to understand much of it....*

Of these two things, it was the “malas” (sex, gender-plus-sexual constructions, money, the night, the bitching, the “cruising”) that mattered most to me at first. I paid little attention in 2011 to the issues associated with “Batuque”.

In September 2012, in the context of the Gay Pride events, I met Jairo (23 years old), organizing a part of the celebration and, at night, riding the beautiful Hannah during the Parade, dancing and twerking euphorically all the way to the ground. Weeks later I attended, for the first time in fieldwork -- and in my life -- an Umbanda ceremony.

Before going forward with a description of this initial context, it is important to stop and briefly ponder Umbanda. As I am not attempting to “explain” what this religion is<sup>14</sup>, I will make a leap forward time to present some elements of it, as presented by the teachings that Pai Edinho gave me in Manaus in 2015 on our return from Tabatinga<sup>15</sup>.

Pai Edinho explained to me that Umbanda is an organizational device (derived from Candomblé and strong indigenous roots); an institutionalization of forces, energy, spirits, and mediumistic abilities that are prior to any religion or technique. These forces, energies, and capabilities are extremely present and available in the Amazon, as in other regions, he explains. These *Afroindigenous relationships* (Goldman, 2021), especially those of welcoming, strengthening, and healing, offer up resistance in the face of “oppression” and “humiliation”.

At a time of life that... in Brazilian society, if you weren't white, you didn't have a family, you didn't have status, you weren't part society. So, a lot was oppressive, right? Humiliating. And it was people like us discovering that they had strength, that they had energy, that they had spirit, that they had...

For Pai Edinho, there is a full (virtual and current) disposition of Umbanda that welcomes *difference* as difference and as something not to be *civilized*. This is how *terreiros* such as that of Pai Jairo have enormous capacity to welcome young gay and trans people (whores and grifters, including young people with serious health problems and/or who suffer from drug abuse). Not for spiritual reasons (particular “gay” connections with spirits or mediumistic abilities), but for “social context, really”. For Pai Edinho, “homosexuality is a search for freedom of spirit, for a more adventurous, more spontaneous person. Not every religion accepts this spontaneity.”<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, Umbanda, establishes a very precise sense of “development” and organization. It implies total attention to the growth processes of young people and a form of guidance. Guiding, strengthening, listening; following all the complex religious rituals, getting involved in a series of obligations, take hold, and develop. The spirits “also incite one to learn. They also must have permission for that. On top of that medium, mainly. Not every spirit comes and does what it wants.”

All this takes place in a not always clear balance or back-and-forth between organization (discipline, hierarchy, division), care, and an ethics based on respect (and not on tolerance or obedience<sup>17</sup>). “Spirituality is very individual. It is intense, immense, irregular, but it does not cancel out individuality”.

14 As Banaggia (2008) and Chiesa (2012) have shown, Umbanda has strong regional and local variability, including from *terreiro* to *terreiro*. Drawing on the classic work by Ivonne Maggie, Chiesa (2012) identifies a key role of the house leader in the emergence of these differences “which results in doctrinal and ritualistic differentiation between one house and another” (pg 211). “This process of constant differentiation that makes Umbanda a religion in movement” derives from the individual creative investments, syntheses, and conflicts to which the Umbanda *terreiro* seems to be always open (Chiesa, 2012: 212). In our case, it is necessary to focus on the efficacy of collective work, in a network that not only mobilizes the father and his children, but also collectives of entities, the materiality of the *terreiro*, the bodies, the clothes and objects of decoration and gift, the territory, etc.

15 By 2014 and 2015, Pai Edinho “had his hand on the head” of Pai Jairo. Pai Edinho had great respect for Jairo and was well aware of the networks, circuits, and expressions of the *terreiro* religions in Amazonas, including that in Tabatinga. Pai Jairo, at the main time of the fieldwork, was not a person who was in the habit of “explaining” and teaching religion discursively, much less to those who were not his son or daughter.

16 In this sense, please see Pereira (2018) for a reflection on gender, sexuality and politics in contemporary Brazil, paying attention to the Cristian “inclusive” religions, among the Afro-Brazilian's.

17 *Tolerance* is the modern sister of contempt, the open channel of civilizational unification, a cursed “metaethnocentrism”, as Goldman (2017) analyzes in dialogue with Stengers' (2018) cosmopolitical proposition. Its opposite, typical of Afro-indigenous knowledge (such as Umbanda), is *respect* (Goldman, 2017)..

Let's return to 2012, when Umbanda was increasingly important for the members of this network<sup>18</sup>. Without "his own" *terreiro*, the young Pai Jairo held his parties and ceremonies in other *terreiros*, especially in that of his ally and formative reference, Mãe Lúcia (Mother of the saint, too). With more than 30 years in the religion, she had been the daughter of Pai Luiz Macumbeiro. After his murder, she became the daughter of Pai Raimundo and, in this sense, she had a sibling relationship with Pai Jairo<sup>19</sup>.

Through the side of an old house in the central region of Tabatinga, I enter into a large patio with fruit trees, dirt floors, and plants. Behind the temple stands a strong wooden building, painted white with blue windows, well finished, clean, solid, and cared for. An established *terreiro*, with an abundance of images – some of them very old – displaying the marks and firmness of care and the passage of time. On its dirt floor, the sons and daughters of saints, separated into "men" and "women", were bare foot and dressed in white, beginning the ceremony. In front stood Jairo with his bell, next to the atabaque (large hand-played drum) opening the lines. There stood also Mãe Lucia and several other older women.

Girls like Emilly, Chris and her cousin Samara (trans(girls), in Samara's most recent term) were dressed in pants and t-shirts, hair tightly gathered in light-colored cloths, just like men and gays... 'Just like' is not a good term, however. Even "dressed as men", as Emilly told me, the clothing – all or some of it – was "women's", or aesthetically performing, in Butler terms (1990), femininity (clothes that were more fitted to women or modified in some way for women). I realized that Samara, whose chest was blooming in a hormonally manufactured adolescence, was even wearing a bra. It was one of the first images for thinking about their "truques" (tricks) as fractal devices of habitation, implication, and traversing worlds and normative imperatives (as that of gender in their own religion). The other women, the cis, wore loose, light skirts and "women's" blouses. Their hair was loose and decorated.

Gradually some of the worshippers began to receive the proximity and arrival of the entities, starting the incorporating process. I learned that this border is "a strong crossroads", as said a man who, arriving in Tabatinga and while still on the airplane, had felt the irradiation of Zé Pelintra. Reginaldo da Silva (2015) comments on the abundance of entities and possessions along this border. A multitude of entities inhabit this world-with-them, sharing the world in composition (Nobrega, 2019). I sat outside next to Wallder, looking in through the window. Wallder no longer liked to "receive" entities and that's why I didn't go in. Receiving was too strong for him: it knocked him down.

We see Chris receiving. Spasms come, someone holds her, helps with the turning, releases her head. Her hair spreads out in the night. She moans lightly but stays there, with her body slightly crouched, head down, as if she were an old woman. "Like a cabocla", says Wallder without knowing who is in Chris' head. Is it Jacira? Cris stayed stationary, bathed in sweat, her head bowed and her hair flowing loose in her white boy-girl clothes. Then someone passed a simple colored cloth -- their sword – over her and wrapped it around her torso, precariously evoking/turning into a dress for the entity who was trying to arrive. Jaciara, in Chris's body, kept the pace, marking the rhythm of the drums. She smiled when someone greeted her and summarily greeted them back. She looked calm but was almost immobile.

Mãe Lucia also received Cabocla Jurema, who remained seated in her chair. Then it was Samara's turn. Her long, strong hair twirled, twinkling with light, spreading moisture around her. Her laughter became louder.

18 Pereira (2017, 2018) argues for the special role that possession by Pomba-Giras has for Brazilian travesti processes of *montagem* (body making) and embodiment. My ethnography with Pai Jairo's network shows how this is of fundamental importance not only for *travestis*, but for everyone who experiments and needs to deal with their unconflicting gender/spiritual process. This is not only related to Pomba-Giras, but also to but Caboclas, Exus, and Sailors, which demand specific gender performances. Furthermore, this importance is not only for the *montagem* of the *travesti* body, but also for the emergence of force, network, sense and (as I am arguing here) a place to be (*terreiro*). The multiplicity of presences and physical-spiritual interactions, marked by gender, is a central point in this network of presences, places, people, and possessions.

19 Silva (2015), demonstrates the existence of three recent generations of "macumbeiros" in Tabatinga. The first is represented by Seu Luiz or Pai Luiz Macumbeiro, a former "macumbeiro" who was murdered in 1994, a time when macumba almost disappeared in Tabatinga. The second is represented by Mãe Lúcia, Pai Luiz' daughter of saints. The third generation is represented, and to some extent led, by Pai Jairo.

It was a big woman there! But the possession didn't last long. The entity was very new in this head and the possessed-body-head still wasn't firm enough for the entity to take over. This, at least, was the explanation given to me.

"All People of the Forest," said Walder at this city in the heart of the World's biggest (last) forest. The gyrations went on and the people received entities, tried to handle them, and then the entities let go. Then it began again. Cabocla Jurema continued to sit calmly in her chair, eyes wide open, attentive, and kind. Dona Herondina, firmly settled in Pai Jairo's head, commanded the house and the ceremony in her colorful dress decorated yellow flowers, made of simple cotton fabric.

The next day, Chris told me that the party had turned "left" afterwards, towards the people of the night and the street<sup>20</sup>. That's when an Exu came, "took over Quinho" [Quinho, one of the transwomen, today legally named Aline Tilinha], and came to collect some obligation in an outbreak of violence. It was afternoon in Tabatinga and Chris was very tired, exhausted, and feverish. She explains to me how strong this process is, how she must be much better prepared for it in the future, stronger. Two entities wanted to establish themselves in her head, but for a moment they were fighting. I had seen the first arrival of one of them. 2012. One went in, the other went out. Cabocla Jacira and Caboclo Sete Encruzilhadas, which "is very strong". Heavy. And Chris' head still doesn't know how to deal with it. Her body just wanted to fall. Cabocla Jacira arrived already drunk because she knows that, in Chris' head, she can't drink. "She's too new in my head, so She can't. It must have been drinking in Manaus or Bahia and from there came to try to establish herself." Strong, scary, but it's good. Caboclos, Exus, Pomba-giras, Indians, Sailors and Gypsies like to drink there, smoke there; Erezinhos come to crawl, jump, and run on all fours<sup>21</sup>. One must have a strong body to grow spiritually, to have a head-body capable of serving as a place for the entity to establish itself and also for it to grow. It is necessary to control the irradiation, the presence, and the possession of "the other", as they usually call upon an entity - mostly Exus and Pomba-Giras - whose proximity irradiates through the possessed and out of the ritual space. She can't just come whenever she wants, Chris explained to me in her bed, still glowing from the after-effects of possession by a seductive Pomba-Gira, her favorite<sup>22</sup>.

### **Pai Jairo's *terreiro* (w/f# barricade).**

The time of raw bodies was also the time when the network was at its most fragile depending on other people's *terreiros*. As Rabelo (2014: 280-1) shows, it is in the process of making, a process of hard work performed by several actors, that the saint and his children are strengthened and become agents and objects of care.

20 Umbanda mobilizes a great number of entities organized in different lines, families, groups, ancestral origins, etc.. Names and configurations vary significantly. A basic division at Pai Jairo's *terreiro*, combined with gender, is left side (Pomba Giras, Exus, some Malandros) and right side entities (Caboclos, Índios, Sailors, "Forest People", Pretos Velhos, etc). Differently from another *terreiros* and going against normative expectations, in Pai Jairo's temple it is not uncommon to see the crossing of entities and lines (groups or families) during the same party or ceremony. This "uncontrolled" spiritual force implies much more energy and physical force for, among, and by the sons and daughters, as well as certain dangers and techniques of protection. As we shall see below, this is often used as an argument that the *terreiro* is "too young".

21 TN: The mischievous spirits of young children and babies.

22 Among the girls and some of the gays in the *terreiro*, Pomba-Giras are the favorite entities. There is no local agreement about Pomba-Giras having always been prostitutes. For Cardoso Zikán (2007), Hayes (2009), Pereira (2017), and Bahia (2020), this connection seems to be more-or-less constant or consistent, however. According to Pereira (2017), they "are the spirit of a woman who would have been a prostitute when alive; a woman capable of dominating men with her wiles" (153), and "the embodiment of transgressive femininity, with powers of revenge and care" (154). Bahia (2020) aims at a cross-analysis between the field of sex work and that of religion in Candomblé *terreiros* in Portugal and Blanchette & DaSilva (2018) explore this same intersection in Rio de Janeiro. Freitas and Olivar (2022) show how in Tabatinga, the Pomba-Giras are also those who have been violated and are capable of killing, and allow femininities to deal with enormous sexual, amorous, and economic conflicts and violence, in a similar way as shown by Birman for cis-women (2005).

Together with Rabelo, I somewhat follow what has been called the “material turn”, connecting social analysis of relationships and transformations with its materialities (such as “houses”, bodies, objects, etc).<sup>23</sup>

“(…) The *terreiro* [is] a space for coexistence that entangles its members (not only humans) in the making of each other, which produces certain modes of commitment and responsibility.” (Rabelo, 2014: 281). “*Travestis* seek spaces where they can dance in the houses of the saints, incorporating pomba-gira. After all, as Andrezza pointed out, ‘every *travesti*, every gay, has a pomba-gira, a Padilha’” (Pereira, 2017: 152). In our case, in 2012, the *terreiro* didn’t yet exist, so the entanglements of its members were in process before the *terreiro* began. In fact, the entanglements between worshippers, the father, and the many entities (not only pomba-gira) were what made the *terreiro* possible and imputed a need to keep bodies, networks, and spiritualities growing.

The first image I have of Pai Jairo’s *terreiro* is from 2013. It is the outskirts of Tabatinga, as he said, in a city’s recent area of urban sprawl. When the sidewalk ended, I descended a small ridge along something like a country path between the green grass and the thicket that was beginning to be cleaned out by a few of the area’s first inhabitants. I arrived there guided by Chris.

At the time, the separations between plots were just being invented, as marks cut in the grass, posts, and wires. The back access to Jairo’s land had no restrictions or obstacles. It was a plot of land about 10 meters wide by 30 meters deep. Of the future *terreiro*, there was only one small house of Exu at the back: small, red, made of wood. At first it didn’t even have a padlock. Few images were in Exu’s house, and some were stolen from there. In Tabatinga they were scarce and very expensive. From the grounds of the *terreiro* was 10 meters of cut grass to Jairo’s house, at the front of the plot. At the back of the house, on one side, a system of tanks and hoses served as a bathroom, laundry, and water tank. On the other side, there used to be a small pen for the animals Jairo kept: ducks, chicken and guinea pigs. We entered the house from the back through a wooden door. In 2013, Pai Jairo’s house had three rooms and was made of wood boards, canvas, and zinc sheets, along with some incipient masonry foundations.

Leaving through the house’s front door, Jairo’s land extended another four meters up to a road that was still being opened up as a main street. Beyond were bush and “federal lands” under the control of the Brazilian Army. Nearby, a stream of clean water. At the end of the hot afternoon, the mermaids, gays, misses, and goddesses gathered there in shorts, shirts, and flip-flops, weeding the grass, going into the bush to gather leaves for baths and medicine, sweeping, and smoking in peace.

At the age of 16, recognizing himself as homosexual, Jairo had entered into the life of “the saints”, guided by the emblematic “cartomancer” and “macumbeiro” Seu Luiz, *pai de santo* of the first movement or generational cycle of “macumba” in Tabatinga (Silva, 2015). He then spent some time in training in Manaus with his first mother of saints and then returned to Tabatinga. He quickly learned the work of spiritual mediation and, at the age of 18, in his Hanna-mode, he set up “a little stool” in his mother’s house to read tarot and guide clients in taking healing baths and other spellwork. A “religion researcher” is not defined as being a medium “by birth”, but as an effect of training, obligations, and study.

“Then you start taking shape and after a while you have a lot of clients”, says Jairo about his own growth. At the age of 21, when we met, Jairo was no longer a travesty and had almost 20 children of saints. The need to have a *terreiro* for this more-than-human network thus began to become urgent. “One day [in 2013] I talked to my entity (Dona Herondina): ‘My old lady, you’re going to get me a place, ma’am; a *terreiro* for me... or I’ll stop here”.

<sup>23</sup> I specifically follow the path of André Dumans Guedes (2017) in his dialogue with a certain anthropology that contemplates “the house” in its procedural, movement, relational, and material dimensions. I am interested in the path marked out by this author in the *fractal relations* between mobilities, movement, territories, and “home” in relationships among the Brazilian lower classes. In this sense, the work of Cavalcanti (2009) on the always incomplete transformation of shacks into houses is referential, as is the work of Rabelo (2014), cited in the body of the text. See Machado (2013), too, for his work on “houses”, bodies and kinship in the “batuque gaúcho”.

On the same afternoon in which he put the pressure in Dona Herondina, a client appeared at his stall. “Jairo, there’s a piece of land that I’m not even using’. Kid, it was 25, 30 thousand reais and I didn’t even have R\$100. She brought me here to see the land and told me ‘I’ll give it to you, you can stay...’ I thought it was kind of normal, but not so normal... I was very happy”. Jairo immediately went to “buy on credit” materials to build a squatter shed: some wooden planks, canvas, plastic, cardboard, tools. “I wanted to have my own experience of living alone...” He was 23 years old.

The next day a man appeared complaining. “Who ordered this place to be built...?? It has no title! This land is mine!!!!” There were then 18 or 19 families who, like Jairo, precariously occupied small plots of land. “Actually, it was an invasion, right?”

It was a Thursday. Intimidated, Jairo left the land. He was back on Friday, however: “if they are going to take it all down, I will be one more they have to take out”. It was the end of 2012. The entities said “Go...” But on the same day, at 1 pm, “the man” returned with documents and vehicles. “The policeman told me that I was prohibited from building... He threatened to take me to prison... I was alone. I went to consult the entities and they told me to build again. ‘This is our ground, it’s for us’”. Caboclos Sibamba, Pena Verde, and Dona Brava seemed completely ready and determined to do what they do from centuries: occupy the territory. For them it was necessary to have a “ground”. Thus, strengthened in his relationship with the entities, Jairo called the police station on Saturday and asked if so-and-so (the policeman who had threatened him) was on duty. “And there was no one, for three days!” Understanding that time was precious, he returned to the lot. “A lot of people came, including my father...” The idea was to quickly build something: “Just a roof... there was no light or water or anything... I took an old hammock, some rags and moved in.... When the man came back about three days later, I was already living there.... Then the man left... Other leaders from the invasion here gathered and sent messages to communicate that an invasion was going on, so it could grow... If there were 50 families it would be more difficult to get us out...”. “To be more”, “to be one more” has always been important in this collective endeavor of growth and strengthening.

Sometime later, a city judge appeared, bearing an eviction warrant for all the families. They had fifteen days to leave. “I went to the entities again. Many dismantled their houses; others took the furniture... The judge threatened to burn it down and bulldoze it.” Jairo remembers the Judge’s exact name, “because I had to do the work... Not to harm her, not against her... but simply to change her mind... Then we were all crying... everyone was worried...” Then Dona Cigana came: “I’m going to make a fuss and in 7 days she will withdraw the warrant... and it was every night that she worked in my head until 2 am... She ordered me to throw creolin and coarse salt all over the land [occupied by the invasion] and set all the macumbeiros to spinning, all over the land [this was just one night]...”. “We were dressed in white, running around and tossing about creolin and rock salt... and other things she put inside, which I don’t know...”. Within a week the eviction order was cancelled. Apparently, the man’s property ended up in court due to the accumulation of tax debts. The man never again claimed to own the land.

The materiality of the *terreiro* and the whole of the land managed by Pai Jairo is an important key to understanding these ways of growing and the effectiveness of the relationships constructed in and through the network. The *terreiro*’s temple was built in masonry and construction was a struggle: a huge job of managing money and relationships. “I had 40 children of saints... I said, each one will give 100 reais and we will start... and everyone gave.” One of his blood sisters, who lives in Manaus, sent 400 reais. But Jairo accounts show an investment of 15,000 reais in the construction of the *terreiro*’s temple. “Other people gave much more... And I used my macumba money, too... I called my clients in Manaus...” “If they wanted [the entities], they had to give us money”.

Whoever built it was a bricklayer. But it was sight to be seen, as Pai Jairo remember: “Samara in a skirt, in a little dress, carrying bricks... The sand arrives... she goes there with a basin of sand... all, *travestis*, men... all of them... they hauled sacks of cement...”. Then they had to remove the Exu and build a new house for him, also made of masonry, just over two meters high. This was built on the left side of the *terreiro* temple.

Finally, in October 2015, the *terreiro* was officially and publicly inaugurated, with the visit of Pai Edinho. The temple was already built entirely of masonry, with a gabled wooden structure for its zinc roof. No lining yet. The cold cement floor was painted dark red and the interior walls blue. The altar was made from shelves along the back wall and already housed a growing population of images. Sons and daughters covered the unlined roof with pieces of cloth were stretched and nailed to the beams for the Exu party that would welcome Pai Edinho. The temple had its rectangles opened to a front and a side window and to the doorway, but it was still without a door, without railings, and without finishings. Its outside was raw brick. Exu’s newly built house was a similar structure, with the front wall plastered and painted white and a green curtain acting as a door.

The lot was still open on all four sides and the space between the buildings was covered by grass and earth that, when it rained, turned into mudflats. The external walls of Pai Jairo’s house were now made of long, strong wooden slats painted a vivid green, set on a white-painted masonry foundation. It had wooden windows that closed with blue frames over the green. Inside, still without any covering, slats of wood painted a bright red separated the common area from the bedrooms. It was a colorful, well-kept house, with images of saints on the walls. It was collectively occupied and cared for, serving as a base for the preparation of food and bodies that would be offered at celebrations and also for the organization of the entities’ costumes.

Pai Edinho’s visit in 2015 was fundamental: it guaranteed Jairo’s 7-year “obligation” and his official status as a Pai de Santo while also making it possible to manufacture iron structures for offerings to exus and pombagiras and the laying of the *terreiro*’s foundations, right in the center of the temple. “And it’s not finished yet,” Pai Jairo told me in July 2016, when I celebrated his having put in PVC lining on the ceiling, as well as wooden doors and windows in the temple and in Exu’s house, now painted all in dark red. The facade of the temple was still in raw brick and the red floor was still made of cold cement, but now there was a frame in the middle that marked out the saints’ abode. Wooden doors had padlocks to protect the images. Jairo’s house, on the other hand, remained the same.

By 2016 the network had taken over the land in front of Pai Jairo’s house. They had cleared it and set up two wooden poles in order to build a volleyball court. In the house, the yard and the volleyball court, the girls, the trans, and the gays gathered for long and delicious hours of play, fun, parties and for hyper-realistic or fabulous conversations<sup>24</sup>; for work in the production of this world, for fights, Umbanda, macumba and, as Cris always said, “affect”.

When I returned in 2018 to start filming *Babado*, together with Camila and João, among my son León and her mother Márcia, the grass that covered the space between the *terreiro*’s temple and Pai Jairo’s house had begun to be replaced with cement. The temple floor was now ceramic. In front of an open-air water tank at the back of Jairo’s house, where everyone used to bathe, there was now two closed and stuffy modules constructed made of bricks that would perhaps one day become bathrooms. In addition, a brick wall was being built around Pai Jairo’s land, starting with the back and sides.

In January 2020, on the second visit to film *Babado*, the *terreiro* had become the Palácio da Dona Herondina. The high wall around the site was now closed in front, close to the street, still unpainted and unfinished, but with a gate, railing, skylights and five columns, each crowned with a “Turkish” dome. Ironwork fences in doors and windows were at the front and back of the property. All entrances to the land had been cut off and one could only enter through the main door and through Jairo’s house. My bucolic image of the open occupation had

<sup>24</sup> The film *Babado* deals with this fabled power that crosses children of saints and entities, streets and streets, and worlds (Freitas and Olivar, 2022). On the richness and narrative power of the “street people”, see the abundant work of Vânia Zikán Cardoso (2007, 2017).

been transformed into a closed palace and a protected ground for those who live there or who came through it. It was now a huge and respected *barricade* (Mombaça, 2021).

Finally, in 2021, Samara helped me remotely for a month, paid with FAPESP resources as a Research Assistant. During June and July, she sent me audios, photos and videos showing the temple, the grounds, Jairo's house and the Palace complex, including during her cousin Chris' 3-year obligation. Pai Jairo's house is now built entirely in masonry, with only the facade painted (a light purple) and a long bed of little plants growing next to the inner face of the side wall of the land. The temple is entirely painted white and all the windows of the temple and house are protected with bars. The ground between the buildings is still partially covered with cement and the inner walls of Exu's house are half covered in the same black ceramic tiles as the floor. The temple and house of Exu contain many more images and other ritual objects. There are lots of plants, especially Saint George's swords. With its outer walls painted in burnt yellow and dark brown, tints skylights and the five columns with their golden domes, the Palace of Dona Herondina now stands out from the neighboring houses, which remain more or less the same as they were before, as is the dirt/mud street running through the neighborhood.

### **“Minors”, to grow up, to be more...**

[The saint's daughter] sees a zone of contact and participation form between her and the saint, which often blurs the boundaries between one and the other; she learns to give up the agency on many occasions. (...) As a result of the intervention of many mediators and procedures, she experiences a path from which she can emerge strengthened and from which she can stand out as a focus for the care and strengthening of others. (Rabelo, 2014: 280)

My last argument here is that the metaphor of youth seems to be very important for this network (2011-2020), combining between being “youth”, “growing up”, and “being more”<sup>25</sup>. This was visible in some scenarios where linkages between “youth”, “growing up”, “being more” and the religious notion of “development” were significative.

In 2011, when I was very attentive to questions about “sexual exploitation” and “human trafficking”, Emilly told me that the discourse of “sexual exploitation” is something employed by the “old queers” of the NGO. She also told me that she was “a minor”. “But aren't you 18?”, I asked. “I am”. Emilly, like Wallder -- the gay son of a former child counselor and a much older military man -- was aware of the multiple provocative connotations that such a statement has in the sex market and on its policies of control and regulation.

One afternoon in 2016, when we were preparing for a ceremony of Exu, a mother appeared and, furious, took her 15-year-old daughter (a cis woman) away. The young woman had intended to become a daughter of the saint of Pai Jairo. There is always a new generation entering the *terreiro*. The next day the girl returned and, together with Pai Jairo, they went to try to resolve the conflict with the mother. Jairo sought out information about the right to religious freedom and understood that such rights could be recognized for adolescents. He appealed to the Guardianship Council to confirm this and demanded the guarantee of his daughter (of saints') rights<sup>26</sup>. Several similar situations occur in the daily life of the *terreiro*, involving the youngest sons and daughters, including many, many “affective” receptions and care, in the context of sexual violence, family

25 There is a vast Brazilian literature revolving around what is imagined and administrated as “minor”, underage, youth. These analyses, related with gender, sexuality and rights, used to pay special attention on the public policies and the State. See, for example, the works of Vianna (2002), Gregori (1997), more recently and with special attention to gender and sexuality assemblages of young girls, Fernandes (2017).

26 See Leite (2019) for a better understanding of “underage minors” and children as resources for controversies by conservative Christian political agencies in contemporary Brazil.

beatings, helplessness, loneliness, problematic drug use, and problems with the sexual market (Freitas and Olivar, 2022)<sup>27</sup>.

The importance and the clashes of youth are multiple and also develop within the religion itself. “Too young and too gay”, was part of the arguments that Pai Edinho had given me to explain his impatience with his son of saints and with the way he managed his *terreiro*. Like Pai Edinho, Ivan, other interlocutor (in their 40s) with whom I spoke, great expert and a Afro-Brazilian religious authority, criticized or misunderstood Pai Jairo and his children practices. What was on focus was a certain consistent and excessive “youthful” and “gay” attitude of crossing borders, in terms of gender (the latent girlishness of the transwomen girl and some gays when choosing clothes for their rituals), in terms of sexual practices (prohibited within a given family of saints), in terms of the uses of the *terreiro* (which should strictly be a temple and not a shelter), and finally in physio-cosmological terms: particularly the consumption of beverages within the grounds of the temple. In Ivan’s understanding, in the connection between the somewhat problematic youth involved in the spiritual administration of the *terreiro* with his cosmological perception of this cross-border space (as I mentioned above in note 20), there is a critical intersection with the abundant but “uncontrolled” presence and transit of entities from various lines or groups.

However, abundance, youth and growing up enable important practices of cosmopolitical and more-horizontal care – including legal protection – based on practices of autonomy and respect of their differences. “We need to be more”, said Pai Jairo, explaining how to deal with certain emblematic problems in the *terreiro*. “Being more” on the street (more and stronger people) and in the “head” (more stronger and better established entities). “Being more” in order to enter the Parish Church in masse, with colorful ceremonial clothes, for the celebration of Lent in 2015 and 2016; or “being more” at a public debate on religious freedom at the State University of Amazonas, full of evangelical pastors; or when, in 2016, Mother Lucia’s right to have her *terreiro* and to make her ceremonies needed to be defended against the abusive attacks of a hotel owner allied with a Civil Police delegate.

Finally, they became more. If in 2012 Chris didn’t have the knowledge, the body, or the spiritual development to host Dona Jacira, in 2016 or 2018, she was-with a constellation of at least 8 male and female entities that she used to receive, with three – Dama da Noite, D. Cabocla, and The Sailor -- the ones she most often received and with whom she does her spiritual works for clients. The raw bodies, almost immobile with their newborn entities weighing too much and their improvised “swords” made with simple fabrics, were three years later replaced with a splendid new spectacle. Bigger, stronger bodies that, in the afternoon, after work or a hangover, prepare the entire ritual, clean the lot, make the meals, and prepare the temple. As evening falls, they prepare their bodies for the party. The house is full of people and food, offerings, and potent smells. A choreographic constellation of strong and sumptuous entities, pampered with jewels, perfumes, and clothes made of varied fabrics, bright and sewn with care. Elegant *caboclas* with hats and long dresses, with ever better-defined healing and consultation powers. Divine pomba-giras with loud laughs, the favorites of the *babado* girls, happily chatter, smoke, and drink sparkling wine. They spin around, lifting the colorful layers of their radiant skirts and then sit under the Tabatinga night sky to listen to and advise clients and visitors.

And in the middle of it all sits a “made” Father of Saints, now with grandchildren and granddaughters of saints in Tabatinga and other near cities, always attending to a new generation coming in and through the *terreiro* and that, apparently, in 2021 resists in the Palácio da Dona Herondina as the most well-known house of “religion” in the city. This is a barricade.

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27 Pereira (2017), Souza et al (2014) have ethnographic data showing how the *terreiros* and the Afro-Brazilian religious temples are important for *travestis* to find care, housing, affect, and new forms of kinship and worlding.

To grow is to make more and better space (body-*terreiro*-network) for the entities and for the world-with-them (wf#). It implies a policy of care and obligations, of study and knowledge, of responsibility towards the *terreiro*, the network and religion, of bodily protections that *must* be fulfilled... In this growing in religion while growing in life, the paths of growth, which are marked by individual trajectories, differentiation, mobilities and achievements, shape the particular form of the Umbanda of Pai Jairo and His Children. Growing up, “be in development”, in the style of Butler’s (1990) ontology of gerunds, is a kind of intensive counter-precariousness in relation to difference, abjection, youth, sexuality, and gender.

## Final considerations

This paper advances our understanding of the ways in which people who are abject, threatened, and violated by the Amazonian “border processes” (Grimson, 2003), a particular end for different worlds (Kopenawa and Albert, 2015), make possible and flourishing lives. It is grounded in the comprehension of how the network of *Pai Jairo and His Children*, crossed by and crossing the World as Threat (WfT), make, manufacture, compose a world for them (wf#) that finds its grammar in macumba (Umbanda, “religion”, “batuque”), while they become more to bring on the World as struggle (W/s) [WfT>>wf#<<W/s].

I have dealt with the particular experience of this network and its macumba from its emic ideas of growth, youth, and being more, which have in the construction and fortification of the *terreiro* (the Palacio da Dona Herondina) an actual hub for enacting the World as a pluriverse or as a composite assemblage (Nóbrega, 2019).

Umbanda responds to humiliation (trans)historically, as it was explained by Pai Edinho. It organizes abundant forces that do not depend on history or the State, but which have their contrasting existence in them. Walking around with Chris, Sam, and others through the Tabatinga nights, I don’t “see” the End of the World, and maybe they don’t either. They never seem especially concerned with global politics. But in addition to their own experiences of violence and abjection, the entities-with-them know these endings and have inhabited them for centuries. The end was always there... and so were the stories about how to deal with it, how to face it. As a grammar, as a genealogic, oral and embodied knowledge, Umbanda provides senses, people, and practices that enables the existence of worlds threatened by flattening (Stengers, 2018) and destruction as effect of the colonial and bordering processes. In this sense, the radical engagement of my interlocutors with Umbanda has been implied the (cosmopolitical) multiplication of the world. A world with so much knowledge to be learned, with stories of colonization and slavery, prostitution and masculine violence emerging from their mouths every day, with forces and relationships coming from Turkey, Africa, Bahia or Rio de Janeiro.

This *world-for-us* [wf#] is a localized relationship of stubbornness, creativity, differentiation, and seduction with a World that marks the relationship of asymmetrical exteriority: “civilization, doctors, white businesses, society”, murder, torture, rape, expulsion, humiliation. A *world-for-us* is not an abstraction nor a retreat from the World. The world built with and from the *terreiro* is not a parallel satellite, nor is it a closed community systematically organized against the World, the State, or “Whites,” even though ethnic, gender, class, counter-State, and decolonial enunciations circulate among entities and worshippers. It is a device for participation in the active composition of a World. To inhabit the World as a struggle, and not just as a threat, is the disjunctive condition of vitality and creation for (and from the perspective of) the network of Pai Jairo and His Children. In this active composition of possibilities, a *barricade-for-us* is fundamental.

For Pai Edinho, in his 2015 explanations, “inside a *terreiro*, you have an open door to everything. It is a **neutral** zone.” Neutral is not peaceful, neutral is not wisely led (not least because it is about growing, learning, and developing), neutral is not free from conflicts. Neutral, as an open door to everything, can be connected to the *cosmos* of Stengers (2018: 447): “the unknown that constitutes these multiple, divergent worlds, connections of which they might be capable, against the temptation of a peace that would be final...”.

A dynamic between openness and organization (“division”), care and respect, mark the possibility of this “neutral zone”, as if it were a kind of *cabocla*, “gay”, and juvenile variation of what has been called *acuir lombamento*<sup>28</sup> in other Brazils.

The possibility of persistence and flourishing lies in the solidity of the Palace which ensures that *we are not killed now* (Mombaça, 2021), as well as in its formative conditions of growth and endurance in the world despite abjectifications and threats. This *terreiro* is the crossing of the bush, the waters, the night, and the cosmopolitical street: it is the multidimensional transborder space between them all. It enables the formative and pleasant encounter with “the other” street people, from the streets and nights of the past or beyond; the *caboclos*, the sailors that have gone but who come to co-exists with and duplicate the streets, the nights, the rivers, the forest of the here and now.

In the midst of globally-disputed Amazon and the economic precariousness, sometimes in direct opposition to experiences of death and violence, in the occupied periphery of the nation`s reverse in catastrophic times for the World, the “twinkling mirrors” of Rosa Caveira’s full skirts stand out in the Palácio da Dona Herondina. The intoxicating and delicious perfume of the Lady of the Night, the silky and luminescent skin and the red mouth of Maria Padilha, the shiny black and red of the cape of Tatá Caveira, the undeniable forcefulness of *índia Brava*’s bare feet, or the imposing headdress of Seu Tupinambá all shine. Beautiful and strong bodies-worshippers-entities engage in the process of relational reterritorialization: having a house, a network, a family. The party, the beauty, the ceremony, the growth, the friendship, the intensive fabulation, such as the bodies, the “floor” and the bricks, are for the Pai Jairo and his network constitutive forces of their module of habitability called (too young and too gay) *macumba*. As Christielly always says, what they find there is “affect”.

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<sup>28</sup> In his classic work Abdias Nascimento (1980) proposed an ABC for Quilombismo. Caring is the word for C. “Taking care in organizing our struggle for ourselves is an imperative for our survival as a people” (p.269). In this sense, amplifying the possibilities of political and analytical articulation closer to our case study, it is important to associate Tatiana Nascimento’s concept of *Cuírlombo* (2018), in its dual function: to resist and to organize. Despite the awareness of the *terreiro* as a place of refuge and care, despite the *caboclo* (and therefore afro-indigenous) ethno-racial belongings, and the repeated occasions when entities like *Índia Brava* insist on denouncing the pains of colonization, I have never heard Pai Jairo or his children associate their *terreiro* with the idea of the *Quilombo*, much less the *Cuírlombo*. Analytically, historically, and sociologically, however, these could be close and connected materializations of the management of worlds and barricades.

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